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The Transactions of Mortal Coil: Hellenic Meaning in the Suffering of the Iliad and the Oresteia

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The Transactions of Mortal Coil: Hellenic Meaning in the
Suffering of the *Iliad* and the *Oresteia*

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Introduction – The Life of a Leaf

τὸν δ' αὖθ' Ἴππολόχοιο προσηύδα φαίδιμος υἱός:
Τυδεΐδη μεγάθυμε τί ἦ γενεὴν ἐρεεῖνεις;
οἷη περ φύλλων γενεὴ τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν.
φύλλα τὰ μὲν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη
τηλεθόωσα φύει, ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὄρη:
ὥς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ ἦ μὲν φύει ἦ δ' ἀπολήγει.¹

Then in turn the shining son of [Hippolochus] answered:
“High-hearted son of Tydeus, why ask of my generation?
As is the generation of leaves, so is that of humanity.
The wind scatters the leaves on the ground, but the live timber
Burgeons with leaves again in the season of spring returning.
So one generation of men will grow while another dies.” (Hom. *Il.* 6.144-9).²

What is the value of but a single human life? Within the Iliadic speech given above, Hippolochus' son Glaucus grasps at such an inquiry. Around him, the Trojan War rages: the Achaean Diomedes, standing before the Trojan Glaucus, is prepared to fight to the death. But Diomedes is uneasy—not directly accompanied by the divine Athena and her panoptic sight, he could unwittingly contend with an immortal in human form and meet his doom.³ As such, he asks: “Who among mortal men are you, good friend?” (τίς δὲ σύ ἐσσι φέριστε καταθητῶν ἀνθρώπων, Hom. *Il.* 6.123). The designation of mortal (καταθητῶν) by Diomedes and the response of Glaucus above both profess a similar idea: human beings are defined and delimited by their ability to die. The word chosen to describe mortals, καταθητοί, means most literally

¹ All quoted Homeric Greek is from Perseus Digital Library's version of the 1920 *Homeri Opera in Five Volumes* by Munro and Allen. Any Greek not strictly quoted from a primary text has been written out using the Hoyt's TypeGreek tool. Finally, some Greek has been examined by individual words with the Perseus Digital Library's “Greek Word Study Tool” system. As such, any discussions of specific words or meanings will have influence from the dictionaries listed within its entries: Autenrieth's, the LSJ, the Middle Liddell, and Slater's.

² Unless otherwise mentioned, all translations from Homer are Lattimore's from Martin 2011. This text also contains notes and other information related to the *Iliad*. If this information is used, the citation will be labeled with the author Martin. On another note, I have slightly shifted Lattimore's text so that the number of lines between the Greek and English match. Lastly, I have tried to keep names consistent to avoid confusion concerning different transliterations of Greek and Roman names between translations. Edits of this sort in quotations are bracketed.

³ Gaiser 1969:166.

“ones very liable to death,” if one takes κατά to intensify the root word θνητός.⁴ Meanwhile, the mention of genealogy (γενεή) naturally implies the cycle of life and death conveyed vividly by the growth and decay of leaves (φύλλα). It is clear, then, that both men are very self-aware about their situation. What more, then, could their deliberate words have to tell us?

These designations of mortality are appropriate for the situation: surrounded by bloody clashes and corpses on the battlefield, these warriors behold a simultaneous significance and insignificance of life.⁵ Glaucus’ speech gets at the insignificance—each man meets the same fate as the others as every leaf on a thriving tree eventually crumbles into dust. What does it matter what a mortal does when the gods’ immortal order reigns? This point is central to Glaucus’ ensuing discussion of his famed ancestor, Bellerophon. Although he deflected the amorous advances and subsequent vengeful misfortunes of the deceptive Anteia, even Bellerophon became “hated by all the immortals” and was subjected to a miserable life in wandering the plain of Aleios alone (ἀπήχθετο πᾶσι θεοῖσιν, Hom. *Il.* 6.200).⁶ Each man is susceptible to suffering and, as a result, to death. Diomedes endeavors to prevent himself from enduring that fate too soon, stating that “[t]herefore neither would I be willing to fight with the blessed gods,” such that they would gain a reason to strike him down (οὐδ’ ἂν ἐγὼ μακάρεσσι θεοῖς ἐθέλοιμι μάχεσθαι, Hom. *Il.* 6.141). He contrasts himself with Lycurgus, who terrorized Dionysus and his followers and was blinded for his crimes.⁷ While Glaucus implies that there is a lack of agency in determining one’s end in life, Diomedes champions agency through his actions.⁸ In fact, he goes

⁴ This is derived from the LSJ’s entry at E.V. for κατά and its general entry for θνητός.

⁵ Schein 1984:84 comments exactly that “[t]he *Iliad* is both a poem of death and a poem of life: in other words, it is a poem of mortality.”

⁶ Gaisser 1969:169-70 relates that, in other narrative traditions (or, perhaps, the same one that Glaucus was omitting to avoid embarrassment), Bellerophon rode on Pegasus to spy on the gods; promptly, he was struck down, maimed by his fall, and fated to wander the plain. Whether this narrative tradition was used does not change the warning of Glaucus’ narrative: the gods may strike down even the loftiest man.

⁷ Ibid. 166-7.

⁸ Ibid. 175.

so far as to esteem Ζεύς Ξένιος in honoring the hospitality that Bellerophon and his own ancestor, Oineus, shared.⁹ The two men exchange gifts as a sign of their guest-friendship and leave to fight elsewhere. All is well that ends well—or is it?

As scholars have pointed out, one particularly vexing point emerges at the conclusion of this scene. The exchange itself states that “Zeus the son of Kronos stole away the wits of [Glaucus] / who exchanged with Diomedes the son of Tydeus armor / of gold for bronze, for nine oxen’s worth the worth of a hundred” (ἔνθ’ αὖτε Γλαύκῳ Κρονίδης φρένας ἐξέλετο Ζεύς, / ὃς πρὸς Τυδεΐδην Διομήδεα τεύχε’ ἄμειβε / χρύσεια χαλκείων, ἑκατόμβοι’ ἔννεαβοίων, *Hom. Il.* 6.234-6). Why has Zeus intervened here? In an exchange that honors Zeus and depicts both men respecting each other humanely, why does Zeus feel the need to slight Glaucus? Some scholars have attempted to explain away the scene’s peculiarity by claiming that Glaucus was trading better armor for his life.¹⁰ However, as David A. Traill has pointed out, this would reflect poorly on Glaucus’ character and would ignore the overt motivation of guest-friendship exemplified by the scene.¹¹ Instead, we can frame Zeus’ intervention as a general motif within the epic. In Book 5, Diomedes attacks Aeneas and wounds him, but is deprived of the glory of killing a significant Trojan soldier when the gods intercede. But Diomedes is not deprived of honor. Sthenelus, his charioteer, drove Aeneas’ Zeus-gifted horses toward the Trojan side as per Diomedes’ order (*Hom. Il.* 5.239-333). It is as if Diomedes is requited for the gods’ prevention of Aeneas’ death.¹² This type of requital in which honored possessions are exchanged for enemies’ suffering is also

⁹ Traill 1989:304. The notion of hospitality, ξενία, is prevalent in a world where the environment is much more untamed and traveled upon by foot to get from place to place. While journeying, one family could develop good relations with another by receiving them hospitably. Not everyone that a traveler would run into would be friendly—people could choose to kill travelers and to steal their goods. The Greeks’ fear that Ζεύς Ξένιος, protector of guests, might come to one’s home as a human in disguise encouraged good conduct while providing a divine defense for good-intentioned guests. For a further discussion of Zeus’ title and ξενία in the *Iliad*, see Martin 2011:33-4.

¹⁰ See Craig 1967 and Walcot 1969 for discussions of this point of view.

¹¹ Traill 1989:301-2.

¹² *Ibid.* 302-3.

found in the Glaucus-Diomedes exchange.¹³ Homer's Greek bias declares that Diomedes is the victor of the unfinished fight. Zeus' intervention, then, effects this triumph in a rather unexpected manner: the goods are simply handed over.¹⁴

But what does this god-manipulated exchange have to tell us about the culture surrounding this epic? Present within the Greek society of this time period is a cosmic sense of exchange. In the above case, physical honor is exchanged for the "defeat" of a foe, whether that defeat truly occurs or is obstructed by some divine sanction. As Glaucus claims through his leaf motif, mortals are ensnared in the gods' order. But as Diomedes asserts, mortals seem to have some capacity to manipulate their fate within said order. The extent of such manipulation is unclear. Still, it is evident that life has value within this system. The more one causes suffering, whether such suffering is licit (e.g. in a god-ordained war) or illicit (e.g. in the unjustified murder of kin), the more one reaps its consequences. By constructing suffering in such a way, suffering becomes embedded in the natural order; that is, it is no longer a random event. Rather, through their assertions about the cosmic order, the Greeks of this time period give suffering a meaning, a purpose, a rationalization.¹⁵ Determining that meaning is the goal of this paper.¹⁶

To that effect, I propose the following: within the Archaic and Classical Greek world, suffering is cosmologically purposed through its nature as a transactional commodity. This rationalization evolves with culture such that suffering does not appear to be meaningless. Let us define some terms to clarify this proposal. First, what do we mean by "suffering"? Often, when

¹³ For more examples, see Traill 1989:302-4. He labels this type of exchange as compensatory τιμή. We will discuss the concept of τιμή in the first chapter.

¹⁴ Ibid. 304-5.

¹⁵ For this work, I have used the terms "meaning," "purpose," and "rationalization" synonymously. What exactly I refer to by these concepts will be explained shortly.

¹⁶ To be clear, this is not to say that the Greeks were the only ones to give suffering a meaning; certainly, any theological system that considers mortality comes face-to-face with the concepts of life, suffering, and death. I have selected the Greeks as a case study into how suffering is given meaning.

considering this term neutrally, we jump to synonyms: pain, agony, grief, distress, anguish. Yet none of these terms point to definable realities. Turning to experience, we may be floored by our inability to construct a conception of suffering despite our intimate experiences of it; at best, we describe it in terms of other pains (e.g. “burning”), effects of pain (e.g. “twisted,” “broken”), or instruments of pain (e.g. “stabbing like a knife”).¹⁷ To measure physical pain, these descriptions are often the best we have.¹⁸ An exact definition for suffering, then, is not easily tenable. Thus, I will give a working definition: suffering is a subjection to some stimulus that evokes a negative sensory, affective, or mental response. This stimulus can be internal, like anxiety, or external, like a scraped knee; nevertheless, if the stimulus negatively impacts a person, it causes them to suffer. Next, while I believe that most of the other terms are clear in their meaning, I would like to break down what I mean by “purpose” or “meaning” when referring to suffering.

Consider the daunting question of “why do we suffer?” and its ramifications. To answer this question is to be able to know how we, as human beings, ought to live our lives. Suppose that we answer that there is no reason. Then, the philosophical and ideological value systems which are correct to us must take this into account. Suffering pervades our lives and is frequently something we strive to avoid at all costs, wanting to maximize the good which we experience and avoid the bad or the evil.¹⁹ As such, the “meaning” or “purpose” behind suffering is the way in which it has been placed, explained, and utilized as part of a belief system’s cosmology. I will

¹⁷ Scarry 1985:15-7; Ebbott 2016:31, 34.

¹⁸ This is true even in the medical field. Both Scarry 1985 and Ebbott 2016 discuss the McGill Pain Questionnaire, which attempts to use the language which people already employ concerning pain in order to roughly quantify it, understand it more deeply, and apply more apt procedures to aid patients in pain relief.

¹⁹ I say the bad *or* the evil to distinguish between the two. If our suffering is meaningless and, therefore, “bad,” then what makes sense is to limit the “bad” as much as possible, whatever that means in terms of our actions. However, if our suffering is meaningful and, therefore, “evil,” then the limitation of this “evil” is different; we may not be as free to, for example, cause the suffering of others in order to avoid our own suffering. My use of negative terminology in relation to meaning to describe “bad” and “evil,” of course, could be challenged; its only basis is that because suffering negatively impacts us, it must be described with similar terminology. I cannot claim with absolute certainty that suffering is not “good,” if “good” is the opposite of “bad” and “evil.”

attempt to elucidate precisely that notion via the medium of ancient Hellenic culture, history, and texts—our primary and most intimate means of accessing those bygone people.

Although many resources could be utilized, my analysis of the Archaic and Classical Periods will be done predominantly through two primary literary sources. Said sources were chosen because they reflect on suffering intensely, display a wider political understanding and impact (allowing for a general discussion of their shared culture thereby), and cohere in their narrative tradition. These texts are Homer's *Iliad*, discussed above as an introduction to my topic, and Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. The former is a hallmark of classical literature soaked in the blood, ideology, and sorrows of its time. Meanwhile, the latter work, having been composed roughly three centuries after the first, views the shifted mindset of the early Classical Period.²⁰ Although the *Oresteia* does not catalog as much suffering as the *Iliad*, its songs display suffering viscerally on both a personal and cosmic level through a constant struggle for justice.²¹ Together, these works are positioned distantly enough that we might glean a significant change in thought on suffering without having lost something in transit. After all, Aeschylus lived through political upheaval that transformed society from the ways of the Archaic Period to that of the Classical Period. Lastly, the story of the *Iliad* is bounded on both sides by the *Agamemnon*'s narrative; the grave sacrifice preceding the Trojan War and the tragedies of Agamemnon's νόστος could not have occurred without the war's impetus. Through an examination of this literature and its reflection on the wider world, we will reveal suffering's role in said world.

Before proceeding into the body of this text, let us chart a road map for what is to come. The two chapters of this work each consist of two subsections. The first chapter focuses on the

²⁰ Martin 2011:1 roughly dates the solidification of the *Iliad*'s narrative to 750-550 B.C., while Taplin and Billings 2018:xi place the *Oresteia*'s staging in 458 B.C.

²¹ As Hall 2010:200 says: "But [the *Oresteia*] is always underpinned by a sense of inevitability, and a hope that the reason for the suffering in terms of divine purpose may eventually be explained."

Iliad. Its initial subsection discusses the Archaic Period's major heroic values and religious relationship with ritual. The second subsection, in turn, examines the transactional nature of suffering in the *Iliad*, drawing out suffering's relationship with memory and immortality through Achilles' narrative development and relationship with the heroic code. Then, the second chapter will begin again with some contextualization for the Classical Period. The first subsection gives relevant summaries of the politics and theology that Aeschylus worked with to craft the *Oresteia*. The last subsection will investigate the *Oresteia* in its constructions of inheritance, vengeance, justice, and, most of all, a common misconception concerning the gods' law on suffering and its relationship to learning. Finally, the conclusion will bring together the main ideas of the two chapters to answer the query that this paper has proposed. With that said, we may embark.

Chapter One – Apotheosis through Suffering: Κλέος καὶ Ἄχος

Part One: The Homeric Context

In order to approach Homer’s poetry appropriately, we must first establish his context. Although what we have is morphed by centuries of oral tradition and by the solidification and written recording of the text, the Homeric epics reflect many elements of the Archaic Period.²² The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* strive to reflect on an old era which is frequently championed as better.²³ Yet it is evident in scholarship that multiple factors unique to the Archaic Period are woven into the narrative.²⁴ During the Archaic Period (e.g. from 776 B.C. to about 500 B.C.), the πόλις became prominent as Greece itself became more unified.²⁵ Hellenes spread their culture through the Muse-inspired ἀοιδοί or “singers” whose careers consisted of entertaining hosts (the Homeric ἄναξ or βασιλεύς) and crowds for food.²⁶ We can infer from the frequent utilization of epithets, common phrases, and typical scenes within Homeric poems that such ἀοιδοί likely chose and composed their songs to fit their audience for their own benefit.²⁷ If Homeric poetry is, in fact, derived from the crafting and amending of tales by ἀοιδοί, then it is likely not only that inconsistencies in the Homeric text (such as those of the τειχοσκοπία) can be explained through varying composition but also that the text better embodies the aspirations of the Archaic Period

²² Kahane 2012:27, 38, 45, Martin 2011:1, 30-3, 39, and Monsacré 2017:3 cover these periods in more detail.

²³ For example, Homer describes rocks that the epic warriors threw in battle “which no two men could carry / such as men are now,” scorning men of the current era (ὁ οὐ δύο γ’ ἄνδρε φέροιεν, / οἷοι νῦν βροτοί εισ’, Hom. *Il.* 5.303-4). Hesiod expresses similar sentiments in his *Works and Days*.

²⁴ Kahane 2012:25-36, 45-6. For the sake of keeping focus, incongruities between the Mycenaean Period and what the *Iliad* portrays (i.e. through practices native to the Archaic Period) will not be discussed further here.

²⁵ Kahane 2012:32-6 notes the resemblance of historical Greece to the unified Achaeans going against Troy.

²⁶ Ibid. 41. The distinction between the ἄναξ and βασιλεύς seems to be that ἄναξ is attributed to a sole leader, whereas βασιλεύς refers to a lesser rank of significant, equal men. These terms originated from Linear B. For a discussion of this, see Martin 2011:29-30.

²⁷ The Parry-Lord theory comes to mind when discussing this topic, which championed the perspective that the Homeric texts, being oral, chose their language economically to bolster the ease of composition. To avoid too much technicality, this topic will not be discussed further here. See Kahane 2012:52-9 and Martin 2011:40-2.

through the blending of multiple voices that appealed to the general Archaic ideals.²⁸ Thus, we can rightfully use this poetry to examine the Archaic Period's understanding of the wider world.

