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THE AGAMEMNON OF AESCHYLUS

A REVISED TEXT

WITH

INTRODUCTION, VERSE TRANSLATION, AND CRITICAL NOTES

BY

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INTRODUCTION

THE PLAY'S THE THING

If the function of Tragedy be paradoxical, the production of pleasure by the excitation of certain painful emotions, his function who would edit a tragic drama may be conceived and defined in simpler terms. The pity and fear excited by the story may achieve the end in view; vexation and bewilderment produced whether by a corrupt text or by the intrinsic difficulties of Greek idiom are far from pleasurable and detract from such achievement. The editor's task therefore, as I conceive it, is first to present the text, if possible, in the form in which Aeschylus wrote it or, failing that, in such form as would have given unalloyed pleasure to an audience of Aeschylus' contemporaries; and secondly to provide an English rendering faithful in all respects to the thought of the original, conservative of its general form and specific imagery, and sufficiently literal to enable the less proficient scholar to appreciate its construction and idiom. My notes are intended to subserve only these two purposes, by justifying departures from the traditional text or by explaining the emphasis and the *nuance* of a particular word or phrase.

While thus formulating and defining my own task, I would not have it thought that I am by implication criticising adversely the projects which other editors have proposed to themselves and executed. Wecklein's edition of Aeschylus is an indispensable piece of work conceived on wholly different lines. He prints lines which fail both of metre and of meaning; he provides no translation, and no commentary of his own such as might in some measure replace translation. His work was conceived as a collection of the available material for the reconstruction of the text, the variant readings of all MSS., the scholia, and the conjectural emendations of a host of scholars. The result is a monument of invaluable labour, but not a thing of beauty nor an instrument of pleasure.

Then at the other extreme we have such an edition of the

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Agamemnon as would Headlam's have been if he had lived to complete it, a work comparable in conception with another uncompleted work, Neil's edition of the *Knights* of Aristophanes. In these the commentary assumes a larger importance than I seek to give to mine. It illumines the dark places of the text, without doubt; but it tends to lavish such wealth of illumination as may dazzle and distract. The text has become in some measure a focus of wide erudition and an occasion of scholarly discourse; an alien pleasure is infused, fortifying, it may be, or diluting, but certainly varying, the pleasure proper to pure drama.

Intermediate between these extremes in intention and scope lies Verrall's edition; for his whole interest is in Aeschylus' story and in the manner in which it is told. But in execution it is an edition *sui generis* and not comparable with those of other editors who have set before themselves the same aim,—that of lucid interpretation and strictly relevant comment. For in analysing the story Verrall found himself confronted with so wilful and glaring a discrepancy, as he regarded it, that he argued the whole plot to have been totally misconceived from Byzantine times onward. This discrepancy is one of time; the herald and, after him, Agamemnon are made to arrive within an hour or two of the sighting of the beacon, whereas the passage from Troy to Argos, even without a storm to hinder the ship, would necessarily occupy some days.[1] Verrall builds up on the foundation of this discrepancy a theory that Aeschylus' audience were familiar with a version of the story in which Aegisthus, somewhere in the neighbourhood but not in Argos, was having a watch kept for Agamemnon's return; that on Agamemnon's arrival off the coast Aegisthus caused a beacon to be lighted on Mount Arachnaeum as a signal to Clytemnestra and his partisans in the city; and that a long-prepared political intrigue, supported largely by the young

[1] Verrall, I should note, postulates "several weeks." No one will concede so large an assumption. *εἰ δέ κεν εὐπλοίην δώῃ κλυτὸς ἐννοσίγαιος | ἤματί κε τριτάτῳ Φθίην ἐρίβωλον ἱκοίμην* (*Iliad* IX. 362). Two days to Phthia; not more than four to Argos even with a storm on one night. Thus Homer: but in the fifth century B.C. greater speeds were attained. According to Xenophon (*Hell.* II. i. 30) Theopompus of Miletus in 405 B.C. brought the news of the victory of Aegospotami from the Hellespont to Sparta "on the third day" (*τριταῖος*).

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men in the city who had grown up during the ten years' war, and suspected but hardly combated by the Elders of the city, then took its normal course—the murder of the king and the proclamation of Aegisthus as tyrant. Clytemnestra's graphic description of the chain of beacons therefore, so argues Verrall, was designed only to throw dust in the eyes of the Elders; she knew that Agamemnon had already reached the coast; they were to picture him still at Troy,—her next speech elaborates that picture,—and so believing were to be lulled into a false security, not knowing that the critical hour was near.

To me the whole structure of this theory appears fantastic, and its foundation insecure.

First let it be noted that there is no inherent improbability in the use of beacons for signalling by the route which Clytemnestra names. The longest stage, from Athos to North Euboea, is about a hundred miles; and I myself have seen from a boat in the latitude of N. Euboea the snow on the peak of Athos flushed by the setting sun. A beacon therefore at night on Athos would be easily seen in the clearer atmosphere, some thousands of feet above sea-level, by watchers on the heights of Euboea.

Verrall grants that this would be possible "on a clear night," and that seafaring people like the Athenians knew the distances involved "and their relation to the purpose of a beacon." But, he argues, they would have known too that the use of the beacons might "be defeated by clouds at any point in a traject of one hundred miles." And so, he concludes, "the statement that a beacon-signal was transmitted in the midst of a storm from Athos to Euboea stood to the knowledge and habits of Athens then in much the same relation as the statement that a steamer ran across the Atlantic in one day would stand to the knowledge and habits of Liverpool now."[1]

Granted: but no such statement is ever made in the play. Clytemnestra certainly makes, and the Chorus accept, the assumption that there has been no delay in the transmission of the news by her chain of beacons, and that the fall of Troy may therefore have taken place in the night just past. But, when that assump-

[1] Introd. p. xxii (1904 Edit.)

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tion is made, no one yet knows that there has been a storm in the Aegean: that information is brought by the herald afterwards. We have been led rather by the watchman at the opening to picture the night as clear, with the stars, which he has conned so often, visible overhead. Had the night been thick, and had Clytemnestra's whole account of the beacons been, as Verrall supposes, a mere fabrication designed to mislead the Chorus, then indeed her inventive powers would hardly deserve admiration and the gullibility of the Chorus would be incredible. Verrall, in trying to fasten upon Clytemnestra a statement which she never makes, incidentally represents the Chorus as dolts.

