ATHENA/ATHENS ON STAGE: ATHENA IN THE TRAGEDIES OF AESCHYLUS AND SOPHOCLES

DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

By 440 BC, the Athenians had created an empire for themselves with Athena, patron of their city, as patron of the empire. This dissertation discusses the dynamic relationship between Athena and her city and how the Athenians negotiated their role as imperialists by characterizing her on stage. Understanding Athena in this way shapes how we understand changes in Athenian hegemony. As the nature of Athenian power shifted so too did the way Athena was presented. The implications behind this understanding are that the more ruthless aspects of Athenian imperialism belong not to the post-Periclean period, but begin to emerge in the 470’s and 460's. The tragedians themselves are aware of the changing nature of Athenian power and used their plays as platforms from which to comment on imperial policies. Athena stands, I argue, within the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles as a symbol for contemporary Athens and her empire.

Aeschylus’ plays on the surface both support Athenian hegemony and help create a favorable image of that hegemony. He creates an idealized image of Athens that could be used as support for the empire by portraying Athena and Athens as the source of a system of justice superior to other systems. This endorsement of legal dominance also lends itself readily as a confirmation of the military dominance of Athens. In the character of Athena Aeschylus creates a paradigm both for Athenian imperial and democratic ideology.
Sophocles presents Athena in two plays through which he both supports and questions Athenian power. In Ajax Locrus, Athena appears similarly to Aeschylus’ Athena. She, while having strong grounds for punishing Lesser Ajax, opts instead for a trial by jury. This is similar to the portrayal found in Aeschylus’ Eumenides and in the legal documents from the fifth century that connect Athena to courtroom justice. This changes in Sophocles’ Ajax. For here Athena embodies those very elements of punishment that she worked so hard to suppress in Eumenides. She, like the empire she now represents in the mid fifth century, is concerned with authority at the expense of true justice and the freedom of others.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Overview: Athena and Athens

The special bond between the goddess Athena and her namesake city Athens is well attested in our ancient sources and well accepted by modern scholars. Athena gave her name to the city after being chosen over Poseidon as protector of that land.¹ She was the pseudo-mother of the autochthonous child, Erichthonius, from whom the Athenians themselves sprang.² In Homer, the name of Athena is synonymous with the rock of the Acropolis³ and it was upon that same Acropolis that the Athenians built Athena’s great temple, the Parthenon. The Panathenaia, reorganized in 566/5 BC and in the fifth century the greatest Athenian festival, was celebrated every four years in her honor.⁴ But one aspect of Athena’s relationship to Athens has been, for the most part, ignored—her patronage of the archē.

¹ Apollodorus 3.14.1 Herodotus tells us that Erechtheus, after ascending the throne of Kekrops, renamed the Kekropidae Athenians in honor of his patron goddess, Athena (8.44).


³ As Guthrie points out, in Odyssey 7.80, ἵκετο δ’ εἰς Μαραθώνα καὶ εὐρυάγυιαν Αθήνην; namely, Athene came to Athene. Athene is singular (on analogy with Mykene) because it is the name of the rock. It becomes plural on analogy with the locative Athenai (Mykenai). So the goddess was named like the rock, as Guthrie quotes Cook, “because at the outset she was the rock” (The Greeks and Their Gods, Boston, 1947, 107).

The Athenian arche had its origins in the Delian League, an ostensibly defensive
alliance between the Athenians and the islanders of the Aegean against the Persians.
Established in 478 BC in the wake of the Athenian victory at Salamis, the League soon
became not just a defensive alliance but also served as a front for the offensive activities
of the Athenians against both those Greeks who had ‘medized’ and the Persians
themselves. The original divine patron of the Delian League was Apollo. The League
treasury was housed in his temple on Delos and it was there also that the Athenians and
other members met for their congresses. When the tribute was first assessed by
Aristeides, one-sixteenth of the phoros, the aparche, was set aside as a dedication to
Apollo. When the League treasury was transferred to Athens in 454 BC, the aparche was
also transferred—to Athena.

It is little observed that with the transfer of the treasury the Delian League gained
a new patron. This must have been noted officially. But the Delian League also appears
to have become a new entity—the Athenian Empire. For there is little doubt that by 454
BC the Delian League had been transformed into the Athenian Empire. As patron of the

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5 It has always been assumed by scholars that Apollo was patron of the Delian League at its founding. This
view has been based primarily on the fact that the League meetings and treasury were based on Delos, an
island devoid of people for the most part. Only the shrine to Apollo rested there, thus the treasury would
have been under his protection. Also, it seems only logical that there was a precedent for the aparche that
would be awarded Athena after 454 BC. If Apollo had not received a similar tithe, an uproar over Athens’
claim would surely have left a trace. The transition seems too smooth to have had such an otherwise
overly imperial act, the taking of the aparche, not follow a precedent set by putting a portion of the tribute
aside for Apollo. It has also been noted that Poseidon was a probable secondary patron, for he was the
original patron of the earlier Ionian League (Her. 1.141.4; 1.170.1; 6.7) and, as a naval venture, the League
would have done well to keep the favor of the sea-god. J.P. Barron “The Fifth-Century Horoi of Aegina”
arche, Athena enjoyed the aparche, brought to Athens and displayed in the orchestra at the Great Dionysia each year, as well as the dedication of a cow and panoply by each allied state at the Panathenaia every fourth year. Some cities were even required to give grain and other “first fruits.” Athena also appears to have enjoyed the fruits of others’ labor on islands such as Aegina, Samos, Chalcis and Kos. Horoi, boundary stones marking off cult precincts dedicated to Athena, queen of Athens or Athena Polias, are found on each island.

The horoi on Aegina are a most interesting case when considering the transference of League patronage. For the boundary stones, dated most probably to the mid 450’s, are not the only sacred precincts designated on the island. Also found are horoi dedicated to Apollo and Poseidon, the previous patrons of the Delian League.

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6 Thuc. 1.96-97 and 3.11.4; R. Meiggs The Athenian Empire (Oxford, 1975) 460.
7 The requirement of the cow and panoply was thought to have been part of the allies’ obligation only beginning in the 430’s. However, the Clinias decree concerning tribute payment mentions the delivery of these items to the Panathenaia already as early as 447/6 BC. Meiggs (1975) 293.
8 Erythrai appears to have been required to send first fruits beginning in 453/2 BC following the suppression of their revolt from the Delian League/Athenian Empire.
9 The horoi each belong to slightly different periods. Those of Samos were perhaps set up on land confiscated after the suppression of the revolt in 441/0 BC, though Meiggs and Barron argue for an earlier date. Those of Kos are probably from the 440’s. The horoi of Aegina will be discussed below. For discussions of each set of stones, see especially Barron (1983) 1-11 and “Religious Propaganda of the Delian League” JHS 84 (1964) 35-48; T. Figueira Athens and Aigina in the Age of Imperial Colonization (Baltimore, 1991) 115-120; R. Meiggs (1975) 255-258; G. Shipley A History of Samos, 800-188 B.C. (Oxford, 1987); Meiggs also notes that there is a possible reference to the establishment of a cult to Athena in Colophon after their revolt was suppressed in 447/6 BC (ML 47). For opposed datings of these and many other fifth-century Athenian inscriptions, see H. Mattingly The Athenian Empire Restored (Ann Arbor, 1996) passim. On the extensive use of religion for political gain by the Athenians during the fifth century see especially, Smarczyk, B. Untersuchungen zur Religionspolitik und politischen Propaganda Athens im Delisch-Atischen Seebund (Munich, 1990); Anderson and Dix “Politics and State Religion in the Delian League: Athena and Apollo and the Eteocarpathian decree” ZPE 117 (1997) 129-132 who add the Eteocarpathian decree to those of Samos, Kos and Colophon as being dedicated to Athena Polias; see also R. Parker “Athenian Religion Abroad” in Osburne, R. and Hornblower, S. (eds.) 339-346.
These were most likely dedicated in the immediate aftermath of Aegina’s forced entry into the Delian League in 457 BC. The stones dedicated to Athena mark both the additional confiscations of land that accompanied the conversion from Delian League to Athenian Empire and the growing importance of Athena. For Athena was more than a patron and patriotic symbol for the city of Athens. She was partner to the Athenians and a representative for them in building and maintaining their arche.

But even before the transfer of the treasury to Athens, it seems that the Athenians began promoting their patron Athena as a Panionian patron and began spreading her influence throughout the Aegean. The process of promoting Athena begins with the Homeric poems and the Athenian role in the epic struggles at Troy. For as early as 508/7 BC with the reforms of Cleisthenes, the Athenians began carving out for themselves a larger role at Troy. The assimilation of Ajax as an Athenian eponymos ancestor gave the Athenians a greater claim to glory than the barely mentioned exploits of Menestheus, Theseus’ son. But even Menestheus was given greater glory by the 470’s. An epigram found on the base of a Herm in the agora suggests that based on Homer’s praise of Menestheus, the Athenians can claim to be both marshals of war and a heroic people.12

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10 It has also been noted that Apollo was worshipped in Athens itself as Patroos—father of the Ionians. See Anderson and Dix (1997) for fuller discussion.

11 It is also interesting to note that the myth surrounding Theseus’ paternity by Poseidon also increased in popularity as the fifth century wore on. Part of the reason for this may be the emphasis Athenians placed on their navy (See, J.P. Barron “Bakchylides, Theseus and a Woolly Cloak” BICS 27, 1980, 1-8; D. Boedeker “Presenting the Past in Fifth-Century Athens” in D. Boedeker and K. Raaflaub (eds.) Democracy, Empire and the Arts in Fifth-Century Athens, Cambridge, 1998, 187; D. Castrita Myth, Ethos and Actuality: Official Art in Fifth-Century BC Athens, Madison, 1992, 59-63.) The favor and patronage of Poseidon would have been a necessary component. Also, even though the Athenians rejected Poseidon’s divine patronage of their city, opting instead for Athena, this does not mean they did not pay heed to him at all. The claim of Theseus’ paternity would have been another way to co-opt divine and heroic glory to Athens and thus support their claims to dominance over the other Greeks.
Along with this process of assimilating and enlarging the Athenian presence at Troy comes the increase in the production of paintings which associate Athena with those same Trojan War heroes. Many vase paintings representing Homeric scenes were produced in the late sixth and fifth century in Attica. These vase paintings will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3. However, for now, it is important to point out one major aspect common to each: the scenes present Athena fighting (or standing) along side of Ajax. The scenes as depicted on these vases are not from the Homeric texts. In the poems of Homer, Ajax and Athena do not fight together. Perhaps Athena is meant only to represent the divinities who fought beside the Greeks. However, the choice of adding Athena to scenes illustrating the great deeds of Ajax suggests that not just any divine spirit would do for the scene. By pairing the Athenian patron and one of its eponymous heroes, the vases underline the importance of the Athenian presence at Troy.

Thus already by the 470’s Athens has begun using the Panhellenic myths of Homer to increase its importance in history and to align itself undeniably in the minds of other Greeks with the role of Athena and the pseudo-Athenian heroes at Troy. In 454 BC, Athena became the patron of the Delian League and Athens could point to its long association with her and the military greatness that was connected with her in the great Panhellenic wars of the past and thus justify the dominion they now claimed in the

12 ἦν ἄρα κάκεινοι ταλακάρδιοι, οἱ ποτὲ Μήδων παισὶν ἔπ’ Ἰτ. ὦν, Στρυμόνος ἀμφὶ ῥόας, Λιμὸν τ’ αἴθωνα κρατερὸν τ’ ἐπαγόντες Ἀρηα πρῶτοι δυσενέων εὕρον ἀμηχανήν.
(From Aeschines Against Ktesiphon 184). This epigram dates to ca. 475 BC.

13 Most notably, the famous scene of Achilles and Ajax playing checkers by Exekias is redone in an Attic red-figure vase ca 510 BC with the addition of Athena standing behind the two seated heroes.
Aegean. The insinuating of Athens via Athena and Ajax into the Homeric stories, the spread of Athena’s cult to allied states in the 450’s and 440’s, the dedications at the Panathenaia and the transfer of the patronage from Apollo to Athena along with the transfer of the treasury served not only, then, to bind Athena and Athens together in the minds of Greeks, but also to bind Athena and her worship in their minds with the Athenian arche.15

The Athenians’ need to insert themselves more firmly into the common, heroic Greek past during the course of the fifth century was not a process wholly motivated by the desire to assert the city’s authority and right to that authority in the Aegean. In many ways, myths are designed to help negotiate past and present. The need to see parallels between the past and present in order to more firmly understand contemporary problems is evident in the lyric poets, Herodotus and, especially, tragedy. On the tragic stage, long dead heroes returned to life, their stories retold and new resolutions found to their dilemmas (or not). The anachronistic nature of tragedies only reinforces the fact that the Athenians found tragedy a proper vehicle for working through such contemporary concepts as democracy, justice, war, class and gender differences.16 And these myths were not static. They were adapted, altered, written and re-written in order to reflect the

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14 The significance of Athena's pairing with Ajax will be discussed in Chapter 3.

15 This is not a novel idea. In fact, Meiggs (1975) makes a brief nod in that direction in his discussion of Athens’ cultural growth in the fifth century. (290).

16 Boedeker (1998) cites the Supplices plays of both Aeschylus and Euripides as an example of this process. Aeschylus’ play, staged probably in the late 460’s, has a king of the heroic age address the issue of going to war through a democratic process. His tale is set in Argos, but it can be read as a lens through which Athens can “examine questions facing it at an early stage of its democracy and ‘protectionist’ empire”. Euripides’ play, however, shifts the scene to Attica and, Boedeker suggests, becomes a “democratic
shifting sensibilities and needs of the city and her citizens. Part of this shifting involved the way the Athenians identified themselves both as citizens and as citizens at the head of an empire.¹⁷

One of the most fundamental elements in understanding how tragedy participated in the negotiation of Athenian identity is recognizing the significance that the pre-play ceremonies would have had on an audience’s interpretation of the performance. The pre-play ceremonies consisted of the following: 1. parade of orphans of those who died in wars; 2. announcement of benefactors to the city; 3. pouring of a libation by the strategoi; and 4. display of the tribute.

The earliest of these ceremonies was most likely the parade of war-orphans.¹⁸ The orphans were raised at the state’s expense and, upon coming of age, were awarded full hoplite gear. It was in this hoplite panoply that they were paraded out into the orchestra before the performance of the tragedies at the Great Dionysia.¹⁹ The ideological impact of such a sight can only be imagined. Goldhill suggests that the apologia” and represents “protective heroism . . . as if to show Athenians and their visiting allies alike the just and benevolent motives behind Athenian military intervention” (191).


¹⁸ For an ancient discussion on this ceremony, see Isocrates, De pace 82 and Aeschines, Against Ktesiphon. 154.

¹⁹ It is unknown whether this ceremony was in place when Aeschylus’ Persae was performed in 472 BC, but if it was, the impact would have been amazing.
ceremony was designed to reinforce an Athenian sense of community while, at the same time, reminding the audience of their dependence and subordination to the state.\textsuperscript{20} The military aspect of such a display can also be understood in light of the Athenian attempts to enlarge Athens' role in the Trojan War. The Athenians’ pride in their accomplishments at Marathon and Salamis finds itself manifested in every public aspect of Athenian life.\textsuperscript{21}

The same conclusion might be drawn concerning the announcement of city benefactors at the ceremony, except that the focus shifts from military to civil aspects of Athenian life. While it may seem that the individual is being lauded by the award of a crown or garland in the theater it is really the city that benefits.\textsuperscript{22} The city reaps the rewards for the act of a benefactor. Thus the applause rendered by the audience for such deeds as performed by the benefactors is directed not only at the man, but at the city that so magnanimously rewards its citizens with public recognition. And in the same way in which the war orphans owe their manhood and place in society to the state so too do benefactors owe their own.

\textsuperscript{20} Goldhill (1990), 100-113.

\textsuperscript{21} In addition to the increase in association of Athens with the Trojan War and other aspects of the mythic past, comment must also be made of the Athenian building projects in the years immediately following Salamis. For the Athenians, while they could not rebuild the Acropolis temples, did build and decorate the Theseion and the Stoa Poikile which emphasized both the heroic past of Athens as well as Persian War victories. It can be seen even outside of Athens that the Persian Wars were thought (or at least commemorated) on par with Troy (Boedeker, 1998, 186-192).

\textsuperscript{22} καὶ μὴν περὶ τοῦ γ’ ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ κηρύττεσθαι, τὸ μὲν μυρίαις μυρίως κεκηρύχθαι παραλεῖπω καὶ τὸ πολλάκις αὐτὸς [ἐστεφανοῦσαί] πρότερον. ἀλλὰ πρὸς θεῶν οὕτω σκιῶς εἰ καὶ ἀναισθήτος, Λεωνίνη, ἄστ’ οὐ δύνασαι λογίσασθαι ὅτι τῷ μὲν στεφανουμένῳ τὸν αὐτὸν ἔχει ἐξηλὸν ὁ στέφανος, ὅπου τὸ ἀναρρητήριον τοῦ δὲ τῶν στεφανοῦντων εἶνεκα συμφέροντος ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ γίγνεται τὸ κήρυγμα; οἱ γὰρ ἀκούσαντες ἀπαντεῖς εἰς τὸ ποιεῖν ἐν τῇ πόλιν προτερέπονται, καὶ τοὺς ἀποδιδόντας τὴν χάριν μᾶλλον ἐπαινοῦσιν τοῦ στεφανοῦμένου: διόπερ τὸν νόμον τούτον ἡ πόλις γέγραψεν. (Demosthenes De corona 120).
The first two ceremonies underline the two different aspects of a citizen’s life: his civil responsibilities and his military obligations. But these two different citizen responsibilities are fused together in the libation of the generals. For here we have the highest military authority performing a civic/religious duty. At least as early as 468 BC, just prior to the performance of the tragedies, the ten στρατηγοί poured the customary libation to Dionysos. Goldhill makes it clear that the στρατηγοί were not typically involved in religious ceremonies. In the whole of the Athenian religious calendar (which was rather large), the generals only participated on four occasions in a year. Therefore, the fact that the generals even participated in the opening ceremonies for the Great Dionysia should underscore the strongly political nature of the event. Also, the designation of the generals as libation-pourers underscores the military aspect of the Dionysia and suggests another—the imperial.

Both the pouring of the libations by the στρατηγοί and the parade of orphans were ceremonies designed to assert the authority and dignity of the polis. They assisted in the formation of a civic ideology that reinforced the citizens’ devotion and subordination to the state while reinstating a sense of community. Each citizen helped to raise those orphans and each citizen elected, and then may have served with, the στρατηγοί. The military nature of both the στρατηγοί and the war-orphans also reinforced the ideal of

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23 The role of the generals in the ceremony dates back to at least 468 BC (Plutarch Kim. 8.7-9) but may have begun earlier. The generals probably rose in esteem after the victory over the Persians and it was probably shortly after Salamis that this role was given them. It may have also coincided with the decision to parade the war orphans. The Persian Wars seemed to have been the impetus for many such ceremonies.

24 Plutarch, Cimon. 8.7-9.
the citizen-soldier. It was the fathers of these orphans who saved the Greeks from slavery under the Persians. It was their fathers who laid the foundation for Athenian hegemony. And these generals were the same ones who would lead the Athenians out to sea when the Dionysia ended to fight Persians or subjugate other Greeks. The emphasis placed on the generalship as a position of authority in the *polis* implied the centrality of the military to *polis* life. This life depended on the flow of tribute from the allies and the generals guaranteed that flow. The display of that very tribute emphasized even further the imperial aspect of the Dionysia.

The movement of the League treasury from Delos to Athens in 454 BC is a seemingly crucial event in the development of the Athenian Empire and of the Great Dionysia. For, sometime after 454 BC, the display of the tribute was added to the pre-performance ceremonies. This ceremony is mentioned in two sources. First is a scholion to Aristophanes’ *Archarnians* (504). The scholiast states that it had been ordained that the allies bring their tribute to the Great Dionysia, “as Eupolis says in *The Cities.*” Secondly, Isocrates, in his *De Pace*, an anti-imperialist tract written in response to the growth of Athens’ second empire in the fourth century, cites this ceremony as a central cause for the allies’ disgruntlement with their Athenian overlords during the fifth century:

οὕτω γὰρ ἀκριβῶς εὐφύσιοιν ἐξ ὃν ἄνθρωποι μάλιστ’ ἂν μισηθείειν, ὡστ’ ἐψηφίσαντο τὸ ἐπειδὰν πλῆρες ἦι τὸ περιγιγνόμενον ἐκ τῶν φόρων ἀργύριον, διελόντες κατὰ τάλαντον, εἰς τὸν θέατρον καὶ τοὺς παῖδας τῶν ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ τετελευτηκότων, ἀμφοτέροις ἐπιδεικνύοντες τοὺς μὲν συμμάχους τὰς τιμὰς τῆς οὐσίας αὐτῶν ὑπὸ μισθωτῶν εἰσφερομένης, τοὺς δ’ ἄλλους Ἐλλήσι τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ὀρφανῶν καὶ τὰς συμφορὰς τὰς διὰ τὴν πλεονεξίαν ταύτην γιγνομένας.

For so keenly did they [Athenian ancestors] gauge the actions by which humans incur the worst hatred that they passed a decree to divide the money gathered from the tribute of the allies into talents and bring it into the orchestra when the theater was full, at the festival of Dionysus; and not only was this done but at the same time they led in the sons of those men who had died in the war, seeking to display in this way to the allies, on the one hand, the value of their own property brought in by those hired to do so, and to the rest of the Hellenes, on the other hand, the great number of the fatherless and the misfortunes that result from this policy of aggression (82).26

Regardless of Isocrates’ political bent, the description of the ceremony clearly shows that the Athenians were asserting their superiority over the allies. The parade of orphans and money was not designed to show the misfortunes of war but rather to arouse pride amongst the audience. This was not the Lenaia where ξένοι were prohibited from participating. Rather, the allies were actually present at the ceremonies and were expected to participate in the ideological activities connected with the festival. The Great Dionysia became the stage upon which Athens displayed her power and the allies were present to see for what their tribute was paying.

The Great Dionysia was the glory of Athens and her empire on stage. An Athenian, seeing such a display might think of how great his city must be to have gained such wealth. Or, perhaps he might think how powerful his city must be if others were willing (or compelled) to give this wealth to them. An ally, on the other hand, might see one of two things in that display: either the glory of his position as a member of the Athenian empire or his servitude. Either way, it was Athens’ power being projected out to the audience. The tribute in the orchestra was the fruit of her labors, the payoff for keeping the Persian menace at bay.

26 Text and translation for Isocrates are from the Loeb Classical Library edition.
It is only after these ceremonies had taken place that the tragic plays were performed. It is most likely that at the time of the *Persae* and *Oresteia*, only two, maybe three, ceremonies were performed. The display of the tribute can certainly not date to earlier than 454 BC and the transfer of the treasury. But even without the tribute display, the military aspect of the festival was evident. It is also evident that the Athenians who designed these ceremonies were trying to project a specific image of Athens to both themselves and others. This image was one of civic unity and military might. For these ceremonies were designed to project the potency of Athens and this potency and stability could be used (and was, I will argue) to justify her claims to be the hegemonic leader of the Delian League. And the source of this potency and the power behind this leadership was none other than their patron deity Athena.

While this idea that tragedy worked to help Athenians negotiate their changing role in Greece is widely accepted, Athena has been ignored in this context. Athena, the patron and protector of Athens and her arche, appears in a number of tragedies. Few studies have focused, however, on the role of Athena in tragedy\(^27\) and none of these has attempted to connect the role of Athena as patron of the Athenian Empire to the different ways she has been represented on stage. Much has been said of Athena’s role in Aeschylus’ *Eumenides*.\(^28\) But many of these studies have dealt with either the ambiguity

\(^{27}\) H.R. Butts *The Glorification of Athens in Greek Drama* (Ann Arbor, 1944) 47, 84, 158-160; I. Kasper-Butz *Die Göttin Athena im klassischen Athen: Athena als Repräsentantin der demokratischen Staaten* (Frankfurt, 1990), 21-33; E. Sibley *Athena in Greek Drama* (PhD University of Nottingham, 1996); T. Papadopoulou “Representations of Athena in Greek Tragedy” in Deacy and Villing (eds.) *Athena in the Classical World* (Leiden, 2001) 293-310.

\(^{28}\) See Chapter 2 for bibliography and discussion on Aeschylus.
of her vote\textsuperscript{29} or the conflict between herself and Apollo as Olympian gods versus the older Erinyes. And despite the extensive discussion of the political aspects of \textit{Eumenides}, the imperial implications behind the play have been largely left unmentioned.\textsuperscript{30} Athena is reduced to the role of representing Athens, but only in a limited capacity.

In the case of the plays of Sophocles, any political interpretation has been discouraged on the grounds that he, as a master of his craft, was concerned with the divine and with the human condition in general, not with topical material such as empire and politics. Thus his Athena, as she appears in \textit{Ajax}, has been ignored as a possible representative of Athens and her interests in any context, imperial or not. But, in light of the intimate connection between Athena and Athens and Athena and the \textit{arche}, as well as the overtly political and imperial nature of the context in which tragedies were performed, it seems to me impossible to ignore the possibility that Sophocles staged his Athena with a purpose other than the purely aesthetic.

It is within the framework of the \textit{arche} that the readings proposed in this dissertation should be situated. For it is within this imperial context that the audience would have watched the performances. I will argue in the following chapters that

\textsuperscript{29} Or rather, the questions of gender raised by her statement on why she votes for Orestes.

\textsuperscript{30} Rosenbloom is really the only exception to this (D. Rosenbloom “Myth, History and Hegemony in Aeschylus” in B. Goff (ed.) \textit{History, Tragedy, Theory}, Austin, 1995, 91-130). Other scholars who have debated the geography of the text discuss them in terms of the Delian League. I will argue that that this is an inaccurate way to understand the obvious foreign policy issues mentioned within the text.
Athena’s role as patron for city and arche was so fixed in the minds of the Athenians and, to an extent, the allies) that they could not have separated her roles as character on stage and divine patron.

I will begin, by way of an introduction to Aeschylus' Eumenides, by establishing that Athena was conceived of as the representative of Athens and her interests in tragedy just as she was in other aspects of Athenian life through a reading of Aeschylus’ Persae. This play was produced in 472 BC and is both the earliest extant tragedy and the only extant tragedy to deal with a historical subject. This historic subject, the battle of Salamis, was central to the way Athenians constructed their role in the Greek world. It cast them as the heroes of Salamis and the saviors of the Greek world from the threat of barbarian hordes. It was also produced in the early years of the Delian League when Athens was still, ostensibly, leader of a league of equals and Persae positions Athena as the true patron of the Delian League and foreshadows the transfer of patronage from Apollo to Athena in the 450's. Although Athena never appears physically on stage, her presence is felt throughout the drama as both a symbol for Athens and the source of its power. She is linked intimately to the city linguistically and thus links the city to the divine apparatus of the play. This play also demonstrates just how central the battle of Salamis was becoming in Athenian ideology and sets the standard for how that victory would continue to be used as a justification for Athenian hegemony in the years between the end of the Persian Wars and the beginning of the Peloponnesian War.

This connection between Athena and the city/arche is strengthened by Aeschylus’ portrayal of Athena in Eumenides. But, I will argue that the relationship is furthered,
compounded with that in *Persae*, to show that Athena’s patronage could help the allies just as it has helped the Athenians themselves. Through a reading both of the geography of *Eumenides* and the language of alliances and the courts, I will show that Aeschylus offers his audience an ideal version of what Athenian hegemony means for the Greek world. Just as the Athenian victory at Salamis in *Persae* solidifies Athens’ military right to hegemony, so too does her system of justice validate the spread to the allies of Athenian legal and political processes begun in the 450’s BC.

From this point, I will move on to the representations of Athena in the plays of Sophocles. The first is from *Ajax Locrus*. *Ajax Locrus*, which deals with the fate of Lesser Ajax, exists only in fragments, but enough remains to establish that Athena, as Sophocles has chosen to present her, closely aligns with that found in Aeschylus’ *Eumenides*. In both plays, as well as in public art works of the 460’s, Athena is presented in association with the courts and trial by jury. Athena’s role in *Ajax Locrus*, I will argue, differs from the way in which the same story is presented by Homer and the other epic poets as well as how it is alluded to by Euripides in *Trojan Women* years later. I will argue that Sophocles has chosen to present Athena in association with the courts because this was precisely the preferred representation of Athena both within Athenian civic discourse and as projected to the allies abroad during the early years of the Delian League. Sophocles, however, does not stand by this preferred version of Athena. In his *Ajax*, about the death of Ajax son of Telamon, the goddess appears as she does in no other extant play, as a vengeful god unmindful of what is just or unjust.
The reasons I will offer for such a shift in the portrayal of Athena have to do with the change in the way Athens conceived of her hegemony in the 440’s BC. The alteration in Athena’s character on stage mirrors the shift in the reality of Athens’ power. What began as a cooperative league under the leadership of a proven military victor and proponent of justice has become, by the 450’s an arche with a single decision maker and power source. And it is an arche that functions by using coercive methods to maintain itself. In Ajax, Sophocles presents alternate versions of Athens: first the heroic past upon which Athenian power was built (Ajax) and second, the reality of what the Athenians have done with that authority (Athena). The interaction between these two characters on stage plays out the ideological power struggle which arose from Athens changing role in the Aegean.

Methodology

In order to draw such conclusions about the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles, I will be reading the plays both historically and ideologically. My interests lie not only in connecting the events and moods of the plays to the historical events of the first half of the fifth century, but also in understanding how the Athenian audience conceptualized these connections. I want to ascertain not just the what of fifth-century Athenian thought, but also the how. In other words, I am concerned with what issues were at stake in the Athenian rise to power and with how the Athenians discussed these issues. How did they formulate and then debate the questions surrounding the arche and
their allies? To what extent did the ideological constructs surrounding the performance of the plays inform the Athenians' understanding of their own position as hegemons?

I will not here give a survey of the various political interpretations of Athenian tragedy. This has been done sufficiently by Suzanne Saïd. I will, however, use her categories as a starting point from which to situate my own study within the larger context of tragic scholarship. Saïd divides her survey chronologically for the most part, reading each new trend in tragic scholarship as a progression, each approach an improvement on the previous ones. Her progression of categories for reading tragedy is as follows: tragedy as 1. reflection of contemporary events, 2. reflection of current politics, 3. committed theater, 4. propaganda for Athens, and 5. political thought. A progression in the language of politics has, I agree, occurred. But this does not necessarily negate earlier scholarship, making it irrelevant. Just because scholars now speak of “ideology” does not render a text incapable of “reflecting” history. In addition, Saïd’s categorization of progressions in scholarship, as I will make clear below, might lead one to ignore an important aspect of these scholarly trends: the categories of

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31 Saïd (1998) attempts to dismantle each of the different political interpretations of Athenian tragedy. Her discussion of “allegorical” interpretations such as that by Ehrenberg is to the point. However, as I will make clear below, I do not agree whole-heartedly with her perspective on reading tragedy as a product of its time and place. She admits that different tragedies can question, support or construct ideology. But they can also, I think, reflect contemporary events or thought in a more topical manner. It is hard to see how certain tragedies, such as Persae, Supplices and Prometheus Bound are not topical. For this view see especially C. Meier (1988) and (1990); B. Knox, Word and Action: Essays on the Ancient Theater (Baltimore, 1979); K. Raaflaub, “Contemporary Perception of Democracy in Fifth-Century Athens” in Aspects of Athenian Democracy (Copenhagen, 1990) 49-54 and “Politisches Denken im Zeitalter Athens” in Pipers Handbuch Der Politischen Ideen (Munich, 1988) 273-367.

32 That is to say, Saïd sees the methodologies as improving, not necessarily the quality of the scholarship. Namely, perceiving of tragedy in terms of ideology is more useful and accurate, she suggests, than looking at it in terms of historical events.
interpretation are not mutually exclusive. A play, as this dissertation will demonstrate, can simultaneously be allegorical, reflect contemporary events, support, construct and undermine ideologies. It is in the nature of art. For art always has at least two lives: the life intended by its creator and the life it forges all on its own in the world beyond the author’s intention.

In many ways, this study of Athena straddles the line between the broadly “political” and the historical or allegorical. On the one hand, I am interested in connecting the individual portrayals of Athena with the reality of the changing *arche* and am committed to allegory in so far as the goddess herself is concerned in her role as patron and representative of the city. The ties between Athena and Athens were too strong and too pervasive to be overlooked. This type of allegorical search within tragedy has been seen as part of the trend in tragic scholarship that seeks to find reflections of contemporary events and is, as some scholars have pointed out, partially defective. Rosenbloom suggests this so because “myth is formed by condensation and dramatization; it encodes more information than a single historical person or circumstance.”³⁴ However, I am not looking for representations of particular individuals or events within the tragedies, as earlier scholars have done,³⁵ but rather for presentations of a spirit of the times³⁶ and different conceptions Athens had of itself.

³³ Under the rubric of political thought Saïd places the sub-categories of supporting, questioning and constructing ideology.


³⁵ Examples of such ahistorical treatments include V. Ehrenberg *Sophocles and Pericles* (Oxford, 1954) and A.J. Podlecki *The Political Background of Aeschylean Tragedy* (Oxford, 1973). These studies on the whole are still very influential and pertinent as political discussions of tragedy. It is only the occasional tendency within these works to look for direct allusions to specific historical figures that has become
Saïd’s contention that tragedy can not be topical is based on Aristotle’s statement that this is so. But neither Aeschylus nor Sophocles knew Aristotle’s’ treatise on tragedy. They were not yet aware that they could not be topical. Perhaps to suggest that Oedipus is Pericles is pushing allegory too far, but to think that the events of the day had no effect on Athenian tragedy would be like suggesting that World War II and the Civil Rights movement did not affect American cinema. Art internalizes life. And life for the Athenians included war, empire and politics. To suggest topicality in tragedy does not diminish its artistic value. It merely adds another level at which the audience could interact with the drama.

In addition to reading tragedy as a product of its historical circumstances and as, in some ways, a “reflection” of those circumstances, I am interested in the larger dynamics involved in such an allegorical and historical understanding of tragedy. For the shift in the representations of certain myths and characters on stage signals, in my mind, a shift in the way in which the Athenians conceived of the very issues of tyranny versus democracy, freedom versus slavery and so on. While submission to the Persians was unthinkable in the 490’s and 480’s, submission to the Athenians came to be expected in the 460’s and 450’s. The contradiction between democracy at home and tyranny abroad finds itself examined on the tragic stage repeatedly. And I am not alone in seeing tragedy as a part of the larger political process. Numerous scholars see continuity between the tragic stage and these larger socio-political issues:

suspect. C. Whitman’s *Sophocles: a Study in Heroic Humanism* (Cambridge, MA, 1951) also suggests certain affinities between staged characters and real Athenian politicians.
“Everyone agrees that ‘problems of public life’ and relations among citizens and between citizens and non-citizens are among the major themes of tragedy...More specifically, tragic poets explored the problems of decision making and leadership, which were crucial for a society of free individuals.”

One major aspect of this leadership role would have dealt with the negotiation of Athenian identity between being free citizens of their polis and rulers over an arche. Thus we are still seeing in tragedy a reflection of historical circumstances, we simply discuss them in a different manner. But thinking in terms of the larger political context does not invalidate thinking historically.

The movement in scholarship from thinking directly in terms of political and historical activities to thinking in terms of political thought has given rise to the more ideological studies of tragedy. Of course, scholarship on Athenian civic ideology is not limited to studies on tragedy. Scholars such as Ober, Loraux and Connor have actively promoted discussions of Athenian citizenship and civic identity as represented or constructed in historiography, oratory, fifth-century law and the visual arts. What they and others have argued is that these different genres all participate in a civic discourse on what it meant to be an Athenian. Tragedy too was part of the matrix of Athenian public life and thus would have been a component of that discourse.

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36 Again, Whitman is a good source for this type of study along with B. Knox Oedipus at Thebes (New Haven, 1957) and C. Meier (1990).


How exactly tragedy is a part of Athenian civic discourse has been debated by scholars since such studies began appearing in the 1980’s. Some scholars support the idea that tragedy helped to create Athenian identity. Others suggest that it helped to support an already established ideological construct. Still others suggest that it questioned the status quo and worked toward getting its audience to examine the social and political inequalities or inconsistencies. And, while these different approaches seem to be contradictory, they are not. For one must recognize that not all Greek tragedy questioned democratic or imperial ideology nor was every play propaganda for the state. Nor is it impossible for a play to be both simultaneously. Therefore, a fusion of these different approaches to tragedy seems the most plausible and fruitful method, eliciting from each text only what it offers up instead of insisting on consistent generalizations throughout. This dissertation reads each of the plays in which Athena appears in terms of historical context and in terms of the ideological constructs that accompanied Athens’ rise to power.

Genre, in this dissertation, will not be a restrictive category, but rather a point of reference. Thus, I conceive of tragedy as both within its genre and outside of it. It draws from and interacts with rhetoric, history, public works of architecture and art and legal

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inscriptions—all of which were part of the ideological web of fifth-century Athens. This is, on many levels, a New Historicist project that attempts to read Greek tragedy not simply as a product of a democratic culture but as central to that culture. This means that I conceive of tragedy as helping shape the democratic ideology of Athens as much as rhetoric and public works.

My own view of tragedy’s role in Athenian civic discourse hinges on a conception of Athenians as thoroughly political creatures. Participation in the tragic festivals was a function of citizenship. The plays were written by citizens, paid for by citizens, performed by citizens, watched by citizens and, in the end, voted on by citizens. Concepts such as *parrhesia* and *isonomia* applied to the theater as much as to the assembly. The playwrights spoke their piece as if defendants or prosecutors in the courts. Their job was to persuade their jury, the audience. Each had equal standing before the law of the tragic competition. And each citizen in the audience had as much chance as another at being selected by lot as judge for the day. The tragic competitions were as much an expression of Athenian citizenship as were juries and assemblies. Also, I see tragedy as part of a symbolic order in Athenian political life which means expecting that the Athenians were well aware of how to use and manipulate images, history and myth in order to fashion a specific version of their own identity.

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While I am taking this historical approach to my readings of Athena in the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles, the fact that I argue for a correlation between Athena and the arche places this study also within the realm of ideological constructs in fifth-century Athens. Athena was a fundamental element in the creation and maintenance not only of Athenian civic identity but also of Athenian imperial identity. Any connection made between the goddess and the city/arche forces us to recognize and consider the way in which her image was utilized by the Athenians in their self-promotion and self-definition. But the manner in which Athena was appropriated and fashioned by the tragedians varied from play to play. I will argue that the figure of Athena as she appears in Aeschylus’ plays seems more in line with the idealized version of Athens the Athenians wished to promote among themselves and their allies. The image found in Sophocles’ Ajax, however, is a radical departure from this ideal. Sophocles makes evident the inherent contradiction between the value system upon which Athenian hegemony was founded and its practical application. The relationship presented between Athena and Ajax symbolizes the conflict between ideal and real.

