GODS AND MEN IN THE *ORESTEIA*

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Many readers see in the *Oresteia* a cycle of crime and punishment in which Zeus' agent of punishment, in the very act of executing Zeus' will, commits a crime that offends Zeus. As Denys Page expresses it in the Introduction to his edition of the *Agamemnon* (p. xx): "Agamemnon must pay with his life for a life which he destroyed; and his murderess must pay with her life for taking his; and her son must be brought to justice for killing her." It is Zeus who exacts payment, as Page makes clear (p. xxviii): "Zeus in Aeschylus is a stern and terrible god. In *Agamemnon* he is the inflexible punisher of wrong-doing which arises inevitably out of an enterprise which he himself had approved and abetted." As Kitto puts it, "Zeus first 'sends' Agamemnon to avenge a wrong in blood, and then has him destroyed because he has shed much blood." But, as Kitto also says, if this is so, we may be "dismayed or puzzled that Zeus, for the sake of Dikê, should appoint an avenger who must inevitably be destroyed for doing what Zeus ordains that he shall do, . . ." Nevertheless for Page, Kitto, Lloyd-Jones, and others, this seems to be the essence of Zeus's justice in the *Oresteia*.[1]

[1] Denys L. Page, Introduction to Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, edited by J. D. Denniston and D. L. P. (Oxford 1957) xv, xx–xxix. H. D. F. Kitto, *Form and Meaning in Drama* (London, New York 1960) 5–14 *passim*, 30–31, 36–48 *passim*, 69–72, 78–79, 83–84; *Poiesis: Structure and Thought* (Berkeley, Los Angeles 1966) 58, 61–62, 68; *Greek Tragedy: A Literary Study* (Garden City, N.Y. 1954) 96–98 (Kitto excepts Orestes from Zeus' ordinance that the doer must suffer); Hugh Lloyd-Jones, "Zeus in Aeschylus," *JHS* 76 (1956) 61–64; "The Guilt of Agamemnon," *CQ* 12 (1962) 187–99; *The Justice of Zeus* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1971) 90–92. See also E. R. Dodds, "Morals and Politics in the 'Oresteia'," *Proc. Camb. Philol. Soc.* 6 (1960) 27–31. Hereafter I shall refer to the following editions and commentaries by the editor's or commentator's name only, with line or page reference only when necessary: N. Wecklein, *Orestie* (Leipzig 1888); A. W. Verrall, *Agamemnon* (London, New York 1889) and *Choephori* (London, New York 1893); Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Tragoediae* (Berlin 1914);

Aeschylus' Zeus is surely not the refined quasi-Christian deity that many scholars supposed before Lloyd-Jones's article "Zeus in Aeschylus" appeared in 1956. Still, must we suppose him so primitive, cruel, and arbitrary as to smite the very minister of his will? Is Zeus just another Hittite king, "whether Mursilis II or Muwattallis," or a Captain Bligh of the *Bounty*, who would punish a man for a deed that he himself had ordered him to do?[2] In the context of the *Oresteia* it is conceivable that Zeus could say, "Agamemnon destroyed Troy at my command, but I abhor his sacrifice of Iphigeneia" or "his needless loss of both Trojan and Achaean lives in combat"; but can he say, "Clytemnestra killed her husband at my command, and I abhor her deed?" I believe that these scholars are mistaken when they assume (1) that Zeus wants Agamemnon or Orestes punished, and (2) that Clytemnestra and Aegisthus act as Zeus's agents when they murder Agamemnon.

It is clear that Agamemnon and Menelaus acted for Zeus when they made war on Troy. In the *Agamemnon* the chorus of Argive elders tells us expressly that Zeus Xenius sent the Atreids to punish Alexander-Paris and the Trojans for Alexander's offense (*A.* 60–67). The two chieftains correspond both to the two vultures (*aigypioi*) of the preceding simile (*A.* 49–59) whom some creature has robbed of their nestlings, and to the avenger (Erinys) that Apollo or Pan or Zeus sends against the offender. It is not clear whether Zeus had spoken his will that the Atreids punish Troy before they saw the omen of the eagles and hare (*A.* 104–30); they would move against Troy in any case. But in that omen he makes his will plain, and Calchas, who is infallible (*A.* 249), interprets it correctly.[3] Calchas' fear of Artemis' wrath does not arise

Gilbert Murray, *Tragoediae* (Oxford 1938); Eduard Fränkel, *Agamemnon*, 3 vols. (Oxford 1950); Denniston and Page, see above; H. J. Rose, *A Commentary on the Surviving Plays of Aeschylus*, vol. 2 (Amsterdam 1958); George Thomson, *Oresteia*, 2 vols., 2d ed. (Amsterdam, Prague 1966); Paul Mazon (Paris 1925).

[2] See D. L. Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad* (Berkeley, Los Angeles 1959) 12; Alexander McKee, *H.M.S. Bounty* (New York 1962) 25–28.

[3] John J. Peradotto is correct enough when he says, "Neither text nor tradition will warrant our assuming that Aeschylus or the chorus mean here [60–62] an actual epiphany of Zeus to Agamemnon with a mandate to attack Troy, . . ."; see his "The Omen of the Eagles and the *Ἦθος* of Agamemnon," *Phoenix* 23 (1969) 250–52. He interprets the verses cited as "a religious interpretation of the chorus, not an empirical description." Nobody, however, has ever supposed an epiphany; in legend a god commonly expresses

from his reading of the omen, but from its implications. The Argive elders again attribute authority for the Atreids' enterprise to Zeus Xenius in the anapaests which introduce the first stasimon, when they know that Troy has fallen (*A.* 362–64):

> *Δία τοι ξένιον μέγαν αἰδοῦμαι*
> *τὸν τάδε πράξαντ' ἐπ' Ἀλεξάνδρῳ*
> *τείνοντα πάλαι τόξον, . . .*

These words echo and complete 60–62: Zeus sent the Atreids against Alexander and now has carried out his purpose of punishing him through these agents; for the Atreids and their army are Zeus' bow. In the first strophe which follows these anapaests the elders expand the statement: the Trojans have deservedly suffered Zeus' blow; for Paris was guilty of great hybris when he offended against the Atreids' hospitality (*A.* 367–402). The herald points the same moral: Agamemnon has dug up Troy with the mattock of justice-bringing (*dikêphoros*) Zeus (*A.* 525–26) for Paris' guilt (*A.* 532–37); and it was Zeus' favor that brought victory to the commanders (*A.* 580–82). Again in the second stasimon, the choral ode on Helen, the elders say that punishment has come upon the Trojans for acquiescing in the dishonor that Paris had done to Zeus Xynestius (*A.* 699–708), who is Zeus Xenius. The marriage of Paris and Helen came to a bitter end caused by a spirit, an Erinys, that came upon Priam's house under Zeus Xenius' escort, *πομπᾷ Διὸς ξενίου*.[4] Thus the Argive elders and the herald firmly establish the theme that Alexander-Paris committed a heinous offense against Zeus Xenius, patron of the guest-host relation, and that Zeus

his will through oracles and omens. In the tradition, as early as the *Odyssey* (8.78–81), Agamemnon or Menelaus consulted the Delphic oracle; see also Delphic inscription, *Rev. Arch.* 19 (1942) 119–20, 20 (1943) 21–24; Ephorus 70 F 96 J *ap.* Ath. 232F; Demetrius Phal. 228 F 32 J *ap.* Schol. *et* Eust. (p. 1466) *in Od.* 3.267; Schol. vet. on Lyc. 204. There was also the omen of the sparrows and snake at Aulis (*Il.* 2.303–30). Aeschylus does not inform us about any divine communication other than the omen at Argos; that is enough to assure us that Agamemnon has Zeus' sanction. Notice that the *pempei* of *A.* 61 corresponds to *pempei* of the vulture simile in 59 and is picked up in 111: the omen-bird, Zeus' eagle, sends the Atreid kings against Troy.

[4] *A.* 744–49. We may consider the Erinys to be either a "Fiend of Wrath" that Zeus sent to Troy in Helen's wake (see Denniston-Page) or Helen herself in the sense that though she did not herself intend ruin for Troy, her deed and her presence had that effect; she is like the lion raised as a pet in the house at *A.* 717–36 (Fränkel).

sent the Atreids, and Agamemnon in particular, with an army to punish him and his Trojan accomplices.[5]

The elders introduce the anapaests of the first stasimon with an invocation of Zeus Basileus (*A.* 355), a title that emphasizes the divine power behind the kingship of Agamemnon and Menelaus, who represent King Zeus on earth (this sentence so introduced immediately precedes the verses on Zeus Xenius quoted above, *A.* 362–64). Likewise in the anapaestic entrance song the elders begin with the statement that Menelaus and Agamemnon, the yoke of Atreidae, Priam's great adversary (*antidikos* begins the legal metaphor that is sustained throughout), have received their sovereign power from Zeus (*A.* 40–47); and Apollo himself confirms the statement in the *Eumenides* (625–26; cf. *Iliad* 2.100–9, 205–6).

Thus Aeschylus leaves us in no doubt that Agamemnon had Zeus' sanction and commission for his war on Troy. This must be thoroughly understood, since if we are to suppose that Zeus turned against Agamemnon, as the scholars cited above want us to suppose, we must find good evidence for Zeus' change of heart, some evidence of a wrath directed against Agamemnon. We must realize that Zeus would not withdraw his favor from Agamemnon easily. Yet we are never told anywhere that Zeus turned against him; so that we must find Agamemnon's supposed loss of favor implicit in the drama, if we are to find it at all. But where? Even if we accept the doctrine of punishment engendering crime as stated in the first paragraph above, we have to recognize that Agamemnon's taking of Troy, whereby he executed his mission, was not in itself an act of crime in Zeus' eyes, and is not on the same footing as the murders of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra; so that the first turn of the cycle would differ in this respect from the second and third. His crime, therefore, must be something done while he was carrying out his task of punishment: was it that he killed more Trojans than necessary, or

[5] In no speech or choral ode is Helen called Zeus' daughter; for the *Agamemnon* we may say that she is not. Therefore Zeus has no concern for a daughter in his wrath against Alexander, since this is not even implicit in the play: he is solely concerned about Alexander's offense against his host, all the more serious because his host was a Zeus-sanctioned Atreid king. Whereas Alexander came to grief, Menelaus received Zeus' protection: the herald is confident that Menelaus is alive and will return "by the devices of Zeus who does not yet want to destroy the house" (*A.* 677–78).

for a wanton woman's sake lost too many Argive young men, or destroyed and desecrated the gods' altars and temples in Troy?[6]

The Argive elders close the *chrysamoibos Ares* strophe with a statement that the Argives had muttered against the Atreidae in resentful grief (*phthoneron algos*), because they had lost so many of their young men in a war ἀλλοτρίας διαὶ γυναικός (*A.* 445–55). Then in the antistrophe they sing (456–70):

βαρεῖα δ' ἀστῶν φάτις ξὺν κότῳ·
δημοκράτου δ' ἀρᾶς τίνει χρέος.
μένει δ' ἀκοῦσαί τί μου
μέριμνα νυκτηρεφές.
τῶν πολυκτόνων γὰρ οὐκ
ἄσκοποι θεοί. κελαι-
ναὶ δ' Ἐρινύες χρόνῳ
τυχηρὸν ὄντ' ἄνευ δίκας
παλιντυχεῖ τριβᾷ βίου
τιθεῖσ' ἀμαυρὸν, ἐν δ' ἀίστοις
τελέθοντος οὔτις ἀλκά·
τὸ δ' ὑπερκόπως κλύειν εὖ
βαρύ· βάλλεται γὰρ ὅσσοις
Διόθεν κεραυνός.