But if the assumption that Troy had been taken overnight presents no difficulty at this stage of the play, what of that greater discrepancy which manifests itself, according to Verrall, at a later stage—the shortness of the interval between the sighting of the beacon and the arrival of the herald? It is time to turn to the crucial passage (*vv.* 278–9). The question asked by the Chorus is

ποίου χρόνου δὲ καὶ πεπόρθηται πόλις;

not *πότε ἐπορθήθη*, and Clytemnestra's answer is

τῆς νῦν τεκούσης φῶς τόδ' εὐφρόνης λέγω,

not *τῇ νῦν τεκούσῃ*. With this point of idiom I have dealt in my note on the passage, and I believe that I am right in rendering the lines as in my translation:

> Cho. Since when in sooth hath Ilium lain despoiled?
> Cly. Since that same night, I say, whence sprang this dawn.

Clytemnestra's answer, that is, is conditioned by the knowledge she possesses; the beacon-message had been received just before dawn; she can safely therefore answer that Troy has been in Achaean hands 'since this past night.' And as soon as the next question was put, and elicited the information that a beacon-signal was her source of knowledge, it must immediately have been manifest to the Chorus (and to an Athenian audience) that all she knew was the fact, and not the precise date, of the fall of Troy: dates cannot be signalled by bonfires.

Aeschylus then did not mislead his audience at this point; the message transmitted by beacons during the night was evidence

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that Troy had been in the hands of the Argives as from that night,—but there was no evidence one way or the other as to whether it had been in their hands from an earlier date. Clytemnestra, it is true, in her excitement assumes quite naturally in the two speeches which follow that her train of beacons has been operated successfully and without delay; but this quite obviously is surmise only. She surmises all the detail of the kindling of the beacons; she knows only the route. She surmises afterwards all the happenings in the captured city; she knows nothing of them. She is here surmising similarly the date; she knows only the fact of Troy's fall. And what of the Chorus? They accept at first Clytemnestra's *πιστὰ τεκμήρια* (*v.* 352) and her surmises, date and all. "Hail, Zeus our king, hail, gladdening night, that hast won for our host great glories,..."—so begins their ode of joy and thanksgiving. But how does it end? With suggestions (*vv.* 475—487) that it may be a false rumour after all; that it would be childish to be too much elated over a beacon-signal; that a woman is too ready to believe what she hopes. And immediately thereafter, when the herald is sighted, the train of thought is still the same: "soon we shall know whether the beacon-message is true..."—*whether* Troy is fallen, not *when* it fell.

Yes, the Chorus—and an Athenian audience—knew enough about the transmission of messages by beacons to be chary of accepting them till confirmation was received. Delay in transmission was a small matter; there was a graver risk of erroneous transmission; any one beacon in the whole chain might be kindled accidentally or mistakenly. Nothing is easier on a dark night than to mistake a small fire lit by some shepherd at a few miles distance for a larger fire which you are hoping to see lit at some greater distance. During the War I used fires on occasion at night for passing messages in the Aegean, and can answer for that from my own experience. The Chorus were well justified in revising their hasty acceptance of Clytemnestra's assurance and in questioning whether indeed Troy had fallen.

And, once reassured by the herald, what further interest had they in the beacon-message? If they had given it another thought, they would have said to themselves, "Obviously it was delayed in

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transmission; at this time of year (*ἀμφὶ Πλειάδων δύσιν*, *v.* 826) a continuance of clear and cloudless nights is not to be expected"; and when the herald went on to describe the great storm which had wrecked the fleet, they would have known that visibility had in fact been bad. But would they even have given the matter a thought? The alternating excitements which follow—joy in the victory achieved, distress at the calamity which had befallen the returning fleet, joy again at the entry of Agamemnon, dismay caused by the tension of the scene between him and Clytemnestra, pity excited by Cassandra and perplexity induced by her prophecies, horror at the final catastrophe—would not these emotions automatically exclude from their minds the paltry question how the beacon-message came to be delayed in transmission? Indeed, had they even wished to investigate the matter, there was no one whom they could ask; the herald obviously would know no more about the beacons than they.

I conclude then that there is no glaring discrepancy in the story such as Verrall believed himself to have exposed, and holding, as I do, that his whole theory of the plot is built on the sands, I need not examine further its superstructure. But on the same grounds on which I reject Verrall's theory I reject also Headlam's counter-theory that there was a break in the play after the second chorus (at *v.* 487) and that an interval lasting some days is there postulated. That chorus ends with expressions of incredulity concerning the beacon-message, and the speech immediately following (which Headlam, be it noted, attributes also to the Chorus) continues in the same vein:

τάχ' εἰσόμεσθα λαμπάδων...παραλλαγάς,
εἴτ' οὖν ἀληθεῖς εἴτ' ὀνειράτων δίκην
τερπνὸν τόδ' ἐλθὸν φῶς ἐφήλωσεν φρένας.

Here is obvious continuity of thought, and I cannot believe that Aeschylus intended his Chorus to continue their talk after an interval of some days as if it had never been interrupted. Headlam, I think, took Verrall's criticism of the plot too seriously. I regard Verrall's Introduction as an amazing *tour de force* in the perversion of a simple story which presents no real difficulty and involves no real discrepancy.

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But when I reject the theory developed in Verrall's Introduction I am bound also to reject many of the readings and many of the renderings which he accepts or proposes, as being coloured or, as I regard it, discoloured by his preconceived theory. I will give but two examples out of many available. After verse 1520 the MSS. give the words *οὔτ' ἀνελεύθερον οἶμαι θάνατον τῷδε γενέσθαι*, which most editors strike out as an interpolation arising from a marginal comment by some rather foolish annotator. Verrall retains it and assigns it to "one of the queen's party," who, "indignant at the repeated accusation of setting up a *τυραννίς*" (for Verrall extracts that meaning from *ἀνελεύθερον κοίταν*) "begins to answer the elders on this point, *This man, methinks, is not the victim of despotism, nor*—" but is then interrupted by Clytemnestra, "who is in no mood for such a discussion." The second example shall be from the very end of the play. Verrall's own summary of the plot ends thus: "This is too much for the friends of the king" (i.e. the Chorus). "Stung by their taunts Aegisthus calls on his ruffians to commence a massacre, when the queen, with hypocritical clemency, interposes to prevent an impolitic cruelty which might yet have endangered the success. 'Less,' she says, 'than blood-shed will serve the occasion' (*vv.* 1654–1664). Accordingly the elders are led away to imprisonment; and with this final triumph of Clytemnestra the scene comes to an end." Turn now to the admittedly corrupt lines (1657–8) on which the suggestion of imprisonment is based. Verrall in his text merely reproduces the MSS.:

