

“History, Philosophy, and Mythology in Aeschylus’s *Persians*”

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(1.) Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1451b5 – b7: διὸ καὶ φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον ποίησις ἱστορίας ἐστίν: ἡ μὲν γὰρ ποίησις μᾶλλον τὰ καθόλου, ἡ δ’ ἱστορία τὰ καθ’ ἕκαστον λέγει.

“Poetry is a more philosophical and more serious thing than history; poetry tends to speak of universals, history of particulars.” (trans. Janko).

(2.) Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1451b1, ἀλλὰ τούτῳ διαφέρει, τῷ τὸν μὲν τὰ γενόμενα λέγειν, τὸν δὲ οἷα ἂν γένοιτο.

“the former relates things that have happened, the latter things that may happen” (trans. Janko).

(3.) Herodotus, *Hist.* 6.21.2.

οὐδὲν ὁμοίως καὶ Ἀθηναῖοι. Ἀθηναῖοι μὲν γὰρ δῆλον ἐποίησαν ὑπεραχθεσθέντες τῇ Μιλήτου ἀλώσει τῇ τε ἄλλῃ πολλαχῆ, καὶ δὴ καὶ ποιήσαντι Φρυνίχῳ δρᾶμα Μιλήτου ἄλωσιν καὶ διδάξαντι ἐς δάκρυά τε ἔπεσε τὸ θέητρον, καὶ ἐζημίωσάν μιν ὡς ἀναμνήσαντα οἰκῆια κακὰ χιλίησι δραχμῆσι, καὶ ἐπέταξαν μηδένα χρᾶσθαι τούτῳ τῷ δράματι.

The Athenians acted very differently. The Athenians made clear their deep grief for the taking of Miletus in many ways, but especially in this: when Phrynichus wrote a play entitled “The Fall of Miletus” and produced it, the whole theater fell to weeping; they fined Phrynichus a thousand drachmas for bringing to mind a calamity that affected them so personally, and forbade the performance of that play forever. (Trans. A.D. Godley)

(4.) Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, 762 – 774

ἐγὼ δὲ χώρα τῆδε καὶ τῷ σῶ στρατῷ
τὸ λοιπὸν εἰς ἅπαντα πλειστήρη χρόνον
ὀρκωμοτήσας νῦν ἄπειμι πρὸς δόμους,
μήτοι τιν’ ἄνδρα δεῦρο πρυμνήτην χθονὸς
ἐλθόντ’ ἐποίσειν εὖ κεκασμένον δόρυ.
αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἡμεῖς ὄντες ἐν τάφοις τότε
τοῖς τὰμὰ παρβαίνουσι νῦν ὀρκώματα
ἀμηγάνοισι πράζομεν δυσπραξίαις,
ὁδοὺς ἀθύμους καὶ παρόρνιας πόρους
τιθέντες, ὡς αὐτοῖσι μεταμέλη πόνος:
ὀρθουμένων δέ, καὶ πόλιν τὴν Παλλάδος
τιμῶσιν αἰεὶ τήνδε συμμάχῳ δορί,
αὐτοῖσιν ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν εὐμενέστεροι.

Now I depart for my home, but first I swear solemnly to this land and to your people, for the fullness of all time to come, that no helmsman of my land, well equipped with arms, will ever come bringing war against this place. For we ourself, being then in our tomb, will act against those who violate my present oath, inflicting hopeless misfortunes upon them, making their ways dispirited and their paths ill-omened, till they repent of their effort; but if my oath is uprightly

maintained, and if they always honor their obligations to this city of Pallas by fighting at its side, we shall be more favorable to them. (trans. A. H. Sommerstein)

(5.) Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, 681 – 90; 700 – 706

κλύοιτ' ἄν ἤδη θεσμόν, Ἀττικὸς λεώς,
πρώτας δίκας κρίνοντες αἵματος χυτοῦ.
ἔσται δὲ καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν Αἰγέως στρατῶ
αἰεὶ δικαστῶν τοῦτο βουλευτήριον.
πάγον δ' ἴ' Ἄρειον ἴ' τόνδ', Ἀμαζόνων ἔδραν
σκηνάς θ', ὅτ' ἤλθον Θησέως κατὰ φθόνον
στρατηλατοῦσαι, καὶ πόλει νεόπτολιν
τήνδ' ὑψίπυργον ἀντεπύργωσαν τότε,
Ἄρει τ' ἔθουον, ἔνθεν ἔστ' ἐπώνυμος
πέτρα πάγος τ' Ἄρειος. . . .
τοιόνδε τοὶ ταρβοῦντες ἐνδίκως σέβας
ἔρυμά τε χώρας καὶ πόλεως σωτήριον
ἔχοιτ' ἄν οἷον οὔτις ἀνθρώπων ἔχει,
οὔτ' ἐν Σκύθαισιν οὔτε Πέλοπος ἐν τόποις.
κερδῶν ἄθικτον τοῦτο βουλευτήριον,
αἰδοῖον, ὀξύθυμον, εὐδόκτων ὑπερ
ἐγρηγορὸς φρούρημα γῆς καθίσταμαι.

Now hear my ordinance, people of Attica, who are judging this first trial for bloodshed. In time to come also, the people of Aegeus will always have this council of judges. <They will sit on> this hill, the abode and camping-place of the Amazons when they came as invaders, out of jealousy of Theseus, fortified this new citadel with high walls opposite the existing citadel, and sacrificed to Ares, whence this crag and hill was given the name of the Areopagus. . . . If, I tell you, you righteously fear an august body like this, you will have a bulwark to keep your land and city safe such as no one in the world has, neither among the Scythians nor in the land of Pelops. This council, untouched by thought of gain, reverend, quick to anger, a wakeful sentinel for the land to protect those who sleep, I hereby establish. (681 – 710, trans. A.H. Sommerstein)

(6.) Aeschylus., *Persians*, 620 -1, τὸν δαίμονα / Δαρεῖον = “divine Darius”

(7.) Aeschylus. *Persians*, 634, μακαρίτας ἰσοδαίμων βασιλεὺς, = “Blessed King, equal of divinities”

(8.) Aeschylus, *Persians*, 813 – 22

τοιγὰρ κακῶς δρᾶσαντες οὐκ ἐλάσσονα
πάσχουσι, τὰ δὲ μέλλουσι, κούδέπω κακῶν
κρηνὶς ὑπέστη, κάλλ' ἔτ' ἐκπιδύεται.
τόσος γὰρ ἔσται πελανὸς αἵματοσφαγῆς
πρὸς γῆ Πλαταιῶν Δωρίδος λόγχης ὑπο
θίνες νεκρῶν δὲ καὶ τριτοσπόρῳ γονῆ

ἄφωνα σημανοῦσιν ὄμμασιν βροτῶν
ὥς οὐχ ὑπέρφευ θνητὸν ὄντα χρὴ φρονεῖν·
ὔβρις γὰρ ἐξανθοῦσ' ἐκάρπωσε στάχυν
ἄτης, ὅθεν πάγκλαυτον ἐξαμᾶ θέρος.

Because of this evil they have done, they are suffering evil to match it in full measure, and have still to suffer more: the fountain of suffering has not stopped flowing— more of it is still gushing forth, so great will be the clotted libation of slain men's blood on the soil of the Plataeans, shed by the Dorian spear. The heaps of corpses will voicelessly proclaim to the eyes of men, even to the third generation, that one who is a mortal should not think arrogant thoughts: outrage has blossomed, and has produced a crop of ruin, from which it is reaping a harvest of universal sorrow. (Trans. A.H. Sommerstein)

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