AMIDST the principal human characters of the Oresteia of Aeschylus one stands unique in her situation and in the feelings which she evokes in the spectator—Cassandra. All the others appear to fall into one of two classes. In the case of Clytemnestra and of Aegisthus we feel that, no matter how grim the fate that befalls them, their actions, their motives and the way in which they are presented alienate them from our sympathy; and despite the efforts of Professor Fraenkel,1 few will be disposed to exclude Agamemnon himself from this category. Orestes and Electra, on the other hand, also have to do and to suffer terrible things, but we are allowed to sympathize with them and to feel it appropriate that their miseries should have a happier issue. Only Cassandra seems to stand apart. A captive taken in a war for which she was not personally responsible, she has become involved in the bloody tragedy of a house which is not her own. Her whole life blighted, first by the perverted gift of prophecy and the mockery which it brought her, then by the loss in war of all those whom she loved, she comes at last helpless, yet not without dignity, to be the victim of the murderous wife of her captor. Nor is it only her situation which enlists the sympathy of the spectator: the very language used emphasizes the piteousness of her condition. Thus the scene opens with the Chorus expressing its pity for her—ἐγὼ δ’, ἐποικίσαλος γάρ, οὐ θυμώσωμαι2—and closes with Cassandra herself reading in her own unhappy destiny proof of the pitiful weakness of humanity:

ιὼ βρότεια πράγματ’ ἐνυγοιντα μὲν
σκιὰ τις ἂν πρέψειν. εἴ δὲ δυστυχοῖ
βολαῖς ὑγρώσσων σπόγγος ἀλεσεν γραφήν.
καὶ ταῦτ’ ἐκείνων μᾶλλον οἰκίσαρ πολύ.3

Professor Thomson is apt in his assessment; “The keynote of the scene is pity.”4

1 Agamemnon, ii. 372, 430 ff., 441 ff. 2 1069.
3 1327-30. 4 Headlam-Thomson, The Oresteia, i. 29.
But if the very effectiveness of the scene in arousing this emotion is not to obscure its relevance, we must consider two questions to which it gives rise—firstly, what is Aeschylus’ purpose in presenting this scene, and secondly, how is Cassandra’s plight to be related to the economy of the trilogy as a whole? And we must bear in mind that the answer to the second question is likely to be effected by that which we give to the first.

The most obvious reason for the presence of the scene is that it provides a great dramatic stroke—for Cassandra’s prediction of Agamemnon’s murder and her own achieves something very like a messenger-speech in advance,\(^1\) foretelling—with tremendous power—instead of reporting the horrors within the palace, and going on to foreshadow the pattern of the Choephoroe by the references which it includes to the coming vengeance. But more than this, Cassandra is presented here to reveal the theological implications of what has gone before. She tells us for the first time that behind all that we have so far seen and heard there stands the supernatural power for evil\(^2\) (represented by the Erinyes\(^3\) ) which overshadows the House of Atreus and has its


\(^2\) I use this somewhat cumbrous phrase in view of the objections raised by N. G. L. Hammond (“ Personal freedom and its limitations in the Oresteia " , JHS, lxxv (1965), 42-43) against the obvious and commonly-used term " curse ". No actual curse is explicitly mentioned, as Hammond points out, until that of Thyestes in 1601; but this, when it comes, merely reinforces the pre-existing evil, exactly as Oedipus’ curse reinforces the evil heritage of Laius’ sin in the Septem (cf. 709 and 742 ff.) There is also in the Agamemnon something else, mentioned earlier in the play, which does approximate closely to a curse—the angry speech of the citizens:

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{αρεία δ' αστών φάτες ξυν κότω,} \\
\text{δημοκράτου δ' αράς πίνει χρέος.} 
\end{align*} \]

(456-7)

(53) It is this aspect of popular anger, as adding a further supernatural element to Agamemnon’s burden of guilt, which makes the passage important, not the fact that it is “ the first step towards revolt “ (Fraenkel, Agam., ad loc.) : for the actual political security of Agamemnon never becomes a determining factor in the play.) But in this case also, the occasion of the anger (the Argive losses at Troy) is later than the original guilt of the House of Atreus.

\(^3\) The Erinyes are the most notable element in what is evidently a whole group of supernatural powers. Also included are the \[ \text{παλαιός δρώμως αλάστωρ} \] (1501), \[ \text{μέλας Άρης} \] (1511) and the \[ \text{δαίμων Πλειοθενιδάν} \] (1569) : though some of these may be different names for the same thing. The force which these powers represent is treated as one in what follows.
origins in that nexus of guilt which comprises both the adultery of Thyestes (the πρῶταρχός ἀτη) and the brutal murder of the children which avenged it.¹

The significance of this revelation has been disputed: it is a commonly-held, and I believe correct, view that what Cassandra tells us about the supernatural element is a decisive factor in the action, and the importance of her revelation for the shape of the play as a whole has been stressed (though perhaps without all the implications being full brought out²). Doubts have, however, been cast upon the validity of this interpretation. There is admittedly much wisdom in Fraenkel's warning: "It would be absurd to attempt an exact calculation as to the degree of efficacy in each of the elements that work together towards Agamemnon's fatal end"³; but it is unwarranted, I believe, to go beyond this and to argue that, just because Cassandra's revelation comes late in the play, the supernatural element must be regarded as of secondary importance and, by implication, that this aspect of the scene is not crucial. This was to some extent hinted at by Fraenkel⁴: Professor Hammond in a recent study of the problem of freedom and determination in the Oresteia elevates it to an absolute principle: "If the curse is to come first and to be the fons et origo of the ensuing actions in a living drama, then it must be presented early in the drama by the playwright."⁵ It is however far from self-evident that this is a necessary principle of play construction, and Hammond offers no arguments to support his assertion. Obviously some playwrights have preferred to indicate in advance supernatural factors which are going to condition the action of the human characters—notably Euripides; but this is far from being the only method of constructing a plot. Progressive revelation is in fact a keynote of the Agamemnon: even on the human plane, it is to be noted that Clytemnestra has dominated the stage for a large part of the play.

¹ This is a fundamental point for the meaning of the Agamemnon. See especially Fraenkel's discussion, Agam., iii. 546-7.
³ Agam., iii. 625.
⁴ Ibid. pp. 624-5.
and murdered her husband off-stage before she offers any explanation at all. It is, I believe, demonstrable by the shape of the Agamemnon that the supernatural factor is of the greatest importance, and in this the Cassandra scene is fundamental. The action of the play may be said to culminate in the murder of Agamemnon, but the overall illumination of the meaning culminates in the Cassandra scene, and the scenes following the murder, which might otherwise have been something of an anti-climax, derive their significance largely from Cassandra.

It is a platitude of the commentaries that Agamemnon himself does not appear until the play is almost half-over, that everything which has gone before leads up to his appearance; and that much of what is affirmed by the Chorus about Paris and Troy is by implication referable to Agamemnon and the House of Atreus. The uneasiness of the Chorus in its references to Agamemnon and his Trojan expedition (reinforced by the news from the herald) coalesces with its description of the effect of such powers as Ate and Peitho on those who in consequence of older wickedness are led to wrong-doing and through it to disaster. The culmination of the suspicions which have thus been roused in the audience is reached in the tapestry scene, where the behaviour of Agamemnon manifests him to be precisely such as the Chorus has described. a

1 Cf. e.g., Headlam-Thomson, Oresteia, i. 21-2; Denniston-Page, Agamemnon, p. 104. It is worthy of note at this point, to save confusion later, that there appears to be no special distinction drawn in the play between the effect of sin on members of a city and on members of a family. (Just so, there appears to be no distinction drawn between the city of Troy and the family of Priam—cf. e.g., the second stasimon, which refers three times to the city (699, 710, 737) and once to the Priamidae (747), apparently without any significant difference.) It therefore seems justifiable to speak of "communal guilt" as referring to both types of community.

2 Even if we omit 527 (and the case for doing so is far from conclusive—cf. Denniston-Page, Agam., ad loc.) the destruction of the shrines is clearly implied by the herald's report of the wreck of the fleet, since Clytemnestra's warning (338 ff) expressly links the danger to the returning Greeks with such a sacrilege.

3 The way in which this inter-relation is worked out is deferred for discussion at a later stage (pp. 167 ff). What is to be stressed here is that the crucial first stasimon shows that Paris' abduction of Helen stands not at the beginning but at a distance along a causal chain of wickedness, and that Paris was at the time of the abduction in some degree deluded because of what had gone before. (Cf. Denniston-Page, Agam., p. 104).
man doomed and deluded, yet in some way still committing a crime that will merit punishment: οἶκος καὶ Πάρις. Until the moment when he treads the tapestries it remains (in theory at least) just possible that the fears of the audience may prove unjustified—that Agamemnon will vindicate himself and show that he is not, after all, another Paris. In the event, these fears are confirmed, and Agamemnon’s death is certain.

