# DOUBLE-DEALING ARES IN THE *ORESTEIA*

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*I' fui de la città che nel Batista*
*mutò il primo padrone; ond' e' per questo*
*sempre con l'arte sua la farà trista;*
*e se non fosse che 'n sul passo d'Arno*
*rimane ancor di lui alcuna vista,*
*que' cittadin che poi la rifondarno*
*sovra 'l cener che d'Attila rimase,*
*avrebber fatto lavorare indarno.*
*Io fei giubetto a me delle mie case.*

Dante, *Inferno*

THE first word of the *Oresteia* is "the gods" to whom the watchman prays for surcease of toils; the first god specifically named after Zeus in this trilogy of toils is Ares,[1] the presiding deity of war and of all strife. His eminence is not to be denied.[2]

The watchman, in what seems an endless, dank duty marked by no change save the repeating cycle of the stars, is waiting for the signal of Troy's fall; immediately upon its entrance, the chorus sings of the Trojan expedition and of how the force of men screamed "Ares!" lustily at its departure. The context of Ares' first appearance merits scrutiny, for the language Aeschylus uses here suggests much about the nature of this important god which the poet, in his usual fashion, will clarify and develop in the rest of the trilogy.[3]

In words meant to emphasize grandeur and majesty, the chorus portrays the two Atreidai in their very doubleness—διθρόνου, δισκήπτρου—and connects their twin royalty with Zeus—Διόθεν—to enhance it all the more (43).[4] This deliberate repetition of words beginning with a *di-* sound is striking. It is obvious that Aeschylus wants to draw attention to the notion of duality, but it is also clear that he encompasses within this notion more than mere twoness; for he associates it, through verbal echo, with nothing less than the realm of the gods. It appears, that is to say, that twoness can mean different things in different contexts, including both the simple fact that Menelaos and Agamemnon are two people and also the possibility that

1. M. Smethurst, "The Authenticity of the Elders (The *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus)," *CP* 67 (1972): 93, says incorrectly that Ares is the first god mentioned by name. Her article is valuable for some of the things it says about Ares, although her approach is not centered on Ares as such but on the chorus of the *Agamemnon*, which she attempts to establish as the poet's spokesman. In this effort she is not convincing. To connect, as she does, the *peithō* of this chorus, which is such a fear-ridden and ineffective body—and sometimes an unintelligent one—with the triumphant and divine *peithō* of Athene in the *Eumenides* is too simple. On this point, see instead the excellent remarks of J. Peradotto, "Cledonomancy in the *Oresteia*," *AJP* 90 (1969): 20–21.

2. As has been done by D. M. Leahy, "The Authority of the Elders: A Note," *CP* 68 (1973): 202 ff., in reply to Smethurst's article.

3. On this technique, which unravels obscurity into clarity, cf. E. Fraenkel's remarks in his "*Agamemnon*" (Oxford, 1950), 1 : 37, and his comments ad *Ag.* 7, 131, 136.

4. All citations are from D. L. Page's edition (Oxford, 1972).

doubleness may somehow be involved in deity itself or in the various activities of deity. It is evident, too, given this emphasis at the choral entry, that the recurrence of words elsewhere beginning with a *di-* sound ought not to be surprising, and that Aeschylus, judging by his practice here, will not feel himself bound by strict etymology in connecting such words with one another. In the present instance he is employing a *Klang* association[5] whose interest lies in its evocative possibility for meanings larger than the purely linguistic. An examination of the rest of the trilogy will reveal a similar method operating throughout, so that, in fact, the *di-* sound and the ideas and images that Aeschylus clusters around it eventually signal and expound themes central to his drama. In the present passage of the parodos, the use of such language surely makes understandable the eager "Ares" cry of the kings' army which follows directly afterward. The war god is invoked with, it might be said, a doubled self-confidence; the force is, after all, a thousand ships strong and guided by royalty human and divine. But it need not be assumed that the poet himself necessarily shares this confidence or that he limits the notion of doubleness to the sense of certitude and power which derives from joined effort, energy multiplied.[6]

As the event showed, however, the army's confidence was to some extent justified. The herald informs the chorus and Klytaimnestra that Agamemnon is a prosperous man and most worthy of his contemporaries to be honored, for he has obliterated Priam's city. The twin-sceptered commander has wielded the mattock of justice-bearing Zeus (δικηφόρου Διός, 525–26), and the people of Troy have paid a double penalty (διπλᾶ, 537). When Agamemnon provides his own unforgettable description of his exploit, he too stresses its thoroughness: there were no two ways about it save its doubly-deserved justice (οὐ διχορρόπως, 815). The Argive war-beast, provoked for a mere woman, leveled the city thoroughly, twice over, as it were (διημάθυνεν, 824). The doubled efforts of Atreus' two sons have worked, apparently with the aid of *Dios*, a *dikē* which is stunningly, shatteringly complete.

