FROM *ETHNOS* TO *POLIS*
The Furies and Apollo

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> Through too much glut of blood drunk by our fostering ground
> the vengeful gore is caked and hard, will not drain through.
> Aeschylus[1]

In 1915, Gournig Yanikian witnessed the murder of his older brother during the Genocide of Armenians in Turkey. Because he was a pacifist, Yanikian sought no revenge and instead fled to Iran where he became a successful engineer. In 1946, at the invitation of the United States Government, he and his wife came to America where they were granted citizenship. He published several books on the contributions of the Armenian people to world civilization, discussing at length the horrors of the massacres that took place between 1894 and 1922. Despite his success, however, Yanikian was tormented by nightmares related to his brother's death and his own failure to avenge that death.

After 1921, when an Armenian, Soghomon Tehlerian (''The Lightning''), assassinated Talat Pasha, the Turkish Minister of the Interior who had signed the order for the Genocide, no acts of revenge were carried out by Armenians for many years. It was Gournig Yanikian who in 1973 took up arms; and he did so, he claimed, to free himself from his nightmares. As an act of ''good will'' he invited two Turkish diplomats into his hotel room where he was to present them with two rare paintings. When they arrived he shot them both. Immediately, he phoned the police and told them very calmly what he had done, explaining that he had committed the murders in order to stop the nightmares. It worked. Before he

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died in February 1984, he claimed that after the assassinations he never again suffered a nightmare related to the death of his brother.

Yanikian's assassinations have since become the model for a series of assassinations carried out by two Armenian terrorist organizations (The Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia and The Justice Commandos for the Armenian Genocide). To date (August 1984), thirty-five Turkish diplomats have been slain for the avowed purpose of "drawing the world's attention to the Forgotten Genocide."

A fundamental question presents itself: how can someone with Gournig Yanikian's ethnic memories survive in a modern nation-state without losing his mind in his own bedroom or his life in the state's electric chair? It is hardly an idle question. According to the Center for Defense Information, there are at present forty-two different wars, rebellions, and civil uprisings, and the unwritten issue of all this bloodshed is, according to Flora Lewis, the question of "How may a people enter the modern era without a loss of pride or identity?"[2]

This question arose for the first time when the city-state, the *polis*, arose, since the city-state brought with it a new sense of justice based upon the equality of tribes. An eloquent and subtle answer to Flora Lewis's question is provided by Aeschylus in his *Oresteia* (a trilogy of plays including *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, and *The Eumenides*), first produced in 458 B.C., in the period just following the breakdown of the political power of the aristocratic family-clans.[3] Although the question was first addressed in the fifth century in Greece, it is a question that is lived today practically everywhere in the world. Aeschylus's myth presents a modern, psychological dilemma.

The Furies and the Memory of Evil

> The accusation came upon me from my dreams,
> and hit me, as with goad in the mid-grip of his fist
> the charioteer strikes,
> but deep, beneath lobe and heart.
> The executioner's cutting whip is mine to feel
> and the weight of pain is big, heavy to bear.
> *The Eumenides*[4]

Apollo has ordered the young man Orestes to murder his own mother, Clytemnestra. This act is justified, Apollo claims, on the grounds that Clytemnestra murdered Orestes' father, Agamemnon. She was angry at Agamemnon because he had sacrificed their daughter to Artemis so that wind

would fill his sails and take the Achaeans to the Trojan War. However, if Orestes kills his mother, he will be forever tormented by the Furies, underworld female figures who cause suffering to anyone who has harmed his own kin. Their torment is carried out invisible to everyone except their victim, who is driven mad by their approach. Apollo promises Orestes that he will protect him from the Furies. And herein lies the central issue of Aeschylus's *Oresteia*: does Apollo have the right to block the Furies in their divinely appointed task?

The call for revenge in Aeschylus's lines comes "from my dreams" and strikes "deep, beneath lobe and heart." The words "vengeance," "avenge," and "revenge" all derive from the Latin *vindicare* meaning "to claim, to set free, to punish."[5] *Vindicare* is a compound of the Latin words *vim*, meaning "force," and *dic*, "to say." Early Anglo-Saxon usage suggests that revenge was associated with anger trapped like wind in one's stomach. The "re-" prefix denotes a "turning back." Revenge, therefore, relates to a past claim that must be returned to in order for something which has been in bondage to be released. This return, the etymology tells us, issues in a force which speaks like an angry wind in the stomach.

