A STUDY IN CHORAL CHARACTER: AESCHYLUS, *AGAMEMNON* 489–502

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Just as the Argive Elders finish singing the first stasimon of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, the Herald returns from Troy, and his entry is announced in fourteen lines of iambic trimeter:

τάχ' εἰσόμεσθα λαμπάδων φαεσφόρων
φρυκτωριῶν τε καὶ πυρὸς παραλλαγάς,   490
εἴτ' οὖν ἀληθεῖς εἴτ' ὀνειράτων δίκην
τερπνὸν τόδ' ἐλθὸν φῶς ἐφήλωσεν φρένας·
κῆρυκ' ἀπ' ἀκτῆς τόνδ' ὁρῶ κατάσκιον
κλάδοις ἐλαίας· μαρτυρεῖ δέ μοι κάσις
πηλοῦ ξύνουρος διψία κόνις τάδε,   495
ὡς οὔτ' ἄναυδος οὔτε σοι δαίων φλόγα
ὕλης ὀρείας σημανεῖ καπνῶι πυρός,
ἀλλ' ἢ τὸ χαίρειν μᾶλλον ἐκβάξει λέγων—
τὸν ἀντίον δὲ τοῖσδ' ἀποστέργω λόγον.
εὖ γὰρ πρὸς εὖ φανεῖσι προσθήκη πέλοι·   500
ὅστις τάδ' ἄλλως τῆιδ' ἐπεύχεται πόλη,
αὐτὸς φρενῶν καρποῖτο τὴν ἁμαρτίαν.

The manuscripts attribute the first twelve of those lines to Clytemnestra and the final two to the Coryphaeus.[1] Scaliger first challenged that attribution by allowing the choral utterance to continue right through line 502.[2] Scaliger's emendation once found almost universal favor among editors; but, in recent years, the manuscript arrangement has enjoyed a revival, and scholars now appear to be divided fairly evenly on the issue.[3] In this paper I present a new

[1] The text is M. L. West's, *Aeschylus: Tragoediae* (Stuttgart 1990), with one exception. At 501, West prints Wilamowitz' χὥστις. See below, p. 65, for discussion. For this section, F and Tr are the only extant manuscripts.

[2] Since the Coryphaeus speaks for the entire Chorus, I will use the designations interchangeably. Cf. T. G. Rosenmeyer's comments, *The Art of Aeschylus* (Berkeley 1982), 215 (hereafter, "Rosenmeyer").

[3] Among those favoring the manuscript attribution: D. Page, in both his commentary with J. D. Denniston (Oxford 1957) and his *OCT* (Oxford 1972); H. Lloyd-Jones, *Agamemnon* (Englewood Cliffs 1970); and D. J. Conacher, *Aeschylus' Oresteia: A Literary Commentary* (Toronto 1987) 97–101.
  W. C. Scott, in "Lines for Clytemnestra (*Agamemnon* 489–502)," *TAPA* 108 (1978) 259–69, argues persuasively that lines 489–502 must not be divided between two speakers, and attributes all fourteen to Clytemnestra. Among those who follow Scaliger: P. Mazon, *Eschyle* (Paris 1931); E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus: Agamemnon* (Oxford 1950); H. J. Rose, *A Commentary on the Surviving Plays of Aeschylus* (Amsterdam 1957); W. Headlam and G. Thomson, *The Oresteia of Aeschylus* (Amsterdam 1966); O. Taplin, "Aeschylean Silences and Silences in Aeschylus," *HSCP* 76 (1972) 91–92, also *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford 1977) 294–97; and M. L. West, *Aeschylus: Tragoediae* (Stuttgart 1990). I will

argument, or rather a development of an old one, in support of the view that the Chorus Leader speaks all fourteen lines.

The arguments which scholars in both camps have most often brought to bear on this question fall into four broad categories: the indications of the manuscripts; the length and meter of the passage; the movements of Clytemnestra; and the dramatic propriety of this passage as an expression of the respective characters.

