

The annotations on the Greek verses

The recto of the manuscript presents the original text of *ΑΓΑΜΕΜΝΩΝ*, so that at the opening it appears by the side of the holographic translation. This consists of parts of printed sheets cut out and pasted by Woolf on her reading notebook. The clippings, of which some unused fragments are still scattered throughout the notebook, are arranged in the numerical order of the verses they contain, except for the page in which vv 793-805 precede the 781-792, but the inversion is signalled in ink with boxes and an arrow. The fact that *Agamemnon Notebook* contains the complete tragedy in Greek would suggest that the volume from which the pages were taken was not printed double-sided, or that in any case on one side (that of the glue) there was something that was not taken into account, being compromised by the “assembling” operation. In fact, by checking the original source (which I am going to talk about below) one can see that this is not the case, but there is another explanation: Woolf used not one but two copies of the same book, pasting each page both the front and the back. The proof of this is that the portion of text containing vv 1409-1428 appears twice in the manuscript: in the first occurrence it is placed next to the corresponding English version, while in the second (on the next page) it has been deleted by making a cross over the whole cutting and vv 1429-1443 are transcribed in ink, so that they too match the correct translation. The author must have realized only later that she had pasted the page in Greek twice on the same side and at that point she could only remedy it in this way.

The interesting fact is that the Greek version that Woolf chooses to use is taken from another edition than that of Verrall, probably coming into her possession precisely for this purpose and towards which, as we have seen, she does not have the same regard as she professes to other books that she doesn't even want to write down. Specifically, it is *Aeschyli Agamemnon*, entirely in ancient Greek and with commentary and notes in Latin at the bottom of the pages (which, however, are discarded by the writer), by Friedrich Heinrich Bothe (Leipzig, 1831), and not by Charles James Blomfield as Fowler (1999, 226) and Prins (2017, 36) incorrectly report. That of Blomfield (London, 1832) and that of A. Sidgwick (Oxford, 1887), both with the same approach without the English text, are instead the two editions present in Woolf's personal library, now preserved in the specific collection at the “Manuscripts, Archives & Special Collections” archive of the Washington State University Library in Pullman. These appear in *The Library of Leonard and Virginia Woolf*, the catalogue compiled by Julia King and Laila Miletic-Vejzovic, where it is written that they also contain annotations by the same writer (2003, 2). Actually this information, by going to check it with the curator of the library section Greg Matthews, turned out to be incorrect. In fact, in the two *Agamemnon* that belonged to Woolf there are some pencil notes, but on closer inspection in both cases they do not seem to have been made by the writer. In particular, the strong and heavy handwriting of the annotations and above all the illustrations¹ present in Blomfield's edition suggest, comparing them with other examples, that the hand that drew them is that of Leslie Stephen, who, unlike his daughter, used to write in his own books and was a skilled drawer².

¹ The most evident is the one depicting an elder of the chorus on p. 9, but there are several others (female figures, an ax in correspondence with the Greek text that indicates this instrument, “μελαγκέρω μηχανήματι”).

² Golden reports that “one copy of Aeschylus includes a message in the back: ‘Thoby Stephen was a magnificent fellow . . . He was before me at Trinity.’ The book has a bookplate from Henry C. Adams of Magdalene College” and from this she deduces that “the annotations and drawings in the book may have been Thoby's and the book's owner may have given it to the Woolfs” (2017, 89, nota 15). By asking the head of the division Greg Matthews for confirmation of

Instead, Sidgwick's volume is signed by Leonard S. Woolf, as the catalogue rightly reports (King e Miletic-Vejzovic 2003, 2), and has annotations (one of which consists in several lines in Greek, but most are words' translations and rather sporadic) that seem to be from another hand. In this case, the handwriting resembles that of Thoby Stephen, or at least that of some holographic notes attributed to him present on other texts that I have viewed in digital form³, but it is not known how one of his books later came into possession of his brother-in-law⁴. The research made on the two editions of Woolf's library confirms that the writer, as previously mentioned, was not so used to annotating books⁵, but rather preferred to keep separate reading notebooks, and reveals that some procedures she adopts in the notebook, of which I will discuss shortly, are already found in the volume preserved here, probably made by her father.

