

## LINES FOR CLYTEMNESTRA (*AGAMEMNON* 489–502)

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Following the first stasimon in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* there are fourteen lines announcing the arrival of the Herald from Troy. While the majority of editors assign the final two lines of this speech to the coryphaeus, there is strong disagreement whether the first twelve lines should be assigned to Clytemnestra (as in the manuscripts) or should be joined to the final two as a unified introduction by the chorus leader.<sup>1</sup> The decision of editors regarding attribution has been made primarily on technical grounds:

1. what the markings in the archetype indicate,<sup>2</sup>
2. whether the coryphaeus is the only character appropriately placed in the theater to see the Herald coming from a distance,<sup>3</sup> or
3. whether there is anyone else present to speak the lines.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The first challenge to the manuscript attribution of 489 ff. to Clytemnestra was made by Scaliger; Tyrwhitt, Wellauer, and Hermann swayed most opinion in favor of the coryphaeus. A. O. Prickard, "Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 489–502 (Dindorf)," *CR* 14 (1900) 434–36, confronted the position of critics up to his time and cited reasons based on characterization for reassigning the lines to Clytemnestra; his conclusion, however, was so firmly rejected by later editors (Murray–1955, Thomson–1966, Fraenkel) that his arguments should be reexamined now since Clytemnestra has a series of new advocates in the edition of Denniston–Page (Oxford 1957), the translations of Lloyd–Jones, *Agamemnon* (Englewood Cliffs 1970) and Young, *Aeschylus: The Oresteia* (Norman 1974), and the Oxford text of Aeschylus by Page (1972). See also O. Könnicke, "Aesch. *Ag.* 467 ff. K.," *WkPh* 28 (1915) 664–72, for a discussion of stylistic elements in the speech which suit the character of Clytemnestra as well as her situation.

<sup>2</sup>U. von Wilamowitz–Moellendorf, *Aischylos Interpretationen* (Berlin 1914) 168 f., and also *ad loc.* in his edition of 1914 and Fraenkel 2.252 f.

<sup>3</sup>"... solet Chorus procul advenientes primum conspiciere propter eum, quem in theatro occupabat locum;" so Wellauer. Wilamowitz, *Interpretationen* (above, note 2) 168, also cites the position of the chorus in the orchestra as a reason for assigning the lines to them.

<sup>4</sup>It seems remarkable to many critics that Clytemnestra remains silent through line 587, and therefore most assume her absence at 489; see Tyrwhitt followed by Wilamowitz, Smyth, and Fraenkel among others. But there are similar problems with Atossa, who in spite of her apology at *Pers.* 290 ff. remains silent from 246 to 290. In the *Supp.* Danaus is continually falling silent: he enters with the chorus at line 1, but is a silent presence until 176; then he makes no contribution while his daughters argue their case with Pelasgus (234–489); and finally he is

In fact, no scholar has as yet adequately placed the speech in its context by discussing how it contributes to a unified scene where characters work out understandable relationships with one another.

It should be stated at the beginning that the argument for uniting all fourteen lines into one speech is irresistible regardless of the speaker. The final two lines, as merely supportive comment to the preceding announcement, neither add to the tension of the moment nor introduce a theme or motivation which will be developed later in the play as in other scenes with split announcements (cf. Aesch. *Seven* 369 ff., *Supp.* 176 ff. and 710 ff.; Soph. *Ant.* 526 ff., *OT* 78 ff., *Phil.* 201 ff., *OC* 310 ff.; Eur. *El.* 962 ff. and *Or.* 456 ff.). Paragraph marks in the manuscripts have been shown to have little authority<sup>5</sup> and the one at 501 may be easily ignored since there is no comparable divided announcement of an entrance nor is there any problem in the text which requires a change of speaker here.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, many editors do give all fourteen lines to one speaker but none of them to Clytemnestra, the assignment for which I shall argue.<sup>7</sup>