The text of Aeschylus used throughout is Page’s Oxford edition. For Sophocles’ Ajax, I have used the Oxford text of Lloyd-Jones and Wilson. The fragments of Ajax Locrus are from Halsam’s text in The Oxyrhynchus Papyri v. 44, with reference to Diggles’ Oxford text. Inscriptions are cited according to their source—either Inscriptiones Graecae (abbreviated IG) or A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century BC (abbreviated ML). Translations of ancient texts are my own except where noted.
CHAPTER 2

AESCHYLUS

**Aeschylus: An Overview**

This chapter will look at the figure of Athena as she is developed and presented in Aeschylean drama. Aeschylus, I argue, constructs within his tragedies an idealized vision of Athens and the Athenians and the role Athena plays is integral in this construction. Two plays in particular are central to this argument—*Persae* and *Eumenides*. I consider first how Athena is represented in *Persae* and what significance that representation has for reading the tragedy as a whole. Although Athena does not actually appear in *Persae*, the role she plays is central to the development of the play and to the image of Athens created through this retelling of the battle at Salamis. This play constructs the terms within which the Athenians would conceive of their role in Greece. Also, the two are equated linguistically and, through the special relationship between Athena and Athens, Athens is shown to be under the direct protection and favor of the gods. In addition, the role Athena is given within the play in the victory at Salamis is a precursor to her role in *Eumenides*. Both plays prefigure the transfer of patronage of the Delian League to Athena and Athens.

The second play to be examined will be the *Eumenides*. Here, Athena is presented as a character on stage. Understanding this presentation is integral to understanding the Athenian view of themselves and their role in the Aegean in the early
to mid fifth century. In *Eumenides*, Aeschylus stages Athena as the embodiment of Justice. She is chosen by other deities (Apollo and the Erinyes) to stand as judge over their affairs and they agree that her judgment, given through her citizens, is final. In addition to embodying Justice, Athena also represents Athens and her interests. For Athena and the Athenians are one and the same. By a simple equation, then, Athens itself will be shown to epitomize Justice. Also, a study of these two plays together, *Persae* and *Eumenides*, will show that Aeschylus had a unified idea both of what Athena represented to the Athenians and how that representation was connected with how the Athenians wanted to represent themselves both at home and abroad.

This contention, that Aeschylus was praising Athens in his tragedies, is not unchallenged. D. Rosenbloom, in “Myth, History, and Hegemony in Aeschylus,” suggests that “[i]n the *Oresteia* and *Persians* Aeschylus presents the fearful vision of *poleis* ruined by the seduction of sea power and the forms of military and political domination it makes possible.” Rosenbloom bases this conclusion on his contention that Aeschylean tragedy, especially the *Persae* and *Oresteia* reflect what he calls an “ideology of freedom”. This “ideology of freedom,” he claims, is inherent in the tragic genre just as it is in historiography and consists of two primary stages: “the conquest of *hubris* and the violent reversal of domination driven by a demand for freedom.” Rosenbloom goes on to suggest that this ideology is subverted in the tragedies of Aeschylus because Aeschylus recognizes that “freedom is a precondition for domination...Domination is subverted and *hubris* is conquered; the liberated gain power.”
This is not the conclusion I will draw. Rather, I will demonstrate that, while Rosenbloom is correct in seeing the inherent contradiction presented by Aeschylus between freedom and domination, he incorrectly concludes that Aeschylus therefore feared naval power and the empire it enabled. Naval power may have been a new phenomenon in the fifth century, but it was not, in the eyes of many Athenians, a type of power to be loathed. The development of a navy by the Athenians was certainly untraditional and non-aristocratic. But there was a major re-orientation of political thought in the fifth century which came alongside of the democracy. Many Athenians, even aristocrats like Pericles and Alcibiades, came to recognize the benefits of naval power over that of a hoplite army.45

In contrast to Rosenbloom’s concept of an “ideology of freedom” would be Raaflaub’s linking of an “ideology of power” with the concept of “the greatest and freest city” found in Pericles’ and other Athenians’ speeches in Thucydides. The polis, he suggests, was convinced that it could only maintain its liberty by being powerful. Being powerful meant ruling others.46 This conception of freedom as power is more in line with my own ideas on the dynamics of Athenian militarism in the years following Salamis. In

44 Rosenbloom (1995) 98. One also might ask how Rosenbloom defines “freedom” in this instance and whether an Athenian would recognize it as such; 92. Rosenbloom, however, is not alone in this contention. See also S. Melchinger Die Welt als Tragödie v.1 (Munich, 1979).


order to ensure their own freedoms, and in order to ward off civil strife, the Athenians
turned that energy outward first towards the Persians and, then, toward their fellow
Greeks.

It must be stated here that this discussion will not involve deciding whether or not
Aeschylus was a left-wing radical or a right-wing reactionary. Nor will I answer the
long persistent question of whether Aeschylus supported Themistocles, Pericles,
Ephialtes or Cimon. This does not mean I will not take a stand. Rosenbloom contends
that Aeschylean tragedy calls into question the naval empire of the Athenians:

The vision of his drama implies that naval hegemony, the forms of war built upon
it, the power derived from it, and most of all, the delusions of conquest and justice
it supports, can be deleterious to the polis.

Rosenbloom bases this conclusion on the position of Agamemnon as a strategos in the
Oresteia. Agamemnon’s acceptance of Clytemnestra’s calling him a city-sacker and
persuading him to walk on the carpet as a “barbarian” king would do creates,

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48 This type of question was addressed by V. Ehrenberg (1954) passim.

Rosenbloom suggests, an anxiety about Attic traditions and cultural exchange. The fleet may bring salvation on the one hand, but it turns the victor (Agamemnon) into an eastern potentate (the vanquished) on the other. But this dynamic does not necessarily hold true by the time we move from *Agamemnon* to *Eumenides*. Aeschylus goes to great lengths to situate Athens in *Persae*, not as the inheritor of Persian *hubris* embodied in the growing empire, but rather as the cure for this Persian disease. In *Eumenides*, Athena become the healer of the broken house of Atreus. Where Agamemnon failed, she succeeds. Thus Aeschylus is not necessarily questioning the power Athens has acquired through its navy, but is shoring it up but situating Athena as its patron. Both plays, *Eumenides* and *Persae*, have an underlying message; namely that Athens, like its patron goddess and because of her, is, and is entitled to be, the savior and leader of Greece.

But this situating of Athens as a cure for the Persian disease does not mean that Aeschylus was necessarily a supporter of Athens’ growing power. Rather, what I am suggesting is that Aeschylus sees the potential inherent in Athens’ new position of authority in the Aegean. Athens can give the Greeks security from the Persian threat by helping establish an acceptable balance of power in the region by offsetting both Persia and Spartan hegemony. Whether Aeschylus saw the growing discrepancy between this idealized vision of Athens’ potential and the reality of her power is not under debate here. He may have been unsettled by the growth of Athenian power, but it is overshadowed in these two plays by a love of Athens and an idealized vision of potentialiality. What Aeschylus offers his audience is a paradigm for the dispensing of justice and wielding of authority, a paradigm that the Athenians may or may not choose to follow.
**Persae**

In a recent article, T. Papadopoulou surveys the various representations of Athena on the tragic stage. She explores both those plays in which Athena is referred to and those in which she actually appears on stage.⁵⁰ The conclusion Papadopoulou draws from her survey is that Athena, though serving a variety of dramatic uses, is primarily conceived of as a civic divinity, “it is her association with the public sphere and her role as a civic goddess that are given the strongest emphasis...”⁵¹ (309-310). She is, “...the Athenian deity *par excellence*, the representative and patron of Athenian concerns on stage” (310). This idea is exemplified by the representations of Athena in both *Eumenides* and *Persae*. In *Persae* especially this holds true, for Athena is both linguistically the equivalent of Athens and also its protector.

Aeschylus’ *Persae* is the only extant tragedy to deal with a historical subject. It was produced in 472 BC, only eight years after the battle of Salamis which it stages. The presentation of historical subject matter in tragedy is generally believed to have been problematic. According to Herodotus, Phrynicus, an older contemporary of Aeschylus, produced a play, *The Sack of Miletus*, in 494 BC that dealt with the recent destruction of that city by the Persians. Athens had attempted to aid Miletus against Persia but had been unsuccessful and Phrynicus was given a hefty fine for reminding the Athenians of such a horrid event:

> Ἀθηναῖοι μὲν γὰρ δῆλον ἐποίησαν ύπεραχθεσθέντες τῇ Μιλήτου ἁλώσι τῇ τε ἄλλῃ πολλαχῇ καὶ δή καὶ ποιήσαντι Φρυνίχωι δράμα Μιλήτου ἁλώσιν καὶ διδάξαντι ἐς δάκρυα τε ἔπεσε τὸ

⁵⁰ T. Papadopoulou (2001). She also includes the *Persae* in her study as being, not necessarily an epiphany, but fundamental to the movement of the drama.
Aeschylus, however, while following Phrynicus’ lead in some respects, did not make Phrynicus’ mistake. The destruction he told of was not that of a friend of Athens, but her foe. Aeschylus does not present us with a dark hour for Athens, but rather her finest.

Important for our discussion here is that the ability of Athens to save Greece is linked directly to its relationship with the goddess Athena. The proof of this statement has been argued time and again. Gagarin is especially clear on this point. Many of the passages he mentions in his argument will be addressed below though for a different end. Instead of proving that *Persae* is praising Athens generally, I will argue that the play praises Athens specifically through its connection with Athena. It is Athena who protects Athens and thus all of Greece.

The association between Athens and Athena is essential to the *Persae*. Aeschylus reinforces the connection by pointing to the linguistic equivalence. At line 347, a messenger says, θεοὶ πόλιν σώζουσι Παλλάδος θεᾶς (The gods save the city of the goddess Pallas). The Persian queen responds, ἔτ᾿ ἄρ᾿ Ἀθηνῶν ἔστ᾿ ἀπόρθητος πόλις;
(Is the city of Athenas still not sacked? 348). Thus, the city of Pallas equals Athens
(πόλιν Παλλάδος θεᾶς equals πόλις Αθηνῶν). Note, however that the text does not say
“the city of the Athenians”, but rather “city of Athenas”. Here, then, it seems Aeschylus
identifies Athens as the plural Athena. Thus the Αθηνῶν in 348 is really untranslatable
and the connection between the city Athens and the goddess is strengthened even further
for what are Athenians really but a collective Athena?
Athena is Athens, then, and the gods protect their own. For not only in line 347 above,
but, throughout the text, it is a god or daimon who strikes down Xerxes and his army.53

This god or daimon, according to Darius’ ghost is Zeus (740 and 760-764), but in
at least one instance (472-475), the god may be Athena herself:

ᾗ στυγνὲ δαῖμον, ὡς ἀφεν’ ἐφεύσας φρενῶν
Πέρσας· πικρὰν δὲ παῖς ἐμὸς τιμωρίαν
κλεινῶν Αθηνῶν ἡμέρας, κοῦκ ἀπήρκεσαν
οὓς πρόσθε Μαραθῶν βαρβάρων ἀπώλεσεν.

O hateful god! how you deceived the
Persians’ minds. My child found a bitter vengeance
at famous Athens nor did those of the barbarians
whom Marathon earlier destroyed satisfy her/it.54

The ambiguity here involves the implied object of ἀπήρκεσαν. Is it Athens? Who is the
dαίμων? Is it Athena?55 Are Athens and the δαίμων one and the same? The special

52 M. Gagarin, Aeschylean Drama (Berkeley) 1976, 29-56. The primary exception to this point of view is
Rosenbloom. See above for discussion.

53 cf. 93-4, δολόμητιν δ’ ἀπάταν θεοῦ τις ἀνήθ θαυμάτως ἀλέξει; 354, κακός δαίμων; 454, θεός...ἔδωκε
κόδος Ἐλλῆσις; 472, ὡ στυγνὲ δαίμον; 495-6, θεός χειμον’ ἀφορόν ὥρας; 513-4, πολλὰ δ’ ἐκλέιπω
λέγων κακῶν δ’ Πέρσας ἐγκατέσκηψεν θεὸς; 515, ὃ πυθόνητε δαίμον; 724-5, Atossa: τις δαίμονον
ξυνήψατο. Darius: φεύ μέγας τις ἢλθε δαίμον ὡστε μὴ φρονεῖν καλῶς, etc.
relationship between Athena and Athens begs us to ask if it is Athens that is not satisfied with the blood at Marathon, can that not also mean Athena, the goddess who gives the city its name? It is possible that δαίμων and Athens are also interchangeable in this instance, which urges us to perceive of Athena as the δαίμων. The ambiguity, however, is impressive and leaves one to wonder. But the point is that the gods watch over Athens and for this reason Athens is the bulwark of Greece. That this is the case is emphasized repeatedly throughout the play since it is Athens and its destruction that is the focus of the Persians.

The first mention of Athens as distinct from the collective “Greeks” is found at 231: ὦ φίλοι, ποῦ τὰς Ἀθήνας φασίν ἱδρύσθαι χθόνος; (O friends, where on earth do they say Athens is situated?) The chorus responds that it is far away. Atossa ponders why Xerxes still hunts after Athens. The chorus answers: πᾶσα γὰρ γένοιτ ἂν Ἑλλὰς βασιλέως ὑπήκοος (For all Hellas would become subject to the king; 234). This same type of “singling-out” of the Athenians and Athens as the focus of Persian aggression occurs repeatedly. It is the rise or fall of Athens that dictates victory or defeat for Persia. Thus, Athens’ survival ensures the survival of Greece making Athens Greece’s bulwark and savior.

54 The “her” in the translation can refer either to the city of Athens or to Athena. The verb ἀπαρκέω can be used absolutely though the LSJ cites this particular passage as not being absolute and the translation of Greene seems to agree that there is an implied object.

55 Or, Themistocles who is often mentioned? But the reference to Marathon’s dead seems to make δαίμων more than a mere human.

56 A few instances are found at: 284-6, 347-8, 473-4, 716, and 976. 823-4 will be discussed below. Also, the singling-out of Athens would serve to stir up the patriotism of the Athenian audience.
Two moments in particular reinforce the idea that Athens is the savior of Greece. First, at 823-4, Athens and Greece are mentioned beside each other as if Athens were separate from the rest of Greece or warranted special attention: τοιαῦθ᾿ ὁρῶντες τῶνδε τάπτιμα μέμνισθ᾿ Ἀθηνῶν Ἑλλάδος τε (Seeing the punishments of these, remember Athens and Hellas!). The Persians fought against the Hellenes, but it is Athens alone amongst the Greek states that must be recalled. Second, the only action attributed to a Greek individual in the play is done by a man from Athenian ranks: ἀνὴρ γὰρ Ἕλλην ἐξ Ἀθηναίων στρατοῦ ἐλθὼν ἔλεξε παιδὶ σῶι Ξέρξηι τάδε (For a Greek man from the Athenian ranks coming forth said these things to your son Xerxes; 355-365). Athens is the only Greek state to warrant specific mention in connection to the Persian defeat and it is the trick of an Athenian that brings about a battle in the first place.

Persian aggression, then, was focused on Athens and, after their defeat, Athens also becomes the focus of Atossa’s and the other Persians’ angst. The security of Athens has ensured the survival of the other Greeks because Athens brought about a battle on terrain beneficial to the Greeks, securing victory. But, what were the rewards of such a

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57 This exchange between the chorus and Atossa has been variously received by scholars. Gagarin notes it for its emphasis on Athens whereas Benedetto links it to Athenian hegemonic claims, (Gagarin, 1976, 33 n.2; V. di Benedetto L’ideologia del potere e la tragedia greca (Turin, 1978). Goldhill claims the exchange “not merely praises the Athenians but, more importantly, praises them through a series of oppositions that relate closely to the sense of Athenian ideology. . .It is a hoplite citizen army and navy, state-funded, and in its collective values essentially linked to the practice and principles of the democratic polis.” (“Battle Narrative and Politics in Aeschylus’ Persae” in T. Harrison (ed.) Greeks and Barbarians, Edinburgh, 2002, 55-56. There are numerous parallels in Herodotus’ History to the prominence of Athens in the battle of Salamis and as the focus of Persian angst. Herodotus may very well have taken up this idea from Aeschylus’ play.

58 Scholars have made note of the fact that “some Athenian” is probably Themistocles (or Siccinus). The de-emphasis, however, on the individual is deliberate on the part of Aeschylus. He emphasizes the city and its part in Salamis, not individual men, though political sensitivity may play an important role in that choice.
victory? According to *Persae*, the Greeks had a great deal to gain by fending off the Persians. And the Athenians, as the foremost Greeks in the conflict, could take credit for making those rewards possible. A look at a couple of passages will illuminate the point.

The first passage occurs in the middle of the messenger’s description of the battle. As the Greeks approached to attack, they cried out:

ć παίδες Ἑλλήνων, ἰτε
ἔλευθεροῦτε πατρίδ’, ἔλευθεροῦτε δὲ
παίδας γυναικάς θεῶν τε πατρώιων ἐδή
θήκας τε προγόνων·

O children of Hellas, go forth and free your fatherland, free your women and children and the dwelling place of our ancestral gods and the graves of our forefathers. (402-405)

The key word in this passage, repeated twice, is ἔλευθεροῦτε. Freedom is the impetus for fighting. And not just freedom, but freedom for the fatherland and for their traditions. Free the fatherland and the homes of our ancestral gods and the graves of our forefathers, the Athenians cry. The Athenians, along with the other Greeks, are fighting to preserve their current homes and to reclaim their past. This, then, is the prize—freedom and a Greek identity. For the Ionian coastal cities and many of the Aegean islands had come under the domination of Persia. This domination consisted of paying tribute to Xerxes, fighting in his army and giving up self-governance. The battle cry of the Greeks was to erase this “servitude.”

The Greek victory at Salamis (coordinated by the Athenians) led directly to this freedom, if we believe the choral ode at 584–597:

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59 The inappropriateness of the Persian decision to fight a sea battle is emphasized throughout the *Persae*. 
No longer throughout Asian land
are they governed by Persian law,
and no longer do they pay tribute
with kingly necessity,
nor do they stand in awe,
falling prostrate onto the land;  
For the kingly power has been destroyed.

No longer are men’s tongues under guard;
For people have been released
to speak freely,
since the yoke of strength was demolished.
The sea-girt island of Aias,  
the land having been bloodied,
holds the [remains] of Persia.

This eloquent piece of Athenian propaganda announces the Greek victory over the
Persians at Salamis and the freedom of the Greeks from their domination. The battle of
Salamis is considered, in Aeschylus, as well as in Herodotus later, to be the moment
when Persia was defeated and driven back from Greece. It was a decisive moment in the
battle against slavery. And, the Athenians, as we noted earlier, were not only responsible
for bringing about the battle, but were the reason why the Greeks won. The Persians
focused their attention on Athens and it was the fact that Athens still stood that decided
whether Persia was defeated or not. As the messenger reminds us at 349 when, Atossa
asks if Athens still stands: ἀνδρῶν γὰρ ὄντων ἔρικος ἐστὶν ἀσφαλές (as long as there
are men there is an unfailing defense). As long as there are 200 manned ships, Athens is a
city stronger than any other.61 This city is responsible for freeing Greece. And it was not
something the Athenians were going to let the other Greeks forget.

See especially 1-61; 278-279; 413-418; 424-428.
The power acquired by the Athenians in the aftermath of Salamis is something that is emphasized not only in the messenger speech, but also in the geographic references made in Persae 864-906. Noel Robertson has labeled this passage a “geography extravaganza”. But it is more than just a free flowing mention of geography. Mapping in the ancient world was a form of domination. Mapping was/is a way of making something unknown known and through this knowledge, the one possessing it gains control over the mapped space. Just as the map of Cleomenes (Hdt. 5-49.5-8) and Agrippa’s map of the world were clearly used to express spheres of control, so too is Aeschylean mapping here in Persae and, I will argue below, in the Eumenides. Also, as Rosenbloom has pointed out correctly, it makes clear one major truth at the time of the Persae’s production: these lands were all once part of the Persian Empire and the Athenians had acquired them as a result of their victory. And, as Meier writes, “with what pride must the Athenians have listened to the long catalogue of Greek cities which had been conquered by Darius only to be liberated by Athens!”

60”Remains” is suggested by S. Bernadette.

61 This is a paraphrase of the famous line in Herodotus, attributed to Themistocles: εἴη καὶ πόλις καὶ γῆ μέζων ἐξ ἐκείνων, ἐστ’ ἀν διηκόσαι νέες σφι ἐκ οἱ πεπληρωμέναι(8.61.2). Aeschylus, of course, says “men” and not “ships”. This could have to do with his conception of a citizen navy. Ships are not enough if they are not manned by citizens. Citizens (men) make the city, not the navy. The navy is merely an extension of the citizen male.

62 Robertson simply wishes to ignore the political nature of mapping. But, as Godlewska and Smith put it, “[h]istorically, nothing characterizes geography so tellingly as its close contacts with those either seeking or holding territorial power” (Geography and Empire, Oxford, 1994, 4). For further discussion of mapping in the ancient world, see J. Romm The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought (Princeton, 1992).

63 Meier (1993) 70.
Persae is much more complex than Meier’s assessment suggests. Things were not as settled with Persia as this ode leads us to believe. Perhaps in 472 BC, Athens thought it appropriate to proclaim (in drama) that she had finished with Persia, but that was not, in fact, the case. Rather, a continual state of war existed which would only end with the peace of Callias around 449 BC. In addition, the fact that the Persian menace had not, in reality, been entirely erased is not the only thing amiss with the choral ode quoted above. For each element of the new found “freedom” of the Greeks can be shown to have simply been slightly altered. During the decades following Salamis, the Athenians headed-up the Delian League through which she collected tribute from the allies to support continued military action. Aeschylus’ claim that Greece was no longer subject to paying tribute through necessity is false. The allies paid tribute to Athens, the city of the goddess, for protection from a menace supposedly defeated at Salamis, the isle of Ajax. When the allies “forgot” to pay their tribute, they faced harsh penalties.

64 Pelling has argued that some of the inconsistencies between the play and reality reflect the ideological battle in fifth-century Athens between the predominance of either Marathon or Salamis which is part of the conflict between hoplite and naval ideological modes (C. Pelling “Aeschylus’ Persae and History” in Pelling (ed.), 1997, 1-13 esp.) However, the inconsistencies I am concerned with here pertain more to a conflict between reality and an idealized version of that reality. This Pelling sees as one of the fundamental roles of tragedy in the polis (C. Pelling “Conclusion” in C. Pelling (ed.) 226-227).

65 Robinson writes, “Thirty years after the end of the Persian Wars—precisely in the year 449 BC- it was clear to everyone that the immediate threat of another Persian invasion had passed and that the Greeks were free to work out their destiny.” He assumes that the Peace of Callias was put into effect in 449. C.A. Robinson Athens in the Age of Pericles (Norman, OK, 1959), 31. Badian, however, debates the very existence of such a peace. If there was one, he suggests, it was the renewal of an earlier one. This would make Athens’ desire to keep the League together even more suspect. For it was, supposedly, an anti-Persian alliance (From Plataea to Potidaea, Baltimore, 1983, 1-73 for the complete argument). Meiggs, however, defends the traditional view that the Peace of Callias was concluded around 449 BC (129ff). Athens’ real motives may have been an attempt to have it both ways; namely, declare victory over Persia while still needing the specter of Persia to justify the need for the Delian League. I do not believe this tension is directly in evidence in Persae.
A strategy for preventing such “forgetfulness” was in use soon after the battle at Salamis. This strategy is found displayed in Book 8 of Herodotus’ *Histories* and it is Themistocles, the Athenian leader at Salamis, who uses it. After some debate, the Greeks decide to allow the Persians to return over land to Asia thus transferring the war from Greece to Asia. Themistocles then, at 8.111, embarks on a plan to get money from those Greek islands who had fought with Persia in the war. He begins with Andros. Andros, unable to pay the money due to its poverty, is besieged by Themistocles and the Greek fleet. While besieging Andros, he sends messengers to Karsts and Paros asking for money (8.112). In both cases, Themistocles threatens to send the Greek fleet against them if they do not pay. Both islands pay. What is interesting to note about this is that the Chorus of Persians in Aeschylus has proclaimed that the Greeks were freed from tribute. What is it, if not tribute, that Themistocles is extorting from the islanders?66 Also, once the League was founded, the Greeks did pay tribute, *phoros*.67 It just wasn’t to the king.

We at least know from Herodotus that besides Andros, Karsts and Paros still had to pay tribute. And Herodotus guesses that others did also: δοκέω δέ τινας καὶ ἄλλους δοῦναι καὶ οὐ τούτους μοῦνος (I think that some others also paid, not these people

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66 Also, Herodotus makes a point of saying that Themistocles was doing this *without the knowledge of the other Greek leaders*: Θεμιστοκλῆς μὲν νῦν ἐξ Ἀνδροῦ ὄρμωμενος χρήματα παρὰ νησιωτέων ἐκτάσιος ἀδίκημα τῶν ἀλλῶν στατηγῶν (Themistocles, starting out from Andros, now obtained money from the islanders without the knowledge of the other generals; 8.112.3). If Themistocles did not want the other leaders to know, he may not have been acting in the best interest of all Greece.

67 And, of course, *phoros* is implicit in δασμοφοροῦσιν.
alone; 8.112.2). The conception of this forced pay is as negative in Herodotus as the phrase δασμοφορούσιν δεσποσύνοισιν ἀνάγκαις suggests the tribute to the king was in
Persae.68

What of the other benefits from the Athenian-driven victory at Salamis? At 588-589, the chorus states that the Greeks no longer lie in awe, prostrate on the land. This is true, unless you see the cowering of Karsts and Paros at 8.112.2 as a form of awe.69

Herodotus states of Karsts and Paros that they gave money: οἵ πυνθανόμενοι τήν τε Ἀνδρον ὡς πολιορκέοιτο διότι ἐμήδισε, καὶ Θεμιστοκλέα ὡς εἴη ἐν αἴνῃ μεγίστη τῶν στρατηγῶν (Those men understood both that Andros was being besieged because it Medized and that Themistocles was the greatest in fame of the generals, 8.112.2). The islanders were intimidated by the threat of investment and in awe of Themistocles’ greatness.

And, what of the final claim of the Chorus, that the Greek tongues could speak freely? Surely, the response of Andros to Themistocles is unfettered. When the Andrians refuse to pay at first, Themistocles states (8.111.2-3):

ὡς ἦκοιεν Ἀθηναῖοι περὶ ἑωυτοὺς ἔχοντες δύο θεοὺς μεγάλους, Πειθώ τε καὶ Ἀναγκαῖς, οὕτω τε σφί κάρτα δοτέα εἶναι χρῆματα, ὑπεκρίνατο πρὸς ταῦτα λέγοντες ὡς κατὰ λόγον ἦκαν ἀρα Αθήναις μεγάλαι τε καὶ εὐδαίμονες, <αἰ> καὶ θεών χρῆστον ἦκοιεν εὐθείᾳ Ἀνδροῦ τε καὶ μέγιστον ἀνήκοντας, καὶ θεώς δύο ἀργύρους οὐκ ἐκλείπειν οὐκ ἠμηχανίην καὶ τούτων τῶν θεῶν νήσον ἀλλ’ αἰεὶ φιλοχωρεῖν. Πενίην τε καὶ Ἀμηχανίην, καὶ τούτων τῶν θεῶν

68 The money, like Themistocles, is not mentioned in Aeschylus. Nor would it be necessary to the point that the Athenian audience immediately think of Themistocles’ wartime efforts. This is a praise of Athens and her actions in the battle. I am merely pointing out that, at the time of production, the message of Persae was not in exact alignment with events. The Athenian memory is beginning to become selective.

69 This verb is used specifically of eastern obeisance. This makes the possible connection of the term with Themistocles all the more interesting since he was exiled on charges of Medizing.
ἐπηβόλους ἐόντας Ἀνδρίους οὐ δώσειν χρήματα· οὐδέκοτε γὰρ <ἀν>τῆς ἑωυτῶν ἀδυναμίας τὴν Ἀθηναίων δύναμιν εἶναι κρέσσω.

The Athenians would come having two great gods with them, Persuasion and Necessity, and they (Andrians) must pay the money. To these things the Andrians responded, saying that in accordance with that speech the Athenas were both great and fortunate if they should come with such useful gods. But since the Andrians were land-poor and needy to the utmost and since two useless gods, Poverty and Hardship, refused to leave their island, but were fond of it, and since the Andrians belonged to these gods, they would not give money. For the power of the Athenians was not yet greater than their own weakness.

The Andrians speak out and Themistocles besieges them. And it is through siege that Themistocles is able to scare the other islanders into giving in to Athenian demands. Thus it can be noted that the Andrians, while able to speak their minds, pay for it with a long siege and the weakness of the other islands.

What are we to make then of Aeschylus’ declarations in Persae in light of the events Herodotus describes? Themistocles began “liberating” the Greek islands shortly after the battle of Salamis. But his liberation involved the payment of χρήματα (not technically tribute, but money nonetheless) and the threat of force if payment was not made. Both of these contradict certain of Aeschylus’ listed benefits received from the Greek victory (cf. 587-589). Aeschylus claims that the Greeks had freedom to speak, but when the Andrians did, they were besieged. And, though the islanders were no longer governed by Persian law (584-5), they would soon be subject to the decisions of the Delian League and, later, Athenian law.

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70 Note also that the god they are compelled by is “Necessity”—one of the very things the chorus of the Persae claims will no longer bother the Greeks.

71 The Athenians began subjecting the islanders to certain Athenian laws as early as possibly 469 BC with an alliance with Phaselis.
There is also something to be said for the divine apparatus of the *Persae* and its relationship to this alternate reality of *Persae*. For within the play there is only one god, or rather goddess, ever mentioned in connection with the Greek victory—Athena. She alone, or especially,\(^{72}\) of all the gods protects both the Athenians and the other Greeks. But why is Athena so much in the foreground of the victory at Salamis? She was the patron of Athens and so it makes sense that she be beside them in an Athenian-led victory. But this victory was a victory for all Greeks. The *Persae* thus positions Athens’ goddess as the protector of all Hellas and, in deed, at least, a truer pan-Hellenic deity than Apollo, the patron, in name, of the recently formed Delian League.

It is the case that by 472 BC, when *Persae* was produced, Athens had already begun demonstrating the strong-arm tactics that would characterize her in the years preceding the Peloponnesian War. *Persae* does not reflect this reality. Nor does it necessarily lead us to Rosenbloom’s conclusion that Aeschylus has positioned the Athenians as the successors of Xerxes in all his *hubristic* glory, “[t]he Persians signifies Athens’ transformation from Marathon to Salamis, from defense of freedom to pursuit of domination.”\(^{73}\) This is only partially true. The Athenians were indeed at a crossroads and had the potential to become that which they defeated in reality. A look at the discrepancies between what the play presents and their activities in the Aegean at the time of production has demonstrated this. Aeschylus’ true aim, however, does not seem

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\(^{72}\) This god or *daimon*, according to Darius’ ghost is Zeus (740 and 760-764). But Athena, as is often emphasized, is the right arm of Zeus.

\(^{73}\) Rosenbloom (1995) begins this statement with, “Persia and Athens are parallel to the extent that the past and present of each community is marked by a division between Marathon and Salamis, between evacuating and protecting the land, between land power—and good civic order—and naval power that has a potential for destruction” (94).
to be to point out this reality. In Athenian tragedy the past was conjured up so as to negotiate the present. The Athenians typically summoned up myths of Troy or Thebes. *Persae* does the opposite. It suppresses the present by mythologizing it and turning Salamis into a version of Troy. Thus the Athenian audience reads the tragedy of the Persians and their own victory not through a contemporary lens, but a mythic one, in this way removing it from reality and allowing the Athenians to ignore the inaccuracies and discrepancies between democratic principles and ever increasing imperialist activities that the play might conjure up. *Persae* does not signify an end to freedom’s defense. Rather, it covers up the pursuit of domination with the glory of Salamis.

Aeschylus has presented us, I have been arguing, with an idealized view of the Athenian world in 472 BC:

Aeschylus was able to create a coherent picture of things within the conventions of the genre, ensuring that sense is preserved, that the world-view is in order and that belief in the justice of political and military processes and in the gods is upheld. . . By placing the most important event of the time within their knowledge, he was able to regulate and extend their knowledge.”

Thus Aeschylus the teacher/tragedian has shown the Athenians their own greatness and given them the tools with which to avoid the pitfalls of their rival, Xerxes. This idealized version of reality may not sit neatly with what the real pursuits of the Athenians and their fleet were in the years immediately preceding and following the production but this is precisely because it is a *version* of reality and as such presents only one side of that reality.

*Persae* is a play in praise of Athens. It is not a play questioning the growing naval hegemony of Athens. For this to be true, the audience would need to have
identified themselves and their own real \textit{hubris} with the Persians and theirs within the play. But this identification does not work for two reasons. First, Aeschylus goes to great lengths to alienate the Athenian audience from the Persians.\footnote{Hall has pointed to the detailed description of Darius’ eastern outfit and the cries of the mourning women as evidence that the audience would be forced to back away from any identification they may have begun to make between themselves and the Persians. As pointed out above, the gods, particularly Athena, watch over Athens and the Athenians. In so far as the Persians are tricked by the gods, the Athenians are allied to the gods:} In addition, any identification that may have taken place between the Athenian audience and the Persian characters needs to be questioned. Griffith makes the point that the most likely identification would have been between Xerxes and specifically young aristocratic Athenians; precisely the type of men who were discontented with the democracy.\footnote{Goldhill goes to great lengths to show how Aeschylus distinguishes between the Persian monarchical \textit{hubris} and Athenian democratic collectivity (Goldhill, 2002, \textit{passim} and 59 esp.). Also, in a recent APA paper, Chad Turner has demonstrated that the seemingly tragic lamentations which Rosenbloom and others have offered as evidence for audience identification are only tragic in structure. For, while the laments may follow the pattern of other laments found in Homer and other tragedians, Persian destruction is not complete. The threat of a renewed attack is still evident (cf 795) (C. Turner “Un-tragic Laments in Aeschylus’ \textit{Persae}” APA Annual Meeting, 2003). Also, the need for an Athenian audience to sympathize with the Persians in order for this play to be a tragedy is a function of Aristotle’s theory of tragedy. It is obvious that his model was not universal. Only a minute fraction of fifth-century tragedies actually fit his mold.}

Second, the Athenians are closely linked to the divine apparatus of \textit{Persians}. As pointed out above, the gods, particularly Athena, watch over Athens and the Athenians. In so far as the Persians are tricked by the gods, the Athenians are allied to the gods:}

\footnote{Griffith points out that the language used to describe Xerxes is the same as that used by Pindar and others to refer to athletic and military victors. But “[u]ndemocratic and unGreek though much of this description may seem to us, there were in fact Athenians who would fit the description quite well” (45). Griffith goes on to say that these Athenians were, “aristocrats, those not entirely content with democracy as the fairest or most efficient system for governing a \textit{polis} and rewarding the merits of the best citizens” (48).}
For the Persians, beguiled by the gods, the very elements are harshly destructive; the Greeks, their oars skimming across the sea with regular stroke as λευκόπωλος ἡμέρα (386) first lights up the land, their war-cry taken up by echo from the neighboring crags, are as clearly in league with their gods as the Persians are their dupes.78

Thus, instead of expecting his audience to see their own downfall predicted in that of the Persians, Aeschylus allows his Athenian audience (or most of them) to identify themselves with Athena and the Athenians. He highlights the vital role Athens played in the victory at Salamis and touts the benefits Athens granted the islanders and Ionians by it. Athens was the bulwark of the combined Greek naval force and Athena, as the protector of Athens and the Athenians, was, in a way, the savior of all Greece.

Thus it is that, though Athena herself never appears in Persae, Aeschylus has positioned her, as the patron goddess of Athens, as the benefactress of all Greeks. This is ultimately why the Athenians are free from repeating the cycle of liberation-domination-subversion which Rosenbloom sees inherent in tragedy. For Athena is above human faults in Aeschylean tragedy79 and it is she who saves Greece through the agency of her Athenians. And, according to Aeschylus, the benefits she and Athens have conferred upon their allies are worthy of the greatest praise. However, a look at the Herodotus’ description of the historical events surrounding the battle of Salamis and the production of Persae has shown that Aeschylus’ version of Salamis and its aftermath is not necessarily accurate. But, as Peter Rose reminds us, “despite authorial intent, knowledge

77 This is made evident by the repeated references to the daimon who harms the Persians to the benefit of the Greeks. See above.


79 And probably in actual religious practice at Athens.
serves power.”80 Because of the great deeds of the Athenians at Salamis, Athens can justify the position of leadership she holds in the Delian League,81 and Athens can justify the power that was slowly, but surely accumulating for her. In the *Persae*, Aeschylus has given the Athenians a sure demonstration and a secure knowledge of their own right to hegemony.

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81 This is exactly the tact Thucydides has his Athenians take. In repeated speeches, the Athenians lay the justification for their growing power at the feet of Marathon and Salamis (Thuc. 1.75.3; 2.61.4-64.3).
Eumenides

Athena, Politics and Geography in Eumenides

The representation of Athena in Eumenides is more complex than that in Persae. One reason for this is simply that Athena actually appears on stage in Eumenides. This appearance must have been quite a spectacle. Standing in her panoply with the burnt out Acropolis behind her, the Athenian audience as a jury casting votes at a trial, like citizens carrying out their civic duty. How the Athenians interpreted this appearance has been a popular subject for scholarly debate. While a variety of roles has been suggested, one thing seems agreed on by most scholars: Athena represented the city of Athens and its institutions on stage in the Eumenides.

Many studies have been written concerning the “politics” of Eumenides. Some of these are (pre)occupied with the discovery of whether Aeschylus was a “radical democrat” or a “conservative”. Others have attempted to remove any immediate historical context from their readings and to expand the term “political,” making it more general. Macleod states, “the Areopagus and the Argive alliance. . .have. . .a meaning and a value which are not confined to any historical situation”. In each of these

82 Griffith (1995) writes on audience identification with Eumenides, “...the theater audience is assimilated to the vital, but silent, role of the jurors—who are, after all, the characters in the play whose status and points of view most closely resemble theirs...” (77-78).

83 Gagarin suggests that each of the individual characters of the trilogy should be read as part of a larger whole. Each contributes to the creation of a unified identification of “house, family, mythical city, and contemporary city.” The House of Atreus, as represented by Agamemnon and Orestes “becomes identified with the city of Argos as a political entity and, in the end, mythical Argos gives way to contemporary Athens” (58). Thus, just as Orestes stands in place of both mythical and contemporary Argos, so to Athena stands in for Athens and its interests in the world of the contemporary Athenian law court.

84 cf note 47 above.
political readings of *Eumenides*, Athena is a seeming substitute for Athens. The implications of her appearance on stage are overshadowed by the desire to seek out a political agenda for Aeschylus.

Alan Sommerstein, however, does look at Athena and her role in *Eumenides*. She is, as he puts it, a conciliator. She is chosen to decide between the old order of justice (retribution) and the new order of justice (judicial procedure). Athena’s role is, through reasoned judgment and persuasion, to reconcile the former, represented by the Furies, with the latter, represented by the law court she establishes. Papadopoulou, in apparent agreement, places this Athena under the heading “Athena and Athens/Athena and aetiology.” It is this dual portrayal of Athena that Papadopoulou states is the “most influential portrayal of Athena in her role as the deity of Athens and its institutions.” Not only is Athena the patron deity of Athens but is also, according to Papadopoulou, to be interpreted as its chief political authority.

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86 This view is, in fact, quite common among scholars. Sommerstein (1996), 183-189 and 273-287.

87 Most scholarship on justice in *Eumenides*, however, has tended to focus on Zeus and his role as opposed to Athena’s. In most instances, Athena is seen as nothing but the instrument of Zeus’ will: see especially H. Lloyd-Jones “Zeus in Aeschylus” *JHS* 76 (1956) 55-67 and *The Justice of Zeus* (Berkeley, 1971); R.P. Winnington-Ingram ‘Clytemnestra and the Vote of Athena” in E. Segal (ed.) *Oxford Readings in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford, 1983) 84-103. For a scathing indictment of Zeus’ justice see D. Cohen “The Theodicy of Aeschylus: Justice and Tyranny in the *Oresteia*” *G&R* 33 (1986) 129-140.

