

different ways, but the passage which throws most light on the problem we are discussing is a famous passage of the Eighth Pythian Ode (92f.):

ἐν δ' ὀλίγῳ βροτῶν  
τὸ τερπνὸν αὖξεται· οὕτω δὲ καὶ πίτνει χαμαί,  
ἀποτρόπῳ γινώμαι ἐσεῖσμένον.

How did the corruption come about? One cannot hope to know for certain, but I suspect that the scribe who was copying the poem by a common error repeated the two last letters of the word **ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΙΣ**, and that a later reader, confronted with the unintelligible **ICAE** and assuming that some form of the word **ἵκος** was intended substituted that form of the word which would cohere with **τερπνόν**, the subject of the sentence. One is reminded of *Nem.* 3.44–5 **χερὶ θαμινὰ | βραχυσίδαρον ἄκοντα πάλλων ἵκα τ' ἀνέμοις**, although in that passage there is no dittography; the manuscripts have **ἵκον** (*sic*), but Moschopoulos' conjecture **ἵκα**... is rightly accepted by modern editors. Professor D. E. Gerber draws my attention to *O.* 9.16–17, where **ἀρεταῖσι** *cūn* gave rise to the variant **ἀρεταῖς ἵκον** (*sic*).

Pindar prefers the form **αἰεί**, but has **ἀεί** four times (*N.* 8.22; *I.* 3.13; *Pa.* 2.52; *Pa.* 13a, 1). Hermann's **ἀέ** at *P.* 9.88 is accepted by modern editors, except Turyn; on this form, see Schroeder (1900) ad loc. and B. Forsmann, *Untersuchungen zur Sprache Pindars* (1966), p. 122 n. 5. So it is possible that the poet wrote **ἀέν**, but the correption **ἀεί** is permissible. Although epic correption is avoided in the epitrites of Pindar's dactylo-epitrite, it occurs at all possible places in the hemiepes (see Maas, *Greek Metre* 129 and Braswell on *P.* 4.5 (c)).

If this conjecture is accepted, the 'opaque gnome' serves admirably as a transition from the myth to the praise of Melesias. The walls of Troy did not last for ever; neither did the moment of Aiaikos' special felicity; and, since all human pleasure is evanescent, the praise of Melesias should excite no envy.

Christ Church, Oxford

HUGH LLOYD-JONES

### CLYTEMNESTRA'S WEAPON YET ONCE MORE\*

A good story bears retelling many times, and an appreciative audience will delight in debating its finer points; each participant is – of course – always convinced that only his memory, his understanding, of what the author said is the correct one.

The *Oresteia* is no exception. In a recent number of *CQ* Malcolm Davies reopened the question, which we all thought had been answered once and for all by Fraenkel, of just what weapon it was that Clytemnestra used to kill her husband in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* – axe or sword.<sup>1</sup> He lists some of the names that have been drawn up on either side of the argument, and is kind enough to mention the debates that he and I have had on the topic. Yet we still stand on opposite sides. He believes she used an axe, I, a confirmed Fraenkelian, am still convinced it was a sword.<sup>2</sup> Alan Sommerstein

\* My warm thanks to my colleague Dr D. M. Bain and to Professor Alan Sommerstein for reading through a draft of this paper and for saving me from some crucial omissions. The mistakes that may remain are of course my own.

<sup>1</sup> Malcolm Davies, 'Aeschylus' Clytemnestra; Sword or Axe?', *CQ* 37 (1987), 65–71 (hereafter 'Davies'); E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus Agamemnon* (Oxford, 1950), 3, Appendix B, pp. 806–9.

<sup>2</sup> Most of the arguments are set out in chapter 8 of my book *The Oresteia: Iconographic and Narrative Tradition* (Aris and Phillips, Warminster and Bolchazy-Carducci, Chicago, 1985) (hereafter 'Prag'), especially pp. 82–3; but since it was all but strangled at birth by the publishers, and is now only available in a limited number of copies, there may be some justification for rehearsing again something of what I said there.

has countered the literary arguments in Davies' thesis in *CQ* 39 (1989), 296–301, but there remain some points that should be answered.

