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THE OMEN OF THE EAGLES AND THE ΗΘΟΣ OF AGAMEMNON

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I

THERE IS A KIND OF DRAMA which lays claim to some degree of universality. It is, in a sense, the syllogism of literary art. An undistracted rigour governs its movement from premises to conclusions, from cause to effect. It can little afford the exuberance of comedy or the expansive digressions and unhurried pace of epic. A preoccupation with the chain of cause and effect, with responsibility, dominates this kind of tragic composition and forces it to strip away chance, the fortuitous, the coincidental, leaving only a perception of naked law.[1]

The *Oresteia* is just such a dramatic syllogism, and the first premise of its poetic logic is the omen of the eagles feasting on the pregnant hare, together with two closely allied events—the anger of Artemis and the sacrifice of Iphigeneia—in the parodos of the *Agamemnon* (109–247). The whole trilogy is structured on this incident; images and verbal motifs from this scene recur again and again throughout the work. It sets the "problem"; the remainder of the trilogy develops a solution. Since this problem is a profoundly moral one, involving the concrete issue of Agamemnon's guilt as well as ultimate questions about the nature of the gods, man, and the world, a misunderstanding of the oblique, oracular terms in which this scene is written will seriously compromise even the most careful reading of the rest of the trilogy, and vitiate its poetic logic. Just how important this passage is can be assessed in some measure by the fact that in most cases a critic's interpretation of this portent turns out to be a capsule-version of his total view of Aeschylean moral and religious thought.[2] And in recent years the most literal and, for that reason, misleading interpretations of this scene have been proposed by

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[1]Cf. A. C. Schlesinger, *Boundaries of Dionysus* (Cambridge, Mass. 1963) esp. 12–26.

[2]A survey of significant scholarly viewpoints on this passage may be found in E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus: Agamemnon* (Oxford 1950) 2.96–99, to which the following must now be added: John Finley, *Pindar and Aeschylus* (Cambridge, Mass. 1955) 252 f. (to whose brief but profoundly thought-provoking reading of this passage I owe a great deal), and *Four Stages of Greek Thought* (Stanford 1966) 38; H. D. F. Kitto, *Form and Meaning in Drama* (London 1956) 2–5, 70–79; J. D. Denniston and Denys Page, *Aeschylus: Agamemnon* (Oxford 1957) xxiii-xxviii; C. J. Reeves, "The Parodos of the *Agamemnon*," *CJ* 55 (1960) 165–171; William Whallon, "Why is Artemis Angry?" *AJP* 82 (1961) 78–88; H. Lloyd-Jones, "The Guilt of Agamemnon," *CQ* 12 (1962) 187–199.

critics whose attitude toward the intellectual merit of poetic drama is, to say the least, disconcerting.

That poetry possesses a respectable logic of its own and merits our serious consideration as a means of exploring reality and discovering values is a truth which some Aeschylean critics seem hesitant to entertain without Platonic misgivings or even outright disdain. They create the impression that Aeschylus was singularly unenlightened, distinguished to be sure by a gift for graceful language, but often incoherent, confused, or at best conventional in his thinking.[3] They imply that serious literature may woo us by power and grace of language, but still requires the suspension or even suppression of those critical faculties whose meat is consistency, profundity, and discovery. So, for example, Page tells us that "Aeschylus is first and foremost a *great poet and most powerful dramatist*: the faculty of acute or profound thought is not among his gifts."[4] Fraenkel, though he finds the anger of Artemis an unmotivated and embarrassingly arbitrary starting-point for the logic of cause and effect in the trilogy, still ends with the implication that such lapses of coherence are easily overlooked in the heat of impassioned utterance and may even be concealed by poetic legerdemain: "Aeschylus might be confident that the *power of his song* would keep the hearers firmly in its grip and leave no room for idle speculation or curiosity about details."[5]

The attitude toward poetry and criticism underlying these statements is one which prevailed in the late nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, and still persists obstinately in classical studies long after the revolution in critical methodology that has occurred in other literary fields. Its major characteristic is the dissociation of intellect and emotion, and the association of poetry only with the latter. It is symptomatic that it was a classicist, A. E. Housman, who should make what was probably the last significant defence of this view of poetry in the Leslie Stephens Lecture for 1933,[6] a decade after *The Wasteland* and a year after F. R. Leavis began his vigorous protest against the Victorian dissociation of emotion and intellect and the conventional exclusion of ideas from

[3]See, for example, Lloyd-Jones' essay on tragedy in the collection of essays edited by him, *The Greek World* (Baltimore 1965), esp. 99; also his "Zeus in Aeschylus," *JHS* 76 (1956) 55–67. For a critique of this literalism, cf. H. D. F. Kitto, *Poiesis: Structure and Thought* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1966) 1–115.

[4]Page (above, note 2) xv; italics added.

[5]Fraenkel (above, note 2) 2.99; italics added.

[6]"The Name and Nature of Poetry," delivered at Cambridge in May, 1933, and published in A. E. Housman, *Selected Prose* (ed. John Carter) (Cambridge 1961) 168–195. For a sensitive scrutiny of Housman's attitude toward poetry and the state of literary criticism in contemporary classical studies, see Brooks Otis, "Housman and Horace," *Pacific Coast Philology* 2 (April 1967) 5–24.

poetry.[7] Many of Housman's statements in that lecture read like the first principles upon which Page's conclusions about Aeschylean poetry might have been founded:

> I cannot satisfy myself that there are any such things as poetical ideas. . . . Poetry is not the thing said but the way of saying it. . . . Meaning is of the intellect, poetry is not. . . . The intellect is not the fount of poetry. . . . ; it may actually hinder its production . . . and . . . it cannot even be trusted to recognize poetry when produced. . . . . Poetry indeed seems to me more physical than intellectual. . . . I think that the production of poetry, in its first stage, is less an active than a passive and involuntary process; and if I were obliged, not to define poetry, but to name the class of things to which it belongs, I should call it a secretion.[8]

If the critic is convinced that poetry may so easily dispense with ideas and consistency and still lay claim to our serious attention, and that the most it can do is lend prose statements "an enhancement which glorifies and almost transfigures them,"[9] then he will surely make no great attempt to discover in it any logic other than that of prose, nor feel any scandal at its absence.[10] This is not the place for a detailed critique of this view of poetry. It has been mentioned only because, as we shall see time and again in our analysis, it has profoundly affected Aeschylean scholarship by its depreciation or intolerance of literary criticism, and by a literalism in the reading of poetic texts which calls itself objectivity, but which proves especially impotent before a passage whose fabric is as multilayered and symbolic as the one under discussion.

Because the omen of the eagles and the hare belongs to a broader network of symbolic events and images, whose parts illuminate one another only gradually, it is understandable that they should not yield their meaning easily or immediately. The difficulty is further compounded by calculated verbal obscurity in Calchas' interpretation and the chorus' narration, both motivated by the fear that a too explicit reference to untoward events or their causes will bring them about. But the effect of this heavy overlay of obliqueness is not to divert our attention from bad logic, but to make us all the more aware that there is a problem to be solved.

[7] In *New Bearings in English Poetry* (London 1932).

[8] Housman (above, note 6) 186–188, 194.

[9] Housman (above, note 6) 186.

[10] Interesting, if not wholly convincing, are the arguments of R. D. Dawe in this connection. In "Inconsistency of Plot and Character in Aeschylus," *PCPS* 189 (1963) 21–62, he finds that the ultimate aim of Aeschylean dramaturgy was ἔκπληξις—emotional impact (cf. the manuscript life of Aeschylus, 7)—in each scene, to be achieved at any price, even of consistency of plot and character. Tycho von Wilamowitz had made a similar claim concerning Sophocles in *Die dramatische Technik des Sophokles* (Berlin 1917).

"The problem," as Whallon[11] summarizes it, "is why Artemis should require atonement. She cannot seek retribution for the predation against Troy paid in advance, Fraenkel argues, unless the formula *δράσαντι παθεῖν* is changed to *δράσοντι παθεῖν* [2.97]. But if she bears a grudge against the Atridae for a reason unconnected with the sack of the city, the omen is dramatically misleading. The devouring of the hare is most understandably seen as the sacrifice of Iphigeneia or the children of Thyestes told in other terms." Whallon's summary presents three possible motives for Artemis' anger: the killing of the hare and her young represent (*a*) the harm that will be done innocent non-combatants at Troy, (*b*) the sacrificial slaughter of Iphigeneia, and (*c*) the murder of Thyestes' children by Atreus. We shall return in due course to these three explanations after examining two further interpretations which merit our attention, and reviewing the poetic tradition concerning the events at Aulis.

The first of these alternate interpretations is that Artemis hates the Atreidae simply *because the eagles typify them*, not because Agamemnon is guilty in the eyes of the goddess.[12] The matter is, of course, the other way round; Artemis hates the eagles because they typify the Atreidae. Or better, perhaps: she hates both eagles and Atreidae for the same reason. If the eagles typify the Atreidae, then it must certainly be for something associated with the dramatic content of the omen—something, that is, which is considered guilty *in Artemis' eyes*. That is a critical point, and Page misses it when he argues that it is the killing of the hare, meant as an encouraging omen, that angers Artemis, not anything that Agamemnon has done or will do, *since his actions congrue with the will of Zeus*.[13] But Zeus is not Artemis, and Agamemnon's actions may very well congrue with the will of Zeus and yet earn the displeasure of Artemis.

Another interpretation is Lloyd-Jones'—that Artemis' anger against Agamemnon is sufficiently motivated by the fact that "in the *Iliad* and

[11]Whallon (above, note 2) 81.

[12]J. Conington and C. Robert; see Fraenkel, 2.97. T. Plüss, in "Die Tragödie Agamemnon und das Tragische," *Wissensch. Beilage zum Bericht über das Gymnasium* (Basel 1896) 12, goes a fatal step further and claims that Artemis is angry *only* with the eagles, not with the Atreidae at all.