Agamemnon, in a way suitable for the remarkably self-satisfied and gloating nature of his speech, harps on the justice of his war, using *dikē* thrice in three lines (811–13). So close does he feel his association with divine right that he has made Troy a burnt sacrifice for the gods,[7] its insolent wealth sent up in smoke and reduced to ashes (σποδός, 820). By the same token, the chorus in the parodos, as it speaks of Ares and the war, describes the

5. Though this term is borrowed from the language of psychoanalysis, no attempt is made here to approach the *Oresteia* with the psychoanalytic ideas which are so infecting the study of Aeschylus these days. It could be wished that more critics had taken to heart what Durrell's Clea has to say about Justine (p. 63 of the Pocket Books edition of *Justine*).

6. This crucial point seems not to be understood by Leahy, "Authority: A Note," p. 202, when he criticizes, to some degree correctly, Smethurst's assertion of a sense of dichotomy in *Ag.* 43, where Aeschylus apparently is emphasizing the union of the Atreidai and not their separation. But it is clear that the differences between the fates of the brothers is also present in the play when they are spoken of as a pair, viz., 109 ff. Cf. the remarks on this text and the implication of the two eagles in P. Vidal-Naquet, "Chasse et sacrifice dans l'*Orestie* d'Eschyle," *PP* 24 (1969): esp. 409 ff.

7. Cf. G. Thomson, *The "Oresteia" of Aeschylus* (Prague, 1966), commentary ad *Ag.* 819–20. For a full treatment of ritual and sacrificial language in the trilogy, F. Zeitlin, "The Motif of the Corrupted Sacrifice in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," *TAPA* 96 (1965): 463 ff., is fundamental.

expedition as a "support given in a court of law"[8] and the expedition's leaders as "plaintiffs." But in this there is something strange, something which calls attention to itself. The chorus is using what can only be considered, at least at first glance, an oxymoron when it juxtaposes στρατιῶτιν with ἀρωγήν (47), the first word suggesting violent deeds, the second spoken testimony; later on (813 ff.), Agamemnon will likewise connect martial acts with what he calls justice, denying to the latter any involvement with speech. An audience of fifth-century Athenians and twentieth-century readers would not be remiss in asking, What kind of right is executed by might? Are not *bia* and *dikē* opposites? How can Ares and true justice be so glibly conjoined? More crucial yet, when can they be safely yoked?

Language in Aeschylus is prismatic, any word being capable of refracting many shades of meaning which are not necessarily limited to the immediate context or to the comprehension of the character speaking. Agamemnon's claims to justice are just so faceted; and Klytaimnestra as she listened to them must have savored, given her sense of language, the implications of her husband's lurid confidence. When he spoke of a bloody voting urn and destruction's dust (815 ff.), she might well have recalled the chorus' use of those words in a funereal context apropos of the Argives, not the Trojans, fallen at Ilion (433 ff.); and when he said χἀρπαγὰς ὑπερκόπους ἐπραξάμεσθα (822–23), she could have convicted him not only of avenging insolent plunders but of indulging in them himself.[9] Agamemnon is, to be sure, involved in a drama of *dikē*, but it is a drama whose meaning he perhaps understood only as Klytaimnestra struck him twice (δίς, 1384) and he fell prey to the ruin he had inflicted on Troy and on his own daughter.

The might of Agamemnon and his army is sinister. The doubleness of Ares, at first seen as added strength, is ultimately revealed as enervating self-destruction. Ares exacts his toll from both sides in a conflict; he doubles back force upon the agents of force. And so the chorus in the parodos—after having spoken with seeming optimism about the strength of the army which cried "Ares!"—can say in the same breath that the war brought crunching toil to Greeks as well as Trojans (64 ff.); and the herald's account of the seemingly glorious victors' hardships abroad provides the elders' statement with confirmation (555 ff.). Ares is not concerned with rationality, speech, witness, and justice; those in his fealty exercise to their risk the kick of might.[10] It is to their risk precisely because Ares does not discriminate; he arbitrates by chance, as Thucydides knew as well as Aeschylus.[11] His doubleness can boomerang as duality and duplicity.

Klytaimnestra, always clever, knows better than Agamemnon the perils

8. For the rendering and the image, cf. Fraenkel's commentary ad 47.

9. The text here is beguilingly corrupt, but any solution that attempts to vindicate one and only one meaning forgets the studied ambiguity inherent in Aeschylus' language. For a discussion of this text cf. Fraenkel's commentary, ad loc., and Vidal-Naquet, "Chasse et sacrifice," p. 411.