The first three of these areas I will discuss only briefly; they have been carefully examined by others, and have yielded no conclusive answer to our question. The fourth, however, has not received the attention it deserves. Those few scholars who consider character at all usually do so only as an afterthought to their more rigorous treatment of other questions.[4] But I think that a careful consideration of the propriety of the utterance, i.e., the degree to which it is "in character," yields useful clues to the attribution of these lines.[5] In particular, I will seek to demonstrate both that the Chorus and Clytemnestra do maintain consistent "characters," to the extent that each displays repeated patterns of speech and behavior throughout the play; and that these fourteen lines parallel, in several significant ways, the *modus dicendi* of the Chorus, and contrast with Clytemnestra's.

Three aspects of the text of this passage, as it appears in the manuscripts, have been adduced in support of the view that Clytemnestra speaks lines 489–500 and the Chorus speaks lines 501–2. The most obviously pertinent evidence, the manuscript attribution itself, is the least troublesome. Several recent studies have established that manuscript attributions are no more than scribal interpretations of marginal notes, such as the paragraphus or double point.[6] While the marks are therefore of some value in indicating a change of speakers, the manuscripts can have no authority in establishing the identity of the speaker. There are, in any case, abundant examples of missing or misplaced notations. As indications of Aeschylus' intentions, therefore, neither the specific attributions (489–500 to Clytemnestra, 501–2 to the Chorus), nor even the indications of change of speaker (489 and 501) are decisive.

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hereafter refer to the above works by author only, or, where necessary, by author and date.

[4] Those who do discuss character, however briefly, include F. A. Paley, *The Tragedies of Aeschylus* (London 1855); A. O. Prickard, "Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 489–502," *CR* 14 (1900) 434–36; Taplin (1972) 91–92; Scott 266–69.

[5] More generally, it impinges on the extensive and ongoing debate concerning "characterization" in Greek tragedy. Of the many recent studies of character in Greek tragedy, I mention a few that I have found most useful: C. Garton, "Characterisation in Greek Tragedy," *JHS* 77 (1957) 247–54; P. E. Easterling, "Presentation of Character in Aeschylus," *G&R* 20 (1973) 3–19; J. Gould, "Dramatic Character and 'Human Intelligibility' in Greek Tragedy," *PCPS* 24 (1978) 43–67; D. J. Conacher, "Rhetoric and Relevance in Euripidean Drama," *AJP* 102 (1981) 3–25; and R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Studies in Aeschylus* (Cambridge 1983) 96ff.

[6] Cf. the comments of Scott, 260; Taplin (1977) 294, esp. n. 1; Fraenkel, ad 501; M. L. West, *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique* (Stuttgart 1973) 55. Even those who support the manuscript attribution (e.g., Conacher, 97–98) recognize that they cannot rely on manuscript authority alone.

The manuscript attribution receives more substantive support from σοι in line 496 and the asyndeton in line 501, both of which suggest interplay between two speakers. The use here of σοι, however, an ethical dative, has been widely suspected, even by some who attribute these lines to Clytemnestra.[7] A variety of possible emendations have been suggested, several of them attractive.[8] The asyndeton, it is argued, indicates that a new speaker begins at line 501, and serves to mark the beginning of a typical two-line choral tag.[9] Several scholars have proposed emendations in order to remove the asyndeton, but Kranz and Fraenkel have shown that such asyndeta are not necessarily indicative of a change of speaker in Aeschylus.[10] Scott, moreover, contrasts this passage with the entry announcements that are clearly divided between two speakers, and concludes that nothing in the content of lines 501–2 suggests that the speaker has changed.[11]

Dale, following a different line of argument, maintains that Clytemnestra must speak these lines because "it would be altogether abnormal for a Chorus to speak at such length."[12] While it is true that his extant corpus contains no other choral iambic passage of equal length, Aeschylus, more frequently than the other tragedians, does extend choral speeches beyond the conventional two, three, or four lines.[13] We find several speeches longer than four lines, four passages of six lines,[14] and in *Eumenides*, one iambic speech of eight lines (299ff.) and another of ten lines (244ff). Also pertinent is the long passage of iambic trimeters that is divided among the elders at *Agamemnon* 1348–71; while each speaker has only two lines, the cumulative effect is that the Chorus speaks at considerable length.[15] It is thus apparent that Aeschylus does not feel constrained to limit the speeches of his Chorus to any particular number of lines; although he normally employs the conventional, shorter responses, he is

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[7] P. Maas, quoted by Denniston-Page ad 496, claims that σοι "specializes awkwardly and unnecessarily."

