FEMININE JUSTICE: THE END OF THE *SEVEN AGAINST THEBES*

CLIFFORD ORWIN

PHILOLOGY will not convince all of us that Aeschylus did not write the final scene of his *Seven Against Thebes*. Nor, of course, can it persuade us that he did. The primary questions remain what they have been, the worthiness of the scene and the unity of the drama.[1] In what follows we hope by vindicating the scene to vindicate those who would assign it to Aeschylus.

The argument against runs generally thus. Both Polyneices and Eteocles, the drama's brother-antagonists, have claimed to be in the right in their fratricidal struggle for the throne of Thebes. Right herself (Δίκη), however, if not in word (646–48)[2] then in deciding the outcome, seems to have put paid to the claims of both Polyneices and Eteocles. Both have killed, both have died, and in fulfilling the curse of their father upon themselves and of the gods upon their house have expiated also their own crimes against the city and each other. The matter of the Labdacids is settled, the action of play and trilogy complete. Why, then, clutter the stage with an entirely new cast of characters, engaged in new and inconclusive struggles for which no way has been prepared?[3]

The question is indeed unanswerable. It is also, however, wrongly posed. If the play appears to us to be a monster, it is because we do not clearly discern its outlines. The final scene which belongs to the women is neither superfluous nor unprepared. It is instead a necessary and indicated conclusion to a drama whose true protagonist appears in it in the form of a woman (644–48).

I

We view the drama from the perspective of the Thebans besieged by the murderous host of Argives. Only in the second half is it obviously a drama of fratricide. Eteocles presents himself, and is accepted by the Chorus of

1. Cf. among only the most recent treatments W. Pötscher, "Zum Schluss der *Sieben gegen Theben*," *Eranos* 66 (1958): 140–54; H. Lloyd-Jones, "The End of the *Seven Against Thebes*," *CQ* 9 (1959): 80–115; A. Lesky, *Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen* (Göttingen, 1964), p. 89; R. D. Dawe, "The End of *Seven Against Thebes*," *CQ* 17 (1967): 16–28; H. D. Cameron, *Studies on the "Seven Against Thebes" of Aeschylus* (The Hague and Paris, 1971), p. 51. The foremost recent effort to discredit the scene on wholly philological grounds is E. Fraenkel, "Schluss des *Sieben gegen Theben*," *Museum Helveticum* 21 (1964): 58–64. See now also H. Erbse, "Zur Exodus der Sieben," *Serta Turyniana* (Urbana, 1974), pp. 169–98.

2. Unless otherwise noted we read with G. Murray, *Aeschyli . . . Tragoediae*[2] (Oxford, 1955).

3. Dawe, "The End of *Seven Against Thebes*"; Cameron, *Studies*; M. Croiset, *Eschyle* (Paris, 1928), pp. 123–24.

0009-837X/80/7503-0001$00.95

maidens, as the city's defender against an anticivic barbarism.[4] In this capacity he rallies the citizens, educates the frenzied anxiety of the maidens and dispatches a champion to each of the seven gates of Thebes to meet his counterpart from among the invaders. This he does on the strength of the devices on the Argive shields: as a Spy describes these, one by one, he prescribes for each the proper antidote.[5] The last of the seven attackers happens to be Polyneices. To face him is a fate to which Eteocles resigns himself, despite the attempts of the Chorus to dissuade him. For who, he asks, is a more appropriate adversary for Polyneices than himself (674–75)?

ἄρχοντί τ'ἄρχων καὶ κασιγνήτῳ κάσις,
ἐχθρὸς σὺν ἐχθρῷ στήσομαι.

