**Reanimating Greek Tragedy
How Contemporary Poets Translate for the Stage**

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Abstract

This thesis starts from the premise that modern poets have proved effective translators of Greek tragedy for the stage and is a hermeneutic consideration of why and how they succeeded. The spread of the close analysis is a period from 1981 to the present day. Four poets, Tony Harrison, Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes and Tom Paulin, are considered in detail, while other translators, such as Liz Lochhead and Timberlake Wertenbaker, are used as comparators. The four poets' translations are considered within the context of their whole poetic output, to enhance an understanding of each poet's intentions. The major influences on these four poets are also scrutinized.

The introduction provides the methodology, including the choice of modern scholarship to be cited in support or to be challenged. It provides a brief historical survey of translating the classics and describes the tools provided by modern academic disciplines which help to analyse the poets' achievements. The bulk of the thesis consists of three chapters, each focusing on one aspect of poetic choice which contributes to the appeal of a work. In each chapter, a close comparison is made between the same source text but different translators. Thus, Harrison and Hughes both provide a version of the *Oresteia*, considered in terms of metre, rhyme and general structure, Heaney and Paulin both produced a version of *Antigone*, examined for the use of Ulster and Irish vernacular and Harrison and Paulin created very free adaptations of *Prometheus*, which are considered as part of a broad review of cultural overlay, modernising and democratising in producing Greek tragedy on the contemporary stage.

The conclusion synthesises the strands, signposting possible further research. It celebrates the poets' achievement - and contemporary British theatre for embracing Greek tragedy, as it currently does. It ends with a brief manifesto for the future.

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Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne:
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold
(John Keats, October 1816)

When Keats wrote 'On first looking into Chapman's Homer', he was not praising George Chapman's translation skills *per se* but responding, rather, to a fellow-poet's vitality.[1] Keats was introduced to Chapman when a friend, Charles Cowden Clarke, read aloud the episode of Odysseus' shipwreck; Clark found the sonnet on his table the following morning. We may accept it as an honest account of a damascene moment on the road to Keats fulfilling his own creative genius. He is unequivocal: it is Chapman's voice he hears, 'loud and bold', re-invigorating Homer who had, until that moment, been little more than a name to Keats. Indeed, Professor Susan Bassnett, a specialist in the field of translation and cultural studies, also chooses this sonnet to illustrate her argument in an essay on the translator as creative writer, and considers it: 'Perhaps the best example of a writer's inspiration through translation', further commenting: '[...] the power and magnificence of Homer has come to life for him [Keats] through the work of a long-dead Renaissance translator' (2006: 174).

How did Chapman's magic work? This thesis will explore some of the creative freedoms that poets enjoy, compared to the scholar, in an attempt to establish how and why poets produce eminently readable—and, crucially, speakable—translations of classical texts. We will focus upon Greek drama, a literary form that requires the realisation of a translation in performance before we can fully judge its quality. The plays selected for close study are tragedies, including works by all three of the great 5th-century writers. Comedy is merely referenced, with no intention to denigrate the genre, but for purely practical reasons. The tragedies selected are drawn from plays with well-documented recent performances to analyse, which significantly outnumber comedy in scope.   We could draw on Aristophanes' eleven extant plays from the same period but, of those, only *Lysistrata*, gets a regular airing in the professional British

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[1] Other translations were available to Keats, including Pope's highly-acclaimed version.

theatre, with an occasional production of *Birds*. There is a well-received modern translation of *Lysistrata* by Ranjit Bolt and one of *Birds* by Sean O'Brien, but this does not compare with the number of 'premier league' poets who have engaged with the tragedies and continue to do so.

Most of the material selected for this study spans approximately three decades of British theatre, from 1981 until the present day. There are some earlier texts, however, that provide a literary or linguistic context. Primary texts fall into two categories: firstly, the Loeb editions of all Greek plays: *Prometheus Bound* (trans. Sommerstein, 2008), *Oresteia* (trans. Sommerstein, 2008), *Alcestis* and *Medea* (one volume, trans. Kovacs, 1994/2001), *Hecuba* (trans. Kovacs 1995/2005), *Antigone* and *Philoctetes* (one volume, trans. Lloyd-Jones, 1994/1998) plus some other classical texts included in the thesis, such as Aristotle's *Poetics* (trans. Halliwell, 1995/2005). Loeb has been chosen for its easy availability, should anyone wish to follow up a reference. Secondly, we have the translations of the plays, plus other relevant works, by the poets on whom we are focusing. For the modern play texts, more is included than the mere script on the page. The 'text' is deemed to encompass all evidence that relates to production history, from programme notes to audio-visual recording.

The earliest translation we consider in detail is Tony Harrison's 1981 *Oresteia* for Sir Peter Hall at the National Theatre. Not only does the National Theatre hold extensive archive material on this production, including reviews and interviews, but the British Film Institute has re-mastered a recording which recently came to light in Canada, of the 1983 live broadcast for Channel 4, previously believed to be lost. It is available for study in the BFI archives and was publicly screened in 2012 with Sir Peter Hall present. All this material is included in our discussion. Harrison's 2005 translation of *Hecuba* for the Royal Shakespeare Company is also referenced, as a point of comparison, along with his Palladas epigrams. Harrison's *Oresteia* is taken in tandem with Ted Hughes's 1999 translation of the trilogy. As the text was first produced at the National Theatre by Katie Mitchell, a useful collection of archive material exists for this production also. Although the visual quality of the videotaped recording is poor, the soundtrack is clear and can be used for analysing rhythm and metre. Hughes's *Oresteia* is compared to his

virtually contemporaneous translations of *Alcestis* and *Tales from Ovid*, in an attempt to define his technique. Other poems by Hughes that illuminate his approach to the classics and/or his poetic craft will also be referred to.

Tom Paulin's three translations of Greek tragedy and Seamus Heaney's two are examined together in terms of cadence and dialect and the search for an authentic vernacular voice in Ulster English. Paulin has translated all three tragedians: Sophocles' *Antigone* (*The Riot Act*, 1985), Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* (*Seize the Fire*, 1990) and the most recent of the texts we are considering, Euripides' *Medea* (2010). Heaney confined himself to Sophocles: *Philoctetes* (*Cure at Troy*, 1990) and *Antigone* (*Burial at Thebes*, 2004). Heaney and Paulin spoke and wrote freely about their craft and this material is preserved online or in print, along with various reviews. So too are articles about the rationale of the Field Day Theatre Company which the two poets helped establish. This theatre has attracted scholarly interest, particularly in Ireland, and we shall consider a number of studies, such as Richtarik's *Acting Between the Lines: The Field Day Theatre Company and Irish Cultural Politics 1980-1984* (1994) and the recent work by Aidan O'Malley: *Field Day and the Translation of Irish Identities*: *Performing Contradictions* (2011). Heaney and Paulin both foreground their Irishness and are considered within the context of the Irish 'troubles' of the late 20th century, for their appropriation of classical tragedy to question modern political realities. Relevant poems by Heaney and Paulin further illuminate their respective attitudes to Greek myth and its use as a vehicle for contemporary comment. Paulin's poem 'Under Creon' and Heaney's sequence 'Mycenae Lookout' are the most informative in this respect. Other poems and prose essays will also be referred to when appropriate, as well as Paulin's introduction, as editor, to an anthology of vernacular verse.

Liz Lochhead's *Medea* (2000) will be examined within the same context as Heaney and Paulin, being a markedly vernacular translation in a dialect closely related to Ulster English. Although men dominate as translators it is only right to have a female representative who forwards our exploration of dialect as a translation tool. In 2011, Lochhead was appointed Scotland's official

'makar' (or 'maker')—a position equivalent to poet laureate—which goes back to the 14th century. In a time when nationalism—even separatism—is a powerful force in Scottish politics, Lochhead has been chosen as her country's poetic voice. Heaney, Paulin and Lochhead all use Greek tragedy to explore ideas about national identity and to challenge English cultural hegemony, choosing vernacular syntax and lexicon to examine relationships with the political establishment in England.

Further secondary materials play a part in this thesis: the work and theories of those who shaped the modern poets, and a range of critical commentaries on the modern work by academics and journalists. Tony Harrison, for example, admired Gilbert Murray (1866-1957), an admiration made manifest in *Fram* (2008). Murray was unusual amongst academics in having favoured a self-consciously poetic form for his translation. Using Murray's own English *Oresteia*, the legacy of his rhyming couplets upon Harrison will be considered. T.S. Eliot showed contempt for Murray's style when he wrote in the essay 'Euripides and Professor Murray':

> Greek poetry will never have the slightest vitalizing effect upon English poetry if it can only appear masquerading as a vulgar debasement of the eminently personal idiom of Swinburne. (61: 1969/1920)

Eliot's own views on restoring verse-drama to the 20th-century stage will, therefore, be discussed in some detail, since he was mentor and inspiration to Ted Hughes. The link between these two poets is so strong and well-established that Katie Mitchell worked a recording of Hughes reading from Eliot's *Four Quartets* into her production of Hughes's *Oresteia* (National Theatre, 1999). Both Murray and Eliot drew on mediaeval models for their own verse drama, but produced a markedly different outcome which, in turn, influenced their respective disciples.

Heaney and Paulin both acknowledge their debt to Robert Frost (1874-1963), the American poet famed for his ability to capture the human voice in verse. Frost left copious notebooks which have recently been edited to reveal a complex theory of sentence sound which is useful to those working in an oral medium, such as drama. Both Heaney and Paulin refer to Frost when talking

of their craft and connections will be made between Frost's theories and Heaney's and Paulin's practices. There can also be little doubt that behind Frost and behind all modern Irish poetry stands the towering figure of W. B. Yeats, who also translated Greek tragedy, which we shall examine as background context.

In terms of critical commentary, the Hall/Harrison production gains several specific mentions in scholarly works on Greek drama, some at length. In *Agamemnon in Performance 458 BC to AD 2005* (2005), Oliver Taplin writes a chapter on: 'The Harrison Version: "So long ago that it's become a song?"' as his contribution to the book, which focuses on the musicality of Harrison's text. Simon Goldhill, in *How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today*, uses the Hall/Harrison production in his discussion of stichomythic exchanges and mentions both that production and Katie Mitchell's when commenting on contrasting theatrical styles, which this thesis will suggest emanates in part from the selection of two very different texts. Both productions have become reference points for academics and theatre practitioners alike. Taplin and Goldhill will be referred to in this thesis when the discussion focuses on Harrison's and Hughes's translations.

For Heaney and Paulin, one of the key secondary sources used to explore the Irish context was *Amid Our Troubles: Irish Versions of Greek Tragedy* (2002). This not only has a range of writers putting the Irish plays into an historical perspective but also Heaney and Paulin themselves, discussing their own work. Other articles are used to provide a view on specific points about either poet, such as Elmer Kennedy-Andrews writing of Paulin's political beliefs or Helen Vendler's 1999 article on the language register in 'Mycenae Lookout'. Whilst some of these sources are used to supply a context and provide uncontentious opinions, others demonstrate that strong responses were generated at the time, by some aspects of Paulin's work in particular, which we may not agree with but which add to our understanding of a production's impact.

Further secondary sources provide important overviews. *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre* by Hall and Macintosh, *Theorising Performance*, edited by Hall and Harrop and *Dionysus Since 69*, edited by Hall, Macintosh and Wrigley, all provide detailed information for placing productions into an historical and cultural context. On the process of translation, *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English* places our selected texts onto a spectrum of activity and two books, *Found in Translation* by J. Michael Walton and *The Poets on the Classics* by Stuart Gillespie, deal respectively with the translation of Greek Drama into English and the pervasive engagement of English poets with classical texts, cataloguing a wide range of examples. Susan Bassnett and Jeremy Munday offer accessible insights into the modern discipline of translation studies. It was also necessary to consult an Irish grammar book and a dictionary of Scottish Doric.

The main body of the thesis consists of three substantial chapters, each concentrating on an aspect of the poet's craft that can be applied to translating Greek tragedy and which the conventional philological approach tends to eschew. The method of study is close textual analysis coupled with careful examination of the performance history. In chapter 1, the focus is on metre, exploring Harrison's *Oresteia* and the same trilogy by Hughes. These texts not only provide a strong contrast in poetic approach but, as has already been stated, are well-documented in various critical works. Consideration is given to the difference in impact between what we might perceive as the norms of speech when reading the text and the reality in performance, drawing on the National Theatre's and the British Film Institute's archive recordings. With Harrison's text, the effect of Birtwistle's music cannot be underestimated. We shall see how Birtwistle transformed the choral sections by offering his own rhythmic imperative, creating dynamic tension and a syncopation of the norms of speech. Harrison's translation will be considered with reference to Gilbert Murray's own version of the *Oresteia* and his legacy of the rhyming couplet, whilst Hughes's translations will be set against Eliot's theories and practice for verse drama.

Chapter 2 considers cadence and vernacular writing, comparing Seamus Heaney's and Tom Paulin's versions of *Antigone*, both of which involve elements of Ulster English—sometimes referred to as Ullans—as part of their Northern Irish credentials. The politics of vernacular writing is discussed, alongside problems of access for those outside a dialect's constituency. The chapter makes reference to both Heaney's and Paulin's other classical translations as well as a selection of poems that enhance our understanding of the poets' attitudes to language and to the troubled course of Irish history. There can be no doubt that, for both poets, a deliberate 'Irishness' formed part of their political message. In the case of Paulin's version of *Antigone*, this provoked a strong response in theatre critics, who saw some essential facet of the Sophoclean play being suppressed. Several of these reviews and articles are still available online for discussion. Liz Lochhead's *Medea* uses what the poet calls Scots-English, a very close relative of Ulster English on the Indo-European family tree. Lochhead's play offers a similarly nationalistic slant but from a Scottish perspective.

In chapter 3 we examine what may be the most contentious feature of the non-academic translation: the modernisation of vocabulary, figurative tropes and allusions to ancient people, places and events, which often amounts to a wholesale reconfiguration within a topical framework. This is the aspect of poetic licence for which Translation Theory and Reception Studies provide extremely useful insights, when we consider the function of a literary translation as opposed to one of factual material. (A brief survey of the relevant applications of these two modern academic disciplines forms part of this introduction.) The chapter draws on all the works considered in depth and some mentioned in passing in previous chapters. It considers whether the modernising of texts assists those directors who wish to relocate Greek drama into a contemporary context. We shall explore the linguistic choices of lexicon and register; the importing of clearly anachronistic details which are offered up as modern equivalents for ancient elements; omissions and interpolations and the manipulation of the message. Of course, in performance, a director may be responsible for the most spectacular changes of context but we shall consider whether certain aspects of a creative translation can plant an imaginative seed in the director's mind.

The thesis works within three broad contexts: scholarly, theatrical and poetic (including linguistic). When we consider translation and scholarship, the relationship between poet and academic is closely intertwined. Poets such as Chapman and Dryden knew their Greek and engaged with their sources. Nowadays, that is seldom true. Of the poets we are considering, only Tony Harrison has fluent access to the Greek. The others do/did not. They are reliant on academic 'cribs' which, despite their blandness, have a wider circulation and longer active shelf-life than most of the highly crafted poetic versions. For most of the poets we are considering in this thesis, their creative fires were not fanned by the original text nor by a Chapman, but by the 'safe' translations of such as Lattimore and Vellacott. Heaney was open about using 'cribs', as we shall discover.

Plays belong in the theatre. This may seem a truism yet too often we pore over Greek drama as a purely literary text or, more reductive still, as a linguistic exercise. We shall see in our passing encounter with the German philologists of the 19th century (below) that they had little interest in live performance as part of understanding a Greek play. Their studies tended to focus upon the written word. Moreover, they often misinterpreted the original performance conditions by drawing inferences from Roman survivals. Any claim about the potency of a translation, however, must be tested on a stage, in front of an audience. Nonetheless, we must acknowledge that the poetic play text can have two discrete lives: many (although not all) exist first as performance—frequently commissioned by a director or theatre company—but, within a few years, they are superseded in production by newer versions. They survive, however, as dramatic verse. We shall examine the texts primarily as pretext for a performance but also as literary works, since this is how most will end their days.

The online repository of written and visual materials, the carefully ordered archives of organisations such as the National Theatre and our personal experience as audience members can all combine to reconstruct modern productions for study and should be embraced by theatre historians. It is possible to place all the plays selected for close analysis into their original

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context to a large extent and to reconstruct public reaction. For those plays that were professionally recorded for posterity, almost every aspect can be examined and re-examined in detail on DVD or videotape.

Poets do not write in a vacuum but within the context of their own time and all that has gone before. Poets can be drawn towards imitation of those they admire, or may choose to reject tradition. Either way, they understand their literary and cultural context. We shall note that some poets, such as Christopher Marlowe, position themselves as innovators; others, like Keats, are happy to acknowledge a legacy. We must consider our selected poets against the backdrop of their literary heritage. It would be unimaginable that Hughes embarked on his translation of the *Oresteia* in ignorance of Harrison's version; we know that Heaney and Paulin sat together on the board of Field Day. Reactions and dialogue are as inevitable now as they were in 5th-century Athens where Aristophanes blatantly parodied his contemporaries, partly for comic effect but partly as a critical response to their artistic choices.

The rest of this introduction provides a potted background to our main study, returning to some of the English poets who played a key role in transmitting the classics. There will also be information on relevant points in the development of Classical Studies in Germany and its impact on 19th-century Britain, covering the growth of scholarly translators and the Victorian academic debate about the whole nature and purpose of translation, to provide a context for the poets who continued to plough their own furrow. It will also give a summary of the relevant areas of both Translation and Reception Studies which provide some of the descriptive vocabulary for this thesis.

If we turn our attention back to Chapman, he is but one representative of a long-standing English literary tradition. Since mediaeval times, many translations from ancient (and, indeed, modern) languages have been produced by established writers, as additional grist to their creative mill, either by poets or *literati* in general. In writing of this tradition, Susan Bassnett employs a cumulative style to emphasise the wholesale nature of the practice. She states:

> Most of the great eighteenth-century poets, the European Romantics, the monolithic nineteenth-century writers, the fin-de-siècle writers, the modernists and the poets of the 1930s all translated and read other people's translations. Literary revivals across Europe in the nineteenth century were underpinned by translation. (2006: 174)

Where the translator retains his/her[2] reputation as a poet, the translation also tends to survive, regardless of merit, in an attempt to preserve the whole corpus for posterity, although such survival will not necessarily ensure continuing popularity. Robert Browning's version of *Agamemnon* was immortalised by Terence Rattigan in *The Browning Version* (1949) but Mary Beard contends in an article in the *New York Review of Books* that the translation: '[...] is written in awful nineteenth-century poetry-speak' (2012: 49). We shall scrutinise this criticism in our case study; Beard is not the only critic to have disliked Browning's perceived archaic diction and extreme literalism. One 'failure', however, does not detract from Browning as a poet in general and his *Agamemnon* raises questions about the translation process and its ultimate purpose.

With an amendment to the date, Mary Beard's criticism of Browning could be applied to Chapman. His *Iliad* in particular, with his idiosyncratic choice of iambic heptameter—or 'fourteener'—may seem a literary fossil.[3] The opening lines immediately alert us to deliberately poetic language in an unfamiliarly lengthy line:

> Achilles' baneful wrath—resound, O goddess—that impos'd
> Infinite sorrows on the Greeks, and many brave souls loos'd
> From breasts heroic; sent them far, to that invisible cave
> That no light comforts; (2000: 5)

To Keats, however, Chapman's devices breathed new life into a remote tale. One should also note that Keats received the work orally, which allowed Charles Cowden Clark to animate the written word with vocal embellishments. For the modern reader, Chapman's Homer is probably something of a literary curio, although his *Odyssey*, completed from 1614-15, is in the more

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[2] Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Anna Swanwick were notable female translators of the period.
[3] The metre chosen for many translations of Seneca's plays and considered appropriate for ancient texts.

conventional iambic pentameter. Whatever the vagaries of taste, the translation has survived as part of Chapman's extensive literary *corpus* and such survival is not unique. Stuart Gillespie, in *English Translation and Classical Reception*, writes of the Renaissance period:

> In England translators usually worked outside the academic world as their contemporaries abroad did not. They were courtiers, students at the Inns of Court, gentlemen-soldiers and many other things. [...] But many of their productions have proved more durable than more scholarly undertakings (2011: 11).

Beyond the Renaissance, of the many other British poets who have drawn inspiration from the Classics, John Dryden (1631-1700) is deemed one of the most successful. Jeremy Munday, in *Introducing Translation Studies* (2008), places Dryden in a trio which first attempted to systematise the translation process in England. Although Dryden's contribution was brief, it was influential and began to create terminology. In the preface to his English edition of Ovid's *Epistles* in 1680 (now reprinted as an essay 'On Translation' by Schulte and Biguenet), Dryden wrote:

> All translation, I suppose, may be reduced to these three heads.
>
> First, that of metaphrase, or turning an author word by word, and line by line, from one language into another [...] The second way is that of paraphrase, or translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator, so as never to be lost but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense [...] The third way is that of imitation, where the translator (if now he has not lost that name) assumes the liberty, not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion; (1992: 17)

On the whole, Dryden favoured the middle route. Munday quotes his simile against 'servile, literal' translation:

> Tis much like dancing on ropes with fettered legs—a foolish task. (2008: 26)

By 1697, Dryden has, apparently, shifted his stance somewhat towards the literal, as Munday shows, with an extract from the dedication in his *Aeneid*:

> I thought fit to steer betwixt the two extremes of paraphrase and literal translation; to keep as near to my author as I could, without losing all his graces, the most eminent of which are in the beauty of his words. (2008: 26)

Dryden's change of heart may not be absolute but instead reflect his aesthetic judgement of two contrasting sources: with Ovid, he did not feel the need to preserve every stylistic and lexical feature; with Virgil, the words and the poem's power were inextricably linked in Dryden's appreciation of the work. He wished to convey the beauty of Virgil's lexical choices.

Less well-known to most of us than Dryden's Virgil or Ovid is a version of *Oedipus*, written in conjunction with Nathaniel Lee and published in 1733, after Dryden's death, a very free adaptation of the original, and definitely 'imitation' in Dryden's system, despite passages of close paraphrase. It has additional characters, and occasional songs replace a formal chorus. The play shares features with opera which travelled to England during the 17th century. Despite a somewhat tangential relationship to Sophocles, discussed in detail in Hall and Macintosh (2005), Dryden's and Lee's preface acknowledges:

> [...] that Sophocles, not only the greatest wit, but one of the greatest men in Athens, made it for the stage at the public cost, and that it had the reputation of being his masterpiece, not only amongst the seven of his which are still remaining, but of the greater number which are perished. (A3)[4]

An interesting feature of this preface is the precise knowledge about Sophocles' surviving corpus, from dilettante students of Greek texts. The play's epilogue makes a glancing reference to Aristotle:

> Terrour (sic) and Pity this whole poem sway,
> The mightiest machines that can mount a Play. (93)

Ranjit Bolt, a modern translator for the stage from several languages, still finds wisdom in Dryden's thoughts on the translation process. In his *Art of Translation* (2010), Bolt refers

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[4] Quote comes from print-to-order facsimile edition by Ecco Print Editions. 18th century typeface and the capitalisation of initial letters, retained in facsimile, have been replaced with 21st century orthography.

frequently to Dryden, at one point calling him 'the great man' (25). He is in agreement with Dryden's opinion that: 'a good translation will [...] be neither so loose as paraphrase, nor so close as metaphrase', commenting:

> The interesting point here is that, with the instinct and common sense of a highly intelligent man, coupled to the experience of a skilled practitioner, Dryden has, implicitly and unconsciously, arrived at the same conclusion that the modern linguistic theorist reaches by more technical means, through the denial of paraphrasable content. The acceptance of a linguistic-philosophical truth leads logically to the adoption of a somewhat, but not excessively, relaxed code of practice. (21-2)

Perhaps the assertion that Dryden denied 'paraphrasable content' runs counter to what Dryden actually wrote but the contention that he was, intuitively, three hundred years ahead of the field reflects Bolt's admiration. Bolt's final summary of Dryden's thoughts, 'at the risk of overegging [Dryden's] pudding' expresses the responsibility of the translator towards his/her source:

> A translator is to make his author appear as charming as possibly he can, provided he maintains his character. (25)

We, too, shall be looking for that 'instinct and common sense of a highly intelligent man, coupled to the experience of a skilled practitioner' which create the inspired translation.

Dryden and Lee, following in Chapman's footsteps, were amateur scholars of Greek and Roman literature, outside a university context. Yet, within a century of Dryden's death, Classical Studies had emerged as an academic discipline, with implications for how scholarship would undertake transmission of the classics in the future. Keats' sonnet coincides chronologically with this academic and philosophical shift, destined to create a different type of classical translation to Chapman's, in which the main function was to construe as accurately as possible the original text, with intelligibility overriding stylistic considerations. The systematic study of the classics originated in what is now Germany during the Age of Enlightenment and was termed Philology. As Christopher Stray says in *Classics Transformed*, Germany was 'the source of the most powerful current of Hellenism in eighteenth-century Europe' (1998: 23).

The embryonic Germany was resisting French cultural and linguistic hegemony, bound up with the dominance of its language amongst European aristocrats. Stray describes the movement as:

> [...] reactive ideologizing against what was seen as a dangerous Gallic brew of secularism and materialism. Greece was used to energize the ideological construction of stable or defensive nationalism, against what was perceived as a Latin-orientated expansionist nationalism. (23)

The British, too, accepted this negative view of the French and enjoyed their period of Hellenism, although Roman history re-emerged as we dreamt of Empire in the 19th century.

One of the most important Enlightenment figures from the perspective of classical studies was Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), the first scholar to systematise the description and dating of ancient art. Greek texts north of the Alps were both rare and costly at this period, since Greek printing fonts had not yet spread far from Venice where they originated. Thus, ideas of Greek art were refracted through contact with Roman imitations, frequently damaged by time. In the introduction to his edition of *Winckelmann - writings on art*, David Irwin explains:

> [...] so that, for example, it was believed by Winckelmann and by his contemporaries that ancient sculptors often generalized their anatomy and omitted facial features. (1972: 11)

Nonetheless, despite a lack of authentic information, Winckelmann idealised Greek art and saw it as a model for a modern, free and enlightened state. He drew this idea from an Englishman, George Turnbull, whose book, *A Treatise on Ancient Painting, containing observations on the Rise, Progress and Decline of That Art amongst the Greeks and Romans*, states:

> Liberty or a free Constitution is absolutely necessary to produce and uphold that Freedom, Greatness and Boldness of Mind, without which it cannot rise to noble and sublime Conceptions. (1740: 99-100)

Irwin summarises Winckelmann's stance as appreciating the 'noble simplicity' and 'quiet grandeur' of classical art (12). One cannot ignore, however, the strong element of

homoeroticism driving Winckelmann's perception. He was keenly interested in Greek attitudes to athleticism and nudity.

The link between Winckelmann and Pausanius, a late sophist (110-180 CE), has been noted. Katherine Harloe, in her article: 'Pausanius as Historian in Winckelmann's *History*' for the *Classical Receptions Journal* writes of Winckelmann's 'emphasis on autopsy' (174).[5] Harloe is not using 'autopsy' in our forensic sense but drawing on its etymological roots: Winckelmann, like Pausanius, wants to see things with his own eyes. She also makes the link to Turnbull, as does Maria Pretzler, who contributed her own article: 'Pausanius as Winckelmann's Guide' to this edition dedicated to the reception of Pausanius, writing:

> What is so peculiar about Winckelmann's image is that he saw all these happy circumstances as an effect of Greek freedom and democracy, although the role of art in his ideal Greek society reflects an idealized post-classical, even Roman, perspective: in fact, we can recognize Winckelmann's Greece as a heightened version of the self-image created by the cultured Greek elite of the Roman period—this is the Greece of the Second Sophistic, not the classical Greece which produced such influential ideas of collective freedom. (2010: 205)

In *Winckelmann's "Philosophy of Art"*, John Harry North takes as his focus Winckelmann's desire to build Germany in an image of this illusory Greece, a desire which confused myth and history (a tendency still present in Schliemann a century later). The fact that Winckelmann wrote in German is worthy of notice. North comments in his introduction:

> His language is almost entirely German, which is a radical statement in itself, since access to the courts and the German nobility would have been in French and to the learned community mainly in Latin. (2012: 5)

North quotes an extract from the final edition of *Geschichte* (1776) which shows how Winckelmann is creating paradigms for his own time. He paints a very different picture of Agamemnon's character to most modern commentaries, drawing on a formulaic Homeric epithet:

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[5] Volume 2 Number 2, 2010, OUP

> It was the aim and the intention of the constitution and government of Greece to place freedom at the forefront and preference of art. Freedom in Greece had at all times been in the forefront and at the side of the thrones. Their kings ruled like fathers until the taste of enlightened freedom of thought gave them a foretaste of the sweetness of complete freedom. Homer calls Agamemnon the shepherd of the people to indicate the love and care he felt for his flock. (2012: 35)

For Winckelmann, only an ideal society could create ideal beauty and part of Greece's claim to ideal status was Winckelmann's perception of a Panhellenic sensitivity, or *Griechentum*, which could provide the model for an emergent *Deutschtum*. (The German –tum is English –dom, but –ness would be a more useful analogy.)

As the 18th century gave way to the 19th, enlightened rationalism was countered by romanticism; Western Europe was also in a state of seismic political upheaval. The French Revolution, perhaps a political expression of romanticism, ceded to Napoleonic expansionism and imperialism. Napoleon dissolved a unifying structure that had become known as The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, leaving a loose confederacy of 39 states, some newly-created to be his clients. The bond for these disparate states continued to be the German language which, therefore, became the focus of academic attention. The search for a German identity underpinned much academic and philosophical thought in these German states, several decades before unification delivered modern nationhood. Ancient Greece was the paradigm.

One invaluable by-product of the Napoleonic campaigns was the discovery of the Rosetta Stone in Egypt, in 1799, as archaeology, too, was refined into the academic discipline we know today, with a bow towards Winckelmann. The Rosetta Stone not only underlined the importance of material evidence for decoding the past but also, by providing the same text in Greek, Demotic Egyptian and Hieroglyphics, offered an exciting opportunity for comparative linguistics. Philology, the study of languages from written, historical sources, became formalised in Germany as an academic discipline. The study—and promotion—of German embraced the classical languages and cultures, as an edifying force. Within the dual context of developing the German tongue and language-study in general, one significant educator of the era was Wilhelm

von Humboldt (1767 -1835), a Prussian with distinctive ideas on engaging with the world. For von Humboldt, academic life was no ivory tower: to achieve self-growth and the full expression of one's humanity, it was necessary to interact fully with the wider society. He is sometimes credited as a proto-exponent of the theory of linguistic relativity which postulates that the structure of an individual language affects the mindset of its users as to how they conceptualise their world.[6] Thus, to create German unity, a common language was needed with which to forge a Germanic outlook on the world but the life of a scholar was to be proactive rather than reclusive. Humboldt, as part of his linguistic studies, translated both Aeschylus and Pindar into German.

Two German philologists who have gained world-wide renown are Jacob Grimm (1785-1863) and his brother Wilhelm (1786-1859), who collected oral folk tales as part of their cultural studies. Again, the stories were not merely of interest because they preserved older forms of spoken German but also because the content formed part of the fabric of German identity within a pan-European context. Nonetheless, a certain amount of editing took place to make the stories fit their nationalistic role. The Grimm brothers' first collection of tales was published in 1812 as *Kinder - und Hausmärchen* (Children and Household Tales). The sexual and violent content did not immediately mark out the stories as ideal nursery fare. Between 1812 and 1857, Wilhelm extensively edited the collection, partly to address this problem. 86 tales grew to 200 but more significant than the increased number was the linguistic 'doctoring' that took place. Firstly, all non-rustic elements were removed, to enhance an air of grass roots authenticity. Then, French loanwords – '*fee*' (fairy), '*Prinz*' (prince) and '*Prinzessin*' (princess), for example – were replaced with a Teutonic alternative, such as: '*Zauberin*' (magic woman), *Königssohn* (king's son) and *Königsdochter* (king's daughter). This was Humboldt's theory in practice: Germanic compounds to create a Germanic picture of the world. The editing of *Grimm's Fairy*

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[6] Harry Hoijer named this the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (1954: 92-105).

Tales, as they have come down to us, went alongside the production of a German dictionary, the *Deutsches Wörterbuch*.[7]

The rigorous academic study of folk tales by the brothers Grimm may have been nationalistic at heart but the burgeoning interest in traditional, pre-literary narratives impacted upon the re-interpretation of Greece's contribution to European culture. The brothers were a product of romanticism in their affection for the imagined purity of traditional rural life. Romanticism considered Greece not only the cradle of high culture, but also an ancient *Völkland*, with archetypal myths.[8] Thus we can see that the study of the classics as an academic discipline began life interwoven with the desire of the German intellectual elite to find unifying forces for their emergent nation, both in language and in narrative and the Germans were very thorough in their approach. The scholarly ethos of 19th-century German universities was one of *Wissenschaft*, which prized scientific and systematic approaches, even for the study of language and literature, but this was tempered by the liberating concept of *Bildung*, which favoured personal discovery and growth over the handing down of traditional ideas; in its prejudice against the psychological or subjective response, however, *Wissenschaft* could prove arid.

At the same time as philology was developing its systems for exploring language, German philosophers were formulating concepts of German idealism and transcendental philosophy which were often rooted in theories of art and aesthetics. Again, classical Greece frequently offered the paradigm because its art was believed to inspire the spiritual response these new philosophies demanded. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854), in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), elevates the poetic spirit into the highest realms of philosophical inquiry. He speaks of art in metaphysical language:

> Nothing is a work of art which does not exhibit an infinite, either directly, or at least by reflection. [...] But now if it is art alone which can succeed in objectifying with universal validity what the philosopher is able to present in a merely subjective fashion, there is one more conclusion yet to be drawn. Philosophy was born and

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[7] Project Gutenberg offers an online translation of *Grimm's Fairy Tales* by Edgar Taylor and Marian Edwardes amongst its most popular books.
[8] For example, Frederick Whitling: 'Memory, history and the classical tradition', *European Review of History* (2009: 242)

nourished by poetry in the infancy of knowledge, and with all those sciences it has guided toward perfection; we may thus expect them, on completion, to flow back like so many streams into the universal ocean of poetry from which they took their source. (Trans. Heath, P. 2001: 231/232)

Although Schelling does not identify '*the infancy of knowledge*' overtly, it had become a commonplace in European thought since the Renaissance to view Greece as the birthplace of western learning. One needs look no further than the first verse of Byron's lyrical interlude in Canto 3 (lxxxvi) of *Don Juan* (published in 1821) to appreciate how Greece was revered both as the cradle of learning and for its mythic legacy:

> The isles of Greece, The isles of Greece!
>   Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
> Where grew the arts of war and peace,
>   Where Delos rose, and Phoebus sprung,
> Eternal summer gilds them yet,
> But all, except their sun, is set.[9]

Schelling posits that 'philosophy as philosophy can never become generally current' because it seeks the universal, the transcendent (233). This retrospective approach favoured a corpus of classical writers but it could also prove a two-edged sword; whilst classical scholarship certainly advanced, it nonetheless embodied reductive tendencies, focusing on a limited range of privileged texts. In terms of Greek drama, from the modest number of surviving texts, an even more modest sub-set received virtually all the attention.

George Steiner, in the first chapter of his diachronic survey, *Antigones* (2003: 1-19), argues that the character of Antigone, as presented by Sophocles, represented the *Zeitgeist* of Romantic philosophers and revolutionaries from the late 18th century until 1905, when interest in Freud's Oedipus complex eclipsed her. In an age when the rights of man—and woman—became hotly debated, Antigone ceased to be a transgressive princess from a dysfunctional royal household and became a representative of the citizenry, fighting tyranny. Steiner also suggests that the era of '*liberty, equality and fraternity*' preferred the horizontal, egalitarian family relationship of

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[9] Example in Gillespie's *The Poets on the Classics* (1988: 48-9)

siblings to the vertical, patriarchal ones that Freud later explored. Sophocles, therefore, maintained the ascendancy bestowed by Aristotle, whilst Euripides was sidelined for his perceived modernity and for emphasising individual psychology at the expense of the kind of archetypal conflict that *Antigone* represents.

Edith Hall points out that the preference for Sophocles was not universal in her work on *Iphigenia in Tauris* (2013). Goethe (1749-1832) took Euripides' play to create *Iphigenie*, his only adaptation of Greek tragedy, which presents an atypical choice. Hall comments:

> His choice of Greek prototype, with its barbarian setting, is fascinating given that the French classical dramatists he set out to challenge had elevated, rather, the stories of Medea, Oedipus, Phaedra and the other, more victimized Iphigenia (all set in Greece) to places of prominence. (2013: 262)

As is so often the case, Goethe's choice of play reflects social upheaval in his own time. As Hall explains:

> Goethe's heroine reflected the 19th-century western constructions of ideal femininity as well as the increasing sense of societal fragmentation, deracination and individual isolation ushered in by the industrial revolution and breakdown of the ancient regimes of Europe.
>
> [...] At the core of the play therefore lies a fantasy of imposing a new moral order on international relations, a moral order in which backward peoples *consent* to have their ritual practices and values dictated by more advanced ones. The play offers an improbable vision of a world in which violent antagonism, atavistic ritual brutality, colonial rapacity, concupiscence, vindictiveness and trauma can all be eradicated by an ideal of gentleness, or kindness, embodied in Goethe's psychologically implausible Iphigenie. (262-3)

Like so many of his near-contemporaries and compatriots, Goethe looked to Greece for a paradigm through which to establish the values of his emergent nation. His choice also bows to Aristotle who believed the last-minute reprieve for Orestes in the play to be the most powerful kind of tragic outcome (κράτιστον δὲ τὸ τελευταῖον).[10]

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[10] *Poetics* 14, 1454a

August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767-1845) who is sometimes credited with founding the Romantic Movement with his brother, described *Antigone* in the 7th of a series of influential lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, published in 1809, as 'the purest display of feminine heroism' but comments that:

> The *Oedipus Tyrannus* and the *Philoctetes*, have been generally, but without good reason, preferred by modern critics to all the others: the first on account of the artifice of the plot, in which the dreadful catastrophe, which so powerfully excites the curiosity (a rare case in the Greek tragedies), is inevitably brought about by a succession of connected causes; the latter on account of the masterly display of character, the beautiful contrast observable in those of the three leading personages, and the simple structure of the piece, in which, with so few persons, everything proceeds from the truest and most adequate motives. (73)[11]

With such a glowing assessment of both plays, it may surprise us that Schlegel still thought them unfairly preferred. He offers an insight into the tastes of his age whilst reducing three examples of merit to just one, in his estimation, although he offers a practical rationale for the privileging of Sophocles' plays, most of which had been transmitted 'tolerably free from mutilation and corruption in their text' (73).

Schlegel's ideas on art were widely disseminated. John Black translated them for publication in Britain, prompted by jingoism arising from the Napoleonic wars. Schlegel, like Winckelmann before him, turned to the ancient world for inspiration to help break France's cultural hegemony. With some relish, Black writes in his preface:

> The boldness of [Schlegel's] attacks on rules which are considered as sacred by the French critics, and on works of which the French nation in general have long been proud, called forth a more than ordinary degree of indignation against his work in France. It was amusing enough to observe the hostility carried on against him in the Parisian Journals. The writers in these Journals found it much easier to condemn M. SCHLEGEL than to refute him: they allowed what he said was very ingenious, and had a great appearance of truth; but they still said it was not truth.
>
> In this country [England] the work will no doubt meet with a very different reception. Here we have no want of scholars to appreciate the value of his views on the ancient drama; and it will be no disadvantage to him, in our eyes, that he has been unsparing in his attack on the literature of our enemies. (7)

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[11] A Hard Press edition, printed to order by Amazon, of 1809 translation by John Black, first published 1815

Hegel (1770-1831), in his *Aesthetik* and various other works, expounded his own influential theory of tragedy which was drawn together a century ago by A. C. Bradley and introduced to Britain in one of a series of lectures on poetry (1909: 70-95). The transcript of that lecture remains an excellent digest. Hegel, too, favoured *Antigone,* as well as Aeschylus' *Eumenides.* Bradley summarises Hegel's defining notion of tragedy: '[...] a conflict of the spirit. It is a conflict, that is to say, between powers that rule the world of man's will and action—his ethical substance' (71). Bradley then continues with his own list of the bonds of family and state that produce such conflict. Hegel is interested in what Bradley translates as '[...] the self-division and intestinal warfare of the ethical substance, not so much the war of good with evil as the war of good with good' (71).

Although Hegel explored the concept of *Zeitgeist* on a grand scale as a philosopher, he was less able to recognise that either his own literary choices, or those of his contemporaries, were very much a symptom of their times. Simplified to Hegelian conflicts, the plays that the German romantics and idealists favoured depicted the issues relevant to late 18th-century and early 19th-century politics. In *Oedipus Tyrannus*, one sees the enlightened despot, mild in government, destroyed because of the way he seized that power; *Eumenides* offers individual revenge ranged against civil justice or, if one probes deeper, 'benign' patriarchy triumphing over older social systems. *Philoctetes* pits idealism against expediency (or *Realpolitik*), whilst *Antigone* presents the conflict between the ties of kin and ties of the state as well as the tension between the ideal laws of heaven and pragmatic human constructs.

For Hegel, a play must address such large and universal themes to attain perfection. *Antigone* was the pinnacle of achievement because the claims of both kin and community can inhabit the moral high ground. It is irrelevant that modern reception finds Creon less appealing than his niece, or even that events seem to vindicate Antigone. The essential conflict is between two imperatives that can both claim to be good in essence. We shall see in Chapter 2 how *Antigone*

lent itself to the Irish during their 'troubles'. Hegel's analysis of Greek drama considered the impact of performance on an audience as he was an aficionado of the theatre and an admirer of Goethe, who directed a German language version of *Antigone* in1808-1809. Steiner considers the translation, by Johann Rochlitz, to have been 'infirm and truncated' and the performance 'no great success' (1984/2003: 8). Nonetheless, Goethe's foray into translating and naturalising Greek tragedy was intended to create a national theatre for Germany, bringing a Germanic slant to high culture.

Schlegel approved of such adaptations; in his 5th lecture on Dramatic Art and Literature, he consigned the genre to history as a theatrical fossil without modification and naturalisation to bring the drama into a contemporary context:

> The Greek tragedy, in its pure and unaltered state, will always for our theatres remain an exotic plant, which we can hardly hope to cultivate with any success, even in the hot-house of learned art and criticism. The Grecian mythology, which furnishes the materials of ancient tragedy, is as foreign to the minds and imaginations of most of the spectators, as its form and manner of representation. (Hard Press reprint: 53)

The German philologists stand as founding fathers of systematic classical studies, whose ideas and practices spread across Europe and beyond. Indeed, in *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre 1660-1914* (Hall and Macintosh, 2005) the chapter: 'Page versus Stage: Greek Tragedy, the Academy, and the Popular Theatre' acknowledges this head start by German scholars:

> It was not until the 1870s that the British theatre could be said to have caught up with the German-speaking world in its relationship to Greek tragedy. [...] there had been no serious involvement in the performance of Greek plays within British universities since the Renaissance. (431)

The gap, however, was about to close.

In Britain, during the 19th century, new universities were emerging and the old were being transformed, breaking their ties with theology and the clergy. The study of Theology had required both Greek and Latin; Oxford and Cambridge retained the tradition that a sound

knowledge of the classical languages was intellectually desirable. In volume 4 of *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, Adrian Poole describes the use of classics as a pedagogical tool:

> Translation into and out of Latin and Greek was central to the developing system of examinations at Oxford and Cambridge and to the schooling that prepared pupils for university admission [...] It was also an ordeal facing applicants to the Indian Civil Service—Oxford graduates were unsurprisingly successful. From this perspective translation was a way of instilling in civil servants and others the virtues of accuracy, speed and precision in the discharging of strictly defined tasks, and deprecating independent, creative or sceptical thought. (2006: 117)

The need to pass examinations gave rise to a modest industry of hack translations to act as 'cribs', such as the 'How to Pass' series (ca 1886) which, as Poole notes, 'did not strive for immortality'. In an age of empire, a classical education would indeed prove useful if it created logical and unquestioning minions.

Even liberal academics, notably Jowett (1817-1893), who became master of Balliol College, with his kindred spirit, Mark Pattison, 'saw in the study of Greek culture the means to an imperial end' as Poole says, with Oxford at the hub of British intellectual hegemony worldwide (118). Mirroring the German philologists, British academics were appropriating the classics for their own nationalistic and colonial agenda. Jowett was aided in his ambition by being appointed to the board that selected applicants for the Indian Civil Service. Christopher Stray describes how the British were favoured in the entrance examination by the committee's decision to allot '750 marks each to Greek and Latin—twice as many as modern and oriental languages each received, though fewer than English language and literature (1,500) and Mathematics (1,000) ' (1998: 53). Under this regime, a third of successful candidates came from Oxford University. Phiroze Vasunia, writing of the examination, is clear about motivation:

> [...] Victorian political and intellectual elites sought to manipulate admission to the Indian Civil Service and used it to further their own domestic agenda. As a consequence of their actions, Greek and Latin played a prominent part in the training

and examination of recruits to the Indian Civil Service, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century. (2013: 195)

Politics apart, Jowett was famous for his brilliant mind which ignored minutiae in favour of the bigger picture. He had studied Hegel in his youth and applied a philosophical approach to his scholarship. Through Hegel, he also felt the 'redemptive' power of the classics, which Poole mentions (118). There is a Balliol rhyme about Jowett, acknowledging his genius:[12]

> Here come I, my name is Jowett.
> All there is to know I know it.
> I am Master of this College,
> What I don't know isn't knowledge!

Jowett's translations can still be found in online collections such as the *Perseus* website.[13] Sir Richard Jebb (1841-1905), the noted academic translator, and a gifted editor of Sophocles, whose work can also be found on *Perseus*, saw imaginative engagement as an intrinsic part of scholarship, having adopted the German concept of *Bildung*. A number of schoolmasters, too, saw more to the classics than expediency. One such was Benjamin Hall Kennedy (1804-1889), who became Headmaster of Shrewsbury School (where he had been a pupil) after a brief academic career. In his 30-year tenure, he produced an elementary Greek grammar for his students and also translated *Birds*, *Agamemnon* and *Oedipus Tyrannus* to encourage engagement with the classics.

Beyond Academia, interest in all things classical was growing. There was travel to the Middle East and archaeology had come of age. Two remarkable events happened in the mid-19th century: in 1868, Heinrich Schliemann began his excavation of Troy and in 1876 (after an earlier dig by Kyriakos Pittakis in 1841, which uncovered and restored the Lion Gates) Schliemann excavated Mycenae. Myth suddenly became grounded in fact. There had been an academic series of texts in the late Georgian period for Reading School, also a venue for early

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[12] Balliol rhymes are doggerel quatrains: two rhyming couplets, with four beats to a line.

[13] *Perseus*, created by Tufts University (near Boston), uses texts out of copyright, including acknowledged academic translators such as Jowett and Jebb.

performances of academic Greek plays, (Hall and Macintosh, 2005: 243) but now an increasing number of classical works were translated, not exclusively for privileged schoolboys but to feed the burgeoning interest of a wider public, including women, who developed an appetite for the classics, as female education began to broaden its horizons. Isobel Hurst, in her study of Victorian women writers, describes this education as literary in its bias:

> Even the most accomplished female classicist did not spend much time composing prose or verse in classical languages or analysing grammar, but concentrated on translating and understanding Greek and Latin texts. [...] for the Victorian girl Latin and Greek are associated with empowerment [...] (2006: 2)

W. Lucas Collins published a series in Edinburgh from 1870-79 called: *Ancient Classics for English Readers* which proved very popular but perhaps the most extensive classics series in Britain was *Bohn's Classical Library*, mostly produced from 1848-62. These translations were described as literal. By 1887, the series contained ninety-eight volumes, which generally cost 5/- (25p). The relative cost of Bohn's editions, which was more than a weekly wage to most, suggests that their target readership was to be found amongst the increasingly affluent middle class (although a number of laudable working-class autodidacts also pursued a classical education). Kenneth Haynes, writing in volume 4 of *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, quotes the modern scholar, H. MacLeod Currie's 1996 assessment of the Bohn Library:

> Classically, the Bohn translations are usually sound. Some are offered specifically as literal renderings, but even here there is a certain quality which generally made for smooth readings; they are not crude, and in fact they easily bear comparison with the Loeb series, I think, and can even be superior to it, showing a consistently workmanlike approach [...] No significant author is missing from the Bohn Library. (2006: 165)

Through these editions, Greek drama could be read by the public, but it was not considered suitable, unmodified, for the mainstream theatre in Victorian England, containing incest, infanticide, matricide and other disturbing topics which would never pass the censor in an unadulterated form. Nonetheless, burlesque versions of the tragedies appeared on stage, in keeping with the theatrical *Zeitgeist*. These are thoroughly chronicled by Hall and Macintosh in

Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre 1660-1914. In the chapter 'Medea and Mid-Victorian Marriage Legislation', we can deduce the kind of adaptations that were deemed to turn Euripides' ST into acceptable fare for an English audience, ca 1850:

> The Victorian burlesque Medea did things few heroines in other imaginary contexts could yet dare or achieve—she extracted herself, triumphantly, from a ruined marriage, while succeeding in keeping her sons alive, or cunningly coerced her husband into mending his ways, or took the initiative to correspond with her love rival over financial arrangements, or argued with cogency, wit and panache that women's lot was iniquitous. (2005: 393)

As the chapter's title tells us, Medea became an archetype of the abandoned wife as important social legislation passed through parliament, the most significant of which was: The Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act (1857). We are told:

> For the first time in this book a single Greek tragedy produced, within the space of a few years, a greater number of separate performed adaptations in English than any other Greek tragedy inspired during the entire period 1660-1914. (393)

Hot on the heels of this legislation came a production by John Heraud, revived in 1859 for a huge audience, many of them working-class East Enders. Hall and Macintosh tell us further into the chapter:

> Heraud's *Medea* was revived at the thoroughly demotic Standard Theatre on Shoreditch High Street in the East End. After renovations in 1850 and 1854, the Standard had the largest capacity of any auditorium in Britain; it could seat five thousand, two thousand more than Drury Lane or Covent Garden. (417)

Once again, a society had appropriated the play best able to confront the social currents of the day.

Alongside the burlesque and the demotic, a number of performances in Greek emerged from scholarly institutions, including Balliol College in England, and Harvard University, in the United States of America. Cambridge University staged its first Greek Play, *Ajax*, in 1882. (Jebb provided a parallel translation for the actors.) The tradition is alive to this day. Pat

Easterling has written on the early days of Cambridge's Greek play (1882-1912) and points out that certain social and cultural factors coincided to promote the success of the venture, mainly the secularisation of Cambridge University but also:

> [...] the aesthetic attraction of classical drapery and tableaux at a time when Hellenism in art, as represented by Leighton, Alma Tadema and Poynter, had powerful imaginative appeal. (1999: 30)[14]

A crossover between art forms was compounded by a tendency for classical drama to be declaimed by a static actor, in statuesque pose, gleaned from such artefacts as the Parthenon (Elgin) marbles.

Fig. 1: *A Corner of the Villa*, 1889
Sir Edward John Poynter (1836-1919)

This example of Poynter's work, with the draperies and theatrical tableau pose that Easterling describes, provides a sentimental view of the classical world, placed within the kind of architectural details—the columns in particular—that worked their way into theatre set designs during the late Victorian era; the whole scene might be a frozen moment on-stage.

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[14] 'The Early Years of the Cambridge Greek Play: 1882-1912' in *Classics in 19th and 20th Century Cambridge*, edited by Christopher Stray

Ajax was a sound choice for a first production by Cambridge University in 1882, owing to the paucity of female characters it required to stage it, in a community not yet attuned to the travesty role. With the vagaries of late-Victorian taste, Ajax's 'deception speech' became popular in isolation and was translated as a dramatic monologue, against the general run of preferences. Adrian Poole, who writes the section on Greek drama (5.3) in volume 4 of *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English* (2006), summarises the latter half of the 19th century as favouring Euripides' women, the playwright having come back into full favour. If one were to create a popularity chart, Poole has it topped by *Alcestis*, the perfect Victorian wife, with *Medea*/*Hippolytus*/*Hecuba* in joint second place. *The Bacchae* entered this chart as the century drew to a close (182). Aristophanes, the main representative of Greek comedy, was on the edge of popularity but (as those of us who have ever purchased a second-hand school text of Aristophanes can testify) he was frequently Bowdlerised to a point that effectively neutered his plays (184).

Edith Hall, in her essay: 'The English-Speaking Aristophanes, 1650-1914' explains the problems in staging Aristophanes for a Victorian audience whose members preferred to parody their contemporaries rather than people and works from a distant era:

> The primary problem was that making comedy out of comedy was not the way of the early Victorians: the point of laughter in burlesque, burletta, and light opera was always that it parodically reworked an *elevated* prototype. (2007: 80)

We have already met this passion for burlesque in our discussion of *Medea*. There were, of course, those who embraced Aristophanes outside the popular theatre: students whom Hall describes as 'elitist Oxbridge youths, articulating vendettas' (2007: 81) enjoyed creating their own pastiches. Hall refers specifically to *Aristophanes in Oxford*, a conservative satire on Oscar Wilde and his 'decadent' art, penned in 1894.

It is hardly surprising that a century of translation fervour should arouse questions about the nature of such translation. In the mid-19th century, the poet and scholar Matthew Arnold

fiercely debated the issue with fellow academic F. W. Newman, who claimed in the introduction to his prose Homer, 'faithfully translated', that it was 'ruinous' to create an illusion that a work was not a translation. He wished to 'foreignise':

> [...] attaining a plausible aspect of moderate antiquity, while remaining easily intelligible [...] I ought to be quaint; I ought not to be grotesque. (1856: x)

Arnold proposed a more natural use of language. The argument about whether or not to naturalise a text is summarised by Matthew Reynolds for his chapter: 'Principles and Norms of Translation' in volume 4 of *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English* (2006: 67-70). At the beginning of the chapter, Reynolds differentiates his terms:

> How should we distinguish between a 'norm' and a 'principle'? One view might be that norms tend to inhere in and define societies while principles belong to individuals. (61)

Reynolds describes Newman's ambition as something foreshadowing Eugene Nida's idea of dynamic equivalence:[15]

> [Newman] aims to create a style that will be equivalent to Homer's in the sense of having the same position on a putative scale of English styles as Homer's on a putative scale of Greek ones. (68)

 Newman is also described as 'flag-waving' for a parallel text, showing his desire to link his TT with the exotic ST.[16] Reynolds' choice of the word 'putative' demonstrates the ultimate subjectivity of a translator's choices and the values that can drive them. Reynolds also demonstrates the usefulness of Reception Studies in unravelling mindsets that dictate method and outcome. He describes the Victorians as being latter-day Pericleans (69), only interested in the imagined effect of a ST on 5th-century Athens. Reynolds claimed that Arnold wanted translations of Homer to affect a contemporary audience as the poet moved Sophocles, implying a total disregard for Homer's original audience, several centuries before the classical era.

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[15] Discussed briefly, and referenced, in chapter 3.

[16] TT = target text; ST = source text. Abbreviations used in this thesis listed below (40).

Robert Browning (see the case-study below) clearly favoured Newman, and Reynold's conclusions are a little harsh. A reverence for ancient texts and artefacts was developing, the same reverence that prompted Oxford to perform the *Agamemnon* in its original Greek in 1880, achieving front page news status, a mere four years after Mycaenae was uncovered. To validate the ancient culture of the Greeks, to hold up their authenticity to the world, was to validate the culture of their European heirs which colonial aspiration was imposing across the globe. Many of the people producing 'authentic' Greek drama would also take up the baton for 'authentic' Shakespeare, and begin the movement for a national theatre, presenting serious plays, faithful to their texts, and stripped of populist features. Translation was, inevitably, an intervention that threatened a text's integrity and divided people's opinion of the process.

To sum up the Victorian era in Britain: many academics turned their hands to translations for the scholarly, whilst accessible translations were produced for an increasingly classics-hungry public, including a number of poets who, from the mid-19th century, began to take forms directly from the Greek, rather than refracted through Roman literature. Until 1866, Sapphic metre was learned from poets such as Horace, but Swinburne (whose style, we may remember, was used by Eliot as an insult against Murray) went to the source. This extract is quoted by Haynes in volume 4 of *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English* to demonstrate how 'English words moved in a Greek way' (161):

> Saw the White implacable Aphrodite,
> Saw the hair unbound and feet unsandalled
> Shine as fire of sunset on western waters;
>   Saw the reluctant
>
> Feet, the straining plumes of doves that drew her,
> Looking always, looking with necks reverted,
> Back to Lesbos, back to the hills whereunder
>   Shone Mitylene (sic) [...]

Philology inevitably crossed the Atlantic and *Wissenschaft* found some currency in the United States. The range of texts proliferated, as the discipline developed. Following the pattern in

Europe, interest moved outwards from the universities to the wider public. The United States began one of the most enduring classical libraries, still growing today, when James Loeb, a philanthropist of German-Jewish extraction, began to publish his collection. In the introduction to the 1912 volume of Philostratus, Loeb set out his mission statement:

> These books will appeal not only to scholars who care for a uniform series of the best texts, and to college graduates who wish to renew and enlarge their knowledge with the help of text and translation, but also to those who know neither Greek nor Latin, and yet desire to reap the fruits of ancient genius and wisdom.

Loeb's approach to finding translations was catholic. His introduction goes on to describe the ambitious sweep that was envisaged for the classical library:

> Wherever modern translations of marked excellence were already in existence efforts were made to secure them for the Library, but in a number of instances copyright could not be obtained. I mention this because I anticipate that we may be criticised for issuing new translations in certain cases where they might perhaps not seem to be required. But as the Series is to include all that is of value and of interest in Greek and Latin literature, from the time of Homer to the Fall of Constantinople, no other course was possible. On the other hand, many readers will be glad to see that we have included several of those stately and inimitable translations made in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, which are counted among the classics of the English language.

The 'inimitable translations' referred to would have been created, during the three centuries in question, by writers rather than professional scholars, although the series has moved towards scholarship over the hundred years of its existence. Seamus Heaney, in conversation with Dennis O'Driscoll, recalls reading *Agamemnon* in a very old Loeb, that used 'pseudo-Shakespearean diction', written in verse, with metrical shifts (2008: 420), quite different from Sommerstein's modern version. In 19th-century Britain there were experiments with parallel texts, notably by Jebb, for the Cambridge Greek play, and even interlinear texts for teaching, but never as extensively as the Loeb library, which reminds us at every turn of the page that there was a source in another language.

Honouring the intentions of its founder, the Loeb library, now published by Harvard University Press, remains broad in scope, and is regularly replenished with newly-commissioned

translations to replace those published in the earlier 20th century. It includes lesser-known authors and fragmentary works as they emerge. The editions, however, whilst 'reliable', are pervaded by a blandness of style. To take one example: the current Loeb editions of *The Iliad* (1999) and *The Odyssey* (1998), unlike Chapman's Homer, make no attempt to render these two seminal poems into verse, whether in iambic pentameters, heptameters or any other English metre. The original Loeb editions were translated by Augustus Taber Murray, Stanford Professor of Classics; *The Iliad* was published in 1924 and *The Odyssey* in 1919. Both the modern editors pay tribute to his quality. William F. Wyatt, his great-nephew, writes in the preface to *The Iliad* that A.T. Murray:

> [...] has long set the standard for accuracy and style. But its archaic language no longer seems as appropriate as it did to earlier generations of readers.[17]

Wyatt has, therefore, 'modernized the diction' but lost the poetry. Similarly, the preface to *The Odyssey*, edited by George Dimock, claims of Murray's translation that: 'No more faithful translation of Homer was ever made', yet explains the need for an edition 'bringing all that sounds unnatural into line with today's canons of English'. Whilst praising Murray's 'fidelity and readability' as the twin aims that Loeb editions aspire to, the preface to *The Odyssey* makes it clear that any exotic element in the language is to be eliminated, as does that of *The Iliad*. 'Readability' equates with 'smooth-flowing' rather than dramatic temper or metrical quality.

Thus, both poems become academic texts; the oral cadence is lost and with it our grasp of a world in which reciting Homer was a vast thread in the cultural fabric. Recitations of poetry may no longer be a cultural norm in the United States, Britain, or in many other developed nations, where literacy is the desired end of education; the performance of play texts, however, most certainly is. The Loeb editions are not unique amongst scholarly translations in creating versions unsuited for actual use in the theatre.

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[17] The page of preface is unnumbered.

In recent years, we have formulated disciplines that give us the vocabulary for discussing the translation and adaptation of texts, namely Translation Studies and Reception Studies. In essence, the former is not new; the earliest writers with opinions on translating were working with literary texts and both Cicero and Horace discussed good practice in the 1st century BCE. In 46 BCE, Cicero began the argument for 'a sense for sense' method in his *De optimo genere oratorum* when he wrote in Chapter 5, section 14:

> [...] nec converti ut interpres, sed ut orator, sententiis isdem et earum formis tamquam figuris, verbis ad nostrum consuetudinem aptis [...]

> And I did not translate them as an interpreter but as an orator, keeping the same ideas and forms, or as one might say, the 'figures' of thought, but in a language which conforms to our usage. (Trans. Hubbell, H.M. 1960: 364)[18]

Cicero summed up his own practice in the same section: 'in quibus non verbum pro verbo necesse habui reddere' (I didn't have the need to render word for word) and clearly believed that a practising orator brings an understanding to the job of translating a fellow-orator in a way that a mere interpreter would not. He was the authority for St. Jerome in his production of the Vulgate Bible ca 395 CE. Horace has the same injunction against literalism in 20 BCE, in lines 133-4 of his *Ars Poetica*: 'nec verbo verbum curabis reddere fidus interpres' ('nor [be] such a faithful translator that you will take care to render word for word'). The fellow-poet must be creative, not slavish. Horace is particularly notable as both translator and imitator, in attempting to replicate metre.

Jeremy Munday covers Cicero, Horace and St. Jerome as early pioneers of translation theories in: *Introducing Translation Studies* (2008). He also includes Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), the Protestant theologian and founder of modern hermeneutics, who wrote a key treatise on translation in 1813. Schleiermacher is an important theorist from the perspective of this study, because he illuminates the German philologists and part of their mission. Munday summarises Schleiermacher's main points under the heading 'Schleiermacher and the Valorization of the Foreign' (2008: 28) which alerts us to the fact that Schleiermacher, like

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[18] Relevant sections are available in Latin on *Perseus*, in edition by A. S. Wilkins.

Goethe, saw in the translation of appropriate classics an opportunity to aggrandise the German language through association with heroic content. By 1813 there was a translation industry which was neither academic nor creative but strictly commercial. Schleiermacher called such a practitioner a 'Dolmetscher' or 'interpreter', returning to Horace's and Cicero's '*interpres*', and paid him little regard. Rather more interesting for him was the person who translated scholarly or creative texts, the 'Übersetzer'. Munday quotes the nub of Schleiermacher's theory in an English version:

> Either the translator leaves the writer in peace as much as possible and moves the reader towards him, or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him. (2008: 29)[19]

Schleiermacher favoured the first option and Bassnett writes of his 'theory of a separate translation language' for literature (2002: 70). The dichotomy he identified has since been relabelled as 'foreignisation' versus 'domestication' by Lawrence Venuti, terms which are also employed—and debated—in Reception Studies. We shall see when comparing the translations of Harrison and Hughes that Schleiermacher's dichotomy still holds. Leevi Lehto, a Finnish poet writing on translation in *The Sound of Poetry / The Poetry of Sound* also mentions Schleiermacher and the implications of his theory:

> For [Schleiermacher], translating the Greek and Roman classics was closely connected to the task of elevating the German language to the level of its "historical task". (2009: 51)

Schleiermacher's ideas retain their currency in German translation theories and the development of 'book' German.

The modern discipline of Translation Studies incorporates aspects of linguistics, comparative literature and philosophy, as well as branches of cultural studies, including post-colonialism and gender studies. Its emphases shift in line with trends in related disciplines. These shifts throw up one of the more problematic features of translation theories: fluid terminology—as we have

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[19] Munday draws on various sources to create an accessible précis of early theories.

already noted with, for example, the alienating/foreignisation divide. Dryden identified three basic types of translation: the literal, the sense-for-sense paraphrase and one so free as to be an adaptation, to which he gave names no doubt self-explanatory in his day. The labels change, however, with each new generation of theories.

The influential linguist, Eugene Nida, talks of 'formal equivalence' and 'dynamic equivalence' as corresponding roughly to Dryden's first two categories. (The third category is not considered, being a poetic diversion rather than translation proper.) Nida was modelling his ideas upon Noam Chomsky's theory of surface and deep structures within sentences. Like Dryden, he is a product of his time. Nida's terms embrace a more complex definition than Dryden's, with additional criteria. 'Dynamic' (or 'functional') equivalence might be a consideration when translating for the stage, since it requires the translation to produce an equivalent effect between ST and TT. Thus a modern translation of a classical play, which does not move its audience as the original did, would fail the 'functional' test. 'Equivalent effect' is contentious, however, when the context of ancient theatre was so very different from our own, as we shall discuss in Chapter 3.

Despite the tendency to redefine and re-label concepts within translation theories, there are some constants for basic elements and this thesis employs four, some of which we have already met, namely: ST (source text), SL (source language), TT (target text) and TL (target language). Some theorists challenge the notion of translation altogether but this thesis works within the conventional framework that it is essential for the transmission of great world literature. Indeed, one defining quality of such literature might be its ability to endure translation and still communicate its essence. We shall explore how the poet assists this process.

Reception Studies are also inter-disciplinary, including elements of Translation Studies but moving beyond the minutiae of language, to the broader way one culture receives another. This could include any political purpose for which a text is appropriated, and is relevant to all the vernacular translations we are considering. When George Steiner's *Antigones* was first

published in the 1970s, he was beginning this approach with his perception that every age, either consciously or unconsciously, overlaid its own culture upon a literary text. The still-emerging discipline provides a mechanism and vocabulary for describing this process. When, for example, Tom Paulin writes of 'tanks on the lawn, news blackouts' in his version of *Prometheus Bound*, which he called *Seize the Fire* (1990: 13), from where is he drawing his cultural references and in what way do they create an equivalence with the ST? Reception Studies can be used to address those questions in chapter 3.

This thesis draws together a variety of approaches, including scholarship on individual plays, and attempts to tease out some general conclusions. Works that were previously considered in isolation will now be subject to comparison. There is a presumption that poets generally create effectively for theatre and that their techniques are open to analysis. Not all poets, however, have created eminently performable translations: Browning's version of the *Agamemnon*, was fired up by the scholarship of his day and aimed for literalism, counter to all the other poets in our study, as we shall now discover.

'The Browning Version': a case study

"I am delighted at this evidence, Taplow, of your interest in the rather more lurid aspects of dramaturgy, but I feel I must remind you that you are supposed to be construing Greek, not collaborating with Aeschylus." (*The Browning Version* by Terence Rattigan)

By the mid-19th century, as we have seen, academics had become secure stakeholders in the process of translating and transmitting classical texts. This does not mean, however, that poets abdicated their former role. This case study explores Robert Browning's *Agamemnon* which was rushed into print in 1877 as a response to Heinrich Schliemann's dramatic discoveries at Mycenae the previous year. It was the first 'non-scholarly' translation of the play in English but bears none of the hallmarks that our later poets stamped on their translations, as we shall explore in chapter 1. The *Agamemnon* seems to be the play of choice for many poets, either on its own or as part of the *Oresteia* trilogy, so Browning was beginning a trend, but his version is like no other. He seemed determined to subsume his own creative originality in the cause of representing the ST as accurately as possible. In so doing, Browning produced a translation of Aeschylus that is, sadly, little more than a Victorian curiosity, seldom read for any perceived literary merit, although it might serve as a 'crib'. We shall find out, however, that one of our modern poets admired certain qualities of the text.

