

PURIFICATION AND POLLUTION IN AESCHYLUS’ *EUMENIDES*

‘The issues surrounding Orestes’ purification are some of the most difficult in all of Aeschylus’ wrote A. L. Brown in 1982.¹ Despite the appearance since then of an overall treatment of pollution and three editions of the play, there continue to be disagreements about the matter.² In this paper I suggest that we may be better able to understand the treatment of purification if we focus on the importance of Orestes’ pollution to the particular version of the story constructed in *Eumenides*.

I. THE ISSUE IN THE TRIAL

The issue in the trial of Orestes may be expressed simply. It is ‘a plea by a self-confessed killer that he had killed [his mother] “with justice”’, because ‘his victim was herself guilty of murder’.³ The text is very clear on this. Express statements to this effect come from Orestes (610) and Apollo (615, 625f., 644f.) and Athena in her judgement *ἀνὴρ ὃδ’ ἐκπέφευγεν αἵματος δίκην* (752) uses a formulation which is standard in Athenian courts for a murder charge.⁴ Even before the trial, both Apollo (219–23) and Orestes (468) have claimed that the decision to be made is whether or not Orestes acted justly in killing Klytaimestra. Athena too points out to the Erinyes that this aspect will have to be examined (426, 428, 432), and in her account of the decision to give her vote to Orestes (739–40), she speaks of justification only, merely prefacing it with a reason for her choice.

Yet although this is the explicit issue, it is not the concern of the prosecution at all. Indeed, the Erinyes do not understand the principle at stake (426–32), but are only interested in their established function of pursuing the murderers of kin (210, 605). It is in terms of this *λάχος* (334, cf. 585f., especially 605) and of pollution (cf. 652–6, 715–16) that they express their side of the case. Indeed, they regard the unending pursuit of kin-murderers (208–10) as their *τιμή*, embodied here in Orestes (225, 227, 230–31, 324–27). So the loss of Orestes is coterminous with the loss of that *τιμή*, as Apollo asserts (721–2), the Erinyes complain (747, 780, 845–6) and Athena tacitly admits (e.g. 884) by the offer of new honours at Athens (those of the Semnai Theai, which do not specifically include the task of avenging kindred bloodshed). The play does not deal with their function abstractly. They are bloodsuckers (137–9, 184, 264–7, 305, 333), the ‘animate agents of pollution’.⁵ They are able to follow Orestes—as obliged by their lot—because his hands are covered with the blood of his mother (40–42, 166–70, 230–31, 244–7, 252–3, 261–4, 316–17). This chase, and the struggle between their power and that of the younger gods (Apollo, Athena and Zeus), is strikingly dramatized in the play, as is the moment of Orestes’ final release

¹ *JHS* 102 (1982), 30.

² R. C. T. Parker, *Miasma* (Oxford, 1983). A. H. Sommerstein, *Aeschylus, Eumenides* (Cambridge, 1989). A. J. Podlecki, *Aeschylus, Eumenides* (Warminster, 1989). M. L. West, *Aeschylus, Tragoediae* (Stuttgart, 1990). These works are cited by author’s name only.

³ Sommerstein, p. 16.

⁴ E.g. Dem. 21.105. Cf. 612–13 where Orestes asks Apollo *τὸδ’ αἶμα κρῖνον* in relation to the justification of his deed and 682 where Athena describes the trial as *δίκας... αἵματος χυτοῦ*.

⁵ Parker, p. 107.

from their toils, when he walks away from Athens, while the Erinyes for the first time relinquish their hitherto obligatory pursuit (777–8). The trial result, then, however much expressed in terms of justifiable homicide, also effects a change in Orestes' and the Erinyes' status. Now no one regards Orestes as polluted and the Erinyes have lost the *τιμή* as specifically expressed at 210. Somehow, then, this must also be at issue in the trial.

It must be admitted at once that courts did not explicitly decide the issue of pollution. Nonetheless, Parker has presented a convincing case for a tacit link between justified homicide and ritual purity.⁶ The interpretation by Demosthenes of the phrase *μὴ φεύγειν κτείναντα* as both *τοῦτον... οὐκ ἄδικεῖν* and *καὶ τοῦτον εἶναι καθαρὸν* (Dem. 23.53, 55) is indicative and typical. It is therefore open to us to suppose, if the construction of the play demands it, that an Athenian audience would decode the strands of pollution and justified homicide, artificially separated here to serve the play's purpose, according to an available cultural schema, viz. 'the justified killer is *καθαρός*'.⁷ In fact, just as the treatment of justified homicide does not conform to specific Athenian practice,⁸ so the overt treatment of pollution in the trial (652–66) diverges from actuality, but in doing so confirms the importance of the issue.

The question of pollution and purification is central to the play both thematically and dramatically. This has often been seen, as have the problems which arise especially over the issue of purification.⁹ The perception that the issue remains crucial until the verdict in the trial, however, gives us a new grip over these problems. Since the pollution is embodied in the action as the pursuit of Orestes by the Erinyes, it stands to reason that the moment when that pursuit ceases represents the point when the question has been resolved in favour of Orestes. Thus it must follow that Parker is incorrect to say that the Erinyes 'continue their assaults after the murderer's hands are clean'.¹⁰ The Erinyes can only track Orestes to Athens because his hands still have blood on them (253). However, the effect of the purifications of Orestes (by ritual and wandering) is again dramatically represented by the difficulty they have had in catching up with him (244f.). Here is the nub of the matter. Apollo and Orestes claim that their purifications have been effective and Orestes' willingness to speak from his earliest entry (85–7; cf. 448–50), as well as his rationality in all his speeches (note *Cho.* 1026 and contrast 1048f.) guarantee the reasonableness of that claim. On the other hand, the fact that the Erinyes can still follow the trail of blood (253) is a guarantee that their claim is also in some sense true.

It is immediately clearer on this analysis why Orestes' purification is dealt with as it is. The defence must be able to claim with some justification that the procedure has been effective and that he is already pure when he arrives at Athens. The instruction of Apollo to seek the shrine of Athena (79–80) almost certainly activates another cultural schema: 'the polluted murderer must keep away from shrines' (cf. Dem. 20.158, 23.80).¹¹ This is confirmed when Orestes' first words at Athena's statue ask her to accept him as a suppliant *οὐ προστρόπαιον οὐδ' ἀφοίβαντον χέρα* (237). The focus upon his ritual status lasts from 237–40, preceded and followed only by appeals

⁶ Appendix 5 (pp. 366–9).