And it is the proper attribution of these lines which is of great interest to those who study dramatic staging. If the speech as a whole is given to Clytemnestra, its tone becomes antagonistic as she answers the doubts of the chorus at 272 ff. and 475 ff. At 496 she replies directly to them that they need no longer content themselves with thoughts derived from suspicious signs but will have eye-witness verification of her interpretation of the torches. In such a reading Clytemnestra must be on stage to hear the skeptical words of the chorus in the epode, lines 475–488; it is far too much to assume that she, having exited in triumph at 354, still recalls the insult to her intelligence by the coryphaeus at 272 ff. and enters ready to reconsider

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brought back at 980 but says nothing from 1014 through to the end of the play [here see the suggestion of O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus: The Dramatic Use of Exits and Entrances in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford 1977) 230 ff., for including Danaus in the last scene]. Each example may have its proper dramatic point, but the fact is that characters do indisputably stand silent in full view of spectators for lengthy periods of Aeschylean drama and are therefore available for special dramatic effects if the poet wants to use them as part of the visual design of his scene.

<sup>5</sup>On the general question, see M. L. West, *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique* (Stuttgart 1973) 55, and J. C. B. Lowe, "The Manuscript Evidence for Changes of Speaker in Aristophanes," *BICS* 9 (1962) 27–42.

<sup>6</sup>The joining of these lines with the preceding announcement speech is well discussed by Taplin (above, note 4) 294–97.

<sup>7</sup>Such joining begins with Scaliger, is strongly supported in the 19th-century editions, and continues in the texts of Mazon, Thomson, and Fraenkel.

what she must regard as a dead issue if she has not heard the epode (cf. 351–54). If this speech can be safely assigned to Clytemnestra, there will be further evidence that a main character can remain on stage during the singing of a long choral passage to lend an important visual reference to the words which the chorus is singing.<sup>8</sup> In addition, establishing this tone for the speech offers clarification of some lines which have been troublesome, especially the notorious 494 f.

The criteria upon which previous attribution of these lines has been made are at best ambiguous. Although manuscripts FTr prefix *κλυτ.* before 489 and *χορ.* before 501, Wilamowitz and Fraenkel both make it clear that the archetype most probably contained only paragraphoi and that the assignment of rôles was done by later scribes in order to clarify ambiguity.<sup>9</sup> In such a case the manuscripts' attributions are probably worthless as evidence of Aeschylus' intentions. Second, since a theater audience is generally persuaded by a character's words, it will probably believe that whoever says he can see the Herald actually does see him; and, in any case, a minimum of positioning and gestures will make Clytemnestra as believable an announcer of the Herald as the coryphaeus.<sup>10</sup> Finally, in

<sup>8</sup>Editors are not terribly precise about the moment and the mode of entrances and exits—and, to be sure, there are several notorious problems which probably require us to suspend judgment: e.g., *Ag.* 83 and *Eum.* 140. It seems to be a general assumption that if no specific indication is given that a character is to remain on stage during a stasimon, then he will exit. Yet Atossa during the invocation of Darius, Danaus during the praise of Argos, Prometheus, Cassandra, and Orestes during the Binding Song do not leave the stage, and there is little reason to suppose that all other characters must automatically exit when the chorus commences an ode if elaborate explanations for their continued presence have not been offered and accepted.

<sup>9</sup>See references above in notes 2 and 5.

<sup>10</sup>Indeed the announcements of arriving characters in Aeschylean drama seem split about evenly between the chorus and major characters. The chorus calls attention to a new arrival at *Pers.* 155 ff. and 246 ff.; *Seven* 369 ff. and 861 ff.; and *Cho.* 731 ff.; major characters do the same at *Supp.* 180 ff. and 713 ff.; *Cho.* 10 ff.; *Eum.* 1003 ff.; and *PV* 114 ff. and 941 ff. What is interesting is that only Danaus calls attention to his specific position on the stage, thus explaining how he can see a character coming from off-stage (*Supp.* 713). Prometheus at 115 ff. says only that he can hear and catch the scent of the new arrival although any implied limitation ceases to be a problem for him by the time Hermes enters at 941 ff. Orestes (probably standing in the orchestra) has a sufficiently clear view of the main door of the palace to note the entrance of the slave women at *Cho.* 10. But there is no real indication of the location of Danaus at *Supp.* 176 ff. (he may have moved after 176 and there is textual unclarity at 189 and 210 f.) or Athena at *Eum.* 1003 ff. Surely, with such freedom in placing the character announcing a new arrival, Clytemnestra is not disqualified on the grounds of her stage position, especially when we have no particularly good indication of where she stands just prior to 489. Prickard (above, note 1) in support of Clytemnestra notes a possible recollection of the opening words of this speech in Soph. *Ant.* 631 where a major character, Creon, announces the entrance of Haemon.