Despite posterity's verdict—which we shall challenge, to a degree—Browning's translation illuminates many of the points made in the introduction to this thesis. It is a notable example of literalism and we must consider whether the piece failed to meet popular taste because of the method or the degree: can we see in Browning's *Agamemnon* a vindication of Matthew Arnold or merely the need for moderation in all things? Browning, like most poets, is part innovator and part a product of his age. His translation choices, even down to the ST he selected, are rooted in late 19th-century scholarship and all that went before. Browning had command of classical Greek, plus the option of academic translations, should personal knowledge fail. His preface shows us that he had access to others' thoughts on Aeschylus and information about the

condition of the *Agamemnon* manuscript. Browning's translation reflects advances in archaeology, palaeography, philology and even photography.

With his finger on the pulse of progress, how did Browning 'fail' so spectacularly when other, later, poets have achieved success, both on the page and on the stage? MacNeice, Murray, Harrison and Hughes, with widely differing styles, have all been acclaimed, if not consistently in some cases. Mary Beard, writing about Rattigan's play, *The Browning Version*, in 'Do Classics Have a Future?' (2014: 2), is partly right in her criticism that Browning's translation was consciously poetic in its lexicon—'[...] nineteenth-century poetry-speak'—but it is the literalism that strikes us most, and proves the reason for an almost universally negative reception from the poet's contemporaries.[20] Beard uses Rattigan's selected inscription line to support her contention, which conveniently encapsulates Browning's literal approach:

> 'Who conquers mildly, God, from afar, benignantly regardeth', as Browning puts the key line, is hardly going to send most of us rushing to the rest of the play. (2014: 3)

As Beard says later in this chapter, alluding to Crocker-Harris's criticism of Taplow (see header quote):

> Most of us now, I suspect, are on the side of the collaborators, with their conviction that the classical tradition is something to be engaged with, and sparred against, not merely replicated and mouthed.

An insistence on being as faithful as possible produced confusion for the reader, although as we noted in the introduction (above, 36) the pursuit of the 'authentic' was not unique to Browning. When he told Thomas Carlyle that he intended dedicating the *Agamemnon* to him, Carlyle anticipated that dedication with a pleasure that faded on receiving the published work. Incomprehension was the dominant reaction. Indeed, Carlyle's instinct was to distance himself from the undertaking, no doubt through intellectual embarrassment, although he was not new to

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[20] 'Do the Classics Have a Future?' from *The New York Review*, 12/01/2012, now in *Confronting the Classics*.

Browning's inscrutability. In 1840, 'Sordello' produced similar consternation. An 'unsigned review' said:

> If Mr. Browning will write, we wish he would write something comprehensible. *Sordello* is full of hard names, and nonsense. He calls it poetry, we term it trash of the very worst description. (67: 1968/2014).[21]

The poem is described as 'the most catastrophic poetic failure of the nineteenth century' in the introduction to a recent anthology (2013: ix).

Carlyle's opinion comes to us through a diary entry of the Irish poet, William Allingham, dated 27th October 1877. There was clearly some discussion about translating the abstruse and Carlyle hold up the *Book of Job* as a contrast to Browning. Allingham writes as if capturing live speech:

> But the translator said to himself, "the first thing I have to do is to make this as intelligible as possible to the English reader; if I do not do this I shall be—h'm—I shall be—in fact *damned*." (1970: 432)

When turning to the *Agamemnon*, Carlyle belittles Browning's poetic skill:

> [...] but O dear! [Browning] 's a very foolish fellow. He picks you out the English for the Greek word by word, and now and again sticks two or three words together with hyphens; then again he snips up the sense and jingles it into rhyme! I could have told him he could do no good whatever under such conditions. (432-3)

The concluding sentence of this extract reveals Carlyle's own translation prejudices which clearly do not favour a literal approach, or anything very different to contemporary language usage. Indeed, the polarised attitudes of Browning and Carlyle exemplify the gulf between Newman's foreignisation (alienation) theory and Arnold's naturalisation (domestication/ acculturation), as Kathleen Riley points out in her reception study of Euripides' *Herakles*. Riley talks of Browning's translation techniques in respect 'Aristophanes' Apology' (which preceded

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[21] 19th-century reviews of Browning's work from *Browning: the Critical Heritage* (editors: Litzinger and Smalley)

his *Agamemnon* by two years) and clearly links him to the scholarly debate which she sums up as follows:

> Crucial to this dispute, and not unfamiliar to our own era, was the question of 'faithfulness' to the original: how to define this abstraction in a way that was neither nebulous nor arbitrary, but that would provide translators with practical guidelines for their task. In order to arrive at any sort of definition, the theorist has to contend with several interrelated issues: the virtue, or otherwise, of literalism as a translational system; the benefit to be gained from, and the sheer linguistic attainability of, lexical, syntactical, and conceptual accuracy; and the more philosophical and ethical dilemma of whether translation should entail a process of alienation or acculturation, that is, whether the translation should communicate to the reader a sense of the remoteness, in time, culture, and language, of the original text, or render fluent and accessible what may be fractured and distancing. (2008: 194)

Robert Browning (1812-1889) need not have suffered such an ignominious outcome. By 1877, a widower in late middle age, he was well-established on the literary scene. His poetry frequently reflected his sojourn in Italy and the dramatic monologues, for which he is most famous, were innovative and subtle in their exposure of human motives. He certainly had the creative potential to deal successfully with the long, revealing speeches of Aeschylus' ST, and with their exotic subject-matter. Unfortunately, he fell by the wayside as far as critical opinion was concerned, in attempting an extremely tight 'word for word' translation, later called a transcription, which defied his readers' best intentions. The 'Browning Version' is largely known nowadays not in its own right but as a significant 'prop' in the play by Terence Rattigan to which Mary Beard referred in her article. Rattigan shows an implicit understanding of Browning's peculiar merit: pedantic and ageing schoolmaster, Andrew Crocker-Harris, has a fondness for Browning's *Agamemnon* precisely because the poet accurately construes the Greek. To Crocker-Harris's mind, Browning felicitously lacks those poetic flights of fancy to which Taplow is prone and conveniently overlooks the fact that the *Agamemnon* is rich in dramaturgical potency.

Two articles by Will Turtle and Yopie Prins provide a basis for some of the following discussion. Both are sympathetic to Browning, although for different reasons, and both

recognise Browning's responsiveness to the cultural climate within which he produced his translation. If we apply the tools of Reception Studies to Browning's work, we discover both the influence of new scholarship and also how archaeological discoveries had fired his imaginations with the tantalising possibility that Agamemnon's tomb actually lay in the ruins of Mycenae. Browning had envisaged what we might now consider a concept volume, for the coffee table, and Will Turtle describes this intention, gleaned from correspondence within Browning's circle, in: 'The Truth of Mere Transcript' (2005). He summarises:

> [...]Browning's original conception of the project as one that would encompass and engage with two nineteenth-century developments which are very different to, and yet in some ways analogues for translation (not, at this stage, 'transcription'): photography and archaeology. (2005:196)

We might not entirely accept Turtle's analogues but the article nonetheless makes important observations on the heady scientific environment in which Browning came to Aeschylus. The translation was conceived to accompany photographs from the excavation of Mycenae, making it a part of the re-interpretation of Bronze Age history, using the ST as a literary artefact. Unfortunately, these photographs never materialised, but Turtle's suggestion is that Browning translated Aeschylus like a 'linguistic archaeologist', painstakingly reconstructing the past:

> [...] deploying compound words, manipulating metaphors, and ransacking etymologies in order to find a means of recording the passing of fleeting things. [...] Browning's staccato and disorienting style—punctuated by the hyphens and dashes which suture his transcript, and riddle his manuscript—draws the reader's attention to the correspondences between the state of Aeschylus' play and the condition of the text as a physical object or artefact. (2005:197 & 200)

Whether or not we wish to pursue this archaeological comparison, Turtle's contention that Browning's translation appears stark and strange only when removed from its intended context is plausible. Turtle cites an anonymous critic amongst Browning's contemporaries, who had spotted the photographic connection for himself, thus supporting Turtle's hypothesis:

> One discerning critic, writing in The Saturday Review, noted a photographic quality to Browning's verse, regarding it as the apotheosis of a recent trend towards literal

translation: 'Even the laxity of the old school of translators may be more tolerable... than photograph-like sharpness and severity. (197)

Browning was not, in Turtle's analysis, attempting to create a polished text for theatrical use but a reconstruction of the ST with all its inscrutabilities and hiatuses. This theory can accommodate the difficulties of dealing with a ST that was far patchier than modern editions, filled in with scholarly best guesses. Indeed, Browning mentions as much in his preface:

> For, over and above the purposed ambiguity of the Chorus, the text is sadly corrupt, probably interpolated, and certainly mutilated; and no unlearned person enjoys the scholar's privilege of trying his fancy upon each obstacle whenever he comes to a stoppage, and effectually clearing the way by suppressing what seems to lie in it. (1877: vii)

Thus, Browning is attempting to be 'purer' than the academic, in accepting the manuscript's limitations, even though he was not an 'unlearned person', almost certainly working mainly from the SL. Probably resorting to a scholarly translation at times, he had nonetheless been well-versed in Greek since boyhood and was more than capable of discerning the linguistic problems that Aeschylus posed. Interestingly, the scholar F. A. Paley, whose own edition of Aeschylus is the most likely candidate to have been Browning's 'crib', provided the only known positive review. Yopie Prins quotes a section from *Browning: The Critical Heritage* in her article: ' "Violence bridling speech": Browning's Translation of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*':

> In the sublime and eagle-like passages of this greatest tragedy of the greatest Greek tragedian, Mr. Browning has succeeded–well. In passages where the terrible almost trenches on the grotesque... he is almost the only one of our poets who is thoroughly at home in this perplexing borderland of beauty and deformity. (1989: 157)

The 'perplexing borderland of beauty and deformity' is present in a number of Browning's dramatic monologue, such as 'My Last Duchess', which we shall consider later, but it is worth noting that Paley the scholar both understood and approved of Browning's translation, in a long and detailed review. Beyond what Prins uses, Paley wrote:

[...] any reader comparing [Browning's] transcript with the original will concede that Mr. Browning has unswervingly adhered to this excellent but most shackling basis of procedure. All embellishments of the translator's own brain are strenuously reprobated, as no better than the restorations of 'old Mutyens', a Stockholm picture-cleaner, who took upon himself to widen the eyes and enlarge the mouths of certain nymphs painted by Rubens. What we want are the ideas of Aeschylus, his metaphors, and his turn of phrases 'in as Greek a fashion as English will bear'. Aeschylus and Aeschylus only before all things. (1970: 433)

Paley saw features in the register of the ST, probably hidden to Carlyle, which made Browning's translation pleasing to a scholar: rather than superimposing his own poetic sensibilities, 'Mr. Browning has splendidly denied himself, and is unflinchingly crude, pointless, even clumsy, where the Greek pushes and compels him' (435). What the naturalisation school saw as a vice, Paley regarded as a virtue, in that '[Browning] is not forced to turn Aeschylus into the dialect of modern London' (434).

Browning committed his ideas on translation to paper as part of a preface, which is included in the *Bibliolife* reprint of the original. He is concerned to distance himself from 'violence' to the English language, the point Prins picks up in the title of her article. Here, the poet explains his theory:

If, because of the immense fame of the following Tragedy, I wished to acquaint myself with it, and could do so by the help of a translator, I should require him to be literal at every cost, save that of absolute violence to our language. The use of certain allowable constructions which, happening to be out of daily favour, are all the more appropriate to archaic workmanship, is no violence: but I would be tolerant for once,– in the case of so immensely famous an original,–of even a clumsy attempt to furnish me with the very turn of each phrase in as Greek a fashion as English will bear [...] (v)

Nonetheless, despite Browning's protestations, some violence was inevitable. Browning's extreme attempt at metaphrastic transcription went beyond just 'word for word' and tried to retain the word order of the ST, 'the very turn of each phrase', creating syntactic confusion at times. Browning may have been influenced by the inter-linear school texts beginning to emerge but, whatever the spur, by translating in 'as Greek a fashion' as possible, he ignored the crucial

differences between the inflected SL and English and thereby exacerbated all the obfuscations of Aeschylus' own style. The greater the structural differences between SL and TL, the more difficult it is to understand a literal translation. Catachresis occurs as one strains to reconcile the gulf between two systems. Yopie Prins takes a more generous view of Browning's linguistic experiment than the poet's contemporaries, 'as it moves into an interlingual realm' which is neither English nor Greek, but a metalanguage. She suggests that:

> [...] we might ponder how Browning's translation serves as metaphor for the act of reading itself. (1989: 152)

Prins, however, does not expand on her metaphor beyond citing a comment from Walter Benjamin's: *Die Aufgabe des Uebersetzers* (1923) on the practice of alienation (or foreignisation). Benjamin's title implies that all translation is doomed to fail.

With Browning, we not only struggle with what Aeschylus might have meant by a particular riddling trope, or γρῖφος, but we are also struggling at the basic level of sentence structure. As if retaining the original word order were not challenge enough, Browning 'jingles [the chorus] into rhyme', as Carlyle noted, often with an unobtrusive metre, but it is the syntax that provokes the greatest confusion. If we précis the journalistic advice usually ascribed to Alfred Harmsworth that: 'Dog bites man' is not newsworthy, whereas: 'Man bites dog' surely is, we can see at a glance from these two headlines how important English word order is for our interpretation of events.

In being literal 'at every cost', Browning happily construes some of Aeschylus' long speeches into phrases which borrow from the ST a disjointed structure, praised, we may recall, by Paley, as 'unflinchingly crude, pointless, even clumsy', because Browning follows 'where the Greek pushes and compels him'. The opening lines of the 'warder' serve to illustrate the point:

> The gods I ask deliverance from these labours,
> Watch of a year's length whereby, slumbering through it
> On the Atredai's roofs on elbow, object—dog-like—
> I know of nightly star-groups the assemblage,

> And those that bring to men winter and summer,
> Bright dynasts, as they pride them in the aether
> —Stars, when they wither, and the uprisings of them. (3)

We begin with the irregularity of a direct object—'the gods'—before the main verb 'ask' in the first line. This unconventional word order continues in: 'I know of nightly star-groups the assemblage', where the genitive phrase 'of nightly star-groups' comes before its noun: 'the assemblage'. This tortuous word order plus the old-fashioned 'assemblage' undoubtedly appears as some overwrought poeticism. We also have the ambiguous final line of this section, in which we struggle to discern whether 'stars' is in apposition to ' star-groups', 'those that bring', 'bright dynasts' or all three. 'Stars' corresponds in position exactly to the mooted ἀστέρας in the ST (the manuscript is corrupt at this point). In Greek, the accusative plural inflexion clearly links the word to ὁμήγυριν, τους φέροντας and λαμπροὺς δυνάστας, all dependant on κάτοιδα, but in English the clause seems awkwardly detached. This has an impact not only on our comprehension but also upon our ability to speak the line with conviction, should we care to try.[22] Browning resists the urge to explicate. The phrase λαμπροὺς δυνάστας is rendered as 'bright dynasts' without any glossing of the allusion but he is not alone in this. Sommerstein settles for 'bright potentates' and Tony Harrison multiplies the phrase to 'chiefs of the star-clans, king-stars, controllers', without seeking metaphorical significance.

John Addington Symonds, writing in *The Academy* on 3rd November 1877 (also included in *The Critical Heritage*), gives one of the most balanced reviews of Browning's translation style, avoiding Carlyle's personal remarks. Whilst appreciating the choral episodes and the *kommos* with Cassandra, Symonds nonetheless concludes:

> But language, unlike plaster, will not simply take a mould. It cannot be used as a mere vehicle, because it has its own vitality, its own independent suggestiveness, its own inevitable form. And here, in my humble opinion, the compromise adopted by Mr. Browning in his method of translation reveals its weak point. The result, as regards both language and form, is neither English nor Greek. It does not convey to the English reader either the pleasure of a poem in his own tongue, or the impression

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[22] All references to the ST are from Loeb 2008 edition of *Agamemnon*, trans. Sommerstein, from which line numbers for Greek and page numbers for English will be given.

which the original makes on a scholar's mind. Nor can its archaisms and quaint turn of phrase, suggesting as they do a thousand English reminiscences, convey the same aroma as the antiquated Aeschylean diction did to an Athenian of the age of Alexander. (1970: 440)

Symonds is moving into the territory explored in detail by modern translation theorists such as Nida: the inherent structure of languages and the cultural connotations of words.

From the extreme reaction of his contemporaries, the ungenerous might be tempted to conclude either that Browning was a genuinely incompetent translator who added no new dimension compared to the scholarly editions of, for example, John Stuart Blackie (1850) and F.A. Paley (1855), or that his methodology deviated considerably from a general 19th-century expectation that the translator should also be explicator, especially when dealing with the recondite. On the first point, Turtle asks us to reflect on Browning's concept, to appreciate his technique. We are asked to accept his choices as mirroring the archaeological process with artefacts, where understanding is incomplete. Yopie Prins goes further; she believes that Browning was drawn to Aeschylus as a poetic soul-mate and his cryptic translation style was not simply selected for literalism but positively cultivated. She puts Aeschylus into the context of Browning's own poetry with its disjointedness and opacity:

> [...] the nineteenth-century reception of Aeschylus as sublimely obscure serves as analogy to the popular perception of Browning as obscure poet. (1989: 152)

In addition, Prins finds Browning's style eminently suited to various aspects of his ST. She praises Browning for his precision when dealing with Aeschylus' language in the more turbulent descriptions, such as the herald's speech, where startlingly graphic phrases such as ὠμηστής (827) and αἵματος τυραννικοῦ (828) are rendered literally as 'raw-flesh-feeding' and 'blood tyrannic' to great effect (163), and also for his inventive coinage in accurately translating the chorus's compound adjectives describing Cassandra: 'mind-mazed' for φρενομανής, 'god-possessed' for θεοφόρητος (1140) (165/6). The Loeb edition renders this line: 'You are out of

your mind, divinely possessed' (136) with considerably less succinctness and, indeed, precision.

Browning's compound adjective reflects Cassandra's possession by a god (Apollo), not vague

divinity. One can see, furthermore, that the Loeb is moving its translation into our linguistic

comfort zone whilst Browning is retaining the very strong 19th-century perception of Aeschylus'

'otherness'.

This retention of exoticism and Browning's precision are both seen in respect of Cassandra's

exclamations. Faced with the ST's rendition of sound with emotive rather than linguistic

meaning, Browning simply imports the SL into his translation: 'otototoi' and 'papai' ('popoi' in

Loeb). We shall discover, in chapter 1, that Tony Harrison makes the same decision, a century

later. Browning seems intrigued by the Greek sound. The ST offers us:

> τί ταῦτ' ἀνωτότυξας ἀμφὶ Λοξίου;
> οὐ γὰρ τοιοῦτος ὥστε θρηνητοῦ τυχεῖν. (*Ag.* 1074-5)

Browning recognises that ἀνωτότυξας is a verb that expresses the singular act of crying

'otototoi' and, instead of creating a cumbersome equivalent, repeats the alien sound in shortened

form:

> Why didst thou "ototoi" concerning Loxias?
> Since he is none such as to suit a mourner. (86)

Crocker-Harris would have commended Browning for his attention to the words so often

overlooked: 'none such' for οὐ [...] τοιοῦτος and 'as to (suit)' for ὥστε. Browning sees the style

of the ST to depend upon its minutiae, as much as its broad sweep.

Browning's penchant for creating compound units was not happening in linguistic isolation. A

year before the *Agamemnon* was published, Henry Sweet (1845-1912) produced his *Anglo-

Saxon Reader* (of which a revised edition is still in print). The study of early Germanic and

Norse languages was exercising philologists, especially those whose modern tongues were

descendants of this branch of the Indo-European tree. Indeed, the study of Anglo-Saxon

became an obligatory element for students of English in our most prestigious universities and remained so for many decades. One feature that Germanic languages share with Greek is the ability to coin compounds. We have already seen in the introduction how easily Wilhelm Grimm replaced French vocabulary in folk tales with such Germanic coining. It would, therefore, be a tempting approach to translating Aeschylus, no mean coiner himself. Tony Harrison recognised a link between Browning's translation and elements of Anglo-Saxon. In the introduction to his *Plays Four*, which contains the *Oresteia*, Harrison admires Browning for finding in Greek something beyond the vowel qualities that define its prosody. He makes the following admission:

> Two of my Anglo-Saxon-style neologising inventions—namely 'yokestrap' and 'hackblock', I recalled suddenly, at a later stage, I had lifted from Robert Browning's much maligned *Agamemnon* of 1877, though I never felt tempted to lift the more archaising chivalric 'troth-plight', which, unlike the former examples, sounded too 'poetic' for me to want to plagiarise. I think it might be true to say that the seeds of my principal choices were lurking there in Browning from the beginning without my fully realising it. (2002: 8)

Harrison goes on to say:

> It is certainly Browning's feel for the consonantal, potentially clogging, energy of Aeschylus' verse, his awareness of the oral physicality and what George Steiner calls the 'aural density' of the original language, that distinguishes Browning's *Agamemnon* translation. It may clog but it never cloys like so much inferior Victorian poetry. Somewhere though, almost more than in any other English-speaking poet who has tackled Aeschylus, I have always felt, even before I began to think of translating him myself, there were clues to the way Aeschylus might sound in English in the Browning version. (9)

Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* cites Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* as the first source for the words ἀνδρόβουλον (11) and ἔνδροσόν (12) in the watchman's prologue. Browning has a neat response to what are almost certainly Aeschylean neologisms: he creates compounds of his own, to retain the ST's economy of expression. The coining 'man's-way-planning' is a perfect construal of the SL although cumbersome. Harrison could not find a pithier translation and resorted to a sentence to cover that one word in Greek:

<p style="text-align: center;">That woman's a man the way she gets moving. (1981: 3)</p>

Browning's language is also completely neutral. We know intuitively that the Athenians would have thought Clytemnestra's behaviour transgressive but Aeschylus' ἀνδρόβουλον does not suggest this linguistically. Indeed, could there have been a frisson of admiration beneath the disapproval? Browning's 'man's-way-planning' betrays no judgement on the queen beyond the assumption inherent in the SL/ST that efficient planning is a male prerogative.

Browning sometimes incorporates alliteration into his text. The watchman, for example, describes his situation as 'now on ward I wait the torch's token' and ἔνδροσόν is rendered 'dew-drenched' (1887: 3).[23] Liddell and Scott gloss this word as 'bedewed'. Sommerstein gives his Loeb translation the prosaic 'wet with dew'. Harrison settles on 'dew-drenched' in his own version (1981: 3). He follows Gilbert Murray, who also borrowed 'dew-drenched' (1928: 35). When considering Mary Beard's accusation that Browning employed an artificially archaic diction, we should note that 'dew-drenched' is significantly more modern and 'punchier' than Liddell and Scott's 'bedewed', although no-one would deny that words like 'suchanone' (6) lacked general currency by 1877.

Browning alerts us to his compound creations through hyphens with which Carlyle noted, he 'now and again sticks two or three words together'. Sometimes Browning gives prominence to a simple prefix in the SL, such as 'two-throned' and 'two-sceptred' (6) for διθρόνου and δισκήπτρου (43). On other occasions, a certain degree of licence is taken, departing from the slavish literalism of which Browning stands accused, perhaps to avoid tautology in the SL. Features of Greek style which the original audience might have appreciated as emphasis, we would find repetitious. Thus the phrase:

> [...] οἰωνόθροον
> γόον ὀξυβόαν (56-7)

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[23] References taken from Bibliolife reprint-to-order 'authentic reproduction' of original edition. Page numbers only will be given for further extracts.

(literally: 'a bird's cry, a wail, a piercing cry') is reconfigured into a phrase with a pair of compounds that cover both the quality and origin of the sound:

> '[...]—that wail,
> sharp-piercing bird-shriek' (6).

The prefix ὀξυ- has one compound to itself—'sharp-piercing'—and the word 'wail' (γόον) has been moved into a dominant position by Browning and isolated with a dash. 'Wail' is an ambiguous term, applicable to both humans and animals, and thus helpful in an extended simile, comparing the expeditionary force to bereft birds of prey. It is clear from this example that Browning was studying the SL at the level of root morphemes and trying to do them justice in his translation. In effect, he was creating calques by analysing each component of a word and providing an English equivalent. This is common practice between languages as an alternative to loan-words. French, for example, turned the English 'skyscraper' into 'gratte-ciel'. Mozart calqued his own name, turning the German 'Gottlieb' into the more flamboyant 'Amadeus'. Nida and Taber, a century later, stated as if a novel idea:

> Though for the most part words are selected as the units for semantic analysis, it is also possible to analyze the meaning of subword units. (2003: 89)

All of the above raises the interesting question of Aeschylus' own accessibility in an oral context to the uninitiated Athenian. Aristophanes has Euripides rail against Aeschylus' bombastic, obscure vocabulary in *Frogs*:

> [..] ῥήματ' ἂν βόεια δώδεκ' εἶπεν,
> ὀφρῦς ἔχοντα καὶ λόφους, δείν' ἄττα μορμορωπτά,
> ἄγνωτα τοῖς θεωμένοις.
>
> ([...] he'd come out with a dozen words as big as an ox
> with crests and beetling brows, formidable bogey-faced
> things unfamiliar to the spectators.) (924-6)[24]

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[24] Textual references are to 2002 Loeb edition, translated by Jeffrey Henderson. Greek is referenced by lines, with the equivalent English translation.

The phrase: ἄγνωτα τοῖς θεωμένοις ('unfamiliar to the spectators') acknowledges that a significant feature of Aeschylus' vocabulary was neologism, which always presents a problem for translator since the word comes without precedence and only oblique connotations. The accusation of obscurity is one that Browning confronts, as we shall see later. When Aristophanes' character Euripides cites examples, there is an echo of Homer and Trojan epic in the coining listed, suggesting conscious archaism on the part of Aeschylus:

–ἀλλ᾽ ἢ Σκαμάνδρους ἢ τάφρους ἢ᾽ π᾽ ἀσπίδων ἐπόντας
γρυπαιέτους χαλκηλάτους καὶ ῥήμαθ᾽ ἱππόκρημνα,
ἃ ξυμβαλεῖν οὐ ῥᾴδι᾽ ἦν.

(–but only Scamanders, or moats, or shields bronze-
bossed and blazoned with griffin-eagles, and huge craggy
utterances that weren't easy to decipher.) (928-30)

Jeffrey Henderson, the translator of these extracts, uses hyphens just as Browning did, to cope with Aeschylus' compound words. If the vocabulary was difficult (οὐ ῥᾴδι᾽) for a native speaker to 'decipher' (ξυμβαλεῖν), Browning must be afforded some credit for delving deeply into the dark waters of Aeschylus' etymology with forensic zeal. His interest in the minutiae of Greek grammar precedes the translation by a few years. His collected letters reveal a correspondence with the editor of the *Daily News* on 20th November 1874 about the finer points of the enclitic. Browning's final sentence contains the barbed implication that the editor stands incapable on this topic:

> Sir,—In a clever article this morning you speak of "the doctrine of the enclitic De" —
> "which, with all deference to Mr. Browning, in point of fact does not exist." No, not
> to Mr. Browning: but pray defer to Herr Buttmann, whose fifth list of "enclitics" ends
> "with the inseparable De"—or to Curtius, whose fifth list ends also with "De (meaning
> towards and as a demonstrative appendage)." That this is not to be confounded with
> the accentuated "De, meaning but" was the "Doctrine" which the Grammarians
> bequeathed to those capable of receiving it. (1933: 164)[25]

This letter provides evidence that Browning had engaged with at least one German philologist and an ancient grammarian but he was not always so enthralled. An earlier poem, 'A

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[25] *Letters of Robert Browning* (collected by Thomas J. Wise), edited by Thurman L. Hood.

Grammarian's Funeral', mocks pedantry over minor words as a denial of life, as this extract shows:

> While he could stammer
> He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be!—
> Properly based *Oun*—
> Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
> Dead from the waist down.
> Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place.
> Hail to your purlieus
> All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
> Swallows and curlews!
> Here's the top-peak! the multitude below
> Live, for they can there.
> This man decided not to Live but Know—
> Bury this man there? (504)[26]

We are used to the ST as a literary work in which the marginal jottings of ancient scholia have given way to the functionally similar academic footnotes which allow us to extract meaning through close reading. When we are considering a play in performance, however, especially one that was theoretically intended as a single occurrence, can we be sure that the majority of the original audience comprehensively understood the text? How much were they relying on visual clues? Browning eschewed a theatrical performance of his *Agamemnon*, refusing to add the stage directions his publisher requested in accordance with the late 19th-century convention for play texts, as Turtle points out:

> His transcript is poised on the brink of the unperformable; he signposted this by refusing to add stage directions to the text. (202)

Most of us would decide that the transcript is more than 'poised'; it is firmly in the territory of 'unperformable' and the implication is clear: Browning intended to create a text unsuited to speaking aloud in English not only to get closer to his perception of Aeschylus' style in Greek but also because live theatre formed no part of his remit. With the tendency to vulgar burlesque that Hall and Macintosh chronicle during the Victorian era, small wonder that Browning did not

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[26] *The Poems and Plays of Robert Browning 1844-1864* (no publication date).

see a travesty, with music, doggerel verse and 'nigger-dance' as the appropriate medium for this work.[27] For other dramatic pieces, such as 'In a Balcony' or 'The Heretic's Tragedy', Browning included simple stage directions in line with convention.[28]

Browning, like Humboldt, held the form of language as crucial to the transmission of ideas and chose obfuscation over elucidation to preserve what he considered to be the philosophical integrity of the ST. In the preface to *Agamemnon* he defended his choice:

> [...] I should hardly look for an impossible transmission of the reputed magniloquence and sonority of the Greek; and this with the less regret, inasmuch as there is abundant musicality elsewhere, but nowhere else than in his poem the ideas of the poet. (1877: vi)

He certainly embraced Aeschylus' obscurity and seemed intent on retaining it, picking up Aristophanes' phrase from *Frogs* (as noted above):

> And lastly, when presented with these ideas, I should expect the result to prove very hard reading indeed if it were meant to resemble Aeschylus, ξυμβαλεῖν οὐ ῥᾳδιος, "not easy to understand", in the opinion of his stoutest advocate among the ancients; while I suppose, even modern scholarship sympathizes with that early declaration of the redoubtable Salmasius, when, looking about for an example of the truly obscure for the benefit of those who found obscurity in the sacred books, he protested that this particular play leaves them all behind in this respect [...]' (vi-vii)

Prins sees Browning as deconstructing the very act of reading with his obscurity. Kathleen Riley sums up Prins's argument thus: 'On this model of reading, the obscure is a necessary condition for the sublime' (2008: 197). Riley continues by citing the Irish classicist, John Pentland Mahaffy who wrote of: 'pregnant obscurity, as contrasted with the redundant obscurity of some modern poets or the artificial obscurity of the Attic epoch' in *A History of Classical Greek Literature*. The snippet from Mahaffy which Riley quotes is specifically about Aeschylus, who is compared to Heracleitus. Mahaffy considers both 'masters of bold and suggestive inconsequence'. He describes their obscurity as stemming from 'condensation'. His summary of Aeschylus' style makes Browning seem bold for even attempting a translation:

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[27] *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre 1660-1914* (2005), chapter 13.
[28] See footnote 26

> [...] no other poet amongst the Greeks, either in grandeur of conception, or splendour of execution, equals the untranslatable, unapproachable, inimitable Aeschylus (1890: 275).[29]

Browning comes closest to success with the disturbing and dramatic language that colours his own poetic monologues. Furthermore, he created his monologues almost as a stream of consciousness, containing pauses marked with those dashes still utilised by 20th-century poets such as Harrison and Hughes. The passionate Duke of Ferrara in 'My Last Duchess' experiences the same incoherence as Aeschylus' watchman, although differently motivated. The first two lines of the extract below show a fumbling for clarity on the speaker's part as he seeks to hide the true nature of his deeds. The Duke's hesitancy conceals his duplicity. In this section of the poem we have parenthetical statements, a rhetorical question and direct speech. It is a richly varied text, in which disjointed sentences and enjambment act as a counterpoise to the heroic couplets (rhyming, in iambic pentameter), making a sinister poem edgy rather than lyrical:

> [...] She thanked men,—good; but thanked
> Somehow.. I know not how.. as if she ranked
> My gift of a nine hundred years old name
> With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
> This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
> In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
> Quite clear to such an one, and say "Just this
> "Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
> "Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
> Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
> Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
> —E'en then would be some stooping; and I chuse
> Never to stoop [...] (2013: 199)

The poem was published in 1842, half a lifetime before the *Agamemnon*, but some early stylistic features endured and no translation by a poet stands aloof from the rest of his/her work. The word 'forsooth' was selected, no doubt, to create a sense of period for this disturbing 16th-

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[29] Volume 1.

century tale, which is deemed essentially true. The victim was 17-year-old Lucrezia, daughter of Cosimo de' Medici and the putative portrait is the one below, in which the duchess is decidedly unsmiling, suggesting that in this monologue, Browning's imagination ran counter to his evidence. Clearly, historical tales and artefacts were a powerful stimulant to Browning throughout his poetic life.

Fig. 2: *Lucrezia de' Medici* by Agnolo Bronzino

We can see in the complete monologue those skills that could have fitted Browning for translating Greek tragedy to popular taste: there is artistry in how the Duke reveals his personality and his crime, through language play, including the chilling euphemism for murder:

> [...] I gave commands;
> Then all smiles stopped together.

We are here in that 'perplexing borderland of beauty and deformity' where outside perfection conceals an inner canker, much as Clytemnestra's welcoming speech.

Naturalisation has gained the ascendancy amongst modern translators, who generally abandon strict adherence to the SL in favour of a contemporary norm in the TL, Paley's 'dialect of modern London'. It is the practice of scholarly translators when lucidity is at a premium, particularly in producing series for the popular market, such as the Penguin Classics or the Loeb editions. Poets push the boundaries further and always have an inner ear for the sound of their poetry, as we shall see in the main body of this work. Browning, however, sacrificed the oral cadence of his *Agamemnon* in favour of perceived linguistic truth. Nonetheless, he couldn't entirely shed his poetic instincts and did consider the metrical structure of his choruses quite carefully. In choral sections, Browning divides the ST's lines, to accommodate both his rhymes and his chosen rhythm. The beginning of antistrophe β, after Clytemnestra's first exchange with the chorus, is printed thus in the Loeb edition, using short lines which require the hyphenation of φέρουσαι:

> ὀνειρόφαντοι δὲ πενθήμονες
> πάρεισι δόξαι φέρου-
> σαι χάριν ματαίαν·
> μάταν γάρ, εὖτ' ἂν ἐσθλά τις δοκοῦνθ' ὁρᾷ,
> παραλλάξασα διὰ
> χερῶν βέβακεν ὄψις [...] (*Ag.* 420-425)

Browning translates:

> But dream-appearing mournful fantasies—
> There they stand, bringing grace that's vain.
> For vain 't is, when brave things one seems to view;
> The fantasy has floated off, hands through; (36)

He has reconfigured the lines as iambic pentameters, with the exception of the emphatic clause: 'There they stand'.[30] The end words 'view'/'through' create one of many rhyming couplets. It requires, if not violence, certainly significant twisting of the TL. The phrase that is split between lines in the Loeb, διὰ χερῶν (through [one's] hands) is united by Browning, although 'hands through' is somewhat cryptic, without the Greek. It is small wonder, therefore, that Swinburne claimed to resort to the original for enlightenment.

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[30] Details of poetic metre are dealt with at beginning of chapter 1.

In this brief case study of an atypical poet, we have considered many of the criteria that will be applied to our examples from the 20th and 21st centuries. Browning, with his *Agamemnon*, was an apologist for an extreme literalism in translation which few modern poets would emulate. We can see, however, that he was part of a Victorian dialogue on the transmission of the classics and must be understood within this context. He 'transcribed' Aeschylus at a momentous time for archaeology and his passions reflect the emerging interests of his generation. Reception Studies may be a relatively new discipline but its power to examine our critical assumptions cannot be ignored. Further, a poet needs to be considered in the round, since any one text picked out for study holds a position on the spectrum of his/her complete canon. Other works may illuminate aspects of a poet's intentions or some enduring thread. On the more technical side, metre, cadence, syntax and lexicon all feed the debate about the quality of a text and, fundamental to this study, its suitability for theatrical use.

Posterity may well judge Browning's *Agamemnon* as deeply flawed, but a generous reading finds in the piece Browning's reverence for Aeschylus' style, his commitment to an incomplete historical relic and a hint of that wonder created by the finds in Mycenae. We cannot doubt that Browning's translation was a labour of love.

<u>Chapter 1: Metre in the Translations of Ted Hughes and Tony Harrison</u>

..suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature; for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first, and now, was, and is, to hold as 't were, the mirror up to nature. (Ham. 3. ii. 18-23.)

This chapter considers some of the metrical features of Harrison's and Hughes's translations of the *Oresteia* set in the context of their other poetical works. After an introductory section outlining the fundamental principles of Attic tragic metre, and the language and notation system used in the discussion, three sections of the ST are chosen for close study—one from each play in the trilogy—to cover the formal structures of Greek tragedy. From *Agamemnon*, we shall be considering the watchman's opening *rhesis*; from *Choephori*, the stichomythic exchange between Electra and Orestes in the recognition scene at the tomb (lines 215-224) and from *The Eumenides*, one of the Erinyes' lyric choruses (lines 341-356)[31]. The discussion does not limit itself to these three sections and will make reference to other parts of the text in order to establish generalities. Comparisons with other translations by both Harrison and Hughes will also form part of the discussion, as will references to relevant works and translations by other poets.

Whilst most academic translations aim for fluent prose within the rhythms of spoken English, the deliberate use of metrical devices for effect is normally the preserve of poets and may prove a major contributor to impact in performance. Exactly why we respond to rhythm and music, and their survival value to human existence, remains obscure. Anthropologists and neuropsychologists can describe an almost universal response but evolutionary biologists have yet to explain definitively why we are hard-wired to enjoy a regular pulse. Tony Harrison has his own theory, which seems plausible as explained to John Haffenden, in a published interview:

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[31] All line references are for Greek text as printed in 2009 Loeb edition, translated by A. H. Sommerstein. Translations by Harrison and Hughes do not include line numbers and correspondence to the Greek is imprecise.

> Originally I was drawn to metrical verse because I wanted to 'occupy' literature, [...] Now that I've occupied it in the sense that I can do it—I learned it as skilfully as I could in order that people would have to pay attention—I still instinctively feel that it's associated with the heart beat, with the sexual instinct, with all those physical rhythms which go on despite the moments when you feel suicidal. (1991: 236)[32]

Harrison's translation of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* formed a key part of Sir Peter Hall's now iconic 1981 vision for staging Greek tragedy which retained exotic elements from the ST. The production included an all-male cast, masks and an integral musical score. It was recorded in the Olivier Theatre auditorium and Hall's director's cut was broadcast in 1983 by the newly created *Channel 4*, bringing the production to a wider audience as part of the channel's cultural remit. The National Theatre took the *Oresteia* 'home'; it was the first English language version of classical Greek drama to be performed in Epidaurus and has become a defining dramatic experience of Hall's career. In 1981, however, the fact that this production was destined to enter theatrical folk lore was not immediately apparent. Indeed, Janet Watts, writing shortly before the Epidaurus event, calls the production's success 'slow-burning', taking its creators 'unawares'.[33] Amongst others, Michael Billington—a doyen of theatre criticism—objected to the masks. He found that they 'make language very difficult to hear and deny the actor one of his most basic weapons'.[34] Billington published a collection of his reviews for posterity in *One Night Stands*, in 1993. The preface to his chapter on 1981, describes Hall's *Oresteia* as 'brave and bold if not entirely successful' (162), the intervening twenty years having not, apparently, modified Billington's original verdict. Other critics raised issues about Harrison's translation and these points will be discussed within this chapter as the contexts arise.

Hughes's version was not a commission but also premiered at the National Theatre in 1999, in the smaller, more intimate space of the Cottesloe Theatre[35]. This production, too, received mixed reviews in Britain, although this time Billington was essentially charmed, and wrote:

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[32] *Critical Anthologies I* (Bloodaxe).

[33] *The Observer*, 04/04/1982. Available in theatre.artsfeatures section of *The Guardian*'s website, accessed online 30/07/2013.

[34] *The Guardian* 30/09/1981. As footnote 33.

[35] Now renamed Dorfman Theatre.

[Mitchell] turns Aeschylus' trilogy into a modern-dress ensemble inquiry into the big spiritual issues ("What is good? Who is God?") similar in style, not least in its constant use of a video camera, to her Milanese production earlier this year of Martin Crimp's Attempts on her Life. As a portrayal of the physical and psychic havoc wreaked by a culture of revenge, it is hugely impressive. Only when it comes to The Eumenides, the third play in the trilogy, with its assertive belief in democracy and justice, does it fall victim to contemporary liberal doubt and confusion.

For Billington, Mitchell's modernity stands in contrast to Hall's 'masked, antique ritual', establishing his preferences for Greek tragedy.[36] The production travelled to North America and was well-received in Toronto. Christopher Hoile wrote:

Greek tragedies were first performed as trilogies and Aeschylus' "Oresteia" is the only surviving such trilogy to come down to us. To see any production of this cornerstone of Western drama is something no theatre-lover should miss. The production by the Royal National Theatre of London, here as part of the du Maurier World Stage festival, however, is not "any" production. Rather, it is the most gripping and most intelligent production of a Greek tragedy I have ever seen. We should be grateful to Don Shipley, artistic director of the du Maurier World Stage, for bringing it to Toronto.[37]

Both Billington and Hoile placed the quality of Hughes's translation firmly at the heart of the production's success. Billington writes of 'a tactile dramatic force' and 'miraculously precise' poetic imagery; Hoile, too, speaks glowingly of the translation:

One of the many factors working in favour of this production is its use of a fresh translation by the late Ted Hughes. Hughes's tough, sinewy poetry is a perfect match for Aeschylus' great portrayal of human barbarity and its eventual supersession by civilization. One succinct image succeeds the next without the filler of so many other translations so that the translation has great clarity and bite. It is as if Hughes has sandblasted grime from an old building: we know that the building is old but it looks new and the bricks have been revealed. It is also an eminently speakable translation and in itself a pleasure to listen to. One wishes Hughes had been able to take on the whole canon.

'Sinewy' as a descriptor, recurs with Paulin, so what does it imply? Undoubtedly, it suggests a certain direct, spare and 'masculine' style which speaks uncompromisingly to an audience, a

mode quite different from academic prose. Hughes's translation, with its critically acclaimed poetry, has, so far, stood the test of time and the 'eminently speakable' quality detected by Hoile is, no doubt, a key factor. For example, during March 2012, Theatre Lab Company mounted a production at the Riverside Studios, in Hammersmith, which was highly stylised, in contrast to its predecessor of 1999, but Hughes's text remained potent for both actor and audience, possessing as it does a timeless quality, devoid of obvious anachronism. Even critics who disliked the Mitchell production intensely, such as Charles Spencer, were fulsome in their praise for Hughes:

> Ted Hughes's new version of the drama is outstanding—supple, eloquent and full of vivid, often disturbing imagery. I particularly love the bold, bald way he asks the big questions. What is good? Who is God? But the writing is deliberately timeless, with a sense of decorum and no specifically modern references.[38]

To describe the metre of Harrison and Hughes, a convention is required and, for simplicity, the 'slash and cross' notation system will be used to analyse the stress patterns that create rhythm. Thus / represents stressed (ictus) syllables; x represents unstressed (nonictus). Occasionally, \ is useful for denoting secondary stresses. In his vast hypertext edition on English versification, T.V.F. Brogan warns against the temptations of excessively detailed scansion:

> Since meter is a system of binary oppositions in which syllables are either marked or unmarked (long or short; stressed or unstressed), a binary code is all that is necessary to transcribe it. [...] It is natural to want to enrich scansion with other kinds of analyses which capture more of the phonological and syntactic structure of the line [...] but all such efforts exceed the boundary of strict metrical analysis, moving into descriptions of linguistic rhythm, and thus serve to blur or dissolve the distinction between meter and rhythm. Strictly speaking, scansion marks which syllables are metrically prominent—i.e. ictus and nonictus—not how much. (1999: 1,118)[39]

We shall depart from Brogan's exhortation in some respects, because linguistic and phonological considerations are important when assessing oral impact, as is the degree of stress. Furthermore, in examining whether poetic rhythm or deliberate metrical patterning adds to the

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[38] *Daily Telegraph* website, accessed 13/08/2014. Originally published 03/12/1999.
[39] Accessed online, 03/10/2011.

effective vocalisation of a text we must always remember an inherent tension between the ways we might notionally scan verse on the page and the impact of actor and director, making that verse their own orally. Nonetheless, outside highly stylised scenes or productions, most audiences will expect to hear lines approximating to the norms of speech, as Aristotle discussed in *The Poetics* ca. 335 BCE:

> μάλιστα γὰρ λεκτικὸν τῶν μέτρων τὸ ἰαμβεῖόν ἐστιν· σημεῖον δὲ τούτου, πλεῖστα γὰρ ἰαμβεῖα λέγομεν ἐν τῇ διαλέκτῳ τῇ πρὸς ἀλλήλους, ἐξάμετρα δὲ ὀλιγάκις καὶ ἐκβαίνοντες τῆς λεκτικῆς ἁρμονίας. (1449a: 23-27).
>
> (For the iambic trimeter, more than any other metre, has the rhythm of speech: an indication of this is that we speak many trimeters in conversation with one another, but hexameters only rarely and when diverging from the colloquial register.) (42/43)[40]

Since Aristotle's day, many poets have aspired to this marriage between poetic metre and the natural speech patterns of their native tongue. Fully inflected languages, such as Greek, in which word order is flexible, can sustain what we classify as a quantitative metrical system, in which the words are arranged in lines and verses according to linguistic rules about the length of a syllable. Strictly speaking, however, Greek metre was also defined by pitch changes, a feature we can only grasp hazily. Accents indicate some degree of rising pitch. Writing in *The Ancient Languages of Europe*, Roger Woodward says:

> A second fundamental diachronic characteristic of Greek vocalic phonology is the fronting and raising of vowels, particularly long vowels, along the periphery of the vowel space. (2008: 18)

In other words, Greek had a tendency to pitch vowels into a higher register than its Mediterranean Indo-European relatives, using the front of the mouth to create sounds.

For a Greek native audience, the iambic trimeter of a *rhesis* approached the natural rhythms of the vernacular and was employed for the spoken sections of a drama. The name is derived from a basic shape of three metrical feet (hence 'tri'), each of four syllables. The underlying pattern is iambic, although the first syllable of each metron can be either short or long: an anceps. The

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[40] All page references, excerpts and translations from Aristotle's *Poetics* taken from 1995 Loeb edition, translated by S. Halliwell.

long-short-long pattern is a cretic, so we have a basic structure of anceps-cretic, repeated thrice. If we consider the first line of *Agamemnon*, the scansion is thus:

$$- \; - \; \cup \; - \; - \; - \; - \; \cup \; - \; \cup \; - \; \cup \; -$$

Θεοὺς μὲν αἰτῶ τῶνδ᾽ ἀπαλλαγὴν πόνων

A brief survey of Greek metre is contained in appendix 1 but, for the purposes of a basic understanding of Greek drama, it is sufficient to appreciate that the long speech (*rhesis*), in iambic trimeter, was spoken and deemed 'natural'. It was also, apparently, native to Athens. Such verse is 'stichic', because the metrical pattern covers (measures) a single line. The chorus, however, drew on a wide-ranging lyric tradition, where metrical patterns flowed across lines. Such verse was designed to be sung, originally to the lyre. The dialects rich in the long *alpha* sound produced greater resonance in performance to music. The linguistic artifice of the choral section when compared to the more 'natural' *rhesis* may well have functioned as metatheatre and drawn the audience's attention to the exoticism of the metre and of characters portrayed.

Although experiments have been made in quantitative metre, English poetry favours the qualitative system, in which stress defines metrical patterns. Nonetheless, certain combinations of ictus and nonictus replicate the traditional metrical foot. Two strongly stressed syllables tend to be spondaic, whereas unstressed followed by stressed creates an iambic rhythm. Consider one of Shakespeare's lines:

x / | x / | x / | x / | x /
But soft! What light through yonder window breaks? (*R&J* 2. ii. 2.)

We can observe that Shakespeare's iambic pentameter consists of five 'feet' of these alternate unstressed and stressed syllables, which accord—more or less—with the rhythm of English speech. The syllables of 'window' might have their value differently assigned in a quantitative system, with a long 'o' (*omega*) taking the emphasis over the 'i' before its soft consonantal cluster, illustrating an essential difference between the prosody of Ancient Greek and Modern

English. In speaking the line, not all stresses are equal. In this example, the words 'soft' and 'breaks' would carry most weight. The iamb holds a special place in western poetry, an almost subconscious resort of poets. Tony Harrison, whose attraction to metre has already been cited, discussed this preference with Michael Alexander (author of a work on Anglo-Saxon poetry known to Harrison, as we shall explore later). The discussion was published a decade after the premier of the *Oresteia,* in *Talking Verse*:

> [...] the later [attractions] are first of all the iambic beat. For the iambus is something close to the heart beat, as Jean-Louis Barrault[41] said 'le coeur bat l'iambe' (the heart beats iambically). And I think that the darker my subjects the more I wanted somehow the reassurance of the heartbeat. (1995: 85)[42]

Metre is a template both for writing poetry and for reading it aloud. With verse drama, however, as soon as director and actors begin the transfer from page to stage, other artistic interpretations may usurp the poet's intentions. A famous and potentially regular line from *Julius Caesar* exemplifies this:

$$x \quad / \quad x \quad / \quad x \quad / \quad x \quad / \quad x \quad /$$
Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears (3. ii. 75.)

Within the context of the play, Antony is trying to be heard, to counter the departing Brutus. He faces a restless crowd and has to seize the day, without dithering. The iambic pentameter gives pace to the line, with the possibility that the greatest emphasis falls on 'me', as Antony establishes his personal stake in the proceedings. Many of us, though, are familiar with a less urgent oratorical style, placing pauses after the first three words and the major emphasis on 'lend', somewhat altering our perspective of the scene. Such an interpretation, perhaps the norm nowadays, is acceptable; Shakespeare himself was not rigid in applying a metrical pattern. Many of his lines diverge from the regularity of the example above. Arguably his most famous line breaks the mould, with its supernumerary unstressed syllables at the end:

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[41] French theatre practitioner, 1910-1994.

[42] The conversation was originally recorded in 1991.

$$\text{x } / \mid \text{x } / \mid \text{x } / \mid \text{ x } / \mid \text{x } / \mid \text{xx}$$

To be or not to be: that is the question. (*Ham*. 3. i. 56.)

These supernumerary syllables, frequently feminine endings, are a feature of English poetry and Tony Harrison has a number of them in the first 30 line section of his watchman's speech. All are present participles: 'watching', 'moving', 'living', 'singing', 'weeping', 'waiting', which draw us into the moment. Feminine endings are thought to create a 'dying' cadence (explored in the next chapter), encouraging lines to flow when spoken by militating against a marked end-stopping. Harrison thus gives form to the urgency oppressing the watchman, establishing a mood. The feature is distinctive—and significant enough to have attracted attention. In an article on Harrison's dramatic verse in *Critical Anthologies I*, Peter Levi comments:

> Apart from an increase in feminine endings, and a certain metrical restlessness like Shakespeare's but suggested by the Greek original, *The Oresteia* is in blank verse. (1991: 164)

The *Oresteia* is *not* in blank verse throughout, but Levi's other points hold.

In the original performance of 1981, David Roper, playing the watchman, had a Yorkshire accent—from Bradford, to be precise—and, as a low-status character, dropped the final 'g' from the participles, rendering the words very soft to the ear.[43] Harrison's cluster of present participles can be used to reflect on some general aspects of metre and rhythm. Not only are the six words cited above unified by grammatical form and the 'ing' morpheme that signifies such a form in English, but they are also linked by a /x stress pattern in normal speech, building a regular pulse. When we consider rhyme, a shared stress pattern is part of the equation, hence we can readily identify that 'excelling' is a true rhyme for 'dwelling', whereas 'revelling' is not, because of a different pattern of syllable stress. Such metrical correspondences begin to explain our perception of euphony present in some texts when transferred from page to stage.

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[43] The recently recovered Channel 4 1983 production for television screened at B.F.I. on 23/06/2012. Film is now in Institute's archives, available to researchers.

The softness of feminine endings provided by past participles demonstrates a defining feature of many unstressed syllables in English poetry. They offer a contrast for Harrison's more percussive elements. Most lines of the watchman's speech have four strong beats, interspersed with a flexible number of unstressed syllables. In this, the verse returns to the roots of English poetry. Old English (Anglo-Saxon) verse had the same essential pattern, based on half lines of two beats each, which are separated by a variable number of unstressed syllables. Accentual verse is always stress-timed rather than syllable-timed and was the dominant Germanic form until submerged in England by the Norman invasion. Gerard Manley Hopkins claimed the rediscovery of this native style in the latter years of the 19th century and named it 'sprung rhythm'. In a letter to Richard Watson Dixon, in 1881, he wrote:

> Its principle is that all rhythm and all verse consists of feet and each foot must contain one stress or verse-accent: so far is common to it and Common Rhythm; to this it adds that the stress alone is essential to a foot and that therefore even one stressed syllable may make a foot and consequently two or more stresses may come running, which in common rhythm can, regularly speaking, never happen. But there may and mostly there does belong to a foot an unaccented portion or 'slack': now in common rhythm, in which less is made of stress, in which less stress is laid [...]

> In lyric verse I like sprung rhythm also to be *over-rove*, that is the scanning to run on from line to line to the end of the stanza. But for dramatic verse, which is looser in form, I should have the lines 'free-ended' and each scanned by itself. (2012: 159-160)

Between the two paragraphs above, Hopkins mentions various 'feet', including anapaest and dochmiac. Despite idiosyncratic terminology, he is well-informed about Greek prosody, including the difference between stichic and lyric verse.

The indeterminate number of syllables between stresses can be used to replicate natural speech but Hopkins' own poetry and Old English verse, which probably involved pitch patterns, retain a degree of artifice, orally. For our earliest poetry, bold alliteration formed the unifying feature of the first three stressed syllables, as these lines from *The Battle of Maldon* illustrate:

/ x x x / x   / x x / x
Hige sceal þe heardra, ‖ heorte þe cēnre,

```
 /   x  x / x   x  x   / x  / x
```
mōd sceal þe māre, ‖ swā ūre mægen lȳtlað

("Will shall be more resolute, courage the sharper,
spirit shall be the more, as our might lessens.") (lines 312-313)

Old English verse, as it comes to us in written form, reflects a strong oral tradition which is, by definition, 'speakable'. The half-lines create effective, compact sound bites. Harrison's lines replicate the traditional four beat pulse, often with half-lines detectable. James Fenton, reviewing the *Oresteia* in December 1981 suggests that Harrison's metre is not strictly the Old English four-stress line but:

> [...] Instead, he uses the amphibrach [short-long-short], a poetic measure normally confined to the text books except for one popular English form, the limerick. "There once was a man of Darjeeling"—this line contains three amphibrachs. Say Darjeeling four times and you have uttered an amphibrachic tetrameter—Mr Harrison's chosen form.[44]

If we consider an extract from the watchman's opening speech, Fenton's claim breaks down on analysis, just like Levi's perception of blank verse. Line 1 does, indeed, start with three amphibrachs, when applying the stresses from performance. 'Muttered', however, is a syllable light and is trochaic in emphasis. If the stresses on 'long' and 'groped' were reversed, we could claim a similar start for line 2, although David Roper thought differently. Again, '[...] for end' is also a syllable light and iambic in shape. In line 3, unless we imagine an initial 'I', which Harrison chooses to omit, the line is not amphibrachic but dactylic in Roper's delivery. The nine syllables of line 4 could, in no way, be an amphibrachic tetrameter, which requires twelve:

```
 x   /  x x  / ‖ x    x  /  x   / x
```
No end to it all, though all year I've muttered
```
 x   /  x x  / | x x x    /   x /
```
my pleas to the gods for a long groped for end.
```
  /  x  x  / x ‖ x  /  x  x   /  x
```
Wish it were over, this waiting, this watching,
```
  /    / x   x  ‖  /  x x  /  x
```
twelve weary months, night in and night out [...] (1981: 3)[45]

While one might prefer reviewers to identify metre correctly, suffice it to say that both Fenton and Levi recognised a strong metrical pulse in Harrison's work. Levi includes an anecdote, with no popular currency, but intriguing nonetheless, for what it tells us of contemporary perceptions of the *Oresteia*:

> [...] an austere rhythm was reinforced by metronomes inside the tragic masks at the ear of each actor, the speed of the chorus being controlled by the producer. (1991: 163)

This production seems to have spawned such anecdotes as its iconic status grew. Marianne McDonald writes:

> [Sir Peter] Hall insisted on the text being delivered according to the beats of the music. That may have been his idea of the "primitive". It was pure luck if anyone in the audience was able to decipher any meaning from the choruses. (2003: 32)

Levi concurs with her final point:

> The Anglo-Saxon overtones of the alliteration, the syntactic disorientation and the frankly unintelligible detail [...] give a confused impression of hammer-clangs and anvil-dings, like choral singing in an opera. (1991: 164-5)

Levi's closing remark, surely, is the crux: Harrison restored theatricality, and a genuinely choral element, whatever the critics' preferences. His marginal jotting next to line 350 in his Greek text shows that his ideas for dividing up and presenting the chorus were drawn from the way opera deals with a libretto.[46] Certain sections, such as the *kommos* with Cassandra, were written in columns to allow overlapping of half lines (box 2). This was not a novel idea: Gilbert Murray employed a similar approach in 1928 when he first published his complete *Oresteia*. Choruses have extra spacing to separate sense units and create half line utterances:

> And winds, winds   blew from Strymon River,
> Unharboured, starving,   winds of baulked endeavour,
> Man-blinding, pitiless   to cord and bulwark [...] (43)

---

[46] Harrison has donated all rough drafts, jottings etc to Brotherton Library, Leeds University, where the collection can be viewed by appointment. Notebooks and their pages were numbered and are used here as references. Other material is gathered in numbered boxes. The Greek text was edited by Gilbert Murray.

Harrison's selection of a particular template for his verse was not primarily to recreate an old native form but to offer a dramatically appropriate pattern of stresses to his speaker. Nonetheless, his preoccupation with sound quality and pace reflects the Greek mindset. In the interview with John Haffenden, Harrison describes his wish 'to keep the maximum momentum with the maximum gravity' (1991: 238).[47] The individual interpretation of actor or director in performance, however, may disturb an imagined rhythm which we impose on the page. Thus the watchman emphasises, and significantly extends, the first syllable of 'weary' and stresses the repeated 'night', rather than the contrasting 'in' and 'out', because Roper is articulating the tedium of the situation as he perceives it. A 'good' performance text should have such flexibility, allowing the actor freedom to take ownership of the lines, and Harrison is sensitive to this. At a conference on Ancient Greek theatre around the Black Sea, he read from his latest work, *Iphigenia in Sevastopol*, unpublished at that time because it had not yet found a theatrical outlet.[48] Harrison said: 'My texts are never complete until they get into performance'.

A powerful, visceral script is essential for masked drama, to bear the emotional load, but even Harrison could not lift the 1981 production across what was an insurmountable barrier for critics besides Billington (previously mentioned). The masks jarred with the down-to-earth realism of much post-war British theatre. Milton Shulman questioned the 'immobile muslin masks' and whether they represented an alienating device to distract the audience 'from the passion that can be generated by this classic'.[49] Shulman reveals his stylistic preference for the modern staging of Greek tragedy, drawing on current theatre practice, a prejudice shared by Sheridan Morley, who felt that the actors were 'effectively buried alive'. He called the production:

> [...] an academic experiment of considerable tedium, largely because for better or for worse we have now come to expect more of actors than movements of the voice and arms: we need eyebrows and eyes and cheeks and chins and mouths not frozen into

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[47] *Critical Anthologies I.*
48 'Ancient Greek Theatre in the Black Sea', 05/07/2014, King's College, London.
[49] *The Standard*, 30/11/1981

immobility, and without that kind of life and detail we are left with a carefully choreographed museum display of what Greek drama might have looked like to the Greeks [...]'[50]

Fig. 3: The masked chorus in *Agamemnon*

We, as audience members, are capable of greater sophistication than Morley believes and neither he nor Shulman integrated the various elements but isolated those that offended them. We use visual, verbal and experiential clues to project feelings onto an unchanging mask, picking up on both gesture and utterances. True, there are limitations to the scope of gesture. It can 'communicate' the large emotions such as fear and surprise but falls short of subtleties, such as envy and frustration, without facial clues. With nuanced feelings, the words become crucial for elucidation and our watchman runs the gamut of these nuances—frustration, boredom, anxiety, resentment, exhaustion, wariness. Harrison's language fills the emotional spaces which a mask cannot, such as the watchman's contempt for Clytemnestra, an extension to the ST's ὧδε γὰρ κρατεῖ/ γυναικὸς ἀνδρόβουλον ἐλπίζον κέαρ ('[...] for such is the ruling of a woman's hopeful heart, which plans like a man.' *Ag.* 10-11):

```
       x   / x  x   /     x  / x \        / x
The woman says watch, || so here I am [pause] watching, [...] (3)
```

'Woman' rather than 'queen' lacks respect to modern sensibilities. The Greek γυναικὸς is ambiguous, meaning 'wife', as well as 'woman', reminding us of Clytemnestra's connection to Agamemnon. Feminists might complain of the sexism inherent in Aeschylus' ἀνδρόβουλον, which implies that clear thinking is a male prerogative, but at least the ST recognises the legitimacy of Clytemnestra's action, since they are what a prudent male would recommend. Harrison is more scathing in his version, unsexing Clytemnestra with: 'That woman's a man' two lines later, expressing the 'unnaturalness' of a woman in power more overtly than the ST. The watchman's resentfulness of his tedious regime is stressed by his literal response: he is told to watch so he watches, without an object, either grammatically or in the task. The beacon of hope (ἐλπίζον) burns in Clytemnestra's mind, not his:

> That woman's not one who's all wan and woeful.

Contempt is apparent in the verse; Roper's pause made the watchman's disdain for his queen's orders all the more obvious but the verse entices the actor to this response.

Harrison deliberately moves actors towards his desired interpretation and eventually strips Clytemnestra of status. Earlier drafts were more formal, less pithy and lacked poetic devices, such as alliteration and repetition. Nonetheless, the pause was already in the text, along with a resentful emphasis of 'queen':

> The QUEEN says be on the lookout and so... so
> on the lookout I am, and will be for ages.
> When women take over men's work, like the Queen here
> things get out of hand [...] (Box 1)

The draft submitted to the N.T. as work-in-progress lacks polish, but the interpretation persists:

> On the lookout the Queen says, so here I am...
> The Queen's not the sort to give up hope quickly.
> No. Gets things moving, more like a man does. (Box 1)

Harrison's basic structure of the four-beat line was maintained by Roper's watchman, underscoring his personal interpretation. Harrison's original programme notes for the 1981 production of the *Oresteia* at the National Theatre, dealt with metre as a key element:

> The differences [between Ancient Greek and modern English] largely determined the style I adopted for the translation. The whole of Greek society speaks through the consciousness of Aeschylus. To find an equivalent, I had to go back to our own Heroic Age and filter my modern sensibility through the rhythms of our earliest English literature. Here again, this was quite distinct from an essay in antique reproduction or a piece of pastiche. Just as the masks are, in visual terms, a means of conveying the dramatic rhythm of the original, so the ghostly Anglo-Saxon rhythms I have chosen, with their heavy emphasis on consonants, are intended to convey the particular weight of the Greek without losing narrative momentum.

When talking to Haffenden, the model has become 'Anglo-Saxon-cum-ballad metric' (1991: 238). Nonetheless, the 'heavy emphasis on consonants' provides a meeting point for Anglo-Saxon and Greek, which Harrison recognises. Roger Woodward points out that: 'Attic Greek permits consonants to cluster freely' (2008: 18). Harrison's notebooks reveal his deliberations:

> Both Browning and Hopkins had an instinct for the density of Greek with its (agglutative) syntax and it has always been my impression of it not vowelled, as melodious as Gilbert Murray made him [Aeschylus] seem, but craggy as mocked by Euripides in Aristophanes' FROGS. (notebook 10: 2,340)

Harrison has picked up on the word: ἱππόκρημνα (*Frogs*, 929) which relates to the Hippocrene spring and perhaps by expansion, 'very steep' and thus translatable as 'craggy'.[51] It may, however, simply imply an overly-elaborate poetic style, such as a draught at the spring might induce.

At the 30th anniversary party for Peter Hall's production of the *Oresteia*, hosted on 19th November 2011 by the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama,[52] in Oxford, Harrison gave further information on his decisions in his commemorative lecture. One was a practical consideration: long vowels resonated inside the masks designed for the production.

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[51] The choice of Loeb edition (2002: 151).
[52] Hereafter abbreviated to APGRD.

His letters to Peter Hall at the time show Harrison's involvement in the process, which gave him technical insights that Peter Hall—apparently—lacked, such as this one from the 13th September 1981:

> We don't want Barnsley Working Men's on a Saturday night knees up but I have written SHORT vowels. It matters because unless the vowels stay short the consonants don't register and the most important thing, and one of the reasons I first began to stress these facts, and it is by no means about Northern chauvinism, is that the resonance of protracted vowels disturbs the mask. It begins to vibrate and slur. (1991: 279)

The technical impediment coincided with Harrison's preference for what he described as masculine and patriarchal language; short vowels and strong consonants also accommodate the Yorkshire dialect. The letter—along with all the research notes in the Brotherton archives—shows the degree of involvement from a creative translator, to perfect his/her contribution as working theatre, and his perception of poetry as an oral medium.

Harrison's mediaeval mystery play, based largely on the Wakefield cycle, premiered on the terrace of the National Theatre on Easter Saturday, 1977, as he continued to work on the *Oresteia*. Here too, he was experimenting with alliteration, a feature of northern dialect poetry persisting beyond the Old English era, exemplified in 'Piers Plowman' and 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'. Harrison is aiming for the aural inventiveness of traditional English verse that Michael Alexander describes in *The Earliest English Poems*:

> [...] It is natural to suppose that when oral poetry was first committed to paper it was still intended to be spoken aloud, though the poet himself might not be present. The manuscript was a text for oral performance; hence poetry conserved its oral style, more or less.
>
> The first task of an oral poet was [...] to vary the words, wrestle sense through the lines. It was this that an audience—naturally better able than a reading public to hold sounds in their heads—expected and enjoyed [...]
>
> Anglo-Saxon verse is not syntactical, it is paratactical. The sense is not marshalled into sub-ordinate and co-ordinate clauses, it is organised in terms of phrases which can be delivered with attack. The poet had an audience in front of him, not a blank sheet of paper, and he went on adding his sense-sound units until he judged that the point had gone home. (1966: 65-6)

Harrison had the final paragraph of Alexander's observation (above) in notebook 2: 441. It is part of a preface to *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, which Alexander translated alliteratively. A few lines of *The Seafarer* demonstrate that Harrison would have found a conducive example for his watchman:

> Sitting day-long
> at an oar's end clenched against clinging sorrow,
> breast-drought I have borne, and bitterness too.
> I have coursed my keel through care-halls without end
> over furled foam, I forward in the bows
> through the narrowing night, numb, watching
> for the cliffs we beat along. (1996: 74)

Alexander explains the key point of Old English verse—that stresses are applied because of the 'relative weight' of a word, not vowel length—and reduces each line's impact to a simple paradigm: BANG...BANG : BANG...CRASH (17-18). Harrison certainly uses alliteration to bestow weight but does not always move towards an ultimate 'crash'. When he does, the effect is powerful, as we see in the herald's first line, where the final monosyllable was extended in performance:

> Homesoil! Argos Ground! Clanland! Home! (17)

Whilst Harrison avers that he has borrowed 'ghostly Anglo-Saxon rhythms', his use of alliteration does not strictly adhere to the formal structures of our earliest poets but is refracted through a mediaeval prism, perhaps drawn from Gilbert Murray's style in his own translations, which Harrison admires. Sometimes, alliteration defines Harrison's half line beats and creates powerful units. Levi describes the following as invading the mind (1991: 164):

> /   x   x   / x x ‖ /   x   x / x
> Put down your palliasse. Dew-drenched by daybreak.