Returning to the Greek text pasted on the manuscript, it can be established that it is Bothe's edition because it is the only text carrying the numbering on the left margin (while both Blomfield and Sidgwick mark it on the right). Furthermore, he adopts a subdivision of the tragedy in 1550 verses, against the more common one which counts 1673, also used by Verrall. From this derives a mismatch in the metric numbering between Woolf's work (which keeps the printed one) and the Greek text present in the edition taken as a reference for the translation. In *Agamemnon Notebook*, the author herself points out the discrepancy with an ink annotation that reads "(= 185 V.)": this note indicates that the verse under which it is placed⁶, precisely 161 in the reading notebook, corresponds instead to number 185 in Verrall's edition (the translator's name is abbreviated by Woolf with the initial). For further clarity, in the present treatment, unless otherwise specified, I will indicate the verses always using Bothe's subdivision (which is the one that also appears in the manuscript) as I have already done so far in the part relating to the translation. Since, however, the differences between the two editions also concern the arrangement of some sentences, I

this information, I learned that the edition with the aforementioned ex libris is that of Blomfield in question, but there is no trace of the note regarding Thoby Stephen. Therefore, the attribution of *Agamemnon's* copy to the latter cannot be proven, in the current state of affairs. Henry Cadwallader Adams was an age closer to that of Sir Leslie than his son and was the author of memoirs on his university period, as well as school texts in Latin and Greek. It is possible that Golden wrongly attributed the quote, probably coming from another source.

³ In particular, some inscriptions on book III of Lucretius's *De rerum natura* (Macmillan, 1893), present in Woolf's library, of which the manager Greg Matthews provided me with the photographic reproduction, and the images reproduced by Golden (2017, 92, 95).

⁴ The heterogeneity of the provenance of the books in the Woolfs' library must be borne in mind: "Many books owned by Leonard and Virginia Woolf were accumulated well before either was born. It is a combined collection of many decades, with a wide variety of volumes added by numerous people at many different times. These books—with their dedications, bookplates, signatures, inscriptions, and annotations—are like fragments of conversations. They define institutional, intellectual, and emotional networks of relationships among contemporaries as well as among people of different generations" (Gillespie 2003, IX). Among the various people who contributed to enrich this collection, Leslie and Thoby Stephen certainly played a fundamental role.

⁵ The only significant exception is the school edition of *Antigone*, which was the text used for the intermediate level course with Clara Pater at King's College (Jones e Snaith 2010, 24). Golden reports that "Woolf inscribed her heavily annotated 'Clarendon Press Series: Sophocles: For The Use of Schools' edition of Sophocles, 'AVS 1898.' This copy contains additions in ink and pencil, suggesting that she added notes on different occasions, perhaps even returning to it over time" (Golden 2017, 98) and adds a photograph of a page from the book, now also in the collection "Library of Leonard and Virginia Woolf" at MASC (King e Miletic-Vejzovic 2003, 208), containing some annotations (Golden 2017, 91). Other volumes of Greek texts in the Oxford editions, also known as "Oxford Reds" due to the color of the cover (Henderson 2006, 1), are present in the Woolf library and contain annotations by Thoby Stephen, in the case of *Aristophanes' Comodiae* (Hall and Geldart, 1902), *The Knights* (Merry, 1895) and *Odyssey* (Merry, 1889-1892), and by Leonard Woolf, as in the *Eumenides* (Sidgwick, 1895) and *Acharnians* (Merry, 1901) according to the catalogue (King e Miletic-Vejzovic 2003).

