

THE GLAMOUR THAT WAS GREECE*

By A. H. PELHAM

Speak of the moderns without contempt, and of the ancients without
idolatry ; judge them by their merits and not by their age.

—Lord Chesterfield.

THE two words "Ancient Greece" have for some centuries been decked in glamour. Indeed until this century the glamour and the basis for it were the stock in trade of perhaps a majority of the world's professional academics. These halcyon days have passed, but in very recent years there have been strong and unexpected eruptions of interest in ancient Greece. What for sixty years were just persisting fumaroles have now burst into major activity and today large audiences are assured to any competent scholar who can talk of these matters ; if indeed he talks of archaeology and its spectacular, sometimes beautiful, finds, the scholar can count always on a highly enthusiastic reception for his nuggets of history. Of this, all of us have had recent glad and comforting experience. Naturally, in the current interest and taste, there is a little, too, of academic fashion—such fashions of course exist—and this element of fashion, for the present at least, spreads its suffusion of glamour chiefly over such things as the artefacts of Crete and Pylos or the great work of Ventris and Chadwick.

This is good in itself, very good, but we can be additionally happy that the rosy mists of glamour have inevitably seeped down over the ἐπίγονοι, the after-comers, and particularly over the greatest after-comer of all, fifth-century Athens. We must, however, not forget that things seen through a mist of any colour are things seen wrongly and not true : specifically, we must recognize that the Athenians of the fifth century B.C., who I believe were the greatest human group of all time, were nevertheless no more than human, with some of the squalor and all the sins and much of the silliness that sickens us in other human groups. The marvel for us to comprehend is that, being merely human, still they were giants ; that, being so often silly, nevertheless, almost they invented the truly human brain. The physical light that shone, and still shines, over Athens is almost unnaturally clear ; so too should be the light in which we look at her miracle. Playfully, perhaps, we could remember that "glamour" and "grammar" are the same word and that in some senses either word subsumes the other. And so in this paper it is the "grammar", as it were, of Athens to which we shall chiefly direct ourselves. We shall look just a little more critically than usual at this city of some temples, some public buildings, of a cluttered market place lacking sanitation, and of perhaps ten thousand poor brick houses, nor shall we forget that all Attica, its fountain-land, covered an area less than that of greater Sydney. It was in fact a broken peninsula of roughly thirty-five by thirty

* The Presidential Address delivered at the Thirteenth Annual General Meeting, 14 September, 1966.

miles. In many ways this smallness is of cardinal importance, but specially important is the fact that the most remote of country folk could, on holy days and high days, come to the great city, on foot if need be, or donkey, and attend, in a full rich citizenship, to shopping, to petty feuds, the trial of an Alcibiades, the government of empire, or the performance of *Electra*.

The period at which we shall look will be, with some overt digressions, the fifth century. This restriction, or at least *some* clear restriction, is necessary. To those of us who lack a detailed knowledge of things Greek, and to many of us who do not properly digest our knowledge, there falls the constant risk that we shall confuse facts or phenomena of the fifth century with those of later centuries. Greece, as Greece, not as a Roman prize, survived till the second century B.C. and by that time there had been, since Pericles, three centuries of human and cultural wear and tear on the one hand, of growth and refinement on the other. The arts and thoughts of Pericles' Athens are remote from their Hellenistic successors—sometimes they are much inferior—so that every care must be taken, if we are properly to assess the Athenians of the fifth century, to eschew the use of material drawn from later times. It is for similar reasons that we shall look, as far as possible, only at the Athenians, not confusing them with other Greeks, and see what men they were: sadly, the women did not count for much.

And now a point that, in a more orderly paper, would be made much later, will be made here with the deliberate intention of providing a chastened mood. It will be remembered that in 413 B.C. the Spartans established a fortress in Attica, ten miles or so from Athens, and thereafter all Attica was denied to her. Yet Athens, although she lay four miles from the sea, still, through her Long Walls, remained mistress of a maritime empire far-flung and held partly by force; her food and raw materials must come from places as far off as the Black Sea coasts.¹ Meanwhile, marvels of literature, of art, and thought poured from her people in an unending stream; meanwhile on a sunny day strollers on the Acropolis could watch Spartan soldiers ranging the countryside, and yet could chat with happy expertise of the morrow's dramatic festival, that had involved the services of nearly a thousand men and boys, or the sending of a second massive armament to Sicily, half-way across the world. These are thoughts to choke our pride and make us humble, even us wielders of the fission bomb. But let me press my point even harder and present to you an analogue, not too far-fetched, and surely pertinent. To conceive of Athens in that year, imagine Sydney as a walled city, mistress of the seas, but at war with all mainland Australia; imagine her territory—all of it, except a sprawling island empire—stretching from Cronulla to Liverpool to Penrith and Palm Beach, ravaged and held by a foe insuperable on land—in fact you can clearly see the smoke of your houses burning at Bondi or at Summer Hill; imagine that in your city very many men, perhaps most of the wealthy men, secretly wish well for your foes, and with their hands and money could open gates (in a later year such a one was Plato); and imagine,

¹ In his speech "De Reditu" Andocides tells how, through his relations with Archelaus of Macedonia, he supplied the Athenian fleet with oar-spars.

too, that all your food came through one harbour-mouth from places as far away as Canada ; and now imagine, if you can, that tomorrow you will probably vote a second fleet and army for the conquest of South Africa, and next week will attend a feast of drama, where perhaps some Shakespeare will take the prize. To imagine this is to imagine a miracle, but the truth was greater still. And in this city of Athens, bond or free, there were fewer than half a million souls.

I fear that I am an unconscionable time a-winding to my facts. But before I start, and so that you may not be disappointed, I assure you that you will find nothing new, no glamour of things dug, nor anything profound. You will find simply yet one more man's attempt to see fifth-century Athenians as men who really worked and lived, not always beautifully ; and in this brief time of telling much will be omitted and much will appear haphazard and scatter-brained. But there is, I think, a frame in which most of these things find mutual relevance : that frame—surprisingly—is provided by dour Plato and his Theory of Ideas.

