

Brill's Companion to Euripides

Volume 1

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Brill's Companion to Euripides

VOLUME 1

Edited by

Andreas Markantonatos



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For Daniel I. Iakov and James Morwood

εἴθ' ἐπ' ἐμοὶ μὲν εἴη,
δυναίμαν δέ σε πέμψαι
φάος ἐξ Ἄϊδα τεράμων
καὶ Κωκυτοῖο ῥεέθρων
ποταμῖα νερτέρᾳ τε κώπᾳ.

EURIPIDES, *Alcestis* 455–459



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Preface

The project at hand has been in gestation for a long time. Perhaps it is not too bold to argue that this inordinately extended maturation period was in fact more than necessary for the development of this large-scale volume to accord with both numerous impressive advances in the field of Euripidean studies and an admirable contemporary summation of scholarly interpretations and elucidations concerning fundamental characteristics of Attic drama and its ancient and modern reception. My own aim has been not only to invite together some of the best minds in Euripidean scholarship to form a powerful team of acute and astute contributors, but also to select for detailed presentation and treatment those dominant themes and ideas pervading Euripides' extant and fragmentary dramatic legacy. I am confident that each contributor has put forth the greatest possible effort to make the relevant material more accessible to the general reader, without at the same time shunning sophisticated discussions of a wide range of important debates which will resonate with the advanced scholar. Like the *Brill's Companion to Sophocles* (Leiden/Boston 2012) this multi-authored companion to Euripides, comprising 49 stand-alone chapters (the editor's Introduction included) accompanied by a separate bibliographical index, as well as providing a state-of-the-art research picture of the most interesting aspects of Euripidean theatrical production and addressing fundamental questions that continue to puzzle and provoke today, seeks to challenge readers to rethink their assumptions and reappraise current theories, and therefore to sharpen their response to a broad array of current vigorous scholarly disputes and arguments.

I should like to thank all those with whom I have discussed various points concerning the general outline of this volume, and those who have offered helpful advice in coping with a Goliath of a manuscript. I am particularly grateful to three people who read and checked this extremely demanding material, and thereupon made many valuable improvements and resolved difficulties. These are the Senior Acquisitions Editor of Classical Studies Mirjam Elbers and the Assistant Editor of Classical Studies at E.J. Brill Giulia Moriconi, who, in their perceptive and sensible criticism, have offered a considerable number of useful suggestions. And the anonymous reader, who has corrected the manuscript, always with great learning and ingenuity. Sadly, two old friends and teachers are no longer alive to thank: Daniel I. Iakov, who was kind enough to produce an essay on Euripides' *Alcestis*, drawing upon his profound knowledge of this challenging but fascinating play; and James Morwood, who readily agreed to offer a thoughtful analysis of Euripides' *Suppliant Women*. I owe a

great deal to their kindly encouragement and masterly grasp of editorship. They will be greatly missed but never forgotten. This volume is duly dedicated to their memory. It is also a pleasant duty to record my indebtedness to Helene Foley, who advised me on the closing Reception Section with a genuinely open and enquiring mind and offered a most useful Introductory Note, thus affording better access to the relevant chapters. Last but not least, I owe a special debt of thanks to my parents, who have not only inspired me in so many ways but also shared with me some stimulating and challenging ideas that forced me to rethink afresh about several issues associated with Euripidean tragic poetry. It is my ardent hope that this voluminous companion to Euripides, which has taken me much longer than planned to complete, will enable a greatly improved understanding not just of Euripidean theatrical heritage in particular, but also of Attic drama in general.

It should be noted that in order to improve the readability of this collection of erudite chapters every effort has been made to ensure that the volume stays consistent, while at the same time retaining each author's stylistic intent and special editorial preferences. The abbreviations follow the conventions of *L'Année Philologique* and the *OCD*⁴ or will be obvious.

Andreas Markantonatos

Athens—Kalamata, May 2020

Abbreviations

D-K	H. Diels/W. Kranz (2004–2016) [1952 ⁶], <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> (Berlin)
FGrHist or FGrH	<i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> , F. Jacoby at al. (Berlin/Leiden 1923–)
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae Consilio et Auctoritate Academiae Borussicae Editae</i>
KPS	R. Krumeich/N. Pechstein/R. Seidensticker (eds.) (1999), <i>Das griechische Satyrspiel</i> (Darmstadt)
LCS	A.D. Trendall, <i>The Red-figured Vases of Lucania, Campania and Sicily</i> (Oxford 1967)
LIMC	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> (with Supplement) (Zurich/Munich/Düsseldorf 1981–2009)
LSJ ⁹	H.G. Liddell/R. Scott/H.S. Jones/R. McKenzie et al., <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> 9th edition (with Revised Supplement) (Oxford 1940, 1968, and 1996)
Magnelli	E. Magnelli (ed.), <i>Alexandri Aetoli Testimonia et Fragmenta</i> (Studi e Testi 15; Florence 1999)
OCD ⁴	S. Hornblower/A. Spawforth/E. Eidinow (eds.) (2012), <i>The Oxford Classical Dictionary</i> , 4th ed. (Oxford)
PCG	<i>Poetae Comici Graeci</i> , ed. R. Kassel/C. Austin, 8 vols. (Berlin/New York 1983–1995)
POxy	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> , B.P. Grenfell/A.S. Hunt et al. (London 1898–)
Schwartz	E. Schwartz (ed.), <i>Scholia in Euripidem</i> , 2 vols. (Berlin 1887–1891)
SM	<i>Pindarus Pars I Epinicia, Pars II Fragmenta—Indices</i> ed. B. Snell/H. Maehler (Stuttgart/Leipzig 1987–1989)
TLG	<i>Theasaurus Linguae Graecae</i> (University of California, Irvine)
TrGF	<i>Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i> , 5 vols. (Göttingen 1971–2004)

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- 29.1 Athenian volute krater with *Actors and chorus of a tragedy and satyr play in the company of Dionysus and Ariadne (The Pronomos Vase)*. Side A. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale H3240 (81673). Name vase of the Pronomos Painter, ca. 400 BC. Photo©Archivio dell'arte-Pedicini photographers 667
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Notes on Contributors

James Barrett

teaches Classics at Colby College. He is the author of *Staged Narrative: Poetics and the Messenger in Greek Tragedy*, University of California Press, as well as numerous articles on Greek tragedy and philosophy.

Luigi Battezzato

is Professor of Greek Literature at the Università del Piemonte Orientale, Vercelli/Alessandria (Italy). He is the author of a commentary on Euripides' *Hecuba* (Cambridge 2018), two monographs on tragedy (*Linguistica e retorica della tragedia greca*, Rome 2008; *Il monologo nel teatro di Euripide*, Pisa 1995), and many papers on ancient Greek literature, culture, language and metre. He taught as a visiting professor at the Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa, at the Istituto Universitario di Studi Superiori di Pavia, and at the École Normale Supérieure de Lyon.

Joshua Billings

is Assistant Professor at Princeton University and the author of *Genealogy of the Tragic: Greek Tragedy and German Philosophy* (Princeton University Press 2014).

Claude Calame

is Director of Studies at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris (Centre AnHiMA: Anthropologie et Histoire des Mondes Antiques); he was Professor of Greek language and literature at the University of Lausanne. He taught also at the Universities of Urbino and Siena in Italy, and at Yale University in the US. In English translation he published *The Craft of Poetic Speech in Ancient Greece* (Cornell University Press 1995), *The Poetics of Eros in Ancient Greece* (Princeton University Press 1999), *Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece* (Rowman/Littlefield 2001, 2nd ed.), *Myth and History in Ancient Greece. The Symbolic Creation of a Colony* (Princeton University Press 2003), *Masks of Authority. Fiction and Pragmatics in Ancient Greek Poetics* (Cornell University Press 2005), *Poetic and Performative Memory in Ancient Greece* (CHS—Harvard University Press 2009), *Greek Mythology. Poetics, Pragmatics and Fiction* (Cambridge University Press 2009); with Bruce Lincoln, *Comparer en histoire des religions antiques* (Presses universitaires de Liège 2012); and, more recently, in French *La tragédie chorale. Poésie grecque et rituel musical* (Les Belles Lettres 2017).

D.M. Carter

is Associate Professor in Greek at the University of Reading. His research interests are in Greek drama and Greek political thought. He is the author of *The Politics of Greek Tragedy* (Exeter 2007) and editor of *Why Athens? A Reappraisal of Tragic Politics* (Oxford 2011).

John Davidson

retired as Professor of Classics at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, in 2010. He has published extensively on Greek drama, especially the relationship between the Homeric texts and the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides, as well as the Reception of the Classics in New Zealand poetry. Six collections of his own poetry have been published, and a seventh, this time consisting entirely of Classics Reception poetry, is scheduled to be published in late 2019. He is an Honorary Member of the Hellenic New Zealand Congress.

Markus Dubischar

is Associate Professor of Classics and currently Charles Elliott Scholar of Latin and Greek at Lafayette College. He is the author of *Die Agonszenen bei Euripides: Untersuchungen zu ausgewählten Dramen* (Stuttgart: Metzler 2001). He has also published numerous articles and book chapters on Greek tragedy, the transmission of knowledge in antiquity, and the history of Classical scholarship.

Francis Dunn

teaches Classics at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he also conducts research, primarily on Greek tragedy. His publications include *Tragedy's End: Closure and Innovation in Euripidean Drama* (1996), *Present Shock in Late Fifth-Century Greece* (2007), *A Commentary on Sophocles' Electra* (2019), several edited volumes, and numerous articles, chiefly on Greek literature.

Marco Fantuzzi

teaches Classics at the University of Roehampton, London. He is a member of the board of *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, *Materiali e Discussioni*, and *Seminari Romani di Cultura Greca*. Among his publications: *Bionis Smyrnaei Adonidis epitaphium*, Liverpool 1985; *Ricerche su Apollonio Rodio*, Rome 1988; *Tradition and Innovation in Hellenistic Poetry*, Cambridge 2004 (with R. Hunter); *Achilles in Love*, Oxford 2012. He co-edited (with R. Pretagostini) *Struttura e storia dell'esametro greco*, Rome 1995–1996, (with T. Papanghelis) *Brill's Companion to Greek and Latin Pastoral*, Leiden 2006, (with C. Tsagalis) *A Companion*

to the *Epic Cycle and Its Fortune in the Ancient World* (Cambridge 2015). His full-scale commentary on the *Rhesus* ascribed to Euripides (Cambridge University Press) and a synthetic introduction to the same tragedy in Bloomsbury's series 'Companions to Greek and Roman Tragedy' are due to be published in 2020.

P.J. Finglass

is Henry Overton Wills Professor of Greek and Head of the Department of Classics and Ancient History at the University of Bristol, and Director of the Arts and Humanities Research Council South, West and Wales Doctoral Training Partnership. He has published a monograph *Sophocles* (2019) in the series 'Greece and Rome New Surveys in the Classics', as well as editions of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* (2018), *Ajax* (2011), and *Electra* (2007), of Stesichorus (2014), and of Pindar's *Pythian Eleven* (2007) in the series 'Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries'; has co-edited (with Adrian Kelly) *The Cambridge Companion to Sappho* (2021) and *Stesichorus in Context* (2015) and (with Lyndsay Coo) *Fragmented Women: The Female Characters of Fragmentary Greek Tragedy* (2020); and edits the journal *Classical Quarterly*, all with Cambridge University Press.

Helene P. Foley

is Claire Tow Professor of Classics, Barnard College, Columbia University. She is the author of books and articles on Greek epic and drama, on women and gender in antiquity, and on modern performance and adaptation of Greek drama. Author of *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides*, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*, *Reimagining Greek Tragedy on the American Stage*, and *Euripides: Hecuba* and co-author of *Women in the Classical World: Image and Text*, she edited *Reflections of Women in Antiquity* and co-edited *Visualizing the Tragic: Drama, Myth and Ritual in Greek Art and Literature* and *Antigone on the Contemporary World Stage*.

Moira Fradinger

is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at Yale University. She teaches European and Latin American literature, film, and intellectual history. She is the author of *Binding Violence: Literary Visions of Political Origins* (Stanford University Press 2010) and is currently finishing her book on *Antigone* in Latin America, along with an accompanying anthology of five dramatic reimaginings of *Antigone* which she translated into English (from Haiti, Argentina, Colombia, Peru, and Brazil).

John Gibert

is Associate Professor of Classics at the University of Colorado Boulder. He is the author of a commentary on Euripides' *Ion* in the series *Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics* (2019) and of *Change of Mind in Greek Tragedy* (1995). He is co-author, with C. Collard and M.J. Cropp, of *Euripides: Selected Fragmentary Plays II* (2004). He has published widely on Greek tragedy, comedy, and satyr play, as well as early Greek philosophy and political thought.

Justina Gregory

is Sophia Smith Professor Emerita of Classical Languages and Literatures, Smith College. She is the editor of *A Companion to Greek Tragedy* (Malden, MA/Oxford 2005), and the author of *Euripides and the Instruction of the Athenians* (Ann Arbor 1991), and *Euripides, Hecuba: Introduction, Text, and Commentary* (Oxford 1999). Her most recent book is *Cheiron's Way: Youthful Education in Homer and Tragedy* (Oxford 2019).

Emma Griffiths

is Lecturer in Classics in the Department of Classics and Ancient History at the University of Manchester. Her main research interests include Greek drama, Greek childhood, ancient ideas of time, and mythology. She has authored a book on Euripides' *Heracles* and has published widely on Greek drama.

Mary Louise Hart

is Associate Curator of Antiquities at the J. Paul Getty Museum and is a specialist in the iconography of ancient Greek narrative and theatrical performance. Among her many exhibitions is *The Art of Ancient Greek Theater* (2010) for which she also served as catalogue editor and co-author, and in 2014, *Heaven and Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections* with the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and the Benaki Museum. She is a professor within the European Network of Research and Documentation of Performances of Ancient Greek Drama sponsored by the University of Athens at Laurion and Epidaurus, Greece, consults as a dramaturge for classical and adapted productions, and was the founding curator of the Getty Villa's theatre program.

Daniel I. Iakov

was Professor of Greek in the Department of Philology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He published widely on ancient and modern Greek literature, including a monumental two-volume commentary on Euripides' *Alcestis* (Athens 2012). In 2016 an honorary volume was published in his memory: P. Kyriakou/A. Rengakos (eds.), *Wisdom and Folly in Euripides*, Berlin/Boston.

Ioanna Karamanou

is Associate Professor of Classics at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Her research interests include Greek tragic and comic fragments, Greek tragedy and its reception, papyrology, and ancient literary theory (especially Aristotle) on tragedy. She is the author of *Euripides: Danae and Dictys* (Leipzig/Munich 2006), *Euripides: Alexandros* (Berlin/Boston 2017; Academy of Athens Award for Classical Philology), and *Refiguring Tragedy: Studies in Plays Preserved in Fragments and their Reception* (Berlin/Boston 2019). She has edited two volumes (two further collective volumes are forthcoming) and has published extensively in international peer-reviewed journals and collective volumes. She participates in three international research projects. She is currently working on a commentary on the fragments of Diphilus as part of the *KomFrag* research project.

Adrian Kelly

is Tutorial Fellow in Ancient Greek Language and Literature at Balliol College, Oxford, and an Associate Professor and Clarendon Lecturer at the University of Oxford. He is the author of *A Referential Commentary on Homer, Iliad VIII* (OUP 2007) and *Sophocles: Oedipus at Colonus* (Bloomsbury 2009), and the co-editor (with P.J. Finglass) of *Stesichorus in Context* (CUP 2015) and the *Cambridge Companion to Sappho* (CUP 2021). He is currently co-editing (with Christopher Metcalf) *Divine Narratives in Archaic Greece and the Ancient Near East* (CUP) and working on a commentary on *Iliad XXIII* for the *Greek and Latin Classics* series (CUP).

Poulheria Kyriakou

is Professor of Greek Literature at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Her research interests include archaic poetry, classical drama and philosophy and Hellenistic poetry. She is the author of *Homeric hapax legomena in the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius* (Stuttgart 1995), *A Commentary on Euripides' Iphigenia in Tauris* (Berlin/New York 2006), *The Past in Aeschylus and Sophocles* (Berlin/Boston 2011), and *Theocritus and his Native Muse* (Berlin/Boston 2018). She has also co-edited *Wisdom and Folly in Euripides* (Berlin/Boston 2016) and written articles on Greek philosophy and poetry.

Anna A. Lamari

is Assistant Professor of Ancient Greek Literature at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She is the author of *Narrative, Intertext, and Space in Euripides' Phoenissae* (Berlin/New York 2010) and *Reperforming Greek Tragedy: Theater, Politics, and Cultural Mobility in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC* (Berlin/Boston

2017), as well as the editor of *Reperformances of Drama in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC: Authors and Contexts* (Berlin/Boston 2015, *Trends in Classics* 7.2). She is currently writing a commentary on certain comic poets for the *Fragmenta Comica* series (Heidelberg).

Michael Lloyd

is Professor of Greek Language and Literature at University College Dublin. He is the author of *The Agon in Euripides* (Oxford 1992) and an edition of Euripides' *Andromache* (1994; a 2nd edition came out in 2005), as well as articles on Homer, Herodotus, Euripides, and Greek syntax. A book on Sophocles' *Electra* appeared in 2005, and he edited an anthology of articles on Aeschylus in the *Oxford Readings* series published by Oxford University Press (2007). He is the author of chapters in three of the *Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative* series published by Brill and is currently working on politeness theory with particular reference to Aristophanes and Plato.

Andreas Markantonatos

is Professor of Greek in the Department of Philology at the University of the Peloponnese, Director of the Centre for Ancient Rhetoric and Drama (CARD), and Vice-President of the Olympic Centre for Philosophy and Culture at Olympia (OCPC). He is the author, among others, of *Tragic Narrative: A Narratological Study of Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus* (2002), *Oedipus at Colonus: Sophocles, Athens, and the World* (2007), *Euripides' Alcestis: Narrative, Myth, and Religion* (2013), *The Voice of the Past: Critical Perspectives on Attic Drama* (2020), *Scripta Minora: Theatre, Education, Literature, and Politics* (2020), and *Euripides' Hercules: Mortal Bodies and Immortal Memory* (2021). He has edited several multi-authored volumes, including *Crisis on Stage: Tragedy and Comedy in Late Fifth-Century Athens* (2012, together with Bernhard Zimmermann), *Brill's Companion to Sophocles* (2012), and *Poet and Orator: A Symbiotic Relationship in Democratic Athens* (2019), and has published widely on Greek drama and modern literary theory. He is currently working on an annotated edition of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* for Liverpool University Press.

Sarah Miles

lectures in the Department of Classics and Ancient History at the University of Durham, UK, specializing in Greek drama, and the receptions of Greek literature in ancient and contemporary culture. Her research and publications focus on Greek comedy (Old and New Comedy); comic fragments and paratragedy; comedy's relationship with Platonic philosophy; contemporary receptions of Greek literature in popular culture especially children's media and animation.

A monograph is in preparation on: *Ancient Receptions of Greek Tragedy in Old Comedy: From Paratragedy to Popular Culture*.

Sophie Mills

is Professor of Classics at the University of North Carolina at Asheville and author of *Theseus, Tragedy and the Athenian Empire* (1997), and *Companions to Euripides' Hippolytus* (2002) and *Bacchae* (2006). She has published widely on Greek tragedy and is completing a book on Thucydides and Athenian imperial rhetoric.

James Morwood

was Dean of Wadham College, Oxford, translator of eleven of Euripides' plays in the *World Classics* series, author of numerous Greek and Latin language books and of *The Life and Works of Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (1985).

Melissa Mueller

is an Associate Professor of Classics in the Department of Classics at University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her research focuses on Greek epic, lyric, and tragedy, with special attention to how Greek literary texts, envisioning certain performance parameters for themselves, engage with their material environments. She is the author of *Objects as Actors* (University of Chicago Press 2016) and has co-edited *The Materialities of Greek Tragedy: Objects and Affect in Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides* (Bloomsbury Press 2018).

Dana L. Munteanu

is an Associate Professor of Classics at Ohio State University. Her research concentrates on confluences between philosophy and literature, with special interest in the areas of Greek drama, Aristotle, and the reception of classics in opera and literature. She is the author of *Tragic Pathos. Pity and Fear in Greek Philosophy and Tragedy* (Cambridge 2012), the editor of *Emotion, Genre and Gender in Classical Antiquity* (London 2011) and co-editor of *A Handbook of Classical Reception in Eastern and Central Europe* (Malden 2017).

Patrick O'Sullivan

is a graduate of Melbourne and Cambridge Universities and is Associate Professor of Classics at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. He has published widely on archaic and classical Greek literature and cultural history, including ancient aesthetics and literary criticism, satyr play and tragedy, links between poetics and athletics, and atheism in ancient Greece, as well as on Greek and Roman art and their reception beyond antiquity. He has received awards for

his teaching and research, including major research grants and Visiting Fellowships at Wolfson and Trinity Colleges in Cambridge. He has co-authored (with Chris Collard) *Euripides' Cyclops and Major Fragments of Greek Satyric Drama* (2013) and has a contract with Routledge for a book provisionally entitled *The Rhetoric of Greek Art*.

Joe P. Poe

is Emeritus Professor of Classics in the Department of Classical Studies at Tulane University. He has written widely on Greek tragic drama, elegiac poetry, the *Aeneid*, Senecan tragedy, Roman topography, and Aristophanes.

Pietro Pucci

is Goldwin Smith Professor of Classics Emeritus in the Department of Classics at Cornell University. His research interests include Greek epic, drama, mythology, and textual criticism. He is the author, among much else, of *The Violence of Pity in Euripides' Medea* (1980), *Oedipus and the Fabrication of the Father* (1992), *Odysseus Polutropos* (1996), and *Euripides' Revolution under Cover* (2017).

Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz

is Professor of Comparative Literature at Hamilton College; she has written many articles and two monographs, *Anxiety Veiled: Euripides and the Traffic in Women* (1993) and *Greek Tragedy* (2008). She has co-edited *Sex in Antiquity: Exploring Sexuality and Gender in the Ancient World*, with James Robson, Mark Masterson, Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (2015), *From Abortion to Pederasty: Addressing Difficult Topics in the Classics Classroom*, with Fiona McHardy (2014), *Among Women: From the Homosocial to the Homoerotic in the Ancient World* (2002) with Lisa Auanger, *Women on the Edge: Four Plays of Euripides*, with Ruby Blondell, Mary-Kay Gamel and Bella Vivante (1999), *Feminist Theory and the Classics*, with Amy Richlin (1993). She is currently working on Orestes and Pylades for a performance with By Jove, as well as an article on gendered silence in drama, and a volume on Classics and Prison Teaching (Routledge). Her current interests focus on classics and social justice. She teaches courses on subjects ranging from Greek tragedy to queer theory and literature.

Rush Rehm

is Professor of Theater and Performing Studies and of Classics in the Department of Classics at Stanford University. He publishes in the areas of Greek tragedy and contemporary politics. His publications include *Marriage to Death: The Conflation of Marriage and Funeral Rituals in Greek Tragedy* (1994), *The Play of Space: Spatial Transformation in Greek Tragedy* (2002), *Radical Theatre:*

Greek Tragedy in the Modern World (2013), and *Understanding Greek Tragic Theatre* (2016). He also serves as Artistic Director of Stanford Repertory Theatre.

Mark Ringer

received his PhD in Dramatic Literature, History and Criticism from the University of California, Santa Barbara. His books include *Euripides and the Boundaries of the Human* (Lexington Books 2016), *Electra and the Empty Urn: Metatheater and Role Playing in Sophocles* (University of North Carolina Press 1998), as well as monographs on the operas of Monteverdi and Schubert's Lieder. He is currently completing an introduction to Bach's Sacred Cantatas. He teaches Theatre History and Literature at Marymount Manhattan College.

Hanna M. Roisman

is Arnold Bernhard Professor in the Arts and Humanities at Colby College. She was a Junior Fellow at the Harvard Centre for Hellenic Studies 1985–1986. From 1981–1989 she was a Lecturer and Senior Lecturer at Tel Aviv University. A recipient of *Z. Aranne Prize*, 1976, awarded by Tel Aviv University, of *Rothschild Fund: Yad Avi Ha-Yishuv Scholarship*, 1977–1979, of *Tytus Fellowship*, Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati, 2008–2009, and a Senior Research Fellow at *The Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities*, University of Edinburgh, Spring 2009. She was a Visiting Scholar, Department of Classics, Cornell University, 1989–1990, 1995–1996, and in the summers of 1998–1999, 2001–2002, 2004. She specializes in early Greek epic, Greek and Roman tragedy, and in classics and film. In addition to numerous articles and book chapters, she has published: *Loyalty in Early Greek Epic and Tragedy* (1984), *Nothing is as It Seems: The Tragedy of the Implicit in Euripides' Hippolytus* (1999), *Sophocles: Philoctetes* (2005), and *Sophocles: Electra* (a translation, 2008). She is the editor of the *Encyclopedia of Greek Tragedy* (2104) and co-author of *The Odyssey Re-Formed* (1996), *Euripides: Alcestis* (a commentary 2003), and *Euripides: Electra* (a commentary 2010).

Elizabeth W. Scharffenberger

teaches in the Department of Classics at Columbia University in New York City. Her research interests include Greek drama and comic literature. Among her publications are papers on dramas by Euripides, Sophocles, and Aristophanes and their modern reception, and a translation, co-authored with Professor Katja Vogt of the Department of Philosophy at Columbia University, of Diogenes Laertius' Lives of Pyrrho and Timon.

Ruth Scodel

is the D.R. Shackleton-Bailey Collegiate Professor of Greek and Latin at the University of Michigan. She specializes in ancient Greek literature, with particular interests in Homer, Hesiod, and Greek tragedy. Her research has been influenced by narrative theory, cognitive approaches, and politeness theory. She is the author, among others, of *The Trojan Trilogy of Euripides* (1980), *Sophocles* (1984), *Credible Impossibilities* (1999), and *Listening to Homer* (2002).

Camille Semenzato

is working at the University of Zurich (Switzerland). After a PhD on the Muses in Archaic Greece (De Gruyter 2017), she is currently completing a *habilitation* on Euripides' *Bacchae*. Her research focuses on the various forms of inspiration, wisdom, and mysteries in connection with the relation between humans and gods in ancient Greece.

Carl Shaw

is an Associate Professor of Classics at New College of Florida. He is the author of *Satyrical Play: The Evolution of Greek Comedy and Satyr Drama* (Oxford University Press 2014) and *Euripides: Cyclops* (Bloomsbury Publishing 2018). His research interests include classical drama, performance studies, comedy and satire, ancient obscenity, and genre theory.

Niall W. Slater

(Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Latin and Greek, Emory University) focuses on the ancient theatre and its production conditions, prose fiction, and popular reception of classical literature. His books include *Spectator Politics: Metatheater and Performance in Aristophanes* (Penn 2002); *Reading Petronius* (Johns Hopkins, 1990); and *Plautus in Performance: The Theater of the Mind* (Princeton, 1985; 2nd revised edition 2000), as well as the Bloomsbury Companion to Euripides' *Alcestis* (2013). His translations of various Middle and New Comedy poets are included in *The Birth of Comedy: Texts, Documents, and Art from Athenian Comic Competitions, 486–280*, edited by Jeffrey Rusten (Johns Hopkins 2011). With C.W. Marshall he co-edits the series *Bloomsbury Ancient Comedy Companions*. He is currently working on fragments of Roman Republican drama for the new Loeb *Fragmentary Republican Latin*.

Mae J. Smethurst

Professor Emerita of Classics and East Asian Literature at the University of Pittsburgh, was the author of *The Artistry of Aeschylus and Zeami* (1989 & 2014)

winner of the Hitomi Arisawa Prize, *Dramatic Representations of Filial Piety* (1998) winner of the US-Japan Friendship Commission's translation prize, and most recently, *Dramatic Action in Greek Tragedy and Noh: Reading with and beyond Aristotle* (2013), and co-editor, with Christina Laffin, of *The Noh Omnameshi: A Flower Viewed from Many Directions* (2003). Her articles include 'Are We All Ismenes and Creons? The Kuna'uka Production of the Antigone', in Foley/Mee (2011), and 'Ninagawa's Production of Euripides' *Medea*' in *AJP* (Spring 2002).

Mary Stieber

is Professor of Classics and Art History at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, a small college in New York City that offers degrees in art, architecture, and engineering. She has published widely on the interconnections between ancient Greek literature and art. Her book, *Euripides and the Language of Craft*, appeared in 2011.

Laura Swift

is Senior Lecturer in Classical Studies at The Open University. Her publications include *Archilochus: The Poems* (Oxford University Press 2019), *Greek Tragedy: Themes and Contexts* (Bloomsbury Academic 2016), *The Hidden Chorus: Echoes of Genre in Tragic Lyric* (Oxford University Press 2010), and *Euripides: Ion* (Bloomsbury Academic 2008), as well as numerous articles on tragedy and lyric poetry.

William Blake Tyrrell

is Emeritus Professor of Classics at Michigan State University and the author of *Amazons: A Study in Athenian Myth-Making* (Baltimore/London 1984), with Frieda S. Brown, *Athenian Myths and Institutions: Words and Action* (Oxford 1991), with Larry Bennett, *Recapturing Sophocles' Antigone* (Lanham 1998), *The Sacrifice of Socrates: Plato, Athens, Girard*, (East Lansing, MI 2012), and *The Oedipus Casebook: Readings in Sophocles' Oedipus the King with a New Translation by Wm. Blake Tyrrell* (East Lansing, MI 2019).

Angeliki Tzanetou

is an Associate Professor of Classics at the University of Illinois. Her research interests include Greek drama, Greek political theory, gender, and religion. She is the author of *City of Suppliants: Tragedy and the Athenian Empire* (University of Texas Press 2012) and editor of the special issue of *Illinois Classical Studies* 40.2 (2015) on Greek and Roman Drama. She co-edited (with Maryline Parca) *Finding Persephone: Women's Rituals in the Ancient Mediter-*

ranean, Studies in Ancient Folklore and Popular Culture series (Indiana University Press 2007) and *Gender, East and West* (Special issue of *Classical World* 109. 2 [2016]). She is co-editor of *Illinois Classical Studies* (2016–). Among her current projects is a study of motherhood in Greek literature and society.