But even now the revelation is not complete. It is clear that Agamemnon has acted wrongly, and at the same time that he is a man in the grip of Ate; but the original reason for this remains obscure. The Watchman in his forebodings has hinted that the House has things which it could tell—

οἶκος δ' αὐτός, εἰ φθογγήν λάβοι,
σαφέστατ' ἂν λέξειν.

1 I follow the common opinion that what Agamemnon does in walking on the tapestries constitutes an act of hybris. This view has been challenged by R. D. Dawe (‘Inconsistency of plot and character in Aeschylus’, CPSP., NS (1963), 48, n. 2), who stresses instead the amount of discussion concerning simple waste of property. This criticism seems to me to be in danger of viewing Agamemnon’s treading on the tapestry precisely as Clytemnestra deliberately misrepresents it in e.g. 958-62. Agamemnon knows better, though he fails to act in accordance with that knowledge—cf. 921-5. Dawe’s argument that hybris is disproved by the failure of the Chorus to sing of it in the following ode is not cogent: on the way in which the Chorus of the Agamemnon fails to comment directly on the substance of scenes which it has just witnessed, and the reason for this, see Kitto, Form and Meaning, pp. 200-1.

2 As will be readily apparent, I do not accept R. Lattimore’s description of the tapestry scene (Story Patterns in Greek Tragedy, p. 39) as a ‘curious little scene’ portraying a choice irrelevant to the subsequent action. A distinction must be made between the logic of a narrative account and the requirements of dramatic representation. Though logically Agamemnon’s past career may have already provided sufficient reasons—both human and supernatural—for his death, it is still dramatically desirable that we should see him epitomize, in one telling scene, the process by which he has earned this fate, and have it visually demonstrated to us that he is what we had already suspected. A similar, though simpler, example of the same principle is to be observed in Hippolytus’ first appearance in Euripides’ play, which serves to demonstrate that his character is as Aphrodite has previously described it. However the power of the Agamemnon scene is vastly greater, not least because Aeschylus, by allowing the first fulsome overtures of Clytemnestra to meet with a rebuff, raises momentarily the desperate chance that despite all we have heard Agamemnon may yet prove capable of resisting temptation. (On the dramatic tension of this scene, cf. esp. Reinhardt, op. cit. pp. 90 ff.).

3 37-38.
—and in Cassandra there comes the one person to whom the House can convey its tale. She alone, with her inspired vision, sees on the palace the figures of the children butchered years before, and identifies the Erinyes who haunt the place, singing of the πρῶταρχος ἀτη. The revelation is complete. The first cause of Agamemnon's condition is made clear; and it only remains for him to die. In a sense, the play up to this point resembles a syllogism, of which the Chorus' generalization about the effect of past sin on individuals represents the major premiss and Cassandra's revelations the minor: with the death of Agamemnon following as the logical conclusion.

But still, the significance of the Cassandra scene is not exhausted. The revelation of supernatural evil which Cassandra makes places the audience in possession of greater knowledge than the main actors, and this conditions the pattern of what follows. Though only one new piece of information is introduced (Clytemnestra's personal motive for murdering Agamemnon, already hinted at in Calchas' prophecy) to say with Professor Kitto that "What remains of the play is not development but repetition" scarcely does justice to the last 300 lines of the play.

In a scene outstanding in Greek tragedy for the way in which it represents the development in the attitude of a character on the stage Aeschylus shows Clytemnestra moving gradually from the assertion of her own full responsibility for the killing of her husband to a perception of what is already known by the audience because of Cassandra, that she has after all been acting in conjunction with a supernatural force. In the process of this realization, her exultation fades, and it is with a weariness of bloodshed that she expresses the hope that this force will now be satisfied, and even offers to buy it off. But at the very moment when she makes this offer, Aegisthus enters, the one wholly despicable character in the whole trilogy. Complacent, cowardly and brutal, he parades his claim to a vengeance which he has left a woman to exact, and by his use of a bodyguard to

1 Form and Meaning, p. 35.
2 A. Lesky, "Decision and responsibility in the tragedy of Aeschylus", JHS, lxxxvi (1966), 80. (Referred to hereafter as "Decision and responsibility").
3 1567 ff.
threaten the Chorus epitomises the tyranny which is to be imposed on Argos. A shallower character than Clytemnestra, he never realizes the power of the supernatural forces which the audience now know to be active over him. His version of the Thyestean feast repeats what Cassandra has already revealed, but with a significant omission: he describes Atreus in a vague phrase as ἀμφιλεκτος ὄν κράτει, giving no hint that (as the audience already knows, thanks to Cassandra) Thyestes had himself committed the first act of criminal folly, and that Aegisthus' own side of the family is therefore also enmeshed in the ancestral guilt. Thus, because of Cassandra's prior statement, it is clear to the audience that, whatever claims Aegisthus may have in terms of the vendetta, he is himself involved in the consequences of his father's crime, even though he is not conscious of this.

Over these last two scenes, therefore, the Cassandra scene casts its shadow; and indeed their juxtaposition itself demonstrates dramatically the truth of her words. The κώμος of the Erinyes was described by her as δύσεμπτος ἐξ, and Aeschylus could hardly have represented this more effectively than he does by causing Clytemnestra's prayer that the Evil Spirit of the House will now be satisfied to be followed immediately by the entry of Aegisthus. Far from being able to call a halt to the progress of supernaturally-directed misery and confusion, Clytemnestra is now visibly forced to take upon herself the evil—and disastrous—consequences of her act, maintaining her position by the protection of an adulterer, coward and tyrant: a character for whom the Chorus (which had previously been perplexed when faced with Clytemnestra's own claims to have acted justly) displays only anger and contempt.

1 1585.
2 Our relation to Clytemnestra is thus somewhat similar to what it is towards Oedipus in the Oedipus Tyrannus, seeing a character come to a perception of what we, the audience, already know: in respect of Aegisthus, on the other hand, a closer parallel is afforded by the Troades, where the Greeks remain throughout the action ignorant of the disaster which, thanks to the prologue, the audience knows to be awaiting them.
3 1189-90.
4 This is not always been given due weight: cf. A. J. P. Waldock's comments, Sophocles the dramatist, pp. 49-50, where the Aegisthus scene is regarded as extraneous to the design of the play.
So important then is Cassandra to Aeschylus' purpose that he would almost have been justified if he had made no further attempt to integrate her personal tragedy into the economy of the trilogy, and had been content to put before us the prophetess fated never to be believed simply because of the dramatic possibilities which this offered, and without regard for its consistency with the rest of his theology. That Aeschylus did precisely this is a view which has been maintained. However, a further inspection of the Cassandra scene suggests that her position has in fact been carefully integrated into the play.

Cassandra is the only Trojan to appear on the stage, although we have heard much in the earlier part of the play about Troy and its people; and just as Agamemnon, when at last he appears, exemplifies the man in the grip of Ate of whom we heard in the Choral odes, so Cassandra by her presence enables us to see what we have hitherto heard about the Trojans. Like them, she cries out against the evil marriage of Paris which has brought disaster on his kin. Moreover, her reference to the ineffectiveness of her father's sacrifices—

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ιδω πρόπυργοι θυσίαι πατρὸς} \\
\text{πολυκανείς βοτῶν ποιονόμων. ἄκος δ' } \\
\text{οὐδὲν ἐπήρκεσαν} \\
\text{τὸ μὴ πόλων μὲν ἀστερ ὀὖν ἐξρήν παθεῖν.}
\end{align*}
\]

makes specific and more vivid what the Chorus has already affirmed when, thinking of Paris and Troy, it described the downward course to ruin which sin causes:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{λιτᾶν δ' ἀκόνει μὲν οὕτοις θεῶν.}
\end{align*}
\]

Aeschylus might have left it at this. He might have been content to portray Cassandra as a personally innocent victim of Troy's wickedness and consequent destruction. Such an

1 H. J. Rose, "Theology and mythology in Aeschylus", Harvard Studies in Theology xxxix (1946), 5-6, where the Cassandra scene is singled out to exemplify Aeschylus' use of a myth without regard for anything but its immediate convenience.
2 1156 (cf. 709 ff).
3 1168-71.
4 397 (cf. also 69-71).
5 Hammond appears to come close to this view (op. cit. p. 54). One might ask further whether Cassandra is to be visualized as having a personal share in that public guilt which is the origin of Trojan sorrows. There is indeed a certain
interpretation would have been quite in keeping with the theological views of Aeschylus' predecessors, Hesiod and Solon, both of whom visualize the gods as making individuals who are personally innocent suffer for the sins of their rulers or forefathers. However, Aeschylus does not leave the fate of Cassandra to be explained in these terms: for he complicates the issue by interweaving into the scene references to the part played by Apollo in her history. It is, in fact, difficult to disentangle the reasons for Cassandra's murder. As she gives them (and her statement must be accepted as valid, for the truthfulness of what she reveals is fundamental to the trilogy) they appear to be twofold and not explicitly connected. The obvious reason for her plight is that as a Trojan woman she is involved in the disaster precipitated by Paris, and therefore becomes the property of Agamemnon and is slain with him; and in two stanzas (1156 ff. and 1167 ff.), Cassandra seems to imply this (although in the latter the meaning is somewhat obscured by textual corruption). But in addition she asserts three times (1080-7, 1138-9, and 1275 ff.), with greater explicitness and greater emphasis, that Apollo is responsible for her approaching death. As elsewhere in the Oresteia, an event has more than one cause.