> *στείχετε δ' οἱ γέροντες πρὸς δόμους πεπρωμένους τούσδε*
> *πρὶν παθεῖν ἔρξαντες καιρόν· χρῆν τάδ' ὡς ἐπράξαμεν.*

And here is his note thereon: "1657–58 are beyond restoration: *ἔρξαντα* g, h: M probably had *ἔρξαντας*, as Mr Housman infers, but it is doubtful whether even this *ἔρξαντας*, or the word which it represents, is from *ἔρδω*, *ῥέζω* or from *εἴργω*. The general sense may be

> *στείχετ' ἤδη τοὺς γέροντας πρὸς δόμους πεπρωμένους*
> *πρὶν παθεῖν ἔρξοντες· ἀρκεῖν χρῆν τάδ' ὡς ἐπράξαμεν,*

'go at once and take them to prison before they come to harm; we should have been content with what was done,' an order

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addressed to her attendants and spoken as if she would gladly save the elders from their own folly. The expression *δόμους πεπρωμένους*, *destined dwelling-place*, is perhaps not inapplicable to a prison. All however is uncertain." This, on Verrall's own showing, is weak evidence on which to state that the play ends with the incarceration of the Elders, and weak evidence on which to impute to Clytemnestra 'hypocritical clemency.'

Indeed I judge the presentment of Clytemnestra very differently. From the moment when she speaks the lines (1372–3)

πολλῶν πάροιθεν καιρίως εἰρημένων
τἀναντί' εἰπεῖν οὐκ ἐπαισχυνθήσομαι

up to the end of the play, I can discern no trace of hypocrisy in her character. There is hatred still and vindictiveness—even towards the dead; but there is grandeur and dignity and genuine conviction in her claim to be the minister of Justice. Even the Chorus are shaken in their first condemnation of her as a murderess; *δύσμαχα δ' ἐστὶ κρῖναι*, they confess (*v.* 1561); and then, when Aegisthus at length appears, the contrast between him and the queen regains for her in some measure the respect or even admiration of the audience. The very lines which Verrall quotes as evidence of her 'hypocritical clemency' are (whether in the form in which Headlam restores them or in that which I have suggested in preference) the best evidence of her true queenliness:

στείχετ', αἰδοῖοι γέροντες, πρὸς δόμους, Πεπρωμένης,
πρὶν παθεῖν, στέρξαντες οὖρον· χρὴν τάδ' ὡς ἐπράξαμεν.

"Ye reverend signors, get you to your homes;
Tempt not your fate, but go your way resigned
To Destiny, howe'er she blow; we wrought
As she ordained..."

There is nothing here but courtesy and dignity; and it is not until the Elders have filed out, in obedience to her, though still with defiance and abuse of Aegisthus,—it is not till then that she turns to Aegisthus and by a word of quiet contempt for the Elders' 'feeble snarling' pacifies Aegisthus too.

Though then I set before me the same simple object as Verrall, namely the elucidation of the play and nothing more, the execution of my purpose, seeing that I reject *in toto* his theory of the

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plot, will inevitably be widely different. And when I approach the reconstruction of the text, there too I find that my opinion is directly opposed to his. "Continual study," he writes in his Preface (p. viii, 1904 edition), "strengthens my conviction on one not unimportant point in relation to Aeschylus, the substantial integrity of the text...Although this edition adheres more closely to the MSS. than its predecessors in modern times, my revision, were I to revise it now, would tend rather to closer adhesion than the other way." My own judgement, based also, I may venture to claim, on long-continued study, is the reverse; I find every justification for the opinion pronounced by Sidgwick[1]: "quamquam enim CCCL iam annos (usque a Turnebo Robortello Victorio) doctorum labore arte iudicio Aeschyli textus indies fit correctior, ea tamen vel optimi libri est corruptio, ut permulta hodie restare sit fatendum quae neque recte tradita neque coniectura adhuc fuerint sanata." And the verdict of Wilamowitz-Moellendorff is, in its special bearing upon the *Agamemnon*, of even greater severity: "ut summam faciamus: Choephoros et Supplices uni deberi Mediceo dudum constat; Agamemnonis et Eumenidum est quidem altera memoria, sed adeo corrupta, ut exigui usus sit; itaque Agamemnonis ea pars, quam deficiente Mediceo haec sola tradit, tam incerto nititur fundamento, ut aperta damna coniciendo reparari vix possint, alia ne animadvertantur quidem."[2] Indeed when I bear in mind the fact that these last words of Wilamowitz-Moellendorff apply to the whole of the *Agamemnon* with the exception of lines 1–310 and 1067–1159, I feel that there is little cause for apology even if my estimate of the number of passages 'neque recte tradita neque coniectura adhuc sanata' is, as my *tabula lectionum* will show, somewhat higher than Sidgwick's.

It is rather my attempt to restore to readable condition a text so admittedly corrupt that may appear to savour of the presumptuous. Had I been invited, say twenty years ago, to produce a new edition of the *Agamemnon*, I should certainly have hesitated, probably refused. I should have said to myself, "Here is a play which has been studied, criticised, and edited as thoroughly

[1] Sidgwick, *Aeschyli Tragoediae*, *Praefatio ad init.*
[2] Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Aeschyli Tragoediae*, Introd. p. xxii.

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as any that is extant. Here in this last century alone are the names of Hermann, Blomfield, Klausen, Enger, Karsten, Schneidewin, Davies, Kennedy, Paley, Wecklein, Weil, Verrall, and Headlam—and how many other equal or lesser luminaries?—closely associated with the criticism and elucidation of this text. What hope can I have of adding to the results of their labours anything of such note or value as will justify a new edition?"