It is always tempting to use the iconographic evidence to throw light on a literary problem when the two traditions run close, as they do here, but it is a tricky course to follow, particularly with a man like Aeschylus, who will play on his audience's familiarity with a pictorial tradition in order to give an unexpected jolt to a story as he unfolds it. In the case of the *Oresteia*, it is important to separate the literary tradition of Homer, Stesichorus and Aeschylus from the iconographic one; but it is just as important to keep the ideas of the archaic coroplasts of Crete and the bronze-workers of the northern Peloponnese apart from the traditions of the red-figure vase-painters of Athens. There was indeed an archaic concept of Clytemnestra wielding a sword, which survives in the terracotta plaques from Gortyn and the bronze shield-bands from Olympia and Aegina,<sup>3</sup> but there follows a leap of two generations, into a different artistic world, before the first and only red-figure illustration of the Death of Agamemnon, the Boston krater by the Dokimasia Painter.<sup>4</sup>

First, the literary tradition. I have analysed this in my book, and Davies has summarized the relevant passages with admirable clarity. He rightly doubts the relevance of Homer's account to a discussion of the detail of Aeschylus' treatment, for each author has a different purpose. Besides, Homer has two different versions: in the 'Telemachy' Aegisthus does the murder alone, and the emphasis is on the roles of father and son; in the other version Aegisthus and Clytemnestra are both involved, for Homer is highlighting the part played by Penelope.<sup>5</sup> In the former the murder weapon is never mentioned, unless one feels it necessary to draw a detailed comparison from the simile of Agamemnon killed by Aegisthus after the feast 'as one might slaughter an ox at the manger'.<sup>6</sup> The crucial passage in the other account, in the *Nekyia*, is a difficult one to interpret in detail; but it is surely perverse to think that in the absence of any specific words to the contrary the poet had anything other than a sword in mind when he had Agamemnon describe himself dying with the words

αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ ποτὶ γαίῃ χεῖρας αἰείρων  
βάλλον ἀποθνῆσκων περὶ φασγάνῳ.<sup>7</sup>

Ten lines earlier the ox-at-the-manger simile has reappeared. However, as Davies rightly points out, Agamemnon's killer is still Aegisthus; Clytemnestra despatches Cassandra, with an unspecified weapon. So we are a long way from the horror of

<sup>3</sup> Prag, pp. 1–2, 134, nos A1–2, pl. 1 = terracotta plaques from Gortyn, Heraklion Museum 11152 and unnumbered; *ibid.* pp. 2–3, 134 no. A3, pl. 2a = shield-band from Olympia, Olympia Museum B1654, also Davies, p. 69; Prag, pp. 2–3, 134 no. A4, pl. 2b–c = shield-band from Aegina, Aegina Museum I 61. The first piece perhaps more accessibly illustrated in *LIMC* i.271, pl. 202, the last two in Emily T. Vermeule, 'The Boston Oresteia Krater', *AJA* 70 (1966), pl. 7 figs. 20a–b. A third plaque, apparently from the same mould as the other two (and showing the same 'double-stamping', suggesting the mould itself had slipped in manufacture, rather than the plaques as had previously been thought) is now in Würzburg: E. Simon (ed.), *Die Sammlung Kiseleff im Martin-von-Wagner-Museum*... ii (Mainz, 1989), pp. 20–1, no. 28, pl. 11 (no. K1734) (my thanks to *CQ*'s anonymous referee for drawing my attention to this piece).

<sup>4</sup> Boston MFA 63.1246; Prag, pp. 3–4, 135, no. A6, pls. 3–4; Vermeule (art cit. n. 3), pls. 1–4.

<sup>5</sup> I discuss this fully in Prag, pp. 68–73; see now also e.g. A. F. Garvie, *Aeschylus' Choephoroi* (Oxford, 1986/1988), pp. ix ff. On the literary tradition as a whole, Prag, ch. 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Od.* 4.535.

<sup>7</sup> *Od.* 11.423–4. See also Davies, pp. 66–7 with n. 17 for a comprehensive list of references – and for another view.

Aeschylus' version where Agamemnon is murdered by his wife herself, not by her lover.

The next literary version to consider should be that of Stesichorus, were there really enough of Stesichorus' *Oresteia* surviving to provide substantive evidence of the weapon he conceived Clytemnestra as using: but there is nothing in the small fragment of Stesichorus' text where Clytemnestra sees a snake in her dreams that describes the method of its death: all Stesichorus says is that the snake came with its head covered in blood, and from it appeared a king of the line of Pleisthenes (Fr. 219P). While one should not use the magnificent metope from Foce del Sele that shows a man fighting off an enormous Fury-snake with a sword as an illustration of Stesichorus' poem (though it may give us some hints of the western tradition of the story), it will not do either to say that 'an axe delivers blows to the head, a sword blows to the body': neither the military historian, nor the anatomist studying the skulls of battle-victims could possibly support such a hypothesis.<sup>8</sup>

Maybe Pindar provides the key to the whole question: just as in the earlier accounts, it is the fact that a *woman* is doing the murders which is so horrible. The actual weapon hardly matters, and he glosses over it with the words 'grey bronze', *πολιῷ χαλκῷ*.<sup>9</sup> Fraenkel, Schefold and even the Scholiast take this to mean a sword, but that is not what Pindar says.

