Tournefort, an eighteenth-century traveller, noted: 'comme la mer était grosse, nous relâchâmes [de Stenosa à Amorgos] à Nicouria, roche escarpée à un mille d'Amorgos. Nicouria est un bloc de marbre au milieu de la mer peu élevé, mais d'environ cinq milles de tour, sur lequel on ne voit que des chèvres assez maigres et des perdrix rouges d'une beauté surprenante.' In the nineteenth century, Hoskyn notes: 'The island Avthokea...is rocky and barren, and affords pasturage for a few goats. To the S.E. of it are several rocky islands called Kazil Ada; a few goats are fed on the largest' and (after Tersana) 'several small islands and rocks, known to the Greeks as Stavro Nisia, or the Cross Islands. N. of this is Agio Kisiachi. All these are of serpentine, and afford pasture for a few goats.' In antiquity, as Robert notes, we have at least two Greek islands called Polyaegos, and the inscription of Heraclia. Regarding the name of Aegina and similar names, Chantraine (*DEG* s.v. $\alpha\check{\iota}\xi$) also comments that 'ils doivent avoir été rattachés à $\alpha\check{\iota}\xi$ par étymologie populaire'. Robert restricted himself to the Greek world, but one of the Balearic Islands, the present Cabrera, was called 'Capraria' by the Romans – surely a 'goat island'. Another Capraria, the present Capraja, was located in the Tyrrhenian Sea, but the best known Roman 'goat island' is clearly Capri.[7] We can now also make a small correction to Ruijgh's analysis of δέ τε in line 124. The combination does not so much concern 'un fait valable pour tout pays inculte' but for 'toute île inculte'.[8] Homer's description of 'goat island', we may conclude, was based on his knowledge of similar goat islands in the Greek world.

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now also the interesting study by D. J. Georgacas, 'The $\alpha\check{\iota}\gamma\alpha\gamma\rho\sigma$: A study in Greek etymology', in K. J. Rigsby (ed.), *Studies presented to Sterling Dow* = Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Monograph 10 (Durham, 1984), 101–20.
  [7] For all references see *ThLL Onomasticon* II s.v. *Capraria.*
  [8] C. J. Ruijgh, *Autour de 'τε epique'* (Amsterdam, 1971), 688.

DARKNESS FROM LIGHT:
THE BEACON FIRE IN THE *AGAMEMNON*

The fire beacon in the opening scenes of the *Agamemnon* commands attention and creates the positive image of light from darkness. In the immediate context the light of the beacon relieves the watchman of his toil and brings joy to Argos. The image, however, is not totally positive. The fire signal announces both the fall of Troy and the return of Agamemnon to Clytemnestra. The negative aspect, furthermore, is emphasised at the opening – the watchman's joy at seeing the beacon (lines 22ff.) gives way at line 36 to foreboding (τὰ δ' ἄλλα σιγῶ).[1] For the original audience of 458 B.C. I suggest that this fire beacon proclaiming victory must have conveyed other negative overtones.[2] In brief, it will have recalled to them vividly the signals used by the Persian commanders during the great invasion of 480 to announce Athens' capture to an expectant Persian court.

  [1] On the watchman and the opening in general, see J. T. Sheppard, 'The prelude of the *Agamemnon*', *CR* 36 (1922), 5–8; E. T. Owen, *The Harmony of Aeschylus* (Toronto, 1952), 62–9; E. Fraenkel, *Der Agamemnon des Aeschylus, Ein Vortrag. Kleine Beiträge zur Klassischen Philologie* (Rome, 1964), 329–32; J. W. Vaughn, 'The watchman of the *Agamemnon*', *CJ* 71 (1976), 335–8.
  [2] See T. N. Gantz, 'The fires of the *Oresteia*', *JHS* 97 (1977), 28–38, who examines the fire imagery in the trilogy and finds that 'fire repeatedly serves to symbolize the destructive aspects of vengeance' (28).