terms of who is present on the stage to speak these lines, one must admit that Clytemnestra is a possible alternative to the coryphaeus. The exact moment of her entrance is unknown,<sup>11</sup> but she is obviously on stage around 258, and the first certain exit line for her is at 974.<sup>12</sup> While there is no proof that she remains on stage for the first stasimon, it is at least possible; and in the absence of other objective criteria it is reasonable to consider the dramatic effect which will be achieved by her presence.

If the full fourteen-line speech is assigned to Clytemnestra, strong emphasis will be given to an important minor theme of the play, the distrust of women as competent agents.<sup>13</sup> The chorus' skepticism is evident at line 272 when their leader asks Clytemnestra for her proof since he is unable to believe that she could have obtained trustworthy information so quickly from a place so distant unless there was a letter or a messenger—visible proof which could be produced to satisfy them. When she says that she knows of the fall of Troy “unless some god deceived her,” he asks whether she is referring to some sort of vision in a dream or has been misled by a rumor. Clytemnestra bristles at these charges and delivers her beacon speech to overwhelm such doubts. The playwright presents Clytemnestra as a woman of surpassing competence by having the men of the chorus, who begin by doubting her word, completely swayed by her long and brilliant account of the torches. Indeed, they are so moved that the coryphaeus asks to hear her tale again (317 ff.). In making her a reporter of the events in Troy Aeschylus probably has two effects in mind. He wants her to be capable of inferring what is happening from her knowledge of

<sup>11</sup>For a discussion of opinion on Clytemnestra's first entrance, see the bibliographic review by Fraenkel in his discussion of lines 83 ff. He postpones her entrance until 257 as does Smyth. Add to Fraenkel's list the discussions by Thomson on line 59 and Denniston-Page on line 83 ff.; both of these critics favor an earlier entrance. Also Lloyd-Jones (above, note 1) 20 and Taplin's book (above, note 4) 280 ff. in favor of the later entrance.

<sup>12</sup>In fact, she does not specifically talk of leaving the stage at this point but is required to exit somewhere between lines 974 and 1034 so that she can arrange the sacrifice within (cf. 1056 ff.). Denniston-Page comment on p. 117 that there is no indication of an exit for her up to 1068 and offer advice for her stage action up to that line. But Clytemnestra is not one to let others take over her project: at 1379 ff. she proudly takes credit for the whole deed. She undoubtedly accompanies Agamemnon into the palace, arranges the scene within, and then comes to get Cassandra as a delightful afterthought. Since her prayer to Zeus at 973 f. seems an appropriate line on which she could follow the king into the palace, this is where editors have generally placed her exit (e.g., Wilamowitz, Smyth, Fraenkel). There are good parallels for this judgment. Aeschylus in several other places has characters exit with an optative expressing a wish for or an imperative urging future actions; cf. *Cho.* 782, *Eum.* 60 f., 137 ff., and 775 ff. and earlier *Pers.* 529 ff., *Supp.* 523 and 974. And, in addition, this is the intent of the exit line for Orestes at *Cho.* 583 f.