⁷ See C. Sourvinou-Inwood, *Reading Greek Culture* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 3–23 for a discussion of the theoretical problems of and a methodology for reconstructing the ancient readings of texts and images.

⁸ Sommerstein, p. 16 with n. 57.

⁹ See O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 381–4; A. L. Brown, 'The Erinyes in the *Oresteia*', *JHS* 103 (1983), 13–34; Parker, pp. 386–8.

¹⁰ P. 107. See also Brown (n. 9), p. 24, and id. (n. 1), pp. 30–32.

¹¹ See Parker, p. 125; D. M. MacDowell, *Athenian Homicide Law in the Age of the Orators* (Manchester, 1963), pp. 25, 132–40, 144–6.

to Athena which stress Apollo's role. This schema, together with the insistence on a double purification (by ritual *and* exile), puts very strongly in place for the audience the claim that Orestes is pure, in turn reinforced by the knowledge that ritual silence is required from the polluted suppliant (cf. 448–50). On the other hand, the purification cannot be *presented* as wholly effective, otherwise the Erinyes would never arrive in Athens, and the central conflict of the play would vanish. The audience may be asked to bring to bear on this aspect of the matter the schema 'purification does not always take'.¹² However, what is happening is clearly enough dramatized by the success of the agents of pollution in tracking Orestes, but their failure to get hold of him while he is unprotected (as in fact he never is: see Apollo's instruction to Hermes 90–93). This paradoxical situation makes the issue difficult for Athena to decide without special measures.¹³ There is, of course, a problematic detail (who purified Orestes and when?), but since it makes no material difference to this argument, I will deal with that at the end (under III), as a test of the analysis made here.

II. THE ROLE OF APOLLO

This description of the movement of the plot, however, produces two immediate questions: 'what is resolved by the trial scene?' and 'why have the events been linked up in *this way*?'

The answer to the first is quite clear: Orestes is not guilty, therefore he is not polluted and the Erinyes must release their hold on him. The proof that this issue is resolved is that they actually *do* this now for the first time. Strictly speaking, it may seem illogical that Orestes' ritual status be affected by what happens in the trial: if he was always pure, how can he have been part-polluted until the end of the trial? However, the illogicality is only apparent, for the following reasons. First of all, he and Apollo claim vigorously throughout that the purifications have taken (see Part I). Secondly, if Parker's argument about the ritual purity of the man who is a justified killer is correct (see Part I above), then it follows that the play's reversal of actual practice (in which the trial comes *before* purificatory exile) indicates precisely the motive for leaving this issue open until it is resolved by the acquittal. The acquittal proves that Apollo and Orestes have been right all along. Thirdly, then, the pursuit of the Erinyes is essential to the play's goal (see below). If there is to be a trial, at Athens, the Erinyes are to be the prosecutors and it is to be the climax of Orestes' difficulties, then clearly the dramatist must get Orestes and the Erinyes to Athens, but

¹² See Parker, p. 387. However, it may be better to regard the treatment of purification not as a matter of fact, but as something open to varying points of view—for example, those of the family of the perpetrator versus those of the murdered individual.

¹³ Athena's view at 473f. that Orestes is pure (unequivocal in the received text) is given by an Olympian supplicated by a man who would be breaking all taboos if he had approached her shrine while still polluted and then dared to *speak*. But if the purification procedure is a matter of fact, the question of Orestes' purity is a matter of opinion (see n. 12). The problem for Athena, even if she believes that Orestes is pure, is to convince the wronged parties (here the actual agents of pollution) that the purification has been effective. The process of law offers a remarkable way of doing it (and the split verdict a way of showing that it is a matter of judgement, decided in an arbitrary manner). It is worth noting that Athena's arguments for establishing a court are articulated precisely in terms of (a) Orestes' claim to be pure (473–4) and (b) the danger from the Erinyes as the agents of pollution (476–9). I am grateful to the editors for suggesting this line of argument. The passage is textually corrupt, and it seems possible that in the original version, Athena may not have declared Orestes pure *tout court*. However, if the play has been specifically designed to produce an Orestes pure and able to return to his homeland as ruler, then it is not especially surprising that the odds are stacked against the Erinyes so clearly.

without resolving the issue. We might rationalize this movement by saying that actually Orestes is pure, but the Erinyes are in error. The drama disallows this by its insistence upon the trail of blood followed by the Erinyes (see above) and the continuousness of their pursuit. Only one side can be right on this issue, but the dramatist manipulates his cultural schemata so as to leave it open until as late as possible which side it is.

This analysis, however, puts even greater weight on the answer to the second question. For the dramatist must have seen a specific advantage to be gained by taking such pains to construct the drama so tightly around the pollution question. This again is clear. From *Choephoroi* 480 (αἰτουμένω μοι δὸς κράτος τῶν σὼν δόμων) with 301–5 and 864–5 it has been expected by Orestes and the Chorus that Orestes will by his action receive once more the title to his father's kingdom and its wealth. But a mother-murderer may not so easily stay at home, as the myth of Alcmaeon shows (e.g. Thuc. ii.102.5–6 as well as other versions of the ending of the Orestes story [e.g. Eur. *Electra* 1273–5]). It is his pollution which stops him. This is shown quite clearly when the Erinyes during the trial exasperatedly ask Apollo how on earth Orestes can stay on in Argos as ruler: τὸ μητρὸς αἷμ' ὅμαιμον ἐκχέας πέδοι/ ἔπειτ' ἐν Ἀργεὶ δώματ' οἴκησει πατρός;/ ποίοισι βωμοῖς χρώμενος τοῖς δημίοις;/ ποία δὲ χέρνυφ φρατέρων προσδέξεται; (653–6). After his acquittal, Orestes makes it quite clear that he regards himself as able to return home to Argos as ruler (754–60: note especially 754 σώσασα τοὺς ἐμοὺς δόμους and 757–8 Ἀργεῖος ἀνὴρ αὐθις, ἐν τε χρήμασιν / οἰκεῖ πατρώοις). He also feels free to confirm the perpetual alliance between Argos and Athens which has been mentioned twice before (762–74; see 289–91 and 667–73). The version of the myth articulated here, then, is quite specifically crafted so as to deal with the problem of getting Orestes back to continue to rule in Argos. It is not hard to see that such a design motive must be integrally connected to the play's overt political support for an Argive alliance with Athens.

