

# Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1478–1480

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THE CHORUS OF ELDERS, after being informed of Agamemnon’s murder at the hands of his wife Clytemnestra, addresses the daimon who has engendered so many misfortunes for the race of the Tantalids (1468–1471). Clytemnestra approves of the chorus’s new insight into what has just transpired (1476) and calls the daimon τριπάχυντον, “thrice-gorged.” Tyndareus’ daughter goes on to explain that from such a daimon comes the desire to lick blood, so that a new discharge of pus is brought forth before the old wound is healed (1478–1480). I give Page’s text:<sup>1</sup>

ἐκ τοῦ γὰρ ἔρωσ αἱματολοιχὸς  
νεῖρᾱι τρέφεται· πρὶν καταλήξειαι  
τὸ παλαιὸν ἄχος, νέος ἰχώρ. 1480

1479 νεῖρᾱι Wellauer post Portum et Casaubon (νεῖρηι) : νεῖρει codd. : νεῖκει Scaliger : ἦρι Vossius : τεῖρει Margoliouth : καὶ νῆ Housman, *JPh* 16 (1888) 282–283 : μοῖρ’ ἐκτρ. Burges : δεινὸς vel καίει vel κάει vel καὶ αἶ Blaydes : νεοιτροφεῖται vel νεοιτραφεῖται Headlam, *CR* 14 (1900) 119 : νεαροτροφεῖται Thomson : νεῖται dub. West.

νεῖρᾱι, the Portus-Casaubon-Wellauer conjecture for the MSS. reading νεῖρει, has become, in M. L. West’s words,<sup>2</sup> the modern vulgate, accepted as such and printed by F. A. Paley,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Aeschylī septem quae supersunt tragoedias edidit D. Page* (Oxford 1972). For the apparatus criticus I have consulted also Th. Stanley, *Thomae Stanleii Commentarius in Aeschylī Tragoedias Samuele Butlero editus* (Halle 1832) 468; A. Wellauer, *Aeschylī tragoediae II* (Leipzig 1824) 111; C. J. Blomfield, *Aeschylī Agamemnon* (London 1826); R. D. Dawe, *Repertory of Conjectures on Aeschylus* (Leiden 1965) 119.

<sup>2</sup> *Studies in Aeschylus* (Stuttgart 1990) 222.

<sup>3</sup> *The Tragedies of Aeschylus* (Oxford 1861) 436.

U. von Wilamowitz,<sup>4</sup> A. W. Verrall,<sup>5</sup> H. Weir Smyth,<sup>6</sup> G. Italie,<sup>7</sup> E. Fraenkel,<sup>8</sup> J. Denniston-D. Page,<sup>9</sup> and Page. West<sup>10</sup> indicated his doubts by putting νεῖρει between daggers and placing the colon at the end of 1479 in parentheses. Wilamowitz<sup>11</sup> paraphrased 1478–1480: “libido sanguinis imis visceribus insita nova sanies, novum virus.”<sup>12</sup>

Fraenkel offered two reasons in support of νεῖραι:<sup>13</sup>

(1) From Hsch. v 245 νεῖραι· κατωτάται. οἱ δὲ κοιλίας τὰ κατώτατα and schol. Lycoph. 895 τὸ δὲ ἐννηροῖς τοῖς κοίλοις ἢ τοῖς καθύγροις, νεῖραι might be taken to mean “lowest, deepest, *imis medullis*” and not just “bowels.” This usage agrees with the usual site where desire is engendered and lodged in Greek and Latin poetry.<sup>14</sup>

(2) There would be no need to posit the ellipse of a verb if νέος ἰχώρ were put in an apposition to ἔρωσ ἀίματολοιχὸς νεῖραι τρέφεται, “The craving caused by the δαίμων, a craving for murder (αἱματολοιχός), manifests itself in fresh disease (before the old one has ceased).”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Aeschyli tragoediae* (Berlin 1914).

<sup>5</sup> *The Agamemnon of Aeschylus* (London 1904).

<sup>6</sup> *Aeschylus II* (London/New York 1926).

<sup>7</sup> *Index Aeschyleus*<sup>3</sup> (Leiden 1964).

<sup>8</sup> *Aeschylus, Agamemnon I–III* (Oxford 1950).