<sup>13</sup>R. P. Winnington-Ingram, “Clytemnestra and the Vote of Athena,” *JHS* 68 (1948) 130–47.

men's affairs and of her husband's character, but he also may have intended to give her a kind of second sight which will raise her above the men on the stage. She is so completely compelling in her second speech that the chorus leader equates her ability to a man's, uses the words *σώφρων* and *εὐφρόνως* about her, and finds her evidence *πιστά*. This language could scarcely be further from the initial suspicions of *φάσματ' ἐπιπθῆ* and *ἄπτερος φάτις* (274 and 276).<sup>14</sup>

Yet the chorus is even more severely critical at lines 475 ff. in characterizing her report as a *θεῖον ψύθος* and a *ταχύμορον γυναικογήρυτον κλέος*, and it calls the queen herself *παιδνός* and *φρενῶν κεκομμένος*. The old men even mock her torch device in a kind of pun by scoffing at her "inflamed" heart (481). The deflation of their previous ebullience is complete as they raise again the question of Clytemnestra's gullibility. If she is allowed to speak the lines at 489 ff., she will be reaffirming her confident defiance of the skeptical chorus, a restatement amply motivated by the earlier scene.

The crucial question is why the chorus raises the issue of her reliability once again in terms which are even more hostile. The answer to this question can be found in the development of the first stasimon. The chorus announces the theme of its lyric in introductory anapaests: the justice which has been wrought by Zeus in the devastation of Troy. In the lyric which begins: "They can tell of the stroke of Zeus" (367), it interprets the fall of Troy as corroboration of its moral view of the world: the evil man will pay because the universe is basically just and ordered. Yet in developing this theme the chorus does not deny that justice has also brought a great deal of suffering to the Greeks. Helen sailed away and left nothing but unsatisfied craving in the palace of Menelaus, and even greater grief remained for those at home as they watched their dead sons and brothers sent home in urns. There is even talk among the citizens that the number of dead is excessive and that the commander of the expedition has yet to pay the price for the suffering which he has caused. When the old men finally conclude that they themselves would not accept the title "Sacker of Cities," their logic compels them to say something hostile about Agamemnon; they may even have to acknowledge that they themselves will also soon be able to tell of the stroke of Zeus.<sup>15</sup> But rather than confront this possibility they choose to retreat from the implications of their thinking by throwing doubt on the truth of the torches' message. In effect, their thoughts have led quite reasonably and consistently to conclusions

<sup>14</sup>Cf. Fraenkel 2.182 ff.

<sup>15</sup>R. Arnoldt, *Der Chor im Agamemnon des Aeschylus scenischerläutert* (Halle 1881) 37ff., points out that the chorus returns to the same ethical principles from which it began its song.

which are so disturbing that they do not want the message from Troy to be true. The Justice of Zeus is finally seen to have such horrible immediate consequences that they seek refuge in the hope that the original cause of this train of thought is untrue, that the torches are unreliable and can be dismissed as the kind of thing that only a woman would believe in. Such unwillingness to carry through their thoughts about past events to a present application has been evident since the parodos (cf. lines 67 ff., 160 ff., and 248 ff.). Their feelings of fear and anger increase so greatly in the course of the first stasimon that they seek to reject the whole report of the fall of Troy as being merely rumor or wishful thinking.<sup>16</sup>

Clytemnestra's disposition is completely different as she confidently looks forward to the return of Agamemnon, an event which will allow her to impose her will upon the situation. She easily dominates the chorus by her rhetoric in the beacon speech and in her tale of Troy, and she proudly seeks to vindicate herself as the victor by proclaiming the approach of the messenger who will confirm the truth of her woman's intelligence.

In terms of the development of the chorus' thinking, the characterization of Clytemnestra, and the relationship between the queen and the chorus, the speech at 489 ff. is more cogently and integrally motivated if assigned to Clytemnestra. In addition, there is a significant theatrical gain in having Clytemnestra visible during the singing of the first stasimon.<sup>17</sup> Standing alone near the background of the palace and costumed in strong colors,