In this case, the complication involves further difficulties, because the god who destroys Cassandra is the very same god who later in the trilogy provides the first hope of a new and better order. How are we to reconcile these two aspects of Apollo, and why has Aeschylus placed himself in this situation? Ambivalence in Aeschylus' attitude to the Trojans en masse: on the one hand, there is a corporate hybris, born of wealth (cf. above, p. 147, n. 3), yet equally the sign of the pregnant hare suggests innocent and helpless victims (cf. p. 168, n. 1.). Hammon is probably right (loc. cit.) in regarding the women-folk of Troy as suffering for the acts of others; and though Cassandra is a princess, there is nothing in her portrayal to suggest any personal responsibility for Trojan hybris: indeed such indications as there are seem consistent with the traditional picture of her as isolated from the corporate activities of Troy and vainly warning against the follies of her people. (cf. Agam., 1210-2).


2 The place of Apollo in the trilogy is not made any simpler to explain by his performance in the Eumenides. His impressive first appearance in that play contrasts with his later eclipse, and he is certainly less wise than Athena. However, to suppose that Aeschylus wishes to present a predominantly critical view of
One thing can be immediately asserted, and that is, that Aeschylus is not simply the prisoner of tradition. Indeed it is, in the present state of our knowledge, quite possible that the story of Cassandra’s treatment by Apollo as given here was in fact Aeschylus’ own invention; and even if it was not, certainly his bold re-shaping of accepted myths elsewhere in the trilogy makes it clear that he would hardly have felt obliged to give prominence to an inconvenient aspect of legend simply through faithfulness to tradition.

Interpretations of the treatment of Cassandra by Apollo have varied between two extremes—between condemning Apollo as brutal and finding him justified. The former is the more obvious reaction: our attitude to the story of a mortal woman suffering because of a god’s love, such as Cassandra here reveals, may very easily be to stress the unfairness of it all—the impotency of the god, and the helplessness of the woman: in short, we may be disposed to criticize in the vein of Euripides. Much more subtle, and completely contrary, has been the attempt to find in the Cassandra scene the logical forerunner of the unexceptionable sentiments which Apollo voices in the *Eumenides* concerning the relations between the sexes, and thus to transfer Apollo (as is suggested by R. P. Winnington-Ingram, “The role of Apollo in the *Oresteia*”, *CR*, xlvii (1933), 97-104) is, I believe, erroneous. Despite some ill-judged utterances when he goes beyond his function as the mouthpiece of Zeus, Apollo renders assistance to Orestes second only to that of Athena.

1 J. Davreux,* La légende de la prophétesse Cassandre*, p. 31: P. G. Mason,* “Kassandra”,* *JHS*, lxix (1959), 85.

2 Notably the opening speech of the *Eumenides* with its revised history of the Delphic oracle, and Athena’s “foundation speech” concerning the Areopagus in the same play (especially 685-9): probably also the siting of the *Agamemnon* and *Choephoroe* in Argos.

3 In addition to Kitto’s discussion in *Form and Meaning* (for which see below, pp. 155 ff.), other indications of a similar attitude can be found elsewhere, e.g. Reinhardt, op. cit. pp. 104-5. Lesky’s description of Apollo (*Greek Tragedy*, p. 78) as “the god who has forced her into his dreadful, thankless service as a prophetess” seems likewise very weighted in favour of Cassandra: strictly speaking, the dreadfulness and thanklessness stem not so much from the original prophetic gift as from its subsequent modification after Cassandra had offended Apollo. (Cf. *Agam.*, 1212 with 1269.) Kitto (*Poiesis*, p. 5) cites Jones as holding a similar view of the scene: cf. *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy*, p. 173: it is not however certain from the context that Jones is at this point interpreting Aeschylus.

4 E.g. *Ion*, 881 ff.
all blame for this episode from Apollo to Cassandra. It is evident that Aeschylus cannot have meant to convey both these ideas, and it would therefore appear appropriate to examine them to see which of the two (if either) represents what he would have his audience believe.

At this point, however, we are brought face to face with the ruling on the problem given by Professor Kitto in his latest discussion, Poiesis: “How do we resolve the disagreement over attempted rape or just punishment? Quite simply: these are rival answers to a question that does not exist.”

To dissent from the opinion of such an authority is a thing not to be lightly undertaken, especially when it forms part of a discussion containing so much which is obviously salutary in its treatment of modern criticism of classical literature. Nevertheless, it would appear that on this point there is still a doubt whether the last word has been spoken.

Much of what Kitto has to say in this discussion is directed against the “documentary fallacy”—the attempt to explain difficulties in a Greek tragedy by constructing an imaginary historical situation behind the text and then drawing on this for material to resolve the problem; and certainly it is not hard to find examples of this type of misinterpretation in practice. In respect of Cassandra, however, the situation is not the same: brief though the relevant dialogue is, the facts are conveyed, and the question is what our attitude to them should be. The error of the “documentary fallacy” is illustrated by Kitto with the analogy of a statue group: “If on looking at a pediment we noticed that one warrior had no spear, we should not think of asking where he dropped it, or whether he had forgotten it; we should at once ask ourselves why the sculptor had represented him spearless.” This is a valid analogy with which to answer such eccentricities of criticism as counting Lady Macbeth’s children or explaining the double burial in the Antigone by postulating the existence of a scrupulous but unidentifiable passer-by; but it fails with Apollo and Cassandra. After saying that the

1 Notably R. Kuhns, The House, the City and the Judge, pp. 40-41: on which see below, pp. 165 ff.
2 Poiesis, p. 24.
3 Ibid. p. 15.
question of whether Apollo or Cassandra is in the wrong "does not exist." Kitto goes on immediately to use the sculpture analogy again: "It is like asking whether the warrior had forgotten, or had accidentally lost, his spear." On the contrary, a nearer parallel would be if the warrior was certainly not empty-handed, but it remained hard to distinguish because of the indistinctness of the carving (due, perhaps, to the passage of time) whether what he held was a spear or an olive-branch. Aeschylus has left us in no doubt that Apollo loved Cassandra, was refused by her and retaliated by frustrating her prophetic gift and finally by bringing her to her death: what is hard (owing partly to different attitudes to such a story brought about by the passage of time) is to be sure what meaning Aeschylus attaches to these events.

Nor, I believe, should we too readily be dissuaded from inquiry into the question of guilt by Kitto's argument from the "continuing rhythm" of the play. For Kitto, the power of the two sections preceding and following the confession of Cassandra, contrasted with the brevity and "dryness" of the stichomythia, is evidence that Aeschylus wishes his audience to concentrate its attention on these sections, with the corollary that what happens in between is of minimal importance. "Is it not abundantly clear" he writes "that throughout this whole passage the weight is thrown not on the justice or otherwise of Apollo's revenge, or punishment, not on the culpability or otherwise of Cassandra, but on this: on the manner in which Apollo is punishing her, on the place, on the agent—namely both Clytemnestra and the presiding Erinyes—on the conception that the killing of Cassandra is one more link in the whole chain?"

The question is rhetorical, but not conclusive as an argument. Even where we are satisfied that the playwright seems likely to have achieved a balance between ideas and dramatic technique (an assumption which may reasonably be conceded in the present case) the impressions which we form concerning the rhythm of a scene in any play are liable to be in some degree subjective, and especially so in a Greek tragedy: for here we must rely heavily on our imagination to visualize the overall effect of the original

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1 Poesis, p. 24.  
2 Ibid. pp. 22-4.
production. Thus in the present case, Kitto’s impression of the rhythm of the scene is not the only possible one. If he is disposed to play down the stichomythia, it may on the contrary be pointed out that it occurs at the exact centre of the scene, when the dreadful visions of past and future crime, and the agony which they cause Cassandra as she struggles to communicate them to the Chorus, are for a brief space of time absent. In this quiet central moment the Chorus, not I feel without sensitiveness and sympathy, elicit from Cassandra, not in a flood of impassioned language but with a starkly contrasting simplicity, the basis on which the whole scene rests.