But this volume has not come into being as the outcome of any such invitation. It has rather grown up of its own accord. The *Agamemnon* has always been among my favourite plays. I have lectured on it many times. My criticisms and my notes have accumulated and, I hope, matured. My translation has been written and re-written at intervals during a number of years. If I am bold now in risking comparison with that list of great scholars, I have at any rate not been hasty; and if my conception of an editor's functions is more adventurous than some would approve, it has at any rate been fully considered. Not least among Verrall's merits as a scholar, in my esteem, was the fact that he had the courage of his convictions; and if his convictions provoked a measure of friendly controversy, what of it? Such controversy is not detrimental to classical learning but may *θείᾳ τύχῃ* be a stimulus.

It is in that spirit that I would commit and commend to the mercies of my critics this experiment.

What then is my conception of an editor's duties in his treatment of the text? In general terms, as I have already said, to present the text, if possible, in the form in which Aeschylus wrote it—all will agree so far—or, failing that, in such form as would have given unalloyed pleasure to an audience of Aeschylus' contemporaries. It is in the execution of the second part of this project that the editor's troubles lie. In an extreme case such as occurs in *vv.* 1324–5, where the MSS. give

τοῖς ἐμοῖς τιμαόροις
ἐχθροῖς φονεῦσι τοῖς ἐμοῖς τίνειν ὁμοῦ,

even the most conservative of critics may condone the action of an editor who declines to print a meaningless text and supplies in its place something which, if only because it makes sense, is

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superior to the reading of the MSS.; nor should it be difficult in such a case to devise a line which would not have offended an Athenian audience. But where there is a divergence of view among scholars, some maintaining that the traditional text is tenable and others denying it, there at once the editor exposes himself to attack if he introduce any emendation.

But, apart from this definition of my purpose, let me state a little more explicitly the position which I take, first as regards textual criticism in general, and secondly as regards the textual criticism of the *Agamemnon* in particular.

In the course of some thirty years of teaching I have found myself gradually more convinced that editors are apt to err on the side of conservatism. And there are, I think, two very human reasons for this. First there is our natural disinclination to pit our personal judgements against the authority of the MSS. except where there is some quite obvious error, a defect of metre or of elementary grammar, patent to every reader. An emendation based on bolder criticism will perhaps be admitted to the text if a Hermann or a Porson can be named as responsible for it; but otherwise there is a tendency, I think, *τὰ ἀκίνητα μὴ κινεῖν* and to dedicate a greater ingenuity to justifying a dubious text than would be needed for emending it. Ingenuity in defending the indefensible appears to me to have been the last infirmity of not a few scholarly minds. And the second reason for this conservative tendency may be sheer familiarity with the traditional text. Just as a choir chants unperturbedly, "Or ever your pots be made hot with thorns, so let indignation vex him, even as a thing that is raw," so some phrase of a Greek chorus to which we are inured may strike on our ears with so accustomed a sound that we no longer question its sense. In more than one passage of the *Agamemnon* it was not until I was faced with the difficulty of translating it into coherent English that I realised to the full its obscurity or irrelevance.

Passing next to the particular text with which I am now concerned, I ask myself first, "How reliable are the manuscripts?" Here, I assume, the general trend of editors' opinion may be accepted. Sidgwick, whose text is of a moderately conservative

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type, either indicates some loss or corruption, or admits some specific correction, at roughly three hundred and sixty points; and if my own text, which is not conservative, would make the figure about ten per cent. higher, there is still no very substantial difference in our estimate of the manuscripts' reliability. An average of one error, either large or small, in every four or five lines of the play represents the measure of the accumulated inaccuracies of the copyists.

The divergence of our views is concerned rather with the latitude of criticism and emendation which an editor may exercise in dealing with such manuscripts. Sidgwick[1] estimated his duties thus,—"ut...ubi omnes (codices) viderentur errare, optimis coniecturis ita uterer ut certiora modo nec longius a libris aberrantia in textum asciscerem, probabilia in apparatu critico commendarem, cetera quamvis ingeniosa omitterem."

Now I am not criticising here Sidgwick's execution of his task; he allowed himself, I should say, a little more latitude than this quotation would suggest; I am criticising merely the typically conservative policy which he enunciated. For what in effect is the principle advocated? If the words "certiora nec longius a libris aberrantia" mean anything, they mean this,—that the probability of a conjecture is to be tested by the *ductus literarum* only. Firstly, that is, there would be no diagnosis of the malady from which the text in a given passage was suffering: the primary question whether an erroneous reading is due to the incorporation of a gloss or to a misreading of the true text would not be considered. And, secondly, any operation performed would be only of the mildest character: indeed it would amount to little more than such manicure as will restore orthography and such pedicure as will remove superficial deformities of metre. The editor who follows Sidgwick's policy will not account himself a surgeon. Rather he will treat the emendations offered by others as a number of exhibits which he has to classify and to judge by a single criterion; he will classify them as petty, medium, or large, in terms of their deviation from what the scribe erroneously wrote; and having so classified them he will adjudge prizes to the petty, award

[1] *loc. cit.*

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(in a footnote) an honourable mention to the medium, and disqualify the large,—with the fantastic result that the place of honour, a place in his text, will be shared by minor corrections and major corruptions. Larger emendations, which, just because the traditional text of a given passage is gravely corrupt, deviate more widely from it, may, it is admitted, be 'quamvis ingeniosa'; syntax, idiom, balance of thought, relevance of dialogue, may clamour for their adoption; but no: if the scribe has made a blunder of the first magnitude, *stet*!

Let me propound an example. At *vv.* 559—562 the MSS. give us:

εὐναὶ γὰρ ἦσαν δαΐων πρὸς τείχεσιν·
ἐξ οὐρανοῦ γὰρ κἀπὸ γῆς λειμώνιαι
δρόσοι κατεψέκαζον, ἔμπεδον σίνος
ἐσθημάτων, τιθέντες ἔνθηρον τρίχα.

The point with which I am here concerned is the masculine τιθέντες following on the feminine δρόσοι, and I choose this example because it involves a matter not of literary judgement, which may vary, but of grammatical fact, which is constant. "The masculine participle τιθέντες," says Paley, "seems best explained on the view of most commentators, that he (Aeschylus) was thinking of ὄμβροι ἐξ οὐρανοῦ rather than δρόσοι ἀπὸ γῆς," and both Verrall and Headlam concur in this view. Are we to infer that an Athenian audience, on hearing the word τιθέντες, cast back in their minds to ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, while the actor continued to speak his lines, and whispered to themselves or their neighbours ὑπακουστέον τὸ 'ὄμβροι'? I distrust these *subaudienda*. Yet these same editors, or some of them, are offended by ἐξ οὐρανοῦ γάρ. The γάρ, they say, is illogical, and they replace it on Pearson's suggestion by δέ. Why strain at a gnat and swallow a camel? Or why indeed swallow this camel at all? If ἐξ οὐρανοῦ γὰρ is illogical in the text, it may still be logical as a gloss, and that gloss may have ousted that which τιθέντες presupposes, the nominative masculine of some substantive. In other words one emendation may cure both defects of the passage, the logical and the grammatical. I suggest therefore that ἐξ οὐρανοῦ γὰρ is a gloss which has ousted ὄμβροι δὲ δῖοι, and that δῖοι was the word to which that marginal note was originally affixed.