<sup>16</sup>A hotly debated issue. Schneidewin (1883) cites the dramatic necessity of a change in the chorus regardless of the seeming inconsistency in their characterization. This line of thought has recently been argued by Fraenkel 2.245 ff. and R. D. Dawe, "Inconsistency of Plot and Character in Aeschylus," *PCPS* 9 (1963) 21–62, esp. 43 ff. A. W. Verrall in his edition of 1889, Appendix J, even feels the disjunction so great that he postulates two groups of chorus members—one which is questioning and skeptical (272 ff. and 475 ff.) and one which is privy to the secret and works to stifle all questioning (351–67). His own feeling that there is a consistent development in the chorus' thinking has been previously argued by Wecklein in his edition of 1888 on 481–685 where he comments that the chorus simply no longer wants to believe; for further discussion of this point see Wilamowitz, *Griechische Verskunst* (Berlin 1921) 185 f., W. Kranz, *Stasimon* (Berlin 1933) 159 f., B. Alexanderson, "Forebodings in the *Agamemnon*," *Eranos* 67 (1969) 1–23, and K. J. Dover, "Some Neglected Aspects of Agamemnon's Dilemma," *JHS* 93 (1973) 67 f. My own position is closest to R. P. Winnington-Ingram, "Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* (1343–71)," *CQ* 4 (1954) 23–30, and A. Lebeck, *The Oresteia. A Study in Language and Structure* (Cambridge, Mass. 1971) 37–46.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. the comment of Denniston-Page xxxii (referring to the parodos but equally applicable to the first stasimon): "All this time, ever since the entry of the Chorus, the sinister figure of Clytemnestra has been visible to the spectators, mutely significant in the background." O. Taplin, "Aeschylean Silences and Silences in Aeschylus," *HSCP* 76 (1972) 57–97, and in his book (above, note 4) 288 ff., removes Clytemnestra from the stage at line 350 and does not have her re-enter until 587. He states that a character may not be both significant and in the background, and there is certainly no direct reference to Clytemnestra's presence during the first stasimon or the Herald's report until 585. Still Taplin will allow Orestes to stay on stage

which would offer a contrast to the presumed more pastel coloration of the dirt floor of the orchestra and the washed-out colors of the aged chorus' costumes (cf. 76–82), she will easily catch the eyes of the spectators—especially since they do not have to look through the chorus to see the character near the backdrop as in a standard contemporary playhouse but rather sit above the scene and can simultaneously see characters in the orchestra and near the scene building. Consequently, even though Clytemnestra has no words during the singing of the stasimon, there is no reason to assume her presence will escape unnoticed.<sup>18</sup> As the chorus opens

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during the Erinyes' ode at *Eum.* 490 ff. for dramatic effect (see Taplin's book, 390 ff.) and there are other scenes where I suspect characters are purposefully left on stage in the background in order to offer visual enrichment. I would assign such a position to Eteocles, who can remain present during the parodos of the *Seven* to show the contrast of the efficient commander to the panicky women; and also to Orestes, who is probably visible on stage to the audience (although hidden to the other actors) up to *Cho.* 212 as the fulfillment of Electra's prayers. Taplin himself indicates how effective the silent presence of Atossa is at *Pers.* 246–90 in his book on pp. 85 ff. Given such places where Aeschylus does leave characters on stage during long choral songs, a director should evaluate carefully the need for a literal inclusion of each character on stage in the words of the speakers before ruling out the use of the effect. The structure of the Greek theater allows characters to remain easily visible on stage even while the chorus is performing in the orchestra. When these characters—even though mute—suggest to the audience themes and motifs which reinforce, or contrast with, the words being spoken, then there is a positive dramatic gain. Inclusion of such scenes necessitates only a slight loosening of Taplin's basic principle which he applies elsewhere in his book with great effect against the proponents of the "spectacular" Aeschylus, but visual elements of staging such as spaces left open or crossed in various ways, costumes, props and the presence and position of unmentioned actors are too forcefully present to the spectators in the theater to be denied existence because they are not specifically mentioned in the text.