<sup>9</sup> *Aeschylus, Agamemnon* (Oxford 1957).

<sup>10</sup> *Aeschyli tragoediae cum incerti poetae Prometheus*<sup>2</sup> (Stuttgart/Leipzig 1998).

<sup>11</sup> *Aeschyli tragoediae* 236 on *Ag.* 1480.

<sup>12</sup> Other editors and translators offer the following translations: “For therefrom is bred this craving of the maw for blood to lick, ever new gore (?), ere the old woe be done” (Verrall); “For it is by his doing that a craving for blood to lap is nourished in the belly, new pus before the old woe has ceased” (Fraenkel); “From him it cometh that the lust for lapping blood is fostered in the maw; ere ever the ancient wound is healed, fresh blood is spilled” (Smyth).

<sup>13</sup> *Aeschylus, Agamemnon III* 701–702.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Catull. 76.20–21 *eripite hanc pestem perniciosamque mihi, / quae mihi subrepens imos ut torpor in artus*. Cf. R. Pichon, *Index verborum amatoriorum* (Paris 1902) 198 s.v. “medullas”; A. S. Pease, *Publi Vergili Maronis Aeneidos liber quartus* (Cambridge 1935) 144, on *Aen.* 4.66.

<sup>15</sup> Fraenkel, *Aeschylus, Agamemnon III* 702, following R. H. Klausen, *Aeschyli*

Regardless, Denniston and Page on the one hand and West on the other offered a number of objections of considerable weight against Wellauer's conjecture. To begin with, the bowels are not the site of any feeling in Greek poetry.<sup>16</sup> The form  $\nu\epsilon\iota\omega-$  for  $\nu\epsilon\iota\alpha\iota\omega-$  occurs very seldom, and there are no other parallels for the pro-substantival use of the adjective  $\nu\epsilon\iota\omega\varsigma$  in the whole of Greek literature save for Hsch. v 245.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, there is just one verb ( $\tau\rho\acute{\epsilon}\phi\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$ ) to govern two substantives ( $\xi\rho\omega\varsigma$ ,  $\iota\chi\acute{\omega}\rho$ ), and the ellipse of the main verb in the following clause ( $\pi\rho\acute{\iota}\nu\ \kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\lambda\acute{\eta}\xi\alpha\iota\ \tau\acute{o}\ \pi\alpha\lambda\alpha\iota\acute{o}\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\chi\omicron\varsigma$ ,  $\nu\acute{\epsilon}\omicron\varsigma\ \iota\chi\acute{\omega}\rho$ ) makes for a very unusual nominal sentence.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, if  $\nu\epsilon\iota\omega\bar{\alpha}$  were the correct reading, the appearance of the form  $\nu\epsilon\iota\omega\epsilon\iota$  in the MSS. would be hard to account for.<sup>19</sup>

In my opinion, Fraenkel's reasons do not support adequately the Portus-Casaubon-Wellauer conjecture. First, and leaving aside the matter of the adjectival or pro-substantival nature of  $\nu\epsilon\iota\omega\bar{\alpha}$ , Hesychius' gloss cannot be adduced in order to document the meaning "entrails" (= *medullae*) for a pro-substantival usage of  $\nu\epsilon\iota\omega\bar{\alpha}$ . If anything, it clearly points towards the meaning "abdomen, bowels" ( $\acute{\eta}\ \kappa\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega\ \kappa\omicron\iota\lambda\acute{\iota}\alpha$ , Ar. *Ran.* 485).<sup>20</sup> The

*quae supersunt* I.1 (Gotha 1833) 274; F. W. Schneidewin, *Aeschylus Agamemnon* (Berlin 1856) 177; N. Wecklein, *Äschylos Orestie* I (Leipzig/Berlin 1888) 128.

<sup>16</sup> West, *Studies* 222; Denniston/Page, *Aeschylus. Agamemnon* 206.

<sup>17</sup> Denniston/Page, *Aeschylus. Agamemnon* 206; cf. R. Pfeiffer, *Callimachus I* (Oxford 1949) 45 on Callim. *Aet.* fr.43.15; T. W. Peile, *The Agamemnon of Aeschylus*<sup>2</sup> (London 1844) 325; G. Burges, *The New Readings Contained in Hermann's Posthumous Edition of Aeschylus* (London 1853) 81. Callim. *Aet.* fr. 43.15, Poll. *Onom.* 2.209, and Hippoc. *Coa Praes.* 579 (V 718 Littré) all use the form  $\nu\epsilon\iota\alpha\iota\omega-$ .

