AESCHYLUS, *AGAMEMNON* 1285–1289

τί δῆτ' ἐγὼ κάτοικτος ὧδ' ἀναστένω;
ἐπεὶ τὸ πρῶτον εἶδον Ἰλίου πόλιν
πράξασαν ὡς ἔπραξεν, οἳ δ' εἷλον πόλιν
οὕτως ἀπαλλάσσουσιν ἐν θεῶν κρίσει.
ἰοῦσα πράξω· τλήσομαι τὸ κατθανεῖν.

After these words begins Cassandra's long, halting movement into the house and towards her death.[1]

Line 1289, untouched in most of the older texts, has not fared well at the hands of the chief modern editors. Fraenkel obelizes πράξω, and Page emends it to ἀπάρξω. The meaning of πράξω was, however, more than adequately illustrated by Wilamowitz on *Heracles* 323 (see also Eur. *Cyc.* 616–18: ἴτω...πρασσέτω...ἐξελέτω). It is the first-person counterpart to a well-attested use of the imperative πρᾶσσε in the sense 'go on, do it!' Sometimes this precedes another imperative, as in *Ag.* 1669 πρᾶσσε, πιαίνου...; but this need not be so: see e.g. *Il.* 16. 443 = 22. 181 ἔρδ'· ἀτὰρ οὔ τοι πάντες ἐπαινέομεν θεοὶ ἄλλοι. And that this use of πράσσειν is not confined to the imperative is clear from *Il.* 18. 357 (adduced by Grooneboom) ἔπρηξας καὶ ἔπειτα... ('you did it in the end').

Now Paley was right to observe that πράξω in 1289 is 'related' to πράξασαν ὡς ἔπραξεν in 1287, though he was wrong to conclude that it therefore had to be used in the same way: in 1287 the verb has its passive sense ('fare'), whereas in 1289 it is resoundingly active: 'I will go and do it'. The suspicion that this is a purposeful play on words[2] is confirmed when we see with Bothe (quoted by Fraenkel) that πράξω is pointedly followed by τλήσομαι;[3] in fact, τλήσομαι enlarges on πράξω, very much as a second imperative sometimes does on πρᾶσσε; but here Aeschylus, in the manner of poets, gives depth and force to a common turn of phrase by setting the two verbs in significant contrast. The point is that Cassandra, when most a sufferer, is also a doer. Others too in the *Oresteia* are both doers and sufferers: they pay by their deaths for their actions. Thus Clytemnestra says of Agamemnon (*Ag.* 1527) ἄξια δράσας, ἄξια πάσχων, or Orestes to his mother (*Cho.* 930) ἔκανες ὃν οὐ χρῆν, καὶ τὸ μὴ χρεὼν πάθε: the law is παθεῖν τὸν ἔρξαντα (*Ag.* 1564) or δράσαντι παθεῖν (*Cho.* 313); and Cassandra has just described how this law applies to Troy and its conquerors (1286–8; cf. 532 ff.). But Cassandra's death is not a retribution unwittingly or unwillingly undergone; she chooses consciously, but as an innocent person, her destiny, and so she not only suffers, but 'endures' (τλήσομαι). In this as in other ways, the scene which leads to her death is in sharp and deliberate contrast to the scene which leads to Agamemnon's. He, her conqueror, is overcome[4] in words before he is killed, and thus remains proud and ignorant to the end: she, the captive, resists Clytemnestra's attempts at persuasion and when she goes to be killed goes in foreknowledge and despair.[5]

[1] For an excellent account of this see O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (1977), pp. 317–22.

[2] For examples of this kind of word-play see *PCPS* 205 (1979), 56 n. 30. In the *Agamemnon*, note 1630–2 ἦγε ('he led after him, captivated') ...ἄξῃ ('you will be led away captive').

[3] For oxymoron and related phenomena in early Greek literature see D. Fehling, *Die Wiederholungsfiguren und ihr Gebrauch bei den Griechen vor Gorgias* (1969), pp. 286–93, 301 f., 304.

[4] Cf. Taplin, op. cit. pp. 312 f.