According to Herodotos, the Persian leaders sent three messages back to Persia during the campaign. Two, the first and the third, signalled the taking of Athens. To send the first message, Xerxes himself employed the Persian prototype of the pony express. After seizing Athens and burning the Acropolis, he dispatched a rider to Susa (Herodotos 8.53–4).

ἐπεὶ δέ σφι πάντες κατέστρωντο, τὸ ἱρὸν συλήσαντες ἐνέπρησαν πᾶσαν τὴν ἀκρόπολιν. σχὼν δὲ παντελέως τὰς ᾿Αθήνας Ξέρξης ἀπέπεμψε ἐς Σοῦσα ἄγγελον ἱππέα ᾿Αρταβάνῳ ἀγγελέοντα τὴν παρεοῦσάν σφι εὐπρηξίην.

In mentioning a second (less positive) message sent by Xerxes after Salamis, Herodotos takes time at book 8.98 to describe in admiring terms this Persian messenger system. The passage is worth quoting in full in the Rawlinson translation:

Nothing mortal travels so fast as these Persian messengers. The entire plan is a Persian invention; and this is the method of it. Along the whole line of road there are men (they say) stationed with horses, in number equal to the number of days which the journey takes, allowing a man and horse to each day; and these men will not be hindered from accomplishing at their best speed the distance which they have to go, either by snow, or rain, or heat, or by the darkness of night. The first rider delivers his dispatch to the second, and the second passes it to the third; and so it is borne from hand to hand along the whole line, like the light in the torch race, which the Greeks celebrate to Vulcan. The Persians give the riding post in this manner the name of 'Angarum' [τοῦτο τὸ δράμημα τῶν ἵππων καλέουσι Πέρσαι ἀγγαρήιον].

Lastly, Mardonios probably employed an actual fire beacon to announce to Xerxes in Sardis the taking and burning of Athens for the second time.[3] ὁ δὲ [Mardonios] οὐκ ἐπείθετο ἀλλά οἱ δεινός τις ἐνέστακτο ἵμερος τὰς ᾿Αθήνας δεύτερα ἐλεῖν, ἅμα μὲν ὑπ᾿ ἀγνωμοσύνης, ἅμα δὲ πυρσοῖσι διὰ νήσων ἐδόκεε Βασιλέι δηλώσειν ἐόντι ἐν Σάρδισι ὅτι ἔχοι ᾿Αθήνας (Herodotos 9.3.1).[4] These then, as presented by Herodotos, were the messages dispatched from Athens to Persia during the invasion.

Rawlinson comments as follows on Mardonios' fire signal:

Mardonios, apparently, must himself have organised the telegraphic communication here spoken of, which, in that case, can scarcely have passed through the Cyclades, since, after Salamis, the Greeks were the masters of the sea. I am inclined to believe that the real line of communication passed along the European coast to Athos, and thence by Lemnos to Asia – the line described in reverse order by Aeschylus (*Agam.* 272–290) – who may have taken his idea from the fact here noted, which would have come in part under his own observation.[5]

He adds no more to this provocative suggestion. With the exception of N. Wecklein and G. Thomson, neither of whom does more than mention the parallel in passing,[6] commentators of Aeschylus do not connect the historical beacon of Mardonios with the fire beacon at the opening of the *Agamemnon*; yet the similarities are unmistakable. Whether Rawlinson's assessment of the historical situation and the precise route is correct or not, the distance between the termini and the routes taken are nearly identical, except in opposite directions;[7] the purpose of the signal in each case is also

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[3] For the burning and destruction of the city by Mardonios, see Herodotos 9.13.2.

[4] Herodotos merely records Mardonios' intention to employ a fire beacon. Whether or not he actually did makes little difference; his intent to do so was well enough known for Herodotos writing some 35 years later to deem it worthy to record as a motive for taking Athens. I suppose the fire beacon was indeed sent; but, if not, the notoriety of Mardonios' plan will have been sufficient for the playwright to make use of it.

[5] G. Rawlinson, *History of Herodotos* (London, 1880), iv. 373 n. 5.

