

## ETEOCLES AND THE CHORUS IN THE *SEVEN AGAINST THEBES*

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THE *Seven against Thebes* of Aeschylus contains two scenes of debate between Eteocles and the Chorus, at 181–286 and 677–719 (which must be considered together with Eteocles' speech 653–676). Both have been the subjects of much dispute. Critics are sharply divided on such questions as the causes of the two debates, their function in the play, and the moral attitude of Aeschylus to the two sides. By considering the two scenes in turn I hope to bring us closer to answering these questions. The only preconception that I shall consciously bring to the discussion is that, since the play was written for a single performance in the Theatre of Dionysus in 467, it must always be relevant to bear in mind what the audience in that theatre could have perceived and what its reaction could have been.

### THE FIRST EPISODE

The scene begins with a sudden and very violent onslaught by Eteocles on the Chorus (181–202). For the audience this will be startling and quite unexpected. It is true that a difference in religious outlook between Eteocles and the Chorus has already been detectable; the intelligent pragmatism that Eteocles displays at 4–9 is distinctly different from the desperate and unquestioning faith of the Chorus in the Parodos. But a difference need not imply a conflict, and this difference need not have had any particular significance; if the Parodos had been followed by a scene in which Eteocles and the Chorus were in complete agreement, no one would be in the least surprised.

This would not, indeed, be true if those scholars were right who accuse Eteocles of positive impiety in the Prologue.<sup>1</sup> I think, however, that the special pleading which such an accusation involves is too obvious to require detailed demonstration; the pragmatism of 4–9 is not impious but merely sensible, and a whole series of thoroughly proper and respectful references to the gods (8 f., 14 f., 21, 23, 69 ff.) should remove any temptation to think otherwise.<sup>2</sup> In real life, no doubt, all this appearance

<sup>1</sup>See A. W. Verrall's edition of the play and A. J. Podlecki, "The Character of Eteocles in Aeschylus' *Septem*," *TAPA* 95 (1964) 283 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Even L. Golden, who in general takes a similar view to Podlecki's of Eteocles' character ("The Character of Eteocles and the Meaning of the *Septem*," *CP* 59 [1964] 79 ff.), does not claim to see any impiety in the Prologue.

of piety might be insincere; but the audience is given no reason to think that it is so, and it is the impression received by the audience that matters.<sup>3</sup>

In the First Episode, then, Aeschylus has deliberately chosen to bring the different religious attitudes of Eteocles and the Chorus into open conflict and thus to focus attention on the divergences between them. And he takes good care that the conflict should be realistically motivated: Eteocles tells us at 191 f. that the Chorus's panic has had the effect of demoralising the other citizens, and since no one contradicts this statement we must take it as factually true.<sup>4</sup> But this again does not explain the scene's dramatic function; it would not have occurred to anyone to consider the effect of the Chorus's panic on the other citizens if Aeschylus had not brought the matter to our attention.

If, then, a moral conflict is here being deliberately developed for its own sake, we must next consider what moral attitude Aeschylus's audience would take to it. Now it should not be assumed that Greek canons of religion and morality were so rigid and coherent as strictly to determine the attitude of an audience to any moral problem presented on stage. And here both Eteocles and the Chorus adopt essentially natural positions with which any Greek might on occasion agree. It is normally considered right to submit oneself fully to the gods and to do all one can to enlist their help in time of danger; but on the other hand it is equally right for a king to take practical measures and to condemn any behaviour that could lead to the capture of his city (and we have seen that the women pose a genuine threat). Certainly a dramatist can, if he chooses, supply an objective moral reference—for instance through a manifestly good character or an impartial chorus—to show the audience which party in a dispute should command their sympathy. And here we would obviously know where we were if after Eteocles' rebukes Aeschylus had made his Chorus reply consistently either "I am sorry, Eteocles, I was

<sup>3</sup>I shall not devote much space to the views of those who, like Podlecki and Golden, use Eteocles' words as a basis for searching character analysis, since this kind of approach is nowadays rightly unfashionable in most quarters. It may be that the accounts of character in, e.g., A. J. A. Waldo, *Sophocles the Dramatist* (Cambridge 1951), and John Jones, *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy* (London 1962), take us too far in the other direction, but judicious and helpful remarks on the question can be found in, e.g., C. Garton, "Characterization in Greek Tragedy," *JHS* 77 (1957) 247 ff.; A. M. Dale, "The Creation of Dramatic Characters," *Collected Papers* (Cambridge 1969) 272 ff. (especially relevant here); P. E. Easterling, "Presentation of Character in Aeschylus," *G&R* 2nd Ser. 20 (1973) 3 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Certainly it is the effect on the other citizens, and not the danger that ill-omened utterance could by itself produce disaster, that constitutes Eteocles' main objection to the Chorus's behaviour (despite, e.g., H. D. Cameron, "The Power of Words in the *Seven Against Thebes*," *TAPA* 101 [1970] 95 ff.). The latter danger is mentioned only at 258, and this line refers only to what the Chorus-leader has just said in 257.

frightened" or "No, Eteocles, your attitude is irreligious and wrong." But they actually give, in effect, *both* these replies; they apologise and plead unreasoning terror at 203 ff. and 239 ff. (and this terror is exemplified in the stichomythia when the noise of the attacking army becomes audible again), but seek to defend their religious attitude against that of Eteocles at 226 ff. and 233 ff. (211 ff. is something between an apology and a defence; 219 ff. is merely a horrified attempt to avert the bad omen contained in Eteocles' last words). Nor can either side truly be said to win the argument; although the Chorus-leader submits at 263, it is with a very bad grace, and clearly not because Eteocles has convinced her.

In fact there is no single, isolable philosophic point at issue, for each side in the argument talks in a language of its own and is incapable of communicating with the other. Thus Eteocles constantly refers to the Chorus's behaviour in inappropriately rational terms, as if it must be the result of deliberate calculation,<sup>5</sup> never attempting to take account of their emotions or to suggest how these might be mastered; while the Chorus, moving and emotionally persuasive though their faith may be,<sup>6</sup> never attempt to refute Eteocles' practical arguments, some of which are, indeed, irrefutable.<sup>7</sup>

We must conclude, then, that Aeschylus has not chosen to present a conflict between an unambiguously right view and an unambiguously wrong one. Both undue timorousness and genuine religious feeling are characteristic of the Chorus, just as both prudent calculation and harsh intolerance of emotion are characteristic of Eteocles. There is nothing crude or incompetent about Aeschylus's procedure here, for his skill in writing in these two irreconcilable languages is at least as impressive in its way as, for instance, the legalistic subtlety of Euripidean debate; there is something very realistic about this illogical collision between ill-defined and mutually uncomprehending complexes of emotional attitudes.<sup>8</sup> And

<sup>5</sup>Note his repeated use of *βουλεύειν*: 200, *μὴ γυνή βουλευέτω*; 223, *μὴ . . . βουλεύου κακῶς*; 248, *οὐκοῦν ἔμ' ἀρκεῖ τῶνδε βουλεύειν πέρι*.