Leaders and foes ought to challenge their fellows. That a brother should is much less certain (677–82).[6] In reckoning, however, that he is the man to meet his brother, Eteocles falls prey to no sudden derangement, but to that understanding which has defined him throughout.[7] This does not preclude that his decision, as well as the understanding from which it issues, is the symptom of the curses that lay upon him and his family. Or perhaps his curse is the mirror of a defect of understanding which is inseparable from one of character.[8] Eteocles, we must not forget, has taken after his grandfather Laius (745–57) in bringing his curse upon himself (875–78). The brother whom he now would kill he earlier cheated, and this pair of unbrotherly brothers made earlier a pair of unfilial sons.

In facing his brother-leader-foe, Eteocles undertakes both a crime and a duty.[9] Devotion to the public good requires what respect for the bond of kinship forbids. An error of many scholars has been to see this as a coincidence.[10] There is, however, nothing accidental in the coincidence of the crime of Eteocles and his patriotism, the fate of the Labdacids and that of

4. Croiset, *Eschyle*, p. 117; T. G. Rosenmeyer, *The Masks of Tragedy* (Austin, 1963), pp. 12–14; G. M. Kirkwood, "Eteocles Oiakostrophos," *Phoenix* 28 (1969): 17–19.

5. Kirkwood, "Eteocles Oiakostrophos," pp. 12–13, undertakes, successfully in my opinion, to refute the contention of E. Wolff ("Die Entscheidung des Eteokles in dem *Sieben gegen Theben*," *HSCP* 63 [1958]: 89–96) that Eteocles has in fact posted the different defenders prior to his interpretation of the shields; Cf. also F. Ferrari, "La scelta dei difensori nei *Sette contra Tebe*," *SCO* 19/20 (1970–71): 140–45.

6. Cf. S. G. Benardete, "Two Notes on Aeschylus' *Septem*: (I) The Parodos and the First Stasimon," *Wiener Studien* 1 (1967): 29.

7. Kirkwood, "Eteocles Oiakostrophos," pp. 13–14, 21, is correct in arguing that Eteocles chooses himself to face Polyneices not because he has run out of champions, nor again because of some sudden derangement, but simply because he thinks that he is the proper opponent for his brother (cf. also H. W. Smyth, *Aeschylean Tragedy* [Berkeley, 1924], pp. 138–42). We ought not to conclude from this, however, that he is the proper opponent for his brother.

8. Because we conclude with P. E. Easterling, "Presentation of Character in Aeschylus," *G&R* 20 (1973): 6, "that when a character behaves oddly in an Aeschylean play it is not enough to say 'he is in the grip of Ate,' " we further conclude that the possibility of saying much more than this does not preclude his being in the grip of Ate. This is our critique alike of "the Solmsen thesis" and of its critics. F. Solmsen, "The Erinys in Aischylos' *Septem*," *TAPA* 68 (1937): 197–211.

9. H. Lloyd-Jones, review of *Antike und moderne Tragödie* by K. von Fritz, *Gnomon* 34 (1962): 741–42. To insist, however, as does A. J. Podlecki, "The Character of Eteocles in Aeschylus' *Septem*," *TAPA* 95 (1964): 286, that "it is a searing contradiction: a hero whose heroism must manifest itself through sacrilege," betrays some ignorance of what is tragic.

10. Kirkwood, "Eteocles Oiakostrophos," p. 21; A. Maddalena, *Interpretazioni eschilee* (Turin, n.d.), pp. 118, 124, 130.

Thebes, the opening "public" theme of the drama and the subsequent "private" one. For three generations the family of Laius has borne unwilling witness to the mysterious connectedness of the fate of the city and that of the family.[11]

Where crime embraces duty and duty crime, we must ask where lies the greater duty and lesser crime. It is sometimes contended that from this play of the trilogy, at least, Eteocles emerges as blameless and just.[12] How wrong this is varies with just what is meant. If it is that Eteocles is blameless before Polyneices, it rests upon a misreading of the evidence. We must not conclude that Eteocles is guiltless from his failure to accuse himself. Nor is it decisive that while he still lives no one else accuses him, when "no one else" consists of an underling and some terrified maidens to whom courage comes only much later in the drama. The silence of Eteocles is suggestive, but not of his innocence. Neither in rallying the citizens nor in responding to the challenge of his brother does he deny that he has wronged him. That he does not is hard to understand, unless he cannot.