The thought is obscure and the text not entirely certain. The content is gnomic: both ill fame and high fame are heavy to bear; the man of high estate is prone to either and therefore to the unfavorable notice of deity: verses 456 and 468–69 are antithetical. The citizens' ill report, spoken in anger, say the chorus, has the effect of a public curse.[7] In consequence the chorus are apprehensive of hearing something worse than angry talk, a dismal report of disaster; for the gods take notice of the killers of many (*polyktonoi*); that is, this is the substance of the ill report, that the war-makers are losing too many lives, and that the gods may take heed and visit punishment on them. This is uncertain; what is certain is that the man who prospers by unjust deeds will be driven by Erinyes into oblivion, where he will lack all

[6] See Kitto *FMD* 9–17 *passim*; *GT* 71, 75–77, 96; Denniston-Page xiii and note on *A.* 527; Thomson 1.23.

[7] It seems to me fantastic to read into *A.* 456–57 a meeting of the Argive *dêmos* to put a public curse on the Atreids; see Fränkel and Denniston-Page. Rose and Thomson interpret this correctly.

resource. To be excessively well spoken of is heavy; Zeus strikes this man with a thunderbolt. So it is better to have unenvied wealth (not to have so much as to attract talk) and not to be either victor or vanquished.

We must notice that the thought is general and abstract; the statement is a corollary of the universal Greek belief that hybris provokes the unfavorable notice of gods. The chorus have the Atreids, especially Agamemnon, in mind, but not them only. If it is true that Agamemnon's victory has been costly in lives, some gods not named may be hostile to him. At this point the chorus are not sure that the message of Troy's fall is true (475–77); and they do not know what has happened to Agamemnon. Then the herald arrives and assures them that the report is true and that all is well with Agamemnon. Thereafter Agamemnon arrives in triumph; his victory justifies his deeds and puts the seal of divine favor on his conduct of the war. The chorus apologize for the former angry talk and hard feelings that they as citizens had indulged in; they grant that it was unjustified; all is well that ends well (*A.* 799–809). The elders are still aware that Agamemnon is in danger, but not from the gods. We hear no more about his causing many deaths; and we are never told that Zeus or any god was offended by the bloodshed due to Agamemnon's enterprise.[8]

The stasimon as a whole is about Paris and the just retribution that has come upon him for his deed (if the report be true; at any rate his doom is certain). In carrying off another man's wife to satisfy his own desires he has brought death and destruction to his own city and people. He has also brought death to many Achaean warriors, since his crime brought on the long war (which, we must keep in mind,

[8] Here and elsewhere in interpreting the *Oresteia* we must beware of the documentary fallacy, which is to suppose that a literary work is like an historical document, in which causal events and factors that have meaning for the whole composition may be entirely unmentioned, and inferred only from what is said or from knowledge of other documents. A poet like Aeschylus when using traditional myths and legends may assume that his audience knows the story, but no unmentioned event can be a link in his narrative or dramatic chain. As Fränkel (2.97) expresses it: "It must be regarded as an established and indeed a guiding principle for any interpretation of Aeschylus that the poet does not want us to take into account any feature of a tradition which he does not mention." See A. J. A. Waldock, *Sophocles the Dramatist* (Cambridge 1951) chap. 2; Robert Champigny, "Implicitness in Narrative Fiction," *PMLA* 85 (1970) 988–91.

Zeus wanted Agamemnon to wage), and consequent sorrow to their kinsmen back in Argos, who therefore talked angrily against the Atreids, another consequence of Alexander's deed. And Alexander too is among the *polyktonoi*.[9] He is certainly the fortunate man without justice (*τυχηρὸν ὄντ' ἄνευ δίκας*) whom black Erinyes punish. How can these words apply to Agamemnon, who is Zeus' agent of *dikê*? With Paris, Troy has received just punishment (*A.* 355–84, 399–402). We have come back to Paris in verses 462–70, which echo the earlier strophes, for example, *A.* 381–84:

> *οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ἔπαλξις πλούτου πρὸς κόρον ἀνδρὶ*
> *λακτίσαντι μέγαν Δίκας βωμὸν εἰς ἀφάνειαν.*

Though generalizing, the chorus have Paris especially in mind. Here is the man of 464, who violates justice in winning wealth. But now (in 466–67) the Erinyes send him into the oblivion into which he had kicked Justice's altar. His wealth offered no defense against doom; and in oblivion he has no defense (466–67).[10] Verses 469–70 recall 363–64: there Zeus drew his bow upon Alexander; here he casts his thunderbolt upon the man who has excessive fame. Yet can *hyperkopôs klyein eu* be said of Alexander? I think that it can. As I have interpreted the antistrophe, the meaning is that a man of wealth and power cannot avoid talk both for and against him: he arouses ill will and he also wins fame for power and wealth. Such fame is *eu klyein*, and if excessive, Zeus may strike. This is the high estate that precedes reversal of fortune: Paris had been high and famous, and Zeus had struck him down. Agamemnon in his high position and in victory ran the risk of eminence; but he escaped offending Zeus. After his return and just before he is murdered, the elders say that the gods have granted him the taking of Priam's city, and that he has come home *theotimêtos* (*A.* 1335–37). In this context they mean Zeus and the Olympians. And after the murder they lament him as *anêr theios*

[9] As Rose rightly sees; Thomson, however, supposes that Paris in the first part of the ode is balanced by Agamemnon at the end.

[10] The Erinyes of 463 correspond to Peitho of 385, daughter of Ate, who forced Paris to his doom. Then the "no defense" theme is repeated in *ἄκος δὲ πᾶν μάταιον* (387). Then the reversal theme of 390–93 recurs in 465, where *τριβᾷ* echoes *τριβῷ* of 391. Verse 464 also recalls 397–98.

(*A.* 1548). The chorus are not wrong in bestowing these epithets on Agamemnon; he had the Olympians' favor, as shown by Apollo himself in the *Eumenides* (625–37), when he calls Agamemnon *panto-semnos* and emphasizes his greatness.

It is apparent that Agamemnon did not offend Zeus either in causing great loss of life or in destroying Troy and committing great outrages when it fell. And so nothing can be made of Clytemnestra's words at *A.* 338–47 to support a hypothetical wrath of Zeus against Agamemnon. Clytemnestra insincerely hopes that the victorious Achaeans respect (*eusebousi*) the gods of Troy and their sanctuaries, and that they do not through greed destroy or plunder what they ought not. She, of course, does not mind that Agamemnon offend the gods; but she wants to speak the right thoughts in public, and probably does not want angry gods to anticipate her: she will deal with Agamemnon and on quite another account. We hear only once more of the gods' sanctuaries in Troy, if the verse in question (*A.* 527) is not an interpolation. In his statement that Agamemnon has dug up Troy with Zeus' mattock and destroyed all seed in the land, the herald inserts *βωμοὶ δ' ἄιστοι καὶ θεῶν ἱδρύματα.* Murray comments: *id quod maxime timendum erat factum est*; and Kitto sees "the simple and pious herald mention, almost incidentally, a detail which makes the audience shiver with dread."[11] But Zeus and the gods wanted Troy destroyed; and if the city was either burnt or torn down the temples and altars of the gods would disappear too. The gods expect this to happen, as Poseidon in the prologue of Euripides' *Troades*, when he reluctantly leaves his altars in Ilium, saying that when a city falls, *νοσεῖ τὰ τῶν θεῶν.*[12] What offends the gods is sacrilege, the commission of crimes at their altars and in their temples. In the legend of Troy's fall such desecration occurred when the lesser Ajax raped Cassandra at Athena's altar and when Neoptolemus slaughtered Priam at Zeus' altar. Neither crime is mentioned in the *Agamemnon*; but whatever sacrilegious offenses the Achaeans committed they paid for on the way home; for the herald describes the storm that came upon the returning ships (*A.* 646–60), which in the legendary tradition Athena caused for

[11] Kitto, *FMD* 16.

[12] Eur. *Tr.* 25–27; see Fontenrose, "Poseidon in the Troades," *AGÔN* 1 (1967) 135–41.

Ajax's crime. But Aeschylus assigns no other cause for it than divine wrath (*A.* 649, a corrupt line, but this must be the sense). Some Achaeans were drowned and others lost, but some god (θεός τις, οὐκ ἄνθρωπος), by direct action or intercession, carried Agamemnon and his men safely through (*A.* 661–63). So the herald says and emphasizes that it could be no human being that saved them. A simple and pious soul the herald may be, but nowhere does Aeschylus indicate that the truth was otherwise; therefore he had a purpose in giving the herald this speech. It must be, then, either that Agamemnon, having offended no god in taking Troy, retained divine favor, or that a god was saving him for later assassination; and we have not yet found a good case for the latter alternative (at least if the god be Zeus or an Olympian). And finally we must observe that Agamemnon's martial deeds, however appraised, are neither Clytemnestra's nor Aegisthus' reason for killing him.

Clytemnestra's reason for killing Agamemnon was his sacrifice of their daughter Iphigeneia (*A.* 1414–18, 1432, 1525–29). Did that sacrifice offend Zeus, so that, in effect, he commissioned Clytemnestra and Aegisthus to punish Agamemnon with death, though only after he had first carried out his task of destroying guilty Troy? It was Artemis who demanded the sacrifice of Iphigeneia (*A.* 151–52, 198–204) in satisfaction of the anger that caused her to send contrary winds upon the Achaeans gathered at Aulis. She abhorred the eagles' feast (*A.* 137), say the chorus; and it is unclear whether her wrath was aroused by the literal destruction of the pregnant hare, because the eagles that destroyed her represented the Atreids, or by the Atreids' destruction of Troy, which the omen portended.[13] Artemis acted independently of Zeus, and there is no indication that Zeus ratified her action. If he did, he must appear not only arbitrary but senselessly treacherous to his most pious worshiper, his deputy on earth, and his agent of

[13] For the former interpretation see Schol. M on *A.* 135; Thomson 1.21, 2.19; Page, Introduction xxiii–xxvi. For the latter see Lloyd-Jones, *CQ* 12.189–90; Kitto, *FMD* 4, 70–71. The fact is that Aeschylus does not tell us. See Fränkel's sensible remarks (2.96–99); for various views see his citations on page 97 and William Whallon, "Why is Artemis Angry?," *AJP* 82 (1961) 78–88; Peradotto, *op. cit.* (above, note 3). Kitto, Whallon, and Peradotto interpret the eagle's feast to mean or include the slaughter of Iphigeneia; if true, then Artemis acts as Zeus is said to do: she demands the very slaughter that she abhors, and does so, says Kitto, simply to put Agamemnon in the wrong.

vengeance.[14] Zeus does not necessarily approve of all that he allows to happen (indeed, the aforesaid scholars say that he doesn't even approve of all that he orders to happen), any more than Yahweh approved of the murder of Abel or the Christian God approved of the executions of martyrs. No more than the usual believer did Aeschylus examine the deeper philosophical and theological implications of his theism.

Calchas, foreseeing Artemis' action, called on Apollo to restrain her—to no avail (*A.* 146–51). He did not appeal to Zeus, apparently believing that Apollo, in his character as Paean, could influence his sister and would be more likely to respond to prayer (and a mantis properly calls upon the patron of seers). Just after this, however, the elders sing a hymn to Zeus (160–83), inserted between their report of Calchas' speech interpreting the omen and their account of the sacrifice at Aulis. It is a three-stanza hymn, and the antistrophe which follows its second strophe (third stanza) begins the story of the sacrifice. The transitions are abrupt at both ends, and verse 184 appears to resume where 159 left off, though the scene has shifted from Argos to Aulis; but obviously the hymn has some relation to Agamemnon's deed. The first strophe tells us that Zeus is incomparable, the antistrophe that Zeus alone is always victorious, the only exception to the rule that the mighty fall.[15] The second strophe then concludes the hymn with the climactic statement that Zeus as supreme ruler has established *pathei mathos* as the way to acquire wisdom. This means simply

[14] As Lloyd-Jones says (*JHS* 76.65), "Numerous passages could be cited to show that Aeschylus, just as much as Homer, believed in the efficacy of gods other than Zeus, of Apollo and Athene, Artemis and Ares, Hera and Poseidon; . . ." Only if *aitei* is retained in *A.* 144 and taken as active with object *ton Dia* understood, can one find a consent of Zeus to Artemis' action (see Denniston-Page). But the passage is obscure and possibly corrupt: the active of *aitein* governing an infinitive without an accusative never occurs elsewhere (see Fränkel), and many editors read αἰνεῖ or αἴνει. If *aitei* is right and is active, the object understood may be *me*, meaning Calchas (Schol. M), or third person; a meaning like "want" with complementary infinitive must be supposed, but is unparalleled. Or, with change of accent, it may be taken as imperative (with unsatisfactory meaning). Otherwise with Rose it may be taken as second person passive. Thus the verse offers very infirm support to a Zeus-sanctioned move.

