

TRAGIC PRELUDES:
AESCHYLUS *SEVEN AGAINST THEBES* 4-8

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Κάδμου πολῖται, χρὴ λέγειν τὰ καίρια
ὅστις φυλάσσει πρῶτος ἐν πρύμνῃ πόλεως
οἶακα νωμῶν, βλέφαρα μὴ κοιμῶν ὕπνῳ.
εἰ μὲν γὰρ εὖ πράξαμεν, αἰτία θεοῦ·
εἰ δ' αὖθ'—ὃ μὴ γένοιτο—συμφορὰ τύχοι,
Ἐτεοκλῆς ἂν εἰς πολλὸς κατὰ πτόλιν
ὑμνοῖθ' ὑπ' ἀστῶν φοιμήσις πολυρρόθοις
οἰμώγμασιν θ'· ὦν Ζεὺς ἀλεξητήριος
ἐπώνυμος γένοιτο Καδμείων πόλει.

Septem 1-9

THE THEMATIC SIGNIFICANCE of the opening lines of the *Seven Against Thebes* and the predictive value of language generally in this play were recognized long ago by J. T. Sheppard.¹ However, part of Eteocles' prologue has not been properly understood: "for if we fare well, the responsibility for it is the god's, but if, however, misfortune should occur (may this not happen!), Eteocles alone would be much sung of by the citizens throughout the city in much-churning preludes and laments" (4-8). Commentators have been particularly puzzled by the significance of the "preludes" (φοιμήσις) in verse 7, usually seeing them as metaphorical for laments which will presage further trouble, whether that be the city's conquest by the Argives or the outbreak of popular rebellion. Others see the term merely as a watered-down metonymy for dirges.² But it seems inescapable that the term φοιμήσις, in the context of song (as set up by the preceding verb

¹J. T. Sheppard, "The Plot of the *Septem contra Thebas*," *CQ* 7 (1913) 73-82, at 77-78.

²That the preludes here presage the taking of the city by the Argives is argued by the recent commentary of G. O. Hutchinson, *Aeschylus: Septem contra Thebas* (Oxford 1985) 43-44. For the preludes as "murmurs forerunning the outbreak of actual violence" on the part of the citizens, see A. W. Verrall, *The Seven Against Thebes of Aeschylus* (London 1887) 2, and P. Groeneboom, *Aeschylus' Zeven Tegen Thebe* (Amsterdam 1966) 81. For the preludes as signs of some undefined trouble which is impending, see T. G. Tucker, *The Seven Against Thebes of Aeschylus* (Cambridge 1908) 10. For "preludes" as merely another word for "dirges," see H. D. Cameron, *Studies on the Seven Against Thebes of Aeschylus* (The Hague 1971) 70. But φοιμήσις must refer to something which precedes something else. R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Studies in Aeschylus* (Cambridge 1983) 26, n. 24, sees the preludes as groans and mutterings prior to a hymn cursing Eteocles. This comes closer to my own view, but I would see the curse itself as the prelude.

ὑμνοῖτο), has a very specific non-metaphorical meaning as a song which precedes another song. I would accordingly argue that the preludes in which Eteocles imagines his name sung by the citizens are preludes cursing him as the cause of destruction for the dead kinsmen lamented in their subsequent songs of mourning: the pairing of φοιμίους and οἰμώγμασιν in itself tells us what the preludes are followed by.³ This interpretation will be defended both on grounds of Aeschylean usage and in relation to the characterization of Eteocles' concerns in this play.

There is no question that the term φοῖμιον bears the sense of "song before a song" or "prologue of a discourse" as its basic meaning. This sense is well attested in Aeschylus: Agamemnon makes a φοῖμιον of prayer to the gods before addressing the chorus (*Ag.* 829), the Delphic priestess puts Zeus and Apollo as the first gods in her prayers (*Eum.* 20, φοιμιάζομαι), Prometheus' first speech describing Io's wandering is not yet the prelude to the rest of what he has to tell her (*PV* 741), the Watchman will dance a prelude as the starting point of celebration over Agamemnon's return (*Ag.* 31), Cassandra is disturbed with the preludes beginning her prophetic trance (*Ag.* 1216).⁴ Aeschylus' contemporary Pindar even uses the term in a technical sense to designate the hymn to Zeus with which Homeric rhapsodes begin their songs (*N.* 2.1–3),⁵ a usage which seems to lurk behind the first two Aeschylean examples cited. To be sure, Aeschylus also uses the word metaphorically in reference to evil omens: preludes of toil (*Supp.* 830), signs of coming tyranny (*Ag.* 1354, φοιμιάζονται), or the Furies' dream of Clytemnestra's ghost (*Eum.* 142). But this metaphorical sense is never used in a context of song. In all discourse-oriented contexts, both in Aeschylus and fifth-century usage generally, φοῖμιον refers literally to a prologue or a preceding discourse.⁶

