

The result is something clearer and sharper: 'you have shown fathers (to be) brothers, sons (to be) shed blood of kindred, brides (to be) wives and mothers'. The metonymy in αἷμ' ἐμφύλιον may be compared with φόνος = '(cause of) murder' in *Il.* 16. 144 and *Od.* 21. 24, though Sophocles is bolder and more expressive; for a similar boldness, cf. *Tr.* 1278 κοῦδὲν τούτων ὅτι μὴ Ζεὺς ('all this was Zeus's doing'). It is peculiarly forceful here because it equates the son with the blood he should never have shed, just as the other two phrases equate pairs of relationships which should never have been fused together. The terrible power of Oedipus' marriage, already represented by the apostrophe (ὦ γάμοι γάμοι...), is thus further stressed: it not only makes him and his wife incestuous, but also reveals him to be a parricide. The sense of the lines, like the *tricolon crescendo*, thus corresponds very closely to 1184–5:

... ὅστις πέφασμαι φύς τ' ἀφ' ὧν οὐ χρῆν,³ ξὺν οἷς τ'
οὐ χρῆν ὁμιλῶν,⁴ οὓς τέ μ' οὐκ ἔδει κτανῶν.⁵

Christ Church, Oxford

C. W. MACLEOD†

³ 'Since he was foredoomed to the acts which the following clauses express' (Jebb).

⁴ cf. νύμφας γυναῖκας μητέρας τε and πατέρας ἀδελφούς.

⁵ cf. παῖδας αἷμ' ἐμφύλιον.

RITUALISTIC FORMULAE IN GREEK DRAMATIC TEXTS

Ritualistic formulae and acts pervade the political, legal, societal and religious life of the ancient world. In many instances there are striking similarities between the formulae of the Greco-Roman world and those of the Near East. Often illumination exists from one to the other.¹ Here I wish to notice a few passages in Greek drama where I think such illumination is possible.

First, from Sophocles' *Electra*. Clytemnestra, after a disturbing dream, declares (644 ff.):

ἂ γὰρ προσεῖδον νυκτὶ τῇδε φάσματα
δισσῶν ὀνείρων, ταῦτά μοι, Λύκει' ἀναξ,
εἰ μὲν πέφηνεν ἐσθλά, δὸς τελεσφόρα,
εἰ δ' ἐχθρά, τοῖς ἐχθροῖσιν ἐμπαλιν μέθες.

A similar passage occurs at Aeschylus *Persae* 217–19, where the chorus, in dialogue with Atossa, who has had a disturbing dream, says:

εἴ τι φλαῦρον εἶδες, αἰτοῦ τῶνδ' ἀποτροπὴν τελεῖν,
τὰ δ' ἀγάθ' ἐκτελῇ γενέσθαι σοί τε καὶ τέκνοις σέβειν
καὶ πόλει φίλοις τε πᾶσι.

The silence of the commentators suggests that readers of these plays assume that the sentiments here expressed are reasonable *ad hoc* inventions of the playwrights. I think not. Rather, I suspect that we have here ritualistic formulae that were to be recited after a dream that might appear ill omened. We have several clear examples of such formulae in Near-Eastern texts. One occurs in the Talmud:² 'Oh Lord... I have dreamed a dream and I do not know what it is. Whether I have dreamt about myself or my friends have dreamt about me or I about others, if they are good dreams then make them strong and confirm them... But if they need healing then heal them... Turn

¹ For instructive examples see the articles by M. Weinfeld at *JAOS* 93 (1973), 190–9 and *Ugarit Forschungen* 8 (1976), 379–414.

² Bab. Tal. Ber. 55b.

all my dreams to my good.' Another is in the Assyrian Dream-Book:³ (addressed to the god Nusku) 'This dream which during the first or the middle or the last watch of the night was brought to me and which you know but I do not know – if (its content predicts something) pleasant, may its pleasantness not escape me – if (it predicts something) evil, may its evil not catch me – (but) verily (this dream) be not mine!' A third occurs in an Akkadian prayer-text:⁴ 'May my dreams be good! Turn the dream that I have seen to good.'

We may wonder whether the expression at [Moschus] *Megara* 122–5

τοῖα, φίλη, μοι ὄνειρα διὰ φρένας ἐπτοίησαν
παννυχίῃ· τὰ δὲ πάντα πρὸς Εὐρυσθήα τρέποιτο
οἴκου ἀφ' ἡμετέροιο, γένοιτο δὲ μάντις ἐκείνῳ
θυμὸς ἐμός, μηδ' ἄλλο παρὲκ τελέσειέ τι δαίμων.

is a vestige of the ritualistic formula or simply a rather natural wish. The same holds true for Moschus *Europa* 27,

ἀλλά μοι εἰς ἀγαθὸν μάκαρες κρήνειαν ὄνειρον.

A second text from Sophocles. Oedipus calls upon the citizens of Thebes to identify the murderer of Laius if they know him, and he pronounces a stern curse against the unknown killer. The chorus answers (*O.T.* 276–8):

ὥσπερ μ' ἀραῖον εἶλες, ὦδ', ἄναξ, ἐρῶ.
οὐτ' ἔκτανον γὰρ οὔτε τὸν κτανόντ' ἔχω
δεῖξαι.

Sophoclean invention? Perhaps. Yet I suspect that we have here another ritualistic pronouncement, namely a declaration by the representatives of the entire community (which in some sense the chorus is), in the event of a murder in which the killer is unknown and has not been discovered, that they neither committed the act nor know who the criminal is – a declaration which presumably contributes something towards relieving the community of the guilt and pollution which cleave to it. The scenario is clear-cut in Deuteronomy chapter 21: 'When a dead body is found lying in open country . . . and it is not known who struck the blow . . . all the elders of the town . . . shall solemnly declare: "Our hands did not shed this blood nor did we witness the bloodshed." ' (verses 1, 6–7). Similarly, an Akkadian treaty⁵ requires that in the case of a murder where the killer is not apprehended, the people of the relevant city must take an oath, 'we do not know who the murderers are'.⁶

University of Illinois, Urbana

HOWARD JACOBSON

³ A. L. Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* (Philadelphia, 1956), p. 298.

⁴ E. Ebeling, *Die Akkadische Gebetsserie 'Handerhebung'* (Berlin, 1953), p. 49, lines 115–16.

⁵ J. Nougayrol, *Le Palais Royal d'Ugarit*, vol. 4 (1956), 17, 146, 22–3.

⁶ I am indebted to Professors Abraham Wasserstein and Moshe Weinfeld for their helpful comments. In particular, I owe Professor Weinfeld the references found in notes 4 and 5. I am also grateful to the journal's referee for helpful criticisms.