Let us propose that Orestes is a contemporary Armenian and that Clytemnestra and the Furies symbolize Armenian life itself, the mother-family with its dark memories of all the crimes committed against Armenians in history. "We hold the memory of evil," the Furies claim. This is *ethnos*-thinking, the thinking of a people. Apollo and Agamemnon, on the other hand, depict the city-state, the *polis* and its demand for order and democratic law, its preference for civic duty over family allegiance, its appreciation for abstractions such as written contracts, constitutions, and laws guaranteeing the equality of *all* peoples. Not all blood-letting can be seen through this polarity, however; because the Furies' duty is to avenge harm to one's own kin, the Apollo–Furies polarity is useful only for seeing through situations where kinship (or race) is involved.[6]

If we imagine Aeschylus's drama in this way, then any Armenian who participates, actively or passively, in what the Armenians call White Massacre (the loss of Armenian culture in the American Melting Pot, in the Russian communist dream, in the "new" Turkey where Armenian language and Armenian religion are outlawed, or in any modern state) kills his mother. White Massacre, the Furies would argue, is matricide, the real danger of the Armenian Diaspora. The questions that Aeschylus poses for

Orestes are questions posed for every Armenian and every person in the world who has a shred of ethnic culture remaining: how can I belong to the modern nation-state and assure the survival of my people?

The *polis* in both the Greek and in the modern mind is a place of written contracts (the social contract, the marriage contract, constitutions, manifestos, amendments, writs of habeas corpus, mortgages), whereas *ethnos* prefers the nonverbal contracts understood in the blood. The duties demanded by the *polis* must be written down since they extend beyond one's kin and are likely to be forgotten or ignored; the duties of *ethnos* loyalties do not require anything so abstract as the written word.

In the realm of *ethnos*, one instinctively knows to defend his children or to protect his mother. As the representative of *ethnos*-thinking, Clytemnestra subordinates the *polis* and its contracts to matters of the blood: she murdered Agamemnon only because he had murdered their daughter and not to satisfy a political ambition. He had murdered their daughter, on the other hand, so that Poseidon would arouse the wind and he could fulfill his duty to the *polis* according to the contract he had made with the other chieftains. This contract was intended to protect another contract, the marriage of Menelaus and Helen. Clytemnestra murdered out of instinctual necessity, needing no written contract to remind her of what she had to do, whereas Agamemnon murdered out of political necessity.

Clytemnestra and the Furies live today in what one Armenian calls "the rage trapped under the skin."[7] They are angry at what has been done in history, at massacres black and white, at slavery, at apartheid, at genocide, and they insist that this history not be glossed over or forgotten. Their worst enemy is amnesia. In the beginning of *The Eumenides*, the ghost of Clytemnestra must arouse the Furies from a deep sleep and remind them of their sacred duty to torment the murderer:

> Sisters, we have had wrong done us.
> When I have undergone so much and all in vain.
> Suffering, suffering, bitter, oh shame shame,
> unendurable wrong.
> The hunted beast has slipped clean from our nets
> and gone.
> Sleep won me, and I lost my capture.
>
> (Ll. 143–48)

These words suggest that Gournig Yanikian's nightmares were to awaken him to a task, that sleep to the extent that it is an amnesia is an enemy,

but sleep as an opportunity for arousing through nightmare is a friend of *ethnos*.

In the same spirit, an Armenian man who supports the assassination of Turkish diplomats said to me, "Armenians are forgetting what was done to their grandparents. They are asleep! They want to become American middle class, they are too comfortable! This is White Massacre and they must wake up before it is too late!"[8] He had his brother in mind when he spoke these words. His brother, arguing from the *polis* perspective, said, "There is no excuse for terrorism. What does my brother expect me to do? It is time we got on with our lives. The Genocide was sixty years ago."

The Furies have a deeper appreciation for the past, Aeschylus suggests, because they are older Gods than Apollo or Zeus. They are outraged at the force used by these younger Gods, force that would sacrifice blood-ties for the interests of the *polis* and its new order. This order can be maintained, so it seems, only so long as the Furies remain asleep. As long as Gournig Yanikian forgets the massacre of his family and concentrates instead on his mortgage and income tax, his business profits and his parking fines, there are no dead Turkish diplomats in his hotel room. This concentration is "newer" than Armenianness.

The *polis* came second, *ethnos* first, the Furies claim. They refer to the laws of the *polis* disdainfully as "young laws" (l. 491) and claim that, if the *polis* allows matricide to go unpunished, then all these young laws are of no account. "The laws of the modern world are meaningless," an Armenian man told me, "if the Turks do not have to pay, if they do not even have to admit the crime."[9] Unlike the Germans after the Jewish holocaust, the Turkish government has refused to acknowledge the Genocide of the Armenians, arguing that the events took place prior to the ascendancy of Kemal Ataturk and the "modernizing" of Turkey.