Most peoples have in their make-up enough mock-modesty, even true self-depreciation, to embody in their myths some theory of the fall of man. The Jews, who seemed suspicious of their women, laid the blame on Eve. The Greeks, who ignored women wherever possible, blamed non-female agents for the decay of a golden age, of which all the sensible world of their own day showed only the decline and degradation. Plato, as a Greek, could not have escaped the influence of this pervasive belief in a tarnished golden age, and it is more than plausible that in this belief rests the origin and indeed the explanation of his much-debated Theory of Ideas. I shall here take the risk of offending my readers or almost all of them, by pointing out that this theory dealt neither with ideas, nor with ideals as we should use the words. It was a theory of reality by which Plato sought to understand, and to expound, the facts that he observed so keenly in the world about him. For centuries this theory has been clothed in glamour and on and around it have been raised strange, dubious structures, beautiful or grotesque, according to the bias of the beholder. So it has always been.

Plato had scarcely formulated his Theory with its attendant amplifications and befuddlements when Aristotle sought to demolish it, and from then to now perhaps roughly equal numbers of philosophers and theologians have in this dispute ranged themselves beside one or other of the two leviathans. It is the oldest and most verbose dispute in history, and still it is not settled, despite the intervention of such doughty disputants as Thomas Aquinas, and the *ex cathedra* decision made in 1879 by Pope Leo XIII in favour of Aristotle. I am no pundit, and to me the argument is pure logomachy, verbal sparring—the Greeks had a word for it—but for us today the great thing is that, twenty-four centuries ago in ancient Athens, these great men felt so deeply, and thought they saw so clearly, this central problem of the world. I repeat that I am not interested, not any more, in the truth, if any, in this dispute, but I submit that Plato's theory is a key that opens many doors through which we may approach Greek thought and art.

In its essentials, though many will quarrel with the view that I support, the theory held that before there was space or time (the "before" is difficult!) all things were perfect, or, more precisely but confusingly, in everything there was perfection. These perfect things, these perfections, are Plato's Ideas or Forms. Sadly, by a mechanism that Plato never *could* describe, these perfections (or these Ideas) deteriorated, and so they engendered (again the mechanism cannot be described) copies of themselves that, again engendering, gave copies that were worse; and this process continues, since, with the rarest exceptions, it is inevitable. One exception may be the human soul (and again Plato fails to tell us how), for the soul can by virtue of some residual perfection persisting from the Ideal soul, retard or even halt the change and so the decay of some things at least. Rhys Carpenter, in his *The Aesthetic Basis of Greek Art of the Fifth and Sixth Centuries B.C.* (1959), gives, as befits a writer of this crassly scientific age, an explanation that, at first sight but not in reality, shears the theory of its mysticism, and, what is far more valuable, incorporates in the explanation Plato's notorious views on numbers, of which, from both distaste and ignorance, I prefer not to speak. On page 121 Carpenter writes as follows concerning Plato's view of Nature :

The forms (Ideas) for which she strives are strikingly symmetrical and numerically rational. The accidents of matter obscure and confuse the simple geometry of her intentions; but if we compare enough specimens of any species, we can eliminate the individual accidents and construct the true form. Here then is a cardinal assumption of Greek aesthetic practice—that there is a true form for every class of objects, and that such a true form is characterized by its geometric simplicity, by the commensurability of its component members. For if its parts be not simply commensurable, then complex and therefore less perfect numbers will enter and take the place of more perfect ones which might have been employed.

This is brilliant writing but it is far too simple a statement of Plato's Theory of Forms or Ideas; of this I am well aware, but I believe that essentially, despite Plato's bewildering elaborations and variations, Carpenter's simple explanation gives the core of Plato's thought, which is, baldly, that all change is for the worse, that we must strive to arrest change, to work back towards perfection, and then must fix in stasis this thing that is perfect. If further evidence seems necessary it can surely be found in this passage of Plato's *Laws*, translated by K. R. Popper :

Any change whatever, except the change of an evil thing, is the greatest of all the treacherous dangers that can befall a thing—whether it is now a change of season, or of wind, or of the diet of the body, or of the character of the soul.²

So then, in a Golden Age there was the Idea of justice, the Idea of tree, of dog, of redness, of every separate thing within the world, not forgetting a Doric temple, a statue of Aphrodite, or a choral ode. And so of course there was the Idea of the State, the Ideal *πόλις* of Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*. More and more, as Plato

² K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Vol. I, *The Spell of Plato*, 4th ed. (1961).

progressively revised his views of this perfect State, it came to resemble the "closed" state of Sparta, whereas the "open" state³ of Athens was in his view so debased from the original Idea that at times he could scarcely find words adequate for its denigration. For the truth is that Plato was a pure Fascist, long before the word was coined. He was a superb theorist and perhaps the greatest thinker the world has seen, but his premisses were aristocratic, oligarchic, and his Ideal State could have been at best a prison state. Page after page proves his heavy bias, his lack of feeling, and, too, his arrogance, for beyond doubt Plato was, in theory at least, a most bitter foe of the democracy that gave him shelter and scope to apply his strictures. To his theory of Ideas and degeneration we shall return later.

To strip from Plato some part of his abundant glamour is good, but no amount of stripping would leave him bare of glory. In his powers of deduction, of social analysis, and of argument, he is peerless among many who have been great, and in his flood of writings he reached heights of lucid prose that the classical and Hellenistic world could never equal. But for the present, I must confess that Plato's style of writing and his topics grow wearisome to me when they continue, with many repetitions, for the approximately 500 normal pages of text that comprise the *Republic* alone. Finally, there is much in the *Republic* and in the *Laws* that reflects Plato's adherence to some of the numerous absurd taboos and superstitions of his Pythagorean forerunners. There is time only for one example: the ideal πόλις, "state", will, he says, have a fixed and changeless number of citizens, namely 5,040. This is the product of $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 \times 6 \times 7$; Aristotle naturally was concerned to know how Plato proposed to keep the number static.