[8] Fraenkel, ad 496, discusses the emendations suggested by Housman and Wilamowitz, and Taplin (1977) 295 refers also to the emendations of Hermann, Butler, and Kirchhoff. See also Lloyd-Jones and Rose, ad loc.

[9] Taplin (1977) 294–95, however, points out that such a change of speaker within an entry announcement has no parallel in extant tragedy.

[10] W. Kranz, *Stasimon* (Berlin 1933) 150; Fraenkel ad 501.

[11] Scott 260.

[12] A. M. Dale, "The Chorus in the Action of Greek Tragedy," in *Collected Papers* (Cambridge 1969) 215.

[13] For a collection of these passages, see M. Griffith, *The Authenticity of Prometheus Bound* (Cambridge 1977) 131–34. Euripidean drama offers two parallels for lengthy passages spoken by the Chorus. Diggle, in his *OCT* (Oxford 1981), gives 23 continuous lines to the Chorus at *Heracles*, 252–74; and the Chorus of *Helen* speaks at least 10 lines of iambic trimeter, and possibly 13, at lines 317–29.

[14] *Septem* 369–75, possibly divided between hemichoruses, and 677–82; *Agamemnon*, 258–63, 1643–48.

[15] I do not include trochaic tetrameter passages here, such as *Persians* 215–25, because of the possibility of a generic difference between the uses of the two meters. See A. Michelini, *Tradition and Dramatic Form in The Persians of Aeschylus* (Leiden 1982) 38 and 56–58.

quite willing to give his Chorus more lines when the dramatic occasion demands.

Furthermore, when we consider the function of this passage, an entry announcement, it appears unusually long whether spoken by the Chorus or Clytemnestra.[16] Nowhere else in the Aeschylean corpus does such a long iambic speech mark the entry of a character, particularly one of low status like the Herald.[17] It is noteworthy, however, that the Elders greet Agamemnon later in this play in no less than 27 lines (783–809). While that greeting is uttered in anapaests, it nevertheless indicates the capacity, if not the tendency, of this Chorus to speak expansively, particularly in an entry announcement. In fact, if we were to look anywhere for a lengthy iambic choral speech, it would most reasonably be in *Agamemnon*, where we find several examples of conventional structural elements which are expanded to unparalleled length.[18]

Perhaps the most involved discussion of the attribution of this passage has centered on stage movements, particularly those of Clytemnestra. For those who attribute the lines to Clytemnestra, the most reasonable explanation of her movements is that she remains onstage throughout the first stasimon.[19] Scott makes a virtue of this necessity by seeing in the silent presence of Clytemnestra "a significant theatrical gain."[20] He argues that as the Chorus sings of vengeance, Clytemnestra, the avenger who will physically apply the laws of justice to Agamemnon, visually supports the unintended double meaning of the Chorus. Scott can therefore claim that the presence of the Queen conforms to Taplin's rule that an actor stays on stage during an ode only when he is relevant to the song.[21] But in Taplin's examples, the actor who remains on stage is either clearly and directly relevant to the song or unobtrusively present in the background.[22] The relevance of Clytemnestra, even as presented by Scott, can be only peripheral or ironic, and she is certainly not addressed in the song. In addition, she is too dominant to be relegated safely to the background. While Scott is careful to note that Clytemnestra's presence would not "escape unnoticed" during the ode,[23] in fact, her presence would be too noticeable. After her virtuoso performance in the previous episode, in which she completely overshadows the Chorus, the audience could not help but focus attention on her, rather than on the Chorus, if she were still onstage. The parallels which Scott cites for the presence of Clytemnestra—Cassandra in *Agamemnon*, and the

[16] Taplin (1977) 295, argues that in almost all cases the Chorus, rather than an individual actor, delivers the entry announcement; while Conacher 98–99, emphasizes the exceptions to that rule in arguing that Clytemnestra might make this announcement.