[6] See N. Wecklein, *Äschylus Orestie* (Leipzig, 1888) on line 293 (= 281 in the *OCT*) and G. Thomson, *The Oresteia* (Amsterdam, 1966) on line 282.

[7] For the route of the beacon as described by Aeschylus, see J. H. Quincey, 'The beacon-sites in the *Agamemnon*', *JHS* 83 (1963), 118–32. Quincey refers to the passage in which Herodotos

the same, to announce the capture of a great city. Apart from Mardonios' beacon, we know of no other comparably grandiose set of signal fires in the Greek world and certainly none so proximate to the date of the *Agamemnon*.[8] It is inconceivable, therefore, that the beacon in the *Agamemnon*, a literary construct, could do anything other than recall the actual series of signal fires used by Mardonios in 479.

A small bit of verbal evidence guarantees this interpretation. When Aeschylus comes to describe the beacon fire, he uses the adjective ἄγγαρος (line 282) to characterise it. The word is an emendation, but a certain one. It is Persian, derived from the same stem as the word for pony express preserved by Herodotos in the passage at 8.98 quoted above. The word appears in the second line of Clytemnestra's great beacon speech[9] and introduces her description of the fire relays. It is an arresting metaphor and emphatic by position. Above all else, it re-emphasises the Persian nature of the beacon.[10]

The opening image of the play, then, the light of the beacon announcing Agamemnon's capture of Troy, perforce also recalls the wanton destruction of Athens by the Persians. Aeschylus carefully underlines the similarity: just as in historical fact the Persians had burned and pillaged the holy shrines of Athens, so, we soon learn, Agamemnon and his troops have treated the holy places of Troy (lines 524–8).[11] Why has Aeschylus developed the negative side of the image in this way? Surely one of his purposes is to prepare his audience for Agamemnon's brief, but all-important, appearance in the play. He is alive on stage for slightly less than two hundred lines (789 to approximately 972) and speaks 82 lines. The beacon and the Persian associations naturally surrounding it, which are carefully reinforced by the playwright,

mentions the beacon of Mardonios (p. 126) but does not draw, or imply, any parallel. For a sometimes intriguing, but extreme, discussion of Clytemnestra's language see P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, 'Clytemnestra's beacon speech', *PP* 28 (1973), 445–52.

[8] Relays of signal beacons covering great distances were, in fact, a feature of the Persian empire at its height; there was a network of fire signals connecting the King at Susa or Ecbatana with the most remote areas of the empire ([Aristotle] *De Mundo* 398a31–2). In the Greek world fire signals covering relatively short distances were common enough (Thucydides 2.94; 3.22.8, 80.2; 8.102; cf. Aristophanes, *Birds* 1161). These were, so far as we know, simple signals of the 'one if by land, two if by sea' variety. Polybius describes (10.43–7) with evident pride a signalling system with torches which he developed for sending complex messages, and comments (10.43.5) that fire beacons of former times were of little practical use for anything other than a simple signal.

[9] Furthermore, several of the place names in the speech (lines 281–316), most notably Ἀθῷον αἶπος (line 285) and πεδίον Ἀσωποῦ (i.e. Plataea, line 297), seem designed to evoke memories of the Persian invasion. Quincey has seen this and remarked (op. cit. 122) '...Aeschylus' choice of sites may reflect no humdrum routine with ruler and map but certain niceties of history and myth which he did not need to make explicit'.

[10] Though it is the subject of another (larger) study, it is at least worth noting that Clytemnestra becomes implicated in the Persian connotations of the beacon by this usage and by her claim in this speech that the beacon is her own. To what extent, if at all, her claim is true is moot; Agamemnon has actually sent the signal. At the end of her speech (lines 312–14) Clytemnestra exchanges the Persian pony express metaphor, which has been the controlling metaphor of the speech, for the purely Hellenic image of the torch race, as though trying to compensate. Here, as elsewhere, she attempts (not wholly successfully) to impose a positive note on a negative situation.