Nothing in *Septem* 4–8 leads us to consider "omens" as a possible translation of φοιμίους, as it could be for each of the three indisputably metaphorical uses of the term in Aeschylus. Commentators have found this sense attractive only in virtue of the emphasis placed in verse 1 on avoiding inopportune utterance (χρὴ λέγειν τὰ καίρια), echoed by the apotropaic wish

³Strictly speaking, Ἐτεοκλῆς εἰς πολὺς is the object only of φοιμίους, not of οἰμώγμασιν, which must apply to all the Theban dead. This must be true under any interpretation of the passage. If Thebes is defeated, Eteocles will not be the only one for whom citizens cry οἶμοι, but he will certainly be the one whose name they utter first.

⁴I here follow the interpretation of E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus: Agamemnon* (Oxford 1950) 3.557–558.

⁵For other examples of this specialized use of the term, see Thucydides 3.104.4; Plato *Phaedo* 60d. See also the discussions of R. Böhme, *Das Prooimion: Eine Form sakraler Dichtung der Griechen* (Baden 1937) 10–36, and W. G. Thalmann, *Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek Epic* (Baltimore 1984) 120–122.

⁶See Pindar *Pyth.* 1.4, 7.1–4; Euripides *Medea* 663, *Hec.* 181, 1195, *HF* 538, 1179, *Ion* 753, *Tro.* 712, 895, *El.* 1060, *IT* 1162, *Phoen.* 1336; Aristophanes *Eq.* 1343.

in verse 5 (ὃ μὴ γένοιτο). But the logic of the sentence becomes pointlessly circular if we interpret it to mean: "if the war turns out badly for the city, I alone will be sung in lamentations by the citizens, which will be of ill omen and lead to bad consequences." If the war has turned out badly for the city, the city has already been doomed and ill-omened laments will hardly do any worse damage than has already been determined. Nor will Eteocles be the only one lamented in this case. It is far better to interpret the sentence to mean that Eteocles alone will be cursed as a prologue to citizens' laments for the war-dead. This also has the advantage of clarifying the antithesis of verses 4-8: the gods are credited in the city's success, the ruler is blamed in its misfortune. This antithesis is only obscured if we see the point of 5-8 as having to do with laments being ill-omened.

Curse and lament are often connected in Greek practice,⁷ even as praise for a man is naturally linked with blame for his enemies. There are within the Aeschylean corpus some excellent examples of precisely such curse-prologues. Five years prior to the *Seven Against Thebes*, Aeschylus presented the *Persians*, a play with specific focus on the tragic figure of a ruler whose empire had been defeated in war, as he returns to his capital to face the laments of his citizens. In the first stasimon of that play, the chorus of Persian elders initially pray to Zeus in the anapests (*Persae* 532-547) and then invoke the name of Xerxes in the responsive stanzas, blaming him for the destruction of the army:

νῦν γὰρ δὴ πρόπασα μὲν στένει
 γαῖ' Ἀσίς ἐκκεκενωμένα·
 Ξέρξης μὲν ἄγαγεν, ποποῖ,
 Ξέρξης δ' ἀπώλεσεν, τοτοῖ,
 Ξέρξης δὲ πάντ' ἐπέσπε δυσφρόνας
 βαρίδεσσι ποντίαις.
 τίπτε Δαρεῖος μὲν οὐ καὶ τότε' ἀβλαβὴς ἐπὴν
 τόξαρχος πολίῃταις,
 Σουσίδος φίλος ἄκτωρ;

πεζοὺς γάρ τε καὶ θαλασσίους
 λινόπτεροι κυανώπιδες
 νᾶες μὲν ἄγαγον, ποποῖ,
 νᾶες δ' ἀπώλεσαν, τοτοῖ,
 νᾶες πανωλέθροισιν ἐμβολαῖς·
 διὰ δ' Ἰαόνων χέρας
 τυτθὰ δὴ 'κφυγεῖν ἄνακτ' αὐτὸν εἰσακούομεν
 θρήκας ἄμ πεδιήρεις
 δυσχίμους τε κελεύθους.