The borrowing of 'dew-drenched' from Browning does, indeed, invade the mind more than Harrison's first thought:

Put down your palliasse. Wringing by morning. (Box 1)

Feminine endings in the second half of the line have been replaced by a more consonantal, masculine vocabulary.

At times, Harrison's alliteration spans lines and does not always fall on the stressed syllable:

```
  x    /    /  x x ‖ x   x   /   x  x   / x
A whole year of it!  Still no sign of the signal
 /   x  /    x  x    /   x  x   /   x
I'm supposed to catch sight of, the beacons [...] (3)
```

The second line of this short extract is problematic and the scansion above is taken from the filmed performance. David Roper's delivery raises interesting questions. Is there a natural half line and caesura possible, allowing for the grammatical division, marked by the comma? Does a fourth stressed syllable sit easily within it, beyond the actor's interpretation of his character's egoism, dictating a stress on the personal pronoun? This provides an example in which metre and the expected norms of spoken English compromise to create dramatic meaning. Roper chose to stress those words that gave voice to his frustration and fear and Harrison's verse offers creative choices, whilst defining the parameters of such latitude. Other structural devices—the extensive alliteration and repetition of key words, for example—impose a pattern of emphasis. For the watchman, key words are those that define his role: 'watching' and 'waiting'.

In most of his long character speeches, Harrison adopts a similar approach as it appears on the page: the four-beat line, embellished with alliteration, creating a verse form that invites from actors a heightened use of stresses at moments of intense emotion. Although convention normally makes a binary distinction between stressed and unstressed syllables, when watching the original production, it might be fairer to describe some lines, with their very precise, sometimes almost staccato delivery, as containing a mixture of stressed and heavily stressed syllables. Virtually every word was made to count, such as the watchman's statement below,

which is Harrison's rendering of the Greek φόβος γὰρ ἀνθ' ὕπνου παραστατεῖ,/ τὸ μὴ βεβαίως βλέφαρα συμβαλεῖν ὕπνῳ [...] (*Ag.* 14-15). Sommerstein's rather tortuous translation—'Fear instead of Sleep that stands beside me, preventing me from closing my eyes firmly in sleep [...]'—demonstrates the power of Harrison's poetic precision:

<div align="center">

/   \   /   \   /   x   x   /   \
Fear stays all night. Sleep gives me short time. (3)

</div>

The four-beat format is retained, however, as the basic structure, with four major emphases, a pattern that predominates outside choral episodes. The template is flexible, capable of carrying a regal elegance as well as the fractious concerns of the watchman. Harrison's text helps define character through sociolect, a feature frequently ignored by academic translators. Agamemnon's homecoming speech, for example, allows the actor to sweep through a full sentence in each line, bestowing gravitas upon a gnomic homily. The following approximates to lines 831-3 in the ST:

<div align="center">

x   x   / x x   / x   x   / x x /   x
What you said about praising and joy I agree with.
x   / x   x   /   x x   /   x x   /   \
Not many can look on success without mangrudge. (25)

</div>

The coining 'mangrudge' illustrates another feature of Harrison's approach that divided the critics in 1981. Whilst Oswyn Murray considered the text as 'surely the best acting translation of Aeschylus ever written',[53] Benedict Nightingale took exception to the neologisms, calling them 'self-consciously 'primitive' compound nouns'. Harrison's translation may, indeed, be an acquired taste, for a particular era, but his 'coinings' served a purpose in elucidating the unfamiliar to a new audience. If we consider one example, the succinct 'godsops' offered to the Erinyes at the end of *Eumenides*, it glosses the phrase: καὶ σφαγίων τῶνδ' ὑπὸ σεμνῶν: 'by means of these solemn slaughterings' (1006) (which Sommerstein translates as: 'to the accompaniment of these solemn sacrifices'). Harrison exposes an attitude to sacrifice, that it is

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[53] *Times Literary Supplement*, 11/12/1981

essentially appeasement, all encapsulated in one aurally potent word. His marginalia show he consciously explored this aspect, jotting 'bribe mentality' about sacrifices in notebook 7 (1657).

Nightingale also objected to Harrison's highlighting of the gender:

> And Harrison does much more than he should to emphasise the trilogy's sexual implications. *Pais* and *thugater*, 'child' and 'daughter', are both *she-child*; *adelphe*, 'sister', *she-kin*; and the gods and goddesses *he-gods* and *she-gods* even when their genders are unstressed or invisible in the original. *He Moira*, 'fate', becomes *the she-god of fate*; *eune morsimos*, 'marriage appointed by fate', is *bedbond sanctified by the she-gods of lifelot*, and the deities who wreck the Greek fleet returning from Troy are repetitively abused as *she-gods*, on the basis of one genitive plural of indeterminate gender, *theon*. Thus what's implicit in Aeschylus is made excessively and sometimes speciously explicit, presumably to suggest that the trilogy dramatises a turning-point in the relative power of the sexes.[54]

Nightingale's criticism raises several points. First we have his expectation of 'accuracy' rather than dramatic potency in a performance text. He clearly has some linguistic knowledge with which to condemn Harrison's poetry as 'not merely much freer than Vellacott's freeish Penguin version' but also 'positively untrustworthy'. (Vellacott's translation seems to be something of a touchstone and his quality as a translator will be discussed in chapter 3; Billington, too, referred to 'the calculated thinness' of Vellacott's version compared to Harrison's 'dense, clotted, heavily alliterative, Beowulfian type of verse' without any consideration of the performance potential in the former.) Next, and most strikingly, we have Nightingale's dislike of gender being foregrounded through language. Michael Binns aired Harrison's perception of the inherent sexism in the *Oresteia* in *Event* when talking of the all-male cast:

> This was not, claims Harrison, with a view to creating an exact reproduction of an ancient Greek performance, nor for any misogynistic motive, but ironically, to highlight the extent to which the questions posed by Aeschylus on womanhood remain even now to be resolved [...] Furthermore, in Tony Harrison's opinion, the female roles are written very much from a male point of view. The play, he says, 'is vacuum-sealed in maleness' [...]
>
> Harrison finds in the compound language of the Greeks an echo of Anglo-Saxon metre, and his verse stresses the alliteration and consonant strength of Northern

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[54] *New Statesman*, 04/12/1981. Transliteration is as the original.

English—a craggy, solid sound. Thus a goddess becomes a She-God (precisely to appear less diminutive).[55]

Whereas Nightingale is unimpressed by Harrison's use of language 'to suggest' that the trilogy deals with gender issues, Binns takes this aspect as self-evident, the trilogy being: 'closely concerned with the nature of womanhood and the female role in society'. Harrison was exercised by this dimension as an anecdote from Marianne McDonald reveals:

> In the first performance Tony Harrison wanted to segregate the audience, with men on one side and women on the other, but the Royal National Theatre would not allow it. (2003: 32)

We might also consider how 'invisible' or 'implicit' the gender of language really was, in the classical period. The following dialogue between Socrates and Strepsiades from Aristophanes' *Clouds* challenges the use of a masculine term ('cockerel' for 'fowl') as the generic default:

> ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ:
>> ἀλλ' ἕτερα δεῖ σε πρότερα τούτου μανθάνειν,
>> τῶν τετραπόδων ἅττ' ἐστιν ὀρθῶς ἄρρενα.
>> (But there are other things you must learn before that;
>> say, which of the quadrupeds are strictly speaking masculine.)
>
> ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ:
>> ἀλλ' οἶδ' ἔγωγε τἄρρεν', εἰ μὴ μαίνομαι·
>> κριός, τράγος, ταῦρος, κύων, ἀλεκτρυών.
>> (I certainly know the masculine ones, if I'm not daft:
>> ram, billy goat, bull, dog, fowl.)
>
> ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ:
>> ὁρᾷς ἃ πάσχεις; τήν τε θήλειαν καλεῖς
>> ἀλεκτρυόνα κατὰ ταὐτὸ καὶ τὸν ἄρρενα.
>> (Do you see your mistake? You use the same word
>> to refer both to the female fowl and the male.)
>
> ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ:
>> πῶς δή, φέρε;
>> (How's that, I'd like to know?)
>
> ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ:
>>> πῶς; ἀλεκτρυὼν κἀλεκτρυών.
>>> (How? Fowl and fowl.)
>
> ΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΔΗΣ:
>> νὴ τὸν Ποσειδῶ. νῦν δὲ πῶς με χρὴ καλεῖν;
>> (That's right, by Poseidon. Now just how am I
>> supposed to refer to them?)

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[55] *Event*, 19/11/1981

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ:
    ἀλεκτρύαιναν, τὸν δ᾽ ἕτερον ἀλέκτορα. (658-666)[56]
    ("Fowless," and the other is "fowl.")

This is intended to be a ludicrous exchange, a chance to insult the masculinity of a certain Cleonymus, as it continues, and a parody on sophists such as Prodicus who wanted noun endings to indicate gender more consistently, but it nonetheless reveals that gender within language was already a debating point as early as the 420s (implied by the chronological setting of Plato's treatise *Cratylus*, for example) rather than an 'invisible' feature of classical Greek. When Prodicus makes his cameo appearances in Plato, it is usually in the role of a pioneer in lexicology and/or onomastics and he was one of the sophists whom the Socratic entourage seemed to tolerate.[57] Harrison was responding to contemporary feminist arguments about language, and comments in notebook 10:

> Also, he-god and she-god rather than god and goddess a noun confrontation with the scales already tipped by the feminine diminutive, and the polarity of male and female is a basic thematic pulse of the whole trilogy. (2340)

Harrison's notebooks provide further clues that he was deeply exercised by gender issues and used the *Oresteia* to explore them as no academic translation would. An envelope in the archive contains two yellowing cuttings—by Frances Gibb and Jean Stead—about the Yorkshire Ripper, who killed in Leeds.[58] The articles are less concerned with the crimes *per se* than with female reaction to male violence and the police response. Stead insets a poem by Jacqueline Hill, outraged that the police solution to male sex crimes was, effectively, female curfew after dark. The poem has a male voice and the following two lines encapsulate the tone:

> [...] leave *us* the hunting paths in the city jungle—
> be good: be stupid: never, never be free.

Harrison's interpretation of Clytemnestra has 20th-century feminism as its backdrop.

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[56] 1998/2005 Loeb edition, trans. Henderson, J.

[57] See, for example, *Cratylus* 384b or *Euthydemus* 187e.

[58] Publications' titles and page numbers are absent. By-lines are: Frances Gibb and Jean Stead.

Being rich in those poetic devices that occupied the critics in 1981, Harrison's text often surprises in performance. With Hughes's version, there tend to be fewer departures between what we expect when reading his translation and what we witness on stage. Katie Mitchell's 1999 production in the Cottesloe Theatre is captured on video. Although the visual quality is poor, the soundtrack is perfectly adequate for studying the actors' delivery of lines.[59] Despite some non-naturalistic innovations, such as incorporating filmed footage within the performance, archived rehearsal notes show that Mitchell, as she generally does, went for heightened naturalism and psychological credibility in the actors' interpretations of their roles. As Hoile wrote of the Toronto tour, the production:

> [...] minimized the monumentalism of Aeschylus' ritualistic action to find the gritty, more accessible realism in the story itself.

Hughes shaped his text to plumb its psychological depths. Levi said of Harrison that 'something of the overwhelming power and darkness' stuck to Harrison after his work on Aeschylus (1991: 165). Hughes brought the darkness with him to this enterprise as to many others of his works. He is at his most startling during intensely emotional episodes, when unexpected metrical moments do occur, despite the spare style—described as 'pared-down' by his publisher—and an absence of those obvious conceits present in Harrison. Psychological truth is more enduring than poetic innovation. This is not to imply that Harrison ignored psychological truths; indeed, his research shows he examined every aspect of the *Oresteia* against a modern context—from Engels on the family to Watergate—but he presented it gift-wrapped in poetic artifice which Hughes rejected. Hughes's verse speaks to us with a directness in which raw emotion is easily appreciated and which remains fresh.

When Hughes began his translating career, in the 1960s, he went for a literal approach to fellow-poets from Eastern Europe and elsewhere. Friend and collaborator, Daniel Weissbort, wrote on Hughes and the translatable from personal knowledge and tells us that Hughes cited Ezra Pound's 'the heart's tone' as the quality Hughes sought to transmit between languages.

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[59] Recording can be accessed at National Theatre archive.

(2010: 108). Whilst treating his contemporaries to as faithful a transmission as possible—what Weissbort claims was an instinctive 'foreignizing' tendency , 'a reining in of the temptation, as it were, to make the poem one's own'(108-9)—his approach to long-dead writers was much freer:

> Hughes's approach to translation evolved in practice. The contradictions between the literalistic early approach and the freedom of his adaptations of classical drama is striking [...] (115).

Hughes, like many before him, was seeking in translation, those elements which Weissbort glosses as 'the universally human' (118). He was not only drawn to psychological truth but also to mythic archetypes, notably Prometheus—Crow is a similar 'trickster', who challenges authority—and Orpheus, as we shall see when we consider *Alcestis*.

Whilst exploring complex ideas and themes, Hughes could still access the mind and voice of the common man. When one considers his watchman's speech as a reader, one does not detect any underlying formal regularity. The text meets a basic requirement of verse: it is divided into lines and this is significant; the linguistic impact of those divisions has been carefully considered. Weissbort tells us that in editing verse by the poet Amichai, it was word order that exercised him and which he 'tidied up' (2010: 08). Hughes exemplifies Coleridge's admonition to would-be poets, that they arrange 'the best words in their best order'.[60] Each line seems to represent a mini-strand in the watchman's thought process; the unequal lengths and uneven metre highlight his distress. The ideas have paratactical weight, as Alexander describes in Old English verse (above, 79).

Hughes foregrounds key points, as does Aeschylus, whose image, ἄγκαθεν, κυνὸς δίκην, (line 3) stands out at the end of its line. For Hughes, this section of his simile is highlighted further by isolation on the page: 'Like a dog'. Starting the previous line with 'tethered', foregrounds

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[60] Quoted by Coventry Patmore in 1827 edition of *Tabletalk*, a publication collecting informal words of wisdom, often conversations over dinner, not published elsewhere.

Hughes's expansion of the simile. If we scan the two lines according to the normal stresses of spoken English:

```
 /   x   x  x   /   x  x   / x
Tethered on the roof of this palace
 /   x   /
Like a dog ⁶¹
```

'Tethered [...] like a dog' stands out from the parenthetical 'on the roof of this palace' as the primary statement, because 'tethered' holds primacy of place in the line and its first syllable took the greatest stress in the 1999 performance. Short lines, communicating key thoughts through word position, are a feature of Hughes's translation, and are full of potential for actors. The two lines preceding the extract above, scanned in accordance with Paul Hilton's delivery in 1999, use the short phrases to juxtapose and stress the time units:

```
 /   \    / x   \   x   /       /
All night, every night for twelve months
  /   /      /
Thirteen moons – (3)
```

The consecutive numbers create the effect of the watchman counting out his ordeal, a feature to which the actor responded. Several lines are monosyllabic, sometimes with the equivalent of just one metrical foot. The potential spondaic rhythm invites a deliberate delivery:

```
 /   /  |  /   /
In out in out. (3)
```

```
  /    /
All gone.
  /     /
You Gods,
  x   /     /
Release me.  (4)
```

Spondaic rhythm is never light. Both the examples above have a ponderous beat, reflecting the watchman's gloom. The first proclaims the tedious routine of his life, to which Hilton gave a comic edge, like the equally world-weary porter in *Macbeth*; the second, in contrast, is a statement of despair and was rendered as such, with a slight whine. Hughes modifies the polite request to be released from the ST's opening supplication into a bold statement. His watchman seems to have lost faith in authority, both earthly and divine: Hughes mediates the character for us through his choice of language. Paul Hilton found space in Hughes's carefully chosen words and terse style to express a mixture of emotions. In the very brief extract examined above, every word counts. We shall consider further aspects of this scene in chapter 3, when discussing 'gest'.

Hughes captures the mental disturbance of the watchman on paper with a punctuation device that marks the fractured thought process over and above the short phrases, i.e. the dash:

> I lie down—the aches harden worse.
> No dreams. No sleep. Only fear—
> Fear like a solid lump of indigestion
> Here, high in my belly,—a seething.
> Singing's good for fear
> But when I try to sing—weeping comes. (4)

The present tense, the deictic 'here' to the precise site of his pain, and the disjunction indicated by the dashes give immediacy to the piece and show that it is implicitly primed for performance; the watchman is describing events as they happen and the audience or reader shares his experience, blow by blow. The dash invites pause. In many charged episodes of the performance, the actors could draw on this potential of Hughes's punctuation and terse poetic diction, not only to communicate the disrupted thought process but also, on a technical note, to draw breath and emphasise consecutive syllables. Thus the line already alluded to: 'In out in out' had each word separated by a short but noticeable pause and delivered with equal weighting. A mere four syllable line was protracted to establish the watchman's mood of anxious exasperation mixed with boredom.

Short, occasionally disjointed, lines are used in other works by Hughes to reflect mental distress. As Susan Bassnett says, in her study of Hughes, he was 'translating compulsively, both poetry and drama for several years through the 1990s' (2009: 90). Thus similarities emerge and, in his *Tales from Ovid*, Hughes employs the same technique for the dying Narcissus:

> This impotent grief
> Is taking my strength
> And my life.
> My beauty is in full bloom—
> But I am a cut flower.
> Let death come quickly—
> Carry me off
> Where this pain
> Can never follow. (1997: 82)

In effect, the line endings act as additional punctuation, the indication of a pause in a spoken or theatrical context. Although *Tales from Ovid* was not intended for the stage, Narcissus is nonetheless delivering a dramatic monologue that shares features with the watchman's speech.

Spondaic metre confers weight, as we note with Hughes. Harrison's Anglo-Saxon style kennings: 'bloodclan' and 'bloodkin', for example, as well as his compound terms: 'star-clans', 'gut-truth', offer similar spondaic opportunities (although both director and actors are free to decide whether to give both syllables equal stress or whether to maintain a four-beat line with a trochaic rhythm for these words: /x). In the 1981 production, many of these linguistic innovations carried two stresses, especially those referencing the tangled relationships of the deeply dysfunctional House of Atreus, such as: 'bedbond', 'manlord', 'she-kin' and 'she-child'. Some of these spondaic utterances convey not only strong emotions but also connotations lacking in the ST, with a fierce verbal economy. For Harrison, since gender politics was an imperative, some of his coining carry that load. He obviously conveyed his opinion to the cast and writes in notebook 5:

> words like:
> clan-chief

> blood-kin
> bloodright
> bed-bond
> must be given due weight on each component. These are the key words of the culture
> we are presenting. The line could sound very light, and must have pace if we are not
> to drag, so these weighty compounds brake the line, preventing it becoming too
> tripping, at the same time not letting it stop for long. (1123)

The coinings thus serve a dual purpose: to highlight themes and to control the pace/tone of delivery. We can see the innovation of consonantal emphasis which would have been very striking. Harrison notes as an isolated observation: 'but "classical" acting vowel based' (notebook 2: 441). He was also aware of the ideas of William Barnes (1801-1886), a clergyman and Dorset dialect poet who tried to 'purge' English of foreignness, in similar vein to the German philologists. Whilst we might find his efforts quirky, he nonetheless pointed the way to creating neologisms. In Barnes's *English Speech-craft*, 'introduction' becomes 'fore-say', 'demonstrate' is 'outshow' and 'qualities', 'suchness'—all possessing the robust two-syllable characteristic of Harrison's neologisms.[62] Besides Barnes, however, Harrison needed look no further than Gilbert Murray, whose own quasi-mediaeval English is peppered with original compounds, some two-syllable, some three, such as: War-way, War-seer, War-curb, spear-quelled, fore-smitten, rock-ridged, base-beguiled and roof-tree.[63]

A powerful example of Harrison's craft is the chorus's repeated: 'the whore-war' (9), revealing a degree of venom towards Helen that reflects the general verdict on her character, and emotionally embroiders Aeschylus' moderate: γυναικοποίνων πολέμων ἀρωγαν (*Ag.* 225-6, 'a war of revenge over a woman').[64] The coining is cleverly turned around for another choral section in which the ST plays on Helen's name (*Ag.* 681-698), when Helen becomes the 'war-whore' (22). Harrison retains his interest in this demonisation of female sexuality set against the allegory of Troy; in a very recent poem, 'Black Sea Aphrodite', which opens:

> An Aphrodite of pebbles made fatal as missiles
> when flung by fervid adulteress-denouncers,

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[62] Notebook 13, which has unnumbered pages.

[63] All examples occur pp 39-56, spoken by chorus, Clytemnestra and herald.

[64] Harrison's (lack of) punctuation in his text is replicated whenever it occurs.

in sects so hyper-pious they damn all such couplings,
and stipulate suitable sizes for stoning
so adulteresses the goddess has goaded to lust
suffer death dragged out slowly (as they deserve!)
and not sooner snuffing with stones more grenade-size,
like those the Taurians lobbed at Orestes,
damaged child like his sister from Trojan War fallout [...] (2013: 22)[65]

Harrison's percussive text for the *Oresteia* was combined with Birtwistle's percussive score, which sometimes offered synchronicity with the speech, sometimes syncopation, imposing its own rhythmic demands. Birtwistle's music was designed to enhance the language rather than vice versa, even while confounding audience expectations. Oliver Taplin, in his contribution to: *Agamemnon in Performance, 458 BC to AD 2005*, in a chapter named from a Harrison jotting, 'So long ago that it's become a song?' calls it: 'poetically integrated music' (2005: 235). Taplin is admiring of the production, with no doubts as to why Harrison's poetic translation is liberated from constraints that keep an academic one earthbound:

> A leading reason for this preferred taste of classicists for accurate, careful translation is not hard to find. In order to become professionals, they (we) will have to have translated both prepared and unprepared texts, and to have shown due knowledge of them in examinations. These official translations have to be close enough to demonstrate that the candidate fully understands the precise wording and syntax of the original. This formal exercise inevitably poses a restraint on any sense of larger poetic qualities through its insistence on displaying knowledge of the construal of the detailed verbal sense of the original text. (239)

Harrison's kennings are part of those 'larger poetic qualities' and were often foregrounded by drum beats, heightening audience awareness. Where the musical rhythm took precedence, in the choral sections, the tension between our experience of the natural stress of words and the reality of what was presented, enhanced our perception of the chorus as highly stylised theatre, with musical roots. It helped convey the status of the chorus for the original audience—and participants—as an integral part of the whole, not something to be diminished in modern interpretations. Unfortunately, it was the alienating choral element that some critics found most

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[65] *London Review of Books*, vol. 35 no. 22, November 2013.

problematic and incomprehensible. British practitioners came late to continental notions of physical theatre—often ritualistic—and non-realistic ensemble work; our comfort has grown with the new millennium. For Harrison and Birtwistle, however, the insistent musicality of Aeschylus' metre could not be ignored; their approach was, thus, as innovative as the original.

A 5th-century Athenian audience would not have understood the critics' judgement. Cognitive neuroscience tells us that we do not only form memories with our brains but with our whole bodies; we have physical memories. Thus a trained dancer, watching a performance within his/her discipline, will twitch and discreetly mirror moves, heightening response. An untrained person would not react physically and the response is specific: a dancer will not twitch to Tai Chi.[66] Martin West, in his book, *Ancient Greek Music*, describes the scale of Athenian involvement in choral singing:

> As regards participation there were, at the most basic level, verses and formulae that everyone sang as part of a crowd, like the paean in battle [...]
>
> [...] at the City Dionysia in fifth-century Athens 500 men and 500 boys were required for the dithyrambic contest alone, not to mention those who made up the tragic and comic choruses. (1992: 34)

The choice of 'alone, not to mention' suggests this is just the tip of a choral iceberg involving all males, from youth. As West points out a few lines later, 'at the symposium, until the late fifth century, one was expected to sing something, and few were unable to meet the challenge'. Such mass participation was certainly sufficient to create the neurological phenomenon and the intensifying of response it produced when watching the chorus. One might well posit that, for the original audience, a play was seen as an extended choral work, involving the citizenry, sometimes in spectacular costumes, which was punctuated by speeches from actors—a perception of Greek drama that we have generally reversed.

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[66] Peter Meineck's lecture 'The Theatre that Moved Souls' at University College, London on 08.05.2013 was a reminder of this phenomenon.

During the lyrical scenes in the 1981 production, Harrison's text frequently becomes the libretto for a musical recitative, with ostentatious theatricality. The example below serves to illustrate the point. As the chorus recounts the omen of two birds appearing as the fleet set sail, Harrison inserts the line: 'out of the blue the blue'. Natural stress would indicate:

```
 /  x  x   /  x   /
out of the blue the blue (6)
```

In the production, however, the line was rendered:

```
 \  /  \   /  \   /
out of the blue the blue [...]
```

Such divergence from the norm is not unusual in song. A. M. Dale, who wrote on Greek music from the fragmentary evidence, considers such differences inevitable when talking of lyric metre:

> [...] here is the element introduced by music, or at least characteristic of poetry written to be sung as distinct from spoken poetry (1948/68: 4)

If we consider that well-known children's carol, 'Away in a Manger', the first line differs significantly between assumed scansion on the page and the stresses when sung, usually by an infant school choir. On the page, we have:

```
 x  /  x x  /  x  x  /  x x  /
Away in a manger, no crib for a bed[...]
```

In song, several unstressed syllables take on rhythmic significance that elevates their importance:

```
 x  /  x \\   /  x  \\   /  \  /  /
Away in a-a manger, no-o crib for a bed[...]
```

Birtwistle provides striking effects for Harrison's verse in a similar way and the language is flexible enough to accommodate the syncopation. Indeed, the production revelled in such artifice which frequently produced an insistent pulse. In some sections, the stresses were

delivered with precise regularity, and noticeable half-lines, regardless of how many unstressed syllables intervened, the insistent beat heightening the affective quality as in the following example, which rose to a crescendo in describing Iphigenia's sacrifice:

```
 / x   x   /   x   / x x   / x
making a blood debt sacrifice certain,
x / x x / x  /  x x  /   x
a sacrifice no-one wants to eat meat from,
x / x x  / x  /  x x   /   x
a sacrifice no-one wants to sing songs to,
  / x   x   /   x x   / x    / x
whetting the grudge in the clanchief's household,
  / x  x  x   /   x x   / x x   / x
Weakening the bond between woman and manlord,
x  /   x x  /  x x  / x x  / x
a grudge wanting blood for the spilling of childblood,
x  /   x  x  / x x  / x x  /  x
a grudge brooding only on seizing its blood-dues (8).
```

Whereas in reading, we might pause over 'brooding', in the 1981 performance the word was unstressed in favour of the first syllable of 'only', emphasising the obsessive mindsets of those seeking revenge.   Kennings too, such as 'childblood', which might elsewhere have been foregrounded by a spondaic pulse, were trochaic in delivery, to fit Birtwistle's music. The strict tempo, percussive nature of this section is indicated by Harrison's innovative reiterated line, with its atypical five stresses. The italics imply it is almost a stage direction to the chorus on the nature of its delivery:

```
 / x   / x  x   /   x   x x /   x    x   / x
Batter, batter the doom-drum, but believe there'll be better! (6/7/8)
```

Lines 121, 138 and 159 in the ST offer a ritual cry of lament: αἴλινον αἴλινον εἰπέ, τό δ᾽ εὖ νικάτω (which the Loeb edition renders as: 'Cry sorrow, sorrow, but may good prevail'). The significant moment these lines punctuate is recollection of the portent of the eagle and an utterance by Calchis about a child to be avenged (*Ag*. 154-5) which the chorus fails to grasp any more than it later understands Cassandra. Taplin comments on Harrison's treatment of this utterance:

> This brings out for a modern audience something which is inherent in the original, rather than explicit: that the chorus is embarking on a narrative of huge potential consequence, a narrative which is, however, one of symbol and metaphor rather than directly explained or spelled out in moralizing. (2005: 248)

The ability of a poet to reveal the implicit and to build a cultural bridge across centuries is key to his/her impact as a translator.

At this point, it is useful to consider how Hughes dealt with this potentially emotive account from the chorus. Obvious metrical devices were not a feature of his affective quality; that lay in his lexical and grammatical choices. He selects the vivid present for the moment of Iphigenia's sacrifice:

> The prayers go up. Her father
> Gives the signal. Iphigenia
> Is hoisted off her feet by attendants –
> They hold her over the improvised altar
> Like a struggling calf. (15)

Although the vivid present is common in Greek narrative, Aeschylus does not employ it for this section in the ST. Hughes paints such a potent word picture that Theatre Lab found acting out the sacrifice as a flashback irresistible. Back in 1999, Mitchell had Iphigenia's ghost onstage throughout *The Home Guard* (*Agamemnon*). Most critics at the time commented on this touch. Robert Butler, writing in *The Independent*, was somewhat dismissive in tone: 'lest we forget what happened to Iphigenia, her ghostly figure wanders, gagged, round the stage during Agamemnon'.[67] Charles Spencer, of *The Telegraph*, was more fulsome in his praise of this feature, despite misgivings about the production as a whole:

> The first part, Agamemnon, here retitled The Home Guard, has some superb touches. It is a brilliant device to have the action haunted by the ghost of Iphigenia, a gagged little girl whose sacrifice by her father begins the whole hideous cycle of revenge killing. It is a harrowingly fine touch, too, that the net Clytemnestra uses to ensnare Agamemnon is made out of scores of Iphigenia's tiny childhood dresses.[68]

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[67] *The Independent*, 05/12/1999 accessed online 27/08/2012.

[68] *The Telegraph*, 03/12/1999 accessed online 27/08/2012.

In a lecture to APGRD, in 2012, Jonathan Bate, who is researching unpublished family archive material relating to Hughes, talked of journal accounts in which Sylvia Plath haunted Hughes's dreams in the early years after her suicide.[69] He seems attuned to a ghostly presence influencing events, which we shall consider further in our discussion of *Alcestis* later in the chapter. His text conveys a haunted quality which Mitchell relayed in performance.

In his version of the sacrifice, Hughes creates transgressive erotic images at times—a feature of many of his poems, in which sexuality is essentially destructive. In the ST, for Aeschylus' chorus, Iphigenia's sacrifice seems inevitable, a reasonable appeasement for Artemis: σφ᾽ ἐπιθυμεῖν θέμις (216-17). The girl is simply trussed up like a goat—δίκαν χιμαίρας (232)—and her falling robe, a vivid saffron splash, is the result of being suspended by her ankles. Hughes alters and expands the picture:

> The wind presses her long dress to her body
> And flutters the skirt, and tugs at her tangled hair [...]
> Now rough hands rip off her silks
> And the wind waltzes with them
> Down across the beach, and over the surf [...]
> They stare at a masterpiece of perfect skin
> Goose-pimpled in the cold. (15-16)

There is something about this brutal event—a sacrifice described in the language of rape—that must have struck complex emotional chords with Hughes, about his dysfunctional role as both husband and father, even though the seed corn is provided by the ST. Sexual violence is a motif in the poetic dialogue between Hughes and Plath. In 'The Rabbit Catcher', Plath describes a wild liminal place, with sea-blown hair:

> It was a place of force—
> The wind gagging my mouth with my own blown hair,
> Tearing off my voice, and the sea
> Blinding me with its lights, the lives of the dead
> Unreeling in it, spreading like oil. (1981: 193-4)

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[69] 'Ted Hughes and the Classics', 20/02/2012, Oxford.

Hughes gives his chorus a full and disturbing image of Iphigenia's gagging, again with erotic overtones:

> Her voice is snatched away by the boom of the surf [...]
> Hands are cramming a gag into her mouth.
> They bind it there with cord, like a horse's bit.
> Her lovely lips writhe at the curb.
> So the cry that by chance
> Might have cursed the house of Atreus
> Is trapped inside her body,
> Heaving her breasts. (15)

Plath overtly presents the rabbit catcher as aroused by the thought of death:

> How they awaited him, those little deaths!
> They waited like sweethearts. They excited him.

The poem ends with a clear link to the unravelling and destructive relationship with Hughes which is a death-trap for Plath. Hughes, therefore, equates to the transgressive rabbit catcher:

> And we, too, had a relationship—
> Tight wires between us,
> Pegs too deep to uproot, and a mind like a ring
> Sliding shut on some quick thing,
> The constriction killing me also.

In *Birthday Letters*, Hughes finally responds with a poem also called 'The Rabbit Catcher', in which he explores the distress of a day that began badly:

> It was May. How had it started? What
> Had bared our edges? What quirky twist
> Of the moon's blade had set us, so early in the day,
> Bleeding each other? What had I done? I had
> Somehow misunderstood. Inaccessible
> In your dybbuk fury, babies
> Hurled into the car, you drove. (1998: 144)

'Dybbuk' is a provocative choice of word to apply to someone who considered her father a Nazi sympathiser. Hughes acknowledges that Plath might really have seen the rabbit snares as a metaphor for their dysfunctional relationship in which Hughes revealed a dark side:

> [...] In those snares
> You'd caught something.
> Had you caught something in me,
> Nocturnal and unknown to me? (146)

Animal imagery is a force in Hughes's poetry, both as victim and aggressor. Iphigenia is compared to a 'struggling calf' (15) and a curbed horse as a female victim of male violence. In the extraordinary poetry sequence *Gaudete*, Hughes turns to the deer as he incorporates human sacrifice—female again—into a bizarre pagan ritual, involving a rogue priest and the local Women's Institute. The sacrifice is described in graphic detail:

> Felicity is crying with fear
> As Maud spreads the bluish pale-fringed skin of a hind over her shoulders
> And knots its forelegs across her throat.
> She fastens its mask on to the top of her head with a hooked wire.
> Felicity feels its hind legs tapping at the back of her knees and calves [...]
>
> Felicity
> Tries to stand
> As Maud, lifting both fists locked together above her head
> Brings them down with all her crazy might on to Felicity's bowed nape.
> (1977: 146-7)

Some will complain, no doubt, that *Gaudete* contains gratuitous sex and violence. Indeed, they are the twin themes of this work about the human condition, which reads like the script of a surreal silent movie. Furthermore, there is anecdotal evidence that such images of violence ran deep in Hughes's psyche. *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, edited by Karen Kukil in 2000, record husband and wife sharing dreams which Plath likes to analyse. On 1st November 1959, she records: 'Ted's dreams about killing animals: bears, donkeys, kittens. Me or the baby?' (522) In *Gaudete*, as in the *Oresteia*, Hughes employs the vivid present and bestows the work with such a visual quality that one can see how a director of his *Oresteia* would be inspired to embellish the account with visual details.

The psychopathology of Sylvia Plath has been extensively explored in its own right; the minutiae of her mental anguish are not relevant to our current discussion. What concerns us here is broad brush: the lasting effect she had on Hughes and how she might have influenced, from beyond the grave, his choice of subject matter and style of translation. In psychiatric terms, Sylvia Plath is already linked to the *Oresteia* myth; her deeply disturbing poem 'Daddy' amongst others, has led to a diagnosis of an Electra Complex defining her relationship with her father, in which Hughes became entangled as a surrogate father figure. The following stanza from the poem implicates Hughes as the second destructive force in Plath's life, the seven years being a precise reference to the length of time they lived together, from 1956-1963:

> If I've killed one man, I've killed two—
> The vampire who said he was you
> And drank my blood for a year,
> Seven years, if you want to know.
> Daddy, you can lie back now. (1968/2001: 50)

Beyond her poetry, Plath's journals describe tortured feelings for the father she barely knew and her projection of the destructive emotions involved onto other male/female relationships. Before her marriage to Hughes, in March 1956, she writes of her reaction to a letter from a fellow student:

> I read his letter and walked the wet pine-dark path tonight, with the warm rain dripping and shiny on the black leaves in the humid blurred starlight, crying and crying with this terrible pain; it hurts, father, it hurts, oh father I have never known; a father, even, they took from me. (223)

Plath shows her deep ambivalence as she continues, blaming her mother for killing her father, just like Electra. She describes her elderly father as 'a sick, mean-because-he-was-sick, poor louse, bearded-near-death' and concludes: 'He was an ogre but I miss him'.

In 1958, two years into marriage, Plath records an interview with her therapist, Ruth Beuscher. As one would expect, the content is a product of its context, but nonetheless revealing:

> Me, I never knew the love of a father, the love of a steady blood-related man after the age of eight. [...] I hated men because they didn't stay around and love me like a father: I could prick holes in them & show there was no father-material'. (431)

It would be difficult for anyone to form a functional relationship with Plath and the emotional baggage of her childhood. Hughes certainly saw Plath as Electra, with hindsight. In a late collection of poems called *Howls and Whispers*, published in 1998, he wrote of the strain of living with Electra in 'The Hidden Orestes', which opens:

> Tragedies of the House of Atreus
> Exclude Electra's husband. Gossip has it
> He's a befogged buffoon. He can't make out
> What's eating his wife. Every woman
> Who sits in their home, no matter how friendly,
> She hates. Also he's alarmed
> By the uncanny masculine voice
> That now and again, before she's aware of it,
> Bursts from between her lips with a demonic snarl [...][70]

Hughes portrays the husband as weak and ineffectual, the woman as masculine—like Clytemnestra.

If Hughes felt himself cast in a quasi-paternal role by Plath, any guilt or feeling of responsibility for her death might well lead him to identify her more closely with Iphigenia than Electra. He certainly chooses to echo Plath's consistent form of address to her father when translating the chorus's description of Iphigenia's sacrifice:

> 'Daddy!' she screams. 'Daddy!'—(15)

Aeschylus used the word: πατρῴους—'of one's father'—to describe Iphigenia's cries (κληδόνας). Hughes creates immediacy and pathos, with his choice of direct speech and the present tense, adapting Aeschylus' chorus which reports, not without its own poignancy but more formally:

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[70] The Gehenna Press edition available in British Library has unnumbered pages.

λιτὰς δὲ καὶ κληδόνας πατρῴους
παρ' οὐδὲν αἰῶ τε παρθένειον
ἔθεντο φιλόμαχοι βραβῆς. (*Ag.* 228-230)

(Her pleas, her cries of "father!", and her
maiden years, were set at naught by the war-
loving chieftains.)

The difference in the way 'daddy' resonates across the divide of the Atlantic, however, subtly

alters the reception of Hughes's translation compared to a reading of Plath's poetry. For Plath,

'daddy' may well be more of a linguistic norm for addressing her father. One only has to think

of Big Daddy Pollitt in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, to appreciate how, especially in the southern

states, the word confers patriarchal status, not without relevance for Iphigenia's relationship

with Agamemnon.[71] In the United States, the word 'daddy' conveys either gravitas or 'hipness'

as in the expression 'daddy-o', whereas, in Britain, the word may be viewed as an affectionate

diminutive or belonging to one of two distinct sociolects: that of the very young or that of the

upper classes. In his poem 'Visit', from the collection *Birthday Letters*, published in the same

year as his Greek plays, Hughes gives a brief linguistic glimpse of his family in which the word

'daddy' has moved into the next generation:

> Just as when your daughter, years ago now,
> Drifting in, gazing up into my face,
> Mystified,
> Where I work alone
> In the silent house, asked, suddenly:
> 'Daddy, where's Mummy?' (1998:8)

When we are looking at Hughes's psychological imperatives, Plath inevitably looms large; the

tragic nature of her death has enhanced the appeal of her own poetry, thus gaining her an

international voice. It is easier to overlook the more muted tragedy of Hughes's lover, Assia

Wevill, who took the couple's four year old daughter Alexandra (Shura) with her to an early

grave in 1969. Thus Hughes has personal grief at a lost daughter to colour our analysis of his

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[71] Tennessee Williams (1955).

treatment of Iphigenia. In 'Descent', originally published 20 years after Assia's suicide, Hughes touches on this grief:

> [...] Cowardly
> They scattered in the splinters of weeping
> As your own hands, stronger than your choked outcry,
> Took your daughter from you. She was stripped from you,
> The last raiment
> Clinging round your neck, the sole remnant
> Between you and the bed
> In the underworld [...] (1995: 311-12)

The mention of the underworld and the poem's title hints at the poetic trope of a *katabasis,* as the poem's subject strips away the human world and descends into her personal hell.

Theatre Lab's production assigned Iphigenia's poignant line to a young female voice. An exaggerated, almost infantile pathos emerged which does not entirely reflect Aeschylus' account of Iphigenia's participation in religious rituals, suggesting someone closer to adolescence (*Ag.* 243-7), a fact which is reduced by Hughes to the more ambiguous statement:

> [...] to hear her sing in the home of Agamemnon
> When wine was poured out for the high gods (15).

In these few lines, Aeschylus twice uses πατρός to stress the patriarchal relationship about to be violated. Hughes presents us with the image of a very young child, who sings prettily and screams 'Daddy' when frightened. His horror is very modern.

For Hughes, the word 'daddy' must, inevitably, borrow connotations from Plath which, we can safely assume, denied endearment in the accepted sense, although reflecting a distorted love-hate relationship. Plath's father—and Hughes by conflation—was a vampire who sucked Plath dry and was universally loathed. In the final line of this stanza, 'daddy' is coupled with 'bastard', loading the word with emotional venom, not affection:

> There's a stake in your fat black heart
> And the villagers never liked you.
> They are dancing and stamping on you.

> They always *knew* it was you.
> Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through. (1968/2001: 50)

Does Hughes imbue the word with an ambivalent connotation in his chorus? It is certainly a possibility and one that provides modern directors with an opportunity to put patriarchal attitudes under scrutiny. Furthermore, 'daddy' has a theatrical advantage over 'father', apparent even when reading silently and 'hearing' within the privacy of our own heads. The word 'father' is normally stressed /x. The second syllable can be extended by dragging out the vowel sound but tends to produce an effect of mock surprise. 'Daddy', by contrast, responds well in terms of carrying serious emotion when the second syllable gains weight. It sounds plaintive rather than comic. Beyond linguistic choices, however, the greatest potency of Hughes's poetry lies in its raw psychological truths.

With choruses having once incorporated both music and dance, the STs offer a range of metrical patterns which the academic translator sometimes seeks to distinguish. Poets, too, vary in their responses. Harrison approaches the ST more closely than Hughes because he is interested in the consciously poetic. Many of his choral episodes, as performed in 1981, would have been characterised as *presto* in musical terminology and offered scope for virtuoso realisation on stage. In a section briefly mentioned above (90), speakers overlap as they bitterly chant the name 'Helen', which runs through the lines. Nor was the 1981 delivery entirely a directorial decision: it is embedded in Harrison's presentation of his text, with short, discrete phrases framed by the two syllables of that infamous name:

> HELEN wrecker HELEN Hell
> the one who first named her knew what was fated—
> HEL—a god guided his tongue right—EN
> HEL—spear-bride gore-bride war-whore—EN
> HEL—ship-wrecker man-breaker Troy-knacker—EN
> (22, corresponding to 681-698 in the ST)

The use of the double space between words corresponded with a change of speaker in performance. Harrison has exaggerated wordplay from the ST, where Aeschylus employs the

homophonic prefix ἐλ- to show the scope of Helen's destructiveness: ἑλέναυς ἕλανδρος ἑλέπτολις (689-90). Harrison's male chorus is selectively misogynist, considering the cost of the Trojan War from a female perspective, with the modern importations of 'dogtags' to universalise the experience. The section has been published discretely as 'The Ballad of the Geldshark', becoming Harrison's own voice. Below is the choral version:

> wives mothers sisters each one scans
> the dogtags on the amphorae
> which grey ashes are my man's?
> they sift the jumbled names and cry:
>
> *my husband sacrificed his life*
>
> *my brother's a battle-martyr*
>
> *aye, for someone else's wife—*
>
> *Helen, whore of Sparta* (15)

The free-standing poem has only slight differences of presentation on the page (2006: 104).[72]

The choruses of the *Oresteia* become increasingly exotic as one proceeds through the trilogy, moving from the familiar citizen band, into travesty roles of foreign slave women—with a strange loyalty to their late oppressor—then into the grotesque Erinyes, who must have represented the worst nightmare of womanhood for the Athenian male. The chorus was once considered by scholars to be pure, imported, Doric lyric poetry, but this view has now been significantly modified. In her contribution to *A Companion to the Ancient Greek Language*, Olga Tribulato points out:

> This is not an accurate description of the language of Attic choruses, as their most prominent Doric trait is the preservation of [the long 'a' sound], representing the arrival point of the prestigious choral tradition. Attic tragedy pays homage to it, but within a linguistic framework that, albeit highly poetic, is far from the original language of choral odes: there are no other Doric vocalisms in tragedy. (2010: 397)

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[72] From: *Tony Harrison Selected Poems* (Penguin).

W.B. Stanford, in his monograph: *Greek Views on Euphony*, in which he draws together scraps of evidence from various ancient sources, explains why the Doric alpha might have appealed for the most musical sections of Greek drama:

> Of the long vowels *a* was considered the most euphonious, being pronounced with the mouth open to the widest extent and with the breathing striking on the palate. The Doric dialect with its use of *alpha* for Ionic-Attic *eta* gave poets full opportunity for this. (1943: 7)

For Harrison, however, a long, resonant, 'Doric' vowel sound was undesirable for both the technical and artistic reasons previously mentioned. Nonetheless, he sets his choral sections apart metrically, as we have noted. An extract from *Eumenides* provides a further illustration. From the ST: ἐπὶ δε τῷ τεθυμένῳ / τόδε μέλος (*Eu.* 328-9 & 341-2, 'And over the sacrificial victim this is my song'), Harrison creates a terse refrain, with two stresses per line:

>   / x   / x
>   Victim! Victim!
>   / x   x   /
>   Listen! Our song! (98-9)

Whilst Harrison creates a dramatic pulse, minimalism removes the element of sacrifice which the ST contains. Since Clytemnestra's justification for murder hangs on the back story of Iphigenia's sacrifice at Aulis, casting Orestes in the role of a sacrificial hare adds an ironic layer which Harrison ignores, preferring immediacy to complexity in this instance. Such verbal economy is not borrowed from Gilbert Murray, whose own translation includes the sacrificial element shrouded in a faux-archaic lyricism:

>   / x   / x /   x /
>   But our sacrifice to bind
>   / x   / x /   x /
>   Lo, the music that we wind [...] (218)

Murray's chorus is elegant and metrically regular but his Erinyes lack the naked rage that Harrison provides.

Harrison produces a complex mixture within this choral section from *The Eumenides*, acknowledging patterns in the ST, whilst finding a native way to accommodate ritualised expressions of anger. He employs short lines and occasional rhymes. In the ST, the chorus moves away from lyric mode in the section under consideration (lines 349-352) in order to narrate back story. Harrison renders this in a surprisingly formal language, using complete compound sentences, in contrast to the lyric sections:

> x   x   /   x x / x ‖ x   x   /   \   x   /   \
> When we came into being, they were marked out, the confines.
> /   x   x   x   /   x ‖ x   x   / x x   /   x
> We and the Olympians have no intimate contacts.
> \   /   x   x   /   x ‖ x   /   x   x   /   x
> Food's offered to either but not both together.
> /   x   \   /   x ‖ /   x   \   /   x
> We don't wear white robes, they don't wear black ones. (99)

The first two lines of this example demonstrate how the more expansive sentence is achieved. There are a significant number of unstressed syllables, or those with secondary stresses, between fully stressed syllables, subtly extending the lines. There is also a natural caesura in each line which, in three cases, emphasises opposites: we/they, either/both, white/black. The final pair of opposites is a conflation of Harrison's; the ST separates παλλεύκων δὲ πέπλων (353, 'pure white garments') and μελανείμοσιν (370, 'black-garbed'). An intensified polarisation and isolation of the Erinyes from the Olympians is a construct of Harrison's form and syntax which helps gloss the situation for a modern audience and reflects his research: he had read an article on the Pythagoreans, and identified ten polar opposites, including light/shade.[73]

Naturalising the text was not a consideration, either for Harrison's translation or for Peter Hall's realisation of it. One does not need to labour the point, to demonstrate how, in 1981, the chorus frequently defied audience expectations and functioned, in effect, as metatheatre, making

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[73] Notebook 3, 906-7.

theatricality overt. Two further brief examples will suffice to show the interaction between Birtwistle's score and Harrison's poetry, in which the musical beat was sometimes the dominant factor to the ear. When Electra is engaged in a *kommos* with Orestes and the chorus in *Choephori*, a section loosely corresponding to antistrophe γ, lines 363-371 in the ST, Roger Gartland's rendition of the lines was as follows:

> / / / x / x / /
> I want fate standing on its head
> / / / x / / x
> The goose hacked by the gander! (62)

To cluster so many emphatic syllables in speech requires a very precise, deliberate delivery, without the normal, everyday elisions. Inevitably, a disturbed stress pattern—one in which the feminine '-ing' ending, a possessive pronoun and the definite article receive equal weighting with key words such as 'fate' and 'goose'—will convey a disturbed mind. This disjunction of the norm is also employed with the collective psyche of the Erinyes when they torment Orestes, but there is method in the rhythmic deviance, one which brings certain words into prominence. Consider the stresses in this section as spoken in the recording:

> / x / / / / \
> She-kin, show our force. Join hands!
> / x x / / x /
> Dance the doom-dance steps, display
> x / x /x x / \
> through our grim music that our band's
> x / x x x / x / x /
> a power over men that gets its way [...] (1981, p.98)

The stress patterns produce a number of affective features, not least the emphasis on the Erinyes' femininity and power. Gender politics, as previously mentioned, was one of Harrison's main considerations in his coining of compounds such as she-gods and she-kin. In his interview with Michael Binns in *Event* (1981),[74] Harrison talks of the three plays as being 'vacuum-sealed in maleness'; Binns remarks on Harrison's preference for 'a craggy, solid

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[74] Newspaper articles from press cuttings in National Theatre archives. Page numbers not always retained.

sound' which helps to stress 'the physicality and bloodiness of Greek society'. Part of this 'cragginess' is the short vowel sounds and strong consonants of syllables such as 'clan' and 'kin' which feature in Harrison's neologisms and are referred to elsewhere. The very masculine language was 'not for any misogynistic motive' but to highlight the crushing maleness of Greek society. Thus Harrison's choice of language and the rhythms Birtwistle created were part of an interpretation of the ST. Harrison's notebook 5 is largely engaged with male/female conflict, including patriarchy, against which the Erinyes are fighting a losing battle, albeit with a bold face.

The section above also focuses on the Erinyes' unity. 'Join' gains emphasis over the relevant body part and the corporate act of dancing is also emphasised, rather than the ominous 'doom'. In the third line of this extract, both times 'our' is stressed, as the Erinyes defend their corner against the encroachment of Apollo. Finally, the imperative 'show our force' is not only a powerful instruction but also incantatory. This section in performance was very much the group coming together after the neglectfulness of sleep. It was not spoken chorally but divided between individuals as the Erinyes fought to regain control and reassert their joint purpose. A less ornate text, with a workaday lexicon, almost certainly could not have facilitated such a potent stylised delivery, with or without Birtwistle's accompaniment. The 'otherness' of Greek tragedy was presented, especially in the choral sections; 'native' Old English influences, themselves exotic to the modern eye and ear, retained the exoticism of the ST, fulfilling Sir Peter Hall's production values.

Hughes's choruses, by contrast with Harrison's, transfer differently into performance, most obviously in their lack of an integral musical accompaniment in British productions of recent years. The rhythm—and some might say musicality—of the human voice dominates. Hughes's choral lines are no more regular in length than any other part of his text. This variability offered Mitchell and her cast a range of performance opportunities. After Agamemnon has walked to his doom along the red carpet, the chorus expresses its unease in short lines, each bearing a single stress and a slight upward inflection, as if questioning:

```
     x   x    /
We can pray
  x   x     /
To be wrong.
   /
Pray [...] (48)
```

Many of these short lines were assigned to individual voices, each offering a key word to the audience. It was a production device for filtering meaning. The line breaks did not dictate assignment, featuring enjambment as they do; perceived meaning took precedence. In the extract below, a second voice takes up the speech at the end of a clause, not a line, where there seems to be a natural brief pause:

```
    /    x   x   /   x
What must a murderer
   /         x x  /  x   /
Pay  (2ⁿᵈ) for a human life
   x    /  x   x     /      /
That cannot be brought back? (49)
```

It was a feature of the Mitchell production that further metrical shortening of lines occurred in the cause of naturalism. Thus, 'murderer' was, effectively, a two-syllable word, simply eliding the first 'e'. 'Prayer' was monosyllabic. The absence of a tight metrical constraint permits these idiosyncrasies and even allows moments of wry humour to emerge. When the chorus first addresses Cassandra, it shouts, like an ill-bred British tourist to a foreign waiter, hoping that sheer volume will ram home meaning:

```
  \   /   x    /\
Cassandra – listen.
  \   \   x  x   /
It's all for the best.
  \     /   \ /
You must obey.
   /    /     /   /
Get down.  Go in. (51)
```

The number of stresses in these very short lines reflects a precise *fortissimo* delivery, and Mitchell's interpretation is, to a great extent, embedded in Hughes's structure. He was very aware of the norms of contemporary theatre and had the expectation of performance. The sentences here are extremely short, and often imperative, as if speaking to a recalcitrant child—a plausible mindset for this chorus of male elders—although in the ST there is a greater element of reasoning:

> ἕπου· τὰ λῷστα τῶν παρεστωτων λέγει·
> πείθου λιποῦσα τόνδ᾽ ἀμαξήρη θρόνον. (*Ag.* 1053-4)

> (Follow her. To do as she tells you is the best choice available. Leave your seat in this carriage, and comply with her words.)

For Hughes, this adjustment of line length is the only variable in his *Oresteia*. Harrison has significant variations in poetic presentation, some of which reflect the ST. For example, he closely follows Aeschylus' lead on Cassandra, with wild exclamations and cryptic phrases as the sense of horror rises, presented within a *kommos* in the ST. The various strophes and antistrophes of this section frequently contain a dochmiac foot: short-long-long-short-long ('we all pat the dog'). This metrical combination is the only original contribution to classical Greek prosody from drama—a metre designed for frenzied emotion. Any long beat can be resolved into two shorts, creating a panicked, staccato delivery. The lines below, which start strophe and antistrophe 5 respectively, have identical metrical rhythms: two iambs, followed by a dochmiac, with the second long beat resolved. The inarticulate exclamations are 'extras' in that they are external to the metrical scheme:

> ‿ ‐ ‿ ‐ ‿ ‿ ‿ ‐ ‿ ‐
> ἒ ἒ παπαῖ παπαῖ, τί τόδε φαινεται; (1114)
> ‿ ‐ ‿ ‐ ‿ ‿ ‿ ‐ ‿ ‐
> ἆ ἆ ἰδού ἰδού· ἄπεχε τᾶς βοὸς [...] (1125)

In this scene, where Cassandra foresees the murders, Harrison, too, reflects her mental disturbance in fractured utterances, punctuated on the page with double spacing, although he favours a monosyllabic, spondaic beat:

> net   hell-net
> she-snare   bed-mate   blood-mate [...]
>
> look there   there   look
> bull   cow   bull cow   don't let them grapple

This verbal ping-pong effect recurs when Cassandra cries out a few lines later, stressing each word:

> him   me   him   me   him   me (9)

This line has no direct equivalent in the ST but communicates the frantic style. In notebook 6, Harrison mentions Aeschylean 'curtness' or brachylogy (1213) and a general comment on the back page (1453) likens some scenes to 'kabukified ping-pong'. He also researched glossolalia for his realisation of Cassandra, with its tendency to vowel elongation and use of non-standard speech sounds (notebook 1, 156-7) and drew on a stylistic feature of the ST identified by Anne Lebeck: 'associative or reminiscent repetition', to create cumulative imagery (153).[75] Cassandra's *kommos* with the chorus was originally drafted in columns that signify overlapping speech but Harrison had concerns about the scene becoming too disjointed—and, inevitably, incoherent.[76] Thus a compromise gives us a level of disjuncture but also coherence.

Sometimes Harrison retains the SL cries which are untranslatable. Thus Aeschylus':

> ὀτοτοτοτοῖ πόποι δᾶ·
> ὦπολλον ὦπολλον (*Ag.* 1076-7*)*

 is rendered:

> \ \\ \   \ \   /
> otototoi popoi da!
> x / x   x / x
> Apollo! Apollo! (31)

Harrison's choice departs from Murray who found the line too alien and modified it to:

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[75] In article 'The Oresteia: a Study in Language and Structure' (page number not cited by Harrison).
[76] Draft of scene with marginal comments in box 2.

Otototoi... Dreams. Dreams. (81)

The 2008 Loeb edition has five syllables for the first exclamation but earlier editions, such as that of Herbert Weir Smyth, in 1926, used by the *Perseus* website, have only four. Either through choice or in line with a specific edition of the ST, Harrison has the truncated version, which accommodates his two short metrical units per line. He considered a ten-syllable string of 'yi yi yi...' but reverted to the ST.[77] In the original performance, the utterly alien words were spoken by John Normington with a rapid but evenly stressed delivery until the final 'da'. The repeated 't' and 'p' produced a staccato effect, similar to Wilfred Owen's famous line: 'Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle'.[78] With the recognisable name 'Apollo' the norms of spoken English re-emerged.

The translation of sounds that express anguish is a subject that could fill a thesis on its own. We simply do not know whether the 'extra-metrical' and 'meaningless' words expressing pain, as recorded in tragic texts, could be freely adapted by ancient actors into 'real' screams and howls, and this is not the place for detailed analysis of the evidence and issues. We shall consider just a few points here, pertinent to Harrison and Hughes. Emotional exclamations are vowel-rich: αἰαῖ, ἐ ἐ, οἴμοι, for example. Vowels are inarticulate sound, omitted in the written form of some languages, such as Hebrew. Consonants articulate the vowels into words. Clearly, Cassandra's outburst is highly unusual in its stuttering articulation and would be very difficult to replicate in English. Is she expressing raw emotion or an incantatory cry? Harrison, working from the SL, unlike many modern, non-academic 'translators' recognises the vocal potential and retains it for want of a convincing alternative. Normington did the language justice in the original production. Furthermore, even while expressing intense emotion, this exclamation is metrically controlled in the ST. There is a limit on the utterance which modern actors would find unusual. Harrison constructs his desired metrical control, through incorporating the original Greek.

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[77] Notebook 2 (252).
[78] *Anthem for Doomed Youth*, line 3.

Timberlake Wertenbaker saw the dramatic potential of these articulated expressions of distress over three decades later. Her 2013 *Our Ajax* retains the chorus's two gnomic exclamations:

πόνος πόνῳ πόνον φέρει.
πᾷ πᾷ (*Ajax*: 866-7, 2013: 65)

and:

ὦ πόνοι πρόγονοι πόνων· (*Ajax*: 1197, 2013: 71).

This second outcry is glossed in the following line:

'and pain promotes more pain'.

Both SL examples feature the word play of *polyptoton*; moreover, the plosive 'p' sound can be emphasised in performance to communicate strong emotions.

Hughes also chooses short lines and phrases for Cassandra's outcry, to reflect her distress, but rejects any borrowing from the SL beyond the god's name. The rest of the utterance is comprised of strong monosyllables:

```
 x  /  x
Apollo!
  /
No!
 x   /      /
O Earth! Earth!
  /   /
No! No! (52)
```

In Mitchell's production, as a compensatory expression of grief, Lilo Baur preceded the speech with a natural and heart-rending: 'O! O! O! O!' Hughes's extensive use of exclamation marks in his lines rightly invites a wild declaration. It seems almost inevitable that actors and/or directors will supply naturalised exclamations to fill Hughes's omissions. When Cassandra repeats her plea to Apollo a few lines later, Baur extended the final syllable on the second 'Apollo', like the wail of despair it is:

```
  x  /  x    /     /
Apollo! Earth! Oh
  /    /    /   x  /  \
No!  No!  No!  Apollo [extended]! (52)
```

Both Harrison's and Hughes's texts were emphatically delivered by the respective actors playing Cassandra. The ST's chorus comments upon her violent, possessed quality: πόθεν ἐπισσύτους θεοφόρους [...]; (1150). A director must decide the extent to which Cassandra's utterances are capable of naturalisation or distinctly alien and 'other', a view coloured by the text involved.

When considering the three choruses in the *Oresteia*, in some respects *The Eumenides* is unique: the Erinyes are not merely bystanders, partisan or otherwise, commenting on the unfolding story or counselling actions. They are participants in the story. Appeasing them is as important to the resolution of the drama as is Heracles' intervention to appease Philoctetes in Sophocles' play. It is understandable, therefore, that Hughes should choose to integrate them as another character without the differentiation between *rhesis* and choral lyric of the ST. Nonetheless, one can sense an incantatory potential in certain sections. When the Erinyes confront their quarry, Hughes uses short lines to break sentences into sense units. His free treatment of lines 261-6 in the ST, reminds us of the physical connection between Orestes and his mother:

```
  x    / x  /
Your guilty soul
  x   /  x  x  /
Shall render to us
 x   /   x  x   / x
The rags of the body
 /    /    x
She gave you.  (161)
```

These short, two-stress lines are like a war-dance and Hughes uses his loose stanza structure, which functions like paragraphing in prose, to separate on the page this direct address to Orestes from the more gnomic wisdom the chorus offers us next:

> Nobody alive
> Can escape
> The exact accounting
> For sin against heaven [...] (161)

In the ST, the comparable section (*Eu*. 269-75) is still addressed to Orestes, as the singular verb attests: ὄψῃ δὲ [...] (269). Instead, Hughes implicates us all in Orestes' predicament which offers a powerful theatrical tool.

Nor does Hughes confine these short lines to a choral section. Indeed, they often seem to indicate a ritual context. Orestes delivers a prayer of exhortation in the same mode:

> x / x /   x
> Apollo, tell them,
>   /   x   x /
> Prove that my act
> x   / x   /
> My killing her,
>   x x / x / x
> Was an act of justice. (174)

The terse, almost childlike, phrases—especially the imperative: 'tell them'—plead desperately for the adult Apollo to put things right, in contrast to the standard speech metre and measured forensic language of the ST:

> ἤδη σὺ μαρτύρησον, ἐξηγοῦ δέ μοι,
> Ἄπολλον, εἴ σφε σὺν δίκῃ κατέκτανον. (*Eu*. 609-10)

> (Testify now for me, Apollo, and expound
> whether I killed her with justice.)

To close our consideration of the choral scenes, which includes the *kommos* with Cassandra, we may conclude that Harrison clearly embeds a range of poetic devices to enhance a rhythmic and musical delivery which Hughes rejects, although Hughes's translation does not prevent such an approach and some sections seem to invite it. It is, indeed, extremely adaptable. Theatre Lab ritualised all the choruses and none more so than the Erinyes, who filled the studio with the scent of orange as they crushed small citrus fruit, to communicate their rage physically.

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In the Greek tragedy that has survived, stichomythic exchanges generally—but not always—retain the same metre as the *rhesis*. The pared-down quality, however, changes the dynamic for both actor and audience, signalling rising tension and urgency. A verbal battle becomes a sequence of swift thrusts and ripostes. Simon Goldhill explains his perception of these single line exchanges in *How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today*:

> For stichomythia is a marvelously (sic) economical way of dramatising the breakdown of communication into conflicting positions. Tragedy is a genre of conflict: not only conflict between people or ideas, but also conflict about what words mean. Characters repeatedly use the same word in different senses. They argue over what words to use, and they use them as weapons against each other. (2007: 96/7)

For Hughes, the 'economical way' features throughout; with no metrical regularity to any section, he does not stylistically distinguish stichomythic exchanges any more than choral ones. He still tends to favour the short line that follows the norms of English speech. Harrison, by contrast, finds a distinctive style for the various sections. In *Choephori*, as elsewhere, his stichomythic exchange between Electra and Orestes is in rhyming couplets, with a regular four-stress line. As Harrison said recently, in a poetry reading at King's College[79], the stichomythia is very formal, so he employs rhyme—a view he has maintained for over thirty years, since jotting in the margin of his *Oresteia* ST: 'Stichomythia hard to stage. Try rhymes.' In a further note, alongside exchanges between Cassandra and the chorus, he writes of 'going wholeheartedly against naturalism'.[80] Throughout his early drafts, the stichomythic sections are ruled into pairs, to stress their nature as couplets, for example:

/ x x / x x / x x /
EL: How do you know what it was that I prayed?
x x / x x / x x / x x /
OR: For your much-loved Orestes to come to your aid.
x / x x / x x / x x /
EL: Then how can you say that the gods favour me?
x / x x / x / x x /
OR: You've got what you prayed for. Look! I am he! (57)

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[79] See footnote 48.

[80] Marginal notes to sections 164-81 and 1348-71 in Murray's *Agamemnon*.

Apart from the fourth line one can detect an underlying anapaestic rhythm: xx/ which potentially gives a galloping movement to the lines that requires careful oral delivery if the actors are to retain the gravitas of this recognition scene. *The William Tell Overture*, by Rossini, starts with a largely anapaestic section, the very reason it was considered suitable as a theme tune for the television Western series, *The Lone Ranger*.[81] In the ST, as with other Greek plays, an anapaestic section underscored physical movement, such as the *parodos*. Indeed, we may deduce from the existence of the anapaestic Spartan ἐμβατήρια that the metre originated as a rhythm for marching into battle. Any 'movement' in the 1981 production, however, was emotional, the actors static. The galloping rhythm had the counterpoise of an edgy score and unsettling masks, to anchor the exchange firmly in tragic mode for a modern audience. Furthermore, a formal, non-naturalistic style slowed the tempo to *adagio*—although the impression the scene created was not one of leisurely exploration but of urgency. Goldhill picks out the production for a special mention:

> The Hall/Harrison Oresteia made the exchange of stichomythia absolutely formalized and antirealist, by slowing down the delivery and putting a crash of music between each line. This put a great deal of weight on the semantic significance of each line, as the argument unfurled. (2007: 99)

There is a catechismal quality to this passage in the ST, common to many stichomythic episodes, beautifully parodied by Housman in his 'Fragment of a Greek Tragedy' (*Cornhill Magazine*, 1901), which Goldhill cites as a deliberate example not only of 'bad translation and apparent lumpiness' but also of 'painfully clumsy stagings of tragedy' as his chosen snatch of dialogue between the chorus and a generic protagonist, Alcmaeon, demonstrates:

> Chor: To learn your name would not displease me much.
> Alc: Not all that men desire do they obtain.
> Chor: Might I then hear at what your presence shoots?
> Alc: A shepherd's questioned mouth informed me that—
> Chor: What? For I do not know what you will say.

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[81] The overture premiered in 1829. George W. Trendle and Fran Striker created *The Lone Ranger* for ABC, aired 1949-57.

> Alc: Nor will you ever, if you interrupt.
> Chor: Proceed and I will hold my speechless tongue.   (2007: 95)

The appearance of a ritual interrogation has led to speculation by some that stichomythic sections reflect a form of pre-dramatic liturgy. George Thomson, for example, in *Aeschylus and Athens*, posits that the pattern is one in which a priest intones a series of questions to which the catechumens respond with exact metrical equivalence (1941: 189-91). Thus the interruptions parodied by Housman are revealed as a device to cut down longer utterances into single stichomythia, retaining the balanced alternation of speakers.