Some pivotal parallels between the Archaic Period and the *Iliad* can be illuminated via a deeper analysis of the Greeks' relationship with religious ritual and its emphases on mortality. A variety of Greek texts portray their perceived gravity of sacrifice. Greek sacrifice was dramatized through elaborate rituals that usually culminate in the death of the animal and the offering of its corpse. Its thigh-bones (μηρία) were left for the gods and the sacred innards (σπλάγχνα) were quickly eaten by the gods' supplicants.²⁹ Walter Burkert has argued that such rituals performed multifarious functions revolving around the unease of transition and transformation.³⁰ Within every sacrificial ritual, the animal's consumption signals a recognition of human mortality and the fact that life continues through death. Such a fact explains the consistent post-sacrificial meal as the dead nourishing the living.³¹ We see this mortality-centric ritual, for instance, in the first book of the *Iliad*. After Odysseus gives the stolen Chryseis back to Chryses, the Achaeans and that priest of Apollo perform a detailed yet formulaic sacrifice:

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥ' εὔξαντο καὶ οὐλοχύτας προβάλλοντο,
αὔερυσαν μὲν πρῶτα καὶ ἔσφαξαν καὶ ἔδειραν,
μηρούς τ' ἐξέταμον κατὰ τε κνίσῃ ἐκάλυψαν
δίπτυχα ποιήσαντες, ἐπ' αὐτῶν δ' ὠμοθέτησαν:
καῖε δ' ἐπὶ σχίζῃς ὁ γέρων, ἐπὶ δ' αἶθοπα οἶνον

²⁸ Kahane 2012:56-9; Martin 2011:40-2. The ταχσοσκοπία is the scene in which Helen visits Priam on the Trojan walls and explains who the various Achaeans are at Priam's request. However, given that the war has been going on for many years, it makes little sense that Priam would not already know who they are. This scene can be found at Hom. *Il.* 3.121-244.

²⁹ Burkert 1983:2-3, 6. For a description of the ritual, see Burkert 1983:3-7. For the importance of the thigh-bones, see, for example, Hes. *Op.* 337 and the *Theogony*'s tale about Prometheus and his attempted deception of Zeus. All references to Hesiod use Wender 1973's English translation and Evelyn-White 1914's Greek.

³⁰ Burkert 1983:1-82. This sentence is my approximation of his general argument concerning ritual and sacrifice. To understand what is meant by transition and transformation, we may consider an example from the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. The tale of Persephone deals with the uncomfortable shifts between life and death and between youth and adulthood that ritual—particularly, the one established by Demeter at Eleusis—helps navigate. See Athanassakis 2004:64-5 in combination with Burkert 1983:40 for discussions of these ideas of transition.

³¹ Burkert 1983:38 and *passim*. Practical considerations also add to this explanation. The immortal gods do not need food but desire sacrifice from mortals; burning the thigh-bones, which mortals cannot eat, makes use of and disposes of leftover materials from a human meal and allows mortals to extend their own mortality through nourishment.

λεῖβε: νέοι δὲ παρ' αὐτὸν ἔχον πεμπώβολα χερσίν.
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κατὰ μῆρε κἀη καὶ σπλάγχνα πάσαντο,
μίστυλλον τ' ἄρα τᾶλλα καὶ ἄμφ' ὀβελοῖσιν ἔπειραν,
ὥπτησάν τε περιφραδέως, ἐρύσαντό τε πάντα.
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ παύσαντο πόνου τετύκοντό τε δαῖτα
δαίνυντ', οὐδέ τι θυμὸς ἐδέετο δαιτὸς εἵσης.

And when all had made prayer and flung down the scattering barley
First they drew back the victims' heads and slaughtered them and skinned them,
And cut away the meat from the thighs and wrapped them in fat,
Making a double fold, and laid shreds of flesh upon them.
The old man these on a cleft stick and poured the gleaming
Wine over, while the young men with forks in their hands stood about him.
But when they had burned the thigh pieces and tasted the vitals,
They cut all the remainder into pieces and spitted them
And roasted all carefully and took off the pieces.
Then after they had finished the work and got the feast ready
They feasted, nor was any man's hunger denied fair portion. (Hom. *Il.* 1.458-68).³²

And this is just one of many examples.³³ With the widespread presence of sacrifice in the *Iliad*, the depth of the shared culture and beliefs becomes even more pronounced.

This shared culture emphasizes some pivotal concepts that saturate the *Iliad* and are vital to its heroic code. Given the *Iliad*'s war-driven plotline, said concepts have a lot to do with mortals' conduct in battle. In combat, men attempt to kill the enemy such that they can stake their claim to two rewards. The first of these is known as τιμή, which can be best described as physical possessions by which a person increases his or her social status.³⁴ These tangible items include whatever can be a symbol of one's achievements and deeds. The *Iliad* recalls multiple occurrences in which goods are taken by someone for themselves. The most prominent example of this would be when Hector strips Patroclus' body and dons Achilles' armor (Hom. *Il.* 17.107-39). However, it would be incorrect to assert that the amount of τιμή one earns is proportional to

³² Note that line 459 was slightly shifted in spacing to keep the Greek and English as even as possible.

³³ Another example of detailed ritual will be discussed in Part 2 of this chapter; particularly, I will discuss Achilles' extensive funereal preparations for Patroclus in Book 23.

³⁴ Ready 2007:3.

the magnitude of a warrior's successes on the battlefield. Rather, τιμή can take another form: μοῖρα. Literally meaning "lot," μοῖρα refers to the allotment of spoils after a battle.³⁵ This allotment is performed by a designated leader, but μοῖραι could be passed down further as long as layers of subordination exist within the army's hierarchy.³⁶ When an authority has control of the allocation of goods, the people trust that authority to divide up the overall τιμή properly.

Ultimately, the attainment of τιμή itself is not what the Achaeans seek. Rather, they care about the status accompanying τιμή. We see this, for instance, in Book 7 of the *Iliad*. After Hector has returned from Troy to the battlefield, he is told by his brother, Helenus, that he should challenge the best of the Achaeans to single combat because the gods told Helenus that it was not yet Hector's time to die.³⁷ Following Helenus' advice and speaking his intention, Hector relates that the winner of the duel should strip the opponent of his armor (a clear symbol of τιμή) but should leave the body for its allies to bury. Hector does not dwell on the armor; rather, the end of his speech imagines a man finding the grave of Hector's victim and saying that "This is the mound of a man who died long ago in battle, / who was one of the bravest, and glorious [Hector] killed him.' / So he will speak some day, and my glory will not be forgotten" (ἀνδρὸς μὲν τόδε σῆμα πάλαι κατατεθνηῶτος, / ὅν ποτ' ἀριστεύοντα κατέκτανε φαίδιμος Ἔκτωρ. / ὥς ποτέ τις ἐρέει: τὸ δ' ἐμὸν κλέος οὐ ποτ' ὀλεῖται, Hom. *Il.* 7.89-91). In other words, the remembrance of warriors' actions matters more than the physical manifestations of said actions. Τιμή does symbolize the deeds of its possessor, imbued with the stories and legacies of its past owners. Most of all, though, it contributes to the current owner's renown—his or her κλέος.

³⁵ Ready 2007:4; Schein 1984:62-4, Staten 1993:341. Of course, on the other side of the same coin, μοῖρα can also reference the Fates' (Μοῖραι) allocation of death to all mortals.

³⁶ Ready 2007:4-5. See also Ready 2007:38-9 for a discussion of the expression of μοῖρα as a δαίς or "feast." We will discuss the role of the allotter within a specific Iliadic context in Chapter 1, Part 2.

³⁷ To be clear, Helenus is not taking advantage of the situation; he knows the gods' "deliberation, and all that pleased the musing divinities," including that they wanted Hector to battle one of the best of the Achaeans (βουλήν, ἧ ῥα θεοῖσιν ἐφῆνδανε μητιόωσι, Hom. *Il.* 7.45).

Κλέος is a monumental concept within the heroic code of the Achaeans, expressing itself in two forms. The first manifestation of κλέος is what we have already discussed in τιμή. While alive, a man expresses his κλέος among his peers through τιμή and the valor and virtue embodied in that τιμή. However, if κλέος is to truly be meaningful, it must also consist of one's "reputation after death."³⁸ This concept is fulfilled for these potentially fictitious Achaeans and Trojans by the survival of the Homeric epics; indeed, the ἀοιδοί (and other artists, artisans, and performers) had great power over the perpetuation of tradition and the solidification of certain events within cultural memory.³⁹ The living Achaeans did not truly have control of how they were remembered postmortem; however, they could strive for as much κλέος as possible to prevent themselves from being forgotten. As Seth L. Schein aptly relates, "[i]n the world of the poem, war is the medium of human existence and achievement; bravery and excellence in battle win honor and glory and thus endow life with meaning."⁴⁰ Glory is incredibly vital to the Homeric worldview.

Yet, in their fervor for glory, Homeric warriors might lose themselves and attempt to overtake their betters. To avoid claiming dishonor for themselves, they had to rely on the last major value of the heroic code: αἰδώς. Αἰδώς has been variously translated as "shame," "respect," "awe," and "reverence," but this notion appears to be best understood as a mindfulness of public opinion.⁴¹ In this case, public opinion refers to that of both one's peers and the gods.⁴² The clearest example αἰδώς' role is in Hector's behavior when he is about to face Achilles. He expresses that he would "feel shame before the Trojans and the Trojan women with trailing / robes, that someone who is less of a man than I will say of me: '[Hector] believed in his own

³⁸ Martin 2011:20.

³⁹ Martin 2011:20-1; Kahane 2012:14.

⁴⁰ Schein 1984:68.

⁴¹ Scott 1980:13-6; Hooker 1987:123.

⁴² Hooker 1987:123-5. We saw an example of god-related αἰδώς in the introduction. Diomedes specifically asked whether Glaucus was an immortal; he did not want to overstep his bounds, knowing that he did not have Athena's explicit support as he did in Book 5 against Ares.

strength and ruined his people.” (αἰδέομαι Τρῶας καὶ Τρωάδας ἔλκεσιπέπλους, / μή ποτέ τις εἶπησι κακώτερος ἄλλος ἐμεῖο: / Ἔκτωρ ἦφι βίηφι πιθήσας ὄλεσε λαόν, Hom. *Il.* 22.105-7). As the bastion of Troy, Hector knows that the Trojans depend on him to protect their city. Despite his concern that Achilles will slay him, Hector obeys his αἰδώς (given as αἰδέομαι in the quote) and strives for κλέος against Achilles.⁴³ In the end, αἰδώς is meant to direct one’s conduct toward higher κλέος in considering what may endow one’s name with a favorable, lasting memory.

Having recalled the Homeric religious context and four values—τιμή, μοῖρα, κλέος, and αἰδώς—which are critical to the heroic code of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, we may now endeavor to interpret the presentation of human suffering in the Trojan War.

Part Two: Analysis of the *Iliad*

ὦ πέπον εἰ μὲν γὰρ πόλεμον περὶ τόνδε φυγόντε
αἰεὶ δὴ μέλλοιμεν ἀγήρω τ’ ἀθανάτω τε
ἔσσεσθ’, οὔτε κεν αὐτὸς ἐνὶ πρότοισι μαχοίμην
οὔτε κε σὲ στέλλοιμι μάχην ἐς κυδιάνειραν:
νῦν δ’ ἔμπης γὰρ κῆρες ἐφεστᾶσιν θανάτοιο
μυρίαί, ἃς οὐκ ἔστι φυγεῖν βροτὸν οὐδ’ ὑπαλύξαι,
ἴομεν ἢ ἐτῶ εὖχος ὀρέξομεν ἢ ἐτις ἡμῖν.

Man, supposing you and I, escaping this battle
would be able to live on forever, ageless, immortal,
so neither would I myself go on fighting in the foremost
nor would I urge you into the fighting where men win glory.
But now, seeing that the spirits of death stand close about us
in their thousands, no man can turn aside nor escape them,
let us go on and win glory for ourselves, or yield it to others. (Hom. *Il.* 12.322-8).

Sarpedon and Glaucus are not major characters of the *Iliad*, but their appearances frequently encapsulate key heroic ideas.⁴⁴ In this passage, the Trojans have almost reached the Achaean ships but must first surmount the Achaeans’ fortifications. An omen of a blood-red snake escaping from Zeus’ noble eagle implied that the attacking Trojans would not overcome

⁴³ Ibid. 121-2.

⁴⁴ Compare Hom. *Il.* 6.144-9, the speech by Glaucus discussed in the introduction.

the Achaeans. However, the Trojans still were fighting at Hector's order, costing many Trojans their lives and allowing the two Ajaxes to resist their onslaught. But Zeus himself impels his own son, Sarpedon, to help turn the tide. Thus, the divinely-invigorated Sarpedon encourages his fellow fighter, Glaucus, with a rousing speech that culminates in the above lines. It is not only that, as Sarpedon began, "all men look on us as if we were immortals" and that many men give them tangible honors (τετιμήμεσθα) that should motivate them to fight, but that the prospect of more glory stands before them (πάντες δὲ θεοὺς ὧς εἰσορόωσι, Hom. *Il.* 12.312).⁴⁵ Of course, this idea is traditional within the heroic code—through battle, one can fight valorously, claim the spoils of defeated enemies, and extend one's κλέος thereby.

While Sarpedon recognizes the give-and-take (ἴομεν, ὀρέζομεν) of glory (εὖχος) on the battlefield, he emphasizes the role of mortality in man's motivation to wage war. Mortality is, as scholars have pointed out, what ultimately divides men and the gods in the *Iliad*.⁴⁶ It mandates human conduct. Humans must ensure their survival through labor. Just as we saw with Glaucus and Diomedes, mortals are enraptured within the gods' order; at the same time, they have a certain degree of agency. This human way of life converges around human mortality and its endured sufferings, and it is this idea that Sarpedon relates in the above passage. Men enter "the fighting where men win glory" (μάχην ἐς κυδιάνειραν) as mortals, but if they were without death (ἀθανάτω) and old age (ἀγήρω)—in other words, if they were like the gods—then honorable behavior and daring deeds would be purposeless.⁴⁷ If the character Sarpedon is a model Homeric hero, then we must conclude that mortality and honor are tightly intertwined within the heroic

⁴⁵ Τετιμήμεσθα comes from Hom. *Il.* 12.310.

⁴⁶ For example, Allen 2009 dedicates her chapter on the *Iliad* to proving this essential point in that "the paradox of the Greek hero lies precisely in the fact that what brings him closest to the gods is also what differentiates him from the divine most fundamentally: his mortality" (the quote being from page 74). See also Schein 1984:71.

⁴⁷ Schein 1984:70 notes exactly that the gods, due to their immortality, "can neither win nor lose significant glory."

code. In fact, these concepts are so tightly bound that mortality defines the heroic code in terms of κλέος such that the persistence of memory allows mortals to become immortal like the gods.

In order to display what my contribution to this notion is, I will first give credit to the scholars whose work I am building upon. Specifically, the *idea* of suffering being exchanged for κλέος is not original. For example, Henry Staten states: “[*k*]leos (glory) is supposed to be the warrior's ultimate consolation or compensation for the *akhos* or *penthos* (grief) of his mortality.”⁴⁸ Many others have also pointed out the economic relationship between pain and τιμή.⁴⁹ What I propose here develops on these arguments by attempting to show the way in which suffering is given purpose and the implications of ordering suffering societally in this way. To accomplish this, I will proceed by examining the man whose name forebodes his fate: Ἀχιλλεύς, Achilles, a man full of grief (ἄχος) for himself and his people (λαός). Through him, the major heroic concepts are made manifest. Although he was initially a stout adherent to the code, he defects from its traditional use for reasons which become clearer as the epic drags on. As we will see, Achilles reveals the faults of the heroic code that the epic displays.

Through an exploration of Book 1’s conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon, we may identify the source of Achilles’ anger with Agamemnon in αἰδώς and the beginning of Achilles’ contortion of the heroic system with his plea to Thetis. First, we review the context of their argument. Chryses, a priest of Apollo, pleads with Agamemnon to accept his “ransom, / giving honor to Zeus’ son who strikes from afar, Apollo,” for Chryses’ captive daughter, Chryseis (ἄποινα ..., / ἄζόμενοι Διὸς υἱὸν ἐκηβόλον Ἀπόλλωνα, Hom. *Il.* 1.20-1). When the exchange is rejected, Chryses flees and begs Apollo for retribution: “let your arrows make the Danaöns pay for my tears shed” (τίσειαν Δαναοὶ ἐμὰ δάκρυα σοῖσι βέλεσσιν, Hom. *Il.* 1.42). Dishonor to

⁴⁸ Staten 1993:358. Note his word choice of “supposed to be”—we will touch on this later, as Staten did.

⁴⁹ Examples include Allen 2009, Holmes 2007, and Ready 2007.

Apollo and Chryses is requited by suffering when Apollo unleashed his arrows on the Achaeans. Then, Agamemnon becomes bitter when Calchas reveals the cause of the Achaeans' suffering. In exchange for his personal sacrifice, Agamemnon wants "some prize that shall be my own, lest I only / among the Argives go without, since that were unfitting" from among his men (ἐμοὶ γέρας αὐτίχ' ἐτοιμάσασα ὄφρα μὴ οἴος / Ἀργείων ἀγέραςτος ἔω, ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ ἔοικε, Hom. *Il.* 1.118-9). The use of γέρας here specifically distinguishes to "a specially marked war prize given to a fighter or leader of a community" as opposed to a general μοῖρα.⁵⁰ Achilles' response to Agamemnon concerns this distinction and reveals the source of Achilles' grievance with Agamemnon.