[15] Commentators refer *A.* 167–72 to the myth of Uranus and Cronus, citing but also correcting the Scholiasts TM, who take the *megas* of 167–68 for Cronus or the Titans or Typhon. But Rose is surely right in taking these lines as a statement of a general truth. He points out that neither Uranus nor Cronus can very well be said to have vanished completely from memory. And does *pammachôi thrasei bryôn* fit Uranus very well?

learning through experience with emphasis on sad experience. What does this doctrine have to do with Agamemnon and Iphigeneia? As Denniston and Page say, it is hard to see what Agamemnon learned from the suffering that his sacrifice of Iphigeneia caused him. And surely the elders cannot be saying that punishment will come upon him for his deed.

The chorus come back to this maxim in the final antistrophe of this stasimon, immediately upon concluding their long account (*A.* 184–249) of Agamemnon's dilemma and of the sacrifice, with the words *Δίκα δὲ τοῖς μὲν παθοῦσιν μαθεῖν ἐπιρρέπει* (250–51). The syntax and meaning are not wholly certain; is it "Justice weighs out understanding to those who have gone through suffering" (Fränkel) or "Justice is coming down (like the scale of a balance) to the disadvantage of one party (*τοῖς μέν*), so that they learn through suffering" (Denniston-Page)? Either way we can gather from the statement that Justice sees to it that those who suffer learn the lesson that suffering teaches them. The chorus then continue with the statement (though the text is not certain) that you can learn what is going to happen when it happens, and there is no use in worrying about it beforehand (*A.* 251–54). This statement of *pathei mathos* in the final antistrophe of the stasimon and the Zeus hymn enclose the Aulis scene; the antistrophe repeats the lesson of the hymn. The hymn alone emphasizes that the highest wisdom is to realize Zeus' might and incomparability. The content of this wisdom is repeated in the antistrophe: (1) the lesson of *pathei mathos*; (2) freedom from anxiety about the future; (3) dependence on the gods for blessings and bounty (*A.* 182–83, 255; i.e., the future is in their power). The dismissal in the antistrophe of apprehension about future events appears to balance *A.* 165–66, *εἰ τὸ μάταν ἀπὸ φροντίδος ἄχθος / χρὴ βαλεῖν ἐτητύμως*. The chorus mean that if a man is going to cast off the vain burden of anxiety rightly, he must realize that Zeus, incomparable and invincible, has established the rule of learning by suffering (or experience). That is, they contemplate the event at Aulis with perplexity and foreboding; and they do not know what the consequences will be. Men know, they say, what has happened to them and learn from it (in the *paradeigma* Agamemnon learned from his suffering that victory demands sacrifice). But men cannot know what is going to happen and should

dismiss it from their minds with a prayer for the best (*A.* 255).[16] When it happens, then they will know and can gain wisdom from the event. This, we see, is exactly the state of the elders' consciousness at the moment. They have not yet heard the news of Troy's fall; they know that danger threatens Agamemnon at home, whenever he returns; they do not know what is going to happen nor whether it will be good or ill. Their song goes beyond Agamemnon and the Trojans to the condition of man. There is, therefore, no indication in the hymn that Zeus will punish Agamemnon or wants to.

Is there any indication that Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter offended Zeus? Zeus wanted him to punish Paris and the Trojans; Agamemnon could do so only by making war on Troy (Aeschylus ignores the preliminary embassies and parleys): Artemis, sending contrary winds, prevented his waging war. She would not stay the winds unless Agamemnon paid with his daughter's life. If he refused, he could not carry out his mission and would in consequence risk punishment from Zeus for disobedience; his *βαρεῖα μὲν κὴρ τὸ μὴ πιθέσθαι* (*A.* 206) must refer to Zeus' command and not to forsaking his allies (*A.* 212–13); for though they might be angry, they would hardly be capable of bringing *bareia kêr* upon him. Agamemnon put on "the yoke of necessity"; the chorus' *ananke* means that he had no choice, though he hesitated, if he was to obey Zeus (as Denniston and Page say, the word cannot be used of a voluntary decision).[17] It was a terrible dilemma, and once he had resolved to do what his duty to Zeus required, he entered upon the abnormal state of mind which the elders describe (*A.* 219–25); herein we gain insight into Agamemnon's

[16] Verses 179–80, *στάζει δ' ἀνθ' ὕπνου* (ms. *ἐν θ' ὕπνῳ*) *πρὸ καρδίας / μνησιπήμων πόνος*, also, I believe, refer to vain anxiety about the future. That is, the distress which arises from being mindful of pain to come, inferred from experienced pains, keeps one awake; (no use staying awake, for) you will learn wisdom (through experience) even if you don't want to. We must remember that Aeschylus' lyric thought is elliptical and subject to abrupt transitions.

[17] Some scholars believe that Agamemnon had a choice and made the wrong decision; see e.g., Kitto, *FMD* 4; Rose on *A.* 160; Thomson on *A.* 205. On the contrary see Page, Introduction xxiii–xxix (although he wants to show that Zeus "creates a fault in man" consistently with the punishment-crime interpretation). Agamemnon had a choice in the sense that he could disobey Zeus by giving up the war against Troy and risking divine wrath. In human terms his decision may be considered wrong; it was certainly wrong to Clytemnestra, but not so to Zeus. As we shall see, Zeus' right is not absolute and unquestioned.

character, but no hint that he was displeasing Zeus. To the elders, as to Agamemnon himself, it was a horrible and unholy deed, although performed as an act of worship; and so they are uneasy. To Clytemnestra and to the Erinyes (*A.* 1433) Agamemnon was guilty of a hideous crime; to Zeus he was not guilty because he acted as king and commander with sovereign right, doing what he had to do. The chorus of captive women in the *Choephoroe* call Agamemnon *semnotimos anaktôr*, who, among the dead, is or would be (interpretations differ) a minister of the great chthonian rulers, i.e., Hades and Persephone (*Ch.* 354–62), who represent the Olympian order in the underworld; such honor is due him, the chorus sing, *βασιλεὺς γὰρ ἦσθ' ὄφρ' ἔζης* . . . (360). Could he hold this honored position after death if the gods abhorred him for committing a dreadful crime?

Since, then, there is no evidence in Aeschylus' text that Zeus wants Agamemnon killed, there is consequently no evidence that Clytemnestra and Aegisthus act as Zeus' agents of punishment or carry out Zeus' command. Though we are told in the *Agamemnon* that Zeus sent the Atreids against the Trojans, and in the *Choephoroe* and *Eumenides* that Apollo, speaking for Zeus, ordered Orestes to kill Agamemnon's murderers, we are never told anywhere, directly or indirectly, that Zeus wanted Clytemnestra and Aegisthus to kill Agamemnon. No speaker or chorus in the trilogy finds Zeus' will fulfilled in their deed. Neither Clytemnestra nor Aegisthus mentions Zeus or any other Olympian god when they justify themselves. When Clytemnestra follows Agamemnon into the palace, where she will soon murder him, she invokes Zeus Teleius, the accomplisher (*A.* 973), who is properly invoked when the moment of action arrives; but her appeal does not mean that Zeus sanctions her action: a prayer asks for support and does not presuppose it. In truth, Clytemnestra's next words, the final sentence of her speech, express her uncertainty about Zeus' will, *μέλοι δέ τοι σοὶ τῶνπερ ἂν μέλλῃς τελεῖν*: "but may your care be to accomplish whatever you intend," an acknowledgment that Zeus will order these matters as he pleases.[18] To this invocation of Zeus

[18] Fränkel and Denniston-Page interpret *A.* 974 to mean that Clytemnestra is confident of Zeus' support. But notice the subjunctive *μέλλῃς* with *ἄν* in a vivid-future conditional-relative clause. The verb is not *μέλλεις*, which would mean "what you now intend." Again Page asserts that after the murder Clytemnestra "sees in this execution the will of Zeus" (p. xxxv); but nowhere does she say so.

Teleius we shall return. In any case, Agamemnon is already doomed; Clytemnestra is not asking for Zeus' sanction or permission, but for his support or approval.

Cassandra's words at *A.* 1288–89 are also interpreted to mean that Zeus sanctioned the murder of Agamemnon. There she says that she is ready to die, having seen Ilium destroyed and the victors (i.e., Agamemnon) faring as they do in the gods' decision: *οἳ δ' ἐΐλον πόλιν / οὕτως ἀπαλλάσσουσιν ἐν θεῶν κρίσει.* She does not specify what gods have made the decision. She could mean chthonian gods, since just two lines later she refers to the palace doors as "these gates of Hades," wherein she and Agamemnon will die. More probably, however, her reference is vague: it is the decision of gods, whoever they are, and the decision is to let these things happen. She means that she is ready to leave a world which the gods in general manage as they do, where even such a mighty victor as Agamemnon meets with foul murder just after his victory. Surely we cannot suppose, as Fränkel does, that the gods have formally tried Agamemnon and found him guilty.

Although there is no evidence that Zeus wanted Agamemnon killed, there is much evidence that he wanted Agamemnon avenged. Apollo at Delphi told Orestes to kill his father's murderers, both Aegisthus and his mother Clytemnestra, and threatened horrible penalties for disobedience (*Ch.* 269–97, 556–59, 937–41; *Eu.* 84, 202–3, 465–67, 595–96, 798–99); he purified, protected, and defended him after he had done the deed (*Eu.* 64–93, 205, 278–83, 574–751; cf. *Ch.* 1034–39, 1059–64). And Apollo speaks the will of Zeus; this Aeschylus makes very clear and emphatic. In the trial scene Apollo tells the Erinyes that he has never spoken anything on his mantic seats about man or woman or city that Zeus has not commanded him to speak (*Eu.* 616–18; also 713–14). Did Zeus order the oracle, they ask, which told Orestes to avenge his father's murder without paying any penalty for matricide (*Eu.* 622–24)? And Apollo replies that Zeus did (the *gar* of 625 introduces a statement that explains his unspoken affirmative), since Clytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon, her husband, a king with Zeus-given authority (*διοσδότοις σκήπτροισι τιμαλφούμενον*, 626), was a heinous offense (625–39). Apollo makes very clear that both he and Zeus abhorred Clytemnestra's treacherous deed and held Agamemnon in honor (in this speech, we notice, the Olympians

find no fault in Agamemnon). Though the Erinyes may question his statement, we know that Apollo does not lie. The prologue of the *Eumenides* makes his veracity very clear; the purpose of the Pythia's opening speech is to make Apollo's authority unquestionable: Zeus, she says, endowed Apollo with the mantic art and made him fourth mantis, successor to Gaea, Themis, and Phoebe at Pytho, where he speaks Zeus' will: *Διὸς προφήτης δ' ἐστὶ Λοξίας πατρός*. Athena, after acquitting Orestes, tells the Erinyes that her court had before it testimony from Zeus, spoken by Apollo, giving witness in person, that Orestes should incur no penalty for his deed (*Eu.* 797–99).