[13]Page (above, note 2) xxiii–xxv. Concerning this insistence that Agamemnon is guiltless because he is doing Zeus' will, some further considerations are in order. Must we assume with Page that in willing the punishment of Paris, Zeus also wills the destruction of Troy? And if he does (the text is doubtful), must we assume that he also wills the harm which comes to Troy's innocent non-combatants, protégés of Artemis? And if he does (the text is silent), must we expect that such a state of affairs be "justified by any reasoning acceptable to man"? On this last point it is hard not to share Winnington-Ingram's suspicion (in his review of Denniston-Page, *CR* n.s. 9 [1959] 25) "that his [Page's] real quarrel may be not so much with Aeschylus' theology as with the world in which we live."

in the whole poetic tradition Artemis together with her brother Apollo appears as a loyal partisan of Troy against the invaders."[14] This is inadequate on several counts. As for her presence in the *Iliad*, it is predominately as a bringer of death to women that she would have been remembered, rather than as a "loyal partisan of Troy." Furthermore, it is a dangerous practice to assume anything in Greek tragedy from so variegated a tradition of poetry and cult as lies back of it, unless substantial support in the text warrants our doing so. How easily Aeschylus may dispense with the Homeric tradition and emphasis can be seen in the fact that Apollo, speaking of Agamemnon (*Eum.* 631 ff.), assumes a commendatory tone hardly appropriate for a "loyal partisan of Troy" regarding the leader of the invaders. Where Artemis is concerned, what is heavily emphasized in the *Agamemnon*, to the exclusion of nearly all her other prerogatives and attributes, is her *protective concern for the young and innocent* (an aspect of her personality which would probably have been uppermost in the mind of a fifth-century Athenian, for reasons we shall shortly note). Indeed, the Artemis who enters battle in *Iliad* 20 is utterly alien to the Aeschylean vision, in which it is precisely the destructiveness of war itself that rouses her anger. As we shall shortly argue in greater detail, Artemis is not angry because the victims of Agamemnon's attack are Trojans, but because they are young and innocent victims. Although Lloyd-Jones is quite right in reading the murdered hare as a symbol for the doom of Troy and its inhabitants, he is wrong in seeing Artemis' anger as motivated by nothing more profound than political partisanship. This might satisfy a romancer or mythographer, but it is the purpose of the present analysis to show that Aeschylus cannot and does not settle for such shoddy aetiology in probing so important a question of responsibility and punishment.

Fraenkel has rightly emphasized the differences between Aeschylus' account and the poetic tradition, though he has, I think, drawn incorrect conclusions from those differences. He reasons that, in order to secure Agamemnon's relative innocence and to make his downfall the result of a deliberate choice in a difficult dilemma rather than the disproportionate upshot of a minor offence, Aeschylus "followed the traditional story in maintaining the wrath of Artemis and her appeasement through the sacrifice of Iphigeneia but eliminated the act of Agamemnon which had incensed the goddess."[15] He then goes on to suggest, as we noted above, that Aeschylus ventures to distract his audience from the missing link by "the power of his song." While for Page and Lloyd-Jones the scene represents nothing more profound than the mythic tradition, Fraenkel at least sees it as an exercise in serious, if slightly flawed, thought.

[14]Lloyd-Jones (above, note 2) 190. [15]Fraenkel (above, note 2) 2.99.

It is flawed, Fraenkel would conclude, because there is still a disproportion (though smaller than in the *Cypria*) between the cause of Agamemnon's punishment and its severity. In effect, Fraenkel sees Aeschylus reducing the responsibility of Agamemnon by increasing the arbitrariness of the goddess. But there is only a difference in degree, not in kind, between a divinity who punishes a man so severely for a venial offence (as in the *Cypria*), and a divinity who punishes him for no offence at all. This expedient turns out to be no solution at all: the relatively arbitrary wrath of Artemis is still the starting point and primary cause of Agamemnon's fate, not the deliberate moral decision which, as Fraenkel rightly observes, Aeschylus wished to be the primary cause of that fate. My difference with Fraenkel, as I shall argue in greater detail below, is that Aeschylus has not only "eliminated the act of Agamemnon which had incensed the goddess" (in the *Cypria*), but has substituted in its place an Agamemnon whose moral disposition (ἦθος) is such as to issue in acts at Troy which alienate Artemis. The omen of the eagles dramatizes this moral disposition. If we can demonstrate that the poet has endowed Agamemnon not with less responsibility than he had in the *Cypria*, but with *more*, and that in so doing he has made the king's character and conduct quite proportionate to the punishing anger of Artemis, we shall have the kind of starting point Fraenkel observes here, without feeling constrained to look upon Aeschylean poetry as an incantation to charm away logical difficulties.

Towards this end, our first task must be to examine the poetic tradition behind the wrath of Artemis. It is best reproduced in the epitome of the *Cypria* by Proclus. There we learn that during the second gathering at Aulis Agamemnon, after shooting a deer, had angered Artemis by his boast of skill superior to hers.[16] Other accounts either add details or offer minor variations on this version. In Sophocles' *Electra* (558–576), two details are worthy of note: first the goddess is offended not only by the boast but by the fact that the killing takes place in her sacred grove;[17] second, the subsequent storm keeps the ships from sailing either to Troy *or home*. Apollodorus (*Epitome* 3.21) indicates two causes for Artemis' anger: (*a*) the boast that not even Artemis could have done it better, and (*b*) the fact that Atreus, Agamemnon's father, had neglected to sacrifice the golden lamb to her.[18] Euripides (*IT* 20 ff. and 209 ff.)

[16]The following sources give the same version: Schol. *Il.* 1.108, Schol. Eur. *Or.* 658, Callimachus *Dian.* 263, Dictys Cret. *Bell. Troi.* 1.19–22, Tzetzes *ad Lyc.* 183.

[17]Compare Hygin. *Fab.* 98: *Cervam eius violavit superbiusque in Dianam est locutus.*

[18]So reads the Vatican manuscript. But the Sabbaitic scribe, misinterpreting the phrase οὐδὲ ἡ Ἄρτεμις, introduces a slight variant: Agamemnon boasted that the deer could not have escaped him *even if Artemis had wished it* (οὐδ' Ἀρτέμιδος θελούσης).

introduces a motif common in the folktale tradition,[19] that the sacrifice of Iphigeneia was the constrained fulfillment of Agamemnon's earlier vow to give Artemis the loveliest thing each year should produce.[20]

Two things are noteworthy about these versions in their treatment of Artemis' anger. First, the various inciting causes are altogether prior to and wholly unrelated to the war; second, there is not the remotest resemblance between them and the Aeschylean omen of the eagles and the hare (unless it be in the killing of an animal). These two observations are not unrelated. As I hope to demonstrate, Aeschylus' seemingly deliberate rejection of the tradition is motivated in part by a desire to relate the goddess' wrath causally to the war.

The omen of the eagles and the hare bears no significant correspondence to anything in the poetic tradition about the *second* gathering at Aulis. But it does closely resemble the omen observed at the *first* gathering (*Il.* 2.301–30 and Proclus' summary of the *Cypria*) forecasting an Argive victory in the tenth year: a snake devouring a sparrow and her eight nestlings. Aeschylus has seen fit to conflate the two gatherings at Aulis into one in such a way that the omen of the eagles and the hare does double service as prediction of an Argive victory and as emblem of Artemis' wrath. Still, it remains to ask why the poet should not be satisfied merely to reproduce the omen of the snake and sparrows so well-known from the *Iliad*. If Lloyd-Jones were right in positing as the cause of Artemis' anger her loyal partisanship of Troy (the victims in the Aeschylean omen obviously symbolize the Trojans), then no change would have been necessary, inasmuch as the sparrows of the traditional version also symbolize the Trojans.[21] What poetic purposes were better served by the portent of the eagles and hare than by that of the snake and sparrows, and—a related question—what was the experiential or historical raw material out of which Aeschylus fashioned the portent as it appears in the text?

An answer to the second question, even a merely probable one, will facilitate our investigation of the first, for it goes without saying that a literary artist at nearly every stage of his task quite naturally assumes in his audience a response to associations of the experiential raw materials of his work which may be lost on the foreign reader with nothing but the text to rely on. We must, of course, always exercise care in reconstructing

[19]Compare Jephtha's vow in *Judges* 11.30–40, and cf. Wilamowitz, "Die beiden Electren," *Hermes* 18 (1883) 253.

[20]Cicero uses this version as an example of a promise better left unfulfilled (*Off.* 3.25.95): *Promissum potius non faciendum quam tam taetrum facinus admittendum fuit.*

[21]It is true that the sparrows in the omen seem to refer *primarily* to years of war, but unless they also symbolize Troy, Calchas could not predict an Argive, rather than a Trojan, victory.

the manner in which a poet has converted his raw materials into artistic products, keeping in mind that such reconstructions have at best only probable validity.

An introductory clue to our question is the statement of a scholiast on Aristophanes' *Lysist.* 645: *κἂτ' ἔχουσα τὸν κροκωτὸν ἄρκτος ἢ Βραυρωνίοις· οἱ δὲ τὰ περὶ Ἰφιγένειαν ἐν Βραυρῶνι φασίν, οὐκ ἐν Αὐλίδι. Εὐφορίων· Ἀγχίαλον Βραυρῶνα, κενήριον Ἰφιγενείας. δοκεῖ δὲ Ἀγαμέμνων σφαγιάσαι τὴν Ἰφιγένειαν ἐν Βραυρῶνι, οὐκ ἐν Αὐλίδι.* Brauron (modern Vraona), situated some twenty miles from Athens, was an important centre of the cult of Artemis. Close ties had always existed between the two communities: Brauron was one of the twelve cities in the Attic *synoikismos*, and was the home of the Pisistratids. In the fourth century there was a temple of Brauronian Artemis on the Acropolis, and a century earlier, during Aeschylus' day, young Athenian girls, aged five through ten, customarily participated in the festival of Brauronian Artemis, and were called *ἄρκτοι* because they imitated bears in the ritual (see the same scholion on *Lysist.* 645).[22] During excavations at Brauron begun in 1948, under the direction of John Papadimitriou,[23] votive statuettes were unearthed representing a young girl (very likely one of the *ἄρκτοι*) holding a hare.[24] In addition, votive offerings left at the temple indicate that it was a shrine frequented by women in their pregnancy. Euripides, certainly relying on local legend, makes Iphigeneia (after her sojourn among the Taurians) become "keeper of the keys" and, after her death, recipient of special honours at this shrine (*IT* 1462–1466).[25] Papadimitriou sums up the history of the site as follows:

> Artemis Brauronia . . . was associated with Iphigeneia and adored as Protectress of birth and fertility—especially animal fertility. But we are able to say now that the name of Iphigeneia is one of the *hypostases* of the great chthonian goddess—the Earth-mother—and the cult remained continually associated with the same site even after the abandonment of the prehistoric town. It was much later that the goddess became confused with Artemis and the name became an epithet of Artemis .... We must affirm that

[22]For all the literary sources of our knowledge of Brauronian Artemis, cf. Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States* (Oxford 1896) 2.435–442, 564–566; see also Ludwig Deubner, *Attische Feste* (Berlin 1932) 207–208, and M. P. Nilsson, *Gesch. d. Griech. Rel.*[2] (Munich 1955) 1.484–486.