10. For this image, see A. Lebeck, *The "Oresteia"* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), pp. 74–79.

11. Cf. *Sept.* 414. Although this text is drawn from outside the *Oresteia*, an investigation of Aeschylus' portrayal of Ares in all his plays reveals a consistency. Cf., e.g., on the kick of might, *Sept.* 47 and *Supp.* 934–37. Smethurst, "The Authority of the Elders," p. 89, also notes common features in all the plays.

of war. In this her man-counseling heart has not failed her. She knows well the marked difference between conquered and conqueror, their double fates:

> ὄξος τ' ἀλειφά τ' ἐγχέας ταὐτῶι κύτει
> διχοστατοῦντ' ἂν οὐ φίλω προσεννέποις·
> καὶ τῶν ἀλόντων καὶ κρατησάντων δίχα
> φθογγὰς ἀκούειν ἔστι, συμφορᾶς διπλῆς.
>
> [322–25]

But she is also thoroughly aware of passion's power (ἔρως, 341), how its violence masters men in violent situations so that they kick over altars and, though victors, become themselves victimized by gain. Thus men forget the return home, the second half of Ares' contest:

> δεῖ γὰρ πρὸς οἴκους νοστίμου σωτηρίας,
> κάμψαι διαύλου θάτερον κῶλον πάλιν.
>
> [343–44]

Sacrilege and rapine are the army's and Agamemnon's final delight. They forgot what the queen for the moment remembers in her mindful wrath (μνάμων Μῆνις, 155). Keen in the use of double-meaning speech, mistress of duplicity, she is fitting agent of retributive *dikē* for Agamemnon; she is the two-footed lioness (δίπους, 1258) who casts a net over him even as Zeus cast a δίκτυον of justice over Troy (358).

Both Agamemnon and Klytaimnestra see themselves as avengers, and the chorus, describing the Trojan expedition, calls it an Erinys (59). But vengeance, as the fates of both king and queen show, is its own curse because it resorts to Ares' power. Hence the wordplay on Ares and ἀρή in a drama where blow counters blow (1430) not only between Greeks and Trojans but also between spouses and amongst kin. The war-spirit which impels and delights Agamemnon cannot really still the curse of violated innocence; nor can Klytaimnestra, in spite of all her cunning, allay the recurring illness of a house glued (κεκόλληται) to ruin. As priestess of vengeance, she is priestess of Ares:

> τί νιν καλοῦσα δυσφιλὲς δάκος
> τύχοιμ' ἄν; ἀμφίσβαιναν ἢ Σκύλλαν τινὰ
> οἰκοῦσαν ἐν πέτραισι, ναυτίλων βλάβην,
> θύουσαν Ἅιδου μητέρ' ἄσπονδον τ' Ἄρη
> φίλοις πνέουσαν; ὡς δ' ἐπωλολύξατο
> ἡ παντότολμος, ὥσπερ ἐν μάχης τροπῆι.
>
> [1232–37]

A beast like the Greek army at Troy (cf. 824, δάκος), she is fittingly compared to monsters multiple in form, dualities of contradiction, culminating, as Kassandra sees it, in a seething-sacrificing mother of hell, an Ares-curse without peace, without libation, who yells out with ritual cry at the turn in the battle.[12] A prodigy of hatred, she cannot be glutted with her vengeance

12. On this passage, see F. Zeitlin, "Postscript to Sacrificial Imagery in the *Oresteia*," *TAPA* 97 (1966): 645 ff. Another example of what is surely not so much a textual problem as deliberate am-

until she strikes the already fallen Agamemnon a third blow, gratuitous and cruel (1386). Passion has mastered her as it had mastered him, and she, no less than her husband, is finally blind to and blinded by that dread duality of Ares. Achieving through might their vengeance, which they equate with justice, Agamemnon and Klytaimnestra are both its possessed possessors. As the elders of the chorus lamented for the young men dead at Troy, Ares, the gold-changer of bodies, has exchanged their beauty for dust and in their graves has held them fast by the land they thought in hatred to hold themselves (437 ff., esp. 452–55).

In this same strophe the chorus reverts to an idea it had voiced in its entry song. There, it will be recalled, Justice and Ares seemed to be partners; but now, after the event and with the toils of a war for a wanton all too evident, they question the alleged justice of the Atreidai. As clearly as they see the fitting and deserved nature of the overthrow of Troy, they also see disturbing parallels between the action of Paris and the actions of Paris' assailants. Both are infatuated with the eternally uncatchable, which destroys those it entices and thus too late reveals its true and hardly valuable nature. Enchantment begets bitterness; glitter is proved counterfeit; and Ares, gold-changer, converts men into ashes. The exhilaration of pursuing winged desire and its illusions achieves its inevitable and heavy collapse, doubling back upon itself into despair and convicted by *dikē* of folly: δικαιωθείς, ἐπεὶ / διώκει παῖς ποτανὸν ὄρνιν . . . (393–94).