Orestes holds the favor of the Olympians. In his speech of gratitude to Athena he quotes the future statement of Hellenes:

> *Ἀργεῖος ἀνὴρ αὖθις ἔν τε χρήμασιν*
> *οἰκεῖ πατρῴοις, Παλλάδος καὶ Λοξίου*
> *ἕκατι, καὶ τοῦ πάντα κραίνοντος τρίτου*
> *Σωτῆρος, ὃς πατρῷον αἰδεσθεὶς μόρον*
> *σῴζει με, . . .* (*Eu.* 757–61)

This is the answer to the Erinyes' questioning words, *Πατρὸς προτιμᾷ Ζεὺς μόρον τῷ σῷ λόγῳ* (*Eu.* 640). Zeus does take Agamemnon's death more seriously than Clytemnestra's; he is truly Orestes' savior, as the outcome shows. Apollo has personally defended Orestes, and Athena has been his active helper, receiving Orestes when he came as suppliant to her (*Eu.* 235–43, 470–75), establishing the Areopagus court to try him (*Eu.* 482–89), and voting as a member of the court for his acquittal (*Eu.* 735). She too has her authority from Zeus (*Eu.* 826–28, 850). A fourth great Olympian helped Orestes too, Hermes, who in his character as *pompaios* escorted Orestes to Athens at Apollo's bidding and in doing this fulfilled an office approved by Zeus (*Eu.* 89–93).[19]

There can be no question, then, that Zeus wanted Orestes to kill his mother and that he and his Olympian family were in no way offended by the actual deed. Therefore Zeus cannot have ordered the Erinyes to punish Orestes for matricide. They make no claim to be Zeus' agents; rather they rail against the younger gods, who

[19] Notice Cassandra's prophecy that the gods have sworn a great oath to bring Orestes to Argos as his father's avenger (*A.* 1279–85). See *Ch.* 935–41, where Orestes, the *pythochrêstos phygas*, and Pylades coming to the palace in Argos are parallel to the Justice that came upon Priam's house.

include Zeus, for usurping or nullifying their ancient privileges. Nor does any speaker relate their pursuit of Orestes to Zeus' will. Zeus may send Erinyes to pursue a criminal (*A.* 55–59); but in the *Eumenides* the Erinyes act on their own (this is, in fact, a central issue in the play, as we shall see). Clytemnestra complains, when as ghost she rouses the Erinyes, that none of the gods was stirred to wrath when her son killed her (*Eu.* 101). The Olympian gods under Zeus support the house of Atreus against the house of Priam and against Clytemnestra and Aegisthus (see note 19). They appear to be offended not only because Paris and Clytemnestra committed crimes against hospitality and against the marriage bond, but also because the victims were sons of Atreus. The Olympians are like human rulers: they support those who support them. For not only are Agamemnon and Menelaus Zeus' deputies in earth, but they, Orestes, Electra, and their supporters worship Zeus and the Olympian gods above all other deities.

When the herald reaches Argos he first greets his native Argive land (*A.* 503, *πατρῷον οὖδας Ἀργείας χθονός*; 508, *χθών*, not to be understood here as the goddess Earth) and the sunlight, then Zeus supreme god of the land (*ὕπατος χώρας*), lord Apollo Pythius, the *agônioi theoi* (gods of the marketplace or assembly, who include Zeus, Apollo, and Hermes), Hermes, and the local heroes (*A.* 508–17). Then he calls upon the royal palace and the *daimones antêlioi* to receive Agamemnon graciously (518–26; these daimones are probably the images of gods before the palace and again probably include Zeus and the other Olympians). Later the herald quotes the future Achaean dedication of Trojan spoils to the gods throughout Hellas (577–79); and the words that he speaks immediately before indicate that Zeus above all will be honored: those who hear the dedicatory formula should praise the city and the commanders; thus will Zeus' grace that achieved these results receive honor (580–82).

When Agamemnon arrives, he first addresses Argos and the *theoi enchôrioi* who helped him (*τοὺς ἐμοὶ μεταιτίους*) to victory over Troy and to a safe return (*A.* 810–13). It is the same as the herald's greeting without mention of individual gods; the *theoi enchôrioi* are the *agônioi*. Agamemnon then explains why he calls them *metaitioi*: the gods (the *theoi* of 813 are the *enchôrioi*, as *gar* makes clear) have as judges heard the case of each party and have voted unanimously for Troy's de-

struction. Therefore, Agamemnon says, he must render thanks to the gods; the gods of lines 810–29, the first part of which he calls a prelude (*phroimion*) spoken to the gods, are obviously Zeus and the Olympians, since throughout the *Agamemnon* they are given credit for the victory over Troy. Again as he ends his first speech Agamemnon says that on entering his house he will first salute the gods that sent him forth and brought him back again (*A.* 851–53), who we know are Zeus and the Olympians.

In the *Choephoroe* Orestes prays to Zeus four times (18–19, 246–63, 382–83, 408–9) and to Hermes once (1–2). In the *Eumenides* he prays or appeals to Athena four times (235–43, 287–98, 443–69, 754–77). He consults Apollo at Delphi on two occasions (*Ch.* 269–96, 1029–39; *Eu.* 40–45, 64–88) and appeals to Apollo twice (*Ch.* 1057; *Eu.* 744). Once he invokes Helius as witness (*Ch.* 984–86), who though not numbered among the Olympians is a celestial god. Orestes reminds Zeus that Agamemnon was his sacrificial priest (*thytêr*) and honored him highly, so that Zeus must grant victory to Agamemnon's son and daughter if he wants in future to have the feasts and offerings that Agamemnon gave him; in fact, if he should fail Agamemnon's children, no mortal man will have confidence in Zeus again (*Ch.* 255–61). To Athena he promises eternal friendship for Athens and an Argive alliance (*Eu.* 289–91, 762–74). Electra prays twice to Zeus (*Ch.* 244–45, 394–96), the first time together with Kratos and Dikê, calling him greatest of all gods; and once to Hermes Chthonius (*Ch.* 123–27), ending the same speech with a prayer to her father, asking him to be sender of good things (πομπὸς ἴσθι τῶν ἐσθλῶν) along with the gods Ge and *Dikê Nikêphoros* (at *Ch.* 462 she calls only on *theoi*). Dikê is a heavenly goddess, Zeus' daughter (*Ch.* 949).

The chorus of Argive elders, sympathetic to Agamemnon, sing the hymn to Zeus (*A.* 160–83), already discussed. Later they call on Zeus Basileus in company with friendly Night and express their reverence for Zeus Xenius (*A.* 355–66). The principal message of their choral odes is Zeus' supreme power and the certainty that he will visit his punishment upon the wicked and unjust. In the second stasimon of the *Choephoroe* the chorus of captive women pray successively to Zeus, the household gods, Apollo, and Hermes (783–818). Later they make another prayer to Zeus (855–58), and at another time they express need

for help from Hermes Chthonius and Peitho (726–29). Finally Pylades, encouraging Orestes when the moment of action comes, tells him to respect Apollo's oracles, and to consider all men enemies rather than the gods (*Ch.* 900–902).

In contrast Agamemnon's party seldom invoke non-Olympian or non-celestial deities, and they do so mostly where one would expect them to, in the scene of prayers and libations at Agamemnon's tomb in the *Choephoroe*. Then, as we have already noticed, Orestes and Electra pray to Hermes Chthonius, an Olympian god who has a chthonian function as guide of souls. Orestes also addresses the rulers of the netherworld (*nerterôn tyrannides*), meaning Hades and Persephone, who belong to the Olympian family (and Agamemnon is their *propolos*, 357–58); and in the same invocation he adds the Arae (Curses; *Ch.* 405–8, cf. 577–78), who are Erinyes (*Eu.* 417). But the principal chthonian power on whom they and the captive women call for help is Agamemnon's ghost, both in the long kommos (*Ch.* 306–478) and in the iambic prayer that follows (479–509), which is punctuated by appeals to Gaea and Persephassa. The kommos begins with the chorus' prayer to the great Moerae, who preside over the ancient pre-Olympian deities; but they add *Diothen*, "from Zeus": they should bring these events to a conclusion in accordance with Zeus' will. Herein they touch upon the issue that is central on the divine plane of the trilogy: what should be the relation of the Moerae to Zeus as supreme sovereign? This is also the issue of where Justice lies, when Dikê is opposed to Dikê (*Ch.* 461). The chorus close the kommos with the statement that this is a hymn for underworld gods, and with an appeal to *makares chthonioi* to hear them and send help (475–78): they mean in particular Agamemnon's ghost, to whom the whole kommos is sung. Earlier they have said that the ruin (*loigos*) calls for an Erinys (402). As we have seen, Electra's libation prayer (*Ch.* 123–51) ends with an appeal to her father along with the goddesses Earth and Justice. She begins with an appeal to Hermes Chthonius, asking him to request the daimones beneath earth and Gaea to hear her prayer. By *daimones*, I believe, she means Agamemnon's ghost in particular: he can be said to be protector of the ancestral halls (126); the plural *daimones* may be generalizing, or it may include ancestral spirits and underworld gods. In the kommos she calls upon Earth and the

honored chthonians (*chthoniôn timai*) to hear her (399); again, I think, she means primarily Agamemnon's ghost. And the Earth that is several times invoked is primarily the ground in which Agamemnon lies, as at *Ch.* 540, when Orestes prays "to this Earth and to my father's tomb."

Besides the prayers and hymns at Agamemnon's tomb we find very few references to chthonian and non-Olympian powers made on the Atreid side. The chorus of Argive elders address the daimôn of the house of Atreus (*A.* 1468–74): this is in a kommos with Clytemnestra after the murder. When they invoke King Zeus and friendly Night (*nyx philia, A.* 355), they mean not the goddess Night but the night just ending on which Troy has fallen. The chorus of captive women call on *potnia chthôn* and (what is pretty much the same) *potni' aktê* of Agamemnon's tomb (*Ch.* 722–25). In addition to these invocations we find the Argive elders comparing Agamemnon to an avenging Erinys that Zeus or Apollo sends (*A.* 55–59); later they speak of the Erinys that Helen's marriage brought upon Troy (*A.* 744–49; cf. 462–66, 699–701, 767–71). They also look upon Orestes as an alastor who will come to avenge his father (*A.* 1507–8). According to the captive women, Destiny (*aisa*) and an Erinys are ready to bring punishment on Agamemnon's murderers.[20] The herald invokes the local Argive heroes as friendly powers (*A.* 516).

Hence it is mainly friendly chthonian powers that Agamemnon's party invoke or depend upon when they do not look to Olympian powers: the dead Agamemnon (a hero in the religious sense of the term) and his Erinyes, Moerae and Erinyes under Zeus, Argive heroes. Earth as primarily the land of Argos and the soil of Agamemnon's tomb, Hades and Persephone, and Hermes Chthonius, who mediates between Olympians and chthonians. The only unfriendly chthonian invoked is the house daimôn. One Olympian deity, Artemis, is hostile to the Atreids, but because she favors the Trojans, not

[20] *Ch.* 646–51. The herald calls bad news a paean of Erinyes (*A.* 645): these are definitely unfavorable Erinyes. If the Pythia as Apollo's mouthpiece may be considered a partisan of the Atreids, we may notice that she invokes Gaea, Themis, Corycian nymphs, and the river Pleistus along with Olympian deities in her prologue prayer (*Eu.* 1–31); and Apollo, speaking through the Pythia, threatens Orestes with his father's Erinyes if he does not obey (*Ch.* 283–84). It is hardly dependence on a chthonian power when Orestes counters his mother with the statement that Moira now brings doom to her (*Ch.* 911).

Clytemnestra, whom in fact she aggrieves by demanding her daughter's death. To this Olympian deity Agamemnon also made sacrifice, the hateful sacrifice of Iphigeneia, whereby he appeased Artemis, who thenceforth has nothing to do with the conflict of the *Oresteia* and is never mentioned after the parodos of the *Agamemnon*.

In contrast Clytemnestra and Aegisthus rely almost entirely on chthonian or pre-Olympian deities. It is not only that the Erinyes act as Clytemnestra's avengers in the *Eumenides*— it is, after all, a duty of Erinyes to pursue a matricide—but Clytemnestra's ghost, rousing and chiding the sleeping Erinyes, also recalls the worship that she gave them in life (*Eu.* 106–9):

> ἦ πολλὰ μὲν δὴ τῶν ἐμῶν ἐλείξατε,
> χοάς τ' ἀοίνους, νηφάλια μειλίγματα,
> καὶ νυκτίσεμνα δεῖπν' ἐπ' ἐσχάρᾳ πυρὸς
> ἔθυον, ὥραν οὐδενὸς κοινὴν θεῶν.

