Sons of the Gods, Children of Earth

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Preface

I attempt in the Introduction to set forth my critical goals and presuppositions. It may be helpful, however, if I indicate briefly here some of my more mundane operating assumptions.

Although I have extensively revised the parts of the text originally presented separately, I have retained a certain amount of repetition of critical issues and even of historical data from chapter to chapter in order to make each chapter internally coherent. I have tried to limit this repetition to those critical concepts and data that seem to me essential to the argument of the individual chapters.

Except where otherwise noted, all translations of Greek cited in the text are my own, and it may help the reader if I explain my procedures. Although I have made no effort to retain the original meter or some modern approximation, in translating poetry I have been at pains to retain as much as possible of the content and emphases of the original line units, occasionally using italics to suggest the force of an emphatic particle in the Greek or an emphatic initial position in a line or colon. Nowhere am I more painfully aware of the truth of the old cliche traduttore traditore than in dealing with the language of Aeschylus, in which the deliberate exploitation of the inherent ambiguities of language reaches some sort of ne plus ultra. Although at times I have envied the complexity that a text like Goldhill’s book-length study of the Oresteia can achieve by not translating—in many cases not even paraphrasing—Greek that is notoriously difficult even for a trained classicist, I feel strongly that the advantage of accessibility to the Greekless reader is well worth the risks of distortion. The field of classical liter-
ature and thought daily demonstrates its capacity to engage the lively intelligences of an extraordinary range of intellectuals who happen not to know Greek but are conscientious in their efforts to benefit from the works of those who do. I have accordingly transliterated all the Greek terms I cite, but I have not been completely consistent. In the case of proper names, I have transliterated all but those that struck me as most familiar in their Latinate form. Even with these I have usually preferred the more Greek k to c in names such as Herakles or Kimon, but here too I have not been completely consistent. On this matter we are still in a transitional phase in which what looks too Latinate or too gratuitously pedantic to one reader looks normal to another. My subjective criterion has been how I find myself pronouncing the name in my classes. Thus, though I have taught Lattimore’s translation of the Iliad for many years, I still cannot bring myself to say “Achilleus” rather than “Achilles”—much less write “Akhilleus.”

In transliterating Greek I have indicated long e’s and o’s but have ignored long a’s, i’s and u’s. This practice is arbitrary, but it corresponds to the Greeks’ own use of different symbols only for the long e and long o. It has, moreover, the advantage of indicating to the Greekless reader that such important value terms as timê, dikê, and aretê do not end in a silent e.

Preliminary efforts that culminated in this text were made possible by an NEH Fellowship in 1979–80. Subsequent released time from Miami University is also gratefully acknowledged. In the course of so long a project I have incurred many debts from those who read and offered comments on various drafts of various chapters. If I omit any names here through oversight, I beg these persons not to perceive the omissions as ingratitude: Judith deLuce, Walter Donlan, Michael Gagarin, Peter Green, Mitchell Greenberg, Judith Hallett, Britton Harwood, Albert Henrichs, Susan Jarratt, Frank Knobloch, W. Thomas MacCary, Steven A. Nimis, Douglass Parker, Charles Segal, Linda Singer, Georges Van Den Abeele, Nat Wing, Betsy Wing, R. P. Winnington-Ingram, Froma Zeitlin. If at times I have too sharply differentiated my views from those of these scholars’, I can only hope that this too is not perceived as ingratitude—only as proof of how far they are from any share in my own errors.

Quite apart from his kindnesses as a reader, Steven Nimis has been a guide of saintly patience through the Hell of Gutenb erg into the Purgatory of Microsoft Word.

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texts that are the subject of this volume: Cedric Whitman, Eric Have- 
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My debt to Fredric Jameson is of a quite different order. Encount­
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tion of the relation between my political commitments and my pedagogical 
and scholarly activities. Some eight years of attending the summer In­
stitutes on Culture and Society, of which Fred was a founder and has 
remained a crucial component, have confirmed and developed my 
sense that there is a broader audience for the issues raised here than 
the “community” of classical scholars who previously tended to define 
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Some of the following chapters include material adapted from texts 
that have previously appeared in print: Chapter 1, “How Conservative 
Is the Iliad?” Pacific Coast Philology 13 (October 1978); Chapter 2, “Class 
Ambivalence in the Odyssey,” Historia 24/2 (1975); Chapter 3, “The 
Myth of Pindar’s First Nemean: Sportsmen, Poetry, and Paideia,” Har­
vard Studies in Classical Philology 78 (1974), and “Towards a Dialectical 
Hermeneutic of Pindar’s Pythian X,” Helios, n.s. 9 (1982); Chapter 5,

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