88 Papadopoulou (2001), 304.

Athena in *Eumenides* would be reminded of her contest with Poseidon. How they would be reminded of Poseidon is not made clear, but Bowie seems to be implying that the audience would have seen in Athena their patron and founder.\(^9^0\)

Other studies of Athena in *Eumenides* concern her more “allegorical” function. These scholars address her within the major metaphors of the trilogy, through her relationships to dark and light or male and female.\(^9^1\) In these studies, Athena is situated directly opposite the Furies. The maternal nature presented in the Furies is countered by Apollo’s masculinity and Athena, on account of her “paternal” birth, takes the side of Apollo and masculinity. Her relationship to light associates her with reason and rationality and Apollo. While she does agree with the Erinyes that fear is a necessary component of justice, Athena decides to place that fear within an impartial judiciary alloting punishment through rational assessment. Punishment comes, not necessarily as is deserved, but as the community sees fit to inflict.\(^9^2\)

Each of these studies is important in its own right; even among the political interpretations, none wholly excludes the others. However, previous political interpretations have not done full justice to *Eumenides*. For, internal politics are not the only form of politics the Athenians were involved in during the years following the Persian Wars. Aeschylus has, as we saw in *Persae*, an interest in the activities beyond

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\(^9^0\) A.M. Bowie “Religion and Politics in the *Oresteia*” *CQ* 43 (1993) 18. The fact that the Pythia invokes both Athena and Poseidon in the prologue might also plant the seed in an audiences’ mind.

the home-front. He is concerned also with the Athenian methods of acquiring an empire in the Aegean during the 470’s and 460’s. *Eumenides*, I argue, can be understood not only as reflecting these imperial aspirations, but as justifying them. Athena, in her role as representative of Athens, makes the case, not only for why the Erinyes should submit to her persuasion, but why Athens’ allies should also.\(^9\)

In all political interpretations it is taken for granted that Athena, as she appears on stage, embodies Athens and its interests.\(^9\) The questions I ask are as follows: What is the significance of what Athena says and what is said about her in *Eumenides*? Many scholars have argued in various capacities for political/historical significance of *Eumenides*. None, however, has asked how the significance of the play is altered or emphasized by having Athena pronounce certain political truths. The argument here, then, will be two-fold. First, I will address the different political issues examined by previous scholars, adding my own insights where appropriate. Second, I will examine how having these political/historical resonances issue from Athena’s mouth colors or influences one’s interpretation and how our view of Athena and Athens is shaped by the significance of what she is made to say by Aeschylus.

The political issues addressed by Athena in *Eumenides* have generally been broken down as follows: 1. The Argive alliance (289-291, 669-673, 762-774); 2. The


\(^9\) The discussion of “political” language will be confined here to *Eumenides* since the focus of the discussion is on the figure of Athena herself. For discussions of the political aspects of the trilogy as a whole, see Dodds (1973) 45-63 and Gagarin (1976) 87-118.

\(^9\) The same linguistic equivalence found in *Persae* is found early in *Eumenides* (lines 10: ναυπόρους τὰς Παλλάδος; 79: πτόλιν Παλλάδος)
reforms of the Council of the Areopagus by Ephialtes (and Pericles) in 462 BC (681-710); and 3. The disputed possession of Sigeum (397-402). While the first two allusions have been upheld by recent scholars as, in fact, existing within Aeschylus’ play, the third has come under fire.\textsuperscript{95} I will begin with the last since it is the most tenuous of the allusions and return to the first two further below.\textsuperscript{96}

Generally, scholars have decided that, since there is no dispute or battle known to have occurred around Sigeum in the years immediately before the \textit{Eumenides} was produced, no contemporary echo can exist. However, a re-examination of the lines in question will demonstrate, I argue, that there are contemporary political issues implied in this text. For why does a reference to the land beside the Scamander need necessarily to refer only to Sigeum? The Athenians had a greater connection to that region than scholars have hitherto noted and that connection can be found in the immediate aftermath of Salamis and Plataea.

The passage in question concerning Sigeum is 397-402. It is from Athena’s first speech:

\begin{verbatim}
Πρόσωθεν ἐξήκουσα κλῆδόνος βοὴν ἀπὸ Σκαμάνδρου, γῆν καταφθατομένη, ἣν δῆτ᾿ Ἀχαιῶν ἀκτορὲς τε καὶ πρόμοι, τῶν αἰχμαλώτων χρημάτων λάχος μέγα, ἐνειµαν αὐτόπρεµιν ἐς τὸ πᾶν ἐµοὶ, ἐξαἰρέτον δώρη τοῖς Θησέως τόκοις·
\end{verbatim}

I heard your appeal from afar, around the Scamander, where I was taking possession of the land which the leaders and foremost men of the Achaeans

\textsuperscript{95} And this is, interestingly, the one of only two external political references even considered by scholars.

\textsuperscript{96} For point 1, see pages 61ff below. See 72ff for point 2.
alotted me, root and stock,\textsuperscript{97} for all time,
a great portion of the spear-won wealth,
chosen as a gift for the sons of Theseus.

The earlier scholarly discussion on these lines, beginning with the scholiasts, has focused
on the conflict between Athens and Mytilene over Sigeum in the sixth century. Sigeum,
located in the Troad, was acquired by the Athenians in the late seventh century and is
thought to have been their first overseas possession. The scholiasts and early scholars
read Aeschylus’ text as an Athenian claim for long standing possession of the region,
going back to the Trojan War. However, more recent scholarship, beginning with Dover
in 1957, sees any reference to Sigeum as unclear.

Macleod suggests that, as a result of the dispute with Mytilene, the Athenians
invented the myth that Theseus’ sons received land at Troy as support for their claim to
the region.\textsuperscript{98} He denies that these lines need refer to any contemporary dispute. And this
seems correct. For, when Aeschylus produced \textit{Eumenides} in 458 BC, Sigeum had been
back in Athenian control since the early 500’s. There was no longer any dispute over
that particular piece of land in the Troad. As Dover points out, “[c]onflict with Mytilene
over the Troad was a phenomenon of the sixth century, not the fifth.”\textsuperscript{99} For him, there is
no contemporary event in the Troad warranting investigation.

Podlecki, in his commentary to the \textit{Eumenides}, suggests that there may have, in
fact, been trouble in the Sigeum region in the 450’s. He bases this belief on an

\textsuperscript{97} This term is suggested by R. Lattimore.
\textsuperscript{98} That the sons of Theseus received land in the Troad as a gift for their services in the Trojan War is not
found in Homer or any of the Homeric epics. It must, therefore, be, as Macleod suggests, a later invention. When and where it first appeared is unknown.
\textsuperscript{99} Dover (1957) 237.
inscription published by Meritt. Meritt suggests that there was a possible disturbance in Sigeum with a Persian satrap and that this was a matter for the “Delian Confederacy,” as he calls it. His evidence for this is that Sigeum appears on the tribute list for the year following the incident—450/1 BC. Dodds is in initial agreement with this interpretation but, then, concludes, evasively that “the supposition can be neither proved nor ruled out.” There were no contemporary battles in the Troad in the late 460’s or early 450’s. But Athena’s words need not refer to a battle or to Sigeum at all.

There were connections between Athens and the Troad during the years following Salamis. While these connections had nothing to do with a specific battle or conflict, Athenian activities in the region did deal with a continual, long-term conflict with Persia—namely, the offensive activities of the Delian League beginning with the victory at Mycale in 479 BC and ending with the defeat in Egypt in 454 BC. Although the defeat in Egypt takes place after the production of the Oresteia in 458 BC, it should be included as the conclusion to a series of events which, I argue, the play does address.

In book 9 of his History, Herodotus describes Athenian/Greek activities in the immediate aftermath of the victory at Plataea in 479 BC. While the Greek land forces were fighting at Plataea, the fleet, under command of Leotychides, was lying at Delos. After receiving encouragement from the Samians, the fleet sailed to Samos hoping to engage the Persians there. The Persians, however, withdrew to Mycale, on the Asian coast near Samos, where they had stationed a land army 60,000 strong (9.90-92). They


101 Dodds (1983) 52. Podlecki is in agreement with Dover on this aspect of the Eumenides.
arrived at Gaeson and Scolopoeis, near Mycale, and beached their ships. The Greeks arrived by sea, disembarked, attacked on foot and were victorious (9.102). The Greek victory at Mycale signaled the end of the Persian fleet’s presence in the Aegean. Also, at this time, the Samians, Chians and Lesbians (among others) joined the island confederacy.

After the battle at Mycale, the fleet sailed to the Hellespont with the intention of destroying the bridge there. When they arrived at Abydos, they found the bridge already destroyed. It is at this point, Herodotus tells us, that the Athenians, in the person of Xanthippus, took command. The Spartans, feeling their work done, departed for Greece. The Athenians remained and laid siege to Sestos (9.114). These events all took place in 479 BC. By 477 BC, the Greeks also controlled Byzantium, situated on the channel leading to the Black Sea.103

At this point Herodotus’ History ends, but these events could suggest imperialist or, at least, not entirely defensive activities on the part of the Athenians. And this is significant when interpreting lines 397-402 of Eumenides. For in those lines, Athena does not say that she was at Sigeum. Rather she claims the she was “beside the Scamander.” Scholars have merely assumed that she is referring to Sigeum. However, as the events following Salamis show, the Athenians had a great, and immediate, interest in the region that did not involve Sigeum. For, as soon as the Greeks went on the

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102 Herodotus (9.97) notes that the Persians passed the temple of the Eumenides on their return to Persia. I find this interesting for a number of reasons, one being that in Eumenides Athens via Athena claims responsibility for changing the Erinyes into Eumenides. Is it significant or only coincidence?

103 The Greeks had ostensible control of Byzantium with the arrival of Pausanias there. However, the Athenians gained control of Byzantium (and the confederacy) after Pausanias was recalled by Sparta and accused of Medizing.
offensive, they attacked the Persians in the Troad and drove them out of the region landing first in Abydos, then taking Sestos and Byzantium. This offensive did not involve Sigeum or the conflict with Mytilene from twenty years earlier. It was about removing the Persians from Greek-held lands—and keeping them out.

Nor should the taking of these cities by the Athenians seem unusual or unexpected. For the Athenians did not perceive of their actions as taking foreign lands inhabited by foreign peoples. Rather the land in question had been colonized by Ionian Greeks long before and, as we are reminded by both Herodotus (5.97) and Thucydides (1.95), many Ionians considered Athens to be either their mother, or kindred, city. Thus, the area surrounding the Scamander, which Athena was receiving as a reward for the sons of Theseus was, in fact, land already populated by Athenian descendants. It was their land already, Aeschylus’ text implies, when Athena is said to have received it root and stock, for all time. The Athenians were merely reclaiming it. When the Ionians subsequently entered into an alliance with the Athenians as leaders, the Athenians, though not living there themselves, exerted control over the region. They received tribute from its residents and guarded its sea lanes.

But to really understand the significance of lines 397-402, one must also look at Orestes’ speech at 292-297:

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ἀλλ’ εἴτε χώρας ἐν τόποις Λιβυστικῆς
Τριτώνος ἀμφὶ χεῦμα γενεθλίου πόρου,
τιθησιν ὀρθὰν ἢ κατηρεφῆ πόδα,
φίλοις ἀρήγουσ’ ἐἴτε Φλεγραίαν πλάκα
θρασὺς ταγούχος ὡς ἀνήρ ἐπισκοπεῖ, ἔλθοι.
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But, whether in the places of the Libyan land, around the streams of the Tritonian strait, related to your birth, feet standing straight ahead or covered by a robe, a helper to her friends, or whether as a man, a brave commander, she scopes out the Phlegraean plain, let her come.

These lines have been read by some scholars as a reference to Athens’ activities in Egypt in the 450’s. The reference to Libya may reflect the fact that, according to Thucydides, it was the king of Libya who caused the revolt in Egypt and who sought Athenian support (1.104.1). Also, there may have been problems near the Phlegraean plain, which, according to Herodotus, is located near Potidaea, a Corinthian colony. Dover, however, disagrees with each of these points and his “enquiry,” as he calls it, of these proofs seems solid. However, a review of the historical circumstances will demonstrate that Aeschylus was, in fact, referring to Athenian activities in Egypt and elsewhere with these lines.

For information concerning events after the siege at Sestos we must look to Thucydides’ Pentactetaetia where the activities of the Athenians in the period between Mycale and the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War are recorded. The precise dating of the events Thucydides records in summary fashion is still heavily debated and no scholar’s dating schema has been entirely accepted. Despite this, valuable information concerning Athens’ rise to power can still be gleaned from the text. And, although

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104 According to Herodotus 4.180, the Libyans had a myth that Athena’s father was not Zeus, but Poseidon and that she was born from Lake Tritonis in western Libya. One of Athena’s Homeric epithets is Tritogenia, triton-born and may reflect this alternate version of Athena’s birth.

105 Podlecki, against Dover, sees no difficulty in presuming that an Athenian audience would recognize a reference to Athens’ recent expedition to Egypt at the request of the Libyan king Inaros (Podlecki, 1989, on lines 20).
Thucydides’ chronology and account have been challenged, for our purposes the sequence he presents is sufficient for understanding the scope and type of Athenian activities prior to the production of *Eumenides* in 458 BC.

According to Thucydides, the first activity of the League under Athenian leadership was to take Eion in Thrace (1.98.1). After this events move rapidly. Karystos was forced to join the Delian League (1.98.3) and, shortly after this, the Athenians captured Scyros and colonized it (1.98.2). Naxos, then, attempted to leave the League but was besieged and persuaded to remain a member (1.98.4). Around the same time as affairs in Naxos were being settled, Thasos revolted and an Athenian colony was settled at Ennea Hodoi, near the Strymon River (1.100.2-3). Amidst all of this activity, the Athenians earned a decisive victory over the Persian fleet at Eurymedon in 466 BC. Around 460 BC, Athens had a fleet in Cyprus so that when the Libyan king, Inaros, attempted to put Egypt into revolt against their Persian overlords, the Athenians were able to send aid. This they did and, by 458 BC, had sailed down the Nile and taken most of Memphis from the Persians (1.104).

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106 For two completely opposing views, see especially Meiggs (1975) 42-204 and Badian (1983) 73-107.

107 It was at this time that Cimon is said to have recovered the bones of the Athenian hero Theseus. Theseus, as a result of a crime he committed, was forced to leave Athens and wound up an exile on Scyros where he died. His bones were taken back to Athens and reburied by Cimon after their discovery. For a discussion on the significance of Cimon’s act, see Castriota (1992) ch. 2 especially; W.R. Connor “Theseus and his City” in P. Hellstrom and B. Alroth (eds.) *Religion and Power in the Ancient Greek World: Proceedings of the Uppsala Symposium* (Stockholm, 1993) 115-120; R. Garland *Introducing New Gods: the Politics of Athenian Religion* (Ithaca, 1992) 82-98; S. Mills *Theseus, Tragedy and the Athenian Empire* (Oxford, 1997); E. Simon “Theseus and Athenian Festivals” in J. Neils (ed.) 9-26; H. Walker *Theseus and Athens* (New York, 1995).

108 Thucydides remarks here that by the time Naxos was beaten into submission, the Athenians “were not the old popular rulers they had been at first” (1.99.2).
While League forces were fighting in the east, the Athenians, with their allies, the Argives and Thessalians, were butting heads with the Spartans. The Argive alliance (to which I will turn momentarily) was formed in 462 BC. That with the Thessalians followed shortly thereafter (Thuc. 1.102.4). All of the actions of the Athenians and their mainland allies are not known; but the Athenians surely fought the Corinthians at Halieis and the Peloponnesians at Cecryphalia around 459 BC (1.105.1). Sometime after this, the theater of war shifted into Boeotia where the Spartans and their allies defeated the Athenians and theirs at Tanagra. The Athenians countered with a victory at Oenophyta about two months later (1.108.1-2). Around this same time the Athenians defeated the Aeginetans and brought them into the League (1.108.3-5). This takes us up to (and slightly beyond) the time of production for *Eumenides* in 458 BC.

What, then, is the significance of the events for understanding *Eumenides*? In order to answer this question, it seems appropriate to examine Dover’s seemingly irrefutable opposition to allusions in *Eumenides* to Athens’ activities abroad during the 460’s BC. Dover’s first point is that the Athenian force in Egypt fought in the Delta, not in Libya.110 This is true from our modern perspective. The Athenian fleet sailed down the Delta and established itself at Memphis. However, Dover’s point that, since according to Herodotus 2.15-17, some Greeks considered that Libya began at the west bank of the Nile and did not include the Delta proves Aeschylus could not possibly be

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109 This is the precursor to Amphipolis. The colony at Ennea Hodoi was wiped out in the 450’s by Thracians, but was successfully resettled as Amphipolis in 437/6 BC.

110 Each item comes from a list in Dover (1957) 237. It must also be noted that later scholars (including Macleod and Dodds) seem to agree with Dover. They either state outright that Dover’s arguments are sufficient or they pass over the passage altogether, thus acknowledging by their silence, agreement.
referring to Egypt is splitting too many hairs.\footnote{Contrary to Dover, Sommerstein (1996) states, “...an audience who has just been reminded, by mention of the Argive alliance, of the great war in which their city was engaged, and heard them tell of Athena ‘aiding her friends’ in Africa, could not help thinking of the vast Athenian force even then fighting on the banks of the Nile” (397).} First, Herodotus states that the borders of Libya were conceived of as beginning as close to the Nile as the west bank. This means that the borders were fluid, not really decided upon. Memphis, where the Athenians set up their operations, is on the west bank.

Also, Libya was where the Athenians retreated to in 454 BC after their defeat. The survivors crossed through Libya to Cyrene, on the northwest coast. This suggests that the rest of Libya was safe territory for the Athenians. It also suggests that there was a level of interaction between the Athenians and Libyans during the six years of conflict. The Libyans were their allies. Nor is it necessary that the Athenians operated entirely in or out of Memphis. They probably got supplies and support from the Libyan king. In addition, as Dodds points out:

\begin{quote}
The ancients had no war correspondents and no maps of the front. Probably neither the poet nor the majority of his audience would be in a position to know just where the battles were taking place; what they would know is that many of their kinsfolk were overseas, fighting for the Libyans.\footnote{Dodds (1973) 47.}
\end{quote}

Again, the boundaries between Libya and Egypt are vague in the sources, perhaps also in reality. It was also the case that, regardless of the distinction Dover makes, some Greeks considered the name Libya for the whole continent of Africa. Herodotus attempts to correct them by separating the Delta from Libya, but this does not mean that he
succeeded. In the time of Aeschylus, it may have been very common not to distinguish between Libya, the continent, and the Nile Delta, a place on the continent.

Dover’s next argument concerns line 293 where the Triton River is specified and is, according to Herodotus, located in the far west of Libya, not near Egypt. The association of Athena with Lake Tritonis suggested by γενεθλίου is the purpose, Dover states, of its mention. Just as with Dover’s arguments concerning Libya in general, there is nothing to prevent us interpreting the reference to the Triton River as part of a larger reference to Athenian activities in the Delta during the early 450’s. The Triton River is located, according to Herodotus, near Cyrene. Cyrene was a Greek city (an early colony of Thera) and it makes sense that, if the Athenians retreated to Cyrene after their defeat in 454 BC, they would have had contacts with the city.

But the real importance of the passage lies, not in its specifying a part of Libya, but rather in the justification the statement provides for Athenians being in the region. For, just as with the suggestion above that the Athenians were “reclaiming” the Troad for her kin, the Athenians could claim as much in Libya as they had an intimate connection with the region—their patron was born there. And Athena was not just any patron

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113 Herodotus 4.180.

114 It is interesting to note that there are two other Triton Rivers that claim to be Athena’s birthplace. Both are mentioned in Pausanias. The first is a spring in Arcadia where a statue, which Pausanias assumes is Athena, is worshipped (8.26). The second is in Boeotia. The Boeotians actually have, according to Pausanias, a temple honoring Athena Tritogenia (9.33).
goddess, as we have seen. She is the representative of the city. If the Athenians could claim, yet again, to be reclaiming Greek lands from the Persians, they could justify, yet again, their activities abroad.\footnote{115}

Next, Dover states that there is no evidence for trouble in Potidaea, near the Phlegraean plain, in or around 458 BC. The reference to the Phlegraean plain can easily be accounted for, he suggests, by referring to the battle with the Giants in which Athena played a prominent role.\footnote{116} This may be so. But there is no protocol that demands that it can only refer to that battle. Nor is it necessarily the case that “Phlegraean plain” must refer to Potidaea. The plain is north of Potidaea on the Chalcidean peninsula and is, according to Herodotus (7.123), an ancient name for Pallene in Thrace. Now, there was no known activity in Potidaea at the time immediately preceding the production of \textit{Eumenides}. However, there was a great deal of activity in Thrace, as was mentioned above, though more toward the Strymon River valley. Eion was taken in 477 BC, Ennea Hodoi founded around 465 BC and Thasos was reduced also around the same time.\footnote{117}

\footnote{115}{The story concerning the Triton River and Cyrene at Herodotus 4.178-180 is quite interesting in this regard. For not only is it claimed that Greeks from Thera (the descendants of the Argonauts) settled the city, but that an oracle proclaimed that the Spartans would have colonies around the river and lake. The Spartans never really did found any colonies, but Herodotus tells us that the sons of the Argonauts went to Thera after leaving Sparta. Whether the Athenian claim on the Triton region had anything to do with the Spartan association with the location is uncertain, but interesting to speculate.}

\footnote{116}{I will come back to this below.}

\footnote{117}{Meiggs’ doubts concerning the attempted earlier settlement of Ennea Hodoi in 476/5 BC should be taken with a grain of salt. He argues from Thucydides’ silence on the issue and this is always a dangerous tact to take. In addition, just as with the earlier discussion of the Troad, Amphipolis (the later name for Ennea Hodoi) was claimed by the Athenians as a dowry for Theseus (Aeschines 2.31). This must have been a common part of the Athenian claim to the region.}
Although this is not precisely in Phlegra, it is in the region and could have merely served as a reference point. The fact that the battle of the Giants associates Athena favorably with the region is fortunate.

Dover’s arguments against the geographic references at lines 292-297, then, are not as decisive as has been thought by scholars. On the contrary, it can be demonstrated at every turn that the geographic regions mentioned both at 292-297 and 397-402 can, in fact, reflect a contemporary event or pattern of events. The Athenians had a vested interest in the Troad as early as 479 BC and continued to maintain a presence there. They were active in Libya, Boeotia and Thrace in the early 460’s and late 450’s. The overall picture that emerges from a discussion of these regions taken all together seems to point to a defined (or, rather, suggested) range of activity (Fig.1). 118 The locations in question are each at the extreme boundaries of Athenian activity. They are each associated with the whereabouts of Athena. Athena is the representative of Athens/Athenian interests in *Eumenides*. Thus, the regions can also be associated with the whereabouts of the Athenians at the time.

In addition to this, it is interesting that each of the regions in question can, in one way or another, be associated with Athena or Athens in mythology. Macleod claims that the Athenians invented a myth concerning the sons of Theseus and Athena’s land allotment in the Troad in the sixth century to support their claim on Sigeum against Mytilene. The same myth, as has already been demonstrated, can also refer to the claim

118 This runs counter to Euben’s (1990) statement that, “unlike the unconfined daring of Thucydides’ Athenians, those in the *Eumenides* are still patient with their inheritance” (76). The Athenians had a fleet roaming the Aegean, troops in Egypt and were about to embark upon a war with Aegina. This does not seem very “patient” to me.
of the Athenians to be “reclaiming” the region from the Persians for their Ionian kin. The reference to the Tritonian strait has been shown to be associated with an alternate myth of Athena’s birth. Phlegra was the site of a great battle against giants in which Athena played a central role. But do these mythological references necessitate a connection between the regions in questions and the military operations of the Athenians and their allies? They do if one studies the language within which these myths are framed.

That the regions mentioned are militarily significant is suggested by the military language of 292-297. Dover argues, that the use of the militarily suggestive φίλοις ἀφήγουσ᾿ is weakened by the fact that Orestes invokes Athena’s aid using the phrase ἐμοὶ μολεῖν ἀρωγόν at 289. Dover’s assumption seems to be, though he does not make it explicit, that the word is being used to mean an “advocate” in court as it is used in the description of the peaceful city at Iliad 18.502. However, there is nothing to suggest that this word is not equally applicable to a military situation. As a matter of fact, it is used in a military sense at Iliad 8.205 and there is nothing to suggest that the word can not carry both a legal and military connotation at once.

The military capacity is also strengthened by the line following: θασὶς ταγοῦξ ὡς ἀνήρ ἐπισκοπεῖ (296). Here, Athena is being compared to a man. And

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119 The other uses in the Iliad are equally ambiguous: 4.235; 4.408; 21.360; 21.428; 23.574.

120 See Eumenides. 289 and 579. Both the verb and noun form of ἀρωγός appear in Aeschylus first and then get picked up by Plato and the orators. It occurs especially frequently in Plato’s Laws. It also becomes a common term in inscriptions from the 2nd century BC onwards. It is interesting to note
not just a man, but a brave one, a military leader, scanning the landscape. The word used for “commander”, ταγούχος, is hapax and is built from the word ταγός which is used repeatedly in the Persae to refer to military commanders. Neither of these words, ταγούχος or ἀρωγός is directly related to decrees or the technical language of the Delian League. However, another word in the passage is related directly to such decrees and the League (and the Argive alliance)—σύμμαχος.

**What it Means to be σύμμαχος**

The word σύμμαχος, “ally”, is, in the fifth century and later, the term used in inscriptions to denote the military relationship between Athens and other Greeks who attached themselves to her. It occurs nowhere in Homer, making its earliest appearance in the lyric poets. In Aeschylus’ extant tragedies, σύμμαχος occurs seven times and is used, each time, to denote either a military or, in the case of Choephoroi, pseudo-military alliance. It is most likely that this was the word used in the original agreements

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Aeschylus’ use at Supplices 726. Here Aeschylus uses the phrase ἀρωγός τὰν ἄφθονος  ᾧ ἠξίω λαβών. Both words for advocate are used together as if ἀρωγός alone were not clear enough.

121 It is also used of Zeus in Prometheus Bound. It would be interesting to look at the context surrounding its usage. But that is for another time.

122 Sappho (1.28), Archilocus (108.1), Tyrtaeus (3b, 580) and Alcaeus (350.3-participle).

123 I call the alliance in Choephoroi a “pseudo-military” alliance since it is an alliance against a physical threat and it culminates in the characters taking physical action against the other party. The first occurs at 19 where Orestes asks Zeus to stand and fight with him against his enemies. The second is at 497 where Orestes calls on Dike as his ally. Both of these instances are interesting in light of what happens in Eumenides. Orestes finds “justice” in the court at Athens and the daughter of Zeus (Athena mentions that fact numerous times) becomes his σύμμαχος. On this relationship between Orestes and Athena/Zeus as a xenia relationship, see Griffith (1995) 68-81.
between the members of the Delian League in 478 BC.\textsuperscript{124} The use of the word \textit{σύμμαχος} here to introduce the appeal by Orestes for Athena’s aid at lines 271-279 colors the meaning of the appeal itself. For the word is not simply there to make a passing reference to the Argive alliance. Its use forces us (or, at least, asks us) to consider what type of alliance is being offered. It is an alliance covering both military and judicial matters and it is with an Athena whose influence stretches from Libya to Thrace.\textsuperscript{125}

The discussion of \textit{σύμμαχος} brings us to the Argive alliance and its importance within \textit{Eumenides}. It is agreed by scholars that the three uses of \textit{σύμμαχος} all refer to the alliance made between Argos and Athens in 462 BC. However, who is to say that the Argive alliance is the only alliance meant here? A close examination of the passages in question will demonstrate that the Argive alliance is not the only alliance being referred to. The Argive alliance, as portrayed in \textit{Eumenides} is being set up as an example to all of Athens’ other allies.

The first passage in which the Argive alliance is mentioned occurs at 289-291. Orestes proclaims:

\begin{quote}
κτήσεται δ᾿ ἀνευ δορὸς \\
αὐτόν τε καὶ γῆν καὶ τὸν Ἀργεῖον λεών \\
pιστὸν δικαίως ἐς τὸ πᾶν τε σύμμαχον.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{124} The earliest use in an inscription that remains is the Phaselis decree, dated by Meiggs and Lewis between 469 and 450 BC. A more likely date is between 466 and 454 BC since that is when the Athenians were actually active in the area. After the defeat in Egypt it seems unlikely that Athens would hold sway so far east.

\textsuperscript{125} It is also interesting that each of the regions mentioned both here and at 397-402 (Libya, Thrace and the Troad) are all places taken by Darius in the years before Marathon. These regions were all among the first taken back during the early offensive activities of the Delian League.
She will obtain without her spear
myself and the land and the Argive people
as a trustworthy ally justly for all time.

Athena will become an ally of the Argive people. This much is not disputed and seems clear. But why does Orestes say "without spear"? The meaning of the phrase is, of course, that the alliance is agreed upon between two cities at peace with one another, that it is not a forced alliance coming as a result of any military action or threat. But, the implication behind "without spear" is that Athena/Athens must have made allies "with a spear"—meaning she gained alliances with force. What σύμμαχοι did Athena/Athens gain "by the spear" up to 458 BC other than certain members of the Delian League, namely Karystos, Naxos, Thasos and Andros? Each of these allies was either forced to join the League or were forced to return to it after revolting. Thus, I suggest that the Argive alliance, in which the Argives were willing participants, is being set up as a model for other allies. Others too should become σύμμαχοι ἄνευ δορός.

The second passage in which σύμμαχος appears is at 671 and will be addressed further below. The third usage occurs at 773 and comes from Orestes' speech of thanks to Athena after his acquittal (772-774):

ὀρθουμένως δὲ καὶ πόλιν τὴν Παλλάδος
tιμῶσιν ἀεὶ τήν συμμάχοι δορὶ
αὐτοῖς ἂν ἤμεις εἴμεν εὐμενέστεροι.

126 Griffith (1995) argues that this phrase is referring to the fact that Orestes and Zeus, and through him Athena, were δορύζενος (100). Quincey suggests that this refers to an alliance in which the Athenians would not be required to give military aid in the future (“Orestes and the Argive Alliance” CQ 14, 1964, 190-206). Neither of these views is mutually exclusive.

127 Aegina was also forced to enter the Athenian/Delian League in 457 BC, shortly after the performance of Eumenides.
But to those keeping their oath and who honor
this city of Pallas always with an allied spear
we ourselves would be well-disposed.

In this instance, as in the first, Orestes is pledging himself and his descendants to
Athena/Athens. The Argive-Athenian alliance will be one of mutual friends and
enemies. Orestes/Argos will befriend those who keep their oaths to Athena/Athens and,
as Orestes states in the preceding lines (763-770), Argos will neither attack Athens nor
allow any other, breaking their oath, to do so. Just as with the word σύμμαχος, this
concept of having the same friends and enemies is part of the technical treaties between
Athens and her allies. And it is interesting to note that Orestes will punish, not just
anyone who dishonors Athens, but specifically those who are breaking an oath.

When the Delian League was formed, iron was thrown into the sea as part of the
oath-taking. This was meant to signify that the alliances formed were for all time.
Naxos and Thasos were the first to break that oath and attempt to leave the League.
Athens laid siege to them both until they returned and the other allies appear not to have
attempted to prevent it. Instead, they continued to contribute either ships or money (as
they had been assigned in the original assessment by Aristeides in 478 BC) even though
those resources were being used against fellow Greeks and not the Persian menace.
Unlike some allies, Orestes/Argos will not break his/its oath. And if others do, Argos
will punish them on behalf of Athena/Athens.

It can be seen, then, in these two passages that more than just the Argive alliance
is being touched upon. Rather, Argos is being established as a model ally. Argos has
allied itself willingly with Athens; it has not been compelled. Also, Argos will maintain the same friends and enemies as Athens and will punish other allies who break the same oaths. The language of the play reaches beyond the Argive alliance of 462 BC to include other aspects of Athenian foreign policy. And, in the same manner, other aspects of the play can be said to be transcending “local” politics and reflecting the growing power of Athens abroad. Even the seemingly internal affair of the Council of the Areopagus and the reforms of Ephialtes can be seen to have imperial implications.

Much has been said by scholars concerning the foundation of the homicide court on the Areopagus by Athena at lines 681-710 of *Eumenides*. Scholarship, however, has been focused on two points involving the founding of the court: one, its relationship to the reforms of Ephialtes in 462 BC and two, more abstractly, what this means for a study of the relationship between the *demos* and old aristocracy in Athens in the mid-fifth century. On the first point, much has been written, and the real question that evolves from the discussion is whether or not Aeschylus himself supported the reforms.

A discussion of the second point is not as clear-cut. For any interpretation necessarily depends on how one reads the first point. Briefly, if Aeschylus supported Ephialtes’ reforms, then the establishment of the court by Athena solely as a homicide court suggests that he condoned the usurpation of the old aristocratic rights by the new *demos*. If, however, Aeschylus’ reference to the judges as “the best citizens” is evidence

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128 Garland (1993) states, when discussing the nature of divine punishment under the *demos* in classical Athens that a broken oath amounted to “contempt for their [the *demos’*] majesty” (96). Thus the sort of oath Orestes was swearing would have been to uphold the *demos* and so the democracy (?).
of a more reactionary stance, then Athena’s rhetoric concerning the court is an attempt to reassert the right of the old guard over the new in the face of more radical democratic reform.\textsuperscript{129}

Each of these points is valid depending on which side one believes Aeschylus supported. However, one aspect of the founding of the court by Athena that has been largely overlooked by scholars is the implication of the court’s function in an imperial context. For Orestes is not an Athenian being tried in an Athenian court. He is a σύμμαχος being tried in an Athenian court. And the nature of this allied relationship is not necessarily one of equals.

Another use of σύμμαχος, passed over earlier, is important in understanding this relationship. It comes from a speech by Apollo to Athena (667-673):

\begin{verbatim}
ἐγὼ δέ, Παλλάς, τάλλα θ’ ὡς ἐπίσταμαι,
< >
tὸ σὸν πόλισμα καὶ στρατὸν τεῦξω μέγαν,
καὶ τόνδ’ ἐπεμψά σῶν δόμων ἐφέστιον,
ὅπως γένοιτο πιστὸς ἐς τὸ πᾶν χρόνον,
καὶ τόνδ’ ἐπικτήσαιο σύμμαχον, θεά,
καὶ τοὺς ἐπείτα, καὶ τάδ’ αἰανῶς μένοι,
στέργειν τὰ πιστὰ τώνδε τοὺς ἐπιστόρους.
\end{verbatim}

But I, Pallas, as much as I understand other things,
< >

\textsuperscript{129} For scholarly consensus (or lack thereof), see note 47 above. It is my opinion that Aeschylus was a supporter of the democratic reforms. The reference to “the best citizens” can be a reference to the fact that those who serve on the Areopagus are former archons. The archons, after the reforms of Ephialtes, are no longer only drawn from the aristocracy, but from other economic and social groups within the city. Also, it could refer to an opinion on Aeschylus’ part that any citizen in Athens is “the best” for all citizens in Athens are worthy to serve in the courts and the council. No separation between classes is intended. Also, if I am right in my argument that this play refers to Athens’ growing imperial power, the implication could be that any Athenian is “the best” simply by nature of being an Athenian citizen. Thus the suggestion that an Athenian court is better than any other. This is supported by Griffith states that, “[f]or the most part, these jurors are meant to be thought of as representing the Athenians at large, and the Athenian political process in general, rather than a particular (conservative) segment of it” (103).
I will make your city and army great,  
I sent this man to the hearth of your home  
so that he might become a trusted friend for all time  
and so that you might gain both this man as an ally, goddess,  
and also those still to come, and such things will stand forever  
that posterity esteem the trustworthy deeds of those men.

Here, Apollo claims he sent Orestes to Athens so that they, the Argives and Athenians,  
might become allies. But it is an interesting way for two Greek states to become allies.  
For, the alliance, if one reads Orestes’ supplication and Apollo’s speech correctly,  
implies an alliance of non-equals. At 235ff, Orestes/Argos kneels before Athena/Athens  
clutching the feet of her statue in supplication. Apollo states that he sent Orestes to her  
hearth for the express reason of becoming an ally of Athena. But Orestes does not stand  
before Athena as an equal. He is a man awaiting judgment before a god.

This idea of a just Athena who uses her law courts to solve problems for  
suppliants has great significance in Athens of the fifth century. For as early as possibly  
the late 460’s Athens was already requiring some of her allies to send court cases to  
Athens. The Phaselis decree (ML 31), dated by most scholars between 469-450 BC, is  
possibly the earliest instance of this process. Although the exact nature of the cases to be  
tried at Athens is unclear from the inscription, it has been argued that the right to try  
certain cases at Athens would have been seen as a privilege. And it is this suggestion,  
that Phaselis would have felt privileged to send certain cases to Athens, that is in keeping  
with the spirit of Eumenides. Orestes and other allies should understand that justice

\[130\] Also, cases mentioned in the Phaselis decree were to be tried \(\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\tau\ \tau\omicron\ \pi\omicron\lambda\epsilon\mu\alpha\rho\omicron\chi\omicron\omicron\ \lambda\omicron\ \not\in\ \text{the Areopagus.} \] But it is highly possible that the decree comes prior to the reforms of Ephialtes in 462 BC and it is thought that, before those reforms, magistrates such as the polemarch held more power in the courts.
dispensed at Athens under the auspices of Athena is superior. But there is a darker side to allied justice and it is found reflected in another decree, published close in time to the production of *Eumenides*.

The Erythrai decree (ML 40), dated to 453/2,\textsuperscript{132} has a much different tone from the Phaselis decree. It is in the form of an oath and lists the sanctions imposed upon Erythrai after her revolt from the Delian League. The provisions of the oath run as follows (from text edited by Meiggs and Lewis; Fig. 2):

- The Erythraians must bring grain (Probably σῖτον is restored in line 3) to the Panathenaia.
- A democracy must be installed under an Athenian overseer (ἐπίσκοπος) and garrison (φρο[υ]ραρχος).
- Officers in the democratic government must take an oath of loyalty to the Athenian people and to her allies.
- Murderers are to be punished by death.
- Any man exiled from Erythrai is automatically exiled from Athens and all allied cities. But no one can be exiled without permission from Athens.

The cases might not be tried in Athens, but the authority behind the punishment is directed by the Athenians. And it is this practice that continues, even made stricter, in the Miletos decree of 450/449 (IG i\textsuperscript{2}.22+) and the Chalcis decree of 446/5 (ML 52). In each of these decrees, provisions are made for trying certain court cases in Athens, including murder. And, although the Chalcis decree is dated a full decade after the production of *Eumenides*, the text of the decree actually confirms, not establishes, judicial controls

\textsuperscript{131} Bradshaw states in passing, “[t]he Aeschylean trilogy is clearly related to the judicial reforms that made Athens the legal center for trying all homicide cases, indeed, all capital cases involving members of the confederacy” (D.J. Bradshaw “The Aias Myth and the Polis” in D. Pozzi and J. Wickersham (eds.) *Myth and the Polis*, Ithaca, 1991, 123). Unfortunately, he does not elaborate on this point.