[23]The death of Papadimitriou has long delayed the correlation and final appraisal of the Brauron materials. For a description of the excavation at various stages, see *Praktika* from 1949 on, and *Ergon*, 1954–1961. An up-to-date popular account, relying heavily on conversations with Papadimitriou, may be found in Leonard Cottrell, *Realms of Gold* (Greenwich, Conn. 1963) 186–200.

[24]See reproductions in *Ergon* (1959) 36, fig. 38; Cottrell (above, note 23) plate 96; C. Kerenyi, *The Religion of the Greeks and Romans* (New York 1962) plate 75.

[25]Papadimitriou has actually identified one of the structures at Brauron as the tomb of Iphigeneia mentioned in *IT* 1464: *Praktika* (1955) 118–120.

a faith even older than that of Artemis became in time the cult of Iphigeneia who by classical times had become confused with the daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra.[26]

All the basic elements of the Aeschylean version are present here in embryo: Artemis as patron of pregnancy, innocent youth, and wild life; the hare as particularly appropriate to her cult because it is fecund, timid and innocent in appearance, and wild;[27] the association between Iphigeneia and Artemis.

Other intriguing points of correspondence between Brauron and the Aeschylean account appear. Describing Iphigeneia at the moment of her sacrificial death, Aeschylus uses the much discussed expression *κρόκου βαφὰς δ' ἐς πέδον χέουσα* (*Ag.* 239). At one level, it takes its place within the important image-patterns of entangling fabric (garments and nets) and of flowing blood that run through the trilogy.[28] But the detail adds a further dimension of pathos and irony as yet unnoticed: Iphigeneia is dressed like an *ἄρκτος* at the festival of Brauronian Artemis. The passage in the *Lysistrata* already cited and its scholion emphasize the *κροκωτόν* as a significant feature of the rite.[29] In a context involving Artemis and Iphigeneia, especially as Aeschylus compels us to envision the latter—young, innocent, unwed (*παρθενοσφάγοισιν ῥείθροις*, 210; *παρθενίου θ' αἵματος*, 215; *αἰῶνα παρθένειον*, 229; *ἀταύρωτος*, 245)—the detail would have conveyed the ritual significance quite naturally to an Athenian audience most (if not all) of whose young daughters would don the *κροκωτόν* and dance the bear-mime of Artemis before their marriages.[30]

Another way in which Brauron may have provided grist for the poet's mill is suggested a few lines earlier, where Iphigeneia is lifted, as the chorus describes it, *δίκαν χιμαίρας ὕπερθε βωμοῦ* (232). Here, as many scholars have pointed out, an Athenian may well have thought of the 500 *χίμαιραι* offered yearly to Artemis Agrotera for the victory at Marathon (Xen.

[26]Unpublished address of John Papadimitriou to the *Direction des Musées de France*, cited in Cottrell (above, note 23) 193.

[27]Herodotus (3.108), in discussing *τοῦ θείου ἡ προνοίη* which makes animals more prolific in proportion as they are timid and edible, singles out the hare as a prime example. Cf. also Aelian *NA* 2.12 and Pollux 5.73.

[28]On this point, see the excellent analysis by Anne Lebeck, "The Robe of Iphigeneia," *GRBS* 5 (1964) 35–41.

[29]*Lysist.* 645: *κἂτ' ἔχουσα τὸν κροκωτὸν ἄρκτος ἦ Βραυρωνίοις.* Σ: *Ἄρκτον μιμούμεναι τὸ μυστήριον ἐξετέλουν. αἱ ἀρκτευόμεναι δὲ τῇ θεῷ κροκωτὸν ἠμφιέννυντο, καὶ συνετέλουν τὴν θυσίαν τῇ Βραυρωνίᾳ Ἀρτέμιδι . . . . Ἄρτεμις . . . ἐκέλευσε παρθένον πᾶσαν μιμήσασθαι τὴν ἄρκτον πρὸ τοῦ γάμου καὶ περιέπειν τὸ ἱερὸν κροκωτὸν ἱμάτιον φοροῦσαν.*

[30]A precise parallel can be found at *Eum.* 1028, where the incorporation of the Erinyes into the life of Athens is symbolized by their investiture with the *φοινικοβάπτοις ἐνδυτοῖς ἐσθήμασι* traditionally worn by the *metoikoi* in the Panathenaeic procession. Cf. Walter Headlam, "The Last Scene in the *Eumenides*," *JHS* 26 (1906) 268–277, and George Thomson, *The Oresteia of Aeschylus*[2] (Amsterdam and Prague 1966) 2.231–233.

Anab. 3.2.12, Ael. *NH* 2.25), or of the Spartan custom of sacrificing one before battle (Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.20, Plut. *Lycurg.* 22.2). But a goat was also sacrificed at the Brauronia (Hesych. s.v. Βραυρώνια ἑορτή), according to one tradition, as a substitute for the young girl originally required.[31] An Athenian, with the rites at Brauron in mind, would be struck by the inversion, at once ironic and gruesome, involved in the Aeschylean substitution.[32]

The cult of Artemis at Brauron, then, and the traditions associated with it seem to provide most of the basic materials from which the Aeschylean account could have been created. It also sheds light on the more important question of what poetic purposes are better served by the eagle-hare image than by the Homeric snake and sparrows. The Artemis at Brauron is a goddess whose main concerns are fertility, pregnancy, youth, innocence, but around whose cult there are whispers of human sacrifice.[33] The Artemis of the *Agamemnon* is no other; the devouring of a pregnant hare and her brood dramatizes one aspect of her Brauronian character, while the sacrifice of Iphigeneia dramatizes the other. Such a goddess would indeed resent the murder of Thyestes' children, the murder of Iphigeneia, and the murder of innocent youth at Troy. These three analogous events stand to the omen of the slaughtered hare as species to a kind of symbolic genus; the omen subsumes all three events, relating them one to another as cases of the slaughter of innocent youth in the pursuit and exercise of power.

The text supports this triple reference. Treating the hare's death as a *sacrifice*[34] (θυομένοισιν, 136) and a *meal* (βοσκομένω, 119; λαγοδαίτας, 124; δεῖπνον, 138) underscores its relationship with the sacrificial feast of Thyestes' children (σφαγάς, 1096; βεβρωμένας, 1097; δαῖτα, 1242; θοινατῆρος, 1502; ἐπιθύσας, 1504; δαῖτα, 1593; σφαγήν, 1599; δείπνου, 1601), and to the sacrificial death of Iphigeneia (θυσίαν, 150; παρθενοσφάγοισιν, 209; θυσίας,

[31]Eustath. *Il.* 331.26, Bekker *Anec.* 444 f. The scene of the incident in these sources is the Piraeus, where there was a temple of Artemis Munychia, but on the confusion of Brauronian traditions with those of Artemis Munychia, see Deubner (above, note 22) 205–207.

[32]This assimilation of man to beast in the *Oresteia* is one of the trilogy's more striking image-patterns. In a drama about the progress of δίκη, Aeschylus' use of animal imagery is in the tradition of Hesiod who says that the animal kingdom is (or should be) distinguished from mankind by the fact that there is no justice in it: birds and beasts prey upon one another because there is no δίκη among them (*Op.* 276–280). So in the *Oresteia*, as δίκη itself becomes more humane, the poetic identifications between man and beast gradually diminish, both in number and repulsiveness. See Heinrich Weinstock, *Die Tragödie des Humanismus*[5] (Heidelberg 1967) 15, and J. Peradotto, *Time and the Pattern of Change in Aeschylus' Oresteia* (diss. Northwestern University 1963) 149–169.

[33]Consult Farnell (above, note 22) 2.566, note 35, for sources which associate human sacrifice with Artemis in other contexts than Brauron.

[34]Cf. Froma Zeitlin, "The Motif of the Corrupted Sacrifice in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," *TAPA* (1965) 463–508, where the sacrificial aspect of the eagle-hare omen is developed.

214; θυτήρ, 225; θυτήρων, 240; ἔθυσεν, 1417; τυθείσης, *Cho.* 242), which, though it is not a meal, does not get by without some allusion to eating (θυσίαν . . . ἄδαιτον, 150; εὐτραπέζους, 244).[35] But treated as a *hunt* (λοισθίων δρόμων, 120; πτανοῖσιν κυσί, 135), the omen clearly refers to Troy and its inhabitants[36] (ἀγρεῖ Πριάμου πόλιν, 126; ἐπὶ Τροίας πύργοις . . . δίκτυον . . . γάγγαμον, 357–361; κυναγοὶ κατ' ἴχνος, 695). This, I would argue, is the *primary* reference of the omen; here we are in agreement with Lloyd-Jones' conclusion, if not with his reasons. It is not as an arbitrary partisan of Troy, but as patroness of innocent youth and fertility that Artemis recoils from the indiscriminate predation which she knows a war under the Atreidae will be. Fraenkel[37] (and Whallon appears to follow him[38]) denies this on the grounds that no reference is made to the harm done the young at Troy in the interpretation of Calchas. But it is certainly implied in what Calchas says, and Fraenkel seems to recognize this: "From the fact that the eagles mercilessly devour the hare with her unborn young the seer seems to infer that Troy and *all that is in the city will be completely and violently destroyed.* The violence is strongly emphasized in λαπάξει πρὸς τὸ βίαιον, and that it is to be wholesale destruction is illustrated by a suggestive detail: not even the flocks outside will be spared, much less anything within the walls of the conquered city."[39] It is quite natural that Calchas, conscious of the consequences that δυσφημία may have, should avoid being as explicit about the unpropitious half of the omen—the cause of Artemis' anger—as he has been about the forecast of victory.[40]

But as if this indirect reference to young Trojan victims of the war

[35]Iphigeneia's sacrifice might be spoken of as satisfying hunger indirectly by bringing to an end the adverse winds, one of the effects of which was starvation (ἀπλοίᾳ κεναγγεῖ, 188; πνοαὶ . . . νήστιδες, 192 f.). Aeschylus may have derived this detail from the Brauronian tradition, according to which the need for sacrifice is precipitated by a λιμός which Artemis has caused (Schol. *Lysist.* 645; Suda, *s.v.* ἄρκτος; in reporting the same tradition, Eustath. *Il.* 331.26 and the author of the note in Bekker *Anec.* 444 speak of a λοιμός). None of the other versions of what happened at Aulis mention starvation.