Harrison avoids such interruptions, despite noting that 'realism of unformed or broken speech is one of the prominent features in the dramatic style of Aeschylus'.[82] He clearly revels in the format, with its discrepant awareness between questioner and respondent, a factor giving rise to the more commonly held theory about stichomythic exchanges: that they offer us a riddle, which a character is driven to solve, like Oedipus with the old shepherd. As an audience, we share Orestes' knowledge and can appreciate the inherent tension as he attempts to bring comfort whilst Electra suspects mockery. The 'breakdown of communication' is a crucial feature: Orestes, the male, holds all the cards, in terms of knowledge but only discloses the truth slowly to Electra, as he tests the reception awaiting him, sidling cryptically towards his dramatic disclosure. Whether we view stichomythic dialogue as ritual or riddle, emotional tension is always apparent. Goldhill sums up such exchanges from the actor's perspective:

> This is the very nub of stichomythia for the actor. To be able to communicate powerful emotions within the short space of a dense, articulate, single verse; and to communicate the flow of conflicting emotions through so formal a style of verse exchange. In all senses, stichomythia is designed to make conflicting emotions articulate. It anatomizes argument. (2007: 99)

Goldhill comments immediately afterwards that such communication can be achieved in both naturalistic performances, citing Katie Mitchell, and in the stylized, citing Peter Hall.   Hughes

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[82] Credited to T.G. Tucker (1901) in marginal jotting, section 164-81 in Murray's *Agamemnon*.

and Harrison provide contrasting translations that facilitated two very different approaches. Harrison's treatment of the recognition scene diverges less from the ST than Hughes's in terms of formality. Not only do Harrison's masculine rhymes bind each couplet as a unit, but the use of repetition, such as the word 'prayed' in the extract above, also strengthens the notion of ideas bounced between brother and sister. Edith Hall recounts how, during an actors' workshop with Harrison at the National Theatre Studios in September 2012, working on his play *Iphigenia in Sevastopol*, he wanted stichomythic sections to be treated as a game of squash, with the audience as a wall.[83] This analogy demands a rapid, powerful delivery; in the four lines below, Harrison illustrates his theory with the repetition of 'mock' and 'my misfortune' to link couplets as sharply-defined units, in addition to their rhymes. The siblings also build a joint metaphor, as they swiftly exchange their ideas, with a chilling reference to Agamemnon's fate, inherent in the ST's ἀλλ' ἦ δόλον τιν', ὦ ξέν', ἀμφί μοι πλέκεις; (*Cho.* 220, 'Look here, sir, are you trying to weave some web of trickery around me?'):

> EL: Stranger, you're weaving some net or some snare.
> OR: If you are entangled, I'm also trapped there.
> EL: You mock my misfortune, make it a game.
> OR: I mock my own then, my misfortune's the same. (57)

The metre of Harrison's stichomythic section is most regular when one sentence runs through the line, as unbroken thought. With internal punctuation and parallel clauses, the pattern breaks. There is, in effect, a caesura in the second and fourth lines above, which subsumes the 'missing' unstressed beat, as a brief pause. The couplets take much strength from their masculine end-rhymes on which both eye and tongue linger. Levi, writing of Harrison's *Phaedra Britannica*, picks out this same feature for comment:

> The strong beat [...] is never far distant from the dramatic verse he has chosen to use, and the couplets with their rhymes encourage frequent end-stopping, so that the poetry coexists with an imagined hammer-beat. (1991: 163)

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[83] An oral anecdote, personally communicated to author of this thesis, 20/03/2013.

Harrison departs from the strict iambic pentameter which Gilbert Murray employed in his own translation of the *Oresteia*. He also favoured masculine rhymes:

<div align="center">

x   /   x   /   x   / x / x   /

EL: Thou mock'st me! Thou wouldst laugh to hear me moan!

x   /   x / x / x   /   x   /

OR: Who mocks thy tribulation mocks mine own. (1946: 142-3)

</div>

The introduction of mockery into these lines by both Murray and Harrison deserves comment. The original: ἐμοῖς γελᾶν θέλεις; is more or less covered, albeit in somewhat archaic style, by Murray's 'Thou wouldst laugh', although an inference of sneering is possible from the 'at me' (ἐμοῖς). 'Laugh', however, with its long vowel sound, would have resonated within the mask, unlike the short vowel of the consonantal 'mock'. Borrowing from one translator by another, whether conscious or otherwise, moves each version a little further from the ST. Harrison elaborates the idea of mockery in 'make it a game'. Nearly twenty years on, Hughes's Electra snaps at Orestes: 'Don't play with my pain'. This seems more than poetic licence; it is, perhaps, Hughes's interpretation of the psychological impact of the situation, what Goldhill defined as using words 'as weapons against each other'.

Murray's translation, as a model, has technical merit. Each stichomythia makes its point succinctly but clearly. The metrical imperative does not impede meaning. Contractions such as 'mock'st' not only uphold Murray's preference for the pseudo-mediaeval but, in company with other consonantal monosyllables like 'wouldst', create a pleasing contrast with the softer, Latinate 'tribulation'. Although Harrison also chooses to employ some features from an older era of English poetry, unlike Murray, he is not aping the past, but adapting. His parodies in *Fram* show affectionate recognition of Murray's perceived faults. Not everyone is so charitable, however. Michael Walton contributed a chapter called 'Translation or Transubstantiation' to *Agamemnon in Performance: 458BC to AD 2005*, in which, like Eliot, he was scathing about Murray's style:

> If Murray's translations received considerable exposure on stage, it was largely by default. He had effectively cornered the market in the translation of Greek tragedy and comedy. A formidable scholar, he was also a major populariser.
>
> Part of the problem later generations have had with Murray was his use of rhyming couplets, a predilection which adds little to any tragic work, especially the Greeks, beyond strengthening a determination on the part of most actors to fracture the delivery wherever possible so as to deceive the audience into mishearing the text. As alarming was his enthusiasm for archaisms, as though they awarded authority to a translation of an old play by virtue of sounding nothing other than old. (2005: 192)

Walton's negative critique of Murray is repeated in his contemporaneous publication, *Found in Translation*, making comparisons with Robert Browning in his chapter on Aeschylus and the *Agamemnon* (2006: 49). Walton's main complaint is that Murray's language was synthetic (as is Harrison's):

> [...] a dramatic wilderness, a world that never was, a mirage, a figment of his own fevered imagination that bears no resemblance whatsoever to Aeschylus. (2006: 47)

Walton's comments about the actors are unattributed: he offers no supporting anecdote or testimony but presents his view as an absolute of literary taste, including an apparent aversion to engaging a wider public. He is, almost certainly, generalising from Eliot's description of the performance of *Medea* in 'Euripides and Professor Murray' in which Eliot claims:

> [...] Miss [Sybil] Thorndike, in order to succeed as well as she did, was really engaged in a struggle against the translator's verse. She triumphed over it by attracting our attention to her expression and tone and making us neglect her words; and this, of course, was not the dramatic method of Greek acting at its best. (1969: 60)

We have rehearsed Eliot's Aristophanic vitriol towards Murray in this essay in our introduction. Harrison clearly does not share Eliot's prejudices; indeed, he actively rejects Eliot as a role model in his conversation with Richard Hoggart:

> I always wanted to write plays as a poet, but the verse drama I found was Eliot and Fry which I didn't like, I had no time for it, it didn't seem theatrical, I didn't understand the language. (1991: 42)

Murray was that rare academic who actively translated for the theatre and tried to revive English verse drama, a mantle taken up by Harrison. As a member of a group called the Cambridge Ritualists, Murray believed, contrary to Winckelmann, that Greek literature did not grow out of serene impulses but dark mythic rituals, which he sought to explore. A fellow-traveller in this belief, F. M. Cornford, drew upon Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) which he called 'a work of profound imaginative insight'. Contemplating the chorus, Nietzsche wrote:

> [...] the dithyramb chorus is a chorus of transformed beings [...]

> The dithyramb chorus is now assigned the task of exciting the minds of the audience to such a pitch of Dionysian frenzy, that, when the tragic hero appears on the stage, they do not see in him an unshapely man wearing a mask, but they see a visionary figure, born as it were of their own ecstasy. (1995: 26/28)

Murray's 1912 essay, 'Excursus on the Ritual Forms Preserved in Greek Tragedy' is, in general, a detailed and scholarly trawl through the extant tragedies for evidence of Dionysian rites. The last paragraph, however, sums up Murray's subjective response—as an aside, judging by his final comment:

> An outer shape dominated by tough and undying tradition, an inner life fiery with sincerity and spiritual freedom; the vessels of a very ancient religion overfilled and broken by the new wine of reasoning and rebellious humanity, and still, in their rejection, shedding abroad the old aroma, as of eternal and mysterious things: these are the fundamental paradoxes presented to us by Greek Tragedy. The contrasts have their significance for other art also, perhaps for all great art. But aesthetic criticism is not the business of the present note. (2004: 117)[84]

Murray's translations failed to communicate such ecstatic qualities to all. Although, like Harrison, he wrote his work for performance, general archive material is sparse. Eliot's criticism seems, therefore, to have obtained privileged status. Walton is generous enough to cite George Bernard Shaw's counter-opinion:

> Yet it is Murray to whom no less a playwright than George Bernard Shaw could write in 1940: 'Though I have lived in the thick of a revolutionary burst of playwriting in

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[84] Originally published in *Themis*, published by Jane Harrison in 1912. Now anthologised by Robert Segal in *The Myth and Ritual Theory* .

London, the only plays that seem to me likely to survive are the old Greek ones in your translations'. (2006: 46)

He immediately follows the tribute from Shaw with:

It is interesting to speculate exactly where Murray acquired his style, a style that appears to have enchanted Shaw but is now so hard to stomach.

And speculate Walton does, assuming Browning as the culprit, although it is hard to find a direct link between Browning's tortured syntax and Murray's slick couplets. Furthermore, Walton's use of 'appears', seeks to undermine the authenticity of Shaw's inconvenient praise. For Harrison, however, Murray's passion emerges even from a tight poetic structure. What Harrison adds is the poetic vision and genius Murray lacked.

Murray sought an English context for his Aeschylus, placing it linguistically within the same era of pseudo-history as Mallory's Arthurian legend. There *is* logic in choosing England's putative age of chivalry and deeds of derring-do. Harrison looked both to Murray and to a more obscure, less flamboyant heroic tradition, creating a hybrid from the heavily alliterative 'native' style of our Teutonic ancestors and the quasi-mediaeval couplets of Murray, which owe a debt to France. While Walton might seem harsh in his judgement on Murray, he nonetheless alerts us to an inherent danger of rhyming couplets, as did Marlowe: that they can jingle like a nursery rhyme and destroy any sense of gravitas for both actor and audience. Murray favoured iambic pentameter so it is interesting to ponder how the addition of rhyme turns the lofty blank verse metre of Shakespeare into a form with the potential to slip into doggerel, 'which adds little to any tragic work, especially the Greeks'. Perhaps it is our tendency to linger on the rhymes which inhibits enjambment, distorts the cadence and suggests the nursery. Harrison's verse most definitely did not fall into this trap, protected partly by its innate ruggedness and partly by the other elements of the 1981 production. It is interesting to note, however, that Harrison has persisted with rhyming dramatic verse for over thirty years, with diminishing critical acclaim as tastes change.

Returning to our stichomythia, Goldhill acknowledges that: 'the exchange of stichomythia can be a nightmare for translators' and identifies two approaches, which he categorises as overbloating the timing of the interaction by extending the line in translation or else by reductive means trivialising the dialogue (2007: 178). The matter of poetry versus prose is not mentioned. A trawl through numerous 20th-century translations produced little evidence of excessive expansion or 'overbloating'. If one simply observes the presentation of Murray's and Harrison's works, each stichomythia from the ST occupies a single line in the TT. Several examples of the terse approach, however, can be found. Hughes certainly went for economy and Michael Silk, in an article for the *Times Literary Supplement* (17.12.99), commented that Hughes's stichomythic sections were more staccato than the Greek demands. There is, however, nothing trivial about his exchanges. Within the etymology of 'stichomythia' is a sense of measuring out a standard length for a line of verse, in which one thought is succinctly encapsulated. For modern translators, various approaches apply, which audiences and readers will test with their own aesthetic compass, based on their knowledge and expectation.

We must consider the possibility of a relatively rapid picking-up of cues for stichomythic lines in the original performances of the *Oresteia*, and other Greek tragedies. Silk has inferred a performance style, or 'demand', from which Hughes deviates, but everything about the original performances is, at best, an educated guesses. It seems only common sense that alternating long speeches with an exchange of stichomythia was devised to offer a shift in pace and mood to an audience, some of whom, like Shakespeare's 'groundlings', might well have grown restless beneath the weight of lengthy speeches. Peter Arnott, in his book *Public and Performance in the Greek Theatre*, offers us an insight into the consequences of 'losing' one's audience:

> We recall the tradition dating from the early days of the theatre before the buildings had assumed permanent stone form, that audiences drummed their heels on the wooden benches to show their disapproval of a play. In a theatre with naturally good acoustics, this must have been devastating. It illuminates the necessity, both for tragedy and comedy, of embodying attention-holding devices, and the dangers of allowing a huge crowd to be distracted. (1989: 74)

Edith Hall, in her contribution to *Music and Cultural Politics in Greek and Chinese Societies* (Volume I) discusses some of these 'attention-holding devices'. Analysing the various metrical shifts in Aeschylus' *Persians*, she estimates that:

> [...] counting only the transitions between anapaest, lyric meters, iambic trimeters, and trochaics, there are no fewer than twenty-one shifts (counting conservatively) in basic verse form in the course of this tragedy, which consists of fewer than eleven hundred lines. That means approximately one gear shift every fifty lines (2011: 12).[85]

Hall goes on to explain that the audience's reaction to variation, or ποικιλία, within tragedy was not just one of aesthetic appreciation but that it 'found emotive the precise moments of change within a single performance, from one type of meter and delivery to another.' She bases her conclusion on a single but convincing ancient source. The collection known as *Problems* was originally, but erroneously, ascribed to Aristotle and poses a multitude of questions, probably discussion points for students, about the world and human responses. In Book 19, problem 6 succinctly asks the following:

> Διὰ τί ἡ παρακαταλογή ἐν ταῖς ᾠδαῖς τραγικον; ἢ διὰ τὴν ἀνωμαλίαν; παθητικὸν γὰρ τὸ ἀνωμαλὲς καὶ ἐν μεγέθει τύχης ἢ λύπης, τὸ δὲ ὁμαλὲς ἔλαττον γοῶδες. Διὰ τί ἡ παρακαταλογὴ ἐν ταῖς ᾠδαῖς τραγικον; ἢ διὰ τὴν ἀνωμαλίαν; παθητικὸν γὰρ τὸ ἀνωμαλὲς καὶ ἐν μεγέθει τύχης ἢ λύπης, τὸ δὲ ὁμαλὲς ἔλαττον γοῶδες.
>
> (Why does irregularity in a song produce a tragic effect? Is it due to contrast? For in a serious situation, whether happy or afflicting, contrast produces pathos, while uniformity is less moving.) (1936: 382-3)

The word that the Loeb edition translates as 'contrast' (ἀνωμαλίαν) is our word 'anomaly'. Both 'irregularity' and 'anomaly' defy our expectations and challenge us, as an audience, to pay close attention.

The proposition that irregularity in song produces pathos is not in doubt to the pseudo-Aristotelian, only the mechanism whereby it achieves its effect, with 'contrast' being a possible solution. As recorded in *Problems*, the 'fact' seems to be a commonplace which the pseudo-Aristotelian assumes his readers will appreciate. This brief reflection on song reminds us of the significance of the chorus for the original audience, not only as spectacle but as participation, a

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[85] Edited by Dimitrios Yatrolakis.

crucial and integral part of the performance which modern directors do not always appreciate. 'Contrast', however, could describe more than metrical diversity within Greek drama and one is tempted to broaden the application: we have the frequent metrical shifts but they go hand-in-hand with varying theatrical forms: *rhesis*, stichomythic exchanges, *kommos* and choral interludes, which in themselves provide significant emotional shifts as diction alters.

Harrison understands the emotional frisson that ποικιλία or παρακαταλογή still produces, although it remains a moot point whether human psychology is a hard-wired, evolutionary constant or the product of one's culture and whether, therefore, our response is exactly equivalent to the Ancient Greeks. Certainly, drama in Western Europe is no longer the intense religious and civic experience that it was for people of the Classical period but one may still presume that modern audiences of the established theatrical repertoire—plays such as *Antigone*, *Macbeth* or *Hedda Gabler*, for example—will not be expecting any sudden plot revelation but will be enthralled by the novelty a production can bring to a familiar story and will respond to shifts in tension with anticipation, just like the audience in Athens in the 5th century BCE. Harrison clearly intended a range of paces, to produce these affective gear-shifts, and incorporated the potential within his poetic structures in a way that eludes the even-paced, academic translation.

Harrison and Hughes imply rhythmic possibilities, whether *andante* or *allegro*, in the language of their TT. Ultimately, however, tempo and vocal quality are only potentials in the written word which the director and/or actor must realise. Sir Peter Hall selected a slow delivery for Harrison's stichomythic lines, whereas Katie Mitchell found a tense, staccato pace more naturalistic, in keeping with her approach. Harrison, however, like the playwrights of old, was actively engaged in the process of elucidating and realising his script; Hughes had died before a production was mounted, leaving behind a text that merely hints at his intentions for the stage. It is, perhaps, this relative silence that still intrigues directors and invites fresh interpretation.

In analysing the translation of stichomythic episodes in Greek tragedy, Goldhill uses extracts by Kenneth McLeish and Frank McGuinness, summing up their style thus:

> Both McLeish and McGuinness understand that stichomythia is a taut and rich art form. Each line has no wasted words, but also has enough to provide an actor with a detailed map of contact and discontinuity within the exchange. Each form of address is an act of recognition, each hint of a past or a future narrative is part of the significance of the interaction. (2007: 183)

A taut style of translation might equally be a description of Hughes's text, despite the fact that he deviates from stichomythic structure by ignoring the one-line rule. In the exchange between Electra and Orestes, which we shall consider below, Electra has two lines in translation to her brother's one, reflecting the more cryptic nature of Orestes' utterances. Aspects of Hughes's approach may well have been absorbed from his mentor, T. S. Eliot, who had well-formed theories on verse drama, beyond a hostility to Murray, which he set down in a book called *Poetry and Drama* in 1951.

In its 1965 edition of Eliot's 1935 *Murder in the Cathedral*, Faber and Faber has retained the original introduction and notes by Nevill Coghill, who had direct access to the poet. Several points set down by Coghill, sometimes quoting from Eliot's 1951 book, are relevant to our appraisal of Hughes. Eliot had what Coghill called a 'manifesto' which was '[Christopher] Marlowe's in reverse', i.e. Eliot wished 'to deliver us from the tedium of 19th-century blank verse, just as Marlowe had introduced blank verse to deliver us 'from jigging veins of rhyming motherwit' (1965: 151). Most of Marlowe's near contemporaries—with Shakespeare in the vanguard—and the later Jacobean playwrights, such as Kydd, Middleton and Webster, followed suit in their preference for blank verse in the main, but there are surviving plays from the period that demonstrate why Marlowe felt the need for change. *Cambyses*, written by Thomas Preston ca. 1560, is written in 'jigging' couplets throughout, the same iambic heptameters that Chapman used for his translation of the *Iliad*. The play has no literary merit, as a few lines will demonstrate, but is an interesting example of the evolution from mediaeval religious and moral

drama into the history play. Here, Cambyses, simply called 'King' in the text, shows his

determination to marry a close relative despite religious prohibitions:

> No, no, what I have said to you, I mean to have it so:
> For councel theirs I mean not I, in this respect to goe.
> But to my Pallace let us goe, the mariage to prepare:
> For to avoid my wil in this, I canit not forbeare.[86]

19th-century attempts to reanimate verse drama, such as Tennyson's own version of the Thomas

Becket story, *Beckett* (1884), looked to Shakespeare and his blank verse colleagues for

inspiration. Eliot deliberately turned away from this approach, believing it had stultified verse

drama, and took his cue from *Everyman*, one of the more sophisticated English plays from the

late mediaeval period. Eliot was seeking 'an avoidance of too much iambic, some use of

alliteration, and occasional unexpected rhyme' which would set his versification apart from the

previous century's (1965: 145, citing Eliot, 1951: 24).

Coghill is eminently qualified to identify for us the key features of *Everyman* which Eliot

sought to emulate, although using significantly fewer rhymes than the anonymous mediaeval

author. Coghill describes *Everyman* thus:

> The versification is extremely irregular, at least in comparison with that of the earlier
> Miracle and Morality plays [...]
>
> The lines are of varying length and have a varying number of stresses: there is a good
> deal of rhyme and there are touches of alliteration. The way to feel for its rhythms is
> to stress the most important syllables of the most important words, and let the rest trip
> along on the tongue, with a slight breath-pause at the ends of lines, where it may seem
> necessary, and a slight marking of the rhymes, where they occur. (1965: 145-6)

What Coghill describes can be summarised as an irregular, qualitative metre, approximating to

the norms of speech and using poetic devices lightly. The first four lines of chorus in Part II of

Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* provides evidence of the features Coghill identifies:

> Does the bird sing in the South?
> Only the sea-bird cries, driven inland by the storm.

---

[86] The extract is transliterated, retaining original spelling, from computer-made facsimile reproduction by Amazon's *Ulan Press.*

What sign of the spring of the year?
Only the death of the old: not a stir, not a shoot, not a breath.
(1965: 61, 1-4)

We find alliteration of the letter 's' the internal rhyme of 'death' and 'breath' and irregular line length. On occasions, Eliot creates fully rhyming episodes such as the Tempter's speech:

Think, Thomas, think of enemies dismayed,
Creeping in penance, frightened of a shade;
Think of pilgrims, standing in line
Before the glittering jewelled shrine,
From generation to generation
Bending the knee in supplication,
Think of the miracles, by God's grace,
And think of your enemies in another place. (1965: 47, 533-40)

Apart from rhyme, those other features that Eliot approved for his original verse dramas are incorporated by Hughes into his translations but with a light touch. If we look at a short extract from a choral section of *Choephori* to compare with Eliot's, we find alliteration and the familiar irregularity of line length. What Coghill did not include, because it does not feature as a significant device in *Everyman* but is common to both Eliot and Hughes, is the use of repetition to drive home an idea. Eliot favours the rhetorical tricolon, 'not a stir, not a shoot, not a breath', whilst Hughes mentions 'out of [...]' four times:

Hurricanes come over the horizon
And out of man's heart,
Out of his pride and out of his furious will.
And out of woman's womb
Comes the tornado [...]   (120)

For Hughes, the exchange between Orestes and Electra at their father's tomb is significant in establishing relationships. Formal differentiation is unimportant; stressing the discrepant awareness of the dialogue, picked out as a key feature of stichomythic exchanges by Goldhill (above, 117), counts beyond any regular metrical feature. In the ST, Aeschylus avoids repetition, opting instead for elegant variation. In the scene under discussion (*Cho.*212-221) for example, Aeschylus selects τοῖς θεοῖς/ δαιμόνων as two contrasting mentions of the divine,

ἐξηύχου/ καλουμένη/ κατευγμάτων for the act of prayer, or pleading, and δόλον τιν' [...]/ πλέκεις μηχανορραφῶ for entrapment, whereas Hughes prefers to go boldly with the words 'name' and 'prayer', so crucial to the purpose of this dialogue:

> Orestes
>   Your oldest prayer – fulfilled this very moment.
> Electra
>   If you know my secret prayer, you know
>   The name it bears.
> Orestes
>   Your every heartbeat pronounces a name: Orestes.
> Electra
>   How can that prayer and name be more
>   Than a prayer and a name? (100, *Ag.* lines 215-8)

This offers a very free adaptation of the ST, in order to introduce the repetition, which vividly captures Electra's state of mind as she struggles to accept that salvation is at hand. It depicts a young woman whose thoughts have revolved around Orestes, his name becoming her mantra of hope. Although they are not the only stressed syllables, 'name' and 'prayer' (pronounced as one syllable to rhyme with 'fair' in the Mitchell production) play a key part in structuring these lines and foregrounding emotions for the audience.

In formal terms, the stichomythic lines above are indistinguishable from the rest of Hughes's translation. They are designed to reflect a thought process which has a dynamic defying regularity. Line length varies neither for metrical imperatives nor for stylistic considerations but to verify an emotional state. Hughes makes little attempt to imitate any formal feature of the ST in translation, beyond what Silk, in his previously-discussed review (above, 125), described as the affinity between Aeschylus and Hughes in their use of 'rhythmically alive, sound-enforced' language. Katie Mitchell, herself, remarked on the metrical consistency throughout in an interview with John Whitely, in the *Daily Telegraph*:

> [Hughes's] verse doesn't tie in with any of the metrical complexities and range of the Greeks, there's not much variation but it is exquisite. That's why it's hard to pull off, because it's ostensibly so simple and pure. You have to try to do it as cleanly as he's written it.

Mitchell also pointed out, in the same interview, that Hughes 'uses metaphors that aren't in the Greek at all'. Indeed, there are many original insertions, to highlight the horrors of war and violence in general. Silk's review Hughes as:

> [...] well-suited to capture the bold intensity of Aeschylus' Greek, and so too his elemental predispositions – towards the raw, animal, dark, primal, blood-laden (30.11.99).

For Hughes, this adaptation of the ST is a seed pearl for his own brooding on some of Aeschylus' themes, notably familial violence. The stichomythic recognition scene is a relatively gentle interlude compared with much of the trilogy. Hughes's nature poetry also deals with 'the raw, animal, dark, primal, blood-laden' and, whilst his animals behave naturally compared to the 'unnatural' conduct of the House of Atreus, they nonetheless share traits with characters in Greek tragedy; there is a single-mindedness to both Hughes's hawk and thrushes that corresponds to the obduracy of Electra and Orestes as they pursue revenge. In 'Hawk Roosting', the bird who delivers his own dramatic monologue is hard-wired for ruthlessness and can never change his nature:

> I kill where I please because it is all mine.
> There is no sophistry in my body:
> My manners are tearing off heads—
>
> The allotment of death. (1995: 30)

The mention of 'no sophistry', however, sets up a contrast to the world of Greek drama, where carefully argued self-justification abounds. Hughes admires the resolute mindset, relating it to genius in humans when musing on less obviously vicious birds in 'Thrushes':

> Is it their single-mind-sized skulls, or a trained
> Body, or genius, or a nestful of brats
> Gives their days this bullet and automatic
> Purpose? Mozart's brain had it, and the shark's mouth
> That hungers down the blood-smell even to a leak of its own

Side and devouring of itself: efficiency which
Strikes too streamlined for any doubt to pluck at it
Or obstruction deflect. (1995: 40)

In his poetry, Hughes reveals an understanding of those darker impulses which drive first Clytemnestra and then her offspring in the *Oresteia*. Even the short phrase, 'a nestful of brats' speaks of family dysfunction. Silk is right to appreciate Hughes's transference of his elemental views on nature into contemplation of human cruelty, in all its complexity; the omission of doubt from the 'too streamlined' efficiency which is an 'automatic' rather than reasoned response, cuts to the heart of the dilemma about revenge. Orestes is frequently compared favourably to Hamlet for having acted swiftly whilst his Shakespearean counterpart debated at length, severely plucked by doubt.

'Hawk Roosting' seems to have been a seminal poem in defining language choices for Hughes and also demonstrates that how we read a poem may not dovetail with the poet's intentions. Hughes was a prolific correspondent and his letters (as selected and edited by Christopher Reid) throw light on many aspects of his work. Writing to fellow-poet George MacBeth in 1965, about an upcoming poetry reading, Hughes says of 'Hawk Roosting':

> I'd like to read the poem, Hawk Roosting, but I'd prefer not to take part in the discussion—the poem's my contribution, after all. If it is about violence. I wrote it to a text: "The Truth kills everybody," and if the truth is, ultimately, a totalitarian system, then my poem is also topical. I don't see it as having anything to do with random, or civil or even elemental violence [...] I think my poem is about Peace. (2009: 244)

Clearly, many of us interpret this poem differently, including the examination board that placed it in the 'Conflict' section of an anthology, alongside overt war poems, such as Tennyson's 'Charge of the Light Brigade'.[87] Whether about peace or 'elemental violence', it was certainly a definitive poem for Hughes. Writing to an MA student, Anne-Lorraine Bujon, in December 1992, answering some probing questions she had put to him, he takes a retrospective look at

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[87] AQA's English Literature GCSE anthology, for years including 2013.

'Hawk Roosting' and lays out in detail its importance to his development as a poet. In this section, he refers to 'two earlier poems' ('View of a Pig' and 'Pike'):

> Then, a few months later, I got Hawk Roosting. Here the same language has taken off. Writing this was one of the truly best moments of my life. But internally it is emerging from the two earlier poems [...] What I was also trying to find, from the first point—behind the pig—was the greatest possible musical shift between one inflexion and the next. My ultimate or furthest phase—in that line of development—was in the last one, Hawk Roosting [...] my vocabulary after Hawk Roosting was very different from anything before. I had a much sharper sense, after that, of what was my own, and what was not.' (2009: 631-2)

The ostensible simplicity of Hughes's language, as Katie Mitchell described it, which crystallised in 'Hawk Roosting', is a major factor in the success of his *Oresteia*, allowing for flexibility of interpretation. Despite the innovative use of ICT, Mitchell's 1999 National Theatre production sprang from rehearsal techniques rooted in Stanislavski, as the archive record attests. Mitchell wanted characters imbued with emotional and psychological truth. Hughes's text presented no barriers to this approach. Thirteen years later, Theatre Lab created a notably different production at the Riverside Studios in Hammersmith. Its physical theatre and range of stylised performance techniques offered an interpretation far removed from naturalism. The online review by David Chadderton describes the watchman delivering his speech 'full throttle, almost baying to the moon' and that 'Apollo and Orestes gyrate in the background' at Agamemnon's tomb (Pylades having been replaced by the god).[88] Katie Mitchell remarked in her Telegraph interview that Hughes 'really jacked up' the death of Iphigenia and Theatre Lab used this elaboration of the text to produce a disturbing flashback with Agamemnon speaking some of the chorus's lines, knife at his daughter's throat. (Key moments of Theatre Lab's production can be seen in the photographs in appendix 3.)

Although Hughes's apparent lack of metrical artifice makes his text so adaptable, we can, nonetheless, find unobtrusive rhythms if we look. Writing to an admirer, Anne Vaughan-

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[88] www.britishtheatreguide, accessed 30/10/2011.

Williams, in August 1996, who had gained his trust through a sensitive analysis of the Actaeon section from *Tales from Ovid*, Hughes responds warmly to her comments:

> You are perfectly right—there is as you say 'a backbone of iambic and anapaestic metre'. The only law, in dramatic narrative poems, is a musical one—since the whole point is to control pace, pitch, restraint and release, all forms of contrast, urgency and relaxation, within a single, broad, headlong current of inevitability [...] That effect can be faked (assonance, alliteration, rudimentary Cynganned)[89] but it never works when you fake it—it blocks the current rather than transmits it [...] Also, all the verbal & musical detail has to disappear in the main purpose—which is to <u>tell the tale</u>. (2009: 686-7)

It is this artful simplicity, on which a director can lay his/her own interpretation, to which practitioners still respond. Anastasia Revi, who directed the Theatre Lab production (and for whom English is not her first language) positively opted for Hughes's version, describing the text thus:

> It is the best in my opinion out of all. He spent a lifetime for this and every little word he has used not only gives the absolute essence of Aeschylus but also adds to the original masterpiece. Hughes' language is so rich and vivid and multilayered. In addition, it is equally raw and sensual, poetic and "meaty".

Speaking of her actors, Revi wrote:

> They loved [the text]. They were on a very high performance level due to the fact they were speaking the translation of Hughes and they honoured the language.[90]

When Hughes wrote in his letter that 'the whole point is to control' various aspects of oral delivery, he reveals a consciousness of his work as performance and the poet's ability to influence outcome.

The rawness, richness and vividness of Hughes's work, as described by Revi, and her assertion that he somehow captured an essential quality in the ST, explain his continuing appeal for the

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[89] *Cynghanned* ('harmony') is a prescriptive system for Welsh language poetry, involving stress, alliteration and rhyme. Poets such as Manley-Hopkins and Dylan Thomas experimented with system in English verse.
[90] In an e-mail exchange with author of this thesis, autumn 2012.

modern theatre, but how much longer can this continue? Michael Walton, whose critique of Murray has already been cited, believes that a translation has a limited practical shelf-life, even if written in a vernacular style. In *Agamemnon in Performance* he writes:

> Straight equivalence in the theatre is especially difficult to pin down because of the changing shape of the way in which people talk on stage, as well as how they talk off it. A shelf-life of twenty years may be a bonus for the stage translator. When it comes to a new production, few existing translations of classical plays remain unchallenged in a theatre thirstier for originality than for the original. (2005: 190)

Frank McGuinness agrees. In programme notes for his version of Euripides' *Helen* at Shakespeare's Globe in 2009, McGuinness told Heather Niell that 'the Greek is always there; a translation is for now'. It will be interesting to see whether Hughes can beat the odds. The Home Theatre Company in Manchester are using a condensed version of his text in autumn 2015, so he has 'survived' for sixteen years already and his name still adds a *cachet* to a production.

The choices and opinions of current theatre practitioners remind us that any translation of a play is, potentially, a live script but not all will make the transition from page to stage and that those which do may still prove ephemeral, although the poet definitely seems to have the edge over the academic in negotiating some of the theatrical barriers. When we consider the diction of Greek tragedies, 'forensic' is one descriptor of many contending speeches, which a good scholarly edition should capture but, for the modern audience, the original style imparts a certain lack of spontaneity as a character lays bare his/her thoughts with courtroom precision. Aristotle described the speech of ancient poets as having shifted between two formal, oratorical functions, neither of which is to modern taste:

> οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἀρχαῖοι πολιτικῶς ἐποίουν λέγοντας, οἱ δὲ νῦν ῥητορικῶς.
>
> (The earliest poets made people speak politically, present day poets make them speak rhetorically.) (52/53)

As we have seen, where either of these options might have seemed incredible in the ST, as with Cassandra, the more extreme utterances are presented as a *kommos*. Aeschylus employs the same technique for Orestes' and Electra's frenetic incantations at Agamemnon's tomb. Whilst these convey strong emotions, the style is still unnaturally ritualistic. In a world post-Freud, a text must be capable of fulfilling our psychological expectations, whatever other merits it possesses. Indeed, psychological truth, like philosophical truth, is nurtured by directors as a transcendent element, allowing them to relocate ancient drama into contemporary situations. Even if, like Theatre Lab, a company works within a non-naturalistic, physical remit, no theatre practitioner today will be totally immune to the influence of Stanislavski or Strasberg. It is, therefore, entirely credible, that modern translators for the stage will take cognisance of the way actors and directors may use their texts. It is notable that Peter Hall's production of the *Oresteia*, whilst re-introducing certain 'authentic' elements such as the all-male cast and masks, stopped short of role-sharing between three main actors, which would have prevented the sustained creation of character from within, although a letter from Peter Hall to Tony Harrison reveals that Hall originally contemplated that option.[91] When discussing the tone of tragedy, Aristotle recognised that Euripides was particularly good at expressing strong emotions but thought this talent came at the expense of appropriate diction and other desirable qualities:

> καὶ ὁ Εὐριπίδης, εἰ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα μὴ εὖ οἰκονομεῖ, ἀλλὰ τραγικώτατός γε τῶν ποιητῶν φαίνεται.
>
> [...] and Euripides, even if he does not arrange other details well, is at least found the most tragic of poets. (72/73)

We, however, would find it natural if intensely emotional episodes were expressed in a colloquial register, lacking formal rhetorical fluency. The punctuation of both Harrison's and Hughes's text, despite their difference in style, both imply pauses in which characters may collect their thoughts as we watch.

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[91] Notebook 3, 550-1.

So far we have compared and contrasted two versions of the *Oresteia*, but both poets made other forays into Greek literature. In 1975, Harrison dipped into *The Greek Anthology* and translated a selection of Palladas's fatalistic epigrams with a dovetailing of styles between ST and TT which demonstrated Harrison's mastery of concision. The treatment of epigram 72 in Heinemann's parallel text of the anthology will illustrate the strengths of Harrison's technique. Palladas—'the last pagan poet' of the 4th century CE— is terse in the ST:

> Σκηνὴ πᾶς ὁ βίος καὶ παίγνιον· ἢ μάθε παίζειν
> τὴν σπουδὴν μεταθεὶς, ἢ φέρε τὰς ὀδύνας. (1918: 41)

Harrison retains the terseness:

> ```
>   /  x  x  /  x    / x  x  /
> ```
> Life's a performance. Either join in
> ```
> x   / x \ x  /  x  /
> ```
> lightheartedly, or thole the pain. (1975: 14)

This is not a word-for-word translation by any means. Both W.R. Paton, in Heinemann's 1918 edition of the anthology and J.W. Mackail, in an earlier translation, of 1906, give us more literal versions. Paton offers:

> All life is a stage and a play: either learn to play laying your gravity aside, or bear with life's pains. (1918: 41)

Mackail's is very similar in sense and tone:

> All life is a stage and a game: either learn to play it, laying by seriousness, or bear its pains. (1906: 301)

Harrison remains close enough to the ST, however, to transmit its essence whilst adding 20th-century connotations. 'Performance' not only conflates satisfactorily 'σκηνή' and 'παίγνιον' but adds our own layer of meaning about complexity and effort that is carried in such modern expressions as: 'What a performance!' 'Join in' rather than 'μάθε' (learn) emphasises the participatory nature of performing. 'Lightheartedly' reverses the original by accentuating the

positive, rather than telling us what we should not cultivate—τὴν σπουδὴν (earnestness)—but the general tenor of this gnomic epigram shines through from ST to TT.

Technically, certain poetic features emerge that will reappear in later translations. The verse (above) has been scanned without any distorting of oral norms to produce four beats per line. (A regular stress pattern, however, is not a consistent feature of this collection, as our later example will demonstrate.) Harrison's choice of vocabulary is also interesting. The word 'thole' (O. Norse: 'þole'), meaning 'to endure' still has limited currency as a dialect word in northern England. It is related to 'tolerate' from Latin '*tollere*'. (There was an Anglo-Saxon cognate, but Norman French overlaid English more thoroughly in southern areas, purging many dialect forms.) For a poet who enjoys a rugged, consonantal sound, Old Norse has the edge over Old English, giving us 'kirk' rather than 'church', for example, and 'skirt' instead of 'shirt'.

At first sight, Harrison's couplet does not seem to rhyme but 'in' and 'pain' are half-rhymes. Our second, longer example of a Palladas translation, equates to epigram 75 in the Heinemann edition (1918: 42) from which the Greek snippets are taken. It demonstrates Harrison's penchant for rhyming couplets:

> Our nostrils snuffle life from delicate air.
> We turn our faces to the sun's bright glare,
> organs that get their life out of a breeze.
> Give our windpipes just one stiffish squeeze,
> life's gone, we're brought down low to death.
>
> We're puff and bluster cut off with one press,
> utter nothings, sustained by nothingness
> browsing the thin air for our life-breath.

The tone of this rendition is colloquial; 'puff' and 'bluster' have no equivalence in the ST but are amplifications of the Greek 'being nothing' (οὐδὲν ἐόντες), whilst 'snuffle' picks up on the underplayed metaphor of humans as tended, grazing animals implied by 'τρεφόμεσθα' and 'βοσκόμενοι'. Harrison has again found the essence of meaning, with a native lexicon,

choosing the vernacular 'windpipe' for example, over a Latinate term, and adding to the uncompromising imagery with the blunt 'stiffish squeeze', rather than the ST's more matter-of-fact 'squeeze with the hand' (παλάμη σφίγξειεν). In these taut translations, Harrison reveals himself to be sensitive to the nuances of the Greek language whilst finding ample scope for his own creativity.

From Palladas, Harrison borrows the robes of misogyny in which to dress parts of his *Oresteia* chorus. He translates epigram 381 thus:

> women all
> cause rue
>
> but can be nice
> on occasional
>
> moments two
> to be precise
>
> in bed
>
> & dead (1975: 33)

His chorus of Choephori sing:

> Male boasting, pride in being HE
> only one thing's got that beat
> bursting the bedbond bestially
> the female bitch on heat! (69-70)

What follows is a catalogue of female treachery, the contents roughly in accord with Aeschylus, but the tone of voice is an echo of Palladas.

Harrison's translations of Palladas preceded his *Oresteia* by six years; *Hecuba*, for the Royal Shakespeare Company, came nearly a quarter of a century after his work for Sir Peter Hall. Certain stylistic threads can be traced through the three works but there are also clear differences. Harrison has evolved his work for a different company, one that specialised in the

delivery of drama in regular verse and would not be using masks. Polydorus's ghost opens the play with expansive, five-beat lines. The extraneous syllables that move the poetry towards the norms of natural speech are omitted from his prologue. Line 3 is iambic pentameter:

<pre>
  x   /   /   x   / x / x   /
Those dark cells where all the dead are held
 x /   \   /   x   / x   /   x   /
behind gloom's gates where Hades scorns the gods
 x   /   x /   x   /   x   /   x   /
and skulks apart. This ghost here's come from there. (2005: 1)[92]
</pre>

The extract is rich in deixis, a feature we will discuss in Chapter 2, in respect of the Ulster vernacular and which seems to be inherent to oral poetry for clarifying the action.

In *Hecuba*, the half-rhymes present in Palladas—in/pain—become a strong feature. Polyxena's speech (below) demonstrates these rhymes with a return to the four-beat line. Instead of couplets, Harrison employs a more complex scheme which can be represented as *abbacc*:

<pre>
  / x   /   x   /   x   /
No one's life's been more ill-starred!
  /   x   / x   /   x   /
No one's suffered more than you,
  / x / x   /   x   /
no one, no one, now come new
 x / x / x   / x   /
atrocities some demon's stirred.

  x   /   x   /   x   /   x   /
No more, no more, now frail and old
  x /   x / x   / x   /
can you lean on your loving child. (8)
</pre>

The style is spare; again, there are no extra syllables. Each line clearly shows either a trochaic or an iambic rhythm, the former being more emphatic in delivery. As with epigram 75 (above, 139), terseness in delivery is encouraged through contractions, such as: 'No one's life's [...]'.

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[92] All quotations come from Faber and Faber 2005 edition. Page references only will be given for further extracts.

The four-beat line is less in evidence in *Hecuba* as a whole than in the *Oresteia* but is still a significant feature and is sometimes metrically precise.

After Polymestor's blinding, Harrison provides him with the shorter lines that reflected Cassandra's anguish in *Agamemnon*. The extract quoted below also contains a good deal of the familiar alliteration and the consonantal monosyllables that can lead to an emphatic pulse in a line, with or without a musical score. What is different is the lack of the disjointed punctuation, dashes and double-spaced gaps between words. Here, the pauses are at the actor's discretion rather than being implied by Harrison:

> Sssh! I can sense them
> the women tiptoeing about.
> How can I leap on the
> gorge blood, crunch bone,
> a beast's blood-glut.
> Revenge! Revenge!
> outrage for outrage,
> mangling for mangling.
>
> Now where am I off to?
> Abandoning my children
> to the mercy of these maniacs,
> maenads, berserk bacchantes,
> tearing their bodies apart,
> butchered, dismembered,
> a blood-drunk banquet
> slung out on the crags for the dogs. (41)

The stichomythic sections in *Hecuba* do not all have the consistent, unifying rhyme scheme of Harrison's *Oresteia*. Some exchanges are characterised by half-rhymes, some by none at all. As a general observation: the tighter the rhyme, the more regular the metre. In this exchange between Agamemnon and Hecuba, the shared rhymes and rhythms reflect mutual respect; it is a genuine quest for information, a mixture of true and half-rhymes:

>   x   /   x   / x   /   x   /   x   /
> HEC: Yes, sent with Trojan gold that sealed his doom.
>   x   / x   /   x   /   x   /   x   /
> AG: How did he meet his downfall? And by whom?

```
        x  x   /   x    /  x   /   x   /   x    /
HEC: It was by his Thracian host that he was killed.
        /   x    x   /  x   /     x     /   x   /
AG: Savage! He did the deed through lust for gold?  (29)
```