Persae 548-567

⁷On the lament as an occasion for cursing the enemies of the dead or those responsible for his death, see M. Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (Cambridge 1974) 178-181, who draws on examples from Aeschylus to modern times.

The emphatic anaphora of Xerxes' name in the strophe is picked up in the refrain by the anaphora of $\nu\alpha\epsilon\varsigma$ in the corresponding part of the antistrophe; the initial focus on Xerxes' name is in effect a prelude to the lament for the dead. The onomatopoeic cries of $\pi\omicron\pi\omicron\iota$ and $\tau\omicron\tau\omicron\iota$, as well as the repeated cries punctuating the second strophe and antistrophe (*Persae* 568–583), leave us in no doubt that the chorus accompanies their words with vivid and repeated gestures of lamentation, such as *Septem* 7 designates with the epithet "much-churning." The wish that Darius were still king at the end of the first strophe, corresponding to the almost regretful reflection at the end of the antistrophe that Xerxes has survived, compounds the sense of overwhelming public resentment against any ruler who lives to see his army defeated.

Nor is Xerxes the only example of a humiliated king which Aeschylus had before him at the time of writing the *Seven*. Aeschylus also appears to have written during the late 470s another trilogy concerning the expedition of the *Seven*, from an Argive point of view.⁸ The two plays which can with certainty be assigned to this trilogy are the *Argeioi/ai* and the *Eleusinioi*, with the other play being either the *Nemea* (in the first position) or the *Epigonoï* (in the third position). The *Argeioi/ai* presumably concerned the actual defeat of the *Seven* in battle and reception of the news back in Argos, while the *Eleusinioi* concerned Adrastus' supplication of Theseus to intervene on behalf of the unburied Argive dead.⁹ The figure of Adrastus, the Argive king who is the lone survivor of an annihilated army, must have been central in both plays and a potent symbol of royal power brought low. Particularly if the lexicographers are right in recording the title as the feminine *Argeiai*, Adrastus' confrontation with a chorus of lamenting

⁸The *Eleusinioi* in particular seems to be connected with the general propaganda program of the Cimonian period, transforming Theseus into the Athenian national hero and glorifying episodes from his career in order to justify Athenian interventionism and hegemony; this appears to have been initiated with the Delphic oracle of 475, commanding that the bones of Theseus be retrieved from Scyros (Plutarch *Theseus* 36). On the likely dating of the play to this period, see A. Hauvette, "Les 'Éléusiniens' d'Eschyle et l'institution du discours funèbre à Athènes," in *Mélanges Henri Weil* (Paris 1898) 165–173, at 170–173; E. C. Gastaldi, "Propaganda e politica negli 'Eleusini' di Eschilo," in M. Sordi (ed.), *I canali della propaganda nel mondo antico* (Milan 1976, *Contributi dell'Istituto di storia antica dell' Università cattolica del Sacro Cuore* 4) 50–71; R. Aélion, *Euripide héritier d'Eschyle* 1 (Paris 1983) 233–234. This Argive trilogy also appears to have been earlier than the *Seven Against Thebes* on other grounds: see U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, "Die Sieben Thore Thebens," *Hermes* 26 (1891) 226–227; Hauvette, *op. cit.* 173; T. Zielinski, *Iresione* 1 (Leopoli 1931) 446.

⁹The title *Argeioi* is attested by the Medicean catalogue and *Etym. Magn.* 341.5; *Argeiai* is recorded by Harpocration 306.4 (Dindorf) and Hesychius α6627 (Latte). Fr. 16 (Radt) is a trimeter line describing the battle; fr. 17, possibly delivered by Evadne, laments the death of Capaneus. For the *Eleusinioi*, we have clear evidence in Plutarch *Theseus* 29.4.

widows must have been a high point of the play, comparable to Xerxes' climactic appearance in the *Persians*.