If Eteocles has nothing to say in his defense, neither does anyone else. The Chorus, in its lamentations over the brothers, seems to oppose the one's sole possession of the city to the other's assault upon it, as if these were equally transgressions (881–85). The author of the final scene, whoever he was, clearly took this view of the matter. Even the Herald in this scene, defending the justice of the city's decision to cast out the corpse of Polyneices, does not contest Antigone's assertion that in attacking Eteocles he had been repaying him in kind (1049–50). He says only that the exile ought not have avenged on the public a private wrong. Neither Eteocles, Amphiaraus, nor the Herald—the three great accusers of Polyneices—accuse him of having wronged Eteocles. This must mean, however, that Eteocles has wronged Polyneices.[13]

In fact, the question of the brothers' guilt toward one another pales in the drama before that of their shared guilt towards their father. This is not, as it may seem, a different matter altogether, for the issue is the identical one of crimes within and thus against the family. The wrongs and the war which divide the brothers follow from the curse which unites them. This must affect our response to their characters. The audience that had just witnessed the rest of the trilogy would be somewhat less susceptible than we to the rugged charm of Eteocles.[14]

Surely, however, Eteocles is just, in the sense of public-spirited, and Polyneices is not.[15] The one is defending his native city against a murderous

11. Cameron, *Studies*, pp. 29, 31–32.

12. Ibid. pp. 13, 25–26, 40; Rosenmeyer, *The Masks of Tragedy*, p. 33; Solmsen, "The Erinys," pp. 200, 204, 207; G. Müller, "Textkritisches zu den *Septem* des Aischylos," *Hermes* 94 (1966): 265–66.

13. Lloyd-Jones, "The End of the *Seven Against Thebes*," pp. 85–87; Maddalena, *Interpretazioni*, pp. 124–29.

14. Croiset, *Eschyle*, pp. 103–5, 129; H. H. Bacon, "The Shield of Eteocles," *Arion* 3 (1964): 35; C. Miralles, *Política e Tragedia en Esquilo* (Barcelona, 1968), pp. 96–97.

15. Kirkwood, "Eteocles Oiakostrophos," pp. 12–19; Maddalena, *Interpretazioni*, p. 118; Rosenmeyer, *The Masks of Tragedy*, pp. 12–15; Smyth, *Aeschylean Tragedy*, pp. 132–36.

rout conducted by the other. This circumstance of the present struggle is indeed very much in Eteocles' favor. He would have us join him in ignoring every other. The playwright too conspires in this by immersing us in the present moment. What we see and what we hear from the embattled ramparts on which he places us powerfully summons us to acquiesce in the supreme importance of the city's crisis. The perspective of the first half of the drama is that of the city at the height of its danger, and the justice of Eteocles here consists in his indifference to all but the city's welfare. The first half of the drama works, therefore, to distract us from deficiencies in the justice of Eteocles. The audience will know from the play preceding that Eteocles has insulted his father and so lies under a terrible curse, and they likely anticipate as well that he will encounter Polyneices whom he has wronged. The tension of the drama results from this, that Eteocles will have succeeded in winning, against its better judgement, an audience which knows the case against him and knows moreover that it must prove decisive.[16] He has done his best to make us forget what we very well know, that Δίκη is not in fact his ally.