The pre-Aeschylean literary tradition, then, is vague about Clytemnestra's weapon; Homer at any rate is thinking of a sword, where he feels the need to be at all specific. This, after all, is the appropriate weapon for a premeditated murder.<sup>10</sup>

The artists had to be more precise, given the nature of their medium. On the five surviving occasions when the death of Agamemnon is shown in archaic art (n. 3), the weapon is always wielded by Clytemnestra and is always a sword. But these five pieces, three terracottas of the late seventh century and two bronze shield-bands of the sixth, are survivors of a slender iconographic tradition that evidently never established itself firmly, and did not find favour among the vase-painters. When the story reappears on one solitary occasion in fifth-century red-figure, on the Dokimasia Painter's krater in Boston of around 465 B.C. (see n. 4), the artist has to resort to an adaptation of the established red-figure iconography of the Death of Aegisthus, which is illustrated on the reverse of the vase: thus Clytemnestra, grasping an axe, falls into the role of supporting actor to the principal murderer, who is Aegisthus with his sword: they reflect exactly two of the three principals of the other side, the avenging warrior Orestes who naturally carries a sword, and Clytemnestra who has grabbed the first thing on which she can lay hands, the wood-axe, to try to deal with Orestes and save her lover.<sup>11</sup>

It is important to separate this classical vase with its axe-wielding Clytemnestra from the archaic pieces where she uses a sword: there is a gap of at least fifty years between the vases and the latest surviving archaic shield-relief, and the change suggests that the old iconography had been forgotten, or at least outmoded: we do not yet know what inspired the revival and the change, though Davies suggests

<sup>8</sup> So Davies, pp. 67–8, with references; *contra* e.g. Fraenkel, *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 809 n. 1; also Prag, pp. 44, 73–5, 143–4 no. E1, pl. 28b (more readily in P. Zancani-Montuoro and U. Zanolli-Bianco, *Heraion alla Foce del Sele* [Rome, 1951–4], 2 pls. xlvi, lxxxix).

<sup>9</sup> Pindar, *Pyth.* 11.20; Fraenkel, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 2, p. 809; K. Schefold, *Myth and Legend in Early Greek Art* (London, 1966), p. 94; Prag, p. 79.

<sup>10</sup> Prag, p. 82 for a discussion of the nuances.

<sup>11</sup> Prag, pp. 82, 88–90; Davies, pp. 73–4.

Stesichorus may have had something to do with it,<sup>12</sup> but in theory therefore the illustrations of the death of Agamemnon with which Aeschylus and even more important Aeschylus' audience were familiar all showed Clytemnestra with an axe. The single surviving vase cannot have been the only one to have been produced.<sup>13</sup> For the vase-painters it was important that there existed another story in which a man was done to death by women wielding a motley collection of 'weapons', including an axe – namely the Death of Orpheus; the Dokimasia Painter himself is known to have painted at least two versions.<sup>14</sup>

New in the Dokimasia Painter's version is the net in which Agamemnon is entangled, an element which previously we seemed only to know from Aeschylus, although there are some fundamental differences between the poet's and the vase-painter's use of the concept. But we cannot take the further step of saying that 'whenever bath and robe feature, there too the axe is found': the evidence is simply not there in the art and literature up to the time of Aeschylus.<sup>15</sup> They are only found on the Boston krater, and so far no convincing earlier source has been proposed in print. Besides, there are some crucial differences in the way Aeschylus and the Dokimasia Painter treat the story that must debar us from ever using the one to fill in the gaps in the other's rendering. I have treated them fully elsewhere, and they have been re-examined with great clarity by Garvie:<sup>16</sup> the important one here is that having perforce adapted the 'Death of Aegisthus' iconography to the Death of Agamemnon, the Dokimasia Painter has not only taken over the axe as Clytemnestra's (emergency) weapon, but he has given her the supporting role, secondary to Aegisthus. Aeschylus, by contrast, makes Clytemnestra the principal murderer, a radical change of which he makes much. It would be foolhardy to argue that because the Dokimasia Painter gives Clytemnestra an axe to use against Agamemnon, Aeschylus did so too. Just as in the iconographic tradition, so with Aeschylus it is important to distinguish passages that refer to Aegisthus' death, and Clytemnestra's resistance, from those relevant to the death of Agamemnon. Davies gives us an impressive reanalysis of the language of these three passages where the weapon used to kill Agamemnon is described with 'unambiguous explicitness' (Fraenkel's words), and finds them 'very ambiguous indeed' (*Ag.* 1262, 1527, *Cho.* 1011) but his arguments have now been countered in detail and as far as an archaeologist can tell convincingly so by Sommerstein.<sup>17</sup> Whichever way one chooses to interpret the actual language one must not overlook the point that it is not the actual killing of Agamemnon that is being described in these lines, but incidents connected with it in one way or another – Cassandra's vision of the murder to come, Clytemnestra's exultation over the corpses, Orestes and the slashed robe; I still find it significant that each time Aeschylus actually names the weapon as a sword: he was much too careful a wordsmith to overlook the subtle

<sup>12</sup> Davies, p. 68 with n. 33; cf. Prag, p. 81.

