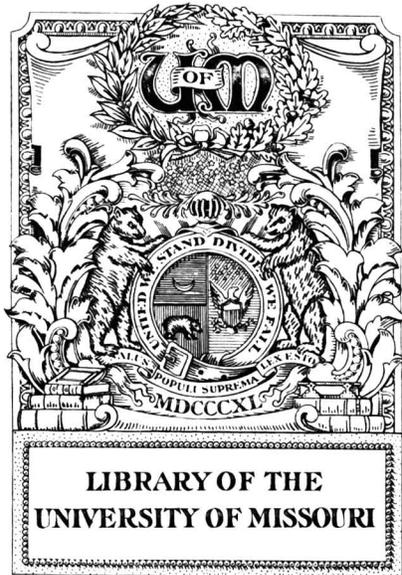


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THE DRAMATIC FUNCTION OF
THE AESCHYLEAN CHORUS.

by



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THE IDEAL AND THE AESCHYLEAN CHORUS

All criticism and investigation of the Attic Drama must go back, for its external authority, to the "Poetics" of Aristotle. In this fragmentary treatise there are only a few sentences that are of use in this study; but they are to be carefully noted, especially in view of the ingenious (1) theories to which they have given rise.

~~"The chorus too," (2) says Aristotle, "should be regarded as one of the actors; it should be an integral part of the whole, and take a share in the action." This statement, which of course only outlines the function of the chorus, presumably expresses not a mere abstract ideal, but the standard of what Aristotle considered the best of Attic tragedy. That this standard was relatively late may be inferred from the incorrect usage mentioned (3): it is not the over-important role of the chorus of primitive drama and of the Suppliants of Aeschylus which is censured, but the singing of irrelevant intercalary pieces, "a practice first introduced by Agathon." Agathon was a younger con-~~

(1) Notably Butcher's, in his "Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art."

(2) 18:1456a: καὶ τὸν χορὸν δὲ ἓνα δεῖ ὑπολαβεῖν τῶν ὑποκριτῶν, καὶ μῦθον εἶναι τοῦ ὅλου καὶ συναγωνίζεσθαι. (Bywater's translation.)

(3) Later in the same section: ἐμβόλιμα φῶσιν.

temporary of Euripides (1). From this fact, and from the slight attention given Aeschylus in the "Poetics" elsewhere, we may conclude that to Aristotle he was merely one of many poets of the period of transition from dithyramb to tragedy. The subject-matter of his criticism was the drama of Sophocles and his successors. Therefore, in spite of the fact that his description of the proper activities of the chorus seems to apply more perfectly to the Aeschylean chorus than to any other in Greek drama that is preserved, ^{Aristotle} it is of value in this study only as indicating the line of development that appeared, and of which the work of Aeschylus was a beginning.

The earliest modern writer of note on the chorus of Attic tragedy was A. W. Schlegel. His conception of the ideal chorus is now standard. "We (2) must consider it as a

- (1) πρώτου ἄριστου Ἀγάθωνος (18:1456a.) This charge against Euripides is definitively refuted by Decharme, in "Euripides and the Spirit of his Dramas."
- (2) "Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur," p. 76: "Wir müssen ihn begreifen als den personificierten Gedanken über die dargestellte Handlung, die verkörperte

personified reflection on the action which is going on;
the incorporation into the representation itself of the
sentiments of the poet, as the spokesman of the whole
human race." The chorus also served, as Schlegel thought,
to give to the action a certain publicity which, however
inconsonant with the supposed period of the action, seemed
desirable to the Athenian democracy (1). "It (2) represented
in general, first the common mind of the nation, and then the
general sympathy of all mankind. In a word, the chorus is
the ideal spectator. It mitigates the impression of a
heart-rending or moving story, while it conveys to the actual
spectator a lyrical and musical expression of his own
emotion and elevates him to the region of contemplation."

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und mit in die Darstellung aufgenommene Theilnahme des
Dichters, als des Sprechers der gesammten Menschheit."
(Black's translation.)

(1) Ibid., p. 76.

(2) Ibid., p. 77, "- - - so stellte er überhaupt und zuvör-
derst den nationalen Gemeingeist, dann die allgemeine
menschliche Theilnahme vor. Der Chor ist mit einem Worte
der idealisierte Zuschauer. Er hindert den Eindruck einer
tief erschütternden oder tief rührenden Darstellung, indem
er dem wirklichen Zuschauer seine eignen Regungen schon

In brief, then, according to Schlegel's conception, the function of the ideal chorus is, first, to generalize in the minds of the audience the action represented in the play as of a particular character or set of characters; second, to idealize the action: -- to alleviate and at the same time deepen the impression of a painful spectacle by raising it to a higher plane. Combining these (1), we may characterize the role of Schlegel's chorus as interpretative; it acts as a sort of go-between for the action and the audience, influencing the point of view of the latter for the former.

Such was the function of the ideal chorus. That this can be accepted as a description of the activities of the chorus in any great number of the extant Greek tragedies, is evidently not true. Though Schlegel did not consider Aeschylus so inferior as Euripides, yet it is everywhere evident that he regarded Sophocles as the one true representative of tragedy in its flower (2); and such differences as Aeschylus showed were, from his standpoint of artistic criticism, only deviations from the type.

lyrisch, also musikalisch ausgedrückt entgegenbringt,
und ihn in die Region der Betrachtung hinaufführt."

(1) And omitting the fanciful aid to publicity.

(2) Curiously illustrating the superiority of Sophocles.

His ideal chorus is a Sophoclean chorus, much idealized at that. In a study of the Aeschylean chorus it is of value chiefly as a fixed basis for comparison and contrast.