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Suppose then that an editor who accepts the principle stated by Sidgwick is faced here with a choice between writing δὲ in place of γὰρ and ὄμβροι δὲ δῖοι in place of ἐξ οὐρανοῦ γάρ. Which will he adopt? If he be true to his principle he must prefer the smaller change; "a first-class emendation," he will say, "fairly to be classed among 'certiora nec longius a libris aberrantia'; for other instances of the same corruption see Porson on *Med.* 34, 1083": while as regards the bolder suggestion he will murmur perhaps "ingeniosum" (if I may be pardoned in assuming this much of compliment) "sed longius a libris aberrans," and so murmuring will incorporate in his text the minor emendation, and will leave as an example of Aeschylus' peculiar style the participle τιθέντες in disaccord with its subject δρόσοι.

To such a principle then I cannot subscribe; the integrity of the manuscripts does not appear to me such as to counsel so conservative a policy. And in defence of my more radical treatment of many passages which have long presented difficulties and excited suspicion (together with just a few in which I seem to myself to find new cause for suspicion) I will adventure the thesis that the textual criticism of a great masterpiece, given an equal degree of integrity or corruption in the MSS., should theoretically be undertaken with greater assurance than that of some second-rate production.

Socrates, in a famous passage of the *Phaedo* (97 C, D), depicts the delight with which he first heard Anaxagoras' conception of mind as the force which orders all things and is the cause of all things. "I assumed," he says, "that, if it is mind which orders things, it must order them collectively and dispose them severally in whatever is the best way; if therefore a man should wish to ascertain why each thing is produced or perishes or exists in a particular way, all he need discover is in what way it is best for that thing to exist or be affected or act; and that on this reckoning a man had nothing else to do but to enquire, with regard both to mind and to the rest of creation, what was best and finest." Similarly I hold that in this play the master-mind of Aeschylus so dealt with its creations as to order them collectively and dispose them severally in the best possible way; and that the textual critic

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(the ideal one, *bien entendu*), if a doubt should arise as to the authenticity of the text, would have nothing else to do but to enquire what reading or arrangement was best and finest; whereas, if he were dealing with an author of lesser genius, he might with justice say, 'This is inferior work, but not so far below the author's general level as to provoke suspicion.'

"Nothing else to do"! There is abundant irony in that phrase. The principle may be admirable, but the application of it by any other than a very Socrates among critics, how arduous and how controversial! Or must I first defend the principle itself? Very briefly perhaps.

When Aeschylus composed the *Agamemnon*, he was in the full maturity of his power and experience as a playwright. The conditions of production were such that every phrase of a play had to be immediately intelligible as it was spoken, or, harder still, as it was sung, at the first hearing. The audience, whose general education had been based on Homer and on the early lyric poets, was in the highest degree sensitive and critical. And finally that audience having heard this play under those conditions awarded Aeschylus the prize.

Those are the undisputed facts: what is the inference from them? This at any rate, I suppose,—that the Athenian audience did not find the play as they heard it so full of obscurities or irrelevancies as we find it in its traditional form. But, it may be argued, this is our fault, not the fault of our text. To that argument there can of course be no final answer; but for my own part I do not so disparage the classical learning of the past or of the present as to hold that phrases which were lucid at the first hearing to an Athenian audience would at all frequently have remained a source of perplexity to the generations of scholars who have studied them at leisure from the time when the first scholia on them were written down to the present day. When therefore I find a given passage annotated from the earliest days and subjected to varying explanations and varying emendations by one critic after another, I incline generally to the opinion that their chorus of dissatisfaction indicates a corrupt passage, and that emendation and not explanation is required.

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There then is the principle which I adopt, and my justification of it. What of its application? Only the wisdom of Socrates, as I have said, would be entitled to pronounce on that which is absolutely 'best and finest'; the ordinary textual critic must be content to propose that which on mature consideration he deems 'better and finer' than a text which he believes corrupt. But he need not abandon his principles because in practice he fails to live up to them. If 'the best and finest' constitute an ideal objective which he cannot hope to reach, yet 'the better and finer' represents a nearer approach thereto than the bad and ugly. If he cannot hope to determine what Aeschylus must have written, he will do better to print what Aeschylus may or might have written than what he is convinced Aeschylus did not write.

Indeed the application of the principle in its negative aspect—in the sense, that is, in which 'the choice of the better' involves 'the rejection of the worse'—will provoke in many cases little or no controversy. A number of passages of the *Agamemnon* are by universal or almost universal suffrage condemned as corrupt; in others, though some champions of the MS. text are found, yet the very divergence of the interpretations which they offer may, as I have said, be used as an argument that those passages as they now stand would have mystified an Athenian audience too. In all such cases 'the rejection of the worse' will involve me in no censure. The few passages in which I have relied on my own judgement in wishing to eject what previous editors have admitted to the text cannot be reviewed collectively in an introduction but are dealt with individually in my notes.

It is in my notes too and individually that I must deal with the positive emendations which I accept from others or propose myself. But it may be convenient that I should state here how far I have gone in pursuance of my aim and in compliance with the principle which I have advocated. That aim is to present the text in such form as would have given unalloyed pleasure to an audience of Aeschylus' contemporaries,—a text which now too may be read with pleasure and without pause, a clean text, that is, free from obelisks which stigmatize phrases as corrupt and from brackets which intern words as alien and suspect. And the

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principle which I advocate is, in its negative aspect, that we should not accept as Aeschylean, in a play produced in the maturity of his genius, obscurities and irrelevancies unbecoming a masterpiece, and, in its positive aspect, that we should for the same reason attribute to him only the best and finest, or at any rate the better and the finer estimated to the best of our own very fallible judgements.