How are we to understand the ontological priority attributed to *ethnos* by the Furies? Their argument suggests that the *polis* is built upon the foundation of an archaic form of justice and that ignorance or neglect of this justice will result in the collapse of the *polis*. The "old" in the term "old laws" is not so much a reference to ancient history as it is to psychological foundations. An ignorance of these foundations (the Furies are the granddaughters of Mother Night who takes the triplicate form of Night-Order-Justice) results in a *polis* without soul, without foundation. The Old Law is the *logos* of the psyche, which, according to Heraclitus, is endlessly deep.

The Turks' denial of the Genocide represents a form of whitewashing for many Armenians and figures in the color imagery of *The Oresteia*. For Aeschylus, the *polis* is imagined in tones of gold or white, in the white robe of Apollo and in the gold strings of his bow, and the Furies cry, "For sheer white robes I have no right and no portion" (*The Eumenides*, l. 352). They are "black" (l. 52), Pythia (the priestess of Apollo) says, and Apollo adds that they "hold the evil darkness of the Pit below" (l. 72). Whiteness and White Massacre, the imagery of racial amnesia, are their sworn enemies; they wear black robes (l. 370) and remember wrongs done in darkness.

From the period of the first *poleis*, families were breaking apart. By the early fifth century, Pindar—who belonged to the ancient family of the Aegidae—was living in Thebes, but there were Aegidae in Sparta and Aegina whom Pindar called his "kin." What does he mean by "kin"? Demosthenes proves kinship by showing that two men offer funeral sacrifices at the same tomb over the same fire. Kinship was determined by male lineage. The right to perform these sacrifices was relegated to males, and the ancestors who received the sacrifices were exclusively male. Fustel de Coulanges explains that, for the Greeks of the classical period, "a female transmitted neither being nor worship."[10] The mother was expelled from her family on her wedding day and considered a "daughter" in her husband's family, her blood relationships considered annulled. By the time of Plato, kinship had lost more of its sense of blood-bond and had come to mean "the community of the same domestic gods" (*Laws* 5). The role of the mother in kinship had been completely abrogated.

What had been lost was a *perspective* on the role of the mother's blood in kinship, a perspective expressed in the image of the Furies.

The Furies' reminders of the mother's blood are incomprehensible to the Apollonic mind. Apollo's command to the Furies suggests the voice of American law addressing the Armenian spirits of Gournig Yanikian's nightmares after the assassinations:

> Get out, I tell you, go and leave this house. Away
> in haste, from your presence set the mantic chamber free,
> else you may feel the flash and bite of a flying snake
> launched from the twisted thong of gold that spans my bow
> to make you in your pain spew out the black and foaming
> blood of men, vomit the clots sucked from their veins.
> This house is no right place for such as you to cling
> upon; but where, by judgment given, heads are lopped

> and eyes gouged out, throats cut, and by the spoil of sex
> the glory of young boys is defeated, where mutilation
> lives, and stoning, and the long moan of tortured men
> spiked underneath the spine and stuck on pales. Listen
> to how the gods spit out the manner of that feast
> your loves lean to. The whole cast of your shape is guide
> to what you are, the like of whom should hole in the cave
> of the blood-reeking lion, not in oracular
> interiors, like mine nearby, wipe off your filth.
> Out then, you flock of goats without a herdsman, since
> no god has such affection as to tend this brood.
>
> (*The Eumenides*, ll. 179–97)

The Furies reply by telling Apollo that their duty is "to drive matricides out of their house" (l. 210). When Apollo asks, "what if it be the woman and she kills her man?" (l. 212), the Furies reply according to the *ethnos* logic, "Such murder would not be the shedding of kindred blood" (l. 213).

Obsessed with blood, the Furies demand: "You must give back for her blood from the living man, red blood of your body. . ." (*The Eumenides*, ll. 264–65). They want Orestes to be "blood-drained" (l. 302) and to become a "wraith" (l. 303). The Furies inhabit the old world of blood feuds, blood vows, and blood brothers. In this spirit, the Furies in the Armenian soul, angry at the murder of the Mother Race, ask for "blood." Gournig Yanikian tried to satisfy them with the blood of the Turkish diplomats. "Without imaginal understanding," James Hillman says, "we may expect killing."[11] But what kind of blood do the Furies want? What is their desire for concreteness?

