

NEW LIGHT ON MASTERS AND SLAVES IN GREEK DRAMA

This article begins with the tiniest of emendations in a Greek text and ends (*inter alia*) with some speculation on what makes Shakespeare a great dramatist, thus conforming to the movement from specific reality to more general construction recommended by K.J. Dover on chapter one page one of *Lysias and the Corpus Lysiacum*. The changing of τε to δέ hardly counts as the most heroic piece of textual criticism, but it does cast indirect light on what constitutes heroism, as we shall see.

Midway through Euripides' *Cyclops*, Odysseus, learning of the fate Polyphemos has in store for him, breaks out (vv. 347-9):

αἰαῖ, πόνους μὲν Τρωϊκοὺς ὑπεξέδυν
θαλασσίους τε, νῦν δ' ἐς ἀνδρὸς ἀνοσίου
ὥμην κατέσχον ἀλίμενόν τε καρδίαν.

At least this is how the Laurentian MS runs (save that, in the last line, ὥμην is Reiske's emendation of γνώμην). But in v. 348, instead of τε we must read δέ, for the following reasons.

The passage has all the signs of being a compressed priamel, a more abbreviated version of the rhetorical device with which Silenus opens the whole play¹. The two speeches have, in fact, much in common. Both represent the sentiments of an individual who, from his own career, compares past πόνοι (cf. μυρίουσ... πόνους at v. 1) with a present woe (emanating from the Cyclops) that surpasses them, thus also utilising the literary pattern known as 'mythological hyperbole'². In the earlier passage, the climax of the argument is reached at v. 10 καὶ νῦν ἐκείνων μείζον' ἐξαντλῶ πόνον. Similarly, in our passage, it is achieved with the collocation νῦν δ', each

¹ See M. Davies, *Comic Priamel and Hyperbole in Euripides Cyclops 1-10*, "CQ" 49, 1999, 428-32, where I overlooked the instance here discussed. Given the emphasis on ζήτησις in Silenus' opening monologue (note esp. vv.14 and 17), it may not be too fanciful to quote in this context W.H. Race's observation that "there is a mutual relationship between a priamel and a journey" and that "both are aspects of ζήτησις" (*The Classical Priamel from Homer to Boethius*, "Mnemos." Suppl. 74, 1982, p. 50 n. 45; cf. n. 46). Compare further the nautical metaphor of arriving at port in vv. 348-9 of Odysseus' speech.

² See N. Zagagi, *Tradition and Originality in Plautus*, Hypomnemata 62 (1980), Index s.v. Cf. Race (n. 1) p. 114: "beginning... with Plautus we find some [prielms] in accordance with the theatrical convention that the monologue of an entering character begin with a generalised or *hyperbolic* statement which is then specified with the particular case at hand" [my italics]. If Race is right to find no priamel in Latin literature earlier than Plautus, the likeliest explanation for their sudden appearance in this author and not before is that he derived them from his New Comedy sources.

phrase being idiomatic³ as introducing the ‘cap’ or climax of the priamel. The *comparative* form to match μείζον’, idiomatic in priamel and mythological hyperbole alike⁴, is postponed a little in our passage. But after a one and a half line prayer to Athena, Odysseus’ patron deity as surely as Dionysus (v. 1) is Silenus’, it arrives: κρείσσονας γὰρ Ἰλίου / πόνους ἀφίγμαι κάπῃ κινδύνου βάθρα, with a restatement of the πόνοι theme, thus completing the mythological hyperbole⁵. The climax also introduces a further parallel to vv. 10ff. of Silenus’ opening monologue, with a sentence introduced by γάρ: the like pattern is to be found in the Trojan portion of Odysseus’ πόνοι, and in each case there is a chiasmic effect (AbA).