We should now leave Plato in his own safe-keeping and turn to the topic of slavery in Athens. Of all things this has been the most difficult for us to understand. Let it be said here and now that there were some, but very few, Greeks, who advocated the abolition of slavery (Euripides was one such, for example in his *Ion*, 854 ff.), but there is no record in the fifth century or later of any Greek who opposed slavery on the grounds that it was morally wrong. The fact is that no Athenian of that time could well have been asked to imagine a state that did not depend on a large working force of slaves. The population figures for Athens in 431, the start of the great war, have been calculated variously by different workers, but I have found it satisfying to accept the estimates of A. E. Zimmern in *The Greek Commonwealth* (1915). Zimmern gives as probable figures for the adult male population:

Citizens	40,000
Slaves	55,000
Metics	24,000.

(Metics were of course free Greeks, or even non-Greeks, residing in Athens, and bearing many obligations, but few of the civic rights enjoyed by full citizens. They were a great source of Athenian wealth and provided also much of her manpower.) Giving calculations for both men and women, Zimmern gives 125,000 for the adult

³ For these terms consult Popper, *op. cit.*

metic and slave population, which is nearly equal to his estimate of the adult full citizens of both sexes. When he adds minors to this total, he reaches a grand total of 425,000 as the full population of the Athenian state in 431 B.C. In passing, we should note that in peace-time, of these 40,000 adult male citizens, it has been calculated that 1,500 were employed in civil administration, 6,000 were employed as types of police or members of the armed forces, and 6,000 were on call for jury service, a total that approaches one full citizen in three. Also, in dealing with slaves, Zimmern gives these figures for 431 B.C. (He warns us, however, that they are highly conjectural.)

Total slaves of both sexes in Attica	90,000
Mine slaves (adult males only)	20,000
Other slaves	70,000.

This last figure of 70,000 is divided into

Adult male slaves	35,000
Adult female slaves	25,000
Slave children	10,000.

The figure for children will shock you, because of what it implies.

This then was the population at the outbreak of war, but disaster befell the city in the shape of plague. It is estimated, on admittedly shaky grounds, that, in the two phases of the great plague that came to Athens between 430 and 426, she lost up to one-third of her total population. This loss of people, and so of breeding stock, must have contributed to her final defeat and later decline, for, as Pericles well knew, even in 431, Athens' greatest poverty in war would be her men. In passing I should mention that H. Zinsser in *Rats, Lice and History* (1934) gives good reasons for believing that the plague was smallpox, but of a type different in many ways from what we now know as smallpox. The disease has apparently evolved through human history.

Returning to the subject of slaves, we should notice, perhaps with admiration, the curious fact that slaves and free men received in Athens the same rates of pay. Naturally, however, the slave's wages were the property of his owner. This equality of wages is referred to by F. A. G. Beck, who writes in his article "Greek Education—in Fact and Fiction":⁴ ". . . in democratic Athens, all workmen, whether slave or freeman, whether doctor, teacher or labourer, earned the same daily rate of pay." In fact the general lot of slaves was not over-hard so far as we can see, except for the dreadful conditions under which 20,000 slaves worked, and quickly died, in the silver-mines of Laurium. There is no record of riots nor of armed rising, for apparently slaves—except mine-slaves—were treated with consideration as valuable chattels, and often with affection as human beings, though by nature of inferior mettle. And this conviction of inferiority raises the vexing problem that the Athenians believed that the inferiority was *natural*. They knew quite well that many slaves were fellow Hellenes, fallen into slavery by diverse mishaps, that surely could not be classed as

⁴ Published in *The Australian Journal of Education*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (June 1966).

natural causes of inferiority. There would for instance have been living at Athens many of the Greeks uprooted from their homes and sold for rebelling against the Athenian power. I cannot solve the puzzle: all slaves simply were inferior to citizens, as Plato and Aristotle affirm with brutal conviction (but was it brutal?), meeting, individually, with negligible protest from any Greek of their day. The whole field of slavery in fifth-century Athens will be found covered in various books and this short paper must leave aside a field so tempting, but it would be wrong indeed not to offer you first some passages from fifth-century law-court speeches—a most fecund source of information—which throw a lurid light on the puzzling attitude of Athenians towards their slaves.

Antiphon was an aristocrat and he was the first prominent λογογράφος, (professional writer of speeches for delivery by others), a necessary calling, since the Greeks had no notions, yet, of representation. In Antiphon's speech called "Prosecution for Poisoning" the prosecutor says that his opponent had refused to submit his slaves for torture, although torture was the only sure way to ascertain the truth:

ἐν οἷς μὲν γὰρ αὐτῷ ἐξουσία ἦν, σαφῶς εἰδέναι παρὰ τῆς βασάνου οὐκ ἠθέλησεν.

(It is by the way curious that the word for torture is almost always βάσανος, a touchstone for testing gold.) Long before, when the poisoning had occurred, a slave-woman who had administered the poison, possibly in ignorance and under orders, had been "put to the wheel and handed over to the public executioner"—

Τῷ δημοκρίνῳ τροχισθεῖσα παρεδόθη.

Maidment, in the Loeb edition, translates this incorrectly, I think, when he uses the phrase "broken on the wheel". The instrument of torture was almost certainly a rack, as is clear from some words in Andocides' speech "On the Mysteries". In this speech Andocides is much concerned with the mutilation of the Hermae on the eve of the Sicilian expedition. These square-hewn statues, not necessarily of Hermes, were set up in great numbers throughout the city and were greatly venerated. Each of them displayed a prominent phallus, and the mutilation (the verb used is περικόπτω) was that all these were knocked off or hacked off in a single night, a desecration that threw an already tense city into a severe panic. In fact forty-two persons were informed against and a demand was forthwith made that, although they were freemen, they should be "made to mount the wheel", ἀναβιβάζειν τὸν τρόχον. The accused, however, begged μὴ στρεβλωθῆναι "not to be windlassed", for στρέβλη is the word for windlass. This would, I fancy, establish that the rack was indeed the chosen instrument, but Greeks certainly in this and other ages used other tortures, perhaps even including a form of crucifixion.