It is now possible to see what function is served by the infamous 'biological' argument of Apollo (657–66). It responds directly to the Erinyes' question about Orestes' ritual status as king of Argos, if acquitted (653–6, quoted above). 'How can he go back to Argos after killing his mother? What public altars will he be able to use? What lustral water from his kin-groups will receive him?' In so far as this departs from the sort of argument one would normally expect in a homicide trial, it highlights the special nature of the issue for *this* trial. It follows that unless Apollo's evidence is accepted at face value, the Erinyes' claim over Orestes will stand, whether or not he is acquitted. Two textual markers show that this evidence is so regarded. First is Orestes' claim at 753–60 that the trial has given him back his native land (cf. 652–6 and the formulation and interpretations of the law cited above from Dem. 23.53–5). He could not return home unless he were considered *καθαρός*. Second is the fact that the Erinyes *stay* while Orestes *leaves* (and this time, unlike at 67f., they are *awake*).

The argument that a mother is not related by blood to her child is crucial, then, and must be taken as true. But it has always caused problems to commentators. Sommerstein considers that the audience would have seen it as fallacious.¹⁴ This view of the argument has much to do with the tendency among some scholars to claim that

¹⁴ Sommerstein on 657–66. Podlecki, on 657, is slightly less sceptical: 'a theory which would perhaps not have sounded as ludicrous to Aesch.'s audience as it does to us'. But lower down he adds: 'Of course the point remains that... Orestes did violence to one of the most basic and sacrosanct of human relationships, that between a child and a mother'.

Apollo receives ambivalent treatment in the drama.¹⁵ This is one way of understanding the reaction of the half of the jury, who reject Orestes' case. However, elsewhere I will suggest that it is not a negative evaluation of Apollo's evidence and Orestes' case that underlies this split decision. That the case is made is implied even by the Erinyes themselves in 679–80.¹⁶ Rather, a positive valuation by one half of the jury of what the Erinyes represent, following Athena's appeal in 709–10, is to be inferred as the rationale.

An entirely different view of Apollo's function in the drama is possible. Let us begin with the perceivedly negative side. It is true that his relationship with the Erinyes is antagonistic (e.g. 67f., 179f., 644f., 717f.). But this antagonism is an essential datum of the play (note especially 66, where Apollo tells Orestes he will not be easy on the Erinyes—they are his *ἐχθροί* and so must be regarded as Apollo's too), and is given the additional justification that Apollo is *καθάρσιος* (63, 578, cf. 283f.). As such he is the antithesis of the Erinyes. In any case he seems generally to have been felt at Athens to have been in some way 'purer' than other gods.¹⁷ Besides, the three main Olympian agents in the drama, Zeus, Apollo and Athena, are linked together not only by Apollo (79–80, 92, 214, 224, 618f., 684–6) and Orestes (757–61), but also by Athena in explaining to the Erinyes why the result of the trial was not a cause for them to harm Athens (797–9). And her explicit words at 736–40 show she accepts at least Apollo's plea that Klytaimnestra's act was worse than Orestes', and suggest that she accepts Apollo's description of her birth (664–5).¹⁸ It thus seems likely that at 778 the Erinyes include Zeus, Athena and Apollo among the *θεοὶ νεώτεροι*. With some justification, then, they see Orestes' acquittal and release as a conspiracy of *three* gods. Given the sympathy which Orestes' claim to justification gains from Athena, and the success of his case with her, it seems gratuitous to claim that Apollo must be regarded as unsympathetic because he is a bully. It is in every way more surprising that the Erinyes are made at all sympathetic.

Apollo's attitude to the Erinyes may be harsher than Athena's, but his argument is at base the same. Athena not only accepts Apollo's testimony (797–9), but herself threatens the Erinyes with Zeus' thunderbolt if they refuse her offer (826f.). She shares too Apollo's critical attitude towards the limitations of *ὄρκος* (compare 217–18 and 621 of Apollo with 426–32 of Athena).¹⁹ And in effecting the transition from Erinyes to Semnai which is endorsed by Zeus and Moira (1046), Athena is agreeing to broaden their powers to include *all* murder (their restriction to kin-murder is part of the criticism of both Athena and Apollo).

It is sometimes held that Apollo, though an oracular deity, nonetheless does not predict the reconciliation between Erinyes and Olympians (indeed assumes there can be no reconciliation) and at 617 says something about his accuracy which would automatically remind the audience of Delphi's medizing during the Persian War.²⁰ Three points may be made here about the first charge. (1) Apollo makes no comment about the possibility of *reconciliation*. His role is to stress the absolute division

¹⁵ References in D. H. Roberts, *Apollo and his Oracle in the Oresteia* (Göttingen, 1984 = *Hypommata* 78), pp. 61–2.

¹⁶ See further n. 19.

¹⁷ Parker, Appendix 8, p. 393.

¹⁸ *Contra* Sommerstein, p. 207, paragraph (3).

¹⁹ It is not at all clear what is meant by *ὄρκος* in the first two passages. Elsewhere I will argue that in fact we should interpret this as *Ὀρκος* (cf. Soph. *OC* 1767), which thus represents the whole area of the Erinyes' operation, rather than any specific oath. West also suggests reading the word as a personification in his apparatus at 621.

²⁰ The first point was made to me in correspondence by Alan Sommerstein (and see his commentary on 721–2 and 730). For the second, see R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Studies in Aeschylus* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 121.

between the realms of Olympians and Erinyes (69–70: note especially the verb *μείγνυται*). Cf. 179–97 (especially 185, 191, 194–5, 197) and 644. (2) Though Apollo is well-disposed towards Athens (cf. 10–14, 667–73),²¹ his concern is focused upon his suppliant Orestes (64–6, 79–84, 90–93, 202f. especially 232–4, 576–81), not upon the Erinyes or what will happen to them. As one might expect in an Athenocentric play, it is the city's patron goddess who has the central role of adjudicating the issue and settling problems with the Erinyes arising from it. (3) Nevertheless, while Apollo's oracular statements do not early on (e.g. 81–3, 224) focus on the outcome for the Erinyes, neither do they exclude a solution (and 81–2 *θελκτηρίους μύθους*, which later has its reflex in 886 and 900, might in prophetic mode incorporate not merely the trial, but also the solution of Athena whereby these particular Erinyes, by conversion to Semnai Theai, are irrevocably detached from the case of Orestes). As we get nearer to the verdict, in fact, Apollo's statements do begin to touch on their fate explicitly. At 721–2, he claims that the Erinyes are *ἄτιμος* both among the young and the older gods.²² Apollo is strictly speaking correct about their actual status after the verdict. They have no *τιμή* and complain of it themselves (780 etc.; cf. 490–93). Athena admits as much in 844 (they will be without *τιμή* if they reject Athena's offer of a local cult). Apollo's derision is once more an expression of the fundamental opposition between purity and pollution. At 729–30, Apollo once more accurately (and scornfully) predicts Orestes' victory. But this time his final line²³ contains a paradox. The Erinyes do not pour out their poison in Athens. Yet the wording here (like *ἄτιμος* earlier) is picked up by the Erinyes themselves directly after the verdict (*βαρύκοτος... ἰὸν ἰὸν* 780–82). The paradox lies in the fact that Athena (477–9; note especially *ἰὸς* 478) thought that the Erinyes *did* pose a real threat to Athens if she made the decision for Orestes there and then. How can it be that the Erinyes will both pour forth their poison and that it will not harm their enemies? This is standard prophetic language, designed within the play's interaction with the audience both to raise the question of what will happen next and to render puzzling the answer.