⁶ Namely "τεύξεται φρενῶν τὸ πᾶν", translated as "the guess of his thought shall be right" by Verrall (234) and transcribed this way also by Woolf (Berg RN3).

immediately set out to note some small adjustments made by Woolf in ink, which also have to do with philological problems concerning the reconstruction of the original text and pursue the aim of adapting the Greek version to the one proposed by Verrall so that the translation transcribed next to it makes sense.

In particular, the author's most macroscopic interventions on the printed text are in three specific points of the text. The first phenomenon is constituted by the displacement of a word within the same line, in order to better construct the sense of the latter. I refer to "στρουθῶν" (literally "of the eagles") in v 138, which is circled to denote that it must be placed immediately after "φάσματα" ("apparition"), where there is a cross reference "Λ" (Berg RN3), so as to obtain a phrase rendered in English with "eagle-omens" (Verrall, 233)⁷. The second procedure concerns the exchange of entire lines and is indicated by Woolf in ink by means of arrows. In this case, v 1090 "προτοῦ μὲν αἰδῶς ἦν ἐμοὶ λέγειν τάδε", which stands for "The time hath been when I dared not speak of it" (Verrall, 252), is preceded and not followed by the question "μῶν καὶ θεός περ ἱμέρω πεπληγμένος;", translated as "For Apollo's self desired thee. Was it so?" (Verrall, 252) and put between square brackets. Lastly, the writer modifies the attribution of specific lines to the characters. Based on this, v 1190 "οὐδεὶς ἀκούει ταῦτα τῶν εὐδαιμόνων", which corresponds to the statement "So praised is never any save the unhappy" (Verrall, 255), is assigned to Cassandra writing the initials "KA" instead of those of the chorus "XO" (Berg RN3), and preceded the phrase "ἀλλ' εὐκλεῶς τοι κατανεῖν χάρις βροτῶ", which Verrall translates "Yet a mortal may be glad to die with honor" (255), considered the response of the chorus (so here Woolf changes "KA" to "XO"). Later, with the same procedure, the author indicates that the line in v 327 is pronounced by a specific part of the chorus, the conspirators, whose English name is abbreviated in "Conspir.s" (Berg RN3), similarly next to vv 1404-1405 she writes "XO." (Berg RN3), which stands for "Chorus of Elders", instead of "ΚΛ.", the initials of Clytemnestra, whose speech instead takes up from v 1406 (Berg RN3). Also, at v 1527 is specified that the speaker is a soldier of Aegistus, "Λ" (Berg RN3), which corresponds to "A soldier" (Berg RN3) in the legend shown in the lower margin, being the first letter of "ΛΟΧΙΤΑΙ"⁸, which means "soldier".

Another question of philological nature concerns the language in which the work was originally written. It is a regional code that was later modified, as Giulia and Moreno Morani explain in the "Critical Note" to their edition of Aeschylus's *Tragedies and Fragments*:

An element that increases the difficulty in which the first copyists of the Aeschylean works already found themselves was given by the particular character of the ancient Attic alphabet, the only one used in Athens at Aeschylus' time. In addition to not marking the division of words and not possessing diacritics (facts that will find a resolution only many decades later), this alphabet did not distinguish between E / EI / H and O / OY / Ω, marking all three different realizations of these vowel sounds with only the signs E and O. Uncertainties due to this ancient approximation of the Aeschylean spelling are found here and there in our plays: in more than one case the division in the word or the spelling is erroneous or doubtful and the type of error indicates how ancient the fact in question is. (1987, 55 my translation)

⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, Verrall's translation is also reported in the manuscript.

⁸ On this role, see *Appendix III* included in the second edition by Verrall (1904, 237-242).

