

ASPECTS OF AESCHYLUS' HOMERIC USAGES

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SIDERAS' *Aeschylus Homericus*¹ should long remain the definitive work on Aeschylus' use of Homeric words. The purpose of this paper is (a) to draw attention to a number of usages not covered by Sideras, despite his detailed treatment; (b) to bring these and examples dealt with *passim* by Sideras together into categories, so that a clearer impression may be formed of Aeschylus' linguistic habits vis-à-vis Homer; (c) to draw attention to some sections of Aeschylus' plays in which Homeric influence is most concentrated; (d) to examine two passages in which Homeric usages contribute to a generally vivid effect. Furthermore, the emphasis here is on deviations from Homer, and little is said about words in common literary use between Homer and Aeschylus. Sideras treats these adequately. I have throughout been aware that, because of the paucity of our sources, we can never be sure that Aeschylus is in any given case alone in deviating from Homer, or the first to do so, and many of our Aeschylean "coinages" may in fact be borrowings from lost works. These reservations must apply to what follows, as they do to all earlier research.

The deviations below show some independence on Aeschylus' part, though it is conceded that metre and the abandonment of formulaic composition may account for the appearance of some non-Homeric forms. The references are confined to single examples in each case; they are not exhaustive.

(1)Fluctuations of number: Aeschylus gives us singular forms of βέλεμον, κεῦθος, and ταρφύς (*Ag.* 1496, *Supp.* 778, and *Sept.* 535, respectively), whereas they are always plural in Homer (*Il.* 22.206, 22.482, and 11.387, respectively). However, Aeschylus uses τῖθά for "by a little" (*Pers.* 565) instead of Homer's τῖθόν (*Il.* 15.268). In Homer τῖθά means "into small parts" (*Od.* 12.174).

(2)Aeschylean compound formations based on simple Homeric verbs, with an intensification or variation of meaning: cf. διαμαθύνω (*Ag.* 824) and ἀμαθύνω (*Il.* 9.593); ἐπαύω (*Choe.* 828) and αὐώ (*Il.* 4.508); κατεναρίζω (*Choe.* 347) and ἐναρίζω (*Il.* 1.191); προτίω (*Ag.* 789) and τίω (*Il.* 5.467); ἐκτολυπεύω (*Ag.* 1032) and τολυπεύω (*Od.* 1.238, but cf. *Hes. Scut.* 44).

(3)Noun/adjective fluctuations: μέροψ is always adjectival in Homer (*Il.* 2.285), while in Aeschylus it appears also as a noun (*Choe.* 1018); ἱππιόχαρμης is always a noun in Homer (*Il.* 24.257), but Aeschylus uses it as an adjective as well (*Pers.* 105 and see [9] below).

¹A. Sideras, *Aeschylus Homericus* (Göttingen 1971, Hypomnemata 31).

(4) Expansion of forms: Aeschylus, unlike Homer, uses ἐναίρω (*Sept.* 811), (κατ)ἐναρίζω (*Choe.* 347), and ὀροθύνω (*P.V.* 200)² in the passive; δῆρις appears as a nominative (*Supp.* 412), with δῆριος as a genitive (*Ag.* 942), whereas Homer has only the accusative δῆριν (*Il.* 17.158).

(5) Differences of form: the Doric form δαρός (*P.V.* 648) is used by Aeschylus even in dialogue—cf. Homeric δηρός (*Il.* 2.298); ἰλέομαι (*Supp.* 117) is Aeschylus' equivalent of Homer's ἰλάομαι (*Il.* 2.550); Aeschylus sometimes gives μῆτις an -ιδ stem—cf. μῆτιδας (*Choe.* 626) and μῆτιν (*Il.* 2.407); πτολιπόρθης (*Ag.* 472) replaces Homeric πτολίπορθος (*Il.* 20.152).

(6) New formations: Aeschylus coins ἀτίετος (*Eum.* 385) from Homer's τίω (*Il.* 9.238); ἰαλτός (*Choe.* 22) is based on ἰάλλω (*Od.* 9.288, and see the difference of application in [9] below); καναχῆς (*Choe.* 152) comes from καναχέω (*Od.* 19.469, and see the difference of application in [9] below); ὀλιγοδρανία (*P.V.* 548) is coined from Homer's ὀλιγοδρανέων (*Il.* 15.246).

(7) Extended constructions: δίομαι, transitive in Homer (*Il.* 22.189), is combined with prepositions in Aeschylus (ἐπί at *Eum.* 357, μετά at *Supp.* 819); κοιρανέω, intransitive in Homer (*Il.* 2.207), governs the genitive at *Pers.* 214 and the dative at *P.V.* 49; μαίομαι, which governs the accusative in Homer (*Od.* 13.367), may be followed by an infinitive in Aeschylus (*Choe.* 786), if the preceding lines have been correctly restored.