That both Schlegel and Aristotle, from whom he drew his inspiration, really treated not of the tragic chorus in general, but of the Sophoclean chorus, was perceived by Stolte (1). He accepts their ideal, however, as final. The ideal chorus should so act as to effect the *κάθαρσις παθημάτων* (2) of Aristotle (3). The ideal chorus should be itself without action, but should be in sympathetic connection with the action of the drama (4), so that it may fulfill to advantage its interpretative function. The personnel of the chorus should be so selected that it will sustain such a relation to the action; further, so that the generalizing and idealizing function may be suited to the character of the choreutae. This is always the case

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he compares him to Polyclitus, Aeschylus to Phidias.

Euripides is likened to Lysippus.

(1) De Chori, qualis in perfecta Graecorum tragoedia apparet, ratione et indole. (p. 17).

(2) 1449b.

(3) Stolte, Op. cit. p. 19.

(4) So Hermann, quoted with approval by Stolte (p. 20):

in the plays of Sophocles, but not in those of Aeschylus (1), and in the later plays (2), at least, of Euripides, the utmost neglect, in this as in other matters, is seen.

The departure of Aeschylus from the Aristotelian-Schlegelian ideal is noted, in that his choruses do indeed take part in the action (3), to an extent which Aristotle did not find practiced in any of the tragedy of his day, and consequently did not reckon with in the Poetics. Of the Aeschylean chorus, rather than of the idealized Sophocelan chorus usually treated, is true Kabath's statement (4) that the chorus was essential to the very existence of the drama. The action of the chorus, somewhat restricted in the later works of Aeschylus, reaches the ideal standard in the Sophoclean drama.

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"Chorus com actione conjunctus et nexus esse debet; nam nisi ita esset, non consisteret actio, sed interpellaretur et rumperetur."

- (1) For instance in the Suppliants, Seven, Choephoroi.
- (2) The early plays of Euripides are declared nearly ideal, as regards the chorus (p. 25).
- (3) P. 23. The exception named, the Agamemnon, is surely accidental.
- (4) De chori tragoediae Graecae nature at munere: "Choro non ornamenti causa, sed ita, ut sine eo tragoedia nulla

Aeschylus represents the transition from the primitive drama to the perfected art of Sophocles (1).

Stolte's consideration of the Aeschylean chorus as distinct from the ideal interpreter of Schlegel, is carried further by Zerneck (2). By means of an exhaustive enumeration he reaches the conclusion that the precepts of Aristotle are founded not only on the Sophoclean chorus, but on ONE Sophoclean chorus -- that of the Oedipus Rex. (3). The amount of action evidently deemed right by Aristotle is exceeded by that of the Aeschylean chorus (4) in all cases: -- even in the Prometheus the chorus participates in the action, so far as there is any (5).

fuisset, utebantur."

(1) Friederichs Chorus Euripideus comparatus cum Sophocleo:

"Quo magis autem ars accedebat ad perfectionem, eo magis restringebantur chori partes, nec tamen adeo, ut vel in Aeschylo omnia prioris condicionis vestigia desiderarentur."

(2) De choro Sophocleo et Aeschylo quæstionum capita tria.

(3) P. 3.

(4) See also Hübner: Einiges zur Charakteristik des Chors der alten Tragoedie.

(5) Zerneck, p. 10.

An inferiority of the Aeschylean treatment is noted, in that the speeches of his choreutae are not in all cases perfectly suited to their character (1). The difference in this matter is slight, however, especially in comparison with the extreme carelessness of Euripides in this respect.(2). A more vital difference, here (3) first mentioned, is the more emotional character of the odes of Aeschylus. This is a difference even more essential, from the artistic standpoint, than the varying participation of the chorus in the action. The Aeschylean chorus, with its emotional $\kappa\acute{o}\mu\mu\omicron\iota$, has the effect of intensifying and vivifying the emotions previously aroused: an effect very different from the idealizing, sedative purpose of the Sophocelan-Schlegelian chorus; -- indeed virtually the opposite of it. If the previously cited opinion of Stolte (4) is correct, that the $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\theta\alpha\rho\omicron\sigma\iota\varsigma$

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 (1) Notably in the cases of the Choephoroi and the Persians, where the choreutae speak with more freedom than is natural (p. 13). The justice of the charge is open to doubt. See below.

(2) P. 20. For a defence of Euripides see Decharme, p. 293.

(3) P. 16.

(4) Op. cit. p. 19.

παθημάτων is to be effected largely by the chorus, the moral benefit expected by Aristotle and declared by him to be the *raison d'être* of tragedy could hardly result from an Aeschylean performance (1).

To summarize, then, the qualities of the Aeschylean chorus, as distinct from the ideal Schlegelian chorus, and as treated in the general surveys in the works mentioned, we may say: first, that the character of the chorus is not well maintained; second, that the chorus is prominent in the action of the drama; third, that, perhaps in consequence of this, the chorus is much given to manifestations of great emotion, and does not occupy the position of an interested but somewhat aloof spectator, as demanded by the ideal.

It remains for me, with these conclusions as a foundation, though not necessarily one free from suspicion, to determine what office is actually filled by the chorus in the dramas of Aeschylus. To reach independent results the traditional ideal must be to an extent disregarded, though the conclusions, to be of value, should be placed in relation to it. Whatever chronological development is discoverable must be traced. In this connection some evidence might be found as to the chronological position of the *Prometheus* among the extant plays.

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(1) However the meaning of *κάθαρσις* may be twisted, the

An examination of each choral part of each play has been made, with a view to determining its dramatic use. In such determination it is necessary to have at least a general assumption as regards the method of presentation. As to this, both in general and in particular, vast amounts have been written (1); but it has not seemed necessary, in general, to indicate or to cite opposing views. To do so with any completeness would lose the conclusions in fine-spun conjectures.

