KASSANDRA'S GLOSSOLALIA

BY

LEO JOHANNES HEIRMAN

There is in the lyric parts of Greek tragedy a specific shout, ὀτοῦ (1), which is used at the beginning of lamentations. We find it fourteen times in eight of the surviving tragedies. It appears in various configurations. Once it is drawn out into one long scream of six throbs, ὀτοῦτοῦτοῦ (Troyades), once, slightly shorter but with reverberation, ὀτοῦτοῦτοῦ τοῦ (Sophocles' Electra). A form consisting of four sounds, ὀτοῦτοῦτοῦ, occurs four times (Persians, Supplices, Iot), and the same form is used by Kassandra as the basis for her evocation: ὀτοῦτοῦ τοῦ δᾶ (Agamemnon) (2). There is finally a threefold form, ὀτοῦ, used in Persians, Agamemnon and Orestes, and doubled in Andromache, ὀτοῦ ὀτοῦ. This versatility in appearance shows that ὀτοῦ is not a real word consisting of syllables, but an utterance open to improvisation, and therefore belonging to a very primitive level of language.

In the contexture of this article we may think of vocal language as being used on four different levels. On the lowest level, the one bordering on the realm of animal sounds, we hear the exclamations of pain, surprise, fear, happiness, etc. Some of them are called 'interjections'. The sounds of laughter are their most obvious example. They are essentially of physiological origin (3), formed by the influence of tension and relaxation in the lips, the tongue, or the rima glottis in their relation to the outstreaming air. A more elaborate, but less well formed manifestation of this 'interjectional

1) See Liddell-Scott-Jones, Greek Dictionary, s.v.
2) In Sophocles' ὀτοῦτοῦ τοῦ the first form, in order not to sound like stammering, needs a secondary accent on its first sound, ντοῦτοῦ, and is therefore in dynamic balance, so that the following, shorter form is merely a reverberating echo of the last two syllables. In Aeschylus' ὀτοῦτοῦ τοῦ δᾶ there is a strong drive toward the end of the word, ντοῦτοῦ, ντοῦτοῦ; the repetition of the last syllables of the dynamically unbalanced first word represents therefore a (step toward a) climax.
language' is to be found in the sounds of lamenting or wailing, physiologically connected with crying. It is here that ὀτοστοῖ usually belongs.

On the lowest level but one we find, especially in Greek, the so-called 'particles', markers of the different ways a speaker chooses to tinge his contact with the listening partner. They could be called 'adverbial interjections', or 'sentence adverbs'. In spoken language certain nouns, and certain little phrases, are often taken down from their own level in order to serve as particles in disguise. For instance the 'sentence', "Like, man, I-mean, you-know, like, you-know: Wow!" 4), consists exclusively of a series of pseudo particles, with the exception of the last sound, which is a mere interjection (of admiration).

The next higher level of language is occupied by what Karl Bühler calls, 'das Zeigfeld der Sprache' 5), which consists of the demonstrative pronouns and adverbs, locked in a system based on the polarities which can be expressed by the personal pronouns. In addition to them the prepositions take a place of their own on this level. They constitute a separate 'demonstrative field', local, temporal, social, organized without direct orientational reference to the speakers.

The top level of language is the realm of 'das Symbolfeld der Sprache' (Bühler), consisting of the words which carry their own meaning in themselves.

Collecting the occurrences of ὀτοστοῖ we find the following distribution. Aeschylus uses it seven times, three times in Agamemnon (1072, 1076, 1257), twice in the Persians (268, 918), and twice in the Supplices (889, 898). Sophocles has it once, in Electra 1215, while we find it six times in Euripides, viz. twice in Troades (1287, 1294), twice in Andromache (1197, 1200), once in Orestes (1389), and once in Ion (789).

In all but four of these places the speakers are women, the Danaids in the Supplices, Kassandra in Agamemnon, Hecuba in the Troades, Phthian women (the chorus) in Andromache, Creusa

4) Caption under a cartoon in The New Yorker, June 10, 1972, 125.
5) K. Bühler, Sprachtheorie (Jena 1934).