In another passage of Antiphon, Section 25 of the speech "On the Chorister", Antiphon says that to ascertain the truth it is good to have many witnesses, both free and slave, because then it is possible to put pressure on the free men by exacting under oath their word of honour, which for free men is the most binding compulsion

possible, but that slaves need other devices by which they may be compelled to speak the truth. But, puzzlingly, in the speech "On the Murder of Herodes" he speaks of the torture of a slave, not by official orders, but—apparently quite acceptably—at the hands of people preparing their private case for the prosecution. This slave, having confessed under duress to complicity in the murder, was summarily executed, and at the subsequent full trial the defendant remarks (Section 32) that witnesses under torture will naturally favour those who do most of the torturing, especially if the other side is not present at the performance. The speeches in this century and later are full of references to slave-torture, legal or apparently semi-legal, but what I have said must suffice to show that the fifth-century Athenian was not—except when we consider his era—remarkably humane.

The orators will reveal also that in his civic life he was all too often cantankerous and litigious, using a formidable array of legal processes and tribunals, which were by no means simple or unsophisticated, as the following document⁵ on the condemnation of Antiphon himself will show :

- A. Resolved by the Council on the twenty-first day of the Prytany : secretary, Demonicus of Alopece : president, Philostratus of Pallene : on the motion of Andron. As touching those persons whom the Generals show to have served as envoys to Sparta with intent to harm the city of Athens and the Athenian army, and to have taken passage for that purpose in an enemy vessel and to have returned by land through Decelea : Archeptolemus, Onomacles, and Antiphon shall be arrested and handed over to the court, to the end that they may be punished. And the Generals and such members of the Council as the Generals shall see fit to choose to assist them, up to the number of ten, shall hold the accused in readiness, to the end that they may stand their trial in person. And on the day following this the Thesmothetae shall issue to the accused a summons to appear ; and when the time allowed by the summons shall have expired, they shall bring them before the court on a charge of treason. And the prosecutors appointed for the purpose, the Generals, and anyone else who so desires shall accuse them. And any of them who shall be found guilty by the court shall be punished in accordance with the existing law which relates to traitors.
- B. Found guilty of treason : Archeptolemus, son of Hippodamus, of Agryle, being present : Antiphon, son of Sophilus, of Rhamnus, being present. The penalty was assessed as follows : the two prisoners shall be delivered to the Eleven : their goods shall be confiscated and a tithe given to the Goddess : their houses shall be rased to the ground and stones of record placed upon the sites of both, thus inscribed : " Here lived Archeptolemus and Antiphon, the traitors " : and the two Demarchs concerned shall make a return of their property. Furthermore it shall be unlawful to bury Archeptolemus and Antiphon at Athens or anywhere within the dominions of Athens. And

⁵ The Pseudo-Plutarch incorporates this document in his life of Antiphon. It was almost certainly a faithful copy of the Athenian original.

Archeptolemus and Antiphon shall be disfranchised, and their issue likewise, whether born in wedlock or out of wedlock. And if any man shall adopt any of the issue of Archeptolemus or Antiphon, he who does so shall be disfranchised. This sentence to be inscribed upon a pillar of bronze set up in the same place as the decrees concerning Phrynichus.⁶

When I first mentioned the dispute between Plato and Aristotle I used the word *λογομαχία*, "word-fight", and used the cliché that the Greeks had always a word for it. This is a charming lie that obscures a very pleasant truth, namely that, for things of the spirit, for the interplay of intellect, Greek seldom began with a word for it, but almost never failed to provide its speakers and writers with the raw materials for constructing, first an intellectual terminology, and then a splendid literary medium for its use. In this paper the time has now come when it would be well to look at Attic Greek, purely as a language. Over the centuries its prestige has perhaps been unexcelled. Was this prestige partly glamorous, or was it properly and truly deserved? The question is difficult, but the answer is important. Words may not be the gateway always to a man's heart, but they should be windows on his brain; and, *pace* dissentient psychologists—they always dissent—as a man speaks, so too, must he think. For these notes on Attic Greek, which will bore or perhaps irk students of ancient Greek, I apologize: to those who have no Greek they may well be worth the wear of reading.

Ancient Greek is a language of many dialects, few of them so variant as seriously to impede mutual intelligibility. For literary purposes Attic Greek became by the end of the fifth century the most-used and most efficient dialect. Nevertheless Attic is difficult, with much syntax and with a highly complex accidence. This complexity is usual in the early stages of any tongue and in essentials the Greek of Homer was in fact still primitive: the miracle that came from it in prose and poetry was brought about by its potential flexibility and by the brilliant striving of literary men. Roughly to generalize, I should say that the supply of nominal roots, basic names of things, was unusually large, but that the supply of verbal roots was by comparison small. The two things that gave to Greek an efficiency second perhaps only to modern English were its facility in making compounds from two or more roots, and its readiness to form new verbs, for new purposes, by adding adverbial prefixes. The first trick, that of compounding, is exemplified by *λογομαχία*, a soldering and modification of the two roots for "word" and "fight"; the second is illustrated by the rich proliferation of the verb *ἵστημι*, "stand", which by means of prefixes can carry meanings so diverse as—

<i>ἀμφίστημι</i>	set around, surround,
<i>ἀνθίστημι</i>	set against, compare,
<i>ἀφίστημι</i>	remove, pay out,
<i>δίστημι</i>	divide,
<i>ἐπίσταμαι</i>	understand,

⁶ This splendid translation is by K. Maidment.

together with many others. Both these processes are regularly found in the descendants of original Indo-Germanic, and they are exemplified respectively by our "dog-fight" or "daytime", and by the verb-building seen in the forming of "uphold" and "withhold". In this original dearth of a literary, especially of a scientific vocabulary, ancient Greek may well be compared with German, and the Greek solution to its problem is to be sure very like the German solution. There is evidence truly of linguistic victory no less in the German "ding an sich" than in the Greek for "reality", τὸ ὄν, "the being (thing)". The Greek superiority in respect of these two expressions lies in the invention of such a concept.