The justice of Eteocles is the city's justice. It is public and therefore masculine, related, perhaps, to the warrior Melanippus (Δίκη δ'ὁμαίμων 415), that true (earth-sprung) son of the city, but not to the women within the city. It is in dispatching Melanippus to the defense of the city that Eteocles first invokes Δίκη. Here he exploits his rare good fortune in commanding an actual relic of autochthony, that literal filial link to the city which he would transfer to all of the citizens. Eteocles does not call again upon "the justice of consanguinity." He shows himself most taken, however, with the notion of autochthony (10–20, 412–16, 472–79). His second mention of justice greets the appearance of Amphiaraus. What reveals to Eteocles his justice is Amphiaraus' confirmation of the adequacy of Eteocles' understanding of justice (570–89). Amphiaraus, as the Spy reports him, employs repeatedly the language of autochthony. In invoking πόλιν πατρῴαν ("the paternal city" 582) and θεοὺς τοὺς ἐγγενεῖς ("the kindred gods" 582, here the gods of the city), he blurs, as Eteocles has wished, the distinction between πόλις and γένος. Accordingly, while he rebukes Polyneices for falling upon his own city, he does not reproach him for falling upon his own brother. Of all the attackers, only he invokes and respects the city (572, 582; cf. 427, 434, 589; 47, 531). So it is that while the Spy refers to him as prudent, brave, and pious (568–69, 596), Eteocles adds that he is just (598, 610).

It is an indication of the trouble with Eteocles' position that he can invoke the justice of consanguinity, that of caring for those in one's family, only in that rare and dubious instance where one's immediate family is the city. Most Thebans descend not from Theban earth—and ultimately from the teeth of the chthonic serpent slain by Cadmus—but from Cadmus and Harmonia. That the Thebans are called "Cadmeians" is a recurrent reminder that their origins are otherwise than Eteocles would have them.[17] In

16. Croiset, *Eschyle*, p. 108.

17. It is to remind us of the origins of Thebes and of the light which they shed on the present situation that Aeschylus uses "Cadmeian" for "Theban" throughout. Euripides is similarly motivated in furnishing his surviving play on these same Theban themes with a "Phoenician" chorus

his defense of the city, however, Eteocles begins by relying heavily on its chthonic remnant (412–16, 472–79). Only when faced with the image of Typhon on a hostile shield (486–500) does it occur to him that creatures born of earth are friendly neither to the city nor to the gods of heaven. Even then he fails to see what light this sheds on the motives and conditions of the gods' defense of the city. He does not divine what the Chorus assumes from the very beginning, that the city that the gods protect is essentially a city of families, of human beings generated as the gods themselves generate.[18]

The city as Eteocles would wish it supplants the family as the primary human association and constitutes itself the standard and arbiter of right. There is no place for women or the family in it, where not women but fountains and fields are maternal (16–20, 413, 477, 584). Eteocles has reasons besides that of statecraft for deprecating the prayers of the Chorus of maidens. These prayers beseech the gods to save the city for the sake of those of its inhabitants whose lives are wholly private, devoted to generation and to the maintenance of the family. The women are emissaries from this private realm, whose unwonted appearance upon the public scene attests to the acuteness of the city's danger.[19] They do not know how to act in public, or publicly; in their frenzied attention to the gods they disrupt the preparations of the city. In fact they must rely upon Eteocles, as well as upon the Olympians. They need the education they get from him. Here as later, there is no indication that he has learned from them.

The justice of Eteocles is his public-spiritedness. What the play teaches us, however, is that there is more to justice than public-spiritedness. In his resolute defense of the city, no less than in his treatment of his kinsmen, Eteocles proves oblivious to that in Δίκη which concerns the family. He is not a good statesman who happens also to be a bad brother. His noble dedication to the city is the obverse of his fatal indifference to the family. He shares with the other Labdacids something in common with the city's attackers. All are assailants of the private realm. The Labdacids are the closest and most hateful of families for having transgressed the laws of the family. Their relations among themselves resume primeval, undifferentiated chaos, such as even now threatens to engulf the city. Among the invaders is one Eteoclus (458), the double of our hero in name as in fate.[20]

II

The *peripeteia* of the drama fittingly consists of the unexpected appearance of Δίκη herself, on the shield of Polyneices, as related to Eteocles by the Spy (644–48).