Did she thus serve the Erinyes only after her murder of Agamemnon in order to placate them, as Wecklein asserts? She does not say so, but implies a long-standing devotion. And if she could placate hostile Erinyes, Orestes should be able to appease them too; but he cannot. Besides, the Erinyes say that they are not interested in the murders of mere marriage relations (*Eu.* 212). Rose says more correctly that she "presumably pray[ed] to the Erinyes to avenge her on Agamemnon." But her relation to them goes beyond that: they are and have been especially her deities; Agamemnon's Erinyes are different persons. When Orestes confronts her, she first asks him whether he does not respect his mother's curses (*genethlioi arai*, *Ch.* 912). Then she bids him beware of his mother's *enkotoi kynes*, i.e., her wrathful Erinyes. And Orestes responds with a question: how can he escape his father's *kynes*, if he should let her live (*Ch.* 924–25)? The phrase reappears at the close of the play, when Orestes sees his mother's Erinyes come upon him: they are not imaginary, he says, but clearly his mother's *enkotoi kynes* (1054).

Clytemnestra's attachment to Erinyes and underworld deities appears plainly in the *Agamemnon*. After the murder she refers to oaths that she swore by her daughter's Dikê and by Atê and the Erinys, through whom she killed Agamemnon (*A.* 1431–33). I agree

with Mrs. Zeitlin (*op. cit.* below, note 23, 476–78) that these were oaths that she swore earlier to kill Agamemnon (the following verses 1434–47 are hardly the content of an oath). She begins by calling the chorus' attention to the *themis* of her oath. For the chorus would expect her to name Zeus and the other usual protectors of oaths: and she informs them that Atê and Erinys, who are virtually the same, and who support her cause, are the proper deities for her to depend upon in her union with Aegisthus (*A.* 1435–36), since these gods effected her vengeance. Earlier, when telling the chorus of her deed, she says that she gave her fallen husband a third stroke as *euktaia charis*, a libation of blood, for Hades Soter (as the manuscripts have it) or Zeus Soter (Enger's emendation accepted by some editors) of the dead beneath the earth (*A.* 1385–87). It makes little difference whether we read Hades or Zeus in 1387: for the underworld Zeus, savior of the dead, is Zeus Chthonius, who is essentially the same as Hades. Clytemnestra means not the Olympian ruler of the underworld cosmos, but the lord of all powers below, of Erinyes and Alastores and Atê. The Curse of the Atreid house, a living spirit (daimôn), is called Alastor by Clytemnestra and the chorus in the *Agamemnon* (1501, 1508) and Ara in the *Choephoroe* (692; cf. *A.* 1565), when Clytemnestra invokes the Curse (and it is virtually the same as Atê, *A.* 1566). With the house Curse, daimôn of the Pleisthenidae, Clytemnestra will swear an oath of compact, which will mean the daimôn's dismissal and an end of bloodshed (*A.* 1568–73). But there is one chthonian power that is hostile to Clytemnestra, the dead Agamemnon, to whom she sends libations after her frightening dream (*Ch.* 42–46, 88–90, 514–539)—obviously in vain: she cannot placate him. Yet her attempt to appease him is chthonian worship, which is congenial to her.

Aegisthus refers only to chthonian deities. Though he makes no expression of worship (he apostrophizes only the light of the vengeance-bringing day, which is not a deity, *A.* 1577), he refers only to chthonian powers. He commends avenging gods, who take notice of mortals' woes on earth, now that he sees Agamemnon lying dead in a web of the Erinyes.[21] So I interpret *A.* 1578–81:

[21] With several scholars I take βροτῶν with ἄχη and γῆς with ἄνωθεν; see A. E. Housman, "The Agamemnon of Aeschylus," *Journ. Philol.* 16 (1888) 286. But they, as well as commentators who construe differently, interpret ἄνωθεν to mean that the gods

φαίην ἄν ἤδη νῦν βροτῶν τιμαόρους
θεοὺς ἄνωθεν γῆς ἐποπτεύειν ἄχη,
ἰδὼν ὑφαντοῖς ἐν πέπλοις Ἐρινύων
τὸν ἄνδρα τόνδε κείμενον, . . .

Aegisthus makes but one other reference to divinity. When Clytemnestra interposes in the quarrel between the elders and Aegisthus, he indignantly exclaims that with their rash words they are tempting daimôn: δαίμονος (ms. δαίμονας) πειρωμένους (*A.* 1663). Commentators take this to mean "tempting fate." But is not Aegisthus picking up Clytemnestra's *daimonos* in 1660? She tells Aegisthus that there has been enough bloodshed, and she asks the elders to go home before they suffer hurt; we, she says, would gladly accept an end of woes, δαίμονος χηλῇ βαρείᾳ δυστυχῶς πεπληγμένοι (*A.* 1660). Here she refers to the house daimôn. Aegisthus replies, "Yes, but they are tempting the daimôn with their foolish speech."

Only once does Clytemnestra invoke an Olympian deity. When she follows Agamemnon into the palace she cries out, Ζεῦ Ζεῦ τέλειε τὰς ἐμὰς εὐχὰς τέλει (*A.* 973), "O Zeus Fulfiller, fulfill my prayers." This follows immediately upon her insincere speech in which she compares her husband's return to occasions of warmth in winter and coolness in summer, the time when Zeus makes wine from sour grapes:

ὅταν δὲ τεύχῃ Ζεὺς ἀπ' ὄμφακος πικρᾶς
οἶνον, τότ' ἤδη ψῦχος ἐν δόμοις πέλει
ἀνδρὸς τελείου δῶμ' ἐπιστρωφωμένου. (*A.* 970-72)

look down from heaven. Gods *timaoroi* are more appropriately underworld deities, and Aegisthus immediately makes this clear by his reference to Erinyes: it is they who have ensnared Agamemnon. Therefore ἄνωθεν γῆς should be taken as "on earth," i.e., on its surface. From the position of chthonian deities within earth, the wrongful deeds are done above earth. See Aristoph, *Ach.* 433, where Euripides tells his slave to fetch Telephus' rags; they lie ἄνωθεν τῶν Θυεστείων ῥακῶν / μεταξὺ τῶν Ἰνοῦς. They lie on top of Thyestes' rags, between them and Ino's. The other interpretation takes *epopteuein* merely as "observe"; but like English "take notice of" or "visit" it may connote "punish," as at *Eu.* 220. Aegisthus means that as proved by events there are avenging gods who punish men for wrongs done on earth above. Even if he meant gods in general, his ἄνωθεν would add nothing; but it has point if he means the gods below, whom the wrongs done above them bring into action.

This is a figurative use of the name, but it probably suggests the invocation of Zeus that follows. Aside from this passage Clytemnestra makes but two allusions to Zeus, neither significant for her own worship or for her relation to Zeus. In the beacon speech she calls Athos Zeus' mountain (*A.* 285), and she tells Cassandra that since Zeus has made her a slave in Agamemnon's house she must acquiesce in her condition (*A.* 1036–39).[22] Clytemnestra mentions no other Olympian god outside of the beacon speech, which she begins with the name Hephaestus (*A.* 281), meaning fire; and the first station after Ida is *Hermaion lepas* on Lemnos (*A.* 283).

Zeus Teleius is the proper god to call upon for success in an enterprise as the moment of action approaches. We may suppose that Clytemnestra wants Zeus' approval, and strength from him to carry her purpose through, if she can have it, just as the Trojans wanted a hostile Athena's favor, if they could persuade her to pity them (*Iliad* 6.269–80, 297–312). Her prayer, however, is as insincere as her whole preceding speech.[23] It is also ambiguous: it has one meaning for the Argive elders and for Agamemnon (if he is supposed to hear, 973–74), another for herself. Her invocation of Zeus Teleius echoes both her reference to Zeus in 970 and the adjective *teleios*, with which she modifies *anêr* in the meaning "husband" or "lord of the house" (*ἀνδρὸς τελείου*). It is a generalizing statement, "When Zeus makes wine from unripe grapes in summer the *teleios* lord's presence means a coolness in the house," with specific reference to her husband and lord. Immediately she prays "Zeus *teleios* (Fulfiller), fulfill (*telei*) my prayers," and then repeats the verb in her final words, verse 974, which her auditors will understand as a prudent qualification of her prayer: *μέλοι δέ τοι σοὶ τῶνπερ ἂν μέλλῃς τελεῖν*. The adjective *teleios* defies translation in 972, and Clytemnestra intends its ambiguity. The chorus take it to mean primarily "holding authority," but will also understand its connotations of "complete" and "completing."

[22] We should also notice *A.* 1391, where Clytemnestra refers to the rain in a figure of speech with the phrase *diosdotôi ganei*. Just before this (*A.* 1385–87), if some editors are right, she speaks of her third libation of Agamemnon's blood to Zeus Chthonius Soter, where the manuscripts read Hades; in any case this is not the Olympian Zeus.

[23] Clytemnestra's insincerity in her invocation of Zeus Teleius is very well revealed by Froma Zeitlin in "The Motif of the Corrupted Sacrifice in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," *TAPA* 96 (1965) 478–80.

Clytemnestra will strike down the husband whom she calls *teleios* and thus will violate the *pistômata* of Zeus Teleius and Hera Teleia, as Apollo makes clear in the *Eumenides* (213–14). For Zeus Teleius is also god of the marriage rites (*telos gamou*), and so there is both deceit and irony in Clytemnestra's invocation. Her wedded husband is the husband who will come to his end.

Clytemnestra is not looking for the Olympian Zeus' support at all. The Zeus Teleius on whom she calls is really the chthonian Zeus, i.e., Hades in his Thanatos character. When she commits the murder, she deals Agamemnon a third stroke as *euktaia charis* for Hades (*A.* 1385–87), as we have already noticed. In telling this to the chorus she is not indulging in a figure of speech: she means that she spoke the god's name aloud as she delivered her stroke, consecrating the flowing blood to him. Then she takes oath by the *teleios Dikê* of her daughter, Atê and Erinys, through whom she killed Agamemnon (*A.* 1432–33), where the adjective modifies the three terms that follow. As Mrs. Zeitlin puts it, "it is the *teleios Erinys* to whom she really addresses her prayers, . . ." (see note 23). It is her accomplished Dikê, the accomplishing Erinys. In the *Eumenides* Clytemnestra's Erinyes call themselves *teleioi* (382) and speak of their *thesmos* confirmed by Moera (*moirokrantos*) as *teleos* (391–93); they mean that they have authority and also that they carry their task through to the end. These are her own Erinyes and it is in her person that the house Alastor has appeared against Agamemnon (*A.* 1500–1504):

> φανταζόμενος δὲ γυναικὶ νεκροῦ
> τοῦδ' ὁ παλαιὸς δριμὺς ἀλάστωρ
> Ἀτρέως χαλεποῦ θοινατῆρος
> τόνδ' ἀπέτεισεν
> τέλεον νεαροῖς ἐπιθύσας.

The ambiguities of these lines are surely intentional. The verb *apotinein* means both "pay" ("repay") and "punish." The adjective *teleon* modifying *tonde* (Agamemnon) means both full-grown, and so is effectively juxtaposed to *nearois* (Thyestes' sons and probably also Iphigeneia), and also "perfect" ("unblemished"), a technical term for sacrificial victims. The Alastor in Clytemnestra's form has punished Agamemnon, offering him as perfect victim in payment to the child-

ren, sacrificing a mature victim after young victims.[24] This is her hidden meaning when she called her husband *teleios* (*A.* 972) just before she addressed Zeus Teleius, when her first employment of the adjective suggested the second. Her husband was to be the perfect victim.