[36]The motif of biting or eating also enters into the description of Troy's destruction: Ἀργεῖον δάκος (824), ὠμηστὴς λέων (827).

[37]Fraenkel (above, note 2) 2.96 f.

[38]Whallon (above, note 2) 81.

[39]Fraenkel (above, note 2) 2.96; italics added.

[40]Lloyd-Jones, "Three Notes on Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*," *RhM* 103 (1960) 76 f., argues that Calchas, in the expression κτήνη . . . δημιοπλήθεα, with the tendency Greek prophets show of referring to people by animal names, is referring to the Trojans, not to their cattle: "the herds which are the people." If this is the case, it should be further noted that an interpretation as cryptic as the omen itself would be odd, unless, as I have suggested, the interpreter had good reason to avoid straightforward speech—the fear of naming undesirable possibilities. No reader will have missed the sharp contrast between the clarity of lines 122–125 (explaining the propitious side of the omen, and identifying the eagles as the Atreidae and the hare as Troy) and lines 126–155, where, besides the calculated indirection of the language, one may note that the expected explanation of the unborn young is never explicitly made.

were not enough, the poet vividly recalls the detail in the next choral ode. The motif of the hunt, begun in the parodos (120, 126, 135), is resumed: the capture of Troy is described as the casting of a hunting-net from which neither old *nor young* can extricate themselves (357–361):

> . . . ἐπὶ Τροίας πύργοις ἔβαλες
> στεγανὸν δίκτυον ὡς μήτε μέγαν
> μήτ' οὖν νεαρῶν τιν' ὑπερτελέσαι
> μέγα δουλείας
> γάγγαμον ἄτης παναλώτου.

Note how οὖν adds emphasis to νεαρῶν, a word which, as Fraenkel himself points out (*ad loc.*), is properly, though by no means exclusively, used of young wild animals, and which certainly carries this connotation in the context of the hunting-net. The choice of this word itself and of the whole hunting image at once describes the event and recalls the omen which forecast it.[41] If, as is unlikely, the terms of the omen itself were not sufficient to have reminded a fifth-century audience of the Homeric Agamemnon's desire, memorable in its ferocity, that every Trojan perish utterly, *including the unborn child in the womb* (*Il.* 6.57–60[42]), then this passage would surely have done so, concentrating as it does upon the fate of the young and emphasizing the barbaric completeness[43] of the havoc (ἄτης παναλώτου). We are left with the overwhelming impression that the Argives, especially their commander, are not mere hunters, but vicious, pitiless, indiscriminate hunters, who must naturally incur the hatred of her in whose honour young hares, as Xenophon tells us, were traditionally spared by huntsmen.[44]

[41]If we accept Weil's φυτάλμιοι παιδῶν γέροντες or Denniston-Page's φυταλμίων παιδῶν γέροντες for the clumsy φυταλμίων παῖδες γερόντων of the manuscripts at 327 f., we have another, though less emphatic, reference to the fate of the young at Troy. Furthermore, in line 528 (καὶ σπέρμα πάσης ἐξαπόλλυται χθονός), though the metaphor is different, the referent is the same: killing—complete and indiscriminate.

[42]τῶν [*sc.* Τρώων] μή τις ὑπέκφυγοι αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον
χεῖράς θ' ἡμετέρας, μηδ' ὅν τινα γαστέρι μήτηρ
κοῦρον ἐόντα φέροι, μηδ' ὅς φύγοι, ἀλλ' ἅμα πάντες
'Ιλίου ἐξαπολοίατ' ἀκήδεστοι καὶ ἄφαντοι.

[43]To a fifth-century Athenian, not to spare the young would be un-Greek. Compare Thucydides' account of the massacre perpetrated by Thracian mercenaries at Mycalessus (7.29.4), where, as in the Aeschylean account, the historian concentrates upon the fate of the children and the indiscriminate slaughter of every living thing in sight: ἐσπεσόντες δὲ οἱ Θρᾷκες ἐς τὴν Μυκαλησσὸν τάς τε οἰκίας καὶ τὰ ἱερὰ ἐπόρθουν (cf. *Ag.* 527) καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐφόνευον φειδόμενοι οὔτε πρεσβυτέρας οὔτε νεωτέρας ἡλικίας (cf. *Ag.* 358 f.), ἀλλὰ πάντας ἐξῆς ὅτῳ ἐντύχοιεν καὶ παῖδας καὶ γυναῖκας κτείνοντες, καὶ προσέτι καὶ ὑποζύγια καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα ἔμψυχα ἴδοιεν (cf. *Ag.* 528).

[44]*Cyn.* 5.14: τὰ μὲν οὖν λίαν νεογνὰ [*sc.* τῶν λαγίων] οἱ φιλοκυνηγέται ἀφιᾶσι τῇ θεῷ. Fraenkel (above, note 2) 2.84, note 1, argues that this passage sheds no light on the omen: "Neither god nor man can expect of eagles the behaviour of φιλοκυνηγέται"—as if the eagles stood for nothing beyond themselves!

II

In the logic of the drama, then, Artemis, particularly under her Brauronian aspect of fertility goddess and guardian of the young and innocent, is angry principally over the innocent victims of the impending war. Yet, we must not, with Daube, regard the sacrifice of Iphigeneia as an *atonement* or *appeasement* demanded by Artemis of Agamemnon in advance for what he will do at Troy.[45] The sacrifice of Iphigeneia is itself a partial cause of Artemis' anger. We may not say, with Whallon, that Artemis was "a deity whose punitive actions became predacious,"[46] unless it can be shown that she desires and causes the death of Iphigeneia. The precise nature of Artemis' demand is a critical adjunct of our interpretation of the omen and must occupy us at this point for the light it throws on Agamemnon's guilt. For in the dramatic economy of the trilogy it is, as Fraenkel insists, the death of Iphigeneia which is, at the level of human agency, the first sufficient cause (*πρωτοπήμων*, 223) of the ensuing chain of troubles. Aeschylus, again departing significantly from the Homeric tradition, makes it quite clear in the feeble character of Aegisthus, effeminate foil to the masculine Clytemnestra, that the crime of Atreus, though a contributing factor, is not a sufficient cause of what follows.[47] Who then is responsible for the inciting incident—the death of Iphigeneia? The goddess who requires the sacrifice or the man who performs it?

Is it correct to say that Artemis *demands* the sacrifice of Iphigeneia? All the text tells us (in the words of Calchas) is that she caused adverse

[45]B. Daube, *Zu den Rechtsproblemen in Aischylos' Agamemnon* (Zurich 1938) 147 ff. Fraenkel (above, note 2) 2.97 and Whallon with him (above, note 2) 81 imply that the only conceivable relationship between the omen (with the ensuing sacrifice of Iphigeneia) and the events at Troy can be one of *atonement*. They therefore reject such a relationship on the grounds that "the fundamental maxim *δράσαντι παθεῖν* cannot be supplanted by a *δράσοντι παθεῖν*" (Fraenkel), implying that the death of Iphigeneia is a *πάθος* of Agamemnon. How relevant the principle *δράσαντι παθεῖν* is to Agamemnon as sacrificer of Iphigeneia is at best doubtful; actually, where the principle is explicitly applied to him, his *πάθος* is *his own* (not Iphigeneia's) death, and what he has *done* to deserve it is the sacrifice of Iphigeneia; *Ag.* 1526 f.: *Ἰφιγένειαν ἀνάξια δράσας ἄξια πάσχων* (compare 1564: *παθεῖν τὸν ἔρξαντα*). In any case, it will not be for Fraenkel's reason that we reject the notion of Iphigeneia's death as an atonement in the ensuing argument.

[46]Whallon (above, note 2) 87.

[47]Cf. Henri Weil, *Études sur la drame antique* (Paris 1897) 39, and N. G. L. Hammond, "Personal Freedom and its Limitations in the *Oresteia*," *JHS* 85 (1965) 42. Here we are in disagreement with Lloyd-Jones and Page who believe that the *fons et origo* of the action of the trilogy is the curse upon Atreus, and that Agamemnon, acting under its compulsion, is punished for the crime of his father. In what follows we will argue not against the notion of son punished for father's wrongs (it is a function of the reconciled Erinyes, *Eum.* 934 ff.), but against the idea that this is the exclusive or sufficient cause of Agamemnon's fate (as it is in Homer), and that Agamemnon is the victim of external compulsion.

winds, precipitating (σπευδομένα) the sacrifice (148–150), and that the sacrifice was a μῆχαρ (199), an *expedient* or *remedy* for the bad weather, proposed by Calchas, and uncontested by Agamemnon (μάντιν οὔτινα ψέγων, 186). Artemis compels Agamemnon to nothing. She merely creates a situation in which he may either cancel the war, or else pursue it by inflicting on his own household the kind of slaughter he will perpetrate at Troy. αἰτία ἑλομένου· θεὸς ἀναίτιος (or at most μεταίτιος). The result depends less upon the goddess than upon the kind of man Agamemnon is. And it is because Calchas knows what kind of man he is that he can speak of Artemis "precipitating" Iphigeneia's sacrifice by creating contrary winds. Some critics will, no doubt, find that this condition imposed by Artemis rather vitiates the picture I have drawn of her overmastering concern with the suffering young. But this (as any) estimate of the goddess depends upon whether or not Agamemnon has a reasonable alternative to the sacrifice of Iphigeneia. If such an alternative is wanting, then indeed Artemis at this point is not only inconsistent, but vicious. But is the alternative wanting?

We have suggested that Agamemnon is *free* to sacrifice or not to sacrifice Iphigeneia, to pursue the war against Troy or not to do so. Is this in fact true? Page,[48] Lloyd-Jones,[49] Fraenkel,[50] and Whallon[51] all insist that Agamemnon acts if not under compulsion, at least without a harmless alternative, that the war is a holy command of Zeus Xenios and not to pursue it is to incur punishment at his hands. The text seems to lend strong support to such a position. At 60–62, we are told by the chorus, Ἀτρέως παῖδας ὁ κρείσσων ἐπ' Ἀλεξάνδρῳ πέμπει ξένιος Ζεύς. They speak even more strongly at 362 f. of Troy's destruction as the work of Zeus (Δία τοι ξένιον. . . τὸν τάδε πράξαντα), and at 367 as his stroke (Διὸς πλαγάν). Similarly, at 748, they tell us that Helen, with the Argive army close behind her, brought doom to the Priamids, πομπᾷ Διὸς ξενίου, and Agamemnon at 853 greets the gods who sent him on the expedition and brought him back again (οἵπερ πρόσω πέμψαντες ἤγαγον πάλιν). But what seems "final and decisive" (in Page's words) is the description at 218 of

[48]Page (above, note 2) xxiii–xxiv.