On the point about 617 one may legitimately question whether the ironic meaning is not itself the product of an underlying scepticism about Apollo's role, which we have found on the contrary to be projected positively (or at least *neutrally*: see further below). As Sommerstein notes, within the play itself, 'Orestes' judges... would have no reason to disbelieve it' (ad loc.).

It is sometimes argued that Apollo is on trial *with* Orestes (579 *ξυνδικήσων*).²⁴ But (i) the word is not attested in this etymologically possible sense. Elsewhere it means 'to act as an advocate'—which is what Apollo does;²⁵ (ii) Apollo is not mentioned in the verdict (except implicitly as the source of the evidence about Athena's birth at 736); (iii) it is hard to see how a *human* court could judge a god's action (the founding

²¹ But see below for reservations about the latter passage.

²² Sommerstein notes here: 'Even Apollo can hardly seriously believe that the Erinyes are despised by the older as well as the younger gods' and refers back to 73. But this mentions only the *hatred* of men and of the Olympians for the Erinyes. *ἄτιμος* does not necessarily imply hatred.

²³ In my view (cf. also Podlecki ad loc.), this is Apollo's last line (Sommerstein and West allot 748–51 to him). Elsewhere I will argue that its finality and the reply of the Erinyes suggest that the god makes a sudden exit after he has spoken it.

²⁴ S. D. Goldhill, *Language, Sexuality, Narrative: the Oresteia* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 246. See Sommerstein ad loc.

²⁵ In my view, 676–7 should be assigned to Orestes rather than Apollo or the Chorus. (1) It is he who controls the conduct of his case (609–14 is an instruction to his advocate and witness); (2) 677 alludes to the right of the defendant to leave after his first speech in the Areopagus court (Dem. 23.69, cf. Antiphon 5.13; see MacDowell [n. 11], pp. 114–15).

myth involving Ares and Halirrhothius had the *gods* as jury);²⁶ (iv) Apollo is only the vehicle for Zeus' judgement (19) and Orestes links the three gods who have saved him at 757–60, after the verdict). What is happening here is that a well-known schema, 'the gods determine human actions', is being pushed to one extreme, at which the human is a pawn and the god must take the responsibility for making him act against established law. Cf. the argument of Helen in Eur. *Tro.* 924f. Orestes must appear to have had no choice in the matter and this is what is made explicit at 579–80. Apollo does not say: 'I have come to stand trial with Orestes because I am responsible', but 'I have come to speak on his behalf because I am responsible'. His responsibility has been well established anyway in an earlier conversation between Apollo and the Erinyes, designed to show even the agents of pollution placing more blame on Apollo than on Orestes (199–200 αὐτὸς σὺ τούτων οὐ μεταίτιος πέλημι, ἀλλ' εἰς τὸ πᾶν ἔπραξας ὧν παναίτιος).

A major problem for modern readers appears to be that Apollo could be seen to use a human in this way without inviting an audience's distaste. This is probably because the notion cuts across a schema deeply set in the Judaeo-Christian mentality, 'God is good', which was only available as a philosophical hypothesis for the Athenians. Gods were powerful and self-regulating beings for whom humans were at the margins of concern, but who could be tied down—like humans—by the laws of reciprocity (such as supplication, the major schema used in this play: cf. 232–4).

On two further points Apollo's behaviour at the trial has been attacked: (i) he asks the jurors to disregard *ῥρκος* (621); (ii) he offers the jury a bribe (667–72). I will argue elsewhere (see n. 18) that *ῥρκος* is in fact a personification of the area of the Erinyes' competence, not the jurors' oath (evoked if at all at 674–5; cf. 483). On the second point, though it is normal for defendants to offer their past services as reasons for acquittal (e.g. Lysias 21.1f.), and to suggest that future benefits will accrue from an acquittal (e.g. Lysias 21.12–14), it was specifically against the procedures of the Areopagus to speak *ἔξω τοῦ πράγματος*.²⁷ This passage disrupts the effect of the culminating 'biological argument' of Apollo, where a silence from the Erinyes followed by Athena's question about whether it is now time to vote (674–5) would be more suitable. I am inclined to think that in the absence of any strong argument from elsewhere to undermine Apollo's sense of *decorum*, we should regard this passage as an interpolation.²⁸

We can now return to the biological argument. It is important to note that it has been adumbrated by Orestes himself (606) in advance of Apollo's contribution. Unless we are to argue that Orestes too is compromised by this sophistic doctrine, we cannot avoid the conclusion that Apollo's argument is also required to be regarded as acceptable. It arises, as we saw, in direct response to the Erinyes' claim that Orestes cannot go back to Argos since he will be ritually impure (652–6). The requirement that Orestes be able to return to Argos to rule, however, is not casual, but related to the theme of the Argive alliance with Athens (289–91, 669–73, 762–4) and guaranteed by Orestes' first words after the result (754–8). Since the return of Orestes to rule in

²⁶ See references in Sommerstein, p. 3 n. 6.

²⁷ Lysias 3.46, Lykourgos 12–13, Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1354a22–3, Lucian, *Anacharsis* 19. See MacDowell [n. 11], pp. 43–4: 'We are not told whether the herald decided for himself whether particular remarks were relevant or how he received instructions to intervene. But the rule must certainly have discouraged the irrelevant pleadings and personal attacks which are a conspicuous feature of extant Athenian speeches delivered before other juries, and have helped the Areopagus to focus their attention on the true merits of the case.' Cf. also Antiphon 6.9 with MacDowell, p. 93.