When Hecuba is talking to Polymestor, however, there is no unity of purpose; there is lying,
dissembling and dramatic irony. Rhyme is dispensed with, and rhythm moves towards the
irregularity of speech norms. Harrison is using structure to signal relationships:

```
        x   /   x    \    x  x   /   x   /   x   /
POL: Is this something that you want your son to know?
        /    \     /      x    /   x  /  x   /
HEC: Yes, through you.  You're someone I can trust.
        x   /  x  x   /   x    /  x   \   x    /
POL: But why do we need the presence of my sons?
        x   / x   /   x    /  x  /    \    /
HEC: It's better they know too, in case you die.
        x     /    x   /    x   /   x   x   /   \
POL: You're right, of course.  Your plan shows some forethought.  (38)
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Harrison's corpus abounds in poetic constraints: a regular pulse, a set number of beats per line,
rhyme or half-rhyme. In conversation with Edith Hall in 2009, he likened these constraints to a
corset that not only controls but shapes. Harrison agrees with Robert Frost, who decried 'free'
verse dismissively in a WQED broadcast back in the 1950s: 'I'd just as soon play tennis with
the net down'.[93] Edith Hall recalls in that conversation how Harrison wished Hughes truer to
the style of Racine in translating *Phèdre*, despite the critical acclaim received by Hughes's
version at the National Theatre in 2009.[94] In *Phaedra Britannica*, Harrison writes throughout in
rhyming pentameter, many lines having a regular iambic beat:

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  x   /   x   / x   /   x    /   x   /
if you're my oldest friend you ought to know
  x   / x   / x  / x  /   x   /
I'd never let myself descend so low.
  x   / x   /  x  / x  /  \   /
still at the breast I started to drink in
   x    /  x  / x   /   x   / x   /
chaste principles and pride and discipline.  (1976: 4)
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[93] Reported in *Newsweek*, 30/01/1956, p.56.

[94] Another oral anecdote to the author of this thesis. The production starred Helen Mirren and was one of the first streamed live to cinemas.

Harrison employs a defined poetic metre time and again as a framework for his creativity and to provide the theatricality he perceives as lacking in other modern verse dramas.

Hughes's *Alcestis* was published in the same year as his *Oresteia*, 1999. It was completed only months before the poet's death, commissioned and premiered by Northern Broadside. Although this company has featured dialect scripts and despite Hughes's insistence on his Calder Valley voice, his translation of *Alcestis* does not strike us as peculiar to Yorkshire unless one applies a crude stereotype of the county's proverbial bluntness. Since death intervened soon after he completed these works, we have no later translations by Hughes through which to gauge whether his spare style was now set in stone, but the short time span in which he worked on his two translation of Greek tragedy has produced more homogeneity than we find in Harrison. The subject matter of *Alcestis* must have held a poignant appeal for Hughes but we should not put his choice of Greek texts down entirely to the traumas of his personal life.

Hughes's mentor, Eliot, also chose the *Oresteia* and *Alcestis* as the starting point for two of his own verse dramas. Seldom, since Shakespeare's: '*Exit, pursued by a bear*', can there have been a more startling stage direction than that in *The Family Reunion* when Harry's summons to 'Come out' produces the following, in a quintessential upper middle class drawing room: '*The curtains part, revealing the Eumenides in the window embrasure*' (1939: 57). For Eliot too, there were personal resonances in the Alcestis story, which he dealt with in *The Cocktail Party*, premiered roughly a decade after he had committed his first wife to a mental hospital and just months after her death. The mystery guest, later identified as some kind of psychiatric *deus ex machina* called Harcourt-Reilly, specialises in nervous disorders. The wife, Lavinia, disappeared not to Hades but to a sanatorium. The Alcestis story appears to attract men with unresolved guilt about the treatment of their wives and Hughes's version speaks of this guilt. Admetus' grief is raw, as if drawn from Hughes's personal experience, and regret for his loss sets in quickly. Herakles offers a gnomic platitude: 'Losing the loved one is the worst grief' but

the agonised reply: 'Losing her—I have lost everything' (1998: 76)[95] is a cry from the heart,
more than capturing in 20[th]-century English the emotion of the ST:

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ: τὸ γὰρ φιλῆσαι τὸν θανόντ' ἄγει δάκρυ.
ΑΔΜΗΤΟΣ: ἀπώλεσέν με κᾆτι μᾶλλον ἢ λέγω –

(Her: 'Yes, your love for the departed stirs up your tears.'
Ad: 'Her death has destroyed me, even more than I can say') (1081-2).[96]

With his statement of absolute loss, Hughes intensifies Admetus' grief. The play offers a
vehicle for exploring bereavement and Hughes has adapted it to his own ends. Quite tellingly,
he omits from his version Admetus' existential discovery 'τί γὰρ ἀνδρὶ κακὸν μεῖζον ἁμαρτεῖν/
πιστῆς ἀλόχου;' (879-80, 'What greater sorrow can a man have than the loss of his faithful
wife? '), dealing less in philosophy than the workings of memory. We are offered no great
technical surprises but Hughes frequently uses the line structure to underpin meaning,
separating out units of thoughts for close attention, the line endings acting as punctuation, even
when they are not end-stopped, to create pauses for each item to be acknowledged. Admetus
exclaims the following:

At last I understand what that means.
How can I enter my own house?
Who will greet me there?
Her empty chair. The imprint of her body
On our bed. And the children
Crying for their mother. (69)

In the listing of memory triggers, Hughes foregrounds some through enjambment, which builds
in slight pauses as the eye moves between noun phrase and the poignant additional information:
'The imprint of her body—on our bed', for example. An actor can replicate these brief hiatuses
to dramatic effect and thus expose the anatomy of grief more effectively to a modern audience
than the ST, in which a roughly equivalent section uses conventional tragic exclamation and
rhetorical questions:

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[95] All quotations from the Hughes' version come from 1998 edition. Page references only will be cited with future extracts.
[96] Line references are from Loeb edition (revised 2001), translated by David Kovacs. The English is given when shades of meaning
are relevant to discussion.

ἰώ,
στυγναὶ πρόσοδοι, στυγναί δ' ὄψεις
χήρων μελάθρων.
ἰώ μοί μοι, αἰαῖ <αἰαῖ>.
ποῖ βῶ; ποῖ στῶ; τί λέγω; τί δὲ μή;
πῶς ἂν ὀλοίμην; (861-4)

(Oh, how hateful the approach, how hateful the
sight of this bereaved house! Ah, woe is me!
Where shall I go, where stay? What shall I say,
what conceal? I wish I could die!)

In the ST, Admetus has plans to alleviate his grief. He makes a positive decision, which alludes

to the Pygmalion story:

σοφῇ δὲ χειρὶ τεκτόνων δέμας τὸ σὸν
εἰκασθὲν ἐν λέκτροισιν ἐκταθήσεται [...] (348-9)

(An image of you shaped by the hand of skilled
craftsmen shall be laid out in my bed.)

Hughes rejects this option:

What shall I do,
Have some sculptor make a model of you?
Stretch out with it, on our bed,
Call it Alcestis, whisper to it?
Tell it all I would have told you?
Embrace it—horrible!—stroke it!
Knowing it can never be you.
Horrible! (22)

In *Tales from Ovid*, Hughes's unease at Pygmalion is obvious. He describes him as living 'in

the solitary confinement of a phobia' (1997: 145). The statue is 'his ivory obsession' (149). He

behaves in the very way that Admetus rejects as horrible, because Pygmalion is not seeking for

a real woman—mother of his children and mistress of his palace—but for an idealised sex toy:

He laid her on his couch,
Bedded her in pillows
And soft sumptuous weaves of Tyrian purple
As if she might delight in the luxury.

> Then, lying beside her, he embraced her
> And whispered in her ear every endearment. (1997: 148)

The epilogue poems to *Gaudete* suggest that a mortuary experience may have rendered the idea of a marble-cold corpse-bride repellent to Hughes as a solution:

> I turned
> I bowed
> In the morgue I kissed
> Your temple's refrigerated glazed
> As rained-on graveyard marble, my
> Lips queasy [...] (1977: 186)

The tragically romantic quest of Orpheus is offered up as another role model in the *Alcestis* ST, although Admetus imagines he would succeed. Hughes dismisses the Orpheus myth in the same term as Pygmalion: 'horrible'. His Admetus stresses Orpheus's failure:

> A glance. Think of it. Only a backward glance.
> And he had done what he should never have done.
> At the crucial moment.
> He lost her.
> Horrible! (23)

The number of short, frequently minor, sentences reflects the broken thoughts of the grief-stricken husband faced with his own failure to redeem the situation.

The Orpheus story, although rejected here, seems to have resonated with Hughes elsewhere. In *Howls and Whispers* (1998) Hughes reflects on his life with Sylvia Plath. Neither the years, nor a peaceable second marriage has lessened the pain. In 'The Offers' he writes of encounters with Plath's ghost in humdrum situations, where she always eludes him:

> Only two months dead
> And there you were suddenly back within reach,
> I got on the Northern Line at Leicester Square
> And sat down and there you were.
> And there the dream started that was no dream.
>
> Chalk Farm came. I got up. You stayed.

It was the testing moment.

[...] You came behind me
(At my helpless moment, as I lowered
A testing foot into the running bath)
And spoke—peremptory, as a familiar voice
Will startle out of a river's uproar, urgent,
Close: 'This is the last. This one. This time
Don't fail me.'

The potential for word-play between 'Offers' and Orpheus is unlikely to be coincidental, especially when Hughes describes himself as 'a hostage stopped/ In the land of the dead'. Like Orpheus, he fails to regain his dead wife. Plath had her own obsession with resurrection. In one of her most notorious poems, 'Lady Lazarus', she writes about suicide attempts and regrets each return to the world of the living:

[...] And I a smiling woman.
I am only thirty.
And like the cat I have nine times to die. [...]

It's easy enough to do it in a cell.
It's easy enough to do it and stay put.
It's the theatrical

Comeback in broad day
To the same place, the same face, the same brute
Amused shout:

'A miracle!'
That knocks me out. (1968/2001: 9-10)

Alcestis demonstrates Hughes's grip on stagecraft. His Death does not have stichomythic parity with Apollo, as in the ST, but is more powerful and dominates the scene, no doubt reflecting Hughes's preoccupation—not only for his lost women but his own advancing years. The actor's role as Heracles is enhanced, with the comic re-enactment of his labours and the introduction of Prometheus and the vulture. Once again, Hughes envisages a physical on-stage response to his verse with an inner eye that imagines his plays as live and robust theatre.

Although in terms of poetic structure and style, Hughes's *Alcestis* does not offer us any clear distinction from his *Oresteia*, he imbues a play that we would not consider tragic by modern definitions, with a dark undercurrent. When Apollo boasts of killing 'electro-technocrats' whose lightening destroyed his son, there is an atypical and world-weary nod towards modernity (2). Hughes's Death utters a speech that seems to negate all joy in life:

> Don't you know how paltry and precarious
> Life is? I am not a god.
> I am the magnet of the cosmos.
> What you call death
> Is simply my natural power,
> The pull of my gravity. And life
> Is a brief weightlessness—an aberration
> From the status quo—which is me. (5-6)

Hughes in part transmits Euripides' own cynicism with regard to the human condition but we also suspect that the piece reflects much unresolved personal bitterness. Nonetheless, beyond the ST's happy outcome, Hughes ends on a surprisingly positive note, nowhere present in the original. The final line of the play, uttered by a section of the chorus is: 'Let this give man hope'.

From our analysis of Harrison and Hughes, we can draw several conclusions about their success as translators for the theatre. Both generally imbue their poetry with dramatic qualities which transfer well into performance. They enjoy the creation of character and voice, whether a hawk or a crusty pagan poet. Freed from the trammels of pure scholarship, both can reconfigure content to reflect modern concerns. Harrison uses linguistic artifice and metre to foreground issues such as gender politics, perceived in the ST. He embraces the original and creates a synthesis of contemporary sensitivities and exotic 'otherness' in his translations, omitting those references that might jar with his concept. Hughes is more ruthless with his poetic scalpel and excises the alien, to create spare, timeless pieces. While working on *Eumenides*, Harrison read an essay by Donald (D.S.) Carne-Ross, containing the following encouraging observation:

> Only a poet can translate poetry. A poet perhaps in some way *manqué,* but still a poet. It is plain impertinence for a man who has written no good verse of his own to offer the public a verse translation of a great poet. (Notebook 4, 917-947)[97]

We might question 'only' or the sharp censure of 'plain impertinence', but our examination of two poets in action supports the premise that they come to a translation task with certain sensitivities that pure scholarship lacks.

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[97] Headed 'Aeschylus in Translation', probably from *Classics and Translation*.

That strain again; it had a dying fall.
O, it came o'er my ear, like the sweet sound
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing, and giving odour!
(*Twelfth Night*: William Shakespeare)

Metre and stress together offer one method of describing the rhythm of verse. The notion of cadence (Latin: *cadentia*, 'a falling') is another, evolving from music, in which it may be defined as a harmonic or rhythmic configuration that creates a sense of closure or completion. The harmonic cadence, which consists of a progression of chords, resolving a musical phrase, has no literary analogy. The rhythmic cadence, however, in which some kind of anticipated pattern signals a resolution, can clearly be compared to the spoken word and sentence structure, analogous, in some ways, to punctuation: a weak cadence, indicating a brief pause, is like a comma, whereas a strong cadence, signalling the end of the musical 'sentence' represents a full stop. Nowadays, as well as referring to the flow of music or language, cadence also applies to the rise and fall of the human voice—its musicality—which is a crucial point in any discussion of the dramatic realisation of texts.

Every language community develops its own cadence. Those that we find pleasing to the ear might be described as 'lilting'. For the ancient Greeks, musicality was, from all the available evidence, an integral part of oral poetry. In the education of boys, μουσική meant more than our modern, specialised use of the word 'music'; it incorporated the whole sphere of the Muses. The oldest surviving grammar, τέχνη γραμματική, attributed to Dionysius Thrax (170-90 BCE) but probably a composite work, describes the art of reading aloud in section II. It is reproduced here from the translation by Alan Kemp in his article for *Historiographia Linguistica*:

> By reading is meant the faultless pronunciation of the works of poets or prose writers. When reading, proper attention must be given to style of delivery, to the prosodic features, and to the correct division of the utterance. From the style of delivery we perceive the true value of the piece, from the prosodic features the art of its construction, and from correct division, the overall sense. So that we may read

tragedy in a heroic style, comedy in a style suited to everyday life, elegy in plaintive tones, epic vigorously, lyric harmoniously, and laments in a subdued and mournful way. Unless these rules are carefully observed, the true value of the poetry is lost, and the reader's whole approach becomes subject to ridicule. (1986: 346-7)

The collaboration ascribed to Dionysius Thrax may not have been consistently transmitted down the centuries. Raphael Dammer, writing on Diomedes Grammaticus's study of the τέχνη γραμματική from the late 4th century BCE, comments that quotations taken from the work by another ancient writer, Apollonius Dyskolos, two centuries earlier, differed markedly from our current version (2001: 30-1).[98] Nonetheless, Edith Hall selects an intriguing morsel of Diomedes' advice in footnote 37 to her essay mentioned previously (above, 126). It is taken from a Leipzig publication, *Grammatici Graeci* (1878-1910) in which Diomedes comments on a section of Dionysius's grammar with the edict: *dei meta melous anagignôskein* (Hall's transliteration). The import of this statement lies in the Greek verb (δεῖ) which implies necessity. The need for a musical accompaniment to some forms of Greek poetry, which includes the dramatic chorus, is so compelling that any tune, in the absence of a known melody, is better than no melody at all.

Although this strikes us as highly prescriptive, Dionysius and his followers are not laying down their own rules but recording and commenting upon actual practice. For the next few centuries, volumes of grammar were conservative repositories of traditional wisdom. The extent of this conservatism is covered by W.B. Stanford in: *Greek Views on Euphony*, mentioned in the previous chapter (above, 105):

> Under the rhetoricians of Isocrates's era, and for seven hundred years later, virtuosity in euphonious speech, both in composition and delivery, reached a degree of perfection probably never reached before or afterwards. Indeed a speech in the best Isocratean style might be compared with a composition by Bach for formal perfection. (1943: 18)

Isocrates lived from 436-338 BCE. His influence thus triumphed over Romanization and the rise of Christianity as alternative cultural threads. It is hard to imagine, in our rapidly changing

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[98] 'Allerdings zeigen Zitate, die Apollonios Dyskolos ihr entnahm - Zitate, die sie in ihrer heutigen Fassung nicht enthält -, daß sie sich von der τέχνη in ihrer heutigen Form noch merklich unterschieden haben wird.'

world, that any practice could achieve this level of continuity and entrenchment, but it seems to have been the case in antiquity. Stanford follows up this statement with a comment on one of the *scholia* from Aristophanes, recounting the clamour from the audience when an incompetent actor misconstrued a single accent in his delivery. The story is a reference to that famous theatrical solecism known as *Hegelochus's Weasel* (or, possibly, polecat) which occurred during a performance of Euripides' *Orestes*. The incident is almost certainly true, being referred to by Aristophanes in *Frogs*, written three years after the actor's lapse:

> ἔξεστί θ᾽ ὥσπερ Ἡγέλοχος ἡμῖν λέγειν·
> "ἐκ κυμάτων γὰρ αὖθις αὖ γαλῆν ὁρῶ." (304-5)

This is cleverly translated by Henderson for Loeb as:

> [...] and we can say with Hegelochus, "After the storm how weasily we sail." (2002: 67)

No humour would accrue to this joke if Aristophanes' audience was not entirely *au fait* with the reference. We can infer from the persistence of this anecdote just how attuned the ancient ear must have been to the appropriate rise and fall of Greek verse and how outraged at any transgression of the rules.

Metre and cadence should not be considered mutually exclusive alternatives. Rather, metre is one aspect of cadence when considering poetry. As Aristotle implies in *The Poetics*, ancient prosody was an established method for constructing verse, which included Greek tragedy, based on recognised arrangements of metrical 'feet', often specific to a genre.[99] For the spoken elements of drama, ideally, this construction imitated, to a great extent, the natural speech rhythms, or cadence, of a language community. For modern theatre audiences, as a general rule, there are similar expectations of 'naturalness' in speech. Leaving aside the extreme *avant-garde*, however surreal a plot or stylised a particular presentation, we hope to hear dialogue with the recognisable cadence of our native tongue. Indeed, *Theatre of the Absurd* works precisely because it juxtaposes bizarre situations with often banal, everyday dialogue. When art holds her mirror up to nature, it is not just what we see but also what we hear that convinces us of

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[99] See the opening chapter, for example, or section 24.

authenticity. Cadence, as a way of describing our patterning of human speech, has the edge over metre in one important respect: it can be applied to prose, and to poetry that does not conform to regular English rhythms, thus making it a useful tool in the analysis of dramatic works by two Irish poets and translators: Tom Paulin and Seamus Heaney.

The 'dying fall' mentioned by Shakespeare in the opening speech from *Twelfth Night*, which heads this chapter, is partly a play on words, since the Elizabethans and Jacobeans metaphorically connected sex with death, but it is also an early comment on cadence. In the English language, a 'dying fall' has traditionally been associated with unstressed 'feminine' endings, rather than the robust 'masculine' alternative. This has nothing to do with the assignment of gender, natural or otherwise, to nouns. It has everything to do with a linguistic sexism that saw the feminine as soft and fading, compared to masculine strength. Gender politics, whilst important, are not a part of this discussion except to point out that, so far, no replacement for the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' endings has yet gained currency. The idea of a dying fall as melancholic was being played with by Eliot as late as the 20[th] century. In 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', Prufrock says:

> I know the voices dying with a dying fall
> Beneath the music from a farther room. (1969/2004: 14)

Whether cadence can create a distinct voice, mood or stance forms part of the following exploration of Heaney and Paulin, whose Ulster vernacular tends to avoid the 'dying' cadence, for reasons we shall discover. Their decision to write in a local dialect, intended for a local accent, arises from the politics of the day but also has theatrical implications. Any move towards the demotic brings a text closer to a certain audience's linguistic reality whilst distancing it from another. Thus, for some, vernacular writing may naturalise a text whereas for others, it will alienate. Heaney and Paulin had a specific context for their translations and took options that those translating for the academic community would avoid. We shall explore the effects of those options on our appreciation of the TTs as both literary works and performance

opportunities. Although other works by these two poets will form part of the discussion, close analysis will compare and contrast their treatment of Sophocles' *Antigone*.

When writing about his 2010 translation of *Medea* on *theartsdesk.com*, Paulin is specific about cadence, and the ideas he has drawn from the American poet, Robert Frost (1874-1963), renowned for his mastery of American colloquial speech:

> I aimed at doing my version for what Robert Frost calls "sentence-sound". Frost says that a sentence is "a sound in itself on which other sounds called words may be strung". His poetry is rich in such vernacular, spoken sounds [...][100]

Paulin prefers the word 'vernacular' to 'dialect' as he explains in his editor's introduction to *The Faber Book of Vernacular Verse*:

> Until recently, many of the poets I have included in this anthology would have been termed 'dialect' poets—a term which works to marginalise regional speech and privilege Standard English. *Vernacular* is a term used in sociolinguistics to refer to 'the indigenous language or dialect of a speech community, e.g. the vernacular of Liverpool, Berkshire, Jamaica etc.' The problem with the term *dialect* is that it has a certain archaic, quaint, over-baked remoteness that really belongs in the dead fragrance of a folk-museum. (1990: xi)

For Paulin, cadence isn't just the prerogative of non-standard vernacular. He returns to the subject in 'A Note on Versification' in the preface to the *Medea* text which was written in the 'privileged' Standard English:

> In doing my version of *Medea*, I concentrated on trying to hear how the words might sound as they were spoken in passion. I hope I have succeeded in this. (2010: page unnumbered)

Robert Frost has several musings and jottings for his classes on the subject of sentence sound, preserved in numerous notebooks (edited by Robert Faggen in 2006), and based on the somewhat metaphysical idea quoted by Paulin that a sentence has an abstract—almost

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[100] Accessed 14/09/2011.

Platonic—form, which we innately recognise, regardless of lexicon. In other words, there are archetypes of cadence. Frost expresses his idea thus:

> A sentence carries a certain number of words and those have their sound but the sentence has a sound of its own apart from the words which is the sentence proper. It was before words were. It still has existence without the embodiment of words in the cries of our nature. (15r/112)[101]

The most relevant part of Frost's poetic theory for a translator of Greek drama is his insistence that all poetry captures an authentic spoken voice. As he notes later:

> The essential sentence is some tone of voice some one of the tones belonging to a man as its set of songs belongs to a kind of bird [...] That the first function of voice in writing is to pin these tones to the page definitely enough for recognition. (32r/115)

Frost, himself, used metre lightly and never at the expense of a perceived natural cadence. He saw scansion and metre as a weak substitute for innate oral rhythms, which one must inevitably resort to with the classics, because the cadence is lost to us. He wrote:

> Sentences only hold their sounds for those who have heard them. The real intonations of Homer's verse are long since lost. That is why we drop into scansion. (40r/120)

Frost proves an inspiration to those creating poetry where the oral medium is to be the dominant form, the written a secondary record, such as a play text. Paulin was encouraged to translate by an academic colleague, 'Jim' Shapiro. The illustrious James S. Shapiro is an acknowledged Shakespearian scholar from the U.S.A. who was the Samuel Wanamaker Fellow at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in 1998 and who has a keen interest in performance. In an interview for the *FT.com*, Paulin cites Shapiro as complaining that he couldn't speak the lines in translations of Greek tragedy.[102] This was put into rather more technical terms in the later *theartsdesk.com* article (cited above) in which Paulin wrote that Shapiro 'thought most translations of the Greek classics were very stilted and lacked vocal pitch and cadence'.

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[101] Faggen references through recto and verso in Frost's original. These references are given, with page numbers for Faggen's edition. Frost's notes sometimes omit standard punctuation. They are reproduced here as written.

[102] Accessed on 22/01/2010

Shapiro's comment implies, like Frost, that a written sentence captures oral qualities; that a sentence is, in fact, a covert stage direction, embedding information on delivery for both actor and director. Frost claimed as much when he stated:

> Poets have lamented the lack in poetry of any such notation as music has, for suggesting sound. But it is there. The sentence is the notation. The sentence is before all else just that: a notation for suggesting significant tones of voice. With the sentence that doesn't suggest significant tones of voice, poetry has no concern whatever. (3r&4r/640)

Frost was aware of how his theory intertwined with theatrical practice. He explained the complementary functions of actor and writer thus:

> It is one thing to hear the tones in the minds (sic) ear. Another to give them accurately in the mouth. Still another to implicate them in sentences and fasten them printed to the page. The second is the actors (sic) gift. The third is the writers (sic). (2r/645)

Frost's actor is clearly a mimic, hearing a voice 'in the mind's ear' and then reproducing it 'accurately' on stage. We are dealing here with the age-old notion of mimesis, simplified to 'art imitating nature'. For Aristotle, realism in the theatre came with replicating the natural metre of spoken Greek; for Frost, Shapiro and Paulin, other elements are equally significant: tones of voice, vocal pitch and cadence.

Heaney, too, looked to Frost when producing his translations of *Philoctetes* (*The Cure at Troy*) and *Antigone* (*The Burial at Thebes*). His 'Production Notes in No Particular Order' for the former has been included by McDonald and Walton in *Amid Our Troubles*. Heaney was committed to metre in his verse, giving precise instructions for delivery, down to the level of individual lines. The actual example he cites would have a clear trochaic beat:

> The choruses in metre and rhyme should retain a strong metrical definition. In other words, the 'Human beings suffer' lines should be regularly stressed and end-stopped, with an emphasis on their linear and stanzaic articulation. (2002: 179)

Continuing this paragraph, however, he turns from metre to cadence. Heaney sees Frost as a potential voice coach for actors:

> For the speaking of the blank verse, I can think of no better guide than Robert Frost's notion that one obeys 'the sound of sense'. Which does not entail ignoring the footwork of the verse, but asks that the voice walk or dance or pause in step with it. In general, Frost on 'sentence sounds', on 'tones' and so on, would be an admirable mentor for actors approaching verse dialogue. (Of course, the blank verse is susceptible to a far more 'naturalistic' conversational style.)

Heaney explains cadence and metre as two elements 'in step' with each other, not in competition. He is also, like the ST, distinguishing between the lyrical artifice of the chorus, where metre dominates, and the more 'natural' cadence of the remaining dialogue, which can adopt a 'conversational' register. Although he talks of 'the speaking of the blank verse', Heaney's translations in no way offer us a regular iambic pentameter, although five stresses can be detected in some lines. In fact, he turned to a Gaelic lament as a model for Antigone's emotional speeches. As he said in his 2004 Jayne Lecture, published the same year:

> Then suddenly, as if from nowhere, I heard the note. Theme and tune coalesced. What came into my mind, or more precisely, into my ear, were the opening lines of a famous eighteenth-century Irish poem, called in the original "Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire":
>
>> Mo ghrá go daingean tu!
>> Lá dá bhfaca thu
>> Ag ceann tí an mhargaidh,
>> Thug mo shúil aire dhuit,
>> Thug mo chroí taitnearnh duit,
>> D'éalaíos óm charaid leat
>> I bhfad ó bhaile leat. (2004: 423)

In 'The Lament for Art O'Leary', a widow weeps for her unburied warrior husband. Heaney found, in his native literature, 'a metre to make the two sisters [Antigone and Ismene] pulse with a certain ritual force' and also the three-beat line that distinguishes those speeches (424). He chose not just a local form of English as a template but also the long-term indigenous language of the Irish.

Comparing Heaney's and Paulin's version of *Antigone,* it becomes apparent that for both, cadence was bound up with the idiosyncratic rhythms of a dialect, both its structure and its pronunciation.   In his production notes, Heaney was clear about his intentions on the matter of accent:

> The first echo is the note to which the writing is tuned. I wanted to have verse that would sound natural if spoken in a Northern Ireland accent. (2002: 174)[103]

Heaney, in choosing the word 'tuned', acknowledges the link between human speech and musicality or cadence. His specifying of a 'Northern Ireland accent' rather than a broader Irish brogue is interesting; *The Burial at Thebes* was commissioned to mark the centenary of the Abbey Theatre, in Dublin. It was not premiered in Ulster, but south of the border, whereas Paulin's version of Antigone first played in Derry for the Field Day Theatre Company. The original cast list of *The Riot Act*, published with the play text, shows that actors with Irish roots performed to an audience that would have used the Ulster vernacular. Heaney's *The Cure at Troy*, conceived to show the intransigence of those involved in the peace process, as we shall discuss further, was also for Field Day. Here, the Ulster cadence emphasises Heaney's perceived parallel.

The Field Day Theatre Company sought to confront the 'troubles' in its work obliquely, instead of head on, using analogy rather than direct reference, in similar fashion to classical Greece. Both Heaney and Paulin were appointed to its small board of directors in 1981. Marilynn Richtarik, whose book: *Acting Between the Lines—The Field Day Theatre Company and Irish Cultural Politics 1980-1984* reviews the early years of the organisation, writes in her introduction:

> Field Day, a Northern Irish artistic and critical collective, has over the fourteen years of its existence come to be identified with a certain philosophical approach to the study of Irish literature and culture. This analysis centres on the idea of Ireland as a post-colonial country and of the violence in Northern Ireland as a lingering effect of colonial rule. (1993: 3)

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[103] *Amid Our Troubles.*

Richtarik quotes part of an interview with Heaney about the company's first board meeting, conducted by Mary Holland for her *The Observer* magazine article: 'A Field Day for Irish Theatre'.[104] Heaney said:

> We believed we could build something of value, a space in which we would try to redefine what being Irish meant in the context of what has happened in the North over the past 20 years, the relationship of Irish nationalism and culture. We were very conscious that we wanted to be quite independent of the British influence exercised through Belfast and the equally strong cultural hegemony of Dublin. (68)

Later, when reviewing Brian Friel's *The Communication Cord* which was dedicated to Paulin, Richtarik includes an extract of Paulin's programme notes, which further defines the company's stance:

> Like Bostonian patriots, the members of Field Day are separatists, but separatists who also hunger for Europe [...] We hope that there is now in this island the possibility of a shared *civilitas* and conscience which can be given coherent form. (136)

Paulin's contribution to *Amid Our Troubles* mentions the Northern Ireland voice and, as part of the Field Day brief, he produced one of the company's political pamphlets specifically on Ulster English: *A New Look at the Language Question*. In it, Paulin takes Noah Webster's 1780 dictionary as a revolutionary act, seeking to define American English as a distinctive form and writes of the 'crisis of a nation without its "own" language'. The pamphlet sets out colonial attitudes and the denial of formal recognition for the Ulster dialect:

> Traditionally, a majority of Unionist protestants have regarded the Irish language as belonging exclusively to Irish catholic culture[...]
>
> Spoken Irish English exists in a number of provincial and local forms, but because no scholar has as yet compiled *A Dictionary of Irish English* many words are literally homeless. They live the in careless richness of speech, but they rarely appear in print. When they do, many readers are unable to understand them and have no dictionary where they can discover their meaning. The language therefore lives freely and

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[104] 30/10/88, page 65

spontaneously as speech, but it lacks any institutional existence and so is impoverished as a literary medium.' (1983: 12-13)

Paulin needs the Ulster dialect to be inclusive, rather than sectarian, to justify its use by both Antigone and Creon, although he claims to have drawn on Douglas Hurd for the latter, who was not an Ulsterman. This followed a famous speech in which Hurd, like Creon, claimed to be 'listening'. Paulin wrote:

> I imagined Creon as a Northern Irish Secretary, and had him give a press conference where he used the usual cliché about doing a great deal of listening. I wanted Creon to be a kind of puritan gangster, a megalomaniac who spoke alternately in an English public school voice and a deep menacing Ulster growl. I used the Ulster vernacular as far as I could [...] (2002:167)

It seems, however, that this was a later thought. In *Field Day and the Translation of Irish Identities—Performing Contradictions*, Aidan O'Malley has an extract of a letter from Paulin to Friel, dated 23/02/1984, written whilst composing *The Riot Act*. Paulin's imagined Creon began life somewhat more whimsically:

> Antigone is obviously Bernadette [Devlin], but with a Paisley tone at times [...] More and more I'd want to give Creon, not just a De Valera touch, but something Episcopal, papal—a cap with Masonic symbols on it. (2011: 97)

What this demonstrates, however, is that Paulin sees the Ulster vernacular as crossing political and geographical boundaries.

For many English people, especially those living in rural areas or the Home Counties, the Ulster accent sounds strident, an opinion coloured, no doubt, by the fact that, in the late 20[th] century, we heard it on television and radio within the narrow context of Sectarian polemic, speaking the kind of uncompromising political and religious dogma that shapes the Antigone story. Nonetheless, since both Heaney and Paulin have decided that the Ulster setting adds contemporary relevance to Sophocles' play and the local vernacular is clearly an important factor in their translations, we should consider some key elements of the language with fresh eyes.

Hiberno-English, or Ulster English, which sub-divides into several regional variations, is still heavily influenced by Irish Gaelic morphology and syntax. For example, Irish Gaelic, or Erse, retains a distinction between the second person singular (*thú*) and the second person plural (*sibh*), which English used to have and many of us are familiar with, from French. Ulster English has absorbed this distinction, by using the plural 's', creating words that are rendered in writing as *yous*, *yousuns* or even the phonetic *yis*. This plural form has been exported to places such as Liverpool through Irish immigration. Paulin's guard uses the form when he rounds on Creon in *The Riot Act*:

> You know, the likes of you—I never thought till now just how wrong yous are. (1985: 23).

The 'yous' is theoretically respectful, like the French convention that we should *vousvoyer* those of higher status than ourselves, unless the chorus is to be included in the guard's sweep. The sentiment, however, is far from polite. Whatever the guard is feeling, it would be hard to imagine that line uttered in any accent other than Northern Irish.

A second major influence on the Ulster dialect and accent is the English of the lowland Scots. Many of them settled in Northern Ireland from 1606 onwards in what are euphemistically referred to as 'plantations' but which were, in effect, waves of colonisation. This variety of Scottish English had, itself, an organic relationship with Scottish Gaelic. Some imported Scottish vocabulary would be as incomprehensible south of the border as in mainland Britain. When Frost enters the linguistic pool, the cross-pollination reaches still further. He was of Scottish extraction on his mother's side and was also influenced by Yeats's poetry. Yeats, from what is now the Irish Republic and considered the quintessential Irish poet, cannot be ignored in this brief survey of Ireland's linguistic history.

Yeats referenced his heritage extensively, drawing on native myth and Gaelic names. He was influenced by French symbolist poets and the Golden Dawn (below) in a desire for mythic archetypes but was also upholding the richness of Irish culture in the face of England's

encroaching cultural hegemony, not only being imposed on colonies abroad but also threatening to dominate the home nations. Yeats did not, however, strive for an Irish vernacular. He wrote in the sociolect of the educated British speaker of English, as did many Irish writers before him. Yeats's translations of Sophocles' two plays about Oedipus are stately in tone. Nonetheless, whilst using a largely formal register, Yeats was still a moderniser, and this is the quality that Frost picked up and admired. In Yeats's autobiography, quoted by Suheil Bushrui in *Yeats's Verse Plays: The Revisions 1900-1910*, the poet explains his practice:

> As I altered my syntax I altered my intellect. Browning said that he could not write a successful play because interested not in character in action but in action in character. I had begun to get rid of everything that is not, whether in lyric or dramatic poetry, in some sense character in action; a pause in the midst of action, perhaps, but action always its end and theme.

> I planned to write short lyrics or poetic drama where every speech would be short and concentrated, knit by dramatic tension [...] I tried to make the language of poetry coincide with that of passionate, normal speech. (1965: 213)

Yeats regularly rethought his work. His *Oedipus at Colonus* has been edited by Jared Curtis to show how revisions eventually produced the most harmonious and natural word order for Yeats's prose. From his starting point of Richard Jebb, Yeats drafted and re-drafted to remove archaisms and to adopt a demotic lexicon. Below is a section corresponding to lines 9-13 in the ST, beginning with Jebb and following with three versions by Yeats in chronological order.[105] The final draft incorporates ideas thrown up during rehearsals, when written word became spoken. Bushrui commented in his preface that Yeats's own verse plays were 'much revised in light of their effect on the stage' (1965: vii) and Yeats obviously continued in this vein:

> If thou seest any resting-place, whether on profane grounds or by groves of the gods, stay me and set me down, that we may inquire where we are for we stand in need to learn as strangers of denizens [...]

> My child, if there is a resting place near, whether in some field or in a sacred place, stop there and let me sit down there that we may discover where we are, we have to learn from natives of the place [...]

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[105] Line reference from 1994 Loeb edition, translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones.

My child, if there is a resting place near, whether in some field or in a sacred place, bring me to it that we may rest and find out where we are from some native of the place [...]

Bring me, daughter, to some place, to some sacred place perhaps, where we can rest and speak to a passer-by and find out where we are [...] (2008: xxviii-xxix)

Even in Yeats's first attempt, Jebb's markers of lofty diction—'seest', 'profane', 'groves' and 'denizen'—have gone, replaced with a 20th-century vocabulary. In fact, Yeats has edited out any specific mention of gods. Yeats's own slightly pompous 'native(s)' is ultimately replaced with 'passer-by' and his 'discover' with 'find out'. The phrase 'whether in some field', a structure borrowed from Jebb, finally disappears, the uncertainty being covered by 'perhaps'. What is most striking, however, is the rhythm evident in the final draft of the opening phrases of this extract, which have acquired a musical, almost hymn-like quality:

    /　x　　/　x　/　x　　/
    Bring me, daughter, to some place [...]
　　/　x　　/ x　/　　x /
    to some sacred place perhaps,

Yeats removed what seemed dated and convoluted, with Jebb's 'we stand in need to learn [...]' reduced to 'we have to learn [...]' and then to the straightforward language of the day: '[...] find out where we are [...]'. Yeats wrote his final draft in the register of polite conversation.

Occasionally, with the less regal characters, a certain vernacular syntax breaks through. Although Polynices is of royal birth, he is not granted the same verbal status as Oedipus or Theseus. He says:

Fortune will decide, but I pray to God that only good fortune attend you two, for there is not a man in the world but knows that you deserve it [...]' (2008: 119, line 1099 in ST)

The construction 'but knows' is non-standard.

The hymn-like quality of Yeats's final version is unlikely to be pure chance for a writer whose country was steeped in Catholicism. The directness and simplicity of some parts of the final draft are reminiscent of bible stories, apparent when the messenger tells us:

> [...] but presently they ceased to sob and to cry out and there was silence, and then a voice spoke. It summoned Oedipus and the hair stood up upon our heads for it was a God that spoke. It summoned Oedipus not once but many times, "Oedipus! Oedipus!" it said "what keeps you there? [...] (2008: 333, lines 1218-40 in ST)

Yeats's fondness for myth—whether Greek or native—ran in tandem with his membership of The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn which drew on such myths to create modern magical rituals, thus giving them a contemporary resonance. *Oedipus at Colonus* has mystical rites at its core, offering itself to Yeats's interests. Bushrui finds evidence in one of Yeats's essays that despite his modernising style, Yeats found in Greek tragedy an exotic quality which he desired because of its mystical potential:

> We may not find either mood [tragedy or comedy] in its purity, but in mainly tragic art one distinguishes devices to exclude or lessen character, to diminish the power of that daily mood, to cheat or blind its too clear perception. If the real world is not altogether rejected, it is but touched here and there, and into the places we have left empty we summon rhythm, balance, pattern, images that remind us of vast passions, the vagueness of past times, all the chimeras that haunt the edge of trance [...] (1965: 46)

Some have found Yeats's 'belief' in fairies and other folk motifs to be the affectation of an effete ruling class, but Heaney defends the interest as quintessentially Irish. In *Preoccupations*, he answers the accusation of Yeats's eccentric elitism:

> [...] when he was a youngster in Sligo he heard these stories about fairies from the servants in his grandparents' house; and then when, as a young poet, he sought a badge of identity for his own culture, something that would mark it off from the rest of the English-speaking world, he found this distinctive and sympathetic thing in the magical world view of the country people. It was a conscious counter-culture act against the rationalism and materialism of late Victorian England. (1980: 101)

In Ireland, Gaelic place names frequently entrench folk myth and bestow local identity, as Brian Friel explores in *Translations* (the inaugural play of the Field Day Theatre Company, in 1980). He shows a peasant population in 1833 more likely to quote snippets of Homer than to speak English. Hugh, the Hedge School teacher, reports on an encounter with Captain Lancey, a British soldier, in which language differences were discussed:

> Indeed—he [Lancey] voiced some surprise that we did not speak his language. I explained that a few of us did, on occasion—outside the parish of course—and then usually for the purposes of commerce, a use to which his tongue seemed particularly suited [...] and I went on to propose that our own culture and the classical tongues made a happier conjugation. (1981: 23)

James Grieve, who directed the revival of *Translations* in 2014, wrote in his programme notes:

> These Classics reflect the great love of story-telling and mythology—both Greek and Irish—among these people. They understood a huge amount through the culture of story-telling which was the only form of entertainment available to you, when you were living in great poverty and hardship. In our research, we discovered how exciting and transportative these myths could be to the people, myths that took them into a world of gods and goddesses.[106]

English, for the rural population, was the prosaic tongue of colonial rule. Gaelic—and even Greek—conveyed romance and mystery. It is not surprising, therefore, that Yeats was drawn to both Greek myth and to his native tales, even while writing in English. Storytelling, including an imaginative topography, was ingrained in Irish culture, providing a counter-narrative to Anglicisation.

To sum up our brief survey of Ulster English, and English usage within Ireland, we can conclude that the intermingling of Irish, Standard English and Lowland Scots is diffuse, organic and ongoing. Both Scottish and Ulster English dialects retain elements of pre-English in a regional lexicon and a few syntactic roots shared with Gaelic, part of a different branch on the Indo-European tree to English. The vernacular rhythms and cadences impart to poetry the semblance of an authentic spoken voice. Although Friel shows us a peasant community devoid

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[106] Programme notes for performance at Rose Theatre, Kingston-upon-Thames, April 2014, by Sheffield Theatres and English Touring Theatre.

of English as late as 1833, the urban educated class had access to the standard form. Gaelic influences, however, have a long—and continuing— reach, including across the Atlantic. Frost is part of a fascinating circle in which he draws on the supreme Irish poet of his early years, as his own poetic theories are formed, then feeds his ideas on cadence back to a later generation of Irish poets, across the disputed geographical boundary that defined 20[th]-century Irish politics. Both Frost and Yeats might have employed native nouns but both favoured standard syntax, to attract the widest readership.

Why choose, therefore, to employ a non-standard, less comprehensible vernacular? The answer lies in the politics of language across the British Isles and in the Irish Republic. Heaney and Paulin, along with other Irish playwrights involved in Field Day, have made this political connection overt. On the British 'mainland', we may be more familiar with the Welsh resurgence, as part of a nationalist agenda, or minority efforts to resurrect Cornish and Manx as living languages. The term 'Ulster English' should not imply, however, that the Northern Irish speak with a single tongue or that language unites a population. Those of us who listen carefully to current events on radio or television have probably discerned a qualitative difference—and fault-line—between the accent of hard-line Protestants, such as the late Ian Paisley, and of those such as Gerry Adams, who has a long association with the south, both politically and through ancestry. Language in Eire became strongly politicised after the Easter Rising of 1916, as Ireland fought for independence. English was viewed by many as the tongue of the oppressor and there were moves to reinstate Irish Gaelic as the official language. Yeats himself spoke moderately in parliament on this very issue in November 1923, a year after the founding of the Irish Free State:

> I wish to make a very emphatic protest against the histrionics which have crept into the whole Gaelic movement. People pretend to know a thing that they do not know and which they have not the smallest intention of ever learning. It seems to me to be discreditable and undesirable. I hope this will not be taken as being unsympathetic to the Gaelic movement. In the Abbey Theatre, on Monday night, a play in Irish was produced, and the theatre was packed with an enthusiastic audience. They knew Irish and they were able to understand the language of the play, but I think the method of histrionics, and going through a childish performance of something we do not know, and which we do not intend to learn, will ultimately lead to a reaction against the

language. I wish to say that I wish to see the country Irish speaking. (1997/2008: 448)

The final sentiment may be more politically prudent than heartfelt. Yeats showed his ambivalence about the uprising in his poem 'Easter 1916' in which he mentions three times 'a terrible beauty' and exacts revenge on Maud Gonne's husband by labelling him 'a drunken, vainglorious lout' (1997/2008: 85-7). Like all world authors, Yeats was no doubt aware that writing in English rather than Irish Gaelic, gave him widespread accessibility without the intervention of translators. The further one travels into vernacular, the less 'outsiders' can understand without subtitles, a fact that must weigh heavily in our assessment of linguistic choices. James Grieve, in his programme notes for *Translations*, mentioned above (165), gives us Brian Friel's insights on the decline of Gaelic, quoting from the play:

> In writing the play, Friel was heavily influenced by George Steiner and by his argument that language can trap a culture and that several languages have ceased to exist because, as we hear in the play, 'their linguistic contours could no longer match the landscape of fact.' (1981: 52)

On the eve of the premier of *The Riot Act*, Patrick Quilligan of the *Irish Times* interviewed Brian Friel about Field Day's rationale. Language formed part of the conversation that was printed on 18[th] February 1984:

> "We're a Northern accented group," says Friel, "with a strong political element (small p) and that would concern itself with some sense of disaffection most of us would feel at the state of two nations, which is strongly reflected in the work we are doing this year. I would say that all six of us are not at home in Northern Ireland and indeed all six would probably be at home in the 26 counties."[107]

Although writing with an Ulster cadence and for a Northern Irish accent, the playwrights associated with the Field Day Theatre Company have their hearts and spiritual home south of the border, according to Friel, where they perceive the true voice of Ireland lies. The teacher, Hugh, describes Gaelic in romantic terms in *Translations*:

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[107] Accessed through website of Ciaran Hinds, the chorus leader in the original production, 23/11/2012.

> Yes it is a rich language, Lieutenant [Yolland], full of the mythologies of fantasy and hope and self-deception—a syntax opulent with tomorrows. (1981: 51)

Despite Friel's fondness, he is aware that Gaelic had a shrinking constituency, even back in 1833, when the play is set. He hankers, nonetheless, for its cadences that resonate through Irish English. Paulin creates a telling line about language displacement for his chorus leader in *The Riot Act* to open the speech corresponding to lines 582-630 in the ST. The original is a lengthy musing on the fated *Labdacid* house. Paulin condenses it to a summary of ongoing woe down the generations, expunging the exotic allusion which would remove it from contemporary Ulster. It begins:

> Ever since the day I first made this speech—it was in another time and place, and in a different language too—the grief I was speaking of then has grown and multiplied. (1985: 35)

The chorus of the ST, Theban Elders, had no such displacement of place or language. Paulin, in overtly appropriating the story to explore Ireland's political problems, understands how the identity conferred by language plays a part. Heaney, too, wrote of the alienation he felt reciting English poetry at school, even by giants, such as Byron and Keats:

> The literary language, the civilized utterance from the classic canon of English poetry, was a kind of force-feeding. It did not delight us by reflecting our experience; it did not re-echo our own speech in formal and surprising arrangements. (1980: 26)[108]

Returning to the influence of Robert Frost, in his article for *theartsdesk.com* Paulin offers us the first line of 'Mending Wall' to illustrate that Frost's poetry 'is rich in [...] vernacular spoken sounds':

> 'Something there is that doesn't love a wall'.

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[108] *Preoccupations*: 'Mossbawn'

Yet, to most of us, this is a strange choice: the word order is neither vernacular nor formal Standard English. Indeed, this kind of inversion is frequently used to stereotype the alien, as when Yoda says to Obi-Wan Kenobi in the 2005 *Star Wars* instalment, *Revenge of the Sith*: 'To fight this Lord Sidious, strong enough you are not'. The film had a global distribution and Yoda's turn of phrase was designed to strike English speakers worldwide as distinctly non-standard, a fact exploited to amuse us at an alien's expense in Vodaphone advertisements during the 2010s. Similarly, with Frost, for most English speakers, the order: 'There is something' would, almost certainly, seem more natural. What Frost has done by his inversion, however, is to create a regular line of iambic pentameter, in which a major stress will be placed on 'is', including the enhanced effect of a short natural pause, or *caesura*. The line thus has a clear shape, rising to 'is' in pitch before falling slightly towards 'wall', although the upward inflection of non-interrogatory sentences in American English would prevent a marked dying cadence. 'Something' is now foregrounded as the poem's opening word and gains in potency from the position. The next three lines of the poem confirm the mysterious something's status as a powerful destroyer of walls, continuing the metre:

>   x / x / x /   x   / x /
> That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
>   x   / x / x / x / x /
> And spills the upper boulders in the sun,
>   x   /   x / x / x / x /
> And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.

Both Paulin and Heaney use this kind of departure from Standard English sentence structure in their versions of the Antigone story, following Frost's lead in rearranging word order to produce metrical benefits. Consider these lines from the chorus in *The Riot Act*:

>   /   x \ x
> Wild as ever
> \ x   /   x /
> in her speech she is. (1985: 47)

Irish Gaelic is relatively unusual as a Western European language for having a verb-subject-object statement structure, thus moving the subject and main verb to the end of a sentence draws on neither Gaelic nor Standard English. Its cadence is the inverse of dying, having the main emphases at the beginning and end of the sentence and the effect that Paulin has created is one of foregrounding a key pronouncement within a longer sentence: 'wild [...] she is'. The sentence is just one opening unstressed syllable short of an iambic pentameter in Paulin's arrangement and other sentences are rearranged into this metre across two short lines, as when Ismene says:

> x   /   x   / x
> It was our father
>   /   x   /   x   /
> tore his own eyes out.

'It was' does not add to our understanding of the sentence but the inclusion of this typically Irish-English narrative trope creates a richer cadence. Despite Eliot's objections, the rhythm of iambic pentameter appears to be the satisfying default mode of English dramatic poetry.

Both Paulin and Heaney select similar non-standard structures, which transposes the verb to the end of the sentence. In Paulin's *The Riot Act*, Ismene says:

> I'll go die with you;
> respect the dead I will. (1985: 31)

Heaney's Ismene says of the dead:

> Dishonour them I do not. (2005: 6)

Since neither Heaney nor Paulin is locked into non-standard writing but make deliberate choices at certain places in their translations, we should consider what effect these departures have on the pattern of sound and delivery of meaning, an effect that may be subtle but nonetheless significant. To take Paulin's text first, if one analyses the standard word order, using primary and secondary stresses, the main stress falls on the second syllable of 'respect':

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        x  \   x   /   x    \
        I will respect the dead.
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As respect for the dead is a major theme of the ST, this would offer a promising line, in terms of
meaning. What Paulin's word order achieves, however, is a shift of the main emphasis in this
pair of lines onto death, an over-arching factor of tragedy:

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         \   x   /    x     \
        I'll go die with you;
        x  \    x   /   x  \
        respect the dead I will.
```

The cadence of each line is to rise towards the middle, i.e. 'die' and 'dead' before declining
slightly. This parabolic shape is common in English statements but will be less noticeable in the
Ulster dialect than in standard form. Both Ulster and Irish English share features with, for
example, varieties of English from the U.S.A. and Australia, in which rising inflections for
statements as well as questions tend to focus the listener on the final syllable. The linguistic
term is 'high rising terminal' (HRT) or 'Australian interrogative'. There is no clear proof of
how this type of inflection spread or its modern origin. Australian soap operas have certainly
introduced the interrogative style into the speech of young British people. Whatever its
transatlantic or antipodean currency might be, HRT is a long-established feature of the mid-
Ulster and Belfast dialects, rising on the final strong beat of a statement, and thus militating
against a dying cadence.[109]

Paulin also creates a clear assertion of purpose here, the heroic declaration of intent. His non-
standard 'go die' in place of the metrically weaker 'go and die' reinforces Ismene's resolve, in
marked contrast to the ST, which puts the responsibility back onto Antigone. In the Loeb
edition, Hugh Lloyd-Jones finds it difficult to replicate the conciseness of his ST:

> μήτοι, κασιψνήτη, μ' ἀτιμάσῃς τὸ μὴ οὐ
> θανεῖν τε σὺν σοὶ τὸν θανόντα θ' ἁγνίσαι. (*Ant*. 544-5)

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[109] For more information on this topic, consult D.R. Ladd's *Intonational Phonology*.

(Sister, do not so dishonour me as not to let me die with
you and grant the dead man the proper rites!)[110]

Paulin's choice of structure for Ismene echoes Antigone's earlier resolve, which she maintains in both ST and TT. 'But' in Ulster vernacular can often carry the force of 'still' or 'even so':

But I'll go bury him
and die for it, (1985: 12)

Paulin has strengthened Ismene's backbone in his structure; she speaks more like her sister, who defiantly courted death. The greatest influence on the resolute cadence of this sentence, however, beyond word order and syntax, is the predominance of monosyllabic words, creating a precise, punctuated delivery. Paulin makes a virtue of his political instincts and uses his chosen vernacular creatively, to foreground his interpretation of character.

Heaney's line, from an earlier section of the play, works somewhat differently, although it also focuses on Ismene's feelings. Even in Standard English, the emphasis falls on the self-justifying 'not':

\ x / x \ x /
I do not dishonour them.

The sentiment expressed in these five words, regardless of order, is a strong refutation, in response to Antigone's charge that her sister will not be able to face the dead if she should 'dishonour their laws and the gods' law'. The ST makes no such direct accusation; the dead are not mentioned. Indeed, Ismene is invited— in a barbed, but formal, way—to follow her own inclination about divine law,:

[...] σὺ δ' εἰ δοκεῖ
τὰ τῶν θεῶν ἔντιμ' ἀτιμάσασ' ἔχει. (*Ant.* 76-7)

(As for you, if it is your pleasure, dishonour what the
gods honour!)

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[110] Line references for Greek from 1994/1998 Loeb edition. English will only be page-referenced if not spatially parallel.

In the ST, Ismene's response to being accused, in effect, of impiety, is measured and only refers back to 'τὰ τῶν θεῶν ἔντιμα' although the use of ἐγὼ suggests the importance of personal vindication:

ἐγὼ μὲν οὐκ ἄτιμα ποιοῦμαι (*Ant.* 78)

(I am not dishonouring them [...])

Heaney's version places great emphasis on the denial by moving 'not' to the final position in the line. It is an uncomfortable line to scan definitively, and other, equally plausible, solutions exist but what follows is a reasonable suggestion:

    x / x   \ || / \ /
    Dishonour them I do not.

Wherever we impose a cluster of stressed syllables, especially monosyllables, pauses tend to enter the equation when speaking aloud, and words will be delivered like regular drum beats: 'I... do... not' and this is the option selected by a very competent student actor in a 2014 performance of Heaney's text.[111] We are entering into Robert Frost's poetic world, as already cited, in which a sentence is: 'a notation for suggesting significant tones of voice', here the angry rebuttal of Antigone's accusation. The line rises to Ismene's emphatic denial and those dialects with upward inflection tend to strike the listener as assertive in tone. Despite these emphases, however, the utterance is still soft in its sound quality, avoiding harsh gutturals. It is euphonic anger. In using a pared-down, non-standard word order, both Paulin and Heaney create a much more assertive Ismene than Sophocles' presentation might suggest.

Michael Billington, reviewing *The Burial at Thebes*, suggested that Heaney created a distinct poetic diction for each of the main protagonists:

> Heaney, as we know from his version of Philoctetes called The Cure at Troy, is a magnificent translator of Sophocles, and his version of Antigone not only has his customary power and precision but also subtly varies the verse-form for different

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[111] At City Lit, London on 02/11/2014.

characters. Antigone herself speaks in suitably impulsive three-beat lines. The two-man chorus is lent an alliterative, Anglo-Saxon form reminiscent of Heaney's Beowulf. And Creon, as the Theban king, is given iambic pentameters full of Shakespearean echoes: "Two brothers badged red with each other's blood," is his vivid description of Oedipus's warring sons.[112]

This is an interesting observation but one that fails to survive scrutiny. Indeed, Billington's own example only scans as iambic pentameter if one accepts 'badged red' as /x, which strains both the norms of speech and meaning. The very next line also defies such regular scansion, although the following line complies:

>   x / x   / x / x   /   / x   /
> And I, as next of kin to those dead and doomed,
>   x   / x   /   x   /   x   /   x /
> I'm next in line. The throne has come to me. (9)

An accuracy rate of one in three cannot be held to support an argument. What we do observe, however, is that Heaney's main characters have a different voice in public, compared to their private utterances. Alone, impulsive Antigone and cautious Ismene urgently converse in identical short bursts, the three-beat lines Heaney found in 'The Lament for Art O'Leary' (above, 158):

> Antigone:
>   x   / x   / x x /
>   His body... Help me to lift
>   x   /   x   / x   / x
>   And lay your brother's body.
> Ismene:
>   x   / x /   x   / x
>   And bury him, no matter...?
> Antigone:
>   x   x / x   / x   / x
>   Are we sister, sister, brother?
>   x   / x   / x   / x
>   Or traitor, coward, coward?
> Ismene:
>   x   / x x   / x   / x
>   But what about Creon's order? (4)

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[112] *The Guardian*, 07/04/2004, accessed online, 23/05/2012.

Antigone's summary of their family dynamic is a wonderfully pared-down rendering of the ST's:

> τὸν γοῦν ἐμόν, καὶ τὸν σόν, ἢν σὺ μὴ θέλῃς,
> ἀδελφόν· οὐ γὰρ δὴ προδοῦσ᾽ ἁλώσομαι. (45-6)
>
> (Well, I will bury my brother, and yours, if you
> will not; I will not be caught betraying him.)

For Heaney, only the key words—'brother', 'sister', 'traitor', 'coward'—have dramatic significance, but the lines flow, unstilted by the poetic strictures.

When Antigone defends the burial to Creon, before the chorus, it is a more formal, forensic affair and her speech matches her uncle's, to create a stichomythic parity:

> Creon:
>   So you know something no one else in Thebes knows?
> Antigone:
>   They know it too. They're just afraid to say it.
> Creon:
>   But you're so high and mighty you've no qualms.
> Antigone:
>   None. There's no shame in burying a brother. (23)

The contractions show that this is not a fully formal register but the voice of public debate, nonetheless. In this quasi-legal mode, the sisters also converse in longer utterances, even when strong emotions underpin their words:

> Ismene:
>   Antigone, don't rob me of all honour.
>   Let me die with you and act right by the dead.
> Antigone:
>   You can't just pluck your honour off a bush
>   You didn't plant. You forfeited your right.
> Ismene:
>   If Antigone dies, how will I keep on living?
> Antigone:
>   Ask Creon, since you seem so fond of him. (25)

The three lines spoken by Antigone here are not what Billington described as 'suitably impulsive three-beat lines' but faultless iambic pentameter. Heaney has chosen to contrast public and private utterances.

Billington's observation of 'an alliterative, Anglo-Saxon form' for the chorus holds up better to the test. Heaney's own work on *Beowulf* offers him a model, as Billington suggests. Unlike Harrison, Heaney alliterates lightly, just twice per line and irregularly placed:

> Glory be to brightness, to the gleaming sun,
> Shining guardian of our seven gates.
> Burn away the darkness, dawn on Thebes,
> Dazzle the city you have saved from destruction. (8)

Even when the lines are shorter, the alliteration continues:

> Overstep what the city allows,
> Tramp down right or treat the law
> Wilfully, as his own word,
> Then let this wonder of the world remember [...] (17)[113]

Through this stylistic shift, Heaney differentiates the chorus from the rest of the play and gives it a distinctive poetic cachet, drawn from an earlier oral tradition. It is still a public declaration, but ritualised.

Paulin uses vernacular form and lexicon more frequently than Heaney, partly because, like Shakespeare and others before him, he varies register to define class. The chorus of ordinary, 'everyman' citizens can slip out of a formal register, as when their leader says of Creon's approach:

> Now watch the big man
> this bran-new morning:
> our new king Creon's
> wanting some wise words
> from us old ones. (1985:15)

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[113] In Anglo-Saxon verse, long 'a' and 'o' are deemed alliterative, hence 'overstep' with 'allow'.

Paulin provides us with phonetic spelling: 'bran' for 'brand'. Just before this, Polynices' grudge has been described as 'a thin wee grievance', in which Ulster English shows its kinship with Lowland Scots. It is a wonderfully dismissive phrase that demonstrates the effectiveness of vernacular.

The guard offers the most sustained example of low-status register, speaking in prose, like Shakespeare's lower orders. In a similar vein to Dogberry in *Much Ado About Nothing*, he presents his own perceived stupidity to the audience, in which the word 'idiot' is also phonetically rendered for the Ulster voice, along with the dialect 'real' in place of 'really', (favoured in American English too):

[...] you're a complete eejit [...] I'm real sorry about this [...] (1985: 18/19)

The standard: 'I'm really sorry about this' might reasonably be stressed thus:

$$x \quad \backslash \quad x \quad / \, x \quad x \quad \backslash \quad /$$
I'm really sorry about this

The dialect version has a different shape, however, since it becomes almost impossible not to put the major stress on the first syllable of 'real' within the normal cadence of the Ulster accent. This slight but significant difference effectively turns our attention to the authenticity of the guard's feelings:

$$x \quad /x \quad \backslash \quad x \quad x \quad \backslash \quad /$$
I'm real sorry about this [...]

Some of the guard's utterances might be labelled incorrect usage by language snobs, who tend to see the less euphonious (urban) English dialects as working-class aberrations. From their perspective, his protest: 'and I didn't see who done it neither' (1985: 19) commits two solecisms: the double negative and the past participle as finite verb. J. Derrick McClure, writing on Scots, which is entirely comparable, challenges such a response. Describing the natural divergence between Scottish and Standard English over the centuries, he picks out two

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points of difference, relevant for our guard: the loss of distinction between past tense and past participle and the use of double negatives, normal to Scottish English and normal in Anglo-Saxon and Classical Greek (1997: 17). Up to a point, of course, we are meant to classify the guard by his speech but should be wary of identifying 'errors'. The guard's statement is effective, with two natural movements, dividing between see/who. Each half now ends with a strong negative, creating balance and emphasising the denial that runs through this short speech, which includes other negations: 'oho, no', 'it's not right', 'never'. Replacing 'did' with 'done' provides aural variation from the preceding 'didn't'. Sophocles would have recognised this as *polyptoton*.

The guard's vernacular demonstrates the non-standard sentence structure of the Ulster dialect, best delivered in an Ulster accent. The opening of his narration of events relies heavily on deictics as authentication:

OK, it's like this what happened – and it's the whole truth this. (1985: 19)

The second 'this' is semantically gratuitous, adding nothing to meaning, but the repeated demonstrative pronoun dominates the sentence nonetheless. English, like many European languages, distinguishes 'this' (close to me) from 'that' (over there), comparable, for instance, to the French *voici* and *voila*, but 'this' and 'that' can have other functions. Clearly, the guard is not indicating any physical entity but is alerting us to an upcoming part of the narrative as opposed to 'that', which is already known. His focal point is also egocentric: 'this' brings the narrative close to the speaker. The *deixis* ensures that we pay full attention to the guard. Again, Paulin cleverly exploits features of the vernacular to build character—or 'gest'.

In many English versions of *Antigone*, the guard has the potential for this kind of bumbling, comedic presentation, even within the tragic genre, through a clear shift into a colloquial register, much like the porter in *Macbeth*. Paulin's guard is not unique. Potential humour for this character is embedded in the ST, for those familiar with tragic diction and convention. Sophocles' guard is an unwilling messenger who clearly subverts the tragic stereotype, almost

to the point of metatheatre. He comes, not like Hermes, with winged feet and words, but like a snail, dragging out his journey. His opening words to Creon are far from a professional recommendation:

> ἄναξ, ἐρῶ μὲν οὐχ ὅπως τάχους ὕπο
> δύσπνους ἱκάνω κοῦφον ἐξάρας πόδα. (*Ant.* 223-4)
>
> (King, I will not say that I come breathless with running,
> having plied a nimble foot!)

Paulin retains the guard's reluctance, with close reference to the ST, using a vernacular mode, in prose:

> Your honour, I didn't run the whole way here—and if I'm honest with myself I can't say I'm anyways puffed at all—for I have to tell ye I kept stopping and thinking the whole time, and a few times even I turned right round and set off back again [...] (18)

The Irish voice is strong here, from the choice of 'your honour' for ἄναξ, through the lilting phrase 'anyways puffed at all', with its rising cadence, the contracted 'ye' for 'you' and the positioning of 'even', to stress the guard's desperate response to his mission. This placement produces a minor pause, like a comma, whereas that effect is lost in the more standard word order 'I even turned [...] which emphasises the act of turning rather than the man's repeated recourse to disobedience, *in extremis*. The displacement of a word from standard order to the end of a clause is a feature of Ulster English. Later, the guard describes daybreak as 'at the scrake of dawn just', not only using vernacular vocabulary but also moving 'just' to a dominant position (18). Whatever our view of vernacular writing, Paulin certainly creates a linguistically authentic menial.

Another way in which Sophocles' guard is atypical of tragic messengers is his lack of detailed knowledge. Although he does eventually manage to describe the dust-covered corpse, he begins with protestations of ignorance and an account of chaotic behaviour amongst members of the watch:

$$[...] \; \tau\grave{o} \; \gamma\grave{\alpha}\rho$$

$$\pi\rho\tilde{\alpha}\gamma\mu' \; o\ddot{\upsilon}\tau' \; \ddot{\epsilon}\delta\rho\alpha\sigma' \; o\ddot{\upsilon}\tau' \; \epsilon\tilde{\iota}\delta o\nu \; \ddot{o}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma \; \tilde{\eta}\nu \; \dot{o} \; \delta\rho\tilde{\omega}\nu \; [...] \; (238\text{-}9)$$

([...] I did not do the deed, nor did I see who did [...])

$$\lambda\acute{o}\gamma o\iota \; \delta' \; \dot{\epsilon}\nu \; \dot{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\acute{\eta}\lambda o\iota\sigma\iota\nu \; \dot{\epsilon}\rho\rho\acute{o}\theta o\upsilon\nu \; \kappa\alpha\kappa o\acute{\iota},$$

$$\phi\acute{\upsilon}\lambda\alpha\xi \; \dot{\epsilon}\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\chi\omega\nu \; \phi\acute{\upsilon}\lambda\alpha\kappa\alpha, \; \kappa\ddot{\alpha}\nu \; \dot{\epsilon}\gamma\acute{\iota}\gamma\nu\epsilon\tau o$$

$$\pi\lambda\eta\gamma\grave{\eta} \; \tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\tau\tilde{\omega}\sigma', \; o\dot{\upsilon}\delta' \; \dot{o} \; \kappa\omega\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\omega\nu \; \pi\alpha\rho\tilde{\eta}\nu. \; (259\text{-}61)$$

(Hard words were bandied between us, one guard questioning
another, and it might have ended with a blow, and no one was
there to stop it.)

These are not the outpourings of a lucid messenger, bringing the offstage world to life for us, but of a frightened little man, desperate to save his own skin. In the ST, Sophocles achieves a brief episode of humour by the subversion of conventional expectations. Paulin achieves a similar end with the use of a very broad vernacular register.

In sharp contrast to the guard, Paulin's Creon employs formal, Standard English, with compound sentences—his 'English public school voice'—when in oratorical mode:

Such a position brings with it a very, very heavy responsibility, and it is probably true that no-one who has not at some time or other assumed the burdens of public office can ever really reveal the full range of their abilities—or even, we may say, of their professional limitations. (1985: 16)

This statement has to be pieced together carefully, since a number of devices—relative clauses, parenthetical clauses and a change of direction indicated by a dash—interrupt and embellish the basic chain of thought. All are useful rhetorical techniques for argument-building. The tag phrase 'we may say', is partly the royal 'we' but also serves as hegemonic, to implicate the audience in the action—both the onstage audience of the chorus and the rest of us, in the auditorium. It recurs later in the same speech:

Eteocles, we may say, was exemplary, but of Polynices we must, most regrettably, make an example. (1985: 17)

There is some equivalence in the ST, although applied to the other brother and with a singular verb, 'I say': 'Πολυνείκη λέγω' (*Ant.* 198). The hegemonic 'we' is Paulin's interpretation of Creon, a man employing modern rhetoric to spread the burden of responsibility and consequences.

Creon's long sentence under consideration is broken up into more compact sense units, each clause with its own cadence, and there is a natural tendency to stress a key word in these clauses: 'heavy', 'no-one', and 'burden', for example, to borrow a term from prosody, have the trochaic stress pattern common to many two-syllable words in English which invites us to linger on the first syllable. This bestows oratorical weight, obeying Frost's dictum that the written word should 'suggest significant tones of voice'. The first clause fulfils this dictum with some subtlety in terms of revealing character, offering us a vocal contradiction: whilst 'very, very heavy', with its repetition of 'very' and trochaic rhythm produces a tub-thumping beat, suited to public speaking, the repeated employment of both the vowel phoneme and the letter 'v' creates a soft sound, at odds with Creon's vehemence. Added to the almost childlike quality of 'very, very heavy', it seems, indeed, the utterance of someone insecure, trying to stamp his authority on Thebes despite lacking the natural authority required. The phrase 'ever really reveal' has similar phonic qualities and the intensifiers again shows Creon's need to convince us of the burdens of high office, as he attempts to gain sympathy for his actions. Paulin has nuanced the speech artfully.

In 'The Fuse and the Fire: Northern Protestant Oratory and Writing', Paulin considers the oratorical style that he believes is part of the Protestant heritage:

> In order to establish the distinctive characteristics and values of Ulster loyalist or Protestant culture, it is necessary to abandon conventional ideas of the literary and the aesthetic and consider forms of writing that are often dismissed as ephemeral or non-canonical—familiar letters, political speeches, oaths and toasts, sermons, pieces of journalism, overtured addresses, the minutes of synodical and other meetings. All these texts are forms of cultural production which for a variety of reasons have remained unexamined for many generations. The consciously modulated and often passionate voices that speak out of these printed texts have not so far attracted that critical appraisal to which self-evidently literary texts are submitted, nor have they yet

been gathered and reproduced by cultural historians; but they stand nevertheless as the distinctive achievements of a community. (1996: 85-6)[114]

Paulin's Creon has certainly picked up the sermonising, self-righteous streak evident in the ST and his formal addresses possess both a 'consciously modulated' and 'often passionate' voice. His first words to the crowd are 'overtured', as if convening a public meeting or proposing a toast. 'Mr Chairman, loyal citizens of Thebes' is a distinct departure from Sophocles' curt ἄνδρες, without even the usual vocative ὦ.

Heaney's translation of the same speech is more succinct, avoiding the air of the pulpit:

> Until a man has passed this test of office
> And proved himself in the exercise of power,
> He can't be truly known—for what he is, I mean,
> In his heart and mind and capabilities. (2005: 9-10)

A conciseness is communicated through the choice of monosyllabic words to carry the emphasis within clauses: 'man', 'test', 'proved', 'heart' and 'mind', for example. 'He can't be truly known' is a more rugged, consonantal clause than Paulin's 'can ever really reveal'. The linguistic choices of these two poets create two different Creons. If we compare their two versions of the speech at the height of Creon's anger with Haemon, the difference is abundantly clear. Paulin's Creon is almost incoherent with rage, using contractions, repetition, vernacular vocabulary and abusive slang, approaching the 'deep, menacing Ulster growl' that Paulin intended:

> D'you say so?
> D'you say so?
> By the gods in heaven
> you'll bite that flitchy tongue.
> Bring out the dirty bitch
> and let's be rid of her. (1985: 42)

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[114] From *Writing to the Moment – Selected Critical Essays 1980-1996*

The stage direction, *Wild*, and the structure of this section, encourages a rapid, staccato delivery. Although secondary stresses will certainly occur, each line moves towards one monosyllabic emphasis: 'say', 'say', 'gods', 'bite', 'out' and 'rid'. It is a powerful marriage between form and purpose, encapsulating Creon's disintegrating mental state.

In the collection of theatre reviews by Fintan O'Toole, published together as *Critical Moments*, the effect of Paulin's characterisation of Creon is discussed at some length as a structural weakness:

> [...] Tom Paulin's version of *Antigone* exploits the resonances of the classical text without clarifying them. It goes half-way and ends up in something of a theatrical never-never land. For the sake of the modern resonances much of the theatricality of the original *Antigone* is lost. And there is no clear political passion to compensate.
>
> The loss of theatricality is in relation to the figure of Creon, played by Stephen Rea. Rea's first speech is a brilliant parody of a Northern Ireland Office political functionary, appealing for public support. It is enormously enjoyable to spot the Irish parallels and to smile. But it immediately draws the theatrical sting of the play. *Antigone* works as a play because we are also interested in Creon as a man, concerned with his dilemma and the way he tries to cope with it. Sophocles' Creon is a tragic hero as well as a villain. By satirising him from the start, the drama of his conflict with Antigone is rendered impossible. (2003: 30)

Ciaran Hinds, who was involved in the original production, gives Paulin's justification for this distortion of Sophocles in the 'programme notes' on his website:[115]

> Paulin's version of Antigone finds its origin in an argument with Conor Cruise O'Brien over the interpretation of the play. O'Brien was one of the first to apply the story of Antigone to the Northern Irish situation. From his point of view, Antigone's decision was a disputable one for Creon's power, even though he had abused it, was legitimate, "and the life of the city would become intolerable if citizens should disobey any law that irked their conscience." This commitment in favour of obedience to authority, from Paulin's point of view, suggests unacceptable passivity and submission to Northern Ireland's status quo ("the Unionist state is virtually absolved of all responsibility and Creon's hands appear to be clean").

Richtarik covers this dispute with O'Brien in some detail, as seminal to explaining Paulin's stand. In his original article in *The Listener*, O'Brien claimed what Hinds reports in his

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[115] www.ciaranhinds.eu/play.php, accessed 20/10/2011.

programme notes but, in a later reprint for the 1972 book *States of Ireland*, he went further, writing that, although the 'trouble-maker from Thebes' should have her say, 'you begin to feel that Ismene's commonsense and feeling for the living may make the more needful, if less spectacular element in human dignity'.[116] Paulin (somewhat belatedly) responded in the *Times Literary Supplement*[117] that O'Brien saw 'the political conflict in the play as one of unequal values and unequal personal responsibilities', thus distorting the proper equilibrium of the play (1993: 217-218). Paulin may be said to over-correct the 'distortion' by turning Creon into an arch-villain, thus altering significantly our response to the second half of the play in which Sophocles gives us Creon's reversal and recognition. If not pity and fear, should we nonetheless feel something more empathetic than *schadenfreude*? Certainly, that is what several critics felt.

Paulin is obviously not the first to present Antigone as a freedom fighter, here the doughty Republican, based on a specific woman, resisting an intransigent Ulster politician.[118] George Steiner's view on this matter was mentioned in the introduction (above, 24). In 1992, the Cornish theatre group, Kneehigh, began collaborating with the National Youth Theatre, to recast Antigone and Polynices as members of the Kernow Independence movement in *Antigone at Hell's Mouth*. It was as black and white as Paulin's interpretation: Antigone and Polynices were brave, persecuted, separatist eco-warriors—the latter giving them their appeal—whilst Creon and Eteocles were in league with the British government and big business. Charlotte Loveridge wrote in her 2005 review on curtainsup.com:

> Modern interpretations of 'Antigone' can rarely resist portraying the struggle of an innocent martyr against a tyrannical autocrat who has the backing of society. This is certainly true in this case. While Gonnieta [Antigone] fights for brotherly love and environmental preservation, the Creon character [...] is by blood and instinct on the side of power and privilege.[119]

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[116] Original article: 24/10/1968.
[117] 14/11/1980.
[118] Bernadette Devlin
[119] Accessed online 20/10/2011

Loveridge continues that this weight of expectation and romanticisation of Antigone 'tends to undermine the second half of the action, following Antigone's death', the same criticism levelled at Paulin.

This unbalancing of the action relies upon Ulster audiences sharing Paulin's bias, alien to the mainland, where Bernadette Devlin was demonised by the right-of-centre media. The bias feeds off the extreme polarisation of the era, with Catholic Irish republicans pitted against Protestant unionists of English or Scottish extraction. Elsewhere, however, Paulin shows that his political stance is more complex than 1980s sectarianism along this religious divide. The first poem in his 1983 anthology, *Liberty Tree*, is called 'Under Creon'. Here, Paulin sees Creon as the oppressor of radical Presbyterianism, faded in Ireland since the late 18th century when the Society of United Irishmen rebelled against British rule in 1798. These rebels were not religiously homogenous; many were persecuted Protestant dissenters.

'Under Creon' is set in an Irish landscape, with loughs, holm oaks and northern starlight. The poem narrates a journey both geographical and into the past 'to find a cadence for the dead' which includes the name of a leading United Irishman, McCracken (an amphibrach in metrical terms). Antigone seems present in spirit: 'a free voice sang/ dissenting green' (1983: 13). 'Green' represents not only life and hope on 'a humped road, bone-dry' but also the Republican colour. The poem ends with a wistful recollection of 'that Jacobin oath', linking the Irish rebels to the ideals of the French Revolution, which offers a key to Paulin's political thinking: he is a republican on the same lines as the old Protestant dissenters who fomented American independence and other revolts against tyranny in the late 18th century. This is not the narrow sectarianism of modern Irish politics but the spirit of an age that first embraced Antigone as an emblem of liberation from tyranny. Creon oppresses by dint of his autocratic role, beyond any personality traits. He only needs to be included in the title of a poem for this oppression to be communicated in Paulin's political shorthand. He is never mentioned within the poem.

Discussing other aspects of the Antigone story, Paulin can be contradictory, showing ambivalence more in keeping with the ST. His religious background is a key factor. Elmer Kennedy-Andrews, writing in Ulster, describes Paulin's dilemma thus:

> The revolutionary strand in [Paulin's] writing which privileges the Protestant belief in the supremacy of the individual conscience and the tradition of dissent is tempered by a Hobbesian recognition of the need for some kind of state power to curb the forces of anarchic individualism. (2008: 190)

A few lines later, Kennedy-Andrews recalls an interview with Paulin who agreed he was not a Romantic but a reluctant Hobbesian, trying to reconcile two polarised viewpoints as does Sophocles. The struggle, in which the bonds of kinship and individual conscience are pitted against collective need and civic duty, is at the heart of Hegel's appreciation of *Antigone*, which Paulin acknowledged when he wrote in *Amid Our Troubles*:

> [...] the conflict in the play is between what sociologists call *Gemeinschaft*— roughly the family—and *Gesellschaft*, which is civic or public life. It is rare to get this conflict within mainstream white British society, but many members of ethnic minorities appreciate the tension between those two worlds. (2002: 167)

Richtarik, too, covers Paulin's intellectual appreciation of Sophocles' ST in a 1984 interview for *North* magazine in which he said:

> [The play] expresses all the principal conflicts in the condition of man—men versus women, age versus youth, society versus the individual, the living versus the dead, and men versus the gods. (1993: 217)

It is, therefore, deliberate choice rather than ignorance on Paulin's part to tilt the balance and to bring the philosophical conflict down from its lofty heights to street level, with his use of a colloquial register containing vernacular slang, and domesticated images to appropriate the ST for an Irish context. Paulin is, by implication, casting the people of Ulster as a non-mainstream ethnic minority, and his interpretation distorts Hegel's assertion that *Antigone* provides the perfect tragic conflict between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft.* Paulin's Creon loses entirely his moral high ground within the analogy of Ulster politics.

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Such manipulation of our response requires a creative approach to translation that reconfigures context to an idiosyncratic view of the present. Aiden O' Malley quotes a short extract from Joe Cleary's *Outrageous Fortune*. He analyses *The Riot Act* as:

> [...] a psychodrama in which Antigone acts as a figure for the compelling emotional loyalties that continue to bind Paulin to his ancestral community, while Creon stands for everything that makes it impossible to accede to those forces of attraction. (2011: 98)

Overstated perhaps, but there does seem to be conflict for Paulin between heart and head in which his Protestant roots undoubtedly play a part. Paulin does not wish to be associated with the Protestant rhetoric of entrenched Ulstermen although his own heritage places him on their side of the battle lines. Protestantism is resolutely individual in its relationship with divinity, unlike Catholicism which looks for a more absolute, monolithic moral code—a modern conflict between the laws of god and the laws of men echoing the main breech between Antigone and Creon. In 'The Fuse and the Fire', Paulin describes the Protestant mindset thus:

> Like 'honest', 'independent' and 'pure', such terms represent key concepts in Protestant discourse and may be set against terms such as 'organic' or 'balanced', which feature so strongly in certain forms of British literary criticism and conservative argument. In essence, they express a constantly challenging or polemical mind-set and this is one result of a belief in the right of private judgement.
>
> That belief also stimulates the frequent protestations of personal integrity that can disfigure Protestant discourse [...] (1996: 87)

Despite seeing it as a disfigurement, Paulin emphasises the 'frequent protestations of personal integrity' which underpin the argument between uncle and niece and which are intrinsic to the ST, although Sophocles' Antigone frequently expresses impersonal principles rather than talking about her own deed. Her comment: οὐδὲν γὰρ αἰσχρὸν τοὺς ὁμοσπλάγχνους σέβειν (511) uses the infinitive σέβειν to generalise kinship duty: 'There is no shame in showing regard for those of one's own stock'. Paulin personalises this to:

> I stuck by my brother-
> where's the shame in that? (28)

The vernacular 'stuck' plus the contraction renders the retort highly colloquial, whilst the strongly rising cadence of a question rather than a statement, moving towards a stress on 'that', effectively returns the stichomythic ball into Creon's court. οὐ μαρτυρήσει ταῦθ᾽ ὁ κατθανὼν νέκυς (515) uses a generic corpse to stress the inability of a dead body to bear witness—'The dead body will not bear witness to that'—while ὅμως ὅ γ᾽ Ἅιδης τοὺς νόμους τούτους ποθεῖ (519) states religious practice—'None the less, Hades demands these laws'— which Paulin merges briefly and colloquially, as personal to Antigone's situation:

> That's no great matter now
> to either one.
> They're gone from this
> and must be buried right (29).

Antigone's stress-bearing 'this' is deictic, separating by a brief pause the sense of that line from the one following. She is responding directly to Creon, '*Pointing to gates and wall*', before uttering: 'It was *this* he would defend [...]' (29). Paulin turns Creon's somewhat bemused questioning of Antigone in Sophocles into a vituperative attack on her personal integrity. Creon demonstrates the feature that Paulin claims disfigures Protestant discourse, employing the word 'honest' (emphasised by 'real'), one of the words Paulin suggests 'represent key concepts' for Protestants:

> So he'd never tell you
> there's not the least scrap
> of piety—
> real honest piety—
> in what you've done? (29)

This is not the formal Sophoclean debate over principles, but vernacular character assassination at a very personal level.

In defence of Paulin's imbalance, Bernard Knox distinguishes between the equal weight of argument—kin versus polis—and the unequal temper of the antagonists. Whereas Antigone is cast in the heroic mould, Knox believes that Creon is not:

> In this play [*Antigone*] two characters assume the heroic attitude, but one of them is in the end exposed as unheroic. Unlike Antigone, whom even death cannot move, Creon surrenders. The collapse of his apparently unshakeable resolution throws into sharp relief the heroism of Antigone, who, in the face of opposition from friend and enemy alike, stands her ground and goes, still defiant, to her death. (1964: 62)

We have the interesting phenomenon that modern reception is sympathetic to the self-justifying and obsessive character—Homer's Achilles or Sophocles' Antigone—whom Knox describes as:

> [...] one who, unsupported by the gods and in the face of human opposition, makes a decision which springs from the deepest layer of his individual nature, his *physis*, and then blindly, ferociously, heroically maintains that decision even to the point of self-destruction. (1964: 5)

Creon, who makes an error, but then compromises and finally retracts, has become a universal object of scorn. We seem attracted, still, to the heroic temper and a grand—if futile—gesture.

Heaney's translation, in contrast to Paulin's, maintains the equilibrium of Creon's role, which better sustains him as an advocate for civil order and the collective good of the polis. Although angry, Heaney's Creon speaks in formal, coherent sentences in his dealings with Antigone:

> By all the gods that look down from Olympus,
> I'm telling you you'll pay a heavy price
> For this disrespect.
> > Bring her out here.
> Bring her out and do away with her
> So that her groom can watch the deed being done. (2005: 35)

Heaney approximates much more closely to the ST than Paulin, with Creon's reference to the Olympian gods, which distances his version from a contemporary setting. He captures Creon's resentment of disrespect:

ἄληθες; ἀλλ᾽ οὐ, τόνδ᾽ Ὀλυμπον, ἴσθ᾽ ὅτι,
Χαίρων ἔτι ψόγοισι δεννάσεις ἐμέ.
ἄγετε τὸ μῖσος, ὡς κατ᾽ ὄμματ᾽ αὐτίκα
παρόντι θνῄσκῃ πλησία τῷ νυμφίῳ (*Ant.* 758-61)

(Do you say that? Why, by that Olympus which we see, be
sure of it, you shall not continue to abuse me with your
reproaches with impunity! Bring the hateful creature, so that
she may die at once close at hand, in the sight of her
bridegroom!)

Heaney's light touch on the use of vernacular retains the tone of the original, with Creon's ability to express his anger in formal verse. Indeed, the first two lines of this speech are classic iambic pentameter, with just an extra syllable for the feminine ending in the first line:

<pre>
 x / x / x / x / x / x
By all the gods that look down from Olympus,
 x / x / x / x / x /
I'm telling you you'll pay a heavy price [...]
</pre>

Heaney actually tones down Creon's spleen: τὸ μῖσος, being the neuter form, might well be rendered as 'hateful creature' but Heaney employs the feminine pronoun, with 'hateful' expunged: 'Bring her out here'.

Michael Billington recognised Heaney's balance and took issue with director Lorraine Pintal whose premier production ignored the 'genuinely Hegelian dialectic between the individual and the state'. Billington offers us the knowledge that Heaney:

[...] was partly inspired by Bush's war on Iraq—in particular the argument that you are either for state security or an advocate of terrorism.

Billington disliked Pintal's lack of 'cultural specificity', actually wishing for an overt modern context, but Heaney's work does not automatically invite such an approach. Indeed, Billington comments on the 'austerely memorable text' which brilliantly stripped Sophocles' play to the bone' and disliked Pintal's 'quasi-operatic production'. The overriding 'sin' for Billington is

that Pintal 'de-politicises the play' by siding with Antigone.[120] We might reasonably deduce from the various criticisms of Paulin's text and Pintal's realisation that discerning audiences instinctively require the Hegelian conflict for a production to satisfy.

Paulin's Creon not only lacks moral high ground but loses dignity as he slips into harsh vernacular.   His short sentences, particularly: 'Bring out the dirty bitch' sidesteps formal diction and has the ring of Ulster's vicious reaction to women suspected of fraternising with the enemy by both sides of the sectarian divide, during 'the troubles'.   When Paulin's Ismene predicts their fate should she and Antigone defy Creon's edict, she also uses a harsh colloquial register with dialect slang—'sleg'—for abuse that has no counterpart in the ST and shows contempt for the masses:

> [...] some scraggy, smelly crowd,
> us dragged before them—
> oh they'll spit
> they'll sleg us then,
> shout all the dirt
> till the first stones go *whap*! (1985: 12)

'Sleg' requires comment. It is cognate with 'slag [off]' in other dialects of English. In Paulin's anthology of vernacular poetry, 'slegging' has its own section and is the poetry of insult. A short example gives the flavour of the traditional, anonymous, playground taunting included in the section. It is written with the Scottish spelling of 'old' and no punctuation beyond the apostrophes:

> Yer auld man's a dirty auld man
> he washes his face in the frying pan
> he combs his hair with the leg of a chair
> yer auld man's a dirty auld man. (1990: 315)

In the ST, Sophocles depicts no 'slegging' crowd. Furthermore, Paulin diminished the role of the chorus in *The Riot Act* after advice from actor Stephen Rea to 'go easy on the choruses'.[121]

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[120] *Guardian*, 07/04/2004, accessed online 30/10/2012.

In the ST, Ismene's reluctance is predicated on the family's doomed past and her weakness as a female. Heaney adheres to Sophocles' angle; his Ismene says, in despair:

> Two women on our own
> Faced with a death decree –
> Women, defying Creon?
> It's not a woman's place. (5)

Paulin replaces Ismene's acceptance of the patriarchal imperatives with a somewhat haughty outburst which does, however, have a parallel in Jean Anouilh's version, even down to the mob's bad odour:

> Ils nous hueront. Ils nous prendront avec leurs mille bras, leurs mille visages et leur unique regard. Ils nous cracheront à la figure. Et il faudra advancer dans leur haine sur la charrette avec leur odeur et leurs rires jusqu'au supplice. (2009: 26-7)

The phrase 'leurs mille visages et leur unique regard'—'their thousand faces with their singular expression'—is a particularly apt encapsulation of the mob mentality with which Ulster was blighted; Paulin's Ismene owes her fear of public humiliation less to the 5th century BCE than to the 20th century CE, with its punishments for disloyal women, such as 'tarring and feathering', in which degrading the young victim was everything and the perpetrators frequently a group of fellow females. These actions were not part of a class divide, however, as presented by Anouilh, but of sectarian bigotry. Nonetheless, Paulin's Ismene echoes Anouilh, who wrote when similar mob reprisals were meted out to Frenchwomen fraternising with Nazi soldiers. Sadly, Ireland has a long and lingering history of harsh tribal 'justice' and Ruth McDonald remembers when such acts re-emerged in Derry, in 1971:

> She was then taken from her house by a group of women and publicly humiliated in front of her friends and neighbours.[122]

Paul Theroux, too, found the practice almost his most disturbing memory of the Troubles, as he recalled in The Observer newspaper:

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[121] FT.com, 22/01/2010

[122] Accessed online via BBC website, 08/08/2012.

> The clearest memory I have of the whole nasty Ulster mess, of cruelty and bloody-mindedness, is a newspaper picture of a skinny teenaged Irish girl whose boyfriend was a British soldier: tarred and feathered, gleaming black, with white tufts stuck to her body, her head shaven, terrified, pushed along a street by a howling mob of Catholics. She looked like an alien to me, suffering the alien's fate of rejection—in her case, extreme and humiliating. (13.02.2011)[123]

If images of the public humiliation of young women made an impact on those just brushing the fringes of Ulster's mob cruelty, how much more unsettling they must have been for those living amongst it as a daily reality. *The Riot Act* seems suddenly a much more dangerous play, like Anouilh's *Antigone*, played in the face of Nazi occupation.