The primitive nature of Greek is shown also by the irregularity and deficiencies of its verbs. I doubt if in fifth-century Attic there was a single verb with a full complement of forms for moods, voices, tenses, and inflections. Of verbs that were otherwise regular, despite the lack of many forms, there were probably very few indeed. In fact a large dictionary of irregular and defective verbs was in my youth a necessary aid in the writing of Greek "proses". For each verb there were in theory six tenses, four moods besides the ten infinitives and ten participles, three numbers, three persons, and worst—or best—of all, three voices, namely the active, middle, and passive. As with early English, there was not a full supply of passive forms and, in the century of which we speak, the delightful middle voice, which had existed from olden times, was used to supply many forms for the still quite sketchy passive. For example, παύομαι, a middle form, means, from its context, either "I cease" or "I am stopped". The number of distinct verb-forms theoretically available for any verb would be nearly 260 (without counting second aorist forms), plus ten participles and two verbal adjectives, each with a paradigm of forms for three genders, three numbers, and five cases. In these participial and verbal-adjective paradigms there would theoretically be over 260 separate forms. By contrast, in English a verb such as "break" has only eight forms, and the Latin "amo" can use about 120 different forms, not counting gerund, gerundive, or participial forms. Even the accent may have been difficult, at least to our ears, for in the fifth century the word-accent, which by the way was not written in the script till much later, was tonal. I have heard few moderns make a plausible attempt at reproducing this accent. All in all, then, it is to me one of history's miracles that this ramshackle assembly of forms could have been pared and moulded into the verbal vehicle for so rich a life and literature. English has of course performed a similar miracle.

The difficulty and the naive triumph of Greek is never apparent in English translation. Translators, from schoolboys to learned men, are dazzled by the glamour that supposedly was Greek, and they do not translate the blunt words reflecting the Greek brain; instead, they render the meaning as it would comfortably—and fashionably—be grasped by speakers of the translator's time and tongue. This is sad, but there is no cure even for those who try not to be dazzled, for to translate quite literally would be always harsh, and often ugly and unintelligible. True, only such factual translations could lead the reader into the Athenian brain, but the

price is so high that none, I think, would wish to pay it. The trouble can be gauged by a small example, taken from a choice ode by Aeschylus.

The play is the *Eumenides*, with which it is probable that Aeschylus won the first prize for tragedy in 458 B.C. The lines that I translate (155-168) are part of the song and counter-song sung by the chorus of Furies, Erinyes, whom for diplomatic reasons the Athenians preferred to call the Kindly or Venerable Ones.

στ. ἐμοὶ δ' ὄνειδος ἐξ ὄνειράτων μολὸν
 ἔτυψεν δίκαν διφρηλάτου
 μεσολαβεῖ κέντρῳ
 ὑπὸ φρένας, ὑπὸ λοβόν.
 πάρεστι μαστίκτορος
 δαίτου, δαμίου
 βαρὺ, τὸ περιβαρυ κρύος ἔχειν.

ἀντ. τοιαῦτα δρωῖσιν οἱ νεώτεροι θεοὶ
 κρατοῦντες τὸ πᾶν δίκας πλέον
 φονολιβῆ θρόνον
 περὶ πόδα, περὶ κᾶρα.
 πάρεστι γᾶς ὀμφαλὸν
 προσδρακεῖν αἱμάτων
 βλόσυρον ἀρόμενον ἄγος ἔχειν.

Exactly how these words affected the understanding and the emotions of the Athenians, who can say? But it is possible to tell confidently some of the ways in which they did *not* affect the audience. The literal rendering that follows I give with all diffidence; so far as I found possible I have retained the order of words and have avoided giving an emotional content to any words unless the original Greek word seemed deliberately so used. And now—the chorus of Furies, with song and dance, are complaining that Zeus, a mere parvenu among the gods, has torn Orestes from their grasp, despite the horror of his blood-guilt.

Turn: And to me blame, from dreams come,
 struck, manner of two-bearer-driver with
 mid-gripped pole to-under midriff, to-under liver.
 (It) is present of whipper, blazing, public, heavy,
 the very heavy chill, to have.

Counter-Turn: Such things do the younger gods,
 possessing—the all—than justice
 more, gore-dripping throne round foot, round head.
 (It) is present to look at earth's navel having-won
 grisly awe of bloodshed to have.

Now let me try again, this time seeking, still without distortion or twist, to make these words intelligible to English speakers: to bring to you the implicit emotion,

the overtones, the cultural womb, is to me quite impossible. Any emotions conveyed would be mine, not those of Aeschylus.

Song : And shame, come to me from nightmares, has struck, as a charioteer
with firm-held goad, to my heart, to my vitals. It is mine to feel
the heavy, the thrice-heavy sear of the people's blazing scourger.

Response : Such evils the younger gods commit, possessing, wholly beyond
what is right, a blood-dripping throne around their feet, around
their heads. It is ours to behold the navel of earth win, as a prize
to hold, the grisly pollution of bloodshed.

But this passage (the interpretation of which is disputed by different scholars) has quite defeated me, for I could give to you neither the strict metre, the musical accompaniment, the dancing—of hands if not of feet—the nuances that mock in every line, nor an Athenian's mental disposition to be filled by primordial awe. Perhaps there were many in Athens who disregarded the gods of Olympus; the Erinyes, however, were old, old, and too awful to permit a hazardous disbelief.

It is the time now to consider a translation published in an ambitious collection of Greek drama.⁷ From what I have said you will realize that this is not at all a translation; but it is not dishonest. Rather it is an attempt, and a very skilled attempt at that, to suggest the music, the atmosphere, and the poetry of this ode.