The Furies' literalism is, in the words of David Miller's essay "On Literalism,"[12] a language we no longer understand, whose letters we can no longer read. It is a "deeper literal" than the ordinary literal (the notion that Armenianness is nothing more than blood-type, bone structure, hair texture, pigmentation, and genetic programming). The Furies' literalism is a psychological perspective on race as blood and body. Miller's idea of "deeper literal," therefore, does not require us to set up an opposition between Armenianness as a biological reality and Armenianness as a psychological reality. The "red blood of your body" the Furies demand is the *connection to concreteness* that gets lost in the White Massacre. The loss of this perspective is expressed in life when one becomes a "racial ghost," bloodlessly white in a world where everyone speaks English,

wears bluejeans, eats Big Macs, and jogs. Seen as the "deeper literal," the blood the Furies call for in Yanikian's nightmares is *neither literal nor metaphorical*; rather, to paraphrase Miller, without the Furies as the image of literalness, literalness will be enacted literally in life. The Furies are important because they are the keepers of this perspective on the concrete, a perspective which gets lost in terrorism and assassination.

Hesiod claims that the Furies, Alecto ("relentless"), Tisiphone ("avenging"), and Megaera ("jealous") were born when drops of blood from Uranus's castration wound fell upon Gaia.[13] Aeschylus, however, holds to the view (also claimed by Hesiod)[14] that they are the daughters of Night. Their primary responsibility is to avenge violence against mothers. Homer says that Oedipus was tormented by the Furies who claimed he had caused his mother's suicide. Alcmaeon's murder of his mother, also on the orders of Apollo, caused the Furies to pursue him and drive him mad.

The Furies are incited to action by violations against the course of nature. In the *Iliad*, when Hera grants the power of speech to the horse Xanthus, the Furies annul that power. In this same spirit Heraclitus offered his famous dictum that, if the Sun should leave his course, the Furies would find him. The nature the Furies care most about is the body and the earth. It was not only Hesiod who connected the Furies to the Earth; the title Demeter Erenys was used in Thelpusa. These sources (Homer, Hesiod, and Heraclitus) suggest that violence to the mother was evil in the eyes of the Furies because it was against nature. A *polis* that believed that the mother "transmitted neither being nor worship" was in the Furies' view a *polis* without foundation in the earth, without perspective on concreteness.

In long conversations with an Armenian photographer, I congratulated him on his ability to transform his outrage at the Genocide into the beauty of his photography. He said to me, "You have misunderstood. What I am doing is *not* art, it is historical documentation. I show these pictures of the Genocide to arouse the Armenian people. It is the first step in the reclaiming of the land. What I am doing has more to do with the soil than with the soul." He said I could not possibly understand because I had been White-Massacred so long ago that I had lost the soul of my people and therefore was no longer connected to the land. "It is the danger of America," he concluded. Behind him on his living-room wall was a photograph of Mount Ararat with the words "OUR LAND."

When I argued that the way to preserve a people is to preserve its soul

through images—ethnic imagery, Armenian story-telling, Armenian rugs, the old books, the metaphor of Mount Ararat, the dance, even through photography—he answered that, if Armenians followed my prescription, in five hundred years Armenianness would have vanished from the earth. Once again the argument turned to time (the sixty years since the Genocide, the five hundred years until the disappearance of Armenian culture), and I felt the deep suspicion in *ethnos*-thinking of the passage of time and the appreciation of the past. The Furies' perspective toward time is different from Apollo's. The Furies repeatedly call up the past, memorize the ancestors, study the history, commemorate wars. They would slow time down by mulling over memories, while Apollo wishes it to speed up, causing amnesia. The perspective of the Furies is not only of the earth and the body; it is also the concrete aspect of history or "what really happened."

Orestes expects time to absolve him of his guilt. It will, he thinks, have greater power to eliminate his guilt than would his sacrifice of pigs: "Time, in his aging, overtakes all things alike" (*The Eumenides*, l. 246), a statement which echoes the Turkish government's response to the accusations of genocide: Who can worry about what happened so long ago? Adolf Hitler in 1939 said, "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenian?"[15] "The stain of blood dulls now and fades upon my hand," Orestes says (*The Eumenides*, l. 280). *Polis*-thinking looks for time to erase what *ethnos*-thinking eternally commemorates. Each April 24 Armenians around the world gather at shrines to remember the Genocide, but these commemorations are outlawed in Turkey.

Orestes appeals to Athene, in her fifth-century mask as Zeus's daughter and patroness of the *polis*, a Goddess who does not require the "work of her spear" (*The Eumenides*, l. 289). It is through her wisdom that Orestes hopes to gain his acquittal: "so may she set me free from what is at my back" (*The Eumenides*, l. 298). Perhaps Gournig Yanikian had similar hopes when he first looked upon that American Athene in the New York harbor, that the 'wisdom' of the modern world would free him of his nightmares.