\textsuperscript{132} This decree can be dated possibly as early as 455 BC but not later than 452 BC.
already in place. This decree is dated to around 446 BC following the suppression of a revolt there. The earlier decree to which this one refers most likely came from the 450’s.\(^{133}\)

As the century wore on and the Delian League was transformed more certainly into the Athenian Empire, the requirement that cases involving large fines, death penalties and exiles continued to be tried in Athens and was expanded to include allies such as Samos, Rhegion and Leontini. Meiggs states that it is only “natural” for the Athenians to move court cases to Athens concerning possible threats to her authority after the Peace of Callias when keeping the League in order became more important than fighting Persians.\(^{134}\) This gave the Athenians a measure of control over the doings of those would-be opponents of Athenian domination. And a measure of control is just what they got. That the Athenians would be emphasizing their “just” and litigious nature in a play dated only a few years prior to the first certain decree of this type should not seem odd. It may have even served as a harbinger of what was to come.\(^{135}\)

Athena says of Athenian justice that it can be found nowhere else (700-706):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{τοιόνδε τοι ταρβούντες ἐνδίκως σέβας} \\
\text{ἐμμα τε χώρας καὶ πάλεως σωτήριον} \\
\text{ἐχοίτε ἄν, οἶον οὔτις ἀνθρώπων ἐχει,} \\
\text{οὔτ' ἐν Σκύθησιν οὔτε Πέλοπος ἐν τόποις.} \\
\text{κερδῶν ἀθικτον τούτο βουλευτήριον,} \\
\text{αιδοίον, ὀξύθυμον, εὐδόντων ὑπερ}. \\
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{133}\) That this decree refers back to an earlier one is suggested by references in the decree to τὰ ἐφεσφισμένα at line 49, τὸ φοσέφισμα at line 76 and the article in τὸν ἦροκον at line 3 (ML 140).

\(^{134}\) Meiggs (1975) 221.

\(^{135}\) Raaflaub (1998) states that the Athenians and other Greeks were probably fully aware of the conversion of the Delian League into the Athenian Empire in the late 460’s (20). This coincides precisely with the production of Oresteia.
Stand in just awe of such majesty, and you will have a defense for your land and salvation of your city, such as no man has, either among the Scythians or in Pelops' realm. I establish this tribunal, untouched by greed, worthy of reverence, quick to anger, awake on behalf of those who sleep, a guardian of the land.

Subject yourself to my justice, allies, and your cities will be safe. For, only in Athens can true judgment be gotten. Only the courts of Athens have the guidance and protection of the gods. Only the Athenian courts can supply ἔρυμα and σωτήριον for other cities.

And this Athenian court will stand as a φρούρημα γῆς unlike any found in the Peloponnese or Scythia. Sounds like a good deal, right? But was it? A close look at the language of the passage will reveal that there is much more than meets the eye to Athena’s establishment of the court on the Areopagus.

Before Athena establishes this court, Apollo promises Orestes to Athena/Athens as a σύμμαχος. Athena accepts this, for all appearances, and establishes a court to try her new found ally, a murderer and an exile. Both Orestes and the Erinyes have agreed to abide by its ruling and the Areopagus will be a φρούρημα, guardian, for those who submit to it. If we recall the details of the Erythrai decree from above, a few “overlaps” appear. Athenian justice, while not direct, is to be enforced on her new “allies” in Erythrai just as Orestes will subject himself to Athena and her court of Athenians. The Erythraians must swear an oath to the Athenians and the other σύμμαχοι, an oath not unlike the one Orestes swears at 755-777. Erythrai must also submit itself to an overseer (ἐπίσκοπος) and garrison (φο[ῦ]ραρχος). Athena establishes her court as φρούρημα.
And, at lines 295-296, Orestes asks Athena to come to him εἰτε Φλεγάωαεν πλάκα θρασὺς ταγούχος ὡς ἀνήρ ἑπισκοπεῖ. Thus Athena and her court are both “overseeing” lands and standing guard over them as well. This is just what the Athenians will supply for her σύμμαχοι according to the terms of the Erythrai decree.

What seems so appealing in Eumenides loses its appeal when compared with the Erythrai decree. For sacrificing control over law courts is one of the key steps in surrendering autonomy. It is a sure sign of one state’s subjugation to another. Herodotus wrote with regards the conflict between Epidauros and Aegina that the Aeginetans were subject to Epidauros so much so that they had to cross to Epidauros to have their law cases heard (5.83). Herodotus probably wrote this over twenty years after Eumenides was produced. But what his attitude reflects is the process by which Athens converted her allies into subjects and changed the Delian League into an Empire. And, it is exactly this process of judicial imperialism that Aeschylus, perhaps unwittingly, legitimizes in Eumenides. Athena in her role as both goddess and city can be understood as Athens defending her judicial system to the allies. Athena, by trying Orestes’ case in Athens, suggests that it can only be solved there. Justice can not be found at home. Only in Athens, in the presence of Athena, the representative of the city itself, can true justice be found.

In addition to this, it is interesting to consider why Apollo would send Orestes to Athens at all. Why can Orestes only find Justice in Athens? Why can it be found only in the presence of Athena? One explanation would be that, despite Apollo’s purification of
him, the Erinyes will continue, Apollo says, to hunt Orestes. But, because Apollo ordered Orestes to kill his mother, he can be freed from the Erinyes by a judgment. It seems, from the way Aeschylus words it, that the only place Apollo himself can stand trial is in front of Athena. Only Athena, because of her relationship to Zeus, is worthy of judging a case between two divinities.\footnote{And through Athena, the Athenians themselves. For Athena claims that even she is not great enough to judge alone. Thus she inaugurates the court on the Areopagus.}

Another explanation, however, could have to do with the relationship between Athena and Apollo in their patronage of the Delian League. Apollo seems originally to have been patron of the League whose center was on Delos and the \textit{aparche} was initially dedicated to him.\footnote{See Introduction.} Around 454 BC, however, the League treasury was transferred to Athens and the \textit{aparche} was dedicated to Athena instead of Apollo. Shapiro has argued that there was no significant diminution of Apollo’s association with the League in the years following the transfer, but rather, that Athena and Apollo came to have a “reciprocal relationship”, sharing the task of protecting the allies.\footnote{Shapiro (1993) gives as proof of this a number of vases which show Apollo and Athena flanking Orestes as well as other vases depicting sacrifices to Athena and Apollo (“Athena, Apollo, and the Religious Propaganda of the Athenian Empire” in Hellström and Alroth (eds.) 101-113). Euben (1990), however, would disagree: “There is external, though inconclusive evidence that the Athenians regarded Apollo as pro-Spartan at precisely the time Athens was turning away from its onetime ally to that ally’s foe, Argos. Moreover, Apollo had given bad—some thought traitorous—advice to the Greeks at the approach of the Persian armies in 480 BC. Finally, some Athenians were apparently critical of what they regarded as the meddling of the god in their internal politics” (80). Euben does not list his “external” sources. The fact that Apollo is representing Argos at Athens in \textit{Eumenides} seems to counter Euben’s first statement. Also, the prophecy of Apollo to “trust to your wooden walls” was well enough received by the Athenians—not so traitorous a statement. I find Shapiro’s argument for the continued cooperative nature of Apollo and Athena’s relationship much more satisfactory. Especially as the continued cooperation between the two gods would serve as further propaganda for the Athenians.} I would go further by suggesting that \textit{Eumenides} prefigures the transfer of the treasury, and thus patronage,
of the League. Apollo, by urging Orestes to have his case tried in Athens, is recognizing
the judicial superiority of Athena and the democratic institutions embodied in the jury of
Athenians. Not only has Aeschylus legitimized Athenian judicial imperialism in
_Eumenides_, but he gives it divine sanction by depicting the first patron of the Delian
League as also endorsing the transfer of authority.139

Also, it should be noted concerning the geography in Athena’s statements on the
establishment of the Areopagus that Athena says that her court will supply a defense and
salvation οἶον οὔτις ἀνθρώπων ἔχει, οὔτ’ ἐν Σκύθησιν οὔτε Πέλοπος ἐν τόποις (such
as no man holds, neither in Scythia nor in the lands of Pelops). Athena has here defined
the region of influence for her court—from the Peloponnese to Scythia, from the Isthmus
to the edge of Persia. When we add this reference to the geographic references discussed
earlier we find a specifically defined sphere of influence for Athenian activity. And this
poetic definition actually corresponds with the regions in the Aegean and Asia Minor that
Athens held sway over as head of the Delian League (Fig. 1). Aeschylus, through
references to Athena’s whereabouts and through Athena’s own words, has staked a claim
for Athenian hegemony in the Aegean. And Athena/Athens is a hegemon who holds
sway through a highly developed system of alliances and court justice.

Aeschylus’ claim for Athenian hegemony has been made through a political
subtext found in _Eumenides_. This subtext consists, first, of the “imperial geography”
noted above and the military and inscriptive language of the play. The use of

139 Euben (1990) writes, “the Athenians, in alliance with a god [Apollo], defined a way of life as well as a
physical one; [that] they have charted a moral and political wilderness as well as a physical one” (32). I
would amend that statement slightly. It was Athens, in league with Athena. Apollo just helped them get
started.
σύμμαχος coupled with terms such as ταγοῦχος, φρούρημα and ἐπισκοπέω emphasizes the military nature of the alliance to which Athena and Orestes are agreeing. The fact that Orestes, the σύμμαχος, is a murderer and exile seeking judgment in an Athenian court points toward the developing Athenian practice of trying allies’ cases concerning murder, exile and treason in Athens instead of in allied cities. But these aspects of the imperial subtext are only a prelude to Aeschylus’ real demonstration that the Athenians are worthy of their power. Athena’s dialogue with the Erinyes convincing them to become the “helpful” Eumenides is a veritable tour d’ force of power and persuasion.

Power and Persuasion

The dialogue between Athena and the Erinyes is rather long and presents various reasons given by Athena for why the Erinyes should submit to the court’s judgment. Immediately after Orestes’ acquittal, he swears his oath of alliance to Athena and departs. But the Erinyes are furious and swear that they will destroy Athens on account of the dishonor they feel they have suffered at the hands of the younger generation of gods represented by Athena and Apollo. Athena, however, responds to this by saying (793-795):

εἷς πίθεσθε μὴ βαρυστῶνως φέρειν·
οὐ γὰρ νενίκησθʹ, ἀλλʹ ἰσόψηφος δίκη
ἐξῆλθʹ ἀληθῶς οὐκ ἀτιμίαι σέθεν·

Be persuaded by me not to bear it with heavy lament. For you have not been defeated; the trial resulted fairly in an equal vote, without disgrace to you.
Be persuaded, Athena says. And what follows is indeed a persuasive bit of rhetoric.

The Erinyes have not suffered any dishonor. It is no shame to lose by an even vote. Besides, it was Zeus’ will that Orestes be spared and this, especially, brings no shame to the Erinyes (ἀλλ’ ἐκ Διὸς γὰρ λαμπρὰ μαρτύρια παρῆν; 796). Also, Athena promises them a place of worship and honor among the Athenians:

ἐγὼ γὰρ ὑμῖν πανδίκως υπίσχομαι
ἐδρὰς τε καὶ κευθμὼνας ἐνδίκου χθόνος
λιπαροθρόνοις ἥμενας ἐπ’ ἐσχάραις
ἐξειν ὑπ’ ἀστῶν τῶν τῶν ἐπὶ ἐσχάραις.

For I promise you most sacredly that you will have a cavernous sanctuary in a land rightfully yours, where you will sit on shining thrones at your hearths, worshipped with honor by these citizens (804-7).

What could the Erinyes possibly complain about? But complain they do and it is only after a veiled threat followed by more persuasive rhetoric that they finally give in to Athena’s will.

I will return to the “veiled threat” in a moment, but would like to look first at the promises Athena makes to the Erinyes and by which they are, in the end, persuaded to spare Athens their destructive wrath.¹⁴⁰ The first is seen above. There, Athena offers the Erinyes a sanctuary and honor. Her second promise is even more appealing:

κοίμα κελαινοῦ κύματος πικρόν μένος,
ἀς σεμνότιμος καὶ ξυνοικήτωρ ἐμοί.
πολλῆς δὲ χώρας τῆς τάκτων τάκτων
θύη πρὸ παιδών καὶ γαμηλίου τέλους
ἐχούς’ ἐς αἰεὶ τόν τοῦ ἐπανένεισες λόγον.

¹⁴⁰ It is interesting to note that numerous scholars, including Winnington-Ingram (1979) and Lloyd-Jones (1956: 64) practically ignore the final appeal of Athena and credit the “threat” (or the will of Zeus embodied in it) with changing the Erinyes’ decision.
Lull to sleep the sharp force of the dark waves,
since you are held in honor and a co-resident with me.
As you receive the first fruits of this plentiful land,
sacrificial offerings on behalf of children and marriages,
you will approve always this speech (832-836).

Not only will the Erinyes be worshipped in Athens, but they will be co-habitators with
Athena herself. Podlecki goes so far as to call it “naturalization, so to speak.”¹⁴¹ And, they will receive, along with Athena, the first fruits of sacrifices made on behalf of families.¹⁴²

But, again, the Erinyes are not appeased. Still they fear the loss of their ancient right, the ability to instill fear. But to this Athena responds:

ὁργάς ξυνοίσω σοι γεφαίτερα γὰρ εἰ.
καὶ τοι μὲν εἰ σὺ κάρτ' ἐμοῦ σοφωτέραν,
φρονεῖν δὲ κάμοι Ζεὺς ἔδωκεν ὡς κακῶς.
ὑμεῖς δὲ ἐς ἀλλόφυλον ἔλθοναι χθόνα
γῆς τῆσδ' ἐρασθήσεσθαι προούννεπῶ τάδ'ε·
ὁπροφέρων γὰρ τιμωτέρος χρόνος
ἔσται πολίταις τοῖσδ' εἰ.
καὶ σὺ τιμίαν
ἔδωκαν ἐξουσία πρὸς δόμιοις Ἐρεχθέως,
τεύξει παρ' ἄνδρῶν καὶ γυναικείων στόλων,
ὅσ ἀν παρ' ἄλλων οὔποτ' ἀν σχέθοις βροτῶν.

I will endure your anger, for you are older,
and in that respect you are surely wiser than I;
Yet Zeus has given me, too, no mean understanding.
But, if you go to a foreign land,
you will come to love this land—I forewarn you about this.

¹⁴² At this time, 458 BC, the Athenians had not compelled the allies to bring their first fruits to Athens. This will become a common practice, as the Erythrai decree demonstrates, a little later. However, it seems meaningful to note here that after the transfer of the treasury to Athens in 454 BC the allies were required not only to give the aparche to Athena instead of Apollo, but were also required to bring a cow and panoply to Athena at the Panathenaea. The Erinyes, by submitting to Athena will supposedly receive similar gifts from the Athenians themselves. Perhaps Athena is willing to concede Athenian first fruits because she no longer needs them herself. She is no longer a fertility goddess, but a warrior goddess. Her first fruits will come from military “allies”.  

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For time, flowing on, will bring greater honor to these citizens. And you, having a seat of honor at the house of Erechtheus, will obtain from hosts of men and women more than you could ever win from other mortals (848-857).

Always the diplomat, Athena admits the justness of their anger. But, even so, they must understand that she too has knowledge and power. Twice already, Athena has promised them a home in Athens. Twice the Erinyes have balked at the thought. But this promise is the strongest. For in addition to honor, a home and first fruits, Athena offers greatness. For Athens will become great and the Erinyes can participate in that greatness by taking up residence on the Acropolis along side other ancient gods of the Athenians like Erechtheus. If the Erinyes refuse, they will be sorry. For they will come, Athena warns, to be lovers of Athens (ἐρασθήσεσθε; 852) and will miss the city if they leave.143

Not only will the Erinyes come to love Athens, but, if they choose to stay, Athena promises them a share in a land most beloved of the gods:

τοιαῦθ’ ἔλεσθαι σοι πάρεστιν ἔξ ἐμοῦ,
εὖ δρώσαν, εὖ πάσχουσαν, εὖ τιμωμένην
χώρας μετασχεῖν τῷδε θεοφιλεστάτῃς.

It is possible for you to choose such things from me: doing well, enduring well, being well honored, to have a share in this land most beloved of the gods (867-869).

Podlecki comments that Athena is giving the Erinyes opportunity to “join in with the Olympian gods in learning to love Athens.”144 And this is probably the case, at least as

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143 This idea in relation to Athens is made famous by Thucydides in Pericles’ Funeral Oration (2.43.1). Its use here suggests that the idea of being a lover of the city was not new with Pericles or Thucydides.

144 Podlecki (1989) note on line 869.
far as Aeschylus is concerned. For, if we recall the discussion on *Persae*, Aeschylus went to great lengths to emphasize the fact that Athens was the beloved of Athena and, through her, favored and protected by the gods. The Erinyes can have a stake in the realm of the “younger” gods by whom they feel themselves so threatened. But still the Erinyes resist.

The final appeal, the one that assures the Erinyes’ assent, however, makes explicit what has been implied by the language of the appeals all along. Athena appeals to Πείθω:

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ἀλλʹ εἰ μὲν ἀγνὸν ἔστι σοι Πειθοῦς σέβας,
γλῶσσης ἐμῆς μελιγμα καὶ θελκτήμιον,
σοῦ δʹ οὖν μένοις ἄν· εἰ δὲ μὴ θέλεις μένειν,
οὐ τὰν δικαίως τήδʹ ἐπιφρέτοις πόλει
μὴν ὑπὲρ σὲ ἕκτον τιν’ ἡ βλάβην στρατωὶ·
ἔξεστι γὰρ σοι τὴσδὲ γαμόφωι χθονὸς
εἴναι δικαίως ἐς τὸ πᾶν τιμωμένη.
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But if the reverence due Persuasion is sacred to you, if my tongue has the power to soothe and cast a spell, then you will remain. But if you do not wish to stay, you should not justly level against this city any wrath or anger or harm against the people. For it is possible for you to have a landholder’s status here and to justly be honored for eternity (885-891).

Persuasion has been present from the beginning of Athena’s appeal. The verb πείθω is used in each of the passages quoted above and is the key to winning over the Erinyes. Persuasion is the key to preventing the havoc the Erinyes have promised to wreak on Athens. And part of this persuasion is the promise of landholder’s status (γαμόρωι.
χθονὸς) to go along with the co-habitant status (ξυνοικήτωρ) granted above.\textsuperscript{146} What is being promised to the Erinyes is a status in Athens almost akin to that of Athena. It is a status the Erinyes can have, however, only if they submit to her.

This aspect of submission inherent in the Erinyes’ position relative to Athena’s can be seen primarily in two places: first in the “veiled threat” of Athena in the second persuasion attempt; secondly, in the repeated use and reference to πείθω. For, πείθω, if we recall Themistocles’ invocation of it following the battle of Salamis, was a tool of heavy-handed, power politics. Aeschylus’ combination of the threat and the appeal to πείθω gives his Athena much the same air as Herodotus gives his Themistocles three decades later—one of confidence in their ability to force the issue if the powers of Persuasion fail.\textsuperscript{147}

The threat referred to above occurs in Athena’s speech at lines 824-829. Athena tells the Erinyes that they have not been dishonored. For, it is Zeus’ will that Orestes be acquitted. Then Athena says:

\begin{quote}
κἀγὼ πέποιθα Ζηνὶ, καὶ τί δεῖ λέγειν;
κληθεὶς οἶδα δῶματος μονὴ θεῶν
ἐν ὧν κεραυνός ἐστιν ἐσφραγισμένος.
\end{quote}

I too believe in Zeus, why is it necessary to say it?
And I alone of the gods know where the keys to the halls are in which the thunderbolt is kept safe (826-828).

\textsuperscript{145} After the first appeal by Athena and immediately following Orestes’ acquittal, the Erinyes shout out against the θεοὶ νεώτεροι. It is they, represented by Athena and Apollo, who have run roughshod over the ancient laws and dishonored the elder gods represented by the Erinyes.

\textsuperscript{146} This status is the equivalent of \textit{metic} status though the term is not legal or technical.

\textsuperscript{147} One could also cite the Melian Dialogue as a relevant, though much later comparison.
The Erinyes have not been dishonored. But if they have, it does not matter—Athena knows where Zeus keeps his thunderbolt. Why say this? Why does Athena feel it necessary to remind the Erinyes that she, and not they, has access to this power? She is not overtly threatening them. Athena does not say, “Do what I want or I will strike you down”. But she does imply it. And the weight of that implication is emphasized by the next line: \(\text{ἀλλ’ οὐδὲν αὐτοῦ δεῖ. σὺ δ’ εὐπιθῆς ἐµοὶ;}\) “But no need of that; be persuaded by me” (829). Athena stands before the Erinyes, just as she stood before Orestes, confident in the knowledge of her superior power and abilities. If the Erinyes will not give in to Athena’s “persuasion”, she can rely on other methods to gain what she wants.\(^{148}\)

The Erinyes, however, are, in the end, persuaded by Athena. And when they do decide to take Athena’s offer, it is interesting to see what the Erinyes gain. They accept, they say, co-resident status (\(\xi\nu\nu\οικὴτω\)) and the honor Athena has promised them to coincide with it. But in return they are to offer up protection for Athens against evils such as blight (938), infertility, murder (956-957), infidelity (958-959) and factional strife (977). Compare this with Orestes’ oath after his acquittal. Orestes thanks Athena for “re-settling” him in his fatherland (\(\gamma\αίας πατρώιας ἐστερηµένον σὺ τοι κατώικισας με\), “you restored me, deprived of my paternal land,” 755).\(^{149}\) Athena, then, settles the

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\(^{148}\) Winnington-Ingram (1979) states in relation to Athena’s threat, “...Tactfully, yet firmly, she reminds the Furies of the thunderbolt of Zeus—which had already been employed against recalcitrant divinities of an older generation. The will of Zeus for the evolution of human society is not to be frustrated”. (101)

\(^{149}\) It is interesting to note that this is also the word used for “colonizing”. The word is common enough that it need not carry this more specialized meaning, but it is a connotation to note nonetheless considering
Erinyes in the same manner in which she settled her ally Orestes. Both are made residents of a city who were before without a city (ἄπολις). Both will defend Athens from evils—Orestes from any oath breakers and physical assaults, the Erinyes from natural disasters and internal strife. And both, regardless of their status outside of Athens, owe their positions and authority, like allies in the arche, to Athena and Athens.

Although the Erinyes are granted “co-resident” status on the Acropolis with Athena, their position is still inferior to hers. Their strength and honor only exist because Athena stands as the guarantor of them:

Χο. καὶ δὴ δέδεγμαι τίς δὲ μοι τιμὴ μένει;
Αθ. ὡς μὴ τιν’ οἶκον εὐθενείν ἀνεύ σέθεν.
Χο. σὺ τούτο πράξεις, ὡστε με σθένειν τόσον;
Αθ. τῶι γάρ σέβοντι συμφορὰς ὀρθῶσομεν.
Χο. καὶ μοι πρόπαντος ἐγγύην χρόνου;
Αθ. ἔξεστι γὰρ μοι μὴ λέγειν ἃ μὴ τελώ.

 Cho. Let’s say I accept. What honor do I have?
Ath. That no house flourish without you.
Cho. You will do this for me—that I have such strength?
Ath. Yes, for we will set straight the fortunes of those reverencing you.
Cho. And you will make this pledge for all time?
Ath. Of course, for I have no need to speak of what I will not accomplish (894-899).

Here, it is made clear that only through Athena’s grace can the Erinyes gain any sort of respect and power in Athens. Also, Athena’s abrupt response to their plea for an eternal pledge indicates, yet again, Athena’s superior position. She need not give any other pledge to the Erinyes. Her word is surety enough.

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Thucydides uses it when discussing the settlers of Athenian colonies on conquered Greek lands (2.70.4). See also Plutarch Per. 19.1 for this term (though his source for the usage is unclear).
But all of this again brings us back to πείθω. For it is to πείθω once again that Athena gives thanks after the Erinyes have given in to her wishes:

οστέργω δ᾿ ὀμματα Πειθούς,
ὅτι μοι γλώσσαν καὶ στόμι ἐπωταί
πρὸς τάσδ` ἀγορίως ἀπανημένας.

For I love the face of Persuasion because she watched over my tongue and speech toward those goddesses refusing vehemently (970-972).

Πείθω, however, is not the most positive-natured of forces. For, in addition to its connection with the strong armed tactics of Themistocles following the victory at Salamis, πείθω also carries negative connotations in the earlier plays of the Oresteia. Of Πείθω, at Agamemnon 385-386, the Chorus says: βιᾶται δ᾿ ἁτάλαινα Πειθώ, προβοῦλου παῖς ἀφερτος Ἀτας· (Wretched Persuasion forces him, the insufferable child of crafty Ruin). It is Πείθω who overwhelmed Paris and drove him to his crime. And again, at Choephoroi 726 Πείθω is called upon to aid Orestes in his murder of Aigisthos. In both instances, πείθω is a necessary aspect to retributive Justice. Πείθω assists in the continuation of blood feuds just as Themistocles’ invocation of Πείθω contributes to the perpetuation of tyranny.\(^{150}\)

But a brief look at the development of Justice in the Oresteia and Athena’s involvement in that development can shed light on πείθω and how we are to perceive it and Athena’s praise of it in Eumenides.

\(^{150}\) R. Buxton accounts for Πείθω being bound to such injustices by claiming that these are instances of false Πείθω. Clytemnestra’s persuasion of Agamemnon is “deception masquerading as Πείθω” (Persuasion in Greek Tragedy: A Study of Peitho, Cambridge, 1982, 106). Πείθω itself, according to Buxton, is really a cure or remedy. That this healing power of Πείθω is not present in either Ag. or Cho. emphasizes the false nature of the Πείθω involved (108).
Justice, as it is invoked in both *Agamemnon* and *Choephoroi* is retributive. Agamemnon killed Iphigeneia, so Clytemnestra kills him as punishment. Atreus killed Aigisthos’ brothers, and so he participates in Agamemnon’s murder out of revenge. Orestes kills both Clytemnestra and Aigisthos as retribution for Agamemnon’s murder. This cycle of “Justice” would have continued with Orestes’ death (by his own hand, perhaps) if Athena had not stepped in to stop it. It is Athena, in *Eumenides*, who is the answer to retributive Justice. Athena and the Athenian court assert a new, impartial form of Justice in place of the old, “eye for an eye” sort.151

This progression from retribution to court-enforced Justice follows along the path of Rosenbloom’s “ideology of freedom”. For it is through the use and abuse of the concept of Justice that the Argive people are enslaved (by Aigisthos the tyrant) and then freed (by Orestes the tyrant-slayer). But the conclusion is not, as Rosenbloom would have it, that Orestes must now become the tyrant in Aigisthos’ place and suffer collapse.152 For, Orestes does not, like his predecessor, become the tyrant in turn and

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151 This statement, while agreed upon by the majority of scholars, is contested by Cohen (1986). Cohen argues that the emphasis of Aeschylus on the suffering of innocents such as Iphigeneia should lead one to the conclusion that Zeus’ justice is tyrannical and immoral and based on force and fear. That Athena invokes fear of the Erinyes as part of her “new order” and must threaten them in order to get them to cooperate only confirms Cohen’s belief. Cohen, however, has missed two significant points. First, the justice portrayed in *Eumenides* is a progression away from the forms of justice found in *Agamemnon* and *Choephoroi*. Nor is there anything that necessitates that Zeus himself cannot progress in his thinking about justice. The justice Athena establishes is not based on retribution and it silences the cycle of murder perpetuated by such a concept of right and wrong. Athena’s new justice also brings to light the very contradictions in such a system. In a retributive system, one man’s right is always another’s wrong. The justice embodied in the court of the Areopagus puts a stop to the cycle. The second point Cohen misses relates to fear. He emphasizes the fear that the Erinyes will supply as part of Athens’ new order. This fear, he argues, makes the new justice just as tyrannical as the old. But fear does not necessarily mean that fair, impartial justice cannot be present. The Erinyes represent the fear of wrongdoing that should act as a deterrent against harming others.

152 Rosenbloom (1995) writes, “Freedom is fundamental but insufficient in the absence of justice; domination either falls or is threatened with collapse” (94).
then suffer subversion. Rather, Athena comes on stage to prevent the very continuation of this cycle. Athena comes on stage with her Athenian jury to fill in the gap. Athena guarantees freedom by providing a proper form of Justice to support it and by turning Orestes, not into an Eastern despot, but an ally of Athens and one who submits openly to democratic judgments.

The same fundamental principle applies to πείθω. Whereas Πείθω is the child of Ate in Agamemnon, she is a necessary element in Athena’s new Justice in Eumenides. Whereas πείθω leads to the destruction of Troy, Agamemnon and Aigisthos in the earlier plays of the Oresteia, it leads to the salvation of Orestes and of Athens in Eumenides. For πείθω, according to Buxton’s assessment of it in tragedy, is linked to νόμος and δίκη. It is a civilizing force set opposite βία and tyranny. But this does not mean that Aeschylus has entirely excluded any negative connotation connected with πείθω. For it is still a tool of power. Athena’s superior position to the Erinyes is affirmed through their submission to her persuasive efforts just as Agamemnon’s surrender to Clytemnestra’s seals his doom.

Agamemnon’s submission to persuasion signals the superiority of Clytemnestra:

Aγ. οὖτοι γυναικός ἐστιν ἰμείρειν μάχης.
Κλ. τοῖς δ’ ὀλβίοις γε καὶ τὸ νικᾶσθαι πρέπει.
Aγ. ἡ καὶ σὺ νίκην τήδε δήμος τίεις;
Κλ. πιθοῦ, ἄρα κινεῖτε μέντοι πάρες γ’ ἐκὼν ἐμοί.

Ag. Surely to desire battle is not woman-like.
Cl. But it is fitting even for prosperous men to be conquered.
Ag. And do you value a victory in such a battle?
Cl. Be persuaded, and willingly let fall your power to me (940-943).

Both Clytemnestra and Agamemnon perceive her persuasion in terms of a battle (μάχη, δῆρις) that is to be won or lost. Agamemnon’s submission signals a victory (νίκη) for Clytemnestra, and Agamemnon, in turn, becomes the conquered (τὸ νικᾶσθαι).  For the Erinyes to submit to Athena’s persuasion signals their own submission to her authority. She becomes the guarantor of their powers and they become allies (like Orestes) who will help protect Athena’s city, Athens, from any external or internal harm.

**Conclusion**

What, then, are we to make of Athena in the *Eumenides*? She is a goddess confident both in her powers of persuasion and justice. Her influence reaches the four-corners of the Aegean—from the Hellespont to Libya, from mainland Greece to Thrace. And the justice she doles out to those within that region is unlike any found in Persia or Sparta. Athena is able to take outcasts such as Orestes (and the Erinyes) and turn them into allies and useful members of society. And she is able to ensure the safety and glory of Athens through such alliances.  

As part of Athena’s justice, she seeks also to prevent the internal *stasis* with which the Erinyes have threatened Athens in the event of Orestes’ acquittal. And she does so by directing Athenian aggression outward: θυραῖος ἔστω πόλεις, οὐ μόλις παρών, ἐν ὧι τις ἔσται δεινὸς εὐκλείας ἔρως· (Let war be external—not present in

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154Buxton (1982) suggests that it is this dynamic emphasizing power and conquest that overrides and subordinates Πείθω. It is this dynamic that drives Agamemnon to concede to Clytemnestra and also diminishes the healing power of persuasion itself.
abundance—in which there will be some terrible lust for glory, 864-865). Nor will Athena condone Athens not getting the required honor for her victories: οὐκ ἀνέξομαι τὸ μὴ οὐ τήνδ᾿ ἀστύνικον ἐν βροτοῖς τιμᾶν πόλιν (I will not allow this victorious city to not be honored among mortals, 912-913). These lines are, seemingly, controversial. One scholar finds it “hard to harmonize these lines with the trilogy as a whole.”156 Other scholars reject them as later, non-Aeschylean insertions.157 Still other scholars read them as later insertions, but by Aeschylus himself.158 What do these scholars find so irreconcilable? That Athena does not wish her city to be ravaged by internal strife? Or that she desires her city to be honored according to her accomplishments?

In the first case, it is entirely logical that Athena would fear civil war. The Erinyes have threatened to inflict it and it is precisely this—internal rivalry—which the House of Atreus was cursed with. Orestes is the last in a long line of kin slayers. Athena intends to prevent such a thing from wreaking havoc in her city. Athens has just witnessed the assassination of a prominent democratic politician and the ostracism of another.159 Would such partisanship not strike an Athenian as the beginnings of trouble if

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155 For this opinion, see also Papadopoulou (2001) 304-306.

156 Rosenbloom (1995), 114. For the opposite view, see Pelling (2000). He reminds us that, according to Thuc. 1.107.4, there was “only a short while after the Oresteia’s production, an attempted coup by Athenian aristocrats who planned to open the city’s gates to Sparta and overturn the democracy...and such stasis was surely simmering already (i.e. at the time of production)” (176). For an argument against the existence of such a coup, see Badian (1993) 213 note 50. Both Pelling (1997) and Hornblower (A Commentary of Thucydides: Volume 1 Books I-III (Oxford, 1991) agree on its authenticity.


158 Taplin The Stagecraft of Aeschylus: the Dramatic Use of Exits and Entrances in Greek Tragedy (Oxford, 1977) 401, n.1
not stopped? As to the second disputed line, was this not the basis for Athenian expansion? The Athenians, according to Thucydides, felt entitled to their Empire because of their great victories against the Persians—Marathon and Salamis. That Athena should hope for recognition to match her accomplishments should not seem odd or irreconcilable with the trilogy. Aeschylus’ logic in the trilogy progresses toward such a recognition.

There are discrepancies, as I have pointed out, between the reality within Aeschylus’ play and the political and historical reality of Athens in the 450’s and 460’s. But I do not perceive these discrepancies as intended to question Athenian practices. Rather, Aeschylus is very subtly and cleverly ignoring reality in order to smooth over the more negative facets of that reality. Aeschylus does not point to the growing negative aspects of being an ally of Athens. Instead, he emphasizes only the benefits, both to Athens and Argos. This is also the case with the “alliance” between Athens and the Erinyes. Only good things will occur for both parties if the Erinyes agree to Athena’s terms. And this same “white-washing” occurs in the case of $\pi\epsilon\iota\theta\omega$. It is Athena and the Athenians who are able to take what was “the child of Ruin” in the hands of Clytemnestra and turn it to good. Aeschylus offers us an idealized version of $\pi\epsilon\iota\theta\omega$ and its benefits in the hands of the right authority. Athena and Athens are the “right” authority.\(^{160}\)

\(^{159}\) There were also attempts to repeal the law restricting the Areopagus (Plutarch Cimon 15.3; Thucydides 1.107.4). Also, it may have been suspected that some nobles were conspiring at that time with the Spartans to overthrow the democracy (Cimon 17.4).
Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* is the final play in a trilogy and as such should be read as both the resolution of the conflicts and the culmination of events in the earlier two plays. Scholars who argue against this fail to take into account that Athena’s remedy to the trouble of Orestes and the House of Atreus are changes that adhere to the democratic reforms that had recently taken place in Athens. And linked, hand-in-hand, to the democratic reforms is the growth of Athenian imperialism based on naval power. Aeschylus is affirming, not questioning naval hegemony. He is affirming, not undermining the reforms of the council on the Areopagus instituted by Ephialtes in 462BC.

Aeschylus’ affirmation of naval hegemony, I have argued, is completed through the establishment of an imperial geography in *Eumenides* and, also, through the establishment of a paradigm for allies. This paradigm is seen most clearly in the relationship established between Orestes/Argos and Athena/Athens through the continued uses of the term σύμμαχος and also in the appeasement and co-opting of the Erinyes. The doubts raised by Rosenbloom concerning the irreconcilable nature of Agamemnon’s dual role as father and naval hegemon are mooted by Athena’s resolutions. Athena, through her institution of the court and by placing Justice in the hands of the Athenian people, has cured the ailments of the past. Where the Peloponnesians failed, the

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160 Again, I submit that Aeschylus is offering an idealized picture of Athens, not a reflection of reality. This is a “best of all possible worlds” scenario; Athens will never abuse its power and the allies will only benefit from her strength.

161 For disagreement, see Rosenbloom (1995) *passim*.

Athenians will succeed. And they will succeed because they understand, via their relationship with Athena, the true nature of Justice. It is not retributive, but objective. It is not situated in human emotions and desire, but in Law. Just as Athens is the answer to Persian hubris in Persae, so too Athena and Athens are the medicine for the plague that is embodied in the House of Atreus.\textsuperscript{163}

\textsuperscript{163} This metaphor of the “cure” was also used by Gagarin (1976). He writes, “At the end, mythical Argos gives way to the contemporary city of Athens, so that the resolution that finally ‘cures’ troubles of the house of Atreus and the city of Argos becomes the resolution of conflicts within contemporary Athens also” (58). I use the same metaphor but for a slightly different point. Athena’s ability to cure the disease of Argos (and also, perhaps, the threat of stasis in Athens) is not an end in itself but a statement of her ability to do so for others also.
Athena in Sophocles: An Overview

In the previous chapter, I argued that Athena stands as the symbol for Athens in *Eumenides* and *Persae*. But she is not just the symbol for the city but also for the *arche* and the imperial project of Athens. As the earlier discussion concerning the spread of the cult of Athena *Polias* under the *arche* and of the vase paintings that were circulating throughout the Aegean demonstrates, the allies also would have recognized a connection between Athena and the empire. This would have been especially true after 454 BC when the allies were required to bring their tribute, a part of which was dedicated to Athena, to the Great Dionysia. Sophocles, too, despite scholars’ most earnest desires, is not immune to the phenomenon of political symbolizing in the case of Athena that was rampant in fifth-century Athens.

Sophocles presents Athena as a character on stage in two separate plays, *Ajax* and *Ajax Locrus*. *Ajax Locrus* was probably produced in the 460’s, prior to Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*, and tells the story of the crime and punishment of Lesser Ajax, son of Oileus. The play remains only as fragments and so has received little treatment by scholars despite affinities with *Eumenides*. The second play, *Ajax*, about Ajax, son of Telamon, is fully extant and has caused much difficulty for scholars. They find the structure and character of Ajax particularly troubling. Despite the problematic nature of the play,
however, Athena’s appearance in Sophocles’ Ajax has not garnered nearly as much attention as that of Eumenides.\textsuperscript{164} This is surprising considering how radically different the two Athenas are from each other. The court-oriented, just Athena has given way to a vengeful, eye-for-an-eye goddess not all too different from an Euripidean Aphrodite. Perhaps the silence on behalf of scholars concerning Athena in Ajax is explained by the perceived differences as to the nature of the two plays and what Athena seems to “stand for” in each. As stated above, I have argued that in Aeschylean tragedy, Athena is the representative of Athens and her interests on the stage. Scholars do not make a similar identification between Athena and the polis/arche in Ajax.

I, however, will argue that we should see such a connection between the city/arche and Athena in Ajax and Ajax Locrus. This will be based on two points: first, Sophocles had a choice on how to present Athena in both plays; second, he even had a choice as to whether or not Athena appeared in his plays at all. His decision to insert the goddess into stories where she either did not previously appear or in a role she did not previously play underscores the importance of her appearances. The ways in which Sophocles himself has chosen to represent Athena should give us pause. For his own two characterizations are, in many ways, entirely opposed.

In Ajax Locrus, Sophocles stages an Athena who uses the court and jury to decide guilt or innocence of the hero. The jury trial of Lesser Ajax, in fact, occurs nowhere else in the epic/mythic tradition.\textsuperscript{165} Similarities between the structure and role of Athena in

\textsuperscript{164} The opinions on her appearance have been greatly varied and will be discussed in detail below.

\textsuperscript{165} This version appears in the paintings of Polygnotos in the Stoa Poikile and in Delphi. I will discuss the possible relationship(s) between the Ajax Locrus and the Polygnotos paintings below.
Eumenides and Ajax Locrus suggest a continuity between the two appearances of the goddess. In both instances she is linked with justice in the courts. In both plays she appears to resolve conflict.