Eirene Visvardi

is an Associate Professor of Classical Studies at Wesleyan University. She works primarily on Greek drama and its role in ancient intellectual and political life. The questions that drive her work regard the nature and structure of the emotions and their motivational power; the relationship between individual and collective, especially in the context of democratic institutions; and the role of different aesthetic, discursive, and performative forms including theatre and philosophy in shaping both the emotions and political dialogue. She discusses these issues in her book *Emotion in Action: Thucydides and the Tragic Chorus* (Brill Mnemosyne Supplements 2015).

Paul Woodruff

teaches philosophy and classics at the University of Texas at Austin. He has published translations of Euripides' *Bacchae*, and, with Peter Meineck, of Sophocles' Theban plays, as well as an abridged Thucydides translation and versions of several Platonic dialogues, two of them with Alexander Nehamas. He is, as well, the author of several plays and opera libretti.

Nancy Worman

is the Ann Whitney Olin Professor of Classics at Barnard College, Director of Graduate Studies at Columbia University, and affiliated with Barnard's Program in Comparative Literature and Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Her research focuses on style and the body in performance in classical Greek drama and its reception, as well as rhetoric and ancient and modern literary criticism and theory. She has published books and articles on these topics, including most recently *Landscape and the Spaces of Metaphor in Ancient Literary Theory and Criticism* (Cambridge 2015) and *Virginia Woolf's Greek Tragedy* (Bloomsbury 2019). She is currently working on a book-length project entitled *Embodiment, Materiality, and the Edges of the Human in Greek Tragedy*, which is forthcoming from Bloomsbury.

Florence Yoon

is Assistant Professor of Greek Language and Literature at the University of British Columbia. Her research interests centre on the construction of char-

acter and its limitations, and the formal elements of ancient drama. She is the author of *The Use of Anonymous Characters in Greek Tragedy* (Leiden 2012) and a companion to Euripides' *Children of Heracles*.

Introduction

Andreas Markantonatos

Fixing labels is easy, and Euripides has had his fair share of labels enforced upon him, both flattering and unflattering. In fact, he has been known by many contradictory appellations through the ages: revolutionary and innovative, while at the same time atheist and misogynist; harbinger of a new era, but at once reactionary and intransigent; realist and genuine, and simultaneously theoretical and highbrow.¹ There is no end to this exercise of detecting striking oppositions and their possible ramifications in Euripidean drama; and indeed this bewildering multipolarity, this almost unnerving tension between countless antitheses, cutting across the interpretative scholarship on the poet's masterworks from antiquity to the present, has become in its own right the label of Euripides. In our troubled times, conversely, the critic's attempt to achieve mediation between symbols of confrontation would fall on far more receptive ears given the widespread antipathy to fixed labels and enclosures in externally imposed dichotomies. And thus, it would surely be gracefully fashionable to posit that Euripidean tragedy, despite limitations which always need to be frankly avowed, remains a powerful conceptual tool for discovering an all-reaching homology among the various rival expressions of such contrasting values and beliefs.

It is, however, appropriate to issue a caveat here: *that* is not the case with this book. All authors contributing to this volume strongly believe that denying the validity and utility of Euripides' confounding, yet exhilarating network of recurrent antinomies would not only blunt our encounter with the intricacy and the interconnectedness of the plays' separate social, political, moral, philosophical, and religious elements, but would also blur our vision to the complex value patterns and underlying mental structures of Athenian society, in the context of which Greek tragedy becomes interwoven with the entire variegated life of the community. Euripides shares with Aeschylus and Sophocles in a thoughtful appreciation of man's constant effort to persevere through life's unremitting trials by drawing strength from pain while following an elemental moral code. Without losing sight of this common ground, this multi-authored compan-

1 For helpful and accessible overviews of Euripidean interpretation, see (e.g.) Michelini (1987) 3–51; Mossman (2003) 1–15; Ringer (2016) 1–15; McClure (2017) 1–8. On the reception and appropriation of Euripidean drama from antiquity to modernity, see primarily Kovacs (2014) and Lauriola/Demetriou (2015).

ion to Euripides aims to illuminate the fascinating diversity of causes—that is, the sheer heterogeneity of principles and attitudes—which have multiplied through numerous theatrical scenes and spectacles, thereby heightening the dramatic effect and intensifying the dominant motifs of the Euripidean plays.²

Though we are poorly informed as to the critical assessment of Euripidean drama prior to Aristotle, we cannot exclude the possibility that Aristophanes has preserved for eternity a valuable comic portrayal of the tragic poet, which notwithstanding the waggish humour, the sharp-edged mockery, and the facetious overstatement, reveals most emphatically some of the ways in which many Greeks of the day perceived Euripides and his work. Aristophanes had no qualms about attacking Euripides with unsparing vigour and unappeasable animosity, pouring rivers of ridicule upon him to the point of casting serious doubt on the importance of his much-celebrated innovating spirit. On the other hand, however, even if roguishly derisive and impishly taunting, this unrelenting engagement with certain pioneering aspects of Euripidean theatre, as well as an insightful familiarity with the plays themselves, shows beyond any doubt that Aristophanes had a strong appreciation of Euripides' contribution to Attic drama.³

All in all, Euripides is brilliant enough to merit the veiled approval of so stern a critic as Aristophanes, and this becomes more than evident in the intermittent paratragic depictions of his unique personality in several comedies. The mere fact that Euripides can frequent the Aristophanic universe as the equal of such giants as Aeschylus and Sophocles is both an unmistakable indication of his high status in the theatre world of fifth-century Athens and, more important for my point, an irrefutable testimony to the comedian's reflective appreciation of his fellow dramatist's tragic productions. Despite obviously the steady scepticism, undoubtedly inflamed by an equally unshakeable admiration for the ideal splendour of the Aeschylean and Sophoclean stage, it is fair to argue that the Aristophanic Euripides cuts a powerful comic figure. This is meticulously conveyed through a complex web of intertextual allusions to his plays, most often connected not as a linear sequence but in multiple, mutually sustaining criss-crossings, such that one is inclined to suggest that Aristophanes had recognized from early on in his career the considerable potential for humour when Euripidean tragic material is embedded, often deeply, within central comic scenes. In a sense and for that matter quite ironically, in their tireless effort to attain a sharper impression and a clearer understanding of the striking achievements

2 See Markantonatos (2013) esp. 1–21 and *passim* with relevant bibliography.

3 Cf., for instance, Storey/Allan (2014²) 133–152.

and the actual failings of their protagonists, both Euripides and Aristophanes came to share the same direct interest and response to the larger experiences of political life in fifth-century Athens, as well as an identical fascination with the most intimate springs of personal feeling in Athenian society. To put it briefly, by studying man's defencelessness against passion and deception they both eventually found their way to a piercing truth: in the perplexing and at times unjust world of humans, the mere attempt to be in accord with morality and justice renders anyone lamentably vulnerable and unprotected.

The popularity of Euripides knew no bounds in the Hellenistic period, and this is no cause for surprise given, for instance, both the considerable influence of his tragic work upon numerous postclassical tragedians and playwrights of Middle and New Comedy and his centrality in the most primary and prominent treatise on Greek tragedy, Aristotle's *Poetics*, in which he is pictured as the most tragic of the poets despite the sporadic criticisms regarding predominantly the irrelevance of his Choruses and the inartistic delineation of certain principal characters.⁴ The occasional sceptic might have made capital out of Aristotle's slight disapproval of Euripides' management of his heartrending plots. The fact remains nonetheless that the Euripidean oeuvre, consisting of twenty-two no doubt remarkable and memorable theatrical productions at the dramatic festivals, enjoyed immeasurable fame with postclassical poets and audiences. It would be a reasonable inference that both playwrights and the public at the time sought for innovative ways to give expression to their intimate thoughts and feelings stemming from widespread social discontent in the context of colossal political structures which were often seen as dehumanizing and uncongenial, as well as from personal disheartenment at perennial existential questions continually exacerbated by domestic anxieties and private predicaments. There can be no doubt that Euripides' perceptive reflections on the perplexing, ever-shifting reality in which men must live reached deep into the conflicts of principles and values in the variegated cultures of later antiquity.

In the centuries to follow there was a notable burgeoning of interest in certain Euripidean dramas despite the vagaries of manuscript tradition and the unsteady fluctuations in aesthetic ideals and canons. Through an extended selection process, predominantly predicated on the stringent educative requirements of that otherwise remarkable epoch, a massive number of Euripidean plays, more than 70% of his total dramatic output, gradually sank into oblivion, forgotten by the people and apologized for by scholars. Widespread at that time was nevertheless the recognition that Euripides' impressive artis-

4 See mainly Garland (2004) 29–31 and *passim*.

tic talent is indeed at its strongest in laying bare the terrible ways in which his mythical characters strive towards self-realization only to discover in the end that their ennoblement is undercut by shadowy, self-destructive forces. In both the Roman empire and the Byzantine era playwrights and critics came to appreciate Euripides' sensational plot-making and the extraordinarily intense emotions of his protagonists; for in Imperial Rome Euripides was given precedence over any other Greek tragic poet, as demonstrated by his colossal influence on most plays of that period, which were frequently nothing but faithful yet creative paraphrases of his masterpieces. In Byzantium, especially from the ninth century AD onwards, several assiduous scholars of high calibre bent all their energies towards resuscitating classical learning after almost three centuries of neglect and occasionally open hostility, abundantly citing, among much else, Euripidean plays in their effort to construe Greek literary texts, mainly the immensely popular but at times rather intricate and abstruse Homeric epics.⁵

This important scholarly tradition of generously promoting the Attic theatrical legacy continued in the ensuing centuries, especially during and in the wake of both the Renaissance and the Enlightenment; European critics and intellectuals, as well as philosophers and artists, not only strove to establish a reliable text of Euripides' chefs-d'oeuvre, thereby taking a huge forward step in offering a better understanding of many fascinating and baffling problems concerning the playwright's original words and intentions, but also gave substantial insight into his dramatic inventiveness and provided a cultural and historical frame of reference for Euripidean tragedy. Much as the critical scholarship and the philosophical thinking of those emblematic eras of intellectual revival and ferment often failed to fully fathom some principal elements and features of Euripides as both a unique personality of tremendous intelligence and sensitivity and an enormously gifted man of the theatre, it is fair to say that they enabled exploration into the heart of his extant work, thus inviting stimulating thought and further detailed research. Above all, since the fifteenth century onwards and more intensely throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, brilliant men of letters and acutely perceptive critics and philosophers have endeavoured to shed revealing light on the inner core of the Euripidean tragic conflict, thereby both teasing out long-hidden thematic networks and technical innovations and unravelling perplexities in dramaturgy and plot-making.

Throughout the eighteenth century a highly idealized notion of Greek culture, mainly attributed to the influential neoclassical vision propounded by

5 For a brief and readable introduction, see principally Garland (2004) 39–55 with further bibliographical guidance.

the most brilliant and pioneering Hellenist and art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann, took centre stage in efforts to capture the essence of the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome, thus determinedly propagating the ideals of harmony and symmetry in both art and literature. There is no doubt that Winckelmann's admirable contribution to a vastly improved understanding of ancient cultures at the time imposed a literally tyrannical rule over German intellectuals and philologists; but in that case flashes of innovative thinking countervailed erroneous principles and far-fetched concepts about the hypothetical evolutionary progress of all art and literature. Similarly, the German Romantics, especially the brothers August Schlegel and Friedrich Schlegel, together with the controversially astringent and idiosyncratically passionate philosopher and philologist Friedrich Nietzsche, as well as tediously theorizing about the dark agency of Fate brooding over dreadful catastrophes enacted on the tragic stage, always relished the opportunity to deprecate Euripides as being wanting in essential harmonious unity and devout dedication to celestial morality and planning and thus unconsciously serving as unwelcome forerunner of destructive transformation leading up to absolute decay and failure.⁶ There was nonetheless a refreshing and energizing genuineness to their decline-and-fall narrative, and something evidently to be gained from this forthrightly independent and broad-gauged re-reading of Euripidean theatre, especially in the field of analysis of both heroic character portrayal and the interactions of philosophical and moral beliefs and ideas frequently occurring in the course of the tragic plays. But having said that, the totally unfair and unwarranted allegations about atheism and decadence, supposedly stemming from a debased application of narcissistic rationalism to his recasting of well-known mythical tales, haunted Euripides' reputation for years to come, painting an extremely unflattering picture of him as the demolisher of tragic art and the disseminator of dubious morality.

This prejudicial and unfounded branding of Euripides as the grim and persistent harbinger of the decline and fall of Greek tragedy began to peter out in the twentieth century; but the misrepresentation of his dramatic work as both egotistically hyper-rational and ironizingly atheistic persevered with certain highly influential critics, especially A.W. Verrall and his troop of staunch followers. In the latter part of the twentieth century, the weight of the critics' judgement of Euripidean drama swung firmly against Verrall's preposterous claims and outrageous theories, despite the fact that such distinguished Hellenists as Gilbert Murray, Karl Reinhardt, and Phillip Vellacott continued with

6 For a thorough discussion of Nietzschean tragic thinking, cf. Silk/Stern (1981).

the then orthodox perception of Euripides as a playwright savouring irony and realism. For at the time, juggling with multiple flows of theoretical influence, more than a few perceptive and assiduous scholars offered a dispassionate and astute roadmap to guide readers through Euripidean drama's complex thematic meanderings and intellectual and philosophical cul-de-sacs. It would be remiss at this point not to mention the renowned German *Programme*, those small-scale yet densely argued dissertations treating distinctly technical aspects of Euripidean drama but at the same time including valuable and eye-opening elucidations of textual issues and interpretative problems. Equally important and influential has been the cascading profusion of doctoral theses in the Anglo-Saxon world, most particularly in British and North American universities, discussing a wide range of themes and ideas permeating Euripidean plays.

Building on this rich and enlightening yet unassuming academic tradition, spanning a period of almost two centuries starting from the eighteenth century and culminating in the twentieth century, modern scholarship has broken away from flamboyant yet misleading theories which distort Euripides' achievements and objectives. The groundbreaking critical and interpretative work of a cohort of excellent Hellenists, such as Cedric Whitman, T.B.L. Webster, D.J. Conacher, B.M.W. Knox, N.C. Hourmouziades, Oliver Taplin, Froma Zeitlin, Charles Segal, Pietro Pucci, Helene Foley, Rush Rehm, W.S. Barrett, James Diggle, Jacqueline de Romilly, H. Van Looy, P.E. Easterling, Simon Goldhill, Justina Gregory, David Kovacs, Ruth Scodel, Donald Mastronarde, Niall Slater, Nancy Rabinowitz, Christopher Collard, M.J. Cropp, K.H. Lee, Shirley Barlow, A.P. Burnett, L.P.E. Parker, Marianne McDonald, J. Michael Walton, Albin Lesky, Richard Kannicht, G.A. Seeck, H. Erbse, Martin Hose, K. Matthiessen, Hanna Roisman, John Gibert, Richard Seaford, Barbara Goff, Judith Mossman, and Michael Lloyd to name but a few, combined fresh theoretical approaches to the Euripidean stage with a deep and charismatic understanding of the ancient texts. Obsolete by now are the warped notions of Euripides' alleged atheism and misogyny; there is now a focused effort to examine the social, political, religious, philosophical, and moral issues behind his fascinating dramatizations of a broad assortment of legendary tales, and to place his dramatic writings in their Athenian context, thereby contributing thought-provoking insights towards the latest thinking about the Athenian democratic city-state in particular and the ancient Greek world in general.⁷

7 It is not my intention to reprise the detailed bibliographical guidance included in fairly accessible comprehensive reviews of modern Euripidean scholarship and, more importantly, in

All contemporary critics concur fully with each other in the view that in recent times Euripidean drama has enjoyed a remarkable revival of interest principally demonstrated and confirmed by both a plethora of indispensable scholarly publications providing unrivalled coverage of all facets of Euripidean poetry and an unprecedented flow of splendid theatrical productions the world over attempting to breathe new life into Euripides' masterworks. Long gone are the days when critics strove to fathom the complexities of human nature and to arrest the fleeting phenomena of dramatic character, as they were excitedly spurred on by the obsessive idea that each and every tragic plot exclusively stands upon the inspiration and motivation of those dominant heroic figures of a remote misty past. Since the 1970's many researchers, well-read in the intricacies of modern literary theory and the analytical tools of anthropology, sociology, and theoretical linguistics, as well as being grounded in a long academic tradition of interpretative scholarship on ancient Greek drama, have formulated sophisticated theories about Euripidean theatre. Although initially these may have appeared a mere refinement of a peculiar intellect, they gradually emerged with startling inevitability as the perfect methodology for so demandingly complex a dramatist.

This welcome reassessment of Euripidean drama, which recognizes his subtle use of language, his ethical genius, his sensitivity to all aspects of human life, and the force with which he continues to stir the deepest springs of thought and feeling in audiences all around the world, serves as the foundation for this companion. In particular, this capacious volume, composed of specially-commissioned chapters written by an international team of seasoned scholars and academics, many of whom have played a significant part in fully revising our take on ancient Greek theatre, seeks not only to synthesize what has heretofore been accomplished in the field of Euripidean studies by means of individual chapters introducing the reader to the current state of research on the plays and fragments (Part 1), but also to provide a comprehensive and authoritative guide to understanding dominant themes, overriding ideas, and prevailing motifs infusing Euripides' works by way of challenging yet accessible essays which represent the best in current thinking in the study of the tragic poet and his fascinating ancient and modern reception (Parts 2–8). This long series of themed sections presents a wide-ranging collection of essays that critically engage with important questions about multiple aspects of Euripidean

the relevant chapters in this volume. I may be excused, nonetheless, for pointing out some recently published surveys touching upon various aspects of current critical thinking about Euripides. See, for instance, Hose (2005) and the *Oxford Bibliographies Online* s.v. Euripides (S. Mills).

theatre and offers an essential starting point for those who want to pursue particular topics in more depth. It aims to vividly illustrate Euripides' remarkable versatility and talent as a genuine craftsman of the theatre, capable of keeping his audience's attention captivated by the shades of contrast in which his plays are extraordinarily rich.

To conclude: It is to be hoped that this brief *tour d'orizon* in the field of Euripidean scholarship shows more than anything else that the greatness of Euripides as a man of the theatre continues to be undisputed, and his plays continue to be treated as magnificent specimens of dramatic power. And rightly so, because in Euripidean drama not a word is wasted, every phrase tells: his arresting re-enactment of Greek lore stings and illuminates at once. The acclaimed Dutch writer Harry Mulisch once famously declared that the responsibility of the author is 'to make the puzzle bigger'; this Euripides accomplished to the best of his ability, while at the same time attempting to offer elucidation and inspiration. And this is no mean achievement.

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PART 1

The Poet and His Work



Life of Euripides

William Blake Tyrrell

In writing *On Euripides*, Philochorus, a scholar living in the late fourth and early third centuries, consulted temple inscriptions, official records, and oral tradition.¹ His treatise was available to Theophrastus (370–288/5 BC), student and successor of Aristotle, but sometime afterwards was lost, to be preserved in quotations passed from one author to another. Other biographers with methods and ideas of composition more in common with the times took over writing Euripides' life. These writers looked for evidence to Euripides' plays and those of the comedians, especially Aristophanes' *Frogs* and *Thesmophoriazusae*.² They regarded these texts not as products of their poet's imagination but as testimony to Euripides' character.³ Aristophanes himself expressed this tenet of ancient critics: 'As he [Euripides] writes for his characters to speak, so such is he'.⁴ Accordingly, Euripides could not have written about women like Phaedra and Medea unless he despised women and thought them treacherous. Such evidence for the life of Euripides suited the ancient reader but fails modern historians in their quest for factual information. At the same time, the

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- 1 For the fragments of Philochorus, see Jacoby (1950) s.v. Philochorus 328 F 218–221; (1954) 585–588 and (1954a) 481–482.
 - 2 Evidence for Euripides' life consists of fragments of Satyros' third-century Peripatetic biography (*Oxyrhynchus/POxy* 1176), a much-abbreviated *Vita* entitled Γένος καὶ Βίος (*Lineage and Life*) attached to some manuscripts of his plays, an entry in *Suda* and a chapter in Aulus Gellius' *Attic Nights* (15.20), a biography by Thomas Magister (1 1–13) as well as tidbits found in mostly postclassical sources. For a Greek text of the fragments of Satyros' *Life of Euripides* and translations of the longer fragments, see Hunt (1912) 170–182 *passim*, Arrighetti (1964) 85–90, and Kovacs (1994) 10–13. For all the fragments, see Kannicht (2004) 39–145. For the Greek text of *Life and Lineage*, see Schwartz (1887) and Nauck (1895) v–x. Lefkowitz (1981) 163–169 and (2012) 152–155, and Novacks (1994) 3–10 (with Greek text) have provided a translation of *Life and Lineage*. A translation of the *Suda* and *Attic Nights* may be found in Kovacs (1994) 10–13, 26–29. For the biography of Euripides, see Nauck (1895) x–xxiv; Wilamowitz (1895) 1–17; Dieterich (1907) 1242–1281; Murray 1913; Decharme (1906) 1–14; Schmid/Stählin (1959) 309–328; Lesky (1966) 360–363; Lefkowitz (1981) 88–104 and 87–103; Kovacs (1994/2001) 1–22. All translations are my own.
 - 3 Stuart (1931) 301–304; Delcourt (1933); Fairweather (1974) 242–247; Lefkowitz (2012) 87–103.
 - 4 Aristophanes in: Satyros 1176 fr. 39.ix; see also Ar. *Thesm.* 149–150: 'The poet must be a man who has the character for the dramas he's writing'.

reduction by the biographers of their subjects' lives to conventional themes opens a methodology in that what seems singular may be historical. As Sherlock Holmes observed, 'Singularity is almost invariably a clue'.⁵ Two facts, however, remain unimpeachable: Euripides was an Athenian citizen, and he produced tragedies in the theatre of Dionysus at Athens during the fifth century. He spent his adult life in the theatre as a playwright whom the people's archon never, at least to our knowledge, denied a chorus and as the butt of abuse in the comic theatre. In his *Nachleben*, however, he leads two lives: the meagre one eked out by modern scholars and the rich one elaborated by ancient biographers.

The sources place the birth of Euripides during the archonship of Philocrates (485/4 BC) or that of Calliades (480/79). The earlier date is owed to the Parian Marble, a stele set up on the Cycladic island of Paros.⁶ Its dating suffers from its sources, the suppositions of the biographers, as well as from its desire to make connections between famous men, in this instance linking Euripides' birth with Aeschylus' first victory, his birth, so-to-speak, as a major tragedian. The later date derives from the *Vita* and is consistent with its assertion that the poet was twenty-six when he produced his first tragedies in 455/4 BC.⁷ Both dates draw support from Philochorus' statement that Euripides was older than seventy when he died in 406 BC.⁸ The *Vita* places Euripides' birth on Salamis off the coast of Attica. His family may have had an estate on the island or fled there pursuant to the Athenians' decree that those who had the means should send their children and family members to Troezen, Aegina, or Salamis to escape the ravages of the Persians.⁹ At any rate, the nearness of the poet's date and the famous victory of Greeks over the Persian navy in 480 BC drew the attention of the biographers. They devised a mnemonic, a synchronism that the mature Aeschylus fought in the battle, Sophocles as a youth danced in celebration of the victory, and the infant Euripides had to learn of both victory and celebration from others.¹⁰ The lack of precision in Philochorus' remarks forewarns his modern counterparts against the search for greater accuracy. The Greeks themselves paid little heed to a person's time of birth, so we must settle with assigning Euripides' date to the years between 484 and 480 BC.

5 Doyle (1930) 227.

6 Jacoby, *FGrH* 239 A 50.

7 The *Vita's* dating (section 2) is repeated by Plutarch (*Mor.* 717 C) and Diogenes Laertius (2.45).

8 Jacoby, *FGrH* 328 F 220 (*Vita* 17).

9 Hdt. 8.41.1.

10 *Vita Aesch.* 11; *Vita Soph.* 3; Lefkowitz (1981) 157, 160.

Some thought that Euripides received his name, 'Son of Euripus', from the strait that separates Euboea from mainland Boeotia.¹¹ Accordingly, a story had to be fabricated to explain the name: his father, originally a Boeotian, lost his citizenship for failure to pay his debts and emigrated to Attica.¹² His father the sources variously call Mnesarchos or Mnesarchides.¹³ Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf suggests that they amount to the same name 'since patronymic derivations often switch with the full name and its abbreviations'.¹⁴ Even so, a son was commonly named for his grandfather; Euripides' eldest son bears the name, Mnesarchides.¹⁵ According to Plutarch, Euripides' father did not live to see his victories.¹⁶

Philochorus testifies that his mother, Kleito, belonged to the best of Athenians.¹⁷ In pointing to his mother's status, Philochorus was responding to the slurs of comedy that claimed Kleito peddled vegetables for a living, in particular, chervil, a species of wild parsley eaten by the poor and distressed.¹⁸ Aristophanes' Dicaeopolis insults Euripides: 'Give me parsley you got from your mother' and his Mica, wife of Cleonymus in *Thesmophoriazusae*, addresses him as 'Euripides, son of a vegetable seller'.¹⁹ The reason for the calumny has most often been explained by postulating some circumstances in Euripides' life, for instance, the appearance in the markets of produce from family's estates near the village of Phlyea east of Mt. Hymettus or from its farm on Salamis.²⁰ The long-standing misrepresentation had to have had some basis, but it need not be from Euripides' life. David Kawalko Roselli proposes such criticism of Euripides' mother constitutes a discourse and a way of exploring the value of Euripides' poetry and its appeal to the lower segments of the theatre audience. It represented Euripides 'as being close to the *demos* and the attacks on his mother in Aristophanes serve to highlight the poet's tragic style as more in tune with Athenian popular culture'.²¹

11 Wilamowitz (1895) 8–9 doubts the Euripus as the source of Euripides' name, calling it and the story invented to explain why Mnesarchides who lived in inner Attica named his son after a strait off Boeotia 'adventuresome, groundless nonsense'.

12 *Suda* s.v. Euripides 1; Nic. Dam. in: Jacoby, *FGrH* 90 F 103.

13 Jacoby, *FGrH* 328 F 218 (*Suda* s.v. Euripides 1); *Vita* 1.

14 Wilamowitz (1895) 5.

15 *Vita* 14.

16 Plut. *Mor.* 496F.

17 *Suda* s.v. Euripides 2: 'It is not true that his mother was a seller of vegetables, for she was from very noble people, as Philochorus has demonstrated'.

18 That Mnesarchos was a shopkeeper is mentioned only in *Vita* 1. Chervil: Thphr., *HP* 7.7.1.

19 Ar. *Arch.* 478 and *Thesm.* 387. Also *Thesm.* 456; *Equ.* 19; *Ra.* 840.

20 Harp. s.v. *phlyea*.

21 Roselli (2005) 36; also 36–38.

What little is known of Euripides' early life supports the contention that his father belonged to the aristocracy. The *Vita* reports that the poet carried a torch for Apollo Zosterios, and Theophrastus, that he poured wine at Athens for a sacred guild of dancers who danced around the temple of Apollo Delios.²² Theophrastus appends the comment: 'These were the sons of the first men among the Athenians'. Religious activities of this nature did not fall to sons of the ignoble. Mnesarchos had estates in the deme Phlyea and lived on them or in the village of Phlyea. Although Euripides may have been born on Salamis, he probably grew up in one of the most pleasant parts of Attica.

Aulus Gellius records that a response 'came from the Chaldeans to Euripides' father on his son's birth that the boy, when grown, would be a victor in contests' which, the *Vita* adds, bore garlands.²³ Mnesarchos trained his son in *pankration* or boxing, but when Euripides presented himself, the judges did not accept him because of doubt over his age. He later fought in the contests of Eleusis and Theseus and was crowned.²⁴ The story, while befitting a youth of the nobility, is most likely an invention of the biographers, for it reproduces several of their commonplaces.²⁵ It marks the god's care for the poet (an oracle, for instance, directed Aeschylus to compose tragedy²⁶), the early recognition of his talent, and his accomplishments before embarking on course that made him famous.

According to the *Vita* and *Suda*, Euripides pursued painting before turning to drama, showing his pictures in Megara.²⁷ There is nothing inherently impossible about this. Gifted people often evince talent in areas besides their chosen. Moreover, the notice does not conform to the usual method of biographers for constructing Euripides' life from his plays and those of the comedians. Still, this Euripides may well be a Megarian who found a place for his pictures at home rather than an Athenian who had to export his. The evidence is inconclusive.

Euripides knew well the theories of philosophers and sophists and brought them so profusely into his plays that he was later deemed 'the philosopher of the stage'.²⁸ He was said to have been the pupil of the sophist Protagoras, the cosmologist Anaxagoras, the sophist Prodicus, and Socrates in ethics.²⁹ Socrates and Prodicus, in their mid-teens when Euripides produced his *Peli-*

22 *Vita* 7; Athen. 10.24 (424 E-F).

23 Aul. Gell. *NA* 15.20.2.; *Vita* 3.

24 Aul. Gell. *NA* 15.20.3.

25 Lefkowitz (1981) 93-94.

26 Paus. 1.21.2.

27 *Vita* 33; *Suda* s.v. Euripides 4.

28 Athen. 13.11 (561 a); Vitruv. 8 pr. 1; Clem. Alex., *Miscellanies*, 5.70.1; Decharme (1906) 19-42; Schmid/Stählin (1959) 315-318.

29 Aul. Gell. *NA* 15.20.4. Also: Strabo 4.645; D. S. 1.7.7; Schol. Pi. *Ol.* 9; *Vita* 4.

ades, were too young to be his tutors.³⁰ But Pythagoras and Anaxagoras were older than Euripides, and both men lived in Athens where they could have known him as a youth.