The theme of popular resentment towards the royal family because of men lost at war also bulks large in the *Oresteia*. The second stasimon of the *Agamemnon* opens with Helen's name being cursed by the citizens as responsible for the destruction of many:

τίς ποτ' ὠνόμαζεν ὦδ'
 ἐς τὸ πᾶν ἐτητύμας,
 μή τις ὄντιν' οὐχ ὀρώμεν προνοί-
 αῖσι τοῦ πεπρωμένου
 γλῶσσαν ἐν τύχῃ νέμων,
 τὰν δορίγαμβρον ἀμφίνει-
 κῇ θ' Ἑλέναν; ἐπεὶ πρεπόντως
 ἑλένας ἔλανδρος ἑλέ-
 πτολις ἐκ τῶν ἀβροτίμων
 προχαλυμμάτων ἔπλευσεν
 Ζεφύρου γίγαντος αὔρα,
 πολύανδροί τε φεράσπιδες κυναγοὶ
 κατ' ἔχνος πλατᾶν ἄφαντον
 κέλσαν τὰς Σιμόεντος ἀ-
 κτὰς ἐπ' ἀεξιφύλλους
 δι' Ἑριν αἵματόεσαν.

Ag. 681-698

As in the vituperation of Xerxes quoted above, the name seems to have a magical quality which through repetition evokes the destiny for which it is responsible; the same kind of play on names is apparent in the *Seven*, when the chorus invokes the names of Polyneices ("much strife") and Eteocles ("true fame").¹⁰ In the antistrophe which responds to the passage above, the Trojans are imagined as turning their wedding song into a song of mourning, cursing Paris for bringing doom to them even as Helen did to the Argives:

μεταμανθάνουσα δ' ὕμνον
 Πριάμου πόλις γεραῖα
 πολύθρηνον μέγα που στένει, κικλήσκου-
 σα Πάριν τὸν αἰνόλεκτρον,
 παμπορθῇ πολύθρηνον
 αἰῶ θεμένα πολιτᾶν,
 μέλεον αἶμ' ἀνατλάσα.

Ag. 709-716

¹⁰ *Septem* 830 is generally read <ἐτεόκλειτοι> καὶ πολυνεικεῖς or with some other form of the name Eteocles in the lacuna. Eteocles himself interprets the name Polyneices as significant in *Septem* 658. For the play on names, see Sheppard (above, n. 1) 78, and F. I. Zeitlin, *Under the Sign of the Shield: Semiotics and Aeschylus' Seven Against Thebes* (Rome 1982) 38-39.

Nor are Paris and Helen the only ones whom popular mumblings and curses blame for the war-dead. The first stasimon reveals long-suppressed discontent against the Atreidae, who are viewed as the "killers of many" (Ag. 461, τῶν πολυκτόνων). After imagining Ares packing the urns full of ashes, the chorus describes citizens mourning for the dead:

στένουσι δ' εὖ λέγοντες ἄν-
δρα τὸν μὲν ὡς μάχης ἴδρις,
τὸν δ' ἐν φοναίῃς καλῶς πεσόντ',
ἀλλοτρίας διαὶ γυναι-
κός· τάδε σιγά τις βαύ-
ζει, φθονερὸν δ' ὑπ' ἄλγος ἔρ-
πει προδίκους Ἀτρεΐδαις . . .
βαρεῖα δ' ἀστῶν φάτις σὺν κότῳ,
δημοκράντου δ' ἀρᾶς τίνει χρέος·
μένει δ' ἀκοῦσαί τί μου
μέριμνα νυκτερφεές·
τῶν πολυκτόνων γὰρ οὐκ
ἄσκοποι θεοί . . .

Ag. 445-451, 456-462

Suppressed popular discontent with the rulers is a leitmotif throughout the *Oresteia*.¹¹ One could also consider the case of Pelasgus in the *Suppliants* or of Zeus in the *Prometheia* as illustrations of the characteristically problematic relationship between ruler and subjects in Aeschylean tragedy.