(and title). Cf. G. M. A. Grube, *The Drama of Euripides* (London, 1941), pp. 103, 115. On this play, see Benardete, "Two Notes," p. 27, n. 9.

18. Benardete, "Two Notes," pp. 26–30; idem, "Two Notes on Aeschylus' *Septem*: Interpretations of the Shields," *Wiener Studien* 2 (1968): 5–17.

19. Cf. Rosenmeyer, *The Masks of Tragedy*, pp. 17–20.

20. On the ambiguity of the name Eteocles, cf. H. H. Bacon and A. Hecht (trans.), *The "Seven Against Thebes" of Aeschylus*, (New York and London, 1973), pp. 14–15.

χρυσήλατον γὰρ ἄνδρα τευχηστὴν ἰδεῖν
ἄγει γυνή τις σωφρόνως ἡγουμένη.
Δίκη δ'ἄρ' εἶναί φησιν, ὡς τὰ γράμματα
λέγει "κατάξω δ' ἄνδρα τόνδε καὶ πόλιν
ἕξει πατρῴαν δωμάτων τ' ἐπιστροφάς."[21]

Of Polyneices we have, so late in the proceedings, heard but once, and that in the speech just prior to this one (577). So thoroughly has Eteocles suppressed, from his own view as well as from ours, the actual character of his struggle. Now he must confront a being who claims to be Δίκη and who, announcing her concern for the family as well as the city,[22] vows to restore Polyneices to both.

The impact of this reversal is stunning. Eteocles, as others have remarked, fails notably to invert, as he has done six times before, the portent on the enemy shield.[23] This time he summons no friendly blazon with which to counter the hostile one and expose the emptiness of its menace. His own shield must lack the device that might vanquish that of Polyneices.[24]

The present omen, like its predecessors, will prove to be anything but transparent. For once, however, Eteocles is not the man to discern this. The death which this device bodes for its bearer is death to Eteocles also. Although the victory of Polyneices is not, the defeat of Eteocles is the condition of the restoration that Δίκη intends. Eteocles takes the device at face value, as he has those on the Theban shields, the effect of which was to render them invincible. He thus unwittingly reminds us that this is in fact a Theban shield. Here, however, unable to show that while genuine the present omen bodes well for him, Eteocles must assert that it is false. Yet he has himself established the hermeneutic principle that blazons, even despite themselves, speak truly. If six times before he has interpreted truly in awarding the victory to the Theban defender, he would here interpret falsely in predicting his own.

Eteocles wavers. The painted Δίκη has reminded him that the question of the family is relevant to his present business. Doubt though he may that Δίκη would lend support to his brother's current enterprise (662–71), he

21. 648 πατρῴαν Q et Murray; πατρῴων rell.

22. Cf. Bacon and Hecht, *The "Seven Against Thebes,"* p. 13.

23. Rosenmeyer, *The Masks of Tragedy*, p. 37; Cameron, *Studies*, pp. 46–47.

24. Bacon has argued that as Eteocles is arming himself in the course of his last exchanges with the Chorus (cf. 675–76), the device on his own shield must now come to light. This, she continues, must be none other than the Erinys of his father's curse (cf. 695–97), a chthonic deity represented as a serpent; "The Shield of Eteocles," passim. If so, the futility of this device when ranged against that of the Olympian daughter of Zeus would be quite evident, and the stroke of dramaturgy a highly effective one. See above, pp. 190–91, and compare the matching of the devices of Eteocles and Polyneices with that of the devices of Hyperbius and Hippomedon (486–520).

Eteocles' choice of the curse as his emblem would be consistent with his invocation of it at 69–77 which comprises his single allusion to his family troubles prior to the appearance of Polyneices. It will never be entirely clear how Eteocles can invoke against Polyneices a curse which the brothers jointly bear. The "Patzer thesis" may explain why Eteocles is unaware that the curse bodes his death, but it does not explain how he could possibly interpret his having been cursed along with Polyneices as favoring him in his struggle with Polyneices. That he does betrays him: to him it seems that even a father's curse respects exclusively the exigencies of the city. On the curse, H. Patzer, "Die dramatische Handlung der *Sieben gegen Theben*," *HSCP* 63 (1958): 97–119; A. Burnett, "Curse and Dream in Aeschylus' *Septem*," *GRBS* 14 (1973): 343–68.

now finds it necessary to bolster his case by recalling Polyneices' past injustices. But these were offenses against the family.