²⁸ Likewise, there are problems with 762f. I propose to deal with these passages elsewhere.

Argos was not the only version of the story (cf. Eur. *Or.* 1660, but contrast *El.* 1250–75), it looks very much as though the treatment of the pollution question is related to the desire specifically to justify the tale which makes Argos' gratitude to Athens for its kindness to Orestes survive the change of dynasty which other versions dictate.²⁹ It is worth noting that the movement Erinyes to Eumenides, peculiar to this play and standing equally against a tradition that the *three Eumenides* appear against Orestes in court (Eur. *Or.* 1650; cf. Dem. 23.66), also may signify an underlying desire to deal with the pollution question as a matter of central importance.³⁰

Sommerstein's arguments for a sceptical view of Apollo's speech (pp. 206–8) do not render the above considerations invalid. What has been said relates to the function of the speech in the drama, whereas his premiss is what the *audience* can be expected to have thought. Of his six reasons, numbers (1)–(4) and (6) rely upon external criteria which are deliberately set aside by the plot. Of (1) ('Apollo does violence to the normal usage of the noun *τοκεύς*') and (2) ('Athenian society... in important respects treated the bond between mother and child as closer than that between father and child') we may say that it is of course true that Apollo presents a paradoxical view, so that it is not surprising that he confounds normal linguistic usage and social viewpoints. If, as seems to be emerging from this argument, there is a central underlying agenda—to have Orestes back at Argos unpolluted—then these perversions relate to a clear substructure. In reply to (6) ('...the Athenian public... would [be unlikely to] accept as decisive evidence in a case of murder... the speculative theory of an advanced philosopher: popular prejudice against natural philosophy was powerful and long-lasting... This particular theory... was a minority view even among natural philosophers'), we may say: (1) it is irrelevant what people *think* of the argument: its seriousness is guaranteed by the crucial function it has in releasing Orestes; (2) what the Athenians would not have accepted in *reality* is not evidence of what they would accept in the telling of a myth; (3) the paradoxical aspects of the doctrine are rendered anodyne and given status within the drama by their presentation in the mouth of an oracular god, the mouthpiece of Zeus (19), whose predictions in the play (even 721–2 and 729–30) are accurate, whose underlying arguments are in other respects the same as those of Athena, and whose testimony is accepted as reflecting Zeus' own position (787). Arguments (3) ('the claim that Athena was begotten *ἀνεὺ μητρός* is of dubious validity...') and (4) ('In any case, if the births of Athena [etc.]... were motherless, myth also speaks of several fatherless births...') are irrelevant, since Athena explicitly accepts Apollo's account of her birth (736) and the Erinyes are not allowed to bandy mythology with Apollo here as they do for example at 640f., 723–4 and 727–8. Only argument (5), that Apollo's explanation does not rebut the basis of the Erinyes' argument at 607–8, which was to do with the nurturing of the embryo by the mother's blood, appears to have some validity. But 607–8 is not an argument as such. It rests on an undeniable fact (the embryo is nurtured by the mother in her womb) together with a theoretical explanation based on observation (blood in the umbilical cord). But it is intended as an outraged response to Orestes' paradoxical claim rather than as a full account of their scientific justification for their pursuit of him. The reason it is formulated thus is so that Apollo can incorporate it and still make his point. There is a vast difference between *nurturing* (607 *ἐθρεψεν*, cf. 659 *τροφός*) with one's blood and being *δμαιμος*.

²⁹ This reading is therefore justified whether or not the passages which *specifically* mention the Argive alliance are interpolations. If they are, they will have been inserted to create an even stronger focus on this aspect.

³⁰ See A. L. Brown, 'Eumenides in Greek tragedy', *CQ* 34 (1984), 260–81.

For the latter, one must contribute seed. Thus Apollo's theory does not contradict what the Erinyes say, but incorporates it the better to convince. It may well be true that some members of the audience would have reacted with disgust to the explanation. That does not count against an observable function of the speech in the play's construction.

In any case, underpinning the role of Apollo at the trial is a schema which is activated by ἐξηγοῦν in 609, 'Apollo as *exegete*'. Of the two groups of *exegetai* at Athens, one, the *pythochrestoi*, derived its mythical aetiology from Apollo.³¹ The role of these *exegetai* was twofold. They would give advice about how to act to gain justice (or revenge) in a case where a relative had been murdered (cf. Dem. 47.68–70) and were also concerned with the ritual aspects, especially purification.³² These are precisely the areas which Apollo covers both in his oracular statement to Orestes in *Choephoroi* 269–96 and in his evidence at the trial (615, 625–39, 644–51, 657–66).³³ This schema interacts, then, with two others, 'oracular deity who speaks the truth and Zeus' will' and 'the gods determine all', to produce a picture in which Apollo is clearly the one trustworthy source of information on the issue at hand.

Let us once again reiterate the reason for this strange assertion about the relationship between a mother and her son. Orestes must return to Argos unpolluted, in order that the alliance with Athens may be given mythical support. This begs the further question, of course, why some other Argos myth could not have been used. But to answer this would take us beyond the scope of the present discussion. We will merely comment that a prior tragic collocation of Orestes and Argos utilized with *negative* purpose might well have provoked the need for a response *within the framework of the same myth*. Here we are talking about ancient history and its use in political argument.

III. WHEN WAS ORESTES PURIFIED?

If the above analysis is correct, then the problem of when Orestes was purified ought to yield to it. This question has exercised scholars much recently.³⁴ There seems to be general agreement that purification does not occur on stage in the play.³⁵ Several scholars argue that we must suppose Orestes to have been purified between his departure from Delphi and his arrival at Athens, because he is described as *προστρόπαιος* at 234 and claims not to be one at 237 and 445.³⁶ The lack of clarity with which the matter of purification is treated is seen as deliberate.³⁷

However, our analysis has given us good reason to believe rather that, though the treatment of Orestes' purification and pollution does not reflect actual practice,³⁸ it does utilize aspects of actual practice to communicate to the audience what the issues are. It seems *a priori* unlikely on this argument that when Apollo says at 578 *φόνου δὲ τῶιδε ἐγὼ καθάρσιος* the audience does not know what he means from the way the action of the play has been managed (cf. Orestes' statement at 282f. and the assurance

³¹ See Parker, p. 141. Generally, see MacDowell [n. 11], pp. 11–25; J. H. Oliver, *The Athenian Expounders of the Sacred and Ancestral Law* (Baltimore, 1950); F. Jacoby, *Atthis: the Local Chronicles of Ancient Athens* (Oxford, 1949), pp. 8–51. ³² See Parker, p. 374 n. 29.