To enable us to decide between contrasting subjective interpretations, we must have recourse to some form of “control” and the obvious one is the usage of the poet himself. The structural parts of a Greek tragedy remain formally much the same throughout the period of the three great tragedians, but the way in which they are used varies very considerably from one to another. Thus the important question concerns not stichomythia in general but Aeschylus’ own use of it. And the evidence suggests, as Fraenkel points out, that in Aeschylus’ hands stichomythia, far from being the mannerism into which it later declined, was a device for conveying important information at crucial junctures in a play. This would appear to weight the balance against Kitto’s impression of the rhythm of the scene.

Nor is this the only test which we can apply. Kitto has listed

1 It must be borne in mind that we are attempting something not so very different from visualizing an opera on the basis of its libretto alone and without any knowledge of the contemporary musical style. Kitto reminds us (ibid. p. 11) that it is the business of the critic to see a play through the eyes of the playwright’s contemporary audience; but an attempt to do this in terms of “continuing rhythm” for a Greek tragedy cannot but be very conjectural. How accurately, for example, can we, lacking both the music and the choreography, assess the impact on an Athenian audience of those Euripidean choruses which we are tempted to dismiss as dramatically irrelevant?

the items which he considers Aeschylus to have stressed in the Cassandra scene, and on inspection they are incompatible with the notion that what the stichomythia says is unimportant or meaningless. "Clytemnestra and the presiding Erinyes" are agents of Apollo: now Clytemnestra's readiness to kill her husband's foreign concubine we can easily understand in human terms, but how are we to suppose that Cassandra came to be subject to the power of the Erinyes, the nature of whose retributive "justice" is precisely the point at issue in the trilogy? It is very hard to see how it can be left a matter of indifference whether they are punishing an innocent or a guilty person. And if we are to regard the killing of Cassandra as "one more link in the whole chain", we need to bear in mind that the distinctive thing about links in a chain is that they are connected. Yet if Cassandra's killing is to be a link in any chain, the connection will not be a simple, obvious one, like that between the deaths of Iphigenia, Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, where on a human plane each killing provides a clear motive for the next. The killing of Cassandra is, humanly speaking, incidental to the revenge of Clytemnestra, as she herself makes clear; and although Cassandra does foretell that she is to be avenged, this does not in fact come about for any conscious human motive. Orestes does not concern himself with her when announcing the reasons which bring him to kill his mother: in fact, once Clytemnestra has finished her contemptuous denunciations over the corpse of her husband's concubine, no one else in the trilogy shows any signs of being concerned about Cassandra's death. If her fate is to be truly "one more link in the whole chain", the connection must be found at a deeper level than that of human motivation: that is, in the world where the purposes of the gods are interwoven with human behaviour, in that tangle of sin, retribution and justice which it is the aim of the Oresteia to resolve. There is no way of avoiding the moral issue.

We return, therefore, to the problem: are we to regard Cassandra as an innocent victim of outrage, or as a sinner justly punished?

If we take first what was indicated above to be the more
obvious suggestion, that Apollo is treating Cassandra brutally and outrageously, there arises the curious situation that we find ourselves once again dealing with Professor Kitto's views, though this time they are to be found in an earlier discussion of the problem, in *Form and Meaning in Drama*.\(^1\) Here the Apollo of the *Agamemnon* is a crude deity, who will, however, develop into the god of purity and light whom we see in the *Eumenides* as part of a general divine progress, including Zeus himself, towards greater wisdom and justice. Though there is no formal contradiction between the views propounded in Kitto's two works, the shift of emphasis is so considerable that it is reasonable to suppose that the earlier discussion no longer wholly represents its author's opinion. However, there appears to be some indication that, although Kitto has in the more recent work turned all the emphasis away from the apportionment of guilt between Apollo and Cassandra, the solution given earlier is not wholly abandoned. For the discussion of Zeus in *Poiesis* still maintains the theory of progression, and in one sentence Kitto, whilst describing the cruelty of Zeus in the *Oresteia* (the reference is clearly to the *Agamemnon*), adds Apollo as another example of the same kind of thing.\(^2\) In any case, the solution offered in *Form and Meaning* remains important as a notable attempt to find a consistent pattern whereby to explain the difficulty of "the two Apollos". It therefore appears still justifiable to examine the solution there offered; and, indeed, after doubting whether Professor Kitto's revised opinion is preferable, one can hardly do otherwise.

To discuss the concept of Zeus progressing in the *Oresteia* would be a large subject in itself: what is pertinent here, however, is that the accompanying theory of a "progressive" Apollo is, I believe, based upon questionable premisses.

Cassandra's story has two aspects—the god's love for her and her punishment for refusing him. Kitto's criticism appears to be largely concerned with the second of these (the Cassandra scene he regards as being dedicated to showing that "Apollo's conception of 'justice' is as violent as Clytemnestra's"\(^3\)); and it will be convenient to deal with this aspect first. Cruel though

\(^1\) *Form and Meaning*, pp. 68-80.  
\(^2\) *Poiesis*, p. 58.  
\(^3\) *Form and Meaning*, p. 70.
Apollo’s punishment of Cassandra certainly appears to us, we must nevertheless ask whether the audience for whom Aeschylus wrote would have expected a god to show lenience in punishing a transgressor.

In fact, the adage “to err is human, to forgive divine” is not one to which a fifth-century Greek would readily have assented. It is precisely the gods who do not forgive. Men not uncommonly judge each other kindly from a sense of the weakness of their common humanity: the gods, having no such motive, might logically be expected to show themselves implacable; and indeed they are commonly so represented both in fifth-century literature and in the tradition underlying it. Even Pindar, whom Kitto invokes as allegedly eschewing the crudity which he himself claims to find in the Cassandra scene, portrays Coronis as suffering at the behest of Apollo a punishment which if less prolonged than that of Cassandra is otherwise no less terrible. Divine implacability may even persist although the wrong-doer has repented: thus repentance does not save Creon in the Antigone from utter disaster, nor, in the Delphic moral tale which Herodotus (somewhat incongruously) places in the mouth of Leotychidas, did Glaucus the Spartan, although he begged Apollo’s forgiveness and made restitution to the men whom he had defrauded manage thereby to save his family from extinction. That human and superhuman standards are regarded as different is exemplified especially in the aged Oedipus, who as he approaches, in his last hours, to the status of a hero, mercilessly curses Polynices, thereby rejecting the humane argument of Antigone that it is not right for a father to return evil for evil

1 So, e.g. Theseus in Soph., Oed. Col., 560-8 (cf. also Phil., 501-6): Cyrus in Herod., i. 86, 6; and more generally the portrayal of Odysseus in Soph., Ajax.
2 Form and Meaning, p. 70.
3 Pythian, iii. 31-37; and the punishment of Coronis in fact involves the destruction of many people who simply happened to live in the vicinity—a form of divine retribution apparently even less discriminating than that envisaged by Aeschylus in Septem, 597-614.
4 One might add that neither does it save Neoptolemus from a violent death (Eur., Androm., 1085-1158, especially 1145-9), except that the marked hostility which Euripides repeatedly displays towards the god of Delphi somewhat reduces the effectiveness of this example as evidence for characteristic Greek views on the subject.
5 vi. 86 a-8.
against his own son\(^1\): far from allowing this action to be modified or criticized by later scenes, Sophocles makes it the final, and in a sense the culminating, act of Oedipus’ life before the gods call him to his mysterious end. From time to time the feeling is indeed expressed that the gods are over-harsh, as when Cadmus in the *Bacchae* protests that the punishments inflicted by Dionysus, though merited, are nevertheless excessive\(^2\); but such utterances hardly warrant the idea that a fifth-century Athenian audience would have regarded the imposition by a god of a punishment cruel by human standards as anything other than typical. Apollo’s punishment of Cassandra is therefore far from being exceptional; and indeed Aeschylus appears to make his Chorus anticipate something of this degree of severity as soon as Cassandra confesses that she has offended the god. There is thus no warrant in the punishment of Cassandra for the concept of a “progressive” Apollo.

The argument for the innocence of Cassandra and the barbarity of Apollo is thus pushed a stage further back: granted that Apollo’s retaliation is in keeping with contemporary Greek notions, might it still be urged that Apollo is to be regarded as having behaved outrageously in the first place by importuning Cassandra, so that her offence was nothing more than resisting an unjust demand. Kitto had evidently no doubts on this score: “The Apollo of the *Agamemnon* is one whose behaviour in contemporary Athens would have put him within reach of the law.”\(^3\)

At this point, however, it becomes pertinent to inquire in what terms the victim herself refers to the affair. In fact, far from supporting Kitto’s view, they suggest something very different. Although Cassandra cries out against the harshness of her punishment, the very words which she uses suggest that she is aware of having done wrong—εὐναυέσσασα Λοξίαν ἐφευσάμην, and with perhaps more explicit moral connotation, ἡμπλακον.\(^4\)

A natural conclusion from this confession would appear to be

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3 *Form and Meaning*, p. 68. (This clearly cannot refer to *exacting retribution*, and can only have meaning as referring to the original attempt at sexual relations.)