[17] Taplin (1977) 71n. 2, lists several collections of entrance announcements. See also R. Hamilton, "Announced Entrances in Greek Tragedy," *HSCP* 82 (1978) 63–82.

[18] E.g., the parodos (40–257) and the exchanges between the Chorus and Cassandra (1069–1330) and between the Chorus and Clytemnestra (1399–1576).

[19] Taplin (1977), 296, argues against her coming onstage just to announce the Herald, or flitting on and off at various points.

[20] Scott 264; cf. Conacher 99.

[21] Taplin (1977) 288–89.

[22] Taplin (1977) 110–14.

[23] Scott 265.

jurymen in *Eumenides*—are therefore different in this respect; since they have not yet become integrally involved in the drama, there is little likelihood that they will distract the attention of the audience away from the Chorus.

Conacher and Page have both found support for the silent presence of Clytemnestra in her knowledge of what is said onstage.[24] Page argues that Clytemnestra must hear the first speeches of the Herald because, when she begins speaking at line 587, she knows that Agamemnon has returned to Argos. Conacher uses similar reasoning when he cites lines 590ff., Clytemnestra's allusion to those who doubted her report, to prove that she heard the Chorus express those doubts during the epode of the first stasimon. To respond in an equally literal-minded fashion, we might recall Clytemnestra's ironic recasting at 349 of the refrain of the Chorus (121, 138, 159), which she did not hear. Also, the Elders had, of course, expressed their disbelief earlier, when the Queen first announced her news. As for the second point, the very presence of the Herald must indicate to Clytemnestra that the rest of the army cannot be far behind. We might also respond, as a preliminary to a discussion of character, that displays of extensive knowledge seem natural to the speech and behavior of Clytemnestra; after all, she claims to receive her information from a god, Hephaestus, and envisions the events in distant Troy even as they are occurring.[25]

When we turn to a consideration of dramatic propriety, and the character of the speaker, we cannot confine ourselves to the 14 lines of this passage; before we can claim that these lines are more appropriate as the expression of either the Chorus or Clytemnestra, we must first determine the character of both, as they appear throughout the play. There is general agreement on the character of the proposed speakers of these lines; both Taplin and Scott, for example, agree that Clytemnestra appears throughout the play as confident and powerful, while the Chorus is typically uncertain and ineffective. Agreement stops there, however, for Scott sees this passage as "a fine speech of [the] overstatement and disdain" of the Queen, and Taplin describes it as illustrating the type of uncertainties which often beset the Chorus, not Clytemnestra. A century earlier, Paley had argued that Clytemnestra cannot speak these lines, because she "has no misgivings," and Prickard responded that the speech reveals the "defiant certainty" of the Queen.[26]

Supporting arguments for these conclusions have been either minimal or nonexistent. Scott is perhaps the most systematic in his close analysis of the rhetoric of the passage, but his discussion is not convincing. He calls attention to several of the ornate or contrived expressions in this passage, which he believes are more characteristic of Clytemnestra—and the Queen certainly does

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[24] Conacher 99; Denniston-Page ad 489.

[25] As Taplin points out, (1972) 92, "Aeschylus has built up a picture of Clytemnestra as supremely competent and almost omniscient." Taplin also argues against the approach of Conacher and Page, and cites Denniston-Page's own rejection, ad 1444, of such a literal-minded attitude. Cf. the comments of Rosenmeyer, 72.