³³ The fact that Apollo's words at 667–73 also fall *ἐξω τοῦ πράγματος* on the schema which justifies his role at the trial adds another argument against the authenticity of this passage. See above n. 28.

³⁴ See for example Taplin (n. 9), pp. 381–4; Brown (n. 1), pp. 30–32; Parker, pp. 386–8; Sommerstein *ad* 237. ³⁵ E.g. Parker, p. 386. ³⁶ E.g. Sommerstein *ad* 237.

³⁷ E.g. Taplin (n. 9), p. 383.

³⁸ See Parker, p. 387 for the position of the trial in actual practice (*before* exile) and in the play (*after* exile).

at *Cho.* 1059–60).³⁹ That is, it is more likely than not that Apollo did purify Orestes *within the play*,⁴⁰ or at least that the audience have been given some non-textual indication in the opening scene that Apollo had done it either before the play opens or between the Pythia's exit and the *ekkyklema* entrance of Orestes and Apollo.⁴¹

On the face of it, then, Orestes has been purified (237, 445–52), and his purifier was Apollo (282f., 578). The phrase *πρὸς ἄλλοις... οἴκοισι* (451–2) might seem to suggest that Orestes has been purified more than once on his travels.⁴² However, there is no evidence for multiple purification.⁴³ Moreover, the fact that Orestes speaks to Apollo at his first appearance cuts across the rule articulated at 448–50, that the polluted suppliant should not speak until purification has taken place. Evidence from Apollonius' *Argonautica* (4.685–717, especially 696–9) confirms that the posture in which Orestes sits at the *omphalos* (40–45) is designed to alert others to the nature of the deed for which he requires cleansing. The suppliant sits with a sword and casts down his eyes because he is not allowed to speak until cleansed (cf. Apollonius, *Argonautica* 4.693–4). Hence, we ought to interpret the plurals in 451–2 as generic, as would an audience which knew the structures of ritual purification.⁴⁴

The two major problems with this analysis are: (1) Dyer has shown that Delphi was a place where advice about purification was given, but where the rituals were not actually conducted;⁴⁵ (2) the Pythia thought Orestes was polluted at 40–45, Orestes is called *προστρόπαιος* by Apollo (who should know) at 234, after he has left Delphi. However, (1) several fourth-century vase-paintings show Apollo in the act of purifying Orestes.⁴⁶ Thus, as Parker has pointed out,⁴⁷ although Apollo was not connected with purification rituals at Delphi, nonetheless in myth he takes the place of the man (*Eum.* 449) who has to perform the ritual. (2) The question of Orestes' status is more complex. Since he speaks at 85–7, the purification must have occurred before this point. Hence, when Apollo uses the term *προστρόπαιος* at 234, he cannot be speaking of Orestes' current status. In fact, this is articulated by the word *ικέτην* in 232. The rest (233–4) is a general statement about the gods' responsibility. Of course, the use of the word *προστρόπαιος* in 234 does imply that when Orestes came to Apollo, he was in that state. However, it need not imply that he is still in it, and indeed will not do so if the audience is clear that Apollo has performed the purification earlier.

³⁹ On the problems presented by this line, see A. F. Garvie, *Aeschylus, Choephoroi* (Oxford, 1986), ad loc. Brown (n. 1, pp. 31–2) constructs his discussion the other way round, which has the effect of implying that these references are out of line with everything else.

⁴⁰ R. R. Dyer, *JHS* 89 (1969), 39 n. 5 for a list of the various ways in which the question has been answered. It is not enough to say that these 'contain their own refutation' and 'make no sense in terms of dramatic technique' (Brown n. 1, p. 30). The answer offered below contains aspects of several of them.

⁴¹ For the staging of this scene see Taplin (n. 9), pp. 363–5 and Brown (n. 1), pp. 29–30, Sommerstein, p. 93 and ad 64. I agree with the last two against Taplin that the *ekkyklema* is used here. Though I have some sympathy with West's case for movable screens (M. L. West, *Studies in Aeschylus* [Stuttgart, 1992], pp. 264–71), I do not think we know enough about the dimensions of the *ekkyklema* to rule out the possibility of its having been able to contain the whole scene described by the priestess.

⁴² Sommerstein ad loc.

⁴³ Parker, p. 387.

⁴⁴ Even if multiple purification was possible (as Parker allows, p. 387), and this passage reflects that possibility, it is not evidence that Orestes did not receive his *first* purification at Apollo's hands. This must be considered a datum, since it is said openly at 578, and is backed up by the treatment of the requirement for silence.

⁴⁵ Above (n. 40).

⁴⁶ Dyer (n. 40), plates 3.3 and 4.5. See also A. Kossatz-Deismann, *Dramen des Aischylos auf Westgriechischen Vasen* (Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. Kommission für Antike Mythologie. Schriften zur Antiken Mythologie IV. Mainz am Rhein, 1978), p. 108 with n. 607.

⁴⁷ P. 139 n. 142, p. 228 with n. 121 and p. 386.

It might be thought that the Pythia's words at 40–45, and especially her use of the term *προστρόπαιος* at 41, must imply that the purification takes place in the space between her exit and the entrance of Orestes and Apollo. However, this is not the case, since the sleeping Erinyes are already part of the picture (46–7); and the use by Orestes of the metaphor *βρίζει... αἷμα* at 280 strongly suggests that it forms part of the normal vocabulary of pollution. In that case, the sleep of the Erinyes would be an easily readable symbol for what was thought to occur when purification was taking place.⁴⁸ In just the same way, (a) their awakening by Klytaimestra's ghost dramatizes the fact that the efficacy of the purification is at issue, (b) the pursuit of the Erinyes by means of the trail of blood from Orestes' hands and their failure to catch him image the unresolved nature of the whole issue surrounding his purity, and (c) after the trial his walking free from Athens and the Erinyes' remaining there make visible his final release from their grip and from the dilemma surrounding his pollution. In favour of this interpretation, it should be noted that a reference to the sleeping Erinyes comes towards the start of Apollo's opening speech (67–8), but that this is followed by a qualification (74f. *ὅμως δέ*): despite the fact that they are sleeping *now* (cf. 67), they will pursue Orestes until he comes to Athens. The audience is thus given both a symbolic structure and a verbal outline of future action from which, with their ritual knowledge, they can construct the poet's meaning. It is possible to infer that the sleeping/waking Erinyes either represent an existing structure for the problem of the efficacy of purification, or that the poet extrapolates upon an existing image to produce a structure for an unusual proposition (purification may not work, or may not fully work).