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same effect could hardly be produced by methods so variant.

(1) Most of the works in the bibliography deal with this subject. Those already cited at length are the only ones which, as wholes, bear directly on the subject of this paper.

II

THE SUPPLIANTS

In this, the earliest (1) of the plays of Aeschylus that have been preserved, the parodus extends to 40 (2). Recited by the coryphaeus, it introduces the chorus and the play to the audience (3). There is intense feeling in the parodus (4), but no unbridled emotion. The first

- (1) So Körte, Georg Müller, Tucker, Hermann, Bergk, Bücheler, Wilamowitz, Muff, Böckh, C. O. Müller, and others formerly put the Persians first, partly on metrical grounds, partly because of supposed allusions to contemporary events. The importance of the chorus and the character of the action are decisive.
- (2) I accept the arrangement of Tucker (ed. p. xxxvi). For an elaborate defense of a wholly different one, see Freericks: De Aeschylī Supplicum choro, P. 23.
- (3) The suggestion of Stephenson (Some Aspects of the Dramatic Art of Aeschylus, p. 52) that the coryphaeus addresses her comrades and the sacred images, not the audience directly, is not impossible, but there is no evidence for it. The presumption is against it; for the audience is directly addressed in the Persians, which is later.
- (4) 22ff.

stasimon (41-149) is rendered by hemichoria (1). Faith in the Gods is mingled with doubt and anxiety, and the close leaves the spectators in doubt, as it may serve equally well to introduce any sort of fortune. There is much said about the power of Zeus; but it is overborne by the fears of the maids. In the episode (150-502) the chorus converses first with Danaus, then with the king. A special reason is lacking for the selection of the chorus, instead of Danaus, to talk to the king; clearly it was at that time natural for the chorus to say everything that did not for some special reason belong to someone else.

In the second stasimon (503-578), rendered by the whole chorus, as is suitable for so brief an ode, a short description of Io's career is given, as a foundation for prayers to Zeus. There is a noticeable increase in the

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(1) Of six choreutae each. Fourteen, fifteen, and fifty (Tucker) have also been assigned as the number of the chorus. It is necessary to assume that the φίλοι δμῶιδες (945) took part in the choral performances; to have them "grouped at the entrance or inconspicuously seated" (Tucker, ed. p. xiv) would be dramatically impossible; and any mention of them would be an unprovoked error.

confidence of the tone. After a brief episode (579-603), during which encouraging news is heard, the chorus breaks forth in an ode (604-688) of enthusiastic blessings on their benefactors. As is natural and proper to such a mood, some of the singing is done by individuals (1). In the episode (689-754) the maids are informed by Danaus of the approaching pursuers. In the following stasimon (755-798) they give vent to the most abject terror, relieved only by a brief prayer to Zeus. In the episode (799-985) they are seized by the Egyptian herald and his henchmen, and resist with defiance, tears, and prayers. Being at last rescued, in the exodus (986-1041) they start a hymn of thanksgiving, which changes into a discussion between the two hemichoria, and ends in the same doubtful mood as did the first stasimon.

The chief object in these choral odes seems to be the communication of the emotions felt by the choreutae to the audience. This they do admirably. There is little of the 'generalizing' function: the misfortunes of Io are indeed related, but in such a way that they intensify rather than alleviate the terrors of the maids. Besides, Io was not a character of sufficient importance for the

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 (1) As to the exact mode of presentation no two agree.

purpose. Of intent to lead the audience from emotion to contemplation there is not a particle. The fourth stasimon is the very antithesis of such artistry; and the play ends in an atmosphere of troubled uncertainty most disquieting. A reading of the play can not fail to convince one that that genius which was later to devise the dramatic force of the Agamemnon was at this time interested chiefly in the odes. We can well believe the tradition that represents him as a worthy competitor of Simonides.

It may be remarked that the choreutae always speak in character. Skill is shown in indicating the varying states of mind of the chorus. Their confidence increases steadily throughout the first three stasima, so that the sudden terror of the fourth makes a forceful impression.

The peculiar point in this play is the part taken by the chorus in the episodes. The choral parts would almost suffice for a play by themselves, if all the other characters were mutes. The play is thus set aside from all others (1). Not yet was it true

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(1) Georg Müller (De Aeschylī Supplicum tempore et indole) divides the plays into two groups, of which the earlier consists of the Suppliants, the Persians, and the Seven.

that Αίσχύλος---τὰ τοῦ χοροῦ ἡλάττωσε καὶ τὸν λόγον
πρωταγωνιστὴν παρεσκευάσεν(1).

We shall see that the Prometheus also stands alone.

(1) Poetics 4:1449a.

III

THE PERSIANS

In this play the chorus consists again of twelve (1). First (1-64) comes the speech of the coryphaeus, introducing the chorus and the situation to the audience (2). The remainder of the parodus, though metrically divided into two parts (3), is tripartite in content. The first part (65-92) further describes the situation, especially the vast array of the King; the second (93-114) considers the power of an inexorable fate, which has lifted Persia and may cast her down (4); the third (114-154) expresses the anxious foreboding of the chorus.

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- (1) Blomfield thought the number was three (preface to ed.). Muff, who gives twelve, attributes to Stanley, Welcker, and Bamberger the opinion that the number was seven (*De choro Persarum fabulae Aeschylei*, p. 6). Apparently he misread Bamberger, who (*De carminibus Aeschyleis a partibus chori cantatis*, p. 40) gives fourteen. Twelve is generally accepted as correct.
- (2) Stephenson (p.54) elaborately explains and justifies this direct address. The fact seems to be that it was perfectly regular at this time.
- (3) 65-139, melic; and 140-154, trochaic.
- (4) 93-101 seem rightly retained and treated as antistrophic

The queen enters, and tells the chorus of her dream and presentiment. A messenger then arrives, and, interrupted by emotional outbursts from the chorus, tells the tale of Persian disaster. The episode extends through 531. In the first stasimon, after a dignified lament by the coryphaeus (1) (532-547), the chorus wildly bewails the misfortune, contrasting it with the glories of the past (547-597). The second stasimon (623-680) is a solemn invocation to the dead Darius, strengthened by the closing passage (672-680), given by the chorus in concert.(2). In the succeeding episode 694-696 and 700-702 are brief but effective interjections by hemichoria. The speeches of the chorus in 787-800 are no doubt spoken by the coryphaeus.