Protagoras, a citizen of Thracian Abdera, first came to Athens around 464/3 where he remained, in time becoming the tutor of the youthful Pericles.³¹ His relationship with the latter led to his expulsion in 458/7. He returned to Athens, apparently on short visits, first in 445/4 to which Plato alludes in *Protagoras* 310E, later in 433, and again in 422/1 when he is said to have read his treatise *On the Gods* at Euripides' house.³² That treatise led the next year to his removal from the city in flight before a prosecution for impiety. The report came back that his ship had gone down on his way to Sicily, an end that Philochorus said Euripides referred to in his *Ixion*.³³ Protagoras lived among the Athenians long enough to attend the theatre for Euripides' plays, while Euripides could readily have become acquainted with the sophist's teachings without formal instruction. At any rate, ancient critics contended that he alluded in his plays to the sophist's sayings. Macareus' question in *Aeolus* (427–423 BC), 'What's shameful if it does not seem so to those engaged in it?' was taken to recall Protagoras' famous dictum, 'Man is the measure of all things'.³⁴ In the *Antiope* (411–409 BC) a character asserts:

On every matter you could set up a contest
of speeches both ways if you were but clever at speaking.³⁵

Euripides may have had the sophist's antilogies in mind.³⁶ Yet speeches directed toward opposite ends are a feature of his dramaturgy³⁷ and the marrow of the law courts and cannot argue for a follower's devotion to his master, especially when an Euripidean character can contradict herself even in the same play.³⁸ Thus, Hecuba first says:

30 Guthrie (1965) 348 places Prodicus' birth in the years between 480 and 470. Socrates was born in 369 (Plat. *Apol.* 17D).

31 Davison (1953) 36–37 and his summary of the known chronology of Protagoras' life (38).

32 D. L. 9.54. Also given as sites of a reading are the house of Megaclides and the Lyceum.

33 Philochorus in: D. L. 9.55. The date of the *Ixion* is unknown.

34 Eur. *Aeolus* fr. 19 N2 with Ar. *Ra.* 1475: What is shameful if it doesn't seem so to those watching (i.e. the audience). Protagoras: D. L. 9.51.

35 Eur. *Antiope* fr. 189 N2; also *Phoenix*, fr. 812 N2.

36 D.L. 9.51: 'Protagoras first said that there are two arguments opposed to one another on every matter'.

37 The *Vita* 4 speaks of his 'displays of rhetoric'.

38 Decharme (1906) 35–36.

Why do we mortals toil and search
 all manner of learning as needs be,
 but Persuasion, that sole tyrant over men,
 we strive not at all to accomplish,
 but we pay money to learn Persuasion
 so that it be possible for one on a day to persuade and get his wish?³⁹

and then four hundred lines later:

Agamemnon, never should the tongue have
 greater strength than what a man has done.
 If he did good things, he must speak good things,
 but if evil, then his words are rotten
 and cannot ever speak well unjust things.
 Men accomplished in these pursuits are clever,
 but they cannot be clever to the end.
 Rather, they perish foully. No one yet has escaped.⁴⁰

Euripides knew and apprehended the rhetoric and challenge of the sophists to traditions and the ordinary man's religion of gods and cult and engaged his audiences with their thoughts to provoke them and stay relevant. But the sophists 'came to Athens too late, it is true, to have sold their knowledge to the poet in his youth, which was not formed in their likeness.'⁴¹ As is the conclusion throughout this discussion of Euripides' education, apparent allusions and references in the plays to the works of sophists and philosophers cannot support a formal experience with them as his teacher. In fact, it is far more likely that such observations created the relationship of teacher/student as a ready means of accounting for Euripides' early education.

Later writers inferred a debt to Anaxagoras from Euripides' plays and attributed it as the fruit of the cosmologist's tutoring. Although Euripides is said to have 'honoured Anaxagoras terribly',⁴² no formal relationship need be postulated. Euripides was regularly produced in the theatre, while Anaxagoras' cosmology was probably bantered about after his trial not only among the intellectual circles but in the streets. Moreover, Euripides liked to read and pos-

39 Eur. *Hecuba* (427–423 BC) 814–819.

40 Eur. *Hec.* 1187–1194.

41 Decharme (1906) 41.

42 Satyros 1176 fr. 37.i.

essed a large library, and Anaxagoras' book was available for the inexpensive price of a drachma from the booksellers in the agora.⁴³

Socrates was fourteen when Euripides produced his first tragedies in 455 BC and in no position to become Euripides' tutor as Dionysus of Halicarnassus, rhetorician and historian living in late first-century Rome, claimed.⁴⁴ Euripides may well have enjoyed a friendship with Socrates, as the *Vita* says.⁴⁵ But Aelian's assertions that Socrates went to the theatre only when Euripides was competing among the 'new tragedies' and that he once walked down to the Piraeus to see Euripides' plays reflect Hellenistic practice after 'old' tragedies, namely, revivals, were added in 386 BC, thirteen years after Socrates' death.⁴⁶ Cicero preserves the anecdote that Socrates called for an encore of the first three lines of Euripides' *Orestes* (408 BC):

Nothing exists so dreadful to put into words
no suffering, no misfortune sent by the gods
whose agony human nature could not endure.⁴⁷

On the other hand, one story has it that Euripides incurred unpopularity with the people for admiring Socrates very much 'so that', Satyros asserts, 'when he revealed his opinion of greed in *Danae*, he made an exception of Socrates'.⁴⁸ Enough happened between them, however, for the comic poets to imagine that Socrates was his coauthor or even ghost writer. Teleclides (mid-fifth century BC), punning on the title *Phrygians*, jested that 'Mnesilochus [Euripides' father-in-law] is roasting (*phrygei*) a new play for Euripides, and Socrates is stoking firewood beneath it' and elsewhere that 'he [Socrates] wrote tragedies for Euripides, full of talk and clever things'.⁴⁹ Callias, contemporary of Teleclides, has left an exchange that someone has with Euripides' Muse:

Why are you so pompous and conceited?
I've every right. Socrates is the cause.⁵⁰

43 Euripides' library: Athen. 1.4. 3A. Anaxagoras' book: Pl. *Apol.* 26D.

44 Dion. Hal. *Rhet.* 9.11.

45 *Vita* 4 (Kovacs 1994/2001): Σωκράτους ἑταῖρος, deleted in Schwartz (1887). For a discussion of possible sources in Euripides' plays for the association with Anaxagoras, see Lefkowitz (2012) 88–90.

46 Ael. *VH* 2.13; Webster (1967) 26.

47 Cic. *Tusc. Disp.* 4.63.

48 Eur. *Danae* fr. 325N2; Satyros 1176 fr. 38.iv with 39.1.

49 D. L. 2.18; *Vita* 5.

50 D. L. 2.18. For the identification of the second speaker, see Kovacs (1994) 35 n. 3.

Such evidence recalls the biographers' endeavours to link famous men, even though Euripides' plays show little trace of Socratic ideas. Some have seen Socrates' famous dictum, 'virtue is knowledge', in Hecuba's address to her dead daughter, Polyxena:

The good man is always good, and his nature
is not ruined by misfortune, but he is always morally upright.
Do parents make the difference or nurture?
Yet good rearing holds the possibility of instruction in the good.⁵¹

Euripides' emphasis rests not on knowledge but upbringing and education. The differences between the two men, one an idealist, the other a realist, are clear.

All that is known of Euripides' appearance has him heavily bearded and grey-haired with warts or moles on his face.⁵² In the 110th Olympiad (340–336 BC), the Athenian statesman Lycurgus set up a statue of the tragedian in the theatre at Athens along with those of Aeschylus and Sophocles.⁵³ This statue seems to have provided the original for a group of some thirty copies resembling one another known as the Farnese Collection.⁵⁴ The Farnese type which best represents Euripides in statuary shows 'a man, about fifty years old, with an oval, thin, and bony face; short furrows between the eyebrows and at the outer corners of the eyes; a high, smooth forehead; eyes placed rather close together and with eyelids slightly drooping; a thin, long nose with a slight protuberance below the bridge; hair sparse on the forehead, long at the sides (covering the ears) and at the back; a short beard projecting below the lower lip; and a short, thick moustache; no taenia'. Gisela M.A. Richter and R.R.R. Smith summarize their description: 'A distinguished, contemplative, solitary character'.⁵⁵

The Euripides of the written sources is deeply embedded in tradition, to be sought only through a litany of perhaps, maybe, and verbs in the subjunctive mood. More than other aspects of the man's biography, this ancient construct has overwhelmed fact with fiction in matters of his personality and private life. It may safely be said that despite decades in the theatre Euripides remained a reserved person, and that alone in a world of social beings and busybodies would brand him as prideful and aloof. Both qualities were

51 Eur. *Hec.* 597–601.

52 Ar. *Thesm.* 190; *Vita* 12.

53 [Plut.] *Vit. x Orat.* 841F; Paus. 1.21.1.

54 Richter/Smith (1984) 121.

55 Richter/Smith (1984) 123.

attributed to him. Aristophanes found him 'harsh to talk to', no doubt with good reason, given the comic's treatment of him.⁵⁶ Over a century after the poet's death, Alexander of Aetolia contrasted his personality, 'sour to talk to, hating women, unable to have fun over wine', with the honey sweetness and Siren-voice of his verse.⁵⁷ The reference to Euripides' misogyny points to the traditional content of Alexander's assessment. It is reflected in another late source, the *Vita*: 'morose, thoughtful, austere, serious (laughter-hating), and woman-hating'.⁵⁸ Euripides did not favour the frivolities of the symposium. He enjoyed reading and built a large library.⁵⁹ He once loaned a book by Heraclitus to Socrates who, when asked what he thought about it, said, 'What I understood is noble so, I suppose, is what I didn't, but it would take a Delian diver to plumb its depths'.⁶⁰ Euripides has the chorus of his *Erechtheus* (422 BC) praise reading as a pleasure of old age: 'May I unfurl the voice of the tablets by which the wise are celebrated'.⁶¹ Aristophanes, of course, noted his interest in books and, drawing upon the opposition of the anti-book lobby, derided him for reading books. Aristophanes' Euripides tells Aeschylus that he removed the swelling afflicting tragedy, in part, by 'administering a decoction of small talk from books'.⁶²

The need for solitude was taken to explain Euripides' use of a cave on Salamis: 'They say that he had a cave on Salamis with an opening that looked out upon the sea and that he spent his days there fleeing the crowd'.⁶³ Satyros adds that 'he passed the day there by himself, always thinking and writing, scorning as unworthy everything not magnificent or noble'.⁶⁴ The cave rests upon the authority of Philochorus who claimed to have seen it, 'a foul and horrid cave on the island of Salamis (which we have seen) in which Euripides used to write his tragedies'.⁶⁵ P.T. Stevens suggests that 'we need not doubt it [the cave] for Euripides, but we may doubt whether it necessarily stamps him as a recluse, and whether he really needed it to escape from the ὄχλος [crowd], except in the sense that any writer, even an Athenian, might sometimes be

56 Aristophanes in: *Vita* 23.

57 Aul. Gell. *NA* 15.20.8.

58 *Vita* 23.

59 Athen. 1.4. 3A.

60 Diog. Laert. 2.2.

61 Eur. *Erechth.* fr. 369 Kannicht.

62 Ar. *Ra.* 943; also 1114.

63 *Vita* 22.

64 Satyros 1176 fr. 39.ix.

65 Philochorus in Jacoby, *FGrH* 328 F 219 (Aul. Gell. *NA* 15.20.5).

glad of a pleasant and secluded spot to work in'.⁶⁶ On the other hand, the cave provided the biographers with ready explanations for the prominence of sea metaphors in his plays (the cave lay exposed to the sea) and his demeanour as a thinker (the cave provided the seclusion such people need to think 'magnificent and noble' thoughts). In this role, Euripides functions as an antipode of not only the man in the street but Sophocles.⁶⁷ For example, Sophocles is φιλομεῖραξ (lover of boys), while Euripides was φιλογύνης (lover of women).⁶⁸ In an extended version of the opposition, Athenaeus records an exchange between the constructs of the biographers' fancy from Hieronymus of Rhodes, a philosopher resident in Athens during the third century BC:

Sophocles led a good-looking boy outside the wall in order to enjoy him. The boy spread his cloak on the grass, and they threw Sophocles' mantle over themselves. After their intercourse, the boy absconded, stealing Sophocles' mantle and leaving Sophocles his boy's cloak.

Euripides, learning of the incident, held Sophocles up for ridicule: 'He himself enjoyed this boy, he said, without making a contribution. Sophocles let his self-indulgence in matters of the flesh make a fool of him'. Sophocles, piqued by Euripides' remarks, wrote the following epigram:

Helios, not a boy, Euripides, left me naked
without my mantle. Boreas joins you, poor thing,
when you are making love. You're not clever.
While sowing the fields of others, you bring Eros
to court for stealing clothes.⁶⁹

Sophocles begins with an allusion to the contest between Boreas and Helios over who could divest a travelling farmer of his goatskin.⁷⁰ Boreas sends his winds only to make the farmer clutch his cloak more tightly. Helios gently warms the man until the heat becomes unbearable, and he strips himself of the goatskin. Sophocles has his encounter with the boy under the warmth of Helios, and in his passion, he flings off the mantle and lets it go to the boy for his

66 Stevens (1956) 88.

67 Stevens (1956) 89.

68 Athen. 13.81 (603E).

69 Athen. 13.82 (604D); Tyrrell (2005).

70 Aesop 46 Perry; Babr. 18.

gift to him. Euripides, on the other hand, goes about his business with Boreas, for seducing married women is a cold affair. And worse, Euripides accuses Eros of stealing clothes, a death-penalty offence, according to Demosthenes, when practised in a gymnasium.⁷¹

The epigram elicits from the informed reader the biographer's Euripides with the purpose of glorifying the biographer's portrait of Sophocles. This Euripides writes in a cave to avoid Athenians, prefers the company of foreigners, and hates women for their immorality, while he craves them in his bed.⁷² The tragedian of the epigram consorts with the Thracian troglodyte, Boreas, and seeks illicit sex with the wives of other men. On stage, he offers Athenians an adulterous Phaedra, a filicidal Medea, a voyeuristic Pentheus, a murderous Orestes, a maddened Heracles, figures who undermine social and divine order. When he accuses Sophocles, the easy-going, happy Sophocles of tradition should stand aside as he most famously did when Euripides challenged Aeschylus.⁷³ For the biographer, his scene in Aristophanes' *Frogs* reproduces the nature of the man.⁷⁴ But this Sophocles gets feisty. He shows in defeating Euripides what he could have done had Aeschylus failed. The man wins because his dramaturgy with characters like the beneficent Triptolemos, heroic Ajax, defiant Antigone, and godlike Oedipus, are more worthy, while his dramaturgy wins because the man is the more worthy lover.

Euripides married Melito, daughter of Mnesilochus. The couple had three children, the eldest Mnesarchides who became a merchant, Mnesilochus, an actor, and Euripides who may have completed parts of *Iphigenia at Aulis* written while the elder Euripides was staying at King Archelaos' court.⁷⁵ In the year following his father's death (405 BC), his namesake went on to produce the trilogy which besides the *Iphigenia at Aulis* included *Alcmeon in Corinth* and *Bacchae*, probably at the festival of Dionysus in Athens.⁷⁶ Afterwards according to the third-century biographer Hermippus, Dionysius, tyrant of Sicily, gave his heirs a talent for his lyre, writing tablet, and stylus.⁷⁷

71 Dem. 24.114.

72 *Vita* 23–27; Athen. 13.5 (557E); Stob. 3.6.18.

73 *Ar. Ra.* 786–794.

74 The happy, contented Sophocles is the biographer's creation from Aristophanes' *Frogs* (786–794) but also appears in Phrynichus' *Muses* (fr. 31 in: *Argumentum* 11 Soph. *OC*), presented at the Lenaia in 405 with *Frogs*.

75 *Suda* s.v. Euripides 7 has Chorinë [*sic*], daughter of Mnesilochus, bear Euripides his sons.

76 *Vita* 14; Wilamowitz (1885) 9–11.

77 *Vita* 27. In Attic monetary system, a talent of gold or silver weighed about 57 pounds.

During the period between 411 and 405 BC, the dates respectively of the production of Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Frogs*, a scandalous story arose, surely from the comic poets, perhaps Aristophanes alone, concerning Euripides' marital situation. It is not mentioned in the earlier play, even though it is about the tragedian's lampoons and slanders of women in his plays and hatred of their sex.⁷⁸ Six years later in *Frogs*, we may hear it in the background of Aeschylus' sharp reply to Euripides: 'She [Aphrodite] sat down all over you and yours and knocked you out cold', and Dionysus' follow up: 'Yes, by Zeus, you wrote that stuff about the wives of other men, only to be stung by the same thing yourself'.⁷⁹ In this fiction, Euripides had two wives, Melito and Choirilê, namely, 'Piggy', over whom the sources vary on who came first.⁸⁰ When he discovered that his wife was sexually promiscuous, 'he wrote *Hippolytus* in which he ballyhooed the shamelessness of women and then divorced her'.⁸¹ 'When the man who married her said, "She is chaste in my house", Euripides replied, "You poor sod, if you think she will be chaste in one's man's house and not in another"'.⁸² One wife even had sex with Cephisophon, a slave born in the house. Euripides tried to dissuade her from her ways, but, failing, he gave her to Cephisophon or, as Satyros writes, he took Cephisophon's wife, cuckolding him in return.⁸³ He remarried and, finding his second wife even more immoral than the first, he became bolder in his attacks on women.⁸⁴ The biographers, perhaps taking Choirilê, a comedian's epithet for Melito, as a second wife, invented the story in response to Euripides' treatment of women. A man who could show a Phaedra seducing her stepson and lying about him to her husband or a Melanippe, an innocent raped by Poseidon but appearing with twin sons and no husband, had to have had wretched experiences with women. From there, their imagination conjured wives with the morals of alley cats and a twice-cuckold Euripides.

Euripides fulfilled his citizen's obligations, for had he not, Aristophanes could never have remained silent. He held no public office. He may have served as ambassador to the Syracusans seeking peace and friendship.⁸⁵ But he spent

78 Ar. *Thesm.* 85.

79 Ar. *Ra.* 1045–1048.

80 Melito is Euripides' first wife in the *Vita* (13), and Choirilê in *Suda* (s.v. Euripides 7) who is also said to have been the mother of his sons.

81 *Vita* 24.

82 *Vita* 24.

83 *Vita* 29; Satyros fr. 39.xii–xiii; Lefkowitz (1981) 100.

84 *Suda* s.v. Euripides 8; *Vita* 24.

85 Ar. *Rhet.* 2.6.20 (1384b13–17) with scholia.

his life teaching fellow Athenians, prodding and shocking them to ponder, by getting 'inside his characters by deep sympathy'.⁸⁶ The *Vita* places the number of his plays produced over a fifty-year career, 455 to 405 BC, at ninety-two. The *Suda* also has ninety-two. The *Vita* records as spurious *Tennes*, *Rhadamanthys*, and *Pirithous*; presumably they were accompanied by a satyr play. These four plays removed, the number of genuine plays comes to eighty-eight or twenty-two tetralogies.⁸⁷ The satyr play *Cyclops*, although extant, is of an uncertain production date, and the tragedy *Alcestis* replaced the satyr play of 438 BC. The names of seven others survive: *Autolykos*, *Bousiris*, *Eurystheus*, *Skeiron*, *Syleus*, *Theristai* (431 BC), and *Sisyphos* (415 BC). The posthumous plays had no satyr play. Thus, the names, as well as the plays themselves, of nine productions have disappeared. Since Euripides did not favour the humour of the satyr play, some may have been written by other poets. He won the tragic competition for the first time in 441 BC.⁸⁸ The names, production dates, and prize, if known, of the extant plays follow: *Alcestis*, 438 BC, second prize; *Medea*, 431 BC, third prize; *Children of Heracles*, ca. 430; *Hippolytus*, 428 BC, first prize; *Andromache*, ca. 425 BC; *Hecuba*, ca. 424 BC; *Suppliant Women*, ca. 423 BC; *Electra*, ca. 420; *Heracles*, ca. 416 BC; *Trojan Women*, ca. 415, second prize; *Ion*, ca. 413; *Helen*, 412 BC; *Phoenician Women*, ca. 410, second prize; *Orestes*, 408; posthumous *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Alkmaion in Corinth* and *Bacchae*, 405, first prize. Zielinski provided a methodology for approximately dating those plays including the fragmentary ones that lack a reliable date: as Euripides coursed through his career, he allowed an increasing resolution of the first five long syllables into two short syllables in the iambic trimeter lines of dialogue.⁸⁹ Zielinski's observation accordingly allows the plays to be divided into four chronological periods from the least to the most resolution.

Euripides may have composed a victory ode in the style of Pindar for Alcibiades' three victories in the chariot races at the Olympics of 416. Plutarch, who hesitates over Euripides' authorship in his *Life of Demosthenes*, attributes the epinician to Euripides in his *Life of Alcibiades* and cites a critical passage about Alcibiades' victories:

I stand in wonder of you, son of Clinias.
Victory is a beautiful thing, but most beautiful,

86 Webster (967) 27.

87 *Vita* 17; *Suda* s.v. Euripides 11. Dieterich (1907) 1247; Webster (1967) 5–7. Varro, quoted by Aulus Gellius (17.4.3), set the number of productions at seventy-five.

88 Parian Marble in: Jacoby, *FGrH* 239 A 60.

89 Zielinski (1925); Webster (1967) 2–5.

a thing no other Greek has obtained, is to race
with your chariot to first, second, and third place
and to walk effortlessly, crowned with the ivy of Zeus,
to hand your name to the herald to be cried out.

Plutarch's reservation may derive from Thucydides' account which gives Alcibiades' finishes as first, second, and fourth, perhaps correcting Euripides' version.⁹⁰

Sometime after 428, the demos imposed upon Hygiainon the funding of a *leitourgia* (public service) such as outfitting a trireme or funding a tragic or comic chorus. Hygiainon, in turn, brought a procedure of *antidosis* against Euripides in which he claimed that the poet was better situated to give (*-dosis*) the financial support for a *leitourgia* in place of (*anti-*) himself and therefore should exchange (*anti-*) property with him. In the course of the action, Hygiainon accused Euripides of impiety because he had written in *Hippolytus* (428 BC) for Hippolytus: 'My tongue swore, but my mind remained unsworn'.⁹¹ The words said in anger aroused by the nurse's proposal of adultery with his father's wife fit the context, and Hippolytus abides by his oath at the cost of his life. Yet his statement was received as proof of Euripides' impiety. Aristophanes has his Inlaw refer to it: 'Remember this—you mind has sworn, your tongue has not, and I didn't bind your tongue'.⁹² Hygiainon evidently asserted that because Euripides wrote this line, he could not be trusted to give an honest account of his finances.⁹³ Aristotle cites the case as an example of how to fend off an attack by citing a previous decision. Euripides replied that Hygiainon was wrong to bring judgments from the contests of Dionysus into the courts and that he had given an account of himself there and would do so again if he wished to accuse him. Since the Athenians in the theatre had awarded him first prize for *Hippolytus* and its accompanying plays, he felt confident that those same Athenians assembled in the court as jurors would acquit him. Aristotle perhaps thought the exchange occurred; in any case, it implies that Euripides possessed greater wealth than the average man as would surely be true for someone who needed the leisure to compose.⁹⁴

90 Plut. *Dem.* 846A–B; *Alc.* 196 B. Thuc. 6.16.2; Gomme/Andrewes/Dover (1970) 246–247. For Euripides' epinician for Alcibiades, see Bowra (1960).

91 Eur. *Hipp.* 612.

92 Ar. *Thesm.* 275–276; Sommerstein (1994) 175. Also: Ar. *Ra.* 101–102, 1471.

93 Arist. *Rhet.* 3.15 (1416a28–35); Barrett (1964) 274; Kennedy (1991) 267 n. 208.

94 Kovacs (1994/2001) 18–19.

Satyros is the sole source for a prosecution for impiety brought against Euripides by Cleon.⁹⁵ His value as a historical source, however, was undermined with the publication of the fragments of his *Life of Euripides* in 1912 in which he referred to Euripides' plays for documentation on his subject's character and accepted the fictions of Aristophanes' misogynistic Euripides in *Thesmophoriazousae* as historical.⁹⁶

An incident in the aftermath of the Sicilian debacle showed that audiences thought his verse worthy even if its unconventional ideas and sentiments and apparent atheism often upset them. According to Satyros, 'the story goes that when Nicias conducted his expedition against Sicily, and many Athenians were taken captive, many were saved on account of Euripides' poems. Those who knew some of his verses taught them to the sons of their captives. So did all Sicily admire Euripides';⁹⁷ Plutarch tells the same story more fully:

Some of the Athenians captured were saved because of Euripides. As it appears, the people of Sicily longed for his poetry beyond other Greeks. They learned the samples and tidbits of his verse from those who came to Sicily and shared them with one another. At any rate, they say that many of those saved greeted Euripides kindly and told him that they were spared when enslaved because they taught their captors what they remembered of his poems, and when they were wandering about after the battle, they obtained food and water by singing his songs.⁹⁸

Euripides was appreciated by the Sicilians but more importantly by the Athenians who remembered his verses and recited them. His popularity with them explains why he was chosen to compose the funeral dirge that was sung before the funeral for the dead of Sicily. Plutarch quotes a couplet:

These men prevailed over Syracusans with eight victories
when the stance of the gods was fair to both sides.⁹⁹

Soon after the production of *Orestes* (408 BC) and its companion pieces, Euripides left Athens, allegedly embittered by his maltreatment by the judges and

95 Satyros 1176 fr. 39 x.

96 Hunt (1912) 124–182. For Satyros as a biographer and source for Euripides' life, see West (1974).

97 Satyros 1176 fr. 39.xix.

98 Plut. *Nic* 29.2–4.

99 Plut. *Nic*. 17.4.

comic poets. He went first to Magnesia where he accepted the honours of representing the citizens at Athens as their *proxenos* and freedom from taxation. Stevens observes that ‘normally a city would try to secure as proxenos [*sic*] a man of good standing’.¹⁰⁰ Hence it is likely that Euripides intended to return home after his travels were completed. He then accepted the invitation of King Archelaos of Macedonia to visit his court at Pella. The sculptor Zeuthis, tragedian Agathon, and Timotheus, a lyric poet, were also in attendance. There he was entertained and honoured as befitted a poet of his stature. In return, he wrote a play named for his host and left behind three others, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Alcmeon in Corinth*, and *Bacchae*. Death came upon him in 406 BC in his seventies according to Philochorus, while Eratosthenes places his death in his seventy-fifth year.¹⁰¹ Aristophanes in *Frogs*, performed in 405 BC at the Lenaea, fails to remark about the circumstances so that the stories of Euripides’ being torn apart by dogs or women are later inventions.¹⁰² He was buried in a tomb built in Macedonia near Arethousa, and a cenotaph erected on the road to the Piraeus.¹⁰³ Later lightning struck both monuments, a sign of the gods’ favour for the man.¹⁰⁴ An epigram was written for him either by the historian Thucydides or lyric poet Timotheus whom Euripides once encouraged to persevere when the audience rejected his innovations in music:¹⁰⁵

All Greece is Euripides’ memorial, the land
of Macedonia has his bones where he received the end of life.
Greece of Greece, Athens, was his fatherland. He delighted
the Muses much. He also has praise from many.¹⁰⁶

When Sophocles heard that Euripides had died, he entered the Proagon wearing the dark cloak of mourning and led his choristers and actors without garlands, and the people burst into tears. The Proagon or Preliminary to the Contest was a ceremony, held in the Odeion, that announced the titles of the dramatists’ plays and introduced their choristers and actors.¹⁰⁷ Sophocles took

100 Stevens (1956) 90.

101 *Vita* 17.

102 D. S. 13.103; Val. Max. 9.12 ext. 4; Stob. *Flor.* 98.9; Paus. 1.2.2; *Vita* 21; Satyros 1176 fr. 39 xxi.

103 Tomb: Adaeus, *Anthologia Palatina* 7.51; Vitruv. *Arch.* 8.3.16; Amm. Marc. 27.4.8. Cenotaph: Paus. 1.2.2.

104 *Vita* 19; Plut. *Lyc.* 31.5.

105 Satyros 1176 fr. 39 xxii; Plut. *Mor.* 795D.

106 *Vita* 18.

107 *Vita* 20. For the Proagon, see Aischines *Against Ctesiphon* 66–68 with scholia, available in Pickard-Cambridge (1968) 63; also 67–68; Parke (1977) 132–133.

the occasion to mourn Euripides publicly. The reaction of the people again belies the stories of Euripides' unpopularity.

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The Textual Tradition of Euripides' Dramas

P.J. Finglass

1 Introduction¹

The City Dionysia at Athens saw ninety new tragedies, plus thirty new satyr plays, every decade. Still more tragedies were performed at the Lenaea, also a city festival, and at the Rural Dionysia in the demes. Venues for tragedy outside Attica featured already in the fifth century, and with increasing importance in the fourth and beyond. The total number of tragedies and satyr plays composed for performance at Greek festivals in antiquity is likely to have been in the low thousands. Of these, barely a handful remain; yet the tragedian to whom this Companion is devoted was more fortunate, in terms of the survival of his work, than any other. Six of Aeschylus' ninety or so plays remain, seven of Sophocles' hundred and twenty-three.² Yet for Euripides, fully eighteen out of a total output of around ninety have come down to us: roughly a fifth of his output.³ And the fragments of his lost plays are far more substantial than those of Aeschylus and Sophocles.

Why did some of Euripides' plays survive, in full or in part, when the overwhelming majority of Greek tragedies were lost? Why did such a high proportion of his plays survive compared to the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles? What lay behind the survival of particular plays, and the loss of others? For what purposes were Euripides' plays transmitted? What impact did ancient scholarship have on the transmission of the plays? Which plays were being read during the mediaeval period? What impact did the invention of the printing press have on the process of transmission? Has scholarship since the end of antiquity assisted that process? And how will the transmission continue into the future? No mere chapter can deal adequately with even one of

1 I am grateful to Professor David Kovacs and to the volume's editor and referee for helpful comments.

2 For the total number of Aeschylus' plays, see Sommerstein (2008) I xxii with n. 31; for Sophocles', see Sommerstein (2012) 191–192.