Other features, paralleled from passages outside the play, confirm our lines’ status as priamel. For the opening of this rhetorical device with an exclamation or a vocative equivalent to an exclamation see⁶ (apart from ὦ Βρομίε in v. 1) Soph. *Tr.* 1046 ὦ πολλὰ δὴ κτλ., Menand. fr. 420 K-A [*PCG* VI.2] μὰ τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν, ἄνδρες, εἰκόν’ οὐκ ἔχω / <εὐρεῖν> ὅμοιον τῷ γεγονόντι πράγματι κτλ., *Il.* 2.272-4 ὦ πόποι, ἦ δὴ μυρὶ Ὀδυσσεὺς ἔσθλ’ ἔοργε / ... / νῦν δὲ τόδε μέγ’ ἄριστον ἐν Ἀργείοισιν ἔρεξεν, Callim. *h. Ap.* 69-71 ὦ πολλον, πολλοὶ σε / ... πολλοὶ δέ κτλ., *h. Del.* 1ff. τὴν ἱερὴν, ὦ θύμε, κτλ., Hor. *Sat.* 2.1.24-6 *quid faciam? saltat Milonius... / ... Castor gaudet equis / ... / ... me pedibus delectate eludere verbis*, Propert. 1.12.15ff. *felix qui potuit praesenti flere puellae / ... / aut si despectus potuit mutare colores / ... / mi neque amare aliam neque ab hac desistere fas est*. For a priamel opening with precisely the same exclamation as our present passage see [Mosch.] *Bion. epitaph.* 99-103 αἶαι, ταὶ μαλάχαι μὲν ἐπὶν κατὰ κάπον ὄλωνται / ἦ δὲ τὰ χλωρὰ σέλινά τό τ’ εὐθαλὲς οὖλον ἄνηνθον / ὕστερον αὖ ζώντι ... ἄμμες δέ κτλ. For the first two cola of a priamel as constituting mention of *land* and *sea* (as in the passage we are considering) cf. the far more elaborate example that is Aesch. *Cho.* 585-595 πολλὰ μὲν γὰρ τρέφει δεινὰ δειμάτων ἄχῃ / πόντιαί τ’⁷ ἀγκάλαι κνωδάλων / ἀνταίων βρύου-

³ See Davies (n. 1) p. 429 and n. 6.

⁴ On the force of such comparatives see further Davies (n. 1) p. 431 n. 25.

⁵ The hyperbole (but not the priamel structure) is detected by Zagagi (n. 2) pp. 44-5.

⁶ Two of the following examples are too complex and lengthy for full quotation: on the Menander fragment see Race (n. 1) p. 18, on Callim. *h. Del.* Race p. 103. I have taken *quid faciam?* in the Horatian passage as equivalent to an exclamation (genuine questions frequently open a priamel).

⁷ This particle cannot be used to defend τε at *Cycl.* 348: in Aeschylus’ priamel the contents “are expanded into a list” (Race [n. 1] p. 14 n. 38). Note also that the passage from *Cho.* belongs to a special group of μὲν... τέ constructions involving πολλά: see Hutchinson on Aesch. *SCT* 924.

σι... / ἄλλ' ὑπέρτολμον ἀνδρὸς φρόνημα τίς λέγοι; The fragment of Menander quoted above, with its mention of whirlwind and shipwreck, may point in the same direction. Adventures on land and sea are also summarised in Silenus' opening speech, though they do not shape the priamel as they do at 347-8.

Our passage's status as priamel being thus established quite independently of the need for emendation, we may now take that final, modest step, by recalling two considerations, one specific, the other more general. In Silenus' opening monologue, the first two sets of his πόνοι are introduced and distinguished by the two paratactic cola πρῶτον μὲν (3) and ἔπειτα δ' (5). Such parataxis involving μὲν and δέ is idiomatic in the two cola of a priamel leading up to the third and climactic colon. μὲν in such priamels is repeatedly followed by δέ not τε⁸ (though τε is found in more elaborate priamels that take the form of a list). Several examples have already been cited above. For confusion of particles in the second colon of a priamel cf. v. 5 of our play, where δ' is Heath's correction of γ'.⁹ For the specific confusion of δέ and τε we need look no further than v. 342, where τε was corrected to δέ by Fix. For even more specific confusion of δέ and τε following a construction similar to ours, cf. vv. 42-3 γενναίων μὲν πατέρων / γενναίων δ' (L. Dindorf: τ')¹⁰.

The numerous parallels noted above between the priamels used by Silenus and Odysseus are far from incidental. The end of Odysseus' speech marks exactly the half-way point of the play¹¹, so that we have large scale ring-composition intended to remind us of how the drama began. Since Odysseus' remarks end (354-5) with a heroic declaration redolent of tragedy¹², their tone throughout is likely to aim at a genuinely heroic and tragic

⁸ For further instances of the idiomatic use of (μὲν)... δέ in priamels see Davies (n. 1) p. 428 n. 4.