[49]Lloyd-Jones (above, note 2) 193.

[50]Fraenkel (above, note 2) 3.726: "The common man may content himself with the wish μὴ εἴην πτολιπόρθης and hope thus to escape irrevocable conflicts, but the man on whom God has laid the burden of a great undertaking, seeing in front of him two ways open, may feel that whichever way he chooses there is no way out of evil." See also 2.122 f.

[51]Whallon (above, note 2) 83 f.: "Sent by Zeus as an Erinys against Troy, Agamemnon has no attractive choice. He faces the conflict between the punitive forces, Artemis and the Erinyes, and is scourged by the one for satisfying the other. . . . It is difficult to attach blame to Agamemnon. He sacrifices his daughter with free will, it is true, but an inimical cosmos has confronted him with a dilemma."

Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter as *inevitable* (*ἀνάγκας ἔδυ λέπαδνον*).

Here again we must be on our guard against the pitfalls of literalism. In particular, we must avoid confusing two quite distinct elements: on the one hand, the descriptive narrative of what happened in purely human causal terms, and on the other, the religious generalization or interpretation of those same events. The first states an individual and contingent fact; the second, usually made after the event, sees it as an instance of universal and necessary law. We must not confuse the statements of the chorus with a dramatic *intervention* of the gods, either offstage or on, as in the *Eumenides* (though these too, I would insist, must be interpreted in other than literal terms). Neither text nor tradition will warrant our assuming that Aeschylus or the chorus mean here an actual epiphany of Zeus to Agamemnon with a mandate to attack Troy, nor do I think any of the critics would defend such an absurd interpretation. How then are we to understand the statement "Zeus *sent* Agamemnon"? Is there a standing mandate of Zeus which obliges men *under threat of their own punishment* to avenge all violations of hospitality personally and regardless of cost? None at all. In fact, *Eum.* 269 ff. (compare *Frogs* 145 f.) records the belief that those who go unrequited for harming a guest-friend are punished hereafter. It must be remembered that we are not dealing here with the same kind of situation as vengeance for murder—Orestes' situation—where the kinsman-avenger is himself treated as a murderer if he neglects his duty. To my knowledge, there are no examples from antiquity of punishment meted out to those who do not avenge a crime against hospitality.[52] Indeed, were the imperative to vengeance as coercive as Page suggests, one wonders why Agamemnon should not employ so compelling an argument in favour of sacrificing Iphigeneia, or why the poet should not use a stronger verb than *πέμπειν* to mean "command" or "demand."

The statement "Zeus sent the Atreidae . . ." is a religious interpretation of the chorus, not an empirical description. It does no more than indicate their belief in the right or legal claim under which the war might be justified. Zeus Xenios *permits, justifies, supports* the war, but nothing in the text suggests that he *obliges*. After the event, the chorus sees the destruction of Troy as retribution fulfilled for a crime hateful to Zeus Xenios, and can, therefore, speak of the war as the stroke (367) or the

[52]Cf. George M. Calhoun in Wace and Stubbings, *A Companion to Homer* (New York 1963) 450: "It is worth noting that the offences which invite divine reprobation [in Homer] are precisely those for which human justice in a simple society will be least likely to offer adequate remedies—neglect of the dead, *injuries to suppliants or guests*, the perversion of justice" (italics added). Compare Hesiod, whose assurances about the chastisement meted out by Zeus to the unjust man are statements of religious hope rather than empirical observations, as is clear in *Op.* 267–273.

work (362) of Zeus, and of the Atreidae as his avenging instruments.[53] The poet's *Persians* is full of similar statements about the agency of the gods in a historical event that had occurred in his own lifetime.[54] It is not likely that a veteran of Salamis would take Aeschylus literally when his messenger in the play claims that a *daimon* destroyed the Persian fleet, and that the gods saved Athens (345–347, compare 724 f.), or when the chorus calls Zeus the destroyer of the Persian force (532–534, compare 739 f.). These were not observable phenomena in the literal sense, but interpretations raising the events of the war beyond the realm of contingency and accident, endowing them with some degree of normativeness, and seeing in them the manifestation and verification of laws whose definition was the product of faith and hope more than of experience. Clearly such statements about divine activity and necessity do not devaluate human accomplishment, eliminate human responsibility, or purge decision of its perils. The Greeks who in the *Persians* are heard to shout *νῦν ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀγών* are less assured of their divine mission than the messenger who later reports the outcome. After the event, what appears is such an interpenetration of divine and human agency that the line dividing them is blurred: Xerxes, for example, is duped both by the guile of a Greek *and* the *φθόνος* of the gods (361 f.). The ghost of Darius enunciates this double aspect of an action in a general principle (742):[55] *ὅταν σπεύδῃ τις αὐτός, χὠ θεὸς συνάπτεται.*

The other half of the argument against Agamemnon's freedom lies in the poet's use of the word *ἀνάγκη* at 218: *ἀνάγκας ἔδυ λέπαδνον.* Page is quite right to insist that it not be toned down to mean "bodily pain," or "anguish," but that it retain the full meaning of *inevitability* its usage elsewhere demands. But there are grounds for disagreement over what precisely *ἀνάγκη* refers to. Is it Iphigeneia's sacrifice itself, or the *inevitable consequences* of that action? Page categorically denies the latter, without offering any argument. Yet, what is the overriding preoccupation of the

[53]If, on the other hand, a crime against hospitality goes unrequited, Zeus Xenios himself is subject to criticism: cf. Aesch. frag. 496 (Mette).

[54]*Pers.* 94–99, 107–115, 337–347, 353 f., 362, 454 f., 515 f., 532–536, 604, 724 f., 740–742, 772, 918–921.

[55]Compare: *φιλεῖ δὲ τῷ κάμνοντι συσπεύδειν θεός* (frag. 673 Mette), and the statement of Themistocles, reported by Herodotus (8.60): *μὴ δὲ οἰκότα βουλευομένοισι οὐκ ἐθέλει οὐδὲ ὁ θεὸς προσχωρέειν πρὸς τὰς ἀνθρωπηίας γνώμας.* Incidentally, this remark of Themistocles is surely a better index of the state of mind in Athens *during the events themselves* than the later tales of divine intervention collected by Herodotus. In any case, it is not easy to ascertain how popular such tales were or how widely believed.

How much the sophistic separation of the divine and human aspects of an action can lead to a denial of human responsibility and an excuse for misconduct may be seen in Euripides' *Cyclops*. When Polyphemus reproaches the Greeks for having fought a war over one shameless woman, the corrupt and sophistical Odysseus disclaims responsibility (285): *θεοῦ τὸ πρᾶγμα· μηδέν' αἰτιῶ βροτῶν.*

chorus in this ode as throughout the play if not the *inevitable consequences* of unjust acts, both Paris'[56] and Agamemnon's? This automatic chain of cause and effect which springs from a single free act and issues in the ruin of a man or a whole house constitutes the burden of the chorus' inmost thoughts, despite Agamemnon's safe return, right up to the moment of his murder, and long afterwards. What more felicitous metaphor could the poet have found for this idea than to say that Agamemnon himself "*put on* the harness of necessity"? The verb ἔδυ, with an accoutrement like λέπαδνον, can hardly support a toned-down meaning like "fell into," "bowed down beneath," or passive meaning like "was put on him."[57] In terms of freedom and compulsion, this passage is analogous to the choice of lives by the souls in Plato's myth of Er (*Rep.* 614B-621B): the choice is free; what follows is necessity. The gods are responsible for the necessary chain of cause and effect; man is responsible for its inception or application.[58]

In a further attempt to exculpate Agamemnon, Page argues that the king is externally compelled not only by the gods but even at the *human* level: Agamemnon (Page tells us) guesses that were he not to sacrifice

[56]Consistent, if mistaken, Page (above, note 2) 104 sees in Paris the same innocence and the same divine compulsion due to a family curse as he sees in Agamemnon.

[57]By contrast, all the parallel yoke-metaphors cited by Fraenkel and Headlam-Thomson have *passive* forms (usually of ζεύγνυμι) or neutral meanings, e.g., Eurip. *IA* 443, ἐς οἷ' ἀνάγκης ζεύγματ' ἐμπεπτώκαμεν and *Or.* 1330, ἀνάγκης δ' ἐς ζυγὸν καθέσταμεν. *PV* 108, ἀνάγκαις ταῖσδ' ἐνέζευγμαι τάλας, is probably an exception. Its meaning is identical with ἀνάγκας ἔδυ λέπαδνον if ἐνέζευγμαι is read as a middle. Such a reading would seem to be required by Prometheus' insistence, a few lines earlier (101–105), that he had foreknown with utter certainty the *necessary consequences* of his action. Thus, he says, by performing it, he has in effect *put himself* in the yoke of necessity—an idea to which he returns at 266: ἑκὼν ἑκὼν ἥμαρτον.

D. J. Conacher, in a recent study (*Euripidean Drama* [Toronto 1967] 241, note 17), points out that Menoeceus in the *Phoenissae* (999–1005) seems to use the expression ἀνάγκη δαιμόνων in a manner hardly different from Aeschylus at *Ag.* 218; "yet," Conacher insists, "it is quite clear that Menoeceus considers himself as having a choice here, for he declares how base and cowardly it would be to choose the alternative of fleeing from this necessity."

[58]The result of this dual aspect of human action is often the juxtaposition of remarkably strong expressions for compulsion with expressions of human spontaneity and freedom, equally strong, without incompatibility. For example, in the Homeric description of Clytemnestra's seduction by Aegisthus (*Od.* 3.269–272) we read:

ἀλλ' ὅτε δή μιν μοῖρα θεῶν ἐπέδησε δαμῆναι . . .
τὴν δ' ἐθέλων ἐθέλουσαν ἀνήγαγεν ὅνδε δόμονδε.

