1. Did the Athenian audience at the Great Dionysia of 458 BC see Clytemnestra on-stage when the chorus addressed her for the first time (at Ag. 83-103)? The answer to this question, “perhaps the most famous problem of choral address in Greek tragedy …”¹), has kept scholars divided after Hermann²) had been the first to assume the queen’s presence during 83-103. While many followed his lead, with variations on the precise staging, not a few opposed the case for her presence vigorously.

The latest contributors to the discussion all concluded that Clytemnestra’s first entry came at the end of the parodos (at 255 or 258)³). Their conclusion confirms the opinion of some of the most

¹) My thanks are due to Professor J. C. Kamerbeek, Professor J. M. Bremer and Dr. A. M. van Erp Taalman Kip for their constructive criticism of an earlier even more oversized Dutch version of this article. I am grateful to Mr. T. van Brederode, who was so kind as to undertake the task of correcting my English.

²) D. J. Mastronarde, Contact and Discontinuity: Some Conventions of Speech and Action on the Greek Tragic Stage (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1979), 101.

³) M. Vetta, La prima apparizione di Clitemnestra nell’Agamennone di Eschilo. Problemi di scena tragica, Maia n.s. 2 (1976), 109-19. O. Taplin, Aeschylean Silences and Silences in Aeschylus, HSCP 76 (1972), 89-91; The Stagecraft of Aeschylus: The Dramatic Use of Exits and Entrances in Greek Tragedy (Oxford 1977), 280-5. I take the opportunity of thanking Dr. Taplin, who sent me a preprint of the pages relating to Ag. 83-103 of
authoritative modern editors and commentators of Agamemnon and, what is more important, of the older scholars who went into the matter most thoroughly"). So it is no wonder that Taplin, who contributed many new arguments based on normal dramatic technique, holds the case for this late entry to be "all but conclusive".

The aim of this article is to show why, in my opinion, the case against Clytemnestra’s presence at Ag. 83-103 is not at all conclusive. My first point is that the verbal evidence for the queen’s presence during 83-103 is overwhelming. My second point is that from a dramatic point of view much is gained by this short appearance. The reasons why earlier treatments of this stage problem have been defective are of a methodological and theoretical nature and will become clear in the following argument.

2.1 The main points of the problem in Ag. 83-103 are well known. In the text of 40-82 there is not a single trace of Clytemnestra’s presence or entry. Then suddenly she is addressed until line 103; there is no reply after 103, but the chorus starts singing and dancing at 104. What exactly was happening on-stage and why? A systematic and detailed analysis of these questions has been lacking so far and this has done serious harm to the case for Clytemnestra’s presence. First, I will fill in this gap, next take stock of the harm done.

The problem of 83 ff. can be presented by two groups of questions:

his Stagecraft. My view of the stage problem of Ag. 83 ff. had already been formed when this admirable book was published. But I have tried to fit in my approach and terminology with his methodological and theoretical framework. I hold Taplin’s approach of dramatic analysis to be extremely fruitful. In fact, my main objection to his treatment of Ag. 83 ff. is that he has not come up to his own standards and principles. For another book by Taplin on the same subject, see my note 66. See also Mastronarde (above n. 1), 101-3.


5) On this distinction see Taplin 1977 (above n. 3), 5-6.