

RELIGION AND POLITICS IN AESCHYLUS'  
ORESTEIA

In the light of the remarkable changes of political colour which Aeschylus has undergone in the hands of scholars, there is a certain amusing irony about the fact that the satyr-play which followed the *Oresteia* was the *Proteus*. Sadly, we know too little of the *Proteus* to say whether it would have resolved this debate about the *Oresteia*'s political stance, though one may have one's doubts.<sup>1</sup>

For some, Aeschylus has been a conservative: K. O. Müller and Blass saw him fighting a conservative rear-guard action, and Peter Rhodes has recently found 'it easier to believe that Aeschylus is not expressing enthusiasm for the reform but after the event felt regret at what happened or at any rate fear that in the future the democrats might go too far'.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, despite Lloyd-Jones's warnings against the 'incautious liberalism'<sup>3</sup> of writers like Kitto, through the twentieth century Aeschylus has generally become more liberal, though there have been notable reservations, not least from feminist writers. Livingstone saw the ending of the trilogy as an allegory, in which the *Eumenides* represents and so prompts the reconciliation of conservatives to the democratic reforms.<sup>4</sup> Dover was more forthright: 'if [Aeschylus] was positively conservative in sentiment, it is difficult to believe that he would have written the *Oresteia* in anything like the form which it actually has. If he was in principle democratic, but mistrustful of the continuation of democratic reform, he has concealed his mistrust impenetrably'.<sup>5</sup>

Others have been less certain: 'a moderate democrat – a member of the old nobility who...had espoused the cause of the people, but was opposed to the extreme democracy', was Headlam and Thomson's analysis.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, for Dodds, Athena's foundation-speech contained 'a quiet word of warning for the future';<sup>7</sup> the references to the Argive alliance showed Aeschylus could not be a conservative, but it was 'difficult to see Aeschylus as a consistent and committed supporter of radical reform'.<sup>8</sup> Dodds gave the trilogy a wider significance as expressing a hope 'of achieving a truer insight into the laws that govern our condition rather than concerned solely with the particular squabble about the powers of the Areopagus'.<sup>9</sup> Macleod too argued for a broadened view of the plays' scope, opposing the application of the term 'political' solely to the poet's own time: 'the Areopagus and the Argive alliance...have...a meaning and a value which are not confined to any historical situation.... By fashioning in mythical Athens the image of an ideal city, Aeschylus is presenting goodness achieved'.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For suggestions concerning the relationship between satyr-play and trilogy, cf. J. J. Peradotto, 'The Omen of the Eagles and the ἦθος of Agamemnon', *Phoenix* 23 (1969), 261–3.

<sup>2</sup> P. J. Rhodes, *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford, 1981), p. 312.

<sup>3</sup> P. H. J. Lloyd-Jones, *The Justice of Zeus* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1971), p. 93.

<sup>4</sup> R. W. Livingstone, 'The Problem of the *Eumenides* of Aeschylus', *JHS* 45 (1925), 120–31.

<sup>5</sup> K. J. Dover, 'The Political Aspect of the *Eumenides*', in *Greek and the Greeks: Collected papers*, Volume I: *Language, Poetry, Drama* (Oxford, 1987), p. 171 (= *JHS* 77 (1957), 236).

<sup>6</sup> G. Thomson and W. G. Headlam, *The Oresteia of Aeschylus* (Cambridge, 1938), p. 357.

<sup>7</sup> E. R. Dodds, 'Morals and Politics in the *Oresteia*', in *The Ancient Concept of Progress and Other Essays on Greek Literature and Belief* (Oxford, 1973), p. 49.

<sup>8</sup> Dodds (n. 7), p. 48. Cf. for a similar view A. J. Podlecki, *The Political Background of Aeschylean Tragedy* (Ann Arbor, 1965), pp. 63–100.

<sup>9</sup> Dodds (n. 7), p. 62.

<sup>10</sup> C. Macleod, 'Politics and the *Oresteia*', in *Collected Essays* (Oxford, 1983), p. 28 (= *JHS* 102 (1982), 132).

Meier gave a complex discussion of how the myth of Orestes was a means of articulating a vision of recent political events: 'what Aeschylus attempted to do was to evolve new concepts by means of which the whole of this new [political] experience could be articulated and brought into equilibrium'.<sup>11</sup> Meier wanted to play down the idea that the tragedy is being used for making party-political points, but ultimately ascribed to Aeschylus a firm view: 'there was no mistaking what the poet was saying: the defeated should accept defeat, and the victors should accord them functions in the new order that partly corresponded to those they had performed in the old'.<sup>12</sup> Most recently, Sommerstein has entered a note of caution, playing down the importance of the views of Aeschylus the private citizen: 'nowhere in *Eu.* is there an avowedly partisan utterance relating to domestic Athenian politics. Athena's advice about the Areopagus is wrapped in ambiguities.' Only one message is clear: "'unity and victory"'.<sup>13</sup>

There have been other views: for instance, Lebeck saw a humour and parody in the ending of the trilogy which undercuts the apparently triumphant resolution of the problems,<sup>14</sup> and feminists like Millett and Zeitlin have worried about what they see as the blatantly patriarchal nature of the end of the trilogy.<sup>15</sup> Cohen wrote to show, against what he saw as an insufficiently sceptical orthodoxy, that the trilogy institutes 'a cosmic and political order which is neither moral nor just, but rather tyrannical, in the sense that its ultimate foundations are force and fear'.<sup>16</sup>

In the face of such ambiguity, then, though each of these readings illuminates something of Aeschylus' text, Goldhill did well to warn against confident attempts to get at the author behind the text, and also of the danger that the reader's own ideological biases will be imported into the reading of the text or the constitution of the author.<sup>17</sup>

We may surely welcome the recent growing tendency to shift from consideration of the author to the attempt to reconstruct something of the discourses made available by the plays to the audience, the shift from individual intention to multifarious receptions which do greater justice to the many ambiguities that are apparent in the text. We can attempt to reconstruct not the individual views of one man, but the kinds of responses which the trilogy may have evoked in the audience generally, by considering the meaning its various elements had for the culture of Aeschylus' time. We can view the Orestes myth not as bearing a message, so much as offering a matrix, that is, as providing a model for thinking about what has recently happened. Providing a way of thinking about the world is, after all, one of the most important functions of myths in society. They can be used to inculcate a particular ideology, but are also available, via Lévi-Strauss's process of 'bricolage', for thinking about the world and its problems. By displacing consideration of the Ephialtic reforms on to a mythical story, the *Oresteia* is able to articulate thought and discussion of recent events through mythical events which, though historically connected to the more

<sup>11</sup> C. Meier, *The Greek Discovery of Politics* (tr. D. McLintock, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1990), p. 89.

<sup>12</sup> Meier (n. 11), p. 114.

<sup>13</sup> A. H. Sommerstein, *Aeschylus: Eumenides* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 31f.

<sup>14</sup> A. Lebeck, *The Oresteia* (Washington, 1971), pp. 134ff.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. K. Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York, 1971), pp. 114ff.; F. I. Zeitlin 'The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth and Mythmaking in the *Oresteia*', *Arethusa* 11 (1978), 149–84.

<sup>16</sup> D. Cohen, 'The Theodicy of Aeschylus: Justice and Tyranny in the *Oresteia*', *G&R* 33 (1986), 129–41 (p. 129).

<sup>17</sup> S. D. Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 32–56. For other bibliography on politics in the *Oresteia*, cf. A. Wartelle, *Bibliographie historique et critique d'Eschyle et de la tragédie grecque 1518–1974* (Paris, 1978), p. 672.

recent ones, are not identical with them; as a result of this difference, the discussion can then take place in a less heated and partisan atmosphere.

The *Orestes* myth in the *Oresteia* suggests a pattern, in which one group is deprived of some of its previous power but yet retains a role, and this pattern provides a filter through which the Athenians can look at the recent changes to the political scene and make sense of them. The pattern has the possible message that even radical changes can be seen to be leaving behind them something of the situation which they have destroyed. What has happened to the Areopagus is a repetition of its own foundation: this foundation led to the substitution of a new, more rational type of justice which subordinated the old, vendetta system which had operated in the play and the world so far, but did not obliterate it. This change was to the benefit of mankind: might not the recent changes in Athenian justice be similarly beneficial, the next step in an ever-improving judicial system? When there is change, there are winners and losers, but the losses of the latter may be compounded for by the greater good of the wider community: justice after Athena's settlement with the Furies involved a small section of mankind; after Ephialtes' reforms it takes in an even wider group. Indeed, the mythical changes made to justice, which were such as to affect justice in the cosmos as a whole, by the deposition of the Furies and the elevation of mortals to a position of importance, might be said to put into some sort of perspective the recent changes, which in the case of judicial matters affect Athens and mortals alone.<sup>18</sup>

This main myth is not, however, the only one to provide a filter through which the action can be viewed, though it has received most attention. There are several other myths and, perhaps more striking, rituals, which Aeschylus offers for his audience to use to explicate the political codes of the *Oresteia*. I shall consider first myths, which also contain a ritual element, and then the rituals, which also involve mythology.

## 1. MYTHS

### (a) Zeus and Cronus

The great myth concerning change of authority was that of Zeus' defeat of Cronus in a competition for the rulership of the cosmos.<sup>19</sup> There are two references to this myth in the trilogy. First, in the more pitiless world of the *Agamemnon* (168–75; tr. Fraenkel):

οὐδ' ὅστις πάροιθεν ἦν μέγας,  
παμμαχῶι θράσει βρύων,  
οὐδὲ λέξεται πρὶν ὦν·  
ὅς δ' ἔπειτ' ἔφνυ, τρια-  
κτῆρος οἶχεται τυχών·  
Ζῆνα δέ τις προφρόνως ἐπινίκια κλάζων  
τεύζεται φρενῶν τὸ πᾶν.

And he who aforesaid was mighty, swelling with the boldness of a victor in every contest, shall not even be reckoned, since he is of the past; and he who afterward came into being met his thrower and is gone. But anyone who gladly shouts 'Hail to Zeus the victor!' shall hit full on the target of understanding.

<sup>18</sup> The analysis is very similar to the Marxian notion of 'struggle', in which the worse aspects of an earlier stage of social development are removed and the better retained. For Marx and Aeschylus, cf. S. S. Prawer, *Karl Marx and World Literature* (Oxford, 1976).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Hsd. *Theog.* 617ff. For this type of story, cf. J. Fontenrose, *Python: A Study of the Delphic Myth and its Origins* (Berkeley, 1959); F. Vian, *La Guerre des Géants: le mythe avant l'époque hellénistique* (Paris, 1952), pp. 94–113, who offers a critique of Fontenrose's methodology; J. Trumpf, 'Stadtgründung und Drachenkampf', *Hermes* 86 (1958), 129–57, on Pi. *Py.* 1 and near-eastern mythology, a poem where this myth has a similarly paradigmatic function to that proposed here.