<sup>18</sup> Denniston/Page, *Aeschylus. Agamemnon* 206, West, *Studies* 222.

<sup>19</sup> G. Hermann, *Aeschyli Tragoediae* (Leipzig/Berlin 1852), believed  $\nu\epsilon\iota\omega\epsilon\iota$  to be the dative of an unattested substantive  $\nu\epsilon\iota\omega\varsigma$ .

<sup>20</sup> Hsch. v 246  $\nu\epsilon\iota\omega\eta\ \kappa\omicron\iota\lambda\acute{\iota}\eta\ \kappa\omicron\iota\lambda\acute{\iota}\alpha\ \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\chi\acute{\alpha}\tau\eta$ ; cf. Choerob. *De orthographia* 241.22–24  $\nu\epsilon\iota\alpha\omega\alpha$ : σημαίνει δὲ τὸ ἔσχατον μέρος τῆς γαστροῦς ... εἰς αὐτὴν γὰρ πορεύεται τὰ ἐσθιόμενα; Erotian. *Hippocr.coll.* 97.9; *Suda* v 282; Eust. *Il.* II 144.22 Erbse; schol. *Il.* 5.239  $\nu\epsilon\iota\alpha\iota\omega\eta\ \delta' \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \gamma\alpha\sigma\tau\rho\acute{\iota}\ \tau\acute{\omega}\ \pi\alpha\chi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\acute{\epsilon}\rho\omega\ \eta\ \tau\acute{\eta}\ \kappa\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota$ ; schol. Nic. *Alex.* 20  $\nu\epsilon\iota\alpha\iota\omega\eta\varsigma$ ] (a)  $\nu\epsilon\iota\alpha\omega\alpha\ \tau\acute{o}\ \beta\acute{\alpha}\theta\omicron\varsigma\ \tau\acute{\eta}\varsigma\ \gamma\alpha\sigma\tau\rho\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ , (b)  $\tau\acute{\eta}\varsigma\ \kappa\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega\ \tau\acute{\eta}\varsigma\ \kappa\omicron\iota\lambda\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ . See also Blomfield, *Aeschyli Agamemnon* 305: "infima pars ventris. viscera.  $\kappa\omicron\iota\lambda\acute{\iota}\alpha\ \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\chi\acute{\alpha}\tau\eta$ . Hesych. eadem quae  $\nu\epsilon\iota\alpha\omega\alpha$ . Hom. II. E 539  $\nu\epsilon\iota\alpha\iota\omega\eta\ \delta' \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \gamma\alpha\sigma\tau\rho\acute{\iota}$ "; Schneidewin, *Aeschylus Agamemnon* 177.

usage of νεῖρή as a metonym for “entrails as the locus of desire” is, so far as I can tell, undocumented. Rather, such a notion was usually conveyed by the phrase ὑπὸ σπλάγχνοις (= *medullae*).<sup>21</sup> Desire manifests itself also in the lungs πνευμόνες,<sup>22</sup> heart ὑπὸ καρδίην,<sup>23</sup> breast ἐν στήθεσσι,<sup>24</sup> στέρνοις,<sup>25</sup> spirit θυμῷ,<sup>26</sup> soul ψυχῇ,<sup>27</sup> brains φρένες,<sup>28</sup> liver ἥπαρ,<sup>29</sup> and even the bones.<sup>30</sup> I have been unable to locate a single passage where the belly<sup>31</sup> or the bowels are said to be the seat of ἔρωσ.

With regard to the second of Fraenkel’s reasons in support of the modern vulgate, i.e., that νέος ἰχώρ is put in apposition to ἔρωσ αἵματολοιχὸς νεῖρᾶι τρέφεται, it is certainly true that the meaning of the phrase, so construed, would fit the common amatory motif of desire as sickness.<sup>32</sup> There are indeed parallels for the conceit of love as an infested or suppurating wound

<sup>21</sup> Herod. 1.57; Theoc. 7.99; Mosch. 1.17; Dion. Hal. *AR* 11.35.4; *Anth. Gr.* 5.56.4, 6.260.6; Opp. *Hal.* 4.17. See also W. Headlam and A. D. Knox, *Herodas. The Mimes and Fragments* (Cambridge 1922) 42; A. S. F. Gow, *Theocritus* II (Cambridge 1950) 156.