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by Seidler and Weil. See Dippe to the same effect: *De canticorum Aeschyleorum compositione*, p. 8. C. O. Müller, Heimsoeth, Westphal, Teuffel, Kirchoff, and Muff would insert the lines after 113, as an epode delivered by the entire chorus.

(1) So Maury, (*De cantus in Aeschleis Tragoediis distributione*, p. 12). Heimsoeth, Conradt, and Wecklein disagree.

(2) So Westphal, (*Prolegomena zu Aeschylus Tragödien*, p. 107), seemingly alone. For various arrangements of this, and of

The third stasimon (852-908) dwells upon the past glories of the reign of Darius. Xerxes then enters, and the remainder of the play is a lamentation between the fallen monarch and the chorus. At first there is some dialogue, but after 1015 there are sixty lines of the most unrestrained wailing (1).

The extraordinary length and monotony of this commus has been explained as intentionally ludicrous (2), and as intended to represent the barbaric emotionalism of the Persians (3). It should be recalled that the Greeks themselves were emotional; that great mourning was to them the natural concomitant of many deaths (4); and chiefly that the accompanying action, which we can most imperfectly reconstruct, was of chief importance.(5).

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the whole stasimon, see Maury, p. 14, 15. Westphal's position seems strong, and his arrangement is certainly the most effective.

(1) For citations of various arrangements of this chorus, see Maury, p. 16ff. His own complex plan is mere conjecture. The general effect is clear, and the delivery was no doubt such as would most powerfully express the despair of the choreutae, under the conditions of the Greek theater.

(2) Blomfield, ed. preface; Miss Swanwick's translation, p.257.

(3) Haigh, "Tragic Drama of the Greeks," p. 106.

(4) Sidgwick, ed. p. xii. (5) Paley, ed. note on 1049.

The position of the chorus in this play is vastly different from that in the Suppliants. In the Suppliants the chorus performs the drama; in the Persians the play would still be a play if there were no chorus at all. The evocation of the ghost of Darius by the chorus (628-680), however, reminds us that the chorus is not yet relegated to the position of a spectator. Whereas the extra-choral figures in the Suppliants were mere automatons, we have here two characters -- Atossa and Darius -- as clearly individualized as anyone could wish (1); while Xerxes is much more of a human being than Danaus or Pelasgus. The chorus does, however, take an active and vigorous interest in the event, and comment on it with a lively freedom which Zermecke (2) considers out of character. The criticism is hardly just. The circumstances allow free speech. No doubt, however, less attention was given the matter in the later play, because, first, of the presence of vivid characters apart from the chorus; and second, of the fact that the representation of character in the chorus is of less importance here than in the Suppliants, where there was almost no other.

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(1) Sidgwick (p. x) to the contrary notwithstanding. Yet perhaps Patin (Eschyle, p. 227 and passim) overemphasizes it.

(2) P. 13.

It is evident that in this play, as in the preceding one, the object of the choral odes is to strongly impress upon the audience the emotions felt by the choreutae. There is little reference to higher powers; 93-114, with its somewhat trite reference to fate, is in the middle of a long ode. The first instance of a tranquilizing use is yet to be met. The chorus is used in the early part of the play to induce an atmosphere of foreboding, chiefly, and later to express emotion after the event. The astute use of the third stasimon (852-908), to relieve the otherwise unbroken gloom, may be noted.

IV

THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

The chorus in this play is in number twelve (1).
The choreutae are Theban women, some young, some mature (2).

(1) So Muff (Der Chor in den Sieben des Aischylos, p. 1-2)
and most later authorities, including Tucker (ed. p.6).
Hermann thought fifteen correct (Aesch. Trag. Iip.273-4).
If the practice of using fifteen choreutae was first introduced by Sophocles, Aeschylus could hardly have used them in so early a play. This consideration has slight weight, however; the tradition, though generally accepted, rests upon the authority of Suidas and of the Vita Sophoclea. For a consideration of the matter see Stolte, p. 8. He accepts the tradition.

(2) The ὑπόθεσις of the Medicean has "ὁ δὲ χορὸς ἐκ ἠθβαίων ἐστὶ παρθένων." Whatever authority this may have is vitiated by cod. Guelf., which has "χορὸς γυναικῶν ἐπιχωρίων."
673(τί μέμονας, τέκνον; spoken to Eteocles) seems decisive. Tucker, after reviewing this and other evidence, comes to the conclusion stated (ed., p. 4). Stephenson's objection (p. 35) appears to me weak.

After the prologue (1-77), spoken by Eteocles, the parodus (78-164) is given. It is of two parts: 78-107 is spoken in excited dochmiacs by individual choreutae (1), while 108-164 is antistrophic. The whole passage is a palpitating expression of fear and prayer, mingled with a vivid and brilliantly metaphorical description of the advance of the enemy (2). It is indeed a "praestantissimum carmen" (3).

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(1) So first Ritschl, followed by most later commentators.

