

## AESCHYLUS, CHOEPH. 363–71

This is an attempt to shed new light on this passage of Aeschylus, offering, in some cases, a different interpretation. Many scholars have already expressed various suggestions with regard to these lines; for an account (with discussion) see Garvie<sup>1</sup>), pp. 140–1, cf. Sier<sup>2</sup>), pp. 85, 125–8 (text – transl. pp. 56–7). Let me first give a translation of what I am going to comment on; text as in OCT, Page<sup>3</sup>).

El. (You ought) not even to have been killed under the walls of Troy, father, and buried beside the river Scamander among other warriors slain by the spear<sup>4</sup>)! But better had his murderers been killed thus, so that one should learn the death-bringing lot from afar unacquainted with these troubles . . .

After πάτερ (364, cf. Or.’ πάτερ in 346) the change to νιν (368)

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1) A. F. Garvie, *Aeschylus: Choephoroi*, with *Introd. and Comment.*, Oxford 1986 (Clarendon Paperback, with corrections, 1988).

2) K. Sier, *Die lyrischen Partien der Choephoron des Aischylos*, Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar, *Palingenesia* 23, Stuttgart 1988.

3) Ηλ. μηδ’ ὑπὸ Τρωίας  
 τείχῃσι φθίμενος, πάτερ,  
 μετ’ ἄλλωι δουρικμητι λαῶι 365  
 παρὰ Σκαμάνδρου πόρον τεθάφθαι·  
 πάρος δ’ οἱ κτανόντες  
     νιν οὕτως δαμῆναι  
 (     ) θανατηφόρον αἶσαν  
 πρόσω τινά πυνθάνεσθαι 370  
 τῶνδε πόνων ἄπειρον.

This text is also reproduced by Garvie.

4) τεθάφθαι Tafel (λείπει τὸ ὄφειλες M<sup>2</sup>): τέθασθαι M; also, below, οἱ κτανόντες . . . δαμῆναι, λείπει τὸ ὄφελον (Σ 368b). Sier (pp. 125–6, on τεθάφθαι) does not accept this ellipsis and El.’s unfulfilled wish (see my relevant comments below): “ein Imperativ σύ, πάτερ, (μὴ) τεθάφθαι ist kaum vorstellbar” (cf. Garvie, p. 140, on τεθάφθαι: “the infinitive (see 306–8 n.) is unusual in an unfulfilled wish for the past”). “Man wird vielmehr einen imperativischen Infinitiv annehmen, der dann, wie es scheint, Heimsoeths (S. 124) Änderung von πάτερ 364 in πατήρ erzwingt.” But again Sier admits “die Konstruktion mit 3. Person im Nominativ ist selten”; nevertheless he restores πατήρ in his text and translates: “Auch nicht . . . gestorben sei der Vater mit dem anderen . . . Volk . . . begraben” (p. 57). But see my comment on πάτερ, below.

could be explained either by Electra's turning to address the Chorus, or as her expressing aloud what actually was just a mental conception, an alternative piece of wishful thinking after addressing her father in 363–6. Sier however accepts Heimsöeth's πατήρ (cf. νιν, see my n. 4) disregarding the correspondence of πάτερ (364~346): "Solche Übereinstimmung ist jedoch gar nicht zu erwarten, wenn El.'s Strophe die Antithese zu der des Or. darstellt" (p. 126).

οὕτως δαμῆναι, 'thus' (i.e. ὥσπερ Ἀγαμέμνων ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἐδάμη): 'in this (ignoble, obscure)<sup>5</sup>) manner in which Ag. was killed'; so: 'would that his murderers had been killed (instead) *in the way that Ag. was killed*'<sup>6</sup>). The question *who* was to kill Klyt. and Aeg. may not really have been Electra's specific concern at this moment.

Garvie's interpretation of οὕτως δαμῆναι is 'i.e. fighting at Troy, not "at the hands of kin" (which is presupposed in Conington's δαμῆναι <φίλοις>); cf. πρόσω below'. Garvie explains that 'Clytaemestra, as a woman, could not indeed have fought at Troy' so 'Electra is perhaps thinking primarily of Aegisthus', but his whole point rests on an assumption which I do not accept<sup>7</sup>).

Οὕτως must be considered very carefully in relation to the rest of this lyrical passage and, indeed, in relation to the character of both Orestes and Electra. Orestes (345–53) has expressed a wish that Ag. could have died gloriously at Troy and received the honour of a conspicuous tomb. Electra now goes further than this and wishes that Ag. had not even received this honour (that is how it is put in the Greek, but perhaps logically the negative comes before the wishing: she does not wish that he had received even this honour). She implies, but does not express, a wish that he were still alive. The wish that she does express is that Ag.'s murderers had died instead. It is most unlikely that she wanted them to be glorified by the kind of death and tomb that Ag. was denied, and that Orestes would have wished him to have. Surely, therefore, οὕτως must refer not to a place (at Troy), but to the manner of

5) To this Orestes' words λιλῶν ἄν εὐκλειαν ἐν δόμοισιν (348) might be contrasted.

6) This of course suggests the fact of *killing ignominiously*, not the special device Klyt. used for it or any other specific way of killing.