The variance of the handwriting of the first tragedian with respect to the normalized one of his successors led to the different interpretation of some words, thus generating ambiguities that remain in the subsequent manuscript tradition⁹ on which the modern editions of his works are based. This means that the copyists had to decide independently when to detach the words, where to place spirits, accents, umlauts and iotas in a text that was born different and without these indications, as well as choosing between vowels not at all equivalent one to another, determining both lexical and grammatical differences. In turn, scholars, finding themselves faced with the work thus reconstructed, analyse all possible solutions in a scientific manner, often finding themselves in disagreement. This explains the reason why the lines pasted on the manuscript appear in many details at discrepancy with those of Verrall's edition, to which Woolf generally conforms them by making her modifications in ink. These changes concern the initial and final part of the document, leaving the central lines from 162 to 835 unchanged, and mainly intervene on punctuation, with which interrogatives¹⁰, the addition or elimination of parentheses, commas or high points¹¹ are signalled, as well as capital letters for proper names¹². Often, however, there are also new subdivisions of some words, operated through signs of union (“⌢”) and disjunction (“/”) inserted in ink, and Greek expressions “transformed” by the author, sometimes changing only some letters and sometimes by deleting them entirely and rewriting them, changed, in the margin of the text. These are vowel alternations that for the most part affect only the spelling, or substitutions of consonants that generally cause a grammatical alteration in the number or in the case but not semantics. Sometimes, however, there are also words with a different meaning than the printed text, generated by Woolf's amendments, but which in any case are all taken up by Verrall so that they correspond to the translation that is placed next to them¹³.

Another type of intervention by the author concerns some words that she underlines in the Greek text, about which she makes research, and of which she notes the English translation in the margin next to the corresponding line. Sometimes the term found matches Verrall's version, which in any case remains transcribed on the verso, other times it is different and generally more literal or explanatory¹⁴. Some of these expressions noted in the margin¹⁵ are the same as the notes probably written by Sir Leslie on the aforementioned edition by Blomfield (MASC), and from the latter it seems to be taken also the method of underlining and retranslating alongside (indeed in the case of the book of translating for the first time, since the basic text is only in Greek) and a couple of notes which will be discussed shortly. However, only in the first part of the manuscript Woolf follows the aforementioned notes, then she departs from them to stick to Verrall instead. A case that deserves a separate consideration is “unharméd” (Berg RN3) written next to “ἀνὰκτος”, underlined in v 1097.

⁹ Which for *Agamemnon* consists mainly of the code called Mediceo Laurenziano XXXII, 9, the most ancient and reliable source of Aeschylus' works, which however is incomplete. So explains Verrall in his *Introduction*: “The *Mediceus* (M) should be regarded as the sole authority for those parts which it contains (vv. 1—322 and vv. 1051—1158). Only one MS. of any value, the *Florentinus* (f) contains the whole play, and for nearly one half of it (vv. 361—1052) this is necessarily the sole authority. Fortunately it appears to represent M very closely” (1889, lxi).

¹⁰ By inserting the sign “;” (which in Greek corresponds to the question mark) after vv 1102, 1171, 1196, 1209, 1260, 1296, 1382, 1391, 1407, 1491 and 1503 in the same place as Verrall and instead deleting it after v 848, where the scholar does not put it.

¹¹ In Greek, the sign “.” indicates a pause of medium length, equivalent in Latin punctuation to the semicolon.

¹² In particular of Zeus and Ares in all cases of “Ζεύς” / “Διός” and “Ἄρη” / “Ἄρης” printed with lowercase.

¹³ In *Appendix B* I describe in detail the specific examples of all these procedures through explanatory tables.

¹⁴ I report all the examples relating to this case in an explanatory table in *Appendix B*.

¹⁵ Namely, the first six examples in the aforementioned table in *Appendix B*.