In addition to blood-sucking and blood-letting, the Furies also haunt by means of "the power and terror of our music" (*The Eumenides*, ll. 308–09), a chanting that is a "scatter of wits, frenzy and fear, hurting the heart, song of the Furies, binding brain and blighting blood in its stringless melody" (ll. 329–33). They have the same mother, Night, that Rhea has, and it might be that their song resembles the rhythms of Rhea's

drumming at the mouth of Night's cave, for just as Rhea's rhythms summon humanity back to the place of the origins where we experience the *archai*, the "first principles" of being, so do the chants of the Furies return one to racial origins, to those first principles that instill a people with their identity. Gournig Yanikian's nightmares were such chants.

Aeschylus says that the Furies' place in the scheme of things has been ordained by the Gods (*The Eumenides*, l. 391), and yet they have been cast out by these same Gods (ll. 385–86). Their place is underground and "in gloom" (l. 396). It is by cheating that they fulfill their duty, a duty that is "absolute" (l. 393) and "given by destiny" (l. 392). We cannot live without them, although their place is not in the psychological sunlight but deep and occult: "nor am I without place though it be underneath the ground," the Furies say. But what is their place in the life of the *polis*?

The Trial

Midway through *The Eumenides*, Aeschylus shifts the scene to the temple of Athene. Here Athene assembles her court on Ares' Hill, where the Amazons sacrificed their horses to the God of War and where, she says, "juries shall always meet" (l. 689). This location indicates that for Athene there is a martial aspect to judicial decisions, that *ethnos* and *polis* are at war.

The Furies and Apollo argue their positions before her court as Orestes kneels in adoration, but the die seems already cast in Apollo's favor since Athene is the patroness of the city-state. Nevertheless, the Furies expect a fair trial since Athene is the daughter of adjudicating Zeus and a sister of Dike (Justice). In addition, they may feel assured by the image of the Gorgon that Athene bears; Pythia, the priestess of Apollo, compares the Furies to the Gorgons (ll. 48–49).

At issue is Apollo's right to block the Furies' tormenting of Orestes. Athene claims the matter is too important for any one person to decide and that a *group* of mortals must pass judgment (l. 470). "It is a hard course and will hurt," she claims (l. 481), but the court she is establishing will stand for "all time to come" (ll. 484 and 572). This trial, we are meant to understand, is therefore taking place today, twenty-five hundred years after the first production of *The Oresteia*, in the psychological lives of people like Gournig Yanikian. Because it is a trial of the soul, the court where it takes place will stand wherever the interests of *ethnos* and *polis* must be reconciled.

In their argument the Furies claim that Clytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon was a less serious crime than Orestes' murder of Clytemnestra. Constantly referring to blood, they say that "the man she killed was not of blood congenital" (l. 605) and that "he has spilled his mother's blood upon the ground" (l. 653).

Apollo's rebuttal has very little to do with the loss of Agamemnon's blood, that is, with the *fact* of his blood. Rather, Apollo appeals to ideas regarding Agamemnon's political importance as "lord of the host of ships" (l. 637) and to the idea that it was unseemly for so great a warrior to die in the bath at the hands of a woman. Clytemnestra's crime threatens the very ideas upon which (Apollo feels) the *polis* is based, principally the idea of a man's stature in the eyes of the community. Apollo goes so far as to argue that Orestes' murder of Clytemnestra is not in fact matricide since

> the mother is no parent of that which is called
> her child, but only nurse of the new-planted seed
> that grows. The parent is he who mounts. A stranger, she
> preserves a stranger's seed, if no god interferes.
> (Ll. 658–61)

He offers the example of Athene herself, as a child born of a father without a mother. He concludes this speech with a vow to Athene to "make great your *polis*" (l. 668).

Athene admits her bias for the masculine:

> There is no mother anywhere who gave me birth,
> and, but for marriage, I am always for the male
> with all my heart, and strongly on my father's side.
> So, in a case where the wife has killed her husband, lord
> of the house, her death shall not mean most to me.
> (Ll. 736–39)

This disenfranchising of the mother is unnatural and, therefore, evil in the eyes of the Furies. Is it possible that the exponent of this disenfranchisement can serve as the arbiter of *ethnos–polis* reconciliation?

The Furies want to know if their mother, Night, is listening to these insulting proceedings. The bias against them is so great that they feel they might be annihilated, but if Night is listening the Furies feel their role in the scheme of things will be assured. Mother Night is necessary to the cause of the Furies because *all* the Gods owe their very existence to her. In the succession of Gods, she arrives very early in almost every tradition.

In the Orphic myth of creation she rules the universe from her cave in the treble form of Night-Order-Justice. This new court must take into account the original Justice that gave birth to the Furies. In their final summation to the jury, the Furies claim, "Here our destruction, or our high duties confirmed" (l. 747).

The votes are then taken, and Athene's "good citizens" cast an equal number for each side. Athene casts the deciding vote and saves Orestes from the Furies. Orestes is so overjoyed he swears to defend the *polis* even after he dies.