This rhythm of reversal, especially as it applies to Agamemnon and his army, was always present, if not always perceived. The backward-turning rubbing-out of life the elders come to know (465) had ominously attended the army at its departure, when natural forces at Aulis held it fast in tides that shifted back and forth and made time twice as burdensome (παλιρρόχθοις, 190; παλιμμήκη, 196). So, too, after it left Troy, the storms which beset it were a confusion of contending powers which pulverized (σποδουμένου, 670) those not rendered into dust by battle.[13] The fleet was whirled in a circle (στροβῶι, 657), rather like the whirlpool of the Furies which sucks down those involved in the violence of injustice (δίναι, *Eum.* 559). In the end Agamemnon's endeavors prove pointless, lacking proper direction and genuine fulfillment. The image of the circle aptly conveys the ever-repeating futility in which he is caught with his army, crying "Ares!" like shrieking vultures who circle (στροφοδινοῦνται, 51) over empty nests. No wonder that the chorus has a heart spun round by eddies which achieve repeated and ruinous judgment (δίναις κυκλούμενον, 997), or that the horrors of the house of Atreus confuse and whirl Kassandra as she envisions them (στροβεῖ, 1216). The

biguity with Ἄρη and ἀράν is *Sept.* 945–46. For further association of vengeance and Ares, cf. *Ag.* 1511. *Ag.* 1128–29 echoes in its description of Klytaimnestra's weaponry the language used elsewhere of Ares and of Agamemnon's *dikē:* cf. 435, 444, 815. For Ares and corrupted ritual, cf. also *Sept.* 343–44.

13. J. Peradotto, "Some Patterns of Nature Imagery in the *Oresteia*," *AJP* 85 (1964): 378 ff., sees, with equal validity, the natural events at Aulis as mirrors of Agamemnon's indecision and dilemma before the sacrifice of Iphigeneia. He is surely incorrect, however, when he tries to argue similarly about the setting of the Pleiades mentioned in 826, for this occurred at the time of Troy's final fall, not at Aulis. Cf. also *Sept.* 63–64.

watchman of these halls has also observed well, emphasizing in the prologue the ever-recurring cycle of the stars in the sky, when they rise and when they perish (5–7).[14] No man can charm away Ares or soothe away a curse. The resort to force, the coupling of violence and right, so evident in the private life of Argos' ruling family and in its public acts, vitiate the very justice that the sword and the net have sought to achieve. If the chastisements of Troy and Agamemnon were just, this does not mean that the agents of punishment were just. Rather, their ready use of might invites what elsewhere[15] Aeschylus calls the madness of Ares, which overpowers the war-lovers and makes them the victims of their own passion, a *daimon* invincible in battle, invincible in war (ἄμαχον ἀπόλεμον, 768). Not for them the healing of Paian Apollo (146); theirs to sing is the horrible paean of the Furies (645).

Ares, as the veteran and herald knows so well, loves the double whip, the twin-speared ruin, the bloody couple (642–43). As he enlarges on this theme, there is none of that confidence in the doubleness of Ares which the chorus earlier had expressed. Ares' duality is now a source of grief, not only for combatants on both sides in the strife, not only for the kin of fallen soldiers, but for the city as an entity which sorrows for lost citizens while its families grieve individually.[16] The woe of Ares is contagious, striking those in battle, but also afflicting the *polis* itself with pain and, what is more important, with the hostility and contentiousness bred from this sort of war-plague. Thus the chorus reflects upon the dynamism which converts private woe into public wrath, as heavy funeral urns provoke speech heavy with rage for leaders (456 ff.; also 449–51), requiring payment of the curse (ἀρᾶς, 457) spoken by a populace against lords in love with Ares. Even Agamemnon is ostensibly aware of the dangers of public unrest, but typically he associates that unrest with envy of martial luster and glory. He understands, so he says, the dangers involved when a king is away on campaigns, chiefly the chance provided for rebellion and the inviting of hatred and jealousy for a king returned in triumph, a double grief (διπλοίζει, 835).[17] But Agamemnon has confidence that he can manage everything to his satisfaction (846 ff.), an attitude which contrasts markedly with the hesitation of the chorus and the stutterings of the herald.[18]

His confidence proves false, for his queen ensnares him easily enough. But Klytaimnestra herself is likewise incorrect when she spurns the public castigation (δημοθρόους τ' ἀρὰς, 1409) of her deed instinct with Ares. No less than Agamemnon, she will be prey to that god's double lash; so will her paramour

14. The watchman's use vis-à-vis the stars of metaphorical words like "dynasts" and "perish" is charged with more than an astronomical significance, and these considerations alone justify agreement with Thomson's commentary ad *Ag.* 7 that "Fraenkel's attempt to argue that the verse was interpolated before the second century A.D. is hardly to be taken seriously."