Paulin uses vernacular to define social status but also to express strong emotions. When we consider Liz Lochhead (below) we will explore her theory about emotional state and register, which supports Paulin's practice. The vernacular that distinguishes intimate conversations between family members from controlled public statement often becomes abusive in tone, departing from the ST in which even the hostile debate between Antigone and her uncle is formalised. Paulin gives Creon a more vicious tongue than that conceived by Sophocles. Whereas Sophocles has Creon describe Ismene as a viper (*Ant.*531), and the two sisters with the grandiose epithet: δύ' ἄτα κἀπαναστάσεις θρόνων, 'two cursed dispatchers of thrones' (*Ant.*533), which stresses the risk to the state, Paulin has Creon insult Ismene as: 'the sneaky, sleaked (sic) one'. 'Sleaked' is a cognate of Scottish Doric 'sleekit', which can mean 'sly' and ''sneaky', so we are dealing in tautology, the more standard English form glossing the vernacular.[124] Together, the sisters together are:

> A pair of beetles
> that ground good mortar
> into dust. (1985: 30)

Although the alternative metonym for the royal household works on one level—undermining is still taking place—as an analogy of Sophocles' image, it has become less regal, more

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[123] Accessed online via *Observer* website. Now removed.
[124] For more on Doric, see below (219) and appendix 2

domesticated, not only in the technical sense of Reception Studies, as Paulin transpose his ST into a familiar contemporary framework, but also in our common understanding of the word. Antigone and Ismene are not dangerous subversives, merely household pests. From representing the royal house through the glory of the throne, Paulin has turned, literally, to the bricks and mortar. This change in register between ST and TT may be seen to convert the tenor of the argument to a very intimate level, with an imagined privacy unknown in the conventions of the original performance. Creon's personal vindictiveness becomes apparent when the ST statement of principle: κακὰς ἐγὼ γυναῖκας υἱέσι στυγω (*Ant.* 571) is rendered with a colloquial, imperious and monosyllabic statement that strips Antigone of all humanity and reduces her to 'it':

> A hard bitch like that!
> I'll let no son of mine
> go near it. (34)

Paulin intended to focus on the central characters and the dynamics of their dysfunctional relationships, with the chorus a skeletal presence in the background. As he said in *Amid Our Troubles*, he 'slashed away at the choruses to make the play run for fifty minutes and no more'. (2002: 167). The conversation is thus often terse. A stichomythic section in the ST has the single line utterances divided into two by Paulin to create the illusion of even shorter sound bites, as when Ismene says:

> Could I stand living here
> without she shared the pain? (33)

The use of 'without' for 'unless' is another example of non-standard form and it will take a major stress in its prime position, after a short pause. It defines Ismene's loss. When Ismene talks of Haemon's feelings for Antigone, the short lines draw us towards the final words of each line, delayed adverbs, which encapsulate the strength of Haemon's love:

> He loves her only

and he will do always. (34)

Paulin's use of slang can be extremely unsettling; at one point Creon instructs the guards:

> Get out of this
> and shut her from the light;
> she belongs in the dark
> like any blacky. (1985: 46)

The word 'blacky' adds racism to misogyny and suggest that bigotry in all its forms springs from a single mindset. Interestingly, Anouilh puts a similar example of the unthinking colonial attitude into Ismene's mouth as she belittles the guards who would arrest her and Antigone, should they defy Creon:

> Et là il y aura les gardes avec leurs têtes d'imbéciles [...] qu'ils vont comme des nègres [...] (2009: 27)

Undoubtedly, 'blacks'—or 'blackies'—are possible translations for 'nègres' within this context and Anouilh's *Antigone* was certainly in the frame at the time Paulin composed *The Riot Act*. Field Day was considering the play when Athol Fugard's *The Island* and David Rudkin's *The Saxon Shore* were rejected as possible productions but instead decided that Paulin should hone the Antigone story for the company. Whatever influence Anouilh's version exerted on Paulin, it certainly wasn't in the defining of character; Anouilh's Creon is a reluctant tyrant, engaged in gesture politics whereas for Paulin, he is bigotry personified. The other characters' faults are diminished as Creon's are magnified, so the racist comment is inevitably laid at his door.

The prevalence of both the Ulster cadence and Ulster slang in *The Riot Act*, combined with its appropriation to the Irish cause, raises the question of whether the play can be comfortably performed outside its original context and whether it was intended to be, although it managed a brief transfer to the left-wing London fringe theatre, The Gate, in 2003, in a programme that showcased modern adaptations of Greek drama. The political stance of the play, outside the context of Ulster's 'troubles', seems best appreciated from a left-leaning perspective. Paulin is well aware of the reductive aspect of vernacular writing in linguistic terms. Commenting in *A*

New Look at the Language Question on certain dialect words—'geg', 'gulder' and 'gobshite'—
he says:

> [Dialect words] will create a form of closed, secret communication with readers who
> come from the same region. This will express something very near to a familial
> relationship because every family has its hoard of relished words which express its
> members' sense of kinship. These words act as a kind of secret sign and serve to
> exclude the outside world. They constitute a dialect of endearment within the wider
> dialect'. (1983: 18)

For Creon and Antigone, no bond of kinship holds, least of all 'a dialect of endearment'.

Although Heaney maintains a more formal diction throughout, closer in tone to the ST, his
choice of vocabulary frequently speaks to us of Ulster and Irishness. The chorus talks of
Polynices having 'put himself beyond the pale' (2005: 17) and Antigone, as she is led off to die,
bemoans the fact she will receive 'no wake' and 'no keen' (2005: 39), two practices very much
a part of the Irish culture translating the one SL word for 'unwept': ἄκλαυτος (876). Indeed,
uniquely within Western Europe, the Irish, with their traditional funeral rituals, would see their
world reflected in Antigone's attitude that the rites of passage for the dead cannot be ignored
and are a family affair. When Creon and Antigone debate Polynices' criminality, Heaney's
translation puts the action firmly within a contemporary context, where sectarian killings were
either justified acts of war or premeditated murder, depending on one's viewpoint. Whilst in the
ST, the issue is presented partly as a matter of status, when Antigone reminds her uncle that
Polynices was not a slave—'τι δοῦλος' (517), Heaney selects 'no common criminal' (2005: 23).
Creon's counterclaim that Polynices was a traitor: πορθῶν δὲ τήνδε γῆν (*Ant.* 518), is translated
by Heaney to embrace the concept of terrorism: 'He [Polynices] terrorised us' (2005: 24).

Two decades separate Paulin's and Heaney's versions of *Antigone*. By the time the latter is
writing, the *Good Friday Agreement* is in place and Sinn Fein and the DUP are deep in talks to
finalise what became known as *The Comprehensive Agreement*. Nonetheless, despite an edgy
peace, Heaney's work still displays the scars on Ulster's psyche and motifs recur. In 1992, the
poem 'Punishment' used a meditation on a young, female, Iron Age 'bog person' to condemn

Heaney's own complicity in tarring and feathering, because he failed to speak out. He writes of the bog girl's 'shaved head' and tar-black face before making his comparison explicit:

> I almost love you
> but would have cast, I know,
> the stones of silence.
> I am the artful voyeur [...]
>
> I who have stood dumb
> when your betraying sisters,
> cauled in tar,
> wept by the railings,
>
> who would connive
> in civilized outrage
> yet understand the exact
> and tribal, intimate revenge. (1990: 71-2)

As Heaney said of the bog bodies in *Preoccupations* in the chapter 'Feelings into Words':

> [...] and the unforgettable photographs of these victims blended in my mind with photographs of atrocity, past and present, in the long rites of Irish political and religious struggles. (1980: 57-8)

Although neither the Iron Age girl nor Ulster's young females were stoned for their sexual transgressions, stoning inevitably raises a Biblical parallel for a community pervaded by Christian tradition on both sides of the sectarian divide. In *Antigone,* the idea is present in the ST—δημόλευστον (*Ant.* 36)—and is retained by Heaney and expanded on by Paulin. Heaney embroiders his translation at the point where Antigone is to face her death; she is not stoned by the people, but stones cause her death notwithstanding and the emphasis in each line will pick out the offending word:

> Creon: [...] she is to blame
> For every blackout stone they pile up round her.
>
> Antigone:
> Stone of my wedding chamber, stone of my tomb,
> Stone of my prison roof and prison floor,

> Behind you and beyond you stand the dead (2005: 40).

Heaney's choice of *The Burial at Thebes* as his own re-naming of the Antigone story indelibly connects the eponymous heroine's quest with her own fate, to be buried alive. There is no explicit link in the ST between the nature of the 'crime' and the chosen punishment. Indeed, Creon presents the method as a pragmatic choice, to avoid the pollution of a hands-on killing. Foregrounding the act of burial is Heaney's decision. Living in a society where the gentle mourning rituals of traditional communities had, in urban areas, given way to highly-charged, sectarian military funerals, the importance of these last rites had not escaped Heaney, nor the tension they produced. In 1981, nine years after the Bogside Massacre ('Bloody Sunday') Heaney published the poem 'Casualty' in his anthology *Fieldworks*, about a drinking companion, Louis O'Neill, a victim of the unrest that followed the massacre. In the following stanza, O'Neill is determined to find a drink, despite a curfew imposed on funeral days:

> It was a day of cold
> Raw silence, wind-blown
> Surplice and soutane:
> Rained-on, flower-laden
> Coffin after coffin
> Seemed to float from the door
> Of the packed cathedral
> Like blossoms on slow water.
> The common funeral
> Unrolled its swaddling band,
> Lapping, tightening
> Till we were braced and bound
> Like brothers in a ring.
> But he would not be held
> At home by his own crowd
> Whatever threats were phoned,
> Whatever black flags waved. (1990: 100-103)

Heaney seems to be drawn into the restrictions caused by the funerals—'Till we were braced and bound'. Later in the poem, Heaney fails to attend the funeral of this friend, but describes a quiet family ritual:

> I missed his funeral,
> Those quiet walkers
> And sideways talkers
> Shoaling out of his lane
> To the respectable
> Purring of the hearse...

Heaney communicates both his respect for O'Neill's defiance and the significance of ritual. In another poem, 'Funeral Rites', Heaney makes the need for a funeral explicit:

> Now as news comes in
> of each neighbourly murder
> we pine for ceremony,
> customary rhythms:
>
> the temporary footsteps
> of a cortege, winding past
> each blinded home. (1990: 52-5)

The Burial at Thebes allows a reflection, from the relative calm of 2004, on decades of internecine struggles in which Ulster English, for many, would have been the language of a colonial oppressor. The Irishness emerges at times but it is allusions other than dialect that more clearly demonstrate Heaney's roots and that connect with his other poetry. These allusions are more apparent in his earlier work, *The Cure at Troy* (1990), which predates the Good Friday Agreement. Although Ulster was still embroiled in its troubles, elsewhere in the world, *glasnost* promised hope, even in the face of monolithic belief systems. *Philoctetes* is infrequently performed compared to *Antigone*, but Heaney found in this difficult play, with its festering sore, human duplicity but dramatic resolution, some scope for optimism. It is, after all, the Sophoclean tragedy with the most positive ending, after a gruelling tussle. Edith Hall describes *Philoctetes* in stark terms:

> There are no cities, institutions, lawgivers, judges, priests, prophets or other authority figures to provide a moral framework for the action. Distinctions between right and wrong have to be made up as they go along. [...] the implications are grim: isolated from civilisation, these men fail completely to resolve conflict without supernatural help. (2010: 319-20)

It is in this moral wilderness that Heaney finds Irish analogies. He starts the process by creating his own introduction for the chorus, denying Odysseus the opening words:

> Philoctetes.
>   Hercules.
>   Odysseus.
> Heroes. Victims. Gods and human beings.
> All throwing shapes, every one of them
> Convinced he's in the right, all of them glad
> To repeat themselves and their every last mistake,
> No matter what.
>   People so deep into
> Their own self-pity self-pity buoys them up.
> People so staunch and true they're fixated,
> Shining with self-regard like polished stones.
> And their whole life spent admiring themselves
> For their own long-suffering.
>   Licking their wounds
> And flashing them around like decorations. (1990: 1/2)[125]

The three names create a 20th-century example of iambic trimeter. Although 'Hercules' is theoretically a cretic in normal speech, on stage, the long vowel in the first syllable of the Roman version of the name, as opposed to the more appropriate 'Herakles', can be extended towards a double metrical value. The three names then each stand as a foot: x/x/ x/x/ x/x/. The combination of this scansion and the printed layout of the text, suggests that the names were intended to be proclaimed as distinct units of sound and sense. Thus Heaney sets the three heroic characters up for our attention, only to undercut them and our expectations by the criticism that follows.

What is the purpose of these opening lines? At the time Heaney wrote them, they could only be read as a comment on sectarian entrenchment. Heaney implies as much in *Amid Our Troubles*:

> In other words, while there are parallels, and wonderfully suggestive ones, between the psychology and predicaments of certain characters in the play and certain parties and conditions in Northern Ireland, the play does not exist in order to exploit them. The parallels are richly incidental rather than essential to the version. (2002: 175)

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[125] All quotations from *The Cure at Troy* come from Faber and Faber edition (1990). With future quotations page numbers only will be given.

Philoctetes, in his intransigence, resembles the Ulster Unionists and their refusal of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1987 but, as Heaney is keen to establish, the play is intended to transcend such parochialism. (We shall turn later to what Heaney called his 'extra speeches for the Chorus' and consider the tension between the poet's stated aim for parallels to be incidental and his practice, which firmly roots the action in Ulster.) Bernard Knox identifies Sophoclean heroes as showing intransigence to a particularly high degree, compared to those of his fellow-tragedians. They provide Heaney, therefore, with his ideal parallel. Knox describes them thus:

> Immovable once his decision is taken, deaf to appeals and persuasion, to reproof and threat, unterrified by physical violence, even by the ultimate violence of death itself, more stubborn as his isolation increases until he has no one to speak to but the unfeeling landscape, bitter at the disrespect and mockery the world levels at what it regards as failure, the hero prays for revenge and curses his enemies as he welcomes the death that is the predictable end of his intransigence. (1964: 44)

This might be a character study of Philoctetes, yet he ultimately capitulates to necessity, granting hope to Heaney, who nonetheless criticises such a mindset. Knox believes Philoctetes to be 'the most outrageously wronged' of Sophocles' heroes (117) but Heaney focuses on the negatives in the heroic temper. 'Shining with self-regard/ like polished stones' puffs up the characteristic that suffuses Knox's description of heroic temper throughout his book: the sense of entitlement that leads to anger when thwarted. As Knox puts it: 'their sense of their own worth, of what is due to them from others, is outraged' (29). The idea of being mocked and wronged, of the grudge-bearing that inevitably ensues, is evident in Heaney's evocation of pointless, life-long self-pity that parades past grievances like badges of honour:

> And their whole life spent admiring themselves
> For their own long-suffering.
>   Licking their wounds
> And flashing them around like decorations.

This Sophoclean stance strikes a consistent chord with the modern Irish as they contemplate their history. In 2014, Frank McGuinness spoke movingly of his introduction to Greek tragedy as a teenager, watching a televised version of Sophocles' *Electra* and recognising in it both Irish

families and Irish grudges.[126] His own translation of the play for an Old Vic production created one of the most obsessed and compulsive Electras seen in modern times.[127]

Heaney's formal declamatory innovation to the ST is quite a departure from the choral episodes in the rest of the play, which have rhyming lyrics that frequently demonstrate their Ulster credentials.   The chorus comments on Philoctetes' condition at the end of Odysseus's and Neoptolemus's opening dialogue:

> It's a pity of him too
> Afflicted like that,
> Him and that terrible foot.
> And not a one to talk to.
> Like the last man left alive.
> How does the being survive? (13)

This choral stanza corresponds to lines 169-176 in the ST; Heaney edits out reference to the gods.[128] The first line is clearly non-standard syntax, for the straightforward Greek: οἰκτίρω νιν ἐγώγ᾽ which translates, literally as 'I, for my part, pity him'.   The Loeb edition removes the personal emphasis of ἐγώγ᾽, rendering the utterance as 'I pity him' but Heaney's impersonal structure distances the sentiment still further from any individual chorus member. The effect of this use of Ulster English is to make Philoctetes truly remote from his fellow humans. 'It's a pity of him' does not uphold the emotional engagement of the ST: Philoctetes seems pitiful, rather than pitied. Heaney's evocation of the Irish cadence is subtle but persistent. Although he also acknowledged Robert Frost as Paulin does, it is the equally metaphysical idea of Eliot's that Heaney mentions in his essay, 'Englands of the Mind' (in *Preoccupations*):

> One of the most precise and suggestive of T. S. Eliot's critical formulations was his notion of what he called 'the auditory imagination', the 'feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word; sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back' [...] I presume Eliot was thinking here about the cultural depth-charges latent in certain words and rhythms [...] thinking of the relationship

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[126] *Power and Passion in Greek Theatre*, delivered at King's College, London, 22/05/14

[127] Autumn 2014, starring Kristin Scott Thomas as Electra.

[128] All references to ST are taken from Loeb edition (1998 reprint) translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones.

between the word as pure vocable, as articulate noise, and the word as etymological occurrence, as symptom of human history, memory and attachments. (150)

While parts of Heaney's arguments might be obscure, he interprets Eliot to imply that tribal or race memory embeds particular language use, including collective intangibles: 'memory and attachments'.

The ST expands the choral musing with a mention of Philoctetes' 'cruel sickness': νοσεῖ μὲν νόσον ἀγρίαν, which Heaney encapsulates in the very colloquial phrase: 'Him and that terrible foot'. Having already detached Philoctetes somewhat from the chorus's pity, with this second non-standard expression, which might, in mainland informal speech, be more commonly rendered as 'that terrible foot of his', Heaney bestows a separate existence upon the foot, stressing Philoctetes' lack of control over that particular body part. It is curiously intimate in tone, like neighbours gossiping over the fence, with the assumption that everyone knows the precise details of Philoctetes' affliction, including which foot assails him. The line as a whole also has an interesting rhythm:

                    /   x   x | / x x | /
                    Him and that terrible foot [...]

We have two sections of the line with a dactylic stress pattern but 'foot' stands alone and prominent. A dying cadence would not do justice to this line: 'him' and 'foot' must take the strongest emphasis, indelibly linking Philoctetes with his affliction. It is a rhythm impossible to replicate with the standard form: 'that terrible foot of his' even though it contains the same number of words and syllables. The Ulster dialect offers the chorus lyrical opportunities, even for essentially non-poetic utterances.

Further on in this passage of the chorus, the indefinite article, which aids the metrical flow in 'not a one [...]', also helps to stress Philoctetes' complete isolation. 'Being', too, is an interesting choice of word. Many dialects use the word, which has the great advantage of gender-neutrality, but does it dehumanise here? Elsewhere, the chorus talks of 'human beings'.

Our reception of Heaney's dialect use will depend on our own linguistic map to an extent but he certainly seems to isolate Philoctetes even beyond the ST, entirely credible in terms of the play's themes and achieved through vernacular nuance.

The Cure at Troy contains several examples of local vocabulary that also feature regularly in Lowland Scots and are almost stereotypes of Scottish speech to an English listener, such as Philoctetes' exclamation of 'och!' at various points in his suffering. Equally accessible is the expressive, onomatopoeic imperative 'Wheesht!' from the chorus, especially as it is previously glossed: 'Quiet' (14). Odysseus warns Neoptolemus to: 'go canny' (4), a simple instruction, and fairly familiar to English speakers, although worthy of comment grammatically, since 'canny' is an adjective rather than the expected adverb, its two-syllable structure giving a stronger metrical dynamic to the instruction. Neoptolemus throws the idea back at Odysseus later: 'Candour before canniness' (67), in which the identical first phoneme of the two attributes provides a linguistic tautness to the contrast, in which Neoptolemus states his values.

Few people outside Ulster would have trouble in understanding any of the language features cited above, but some of Heaney's lexicon would not travel so easily. When pondering the written script, guesses as to meaning can be made from context; in the theatre, this becomes more difficult. We might grasp: 'Hagged out of a log' (5) but the expression 'Is his head away?' (12) and Neoptolemus's anguished statement: 'I'm all throughother' (48) are less accessible, although the latter is explained, on closer inspection, by the following sentence: 'This isn't me'. Heaney's choice of vernacular is affecting, projecting a stronger sense of self-disgust than the ST's οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπῃ χρὴ τἄπορον τρέπειν ἔπος (897), 'I do not know where to turn my words in my perplexity', but it once again poses the thorny question of whether dialect forms and local references can travel.

The answer to that question must be that it depends on degree. Many of us will have seen television clips in which a very strong Belfast—or Glaswegian—accent has to be subtitled. When we turn our attention to Liz Lochhead's *Medea* at the end of this chapter, we shall

consider several fairly impenetrable speeches for speakers of Standard English. Heaney's work does not approach this model. His use of the Ulster cadence is subtle; the choice of dialect words and phrases is measured. His audience might occasionally stumble but the broad sweep of Heaney's vision is easily accessible. Some of Heaney's non-standard sentences, ending in an adverb, present no comprehension problems and perhaps strike us as euphonic. 'Out scavenging, likely' (5) is a compact assessment of the initial situation. A minor sentence assumes the subject—Philoctetes is hardly mentioned by name during this first dialogue—and neatly sums up probability in 'likely'. In standard speech, adverbs would present themselves with a liquid, dying cadence, but the slight upward intonation of the dialect lifts the sentence. There is a further effective use of a delayed adverb in:

> [...] and me not fit
> To move hardly. (27)

When we compare this to the standard utterance: '[...] and I'm hardly fit to move', in which 'fit' would take the main stress, focusing on Philoctetes' poor health, we can see how Heaney has shifted the emphasis and created a more plaintive cadence. The main stress moves to 'me' and the adverb's final position highlights Philoctetes' difficulties, as he perceives them. He feels hard done by, in being expected to supplicate on his knees, as a suffering cripple. The ST has some of this self-pity, since Sophocles presents Philoctetes throughout as bearing a strong sense of grievance. Nonetheless, supplication being part of the fabric, it is automatically observed, despite (καίπερ) frailty:

> [...] προσπίτνω σε γόνασι, καίπερ ὢν
> ἀκράτωρ ὁ τλήμων, χωλός. (485-6)
>
> ([...] I fall on my knees before you, although I am
> helpless in my misery, lame.)

Heaney's opening innovation clearly presents the archetypal hero as steeped in obduracy and self-pity. It is small wonder, then, that he chooses to magnify this aspect of his protagonist with the vernacular of complaint, even when engaged in the established protocol of supplication.

Heaney's other innovations root his text firmly in Ulster and some refer specifically to the troubles. As Philoctetes takes his farewell of Lemnos, the ST speaks of a rough terrain with sea storms, but also of meadow nymphs and Lycian wellspring (1452-63). Heaney transmutes the mythological Greek landscape into a realistic northern clime:

> [...] I'm nothing but cave
> stones and damp walls and an old mush of dead
> leaves. The sound of waves in draughty passages. A
> cliff that's wet with spray on a winter's morning. [...] (1990: 80)

This is reproduced as it is presented in the Faber and Faber edition but, in fact, the line breaks are nothing more than page capacity. An enjambment that separates a noun from its indefinite article serves neither meaning nor potential delivery. Although essentially prose, there is still a deliberate elegiac cadence to the first sentence, with its conjunction of images created from paired monosyllables: 'cave stones', 'damp walls', 'old mush' and 'dead leaves', rather like a dead march. The two following minor sentences add to the bleakness of the picture which Philoctetes, nonetheless, holds dear. This brief section demonstrates a significant aspect of Heaney's technique: whilst retaining the Greek landmarks of cave and cliff, crucial to the plot, he nonetheless suggests an Irishness for his audience. In effect, he creates a topographical diptych, where both worlds can be viewed simultaneously. The ST makes much of the sea's force—its sound and penetrating spray—with accompanying wind, which Heaney retains, but the boggy 'mush' of dead leaves and other vegetation is his own, a realistic native replacement for the natural world implied by nymphs.

Probably the most controversial overlay of Heaney's translation is the choral addition as Philoctetes prepares to leave. Heaney claimed that any 'parallels' between *The Cure at Troy* and events in Ulster are 'richly incidental' (above, 201). In continuation, he seeks to persuade us that his references can go outside Ulster and become generic:

> The extra speeches for the Chorus [...] were meant to contextualize the action, and
> not just within a discourse that could apply to Northern Ireland politics.

Despite this disclaimer, most of us would recognise some of Heaney's references as drawn from a very specific political context:

> A hunger-striker's father
> Stands in the graveyard dumb.
> The police widow in veils
> Faints at the funeral home. (1990: 77)

Furthermore, the following stanza of this chorus is the most cited passage from Field Day's entire output. Bill Clinton incorporated the first stanza below in a speech on the peace process which he gave in Derry in 1995, selecting it because it fitted the circumstances so precisely:

> History says, *Don't hope*
> *On this side of the grave*.
> But then, once in a lifetime
> The longed-for tidal wave
> Of justice can rise up,
> And hope and history rhyme.

Heaney himself had second thoughts about this section. He reflected on it in conversation with Dennis O'Driscoll:

> Once the performance started I came to realize that the topical references were a mistake. Spelling things out like that is almost like patronizing the audience. But luckily, it was the more quotable 'hope and history' line that caught on. Even Gerry Adams went for the uplift factor [...] (2008: 421)[129]

The message of hope is Heaney's own, using a metaphor that is both poetic and *about* poetry. He continues this optimism into the next stanza with a very Irish allusion to miracle cures:

> So hope for a great sea-change
> On the far side of revenge.
> Believe that a further shore
> Is reachable from here.

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[129] *Stepping Stones: Interviews with Seamus Heaney.*

> Believe in miracles
> And cures and healing wells.

As he said of his choice of title in 'The Cure at Troy: Production Notes in No Particular Order' (from *Amid Our Troubles*):

> *Cure* is backlit ever so faintly in Irish usage (or should I say Irish Catholic?) by a sense of miracle. Lourdes and all that. [...] Anyhow, I wanted the title to prefigure a benign and unexpected turn of events.' (2002: 172)

The reference to hunger-strikers and police widows could be cut from a performance outside Ulster but Heaney retained them in the published text, despite misgivings, as intrinsic to his Irish analogy. Not all of his Field Day colleagues, however, were convinced by the parallels. Seamus Deane was unhappy with what Oliver Taplin calls 'the play's evasion of what Troy stands for'. Taplin quotes Deane at length in *Dionysus Since 69*. He begins:

> Troy's 'meaning' in the play's system of political reference is ostensibly clear; it refers to Northern Ireland. But there is the problem that it also refers to a place that is finally sacked and that this prelude to the final battle, which seems to be about miraculous change, is not in any coherent sense really about an alteration that will bring reconciliation. Instead, it will bring victory to one side and defeat to the other. (2004: 162)

Deane sees Troy as having a transcendent meaning, which Heaney's optimistic overlay cannot obliterate.

Paulin's politics reach beyond Ulster, so it is likely that he will draw on references from other contexts and his poetry shows this diversity. Perhaps the most controversial example is the pro-Palestinian and, many would say, anti-Semitic poem, 'Killed in the Crossfire', published in the *Observer* review section, in 2001:

> We are fed this inert
> This lying phrase
> Like comfort food
> As another little Palestinian boy
> In trainers jeans and a white teeshirt
> Is gunned down by the Zionist SS
> Whose initials we should

—but we don't—dumb goys
Clock in that weasel word
Crossfire

Edward Alexander, writing for a Hebrew-language periodical, *Nativ,* naturally took issue with Paulin's stance on Israel. Although few of us would agree with his description of Paulin in the article's sub-heading as a 'poetaster' nor automatically warm to Alexander's vitriolic tone and sometimes muddled argument, we might accept his basic premise that Paulin is a political man—who can misfire on occasions:

> As a literary critic, Paulin's chief distinction has been the aggressive politicizing of literature. He has viewed the work of D.H. Lawrence through the prism of "post-colonialism", a pseudo-scholarly enterprise whose primary aim is the delegitimization of Israel; he thought Emily Dickinson an important poet because she criticized "mercantile values"; in an essay on T.S. Eliot he sternly warned that "Hate poems are offensive" and took it upon himself to accuse a host of critics (including Denis Donoghue) of "complicity" in Eliot's anti-Semitism because they had discussed his poetry without mentioning it. In this failure to recognize that although politics may be "in" everything, not everything is politics, and that to see politics everywhere empties politics of meaning, Paulin was not much different from countless other academic insurrectionaries in the English departments. But when he found that the excitement of showing oneself politically superior to writers of the past was transitory, Paulin turned to "action".[130]

Paulin tends to take up causes as they arise and not pursue them assiduously. In his poems, he generally appears less strident than in *The Riot Act*. 'Killed in the Crossfire' is atypical. In 'And Where Do You Stand on the National Question?' an interview is taking place which is deliberately set against a backdrop of beautiful spring normality:

> Apple blossom, a great spread of it
> above our heads.
> This blue morning a new visitor
> is laidback (sic) on a deckchair; (1983: 67)

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[130] *Tom Paulin: Poetaster of Murder* was accessed in online, English-language version of *Nativ: A Journal of Politics and the Arts* (Vol. 3, April 2004), on 08/09/2012.

The poem thrashes out Irish history in direct speech: "Your Lagan Jacobins, they've gone with the *Northern Star*" and the sectarian colours—orange and green—are opposed. The 'I', indistinguishable from Paulin in his final argument issues the insult:

> "So you're a band of Orange dandies?
> Oscar in Père-Lachaise with a sash on?"

The interviewer 'counters':

> "Well, not exactly ... that's unfair—
> Like my saying it's a green mess you're after."

This short exchange demonstrates two important points. Firstly, for the educated classes of Northern Ireland, words, not armalite rifles, were the weapon of choice and, secondly, Ulster English influences all social strata. We have the grammatical precision of 'my saying' rather than the demotic 'me saying' showing a close knowledge of standard form, followed by a vernacular word order—'it's a green mess you're after'—which Standard English would render: 'you're after a green mess'.

Following the trade of insults, we get the mini-manifesto from our 'I' persona:

> "I want a form that's classic and secular,
> the risen *République*,
> a new song for a new constitution—
> wouldn't you rather have that
> than stay loose, baggy and British? [...]"

This represents the same hankering for the old Republican values that Paulin expressed in 'Under Creon'.

By the time Paulin translated *Medea* in 2010, he had eschewed dialect, even though the play was first performed by Northern Broadside. In an interview on *Theartsdesk.com*, Paulin said:

> [...] and though I did my *Antigone* sometimes in Northern Irish dialect, I've moved on since then and my *Medea* is in Standard English, though I do use the word 'lunk' in the Nurse's opening speech [...] Otherwise, as I say, I've kept the language Standard.

> I've aimed for short, terse lines, and have, for the most part avoided the iambic pentameter.[131]

'Moved on' implies that Paulin considers Standard English as a refinement of his previous approach and, in terms of posterity, it probably is. *The Riot Act*, his earliest foray into Greek tragedy and the one most specific to time and place, is currently out of print. Despite Paulin's declaration, however, the Ulster cadence keeps breaking through in *Medea*, such as the tutor's: 'Well, I was sat down just' (6) and the chorus's: 'It hurts our hearts this' (9), with the deixis we met for the guard. If cadence can break through unlooked for, the measured style of an academic translation, consistently in Standard English, must require intense concentration. Even if somewhat bland for performance purposes, it is still no mean feat.

Heaney's two plays stand either side of a notable departure for him in poetic terms: the naked anger of 'Mycenae Lookout', published in *The Spirit Level* collection of 1996. It also contains 'The Flight Path', in which an acquaintance of Heaney questions his equanimity:

> So he enters and sits down
> Opposite and goes for me head on.
> 'When, for fuck's sake, are you going to write
> Something for us?' 'If I do write something,
> Whatever it is, I'll be writing for myself.'
> And that was that. Or words to that effect. (1996: 25)[132]

On 31st August 1994, the IRA called a ceasefire. Heaney began 'Mycenae Lookout' in October. During a brief period of relative peace, he suddenly felt able to give vent to his anger for the devastation of the previous decades, refracted through Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. In choosing to focus on the watchman and Cassandra, Heaney sidelines the perpetrators of both a vicious war and a drawn-out cycle of vengeance, concentrating instead on the collateral damage and, tellingly, the role of the mute bystander. His watchman has no glamorous words for war: 'that killing-fest, the life-warp and world-wrong' (29). In her book on Seamus Heaney, Helen Vendler wrote in her chapter, 'An Afterwards':

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[131] Accessed online, 14/09/2011.

[132] All quotations come from 1996 Faber and Faber edition. Page numbers only will be given with future extracts.

'Mycenae Lookout' stands as the emotional centrepiece of *The Spirit Level*. It speaks from the impotent position of the ordinary citizen caught in the crossfire of civil atrocity, and it predicts the endemic resurgence of violence [...] (1998: 156-7)

'The Watchman's War' contains many allusions to the ST and is, essentially, written in pentameters, with rhyming—or half-rhyming—couplets:

> x / x / x / x / x /
> Day in, day out, I'd come alive again,
> / x x / x x / x \ x /
> Silent and sunned as an esker on a plain [...] (30)

'Esker' comes from the Irish: *eiscir* (from Old Irish: *escir*), meaning a long glacial ridge, one of Heaney's few concessions to dialect in this section, where the diction owes much to the ST.

Once the watchman moves off himself in the following section, 'Cassandra', the register moves down to street vernacular and the language is raw. Vendler's 1999 article for *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* called: 'Seamus Heaney and the "Oresteia": "Mycenae Lookout" and the Usefulness of Tradition', makes this general comment:

> Never during the quarter-century of hostilities in the North had Heaney written openly inflammatory or recriminatory verse [...] His own intelligence and distrust of propagandist rhetoric kept Heaney scrupulously away from language expressing the mad exuberance—felt by many, and a temptation to all writers—of those seeking vengeance by violent means. (1999: 116)

Heaney's opening lines on Cassandra depart from this moderation and implicate everyone in Ulster's troubles:

> No such thing
> as innocent
> bystanding. (30)

This has an impact on our evaluation of the watchman himself, who uses the images of the ST, in the first section of the sequence, to define himself as a passive instrument, 'the lookout/ The queen's command has posted and forgotten' whose 'sentry work was fate, a home to go to' (29).

He is 'a sheepdog stretched in grass' propped up on his elbows, 'gazing, biding time' (30). Despite this removal from direct involvement in the violence, like Heaney the watchman is complicit as he watches the suffering of a young woman. In 'Cassandra', Heaney offers us a much starker analogy for the punishments meted out in Ulster to young women than that of his 'Bog' poems:

> Her soiled vest,
> her little breasts,
> her clipped devast-
>
> ated, scabbed
> punk head,
> the char-eyed
>
> famine gawk-
> she looked
> camp-fucked
>
> and simple. (31)

The language is all the more shocking because it is a departure from Heaney's norm. As Vendler says:

> Measured eloquence and steady reflective meditation on life had been the staples of Heaney's poems written before the cease-fire; but these are discarded during most of "Mycenae Lookout", as if only outraged language could suit outrageous acts. (1999: 121)

She comments specifically on the language of 'Cassandra' before going on to a general statement about the sequence:

> After all, Heaney has in Cassandra's poem reduced Aeschylean high tragedy to amputated tercets in contemporary dress, tercets voiced in the lowest of styles, with interpolated vulgarity and obscenity. [...] to understand Aeschylus today we need to read Heaney. The "spoiling" of form and language—in a sequence so antithetical to the ceremonious forms of Heaney's earliest writing—reflects accurately the "spoiling" of life brought about by war. (125)

It might be fanciful for Vendler to claim that Heaney is a necessity for a thorough understanding of the ST but she is expressing her instinct that Heaney has, somehow, penetrated the essence of

Aeschylus with his war-weary watchman, sickened by years of violence and fearing new reprisals domestically, voicing angry thoughts in angry words, just as peace apparently breaks out. He and Cassandra are the little people, innocent victims of a protracted conflict.

Throughout 'Cassandra', the watchman persona employs even more ferocious invective than Paulin's Creon uttered about Antigone and Ismene. In the epithets coined for Agamemnon— 'Old King-Cock-of-the-Walk' and 'King Kill-the-Child-and-Take-What-Comes' (31-2)— Heaney offers a new kind of linguistic inventiveness to show the watchman's contempt for his strutting warlord master. The language is deliberately debased and harsh; the scant, two-beat lines—Vendler's 'sliced-up dimeter tercets' (1999: 122)—offer scope for little else, frequently requiring the hyphenation of polysyllabic words, *metri gratia*. Corrupt rhymes— 'buck's/back/Greek' (32)—add to a sense of discord. In his play texts, destined for unrestricted public performance, Heaney employs, as Vendler says, 'measured eloquence'; within his poetry, Heaney grants himself a licence to push language to the limits of acceptance, describing Cassandra as:

> Little rent
> cunt of their guilt. (32)

In 'The Nights', Heaney becomes blatantly sexual in his subject matter, what Vendler describes as 'demotic coarseness', and the watchman's 'tabloid terms' (122). Heaney describes the Trojan Horse incident as follows:

> When the captains in the horse
> felt Helen's hand caress
> its wooden boards and belly
> they nearly rode each other.
> But in the end Troy's mothers
> bore their brunt in alley,
> bloodied cot and bed. (36)

At the end of this section, the watchman once again implicates everyone in what happens during a war, whether actively engaged or silently acquiescent:

> The war put all men mad,
> horned, horsed or roof-posted,
> the boasting and the bested. (36)

It is an embellished version of the guilt Heaney expressed four years earlier in 'Punishment',

touched on previously (above, 198), when he calls himself an 'artful voyeur' who 'stood dumb'.

Vendler writes of the watchman's 'unrelenting rhythms (taking their cue from the heavy

trochees of the name "Agamemnon")' (122) and a strong, pulsating beat seems to have been

Heaney's intention, to hammer home his anger. In an interview with Henri Cole in *The Paris

Review*, he describes the watchman's speech as 'a pneumatic drill' (1997: 136).[133] This is a

metaphor that implies not only persistence but also the impossibility of our ignoring the voice.

In *The Guardian* , just following Heaney's death, Charlotte Higgins and Henry McDonald wrote

a tribute that described Heaney as: 'a man who radiated granite integrity and deep kindness'.

Tom Stoppard added: Seamus never had a sour moment, neither in person nor on paper'.[134]

Perhaps 'Mycenae Lookout' escaped Stoppard but his observation on Heaney's lack of sourness

in his work confirms the general consensus about the bulk of his poetry. A moment of

overwhelming emotion broke through in 'Mycenae Lookout'. In the same *Guardian* article,

Frank McGuinness says of his fellow-countryman: 'During the darkest days of the Northern

Ireland conflict, he [Heaney] was our conscience' but he only showed anger when peace gave

him a breathing space.

Liz Lochhead seems more convinced than either Heaney or Paulin about the merits of using

dialect extensively, to carry a message. In her full-throttle version of *Medea*, which combines

Euripides with original material involving the bride, Glauke, the low status characters' speech is

written in a Scottish vernacular broad enough to obscure meaning outside Scotland. Many of

the words are written phonetically to catch the Scottish version of vowel sounds, which

frequently replaces 'o' with 'a', such as 'naething' for 'nothing' and 'sair' for 'sore'. When the

manservant says, 'things cheynge', the spelling reflects the assumed accent, turning one syllable

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[133] Fall edition 1997, pp 88-193. Interview can also be accessed online.
[134] *The Guardian*, 31/08/2013, p.3.

into two, with an upward inflection at the end, similar to Irish-English. Such a rich word requires a pause after it and, for Lochhead, double spacing frequently serves as punctuation. Lochhead was quite clear about the Scottishness of her work. The first stage direction states:

> *The people of this country* [Corinth] *all have Scots accents, their language varies from Scots to Scots-English—from time to time and from character to character—and particular emotional state of character*. (3)

By comparison, Medea is described as crying out:

> [...] *in a voice that is not Scots but a foreigner speaking good English—an 'incomer's voice'.'* (6)

Lochhead sees her approach as part of a cultural renewal. She writes in the introduction:

> [...] it struck me the conventional way of doing Medea in Scotland until very recently would have been to have Medea's own language Scots and the, to her, alien Corinthians she lived under speaking as powerful 'civilised' Greeks, patrician English. That it did not occur to me to do other than give the dominant mainstream society a Scots tongue and Medea a foreigner-speaking-English refugee voice must speak of a genuine in-the-bone increased cultural confidence here. (unnumbered page)

It is noteworthy that Lochhead, for all her patriotism, sees Standard English as 'good', reinforcing its status as the sociolect of the aspirational, a prejudice shared by many. Until recently, to hear a tragic protagonist slip into vernacular would have been unthinkable. Edith Hall points out in a recent article on tragedy and social class that the working man was not portrayed as a tragic hero until Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck*.[135] Hall cites Pat Easterling's notion that tragedy has a kind of 'heroic vagueness' to which the use of mythic royalty contributes and points out that a working-class tragedy which 'made material and economic forces the exclusive causes of the suffering enacted would no longer be tragedy: it would be left-wing agitprop' (2014: 776-81). Lochhead does not fall into this latter trap but her Kreon (sic) is still a bold choice, comparable to King Lear lapsing into a broad vernacular as he goes mad. J. Derrick McClure saw the use of Scottish vernacular in the 18th century as an act of defiance, similar to German writers using their native tongue in the same period:

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[135] Left unfinished at Büchner's death in 1837.

> English was considered a more polite language than Scots. To write in Scots, therefore, was an act with overt and inescapable cultural, even political, implications: a deliberate gesture of support for a denigrated tongue (1997: 29-30).

No doubt there is still an element of this defiance in Scottish writers but Lochhead goes a step further. Like her Ulster counterparts, she creates dialect writing capable of carrying tragic weight and gives gravitas to vernacular literature.

The complexity of language use in modern Scotland was summed up by Lynda Mugglestone in her contribution to the first collection of academic essays on Lochhead: *Liz Lochhead's Voices* (1993). In chapter 6, 'Lochhead's Language: Styles, Status, Gender and Identity', she writes:

> The fact of being Scottish adds of course an extra dimension to this sensitisation to the spoken word, the linguistic repertoire in Scotland incorporating not only Gaelic, but also the use of Scots and English in varying measures along a bi-polar continuum. Correlations between style, status and language in lowland Scotland range, for example, from the use of a more prestigious standard English, in varieties which embrace both Scottish and non-Scottish, to, at the other end of the spectrum, 'fully local non-standard varieties, in which the choice of Scottish elements (and Scottish phonology and phonetics) is maximal'.[136]
>
> [...] Language use in Scotland is therefore highly complex in the schema of differentiation it offers, and it is presumably this circumstance which leads Lochhead to assert the supreme value of Scots as a 'language for multiplicity of register' and for the foregrounding of social, gendered and geographical divisions, the modulation of voice and register which inevitably accompany every exchange (93-4).

When Mugglestone wrote this essay, she was a Fellow in English at Pembroke, Oxford and the recent author of *Talking Proper*, dealing with the notions of language and class.[137] For Lochhead, whereas identity—and, therefore, status—is part of the equation, authenticity also plays a major role in her choices. Lochhead's poetic theories are captured in an interview with Emily B. Todd in *Talking Verse*. Like Robert Frost, Lochhead is searching for a credible voice. She says:

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[136] Quoting A.J. Aitken: 'Scots and English in Scotland' in P. Trudgill's (ed.): *Language in the British Isles*, C.U.P. (1984: 527)
[137] O.U.P. (1993)

So I suppose I'm interested in voice, whether it's in drama, whether it's in poetry, or whether it's in fiction. I'm not particularly interested in poetry in which I can't hear the voice. (1995: 121)

According to Lochhead's stage direction upon Medea's entry, her physical appearance marks her out as '*somehow exotic*' (9) and her non-local speech continually reinforces her alien status, her 'otherness'. Graham McLaren, artistic director of Theatre Babel—the company's name speaking of a multi-lingual approach—commissioned the translation in search of a Scottish voice, within a transcendent piece of drama. In his brief preface to the printed text he writes:

With this project I wanted to create lasting work that would impact on Scottish culture [...] and so create plays that would transform great and ancient classical works into pieces that would speak not only directly to a Scottish audience but also of universal modern experience. (Unnumbered page.)

Both commissioner and creator saw vernacular writing as a means of identifying with an audience and of encouraging the audience to identify with the action. By 2000, Scottish Nationalism was on the march, both as a political movement and as a general mood. In 2010, a survey reported by the Scottish Parliament found a general affection for the Scots dialect—or separate Germanic language, as some claimed—even amongst those who used it sparingly. The report concluded that:

The two main themes to emerge are those of identity and heritage. These were each mentioned by around one in five of all those believing Scots is important. Additionally, culture and the need to keep the language alive were also mentioned by sizeable numbers, the latter highlighting that Scots is not just associated with the past. Secondary reasons for the importance of Scots include the idea that it is the natural language and because "we are Scottish". A number of other points were also brought up, although each by only very small percentages. These include factors such as liking the sound, making Scotland unique and being part of one's upbringing.[138]

Against such a climate of nationalism, Medea's 'Englishness' might not be an asset, prejudicing her case from the first time she opened her mouth.

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[138] *Public Attitudes Towards the Scots Language*, published on Scottish Government's website, 14/01/2010.

Lochhead's stage directions inform those who read them before watching the performance that the servants in Medea's household must be locals; their Scots-English is immediately apparent. What follows is a short section of the nurse's opening speech in which she comments on Medea's fate. On the page, it can be deciphered with a little linguistic knowledge, and reference to the ST, which would provide the gist. On stage, when clad in an accent, comprehension may prove more problematic, particularly as 'greet' has contradictory meanings between some dialects and Standard English:

> [...] she's chucked out like
> an old coat that nae langer fits him
> nae wonder Medea winna be comforted   shivers
> stinks of fear   canna eat
> canna sleep   greets till she can greet nae mair
> stares at the cauld grunn   greets again...greets sair
> try soothing her   she's a stone [...] (2000: 4)[139]

The contractions 'winna' and 'canna' have distinct final syllables, despite being vowels. There is probably the equivalent of the Cockney glottal stop between 'canna' and 'eat', rather than elision. We hear a rhythmic repetition in the three phrases:

> \   \   /   \   \   /
> stinks of fear   canna eat
> \ \   /
> canna sleep

The mounting emphasis to each unit, delivered with rising pitch, would reflect the natural cadence in which one enumerates troubles, metaphorically, or perhaps literally, counting them off on one's fingers.

When Medea describes her own woes to Kreon, she uses standard form, as the outsider. Not for her the homely metaphor of a cast-off coat; she returns to the seafaring that began her misfortune to find her comparisons:

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[139] All references taken from edition published by Nick Hern Books Ltd (2000). In future, page numbers only will be given. The preference for lower case and minimal punctuation is Lochhead's.

> I am in the worst of the storm and battered by it
> I'm all alone   it's all over for me
> no harbour   no haven
> not a cave to shelter in
> and this I ask you
> what have I done to deserve this?

Kreon answers in dialect:

> frankly I'm feart of you   why no?
> feart you hurt my daughter why no?
> you're a clever quine and cunning [...] (11)

'Quine' is a north-east Scots word for a female adolescent and thus demeaning. The dialect from this geographical region of Scotland is still called 'Doric'. 'Feart', too is claimed by Doric in Douglas Kynoch's Doric Dictionary (1996/2006). Lochhead's Kreon is not merely speaking in a vernacular tongue but in one that incorporates vocabulary from a regional variant deemed particularly broad.[140]

Despite the discrepancy in diction between Kreon and Medea, the two speeches have elements in common; the pattern of rhythmically parallel phrases as a stylistic device is evident in both these speeches, with Medea's 'no harbour   no haven' and Kreon's repeated 'why no?' Why should Kreon have a more vernacular tongue than his daughter or the chorus? The answer lies in the second half of Lochhead's stage direction: that the level of brogue varies, according to the '*particular emotional state of character*'. Kreon is the most afraid of Medea, for his daughter's sake. When he says to Medea of her homeland, 'get back there then why don't you?' his word order echoes Ulster English but is more than simply swapping over two halves of a sentence. The utterance has now taken on a sense of menace, the unspoken 'or else' hovering in the air. Question becomes threat in dialect form. When we meet Kreon's beloved Glauke, she has fewer vernacular traces than her father but there are instances: 'I'm no some lightweight [...]' (24). She is confident enough to maintain linguistic poise most of the time. Her use of vernacular is more assertiveness than fear.

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[140] See appendix 2.

Although the implication of Lochhead's stage direction is that only Medea and Jason should speak Standard English, it is also, somewhat inconsistently, the dialect of the chorus, albeit in a colloquial register:

> one day!　　one useless day!
> poor woman we feel for you
> where can you turn
> who'll take you in
> contaminated as you are
> with the worst luck that Gods could chuck at anyone
> it's an overwhelming sea　　you're in it up to here (15)

Lochhead creates her poetry through patterning. The two unpunctuated questions have the same rhythm, with the main stress on the interrogative and a rising cadence. Although quite free in creating her version of Euripides, she retains the sea metaphor of the ST, one of several references to the sea that reflect on Medea's previous adventures. The ST uses an ambiguous word—κλύδωνα—which means 'buffeted by rough seas' but also 'assailed by troubles'. The Loeb translation conflates both meanings:

> ὡς εἰς ἄπορόν σε κλύδωνα θεός,
> Μήδεια, κακῶν ἐπορευσεν. (*Med.* 362-3)
>
> (A god has cast you, Medea, into a hopeless sea
> of troubles.)[141]

Lochhead's 'overwhelming' has the same scope to be taken literally or metaphorically in the context of the play. Paulin, who published his *Medea* a decade later, gave the image an air of nautical realism:

> Medea a god has abandoned you
> in an open boat
> on a wide wide sea that has no shore. (2010: 20)[142]

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[141]　Greek extracts of *Medea* from Loeb edition (1994/2001), translated by David Kovacs.
[142]　Lower case and minimal punctuation is Paulin's.

Lochhead's chorus barely resorts to vernacular vocabulary, apart from 'bairns'. If slipping deeper into Scottish denotes emotional agitation, the chorus remains surprisingly calm. Even at the end, after the horror has been revealed, the chorus is resolutely standard:

> Gods stop her   if Gods you are!
> Mother Earth open up and swallow her now
> before she forever defiles you
> with the spilt blood of her own children (43).

Despite this anomaly of the chorus, the linguistic 'message' of the play is that, for the Scots, Standard English defines an outsider, in addition to Lochhead's point that vernacular language will broaden with extreme emotions as the true mother tongue, whereas Standard English is an acquired veneer. Vernacular serves as an emotional barometer and, thus, Lochhead embeds stage directions in her verse, based on the degree of divergence from the standard form. Kreon has a heavily vernacular voice throughout, being continually agitated by the presence of Medea. The manservant illustrates a clear emotional/linguistic shift in his role as messenger. He begins relatively formally:

> the ceremony was done
> Kreon kissed his daughter
> shook the hand of her new husband
> and took his leave [...] (40)

By the end of the speech, he has been overtaken by terror:

>   Medea
> by the Gods I'm feart frae you
> mair feart even than I am feart o Jason
> and the soldiers he'll bring with him
> to torch this place (42).

Lochhead obviously sees dialect as something shared by a community and to which even high status characters will revert, in times of stress. It defines people at a deep level. As a Scottish writer, she naturally sees the English, with their non-Scots accent, as outsiders. It is a potent way to define Medea on a Scottish stage. Lochhead shows her attitude to language overtly in

her poem 'Kidspoem/Bairnsang' which switches between a very strong Scottish dialect to more standard English. The poem shows how school 'educates' children out of their native vernacular. She writes:

> it wis January
> and a gey driech day
> the first day Ah went to the school
> so my Mum happed me up in ma
> good navy-blue napp coat wi the rid tartan hood
> birled a scarf aroon ma neck
> pu'ed oan ma pixie an' my pawkies
> it wis that bitter
> said noo ye'll no starve
> gie'd me a wee kiss and a kid-oan skelp oan the bum
> and sent me aff across the playground
> tae the place A'd learn to say
> it was January
> and a really dismal day
> the first day I went to school
> so my mother wrapped me up in my
> best navy-blue top coat with the red tartan hood,
> twirled a scarf around my neck,
> pulled on my bobble-hat and mittens
> it was so bitterly cold
> said now you won't freeze to death
> gave me a little kiss and a pretend slap on the bottom
> and sent me off across the playground
> to the place I'd learn to forget to say
> it wis January [...] (2003: 19-20)

Lochhead views this as a betrayal not only of her roots but also of her class and gender. The poem concludes:

> Oh saying it was one thing
> But when it came to writing it
> In black and white
> The way it had to be said
> Was as if you were posh, grown-up, male, English and dead.

She reflects McClure's opinion about 'the traditional enforcement of English and suppression of Scots in the schools'. He wrote:

> Schoolteachers who despair of eliciting any response from children in the assertively "proper English"-speaking environment of classrooms have been known to be surprised at the fluency of their charges when they resume their native vernacular in the playground (1997: 53).

Not all of Lochhead's poetry is written in the Scottish vernacular; she selects it to make a political point about language and we must, therefore, take note of her choices as part of the message in her writing. Indeed, these choices are foregrounded by the fact that much of Lochhead's verse is in more standard form, although colloquial, only employing native nouns for native objects as necessary.

One of Lochhead's earliest poetry collections was *Memo for Spring* (1972) which she refers to in the *Talking Verse* interview, saying:

> Probably if I think of *Memo for Spring*, it was the idea of forging-out a Scottish and female and working-class and contemporary identity as a writer. I would probably say that was the function of those poems for me. (1995: 121)

Her working-class roots are not as apparent as her Scottish ones. The poetic voice of Lochhead's mother speaks in standard form though she is able to slip into vernacular when describing a local Hogmanay custom:

> Darling, it's thirty years since
> anybody was able to trick me,
> December thirtyfirst, into
> '*looking into a mirror to see a lassie*
> *wi' as minny heids as days in the year*' – [...] (2003:45)

Many of Lochhead's cultural references are recognisably middle class, with a bohemian edge. In 'Black and White Allsorts' she lists:

> a liquorice bootlace
> a cultured pearl necklace
> a little black dress
> lux flakes, snowflakes
> sno-pake, tippex

a black bra
a zebra, an op-art umbrella
ebony, ivory, a black Sobranie, a skunk
a black eye, a white feather, a pool of printers ink (2003:104)

In *Memo for Spring*, Lochhead's language is almost timeless and placeless. Many of the poems have a feminist 'take' on love, such as 'How Have I Been Since You Last Saw Me?' Lochhead describes in very precise language, avoiding the contraction, how, since her lover's departure, she has seen 'one or two films you would have liked/ with other men' (1972: 7). The Scottish dimension creeps out in this collection in tiny linguistic moments. When writing of her dead uncle, Robert, as 'a real nice lad' in 'Grandfather's Room' (20), she substitutes the adjective 'real' for the standard adverb 'really, just like Paulin's guard, and uses the word 'peever' for hopscotch in 'Poem for My Sister' (24). Scottish popular fiction—aiming for credibility rather than engaging in language politics—supports the proposition of an easy bilingualism. One example suffices. Craig Robertson sets detective novels in Glasgow. In his 2013 book, *Witness the Dead*, a detective comments: 'That is not information we shall be sharing outwith the confines of the room' (68). In a generally standard utterance, correctly using the word 'confines', the non-standard 'outwith', for 'outside', is offered as a norm.[143] The detective has no extreme dialect use within the novel. In a similar vein, another detective tells two suspects: 'If only you two eejits had the brains to make life easier for yourselves' (260). We met the same dialect word, which drags out its first syllable for emphasis, with Paulin's guard. The detective is addressing two men of lower social status to himself. The evidence within this minor literary work suggests that most Scots have the native vernacular at their disposal, when appropriate.

Lochhead's later corpus demonstrates this bilingualism, moving deftly between Standard English and Scottish vernacular. She recognises the everyday language choices of her fellow Scots in *Talking Verse* when she says:

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[143] 'Outwith' inverts the elements of 'without' which used to mean 'outside' rather than 'lacking', hence: 'There is a green hill far away/without a city wall'.

> There are all kinds of very, very local and particular class and almost gender and certainly geographical divisions which, you know, are mostly about class. Lots of Scots speakers, we have different ways of speaking. You know, I speak differently to my sister from the way I speak to you. And certainly that would be different from how I sort of had spoken to my grandmother where I'd probably fall naturally ... without thinking I'll now use a different voice. And there's probably a posher voice that I would reach to when I'm talking to the BBC. I'm not talking about putting on voices. I'm talking about voices that are natural to you. I mean this is true of everybody. It's a truism. But in Scots that kind of thing is very marked. (125)

Once again, just as when defining Medea's Standard English sociolect as 'good', Lochhead suggests a movement 'up' registers, from family vernacular to formal BBC interview, which entrenches class attitudes. The formal circumstances require a 'posher' tone, removed from Scots. This perception by many that non-standard English suggests a lower-status sociolect renders vernacular writing fraught and bedevils attitudes to dialect in Britain. Tom Leonard tackles the class reaction to broad Glaswegian head on in his humorous poem, titled 'Unrelated Incidents—No 3' which opens:

> this is thi
> six a clock
> news thi
> man said n
> thi reason
> a talk wia
> BBC accent
> iz coz yi
> widny wahnt
> mi ti talk
> aboot thi
> trooth wia
> voice lik
> wanna yoo
> scruff. if
> a toktaboot
> thi trooth
> lik wanna yoo
> scruff yi
> widny thingk
> wuz troo. (1984: 88)

Unlike Lochhead, Leonard does not accept the concept that 'posh' is a superior register. In the same anthology, tellingly named *Intimate Voices*, he passes no moral judgement on young men who react to Standard Form with deadly violence. Their attitude is established in the first three lines of 'No Light':

> "i've not got a light,"
> hi sayz, dead posh
> so a looksit wullie [...] (59)

Leonard resents the description 'restricted register' being applied to working-class vernacular, with the inbuilt cultural bias that underpins the notion. The second of 'Four Conceptual Poems', phrased like exam questions, looks at how those deprived of language-rights may turn to physical aggression:

> In what ways do extra-verbal kinetics affect class-accent communication? (123)

The tenor of Leonard's poems is that some accents seem more trustworthy than others in a way that is prejudicial for certain language communities. The poems touch on the problems of comprehensibility but deal mainly with the issue of class. Unlike some other countries, such as France, where a regional accent once pervaded all social strata in the area, the 'educated' classes in Britain eschewed such universality and created a social divide which still has currency. We might talk of a 'Brummie' accent but it will be far more apparent in Aston than Edgbaston. Where a writer gives vernacular speech to low-status characters, therefore, is s/he finding an authentic voice for them, or reinforcing social divisions? Paulin may be using satire in his creation of Creon but it is the guard who appears inept and clownish. Paulin, in particular, on the *Late Review* show, was famous for his 'plummy' voice, intellectual elitism and patronising snubs of the author Tony Parsons, with his strong East London accent. Paulin does not employ the Ulster vernacular beyond selected writing; both he and Heaney are intermittent users of dialect. Paulin's vernacular anthology includes none of his poems and just one by Heaney, *Broagh*, which is written in Standard English, using standard orthography. Apart from five

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lexical items, all native nouns, its main claim to be a vernacular poem is the reference to the Irish language in the final stanza:

> [...] ended almost
> suddenly, like that last
> *gh* the strangers found
> difficult to manage. (1990: 207)

Ted Hughes's 'Thistles' is included on similar grounds. He likens the thistles to: 'pale hair and the gutturals of dialect'. (1990: 340) Both the poems are writing *about* the sounds of dialects they know, rather than *in* dialect. This absence of vernacular writing elsewhere in no way invalidates the attempt by Heaney, Paulin, or other contributors to the Field Day Theatre Company to create texts suited to a particular community but serves to emphasise the fact that both Heaney and Paulin were making language choices selectively, where they enhanced the political message of their work, rather than embedding vernacular in their wider canon.

Writing in dialect is not new but has previously tended to be for comic effect. Aristophanes' Megarian, an ally of Sparta, when trying to pass off his daughters as pigs, is marked as non-Attic by the replacement of other vowels with *alpha*, for example: Ἑρμᾶ ᾽μπολαῖε, τὰν γυναῖκα τὰν ἐμὰν (*Ach.* 186). In combination with a broad accent, this would no doubt have signalled his yokel status to a delighted Athenian audience, much as the generic West Country accent known as 'Mummerset' by British actors—a portmanteau word, combining 'mummer' and 'Somerset'—signals 'country bumpkin' to us. Interestingly, in light of what we have discussed about the status of Scottish English, and specifically Glaswegian, Sommerstein's translation for *Penguin Classics* renders the Megarian's speech into broad Scottish, including the traditional orthography that indicates a long vowel with a following 'i':

> Meg: Can ye believe it? Luik! Why will this mon no trust me? He says this is no a porker. Well and guid: I'll bet ye a block o' salt flavoured wi' thyme that *this* is what a' Greeks call pork (1973/2002: 43, 770-4)

Of course Greek comedy contained political comment but the use of dialect was probably little more than a vehicle for crude comic stereotypes—including insults against perceived enemies—which played to the Athenians' belief in their own superiority to all things foreign. Something of that attitude still clings to the English. Sommerstein is not the first to 'burlesque' the Scots; The Victorian, Benjamin Bickley Rogers did the same for the Spartans in *Lysistrata*. Lampito enters with: 'Weel, by the Twa, I think sae./ An' I can loup an' fling an' kick my hurdies' (1955: 290), while the Laconian Herald asks: 'Whaur sall a body fin' the Athanian senate,/ Or the gran' lairds? ' (325). In the tragedies we have been considering in this chapter, however, vernacular is generally part of a strategy to engage with political issues involving intense nationalism. It is not to provoke laughter or to insult a language community.

Sommerstein and Rogers provide a phonetic rendition of Scottish dialect, as seen in the extracts, which is another point to consider. Writing a work largely in Standard English, which fits the cadences and accents of a particular vernacular, is one approach to accessibility and local engagement. Fixing a text for all time with forms and spelling that require a particular accent on stage is a much more limiting concept. Sommerstein's 'no a porker' would have to be rewritten to remove its obvious regional form; a different, perhaps less inflammatory, stereotype introduced—should there be one—to retain the comedy. With a vernacular chosen purely for comic effect, such a change might not affect artistic integrity, but there are regional sound qualities which could be lost in replacement. When Lochhead's manservant talks of being 'mair feart' of Medea than of Jason, that rich combination of long vowels and rolling 'r' sound, which draws out the phrase in speech, disappears in standard form.

In our supposedly politically correct age, we must always be cautious about the use of dialect. Adopting the cadence of a population, to facilitate delivery by native actors, may be a virtuous enterprise that gives a voice to minority communities; dialect as a reinforcement of social stereotypes, on the other hand, is questionable. Furthermore, it is a self-limiting device, as Paulin implied in his interview on *Medea*. He had 'moved on' and his text, in Standard English, formed part of a production that toured widely in the U.K. without any linguistic barrier to

understanding. In *A New Look at the Language Question*, Paulin holds up the Standard English of Samuel Beckett as a wonderful, neutral tongue: 'a form of ideal, international English' (1983: 14). He is using 'ideal' in its platonic sense, drawing on a 1712 pamphlet of Swift's, which might have led its readers to deduce the need for an academy, on French lines although, as Paulin points out, Swift 'strategically avoided mentioning the idea' (6).[144] In *Ireland and the English Crisis*, which Paulin dedicated to Brian Friel and Stephen Rea as 'founders of Field Day', he writes an essay entitled: 'In the Beginning Was the Aeneid: On Translation', in which he says:

> As Seamus Deane has pointed out, the translator has been of extraordinary importance in Irish writing. There is a long tradition of translation from Gaelic into Irish English and the result is 'a kind of interstitial literature which responds to the genius of both tongues' and so effects a form of reconciliation that is far in advance of political reality. [...] This strong and autochthonous tradition of translation is complemented by a more recent interest in translating classical and European poetry into Irish English. (1984: 214)

Translation thus becomes an act of reconciliation between cultures which is a noble aspiration for all practitioners.

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[144] *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue.*

Dynamic equivalence: the "quality of a translation in which the message of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that the response of the receptor is essentially like that of the original receptors." (Eugene Nida, 1914-2011)[145]

Eugene Nida made his important contribution to linguistics from the late 1940s into the early 21st century, almost until his death aged 96. His concept of dynamic or functional equivalence directly challenged philologists, in acknowledging a subjective response to language, beyond the self-contained semantic understanding of a text. The theory was definitely not a rebranding of 'sense-for-sense', although it has been seen as such by some, but espoused instead a rhetorical concept: to recreate, through translation, the original impact for modern readers or audiences. Formal equivalence 'focuses attention on the message itself' whereas dynamic equivalence is designed to 'replicate the relationship between receptor and message' (1964: 159).

Nida advocated a 'complete naturalness of expression' and 'modes of behaviour relevant within the context of his own culture' (159) so has some relevance in consideration of play texts, where the aim is to communicate with the diverse catchment of a theatre audience and to engage its emotions as well as intellect. Nida, with his some-time collaborator Taber, asked important questions not just about the theory of translation but its function for the receiver. Other translation theories, in examining the purpose of various types of STs and TTs, imply an assortment of reader responses but Nida made this explicit: it was not sufficient to transmit the meaning of words; one must also transmit their potency.

Nida, with Taber, evolved their theory for a restricted field: the Bible. Nida was aware of pitfalls, describing 'the deep personal attachment of many people and the vast, vested interests of numerous institutions' (1964: 26). With such a privileged text, a conservative tendency is inevitable. All the textual examples in *The Theory and Practice of Translation* are drawn from the Bible and lucidity is the aim of both theory and practice. Nonetheless, there is awareness

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[145] *The Theory and Practice of Translation, With Special Reference to Biblical Translation*, (2003: 200) with Charles Taber.

that readers do not form a homogeneous mass, and recognition of 'a number of socio-educational levels of speech and comprehension' amongst bible readers, all of whom seek an absolute clarity of message (2003: 2). The translator must fine-tune register but respect an enduring content, transmitting a sense of continuity with the past. In the world of drama, by contrast, theatregoers thirst for originality, as well as recognition of the familiar text, and are willing to contemplate a novel interpretation. Furthermore, the demographic of theatre audiences in Britain tends to the higher socio-economic groups, informed people prepared to wrestle with the metaphorical and subtle to a significant degree. Unlike the bible, language is certainly a key aspect of staging a play, but not the only one, nor always the most important. Furthermore, in attempting to recreate a particular theatrical experience we would inevitably fail because of the multiplicity of shifting political, cultural and social factors that determine our reception of drama. The potent religious significance in classical Athens is now lost to us, as Harley Granville-Barker pointed out a century ago (below, 243). Such external contexts of drama are virtually impossible to reproduce across centuries.

Greek drama provides unique challenges for the modern director. The number of successful productions in recent years may lead us to underestimate the alien qualities, some of which cannot be fully naturalised. A sophisticated audience will accept a 'wordy' play but the modern theatrical trend—in competition with film and television—is 'show, don't tell'. In certain areas of life, such as politics and law, oracy still predominates as it did in 5th-century Athens but elsewhere literacy triumphs and we have lost a certain aptitude in processing the spoken word at speed, especially when dealing with complexities. Greek drama evolved in an era when Socrates could, allegedly, corrupt a generation through the power of discourse, yet leave not a trace in writing, while Plato purported to recreate these conversations, from memory, after a single hearing. The modern audience for Greek drama is not yet limited to dealing in mini-soundbites; we may, however, desire what Bernard Knox labelled the 'visual correlative' when

reviewing a production of *Agamemnon* directed by Andrei Serban, who brought reported actions onstage (1979: 75).[146] Knox explained his thinking thus:

> [...] a modern audience, unused to hearing poetry even of the simplest sort, cannot see in imagination or experience in emotion the events over which the chorus broods in choral lyrics [...] (1979: 73)

Since we no longer view our drama in a sacred space, at risk of pollution by even the imitation of violence, the presentation of messenger speeches and choral episodes in particular is open to re-evaluation by directors. Nowhere is this more true than in *Agamemnon*, a spectacular *tour de force* for its chorus, which claims almost half of the play's lines. Again, Bernard Knox was sensitive to the theatrical problem this poses for a modern director when he wrote of the Aeschylean chorus:

> Yet to modern ears, no matter how reductively simple the translations, they are hard to follow, even if they are intelligibly delivered (which is often not the case) [...] (1979: 73)

Knox's analysis explains the critics' consternation when faced with Harrison's choruses in Peter Hall's production, which they found incomprehensible. It also invites the licence a poet might employ, either to make irresistible the invitation to a 'visual correlative', as Hughes did in his description of Iphigenia's sacrifice, or else to find some modern equivalence to carry the ST's theme. Even blind or deaf audience members nowadays no longer rest content with half a performance but receive a description of actions via aural technology or follow dialogue via captions, so important is the melding of word and image for the modern theatregoer.