Here then is a brief summary of the deviations from the text of the MSS. which this conception of an editor's task has led me to make. I have judged that text faulty in lesser or greater degree at about four hundred points,—a figure a little in excess, as I have said, of Sidgwick's estimate. I have accepted at these points about three hundred emendations proposed by others, and have added to them about a hundred suggestions of my own,—an average exceeding one in every twenty lines,—but very unevenly distributed; for, as regards the iambics at any rate, I consider that the latter part of the play has sustained more textual damage than the earlier part. These emendations of my own include the complete reconstruction of two lines admittedly corrupt (*vv.* 1172 and 1325) in a different sense from that which the *débris* in the MSS. would at first suggest; the excision of lines at three points (after *vv.* 1261, 1274, and 1305) as being inferior variants wrongly incorporated in the text side by side with the genuine version; the insertion of complete, though as it happens short, lines (after *vv.* 794 and 1005) to fill acknowledged gaps; several transpositions, as of *vv.* 968, 1230, 1312–13, and 1649, in addition to the interchange of two speeches of the Chorus (*viz.* 1625–7 and 1643–8) on which I propose to touch later; the attribution to the Greek language of six words not elsewhere found,—ἐγκαταπνεύει (*v.* 105), ἀγελακτόνου (*v.* 718), χραντήριον (*v.* 1092), θράγματα (*v.* 1166), φόνευτρα (*v.* 1325), ἀγκυλοτοίχου (*v.* 1539),—and of two forms equally unknown, ἐπεῦκτο (*v.* 288) and ἀκτήνασα as aorist participle of the rare word ἀκταίνω (*v.* 1230); the vindication of five more words as classical,—λαγίναν (*v.* 119) as the accusative of a substantive λαγίνης known only as a Byzantine by-form of λαγῶς,—ἀόπτοις (*v.* 141) in the active sense of 'sightless,' the word in its passive sense

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'unseen' being ascribed by Harpocration and others to Antiphon, —*προβουλευτάς* (*v.* 386), another word known otherwise only in Byzantine Greek,—*ἐριφύλλους* (*v.* 697), recorded by Hesychius, —and *ἄμηνιν* (*v.* 1450) used by Josephus; and the consequent exclusion from the Greek language of the harmless *ἀεξιφύλλους* (*v.* 697) and the monstrous *προβουλόπαις* (*v.* 386).

These then are my major aberrations, and in my notes will be found the pleas by which I seek to justify them. I must leave it to my critics to judge whether and where I have achieved in any degree my purpose of choosing the best.

Yet I would add just one word. 'The best' has many meanings; there is the best metrically, the best grammatically, the best logically, and the best in the literary or dramatic sense. And the degree of certainty or probability attainable varies widely with these several meanings. Metrically that which does not scan correctly is bad, and that which does scan correctly is good; there we are all agreed, and if by the change of *διά* into *διαί* the requisite metre is restored, we all make the correction in complete assurance that it is right. Logically again there are simple cases in which no one would hesitate; if in a dialogue the MSS. should accidentally invert the order of question and answer, we should all agree that answer preceding question is logically bad, and should transpose the lines accordingly; but there will be more debatable cases in which such transposition is a matter less of logical necessity than of literary effect. Grammatically,—for my own part here again I should say that in simple cases we might be certain what was best; *βλαβέντα* (*v.* 120) in would-be agreement with *λαγίναν γένναν* and *τιθέντες* (*v.* 562) in would-be agreement with *δρόσοι* are in my view grammatically bad, and 'the best' seems to me unprocurable by any expedient other than that of finding masculine substantives with which they may agree; but, inasmuch as the existing text in both passages has had its defenders, I must classify the grammatically best as less certain than the metrically best. And finally the best in the literary and dramatic sense,—who shall be qualified to pronounce judgement there? Metre has rules, logic has rules, grammar has rules, but the canons of literary taste

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and dramatic propriety are hard to formulate and hard to apply. So be it; if *τὸ ἄριστον καὶ τὸ βέλτιστον* is beyond attainment, the editor can but do his own best.

Yet faint hope does not excuse faint heart; and even where the traditional text has not hitherto fallen under any general suspicion, I have occasionally ventured to suggest that it falls so far short of the best as to require reconstruction.

I select as my example a proposed interchange in position of two short speeches of the Chorus (*vv.* 1625–7 and 1643–8). A transposition will best serve the purpose of illustrating my views for three reasons. First, whereas in cases of ordinary verbal corruption there may be a dozen or more emendations offered from which to choose, in the case of a proposed transposition the issue is simpler; either the existing position of the lines or the proposed new position is presumably right; no third alternative position is likely to be claimed for them. Secondly, any transposition may involve the choice of what is 'best' in more than one sense of that word, and this particular instance does so. Thirdly, no other type of emendation could illustrate so aptly the Socratic principle that the lines under consideration should be ordered collectively and disposed severally in the best possible way.

The passage affected as a whole is that in which occurs the altercation between the Chorus and Aegisthus (*vv.* 1612–1653). In what way then do I claim that the several speeches composing the passage are not ordered collectively for the best? In this: the passage opens with *Αἴγισθ', ὑβρίζειν ἐν κακοῖσιν οὐ σέβω*, and ends not merely with verbal *ὕβρις* but with a challenge to fight. I argue therefore that it would be dramatically best for the Chorus, provoked by Aegisthus, to be worked up stage by stage from dignified rebuke at the outset to the fighting mood in which they finish. But what do I find? The most abusive word which they flung at him, *γύναι*, forms the opening not of their last speech before swords are drawn, but of their second speech, and follows immediately upon their expressed intention of refraining from *ὕβρις*. On the other hand, if we make the interchange which I propose, we obtain thereby a sequence of speeches

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on the part of the Chorus which I should characterize thus: (1) *Αἴγισθ', ὑβρίζειν...*, dignified rebuke, and warning of punishment by the people; (2) *τί δὴ τὸν ἄνδρα τόνδ' ἀπὸ ψυχῆς κακῆς οὐκ αὐτὸς ἠνάριζες...*, expostulation, and prayer that Orestes may return and take vengeance; (3) *ὡς δὴ σύ μοι τύραννος Ἀργείων ἔσει...*, indignant protest that one who had lacked the courage to slay Agamemnon with his own hand should think now to usurp his place; (4) *γύναι...*, the last insult.