<sup>22</sup> Soph. fr.941.7, 15 R.

<sup>23</sup> Archil. fr.191.1 West<sup>2</sup>, Ap. Rhod. 3.296, Theoc. 11.15, Opp. *Hal.* 4.12. Cf. Eur. *Hipp.* 1274; Bion 1.17; *Anth. Gr.* 5.224.1, 12.17.1, 12.83.2, 12.130.4, 16.199.5.

<sup>24</sup> Hom. *Il.* 14.316, Hes. *Theog.* 122, Archil. fr.191.3.

<sup>25</sup> *Anth. Gr.* 5.293.4.

<sup>26</sup> Hom. *Il.* 14.316; *Anth. Gr.* 5.47.2, 9.442.2; Mus. 240.

<sup>27</sup> Eur. *Hipp.* 527; fr.431.3 K.; *Anth. Gr.* 5.267.10, 10.29.2, 12.80.1, 12.91.1, 12.92.8, 12.157.2.

<sup>28</sup> Hom. *Il.* 3.442, 14.294; Archil. fr.191.3; Sapph. fr.47.2; Eur. fr.138a.3 K.; Ap. Rhod. 3.1019; Theoc. 2.7, 13.48; Opp. *Hal.* 4.13.

<sup>29</sup> Theoc. 11.16, 13.71; *Anth. Gr.* 5.224.1; Anacreont. 33.27–28; schol. Theoc. 11.16.

<sup>30</sup> Archil. fr.193.3, Theoc. 3.17, Ap. Rhod. 3.763, *Anth. Gr.* 7.31.1.

<sup>31</sup> The only apparent exception occurs in Achaëus’ *Aethon* (*TrGF* II 20 F 6), ἐν κενῇ γὰρ γαστρὶ τῶν καλῶν ἔρωσ / οὐκ ἔστι, but this is clearly a metaphorical use.

<sup>32</sup> E.g. A. La Penna, “Note sul linguaggio erotico dell’elegia latina,” *Maià* 4 (1951) 187–209, at 207–208; E. Calderón, “Los tópicos eróticos en la elegía helenística,” *Emerita* 65 (1997) 1–15, at 5.

(ἔλκος, *ulcus*).<sup>33</sup> While this is true, it must be born in mind that there are no parallels in the whole of Greek literature to support the notion that it is ἔρωσ itself that is the pus (ιχώρ)<sup>34</sup> rather than the wound (ἔλκος) from which the purulent discharge oozes forth. The difference is very significant, and can be illustrated e.g. by *Anth.Gr.* 5.225, ἔλκος ἔχω τὸν ἔρωτα· ῥέει δέ μοι ἔλκος ιχώρ / δάκρυον, ὠτειλῆς οὔποτε τεροσμένης (Macedonius Consul).<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, νεῖο̄αι is not sufficiently defended and cannot stand. On such grounds, West<sup>36</sup> was inclined to assume that the MSS. reading νεῖο̄ει conceals a verb and not a noun. Such had been the diagnosis made by D. S. Margoliouth<sup>37</sup> and A. E. Housman<sup>38</sup> as well,<sup>39</sup> and hinted at by Blomfield.<sup>40</sup> For my part, I submit that νεῖο̄ει is indeed the corruption of a verb, which I believe to be κείο̄ει. In support of my conjecture I offer the following arguments (i–iv) from Aeschylean and Homeric usage, as well as from dramatic meaning.

<sup>33</sup> A. C. Pearson, *The Fragments of Sophocles* II (Cambridge 1917) 252, “sore or stab”; R. D. Brown, *Lucretius on Love and Sex* (Leiden 1987) 209–210, “festering wound or sore.” See e.g. *Soph. Ant.* 652, *Eur. Alc.* 878, *Theoc.* 11.15, *Bion* 1.17.

<sup>34</sup> On the meaning of ιχώρ here as “purulent discharge” see W. Headlam, “Aeschylea,” *CR* 12 (1898) 245–249, at 247; Wilamowitz, *Aeschyli tragoediae* 236, “nova sanies”; Denniston/Page, *Aeschylus. Agamemnon* 206.