Athena in Ajax is also an addition to a plot. She is not the cause of Ajax’ madness in the epic tradition nor does she play a role in his slaughter of the sheep. Athena is not, in the epics, an ally of Ajax’s. But in Sophocles’ play, there is evidence that Ajax and Athena had an “ally” relationship at one point. The linking of an eponymous hero and the patron deity of the city should intrigue us. The fact that they appear as allies nowhere else in the mythic tradition should intrigue us further. And if they are connected within the play through their relationship as allies, which is purely an Athenian relationship, could it not be the case that they are both functioning in their other purely Athenian roles, namely, as patron and eponymous hero?

As with the discussion of Athena in Aeschylean drama, I will work within a chronological framework. Ajax Locrus is the earlier of the two plays and therefore serves as a point of departure for a discussion of Ajax. The continuity between Ajax Locrus and the Aeschylean representation of Athena demonstrates a general association in the early years of the empire between Athena and Athenian justice. The radical departure of Athena’s characterization in Ajax from that of Ajax Locrus suggests either a separation between Athena and the city in drama, or it represents an entirely new version of the Athenian polis. I will argue that it is the second option and that the entirely new version is bound up with the development of the empire.
Ajax Locrus

In his discussion of the Stoa Poikile at Athens, Pausanias describes the famous painting by Polygnotos of the sack of Troy.\textsuperscript{166} He writes:

\[\text{ἐπὶ δὲ ταῖς Ἀµαζόσιν Ἐλληνες εἰσίν ἡµηκοτες Ἱλιον καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς ἠθροισµένοι διὰ τὸ Αἴαντος ἐς Κασσάνδραν τὸ λόγμα καὶ αὐτὸν ἡ γραφὴ τὸν Αἴαντα ἔχει καὶ γυναῖκας τῶν αἰχµαλώτων ἀλλὰς τε καὶ Κασσάνδραν.}\]

After the Amazons are the Greeks having taken Troy and the kings gathered together on account of the outrage of Ajax against Cassandra. This picture contains Ajax himself and both Cassandra and the other captive women (1.15.3).\textsuperscript{167}

Castriota writes that this painting (and that in the Knidian Lesche) is the only known evidence for a trial of Locrian Ajax in the mythic tradition.\textsuperscript{168} This is untrue. Sophocles wrote a play, \textit{Ajax Locrus}, in which such a trial scene takes place. It is certain that in this play the goddess Athena appears and that there is a trial. And it is almost certain that the trial scene was a Sophoclean invention, or at least, an Athenian one. We should ask ourselves why Sophocles would insert the trial. I will suggest he did this precisely because Athena is a part of the tradition concerning Locrian Ajax. Sophocles has consciously inserted a trial into the myth of \textit{Ajax Locrus} in order to reflect a trend in representing Athens and its interests similar to that paradigm of Athenian justice found in

\textsuperscript{166} The paintings at the Stoa Poikile and the Knidian Lesche, of course, no longer exist. The discussions by scholars are based on reconstructions primarily from Pausanias’ descriptions.

\textsuperscript{167} Text of Pausanias is from the Loeb Classical Library Edition.

\textsuperscript{168} Castriota (1992) 113.
Aeschylus' *Eumenides*\(^{169}\) And he has characterized his Athena, as being that same symbol of Athenian justice the Athenians were keen to promote throughout their empire.

Only fragments of *Ajax Locrus* remain and, as a result, there is debate as to the details of the play’s plot, structure and, of course, date. It is clear that Athena appears on stage,\(^{170}\) though exactly when is unclear.\(^{171}\) The story seems to be based on the tradition found in Arctinus’ *Sack of Ilium* summarized by Proclus. Proclus writes:

> Κασσάνδραν δὲ Αἴας ὁ Ἴλεως πρὸς βίαν ἀποσπῶν συνεφέλκεται τὸ Ἀθηνᾶς ξόανον· ἐφ’ ὧν παροξυσμένες οἱ δὲ Ἑλλήνες καταλεύσαι βουλεύονται τὸν Αἴαντα. ὁ δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς βωμὸν καταφεύγει καὶ διασώιζεται ἐκ τοῦ ἐπικείμενου κινδύνου. . . ἐπεὶ δὲ Ἑλλήνες καὶ φθορὰν αὐτοῖς Ἡ Ἀθηνᾶ κατὰ τὸ πέλαγος μηχανάται.

Ajax son of Ileus, while dragging Cassandra away by force, draws along with her Athena’s wooden image. On account of this, the Greeks, irritated, decide to stone Ajax to death. He, however, flees to the altar of Athena and is saved from the impending danger. . . Then the Greeks sail off and Athena devises destruction for them on the sea.

To this may be added the story found at *Odyssey* 4.499-511. Here, Ajax is said to have been in a shipwreck, but not killed (although hated by Athena). Then, after boasting that he survived despite the gods’ wrath, Poseidon struck the Gyrean rock where Ajax sat, drowning him in the depths of the sea. Thus the traditional story of Locrian Ajax has him

\(^{169}\) It is possible that these two plays were produced close in time to one another. Sophocles' play may even have come first. This does not change the argument. I will suggest that it reflects a trend in Athenian mythologization. Aeschylus and Sophocles were both subject to it.

\(^{170}\) The papyrus contains the letters ΑΘ next to the speech.

\(^{171}\) Halsam places the speech near the beginning but not as a prologue. A position as prologue appears to be impossible since the papyrus contains the remains of a choral ode just above the Athena fragment. He discounts the possibility of Athena appearing in the middle of the play since the only known example of a mid-play epiphany is a satyr play, *Rhesus*. He also finds the vehement tone of the speech inappropriate for an end speech (*The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* v. 44, London, 1976, 1-26). However, the *Choephoroi* ends on a similarly unresolved tone and, perhaps, if this is *deus ex machina* it could suggest that *Ajax Locrus* was also
commit a crime against Athena, the knocking over of her statue. Then, after surviving his punishment from Athena, Ajax is destroyed by Poseidon for boasting of his own indestructible nature.\textsuperscript{172}

Sophocles, it seems, does follow this tradition for the most part. I say ‘for the most part’ because the fragments suggest that Athena’s first response to Locrian Ajax’s crime was not the destruction of the Greeks during their homeward journeys, but rather a trial.\textsuperscript{173} She only decides to destroy the fleet after they acquit him of the charge of violating her temple. Somewhere, then, between the time the epic cycle was composed and the time Sophocles produced \textit{Ajax Locrus}, a trial by jury was inserted into the tradition. And it is a trial by jury ordered by Athena who also invoked the first homicide jury in Aeschylus’ \textit{Eumenides}. That the decision did not go her way is dictated by the necessities of the traditional. Ajax must die by Poseidon’s hand at sea. He can not be condemned and killed by the Argives at Troy.

Sophocles has added a new element to his story of \textit{Ajax Locrus}. But how is his Athena characterized? Is she similar to Aeschylus’ Athena as the insertion of a jury scene might suggest? Or, is she more closely related to Athena as Sophocles stages her in \textit{Ajax}? Fortunately, we have some text with which to work, since the largest extant fragment from the \textit{Ajax Locrus} is a speech by Athena:

\textsuperscript{172} The story of the boast is also found in Pseudo-Apollodorus, \textit{Epitome} 5.25. See also, D. Sutton \textit{The Lost Sophocles} (Lanham, 1984) 7-9.

\textsuperscript{173} For the validity of this statement see the discussion below on the possible make-up of the chorus and the dating of \textit{Ajax Locrus}.
Did the famous offspring of one such as Dryas’ son come to fight at Troy, Argives? Who was it who dared such things against the gods? Is it that Salmoneus who imitated the thunders of Zeus arose from among those below? What man’s [work] shall I compare to these deeds? Whoever... overturned my image from its foundation, from Phoebus’ priestess. . .

Halsam has characterized this speech as “passionately angry”.176 Kiso states (without discussion) that Athena in this fragment is portrayed “as malevolent as the Athena in the extant Ajax.”177 But what in this speech is especially malevolent? What in Athena’s speech is not justified? She compares the perpetrator to Lycurgus and Salmoneus. That does not make Athena malevolent. A crime has been committed and she is seeking the criminal. Angry she is. And justifiably so. Malevolent? I see no justification for such an assessment. And if she is so malevolent, why the trial?

As mentioned above, one fragment of Ajax Locrus suggests that Sophocles added the element of a jury trial to the traditional story. This fragment (3151, Fr. 5) is, to say the least, fragmentary:

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174 This word is not attested anywhere else in extant Greek thus its meaning is somewhat uncertain.

175 Translations are primarily my own but with suggestions on certain words taken from Halsam.

176 Halsam (1976) 2.

177 A. Kiso The Lost Sophocles (New York, 1984).
The restorations, minimal as they are, suggested, for the most part, by Halsam have equivalents in the plays of Aeschylus and Euripides. The first, most important of those restorations which points to a trial scene is at line 11: ἀποψηφίζεσθαι “acquit.” This word occurs exclusively in prose. In fact, if this restoration is correct, it would be the only known occurrence in poetry. But if this is a trial scene (as lines 11-15 suggest), the restoration makes sense. For this is a technical legal term just as is τὰ ψήφισματα in line 16. Also ψήφος ἐκράνθη in line 15 is found in trial/voting scenes in Aeschylus and

178 Or, ψήφος κεκρανται / κραίνεται

179 The term occurs 2700 times in Attic inscriptions, but see especially IG II (2) 977. All other occurrences of the term in the fifth and fourth century are found in the orators (or in trial scenes such as that of Socrates in Plato and Xenophon).
Euripides. Nor should the notion of Sophocles inserting a trial scene into the *Ajax Locrus* be surprising. For, as the plays of Aeschylus show, the concept of a democratic trial taking place in mythical monarchies was not seen by Athenians as anomalous.\(^{181}\)

The insertion of the trial scene would also seem to be part of a trend in Athenian myth-making. For scholars have, on admittedly little information, dated the play to what Plutarch calls Sophocles’ earliest “Aeschylean” period, putting an end date for production at around 460 BC, only a few years prior to the production of Aeschylus’ *Eumenides*.\(^{182}\) This date is based primarily on the perceived connection between Sophocles’ *Ajax Locrus* and the scene portrayed on the wall of the Stoa Poikile (and the Knidian Lesche at Delphi; Fig. 3-4) dated to 460 BC or shortly thereafter. Webster argues, concerning this connection:

I do not deny the connection is weak. . . And why does Pausanias only mentions the assembly of the kings to judge lesser Ajax in the Sack of Troy when he describes it as one scene among twenty others in Polygnotos’ Sack of Troy at Delphi? It must have dominated the Athenian picture and Sophocles’ play may have been the cause.\(^{183}\)

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\(^{180}\) For Aeschylus, see: *Supplices* 943, 964; *Eumenides* 347. For Euripides, see: *Andromache* 1273; *Trojan Women* 785; *Hecuba*. 219.

\(^{181}\) That Sophocles himself was not adverse to such insertions has been demonstrated by B. Knox of *Oedipus Tyrannos*. (*Oedipus at Thebes*, 1998 reprinting, especially 78-98; 114-198).


\(^{183}\) T.B.L. Webster *An Introduction to Sophocles* (London, 1969-2\(^{nd}\) ed.) 202. Much of the connection between the painting and the play has been based on the assumption that Sophocles and Polygnotos were connected through their individual relationships with Cimon. For these relationships see, for Sophocles: Whitman (1951) 13-14, 45-46; for Polygnotos: Castriota (1992) 78-84; 90-94; 96-133.
The evidence of a trial (ἀποψηφήσεθαι) and also the presence of captive women (ἀιχμαλωτ-) suggest an affinity between the scene represented by Polygnotos and the play by Sophocles not attested elsewhere. Also, the presence of spear-won women has led Zeilinsky to identify Ajax Locrus with another play, Captive Women, and thus dates it as part of that trilogy.\textsuperscript{184} There are problems, as Halsam has pointed out, with such an identification if we are to have a jury of Argives as the chorus to coincide with a jury of Athenians in Eumenides. For Zeilinsky states that the chorus of Captive Women/Ajax Locrus would have been made up of captured Trojan women. It seems, however, that if the painting in the Stoa Poikile does indeed reflect a version of the Locrian Ajax tradition used by Sophocles, captive women would have been present, but the jury deciding Ajax’ fate would have been the Argive kings. This, however, is not an irreconcilable difference since the use of a jury of silent actors is possible.\textsuperscript{185}

The dating of the Ajax Locrus would place its production before Aeschylus' Eumenides. This date is primarily based on the relationship between the Polygnotos painting and Sophocles' play. And this relationship has been determined to be one in which painting reflects tragedy. But why must the paintings reflect the play? Why can't it be the other way around. The Stoa Poikile and the Knidian Lesche at Delphi were very well known. Sophocles might have felt himself compelled, or at least felt capable, of staging his Ajax Locrus in keeping with the "new" Athenian version of events. Which Athena came first is impossible to know. Regardless, that two plays, Ajax Locrus and

\textsuperscript{184} T. Zeilinsky “De Aiacis Locrensis Fabula Sophoclea” Eos (1925) 37-43 esp.

\textsuperscript{185} As is made evident by such a silent jury in Eumenides.
Eumenides, were produced at around the same period, both adding the element of a trial to myths otherwise not containing them, attests to the power of the new Athenian judicial imperialism.

Whatever the relationship between the paintings and the play, it seems sufficient to say that they reflect what could be said to be a purely Athenian version of the myth. A larger question in my mind, however, is not whether the painting(s) reflect Sophocles’ play, but rather, what it is doing in an Athenian monument geared toward the glorification of Athenian military victories. Was this Ajax being co-opted and represented as an Athenian victor at Troy? Or is it the justice of Athena, embodied in the gathering of kings to judge Ajax that is the point of the painting? Neither option is really sustainable in the light of the evidence. For we only have descriptions of the paintings by Pausanias and nowhere does he tell us whether Athena is present or not. The only connection we know of between Athena and Ajax Locrus from the Homeric tradition involves his violation of her temple and her later decision to punish all the Greeks for it. How does this fit together? To start, let us look at some possible interpretations of the painting in order to then decide whether we can understand Sophocles’ play better.

First, according to Pausanias (10.31.2), Odysseus has urged the Greeks to stone Ajax to death for raping Cassandra. But there is no evidence in the painting itself of a rape, only of Cassandra’s having clung to Athena’s image (Figs. 3, 4). For she is pictured as still holding part of it. Ajax stands with his hand upon an altar in the presence of the kings. Is he “contemplating his degree of guilt”?\textsuperscript{186} Or is this painting instead a scene of

\textsuperscript{186} J. Pollit The Ancient View of Greek Art: Criticism, History and Terminology (New Haven, 1974) 188.
ritual atonement for his crime of having violated Athena’s temple? Castriota finds this a difficult view to agree with since Ajax is pictured in the nearby Nekyia painting amongst a group of *hubristes*, the brine of his watery death clinging to him. Is this an atonement scene? I don’t think so. It was known from Homer and the other epic poets, that Locrian Ajax was killed by Poseidon at sea. It is known from Euripides’ *Trojan Women* that Athena sent storms as a reaction to the Greek refusal to punish Ajax. Sophocles and, perhaps, Polygnotos by inserting the trial scene into the original story, has demonstrated, especially if we take into account the Nekyia painting, the ability of Athens, through their goddess, to correct even the most hubristic of acts.

Athena, as can be discerned from the fragments, is not especially cruel or malevolent. If the trial scene is authentic, she is even here, as in *Eumenides*, the embodiment of legal justice. Athena has good reason to be angry with Locrian Ajax and yet she defers to a jury. Ajax, as we know from epic tradition, dies at the hand of Poseidon at sea. Therefore, Ajax must have been acquitted. And, although it may have been his acquittal (or the lack of action by the Greeks as in Euripides’ *Trojan Women*) that caused the stormy seas for the Greek homecomings, she still trusted in the jury first. The trial of Locrian Ajax is attested only in the paintings of Polygnotos and this play. To portray Athena this way, in this setting, was a conscious choice on the part of Sophocles.

We should keep Sophocles’ choice for Athena’s role in *Ajax Locrus* in mind when trying to understand her in *Ajax*. His decision to stage Athena in this second play is also a conscious choice, not an aspect of the tradition. Like the trial of Ajax Locrus, the

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relationship between Athena and Ajax’ madness are likely Sophoclean inventions. For Athena, while she may have played a part in the awarding of Achilles' arms, plays no part in Ajax’ madness in the epic tradition.

188 Castriota (1992) 114.
The Problem of Athena

When attempting to understand the enigma that is Sophocles’ Ajax, the majority of scholars tend to overlook Athena or relegate her to a minor role. She is simply deemed “Homerian” or, as Papadopoulou states it, her behavior is considered, “in accord with the often ‘elusive’ divine presence in Greek Tragedy.”189 The Greek axiom “help friends, harm enemies” has also been applied to Athena’s character in Ajax. Knox suggests that Athena is the personification of the old axiom; Athena “thwarts and mocks her enemy, but it could be said she also baffles and convicts a wrongdoer.”190 Blundell states of the Ajax, “[t]he opening lines of Ajax are spoken by Athena, who addresses her favourite, Odysseus, as an adherent of Harm Enemies...”191 When Odysseus shrinks away, frightened from seeing the maddened Ajax, Athena cries out: οὐκ οὖν γέλως ήδιστος εἰς ἐχθροὺς γελᾶν; (Is it not the sweetest laugh to laugh at one’s enemies? 79). “Help Friends/Harm Enemies expects and justifies...such gloating pleasure in an enemy’s misfortune, and this aspect is particularly prominent in Ajax.”192

189 Papadopoulou (2001) 310. For the “Homerian” nature of Sophocles’ Athena see Papadopoulou (2001) 306 and M. Blundell Helping Friends and Harming Enemies (Cambridge, 1989) 60-68. For a conception of what Athena’s “Homerian” nature may have been see J. Clay The Wrath of Athena (Princeton, 1983) passim. There, Clay looks at Athena’s anger at the Greeks upon leaving Troy and its justification. I would argue that Athena’s anger in the epic tradition is a justifiable wrath and neither random nor malicious.


191 Blundell (1989) 60.

But this is not the only rationalization offered for Athena’s “cruel” behavior. Knox has given the most simple explanation. While he admits that her fierceness is disturbing he diminishes the difficulties by stating “[b]ut we must remember that for Sophocles and his contemporaries gods and men were not judged by the same standards.” He goes on to state that the cruel behavior of Athena is not a criticism of her, but rather of Ajax. For he has deigned to behave in the manner of a god.

Jebb suggests that Athena is in Ajax a just god exacting proper punishment for a crime: Ajax has attempted to kill the Argive leaders. Therefore, the “punishment” Athena doles out to Ajax, his madness, is fair. But as Linforth points out, Athena never condemns Ajax as guilty of committing a crime. She is not punishing him for attacking the Atreidae. Other scholars suggest that the true aim of Athena’s appearance is to pronounce the “moral” to our story: σωφροσύνη. Her final words

\[193\] Blundell tries to argue that this is a nonsensical interpretation of her behavior (65). But Reinhardt states concerning Athena’s behavior (and I fully agree) that, “[i]n Sophocles, the goddess has her sport with the mortal. And this sport, and everything connected with it...is represented in a form which is more cruel than anything in the Ajax saga or any other work known to us” (“Ajax” in E. Segal, ed., 1983, 150).

\[194\] Knox (1961) 36.

\[195\] Knox (1961) 38.

\[196\] Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments: Part VII, The Ajax (Cambridge, 1907). The crimes of Ajax are the focus of many other commentators as well. According to them, Athena’s actions, because of the nature of Ajax’ crimes are justified. However, it is not a question of whether Ajax acted wrongly. He did, but Athena responds in a manner not in keeping with other representations of her nor with the qualities of moderation, wisdom and justice attached to her in myth and even the closing lines on her speech in Ajax. Also, if one believes that Ajax is being punished for the attempt on the Argive leaders, then they can not take Calchas’ prophecy as the explanation for Athena’s wrath making lines 748-777 even more irrelevant.

\[197\] I.M. Linforth Three Scenes in Sophocles’ Ajax (Berkeley, 1954) 4. Holt recognizes also that Ajax is never called ‘mad’ within the play in reference to his attempt on the Greek army. He was perfectly sane, not yet afflicted by Athena when he plans the night foray against the Greeks, but is not condemned as a criminal for it. (P. Holt “Ajax’ Ailment” Ramus 9, 1980, 23). See also Knox (1961) 33; G. Grossman “Das Lachen des Ajax” MH 25 (1968) 79f.
assert the lesson to be learned from the exchange with Ajax: τοὺς δὲ σωφρονας θεοι
φιλούσι καὶ στυγούσι τοὺς κακοὺς (The gods love the modest and hate the bad, 132-3).

In this vein, scholars have pointed out that cognates of σωφροσύνη occur more in
Ajax than any other Sopholcean play though the noun itself does not appear.  Jebb even
suggests that Odysseus is set up as the model for “moderate” behavior in opposition to
Ajax’ boastfulness.  Grossman goes so far as to read the entire play in terms of
σωφροσύνη and ὑβρίς. This is a stretch, however, since the term is only ever applied to
Ajax once indirectly by Menelaus, his arch-enemy.

The play itself does offer us a simple way out of the conundrum that is Athena
and numerous scholars have taken it: Ajax has insulted Athena. After Ajax has taken

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198 For such a reading see, T. Sheppard Wisdom of Sophocles (London, 1947), 20-29. Knox (1961) also
sees Athena’s epiphany as impressing a moral upon the audience. That moral, however, is not σωφροσύνη
but rather time—namely, the difference between mortality (Ajax) and immortality (Athena): “[i]t is
significant that the Ajax, contrary to Sophoclean practice as known from the extant plays, brings an
Olympian god on stage. . .” (2).

199 For citations see Blundell (1989) 61, note 6.

200 Whitman (1951) perceives of Athena and Odysseus as sharing the same morality and policy (78-79).
Knox (1961), however, sees Athena and Ajax and kindred spirits. They share the same harsh view toward
the concept of “harm enemies” (33).

the term is never applied to Ajax (61, note 6). For other advocates of this reading see: M. Bowra (1944)
11-12, 27-18; G. M. Kirkwood A Study of Sophoclean Drama (Ithaca, 1958) 274; H. Kitto Form and
Meaning in Drama (London, 1956) 179-198; A. Lesky Greek Tragedy (London, 1965) 99; W.B. Stanford
Sophocles: Ajax (New York, 1963) xxvi; and Webster (1969) 65; Garvie opposes this view, stating that the
previous arguments for such a reading are insufficient and do not take the entire picture into account
(Sophocles: Ajax, Warminster, 1998, 12-14). I will argue, with Garvie, against reading σωφροσύνη as the
moral of the play. If the term ὑβρις applies to anyone’s behavior in the play it is either the Atreidai or
Athena herself.

202 Tyler is the strongest proponent of the explanation of the insults. He states, “Sophocles could hardly, in
my opinion, have given a clearer exposition of Athena’s motives as well as the effects” (“Sophocles’ Ajax
and Sophoclean Plot Construction” AJP 95, 1974, 26). However, as Tyler himself points out, a great many
scholars seek a more immediate reason for Athena’s punishment. Waiting 700 lines to discover the “truth”
seems a bit much to ask of an audience. This consideration, however, is not something Tyler wishes to
leave to commit suicide, a messenger arrives and relates the prophecy of Calchas concerning Ajax’ madness. In lines 748-777, we are told that on two separate occasions, Ajax rejected the aid of the gods. First, before leaving home he told his father, Telamon:

πάτερ, θεοίς μὲν κάν ὁ μηδὲν ἄν ὁμοῦ κράτος κατακτήσαιτ᾽ ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ δίχα κεῖνων πέποιθα τοῦτ᾽ ἐπισπάσειν κλέος.

Father, together with the gods even a nobody could achieve power. I, however, trust that I will gain glory without them (767-769).

The second rejection came, supposedly, on the battlefield and was directed at Athena herself. Athena encouraged Ajax in battle but was told: ἀνάσσα, τοῖς ἄλλοισιν Ἀργείων πέλας ἱστω, καθ’ ἡς δ᾿ οὔποτ᾿ ἐνρήξει μάχη (Queen, stand near some other Argives, but where I am stationed, the battle will never break [stream] 774-775).

These two insults are the reason behind Ajax’s madness and these are the lines often referred to in order to explain the “ironic” use of σύμμαχος at line 90.203

These plays were not originally read silently, but performed on stage. If these two insults were not part of the epic tradition, how can an audience be expected to know the reasons behind Athena’s wrath before Calchas tells us. The answer is, they can’t be. Nor admit. He states concerning Linforth’s decision to read the play in order, “Linfirth argues, in accordance with a principle...that verses 127-133 cannot be interpreted in the light of Calchas’ account because the audience has not yet heard that account. Such an argument is acceptable only if the critic’s sole aim is to recreate the first impression of a play on an audience; it is not universally valid in a more general study” (30, note 17). Tyler fails to account for the fact that Sophocles wrote the play to have such an effect on the audience as both Linforth and I are searching for. Sophocles did not write his plays to be read by scholars repeatedly and out of sequence, but performed in the theater at the Great Dionysia. There is, of course, a strongly retroactive nature to Ajax. But, Sophocles goes to too great a length to create ambiguity for it to be essentially mooted by Calchas’ revelation. Whitman (1951) is correct, it is the easy way out, not necessarily the right way out (66).
should they be. Sophocles is writing for a live performance. Athena and Ajax call each
other ally and the audience, being familiar with Athenian civic mythology, would think
they were, in fact, allies. Whitman has summed up the situation best:

As if to clarify the dubious situation, Sophocles inserts a passage later on in the
play which implies that Ajax’ murderous plan was not his first offence...He
[Sophocles] may have invented the insult stories, but in a spirit akin to Dante’s
prose explanations of his sonnets, to satisfy those who cared to look no further
and to warn the more curious that the answer was not so simple.  

I am of the curious sort who does not find the “simple” answer plausible. Athena’s
behavior can not be explained away by Calchas’ prophecy. For the audience would not
have known about the insults at the beginning of the play. Only in retrospect would the
discomfort caused by Athena be understood.

All of the above quoted scholars rely on the fact that Athena is just in Ajax,
regardless of her taunting and vicious exchange with Ajax. But, as Podlecki asserts, “It is
not a question of justice... Rather it is a matter of the inhumane and even brutal manner of
her exaction of justice.”  Any reading that attempts to white-wash Athena’s behavior
with terms like σωφροσύνη and ὕβρις does not account for the discrepancy in Athena’s
behavior and this supposed “moral” of the episode. Athena is, despite Blundell’s
assertions, a vindictive, unpredictable and destructive figure. In any other god on stage

203 Jebb, Stanford and Garvie each cite this reason in their commentaries for line 90 (the “ironic” use of
σύμμαχος) for Athena’s mocking anger. See below for further discussion.

204 Whitman (1951) 67.

205 Podlecki (1980), 55. For Podlecki, as well as myself, the crimes of Ajax are not at issue here. It cannot
be denied that Ajax acted criminally. That is not the problem. The problem is that Athena is not behaving
in keeping with her own character. Papadopoulou is also troubled by Athena’s behavior but her problem is
this may be acceptable. But the god is Athena and thus it should be troubling. For Athena is the patron and protectress of Athens. She is the symbol, along with Athens, of True Justice.

Let us look, then, at the goddess Athena in Sophocles’ *Ajax* to discern first, what the purpose of her appearance is and, second, how we should understand the rest of the play in terms of her early cameo. As the above, albeit brief, discussion of some previous views of Athena suggests, not much has been decided on the subject of Athena beyond, “she is ambiguous.” But I will argue that her appearance is not in the least ambiguous. Rather she is on stage as a blazing beacon fire announcing to the Athenian audience that this play, *Ajax*, is about them. Just as Athena stands as the representative of Athenian interests in Aeschylean drama, so too she stands here. And we must ask, if Athena has been so altered by Sophocles, what interests are represented here and are they altered too? The fact that Sophocles has chosen to portray her in such an unusual manner should bother his audience, ancient or modern.

In order to understand fully the role Sophocles has assigned Athena in his drama, it is necessary to recognize three important aspects concerning her and this play. First, *Ajax*, like many other tragedies performed at the Great Dionysia, is a political play. The context for the performances precludes ignoring this feature of Greek Tragedy. Politics, civic ideology/mythology and the festival are inextricably bound together. The fact that the patron deity of the city and one of its eponymous heroes appear on stage together should draw attention to the political underpinnings.

more with the fact that Athena has imposed madness on Ajax. This runs contrary, Papadopoulou suggests, to her Homeric role of preventing violent rage and madness (*II*. 1.194ff; 15.121ff).
Second, Athena, as portrayed in *Ajax*, is different from all other representations of Athena from Homer to Aeschylus to Sophocles himself. And this is important since, I will argue, Sophocles intentionally invokes these earlier representations within *Ajax*, especially Aeschylus’. But the two goddesses are very much opposites and it is in these differences that understanding is born. Thus one task will be to compare and contrast the presentations of Athena in Aeschylus and, where necessary, Homer with the goddess as she appears in Sophocles.

The third aspect under discussion here will be the relationship between Ajax and Athena. It is, to say the least, problematic. Knox and Blundell have argued that Athena’s interaction with Ajax exemplifies the *ethos* “harm one’s enemy”; and Ajax is the enemy. But the use of σύμμαχος to frame the dialogue between the two implies that they are not enemies. Ajax, far from being an enemy of Athena, is, according to Athenian civic mythology, her ally. Athena should, therefore, be helping Ajax, as he thinks she actually is. Instead of aiding Ajax, however, Athena has driven him mad and then

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206 See discussion above on *Ajax Locrus*.

207 Both the use of σύμμαχος and the nature of the relationship between Athena and Ajax will be discussed at length below.

208 Knox (1961) also claims that the term σύμμαχος contains an implied inferiority thereby rendering Athena’s use of it even more ironic. She is the superior of the two though Ajax, seemingly, does not think so (38). I would argue, however, that the word does not yet, in the 450’s and early 440’s, have such a negative connotation and that the representation of Athena actually aids in giving σύμμαχος this un-literal sense. Also, it is even arguable that the “inferiority” Knox sees attached to the word is not even represented in Thucydides’ History. Thucydides makes the point, on numerous occasions, of differentiating between σύμμαχος and ὑπήκοος. “Ally” does not mean “subordinate” consistently, if at all. Inscriptional usage does not seem to change much either concerning the meaning of σύμμαχος. Only who the oath is taken to changes. σύμμαχος comes to mean “inferior” only in a retrospective look at the practice. See also Kiso (1984) 1-19.
taunts him while under her spell. This is hardly the behavior of an ally. If Athena is just, her form of “justice” is undermined by the second half of the play. Ajax’ vindication and elevation undermines the mode of justice and proves it faulty.\textsuperscript{209}

A discussion of these three issues will lead us to determine what we are to make of both Athena’s character and her relationship with Ajax in terms of the rest of the play. Athena only appears at the opening and Ajax dies just over half way through. How important can a brief dialogue be in understanding the play as a whole? It is very important. A look at the dialogue of Menelaus and Teucer compared with that of Athena and Ajax will show that Athena is paired with Menelaus on many levels. First, these two characters are the advocates of ςωφροσύνη in Ajax. Second, both advocate a form of ςωφροσύνη that is supported by violence. Nor does this ςωφροσύνη serve as the opposite of υβρις as might be expected but is actually underscored by the most hubristic actions to occur on stage. And finally, this pairing of Athena and Menelaus will be shown to undermine the position of Athena as a representative of justice because Menelaus’ dialogue with Teucer is, in fact, a parody of that between Athena and the Erinyes in Eumenides. Thus Sophocles links the divine with the human as well as the two plays and in doing so destabilizes the justice of Aeschylus and so of Athens.

Sophocles is using Aeschylus’ Athena to expose the hypocrisy of his own.

\textsuperscript{209} For adherents to the “rehabilitation” interpretation of Ajax’s character in which his suicide is seen as the reassertion of his heroic nature, see especially Knox (1961) 56 and D. Cohen “The Imagery of Sophocles: A Study of Ajax’s Suicide” Greece and Rome 25 (1978) 24-36. V. Rosivach opposes this view: “[t]he difficulty with this “rehabilitation” interpretation is that both Ajax, while he is still alive, and Teucer, after his brother’s death, fail to admit that there was anything wrong (as opposed to embarrassing) in the slaughter of the animals or in the revealed intention to slaughter the Greeks” (“Sophocles’ Ajax” CJ 71, 1976, 47). Of course, if one concede that Ajax is an adherent of the Homeric code, there is no wrong in avenging a wrong. Rosivach, however, doesn’t see that Ajax has been wronged at all.
What will emerge from discussions of the above issues are the following conclusions: first, Sophocles’ *Ajax* enacts the death of Aeschylus’ idealized nation.\(^{210}\) The Athens embodied in both *Persae* and *Eumenides* will find its representative in the figure of Ajax. What will it mean when Athena herself causes his destruction? I will argue that the growth of the empire and an imperialist attitude, as embodied in Athena and the Atreidae, has destroyed, or is destroying, the very ideals that Athens fought the Persians to preserve. Second, the play signals, in some ways, a questioning of the Athenian state and the direction she has chosen as an imperial power. The judicial and military alliances supported and sanctioned by Aeschylean drama have found their logical conclusion in the harried and brutal relationship between Athena and Ajax. Those very associations which stood at the heart of the Delian League have become the mechanisms of the League’s ruin. True Justice is no longer found with Athena in Athens nor are her alliances any longer a benefit to her allies.

**The Date of Ajax**

Before beginning our analysis of Athena in *Ajax*, it is necessary, however, to discuss the date of the play. There is no certain date for *Ajax*. The majority of scholars date it sometime in the 440’s though there are a few dissenters who suggest the 420’s.\(^{211}\)

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\(^{210}\) Most scholars assign the code of Ajax to the Homeric age. This code was equally applied to the Persian War-era Athenians who fought at Marathon and Salamis. Earlier scholars have noted an emphasis on Ajax’ relationship to Salamis and some have commented on his “hoplite” nature. I will argue that Ajax embodied them both. He is killed because even that heroic code, that of the *Marathonomachoi* and the sailors at Salamis, can no longer apply. These heroes have become the villains.

\(^{211}\) J. Kott suggests the 420’s but here arguments are entirely unconvincing (*The Eating of the Gods*, New York, 1973, 289-290 n. 42.) Rosenbloom has also suggested that the Ajax should be dated after the death of Pericles. See below for further discussion.
The criteria for dating the play has been of three kinds: internal (metrics, diction etc), historical and in relation to external art. First, I will present the internal arguments.

Jebb\textsuperscript{212} advocates an early date for \textit{Ajax}, situating it shortly after \textit{Antigone} in an uncertain chronology.\textsuperscript{213} His basis for such a date is a composite of metrical and diction-based analysis. First, the \textit{parados} is written in the conventional form of an anapestic marching song (134-171) followed by a lyric ode (172-200). This is similar to Aeschylus’ \textit{Persae}, \textit{Supplices} and \textit{Agamemnon}. In the extant Sophoclean corpus, only \textit{Antigone} is remotely similar. Second, the choral anapests are interspersed with iambic dialogue (1163-1167). Again, only \textit{Antigone} shares this characteristic.

Third, \textit{Ajax} appears to share numerous phrases and words with Aeschylean drama, especially \textit{Persae}.\textsuperscript{214} And two epic usages only occur in \textit{Ajax} (ℏ ᾲα) or in \textit{Ajax} and Aeschylus (plural τοί) though, Jebb states, they can be explained by the Homeric subject matter and general Homeric coloring of the text.\textsuperscript{215} All of the above internal considerations are enhanced by Plutarch’s discussion of Sophocles’ “periods.”\textsuperscript{216} Each of the metrical elements seems to either imitate or move slightly away from Aeschylus and

\textsuperscript{212} The following comes from Jebb’s edition of \textit{Ajax} (Cambridge, 1896) li-liiv.

\textsuperscript{213} I say uncertain since \textit{Antigone} is also not securely dated. Most scholars agree that it is probably from the 440’s based both on metrical considerations and because of a comment in the hypothesis that Sophocles was elected general based on the popularity of \textit{Antigone}. He was most likely not elected as a direct result of the production. However, some tradition has been preserved linking the two events temporally and Sophocles was general in 441/0 BC. Thus \textit{Antigone} is likely to have been produced in the years preceding 441 BC. I would push the date even earlier since Sophocles was one of the \textit{hellenotamioi} in 443/2 BC and may not have had much time to spare for writing and producing plays.

\textsuperscript{214} Wolfe, in his edition of \textit{Ajax}, points out \textit{Aj.} 56, \textit{Per} 426; \textit{Aj.} 412, \textit{Per}. 367; \textit{Aj}. 447, 673; \textit{Aj}. 673, \textit{Per}. 386; \textit{Aj}. 740, \textit{Per}. 489. The shared language between \textit{Persae} and \textit{Ajax} occurs mostly in lines spoken by Ajax himself. This punctuates the idea that Ajax has been constructed as a Persian war hero.

\textsuperscript{215} Jebb cites as examples lines 177, 374f, 933, 954 and 1165.
the Homericisms are similar in flavor to Aeschylus’ own archaic style. This could place *Ajax* into either the first or second period, though most likely the second. This placement is supported further by Reinhardt’s suggestion that *Ajax* is closely related both in theme and structure to Aeschylus’ *Niobe* usually dated to the 450’s.

Of course, as the example of *Supplices* has proven, it is always tenuous to date a play purely on internal considerations. In light of this difficulty, then, scholars have attempted to find references to external historical/political events in *Ajax*. Such references are difficult to find. Robert, however, has argued for a date following shortly after Pericles’ citizenship law of 450/1 BC was passed based on the relationship presented in *Ajax* between Ajax, Tecmessa and their son, Eurysakes. Eurysaces, as the son of Ajax and a Trojan captive, would be denied citizenship under this law and Tecmessa appeals to Ajax on these very grounds: that their son would become a slave and bastard if Ajax were not alive to protect him. As Griffin points out, “this idea [Robert’s] can be no more refuted today than it could be 30 years ago.” But a single vague historic reference must be supplemented, if possible, from other sources.

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216 See note 169 above.

217 The “inadequate” use of the third actor has also been cited as reasoning for an early date though Jebb finds this point to be not provable and aesthetically motivated.

218 Sophocles’ first production was in 468 BC and it was, apparently also his first victory. This would probably make the “early years” between 468 and, perhaps, the early 440’s?

219 *Niobe* exists only as a fragment. Fortunately, the fragment is a speech of Leto describing the vengeance she has wreaked on Niobe. It is similar in its tone and language to the gnomic statement of Athena that no matter how great the man, he is subject to the will and whims of the gods. Also, as Reinhardt (1983) argues, the structure of the plays are both somewhat unique in tragedy—it is not the story of a man’s (or woman’s) *hubris*, but rather the aftermath of that hubristic act that is the subject matter. Thus it is the judgment of the gods on the hero that focuses the tragedy (148-149).

In the same vein as Robert, then, other scholars have tried to link *Ajax* to historic figures and events. Ajax himself has been linked with both Themistocles and Cimon: his strong “aristocratic” nature and *ethos* modeled on the latter’s pro-Spartan, hoplite-centered politics; Ajax’ connection to the Salaminian sailor chorus and the question of his burial connecting him to the former.\(^{222}\) Whitman denies any historic connection between Ajax and Themistocles since Themistocles’ burial would have been a moot point so long after the fact.\(^{223}\) He does, however, find the figure of Cimon lurking in the shadows of Sophocles’ *Ajax*.\(^{224}\) These historical analogies are a wonderful game for scholars to play, but they are as tenuous and subjective as metrics for dating a play such as *Ajax* because they can never be proven or disproven, only speculated upon.