3 The figure of eighteen does not include *Rhesus*, a drama transmitted with the plays of Euripides but incorrectly attributed to him.

these questions. My hope is that this essay may nevertheless give a general outline that students and scholars will find useful, and that it may stimulate deeper inquiry.⁴

2 Euripides to Lycurgus

Euripides' career began in 455 and lasted until his death in 406. Throughout that period he was one of the most prominent dramatists in Athens, although not the most successful; he was placed first only five times (including one posthumous victory) at the Dionysia.⁵ But his frequent presence there as a competitor, when the number of competitors in any one year was limited to three, is testimony to his wide and persistent appeal.⁶ The repeated jibes of comic poets show that he was easily parodied, but not that he was held in contempt; quite the reverse, in fact, since only a popular poet would warrant such a sustained level of parody.⁷ His fame spread beyond Athens: he wrote tragedies for the king of Macedon, and his *Andromache* apparently had its premiere outside Euripides' home city.⁸ And it is likely his plays were the subject of frequent reperformance as early as the fifth century.⁹

Such popularity was a necessary, if not a sufficient, condition for the transmission of his plays. For any ancient text to be preserved, people had to be sufficiently interested in it to want to have it copied, and thus to pay for the writing material (papyrus, ink) and the labour (by the scribe) that this required. Bookish spectators will have wanted to acquire copies of plays that they had

4 This piece inevitably overlaps with Finglass (2012), which is concerned with the transmission of Sophocles; in this study, however, I have spent more time on the ancient transmission, since the evidence is more abundant than in the case of Sophocles. Even so, much relevant material has been omitted—for example, an account of the use of Euripides made by other ancient writers and the implications that this has for familiarity with Euripides' works. For excellent accounts of the transmission of Euripides, which more than complement my own piece, see Barrett (1964) 45–84 and Parker (2007) lvii–lxvii. An important analysis of the transmission of tragedy in general can be found in Garland (2004).

5 Eur. test. 1.IB.5, 3.5 *TrGF*.

6 Stevens (1956) 91–94.

7 Indeed, 'there is a correlation between the tragedies whose comic parodies and allusions we can identify and those which enjoyed a vibrant afterlife more generally' [Hanink (2014) 161].

8 Eur. test. 112–120 *TrGF*; Σ Eur. *Andr.* 445 (11 284.20–21 Schwartz).

9 Much of the discussion of Sophoclean reperformance in Finglass (2015a) can also be applied to Euripides. See further Vahtikari (2014); Lamari (2015) and (2017); Stewart (2017).

enjoyed in the theatre.¹⁰ Reperformance will have been a key factor, stimulating interest in particular plays, as well as necessitating the creation of new copies for the benefit of actors.¹¹ Euripides himself will have kept copies of his plays—for directing reperformances, for reading them to stimulate his creativity when composing fresh works, and as an inheritance for his family. But even in the fifth century, these will have been far from the only copies available.

The cultural significance, and popularity, of Euripides is evident from Aristophanes' *Frogs* in 405, where, despite all the mockery of his poetic style, his and Sophocles' deaths are presented as robbing Athens of their last great tragic poets; from the decision by the actors to introduce a reperformance of old tragedy at the Dionysia in 386, thereby introducing to the greatest festival of tragedy something that had been in operation for some decades in the demes and abroad; and by his popularity outside Attica, something that we can infer chiefly from the vases in south Italy and Sicily which seem to illustrate individual dramas of his.¹² We do not know which play was chosen for reperformance in 386, and the decision to introduce reperformances probably reflects the popularity of more than one tragedian. Nevertheless, when (very limited) data become available later that century, it is Euripides who dominates: one of his *Iphigenia* plays (341) his *Orestes* (340), and another play by him (339) were performed at the Dionysia.¹³ Three successive years, then, saw reperformances of a play by Euripides; variation among the tragedians, even among the three 'old masters', does not seem to have been a priority for the actors, or, it would appear, for their audiences. We may infer that even in the fourth century Euripi-

10 In Aristophanes' *Frogs* Dionysus is said to have been reading Euripides' *Andromeda* on board a ship in 405, seven years after its first performance in 412.

11 For the importance of reperformance for the transmission of texts, see Finglass (2015b).

12 Taplin (2007) 108–219.

13 Millis/Olson (2012) 65. The *Iphigenia* might have been *Iphigenia in Tauris* rather than *Iphigenia at Aulis* [thus Taplin (2007) 149], since there are four fourth-century vases which could reflect the influence of the former play (ibid. 149–156), and none for the latter. But this assumes that the same plays enjoyed popularity in Magna Graecia, where the vases are found, and in Athens, which might well not be the case; and vase numbers are so small that it is risky to make this kind of inference. The interpolations in the *Iphigenia at Aulis* presumably reflect the consequences of reperformances, perhaps including one in 341 [thus Kovacs (2007) 269 n. 13, referring to id. (2003b)]. The fact that one of the two named plays is *Orestes* may be significant, as this would turn out to be one of the most popular plays over the succeeding centuries. There are no vases which reflect the influence of *Orestes*, or indeed *Phoenician Women*, and only one which could show the influence of *Hecuba* [Taplin (2007) 141–142, 156], to cite the three plays of the so-called Triad, a concept which will be elucidated below; but again it is unsafe to draw conclusions from this.

des' popularity outshone that of his rivals, granting him a position in death that he never quite saw in life;¹⁴ his huge influence on Menander, greater than the influence on that poet of Aeschylus and Sophocles put together, lends further support to this proposition.¹⁵ References to actors in this period, in the orators and elsewhere, often mention performances of Euripides.¹⁶ It is very likely that, in the fourth century, getting hold of a copy of almost any play by Euripides would not have been difficult in Athens, and indeed should have been possible in many other towns, not least in Magna Graecia.

Little quality control was exercised over these copies. Each had to be made by hand, with all the potential for error that this involved—the beginning of a process of deterioration that lasted until the invention of printing. And although reperformance was of crucial importance in ensuring continued interest in, and thus the continued availability of, Euripidean drama, it also had a significant impact on the quality of the texts that it helped to preserve. The actors who reperformed Euripides were not bound to reproduce his plays exactly as he had scripted them. In a world where, as Aristotle remarked, actors were more important than poets,¹⁷ we should expect that actors (and directors) will have reshaped dramas for their own ends—to lengthen the lead part, say, thereby giving the chief actor a more impressive vehicle in which to display his talents. So Aristotle tells of an actor who insisted that he should always speak the opening lines of a play; as Hall says, 'this must in practice have meant that new prologues needed to be created hastily and prefixed to favourite plays in the repertoire'.¹⁸ Scholars later in antiquity were aware that actors sometimes changed the texts; although none of their specific diagnoses of the phenomenon is convincing,¹⁹ that does not mean that this kind of interference did not occur, as the next paragraph will show. Such interaction with the text is itself a mark of cultural vitality and should not simply be seen as just one more type of textual corruption. Nevertheless, from the point of view of anyone concerned to recover what Euripides actually wrote, the continuing health of the theatrical tradition was a decidedly ambiguous blessing.

14 Vahtikari (2014) 217–219.

15 Meineke (1841) 705–709; Katsouris (1975); Porter (1994) 1–2; Cusset (2003).

16 For the evidence, see Nerveña (2007) 17–18.

17 Arist. *Rhet.* 1403b33 ἐκεῖ (sc. at theatrical festivals) μείζον δύνανται νῦν τῶν ποιητῶν οἱ ὑποκριταί.

18 Arist. *Pol.* 1336b27–31 οὐ κακῶς ἔλεγε τὸ τοιοῦτον Θεόδωρος ὁ τῆς τραγωδίας ὑποκριτῆς· οὐθενὶ γὰρ πῶποτε παρήκεν ἑαυτοῦ προεισάγειν, οὐδὲ τῶν εὐτελῶν ὑποκριτῶν, ὡς οἰκείουμένων τῶν θεατῶν ταῖς πρώταις ἀκοαῖς; Hall (2010) 161.

19 For this topic in detail, see Finglass (2006), (2015b).

The decision of Lycurgus, an Athenian statesman active in the 330s, to establish an official state copy of the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, which it was henceforth compulsory for actors to use, marks a watershed in the transmission of the plays.²⁰ For the first time, we can identify a recognition that corruption was afflicting the texts of the tragedians, and that actors in particular had to be restrained from making changes to the plays. And since Euripides was already the most popular of three 'old masters'—a status that he would retain for the rest of antiquity—we may imagine that these processes had a particular impact on the text of his dramas. On the other hand, Lycurgus' official text may also have had the effect of canonizing error. There is no reason to think that the text of Euripides that he used to create his copy was a particularly good one; its quality may have varied considerably from one play to another.²¹ Nor should we imagine that Lycurgus or those working on his behalf had a particular talent for textual criticism; they will not have collated one manuscript against others to obtain a more accurate text. So any mistakes present in the copy used to create the Lycurgan recension would now be immortalized, at least at performances at the Dionysia—and perhaps down to our own day, depending on the next stages of the transmission, to which we now turn.

3 Alexandria to Late Antiquity

We cannot know for sure how early Euripides' plays made their way to the great Library of Alexandria, there to be studied and edited by the leading scholars of the age. We may imagine that it was early in the third century; Euripides was already a popular classic author, and it is hard to imagine that many others (Homer apart) were studied in preference to him. Very probably the great majority of his tragedies made the transition to Alexandria, although it seems that some of the satyr-plays had already been lost by this time.²² According to an anecdote in Galen, Ptolemy Euergetes (probably Ptolemy III, 246–221) acquired τὰ βιβλία—'the books', or perhaps 'the famous books'—of tragedy from Athens, leaving them a deposit of fifteen silver talents which he proceeded

20 [Plut.] *Vit. x Or.* 841f εἰσήνεγκε δὲ καὶ νόμους, τὸν μὲν περὶ τῶν κωμῳδῶν ... τὸν δέ, ὡς χαλκᾶς εἰκόνας ἀναθεῖναι τῶν ποιητῶν Αἰσχύλου Σοφοκλέους Εὐριπίδου καὶ τὰς τραγωδίας αὐτῶν ἐν κοινῷ γραψαμένους φυλάττειν καὶ τὸν τῆς πόλεως γραμματεῖα παραναγινώσκειν τοῖς ὑποκρινομένοις· οὐκ ἐξεῖναι γὰρ (παρ') αὐτὰς ὑποκρίνεσθαι; cf. Hanink (2014) 60–74.

21 Barrett (1964) 47; Garland (2004) 28.

22 The evidence is sifted by Kannicht (1996), whose conclusions are slightly modified by Scullion (2006) 187, 197–198 n. 7.

to forfeit, although he did make splendid copies of the manuscripts which he had 'borrowed' and sent them in place of the originals.²³ If we can trust this account, the books in question are likely to have been the official Lycurgan text; and if that text was still the same one written in the 330s, and not a copy subsequently made to replace it, that would mean that the Alexandrian library would have thereby obtained a text free from a century or so of further textual corruption. But even if these hypotheses are correct, we have no way of knowing how much of an impact, if any, the Lycurgan text had on the edition(s) of Euripides that came out of Alexandria.

Ancient scholarship on Euripides is certainly attested.²⁴ Even before the Alexandrians, he was the subject (or co-subject) of monographs by Aristotle, Philochorus, Duris, and Heraclides Ponticus; Aristoxenus and Dicaearchus also wrote on him. From the scholia we know of a variety of scholars, usually of unknown date, who studied individual plays: Aeschines, Apollodorus of Cyrene, Apollodorus of Tarsus, Parmeniscus, Timachidas of Rhodes. But as for complete editions, we are not very well informed. Alexander of Aetolia was commissioned by Ptolemy II Philadelphus (sole ruler 283–246) to produce a δῶρον of all of tragedy and satyr-play.²⁵ Even if Alexander set out with the intention of correcting as many errors in the texts as possible, the sheer size of this undertaking will have limited the impact that he had on the text of any individual play; and the loss of his work on drama means that we cannot form even a provisional assessment of his capability as a critic. A few variant readings, as well as the use of critical signs, by Aristophanes of Byzantium (257–180 BC) are attested in the scholia on *Orestes* and *Hippolytus*;²⁶ he also wrote hypotheses to at least some of the plays, which included a brief summary both of the plot and of the circumstances of the first performance.²⁷ Hard evidence that he produced an edition of the whole Euripidean corpus, however, is lacking.²⁸ Even if he was nominally responsible for a complete edition, much of the work may have been undertaken by subordinates, supervised, to what-

23 Galen, *Commentary on the Epidemics of Hippocrates* 2.4 (= Eur. test. 219 *TrGF*). See Handis (2013) for a sceptical account of this story.

24 Eur. test. 206–217 *TrGF* (which contains the references for the statements that follow), McNamee (2012).

25 Alex. Aet. test. 7 Magnelli.

26 For references, see Schwartz (1887–1891) II.380.

27 Pfeiffer (1968) 192–194; Van Rossum-Steenbeek (1998) 32–36; Carrara (2009) 243–252; also Brown (1987), who argues that many of these hypotheses do not originate with Aristophanes.

28 For a discussion, see Carrara (2007).

ever degree, by the great master. Confident assertions about the scope of his editorial activity, in tragedy as well as in lyric poetry, should be treated with scepticism.

The same is true in the case of Aristarchus (ca. 220–143 BC), where the evidence for his work on Sophocles is actually stronger than for any engagement with Euripides.²⁹ Work by Didymus (ca. 65 BC–AD 10) on Euripides is attested in the scholia to six different plays, from which we may conclude that he produced a commentary on at least part of Euripides' oeuvre; but nothing suggests that he produced an edition too.³⁰ Any edition of Euripides that did come out of Alexandria would have had considerable prestige, and would probably have made quite an impact on the textual tradition. But texts of Euripides continued to circulate outside that city, and it seems unlikely that an Alexandrian edition could have entirely dominated the tradition of a poet increasingly read over the Greek-speaking Mediterranean.

We can observe the changing fortunes of different plays over the centuries, thanks to the recent magnificent study of the ancient manuscripts (papyri) by Paolo Carrara.³¹ The evidence is almost completely limited to Egypt, and a great proportion of it comes from a single town, Oxyrhynchus. No doubt there were variations across the Greek-speaking world in terms of which plays were especially popular in different periods. But we have no reason to think that Egypt or Oxyrhynchus were so culturally peculiar that we cannot make at least some broad inferences about the transmission.³²

Before we consider the papyri in detail, however, we need to jump ahead for a moment, and note which plays did in fact survive antiquity; it will be important to bear this information in mind as we consider which plays seem to have been most popular at different stages in the transmission.³³ The plays that survived can be divided into two groups. The first consists of nine dramas, namely *Alcestis*, *Andromache*, *Bacchae*, *Hecuba*, *Hippolytus*, *Medea*, *Orestes*, *Phoenician*

29 Pfeiffer (1968) 222–224; Finglass (2012) 12.

30 For references, see Schwartz (1887–1891) 11.382; also Pfeiffer (1968) 277.

31 Carrara (2009). Two Euripidean papyri post-date Carrara's book: a first-century papyrus of *Alexandros* [Henry (2014)] and a third-century papyrus of *Ino* [Luppe/Henry (2012); Finglass (2014), (2016), and (2017)]. These are naturally included where relevant in the lists below.

32 Our Egyptian papyri may have been more influenced by the Alexandrian edition(s) of Euripides than the (lost) papyri from elsewhere in the Roman empire; this may mean that they offer a more accurate text than would a comparable set of papyri from another place.

33 A full account of this question would also consider the frequency of quotations from different plays in antiquity, a topic beyond the limits of this essay.

Women, and *Trojan Women*, which survive in many mediaeval manuscripts.³⁴ These plays are known as ‘the Selection’, a term that will be examined later. Three of them, *Hecuba*, *Orestes*, and *Phoenician Women*, evidently enjoyed a special popularity, at least in very late antiquity and in the middle ages, since they are found in so many more manuscripts than the others; these are called ‘the Triad’. The second group of plays, also nine in number, is made up of *Cyclops*, *Electra*, *Helen*, *Heracles*, *Heraclidae*, *Ion*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Suppliant Women*. These survive in only one mediaeval manuscript, plus in others copied from that sole manuscript. The tenuous nature of this transmission, coupled with the alphabetic proximity of these titles in Greek, suggests that a single book from a multi-volume edition of Euripides somehow survived the destruction of its fellows and lasted long enough to be copied. This freakishly fortunate occurrence was the only thing that stood between these plays and oblivion. The upshot is that we cannot simply separate the plays of Euripides into those that survived and those that did not; such a division makes far too much of the contingent survival of a single ancient book. The real divide is between the plays of the Selection and all the others. It is also worth looking out for the Triad, to see when these three plays began to achieve prominence.³⁵

Even as early as the third century BC, which is when the first papyri are found, there may be a bias in favour of the Selection: four of eleven papyri are taken from this group, including one from the Triad.³⁶ This fact needs to be treated with care. Three further papyri from this period might belong to Euripides, all to plays outside the Selection; four out of fourteen is not as impressive a percentage, though still more than we would expect for a group that makes up just over 10% of Euripides’ output. (*Ex hypothesi* it will always be possible to attribute papyri of plays already known to be by Euripides to the correct author, whereas with lost plays we must rely on there being sufficient text for us to establish a connection by means of language or style; there is thus always a chance of skewed picture.) But already in papyri from the second to first centuries BC that picture begins to change: by this time six out of eleven papyri are from the Selection, and fully five from the Triad.³⁷ This is far more than

34 *Rhesus* is also part of this group. *Bacchae* survives in only two manuscripts but was still part of the Selection.

35 Papyrus dates are taken from Carrara (2009), whose use of overlapping chronological periods reminds us that dating papyri is not an exact science.

36 *Alexander*, *Antiope*, *Erechtheus*, *Heracles* (2), *Hippolytus* (2), *Hypsipyle*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Medea*, *Orestes*.

37 *Cresphontes* (3, though one is doubtful), *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Medea*, *Orestes* (4), *Phoenician Women*, *Phrixus A?*

we would expect if all the dramas were equally popular. We are dealing with small numbers, yet the picture is consistent, as we shall see. As Mastronarde notes, 'it does not take very long for the popularity among readers (and students and teachers) of most of (the) select plays to be evident in their survival in the known fragments, and in particular the triad plays ... emerge already in the Roman period as abundantly attested'.³⁸ Nevertheless, at least one play outside the Selection enjoyed popularity during this period, if the three attested fragments of *Cresphontes* are anything to go by.

From the first century BC to the first century AD six fragments out of seven are from the Selection, and three from the Triad.³⁹ The smaller number of fragments from this period 'is mirrored in all kinds of papyri and relates to survival rather than production'.⁴⁰ Papyri are more numerous from the first to the second centuries AD, with thirty-six separate texts.⁴¹ Fifteen come from the Triad, and eight more from the rest of the Selection, leaving only thirteen for the rest, or a just over a third of the papyri for approximately 90% of Euripides' plays. In the third century twenty-five papyri are divided fifteen for the Selection (with nine for the Triad), ten for the rest.⁴² Numbers start to decline only in the fourth century, when eight papyri are represented: six from the Selection (only one from the Triad), two from the other plays.⁴³ The last papyri come from the fifth to seventh centuries. During this period twenty-four papyri are attested, all but one from the Selection, and with eleven attestations of the Triad.⁴⁴

38 Mastronarde (2011) 193.

39 *Alcestis, Bacchae, Helen, Orestes* (2), *Phoenician Women, Trojan Women*.

40 Thus Morgan (2003) 188; she adds (with regard to the data for all tragedy, not just Euripides) that 'if anything these figures are relatively high for this period, so interest in tragedy seems to have continued healthy'.

41 *Alcmeon, Alexandros, Andromache* (3), *Andromeda, Antigone, Bacchae* (2), *Cretans, Cresphontes, Hecuba* (3), *Hippolytus, Hippolytus Veiled, Hypsipyle, Iphigenia in Tauris* (2), *Medea* (2), *Orestes* (5), *Phoenician Women* (7), *Phrixus A or B, Telephus*, and one fragment not certainly attributed to any play.

42 *Alcestis, Andromache* (2), *Archelaus, Cretans, Cresphontes, Electra, Hecuba* (3), *Heracles* (2), *Ino, Iphigenia at Aulis, Iphigenia in Tauris, Medea* (2), *Orestes* (2), *Phoenician Women* (4), *Theseus, Trojan Women*.

43 *Andromache* (2), *Cyclops, Hecuba, Medea* (2), *Melanippe, Oedipus*. As Morgan (2003) 188 notes, 'it is possible that as the reading of Christian texts increased at this time, the reading of tragedy dropped sharply except (probably) among small groups of the highly cultured'. I do not include in these figures, though do mention here, the line of *Hypsipyle* recently discovered in Trimitis on the wall of a school building from the mid-fourth century [Criore and Davoli (2013) 11–13].

44 *Andromache* (6), *Bacchae* (5), *Hecuba* (2), *Hippolytus, Medea* (4), *Orestes* (4), *Phaethon, Phoenician Women* (5). This list includes four papyri containing (at least) two plays each. The text of *Phaethon* was probably written in the fifth century, outside Egypt. Cf. Morgan

From this rather breathless survey various points emerge. First, the sheer number of Euripidean papyri is remarkable:⁴⁵ far more in every period than those of Aeschylus or Sophocles.⁴⁶ Second, the plays of the Selection are somewhat overrepresented even among the third-century BC papyri, and by the second to first centuries BC both the Selection in general, and the Triad in particular, make up a decisive preponderance of the attested texts.⁴⁷ This contrasts with the picture for Sophocles, where in the distribution of papyri 'there is nothing to suggest that, before AD100, any group of plays was being read, performed, and copied ... more than any other'.⁴⁸ Third, although it follows that the non-selected plays are not as numerous as they might be, at any period for which papyri are attested, they nevertheless continue to be attested down to the fifth century. One of them, *Cresphontes*, has fully five attestations in the papyri between the second century BC and third century AD, which suggests particular fame; further indications of this play's popularity will be noted below. This again contrasts with the picture from Sophocles, where we encounter 'the complete absence of plays outside the Seven from the fourth century onwards'.⁴⁹ Euripides' greater popularity is manifested by the survival, for a longer time, of a greater proportion of his poetry. Fourth, the dominance of the Triad can be observed from the second century BC onwards, but this dominance is not absolute. If we did not know otherwise, we might have included *Medea* and *Andromache* alongside *Hecuba*, *Orestes*, and *Phoenician Women*, since we have an impressive twelve and thirteen papyri respectively of those plays. Within the triad, *Orestes* and *Phoenician Women* are better attested than

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- (2003) 201: 'during the later Roman period the reading of tragedy declines steadily, but among a few keen communities or individuals it hangs on right up to the Arab conquest'.
- 45 Cf. Morgan (2003) 189: 'Euripides appears somewhere in Egypt in every century and at every findspot at some time, and there are no obvious gaps where excavation turned up large numbers of other literary papyri, but no Euripides.'
- 46 A survey of quotations or literary allusions would complement this picture. For example, Plutarch quotes Euripides 359 times, more than any other author except for Plato (915 times) and Homer (889), and more than twice as often as Sophocles (140); for the figures see Morgan (1998) 318–319.
- 47 Quotations show a similar pattern: 'the select plays are increasingly dominant over the others; within the others the proportion of alphabetical to lost plays is fairly constant' [Heath (1987) 41].
- 48 Finglass (2012) 13 (note that a number of instances of 'AD' in my typescript have been rendered as 'BCE' (sic) in the published text of that chapter; I have cited above the text as it should be written). This is based on a sample of only six papyri, of which one is from the seven plays that survived; the picture could change if we had more fragments.
- 49 Finglass (2012) 13 ('the Seven' denotes the seven plays of Sophocles that have survived complete).

Hecuba, and in terms of quotations '*Hecuba* does not share either in the early dominance of the "triad" or in its late increase';⁵⁰ but thanks to recent papyrus publications the popularity of this play in antiquity can be discerned.

The term 'the Selection' is handy but question-begging: it implies that somebody made a deliberate choice of these particular plays. This was the view of Wilamowitz, according to whom a choice was made for educational purposes in the third century; from that point on, these plays alone were read, and the others were duly lost.⁵¹ Wilamowitz had nevertheless to admit that two plays of the selection, *Orestes* and *Phoenician Women*, had begun to enjoy popularity long before the date of this putative selection.⁵² And the evidence from the papyri, as we have seen, tends to underline the significance of that admission.⁵³ Ascribing the survival of certain plays to the intervention of a single Selector parallels the ancient tendency to credit to one *πρῶτος εὐρετής* or *primus inventor* phenomena which today we would see as the results of a long process of development involving many people.⁵⁴ Thanks to the papyri, we can see that the plays of the so-called Selection are strongly overrepresented from at least the second century BC; we also know that plays outside that Selection were being read as late as the fifth century AD. Both these data tell against the idea of a single moment of choice. It is better to see the survival of certain plays as the result of a centuries-long period of change. As the use of Euripides in educational contexts, and the performance of his plays, became less frequent, certain dramas stopped being copied, which resulted in the relatively small number of plays that reached the middle ages. The name 'the Selection' nevertheless remains a convenient shorthand, as long as we remember that any process of selection was more akin to Natural Selection than to any discrete moment of choice.

Why certain plays remained popular, and why others faded away, is impossible to tell. The hypothesis to Euripides' *Phoenician Women* emphasizes both the emotional impact caused by the many deaths in the drama, and the many maxims that it contains; such a combination would make it ideal both for per-

50 Heath (1987) 41.

51 Wilamowitz (1907) 195–197, 201–203; cf. the summary in Barrett (1964) 51–52.

52 Wilamowitz (1907) 201.

53 So Roberts (1953) 271 ('thus the selection—in other words, the formation of the classical tradition—is seen not to have been an arbitrary act but in keeping with the general taste of the Hellenistic age'), Barrett (1964) 52 ('the evidence of the papyri ... indicates that some at any rate of the select plays had established an ascendancy long before that date'); Garland (2004) 69–70.

54 Cf. the language of Wilamowitz (1907) 195: 'Ein mann ist est gewesen, der damals für den unterricht eine auswahl von tragödien der drei tragiker veranstaltet hat ...'

formance and for use in the schoolroom, and may explain its success.⁵⁵ But many other Euripidean plays might be expected to excite the passions of their audiences, and maxims are hardly in short supply elsewhere in this author. Moreover, we have no way of assessing the supposed demerits of the many plays which have perished. The greater success of Euripides compared to that of Sophocles or Aeschylus is perhaps easier to explain; his language is simpler than that of his two fifth-century rivals. Aeschylus' language is the most difficult of the three (as is already recognized in Aristophanes' *Frogs*), and it is no coincidence that his plays turned out to be the least popular in succeeding centuries.

It may be that choices made quite early on in the story of the transmission, in the fourth and third centuries BC, as to which plays were worth reviving, continued to have an impact in subsequent centuries by sheer force of inertia. If a play dropped out of the general repertoire of actors, it would have been difficult for it to find a way back in. An actor would have had to make quite an investment of time and effort to learn a play that was no longer being performed; and there was a risk that audiences would not take as well to material that had become unfamiliar. We should not think, then, in terms of each successive generation assessing all the plays of Euripides independently and deciding which ones they liked best; inherited patterns of availability will have limited the plays with which they are likely to have come into contact. And as opportunities for performance of entire tragedies dwindled, we may imagine that actors fell back on a smaller and smaller repertoire, with inevitable consequences for the copying of the plays.

Performance of tragedy, sometimes without the Choruses, can be traced for hundreds of years after the classical period.⁵⁶ A third-century BC inscription from Tegea celebrates the victories of a tragic actor at different contests, and lists seven by name (leaving another eighty-eight unenumerated); of the seven, five involve plays by Euripides.⁵⁷ One is the familiar *Orestes*, which the actor put on at the Athenian Dionysia; but *Heracles* and *Archelaus* are also attested twice, and performed at different festivals. The repetition implies that these plays formed part of the repertoire, and thus that audiences in this period were still enthusiastic for a range of Euripides' plays, not just the ones destined to survive. Later, Plutarch and Philostratus refer to performances of two of Euripides' dramas, both from outside the Selection;⁵⁸ a few papyri from the imperial

55 Hyp. Eur. *Phoen.* (1.243.1–7 Schwartz). See Cribiore (2001).

56 Nervegna (2007), (2014); Finglass (2014) 77–79.

57 *TrGF* I DID B 11 (276–219 BC). The other two plays are by Archemstratus and Chaeremon.

58 Plut. *De sera numinis vindicta* 556a (*Ino*), *De esu carniū* 11 998de (*Cresphontes*), also

period look as if they were used in the context of performance.⁵⁹ In addition to complete plays, extracts were also performed, both in the theatre and in smaller gatherings.⁶⁰ As in the very earliest stages of the transmission, these reperformances of various types stimulated interest in the plays and demand for texts. It may be no coincidence that the range of surviving Euripidean plays contracts not long after performances appear to cease in the early third century.

4 The Mediaeval Transmission

'I assume that by the 7th cent(ury), there existed in metropolitan Greece a considerable number of codices containing the select plays of Euripides (or, in some cases, some of them), many of them with marginal annotations in a form resembling the medieval scholia. Then come the dark centuries; then in the later 9th and the 10th cent(uries) some of these codices are rediscovered, text and annotations are transcribed from the ancient uncial into minuscule, and the mediaeval tradition begins.' Thus begins Barrett's masterly survey of the transmission of Euripides in the middle ages.⁶¹ He goes on to argue that the variety of readings in the mediaeval tradition of the plays from the Selection can be explained only by supposing the survival of more than one manuscript from antiquity.⁶² We have already discussed the division of Euripides plays into the Selection (which includes the Triad) and the Alphabetic plays. Scores of manuscripts contain the Triad,⁶³ far fewer the Selection: sixteen for *Hippolytus*, say, and a still smaller number for other plays. The oldest manuscript was written in the tenth or eleventh century, and contains the Triad plus *Andromache*, *Hippolytus*, and *Medea*; about two centuries later the Euripidean text was imperfectly deleted to make room for a commentary on Old Testament prophets. The limited classical curriculum of the Byzantine period focused on

Pseudo-Plutarch, *Consolatio ad Apollonium* 110c (*Cresphontes*); Philostr. *Vita Apollonii* 7.5 (*Ino*).