⁹ Deplorable confirmation of the ease with which the two can be interchanged is supplied by Davies (n. 1) p. 428 n. 4, where I misquoted *Cycl.* 5's δ' as γ'.

¹⁰ The sequence μὲν... τε here was defended by R. Kassel, "Rh.Mus." 98, 1955, 281 = *Kl. Schr.* pp.193-4, citing Kühner – Gerth 2.[2.] 271, but in all the examples of μὲν... τε there listed, δέ has been conjectured by one scholar or another, with the exception of Eur. *Andr.* 8-9, where, as Stevens ad loc. observes, "παῖδά θ' is an extension of the μὲν clause, which is answered by αὐτὴ δέ in 12", and *Or.* 501, where ἐκβάλεῖν τε is part of an epexegetic construction (see Willink ad loc.). Denniston, *GP*² p. 374f. has a more convincing list of examples of μὲν... τε which he claims is "often needlessly altered by editors", but as Diggle's *app. crit.* on *Cycl.* 42-3 observes, he supplies no parallel for μὲν... τε in anaphora such as the Laurentian presents us with here.

¹¹ See Biehl, "Hermes" 105, 1977, 161 (cf. 164).

¹² See Seaford's commentary ad loc., quoting A.M. Dale, "Maia" 15, 1963, 312 =

quality, in contrast with the bathetic and parodic¹³ nature of Silenus' speech. It has been observed¹⁴ that Euripides' Silenus is a ridiculous and degraded version of Odysseus. It would be equally reasonable to say that Odysseus is a more serious and reputable version of Silenus. This contrast is highlighted by the two passages we have been examining.

This parallelism could and should be taken further. Eduard Fraenkel¹⁵ once observed how in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, the herald's entry speech and that of the king himself later on, correspond with each other, both on a general level within the structure of the whole, and on a more detailed level involving individual motifs, – "just as the aria of a servant in a Mozart opera is often a parallel to the master's aria". As regards the analogy, one thinks most obviously of *Don Giovanni*, where the parallelism between Leporello and his master (the former a degraded version of the latter) informs the entire work; but one must not overlook the equivalent relationship between servant and Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (or that between the ironically named Despina and her two mistresses in *Così fan tutte*). These patterns ultimately came down to da Ponte via Plautus (see, for instance, the juxtaposition of slave and master in *Mostellaria* or *Pseudolus*) from New Comedy¹⁶, which will itself have inherited them from the tragic tetralogy, the

Collected Papers p. 182 for the serious or tragic tone of such a "challenging-nouthetic address" from mortal to god "at the close of a scene, just before going off at the climax of the action".

¹³ See Davies (n. 1) p. 430 and cf. A.G. Katsouris, *Linguistic and Stylistic Characterisation: Tragedy and Menander* (Ioannina 1975) pp. 97-8 on the different registers of linguistic characterisation of Silenus and Odysseus in our play. Note also Race (n. 1) p. 114: "There are many such speeches in Plautus. Some of them are in the form of a priamel and create a *comic bathos* by comparing heroic instances with the present case" [my italics]. He goes on to cite examples, esp. Plaut. *Persa* 1-5.

¹⁴ So, for instance, G. Wetzel, *De Euripidis fabula satyrica quae Cyclops inscribitur* (Wiesbaden 1965) p. 44. For the *Cyclops*' Odysseus as consistently a *persona tragica*, and for the effects produced by Euripides in contrasting his dignity with, on his first encounters with them, the characters of Silenus (at vv. 102-4), the coryphaeus (177-80), and Polyphemus (275ff.) see Kassel (n. 10) p. 285 = pp. 196-7.

¹⁵ *Der Agamemnon des Aeschylus* (Zurich/Stuttgart 1957) pp. 19-20 = *Kl. Beitr.* i. 338-9: "des Herolds Auftrittsrede und die spätere Auftrittsrede des Königs entsprechen einander im Bau des Ganzen und in vielen Einzelsmotiven, wie in einer Mozart-Oper oft die Arie eines Bedienten der Arie des grossen Herrn parallel läuft". For a more detailed exposition of the point see his commentary on the play (Oxford 1951), ii.293-4 (esp. the final sentence: "the whole character is meant to set off the much greater figure of the king"), where he observes that Agamemnon's speech stands exactly half-way through the play- just like the equivalent speech of Odysseus in the *Cyclops*.