7) Sier's comment on this is as follows: "die Mörder sollten fern von Argos gestorben sein . . ." (p. 127) and, *ibid.* (below), referring to οὕτως: "Der Bezug von οὕτως ist ambivalent. El. weist das τεθάρθαι des Vaters vor Troia zurück; solches Schicksal hätten eher die Mörder verdient – zwar nicht den ruhmvollen Tod, aber das Ende fern von Argos."

death; i.e. she wishes that they had died ingloriously, as Ag. himself had in fact died. She does not specify *where* she wishes this could have happened, so long as it was far away and she herself was free of her present troubles.

Orestes and Electra think in terms of their τιμή over and above their natural affection for Ag. For Electra this means a restoration of her status as the daughter of a king (and a glorious king, too). For Orestes, who is not subjected to Klyt. and Aeg. as Electra is, it means the εὐκλεία of which he has been robbed (cf. ἄτιμα [408]; ἀτίμως [434], ἀτίμωςιν [435], ἄτιμος [485], and also 556–8).

The missing syllables in v. 369 must have the metrical scheme – – or, perhaps, ∪ –, in so far as στω. γ̄ and ἀντ. γ̄ correspond to each other metrically<sup>8</sup>): thus the reading of codex unicus M κτίσας (351) leads to a ⟨– –⟩ filling for 369, although Page prefers κτίσας in his text<sup>9</sup>), thus ⟨∪ –⟩; and it is noteworthy that ∪ – has prevailed in the suggestions proposed for 369<sup>10</sup>) but in fact without particular reason, since the metrical colon of the enoplian paroemiac, in its monosyllabic opening<sup>11</sup>) (which is the case here), is anceps. Thus the reading κτίσας, though an epic form, should not necessarily be changed.

With regard to Conington's suggestion ⟨φίλοις⟩, ex M<sup>2</sup> τοῖς ἐκείνων, some attention should be paid to A. Bowen<sup>12</sup>) (on 369) in that 'the scholiast's understanding does not have to be right'; he, moreover, does not think that 'the murderers should have been slain by their (ἐκείνων) φίλοι' but that 'a reflexive is needed.' ... For an account of suggestions about the two missing syllables – and an evaluation – see Garvie ad loc.

Some translate as though something like ⟨ὥς τὴν⟩ were missing: 'so that' (Verrall, Thomson), 'in such a fashion that' (Lloyd-Jones). But (a) Verrall does not note in his text (or otherwise discuss) the two missing syllables; (b) Thomson has (Conington's) φίλοις in his text – punctuating with a comma after δαμῆναι(?); (c) Lloyd-Jones does not have a text. Further,

8) See Garvie, pp. 124, 358.

9) κτίσας is also accepted by Sier, who mentions (in his app. crit.) that it is a correction of Robortello.

10) To those mentioned by Garvie add "supplere possis σὺ δ' αὖ vel ὁ δ' αὖ", Blaydes (Advers. in Aesch., ad 369).

11) Cf. A. M. Dale, *The Lyric Metres...*, Cambridge 1968<sup>2</sup>, p. 33 (and n. 2), also pp. 27, 172, 217.

12) Aeschylus: Choephoroi, Bristol Class. Press, Bristol 1986.

Tucker has ⟨δαίμοσιν⟩ and explains ‘the infin. is consecutive (i.e. ὥστε τινὰ πυνθάνεσθαι)’<sup>13</sup>. But the syntax of this is to say the least doubtful.

My own suggestion would be ⟨ὥς τὴν⟩, making good sense in this context. The metrical scheme of ὥς τὴν corresponds to the reading κτίσσας, which should be retained.

τινὰ (370) varies as regards the specification of the person it signifies, according to the different interpretations given. Bowen (probably on the ground that the killing would take place elsewhere – at Troy?) comments that ‘τινὰ conceals Electra herself, imagining she could hear the news of the deed far from it (πρόσω), safe in Argos’<sup>14</sup>.

Yet τινὰ would better be understood as a more general reference including Orestes and Electra herself, since she as well would participate in Orestes’ venture (cf. τῶν μὲν ἄρωγοί, 376). However, in this case πρόσω πυνθάνεσθαι should be explained also with reference to her, as follows: If Orestes’ πόνοι started as soon as he learnt of his father’s murder, Electra had to face the πόνοι in the very palace of Argos well in advance (cf. 444–9). Accordingly by her wish El. would mean ‘would that one might learn of both Klyt. and Aeg. being killed far from all this’, i.e. from all that she first had to undergo at close quarters. In this case τινὰ, exactly equivalent to the English *one*, could imply both Orestes and Electra, though each one from a different aspect.

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13) Cf. Sier (p. 127 init.), with ref. to οὕτως: “Es könnte, wie Ahrens a.O. (zu 366) annahm, auf den Konsekutivsatz in 370 vorausweisen (οὕτως mit konsekutivischem Inf. ohne ὥστε E. Hyps. fr. 60 I 45 f., Bond p. 111), doch bleibt das aufgrund der Lücke in 369 unsicher.” In his text Sier leaves the gap in 369 unfilled; in his comment he mentions what he thinks as plausible conjectures, adding (ibid. p. 127 fin.): “denkbar etwa auch ⟨ὥστ’ ἔν⟩ (dann κτίσσας in 351), wodurch οὕτως enger an 369–71 gebunden würde”; cf. also his app. crit.

14) So also Sier: “daß einer in der Ferne von ihrem Todesgeschick erfahren könnte, . . .”, p. 127, where under ‘einer’ Electra is meant (cf. his comm. below).