Here, Cronus and his helpers are, unusually, completely destroyed and their names are not even mentioned.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, in *Eumenides*, when Apollo appeals to Zeus for the justification of his case in favour of Orestes (614–21), the Chorus gleefully pick him up with the second reference to this myth (640–2):

πατὸς προτιμᾷ Ζεὺς μόνον τῷ σώϊ λογῶϊ,  
αὐτὸς δ' ἔδησε πατέρα πρεσβύτην Κρόνον·  
πῶς ταῦτα τοῦτοις οὐκ ἐναντίως λέγεις;

According to your argument, Zeus has a special regard for the death of a father, but he himself bound his old father, Kronos: does this not contradict what you said before?

Apollo, who is not having an easy time defeating the Furies' arguments, is reduced to a splenetic reply, which nonetheless makes our point once again (644–8):

ὦ παντομισὴ κνώδαλα, στύγη θεῶν,  
πέδας μὲν ἂν λύσειεν, ἔστι τοῦδ' ἄκος  
καὶ κάρτα πολλή μηχανὴ λυτήριος·  
ἀνδρὸς δ' ἐπειδὴν αἶμα' ἀνασπάσῃ κόνις  
ἅπαξ θανόντος, οὔτις ἔστ' ἀνάστασις.

O most hateful beasts, objects of loathing to the gods, he could unlock the fetters, there is a remedy for this and there is many a device to undo the wrong; but when once a man has died and the dust has drunk his blood, there is no resurrection.

In *Eumenides*, then, Cronus is merely bound and the possibility of release remains, in a version of the story closer to the standard one of Cronus' being bound in Hades. There are a number of significances that could be given to this difference in the versions. It may be a case of divine rhetoric, with Apollo choosing a version that better supports his case. Alternatively, it may be that as the new dispensation comes closer, the picture of Zeus is improved. Furthermore, as Burian has argued, 'the history of the house of Atreus is made not only to replicate the history of the house of Ouranos. The chorus of the *Agamemnon* depicted Zeus' succession in terms of sheer force.... Now, Zeus triumphs through persuasion: ἐκράτησε Ζεὺς ἀγοραῖος (*Eum.* 973), the Zeus of the polis, of law, of debate.'<sup>21</sup> Whatever the reason for this shift, in this succession myth we have a change in which a better state of affairs is achieved by the defeat of earlier rulers: the victory of Zeus moves us from a world in which children are devoured to one where order, peace and prosperity reign.<sup>22</sup>

In the main story of the trilogy, continued cult is one of the consolations offered to the defeated: as Athena repeatedly stresses,<sup>23</sup> the Furies will receive worship from the Athenians. No such cult for Cronus is mentioned in the play, but Athenians should have remembered that, despite his deposition by his son, he continued to be honoured in Athens, especially at the Cronia, celebrated in the autumn.<sup>24</sup> This

<sup>20</sup> Sommerstein (n. 13), p. 81.

<sup>21</sup> P. Burian, 'Zeus Σωτήρ τρίτος and Some Triads in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*', *AJP* 107 (1986), 342; he also notes the parallels between Orestes and Zeus as *τριακτήρ* and *τρίτος σωτήρ* (p. 341).

<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of the play in terms of a Gigantomachy, with Orestes opposing Clytaemestra and the Furies as dragon-like figures, cf. N. S. Rabinowitz, 'From Force to Persuasion: Aeschylus' *Oresteia* as Cosmogonic Myth', *Ramus* 10 (1981), 159–91.

<sup>23</sup> 804–7, 833–6, 854–7, 890f.; cf. C. Carey, 'Aeschylus *Eumenides* 858–66', *ICS* 15 (1990), 239–50.

<sup>24</sup> L. Deubner, *Attische Feste* (Berlin, 1932), pp. 152–5; H. W. Parke, *Festivals of the Athenians* (London, 1977), pp. 29f.

festival, seen as the equivalent of the Roman Saturnalia,<sup>25</sup> honoured both Cronus and Rhea, mother of the gods, that is, the representatives of the divinities who were overthrown by the Olympians. Furthermore, masters would dine with slaves,<sup>26</sup> thus giving a position to this class which, at the human level, had also been marginalized.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, Cronus had a sanctuary in the enclosure of the temple of Zeus<sup>28</sup> and there was a tradition that Hekatombaion had originally borne his name.<sup>29</sup> The greatest succession myth of them all, with its cosmic change that brought Zeus to power and created the world order as we now know it, thus has lessons for those contemplating recent upheavals in Athens.

### (b) Delphi

*Eumenides* begins with a succession myth, which has links with Zeus' own succession myth, in that it is Zeus who sets the seal on Apollo's authority at Delphi (17–19).<sup>30</sup> That it prefigures the outcome of the trilogy has been sufficiently noticed.<sup>31</sup>

πρώτον μὲν εὐχῇ τῇδε πρεσβεύω θεῶν  
τὴν πρωτόμαντιν Γαίαν· ἐκ δὲ τῆς Θέμιν,  
ἣ δὴ τὸ μητρὸς δευτέρα τόδ' ἔζετο  
μαντεῖον, ὡς λόγος τις· ἐν δὲ τῷ τρίτῳ  
λάχει, θελούσης, οὐδὲ πρὸς βίαν τινός,  
Τιτανὶς ἄλλη παῖς Χθονὸς καθέζετο  
Φοῖβη, δίδωσιν δ' ἣ γενέθλιον δόσιν  
Φοῖβωι· τὸ Φοῖβης δ' ὄνομ' ἔχει παρώνυμον.

First in this prayer I honour among the gods Earth, the primeval prophetess, and after her Themis, who was second to sit in this oracle of her mother, as the story goes. In third place, Phoebe, a Titaness and another child of Earth, sat here, with Themis' agreement and without violence on anyone's part. She gave it as a birthday-present to Phoebus, who bears Phoebe's name along with his own.

This encompasses a number of movements important to the play. First, that from Earth, Themis her daughter and a Titan, and Phoebe's 'another Titan' (6), representatives of the earlier, chthonic world and opponents of the Olympians, to the Olympian Apollo; and second, from 'old' deities like Gaia to the 'new'. These two movements prefigure that from the vengeful Furies, the old daughters of Night, to the Olympian justice of the younger Athena and Apollo. Finally, the passage depicts a movement from the female to the male, which again prepares for the dominance of that sex in the decision over Orestes. The changes in the trilogy thus receive some authentication from this paradigmatic myth.

<sup>25</sup> So Accius, fr. 3 Morel: 'maxima pars Graium Saturno et maxime Athenis / conficiunt sacra, quae Cronia esse iterantur ab illis / ... nosterque itidem est mos traditus illinc / iste, ut cum dominis famuli epulentur ibidem'; cf. Philochorus, *FGrHist* 328 F 97. Cf. Farnell, *Cults* i.32–4 for Cronus' cults; also Deubner (n. 24), pp. 152–5 for Athens.

<sup>26</sup> Plut. *Mor.* 1098bc.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. C. Sourvinou-Inwood, 'The *Votum* of 477/6 B.C. and the Foundation Legend of Locri Epizephyrii', *CQ* 24 (1974), 194f. for the ideology of festivals of this kind.

<sup>28</sup> Paus. 1.18.7.

<sup>29</sup> Plut. *Thes.* 12.1; *EM* 321.4.

<sup>30</sup> For this use of Zeus in such myths, and on the Delphic succession myths generally, cf. C. Sourvinou-Inwood, 'Myth as History: the Previous Owners of the Delphi Oracle', in J. Bremmer (ed.), *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London and Sydney, 1987), pp. 214–41, esp. 225–33, and now 'Reading' *Greek Culture: Texts and Images, Rituals and Myths* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 217–43.

<sup>31</sup> See also on this passage and its possible antecedents D. S. Robertson, 'The Delphian Succession in the Opening of the *Eumenides*', *CR* 55 (1941), 69f.

Aeschylus' version may well be his own,<sup>32</sup> but it stands in that class of myths which transfer power from more or less disordered figures like Gaia, Themis or a dragon to Apollo, in a manner that is not violent but peaceful: Themis seems simply to inherit the throne from her mother; Phoebe is explicitly said to receive it 'with Themis' agreement, and with violence on no one's part' (5); and Apollo has it as a birthday present, taking Phoebe's name as his own.

This last element is important. Phoebe appears in no other version of this myth, and her role is explained by Sourvinou-Inwood as 'a representation... of a positive relationship between Apollo and the maternal side of his family – perhaps a symbolic counterweight to Orestes' matricide and Apollo's role in it and in its aftermath'.<sup>33</sup> Phoebe's gift symbolizes also the important aspect of the fate of the defeated parties mentioned above: though defeated, they are not entirely obliterated but, in this case quite literally, leave their name behind them. As in the case of the Furies, names are again important: they too will continue, with the new name of 'Semnai' beside their old one, to play a part in Athenian justice; we may compare also how Cronus' name continues in the appellation 'son of Cronus' for Zeus, and the names Pytho, Pythius and Pythia recall the snake which Apollo defeated at Delphi.<sup>34</sup>

Again, under the new dispensation in Athens, violence will ultimately be subordinated to *logos* and *peitho*: the Furies are persuaded 'with violence on no one's part' but through the words of Athena to abandon their violent pursuit of Orestes. On the other hand, were it not for another aspect of this myth which again appears to be Aeschylus' own, one might be tempted to contrast the smooth manner in which grandson succeeds grandmother at Delphi with the more troubled and threatening transfer in Athens: after all, Athena refers in a scarcely oblique manner to her knowledge of where Zeus keeps his thunderbolt (*Eum.* 827).

However, the Pythia's account of Apollo's career continues as follows (9–14):

λιπὼν δὲ λίμνην Δηλίαν τε χοιράδα,  
κέλσας ἐπ' ἅκτας ναυόρους τὰς Παλλάδος,  
ἐς τήνδε γαίαν ἦλθε Παρνησοῦ θ' ἔδρας.  
πέμπουσι δ' αὐτὸν καὶ σεβίζουσιν μέγα  
κελευθοποιοὶ παῖδες Ἡφαίστου, χθόνα  
ἀνήμερον τιθέντες ἡμερωμένην.