Opposed to the Erinyes as *teleioi* is Zeus Teleius, as we perceive in the prologue of the *Eumenides*, where the Pythia invokes him as Highest (28, καλοῦσα καὶ τέλειον ὕψιστον Δία): it is his will that Apollo spoke through the Pythia when he ordered the matricide and cleansed Orestes afterward. Hence we perceive that Clytemnestra's invocation of Zeus Teleius is false or vain or both, and charged with irony.

This is Clytemnestra's only apparent invocation of an Olympian god. It is true that she also formally engages in Olympian worship when she conducts sacrifices to all the gods of Argos after hearing the message of Troy's fall. Then she set the altars of all gods alight (*A.* 88–91):

> πάντων δὲ θεῶν τῶν ἀστυνόμων,
> ὑπάτων, χθονίων,
> τῶν τ' οὐρανίων τῶν τ' ἀγοραίων,
> βωμοὶ δώροισι φλέγονται.

In these sacrifices she acted for the state as queen, ruler in Agamemnon's absence; and all gods received equal honor, chthonian and celestial alike. She simply performed her public duty, and we should see no special reverence in her act. Again at *A.* 1056–57 the sacrifices to which she refers are those that Agamemnon proposed on his return (*A.* 852). Surely she respected the Olympian gods, as the Trojans respected pro-Achaean gods; but she was devoted to chthonian deities and placed her trust in them, as the Trojans relied on pro-Trojan gods. Yet the polytheist knows that all deity must be approached with reverence.

Clytemnestra is not only devoted to Erinyes, but, as we have noticed, even identifies herself with avenging chthonians. In the kommos the chorus apostrophize the house daimôn, and Clytemnestra tells them that they have hit the mark (*A.* 1468–77)—she has previously told them

[24] There is also intentional ambiguity in the dative νεαροῖς. It may be taken as indirect object with either ἀπέτεισεν or ἐπιθύσας, "paid (*or* offering) this man, full-grown (perfect victim) to the young"; or "sacrificing a full-grown victim after young victims."

that they should not blame Helen (*A.* 1464–67). Then in her next lyric she identifies herself with the daimôn: "You say this was my deed; but don't suppose that I am Agamemnon's wife: the ancient bitter Alastor has taken on her shape" (*A.* 1497–1504). And in the *Eumenides* Clytemnestra is virtually leader of the Erinyes, as ghost a chthonian power herself. Her own words show that Cassandra spoke more than metaphor when in her prophetic vision she called Clytemnestra such names as belong to Erinyes and similar spirits. In the kommos Cassandra asks whether what she sees is a net of Hades and then answers her question: the snare is Agamemnon's wife; and, she continues, let Stasis, insatiate, raise the exulting cry (*ololygmos*, implied in *katololyxatô*) over the sacrifice (*A.* 1114–18). The chorus respond with a question: what is this Erinys that you call upon to raise a shout (*A.* 1119–20)? Stasis has been identified with the house daimôn, especially since *genei* appears in the sentence, taken with either *akoretos* (insatiate against the family) or *katololyxatô* (let her raise her exultant shout to the family). Cassandra means Clytemnestra too, who after the murder identifies herself with the daimôn. Her meaning in *A.* 1117–18 is made evident when later in dialogue she returns to her prophecy of murder (*A.* 1227–38). Agamemnon, returning in triumph, she says, does not know what evil the hateful bitch (Erinyes are called *kynes*) is going to do in the manner of a treacherous Atê; a woman is killer of the man, and Cassandra does not know the most apt name for this malevolent monster (*dysphiles dakos*), whether to call her amphisbaena (a dragoness), Scylla, slaughtering mother of Hades, implacable Curse (*aspondos Ara*).[25] Then Cassandra says *hôs d' epôlolyxato*, "and how she raised the *ololygmos*," a sentence which echoes 1117–18, as Mrs. Zeitlin points out, interpreting it solely with reference to the past, Clytemnestra's public expression of joy over Agamemnon's triumph. Yet it may be taken as a prophetic aorist, looking back from a future standpoint, referring to the *ololygmos* that

[25] Surely Verrall, D. C. Young, and Zeitlin are right in retaining the manuscript reading ἀρὰν in *A.* 1235; see Young, "Gentler Medicines in the *Agamemnon*," *CQ* 14 (1964) 19; Zeitlin, "Postscript to Sacrificial Imagery in the *Oresteia* (*Ag.* 1235–37), *TAPA* 97 (1966) 645–53. Fränkel is beside the mark in commenting that curses are not ended by *spondai*. The Ara is an underworld deity, an Erinys; such deities do not receive ordinary drink-offerings, i.e., of wine; see *Ch.* 15, *Eu.* 107; Soph. *OC* 100; Eur. *Alc.* 424.

Clytemnestra raised when she made Agamemnon a bloody offering to Hades and the gods below. Mrs. Zeitlin has convincingly demonstrated that Cassandra's sacrificial imagery is something more than figures of speech: Clytemnestra was really performing an act of worship for the chthonian gods when she slaughtered Agamemnon and Cassandra.[26] Editors have daggered or emended *A.* 1235 without reason: Clytemnestra is truly mother of Hades, i.e., Death, and not merely a "hellish mother," as the phrase is often translated, although she is that too.[27] When Cassandra is about to enter the palace, she calls its doors Hades' gates: in that house Clytemnestra is mistress. And Clytemnestra is also truly a libationless Ara, a Curse Fiend. Elsewhere she invokes the Fiend or makes compact with him (her), as we have seen; throughout Clytemnestra is both identical with and separate from the Erinys or Ara, an avenger and accomplice of avengers.

Again Cassandra sees a *kômos* of kindred Erinyes (*syngonoi Erinyes*) in the palace, a band that has drunk blood and stays to drink more, Agamemnon's and her own; they sing a hymn of the crimes of Thyestes and Atreus. Afterwards in kommos Clytemnestra does sing of the ancient crimes and of Atreus' feast for Thyestes just when she avows herself the embodied Alastor (*A.* 1478–80, 1501–4), although Atreus' crime is her paramour's grievance rather than her own.

Among the terms with which Cassandra designates Clytemnestra are *dakos* (monster), *amphisbaina* (a fabulous snake), and Scylla. These terms are echoed in Orestes' *echidna* (viper) and *myraina* (sea-eel or sea-serpent). After revealing himself to Electra, Orestes addresses Zeus,

[26] See Zeitlin, *op cit.* (above, note 23) 467–81; *op. cit.* (above, note 25). An example of aorist for future occurs at Eur. *Alc.* 386. To avoid misunderstanding, I wish to warn anyone against interpreting my words to mean a ritual sacrifice of the divine king; see my *The Ritual Theory of Myth* (Berkeley, Los Angeles 1966) chaps. 1 and 3.

[27] We do not fully understand the phrase. Perhaps it means that Clytemnestra is a woman who figuratively gives birth to murder by committing it, but it may mean a figure of early Greek religion and myth unknown to us; see Erwin Rohde, *Psyche* (London, New York 1925) 591–92. As Rohde points out, this Hades is not Zeus' brother, and his mother is not Rhea; he thinks that she may be Hecate and supposes an old tradition in which she was Death's mother. In any case, Clytemnestra's relation to chthonian powers, as Mrs Zeitlin has revealed it, and as I have outlined it here, leads me to a fair certainty that the ms. *"Αιδου* should be retained in *A.* 1387; there is no need to change it to *Διός*, especially since it would refer to the same underworld god.

asking him to look upon the children of Agamemnon, who died ἐν πλεκταῖσι καὶ πειράμασιν / δεινῆς ἐχίδνης (*Ch.* 248–49). This echoes Aegisthus' ὑφαντοῖς ἐν πέπλοις Ἐρινύων (*A.* 1580; cf. Cassandra's δίκτυόν τί γ' Ἄιδου, *A.* 1115), so that Echidna and Erinys are equivalent terms for a spirit of Hades' realm. The name Echidna is given in Greek myth to a malicious demoness, a beautiful and seductive woman who had snake form from her hips down. There was a single Echidna, wife of Typhon, and many Echidnae, evil and seductive spirits. They are similar in form and character to Lamias and also similar to Gorgons, who like Erinyes have snakes for hair, as Orestes says when he sees them approach like, "these creatures Gorgons, dark-robed and crowned with thickly entwined snakes" (*Ch.* 1048–50). The Pythia, after coming upon them in Apollo's temple, says that they are not women but Gorgons; yet not quite like Gorgons either, but rather like wingless Harpies (*Eu.* 48–52). All these spirits—Erinyes, Echidnae, Gorgons, Harpies, Scyllae—are Keres, spirits of death, disease, war, famine, minions of Hades and Thanatos.[28] It is to this company that Clytemnestra attaches herself.[29]

The house daimon or Curse Fiend or Alastor or Erinys, who operates through Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, holds Agamemnon guilty for the crimes of Atreus; Clytemnestra holds him guilty of murdering Iphigeneia; the Erinyes and Clytemnestra hold Orestes guilty of matricide. Do they work independently of Zeus, or does he control them? There is no statement anywhere that he sent or initiated the daimôn, or that the operation of the daimôn was in any way the enactment of Zeus' will.[30] In fact, as Mazon has perceived, after Orestes and Electra call on Zeus for vengeance (Orestes has asked Zeus to call up an avenging Atê from below, *Ch.* 382–83), the captive

[28] See Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge 1922) 165–239; Rohde, *Psyche* 590–95; Fontenrose, *Python* (Berkeley, Los Angeles 1959) chap. 6. Scylla can be plural too; see Virg. *Aen.* 6.286, *Scyllae biformes* as underworld demons.

[29] And so she is properly mother of a snake, as in the dream that frightened her (*Ch.* 523–34). It was an unfilial snake that she bore, one that turned against his own kind. As in the original combat myth of god against Typhon-Python, the divine champion fought both a male and a female dragon (see Fontenrose, *Python* 262–63), so the captive women perceive both Clytemnestra and Aegisthus as *drakonte* (*Ch.* 1047).

[30] Lloyd-Jones places the daimôn (Wrath) directly under Zeus' command; Zeus' justice demands that Agamemnon pay the penalty for Atreus' crime. He believes

women tell them that they must place their trust elsewhere: blood demands blood; for murder calls upon the Erinyes to add *atê* to *atê* (*Ch.* 400–404). This means that not Zeus but the avenging daimôn of the house is effective, and that Electra must act through its power. And Orestes at once calls on the rulers of the underworld and on the Curses (*Arai*) of the slain to look upon his plight; but he does not forget Zeus. With a note of despair he cries (*Ch.* 408–9), *πᾶ τίς τράποιτ' ἄν, ὦ Ζεῦ*; "to whom can one look for help, Zeus?" The Curse is neutral, acting automatically to exact blood for blood. Though it takes Clytemnestra's form to punish Agamemnon, it may then demand her death. Had she finally dismissed it after killing Agamemnon? We cannot be certain; identities become vague among avenging spirits. When Orestes apostrophizes *Arai* of the slain he means his father's Erinyes, his father's own curses on the murderers. In any case we must understand the captive women to mean that the Curse acts independently of Zeus. But how do we reconcile the daimôn's or Clytemnestra's freedom of action with Zeus' supremacy and omnipotence? If this is the problem of Zeus' omnipotence or of determinism against free will we need not expect Aeschylus to provide a solution that has eluded others, nor should we expect any more consistency from him than from other poets in his views of divine government. We should not, however, relegate the problem to abstractions, but look at Aeschylus' text. What does he say about Zeus' sovereignity in relation to deeds in the house of Atreus? In *A.* 1560–66 the chorus may appear to assign ultimate responsibility to Zeus for the whole cycle of murders in the house: after stating the general law that the killer must pay the penalty, they continue, *μίμνει δὲ μίμνοντος ἐν θρόνῳ Διὸς / παθεῖν τὸν ἔρξαντα*. The often accepted view of Zeus' role has affected the interpretation of these verses. Yet what do the elders really say? Clytemnestra has countered their censure of her deed with the charge that Agamemnon had murdered

that the kommos between Cassandra and the chorus, which emphasizes Atreus' crime, just before the murder itself, establishes the point; see *CQ* 12.187–99; *The Justice of Zeus* 90. It is true that Cassandra establishes the importance of the Curse in effecting the series of murders in Atreus' house and foretells Agamemnon's doom from the Curse as well as her own. But we must realize that (1) she does not attribute the Curse's action to Zeus (on Apollo's part in her doom see Appendix) nor does anyone else; (2) she thus indicates Aegisthus' motive.