Nida and Taber were pioneers in considering the reader's responses in ways which we can apply in part to our theatre audience. From the start, they flag up a subjective level of understanding:

> Even the old question: Is this a correct translation? must be answered in terms of another question, namely: For whom? (1)

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[146] One of a number of reviews collected in *Word and Action* (1979).

The nature of such subjectivity is briefly explained further into the book:

> Dynamic equivalence in translation is far more than mere correct communication of information. In fact, one of the most essential, and yet often neglected elements is the expressive factor, for people must also feel as well as comprehend what is said. (25)

We may safely assume that most academic translators will not prioritise this aspect of a text over meaning. In contrast, for the literary translator, subjective choice plays a major role, and a complete theatrical experience is the desired end. We would expect, therefore, that poets—and other creative translators—who are directly commissioned by a theatre company, will reconfigure STs to promote relevance and/or impact, within the context of a full-blooded performance. Some, it is true, veer from the path of translation altogether; a classical text becoming merely the stimulus for a tangential piece of original writing, driven by contemporary tastes. It was ever thus. Shakespeare, for example, nodded substantially to Seneca with his early play, *Titus Andronicus*, but the outrageous story had no direct classical source, while in the 21st century, Moira Buffini took a divergent approach in *Welcome to Thebes*, her 2010 National Theatre production, reconfiguring the Antigone story to an African context (perhaps Rwanda), imagining a female ruler with a more conciliatory approach than Creon. Harrison's *Prometheus*, which we shall examine in detail, is a more problematic example of adaptation. For others, despite what scholars might consider very free treatment of STs, the intention is still to engage with the ancient voice and to mediate it for a modern audience. This chapter explores the extent of poetic licence: what does this mediation achieves in practice, for reader and, most importantly, for an audience?

We are generally open to such transmutations; indeed, we expect a directorial imprint on productions and may seek out a favourite practitioner. When Katie Mitchell cut the gods from her *Women of Troy* at the National Theatre in 2007, she made it clear in the contemporaneous platform talk that she wanted an amoral universe, where supernatural elements did not exist to intervene. She imposed her bleak interpretation of the human condition.[147] What remained, however, was recognisably Euripides and still communicated the shocking aftermath of war.

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[147] The platform talk is available to view at National Theatre archives.

Whereas Mitchell had her own rationale for omitting the supernatural, a side-effect was that the 20th-century audience no longer had to absorb the completely alien concept of being abandoned by patron gods. It was similar to omitting the scene in *Macbeth*—almost inevitable nowadays— in which Malcolm discusses kingship with Edward in England. Such a verbose 'two-hander' is not to modern theatrical taste nor does it chime with modern politics. The cut does not destroy the impact of the large remnant, however, and enhances the pace of action for many. A poet, frequently in a symbiotic working relationship with a director, similarly shapes his/her TT to the contemporary palate and thus will indulge in translation liberties impossible for the academic. There are three main prongs to such re-shaping: creative lexical choices, importing topical references to replace ancient ones and shifting the emphasis, by omitting sections of the ST and/or adding supplementary material.

The poets examined in chapters 1 and 2 have employed all three of these modernising techniques, and we have already considered lexical examples such as the use of vernacular, which not only applies to our Irish and Scottish poets but also to Harrison. When *The Trackers of Oxyrhynchus* was staged in Australia, modification of both grammar and lexicon were required. The former gave sentences a cadence suited to the Australian HRT inflexion; the latter clarified meaning.[148] Hughes is known for stressing his Calder Valley roots but it does not impact significantly on his work, beyond a terseness of style. We have, however, noted his shifting of emphasis, adding venom to already-toxic family relationships in the *Oresteia*. Heaney, too, embroidered the theme of intransigence in *The Cure at Troy*. Reinterpretation is a touchstone of the modern translation for the stage. While the classicist studies the original mindset of a ST, theatre practitioners, including the writer, seek contemporary relevance. The examples in this chapter, however, are those that push a little harder at the boundaries between translation and adaptation.

Whatever their approach and their exercise of licence, for poets the ST is a stimulus, not a translation exercise, with the possible exception of Browning. He wrestled directly with the SL,

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[148] An anecdote from Lucy Jackson, Early Career Fellow, at King's College, London, who was personally involved, recounted on 27/10/2014.

and the culture that shaped it, but was part of a small minority; most poets are reading in English, at one step removed from the original. Ironically, they often use a scholarly edition, whilst bemoaning its blandness, but finding, nonetheless, the soil in which their fancies grow. However quirky a particular translation might seem to a serious student of classical texts, all those we have considered, barring Browning's, have found favour with a director at an early point in their published history, and all our 20th- and 21st-century poets embrace this dramatic engagement, which most past scholars ignored. We must acknowledge, however, that those boundaries are shifting, and many modern academics have thrown off a strictly philological approach, exploring Greek drama as potential theatre. Some join the world of practitioners; others advise practitioners.

Before we turn to our poets in practice, let us examine how the traditional scholarly approach falls short of communicating dramatic effect. A line from Euripides' *Ion* illustrates the point. In the ST, Euripides writes:

ἔστιν γὰρ οὐκ ἄσημος Ἑλλήνων πόλις (*Ion* 8)

It is a wonderful piece of litotes: 'For there is, not without mark, a city of the Greeks [...]' In the current Loeb edition, David Kovacs renders this as: 'There is a famous Greek city [...]' (1999: 323). No disrespect to Kovacs is intended; he is a respected academic translator. The gist of Euripides is clearly communicated. Kovacs has, however, eliminated Euripides' trope and thus diminishes our comprehension of the original experience, in as far as we can grasp it. Euripides was puffing up the false modesty of watching Athenians who, to a man, luxuriated in the conceit that their city was the most glorious on earth. Had not Pericles told them as much in his funeral oration some 15 years previously?[149] Our 5th-century audience would have responded with pride to Hermes's pointed understatement. 'Famous', too, is a neutral choice compared to legitimate options such as 'illustrious', for example. A deliberate poetic device has been abandoned, for the sake of clarity and an unobtrusive style. In doing so, the theatrical impact is also undermined. Edwardian translator E.P. Coleridge maintained the integrity of

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[149] Thucydides: *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2: 34-46

Euripides' trope with 'a city [...] of no small note', so there need be no absolute divide between creativity and scholarship.[150] Indeed, Gilbert Murray revelled in poetic devices, as we have already seen. In the main, however, one might expect that a literary practitioner would be more sensitive to creative language-use by a fellow-poet than the average philologist.

Perhaps we accept as self-evident that such nuances of the ST must be lost in translation. Michael Walton points out the difficulties of translating the Greek playwrights in the introduction to *Found in Translation*:

> One of the factors that make Greek playwrights difficult to translate is that they were, in their own day, the *avant-garde*. Aeschylus uses coinages which are not found anywhere else in surviving Greek literature. Sophocles incorporates emotional contrasts which have their physical, hence visual counterparts. Euripides uses a mixture of colloquial and forensic language to make the plays sound as though spoken by fifth-century Athenians, not miscellaneous Greeks from that distanced and unfocused past which was the Greek confluence of myth and history. (2006: 3)

Walton's opinion that the surviving Greek playwrights were '*avant-garde*' in their own times is a pertinent reflection, a reminder that preserving vibrant, innovative theatre as a staid literary fossil does it an injustice. Finding a contemporary 'hook' offers scope to reanimate an ancient friend and our poets are engaged in a worthwhile quest as they seek some kind of dynamic equivalence, for want of a better shorthand.

Walton has clearly-stated views on translation for the stage, which acknowledge the complex interplay between the various practitioners involved and, ultimately, supports modernisation of context:

> A consolation in any search [for a translation] is the fundamental imperative that drove Aeschylus and is shared by today's translator/director/performer. Whatever else can be discovered by scholars and critics in the extant written text, Aeschylus' own priority had to reside in the immediacy of performance before an audience as diverse in experience, intellect and concentration as might be expected in any modern theatre. (9)

Combining Translation Theory with Reception Studies, Walton goes on to say:

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[150] From print-to-order *Digireads* edition.

> The desire to represent a classical play as contemporary may be a deliberate and unapologetic appropriation but the justification is a simple one. However laudable the desire to do justice to the playwrights of antiquity within their own milieu, a modern performance is for a modern audience. Anything that comes under the broad banner of cultural transference is inevitably writ large when considering Greek tragedy. There is always likely to be a gulf between those whose classical training demands a respect for the play on the page, in the context of the society of ancient Greece, and those for whom text is pretext, no more than a map from which they wish to create a landscape of their own imagination. (15)

Walton understands the crucial point that, in theatre terms, the play text is merely a pretext for a dramatic event, or a 'manual for performance', as Ben Power described it, when discussing his recent version of *Medea* for the National Theatre.[151] The thrust of Walton's book is how translations in English work as performances, not texts. His choice of the word 'gulf' above implies a significant divide between the imperatives of philologists and of theatre practitioners. An inevitable blandness creeps into the purely scholarly, with its 'respect for the play on the page'. Hugh Lloyd-Jones, who edited Sophocles before translating three of his plays for the Loeb series, says modestly of his efforts in the preface:

> My translation has no literary pretensions, being intended as an aid to those who wish to understand the Greek text that is printed opposite. (1994/1997: vii)

This begs the question of what it means to 'understand' a text, which Walton touches on in the extract from his book quoted above and which is implicit in Nida's discussion of subjective response. Lloyd-Jones, like many academics, views comprehension at the level of lexicon and grammar and comments on the emendations he has made from his 1990 Oxford Classical Text: 'because in a few places I have changed my opinion'. This kind of translation may tell us much about the Greek language but can it transmit the intentions and impact of the ST? T.S Eliot made a plea for creativity in translation in his 1920 essay: 'Euripides and Professor Murray'. It was a quality he believed Murray lacked (but Ezra Pound promised):

> We need an eye which can see the past in its place, with its definite differences from the present, and yet so lively that it shall be as present to us as the present. This is the

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[151] 'Staging Greek Tragedy Today' at University College, London, 14/02/2015.

creative eye; and it is because Professor Murray has no creative instinct that he leaves Euripides quite dead'. (1920/69: 64)

The greatest poet of his day, the man who both inspired and mentored Ted Hughes, sets the bar high. He wants the creative translator both to recognise the exotic 'differences' in the ST and to make it natural to our present lives. Eliot did not want a 'highbrow' style, despite his own intellectual genius; he wanted something that worked in performance. His 1920 description of Murray's *Medea* was both scathing and satirical:

> [...] the refined Dalcroze chorus had mellifluous voices which rendered their lyrics happily inaudible. All this contributed towards the highbrow effect which is so depressing; and we imagine the actors of Athens, who had to speak clearly enough for 20,000 auditors to be able to criticize the versification, would have been pelted with figs and olives had they mumbled so unintelligibly as most of this troupe. But the Greek actor spoke in his own language, and our actors were forced to speak the language of Professor Gilbert Murray. (1969: 59-60)

Eliot also demanded that a translation retained the economy and tautness of the ST, something he thought beyond Gilbert Murray. Nida and Taber, however, amongst others, point out that additional length is almost a given of the translation process, whether by poet or philologist since both are:

> [...] obliged to make explicit in the receptor language what could very well remain implicit in the source-language text. (2003:163)[152]

In fact, Murray is perfectly capable of both succinctness and clarity. In the first choral section of the *Agamemnon*, the old men explain their position:

> ἡμεῖς δ᾽ ἀτίται σαρκὶ παλαιᾷ
> τῆς τότ᾽ ἀρωγῆς ὑπολειφθέντες
> μίμνομεν ἰσχὺν
> ἰσόπαιδα νέμοντες ἐπὶ σκήπτροις (72-5)

> (But we, who because of our ancient flesh could
> not then contribute to the force in support, and
> were left behind, remain here, guiding our
> childlike strength upon staffs.)

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[152] Nida and Taber use 'receptor language' instead of TL.

The Loeb translation has a complex structure, with subordinate clauses interrupting the main

statement. Murray retains the sense but unravels the sentence into co-ordinate clauses:

> And they left us here; for our flesh is old
> And servest not; and these staves uphold
> A strength like the strength of a child at play.

Whereas Loeb has the somewhat clumsy and over-precise: 'contribute to the force in support',

Murray has the pithy and intelligible: 'And servest not'. His only embroidery is for the phrase

ἰσχὺν ἰσόπαιδα—rendered literally by Loeb as childlike strength—to which Murray adds 'at

play', bringing to life a general observation. In a collection of tribute essays, Dame Sybil

Thorndike writes movingly of the profound effect Murray's work had on her. She says:

> [...] I feel it is a great privilege to have the opportunity of voicing aloud the gratitude I
> feel towards him [Murray] for inspiration and new vision of life that he gave me.
> (1936: 69)

She remembers both Murray's popularity and his modesty:

> I remember once at a performance of one of his plays the audience shouting and
> yelling for him, with cries of "Murray! Author!" and he got up from his seat in the
> theatre and said that the author had been dead for many hundreds of years! (72)

Eliot's biting comments on the difficulty for actors of Murray's verse finds no counterpart with

the actor concerned. Instead, Thorndike is enchanted by Murray's ability to reach a wide

audience—as Nida would have approved. She describes his *Trojan Women* thus:

> Something of Murray's own deep conviction and faith seemed to shine through his
> interpretation and permeate us who were the actors. So huge a play and occasion
> necessitated sinking of personal selves in order to transcend and become a universal
> self. A play must be a great one that can make this happen to its actors and audience,
> and we had the example of Gilbert Murray, who had rendered this play into something
> which was living for the present-day, striving, anxious world.
>
> [...] Yes, that play spoke to a war-ridden world and made us one with those who had
> suffered thousands of years ago, and we knew we were all part one of another—all
> ages and all times—in our quest for light and strength. (73-4)

Murray managed to touch his audience whilst remaining faithful to his STs but most poets transmute their sources, including the 'cultural transference' that Walton describes. We shall consider whether these transmutations respect the integrity of the ST, beyond 'the context of the society of ancient Greece' and perhaps enhance our appreciation. Indeed, what is the 'integrity' of an ancient play-text: the linguistic meaning ascribed to it by scholars or its continuing ability to fire the imagination in the theatre? What factors distinguish a translation made to ignite the present, rather than to illuminate the past?

Walton believes that the opening up of Greek drama 'in recent years' has demonstrated:

> [...] a theatrical awareness on the part of the ancient dramatists that reveals them as profoundly effective makers of plays. It may be as much the responsibility of the translator to address this aspect of their craft as it is to find any linguistic match. (2006: 15)

In the same work, when discussing the *Agamemnon*, he also posits:

> There is certainly an argument that the shade of Aeschylus is better off in the translating hands of a poet than of an academic. Shapiro and Burian combine the two in a joint translation. There is an equally strong argument that the Greeks are better served by a playwright than by a poet. (60)

In this argument, Walton sets up a false dichotomy between poets and playwrights—the Greek tragedians being both. Harrison and Hughes gained theatrical insights with Northern Broadside. Hughes showed a great fondness for theatre in his wide range of translations from the European repertoire and dramatic texts form a significant proportion of Harrison's output. Heaney and Paulin were founder members of Field Day. They all follow the long tradition of poet-playwrights and are more than capable of addressing the aspect of theatricality within the ST and to do justice to the dramaturgical craft of their ancient fellows.

The poets under consideration have not only generated ephemeral but effective performances; their written texts have an afterlife. Studied on the page, certain commonalities swiftly emerge.

Unlike most scholarly translators, poets unsurprisingly favour verse, whether free or structured. This imperative drove Gilbert Murray but was not his alone. Sir Harley Granville-Barker, probably the most influential actor-manager of his day and dedicated to raising standards in the commercial theatre, demanded for Greek tragedy: 'a formal decorative beauty, scarcely attainable in English without the aid of rhyme' which Bernard Knox quotes before his own bleak verdict on Murray's output, criticising:

> [...] the faintly spastic effect of rhymes which usually do not point up and sometimes work against the sense, the insistence on rhyme over hundreds of lines of dramatic dialogue exacts a heavy price in warped syntax, violent inversions, and, above all, fulsome padding. (1979: 57)

Granville-Barker had appreciated the pitfalls in the staging of Greek drama. In a tribute essay to Murray, he comments bluntly: 'These are not our gods' (1936: 238). Most of his analysis, however, is more measured but his underlying belief is that 'dramatic form can best be appreciated [...] in the external conditions that gave it birth' (240). Granville-Barker wanted a modern performance of Greek drama to generate emotion, otherwise 'the play will not be a living thing at all but a "museum piece", and out of place in a theatre' (241). He precedes Nida with the idea that there is a subjective response to language and honours Murray for his approach to theatre:

> I have heard Murray's translations severely dealt with by critics of a certain school. They have known the original Greek better than I (they easily might), so I have been disabled from argument. I could only hope that they knew it as well as Murray does. I have had to point out that, in any case, something more than what they are calling translation is involved. First as well as last, at the desk as well as in the theatre, it will be a question of interpretation. What has to be done is not to translate so many Greek sentences correctly, or even poetically, but to take a Greek play which was a living thing two thousand years ago and provide for its interpreting as a living thing to an audience of to-day. The translator is the first of the interpreters, and he must provide his actors with a text which they can not only understand but feel, by which they may express themselves [...] as spontaneously as possible, and to which their audience may as spontaneously as possible respond. And by however much the result lacks this essential vitality the interpreters will—however excusably—have failed. (243)

Murray left no original poetry. He was a craftsman, rather than artist, and worked within the prejudices of his age. Knox talks of time rescinding its favourable opinion of Murray, but that

means little more than confirming how literary taste is fickle. Tony Harrison escapes the clumsiness that Knox (and others) perceived in Murray, with his shapely closed couplets and a careful pointing of themes through a potent use of language, but still faces dwindling theatrical acceptance of his verse. Nonetheless, all of Murray's sensitivities about theatre are alive in Harrison and our other poets, although they stray a little further from their STs than the professor of Classics to achieve their end.

Scholars can elucidate obscure points and textual difficulties through the footnotes, a convention virtually non-existent for a poet (although Eliot employs endnotes for *The Wasteland*). The need to explain themes and allusions from a ST within the body of a TT, acts as a significant goad to modernisation. The translator and academic, Margaret Williamson, works with Timberlake Wertenbaker, who declines the use of a written 'crib' when translating, to avoid subliminal influence. Williamson provides oral input, as she discussed in an APGRD lecture: 'Translating for the Stage'.[153] She quotes Wertenbaker's comment that 'there is no such thing as a footnote in a theatre' which supports the case for updating our frame of reference where the original significance is lost. Whilst learned programme notes can enlighten us about aspects of a play as a whole, they cannot unpick the minutiae of a work. Nonetheless, there are ways to bridge the comprehension gap in a free translation. When Wertenbaker has Menelaus give the following speech in *Our Ajax*, she makes overt a theme in the ST which could stand as an epitaph for all Sophocles' intransigent heroes:

> Listen, Odysseus
> People like us can't change our minds.
> Or ever admit we were wrong
> otherwise we'd have to resign. (2013: 79)[154]

Wertenbaker believes that scholars mediate a text for us in a particular way which 'prioritises some kinds of meaning', i.e. a certain leaning towards the literal. Translating a dramatic gest

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[153] Given on 29/10/2012 at Ioannou Centre for Classical and Byzantine Studies, Oxford.
[154] The inconsistent use of capitals to begin lines is in text.

and communicating character through speech is, undoubtedly, more subjective than the translation of language for academic or didactic purposes.

By muting the metaphorical levels of language, which cannot be so easily pinned down, translators reduce the social and affective impact. Williamson pointed out that the Liddell and Scott Greek lexicon is still the 'bible' of meaning, much of it unchallenged—and unrevised— since 1843, and that 'the demands of the present versus the weight of tradition' inevitably produces tension for a translator. Colin Teevan, who has translated for the National Theatre, made a similar point about Liddell and Scott's fossilising effect in a platform conversation on translation in 2003:

> One aspect is the traditional dictionary of Ancient Greek called the 'Liddell and Scott' (Henry Liddell being the father of Alice Liddell of Alice in Wonderland—that's what her dad was doing while she was off playing with Lewis Carroll). Liddell spent about 40 years putting together this dictionary, died just before the end, and Mr Scott came in and finished it off. I was having to get my contemporary dictionary and translate his translations, because I was translating through a veil of Victoriana.

Teevan also implicitly echoes Wertenbaker's concerns about the unhelpful influence of an academic 'crib' on creativity. He includes a brief critique of some fellow-practitioners:

> There's almost a metronomic beat to a Tony Harrison translation, which suits Aeschylus very well. I don't know the Ranjit Bolt *Oedipus*, but he worked in rhyming couplets, didn't he? That's very different to how I'd do it. I used iambic pentameter for the actual scenes, the Choruses were much freer. Euripides varies his meters. Our experience of the Penguin translations, the voices all appear very samey, because they're all largely Philip Vellacott's, but actually the voices of the three tragedians are so different that I think often the writer needs to find a translator.[155]

Vellacott reviewed his own work in the 1970s and re-wrote *Women of Troy* and *The Bacchae* from prose into what he called 'relaxed hexameters'.[156] He has his devotees still, despite Teevan's criticism. Chris Vervain, dedicated to re-creating 'authentic' masked theatre at Theatro Technis, makes an advertising feature of Vellacott's texts. Critics, however, highlight

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[155] The transcript of this platform conversation is available from N.T. archives, through N.T. website. Teevan has translated Greek drama for the N.T.

[156] Preface note in Penguin Classic 1973 edition: *The Bacchae and other plays*.

the problems that arise from using a dated text with the monolithic view of Greek tragic diction identified by Teevan. The *British Theatre Guide*'s website, reviewing Vervain's production of *Women of Troy* in March 2014, describes a stilted delivery:

> This stylization is matched by the delivery of the text which seems consciously treated as being verse with line endings marked and with some verbal emphases against the manner of natural speech. Again this varies considerably between members of the cast but often the delivery, though rhythmic, interrupts the sense of more natural speech. The actor has not made the verse seem like a thought or utterance freshly born, ideas are not held in the mind through to completeness.
>
> [...] Andromache (Helen Jessica Liggat) at times becomes rather primly pompous, but that matches this translation.

The website *A Younger Theatre* broadly concurs with the criticism above, although in somewhat less measured language, when talking about the male leads:

> [The actors] who played various male roles within the work, were guilty of lacking varied intonations and inflections; instead they resorted to monotone bellowing throughout the piece. Adopting this Brian Blessed-esque manner meant that although their speech could be heard clearly through the cumbersome masks, this was at the expense of any light and shade within any of their characterisation.[157]

Vellacott can be spoken aloud with a degree of lucidity in a declamatory style, unsuited to modern studio theatres. For the audience, such a delivery prevents the communication of credible emotion, even from a master, such as Euripides. The critics' negative response reflects in part their preference for psychological truth. It is not simply the structure of the text, 'which seems consciously treated as being verse', that inhibits the actors; we may recall that Colin Teevan admires Tony Harrison's *Oresteia* for having 'almost a metronomic beat'. Not the verse form *per se*, but its blandness, destroys theatrical impact. Vellacott's text simply does not allow passion to breathe and we have an object lesson that avoiding one's own idiosyncratic style in the TT is no guarantee the original voice will emerge. It may be tempting for a director to seek a neutral text, on which to impose his/her stamp, but audiences cannot be moved by such neutrality. An evergreen of lucid translation fails on stage.

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[157] Both websites accessed on 13/03/2014.

For Teevan, as for most theatre practitioners, there is a need for the translator not merely to transmit linguistic meaning but to probe the ST for other clues. Wertenbaker, whose prose is highly crafted, bordering on the poetic at times, always considers translation within the context of performance. Williamson spoke in her lecture of Wertenbaker's desire to capture '*gestus*' as well as speech, which should inform the work of 'better equipped translators'. Brecht's term has always defied exact translation, often being rendered into English as 'gest' or 'gist'. Its precise meaning is equally slippery. We might propose a definition that *gestus* is the outward expression of a character, which manifests the nature of his/her social transactions and function in the narrative, which for Brecht was an essentially political realisation of roles. Wertenbaker and many of our poets appear to agree; even Hughes explores gender politics. The examples we shall be examining below—whether successful or not—clearly deal with political ideas.

We considered in chapter 1 how the choice of metre or a layout to suggest hesitation can begin to define 'gest' and may take a lead from the ST. Wertenbaker, for example, instinctively noted those Sophoclean 'emotional contrasts which have their physical, hence visual counterparts' that Walton identified and, through the implications of her text, moulded Ajax and Odysseus as two vastly different presences onstage. Those 'visual counterparts' mark out a play text as unique when compared to other literary forms. We only have to return to the watchman to see how language builds 'gest' from the very first line of a play. Aeschylus opens with a respectful supplication: Θεοὺς μὲν αἰτῶ, τῶνδ' ἀπαλλαγὴν πόνων (1, 'I beg the gods to give me release from this misery'), and Harrison mentions 'pleas to the gods' in his second line, although only grudgingly 'muttered', but Hughes's watchman is less cautious; there is a sense of bitterness as he accuses 'You gods in heaven' of having watched his misery unmoved. The ancient concept of polite supplication has been dislodged and replaced with a 20th-century attitude to fate and the acceptable treatment of low status individuals. The ST begins with a pious: Θεοὺς μὲν αἰτω, which would win approval from the original audience, but Harrison sees the watchman's problems as rather more human and he has his pleas mentioned in passing (3). Hughes's

watchman is even less in awe of the gods, not asking but stating bluntly: 'It is time to release me'. (3)

Hughes accentuates the watchman's woe and thus marks him out as more of a victim than Aeschylus does. The image of a dog is present in the ST and would have carried the idea of abasement to the original audience (the Greek verb of prostration, προσκυνέω, and the noun for a worshipper, ὁ προσκυνητής, incorporate the word 'dog'—κύων/κυνός). It is a brief comment, however, on the watchman's posture, propped up on his elbows, 'in the manner of a dog'. Hughes adds the idea of being 'tethered on the roof', to justify a demand to the gods: 'It is time to release me', an assertive encapsulation of Aeschylus' opening line (1991: 3). Hughes engages fully with the watchman's servile status and emotional state from the outset and heightens our awareness by moving beyond the ST:

> I'm tired of the constellations— [...]
>
> Slow as torture [...]
>
> Wearisome, like watching the sea
> From a deathbed. Like watching the tide
> In its prison yard [...] (3)

The imagery is bleak and replaces the domestic details from the ST about the bedroll and dew.

Harrison reacts in similar vein. Aeschylus presents the watchman as distressed by his position:

> κλαίω τότ' οἴκου τοῦδε συμφορὰν στένων,
> οὐχ ὡς τὰ πρόσθ' ἄριστα διαπονουμένου. (18-19)
>
> ([...] then I weep, grieving over the fortunes of this
> house, which is not now admirably managed as it used
> to be.)

The ST contains a personal element, 'I weep, grieving [...]', but Harrison chooses to embellish the watchman's subjective response, with the verbs 'think' and 'feel':

> [...] I feel more like weeping
> when I think of the change that's come over this household,
> good once and well ordered ... but all that seems over ... (3)

Harrison invites us into an ongoing mental process, making explicit the experience of change, with the added gloss on the situation: 'but all that seems over'. The framing ellipses show pause for thought, leading to a brief aposiopesis, none of which occurs in the ST but which are authentic features of spontaneous utterances. The watchman does not complain about his low status *per se*, only his position in a dysfunctional household, expanding upon the ST.

Hughes elaborates further with significant additions to the ST, such as the watchman's comment on the 'rightful King'. There is also a rare internal rhyme in 'weeping/keeping', which foregrounds the words:

> But when I try to sing—weeping comes.
> I weep. There's no keeping it down.
> Everything's changed in this palace.
> The old days,
> The rightful King, order, safety, splendour,
> A splendour that lifted the heart— (4)

The repetition of 'splendour', absent in the ST, offers a strange insight into Hughes's watchman who only resents his low status because he is in thrall to an inadequate master. Both Hughes and Harrison demonstrate that the creation of character is not just the prerogative of actor or director; the linguistic choices begin the process in establishing 'gest'.

Any such mediation involves cultural transference, as noted by Walton. It is a key feature of literary translation—whether poets adopt a fashionable metre, alter the emphases or transport a story wholesale into their own era—and should be explored as a concept before we move on to individual cases. The recent reception history of Euripides' *Trojan Women* (or *Women of Troy*) is a suitably clear example of cultural transference in action and helps to illuminate the thinking of modern theatre practitioners, including poet-translators, which makes Vervain's production all the more unusual in eschewing any engagement with the 21st century. There have been

numerous attempts by scholars to link Euripides' play definitively to Athenian excesses on the island of Melos and, more generally, to criticism of the disastrous latter years of the Peloponnesian War.[158] The enterprise can be supported by comparisons with Thucydides and by citing relevant dates. Scholarly musings, however, did nothing to popularise the play for theatrical consumption, because of its highly episodic nature and the absence of many Aristotelian requirements for a 'well-made' play. As storm clouds began to gather over Europe, however, in the early 20th century, *Trojan Women* once more made the transition from page to stage and became a theatrical 'hit'. Edith Hall writes in support of the play:

> For it is only a performance that makes it possible to appreciate the cumulative effect of the sequence of scenes revealing the appalling effect of the war on the female inhabitants of Troy. [...] It is the reactive presence of the widowed old queen which draws into a coherent vision all the other characters' perspectives: she never leaves the stage from the beginning to the end, and her role must have challenged even the greatest of ancient actors. (2010: 269)

Scholarship and dramaturgy now sit in different camps: for scholars, Euripides' criticism was aimed at some particularly base and inept conduct, not at the very notion of war. He lived in a martial society with no philosophical concept of pacifism (despite an *ad hoc* Peace Party during the latter stages of the Peloponnesian War); for theatre directors, however, the play has become a pacifist manifesto, picking up on Cassandra's gnomic statement: φεύγειν μὲν οὖν χρὴ πόλεμον ὅστις εὖ φρονεῖ (*T.W.* 400), that sensible people avoid war, if possible. *Trojan Women* can easily be relocated to the Balkans, the Middle East or any other contemporary war zone. It is particularly barbed when linked with that recent buzz phrase: 'collateral damage', a euphemism for civilian casualties, many of them women and children. In terms of posterity, it is a high risk strategy when such modern displacements are embedded in the text. Wertenbaker's *Our Ajax* is firmly located in Afghanistan. Athena says of Ajax:

> The man's blown up:
> God's IED (2013: 12).[159]

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[158] See *Essays on Trojan Women* published by Actors of Dionysus for balanced essay by Keith Sidwell.
[159] Improvised Explosive Device associated with Afghanistani insurgents.

There is, of course, no equivalent in the ST and the image will date and fade. Later, in the choral speech that in the ST begins τίς ἄρα νέατος, ἐς πότε λή-/ ξει πολυπλάγκτων ἐτεων ἀριθμός ... (1185-6), and 'How much longer?/ How many more years?' in the TT, Wertenbaker condenses three millennia of military history into a handful of names that might ring bells with older members of a contemporary audience, passing from Troy to the mid-20th century onward, with nothing intervening:

> windswept
> on the Asian plains
> the dust of Helmand
> the sand of Troy
> salt marshes of Basra
> the barren rocks of Aden
> Bosnia
> The jungle of Malaya
> Vietnam
> The beaches of Al Faw. (2013: 70-1)

For the many school students who saw the first run of this play, Troy is more likely to resonate than Aden or Al Faw, thanks in part to Hollywood and in part to our collective cultural currency, which Seamus Deane invoked in his criticism of *Cure at Troy* (above, 209). Within a generation, all the places alluded to will have slipped to the back of our memories and become less relevant than the transcendent Troy, as the Greeks understood. An ancient myth can be a metaphor or allegory for the modern world. The contemporary world represents little except itself, but directors are not deterred: poets might wish for an extended shelf life for a text; directors knowingly create the ephemeral.

When Katie Mitchell directed her version, *Women of Troy*, at the National Theatre in 2007, she used a translation by the poet and playwright Don Taylor, who wrote in his introduction:

> There has scarcely been any doubt what sort of play *Women of Troy* is, nor of its central place in the repertoire as one of the masterpieces of Mediterranean civilisation. (2007: vii)

Taylor's comment demonstrates how thoroughly the perceived 'message' of the play has lodged in the modern consciousness as a reflection of our own sensibilities. Taylor, himself, was reacting to events in the former Yugoslavia when he created his translation, ca 1990. His text now contains a 'postscript' poem, dated 1994, and called 'Reunion in Sarajevo'. The poem is described as: 'written in response to *Women of Troy*' and makes an overt comparison between the 20th-century Balkans and Ancient Greece. Taylor clearly has some classical knowledge beyond the play, because he alludes to Hecuba's ultimate fate. The universal and the 20th century merge in the montage of images:

> [...]   In the mortared market-place
> Andromache shovels her son
> Into a bag. Raped Cassandra's crazed face
> Stares from the TV screen. No trace
> Of Polyxena's tomb. Dog-like, Hecuba digs alone
> In the shelled graveyard. No peace
> For the mutilated child-body, thrown
> Into a cellar and burned. No identification:
> An unknown daughter of a murdered nation.

In our time, *Women of Troy* has become a vehicle for examining atrocities, frequently genocides, where the rules of engagement and the Geneva Convention are ignored, most pertinently on the treatment of women and children. Taylor's contention, however, that 'there has scarcely been any doubt' about the meaning of the play is disingenuous. He does not cover its entire performance history, merely the most recent and, as he believes, the original. He proclaims that 'the play's performance history is precise' on the first (unnumbered) page of his introduction but is only analysing evidence concerning the premier, in 415 BCE. Taylor needs that precision for the link to the Melian atrocity. He speculates about Euripides' intentions:

> Without the other two tragedies that comprised the trilogy we can't be sure, but it seems likely that Euripides composed a powerful protest cycle, probably with a quite clear political purpose. [...] What could be more likely than that Euripides was one of those Athenians who were against restarting the war, and against the Sicilian expedition, and that he used the horror and guilt that must have existed in some men's minds about the recent slaughter on Melos as a powerful reminder of what war really meant in human terms? (ix)

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The language—'seems likely', 'probably', 'what could be more likely', 'must have existed'—is more wishful thinking than scholarship.   Fragments of *Alexandros*, the first play in the 'trilogy' concluded by *Troades*, are still emerging in papyri troves.[160]   The Brighton-based theatre group, Actors of Dionysus, staged a dramatic reading of some quite substantial excerpts in 2012 which highlight Hecuba's desire to welcome Paris (Alexandros) back into the fold.   She persists in the face of a dire prophecy, reiterated by Cassandra to no avail.   In effect, Hecuba's maternal instincts doom Troy to its fate.

Don Taylor had no thoughts on the intervening two millennia of performance history.   We know, however, through research bodies such as APGRD, that for four centuries, since its re-emergence in the Renaissance, the play was ignored; it only gained its 'central place in the repertoire' when we collectively questioned the morality of war, after the carnage of World War I.   Mitchell, in her platform talk on *Women of Troy*, declared it the greatest anti-war play ever written, taking up Taylor's belief that this was Euripides' original intention.   We might posit with some confidence that he was criticising a particular campaign and may well have had no wish to reignite a conflict on the back-burners by 415 BCE.   His view of the human condition is certainly more jaded than that of the other two surviving tragedians, but was he writing a play to challenge the entire notion of conflict or are we projecting a cultural overlay?   After Europe's century of war-guilt, and a range of widely-disseminated modern atrocities, some translators and most directors are eager to show contemporary parallels.   For Mitchell, her vision required the wholesale removal of the gods from her production, cutting Taylor's text, to leave humans floundering in a horror for which they were entirely responsible.   Attitudes to war in our liberal democracies are being transferred to a play from a vastly different culture which, fortuitously, can bear the load.

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[160] By this date, cohesive run-on trilogies like *Oresteia* were largely superseded by three plays, linked but dramatically self-contained.

The director is central to the selection of a text and all the poets we examined in Chapters 1 and 2 have accepted commissions from theatre practitioners, often with certain production values embedded in the project. Thus, to the tensions already inherent between ST and translator, is added a third party to the deed with his/her own creative imperative which can, as we have seen, range from stylistic choices to nationalist politics. Again, Walton is very aware of these tensions and the layers of interpretation:

> Plato was wary of theatrical performance for being an imitation of an imitation. Seen on video the Stein *Agamemnon* is not even that. It is at best an interpretation (by the viewer), of an interpretation (by the video director), of an interpretation by a stage director (Stein), at one stage in his creative life (twenty years ago), of an interpretation by the translator (Greek into German and thence into surtitle) of an interpretation (via a combination of manuscripts), of an interpretation (in the original production), of what may have been Aeschylus' own work. The translator may have an important relationship with a dead playwright. How far that relationship is reflected in what a living audience eventually sees or hears is a very different matter. (2006: 61)

Walton cites an extreme example, to stress his point about reception and transmission. Nonetheless, theatre is inevitably collaborative. What unites commissioner, commissioned and the various practitioners in their ventures is the understanding that the TT must work within a piece of living drama. In previous generations of academics, a few emerged who shared this sensibility, because of a personal commitment to performance. Jebb stood out in the Victorian era, with his parallel texts that began as coaching for actors speaking the original Greek, and Murray produced his performance versions in the first half of the 20th century, whatever posterity's verdict on their merit. In our own day, moving into the 21st century, Peter Meineck has an ear for the spoken impact of his translations and deserves some credit as a modern academic with a keen sense of theatre.

Meineck's stage directions for the watchman's entry in *Agamemnon*: '*a disheveled* (sic) *watchman appears on the roof of the house*', shows that he has 'translated' the gest as he sees it and expects his text not only to be performed, but to be performed in a certain way. (As an academic, he still provides footnotes for readers with scholarly inclinations.) His stage direction begins steering any putative actor of the watchman towards an interpretation: a downtrodden

man, full of anxiety for his future (1998: 3).[161]   Beyond that, Meineck orders his language and finds a register that makes it accessible, whilst retaining the essence of the ST, with neither significant subtraction nor addition of material.   It would seem that an academic translator, however creative, will hold the integrity of the ST as paramount.   Meineck patterns language to heighten contrasts.   Talking of the constellations, his watchman says:

> How well I've come to know night's congregation of stars,
>   [...] those that bring winter
> and those that bring summer to us mortals.
> I know just when they rise and just when they set. (3, 5-8)

What Meineck does not do, of course, is embellish his language with poetic tropes. 'Congregation' is a perfectly credible translation of ὁμήγυριν, which the Loeb edition renders 'throng'.   Meineck's choice might have a religious overtone, compared to a more neutral word such as 'assembly' but is dramatically effective, with its strong and ringing first syllable, whilst his phrase 'to us mortals' is a conventionally literal translation of the ST's βροτοῖς (5).

When Meineck progresses to Cassandra, there is somewhat greater licence with the re-ordering of language; he produces well-structured stanzas which communicate the emotional intensity of the ST.   Aeschylus has a dense style in parts of this section and Meineck transmutes participle constructions and compound words into speakable English.   One example will demonstrate. The ST has:

> ἆ ἆ ἰδού· ἄπεχε τᾶς βοὸς
> τον ταῦρον· ἐν πέπλοισιν
> μελαγκέρῳ λαβουσα μηχανήματι
> τύπτει· πίτνει δ' ἐν ἐνύδρῳ τευχει.
> δολοφόνου λέβητος τέχναν σοι λέγω. (*Ag.* 1125-29)

Sommerstein translates for the Loeb edition:

> Oh! Oh! See, see! Keep the bull
> away from the cow! She traps him
> in the robe, the black-horned contrivance,

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[161] All extracts come from 1998 Hackett edition. Page and line numbers only will be given for future extracts.

and strikes—and he falls into the tub full of water.
I'm telling you of the device that worked treacherous murder in a bath.
(2008: 135)

Although Sommerstein has creatively adjusted ἇ ἇ ἰδού to produce a balanced exclamation, we can see that the Loeb version is still clumsy in part and not entirely lucid. First of all, there is the problem of three words in the dative case: πέπλοισιν, μελαγκέρῳ and μηχανήματι. Sommerstein has conflated them into one notion, ignoring number, with 'the black-horned contrivance' being in apposition to 'the robe', which is plural in the SL. He has deviated from the grammar without creating a coherent image. Meineck takes the more dramatic and plausible view that, having trapped her husband in the 'robes' (or net?), Clytemnestra strikes him with the (separate) black-horned device. He omits a direct translation of the aorist participle λαβουσα (having taken), transferring the idea to the adjectives 'tangling' and 'conniving':

> Look! There, look! Protect the bull from the cow.
> The tangling, conniving robes. She strikes!
> The black horn gores through!
> He falls face down in the water.
> Murder! Treachery! Dead in his own bath! (44, 1125-29)

Sommerstein's phrase 'he falls into the tub full of water' possesses an element of slapstick banality, whereas 'falls face down in the water' has a more ominous ring. Finally, Sommerstein's attempt to explicate line 1129 could never be uttered in a theatre with any credibility. It is as cumbersome as Browning's: 'Of the craft-killing cauldron I tell thee the case!' The complex idea contained in the single word δολοφόνου—as defined by Liddell and Scott—cannot be rendered literally with any economy.[162] Meineck separates 'murder' and 'treachery', into discrete exclamations, showing the action of speaking, rather than describing it—λέγω.

Meineck effectively retains Cassandra's gest as a frustrated prophetess of doom, even if her words are not conveyed with absolute precision from the ST. Her mental derangement is the

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[162] Primary meaning given is: 'to slay with treachery'.

'hook' for modern practitioners, as they wrestle with the decidedly alien Greek gods, their prophets and their oracles. It is not merely a matter of modern scepticism against ancient belief: those with religious convictions today expect their gods to be a moral force in the universe, another key example of cultural transference that requires more of a god than merely superhuman qualities, accompanied by foibles and vices.   Sometimes, the supernatural is integral to the drama; it would be hard to contemplate *Eumenides* with the supernatural elements cut or humanised, for instance. Our poet-translators tend to retain the gods, rather than expunge them like Katie Mitchell, but their potency is often diminished or their role reduced.

Hughes was an entirely free agent in his translation of the *Oresteia* and retained the gods as part of a passive process in which they watched the human as he watched the stars. This is not the place to explore Hughes's apparent misogyny in depth: we must simply accept that his experiences tormented him to his dying day and coloured his viewpoint. He saw Clytemnestra, not the gods, as the dangerous power in the watchman's universe, embroidering the ST to emphasise her malignity:

> Queen Clytemnestra—who wears
> A man's heart in a woman's body,
> A man's dreadful will in the scabbard of her body
> Like a polished blade. A hidden blade.
> Clytemnestra reigns over fear. (3)

This introduces imagery foreshadowing events that is absent from the ST:

> ὧδε γὰρ κρατεῖ
> γυναικὸς ἀνδρόβουλον ἐλπίζον κέαρ (*Ag.* 10-11).

> ([...] for such is the ruling of a woman's hopeful heart,
> which plans like a man.)

The metaphor of Clytemnestra's male mind as a blade within the scabbard of her female body, shares the portentousness of the imagery at the opening of *Blood Wedding*, which Hughes also translated just before the *Oresteia*. His use of short phrases highlights the ultimate significance of the knife, already present in Lorca's ST:

'The knife, the knife! Damn the knife, damn all knives, damn the devil who created knives'. (1996: 1)

In both plays, the blade/knife has an independent existence and a treacherous disposition, through which Hughes creates a powerful sense of foreboding.

In Sophocles' *Antigone*, Zeus escapes the capriciousness that he displays elsewhere in myth and approaches our modern notion of moral force. He is the source of ancient laws and justice—immutable and outside human whim. Heaney has no problem in embracing his presence in 20th century Ireland, nor of personifying Justice, thus retaining the diction and sentiment of Antigone's most famous rhesis:

> I disobeyed because the law was not
> The law of Zeus nor the law ordained
> By Justice, Justice dwelling deep
> Among the gods of the dead. (2004: 20)

Paulin also mentions Zeus but forgoes the figure of justice. He replaces the notion of chthonic gods with duty to the dead in a condensed utterance:

> It was never Zeus
> made that law.
> Down in the dark earth
> there's no law says,
> 'Break with your own kin,
> go lick the state.'
> We're bound to the dead:
> we must be loyal to them.
> I had to bury him'. (1985: 27)

Zeus is not being cited as an authority but as an insult to diminish Creon's status by invidious comparison. Unlike the ST and Heaney, it is a throw-away reference because Paulin is not polarising divine and man-made law but colonial tyranny—which impacts upon tribal loyalties—and democracy. 'Down in the dark earth' is certainly a powerful, monosyllabic phrase, from a section of text in which monosyllables predominate, but it speaks of modern

funerals, not of Hades. The speech is extremely colloquial, rather than the forensic oratory of the ST. Not only does Antigone speak in contractions—'there's' and the omission of 'that' from standard form ('no law that says,')—but she also uses entirely disrespectful slang, 'go lick the state', which is another non-standard abbreviation (of 'go and lick') in line with the norms of the Ulster dialect. Paulin chooses to minimise the ancient argument about piety and respect for the dead in favour of maximising the notion of kinship. In a summary of Antigone's attitude, from lines 511-19 of the ST, Paulin merges the ancient belief in necessity with sisterly compunction in the short statement: 'I had to bury him'. In his quest for brevity (a 55-minute running-time), Paulin opts for simplicity and emotional sincerity. Antigone's declaration will move the modern audience in a very direct way, whereas the ST uses the cut and thrust of argument, familiar from the Athenian law court to win a favourable verdict. It is a version of the play for a society in which the niceties of the law have been set aside in favour of guerrilla action.

Harrison, working with Peter Hall, who would have set the production values, intended to transmit certain elements of the original circumstances, notably the intensely masculine society. His famous 'he-god' and 'she-god' not only highlighted a feature of the SL but also the gender war going on between older female goddesses and Apollo, representing the new Olympian patriarchy. This is the poet as educator, exposing ideas and culture through language. Harrison is frequently quite literal but then hammers home his perception of the SL. The chorus's report of Agamemnon's anguish at sacrificing his daughter begins with the balanced contrast of μὲν and δὲ:

> βαρεῖα μὲν κὴρ τὸ μὴ πιθέσθαι,
> βαρεῖα δ' εἰ τέκνον δαΐξω, δόμων ἄγαλμα,
> μιαίνων παρθενοσφάγοισιν
> ῥείθροις πατρῴους χέρας πέλας βω-
> μοῦ (*Ag*: 206-211)

> It is a grievous doom not to comply,
> and a grievous one if I am to slay my child, delight of my house,
> polluting a father's hands
> with streams of slaughtered maiden's blood close by
> the altar

This extract follows Sommerstein's layout, with his attempt to match line for line. We can tell at a glance that some lines defied succinctness. Harrison retains the balance of the first two lines and then creates short phrases, carrying equivalent sentiments to the ST but with a 20th-century gloss. Thus 'delight of my house' becomes 'jewel' and 'joy'. Harrison takes direct speech but makes Agamemnon talk about himself in the 3rd person, weighing up the moral conundrum:

> hard   hard for a general   not to obey
> hard   hard for a father   to kill his girl
> his jewel   his joy   kill his own she-child
> virgin-blood   father-guilt   griming the godstone (9)

The lines were delivered with some overlapping and echoing of 'hard', which added to our perception of Agamemnon's dilemma, made clear by the juxtaposition of two equally-weighted (dactylic) phrases: 'virgin-blood' and 'father-guilt'. In four short lines, Harrison brings the off-stage king to life in this back-story, and evokes sympathy for a man about to commit a terrible crime by modern standards: the translation shows what is at stake and retains the force of necessity. Harrison demonstrates great sensitivity for the essence of his ST.

We have considered the function of dialect in chapter 2, to create both place and character and briefly touched upon sociolects when considering dialect and class. Sociolects are invaluable for modern writers seeking authenticity in speech. Two and a half millennia ago, Aristophanes debates in *Frogs* the extent to which the lower orders should speak and his Euripides gives a forceful defence of inclusivity:

> ἀλλ' ἔλεγεν ἡ γυνή τέ μοι χὠ δοῦλος οὐδέν ἧττον,
> χὠ δεσπότης χἠ παρθένος χἠ γραῦς ἄν.
> [...] δημοκρατικὸν γὰρ αὔτ' ἔδρων. (949-50, 952)

> (I'd have the wife speak, and the slave just as much,
> and the master, and the maiden, and the old lady.
> [...] it was a democratic act.)

Aeschylus did not characterise his servant class to the extent of Euripides, but our watchman, once again, proves a useful example. Both Harrison and Hughes are sensitive to nuances and build on the ST. Each seeks to convey his rapid changes of mood and edginess about the future. When the watchman spots the beacon, the ST has an eloquent and formal greeting, an apostrophe (which Sommerstein translates as prose):

> ὦ χαῖρε, λαμπτήρ, νυκτὸς ἡμερήσιον
> φάος πιφαύσκων (*Ag.* 22-23).
>
> (O, welcome, beacon, bringing to us by
> night a message of light bright as day [...])

Neither Harrison nor Hughes retains this rhetorical trope, attempting something more colloquial. Harrison draws attention to the paradox in νυκτὸς ἡμερήσιον with the alliterative 'oasis of daylight in deserts of dark', an accessible, if not commonplace, contrast (3). 'Oasis' is particularly effective in communicating the happy outcome of a long emotional trek. Hughes makes his polarity more concrete, part of the watchman's physical world, with his familiar minor sentences for a thought-process. He adds detail and place deixis[163] that builds belief and draws us into the watchman's experience. The repeated use of the exclamation mark (!) is an implicit stage direction to indicate rising excitement:

> Where did that light come from? In pitch darkness
> That point—that's new.
> Down there, near what must be the skyline,
> In the right place! It just appeared!
> A flickering point. And getting bigger. A fire! (4)

Hughes continues to describe the beacon as 'shaking its horns', initiating the bull imagery picked up later from the ST for Cassandra. As with his expansion on Clytemnestra, he is crafting his own thread of imagery over and above Aeschylus.

In the ST, the watchman uses an idiom, βοῦς ἐπὶ γλώσσῃ μέγας/ βέβηκεν, (36-7, 'a great ox has stepped upon my tongue'). This explains his reluctance to speak further, just as we might claim

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[163] Alternatively called 'space deixis': language that indicates a spatial context.

the cat has got our tongue. Idioms are notoriously difficult to translate, having a culture-specific resonance. Harrison, nonetheless, embraces the ST with blunt slang, highlighted by alliteration, 'tweaking' the original to his own characterisation:

> Say that an ox ground my gob into silence (4)

Harrison employed this particular example of slang, with its robust sound, in two poems about language that predate the *Oresteia*. A 'gob' bestows power; to be 'gobless' is to lack a voice. In the first of *The Bonebard Ballads*, 'The Ballad of Babelabour' Harrison talks of:

> the hang-cur ur-grunt of the weak
> the unrecorded urs of gobless workers (2006: 102).

In 'Them & (uz)', from section I of *The School of Eloquence*, he writes:

> αἰαῖ, ay, ay! ... stutterer Demosthenes
> gob full of pebbles outshouting seas—[...] (2006: 122)[164]

In a footnote to 'Working', Harrison explains the power and ubiquity of the word 'gob' in his Yorkshire dialect and community:

> *Note.* 'Gob': an old Northern coal-mining word for the space left after the coal has been extracted. Also, of course, the mouth, and speech. (2006: 124)

The word resonates with class and cultural connotations as well as having a robust oral quality: sociolect and dialect converge. The word says much about the watchman's status and his emotional state. Harrison takes his lead from the ST but the colloquial register—'gob'—and the contraction—'beacon's'—create a recognisably 20th-century working man, even within an exotic performance framework.

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[164] The Harrison poems in this chapter were originally published in *The School of Eloquence*. Page references refer to 2006 edition of *Selected Poems* in which they were reprinted.

Because Hughes has his own purpose for ox/bull imagery, the ST idiom is unhelpful so he omits it, stressing instead the oppressive nature of the royal household which stifles free speech. The ST contains a diplomatically veiled reference to this:

> [...] οἶκος δ' αὐτός εἰ φθογγὴν λάβοι,
> σαφέστατ' ἂν λέξειεν· ὡς ἑκὼν ἐγὼ
> μαθοῦσιν αὐδῶ κοὐ μαθοῦσι λήθομαι. (*Ag.* 37-9)

> (The house itself, were it to find voice, might speak very plainly; as far as I am concerned, I am deliberately speaking to those who know—and for those who do not, I'm deliberately forgetting.)

Hughes significantly expands:

> Better not think about it.
> Only the foundations of this house
> Can tell that story. Yes,
> The tongue that could find
> The words for what follows—that tongue
> Would have to lift this house's foundations.
> Those who know too much, as I do, about this house,
> Let their tongue lie still—squashed flat.
> Under the foundations. (5)

Hughes's repetition of 'foundations' reminds us of the long history of transgression in the household of Atreus. Similarly, he stresses tongue—with no mention of the ox—in an extended example of metonymy. Whilst the ST only implies dangerous secrets, Hughes's notion of knowing 'too much' makes it overt and he consistently extends those sections of the ST that resonate with him, whilst overlooking others.

Harrison retains the gaming image from the ST which even today suggests a good omen from chance/fate and adds another touch of authenticity to the watchman:

> τρὶς ἓξ βαλούσης τῆσδέ μοι φρυκτωρίας (*Ag.* 33).

> (—this beacon-watch has thrown me a triple six!)

Sommerstein is succinct and Harrison shows a comparable economy:

Sighting the beacon's a dice-throw all sixes (4).

There is, of course, dramatic irony in the watchman's delighted perception of a good omen; to an audience familiar with the plot, this irony is immediately obvious. Hughes omits the distraction to focus us on the beacon 'shaking its horns', establishing his ominous thread of 'bull' imagery that culminates with Cassandra. This imagery, whilst powerful, is more easily perceived as a reader than viewer, which is how a director first comes to a text. We cannot, therefore, dismiss the power of poetry on the page as part of the theatrical process. Language creates character and directs our response to the narrative, whether director, actor or audience member.

So far, although we have considered some flexible interpretations of STs, there have been few wide divergences. Timberlake Wertenbaker clearly pushes boundaries the furthest in those plays we have considered up to this point, introducing topical references to the Ajax story, but others have ventured as far, or even further, from their STs. Tom Paulin innovated extensively in his version of *Prometheus Bound*, renamed *Seize the Fire*, which the Open University commissioned. It broadcast an abridged version on BBC2 as part of a module on Athens and democracy, in February 1989 (filmed in 1988). As one might expect, therefore, the televised 'cut' emphasises the democratising role of Prometheus, at the expense of other features. The half-hour broadcast began very much *in media res*: Prometheus is already fettered; Hephaestus, Power and Violence have departed. Those unfamiliar with the play, however, would not be aware of any omission, since no reference is made to these three characters in the written on-screen scene-setting. John Franklyn-Robbins, who plays Prometheus, appears in close-up or near close-up much of the time, negating the sense of a vast wilderness at the limit of the earth.[165] A comparison of the broadcast text and the 1990 publication reveals telling differences, the published version being a richer work. Most notable is Paulin's re-adjustment of Io.

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[165] The Open University library holds copies of broadcast.

Power's opening line of the written text sets the tone for a very modern vernacular: 'There's fuck all here' (1990: 1)[166]. Although crude, this is, nonetheless, an extreme précis of the description in Aeschylus' opening lines:

> Χθονὸς μὲν εἰς τήλουρον ἥκομεν πέδον,
> Σκύθην ἐς οἶμον, ἄβροτον εἰς ἐρημίαν.
>
> (We have reached the land at the furthest bounds of earth,
> the Scythian marches, a wilderness where no mortals live.)
> (2008: 444/5)[167]

What immediately follows from Violence is pure invention, however, but establishes our modern context:

> No firing squad.
> No nothing.

From the outset, Paulin is creating a consistent contemporary parallel for his version—the world of the military junta—and is importing anachronisms to this end. In the ST, a reluctant Hephaestus stresses the unpeopled remoteness of the rock to which he must fetter Prometheus: τῷδ' ἀπανθρώπῳ πάγῳ (20). Paulin describes the location as a killing field for political dissidents:

> It breaks my heart to leave you in this abattoir—
> a dump for rebels
> and the disappeared. (3)

The word 'abattoir', with its connotations of butchering animals is echoed later when Prometheus calls the location 'a killing zone' and 'a meatgrinder' (11). The abattoir description, with less personal regret, was spoken by the disembodied one-woman chorus (Kate Binchy) in the broadcast version. As written, it establishes the empathy between Hephaestus and Prometheus present in the ST and contains more dramatic potential than the Open University required. The original broadcast had a straightforward didactic function; the published edition offers a more complex work .

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[166] Extracts from Faber and Faber edition. Page numbers only will be given for further extracts. The text is printed on recto pages.

[167] All Greek extracts from *Prometheus Bound* are from the Loeb edition (2008) translated by Sommerstein. Only line references will be given for further extracts and page numbers for translation if not opposite equivalent Greek.

Paulin sets his play during a precise era of modern history. Enforced disappearances have been recognised by the United Nations as a recent phenomenon, beginning in Chile and Argentina in the 1970s, but also a potent issue for the Irish. During 'The Troubles', the Republican side abducted, murdered and secretly buried some 16 people, believed to be informers for the British army. Whilst this was very small scale compared to the wholesale slaughter under dictators such as Pinochet, the impact is still being felt, as bodies are finally uncovered and old wounds re-opened. These victims, too, came to be known as 'the disappeared'. Whilst the local parallel wouldn't have escaped Paulin, and the Ulster dialect is strong within the published text, his Promethean landscape is based on a military dictatorship and liberation politics.

The ST in no way precludes Paulin's interpretation. Aeschylus incorporates the personification of power and violence. They are identified for the audience by Hephaestus who addresses them: Κράτος Βία τε, (12) These attributes of Zeus are drawn from Hesiod's *Theogony*:

> καὶ Κράτος ἠδὲ Βίην ἀριδείκετα γείνατο τέκνα.
> τῶν οὐκ ἔστ᾿ ἀπ᾿νευθε Διὸς δόμος, οὐδέ τις ἕδρη,
> οὐδ᾿ ὁδός, ὅππη μὴ κείνοις θεὸς ἡγεμονεύει,
> ἀλλ᾿ αἰεὶ πὰρ Ζηνὶ βαρυκτύπῳ ἑδριόωνται. (385-8)

> (And she [Styx] gave birth to Cratos (Supremacy) and Bia
> (Force), eminent children. These have no house apart from
> Zeus nor any seat, nor any path except that on which the god
> leads them.) (2006: 35)[168]

The ST has Prometheus obliged to accept τὴν Διὸς τυραννίδα (9), which Sommerstein translates as 'the autocracy of Zeus', somewhat less loaded for modern readers than 'tyranny'. We are also offered a doorway into Zeus's mindset, which remains a truism of modern dictatorship, namely creating a climate of fear to establish control:

> Διὸς γὰρ δυσπαραίτητοι φρένες·
> ἅπας δὲ τραχὺς ὅστις ἂν νέον κρατῇ. (34-5)

> (The mind of Zeus is implacable—

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[168] Taken from 2006 Loeb edition of Hesiod, translated by Glenn Most.

and everyone is harsh when new to power.)

Paulin renders Aeschylus' insight thus, with a preponderance of Ulster English in his first two
lines:

> It's a hard, tight,
> new state we live in—
> Zeus set it up.
> No room for pity. (3)

The 1990 text assigns these lines to Hephaestus which were delivered by the chorus in the
broadcast performance. This is important for our appreciation of their significance: Hephaestus
essentially sympathises with Prometheus, both in the ST and in Paulin's version. The chorus, as
represented by Paulin, is ambivalent. His text mixes ultra-traditional features with modern
vernacular sarcasm: the chorus retains its mythological edge as daughters of Oceanus, who 'fan
Prometheus with their wings' but when Prometheus complains that his enemies must be
laughing, the chorus snaps back at him:

> But who is there here?
> Who's looking at you in this yard
> at the world's end?
> There's no-one laughing. (11)

This is one of the attractive features of Paulin's otherwise robust approach: he appreciates the
mythical elements, which the Open University played down in favour of the politics. The
published text contains details of the fennel trick and Zeus's back-story with Cronos, neither of
which detracts from Paulin's clear political context, although omitted from the broadcast.

Paulin shares the uncontentious belief of most who live in modern western democracies, that
ruthless dictatorship is unacceptable. His character, Violence, is gratuitously nasty and
dominates Paulin's prologue as written. Aeschylus' Βία is a mute character—perhaps best
befitting the female of the two personifications—since the three-actor convention imposed a
limit. Her physical contribution to the original performance is unknown but it might have

provided a chorus member with a brief moment of theatrical glory. Κράτος is portrayed as reasonably dignified, arguing Zeus's case with Hephaestus, using the power of reason rather than force. He oversees the *apotympanismos* instead of executing it personally.[169] In the ST, the two characters represent the inevitable trappings of ancient kingship: sway and physical might, rather than sadistic cruelty, although Κράτος allows no dissent from Hephaestus and the penalties for rebellion are great. Paulin, in contrast, creates a pair of brutish thugs as Zeus's henchmen, with Violence being particularly vicious and crude of speech as he adapts some of Power's thoughts from the ST:

> Humans!
> Dirty beasts they are! (1)

This is a very harsh interpolation compared to Power in the ST, who was merely dismissive of human significance in the scheme of things: Prometheus gave divine prerogatives to ἐφημέροισι (83).[170] Power also warns Hephaestus about Prometheus's renowned wiliness:

> δεινὸς γὰρ εὑρεῖν κἀξ ἀμηχάνων πόρον. (59)

> (He's very clever at finding ways out of impossible situations.)

Paulin's Violence turns this cautionary note into a barbed challenge accompanied by an assault. The stage direction also indicates that Paulin does not envisage his character as female, a gender stereotype that reflects the known paramilitary world of the day:

> [...] Wriggle your way out of that one,
> Trickster!
> (*He headbutts Prometheus in the stomach as they leave*.) (7).

Earlier in the text, Violence was cracking his knuckles, throwing stones and aiming kicks, seemingly for pleasure rather than necessity. Paulin's stage directions form an integral part of his vision: that corrupt power encourages and relies upon those who relish violence.

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[169] Athenian method of capital punishment in which victim was clamped upright to board and exposed. If shock/exposure had not caused death by sunset, neck clamp was tightened.
[170] Living just one day, like mayflies.

The context of a military coup is made explicit in Prometheus's first exchange with the chorus. Again, the ST sets up the possibility:

> χρείαν ἕξει μακάρων πρύτανις,
> δεῖξαι τὸ νέον βούλευμ᾽ ὑφ᾽ ὅτου
> σκῆπτρον τιμάς τ᾽ ἀποσυλᾶται. (169-71)
>
> ([...] the president of the immortals will yet have need of me,
> to reveal the new plan by which
> he can be robbed of his sceptre and his privileges;)

The word 'νέον' does not merely mean 'new' but carries the scent of revolution. In one of Paulin's most striking innovations, he describes Zeus's fate in very modern terms:

> He'll call me when he needs me.
> Far, far in the future,
> just when his state looks safe—
> all legal and legitimate
> with flags and judges and all that—
> there'll be this strange weekend,
> part holiday and part disaster.
> First all the fountains
> in the public squares
> will switch themselves off,
> power will fail,
> jolt back in spasms.
> No general,
> no group of sleek young colonels,
> will pump themselves up.
> It'll all be secret
> and anonymous.
> Tanks on the lawn, news blackouts,
> locked doors and panic—
> those empty sinister blocked roads,
> food shortages and rumours,
> then martial music on the radio... (14-15)

As broadcast, whilst most of the above represents the script used, the threat to Zeus was somewhat vaguer. The precise reference to a 'general' and the 'sleek young colonels'—omitted in performance—reinforce the adapted context. Paulin uses a wide range of poetic effects in this section. There is alliteration: 'legal and legitimate', 'first all the fountains' and 'martial

music', for example. Repetition both links and contrasts ideas: 'part holiday and part disaster'.

Paulin is not paraphrasing the ST's intimation of unspecified trouble to come; instead, he is importing a 20th-century military coup, all the references being anachronistic, with no correspondence to the ST. It is a detailed description of events, with a number of disturbing images, drawn from modern newsreels:

> Tanks on the lawn, news blackouts,
> locked doors and panic—
> those empty sinister blocked roads,

The tone of the phrase 'with flags and judges and all that' is deeply dismissive, as captured by Franklyn-Robbins in his delivery. Zeus—like his modern counterparts—has the trappings of legitimacy but nothing more.

Despite Paulin's overarching context of totalitarian dictatorship, the Ulster troubles keep breaking through. The Arts Council of Northern Ireland supported the televised project, so the regional connection is no surprise. Marianne McDonald, with her own Irish roots and interests, has no doubt that the play 'expressed the concerns by the Irish in the North about the British occupation' and is a 'paean to liberty'. She continues:

> "*Seizing the Fire*" is a metaphor for regaining one's country, by the use of arms if necessary. It is a metaphor for gaining freedom not only from the tyranny of occupation, but also from the tyranny of dogma and of course—faithful to Marx— class. (2003: 43)

Seize the Fire references William Blake's 'The Tyger' and alludes to radicalism and defiance in general, whereas McDonald's parochial response, while sincere, is a cultural overlay. Her comment about 'tanks on the lawn'—that 'immediately the North of Ireland comes to mind' (44)—won't be true for all. The Belfast government was never military, either with martial music and a clique of colonels/ generals, or with a widespread rolling out of heavy weaponry. Certainly, the presence of the British army was oppressive to some but it did not function as a junta. There was still a civil government. Nonetheless, we can see the potency of Paulin's

approach. He keeps his theme as streamlined as the ST; the play is, indeed, a 'paean to liberty'. Prometheus defines himself thus, compared to Zeus:

> Zeus said *Exterminate!*
> I said *Miscegenate!* (17)

'Exterminate!' will be familiar to all *Doctor Who* fans. 'Miscegenate' rhymes, matches metrically and completes an aphoristic couplet but is an unusual choice. It refers unambiguously to inter-racial relationships, but it is difficult to ascribe significance to Paulin's selection: race is not referenced elsewhere within the text. Poetic 'punch' might be overriding meaning in this instance.

The technology that is imported—tanks, news blackouts, radio—places Paulin's piece firmly into modern times. Beyond that, we can impose our own experiences. For McDonald, Prometheus being asked to sign a recantation conjures up Michael Collins and the Fenian legacy; for others, the play would have suggested a South American context, despite the strong Ulster vernacular and references. The following exchange between Prometheus and Oceanus illustrates how specifically Paulin cited 'the troubles', conflating Ulster and South America. The ST reveals Oceanus's intent to ask a boon of Zeus, on behalf of his friend—[...] τήνδε δωρειὰν ἐμοὶ δώσειν Δί' (338-9, 'Zeus will grant me this boon.')—which Prometheus politely dismisses as futile: τὰ μέν σ' ἐπαινῶ [...] ἀτὰρ μηδὲν πόνει (340/342, 'I thank you for that [...]but don't make the effort the effort'). Paulin's exchange is both more spirited and more seditious, with a reference to kneecapping which was not included in the broadcast version:

> O: We're comrades still.
>
> P: You better head.
>
> O: I'll see you're freed.
>
> P: More likely you'll get kneecapped.
>
> O: He trusts me, Zeus.

'Comrades' is used regularly to translate the relationship between men-at-arms in Homer but Aeschylus describes Oceanus and Prometheus as kin—ξυγγενὲς. Paulin chooses the word that confers nowadays a left-wing political connotation, suited to liberation politics. The entirely vernacular but urgent: 'You better head' for the ST's civil admonishment not to waste any effort, brings the sense of danger close.