In shifting ground Eteocles loses it. By calling as he does upon the past to vouch for the injustice of his brother, he inevitably calls into question the distinction which he would maintain against him. If Δίκη has never before attended the deeds and thoughts of Polyneices (662–63), then what has she had to do with Eteocles? The emphatic accusation νιν (664) is unlikely to make us forget that the brothers have shared a common womb,[25] a common nurturing and a common youth, and that it is for a common transgression that they labor in common under a father's curse (664–69; cf. 720–26, 785–91, 875–78, 886–87).[26] Acknowledging now the stain of filial impiety, and even its decisiveness, Eteocles speaks as if he did not share it (672 τούτοις πεποιθὼς). It is Δίκη herself who has undone Eteocles. In supporting a claim of Polyneices which is based on the family as well as the city, she has provoked Eteocles to mount his defense on grounds on which he is indefensible.[27]

Much depends upon this appearance of Δίκη. S. G. Benardete has shown of the shield-interpretations that the complicated interaction of device, interpretation, and succeeding device culminates in a true theophany. "For the first time we have a god who speaks and moves. . . . God and man come together in a single image, and their relation to the city is completely spelled out. The ultimate manifestation of the gods among men is the *energeia*, the being-at-work, of the anthropomorphic goddess Justice."[28] This Justice is no more the creature of Polyneices than of Eteocles. Her claim is not identical with his but is both more precise and more ambiguous (cf. 634–38 with 647–48).[29] She does not follow Polyneices, but leads him. The omen speaks truly, but its interpretation the playwright reserves for himself.

III

The final and disputed scene commences with the entrance of a Herald (1005). The Herald is the city's voice and nothing more. He speaks impersonally in legal formulas (1005, 1008, 1012, 1020, 1025). When he comes to speak emphatically (1042, 1053),[30] again it is the city speaking: to legislate is to admonish, especially to admonish those like Antigone who have shown themselves minded to disobey. The Herald has no son engaged to Antigone. He has no private fate in which to interest us, and this is his contribution to the drama. He does not obtrude between us and the city,[31]

25. Cf. Maddalena, *Interpretazioni*, p. 125.

26. See n. 24.

27. Cf. Lloyd-Jones, "The End of the *Seven Against Thebes*," p. 86.

28. Benardete, "Eteocles' Interpretations of the Shields," p. 16; Rosenmeyer, *The Masks of Tragedy*, p. 37; K. Reinhardt, *Aischylos als Regisseur und Theologe* (Bonn, 1949), p. 123.

29. Cf. Cameron, *Studies*, p. 47, on the ambiguity of κατάξω (647) (which may mean "to bring down to Hades"); but, if we take it to mean "restore," the ambiguity of the promise persists.

30. Rejecting Murray's transposition of 1052–53.

31. In this paragraph I have attempted to reply to those who see in the absence of Creon from this scene a certain proof of the dramatic ineptitude of the author (cf. Dawe, "The End of *Seven Against Thebes*," pp. 22–23). In arguing as I have, I have been pleased to find an ally in U. Albini, "Aspetti dei *Sette a Tebe*," *Parola del Passato* 27 (1972): 299–300.

For the city, as for its fallen champion, the primary distinction is that of friend and foe. Like him it must in the present situation dispose of the anomalous category of brother. This Eteocles had sought to accomplish by the assimilation of the ancestral to the political, extending the blessings of autochthony from the handful of Spartoi to the whole of the city. The present proclamation of the city, which revives Eteocles' identification of the city with the earth on which it stands (1007, 1008, 1015),[32] resumes that assimilation of family to city which Eteocles had finally been compelled to abandon.