Achilles' response criticizes Agamemnon for his threat (and his subsequent fulfillment of that threat) as an improper allotter and as a man ignorant of αἰδώς. Calling Agamemnon the "greediest for gain of all men" (φιλοκτεανώτατε πάντων), Achilles insists that "what we took from the cities by storm has been distributed; / it is unbecoming for the people to call back things once given" (τὰ μὲν πολίων ἐξεπράθομεν, τὰ δέδασται, / λαοὺς δ' οὐκ ἐπέοικε παλίλλογα ταῦτ' ἐπαγείρειν, Hom. *Il.* 1.122, 125-6).⁵¹ In this, he references the structure by which spoils are allotted and what the allotter should not do. Agamemnon's "crucial mistake" against Achilles occurs when he takes Achilles' γέρας, "pushing [his] personal status and demands for τιμή to the detriment of the common good."⁵² This flagrant misuse of power is what Achilles labels "shamelessness," or ἀναίδεια (αἰδώς' direct antonym), twice over (Hom. *Il.* 1.149, 158). Despite that the Achaeans agreed to be led by Agamemnon "to do [him] favor, / ..., to win [his] honor and [Menelaus'] / from the Trojans" and not out of slights against themselves, Achilles finds that those who are risking their lives for others (e.g. himself) without other direct motivations have

⁵⁰ Ready 2007:4. See also Schein 1984:71.

⁵¹ See also Achilles' use of "with your mind forever on profit" (κερδαλέοφρον) at Hom. *Il.* 1.149.

⁵² Allan 2006:9.

received less for their efforts (ὄφρα σὺ χάριης, / τιμὴν ἀρνύμενοι Μενελάω σοί τε ... / πρὸς Τρώων, Hom. *Il.* 158-60). Spiteful toward Achilles for “likening himself to [him] and contending against [him],” Agamemnon abuses his position as the general allotter of γέρας and μοῖρα (ἴσον ἐμοὶ φάσθαι καὶ ὁμοιωθήμεναι ἄντην, Hom. *Il.* 1.187). He does so in taking others’ honors for himself and robbing them of τιμή and, thereby, κλέος. Thus, Agamemnon’s dual offense in abusing his position and not paying respect to his comrades is the source of Achilles’ rage.

Frustrated by this breach in the heroic code, Achilles bids Thetis to ask Zeus to permit the deaths of many Achaeans in war. But why is it that the whole Achaean army suffers instead of just Agamemnon? The answer lies in Agamemnon’s role as the allotter. Only a leader approved by the people can divide up collected wealth as μοῖραι. Still, this allotment is a public decision; we may think of the many times in the *Iliad* when crowds assent to the leader’s decision instead of silently obeying his beck and call as evidence of this.⁵³ Thus, each decision is ultimately communal. Indeed, Achilles appeals to the people when he tries to appease Agamemnon, saying, “No, for the present give the girl back to the god; we [Achaeans] / thrice and four times over will repay you, if ever Zeus gives / into our hands the strong-walled citadel of Troy to be plundered” (ἀλλὰ σὺ μὲν νῦν τήνδε θεῶ πρόες; αὐτὰρ Ἄχαιοὶ / τριπλῆ τετραπλῆ τ’ ἀποτείσομεν, αἶ κέ ποθι Ζεὺς / δῶσι πόλιν Τροίην εὐτείχεον ἐξαλαπάξαι, Hom. *Il.* 1.127-9).⁵⁴ Therefore, from Achilles’ point of view, the other Achaeans were complicit in Agamemnon’s theft of Briseis. The heroic code assumes that allotment occurs once and that incurred τιμή can bolster a man’s κλέος as long as it is possessed. A man can die or lose his possessions, but the notion of unwilling re-allotment

⁵³ See, for example, the response to the speech of Odysseus in Book 2 that prevents the Achaeans from fleeing Troy in Agamemnon’s test (Hom. *Il.* 2.333-5) and again after the subsequent speech of Agamemnon (Hom. *Il.* 2.394-7).

⁵⁴ Ready 2007:10 (and elsewhere) notes the rhetorical value of using the allocator position or communal decision as a position of persuasion (i.e. as a distinct delegate of the people or as one of the people).

imposed upon a living man is absurd.⁵⁵ That is why Achilles' vengeance attacks all of the Achaeans, "so that thus they may all have profit of their own king, / that Atreus' son wide-ruling Agamemnon may recognize / his madness, that he did no honor to the best of the [Achaeans]" (ἵνα πάντες ἐπαύρωνται βασιλῆος, / γνῶ δὲ καὶ Ἀτρεΐδης εὐρὺ κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων / ἦν ἄτην ὃ τ' ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν οὐδὲν ἔτισεν, Hom. *Il.* 1.410-2).⁵⁶ Only vengeful suffering, in other words, can fill the void of Achilles' stripped honor.

Here, we see Achilles push the heroic system to its extremities; as recompense for the dishonor done to him, Achilles has Thetis supplicate Zeus to bring ruin to the Achaeans. But why does Achilles intend to punish the Achaeans at all? Reasons have been discussed above, but there is a further obstruction. Recall that Achilles initially draws his sword to kill Agamemnon (Hom. *Il.* 1.188-222). Hera, caring for the men equally, sends Athena to prevent Achilles from exacting revenge. The goddess promises him that "[s]ome day three times over such gifts shall be given you / by reason of this outrage. Hold your hand then, and obey us" (καί ποτέ τοι τρις τόσσα παρέσσεται ἀγλαὰ δῶρα / ὕβριος εἵνεκα τῆσδε: σὺ δ' ἴσχεο, πείθεο δ' ἡμῖν, Hom. *Il.* 1.213-4). Achilles listens; about two-hundred lines later, though, he asks for the Achaeans' destruction. What happened? Brooke Holmes suggests that he takes a cue from Chryses, who achieved devastation on the Achaeans to the same effect.⁵⁷ Even more so, Achilles' evident pain from the loss of Briseis is not sated by material requital; he is dissatisfied that Agamemnon "did no honor to the best of the [Achaeans]" and got away with it (ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν οὐδὲν ἔτισεν, Hom. *Il.* 1.410-2). Holmes writes: "Achilles ... seeks from Zeus ... dead bodies as compensation for the

⁵⁵ For the idea of losing possessions, one can think of how Diomedes obtained Aeneas' horses in Book 5; see the introduction for a brief discussion of this scene.

⁵⁶ Furthermore, one could argue that Achilles leaving battle would be a very odd way of harming only Agamemnon; the collateral damage to people whom Achilles respects would be massive. Thus, it makes more sense that Achilles is at odds with the entire Achaean army.

⁵⁷ Just before Achilles makes his plea, he mentions this at Hom. *Il.* 1.370-85. For this idea, see Holmes 2007:50.

timê lost in his quarrel with Agamemnon, thereby perverting the code that grants *timê* in exchange for the deaths of enemy combatants.”⁵⁸ That is, Achilles disrupts the heroic transactional system by approaching it in an unexpected way. Finding the heroic code to be defective due to Agamemnon’s abuse of it, Achilles seeks vengeful recompense from the gods themselves. If the gods stay his hand, then Achilles can only ask the gods to employ theirs to restore his honor, as the gods—particularly, Zeus—are said to be able to do.⁵⁹

But even this is not satisfactory for Achilles: as time tempers his broiling emotions, his perspective shifts more fully toward an overextension of the heroic ideology. We move to Book 9, the site of the famous embassy scene. Achilles, having been seldom present in the narrative since Book 1, now comes to the fore as the Achaeans wallow in a divine despair.⁶⁰ Agamemnon believes that Zeus has turned against them and that they should give up, but Diomedes and Nestor talk him down from flight. Nestor moves the discussion to returning Achilles to battle, at which point Agamemnon agrees to give Achilles endless riches with the caveat that Achilles let Agamemnon retain his kingly role. Odysseus, Phoenix, and Telamonian Ajax go to Achilles and try to persuade him to return to battle in different ways, but Achilles resists each of them. It is his resistance that reveals his ideological shift and the exploratory nature of his understanding. We see this most vividly in his reply to Odysseus:

ἴση μοῖρα μένοντι καὶ εἰ μάλα τις πολεμίζοι:
 ἐν δὲ ἰῆ τιμῇ ἡμὲν κακὸς ἠδὲ καὶ ἐσθλός:
 κάτθαν’ ὁμῶς ὃ τ’ ἀεργὸς ἀνὴρ ὃ τε πολλὰ ἐοργῶς.
 οὐδέ τί μοι περίκειται, ἐπεὶ πάθον ἄλγεα θυμῶ
 αἰεὶ ἐμὴν ψυχὴν παραβαλλόμενος πολεμίζειν.
 ὥς δ’ ὄρνις ἀπτήσι νεοσσοῖσι προφέρησι

⁵⁸ Holmes 2007:51. See also Staten 1993:349-50.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Hom. *Il.* 1.353-4 for evidence of the gods’ role in doling out honor: “therefore Zeus of the loud thunder on [Olympus] should grant me / honor at least. But now he has given me not even a little,” τιμὴν πέρ μοι ὄφελλεν Ὀλύμπιος ἐγγυαλίξαι Ζεὺς ὑπιβρεμέτης: νῦν δ’ οὐδέ με τυτθὸν ἔτισεν.

⁶⁰ Specifically, I refer to the presence of “Panic, companion of cold Terror,” φύζα φόβου κρυόντος ἐταίρη, among the Achaeans (Hom. *Il.* 9.2).

μάστακ' ἐπεὶ κε λάβησι, κακῶς δ' ἄρα οἱ πέλει αὐτῆ,
ὥς καὶ ἐγὼ πολλὰς μὲν αὐπνοὺς νύκτας ἴαυον,
ἦματα δ' αἱματόεντα διέπρησσον πολεμίζων
ἀνδράσι μαρνάμενος ὀάρων ἔνεκα σφετεράων.

Fate is the same for the man who holds back, the same if he fights hard.
We are all held in a single honor, the brave with the weaklings.
A man dies if he has done nothing, as one who has done much.
Nothing is won for me, now that my heart has gone through its afflictions
in forever setting my life on the hazard of battle.
For as to her unwinged young ones the mother bird brings back
morsels, wherever she can find them, but as for herself it is suffering,
such was I, as I lay through all the many nights unsleeping,
such as I wore through the bloody days of the fighting,
striving with warriors for the sake of these men's women. (Hom. *Il.* 9.318-27).

Whereas the heroic system finds great opportunity for τιμή and, thereby, κλέος in battle, Achilles no longer sees purpose in it other than as suffering in his heart (ἄλγεα θυμῷ). He does not find that striving produces more τιμή; allotment (μοῖρα) is the same (ἴση) for every man, as they all die (κάτθαν'). His labor, which others can hardly do on their own (as in the mother bird simile), only brings good to those whom he aids—those who have wronged him previously. Thus, war is not worth waging for him even if Agamemnon supplied him with numberless gifts (Hom. *Il.* 9.375-92). To put it briefly: “[f]or not / worth the value of my life are all the possessions they fable / were won for Ilion” (οὐ γὰρ ἐμοὶ ψυχῆς ἀντάξιον οὐδ' ὅσα φασὶν / Ἴλιον ἐκτῆσθαι, Hom. *Il.* 9.401-2).⁶¹ In brief, Achilles no longer finds the termination of his mortality to be a fair trade for honor among the Achaeans because the system of allotment was revealed to be faulty. Truly, if Achilles does have a choice between the two fates told to him by Thetis—one of eternal glory but a youthful death in the Trojan War and the other of obscurity but a long, peaceful life—why would he not wish to choose the latter if it is guaranteed to be worthwhile (Hom. *Il.* 9.410-6)?⁶²

⁶¹ Within my discussion of Achilles' reply to Odysseus, I have roughly followed the ideas of Staten 1993:349-51.

⁶² That is, while Achilles has been given both options as fates, the one concerning glory in war to be undesirable for Achilles because the heroic code which presents glory is defective and, perhaps, is meaningless in his eyes.

This interpretation of the above passage and Achillean mindset is objectionable. How, for example, can I determine that this mindset represents an *overextension* of the heroic code (and those who may abuse it, like Agamemnon) rather than an Achillean mistake in judgment? This question could especially be raised in light of Achilles' gradually-weakening resistance to the embassy. Achilles is unfazed by Odysseus' promise of goods from Agamemnon. However, Phoenix's emotional and value-driven argument causes his departure from the Trojan shores to become a future decision (φρασσόμεθ').⁶³ Finally, Ajax's indignation keeps Achilles on the shore but unwilling to fight until the battle comes to him. Achilles even admits that what Ajax says is reasonable.⁶⁴ Particularly, Ajax states: "And yet a man takes from his brother's slayer / the blood price, or the price for a child who was killed, and the guilty / one, when he has largely repaid, stays still in his country" (καὶ μὲν τίς τε κασιγνήτοιο φονῆος / ποινήν ἢ οὗ παιδὸς ἐδέξατο τεθνηῶτος: / καὶ ῥ' ὁ μὲν ἐν δῆμῳ μένει αὐτοῦ πόλλ' ἀποτίσας, Hom. *Il.* 9.632-4). Here, Ajax relates the notion of ἄποινα, "recompense" (e.g. that of Agamemnon to Achilles), to ποινή, "blood-money," to display recompense's role in the heroic code.⁶⁵

For Ajax, as shown in the ἄποινα-ποινή relation, "no loss is uncompensatable and everything finds its equivalent,"—that is, all actions are ordered and valued.⁶⁶ Honors (τιμὴ or κλέος) and actions, whether done or suffered, are commodities; to keep equilibrium, one is given for another. Thus, what Ajax maintains is the cultural norm and is inherent to the heroic code. But Achilles' assertions on the same subjects differ greatly: allotment is the same for everyone, regardless of their labor (πολλὰ ἐοργῶς) or lack thereof (ἀεργός).⁶⁷ Thus, Achilles remains at

⁶³ The φρασσόμεθ' comes from Hom. *Il.* 9.619.

⁶⁴ Indeed, Ajax has "spoken after [Achilles'] own mind" (μοι κατὰ θυμὸν ... μυθήσασθαι, Hom. *Il.* 9.645).

⁶⁵ Staten 1993:360-1, Note 14 details the distinction between ἄποινα and ποινή.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 351.

⁶⁷ To be clear, I am referring to the previous block quote with this Greek.

Troy for a reason that does not rely directly on those principles of the heroic code. Achilles still has a sense of respect (αἰδώς) for his Achaean companions (though not for Agamemnon).⁶⁸ It is not that Achilles has abandoned the heroic code—the odd uses of his traditional language within dactylic verse nevertheless embed him within the Homeric world.⁶⁹ Rather, under the critical eye of Ajax, Achilles cannot justify abandoning his companions due to his αἰδώς toward them.

This comradeship comes to the fore within the last third of the epic, where both Achilles' greatest suffering and Achilles' motivation for returning to battle are revealed. Both arise in the death of Patroclus. Upon seeing that so many Achaean leaders are wounded, Patroclus has had enough. Weeping, he implores Achilles to allow for one of the plans which Nestor had suggested; only at Patroclus' plea does Achilles supposedly "let all [of the Achaeans' wrongs against him] be a thing of the past" (τὰ μὲν προτετύχθαι ἐάσομεν, Hom. *Il.* 16.60). Given that Achilles himself does not return to battle, though, his sentiment is not convincing; his ambivalence about the heroic code remains. Furthermore, he orders Patroclus to return after driving the Trojans away from the ships. Achilles does so because does not want to jeopardize his honor—the honor that he already had and that he would gain from Patroclus' feats in Achilles' own armor—nor to have Patroclus die by the intervention of the Trojan gods (Hom. *Il.* 16.83-100). Again, there is uncertainty here; Achilles clings to his grudge by not fighting but still is concerned with his honor and his fellow Achaeans. With Achilles' permission, though, Patroclus heads out to fight the Trojans as the enemy is just short of victory; with a violent onrush, the Trojans are shunted back to their walls. Apollo prevents Patroclus from taking the

⁶⁸ For αἰδώς in this sense, see Hooker 1987:123 and Scott 1980:16.

⁶⁹ Parry 1956:6 states that "Achilles has no language with which to express his disillusionment. Yet he expresses it, and in a remarkable way. He does it by misusing the language he disposes of." See also Claus 1975 and Nimis 1986, the latter of whom I agree with the most, for other perspectives that come to similar conclusions on how Achilles' language reveals the frayed relationship between himself and the heroic code.

Trojan walls, but the mortal fights on. Seeing this, Apollo strikes him and the subsequent stabs of Euphorbus and Hector end his life. After that climactic event, Antilochus is sent to tell Achilles what had happened as the Achaeans struggle to save Patroclus' body.

With that context in place, we can reveal even more deeply why Achilles overextends the heroic system despite his return to battle. Achilles fears that Patroclus has died, but retains a shred of hope in that he “told him, once he had beaten the fierce fire / off, to come back to the ships, not fight in strength against [Hector]” (ἦ τ' ἐκέλευον ἀπώσάμενον δῆϊον πῦρ / ἄψ ἐπὶ νῆας ἴμεν, μηδ' Ἐκτορι ἴφι μάχεσθαι, Hom. *Il.* 18.13-4). But Antilochus gives his report and Achilles falls (literally) into a powerful sorrow; hearing his lament, Thetis and the Nereids come to join him in threnody. When Thetis asks Achilles what is wrong, he replies that “all things the Olympian brought to accomplishment. / But what pleasure is this to me, since my dear companion has perished, / [Patroclus], whom I loved beyond all other companions” (τὰ μὲν ἄρ μοι Ὀλύμπιος ἐξετέλεσεν: / ἀλλὰ τί μοι τῶν ἦδος ἐπεὶ φίλος ὄλεθ' ἐταῖρος / Πάτροκλος, τὸν ἐγὼ περὶ πάντων τῶν ἐταίρων, Hom. *Il.* 18.79-81). He loves Patroclus as he loves his own life. As he speaks, his mind turns to action: he cannot let Hector get away with killing and dishonoring Patroclus. His “sorrow beat[s] down by force the anger deeply within [him],” allowing him to return to battle (ἀχνύμενοί περ, / θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλον δαμάσαντες ἀνάγκη, Hom. *Il.* 18.112-3).⁷⁰ It is that deep suffering that allows him to put aside his grudge.⁷¹

The nigh-unfathomable suffering which motivates Achilles reveals his overextension of the heroic code in his insatiable bloodlust. Once he returns to battle and causes grisly chaos for

⁷⁰ Lattimore renders the thought expressed in the Greek in two lines as one line. Although one might consider the plurals (ἀχνύμενοί, δαμάσαντες) as not focused on Achilles, the grouping here seems more general. Clearly, though, the sorrow and anger belong to Achilles: the presence of the verb related to his name punctuates this point.