15. *Sept.* 497–98.

16. Fraenkel (commentary ad *Ag.* 645) presents arguments for so interpreting the herald's imagery, but then illogically refuses to assent to the interpretation.

17. Cf. also 942 and Klytaimnestra's argument from probability at 882–85.

18. On the peculiarities of the herald's Greek at 640 ff., cf. the commentary of J. D. Denniston and D. L. Page (Oxford, 1957), ad loc.

Aigisthos, who also knows only the language of power and violence.[19] Devotion to Ares succeeds in the confusion of society itself, as force antagonizes citizens and rulers and inevitably unstrings the sinews of ordered life and justice. In the assertion of their tyranny,[20] Klytaimnestra and Aigisthos demonstrate vividly the rape of that justice, public and private, which they and Agamemnon have claimed to respect. Their justice, unlike true justice, settles nothing: it does not define and limit but, rather, riots like Ares in blood and more blood, suppurating and flowering with corpses whose number will include their own. Do the confusion and contradiction, the allegations of justice and performance of ruin, all come about by the will of Zeus (*διαὶ Διός*, 1485)? The chorus is posing a question, not making a statement that is necessarily true in all that it implies. The elders' bewilderment prevents them from seeing in the supreme god much more than a vindictive and malicious deity who destroys his own agents. This limited vision need not be correct and need not be the poet's own; for, if the *Agamemnon* has shown anything, it has revealed that Ares, not Zeus, is the real motivator of the deeds of Agamemnon and Klytaimnestra and Aigisthos. It is Ares' doubleness in all its aspects which has finally produced this tragedy's drama of heartrending self-destruction.

Aeschylus attempts to clarify, sharpen, and, finally, resolve the tensions of duality so compellingly displayed by the *Agamemnon* in the last two plays of the trilogy. The *Choephoroi* at once takes up the theme of force and Ares, as Orestes prays to Hermes, overseer of parental *kratē*, to be his ally in battle (*σύμμαχος*, 2). Zeus, too, is similarly entreated (19); and the son prays to his father's shade to send *Dikē* as aid in arms to his dear ones (497). Orestes is patently at war with his father's murderers; and thus he proclaims that Ares clashes with Ares, *Dikē* with *Dikē* (461), while the chorus of slave women describes him in effect as wielding Ares' weapons (162). Just as in the first play the army going off to Troy was an *ἀρωγή* of might, so too Orestes must have his own help at trial, a trial not of words and arbitration but of deeds of violence (476–78). For Orestes is a *δάκος*, a beast of prey (530), like his mother (*Ag.* 1232) and like his father's army (*Ag.* 824); and he is just as implacable as both of his parents (420). Lion has begotten lion; twice has an Ares come to the house of Agamemnon (*διπλοῦς λέων*, *διπλοῦς Ἄρης*, 937–38).[21] Thus Orestes, though raised in exile, shares in the Atreid legacy, an inheritance both from his father and from his mother, that two-footed lioness whose guile and duplicity, in the way of Ares, have given literal birth to the kindred monster which will surpass its parent.[22]

And yet, for all his identification with the traits of his parents, Orestes

19. N.B. 1617 ff.; and cf. Aigisthos' remarks at 1649 and 1662–64 with Klytaimnestra's unabashed assertion at 1421–25.

20. Cf. 1633.

21. H. Lloyd-Jones in his translation with commentary of the play (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970) suggests that the double lion and double Ares refer to Pylades and Orestes. But surely Pylades is at best a tangential figure in the destiny of the Atreids; given the implications of the imagery here, the reference must be to the slayings perpetrated by Klytaimnestra and Orestes.

22. The identification is so strong that Orestes, not without justice, can say (923) that Klytaimnestra herself is her own destroyer. Cf. also *Ag.* 763–71, *φιλεῖ δὲ τίκτειν ὕβρις . . . εἰδομένας τοκεῦσιν*,

is fundamentally different.[23] Unlike them, he is consciously aware of the ramifications of his actions and appreciates fully the horribly double nature of his deed of retribution and matricide. Hesitation played no part in the carrying out of his parents' plans, inspired as they were by an awesome, compelling passion. Orestes, on the contrary, for all his craft and resolution, needs the helpful solidarity achieved with Elektra and the chorus[24]—not to mention the authoritative voice of Pylades, spokesman for Delphi, who shatters his silence at the critical moment.[25] Orestes' prayerful stance at the very start of the *Choephoroi* distinguishes him from his proud elders, as does his sense of the doubleness implicit in his being. For nurture and for grief he cuts two locks of hair as offering (6–7), reflecting the conflict between debts owed a mother for nurture and grief owed a father who is murdered.[26] Orestes' perception singles him out from all other agents of punishment in the trilogy; no wonder that he feels so singularly alone in what he does, as the chorus remarks:

> τοιάνδε πάλην μόνος ὢν ἔφεδρος
> δισσοῖς μέλλει θεῖος Ὀρέστης
> ἄψειν. εἴη δ' ἐπὶ νίκηι.
>
> [866–68]

In his solitude, this heroic contestant confronts duality. On a literal level, his two opponents are Klytaimnestra and Aigisthos; but the opposition comprises more than that. Theirs is a double tyranny not just in number but in quality, a tyranny that is responsible both for depriving him of his patrimony, public and private, and for slaying his father: ἴδεσθε χώρας τὴν διπλῆν τυραννίδα / πατροκτόνους τε δωμάτων πορθήτορας (973–74). But his most grievous involvement is with Klytaimnestra by herself, murderess yet mother; and, in slaying her, Orestes runs the risk which Ares' ministrants always run, of being locked himself in the cycle of ruin. Thus the chorus, though desiring no other solution, can still lament the peculiarly double misfortune of parent and child, τῶνδε συμφορὰν διπλῆν (931).[27] But, again unlike other perpetrators of violence, Orestes has no false claims to make, no boasts to vaunt, no third blow or kick to give the already fallen. His victory, he confesses (1016–17), is an unenviable pollution; he weeps for

23. Cf. the apposite remark of E. R. Dodds, "Morals and Politics in the 'Oresteia,'" *PCPhS* 6 (1960): 30: "Orestes has not merely suffered his situation, he has understood and in a sense mastered it."

24. On the role and meaning of the extended kommos, cf. the intelligent discussion of Lebeck, *The "Oresteia,"* pp. 110 ff.

25. On the use of the silent third actor here, so typical of Aeschylus' use of silence throughout his plays (*pace* the arguments of O. Taplin, "Aeschylean Silences and Silences in Aeschylus," *HSCP* 76 [1972]: 57 ff.), cf. Bernard Knox, "Aeschylus and the Third Actor," *AJP* 93 (1972): 109.

26. Cf. Lebeck, *The "Oresteia,"* p. 97.

27. Τῶνδε ought properly to refer to Klytaimnestra and Orestes, not Klytaimnestra and Aigisthos. The chorus' remark comes at the end of a scene in which the paramour has not figured at all, being already dead, and during which the intense confrontation between the mother and son has taken place. The opposition marked by the μέν and δέ (931–32) lies in the misfortune of a situation in which both participants will suffer (hence Orestes is called τλήμων at 933) and which yet achieves some good, not in the downfall of the two tyrants and the success of Orestes. The chorus' shedding any tears for Aigisthos would be startling, to say the least.

the deeds, the suffering, of his whole race. Agamemnon and Klytaimnestra never attain this integrity of vision, this humanity.

Justice, Zeus's daughter (Διὸς κόρα, Δίκαν, 949; cf. διαὶ Δίκας, 641), has been achieved. And it is now that Aeschylus finally focuses with awesome clarity on the dilemma inherent in an act whose genuine justice cannot be questioned. Thus, no sooner has the chorus applauded Orestes for liberating the city of Argos from the two serpent-tyrants (δυοῖν δρακόντοιν, 1047) than he is set upon by Gorgon-like furies whose hair is woven thick with snakes (δράκουσιν, 1050). It is as though Orestes, the serpent of Klytaimnestra's dream (cf. 549), will, for all his nobility, be caught up in the plaited net of his Ares-ridden heritage. As Elektra had said in a happier vein, children are like the corks holding up the net (δίκτυον, 506) of a family's past, preserving the line.[28] And so her brother also whirls round in the vortex of recurrent ruin (στροβοῦσιν, 1052), just victor but also victim of *dikē*.

Paradoxically, the language of duality manifest in the *Agamemnon* and the *Choephoroi* ceases to be so prominent in the *Eumenides*, precisely because Aeschylus has now intensified the dilemma of the trilogy, with the retributive Furies on one side and Orestes and his Olympian allies on the other. There is no observer chorus here to stand back and assess conflicts and comment on the obscurity of alleged justice. The chorus now is a belligerent itself and represents, in fact, those warlike forces encountered in the previous plays. The Furies are a *lochos* (46)—even as the troop in front of whom and for whom Agamemnon slew Iphigeneia (*Ag.* 136).[29] They are hunters after prey, as ravenous and lionlike as the son of Atreus (cf. 132 ff., 193–94), and, like him in his war against Troy, they make accusations of theft (cf. 149 ff.). They have little use for words; they pay heed to act alone, tracking their victim by the hints of a voiceless informer, dripped blood (245). They appear before men as avengers exacting requital of debts (πράκτορες, 319), and thus their presence on the stage embodies the horror implicit in the warrior bird of omen which, at the beginning of the trilogy, sped on Agamemnon's force with spear and avenging hand (χερὶ πράκτορι, *Ag.* 111).