<sup>6</sup>Note especially 226 ff.: the god can save even when things seem hopeless to rational calculation, as *πειθαρχία* cannot; he is therefore more powerful and we should rely on him. The metaphor of clouds over the eyes vividly conveys the sensation of *ἀμηχανία* from the point of view of the individual sufferer, thus helping to suggest, by fifth-century standards, a distinctly personal and subjective kind of faith.

<sup>7</sup>Particularly telling is 217 f., *ἀλλ' οὖν θεοὺς τοὺς τῆς ἀλούσης πόλεως ἐκλείπειν λόγος*. The fact that cities *can* be captured shows that we cannot always rely on the gods; if the human defences failed, the gods, instead of providing a miracle, would simply abandon the city. Aeschylus cannot intend us to think this argument impious, since it is so obviously valid (and elsewhere in the scene, as at 230 f., 236, 265 ff., it is made quite clear that Eteocles' quarrel is not with the gods).

<sup>8</sup>Even Eteocles is not fully consistent in his arguments. This is brought out by 233 ff., where the Chorus echo what he himself said at 216 f., to remind him that at that stage

if the scene explores a conflict which exists in real life between sets of natural and widely-held Greek values, this in itself gives it great interest and goes far towards justifying its presence in the play. Its relevance to the play's central concerns may be none too obvious at first,<sup>9</sup> but it will perhaps become clearer later, when at the crisis of the play a second argument breaks out between the same two parties (see below).

I have been concerned so far with the conflict of religious attitudes, and I would argue that this is indeed the principal theme of this episode. How far is it possible to be both pious and practical? Is wholehearted devotion to the gods not necessarily intuitive and irrational and therefore likely to be at variance with the demands of common sense? And if so, is piety or common sense to be preferred? The whole scene is concerned with these questions. But there is another theme, which has much more pre-occupied the critics, namely Eteocles' attack on womankind as a whole at 187–190, with echoes at 195, 200 f., 230 ff., 256. Such an attack would no doubt seem less strange to a Greek audience brought up on Hesiod and Semonides than it at first sight does to us (cf. also Eur. *Med.* 573 ff., *Hipp.* 616 ff., where the attacks on women, however exaggerated, presumably did not seem ludicrous), but the fact remains that it is not fully justified by the dramatic situation—i.e., by the irresponsible behaviour of this one particular group of women.

Should we then start thinking in psychological terms? Some have supposed that Eteocles is influenced by memories of Jocasta and knowledge of his incestuous origin,<sup>10</sup> but this notion can at once be ruled out on the simple grounds that Aeschylus does not say so, and that such a surprising degree of psychological realism would need to be made very explicit if an audience was to take it in.<sup>11</sup> Others, such as Verrall, Podlecki, and Golden (notes 1 and 2 above), see it as Aeschylus's intention to show flaws in the character of Eteocles, but if we reject their general imputations of impiety and cynicism (as we must), it will make little dramatic

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he was not forbidding them to worship the gods at all, as he has apparently just done at 230 ff.

<sup>9</sup>Attempts have been made to integrate the scene into the main plot of the play by saying that it is to quiet the women that Eteocles decides at 282 to place himself among the seven defenders (so, e.g., H. D. F. Kitto, *Greek Tragedy*<sup>3</sup> [London 1961] 49). But the text does not say this, and it is anyway difficult to see why such a decision should have such an effect (cf. H. D. Cameron, *Studies on the Seven Against Thebes of Aeschylus* [The Hague 1971] 35).

<sup>10</sup>See e.g., G. Méautis, *Eschyle et la trilogie* (Paris 1936) 109; H. J. Rose, "Aeschylus the Psychologist," *SymbOslo* 32 (1956) 13; C. M. Dawson, *The Seven Against Thebes by Aeschylus* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1970) 48. This type of Freudian explanation is carried to extremes by R. S. Caldwell, "The Misogyny of Eteocles," *Arethusa* 6 (1973) 197 ff.

<sup>11</sup>As Garton well expresses it ([above, n. 3] 252), Eteocles "speaks like a misogynist, but you cannot investigate him as such."

sense to see a tragic flaw in the misogyny alone. H. Patzer<sup>12</sup> believes that Eteocles' excessive anger reveals his hidden fear that the present war is the outcome of the Curse of Oedipus, he having misinterpreted the Curse as meaning that Thebes would be destroyed in the war; the case is ingeniously argued, but A. Lesky and G. M. Kirkwood<sup>13</sup> have shown that it too is inadequately supported by the text. K. von Fritz,<sup>14</sup> while not accepting Patzer's detailed arguments about the misunderstanding of the Curse, similarly sees signs here of an underlying nervousness in Eteocles—the same nervousness which certainly seems to be revealed at 69 ff.; his views are very carefully stated (he is doubtless right that we should not reject out of hand any interpretation that could be called 'psychological'), and they may well be correct, but they account (like Patzer's) merely for the excessive anger rather than for the misogyny as such. It is true that, given the anger, the misogyny is humanly intelligible, in that a man who was violently angry with a group of women *might* easily extend his anger to womankind in general, but we may still wonder whether these considerations are sufficient to account for the inclusion of the misogynous passages in the play.

At this point it may be helpful to consider briefly a closely parallel problem in the *Supplikes*. In that play it is notoriously difficult to decide whether the Danaids reject marriage in general or merely marriage with their cousins, since their words are sometimes directed against the male sex as a whole and sometimes against the specific arrogance and violence of the Aigyptioi.<sup>15</sup> The very possibility of wholesome marriage, desired by both parties, is in fact firmly ignored until the end of the play.<sup>16</sup> Here again the attitudes displayed are psychologically plausible, in that the behaviour of the Aigyptioi *might* easily have induced in the Danaids a general aversion to men, but here again it is difficult to feel that this is a sufficient explanation of Aeschylus's procedure. von Fritz, using some very subtle arguments, maintains that the inconsistency (such as it is) in the Chorus's attitude is necessitated by developments later in the trilogy. But whether or not he is right in detail, I think we may see the inconsis-

<sup>12</sup>"Die dramatische Handlung der *Sieben gegen Theben*," *HSCP* 63 (1958) 97 ff.

<sup>13</sup>A. Lesky, "Eteokles in den *Sieben gegen Theben*," *WS* 74 (1961) 5 ff. (= *Ges. Schr.* 264 ff. = *Wege zu Aischylos* 2.23 ff.); G. M. Kirkwood, "Eteocles Oiakostrophos," *Phoenix* 23 (1969) 9 ff.