In the same vein, Plato can say of the Athenians (*Laws* 642c): μόνοι γὰρ ἄνευ ἀνάγκης, αὐτοφυῶς, θείᾳ μοίρᾳ, ἀληθῶς καὶ οὔτι πλαστῶς εἰσὶν ἀγαθοί. In the *Agamemnon* itself, the chorus can, without apparent contradiction, speak of Zeus as παναίτιος πανεργέτης (1486) and fifteen lines later deny that Clytemnestra is ἀναίτιος (1505). So also Aegisthus admits responsibility (1604) for what he has called not too many lines previously the handiwork of the Erinyes (1580). Compare *Eum.* 199: the Erinyes claim that Apollo is παναίτιος, yet they pursue Orestes.

Iphigeneia, the other Achaean leaders would do so.[59] He urges that the only alternative mentioned is to become a λιπόναυς, which Agamemnon rejects "immediately" on the ground that it would not thus save his daughter. This curious embellishment, it need hardly be stated, has little, if any, substantiation in the text.[60] Fraenkel, without going so far, still sees in λιπόναυς γενέσθαι an unthinkable and unrealistic alternative: "such an action would be criminal for any member of the expedition, how much more for the commander."[61] But how can it be criminal for the Atreidae, leaders of the expedition and "plaintiffs" (41) in the legal claim justifying (but not *obliging*) them in the war, to call it off at Aulis? Does Agamemnon face danger as a "deserter"?[62] Again, nothing in the text suggests this. In a context where, if Fraenkel and Page were correct, we would reasonably expect such a consideration to be prominent, neither Agamemnon nor the chorus make anything of it.[63] For Agamemnon to call the sacrificial murder θέμις (217, if indeed that is what he is doing in this much vexed portion of the text), does not make it so, and must be considered at best hyperbole, at worst rationalization.[64]

In evaluating Agamemnon's responsibility there has not been sufficient attention paid to the sharply drawn contrast between the pretext of the war (Helen) and its cost (Iphigeneia and the large number of Argive and Trojan casualties). Aeschylus' emphasis upon Iphigeneia's virginity (210, 215, 229, 245) sets her off from Helen, the πολυάνωρ γυνή (62), the "heart-tearing flower of desire" (δηξίθυμον ἔρωτος ἄνθος, 743). The light, delicate, untrammelled movement of Helen (407, 425, 690–692, 737–740) contrasts with the brutal constraints pressed upon Iphigeneia (235–237). Helen's seductive μαλθακὸν ὀμμάτων βέλος (742) recalls its foil, Iphigeneia's piteous but unpersuasive glance at her murderers (ἀπ' ὀμμάτων βέλει φιλοίκτῳ, 240),[65] just as the sensual hangings of the older woman's bed-chamber (ἀβροπήνων προκαλυμμάτων, 690) ironically sharpen in retrospect the pathos in the image of the young girl's κροκωτόν spilling in saffron folds to the ground at the sacrificial altar (239). As for the dispropor-

[59]Page (above, note 2) xxvii.

[60]Thomson (above, note 30) 2.22 adds a further consideration: even granting the possibility of Iphigeneia's sacrifice by the other commanders, why does Agamemnon choose to do it himself when he might, if others did the deed, escape blood guilt (μιαίνων . . . πατρῴους χέρας, 209 f.)?

[61]Fraenkel (above, note 2) 2.122 f.

[62]Like Achilles in Aeschylus' *Myrmidons* (?) (frag. 225 Mette).

[63]Aeschylus leaves nothing implied in dealing with a moral dilemma. Note how fully detailed the consideration of alternatives is in the case of Orestes (*Cho.* 269–305) and Pelasgus (*Supp.* 468–489).

[64]One is reminded of a remark attributed to Democritus (192 DK): ἔστι ῥᾴδιον μὲν ἐπαινεῖν ἃ μὴ χρὴ καὶ ψέγειν, ἑκάτερον δὲ πονηροῦ τινος ἤθους.

[65]For another version of the young girl's innocent glance and its seductive counterpart, see fragments 420 and 421 (Mette) from the *Toxotides*.

tionate extent of the Atreid retaliation, the chorus returns to it relentlessly. In their opening anapaests the magnitude of the expedition is emphasized (χιλιοναύτην, 45; μέγαν . . . Ἄρη, 48), and in a startling *jeu de mots* the extent of the suffering is ironically compared with its object—πολυάνορος ἀμφὶ γυναικὸς πολλὰ παλαίσματα καὶ γυιοβαρῆ (62 f.), an idea repeated at 694 (πολύανδροι). Menelaus' dreamy, erotic grief over the loss of Helen is set sharply against the brooding anguish of the community for the Argive dead (408–436); their ashes, measured against the woman they fought to win back, rouse public indignation (445–451). The Argive elders actually accuse Agamemnon to his face of madness in recovering a "willing wanton" (θράσος ἑκούσιον) at the cost of dying men (799–804),[66] while only for the king himself is the disproportion in his vengeance a point of pride (823 ff.). The king's own death in the eyes of the chorus is the crowning achievement of Helen's mass-destructiveness (1455–1460):

ἰώ· παράνους Ἑλένα,
μία τὰς πολλάς, τὰς πάνυ πολλὰς
ψυχὰς ὀλέσασ' ὑπὸ Τροίᾳ
νῦν τελέαν πολύμναστον ἐπηνθίσω
δι' αἷμ' ἄνιπτον.

A young girl's innocent blood is shed to launch a war for an adulterous woman (225–227), involving a holocaust of victims and regicide. The war is thus a demonic perversion of society's extermination of the offender recognized as a public menace. The moral condemnation implied in all these contrasts far outweighs the cold comfort that its legal sanction is the law of hospitality.[67]

In his decision to sacrifice Iphigeneia and pursue the war for Helen Agamemnon suffers no external coercion.[68] As we have tried to demonstrate, his choice depends less upon Zeus or Artemis than upon the kind of

[66]For a defence of the manuscript reading, θράσος ἑκούσιον, against Fraenkel's suspicion and Page's absolute rejection, see Headlam-Thomson (above, note 30) 2.66.

[67]The moral implications of the Trojan War in such terms as these are not a major concern of the *Iliad*, where its *raison d'être* is to provide an arena for heroic achievement rather than to attain a more specific pragmatic purpose like the return of Helen or the punishment of Paris. Still, something like the Aeschylean contrast between the alleged justification for the war and its toll in human lives and suffering is present in Hector's rebuke of Paris in Book 6, and in Achilles' complaint (9.321–341) that he suffers the bloody business of battle for other people's women (ὀάρων ἕνεκα σφετεράων).

The most explicit condemnation of the Greek expedition against Troy appears, of course, in the Persian account of the origins of the antipathy between East and West reported by Herodotus (1.3–4).

[68]See Albin Lesky, "Decision and Responsibility in the Tragedy of Aeschylus," *JHS* 86 (1966) 78–85. Lesky's conclusions and those of the present study are in the main similar, though the line of argument and the interpretation of Agamemnon's dilemma are different.

man he is, his ἦθος. A man's ἦθος is the abiding disposition or habitual texture of his mind and behaviour. In Greek tragedy it is usually a relatively uncomplicated matter: one or two basic and easily definable attitudes which motivate every significant decision a given character makes. In Aristotelian terms (useful here insofar as they originate in large measure from both a descriptive analysis of tragedy [the *Poetics*] and a discursive mode of examining the moral act closer to our own [the *Nicomachean Ethics*]), ἦθος is the "ground" of moral choice (προαίρεσις); in tragedy, Aristotle says, it reveals what course of action a man will take where this would not otherwise be clear in the situation itself.[69] Put in slightly different terms, decision or choice discloses the moral motivation of an action and the ἦθος of the agent. Though in the *Ethics* Aristotle lays chief stress upon the *formation* of ἦθος, he is at one with his predecessors in treating it as fairly fixed; once known, the decisions and acts emanating from it are, if not automatic and predictable, at least expected. The constitutive elements of ἦθος are varied, but the early aristocratic emphasis upon heredity as an important (if not its prime) factor never quite disappears. In the *Oresteia* the idea of inherited ἦθος is a motif of major significance.

The chorus presents the idea most explicitly in the second stasimon of the *Agamemnon*. The lion-cub (717–736), despite a τροφή[70] calculated to alter its natural character, ultimately displays its inherited disposition of savagery (χρονίσθεις ἀπέδειξεν ἦθος τὸ πρὸς τοκέων, 727 f.).[71] Not much later, the chorus transfers the idea of inherited ἦθος from agents to actions (758–765): the unholy act proliferates (πλείονα τίκτει) others exactly like itself (σφετέρᾳ δ' εἰκότα γέννᾳ); old hybris tends to breed (τίκτειν) youthful (νεάζουσαν) hybris, when the day of delivery (φάος τόκου) arrives; black ἄτη comes into being, resembling its parents (εἰσομένας τοκεῦσιν).

Like the lion in the parable, Agamemnon has inherited his father's predatory and teknophonous ἦθος, an ἦθος incidentally which is quite consistent with the portrayal of Agamemnon in the literary tradition.[72] It is this ἦθος that Artemis chiefly hates; it is this ἦθος that is the source

[69] *Poet.* 1450b 8: ἔστιν δὲ ἦθος μὲν τὸ τοιοῦτον ὃ δηλοῖ τὴν προαίρεσιν, ὁποῖά τις ἐν οἷς οὐκ ἔστι δῆλον ἢ προαιρεῖται ἢ φεύγει. Compare *Poet.* 1454a 17, *Rhet.* 1395b 13, 1417a 16, and *NE* 1139a 23.

[70] The emphasis upon τροφή in opposition to ἦθος is unmistakable: ἔθρεψε (717), νεοτρόφου (724), τροφεῦσιν (729), προσεθρέφθη (736).

[71] Compare especially Pindar, *Ol.* 9.100: τὸ δὲ φυᾷ κράτιστον ἅπαν; *Ol.* 11.19 f.: τὸ γὰρ ἐμφυὲς οὔτ' αἴθων ἀλώπηξ οὔτ' ἐρίβρομοι λέοντες διαλλάξαιντο ἦθος; *Ol.* 13.13: ἅμαχον δὲ κρύψαι τὸ συγγενὲς ἦθος; *Pyth.* 8.44 f.: φυᾷ τὸ γενναῖον ἐπιπρέπει ἐκ πατέρων παισὶ λῆμα; *Pyth.* 10.12: τὸ δὲ συγγενὲς ἐμβέβηκεν ἴχνευσιν πατρός.