We can assume that Eteocles fears precisely this sort of popular lamentation and reproach. *Septem* 4-8 places in the foreground the monarch-citizen relationship as one of importance to the play, which influences Eteocles' actions and motivations throughout the drama. It is significant, however, that the chorus of this play are not citizen-elders, as in the *Persians* or *Agamemnon*, but a chorus of women; women are precisely those to whom the task of formal lamentation is traditionally assigned and who are also most likely to exhibit spontaneous outbursts over the dead in Greek tragedy. Eteocles' much-discussed interaction with the female chorus here centers around his desire to suppress excessive and premature lamentation which may dishearten the citizenry and reflect badly on his leadership. In an imagistic echo of the prologue, with its "much-churning (πολυρρόθους) preludes," Eteocles accuses the women's laments of "churning up (διερροθῆσαι) dispirited cowardice among the citizens" (191-192). In the following amoebaeian exchange, he warns them not to greet news of dead or wounded men with wailing (242-244), not to make the citizens ill-disposed by their fear (237-238, ὡς πολίτας μὴ κακοσπλάγχχνους τιθῆς . . .). Such panic

¹¹See, in addition to the passages quoted, Ag. 36-39, 546-550, 788-798, 1025-1034, *Choe.* 46-47, 75-83, 102-105, 264-268, *Eum.* 379-380, and the discussion of C. W. Macleod, "Politics and the *Oresteia*," *JHS* 102 (1982) 124-144, at 130-131.

about the city's fate seems to reflect a lack of confidence in his leadership (248, οὐκ οὖν ἔμ' ἀρκεῖ τῶνδε βουλευέειν πέρι;), which he fears may infect the whole city (250, οὐ σῖγα μῆδ' ἐρεῖς κατὰ πόλιν;/ and 254, αὐτὴ σὲ δουλοῖς κάμει καὶ πᾶσαν πόλιν). It is clear that Eteocles' concern about the women's lamentation is not just an obsession with ill-omened speech, but a legitimate worry over the effect their laments will have on the whole city and its morale.¹² He exhorts them instead to sing a ritual paean as accompaniment to sacrifice, which will give boldness to their defenders (267-270). After a final admonition to avoid "vain and wild exhalation" (279-281), Eteocles makes his climactic announcement that he will enter battle himself, the seventh man after six others (282-286). The ruler's undertaking to enter battle personally is thus directly linked to his desire to quell public lamentation and fear.¹³ By sharing the fate of his men, he hopes to avoid the curses which await Xerxes or Agamemnon upon their return.

Eteocles' concern about his public posture in the eyes of his citizens is also foregrounded at the play's other *peripeteia*, the revelation that he will fight his brother at the seventh gate. There has been much critical controversy whether Eteocles freely chooses to meet his brother in battle or whether the pairing is a matter of predetermined allotment.¹⁴ But even

¹²This is clearly also Eteocles' concern in restraining himself from lament in 656-657: he is afraid not that his cries in 653-655 will be of ill omen and thus cause his death, but that they will literally lead to interminable wailing and lamentation on the part of the chorus and citizens (δυσφορότερος γόος). The lamentation will not be difficult for Eteocles to bear if he is already dead. I also disagree with the interpretation of this line by H. Patzer, "Die dramatische Handlung der *Sieben gegen Theben*," *HSCP* 63 (1958) 97-119, at 98, 110, who sees it as a prediction that greater lament will arise from the city's destruction if he does not face his brother in battle. I do not think that anything in lines 653-655 suggests that Eteocles was seriously considering withdrawal from the fight: these lines are an *anagnorisis* of the fulfillment of Oedipus' curse.

¹³The "swift-churning" words of the Messenger which Eteocles here anticipates (285-286, ταχυρόθους λόγους) seem meant as another echo of the prologue's "much-churning preludes," like 191-192 discussed above. The ῥόθος-motif, always associated with language, constitutes a significant thread within the play's dominant framework of nautical imagery: see also 368 (παγκλαύτων ἀλγέων ἐπιρροθόν), again associated with lamentation, and 854-856, where the theme receives its ultimate realization, as the chorus "row an escorting plash of hands around the head, accompanying a wind of laments." On 854-856 as the fulfillment of the prologue, see Cameron (above, n. 2) 99, and *id.*, "The Power of Words in the *Seven Against Thebes* of Aeschylus," *TAPA* 101 (1970) 95-118, at 115-116.