External art, however, can provide clues that allegory and meter cannot and this evidence may be found in the Ajax-lykthos. Ascribed to the Alkimachos painter by Schefold and Robertson, this vase is said to illustrate the death of Ajax from Sophocles’ play.\(^{225}\) A connection between the play and the scene by the Alkimachos painter would place the play around 450 since the Alkimachos painter worked primarily during 450’s. But the fact that a vase portrays a myth similar to a staged version does not necessitate


\(^{222}\) For Themistocles, see Bowra (1944) 49-50. For Cimon, see Whitman (1951) 45-46.

\(^{223}\) Whitman (1951) 45. Themistocles died in 460 BC. *Ajax* was not produced until at least 10 years later.

\(^{224}\) “If any Athenian lies behind the character of Ajax, a more probable candidate is Cimon whose simple, aristocratic virtues were famed and beloved and consistent well with the dignity of Ajax” (Whitman, 1951, 45). Whitman also sees a bit of Pericles in the figure of Odysseus who was, in relation to Cimon “as untrustworthy and obnoxious an upstart to the conservative as Odysseus to Ajax” (45). Cimon was known to have traced his ancestry back to Ajax thus making the connection even more desirable.
that one *illustrates* the other. This would imply two things: first, that Sophocles invented this particular version of the Ajax myth (which is nearly impossible to say with certainty); and second, that vase-painting cannot exist as a form of artistic expression independent of literature. This is most definitely not true.

Discounting the idea that the vase necessarily illustrates the play does not, however, mean that art cannot be useful when dating tragedies.\footnote{This may also seem a contrary notion to that supposed when discussing the relationship between *Ajax Locrus* and Polygnotos' paintings. The difference here is that the trial scene is definitely not anywhere else in the literary or iconographic tradition. A scene in which Ajax plants a sword into the ground could illustrate numerous versions of Ajax’ suicide.} For trends can be found in vase-painting just as in any other form of artistic expression. It may be that the myth of Ajax’ suicide was popular in the 450’s and 440’s. There are a number of representations of Ajax dated after the battle at Salamis. Perhaps his popularity as an eponymous hero soared after the Greek victory he helped gain.\footnote{There are scholars who argue that such a thing is indeed the point of *Ajax*. The play justifies and leads up to the establishment of his hero-cult in Athens. Jebb (1896) suggests that understanding this *terminus ad quem* is the only way to give the play coherence and unity (xxiv-xxv). It is also interesting to note that the vase paintings dated to the 460s and 450’s tend to picture Ajax and Athena together more than those from the sixth century. For example, a vase (Bologna PU 273) by the Kodros painter from the 450’s shows Ajax being escorted to Troy by Athena along with the other Athenian heroes. The companion cup (Basel BS 432), according to Berger and Kron, depicts a myth of Ajax in which he is the bastard son of Theseus. (E. Berger “Zur Deutung einer neuen Schale des Kodrosmalers” *AK* 11 (1968) 125-138; U. Kron “Die Schale..."} If this is so, it is also possible that Sophocles’ play is reflective of the increased use of Ajax as a paradigmatic Athenian hero.\footnote{It shows Ajax kneeling in prayer before his suicide. K. Schefold and M. Robertson “Sophokles’ *Ajax* und einer Lekythos” *AK* 19 (1976) 71-78.}

All of this is speculation and no single factor can decide the problem for certain. But all of the evidence taken as a whole can lead to a more probable date for the 440’s...
than the 420’s. For in addition to the metrical, historical and external there are also thematic elements that seem to span the 450’s and 440’s are of particular interest in Ajax. The first of these is burial. Burial is a central element, not only of Ajax, but also of Antigone and Aeschylus’ Septem (though when the ending was written is still a matter of debate). And, although Whitman discounts any connection to Themistocles’ burial in 460 BC, it is interesting to note that when Thucydides mentions the law against burial of the banished in Attica, he uses ἐξῆν.229 This implies a completed action: “there used to be a law”. Thus, by the time Thucydides writes his history, there is no longer a law forbidding it. Perhaps the plethora of plays in the middle of the century reflects a movement against such a law which the denial of burial for Themistocles started.

Again, this is speculation but the compounding of so many coincidental factors argues more strongly for a date in the 440’s than 420’s. Arguments for moving the play to the 420’s have, on the whole, been unsatisfactory. Rosenbloom’s arguments for moving the date of Ajax to the 420’s are primarily theme driven. He suggests that the use of the words poneros and chrestos within the play situate it thematically in the years following Pericles’ death. This assumption is based on an interpretation of the uses of poneros and chrestos in post-Periclean literature, especially Aristophanes, which are directly related to the rise of Cleon and non-aristocratic demagogues.230 This would be an acceptable criterion except that he lists Odysseus among the poneros and thus the

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229 Thuc. 1.138.6: οὐ γὰρ ἐξῆν θάπτειν ὡς ἐπὶ προδοσίαι φεύγοντος.
230 “Ajax is Megas. Is that all we can say?” Prudentia 33 (2001).
demagogues. The portrayal of Odysseus in Ajax, however, as I will address below, is in no way similar to the extremely negative demagogic portrayals found in Sophocles’ 
Philoctetes or Euripides’ Hecuba both of which are really the paradigmatic representations of such characters in tragedy. The characterization of Odysseus appears itself to undermine Rosenbloom’s urge to read the demagogic poneros into the play.

Menelaus, the only other possible bearer of such a title could be described as Sophistic. But it is an undeveloped Sophism more reminiscent of the early stages in the development of that “school” as represented by Protagoras and Gorgias’ Helen, rather than of those Sophists found parodied in Clouds and other dramatic performances.

Kott registers the other dissenting voice on the date of the Ajax. Kott’s statement that, “only if considered in the political climate of the late twenties does the Ajax become fully intelligible” is simply a personal hypothesis. For, if my understanding of the imperial reflections in Aeschylus’ Eumenides is correct then the Athenian policies and attitude that contributed to the “climate” of the 420’s were already in place and developing in the 440’s. Thus Ajax not only becomes more intelligible as a product of the 440’s but also helps illuminate the Athenian attitude toward their burgeoning arche in its formative years. Both Rosenbloom’s reasons for re-dating and Kott’s are far more tenuous than those supplied by previous scholars and myself for keeping the production in the 440’s rather than the 420’s.

231 The inscriptional evidence for the 440’s is really concrete evidence for the beginnings of Athenian imperial policy. And, despite Mattingly’s attempts to re-date the most “oppressive” of the decrees, including the Coinage, Brea, Methone and Segesta decrees, the Erythrai, Chaclis and Miletus decrees discussed in connection with Eumenides are enough to chart the shift in Athenian authority over the Delian League in the 450’a and 440’s.
The Politics of Meaning in Athens

One of the reasons why the date for Ajax is a necessary part of understanding the play is a whole is because of the constructed nature of meaning. Meaning of all types—social, textual, verbal—is socially constructed and institutionalized. The choice of meanings available to a community through this institutionalization comes to play a role as social “norms” and thus comes to be held as beliefs of individuals within a society. But those beliefs are not truly individualized, rather they are “communal and conventional.” Thus, I argue in the introduction that the ideological underpinnings of governmental, religious and social institutions so permeated daily life that it would be impossible for a citizen of Athens to think apolitically. Nor could he walk into the agora and not be reminded of Ajax the eponymous hero. Nor could he look to the Acropolis or the Stoa Poikile and not recall the Persian Wars. Nor could he look upon a figure of

232 It has been noted by scholars, including Webster, that Ajax resembles two Euripidean plays from 438 BC, Cretan Women and Telephus. If this is indeed the case there is nothing that precludes Euripides from taking a cue from Sophocles especially if Euripides is understood to be reacting to the recent, harsh suppression of the Samian revolt in which Sophocles himself may have participated.

233 Stanley Fish writes: “some institutions or forms of life are so widely lived in that for a great many people the meanings they enabled seem ‘naturally’ available and it takes a special circumstance to see that they are products of circumstances” (“Is There a Text in this Class” title essay from Is There a Text in this Class, Harvard, 1980, reprinted in H. Adams and L. Searle, eds. Critical Theory Since 1965, Tallahassee, 1992, 527).

234 Fish (1980), 533.

235 According to Pausanias, statues of Ajax and the other eponymous heroes stood in the Athenian agora near the Council Chamber of the Five Hundred (Paus. 1.4.5.1-2).

236 See above for a description of the paintings in the Stoa Poikile. The Acropolis was burnt by the Persians when they sacked Athens in 480 BC. It remained rubble until the Periclean building program was inaugurated in 447 BC.
Athena and not be reminded of her role in protecting the city in that war and beyond.\textsuperscript{237}

Raaflaub puts the case for this most strongly when he writes:

> The Athenian citizens were exposed to a constant barrage of visual and oral expressions of a highly militaristic ideology of war, power and commitment to service and sacrifice for the \textit{polis}. Sites, monuments and rituals reminded them of their city’s glorious past and unprecedented power, and of their ancestors’ heroic accomplishments, and of their obligations to live up to these examples.\textsuperscript{238}

The figures of Athena and Ajax both were a part of this “barrage”. Also, tragedy itself participated in this ideology both in the rituals attached to the performances at the Dionysia and in the visual images playwrights presented on the stage.

The political nature of Athenian tragedy has been discussed in the introduction. This is something, however, that needs to be restated in light of the dating for Ajax. For the ceremonies attached to the City Dionysia after 454 BC, especially the transfer of the tribute, would have shaped, in the manner suggested above, the way an audience would interpret a performance. A brief reiteration of some of the ceremonies which preceded the dramatic performances seems in order to re-orient ourselves for the appearance of Athena on stage in \textit{Ajax}. For, as Goldhill reminds us, tragedy, was a “social, political, and theatrical phenomenon,”\textsuperscript{239} none of which should be excluded from an understanding

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\textsuperscript{237} Statues of Athena, as discussed in the introduction, were everywhere in Athens, not just on the Acropolis.

\textsuperscript{238} Raaflaub (1998) 18.

\textsuperscript{239} Goldhill (1990) 98.
of Athenian drama of the fifth century. Three ceremonies in particular need mentioning as contributing to a “civic discourse” of fifth-century Athens: the parade of orphans, the libations of the στρατηγοί and the display of the tribute.240

These three ceremonies were part of a highly ritualized, militarized, political public performance. To see the implication or influence of these ceremonies on a play such as Ajax is not hard. Ajax himself is within the play a strategos. He is also a spear-bearer and his most prominent feature was his great shield. Both of these weapons were the hallmarks of the hoplite warrior.241 He hailed from Salamis, the site of Athens’ greatest victory and the chorus itself is made up of Salamian sailors. Each of these echoes the libation of the generals and the parade of the war-orphans whose fathers or grandfathers had perhaps fought and died at Salamis. Also, such orphanage is suggested for Ajax’s son Eurysakes in the eventuality of Ajax’s suicide. In the case of Athena, it can not be mentioned enough times the prominent role she played in Athenian ideology. The fact that part of the tribute displayed in the orchestra prior to the tragic competitions was dedicated directly to her would only add to the effect her appearance on stage would have had on an audience.

Above, I commented that tragedy, was a “social, political, and theatrical phenomenon”,242 none of which should be excluded from an understanding of Athenian

240 Goldhill (1990) 100-113. I am excluding from my discussion the announcement of the city’s benefactors (mentioned in the introduction). It has importance perhaps for an understanding of Ajax’ character but not so much for an understanding of Athena’s.

241 Ajax’s shield is typically called a σάκος which was a very broad shield made of seven layers of ox hide. This type of shield was apparently outdated even in the Archaic period. The ὅπλον from which hoplites derived their name was much smaller and lighter. The distinction between the two types of shield does not weaken the connection. In fact Ajax is called both σακεσφόρος and ὅπλισμενος within the play.

242 Goldhill (1990) 98.
drama of the fifth century. In light of the ceremonies discussed above and in light of the ideological project of the Athenian state that seems to touch every corner of the cultural experience, it seems almost impossible to deny such a statement. In the case of Sophocles, however, and his *Ajax* in particular, some scholars have found this a difficult pill to swallow. Jasper Griffin is one such scholar. He has pointed out in great detail that most of the political or historical interpretations of *Ajax* have tended to be in complete conflict with one another.\(^{243}\) His solution is to look at this tragedy from the perspective of the audience and to assume that the average Athenian (or average Greek, in general) either had no real inkling of or did not care for political lessons.\(^{244}\) And, as Seaford has recently reminded us, there is still a large contingent of scholars who consider most tragedy to be ahistorical.\(^ {245}\)

On the opposite side of this trend toward ahistoricism is Podlecki who states that “[t]he moral of Sophoclean poetry... is that man is a political animal and must learn the restraints that this situation imposes upon him.”\(^ {246}\) Sophocles’ interests lie, not in historic

\(^{243}\) Griffin (1999) 76-77.

\(^{244}\) Also, Griffin’s interpretation insists that the audience only sees a play once. We know that the tragedies performed at the Great Dionysia were also performed in the smaller festivals in the demes. Some may even have been revived later in the century. It also seems impossible that an audience not be familiar enough with the tragic texts to recognize Aristophanes’ parodies of them. The *Frogs* would not have worked if the audience could not be counted on to recognize the particular trademarks of each author. Nor could Euripides’ *Electra* be understood without reference to *Choephoroi*. Some texts from plays were even used as school texts not long after they were produced (e.g. *Oresteia*). Under these circumstances, political lessons would not have been as easily ignored as Griffin suggests.

\(^{245}\) Seaford writes of the trend in scholarship to look for civic and political aspects in tragedy: “But to locate unanswerable interrogation [of the polis’ role in tragedy] and irresolvable ambiguity at the heart of an ahistorical ‘tragic consciousness’ as a final destination of analysis, is to place another barrier to its understanding...” R. Seaford “Something to Do with Dionysos-Tragedy and the Dionysiac: Response to Friedrich” in Silk (ed.) *Tragedy and the Tragic* (Oxford, 1996), 292. For the argument Seaford is arguing against, see R. Friedrich “Everything to Do with Dionysos? Ritualism, the Dionysiac, and the Tragic” 257-283 in the same volume.
events, but in the function of the polis and man’s role in it. Tragedies, as has been emphasized in previous scholarship, were neither created nor performed within an historic vacuum. Thus it seems highly improbable that a man as politically active as Sophocles, producing a play in a city of citizens as politically active as Athenians, would have been able to create a completely apolitical and ahistorical tragedy.

Imagine, then, being a citizen of a city such as Athens, your senses saturated on a daily basis by reminders of Athens’ military glory. And then imagine sitting down in the theater and watching the display of tribute, the parade of war orphans and the libation of the στρατηγοί with the burnt out Acropolis, construction on the new Parthenon having only recently begun, behind you. Then, Athena, your city’s founder and protectress, appears on the theologeion. And, while there may be nothing necessarily ominous or unusual in her first words, the fact that she is there should raise an eyebrow or two.

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247 Griffin (1999) writes of Romeo and Juliet and the nature of tragedy: “[w]e do not go to the theater to be taught that sort of elementary political truth. And, of course, the interest of the play lies not there but in the suffering and the poetry of the star-crossed lovers. To insist on a political interpretation can mean missing the real point of tragedy” (76-7). This statement assumes, firstly, that the author of a tragedy has no intent when writing his dramas. Second, Griffin assumes that good entertainment can have no real political value. Third, not all Greek tragedy contains a “tragic” lesson in the Aristotelian sense. Nor, fourth, does Griffin recognize that the only reason Romeo and Juliet are “star-crossed lovers” is because of the politics of the families. And, of course, Elizabethans are not Athenians. The political dynamic of 16th century England was not the same as that of fifth-century Athens.

248 Raafflaub (1990) writes, “it was not the purpose of tragedy to reenact myth for its own sake but to interpret through the medium of myth a contemporary problem for the benefit of the community and in the context of an important communal event... In a world that was increasingly politicized, tragedy necessarily assumed a political dimension and function as well” (49).

249 It is hotly debated both whether Athena actually appeared on the ground or on the theologeion. In one camp is Pickard-Cambridge, Stanford, Knox and Taplin. They argue that Athena entered the stage through the right parados and would have, at some point, shown herself to Odysseus. But, there is no evidence in the play to suggest that Odysseus ever saw Athena. We only know for certain that he heard her voice (ὠ φθέγμ᾽ Ἀθάνας... κἀν ἀπάστωσις ἡς ὁμως, φώνημ᾽ ἀκούω, 13-16 abv.). On the other side of the argument are Jebb, Kamerbeek and Calder who all agree that Athena would have appeared on the theologeion. Even
Griffin is right, however, to some extent when he throws up his hands in the face of conflicting readings of *Ajax*. For the political interpretations of Sophocles’ play have been all over the spectrum and neither entirely wrong nor mutually exclusive. Meier, who almost ignores Athena’s presence in *Ajax* writes that Ajax represents Athens in the play, Athens “which laid such importance on independence, treated its allies with such contempt and which, in its foreign policy, hardly lived up to the play’s message of cooperation.” On the opposite side of the scale is Butts who sees in *Ajax* an unmitigated praise of Athens. It is a “great patriotic drama.” Somewhere in between lies Rose’s assessment of *Ajax* which focuses on the “aristocratic, militaristic, paternalistic” ideology supposedly supported by the play. *Ajax* is not political insofar as it supports or undermines a particular partisan group over another. What Sophocles has created is a social commentary on the hierarchical class structure in Athens in the fifth century.

before reading Calder’s very well laid out argument for this view, I was of the same opinion. It makes the most sense if we are to believe first, that Odysseus heard but did not see Athena and second, that Tecmessa only heard Ajax speaking but not Athena (she heard Ajax addressing στιχὰ τινὶ (301)-some phantom ). The overall effectiveneness of Athena’s appearance is only enhanced by an entrance on the theologeion. Her appearance on the ground, following Odysseus through the orchestra is, to say the least, un-godlike though not out of keeping with this Athena. For the full debate, see W.M. Calder “The Entrance of Athena in *Ajax*” *CP* 60 (1965) 114-116; idem “Once More: The Entrance and Exit of Athena” *CF* 28 (1974) 59-61; R.C. Jebb (1907) 10; J.C. Kamerbeek *The Plays of Sophocles: Commentaries I: The Ajax* (Leiden, 1953) 19; A.W. Pickard-Cambridge *The Theatre of Dionysos in Athens* (Oxford, 1946) 48; Stanford (1963) 56; W.J. Ziobro “The Entrance and Exit of Athena in the *Ajax*” *CF* 26 (1972) 122-128.

250 Her first words are spoken to Odysseus: Ἀεὶ μὲν, ὦ παῖ Λαερίτου, δεδορκά σε πεῖραν τιν’ ἐχθρῶν ἁρπάσαι θηρών µενον· (Always I have looked upon you, o child of Laertes, seeking to seize upon some activity of your enemies. *Ajax* 1-2).

251 Meier (1993) 184. Meier’s arguments are based on the assumption that Ajax is a negatively portrayed character and not redeemed in the least by the activity of the play following his suicide.

252 Butts (1942) 59.

Also, it is a war commentary designed to create consensus among the people by focusing attention away from Athens and the inevitability of war with the “Spartan menace.”254

One can see in just this small sampling of “political” interpretations of Sophocles’ *Ajax* how varying opinions can be. But are we right, then, to throw up our hands and refuse to believe in the political nature of Greek tragedy at all, as Griffin would have us do? No, of course not. For, clearly, to espouse any one political interpretation does not mean that is only what a play is about. Rather we look for continuities between the different interpretations and for new avenues of understanding how the Athenians themselves may have viewed the works of the tragedians at the Dionysia. The existence of the pre-performance ceremonies discussed above is one clue to that understanding. For the Athenians were everyday bombarded with reminders both of their empire and political responsibilities. The Cimonian monuments, the directly participatory nature of their democracy, their education system and social structures all contributed to the “political” nature of Athenian citizens.

**Athena and Ajax**

The civic setting for the performance of tragedies would have contributed to shaping the way in which an Athenian audience interpreted the plays. The political nature of the pre-performance ceremonies and the nature of the Athenian relationship to their patron goddess would have also shaped any opinion the audience might have had concerning Athena’s appearance on stage. In Aeschylean tragedy, Athena is just, serene, persuasive and queenly. But that image of Athena is called into question by Sophocles’

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254 Rose (1995) 70.
portrayal of her in *Ajax*. This particular image of Athena is troubling. A clearer understanding of who exactly this Athena is and why we should be troubled by her appearance can be uncovered from a closer look at the language of the play and can be done by answering three questions: first, how is Athena characterized in *Ajax* as opposed to Aeschylean tragedy; second, what connection do Athena and Ajax have in previous literary traditions, epic and tragic; and third, what relationship, if any, do Athena and Ajax have apart from these traditions.

How, then, is Athena characterized in *Ajax*? As mentioned above, some scholars have called her cruel. Others have explained away this cruelty with reference to the axiom “help friends, harm enemies.” Whitman calls her “neutral.” Papadopoulou, “ambiguous.” Athena is “Homeric,” the embodiment of divine law, just and unjust. Butts even goes so far as to call Athena, “queenly, compassionate, restrained, intelligent—a veritable epitome of Athenian virtue.” A wide variety of interpretations to say the least. But perhaps the answer is to be found not so much in how Athena is portrayed, but rather in how she is not. For no matter how “just” scholars claim her to be, she is not in any way reminiscent of Aeschylus’ Athena.

The Athena of Aeschylus, as discussed in the previous chapter, is the representative *par excellence* of the city of Athens and the embodiment of Justice. She favors litigation and persuasion over blood-feud and revenge. She is the arbitrator of the gods themselves. But this is not how she is portrayed in Sophocles’ *Ajax*. If she is a

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255 Butts (1942) 85. No other scholar has dared to apply these terms to Athena in *Ajax*. They are just not correct.
ponent of “harm enemies” as Knox and Blundell suppose, then she rejects the role of conciliator assigned her in Aeschylus. If she is an ally of Ajax, as I propose her to be, then her behavior toward Ajax is unconscionable. She mocks, taunts and maddens Ajax. This is not the Athena of Aeschylus. It is not even the Athena of Homer. For in the *Iliad*, she prevents madness and unnecessary violence, not encourages it.²⁵⁷ In *Odyssey*, she helps Odysseus avenge himself on the suitors, but only as it was warranted. And, as the end of *Odyssey* testifies, even that revenge necessitated some sort of legal reconciliation.²⁵⁸

Athena is, it seems, often linked to justice and moderating behavior. She is also, in Aeschylus, the *Odyssey* and Sophocles’ *Ajax Locrus*, linked to legal proceedings. Athena of *Ajax* is radically different. But this difference is not motivated purely by plot. For, as will be shown, Athena’s imposition of madness upon Ajax is not part of the traditional myth. Sophocles had the choice of adding Athena to the story. He also had the choice as to how he would portray her. And we know that his decision to characterize Athena as contrasting with Aeschylus’ Athena was intentional because we have the other representation of Athena on stage, *Ajax Locrus*, in which he presents an Athena who defers her wrath in lieu of the courts. That Sophocles decided not to do the same in *Ajax* should raise questions.

²⁵⁶ In the Prometheus trilogy she seems to have been the conciliator between Zeus and Prometheus. This role would be in keeping with her other appearances in Aeschylean tragedy. It also undermines an interpretation of *Prometheus Bound* as being an anti-imperial tract. Although it may reflect a contrast such as I suggest for *Ajax* between the ideal of empire (Athena) and the reality (Zeus).

²⁵⁷ *Iliad* 1.194ff, 15.121ff.
The story of Ajax and his madness has a long tradition stretching back to Homer and the Epic cycle. Sophocles, however, has made alterations to this tradition. I suggested above that we should be wary of Sophocles’ portrayal of Athena in part because she seems to have been added to the story and is, in fact, quite unnecessary to the unraveling of the plot. Understanding that Sophocles had a choice as to whether he would stage Athena is the first step in understanding why he would stage her and the importance of the portrayal. A brief look at the myth of Ajax’ madness prior to Sophocles’ production will make this “choice” evident.

The earliest known reference to the Award of Achilles’ armor comes at Odyssey 11.541-51:

αἱ δ’ ἄλλαι ψυχαὶ νεκύων κατατεθνηῶτων ἐστασαν ἀχνύμεναι, εἴροντο δὲ κήδε’ ἐκάστη.
οἷὴ δ’ Αἰάντος ψυχὴ Τελαμωνιάδαο νόσφιν ἀφετήκηε, κεχολωμένη εἶνεκα νίκης,
tὴν μὴν ἐγὼ νίκησα δικαζόμενος παρὰ νησί
tεύχεσιν ἀμφ’ Ἀχιλῆος· ἔθηκε δὲ πότνω μήτηρ.
pαῖδες δὲ Τρώων δίκασαν καὶ Παλλὰς Αθήνη.
δὴ γὰρ κεφαλὴν ἑνεκ’ αὐτῶν γαῖα κατέσχεν,
Αἴανθ’, ὃς πέρι ἔργα τέτυκτο τῶν ἄλλων Δαναῶν μετ’ ἀμύμονα Πηλείδων.

The other souls of the dead stood grieving and each spoke about its sorrows. But the soul of Ajax son of Telamon alone stood aloof, angered on account of the victory I was awarded over him beside the ships concerning the arms of Achilles which his queenly mother established as a prize. The children of the Trojans and Pallas Athena were the judges. Thus indeed there was nothing gained by winning this prize. For on account of the arms, the earth buried this head, Ajax, who both in his form and deeds surpassed the other Danaans except noble Achilles.

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Odyssey 24 is often read as an attempt to reintegrate the hero into peaceful society. Despite the uncivilized behavior of the suitors, even the great Odysseus must seek a legal solution and give recompense to the families whose sons he killed.
According to Odysseus, the “sons of the Trojans and Pallas Athena” decided that the armor should go to him and not Ajax even though Ajax was the second greatest warrior at Troy after Achilles himself. However, it is not Athena who is attributed with bringing about Ajax’ death:

οὐδὲ τις ἄλλος αἴτιος, ἀλλὰ Ζεὺς Δαναῶν στρατὸν αἰχμητάων ἐκπάγλως ἔχθαιρε, τείδν δ’ ἐπὶ μοῖραν ἔθηκεν.

Nor was any other at fault concerning his fate except Zeus who hated terribly the army of the warlike Danaans (559-561).

Zeus, father of gods and men, destroyed Ajax. And he did not do it out of personal spite against Ajax, nor through any fault of Ajax’s. It was because Zeus hated the Danaans as a group. There is no mention of madness or of a quarrel with the Atreidæ.

Our next reference comes in the Little Iliad. Ajax and Odysseus are quarreling over the armor of Achilles. So, on the advice of Nestor, the Greeks eavesdrop on two Trojan women arguing over whether Ajax or Odysseus is the greater warrior. The first girl chooses Ajax: Αἴας μὲν γὰρ ἀείρε καὶ ἔκφερε δηιοτῆτος ἥρω Πηλείδην οὐδ᾿ ἠθελε δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς (For Ajax picked up and carried the hero Achilles out of battle while godlike Odysseus was unwilling to do so). But the second girl wins the argument for Odysseus “by the forethought of Athena”:

τὴν δ’ ἐτέραν ἀντειπεῖν Αθηνᾶς προνοίας πῶς ἐπεφωνήσω; πῶς οὐ κατὰ κόσμον ἔειπες ψεῦδος; . . καὶ κε γυνὴ φέροι ἄχθος ἐπεὶ κεν ἀνήρ ἀναθείη, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἃν μαχέσαιτο’ εχέσειτο γὰρ εἰ μαχέσαιτο.

But the other girl spoke to the contrary at the urging of Athena: How will I address this? How can you speak such lies? Even a woman could bear a burden

259 All text for the Little Iliad and Sack of Ilium comes from the Loeb Classical Library edition.
such as this man was ascribed with bearing. But she could not fight. For she would weaken if she fought.

And Agamemnon, angered at Ajax for an undisclosed reason, refuses him cremation after his suicide (ο την μικραν Ιλιάδα γράψας ιστορει μηδε καυθηναι συνήθως τὸν Αἴαντα, τεθηναι δε ουτως ἐν σορωι δια την όργην του βασιλέως: the writer of the Little Iliad writes that Ajax was not cremated as is customary, but was placed in a coffin on account of the anger of the king). There is no mention that Ajax intended to kill the Greek leaders. Nor any mention of the slaughter of the herds.

There are a few shorter mentions quoted for some grammatical oddity. First, in the Sack of Ilium, Podalerius is said to be the first to notice “Ajax’s flashing eyes and clouded mind when he was enraged” (ὅς ὁ δε Αἴαντος πρῶτος μάθε χωμένοιο ὄμματά τ´ ἀντράσπττοντα βαρυνόμενον τε νόημα). In the Aethiopis it is written that Ajax killed himself at dawn (ὁ γὰρ την Αιθιοπίδα γράφων περὶ τὸν ὀρθὸν φησὶ τὸν αἰαντα ἑαυτὸν ἀνελεῖν). The composite story of Ajax, then, as it came down to the Athenians in the epic tradition tells us only the following: 1. Odysseus was awarded the arms of Achilles over Ajax; 2. This award was either done by Athena and Trojan captives or by two Trojan women under Athena’s influence; 3. Ajax was enraged and his mind clouded; 4. He killed himself at dawn; and 5. Agamemnon refused him cremation. There is a big gap between the story as presented in epic and Sophocles’ version.

This gap can be partially filled in by Pindar. He makes much mention of the Ajax story in his odes. At Nemean 7.20-30 (dated to the 480’s or 460’s BC) he writes that the Greeks unfairly awarded the arms to Odysseus:
Skillful men know the wind that will come on the day after tomorrow, and they do not suffer loss through the love of gain. The rich man and the poor man alike travel together to the boundary of death. [20] And I expect that the story of Odysseus came to exceed his experiences, through the sweet songs of Homer, since there is a certain solemnity in his lies and winged artfulness, and poetic skill deceives, seducing us with stories, and the heart of the mass of men is blind. [25] For if they had been able to see the truth, then mighty Ajax, in anger over the arms, would never have planted in his chest the smooth sword—Ajax, who was the most powerful in battle, except for Achilles, and whom the breath of the unswerving Zephyr conveyed in swift ships, to bring back the wife of golden-haired Menelaus [ant. 2] from the city of Ilus.²⁶⁰

Again, at Isthmean 4.35-9 (478 BC), he writes that Ajax’ suicide brought blame upon all the Greeks: ἰστε μὰν Αἴαντος ἀλκὰν φοίνιον, τὰν ὅφιαι ἐν νυκτὶ ταῦταν περὶ ὦν φασγάνωι, μομφάν ἔχει παίδεσσιν Ἑλλάνων ὅσοι Τρώιαν ἐβαν (Indeed, you know of the bloodstained might of Ajax, which late at night he pierced by falling on his own

²⁶⁰ All translations and text for Pindar are taken from the Loeb Classical Library Series.
Envy devoured the son of Telamon, throwing him onto his own sword. A man who was not gifted in speech, but brave in his heart, is held down by oblivion under deadly strife; and the greatest prize of honor has been offered to the shifty lie. For in a secret vote the Danaans favored Odysseus; and Ajax, robbed of the golden armor, wrestled with death.

Human envy led the Greeks to cast “secret votes” that cheated Ajax out of his rightful prize.

Pindar’s version of events, then, seems to be the most influential of the previous versions and it appears from Aj. 1135 that Sophocles is definitely following Pindar’s, not the Epic, version of the vote.  But Pindar makes no mention of Athena and her possible role in the vote. Sophocles has (re)inserted her into the story. In the Homeric passages Athena appears to be present solely because of her relationship to Odysseus, not because of any personal enmity toward Ajax. In fact, Homer’s version charges Zeus with responsibility for Ajax’s death. On the topic of Ajax’s madness, Pindar’s version is not

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261 Aeschylus wrote a trilogy on Ajax’ suicide but only fragments remain. None of these shows similarity to Sophocles’ version though their fragmentary nature makes any conclusions difficult to draw. Also, it is uncertain how widely read Pindar’s odes would have been. They made have only been heard once in public performance or circulated afterward among more the literate, aristocratic circles. He had an elite audience and clientele. It is possible that the average Athenian might not know his version of the story. However, an Attic red-figure c. 480 BC portraying the Award of the Arms shows Athena standing watch as the Greeks cast their votes. Odysseus wins.
ambiguous either. Ajax is angry (ὀπλων χολωθεὶς) and envious, not mad. As Holt points out, the story of Ajax’s delusion is assumed to come from the Little Iliad. But even this is uncertain.

Athena’s relationship to Ajax outside of Athenian myth, then, is really quite incidental. There is no evidence of a boast before leaving Salamis. No evidence of a battlefield slight. The audience is given no clear reason for the appearance of Athena except her traditional role as Odysseus’ patron. But even this can not explain her behavior toward Ajax since she claims, and Ajax believes, that she and he are allies also. That no animosity between Athena and Ajax existed is also emphasized within the Ajax itself by both the chorus and Atreidae. For the chorus, in pondering who might have driven Ajax mad, never consider Athena a possibility. They guess either Ares or Artemis (172-181). Menelaus himself is also unaware of Athena’s role (even after Calchas has announced it). He only states that “some god” diverted Ajax. (κεὶ µὴ θεῶν

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262 φθονεροῖσιν is the word to which κεῖνος refers in Nemean 8.21.

263 Only assumed, not known for certain. Holt (1980) writes of Ajax’s madness: “Sophokles cannot have taken his complex story of Ajax’s night foray, blindness, and recovery from any source known except the Little Iliad, and it cannot be certain that he took it from there. Indeed, he takes great care in explaining the story to his audience in the prologue and the first episode. That care may have been necessary in presenting an original version of the story, or at any rate an unfamiliar one” (27).

264 Also, as J. Tyler (1974; 28-29), I.M. Linforth (1954; 3) and M. Kirkwood (1958; 275) all conclude, even that reason is undermined. Athena apparently shows no special interest in Odysseus and is punishing Ajax for the sake of his own crimes (though each of the above scholars differs in opinion concerning what that actual crime is, be it hubris, the attempted murders or the battlefield insult). I think that the audience would not forget the traditional relationship between Odysseus and Athena. It is not, perhaps, central to the story, but it certainly can not be disregarded.

265 Only Calchas, who has the gift of prophecy, knows Athena’s role in Ajax’s destruction. No one without such a gift even suspects.
τις τήνδε πείραν ἔσβεσεν—if someone of the gods hadn’t quelled this attempt, 1057; νῦν δ’ ἐνήλλαξεν θεός τήν τοῦδ’ ὑβρίν μῆλα—now a god diverted his hubristic deed toward the sheep, 1060-1061).

Let us now turn to the actual text of Sophocles’ Ajax and Athena’s appearance there. As the play opens, Athena calls out to Odysseus:

Ἀεὶ µέν, ὦ παῖ Λαρτίου, δέδορκα σε πείραν τιν’ ἐχθρῶν ἀρπάσαι θηρώµενον: καὶ νῦν ἐπὶ σκηναῖς σε ναυτικαῖς οὕτω Αἰαντος.

Always, child of Laertes, I have watched you hunting trying to seize upon something of your enemies. And now I see you before the naval tents of Ajax (1-4).

Immediately we know that Ajax and Odysseus are presented as enemies, for Odysseus is always hunting enemies (ἐχθροῖ) and here he is hunting (θηρώµενος) outside Ajax’s tent. The audience would have remembered, of course, Odyssey 11.541-565 and Ajax’s anger, unforgiving even in death. They would have remembered the awarding of the arms in the form presented by Homer and the epic tradition.

We are also reminded in Odysseus’ first lines of his relationship with Athena: ὥ φθέγµ’ Αθάνας, φιλτάτης ἐµοὶ θεῶν (O voice of Athena, dearest of gods to me; 14). And it is reiterated and further strengthened by the last lines of his opening speech:

καιρὸν δ’ ἐφήκεις: πάντα γὰρ τὰ τ’ οὖν πάρος τὰ τ’ εἰσεπείτα σὴ κυβερνῶµαι χερί (You have come at the right time: for in all things in the future and earlier I am steered by your hand; 34-35). To this Athena responds: ἔγνων, Ὀδυσσεῦ, καὶ πάλαι φύλαξ ἐβην
I knew, Odysseus, and so I came awhile back onto the road as a guard eager for your hunt; 36-37). Thus the traditional relationship between Athena and Odysseus is accentuated by Sophocles in his opening scene.

Also, the animosity between Ajax and Odysseus resulting from the awarding of Achilles’ arms is evident. This is made abundantly clear by the exchange between Odysseus and Athena at 77-79:

Ath: What might happen? Was he not a man before?
Od: At any rate I was an enemy to the man and am still now.
Ath: Is it not the sweetest laugh to laugh at one’s enemies?

What we have on stage, then, at the beginning of the play are Athena and Odysseus in their traditional roles as allies. But the enemy against whom they have united is Ajax, a fellow Greek, not known from the epic tradition to have been a Greek particularly hateful to Athena.266

Also, Athena appears to be adhering to the maxim of “help friends/harm enemies.” This is argued for by both Knox and Blundell based on her words at 79:

οὐκ οὖσ ταλαγὰς ήδη οὖσε εἰς ἐκθροὺς γελᾶν; (Is it not the sweetest laugh to laugh at one’s enemies?). However, immediately following this line, Athena calls out to Ajax, asking him to come out of his tent. It is this summons that throws doubt on the “harm enemies” theory. For Athena calls out to Ajax at line 90: ὦ οὗτος, Αἴας, δεύτερόν σε προσκαλῶ.

266 In fact, Tyler (1974) goes so far as to suggest that the enmity between Ajax and Odysseus and the Atreidae has neither real bearing on the plot of Ajax nor is it a motivating factor in Athena’s punishment.
τι βαιόν οὕτως ἐντρέπῃ τῆς συμμάχου; (Ajax, I’m calling you out again. Is this how little you respect your ally?) The key word here is ally, σύμμαχος. Why would Athena call herself Ajax’s ally? And why would Ajax respond to her as he does if he does not believe she and he are allies?

When Ajax first appears on stage, he greets Athena most graciously:

ὠ χαῖρ᾽ Ἀθάνα, χαῖρε Διογενὲς τέκνον, ὡς εὐ παρέστης· καὶ σε παγχρύσιοις ἐγὼ στέψω λαφύροις τήδε τῆς ἀγρας χάριν.

Welcome Athena, daughter of Zeus, welcome. How well you have stood by me. I will crown you with trophies all of gold from the spoils of this hunting trip in thanks.

Note the παρέστης. Fraenkel explains this by suggesting that Athena stood by Ajax and “helped” him as he slaughtered the cattle. She was there, but not really “helping”.

Unless one means by help driving him even more insane:

ἐγὼ δὲ φοιντῶντ’ ἀνδρα μανιάσιν νόσοις ὠτρυνον, εἰσέβαλλον εἰς ἕρκη κακά.

I urged the man on in his ravages with frenzied sickness and cast him into evil hunting-nets (59-60).

Athena, then, may have stood beside him at one point as an ally and they are σύμμαχοι, but exactly what that means is unclear. Some scholars have suggested that the σύμμαχος

They “are necessary to the story only because Ajax’ desire to kill them provided Athena with the opportunity to frustrate him. They have no other necessary function” (32).