(2) It is of some importance to an analysis of this ode to see whether or not the chorus was supposed actually to see what it describes. The Medicean scholium on 79 says: ταῦτα δὲ φανταζόμεναι λέγουσιν ὡς ἀληθῆ, and this has been generally followed. Tucker, however, (note ad loc. and p. lv.) argues that there was no practical difficulty in the observation of the chorus, and that they were giving a description of what they actually saw. It is perhaps true that the scene would be more effective if viewed from his standpoint, although the excited imagination of the choreutae would also be dramatically effective. It would seem, however, so far as can be judged from the text, that each member of the audience could interpret the matter as he wished.

(3) Weil.

The first episode (65-273) is an altercation between Eteocles and the chorus. In it the chorus appears notably more reverent than does Eteocles (1). The first stasimon (274-355) finely describes the misfortunes of a captured city. The terror of the parodus is now replaced by the deep depression of enforced calm; the prayers for aid especially are more composed, though no less fervent.

After the great second episode (356-706), in which the chorus inserts brief speeches of blessing and prayer, and of pleading with Eteocles, (2) the second stasimon (707-776) describes, in a dejected monotone, the horror of the ancestral curse. In the episode (777-806) the chorus is notified of the turn of events. In the long third stasimon the chorus laments the unnatural slaughter. Part of the ode is rendered by hemichoria, part by single choerutae: the effect must have been similar to that of an ordinary dirge. 941-995 is the *ἑρῆνος* of Antigone and Ismene. 996-1044 is an altercation between Antigone and the herald. In the exodus (1045-1070) the chorus debates, in hemichoria (3), whether or not to support Antigone.

(1) 195ff, 212ff, 219, 209, 242, 244.

(2) 404-8, 439-43, 468-72, 508-11, 550-54, 613-17.

(3) Bamberger, p. 57: "Hemichororum in tragoedia potissimum

It may be remarked that this to us peculiar manner of ending a play utterly destroys the final effect of the drama, considered alone. This seems to indicate that the unity of a trilogy, when it existed at all (1), was quite close; or it may show an indifference to climax which is often encountered in the Attic orators.

The most notable point in regard to the choral portions of this play is the gradual lowering of the emotional pitch. From the wild exclamations of terror in the parodus to the dirge-like laments of the third stasimon there is a gradual sinking into the depths of depression. Unlike the two preceding plays, there is no break in this development, but the necessity for it does not here exist. The healthy vigor of the episodes in the Seven renders such a diversion, however necessary in the Suppliants, where the episodes are of no account, or in the Persians, where their content is much the same as that of the stasima, not only needless but undesirable. This play, then, is the first in which the chorus and the characters are distinct in dramatic value.

his usus est, ut chori quaedam dissensio sit, qua discordes in duas oppositas vel diversas sententias discedant."

(1) In the trilogy which contained the Persians there apparently was none.

The lessening in the emotion of the chorus may be a first sign of the tranquilizing influence that was later to be exerted. Otherwise it does not yet appear. The religious character of the chorus does first appear in this play. The prayers to the Gods are more frequent than before and are more earnest, with a loss of the incidental character which in the earlier plays makes them rather oaths than prayers. The disaster to the irreverent brothers brings this out in strong relief, and renders the drama much more religious than either of the preceding ones.

While the chief purpose of the choral odes is still to communicate to the audience the emotion of the chorus in as vivid and beautiful a form as possible, other functions begin to appear. The choral parts are now of distinctly less importance than the external action.

With Tucker's theory of two classes of choreutae accepted, the speech of the chorus is perfectly in character. In no particular is there retrogression from the Persians toward the Suppliants.

THE ORESTIA

I have thought well to effect a considerable saving in space by considering the choral functions in the Orestia entire, without taking each play individually. The course of action will also be traced with less minuteness than in the earlier plays. This may result in a curtness of treatment not suitable to the importance of the trilogy; but the labors of Verrall (1) especially, and in lesser degree of the other multitudinous works founded on the Orestia, render necessary a choice between glossing over many matters of interest, on the one hand, and on the other an almost indefinite expansion. For this study the former alternative is unavoidable. Besides, the comparisons between the Suppliants, the Persians, and the Seven need have no correspondent here, since the trilogy all belongs to one period.

In each play the number of the chorus is twelve (2).

(1) Whose work is justly estimated by Tucker (ed. Choephoroi p. iv). Dr. Gildersleeve's *sauve* implication that Verrall's theories are "masturbazione intellettuale" (A.J.P. XXXV p. 491) is unjust. If they are treated at all, it must be done adequately.

(2) Wecklein, Verrall, Tucker, etc. Others say fifteen.

In the Agamemnon the chorus consists of Argive elders, some of them, perhaps, in sympathy with the conspirators (1); in the Choephoroi, of female slaves of the house hold; and in the third play, of the Eumenides themselves.

There is no clear logical separation, in the Agamemnon, between the anapaestic parodus (40-103) and the first stasimon (104-269), delivered by hemichoria. They review the situation, hinting at the infidelity of Clytaemnestra, and solemnly declaring the omnipotence of Zeus (175-195). (The tone throughout is one of uneasiness and anxiety, but

For theories of double choruses in the first two plays, and a triple one in the Eumenides, see C.O Müller's Dissertations on the Eumenides, p. 9(trans. 1853). For a different sort of double chorus in the Agamemnon, see Verrall's edition(Appendix 1,J:p. 206ff). It seems that his arguments could be met by assuming hemichoria in odes not antithetic. Müller's speculations are interesting, but incapable of proof or of disproof.

(1) Not suggested by anyone so far as I know; but it is certainly the simplest way of explaining such passages as 363-378, and others ascribed by Verrall to a secondary chorus.

it is far from emotional. In the episode (270-378) the chorus converses with Clytaemnestra; some of the choreutae seem convinced of her sincerity; but most, if we may judge by the greater space given to the expression of their sentiments, are troubled and incredulous.]