<sup>35</sup> N. Hopkinson, *Greek Poetry of the Imperial Period. An Anthology* (Cambridge 1994) 89, “His love is a running sore that discharges tears.” On the strength of this passage I had initially considered that νεῖο̄ει τρέφεται might be a corruption of νῆ ῥεῖ τρέφεται <τε>, a rising tricolon, but while such a conjecture may be palaeographically easier, it creates more problems than it solves, construction-wise.

<sup>36</sup> *Studies in Aeschylus* 222.

<sup>37</sup> *Aeschyli Agamemno* (London 1884): τεῖο̄ει] νεῖο̄ει.

<sup>38</sup> “The Agamemnon of Aeschylus,” *JPh* 16 (1888) 244–290, at 282–283 (= *The Classical Papers of A. E. Housman I* [Cambridge 1972] 55–90, at 84).

<sup>39</sup> For his part, G. Thomson, *The Oresteia of Aeschylus* II (Cambridge 1938) 110, took νεῖο̄ει τρέφεται to be a corruption of the unfamiliar compound νεαροτροφεῖται, “to be nourished anew.”

<sup>40</sup> *Aeschyli Agamemnon* 306: “in hoc loco subaudiendum videtur ῥέει.”

(i) Confusion of ν and κ, although not frequent, can be documented in the MSS. of *Agamemnon*:<sup>41</sup>

17 ἐντέμων MVT : ἐκτέμων (ss. F ἐν) FG

541 ἐκδακρύειν T : ἐνδακρύειν

1473 ἐκνόμως schol. vet. in T<sup>c</sup> : ἐννόμως T (antem correctionem)  
FG

while confusion of initial ν and κ appears in *Pers.* 310 νικώμενοι  
M : κικώμενοι O.<sup>42</sup>

(ii) The verb κείρω and its compounds such as ἐπικείρω are documented in the Aeschylean corpus with the meaning “desecare, vastare” (*Supp.* 666, *Pers.* 953)<sup>43</sup> and “demetere, occidere” (*Pers.* 921, 951),<sup>44</sup> as well as in Sophocles.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, it is safe to posit that κείρω belongs to the tragic lexis. The thrice-gorged δαίμων of Tantalus’ race (1476–1477) is ultimately the cause of the hunger for blood that devours (κείρει) them. Notice that in *Pers.* 921 (as well as in Soph. fr.210.37, 46) the subject of the action expressed by ἐπικείρω is a δαίμων also: οὐς νῦν δαίμων ἐπέκειρεν. It might be countered that κείρω construed without need of an explicit direct object is a remarkable construction, but on the other hand it is quite easy to supply a pronominal direct object from the previous line (1476–1477, τὸν τριπάχυντον / δαίμονα γέννης τῆσδε κικλήσκων). So far as I can tell, κείρω construed in absolute use is documented at least once in the Homeric corpus with the meaning “eat up, destroy utterly,” in *Od.* 1.376–378 (= 2.141–143) εἰ δ’ ὕμιν δοκέει τόδε λωΐτερον καὶ ἄμεινον / ἔμμεναι, ἀνδρὸς ἐνὸς βίοτον νήποινον ὀλέσθαι, / κείρετ’. Doubtlessly Aeschylus might have come across these lines. Furthermore, there are a number of passages in the Aeschylean corpus where a transitive verb does not take a pronominal personal object as

<sup>41</sup> ν might also have been affected by the nearness of νέος (1480).

<sup>42</sup> R. D. Dawe, *The Collation and Investigation of Manuscripts of Aeschylus* (Cambridge 1964) 121–122.

<sup>43</sup> Italie, *Index Aeschyleus* 152 s.v. κείρω 2.

<sup>44</sup> Italie, *Index Aeschyleus* 106 s.v. ἐπικείρω.