<sup>14</sup>"Die Gestalt des Eteokles in Aischylos' *Sieben gegen Theben*," *Antike und Moderne Tragödie* (Berlin 1962) 193 ff.

<sup>15</sup>See A. F. Garvie, *Aeschylus' Supplikes: Play and Trilogy* (Cambridge 1969) 221 ff., and literature cited there, especially von Fritz, "Die Danaidentrilogie des Aischylos," *Philologus* 91 (1936) 121 ff., 249 ff. (= *op. cit.* [above, n. 14] 160 ff.).

<sup>16</sup>This can best be illustrated by 392 f., where the question, "Have the Aigyptioi any rights over you?" provokes the reply, μή τί ποτ' οὖν γενοίμαν ὑποχείριος κράτεσσιν ἀρσένων. All marriage is conceived in terms of the kind of enforced domination which the Aigyptioi desire.

ency as having a rather more straightforward point. Aigyptioi and Danaids are particular figures in a particular story; and both the *ὑβρις* of the one party and the consequent *φύλαξις* of the other must first and foremost be specific qualities of those particular figures. But Aeschylus does not wish us to feel for that reason that these qualities are without wider reference and significance beyond the unique situation which the play depicts. Not, indeed, that *ὑβρις* could be considered characteristic of all men, or *φύλαξις* of all women;<sup>17</sup> but Aeschylus perhaps felt these to be attitudes to which men *as men* and women *as women* were constantly liable, and which formed a major source of discord between the sexes. Thus by making the Danaids' aversion extend to all men, as though all men were like the Aigyptioi, Aeschylus is able to draw out the paradigmatic implications of his play. The effect is similar to that of *γνώμαι*, which, by extracting a general truth, or half-truth, from an action performed on stage, invite the audience to consider the implications of that action for the world at large.

The same kind of reasoning can now be applied to the First Episode of the *Septem*. Here too Aeschylus wishes the audience to see the two parties in the dispute as representative of the two sexes. The Chorus exemplifies womankind for Eteocles because it must do so in some degree for us; we are to see its timidity and its intuitive religious feeling as essentially feminine qualities in antithesis to his masculine courage and practicality. Eteocles' view of women, like the Danaids' view of men, is exaggerated, since he, like the Danaids, sees only one side of the question, but the exaggeration draws attention to a sexual issue which itself is real enough. Each sex can claim to have a role in the city and to represent it in opposition to the wild, uncivilised host outside, since the man Eteocles is the city's worthy and capable leader and defender while the women (like other female choruses in tragedy, especially that of *Troades*) embody its deep-rooted social and religious institutions and its capacity for fear and suffering. That the roles of the two sexes and the proper relations between them were matters of major importance for Aeschylus can be clearly seen from the *Oresteia* as well as the *Supplikes*.<sup>18</sup>

If it is true that the conflict in this scene is between masculine and feminine qualities as well as between different religious views, it is natural to wonder whether masculine and feminine qualities were at

<sup>17</sup>Though we must remember that Aeschylus was writing for a society in which a woman normally had little say in the choice of a husband and in which she was expected to feel some regret at the loss of her virginity.

<sup>18</sup>I am drawing here on J. H. Finley, Jr., *Pindar and Aeschylus* (Cambridge, Mass. 1955), a book which, among much that I find unacceptable, contains some interesting and original remarks on the roles of the sexes in Aeschylus. For the women's role in the *Septem* cf. also T. Rosenmeyer, "The Seven Against Thebes: The Tragedy of War," *Arion* 1 (1962) 48 ff. (= *The Masks of Tragedy* [Austin 1963] 7 ff.).

issue elsewhere in the trilogy. If this were so it would give the motif of the sexes in this scene an appropriateness and a thematic motivation which it otherwise seems to lack; and certainly the analogous motifs in the Danaid Trilogy and the *Oresteia* were developed through all three plays.<sup>19</sup> This brings us to an ingenious theory of R. P. Winnington-Ingram's.<sup>20</sup> He notes that in lines 187–190 there are certain terms (ἐν εὐεστοῖ φίλῃ—ξύνουκος—κρατοῦσα—οἴκῳ) which have no bearing on the present situation and which, although doubtless included here for the sake of 'foil anti-thesis', still seem peculiar if they are not prompted by something in the wider context. Perhaps, then, the danger of women's *dominance* in the *house* in *peacetime* was a theme of one of the earlier plays. The argument, though speculative, is attractive, and it could be strengthened slightly by reference to Eur. fr. 543–546 N (lines on the virtues and vices of wives taken from Euripides' *Oedipus*), which show that the proper role of women in the home is not an impossible theme for an Oedipus play.<sup>21</sup>

However this may be, there are two points which I should like to re-emphasise. Firstly, if there is any link to be seen here with earlier plays in the trilogy then it will be purely a thematic link, not a causal link through the warped psychology of Eteocles; for the psychological roots of his behaviour are left entirely unexplored in the *Septem*, and it is highly unlikely that they were explored in the *Oedipus*. Secondly, the misogyny of Eteocles, however it is to be explained, is not the most prominent theme of the scene, and the scene does not exist purely or principally in order to illustrate it. The basis of the dispute is the difference in religious attitudes between the two parties, and it is this religious conflict that is explored through most of the scene. And apart from a single allusion to the sexual aspect at 712, it is only the religious conflict that is further developed later in the play.

<sup>19</sup>We can hardly doubt this for the Danaid Trilogy, whatever view we take of the detailed content of *Aigyptioi* and *Danaiides*. At the end of *Supplices* (1034–1051) the theme of normal and wholesome marriage, to which both ὕβρις and φυχανορία must be opposed, is introduced in a passage which presumably looks forward to later developments; and this is confirmed by Aphrodite's speech on the power of love from the *Danaiides* (fr. 44 M).

<sup>20</sup>BICS 13 (1966) 88 ff.

<sup>21</sup>I would hesitate, however, to follow Winnington-Ingram in his more specific conclusion that Jocasta was responsible for Laius's disobedience to Apollo's oracle. Here the argument depends on reading φίλων ἀβουλιᾶν at 750 and taking this to mean "his wife's bad advice". But since the emphasis of the whole context is on the culpability of Laius himself, and since ἀβουλία elsewhere is "thoughtlessness" (as one would expect), not "bad advice", it seems to me (as to most scholars) better to read φίλᾶν ἀβουλιᾶν, a euphemistic expression for sexual lust. At 802, Λαῖτον δυσβουλίας, and 842, βουλαὶ δ' ἄπιστοι Λαῖτου, it is probably again *lack* of thought that is meant; and 756 f., παράνοια συνᾶγε νυμφίους φρενῶλης, refers, I am sure, to the union of Oedipus with his mother, not to that of Laius with his wife.

## LINES 653-719

The speech of Eteocles (653-676) which provokes his second dispute with the Chorus is the final speech in the set of seven *Redepaare* which form the centrepiece of the play. I do not think that for my present purpose I need to discuss the rest of the *Redepaare* in any detail. I must, however, briefly explain why not.