267Athena’s taunting questions suggest that either she or the audience were not aware of the the details of the night’s events. She asks Ajax first whether he had sufficiently blooded his sword (ἀλλ’ ἐκεῖνο μοι φράσων, ἐβαψας ἔγχος εὖ πρὸς Ἀργείων στρατῶι, 94-95). Then she asks what he has done with both the Atreidae and Odysseus (ἤ καὶ πρὸς Ατρείδαισιν ἠχμασσας χέρα; 97 and τί γὰρ δὴ παῖς ὁ τοῦ Λαερτίδου; ποῦ σοι τύχης ἐστηκε; ἢ πέφευγε σε; 101-102). If the version of the myth presented by Sophocles was new, this exchange could be to tell the audience exactly what happened as well as to show them something of Athena’s character.
is “ironic” based on the explanation of Ajax’s “guilt” at 774-775.\textsuperscript{268} Indeed, it may be ironic though not for the reason they state. There is a more immediate explanation for σύμμαχος, perhaps obvious to an Athenian audience. Athena and Ajax really are/were allies—at least as far as Athenian myth was concerned.

It was demonstrated above that in the epic tradition, Athena and Ajax had no special relationship either as enemies or allies. But in the Athenian mythic tradition, Athena and Ajax are allies. This can be made clear by looking at some vase paintings from the early sixth to mid-fifth centuries. The first of these is on a Chalcidian amphora from c. 540 BC, (Fig. 5). In it Ajax defends the body of Achilles while Athena stands behind him wearing her Aegis. The second is an Attic red-figure vase c. 490 BC (Fig. 6). Here, Ajax is urged on by Athena while he attacks Hector. The most interesting thing about these paintings is that, while they portray scenes from the \textit{Iliad}, they do so with an added element—Athena stands beside Ajax. Athena is not present in these scenes in Homer’s epics.\textsuperscript{269} Somewhere between Homer and the mid-6\textsuperscript{th} century, Athena became Ajax’ protector.

Of interest also is the fact that the first vase is not Attic. It was not produced by Athenians, but Chalcidians. This can mean different things. Athena may represent the “spirit” of the Homeric patron. She fought for the Greeks against the Trojans and thus appears as the representative of all divine support on the Greek side. Thus the idea of Ajax and Athena being allies is of more general, not specifically Athenian sort. Or, the association of Ajax with Athens has already become commonplace by the mid-sixth

\textsuperscript{268} See above.
century. That this could be a possibility is also demonstrated by a comparative look at two other vases. The first is a famous vase by the Exekias painter from the mid-sixth century. It depicts Achilles and Ajax at a gaming table (Fig. 7). Compare this with an Attic black-figure from c. 510 BC (Fig. 8). Ajax and Achilles are also at a gaming table, but Athena in this version is shown in the background warning of an attack. Somewhere between the middle and the end of the sixth century Athena entered this commonly depicted scene.

One reason for this insertion could be that the end of the sixth century signaled Ajax’s debut as one of the Athenian eponymoi. The reforms of Cleisthenes c. 508/7 BC introduced Ajax to his new role, his worship set up in the Eurysakleion which was originally dedicated to his son.270 And, near the end of the sixth century, his hero-cult was most likely introduced by Peisistratus. The arrival of Ajax at Athens coincides with the conflict over Salamis with Megara in the middle of the century and also with the earliest representations of Athena and Ajax fighting side by side.

The clearest evidence, however, for the insertion of Athena into stories about Ajax and the Trojan War is an Attic red-figure vase c. 440 (Fig. 9). Here, Ajax and Menestheus are escorted to Troy by Athena. Since when did Athena escort Ajax off to Troy? Since when was he pictured as a companion to Theseus’ son?271 This appearance

269 See Chapter 1 above for Athena as “spirit of Athens” at Troy.

270 Eurysakes was said by the Athenians to have handed over rule of Salamis to Athens. The addition of Ajax to the pantheon of eponymoi seems to be an attempt to reach back beyond Eurysakes and set up a Trojan War source for control of Salamis. This is a similar phenomenon as the mention in Eumenides to Athena receiving land in the Troad for the deed of the sons of Theseus in the war.

271 Nor is this mentioned in Eumenides when Athena goes to claim her share of land. There is also supposedly a myth in which Ajax is Theseus’ bastard son but I have not been able to find it.
seems to be more than the artistic convention of inserting a daimonic spirit even when it does not appear in the literary tradition. Even more interesting, however, is what is painted on the opposite side of the bowl (Fig. 10). There, Erechtheus is being presented to Athena (identifiable by her aegis and spear) by a daughter of Erichthonius while Erichthonus and Hephaestus watch. Thus, by the middle of the fifth century, our proposed time of production for Ajax, not only have Ajax and Athena become bound up together in Athenian myths of the Trojan War, but Ajax has come to be linked with myths of Athenian identity. He has entered the ranks of Athens’ autochthonous ancestors, Erechtheus and Erichthonius.

The point of this excursus has been to demonstrate that between the mid-sixth century and mid-fifth century, Ajax, like Theseus and Erechtheus, had become identifiable as an Attic hero. He had also became identified as a companion and protected favorite of Athena, much as Odysseus was portrayed in the epic tradition. Thus, the term σύμμαχος is entirely appropriate when used between Ajax and Athena because they were, in the Athenian tradition, allies. The use of σύμμαχος also puts us squarely in the realm of fifth-century Athens. The term is not applied to the relationship between Athena and Odysseus. For the word is not used at all by Homer or the other epic writers. Thus a non-Homeric word is inserted to define a non-Homeric relationship. Therefore, we should not presume ourselves, despite the “Homeric” roots of the story, to be in a Homeric situation.272

272 Often scholars assume that because all of the characters are Homeric the situation must also be Homeric. Athenian tragedy, however, is certainly not a simple retelling of old Greek myths. Tragedy is the
Perhaps this is too much emphasis on a single word. Answering two questions will tell us why it is not. First, what makes σύμμαχος so important in the dialogue? And second in what ways does the use of σύμμαχος move us beyond the Homeric tradition? On the first point, the term σύμμαχος frames the entire exchange between Ajax and Athena. It is the last word spoken by Athena before Ajax appears in the play for the first time and it is the second to last word he says before exiting the scene. If we are not supposed to recognize it, why make it so prominent?

To the second question, any Athenian sitting in that audience would make the immediate association between σύμμαχος and the allies seated nearby whose tribute had just been so prominently displayed in the orchestra. For σύμμαχος is a technical term that applied, during the fifth century, almost exclusively to the members of the Delian League/Athenian Empire. And Athena was the patron and symbol for that League. She was the patron and symbol for that Empire. Ajax and Athena are yoked together by the word. They are σύμμαχοι. But who is σύμμαχος to whom? For the σύμμαχος relationship was between Athens and non-Athenians. Athena and Ajax are both associated with Athens.

If Athena is Athens on stage, as I have argued both in the introduction and the previous chapter, what does that make Ajax? The relationship between Athena and Ajax can only be understood if we understand both the relationship of Athena to Athens and also that of Ajax to Athens. Athena’s we understand, but what of Ajax’s? As was assimilation of ancient myths to contemporary society. Tragedy focuses the audience on the present through the medium of the past.
mentioned above, Ajax was made an eponymous hero in the sixth century under the reforms of Cleisthenes. As such his statue was set up beside the Heliaia in the agora along with the other *eponymoi*. There was a hero-cult of Ajax with its priest coming from the tribe Aiantis. The concept of Ajax’ hero-cult looms so large in the scholarship that many believe Sophocles’ play to be about its foundation. Also, Ajax was summoned, along with the Aecidiae to aid the Athenians at the battle of Salamis. After the Athenian victory, a captured trireme was dedicated to him in thanks. Ajax, then, was an Athenian hero. Sophocles’ text repeatedly emphasizes that Ajax is not only a Salaminian, but an Athenian.

It would not have been difficult for a member of the audience to conceive of Ajax as an Athenian hero. In fact, there were concerted efforts on the part of Athenians during the sixth and fifth centuries to assimilate Ajax to Athens.\(^{273}\) Salamis itself was, in the fifth century, considered a part of Athens and held status as an "unofficial" demos.\(^{274}\) There were definitely Athenian citizens residing on Athens by 508/7 BC when Cleisthenes reformed the demes of Attica\(^{275}\) and there was, in Attica itself, a *genos* *Salaminioi* that held a hereditary priesthood for Eurysakes, Ajax's son. The naming of the *genos* *Salaminioi* itself may have had nothing to do with its members having ever resided on Salamis, but rather was an artificial construction which "came into being to

\(^{273}\) Throughout much of the sixth century, Athens and Megara fought over possession of Salamis. How and when that dispute was finally settled is a hotly debated issue. See Taylor (1997) 21-47 for a full discussion. However the dispute ended, by 508/7 BC at the latest there were Athenian citizens residing there.

\(^{274}\) This term is applied to Salamis by M. Taylor in the title of her book *Salamis and the Salaminioi: The History of an Unofficial Athenian Demos*. For her arguments for the validity of this title see especially 105-195.
promote and justify the claim of Athens to possession. . . of Salamis."\textsuperscript{276} Such a naming would have fit in with the tale in Plutarch concerning the insertion on Athens beside Salamis in the Catalogue of Ships in \textit{Iliad}.\textsuperscript{277} And this would have been in keeping with the process noted above of insinuating Athens more firmly into the heroic past by assimilating Ajax. The Athenians made every effort to demonstrate that Salamis and its heroes were, from ancient times, part of Athens.

This same dynamic applies within the play. Although Ajax is first addressed as the holder of sea-girt Salamis (134), it is made abundantly clear that Tecmessa and the Salaminian sailors who make up the chorus identify Salamis with Athens. At 201, Tecmessa addresses the chorus as γενεὰς χθονίων ἀπ᾿ Ἐρεχθειδᾶν (from the chthonic lineage of Erechtheus; 201). Also, Ajax himself, in his final speech says, at 859-861:

\begin{quote}
ὦ φέγγος, ὦ γῆς ἱερὸν οἰκείας πέδον
Σαλαμίνος, ὦ πατρῴων ἐστίας βάθρουν,
κλειναὶ τ᾿ Ἀθῆναι, καὶ τὸ σύντροφον γένος. . .
\end{quote}

O light, oh sacred field of my homeland
Salamis, oh threshold of my father's hearth,
and famous Athens, and the commonly nourished race.

And, once again, as the chorus bemoans its fate and wonders if it will ever see home, it refers to that home as “sacred Athens” (τὰς ἱερὰς ...Ἀθάνας; 1220-1222). Ajax is an Athenian as are the chorus members. The audience, which included large numbers of

\textsuperscript{275} This is made evident by IG I\textsuperscript{3} 1 where provisions are made for the organization of a \textit{demos} of Athenian citizens residing on the island.

\textsuperscript{276} W.S. Ferguson "The Salaminioi of Heptaphylai and Sounion" \textit{Hesperia} 7 (1938) 42. Although subsequent scholars tried to see a connection between the \textit{genos} and the island, it seems improbable. Taylor (1997) argues for a return to Ferguson's view on the name \textit{Salaminioi} (60-61).

\textsuperscript{277} Plutarch, \textit{Solon} 10; Aristotle, \textit{Rhetoric} 1375b30; Strabo 9.1.10.
both Athenian aristocrats and sailors, would have had no difficulty identifying with either
the chorus or Ajax. Thus the association in Athenian myth of Ajax with Athens is
present in Sophocles’ play.

The repeated references to the relationship between Ajax and Athens should cause
some concern in scholars. While the relationship has been discussed by Meier and
others, no direct correlation has been made between Ajax’s Athenian ancestry and
Athena's appearance. But this ancestry causes very real problems for the Athena/Ajax
dynamic. For, in addition to the reference to Erechtheus, Ajax also refers to "Zeus,
father of my ancestors" (ὦ Ζεῦ, πατέρας πρόγόνων; 387). I am not sure how the line of
descent works here. But, consider that Zeus is the father of Athena, as we are reminded
at lines 450 and 953-954, and Athena is the surrogate mother of Erichthonius who is the
grandfather of Erechtheus. If Ajax is descended from Erechtheus (as were all Athenians)
and from Zeus, as Sophocles’ text suggests, he must be related to Athena. This causes
some problems.

There are no extant myths which specifically relate Ajax to the autochthons, but,
if we recall the vase painting depicting Ajax and Menestheus on the one side and the birth
of Erechtheus on the other (Fig. 9), it appears that the Athenians themselves attempted to
link the two lines somehow. The attempts by Athens in the late sixth and early fifth
centuries to blur the lines between Salaminian and Athenian also suggest that the
Athenians were trying to usurp Ajax as purely Athenian hero. The fact that Sophocles
makes a point of emphasizing (or creating) this familial connection gives it significance
and must color our understanding of how Athena's appearance shapes the rest of the
Athena appears on stage, taunts the already maddened Ajax and then, gradually, the audience is reminded that Ajax and Athena are bound together through their relationship to Athens. By the time Ajax commits suicide, the audience sees that it was his own patron, his own ancestor, who pushed Ajax towards suicide.

This revelation, that Ajax and the chorus are identified within the play as Athenians, may cause a few problems for my hypothesis that we are to perceive of Athena as the symbol of Athens. The view one takes on this depends on how one defines “Athenian” or, more to the point, which "Athens" one is talking about. For there are two Athens’ always under discussion. There is the Athens the city and its representatives present to others and the Athens others perceive. Both Athens’, I suggest, are represented in this play and it is precisely the conflict between these two different identities that drives the play and Athena’s appearance in it.

As mentioned above, Ajax is connected by Sophocles, not only to Salamis, but to Athens itself. He is an eponymous ancestor, related to their autochthonous ancestor Erechtheus. The audience is also reminded, at line 645 that Ajax has become, in Athenian genealogy, a descendant of Aeacus (Ἀἰακίδης).

Step by step, Sophocles

278 This point will be made more clearly below.

279 I say this because it is Athena who drives Ajax mad and it is his mistaken slaughter of the cattle that leads to the suicide, not his attempt of the other Greeks. Shame at having erroneously killed sheep instead of men is Ajax’s motivation (see lines 356-382 especially). Had he succeeded, Ajax would not have felt so dishonored.

280 This could be an attempt on the part of Athens to justify its dominion over Aegina where Aeacus was king.
leads his audience to relate this Ajax with the Ajax who helped the Athenians at Salamis. The fact that the chorus members are called sailors of Salamis makes it more necessary to associate Ajax (and the chorus) with the victory at Salamis.281

But this is not the only association that is forged for Ajax in the play. It has been said by numerous scholars that the crisis of Ajax is that he adheres to a heroic code that no longer applies.282 Ajax is called δυστράπελος (inflexible; unadaptable) at 913. And, indeed, he seems unwilling to sacrifice even the smallest shred of his dignity for a chance at living. Honor comes before all else. But this inflexibility connects him to a code other than the Homeric code. It connects him also to the honor code of the Athenian generation immediately preceding Sophocles' audience. The Athenians were willing, as Themistocles' strategy at Salamis makes clear, to sacrifice their city to the Persians on the chance of defeating them at sea. The Athenians at both Marathon and Salamis were willing to do what no other Greek city had been willing to do—take on the Persian juggernaut on their own.283 These two Athenian victories were the foundation for the Empire that grew out of the Delian League during the fifth century.

It is important to associate Ajax with these victories in Ajax. And it is necessary that we recognize the lengths to which Sophocles goes to point out Ajax’ Athenian heritage because we must recognize Ajax for what he is: a remnant. He is the

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281 Tecmessa addresses the chorus as ναὸς ἄρωγοι τῆς Αἴαντος (201) while Ajax himself addresses them as his φίλοι ναυβάται (349).


283 I mention Marathon because it is part of the Athenian myth of her own greatness. Also, because I would argue that Ajax represented to many Greeks the ideal hoplitic warrior. Pindar's praise of him at Odysseus' expense smacks of aristocratic coloring and Marathon was a hoplite/aristocratic victory.
representative of an Athens whose moral code and attitude toward power and honor is
outdated and old-fashioned. He is the uncompromising hero in an era of debate and
compromise. He is a proud man adhering to a strict, some might say too strict, code of
shame and honor. He is an Athenian no longer suited to the Athens of the 440’s. He is
the Athens the Athenians point to in order to justify their power, but he is an Athens a
part of which they can no longer claim, truthfully, to be. And this is precisely why
Sophocles has put Athena on stage in Ajax.

I suggested above that there are two different Athens’ being staged by Sophocles
in Ajax. Ajax is the heroic past and Athena is the arche. The arche is presented as
destroying its own heroic past. The empire has undermined its own claim on that empire.
Athens has come to a crossroads in its history. It must decide how it wants to continue
on. Does it want to be the “saviors of Greece” or its enslavers? Sophocles wants his
audience to be aware of this dilemma, to understand and question the necessities involved
in becoming an imperial power. They must understand what it means to rule over other
Greeks the way the Persians once did. Sophocles wants his audience to see what it has
come to mean to be an “ally” of Athens.

We have established that in Athenian mythology, at least, Athena and Ajax were
allies. Thus the use of σύμμαχος to frame their dialogue is justifiable and appropriate.
There is irony in the term, however. But it is not the irony that Knox and others have
suggested. Concerning σύμμαχος, Knox writes, “[t]he word in Athenian official
parlance suggests inferiority.” I would argue that this is not true. It denoted from the
time of the Delian League on, a specific legal relationship to Athens. In the beginning,
this relationship was one of equals. Athens was, perhaps, first among equals, but the partners were not subject to each other. They supposedly voted on military actions as well as the allotment of funds. They did not simply do whatever the Athenians commanded they do. If the meaning behind σύμμαχος came to mean less than an equal in fact because of restrictions placed on those who bore the title, it was not because the word itself denoted inferiority.\footnote{Also, Thucydides himself, from whom Knox supposedly derives his definition, does not necessarily use the term to mean an inferior. When he speaks of the allies he considers them two groups, the σύμμαχοι (allies) and the υπήκοοι (subject-allies). The former may denote those who physically fight alongside of the Athenians while the latter may refer to those who send ships and tribute instead.}

In terms of the perceived irony of σύμμαχος Knox and Meier point out Ajax’s final words to Athena:

\begin{quote}
χωρῶ πρὸς ἔργον· τούτο σοὶ δὲ ἐφίεμαι,
τοιάνδ᾿ ἀεὶ μοι σύμμαχον παρεστάναι.
\end{quote}

I’m off to work. But I command this to you, always stand beside me as such an ally (116-117).

Of these words, Knox writes:

He [Ajax] gives her orders, ἐφίεμαι (112), a strong word which he repeats a few lines later (116), he roughly and insultingly refuses her request for mercy for Odysseus, and, when she tells him to do what he sees fit, he condescendingly orders her to be just that kind of ally to him always, that is, a subservient one.\footnote{Knox (1961) 38.}

ἐφίεμαι is certainly a strong word and it does appear that Ajax is ordering Athena around. But if Ajax is who I claim him to be, then he has the right and no Athenian would deny it. He is the bulwark of Athens just as Athens is the bulwark of Greece.

Knox has been driven in his interpretation, however, not just by ἐφίεμαι, but also by
σύμμαχον. What kind of ally does Ajax mean? Is it subservience that he wants? I have suggested that the term σύμμαχος does not necessarily apply to an inferior. Ajax looks to Athena as an equal. This statement would provide many a scholar with ammunition to, presumably, disprove my own point. It is Ajax’s ego, they say that causes his downfall. His *hubris* is embodied in the idea that he might think himself equal to a god. But, Ajax is Athens. Athena is Athens. They are both symbolic of the same thing. Both embody power, a power that belonged to Athens.

Beyond this, Knox and others point to the “condescending tone” of Ajax. He gives orders and expects them to be followed. But none mark Athena’s tone and her role in provoking such orders or such a “condescending” tone. Ajax is arrogant and confident. But he would be neither of these things were it not for Athena. It is she who aids him in his conquest. It is she who asks the right questions to evoke his boasting responses. As for her “plea” for mercy—would Knox have us believe that it was a sincere plea? Athena was not begging Ajax for the life of the cow he had tied to his tent post. She is mocking him. She is setting him up for a fall. But it is a fall that could only be accomplished by first lifting him up.

That Athena has set Ajax up for a fall is emphasized by Athena’s words to Odysseus immediately following Ajax’ exit:

Do you see, Odysseus how great is the strength of the gods? Who other than this man was more prudent in your opinion?

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Or who was found better able to act when necessary (118-120)?

She has taken the most prudent and capable man in the Argive camp and driven him insane. And both prudent and capable is Ajax in the Homeric tradition. Athena herself has proven, with these words, that the real Ajax, the Homeric Ajax, would never boast of his power. The Homeric Ajax would never shun the aid of the gods. Only this Ajax, bloated with the insane power Athena has granted him, can behave in such a manner.

If this is so, then what we have displayed for us is not a mere dialogue between man and god. It is a dialogue between two opposing views of power, between two opposing views of Athenian power. One is based on heroic deeds that grant one authority and justify power. The other is based on the strength innate in power: ὃρᾶις, Ὥδυσσεῦ, τὴν θεῶν ἰσχὺν ὅση; (Do you see, Odysseus, how great is the strength of the gods? 118).

And, if Ajax represents the heroic Athenian past, when Athenians did what needed to be done when it needed doing, when the Athenians behaved with prudence in order to protect themselves and their fellow Greeks from the Persian menace, then power itself, in

287 Of course, it could be (and has been) argued that his attempt to kill the Atreidae and Odysseus was a crime in and of itself and that Athena saved him by diverting his mind, thus acting as his σύµµαχος. But Ajax’ shame from his point of view, and from Athena’s, within the play was not to attempt revenge on the Atreidae. They cheated him of his rightful reward, as even Odysseus admits. Under the heroic code of “help friends/harm enemies” Ajax is fully justified. Ajax’s shame was his failure to achieve revenge and the form this failure took, madness. Athens, his σύµµαχος has denied him that right.

288 The fact that Ajax is included in the embassy to Achilles attests that he must have been considered reasonable. Also, recall that it was Ajax’s speech to Achilles that was the most persuasive and most capable of penetrating Achilles’ wrath. See also, Blundell (1989) 93-94; H. North Sophieuse (Cornell, 1966).

289 The claim of Calchas that Ajax told Athena to fight beside another is, again, not part of the epic tradition and would not, as a Sophoclean invention, be evident to the audience at this point in the play.
the form represented by Athena leads to heroic Athens’ demise. The arche itself, as embodied in Athena, destroys the ethical code upon which the Athenians built their power base. The heroes of Salamis have no place in the new regime.291

That this is, in fact, what is happening can be demonstrated by looking at the dialogue between Athena and Ajax in light of a few other dialogues. The first of these takes place between Teucer and Menelaus at lines 1050-1160 of Ajax. A comparison will show that Athena’s stance vis a vis Ajax is mirrored by that of Menelaus vis a vis Teucer and the association of Athena with Menelaus is not flattering. Next, we will compare the Athena/Ajax dialogue with Thucydides’ Melian dialogue. It will be demonstrated that the position of power made evident in Athena’s words is the same power politics expressed so eloquently and blatantly by the Athenians to the Melians.292

Once these three dialogues have been related, they will all be read with reference to that famous dialogue between Athena and the Erinyes in Aeschylus’ Eumenides. From this comparison, I will show that the other three dialogues are all really perversions of Aeschylus’ and that what this demonstrates is the decline of the Athenian ethical position

290 Also note Athena’s last words τοὺς δὲ σώφρονας θεοὶ φιλοῦσι καὶ στυγοῦσι κακούς (But the gods love moderate men and hate the wicked; 133). It is Athena herself who has caused Ajax’ lack of moderation. She has brought the hatred of the gods upon him.

291 There is an interesting correlation between Ajax’s weaponry within the text and his madness. When his madness is described by Tecmessa at 237-239, Ajax is holding a µαστίς, a whip, which is usually associated in the fifth century with Persian tyranny. When Ajax’s sanity returns, he is described as a spear bearer or shield bearer. Thus the madness imposed on him by Athena is Persian-like. The heroic Athens is becoming the tyrant under the influence of the arche.

292 It may sound to some scholars as if I would, by using the Melian dialogue, propose to move the date of the play to the 420’s from the generally accepted date in the 440’s. Some scholars have tried this on flimsier evidence. But I will not make this argument at all. Rather, I accept, and even hope to strengthen a date for the 440’s. For my hypothesis is that the Athenians had already, by the time we get to the 440’s, become full scale imperialists. The transfer of the treasury in 454 BC did not signal the beginning of this
for its hegemony. I will also argue that Sophocles, by aligning Athena with Menelaus—who is repeatedly referred to as “the Spartan” (thus representing the “Spartan menace”)—is making the point that the Athenians, for all their high flown rhetoric, have become that which they propose to hate. No longer do they gain authority by persuasion and appeal to justice but through brute strength and threats.

**Athena, Menelaus, the Melians and Eumenides**

The conversation between Athena and Ajax is a mock dialogue between allies. Athena pretends to be Ajax’ friend but only does so in order to prove a point to Odysseus. What is this point? Most scholars have pointed to the phrase τοὺς δὲ σώφρονας θεοὶ φιλοῦσι καὶ στυγοῦσι κακοὺς (But the gods love moderate men and hate the wicked; 133) as the moral of our story. If it is the moral, then the audience will find a strange pairing in the course of the *Ajax* of proponents of σωφροσύνη. The other advocate of such behavior in the play is Menelaus, and Menelaus is not a positively portrayed character.

In his dialogue with Teucer, Menelaus gives a lengthy speech on why he and Agamemnon have decided to deny burial to Ajax. In this speech Menelaus expresses the general sentiment that misfortune strikes even those of great strength:

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ἀλλ’ ἄνδρα χρῆ, κάν σώμα γεννήσῃ μέγα,
δοκεῖν πεσεῖν ἂν κάν ἀπὸ σμικροῦ κακοῦ.
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But it is necessary that a man, even one born strong in body, seem to fall short because of some minor misfortune (1077-1078)

process but rather reflected a process already in full swing, one almost complete. The Athenians did not wait, as many historians and other classicists propose, until Pericles’ death to become an “evil Empire”.

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Compare this with Athena’s statement to Odysseus at 129-132:

τοιαῦτα τοίνυν εἰσορῶν ὑπέρκοπον μηδὲν ποτ’ εἴπης αὐτός εἰς θεοὺς ἑπος, μηδ’ ὄγκον ἁρῆ μηδὲν’, εἰ τινὸς πλέον ἢ χεῖρι βρίθεις ἢ μακρὸν πλούτου βάθει. ὡς ἡμέρα κλίνει τε κάναγει πάλιν ἀπαντα τάνθρωπεια: τοὺς δὲ σωφρόνας θεοὶ φιλοῦσι καὶ στυγοῦσι τοὺς κακοὺς.

Well then, seeing such things, do not ever yourself speak boastful words against the gods, nor puff up with pride if you hand is superior in battle to another’s or your great wealth is deeper. Thus a day both sinks and raises again everything human; The gods love the moderate and hate the bad.

In both instances, the speaker is insisting that physical might can lead one to their downfall. Menelaus uses the term μέγα and, as has been commented by many a scholar, it is Ajax who is μέγας. The jibe in both instances is directed at the man of greatest physical strength, Ajax. But what is important concerning this similarity in sentiment between Athena and Menelaus is not who it is directed at, but rather the fact that they apply the term σωφροσύνη to those without this characteristic.

After Athena’s reference to the arrogance of those with physical strength, she utters her famous gnomic statement τοὺς δὲ σωφρόνας θεοὶ φιλοῦσι καὶ στυγοῦσι κακοὺς (But the gods love moderate men and hate the bad; 133). Menelaus too introduces his comment on the misfortune that befalls the strong with a reference to σωφροσύνη:

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Not ever would the laws of a city be upheld nobly if fear should not be established there. Nor indeed would an army be kept in line any longer having no defense of fear or shame.

In each instance, also, it is the force behind the statement that garners attention.

Moderation, it seems, is not an innate quality, but something that must be forced upon one. Athena enforces her form of σωφροσύνη through shame and madness. Ajax is set up, in the opening scene, as an example of what happens when one does not behave with the appropriate amount of σωφροσύνη. She tells Odysseus, “See how great is the strength of the gods,” and the supposed moral to the story is that men should fear the punishment of the gods. They should never imagine themselves powerful enough to be “allies”, and therefore equals, of any divinity.294

Menelaus, too, discusses σωφροσύνη in terms of shame and fear. As quoted above, moderation is a result of fear (φόβος). Also, fear (δέος) and shame (αἰσχύνη) accompany a secure man. If he wants to be secure, others must fear him: δέος γὰρ ω̣ πρόσεστιν αἰσχύνη θ’ όμοι, σωτηρίαν ἐχοντα τόνδ’ ἐπίστασο (For, you should know that the man having safety is the one for whom fear and a sense of shame are present;

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294 One may note that in Aeschylus’ Persae, the Athenians are so closely linked with the divine Athena that the word ally is never used. They are Athena by way of being citizens of Athens. Thus they themselves are divine. Ajax too is descended from the gods (and Athena herself?). His assumed status as an equal to Athena could be based on this genetic relationship. As Davis has pointed out, part of Ajax’s madness is his inability to distinguish between human and not human. Just as the herd and herdsmen whom Ajax slaughters appear as humans to Ajax, so to the goddess, when she appears, seems human. His world is entirely mortal thus entirely purposeful and intentional (M. Davis “Politics and Madness” in Euben (ed.), 1986, 146).
Menelaus also conceives of his relationship with Ajax as one between allies: ὁθούνεκ’ αὐτὸν ἐλπίσαντες οἰκοθεν ἄγειν Ἀχαιοῖς ξύµµαχον τε καὶ φίλον (hoping to lead him (Ajax) from home as an ally and friend to the Achaean; 1052-1053).

But his definition of an ally leaves something to be desired. Again, as in the case of Athena and Ajax, this relationship is ultimately conceived of not as one between equals but between a master and a subordinate.

That this is Menelaus’ conception of σύµµαχος is made clear both in his own speech and in Teucer’s response. In his decision to deny burial to Ajax, Menelaus remarks:

εἰ γὰρ βλέποντος μὴ ἰσνήθημεν κρατεῖν, πάντως θανόντος γ’ ἀρξομεν, κἂν μὴ θέλης, χερσίν παρευθύνοντες οὐ γὰρ ἐσθ’ ὅπου λόγων ἀκούσαι ζῶεν ποτ’ ἣθέλησ’ ἐμὼν. καίτοι κακοῦ πρὸς ἀνδρὸς ὄντα δηµότην μηδὲν δικαίου τῶν ἐφεστώτων κλέειν.

For if we could not overpower him while alive, at least we will altogether rule over him when dead, whether or not you want it, constraining him with our hands. For not ever was he willing while alive to listen to my words. And yet it is just like a commoner, being a bad man to think it right to ignore his superiors (1067-1072).

It is assumed by Menelaus that, in relation to himself and Agamemnon, Ajax is a commoner (δηµότην) and they lord it over him (ἲσνήθημεν). Menelaus equates himself with the laws in a city (οὐ γὰρ ποτ’ οὔτ’ ἄν ἐν πόλει νόµοι καλῶς φέροιντ’ ἄν; 1073) to be supported by respect and fear.
Teucer’s response to Menelaus’ assumption that he rules over Ajax as laws rule a city is one that raises important questions for what it means to be a σύμμαχος in Ajax.

Teucer says:

ἀγ’, εἰπ’ ἀπ’ ἀρχής αὐθίς, ἢ σὺ φής ἄγειν τόνδ’ ἄνδρ’ Ἀχαιοὶς δεύρῳ σύμμαχοι λαβὼν; οὐκ αὐτὸς ἔξεπλευσεν ἡς αὐτοῦ κρατῶν; ποῦ σὺ στρατηγεῖς τούδε; ποῦ δὲ σοι λεών ἔξεστ’ ἀνάσσειν ἢν ἄρ’ ἡγαγ’ οἶκοθεν; Σπάρτης ἄνασσων ἠλθες, οὐχ ἡμῶν κρατῶν: οὐδ’ ἐσθ’ ὅποι σοι τόνδε κοσμήσαι πλέον ἀρχής ἔκειτο θεσοῦς ἢ καὶ τούδε σέ... οὐ γὰρ τι τῆς σῆς εἶνεκ’ ἐστρατεύσατο γυναικός, ὡσπερ οἱ πόνοι πολλοὶ πλέωι, ἀλλ’ εἶνεχ’ ὅρκων οίσιν ἦν ἐνώμοτος, σοῦ δ’ οὐδὲν: οὐ γὰρ ἡξίου τοὺς μηδένας.

Come on, tell me again from the beginning: do you think that you, seizing this man, led him here as an ally for the Greeks. Did he not sail here of his own free will? How are you general over him? How is it possible for you to lord it over his troops whom he led from home? You came as king of Sparta, not as our overlord. Nor is there any law permitting you to discipline him any more than he you. . .

For he did not lead his army here on account of your wife as some laborer might do, but on account of the oaths which he swore—not at all on your account. For he did not deem them “nothing” (1097-1104; 1111-1113).

The primary issue between Teucer and Menelaus, then, is an old one for us: what does it mean to be a σύμμαχος? As we saw in Menelaus’ speech, an ally is a subordinate, someone who does his bidding and obeys his commands. For Teucer, as the above passage shows, an ally is one’s own master, not a subject to other allies. He is bound by
oaths (εἵνεχ’ ὅρκων) alone to support another. This is not a client relationship. He provides ships and a fighting force and this force is his own to command, not some self-appointed general’s.295

What is displayed here for the audience in the dialogue between Menelaus and Teucer are two different conceptions of what an ally should be. On the one hand, Menelaus conceives of an ally as a subordinate who should fight when told to fight and must take abuse when given it by his supposed superiors. On the other hand, Teucer’s view is that an alliance is based on a working relationship between equals who command their own troops and fight together when it is agreed necessary. They fight side-by-side for the greater good. They are not master and slave, one fighting for the good only of the other. Interestingly enough, these two conceptions find themselves reflected in the actuality of the movement from Delian League to Athenian Empire.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, when the Delian League was formed, it was a league of independent city-states working towards a common goal, protection from Persia. Each ally swore oaths to the other allies as well as to the Athenians and sank iron into the sea to denote the permanence of the arrangement. Granted, the Athenians had the most ships and the others looked to them, as the victors at Salamis, to lead the way. But being a leader and being an overseer are different. The League members signed up for the first, but ended up, by the middle of the century, with the second. The linking of Ajax with Salamis and the Athenian heroic recent past also links him directly with this earlier conception of σύμμαχος. Ajax perceives his relationship to Menelaus as one

295 That this is, in fact, how it worked in the Iliad can be attested by Achilles’ withdrawal of himself and his
among equals. Menelaus and Athena both conceive of allies as those under their command. That Athena and Menelaus are both to be linked to the form of alliances represented by, for example, the Erythrai decree discussed earlier can be demonstrated by looking at the speeches of Athena and Menelaus in comparison with the most well known representation of *realpolitik*: Thucydides’ Melian Dialogue.

It has been demonstrated that both Athena and Menelaus are proponents of σωφροσύνη. Or, rather, they wish to force σωφροσύνη upon their fellows while they themselves behave outside of the realm of moderation. σωφροσύνη, however, is not just a literary fancy. It was a real part of real politics and this “real world” politics is found displayed no more prominently than in Thucydides. Peter Rose writes that the political context for the word σωφροσύνη amounts in Ajax to “recognizing the actual hierarchy of power and adjusting one’s behavior accordingly....The Athenian Empire recommended it to its subject allies.”²⁹⁶ To this comment, Rose adds a footnote citing the Melian dialogue. Although Thucydides wrote the dialogue some time (nearly 40 years) after Ajax was produced, still it contains the essence of what this discussion on Athena is about. A comparison between the exchange of Ajax and Athena (and Menelaus and Teucer) with the Melian dialogue will show that Athena in Sophocles’ Ajax embodies the characteristics of *realpolitik* imperialism demonstrated in the Melian Dialogue.

The crux of this argument lies in the use of σύμμαχος by Athena and Ajax in lines 90 and 117. In its literal sense, meaning “companion-in-arms”, the word seems

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entirely appropriate here. As discussed above, in Athenian mythology, Ajax and Athena were allies. But there is also a second connotation of σύμμαχος that finds it way into this text. Menelaus, by defining an ally as someone over whom he is master, places a stigma of inferiority upon the party to which it is applied (namely, Ajax). Thus, σύμμαχος, while still holding its literal meaning, comes to gain what would become its practical meaning in second half of the fifth century. As a result of the conflict between Athena’s treatment of Ajax and the lesson of σωφροσύνη being taught in lines 127-133, σύμμαχος comes to mean not an ally in battle, but a subordinate used for battle. The association of Athena with Athens moves the meaning from the realm of myth into the “real world” of politics and empire.

At the beginning of the Melian Dialogue, the Athenians suggest that, because the conversation is not to take place in front of the people, they should speak frankly with one another. The Melians agree to talk, but feel that their only options are war with the Athenians or slavery to them. The purpose of the Athenians’ visit with the Melians is this:

跽 δὲ ἐπ᾽ ὑπερεσίμεν τῆς ἡμετέρας ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐπὶ σωτηρίαν νῦν τοὺς λόγους ἐρούμεν τῆς ἡμετέρας πόλεως, ταῦτα δηλώσομεν, βουλόμενοι ἀπόνως μὲν υμῶν ἄρξαι, χρησίμως δ’une ἡμᾶς ἀμφοτέρους σωθῆναι.

We will make clear these things, how we are both here for the benefit of our empire and how we will say these words for the safety of your city, wishing to rule over you without trouble and wishing to preserve you to the advantage of us both (5.91.2).²⁹⁷

The Melians ask how this situation can be resolved to the advantage of both themselves and the Athenians. The Athenians answer:
ΑΘ. ὅτι ύμιν μὲν πρὸ τοῦ τὰ δεινότατα παθεῖν ὑπακούσαι ἃν γένοιτο, ἡμεῖς δὲ μὴ διαφθείραντες ύμᾶς κερδαίνομεν ἃν.
ΜΗΛ. ἂστε [δὲ] ἠστείαν ἁγοντας ἡμᾶς φίλους μὲν εἶναι ἀντὶ πολεμίων, ἐνυμμάχους δὲ μηδετέρων, οὐκ ἂν δέξαισθε;
ΑΘ. οὐ γὰρ τοσοῦτον ἡμᾶς βλάπτει ἡ ἐξήθεα ύμῶν ὡς ἦν φιλία μὲν ἀσθενείας, τὸ δὲ μίσος δυνάμεως παράδειγμα τοῖς ἀρχομένοις δηλούμενον.

ATH. Because it would happen that you submit before suffering the most terrible things, and we would gain by not destroying you.
MEL. You would not accept that we, keeping quiet, be friends instead of enemies and the allies of neither side?
ATH. No; for your enmity harms us not as much as your friendship which will be a clear indicator to our subjects of our weakness, on the one hand, and your hatred of our power on the other hand (5.93-95).

What this exchange, along with the reason for the Athenians’ approach, shows is that Athens perceives of the allies as something to be ruled over while the Melians equate being ἐξύμμαχοι with being enslaved to the Athenians. At 5.100, they argue:

ΜΗΛ. ἢ που ἄρα, εἰ τοσαύτην γε ύμεις τε μὴ παυθῆναι ἀρχής καὶ οἱ δουλεύοντες ἢδη ἀπαλλαγῆναι τὴν παρακανδύνευσιν ποιοῦνται, ἡμῖν γε τοῖς ἐτι ἐλευθέροις πολλῆς κακότης καὶ δειλία μὴ πᾶν πρὸ τοῦ δουλεύσαι ἐπεξελθεῖν.

MEL. Well then, if you risk so much not to lose you empire and your subjects do so much to be set free from it, indeed it is very base and cowardly for us who are free not to attempt everything instead of being enslaved.

