11

Agamemnon, Warfare, and its Aftermath

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The extraordinary and grisly revenge plot dramatized in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, in which Clytemnestra murders her husband and his war captive the Trojan prophetess Cassandra, is, without a doubt, the most shocking and gripping aspect of the play. Beyond these acts of domestic bloodshed, however, it is important not to lose sight of the context of warfare and its aftermath, in which these murders play out. In many ways, the *Agamemnon* is a tragedy about warfare and its impact. It looks back to the beginning of the Trojan War in the lengthy opening choral song, and to Agamemnon's decision to put his military duty above his duty as a father when he sanctions the offering of his daughter Iphigenia as a human sacrifice to aid the launch of the military campaign. Avenging the slaughter of Iphigenia is Clytemnestra's primary motivation in plotting Agamemnon's murder. Moreover, the tragedy provides vivid details, through the reports of the Herald, of the miseries and horrors endured by ordinary soldiers both during the siege of Troy and on the return journey to Greece. The sufferings and humiliations of women in war are represented most poignantly through Cassandra, once a princess now a slave and a rape victim in a foreign land. The family of Agamemnon may well be cursed, as Cassandra's visions of the past and future confirm, but if the household (*oikos*) functions as a microcosm for the state (*polis*) in Greek tragedy, then even the internecine atrocities within the family's history can be mapped onto a broader social context.[1]

Fifth-century BCE Athenians had much experience of warfare and Aeschylus himself was a war veteran. He had fought in the Persian Wars, certainly at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BCE, where Herodotus reports that he lost his brother Cynegirus (*Histories* 6.114), and probably also at the battles of Salamis and Plataea in 480 and 479.[2] In 480, Athens was besieged by the Persians. Most of the citizens were evacuated but those who remained and had barricaded themselves into the Acropolis were slaughtered when the Persians took control of the Acropolis and burned its buildings (*Histories* 8.51–54). It was soon after this that the Athenian naval forces defeated the Persians at the Battle of Salamis, which was dramatized eight years later by

Aeschylus in his tragedy *Persians*. In 479, the Athenians decisively repelled the Persians at the Battle of Plataea. Athens and her allies then continued their military exploits by besieging Thebes in retaliation for Theban capitulation to the Persians and their failure to lend support to the defence efforts. The siege was resolved after twenty days (*Histories* 9.86–88), but these examples of Athenian military campaigns, both defensive and offensive, highlight the degree to which both Aeschylus and his audience were sensitive to the conditions and impact of warfare. In this chapter, we will examine the representation of warfare in *Agamemnon* and we will conclude by looking at adaptations of the *Agamemnon* story told in the context of modern warfare through Louis MacNeice's translation, Seamus Heaney's 'Mycenae Lookout' poems, and Colm Tóibín's novel *House of Names*.

Human sacrifice

There are a very small number of references to human sacrifice in historical sources relating to ancient Greece, but no archaeological evidence confirms that the ancient Greeks ever did practise human sacrifice. Classical Greeks seem to have believed that human sacrifices had occurred in their distant past, and the idea of human sacrifice as a concept was important throughout antiquity.[3] Certainly, the ancient Greeks were familiar with animal sacrifice in various forms. These included sacrifices made at religious festivals, which were consumed at a subsequent feast, as well as pre-battle sacrifices and sacrifices made in response to adverse weather conditions where the animal was not eaten but discarded.[4] In *Agamemnon*, the sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis functions both as a pre-battle offering and as a response to the difficult weather that prevents the naval fleet from sailing. As a human sacrifice, however, it is a horrific distortion of normative custom where the cultural language and imagery of animal sacrifice is applied to the murder of a human. The sacrifice of an animal followed a distinctive ritual pattern where an animal deemed to be a perfect specimen was led in a procession to the sacrificial altar. The sacrificial knife was hidden from the animal's view, and its head was sprinkled with water eliciting a symbolic 'nod' of assent to the sacrifice. An animal that struggled at the point of death was considered an ill omen.[5] It is in this context that we should consider Aeschylus' description of the sacrifice of Iphigenia. She is lifted above the altar on her father's orders 'like a yearling goat', face down, and gagged by force so that she cannot curse her father's house (232–38). Iphigenia's pleas for her life prove meaningless to the war-hungry army officers (228–30). These are men she knows by name,