59 *P.Oxy.* 4546 (first century BC or first half of the first century AD, *Alcestis*), *P.Oxy.* 2458 (third century, *Cresphontes*), *P.Oxy.* 5131 (third century, *Ino*).

60 Garland (2004) 63–64.

61 Barrett (1964) 57–58. For the Byzantines and Euripides, see also Baldwin (2009).

62 *Ibid.* 58–60.

63 For *Hecuba*, see Matthiessen (1974); for *Orestes*, Diggle (1991), for *Phoenician Women*, Mastronarde/Bremer (1982). Turyn (1957) remains a useful account of individual manuscripts, but its account of the relationship between them has been discredited by subsequent scholarship (see Barrett (2007) 420–431, a review that remained unpublished for half a century after the appearance of Turyn's book).

the three plays of the Triad above all, which explains their frequency in the manuscripts. In this period Euripides was appreciated not by audiences but by readers, whether they were students or people with literary interests more generally.

For the Alphabetic plays, there is only one witness, the fourteenth-century manuscript L. Another manuscript containing the same plays, P, also from the fourteenth century, is a copy of L, and thus not an independent witness; it is nonetheless useful, since it sometimes tells us L's likely reading when the latter has been obscured or obliterated.⁶⁴ There are a handful of further apographa from the fifteenth century. The survival of so few manuscripts from the middle ages containing the Alphabetic plays suggests that they were barely read, and certainly not on the school curriculum. L's readings are sometimes unclear because it was worked on, more than once, by Triclinius (active ca. 1320), the most important Byzantine scholar of Euripides. His particular contribution was to rediscover the principle of strophic respension in the lyric of tragedy, which allowed him to make many successful interventions in the text. It is with him that modern scholarship on Euripides begins, long before the printing press.

5 The Progress of Scholarship⁶⁵

The first printed edition of Euripides was published at Florence in 1494 by Janus Lascaris; it contained four plays, *Alcestis*, *Andromache*, *Hippolytus*, and *Medea*. The Aldine edition followed in 1503, containing all the surviving plays except for *Electra*; this followed in an edition of 1546. Only now is the transmission of the plays secure. The works of Euripides were now to be found in many more copies and locations than ever before. Producing a new set of copies was now much easier; and the chance that any play would be lost thanks to the disappearance or decay of a handful of manuscripts, a threat all too real in previous centuries, was gone.

From this point, the story is not one of the disappearance of Euripides' texts, but of their steady improvement, always with the goal of removing the errors introduced by some two millennia of written transmission. Particular highlights include Wilhelm Canter's edition of 1571, the first to print Euripides' lyrics in responding verse; the editions by John King (1726) and Samuel Mus-

64 Zuntz (1965) is the definitive account of the relationship between these two manuscripts, as well as of their fortunes.

65 For this topic, see in particular the elegant Latin account of Diggle (1981–1994) I.v–xi.

grave (1778), who made use of a greater number of manuscripts in establishing the text rather than simply making conjectural changes to previous editions; Lodewijk Valckenaer's edition of *Phoenician Women* (1755), the first to take seriously the possibility that interpolation had affected our texts of Euripides;⁶⁶ the editions of individual plays by Richard Porson in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which displayed (along with his posthumously printed *adversaria*) a unique critical ability; and the edition of Adolph Kirchhoff in 1855, the first to set about evaluating the manuscripts on a scientific basis by applying the method today associated with the name of Karl Lachmann. Apart from these big names, many other scholars have contributed to the purification of Euripides' text. To make even a single conjecture that wins general approval is a valiant achievement in the perpetual scholarly struggle to increase our understanding of the past.

The discovery of papyri of Euripides from the early twentieth century onwards both enabled the recovery of substantial parts of Euripides inaccessible since antiquity, and gave us glimpses of a textual tradition for the other plays much older than that provided by the mediaeval manuscripts.⁶⁷ These new discoveries are certainly the most glamorous part of the achievement of modern scholarship; but we should not forget that the twentieth century also saw the most significant improvements to our texts of the plays that have survived complete. This was in part thanks to the studies of Zuntz, Matthiessen, Bremer/Mastronarde, and Diggle (all cited in the previous section) in untangling the relationships between individual manuscripts. This is work of permanent value; it will never need to be done again, and gives vital assistance to a modern editor of Euripides, as well as illuminating the history of the transmission. But this improvement is also due to the quality of the editions published over the last half century. Indeed, perhaps no other ancient author was as fortunate in his modern editors as was Euripides. The Oxford Classical Text by Diggle⁶⁸ and the Loeb Classical Library edition by Kovacs,⁶⁹ accompanied by several volumes explaining their textual choices,⁷⁰ are wonderful resources for the study of the plays that have survived in full, thanks to the knowledge of Euripides' language, style, and dramatic technique exhibited by their editors in their tex-

66 For unpublished work by Valckenaer and his contemporaries on the text of Euripides, see Finglass (2009).

67 For the significance of papyri for the textual criticism of extant texts, see Finglass (2013), (forthcoming).

68 Diggle (1981–1994).

69 Kovacs (1994–2002).

70 Diggle (1981), (1994); Kovacs (1994), (1996), (2003a).

tual choices. The fragments, too, have been acutely edited by Kannicht (2004). Editions of individual plays have also contributed considerably to our understanding: those by Barrett of *Hippolytus* and Mastronarde of *Phoenician Women* deserve particular mention among many outstanding contributions.⁷¹ The Aris and Phillips series, presided over for several decades by Collard and now complete, often provides further useful assistance.⁷²

6 The Future

Texts of Euripides have not in been in such good shape since shortly after the playwright's lifetime. A reader wanting to get a picture of the possibilities for any textual point can easily consult the editions of Diggle and Kovacs and their ancillary volumes, and several commentaries per play. It is tempting to conclude that the work is done; that progress in this area is unlikely or impossible. That would be a mistake. True, any scholar setting out today to create a complete new critical edition of the works of Euripides would be better advised to pursue a different research topic. But our ever-increasing understanding of Euripides' language, metre, and dramatic and literary technique, combined with the likely recovery of more Euripidean papyri, should mean that, within two or three generations, a fresh investigation would indeed bear fruit. In the meantime, detailed editions of individual plays which consider textual criticism alongside issues of literary and dramatic interpretation are still needed for several dramas, both those preserved complete and those in fragmentary form. A more pressing need today is for a proper analysis of what this chapter has merely sketched: the extraordinary process by which a few of the tragedies of Euripides managed to survive antiquity, and so came down to us.⁷³

⁷¹ Barrett (1964); Mastronarde (1994).

⁷² The Teubner Euripides is in general less useful, although some volumes are worth consulting.

⁷³ Nervegna (2013) provides an excellent model for such a volume, being an account of the ancient transmission of the only classical dramatist to enjoy greater popularity in antiquity than even Euripides, namely Menander.

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*Alcestis**Daniel I. Iakov †*

Alcestis, the oldest extant drama of Euripides, is a hermeneutically controversial work, which was performed in 438 BC as the last play in a tetralogy including *Cretan Women*, *Alcmeon in Psophis*, and *Telephus*, thereby taking the place of the satyr-drama.¹ In what follows, I shall discuss the development of the plot, the knowledge of which I presuppose as a given, while concentrating on various interpretative issues which have polarized modern critics. Before I proceed with my discussion, the reader should bear in mind the following four preliminary points:

1. The theme of the drama: the possibility of one life being offered as a substitute for another, as well as the return from the grave, is unrealistic, even if it frames the play² and mostly relates to a folktale rather than to a dramatic work despite the fact that similar episodes, such as the rejuvenation of the old man Iolaus in the *Children of Heracles*, are not unknown to Euripides. This caveat is in order here, as it raises the crucial question of why the poet chose to treat a folktale theme, if he intended to cast an ironic light upon his work. According to the prevailing opinion, however, Euripides sought in this play to put the accent on the hypocrisy of Admetus.³
2. The genre problem: the play substituted the traditional satyr-drama. The question that arises is whether Euripides repeated this experiment on other occasions. From the ancient biography of the poet we learn that only eight satyr-dramas were attributed to him, and their extremely limited number renders possible the conjecture that many tragedies would occupy the last place in a tetralogy.⁴ Critics⁵ have attempted to trace spe-

1 See the ancient Hypothesis, which became known through the work of Dindorf in 1832.

2 See further Lloyd (1985) 124.

3 The harshest accusation against Admetus was launched by von Fritz (1962), who has exercised an enormous influence on subsequent research.

4 See Mastronarde (2010) 57, who draws attention to the possibility that a great number of Euripidean satyr-dramas had been lost before the Alexandrian scholars had started collecting ancient texts.

5 See Susanetti (2001).

cific characteristics associated with satyr-drama; nonetheless, the work must have been received as a tragedy.⁶

3. This play presents a closed form in a remarkable way: it starts directly with Alcestis' imminent death, it enacts this onstage, it features the conflict between father and son over the unwillingness of the former to offer his life so that the latter can be saved, and, finally, it includes the fulfilment of the prophecy: the hospitality scene with Heracles, who serves as a guardian angel coming from offstage to the grave of Alcestis. It is worth noting at this point that the salvation of Alcestis is an exploit that is exclusively attributed to the willpower of Heracles,⁷ and is not forcibly imposed upon the hero by Eurystheus. The drama ends with Admetus calling for a city-wide feast, without any reference to the couple's future life, which, in absence of any indications to the contrary, looks happy and promising. And the choral odes are closely associated with the plot. A concise summation of the play would run as follows: 'death and revival of Alcestis'. Past and future are irrelevant, while on both those time levels the relationship of the royal couple appears to be unclouded. The contention that the future remains unexplained is further reinforced by the question whether the return of Alcestis to life entails the death of some other character, so that balance can be restored between the world of the living and the realm of the dead, as the Fates had agreed with Apollo. For example, it is not impossible that ultimately one of the parents of Admetus would have died, as happens in a modern Armenian version of this widely circulated folktale.⁸

6 Riemer (1989) suggests that Euripidean *Alcestis* is a pure tragedy, pointing out useful intertextual affinities between the play and Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* and *Eumenides*, as well as Sophocles' *Trachiniae*. Gregory (2006) detects points of contact between the play and Sophocles' *Antigone*. See further Markantonatos (2013) 61 n. 59. Marshall (2000) 229–238 argues that the Euripidean tetralogy of 438 BC constituted a zone of resistance to an official decree issued in the archonship of Morychides (440/439 BC) which sought to curtail the satire of individuals in comedy. In my opinion, this theory pertains to comedy rather than to satyr-drama, which, not unlike tragedy, draws heavily on Greek mythology. It goes without saying that dramatized myths can also contain political references; but those references are implicit and less acidulous.

7 On Heracles, see Stafford (2012).

8 Luschnig/Roisman (2003) 163–226 suggests a correspondence between *Alcestis* and the Aeschylean *Agamemnon*: as both the return of the conqueror of Troy and his entrance into the Argive palace signal his death, so too the return of the queen to life entails the death of her husband. However, it is hard to accept that Euripides would compose a drama only to turn it on its head in the closing scene, since this suggestion implies a return to pre-dramatic events, namely the imminent death of Admetus. For a detailed narratological analysis of the play with religious ramifications, see Markantonatos (2013) 23 ff.

4. The final point concerns the selfishness of Admetus, which has already been suggested by modern critics.⁹ However, in order for such an allegation to be credible, what has to be taken into serious consideration is the premise entailing that the necessary convention allowing a tragedy to have a powerful effect is none other than an impenetrable dilemma with catastrophic results for the principal character. On the face of this the available choices lying before the tragic poet are the following: a) Admetus conceals the gift of Apollo and bravely chooses death.¹⁰ In such a case, we would be talking about a natural death that does not pose particular problems and, consequently, is not suitable material for tragic drama. b) Either of the superannuated parents agrees to offer their life for the salvation of Admetus. And again, no serious problems arise: Heracles treats the loss of an elderly person as an ordinary course of nature (line 516). c) The only possibility with catalytic effects on the lives of Admetus and his children is Alcestis' self-sacrificing offer. In fact, Alcestis emphatically states that she dies when her young children need their mother the most (lines 317–319, 379), while Admetus realizes all too late the serious consequences arising from the loss of Alcestis (ἄρτι μανθάνω, 940).¹¹

The conclusion is obvious: the last option constitutes the sole principle for the creation of tragic drama. This, however, has contradictory results as far as the characters of the play are concerned. Admetus is the greatest winner, since he succeeds in securing his survival, but simultaneously the biggest loser, primarily because he buys off his life at an exceptionally high price, which, in accordance with his promises, consists in permanent mourning, life-long celibacy, as well as refraining from any kind of enjoyment and pleasure (lines 343–344). He will become a living dead.¹² Furthermore, the king of Thessaly wails for his prematurely deceased wife, whilst he knows all too well that his survival presupposes her voluntary self-denying offer. Consequently, the poet had to tackle a complex problem, for the reason that he would have to present the mourning of Admetus as either sincere and heart-rending or hypocritical and deceitful.

9 Von Fritz (1962); Schwinge (1962) 42 ff. and (1968) 100 ff.

10 It has been argued that the message of the play consists in the view that death is a personal matter, and, therefore, every effort to avoid it is not only a self-seeking enterprise but also causes additional problems. This argument, however, fails to notice that the substitution of a life for another is improbable.

11 Dale (1954) xxv; Seeck (1985) 80 n. 10. The Maid is right to note that the Thessalian king has not yet realized the seriousness of the situation (line 145).

12 See further Markantonatos (2013) 77 n. 84.

I believe that the final option corresponds neither to the expectations of the audience nor to the intentions of the poet, who had before him three choices: a) to portray Admetus as cynically indifferent towards the death of his wife, thereby provoking the repulsion of the spectators, b) to engage in the problem stemming from Admetus' acceptance of his wife's voluntary sacrifice and his potential guilt thereafter (that indeed pervades as the most important theme the war of words [ἀγῶν λόγων] between Pheres and Admetus),¹³ c) to dramatize the passing of Alcestis as a natural death. In my opinion, Euripides opted for the latter possibility, since the sacrifice of the queen was purposeful. That is the reason why the Chorus deploy well-known comforting motifs in relation to the loss of a spouse and refer to a kind of terminal illness (lines 203, 236), while attributing to Admetus absolutely no responsibility.

The last remark conclusively leads to the more detailed examination of Admetus' reaction, which, as has been indicated, was judged by critical scholarship as excessive and outrightly hypocritical,¹⁴ since Admetus appears to suppress consciously the responsibility for the death of his wife. This fact, however, as has already been underlined, is due to the peculiarity of the material for dramatization. That the response of Admetus is disproportionate is indicated by the text itself (line 1077): Heracles advises Admetus μή νυν ὑπέρβαλλ', ἀλλ' ἐναισίμωος φέρε. ¹⁵ The extreme reaction is justifiable, if we suppose that the poet sought to express in condensation as well as in anticipation the ineffable pain of Admetus, who predicts the miserable life awaiting him, while at the same time he shows the highest happiness over the reunion with his wife. Admetus attempts with his promises to counterbalance the offer of his wife's life with a kind of earthly death.¹⁶ However, his actions are not equivalent to hypocrisy in any way.¹⁷ In order to comprehend the reaction of the Thessalian king, one should bring to mind the analogy of the exchange of gifts between Glaucus and Diomedes in the *Iliad* (6.119–236). As is widely known, the two combat-

13 Riemer (1989) 157 argues that the play continues as if the debate scene has never happened. I disagree with this interpretation.

14 See (e.g.) Swift (2010) 355.

15 The excessive wailing of Admetus is not comparable to the weeping of Electra [Swift (2010) 357], because the latter concerns a death that happened in the past (the assassination of Agamemnon) and the painful consequences (economic adversity and social isolation, an unfulfilled marriage), while Admetus' extreme mourning concerns a recent death that causes great pain and will bring about destruction in the immediate future.

16 See Padilla (2000) 179–211, who treats Admetus' counterbalancing effort as hypocritical.

17 One could add to the passages cited by Swift (2010) Admetus' criticism against the Chorus for preventing him from falling into the open grave of his wife (line 897). See further Riemer (1989) 161.

ants exchange a gold shield with a copper shield. If we accept that the gold shield corresponds to the most precious good in the life of every person and the copper shield parallels the promises of Admetus, then we understand that the military exchange of gifts, as well as the substitution of the life of Admetus with the life of Alcestis, are not measurable, but have a symbolic value, since the death of the heroine is counterbalanced with an unbearable earthly life for Admetus. The analogy consists in the fact that the shields, regardless of their material substance, accomplish the same function: they protect the life of the warrior in battle. And in the play the earthly life of Admetus and the death of Alcestis, as has already been indicated, are equated.¹⁸ Consequently, the criticism against self-centredness and cowardice is not valid because the matter concerns not as much the character of Admetus but the very quality of his own life in the wake of Alcestis' death.

In examining the prologue-scene, one can distinguish an impressive departure from the usual Euripidean practice; though, at first sight, this is a typical divine opening. Firstly, I shall argue that Apollo does not exit the palace, as suggested by the ancient Hypothesis,¹⁹ which either knows a later performance of the play or is simply predicated upon conjecture, which possibly was dictated by the notion that the god protected the palace until the moment of the opening of the drama (line 9): τόνδ' ἔσφζον οἶκον ἐς τὸδ' ἡμέρας. This kind of defence, however, does not necessarily presuppose the physical presence of the god. In *Iphigenia in Tauris*, for example, Apollo protects Orestes from a distance. I accept as true that the god appears from some parodos on his way from Olympus. In defence of that interpretation I offer the following arguments: a) the third stasimon (lines 569ff.), which praises the hospitality of Admetus, deals with the service of Apollo as a mythological example from the past, which is repeated in the present in the hospitality extended to Heracles. Therefore, the penal servitude of the god would have been completed. b) Apollo's recognition that during his bondage he met a devout mortal (line 10): ὀσίου γὰρ ἀνδρὸς must have been based on the total appreciation of Admetus' conduct,²⁰ which almost certainly came about after the ending of the god's servitude. c) It is not probable that the negotiations with the Fates for the life of Admetus had been completed during Apollo's service; so, it is reasonable to suppose that if he remained punished Apollo was excluded from the world of the gods. d) According to the ancient Hypothesis and almost all contemporary scholars the address to the palace in line 1 does not rule out with absolute certainty the exit of the

18 See further line 960 (τί μοι ζῆν δῆτα κῦδιον ...).

19 See principally Markantonatos (2013) 25 n. 5.

20 See Burnett (1965).

god from the palace, but renders equally probable the entry of the god from offstage, as happens with Admetus, who, returning from the grave of his wife, addresses the palace (line 912): ὦ σχήμα δόμων.

The distinctiveness of the prologue-scene lies in the fact that no mention is made therein of the time prior to the drama as regards the royal couple, nor of any associated genealogy, whereas Apollo refers to his own past and his strong connection with Admetus. Both the suppression of the past and the commencement of the plot with the dying queen prove that the relationship of Admetus with his parents, as well as with his wife, had been cloudless. That is also confirmed by the epithet ἀπειρόκακος (line 927), which reveals that the Thessalian king had not had any unfortunate experience until the opening of the play. Therefore, the suppression of the backstory in the prologue is due to the poet's conscious choice.

The time of the promise remains undetermined, though we may well suppose that the pledge was not given on the first day of the marriage, as argued by Apollodorus (1.9.15), but at some stage in the course of their married life and perhaps even after the birth of the children. That since then a time period has passed can be inferred from the indefinite (line 421) πάλαι, as well as from the fact that Heracles learns at some point about the promise (line 524). By introducing such a novelty Euripides renders the death of Alcestis even more painful, as the young children will become orphans. The prologue does not offer any other evidence about the backstory of the drama. With her voluntary sacrifice²¹ Alcestis merits her place amongst those young men and women who gave up their lives for either the communal or the family good (e.g. Menoeceas, Macaria) or those fearless ones who chose death over slavery (Polyxene). The major difference consists in the fact that the sacrifice of those young persons is placed within the theatrical time frame, while Alcestis' self-sacrificing vow belongs to a time prior to the opening scene of the play. An additional essential difference lies in the fact that Alcestis saves the life of Admetus; but her death destroys both the royal household, as is openly stated by her son Eumelus in his plaintive monody, and the life of her husband, for fear that he puts into practice his promises. Certainly, the possibility of a rich and royal second marriage after

21 Bergson (1985) 20 n. 66 is right to suggest that οὐ δῆθ' ἐκούσά γ' in line 389 does not mean repentance for her decision but unwillingness to abandon her young children; though, I would add, her offer has simultaneously an obligatory force about it, in the sense that, after the refusal of the elderly parents to offer their lives for her son, her promise is rendered inevitable in view of the specific criteria she lays down for her sacrifice (lines 290–294). Alcestis, like Admetus, is a living contradiction: she accepts to be sacrificed, while at the same time she is conscious of the fact that her self-sacrificing pledge is *de facto* compulsory and unavoidable. Cf. also Riemer (1989) 125.

the death of her husband (lines 285–286) is theoretically examined; but such a thought underlines the greatness of her noble pledge and does not correspond to a specific plan.

The Maid, who appears after the *parodos*,²² informs the Chorus that she is in agony for the fate of the queen, now that she is making the final preparations for her imminent death. All movements of Alcestis inside the palace have an Olympian calmness about them. She puts on her burial clothes and jewellery, after having a bath, and her actions indicate with utmost clarity her unswayed decision to offer her life for the safety of her husband. It is noteworthy that in Greek tragedy often those anticipating their own death wash themselves while still alive, as happens with the dying Oedipus in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*.²³

Two other points from the speech of the Maid are worthy of our attention: the prayer of Alcestis to Hestia and the farewell to the marital bed.²⁴ In both cases, segments of direct speech are threaded into the narrative, thereby highlighting the significance of those events. The fact that in the prayer the husband is not included has been taken as an indication that coldness has invaded the feelings of Alcestis towards Admetus. However, it is exceptionally early for the husband to be mentioned in the prayer, since the royal couple will appear onstage in the ensuing episode. Besides, it is natural that Alcestis focuses her interest on the future of her children, since she will soon raise the possibility of Admetus entering a second marriage.

Her hope concerning the children is twofold: their happy marriage and their longevity in their ancestral land. It would have been unwise to suppose that Alcestis considers her own marriage a failure, while at this point perhaps a grievance for her early death emerges—that is, a grievance not against Admetus but against his selfish parents (lines 290–295). Alcestis, as well as airing her fear that a stepmother may prove harmful for the future marriage of her daughter (lines 313–316), expresses deep concern about the marital future of her children in general.²⁵ The reference to the marriage of Alcestis' offspring is significant for one more reason. It serves as a crucial time limit not only for the coming of age of the children but also for Admetus' potential second marriage.

22 It is doubtful whether the Chorus enters from the two *paradoi* already divided in half-choruses, as suggested by Slater (2013) 18 and 118 n. 66. I agree with Willink (2010) 786–790 that the Chorus enters onto the stage as an undivided group.

23 See further Markantonatos (2002) 136–137. Perhaps this also applies to Ajax before his suicide in the Sophoclean nameplay. See Belfiore (2000) 243 n. 53.

24 On the meaning of the marital bed, see Kaimio (2002).

25 On stepmothers, see Watson (1995).

The latter point in the Maid's narration relates to such a perspective, namely Alcestis' nightmarish thought that the conjugal bed will be occupied by another woman not as prudent and virtuous as herself but without doubt much more fortunate (lines 181–182).

Critics²⁶ have noticed a sudden change in the attitude of Alcestis, who demands of Admetus with uncommon sternness to remain unmarried for life, offering as a pretext the danger stemming from a bad step-mother.²⁷ Contrary to this view I believe that the emphatic insistence on the step-mother indicates the best timing for Admetus' marriage: he is entitled to remarry after their children's coming of age, which is usually marked by their marriage.²⁸ The *Odyseey* (lines 269–270) offers an instructive parallel. Departing for the Trojan War, Odysseus requested that, should he not return, Penelope remarry when the beard covers the cheeks of Telemachus. Therefore, no change can be ascertained in the behaviour of Alcestis. There is simply the suspension of Admetus' second marriage until the coming of age of the children.²⁹ In the second Episode the royal couple appears onstage, followed by their two young children and attended by servants carrying a couch.³⁰ The speech of fading Alcestis dominates the stage; it is divided into two parts: an emotionally charged lyrical farewell monologue³¹ accompanied by hallucinations and a calm expression of her final wishes.

It has been argued that the lack of communication between husband and wife during the lyrical monologue reveals the estrangement of Alcestis from Admetus. It would be wiser to suggest that it showcases eloquently the loneliness of the person who is on the verge of two worlds, a loneliness that will culminate with Alcestis' hallucinatory visions, which lead to the loss of every contact with her surroundings. More than that, the fact that in her address to the conjugal bed Alcestis declares that she does not hate it, though it was

26 Kaimio (2002) 107; Mastronarde (2010) 299–300. See further Beye (1959) 124; Rosenmeyer (1963) 227; Erbse (1972) 44; Markantonatos (2013) 72 n. 73. See, however, Seeck (1985) 74.

27 The theory that as an unmarried man Admetus could take a concubine is not improbable; but, as Mastronarde (2010) 299 rightly suggests, the simulacrum of Alcestis will occupy her place in the marital bed.

28 See further Plato, *Laws* 930b–c.

29 Slater (2013) argues that the differentiation could not have become directly noticeable by the spectators; but we should take into consideration that in all cases Alcestis refers exclusively to a would-be stepmother, and not to Admetus' second marriage, and that insistence cannot possibly be without special significance.

30 Slater (2013) 20 is right to rule out the use of the *ekkyklêma*, drawing attention to references to the light of the sun which indicate an entrance from within the palace door.

31 See further Markantonatos (2013) 57 n. 53 with relevant bibliography.

the cause only of her own death (line 179), shows most definitely the great weight she herself attributes to the survival of Admetus. The exclusive concern of her last wishes is that Admetus should not impose a stepmother on their children. Exceeding those requests Admetus promises that he will remain unmarried for life, eternally mourning his beloved wife (lines 336–337),³² and additionally on the conjugal bed a simulacrum of Alcestis will take the place she occupied while alive. Swift,³³ together with other scholars,³⁴ argues that this kind of substitution is cold and unrefined, which moreover indirectly but quite noticeably refers to the myth of Protesilaus and Laodameia.³⁵ Paduano³⁶ correctly observes that the simulacrum gives the dying Alcestis the assurance that her place will not be taken by another woman. Therefore, I would add, Admetus subconsciously reacts to the view only just expressed by Alcestis that the marital bed will be enjoyed by some other woman.³⁷ Furthermore, the reference to Orpheus (lines 357–359)³⁸ has been treated as deeply ironic, principally because Orpheus failed to bring to light his dead wife. It is worth noting, however, that Euripides in this case alludes to some mythological version in which Orpheus' effort is crowned with success;³⁹ for this reason the ironic interpretation of the passage should be heavily revised.

Alcestis dies onstage placed on a couch. It is quite rare for a tragic hero to breathe their last onstage, something that is facilitated in this case by the natural causes of the passing, as violent deaths always occur offstage. Parallels include the death of the wounded Hippolytus at the end of his Euripidean nameplay, while the onstage suicide of Ajax in the Sophoclean play⁴⁰ remains problematic in performative terms. What follows is the harrowing monody of the young Eumelus over the lifeless body of his mother, a monody which might have been performed by an appropriately trained boy, though other solutions⁴¹

32 On permanent mourning, see Lattimore (1962) 245 and Skiadas (1967) 73. According to Swift (2010) the deployment of this motif reinforces the theory about Admetus' excessive and hypocritical reaction; but its presence in funerary epigrams shows that in this play Euripides draws heavily on funeral literature. For a collection of relevant material, see Iakov (2012) 1.106 ff. and 114 ff. See further Slater (2013) 71, where reference is also made to illustrations on sarcophaguses.

33 Swift (2010) 353.

34 See (e.g.) von Fritz (1962) 260.

35 See Iakov (2012) *ad* 350.

36 Paduano (1969) *ad* 350.

37 On the simulacrum, see Burnett (1983) 438 n. 10.

38 See Seidensticker (1982) 145.

39 Bowra (1952); Sansone (1985); Riemer (1989) 116.

40 Scullion (1994). See further Erbse (1984) 24.

41 Iakov (2012) *ad* 393 ff.

have been suggested. The lyrical monody describes expressively the impactful poignancy of the loss of Alcestis.

After Admetus' directives for public mourning⁴² there follows the second stasimon which is performed on an empty stage. Unexpectedly for the Chorus—but not at all for the spectators—in the third Episode Heracles appears on his way to Thrace, where he will perform his eighth labour. The Chorus does not inform Heracles of Admetus' bereavement, and the Thessalian king—who as far as tragic protocol is concerned appears somewhat late, and not immediately after a newly arrived character has asked after him—misleads Heracles with an ambivalent speech, so that he will not decline his hospitality out of respect for his sorrow. The Chorus initially blames Admetus for his excessive show of hospitality, but at any rate they have a presentiment that it is not impossible for something positive to result from this disproportionate gesture of generosity and friendliness. The Chorus' initial censure has found adherents in modern criticism, who argue that Admetus, by offering hospitality, breaks his promise to Alcestis that after her death music and song⁴³ will not sound in the palace. It is evident, however, that Admetus does not go back on his pledge since he does not take part in the feast given for Heracles, who is found isolated in a space far from the place of actual mourning.⁴⁴ In traditional societies, like those of ancient Greece or modern day Greek rural regions, it is natural that in the absence of lodges extending hospitality to strangers is often the privilege of regional officeholders. In that context let me remind the reader of another offer of hospitality with fatal results. In Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* Orestes, setting in motion his revengeful plan, makes known to Clytemnestra his supposed death, thereby expressing his intention to abandon the palace that mourns the passing away of the prince. His mother, however, offers him generous hospitality and thereupon loses her life.