This translation actually refers to the term as it is printed, that is “ἄνατος”, without the “κ”, which Woolf adds in ink. By inserting the word not amended in the sentence “πῶς δῆτ’ ἄνατος ἤσθα Λοξίου κότῳ;” the literal rendering would be “How were you unharmed by the wrath of Loxias?”, but in *Appendix W* Verrall notes that “the answer does not correspond” to this question (217). Immediately after, in fact, Cassandra tells how the god had granted her the prophetic ability and then made sure that no one believed her words. The scholar then chooses the variant “ἄνακτος” justifying it thus: “Ἀνακτος is not the genitive of ἄναξ but the verbal adjective from ἀνάγειν, represented in Latin by revocabilis” (217-218). Therefore, in his translation, also transcribed on the verso of the manuscript, he paraphrases in “And how could the wrath of Loxias reach thee then?” (252), reading the chorus’ question as a doubt about the way in which Apollo withdrew his gift¹⁶, such action not being granted even to the gods. This interpretation by Verrall, although unusual, must have convinced Woolf, who accepts it both with regard to English and by modifying the word in Greek.

Two more expressions are underlined in the manuscript, but instead of a literal translation, the author places a brief explanation next to them. The first case is that of the particle “οὐν” in v 34, above which she writes “οὐν combined with any other particle adds force to it. has no force by itself” (Berg RN3). This comment is identical to the one added probably by Leslie Stephen in the aforementioned edition of *Agamemnon* by Blomfield (MASC): the writer must have brought it back from here by copying it as she found it, only by replacing “emphasis” that the latter had written with “force” (in the first occurrence, then repeating it in the next sentence). The other example that reveals the study of a word is instead made manifest in a more extended note, placed in the margin of the Greek text and precisely in correspondence with “ὑπατοι λεχέων” in v 51, translated with “in the supreme solitudes where they nest” (Verrall, 232). This is a technical explanation in which Woolf states that “‘high above their nests’ is impossible. ὑπατος is a superlative. W.H. ὑπατη λεχέων agreeing with παίδων” (Berg RN3), referring to the philological interpretation by Walter Headlam (indicated by the initials) for this term (1910, 46), also cited by Verrall himself in *Appendix B* (184-186). Actually, this note is also reported in the exact same words again on the Blomfield edition which is supposed to have been annotated by Leslie Stephen (MASC), suggesting that his daughter got the information from there and not from the original source, which according to the catalogue by King and Miletic-Vejzovic was not present in her library (as indeed not even that of Verrall, which, however, it is obvious that she consulted directly).

This once again demonstrates how the writer does not simply transcribe but questions herself on each passage from one language to another until she has mastered the entire translation process. The reworking labour “shows her attention to individual words that she retranslated” (Dalgarno 2012, 3) and allows her not only to set linguistic reference points when the literal meaning of a term corresponds to that used by Verrall, but also a greater understanding of the meaning of the final translation when this results from an indirect procedure and therefore does not appear immediately evident to her. An example of this is the fact that, retranslating with the dictionary “ἐπινηθίσω” (second person singular aorist indicative of the verb “ἐπανθίζω”) to v 1346 in “deck with flowers” (Berg RN3) she asks herself, also signalling the doubt with a question mark, how the scholar has

¹⁶ In the second edition Verrall makes everything even clearer with the verb “retrieve” (1904, 145).

come to render it with “for thy final crown” (Verrall 1889, 258), a version which she maintains instead in the corresponding transcription on the verso.

Prins describes *Agamemnon Notebook* comparing it to an artistic exhibition, as if the composition of the manuscript took place on a stage, a metaphor that is particularly significant because it makes the idea of wanting to make the study process “plain”:

Much more than a ‘crib,’ the notebook is a theatrical spectacle in its own right; a theatre where Woolf can perform the act of translating— transposing, transcribing, transliterating, transforming— one language into another. (2017, 37)

Woolf’s notes testify how she has refined her work and paid attention to every detail, taking into consideration different possibilities and using the ideas of those she considered more experienced than her. Indeed, the writer asked for advice to scholars to dispel her doubts and have a different perspective. In a letter dated December 19, 1922, she wrote to Trevelyan, the director of the play at the University of Cambridge: “I want to discuss your Aeschylus with you — I give way about the spelling of quire. Nor should I yield to Logan. If he thinks Earlham a masterpiece, he is not to be trusted about the letter K” (Woolf 1976, 601). In the libretto of his *Oresteia*, Trevelyan had used the ancient spelling of the term “choir” (of which it is also homophonic) to translate “χορὸς”¹⁷, and Woolf was curious, “perhaps to compare his translation with her own” (Prins 2017, 51). Reflection on the individual words reveals for her part a great fascination for the translation activity itself, which she tries to accomplish in the most authentic and correct way possible:

Translating for Woolf enables her attention to language within the institutional structures that informs her sense of a ‘complete edition.’ Communicating with Trevelyan, she is acting as an academic from outside of academia, and able to articulate what she sees as fidelity to the text, history, and genre of Greek translating with which she is engaging. (Golden 2012a, 211)

The relationships that the author had with academics allowed her to indirectly access the knowledge kept in that environment that was officially forbidden to her, therefore their writings constituted a solid support to strengthen her private education and the compilation of the reading notebook demonstrates an incessant desire to learn and test herself.

Finally, the presence of more extensive notes written at the bottom reveals Woolf’s interest in other aspects of the Aeschylean work as well, denoting her research in the cultural field to frame the semantic aspects of the work and its interpretation. A first type of information, which serves to clarify the context, is inserted in the lower margin of the recto, by way of glosses. Specifically, these are the two comments that I insert in the following tables next to the expressions they intend to explain:

¹⁷ This word is found in the Cambridge libretto translated with the obsolete “quire” (Trevelyan 1920, 44-45) in v 631, which corresponds to 1072 in Woolf’s manuscript, where it is rendered instead with the modern “choir” (Berg RN3) as well as in Verrall’s version (1889, 252).

Note 1

Aeschylus' phrase	Verrall's/ Woolf's translation	Explanation in note
“τὰ δεσποτῶν γὰρ εἴ πεσόντα θήσομαι” (30)	“for my score shall profit by my master's game” (231)	“A technical term in Greek backgammon ‘I will score it my account’ or ‘I will play according to my terms’” (Berg RN3)

Surprisingly, the note relating to the verse does not find its source in the work of Verrall but in that of Headlam. However, it is not possible to hypothesize a direct connection between the latter and the writer since, in reality, Woolf transcribes in an identical way one of the notes present in the edition of Blomfield (MASC), therefore, assuming that the latter was written by Leslie Stephen, it is likely that he was the one who consulted a variety of sources, including the work of Headlam. In his edition the scholar writes:

The metaphor is taken from the game of πεσσοί, *Tables* or *Backgammon*, in which the moves of the pieces were determined or limited by the throws (βάλλειν, βόλος), or falls (πίπτειν, πτώσεις) of the dice, τίθεσθαι is applied to the skill of the player, whose opportunities are so conditioned. (1910, 178)

Such a clarification denotes an all-round interest of the author for Greek culture in general, not only for literature but also for the pastimes of everyday life and popular idioms. The expression, indeed, is pronounced by the guard who has just learned through the fire signals of the fall of Troy and uses the language of the game, from which the subsequent “treble-six” (231) is also taken, to express a lucky circumstance as if one had won the dice.

Note 2

Aeschylus' phrase	Verrall's/ Woolf's translation	Explanation in note
“ἀπύρων ἱερῶν” al v 71	“a sacrifice that will not burn” (Verrall, 232)	“If a man's fire did not burn it was a bad omen. it might refer to Iphigenia” (Berg RN3).

Here the writer examines the reference to a superstition of the time. Agamemnon tries to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia to the gods to propitiate the return of the ships to their homeland but this very act by himself unleashes the terrible revenge of Clytemnestra against him. Woolf suggests that the sacred stake, being unburnt, foretold the future misfortunes of his home to the king. Even this annotation is taken, albeit slightly summarised, from a very similar one found in the Blomfield edition (MASC) probably written by Leslie Stephen.