¹⁶ For monologues from slaves grumbling at their onerous servitude placed at or near the

satyr play not excluded. Shakespeare too was influenced by this pattern. As early as his very early *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, he made use of the two servants Speed and Launce to convey burlesque and parody by means of juxtaposition and parallelism of scenes. The effect is to shift the audience's perceptions of the two masters' apparently serious emotions, thus prefiguring Shakespeare's "readiness to see things simultaneously from more than one point of view".¹⁷ Since this readiness is possibly Shakespeare's greatest achievement as dramatist, it is interesting to identify at least one of its sources. Note too the way in which Wagner's *Fliegende Holländer* and *Tristan und Isolde* open with or have near their beginning the musical equivalent of a monologue from a character equivalent to a servant (in each case a "Steuermann") whose naïve and conventional feelings of love contrast totally with the following demonic or tragic passions of the titular heroes and heroine.

To return to ancient drama, the Aeschylean contrast between the herald's view of the Trojan War (with its stress on that conflict's purely physical discomforts) and that of his master, has its counterpart in Euripides' comparison of the reactions to Polyphemus' treatment entertained by Silenus and Odysseus. Not so very different is the juxtaposition of the behaviour of Dionysus and his slave Xanthias in the first scene of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, where it has been said¹⁸ that we encounter for the first time "a new kind of slave role", and witness something unusual at vv. 50ff., when Xanthias "communicates with us, the audience, in asides", grumbling about the physical discomfort caused by his burdens, while the master discourses loftily to Heracles regarding his proposed *katabasis*. We might further compare Leporello's stress on his own physical symptoms of fear while his master converses with the Commendatore's statue.

Silenus' grumbling monologue at the start of his play is indeed the grand progenitor of a whole succession of servants complaining at the start of play or their first entrance, who find their apotheosis in Moliere's Sganarelle and in da Ponte and Mozart's Leporello and Despina¹⁹. The satyr is the servant or

openings of New Comedy dramas see Fraenkel, *Plautinisches im Plautus* p.183 = Engl. tr. p. 123 = Ital. tr. p. 174.

¹⁷ See Clifford Leech's Introduction to his Arden edition (London 1969) pp. lxi ff. and lxxiv.

¹⁸ K.J. Dover's commentary on the play (Oxford 1993) pp. 44 and 47.

¹⁹ Leporello: I.i.1ff. "Notte e giorno faticar, / per chi nulla sa gradir:/ pioggia e vento sopportar, / mangiar male e mal dormir!". Despina: I.iii.1ff. "Che vita maledetta è il far la cameriera! Dal mattino alla sera si fa, si suda, si lavora, e poi di tanto che si fa, nulla è per noi". For Silenus' servitude to Polyphemus see Davies (n. 1) p. 430.

slave of Polyphemos, not of Odysseus – because the required character contrast between cyclops and satyr would not work – but he does finally (as reported at 429ff.) transfer his loyalties to Odysseus, and Euripides has chosen to place the two in the same position in order to produce the required effect. Both have (together with their companions) wandered from their goal because of a storm at sea (Silenus himself draws the comparison at 110 for Odysseus' benefit: παπαῖ· τὸν αὐτὸν δαίμον' ἐξαντλεῖς²⁰ ἐμοί). Both become unwilling cupbearers to Polyphemos (566ff.). But each has a very different ethos. The former's valour is contrasted with the latter's cowardice (195-202) and their behaviour inside the Cyclops's cave pinpoints this contrast, with Odysseus exhibiting an iron self-control (405-8) while Silenus (432) is reduced to helplessness by the wine he has imbibed.

The *Cyclops* is a relatively short play, and its claims to literary sophistication have not usually been rated highly²¹. One aspect of such negative criticism relevant here is the complaint that towards the end “le rythme s'accélère et l'on a l'impression que le poète a été pressé par le temps”.²² As part of this process, Odysseus' priamel, as we have seen, is so much more compressed than Silenus'. But if Euripides was aiming at a carefully engineered *accelerando* of the action – akin to that detected²³ in Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* – the phenomenon need not be viewed negatively. That likelihood, together with the evidence here amassed, is a further reminder that Euripides crafted his play with care. At any rate, one aspect in particular was destined to have a prodigious and productive afterlife in European drama. We are also reminded of the truth that the satyr play produces a parodic and burlesque effect not merely by contrast with the other parts of the tragic tetralogy, but also by contrast with other elements within the play itself²⁴.