[26] Scott 266; Taplin (1972) 91; Paley (above, note 4) ad loc.; Prickard (above, note 4) 436.

express herself in similar language.[27] It is also true, however, that the Chorus speaks in equally highblown fashion elsewhere in this play, and that other plays provide examples of entry announcements which contain particularly ornate flourishes.[28]

The single most ostentatiously artificial phrase in this speech is the description of the Herald's dust in lines 494–98. This passage, Scott argues, is not simply pointless "Aeschylean rhetoric," but presents, sarcastically, the reasoning power of Clytemnestra.[29] There is also point to the expression as an utterance of the Chorus, and we need not look for sarcasm in order to explain it. The entry announcement draws an explicit contrast between the Herald and the beacon as sources of information.[30] The elaborate reference to the dust of the Herald emphasizes his close association with the physical, concrete, and immediate world of the Elders, and thereby deepens the contrast between his message and the more magical and ethereal information of Clytemnestra.[31]

Even more central to the assessment of character are lines 498–500. These lines in particular motivate the diametrically opposed opinions quoted above. Scott suggests that we see in these lines Clytemnestra's "triumphant refusal to consider that she will be disproved by the messenger's words."[32] We might wonder, then, why she refers, even remotely, to the possibility of bad news.[33] Clytemnestra is so certain of her knowledge that the questioning of the beacon signal, even implicitly or sarcastically, seems inappropriate.[34] Furthermore, if she is onstage, and so eager to vindicate herself, we must wonder why she waits through the first two speeches of the Herald and, even more curiously, through his stichomythia with the Chorus before she actually speaks out at 587.

The detailed analyses of this passage—Scott's is the most thorough—rarely offer more than impressionistic responses to particular words or lines.[35] It is my contention that we can avoid the subjectivity of these assessments, at least in

[27] As in, e.g., lines 264–65, 281, and 314. Scott, 267–68; cf. Dale (above, note 10) 215.

[28] In *Agamemnon*, 801–4; 542, 544; in other plays, *Cho.* 733, *Septem* 371–74, *Persae* 155–58. Scott recognizes the rhetorical level of these entry announcements but discounts their value as parallels because they are so short. This objection introduces a separate issue into the consideration of rhetoric, an issue which I have addressed above.

[29] Scott 268.

[30] As in lines 496–98, esp. οὔτ᾽ ἄναυδος; ἐκβάξει λέγων.

[31] Cf. Paley (above, note 4) on his line 477; S. Goldhill, *Language, Sexuality, Narrative: The Oresteia* (Cambridge 1984) 49–50; A. E. Housman, "The *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus," in *The Classical Papers of A. E. Housman*, edd. J. Diggle and F. R. D. Goodyear (Cambridge 1972) vol. 1, 70–71; Schneidewin, whose views are noted in A. Sidgwick, *Aeschylus, Agamemnon* (Oxford 1890), takes the issue full-circle in suggesting that this expression might be choral parody of the style of Clytemnestra.

[32] Scott 268.

[33] Scott 268n. 1, anticipates this charge. Noting that "[o]ne might ask why the confident Clytemnestra even raises the possibility of bad news in this speech," he responds that "of course, she raises it only by implication."

[34] Cf. Rosenmeyer, 72–73.

[35] Scott 268, for example, makes his case with language like "overblown rhetoric" and "sarcastic tone."

part, by examining a group of speech patterns which appear both in this passage and elsewhere in the play. In this passage, we find those patterns most clearly delineated in lines 498–500, and it is on those three lines, and their parallels, that I will concentrate for the remainder of this paper.

Lines 498–500 contain three specific examples of speech patterns which appear repeatedly in the utterances of the Chorus in this play, and stand in sharp contrast to the characteristic expressions of Clytemnestra: the aposiopesis at the end of line 498, the euphemism (ἀποστέργω, 499), and the prayer in line 500 for future good. The speaker predicts that the Herald might bring good news, but then, instead of stating the expected alternative, he interrupts the thought and the grammatical structure. Rather, he professes his aversion to that alternative, claiming not that he hates or fears it, but, euphemistically, that he rejects it, that he is out of love with it.[36] The speaker then prays that there might be a good addition to the present good.[37]