<sup>18</sup>There are at least two other characters who remain on the stage during choral odes in the *Oresteia* adding a visual effect important to the play. First, Cassandra remains alone in Agamemnon's chariot during the third stasimon, thus focusing attention on the insulting request by Agamemnon that Clytemnestra look after the "chosen flower" from Troy. Cassandra's presence during their song of foreboding emphasizes in another way the arrogance of Agamemnon which raises their troublesome thoughts. Second, the jurymen do not leave the stage during the dispute of Athena and the Furies, but rather remain to embody the new type of justice which Athena wants to found for Athens and to dare the Erinyes to destroy their land, even after six of them have voted for the Erinyes' cause. It should also be noted that there is no exit line for Apollo in the *Eumenides* following the voting, a fact which leads several editors to ignore him and is the cause of Smyth's mysterious stage direction: "Apollo disappears" (line 753). It may well be that Apollo remains on stage during the final scene of this play and joins the procession at the end as a visual sign of the willingness of the new gods of Olympus to work out an arrangement with the older Erinyes. Taplin (above, note 4) 403 ff. is uncertain about Apollo's exit but does not consider leaving him on stage to exit with the final procession. Yet he has natural comrades in the jurors who have upheld his case and in Athena who cast her vote in his favor. Still his exit remains a puzzle and Taplin is correct to point out the uncomfortable neglect of Apollo in Orestes' speech if he is still on stage.

its song singing of the stroke of Zeus and the strong rule of the law which has just been demonstrated in the destruction of the city of Troy, the presence of Clytemnestra is a visual reminder that this woman also has a claim on her husband because he has violated the "grace of things which are not to be touched" (371). Similarly the whole first strophe easily takes on a double meaning because of the presence of Clytemnestra; e.g., "For there is no defense for a man who in fulness of wealth has kicked the great altar of justice into invisibility" (Paris or Agamemnon?). When the ode turns to be critical of Agamemnon because of the great sufferings of his citizens (449 ff. and esp. 471 ff.), the presence of Clytemnestra has already foreshadowed this development. As the chorus sings of the law which calls determinedly for revenge, she visually represents that law as its agent. The visual and the oral here complement each other as so often in Aeschylean drama—and in all the best drama. One need only think of the famous Aeschylean scenes where the effect is at least half dependent on stage action in order to realize that Aeschylus always wrote for the spectator: scenes like the frantic recoiling of the Pythia from the temple at the opening of the *Eumenides*, the disorder of the entering chorus in the *Seven*, and the repetitious but dramatically effective musical exodos of the *Persians*. At the end of the first stasimon Clytemnestra should be in her glory because she has just witnessed the chorus, which wants to greet the returning king joyfully, arrive at the same conclusion about Agamemnon's precarious future which she herself has reached. The old men doubted the worth of her torches, and she now produces a messenger to demonstrate her control. While they may doubt the rightness of her future actions, independently they have come to the same feelings about Agamemnon as she has, and when they refuse to develop the logical conclusion of their thinking, she can only view them with contempt as weak men who cower before necessity. She articulates this feeling in the fine speech of overstatement and disdain in which she announces the entrance of the messenger who will vindicate her self-confidence and crush the fainthearted wavering of the chorus.

The assignment of this fourteen-line speech to the coryphaeus weakens the dramatic impact of the scene. Further, there is little comfort in having the leader of the chorus speak a self-consciously poetic and curiously

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Electra also remains on stage during the parodos in the *Choephoroi*; although I can ascertain no dramatic point in her presence except to identify her with the plaints and situation of the slave women, it is reasonable to speculate about her sudden disappearance, especially in regard to the speakers of lines 691 ff. Cf. W. A. McDonald, "A Dilemma. *Choephoroe* 691–9," *CJ* 55 (1960) 366–71, for a discussion of the arguments on each side of this question. It is possible for a director to have a mute Electra available as a visual reference to the unity of the conspirators at the end of the play, and she could depart as she entered along with the chorus whose despair and confusion she shares.



rhetorical speech in which the phrasing is much in opposition to the quite direct short speeches which are cited by Fraenkel as possible parallels: *Choephoroi* 730 ff., *Seven* 369 ff., *Persians* 155 ff. (appropriately high in its rhetoric for the entrance of a queen but only four lines), and *Agamemnon* 258 ff.<sup>19</sup> But the assignment of Clytemnestra as speaker gives meaning to the “rhetoric” of these lines:<sup>20</sup>