⁷¹ This does not mean that Achilles has forgiven Agamemnon; rather, the heroic need for vengeance allows Achilles to fight for his own reasons.

the Trojans, his ruthlessness is clear. Even when supplicated by Lykaon, a man whom he had spared before, he states: “And yet / even so, die all an evil death, till all of you / pay for the death of [Patroclus] and the slaughter of the [Achaean] / whom you killed beside the running ships, when I was not with them” (ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅς ὀλέεσθε κακὸν μόνον, εἰς ὃ κε πάντες / τίσετε Πατρόκλειο φόνον καὶ λαιγὸν Ἀχαιῶν, / οὗς ἐπὶ νηυσὶ θοῆσιν ἐπέφνετε νόσφιν ἐμεῖο, Hom. *Il.* 21.133-5). As in many prior quotes, the verb *τίνω* (here, *τίσετε*) demands recompense or repayment in its meaning and “combine[s] the ideas of honoring and punishing” at once.⁷² But there is no limitation on what will sate Achilles’ desire for requital here. No heroic equivalence of suffering and glory is at play. What has taken its place, then? Returning to Book 18, the usurping principle becomes evident: he desires not only to “win excellent glory” but also to “drive some one of the women of Troy / ... / to wipe away the close bursts of tears in her lamentation” (νῦν δὲ κλέος ἐσθλὸν ἀροίμην / καὶ τινα Τρωϊάδων ... / ... / δάκρυ’ ὁμορξάμενην ἀδινὸν στοναχῆσαι ἐφείην, Hom. *Il.* 18.121-2, 124). *Κλέος* still impacts Achilles because of his participation in war and, thereby, in the public eye that will recognize his deeds as glorious, but he ultimately wishes to wound the Trojans as he was wounded. In short, his motivation is to exact suffering for suffering. Patroclus’ death personalizes the vengeful suffering that Achilles initially inflicted because of Agamemnon’s theft, as Achilles is now his own avenger—he does not leave the task of vengeance to the gods anymore as he did with the Achaeans.

The notion that Achilles’ vengeance is not endemic to the traditional heroic system of equivalences is illuminated by Achilles’ behavior after Hector’s death. With Hector dead, Achilles swiftly turns his mind to “shameful treatment for glorious [Hector]” (Ἐκτορα δῖον ἀεικέα ... ἔργα, Hom. *Il.* 22.395). This is after the Achaean mob has already defamed Hector’s

⁷² Holmes 2007:51 from Wilson 2002:20-2.

body with many wounds (Hom. *Il.* 22.367-75). Because his emotions still flare hotly over Patroclus' death—because, indeed, the honor gained from killing Hector does not equate to and stem Achilles' suffering, Achilles seeks further retribution through maltreatment of Hector's body. In front of the Trojans, the deceased Hector is pierced at the back of his feet and is dragged around the city by his killer. But Achilles does not stop there. Achilles leaves the body in the dust by Patroclus' bier for the dogs and vultures.⁷³ On top of that, Achilles chooses to drag Hector around Patroclus' tomb with his chariot repeatedly (Hom. *Il.* 24.14-22). It is only Apollo's intervention that preserves Hector's body and halts Achilles' maltreatment of the corpse. Apollo remarks that “[Achilles] has destroyed pity, and there is not in him any shame,” believing that Achilles gains nothing honorable from his actions (Ἀχιλεὺς ἔλεον μὲν ἀπώλεσεν, οὐδέ οἱ αἰδῶς / γίγνεται, Hom. *Il.* 24.44-5). Although Achilles attempts to sate his own suffering, the gods see Achilles' actions as immoderate within the heroic code. Like Agamemnon, Achilles falters in his αἰδῶς by his excess; unlike Agamemnon, he relents to the gods' will and receives Priam's ransom for Hector's body.⁷⁴

Moreover, through that ransom, Achilles receives even more in exchange for Hector's body; in doing so, he achieves another excess in exchange for his suffering. Having wealth promised by Agamemnon, riches ransomed from Priam, and the deaths of many Trojans under his belt, Achilles is finally able to let go of his wrathful suffering after his interaction with Priam in Book 24. Yet this overabundance of wealth acquired by Achilles, as with Achilles' vengeance against Hector, exceeds the heroic equilibrium; from the objective valuation of the heroic code,

⁷³ Achilles says directly that this is his intention at Hom. *Il.* 23.19-23 to fulfill his promise to Patroclus.

⁷⁴ To be clear, it is the *excess* that the gods complain about. It is fine to dishonor the body of a defeated warrior within the heroic code. See, for example, Hom. *Il.* 16.555-61 for Patroclus' unquestioned desire to strip and to dishonor Sarpedon's body. Achilles goes overboard in how much he harms Hector's body for the sake of his own suffering; the gods do not understand why he is causing suffering when no honor is being transacted.

Achilles has received much more than he had taken from him. Both excesses are caused by the subjective nature of Achilles' suffering: being so grievous and unfathomable, this suffering becomes "the insatiable maw that all material forms of *timē* attempt to appease."⁷⁵ Achilles has contorted the heroic code in refusing to quantify his pain. Pain, as Mary Ebbott relates, removes our ability to focus on anything but it, spiraling into more pain while remaining only describable by our own conceptions of it.⁷⁶ Achilles experiences exactly this: a consuming, personal suffering that defies evaluation and comparison, an entity that cannot feasibly be transacted within the equivalence-reliant heroic code.

Yet suffering, in any case, must be expressed; through lamentation and sacrifice, the *Iliad* conveys an alternative (yet traditional) transaction of suffering for κλέος outside of battle, one that strives to apotheosize mortals within the realm of memory. To reveal this, we turn to the context of Book 23. Recall that Achilles, after killing Hector, thought first of Patroclus' corpse: "There is a dead man who lies by the ships, unwept, unburied: / [Patroclus]: and I will not forget him, never so long as / I remain among the living and my knees have their spring beneath me" (κεῖται παρ νήεσσι νέκυς ἄκλαυτος ἄθαπτος / Πάτροκλος: τοῦ δ' οὐκ ἐπιλήσομαι, ὄφρ' ἂν ἔγωγε / ζωοῖσιν μετέω καί μοι φίλα γούνατ' ὀρώρη, Hom. *Il.* 22.386-8). Once Book 23 opens, Achilles has the Myrmidons circle and lament the body thrice and give sacrifices over it. Then, falling asleep in his own threnody, Patroclus appears to him and accuses Achilles of forgetting him, explaining that he cannot cross into Hades until he has been given a proper burial. During the next morning, Achilles begins the public funeral preparations and proceeds to plentifully adorn the pyre with sacrifices—including that of twelve Trojan youths. Achilles even offers sacrifices to wind deities Zephyros and Boreas so that they set alight the pyre. Achilles laments overnight,

⁷⁵ Staten 1993:351.

⁷⁶ Ebbott 2016:34.

has the pyre put out in the morning, collects Patroclus' bones in a jar, and interts it in a pyre mound where he too shall soon lie as per his chosen fate. In doing so, Achilles respects Patroclus' wish of a shared burial with him. Lastly, Patroclus' funeral games are held, giving way to fervent competition for prizes from Achilles' stores. All of these elaborate funeral rites and sacrifices were given in Patroclus' honor.

Of course, by "honor," I refer to his κλέος; through the practices of lamentation and sacrifice, one invokes and reverences the memory of the departed. We see this most explicitly in Achilles' gifting to Nestor of the last prize of the chariot race, the two-handled jar. First, Achilles, handing over the leftover reward to old Nestor, remarks: "This, aged sir, is yours to lay away as a treasure / in memory of the burial of [Patroclus]" (τῆ νῦν, καὶ σοὶ τοῦτο γέρον κειμήλιον ἔστω / Πατρόκλοιό τάφου μνημ' ἔμμεναι, Hom. *Il.* 23.618-9). The prizes (γέρον) of the games are treasured (κειμήλιον) to remember (μνημ') the burial (τάφου) of a man. Furthermore, after reminiscing on his own feats of athleticism, Nestor bids Achilles to "[g]o now, and honor the death of your companion with contests," gladdened that he, too, could receive funereal honors (ἀλλ' ἴθι καὶ σὸν ἑταῖρον ἀέθλοισι κτερέϊζε, Hom. *Il.* 23.646). While these instances of honor are concentrated in the funeral games, I assert that they extend to the preceding sacrifice and threnody. We can see the latter in the prior paragraph's first quote—Achilles was concerned that Patroclus' body laid "unwept" (ἄκλαυτος). Indeed, Helené Monsacré also sees the relationship between lamentation and κλέος, stating that "[t]ears are the complement of *kleos*; one is not possible without the other."⁷⁷ But such examples alone do not reveal *how* the lamentation and sacrifice apotheosize mortals.

⁷⁷ Monsacré 2017:89.

Mortals experience apotheosis through lamentation and sacrifice in that the essence of κλέος is evoked, a κλέος kindred to sacrifices for the gods. The root of κλέος is cognate with κλύω, which refers to the action of hearing. Also, κλέος, too, deals with “hearing,” evolving into the notions of “report,” “rumor,” or “glory.”⁷⁸ The relationship between κλέος and lamentation is not hard to see: mourners cry out to the memory of the deceased, devoting their suffering to keep the dead heard about and in mind. For instance, the whole Myrmidon army, “longing after [Patroclus],” weeps in memory of their countryman’s death (τοῖον ... πόθειον, Hom. *Il.* 23.16). On the other hand, κλέος-evoking sacrifices may be harder to visualize. A lavish sacrifice may be more memorable in its quantity. Plus, such a sacrifice gifts further τιμή upon the dead. More significantly, these sacrifices parallel those meant for the gods and, thusly, make men godlike within memory. This may be gleaned from the gods’ reactions to sacrifice. For example, in Book 1, when Chryses prays to Apollo for the god’s intervention, the poet states that “[s]o [Chryses] spoke in prayer, and [Phoebus] Apollo heard him” (ὥς ἔφατ’ εὐχόμενος, τοῦ δ’ ἔκλυε Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων, Hom. *Il.* 1.43). Again, in Book 23, when the flames of Patroclus’ pyre do not light, it is Iris who, “hearing [Achilles’] prayer,” tells the winds of the offering that Achilles promises for their aid (ἀράων αἴουσα, Hom. *Il.* 23.199).⁷⁹ Thus, when a sacrifice is performed, it asks for the gods to listen. Similar proceedings take place for mortals within funeral rites, as Patroclus’ funeral demonstrates.⁸⁰ In transacting suffering through godlike sacrifice and vast lamentations, Achilles strives to give to Patroclus unforgettable honors so that Patroclus will be apotheosized.

But not even this stems Achilles’ suffering once and for all; determining what does so will illumine the *Iliad*’s full evaluation of the transactional nature of the heroic code. For

⁷⁸ See Autenrieth’s entry for the word κλέος.

⁷⁹ Although αἴουσα is not κλύω, it also refers to perception in the sense of hearing.

⁸⁰ Achilles even gives over a lock of hair dedicated to the river god, Spercheios, glorifying Patroclus even further with a gift *meant* for the gods. See Hom. *Il.* 23.144-53 for this scene.

Achilles, suffering abates after his encounter with Priam—Achilles finally eats and rests after so much strain and sorrow. But what it is about this encounter that calms him? First, Achilles and Priam are similar in their sorrows. Both defile and starve themselves until their laments conclude, for example.⁸¹ Therefore, it is no coincidence that these two men weep together over their losses, recognizing their shared suffering in fathers losing their sons.⁸² For Achilles, that understanding of common humanity lets him to realize that “[t]here is not any advantage to be won from grim lamentation. / Such is the way the gods spun life for unfortunate mortals, / that we live in unhappiness, but the gods themselves have no sorrows” (οὐ γάρ τις πρῆξις πέλεται κρυεροῖο γόοιο: / ὥς γὰρ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι / ζῶειν ἀχνημένοις: αὐτοὶ δέ τ’ ἀκηδέες εἰσί. Hom. *Il.* 24.524-6).⁸³ That is, although Zeus bestows from both “an urn of evils” and “an urn of blessings,” mortal lives are ultimately unhappy because of the evils ([δῶρων] οἷα ... κακῶν, ἕτερος δὲ ἑάων, Hom. *Il.* 24.528).⁸⁴ Although Achilles tried to contort the heroic code to quell his suffering, he sees no further point in doing so. From his viewpoint, the gods gave mortals suffering and their only option of dealing with it is the heroic code’s promise of immortality.⁸⁵ He must accept the circumstances of mortality to move forward, no matter how dissatisfying they are. It may be true that Book 24 normalizes the heroic code in giving Hector and Achilles their owed honors. But this scene acknowledges that all the suffering required to attain those owed honors might not have been worth it in the end. In other words, suffering is too subjective for the heroic code to work; that is what Achilles and Priam begin to see.

⁸¹ For the parallel defilement, see Hom. *Il.* 18.22-7 for Achilles and Hom. *Il.* 22.412-5 and Hom. *Il.* 24.160-5 for Priam. For the parallel starvation, see Hom. *Il.* 19.305-8 for Achilles and Hom. *Il.* 24.641-2 for Priam. Monsacré 2017:127-31 details these parallels.

⁸² Staten 1993:353; Oele 2010:63.

⁸³ The spacing of Lattimore’s translation was slightly shifted to match the Greek in its number of lines. See also Hom. *Il.* 24.549-51 for a similar sentiment.

⁸⁴ The δῶρων is not explicitly in the quotation but is necessary for seeing syntactically how the ἑάων functions.

⁸⁵ Schein 1984:82.

With that said, let us return to what this chapter ultimately concerns: how is suffering given meaning within the *Iliad*? At the very beginning of the epic, we hear:

μη̄νιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος
οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρί' Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκε,
πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν
ἡρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν
οἰωνοῖσί τε πᾶσι, Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή,
ἔξ οὔ δὴ τὰ πρῶτα διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε
Ἄτρεΐδης τε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν καὶ δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.

Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus' son Achilles
and its devastation, which put pains thousandfold upon the Achaians,
hurled in their multitudes to the house of Hades strong souls
of heroes, but gave their bodies to be the delicate feasting
of dogs, of all birds, and the will of Zeus was accomplished
since that time when first there stood in division of conflict
Atreus' son the lord of men and brilliant Achilles. (Hom. *Il.* 1.1-7).

And it is here, as with this chapter, that we end. Achilles' godly wrath (μη̄νιν), the emotion so deep that it can only be described as divine, divides (διαστήτην, as a noun) him from the traditional use of heroic code. Why? It is because of the system itself, an order which mortals cannot truly evaluate and adjudicate. The thousand-fold sufferings (μυρί' ... ἄλγε') on both the Achaean and Trojan sides are unfathomably deep, resulting in sufferings unable to be measured for proper recompense. Achilles recognizes this subjective nature of suffering and enacts his own exchange, taking vengeance and receiving ransom until he finally *feels* sated and accepts both the death of his glorified companion and the glorious, youthful death he is fated to receive on account of his choices. But Achilles' rejection of the heroic code's κλέος-suffering equivalence does not label said code as unequivocally negative. Transacting honor through suffering and death on the battlefield, the heroic code's quest for immortality stands as a dissatisfying yet sole option for escaping the unhappiness of a mortal life and attaining divine happiness. Truly, it is as Sarpedon declared to Glaucus in this chapter's opening:

Man, supposing you and I, escaping this battle
would be able to live on forever, ageless, immortal,
so neither would I myself go on fighting in the foremost
nor would I urge you into the fighting where men win glory. (Hom. *Il.* 12.322-5).

Chapter Two – The Inheritors of Suffering: Πάθος καὶ Μάθος

Part One: The Aeschylean Context

As Homer’s Archaic Period concluded, Hellenic society faced a monumental period of change. This change can aptly be characterized as a period of ἀγών, of “gathering” or “struggle.” Formerly fitting for an occurrence like the Homeric funeral games, the Classical ἀγών took on the wider nuances of the wars against the Persians, the legal trials in a now-democratic Athens, and the yearly theatrical contests of the Great Dionysia. Born to Euphorion at Eleusis in either 525 or 524 B.C., Aeschylus witnessed the dawn of this fruitful period and was a frontrunner in the cultural revolution as a famed playwright.⁸⁶ His ingenuity did not restrict him from using the ideas and values of the former period; rather, Aeschylus crafted a trilogy of plays based on a myth tradition also found in the *Odyssey*.⁸⁷ This trio of plays is the *Oresteia*, a tale of familial destruction and the revival of justice. It is in combining our ideas about the Archaic Period’s view of suffering and grasping some specific contentions of the Classical Period that we will be able to dig more deeply into the *Oresteia*’s suffering.