The key to the city's argument is its use of πατρῷος. Eteocles, because "hating the foe he courted death in the city, and died free of offense toward the ancestral shrines," is to be honored with burial; Polyneices, "who would have been the overthrower of the land of the Cadmeians had not some one of the gods stood in his way with his brother's spear, will bear even in death the stain of his offence against the ancestral gods whom he dishonored in wishing to take the city by hurling against it an alien host" (1005–19). The city overlooks what ancestral gods might not, that both of the brothers died fratricides. Only if the ancestral gods were unambiguously the city's rather than the family's gods would the city's reasoning here hold true. In describing the brothers as ἐχθρούς, the Herald again recalls Eteocles (cf. 675), and his strongly adversative use of τόνδε at 1013 ("as for his brother corpse here, Polyneices . . ." cf. τοῦδε, "of this one," 1017) revives the notion that the fraternity of the brothers deepens rather than qualifies their antagonism. In asserting, finally, that some god had used Eteocles to dispose of Polyneices (1015–17), the city lets it be known that the gods not only sanction but employ fratricide in the city's service.

As the city resumes the cause of Eteocles, so does Antigone that of Polyneices. Private wrongs seem to her fully to justify public revenges (1049–52). A stranger to respect for the city, she mocks repeatedly its spokesman and its laws (1026, 1036, 1040). As for the gods, they are as indifferent to the city as she; it was nothing to them that her brother had assaulted it (1047). She is, accordingly, the only speaker in the final scene who does not attribute to the gods the defense of the city (cf. 1016–17, 1074–75).

The response of the Chorus to what it has witnessed confirms beyond question the failure of Eteocles to win it to his understanding of the city. Its reason for joining Antigone, however, is not her own. It cannot be. For she has pleaded a motive unique to herself, the terrible bond of blood which unites the offspring of the most united of families (1031–32). What the Chorus proclaims is a very different principle. Its complaint is that attended by Antigone alone Polyneices would depart "unmourned, his only dirge the wailing of a sister" (1063–65). The lot of Eteocles is much to be preferred, because many will mourn him: σὺ γε . . . κεῖνος δέ (1062–63) implies that the brothers equally deserve many mourners. Antigone's insistence on a sister's duty to provide her brother a proper burial has moved the Chorus to reflect

32. Benardete, "Eteocles' Interpretations of the Shields," p. 16, n. 28.

on the insufficiency of a sister thereto. To the injunction of the city that none of the citizens honor Polyneices, it opposes the duty of his fellow citizens to do so. In this it seems to join issue with the city more squarely than has Antigone.

Antigone, in her reply to the city, had distinguished sharply between the city and the family and had denied its authority over the family. Thus she had opposed Eteocles, who had wished to resolve all tensions by presenting the city as itself a family which nonetheless remained primarily a city. Such, for him, was the significance of autochthony. The position of the Chorus is a sort of mean. The Chorus agrees with Eteocles that the family is coextensive with the city in such a way that there can be no strict opposition of the two. It agrees with Antigone, however, in acknowledging the primacy of the family.

The death of Polyneices could be a sorrow to the whole of the "stock" or "family" (γένος) to which the Chorus belongs (1069–71) only if by γένος it means the πόλις. The city so understood, however, is not a family of such a kind as to supersede its constituent families. It is not a competitor but an offshoot of the family. The city is an extended family, whose members are related not as children of the common earth but rather as children of a common womb. The civic bond is that of common parentage—in the case of the "Cadmeians," of descent from Cadmus and Harmonia.