Leaving the Pool and rocky island of Delos, he landed at Pallas Athena's shores, the haunt of ships, and came to this land and his abode on Parnassus. He was escorted and greatly honoured by the road-building sons of Hephaestus, who made the savage land civilized.

The scholiast says of this version that it was created to give special honour to Athens: in the *Homeric Hymn*, the god went via Mount Olympus, Thessaly, Euboea, the Euripus and Boeotia.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the scholia identify the 'builders of roads' as the Athenians, who built a road to Delphi for their processions,<sup>36</sup> and most commentators have followed them in seeing the Athenians in the 'sons of Hephaestus', because of Erichthonius' birth from his seed.<sup>37</sup> The scholia on 14 point out that when the sacred

<sup>32</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (n. 30), p. 231.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> *H.Ap.* 372–4. On naming in the trilogy as an attempt at controlling language and so (the narrative of) events, as ultimately a political act, cf. S. D. Goldhill, *Language, Sexuality, Narrative: The Oresteia* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 54–63 and index, s.v. 'naming'.

<sup>35</sup> 186, 214ff.; cf. A. J. Podlecki, *Aeschylus: Eumenides* (Warminster, 1989), p. 130.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Ephorus, *FGrHist* 70 F 31b.

<sup>37</sup> 'Probably only a periphrasis for "craftsmen"' (Podlecki (n. 35), p. 130), but the point of such a reference is hard to discern, and the scholiasts' comment on the Athenian procession on 14 (which Podlecki quotes) surely suggests the meaning 'Athenians'.

embassy went from Athens to Delphi, there preceded it a troop of men carrying axes 'as if to civilize the land'. We have therefore also a move from the chaotic to the civilized, from Gaia to the sons of Hephaestus (a god of craft, *techne*) who are described in 14 as 'making the wild earth civilized'. The Athenians thus play a crucial role in this Delphic succession myth, by civilizing the very ground over which the god went to his oracle: it is almost as if their part is more important than that of the Delphians, in that all the latter have to do is to welcome the god, whose arrival has been made possible by the Athenians. Athens has, therefore, some time before the arrival of Orestes, established its claim to an association with the civilized transfer of power in a manner both peaceable and ultimately satisfactory to all sides.<sup>38</sup>

### (c) Amazons

These ideas are repeated and reinforced by reference to the Amazons. Athena, at 685–90, speaks of

πάγον δ' † Ἀρειον† τόνδ', Ἀμαζόνων ἔδραν  
 σκηνάς θ', ὅτ' ἦλθον Θησέως κατὰ φθόνον  
 στρατηλατοῦσαι, καὶ πόλιν νεόπολιν  
 τήνδ' ὑψίπυργον ἀντεπύργωσαν τότε,  
 Ἀρεὶ δ' ἔθυσον, ἔνθεν ἔστ' ἐπώνυμος  
 πέτρα πάγος τ' Ἀρεῖος.

this hill of Ares [?], where the Amazons encamped, when once they marched against us because of their jealousy of Theseus and built this new, high-walled city against our own, and sacrificed to Ares whence the rock and hill have the name of Ares.

Theseus defeated the Amazons, in an exploit that Herodotus has the Athenians recount as one of their military glories.<sup>39</sup> The Amazons' errant lifestyle stands as the opposite of normal human life in the polis, and their abnormal sexuality and man-killing ways are the opposite of the normally fertile family life; they thus resemble the Furies, who also lack a fixed abode, have no sexuality and spend their time rending mortals, as Apollo so charmingly points out (*Eum.* 179–97). In Isocrates' version of the Amazons' story they are obliterated,<sup>40</sup> but if what Plutarch tells us about the existence of shrines to them near the Peiraeus gates, their graves below the Acropolis hill, and an 'ancient sacrifice' that used to be made to them on the day before the Theseia can all or in part be referred to the fifth century, then they too, like Cronus, can be said to continue to receive recognition despite their defeat.<sup>41</sup> In the fourth century at least there was a shrine to them, the Amazoneium.<sup>42</sup> Even if these rites did not exist in the fifth century, the play itself provides for continued recognition of the Amazons, in terms familiar from the other two myths discussed above. As Athena

<sup>38</sup> For the idea in tragedy of Athens as a locus of civilization and fertility, an idea to which the end of the play will return, cf. F. I. Zeitlin, 'Thebes: Theater of Self and Society in Athenian Drama', in J. J. Winkler and F. I. Zeitlin (eds.), *Nothing to do with Dionysus?* (Princeton, 1989), pp. 130–67.

<sup>39</sup> 9.27.4.

<sup>40</sup> 4.70. See most recently, W. B. Tyrrell, *Amazons: A Study of Athenian Mythmaking* (Baltimore, 1984).

<sup>41</sup> Plut. *Thes.* 27. The possibility should not be ruled out that some or all of these cults were created in response to myths like those of the *Oresteia*: cf. N. J. Richardson, 'Innovazione poetica e mutamenti religiosi nell' antica Grecia', *SCO* 33 (1983), 13–27; Sourvinou-Inwood (n. 30), p. 221 on the cult on Gaia and Themis at Delphi.

<sup>42</sup> Cleidemus, *FGrHist* 323 F 18 (*ap.* Plut. (n. 41)); it was on the Areopagus.

says, the Areopagus will have a name which commemorates the Amazons defeated on it: they made a sacrifice to Ares, who was their father according to Lysias and Isocrates,<sup>43</sup> and whose name is preserved in 'Hill of Ares'. Here then, as with Phoebus and Phoebe and Erinyes/Semnai, we have a case of a name acting as an acknowledgement of the significance of a defeated party, and, as with Cronus, the persistence of cult. The site of Athens' first law-court is thus emblematic of the way that defeated forces can be reintegrated into ordered existence.

We may contrast this story about the Amazons with what is said about the Lemnians in *Choephoroi*. The chorus of women put this myth at the end of their list of female destructiveness (631–6):

κακῶν δὲ πρεσβεύεται τὸ Λήμνιον  
 λόγῳ, γοῶται δὲ δημόθεν κατὰ-  
 πτυστον, ἥκασεν δέ τις  
 τὸ δεινὸν αὐτὸ Λημνίοισι πῆμασιν.  
 θεοστυγῆται δ' ἄγει  
 βροτοῖς ἀτιμωθὲν οἴχεται γένος.

The horrors of Lemnos have pride of place in story, and they are lamented as abhorrent by the people; one still compares dreadful deeds to the Lemnian troubles; but the race has perished unhonoured by men because of the pollution the gods hate.

Here is a myth where women succeeded in taking power by slaughtering their husbands, but their race has disappeared and has no celebration. Aeschylus' version is unusual, in that the Lemnians are normally regenerated by the arrival of the Argonauts,<sup>44</sup> but we may, taking up the hint in the text, contrast this tale with what happens in Argos in the play and, equally importantly, in Athens in the case of the Amazons. The crime of the Lemnians and its aftermath is thus a 'limit-case', illustrating the worst that can happen. In comparison with it, the state of affairs in Athens is obviously preferable.

This example of the Amazons is, of course, of a different nature to the first two discussed, in that we do not here have a change of authority but rather the preservation of a presumed better ordering of society from attack by forces representing its antithesis. In this case, therefore, one might argue that the myth is open to a double interpretation in terms of Athenian politics, depending on whether one reads the proponents or opponents of the recent changes as the Amazons. On the other hand, it is equally true that the myth, though a standard type of representation of the victory of civilization over chaos, is a particular version of this myth-type, in that it does not, like that of Zeus and Cronus, represent an 'original' victory, so much as a successful attempt to prevent a return to an earlier, more chaotic state of things which has been transcended. It avoids the kind of regression which the Furies threaten after their defeat (*Eum.* 778ff.), where wholesale destruction of the fertility of Athens would reduce the city to a chaotic and uncivilized condition. Sommerstein on *κατὰ φόβον* remarks that 'this vague expression tends to suggest that the Amazons' motive for invading Attica was not an honourable desire for revenge, or for the rescue of a captive compatriot... but base jealousy of the glory of Theseus'.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Lys. 2.4; Isoc. 4.68. Aeschylus appears to have invented this sacrifice, which is not mentioned elsewhere (Sommerstein (n. 13), p. 214).

<sup>44</sup> G. Dumézil, *Le Crime des Lemniennes: rites et légendes du monde égéen* (Paris, 1924); W. Burkert, 'Jason, Hypsipyle, and the New Fire at Lemnos: A Study in Myth and Ritual', *CQ* 20 (1970), 1–16.

<sup>45</sup> (n. 13), p. 214.



There are echoes, therefore, of the Furies' feelings on their defeat, and anger and jealousy in the face of defeat are put forward as negative qualities that contrast with the relative magnanimity of the victors.<sup>46</sup>

#### (d) Athena

Finally, the presence of Athena herself on stage is a reminder to the audience that, in the foundation legend of their city, she defeated the elder Poseidon to become its patron.<sup>47</sup> Her victory led to a turbulent reaction from Poseidon, involving either the flooding of Attica or an invasion of the territory by Poseidon's son, Eumolpus. Athena's 'son', Erechtheus, defeated Eumolpus in battle, but was rammed into the ground by the god. Nonetheless, despite his ultimate defeat, Poseidon, like the other defeated parties discussed above, was still worshipped, alongside Athena on the Acropolis, and was known as Poseidon-Erechtheus. Mankind benefited because the goddess of craft, intelligence and cultivation triumphed over the elemental Poseidon, despite the fact that he was one of the three most august gods of the earlier generation. Once again, therefore, a change of name and continuity of cult accompanies a major but beneficial change, and this divine reconciliation is made available as another way of thinking about contemporary events. Here too, as in the trial of Orestes, the choice between two possible patrons with powerful cases was, in some versions at least,<sup>48</sup> left to the kings of Athens, Cecrops, Cranaus and Erysichthon; and the choice, though initially involving violence from the loser, was ultimately to the benefit of the city. Their own foundation myth thus also provides a model for the curbing of the existing authority by newcomers.

## 2. RITUALS

Reference to rituals and especially, as in the case of the myths, peculiarly Athenian rituals is another important device whereby Aeschylus provides perspectives and filters for recent events.<sup>49</sup>

Zeitlin has already shown that the trilogy is structured in the same way as a myth of rite of passage.<sup>50</sup> The pattern of such myths and rituals can be analysed in the same terms as were discussed above: the male is privileged over the female, as the son is moved from the sphere of the mother to that of the father, but at the same time, the fact that the end of such myths is the achieving of adult male status, including

<sup>46</sup> The fact that the Persians had similarly used the Areopagus as a base for their attacks, which resulted in the murder of suppliants and the destruction of the whole Acropolis, also characterizes the Amazons in a negative fashion: cf. Hdt. 8.52–3.