The Furies, however, are furious. They unleash a speech worthy of the most extreme *ethnos* terrorism:

> Gods of the younger generation, you have ridden down
> the laws of the elder time, torn them out of my hands.
> I, disinherited, suffering, heavy with anger
> shall let loose on the land
> the vindictive poison
> dripping deadly out of my heart upon the ground;
> this from itself shall breed
> cancer, the leafless, the barren
> to strike, for the right, their low lands
> and drag its smear of mortal infection on the ground.
> (Ll. 778–87)

An Armenian man who supports the assassinations of the Turkish diplomats gave me a poem written by an Armenian in 1905 (following eleven years of massacres by Turks), a poem with the tone of this speech. This poem has become, in his words, the "rallying cry" of Armenian resistance. It is addressed to all future "Assassins, Terrorists, Avengers," and a few lines will be enough to show the resemblance in spirit to the Furies' chorus in Athene's court:

> This way, your righteous and invincible hands of iron,
> Departing from your military and fiery chests furiously,
> Plunge into the ground, the crimes and treason with
> a merciless blow. . . .
>
> You rushed through the doors of dark and criminal
> spirits, like the conscience, whose search is
> over when the truth is found
> You became the law, watching crime-worshipping evil. . . .
>
> They saw your ruthless sword, was the sword of
> destiny,

> They saw that your daggers, in search of sinful necks,
> were again shining. . . .
>
> But still we have to thunder death, we have to spread
> death, upon those evil and ungodly palaces of
> hatred,
> Beneath those cornerstones the spirit of our people's
> thoughts and body is beating. . . .
>
> Your person invades their nightmares with its iron
> steps searching for revenge. . . .
>
> Therefore, stand up, again and again, sons of the
> Armenian people, heroes, freedom fighters,
> Stand up, annihilate and turn into ashes
> These guilty and bloody palaces of our
> executioners.[16]

Athene seeks to calm the Furies' rage by means of oratory (the first politicians were called *rhetors*), but this poem, like the Armenian photographer's pictures, is not meant to be art. It is "historical documentation" and seeks to incite concrete actions: the Furies have no interest in an aesthetic Orestes.

Nevertheless, Athene's words are crucial to finding a way through this battle between *ethnos* and *polis*. She explains to the Furies that a place has been preserved for them for eternity, "deep hidden under ground, that is yours by right where you shall sit on shining chairs beside the hearth to accept devotions offered by your citizens" (ll. 804–08). Athene claims that, even in the most politicized of *poleis*, ethnicity has a cult and that the temple of this cult is at the center, deep and hidden.

Athene is concerned about terrorism: "Do not in too much anger make this place of mortal men uninhabitable" (ll. 824–26). When Armenian terrorists killed eight people in the Paris Orly Airport, when six hundred people died in the invasion of the Sikhs' Golden Temple in the Punjab, when six hundred Tamils are killed by Sinhalese guerrillas in Sri Lanka, when three hundred Palestinians are massacred by Christian militia in refugee camps in Beirut, and when Gournig Yanikian emerges from his hotel room with a handgun, Athene argues that it is time to place the fury "underground."

Her speech does not satisfy the Furies: "That they could treat me so! I, the mind of the past, to be driven under the ground, out cast, like dirt! The wind I breathe is fury and utter hate. Earth, ah, earth, what is this

agony that crawls under my ribs?'' (ll. 870–75). The ''angry wind caught in the stomach'' insists on coming out into the daylight.

As a last resort, Athene appeals to the Goddess Peitho (Persuasion) who gives her the right words and phrases capable of converting the Furies. Athene begins to picture the Furies' court of honor as ''a place free of all grief and pain'' (*The Eumenides*, l. 893), and she grants them the power of making families prosperous or poor. Persuasion wins them over.

This sudden transformation of the black-robed Furies into the red-robed Eumenides (good spirits) is difficult to believe. What is it the Furies recognize in Peitho? That the Furies and Peitho share a special relationship to the Goddess Ananke (Necessity) has been pointed out by Hillman in his essay on Ananke. ''The image by which the flesh lives is the ultimate ruling necessity,''[17] Hillman claims, and the image that binds race to the body and to the blood is the Furies. Peitho persuades the Furies because she understands this necessity.

As Hillman shows, Peitho and Ananke share a special connection to the image of the necklace, an image associated with destiny. This connection is seen in the etymology of Ananke's name (neck, neck-band, collar, yoke)[18] and the fact that Hesiod claims Pandora is given golden necklaces by Peitho. ''The undressed throat is the unarticulated and inarticulate flesh without a specific sense of its own necessity,''[19] Hillman says. What the Furies and Peitho both see in Necessity is the very thing with which Peitho inspires Athene's speech—the Furies are to crown each family with its own destiny.