her father's friends, whom she has previously entertained with song at banquets in her father's halls (242–47). She is a young teenager, called 'unbulled with a pure voice' (245). The obscure term 'unbulled' (*ataurōtos*) seems to refer to a sacrificial heifer who has not mated, and the phrase equates Iphigenia with an unblemished and therefore ideal animal sacrifice. The purity of her voice creates an unsettling conflation in this image between a human and an animal sacrificial victim. Although she is gagged, she still manages to plead with her eyes albeit to no avail (240–41). The moment of Iphigenia's death is captured as a still frame for the audience as if she were 'in a painting' (242). It is very clear that the event is terribly ill-omened, and that Iphigenia struggled until the last moment to avoid her death.

This ominous pre-battle sacrifice, then, highlights how military duty and lust for war can work to betray basic human values. In resolving his dilemma, Agamemnon sets his martial role and his allegiance to the Greek army above his duty as a father. He acts in the interests of the army, whose soldiers are idle and starving (194), but the campaign is one of aggression launched on the questionable pretext of retrieving his brother's cheating wife. This pretext masks the true motivation for the war, which is a hardly concealed greed for Trojan wealth. Agamemnon's opening speech on his return from Troy evokes a grotesque image of the city's ashes blowing about and sending forth 'thick puffs of wealth' (818–20) even in its destruction. His desire to be like the wealthy Trojan king Priam is what persuades him to walk on the embroidered cloths set down by Clytemnestra as a psychological trap, an equivalent to the 'nod' of assent elicited from a sacrificial victim (918–49). Moreover, Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia is made in response to the interpretation of an omen by the army's seer Calchas, an omen which graphically foretells the slaughter of the innocent in the war to come. A pair of eagles feast on a pregnant hare and her unborn young, representing Agamemnon and his brother Menelaus on their ruthless destruction of Troy. The feast angers the goddess Artemis, who then ostensibly demands Iphigenia's sacrifice (105–37). This will lead to a successful campaign, but the prophet also refers to 'unforgetting, child-avenging Wrath, a guileful keeper of the house' (155), an allusion to Clytemnestra's future vengeance. She, too, will apply the language of animal sacrifice to her butchery of Agamemnon and Cassandra when she says that the 'sacrificial sheep' are ready for slaughter before killing the pair (1056–57).[6] The military expedition's success is assured by the sacrifice of Iphigenia, and by the army's soldiers who sacrifice their own lives (641), but its consequences are simultaneously devastating. We are asked to consider whether all the death and destruction was worth it. Yes, the Greeks won the war, but at what cost?

Ordinary soldiers

The Herald provides further evidence of the debilitating human cost of the war both at Troy and on the perilous return journey. He rejoices at his arrival home after ten years of believing he would never see his homeland again, but even this joy is marred by the many men lost (502–7). The army, as it previously existed, is no more; there is only what the war has spared of it (517). As a nameless stock character, a herald is a common feature in Greek tragedy, but the Herald in *Agamemnon* is also much more than simply a messenger. He is an unnamed soldier, the kind of rank-and-file infantry member whose low social status means that his deeds will not be remembered in song like those of the famous noblemen he serves such as Agamemnon. As a 'song' about Agamemnon, Aeschylus' tragedy in fact presents a complicated picture of the actions of so-called war heroes. The play zooms in on the plight of ordinary soldiers focalized through the Herald's experiences. These soldiers lack contact with home to such an extent that they are not even aware of how much they are missed by the locals even as they themselves yearn for home (544–46). Living conditions on land and on sea were equally miserable, with wretched narrow sleeping arrangements on the ships and a constantly sodden state of existence in their bivouacs on land. Moisture from the dew on the ground and drizzle from the sky caused their woollen clothes to be persistently infested with vermin (555–62). The winters were so cold that the birds could not survive them; the summers were so hot that the sea became a waveless and windless expanse (563–66). When the Herald catches himself and changes tack, proclaiming that misery is over, the gains outweigh the anguish, and it is proper to rejoice (567–79), he returns to his formal role as herald for the army's generals who must be praised and honoured in their victory (580–82). But the power of the Herald's revelations about the life of ordinary soldiers should not be underestimated. The theatre audience will have been primarily made up of Athenian male citizens who had trained in compulsory military service, and who had first-hand experience of warfare.