<sup>47</sup> On this story, cf. Preller-Robert, i. 202–4; W. Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth* (tr. P. Bing, Berkeley, 1983), pp. 136–61, and on Athena's relation to Poseidon, M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (tr. J. Lloyd; Hassocks and New Jersey, 1978), pp. 187–203; R. Parker, 'Myths of Early Athens', in Bremmer (n. 30), pp. 198–200, 203.

<sup>48</sup> The traditions are varied: Apollod. 3.14.1 says 'Zeus appointed arbiters (*kritai*), not, as some have affirmed, Cecrops and Cranaus, nor yet Erysichthon, but the twelve gods'; in Callimachus, there are two versions, fr. 194.66–8 and fr. 260.24. Hesychius related Cratinus, fr. 7 ἐνθα Διὸς μεγάλου θᾶκοι πεσσοί τε καλοῦνται to the story of Athena trading a first sacrifice for Zeus' vote, but Kassel–Austin doubt whether the interpretation is correct. For mortals judging such competitions, cf. Paus. 2.15.5 (Cephisus and Asterion assist the river Inachus to judge a competition between Hera and Poseidon for Mycenae) and Simon, fr. 552 (= schol. Theoc. 1.65/6a). In Varro (*ap. Aug. Civ. Dei* 18.9) the whole city voted on the matter.

<sup>49</sup> For other bibliography on ritual and the *Oresteia*, cf. Wartelle (n. 17), p. 676.

<sup>50</sup> F. I. Zeitlin, 'The Dynamics of Misogyny in the *Oresteia*: Myth and Myth-making', *Arethusa* 11 (1978), 149–84.

marriage to a woman, means that this privileging is deconstructed and the importance of the female acknowledged. The female is abandoned by the ephebe, who leaves his mother, passive sexual roles etc., but she nonetheless has a part to play in fertility, as even those who accepted Apollo's chauvinistic words at *Eum.* 658ff. must have allowed. Athena, tender of the city's hearth, is always there in *Eumenides* to remind us of the centrality that the female holds in the *oikos*.

The same author has also traced the way in which, especially in *Agamemnon* and *Eumenides*, the language and conventions of sacrifice are put to perverted use, so that Clytaemestra's murder of Agamemnon is described in terms of libation, the Furies' desire to punish Orestes as an attempt to make him a victim of a perverted human sacrifice, and so on; this perversion of sacrifice is corrected by the end of the trilogy.<sup>51</sup>

There are also references to a variety of different cultic and religious practices which have already been noted by scholars,<sup>52</sup> such as the confusion by Clytaemestra of rituals for dressing for a feast and dressing a corpse,<sup>53</sup> libations for the dead and lamentations at the tomb of ancestors in *Choephoroi*,<sup>54</sup> the use of curse-tablets to damage an opponent before a trial in the 'binding-song' of the Furies,<sup>55</sup> refrains<sup>56</sup> and so on. Here, however, I shall be concerned with reference to specific Athenian cults and rituals through which commentary on the political events can be generated.

#### (a) *Arkteia*

Peradotto first looked in depth at the importance of the rites of Brauron for the representation of Artemis and the sacrifice of Iphigeneia.<sup>57</sup> Lloyd-Jones discussed the passage more fully in terms of Athenian and other cults of Artemis, especially those at Brauron, Mounychia and Halai Araphenides. These cults are a specific instance of rites of passage: 'there is ground for suspecting that, at least in the earlier stages of its history, the cult of the Tauropolos [at Halai] was concerned with the initiation of males, and was closely related to that of the Brauronia, which was concerned with that of females.'<sup>58</sup> Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood has discussed the dropping of the saffron-coloured robes in 239 (κρόκου βαφὰς δ' ἐς πέδον χέουσα) as a feature of the rites at Brauron: 'the shedding of the krokotos by the bears at the Brauronia was a symbolically charged act marking the end of the *arkteia* and the beginning of the transition into a new status, and as such it functioned as a very potent and apt *pars pro toto synecdoche* expressing the notion "successful completion of the *arkteia*, achievement of acculturation, and the status of proper marriageable parthenos".'<sup>59</sup>

<sup>51</sup> F. I. Zeitlin, 'The Motif of the Corrupted Sacrifice in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*', *TAPA* 96 (1965), 463–508.

<sup>52</sup> A general argument in G. F. Else, 'Ritual and Drama in Aeschylean Tragedy', *ICS* 2 (1977), 70–87.

<sup>53</sup> R. A. S. Seaford, 'The Last Bath of Agamemnon', *CQ* 34 (1984), 247–54.

<sup>54</sup> W. Schadewaldt, 'Der Kommos in Aiskhylos' *Choephoroi*', *Hermes* 67 (1932), 312–54.

<sup>55</sup> C. A. Faraone, 'Aeschylus' ὕμνος δέσμιος (*Eum.* 306) and Attic Judicial Curse Tablets', *JHS* 105 (1985), 150–4.

<sup>56</sup> H. E. Moritz, 'Refrain in Aeschylus: Literary Adaptations of Traditional Form', *CPh* 74 (1979), 187–213 (esp. 195ff.).

<sup>57</sup> (n. 1), pp. 244–8.

<sup>58</sup> P. H. J. Lloyd-Jones, 'Artemis and Iphigeneia', *JHS* 103 (1983), 87–103, quotation on 97.

<sup>59</sup> C. Sourvinou-Inwood, *Studies in Girls' Transitions: Aspects of the Arkteia and Age Representation in Attic Iconography* (Athens, 1988), p. 134. The book should be consulted on these festivals generally. See also on the myths A. Brelich, *Paides e Parthenoi* (Rome, 1969), pp. 248f. n. 44; W. Sale, 'The Temple Legends of the Arkteia', *RhM* 118 (1975), 265–84. On Iphigeneia in Athens, cf. E. Kearns, *The Heroes of Attica*, *BICS* Suppl. 57 (1989), 27–33, 57f., 174. R. A. S. Seaford, 'The Tragic Wedding', *JHS* 107 (1987), 108f. has discussed the sacrifice

This shedding of the robes and the sacrifice because of the wrath of Artemis<sup>60</sup> are perhaps the most striking parallels between play and ritual, but Aeschylus' picture of Iphigeneia's sacrifice also contains other references to aspects of these cults. First, Iphigeneia is referred to as ἀταύρωτος (*Ag.* 244), an adjective indicating her virginity.<sup>61</sup> Athenian myth continued the story of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, telling of Orestes' subsequent foundation of the rites of Artemis Tauropolos at Halai Araphenides two miles to the north of Brauron, and of Iphigeneia's foundation of those at Brauron.<sup>62</sup> As Graf has shown, Artemis Tauropolos was a goddess connected with rites of passage of young men,<sup>63</sup> and she was also connected with madness:<sup>64</sup> both aspects suit Orestes. The bull is a regular feature of maturation rites for young men, as is shown by Theseus' killing of the Minotaur, bull-lifting by ephebes at sacrifices, the gift of the bull to the boy involved in the Cretan rite of passage, the Harpage,<sup>65</sup> and many other examples. Secondly, Iphigeneia is sacrificed 'like a goat'. This was the sacrificial animal at Brauron,<sup>66</sup> and the rite at Mounychia, closely related to that at Brauron, was instituted after the death of a bear at the hands of Attic youths: the goddess demanded a maiden as requital and a goat was substituted for the maiden.<sup>67</sup> Embarus offered to sacrifice his own daughter to the goddess but substituted a goat disguised as the girl, who was thus saved.<sup>68</sup> Finally, Iphigeneia's sacrifice is described as the *proteleia* of the ships (*Ag.* 227), the word for the sacrifice made by Athenian girls to Artemis before their marriage.<sup>69</sup> For an Athenian, therefore, the evocation of these rites, that moved their children to marriageable status, in the context of the ending of Iphigeneia's young life, would have had an especial poignancy, through the contrast between their daughters' dropping of the saffron robes and Iphigeneia's.

We can distinguish, therefore, three levels of narrative in this context: (1) the human sacrifice at Aulis, (2) the Athenian rites at Halai and Brauron evoked by the description of (1), and (3) the experiences of Orestes in the *Eumenides*.<sup>70</sup> (2) is an improvement on (1), demonstrating a better solution to the problem of human sacrifice demanded by angered deities. This brings to an end a sequence of killings, but still makes some reparations to the slighted divinity: young girls in Athens still serve the goddess before going off to be married.<sup>71</sup> The divinity concerned with the of Iphigeneia in terms of Greek marriage; against this view, see C. Sourvinou-Inwood, 'The Sacrifice of Iphigeneia in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*: Ancient Meanings and Modern Constructs', in *Readings in Greek Tragedy, Religion and Society* (forthcoming).

<sup>60</sup> The later correlative of this scene is that with Orestes in *Eumenides*, where the Furies wish to have him killed because they are angered at the death of Clytaemestra; they refer to him too as a 'hare' (26).

<sup>61</sup> On the whole phrase ἀγνῶν δ' ἀταύρωτος αὐδαί, cf. D. Armstrong and A. E. Hanson, 'The Virgin's Voice and Neck: Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 245 and Other Texts', *BICS* 33 (1987), 97–100.

<sup>62</sup> Eur. *I.T.* 1446–61.

<sup>63</sup> 'Das Götterbild aus dem Taurerland', *AW* 4 (1979), 33ff.

<sup>64</sup> Lloyd-Jones (n. 58), pp. 96f.

<sup>65</sup> Ephorus, *FGrHist* 70 F 149; cf. J. Bremmer, 'An Enigmatic Indo-European Rite: Paederasty', *Arethusa* 13 (1980), 279–98.

<sup>66</sup> Hesych. s.v. *Βραυρώνια*.

<sup>67</sup> Schol. Ar. *Lys.* 645; Zenob. *Ath.* 1.8.

<sup>68</sup> Paus. Att. 35 Erbse; Suda s.v. *Εμβαρος* Lloyd-Jones (n. 58), pp. 93f. The *Cypria* (Proclus 104.12f. Allen) said that a hind was substituted for Iphigeneia, but Phanodemus, an Athenian, says it was a bear (*FGrHist* 325 F 14).

<sup>69</sup> Evidence in Burkert (n. 47), p. 20.

<sup>70</sup> The question of how these relate together in any realistic chronology is not of importance here.