4 1208, 1212.
that Aeschylus implies here an attitude towards a god's love for a woman different both from the Euripidean style of criticism and from the carefree amorality which is (as Xenophanes complained) so characteristic of epic poetry. There would appear instead to be the suggestion of a positive religious viewpoint—that such a love should be accepted as a good.

If this conclusion is valid, we have here an important factor for understanding what Aeschylus is telling us about Cassandra; but two brief and elliptical phrases are in themselves hardly sufficient to establish beyond doubt that this is what he means. The words of Cassandra must be compared with such other indications as can be found of Aeschylus' views on love-affairs of this kind. And here a pertinent warning of Kitto's is to be observed, against the error of trying to explain Aeschylus by a process of "extrapolation"—by borrowing ideas from non-Aeschylean sources (especially from Pindar, the best-known exponent of the positive religious standpoint on such love-affairs) and applying them as if they were necessarily valid for Aeschylus also. Only if Aeschylus' general attitude, in so far as it can be determined from the available sources, shows divine love for a woman as a positive good can we fairly claim substantial support for the argument that Cassandra's language implies that she is to be regarded as morally wrong in refusing Apollo.

Two questions naturally present themselves at this stage—whether there is in fact sufficient material extant to enable us to form any useful judgement of Aeschylus' views on this subject, and whether any consistent pattern is discernible. I believe the answer to both questions to be in the affirmative.

The love of a god for a woman appears as a recurrent theme in Aeschylus: in addition to Io, whose story occurs both in the Prometheus Vinctus and in the Supplices, Alcmena, Callisto, Danaë, Europa and Semele seem to have figured in the lost plays, though the union of god and woman was not in every case

\(^1\) Poiesis, pp. 6-7.

\(^2\) Cf. H. J. Mette, Die Fragmenten des Aischylos fr. 34 (Alcmena), 142-3 (Callisto), 462 (Danaë), 144-7 (Europa), 354-62 (Semele), with corresponding commentary in Der Verlorene Aischylos.
the actual subject of the plot; and to these may perhaps be added the nymph Thaleia, whose history was evidently very similar.¹ (In each of these cases the divine lover was Zeus himself, a fact which is perhaps noteworthy in view of the high dignity with which Aeschylus is commonly regarded as having invested Zeus.) In short, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that this kind of love appears to have been a favourite motif of Aeschylus.

In seeking to determine whether these instances have any common pattern and whether it supports the view that Aeschylus means us to regard Cassandra as sinful in denying Apollo, it may be useful (provided that we bear in mind Kitto’s warning against “extrapolation”) to recall the general pattern of such love affairs in Pindar, as he presents the clearest exposition of the idea that they are positive blessings, and his treatment of the theme will provide a useful yardstick against which to measure whatever can be discovered about Aeschylus’ handling of the same theme.

In Pindar, who provides in his poetry a number of descriptions of women loved by Zeus or Apollo, the love of a god is normally (though not quite always²) invested with deep religious feeling. It is a special privilege, transcending any human love, and the children of such unions are specially blessed.³ Indeed the stress is not uncommonly on the children rather than the love itself: for from such origins come great figures of legend—Heracles, for example, and the founders of Greek peoples. The willing acceptance of the god’s love by the woman is presupposed and (save where a subsequent unfaithfulness destroys the harmony) an air of blessed happiness pervades the scene.⁴

Set against this, the treatment of the theme by Aeschylus, as far as can be determined from the available evidence, appears to have points both of difference and resemblance. It is immediately clear that the bestowal of divine favours, far from necessarily bringing happiness to the recipient, may in some cases

¹ Cf. Mette, op. cit. fr. 24-33.
² The light-hearted tone of the story of Apollo and Cyrene (Pythian, ix) is exceptional.
³ C. M. Bowra, Pindar, pp. 65-66.
⁴ Cf. e.g., Olympian, ix. 53-66; and perhaps especially the brilliant picture of the infancy of Iamus, Olympian, vi. 37-57.
actually bring sorrow—most obviously perhaps with Callisto, Semele and Io. Indeed from witnessing the plight of the last-named the Chorus of the Prometheus Vinctus is led to pray that it may be spared the misery reserved for those on whom the inescapable glance of a god falls.

If this were all, we might have to conclude that Aeschylus’ views were after all not far removed from those of Euripides. The Prometheus Vinctus is, however, a very controversial play, its treatment of Zeus exceptional as far as can be judged, and its whole meaning obscured by the fact that what it says has to be treated as provisional and capable of full explanation only in the light of the lost plays of the trilogy. It would, therefore, be rash to take this utterance of the Chorus as necessarily a final judgement.

Indeed, the Prometheus Vinctus itself gives some indication of a different view. The long wanderings of Io, Prometheus foretells, will at last come to an end, and with a wonderful event, the birth of Epaphus, from whom will ultimately be descended Heracles, destined to end Prometheus’ own torment. Thus in some way the suffering of the mother will be compensated by the glory of her progeny. This is especially seen in the Supplices, where the same union of Zeus and Io is a recurring motif of the Chorus, not only stressing their claim to the protection of Zeus as their ancestor, but very possibly also adumbrating the later progress of the trilogy: for if the main outline of the story of Hypermnestra is similar to that given in the Prometheus Vinctus, here also the importunity of the wooing was treated as less important than the children to be born as a result of it. Something of the same kind appears likely to be true also of the other women already mentioned as portrayed in the lost plays: no matter what the personal cost to themselves, they all became mothers of heroes or even gods—Heracles, Arcas, Perseus, Minos, Rhadamantus and Sarpedon, and Dionysus: whilst the nymph

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1 887-907. (Though Rose, Comm., ad loc. cannot bring himself to believe that the first stanza is genuine.)
2 844-76.
4 R. D. Murray, The motif of Io in the Suppliants of Aeschylus, especially Ch. IV.
Thaleia, after being hidden in the earth for fear of Hera, returned to give birth to the Palici. Thus there seem to be grounds for supposing that Aeschylus, though differing from Pindar in the sorrow which he portrays as befalling some women loved by a god, is nevertheless at one with him in the stress laid upon the glorious offspring of such unions. Nor would such a conclusion be out of keeping with the general thought of Aeschylus, in which a movement towards ultimate good through present suffering is characteristic.

Thus the pattern which emerges from a brief survey of the other examples of a god-woman relationship appears to confirm the original judgement based on the words which Cassandra herself uses in confessing that she has offended Apollo. At the same time, however, this survey suggests that there may be other details in the language of the stichomythia which deserve closer scrutiny. Let us therefore consider the exchange leading to the actual confession:

Ka. ἀλλ' ἦν παλαιοτής κάρτ' ἐμοὶ πνέων χάρων.
Χο. ἥ καὶ τέκνων ἐἰς ἐργον ἥλθετην ὄμοи (οτ ἥλθην νόμω;) Ka. ἐνανέσασα Ἀλεξίαν ἐφευσάμην.¹

The first of these lines is perhaps worth noting, in the light of what has already been said about the mixture of suffering and ultimate good. The term παλαιοτής may suggest the overwhelming power of the god, but the same line speaks of his χάρις: (one is reminded by this conjunction of the χάρις βίαιος of 1. 182). More important, however, in view of the emphasis on children which we have seen to be common in other Aeschylean instances of this relationship, are the lines which follow. The crucial point is that Cassandra’s refusal meant that no children would be born of Apollo’s love for her.

Moreover, the language used here is itself significant. The phrase τέκνων εἰς ἐργον has, as the commentators point out,² overtones which would for a contemporary Athenian audience be reminiscent of marriage-ceremony formulae. (This is a detail apparently passed over by Kitto in characterizing the stichomythia as “dry”.) Here, as in the instance previously dis-

¹ 1206-8. ² E.g. Fraenkel, Agam., iii. 555.
cussed—but on this occasion perhaps more markedly—the question of the Chorus is so framed as to help determine our attitude to what is being confessed. The relationship which Cassandra frustrated, it is implied, would have been an honourable one.

In sum, then, the language of Cassandra and of the Chorus suggests that we are to regard her as being in the wrong; and this view is supported by the general attitude towards the love of a god for a woman which Aeschylus displays elsewhere in his work. Thus the premisses on which the theory of a "progressive" Apollo rest appear to be unjustified, and we cannot look to this explanation to show us how the relationship with Cassandra is to be integrated into the plot of the trilogy.

Can we, therefore, find a satisfactory link in the alternative theory indicated above, which in fact takes its origin in what we have just noticed, the echo of marriage formulae, and maintains that the link between these two manifestations of Apollo lies precisely in the importance of marriage in the Oresteia? This theory has been maintained by Professor Kuhns in The House, the City and the Judge. In breaking her word and denying her duty, he writes, "Cassandra violated the covenant of marriage." This, he holds, explains not only Apollo's reason for punishing her but also the relationship with the Apollo of the Eumenides: his love of Cassandra, as implying marriage, is to be linked with his defence of the institution of marriage in the latter play.