Iphigeneia. They reply, "We shall not try to judge charge and countercharge. Of one thing we can be sure, that while Zeus is on his throne the murderer shall be punished." They mean the murderers of Agamemnon: that is the murder which now concerns them. Clytemnestra has just repeated a bold avowal of her deed, "It was at our hands that Agamemnon fell and died" (*A.* 1552–53). The chorus continue, "Who can cast the Curse from the house? The family is tied to Atê." They recognize the workings of the Curse in the house, one murder after another; but they do not say that Zeus produced or sent the Curse, or that he wanted Agamemnon murdered. Then in Clytemnestra's reply (*A.* 1567–76) she does not grant that Zeus will punish her, as some scholars interpret her words (e.g., Fränkel). When she tells the elders that they have spoken a true *chrêsmos*, she means their final question on the Curse, from which she draws the inference that they predict the murders of Aegisthus and herself next in the cycle. But she has a ready answer: she will make a sworn compact with the daimôn of the Pleisthenids to be content with what has happened and with the estate that she has; in return he will go off to some other house. That is, she believes that it is the daimôn who is effective for bringing about her punishment with death; and she is on good terms, she believes, with the daimôn that has taken her form. Therefore she is confident that she can strike a bargain with him and put an end to the series of family murders, so that she will live modestly thereafter in peace. And she has apparent success: the house Curse is almost absent from the two plays that follow; Clytemnestra feels safe and secure until she has the frightening dream years later. When she hears the false report of Orestes' death, she fears that after all the Curse is still at work, exclaiming *ὦ δυσπάλαιστε τῶνδε δωμάτων Ἀρά* (*Ch.* 692); the Ara struck Orestes down, though far away. Yet here she sees the Curse working against Orestes, not herself (when at *Ch.* 912 she warns Orestes against *genethlioi Arai* she means her Erinyes).[31]

The exchange of *A.* 1551–76 repeats in essence an earlier exchange in the same lyric dialogue. When the chorus mention the Tantalid daimôn (1468–74) Clytemnestra replies that now they have hit upon

[31] When Orestes beside Athena's image asks the goddess *δέχου δὲ πρευμενῶς ἀλάστορα* (*Eu.* 236), he is not representing himself as an avenging spirit, but rather as the victim, a suppliant, with some play upon "wandering."

the right cause. Then the chorus, granting the daimôn's awful power, turn suddenly to Zeus (1485–88):

ἰὴ ἰὴ διαὶ Διὸς παναιτίου πανεργέτα·
τί γὰρ βροτοῖς ἄνευ Διὸς τελεῖται;
τί τῶνδ' οὐ θεόκραντόν ἐστιν;

This is a statement of Zeus' omnipotence, but, as Lloyd-Jones has warned us, we must not suppose that Aeschylus and his contemporaries had the philosophical conception of divine omnipotence with which modern Christians are familar.[32] Zeus' omnipotence is limited: he is supreme ruler of the world, and his will is law; but like a human king he does not control all the acts of all his subjects. As Zeus could not, or would not, save Sarpedon contrary to Moera (*Iliad* 16.431–61), so he could not or would not save Agamemnon for whatever reason. In any case, what do the chorus mean here? Their exclamatory reference to Zeus *panaitios panergetês* is followed by a rhetorical question that *gar* introduces. That is, the statement implied in the question explicates the epithets. Whatever the daimôn's power, they say, Zeus has final authority; whoever begins a train of events, Zeus brings it to an end. It is essentially the same statement as they make soon afterward in 1563–64. Here we must realize the meaning of *telein*: it is not simply "accomplish," usually understood here as hardly more than "do"; it is rather "nothing is brought to an end for mortal men (*or* 'by mortal men') without Zeus." And in *theokranton* of the next line the chorus repeat the thought: Zeus will end this business with the punishment of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. The chorus' *teleitai* echoes Clytemnestra's *Zeu teleie*: yes, Zeus will certainly bring this matter to an end.

More clearly than the Atreid daimôn the Erinyes of Clytemnestra work independently of Zeus' will. They constantly complain that the younger gods are usurping their function, established long before Zeus came to power. A young god, Apollo, rides roughshod over grey-haired spirits (*Eu.* 150, 731) and deprives them of honor by sheltering Orestes from their pursuit (*Eu.* 323–27). The younger gods overstep

[32] See Lloyd-Jones, *JHS* 76.55–67. Page interprets *A.* 1481–88 as a confession of the chorus that Clytemnestra rightly sees the will of Zeus in her deed (p. xxxv; see above, note 18). This, however, cannot be the chorus' meaning; furthermore they cannot grant what Clytemnestra has not claimed.

the bounds of *dikê* by exercising power as they do (*Eu.* 162–65); they ride down ancient laws and deprive the Erinyes of their privileges (*Eu.* 778–79, 808–9).[33] Apollo speaks Zeus' will; and Zeus is chief of the *neoteroi theoi*. He may send Erinyes against an offender; but in a case of kindred murder, especially of matricide or patricide, the Erinyes move into action against the murderer without orders from anyone: this is their function from the time when Mother Night bore them. They argue that not even Zeus can interfere with it or take it from them (*Eu.* 333–40). If in Aeschylus' intention Zeus had ordered them to pursue Orestes, they would certainly have made the point in the prosecution of him before Athena's court.

The Erinyes, however, derive their primary avenging office from the Moerae (*Eu.* 333–35; see also 391–96, 476):

> τοῦτο γὰρ λάχος διανταία Μοῖρ'
> ἐπέκλωσεν ἐμπέδως ἔχειν, . . .

They belong to the ancient pre-Olympian order, upon which Zeus has imposed his Olympian order, but which he has not abrogated. It is the Moerae who preside over the old order, to which the chthonian powers belong: Nyx, Erinyes, Alastores, Atê, Thanatos, Hades Chthonius and Persephassa (as pre-Olympian powers), Gorgons, Echidnae, Scyllae. These Moerae are daughters of Night, as they appear first in Hesiod's *Theogony* (211–19), not daughters of Zeus and Themis, as Hesiod also has it (901–6), apparently giving them an inconsistent second origin (but he may mean that they had a rebirth under Zeus, symbolizing their subordination to Zeus and Law). Therefore they are sisters of the Erinyes, who for Aeschylus are daughters of Night, as we are often reminded in the *Eumenides* (321–22, 416, 745, 792 = 822, 844–45 = 877–78, 1034). When the Erinyes invoke the Moerae, they call them sisters, *matrokasignêtai* (*Eu.* 962), as well as *timiôtatai theôn* (967). They remind Apollo that he corrupted the Moerae once before when he tricked them with wine to save Admetus from death (*Eu.* 723–28); and now they accuse him of repeating the offense (*Eu.* 171–72):

> παρὰ νόμον θεῶν βρότεα μὲν τίων,
> παλαιγενεῖς δὲ Μοίρας φθίσας.

[33] See also *Eu.* 172, 227, 490–93, 837–39 = 870–72.

Hence Clytemnestra, answering Orestes' accusation of husband murder, tells him that Moera has also brought this to pass (*Ch.* 910): *Ἡ Μοῖρα τούτων ὦ τέκνον παραιτία*; and Orestes retorts that likewise Moera has decreed her death. There is the ancient Moera who presides over the ancient chthonian powers on whom Clytemnestra relies; and there is the Moera who is subordinate to Zeus.

On coming to power Zeus and the Olympians were like conquering rulers on earth who in the conquered land retain much of the former administration. According to Hesiod, Zeus allowed Styx and Hecate to retain their powers and privileges and even to have additional honors and rights (*Theog.* 389–403, 411–28). So in the *Eumenides* the Moerae and Erinyes have kept their ancient rights under Zeus' dominion, and he has added to them. Their ancient jurisdiction was to pursue and punish the murderers of kindred; when a man murders a parent they need no summons. Zeus calls them forth against transgressors of all kinds, e.g., perjurers, violators of obligations to host or guest, wanton destroyers. When the captive women invoke the great Moerae, they pray *Διόθεν τῇδε τελευτᾶν* (*Ch.* 306–7); that is, their action should be subordinate to Zeus' will. This is the proper relation of Moerae and Erinyes to Zeus' government. Yet Zeus' settlement, his assignment of jurisdictions, has broken down, All went well as long as the Erinyes' ancient functions did not conflict with Zeus' will. But events in the house of Atreus and especially Orestes' matricide have brought the ancient gods under the Moerae into open conflict with the younger gods under Zeus.[34] The new settlement resembles the old in that the Erinyes are granted powers and privileges, symbolized in the honored position that Athena gives them in Athens. But there is a difference: they now accept full subordination to Olympian rule, and their very character changes. They become the guardian spirits of the Areopagus, i.e., of the law courts; and they operate

[34] On deeper meanings of what appears to be a dispute between Apollo and Erinyes before the Areopagus see George Thomson, *Aeschylus and Athens* 2d ed. (London 1946) 278–80, 288–89; and *Oresteia* 1.45–47, 55–56. For Thomson, the *Eumenides* recapitulates the social history of the city-state, especially Athens: the Erinyes represents the old tribal order of Greek society (blood vengeance); Apollo represents the oligarchic order (purification); and the conflict is resolved in the establishment of trial before a court in a democratic state; see *Aeschylus and Athens*, especially chaps. 3, 5, 12, 15, also A. M. G. Little, *Myth and Society in Attic Drama* (New York 1942).

against those whom the court convicts (*Eu.* 927–37, 949–55). And so in the end Zeus and Moera are reconciled: the Athenian *propompoi* close the *Eumenides* with *Ζεὺς πανόπτας οὕτω Μοῖρά τε συγκατέβα.*

In the *Agamemnon* and *Choephoroe* the Erinyes appear to be attached to individual victims: one or more go out to pursue a transgressor, whether at Zeus' order or on their own, and one victim's Erinyes are not the same as another's. Agamemnon has his Erinyes (or Erinys) whom Orestes and his helpers either invoke or look to for support (*Ch.* 400–408, 577, 648–51; cf. 382–83). Why Clytemnestra has not been haunted by them (unless her frightening dream after eight years or so expresses their late working), and why Zeus has not called them into action, remains unclear; we can only say that Aeschylus had no need of this factor in his drama.[35] But Clytemnestra has her Erinyes and they act immediately in her behalf. At the beginning of the *Eumenides* they appear to be her individual avengers; but as the play advances they seem to become the Erinyes in general, contending against the Olympians for their ancient rights in the order of the Moerae.

The conflict of the Atreids with their opponents, Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, is the earthly counterpart of a cosmic conflict between heavenly and chthonian gods, or younger and older gods. The Atreids on earth correspond to the Olympians in heaven. The Atreid kings, who hold their sovereign power under Zeus and who worship Zeus and the Olympians, have to meet a Thyestid–Tyndarid challenge from Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, agents and worshippers of the Erinyes. The Olympians have to meet the challenge of older gods under the Moerae, who resent them as interlopers and usurpers.