<sup>71</sup> For the placatory aspect of the Arcteia, cf. Suda s.v. *Ἀρκτεία ἢ Βραυρώνια*: ἀπομελισσόμεναι τὴν θεάν; also schol. Theoc. 2.66 (on an uncertain festival of Artemis) ἀφοσιώσει τῆς παρθενίας, μὴ νεμεσηθῶσιν ὑπ' αὐτῆς (the reference to the 'basket-bearer' in Theocritus could point to the Brauronia: see Gow ad loc.).

rites of passage of young girls is placated so that she is not forced to take her revenge by killing those under her tutelage, and the paradoxes inherent in the need for Agamemnon to sacrifice his daughter because of the death of a hare and her young are avoided. The deity continues to receive cult, without having to resort to continued demands for revenge, and thereby Athenian society is able to continue without being constantly under the threat of divine anger and the compulsion to sacrifice children. The goddess is thus respected, not simply feared.

(3), which deals with the brother of Iphigeneia also pursued by divine anger over a murder, is another improvement over (1), again engineered by Athens. At Aulis, 'the judges [βραβῆς]<sup>72</sup> in their eagerness for battle cared nought for her prayers, her cries of "father" and her virginal youth' before she is gagged to prevent unfortunate utterance, and sacrificed like a goat (*Ag.* 228–30); in Athens, these things are again considered by judges but the defendant may speak and is protected by the goat-skin aegis of Athena. The Brauronian and Halai cults thus act as mediators between the stories of brother and sister and as further signs of the rightness of the justification of Orestes in the play: as the girls go off to be prospective mothers and the boys hoplites, Orestes makes a military treaty with Athens and goes off to re-establish his house, taking his father's place at the head of it and reinstituting its fertility which Clytaemestra had destroyed, by her marriage to an effete man and by chopping down the tree that shaded the house (*Ag.* 966–74). Like Artemis, the Furies are to be respected not simply feared; they continue to be concerned with justice, but within the context of a civilized society which will honour them in a way that Delphi, for instance, did not.<sup>73</sup> The Furies thus avoid the more catastrophic fate of the Amazons and the Lemnians, which Athena's reference to the thunderbolt held out to them.

Sacrifice is thus restored to its proper role in peaceful communion between god and man, symbolized by the normal animal victims which are substituted by Athena for Orestes (*Eum.* 1006f.). This then contrasts with the impossibility of softening the anger of the divinity stated at the start of the play, in *Ag.* 69–71:<sup>74</sup>

οὐθ' ὑποκαίων οὐτ' ἀπολείβων  
ἀπύρων ἱερῶν  
ὄργας ἀτενεῖς παραθέλξει.

neither by burning sacrifices nor by libations <nor by the spell of(?)> fireless offerings shall he soothe aside the relentless wrath

and with the failure of Priam's sacrifices to protect Troy (*Ag.* 1167–72).<sup>75</sup> Athens has found a way. The justification of Orestes in the law-court thus marks a step away from violent types of appeasement,<sup>76</sup> as did the substitutions of the Brauron cult. Law-courts are not without their measure of rhetorical trickery, which would match the cunning of an Embarus, but they offer a rather more open and public demonstration of the solution to the problems of exigent anger. The ultimate justification for the changes is that they create a situation where a civilized existence

<sup>72</sup> On the meaning of this word, see Fraenkel, ii.132.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Apollo's words at *Eum.* 179ff.

<sup>74</sup> (παρα)θέλγειν and its cognate noun reappear in the final persuasion of the Furies (*Eum.* 886, 900).

<sup>75</sup> For parallels between this scene and *Eumenides*, cf. A. L. Brown, 'The Erinyes in the *Oresteia*: Real Life, the Supernatural, and the Stage', *JHS* 103 (1983), 14.

<sup>76</sup> One might be tempted to say that the Areopagus court is something of an improvement over the court described by Agamemnon in *Ag.* 813–17, where the gods vote οὐ διχορρόπως ('in a decision leaving no room for doubt', Fraenkel), δίκας... οὐκ ἀπὸ γλώσσης... κλύοντες 'after they had heard by no spoken word the parties' claims'.

is possible for all, where competing claims have been and will continue to be balanced. The nature of the response to events in Athens, whether to what was done to the Areopagus or to the murder of Ephialtes himself, needs to be viewed in the light of all of this.

### (b) Anthesteria

The solution to the problem of Orestes also features in the second Athenian rite to which *Agamemnon* makes significant reference. In Aegisthus' account of Atreus' serving of his children to Thyestes (1577–1611), there would appear to be a hidden reference 'en filigrane' to one of the myths of the Anthesteria, in which we have another aspect of the story of Orestes in Athens, this time his purification: several words and phrases point as easily (if not, in some cases, more so) to Orestes as to his assonant counterpart Thyestes.

The most important feature for the argument is the use of the adverb *ἀνδρακάς*, *viritim*, 'each separately' (1595) to describe the seating arrangements at the feast. The text is corrupt,<sup>77</sup> but the rare *ἀνδρακάς* is unlikely to be a scribal correction or error: one may agree with Fraenkel when he says 'is it too much to hope that future editors will leave *ἀνδρακάς* alone and no longer play with a charcoal fire as Abresch did in the eighteenth century and Housman in the nineteenth?'<sup>78</sup> Whether the participle *καθημεν-* should be in the plural or singular does not much affect the argument here, though the distributive sense of the adverb might suggest the plural is more natural. A number of practical explanations have been given for this use, such as that of Denniston–Page: 'The point of "each man sitting by himself" is of course that there may be no danger of the fatal dish being taken by, or shared with, somebody else.'<sup>79</sup> From the point of view of the practical arrangements of the feast this is eminently sound, but we are dealing with an author characterized more by a densely economical treatment of his material than an obsessive concern with *placements*.<sup>80</sup> Fraenkel argues that 'the statement that Atreus, the host, is sitting at a separate table would be pointless: what really matters is that Thyestes is served with his ghastly meal apart from the rest of the company';<sup>81</sup> this is true, but Greek ritual practice, especially that of Athens, may suggest that the idea of each at a separate table is more likely. The use of this rare adjective remains an unusual and unparalleled detail for this story, but it does have an analogue at the Anthesteria.

This was the one time of the year when the Athenians sat separately, at the drinking competition on 12 Anthesterion, the 'Choes'.<sup>82</sup> This practice commemorated king

<sup>77</sup> H. Neitzel, 'Das Thyestes-Mahl im "Agamemnon" des Aischylos', *Hermes* 113 (1985), 406–9 ingeniously suggests that *ἀνδρακάς* is in fact a noun = 'Mannsportion' (cf. Nic. *Ther.* 643); however, is it not perhaps more likely that Aeschylus would have used a Homeric word in the Homeric sense and that a Hellenistic writer should then have created a noun from it, than that Aeschylus should have made the change?

<sup>78</sup> iii.750. The word appears only in *Od.* 13.13f. The meaning *κατ' ἄνδρα* (a *varia lectio* in the *Od.* passage), *viritim* is found in Hesychius and *E.M.* s.v. and *Anec. Bachm.* p. 86.27; the lexicographers tell us that Cratinus used the word to mean *κατ' ἄνδρα, χωρίς* (fr. 21).

<sup>79</sup> J. D. Denniston and D. L. Page, *Aeschylus: Agamemnon* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 215f.

<sup>80</sup> Fraenkel's suggestion that Aeschylus is making 'deliberate use of the discrepancy between the customs of Homeric society and those of his own time' (iii.754f.) does not give any significance to this (rather *recherché*) Homeric echo.

<sup>81</sup> iii.751. Cf. Denniston and Page (n. 79), p. 215: 'grammar demands that the subject should be Atreus, the context insists that it must be Thyestes.'

<sup>82</sup> On this festival, cf. H. W. Parke, *Festivals of the Athenians* (London, 1977), pp. 107–20; Deubner (n. 24), pp. 93–123; Burkert (n. 47), pp. 213–47; *Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1985), pp.

Demophon's solution to the problem of the arrival of Orestes, still polluted by the murder of his mother, at the time of the festival: not wishing to turn away a suppliant nor to pollute the festival, he sat Orestes at a separate table with his own *crater* and wine-jug, and, to avoid any hint of insult, ordered everyone else to do the same. The story has obvious relevance for the *Oresteia*, in that yet again it records an Athenian resolution of a potentially disastrous problem, and the use of *ἀνδρακάς* ought to have put the Athenians in the audience in mind of their own sitting separately, in imitation of this mythical event.

This parallel between Atreus' feast and the Anthesteria now allows us to see other parallels between the festival and this passage. Thyestes is described as returning home as a *prostropaios* (1587), which is more applicable to Orestes than to Thyestes, since we are given no clear reason why the latter went into exile and returned as a *prostropaios*, whereas Orestes came to Athens as a suppliant for purification.<sup>83</sup> In 1590 Thyestes is given hospitality (*xenia*), which is what Orestes also sought, on a *κρεουργὸν ἡμᾶρ* (1592), a phrase which combines notions of the grisly meal,<sup>84</sup> and also 'festival day', on which sacrificial meat was eaten, as at the Choes.<sup>85</sup> *τυτθὸν ὄντ' ἐν σπαργάνοις* ('young and in my swaddling-clothes', 1606) and *τραφέντα δ' αὖθις ἡ Δίκη κατήγαγεν* ('when I grew up, Justice brought me home again', 1607) are both appropriate to Orestes. Finally, and perhaps more controversially, could the reason for Aegisthus' use of *τρίτον... ἐπὶ δέκα* ('in addition to ten, the third', 1605), with its archaic ordinal and, to many, strange and apparently unnecessary precision about the number of Aegisthus' sons,<sup>86</sup> result from a desire to emphasize the idea of 'the third', when Orestes is Agamemnon's third child, the 'third storm' (*Cho.* 1066) and 'third saviour' (1073), as the Chorus call him, and third murderer in the trilogy after Agamemnon and Clytaemestra? It may be pure chance that this archaic form of expression was used in the Athenian calendar, and that 13 Anthesteria was the last day of the Anthesteria,<sup>87</sup> the day after Orestes arrived.<sup>88</sup>

In its context, this evocation of the Anthesteria both throws a negative light on Aegisthus' involvement in killing Agamemnon on his arrival by the contrast with Demophon's treatment of Orestes, and provides an ironic commentary on Aegisthus' crime of revenge, by presaging the appearance of the avenger Orestes who will kill Aegisthus in turn and for similar reasons. At the same time, it associates Orestes with

237–42; A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*<sup>2</sup> (rev. J. Gould and D. M. Lewis, Oxford, 1988), pp. 1–25. The earliest reference is in Eur. *I.T.* 947–60, and the other main source is Ar. *Ach.*, esp. 960f., 1000–2, 1076f., 1224f. with their scholia.