First, let us clarify the political context of the plays. One of the major divergences of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* from the myth tradition of the *Odyssey* is the entire third play, the *Eumenides*. The *Odyssey* makes no mention of the Erinyes’ pursuit of Orestes.⁸⁸ While the Erinyes’ deeds may have been part of the wider myth tradition, Aeschylus turns their hunt and its resolution to Athens. This alteration of the story not only produced novelty for the audience but also provides a twofold etiology.⁸⁹ First, it explains the origin of the shrine to the Erinyes in a

⁸⁶ Hall 2010:62; Taplin and Billings 2018:1. See also the LSJ for the varying nuances of ἀγών. Grene and Lattimore 1959:2 disagrees with the certainty of Aeschylus’ year of birth, saying that 513 or 512 B.C. is more likely.

⁸⁷ For example, see Hom. *Od.* 1.32-43 for references to the characters of the myth surrounding the House of Atreus (or, perhaps more correctly, the House of Pelops). Lattimore 1991’s *Odyssey* was used to examine these lines.

⁸⁸ Grene and Lattimore 1959:8.

⁸⁹ Taplin 1983:4-6.

cavern beneath the Acropolis.⁹⁰ How it does so is apparent: Athena promises them said cavern, a place “deep hidden under ground that is [theirs] by right / where [they] shall sit on shining chairs beside the hearth / to accept devotions offered by [their] citizens,” *κευθμῶνας ἐνδίκου χθονὸς / λιπαροθρόνοισιν ἡμένας ἐπ’ ἐσχάραις / ἔξειν ὑπ’ ἀστῶν τῶνδε τιμαλφουμένας*, so that they do not taint Athens in their bitterness at losing the trial, and the Erinyes eventually receive it happily (Aesch. *Eum.* 805-7).⁹¹ Second, it discusses the Areopagus in light of its recently-restricted role in adjudication. In 462 and 461 B.C., a civil war had nearly broken out in Athens over recent political tensions. The Athenian Ephialtes wanted to alter the function of the aristocratic Areopagus so that juries could be from any class and the Βουλή and Ἐκκλησία could take on some of its duties. However, chaos erupted: Ephialtes was assassinated, an oligarchic plot attempted to overthrow the democracy, and slaughter occurred in the streets. That chaotic year still passed Ephialtes’ reforms and caused the Areopagus to judge homicide cases alone.⁹² While Aeschylus’ exact position on the issue of the Areopagus is unclear, his representation of it is lucid.⁹³ Athena establishes a court in Athens with an Athenian jury to judge Orestes’ guilt in the murder of his mother. Both etiologies are crucial to understanding why the plays proceed as they do and aid us in discerning what values and meaning lie beneath the narrative.

The other aspect of Aeschylus’ context that deserves discussion is religion; first, we shall discuss religion and Greek tragedy in a more general manner before proceeding into Aeschylus’ chosen theological concerns. Tragedy itself performs a religious function; the Great Dionysia

⁹⁰ Hall 2010:224.

⁹¹ All Aeschylean Greek is from the Perseus Digital Library edition of the Herbert Weir Smyth’s second volume on the plays of Aeschylus. All translations will come from Grene and Lattimore 1959 unless otherwise noted. Note that Lattimore utilized Smyth’s Greek but may differ in translation in slight ways via taking directly from the manuscripts instead of from Smyth’s emendations, as Grene and Lattimore note (see page v).

⁹² Euben 1982:23; Hall 2010:224-5.

⁹³ Bowie 1993:11 catalogues some scholarly thoughts on the relationship between the *Oresteia* and recent political events. Hall 2010:225-7 also notes a few arguments that have been given on the subject, including her own.

festival, dedicated to Dionysus, included three days of plays preceded by months of theatrical preparation and extensive celebratory rites.⁹⁴ Furthermore, the word “tragedy” or τραγωδία, which is most sensibly divided into τράγος, “goat,” and ᾠδή (a contraction of ἀοιδή, kin to ἀοιδός), “song,” seems to bear a ritualistic connotation.⁹⁵ However, the exact sense of the term is unclear. Does it refer, like Aristotle once asserted, to Dionysus’ satyrs and the corresponding hymnal dithyrambs which they sang in the god’s honor?⁹⁶ Or could the goat’s role pertain to sacrificial rituals at the Great Dionysia?⁹⁷ The latter explanation has some merit with the prominence of religious animal sacrifice.⁹⁸ Regardless of one’s answer, the Athenian esteem of Dionysus is apparent. The plays were held at the Theater of Dionysus, a location adjacent to the holy Acropolis and contained within Dionysus’ sanctuary.⁹⁹ Dionysus himself, perhaps most suitably called the god of tensions in his domains of revelry and madness, deception and epiphany, and life and death, is served well by Athenian tragedy.¹⁰⁰ As a god born, torn apart, and reborn in various ways (e.g. the myth of Zagreus), Dionysus can interact with questions of life and death more than the other gods.¹⁰¹ Most of all, he has a mystery religion. Like the secret initiation rites of Dionysus, the plays were rituals participating in madness through the actors’ personae; they, too, muddled boundaries to reach toward greater knowledge of the world.¹⁰²

⁹⁴ See Hall 2010:20-4, 55-8, 87 and Taplin and Billings 2018:xii for discussions of the aspects of tragedy (e.g. the stagecraft and aural components) and the preparations of such aspects.

⁹⁵ Burkert 2001:2-4.

⁹⁶ Burkert 2001:2-3; Hall 2010:49-50. The accounts of both stem from Arist. *Poet.* 4.1449a.

⁹⁷ Burkert 2001:4-5; Hall 2010:50.

⁹⁸ For a discussion of this, see Chapter 1 or Burkert 2001:9-16. Also, as Hall 2010:22-5 does, we may note that a procession called the πομπή led to the Theater of Dionysus for sacrifices and a public feast preceding the three days of plays.

⁹⁹ Hall 2010:91; Taplin and Billings 2018:xiii.

¹⁰⁰ Woodruff 1999:xiii-xv, xl-xli.

¹⁰¹ Gantz 1993:112-9. For the myth of Zagreus, see especially 118-9. Gantz also rightfully points out that most of Dionysus’ stories “result in the catastrophe for the mortals involved,” which reinforces the suitability of Dionysus for Greek tragedy; indeed, few characters escape the stage unscathed!

¹⁰² Woodruff 1999:xiv-xv.

By my analysis of the *Oresteia*, I would assert that Aeschylus used his play in that manner. Particularly, Aeschylus' ruminations revolve around Greek religion and its concerns.¹⁰³ Of these, one especially deserves definition for the context of the *Oresteia*: μίασμα. Usually translated as “pollution,” μίασμα is a spiritual stain, sickness, or entanglement that a person incurs in certain ways. While incurred μίασμα is often reprehensible to the gods and is morally deplorable thereby, it more generally denotes and evaluates awkward states of being.¹⁰⁴ As such, childbirth, incest, and—the most relevant of the three to our plays—murder are acts that produce μίασμα.¹⁰⁵ This religious ailment required specific purification rituals for its cleansing, ones which ultimately allowed for the dirtied individual to return to purity and normalcy in society.¹⁰⁶ With this concept established, we may embark into the plays that take a tale from the Archaic Period, imbue it with the contextual intricacies of the Classical Period, and let it say something more about the concepts of justice, wisdom, and suffering.

Part Two: Analysis of the *Oresteia*

Χο.: παιδοβόροι μὲν πρῶτον ὑπῆρξαν
 μόχθοι τάλανές τε Θυέστου:
 δεύτερον ἀνδρὸς βασίλεια πάθη:
 λουτροδάικτος δ' ὄλετ' Ἀχαιῶν
 πολέμαρχος ἀνὴρ:
 νῦν δ' αὖ τρίτος ἦλθέ ποθεν σωτήρ,
 ἢ μόρον εἶπω;
 ποῖ δῆτα κρανεῖ, ποῖ καταλήξει
 μετακομισθὲν μένος ἄτης;

Chorus: The children were eaten: there was the first affliction, the curse of Thyestes. Next came the royal death, when a man and lord of the Achaean armies went down killed in the bath. Third is for the savior. He came. Shall I call

¹⁰³ Helm 2004 *passim*, but especially 29-38, 50-3.

¹⁰⁴ Meinel 2015:16, 114; Taplin and Billings 2018:245; Zeitlin 1965:502.

¹⁰⁵ Meinel 2015:114; Visser 1984:201-2.

¹⁰⁶ Visser 1984:202-3.

it that, or death? Where
is the end? Where shall the fury of fate
be stilled to sleep, be done with? (Aesch. *Cho.* 1065-76).

Echoing throughout the *Oresteia* is the question of an end, one which the female servants of Argos' royal house frame in the *Choephoroi*. This end is that of the suffering and ruin (ἄτης) of the house of Atreus. The trilogy sends body after body toppling onto the stage. First, in the *Agamemnon*, we hear of the sacrifice of Iphigenia by Agamemnon in order to sate Artemis and stir winds toward Troy for the Achaean fleets (Aesch. *Ag.* 218-57). Then, Cassandra envisions Atreus' bygone slaughter and "celebratory" meal of Thyestes' children (παιδοβόροι) for Thyestes' return from exile (Aesch. *Ag.* 1095-7). The plays then roll out visual evidence of two double murders. A bloodied Clytemnestra, vaunting in her victory, unveils the corpses of Agamemnon (ἄνδρὸς βασιλεία πάθη) and Cassandra (Aesch. *Ag.* 1331-98). Following this, Orestes (the servants' σωτήρ) slays both Aegisthus and Clytemnestra within the *Choephoroi* (Aesch. *Cho.* 838-1006). Death threatens Orestes from the end of the *Choephoroi* into the *Eumenides*, but Clytemnestra's vengeful Erinyes do not overtake him because of Athena's trial. With Orestes' escape, the libation-bearing servants seems to have been answered. But this ending does not sit well with scholars. While some accept this distinctly "happy" ending to a tragedy, others are not so convinced.¹⁰⁷ As with most discussions of the *Oresteia*, we cannot ignore this question: does the *Eumenides* end the cycle of suffering, ruin, and μίαισμα rending the royalty of Argos? Or does the play, through the cleverness (i.e. the πειθῶ, "persuasion") of Athena and Apollo, problematize the issue further in a deceptive cleansing?

¹⁰⁷ For arguments that support the idea that the *Eumenides* resolves the issues of the three plays in a firm and moral manner, see Lattimore 1959:29-31, Zeitlin 1965:506-8, Visser 1984:202-6, Sommerstein 2010:187, and Allen-Hornblower 2016:198-9. For arguments that oppose this idea, see Euben 1982:29-33, Cohen 1986:136-40, and Dolbert 2012:281-4. Hall 2010:226-7 and Taplin and Billings 2018:xx have more neutral stances.

The answer to this inquiry is vital to understanding Aeschylus' depiction of suffering; yet it, like the plays' symbolism, is bound up in a well-woven net of questions that must be untangled to find fuller meaning.¹⁰⁸ For the sake of brevity, we will confine ourselves to a selection of unifying themes to understand Aeschylus' assertions. Πάθει μάθος, "learning by suffering," reigns: this principle governs all three plays.¹⁰⁹ What this principle manages is dual and entwined in itself—the themes of life versus death and of corruption versus restoration, which serve as an evaluative through line from which Aeschylus makes moral judgments. I would place these themes under the plays' understanding of inheritance. From old to new, from parent to child, these transitions recur as contrasting pivots for Aeschylus' aims. Having established these ideas of inheritance, we can define the true justice (δίκη) in these plays. Finally, we may return to our overarching query and reveal what meaning suffering is given for the Classical Period as it inherits from the Archaic Period and Homeric vision of suffering.

In the *Agamemnon*, the phrase πάθει μάθος appears in the elderly Argive Chorus' Hymn to Zeus and provides the plays with some cosmic definition. After inquiring about Clytemnestra's present sacrifices and remembering Calchas' prophecy concerning the Atreides, the Chorus pleads to Zeus that he free them from "the fruitless burden from the mind" of not being certain about how to invoke Zeus in their plea (τὸ μάταν ἀπὸ φροντίδος ἄχθος, Aesch. *Ag.* 165).¹¹⁰ They acknowledge the overturning of unnamed former powers whom Zeus overcame. The one "who in time long ago was great," Ouranos, has faded into the background; Kronos, too, has disappeared via Zeus' mastery of him (ὅστις πάροιθεν ἦν μέγας, Aesch. *Ag.* 166).¹¹¹ The

¹⁰⁸ For a discussion of the interwoven symbolism, see, for example, Lattimore 1959:15-8 and Zeitlin 1965:463-4.

¹⁰⁹ The quotation is my translation of the words. This phrase can be found in the text at Aesch. *Ag.* 177. Lattimore 1959 renders it "wisdom / comes alone through suffering" in its context.

¹¹⁰ The translation is mine. I follow Clinton 1979's reading of the Hymn to Zeus that takes it seriously as a prayer, proposing that the Chorus' confusion here deals with determining the invocation of Zeus proper to their entreaty—that is, to spare Agamemnon from death and to allow him to learn from his wrongdoing in sacrificing Iphigenia.

¹¹¹ This would at least match the familiar Hesiodic picture in the *Theogony*.

influence and manner of these old gods is not what the Chorus is searching for.¹¹² Rather, Zeus' rule is what institutes the law of πάθει μάθος, having “guided men to think,” in and of itself (τὸν φρονεῖν βροτοῦς ὁδώ- / σαντα, Aesch. Ag. 176-7). This statement about Zeus' rule justifies the Chorus' invocation of Zeus in the first place. Because they are concerned about Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia receiving retribution, they hope that Zeus does not kill Agamemnon outright but allows him to learn from his mistakes.¹¹³ But this motivation only vaguely defines πάθει μάθος as a relation between suffering and learning connected with retribution. The next lines say that “[s]till there drips in sleep against the heart / grief of memory; against / our pleasure we are temperate” (στάζει δ' ἔν θ' ὕπνῳ πρὸ καρδίας / μνησιπήμων πόνος; καὶ παρ' ἄ- / κοντας ἤλθε σωφρονεῖν, Aesch. Ag. 179-81).¹¹⁴ The dual statements relay a resistance to Zeus' edict. The former, opposing the heart (πρὸ καρδίας), and the latter, opposing our will (παρ' ἄκοντας), hint at the nature of πάθει μάθος as occurring painfully in memory (μνησιπήμων) but leading to proper restraint (σωφρονεῖν). As nightmares in sleep (ἔν ... ὕπνῳ) or ill thoughts flit about, the “grace” that the gods' king has given “comes somehow violent” (που χάρις βίαιος, Aesch. Ag. 181). It reinforces man in his quest toward thinking soundly (σωφρονεῖν).

To further clarify the importance and lingering obscurity of πάθει μάθος, we will examine a second passage in which this Zeus-ordained maxim arises. Following the tale of Iphigenia's sacrifice, which the Chorus refuses to fully retell, the old men state:

(Χο.: Δίκα δὲ τοῖς μὲν παθοῦσ-
 τιν μαθεῖν ἐπιρρέπει:
 τὸ μέλλον δ', ἐπεὶ γένοιτ', ἂν κλύοις: πρὸ χαιρέτω:
 ἴσον δὲ τῷ προστένειν.
 τορὸν γὰρ ἤξει σύνορθρον ἀυγαῖς.

¹¹² Clinton 1979:7-8 notes that the first god might more vaguely be a god of strength and might rather than Ouranos due to the following line in the play; regardless, the point stands that the character of such gods is not desirable here.

¹¹³ Ibid. 1979:3.

¹¹⁴ This text is sometimes emended to ἄνθ' ὕπνου, “instead of sleep”, instead of ἔν θ' ὕπνῳ, but I agree with Aranovsky 1978:244 in finding the original reading to be more suitable.

(Chorus:) Justice so moves that those only learn
who suffer: and the future
you shall know when it has come; before then, forget it.
It is a grief too soon given.
All will come clear in the next dawn's sunlight. (Aesch. Ag. 250-4).

The Chorus points to the divine personification of justice (Δίκη), that which Zeus instated through his rule, as the one who allots (ἐπιρρέπει) to the ones having suffered (τοῖς μὲν παθοῦσιν) that they learn (μαθεῖν). On the other hand (following the μὲν ... δ'), foresight (τὸ μέλλον ... κλύοις) remains a grievance (τῷ προστένειν) that only the passing of time can resolve (τορὸν γὰρ ἤξει σύνορθρον ἀγαῖς). These passages cosmically express learning as the *result* of suffering—and the consequence of knowing, as the preceding lines express in discussing Calchas' prophecy.¹¹⁵ Learning, being contingent on time and expressed both in sleep and in the waking world, is *experienced*.¹¹⁶ It is felt within the mortal body. This is what Zeus gave men: a toilsome, corporeal, inescapable avenue for learning.¹¹⁷ In the old and the new, we experience (πάθος, tamely) the world and reap the fruit of our deeds within the bounds of allotted justice.

But that is not all there is to say about these notions. The *Oresteia* problematizes and deepens its conceptions of πάθει μάθος and δίκη through its entanglement of ruin and μίσημα. If we proceed chronologically in our investigation, we must begin with Cassandra—she, as a prophetess, reveals the origin of the Atreid curse.¹¹⁸ Calchas and Cassandra, as oracles,

¹¹⁵ Aranovsky 1978:246-7. See also Sommerstein 2010:185.

¹¹⁶ Aranovsky 1978:248. This is like Boitani 2009:215's framing of this idea as a *recognition* that comes through suffering, but I would argue that, although Aristotle's *Poetics* later recognizes the idea of recognition as important to tragedy, Aranovsky's perspective on experience is more accurate in terminology because it represents a gradual attainment rather than an instantaneous acquisition.