What persuades the Furies is the promise of recognition. Why else enthrone them in the center under the hearth, if not to be centered in them? When Yanikian kills the Turkish ambassadors, it is ''merely literal'' and non-psychological *because the Furies' perspective is lost, ''the image by which the flesh lives.''* He only knows that the nightmares have ceased and is relieved. When the Arab poet Al-Samau'al wrote, ''our souls are stuck on the edges of our swords, and nowhere else will you find our souls,'' he was describing the condition of Yanikian's literalism. The soul not only gets stuck, Miller says, but it gets ''stuck in [its] . . . stuckness.''[20] It is the cul-de-sac of tribal revenge which appeases the Furies but does not place their perspective in the center.

How then do the Furies live on if Yanikian (or any one of us) is to remain a ''good polis citizen''? How are they to be enthroned in lived experience? Consider the case of Nicholas Gage, a former investigative reporter for the *New York Times*, who has written a moving account[21] of

his attempts to track down the Communist guerrilla leader, Achilleas Lykas, who ordered the torture and execution of his mother in 1948 during the Greek civil war. The story has an added poignancy since Gage's mother was executed for protecting her children, and her prize child, as is common among Greek peasant women, was the nine-year-old son, Nicholas Gage himself.

"No one doubted that she died so I could live,"[22] Gage says. In 1980, Gage began to research his mother's story:

> I had to find my mother, to see her with the eyes of an adult, and to uncover her secret feelings about the world that caged her. I had to do this to learn how she wanted me to deal with her murderers. I had to discover if, as she climbed toward that ravine to her execution, she was Antigone, meeting death with resignation because she had purposely defied a human command to honor a higher law of the heart, or if she was Hecuba, crying out for vengeance. What did she want me to do?[23]

He did not learn the answer to this question until April 1982 when he finally tracked down the judge who had ordered his mother's execution.

On two different occasions, Gage had the opportunity to kill his mother's executioner but was prevented from doing so by the memory of a woman who had talked with his mother days before her death: she "did not speak of the pain of her torture, although she was too badly beaten to stand, but only of her longing to embrace her children one last time."[24] This thought prevented him from pulling the trigger:

> Like the mulberry tree in our yard, which still stands although the house has fallen into ruins, that love has taken root in us, her children, and spread to her grandchildren as well.
>
> If I had killed Lykas, I would have had to uproot that love in myself and become like him—purging myself, as he did, of all humanity or compassion.
>
> Killing Lykas would give me relief from the pain that had filled me for so many years. But as much as I want that satisfaction, I have learned that I can't do it. My mother's love, the primary impulse of her life, still binds us together, often surrounding me like a tangible presence. Summoning the hate necessary to kill Lykas would have severed the bridge connecting us and destroyed the part of me that is most like Eleni.[25]

The appeal to be a good citizen was not in itself sufficient to stop Gage from pulling the trigger. He returned for a second time to Lykas's apartment. He was persuaded (we might say the Furies were persuaded) when they were given a place, when their perspective, the bond of son to

mother, the 'almost tangible,' was accepted. The Furies have become "guests of the *polis*" (ll. 1012–019). For Gage to have killed the executioner, as he himself says, would have been to kill the bond. The Furies are not converted by Athene; they are *persuaded* and take their honored place as Gage's perspective. This perspective sees to it that the bond survives. It is a covenant the Furies agree to while remaining autonomous and alien.

Epilogue

There is a scene in James Joyce's *Ulysses* in which Leopold Bloom enters a Dublin pub. There he is challenged by a fat bigot, identified only as The Citizen, to state before everyone present his nationality. Knowing him only as a Jew, The Citizen is surprised when Bloom answers that Ireland is his nation. But Bloom is quick to add, "And I belong to a race too . . . that is hated and persecuted. Also now. This very moment. This very instant."[26] The Citizen calls him a Zionist daydreamer, "Are you talking about the New Jerusalem?" Bloom answers that he is talking about injustice.

Another man in the pub, John Wyze Power, challenges Bloom to "stand up to it then with force like men," but Leopold Bloom, the new "womanly man," delivers his famous speech,

> But it's no use. . . . Force, hatred, history, all that. That's not life for men and women, insult and hatred. And everybody knows that it's the very opposite of that that is really life.[27]

"What?" asks another man in the pub. And Bloom answers, "Love . . . I mean the opposite of hatred. I must go now."