The fourth Episode contains a war of words between Admetus and Pheres. The placement of the *agôn* in the centre of the drama should not be considered decisive for its interpretation.⁴⁵ Indeed, in accordance with certain scholars, the conflict reveals that Admetus serves as an exact duplication of narcissistic

42 Swift (2010) 354–355 argues that the shearing of the horses' manes (lines 428–429) was excessive and even comical except for military contexts; but we must not forget that the horses of Thessaly were regarded as exceptional, and thus their participation in the mourning process has a highly symbolic value.

43 See Seidensticker (1982) 149 ff. and previously Schwinge (1962) 49–50.

44 On hospitality and mourning in literature as well as in everyday life of contemporary Greece, see Alexiou (2002²) *passim*.

45 Thus, von Fritz (1962) 307. For a different interpretation, see Lloyd (1985) 131 n. 36.

Pheres. This dispute is an integral part of the play's backstory:⁴⁶ the parents of the Thessalian king had refused to offer their life to save their son. It is remarkable that the verbal wrangle unfolds in the dramatic present, and principally in front of the lifeless body of Alcestis, possibly because the spectators must hear from the father himself the reason behind his refusal. Furthermore, the image of an old man so tenaciously attached to life shows *a contrario* the enormity of young Alcestis' self-sacrificing promise.⁴⁷ Finally, the sentimental breach with the parents renders the isolation of Admetus absolute and his despair impenetrable, as he cannot draw any emotional support from his immediate family. Consequently, the *agôn* serves an important purpose. As a true realist Euripides had to offer a response to the understandable questions of certain spectators—that is, whether at least a part of the guilt should be attributed to Admetus, since both he and Apollo are mainly responsible for this impossible situation. The god bears the main responsibility on account of his gift, but after the unanticipated refusal of Admetus' parents, he decides to make amends and rectify mistakes by sending mighty Heracles.

During the verbal dispute between father and son the issue of guilt comes under discussion; Pheres plays an important role in this, but the delineation of his character with the darkest colours shows him absolutely untrustworthy.⁴⁸ More particularly, with reference to Pheres one can note the following: a) he is a self-centred man, principally because he praises Alcestis, who by dying for the sake of his son allows him to go through old age without grief (lines 621–622); b) he is cynical, primarily because he believes that only marriages of convenience have any value (lines 627–628); c) he is exclusively interested in earthly life, while he is totally indifferent to his posthumous fame (line 726), something totally foreign to ancient Greek moral values and beliefs; d) he focuses the obligation of parents only upon the bequeathing of material goods (lines 686–688), while it escapes him that the death of Admetus would render those possessions useless and futile; e) he resorts to sophistic arguments; for instance, he maintains that Admetus has discovered a clever way to secure a long life, if every time he convinces his wife to offer her life for his sake (lines 699–700). The gift of the god, however, is never to be repeated, and, as the audience know very well, Admetus has already sworn celibacy for life; f) he considers Admetus the murderer of his wife, intentionally ignoring that Alcestis offered her

46 Lloyd (1985) 120–121.

47 See Riemer (1989) 152 with n. 356.

48 Swift (2010) 350 n. 115 believes that the juxtaposition of father and son proves the guilt of the latter. For the delineation of the dramatic characters in the verbal conflict, see the relevant bibliography cited by Riemer (1989) 141 n. 328.

life of her own free will;⁴⁹ g) he argues that the happiness or the misfortune of Admetus is his own personal responsibility (line 685), something that reveals his lack of solidarity. h) He offers distinctly legal arguments, as Thanatos had done before him.⁵⁰ It is impossible, however, that any legal principle can treat those ethically complex matters sufficiently, since the sole criterion in this case is human love and selflessness. That is exactly what Admetus implies, when he declares that he does not consider himself the legitimate child of Pheres.⁵¹ Under such conditions Pheres' speech proves to be defective and flawed. His criticism serves exclusively the aim of revealing Admetus' selfishness, cowardice, and guilt. It is indicative of the moral chasm separating the two interlocutors that, after his return from the funeral, the Thessalian king hurls similar accusations at his cruel fellow-citizens who are like his father.⁵²

Admetus deploys the following arguments in his favour: a) he showed until now blameless behaviour towards his parents (lines 598–600). That virtue was combined with two other positive elements of his character: his devoutness towards the gods (Apollo) and his respect for foreigners (Heracles). b) As a young man he is entitled to hope for a long life, while the remaining days of his aged parents are numbered (line 711). In other words, the young have priority to life compared to the elderly.⁵³ Apollo appears to have expected a selfless offer from either of his parents, and particularly from his mother, as implied in line 16: *πατέρα γεραϊάν θ' ἢ σφ' ἔτικτε μητέρα*,⁵⁴ but he was proven wrong. That line, moreover, dryly undercuts Alcestis' view that some god determined that the situation should develop thus and so (lines 297–298), since the audience know very well the intention of the god.⁵⁵ Besides, apart from Admetus, the Chorus also emphasizes (lines 150, 466–471) the age hierarchy; and their judgement should be treated as an objective evaluation of the special circumstances, since they serve as external and unbiased observers.⁵⁶

49 See further Belfiore (2000) 156–158.

50 See Golden (1970).

51 See Griffith (1978).

52 See further *IT* 676–679 and Seeck (1985) 107ff. For a list of the contemporary critics of Admetus, see Steidle (1968) 132 n. 2 and Bergson (1985) 18 n. 53.

53 The subject of age has already been broached by Doerrie (1939) 176. See further Bergson (1971) 57 n. 4. If this view is disagreeable to contemporary readers because it is predicated upon religious principles, that is another matter.

54 See Iakov (2012) *ad* 16.

55 On the unexpected behaviour of mortals in contrast to the divine plan in Euripides' *Ion*, see Burnett (1971) 128.

56 Mastronarde (2010) 228 correctly notes that the main criteria for the sacrifice are kinship and age; however, he hastens to add that the demand of Admetus for the self-sacrificing offer of Pheres is exaggerated and shocking.

As a rule, in Euripidean tragedy parents⁵⁷ offer their life willingly and without misgivings in order to save their children. Thus, Hecuba in her nameplay is willing to lay down her life to save Polyxena from harm. Similarly, Andromache in the homonymous drama is ready to depart from her sanctuary, thereby putting her life in harm's way to save her defenceless child, the offspring of Neoptolemus. Herodotus (1.87.4)⁵⁸ argues that combat reverses the natural order of things given that in wartime parents bury their children, while the opposite should happen in normal life. Strabo (10.5.6) recounts an episode from the siege of Ioulis, an event that happened a few years before the performance of Euripidean *Alcestis*. As the supplies in the besieged city had been dramatically reduced, the elders decided to give up their lives so that provisions would be enough for the preservation of the young who were capable of fighting and were at a reproductive age. Eventually, they never acted on their decision because the siege was raised on time.⁵⁹ c) The death of his wife will result in the premature devastation of a happy family and the deprivation of the young children of their mother. d) As the sole heir to the throne (lines 293–294, 655) he must stay alive, mainly because otherwise his rule is in danger of being taken over by ruthless usurpers.⁶⁰ e) Pure love is proven only with actions, and not through legal arguments.⁶¹

At this point the comparison with *Antigone* is pertinent; for, as Creon condemns Antigone to death, so too Pheres with his refusal forces Alcestis to lay down her life for the sake of her husband. If there is irony to be found in Euripides' *Alcestis*, then that irony does not concern the god, who is supposed to have offered to his protégé an unnecessary and ultimately catastrophic gift, since nowhere in the play Apollo is subjected to criticism,⁶² or Admetus censured for his contradictory behaviour, which, as I have already suggested, is due to the peculiarity of the plot. Irony stems from the fact that the war of words will prove to be without issue, since Alcestis will return to life. This fierce debate, however, will bring about an irreparable rupture in the relationship between

57 See Riemer (1989) 151.

58 See further Plutarch, *Consolatio ad Apollonium* 191; Euripides, *Supplices* 174–175, and funerary epigram 268 Peek. For other epigrams, see Iakov (2012) 1.82–83.

59 The objection of Parker (2007) xxxix n. 76 that the story does not have enough provable value in view of its uniqueness is not correct because similar episodes are rare.

60 In accordance with Apollodorus (1.105), Admetus had a brother, Lycurgus, to whom no reference is made in the play. See Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 898: *μυογενὲς τέκνον πατρί* with reference to Agamemnon as an heir of Atreus.

61 See Belfiore (2000) 107.

62 Kullmann (1967) 134 and 142 and Gregory (1979) argue that there is here latent criticism against the god; Lloyd 1985, 124 correctly refutes their theory.

parents and child. Both Admetus' lack of respect towards his father and more generally his furious verbal attack against Pheres have encouraged critics to search for serious flaws in his character.⁶³ Nonetheless, his behaviour is explicable, if we consider that Pheres would cause the death of his son with his stern denial (line 665): *τέθνηκα γὰρ δὴ τοῦπίσ'*. That means that Pheres is treated as an enemy, hence he is met with the appropriate response in accordance with the ancient Greek moral principle entailing harm for one's enemies.⁶⁴ Compared to Haemon in *Antigone*, who comes close to killing his own father, Admetus' reaction looks mild and subdued.

After a brief laudatory farewell to the dead woman, the Chorus departs from the orchestra accompanying Admetus on his way to the burial place. The stage is empty,⁶⁵ and for a very good reason: soon Heracles will learn the real identity of the deceased and choose to confront Thanatos and attempt to bring Alcestis back to life. His intention must remain unknown to the dramatic characters, so that the conclusion of the play will come as a surprise.⁶⁶ Although the Servant directs Heracles towards the grave, he will not meet Admetus returning from the funeral. Admetus will not express surprise at the absence of Heracles; moreover, he will not comment on the reason that urged Heracles to participate in athletic games, though such grounds are completely lacking. The poet proceeds towards a happy ending despite certain unimportant inconsistencies. In all his devastation Admetus foresees the difficult life awaiting him. Some scholars⁶⁷ suggest that there is here a reversal of roles, as Admetus, after the death of his wife, will also take on the role of the mother and, while enclosed in the royal household, the appropriate space for women in antiquity, he will devote himself to womanly lamentation, whereas Alcestis shows male-like bravery and wins glory. However, this theory about the reversal of gender roles is not convincing because, when coming out of the palace, Admetus expresses sorrow now that he will have to face female company (lines 952–953). It should be noted that Alcestis' self-sacrificing pledge resembles the martyrdom of other young heroines; those altruistic actions do not imply any effeminacy on the part of the male dramatic characters.⁶⁸

63 Swift (2010) 353 with n. 125.

64 See Blundell (1989).

65 Parker (2007) 199–201 rules out the exit of the Chorus.

66 Swift (2010) 359 comments on the 'philosophical lesson' by Heracles; but she fails to note that the hero, despite his apparent self-indulgence, finally undertakes the hard task of rescuing Alcestis, thereby essentially undercutting his own 'lesson'.

67 See Segal (1993); Foley (2001).

68 See further Markantonatos (2013) 79 n. 87. Suter (2008) 164–165 is right to argue that male sorrow does not entail effeminacy. She suggests that Admetus is dominated by remorse,

On their return from the grave, the Chorus attempts to comfort Admetus, recounting the story of an elderly relative, who lost his only child. Swift⁶⁹ argues that with this example of personal suffering the Chorus seeks to show that the reaction of Admetus is excessive, rather unnatural, and even hypocritical. I would suggest that the sad tale of individual bereavement serves as a reminder that things could have been worse, given the fact that the king, in theory at least, has the possibility of marrying again; but I find no reason to question his sincerity in mourning his lost wife.

In such a gloomy atmosphere, after the Stasimon on unconquerable Necessity, that apparently seals the fate of Admetus,⁷⁰ Heracles appears onstage accompanying an unknown woman who wears a veil, for whom the spectators are certain, based on the prologue-scene of the play, that she is indeed Alcestis. Heracles' intervention reciprocates Admetus' generous hospitality in the face of extreme mourning. If his act looks excessive or disproportionate, we must not forget the ethical precept of Democritus (fr. 92 D-K), according to which people have to accept a benefaction with the prospect of reciprocating it to the maximum. With an ambivalent speech that recalls⁷¹ Admetus' misleading speech, Heracles makes known that the woman was given to him as a prize at an athletic contest (lines 1028–1029). Admetus puts up a vigorous resistance⁷² and refuses to offer hospitality in the palace to the unidentified woman. He does not wish to usher into his house a woman so similar to his dead wife, indeed on the day of her burial. He has already mentioned the sorrow which the befriending of women outside the palace would cause him (lines 952–953), a sorrow that would increase if he saw a young woman frequenting his household. What terrifies him is that Heracles insists on delivering her into his hands, something that would likely cause unwelcome comments, though his friend does not ask him, as has been supposed,⁷³ to marry her, but simply to offer her hospitality and perhaps to give her a place among his servants (line 1024). The Thessalian king, therefore, does not break his promise to Alcestis to remain unmarried.⁷⁴ Swift

thereby arguing that he expresses repentance for the acceptance of the sacrifice, repentance for which he is finally rewarded with his reunion with Alcestis. However, there is not the slightest hint about this change in Admetus' stance on the events.

69 See Swift (2010) 356–357.

70 This is a kind of ἀντιπαρέκτασις. This is a familiar Sophoclean literary device, namely a joyful choral song before the final catastrophe.

71 On mirror scenes in *Alcestis*, see Iakov (2012) 1.247–250.

72 Hübner (1981) suggests that Admetus' intense reactions, the slowing pace of the dialogue, and the length of the relevant scenes showcase this resistance.

73 For further bibliography, see Swift (2010) 362 n. 137 and Mastronarde (2010) 300.

74 I agree with Swift (2010) 362–363.

casts doubt on Admetus' argument that he cannot guarantee the virginity of the unnamed woman since at the palace other women also serve as maids. However, what Admetus finds troublesome is the young age of the guest woman, while the rest of the maids, as we may well presume, are mature females and have served in the palace for many years. The only way to protect her would have been perhaps to offer her hospitality in his private quarters; but that is impossible.

Another lurking fear consists in the danger of Admetus falling in love with the unidentified female, as happened with the guest woman in Euripides' *Helen*. Eventually, Admetus yields to Heracles. However, this is not about acquiescence but about friendly provision.⁷⁵ The king, I would add, had displeased his friend (line 1017). At present he finds himself in a tight spot, when he considers declining the favour Heracles asks of him. Finally, in a kind of a second symbolic marriage, Heracles delivers Alcestis in the hands of Admetus and withdraws the veil from her face, a typical gesture in the context of the ancient Greek wedding ceremony, the ἀνακαλυπτήρια.⁷⁶ Admetus expresses his immense joy at the unanticipated return of his wife and orders a public celebration, which calls off the previously planned mourning rituals.

A final shadow of the netherworld lingers on—Alcestis cannot speak. This dramaturgical invention is brilliant because we would find it difficult to imagine a detailed conversation between husband and wife after the return of Alcestis from Hades. Her silence has been interpreted as an eloquent indication of displeasure or even anger against her supposedly selfish husband.⁷⁷ Such an interpretation, however, presupposes that the play has already given out preparatory signals to the audience, but any relevant intimation is completely absent. In my view the only possible explication is to be found in the text itself. Heracles emphasizes that Alcestis will speak in three days (this is a sacred number), after having been previously cleansed of miasma resulting from her sojourn in the nether regions. It is noteworthy that at the beginning of the play

75 See Riemer (1989) 76 with n. 200.

76 See Halleran (1988). For similar cases in Euripides, see Belfiore (2000) 53–54 and 230 n. 87 with relevant bibliography. See further Slater (2013) 110 n. 25. Rabinowitz (1993) 87 doubts that Alcestis appears with a veil, because there is no explicit textual reference. However, based on the ending scene of *Hippolytus* (line 1456) one can conclude that the face of the dead was covered with a veil. See further Kavoulaki (2005) 141 for the covering of the face of the dead with a veil in real life. See further Tordoff (2013) 94 n. 20. Besides, that is the reason why Hecuba in her Euripidean nameplay does not immediately recognize the identity of the corpse that the Maid brings from the shore. Parker (2007) and Seeck (2008) disagree with Halleran's view on the symbolic second marriage.

77 See (e.g.) Beye (1959) 127.

Thanatos calls the cutting of hair of the dying woman ἀγνισμὸν (line 76), namely a kind of rite of passage allowing access to the kingdom of the dead. Heracles refers to ἀφαγνισμὸν (line 1146) obviously meaning the reverse ritual of placing her back into the world of the living. That religious process is not witnessed by all interested parties, primarily because the return from the grave was inconceivable in real life. In this case, it is reasonable to suggest that the poet invented that particular process, and the spectators would consider it essential and probable.⁷⁸ Other interpretations, such as that Alcestis had been transformed into a simple object at the hands of men,⁷⁹ or that the plot allows for two speaking actors⁸⁰ and, consequently, there was no other available, fail to produce conviction.

To sum up: *Alcestis* has divided critics in two rival groups; I call for short the first 'romantic' and the latter 'ironic' or 'realistic'. It should be noted that the 'ironic' group currently enjoys widespread recognition. However, the text can be interpreted without difficulty as a folktale drama,⁸¹ that is, a drama praising unconditional and boundless conjugal love that eventually leads to self-sacrifice.⁸² In that manner Euripides paves the way for the Hellenistic novel,⁸³ while with *Ion* he lays the foundation for the emergence of New Comedy.⁸⁴

The triumph of pure love even surpasses death, as at the same time friendship and solidarity are strong enough to surmount overwhelming obstacles. Apollo's gift to Admetus, as well as the revival of Alcestis, is an improbable event, which nonetheless puts a strain on both personal and familial relations. Admetus' superannuated parents refuse to offer their lives, as would have been expected, for their only child, while a young wife agrees to lay down her life

78 See Riemer (1989) 93–103 and especially 99 ff.

79 See Panoussi (2005). The inferior position of Alcestis is not confirmed by the text; I think moreover that this theory is overthrown by the myth of Coresos and Callirhoe, which features impressive points of similarity with that of Alcestis, where the offer of life comes from the male. See Kakridis (1944) 205. Seeck (1985) 88 argues for the equality between the spouses.

80 See Lushnig/Roisman (2003) 66–67 and, with serious doubts, Slater (2013) 12 and 111 n. 27.

81 See Steidle (1968) 144 ff. See further Bergson (1985) 19.

82 The extremely laudatory epithets for Alcestis, which are spread with noteworthy frequency throughout the play, have been gathered by Bergson (1971) 52 n. 2. Further, I note the funerary epigrams 1737a, 2005, 26 ff. Peek, where Alcestis is described as a paragon of conjugal fidelity or as a model the dead women have achieved to surpass. See moreover the Barcelona papyrus (*Alcestis Barcinonensis*) with the relevant annotation by Nosarti (1992). The laudatory epithets for Admetus (ἀγαθός, αἰδοφρων, γενναῖος, θεοσεβής) occur with lesser frequency; but that is not of special significance, since line 144 and especially the expression therein οἷας οἶος ὦν ἀμαρτάνεις bring husband and wife on the same level.

83 See Trenkner (1958) 31 ff.

84 See Friedrich (1953).

for her husband. Apollo, Alcestis, and Heracles constitute a uniform group that offers Admetus infinite love and solidarity: Apollo and Alcestis secure an extension of his life, while Heracles brings the queen back to life and restores the happiness of the couple. A common denominator that contributes to the salvation of Admetus is hospitality. On the contrary, Thanatos and Pheres (the mother does not appear at all in the play because her views coincide with those of her husband) serve as rivals of the king, inasmuch as they adhere to stringent legal principles, thereby leaving a little room for morality and sentiment.

Certainly, there are differences between the play and the fairy-tale adventure, since the poet felt the need to set forth (and to refute) the issue of Admetus' potential guilt in the context of a verbal wrangle, while Alcestis, though she offers her life of her own volition, diverges from similar cases of young self-sacrificers, principally because she is ready to find fault with her self-absorbed parents-in-law. Despite the realistic touches the folktale theme remains strong.⁸⁵ A last word of caution is in order here: the current orthodoxy that Euripides is an ironic tragic poet should not encourage readers to overinterpret this fascinating play.

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85 On the afterlife of Alcestis in modern European literature, see (e.g.) Parker (2007) lxxv–lxxvii; Iakov (2012) 1.42–44; Slater (2013) 75 ff.

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Medea

Adrian Kelly

1 The Play

The *prologue* opens in Corinth, where Jason and Medea have settled with their children. A nurse comes forward from the *skênê* (representing the house) to tell the audience that all is not well (1–48): Jason has abandoned his family and married the daughter of Creon, ruler of Corinth.¹ Medea is taking it hard, though things are about to get worse; the aged tutor enters and brings news of exile for Medea and her children (49–95), at which point we hear an enraged Medea singing offstage (96–98). The Chorus enter (*parodos*) and sing in exchange with the (chanting)² nurse about the situation, establishing them already as sympathetic to Medea's cause (99–211). As the *first episode* opens, the woman herself then enters and speaks powerfully of the difficult plight of women in ancient Corinth (214–266) before Creon, the new ruler, comes to pronounce her exile (271–356). She manages to get him to agree to a postponement of exile for one day and, upon his exit, triumphantly vows her revenge (364–409). In the *first stasimon* (410–445), the Chorus propose a new tradition of song, positive about women and their deeds, before lamenting Medea's plight and the apparent end of oaths. The *second episode* sees Medea and Jason clash, as he attempts vainly to justify himself (446–464 / 520–575) and she excoriates his faithlessness (465–519). The upshot is that she refuses all his offers of aid in exile. The *second stasimon* (627–662) sings of the need to avoid destructive love and the horror of exile, before the *third episode's* unannounced arrival of Aegeus from Athens, on his way to consult Pittheus of Troezen about an oracle he has received about his childlessness (665–688). Expressing himself outraged about Jason's behaviour, he agrees to shelter Medea in Athens, binding himself with a powerful oath, on condition that she should make her own way there (689–758). Upon his exit, Medea now reveals her intention to kill Creon and Glauce, as well as her own children (764–810). The Chorus briefly try to per-

1 Though unnamed in the play, she is Glauce in the hypotheses [see Mossman (2011) ad loc., 210] and in this chapter.

2 On the significance of chanting and singing in this scene, see § 4, p. 73–74.

suade her against the filicide (811–823), before launching into the *third stasimon* (824–865) about Athens, praising its history and moderation, and wondering how it could receive someone as stained as Medea intends to be.

Jason now arrives (*fourth episode*) and Medea transforms herself, pretending to have come round to his way of thinking, and sending with him their children with new bridal gifts for Glauce. Once or twice she almost lets the game slip in this episode, but all depart to allow the Chorus to launch into the *fourth stasimon* (976–1001), in which they connect the coming death of the children with that of Creon's daughter, before turning to the misery to come for both Jason and Medea. The tutor arrives at the start of the *fifth episode* to tell Medea that the sentence of exile has been lifted from the children (1002–1020); upon his departure into the house, she agonises about her decision in her famous deliberation speech (1021–1080), while the Chorus reflect on the worries of parenthood (1081–1115).³ The arrival of the messenger brings the news of her plot's success, claiming not only the daughter but Creon as well (1121–1230). Medea rejoices, steels herself for one final time and then leaves to complete her mission (1236–1250); the Chorus use the *fifth stasimon* (1251–1281) to call out for divine intervention, before the children's death-cries are heard, after which the Chorus compare Medea to Ino. Now, as the *exodos* opens, Jason bursts into the scene, hoping to rescue his children from the rage of the Corinthians (1293–1305). Once the Chorus inform him of their death, Medea appears on the *skênê* roof or *mêchanê*, refusing to hand over their corpses, prophesying their cultic future and Jason's own death (1317–1404). She leaves in triumph, with both Jason and the Chorus left to ponder, aporetically, her success (1405–1419).

2 Date and Production

The Aristophanean hypothesis says that the *Medea* was produced in 431 BC (presumably at the City Dionysia), with *Philoctetes* and *Dictys*, and the satyr-play *Theristai* ('Harvesters').⁴ The play has been interpreted in the light of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War a few weeks later, but the *Medea* was

3 Most scholars end the fifth episode here [e.g., Mastronarde (2002) 80; *contra* Buttrely (1958) 10], but see § 4, p. 75 and n. 31.

4 Hyp. (a).40–43 Diggle. See Kannicht (2004) 11.827–844 on *Philoctetes* (fr. 787–803), 1.381–389 on *Dictys* (fr. 330b–348), and 1.425 on *Theristai* (no fragments); for text, commentary and discussion of *Philoctetes*, see Müller (2001) and Collard/Cropp/Gibert (2004) 1–34; of *Dictys*, Karamanou (2006) 119–124. Luppe (2010) proposed that Euripides wrote two *Medea* plays, of which we have the second, not the one performed in 431 BC: see *contra* Colomo (2011) and Mossman (2011) 211, with response in Mehl (2011).

worked on long before the production, and there was no reason for an Athenian audience to think that the coming war would be the cataclysm it turned out to be.⁵ The trilogy placed third (after Aeschylus' son Euphorion and the popular Sophocles), but there is no evidence that the audience was scandalized by the play,⁶ and we don't know enough of the tetralogy's other plays, the judges or circumstances in that year, let alone the quality of the other playwrights' productions, to speculate with any profit about the result.⁷

Of its companion plays, the *Philoctetes* dealt (as Sophocles' *Philoctetes* in 409 BC) with the eponymous hero abandoned on Lemnos by the Greek army on its way to Troy, and then fetched reluctantly from his exile by Odysseus, despite an embassy from the Trojans themselves. The *Dictys* took up the story of Danae, set adrift by her father Acrisius, king of Argos; she is welcomed on Seriphos by the fisherman Dictys and protected by him from the schemes of the local king Polydectes until the return of Perseus, who kills the king and sets Dictys upon the throne. Though mythologically connected tetralogies were out of fashion, informative links have been detected in other productions.⁸ Certainly, Euripides' three tragedies in 431 BC shared several themes—exile, children and inheritance, reception of foreigners, fathers and irregular marriages, and perhaps the mythical history of Greek/non-Greek hostility.⁹ Many of these are somewhat inevitable given the clichés of the tradition, but our experience could be enriched if we knew more of the production as a whole.

3 Myth

The story of Jason and Medea was popular and early,¹⁰ with the voyage of the Argo known already to Homer (*Od.* 12.69–72) and the subject of at least two

5 Indeed, the first, 'Archidamian', phase of the war ended favourably for Athens in 421 BC: see Mossman (2011) 11–12; *contra* Allan (2002) 16–17. See also Beck (2002) 43–44 for interpretations in the light of poor Athenian relations with Corinth.

6 See, e.g., Friedrich (1993) 220, 237–239; Karamanou (2014) 35. Beck (1998) 34–35 ascribes that 'failure' to structural problems in the play, but this all sits ill with the fact that the *Medea* very soon left its mark on both dramatic and iconographic traditions: see § 3 for Neophron and § 8 for the earliest reception.

7 See now Wright (2009) esp. 170–172 on Euripides.

8 See Scodel (1980) for Euripides' 'Trojan trilogy' in 415 BC (*Alexandros, Palamedes, Trojan Women*), and Wright (2003) 43–55 for his 'escape trilogy' in 413 BC (*Helen, Andromeda* and *Iphigenia among the Taurians*).

9 See Karamanou (2014).

10 See Moreau (1994) (esp. 23–80 for outline); Graf (1997); Giannini (2000); Mastronarde (2002) 44–64; Mossman (2011) 3–11; Fowler (2013) 195–234; McCallum-Barry (2014).

archaic epic poems (Eumelos' *Corinthiaca* and the anonymous *Naupactia*). Most of the basic elements in our play's version of the couple's history are already evident in the pre-Euripidean tradition: Medea's love for Jason and betrayal of family and homeland (Hesiod *Theog.* 992–994), her assistance in the tests set by her father (Pindar *Pyth.* 4.220–241), the killing of her brother Apsyrtos (Pherecydes fr. 32 Fowler), the death of Pelias (*Pyth.* 4.251), the couple's settlement in Corinth (Eumelus fr. 5 Bernabé)¹¹ and the death of the children there (see below), Jason's miserable death (see below), Medea's flight to Athens and future exile thence (Herodotus 7.62.1) after being unmasked in her attempts to kill Theseus.

Euripides' innovations have inevitably been sought.¹² Unknown from any earlier source, Jason's death is a candidate, though predicted so swiftly as to suggest familiarity (1386–1388).¹³ Jason is universally held to have ended badly anyway, killed either by a fallen fragment of the Argo itself (Σ *A Med.* 1386 Schwartz) or by himself out of despair (Neophron fr. 3 Snell).¹⁴ Medea's Athenian connection is different, since visual and literary evidence indicate that she was already Theseus' enemy as early as the middle of the fifth century.¹⁵ Other versions of the filicide have them killed by the Corinthians either in revenge for Medea's slaying of Creon and his daughter (Creophylus fr. dub. 9 Bernabé)¹⁶ or because they did not wish to be ruled by a foreigner (Parmeniscus *ap.* Σ *Med.* 264 Schwartz), or perishing when Medea tried to make them immortal (Eumelus fr. 5 Bernabé). All are predicated on the death of (at least some of) their children in Corinth, and from Euripides' several references to the possibility that the Corinthians might kill the children (*Med.* 781, 1060–1061, 1238–1241 etc.), scholars have inferred that he was the first to make Medea the murderer;¹⁷

11 Here a question of succession, i.e. that Aeetes was once ruler of Corinth and Medea was summoned to rule once King Bounos died and his dynasty came to an end. Simonides (*PMG* 545) has Jason ruling in Corinth.

12 See Moreau (1994) 101–113 for a list; also Mastronarde (2002) 50–57.

13 Moreau (1994) 52–54.

14 This is only a prediction in the fragment (= Σ *Med* 1386 Schwarz), where it is termed 'rather unusual', but suicide is confirmed in Diodorus Siculus 4.55.1 (method unspecified).