<sup>83</sup> The word is used of Orestes in *Eum.* 40f.; cf. also 176, 205, 234, 237, 445; *Cho.* 287, etc. Cf. R. C. T. Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1983), p. 108; Fraenkel, iii.745.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Hdt. 3.13.2, 7.181.2 quoted by Fraenkel, iii.747, who notes the words *κρεουργεῖν* and *κρεουργία* become in later literature *voces propriae* for the cutting up of Pelops, father of Thyestes and Atreus.

<sup>85</sup> *IG* ii/iii<sup>2</sup> 1672.204 (329/8).

<sup>86</sup> The reading is defended against attacks on it as absurd by Fraenkel, iii.758; Denniston and Page (n. 79), p. 216 justify their *obel*i by reference to 'a ludicrous multitude' of sons; H. Neitzel (cf. n. 77), pp. 366–70 also opposes thirteen sons, but not convincingly.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Philochoros, *FGrHist* 328 F 84 *ἦγετο ἡ ἑορτὴ Ἀνθεστηριώνος τρίτη ἐπὶ δέκα*. As in the case of *ἀνδρακάς*, the archaic nature of the expression makes it, as Fraenkel, iii.760 says, 'hard to believe that the occurrence here is due to corruption'.

<sup>88</sup> A similar custom of solitary dining connected with Orestes is found in Troezen. The people did not take the polluted Orestes into their house until the pollution had been removed, but fed him in the 'booth of Orestes' in the sanctuary of Apollo; the descendants of the men who purified him still dine there on set days (Paus. ii.31.8, with Frazer). Cf. Plut. *Q.G.* 44 (*Mor.* 301 ef, with W. Halliday, *The Greek Questions of Plutarch* (Oxford, 1928), pp. 183–5) for a similar Aeginetan custom deriving from the Trojan War.

Aegisthus as murderer and raises the question of what will happen to Orestes as a result. More specifically, in terms of the present enquiry, the connotations of the Anthesteria come into play in the *Eumenides*, when we see Orestes again coming to Athens for purification. Delphi has ultimately proved unable to solve the problem, and Athens is again the place where the solution is found.<sup>89</sup> There is no king in this version, the tradition of an ancient democracy is invoked, bringing mythical Athens closer to the audience of Aeschylus' time.<sup>90</sup> The legal solution in the trilogy and so the changes piloted by Ephialtes are thus of a similar kind to the mythical-ritual solution, and offer a greater participation to members of the community in such matters, rather as Demophon involved the whole community in the case of Orestes.<sup>91</sup>

### (c) The Mysteries

Building on work initially done by Headlam, Thomson argued for a consistent thread of allusion to the mystery cults, and especially to Eleusis.<sup>92</sup> Not all of the claimed allusions are soundly based, but there is enough for us to allow that this is a significant code in the trilogy. The Watchman in the opening line prays for ἀπαλλαγὴ πόνων ('freedom from toil'),<sup>93</sup> which recalls the function of the Mysteries in guaranteeing happiness in the Underworld after death.<sup>94</sup> This allusion can be justified by the fact that, as if in answer to his prayer, the beacon almost immediately blazes out in the darkness, just as the light blazed from the Anactoron at the climax of the Eleusinian Mysteries.<sup>95</sup> The Watchman's prayer and its fulfilment set up the imagery of darkness and light which is to be central to the play and lies at the heart of the Mysteries.<sup>96</sup>

Initiation was regularly seen as a toilsome journey, made in darkness and ending in light.<sup>97</sup> Thomson saw an allusion to this at the end of *Choephoroi*.<sup>98</sup> However, one

<sup>89</sup> I hope to examine in more detail the opposition between Athens and Delphi in 'Athens and Delphi in the *Oresteia*' (in preparation). <sup>90</sup> Sommerstein (n. 13), pp. 132f.

<sup>91</sup> The Anthesteria also permitted for one day the circulation in the city of the 'Cares'. It is debated whether these were spirits or Carian foreigners (cf. Burkert (n. 47), pp. 226–30), but whichever was meant (perhaps both) one has again the idea of full participation in the city by outsiders, like the Furies, Orestes, etc.

<sup>92</sup> W. Headlam, 'The Last Scene of the *Eumenides*', *JHS* 26 (1906), 268–77; G. Thomson, 'Mystical Allusions in the *Oresteia*', *JHS* 55 (1935), 20–34; Thomson–Headlam (n. 6), index s.v. 'Eleusinian mysteries'. M. Tierney, 'The Mysteries and the *Oresteia*', *JHS* 57 (1937), 11–21 accepted Thomson's main theory but preferred to refer to matters which were 'simply mystic in general', but his distinctions between Eleusinian and Orphic elements were challenged by Thomson in the commentary (362–6), and need to be reviewed now in the light of F. Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit* (Berlin, 1974). On the Mysteries, see most recently Burkert, *HN* (n. 47), pp. 248–97, and *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1987).

<sup>93</sup> As do the Chorus of *Choephoroi* (941f.) and Apollo (*Eum.* 82f.); the word σωτηρία appears repeatedly towards the end of *Eumenides*.

<sup>94</sup> Thomson quoted Firmicus, *err. prof. rel.* 22 for the words of the priest at Eleusis promising ἐκ πόνων σωτηρία but, as Tierney (n. 92), pp. 11f. pointed out, Firmicus does not relate these words to Eleusis. The importance of 'salvation' in Eleusinian cult is, however, enough for Thomson's argument to stand: cf. e.g. Plato, *Phdr.* 70a and Thomson ('Allusions' (n. 92)), pp. 21–3 for further examples, and Burkert (n. 92), index s.v. 'salvation'.

<sup>95</sup> Plut. *Mor.* 81e; Posidonius, *FGrHist* 87 F 36.51, etc.

<sup>96</sup> The Watchman's reference to the silence caused by 'an ox on the tongue' (37) has Pythagorean and so mystical resonances (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 6.11). The opposition light/darkness is also related to the code of rites of passage: cf. e.g. P. Vidal-Naquet, 'The Black Hunter and the Origin of the Athenian *Ephebeia*', in R. L. Gordon, *Myth, Religion and Society* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 147–62.

<sup>97</sup> See esp. Plut. fr. 178.

<sup>98</sup> Thomson, 'Allusions' (n. 92), pp. 24–7.

may wonder whether the use of the characteristically Eleusinian verb ἐποπτεύειν<sup>99</sup> by Orestes before the murder (along with his command for silence from the Chorus, another mystic idea) is really enough to support the inference that 'a parallel is being drawn, or is about to be drawn, between the murder of Clytaemnestra and mystic ritual'.<sup>100</sup> Again, Thomson's claim that, in *Choephoroi*, in a reminiscence of the climactic moment of the Eleusinian Mysteries, the darkness 'is scattered by a sudden burst of light (πάρα τὸ φῶς ἰδεῖν (961)) from torches seen within the palace as the doors are thrown open' is open to question in terms of staging.<sup>101</sup> A more persuasive specific reference to mystic affairs is the suggestion of Tierney that the image of the journey accounts for the unusual description of Orestes' wanderings from Delphi to Athens as being over sea and land (*Eum.* 75–7, 240, 249–51) through the analogy between wandering and initiation.<sup>102</sup> He noted too that Orestes achieves safety like the initiate and 'comes to his trial a living dead man';<sup>103</sup> he leaves it reborn (l. 757), declaring himself "an Argive again" and thanking Athena, Loxias and Zeus in a speech which three times in eight lines has a reference to σωτηρία. The notion that initiation... was equivalent to rebirth was a widespread one.<sup>104</sup> These references and the use of 'Eleusinian' vocabulary<sup>105</sup> help to maintain the Eleusinian colouring, and the general idea of light and safety coming after long tribulation is one which, it is not over-bold to assume, Athenians would have associated with their experiences at Eleusis or other mystery cults.<sup>106</sup>

The Eleusinian Mysteries, therefore, can be said to offer a metaphor for the experiences undergone by Orestes. They also provide a slightly different perspective from those we have discussed so far. Like the Anthesteria, though in a more all-embracing manner, they offer a model for the acceptance into the city of problematic figures, like the polluted Orestes or the apparently vile Furies. However, Orestes' polluted state is, in the context of the Mysteries, a problem: pollution was one of only two things which precluded one from participation.<sup>107</sup> It is interesting, therefore, that

<sup>99</sup> *Cho.* 579–84. *Epoptes* was the name given the *mystes* on his second journey to the Mysteries. For the verb, cf. Harpocr. s.v. ἐποπτευκότων, Theo Sm. *Math.* p. 14 Hiller; C. A. Lobeck, *Aglaophamus: sive de theologiae mysticae Graecorum causis* (Königsberg, 1829), i.127–31. It is frequent (*Cho.* 1, 487, 581, 689, 983, 1061, and *Ag.* 1269, 1579, *Eum.* 220, 224), but its normal use is 'in the context of divine, or semi-divine, superintendence of human affairs' (A. F. Garvie, *Aeschylus: Choephoroi* (Oxford, 1986), p. 201).

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Thomson, 'Allusions' (n. 92), p. 24; Thomson–Headlam (n. 6), pp. 203–6 (on *Cho.* 581f.).

<sup>101</sup> O. P. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus: The Dramatic Use of Exits and Entrances in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford, 1977), p. 357 has him enter at 973, and Thomson's staging is also rejected by Garvie (n. 99), p. 313.

<sup>102</sup> Tierney (n. 92), p. 18.

<sup>103</sup> Both he (n. 92), pp. 13–17 and Thomson, 'Allusions' (n. 92), p. 34 point to the similarity between what Orestes is threatened with and the tribulations of the uninitiated in Eleusinian–Orphic belief (cf. e.g. Plato, *Rep.* 365a).

<sup>104</sup> Tierney (n. 92), pp. 20f. There is nothing about rebirth in 757, but Orestes' move from the clutches of the chthonic Furies is perhaps enough to let Tierney's point stand.

<sup>105</sup> One might add the frequent repetition of words from the root \**tel-* with its connotations of 'initiate' etc.; cf. S. D. Goldhill, 'Two Notes on *telos* and Related Words in the *Oresteia*', *JHS* 104 (1984), 169–76.

<sup>106</sup> Garvie (n. 99), p. 304 is, therefore, being too reductive when, in discussing Thomson's claims about the Chorus in *Cho.* 935–71, he writes; 'though the parallels [with the Mysteries] are undeniable it seems unnecessary to interpret the ode in mystic terms. The language is fully explicable in the dramatic context of the play itself.' 'Full' explanations of imagery etc. will not necessarily involve merely the internal relations of the play; broader cultural reference also needs to be taken into account.