Strophe : The sound of chiding scorn
Came from the land of dream;
Deep to mine inmost heart I felt it thrill and burn,
Thrust as a strong-grasped goad, to urge
Onward the chariot's team.
Thrilled, chilled with bitter inward pain
I stand as one beneath the doomsman's scourge.

Antistrophe : Shame on the younger gods who tread down right,
Sitting on thrones of might!
Woe on the altar of earth's central fane!
Clotted on step and shrine,
Behold, the guilt of blood, the ghastly stain!

This antistrophe is complete with three Victorian exclamation marks, and the whole piece is heavy with gold alberts and macassar oil. This, of course, *n'est pas le grec, mais c'est magnifique*. It is thus obvious that we ἐπίγονοι cannot any longer feel these things deep in our marrow, no matter how well versed we may be in the accessible surface of Greek language and literature. But is it possible to give any idea at all of how this choral ode would sound to the average Athenian, *l'homme moyen sensuel*? I think that up to a point it is possible to do so.

To begin with we must remember that the story of Orestes was as familiar to the ordinary Athenian as is Adam's fall or the Garden of Gethsemane to us. It was

⁷ *The Complete Greek Drama*, ed. Oates and O'Neill (New York, 1938).

therefore not necessary for him to hear and to understand every word ; indeed, this must have been physically impossible for very many of the audience in the Theatre of Dionysus, since the distance from the back bench down to the stage was roughly the length of a rugby football field, and the theatre held 14,000 people, not all of whom would have been mutes. Even if we accept the strange claims made for the acoustics of this hill-side and its theatre, or the theory that the masks worn acted as megaphones, and even if we ignore the possibility of a strong wind, we cannot readily conceive that every man—and woman—in the audience could have heard every word even of the play proper. With the interspersed choruses the matter was further complicated. By an old tradition many forms of the Doric dialect were used in the choral odes : these may or may not, even within earshot, have been readily comprehended. Also, by the traditions and in the nature of lyric verse, the odes used a very large number of poetical terms, poetic diction as we should call it. In the lines I have quoted there are at least six words that appear, to my knowledge, very rarely if ever in mundane prose. Again, the odes were sung, probably always to some instrumental accompaniment, and of course the sung word is less easy to grasp than is the spoken word. Beyond these more or less physical considerations is the often abstruse content of the odes, which hold much of moralizing and slanted allusions. Finally, the odes, as intricate metrical compositions, were forced to a word-order that must have made them very often inscrutable to an average man. You will remember the unnatural word-order of the lines I translated so baldly. This, however, was by no means the order of normal intercourse. Xanthippe used indeed a very simple order of words when she nagged Socrates and drove him into the streets to become a pest or a martyr, as your choice may be. To show this, one may quote anywhere from the so-called orators, who could not dare to have their speeches baffle their hearers' understanding. This is Lysias, for example, speaking of profiteers in corn ; I render his words and his order of words quite literally.

If then these men you condemn, the just things you will do and more fairly the corn you will buy ; but if not, more dearly.

The whole truth of this we shall not know, but it is at least very probable that the tragic poets, who gave so much of genius and labour to their works, were understood in full, textually or otherwise, only by their fellow-literati who had opportunities not only for hearing the plays performed, but also of reading them in manuscript. The common man, who could read, to be sure, but who could rarely have acquired a manuscript, either before a play was produced or afterwards, probably enjoyed the theatre hugely, for all that so much of it went past him. The bombast, the costumes, the dancing, the music, and withal the holiday spirit, made the festivals a thing of joy to him. His traditions and that strange thing that was Athens must have made him a far keener judge of merit than were Shakespeare's fops or groundlings. If some leather-clad rustic from Sunium grandly applauded the songs of the Erinyes, it was certainly for reasons more fundamentally sound than those which prompted an Elizabethan audience at least to tolerate, perhaps with addled awe, the mouthings of

Thy life is dear ; for all that life can rate
 Worth name of life in thee hath estimate,
 Youth, beauty, wisdom, courage, all
 That happiness and prime can happy call :
 Thou this to hazard needs must intimate
 Skill infamous, or monstrous desperate.

—*All's Well That Ends Well*, II. i. 182 ff.

However, I speak here with all humility : if I were forced to listen and to judge between sundry operas, I should catch but little of them, like even less, and almost certainly award the prize to the opera that had given me the least amount of recognizable annoyance.

And now, before we leave this fruitful field, too lightly cropped, I shall mention that actors wore conventional masks. It is salutary to remember that when we hear of this great actor or of that, his glory must have been won at least as much from the volume of his voice as from anything that we might call the talent of an actor. It is also chastening to remember that in fifth-century Athens there were no revivals of plays and that these laboured monuments of genius were composed and presented for a single performance before the sovereign people. Few men ever could have come by written copies.

While pondering the vagaries of dramatic diction my mind strayed, as it often does, to the Greek perception of colour. In view of Homer's " wine-dark sea " and one or two other mystifying references to colour, I have long been sure that the Greeks divided the rainbow's bands in a manner different from our own, but I suspect, too, that, for all their lavish use of colours, they observed but little of colour in the world of things. On an impulse I read through two plays of Sophocles to note the occurrences of colour-words. I found one reference to red blood and several to grey or white hair. This proves nothing. Sappho, admittedly writing a century before our period, and not a man or an Athenian, in her pitifully scanty fragments mentions colours fifteen times ; strangely she never uses words for red, blue or green. The topic needs further work. But unexpectedly, in a play of Euripides another pearl was found which I hope may prove an amulet against the making of false assumptions based on translations from Greek into English. (The French translators are worse.) Euripides' tragedy *The Trojan Women* opens with a speech by Poseidon, who declaims in the typical good taste of a fifth-century Athenian :

I, Poseidon, am come, leaving the salt Aegean depth of the sea, where bands of nereids weave step(s) most beautiful. For, since about this Trojan land Phoibos and I set stone towers around with straight (measuring-) rods, never from my mind has gone goodwill to the city of my Phrygians, which now turns to ashes and has perished, ravaged by Argive spear. For Epeios, of Parnassos, a Phokian, by devices of Pallas fitting together a horse pregnant with arms, sent a destroying image within the towers.