Paulin alters the focus of an Aeschylean *rhesis*. In the ST, Prometheus glosses over his part in bringing the gods to power and focuses on the primitive nature of the human before his intervention (436-471). Paulin greatly elaborates the first element, drawing on modern images of political corruption. He deliberately blurs the boundaries between god and military dictator:

> The gods of our new mythology are all generals and politicians. I helped them get power. I watched them drive in stretched limos to ceremonies where they made speeches and then awarded each other honours, titles, medals, stars, brownie points. And always there was some historian handling the press. (29)

Paulin not only diverges significantly from his ST but adds a strong authorial voice; no director could ignore the deep vein of cynicism about modern politics, which even includes a revisionist historian as a spin-doctor 'handling the press'. This section chimed well with the Open University's teaching agenda as it dissects the corruption in absolute power.

Aeschylus has humans as simply underdeveloped: ὥς σφας νηπίους ὄντας [...] (443, 'how infantile they were [...]'). The word νηπίους has a long pedigree, being applied by Homer to the Trojans who reject Polydamus's good advice in favour of Hector's call to action, when befuddled by Athena.[171] It suggests foolishness. Paulin transmutes his humans into the politically oppressed and is describing Marx's 'lumpen proletariat', manipulated by lies. The word 'witless' approximates most closely to νηπίους:

> Down on the ground the people humped heavy loads and suffered back pains and self-disgust. Those humans drudged. They'd no idea what they were for. Witless, glum, trapped, they blundered about with their heads down [...]. When first they started they

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[171] *Iliad*, Book 18, line 311 (Loeb: 1999)

had eyes but didn't yet know how to look at the world. Their ears were blocked by wax and ignorance, lies that had been stuffed there. (29-31)

'They'd no idea what they were for' inserts the big philosophical question about purpose into Paulin's concept. In a few lines within this speech, Paulin adds to the ST's list of Promethean gifts, which were essentially utilitarian. He creates a paean to the artistic spirit, arising unprompted in humans, and placed above the purely functional. The museum catalogue of our earliest forays into aesthetics produces a tender prose description of human aspiration at its best, the cumulative detail untrammelled by poetic strictures. The text as performed was similar but omitted aspects of Prometheus's mindset—his 'immense patience and good will' and the affectionate recognition of 'nothing alien or strange', which begins this extract:

> There was nothing alien or strange about the small gnarled artefacts they began to skrimshander out of whalebone, teak, black soapstone. Little gods, animals kissing, keepsakes, bison running, white horses—they began to make images and objects, each with its own aura [...] I taught them to sail, fly, glide and push themselves out at the stars— (29-31)

What we are examining is a creative translator making vivid the off-stage world of humans, drawing on the genuine artefacts of early humans to build the past, whilst clothing the present action in modern dress. Although Paulin has retained a chorus of sea-nymphs, there is little ethereal about their lyrics. Both Prometheus and the final written chorus emerge as robust Ulster folk in their exchanges. The chorus is unimpressed by Prometheus's self-proclaimed generosity to humans:

Ch: That was big of you.

P: So I'd a big head?
        And who wouldn't?
        I'm trapped but.
        After the first bang
        of those ideas
        I hit the floor.

Ch: Who marked the floor out?

P: Nothing.
        Nothing and no-one. (32)

When broadcast, Franklyn-Robbins said: 'but I'm trapped now'—using Standard English. The Ulster 'I'm trapped but' is Paulin's written version. As we saw in the previous chapter, the word 'but' achieves much greater emphasis in the final position, meaning something equivalent to 'even so'. Paulin's 'big-headed' Prometheus is part liberator, but also part Romantic over-reacher, caught by his own ambition. The Ulster vernacular sharply pronounces Prometheus's resentment and surprise at his punishment, although the ST makes clear he courted trouble, not expecting such severity—despite his foresight:

> [...] ἐγὼ δὲ ταῦθ' ἅπαντ' ἠπιστάμην.
> ἑκὼν ἑκων ἥμαρτον, οὐκ ἀρνήσομαι·
> θνητοῖς ἀρήγων αὐτὸς ηὑρόμην πόνους.
> οὐ μήν τι ποιναῖς γ' ᾠόμην τοίαισί [...] (265-8)

> ([...] I knew all that, all along. I did the wrong thing intentionally, intentionally. I won't deny it: by helping mortals, I brought trouble on myself. But I certainly never thought I would have a punishment anything like this [...])

The original play is not an easy project for the modern theatre, particularly with a bland translation. Bernard Knox points out the overlap in dates between the elderly Aeschylus (and/or his son) and Sophocles. Not only does Sophocles' innovation of the third actor give Κράτος a voice but Prometheus shares traits with Sophoclean protagonists. As Knox says:

> The hero [...] is fixed, in this case literally, in one place; the action is a sequence of visits by others who come to deceive, persuade, or threaten. The dramatic power of the play has its source in the efforts to break his resolution and their failure. (1964: 45)

Beyond the mental struggle, however, the play can appear static, a candidate for radio rather than the stage. Edith Hall comments on the 'virtuoso' quality of Prometheus's monologues and the verbal dynamism of the play:

> This most static of tragic heroes, unable to move from the Caucasian peak to which he is fettered, ranges with unprecedented verbal energy through time and space. (2010: 229)

A modern audience is not averse to a play in which words dominate; Becket's *Happy Days* has an equally static protagonist and regularly fills theatres. Nonetheless, touching a contemporary nerve is a justified approach to *Prometheus Bound*. Faber and Faber's 'blurb' for *Seize the Fire* writes of Paulin's 'formidable powers of transformation'. Plot, character and action are seen as:

> [...] secondary to a gripping, inventive and quasi-futuristic treatment of burning contemporary issues—feminism, the corruption of power and authoritarian politics. (1990: back cover)

The 'blurb' thus identifies the play as being both rooted in the present but also embracing aspects of the futuristic dystopian genre, popularised in films of the 1980s such as *Blade Runner* and the *Terminator* franchise.

We have already considered power and authoritarian politics; feminist ideas are addressed in the striking figure of Paulin's Io. In the ST, Io is clearly anguished, with disjointed sentences upon entry, and exclamations similar to Aeschylus' Cassandra. She is plagued by a gadfly and the ghost of Argus:

> [...] ὃν οὐδὲ κατθανόντα γαῖα κεύθει,
> ἀλλά με τὰν τάλαιναν
> ἐξ ἐνέρων περῶν κυνηγετεῖ πλανᾷ
> τε νῆστιν ἀνὰ τὰν παραλίαν ψάμμον·
>
> ὑπὸ δὲ κηρόπλαστος ὀτοβεῖ δόναξ
> ἀχέτας ὑπνοδόταν νόμον. ἰὼ ἰὼ πόποῖ [...] (*P. B.* 570-76)
>
> ([...] even though he is dead, the earth cannot cover him—
> he crosses over from the underworld
> to hunt me—wretched me!—and make me wander
> starving along the sands of the seashore;
>
> and in accompaniment the noisy reed-pipe, fashioned with wax,
> drones its soporific melody.
> Io, io popoi—)

Between her pain, and the exclamations which include the sound of her own name, Io is formal in the ST. She relates her own history in a lengthy *rhesis* and questions Prometheus about past and future events. Paulin's creation shows none of this restraint. Of all the main characters, Io undergoes the greatest transformation between television broadcast and published text. In the Open University production, Io (Julia Hills) was stereotypically feminine, a replica of Marilyn Monroe in her iconic white dress. Hills even paused briefly over a grille during her scramble towards Prometheus, to re-create the famous billowing skirt. Although the blonde wig was contemptuously discarded, the broadcast Io was, essentially, sex-object and victim, her voice always on the edge of a whine. She did not wear the aggressive 'cow-horns' specified in the text (33).

The chorus describes Io as 'brittle and fragile' (39) and 'a sweet little girl' (41), which is how she appeared for the Open University's viewers, but these descriptions become ironic in the face of our published Io, who is quite different. Her feminist invective and attitude defy the broadcast stereotype. Paulin picks up on the phallic nature of the gadfly—οἴστρου δ' ἄρδις/ χρίει ζάπυρος (879-80) which Sommerstein translates as: 'I am pricked by the gadfly's fiery dart'—and puts coarse sexual slang into Io's mouth, playing with the double meaning of 'prick'. Io goes beyond words; the stage directions invite crude and irreverent actions, missing from the broadcast version, in which Hills merely used this speech to cry and to remove her wig:

> Isn't this great?
> I could've had my tits pumped up
> like tight udders [...]
> And this,
>   (*Cupping hands*)
> this is the thing pokes out their flies
> —the flying prick
> that comes humming after me—
> oh, how it wants to sting sting sting me—
>
> [...] But see Zeus—
> Zeus, he's a prick—
>   (*Blows party-popper.*)[172]
> and this buzz you hear

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[172] Almost certainly referring to paper blow-out, as used in the broadcast version, rather than explosive party-popper.

> that's the song of his prick.
> It's glued to my body
> just like you're tied to that stake.
> A hard high scream it is
> that shaves and shapes me.
> It flays my legs, lips, tits, bum,
> then prick, prick, pricks me!

Paulin's published Io is a defiant Ulsterwoman, inured to male abuse, rising above it with spirit intact: 'Isn't this great?' She has none of the pitiful cries from the ST. When Prometheus resists telling her future, Io snaps: 'Don't be a schmuck', not included in the broadcast. His patronising claim, 'I don't want to hurt you' is met with: 'All the wee pricks say that' (39), in which the dialect marker—'wee'—was also absent from the broadcast. Most striking of all in this reconstructed Io is her bravura exit, every bit as heroic as a mythic male counterpart on paper, but lacking feistiness in the performance:

> (*Emptying pills and scrunching them under her heels*)
> Would y' look at them out there
> unzipping themselves
> and pointing their stalky eyes
> at this artificial me.
> It's a tough trek
> you've mapped out for me
> —I'm gonna take it but.
>   (IO *blows party-popper at* PROMETHEUS *and exits*.) (49)

Who are the 'them out there'? Almost certainly, Paulin intends male audience members to be implicated. The final 'but', once again that strong Ulster feature, stresses Io's intention to carry on regardless.

With so much alteration to character and context, we are entitled to ask in what sense is *Seize the Fire* a 'version' of the Aeschylean ST? Even Faber and Faber hedges its bets in the 'blurb', writing of 'transformation' and 'reworking'. Nonetheless, the essential elements of the original are present, including the megatheme of power. Paulin's version includes the same mythical cast list, with the same distribution of hostility or sympathy towards Prometheus; the 'action', consisting of a series of dialogues, sequenced as the ST; the content of those dialogues touches

on similar topics—although alternatively slanted.   Paulin's conclusion however, is more optimistic than the ST. Sommerstein takes the description of the tempest to signify some kind of physical movement on stage so that Prometheus passes from view into the rock (563). His last words call for recognition of his suffering:

> ὦ μητρὸς ἐμῆς σέβας, ὦ πάντων
> αἰθὴρ κοινὸν φάος εἱλίσσων,
> ἐσορᾷθ᾽ ὡς ἔκδικα πάσχω. (1091-3)

> (O my honoured mother, O Sky
> around whom rolls the light that shines on all,
> see how unjustly I suffer!)

Paulin also suggests the exit of Prometheus, but in a much more positive vein:

> Let Prometheus go out
> And become one
> With the democratic light! (65)

Paulin seems to find it hard in this stand-alone play to allow Zeus the final initiative. The description of the tempest from the ST is not transmitted. Instead, Prometheus repeats his justification and his fondness for humans:

> Men, women, tiny kids,
> every juicy little life—
> Zeus wanted crush them.
> I heard their stittering
> frantic cries,
> cries like pebbles bouncing
> on a stone floor,
> and my conviction
> was simple and complete.

The description of humanity is positive and a challenge to tyranny:

> Every mind was a splinter
> of sharp, pure fire
> that needled him
> and made him rock
> uneasy on his throne. (62-3)

Paulin's poetry is beautiful in its own right—'fluent and sinewy', as the publishers describe it. Humans are small, like berries or pebbles, but collectively can needle the despot. The phrase 'sharp, pure fire' has a precise, staccato rhythm, created by the distinctive first sound in each word, to mimic the act of jabbing Zeus with a splinter. It is a powerful image and one that Tony Harrison re-shaped a decade later, in his *Prometheus*, writing of Jewish commemorative candles:

> Flames when they are used for light
> most undermine Lord Zeus's might.
> Zeus particularly dislikes
> such stolen fire in little spikes [...] (1998: 61)

Unfortunately, the rhythm here does not help us to match form with content, especially the rather clumsy third line of this extract.

Paulin projects us into a hopeful future, in the absence of further plays to resolve our tale. Despite his many innovations, the ST remains discernible in structure and content. In contrast, Harrison's 1998 re-telling of the Prometheus story, commissioned by Channel 4 and the Arts Council of Great Britain, veers so widely from the ST, as we shall discover, that it goes beyond being even a loose version of Aeschylus. His introduction tells us that the piece had other influences, including Shelley and Marx. It is part-adaptation, part-sequel, with more of Harrison's own material than he borrowed from any source, demonstrating that moving too far outside the parameters of recognisable structure has inherent dangers. The new 'take' requires potency and coherence in its own right, and many felt this piece lacked both. We may admire aspects of Harrison's craft, which has both ambition and sincerity at its core, but perhaps he overwhelms his starting point with more innovations than such a spare story can hold. One reviewer at the time described the film as:

> A ponderous look at 20th-century history and the human condition, the odyssey, scripted entirely in rhyming verse, makes for arduous viewing. Harrison's humanist

ideas—anti-ideology, pro-imagination—may be genuine, but it's unclear to who this will appeal. (16/04/1999)[173]

This review, like others we have considered, makes sweeping generalisations. As a matter of simple fact, the film is not 'entirely in rhyming verse': 'dad' and 'boy' converse in prose. To the reviewer, however, rhyming verse dominated the film and seemed entire. That error does not negate the general thrust of the criticism: that the piece falls between stools in terms of audience. With Paulin, the broad-minded aficionado of ancient theatre will identify many points of similarity with the ST and appreciate clever divergence, but Harrison takes us beyond that comfort zone: we recognise little of the notional ST in Harrison's version; it moves a long way from the lucid simplicity of Aeschylus' theme, which Paulin essentially respected. Harrison's vision may not strike us as cohesive drama in its own right, although the film has some deliberately disturbing episodes, which touch us emotionally. In essence, Prometheus's absence as a living presence removes the obvious focus for our sympathies and the alternatives do not fully compensate. The boy, inevitably, tugs a few heartstrings but is reduced to a sound effect for much of the time. Io, who should move us, and who retains her plot function in Paulin's version, is a physical presence, identified with Europe's outcasts: pathetic, ever-running, but without a voice and a sideshow of the main plot, to destroy Prometheus's statue.

Academic responses, however, were more favourable than those of film critics. Edith Hall wrote in the face of a poor reception:

> Yet I am convinced that the eye of history will later view Harrison's *Prometheus* as the most important artistic reaction to the fall of the British working class as the century staggered to its close, a fall symptomatic of the international collapse of the socialist dream. The film also offers the most important adaptation of classical myth for a radical purpose for years [...] (1998: 129)

Hall directly challenges the view that Harrison was 'anti-ideology', although posterity has yet to acclaim the piece. For an average audience, should we wish to immerse ourselves in Harrison's deconstruction of modern history, we must then negotiate exaggeratedly alien features, such as

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[173] Accessed on 17/07/2014 through *Total Film* website. Review has no by-line nor name of original publication medium.

the chorus, made resoundingly 'other' in form. Harrison is concerned at one level with Yorkshire miners and the closure by Michael Heseltine of the last pit in Kirkby—a topic for which sympathy no doubt exists—but, in his attempt to universalise his theme, he complicates his borrowed narrative in a way that Paulin resists, exploring the death of socialism in general, alongside the closet survival of fascism as he takes us on a whistle-stop 'pollution' tour of central and eastern Europe.

Whereas Paulin created a contemporary analogy, Harrison's dominant comparison is retrospective. Kratos and Bia—both male—are ex-SS members and the various signs that play such an important part in the visual impact of the film are described at the beginning as 'black, white and red rather reminiscent of Nazi insignia' (1998: 3)[174]. Hermes refers to Zeus as the Fuhrer (61) and World War II represents the depths of human depravity in the use of fire, to which all else—such as the regimes of Milosevic and Ceausescu (75)—are compared. The Old Man, as we shall see, looks back with relish to the bombing of Dresden. This montage of non-contemporaneous European atrocities clouds the essentially linear plot, as Kratos and Bia drive Prometheus's statue to its destination. Visually, there are stunning moments in the film, images impossible to replicate on stage, but the combination of ultimate source and modern overlay seems doomed because the clarity of the former is swamped by the complexity of the latter.

None of Harrison's 20th-century characters merits a name, just a descriptor, until 'Mam' becomes Io. The boy's family has its symbolic coal fire. In his introduction, Harrison explains the significance of such a fire, with an air of nostalgia:

> As a child I learned to dream awake before the coal-fire in our living room. Staring into the fire, with its ever-changing flames, shifting coals, falling ash, and what were called 'strangers'—skins of soot flapping on the grate—evoked in me my first poetry. My first meditations were induced by the domestic hearth, I have always associated staring into flames with the freedom of poetic meditation. (vii)

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[174] All textual references from 1998 Faber & Faber edition. Only page numbers will be given in future.

As with Paulin's extension of human crafts into the aesthetic, Harrison associates fire with creative forces and the mental freedom they represent, a fact that the Old Man makes explicit towards the end of the piece, singling out poetry for a particular accolade:

> Imagine men first freed from t'night
> first sitting round t'warm firelight,
> safe from t'beasts they allus feared
> until Prometheus first appeared.
> Watching logs burn, watching coal
> created what's been called Man's soul [...]
>
> Fire and poetry, two great powers
> that mek the so-called gods' world OURS! (83-4)

Prometheus represents not only technological advance but also imaginative and intellectual, which remains close to Aeschylus; here, too, Prometheus brought to humans awareness of their condition: ἔννους ἔθηκα καὶ φρενῶν ἐπηβόλους (444, 'I made them intelligent and possessed of understanding'). Prometheus becomes what Harrison calls a θεαμα, or spectacle, for a recurring idea. At this stage of the introduction, drawing on Byron and Shelley—who both helped to romanticise Prometheus into the archetypal freedom fighter for the common man—plus other modern commentators, Harrison's interpretation still seems conventional. He writes:

> [...] thirty millennia of tyrannical torture, thirty millennia of defiance. And so it is not surprising that at times of the collapse of ideas that might have created liberty and equality the figure of the chained Titan, Prometheus, is remembered. Nor is it surprising that for those who dramatise history as dialectical struggle Prometheus has come to embody the tyrannically restrained champion of the downtrodden and oppressed. When men feel themselves in chains the myth of the Titan re-enters history. (viii)

In this analysis, he shares common ground with Paulin, despite their vastly different approaches and contexts, and also with Hughes, whose cameo Prometheus, in *Alcestis,* adds a serious note to physical comedy, declaring:

> I gave man freedom.
> When I gave him fire, I gave him freedom
> To re-create mankind in his own image (1999: 58).

Mary Beard selects Harrison's adaptation of the Prometheus story for a passing comment in *Confronting the Classics* where she writes of the play as 'addressing the 'enemy within', in the shape of poverty and class' (2014: 219), identifying the ideological thrust.[175] Paulin, too, magnifies the hapless state of average humans, ground down by their lot with his additional material.

Nonetheless, as we shall see, it is the destructive, rather than creative power of fire that Harrison emphasises and his story has no redemptive edge. He comments on the ST's final 'great cry to the light' which he describes as being:

> [...] common to all and that unites the audience with the surrounding universe and their suffering champion [...]

> This common light is at the heart of the experience of Greek tragedy, as I have written in the introduction to my play *The Trackers of Oxyrhynchus*. (xxi)

In that introduction, Harrison describes 'the light common to all' which brings 'spiritual understanding' and that 'unites actor and audience, theatrical space and outside world, the imaginary and the real' (2004: 6). This uplifting assertion, however, is muted by the psychological scars of war. Writing of 'VJ' celebrations, he tells us it was:

> [...] even before I became a poet, that I learned to relate our celebratory fire [...] to that terrible form of fire that brought about the 'VJ' when unleashed on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. (4)

The introduction to *Prometheus* demonstrates that Harrison is writing a bleak piece, haunted by the aftermath of World War II:

> Whoever looks into the golden eyes of Prometheus set in the cremated sockets sees the early hope of the world and knows its late despair. (xxix)

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[175] In the chapter 'Only Aeschylus Will Do?'

Prometheus's sacrifice was in vain. Unlike Paulin, Harrison portrays humans as essentially unworthy recipients of Prometheus's gift: we may recoil in horror as the miners are tipped into a furnace without warming to either the father or old man.

Kratos and Bia still open Harrison's piece, wearing white overalls, black chemical exposure masks and red hard hats, for work in a cooling tower. Their function is not to fetter Prometheus, long since achieved, but to destroy his statue and:

> [...] give some grief
> to those who love the fire-thief. (3)

On this mission, the pair tends to turn up whenever Zeus ordains aggression via his mouthpiece, Hermes. Whereas Paulin merely embroiders the personifications, Harrison magnifies their role: they are the final, bleak prediction in the film, when Hermes says of the fleeing boy (echoing Andrew Marvell):

> And at his back he'll always hear
> the boots of KRATOS and of BIA! (86)

Harrison has taken the 'great cry to the light' and replaced it with an image of despair.

The Old Man, Harrison's central protagonist, does not easily command sympathy on the page. He is an unrepentant apologist for smoking, with a sexist description of the female cinema attendant and a cavalier attitude to pollution:

> T'whole bloody place all full of NOS:
> no bloody smoking, spitting, booze,
> no even lighting up in t'loos.
> Ay, I bloody tried that too,
> having a quiet drag in t'loo.
> But t'old maid wi' her ice-cream tray
> saw t'smoke and gave the game away.
> I smoked that fast it made a fug
> and got me chucked out on mi lug.
> Then I said, 'sod it! That's me done!'

Forbidding fags spoiled all my fun. (28)

Where our sympathies are supposed to lie is further complicated by Hermes's declaration that smoking is one of the abuses of fire that Zeus tolerated as a method for human self-destruction:

> When forms of fire get men destroyed
> Zeus is more than overjoyed [...]
>
> It's long been Zeus's fervent hope
> by giving men sufficient rope
> and simply allowing a free hand
> with stolen fire, the contraband,
> that fire will blow up in the face
> of the whole detested human race. (62)

'Contraband' is a particularly loaded word, taken from pit signage; illicit smoking by miners risked death by explosion and the old man grudgingly admits that 'underground makes sense' but obviously resents it:

> Sometimes I think t'whole bloody land
> 's made bloody baccy contraband. (28)

We must remember, however, that Harrison writes for performance and personally directed the film of *Prometheus*.[176]   On screen, Walter Sparrow draws some respect, with his obvious passion and mobile face:

Fig.4: Cover photo from *Prometheus*: Sparrow as the old man in cinema.

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[176] The film is not in B.F.I. archives. A privately-owned copy was made available by Professor Edith Hall.

He has a tender scene on the wrecked bus with his grandson, interpreting the adult world, but still appears unlovely in close-up, as he 'gobs [...] coaly green phlegm' onto a picture of Heseltine (5) and chain-smokes throughout, to the accompaniment of a hacking cough from his one lung.

Combined with the apparent philistinism of 'Dad', some might see Harrison as having created an unhelpful stereotype of the northern working class man. Nonetheless, Harrison is drawing from life, as earlier poems testify. In 'Cremation', from *The School of Eloquence* he writes movingly of another ex-miner with broken health but unbroken spirit:

> He keeps back death the way he keeps back phlegm
> in company, curled on his tongue. Once left alone
> with the last coal fire in the smokeless zone,
> he hawks his cold gobful at the brightest flame,
> too practised, too contemptuous to miss. (1984/2006: 125)

This poetic snapshot captures, with pathos, both the privations and stubbornness of working-class life. In 'Bringing Up', Harrison writes of a parent feeling threatened by others' cultural *mores* :

> It was a library copy otherwise
> you'd've flung it in the fire in disgust.
> Even cremation can't have dried the eyes
> that wept for weeks about my 'sordid lust'. (166)

When the father in *Prometheus* throws the boy's school copy of Aeschylus into the fire, his son retorts, without Harrison's own insight: 'Burning books's what Nazis do' (10).

Harrison is incorporating personal experience into his *Prometheus* but the mythic apparatus tends to dilute the social message, and the modern thread does not elucidate the myth. Harrison oversaw the physical vision as well as the text, which follows his stage directions in the extravagance of some aspects. Hermes, on screen, has a 'camp' glamour in his silver suit, and points out our human folly with wry humour, using comic rhymes worthy of Byron:

> [...] And if not Armageddon dream a
> universal emphysema! (63)

The most exotic element is the chorus of Oceanids. On the page, the women from the Oceanus fish factory are little more than stage directions, singing sounds without words: 'something infinitely sad' (36) or 'almost peaceful 'liquid' music' (39). In the film, when the blue-overalled women become surreal turquoise mannequins, they float open-mouthed down the Humber, providing a dirge-like soundtrack to human atrocities. In the absence of a living Prometheus, the chorus's original function is lost. Like Io, these female 'characters' are wordless, which could be a strong feminist point, but there is no exploration of this aspect. Instead, we have an unsettling image of seven inanimate, well-endowed female forms, diaphanously clad but for their wellington boots, with gaping mouths that notionally emit a siren-song, though lacking a clear dramatic narrative.[177]

Harrison's complex piece is pervaded with moral ambiguity but is consistent in exposing fascism, from the throwaway comment of the boy on his father's behaviour, through a world of petty regulations into European history and, ultimately, to the behaviour of Zeus, the supreme being. Human misuse of fire runs from clandestine smoking to the holocaust and beyond. Harrison leaves room for us to make our own judgement, but there appears to be no irony in the old man's reaction to the firebombing of Dresden, fairly typical for his class and generation:

> I want to see t'newsreels that I saw
> on Saturday mornings during t'War.
> And show us what were justly done
> by Bomber Harris to the Hun.
> When Bomber Harris turned on t'heat
> I cheered it from this very seat. (42)

We are about to watch a poignant contrast to this triumphalism—a ghostly operatic interlude that is genuinely evocative—but Hermes' dismissive 'my master Zeus had Dresden zapped' (42), whilst intended to show the brutality of a fascist god, also trivialises the event. The piece

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[177] The text contains black and white still photographs from the film.

contains other dubious scenes, such as the slaughter of Io, in a Bulgarian abattoir, which many would find gratuitous. Once again, Harrison shares an image with Paulin, who mentions an abattoir briefly, but without the graphic realisation we witness here.

The abattoir is a recurring image in Harrison's poetry. His Palladas epigram 18 reads:

> Death feeds us up, keeps an eye on our weight
> and herds us like pigs through the abattoir gate. (1975: 20)

The Greek makes no mention of place:

> Πάντες τῷ θανάτῳ τηρούμεθα καὶ τρεφόμεσθα
> ὡς ἀγέλη χοίρων σφαζομένων ἀλόγως
>
> (We are all kept and fed for death
> like a herd of swine to be slain without reason.) (1918: 46-7)[178]

Harrison has replaced the gnomic brooding on the irrationality of human existence with a very concrete image drawn from his own landscape and Cassandra uses the same word when she cries out:

> ah ah ah
> god-shunners kin-killers
> child-charnel man-shambles
> babe-spattered abattoir (32)

The word 'shambles' also conveys a butchery context. Harrison has brought together in one speech, two separate pieces of ST: ἀνδροσφαγεῖον καὶ πεδορραντήριον (*Ag.* 1092, 'a place where men are slaughtered and blood sprinkles the floor') and κλαιόμενα τάδε βρέφη σφαγὰς (1096, 'these are babies I see, bewailing their slaughter'). He divides his verse into a series of gruesome images. Leeds had a thriving butchery trade, with abattoirs such as the Kirkgate (below) operating in the town centre before their relocation to the periphery by the 1990s. Indeed, the plot of Peter Robinson's 2013 novel, *Abattoir Blues*, set around Leeds, hangs on the

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[178] Loeb Greek Anthology IV, trans. W.R. Paton, accessed online 16/11/2014.

number of abattoirs in the area. The unique smell of death and the cries of transported animals surrounding an abattoir are pervasive and must have imprinted themselves upon the collective psyche of Leeds. The butchery image is rooted in the experience of 'Loiners'.[179]

Fig. 5: Kirkgate abattoir, relocated in 1966

Harrison's description of the Bulgarian abattoir in his stage directions contains both realistic detail and an echo of ritual slaughter and/or execution:

> Two Friesian cows are stunned in turn and their carcasses fall out of the chamber onto a metal grid. They are hooked and hoisted up into the air on a chain. Their hooves rattle across the metal grid as they are dragged [...]

> The yellow plastic starter button for the carcass hoist swings to and fro across a white immaculate tiled wall. A blue Insect-o-cutor bar is reflected in the white tiles. (79)

In *Prometheus*, Harrison mixes such real-life detail with the mythical elements and many of his stage directions create a precise sense of place.

Where Harrison engages directly with his ancient ST, the purpose of this engagement is dramatically unclear. The boy recites one of Prometheus's speeches, a loose but recognisable précis of lines 447-471. The section has light, four-beat rhyming couplets in formal diction, retaining the ST's sense of a deed well done. It begins:

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[179] Inhabitants of Leeds.

Men had eyes but didn't see.
The sight they now have came from me.
They had ears, but never heard
the beauty of a sound or word,
so that Man's earthly life did seem,
until my deed, a cloudy dream,
until I opened ears and eyes
to all the life of earth and skies. (6)

For the boy, however, learning the speech is a chore and his father is equally dismissive:

BOY
'ave gotta learn it for us 'omework,
'ave gotta learn it!
DAD
God knows why they feed yer all that crap.
BOY
Ah've gotta learn this speech for t'class today.
Bloody great chunk to learn by heart. (9)

There is no reverence anywhere for Prometheus. The 'blurb' put out by Faber and Faber claims that 'the words of an old cough-wracked miner in a wrecked Yorkshire cinema reaffirm the defiance of Prometheus' but much of what he hankers for is unedifying, not to mention politically incorrect:

I'd like to watch a thousand clips
of ciggies dangling from wet lips,
the mean lips of Chicago hoods
on corners of bleak neighbourhoods,
loitering in dark parts of town
to gun some other gangster down,
them painted scarlet lips that pout
to blow some perfect smoke-rings out,
what I now know as prostitutes
with six-inch heels who smoked cheroots. (29)

The dad is completely dismissive of Prometheus:

Serves him bloody reet for thieving. And he shouldn't have bloody bothered, if pits was his idea!

The play looks towards the new millennium which, Hermes tells us, is Zeus's trigger for action:

> With the new millennium nigh
> Zeus wants his forces standing by
> to make one final all-out thrust
> to grind Prometheus into dust. (41)

As a review of humankind, however, it lacks the hope that Aeschylus offered. Whereas Paulin picked up the positives from the gift of fire, Harrison gives us the negatives. The idea of creativity offered by Harrison in his introduction is given an airing, but as an aside, not developed into a redemptive power:

> Poets have taught Mankind to breach
> the boundaries Zeus put round speech,
> and the fire Prometheus stole
> created man's poetic soul. (44)

The poet as translator is vulnerable, whatever his/her approach: licence creates risks, and McGuinness was correct in assuming that most translations had a limited lifespan (above, 136). Modernity and innovation create a two-edged sword: if a text has topicality, it must, inevitably, contain inbuilt obsolescence. We might agree that Paulin produced a more marketable version of the Prometheus story in its day, but the piece no longer has performance currency because its political allusions have lost resonance: the military juntas of South America are largely eclipsed and most Irish citizens wish to put their past behind them and move forward in peace. The text is still rewarding poetry but no longer acts as a precise analogy for our times. Its references will slide further into obscurity with each passing decade. Harrison attempts to combine parochial events with a panoply of 'modern' European atrocities but the connection is tenuous and both pit closures and events of World War 2 are now distant history for the young.

Heaney's translations still stand as very fine poetry, if not performance texts. Once we filter out his additions to the ST in *The Cure at Troy*, what remains is a passable 'crib' and very readable. Of all the modern poets we have considered, he had the least theatrical eye; his words carried

the day. When reviewing a production of *The Burial at Thebes* for *The Guardian*, Billington wrote of Heaney's 'austerely memorable text' in which 'you feel that Heaney has stripped Sophocles' play to the bone'. He objects to the director having used 'excessive theatricality' which swamped Heaney's appreciation of the Hegelian dialectic.[180] Heaney's versions retain power because he has captured the transcendent quality of his STs by remaining close to them.

Paulin was aware of the risks of the highly idiosyncratic approach when he created *Medea* for Northern Broadside and eschewed dialect. He did not revert to a formal diction, however, but to a generic demotic vernacular. Paulin says in his introduction to the text:

> [...] in all my writing I have tried as hard as possible to follow always the pitch, the cadence, the lilt of the speaking voice. In doing my version of *Medea*, I concentrated on trying to hear how the words might sound as they were spoken in passion. (2010: unnumbered)

In an article for theartsdesk.com, he gives technical details:

> I've kept the language Standard. I've aimed for short, terse lines, and have for the most part avoided the iambic pentameter.[181]

Jane Wheatley, who interviewed Paulin for The Times, included the director Barrie Rutter's opinion in her piece:

> It's a great script [...] tuneful, percussive monosyllables: Shakespeare uses monosyllables for angry speeches, they do a lot of the work for you.[182]

Rutter summarises some common aspects of our poets: a musical quality, percussive elements and the effective use of monosyllables for moments of strong emotion, all of which we have commented upon.

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[180] Written: 07/04/2004. Accessed 16/10/2011.
[181] Written: 14/09/2011. Accessed: 16/10/2011
[182] Written: 25/01/2010. Accessed: 16/10/2011

Despite Paulin's protestations of keeping his language Standard, the play opens with an insertion to set the scene, employing Ulster vernacular for hot and sultry:

> It's a lunk day today
> —hot, baking hot
> and as still as death. (2010: 3)[183]

Beyond that, the nurse's prologue proceeds on a more conventional course. Paulin honours the ST's opening: Εἴθ' ὤφελ', which he translates as 'I wish', before the nurse's catalogue of regrets.[184] He glosses the 'difficult' Greek, the Symplegades, as 'clashing rocks' but is happy to retain the more obvious Mount Pelion (Πηλίου, 3). His use of proper names reveals a point of note: as a non-classicist, he confuses—or conflates—Pelias (Πελία, 6) with Peleus. For Paulin, the back-story lacks current significance, so the name of a minor character has no intrinsic importance beyond an aural link to Mount Pelion. Such a lapse is not unique to Paulin: Harrison, in the *Choephori*, writing of the 'fledglings left fatherless, when the great eagle got snarled', later refers to the offspring of 'Eagle Agamemnon' as 'his egrets'—an ornithological impossibility (58). These 'errors' are illuminating in terms of poetic priorities: what is worth research, and what is chosen for sound quality alone. We are discovering a hierarchy of interest, which differs markedly from the scholar-translator. Paulin selects the 'wrong' king but one plausibly linked to Mount Pelion, while Harrison uses an apparent diminutive, again with some aural link to eagle in its first syllable. Both are clear on the megathemes they wish to explore but casual on some linguistic periphera. A strict classicist would hold linguistic precision at a premium in translating.

Liz Lochhead, who omits Mount Pelion from her nurse's prologue but retains Pelias accurately, glosses the Symplegades as 'the humped blue rocks' (3). She has done her research: the Symplegades are also known as the Cyanean Rocks, or the Blue Islands, which she alludes to in her epithet. In the ST, Euripides has 'Symplegades' emphasised by its terminal position, as a beautifully euphonic trimeter but the word does not slip so easily off a non-Greek tongue.

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[183] All quotations come from Nick Hern edition (2010). In future, page numbers only will be given.
[184] The Greek combines Εἴθ'-'would that/ if only', and ὤφελ'-'it ought to have...'

Beyond these rocks, Lochhead's sense of place is understated: 'unlucky Colchis' covers the past. For a Scot, shipyards and forestry hold great economic significance and, in place of mythological sites, Lochhead prefers to elaborate on the ST's μηδ' ἐν νάπαισι Πηλίου πεσεῖν ποτε/ τμηθεῖσα πεύκη (Would that pine trees had never been felled in the glens of Mount Pelion, 3-4), to create a description of tree growth and early boat-building:

> why   did the sun ever heat up the soil
> in which there split that seed
> that sproutit from sapling to tall tree of girth enough
> to be felled to build its keel? (3)

Lochhead, in her elaboration, echoes Wilfrid Owen's 'Futility', which also considers the sun's 'fatuous' activity in both warming the seed and humanity:

> Think how it wakes the seeds— [...]
>
> Was it for this the clay grew tall?
> —O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
> To break earth's sleep at all? (1994/2002: 90)

Underpinning both is an interest in destiny and (divine) purpose. Euripides has Pelias as instigator but Lochhead, like Owen, is drawn to the image of the sun. Her ST has undefined pine trees felled; Lochhead's are designed to fulfil their role in building the Argo. In this brief example, we can observe how poets manipulate their material to create resonance for their target audience.

Euripides' nurse offers us a piece of gnomic wisdom:

> ἥπερ μεγίστη γίγνεται σωτηρία,
> ὅταν γυνὴ πρὸς ἄνδρα μη διχοστατῇ (14-15)

> (This is what most keeps a life free of trouble, when a
> woman is not at variance with her husband.)

The SL does not state that women must be the peace-keepers but it would have been the obvious implication. These lines offer a stumbling-block for feminists. Lochhead edits them out.

Paulin chooses to make the implicit explicit, not to condone the sentiment, we hope, but to highlight the inequality in Medea's and Jason's relationship within their society:

> She was happy in this new life
> and she obeyed Jason in everything.
> That's the safest way in marriage.
> It's best to follow your own husband
> and to accept all his rules. (4)

It is an emphatic statement incorporating two superlatives plus 'all' and 'everything', which provides an unequivocal picture of a woman who has invested completely in her marriage, preparing us for the ensuing storm.

Liz Lochhead complicates the plot, and our response, by her realisation of Glauke, a feisty Scottish lass—physically attractive, as the stage directions attest—and not the remote, offstage, trophy bride whom Euripides did not name. She is introduced to the plot at the expense of Aegeus, denying the audience resolution. Instead, the play ends with what Lochhead describes as 'a cacophony' from which key words or phrases emerge. In the ST, the bride was a faceless young woman, a νύμφαν (163) or a κόρη (1125). Many modern productions bring the wedding onstage but invariably as some kind of dumb show. Lochhead's Glauke speaks, thinks and feels. This single but significant innovation turns an otherwise recognisable version of the ST into adaptation. Lochhead gives no motives for her replacement of Aegeus by Glauke in her brief introduction, beyond saying that 'I even loved her name' but the character expresses a callow modern viewpoint, bursting onstage when she confronts Medea with a mixture of sisterhood, reasonableness but, also, unthinking adolescent cruelty:

> I never wanted my happiness should hurt another woman
> do you know how much it hurts me
> my happiness should hurt another woman?
> but if a man no longer loved me   wanted freedom
> he could have it
> I'd be too proud to try and keep him
> I don't hate you [...]
>
> I know what you and Jason have been to each other

> in the past   these things are not easy
> even though for you and Jason
> everything has long been over
> in the   man and wife sense of things
> still you are your children's mother and father (24)

Glauke gives a psychological gloss on Medea which is not sympathetic:

> The past   the past   what's done is over!
> you live inside your own self only
> you live in the past (25)

The spaces and lack of punctuation for sentence end-stopping, create the impression of organic, impromptu speech, plus a certain reluctance to mention sex. Glauke soon undermines her position as the reasonable woman, however, by revealing her callousness:

> your womb is a dried up pod
> rattling with shrivelled old seeds
> you cannot give him any more babies
> and my sweet firstborn
> already is kicking in mine (26)

Her assertiveness begins to grate as she lectures Medea:

> think about this   calmly   when I'm gone
> Jason would love to see his three oldest children
> at our wedding
> if you ever loved him   you will send them (26)

Glauke thus invites her own doom to the wedding but the exchange also ratchets up what is at stake. Medea has three children to slaughter and also kills an unborn child. The ultimate effect of Lochhead's innovation is to play down Medea's partial divinity and her outraged honour but to foreground the aspect of the ST that resonates most with contemporary life: the older woman 'dumped' for a younger model. The chorus sides with Medea unprompted:

> we think you show forbearance indeed Medea
> the best that can be said in mitigation of the young
> is that they are not yet old
> her unkindness to you is unforgiveable
> but maybe understandable?

> we disliked her too
> young beautiful women
> in the wrong but righteous about it   are very hard to take (27)

The pause in the final line isolates the chorus's conclusion as an offering upon which the audience can ponder.

Lochhead uses her ST as a springboard for a feminist exploration of gender politics which is a predictable response for our times. To modern women, Medea may well appear to be a proto-feminist, challenging her smug husband as he attempts to rationalise his desire for fresh meat. Killing her own children is a stumbling block, however, hence Lochhead moves towards an ambiguous ending. *Medea* would have been a problem play for its original audience, but for different reasons. Ancient myth, alas, is filled with incidents of children used as pawns, from Niobe's punishment to Agamemnon's necessity. Medea's action has precedent amongst both men and gods, and brutal death was the stuff of much poetry. The original audience was not squeamish but Euripides piles up the anxiety for his male compatriots nonetheless: Medea is not just transgressive in her murders; she is also a foreign woman challenging a Greek male and planning her own destiny, seemingly ratified by the gods. Although her immortal grandsire sets her apart from ordinary women, Medea is still a wife and mother who represents everything the Athenian man would dread. Modern liberal democracies have different moral imperatives: a strong, resourceful woman is not a problem, but treating your children as disposable property clearly is.

Lochhead retains features that have a muted significance for us, such as the gods and the disgrace of oath-breaking, but foregrounds the sexual politics that are latent in the ST:

> do you
> cheat on me   forsake me   bed a new bride (18)

Where Euripides has Medea speak of betrayal and a new marriage bed: παθὼν/ προύδωκας ἡμᾶς, καινὰ δ' ἐκτήσω λέχη (488-9), Lochhead uses an interesting mixture of demotic

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vernacular ('cheat on me'), which refers specifically to sexual infidelity in common parlance, and poetic language ('forsake'), suggesting the vulnerable damsel of fairy tales. Whereas in the SL, a bed simply stands as a metonymic symbol for marriage, implying sexual activity, 'bed a new bride' is a more explicit modern idiom.

The nurse flags up sexual jealousy as a driving force in this version by turning the ST's simple threat of murder—ἢ καὶ τυράννους τόν τε γήμαντα κτάνη (42, 'or kill the royal family and the bridegroom')— into a vivid picture of lovers killed *in flagrante delicto*, with a phallic dagger. The nurse implicitly compares Medea to Ariadne, another resourceful female wronged by the man she helped, which underlines the level of male treachery we must contemplate:

> I shut my eyes and see Medea
> creepan through the labyrinthine palace
> follying her hatred like a thread
> I dream of a dagger thrust in yon double bed
> skewering the lovers thegither (4)

In the ST, Medea goes almost at once from confrontation with Jason to her encounter with Aegeus. Lochhead's excision of the character, however, allows Medea to muse in a very modern way about custody and self-sacrifice:

> Jason is right   my children would be better off
> if I leave them here with their father
> who loves them   he loves them
> loves them and can offer them
>
> everything
> so much   so much
> I love my children
> can I leave them? 22

Perhaps ironically, even Jason is softened by the feminist slant. As he mourns at the end of the play, it is not just for his dynasty, with 'my boys' but also 'my darling girl', the daughter that Lochhead added (45). Despite his grief, however, he gets locked into the kind of back-biting with Medea all too common in the modern world, between warring couples. Firstly, Medea

confronts Jason with the kind of abuse that will inevitably be thrown at her, a mixture of ancient references and tabloid headlines:

> tigress? fury? harpy? witch? she wolf?
> monster? yes I am! (45)

They then indulge in character assassination, as each addresses their dead children:

> JASON
> children   the mother you had
> MEDEA
> children   the father you had
> end of story (46)

In 'end of story', Medea delivers her verdict on events and the chorus repeats it as the final line in Lochhead's text. Lochhead's chorus shifts the moral burden to the gods and fate, a jarringly non-modern conclusion:

> the Gods look down
> expect the unexpected
> what we wish for   work for   plan for   hope for
> think is bound to happen   won't
> what is fated   will
>
> end of story. (47)

Lochhead is not alone in dodging Medea's triumphant exit amongst those seeking to dress the play in contemporary clothes. Medea has potential, indeed, as a feminist icon: strong, resourceful, unbowed by marriage to a hubristic male. Jason conveniently—though tragically— forgets those female talents that made his cast-off wife an equal partner in their youthful ventures. Nonetheless, Euripides' murderous plot twist proves a conundrum for many. Lochhead leaves us dangling; others seek an overtly modern solution. Citizens Theatre, from Glasgow, which, in 2012, toured a jeans-clad Medea who lived on a housing estate, ended the piece with police sirens, as Medea loomed over the body of her son in the attic. The 2014 National Theatre production had Medea lapse convincingly into psychosis, her only legal loophole, which might also evoke on-going sympathy for a woman wronged, with her sons'

blood on her hands. We are re-casting the story for our own sensitivities about vengeance and justice and find it impossible to condone Medea's solution.

Lochhead's version is not radical feminism but, nonetheless, from a ST that purports to tell the female viewpoint, she creates a work that genuinely touches on gender politics, modern sexual *mores* and their impact on women. The end offers Medea neither escape nor punishment; it simply makes her point forcefully. As the *Scotsman*'s theatre critic wrote, quoted on the back cover of the text:

> What Lochhead does is to recast MEDEA as an episode—ancient but new, cosmic yet agonisingly familiar—in a sex war which is recognisable to every woman, and most of the men, in the theatre.

It is a perceptive analysis which could be applied to all the plays we have considered in this chapter. However broad the interpretation of sources, however contemporary the new context and the choice of lexicon, all the translators/adaptors held fast to the megathemes of their STs, as they saw them, for what else does 'cosmic' imply apart from the universal and transcendent? Of course, scholars may argue with the assumptions of poets, the cultural overlay that prefers *Medea*, for example, to be about sex and jealousy, rather than oaths and honour. Nonetheless, with the possible exception of Harrison's *Prometheus*, we have discovered a sensitivity and flair in respecting the dramatic thrust of the STs, whilst mediating them across two and a half millennia so that we come to them with fresh eyes and an increasing appetite for Greek drama. As Michael Walton stated:

> However laudable the desire to do justice to the playwrights of antiquity within their own milieu, a modern performance is for a modern audience (above, 239).

<u>Conclusion</u>

Art [...] alone may transform these horrible reflections on the terror and absurdity of existence into representations with which man may live. (Nietzsche)[185]

It may seem odd, with hindsight, how recently we concluded that Greek drama, the beauty of which was perceived by Hegel and Goethe, was best appreciated in performance. Even those Victorian academics who saw the potential, were still dealing in the original language, for an elite audience, with their translations being for reference, not for delivery. Since the mid-20th century, however, we have had the slow re-democratising of theatre, with grants and sponsorship increasingly dependent on both inclusivity and diversity. The theatre companies collaborating with some of our poets—Field Day, Northern Broadside, Theatre Babel—all attempt to capture a non-traditional audience. Within their outreach work, and the expansion of theatre-going in general, Greek tragedies have become fixtures of the British and Irish stage repertoire, because of innovative work to make them fresh and accessible for a new generation.

We are fortunate that the three tragedians whose work survives provide such a rich contrast of ideas, themes and style. To treat them as a homogeneous corpus would do them a disservice. With assistance from academic advisers, modern directors aim to find the essence and distinctive voice of each play. We have moved a long way from Athens in its heyday; the surface story of Greek tragic drama, *Persians* excepted, is undeniably myth to us, not a proto-history of Bronze Age ancestors. We recognise, however, that tragedies, in particular, are no mere literary fossils but philosophical debates, albeit it in aesthetic form, that were relevant in 5th-century Athens and remain relevant today, becoming once again part of a moral dialogue with the audience. Such potency, however, can only be revealed in a translation which puts the poetic artistry at the heart of a ST ahead of niceties about lexicon and syntax.

This thesis has been intended to analyse various approaches by contemporary poets, bringing together disparate critical responses from academics, theatre critics and fellow practitioners,

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[185] *The Birth of Tragedy* (23)

with the intention of synthesising an understanding of the poets' contribution to art in general and stagecraft in particular. Although some of the conclusions reached inevitably have a subjective element, based on personal preference, we can, nonetheless, point objectively to a number of common strands from the material considered, one of which is the appropriation of Greek tragedy to explore modern politics, in the broadest sense, including not just the overtly political, such as the 'troubles' in Ulster, but also those issues that affect us all, including gender and power structures. The Brotherton Library archive of Harrison's notes, for example, proved an impressive resource, showing, alongside the technical development of Harrison's verse, the intensity with which he draws upon contemporary issues as an inspiration for his art. The majority of the poets we have considered have expounded their ideas in pamphlets, interviews, prefaces, programme notes and essays and make clear that there is direct engagement with current events. Greek tragedy provides as conducive a vehicle for presenting debate today as it did originally. Our exception is Hughes, for whom the dramatic conflict reflected the personal and psychological; whatever his explorations of gender issues, they were raw and unsystematised. Where he did agree with his fellows, however, was in the choice of a broadly vernacular or demotic voice for his translations.

Vernacular writing, as we have seen, ranges from Hughes's preference for a blunt, informal register to moments of dialect in Lochhead that are near-impenetrable to some of us beyond the language boundary. Whereas Hughes travels, Lochhead's linguistic politics work best at home and the use of vernacular has limitations, offering familiarity to one community but alienating another. There is, however, no obligation on a poet-translator to provide a universal version, as there might be for an academic. Bassnett comments that, for 18th-century translators, 'the right of the individual to be addressed in his own terms, on his own ground is an important element' (2002: 65). Our poets embody much of this sentiment as they reconfigure Greek tragedy not for an elite few but to address their own cultural, social and language constituency in appropriate terms. When Harrison mingles a current dialect with echoes from the past, his choice of Anglo-Saxon, with its Germanic roots, complements the vernacular of England's north-east, rich in the influence of Old Norse, a linguistic cousin of English.

The use of vernacular feeds into another common strand: an interest in the sound of words and sentences, by all our poets. They drew inspiration from diverse sources—Murray, Eliot, Frost—but converge on the notion that sound quality and rhythm are important. Of course, some manifestations are bolder than others. Harrison, for instance, not only created his consonantal sound but employed a tight structure of alliteration, stress and rhyme. By contrast, Hughes shunned these obvious devices but still aimed for musicality, however blunt his language and bleak his theme. For Paulin and Heaney, working within a language community noted for a certain lilting quality in speech, the cadence of sentences absorbed their attention and was commented upon by them in interviews. Lochhead showed the power of a dialect to communicate emotional states, with skilful linguistic shifts. She also shared Harrison's preference for a 'craggy' sound, employing words from Scottish Doric, with its Scandinavian ancestry.

The poets we have considered are all in touch with the oral, demotic roots of poetry, whether it be Anglo-Saxon, mediaeval or later vernacular writers such as Burns. This continuity with an oral tradition is in contrast to academics, whose influences tend to be literary. Thus we have seen that our poets tend to conserve those elements coming from the oral tradition, which fed into early drama. These include the use of deictic language and vivid descriptions of off-scene events. Deixis survived the transition from the oral to literate culture: the 17th-century *King James' Bible* retains 'lo' as an intrinsic feature of the text's original deictic style. Oral traditions were designed to create immediacy and vividness, to bring an event to life in the imagination. Enhanced by the visual elements of theatre, such language is potent and can pluck emotional chords.

Vernacular writing is very much part of a democratising process. We no longer wholly subscribe to the Aristotelian theory that we best appreciate our own vulnerability by watching the downfall of high-status individuals—although some will argue that the degree of reversal is

a factor in our response.[186] After the Restoration in Britain, the nobility slowly gave way to the bourgeoisie on our stage and, since the 1950s, working-class tragic protagonists have made an entrance into British theatre, more than a century after *Woyzeck* was conceived in the 1830s. (That play was considered too revolutionary to perform until the 20th century.) Now, our heroes often sound like sections of their audiences and this language convergence has become the new mark of authenticity, attracting descriptors such as 'gritty'. Wertenbaker's Ajax speaks like a squaddie, not a lord, Heaney's chorus discusses Philoctetes' foot as if gossiping over the fence and Paulin's Io swears crudely like a 'ladette' on a binge. Power and status issues still matter as themes but recognising the universal human condition is how the audience connects. Sophocles shows us that this is an implicit element of Greek drama in his famous chorus from *Antigone*: rather than commenting directly on events after the guard's revelation, the Theban elders prefer to reflect on the nature of man (332-375).

Choices about language-use will, inevitably, foreground certain elements within a translation. Some may be in the ST, either implicitly, or explicitly; others will reflect the poet's own preoccupations. None of our modern poets has emulated Browning in his efforts to 'transcribe' the ST into English with as little mediation as possible. All use language creatively to reflect their personal imperatives. Harrison, as we have seen, was aiming for a particular sound but also attempting to highlight gender issues. Hughes, by contrast, was building a dark mood with the linguistic brutalism that runs through his verse. The dialect translations provide texts that chime with the expectations of a local audience, both in the cadence of whole sentences and the sound of individual words. The actual—or imagined—sound is a key factor for all.

It is in the matter of cultural overlay, however, that our poets make their most significant contribution to theatre. Aristotle's own theory of tragedy involved *mimesis*, or holding up a mirror to nature. For the Athenians, there was nothing incongruous in Aeschylus presenting a Bronze Age man from Argos being tried for murder by a jury on the Areopagus; they expected to see themselves reflected in their drama. Shakespeare, too, is full of such anachronisms.

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[186] See Edith Hall, 2014: 773-781.

Small wonder, therefore, that modern theatre practitioners uphold the importation of similar topicality, to maintain our ability to recognise ourselves in what we watch. Translation provides greater scope for innovation than merely updating the physical setting on stage: while we don't re-write Shakespeare, our poets have significantly re-written their Greek STs to embed the modernisation within the text. Much was made by Hegel about the transcendent nature of his preferred Greek tragedies but even the most universal of themes can only be dramatically communicated within an appropriate vehicle, a complex mixture of plot, character, language, connotation and psychological credibility.

Reconfiguring runs in tandem with a changing approach to literary translation. As we saw in the introduction, throughout both 18th and 19th centuries, the academic translator remained faithful to a ST, merely decoding the language as fluently as possible. If there was any concession to style, it tended to be the use of deliberately archaic diction. The popular series of the late 19th century did much the same. It was provision for a reader, not a viewer, and its function was to explicate the Greek. A few academics, however, notably Jebb, and later Murray, wished to capture something of the essence of their STs, the 'tingle' factor that has made them worth transmitting for more than two millennia. Those commissioned to translate for theatre today are heirs of these pioneers, but with rather more licence. By their innovations and refocusing, they bring two disparate worlds together, instinctively finding the human megathemes that remain universal.

If we briefly revisit a few of the works we have explored, the transformations effected are there to be admired. The plot of *Alcestis*, for example, now seems within the realm of fairytale, or comic book superhero, for a modern audience. The fact of bereavement, however, remains relevant and troubling and it is this aspect upon which Hughes dwells. As his Apollo remarks: 'The dead/ Are dead are dead are dead are dead/ Forever' (2). He is enough of a theatre aficionado, however, to realise that unrelieved moroseness would not appeal, so develops the role of Herakles, as a comic counterweight. Hughes's *Oresteia* was an exploration of the gender politics entrenched in the plays. He was not drawn to the transition from monarchy

through tyranny to democracy as much as to the conflicting claims of the two sexes about their rights and grievances. Hughes is less interested in the ultimate verdict—which he curtails to a perfunctory decision—than the dangerous passion of Clytemnestra and the poignant back story of Iphigenia's sacrifice. By elaborating on the chorus's account of the latter, as we explored, he makes us ponder on where our sympathy should lie at that moment, beyond what is inherent to the ST.

Heaney confined himself to Sophocles, noted for his intransigent or 'hard line' protagonists, which suited the Irish situation. As the Ulster troubles moved towards resolution, he offered us two outcomes for obduracy: Antigone's story ends in tragedy for want of timely compromise; Philoctetes—whose tale is not tragic by modern definitions—achieves a positive outcome for himself, albeit reluctantly. In *The Cure at Troy* Heaney's addition to the prologue hammers home the theme of intransigence and the extra choral stanzas have become a widely-quoted paean for hope and peace. Heaney's message is delivered head-on. A 'difficult' ST, seldom performed nowadays, chimed perfectly with a perception of the 'troubles' as a history of men behaving badly, but belatedly coming to their senses. Heaney's own topical importations will ultimately date the work but his ultra-unyielding humans continue to resonate in our volatile world.

The sweep of this thesis has been broad; there is scope for several aspects to be explored more narrowly but in greater depth. Dialect translation, for example, is very much an aspect of identity politics and the upsurge of nationalist sentiments. The people of Ireland and Scotland are undergoing the equivalent of a post-colonial reassessment of their relationship with England and the English language, which will impact upon all demotic writing, not just the translation of Greek tragedy. Gender, too, is emerging as an area of study with women writers turning their attention to works emanating from a deeply misogynist culture which, nonetheless, speak to them. We have considered Lochhead and Wertenbaker in this thesis but there are others, such as the Canadian classicist and poet, Anne Carson, who has become a prolific translator for the 21st century. With the female translators comes a growing awareness amongst female actors

that Greek tragedy provides them with wonderful roles. With a sympathetic touch, originally transgressive women, such as Clytemnestra and Medea, become complex psychological explorations of gender and power.

Perhaps most interesting of all, because it sets off down a relatively untrodden path in recent years, is to consider Tony Harrison's work within a wider debate on the future of verse drama in the English-speaking theatre. As this conclusion was being written, *Everyman* opened at the National Theatre, in a modern version by Poet Laureate, Carol-Ann Duffy.[187] The verse was unobtrusive, but very much present. The play was a qualified success and most criticism was levelled at the noisy special effects, rather than the poetry, but this is unlikely to be signalling a renaissance for verse drama. Does it have any future? For the Victorians, Shakespeare was both a yardstick and a shackle from which Eliot and Murray tried to escape by divergent routes. Both were popular in their day but have failed to establish themselves in a repertoire of regularly performed works. Christopher Fry has suffered much the same fate half a century later. We revere Shakespeare—he is a global brand—but for other verse playwrights, success is distinctly ephemeral. For Harrison too, the admiration for his robust rhymes seems at an end. His latest play is still unperformed at the time of writing—and thus unpublished, because Harrison believes that staging a play is the only way to perfect his text.

Contemporaneous with *Everyman*, a bold adaptation of the *Oresteia*, incorporating elements from Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, opened at the Almeida Theatre, in London, with *Bakkhai* and *Medea* to follow. Two further versions of the *Oresteia* were in rehearsal, at Shakespeare's Globe and the Home Theatre (Manchester). All this suggests that Greek tragedy is thriving— and in one sense it is—but we are in danger of becoming as reductive as our Victorian forebears. With the originality that exists in our British creative writers, perhaps some of the distinctly underperformed plays might also be refreshed. We glanced at Euripides' *Ion* in chapter 3. The play deals with a rape victim, too cowed and ashamed to speak out, a baby requiring asylum, issues of infertility, paternity, citizenship and identity. Which of these issues

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[187] Summer 2015.

does not still resonate? Euripides' *Phoenician Women* too, shows us how corrupt power leads to war that tears families irretrievably apart and creates involuntary exiles: male and female, young and old, fit and frail. Again, how can that not be relevant in this war-torn 21st century, with so many displaced people? In both these plays there are wonderful roles for mature female actors: Creusa in *Ion* and Jocasta in *Phoenician Women*. Those of us who admire Euripides' portrayal of women, would be pleased to advance further into this territory. An inventive translation could breathe new life into such plays—once-popular and fortunately preserved for us. We have already discovered the enduring intellectual and visceral appeal of half a dozen gems from Classical Athens; now—with the help of a fresh imagination—let us explore the rest of these treasures entrusted to our stewardship.

In Classical Greek, syllable length is predicated mainly on vowel quality. Those we consider naturally 'long'— *eta* and *omega*—fulfilled that expectation in iambic trimeter, although the Attic alphabet lacked *omega*, and the *eta* was a breathing indicator, our 'aitch', until the Decree of Eucleides and Archinus, in 403 BCE, when Athens diplomatically adopted the Ionic system. Before this innovation, the written signs *epsilon* and *omicron* must have been variable in value, like *alpha* or *iota*. By contrast, for a speaker of modern English, the perceived length of a syllable will be defined by the emphasis bestowed in speaking, although some letter combinations predispose us to draw out the sound, such as the 'ar' in 'snarl' or 'part'.

Letter combinations also defined length in Greek. A diphthong—two vowels sounded as one, like the first syllable of αἰτῶ—would generally have been long, as would a vowel before a consonantal cluster (or the 'double' consonants, such as ξ and ψ) similar to 'part' in English.[188] 'Soft' consonantal clusters—such as those involving γ and λ—did not inevitably require a long vowel. There can be resolution of the final syllable in the first two feet, almost never in the third, which is known as *brevis in longo*, and bestows a short value, or double short beats, on what should, strictly, be long, colloquially described as a 'drag'. This is especially useful for incorporating names: whereas 'Antigone' (Ἀντιγόνη) perfectly fits a foot in iambic trimeter, 'Neoptolemus' (Νεοπτόλεμος) does not. Euripides, who was more attracted to the vernacular than Aeschylus or Sophocles, used resolution more frequently than his fellow-tragedians.

Choruses, drawing on lyric poetry that was frequently—but far from exclusively—of Doric origin, had a wide range of metrical patterns. In lyric poetry, the pattern extends beyond the line into what we might now call a stanza but is often designated strophe/antistrophe in modern texts. Let us consider a short extract from Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, a play which features in chapter 2. It is part of a *kommos* between Philoctetes and the chorus (*Phil.* 1212-17):

> οὐ γὰρ ἐν φάει γ᾽ ἔτι.

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[188] A naturally long vowel sound could be deemed short if unelided across a hiatus (between words). This is called 'correption'.

ὦ πόλις ὦ πόλις πατρία,
πῶς ἂν εισίδοιμί σ᾽ ἄθλιός γ᾽ ἀνήρ,
ὅς γε σὰν λιπὼν ἱερὰν λιβάδ᾽,
ἐχθροῖς ἔβαν Δαναοῖς
ἀρωγός· ἔτ᾽ οὐδέν εἰμι.

In these six lines, we have, in order: a syncopated iambic dimeter, a choriambic dimeter, a syncopated iambic trimeter, a trochaio-dactylic colarion, a heptasyllable B and a choriambic enoplian. The choriamb is an Aeolian metron—a trochee followed by an iamb—which only occurs in lyric (sung) verse, such as that of Sappho; the second foot of a Sapphic stanza is choriambic. In various combinations, it occurs regularly in choral sections. The first part of the word 'choriamb' shares roots with chorus and choreography, an etymological clue to is suitability for the musical elements of Greek drama.

Some choral metres take their names from lyric poets who particularly favoured them: the *anacreontic*, for example, is a trochaic metre (familiar to those of us who know Longfellow's *Hiawatha*) named for Anacreon, just as the *glyconic* is named for Glycon. Both these poets were Aeolian. Other metrical patterns are geographically defined, such as the ionic colarion. The complexity—and some would say the opacity—of Greek metre is widely acknowledged. M. L. West, elucidating the subject for the Oxford University Press, wrote:

> [...] it is doubtful whether a coherent system could be devised, even if the world wanted it. Greek metre itself is too complex and multiform. (1982: 28)

For those interested in the technicalities, a list of the most common metrical feet is given below. Note that the terminology is not consistent from one authority to another. One should proceed with caution, however, in assuming metre can be considered alone in lyric poetry. As A. M. Dale wrote in her study of possible Greek music:

> The modern reader of Greek choral lyric [...] has to attempt to elucidate from the words themselves the ordered cadences of rhythm, divorced from melody and visible movement; and the metrical principles thus evolved have in the last resort no other criterion of their substantial accuracy than the text itself (1948/68: 1).

Disyllabic:

˘ ˘ pyrrhus, dibrach
˘ ¯ iamb
¯ ˘ trochee, choree (or choreus)
¯ ¯ spondee

Trisyllabic:

˘ ˘ ˘ tribrach
¯ ˘ ˘ dactyl
˘ ¯ ˘ amphibrach
˘ ˘ ¯ anapest, antidactylus
˘ ¯ ¯ bacchius
¯ ¯ ˘ antibacchius
¯ ˘ ¯ cretic, amphimacer
¯ ¯ ¯ molossus

'Doric' always implies rusticity. In ancient Greece it became the dialect of bucolic verse. Within Scotland, the term is now applied to the vernacular form of language in the North East: around Aberdeen, and in the areas of the old, historic counties, such as Banffshire and Moray, although the English once applied the term unkindly to most Scottish vernacular, with a barely-veiled implication of the barbarous. The dialect uses both a distinctive lexicon, into which Kreon's choice of 'quine' would fit, but also an adaptation of English spelling and vocabulary, so that 'cautious' becomes 'cowshus' and 'marriage' is rendered 'mairritch'. Although a largely rural dialect, there is some use within towns. As Douglas Kynoch points out, it is not a homogeneous dialect, any more than Ulster English or other widespread vernaculars. In the foreword to his Doric Dictionary, he writes:

> The truth is that there is not one monolithic form of Doric but a multiplicity of forms, differing to a greater or lesser degree here and there. Not only is there a northern and southern Doric, a Banffshire and a Mearns Doric, there is a farming and a fishing Doric and a now somewhat diluted urban Doric. (1996/2006: vi)

Farming and fishing provide the Doric dialect with some expressive vocabulary. The former gives us, for example, 'growthe-midden' (a compost heap), 'harigals' (animal entrails) and 'tattie-howker' (a potato-digger); the latter gives 'fisher-loon/quine' (fisher-boy/girl), 'plash fluke' (a plaice) and 'skirlie-wheeter' (an oyster-catcher). Although 'rustic', Scottish Doric is creative and resourceful: a cat's purr is described as 'three-threids-an-a-thrum'. Some words have southern cognates, such as 'withershins' (cf 'widdershins'), to walk anti-clockwise—extremely unlucky, if round a church—which reveals that the Teutonic influence is stronger than Gaelic. Other words, however, are obscure in their linguistic links, such as 'gaberlunzie' (a beggar).

In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare's Scottish witches have a toad called Paddock as a familiar; 'puddick' or 'puddock' is Doric for 'frog'. It is tempting to think that Shakespeare knew a smattering of dialect when he has Macbeth call a terrified messenger-boy: 'whey-faced loon'. Indeed, the

description 'weird' (from O.E. 'wyrd') for the 'sisters'—who are never called witches in the text—is also claimed by Kynoch for his Doric lexicon.

The extension of vowel sounds is a feature shared by Scottish Doric and its Greek namesake. If we consider negating prefixes, Standard English has a range, all with short vowel sounds: dis-, im-, in- and un-. Doric prefers oon- which can be attached to both noun and adjective: oonhappy, oonhonesty, oonjustice and oonpossible. Doric orthography has several methods for indicating rich vowel sounds, of which 'oo' is but one. Others involve diphthongs: 'rael', for example, which is sounded as the English 'rail', is Doric for 'real'. The first vowel of the pair gains the emphasis. An 'i' can also act as a lengthener, so 'deid' (dead) is pronounced as English 'deed'. This feature is not exclusive to Doric; 'deid' and 'heid' are common in Scottish English. Robert Burns is famous for his description of a mouse as 'sleekit' (both sleek and sneaky). The creature runs from him with a 'bickering brattle' (fast-moving rattle). These words are all listed by Kynoch as Doric. Although Burns lived in Ayrshire, in south-west Scotland, his father was from The Mearns, in the north-east. Thus the dialect forms travel nationwide as people migrate.

Fig. 6: The ritual bathing of Agamemnon, brought onstage.

Fig. 7: The trial of Orestes, stylised within a rope enclosure.

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