<sup>107</sup> The other was an inability to speak Greek; the prohibitions were proclaimed in the *prorrhesis*, cf. Isoc. *Paneg.* 157.



in *Eumenides* the question of Orestes' pollution is complicated. He claims three times to have been purified, his most explicit statement coming at *Eum.* 445–52;<sup>108</sup>

οὐκ εἰμι προστρόπαιος, οὐδ' ἔχων μύσος  
 πρὸς χειρὶ τήμῃ τὸ σὸν ἐφεζόμεν βρέτας.  
 τεκμήριον δὲ τῶνδ' εἰ σοὶ λέξω μέγα·  
 ἀφθογγον εἶναι τὸν παλαμναῖον νόμος,  
 ἔστ' ἂν πρὸς ἀνδρὸς αἵματος καθαρσίου  
 σφαγαὶ καθαίμαξωσι νεοθηλοῦς βοτοῦ.  
 πάλαι πρὸς ἄλλοις ταῦτ' ἀφιερώμεθα  
 οἴκοις καὶ βοτοῖς καὶ ῥυτοῖς πόροις.

I am no suppliant, and I did not sit by your statue because my hands were polluted. I will give you clear proof of this. It is the custom that the polluted man should stay silent until at the hands of one who frees him of his bloodstain the blood of a young sacrificial animal washes away the pollution. Long ago I was purified in others' houses with victims and running waters.

The Furies, however, are not impressed, claiming the blood is still on his hands, as indeed the Pythia has also said when she described seeing Orestes as 'a polluted suppliant sitting at the Omphalos with blood dripping from his hands' (40–2). There are further difficulties as to whether the pollution has 'worn off' during the wanderings (238f., 280) or was cleansed by ritual purification, and, if the latter, whether this happened once (282f.) or repeatedly (451f.). This problem has been addressed by reference to formal aspects of the composition of the play,<sup>109</sup> but it may be that these confusions have a more central purpose, as do similar uncertainties in Sophocles. In particular, we have here to ask how the possibly polluted nature of Orestes tallies with the claimed triumphant justification in Eleusinian terms at the end of the trilogy. The answer would appear to be that, when a man claims to have undergone all that ritual prescribes to free himself from pollution and suggests that he has done this on divine guidance,<sup>110</sup> but other divinities counterclaim that the pollution is still present, a further process is necessary to prevent a repetition of the kind of circumstances in which Agamemnon found himself at Aulis, hopelessly trapped between two deities and their demands. Athena herself says the matter is too great for mortals or even her to decide alone and that the Furies have a claim (470–9). The resolution of the problem is to be found in the debate and voting of the law-court: 'legal absolution' is thus a necessary complement to the religious, and the old, traditional forms of purification are seen to require the new judicial process in order to resolve complex, disputed cases, in which the status of the defendant is not, in religious terms, clear-cut. The decision in the play devolves on to the mortal citizens of Athens, the city that has to decide whether to accept Orestes, and, with the help of Athena's casting vote, a solution is found. There is a parallel in contemporary Athenian politics too, in that in future there will be a greater involvement in the legal processes by those who are affected by the decisions: weighty matters of state are, like the trial of Orestes, a *πράγμα μείζον*, resolution of which is not to be left to a powerful élite, be it a goddess or the Areopagus.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. 235–43, 276–98. On the question of Orestes' condition, cf. Taplin (n. 101), pp. 381–4; Parker (n. 83), pp. 386–8.

<sup>109</sup> e.g. by Taplin (n. 101), p. 383: Aeschylus 'wants the supplication at Delphi, but he also wants the salutary suffering of Orestes' wanderings', and both are necessary for his purification; 'perhaps there is a simple explanation which reconciles these features; but it seems more likely that they are meant to co-exist without this kind of close scrutiny' (this is accepted by Sommerstein (n. 13), pp. 124f.).

<sup>110</sup> Athena too describes him as *καθαρὸς ἀβλαβής* (474).

## (d) Panathenaea

The final example of an Athenian festival evoked in the trilogy is the Panathenaea, to which a number of references are made at the very end of the trilogy.<sup>111</sup> Headlam was the first to explain the red cloaks of the Eumenides as those worn by the Metics in the Panathenaeic procession: the Furies are called *metoikoi* in *Eum.* 1011,<sup>112</sup> and so, as they put on their new raiment, take up a new position in the community of Athens.<sup>113</sup> That the new clothes are put on over the old symbolizes the blend of old and new justice in which they will share.<sup>114</sup> Headlam also related Athena's words in 1030–1:

ὅπως ἂν εὖφρων ᾗδ' ὀμιλία χθονὸς  
τὸ λοιπὸν εὐάνδροισι συμφοραῖς πρέπηι.

so that this kindly association with the land may be glorified by the good fortune of manly excellence

first, to Hesychius' statement that the Metics carried bowls in the procession *ἵνα ὡς εὖνοι ἀριθμῶνται* ('so that they should be counted as kindly disposed to the city'),<sup>115</sup> and second to the contest in *euandria* which determined the leaders of the procession.<sup>116</sup> perhaps too the Jurors, specially selected by Athena as 'best of my citizens' (487), recalled the way that older men were chosen, for their striking good looks, to take part as representatives of their group. Headlam revived a suggestion of August Mommsen that the torches, and the *ololugmos* and singing (1043, 1047) attested for the Panathenaea by Euripides,<sup>117</sup> will have recalled the *pannychis* which took place immediately before the procession, which set off at day-break.<sup>118</sup> The Areopagus met at night (*Eum.* 704–6), so that the Panathenaeic *pompe* in the play will have set off at the same time.<sup>119</sup> One may note too that the goal of the procession was the temple of Athena Polias, where the first scene in Athens is set. Headlam concluded that 'the whole of this procession was designed by Aeschylus as a reflection of the great Panathenaeic'.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>111</sup> For another play in which the Panathenaea and associated festivals play an important role, see the author's *Aristophanes: Myth, Ritual and Comedy* (Cambridge, forthcoming), on Aristophanes' *Knights*.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. too 1018 and also 804–8, 833, 869, 890, 916; Headlam (n. 92) and Thomson–Headlam (n. 6), pp. 315–19. The language of 1011 echoes the juxtaposition of *μετοίκων* and 'Ἐρινόν in *Ag.* 57–9; for *μέτοικος* elsewhere, cf. *Cho.* 684, 971 (of Furies) and Garvie (n. 99), ad locc. See also R. F. Goheen, 'Aspects of Dramatic Symbolism: Three Studies in the *Oresteia*', *AJP* 76 (1955), 113–37, and on the procession, Taplin (n. 101), pp. 410–15, esp. 411 and Sommerstein (n. 13), pp. 34, 275–82.

<sup>113</sup> For this theme in the play, cf. D. Sider, 'Stagecraft in the *Oresteia*', *AJP* 99 (1978), 12–27; T. A. Tarkow, 'Thematic Implications of Costuming in the *Oresteia*', *Maia* 32 (1980), 153–65; Macleod (n. 10), pp. 41–3 (= *Maia* 27 (1975), 201–3); R. Drew Griffith, 'Disrobing in the *Oresteia*', *CQ* 38 (1988), 552–4.

<sup>114</sup> For *ἐνδύσεις* (1028) = 'additional' cf. G. Hermann's edition (Leipzig, 1852), p. 645.

<sup>115</sup> s.v. *Σκαφηφόροι*; cf. also similar language in *Eum.* 992, 1013, 1034 (Headlam (n. 92), p. 273; cf. 276f. for the significance of 990–5 to Athens' relation with the Metics).

<sup>116</sup> [Andoc.] *Alcib.* 42 (Headlam (n. 92), p. 274).

<sup>117</sup> *Heracleid.* 777ff.

<sup>118</sup> Headlam (n. 92), p. 275; A. Mommsen, *Heortologie: antiquarische Untersuchungen über die städtischen Feste der Athener* (Leipzig, 1864), p. 171; *IG* ii<sup>2</sup> 334.30. Mommsen also noted the existence, at least in the fourth century, of *hieropoioi* for the Semnai appointed by the Areopagus (Dem. 21.115); the *hieropoioi* were generally in charge of the festival.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Lucian, *Hermot.* 64. Sommerstein (n. 13), p. 279 notes that references to light begin at 906 and replace frequent reference to darkness; the Chorus calls on the sun at 926.

<sup>120</sup> (n. 92), pp. 274f.

How many other features of the procession appeared on stage is unknowable.<sup>121</sup> Even if some of these features were not actually brought on stage, the evocation of this scheme of the festival means that the trilogy can be considered in terms of the schema. One can only speculate on whether branches were carried, as by the *thallophoroi*, freed slaves and barbarians in the actual procession; these would pick up the suppliants' branch with which *Choephoroi* ended.<sup>122</sup> Would not the Panathenaic robe, present or otherwise, with its depiction of the defeat of chaos, pick up the imagery of weaving and, with the red robes of the Eumenides, bring that symbolism, which has stood so long for entrapment and death, to an auspicious close? The word *peplos* is actually used of the garment in which Agamemnon was murdered at *Eum.* 635,<sup>123</sup> where it has the epithet *δαίδαλος*:<sup>124</sup> the *peplos* was highly decorated, as we learn from Euripides:<sup>125</sup>

ἡ Παλλάδος ἐν πόλει  
τὰς καλλιδίφρους Ἀθα-  
ναίης ἐν κροκέωι πέπλωι  
ζεύξομαι ἄρα πώ-  
λους ἐν δαδαλαίσι ποι-  
κίλλουσ' ἀνθοκρόκοισι πη-  
ναῖς ἡ Τιτάνων γενεάν,  
τὰν Ζεὺς ἀμφιπύρῳ κοιμί-  
ζει φλογμῶι Κρονίδας;

Or in the city of Pallas Athene, will I yoke the horses with their fine chariots on the saffron *peplos*, decorating it with colourful webs worked with flowers, or the Titans' race, which Zeus son of Cronus lays low with a blazing bolt?