[5] Cf. K. Reinhardt, *Aischylos als Regisseur und Theologe* (1949), pp. 97–105; Taplin, op. cit. pp. 321 f. For another aspect of this contrast see *Maia* 27 (1975), 202 f. I should have noted there that both Agamemnon and Cassandra visibly trample; cf. Wilamowitz on 1267.

One might say that Cassandra – the woman and the slave – is closest of all the characters in the *Oresteia* to a Homeric hero. The stuff of epic is what the Achaeans did and suffered (or 'endured');[6] and in the *Iliad* the heroes fight and act in the knowledge that death is always imminent.[7] So it is not surprising that Cassandra's words in *Ag.* 1289 find a striking parallel in the mouth of a heroic figure from later Greece, Cleomenes III of Sparta: see Plutarch, *Vit. Cleom.* 31. 10 δεῖ γὰρ τὸν αὐθαίρετον θάνατον οὐ φυγὴν εἶναι πράξεων, ἀλλὰ πρᾶξιν.[8]

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⁶ *Od.* 8. 490; cf. 4. 242. For Iliadic heroes as sufferers or endurers see also *Il.* 3. 157; 11. 317; 14. 85–7; 23. 607; 24. 505; *Od.* 3. 104.

⁷ E.g. *Il.* 6. 486–9; 12. 322–8; 14. 83–7.

⁸ Cleomenes is here refusing to commit suicide; two or three years later he did so, again with words of action in his mouth: Plut. *Cleom.* 37. 12 παρεκάλεσε πάντας ἀξίως αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν πεπραγμένων τελευτᾶν.

SOPHOCLES, *OEDIPUS TYRANNUS* 1403–8[1]

ὦ γάμοι γάμοι,
ἐφύσαθ' ἡμᾶς, καὶ φυτεύσαντες πάλιν
ἀνεῖτε ταὐτὸν σπέρμα, κἀπεδείξατε
πατέρας, ἀδελφούς, παῖδας, αἷμ' ἐμφύλιον,
νύμφας γυναῖκας μητέρας τε, χὠπόσα
αἴσχιστ' ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ἔργα γίγνεται.

After consulting the commentaries and the fine remarks of 'Longinus' (23. 3) on this passage, a reader may still reasonably feel dissatisfied. Lines 1405–7 are normally taken to mean 'you have shown fathers, brothers, sons and brides, wives, mothers to be kindred blood'; for the position of αἷμ' ἐμφύλιον Schneidewin–Nauck compare *Od.* 4. 229–30:

Αἰγυπτίη, τῇ πλεῖστα φέρει ζείδωρος ἄρουρα
φάρμακα, πολλὰ μὲν ἐσθλὰ μεμειγμένα, πολλὰ δὲ λυγρά.

But this is unhappy. The μέν . . . δέ . . . in the *Odyssey* passage make clear what remains unclear here, which words form the predicate; and it detracts from the unnatural horror that sons (παῖδας) and mothers (μητέρας) naturally share the same blood. Further, when we consider that 'murder of kindred' was a great part of Oedipus' destiny, and that that is what αἷμ' ἐμφύλιον regularly means, it is fair to agree with Campbell that the unparalleled sense 'kindred blood' should not be given to these words.

The humble τε may help towards a better construction of the phrase. In a word-pattern of the form *x y z* τε and in a phrase like this, it is natural to take *x* as the subject and *y z* τε as the predicate; for a mere series of three words would normally take the form *x y z* or *x* (τε) *y* τε *z* τε. If, then, γυναῖκας μητέρας τε is predicate to νύμφας,[2] it follows that the lines should be punctuated thus:

. . .κἀπεδείξατε
πατέρας ἀδελφούς, παῖδας αἷμ' ἐμφύλιον,
νύμφας γυναῖκας μητέρας τε, χὠποσα . . .

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¹ I am very grateful to Professor Hugh Lloyd-Jones and Dr R. C. T. Parker for valuable discussion of this problem. The most helpful exposition of the problems is in Kamerbeek's commentary.

² So Mazon and Longo; but their treatment of line 1406 founders on the meaning of αἷμ' ἐμφύλιον. Campbell's own translation, however, will not do either (' . . .dire confusion | Of father, brother, son, bride, mother, wife, | Murder of parents and all shames that are'), because the words 'dire confusion' correspond to nothing in the Greek.