Joyce based this scene on Odysseus's encounter with Polyphemus in the Cyclops' cave: Polyphemus had challenged the hero to identify himself. For Joyce, the Citizen's Irishness is one-eyed, accepting nothing that is not Irish and confusing the modern nation-state with the Irish tribe. Bloom's Jewishness, on the other hand, is two-eyed, evolved, and he is able to see his own "Irishness" alongside his Jewishness. Bloom is more Christlike than the Christian Citizen, urging men to love and then making his rapid departure.[28]

In Leopold Bloom we find the ideal citizen, the citizen of the New Bloomusalem, as Joyce calls it. Bloom does not deny his tribal foundations. With his fury in the center, he does not lose his perspective on the concrete nature of his Jewishness. But he invokes the power of the true *polis* by honoring his Furies in silence.[29] The true *polis* is founded on psy-

chological insight and not the "merely literal" Jerusalem that The Citizen had in mind when he accused Bloom of Zionist daydreams. Bloom invokes the power of the true *polis*, the one grounded in the Furies' perspective, by his call for justice for all tribes and against the force that has made history a nightmare. The soul has become unstuck from the edge of the sword. *Ulysses*, a book in which a Jew is father to a Celt, is a document of this New Jerusalem. And under the hearth of this city, naturally, blood-sucking Furies are held in high veneration:

> In the terror upon the faces of these [Furies]
> I see great good for our citizens.
> While with good will you hold in high honor
> These spirits, their will shall be good, as you steer
> your city, your land
> On an upright course clear through to the end.
> (Ll. 990–95)

1. *The Libation Bearers*, ll. 66–67. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from *The Oresteia* are taken from the Richmond Lattimore translation in *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, vol. 1, ed. David Grene and Richmond Lattimore (New York: The Modern Library, 1942).

2. *The New York Times*, November 8, 1983.

3. The principal turning point in this breakdown was Cleisthenes' creation of local *phylai* in 508 B.C. which had the effect of breaking up the voting blocks of the aristocratic families. For additional information on the democratic reforms preceding Aeschylus's active period, see Eric Voegelin's *Order and History: The World of the Polis* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), p. 119f. and p. 243f.

4. Ll. 155–61.

5. Eric Partridge, *A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958), p. 155, and *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 2 (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 3604.

6. This is complicated by the fact that there are no longer any 'pure races' left on the earth, 'pure' in the sense of blood-lines being unmixed with other races. The term "race" is no longer used by anthropologists. But regardless of what has happened to the blood or what has happened to the language of the anthropologists, atrocities are committed every day for the sake of one's "race." Can a Greek or Western fantasy such as the *ethnos–polis* polarity be applied to such non-Western countries as India, Sri Lanka, Nicaragua, or Turkey? It can, insofar as such nations have founded their governments on the Greek idea of the *polis*. Wherever the *polis* exists with its notion of the equality of tribes and its standards of justice based on that equality, Zeus, Apollo, and Athene are present. And wherever a people have imagined, thought, and acted for the sake of blood-related kinship, the Furies are present. And where has this *not* been the case? The Tamils of Sri Lanka, the Jews in Russia, the Armenians in Turkey, the Druse in Lebanon, the Basques in Spain, and many more are all waging battles as statements of their identity in nations professing equality.

7. Michael Arlen, cited by Irving Sheldon in *The Providence Journal*, November 20, 1983.

8. Private interview with the author.

9. Ibid.

10. *The Ancient City* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., n.d.), pp. 56–57.
11. *The Dream and the Underworld* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 115.
12. *Spring 1984* : 157.
13. *Theogony* 133–87.
14. *Theogony* 211–32.
15. Dickran H. Boyajian, *Armenia: The Case for a Forgotten Genocide* (Westwood, N.J.: Educational Bookcrafters, 1972), p. 311.
16. Poem by Siamanto (Adam Yardjanian, 1878–1915), composed in 1905, trans. Rev. Sahag Vertanesian and Taniel Varoujan Santourian, in private circulation.
17. "On the Necessity of Abnormal Psychology," in *Facing the Gods* (Spring Publ., Inc., 1980), p. 17.
18. Ibid., pp. 5–6.
19. Ibid., p. 36, n. 49.
20. *Spring 1984* : 153.
21. "My Mother Eleni: The Search for Her Executioners," *New York Times Magazine* (April 3, 1983).
22. Ibid., p. 22.
23. Ibid., p. 26.
24. Ibid., p. 65.
25. Ibid.
26. (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), p. 332.
27. Ibid.
28. Richard Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey* (New York: Oxford University Press), p. 86.
29. We get Bloom's negative view of literalized Zionism in his description of the geographical promised land: "No not like that. A barren land, bare waste. Volcanic lake, the dead sea: no fish, weedless, sunk deep in the earth. No wind would lift those waves, grey metal, poisonous foggy waters. Brimstone they called it raining down: the cities of the plain: Sodom, Gomorrah, Edom," p. 61.