The Chorus tease out more details from the Herald, bringing him back to the loss of life caused by the terrible storm that wrecked the naval fleet on the homeward journey. Menelaus has vanished with his ship and crew (615–33). The Herald is reluctant to mix good tidings of victory with news of disaster by giving further details of the storm to a city which has lost so many men as 'sacrificial victims' to the war (636–49), but he continues with his narrative and describes a truly terrifying night on the high seas. Lightning, whirlwinds, squalls of driving rain caused ships to ram into each other. One ship would gore another which would then disappear in a whirlpool of waves. When the morning finally came, the open sea was a blooming field of bodies and

wreckage with few survivors (653–60). Although the storm was not a part of the war, it nevertheless vitiates the triumphant homecoming of the military victors and demonstrates the anger of the gods against the Greeks for their war crimes. Similarly, Agamemnon's 'noble deeds' are exclusively destructive. We have already heard of Iphigenia's sacrifice under his command. We then hear from the Herald how he has destroyed the whole population of Troy (528). Ostensibly a cause of celebration, the imagery employed by the Herald casts Agamemnon's deeds as problematic. The Herald claims that Agamemnon brings 'light out of darkness' to the people (522–23), but light is a corrupted image in this play where it indicates doom. The beacon-fires announcing the downfall of Troy, and the sacrificial fires lit in the palace at Argos both signal Agamemnon's death (cf. 254, 265, 279, 1577). In another image used by the Herald, Agamemnon has 'cast a yoke on Troy' and has come home 'a happy man' (529–31), but the yoke is an overwhelmingly negative image in the tragedy, associated with Agamemnon's decision to kill his daughter (219) and with Cassandra's experience of slavery (953, 1071).[7] 'Heroic' deeds are thus called into question, while the suffering and sacrifices of ordinary soldiers are noted.

Slavery and rape

Greek tragedy is very clear on the fate of women from a conquered city – rape, slavery, and relocation in an enemy household. Agamemnon may not have been the worst captor. He asks Clytemnestra to treat his Trojan slave Cassandra kindly (951–52). Clytemnestra claims that she will, suggesting disingenuously while plotting Cassandra's murder that the Trojan is lucky to have been allotted a family of ancient wealth since those with new money are cruel to their slaves in every way (1042–46). Cassandra, of course, is no ordinary slave, but a gifted prophet who foresees her own death and walks knowingly into her own murder with the observation that a slave is an easy victim to kill (1326). Nevertheless, it is clear that her final hours are filled with terror. She is overwhelmed by the visions of horrors related to the family of Agamemnon. Babies murdered by Agamemnon's father Atreus are served as food to their own unsuspecting father, Agamemnon's uncle Thyestes (1096–97, 1217–22). A band of Furies remain in the house and drink human blood (1186–97). She foresees the murder of Agamemnon and is as terrified as a mortally wounded warrior (1121–24), and laments for the utter destruction of her city and family (1167–72). Before entering the house, she recoils in horror at the smell of human blood and must steel herself to enter in spite of her terror (1309–17).