The care taken here to keep the audience abreast by the combination of cultural schemata and plain narrative is yet another reason for believing that the purification must have been made clear at this point in the drama. But how, if both 46–7 and 67–8 imply that it has actually been performed *before* the Pythia sees Orestes? And how can we resolve the contradictions built into the Pythia's statement? For to her eyes, Orestes' bloodstained hands and his whole demeanour show him as a *προστρόπαιος*, but to the audience the sleeping Erinyes ought to imply that he is already being purified.

Various elements of the answer have been presented by earlier scholars.⁴⁹ (1) What the Pythia sees is the aftermath of the purification ritual, in which the blood of a sucking-pig was sprinkled on the killer's hands (cf. 283). Thus the blood she sees is not that of Klytaimestra, but that of the sacrificial animal.⁵⁰ (2) The picture she draws of the sleeping Erinyes produces for an audience familiar with the ritual structures a stark contradiction. The image deconstructs the priestess's words at 40–41 *θεομυσή... προστρόπαιον* and shows that she is not clear what is going on. The audience, of course, knows who these creatures must be and what they represent, as well as what Orestes is doing at Delphi, from the end of *Choephoroi* (note especially 1048, where Orestes describes the Erinyes as resembling Gorgons, and *Eum.* 48, where the Pythia does the same). Hence Brown is wrong to privilege the textual markers here, which are part of a paradox.⁵¹ The Pythia is describing something which she cannot understand and which the audience can partially understand. Orestes has been purified. (3) Her final words point to the solution. Lines 60–63 mention Apollo and

⁴⁸ Cf. Brown (n. 1), p. 31 n. 32.

⁴⁹ See Dyer (n. 40), p. 39 n. 5 and Brown (n. 1), pp. 30–32 for references.

⁵⁰ Parker, p. 370. This was the view of Verrall and he was followed by many others (Brown, [n. 1], p. 30, n. 28). The drama, and not the make-up, makes clear the state of Orestes' hands (*contra* Brown, [n. 1] p. 31).

⁵¹ Brown (n. 1), p. 30 n. 28.

his function as *καθάρσιος*. Almost immediately, the *ekkyklema* rolls out. Commentators disagree as to both the staging and the text here.⁵² The paradox of the opening requires resolution, however. This can only be done by assuming that the *ekkyklema* contains precisely the scene described by the Pythia, but with the single missing element, viz. Apollo in the guise of a purifier. He will still be holding the piglet and the laurel bough with which he has performed the ceremony and with which he is shown on South Italian vase-paintings.⁵³ The Pythia has not seen Apollo, which is why she misinterprets the scene she describes in the prologue, or at least she has seen his statue (an audience familiar with the interior of temples would construct this into the manner of the resolution), but could not see the god in person. A common schema underpins this dramatization, viz. 'the gods can control the vision of mortals'. Compare for example the opening of Sophocles' *Aias*, where Athena assures Odysseus that she will ensure Aias will not see him (83–5).⁵⁴

This is a *stumme Szene*,⁵⁵ but not one which lacks either preparation or backward references. The audience is invited to consider how the Pythia's interpretation of the scene she describes can possibly be correct, since it presents a paradox: Orestes appears polluted, but the Erinyes who symbolize pollution are asleep. The purification is then referred back to twice within the play, by each of the two participants (282–3 Orestes; 576 Apollo), which would be exceptionally confusing had the audience not had confirmation. One might add that the purification scene would in any case *have* to be a 'dumb-scene', since the participants were not allowed to speak to each other until the ceremony was over (cf. Apollonius, *Argonautica* 4.693–4, 720–23, and 730). What we see in the conversation between Apollo and Orestes is precisely in line with ritual procedure as we know it from elsewhere.

What is the point of having the Pythia so represent the purification scene, if this is the correct explanation? It is a masterful piece of drama, which produces a suspense which is quickly taken advantage of. From *Choephoroi* 1059–60, the audience expects some action of purification from Apollo. Now at the start of *Eumenides*, their expectation is put momentarily in doubt. Was it false preparation? No. The 'dumb-scene' which becomes a 'talking-scene' not only fulfils this expectation, it also shows for the first time that Orestes' madness (*Choephoroi* 1048–50, 1053–4, 1057–8, 1060–61) was not internal. These creatures actually *do* exist.

This inscenation, evolving as it does from a consideration of the role of pollution and purification throughout the play, of itself puts in doubt Burges' widely accepted transposition of 85–7. The arguments in its favour, put recently by Sommerstein (ad loc.) are: that the lines are an appeal for protection; and they convey a certain note of reproach out of place after Apollo's assurances of 64 and 83. But they are an appeal wherever we put them. What is at issue is whether the distinction between *τὸ μὴ ἀδικεῖν* and *τὸ μὴ ἀμελεῖν* can be understood as a response to Apollo's assurances in 64–84 and whether 88–93 can be seen as an adequate reply to such an appeal. The answer to the suitability of a tone of reproach *after* Apollo's assurances consists in the fact that Orestes is responding to Apollo's claim that even though he has been

⁵² Sommerstein and West follow Burges in transposing 85–7 before 64, but Podlecki keeps the ms. order. Sommerstein has Apollo enter after 87 in response to Orestes' appeal, but Podlecki has them enter together. See also Taplin (n. 9), pp. 363–5 and Brown (n. 1), pp. 29–30. See n. 41 for my view of the staging.

⁵³ See above nn. 40, 46 for references.

⁵⁴ A correspondent suggests that it is odd for the Pythia of all people not to be able to see Apollo. However, if the resolution of the paradox is as suggested here, then the audience will certainly not have given this issue another thought, except to use the available schemata to interpret it, especially as the Pythia's parting words invite Apollo to deal with the awful scene.