Each of these verbal maneuvers has a similar effect: they allow the speaker to avoid explicit reference to a disturbing possibility. Just as the Herald is hesitant to undermine the effect of his good news by relating less welcome information (636ff.), the speaker of the entry announcement seems unwilling to make a negative, and therefore potentially ill-omened statement. The aposiopesis suppresses actual statement of the disturbing alternative. The euphemism so indirectly conveys the aversion of the speaker that the force of the unstated alternative is diminished. The hope for future good not only directs our attention back to what is desired, but also precludes any further discussion of what is feared. Once the speaker has controlled the utterance of his own anxieties, he attempts, in lines 501–2, to apply a similar εὐφημία to others.[38]

Throughout this play, the Elders display similar behavior, as they refuse to state, or even acknowledge, information which is unwelcome. We see that they are consistently aware of disturbing events or information, but are unwilling, even at times unable, to give voice to that awareness; they are beset with a conflict between what they know or feel and what they say. The Elders themselves refer explicitly to this conflict in the third stasimon when they recognize the presence within themselves of an "unbidden song" (979–80), "a tuneless dirge" which their θυμός sings entirely of its own accord (990–91). Although the Elders claim that song cannot be avoided or silenced, and that its forebodings are not in vain, they conclude their discussion of those voices by praying that the ill that they anticipate might not actually be fulfilled (998–1000).

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[36] On ἀποστέργω as a euphemism, see Fraenkel ad 499; and Headlam-Thomson ad 499.

[37] See Fraenkel ad 500 for a discussion of this prayer.

[38] Underlying this concern with εὐφημία is the common Greek assumption that speech is somehow efficacious, that the mention of unwanted events will somehow lead to the accomplishment of those events. I have argued earlier, on formal grounds, that no change of speaker need occur at line 501. Now I can add that we see in the final lines of the passage a view of language similar to that in the first 12 lines. A curse, like the one in 501–2, makes sense only if the speaker expects that his words will have some effect.

The third stasimon presents the most explicit reference to the conflict within the Chorus, but several other passages illustrate its effects. We find that in those passages the Elders not only behave in the same general fashion as the speaker of lines 498–500, but also that they use the same patterns of speech. I consider here three of the closest parallels.

At the end of the parodos (lines 248 ff.), the Elders suddenly say, somewhat surprisingly, that they did not see the actual sacrifice of Iphigenia. The abrupt shift in sense at line 248 corresponds to the aposiopesis in line 499.[39] The Elders have been describing, in some detail, the preparations for the sacrifice, thereby leading us to expect a complete account of events; but they stop short, and instead of detailing the impious and unholy behavior of their beloved king, they claim simply, and euphemistically, that the crafts of Calchas are not unfulfilled.[40] Finally, after several gnomic statements, that universalize the unsettling particulars of the events at Aulis, the Elders pray in general terms for future prosperity, πέλοιτο δ'οὖν τἀπὶ τούτοισιν εὖ πρᾶξις (255). Despite their misgivings, which are apparent in both their refusal to describe the sacrifice and in their indirect reference to its completion, the Elders conclude with the wish for a bright future.[41] Thus, each of the three elements which we noted in lines 498–500 appears here, and the effect is similar: the Chorus uses these linguistic maneuvers to avoid the explicit statement of troubling matters.

The exchange between the Chorus and Cassandra contains a second significant parallel. In line 1246, Cassandra tells the Elders, in no uncertain terms, that their king will soon die, information which the Chorus would rather not acknowledge. The Coryphaeus attempts to impose on Cassandra the same sort of constraints that the Elders, in the previous example, impose on their own speech. He simply asks her to be quiet: εὔφημον... κοίμησον στόμα! When she responds that this plea is out of place, the Coryphaeus resorts to the hope that the deed might not actually occur: ἀλλὰ μὴ γένοιτό πως (1249).