Through imagery referring to herself as being 'like a newly-wedded bride' (1179), Cassandra poignantly alludes to the union she has with Agamemnon. Her relationship with her captor is presented as a kind of perverse marriage, with traditional motifs and language normally associated with Greek marriage here applied to the slave Cassandra. Her entrance alongside Agamemnon in his chariot recalls the journey taken by the bride to the groom's home on marriage, and she is referred to as Agamemnon's 'select flower' (954–55).[8] Although the sexual violence experienced by Cassandra at the hands of Agamemnon is not directly mentioned, the attempted rape she suffered at the hands of the god Apollo, her resistance to that rape, and her subsequent trauma provide a framework through which to understand this kind of violence and its effects. Punning on Apollo's name, Cassandra addresses the god (*Apollon*) as her destroyer (*apollōn*) in a refrain (1080–81 = 1085–86). She recounts her shame at the sexual encounter with the god, and how Apollo offered her the gift of prophecy along with his sexual advances. He was 'a wrestler' and she consented at first but then rejected the god who punished her by making her prophecies fall on deaf ears (1203–12). As a result, Cassandra endures unanimous mockery by friends, and is forced to wander like an itinerant beggar, wretched and starving, with no one to help her (1270–76). Cassandra's life is ruined because she dared to resist an aggressive sexual act, instigated by an all-powerful male offering a reward whose value is sabotaged when his advances are rejected. This storyline is not unfamiliar in the age of #MeToo.

In death, Cassandra is viciously reduced by Clytemnestra to a 'cheap whore of the ship's benches' (1442–43; literally a 'mast-rubber', where 'mast' is a metaphor for a phallus), and one of Agamemnon's many Trojan sex slaves. Notwithstanding Clytemnestra's insult, Aeschylus portrays Cassandra with great pathos and dignity. She defies Clytemnestra by refusing to respond to the queen's requests and is the only character in the play who is immune to Clytemnestra's control. Indeed, this may explain Clytemnestra's particular vitriol for her at the end. Cassandra goes to her death on her own terms, having prophesied the ensuing vengeance that will see the death of her killer. Remarkably, she defies Apollo, first by resisting rape, and later by casting off the prophetic accoutrements, her staff and veil, that defined her subjugation by Apollo in an action that represents a 'semiotic death' in anticipation and acceptance of her actual death (1264–70).[9] Cassandra does not dwell on her sexual humiliations, which only elicit her sense of shame as a victim (cf. 1203). Her well-known rape by Ajax, son of Oileus, in the temple of Athena during the sack of Troy is not mentioned in the play, but it was one of the Greeks' major war crimes which elicited divine anger in the form of the devastating storm that battered the Greek fleet, as recounted by Agamemnon's

Herald. Aeschylus thus obliquely alludes to Cassandra's sufferings as a rape victim and war captive, all while presenting a dignified and sympathetic character caught up in the horrors that life has dealt her.

Looking at modern warfare through *Agamemnon*

Sexual humiliation and degradation is the plight of many women in war-ravaged countries, and one of the most shocking modern representations of Cassandra's experiences is the second poem in Seamus Heaney's 1996 five-poem set 'Mycenae Lookout'. Published in *The Spirit Level* collection the year after Heaney had won the Nobel Prize for Literature, the poems are inspired by the *Oresteia* trilogy and particularly by the first play *Agamemnon*. In the context of Heaney's oeuvre, the poems are unusually graphic and violent in their language. They express Heaney's rage at the decades of political violence in his homeland of Northern Ireland and, in the final poem, a hope for lasting peace. '2. Cassandra' casts Aeschylus' Cassandra as a young woman suffering the kind of punishment meted out by paramilitary groups on women accused of 'keeping company' with the 'enemy'. Her hair has been aggressively shaved off leaving her head scabbed. She looks 'camp-fucked and simple' and is later called 'Little rent cunt'.[10] The language shows her to be the victim of aggressive sexual violence, while the suggestion that she looks simple implies that it was easy to take advantage of her. She was a vulnerable target, depicted as frail, her speech compared to a bleating lamb. The presentation of the situation is highly complex. The poem's opening stanza seems to suggest that Cassandra was not completely innocent. It reads 'No such thing as innocent bystanding' with the first two lines repeated later in the poem where Cassandra's 'bewilderment' is called 'half-calculating'.[11] This implies that Cassandra must have known the repercussions she would face for the circumstances in which she finds herself, as she now consciously attempts to elicit sympathy for her plight. As the poem progresses, however, it becomes clear that this perspective is not objective. The not-so-innocent 'bystanders' are, in fact, the members of the community who watch her suffering and who feel roused to rape her as well.[12] Cassandra's punishment coincides with the return of Agamemnon and his 'drum- / balled, old buck's / stride'.[13] Reflecting Northern Ireland's culture of marches and parades across both sides of the political and ethnic divide, Agamemnon is a drum-beating but also a sexually aggressive leader. He is a powerful man, a king who controls his community, as well as a child-killer. This is his world. In retrospect, then, the poem exposes how Cassandra, the victim, is both blamed and shamed by a complicit community conditioned to lust after violence and aggression. The precarious nature of life in such