Recent discussion of the *Redepaare* has centred on a single question: at what stage does Eteocles decide on the disposition of the Theban champions? Does he do so during the First Stasimon and come onstage already knowing who will defend each gate?<sup>22</sup> Or is each champion chosen on stage in response to one of the Scout's reports?<sup>23</sup> Or is Aeschylus deliberately ambiguous in the matter?<sup>24</sup> The third answer is the one which I in fact favour; but the point I wish to make now is that the situation facing Eteocles after 652 is exactly the same whichever solution we adopt. At 282 he declared that he would be among the seven defenders, and by 652 the other six have all been posted at some time or other; therefore unless Eteocles retracts one of his earlier decisions he is on any view the only possible defender for the seventh gate. Lesky appears at one stage of his article to be making this very point, but at another stage he claims that the ambiguity of timing in the *Redepaare* creates a *Helldunkel* enabling Aeschylus to confound free will and compulsion in the decision of Eteocles to fight Polynices. We cannot have it both ways, however; and indeed we shall see that in the 'decision scene' Aeschylus makes no attempt to *conceal* a confusion between free will and compulsion, since both the inevitability of the duel and Eteocles' passionate assent to it receive full and unequivocal stress.

On the face of it, then, the situation after 652 is clear enough. Eteocles has just learnt that Polynices is to be one of the seven attackers, a fact which he had not previously suspected. He himself is the inevitable defender. His own prudent decisions, coupled with Polynices' wickedness in attacking his city in person, have thus led to a terrible coincidence in

<sup>22</sup>So E. Wolff, "Die Entscheidung des Eteokles in den *Sieben gegen Theben*," *HSCP* 63 (1958) 89 ff.; followed by Patzer, *art. cit.* (above, n. 12); B. Otis, "The Unity of the Seven against Thebes," *GRBS* 3 (1960) 153 ff.; H. Erbse, "Interpretationsprobleme in den *Septem des Aischylos*," *Hermes* 92 (1964) 1 ff.; Cameron, *Studies* (above, n. 9) 38 ff.; A. Burnett, "Curse and Dream in Aeschylus' *Septem*," *GRBS* 14 (1973) 343 ff. Wolff's view seems to go back at least as far as H. Weil.

<sup>23</sup>The more traditional view, accepted recently by von Fritz, "Gestalt des Eteokles" (above, n. 14) 200 ff.; Kirkwood, *art. cit.* (above, n. 13), 12 ff.; F. Ferrari, "La Scelta dei Difensori nei *Sette Contro Tebe* di Eschilo," *S.C.O.* 19-20 (1970-1971) 140 ff.

<sup>24</sup>So Lesky, *art. cit.* (above, n. 13); R. D. Dawe, "Inconsistency of Plot and Character in Aeschylus," *PCPS* 189 (1963) 33 ff.



which the working of the Curse of Oedipus can be clearly discerned.<sup>25</sup> Polynices' threat of single combat with his brother (636), although it will not be fulfilled in its details (for the brothers will meet during, not after, the battle, something which Polynices could not have predicted), also provides a further clue as to the manner in which the Curse is to be fulfilled.<sup>26</sup>

Eteocles' outburst of despair at 653–655 reflects this situation. He can already see that he must fight his brother, even though in doing so he will be fulfilling the Curse. If either brother were to survive the duel he would be visited with deadly and incurable pollution, so destruction by the Curse is inescapable.<sup>27</sup>

As is constantly pointed out, a new stage in the drama begins at 653, in that the Curse, previously mentioned only at 70, now rises to sudden prominence. But it was essential to Aeschylus's purpose that the Curse should descend suddenly and unexpectedly, and since no one previously knew how or when it was to be fulfilled no one previously had much occasion to mention it. We should note also Aeschylus's skill in making the new development occur not at a structural break in the play but within the unbroken pattern of this formalised scene. This is both

<sup>25</sup>O. L. Smith, "The Father's Curse," *ClMed* 30 (1969) 27 ff., denies that the Curse has any objective existence; but Aeschylus and his audience can hardly fail to concur with Eteocles in seeing something more than mere coincidence in the way Eteocles finds himself matched against his brother. It is true that nothing has happened which we can definitely call miraculous; in this respect the events of the *Septem* conform to the pattern of most events in Aeschylus outside *Eum.* and *PV*, for Aeschylus wishes the action of his plays to resemble real life, in which *direct* divine intervention does not occur. It remains clear, however, that we are intended to *interpret* the action of the plays in religious terms, just as Aeschylus and his audience doubtless interpreted real-life events in religious terms.

<sup>26</sup>I cannot agree with Burnett, *art. cit.* (above, n. 22), that Eteocles' dreams are a motivating factor of comparable importance with the Curse. The mention of dreams at 710 f. gives us an added sense of the sinister inevitability of present events, but this is merely a momentary effect, for there is no reference to them elsewhere and we are not justified in reading them into the text where they are not specifically mentioned. Most scholars, including Burnett, suppose that the dreams were described in the *Oedipus*, but that is by no means a necessary assumption (cf. O. Klotz, *RhM* N.F. 72 [1917–1918] 623; A. J. Podlecki, *BICS* 22 [1975] 12); we may compare the previously unmentioned oracles whose fulfilment Darius recognizes at *Pers.* 739 f., or those to which Eteocles alludes, in very vague terms, at *Sept.* 618.

<sup>27</sup>The Chorus refer to the pollution of fratricide at 682 and 737 f.; and *τούτους πεποθώς* at 672 should mean, if the implications are pressed, that Eteocles expects to win the duel. On the other hand there are several expressions, from both Eteocles and the Chorus (681, 684, 690 f., 703 f., 734 f.), which are most naturally taken to imply that both brothers must die in the duel itself. It is wrong, I think (despite Patzer, *art. cit.* [above, n. 12] 109 ff., and others), to enquire in detail what Eteocles or the Chorus expect at this stage; what matters is that if Eteocles fights his brother he will certainly die *somehow*.

aesthetically pleasing and, I think, in a certain sense true to life; it is during the regular conduct of our lives that we suddenly find that we have involuntarily and insensibly committed ourselves to our destined fate.