But the Furies are curiously out of place in the world of the *Eumenides*. As the prophetess describes it at the opening of the play, it is a world of productive industry and tameness (13–14), where, to be sure, Bromios has his proper place (24 ff.). Delphi, its mantic seat, has been handed down peacefully from one deity to the next, in a linear and purposeful succession unlike the awful cycles of frustration in the *Agamemnon*'s Argos. The Furies, however, devotees of Ares, deny the honor due Aphrodite and lawful increase, the pledges of Zeus and Hera (213–16). Immature in spite of their antiquity, they are a living contradiction: undiscerning, grey-haired children (69). They would be comical were it not for their might; but even though they may be awesome agents of negativity, they are also piteous creatures, frozen themselves in the very bondage by which they seek to enslave.

28. This passage must be genuine, for its attention to the prevailing imagery of the trilogy would be surprising if it were interpolated. Clement of Alexandria's attribution of the lines to Sophocles must be a slip on his part.

29. On this text's multiple implications, cf. W. B. Stanford, *Ambiguity in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford, 1939), p. 143.

The problem of the *Eumenides*, then, is to find a way of placating the seemingly implacable and turning to productivity the frightening energy expended on ruin. For the Furies, more so indeed than Agamemnon and Klytaimnestra, have a genuine claim to honor and justification, as Athena affirms (698–99, 795–96). Fear and force have their place, but they cannot be the dominant powers either in family or city without inviting the catastrophes with which the *Oresteia* continues to appall. Ares cannot be denied, but neither can he be allowed to run riot. On his hill in Athens, then, Athena and her citizens, goddess and mortals, attempt a taming of the savage beast by a civilizing, careful, and caring regard for its true nature. They do not pretend it is something it is not, like those in Troy and Argos who foolishly nurtured wild lions in their halls (*Ag.* 717 ff.); they try instead to condition and persuade it to a better and more fruitful realization of itself. This is a difficult, almost incredible feat, not least because it does not resort to compulsion. Ares does not war with Ares, nor justice with justice; the weapon used, if so it may be called, is the charm in speech and persuasion (γλώσσης ἐμῆς μείλιγμα καὶ θελκτήριον, 886; cf. 900 and 81).[30] This is justice's more fitting mode, even as spoken oaths and sworn witnesses, not an army, are the aids at law in Athena's court (ἀρωγὰ τῆς δίκης ὁρκώματα, 486). Only in this way, as fragile as it is, can a genuine (ἐτητύμως, 488) resolution of tensions be attained, a settlement of violent conflict such as the chorus of elders had hoped for from Zeus:

> οὐκ ἔχω προσεικάσαι
> πάντ' ἐπισταθμώμενος
> πλὴν Διός, εἰ τὸ μάταν ἀπὸ φροντίδος ἄχθος
> χρὴ βαλεῖν ἐτητύμως.
>
> [*Ag.* 163–66]

The modesty of Orestes has finally provided the opportunity for the justice of Zeus to salve the hurts of the Atreids, who as a family had flaunted that justice and used it more for propaganda than for paradigm. In the court established by Zeus's daughter, Orestes is acquitted and restored to proper and lawful rule in Argos. His test case confirms among men a precedent already set by Zeus among the gods, when the era of kindred-devouring deities like Kronos had come to an end.[31]

It is consonant with his purposes in the trilogy that Aeschylus has de-

30. Contrast *Ag.* 71; *Cho.* 420, 670.

31. It would thus appear that those who speak of an evolution of Aeschylus' conception of Zeus within the trilogy are incorrect. Zeus's dispensation is fixed; human characters may grow to it or not. To argue, as the Furies do at *Eum.* 640–43, that Zeus is a fine one to uphold the rights of fathers, is sophistic, since it is a shining mark of Zeus's order that he can revere the paternal when his own father Kronos wanted to eat him at birth. Zeus's use of might, contrary to the despairing speculations of the elders at *Ag.* 168 ff., is not comparable to the gratuitous ruthlessness of Kronos or an earlier generation (even as Orestes' use is not the same as his forebears'). In this, it seems, Aeschylus and Hesiod are at one: so, like Hesiod, Aeschylus can speak of a good kind of strife (*Eum.* 975); and the victor of the trilogy, like the victor of the *Theogony*, notwithstanding his power, is Zeus *agoraios* (*Eum.* 973). None of this is to deny that in the *Prometheus* trilogy Aeschylus may have probed in a new and more daring way Zeus's nature, although here again it will not do to see the Zeus of *PV* as an unmitigated bully. Cf. C. J. Herrington, "Introduction to the *Prometheus Bound*," *Arion*, n.s. 1 (1973–74): 640 ff.