If the principle of the city does not prevail over that of the family—if in fact the family is the principle of the city—this does not justify Antigone's indifference to the city. It rather means that she and Polyneices are no less "terribles simplificateurs" than Eteocles and the city. In this the Chorus will not follow her. Assured by the resolve of their bolder fellows that Polyneices will receive a "public" funeral, the remaining maidens announce their intention of assisting at the rites of Eteocles, of which, they say, the city and Δίκη alike approve (1072–73). Inasmuch as γάρ at 1074 expresses the relationship of the clause it introduces to the whole of the preceding clause, it seems that Δίκη agrees with the city on the merit of Eteocles' services to it.

Δίκη both sanctifies the family and endorses Eteocles' defense of the city. The city depends upon the family, for the gods maintain it as the protector of the family. In another sense, then, the family depends upon the city. Only the city can lend security to the sacred ordinances that preserve the family. As helpless maidens in a beleaguered city (355–68),[33] the Chorus had learned from Eteocles that the divine law is breached with the walls of the city and that attention must therefore be paid to the needs of the city. The unwisdom of the Chorus had shown itself in their wild entreaties, which threatened to blunt the very sword through which the gods might work their deliverance.

The city enjoys divine protection, but only for so long as it respects the family. Its safety therefore depends on its enforcing the proper order of its families. Such was the significance of the oracle to Laius (745–49). His

33. Rosenmeyer, *The Masks of Tragedy*, pp. 17–20, properly emphasizes this aspect of the drama.

descendants subvert by their very presence in the city its claim to the favor of the Olympians. Earlier the Chorus has shown its awareness that human sexual differentiations reflect those prevailing among the Olympians.[34] The founding of Thebes, we recall once more, was the slaying of the chthonic serpent. The "Cadmeians" do not spring from the "Cadmeian" land, nor were those sprung from it "Cadmeians." The tamer rather than the child of earth, Cadmus had taken a wife from the heavens, in a wedding which the heavenly gods had attended (135–44).[35] The city must reject its roots in the earth in favor of its roots in the family. At the same time it must in times of crisis continue to demand of its citizens an allegiance no less than that due one's parents. The tragedy of the city is that it both requires and cannot tolerate Eteocles.

The maidens, unlike Eteocles, have understood from the beginning that it is not man's citizenship which he must hold most sacred. In the course of the drama they have learned, however, the fragility of the private and its inevitable dependence upon the public.[36] Their distinctly feminine wisdom reflects the androgynous wisdom of the playwright.[37]

The case for this scene cannot rest, however, merely on the aptness of its arguments. The question must be whether its action is necessary to complete that of the drama as a whole. In fact it is only with this scene that the dispensations of Δίκη are accomplished and the drama thereby brought to its conclusion. She has confirmed beforehand the rightness of what Antigone proposes, but also the propriety of the motive with which the Chorus lends her (Antigone, but also Δίκη) its assistance. For Δίκη has promised not only that Polyneices will range within his father's house—which is nothing else than the tomb that he will share with his father and Eteocles (cf. 727–33, 811–20, 879–85, 904–14, 947–50)—but also that he will regain his city. Antigone, in demanding that he be buried in the tomb of his fathers, is indifferent to his restoration to the city. It is only the Chorus which, in assuring Polyneices burial not by his natural sister only but by a train of his compatriots assembled as a family, finally accomplishes the prophecy.

It is the common verdict of Δίκη and the Chorus that Polyneices has no more forfeited his place in the city by his crime against it than Eteocles his place in the family. The play concludes with the restoration of Polyneices to home and city, a restoration accomplished by anthropomorphic Justice through the agency of (in the person of) that half of the city whose form she shares.

University of Toronto

34. See n. 18.

35. Theog. 1. 15–18; Pind. *Pyth.* 3. 88–92; Eur. *Phoen.* 822–23.

36. Benardete, "Parodos," passim, and Cameron, *Studies*, pp. 46, 97, remark on the earlier progress of the understanding of the Chorus.

37. Bacon and Hecht, *The "Seven Against Thebes,"* p. 16, have also argued, but for different reasons, that the demeanor of the Chorus in this final scene is distinctly feminine.