communities is captured at the end of the poem where Cassandra speaks and compares the extinction of life to the wipe of a sponge in an image taken directly from Cassandra's final words in *Agamemnon* (1328–29).

It is difficult to overstate the importance of this poem in exposing a part of the Northern Irish conflict that is commonly hidden from view. Cassandra's frailty, and that of the women she represents, is captured visually on the page by the very short lines and thin shape of Heaney's poem. It comes after '1. The Watchman's War' where the joy some felt at the recently launched war is contrasted with the grisly realities of the ensuing 'killing-fest'. Fire, the signal of triumph, is simply 'A victory beacon in an abattoir . . .' while references to the queen and 'the border' map the mythological war subtly onto the Northern Irish conflict.[14] The third poem '3. His Dawn Vision' presents the intransigence of both sides which leads to continued warfare, while the fourth '4. The Nights' illustrates how 'The war put all men mad' before the peace described in the last poem finally comes.[15] *Agamemnon* is the most important of the *Oresteia*'s plays for understanding the 'Mycenae Lookout' set, which opens with an epigraph quoting the striking claim by Aeschylus' Watchman that a great ox has stepped on his tongue (*Ag.* 36–37). The Watchman doubles as a persona for Heaney himself. As an observer of the Northern Irish conflict and a public figure who was under immense pressure to comment on contemporary politics, Heaney identifies with the Watchman who knows so much but is not able to speak for fear of repercussions.[16]

Heaney's 'Mycenae Lookout' poems are, in many ways, about the aftermath of warfare. They were written after the 1994 ceasefire when peace seemed, finally, to be almost within reach after three decades of horrific violence. It was a precarious time, and peace talks would fail until the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. Heaney's final poem '5. His Reverie of Water' reflects this anxiety when the poet can only 'nearly smell' the 'fresh water' that symbolizes peace.[17] The *Agamemnon* of Heaney's Northern Irish predecessor Louis MacNeice, first published in 1936, was also written in the aftermath of warfare and during a period of social anxieties concerning events in Europe that would lead to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. With the First World War still a recent memory, MacNeice's translation, which was written for performance, alluded both to traumatic experiences recognizable to First World War veterans and to alarming contemporary events. The raw material of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, which emphasizes the waste of human life and suffering caused by warfare, spoke directly to an audience familiar with such experiences. At the same time, choices made by MacNeice in his translation created a further layer of familiarity. Unlike Heaney, MacNeice was well-trained in Greek as well as Latin. From 1930 to 1936 he was a Lecturer in Classics at the University of Birmingham, working alongside the illustrious