<sup>45</sup> Soph. fr.210.37 R., ὦ δαίμον, ὦ δύσδαιμον, ὦ κείρας [ἐ]μέ, 46 δαίμων ἔκειρεν ἐν δίκῃ σε, δαίμων.

would be expected.<sup>46</sup> To limit ourselves to *Agamemnon*, see *Ag.* 69 (ὑποκαίων οὔτ' ἐπλείβων), 369 (ἔπραξεν ὡς ἔκρανεν),<sup>47</sup> 917 (αἰνεῖν, cf. 1403), 1069 (ἐποικτίρω), 1082 (ἀπώλεσας), 1128 (τύπτει), 1562 (ἐκτίνει). Thus, the construction of κείρω without an explicit direct object is compatible with Aeschylean practice.<sup>48</sup>

I turn now to arguments from dramatic sense and meaning. My contention here is that Aeschylus portrays the daimon as a savage beast that causes a monstrous lust for blood to prey (κείρει) on the race of the Tantalids, and whose repeated bites leave infected wounds that do not cease to suppurate. Such a conceit would resonate with the portrayal of other monstrous deities in the *Agamemnon*, such as the Erinyes.

(iii) What dramatic purpose might κείρει serve, and would it offer a better sense than νείρει? The daimon who arouses the desire to lap blood (ἔρωσ ἀιματολοιχός) is described as “thrice-gorged” (τριπάχυντον 1476) and assimilated to a crow perched (ἐκπαθείς) on top of a corpse<sup>49</sup> (1472–1473). The bestial nature of the daimon comes through also in the use of χηλῆ βαρεία (1660) to describe its clawed or cloven feet.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, the feeling he engenders, ἔρωσ ἀιματολοιχός, acquires the traits of a flesh-eating beast that licks blood, an image that can be illustrated from *Ag.* 827–828 ὠμηστής λέων / ἄδην ἔλειξεν αἵματος τυραννικοῦ, *Sept.* 692 ὠμοδακῆς ... ἕμερος.<sup>51</sup> Precisely, one of the meanings of κείρω in Homer is “tear, eat greedily, of

<sup>46</sup> H. Friis-Johansen and E. W. Whittle, *Aeschylus. The Suppliants II* (Copenhagen 1980) 596–597; see also W. S. Barrett, *Euripides. Hippolytus* (Oxford 1964) 325, on ellipse of the object in Eur. *Hipp.* 848–851.

<sup>47</sup> See Fraenkel's note, *Aeschylus, Agamemnon II* 193.

<sup>48</sup> For a parallel of an asyndetic verb without a direct object see T. W. C. Stinton, *Euripides and the Judgement of Paris* (London 1965) 1–77, at 71, on Eur. *Andr.* 289. As for the explicative asyndeton that the reading κείρει (or any other verb) would introduce in 1478–1480, see e.g. *Ag.* 951, 1261, 1284, 1428, and Fraenkel, *Aeschylus, Agamemnon II* 432–433, III 582, 597, 673.

<sup>49</sup> Fraenkel, *Aeschylus, Agamemnon III* 699–700.

<sup>50</sup> See Italic, *Index Aeschyleus* 237 s.v. “ungula, unguis.” H. D. Broadhead, *The Persae of Aeschylus* (Cambridge 1960) 84.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. also Opp. *Hal.* 2.453 τόσσοσ ἔρωσ καὶ τοῖσιν ἐν ἰχθύσιν αἵματος ἀνδρών.

beasts” (LSJ s.v. III.1):<sup>52</sup> *Il.* 11.560 (a donkey) κείρει τ’ εἰσελθῶν βαθὺ λήϊον (cf. Lycoph. *Alex.* 215 λέοντα κείροντα ὀδόντι καὶ γνάθοις λήϊον), *Il.* 21.203–204 (eels and fishes) τὸν μὲν ἄρ’ ἐγγέλυσες τε καὶ ἰχθύες ἀμφεπένοντο / δημόν ἐρεπτόμενοι ἐπινεφρίδιον κείροντες, *Od.* 11.578 (vultures) γῦπε δέ μιν ἐκάτερθε παρημένω ἦπαρ ἔκειρον. It would be expected for such a beast-like daimon to be said to “devour” (κείρει) the race of Tantalus, just as its intervention is said to “bite” the chorus’s heart: 1469–1471 δαίμον, ὃς ... / κράτος <τ’> ἰσόψυχον ἐκ γυναικῶν / καρδιόδηκτον ἐμοὶ κρατύνεις.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, the daimon is closely linked to acts of human flesh-eating in that he metes out punishment for the cannibalistic feast served by Atreus: 1501–1502 τοῦδ’ ὁ παλαιὸς δορυς ἀλάστωρ / Ἀτρέως χαλεποῦ θοινατήρος.