Lines 104–83 of the parodos, particularly in the refrain and the Hymn to Zeus, present a large-scale parallel to the language and attitude of lines 498–500. It has long been noticed that within each of the three stanzas in lines 104–59 the Elders begin with a positive and confident tone, but become increasingly beset with anxiety.[42] In the antistrophe, for example, they sing first of the predicted success of the Greeks at Troy (123–30), but conclude with references to the wrath of Artemis (131–37). In the refrain at the end of each of these stanzas, the Elders begin with a recognition of that anxiety, and a response to it, αἴλινον, αἴλινον εἰπέ; but in the second half of the refrain, τὸ δ' εὖ νικάτω, they attempt, as in their expressions of hope elsewhere in the play, to minimize the force of the negative, and to return to a course of confidence and optimism. When the Elders begin both the antistrophe and the epode with renewed

[39] For a review of other interpretations of this passage, see D. J. Schenker, "The Character of the Aeschylean Chorus" (Diss. Berkeley 1989) 59–60.

[40] Not only is the completion of the sacrifice thereby subsumed under the more general topic of the skill of Calchas; in addition, we see a closer parallel to the euphemism at 499 in the indirect expression of an idea through the negation of its opposite.

[41] Even Denniston-Page (ad 500) cite this wish as a parallel to line 500.

[42] Cf., most recently, Schenker (above, note 39) 41–48.

optimism, they seem to be responding not to the increasing doom in the stanza that precedes, but to the brief expression of hope in the second half of each refrain.

The singing of the refrain at the end of the epode, however, has no such effect on them. Rather than resuming their narrative with renewed confidence, the Elders shift abruptly to address Zeus in the so-called Hymn to Zeus. No grammatical break occurs here, as it does at line 499, but the tone, content, and meter shift so sharply that some critics transpose the entire passage.[43] The Hymn makes good sense, however, following the epode; instead of continuing with the escalation of foreboding, the Elders turn to Zeus to seek relief from it.[44] The Hymn to Zeus, and particularly the shift at line 160, provides another example of an attempt by the Chorus to avoid discussion of disturbing events simply by refusing to say more about them.

The type of speech and behavior we have noted is not limited to the Chorus in this play. The Watchman, who becomes increasingly gloomy as he anticipates the return of his king, abruptly breaks off his speech at line 36—τὰ δ'ἄλλα σιγῶ. In the parodos, Calchas, as quoted by the Chorus, refrains from making explicit the negative side of his prophecy, but prays that it might not be fulfilled.[45] Also in the parodos, Agamemnon, despite his clear recognition that killing his daughter is a heinous crime, concludes his speech with a simple wish that all might be well, εὖ γὰρ εἴη (217). The Herald, after he has reported the fate of Menelaus, as he knows it, prays for future good (674) and then, like the speaker of lines 498–99, suppresses the expression of the less welcome of two alternatives (676).

In fact, only two characters in *Agamemnon* are free of the anxieties which so regularly effect the utterances of the Chorus; one is Clytemnestra.[46] Her dominance and superiority in this play are portrayed in large part by her mastery and control of language. We see no wavering in her purpose, no conflict within her as to what should be said, what repressed. The beacon speech, for example, displays not only her administrative skills, but also her rhetorical prowess; the Elders are so overwhelmed by it that, after hearing it, they ask not for more information, but for another performance of the same marvelous speech (317–19). Throughout the play, the Queen is able to maintain her deception in her

[43] R. D. Dawe, "The Place of the Hymn to Zeus in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*," *Eranos* 64 (1966) 1–21; supported recently by Malcolm Heath, *The Poetics of Greek Tragedy* (Stanford 1987) 19.

[44] T. J. Sienkewicz, in "Circles, Confusion, and the Chorus of *Agamemnon*," *Eranos* 78 (1980) 133–42, discusses the function of the Hymn as a verbal escape from the imminent conclusions of the choral narrative. While the Hymn to Zeus does not constitute a prayer for future good, it does parallel those prayers in its gnomic nature (cf. Fraenkel ad 184 n. 2). Just as the expression of hope effectively precludes discussion of the present, the immediate and the particular, the Hymn to Zeus brings an end, if only temporarily, to the particular description of the events at Aulis by introducing more general and universal themes.

[45] This contra R. D. Dawe, "The Place of the Hymn to Zeus in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*," *Eranos* 64 (1966) 2: "A prayer that something will not happen is not the same thing as a prediction that it will."