Classicist and fellow Northern Irishman Eric Roberston Dodds. MacNeice acknowledges Dodds' friendship and advice in the preface to his *Agamemnon*, all the while conceding that the final product and choices made are his own responsibility.[18] Numerous references to 'God', as well as evocations of 'sin', 'holy water' and 'Hell' Christianized the ancient text for contemporary audiences.[19] The Herald's description of the soldiers' wretched experiences resonated strongly with reports on life in the trenches during the First World War, and MacNeice capitalized on this in his rendering of the Greek into idiomatic English: 'hard lodging', 'scanty blankets', 'rations that never reached us', and 'dews from the marshes / Rotting our clothes, filling our hair with lice'.[20] Ominous events are evoked when a member of the Chorus claims that Aegisthus and Clytemnestra 'are going to set up a dictatorship in the state'.[21] Allusion to Nazi Germany was amplified in performance through a Nazi salute given by Aegisthus' soldiers. Agamemnon and Cassandra were also to enter in chariots accompanied by martial music.[22] The 1936 production of MacNeice's *Agamemnon* was thus highly topical, as it was again in 1946 in the very recent aftermath of the Second World War when it aired on BBC Radio's Third Programme in a production by Val Gielgud. Audience figures for the Third Programme drama broadcasts imply that the production may have reached a staggering number of between 1.5 and 2.5 million listeners.[23] MacNeice's *Agamemnon* aired again on BBC's Third Programme in 1950 and on BBC's Home Service in 1953, in productions by Raymond Raikes. Falling numbers of listeners suggest a much lower figure for the later radio versions, around 90,000, but still a very large audience for an ancient Greek tragedy.[24]

From Heaney's poetry and MacNeice's theatre and radio, we come to the final and most recent of our case studies in the reception of *Agamemnon* as a war tragedy – Colm Tóibín's 2017 novel *House of Names*. Best known for his 2009 novel *Brooklyn*, which was subsequently adapted into an award-winning film of the same name, Tóibín frequently engages with themes of loss and identity in his work. *House of Names* alludes to a number of Greek tragedies that deal with the Trojan War and its effect on the family of Agamemnon, especially the surviving children Orestes and Electra. *Agamemnon* itself remains an important source, however, particularly in the first part of the novel, which is told from Clytemnestra's perspective. Iphigenia is gagged at her sacrifice to stop her cursing her father, as in Aeschylus, and in a detail that recalls Heaney's Cassandra her hair is cropped so roughly that her head is gashed. Clytemnestra kills Agamemnon in the bath on his return and he is compared to a lion in death, an image that recalls his military exploits in Aeschylus.[25] Unlike her Aeschylean counterpart, however, Tóibín's Clytemnestra does not believe the gods have any interest in or notion of human affairs.

Iphigenia's sacrifice and all the other horrors are thus simply war crimes decided by men.

When Clytemnestra protests as her daughter is led off to be killed, she too is gagged, bound, and stuffed into a tiny underground crawl space covered by a heavy stone where she is left in a stress position for days without food or water. Occasional pitchers of water are thrown into the hole but she is unable to drink the water as it soaks into her clothes and mixes with her excrement. It is during this time that Clytemnestra loses her belief in the gods and determines to murder Agamemnon.[26] While Agamemnon is at war, Clytemnestra is a prisoner in her own home guarded constantly by Agamemnon's men. Aegisthus is a high value hostage and a prisoner in the palace from one of Agamemnon's previous wars, but he remains a dangerous and powerful figure with a loyal following. Although he should be chained up, he roams the palace at night quite freely and it is through his assistance that Clytemnestra dispatches Agamemnon's men and takes control, installing Aegisthus as her personal bodyguard. When Agamemnon returns, he is so enamoured with recounting his own valiance and triumph in battle that he does not sense any danger as Clytemnestra lures him to his death in the bath. Wrapping his head in a net, she stabs him in the neck and slices his throat; Cassandra is killed by Aegisthus. With Agamemnon dead, Aegisthus and his followers secure control by capturing and imprisoning Agamemnon's men. Leading men with experience of maintaining and consolidating the lands and riches taken in the wars are kept close to share their knowledge. The coup is effected according to plan, but Clytemnestra realizes that she is now under Aegisthus' control. It is he who has secreted Orestes away from the palace and, much to Clytemnestra's distress, it is he who will decide when Orestes should return.[27] As the novel progresses, we learn of Orestes' own experiences, of how he escapes from his place of entrapment thus depriving Aegisthus of power over him, and of the circumstances in which he eventually does return to the palace, killing his mother under the influence of Electra and taking control of the kingdom.