[11] E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus, Agamemnon* (Oxford, 1962), ii. 266–7, rejects line 527 as an interpolation from *Persians* line 811. J. D. Denniston and D. Page, *Aeschylus, Agamemnon* (Oxford, 1960), 120–1, rightly defend the line and stress its importance for answering the concern raised by the Queen in lines 338–9 about the Greek treatment of the Trojan gods and sanctuaries. H. Lloyd-Jones, *Agamemnon by Aeschylus* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970), 46, similarly comments '...it is clear from Clytemnestra's speech at 320f. that she is hoping that the victorious Greeks may provoke divine anger, and that this hope is likely to be fulfilled. The line is very hard to remove from its context and is doubtless genuine.'

do much to characterise Agamemnon before he actually appears. He is, in some sense, an oriental despot – the sort of man who will, when the time comes, and not merely out of weariness, tread on the crimson fabric.[12]

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[12] See also K. J. Dover's article, 'I tessuti rossi dell' *Agamennone*', *Dioniso* 48 (1977), 55–69, especially 63–6. He suggests that Clytemnestra's invitation to walk on the crimson fabric may be better appreciated if one understands Aeschylus to intend the Spartan King Pausanias and his fate as a parallel for Agamemnon. I am indebted to the editors for calling this reference to my attention.

A NOTE ON EURIPIDES, *MEDEA* 12

Euripides, *Medea* 11–13 (Diggle's Oxford text):

ἁνδάνουσα μὲν
†φυγῇ πολιτῶν† ὧν ἀφίκετο χθόνα
αὐτῷ τε πάντα ξυμφέρουσ' Ἰάσονι.

12 πολιτῶν codd. et Σᵇᵛ; πολίταις (Bᵍˡ) V³, sicut coni. Barnes　　　13 αὐτῷ Sakorraphos; αὐτή codd. et gE et Stob. 4.23.30

In his recent discussion of this passage (*CQ* 34 [1984], 50–1), Diggle has convincingly argued for πολίταις and αὐτῷ, the latter of which he places in his new Oxford text, but recognises that φυγῇ remains highly problematic (51): 'The truth, I think, is still to seek'. It is to this last difficulty that I should like to suggest a solution.

The problems of φυγῇ are syntactical, as Diggle clearly demonstrates (51): 'With which verb (ἁνδάνουσα or ἀφίκετο) is φυγῇ to be constructed?' Of these ἁνδάνουσα is more likely for position, ἀφίκετο for sense; but the former construction produces an obscurity, the latter an unacceptable hyperbaton. Another complicating element is the juxtaposition φυγῇ πολιτῶν: it is clearly significant, and by its intervention appears to prevent taking φυγῇ as ἀπὸ κοινοῦ with both verbs, the third possible construction.

As a solution I should like to revive a forgotten conjecture of Pierson's, made in his *Verisimilia* (1752). His φυγὰς πολίταις appears both to solve all the syntactical problems and to give appropriate point to the juxtaposition of 'exile' and 'citizen'. φυγάς would then go with ἁνδάνουσα and bear a concessive sense: 'pleasing, though an exile, the citizens to whose land she came', a nuance found already in Wecklein's paraphrase of his text φυγῇ πολιτῶν: 'Sie gefällt denen, in deren Land sie gekommen ist, obwohl sie die Bürgerschaft als eine fremde, landesflüchtige Person gegenübersteht'. This contrast between citizen and exile and the necessity for the latter to please the former are naturally important themes in the dramatic situation of the *Medea* – cf. Medea's words at 222 χρὴ δὲ ξένον μὲν κάρτα προσχωρεῖν πόλει, with Page's note. The close binding of φυγὰς πολίταις is an antithetical juxtaposition of a type found elsewhere in Euripides – cf. *Electra* 795 ξένους ἀστοῖσι, *Heracles* 199 τυφλοῖς ὁρῶντας, *Orestes* 8 θεοῖς ἄνθρωπος, and for the general principle see Fraenkel on Aeschylus, *Ag.* 320.[1]

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