Many scholars, however, have seen at this point not only a fresh turn in the plot but also a change in the character of Eteocles; and ever since an influential article by F. Solmsen<sup>28</sup> this change has commonly been described in terms of the onset of the Erinyes, who, it is supposed, besides working through external circumstances, has a direct supernatural effect on Eteocles' mind and so drives him to frenzy and madness. This frenzy is often described in graphic and imaginative language,<sup>29</sup> and it plays a useful part in Lloyd-Jones's 'supernaturalist' account of human behaviour in Aeschylus.<sup>30</sup> Belief in it has been abandoned, however, by several recent scholars from Patzer on, and Kirkwood, in particular, argues strongly against it.<sup>31</sup> The emotional outburst of Eteocles at 653–655 is as much prompted by circumstances as that at 597 f., and is as brief as it could well have been. Then in 656 f. he pulls himself together for the common good, and does so in language which so clearly recalls his language in the First Episode that it might almost have been designed to refute in advance any accusation of a change of character. And all his other utterances in this scene are in accord with the mood of grim resolution which these lines imply. His reply to the Scout's last report is entirely logical and coherent;<sup>32</sup> his tone here may be rather more rhetorically heightened than it was earlier in the scene, but this again is wholly appropriate to the situation. His replies to the Chorus show equally little outward passion. He can still look the Curse in the face without weeping at 696,<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup>"The Erinyes in Aeschylus' *Septem*," *TAPA* 68 (1937) 197 ff. (= *Kl. Schr.* 1.106 ff.). Cf. also K. Reinhardt, *Aischylos als Regisseur und Theologe* (Berne 1949) 123 ff.; and earlier Walter Nestlé, *Menschliche Existenz und politische Erziehung in der Tragödie des Aischylos* (Stuttgart 1934) 2, 57 f.

<sup>29</sup>E.g., G. Murray, *Aeschylus, the Creator of Tragedy* (Oxford 1940) 140; E. T. Owen, *The Harmony of Aeschylus* (London 1962) 49.

<sup>30</sup>H. Lloyd-Jones, "The Guilt of Agamemnon," *CQ* N.S. 12 (1962) 187 ff.; *Gnomon* 34 (1962) 740 ff.

<sup>31</sup>*Art. cit.* (above, n. 13) 14 f.

<sup>32</sup>I doubt whether we are meant to feel, as some critics do, that Eteocles' reply to Polynices' blazon is less effective than his replies to those of the other attackers. We know, after all, that Dike will not restore Polynices to his home in the event, and we know that at any rate the last and most important of Eteocles' charges against him is valid (668–669; cf. 576–586).

<sup>33</sup>Admittedly *ξηροῖς ἀκλαύτοις ὄμμασιν προσιζάνει* is taken by most commentators to mean "sits on me with dry unweeping [i.e., pitiless] eyes." But when we recall *Il.* 10.25 f., οὐδὲ γὰρ αὐτῶι ὕπνος ἐπὶ βλεφάροισιν ἐφίζανε, *ibid.* 91 f., οὐ μοι ἐπ' ὄμμασι νήδυμος ὕπνος ἰζάνει, and such later imitations as Pind. *Nem.* 8.3, (ὦρα) παρθενήϊοις παίδων τ' ἐφίζουσα βλεφάροις, it is hard to resist the conclusion that the eyes are those

and at the end of the scene he departs as a hoplite to battle in the same mood of fatalistic courage.<sup>34</sup> The examples of Cassandra, Orestes, and Io show that Aeschylus's way of depicting frenzy and madness was very different from this. (Eteocles' predicament is comparable with that of Orestes before the matricide, not after it, and Orestes is certainly not possessed by any Erinyes then; indeed I doubt whether any character in Aeschylus commits a crime because "an Erinyes has taken away his wits," whatever Lloyd-Jones may believe.<sup>35</sup>) When Solmsen writes (198) that "His [Eteocles'] language in this scene is most passionate; we cannot imagine anything that he says here coming from the same balanced state of mind in which he arranged everything for the defense," his words simply contradict the text.

Eteocles' references to the Curse at 655, 695 ff., 709, are thus to be explained by the Curse's action in events, not by any supernatural visitation. Nor do the Chorus imply otherwise. It is true that they credit Eteocles with a passionate desire for fratricide, and that is something that we shall need to explain; but let us merely note for the moment that nothing they say implies insanity or divine possession. If the *κακὸς ἔρως* and *ἔμπερος* are described as external forces at 687 f. and 692–694, this is merely the normal Greek way of referring to any strong emotion and does not entail anything supernatural. If the word *ἄτα* is used at 687, this is a description of Eteocles' ruinous state of mind, not a diagnosis of its cause; we do not need to think here of what Aeschylus and others may have written of the supernatural causes of *ἄτη* any more than we would

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of Eteocles (so Paley, Rose, Dawson)—"sits on my dry unweeping eyes" or perhaps (with Butler's *ἄκλαυτος*) "sits unwept on my dry eyes." The Curse fills Eteocles' field of vision, so to speak (note that its seat is his eyes and not his *φρένες*); whichever way he looks he can see nothing else, so completely is his mind taken up with the unavoidable knowledge of how it is working. But still he does not weep.

<sup>34</sup>I am not intending to imply that grim resolution is incompatible with strong *underlying* emotion; clearly Eteocles' resolution is that of a very desperate man. But then strong emotion, as well as resolution, has characterized Eteocles throughout, as von Fritz's article shows (above, n. 14). As I see it, Eteocles' mood in this scene resembles that of the Seven at 49–53, except that they do shed tears.

My reading of this scene would fit well with the view of W. Schadewaldt, "Die Wappnung des Eteokles," *Eranion: Festschrift für H. Hommel* (Tübingen 1961) 105 ff., following Murray in his translation of the play (London 1935) and Rose in his Commentary on 676, that Eteocles is actually given his armour and weapons between 676 and 719 and transformed into an *ἄνθρωπος ὁπλίτης* before our eyes. I find this view very attractive, though I do not think it impossible for the evidence to be differently interpreted. (The further speculations of H. H. Bacon, "The Shield of Eteocles," *Arion* 3 [1964] 27 ff., are of little value.)

<sup>35</sup>It is worth remembering too that, while possession by Erinyes is a constant feature of the stories of Orestes and Alcmæon (*after* their crimes), it does not appear to be found in any other version of the story of Eteocles and Polynices; see, e.g., J. Mattes, *Der Wahnsinn im griechischen Mythos und in der Dichtung* (Heidelberg 1970) 45 ff.

need to invoke modern psychiatric theory if a character in a modern drama remarked "Don't be insane". (And indeed if the Chorus really thought of ἄτη as a Lloyd-Jonesian supernatural force, what use would it be for them to try to influence him?) In the words δαίμων λήματος ἀν τροπαίαι χρονίαι μεταλλακτός at 705 ff. λήματος goes not with δαίμων, as is sometimes thought ("the *daimon* of your nature"), but with τροπαίαι ("the *daimon*, changed with the eventual veering round of its nature").<sup>36</sup>

If Eteocles has good reason to think that the Curse is coming to fulfilment, and suffers no demonic possession, why is it that he declares his intention of fighting his brother in the manner of a man making a free decision (672 f., τούτοις πεποιθώς εἰμι καὶ συστήσονται αὐτός), and subsequently, as well as pleading divine constraint, also seeks to defend his future action in terms of *dike* (673 ff.<sup>37</sup>) and honour (683 ff., 697,<sup>38</sup> 704 [in the implications of σαίνομεν], 717)?