In the second stasimon (379-480) the chorus discourses, with weighty solemnity, on the omnipotence and justice of Zeus; the folly of Paris; the sorrows of war. They then converse (481-493) among themselves, disparaging the beacon-report and Clytaemnestra herself. In the following episode the chorus is merely an interlocutor.

In the third stasimon the chorus further reviles Paris as the cause of the war (1). It declares its faith in the reward of righteousness, and contradicts the theory of divine envy (754ff). In 774-800 the chorus welcomes Agamemnon, with obscure hints at danger (786-9, 798-800). After the king enters the palace, the chorus voices its anxiety more clearly than it previously has; the uneasy, indefinite fear of one who is in the dark, but feels that all is badly wrong, is finely expressed.

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(1) Verrall (ed. p. liv) says, apparently as a quotation from someone: "Again the application is apparently to Paris; again we feel that the sin of Agamemnon is present in the thought." But (718-48, the most vivid and powerful

From 1059 to 1329 Cassandra, in prophetic frenzy, delivers her frightful prophecies to the chorus. They are horror-stricken, indeed, but calm. After her exit, they calmly enough reflect (1330-41) on the vanity of glory. When the death-shriek of the king is heard (1342, 1344) the elders confusedly consult as to their course of action(1). After this point the chorus defies Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus, but it is the defiance of hysteria: the old men are clearly crushed by the tragedy, which they dimly foresaw but lacked initiative to prevent. The calm, not of strength but of weakness, is now entirely broken. Childish blatancy, reflections on Paris and Helen, prayers for death, broodings on the curse, and reiterations of the power of Zeus behind it all, are mingled. Such an ending is evidently intended to emphasize the horror of the deed, by showing its effects on the elders. The effect of this ending is greatly increased by the fact that the chorus have hitherto kept themselves well in hand, despite their forebodings. They have been calm, even before Cassandra,

part of the ode, negative any such supposition.

(1) This passage (1247-1370) is frequently cited as proof that there are twelve choreutae. On the other hand, with a different arrangement, it is also relied on to prove that there were fifteen.

where their coolness must have given an impression of strength that made the final collapse very effective.

The parodos of the Choephoroi introduces the chorus to the audience, and briefly intimates the state of affairs. Reference is made to the power and justice of the Gods and to the iniquity of men. In the long episode which follows (83-582) the chorus at first (to 210) converses with Electra, advising her as to the proper measures (1). Later (305-476) it joins with Electra and Orestes in a chant to the dead Agamemnon and to the Gods, to bring vengeance. In the first stasimon (583-648) the chorus recites other outrageous crimes of women, comparable to that of Clytaemnestra, and at the end (637-648) impressively declares the certainty of justice. After Orestes discloses himself, a brief stasimon (2)(715-725) consists of prayers for his success. In the episode (726-778) the chorus directly and materially influences the course of events by its directions to the nurse (766ff). The third stasimon(779-836)

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(1) In Zerneck's opinion (op. cit. p. 13) they speak too freely. But they have probably not been slaves long. Besides, Electra had asked their advice.

(2) This division, and the others in this play, are Tucker's.

is an extended and solemn prayer for the aid of the Gods for Orestes, on the plea that his cause is just. Aegisthus then comes. In the fourth stasimon (854-867) another prayer for the success of the avenger is delivered. Its effect, after the preceding one, is solemnified by the fact that it is made to Zeus alone. The killing is then enacted, under the spur of Pylades (1).

The chorus then sings an ode of joy and thanksgiving (934-970). In the exodus Orestes, at first triumphant, sees in imagination (2) the pursuing Erinyes and takes flight. The last speech of the chorus (1063-74) is a sorrowful recognition of the continued activity of the curse, and a hint (1072) at doubt as to the justification for Orestes' deed. The final pessimistic look into the future contrasts strongly with the rejoicing of the preceding ode.

In the Eumenides, the chorus is aroused from sleep by the shade of Clytaemnestra (94-139).

(1) For the significance of Pylades in the play, see Verrall (ed. xviiiiff).

(2) So Tucker and Verrall (notes ad loc.). The latter suggests that the slave-women take, to Orestes, the appearance of Furies. This is hardly possible, as he continues to converse with the chorus. C.O. Müller (op. cit. P. 9) and others think that the Furies were actually present.

When they discover the escape of Orestes, they express their angry disappointment in disconnected exclamations (143ff). Then they vow that retribution shall follow, despite the meddlesome interference of Apollo, the type of the *vsóteroi θεοί* (162). After a bitter altercation with him (179-234) they depart in pursuit of Orestes.

In 244 they overtake him, now a suppliant to Athene. After the coryphaeus has threatened him (to 306), a magnificent stasimon (307-399) relates the inalienable preorgatives of the Erinyes, and the dreadful lot of him whom they pursue. Athene now comes, having heard from the banks of Scamander(401) the suppliant appeal. She converses in a friendly spirit with the coryphaeus(418-438), then hears Orestes' side of the case(439-472), and after some consideration goes to impanel a jury. The Erinyes do not like this turn of events. In the following stasimon(493-568) they criticize this new sort of justice and assert the excellence and the invulnerability of their position. The spirit of this ode is similar to that of the last, and the Erinyes are still unshaken in their grim confidence of ultimate success, despite their new set-back. The trial follows(579-780).

At its close the choreutae break forth into incoherent cries of frenzied rage. The change in spirit from the earlier odes is most striking, more striking, perhaps, than any contrast previously encountered(1). Athene tries in vain, for

(1) See C.O. Müller p. 46.

a time, to placate them(797-881). Then, quickly and inexplicably(1) they are won over(882-916). From then to 1032 the chorus, in passages alternating with those of Athene, expresses its content and predicts the joyful results to Athens. The closing part (1033-1048) is sung by the citizens who are acting as escort(2). It corresponds more nearly to the modern meaning of the word "hymn" than any other thing that I know in Greek literature. It is evident that in this play a large crowd, besides the regular chorus and the actors, took part; and the exodus must, with its religious and patriotic significance, have been very inspiring.