15 See Moreau (1994) 56–58; Herodotus makes Medea the eponym of the Medes, whilst Hesiod *Th.* 1001 and Cinaethon fr. 2 Bernabé (= Pausanias 2.3.9) name the son Medeios: see Fowler (2013) 230; Krevans (1997) 75–76.

16 Either an archaic epic poet or a fourth-century historian: see Fowler (2013) 230–231 with n. 102.

17 See Allan (2002) 22–23; Mastronarde (2002) 52–53; Mossman (2011) 8–9. Much depends on dating Neophron (see above), though e.g. Johnston (1997) suggests other reasons for pre-Euripidean filicide.

whether true or not, he certainly locates the event firmly within her history and *modus operandi* (§5).

Medea also appeared often on the Athenian stage. Again, evidence is fragmentary and mostly undateable, and a range of options seems to have been taken: in Sophocles' *Rhizotomoi* ('Root-cutters'), e.g., she appears to have been a 'herb-gathering witch' (as probably also in Euripides' *Daughters of Pelias*), in Euripides' *Aegeus* a wicked step-mother (probably also in Sophocles' play of the same name), in Sophocles' *Scythian Women* a fratricide.¹⁸ But one of these works has a very special role: according to the first hypothesis to our play, Euripides 'seems to have revised and passed off as his own' the *Medea* of Neophron of Sicyon (author of 120 tragedies: test. 1 Snell).¹⁹ The similarities of its few surviving fragments and testimonia with Euripides' work are great: Neophron has Medea kill her children (fr. 2 Snell), and Aegeus expressly come to Corinth to consult her (fr. 1 Snell), while the longest fragment comes from a monologue in which Medea debates her murderous decision (fr. 2), though (unlike Euripides) Medea predicts that Jason will hang himself (fr. 3). Majority opinion favours Euripides' priority, but the question remains open.

In sum, Medea was a figure rich in mythology before 431 BC, frequently treated in a range of almost entirely lost sources, offering a wide choice of narrative and dramatic options—goddess, witch, wife, lover, mother, a helper and a harmer of those she encounters. Specific innovations are hard to identify, but Euripides makes sure that all of the options have a role to play.

4 Structure and Song

As one of Euripides' earliest extant plays, the *Medea's* structure is straightforward, with an easy division of parts,²⁰ clear divisions between actors and Chorus, stasima and episodes,²¹ and no sustained monody or astrophic lyric.²² Medea does sing briefly in the parodos, where she and the nurse 'exchange'

18 Graf (1997) 38–39; Mills (1997) 237–238, 240–245; Belfiore (2000) 170–171; Allan (2002) 20–21; Colomo (2011) 49 n. 37.

19 Hyp. (a).25–26 Diggle; see Michelini (1989); Mastronarde (2002) 57–64; Mossman (2011) 23–28. On *P.Oxy* 5093 and its suggestion that Euripides reworked a scene in which Medea kills her children onstage, see Luppe (2010) and Colomo (2011) 48–49.

20 Mastronarde (2002) 40 opts for three actors, Michelini (1987) 99 for two. On staging, see Mastronarde (2002) 37–44; Mossman (2001) 48–53; Wyles (2014); (more generally) Halleran (1985).

21 See Allan (2002) 23–44; Rutherford (2012) 267–277.

22 See Csapo (2004), and Battezzato (2005); Rutherford (2012) 217–282 for tragic song.

lines in anapaestic dimeters.²³ Here Euripides contrasts the chanting of the onstage nurse with the sung anapaests of the offstage Medea to underline the emotional intensity of the latter's cries (96–97, 144–147, 111–114, 160–167) and thus her frenzied grief and rage, to shock the audience with the calm and measured rhetoric of Medea's speech at the start of the first episode.²⁴

The *Medea* is broadly constructed in ring composition around the third episode–stasimon, since Aegeus provides the means of escape around which Medea can plot her revenge, and here she first expresses her intention to kill the children (791–810).²⁵ On either side of this episode, Jason has to deal with Medea in contrasting moods, viz the angry heroine and (apparently) submissive wife.²⁶ Extending the ring further, the prologue / parodos and exodos lie in parallel, with iambic trimeters between characters (nurse and tutor 1–95, Jason and Medea 1293–1388) being followed by character anapaests (nurse and Medea 96–130 / Jason and Medea 1389–1414) as the Chorus move onto (131–138 ff.) and off (1415–1419)²⁷ stage. The fifth stasimon, as the children interject with their death cries offstage, recalls the stasimon within the parodos, where Medea's frenzied cries were interwoven with the nurse's chanting and the Chorus' song (131–138, 148–159, 173–183).²⁸ Further, the fifth episode (Medea and tutor 1002–1080, Medea and messenger 1116–1250) pairs with the first episode (Medea and Chorus 214–266, Medea and Creon 271–409) as the fulfilment of the plans first voiced there; now she listens with undisguised glee to the death she had only wished. All these *Rückblickszenen* represent the completion or reversal of the earlier instalment, and their arrangement around the third episode shows the centrality of the Athenian future to Medea's story.²⁹

23 A metre traditionally used for motion, as the Chorus' entrance and exit (131–138, 1389–1419), the departures of Creon (358–363) and Aegeus (759–763), and the arrival of the messenger 1081–1115; see West (1982) 94–95 (chant), 121–122 (lyric); also Hose (1990–1991) 1.53–58.

24 See below, § 5. The OCT (not the MSS) has 139–145 (nurse) as chant.

25 See also Halleran (2005) 177–181, though he finds 'much of the play's architecture' (178) in the scenes between Jason and Medea (second and fourth episodes, exodos); for other schemes, see Strohm (1957) 103 n. 3; Buttrey (1958); Joerden (1960) 217–220; Aichele (1971) 73–76; Hose (1990–1991) 11.76–78. On the question of when she fixes upon filicide, Gill (1996) 155–173 plausibly suggests the *agôn* with Jason; see also Grethlein (2003) 335–338.

26 See Luschnig (2007) 36–62; also n. 30.

27 This coda is condemned by most editors, but structural arguments suggest authenticity; see Kovacs (1993) 65–67; more generally, Roberts (1987).

28 See Yoon (2012) 34–35 on the structurally suggested violence of Medea's offstage song.

29 *Contra* Aristotle *Poetics* 1461b19–21 and Beck (1998), for whom this scene proves the play's structural and dramatic failure: see Buttrey (1958); Sfyroeras (1994).

Moreover, the first, third and fifth episodes share a basic structure: an exchange between Medea and an older character is concluded by an anapaestic interlude, which then proceeds into a revelation from Medea herself about revenge.³⁰ The prior exchange is always (a) concerned with exile: she pleads with Creon and Aegeus to save her from it, and receives the tutor's news that her children are to be spared it; and (b) depicts Medea against a background of traditional womanly concerns: she appeals to the Chorus and the grounds of their shared gender (230–266) and claims to Creon that she is, for all her reputation for wisdom, weak and unable to hurt 'ruling men' (308), portrays herself (not unreasonably) to Aegeus as an abandoned wife, and then in the 'deliberation speech' argues with herself from maternal instinct. The choral anapaests (358–363, 759–763, 1081–1115), then introduce a scene focused upon revenge: in the first and third episodes, this was merely planned and so expressed in monologues and exchanges with the coryphaeus, but in the fifth episode she hears about and rejoices in its success. The anapaestic interludes thus mark a boundary between a more 'female-focused' scene and a 'male-focused' one (§ 5), and the greater scale and scope of the interlude in the fifth episode marks the completion of the play's dramatic structure with the most important murder of all—Jason's children.³¹

A similar dynamic shapes the rhythmical contour of the Chorus' singing. The first four *stasima* comprise two strophic pairs, the first pair dominated by dactylo-epitrite and the second by aeolic rhythms (except in the fourth stasimon, whose second pair is more varied: see § 7), but the continuity is then broken in the fifth stasimon, where the rhythm turns to dochmiac.³² This underpins the play's progress: the first four stasima invoke the epinician genre (praise poetry), whose two conventional rhythms were dactylo-epitrite and aeolic.³³ The invocation of this genre expresses Medea's story in an heroic reg-

30 These episodes contrast to the second and fourth, where Medea is entirely taken up with an *agôn* and then an 'anti-*agôn*' [Halleran (2005) 181] with Jason. The first and third episodes are usually classed as 'mirror-scenes' [see, generally, Taplin (1978) 122–139; Mossman (2011) 49–40], but the link continues into the fifth episode.

31 With most scholars (n. 3), Taplin (1977) 225 n. 2 classes this last interlude as an act-dividing song, yet Medea could well have remained onstage (see Halleran (2005) 180), and the structural parallels suggest that 1002–1250 is a unity; see § 7 on the content of this interlude.

32 Note the iambic trimeters in the second strophe (1271–1272, 1277–1278), cried by the children offstage as they are murdered, matched by sung iambics of the Chorus in the anti-strophe (1284–1285, 1288–1289), now that the children are dead.

33 Both are found frequently in tragedy and need not recall epinician, yet Euripides underlines their combination in the first three stasima and maintains dactylo-epitrite in the first

ister, matching and reinforcing her self-conception and the Chorus' alignment with her position, but is stunningly halted by the dochmiacs, since this characteristically tragic rhythm is always deployed for extreme emotional reactions.³⁴ Heroic positivity is finally abandoned as she leaves the stage to kill her children, and the Chorus' commemoration gives way to a specifically tragic reflection on the horror.³⁵

5 Many-Sided Medea

The opportunities afforded by Medea's history and range of abilities, not to mention her future as the progenitor of the Greeks' eternal enemy, make her a fruitful representative of almost everything opposed to the Athenian citizen's conception of himself—female, foreigner, witch, dangerous semi-divinity.³⁶ All are invoked at some point during the play, but Euripides makes much more of Medea than cliché and prejudice.

The most obvious considerations are grounded in her sex and gender.³⁷ Medea is not a fifth-century woman, but a mythological refraction of contemporary conceptions of the female. Her marriage to Jason illustrates the point: while no-one in the play doubts that they are (or were) married,³⁸ marriage in Athens was an alliance between households and an agreement between fathers, with legislation and custom about property and personal rights. By contrast, Medea contracts her own marriage, betraying her father and stealing her dowry (the golden fleece), and sealing the deal by killing her own brother. A relationship begun in such a manner with such a figure could hardly be expected to end well.³⁹

strophic pair of the fourth, and he also constructs the first stasimon as a new type of victory song, with its emphasis on the link between song and celebration of *aretê* (415, 420). See esp. Swift (2010) 120–121 (on the *Medea*) and 104–172 (on the genre); also Swift (2013) 133–144.

34 See West (1982) 108.

35 Hopman (2008) traces a similar generic contest, between epic and tragedy.

36 See the earlier analyses of this much-studied character summarised in Rohdich (1968) 44–46; of more recent works, esp. Gellie (1988); Moreau (1994) 193–195; Boedeker (1997); Sourvinou-Inwood (1997); Zerba (2002); also Luschnig (2007) 7–36, 119–156.

37 An enormous topic: see *inter al.* Zeitlin (1990) esp. 70–71 [= (1996) 348]; Seidensticker (1995); Foley (2001); for Euripides, Rabinowitz (1993) esp. 125–154 on *Med.*; McClure (1999); Matthiessen (2004) 36–44; Mastronarde (2010) 246–279; Gerolemou (2011) esp. 282–332 (on *Med.*).

38 See Easterling (1977) 180–181 [= (2003) 190]; Luschnig (2007) 18–21.

39 See Allan (2002) 45–65; Schein (1990) and Mueller (2001) similarly link marriage with

One of the reasons for this is the role of passionate love or *erôs* in Medea's history and the play as a whole: it motivates her abandonment of family and country (8, 485, 526–528 etc.), and—when spurned—turns into a jealous, murderous rage.⁴⁰ *Erôs* was associated with marriage, of course,⁴¹ but Euripides suggests its potential destructiveness in that context (e.g., 627–642) and returns constantly to the institutional importance of marriage for household and community.⁴² Here lies the crux of the matter: Medea is 'the kin-killer par excellence'⁴³ within the unit created by marriage, from the fratricide (167, 257, 1334) and betrayal in Colchis, to the parricide committed magically by Peleus' daughters (9, 504–505), the deaths of Glauce and Creon, of Jason's children, and the attempted murder of Theseus to come.⁴⁴

Yet she is no simple monster. The play avers her prior devotion to Jason and her children (10–14: also 558), while her regrets for parental joys foregone (1025–1027, 1032–1035) and the whole 'deliberation speech' (1019–1080)⁴⁵ show all the motivations traditionally assigned to women.⁴⁶ Indeed, her complaints to Jason in the second episode focus entirely on his betrayal of her and those norms, not on anachronistic notions of gender freedom. The first speech to the Chorus in the first episode is sometimes quoted here, especially the memorable

notions of *philia*, in that Medea tries to invoke an institution which she has already broken.

- 40 See Michelini (1987) 75–80; Calame (1992) esp. 130–150; Mastronarde (2002) 16–17; Sanders (2013).
- 41 See, e.g., Gregory (1991) 106–107 on sexual activity as an expression of *charis* (reciprocity); more generally Calame (1992) esp. 110–129, 141–150.
- 42 See esp. Cairns (2014); also Rehm (1989) – (1994) 97–109; Mueller (2001).
- 43 Bremmer (1997) 100.
- 44 Silent until the fifth stasimon [see Yoon (2012) 34–39], the children are the passive objects of Medea's decisions, thus resembling her other youthful victims, Glauce and the daughters of Pelias.
- 45 Scholars question the authenticity of various parts of this speech [see Mastronarde (2002) 388–397; Mossman (2011) 314–319], but its difficulties may also reflect the problem Medea faces: see Catenacci (2000); Allan (2002) 90–93; Foley (2001) 243–271; Rutherford (2012) 315–322.
- 46 See Seidensticker (1995) 163; Gerolemou (2011) esp. 285–294; *contra* Moreau (1994) 198–199; also Friedrich (1993) 227, who argues that she is against the very notion of the household. Interestingly, maternal filicide is much more common than one might assume: see Easterling (1977) 186 [= (2003) 195–196]; Luschign (2007) 12, 199–201; Hall (2010) 16–17; Mossman (2011) 1–2. Whatever the precise interpretation of the famous close to the deliberation speech—'and I know what sort of evils I intend to do, / but my anger is stronger than my planning, / which is the cause of the greatest evils for mortals' [1078–1080: see Foley (2001) esp. 248–257; Mastronarde (2002) ad loc., 393–397; Torrance (2007)]—the turmoil is real.

'how I would rather stand three times / in the battle line than give birth once' (250–251), but this deeply deceptive offering seeks to bring the Chorus over to her side, overriding their local identity in favour of a gendered one.⁴⁷

Nonetheless, several scholars have suggested that Medea is a proto-feminist character, that Euripides shows a disturbing and sympathetic understanding of women's lives in fifth-century Athens.⁴⁸ Certainly, many of the problems she highlights (isolation, dependence, dangerous childbirth) were applicable to that world, and their voicing shows that fifth-century discourse was not unaware of them. Yet Medea herself utters extremely negative comments about her sex (e.g., 263–266),⁴⁹ and seems just as dismissive as Jason was of its capacities. She is no feminist revolutionary, and we should note that the absence of compensations held by fifth-century Athenians to balance out her criticisms mark Medea as particularly isolated, as she recognizes (252–258): there is no natal family for her to fall back on, no-one whose presence and ability to enforce her legal and property rights would act as a check on her treatment at her husband's hands,⁵⁰ while her—deserved—reputation for 'cleverness' seems to have made her an object of suspicion (293–294, 303–305). She is truly alone, in ways and extents that few fifth-century Athenian women (or men) could have countenanced.

Partially this reflects her appropriation of masculine attitudes.⁵¹ Medea drives herself by a typically male concern for honour, that she should be considered 'heavy to my enemies and to my friends kindly' (809), and refuses to incur mockery (e.g. 404–406). Indeed, this above all defeats her maternal feelings, since she wishes to harm her deadliest enemy so as to cause him the greatest grief (790–810, 1362, 1398). And gendered interplay is also enshrined in the very structure of the first, third and fifth episodes (§ 4), where a more obvi-

47 See Pucci (1980) 61–77; Pelling (1997) 220–221; Lawrence (1997) 50–51; Sourvinou-Inwood (1997) 257–258; Pelling (2000) 198–203; Lloyd (2006); Luschnig (2007) 134–143. For the Chorus, see § 7.

48 See, e.g., Vellacott (1975) 82–126 (esp. 106–117); Burnett (1998) 192–224; March (1990) 35–43; Allan (2002) 45–65; Mueller (2001); *contra* Seaford (1990); Zeitlin (1990) 70–71 [= (1996) 348]; Foley (2001) 265–268; Cairns (2014).

49 These lines pre-empt Jason's similar condemnation at 569–573. See also 407–409, 384–385; also 822–823 with Mastronarde (2002) *ad loc.*, 304.

50 See Mossman (2011) *ad* 253–254, 240. Other compensations include the range of social and ritual functions provided for women in Athenian life. Perris (2017) seems to believe that contemporary social and political norms have no role in the play, but this is based on a simplistic notion of how these norms relate to, and are refracted by, the mythical world of tragedy: see Allan & Kelly (2013).

51 Knox (1977) = (1979); see also Foley (1989); Rehm (1989); Rabinowitz (1993) 153; '... of the female sex but ... of the male gender'; also Foley (2001) 243–268.

ously 'feminine' scene gives way to a more traditionally 'masculine' expression of revenge. This mirrors her character's trajectory, in that Medea loses or rejects her gender roles one after the other:⁵² at the outset, she has already rejected filial passivity and been robbed of her resulting marital status by Jason, to which she responds by cancelling her own maternity in killing her sons. Medea ends with almost nothing that an Athenian audience associated with female humanity, and when she appears on the *skênê* or *mêchanê* in Helios' chariot, she delivers the cultic *aition* usually reserved for the divine and divinely empowered.⁵³ She does not undergo apotheosis, however; only her removal from the usual gendered parameters is expressed by her elevated dramaturgic position.

This distancing is furthered by Medea's foreign origins.⁵⁴ She recognizes her isolation in Corinth because of her Colchian heritage (222, 252–258), and Jason invokes the great benefit of Hellenic civilization conferred upon her (536–541), whilst his bafflement at the end of the play ('no Greek woman could ever have done this' 1339–1340) shows a lamentable unfamiliarity with Greek myth.⁵⁵ Perhaps even her costuming reflected an alien quality, since she is usually depicted before the end of the fifth century in standard Greek dress, and it is only in the South Italian representations of the play's final scene that a heavy barbarian colouring begins to appear.⁵⁶ Similarly distancing in their effect, and contentious in the scholarship, are her magical abilities.⁵⁷ Medea invokes Hecate (397), mentions her role both in helping Jason to overcome his magical tasks (478–482), and in Pelias' death (504–505; see also 9), the poison (384, her 'direct

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- 52 See, e.g., Friedrich (1993) 236; also Knox (1977) 206–211 [= (1979) 303–306]; March (1990) 42–43; Rabinowitz (1993) 132–138. Hopman (2008) 165–166 suggests that, in the princess, Medea kills a younger version of herself.
- 53 See Mastronarde (1990) 280; Luschnig (2007) 63–84. On the cult for her sons, see Johnson (1997); Scullion (2000) 224 [with reply in Seaford (2009) 228–230]; Pache (2004) 9–48; Mossman (2011) *ad* 1378–1388, 364–365; also Moreau (1994) 191–193 on supposed divine origins; Boedeker (1997) 140–142 approximates her to Aphrodite, Hopman (2008) to Scylla.
- 54 Scholars used to follow Jason (1339–1340) and wrongly ascribe much to this fact [e.g. Page (1938) xviii–xxi], though it would be wrong also to ignore it: see *Med.* 1–11, 133, 209–213, 431–436, 1263; Friedrich (1993) 219–224; Lawrence (1997); Allan (2002) 67–79; Mastronarde (2002) 22–26. Griffith (2011) 196–197 locates this element in her character within the effects of the Periclean citizenship law of 451 BC but seeks to reframe her choice in elite terms.
- 55 See Friedrich (1960) 72–74 [= (1968) 185–187]; Newton (1985) 499; Holland (2003) 270–272; McHardy (2005).
- 56 See Mastronarde (2002) 41–42. Sourvinou-Inwood (1997) 290–294 suggests Greek costume throughout the play until the final scene, where she becomes (or returns to) the barbarian, Wyles (2014) 53–54 barbarian costume throughout.
- 57 Compare the polarization in Knox (1977) 211–216 or March (1990) 38–39 with Page (1938) xviii–xxi. More nuance in Mills (1980) 291–293; Pucci (1980) 91–100; Gellie (1988) 17–18; Moreau (1994) 197; Mossman (2011) 31.

route') with which she says she will anoint the dress sent to Glauce (789) has a horrifying effect (which she enjoys),⁵⁸ she promises Aegeus an heir with her potions (716–718), and the divine chariot at the play's end is hardly an ordinary mortal's means of escape.⁵⁹ Though more than a witch, she is nonetheless a witch, another factor underlining Medea's distance from a fifth-century audience, even as she crosses the spatial divide between them.

Medea is many things abhorrent to a fifth-century Athenian, and many things sympathetic and understandable as well. She triumphs deservedly over an oath-breaker, a weakling and a fool, and her revenge also stains her character and disassociates her from the human world. Critics have been troubled by the fact that she 'gets away with it',⁶⁰ but in the world of Athenian tragedy 'the impious are punished [...] sometimes by means of a criminal act far more ghastly than the offense'.⁶¹ This play is above all about Medea's punishment of Jason, and the damage it causes her as a human, so that her further 'solution' is postponed to an Athenian future, and an Athenian hero.⁶² While this does not detract from her terrifying depiction as an agent of retribution, the play certainly does not—as some moderns would have it—destabilize the moral universe of its audience.⁶³

58 See McClure (1999) 138–139: 'a perverted form of feminine love magic'. On the horror of the speech and its embedded witnesses, see Barrett (2002) 93–96.

59 Technically a gift of Helios and so another sign of her quasi-*theos* status, but the family background also evokes Circe (Medea's aunt), and the association between snakes and witchcraft in Medea's iconographic tradition was well-known: see Ogden (2013) 198–202; also § 8.

60 See, e.g., Buttrey (1958) 17; Easterling (1977) 190 [= (2003) 199]; McCallum-Barry (2014) 33–34.

61 Kovacs (1993) 69.

62 Aeschylus' Clytemnestra is similarly sympathetic (or at least explicable), though she is punished in the next play in the trilogy, whilst Euripides' tetralogy switched story, and Medea's downfall is left for the unrepresented future: see Seidensticker (1995) 162–163; Boedeker (1997) 138–139; Foley (2001); also Hopman (2008) 176–179 on possible intertexts, though she reads them as subverting. Postponement reflects little more than a shift away from mythologically connected trilogies, and delayed resolutions are common in later tragedy: see, e.g., Sophocles' *Electra*, *Philoctetes* or Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Orestes*, etc.

63 A common view: see, e.g., Friedrich (1993); Barlow (1995); most recently Willms (2014) 442–454.

6 The Men around Medea

Masculinity is central to explorations of heroic myth on the Athenian stage,⁶⁴ and it is a reflection of their failings that Medea defeats every male figure she faces, before and after the play, except (importantly) Theseus. She does this in a variety of ways—magic, deceit, and straightforward violence—but always operating on the weak point that is the generation of children and the household's future. With reason does the Chorus reflect in the fifth stasimon 'o much-troubled marriage of women, how many evils have you wrought upon mortals' (1290–1291).

The main victim in this play, Jason, is deeply unimpressive.⁶⁵ An Athenian audience⁶⁶ might have sympathized with his desire for a strong *oikos* (557–558, 559–567, 595–597), but his arguments founder on the fact that he is prepared to allow his children to go into exile with Medea, and only seems to concern himself with exempting them from that fate in the fourth episode (942–945), when she deceptively presents herself as reconciled to his new marriage. Euripides thus allows us to see the falsity of Jason's claims,⁶⁷ but his lack of vision is clear in other ways, for instance, in the misogynistic fantasy about the genealogical drawbacks of women (573–574).⁶⁸ Jason seems here to neglect the fact that Medea has successfully fulfilled that role (558), even as he enters a new marriage for the same purpose. He especially has no authority to complain about *erôs* in the lives of women (or men), and not just because he owes his entire career to erotic success:⁶⁹ Medea's lovestruck assistance made possible his greatest achievement, whilst his own effect on Glauce (1144–1146) and his willingness to manipulate it (1151–1155) is no small part of his new venture.

Jason's hypocrisy is matched only by his misprision of Medea. The list of her benefits is both long and dangerous (465–519); he has to reflect not only on the considerable justice of her claim, but also the ruthless, fearless and supernatu-

64 See Mastronarde (2010) 280–306.

65 This de-heroization may be another innovation (§ 3), but the pre-Euripidean evidence is poor: see von Fritz (1959) 39–40 [= (1962) 331–332]; Moreau (1994) 176–178; Mackie (2001); Mastronarde (2010) 297–298. For Jason's character see, e.g., Rohdich (1968) 56–57; Friedrich (1993) 228; Burnett (1998) 196–205; Luschign (2007) 37–62; Willms (2014) 459–461, 478–480; more sympathetic is Morwood (2014).

66 With women present or not, they were all participants in a discourse which reinforced male primacy: see Henderson (1991) and Goldhill (1994), with Pickard-Cambridge (1968) 268–270; and now Roselli (2011) ch. 5.

67 See *contra* Mastronarde (2010) 297–298; also Gentili (2000).

68 See Mastronarde (2010) 271–279.

69 See § 5, p. 77 and nn. 40–41.

ral aspects of her aid. One may question the wisdom of association with such a figure, but it is doubly unwise to betray that figure (as he realizes when faced with the corpses of his children 1329–1338). Even this is not the extent of it: in the face of Medea's *volte face* in the fourth episode, Jason is fatally blinded by male assumptions about female inferiority and weakness.⁷⁰ Yet most important of all is the fact that he is an oath-breaker (21–23, 160–165, 168–170, 208–210, 438–441, 492–495, 1391–1392): just as he does not try to deny the fact of his marriage to Medea, so he becomes subject to the consequent range of condemnations and punishments, one of the most typical of which was precisely the loss of children (alluded to in her instructions to Aegeus at 755). Euripides' work is more than a tale of crime and punishment, but oaths are important (consider 736–758), and so Jason earns his terrible suffering.⁷¹ While he may become more sympathetic as the play progresses,⁷² this oath breaking helps to make a point about justice in this play: though the gods do not figure as characters, they are 'there' and the story is theologically coherent.⁷³

Jason's distant affection for his children contrasts strongly with Creon.⁷⁴ In the first episode, the Corinthian autocrat is well aware of Medea's abilities (and her threats 287–289), and unconvinced by her self-presentation (316–320). So she switches tactics, responding to his focus on the welfare of his daughter (whose safety was paramount to him 282–283), by adducing her need to provide for her own children's welfare (344–347).⁷⁵ Creon makes the mistake of allowing her time to prepare herself and her children for exile, the first time in the play that she manipulates paternal weakness. His love for his daughter is ironically the very thing which will destroy him, in a reprise of Pelias' death at his daughters' hands, when he too is horribly caught by Medea's gifts (1204–1220).

Nor is Aegeus untouched by paternal weakness, in his case the desire to have children. Though (wrongly) criticized, his coincidental arrival is crucial in

70 Note his complacency about persuading Glauce (944–945).

71 See Kovacs (1993) 58–60; Fletcher (2003) esp. 33–36; Levett (2009) 159–164; Mossman (2011) ad loc., 289–290. Holland (2003) adduces also the difficulties which the Aeolids had in their progeny.

72 Rabinowitz (1993) 149–150; Morwood (2014).

73 See esp. Kovacs (1993); Boedeker (1997) on Aphrodite; Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 308–310.

74 Some [e.g. McDermott (1989) 98–99; Luschnig (2007) 122–130] see Creon as a tyrant justly punished, but he is hardly arbitrary or cruel, especially after her threats (163–165, 366–385, 450, etc.).

75 See esp. Pucci (1980) 91–92; McDermott (1989) 84–89; Gibert (1995) 66–67; Seidensticker (1996) 385–386.

two ways.⁷⁶ Firstly, he links Medea's Corinthian story and its Athenian future. This is not just a matter of refuge, for he presents the revolutionary example of the parent-child theme.⁷⁷ Medea's manipulation thereof is apparently more positive, though to an Athenian, Aegeus' exit to Troezen—and Theseus' engendering—is simultaneously sinister and triumphant: the former because she is going to deceive this man as well, the latter because Theseus will be the one to expel her from Athens, and Greece. Secondly, Aegeus brings an external perspective to the action, and his authority in condemning Jason's behaviour is unequivocal: he terms it 'this most shameful deed' (695), advises Medea to 'let him go if, as you say, he is bad' (699), faults Jason for allowing her to suffer exile (707) and lists as the first of his reasons for accepting Medea's supplication the simple fact of the gods (720), by which he means not only the divine role in the process of supplication, but also the basic justice of the situation.⁷⁸ Where previous indicators of sympathy to Medea's plight came from servants or members of her household, whose partiality is expected (see 54–55, and 823),⁷⁹ Aegeus provides an impartial indication of Jason's fundamental wrongdoing.

7 The Chorus

We saw (§ 4) that the Chorus has a straightforward metrical and structural delineation.⁸⁰ Thematically, they serve as Medea's confidants, establishing a sympathetic view to her plight at the outset which is coloured by growing aversion as her plans come to fruition,⁸¹ though complicity conflicts with their local identity.⁸² While they never reject adherence to Medea entirely, their experience is emphasized by the metrical profile of their songs (see § 4), as the heroic / epinician resonance of the first four (dactylo-epitrite and [largely]

76 See Kovacs (1993) 48–50 on coincidences; Grethlein (2003) 335–345; also n. 29.

77 See Easterling (1977) 184–186 [= (2003) 194–195], and Sfyroeras (1994).

78 Mastronarde (2002) ad loc., 291. See also Grethlein (2003) 338–339 for the contrast between Jason and Aegeus.

79 See Mastronarde (2002) ad 54, 174, for the theme of the 'good slave'.

80 For the Euripidean Chorus, see e.g. Hose (1990–1991) esp. 1.11–39; Foley (2003); Mastronarde (2010) 88–152; on the *Med.*, Hose (1990–1991) 1.53–58, 11.76–88; Chong-Gossard (2008) 155–182; Swift (2010) 120–121; Mastronarde (2010) 116–119, 136–137; Swift (2013) 130–144; Mills (2014). See also Beck (2002) and Luschnig (2007) 144–156 for (differently, and unconvincing) political-historical readings.