The fact that Eteocles does elsewhere regard the duel as something forced on him by the gods and the Curse means that there cannot be any real question of a *wholly* free decision at 672.<sup>39</sup> And since the pattern of the scene dictates that here, as in his previous six speeches, Eteocles should name a defender and say why that defender is appropriate, there is no serious need to see in the wording of 672 f. a personal choice between valid alternatives.

Nor, certainly, is Eteocles sacrificing himself for the good of his city. If we had been intended to understand that Eteocles' death was necessary for the city's salvation, or even that a sense of duty to the city formed some part of Eteocles' motivation, this would certainly have been explicitly stated, since Eteocles is evidently concerned to defend his intention in whatever way he can. The remarks of Wilamowitz on this<sup>40</sup> continue to hold good despite repeated attempts by later scholars to revive an 'Opfertod theory'.<sup>41</sup> Throughout his replies to the Chorus

<sup>36</sup>So most of the commentators; see also D. van Nes, *Die maritime Bildersprache des Aischylos* (Groningen 1963) 13 f.

<sup>37</sup>τίς ἄλλος μᾶλλον ἐνδικώτερος—a paradoxical expression, for Eteocles' intention may be ἐνδικός in the sense "appropriate", but cannot, as he well knows, be ἐνδικός in the sense "morally right".

<sup>38</sup>λέγουσα κέρδος πρότερον ὑστέρου μόρου—a difficult line, but I take it that the general sense is "telling of gain that comes first and outweighs the death that follows" (Rose's Commentary; cf. also Paley's), and that the κέρδος is the same as that of 684, namely the preservation of honour.

<sup>39</sup>See especially O. Regenbogen, "Bemerkungen zu den Sieben des Aischylos," *Hermes* 68 (1933) 63 ff. (= *Kl. Schr.* 49 ff.).

<sup>40</sup>*Aischylos: Interpretationen* (Berlin 1914) 67.

<sup>41</sup>For the most recent of these attempts see M. Pohlenz, *Die Griechische Tragödie*<sup>2</sup> (Göttingen 1954) 84 ff.; F. Egermann, "Menschliche Haltung und tragisches Geschick bei Aischylos," *Gymnasium* 68 (1961) 502 ff.; Dawe, *art. cit.* (above, n. 24) 37 ff.; Kirkwood, *art. cit.* (above, n. 13). Only Dawe produces any substantial arguments, and these

Eteocles appears to have forgotten the claims of patriotism in favour of those of personal honour. Nor is this very surprising, given that Eteocles is living in a 'shame culture' and is above all else a man of ἀρετή.<sup>42</sup> In the normal way ἀρετή involves patriotism, since it is shameful to fail to defend one's country; but in the exceptional case where the claims of ἀρετή and patriotism are in conflict—where serving one's country would involve greater personal disgrace than failure to do so—it is the claim of ἀρετή that must prevail. νίκην γε μέντοι καὶ κακὴν τιμᾷ θεός, says the Chorus-leader (716)—the gods honour victory (by giving success and prosperity to the victors) even if it has been won in a cowardly way;<sup>43</sup> but the true hoplite *must* not prize victory above ἀρετή, whatever the gods may do (717).

What has happened is that the gods have placed Eteocles in a position where to refrain from fighting his brother would involve a positive decision to back out; he would have to say, "No, I shall not fight my brother, although my own earlier decisions coupled with a divinely ordered coincidence make it logical that I should, because I fear the consequences." And fifth-century notions of shame and honour make this impossible; if a man of ἀρετή is faced with a choice between committing a certain act and displaying fear, then the act must be committed.<sup>44</sup>

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have been sufficiently answered, I think, by Podlecki, "Character of Eteocles" (above, n. 1) 295 ff.; Smith, *art. cit.* (above, n. 25); and in particular Ferrari, "La decisione di Eteocle e il tragico dei Sette contro Tebe," *Annali della Scuola N.S. di Pisa* Ser. 3.2<sup>1</sup> (1972) 141 ff. Even the modified 'Opfertod theory' which von Fritz adopts (212 f.—Eteocles accepts the duel because he realises that Thebes cannot be free from danger while Polynices lives) seems to me inadequately supported by the text.

<sup>42</sup>For the persistence of 'shame culture' values into the fifth century see A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility* (Oxford 1960) 154 ff. Sept. 683–685 is a paradigmatic statement of these values, as Adkins sees. The Chorus have warned of the pollution stemming from crime; but Eteocles replies, in effect, that the disgrace stemming from cowardice is a greater evil. Crime does not involve αἰσχύνη, but cowardice does; and the opposite of αἰσχύνη is not moral virtue but εὐκλεία, a good reputation. I can see no foundation for B. Snell's more romantic interpretation of these lines ("Aischylos und das Handeln im Drama," *Philologus Suppl.* 20<sup>1</sup> [1928] 83), and the words of Hector (*Il.* 6.441–446) which Snell contrasts with them in fact seem to me closely comparable.

<sup>43</sup>Patzer has pointed out (*art. cit.* [above, n. 12] 111) that this line by itself rules out an *Opfertod*, since an 'Opfertod theory' involves supposing that cowardice by Eteocles would make a Theban victory impossible, or at any rate less likely. Eteocles rejects the Chorus's values, but cannot deny that a νίκη κακή would be possible.

<sup>44</sup>I am thus in agreement with Ferrari, "Eteocle e il tragico" (above, n. 41), as to the archaic and aristocratic standards embodied in Eteocles. I cannot agree, however, that Aeschylus is attacking these standards. The language which Eteocles uses will still have value for a fifth-century audience, and the Chorus, though it can oppose Eteocles' resolve on other grounds, has no means of answering him on his own terms.

Hypermetra makes the opposite choice to Eteocles, κλύει ἀναλκις μᾶλλον ἢ μαιφόνος (*PV* 868), and we are doubtless expected to approve; but then her sex makes all the difference.

In that it would be physically possible for Eteocles to ignore these claims of honour, we may say, if we wish, that an element of free will is involved—that, as Regenbogen and others put it, he acts as he does because he is who he is. A follower of John Jones, on the other hand, might argue that Eteocles could not have avoided the duel because kings in Aeschylus have no option but to behave in a kingly way. The issue between these types of approach is perhaps slightly unreal.

What does matter is that Aeschylus has been able to show in a natural and convincing manner how a pious and honourable man could be led by a curse to commit, quite consciously and deliberately, a terrible crime. It was open to him, we may imagine, to dramatise the operation of the Curse in a number of ways: the brothers could have met in ignorance of each other's identity, or they could both have been wicked and reckless men, or they could have been possessed by Erinyes. But Aeschylus did not believe that curses always operated in such straightforward ways as these; and the procedure that he did adopt was much subtler, more thought-provoking, and more dramatically effective.