This is unmistakably composed in what Greek critics would call the high style, and you will observe that there is in it no word of colour : the sea is salt, but not blue. And now behold it as Gilbert Murray saw it, in rhyme. (The Athenians, by the way, when they did use rhyme, seem usually to have felt it as a comic device. See as a possible instance Euripides' *Alcestis* 782-6.)

Up from Aegean caverns, pool by pool,
Of the salt sea, where feet most beautiful
Of Nereid maidens weave beneath the foam
Their long sea-dances, I, their lord, am come,
Poseidon of the Sea. 'Twas I whose power,
With great Apollo, builded tower by tower
These walls of Troy ; and still my care doth stand
True to the ancient People of my hand ;
Which now as smoke is perished, in the shock
Of Argive spears. Down from Parnassus' rock
The Greek Epeios came, of Phocian seed,
And wrought by Pallas' mysteries a steed
Marvellous, big with arms ; and through my wall
It passed, a death-fraught image magical.

Being faced with these verbal buboes we can do no more than to hear again the reported voice of Pericles :

φιλοκαλοῦμεν μετ' εὐτελείας.

We are lovers of beauty, without extravagance.

To conclude these rambling remarks on colour I must mention that there is extant a treatise "On Colours", sometimes attributed to Aristotle, but almost certainly the work of another, possibly Theophrastus. Also it is difficult to omit the great joy that the Greeks had in yellow or auburn hair, the colour they called ξανθός. For instance the colour is attributed, to the *hair*, seemingly, of Demeter, Achilles, Odysseus, Menelaus, Ariadne, Apollo, Athena herself, and also to roast beef and sundry horses. I have been told, but I cannot trace the reference, that ξανθή is used also of Cleopatra. It cannot of course be known whether these sporadic outcroppings of yellow or auburn hair were always a feature of the Hellenic race, or whether, concerning mortals at least, we should suspect some Celtic enterprise.

At this point we should properly consider, very briefly, I am afraid, the troubled question of Greek painting. Once again we should remember Plato's Theory of Ideas, with a slight glance at the derivation of his word "Idea", which has in fact to do with things seen, with real things : the root is found in the verbs for seeing and also for knowing. For Greek painting and sculpture seem to have striven with singular consistency towards Ideas, perfection, not the perfection of impression, nor of interpretation, but that of representing things known and seen. And here and now I utter the heresy that Greek painting was probably not worthy of the glamour with which conjecture has decked it. Not one panel-painting of any kind has come

down to us. True, there are extant some treatises and references in Hellenistic and later writers concerning fifth-century and fourth-century painting, and both Greeks and Romans spoke of it with some adulation and reverence. Of the truth we cannot speak except by uncertain interpretation of ancient writers, by the evidence of vase-painting, and by the deductions of common sense.

Now, in the fifth century B.C. the physical techniques of painting, including the preparation of pigments and surfaces, could scarcely have been far advanced. It is probable, too, that the range of available pigments was narrow and that the subtle uses of blending were little known or tried. It is, too, beyond reasonable doubt that panel-painting remained, for some centuries, almost wholly one-dimensional, that is, linear in presentation, or two-dimensional in the disposition of its areas to achieve the ends we know as right pattern and composition. There can have been little if any use of light and shade, as such, nor of depth or perspective. It is certain that it was an art that almost wholly restricted itself to representing animate beings; natural objects of scenery or setting, or objects of still life, were either barely sketched or else suggested by symbols, with dolphins standing for the sea, or, as Rhys Carpenter mentions, with a crab at the foot of a boulder giving us the Saronic Gulf washing the base of the Scironian cliffs.

There is, however, an ancient anecdote which makes me wonder just how successful the later attempts at representation might have been. Alexander the Great had commissioned the great painter, Apelles, to paint his war-horse. At the unveiling, the King, wishing to seem an expert, made some critical remarks, but when Bucephalus himself whinnied at the painting, the painter exclaimed that the horse was a better critic of painting than was Alexander. Nevertheless, despite this tale, from Roman copies it seems quite safe to conclude that Greek panels reached only a limited height of art and thereafter changed but little, till there arose—a little mysteriously—the strange, disquieting, and powerful phenomenon of Byzantine art.

On the other hand, for fifth-century pottery we have abundant material that is rightly held to be of remarkable beauty. Here perhaps there is some confounding of three features of the pottery, namely its texture, its shape, and its decoration. Of the texture I shall not speak, but of the shape it should be said that, in each type of vessel, by the beginning of the fifth century an Ideal shape had been reached by generations of patient effort. Once perfected, these types remained largely unaltered for centuries, and still today we find them wholly satisfying. It is surely a reasonable deduction that, when the craftsmen had reached the Idea of an amphora or kylix or any other type of vessel, they recognized it as a goal attained, and sought no further.

Of the decoration, the famous vase-paintings, so much praise has been spoken and written that it may seem unworthy to cavil. But here again, as possibly with panel-painting, the vase-painting of Athens was still straining towards its Idea, perfect representation, and had progressed only to delineation in one or two dimensions. By the fifth century these pictures had not yet passed wholly beyond strange stylizations and older formulas, and so, truth to tell, some of us do not find great

pleasure in the contemplation of this art, so long as we see it, absolutely, as painting. But if we look at it in its historical context, our emotions can be only those of admiration and wonder that Athenian artists had come so far, even in mass-produced painted pots, towards achieving the Ideas of their art. But, lest we should tend to think of Greek potters of Athens or elsewhere as artists of too stern a cast, we should note that healthy burlesque painting occurs on many vases. There is in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford a delightful example in which a possibly mis-spelt Boreas is pursuing an indecently comic Odysseus. Many such burlesque paintings were in fact associated with the cult of the Cabiri.