(8) Weakened meanings: γεραρός, "majestic" in Homer (*Il.* 3.170), is just "old" at *Ag.* 722 and appears as a plural noun, for "elders," at *Supp.* 667; δηναίος, "long-lived" in Homer (*Il.* 5.407), means "old" in Aeschylus (*P.V.* 794); ῆπύω is "call to" (*Od.* 10.83) and, more vividly, "roar" (of the wind) (*Il.* 14.399), while in Aeschylus it is "speak" or "utter" (*P.V.* 593); κῶδιστος, the regular honorific of gods and heroes in Homer (*Il.* 2.412), is reduced to "greatest" (of woes) in Aeschylus (*Supp.* 13).

(9) Other differences of application—these are listed alphabetically and in some cases illustrate only Aeschylus' well-known love of metaphor:

ἀγάστωνος may have a passive idea ("lamentable") as well as an active one at *Sept.* 99. Homer applies the adjective to Amphitrite or the sea at *Od.* 12.97.

ἀδήριτος means "ineluctable" at *P.V.* 105, while at *Il.* 17.42 it means "free from strife."

αἰθαλόεις presumably following Hes. *Theog.* 72, Aeschylus uses the word as "blazing" (*P.V.* 992); in Homer it means "smoky" (*Il.* 2.415) or "black," "burnt out" (*Od.* 24.316).

²This play is here considered authentic.

- ἄκις causative in Aeschylus, “weakening” (*P.V.* 548); applied to people, it means “feeble” in Homer (*Od.* 9.515).
- ἀλδαίνω the metaphorical applications with θυμόν (*P.V.* 539) and κακά (*Sept.* 557) contrast with Homer’s literal use (*Od.* 18.70).
- ἀτέραμνος Aeschylus expands Homer’s metaphorical use—it is applied to κῆρ at *Od.* 23.167—by qualifying ὀργή (*P.V.* 190) and μύκημα (*P.V.* 1062) with this adjective.
- βάσκω βάσκει means “come” at *Pers.* 663, but βάσκ’ ἔθι is “away!” in Homer (*Il.* 2.8).
- βρίζω Aeschylus uses this verb metaphorically of φρήν (*Ag.* 275) and αἶμα (*Eum.* 280), whereas in Homer it means “to be sleepy,” of a person (*Il.* 4.233).
- δίομαι applied by Aeschylus to pursuing an office (*Eum.* 385); in Homer it means “put to flight” (*Il.* 22.189, and see [7] above).
- ιάλλω means “despatch,” with a personal object, in Aeschylus (*P.V.* 659, and see ἱαλτός in [6] above). Homer applies it most often to putting forth hands (*Od.* 1.149) or sending forth arrows (*Il.* 8.300).
- ιότης the dative may mean only “for the sake of” at *P.V.* 558, though Sikes and Willson (note *ad loc.*, MacMillan edition 1898) render it “to grace” (thy marriage). Homer uses it as “will” (*Od.* 7.214).
- ἵπποχάρμης may be any horseman in Aeschylus (*Pers.* 29, and see [3] above), but only a fighter from a chariot in Homer (*Il.* 24.257).
- ἰυγμός a “cry of pain” in Aeschylus (*Choe.* 26), a “shout of joy” in Homer (*Il.* 18.572).
- καναχής is used of a “plashing” tear in Aeschylus (*Choe.* 152), while Homer applies καναχή or καναχέω to the sounds made by metal, feet, and teeth (*Od.* 19.469, 6.82, *Il.* 19.365, respectively; and see [6] above).
- κεκασμένος Aeschylus’ absolute use as “armed” (*Eum.* 766) contrasts with the common Homeric use with the dative, suggesting excellence (*Od.* 4.725).
- μογέω as an absolute verb means “suffer pain,” “be distressed” in Aeschylus (*P.V.* 275), whereas weariness or difficulty are

- implied in Homer (*Od.* 24.388 and *Il.* 12.29 respectively). When applied to pain in Homer, the verb requires an object (*Od.* 16.19).
- ὄβριμος appears as the epithet of μῖσος, which is applied to Clytaemnestra, at *Ag.* 1411; in Homer it is attached to gods, heroes, and tangible things (*Il.* 5.845, 19.408, 3.357, respectively).
- ποτινίσομαι Aeschylus uses the verb of approaching the gods with sacrifices (*P.V.* 530); in Homer it is an ordinary verb of motion (*Il.* 9.381).
- πτῶξ Aeschylus makes this word refer to a person cowering like an animal (*Eum.* 326); compare Homer's application of the word to animals (*Il.* 17.676).
- φυσίζοος the second element is associated by Aeschylus with ζή or ζωή (*Supp.* 584), while some scholars believe that Homer had ζειά in mind (*Od.* 11.301, and see Stanford's note *ad loc.*, MacMillan edition 1947).