The robe given to Athena at the festival was decorated with a Gigantomachy, and in the play too Athena overcomes chthonic powers, though in a much less violent manner than in this earlier exploit, which predated Zeus' establishment of the present cosmos. This time, the chthonic beings are not, like the Titans, imprisoned under the earth, but are to be honoured there (*Eum.* 1036).<sup>126</sup>

If we accept Burkert's account of the relationship of the Panathenaea to the festivals at the end of the old year,<sup>127</sup> this evocation of the Panathenaea will be not only a symbol and celebration of the unity brought by Athena, but also another way of viewing the events of the play and of recent months. The festivals at the end of the Athenian year marked dissolution, the breakdown of normality and the reversal of roles. At the Scira, the priestess of Athena and the priest of Poseidon left the Acropolis (the gods symbolically abandon the city), men and women were separated

<sup>121</sup> Taplin (n. 101), p. 411 is sceptical of anything too elaborate. Sommerstein (n. 13), pp. 276–8 estimates a total of about thirty-five people on stage at the end.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. *Cho.* 1035; for branches at the Panathenaea, cf. for *thallophoroi* schol. Ar. *Vesp.* 544, X. *Symp.* 4.17, and for slaves etc. Bekker, *Anecd.* i.242–3 (Deubner (n. 24), p. 29).

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Iphigeneia's *peplos* at *Ag.* 233 and *Ag.* 1126, 1580, *Cho.* 1000.

<sup>124</sup> E. Flintoff, 'The Treading of the Cloth', *QUCC* 54 (1987), 122f. argues that there is an earlier near parody of the gift of the *peplos* to Athena in Agamemnon's walking on the robes, which are described as *ποικίλοις κάλλεσιν* (923; cf. for the adjective 926, 936), a phrase suitable to garments in a religious context (Headlam-Thomson (n. 6), p. 96, Fraenkel, ii.925).

<sup>125</sup> *Hec.* 466–74; cf. schol. Ar. *Vesp.* 544.

<sup>126</sup> N. S. Rabinowitz, 'From Force to Persuasion: Aischylus' *Oresteia* as Cosmogonic Myth', *Ramus* 10 (1981), 186.

<sup>127</sup> Burkert (n. 47), pp. 135–61. There is no intention to imply that Athens had any 'new-year' festival of the kind found in Babylon: there was no such neat division. The Scira and Dipolieia took place in the middle of Scirophorion, the last month, the Cronia and Panathenaea in the middle of the first, Hecatombaion. The justification for taking the last as the 'first' festival of the new year is the nature of the festival. Some new officials took up their office after it (cf. Meiggs and Lewis, no. 58A.27–9).

so that family life was interrupted, and women unusually gathered together. During this time, the Dipolieia was celebrated, when the Eleusinian Ceryces family 'occupied' the Acropolis of Athena, and carried out the anomalous Buphonia sacrifice to Zeus, in which the slaughter of an ox which had eaten the sacred cakes resulted in a trial of those involved; the blame was passed from one to another until it fell on the instruments of sacrifice, which were thrown into the sea. At the Cronia, discussed above, the roles of master and slave were reversed.

The trilogy echoes a number of aspects from these festivals. At the Scira, the normal occupants of the Acropolis are absent, just as the murder of Agamemnon and the marginalization of his son remove the expected rulers from the house, and the disruption of the household dramatized by the festival is repeated in the actions of Clytaemestra and Aegisthus: their swapping of the roles of master and mistress is of the same order as the rites at the Cronia.<sup>128</sup> Clytaemestra furthermore sins against two aspects of Greek ideology about women and the household. Women were expected, Penelope-like, to tend the hearth and spin and weave: 'domum servavit, lanam fecit', as was said of the famous Claudia.<sup>129</sup> Clytaemestra, by contrast, weaves not to clothe but to kill her husband. Again, she tends not a domestic fire but a huge chain of beacons, involving herself most anomalously with fires in the outside world,<sup>130</sup> the sphere of men. At the end of her recital of her beacon-chain, she compares it to a *lampadedromia*, the best known of which in Athens took place at the Panathenaea.<sup>131</sup> Here again we have a reversal, a woman associated with and, as it were, in charge of a major city rite. Furthermore, Fraenkel remarks that there is another anomaly, in that at the Panathenaea teams of runners competed against each other, whereas 'a single team, posted from Ida to Argos, is running here and therefore there is no competition, and yet there is mention of a winner as in the Attic Lampadedromia. This paradox must have struck Athenian hearers as something almost grotesque'.<sup>132</sup>

More contentiously perhaps, the anomalous trial at the Buphonia sacrifice might bear comparison with the trial of Orestes:<sup>133</sup> the justification for such a comparison would be that, once the year-end scheme was brought into play, then all aspects of it were available for the consideration of the actions on stage. Furthermore, the Buphonia trial and that of Orestes are, by their very newness, characterizable as anomalous, and both institute a new way of solving a 'legal' problem; both of them make a point of involving not just the people most immediately implicated in the problem but also a wider section of the community: in Orestes' case, the Areopagus, in the Buphonia, 'all' the citizens. The aetiological story told of one Sopatros, a farmer in Attica but not an Athenian, who killed in anger an ox which ate his sacrificial cakes, and then fled to Crete.<sup>134</sup> Drought struck Attica, and the oracle

<sup>128</sup> Aegisthus' effeminacy was traditional: Hom. *Od.* 3.262–4, 310; cf. *Ag.* 1224f., 1625–7, *Cho.* 304.

<sup>129</sup> *Carm. lat. epig.* 52 (Buecheler); cf. R. Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs* (Urbana, 1962), p. 271.

<sup>130</sup> S. V. Tracy, 'Darkness from Light: The Beacon Fire in the *Agamemnon*', *CQ* 36 (1986), 257–60 relates the beacons to the (possible) use made of them by Mardonius to signal his capture of Athens (cf. Hdt. 9.3.1); another Persian element in Clytaemestra's account is ἀγγαρος (282), which recalls the *aggareion* system of horse-riding messengers (Hdt. 8.98.2). Persian echoes would further blacken the picture of the queen, as in the case of the Amazons; cf. K. J. Dover, 'The Red Fabric in the *Agamemnon*', (n. 5), pp. 151–60 (= *Dioniso* 48 (1977), 55–69), esp. pp. 156–60 on the Spartan king Pausanias and Agamemnon.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Fraenkel, ii.166–9 on this rite (with bibliography).

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* 168f.

<sup>133</sup> The fullest account of the Buphonia is in Porph. *de abst.* 2.28ff., which is followed here.

<sup>134</sup> Another version of the story has Diomos 'taking the others who were present when the ox ate the cakes as *sunergoi* and slaughtering it' (Porph. *de abst.* 2.10).

demanded the Athenians punish the murderer; unexpectedly, it did not demand the expiation of the crime but rather its repetition. In return for the gift of citizenship and the promise that all would take part in the rite, Sopatros effected the repetition. The trial followed. Like the men who struck the ox in myth and ritual, Orestes has fled, though like Sopatros he does not flee the trial completely, but is brought to it by the oracle at Delphi. In this way, in each case, a problem is resolved without further suffering: the ox slain by Sopatros is exhumed, skinned, stuffed and set up yoked to a plough as it was in life, and reparations are made to the Furies.

There are a number of ways in which the trial of Orestes demonstrates its superiority to the 'comedy of innocence'<sup>135</sup> acted out at the Buphonia. In the trial at the festival, after the blame had been passed from group to group involved in the sacrifice, 'they convicted the knife [that skinned the ox] of the slaughter, because it was voiceless (*οὔσης ἀφώνου*)'. We may detect echoes of the voiceless Iphigeneia here. Furthermore, the repetitive and predictable nature of the rite's outcome also makes it unsuitable as a model for any practical law-court, which would have to deal with cases of greater complexity where resolution could not always depend on an unusual demand from Delphi, as in the case of Sopatros, or on the convenient fiction that the 'murder-weapon' was guilty. The passing of the blame from one group at the Buphonia to another is, finally, reminiscent of similar attempts by the murderers and their apologists in the trilogy to pass the blame to, for instance, *dike*. At the same time, however, ancient convention is not totally abandoned in the new legal system, in that restitution and the involvement of the wider community appear in the new courts, both in Orestes' time and in Aeschylus'.

The year-end periods of abnormality, violence and disruption are brought to an end by the Panathenaea, as the city remakes its unity and faces a new start; may not the disruption surrounding the recent reforms be similarly concluded? They too can be seen as marking the end of one period and the start of another, with the violence and disruption that such changes traditionally may, but need not inevitably, involve. Athena and Poseidon, normally together on the Acropolis, are ritually split apart each year, but this is done the better to cement their unity for the coming twelve months. Mythology and ritual regularly depict such dislocations and reunifications in terms of violence and upheaval, which lead to a better state of affairs, though inevitably with winners and losers. The *logos*-based courts provide the best available place for resolutions of such conflicts in the future. The mythical first Areopagus even provides a model for the behaviour of the losers: if the Furies need further persuasion, the defeated jurors do not complain.

There is, therefore, a considerable range of mythical reference into which the contemporary events are placed. Parallels are given from mythology, especially Athenian mythology, for the kind of change that has happened, making it comprehensible and even giving it a perspective through changes of a much greater kind on a cosmic scale. Then there are references to Athenian rituals and their myths, which carry the message that Athens has met and coped satisfactorily with crises of this kind before, coped indeed better than other places and people. These references either pervade the whole trilogy, as in the cases of the Mysteries or the year-end festivals, or are placed at significant junctures in the narrative, as in the evocations of the Arkteia at the sacrifice of Iphigeneia or of the Anthesteria at the time of Agamemnon's murder.

<sup>135</sup> For the phrase, K. Meuli, 'Griechische Opfergebräuche', in *Phyllobolia* (*Fest. P. Von der Mühl*) (Basel, 1946), pp. 275f.

All of these myths and rituals can be pressed into service to view the recent changes. They might, but need not, be read as simply supportive of them. The stories themselves have problems in them, such as Zeus' violent treatment of his father, the war in the Athenian foundation myth, or the patriarchal nature of the Amazonian stories. Furthermore, the Delphic succession myth, which provides the non-violent model for the play's changes, appears to have been made up by Aeschylus himself by the suppression of more violent versions, and some of the rituals involve blatant cases of Athenian myth-making: rhetoric is as much part of the manipulation of myth and ritual as it is of legal debate. The imagery of the trilogy creates constant ambiguities, whereby Orestes can be both the snake, chthonic creature of darkness, and the 'light' of the house, but these mythic and ritual references offer more positive ways of looking at the events in the play and in 'reality', which can suggest that what Ephialtes has done is not so very much against Athenian tradition. What our Proteus himself felt about the changes we cannot know, but he has provided a rich variety of means for his contemporaries to come to terms with them.<sup>136</sup>

*The Queen's College, Oxford*

A. M. BOWIE

<sup>136</sup> I am very grateful to Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood for her careful criticism of this article, parts of which also benefited from comments at the Warwick Classical Association conference and seminars in London and Oxford. The views expressed remain the responsibility of the author.