(1) This extraordinary incident is usually passed over without comment. That Athene's eloquent remonstrances (797-810, 827-839, 850-871) should be without any effect whatever, and then be followed by a sudden capitulation, in obedience to 882-892, is remarkable indeed. What has been said to change the spirit of 872-881 to that of the courteous inquiry in 893? Verrall's theory of religious conversion is attractive, (ed.p.xxxiiff), but I think impossible. A lacuna must be assumed, and a longer one than Wecklein's--postulated for grammatical and metrical reasons-- of two lines.

(2) It is unique as an undisputed instance of the song of a "secondary chorus".

In coming to the Orestia from a study of the earlier plays, the most striking feature is the relative lack of emotion in the choral parts. In the latter part of the Agamemnon the chorus loses its self-restraint, and is useful, as has been said, for emphasizing the horror of the murder. The vital difference in effect between such a passage and, for instance, the parodus of the Seven, would be obvious enough in the theater. The excited terror of the Theban women, expressed in fiery and poetic language, with suitable choral evolutions, is calculated to communicate itself to the audience: it is desired that the audience be caught up and swept along with the emotional rush of the drama, as in most modern plays. But the hysterical babblings of the old men, opposed to the cold vindictiveness of the two criminals, could have no such effect: it serves merely to emphasize the dramatic situation. In the Choephoroi, emotion of the old frenzied sort does not appear. In the Eumenides, it is unquestionably present; but in brief, disconnected passages, where the function of the chorus is sunk in that of the protagonist. In the two long, properly choral odes (307-399, 493-568), the feeling is in the one case impressively weird, in the other weighty and turbulent, but in neither is there any unrestrained emotion.

The increase in religious feeling , which was noted in the Seven, continues in the Trilogy. It is unnecessary to cite proofs of this feature: the constant references to the Gods and to Fate are the most notable features of the work. And instead of being made incidentally and conventionally, they now constitute the atmosphere of the drama.

In the first stasimon of the Choephoroi (583-648) appears a thing very common in later drama: the chorus reviews other situations similar to the present one. Here is the 'universalizing' function of the ideal chorus. It is the only case we have found thus far in Aeschylus. But not even in this case is any tranquilizing influence exerted; for the narrative serves as a basis for exultant threats against Clytaemnestra.

The vacillations in the spirit of the choruses have been noted in each play. Here, seemingly, Aeschylus has doubled on his tracks, returning to the early method which he abandoned in the Seven. Consideration, however, will show a fundamental difference. In the early plays the choral odes are arranged in such a way as to secure admirable gradations and contrasts, the action being as it were carried along with them; while in the trilogy the determining factor is the dramatic situation, with the changes of which the choral feeling corresponds. Aeschylus the lyric

poet is now fully developed into Aeschylus the dramatist. It is now true that " la chose dont Eschyle se préoccupe surtout, c'est la situation dramatique". (1) Everything is adjusted to it. The Seven occupies a transition-place, in which the choral and the other functions run in virtually separate courses, the one class sinking, the other rising, in intensity. The two contrasting currents side by side constitute what dramatic excellence the play has, and make it, I think, unique.

The energy with which the chorus enters the action in the Choephoroi has been noted above. In view of this and of the situation in the Eumenides, it seems reasonable to regard the inaction of the chorus in the Agamemnon as accidental so far as the poet's working principle at this time was concerned. We have noted no cases where the speech of the chorus is not in character.

(1) Croiset, Histoire de la littérature grécque, v.IIIp. 208.

VI
SUMMARY

Leaving aside, for a time, the Prometheus, we may now summarize the evidence gathered, as to the functions of the Aeschylean chorus. The most prominent fact we have found is that in the dramas of Aeschylus,--unlike, for the most part, those of Sophocles (1) and of Euripides (2) -- there is continuous development perceptible.

Religious feeling we find continually increasing. Very little in evidence in the Suppliants or in the Persians, it becomes prominent in the Seven, and in the trilogy it pervades the whole. The kind of feeling does not change. It is always a recognition of the omnipotence of Zeus and fate. Appeals to other Gods are generally rather formal: it is Zeus, the avenger of wrong and the helper in trouble, who to Aeschylus represents divinity. Like Hesiod, he is an instinctive monotheist.

Open expression of emotion in the choral odes exhibits

(1) Stolte (p.22) cites Ajax 245-255, 596-621, 900f., 1185ff., and Oedipus Coloneus 1239 as the only instances in Sophocles of complaint made by the chorus. The two are his earliest and his latest play.

(2) Euripides falls away from the traditional ideal more and more.

as constant a decrease. In the two earlier plays the odes are, first, emotional outbursts, and second, fine poetry. In the Seven the type is the same, but the emotional pitch is on the whole lower. In the trilogy the emotion-exciting function has disappeared entirely; the rare emotional passages are used solely in service and subordination to the dramatic action. One must feel in the trilogy that the poet's former joy in his brilliant odes has lessened; they are now dramatic instruments. ←

The developing use of contrast in the choral odes was noted in the last section. In one instance only have we found an ode which exercised the universalizing influence (1) desired by Schlegel. As the Orestia is among the latest works of Aeschylus, and this phase of the choral function has reached no development while advancement was being made so rapidly in many other directions, it is reasonable to suppose that our dramatist did not at any time use his chorus for that purpose, except incidentally.