So far I have been arguing that Eteocles' behaviour, as explained by his own utterances, is fully consistent and intelligible. But I still have not discussed the most difficult feature of this scene. At 677 ff. the Chorus-leader unexpectedly breaks in to tell Eteocles not to become like his brother in passion; and in the following lyrics he is warned that he must not let a mad lust for battle carry him off (686 f.), that he must throw off the rule<sup>45</sup> of an evil passion (687 f.), and that a savage desire is driving him to shed unlawful blood (692 ff.).

Since none of this appears on the face of it to be justified, we might be tempted to maintain, with Patzer, Cameron, and others,<sup>46</sup> that the Chorus is simply mistaken and does not understand what is happening. But this will not do, as Lesky has conclusively shown;<sup>47</sup> in particular γάρ at 695 can only be interpreted as expressing Eteocles' assent to the Chorus's charge of an *ώμοδακῆς ἔμπερος*. If at 695 ff. Eteocles had said "No, the Curse leaves me no choice," we should have had to choose between his view and the Chorus's; the fact that he actually says "Yes, the Curse leaves me no choice" can only mean that Aeschylus feels the two views to be compatible, and indeed complementary.

We must conclude, then, that Aeschylus has chosen—unrealistically, as it seems to us—to give the crime of Eteocles a double motivation; when once Eteocles realises that he has no choice but to fight his brother, he is then made to feel a passionate desire to do so. One reason for imposing this element of desire upon the element of necessity is, no doubt, to

<sup>45</sup> "Rule" seems to me a better translation than "beginning" for ἀρχάν here.

<sup>46</sup> Patzer, *art. cit.* (above, n. 12) 113 f.; Cameron, *Studies* (above, n. 9) 44.

<sup>47</sup> *Art. cit.* (above, n. 13) 12 ff.

make Eteocles appear morally culpable—or perhaps rather to enable the audience to give its emotional assent to a moral law which can punish a man for a crime that he is compelled to commit. The fact that *Polynices* was possessed by a frenzied and criminal lust for fratricide perhaps helps slightly to facilitate the attribution of similar motives to Eteocles here; certainly after the duel the Chorus constantly attribute the same *ἀσεβὴς διάνοια* to both brothers.

But this is not the only instance in Aeschylus of such double motivation.<sup>48</sup> At *Ag.* 205 ff. Agamemnon is represented as realising, after a lucid and rational assessment of his position, that he has no choice but to sacrifice his daughter; but the Chorus continues with *ἐπεὶ δ' ἀνάγκας ἔδν λέπαδνον . . . τόθεν τὸ παντότολμον φρονεῖν μετέγνω* (281 ff.), and with talk of *αἰσχρόμητις τάλαινα παρακοπά*. This means, I take it, that once the necessity was recognized the act was then passionately and impiously desired.<sup>49</sup> And even Orestes, in the very course of explaining that he has no choice but to avenge his father, can talk of being impelled by *ἕμεροι* (*Cho.* 299; cf. *Sept.* 692). Certainly the cases of Eteocles, Agamemnon, and Orestes are not identical (in particular there is no question of frenzied passion in Orestes' case); Aeschylus is not, indeed, concerned to make them conform to any abstract theory of moral responsibility. But they all do, I think, reflect a particular moral outlook or habit of thought—and one that is not arbitrary or without foundation in the realities of life. It is clear, after all, that whenever we make a decision there will be external factors influencing us and in some degree limiting our freedom; there is a sense in which any choice made by more rational means than spinning a coin amounts to a recognition that we have *no* choice. Nevertheless we do accept our decisions as our own and feel moral responsibility for them, and we tend to consider it just that other people, at least, should be punished when they commit crimes. It may be that philosophers, theologians, jurists or behavioural scientists have by now succeeded in resolving this apparent contradiction (though I fancy that even among these experts some disagreement persists as to where the solution lies); in our everyday

<sup>48</sup>I am much indebted here to Lesky's excellent discussions, both "Eteokles in den *Sieben*" (above, n. 13) and "Decision and Responsibility in the Tragedy of Aeschylus," *JHS* 86 (1966) 78 ff.

<sup>49</sup>I hope I may be excused for passing so lightly over a passage which in recent years has been the subject of detailed discussion by: D. L. Page in Denniston and Page, *Agamemnon* (Oxford 1957) xxiii ff.; E. R. Dodds, *PCPS* 186 (1960) 27 f.; Lloyd-Jones, "Guilt of Agamemnon" (above, n. 29); N. G. L. Hammond, *JHS* 85 (1965) 42 ff.; Lesky, "Decision and Responsibility" (above, n. 48); A. Rivier, *REG* 81 (1968) 19 ff.; J. J. Peradotto, *Phoenix* 23 (1969) 237 ff.; K. J. Dover, *JHS* 93 (1973) 58 ff.; O. L. Smith, *Eranos* 71 (1973) 1 ff.; J.-P. Vernant in Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, *Mythe et Tragédie en Grèce ancienne* (Paris 1973) 63 ff.; B. Vickers, *Towards Greek Tragedy* (London 1973) 351 ff.; R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *BICS* 21 (1974) 3 ff.—to name, as they say, but a few.

attitudes to questions of moral responsibility, however, it certainly continues to operate. And it is parallel to the contradiction (the combination of constraint and desire) which we have seen operating in Aeschylus.<sup>50</sup> I say 'parallel' and not 'identical' because the *degree* of constraint upon Eteocles, Agamemnon, and Orestes, and the *degree* to which the acts they commit are, as it seems to us, contrary to their natural disposition, are such that we would not expect these particular agents to feel any responsibility, still less desire, for their actions. There is an undoubted difference here between Aeschylus's vision and any modern one, to be explained, perhaps, by a relative lack on his part of any concept of 'natural disposition', and by the well-known tendency of archaic Greek moral thought to emphasise the act more than the intention. That is why we are conscious of a problem. But it may still be that these instances of double motivation in Aeschylus do no more than express in an extreme and paradoxical form a contradiction in human values which itself is real and universal.

Rather than advancing further into these deep waters, let us now consider the relation between the two scenes with which we have been concerned. There is, to start with, a very striking formal parallelism: in each scene short lyric stanzas from the Chorus, predominantly in dochmiacs, alternate with three-line speeches in iambic trimeters from Eteocles, and in each the *amoibaion* is followed by *stichomythia*. Such formal correspondence over so wide a space would be hard to parallel in Greek tragedy. One effect is to help to structure the play as a whole around the great centrepiece of the *Redepaare*; another is to provide an overt invitation to look at how the scenes correspond to or contrast with each other in terms of content.