¹¹⁷ This serves in contrast to Sommerstein 2010's conception of human life before πάθει μάθος. He argues that, in accordance with many ancient authors framing man's way of life under Kronos as "utopian," human beings neither learned nor suffered. Rather, they lived in a blissful paradise without the need to know anything. While this is a contributive cosmic detail, it does not reveal what suffering is within the *Oresteia*, so I only give mention to it here.

¹¹⁸ This "reveal" is in the sense that Cassandra first recalls and links the deeds of Atreus to the present problems (or, rather, those to come moments later). The servants in the *Choephoroi* certainly know of the deeds of the house, but they are not conveying anything new in relating that those old deeds originate the succession of Argive sufferings.

experience the future before it occurs and explain the past with divine insight. As Cassandra's frenzy conveys, this experience is particularly vivid and painful.¹¹⁹ She cries out to Apollo, the god who both gifted her and cursed her with the gift of prophecy.¹²⁰ After coming to her senses, she speaks of the house of Atreus as "... a house that God hates, guilty within / of kindred blood shed, torture of its own, / the shambles for men's butchery, the dripping floor" (μισόθειον ..., πολλά συνίστορα / αὐτόφωνα κακὰ κατατόμα, / ἀνδροσφαγεῖον καὶ πεδορραντήριον, Aesch. Ag. 1090-2). Relating the slaughter and consumption of Thyestes' children, her visceral vision heightens when she ceases chanting. She sees the children as spirits haunting the house, holding their own flesh and causing there to be "one that plots vengeance for this [deed]" (ἐκ τῶνδε ποινὰς ... βουλεύειν τινὰ, Aesch. Ag. 1223). This must be Aegisthus, Thyestes' only living son. But we know that Aegisthus is not the sole murderer; the children's impact extends further. As Cassandra divulges: "And drugged to double fury on the wine of men's / blood shed, there lurks forever here a drunken rout / of ingrown Erinyes never to be cast forth" (καὶ μὴν πεπωκὼς γ', ὡς θρασύνεσθαι πλέον, / βρότειον αἷμα κῶμος ἐν δόμοις μένει, / δύσπεμπτος ἔξω, συγγόνων Ἐρινύων, Aesch. Ag. 1188-90).¹²¹ In other words, this slaughter-house of men (ἀνδροσφαγεῖον) hated by gods (μισόθειον) incurred their wrath in the form of the ever-present Erinyes (συγγόνων Ἐρινύων) embodied by the vengeance (ποινὰς) of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra.¹²²

Cassandra's prophecies exemplify a recurring motif in the *Oresteia* that displays the corruption and restoration of Zeus' πάθει μάθος: sacrifice. The quotations above are full of references to sacrifice. First, although σφάζω generally means "to kill" or "to slaughter," it

¹¹⁹ Aranovsky 1978:254-7.

¹²⁰ In line with the Chorus' initial confusion, Loraux 2002:72-5 notes the irregularity of invoking Apollo concerning sorrow in a rather discordant outcry. Indeed, they say: "Now once again in bitter voice she calls upon / this god, who has not part in any lamentation" (ἢ δ' αὖτε δυσσημοῦσα τὸν θεὸν καλεῖ / οὐδὲν προσήκοντ' ἐν γόοις παραστατεῖν; Aesch. Ag. 1078-9).

¹²¹ The translation is Lattimore's, but I have emended "vengeful spirits" to "Erinyes."

¹²² Zeitlin 1965:468 and *passim*; Visser 1984:204; Fowler 1991:99 and *passim*.

resonates frequently with sacrifice.¹²³ Next, we saw the terms ἀνδροσφαγεῖον and πεδορραντήριον in Cassandra’s visions. The former is an evocative compound of σφάζω and means “the place of human sacrifice.” The latter signifies something like “sprinkled earth” (stemming from a combination of ῥαντήριος, “of sprinkling,” and πέδον, “earth”). While the notion of blood is not embedded in the word, it is present in the context and harmonious with other Aeschylean imagery—blood as a wine-libation drunk by the Erinyes.¹²⁴ All of this ghastly imagery reeks of the corruption of human sacrifice and stains Atreus’ actions (and the actions of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus to come) as contrary to the law of πάθει μάθος.

These symbols of corrupted sacrifice come to the fore more strongly during the tale of Iphigenia’s death. Questioning the Clytemnestra’s act of sacrifice, the Chorus leaps into the story of the Achaeans’ plight at Aulis. Because of Artemis’ opposition to the Trojan War and her manipulation of the winds to prevent the fleet at Aulis from embarking, Agamemnon is tasked to sacrifice his daughter to Artemis so that she will rekindle favorable winds for the Troy-bound fleet.¹²⁵ However, Calchas’ first prophecy notes at its end that “[f]or the terror returns like sickness to lurk in the / house; / the secret anger remembers the child that shall be avenged” (μῖμνει γὰρ φοβερὰ παλίνορτος / οἰκονόμος δολία μνάμων μῆνις τεκνόποιος, Aesch. Ag. 154-5). Clytemnestra’s vengeance (specifically, child-vengeance, τεκνόποιος) is foreseen. But personal obligations lead Agamemnon to do the deed. He calls this a “sacrifice of wind-stilling and virginal blood” (παυσανέμου ... θυσίας / παρθενίου θ’ αἵματος, Aesch. Ag. 214-5).¹²⁶

¹²³ Zeitlin 1965:468-9. See especially Note 13, where she makes precisely this semantic contention.

¹²⁴ Lattimore’s translation implies this relationship more strongly than it is present. Mortal blood (βρότειον αἷμα) is drunk (πεπωκώς), but revelry (κῶμος) lingers (μένει). The movement in translation from revelry to wine in this context is not inappropriate, given that the Erinyes *do* drink blood (see, for example, Aesch. *Eum.* 264-72) and that this metaphor is prevalent elsewhere. The idea of libation as metaphor comes from Zeitlin 1965:473 and *passim*, but the relation to πεδορραντήριον is my own. A separate version of this relationship is given by Zeitlin from other sources, but my understanding of πεδορραντήριον seems more direct due to its etymological basis.

¹²⁵ This interpretation of the prophesized Zeus-sent eagles feasting on the pregnant rabbit follows Clinton 1979.

¹²⁶ This translation is my own.

Despite his resistance, Agamemnon “endured then / to sacrifice his daughter,” becoming the performer of the sacrifice (θυτήρ) according to the Chorus (ἔτλα δ’ οὖν / θυτήρ γενέσθαι θυγατρός, Aesch. Ag. 224-5).

Iphigenia’s death is drenched in even more sacrificial symbolism that highlights its corruption and connects it with future deaths in the play. The most immediate symbol is overt; Iphigenia is lifted, gagged, and placed “prone above the altar, as [one] might lift / a goat for sacrifice” (δίκαν χιμαίρας ὑπερθε βωμοῦ / ... προνωπῆ, Aesch. Ag. 233-4).¹²⁷ Like her blood is about to be, her “saffron mantle” is “[p]ouring then to the ground” (κρόκου βαφὰς δ’ ἐς πέδον χέουσα, Aesch. Ag. 239). But these details, as scholars have noted, point to specific rituals that play on another sacrificial term: προτέλεια, “preparatory offerings.”¹²⁸ In particular, they are *marital* offerings, which link to the reason why Iphigenia came to Aulis at all—Agamemnon claimed that she was to wed Achilles there.¹²⁹ The robes were shed at the Arcteia ritual, one which represented a woman’s transition from youth to adulthood; the virginal Iphigenia would have experienced that in marriage.¹³⁰ This further mark of treachery in Agamemnon’s deceit gives way to a concluding pathetic scene. Iphigenia sings “the song / of worship when the third cup was poured,” during festal libations, an act that she will no longer be able to perform (τριτόσπονδον ... / ... παιῶνα, Aesch. Ag. 246-7). The Chorus averts their eyes from the succeeding events. They cannot bear to experience again that dreadful bloodshed; they do not want to despair over it and presume ruin for Agamemnon.¹³¹ The Chorus’ reaction to the

¹²⁷ Δίκαν, here, is an improper preposition meaning “in the way of” or “after the manner of.” As Wilson 2006:187-8 relates, this use is almost unique to Aeschylus and, more specifically, the *Oresteia*.

¹²⁸ Zeitlin 1965:466; Bowie 1993:20; Dolgert 2012:273; Allen-Hornblower 2016:197, note 504.

¹²⁹ Zeitlin 1965:493.

¹³⁰ Fowler 1991:90; Bowie 1993:19-20 states this and gives an extensive bibliography that I will not replicate here.

¹³¹ Clinton 1979:14-5.

miasmatic murder clearly colors what the rightful view of Agamemnon's actions ought to be under Zeus' law of πάθει μάθος.

On the other hand, Clytemnestra reacts in just the opposite manner when she revels in her dedicatory murders. This response further helps to define the jurisdiction of πάθει μάθος. Upon entering with Agamemnon's body, Clytemnestra boasts that:

(**Kl.:**) παίω δέ νιν δίς: κὰν δυοῖν οἰμωγμάτοι
μεθῆκεν αὐτοῦ κῶλα: καὶ πεπτωκότι
τρίτην ἐπενδίδωμι, τοῦ κατὰ χθονὸς
Διὸς νεκρῶν σωτῆρος εὐκταίαν χάριν.
οὔτω τὸν αὐτοῦ θυμὸν ὀρμαίνει πεσῶν:
κάκφυσιῶν ὄξειαν αἵματος σφαγὴν
βάλλει μ' ἔρεμνῆ ψακάδι φοινίας δρόσου,
χαίρουσαν οὐδὲν ἦσσαν ἢ διοσδότῳ
γάνει σπορητὸς κάλυκος ἐν λοχεύμασιν.

(**Clytemnestra:**) I struck him twice. In two great cries of agony
He buckled at his knees and fell. When he was down
I struck him the third blow, in thanks and reverence
to Zeus the lord of dead men underneath the ground.
Thus he went down, and the life struggled out of him;
and as he died he spattered me with the dark red
and violent driven rain of bitter savored blood
to make me glad, as gardens stand among the showers
of God in glory at the birthtime of the buds. (Aesch. Ag. 1384-92).

Strikingly, Clytemnestra corrupts sacrifice and the traditional relationship between life and death with her own justice in a manner resembling Atreus' and Agamemnon's actions. Recalling the triple libation, Clytemnestra praises Zeus, savior of the dead (Διὸς νεκρῶν σωτῆρος), upon her third strike by sending Agamemnon's shade to him.¹³² But at the king's sacrifice (σφαγὴν), the blood sprinkling over her resonates again with libation. Like the prior πεδορραντήριον, ψακάδι denotes a sprinkling akin to an outpoured libation.¹³³ However, it is also concordant with a new

¹³² Zeitlin 1965:484; Dolgert 2012:273-4; Allen-Hornblower 2016:191. See also the passage cited at the beginning of this chapter, where three deaths are recounted that mirror the *Agamemnon*'s sacrificial triads.

¹³³ We also see this at Aesch. Ag. 1393-8, where Clytemnestra turns the corrupted image against Agamemnon.

corruption: blood (φοινίας), drizzling over plants (σπορητός) like a spring rain, brings them to a divinely-bright liveliness (διοσδότω γάνει ... ἐν λοχεύμασιν). Rather perversely, μίασμα and death bring life for Clytemnestra.¹³⁴ Already, we see a distortion of sacrificial imagery and the negative light under which Clytemnestra's actions are viewed.

Still, Clytemnestra's justification of her actions has more to show us concerning how Zeus' law of πάθει μάθος evaluates a situation. At the Chorus' scathing criticisms, Clytemnestra spurns their judgment, noting how Agamemnon had "slaughtered like a victim his own child, [her] pain / grown into love, to charm away the winds of Thrace" (ἔθυσεν αὐτοῦ παῖδα, φιλάτην ἐμοὶ / ὠδῖν', ἐποδὸν Θρηκίων ἀημάτων, Aesch. Ag. 1417-8).¹³⁵ More boldly, she announces that "[b]y [her] child's Justice driven to fulfilment, by her Wrath and Fury, to whom [she] sacrificed this man, / the hope that walks [her] chambers is not traced with fear," as long as Aegisthus is present (μὰ τὴν τέλειον τῆς ἐμῆς παιδὸς Δίκην, / Ἄτην Ἐρινύν θ', αἴσι τόνδ' ἔσφαξ' ἐγώ, / οὔ μοι φόβου μέλαθρον ἐλπὶς ἐμπατεῖ, Aesch. Ag. 1432-4). So, she even challenges the Chorus to oppose her, noting that "if the god grant otherwise [in her favor], / [the Chorus] shall be taught—too late, for sure—to keep [its] place" (ἐὰν δὲ τοῦμπαλιν κραίνῃ θεός, / γνώσῃ διδαχθεὶς ὄψε γοῦν τὸ σωφρονεῖν, Aesch. Ag. 1424-5). In response to her beloved daughter's death, she dedicates Agamemnon as a sacrifice to Δίκη, Ἄτη, and an Ἐρινύς (i.e. as synecdoche for all the Erinyes) but holds that the god (θεός, i.e. Zeus) favors her and would cause the Chorus to pay for their ill judgment (σωφρονεῖν, once again).¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Allen-Hornblower 2016:191-4.

¹³⁵ While this statement is expressive on its own, one might even think the word choice of ἀημάτων, being rather uncommon, might have been blatant to sound like πημάτων, a common word for suffering in tragedy.

¹³⁶ This sacrifice to all the Erinyes corroborated by Aesch. *Eum.* 106-9, as Zeitlin 1965:477-8 discusses in tandem with the other deities which Clytemnestra sacrifices to. On another note, a better way to put τὸ σωφρονεῖν in this passage would be "the being-moderate" or "the having-restraint."

Clytemnestra's potent sacrificial imagery and her references to Zeus and δίκη reveal a pervasive and critical misconception of πάθει μάθος.¹³⁷ Cassandra relates that a “choir that sings as one” will never leave Atreus' royal house (χορὸς / ζύμφθογος, Aesch. Ag. 1186-7). Presumably, these are the Erinyes.¹³⁸ Doling out a third and final libation to them, Clytemnestra claims that she is happy that “[she] swept from these halls / the murder, the sin, and the fury” (μοι / μανίας μελάθρων / ἀλληλοφόνους ἀφελούση, Aesch. Ag. 1574-6).¹³⁹ She aligns Justice, whom Clytemnestra also offers Agamemnon as sacrifice to, with atonement for her daughter's death.¹⁴⁰ Even when the Chorus is willing to fight to the death, Clytemnestra prevents it; by Zeus' law, she claims, destiny will decide the matter.¹⁴¹ But her actions, as she latently expresses, boil down to her role as “the old stark avenger / of Atreus for his revel of hate” (τοῦδ' ὁ παλαιὸς δριμύς ἀλάστωρ / Ἀτρέως χαλεποῦ θοινατῆρος, Aesch. Ag. 1500-1). In assuming the role of an ἀλάστωρ, she becomes the “avenging spirit” whom she dedicated her sacrifice to: an Erinyes.¹⁴² As she posits that “[Agamemnon] dealt with even as he suffered,” she voices a veiled version of *lex talionis*, the law of retaliation (ἄξια δράσας ἄξια πάσχων, Aesch. Ag. 1527). Here, we see Clytemnestra's error—she reduces πάθει μάθος to retaliatory justice. In doing so, she falters in her “justice” by effectively usurping Zeus' role as a divine judge.

Instead of πάθει μάθος, Clytemnestra's retaliatory justice claims victory in the *Agamemnon*; in turn, this corrupted version of πάθει μάθος reigns in the *Choephoroi*. Constantly, suffering begets only suffering in the “justice” of revenge. We see this right from the beginning

¹³⁷ Here, “pervasive” refers to the presence of the misconception among the characters of these plays.

¹³⁸ The use of χορὸς appears obscure, but may be rationalized as a reference to the Erinyes' actual role as the chorus in the third play—a metatheatrical prophecy.

¹³⁹ More literally, this would be “... for me, having taken away the each-other-murdering madness from the house.”

¹⁴⁰ Aegisthus also connects Agamemnon's murder with Thyestes' curse, claiming that the king's death has finally obtained justice for the crimes that Atreus committed against his brother (Aesch. Ag. 1603-11).

¹⁴¹ Both at Aesch. Ag. 1568-71 and 1659-60, Clytemnestra expresses this idea. Her claim is to leave the rest to the gods—however, whether this is her true belief is another matter that the *Choephoroi* questions.

¹⁴² Zeitlin 1965:506; Fowler 1991:93 and *passim*; Allen-Hornblower 2016:195, Note 494.

as Orestes prays “Zeus, Zeus, grant me vengeance for my father’s / murder” (ὦ Ζεῦ, δός με τεύσασθαι μόνον / πατρός, Aesch. *Cho.* 17-8). We see τεύσασθαι here from τίνω, our familiar verb of suffering-related transaction.¹⁴³ When Electra asks whom she should invoke to come—a δικαστής, “judge,” or a δικηφόρος, “bearer of justice”—the Chorus responds with “whoever will kill in return” (ὅστις ἀνταποκτενεῖ, Aesch. *Cho.* 120-1).¹⁴⁴ Once Orestes has revealed himself to Electra and the Chorus, he relates that Apollo told him to “cut them down in their own fashion” (τρόπον τὸν αὐτὸν ἀνταποκτεῖναι, Aesch. *Cho.* 274).¹⁴⁵ The Chorus especially encourages the enactment of this will, perhaps acting as per a less-reasoned nature or under a mindset garnered from their new masters.¹⁴⁶ Most significantly, they state:

Χο.: ἀλλ’ ὦ μεγάλοι Μοῖραι, Διόθεν
 τῆδε τελευτᾶν,
 τὸ δίκαιον μεταβαίνει.
 ἀντὶ μὲν ἐχθρᾶς γλώσσης ἐχθρὰ
 γλῶσσα τελείσθω: τοῦφειλόμενον
 πρᾶσσουσα Δίκη μέγ’ ἀντεῖ:
 ἀντὶ δὲ πληγῆς φονίας φονίαν
 πληγὴν τινέτω. δράσαντι παθεῖν,
 τριγέρων μῦθος τάδε φωνεῖ.