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²⁰ Silenus uses the same verb here as he did of his own climactic suffering at v. 10 of the prologue, thus emphasising all the more closely the parallelism between the two characters' experience.

²¹ See, e.g. the bibliography in L.E. Rossi, “Maia” 23, 1971, p. 37 n. 89.

²² J. Duchemin, on p. xvii of her edition of the play (Paris 1945).

²³ See O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford 1977) pp. 351ff. Cf. Seaford's commentary on *Cycl.* 656-62 for a comparable *accelerando* effect in that play's use of progressively shorter choral odes.

²⁴ So Kassel as cited above (n. 10) p. 286 = p. 198.

APPENDIX: “A LEGEND IN HIS OWN LIFE-TIME”

It has been observed²⁵ that Odysseus’ words at *Cycl.* 375-6 ὦ Ζεῦ, τί λέξω, δεῖν’ ἰδὼν ἄντρων ἔσω / κοῦ πιστά, μύθοις εἰκότ’ οὐδ’ ἔργοις βροτῶν involve an ironic detachment, as if referring to the play’s events as πλάσματα τῶν προτέρων (though these words are also a hyperbolic mode of expression – taken from everyday speech ?– for conveying the horror of a situation: “so dreadful it was like a story”- compare “so dreadful it was like a picture” at Aesch. *Eum.* 40-51; cf. Plaut. *Capt.* 998 *vidi ego multa saepe picta quae Acherunti fierent*).

This consideration is closely related to another: in resorting to a mixture of priamel and “mythological hyperbole”, both Silenus (parodically) and Odysseus (more seriously) are treating themselves as if they were each quite literally a legend in his own life-time. There is some Odyssean precedent for this, of course, especially in that scene at the Phaeacian court where Odysseus breaks down and weeps, prior to finally revealing his identity, upon hearing the bard Demodocus relate his deeds at the sack of Troy. But another aspect of this presentation can be used to cast light on the rhetorical devices of priamel and hyperbole. Two other passages in the *Odyssey* are relevant: 12. 208ff., where the hero is seeking to console and encourage his *hetairoi*:

ὦ φίλοι, οὐ γάρ πώ τι κακῶν ἀδαήμενές εἰμεν.
οὐ μὲν δὴ τόδε μεῖζον ἔπι κακὸν ἢ ὅτε Κύκλωψ
εἴλει ἐνὶ σπῇ γλαφυρῷ κρατερῇφι βίηφιν

and 20.18ff., where he is seeking to apply the same psychology to himself :

τέτλαθι δὴ, κραδίη, καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο ποτ’ ἔτλης,
ἥματι τῷ ὅτε μοι μένος ἄσχετος ἦσθιε Κύκλωψ
ἰφθίμους ἐτάρους

It is suggestive, incidentally, that in each passage the past woe that outdoes present woes should be the Cyclops.

Each case expresses the logic of the argument as follows: “We / I have suffered worse than this in the past”. This is the very reverse of the logic to be found in mythological hyperbole, where past sufferings are far exceeded by present, and the pattern may be regarded as a development of the logic idiomatic in *consolation*, where the statement “you must endure, for others, better in different ways than you, have endured even worse things” is a very

²⁵ See esp. Kassel as cited in preceding n., closely followed by Seaford ad loc.

common topos²⁶.

Now what Odysseus, or, rather, Homer, in the two passages quoted above may be said to be doing is to *personalise* this construction, so that the worse sufferings previously undergone derive from *his own heroic past* rather than that of remote mythological beings. And this process is as close as could be wished to the adaptation of mythological hyperbole in *Cyclops* 1-10 and 347-9, or, for that matter, in Soph. *Trach.* 1046ff., where in each case the past sufferings which the speaker claims to be now surpassing are, unusually, taken from his own rather than others' career²⁷, so that again the idea of the speaker as a hero in his own life-time is very much to the fore.

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²⁶ See my remarks in "CQ" 56, 2006, 582-7.

²⁷ See the article by me cited in n. 1, p. 429. Since in the second Odyssean passage the hero is addressing his own heart in a monologue *with no one else present*, the notion of "self-consolation", canvassed by me in the article cited in the previous n., comes into play.