We have been able to discover no single ode to which a tranquilizing influence could be attributed. The κάθαρσις παθημάτων, which Aristotle declared to be the end and aim of tragedy, was an object absolutely foreign to Aeschylean method. The effect of his tragedies, as well as we can see,

(1) Almost never lacking in Sophocles. (Stolte, p. 21.)

so far from soothing the emotions, was to arouse them;- to arouse NOBLE feeling, indeed, but certainly to induce a mental state very different from that which would result from a *κάθαρσις παθημάτων* . The impressionable Athenian must have been flooded with anxiety at the end of the Suppliants; with eager foreboding at the end of the Seven; with horror at the end of the Agamemnon; with patriotic exaltation at the end of the Eumenides.

In the last section was traced the variation in the relation of the choral and other functions. In the Suppliants and the Persians, the choral parts were of predominant importance; in the Seven, where we see the transition, the choral odes, already subordinate in external importance, occupied technically a coordinate place; in the Orestia they are assimilated in the action. This development, however, is chiefly of proportional relationship: except in the Seven (1), which has been considered, and the Agamemnon, the chorus is bound together with the action. The whole scheme of the

(1) Leaving out of consideration the rather lifeless alternation between the chorus and Eteocles, which is a prominent defect of a poor play, the chorus of this play fulfills the traditional requirements, so far as its relation to the action is concerned, as well as does that of the Agamemnon.

Suppliants, the evocation of the ghost of Darius in the Persians, the directions of the chorus to the nurse in the Choephoroi, and the character of the Eumenides, all go to prove that to Aeschylus the chorus was an actor in the drama. This, as compared with the interpretative function of the Sophoclean and Schlegelian chorus, is no mere difference of development; it is a fundamental difference in method and ideal. It follows that, since in one case the chorus was only a part, though an important one, of the dramatic scheme, while in the other it is an essentially separate though conjoined organism, a substitute for the Aeschylean chorus could be found, in other characters, more easily than for the Sophoclean chorus; and later dramatic art, in discarding the chorus, followed the line of development originating from Aeschylus, not that from Sophocles. The older poet had for his ideal the presentation of a stage spectacle as powerfully as possible, reenforced in every way; the younger diverted part of his energies to the proper reception of the entertainment by the audience.

Having acquitted Aeschylus of the charge of not suiting the language of his choruses to their character, our results may be briefly stated as follows: The chorus in Aeschylus is an aid to the dramatic effectiveness of the play, and has no interpretative function; it is used to inspire, not to soothe, emotional feeling; the open expression of emotion decreases, and religious feeling increases, with time.

VII

THE PROMETHEUS

It now remains to speak briefly of the Prometheus, which has been omitted previously partly because of its complete dissimilarity to the other plays, partly because of the lack of the same sort of evidence. The chorus is of ocean nymphs, and they speak perfectly in character. As to the number, the play contains little evidence, but it is presumably twelve.

In the parodus (144-185) they announce themselves, condole with Prometheus, and comment on the harshness of Zeus. The first stasimon (397-435) continues the sympathy for Prometheus and the condemnation of Zeus. There is an epode (431-435). 526-560 is the third stasimon, expressing hope that the choreutae may not run afoul of Zeus. The third stasimon (888-907) treats of the unhappiness of an unequal marriage.

The proportion of choral parts to dialogue in this play is about 1:7, as against 1:3 in the Orestia, and 1:2 in the Suppliants (1). This surely indicates a late date (2).

(1) Harry, ed., p. 88.

(2) Harry, ed. p. 88ff, says the situation did not allow much choral action. But the dramatists felt no timidity in changing the details of classic stories.

Zeus is mentioned frequently, but it is in a vastly different spirit from that of the other plays. The chorus can in no way be said to take part in the action. It may be replied, however, that there is no action. Not much emotion is expressed; that which does occur is of a gentle sort which does not appear elsewhere. All other Aeschylean choreutae, whether or not they restrain themselves, feel genuinely and powerfully: but we feel that these nymphs may at any moment flit away to bestow exactly the same kind of sympathy on some wounded grasshopper.

The chorus might not inaccurately be said to interpret the action, by viewing it from the common human standpoint. They at any rate approach this function more nearly than any other chorus that has been met. They also serve to isolate the protagonist, as in the Antigone. The epodes, the monodies, and the metre are all un-Aeschylean (1). Whether or not we agree with Maury (2) that the chorus is "quasi Euripideus," it is assuredly not Aeschylean, as the term would be defined from a study of the other plays.

The play is anomalous. It is in no respect immature.

(1) Maury, op. cit. p. 106-7.

(2) Op. cit. p. 103.

Mere excellence would not if necessity imply lateness, since the early Persians is one of the very finest of Greek tragedies (1). But it seems that so excellent an opening scheme would have been repeated if the play were early. The character-drawing, too, seems an indication of lateness. The trouble is that it can not have been enough later than the Orestia to allow for such a development, even in the case of Aeschylus. It has been placed as the earliest of all (2); as between the Persians and the Seven(3); as after the Orestia (4). All the evidence seems to indicate that it was late, it indeed it is by Aeschylus at all; but to bring it into relation with the other plays is an impossibility.

(1) In my opinion. Schlegel (op. cit. p. 107) says: Es ist abweichend durch die Wahl des Stoffes---und in der Behandlung unter allen Tragödien des Dichters, die wir haben, unstreitig die unvollkommenste. But Patin, p. 239: Les Perses sont bien certainement l'un des chefs-d'oeuvre d'Eschyle et du théâtre grec.

(2) Schömann.

(3) Harry, ed. p. 89.

(4) C. O. Müller.

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(1) The editions named here are recent and elaborate ones which have been found especially valuable on the chorus. No such edition of the Persians has been accessible.

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We hand you with this the thesis of Mr. F. P. Johnson
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