Chorus: Almighty Destinies, by the will
 of Zeus let these things
 be done, in the turning of Justice.
 For the word of hatred spoken, let hate
 be a word fulfilled. The spirit of Right
 cries out aloud and extracts atonement
 due: blood stroke for the stroke of blood
 shall be paid. Who acts, shall endure. So speaks
 the voice of age-old wisdom. (Aesch. *Cho.* 306-14).

¹⁴³ For the Homeric use of this verb, see Chapter 1, Part 2.

¹⁴⁴ The LSJ notes that Electra’s words are, in a sense, opposites. Her distinction is important and we will return to it. Note also that Electra does not avidly support the Chorus’ pushes for murder; she is reluctant. Zeitlin 1965:496-7 notes the Chorus’ lack of distinction between these terms as part of her analysis. See also Euben 1982:28.

¹⁴⁵ Note the use of the same verb, ἀνταποκτείνω, in these two quotes. The Chorus seems to get what they want.

¹⁴⁶ Hall 2010:119-26 discusses that slaves were often quite influential in tragedy in terms of giving characters rather dangerous ideas. One need only think of the Nurse in *Hippolytus*, who “has too much initiative” to see that the agency of slaves could cause things to go terribly wrong.

Throughout this passage, the Chorus states the *lex talionis* in no uncertain terms, even utilizing the transactional τινέτω along with the reciprocal polyptoton of πληγή φόνια. In the same breath, however, they invoke Δίκη and Διόθεν (along with Μοῖραι), indicating the gods of πάθει μάθος. All boils down to the triply-old tale (τριγέρων μῦθος), δράσαντι παθεῖν. Most literally, this is “for the one having done, to suffer.”¹⁴⁷ It is important to recognize that δράσαντι is in the aorist; the tense indicates the movement from doing into suffering. As it seems, the Chorus combines δράσαντι παθεῖν with πάθει μάθος. This begs the question: are πάθει μάθος and δράσαντι παθεῖν the same?¹⁴⁸ Despite all these commonalities, my assertion is that they are not. Rather, there is exactly one element missing from δράσαντι παθεῖν that makes it a subset of πάθει μάθος. We may find this most starkly in what I term as δράσαντι παθεῖν’s curse.

Δράσαντι παθεῖν, like the misconceived πάθει μάθος in the previous play, motivates many of this play’s actions and perpetuates the cycle of bloodshed. We may view this clearly if we examine Orestes’ situation in the beginning of the *Choephoroi*. Orestes’ father, the lord of Argos, was murdered. Having come to Agamemnon’s tomb, Orestes expresses his sorrows. Orestes wishes to avenge his father by killing his killer, Orestes’ own mother. However, there is more cause for concern. With Agamemnon dead, both he and Electra are in jeopardy. Their claim to the royal house has been weakened; if the usurpers were to have a new heir, the siblings’ claims would surely be ignored. In her craftiness, Clytemnestra had sent Orestes away to avoid exposing her deceit. On top of this danger, Orestes has been tasked by Apollo to kill the killers “else [he] must [himself] pay penalty / with [his] own life, and suffer much sad

¹⁴⁷ The translation is mine. It seems difficult to take this phrase in another way. The preceding clause seems complete with the τινέτω taking φονίαν / πληγήν as its object and ἀντί πληγῆς φονίας as a prepositional phrase. The clause following also refers to some preceding phrase—a τριγέρων μῦθος—yet τάδε, the object of φωνεῖ, is plural. The plural could be referring to the whole strophe or could simply be poetic in referring to many instances of δράσαντι παθεῖν in the minds of the Chorus’ τριγέρων μῦθος. It seems most likely that δράσαντι παθεῖν is a quotation cued by φωνεῖ and being highly abbreviated syntactically.

¹⁴⁸ Clinton 1979:2-4 asks precisely the same question and reviews scholarship on this question.

punishment” (τῆ φίλῃ ψυχῇ τάδε / τείσειν μ’ ἔχοντα πολλὰ δυστερπῆ κακά, Aesch. *Cho.* 266-7).¹⁴⁹ In Orestes’ description of the punishment, the dead figuratively ask Orestes to be an avenger or to suffer isolation from others, be stricken with madness, be forbidden from altars, and “die / at last, shrunken and wasted away in painful death” (θνήσκειν χρόνῳ / κακῶς ταριχευθέντα παμφθάρτῳ μόνῳ, Aesch. *Cho.* 295-6). As such, it would seem that murder is Orestes’ only choice lest he suffers great agony.

However, the curse of δράσαντι παθεῖν complicates this choice. The Chorus expresses that each death “calls out on [an Erinyes] / to bring out of those who were slain before / new ruin on ruin accomplished” (βοᾷ ... Ἐρινὺν / παρὰ τῶν πρότερον φθιμένων ἄτην / ἑτέραν ἐπάγουσαν ἐπ’ ἄτη, Aesch. *Cho.* 402-4).¹⁵⁰ As we have expressed, Orestes’ choice is to kill the killers or to be tortured to death by Apollo and the spirits of the unavenged. But this is a false choice because the murders dredge up death-bringing Erinyes. In either case, Orestes receives a dreadful fate. The curse of δράσαντι παθεῖν, then, is the cycle questioned by the Chorus at this section’s beginning: death upon death with no end in sight. Thus, δράσαντι παθεῖν is devoid of learning; the cycle repeats, breeding suffering endlessly and perpetually causing death. However, as we have already discussed, learning is the result of the law of πάθει μάθος. Thus, not having this element of learning is what distinguishes δράσαντι παθεῖν from πάθει μάθος.¹⁵¹

Along with one other distinction, this difference molds Orestes’ motivations within the *Choephoroi* and heavily characterizes the ideologies of δράσαντι παθεῖν and of πάθει μάθος that

¹⁴⁹ As Helm 2004:40-47 points out, Agamemnon and Clytemnestra both also appealed to gods for their actions. Agamemnon was justified in punishing Paris for his slight against Menelaus. Clytemnestra was justified in killing Agamemnon for his murder of Iphigenia. Despite being an “agent of Zeus,” Agamemnon did not have the right to kill his own kin to appease Artemis; there was no necessity behind fulfilling Calchas’ prophecy. Both Agamemnon and Clytemnestra disrupt their justification when they place their selfish motivations for the murders over piety toward the gods. As we will see, Orestes does not make the same mistake.

¹⁵⁰ This translation has been slightly edited; Ἐρινὺν was translated more literally as “an Erinyes” rather than “Fury.”

¹⁵¹ Clinton 1979:4 comes to the same conclusion.

the trilogy depicts. Emily Allen-Hornblower points out Orestes' ambivalence and resistance toward his crime. While the staging of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus on the ἐκκόκλημα parallels the deaths of the *Agamemnon*, Orestes turns the focus of any witnesses to the robe which Clytemnestra had used to murder Agamemnon—in other words, to the dreadful deed that justifies his handiwork.¹⁵² Then, after ruminating on his dead mother, he indicates Apollo as the one who “declared [he] could do this and not be charged with wrong” (χρήσαντ' ἔμοι / πράξαντι μὲν ταῦτ' ἐκτὸς αἰτίας κακῆς / εἶναι, Aesch. *Cho.* 1030-2). As we have discussed, Orestes is aware of the consequences of murder; he intends to flee to Apollo's shrine after the deed is done. But, as Orestes' confrontation with Clytemnestra shows, Orestes needed reassurance that he ought to obey the gods' oracles rather than the bonds of men. In other words, he was no matricide, but was made one by the gods.¹⁵³ He voices Apollo's explicit role in these acts and the god's exoneration of him (ἐκτὸς αἰτίας κακῆς) for such acts. This is unlike Clytemnestra, who took the duty of vengeance into her own hands. She instituted her own order and let fate decree the future from there; Orestes, however, obeys the gods and leaves himself open for what is to come. He relies primarily on his piety.¹⁵⁴ Although he inherits δράσαντι παθεῖν from the gods' ancient laws, he does not chain himself to it. He listens to Apollo even if the end of the cycle of suffering is unclear. He is open to learn from the gods; that is his saving grace.

If Orestes represents correct adherence to the law of πάθει μάθος, it remains to be seen how this adherence reconciles with δράσαντι παθεῖν and should be reflected practically. The precise temporal connection between the two concepts arises in the *Eumenides*, as this play

¹⁵² Allen-Hornblower 2016:205-6.

¹⁵³ Ibid. 2016:202-3. She also discusses the highly appealing notion that Pylades was an “impartial judge.” This viewpoint could explain his silence up until this pivotal moment, where he gives a succinct judgment of the situation. This view is supported by Orestes' response, “I judge that you win,” κρίνω σὲ νικᾶν, which turns the legal metaphor around, as νικᾶν, “to win,” along with the obvious κρίνω, “to judge,” have legal uses.

¹⁵⁴ Helm 2004:47.

retains the prior plays' conception of δράσαντι παθεῖν. This is evident in Clytemnestra's presence. She is upset that "[she] suffered too, horribly, and from those most dear, / yet none among the powers is angered for [her] sake / that [she] was slaughtered, and by matricidal hands," and she relies on the Erinyes to punish Orestes equally with death (παθοῦσα δ' οὕτω δεινὰ πρὸς τῶν φιλτάτων, / οὐδεὶς ὑπέρ μου δαιμόνων μηνίεται, / κατασφαγείσης πρὸς χερῶν μητροκτόνων, Aesch. *Eum.* 100-2). The blood-for-blood ideology returns. The chthonic Erinyes, as per their duty to Clytemnestra and others, "make allotments among humans / as [they] think is upright justice" (λέξαι τε λάχη τὰ κατ' ἀνθρώπους / ὡς ἐπινωμᾶ στάσις ἀμά, Aesch. *Eum.* 310-1).¹⁵⁵ In a similar sense to the Homeric μοῖρα, the Erinyes declare their role as ones making allotment (λάχη, ἐπινωμᾶ) for men. Furthermore, they ally themselves with Δίκη; they argue that "the house of Justice collapses," if the matricide is not condemned (πίτνει δόμος δίκας, Aesch. *Eum.* 515).¹⁵⁶ Athena even recognizes their place. She says "[b]ut these women have an allotment not easily sent away" (αἴται δ' ἔχουσι μοῖραν οὐκ εὐπέμπελον, Aesch. *Eum.* 476).¹⁵⁷ Despite this role (μοῖραν) and even a recognition of πάθει μάθος following their speech on Justice, the Erinyes remain practitioners of the olden δράσαντι παθεῖν and cannot be ignored.¹⁵⁸

This determination further differentiates πάθει μάθος and δράσαντι παθεῖν in the old Erinyes' and new Olympians' contrasting considerations of μῖασμα. After having committed his murders, Orestes states clearly that he will "escape this blood that is [his] own,"—that is, purify himself of blood-pollution (the αἷμα κοινόν, more commonly known as μῖασμα)—by going to Apollo's shrine at Delphi, as "Loxias ordained that [he] should turn [him]self to no other shrine

¹⁵⁵ This translation is from Taplin and Billings 2018. Lattimore's rendition understates the idea of allotment.

¹⁵⁶ This almost certainly refers to the goddess Δίκη, as she is invoked lines earlier (on 511) by the Erinyes when they mime what a forlorn suppliant might say after, hypothetically, the Erinyes lost the trial and Justice herself fell apart.

¹⁵⁷ This translation is mine. Taplin's, from Taplin and Billings 2018, is similar but verbose: "these, on the other side, possess a function / that is far from airily dismissed."

¹⁵⁸ Zeitlin 1965:486 concludes similarly that the Erinyes follow the δράσαντι παθεῖν ideology.

than this” (φεύγων τόδ’ αἷμα κοινόν: οὐδ’ ἐφ’ ἐστίαν / ἄλλην τραπέσθαι Λοξίας ἐφίετο, Aesch. *Cho.* 1038-9).¹⁵⁹ In other words, Apollo beckons Orestes toward dual purifications: sacrifices and water-cleansings.¹⁶⁰ Yet the Erinyes persist; they track the stain of Orestes’ blood beyond the rites of purification as per their grounding in δράσαντι παθεῖν. They even characterize Orestes as a sacrifice to them—and one not at an altar, mimicking Clytemnestra’s own improper slaughter.¹⁶¹ Thus, old law of δράσαντι παθεῖν clearly considers the crime and vengeance alone whereas the newer πάθει μάθος also considers circumstances in accordance with divine law.¹⁶²

The shift from the old law to the new law can be further illuminated in the distinct inheritances of Apollo and the Erinyes in the new order. As the Pythia relates, Delphi descended from Gaia to Themis to Phoebe to Apollo, each of which gave it to their successor “by free consent, not ... by force” (θελούσης, οὐδὲ πρὸς βίαν, Aesch. *Eum.* 5). In other words, this gift was peacefully given. This is notable in contrast with the myth tradition where Apollo overthrows the snake-dragon Pytho to obtain Delphi.¹⁶³ Apollo’s position makes him “the spokesman of his father, Zeus,” which he himself states in the trial (Διὸς προφήτης ... ἐστὶ Λοξίας πατρός, Aesch. *Eum.* 20).¹⁶⁴ This privileged position as the prophet of Zeus (Διὸς προφήτης) contrasts with the Erinyes’ adherence to their mother, the primeval goddess Nyx. Not only do the Erinyes differentiate themselves from the “young” gods Athena and Apollo, but they also say that “Zeus has ruled our blood dripping company / outcast, nor will deal with us” (Ζεὺς

¹⁵⁹ The latter translation is an edited version of Lattimore’s to make the wording less awkward.

¹⁶⁰ This is expressed most clearly at Aesch. *Eum.* 443-52, but it is also visible at 276-85.

¹⁶¹ Zeitlin 1965:486; Dolgert 2012:275. Both reflect further on their savagery in drinking blood and in being likened to beasts; these arguments only deepen the Erinyes’ connections with the primal ways of the δράσαντι παθεῖν. For the passage mentioned, see Aesch. *Eum.* 304-6.

¹⁶² A prominent instance of such circumstances is, as Helm 2004 asserts, motivation. As we previously expressed, Orestes was motivated primarily by his piety and remained open to learning thereby.

¹⁶³ As such, Bowie 1993:15 comments that the *Eumenides*’ myth tradition may have been Aeschylus’ own creation. This makes the succession of peace even more potent as a piece of evidence.

¹⁶⁴ Cohen 1986:138 points the passage in the trial, Aesch. *Eum.* 614-39, but uses it to frame Apollo’s argument as “passing the buck” to Zeus and depicting the justice of the *Oresteia* rather darkly as “the right of the stronger.”

δ' αἰμοσταγὲς ἀξιόμισον ἔθνος τόδε λέσγας / ἄς ἀπηξιώσατο, Aesch. *Eum.* 365-6).¹⁶⁵ In summation, the Erinyes' departure from Zeus' law is clear in their own blood-stained (αἰμοσταγὲς) impurity; as such, it makes sense that their views concerning Δίκη diverge, too.

The opposition between δρᾶσαντι παθεῖν and πάθει μάθος comes to the fore in Athena's trial as the principles of the latter law are put into practice.¹⁶⁶ Although the contents of the trial are perplexing in their own ways, I focus on the *purpose* and *construct* of the trial. This purpose is foreshadowed by Apollo in his reassurances to Orestes: "there [at Pallas' citadel] we shall find those who will judge this case, and words / to say that will have magic in their figures" (κάκει δικαστὰς τῶνδε καὶ θελκτηρίους / μύθους ἔχοντες μηχανὰς εὐρήσομεν, Aesch. *Eum.* 81-2).¹⁶⁷ The word δικαστὰς reminds us of Electra's δικαστής; at long last, we search for a judge rather than an avenger. Initially, Athena seems to be this judge. However, after hearing the conflict of both sides, Athena deems that these pleadings (δίκαας, *distinct* justices) are beyond the sole judgment of mortals and even of herself. She wants neither to refuse Orestes as a suppliant nor to ignore the Erinyes' destructive anger (Aesch. *Eum.* 470-5). Thus, she establishes a homicide court with the best Athenian citizens who "shall swear to make no judgment that is not / just, and make clear where in this action the truth lies" (διαρεῖν τοῦτο πράγμ' ἐτητύμως, / ὄρκον πορόντας μηδὲν ἔκδικον φράσειν, Aesch. *Eum.* 488-9). With Athena's aid, they are to make clear-cut (διαρεῖν) the deed (τοῦτο πράγμ') and to think (φράσειν) not apart from justice (μηδὲν ἔκδικον). As we have discussed, many scholars have noted the trial's etiological function for the

¹⁶⁵ For instances where the Erinyes differentiate themselves as "old" gods versus Apollo and Athena, see Aesch. *Eum.* 149-52, 727-8, 778-9, 808-9; for more instances where they are described as spurned, see Aesch. *Eum.* 385-8. More directly, Apollo emphatically shoos them from Delphi at Aesch. *Eum.* 179-97.