It is sometimes possible to read one or two hundred lines of Aeschylus without meeting a single peculiarly Homeric word, a fact which makes a few clusters of them quite striking, even if in some cases their occurrence appears to have no special artistic justification. (It is in the martial sections that Homeric echoes contribute most tellingly to the elevation of Aeschylus' style.) The following combinations will serve as examples: *Pers.* 104–105 πολέμους πυργοδαῖκτους / διέπειν ἵπποχάρμας τε κλόνους (πυργοδαῖκτους is Aeschylus' own coinage, incorporating Homeric δαῖζω); 126–129 πᾶς γὰρ ἱππηλάτας / καὶ πεδοστιβῆς λεῶς / σμήνος ὥς ἐκκλείουπεν μελισσ- / ἄν σὺν ὀρχάμφ στρατοῦ (πεδοστιβῆς is Aeschylus' coinage to balance his variant of Homeric ἱππηλάτα, and the brief simile will certainly recall many another in epic concerning bees); 555–556 τίπτε . . . / . . . πολιῆταις; *Sept.* 483–484 βάξουσιν . . . / . . . τῶς; *Supp.* 819–821 διόμενοι / . . . διζήνται; *Ag.* 775 ἐναΐσιμον τίει; 942 δῆριος τίεις (see [4] above); *Choe.* 626–629 μήτιδας . . . / τῶ; 881–882 ἀντῶ . . . / ἄκραντα βάζω (the adjective is a variant of Homeric ἀκράαντος); *P.V.* 530–558 ποτινισομένα / ἀλίτοιμι / ἀλδαίνουσιν / ὀλιγοδρανίαν ἄκικυν, ἱ- / σόνειρον (note the epic long iota of this Aeschylean coinage and recall dream similes in epic) / ἰότατι.

Finally, it is worth examining two passages in which Homeric effects combine with others to produce a memorable result. (a) In *Supp.* 794–796 the Danaids convey their loathing of a forced marriage by imagining an eminence from which they would jump rather than submit: λισσᾶς αἰγίλιψ ἀπρόσ- / δεικτος οἰόφρων κρεμᾶς / γυπιάς πέτρα. In this unique string of

adjectives half have the relatively rare -ας termination and four (ἀπρόσδεικτος, οἰόφρων, κρεμάς, and γυπιάς) appear to be Aeschylean coinages. One recalls λισσὴ . . . πέτρῃ (*Od.* 3.293) and αἰγίλιπος / πέτρης (*Il.* 9.15); λισσάς is a rare variant. The adjectives are to be associated with each other in pairs, the second, if literally interpreted, being always a colourful intensification of the first: λισσάς / αἰγίλιψ—the slipperiness of the rock has caused even the goats to desert it; ἀπρόσδεικτος / οἰόφρων—because of its remoteness the rock cannot be pointed out and it now chooses to be alone. The second adjective personifies it strongly. The rock has φρῆν, perhaps even φρόνημα in its sense of “pride.” κρεμάς / γυπιάς—the first word is vivid enough in itself with its suggestion of “hanging,” and the second, apart from answering αἰγίλιψ, informs us that the Danaids would, after all, have companions at the moment of their plunge to death; but how sinister and how predatory those companions would be! (b) Homeric features are significant in *Ag.* 1030–34 with its conspicuously daring mixture of metaphors: (καρδία) ὑπὸ σκότῳ βρέμει / θυμαλγῆς τε καὶ οὐδὲν ἐπελπομέ- / να ποτὲ καίριον ἐκτολυπεύσειν / ζωπυρουμένας φρενός. In applying βρέμω to καρδία Aeschylus extends its range, since Homer uses it of the elements (*Il.* 4.425 and middle at *Il.* 14.399). In Homer θυμαλγῆς has an active meaning (“heart-grieving” at *Il.* 9.387), but applied to καρδία here it signifies “grieving within.” In ἐπελπομένα Aeschylus gives us a variant of Homeric ἐπι-. The metaphorical ἐκτολυπεύσειν recalls similar metaphorical uses of τολυπεύω by Homer (e.g., *Od.* 1.238), though the most felicitous is Penelope’s ἐγὼ δὲ δόλους τολυπεύω (*Od.* 19.137), with its reference to the original meaning of winding off wool. Aeschylus reserves his most forceful metaphor for the end, and the usage appears to be peculiar to him: in ζωπυρουμένας φρενός one is aware not only of emotions burning like fire but also of a visual contrast with the σκότος above.

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