

comments that these scholars were aware that *furiata mente* was to reappear some one hundred and seventy verses later in the same book. Of itself this *argumentum e silentio* would have little weight; however, the many cogent objections already raised by others do

suggest that any attempt to discount this silence as mere coincidence may not be fully adequate.<sup>18</sup>

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18. For a comparable case, see Hes. *Theog.* 218–19 and 905–906. These two sets of verses are almost identical; editors generally delete 218–19 (omitted by Stobaeus) as an inter-

polation. M. L. West, *ad loc.*, aptly observes as one of the arguments against their genuineness that “there are no scholia on the lines here, but there are on 905–6.”

### THE AUTHORITY OF THE ELDERS: A NOTE

The pattern-seeking analysis of the *Agamemnon* by Mae J. Smethurst (“The Authority of the Elders [The *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus],” *CP*, LXVII [1972], 89–93) highlights the problems associated with the use of this form of literary criticism to interpret Greek tragedy. It is not that Greek tragedians did not use verbal patterns and repeated images: on the contrary, as Anne Lebeck has recently demonstrated, such things form an important aspect of the *Oresteia*. But there is a danger that the pattern which we find may be of our own making rather than something which is really there in the text. Miss Smethurst has clearly recognized the danger (p. 92), but I believe that she has not wholly avoided it.

The discovery of patterns which are purely subjective is probably a risk inherent in this type of criticism; but Greek tragedy appears to be particularly vulnerable to such misinterpretation, perhaps because the conviction that it has contemporary relevance, though right in itself, unfortunately encourages critics to forget that it was composed in a world remote from us in time, environment, and habits of thought. Under these circumstances, any patterns discovered specially need to be checked against external controls. I suggest three of these (the list is not necessarily exhaustive). (1) The pattern discovered must be compatible with the natural sense of the Greek, and in particular must not be explicitly contradicted by other verbal evidence. (2) It must not negate more essential, and more certain, structural features of the play. (3) It must be compatible with what we know about the circumstances and mental attitudes existing at the time the play was written.

Tested against these controls, Miss Smethurst's analysis is unconvincing on certain points. I should like to take two examples.

First, the idea of dichotomy. No one with the slightest acquaintance with the *Oresteia* will doubt that the conflict of rival claims is a basic theme, but it does not therefore follow that it must be traceable in every detail of the trilogy, and the attempt to find it in the twin kingship of the Atreidae is, I believe, demonstrably erroneous. Miss Smethurst draws attention to the series of δι- compounds in line 43, and interprets them as symptomatic of dichotomy. But “twoness” is an ambivalent idea: it may stress dichotomy, but it may also, on the contrary, be used to convey σύν τε δύ' ἐρχομένω; and more than a subjective impression is needed to decide between them. In fact, the necessary “controls” are available here. The genitives διθρόνου and διακήπτρου of line 43 are in fact dependent on the next line, τιμῆς ὄχυρόν ζεύγος Ἀτρειδᾶν, and the phrase ὄχυρόν ζεύγος most naturally suggests that the two kings work closely together. And this interpretation is confirmed by the very similar language of lines 109–110, where Aeschylus refers to διθρόνον κράτος and then immediately paraphrases it by ξύμφρονα παγάν. This contradicting verbal evidence, not discussed by Miss Smethurst, surely invalidates her claim that dichotomy is being suggested.

But even if this verbal proof were not to hand, there is the economy of the play as a whole to consider. Discord, though a basic theme, need not necessarily be omnipresent; and there is no obvious cause for its appearance here, for discord between the Atreidae is

never an issue in the play. What *is* essential here is the closeness of the association between them. So important is this that Aeschylus goes beyond the expectations of his audience in placing the Atreidae in one palace (on this cf. Fraenkel on 400). The close association leads to Agamemnon's direct involvement in avenging Paris' crime: the disappearance of Menelaus leaves Agamemnon unwontedly alone in his moment of danger; and after the murder, the affinity between the fateful sisters who are the wives of the two brothers is stressed (1470–71). And behind all is the crucial fact that everything that happens is in some sense due to the sin of their common father, Atreus himself. Much of this will only become clear as the play develops, but it is important that, from the very first mention of the Atreidae, Aeschylus should impress their close association on his audience, and the repeated  $\delta\iota$ - compounds are a natural part of this, not an indication of the opposite.

Second, the attempt to emphasize the place of Ares in the trilogy. I am inclined to regard some of the discussion of Ares in the *Agamemnon* as over-subtle, but I confine myself here to the treatment of the *Eumenides*. Having argued the importance of Ares in what has gone before, Miss Smethurst seeks to support it by Athena's "Foundation Speech." "Athena duly honors Ares with the Areopagus for his part, as she establishes a spot in memory of the war god . . . She emphatically repeats the name of Ares three times in her speech . . . to make clear that the hill and the court are a visible monument to honor him."

This is surely not supported by an examination of the language itself. Athena is not establishing a spot in memory of the war god: she is, as she carefully explains, establishing a court on a hill already named after Ares, and interrupts her speech to explain the origin

of the name—an origin which has no connection with the process of establishing the court. The three references to Ares are simply required by the aetiology, which would in fact be awkward to express without such repetition.

And beyond the language, one must consider the situation in which Aeschylus found himself at the moment of writing. The Council of the Areopagus, an institution recently the center of public controversy, was in a sense the anchor of his whole trilogy: neither it nor its name could be avoided. But the traditional account of its name, the trial of Ares, was precisely what Aeschylus could not allow to stand if the primacy of Orestes' trial, so essential to his thesis, was to be established. Hence Aeschylus was driven to provide his audience with an alternative myth. Aeschylus can indeed sometimes make a virtue of necessity and achieve an alteration of myth which is programmatic, as in the Prologue to the *Eumenides*, but it is very hard to see that he has achieved it here. Subjectively, one might be tempted to say that his explanation reads awkwardly, but subjectivity is what I have tried to combat in this note; and so I stress instead the need to consider what an Athenian audience would accept. And on this basis, the honor for Ares which Miss Smethurst claims to find here does not exist. That sacrifices to Ares are said to have been offered by Amazons attacking *κατὰ φθόρον* the Athens of Theseus, the folk hero of fifth-century Athenians, and offered, moreover, on a hill from which the Persians had within living memory assaulted the Acropolis (Herod. 7. 52. 1), could have done little or nothing to bring any honor to this most unloved of Greek gods.

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#### ACIES: VIRGIL *GEORGICS* 1. 395

In the phrase, "nam neque tum stellis acies obtusa videtur" (*Georg.* 1. 395), *acies* has been variously translated as "brilliance,"

"beam, ray of light," "sharp outline," and "bright edge."<sup>1</sup> An attempt will be made here to show that by *acies* Virgil means "sharp

1. "Brilliance," *Virgil: Georgics I and IV*, ed. H. H. Huxley (Norwich, 1963), p. 117. "Beam or ray of light," *Oxford Latin*

*Dictionary* (Oxford, 1968), p. 28. "Here it indicates that the stars are brilliant with a sharp edge, not blurred or blunted