[46] Although her deal with the daimon at lines 1568ff. presents a possible, and telling, parallel. The other is the clairvoyant Cassandra.

exchanges with the Chorus, the Herald, and Agamemnon, as she uses her language effectively to ensure the success of her plan.

Aposiopesis, therefore, the rhetorical indication that the speaker has lost control of his or her words, is naturally alien to the speech patterns of Clytemnestra; while the Elders often struggle to regulate their own expressions, Clytemnestra is fully in charge of all of her utterances.[47] Clytemnestra, moreover, has shown no reluctance earlier in the play to speak of the crimes which the victors at Troy might be committing, and has even referred to possible punishments (338ff.).

There is, however, one feature of Clytemnestra's speech that might seem to offer a parallel to our passage: both in lines 349–50 and in lines 973–74 the Queen concludes her speech with a prayer. In the first example, Clytemnestra hopes, as did the Chorus earlier, that the good may prevail, but her version of the good is something specific, which will then be clearly seen. She follows the wish with a difficult sentence that, whatever its specific sense, serves to conclude her speech with an assertion rather than a wish.[48] In lines 973–74, the preponderance of τέλος- words leads us to consider the expected result of the prayer, a particular τέλος toward which she has obviously been working. Since we have just witnessed Clytemnestra's victory over Agamemnon, we are more than ever inclined to believe that her goal is well within her grasp. In other words, these prayers, unlike those of the Chorus and the other characters in the play, seem certain of fulfillment.[49] Whereas the Elders hope for good almost exclusively as a remedy to their foreboding, these prayers of Clytemnestra have a clear and concrete object, even if the nature of that object is hidden from us. In contrast to these two prayers of Clytemnestra, the expression at line 500 is notably lacking in any concrete objective and seems primarily intended, like the prayers of the Chorus, to mitigate the effect of a disturbing thought.

In addition to the passages I consider here, several others might be cited as illustrating the *modus dicendi* of the Chorus and the Queen;[50] these passages suggest strongly that lines 489–502 are more appropriate as the utterance of the Argive Elders. This conclusion has significance for the dramatic force of this passage. The Queen is so confident and self-sufficient that she has no need for the news of the Herald (598–99), and is therefore only minimally interested in his arrival. She appears onstage (587) not to gain information from the Herald, but to use him in the furtherance of her plot. If the Elders speak these lines,

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[47] Therefore, the convoluted grammar in lines 489–90, noted by both Fraenkel (ad 489–90) and Scott (267), might be cited as another indication that Clytemnestra does not speak these lines.

[48] If, as Fraenkel argues (ad 348–50, 500), she is claiming that she prefers the enjoyment of what she already has to the possibility of future blessings, then this line offers another indication of the Queen's control. Unlike the Chorus, she is satisfied with the present state of affairs and need not emphasize her hope for a better future.

[49] These prayers function, therefore, much like the other closures of the speeches of the Queen, to reinforce her control over language; she organizes her words well and they seem therefore more effective. Cf. 315–16, 613–14, 1661; and contrast the false closure of the Herald at 582.

[50] For other passages which parallel one or more of the aspects of lines 489–502, see 62–71, 97–103, 471–88, and 799–809.

they reinforce the uncertainty and doubt which beset the Chorus throughout the play: the Elders recognize that the Herald brings news of either the success or failure of Agamemnon, but they refuse to consider the latter. Furthermore, even the success of Agamemnon, as we have just heard in the first stasimon, arouses in the Chorus anxieties about their king (471–88). While the Elders have been able, by casting doubt on the source of Clytemnestra's information, to remain in a state of uncertainty, and thereby to calm their anxieties, they cannot as easily dismiss the eyewitness account of the Herald. For the Elders, therefore, the arrival of the Herald is a momentous event; the questions of the Chorus will not be answered until after the death of Agamemnon, but into their waverings and vacillations, the Herald promises to introduce, for better or worse, a fixed and undeniable certainty.[51]