The arguments by which Kuhns supports this thesis have been criticized in Poiesis as involving "extrapolation", in that they arrive at their conclusion by the devious route of Pindar and his treatment of Coronis and Asclepius. But the thesis does not in itself necessarily depend on such arguments. If it is to be valid at all, it must be guaranteed by the text of the Agamemnon, and conversely, if the text does guarantee it, then any excursions into Pindar are unnecessary. The important question is simply whether the text shows that Aeschylus wanted his audience to think of the relationship between Apollo and Cassandra as in any way comparable to a marriage.

1 Cf. above, p. 160. 2 The House, the City and the Judge, pp. 40-41. 3 Poiesis, pp. 6-7.
The crucial passage is one which we have already considered from a different angle, 1207-8; and as was there indicated, the first of these two lines presents a textual problem: a choice between ἥλθετην ὅμω and ἥλθετον νόμω. No decision is possible on grounds of accidence, and the suggestion that νόμω may have a vague meaning such as “in due course” is now regarded as implausible. Editors have therefore tended to divide between those who prefer ἥλθετον νόμω as continuing the reference to marriage-formulae\(^1\) and those who read ἥλθετην ὅμω on the grounds that νόμος is an impossible word in this context.\(^2\)

To postulate a νόμος to be observed in those cases where a god chooses to love a mortal woman would be absurd: the word can only be made to give a sensible meaning by treating the relationship between Apollo and Cassandra as in some way analogous to a recognizable marriage. (The word νόμος, with its connotation of due forms set by custom which have to be followed, is really more specific than γάμος, a term much more loosely used, even by Aeschylus, in situations where anything recognizable as a marriage is out of the question.)\(^3\) Kuhns is therefore taking to their logical conclusion the implications of the word νόμω (which in fact he quotes without any indication that it is a disputed reading of a crucial text) in presenting this case.

The argument is I believe erroneous. Apollo’s defence of marriage refers specifically to a relationship between human beings (as do the other passages cited by those commentators who support ἥλθετον νόμω)\(^4\) and it is hard to see how anything resembling a marriage between Apollo and Cassandra could ever be in question. The institution which Apollo defends is one specially characterized by continuing faithfulness of the partners to each other,\(^5\) and the idea that Apollo might have entered into such a relationship is improbable in the extreme. The love of gods for women is a common feature of Greek mythology, their marriage

\(^{1}\) E.g. Fraenkel and Rose, ad. loc.
\(^{2}\) E.g. Thomson and Denniston-Page, ad loc.
\(^{3}\) E.g. Prom. Vinct., 739.
\(^{4}\) More especially Rose’s note ad loc. cites Iliad, ix. 134, which refers to a θέμις ἄνθρωπων... ἄνδρων ἣδε γυναικῶν, (if indeed the passage is relevant at all: it appears to refer to concubinage rather than marriage.)
\(^{5}\) Eum., 213-18.
to them comparatively rare.\textsuperscript{1} Certainly there is nothing in the other examples of this kind of love in Aeschylus to support the view that we have here an exception: that the jealousy of Hera is a feature of the loves of Zeus which Aeschylus repeatedly introduces into his plays is itself a reminder that he was far from regarding such unions as in any sense marriages.\textsuperscript{2} It would take a great deal more than the disputed reading of one word to substantiate the idea that Apollo's relations with Cassandra should be regarded as in any way analogous to a permanent partnership; and unless νῶμω can be otherwise explained away, ἡλθέτην ὅμοι must be accepted as the better reading. The echoes of Athenian marriage-formulae are a reminder of the importance attributed by Aeschylus to the offspring of such unions of god and woman, and they add a dignity which helps to preclude the idea that Apollo is simply acting in a barbarous manner; but they do not imply an actual marriage, nor do they provide an explanation of the relationship between the appearances of Apollo in the \textit{Agamemnon} and the \textit{Eumenides}.

If we, therefore, reject both these contrasting explanations, how is the fate of Cassandra to be related to the economy of the trilogy as a whole? The answer is, I suggest, to be found in that nexus of communal guilt and individual free-will which is so important a feature of the \textit{Oresteia}. To say this is in a sense to leave ultimately an element of mystery, and will certainly give us no neatly tied-up solution to the "two Apollos" problem. However, some degree of clarification is, I believe, possible.

It has already been pointed out\textsuperscript{3} that Aeschylus has preferred not to avail himself of the chance to portray Cassandra as simply the innocent victim of Troy's wickedness and consequent destruction; and if we consider further, we may come to wonder

\textsuperscript{1} Though not unattested: cf. e.g. Hesiod, \textit{Theog.}, 947-9 (Dionysus and Ariadne). The circumstances here are, however, very different. The well-known instances of goddesses marrying mortals—Thetis' marriage to Peleus and Harmonia's to Cadmus—only emphasize the difference. These were envisaged as being like human marriages, solemnized with wedding-feasts (even the lists of wedding-guests being part of the tradition) and of permanent duration.

\textsuperscript{2} Thus Fraenkel (\textit{Agam.}, iii. 555) draws attention to the marriage-formula language in the \textit{Europa} fragment, where marriage is out of the question.

\textsuperscript{3} Cf. above, pp. 151-2.
whether one could have expected him to represent a character in the *Oresteia* in such a plight. A character on the stage, that is.

There are of course the helpless women and children of Troy, whose deaths were prefigured in the slaughter of the pregnant hare,\(^1\) and also the nameless Greek dead whose sorrowing relations rail against the Atreidae.\(^2\) These sufferings would in any case have to be recognized, by a poet acquainted with the realities of war, as something inevitable, and they could moreover be explained in terms of Hesiodic theodicy. And indeed, Aeschylus does more than just recognize their existence—he actually stresses them, for they are part of the burden of guilt which Agamemnon has accumulated. But for Aeschylus to do this is by no means the same thing as to single out such sufferings for individual examination on the stage. What matters is that, whatever attitude Aeschylus may adopt towards "background" people, he appears, in the *Oresteia* at least, to avoid having any character whom he presents on the stage\(^3\) destroyed wholly because of the wickedness of his forebears or his rulers and without any personal guilt.\(^4\)

This principle is immediately clear in respect of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, who despite the effect of the past crimes of the family upon them are not represented as innocent. It is made abundantly evident by their presentation, and especially by the attitude of the Chorus towards them in the *Agamemnon* (to say

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\(^1\) *Agam.*, 109-38: on the meaning of the sign cf., e.g. Lloyd-Jones, "The guilt of Agamemnon", pp. 189-90 (above, p. 146, n. 2).

\(^2\) *Agam.*, 429-55.

\(^3\) The nearest which the trilogy appears to come to presenting innocent people suffering for the guilt of a community is with the Chorus of the *Choephoroe*, whose position is described in 75-8—if indeed these captives are Trojan: this, though commonly asserted, is nowhere stated by Aeschylus, and the supposition raises some difficulties (stated, with a not wholly convincing answer, by A. Sidgwick, *Choeph.*, pp. xvii-xviii.) If they are *not* Trojans we cannot say anything about the reasons for their city having been conquered. In any case, their suffering is not explored: rather, they explain their status as captives in war because (rather like Eumaeus in the *Odyssey*) they are to appear as worthy allies of the man who comes to avenge the wrong done to the house which they serve; and more than this need not be read into what they say.

\(^4\) A corollary of this distinction is that there are also sinners, referred to in the trilogy but not presented on the stage, who do not as far as we are informed suffer any punishment. It might perhaps be argued that Atreus and Thyestes are punished in the persons of their sons, but this explanation will not suffice for Helen.
nothing of the implications of the other two plays), that they are to be regarded as personally responsible for their career of adultery, murder and tyranny. Even in the case of Clytemnestra, whom it is less inclined to condemn out of hand, the Chorus is careful to distinguish between the effect of the wickedness of past generations and personal guilt:

\[
\text{ō} \text{ς} \text{ μὲν} \text{ ἀναίτιος} \text{ εἰ}
\]
\[
\text{τοῦδε} \text{ φόνου} \text{ τίς} \text{ ὁ} \text{ μαρτυρήσων}
\]
\[
\text{πῶ} \text{ πῶ}; \text{ πατρόθεν} \text{ δὲ}
\]
\[
\text{συλλήπτωρ} \text{ γένοιτ' ἃν} \text{ ἀλάστωρ}.
\]

When we turn from Clytemnestra and Aegisthus to Agamemnon himself, a more difficult situation arises. The most critical moment of Agamemnon's life, when he undertook an action destined to have disastrous consequences for himself, is portrayed as a mysterious dilemma. Here the question is not simply the degree of moral responsibility incurred in a choice wrongly made, between good and evil, but whether any guilt at all is to be ascribed. In a now famous argument, Professor Page has marshalled the evidence to maintain that Agamemnon's choice at Aulis was unreal, adducing two major considerations, human and divine respectively.