It is the contrasts that the great majority of scholars have stressed, many going so far as to claim that the roles of Eteocles and the Chorus are now reversed. This seems to me quite unjustified. The case of Eteocles I have already discussed; it is true that we must now accept the existence of his passionate desire for fratricide, but this does not prevent him from continuing to display in his own speeches those qualities of rationality

<sup>50</sup>Ferrari, "Eteocle e il tragico" (above, n. 41), is right to point out that the irrational passion of Eteocles has little to do with modern concepts of free will; we tend to think of *crime passionnel* as being itself involuntary and unpunishable. But I do not think that this invalidates Lesky's arguments, or mine; what matters is that Eteocles does accept and desire the fratricide as though he were free not to commit it. It should be borne in mind also that the Greeks did place *crime passionnel* under the heading of *φονὸς ἐκούσιος*, having no very precise and circumscribed concept of free will; see Vernant, "Ébauches de la volonté dans la tragédie grecque," in Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, *op. cit.* (above, n. 49) 41 ff. (though I would question the assumption constantly made by Vernant, among others, that we, unlike the poor benighted Greeks, have arrived at an enlightened conception of "la volonté" which is generally accepted and fully rational and consistent).



and resolution which make up all the character he ever had. And on the charge of an alteration in the *Chorus's* character we may plead that there is no case to answer.<sup>51</sup> Thus when Wilamowitz<sup>52</sup> and others claim that the Chorus can no longer consist of maidens, their view seems to be based solely on the fact that they now give advice—as though no unmarried woman were capable of doing that—and on the word τέκνον at 686, which is merely a mark of affection and concern.<sup>53</sup> Nor is the affection and concern unexpected in itself when we remember that the Chorus could call Eteocles φίλον Οιδίπου τέκος immediately after his tirade against them (203).<sup>54</sup>

But Aeschylus has not only avoided inconsistency; he has effected close parallels of thought between the scenes. Eteocles was a fatalist before (e.g., 281, οὐ γάρ τι μᾶλλον μὴ φύγῃς τὸ μόρσιμον), and he is a fatalist now (e.g., 719, θεῶν διδόντων οὐκ ἂν ἐκφύγοις κακά). At 217 f. he pointed out that the gods might abandon a city, making prayer useless; at 702 ff. he explains that the gods have now abandoned him in exactly this manner. At 698–701, 705–708, the Chorus are still expressing a faith that the gods may provide salvation at the last if men's actions are sufficiently pious and humble—just as they did at 211–215, 226–229.

We are here presented, then, with the same contrast that we saw earlier between a sombre realistic fatalism and a trusting intuitive feminine piety. All that has changed is the situation; given the new situation, both parties take up exactly the positions that might have been expected. If it is now the fatalism of Eteocles that threatens to bring ruin when before it was the piety of the Chorus, this is due to a change, not in the character or attitudes of either party, but in the immediate subject under dispute. By dramatising in different situations what is essentially the same conflict of attitudes Aeschylus has been able to do full justice to both sides of the ethical problem involved. The play does not come apart at 653;<sup>55</sup> there has indeed been a break in the central subject-matter, but Aeschylus shows great skill in establishing thematic continuity across the break—or, to put it the other way round, in using

<sup>51</sup>Cf. von Fritz 214 f., 481 f.

<sup>52</sup>*Op. cit.* (above, n. 40) 68 f. I am anyway unable to understand how such a change could have been managed in the theatre. Unless the Chorus have furtively changed their masks at some point, they can be *seen* to be maidens.

<sup>53</sup>The Chorus of *Choephores* use the word in addressing Orestes (324), although there is no indication elsewhere that they are older than he, and Oedipus uses it in addressing his suppliants (Soph. *OT* 1, 7), some of whom are positively senile.

<sup>54</sup>It is true that *after* this scene the Chorus comes to be less positively characterized; but this still does not amount to a *change* of character.

<sup>55</sup>For the view that it does so see especially E. Howald, *Die griechische Tragödie* (Munich 1930) 73; Dawe, *art. cit.* (above, n. 24) 30 ff.; Cameron, *Studies* (above, n. 9) 96 ff.

the break as a means of depicting the same ethical issues from two different angles.

Again, it can be seen that Eteocles' final despair of divine protection was necessary to Aeschylus's purpose, both because it provided, as I have argued, a very effective way of motivating the duel, and because, by removing from Eteocles the need, which men of the fifth century normally felt, to humble himself before the gods, it enabled him (much like Sophocles' Ajax) to achieve some of the grim and proud self-sufficiency of Homer's heroes. But for this to be effective it was necessary that the values put to the test at the play's crisis should have been foreshadowed earlier and should not seem arbitrarily imposed at this point.

I should like finally to suggest that the ethical issues of these two scenes may be raised for a third time in the course of the play. In a recent article<sup>66</sup> I have argued that the bulk of the play's Exodos (1005–1025 and 1054–1078) should be retained as a scene between the Herald and the Chorus. In that case we shall once again have a representative of the state displaying a pragmatic religious attitude (by forbidding the burial of Polynices) while the Chorus display an emotional one (by saying that they cannot bear not to bury him). And although the issues are once again left unresolved, the division of the Chorus, with which the play ends, perhaps suggests a certain acceptance of their insolubility which brings this major theme of the play to a fitting close.

I do not wish to imply that acceptance of the arguments in my present article depends on acceptance of those in my article in *Classical Quarterly*, or *vice versa*; but I think I may fairly claim that the two articles hang satisfactorily together.

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<sup>66</sup>"The End of the *Seven Against Thebes*," *CQ* n.s. 26 (1976) 206 ff.

#### ADDENDUM

Since the above was written three studies have appeared which touch on matters discussed here.

K. Wilkens, *Die Interdependenz zwischen Tragödienstruktur und Theologie bei Aischylos* (Munich 1974) 90–113. Wilkens draws attention to the parallels between the two scenes which I have discussed, as well as to other motifs running through the play, but he draws from these a conclusion which I find unacceptable, that Eteocles is possessed by a desire to fulfil the Curse throughout (112).

M. Gagarin, *Aeschylean Drama* (Berkeley 1976) 120 ff., 151 ff. Although Gagarin takes a harsher view than I do of Eteocles' moral character, it is encouraging to see that we have reached notably similar conclusions on

some points. "It is precisely his [Eteocles'] refusal to change, his refusal to abandon his male, militaristic set of values, that causes his death" (161). "Only the situation has changed" (125).

R. P. Winnington-Ingram, "*Septem contra Thebas*," *YCS* 25 (1977) 1 ff. This excellent and wide-ranging study will surely be regarded as a standard account of the play for many years to come. I must acknowledge that through the generosity of Professor Winnington-Ingram I was once able to see a preliminary draft of his article, though I have tried not to be influenced by this in preparing my own, which approaches the play from a rather different angle. There are, however, few areas of sharp disagreement between us.