¹⁴For the decision as a completely free choice, see K. von Fritz, *Antike und Moderne Tragödie* (Berlin 1962) 205-207; G. M. Kirkwood, "Eteocles Oiakostrophos," *Phoenix* 23 (1969) 9-25, at 13-14; F. Ferrari, "La scelta dei difensori nei *Sette contro Tebe* di Eschilo," *SCO* 19-20 (1970-71) 140-145. For Eteocles' pairing with his brother as a matter of predetermined allotment, see E. Wolff, "Die Entscheidung des Eteokles in den *Sieben gegen Theben*," *HSCP* 63 (1958) 89-95; B. Otis, "The Unity of the *Seven Against Thebes*," *GRBS* 14 (1973) 145-174, at 159, 170; A. Burnett, "Curse and Dream

under the second point of view, it seems clear that Eteocles accepts his destiny as appropriate and willingly acquiesces in it (672–676),¹⁵ even more affirmatively than in the parallel case of Agamemnon's acquiescence in sacrificing his daughter and later in treading on the carpet. As Adkins has pointed out,¹⁶ Oedipus' curse works upon the brothers through traditional Greek arete-values, which demand that a warrior defend his claims in battle and subordinate family-concerns to concern for the city. I would add to this formulation the observation that Eteocles' notion of proper heroic behaviour includes an acute anxiety about his reputation among the citizens. After the chorus begs him not to pollute himself with fratricide, he replies:

εἴπερ κακὸν φέρει τις, αἰσχύνης ἄτερ
ἔστω· μόνον γὰρ κέρδος ἐν τεθνηκόσιν.
κακὸν δὲ καίσιχρῶν οὔτιν' εὐκλείαν ἐρεῖς.

Septem 683–685

His concern with "good reputation" (εὐκλείαν) is coupled with the desire to avoid "shame" (αἰσχύνης); both concepts are based upon his perception by others. The tragic paradox of Eteocles' situation, however, is that by trying to avoid shame (in the form of cowardice) he acquires shame (in the form of fratricidal pollution).¹⁷ By trying to preclude his name from being lamented by the citizens as the cause of their ills, he guarantees that his name will indeed be lamented for a different reason.

Eteocles' remarks at the opening of the play thus function as a *kledon*, a verbal utterance which acts as an omen proving true in a way different from that intended.¹⁸ For all his care and verbal cleverness, he is caught up by his own language in precisely the same way that he catches the Argive attackers by interpreting their boasts as omens against them. Every element of *Septem* 4–8 proves true at the play's end. The gods are indeed

in Aeschylus' *Septem*," *GRBS* 14 (1973) 343–368, at 348; A. Lesky, "Eteokles in den 'Sieben gegen Theben'," in H. Hommel (ed.), *Wege zu Aischylos* 2 (Darmstadt 1974) 23–37, at 24–25; F. Maltomini, "La scelta dei difensori delle sette porte nei *Sette a Tebe* di Eschilo," *QUCC* 21 (1976) 65–80; W. G. Thalmann, *Dramatic Art in Aeschylus' Seven Against Thebes* (New Haven 1978) 121–135.

¹⁵See Wolff (above, n. 14) 89; Burnett (above, n. 14) 365–368; A. L. Brown, "Eteocles and the Chorus in the *Seven Against Thebes*," *Phoenix* 31 (1977) 300–318, at 307.

¹⁶A. W. H. Adkins, "Divine and Human Values in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*," *AuA* 28 (1982) 32–68, at 56–62.

¹⁷In attempting to dissuade Eteocles from fighting his brother, the chorus assures him that he will not be shamed as "cowardly" for avoiding this battle (698–699, κακὸς οὐ κεκλήσῃ βίον ἐξ κρησῆας). But by this point Eteocles' mind is made up; he almost uses the Curse as an excuse to avoid considering the alternative.