¹⁶⁶ As Zeitlin 1965:506 says, "The *Eumenides* returns to the conflict between two proponents of justice, but this conflict moves to the divine level and to the formality of a court of law with a goddess as impartial judge."

¹⁶⁷ A similar example can be found when Apollo tells the Erinyes that "Pallas divine shall review the pleadings of this case," which they reject then but later accept (δίκαας δὲ Παλλὰς τῶνδ' ἐποπτεύσει θεά, Aesch. *Eum.* 224).

Areopagus.¹⁶⁸ But Athena constructs the trial to facilitate the process of Zeus’ ultimate Δίκη and law, especially in more difficult quandaries.¹⁶⁹ By explicating the sufferings and circumstances of the litigants concerning a crime and by comprehending their opposing versions of justice, the judges in a legal case strive to achieve learning by suffering (πάθει μάθος) through a trial. That is, the judges try to experience what the litigants did and to determine what the most pious (i.e. Zeus-aligned) result is based on that.

The movement from δράσαντι παθεῖν to πάθει μάθος is exemplified in our initial question concerning the end of the cycle of ruin through the trial’s full resolution for both parties. For Orestes, resolution is apparent. He is acquitted of the murder that he was ordained to commit by Apollo and Zeus himself.¹⁷⁰ However, the Erinyes grieve their loss and threaten desolation upon humanity. Their poison breeds “cancer, the leafless, the barren,” a lifelessness (ἄφυλλος, ἄτεκνος) that cures their afflicted (like λειχήν, a “blight,” “canker,” or “eruption”) sorrows and brings them life, echoing Clytemnestra (λειχήν ἄφυλλος, ἄτεκνος, Aesch. *Eum.* 785, 815).¹⁷¹ In response to this, Athena attempts to soothe them. She does not leave them to enact their seething vengeance. Rather, she offers them a hidden shrine, underground as per their chthonic nature, “where [they] shall sit on shining chairs beside the hearth / to accept devotions offered by [their] citizens” (λιπαροθρόνοισιν ἡμένας ἐπ’ ἐσχάrais / ἔξειν ὑπ’ ἀστῶν τῶνδε τιμαλφουμένας, Aesch. *Eum.* 834-5).¹⁷² These offered honors (τιμαλφουμένας) are later specified as “first fruits / in offerings for children and the marriage rite,” (ἔτ’ ἀκροθίνια / θύη πρὸ παιδῶν καὶ γαμηλίου

¹⁶⁸ See Chapter 2, Part 1 for a discussion of the etiology of the Areopagus in the *Oresteia*.

¹⁶⁹ Bowie 1993:26 gets at a similar idea.

¹⁷⁰ Athena states the proof of the divine sanction most evidently at Aesch. *Eum.* 796-9.

¹⁷¹ Fowler 1991:99 notes the Erinyes’ affinities with blood and the likely real devastation of blood that the Erinyes would inflict with their “vindictive poison / dripping deadly out of my heart upon the ground” (ἰὸν ἰὸν ἀντιπενθῆ / μεθεῖσα καρδίας, σταλαγμὸν χθονί, Aesch. *Eum.* 782-3, 812-3).

¹⁷² For the Erinyes as chthonic deities, see Fowler 1991:89 and Note 22, Dolgert 2012:278, and Allen-Hornblower 2016:199.

τέλους) “from female and from male processions,” (παρ’ ἀνδρῶν καὶ γυναικείων στόλων) “the baron’s portion in this land,” (σοὶ τῆσδε γαμόρφω χθονός) and, most succinctly, “majestic sacrifice” (σφαγίων ... σεμνῶν, Aesch. *Eum.* 834-5; 856; 890; 1006).¹⁷³ With all these gifts, rituals (στόλων), and lofty sacrifices (ἀκροθίνια θύη, σφαγίων σεμνῶν), not only are the Erinyes given reparations for them not to harm the land, but they are also given a new role within Zeus’ order through Athena’s restoration of well-ordered sacrifices.¹⁷⁴ This restoration of sacrifice signifies a return to πάθει μάθος and a positive valuation of the goddesses’ actions.

Moreover, one final passage exhibits succinctly and decisively how the laws of δράσαντι παθεῖν and of πάθει μάθος are reconciled:

(**Xo.:**) μηδὲ πιούσα κόνις
μέλαν αἷμα πολιτᾶν
δι’ ὄργαν ποινᾶς
ἀντιφόνους ἄτας
ἀρπαλίσαι πόλεως.
χάρματα δ’ ἀντιδιδόειν
κοινοφιλεῖ διανοία,
καὶ στυγεῖν μιᾷ φρενί:
πολλῶν γὰρ τόδ’ ἐν βροτοῖς ἄκος.
Ath.: ἄρα φρονοῦσιν γλώσσης ἀγαθῆς
ὁδὸν εὐρίσκειν;

(**Chorus:**) Let not the dry dust that drinks
the black blood of citizens
through passion for revenge
and bloodshed for bloodshed
be given our state to prey upon.
Let them render grace for grace.
Let love be their common will;
Let them hate with single heart.
Much wrong in the world thereby is healed.
Athena: Are they taking thought to discover that road
Where speech goes straight? (Aesch. *Eum.* 979-89).¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ The citation for Aeschylus is in line with the order of the quotations.

¹⁷⁴ For a similar sentiment, see Visser 1984:205-6; Allen-Hornblower 2016:198-9.

¹⁷⁵ I have slightly edited the spacing of Lattimore’s translation to cause the number of lines between the Greek and the English to be equivalent. The wording, however, is exactly Lattimore’s.

In this passage, the Erinyes bless the lands which they now govern in tandem with Athena. Shedding their former bloodlust, they shun both blood (αἷμα) being drunk (πιούσα) by the dry earth (κόνις) and ruining, avenging blood-polluted vengeance (ποιναῖς ἀντιφόνους ἄτας). Instead, they call for harmony (κοινοφιλεῖ διανοία) in one mind (μῦ φρενί). Athena, too, invokes the mind. Through their thoughts (φρονοῦσιν), Athena wonders whether the Erinyes have found the way of good speech (γλώσσης ἀγαθῆς ὁδὸν), of persuasion, and of impartial justice.¹⁷⁶ The question is almost certainly rhetorical, as Athena soon calls them εὐφρονας, “good-minded ones.” This term generally refers to disposition but, in a context laden with thought, could also refer to thinking well as the term σωφρονεῖν denoted previously. The Erinyes become beings of Zeus’ πάθει μάθος. They are no longer held down by the assumption that “learning by suffering” only refers to δράσαντι παθεῖν. Rather, πάθει μάθος recognizes its misconceptions and seeks to repurpose the old into the new, making good societies greater through development and deliberation. Of course, the trial’s strange arguments prove that this act of pondering is not without difficulties.¹⁷⁷ But these deliberative difficulties do not invalidate πάθει μάθος as the true law of all under Zeus’ reign. As the Erinyes assume their new role in Athens, the tragedy ends on an uplifting note in restoring πάθει μάθος to its rightful comprehension.

Once again, let us ask blatantly: how is suffering given meaning in the *Oresteia*? πάθει μάθος is at the heart of the answer. It is Zeus’ law, one held over all beings. However, it is one fraught with mortals’ misunderstandings and immortals’ hesitance. The notions of Homeric transaction and allotment linger most strongly in the notion of δράσαντι παθεῖν, that triply-aged

¹⁷⁶ Athena specifically invokes Persuasion (Πειθώ; like Δίκη, she is a personified goddess) at Aesch. *Eum.* 970-2).

¹⁷⁷ I would argue that many scholars get caught up on the trial itself and subvert the ending and whole trilogy because the arguments do not lead clearly toward justice for the mortals. Athena is the deciding vote; what does this mean for mortals who do justice without the interference of Athena? Indeed, some are even suspicious of Athena’s judgment, perhaps rightfully framing it as disregarding the rights of mothers. Examples of general dismay toward the trial and its aftermath include the arguments of Cohen 1986, Hall 2010:222-3 and 226-7, and Dolgert 2012; Allen-Hornblower 2016 recognizes the moral complexity, but does not address it at length.

saying that the one having done—usually, having done *ill*—must, in turn, suffer the consequences. Characters like Clytemnestra and the Erinyes wish to sate the suffering which they have felt and harbored within themselves, plotting and endeavoring even over the divine order to do as they please. They corrupt Zeus’ order by obtaining life from death. The young inherit these misunderstandings. Orestes, an unwilling matricide, relies on his piety and acts primarily by the gods’ commands while recognizing the lack of a limit to the cycle of δράσαντι παθεῖν. Although he is pursued by vengeance-seeking Erinyes, the true justice of Zeus shines forth in the trial and, through deliberation, both Orestes and the Erinyes find resolution as followers of πάθει μάθος. As many scholars have pointed out, “[t]he new city cannot progress by exterminating its old order of life; it must absorb and use it.”¹⁷⁸ Despite their dark inheritance, they have learned to think and to act thoughtfully through their suffering. For better or for worse, suffering allows us to learn and to grow if we are open to it.

¹⁷⁸ Grene and Lattimore 1959:31. Zeitlin 1965:507-8, Euben 1982:27, and Wilson 2006:201 seem to share this view.

Conclusion – The Memorial of Mortals

τὸν δ' αὖτε προσέειπεν ἄναξ ἐκάεργος Ἀπόλλων:
ἔννοσίγαι, οὐκ ἄν με σαόφρονα μυθήσαιο
ἔμμεναι, εἰ δὴ σοί γε βροτῶν ἔνεκα πτολεμίζω
δειλῶν, οἳ φύλλοισιν εἰκότες ἄλλοτε μὲν τε
ζαφλεγέες τελέθουσιν ἀρούρης καρπὸν ἔδοντες,
ἄλλοτε δὲ φθινύθουσιν ἀκήριοι. ἀλλὰ τάχιστα
παυώμεσθα μάχης: οἳ δ' αὐτοὶ δηριάσθων.'

In turn the lord who strikes from afar, Apollo, answered [Poseidon]:
“Shaker of the earth, you would have me be as one without prudence
if I am to fight even you for the sake of insignificant
mortals, who are as leaves are, and now flourish and grow
warm with life, and feed on what the ground gives, but then again
fade away and are dead. Therefore let us with all speed give
up this quarrel and let the mortals fight their own battles.” (Hom. *Il.* 21.461-7).¹⁷⁹

Such is what Apollo declares amidst the *Iliad*'s strange theomachy. And, indeed, like her scorned patron, the *Agamemnon*'s Cassandra concludes:

(**Kas.:**) ἰὼ βρότεια πράγματ': εὐτυχοῦντα μὲν
σκιά τις ἄν τρέψειεν: εἰ δὲ δυστυχή,
βολαῖς ὑγρώσσω σπόγγος ὄλεσεν γραφήν.
καὶ ταῦτ' ἐκείνων μᾶλλον οἰκτίρω πολύ.

(**Cassandra:**) Alas, poor men, their destiny. When all goes well
a shadow will overthrow it. If it be unkind
one stroke of a wet sponge wipes the picture out;
and that is by far the most unhappy thing of all. (Aesch. *Ag.* 1327-30).

The tone of the leaves metaphor and Cassandra's fragile human destiny echo the passage we encountered at the beginning of this paper. Glaucus related the cyclical life and death of all mortals, but Apollo's variation on the life-death sequence is phrased more harshly due to the ordering of events and the speaker's intention.¹⁸⁰ While the correlative ἄλλοτε connects both clauses in a “now *this* ... now *that*” sense, stating that “the lifeless ones waste away”

¹⁷⁹ The word “give” in the second-to-last line was moved up from the last line for space considerations. Otherwise, Lattimore's translation is untouched.

¹⁸⁰ Glaucus' speech is quoted on Page 2. Quotations from this passage will not be re-cited.

(φθινύθουσιν ἀκήριοι) punctuates the point of the metaphor.¹⁸¹ Because mortals are so transient, they are not worth spending time on; as such, the “uncaring” Apollo need not fight Poseidon as the other gods frivol and quarrel.¹⁸² Cassandra shares a similar sentiment. Although she certainly laments her own fate and the helplessness that comes with her prophesied murder, she recognizes, like Glaucus, the divine order constricting mortal actions. Just prior to her quotation above, she invokes Helios to have her avengers “avenge as well / one simple slave who died, a small thing, lightly killed” (τίνειν ὁμοῦ, / δούλης θανούσης, εὐμαροῦς χειρώματος, Aesch. *Ag.* 1325-6). The use of εὐμαροῦς along with the overall message of Cassandra’s quotation above stress the vulnerability of human life to death and to change in general.¹⁸³ Apollo and his oracle relate the insignificance of humankind through an emphasis on its universal conclusion. Glaucus, though, balances life and death in saying “[s]o one generation of men will grow while another dies,” ὡς ἀνδρῶν γενεῇ ἢ μὲν φύει ἢ δ’ ἀπολήγει.¹⁸⁴ But in such a κλέος-driven world, why do men fight and suffer if they are merely lives that grow, flourish, and decay? In other words, what is the point of Glaucus or any other warrior fighting on the field of Troy if they strive for a significance (κλέος) that ultimately affirms their insignificance in death?

In my analyses of the *Iliad* and *Oresteia*, we witnessed grave incidents which hinge on the core beliefs of the characters and the divine constraints of Hellenic society. The *Iliad* recounted the vast slaughter committed for the sake of an unquantifiable suffering, one incompatible with the traditional equivalent exchanges between glory and suffering in the heroic code. The *Oresteia* illuminated the true nature of learning that comes through suffering, of

¹⁸¹ The quotation is my (more literal) translation.

¹⁸² I put the word “uncaring” in quotation marks because, despite Apollo’s statement here, he seems to care quite a bit about Hector. See Apollo’s speech at Hom. *Il.* 24.31-54 for a view to this divinity’s concern for mortals.

¹⁸³ εὐμαροῦς is a genitive adjective being rendered as “lightly” in Lattimore’s translation.

¹⁸⁴ Schein 1984:70 and Note 9 comes to a similar conclusion on the differing perspectives of Apollo and Glaucus.

experience that engenders wisdom, and of how justice, rather than corrupt vengeance, ought to be exacted. Despite death looming wraithlike behind Glaucus' metaphor of the leaves, it is precisely his emphasis on the cycle of both crumbling death and blooming life that allowed for the Hellenes to find hope in a meaning for suffering. The commonality between κλέος and μάθος is memory; the former must linger in the minds of other mortals such that one's fame remains present in the world, whereas the latter is the act by which knowledge is committed to the mind. But κλέος cannot be without μάθος— κλέος is a *product* of μάθος. Indeed, a person must be learned about before they can be remembered. Thus, the shift between the two commodities exchanged for suffering is not a matter of how one took the other's place in the Hellenic cosmological order. Rather, it is a matter of how their perspective on κλέος evolved into one of μάθος; it concerns how a dissatisfaction with κλέος led to an understanding and acceptance of the wider mechanism of μάθος by which κλέος is attained.

Glaucus could certainly justify his role on the battlefield with the notion of κλέος, just as Sarpedon did.¹⁸⁵ But the broader justification underlying the quest for κλέος became more explicit and important with the oncoming of the Classical Period as the *Oresteia* displays. The exchange of suffering for κλέος only made suffering meaningful by providing κλέος to cope with suffering's presence in the world. Κλέος could conceptually ignore the harrowing reality of death by promising immortality through memory enduring postmortem. But the heroic system of equivalence was ultimately unsatisfying to its adherents due to its lack of explanation for suffering and, thereby, its empty guarantee of life beyond death. As the heroic system declined, πάθει μάθος arose in response. This principle was more satisfying because it asked the question of why there was suffering at all. It did not simply take suffering as a given and make use of it.

¹⁸⁵ Consider Sarpedon's statement to Glaucus displayed at the beginning of Chapter 1, Part 2.

When accepted as part of the cosmological order, πάθει μάθος led to a broader and more arduous search for σωφροσύνη (a nominal σωφρονεῖν, Aeschylus' desired result of πάθει μάθος), the prized Greek virtue dealing with human thought and, therefore, its deeds.¹⁸⁶ This is because natural result of understanding the cause of suffering is knowing what sort of life we ought to live. That was the true aim of the evolution of suffering's transaction from κλέος to μάθος: to learn what the best life is and how to live it out.

With that said, we have an answer as to how the early Hellenes gave suffering meaning. Neither the *Iliad's* nor the *Oresteia's* suggestions, of course, solve the query concerning the cause of human suffering nor identify the belief of every Greek of the Archaic Period and Classical Period. But that was never the point of this venture. Suffering is a vexing concept to define and understand. It accompanies us throughout our lives whether we like it or not. Certainly, the methodology of this study could provide a template for other inquiries and could give basic insights into the meaning behind suffering of later peoples, such as the Hellenistic Greeks or the Romans of the early Roman Empire. But having a better comprehension of some ancient yet insightful attempts at the rationalization of suffering may allow us to discern what our own conceptions of suffering are and to incorporate them into our thoughts, words, and actions. If we shed our presumptions about how the world works and examine our experiences as they come, we, too, can reach ever closer to wisdom.

¹⁸⁶ Helm 2004 places σωφροσύνη as part of a series of genealogically-connected values (as per Aeschylus' metaphors) that are commonly and similarly linked together within Aeschylus' plays. Whether or not Helm is correct, σωφροσύνη remains highly desirable as a key element in achieving ὄλβος, "prosperity." On another note, I say "more arduous" because of the repeated misconceptions of πάθει μάθος as the old δράσαντι παθεῖν and for the clear struggle involved in attaining justice and wisdom explained in Chapter 2, Part 2.

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¹⁸⁷ These links are to the beginnings of each of the three consecutive plays; all of them are from the same book.

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