liberately changed the myth of the Areopagos' founding. In the traditional story Ares gave his name to the hill opposite the *polis* because he had been tried there by gods, for murdering a son of Poseidon after the son had raped Ares' daughter.[32] This tawdry tale of divine passion clearly would not suit the more refined temper of Aeschylus' Olympians in the *Eumenides*. He offers instead a surrogate aetiology which admirably complements the themes of his trilogy.[33] Athena says that the hill of Ares is so called because the Amazons pursuing Theseus, Athens' king, encamped there, outside the city, and sacrificed there to the war god. In other words, in this trial between claims of male and female, mother and father, wife and husband, in which upheavals private and public are involved and over all of which Ares has been a presiding spirit, a settlement will come at a place where man-counseling women, in warlike hunt after a male and king, kept vigilant watch from outside his walls. In this way Athena honors Ares and the feminine Furies at the same time as she establishes their proper sphere. Ares, that is to say, is no longer to be internal, either in family or city, but external (864), directing and defending the might of citizens against foreign aggressors.[34] With dangerous and destructive forces channeled outward, productive energy can be released within and aided in its potential fruitfulness by the very respect it accords Ares, now joined with the almighty Zeus (918). Ares becomes a helpful ally just as Orestes' Argos becomes an ally to the mighty people (*στρατῶι*, 762; cf. 566, 569, 683, 889) of Athens, honored in war:

> *τῶν ἀρειφάτων δ' ἐγὼ*
> *πρεπτῶν ἀγώνων οὐκ ἀνέξομαι τὸ μὴ οὐ*
> *τήνδ' ἀστύνικον ἐν βροτοῖς τιμᾶν πόλιν.*
>
> [913–15]

With Ares duly placed and duly honored, the Furies likewise can work in a positive way to provide blessings where before they inflicted pain. Secure in their prerogatives and, under the spell of Athena's persuasion, confident of respect, they can concentrate their energy on the bounteous increase which ought to attend, by their own admission (535–37), those who observe healthy limits in their deeds. Freed thus from the dual bondage by which they bound and were bound, and grown from infantilism to maturity, they may promote concord and wealth both public and private among the citizens of Athens. Aliens still, yet close to the city, they receive a fitting salute of double cheers from their citizen escort (*ἐπανδιπλοίζω*, 1014). Their name, like Ares', can now be linked with *spondai* (1044); and their doubleness, like his, is righted to effect a thorough, doubled prosperity (*διπλοῖσιν ἐμβρύοις*, 944).

Aeschylus claimed that his work was nothing more than a page drawn from the great book of Homer. He was at once accurate and too modest.

32. Paus. 1. 21. 5.

33. This is denied by Leahy, "Authority: A Note," p. 203.

34. For the transformation of the Eumenides and remarks on the savage as the condition of the civilized, cf. Vidal-Naquet, "Chasse et sacrifice," pp. 423 ff., whose approach is somewhat different from the one taken here.

His understanding of Ares in the *Oresteia* shows that he read closely Homer's poem of wrath and in particular that passage in *Iliad* 5 where Athena and Zeus castigate the deceit and fickleness of the war god, ἀλλοπρόσαλλος.[35] Nor was Aristophanes only joking when his Aeschylus in the *Frogs* claimed the writing of a play full of Ares.[36] But Aeschylus, if not in the *Septem*, then in his later trilogy, enlarges upon and deepens his Homeric legacy. He manages, no matter how tenuously, to create for Ares a more noble and more useful role which he must have thought every individual and every polity for its own sake had to achieve. Whether the Athens of his fancy was the Athens of his audience is problematical. But what must a discerning viewer have thought in 458, when the city was bent upon extensive naval expeditions across the sea, as he heard the chorus recount the tale of Agamemnon's armada and its eastward sailing? Why did the poet depart his city for self-imposed exile in Sicily? Perhaps it was disenchantment with an Athens which could sufficiently appreciate the poetry and the theatricality of the *Oresteia* but not its lesson, an Athens no longer mindful of the meaning behind one of its altars which, so legend said, Argive Orestes dedicated upon his acquittal, an altar to Athena Areia.[37]

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35. *Il.* 5. 825 ff.

36. *Frogs* 1021. S. Benardete, "Two Notes on Aeschylus' *Septem*," *WS*, n.s. 1 (1967): 22 ff., and 2 (1968): 5 ff., is the only writer known to me who has understood that Aristophanes' joke, like all good jokes, has an underlying seriousness which is, in this case, an essential clue to the understanding of the *Septem*.

37. Paus. 1. 28. 5.