On the human plane, it is alleged, Agamemnon's refusal would not have saved Iphigenia, for the other Greek leaders would still have sacrificed her and proceeded to Troy; and on the divine, the expedition for which the sacrifice of Iphigenia was a prerequisite had been willed by Zeus, who intended thereby to punish Trojan wickedness. No subsequent discussion of Agamemnon's guilt or innocence at the moment of this, his most crucial error, can ignore the issues raised by Page.\(^3\)

\(^1\) 1505-8. This is a very important stanza for the understanding of the Oresteia. It establishes once and for all that the demonic powers unleashed by ancestral sin, though constricting, do not inevitably overwhelm their victim so completely as to remove all personal responsibility: it cannot, of course, be used to prove that they never do so. \(^2\) Denniston-Page, Agam., pp. xxiii-xxix.  

\(^3\) The acceptance of Page's arguments (or at least the latter of them) should logically mean that Agamemnon was not a moral agent when he prepared to kill Iphigenia. This conclusion has been drawn by Page himself, who regards Agamemnon as being in substantially the same position as Oedipus in the Oedipus Tyrannus (Agam., pp. xxii-xxiii). In this case the past sins of the House of Atreus are to be regarded as having predetermined Agamemnon's disastrous
My own belief is that neither of these arguments is conclusive, and that the one concerning the human consequences of a refusal by Agamemnon to sacrifice Iphigenia is the weaker of the two. There is no explicit statement in the text to warrant the assertion that the other Greek leaders would have sacrificed her. Even if we assume that it is for these leaders that παυσανέμου . . . θυσίας παρθενίων θ' αἱματος . . . ἐπιθυμεῖν is said to be θέμις,¹ we are still dealing with the subjective opinion held by Agamemnon at the moment when he decided on a course of action characterized by the Chorus as outrageous. The most that can be deduced from this and from the subsequent reference to the callousness of the φιλομαχοὶ βραβήσ is that a body of opinion amongst the Greek leaders is represented as having been ready to support Agamemnon in his decision. To go beyond this is useless: we are dealing not with a historian’s report of an actual event, but with the imaginative creation of a poet, and we shall find ourselves in a completely unreal world if we attempt to explore behind what he says and construct for ourselves as quasi-historical situation which he has not described. It is no more profitable to argue whether the other Greek leaders would have sacrificed Iphigenia if Agamemnon had deserted the expedition than it would be to argue whether Agamemnon, if he had taken such a step so as to avoid sacrificing Iphigenia, would have been so foolish as to leave her behind for others to sacrifice.³ No useful conclusions can be drawn from the discussion of such hypotheses.

course. Alternatively, it has been maintained (e.g. Lloyd-Jones, op. cit., pp. 191 ff.) that Greek poetic thought could represent Zeus as compelling Agamemnon to commit a sin whilst still holding him to be guilty. Both these may be intelligible theological notions, though the latter is considerably the more difficult; but apart from the controversialness of their basic premises (discussed in the text) they have the further disadvantage that they make Agamemnon’s decision to sacrifice Iphigenia quite unlike any other moral choice in the whole trilogy. The only other case where a divine fiat might be invoked is that of Orestes, and since the killing which he undertook did not lead ultimately to disaster, this would hardly be a helpful comparison.¹ 214-17. ² 230.

³ In short, we appear to have here a case of the “documentary fallacy” which cannot even cite in support the evidence of commonly-known tradition. Page assumes the presence of Iphigenia at Aulis throughout the proceedings, without any warrant from the text; whereas the usual form of the tradition represents her as summoned only after Agamemnon had determined to sacrifice her. (Cypria—cf. Proclus, Chrest., I. OCT Homer, V. 104: cf. Eur., Iph. Aul., 87-105.)
Page’s analysis of the situation as viewed from a divine standpoint is admittedly more substantial: there is no doubt that *sub specie aeternitatis* the destruction of Troy is meant to be regarded as the long-standing intention of Zeus. But this does not prove that the expedition itself, let alone the sacrifice undertaken to promote it, must be regarded as necessarily free from moral guilt: “to do the right deed for the wrong reason” may very possibly be sinful—indeed, we need look no further afield than Clytemnestra for a character who combines in the same act divine retribution and personal sin.

The motives of Agamemnon are therefore all-important. The sacrifice of Iphigenia and the expedition to Troy are connected as means and end respectively; and this is in fact the way in which Aeschylus represents Agamemnon as reasoning at Aulis. The determining point in his agonized debate comes with the use of the prejudicial term *λιπόναιος*; the decisive consideration is that he cannot now abandon the alliance which he has assembled. But the purpose of that alliance is here represented as bad: for the Chorus completes its description of Agamemnon’s choice by showing only the human, inglorious aspect:

\[ ςτλα δ’ οὖν θυτήρ γενέσθαι \\
θυγατρός, γυναικοποίων \\
pολέμων ἄρωγαν \\
καὶ προτέλεια ναῶν. \]

This confirms the general pattern—the condemnation of the expedition which the Chorus recollects having made when it set out, and the complacent avowal which Agamemnon makes in person on his return from Troy. Nowhere in the report of Agamemnon’s deliberations at Aulis, nor in the words of the Chorus as it describes the scene, is there any reference to the will of Zeus. Whatever the theological aspect of the war may be, Aeschylus evidently does not wish his audience to use this as a reason for absolving Agamemnon from moral guilt.\(^5\)

\(^1\) For the force of this term, cf. Fraenkel, *Agam.*, ii. 122; and for the turning-point in Agamemnon’s deliberations, Lesky, “Decision and responsibility”, p. 81.  
\(^2\) 224-7.  
\(^3\) 799-804.  
\(^4\) 823.  
\(^5\) The conclusion that Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter for a base human motive spares us the problem of trying to judge whether Aeschylus’ audience
therefore no possibility that Agamemnon's later sins—the destruction of the Trojan shrines and the act of hybris with which he enters his palace—having resulted in some way from a previous act of bloodshed over which he had no personal control. Like these acts, and indeed like the prior decision to jeopardize the lives of his subjects for an unworthy woman, the sacrifice at Aulis is to be regarded as a sin for which Agamemnon is responsible, even though, as he exhibits on the stage, the sins of his father influence his judgement.

In contrast to all these—Clytemnestra, Aegisthus and Agamemnon, only one person comes, despite his evil ancestry, to perform an act of retribution without having evil personal motives, namely Orestes; and Orestes is the one person whose act of bloodshed does not lead to his destruction.

would have accepted even a divine fiat as justifying human sacrifice: fortunately, for it is hard to be certain. That the Athenians of Aeschylus' generation sacrificed three Persian prisoners-of-war before Salamis is asserted by Plutarch, Themistocles, 13, 2-3: the silence of Herodotus on this point is capable of more than one interpretation. (The alleged use of condemned criminals as sacrifices at the Thargelia in fifth-century Athens rests on doubtful evidence: cf. G. Murray, Rise of the Greek epic, pp. 317-21.) In later tragedy only Sophocles appears to have attempted an outright defence of Agamemnon's sacrifice (El., 566-76), and this has the air of an argument forced upon him by dramatic necessity.

There is no indication in Aeschylus' text that Agamemnon had, like Orestes, received any indication from a god that his act of revenge was also to be a divinely-ordained punishment. If we ask at what stage the purpose of Zeus Xenios was realized, we meet with difficulties. The Chorus do not seem to have realized it at the outset (cf. 799-804). Presumably it might have been inferred from the sign of the eagles. The occasion of this is left somewhat vague, but at least Aeschylus seems to visualize it as having occurred after the army had assembled. Moreover, the inference seems to have been drawn by the Chorus: it certainly does not figure in Calchas' reported interpretation, which is concerned only with the actual victory and the danger from the anger of Artemis. It remains obscure at what stage, if at all, we are to regard Agamemnon as fully conscious of the purpose of Zeus Xenios: his words on his return are hardly conclusive.

The motives of Orestes are set out in Choeph., 297-304: the command of Apollo; the wrong done to his father; the deprivation of a rightful inheritance; and the need to free Argos from the tyranny of unworthy rulers. Only the third of these (χρημάτων ἄχρητα) appears possibly exceptionable, and then only if not properly understood: cf. Eum., 756-61.

No mention is made here of Electra. Though she is by no means a minor figure, her rôle is secondary to that of Orestes. She makes no separate crucial choice, and although she is an accessory to the killing of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus,
The indications observable in the *Oresteia* thus suggest that Aeschylus avoids presenting the effect of communal guilt as disastrous for the individual unless he himself also chooses to do wrong. Can this conclusion be confirmed from the other extant plays?