Tóibín's retelling of *Agamemnon* casts the original into a much broader complex of social and political intrigues, demonstrating how numerous different individuals and groups become drawn into the web of conflict. The brutality of this world is inspired not just by Aeschylus, but by the civil war in Northern Ireland and by the wars in Syria and Iraq. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and its companion plays, as in the Northern Irish conflict, each atrocity is a retaliation for a previous atrocity in an apparently endless cycle of violence. A scene towards the end of Tóibín's novel was inspired by the 1986 Kingsmill massacre in Northern Ireland and by the 'image of a single figure still alive in a heap of dead bodies' that had haunted Tóibín for thirty years. As Tóibín was writing, the wars in Syria and Iraq raged on and the public was bombarded

with constant images of human suffering and destruction from the war zones. Tóibín's Agamemnon and Clytemnestra were partly inspired by Bashar al-Assad and his wife Asma.[28] In Tóibín's novel 'evil comes in many guises', a notion that informed MacNeice's *Agamemnon* as well, when he refers in his preface to 'the principle of Evil which logic cannot comprehend' but which seems to drive the cycle of crimes.[29] Where MacNeice differs from Tóibín, and indeed from Heaney, is in his lack of focus on female suffering in war. MacNeice's Clytemnestra elevates herself to an obscenely god-like status after murdering Agamemnon, with the exclamation 'Mine is the glory' distorting the phrase 'Thine is the . . . glory' from the Lord's Prayer.[30] In a drama where God is continuously evoked, this casts Clytemnestra in a particularly damning light. The negative portrayal of an adulterous wife may have been influenced by the fact that MacNeice's own wife had recently left him for another man (in late 1935). The draft for a prologue to his 1936 *Agamemnon* suggested that both Agamemnon and his brother had been 'ruined by their wives'.[31] Tóibín, on the other hand, stresses Clytemnestra's physical and psychological suffering in the motivations for her crimes while Heaney unveils the full horror of Cassandra's victimhood. All three authors, however, converge with Aeschylus in showing how warfare decimates both societies and families, regardless of wealth or of social class.

Notes

1 See Hall (1997), 104 on the relationship between household and state in the context of Greek tragedy.
2 For an overview of Aeschylus' military service, see Echeverría (2017), 74–76.
3 See Henrichs (1981), 232 and Hughes (1991), 185.
4 On these kinds of sacrifices, see Parker (2011), 155, 159.
5 For further details about the rituals of animal sacrifice in ancient Greece, see Burkert (1985), 55–59.
6 On the motif of corrupted sacrifice in *Agamemnon* and its companion plays, see Zeitlin (1965) and (1966).
7 On the complex patterns of imagery of the *Agamemnon* and its companion plays, see Lebeck (1971).
8 Rehm (1994), 43–58 offers a detailed analysis of the complex representation of Cassandra's relationship with Agamemnon, and of other relationships presented as marriages in *Agamemnon*.
9 Wyles (2011), 65–66 uses the term 'semiotic death' in discussing the implications of Cassandra's removal of parts of her costume in this scene.
10 Heaney (1996), 31–32.
11 Ibid., 30–31.

12 Ibid., 32.
13 Ibid., 32.
14 Ibid., 29.
15 Ibid., 36.
16 For further discussion of Heaney's 'Mycenae Lookout' poems, see the insightful analyses of Vendler (2002) and Hardwick (2016), 292–302.
17 Heaney (1996), 36.
18 MacNeice (2008), 9.
19 MacNeice (2008). References to 'God' at 15, 17, 22, 25, 30, 32, 33, 35, 38, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 51, 61, 62; to 'sin' at 28 and 53; to 'holy water' at 48; to 'Hell' at 52.
20 Ibid., 31–32.
21 Ibid., 59.
22 These performance details are discussed by Sidnell (1986), 326–27.
23 Wrigley (2005), 224.
24 Ibid., 227.
25 Tóibín (2017a), 5–6, cf. *Ag.* 827–28, 1259.
26 Ibid., 33–36.
27 Ibid., 39–66.
28 Tóibín (2017b) discusses all these influences on his novel.
29 Quotations from Tóibín (2017b) and MacNeice (2008), 8, respectively.
30 MacNeice (2008), 61.
31 Quoted by Sidnell (1986), 325.