The Melians believe it nothing less than necessary to fight becoming allies/slaves to the Athenians. Anything else would be cowardice and baseness. But the Athenian response is not to sympathize with this heroic attitude on the part of the Melians. Rather, the Athenians tell the Melians to think of their situation not in terms of honor and shame but of self-preservation and necessity:

297 Translations for the Melian Dialogue have been adapted from that of Crawley.
ΑΘ. οὔκ, ἢν γε σωφρόνως βουλεύησθε· οὐ γὰρ περὶ ἀνδραγαθίας ὁ ἄγων ἀπὸ τοῦ ἰσου υμίν, μὴ αἰσχύνην ὅφλείν, περὶ δὲ σωτηρίας μᾶλλον ἡ βουλή, πρὸς τοὺς κρείσσονας πολλαὶ μὴ ἀνθίστασθαι.

Not, indeed, if you are advised *moderately*. For this is not a contest concerning bravery with your equal, not to incur shame, but rather it is a decision concerning safety, not to stand up against those by far stronger (5.101.1).

The Athenians advise that showing moderation, σωφροσύνη, is in the Melians’ best interest. This is not the time, the Athenians suggest, to play the Homeric hero.

This concept, that one should not stand against a superior is found reflected in Athena’s comments to Odysseus after the dialogue with Ajax. She says, ὁρᾷς,

"Οδυσσεῦ, τὴν θεῶν ἵππην ὄση; (Do you see, Odysseus, how great is the strength of the gods? 118). She is emphasizing with this statement that Ajax is not her equal, which is implied by his own use of σύμμαχος. Rather, Ajax is one who should not challenge, or even dare consider himself equal to the gods. For Athena in Ajax is as superior to him as the Athenians of the Melian Dialogue consider themselves superior to the Melians. Her and Menelaus’ conception of a proper ally’s σωφροσύνη is one of σωτηρία. To be brave is to be foolish. To survive is to submit.

This stance on the part of the Athenians, to urge σωφροσύνη over ἀνδραγαθία is reiterated at 5.111.4. Here, the Athenians make it quite clear that they are in a position to destroy the Melians and that resistance will only lead to that certain destruction:

298 This word is associated in the Ajax with Ajax himself as well as with Athens in Persae. He is the defense/bulwark of the Greek army.
This, if you are well advised, you will guard against, and you will not think it dishonorable to submit to the greatest city when it makes a moderate offer to you to become its ally while holding your own land; nor, given the choice between war and safety, will you be so blind as to choose the worse of the two. For such ones as do not yield to their equals and who have good dealing with their superiors and are moderate toward their inferiors seem to flourish most.

The lesson being taught here by the Athenians is that moderation and accepting one’s position as inferior is necessary in order to ensure survival. And it is survival, not bravery, that is the watchword of the day. When the Melians take a stance of seeming heroic stubbornness and choose to die fighting rather than be labeled cowards, the Athenians consider this ἄσοφος.

The stance that the Melians take with regards to the Athenians is one of adherence to a code of justice and honor that the Athenians attempt to show is unwise and dangerous. But this stance, preferring death to dishonor, is much the same as that found in the character of Ajax.299 The attitude of the Athenians, on the other hand, can be found reflected in the speech of Athena at 127-133:

τοιαύτα τοίνυν εἰσορῶν ὑπέρκοπον  
μηδέν ποτ’ εἴπης αὐτὸς εἰς θεοὺς ἐπος,  
μηδ’ ὡς ἄρη µηδέν’, εἰ τινος πλέον  
ἡ χειρὶ βρίθεις ἡ μακροῦ πλούτου βάθει.  
ὡς ἡμέρα κλίνει τε κανάγει πάλιν  
ἀπαντα τάνθρωπων ποτ’ δέ σώφρονας  
θεοὶ φιλοῦσι καὶ στυγοῦσι τοὺς κακοὺς.

299 Ajax’s speech directly preceding his suicide (644-692) demonstrates Ajax’s desire to die rather than to live in disgrace for the cowardly act men will say he has committed. Suicide is the alternative to disgrace. Compare the suggestion of the Athenians that the Melians not be too concerned with the idea of being disgraced (Thuc. Hist. 5.111-3).
Well then, seeing such things, do not ever yourself speak boastful words against the gods, nor puff up with pride if your hand is superior in battle to another’s or your great wealth is deeper. Thus a day both sinks and raises again everything human; the gods love the moderate and hate the bad.

Meier suggests that Athena’s speech, which calls for σωφροσύνη, reflects Athens’ need to practice moderation with its allies. But he sees the lesson as being directed at Ajax, the representative, in his thinking, of Athens. In Ajax, Meier states:

...one could see a representation of Athens, which itself laid such importance on independence, treated its allies with such contempt and which, in its foreign policy, hardly lived up to the play’s message of co-operation.

However, as the discussion of the Melian Dialogue above points out, it was the allies who laid such store by independence. It was the allies who fought to be freed from subservience to Athens. It was the allies who adhered to the code of death before dishonor to which Ajax himself adheres. Also, while Athena’s message of moderation strikes no discord in and of itself, as was suggested earlier, it is not the message itself, but the messenger that causes the problem. Athena, after her treatment of Ajax, needs to be following her own advice and behaving in a more moderate manner.

Ajax’s association with the Athenian heroic past sets him on the side of the Melians and the allies because he embodies the spirit of the Delian League and its origins. Athena embodies the spirit of the arche, an entity which relies on its inferiors to pay tribute and prop up its power structure through complacency. If the Persian War era

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Athenians had been complacent and willing to submit to tribute, Athens, and all of Greece, would have become tributaries of Persia. However, as the above discussion demonstrates, such heroic sentiments are no longer practical in the world of the *arche*. What was morally unacceptable to the Athenians in the 480’s had become their policy towards others by the 450’s.

The comparison of the Melian Dialogue with *Ajax* situates the play as a participant in the continuing dialogue among the Athenians concerning their own power and development. But the Melian Dialogue is not the only link between *Ajax* and the “real world” of the Athenian Empire. For Sophocles summons up within his text the image of an even earlier discourse on the relationship between Athens and her *arche*. Not ever far from the forefront in *Ajax* is the shadow of *Eumenides*.

*Eumenides*, as I have shown, concerns not only the internal political situation of Athens but also her external political relations with the allies of the Delian League. I have repeatedly raised the question, “What does it mean to be an ally of Athens?” in order to link these plays, *Ajax* and *Eumenides*, together. For it is Athens’ relationship to her allies that defines her role in the Aegean. But these two plays are connected not only through the reoccurring theme of “allies” but also on a much more fundamental level. Sophocles repeatedly invokes the text of Aeschylus, encouraging his audience to recall Athena and the image of Athens presented there.

I suggested above that the appearance of Athens in *Ajax* could be compared to the persuasion scene between Athena and the Erinyes in *Eumenides* as well as with the

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302 North (1966) suggests that the actions of Athena prior to her speech at 127-133 are designed to demonstrate Odysseus’ moderation as opposed to Ajax’s arrogance. Her enticing him to gloat over his
dialogue between Teucer and Menelaus in Ajax. In each scene, one speaker is trying to persuade another to submit to his/her authority. Athena in Eumenides attempts to persuade the Erinyes to become supporters of Athens. Athena in Ajax attempts to persuade Odysseus (and Ajax) that submission to the gods is wisest. Menelaus attempts to persuade Teucer that both he and Ajax are inferior and should obey his commands. It is the underlying reason as to why they should be obeyed that tie Menelaus and the two Athena’s together. Moreover, it these same underlying reasons that should motivate the Melians to submit to the Athenians: fear and practicality.

Athena, in her final words to Odysseus, claims that it was an insufficient amount of modesty that drove Ajax to madness. If he had yielded to the gods in an appropriate manner he could have continued to live. However, he did not. Thus the message inherent in Athena’s final words is that men should show the proper reverence and fear embodied in the concept of σωφροσύνη. For σωφροσύνη is, as Menelaus makes clear for the audience later and as the Athenian treatment of her allies demonstrates, really the idea of knowing one’s place. If one knows his place, he will live a life favored by the gods.303

This idea, that modest behavior leads to the good life, can be found expressed by Athena elsewhere in Greek tragedy. Her foundation speech for the Areopagus found at Eumenides 695-703 expresses much the same sentiment:

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\text{τὸ μὴ τ’ αδναρχον μὴ τε δεσποτούμενον}
\]
\[
\text{αδστοις περιστέλλουσι βουλευσεβειν,}
\]

fallen enemy and his refusal make him the model of moderation to be followed (59).

303 This is suggested by Athena’s line that the gods hate the bad and love the moderate.
καὶ µὴ τὸ δεινὸν πᾶν πόλεως εξω βαλεῖν. τίς γὰρ δεδουκὼς μηδὲν ενδίκος βροτῶν; τοιοῦτα τοι παραβουντες ἐνδίκως σέβας ἐφυματε χαῖράς καὶ πόλεως σωτηρίων ἐχοί αὖ, ὅιον οὐτίς ἀνθρώποις ἐχει, οὔτ' ἐν Σκυθησιν οὔτε Πέλοπος ἐν τόποις.

Neither anarchy nor tyranny--this I counsel my citizens to support and respect, and not to drive fear wholly out of the city. For who among mortals, if he fears nothing, is righteous? Stand in just awe of such majesty, and you will have a defense for your land and salvation of your city such as no man has, either among the Scythians or in Pelops' realm.

She counsels her Athenians to follow a middle path, the path of moderation, by avoiding anarchy and tyranny. She tells them to show reverence (σέβειν) and to have fear. For who, she asks, can be righteous who does not fear (τίς γὰρ δεδοικὼς µηδὲν ενδίκος βροτῶν)? With this requisite amount of fear/reverence (σέβας) intact, the city will have both a defense (ἔφυμα) and safety (σωτηρία).

These words, meant by Aeschylus to imbue the Athenians with a sense of pride, have a double-edged meaning, however. For if we recall Thucydides’ Athenians and their words to the Melians, we see that asking one to look to safety by behaving moderately is a way also of asking for submission:

ΑΘ. οὔκ, ἢν γε σωφρόνως βουλεύησθε· οὐ γὰρ περὶ ἀνδραγαθίας ὁ ἀγὼν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἰσου ύμιν, µὴ αἰσχύνην ὄφλειν, περὶ δὲ σωτηρίας µᾶλλον ἢ βουλή, πρὸς τούς κρείσσονας πολλῶι µὴ ἄνθιστασθαι.

Not, indeed, if you take our moderate recommendation. For this is not a contest concerning bravery with your equal not to incur shame, but rather it is a decision concerning safety, not to stand up against those by far stronger (5.101).
Here, instead of reverence (σέβας), the Melians are asked to act in a manner appropriate to their position (σωφρόνως). Thus moderation for the Melians is reverence for the Athenians and both lead to safety (σωτηρία).

In the case of Athena and her establishment of the court, the Athenians are asked to submit to law and justice. Through this submission they will receive gifts as no other man has: defense (έρυμα) and safety (σωτηρία). The Melians too will receive safety as the benefit for their submission. They, however, must submit to a superior (τοὺς κρείσσονας) in order to gain it. The Athenians of Aeschylus are slaves to law, while the Melians are slaves to the Athenians.

But, where does Ajax fit into this schema? As suggested above, Ajax is aligned simultaneously with both the Melians (he is the man forced to submit to a goddess) and with the Athenians themselves (those of the heroic, recent past). He is the recipient of both commands and both commands come from Athena. Thus Ajax seems to occupy a middle position thematically as well as physically between Athena as she is presented in Aeschylus’ Eumenides and Athens as found in the Melian Dialogue. Also pertinent to this line of reasoning is the previous chapter’s discussion of the allied relationship between Orestes and Athens as well as that between Athens and the Erinyes. For Ajax, though he is, in Ajax, linked directly to Athens, is also linked to the role of a σύμμαχος.
Conclusion

The concept of what it means to submit to Athens, what it means to be her ally has changed between the founding of the Delian League and the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. While it first meant to be an equal partner in the enterprise against Persia, it came to mean something more akin to a subject. Ajax, as an ally of the Atreidae, is expected to submit to their will as would an inferior. Ajax as a mortal is also expected to submit to the will of the gods. And Athena represents that will, or does she? For the audience is never really given a clear understanding of what that will is or where it is directed from. In *Eumenides*, Athena clearly states that the submission of the Erinyes to her decision is the will of Zeus. As Ajax opens, however, we know only what Athena tell us. She has made Ajax mad with no apparent antagonism toward Ajax himself.

It has been said that Athena is working to benefit the Atreidae and Odysseus and so she must thwart Ajax’s attempted murder. However, it can (and has) also been argued that Athena gives no clear statement that she is working for their benefit. Rather, it can be suggested that Athena’s behavior toward Ajax is arbitrary. For we do not know until line 746 that she, in fact, has a quarrel with Ajax at all. Athena and Ajax,

304 Or, in the case of the Melians, from the Athenians. Though, as the myths of autochthony attest, the Athenians considered themselves to be one and the same with their patron goddess.

305 *Eumenides* 796.

306 This act could also be perceived as dis-aligning Athena of *Ajax* with Athena of *Eumenides* and aligning her with the Erinyes. For it is their task to avenge blood and to drive mad the murderer. Athena’s preemptive strike on Ajax removes their necessity, but still results in the same thing, madness.

307 See above.
in the minds and material world of the Athenians were allies. Within the text of Sophocles they are even related through the autochthonous ancestor of the Athenians, Erechtheus, and through Zeus himself.

Ajax’s downfall is the downfall of a generation’s ideal. Through his relationship to both the allies and to the Salaminian heroes of Athens’ past Ajax represents an era in Athenian history. But he is a remnant who has lived too long and who could only continue to live in a manner in conflict with his heroic code. For he must give up his honor and live in shame. He feels himself equal, an ally, to the goddess Athena, but his conception of an ally is not Athena’s. He is working under the auspices of an assumed meaning that no longer applies. Just as the allies of the Delian League signed on for a partnership among equals and ended up subjects to a hegemonic leader, so to Ajax went to Troy, a sworn ally, not bondsman of the Atreidae, only to find himself subject (in death) to their whims. Ajax is the brave warrior who thinks he contends with an equal, not to be shamed by a superior (cf Thuc. 5.101: οὐ γὰρ περὶ ἀνδραγαθίας ὁ ἀγών ἀπὸ τοῦ ἰσοῦ ύµίν, µὴ αἰσχύνην όφλεῖν; For this is not a contest concerning bravery with your equal not to incur shame) only to find himself conceived of by others as the lesser man forced to submit to his superiors (cf Thuc. 5.101 again with regards the Melian position: περὶ δὲ σωτηρίας µᾶλλον ἢ βουλή, πρὸς τοὺς κρείσσονας πολλῶι µὴ ἀνθίστασθαι; but rather it is a decision concerning safety, not to stand up against those by far stronger). The man who once provided the Greeks with safety, is now being asked to beg for it. The bulwark of Greece is now its slave.

Athena is Athens. Ajax is Athens. But they both represent different versions of Athens and her power at different periods in Athens’ history. It has been demonstrated above that Athena’s sentiments as expressed in the prologue of Ajax are more closely aligned with that of the Athenians in the Melian Dialogue than to the lofty sentiments of Aeschylus’ Athena. Sophocles’ Athena still espouses the same general sentiments (moderation, justice) but does so in a language that is more closely related to the hard core realpolitik of the arche rather than the Delian League. Ajax has been demonstrated to be closely connected both in the text and in Athenian civic mythology with Athens’ heroic past, both recent (Persian Wars) and distant (Troy). Athena’s mockery and shaming of Ajax prove that in the world of the arche, that heroic ideal has no place. Athena/Athens is no longer the savior of Greece freeing it from the threat of a Persian tyrant. She has become its oppressor and a tyrant in her own right.
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

The point of this study of Athena has been to discern not only how her image mirrors the shift in the reality of imperial Athens but also how the changing image of Athena reflects the way the Athenians conceived of their power. In addition, I am interested in whether or not the images presented by Aeschylus and Sophocles mirror the image promoted of Athens/Athena throughout the *arche* and within the city. This means that I have considered how the tragic representations fall in line with or undermine the ideological constructs of hegemonic Athens. I have addressed these issues in passing during the course of this study but would like now to bring those observations together more definitively.

In the case of Aeschylus, I argued that the Athens he presents to his audience by way of Athena is an idealized, though plausible, version. Athena represents the end of justice based on vengeance and rage and the beginning of a form of justice bound to law and the courts. Athena's justice is that of the community taking into consideration not necessarily what the "right" thing to do is but rather what benefits of the community as a whole. Orestes is acquitted not so much because he is innocent, but because it serves the interests of Athens that he go free. The alliance he offers Athens is central to his acquittal. The conversion of the Erinyes into Eumenides serves also to shore up the community. They may be correct in their reasons for pursuing Orestes, but they follow a
destructive path. For Athena, the fault in the Erinyes' case is that no one benefits from their actions. Athena's final settlement guarantees that everyone wins. The Erinyes get to continue utilizing the type of fear-based justice they represent while Athena can twist that utilization to the benefit of Athens. Priority is placed on the needs of the many over those of individuals.

This scenario created by Aeschylus through his use of the courtroom and of Athena is in keeping with the ideological apparatus of the Great Dionysia. The pre-play ceremonies which were performed prior to the performance of the *Oresteia* in 458 BC were those which emphasized the importance both of the community over the individual and the martial aspects of Athenian society. The parade of the war-orphans was designed to recall to the audience not just the greatness of the Athenians in the Persian Wars but also to point out how much those individuals owed to the state. The orphans were raised at state expense, armed at state expense and were given the opportunity to fight for the glory of their city. The libation of the generals underlined even more the importance of the military side of citizenship. For they were the highest ranking military officials in a position so significant that it was elected by vote not chosen by lot. That the generals were chosen to initiate the opening of one of the primary religious festivals of the city is significant for understanding the Athenian view of the religion. In Athens, the religious, civic and military were one.

The primacy given by Aeschylus to the Argive alliance in the decision to acquit Orestes is in keeping with the central role of the military concerns in Athenian life. The civic and military are combined within the setting of the Dionysia itself and they are
supported and justified by the resolution of *Eumenides*. The centrality of the Argive alliance also emphasizes the importance of the Athenian hegemony. For through the alliance with Argos, the Athenians increase their prestige abroad. The type of alliance they have secured, or rather the type recommended by the play, is one that highlights the superior role of Athens in such alliances.

The absorption of the Erinyes into the Athenian religious superstructure underlines the religious aspects of the festival, but even here, priority is given to the political. The assimilation of the Erinyes to Athenian needs functions more to ward off civil strife and social deterioration than to truly enhance the pantheon of Athenian gods. The promise to the Erinyes that they will grow to love Athens and will also increase in stature as the Athenians themselves increase their power links them to the imperial project of Athens.

The relevance of the imperial development of Athens is evident throughout *Eumenides*. As the discussion on the geography of the text showed, wherever Athena is so too is the power and influence of Athens. That power and influence stretches from Libya to the Hellespont, from the Phlegrean plain to Asia Minor. Nestled within that power nexus is the justice of Athens—justice unlike any found in the Peloponnese or Persia. And it is this element—justice—that Athens itself is working to promote during the 450’s. The examination of the Erythrai decree and others like it demonstrates that the Athenians utilized justice and the courts in order to gain control over the allies. And it is this justice and the power behind it that Aeschylus’ play reinforces. Even gods submit themselves to Athenian justice, why shouldn’t the allies?
In these ways, then, namely, the promotion of Athenian justice, the emphasis on alliances and geographic influence, the placing of community rights over those of the individual, Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* is in harmony with the ideological apparatus of the Dionysia and the city/arche. The same, I have argued, is true for the *Persae* though it is uncertain whether the pre-performance ceremonies were part of the Dionysia in 472 BC. But, as I have pointed out, the idealism of Aeschylus’ *Persae* is in sharp contrast to the reality of Athenian hegemony. While the *Eumenides* presents us with voluntary submission to Athenian justice and authority, the reality of the early years of the Delian League was the veiled threat of Athena, not the soft persuasion that finally swayed the Erinyes. Athens was, from very early on after the battle of Salamis, headed in the direction of empire. It was veiled at first, but very evident, I have suggested, by the 460’s. The revolts of Naxos, Thasos and Karystos were only the beginning of compulsory membership in the Delian League.

The reality of the 450’s, when the *Oresteia* was produced, was marked by more suppressions of revolt, the war with Aegina and the defeat in Egypt which led to a major turning point for the League—the transfer of the treasury. If Aeschylus was aware that there was a growing shift in the nature of Athenian power from hegemon to imperialist in the years preceding the transfer, his text does not reflect it. His Athena still projects the idealized image of the great goddess, symbol of justice and democracy. His Athena still projects the image Athens itself wanted to project to the rest of the Greeks.

309 It is likely that the parade of war orphans was and also the libation of the generals. Whether the announcement of benefactors was, I do not know. The tribute display, of course, was not part of the ceremonies until after 454 BC.
Aeschylus, then, could be said to be participating in and supporting the civic ideology of the *polis*. He could even be said, with his powerful image of Athena, to be participating in its creation and internal development. For *Eumenides*, and Athena as she appears there, had a lasting influence on Greek drama. Aeschylus fashioned in his Athena a lasting image of the greatness of his city. Sophocles, however, is a different case. In the *Ajax Locrus*, Sophocles’ Athena appears in a manner similar to Aeschylus’. It is likely that the play was produced close in time to the *Oresteia* and Athena, there, is also associated with the courts. She is a goddess who first puts her faith not in vengeance or divine punishment, but in the law and the jury. Athena of *Ajax* is, seemingly, another goddess altogether.

I have argued in the previous pages that Athena in *Ajax* represents the reality of Athenian imperialism in the 450’s and 440’s versus the ideal of that same power as represented in Ajax himself. Ajax is the foundation upon which Athenian hegemony is based. He is the hero of Salamis, the remnant of a heroic past more suited to single-mindedly fighting Trojans (or Persians) than giving arguments before a court or compromising. But most importantly, he, like the goddess who harries him, is considered Athenian. Sophocles’ text is very clear in this association. It was an association his audience would readily accept and expect. Ajax, like Athena, was part of the Athenian socio-political network in fifth-century Athens. His absorption as an eponymous hero of Athens made him a part of Athenian identity and ideology.

What does it mean, then, to portray the patron of the city as the manipulator and eventual destroyer of a city’s hero? How is an understanding of this scenario affected by
the pre-performance ceremonies and ideological constructs of the *polis*? I suggested that Aeschylus’ plays not only supported, but helped create an ideology of imperial Athens. Sophocles also participates in this process with *Ajax Locrus*. Sophocles’ *Ajax*, however, presents a more complex view than what is found in Aeschylus. *Ajax* begins in madness and confusion. It is here that the audience too must start. For only slowly are we led to see Ajax not as a Homeric hero but as an Athenian one. And slow also is his restoration from madness to hero. It is only after the death of Ajax that we come to associate Athena with Menelaus and the un-heroic side of the play. Thus only in retrospect does the madness and its source become fully understood.

I argued that the reason we could not accept Calchas’ prophecy as the real reason for Athena’s anger was because it comes so late in the tragedy. And yet, I ask for a retrospective view with regards the understanding of the relationship between Athena and Ajax. This is not a contradiction. One can accept Calchas’ words at face value. But Sophocles demands more of us than that. The audience would have found the slow build up of Ajax’s Athenian association and the plea to his son resonating with the memory of the parade of the war orphans. For those orphans were the children of the great men like Ajax. That ceremony was the reminder of the Athenian heroic past. Ajax’s link to Salamis, his position as an Athenian eponymous hero and his redemption and heroization in *Ajax* reflect the ideology upon which Athens built her empire. The death of Ajax and the fact that Athena was at the root of his death exposes the half truths that such ceremonies were promoting.
Ajax is the ideal, Athena, the real. But it does not necessarily mean that Sophocles rejected the civic ideology of his city nor did he reject the greatness of Athens. Rather, it seems, he offers an alternative. What began in the Persian Wars as striving for greatness and survival, had become, by the mid-fifth century, grabbing at power for power’s sake. Athens did not need to subject her allies to survive. She did not need to move from hegemon to tyrant in order to achieve greatness. Sophocles shows this with his play. It also shows to what end seeking power for the sake of power leads. Its logical conclusion is the death of idealism and the rise of the callous realism presented by Athena and Menelaus in his debate with Teucer. But Ajax also shows what hope remains for the Athenians. There is a way to reverse this progression. There is a way out of the contradiction between the origins of Athenian power and the practice.

The way out is presented to the audience through two characters—Teucer and Odysseus. Teucer is an everyman. He is not the great hero but he still supports the values of the hero. He does not see alliance as one between a master and a servant but rather between equal partners. He does not see σωφροσύνη as knowing one's place, but rather as behaving with moderation always, no matter what one's place. Teucer offers an alternative both to power for power's sake and to unbending adherence to the heroic code. He offers a way to perceive of power not as something to lord it over others with, but as something with which to defend those weaker and their ideals.

Odysseus, too, is an alternative to the power represented by both Athena and Menelaus. For this is not the slimy, sophistic Odysseus of Euripidean tragedy and of Sophocles own, much later, Philoctetes. In Ajax, he is the voice of compassion and
restraint. His position is interesting also. For though he is a part of the imperial project by way of his relationships to both Athena and the Atreidae, he still stands apart from them. It was he who was granted the arms of Achilles. It was this victory that pushed Ajax to violence. But he still recognizes in Ajax the human quality that binds them all together. He recognizes and acknowledges Ajax's greatness, but also recognizes the unsuitability of that heroism in the contemporary world. If Teucer is an everyman, Odysseus is what the everyman should aspire to. He is a hero who understands the limits of power because he understands the limits of humanity. His refusal to gloat over the maddened Ajax and his ability to still accept Ajax's greatness make him the model for a new age. The contrast between Athena's cruelty and Odysseus' modesty can not be made more clear.

The unadaptable Ajax can not survive in the world of Athena's empire. But the flexible Odysseus can. He shows a way to balance the ideal with the real. In the characters of Teucer and Odysseus, Ajax shows his audience the alternatives to both the unbending heroicism of Ajax and the unbridled power of Athena. In doing so, Sophocles' text gives his audience a new base upon which to build their arche. The right to power must be earned and the Athenians, through Ajax, have earned it. That power, however, need not be destructive as is Athena's. It must be used with the same moderation and prudence with which Odysseus wields his. In the world of the Athenian empire, power must be tempered by compromise and compassion.

The goddess Athena's appearances on the stage in the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles are not dictated by plot. Each appearance is a calculated move on the part of
the playwright in order to make a point. And that point changes as the circumstances in Athens change because Athena is the representative of the city and of its *arche*. For Aeschylus, Athena stood for the glory of Athens, the idealized nation created out of the victories at Marathon and Salamis. She is justice and hegemony in one. She has power tempered by a sense of right and wrong. The Athena of *Eumenides* is in keeping with and even enhances the dominant ideological view the Athenians presented by themselves. She is the image they wish to project to others. Sophocles' two Athenas are different. The first adheres to Aeschylus' model. The second shatters the mold beyond recognition. She represents the raw power of the *arche* and the possibilities of destruction inherent in that power. But the ideology of the pre-performance ceremonies is not simply undercut by Athena's characterization in *Ajax*. It is simultaneously reinforced. For, though the Athenian heroic ideal is exposed as untenable in fifth-century Athens with the madness and death of Ajax, it is rebuilt and refashioned in the characters of Teucer and Odysseus. The goddess, whose wrath will only last a day, has given others the chance at redemption. In doing so, Athena/Athens has left the door open to be redeemed and recreated herself.
Fig. 1 Map of the Aegean and Egypt. The enclosed space represents the region defined by Aeschylus’ *Eumenides*. 
Fig. 2 The Erythrai Decree ca. 454/3 BC. From the text of Meiggs and Lewis.
Figure 3. The Stoa Poikile painting of Polygnotos ca. 460 BC representing the sack of Troy and the trial of Ajax Locrus (center with hand on altar). Reconstruction by Castriota after Robert.

Fig 4. The sack of Troy on the Knidian Lesche at Delphi ca. 460 BC. Reconstruction by Stansbury-O’Donnell.
Fig. 5 Chalcidian Amphora ca. 540 BC. Ajax (center with shield) fights over the corpse of Achilles with Athena at his back.

Fig. 6 Attic red-figure vase ca. 490 BC. Athena (far left) urges Ajax on in a fight (with large shield) at Troy.
Fig. 7 Exekias painting of Ajax and Achilles gambling ca 560 BC.

Fig. 8 Attic red-figure vase ca 510 BC. Athena warns Ajax and Achilles of an attack while they are gaming.
Figure 9 Side A Attic red-figure vase ca. 440 BC. Athena (center) escorts Ajax (left with shield) and Menestheus, Theseus’ son, to Troy.

Figure 10 Side B. Adoption of Erechtheus by Athena. Erichthonius (left), his daughters (seated and far right), Hephaestus (right), Athena (center) and Erechtheus.
APPENDIX B

A Note on Athena in the Plays of Euripides

Although this dissertation does not deal directly with the years of the Peloponnesian War, it seems appropriate, nonetheless, to make a few remarks concerning the figure of Athena as she appears in Euripides’ *Trojan Women*. She appears in two plays known to be written by Euripides, *Erechtheus* and *Trojan Women*. She also appears in the satyr play *Rhesus*, but Euripidean authorship for the play is questionable. I will address here, in brief, primarily the *Trojan Women* with a few cursory words about *Erechtheus*. *Rhesus* will be left to the side for now.

The *Erechtheus* remains only in fragments and from those fragments it is difficult to discern precisely what the story was. Central to the plot, however, seems to have been the sacrifice by Erechtheus of his daughter in order to ensure victory over the Eleusinians. It is uncertain if Erechtheus himself was represented as an autochthon or if he is the child/grandchild of Erichthoneus.\(^{310}\) Athena's role seems to have been as a conciliator between Athens and Poseidon after the death of Eumolpus. A large fragment comes from a speech by Athena at the end of the play given shortly after Erechtheus was probably killed by Poseidon for himself killing Eumolpus. In this speech Athena

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\(^{310}\) The distinction between the two ancestors was sometimes blurred, though by the middle of the fifth century, it may have been codified by the Athenians as the genealogy appears in Figure 10 above where Erechtheus is probably represented as Erichthoneus' grandson born from one of his daughters. However, a
convinces Poseidon to be satisfied with Erechtheus’ death to quench his rage and leave Athens alone. This role would have been clearly in keeping with her position as Athenian patron and protector.

Trojan Women was the final play of a connected trilogy concerning the events at Troy along with Alexander, Palamedes and the satyr play Sisyphus. The trilogy hedges around the events of the Iliad. Alexander told the story of Paris’/Alexander's birth and the oracle foretelling the destruction he would bring to Troy. Palamedes focuses on Palamedes, the wisest of the Greeks at Troy, who is not mentioned by Homer at all. Trojan Women is also not a Homeric tale. It is centered on the events following the sack of Troy though the prologue does allude to the storms that would send Odysseus and the other Greeks away rather than towards their homes.

The play was produced in the spring of 415 BC and placed second. Because of the events it describes, many scholars have suggested that it is written as an indictment of the sack of Melos by the Athenians only a few months earlier in 416/415 BC. This is possible, but it is also likely that it is simply an anti-war tract with a more general aim. For it was becoming common practice on both sides of the war to kill all males and sell the children and women into slavery. According to Thucydides (5.32), the Athenians did it to the Scionians in 421 BC and the Spartans did the same to the Hysiaens in 417 BC (5.83). Even before this, the Athenians considered the same treatment for the Mytilineans (3. 50) while the Thebans slaughtered an entire Plataean garrison, sold the

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dominant tradition held that Athena raised Erechtheus herself. The representation of Figure 10 could be presenting this aspect of the myth also since the daughter is handing Erechtheus to Athena.
women as slaves and destroyed the city entirely (3.80). Thus it could be said that Euripides took the opportunity in 415 BC, during an ostensibly peaceful time, to point out some of the more atrocious aspects of war.

As the third part of a trilogy, the *Trojan Women* seems to round out the events of the first play bringing to a close the destruction of Troy in fulfillment of the earlier prophecy. In this way it is comparable to Aeschylus’ *Eumemides* which brings to an end the destructive cycle presented in *Agamemnon*. It is also interesting that it is in both plays that Athena appears. But, as will be demonstrated below, similarities between the two Athena’s are only surface deep. Euripides’ *Trojan Women* is also connected to Sophocles’ Athena in *Ajax Locrus*. For it is the events of that play which most likely precede the wrath of Athena at the opening of *Trojan Women*. Athena expresses anger over the lack of punishment served upon Ajax and for this reason asks Poseidon to send the Greeks rough seas for their homeward journey. A closer look at Euripides’ Athena, however, will show that any connection with the Athena of *Ajax Locrus* is also, most likely, superficial. Her attitude will seem more akin to that of Athena in *Ajax*.

As the play opens, Poseidon is on stage lamenting the fall of his beloved Troy. Three times he lays the blame for its destruction at the feet of Athena (10-11; 24; 46-47). But Athena, always the protector of the Greeks at Troy, has come to ask Poseidon for his aid in punishing them now (65-71):
ΑΘ: οὐκ οἶσθ᾿ ὑβρισθεῖσάν με καὶ ναοὺς ἐμοὺς;
ΠΟ: οἴδ’, ἡνίκ’ Αἴας εἶλκε Κασάνδραν βίατ.
ΑΘ: κοὐδέν γ’ Ἀχαιῶν ἐπαθέν οὐδ’ ἡκουσ’ ὑπο.311

Ath: I want, on the one hand, to gladded my enemy the Trojans and to bring a bitter homecoming to the Greek army.
Pos: Why is it that you, darting back and forth in this way, both hate so excessively and love overly much whom you favor?
Ath: Do you not know of the outrage they committed against me and my temple?
Pos: I know of it. I know that Ajax dragged Cassandra there by force.
Ath: And he suffered nothing from the Greeks. He heard nothing from them.

The Greeks have not punished Ajax for his desecration of Athena’s temple. The οὐδ’ ἡκουσ’ suggests that Euripides envisions no trial, no acquittal. The Greeks simply ignored the crime. Thus it appears that Euripides is not following the story of Sophocles’ Ajax Locrus. His Athena will get revenge (τοιγάρ σφε σὺν σοι βούλομαι δρᾶσαι κακώς—therefore I want to do some evil to them with your help; 73). This is not a goddess looking for courtroom justice.

As this description of Athena’s motives suggests, Euripides does not bind his goddess to the courts and law. There is, of course, a pseudo-trial scene in Trojan Women. The debate between Helen and Hecuba serves the function of the trial in Eumenides. In this way, as with the appearance of Athena itself, Trojan Women suggests comparison with Eumenides. And perhaps it is the case that we are being asked by virtue of Athena’s presence to recall Aeschylus. But the situation itself seems to call up comparison with Sophocles’ Ajax Locrus. But, as the discussion of the trial scene in Ajax Locrus
demonstrated, Athena there was a part of this justice of the courts as opposed to
vengeance. In this way, then, Euripides’ Athena is dissimilar to both Athena of Ajax
Locrus and Eumenides.

This brings us to Sophocles’ Ajax and Athena as she is represented there. Is
Trojan Women the anti-imperial tract that I have suggested Sophocles’ Ajax to be? Is
Athena here, as there, the representative of imperial power? Trojan Women does not
appear to be an anti-Athenian play in general. For the chorus tells us that they would
prefer to become slaves in Athens above any other place: τὰν κλεινὰν εἴθ᾿ ἐλθοίμεν
Θησέως εὐδαίμονα χώραν—would that we might go to that famous, fortunate land of
Theseus (207-208); τάδε δεύτερά μοι μετὰ τὰν ἱερὰν θησέως ζαθέαν ἐλθεῖν χώραν—
these things are for me second after the sacred, holy land of Theseus (218-219). Athens
becomes a haven for the dispossessed and downtrodden. But the chorus members have
never been to Athens. They are merely imagining how it must be. The Athens of their
minds does not really exist. Thus the position of this play in terms of Athenian imperial
power is more ambiguous than the chorus’ comments would lead one to believe. For
Athena has turned away from her favorites and will wreak havoc on her own.

What ill does Euripides’ prologue bode for the Athenians? The vengeance
Athena seeks against the Greeks at Troy is the first indicator. Athena tells Poseidon
when he asks when she wishes to act (77-86):

δότην πρὸς οἴκους ναυστολῶσι ἀπ᾿ Ἰλίου.
καὶ Ζεὺς μὲν ὀμβρὸν καὶ χάλαζαν ἀσπετοῦν

311 All text for Euripides’ Trojan Women comes from the Oxford edition of G. Murray.
πέμψει, δνοφώδη τ᾽ αἰθέρος φυσήματα·
ἐμοὶ δὲ δώσειν φησὶ πῦρ κεραύνιον,
βάλλειν Ἀχαιοὺς ναῦς τε πιμπράναι πυρί.
σὺ δὲ αὖ, τὸ σὸν, παράσχεις Αἰγαίων πόρον
τρικυμίας βρέμοντα καὶ δίναις ἄλος,
πλήσου δὲ νεκρῶν κοῖλον Ἑβοΐας μυχὸν,
ὡς ἄν τὸ λοιπὸν τὰμ᾽ ἀνάκτοπ᾽ εὐσεβεῖν
eιδώσ᾽ Ἀχαιοί, θεοὺς τε τοὺς ἄλλους σέβειν.

When they set sail from Troy for home. Zeus will send a rainstorm and a great hail-storm, a darkness and a roaring wind in the sky. And he will give me his thunderbolt to hurl at them and with which to set fire to the Achaean ships. Your dominion is over the Aegean crossing. Make the sea shake with waves and whirlpools, make full the innermost Euboean hollow with corpses so that the Greeks hereafter might know how to reverence the sacred places and to revere the other gods also.

Athena here wishes the Greeks a rather difficult sailing and this cannot be good for the Athenians. For the Great Dionysia always marked the opening of the spring sailing season and the Athenians, shortly after the performance of this play would be setting off for Sicily. Euripides presents his audience with their patron deity wishing a rough seas and great losses just before they send out the largest and most glorious armada of ships to date.

So it is that while Euripides does express praise of Athens itself through the mouths of the chorus, the prologue begins the play with a foreshadowing of disaster. The body of the play itself shows great sympathy for the victims of an attack such as the Athenians are planning against the Sicilians as well as those victims of assaults such as that on the Melians. Athena herself does not necessarily represent Athens here, but does embody the characteristics of power that I have argued came to be associated with Athenian imperialism. More so, however, she stands as a marker that the play the
audience is about to watch concerns Athens. The Achaeans themselves, as the aggressors and conquerors appear to be aligned with those Athenians who had aspirations in Sicily and who, in their enthusiasm for this conquest, have forgotten to revere their protector properly. They have forgotten who they are and where they came from and have crossed the line from heroes to *hubristes*.

*Trojan Women*, then, seems to be a play very similar to Sophocles’ *Ajax* in that it presents us with two versions of Athens, that imagined by the chorus and that represented by the Greeks who enslave them. Athena herself embodies the vengeful side of Sophocles’ Athena but she does so in a more moderate way. For this Athena, instead of constituting what is wrong with Athenian imperialism instead sees the problem and wishes to correct it. In this way she has become once again the Athena of *Persae* who punishes *hubris* and protects those who revere her. But the perpetrators of this *hubris* are her own beloved Athenians. Euripides seems to recognize this. For this is a fine line between wielding power and being savages. There is a fine line between deserving the protection of a goddess such as Athena and deserving her wrath. Euripides seems to recognize with the *Trojan Women* that the Athenians have passed a point a no return by overreaching the already stretched boundaries of their aggressive imperialism.
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