(iv) The Erinyes are traditionally said to drink blood.<sup>54</sup> In *Ag.* 1188–1190 Aeschylus portrays these demons as a chorus of blood-drinking (καὶ μὴν πεπωκῶς γ’, ... / βρότειον αἷμα) revellers. More relevantly, the Erinyes are described also as beast-like monsters (*Eum.* 192–193 λέοντος ἄντρον αἱματορρόφου / οἰκεῖν τοιαύτας εἰκός) intent on feeding on human blood (264–266 ἀλλ’ ἀντιδοῦναι δεῖ σ’ ἀπὸ ζῶντος ῥοφεῖν / ἐρυθρὸν ἐκ μελέων πελανόν· ἀπὸ δὲ σοῦ / βοσκὰν φεροίμαν πώματος δυσπότου).<sup>55</sup> Another entity closely related to the action of the *alastor*, Ares, is portrayed as forcing his way through human blood in order to render justice to the blood clots left out after the eating of Thyestes’ children:<sup>56</sup> 1509–1512 βιάζε-

<sup>52</sup> Hsch. κ 2006 κείρει· τέμνει· κατεσθίει, *Suda* κ 1478, Eust. *Il.* 3.253.22, schol. *Il.* 11.559 [κείρει] κόπτει τοῖς ὀδοῦσιν· ἐσθίει· μεταφορικῶς. See also H. Ebeling, *Lexicon Homericum* I (Leipzig 1885) 745 s.v. κείρω 2, “depascor.”

<sup>53</sup> Contrast *Ag.* 740 δηξίθυμον ἔρωτος ἄνθος. The link between καρδιόδηκτος and δηξίθυμος had been noticed by Blomfield, *Aeschyli Agamemnon* 305, and Schneidewin, *Aeschylos Agamemnon* 176.

<sup>54</sup> Pearson, *The Fragments of Sophocles* III 7–8.

<sup>55</sup> The connection between αἱματολοιγός and the Erinyes as seen in *Eum.* 193, 205, 305 had been noticed already by Klausen, *Aeschyli quae supersunt* 274.

<sup>56</sup> Schneidewin, *Aeschylos Agamemnon* 180, identifies μέλας Ἄρης with ἔρωος αἱματολοιγός.



ται δ' ὁμοσπόροις / ἐπιρροαῖσιν αἱμάτων / μέλας Ἄρης, ὅποι  
 δίκαν προβαίνων / πάχνην κουροβόρωι παρέξει. The char-  
 acterization of the *alastor* as a carnivorous monster that eats up  
 (κείρει) the Tantalids, which I propose, fits well and parallels  
 thematically the gruesome portrayal of other avenging deities,  
 such as the Erinyes and Ares, as devouring fiends<sup>57</sup> intent on  
 punishing the ghastly feeding of Thyestes' children to his  
 father.

Taking arguments i–iv into account, the text and punc-  
 tuation I propose for *Ag.* 1478–1480 are as follows (West's  
 colometry:

ἐκ τοῦ γὰρ ἔρωσ αἱματολοιχὸς κείρει· τρέφεται  
 πρὶν καταλήξει τὸ παλαιὸν ἄχος νέος ἰχώρ. 1480

It is from him that comes the desire to lick blood that devours  
 (them): before the old wound ceases, new pus is bred.<sup>58</sup>

February, 2009

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<sup>57</sup> On Ares' portrait as a flesh-eating fiend in *Agamemnon* see Verrall, *The Agamemnon of Aeschylus* 84, and compare Hom. *Il.* 5.289 αἱματος ἄσαι Ἄρηα, Aesch. *Sept.* 244 τούτω γὰρ Ἄρης βόσκεται, φόνω βροτῶν.

<sup>58</sup> This article is a part of a research project (HUM 2005–04375) financed by the M. E. C. of Spain. I wish to express my deep gratitude to the readers for *GRBS* for their helpful suggestions and criticisms. I regret that I was unable to consult A. H. Sommerstein, *Aeschylus II Oresteia* (Cambridge [Mass.]/London 2009).