A reference to the Aeschylean tragedy is also present in another reading book kept in the “Berg Collection”, the aforementioned XXV, which contains notes and reflections on various Greek classics that served as a starting point for “On Not Knowing Greek”. Among the notes dated between 1922 and 1924 there is one written in purple ink, the content of which, that I quote as

transcribed by Silver, has the heading “Aeschylus./Agamemnon.” and the phrase “170 he has made wisdom shall be established by means of suffering.”¹⁸ (Silver 1983, 134). The latter is also taken from an annotation present in Blomfield’s volume, precisely in correspondence with the line number indicated in this edition (which in Woolf’s manuscript would be instead 162). The note in question, probably inserted by Leslie Stephen, is the literal translation of “τὸν φρονεῖν βροτοὺς ὀδῶσαντα, τὸν¹⁹ πάθει μάθος θέντα κυρίως ἔχειν”, which sounds like this: “who has made wisdom by means of suffering to be [...] established” (MASC). The subject of this sentence is the father of the gods, named a few verses earlier, as Verrall explains in the notes to his edition²⁰, and the meaning of the maxim itself can be considered the fulcrum of the whole tragedy, with which Woolf wanted to summarise it: “the point is not that Zeus teaches mankind, but that he has imposed upon them one universal condition of learning “ (Verrall 1889, 20), that is, suffering.

Placed in the upper margin on the verso of *Agamemnon Notebook*, above the translation they are dealing with, are the notes taken from the critical apparatus by Verrall himself. The first of these is introduced with “864.”, which probably indicates the verse (in the numbering of the manuscript the text corresponds to verse 863, one can think of a slight oversight) and reads as follows: “The emphasis on πορφύρας πατῶν cannot, so Verrall says, be pursued in English” (Berg RN3). The expression in question is translated by the Cambridge scholar as “your purple path”, which by a lucky etymological coincidence sounds almost like a transliteration, and is found within the prophetic phrase that the protagonist addresses to his wife when she welcomes him in the house: “I will proceed to the palace along your purple path” (248). This rendering of “εἴμ’ ἐς δόμων μέλαθρα, πορφύρας πατῶν”²¹, also transcribed on the verso of the reading book, is justified by Verrall with a note (which Woolf paraphrased) in which he says: “I have inserted the word your as some compensation for the loss of emphasis, given in Greek by the position and mere sound of the words πορφύρας πατῶν” (248). This is a very important step because Agamemnon unequivocally understands that the “purple path” prepared for him is not only a sumptuous carpet in honor of his return, but symbolically anticipates a bloodstream. Woolf appreciates all the power of this line, which continues to grow in Clytemnestra’s answer in which she speaks of a sea that is tinged with red: “ἔστιν θάλασσα (τίς δέ νιν κατασβέσει;) / τρέφουσα πολλῆς πορφύρας ισάργυρον / κηκῖδα παγκαίνιστον, εἰμάτων βαφάς”.

These verses (864-866) must have aroused the attention of the author, who while maintaining on the verso Verrall’s rendering “There is a sea (and who shall drain it dry?) Which hath in it purple enough, precious as silver, oozing fresh and fresh, to dye vestures withal” (248) retranslates three words underlined in the margin of the Greek text (probably those she considers most important): “ισάργυρον”, “κηκῖδα” and “παγκαίνιστον”, respectively in “worth its weight in silver”, “dye” (which is the same term used on the verso) and “ever fresh” (Berg RN3). With reference to this

¹⁸ The editor indicates it as “B.24”, described as follows: “1 p., numbered 82 by NYPL; numbered 45 by VW. 1 line only” (Silver 1983, 134). This information, like the transcript, was double-checked by me as well.

¹⁹ In Verrall’s textual variation (1889, 19) as well as in Bothe’s (which Woolf does not modify) the second “τὸν” is replaced by “τῷ”, an instrumental dative.