[72] In the *Iliad*, Agamemnon's *aristeia* (11.15–283) is unmatched in its savagery and brutality: his shield bears the dreadful face of the Gorgon (36); in killing his opponents he is compared to a lion crunching in his teeth the νήπια τέκνα of a deer (101–119); again compared to a lion, he slaughters the suppliant sons of Antimachus (122–142,

of all three acts symbolized by the portent of the eagles.[73] The situation at Aulis is contrived by the goddess for the disclosure of that ἦθος which will issue in indiscriminate killing at Troy, and which has already led to the murder of Thyestes' children. In so disclosing the ἦθος of Agamemnon, the scene serves a dramatic function similar to his walking over the purple tapestries (944 ff.), which in its relative freedom from external coercion confirms our suspicions about a different but closely related side of Agamemnon's ἦθος, his overweening thirst for ζῆλος—the heroic prestige that makes one the object of emulation and jealousy.[74] At Aulis Agamemnon experiences the existential limitations not only of the particular principle of justice involved in vengeance for violations of hospitality, but of the outmoded quest for heroic ζῆλος. His free decision to sacrifice Iphigeneia is a dramatic refusal to honour those limitations, and by it he incurs a punishment more ineluctable than that which he himself inflicts upon Paris. And while a later romantic view of tragic heroism may exalt a self-destructive disdain for the contingencies of human existence, Aeschylean drama is, to use William Lynch's description of true tragedy, "a sober calculation of the relation of human energy to existence."[75] Agamemnon's decision cannot be viewed as anything other than what the chorus calls it—παρακοπά, a madness which cannot adjust personal desire and legal claim to the demands of a larger reality, and dares all in the face of doom (τὸ παντοτόλμον φρονεῖν). If Agamemnon is victimized, it is by his own ἦθος; the scene at Aulis is Heraclitus' ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμων dramatized.

The various arguments used to exonerate Agamemnon of guilt seem,

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recalling by contrast the mercy of Menelaus in 6.51 ff., which occasioned the expression of Agamemnon's blood-thirstiness); a third time he is compared to a lion, now as it slaughters a cow and laps the blood and guts (172–176; cf. *Ag.* 827 f., ὠμηστὴς λέων ἄδην ἔλειξεν αἵματος).

In the tradition, child-killing seems to be an abiding characteristic of the house of Atreus. In Eurip. *IA* (1151 f.) we are told that Agamemnon murdered Clytemnestra's infant child by her former husband, Tantalus.

[73]It is not unreasonable to suppose that Plato may have had the *Agamemnon* in mind when, in Er's account near the end of the *Republic*, among the examples of souls whose choice of a life-pattern is largely determined by the character (συνήθεια) of their former existence, Agamemnon is represented choosing the life of an eagle (620B).

[74]Lloyd-Jones (above, note 2) 196 f. accepts Hermann Gundert's thesis (in Θεωρία: *Festschrift für W. H. Schuchhardt* [Baden-Baden 1960] 69 f.) that Agamemnon, against his better judgment, walks the purple because Zeus has taken away his wits (just as at Aulis). But why must Zeus drive Agamemnon mad to make him walk the purple? If, as Lloyd-Jones maintains, Zeus has already determined to ruin Agamemnon for the crime of Atreus, if he is to perish whether he walks the purple or not, what does the action add to the economy of the drama? Nothing, of course, unless it is, like the crisis at Aulis, a means of disclosing ἦθος—the springs of his προαίρεσις. It does not bring him any closer to his death; it rather serves to elucidate more fully the relation between his guilt and his punishment.

[75]William F. Lynch, S. J., *Christ and Apollo* (New York 1960) 75.

at least in part, attempts to salvage the tragic integrity of the *Agamemnon*. A morally irresponsible hero, it is assumed, does not engage our sympathy. But we must be on our guard not to confuse dramatic sympathy with moral approval.[76] Even Aristotle, whose tragic pity (ἔλεος) implies a moral judgment, uses the expression τὸ φιλάνθρωπον in situations where it seems to mean a sympathy for human suffering which undercuts moral considerations.[77] There is no question but that Aeschylus elicits profound sympathy for the death of Agamemnon. But we may still insist on his guilt without implying that he arouses our loathing. More important, however, is the fact that Agamemnon is not strictly speaking the hero of the trilogy, nor is the *Agamemnon* itself a complete answer to the questions which are raised in it about crime and punishment. Although in many ways the last two plays of the trilogy lack the artistic polish and dramatic power of the *Agamemnon*, it is clear both from the title of the trilogy[78] and from the dramatic concerns of the final play that Orestes is its central figure.

In the *Choephoroi*, Aeschylus presents Orestes as a moral agent in such a way that a comparison between his ἦθος and that of his parents emerges, and with it the conviction of his innocence and their guilt in other than purely juridical terms. The question at issue in such a comparison is not the relative guilt attached to child-killing, husband-killing, and parent-killing—as the Erinyes and Apollo seem to imply. This is the discursive content of the final play, and its resolution strikes many readers as somewhat arbitrary. The deeper question, *raised by the intervention of Zeus in Orestes' case*, concerns purity of intent or, if you will, moral sensitivity in the face of the existential limitations of purely legal claims and duties. The purity of intent and moral sensitivity with which Orestes executes his legal claim is a *new* and creative event in the trilogy, for it breaks through the apparently invariable cycle of inherited ἦθος. Aegisthus had appeared as his father in miniature: an adulterer in pursuit of power. Clytemnestra was her sister's double: destructive, adulterous allurement. Agamemnon, like his father Atreus, did not hesitate to take young lives to achieve other ends. The chorus in the first play, aware of this seemingly unvarying sequence of criminal tendencies, derived a *law* from it: the fable of the lion cub and its moral—"sinful deeds proliferate (like plants and animals) after their own kind." But Orestes as it turns out breaks the pattern and earns, where his father had not, the protective intervention of Zeus.

This is not the place for a detailed study of the ἦθος of Orestes. But a

[76] Cf. Schlesinger (above, note 1) 27.

[77] *Poet.* 1453a 2, 1456a 21. Cf. φιλανθρωπία, *Rhet.* 1390a 20.

[78] That the trilogy was commonly called the *Oresteia* seems fairly certain from the scholion to Aristoph. *Frogs* 1124 and the *didaskaliae* preserved by Aristotle (frag. 575, 1572b 21). Cf. A. E. Haigh, *Tragic Drama of the Greeks* (Oxford 1896) 114, note 4.

brief examination of the dramatic comparison between him and his parents will be helpful for the light it throws on Agamemnon's guilt as well as on the concept of inherited *ἦθος* in the trilogy. Orestes has, to be sure, inherited the *ἤθη* of his parents to some degree: he is at once the nestling of the eagle, Agamemnon (*Cho.* 247), and the offspring of the viper, Clytemnestra (*Cho.* 540). He is a lion (*Cho.* 938) like his parents and his aunt Helen. He is, like his father, an Atreid (*Cho.* 407) and a man in the grips of a moral dilemma; he is also like his mother, an avenger, a contriver of guile, a murderer. But there the comparisons end. Orestes' reaction to the unlovely command of the god contrasts sharply with Agamemnon's decision, though superficially they appear alike.[79] His meticulous and agonizing struggle to justify his act and his final hesitancy show a moral delicacy not evident in Agamemnon's abrupt decision and brutal execution. In contrast to Agamemnon's tenuous rationalization (*θέμις κτλ*, 214–217), Orestes insists that his strongest incentive was the god's assurance that he would be free of guilt (*ἐκτὸς αἰτίας κακῆς εἶναι*, 1030 f.). While Agamemnon did not stop to question Calchas' interpretation (*μάντιν οὔτινα ψέγων*, *Ag.* 186), Orestes indicates that, were it not for legitimate personal motives (the recovery of his patrimony, the rescue of Argos from tyranny), the *χρησμοί* even of Apollo himself might be repudiated (297–304), even though the alternative to compliance with the oracle is more horrible than any which suggests itself in Agamemnon's case: disease, madness, exile, utter isolation. In this context, even the imagery supports the contrast: Agamemnon puts on (*ἔδυ*) the constricting harness of compulsion, while Orestes is the young colt yoked (the passive voice is used) to pain's chariot (*πώλου εὔνιν ζυγέντ' ἐν ἅρμασιν πημάτων*, *Cho.* 794–796). Furthermore, Orestes' act is no heroic quest for *ζῆλος*, the strong motive behind Agamemnon's behaviour, especially in the scene where Clytemnestra induces him to walk the purple; *ὁ δ'ἀφθόνητός γ'οὐκ ἐπίζηλος πέλει* (939), she tells him, and he yields immediately. By contrast, Orestes sees a singular absence of *ζῆλος* in his victory (1016 f.):

> *ἀλγῶ μὲν ἔργα καὶ πάθος γένος τε πᾶν,*
> *ἄζηλα νίκης τῆσδ' ἔχων μιάσματα.*

Orestes exhibits even less kinship with his Tyndarid ancestry. Clytemnestra's thirst for power[80] is absent in her son. There is in Orestes' case

[79]Both choose the good of the *πόλις* (or, in Agamemnon's case, the *ξυμμαχία*) as against the good of the family, though it should be hastily added that Agamemnon's action tragically depletes the community; both recognize that their deed is a *μίασμα* *Ag.* 209, *Cho.* 1017); both articulate their sense of mental *ἀμηχανία* (*Ag.* 211: *τί τῶνδ' ἄνευ κακῶν*; *Cho.* 407–409: *ἴδεσθ' 'Ατρειδᾶν τὰ λοίπ' ἀμηχάνως ἔχοντα. . . . πᾶ τις τράποιτ' ἄν, ὦ Ζεῦ*;).