⁵⁵ See Kossatz-Deismann (n. 46), p. 108 n. 604, for this idea and its proponents.

purified, he still faces pursuit by the Erinyes until he reaches Athens (74–84), without Apollo's presence to protect him (65). Apollo's reply contains first of all an injunction not to be afraid (88), which amounts to a command to trust what he has already promised. But his second act is to call upon Hermes to guard Orestes on his journey, while between the protective zones of Apollo and Athena.⁵⁶ This indicates that he has listened to Orestes' worries. He will not neglect him. On this reading, τὸ μὴ ἀδικεῖν refers to Apollo's fulfilment of one part of his oracle (*Cho.* 1029–32) through the purification just completed. Roberts further points to the importance of the echo in 64 of the opening of Orestes' report of the oracle at *Cho.* 269 (οὔτοι προδώσει / οὔτοι προδώσω), and this would be disrupted if lines 85–7 were transposed. According to her, this echo justifies the hanging οὔτοι, which 'resumes a train of thought'.⁵⁷ This reading is given further weight by our inscenation, since the train of thought that Apollo is resuming is made very obvious by the visual display which confronts the audience as the *ekkyklema* is rolled out.⁵⁸

IV. CONCLUSIONS

(1) The strange treatment accorded to Orestes' purification in *Eumenides* can be understood once it is realized that the return to Argos of an unpolluted Orestes is a primary narrative goal of the drama. It is difficult to see how this can fail to connect with the more or less overtly political aim of giving mythic substantiation for an alliance of Argos (or any city which traced its origin back to that city) with Athens. On this understanding of the play's design, then, aesthetic and dramatic choices are subordinate to the motive of ideological inscription. The play is not, for all that, political argument. But if it tells the tale with a political goal, then it must have been possible for that tale to be used in the political discourse of the city. This would not

⁵⁶ Whether Hermes is actually present or not is irrelevant to this argument. See Taplin (n. 9), pp. 364–5 for the view that he does not appear and also Sommerstein *ad* 89–93. Podlecki *ad* 89 disagrees and has a mute Hermes appear. The argument is finely balanced, but the current investigation marginally favours a mute Hermes for two reasons: (1) the drama is generally managed in a highly visual and symbolic manner. It is out of character for an opportunity for visualization to be missed; (2) if Orestes really is worried about being left alone to face his pursuit, then a mere verbal appeal from Apollo will not help. If he did appear, the following arguments of Sommerstein cannot stand up: (1) where is Hermes at 235f.? (here the audience will assume that Hermes had left Orestes once he had delivered him safely into the protective zone of Athena); (2) there is no traditional connection between Delphi and Hermes which would account for his being present, unsummoned, within Apollo's temple there. But at 89 the audience would assume that Apollo had already planned to have Hermes at hand to protect Orestes, so that the close bond between the two (expressed by Apollo's ἀντάδελφον αἶμα καὶ κοινοῦ πατρός in 89) is sufficient explanation.

⁵⁷ Roberts (n. 15), pp. 48–9 with n. 23. Taplin (n. 9), pp. 363–4 for objections to the use of οὔτοι to begin the conversation. Another point made by Taplin is the abnormality of opening a scene in tragedy with two characters in mid conversation. But the *Eumenides* is full of abnormalities (such as the emptying of the stage at 33 and 234 and the surprise entry of Apollo at 574). And with Orestes only just purified, there would from the viewpoint of ritual have been no earlier moment for either to speak, so that it is a misapprehension to call it 'mid conversation'. The resumption of speech by Apollo is in mid scene, referring via the ritual just completed to the promise reported in *Cho.* 269.

⁵⁸ The argument of F. W. Blass (*Die Eumeniden des Aeschylus*, Berlin, 1907, p. 77), recently given prominence by West (n. 41 above, p. 272), that one has to suppose a request such as 85–7 to be answered by Apollo's οὔτοι, is not especially forceful given this scenario (see also n. 57 above). Nor, given this explanation of the backward and forward reference of 85–7 *in situ*, is his next point, that Orestes' words make it seem that Apollo has not promised him any protection, and that Apollo's words in 88 make no reference to the request, ignoring the intervention and thus rendering Orestes' words pointless.

be unexampled (see for instance, Thucydides' treatment of Teres and Tereus, in ii.29, which must be connected to the debate in the *ecclesia* over the citizenship of Sadocus, son of Sitalkes and grandson of Teres).⁵⁹

(2) The probable pre-existence in myth of an Orestes trial before the Areopagus placed a constraint on the way the tale (and so the issue of pollution) could be dealt with. That is, the climax of Orestes' story had to be his acquittal. However, Athenian judicial practice in cases of homicide did not deal with pollution except by the assumption that the acquitted person was ritually pure. But in the case of a matricide, and because of the political implications embedded in the design of this version, it was not safe to leave the outcome of the issue to be assumed. The replacement of Klytaimestra's relatives by the Erinyes as prosecuting counsel⁶⁰ is the basic innovation by which the poet focuses this specific issue. However, this choice forces another, the necessity of getting Orestes to Athens with the issue unresolved.⁶¹

(3) The poet concocts his fiction and communicates the validity to his audience in three main ways. (i) He dramatizes the unfamiliar schema of 'matricide purified, but purification unstable' by means of (a) an argument between the personified agents of pollution and the god of purification, Apollo; (b) a battle between the forces of purification (the Olympians generally, whose power is visualized in the *ekkyklema* scene with the purification tableau), and the injured party (Klytaimestra), imaged by the sleep of the Erinyes and their subsequent awakening by Klytaimestra; (c) the flight of Orestes (under the protection of another Olympian, Hermes, whose chthonian connections give him an edge over his peers in the fight with these chthonian deities); (d) the pursuit of the Erinyes; (e) their failure to catch Orestes until in Athena's temple, and finally (f) the binding song which would have brought him within their grasp, were it not for Athena's arrival. (ii) He invokes established cultural schemata: (a) the combination of purification and exile for murderers; (b) the metaphorical 'sleep' of the pollution which follows purification rituals; (c) the existence of a category of justified killing; (d) the purity of the person acquitted of killing justifiably; (e) the infallibility of Apollo as oracular deity. (iii) He ensures that the issue of whether Orestes is pure or polluted is raised explicitly in virtually every scene, even in the trial itself (40–41, 166–7, 230–31, 237–9, 246–53, 280–86, 316–20, 438–53, 473f., 652–66).⁶²

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⁵⁹ I am grateful to Dr David Braund for suggesting this in conversation.

⁶⁰ See Sommerstein, pp. 4–5 for earlier versions of the story.

⁶¹ And probably another, viz. the need to change the Erinyes of Orestes into Semnai Theai. See Brown (n. 30).

⁶² This paper has benefited enormously from careful criticisms of an earlier version by Alan Sommerstein, whom I thank for his kindness.