²⁰ “Ζεύς in v. 170 is the projected subject to the statement ‘Zeus has decreed that wisdom should come by experience’, but this statement is deferred, in order to set forth the legends and suggest the point of view from which they are to be regarded, and finally appears (v. 186) in a slightly modified shape. [...] *Who leadeth men to understanding under this law, that they learn a truth by the suffering of it.*” (Verrall 1889, 18-19)

²¹ In this case Woolf does not delete the comma from the printed text, and puts it also in English. However, this is missing from Verrall’s edition both in Greek (1889, 113) and in translation (248).

sentence, on the next page the manuscript Woolf also reports the essential parts of Verrall's note (144), quoting it directly in square brackets and indicating the deletions with an ellipsis: "[it is to the eye of the queen as though already he walked in blood... no commentary can exhaust the significance of this... scene, which for spectacular writing... has probably never been rivalled. Verrall]"²² (Berg RN3). Comparing these words with the praise that the writer subsequently makes of Aeschylus' style in "On Not Knowing Greek", it is clear how much she shared with the scholar this admiration:

Aeschylus makes these little dramas (the *Agamemnon* has 1663 lines; *Lear* about 2600) tremendous by stretching every phrase to the utmost, by sending them floating forth in metaphors, by bidding them rise up and stalk eyeless and majestic through the scene. (Woolf 1994, 44)

From these considerations it seems that Woolf believes that she must delve into the frequent allegorical character and the extensive use of symbolism in the theatrical texts by this playwright. The reason for her attention to these aspects could be that, considering it as a model of "perfect shape", she uses it to refine her own style. The particular interest exercised on her by these elements of Aeschylus' style is already testified by the fact that the author often paused to analyse the figurative language of *Agamemnon* in her notebook: we can therefore trace the origin of the idea expressed in the essay.

In her "re-edition", Woolf carries out a critical analysis of both the original work and the translation taken into consideration, not much from a philological point of view (leaving the debate on the matter to the experts) but also and above all from a literary and semiotic one, focusing the attention on the function of language and on the meaning that reading the tragedy of the Argive king in this way assumes for her:

In contrast to Headlam and Verrall and their public debates about editing Aeschylus, she created her *Agamemnon* notebook as a private performance of reading, for her eyes only. More interested in understanding poetry than philology, she used her personal 'edition' of the play to transpose their self-authorizing glosses into the unauthorized *glossolalia* of Ladies' Greek. (Prins 2017, 42-43)

Prins observes that the author uses the reading notebook as a space for reflection and challenge (with her own skills but also with the scholars who have dealt with *Agamemnon* before her) which, however, takes place on a private level, free from rules governing the academy, where she too, as a woman and a simple amateur, can express her opinion without needing approval by any university.

Greek always has a mysterious character which is expressed to the highest degree in prophecy and visual communication, in which Woolf reveals a marked interest. The images that remain with her so much that she dedicates a specific study to them are the flames with which the hero's return to his homeland is announced and the red carpet that foreshadows the completion of the assassination.

²² The full text of the scholar's reflection is: "There is purple enough in the sea, and *enough within*'. As the king proceeds to the door along the path with its crimson ποίκιλματα, it is to the eye of the queen, who foresees the εἰμάτων βαφάς that are to follow within (v. 1382), as though already he walked in blood. There is also in the mere sound and imagery of the opening verse the feeling of her hatred, deep, cruel, and inexhaustible. But no commentary can exhaust the significance of this marvelous scene, which for spectacular writing, if the phrase may be used, has probably never been rivalled" (Verrall 1889, 144).

They are both signs, terrible and impressive in their clarity, which are added to the premonitory words already pronounced first by the seer Calchas and then by the priestess of Apollo. From the experience with the Aeschylean drama, as I am about to show shortly, suggestions and ideas arise that also echo in some of the essays dating back to the period immediately following the writing of the manuscript, concerning the eidetic language and the impact of the figures of Clytemnestra and Cassandra, so loved by the writer, which recur in her memories and stimulate her creative imagination.

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