489–90. The emphasis on the torches calls attention to the contest in which she has been challenged and is about to be vindicated; she says, “Soon we will know . . .”<sup>21</sup> and then accumulates in a slightly ungrammatical way words for the torches.<sup>22</sup>

491–92. She specifies the terms of the contest alluding to the words which the chorus used to characterize her womanish thought: *δνειρον* (274); *τερπνόν* possibly to pick up the tone in her words *παιδὸς νέας* (277) and in its *παιδνός* (479); and *ἐφήλωσεν φρένας* as a response to its *θεῖον ψύθος* or *φρενῶν κεκομμένος* (478 ff.).<sup>23</sup>

493–94. There is a problem in the interpretation of the words *κατάσκιον κλάδοις ἐλαίας* which on the basis of the passages cited by Fraenkel seem to indicate that Clytemnestra can already see the signs of victory and need not

<sup>19</sup>Cited by Fraenkel 2.253 as parallels because of similar markings on the manuscript but also because of a similar shift by the chorus from lyric to spoken meters.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. the comment of A. M. Dale in *Collected Papers* (Cambridge 1969) 215: “No Chorus ever *said*, though it might have sung: ‘My witness is mud’s sister and next-door neighbour, thirsty dust,’ whereas Clytemnestra constantly speaks in that style.” She also notes the unprecedented length of this passage among other continuous speeches of the chorus.

<sup>21</sup>The phrase “swiftly X will know” is used often in the *Oresteia*. In the first two plays it contains a threat, i.e., “he will know to his sorrow;” while in the *Eumenides* it stresses the conveying of information, i.e., “listen and you shall hear.” Relevant passages are *Ag.* 1649, *Cho.* 305, *Eum.* 419 and 454. This development of tone is similar to the meaning of *peithō* throughout the trilogy as it changes from the deceptive and harmful persuasion of the Carpet Scene to the beneficial sharing of concerns and opinions between men and gods in the *Eumenides* [cf. R. F. Goheen, “Aspects of Dramatic Symbolism: Three Studies in the *Oresteia*,” *AJP* 76 (1955) 129; A. Lebeck (above, note 13) 40 f.; and E. Petrounias, *Funktion und Thematik der Bilder bei Aischylos* (Göttingen 1976) 243]. The phrase *τάχ’ εἰσόμεθα* at 489 as a participant in this movement should be seen as threatening and, thus, spoken by Clytemnestra. If the chorus were the speaker, it would be saying: “Soon we all will gain clarity on this matter,” a meaning similar to the usage in the *Eumenides*.

<sup>22</sup>Fraenkel 2.250 comments on the repetition of words used by Clytemnestra in her beacon speech. He states: “The repetition of the expressions so often used by Clytemnestra herself, and the bombastic accumulation of them within the compass of a short sentence, can only have a contemptuous effect here.” I would agree on the tone of these lines, but the reference to the beacon speech could also be Clytemnestra’s means of emphasizing her device which has been so easily dismissed by the skeptical old men; cf. 590–92. He also discusses with his usual clarity the grammatical problem in these lines on 249 ff.

<sup>23</sup>Note also the harsh alliteration of *ph* sounds in 489 f. and 492.

wonder at 498 whether the messenger will support her story or not. The only significance to this detail which I can find is that a herald is coming with full information. Whether he is garlanded or carries branches, he is not just a man coming down the road but is marked by his olive boughs as a messenger from the fleet with news.

494–98.<sup>24</sup> These lines contain overblown rhetoric to mark a *reductio ad absurdum*. Clytemnestra uses a legal word *μαρτυρεῖ* to show the chorus that she can reason from evidence to sound conclusions, but the conclusion is absurd: “Dust is my witness that a real man is coming who will not give what you consider ambiguous signs or kindle torches for you, but he will speak out.” This sarcastic tone is clear in successive overstatements: “thirsty dust, sister and neighbor of mud,” “not kindling a flame from the forest wood will he signal to you by the smoke of fire but rather speaking will give his report.”