And what of the two speeches to be interchanged? Are they disposed severally in the MSS. in the best way?

The first (in the accepted order) runs:

γύναι, σὺ τοὺς ἥκοντας ἐκ μάχης νέον
οἰκουρὸς εὐνὴν ἀνδρὸς αἰσχύνων ἅμα
ἀνδρὶ στρατηγῷ τόνδ' ἐβούλευσας μόρον;

Criticism here is easy. The sentence contains a redundant ungoverned accusative in the first line, so that both grammatically and logically it falls a good deal short of the best. True, some editors accept Wieseler's *μένων* in place of *νέον*, and so procure at any rate correct syntax; but *μένων τοὺς ἥκοντας*, 'while you were waiting for those who have now come,' seems to me a little cumbrous in expression, and in any case an alternative remedy which leaves *νέον* unaltered may be considered. Let me present the lines with a different punctuation:

γύναι, σὺ τοὺς ἥκοντας ἐκ μάχης νέον;
οἰκουρὸς εὐνὴν ἀνδρὸς αἰσχύνων ἅμα
ἀνδρὶ στρατηγῷ τόνδ' ἐβούλευσας μόρον.

So punctuated they will make good sense as they stand, provided that a verb to complete the meaning of the first line can readily be supplied from the speech of Aegisthus to which the Chorus thus replies. Now there is one, and only one, sentence spoken by Aegisthus which would allow the required verb to be in thought repeated here:

τὸν δὲ μὴ πειθάνορα
ζεύξω βαρείαις—οὔτι μὴ σειραφόρον
κριθῶντα πῶλον....

So he threatens, and it is to that threat, I submit, that the Chorus rejoins:

γύναι, σὺ τοὺς ἥκοντας ἐκ μάχης νέον;

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If so, that which I am maintaining to be logically and grammatically best in the treatment of this line and the two which follow on it is to be attained by the same means as that which I have argued to be dramatically best in the treatment of the whole altercation.

Finally, what fault, if any, do I find in the second of the speeches which I wish to interchange? One obvious fault, which Heimsoeth long ago pointed out: the question with which it opens

τί δὴ τὸν ἄνδρα τόνδ' ἀπὸ ψυχῆς κακῆς
οὐκ αὐτὸς ἠνάριζες, ἀλλὰ σὺν γυνή...

has already been answered. That answer,

τὸ γὰρ δολῶσαι πρὸς γυναικὸς ἦν σαφῶς·
ἐγὼ δ' ὕποπτος ἐχθρὸς ἦ παλαιγενής,

is not, to my thinking, itself out of place, for it follows on the taunt

δρᾶσαι τόδ' ἔργον οὐκ ἔτλης αὐτοκτόνως.

But, when the answer has once been made, a further question which could only evoke the same answer would seem to be out of place; whereas, if this second speech be set back to the position which I would assign to it, the sequence becomes more natural,—first the question *τί δὴ τὸν ἄνδρα...*, evoking no direct reply from Aegisthus, but merely bluster and threats; then the substance of the question repeated by the Chorus in the form of a taunt,

δρᾶσαι τόδ' ἔργον οὐκ ἔτλης αὐτοκτόνως,

and then thirdly Aegisthus' reply,

τὸ γὰρ δολῶσαι πρὸς γυναικὸς ἦν σαφῶς.

I submit therefore that in the treatment of this speech too the transposition suggested will achieve what is logically best, the normal sequence of question and answer.

One point more. Whether we leave the speech beginning *γύναι* in its traditional place or assign that place to the other speech *τί δὴ τὸν ἄνδρα...*, the speech of Aegisthus which follows, *καὶ ταῦτα τἄπη κλαυμάτων ἀρχηγενῆ...*, will, so far as the general trend of this passage is concerned, fit equally well; it is merely an angry and threatening speech. But, if my transposition be

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adopted, there will result a literary embellishment of the lines which otherwise is absent. The speech beginning *τί δὴ τὸν ἄνδρα...* ends with the lines

> *Ὀρέστης ἆρά που βλέπει φάος,*
> *ὅπως κατελθὼν δεῦρο πρευμενεῖ τύχῃ*
> *ἀμφοῖν γένηται τοῖνδε παγκρατὴς φονεύς;*

and if Aegisthus then makes answer

> *καὶ ταῦτα τἆπη κλαυμάτων ἀρχηγενῆ,*

there will be no lack of tragic irony in that phrase: the *κλαύματα* which he means are those of the Chorus, but, if *ταῦτα τἆπη* be fulfilled and Orestes return, the *κλαύματα* will be Aegisthus' own. He is the unconscious prophet of his own fate.

If then it appear that alike the dramatic effect of this passage as a whole and the grammatical, logical, or literary qualities of its component parts are improved by a single emendation, I cannot treat these several improvements as fortuitous coincidences, but, following my principle, must assume that Aeschylus disposed the speeches in what (*me scilicet iudice*) is the best way; at any rate let this example suffice as an illustration of the method which I have adopted in approaching all the textual problems of this play.

Before passing from the topic of the text I should add that, in pursuance of my plan of providing a pleasurable text, I have substituted for the usual *apparatus criticus* at the foot of each page a *tabula lectionum* occupying a few pages by itself. In editions of Aeschylus such as those of Wecklein and Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, in which the compilation and comparison of all the minutiae of manuscript evidence is of the essence of their project, the convenience of presenting the variant readings page by page along with the text properly outweighs any aesthetic considerations; but none the less the *apparatus criticus* so presented does constitute a disfigurement. The purpose of this edition of a single play being different, a difference in the method of presentation too is, I hope, permissible. I am attempting no re-examination of the actual sources at first hand. I accept Wilamowitz' estimate of the value and relationships of the several manuscripts and his confirmation of Elmsley's opinion that all our existing manuscripts

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"are transcribed mediately or immediately from the same copy, which appears to have survived alone the general wreck of ancient literature." I judge too that the work of determining, on the evidence of existing variants, what must have been the readings in that common archetype, has been already carried out with some degree of finality. But if, after those documentary sources have been fully explored, there still remain abundant passages in which the existing manuscripts concur in attributing to Aeschylus words or phrases which in the opinion of scholars as a whole are either suspect or obviously corrupt—if, that is, the sole archetype from which they all derive was a document by no means impeccable—then, I think, there is still room for speculative criticism. Such criticism therefore as I can contribute will be based more largely on general linguistic and literary grounds than on divergences in particular manuscripts now existing, and will deal with the early corruptions which are attributable to that archetype and its predecessors more generally than with later vagaries in the transcription of existing manuscripts from that archetype.