In fact, only one appears to have direct relevance, namely the *Septem*. We might conceivably have had another, for Aeschylus could have constructed the *Persae* on a similar pattern, representing Xerxes as conditioned by the hybris of his ancestors; but, in the form which he has preferred, the idealization of Darius for dramatic contrast leaves Xerxes responsible for initiating the catastrophe, though he is carried forward by supernatural forces once he has taken the first step.

The *Septem* however does provide a parallel to the *Oresteia*, since it examines the position of a man burdened both by the sin of his grandfather and the curse of his father. And in this play the issue is set out with perhaps greater clarity than in the *Oresteia*. The pattern of the *Septem* looks to be moving inexorably towards a situation where, by a process of elimination, Eteocles cannot avoid having to take his stand at the seventh gate and meet his brother in single combat. We might have anticipated seeing at work an "infernal machine" very similar to that of the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, but manifesting, in contrast to Sophocles' play, the working of divine punishment on the tainted line of King Laius. But at the crucial moment when the presence of Polyneices at the seventh gate is announced, Aeschylus dismisses her from the reckoning once he has dismissed her from the stage, making the whole problem of the responsibility for these killings and the consequent suffering devolve on Orestes alone.

1 The construction of the *Persae* is geared to the revelations made by the ghost of Darius, raised by incantations after the Persian defeat at Salamis has been announced but before Plataea has been fought. It is thus appropriate that the ghost should be informed by the Queen of the past defeat and should in turn inform her of the future one. The inherent difficulty of this is surmounted by the device of the undated (and unmotivated) prophecy of a series of disasters which the ghost realizes has now begun to be fulfilled. This is by no means incompatible with the notion that the sin of an earlier generation is now being expiated (cf. the situation of Croesus as explained by Delphi in Herod., i. 91, 1); but in default of any such explanation by Aeschylus himself we must be content to take the dramatic device at its face value.
breaks the anticipated pattern with an altercation between Eteocles and the Chorus, which makes it clear that another champion might have been sent had Eteocles so allowed.\(^1\) Thus, even though the supernatural forces set in motion by the sin of Laius and the curse of Oedipus have brought Polyneices to the seventh gate, the fatal combat occurs because Eteocles chooses to fight; and thus, although in making his choice he is (like Paris and Agamemnon) affected by Ate,\(^2\) the instrument of ancestral and communal guilt, he is also in some degree himself guilty.\(^3\)

Altogether, therefore, it appears that in the only extant plays in which Aeschylus treats this situation his pattern is consistent. Final disaster (as opposed to temporary suffering such as is undergone by Orestes) does not come upon his characters just because of communal or ancestral guilt, but presupposes also their own personal guilt.\(^4\)

In the light of this, the representation of Cassandra as an offender is neither surprising nor coincidental: to represent her in any other way would have been inconsistent with Aeschylus' practice as far as it can be seen in the extant plays, and certainly inconsistent with the rest of the Oresteia.

It remains to clarify how Cassandra's fate fits into this pattern, and we may best begin by returning to her own statement of the causes of her death. As has been emphasized previously, both

\(^1\) 677 ff.  
\(^2\) Cf. 687.  
\(^3\) On the significance of this altercation between Eteocles and the Chorus, and on the error of supposing that the Chorus has misunderstood the situation, see Lesky, "Decision and responsibility", 84.  
\(^4\) It is perhaps advisable to stress that this generalization about the connection between disaster and personal responsibility is made only in respect of those who are involved in communal guilt. To assert that Aeschylus never portrays on the stage any innocent characters who come to disaster would be extremely rash: if, as is most commonly accepted, the Danaid trilogy included the death of the Pelasgus as a result of the decision taken in the Supplices (on this cf. Garvie, op. cit. pp. 198 ff.), it is hard in our present state of knowledge to detect any moral failing. Despite an overall optimism, Aeschylus was too much of a realist to believe in any facile equation between goodness and success. Thus in the course of a stasimon containing much that is typically Aeschylean in its treatment of hybris, the most that the Chorus of Erinyes can promise is that the man who is just without compulsion ὀνύκ ἄνολβος ἐσται.

πανώλεθρος δ' οὔποτ' ἀν γένοιτο.  

\((Eum., 550-2).\)
Apollo and Paris are said to be in some way responsible. This is
double causation such as we have seen elsewhere in the *Aga­memnon*, and it has the same relation as exists in the other
cases between free-will and the compelling force of ancestral or
communal guilt.

Though this pattern of double causation is repeated through­
out the play, the manner in which it operates is more fully
documented for some characters than for others. Most clearly
expounded is the case of Agamemnon himself, and he thus
presents the most helpful parallel. Conditioned by the sins of
the House of Atreus, yet still a responsible moral agent, Aga­
memnon chose wrongly, especially at Aulis, and thereby ensured
his own murder. Cassandra's history then matches this closely :
conditioned by her Trojan blood, for Troy was guilty of hybris,
yet still responsible, she faced her own moment of decision when
Apollo sought her love, chose wrongly and thereby ensured her
murder likewise.\(^1\) To ask what would have happened had she
chosen otherwise is as fruitless an inquiry as to ask what would
have happened if Agamemnon had not sacrificed Iphigenia: all
that can be said is that her wrong choice was a major factor in
her being brought to her death in the palace of the Atreidae. It
is likewise as fruitless to seek a special motive for Apollo as it is
to ask why his sister imposed an even crueller choice upon
Agamemnon at Aulis, beyond observing that these are apparently
divinely-ordained tests, bringing members of guilty commu­
nities to a moment when they must either free themselves or take
upon themselves the burden of that guilt and the disaster which
it brings in its train.

This remains, even after Aeschylus has placed before us a
number of instances, and represented the mentality of those who
chose wrongly, something of a mysterious ordeal. It is for this
reason that so much controversy has been possible on the

\(^1\) The dating of this in relation to the Trojan War is left vague by Aeschylus: the
only temporal indications seem to be that there was a period between the gift
of prophecy and its modification (cf. *Agam.*, 1210-2) followed by another period
when Cassandra was an object of mockery to the Trojans (1269-74). Tradition
(probably the *Cypria*—cf. Mason " *Kassandra*", *JHS*, lxix (1959), 81) represents
Cassandra as prophesying unsuccessfully before the start of the war. What
Aeschylus says neither presupposes nor contradicts this.
question whether the constricting force of communal guilt and the mental confusion which it entails normally leave room for genuine free-will.\(^1\) One person only is represented to us as having emerged successful from such an ordeal—Orestes, whose choice, though terrible, was made rightly. It remains obscure whether the purity of his personal motives is a factor meriting the assistance of Apollo, or whether the explicit instruction which Apollo gives as the mouthpiece of Zeus may not perhaps be a special \(\chi\upmu\rho\upsilon\) sent by Zeus as the first stage in bringing to a close the long and bitter lesson which he has imposed on humanity. Such inter-relations of divine purpose and human free-will are difficult problems for any system of theology; and it is perhaps fitting that Aeschylus does not explore the moment of Orestes' successful choice, but only shows him to us after the choice has been made.\(^2\)

It is in this setting, therefore, that we should view the fate of Cassandra. She suffers for her wrong choice more disproportionately than any other character in the trilogy, and with that sort of disproportion between initial fault and resulting disaster which especially characterizes tragedy. The pity which, as we saw at the outset, is the keynote of the scene is thus not unmerited; but nevertheless it does not exempt Cassandra from being, in company with Agamemnon, Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, a character punished in accordance with the principle

\(^1\) Thus, e.g. E. R. Dodds "Morals and politics in the Oresteia", CPSP., NS., vi (1960), 27 holds (rightly, I believe) that an area of free-will remains: on the other hand Lloyd-Jones (op. cit. p. 192) regards the power of Ate as amounting to complete control.

\(^2\) That the Commos of the Choephoroe shows something of Orestes' mental processes does not alter the fact that the crucial decision has been taken before the play begins. A parallel may perhaps be drawn with the description of Agamemnon's decision at Aulis. The actual deliberation is described at Agam., 205-17: the following stanza (218-27) tells what happened when Agamemnon "put on the harness of necessity", that is, it describes the mental processes (amounting in this case to something like mental derangement) whereby he was led to perform the deed demanded by the decision already made. Similarly, the Commos is in some part concerned to show Orestes as being mentally prepared for the act of matricide, but the actual choice, soon to be implemented, was made when Apollo set the alternatives before him; and this moment, though reported in considerable detail (Choeph., 269 ff.) is not shown on the stage. See also Lesky "Decision and responsibility", pp. 84-85.
of free-and-yet-not-free double causation which is so prominent and so essential a part of the Oresteia.¹

¹ In conclusion, I would like to thank Professor B. R. Rees for a number of suggestions which he has kindly made on various points in this article; and also Miss Anne C. Alderson, a research student of this University, whose criticisms have materially affected the argument.