499–502. Her triumphant refusal to consider that she will be disproved by the messenger’s words<sup>25</sup> followed by a threat to all who doubt her words or oppose her plans.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup>The MSS reading *σοι* remains and is quite appropriate to the “natural sarcasm on the dull scepticism of the Chorus, in keeping with the words at 590” (Prickard, above, note 1, 436).

<sup>25</sup>One might ask why the confident Clytemnestra even raises the possibility of bad news in this speech; but, of course, she raises it only by implication when she says:

(the messenger) in his speech will tell  
us more clearly to rejoice—but I dislike  
the report opposite to this . . .

As with most statements of Clytemnestra, lines 498–502 are complex in meaning. On first hearing she is dismissing the possibility that she will be defeated in the contest with the men posed for her at 475 ff. and asserting her low opinion of those who seem unable to cope with their own thoughts if the war has actually ended. Yet, in addition, these lines allow Aeschylus to remind the audience of the ironic perspective from which Clytemnestra views “good” and “bad” news. If the war is still raging, it is bad news because she will have to postpone her opportunity to kill Agamemnon. The word “rejoice” at 498 is ironically appropriate for her because the message of his safe return will be her signal to prepare for the welcome murder. Her interest in the homecoming coincides with that of the chorus but for far different reasons. By raising the prospect of the opposite message, she not only turns attention to the messenger but also prepares the audience to listen carefully to his report as he continues the growing indictment of Agamemnon’s conduct of the campaign and ends with the significant news that a god has brought his ship to port safely. Not only is she vindicated—she can truly “rejoice” at this excellent news.

<sup>26</sup>Verrall, *ad. loc.*, sees this tone to the lines and assigns them appropriately to one of Clytemnestra’s partisans. S. Srebrny, *Wort und Gedanke bei Aischylos* (Wrocław 1964) 42–48, feels that there is an unstated irony if these lines are spoken by the same speaker as 489–500 who knows that there is someone in the city who does not share the speaker’s joy in good news. He assigns the whole speech to the chorus, thus making the ironic comment the reverse of my suggestion. Fraenkel 2.253 cites parallels to such lines closing dramatic speeches. Cf. also Kranz (above, note 16) 276.

If this speech is assigned to the chorus, then commentators are at a loss to explain its formalism and overstatement unless one wishes to retreat to the helpless phrase, “Aeschylean rhetoric.”<sup>27</sup> But there is a pervasive tone of combative and sarcastic posturing in this speech which fits well the power and assuredness of Clytemnestra and suits the situation where her competence is called into question.

Finally, it should be noted that the percentage of spondaic or predominantly spondaic lines in these trimeters is more similar to the other speeches of Clytemnestra than to those of the chorus. Defining a spondaic line as one in which the first two syllables of each metron are a spondee and a predominantly spondaic line as one in which this happens in two out of the possible three cases, one finds that 58% of these 14 lines are spondaic or predominantly spondaic while 42% are iambic or predominantly iambic (8 vs. 6). Figures for the speeches of Clytemnestra throughout the *Agamemnon* are 60.4% spondaic or predominantly spondaic and 39.6% iambic or predominantly iambic; for the chorus the corresponding percentages are 43.5% and 56.5%. These percentages, admittedly based on a small number of lines, still offer some support in terms of metrical style for the attribution of these lines to the queen.

In summary, the manuscripts have left the assignment of the speech up to the critic. On the basis of the characterizations and the motivations in this part of the drama it is far more effective to have Clytemnestra speak these lines, and it is at least possible that she is on stage. In such an assignment Clytemnestra will remain visible during the long choral ode, thus providing strong visual and highly specific comment to the chorus’ general statements. Such dramatic writing is typical of Aeschylus, who always sought to combine elements of sight and sound into a unified theatrical presentation.

<sup>27</sup>E.g., A. Sidgwick, *Aeschylus Agamemnon* (Oxford 1898), and Fraenkel, both in their comment on lines 494 f.