In these circumstances I have felt myself free to dispense with a formal *apparatus criticus*. Where a reading preserved in one manuscript only, whether that manuscript be of greater or of lesser worth, is none the less generally accepted, the purpose of this edition will in no way be served by recording the aberrations of other manuscripts; and in the comparatively few instances in which the choice between two or more manuscript readings is less generally agreed, the point at issue can be discussed in my notes. It is rather for those passages in which my actual text tacitly treats the unanimous testimony of the manuscripts as wrong, that such special provision must be made as will enable me to show clearly what readings of the manuscripts have been rejected or modified, to record the emendations which I accept from others or myself propose in their place, and to acknowledge the authorship of these emendations. This purpose can, I think, be adequately served, without encroachment upon the pages devoted to text and translation, by means of a detached *tabula lectionum*.

Of my translation I will say but a few words. The difficulties

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of providing a rendering which will at once serve as an accurate interpretation of the text and possess withal some fluency and rhythm of its own are immense. The primary requisites of linguistic accuracy are, I assume, fidelity to the thought of the original in point of substance, stress, and sequence, and fidelity to the expression of that thought in point of the imagery employed. This latter requirement need involve no great difficulty. The imagery proper to English poetry is no less bold and varied than that of Greek; and if occasionally the lyrical profusion of Greek allows within the compass of a single sentence such accumulation of diverse imagery as would in English be condemned as confusion, a simple expedient is open to the translator; he may legitimately remodel the expression of thought by resolving a single complex sentence into a number of short and distinct English phrases each containing one of the series of images: the ear which would be offended by the combination of them in one sentence will, I think, if each be presented in a detached phrase, find no offence, but rather pleasure, in the rapidity of their succession. It is the other requirement,—fidelity to the thought of the original in point of substance, stress, and sequence,—which constitutes the greater and the more constant difficulty.

Fidelity here may easily be displaced by servility, reproduction of thought by verbal mimicry. The translator is not concerned with the specific words of the original except in so far as they are the vehicle of thought. He will not, because Greek is polysyllabic, seek out polysyllabic words in our own tongue, but will avail himself of that wealth of monosyllables which is the glory of English. He will not coin and utter strange compound adjectives in all the variety of the Greek models, but will see that such as he mints bear the impress of English idiom and ring true to English ears, while, for the rest, he gives the value of the original in simpler currency. And similarly, I think, he should set no great store on a word-for-word translation. Except in passages of very simple narrative where the words employed are such as must have exact counterparts in the vocabulary of all languages alike, to attempt a strictly verbal rendering is to put the translator's own language to servile employ wherein the free

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choice of the native phrase is superseded by the necessity of conforming to an alien idiom. The translator's function is not to provide a continuous glossary of the particular words that happen to form the text, verb for verb and substantive for substantive, but to reproduce in terms of one free and living language that which the poet produced in terms of another.

And what is it that the poet, the ποιητής, creates or produces? Not words; the words are the material in which he works,—the pigments with which he paints his picture, the flowers from which he weaves his garland,—but those flowers and pigments are of his choosing only and not of his own making. The produce of his genius is a composition and a fabric, which has for its minimum unit not the word but the phrase; for, if ever he seem to create a new word by fusing two others into one, that compound is only a phrase compressed.

If then the translator is seeking to reproduce that which the poet has produced, he should surely follow the poet's method and build up his translation not word by word but phrase by phrase. If it so happen that the words composing the Aeschylean phrase have English equivalents so exact and withal so mutually harmonious that from them may be composed an adequate phrase in his own tongue, let him count that an ἕρμαιον but not pride himself on the greater fidelity of his rendering; mere verbal resemblance proves nothing but a casual coincidence of vocabulary in the two languages; let him rather rejoice if in reproducing a phrase whose several components are less readily transmutable he achieve by less obvious means an equal fidelity of thought and spirit, and avoid that semblance of fidelity which is only servility,—a literal rendering in which 'the letter killeth.' A live paraphrase is better than a dead parody; and if my translation fail to preserve the happy mean between them, I should prefer it to err on the side of freedom.

But, if some measure of freedom may rightly be used on the linguistic side, it is even more essential in the sphere of metre. Just as the translator will not seek to imitate the construction, or to maintain the order of words, of a highly inflexional and synthetic language in a language of fixed forms and analytic

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tendency, so too, in the sphere of metre, he should not attempt to reproduce in English verse, which is governed in the main by the ordinary stresses of pronunciation, the metrical intricacies and varieties of a quantitative language in which every syllable has its own proper musical value.

No one, I imagine, would suggest that the iambics of tragic dialogue should be rendered in English by means of Alexandrines, on the ground that these too are *senarii* and subject to a pause comparable with the *caesura* of iambics. Elizabethan drama has settled once and for all the metre proper for this purpose. And in the rendering of Greek lyrics English must claim the same freedom. Any attempt to reproduce the exact metre must be a matter of artifice and convention; for (with all deference to some modern theories) the quantity of English words and of their syllables is not fixed. The most massive of monosyllables may on occasion be used as if quantitatively short; the ear is not offended by "Friends, Romans, countrymen..."; while words like 'verity' or 'melody' which have every claim to be pure tribrachs may, under the influence of metrical stress, do duty as dactyls or even cretics. And there are a multitude of words intermediate between these extremes in which syllabic quantity is wholly indeterminate.

English lacks then that quantitative precision without which the intricacies of Greek metre could not exist. Here and there indeed, where for a time the Greek lyrics are largely, let us say, of some simple trochaic form, the translator may do well to adopt the same rhythm; here and there, as in the opening of the first chorus, where the dactylic element in the metre is designed to give to the lyric narrative some suggestion of the epic, he may find an equivalent in such English metre as will recall the tone of the ballad; but in general he must content himself with such variations of treatment as his own taste suggests.

But, if the modulations of the Greek lyric could not be reproduced even by the greatest poet in the medium of English, yet English possesses in rhyme and in alliteration two instruments of music which may compensate in part for the lesser delicacy of her rhythm. Rhyme, if not too monotonously regular in its incidence

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