The issue centers on Agamemnon and his relation to Zeus. Yet does this mean that in Aeschylus' eyes Agamemnon is faultless and guiltless? It does not; Zeus' favor does not remove *hamartia* from his favorite. Agamemnon was guilty of violent deeds, as was Zeus himself, who bound and despitefully used his father Cronus, once ruler

[35] Thomson maintains that the Erinyes primarily represent the sanctions that protect the mother in a matrilineal society; we notice that they have no interest in the husband's rights (*Eu.* 212). See Thomson, *Aeschylus* and *Athens* 51–53, 277–82, 287–88; *Oresteia* 1.45–49, 55.

of the older gods; and the Erinyes cite this crime to discredit Zeus and Apollo as champions of the father (*Eu.* 640–43). On the human plane Agamemnon is a tragic hero in the Aristotelian sense (*Poet.* 1453A). He has high position, renown, prosperity; everyone except Clytemnestra (after the murder) and Aegisthus honors him and speaks of him with respect and admiration.[36] Yet he is not surpassingly good or just, but has faults that lead him to his doom. He is capable of the inhumanity that could allow him to kill his own daughter instead of braving the wrath of gods and men for not doing so. Further he is blind to others' emotions. Having killed Iphigeneia, he cannot conceive of Clytemnestra's hating him for the act and plotting his death; and so he walks into her trap without suspicion. Not only that, but he also arrives with his captive mistress Cassandra beside him, definitely an insult to his wife, as she later makes clear (*A.* 1438–47). Yet either he does not realize the effect that this confrontation will have upon her or he doesn't care; in any case he cannot imagine that Clytemnestra can want to kill him; and so he walks into the palace on a purple carpet.

Something must now be said about the carpet episode (*A.* 909–65). I did not discuss it in my examination of ways in which Agamemnon might have offended Zeus; for obviously if Zeus wanted Agamemnon killed, he would at this point be already hostile to him—as everyone who thinks that he offended Zeus maintains, finding the reason in the sacrifice of Iphigeneia or in his conduct of the war—and this forced show of hybris would be unnecessary. Clytemnestra cannot suppose that she will turn Zeus against Agamemnon merely because he has trodden on purple vestments: as she argues, and Agamemnon agrees, it is not unthinkable that a mortal victor should do so (*A.* 931–36). Agamemnon fears to give any appearance of hybris to gods and men, and he is mainly afraid of mortal men (*A.* 937–39, 947–49). It makes

[36] Cassandra, we notice, says nothing against Agamemnon, but rather laments his murder, vilifies the murderess, and is ready to die, seeing that such a great victor can come to so miserable an end (*A.* 1288–89). Since Agamemnon is usually not a sympathetic character to modern readers, they often read their own attitudes into the play and do not realize how consistently well Agamemnon is treated. We cannot say that watchman, Argive elders, herald, and Cassandra are insincere, since Aeschylus gives us no hint that they are. In the later two plays Orestes, Electra, captive women, and Apollo continue to speak of Agamemnon in honorable terms; and in the end his avenger is vindicated. We can only suppose that Aeschylus evaluates him as his characters do.

no difference in his doom whether he yields to Clytemnestra or not. The plot is laid, and she will kill him anyway. She would probably prefer to have the good will of gods and men and to cause Agamemnon to seem offensive to them; but she will strike in any case. Moreover is the carpet scene adequately motivated by Clytemnestra's desire, if she has it, to reveal Agamemnon's hybristic character? "See what an arrogant man he is; can you blame me for killing him?" Rather the whole device is part of her deception, to put Agamemnon off his guard. She welcomes him with fulsome speech and spreads purple vestments for him to walk upon; when he hesitates, she plays upon his vainglory and his chivalry. So Agamemnon, completely taken in, believing that his wife admires him to the point of treating him as a god, walks into the trap. Furthermore the playwright wants us to see that Agamemnon, who would not risk the displeasure of gods and men to spare his daughter's life, is willing to do so for his own glory. Thus the carpet scene has a dramatic function and also reveals Agamemnon's fault. Nothing more is said about it; we have no indication that Zeus was upset because Agamemnon walked on purple cloth, nor that the Argive elders, representative citizens, were shocked.

So, in summary, we may say that in the *Oresteia* Zeus and the Olympians are partisans of the Atreids and opponents of their enemies, whether Trojans or Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. They want Paris and Troy punished; they do not want Agamemnon murdered; they want Orestes to kill Clytemnestra and Aegisthus and do not want him to suffer punishment for doing so. Whereas the Atreids are leagued with the newer gods, the Olympians, Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are leagued with the older gods, the chthonians, represented by the Erinyes and ruled by the Moerae. The order of the Moerae is deterministic and rigid: the Erinyes must pursue the matricide, whatever the circumstances; the house daimôn (Curse Fiend, Alastor) must avenge kindred blood with kindred blood in an unending series. Agamemnon is a victim of the Curse that punishes him for his father's crime. The issue is resolved before the court of the Areopagus that Athena sets up in Athens to try Orestes. The court acquits Orestes; the order of the Erinyes and Moerae is finally merged with and subordinated to the Olympian order under Zeus, in which they retain an honored position. Yet to say that Zeus is Agamemnon's partisan is not to say that

Agamemnon is free of *hamartia* and guilt is the world of men. His fault is lack of compassion and fellow-feeling, which leads to deeds of hybris and moral blindness. He was guilty of sacrificing his daughter, Iphigeneia; by this deed he incurred Clytemnestra's hatred, so that she leagued herself with the Thyestid Aegisthus (who represents the Curse that demands expiation of Atreus' crime) and killed him. Agamemnon is truly a tragic hero; but we must not suppose that the hero's fault is necessarily an offense against Zeus or that Zeus wills his catastrophe. Zeus is a divine Agamemnon; he is a stern and mighty ruler; and whatever other qualities Aeschylus may attribute to him, he never calls him compassionate.

APPENDIX

Apollo and Cassandra

There is one prominent relation of god to mortal in the *Agamemnon* that appears to be separate from the complex of divine-human relations discussed in this paper. Apollo loved Cassandra, but she disappointed him of his desire and he turned against her, or rather he penalized her. She is a Trojan, though now associated with Agamemnon and sharing his doom; Apollo is an Olympian god who favored the Trojans in the war (the herald alludes to this, 509–11) and is opposed to Clytemnestra (but because she murdered Agamemnon). Therefore his wrath against Cassandra has nothing to do with the Olympians' support of the Atreids against the Trojans or the Thyestid-Tyndarids.

Before the palace Cassandra enters into a prophetic vision, the beginning of a kommos (1072–177), which is followed by a prophecy that she speaks in trimeters, interrupted three times by a stychomythia, a dialogue with the chorus (1178–330). She begins her vision with a cry to Apollo, accusing him of destroying her a second time (with a play on *Apollôn*, *apôlesas*, 1080–82). Then she asks Apollo a rhetorical question, "Whither have you brought me? To what house?" (1087), apparently meaning that Apollo is responsible for her presence there. Later in trimeters, when she has cast from herself the badges of her mantic office, she says that Apollo himself is stripping her; he had complacently watched her suffering ridicule as prophetess, and now, demanding the mantis herself in payment, he has brought her to her death (1269–76).

Most scholars take Cassandra's words at face value, that Apollo has literally contrived Cassandra's arrival in Argos as Agamemnon's captive and her

death from Clytemnestra.[37] As Kitto expresses it, "In every way he can, Aeschylus forces on us the idea that Cassandra is really Apollo's victim." Moreover Cassandra herself sees "that Agamemnon and Clytemnestra are only the instruments of Apollo's anger." Yet, we must ask, in what sense can Apollo have brought Cassandra to Argos or caused Clytemnestra to murder her? Are we to suppose that Apollo secretly guided the assignment of captive women to Achaean chieftains so that Cassandra would fall to Agamemnon? This was no part of the legendary tradition, and Aeschylus' text has only Cassandra's rhetorical statements just cited, which are not specific. Whatever Apollo's wishes, Cassandra would become a captive at Troy's fall if she survived the catastrophe; as Priam's extraordinary daughter she would be assigned to a high chieftain, and one could expect that she would go to Agamemnon himself. As Agamemnon's captive she would certainly share Agamemnon's doom. In what way could Apollo be the cause? If we suppose that he imperceptibly inspired Agamemnon and Clytemnestra to act as they did, his effort was needless.

Although Apollo as mantis foresees Cassandra's end, he does not devise it any more than he devises other future events that he foresees. The only punishment that he has devised for Cassandra is that nobody believes her prophecies, though they are true (1212). She recurs to this just after she has cast her prophetic garb from her, saying that Apollo himself is performing the action that she performs. Moreover Apollo looked on complacently while the Trojans mocked her, when she spoke in her mantic attire (1270–74); and, she adds, looking at her present situation (1275–76):

καὶ νῦν ὁ μάντις μάντιν ἐκπράξας ἐμὲ
ἀπήγαγ' ἐς τοιαύτας θανασίμους τύχας.

Verse 1275 has been interpreted variously according to how commentators have understood *ekpraxas eme*: (1) the seer having made me a seer (Mazon); (2) the seer making an end of me, the seeress (Wecklein, Rose); (3) the seer, exacting me, the seeress, in payment of my debt (Fränkel; cf. Denniston-Page, Thomson). The third interpretation seems better than the others, although there may be intentional ambiguity. I do not understand "exacting" as does Fränkel, who interprets, "Cassandra is herself the debt owed to the god: he has now called in (*exegit*) her person and her life." Both this interpretation and the second present the difficulty that I have raised: in what way is Apollo responsible for Cassandra's death? It seems to me that these two verses continue the thought of verses 1269–74. Cassandra has

[37] See Kitto *FMD* 28–32, *Poiesis* 7, 179; Mazon on *A.* 1138. It is hardly true to say as Kitto does (*FMD* 29) that Aeschylus allows Cassandra "no word of anger against . . . Clytemnestra. . . ." Cassandra's words about Clytemnestra at *A.* 1227–38 are hardly dispassionate.

just said that it was Apollo himself who stripped her of her mantic garb, though it was with her own hands that she cast them off; that is, this is the last inspiration that she receives from him, and it is to terminate her office. Then she tells how in the past Apollo merely looked on while the people ridiculed her (1270–74). After this statement she returns to the present, *kai nyn*. The sequence of thought is, "Then he exposed me to ridicule; now the seer has reclaimed (or terminated) me as mantis (i.e., the seership that he bestowed upon me); and now is present to watch me go to my death here." In 1276 her *apêgag(e)* is hyperbolic, since Apollo obviously did not take her to Argos. She means that her whole association with Apollo as mantis has brought her finally to her death. If the Trojans had believed her and not ridiculed her, Troy would not have fallen. Now she predicts Agamemnon's and her own imminent death to the Argive elders, who are convinced but powerless to do anything to prevent the slaughter, so that her prophecies are still vain. This is the meaning of verse 1082, *ἀπώλεσας γὰρ οὐ μόλις τὸ δεύτερον*, "You have destroyed me the second time." The first time was at Troy's fall, which meant loss of country, kinsmen, and freedom; the second time will be at Clytemnestra's hand; and both destructions will result from her speaking vain prophecies, Apollo's gift. There may also be an ironical meaning implicit in her words at 1080–82, 1085–87, 1202–12, and 1275–76 taken together. She has refused Apollo consummation of his love for her, and as an ultimate consequence of the penalty which Apollo put upon her she has become the captive mistress of Agamemnon, to whose desires she is forced to yield. She refused Apollo and must accept Agamemnon instead.

Was Apollo so vindictive and hateful that he wanted Cassandra killed and looked upon the slaughter with pleasure? All that we can gather from Cassandra's words is that he lets her foresee her death, but that is not the same thing. We do know that he very much wanted her murderers punished with death; but he wanted them killed because they murdered Agamemnon; he never mentions Cassandra. Yet Cassandra says (1279–81):

> *οὐ μὴν ἄτιμοί γ' ἐκ θεῶν τεθνήξομεν.*
> *ἥξει γὰρ ἡμῶν ἄλλος αὖ τιμάορος,*
> *μητροκτόνον φίτυμα, ποινάτωρ πατρός.*

and foretells that Orestes will return from exile. In the first-person plural forms Cassandra may mean only herself or she may include Agamemnon; in any case she predicts vengeance from the gods for herself. Apollo, who gives her the power to foresee this vengeance, must be one of the gods who sends this vengeance and who swore a great oath that Orestes would return to execute punishment (1284–85).