If we hold a painted vase of the period in our hands and turn it so that the decoration or the painting is revealed as a continuous composition, we are at once struck with what is to me the greatest achievement of the vase-painters. In a score of workshops, dingy perhaps, in Athens and Piraeus, for generations workmen had sought, perhaps not consciously, to solve the problems of placing patterns and pictures on the baffling curves and awkward surfaces of pottery. The problems were immense, and the triumphs of the fifth and fourth centuries were commensurably great.

These problems bedevilled also the architects and sculptors who, on temple pediments and elsewhere, desired to place reliefs, or sculptures in the round, in odd or unaccommodating spaces. The success of the sculptors, particularly in the Parthenon and the Caryatid Porch, need not be emphasized here. The interesting thought that must come to us, however, is that the sure skill of the Parthenon and of other compositions almost certainly owes much indeed to the brilliant solutions that workmen had devised in their dusty potteries. Nevertheless, we must recognize that the sculptors of the fifth century in their own right achieved perhaps the greatest successes of their age. It has been said that this was for sculpture the age of greatness, whereas the next century was the age of beauty. The great statues of imperial Athens were, one must imagine, powerful, cold, and aloof. Their life, their *θυμός*, was still congealed in the marble, and piecemeal experimentation with planes and the torsion of axes had not yet brought them to the market-place and the warm hearts of the people. It was the glory of the fifth-century sculptors that, after centuries of frontal representation, they made the great advance, greater than we can readily conceive, of having their figures essay their first slight fluid step, their first turning and melting towards the full vitality of later works.

To most of us the mention of Greek sculpture straightway calls up a vision of gleaming marble, white or tinted with smokings of native colour. That, too, was how the Renaissance conceived Greek sculptures, when it sought to copy them. But the truth was otherwise. Statues and reliefs of gods, men, or higher animals—the lesser animals were almost never represented—were brightly coloured, as indeed were the great temples, and the eyes too were painted or formed of realistic inlays, another device that the Renaissance did not understand. There are illustrations of Greek colouring available in various publications: you may well approve of these colours, all the more perhaps if you think of them shouting in the clear light of Athens.

To conclude this section I would remind you that Greek sculpture and Greek architecture were crafts governed by rules, from which each successive craftsman might depart, but not widely, and only by gradual steps. The Athenian motto in this as in all else was μηδὲν ἄγαν, "nothing too much". There were for instance proportions laid down for the measurements of the body. There was thus a proportion that must be observed between the length of the torso and the distance from nipple to nipple. This may—or may not—have brought about the remarkable cases of "separation" in some Greek nudes. I do not know. But on this matter as a whole I should like to quote to you a fine passage from Rhys Carpenter's *The Aesthetic Basis of Greek Art*, pp. 89-90 :

Because fifth century Greek sculpture inherited all the schematic forms for representing objects, it could not be true to life. At the time of Pheidias and Polykleitos, the sculptured human body was put together from a series of parts each of which had a more or less intellectualized shape or structure, and each of which had a consequent bias toward geometric formalism and geometric simplification. The idealism, the "classic restraint", the omission of non-essentials, which are so generally acclaimed to be an outstanding mark of Greek sculpture, thus had their origin.

Centuries of glamour have surrounded the temples of the Acropolis and other buildings of Athens, and rightly so ; but it is legitimate to wonder just how much these temples depended for their glory on the superb natural setting. Would the Parthenon have been glamorous on the ten-acre site of the Agora? Would our Opera House look well in Belmore Park? Properly, the type of building designed by a great and sensitive architect will be made to suit its setting ; and indeed the Parthenon suits its site to utter perfection. The arresting thought is that, if Ictinus had been commissioned to build a temple of Athena in any other site, by the iron rule of tradition he would still have raised a Parthenon, squatting perhaps in some low tract of land, not blocked on a sparkling sky.

As with painting, so with music. The Athenians at all times set great store by music and made it so important a feature of civic and private life that it has been hard for us to conceive that their music did not match their other high attainments. Tragically few fragments of their musical notation remain to us and the deciphering of them was long disputed, but at last some agreement has been reached. A gramophone recording has been made of the two largest pieces of ancient Greek music that we have. On this record the pieces are sung by a woman. The music is monophonic and thin, perhaps, to our ears. The first song was found inscribed at Delphi, dating from about 130 B.C. From the fact that it was so inscribed it is almost certain that this "Delphic Hymn to Apollo" won a prize at the Pythian Games. Also there is a brief song, "The Lament of Seikilos" for his dead wife. Dated between 200 B.C. and A.D. 100, and found near Tralles in Asia Minor, it says with simple beauty :

So long as you live, be radiant, and do not grieve at all. Life's span is short and time exacts the final reckoning.

On the same gramophone record there is a rendering in a male voice of a Yemenite Jewish version of Psalm 8 recorded by A. Z. Idelsohn from Yemenite Jews who have almost certainly in their isolation kept intact musical traditions of ancient Judaea. These traditions elsewhere have been wholly lost ; in fact, in the third century, when the Jewish Bible was being translated into Greek, none could be found who could decipher the musical notations of temple music that were found in the sacred Book. To my untrained ear these Greek and Hebrew songs seem to have something of a family resemblance. If this were true, then it would not be far-fetched to feel that ancient Greek music and ancient Hebrew music were really two closely kin variants of a music-type that was common to the eastern Mediterranean. This I shall leave to those whose ears and knowledge are better than my own. I shall merely revert to the two pieces of Greek music that I have mentioned and quote to you the comment made on them by W. Apel in the *Harvard Dictionary of Music* (Harvard University Press, 1944) :

The melodies are not unimpressive in their somewhat puristic simplicity and reservedness, but, on the whole, would seem to confirm the impression that the great artistic contributions of the ancient Greeks lie in the fields of architecture and sculpture, rather than in those of painting and music.

They were a great warm people, these ill-washed Athenians, in their squalid homes. They lived their lives fully as no men before or after them. They were vain, loquacious, litigious, often treacherous and cruel, but they were brave and clever men and they made of man a measure for all the world.