¹⁸For the importance of such *kledones*, including the present one, see Cameron (above, n. 2) 99, and Zeitlin (above, n. 10) 46–48. For their importance elsewhere in Aeschylus, see J. J. Peradotto, "Cledonomancy in the *Oresteia*," *AJP* 90 (1969) 1–21.

assigned credit for the city's salvation (1016-17, 1074).¹⁹ The chorus' first song after the Messenger's report opens by combining thanks to the gods for the city with laments for the dead brothers:

ὦ μέγαλε Ζεῦ καὶ πολιοῦχοι
δαίμονες, οἳ δὴ Κάδμου πύργους
τούσδε < > ῥύεσθε,
πότερον χαίρω κάπολολύξω
σωτήρι πόλεως ἀσινεία,
ἢ τοὺς μογεροὺς καὶ δυσδαίμονας
ἀτέκνους κλαύσω πολεμάρχους,
οἳ δῆτ' ὀρθῶς κατ' ἐπωνυμίαν
<ἐτεύκλειτοι> καὶ πολυνεικεῖς
ὦλοντ' ἀσεβεῖ διανοΐα;

Septem 822-831

Indeed, the remaining lines of the play are taken up with extended lamentation and mourning—not the accusatory laments which Eteocles feared, but laments of pity for him and his brother. The συμφορά which Eteocles postulated in verse 5 turns out to be misfortune not for the whole city (as he expected), but for him alone among the Thebans.

Eteocles' prediction at first seems to be wrong in one other respect: the chorus directs its extended lamentation not just to Eteocles εἰς πολὺς, but to the two brothers equally. However, with the entrance of the Herald in 1004, the city's official lamentation is revealed to be indeed for Eteocles alone: hence we see the relevance of Eteocles' exact wording 'Ἐτεοκλέης ἂν εἰς πολὺς κατὰ πτόλιν ὕμνοϊθ' ὑπ' ἀστῶν ... (6-7). The Herald's proclamations are repeatedly identified with the will of the *demos* (1006, 1044) or *polis* (1042, 1046, 1066, 1070, 1072; cf. 1061, *πολιτῶν*), in contrast to the women, who are not properly part of the body politic. To be sure, Eteocles never expected that his words would come true in this way. But *kledones* never turn out in the way anticipated by their speaker.

Thus we see Eteocles' prologue fully actualized only in the problematic last scene of the play.²⁰ It is perhaps not accidental that the play ends with the ship-of-state metaphor in 1077-78, picking up in ring-form Eteocles'

¹⁹R. D. Dawe, "The End of the *Seven Against Thebes* Yet Again," in R. D. Dawe *et al.* (eds.), *Dionysiaca: Nine Studies in Greek Poetry by Former Pupils Presented to Sir Denys Page on His Seventieth Birthday* (Cambridge 1978) 101, actually tries to use 1074-78 as the basis for an argument against the epilogue's authenticity on the grounds that Aeschylus would never be so clear in articulating a tragic action as the result of double causality. However, *Septem* 4-8 seems at least as clear in this regard. If we accept the interpretation of Wolff (above, n. 14) 89, concerning selection-sequence, as I am inclined to, the whole tragic crux of this play is indeed precisely one of double causality.

²⁰On this controversial question, I am more persuaded by the arguments in defence of the final scene, as advanced in recent times by H. Lloyd-Jones, "The End of the

first words about governing the rudder of state in 2-3, just as the scene in its entirety gives final confirmation to the prediction in 4-8, although in an unexpected way.

There is a sense in which every line and passage of Aeschylus is so rich in associations as to enfold within itself the dramatic meaning of the whole play, reflecting passages and events both before it and after it in ways that we often do not at first suspect. Nowhere is this more true than in epilogues and prologues. In his very words about "much-churning preludes and cries of lament," Eteocles himself strikes up the prelude of tragic lamentation which is to be the *Seven Against Thebes*.

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Seven Against Thebes," *CQ* NS 9 (1959) 80-115; H. Erbse, "Zur Exodos der Sieben: (Aisch. *Sept.* 1005-78)," in J. L. Heller (ed.), *Serta Turyniana* (Urbana 1974) 169-198; E. Flintoff, "The Ending of the *Seven Against Thebes*," *Mnemosyne* 33 (1980) 244-271; C. Orwin, "Feminine Justice: The End of the *Seven Against Thebes*," *CP* 75 (1980) 187-196. To their arguments and those advanced in the text of this article I would contribute the additional observation that the play's final scene is necessary to coordinate it with Aeschylus' earlier Argive trilogy, especially the *Eleusinioi*, where the burial theme was paramount (see above, nn. 8 and 9); it has nothing to do with Sophocles' *Antigone*, with which it is in blatant contradiction at several points, as Lloyd-Jones, *op. cit.* 97-99, demonstrates.