<sup>13</sup> Davies is correct in dismissing the Brygos Painter's cup Berlin F2301 (now lost) depicting Clytemnestra running towards a great door and grasping an axe from the 'Agamemnon' repertoire, and seeing it as an excerpt from the Death of Aegisthus: Davies, p. 69; Prag, pp. 19, 140 no. C17, pl. 11e.

<sup>14</sup> Lugano (Bolla collection); Zurich, University 3477; Prag, pp. 95–6, pl. 44b–d (stamnoi).

<sup>15</sup> For a fuller discussion, Prag, pp. 80–1 (also index s.v. 'net-cloak'); Davies, pp. 69–70.

<sup>16</sup> Especially, Prag, pp. 81–3; on Aeschylus and the overall iconographic tradition of the Oresteia, also pp. 47–57, 76, 79–81, 101, etc. Garvie, op. cit. (n. 5), pp. xxiii–xxiv.

<sup>17</sup> Davies, pp. 70–5; contrast Prag, p. 82 and now A. H. Sommerstein, 'Again Klytaimnestra's Weapon', *CQ* 39 (1989), 296–301.

change that this implied, from crisis weapon and panic to warrior's tool and premeditation. For this reason too the oft-quoted line *Cho.* 889,

δοίη τις ἀνδροκμήτα πέλεκυν ὡς τάχος

is not relevant to the discussion: there, as she realises that her lover is being murdered, Clytemnestra shouts for the first thing that could come to mind or to hand, the wood-axe from the kitchen that features in countless such scenes. This is not to attribute an 'uncharacteristic realism' to Aeschylus – just the opposite: it is the implement which the audience would expect to be used in such a crisis, and with which as it happened they were also familiar from pictures of the death of Aegisthus.<sup>18</sup>

It is an irony which Aeschylus himself would have relished that it is Cassandra who can give us the answer, could we but grasp it. As in most of the earlier poems, Aeschylus' references to the conventional weapon that Clytemnestra used against her husband are deliberately vague and low-key, and (whether the weapon is visible on stage or not) they are vague because it is not the most important point. Cassandra, who tells us only briefly but (I believe) most clearly that it is going to be a sword that kills Agamemnon,

ἐπεύχεται θήγουσα φωτὶ φάσγανον  
ἐμῆς ἀγωγῆς ἀντιτίσασθαι φόνον

(*Ag.* 1262–3), sees that what *is* horrible and *is* important is the death itself, and the fact that it will be done by a woman. While it is true that the lines come from Cassandra's vision, and are cast as a metaphor in a passage where metaphors abound, it is wilful to dismiss so explicit a reference to the weapon if Aeschylus is being as innovative as we suggest – here I part company with Sommerstein as well as with Davies.<sup>19</sup>

Yet I am relieved to find that Sommerstein allows the murder weapon to appear on stage, and does so with even greater conviction than Fraenkel.<sup>20</sup> The scene at *Ag.* 1391ff. where Clytemnestra confronts the chorus as she exults over the bodies of Cassandra and Agamemnon loses much of its power if we do not see the murderess in all her jealous frenzy with her weapon in her hand. As Clytemnestra describes her triumph in every detail we realise that Aeschylus has the edge over his predecessors: his Clytemnestra has the new device of the bath and the net-cloak in her armoury (and we are all agreed on the importance of the net-cloak); further, he can play on his audience's familiarity with the iconographic tradition of the Death of Aegisthus which led them – and the painters of the 'new version' of the Death of Agamemnon – to expect her to use an axe. Typically, he then takes advantage of this by adding another subtle twist to the story, and giving this unwomanly woman not the axe she might have seized in panic from the kitchen woodpile, but a warrior's sword.

Fraenkel, of course, realised all this.

*The Manchester Museum*

A. J. N. W. PRAG

<sup>18</sup> Prag, pp. 88–90; also Garvie, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 289–90 on *Cho.* 889. Davies, p. 74 n. 64, is absolutely right in adducing Tereus' pursuit of Procne and Itys with an axe as a further example.

<sup>19</sup> Sommerstein, *art. cit.* (n. 17), 296; Davies, pp. 71–2.

<sup>20</sup> *Art. cit.* (n. 17), 299–301. His comment (p. 299 n. 11) that even Fraenkel ignored the visual dimension and treated the final 350 lines of the play, from Agamemnon's murder on, as if it were the script of a radio play, seems very apt, and might be applied to other commentators too.