[80]On the importance of *kratos* to an understanding of Clytemnestra's character, see R. P. Winnington-Ingram, "Clytemnestra and the Vote of Athena," *JHS* 68 (1948) 130–147.

no adultery[81] complicating the murder-plot and its motivation, and no gloating over his dead victim. There is that moment of hesitancy to underline the deed's repugnance in his eyes and its discrepancy with his ἦθος, compared to Clytemnestra's triple stroke and the demonic pleasure she admits to have taken in being spattered by her husband's blood. There is unqualified justice in his murder of the other victim, Aegisthus, as usurper and adulterer (*Cho.* 990),[82] while the murder of Cassandra by Clytemnestra (as that of Iphigeneia and Troy's young non-combatants by Agamemnon, and of Thyestes' children by Atreus) was the unjustified slaughter of the innocent. Finally, though he employs guile to enter the house, he does not kill from ambush, as Clytemnestra and Aegisthus had done.[83]

How, in dramatic terms, does the poet account for such divergence from the Atreid and Tyndarid ἤθη? It would seem that the Aeschylean emphasis upon Orestes' (and to some extent Electra's) *alien* τροφή and fatherless exile serves precisely this purpose. Strophius played the part of father (τρέφει, *Ag.* 880) for him during the ten-year war at Troy, and before that Cilissa nursed him in Clytemnestra's stead. Cilissa's long speech in the *Choephoroi*, with its stress on the τροφή-idea (ἐξέθρεψα, 750; τρέφειν . . . τρόφου,[84] 754; τροφεύς, 760; cf. also τροφόν, 731), and its profound expression of grief over the supposed death of her young charge, dramatically explains the weakening of the Tyndarid strain in Orestes,[85]

[81]Electra, in this as in other respects, shares Orestes' divergence from his parents; cf. *Cho.* 140 f. She is like him an outcast (132 ff.). Her hesitancy before the prospect of vengeance is like his (122). Their respective prayers to Hermes are strikingly similar (compare 1 ff. with 124 ff.), and their hair and footprints identical.

[82]Cf. Dem. *In Arist.* 53.

[83]This is no inconsiderable distinction, as we learn later from the trial (*Eum.* 460 f., 627–629). Cf. P. B. R. Forbes, "Law and Politics in the *Oresteia*," *CR* 62 (1948) 100: "In homicide . . . the kinsman's primitive undiscriminating discretion to kill even the least culpable killer is restricted. The first distinction, e.g. in Israel and in England, is against killing from ambush, 'forestealing': and so it seems to have been in Attica, if we may judge by the legal thought inherited by Aeschylus, whose Clytemnestra stands condemned not only on the old criminal count of treason, but also, in the progress of law represented by Apollo, for a killing not open but by deceit."

[84]Thompson's correction of τρόπῳ.

[85]The attitude toward ἦθος-τροφή here seems to parallel the implication in Soph. *Ajax* that inherited ἦθος must be fostered and strengthened by a similar τροφή. Ajax claims that his infant son's fearlessness before fresh slaughter proves his paternity, but that he must still be raised in his father's ways if he is to achieve the same φύσις (545–549):

ταρβήσει γὰρ οὔ
νεοσφαγῆ που τόνδε προσλεύσσων φόνον,
εἴπερ δικαίως ἔστ' ἐμὸς τὰ πατρόθεν.
ἀλλ' αὐτίκ' ὠμοῖς αὐτὸν ἐν νόμοις πατρὸς
δεῖ πωλοδαμνεῖν κἀξομοιοῦσθαι φύσιν.

Compare Plato *Rep.* 8, in which the decline of characters paralleling the decline in their corresponding political forms is a matter of ἀγαθὴ φύσις weakened by κακαὶ ὁμιλίαι.

and discloses the hollowness of Clytemnestra's ἐγώ σ' ἔθρεψα (*Cho.* 908) as a plea for mercy from her son.

In the final analysis, the unexpected newness represented by Orestes' moral sensitivity in spite of his Atreid and Tyndarid heredity happily disproved the apparent inevitability of the lion-cub parable and its law of the endless proliferation of evil. An *alien* τροφή does in fact weaken Orestes' ἦθος τὸ πρὸς τοκέων; his actions do not turn out to be "like theirs in kind." A father whose ἦθος recalls the Aeschylean Xerxes[86] produces a son with the moral sensitivity of king Pelasgus in the *Suppliants.*

The πρώταρχος ἄτη of the trilogy is not an external force, but Atreid ἦθος, predacious, teknophonous, aquiline, hateful to the Brauronian goddess whose special concern is its young and innocent victims. The son, Agamemnon, who is punished for his father's crime is himself guilty. The curse on the house of Atreus does not strike Agamemnon from without; it operates in and through ἦθος,[87] inherited by son from father, giving events a predictable afterlife, and issuing in identical decisions. ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμων. The Erinyes that plague the house are truly σύγγονοι (*Ag.* 1190), "inbred," and the dividing line between them and the human agents is indistinguishable. But the curse is cancelled when the Atreid ἦθος disappears, as it does in Orestes, who turns out to be not so much the nestling of the eagle as the hunted hare of *Eum.* 326, earning the protection of Zeus, who, as the now more benign successor of two violent and arbitrary warlords of Olympus (*Ag.* 168–172), is himself an example of altered ἦθος.

Appendix: Menelaus and the *Proteus*

How concerned Aeschylus was to maintain the thematic continuity of a trilogy in its accompanying satyr-play is not, in the present state of our

[86]Aeschylus' treatment of Agamemnon suggests the oriental. The walking of the purple tapestries comes immediately to mind, especially Agamemnon's weak protest at 919. In addition, the king's extravagant beacon-relay must by its length have reminded an Athenian of Mardonius' trans-Aegean beacon-relay, which was to have signalled the capture of Athens to Xerxes in Sardis (Herodotus 9.3); note the presence of a Persian word, ἀγγάρου (232), early in the beacon-speech.

[87]Lloyd-Jones (above, note 2) 199 believes that Agamemnon was externally compelled to do what he did at Aulis, and that his punishment is nothing but the working out of the curse on Atreus by Zeus. This makes illusory puppetry of all the complexity of human action in the play, and turns Zeus' intervention in Orestes' case into something purely arbitrary. He sees the curse here as an external, determining force which apparently overrides the personal decisions of the human agents, and claims that the same predetermination obtains in Aeschylus' Theban trilogy. For a less literal reading of the *Septem,* see Anthony J. Podlecki, "The Character of Eteocles in Aeschylus' *Septem,*" *TAPA* 95 (1964) 283–299, where the author sensibly sees the curse as operating in and through, rather than external to, the character of Eteocles.

knowledge, the kind of question that will lead to any but the most tenuous conclusions.[88] But there are certain considerations which at least make us suspect that Aeschylus, in composing the passage on the eagles and the hare in the *Agamemnon*, was anticipating the *Proteus*, in which Menelaus—the other eagle of the omen—survives. The survival of Menelaus, an unalterable *datum* of the poetic tradition, would have presented a touchy artistic problem, if the dramatist were concerned to make the *Proteus* a burlesque projection of the same issues raised in the foregoing tragedies. For if Menelaus is the other eagle of the omen, and if he displays the predatory Atreid ἦθος hateful to Artemis, how is he made to escape punishment? Without the *Proteus*, it would be presumptuous to say. But it is noteworthy that Aeschylus goes out of his way in the *Agamemnon* to emphasize the temperamental difference between the two Atreidae, and thus to prepare his audience for Menelaus in the satyr-play as the comic analogue of the tragic Orestes in his divergence from Atreid ἦθος. The eagle which symbolizes Menelaus in the portent is ἐξόπιν ἀργᾶς (115), commonly called πύγαργος and characterized as, if not cowardly, at least less ferocious in comparison with the μελανάετος or λαγωφόνος (κελαινός *Ag.* 115).[89] Calchas understands the difference in the birds as the difference in the temperaments of the two Atreidae (λήμασι δισσοῖς 122). I would submit that this emphasis upon the difference between the vain, vicious Agamemnon and the gentler, less warlike, more humane Menelaus, so well documented in the literary tradition,[90] is

[88]It will be obvious to readers of the Proteus episode in *Odyssey* 4 what ample opportunities for humour were present to Aeschylus: a chorus of malodorous seals or of Menelaus' men disguised as seals, the ambush of Proteus, the chance for an unrestrained discussion (if not representation) of the πολυάνωρ γυνή and of her renewed relationship with the uxorious Menelaus. One is further tempted to wonder whether and how far Aeschylus may have exploited the broad parallels that exist between his own conception of Agamemnon's situation at Aulis and the situation of Menelaus at Pharos as narrated in the *Odyssey*: (*a*) adverse winds preventing a sea voyage and forcing men to wander about in hunger; (*b*) the intervention of a goddess (the one hostile, the other friendly); (*c*) an oracular disclosure of δέξια and κατάμομφα (in Menelaus' case, the assurance of his safe return and ultimate transfer to Elysium, and the news of Agamemnon's murder); (*d*) sacrifice to gain favourable winds.

[89]*EM* s.v. πύγαργος (= Soph. frag. 1085 P): εἶδος ἀετοῦ· Σοφοκλῆς· ἐπὶ τοῦ δειλοῦ, ἀπὸ τῆς λευκῆς πυγῆς, ὥσπερ ἐναντίως μελάμπυγος ἐπὶ τοῦ ἰσχυροῦ. Cf. also [Aristotle] *HA* 9.32.1, and Fraenkel's excellent note (above, note 2) 2.67–70.

[90]See Headlam-Thompson (above, note 30) *ad* 115 for sources. Late in the tradition the character of Menelaus, like that of Odysseus, suffers denigration to such an extreme that Aristotle is prompted to cite his representation in Euripides' *Orestes* as a παράδειγμα πονηρίας ἤθους μὴ ἀναγκαῖον (*Poet.* 1454a 28). In Homer, he is a peace-loving man (*Il.* 13.636–639, *Od.* 4 passim), concerned over the sufferings of both Argives and Trojans (*Il.* 3.95–102), fighting for the pragmatic purpose of the war, the return of Helen and his property. The contrast between the brutal *aristeia* of Agamemnon (see note 72, above) and Menelaus' *aristeia* (*Il.* 17) reveals the corresponding contrast in their char-

intended in some measure to justify Menelaus' exemption from the punishment meted out to his brother.

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acters. Menelaus guards the body of Patroclus "as over her first-born calf a mother cow stands lowing, who has known no young before this" (17.4–6, contrast Agamemnon's remark at 6.57–60). To be sure, his attack, like his brother's, is compared to that of a lion crunching the back of a cow and licking its blood and entrails (17.63 f. = 11.175 f.), but it is significant that in Menelaus' case the killing in question only comes after the victim (Euphorbus) has refused to heed Menelaus when he warns his young challenger not to meet him in battle; in Agamemnon's case the simile refers to the wholesale slaughter of fleeing men. Twice again in Book 17 Menelaus is compared to a lion (109–112, 657–664), but one that grudgingly retreats, harried by overwhelming odds. Here, as in other similes used of him—the persistent mosquito (570–572) and the sharp-eyed eagle (attacking and killing a hare! 674–678)—the point of departure is his sorrow over the fate of Patroclus and his plodding determination to rescue the body against overwhelming odds.