81 See Boedeker (1997) 134; *contra* Beck (2002), Mills (2014).

82 See Chong-Gossard (2008) 155–182 on silent / complicit Choruses in Euripides; also Foley (2003) 19–20. Beck (2002) relates this to Athenian-Corinthian relations in 432–431 BC (n. 4).

aeolic) stasima slowly gives way to doubt, and then outright horror in the (dochmiac) fifth stasimon.

The marching anapaests of their first entrance (131–138) establish sympathy immediately: they ‘do not take pleasure’ in her pain (136), they claim a ‘friendship’ with the house (138: see also 178–179, 277 etc.) and they call on Zeus to witness her suffering, counselling patience and endurance (148–159), a theme taken up in the antistrophe when they encourage her to come out and heed their advice (173–183). This reinforces the supportive tone of the nurse and the tutor in the prologue, but extends it beyond the household’s dependants and thus, like the Aegeus-scene, helps to establish that Medea has been treated badly.⁸³

Their adherence (evident in the coryphaeus’ reaction to Medea’s first speech 267–270, and in the anapaestic interlude 358–363) is the only explanation for their silence after Medea’s statement that she will try to kill members of the Corinthian—i.e. the Chorus’ own—ruling household (374–385, 390–403).⁸⁴ Surprisingly, given what they have heard, they proclaim a new song tradition to celebrate the female (410–430 dactylo-epitrites), before turning to Medea’s situation (431–445 aeolics), even drawing a somewhat Hesiodic picture of the current status of oaths and ‘shame’ (439) in Greece.⁸⁵ Much has been made of the first strophic pair with regard to Euripides’ commentary on gender roles (§ 5),⁸⁶ but the Chorus’ misplaced belief in Medea as a model for this new type of song well complements their disloyalty to their community.⁸⁷

Alignment is maintained in the coryphaeus’ respectful criticism of Jason in the second episode (576–578) and elevated in the second stasimon to a wish never to be hounded by love or its alteration in the first strophic pair (627–653),⁸⁸ before another wish not to be afflicted by Medea’s statelessness (654–662). This is perhaps the summit of their (and our) sympathy in the play since, after they send Aegeus on his way in the typical anapaestic interlude in the fol-

83 We are not told what age or status these women are, and the Aristophanean hypothesis (= *Hyp.* (a).39–40 Diggle) labels them simply ‘citizen women’, but their familiarity with a mature woman’s lot is assumed in Medea’s first speech; see Mills (2014) 101–102.

84 See Swift (2013) 135–136 on the tension between their sympathy and their local identity. I assume that the mention of the princess in Medea’s ambit of revenge in the first episode (262) is not authentic; cf. Mastronarde (2002) ad loc., 215–216; Mossman (2011) ad loc., 241.

85 See Grethlein (2003) 343–344.

86 See, e.g., Luschnig (2007) 144–147.

87 See Chong-Gossard (2008) 160; Hopman (2008); Swift (2013) 138–142. This is reinforced generically, since an important epinician theme was the negotiation between ruling house / political elite and its community: see Kurke (1991).

88 See § 5, p. 77 for *erôs* more generally.

lowing third episode (759–763), the coryphaeus reacts immediately to Medea's revelation that she will kill her children with an attempt to dissuade her (811–813, 816, 818), calling on both her friendship and desire to help Medea as well as a concern for the laws of men (812).⁸⁹ The strain is powerfully represented in the third stasimon, the famous praise of Athens, which describes the city in idyllic terms (824–845) before turning once more to Medea herself in the second strophic pair and wondering how such a wonderful place could cope with her arrival (846–865).⁹⁰ They cannot believe that she will do it (862–865), though it is of course not their role to inform Jason when he enters at the start of the fourth episode, the most they do being to utter a wish that 'evil may not progress further than it has now' (907) after Medea's first dissembling speech, at the end of which she almost gives herself away (899–905).

The fourth stasimon confirms their certainty in the deaths to come, first (briefly) of the children and (more fully) the new bride (976–988), before turning to Jason (991–995) and then Medea herself (996–1001), but they still side with Medea despite her intentions: Jason is 'without regard for law' 1000, and they 'groan in sympathy for [Medea's] grief' (997). Now the clear metrical divisions between the first and second strophic pair evident in the first three stasima begins to break down, and dactylo-epitrite (along with other, non-epinician rhythms) intrudes into the second pair. Correspondingly,⁹¹ their statements spread sympathy around, and the long anapaestic interlude after Medea's deliberation speech in the fifth episode (§ 4) reveals their change in attitude, as they retreat into something of an aporetic state, recalling the first stasimon in claiming for themselves a Muse as a source of female wisdom (1087–1089. 'not for all, but a small number ...').⁹² This preamble introduces a reflection on the burdensome nature of parenthood which denies the purpose of children (1090–1115). An astounding erasure of human life and community, their utterance reflects the effect of the plot and its characters upon them, and the difficulties they face in reconciling their roles within the drama.

Medea's final consideration of her dilemma at the end of the episode then leads into the frenzied (and dochmiac) fifth stasimon, and the closest the Cho-

89 See Allan (2002) 88–89; Chong-Gossard (2008) 162–163; also Mills (2014) 105–106.

90 See Rutherford (2012) 238–241. Many scholars [e.g. Scodel (2010) 125; Grethlein (2003) 339–352; Swift (2009) 371–375] suggest an unsettling threat to Athens in Medea's arrival, but the Chorus' contrast is eventually justified by her expulsion: see Pelling (1997) 226. Pucci (1980) 116–121 suggests that the idealization helps to focus on the violence of Medea's actions.

91 See Mastronarde (2002) ad loc., 327.

92 See Chong-Gossard (2008) 162–163; Swift (2013) 144–145; also Zeitlin (1996) 63–64.

rus gets to outright condemnation.⁹³ They call on 'Earth and the all-shining beam of Helios' to witness her deeds and stop her (1251–1260) and question the need for murder (1261–1270). The second strophic pair begins with the off-stage children calling out for aid and the Chorus vacillating over aiding them (1270–1281), before comparing Medea (poorly) with Ino,⁹⁴ who fell into the sea bearing her child (or children) on her back.

After this point, they are limited to informing Jason of his children's death, and closing, somewhat generalizing anapaests (1415–1419). This stumble into silence is fitting in several ways, since, by the end of the play, the Chorus have nothing meaningful left to say:⁹⁵ they denied their local identity almost at the play's start, they have just recently denied the purpose of their existence (in ancient eyes) and have even shown poverty in mythological knowledge. The tragic Chorus has long been imbued with particular authority in these terms,⁹⁶ but this Chorus compromises itself on every ground. It contributes powerfully to the emotional and structural curve of the narrative, to which it always remains closely bound,⁹⁷ but it is as distanced from the audience, and as tainted by its participation in the drama, as are the characters themselves.⁹⁸

8 Influence and Reception

The *Medea* established itself as a classic very soon after its first performance, with the first effects apparent in the visual arts.⁹⁹ Before the date of our play, Medea's representation is largely limited to scenes of rejuvenation involving Pelias and his daughters, or else she is depicted alone with snakes.¹⁰⁰ But from the last quarter of the fifth century, there are several new directions in her visual discourse: firstly, the rejuvenation scenes largely cease;¹⁰¹ Medea begins to be

93 On their movements, see Hose (1990–1991) 1.258–262; Beck (2002) 39–40.

94 On the suitability of this paradigm, see Newton (1985); Boedeker (1997) 136–137; Holland (2003) esp. 272–273; Mossman (2011) ad loc., 351–352.

95 See Mastronarde (2010) 104–106 on this general tendency in Euripidean Choruses.

96 See, e.g., Foley (2003) and Mastronade (2010) 91–94 on choral authority.

97 See Hose (1990–1991) 11.88.

98 So Mastronarde (2010) 119; also Chong-Gossard (2008) 164–165; *contra* Luschnig (2007) 127–128, who views the Chorus as a political and moral authority.

99 See Schmidt (1992) esp. 395–398; Sourvinou-Inwood (1997); Isler-Kerényi (2000); Mastronarde (2002) 66–69; Taplin (2007) 114–125.

100 Schmidt (1992) nos. 3–6.

101 Sourvinou-Inwood (1997) 267 (with an exception).

represented with Jason as he removes the Golden Fleece;¹⁰² she is shown in her flight to Athens on her father's chariot, which is drawn by snakes;¹⁰³ she appears as the 'filicide';¹⁰⁴ and she is now usually dressed, though never exclusively, in oriental costume.¹⁰⁵ Several of these new developments are also contained on South Italian vases from the late fifth / early fourth century, which may depict more or less directly the final scene of the play.¹⁰⁶ This need not reflect direct influence, of course: there is, for instance, no mention of snakes or dragons drawing the chariot in the *Medea* itself,¹⁰⁷ it's not certain that Euripides was the first to deploy filicide, and she was a popular figure on the Athenian stage (§ 3). Nonetheless, the coincidence of all these themes shows that *Medea's* visual tradition received a powerful, renovating infusion at the end of the fifth century, which many scholars have mapped onto the *Medea's* attainment of 'classic' status in the Hellenistic and Roman periods.¹⁰⁸

Indeed, many comedies and tragedies were titled *Medea* (both before but mostly) after Euripides,¹⁰⁹ and the number of actor's interpolations (e.g., Σ *Med.* 85, 228, 356 Schwarz) suggests an early prominence within the reperformance tradition.¹¹⁰ As a literary artifact, however, the play was a key text for Apollonius' *Argonautica*,¹¹¹ and also found its way into philosophical discussion: the Stoic Chrysippus, for instance, compared her failure at self-restraint with Odysseus' self-control (*Od.* 20.17–21) and was derided for having transcribed so much of the play in one work that it was called the '*Medea* of Chrysippus'.¹¹² In the Roman tragic tradition, the plays of several famous poets—including Ennius, Seneca, Ovid and Lucan—suggest a particular Euripidean influence,

102 Neils (1990) nos. 37–42; Jason was earlier shown removing the fleece with Athene.

103 Schmidt (1992) nos. 35–38.

104 Taplin (2007) 114–115.

105 Sourvinou-Inwood (1997) 279–294.

106 See Sourvinou-Inwood (1997) 269–272 and Taplin (2007) 117–123.

107 The chariot is mentioned in the scholia (*ad Med.* 1320 Schwarz; see also *Hyp.* (a).8–10 Diggle). Snakes are associated with *Medea* earlier in the artistic tradition [Schmidt (1992) nos. 3–6; Ogden (2013) 198–202]. Taplin (2007) 117–123 suggests that the late fifth-century iconography reflects a later production of the play, and Wyles (2014) connects them with Athenian autochthony.

108 See Mastronarde (2002) 64–66; Allan (2002) 101–108.

109 An 'explosion' [Mossman (2011) 54]; see Hunink (2014) 161–162; Colomo (2011) 49 n. 37; Vahtikari (2014) 172–174. If Neophron is later, then the *Medea* was being closely copied soon after its first production.

110 Page (1934) 61–62.

111 See Hunter (1989) 18–19; Allan (2002) 102–103.

112 See Dillon (1997) 212–213, 211 n. 3, 216–217.

and also the character's enduring popularity,¹¹³ though the length and richness of that tradition should make us careful in citing our play for every Roman literary reflection.¹¹⁴

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113 See Jocelyn (1967) 350–352 for Ennius' fragments; Boyle (2014) for Seneca; in general, Allan (2002) 104–106; Arcellaschi (1990); Cowan (2010); Boyle (2012); Manuwald (2013).

114 See Newlands (1997) for Ovid *Her.* 12 and *Met.* VII. For the long and tremendously varied reception of Euripides' masterpiece after classical antiquity, see Mossman (2011) 53–58; for the Roman tradition, Boyle (2012); Manuwald (2013); Boyle (2014) lxi–lxxvii, cxix–cxli; Hall/Macintosh/Taplin (2000) for the story post 1500, along with Mimoso-Ruiz (1982); Morse (1996); Kepetzis (1997); Beck (1998) 35–41; McDonald (1997); Griffiths (2006) 85–119; Stephan (2006) (*non vidi*); Bartel/Simon (2010) parts II–V; van Zyl Smit (2014); and most recently Lauriola (2015).

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Children of Heracles

D.M. Carter

1 What is the Play About?

This play tells the story of the reception of the children of Heracles at Athens by king Demophon, and of the defence of this position against the claims of Argos and its king Eurystheus. The story is told in several Attic funeral speeches, such as in the following example (Lysias 2.11–14):

Some time later, after Heracles had vanished from among men, his children were fleeing from Eurystheus. They were driven away by all the other Greeks, who were ashamed to do this but afraid of Eurystheus' power, and they came to our city and sat down at the altar as suppliants. Despite Eurystheus' demands, the Athenians refused to surrender them. They respected the bravery of Heracles more than they feared the danger to themselves. They believed they should fight for the weaker on the side of justice rather than please those in power by surrendering those they had wronged. Eurystheus, together with those who at that time controlled the Peloponnese, launched a campaign. The Athenians, however, did not waver even when facing danger, but kept to their previous resolve, even though they had received no personal benefits from the children's father and could not know what kind of men they would turn out to be. They had no previous quarrel with Eurystheus and stood to gain no advantage except to their reputation. Nevertheless, they did what they thought just, and risked great dangers on the boys' behalf. They pitied those who were being wronged, in the belief that they deserved help. They hated the oppressors and wanted to hinder them. They believed that free men do not act unwillingly, that just men help those who are wronged, and that courageous men fight and die, if necessary, for both of these principles.¹

I have quoted the Lysian funeral speech at reasonable length because it usefully highlights a number of themes and issues that appear in Euripides' play:

¹ Transl. Todd (2000) 29–30. On this and the deployment of other mythical exploits in Attic funeral speeches, see Loraux (1986) 64–69.

the just claims of the weak and oppressed; the choice to pursue justice even at the expense of the Athenians' collective self-interest; and the way in which the application of these principles is closely associated with Athenian ideas of freedom. I will explore these themes towards the end of this chapter.

However, I want to avoid the 'themes and issues' approach, at least to begin with, because it will distract us from consideration of the play's dramatic merits. Scholarship on *Children of Heracles* tends to be dominated by a single question: whether this is merely a political play (with an emphasis on 'merely'). For large parts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the so-called political plays of Euripides (*Children of Heracles* and *Suppliant Women*) were discussed as dramas whose only appeal lies in curiosity. In the absence of any obvious dramatic merit—the searing drama of a *Medea* or the theatrical ambition of an *Orestes*—the assumption was that these plays served not to entertain the audience but to educate them.² This kind of argument makes a distinction between drama as drama, and drama as propaganda. On this reading, the *Children of Heracles*, perhaps in the same way as funeral speeches, was designed to underline Athenian virtues and advertise the importance and prestige of the city.

Most critics of the play have long since moved on from this position and several scholars have argued strenuously and convincingly for its dramatic merits.³ Their purpose has been to react to the misreading of *Children of Heracles* as merely a political play. This, however, means that the question under consideration is unchanged. Part of the difficulty, I think, is that in labelling *Children of Heracles* and *Suppliant Women* the 'political' plays of Euripides one makes the assumption that the other plays are less political or apolitical. This seems an odd move to make: we would never distinguish between the political and apolitical works of Aeschylus; nor would we assume that his more political works have less dramatic merit.

In this chapter I will not attempt to change the question, but I do want to shift the direction of enquiry slightly by suggesting that it is impossible properly to understand the politics of the play until we have considered it as a piece of drama.⁴ In doing so I want to offer a template for political readings of Greek tragedy more generally.

2 The views of Schlegel (1809–1811) and Wilamowitz (1882) were particularly influential. On this tradition in the criticism of the play, see further Burian (1977) 2 n. 3; Allan (2001) 21–22.

3 The turning point in scholarship came with Zuntz (1955). The play has been further rehabilitated by Burnett (1976), Burian (1977), Allan (2001), and Daneš (2015) among others.

4 This is effectively how Zuntz structured his book. However, his political reading is concerned to a far greater extent with external references, for which reason it is important for Zuntz to be able to date the play as securely as possible. In my approach I try to engage with issues as they emerge through the play as it might originally have been staged.

2 *The Children of Heracles as a Work for the Stage*

To say that this is a work for the stage may seem a point almost too banal to have prominence in this discussion. But it is a good starting point for any reading of a Greek tragedy. *Children of Heracles* was written for a particular occasion. To be granted a Chorus at the Dionysia gave a poet the opportunity to present his work in front of the largest, most diverse and most appreciative theatre audience that there was. Any poet, even one with as long and successful a career as Euripides, was likely to take this opportunity very seriously indeed. It is reasonably safe to assume both that he wanted to present something that would work dramatically and that he knew what he was doing.

It takes some imagination, even guesswork, to read the play as a work for the stage. *Children of Heracles* is hardly ever performed in modern times (certainly I have never seen the play live).⁵ And modern interpretations may not, in any case, offer many clues to the play's ancient reception. We need as far as possible to think ourselves into the position of its audience at first performance. This audience sat in a large open air *theatron* (auditorium) surrounding three sides of the performance space. The play was performed as part of a tetralogy (three tragedies and one satyr drama) during a religious festival when the normal business of the city was suspended, and many people took the day off to see the show. This audience, or certainly the Athenians among them, can be assumed to have been closely familiar with the subject matter of the play. It is noticeable that the fourth-century Attic orators treat the event not as myth but as a matter of record, and one must assume the same to be true when Euripides' play was first performed. *Children of Heracles* is a history play.⁶

In the discussion that follows, *Children of Heracles* will emerge as a somewhat episodic piece of drama: in other words, a drama in which the individual scenes are sometimes not obviously connected. The play is divided neatly into six scenes. A short prologue of 72 lines leads directly into a dialogic parodos (opening Chorus). The drama proceeds through four episodes of gradually

5 At the time of writing (May 2020) the online database of the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk) lists only ten performances worldwide since the Second World War, four of them in this century. The most significant modern version was directed by Peter Sellars and performed at venues in Europe and N. America between 2002 and 2004.

6 *Children of Heracles* cannot be given a secure date of first performance but, on the basis of metrical evidence, most commentators place it in or soon after 430 BC: see e.g. Cropp/Fick (1985) 5; Ceadel (1941) 74. The prophecy of Eurystheus at the end of the play (see below, section 6) appears to make sense if they play was performed soon after the beginning of the Peloponnesian War in 431. On the date see further Wilkins (1993) xxxiii–xxxv; Allan (2001) 54–56.

decreasing size (235 lines, then 227, 118 and 108), delineated by short choral odes, followed by an exodos (closing scene). *Children of Heracles* is the shortest surviving tragedy of Euripides: 1055 lines of verse in the surviving text, although modern editors tend to posit a number of lacunae, meaning that the original text for performance will have been slightly longer. Within this, *Children of Heracles* has the smallest proportion of sung lyrics in any extant tragedy of Euripides.⁷

And it is a fast-moving piece of drama.⁸ In the following discussion the distribution of lines of verse will serve as a useful proxy measure of dramatic pace. The play begins, in the Euripidean style, with a monologue given by Iolaus, Heracles' nephew. This speech fills 54 lines and explains the predicament of the children, of whom the boys can be seen onstage and the girls are inside the stage building with their mother Alcmene. The stage building represents the temple of Zeus at Marathon and the younger sons of Heracles are crowded around the altar as suppliants (E. *Hclid.* 33). Iolaus says that the older sons of Heracles, led by Hyllus, have gone to find a defensible position should they be driven away from Marathon (45–47). As the drama proceeds it becomes apparent that one of the two side entrances (which we can call Eisodos A, stage right) leads to the city of Argos and, closer to home, to a place where Eurystheus, tyrant of that city, is encamped with his army. The other side entrance (Eisodos B) leads to the village of Marathon.⁹

This static opening, however, leads directly into a swift series of entrances. Iolaus uses the final seven lines of his speech to warn the boys of the arrival of a herald from Argos (unnamed in this play but traditionally called Copeus). The staccato delivery of his words gives them a sense of urgency (ὦ τέκνα τέκνα, δεῦρο, 48). The seven lines also serve to cover the passage of the herald down Eisodos A. Given the size and distribution of the audience in the theatre, some audience members would have been able to see the herald coming from the beginning of these seven lines while others will have needed Iolaus' words to get an idea of what they could not yet see. There is a very brief exchange of words before the herald turns to blows, assaulting Iolaus and threatening to drag the children away: this all happens within lines 55 to 68. Iolaus then

7 Csapo (1999–2000) 410.

8 Cf. Zuntz (1955) 26–27; Burian (1977) 4–5.

9 It could, of course, just as easily be the other way around. The key thing is that in a suppliant drama one side exit tends to lead to the receiving city and safety, and the other in the opposite direction: see Taplin (1977) 451, (1983) 158. Wiles (1997) 133–160 has argued plausibly that stability is associated with the right-hand side of the stage from an audience perspective, and instability with the left-hand side. Modern commentators on the play, including Allan (2001) and Kovacs (1995), tend to adopt Wiles' view.

appeals for help to the Chorus of local elders, whom he can perhaps already see approaching down *Eisodos B* (69–72).

The *parodos* is comparatively short, 38 lines in our text plus two lacunae worth six lines, and consists of just one strophe and one answering antistrophe.¹⁰ The Chorus members take no opportunity to introduce themselves but instead enter into a frenzied dialogue with Iolaus and the herald. At the end of this exchange the Chorus asks the herald whether he should not have approached the king of Athens, who is Demophon son of Theseus, with his claim over the children (111–115). Almost immediately upon saying this, they announce the arrival of the man himself, who enters down *Eisodos B* along with his brother Acamas (118–119).¹¹ So, within the space of 120 lines in the drama, Iolaus and the suppliant children have been joined onstage by an Argive herald, a Chorus of old men and the king of Athens. Within this time, it has been established that Argos claims jurisdiction over the children, who in turn claim sanctuary at Athens; and their immediate abduction has been prevented.

At this point the pace of events slows down a little bit and we have the opportunity to assess the rights and wrongs of the herald's and Iolaus' respective cases, which they make in turn to Demophon. This set-piece dramatic debate (*agôn*) consists of a long speech of more-or-less equal length from each speaker (134–178, then 181–231). This sense of balance, and the opportunity to find meaning through the presentation of opposing views, can be said to be typical of Athenian democratic discourse.¹² The Chorus members themselves underline this point in their remark between the two speeches (179–180):

τίς ἄν δίκην κρίνειεν ἢ γνοίη λόγον,
πρὶν ἄν παρ' ἀμφοῖν μῦθον ἐκμάθῃ σαφῶς;

Who can decide a plea or judge a speech until he has heard plainly from both sides?

Many of the audience members were Athenian citizens and would have had experience in the jury-courts of judging on the merits of two opposing

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- 10 In extant Euripides, only the *parodoi* of *Andromache* (30 lines), *Heracles* (33) and the satyric *Cyclops* (41) are shorter. Several near-contemporary plays have *parodoi* of comparable length to *Children of Heracles: Hippolytus* (49), *Suppliant Women* (45) and *Electra* (46).
- 11 Traditionally Demophon and Acamas are co-rulers of Athens. In this play it suits the needs of the drama and its internal politics to make Demophon the king and Acamas his mute sidekick: see Allan (2001) 141. I discuss Demophon's political status further below.
- 12 Cf. Wilson (2011); Burian (2011).

speeches. In this case the decision belongs to the Athenian Demophon. He rules in favour of Iolaus and the children of Heracles. This leads to an angry series of exchanges between the king and the herald (253–273), during which Demophon has to be warned against striking the herald. The herald then warns Demophon that Eurystheus is not far away with a large army (274–283). The Athenians are on course for war with Argos. Iolaus and the boys remain onstage during the choral ode that follows.

At the start of the second episode Demophon returns to the stage with worrying news. In the course of preparing for battle he has learnt that, in order to guarantee victory, an unmarried girl of noble birth must be sacrificed to the goddess Demeter (408–409). He is not willing to give up his own daughter or that of any Athenian for this purpose (411–413). Demophon's words at this point reveal the limits of his power. Athens, as portrayed in this play, is not a democracy. Athenian democratic values (freedom, justice) are promoted in the play and, as we have seen, the way in which views are exchanged onstage gives a democratic texture to the drama. But the decision to accept the suppliants was made with executive authority by Demophon: he did not refer this decision to the people in assembly, even though this decision was highly likely to bring Athenians to risk their lives in battle. Now, since Demophon is confronted with the possibility that this battle might be lost, his authority begins to look more insecure (415–424):

Now you will see crowded assemblies being held (*καὶ νῦν πυκνὰς ἄν συστάσεις ἄν εἰσίδοις*), with some maintaining that it was right to protect strangers who are suppliants, while others accuse me of folly. If I do as I am bidden, civil war will break out. Accordingly, consider these facts and join with me in discovering how you yourselves may be saved and this land as well, and how I may not be put in the wrong in the eyes of the citizens. I do not have a monarchy like that of the barbarians: only if I do what is fair will I be fairly treated.

Demophon's insecurity here is similar to several tragic kings, both ones that exercise power on their own and those that operate in tragic pseudo-democracies.¹³

Neither Iolaus nor Demophon knows what to do. This sense of helplessness is broken by an unexpected appearance from within the stage building by one of Heracles' daughters, unnamed in this play but identified in other

13 Podlecki (1993); West (2006); Carter (2010) 73–83.

sources as Macaria. In a pattern that repeats itself in other Euripidean dramas (*Hecabe*, *Phoenician Women*, *Iphigenia at Aulis* and the fragmentary *Erechtheus* and *Phrixus B*), she volunteers herself to be sacrificed.¹⁴ Her speech (500–534), for all that it comes from a young woman, is strongly argumentative.¹⁵ Iolaus expresses his admiration for the nobility of her words as well as her actions (541–542, 553–554). Following a farewell speech (574–596) she leaves the stage. Iolaus again expresses his admiration (597–601) but, as she is led away up *Eisodos B* by Demophon, he suddenly changes his tone: ‘My children, I am destroyed. My limbs melt with grief’ (ὦ παῖδες, οἰχόμεσθα· λύεται μέλη / λύπη, 602–603).

This sense of dejection is carried over into the third episode. Iolaus is approached (entering along *Eisodos B*) by a slave sent by Hyllus, Heracles’ son. He brings the news that Hyllus has returned with an army and is readying himself for battle. We are given a vivid description of the battle lines (664–676) and Iolaus becomes determined, in spite of his age, to arm himself and go there too (680–701). The slave brings a suit of armour and a spear from the temple and offers to carry the armour to the battlefield so that Iolaus can save his strength (720–725). Iolaus leaves for battle along *Eisodos A*, leaning on his spear. It is often thought that the scene of an old man preparing himself for battle would have been played for laughs, in stark contrast to the pathos of the previous episode.¹⁶ Whether or not this is the case, the scene appears to fulfil some of the function of an arming scene in Homeric epic: Iolaus may not actually arm himself onstage but the armour appears and he takes his spear in readiness.¹⁷ The original audience of the play, well educated in the conventions of epic, was thereby programmed to expect Iolaus to do great things in battle.

In the fourth episode a messenger enters along *Eisodos A* with news from the battlefield. The Athenians have won with help from Hyllus and a momentarily youthful Iolaus. Iolaus himself has carried out the most impressive exploit by capturing Eurystheus alive. In the *exodos* the captive Eurystheus is brought onto stage to confront Alcmene, who demands his death. This closing scene is therefore dominated by two figures who have not previously held the audience’s attention. Their respective characterization comes as a surprise, contrary to what we might have expected. Eurystheus, who appears onstage for the first

14 On this theme in Euripides, see Wilkins (1990).

15 Wilkins (1993) 114; Allan (2001) 172.

16 Zuntz (1955) 29; Burian (1977) 11–13; Allan (2001) 183 ff. For a different view: Wilkins (1993) 137–138.

17 Cf. Wilkins (1993) 142. In the view of Taplin (1977) 158–161 there are no onstage arming scenes in Greek tragedy.

time, is considered by many commentators to be a far more sympathetic figure than expected; Alcmena, who has not had much to say so far, certainly comes across as vindictive.¹⁸

Eurystheus stays silent for the first 55 lines of this scene but eventually speaks at length (983–1017, 1026–1044). In his second speech Eurystheus gives a prophecy that brings events up to the present day. This is a typically Euripidean way to end the drama (in many other plays the prophecy is spoken by a *deus ex machina*). Eurystheus reveals an old oracle saying that, if the Athenians bury him in front of the shrine of Athene at Pallene, he will act as a defence for the city at such a time as the descendants of the children of Heracles forget the favour shown to them by the Athenians and come to invade (1026–1044).¹⁹ By the descendants of the children of Heracles he means the Spartans, with whom the Athenians were at war when this play was first produced. I shall return in more detail to this final scene in section 6 of this chapter.

Thus a great many actions are included within a short play, including: the arrival of the children of Heracles at Marathon and their supplication of the shrine of Zeus Agoraios; the granting of asylum by Demophon on behalf of the city; the willing self-sacrifice of one of the daughters of Heracles to Demeter; a battle in which Iolaus is temporarily rejuvenated, Eurystheus captured and the Argives defeated; and the final humiliation of, and prophecy by, Eurystheus.

On paper the drama appears episodic and bitty.²⁰ (Many commentators have complained, for example, that we do not hear anything else about Macaria's self-sacrifice after she leaves the play; instead the play moves on to other things.) Onstage the drama would have been bound together by the constant presence, from beginning to end, of the younger sons of Heracles around the altar. Those fast-paced early scenes underline their vulnerability, a fact that is kept materially in front of the audience's eyes through the rest of the drama by their very presence. The question that animates the drama is: will they survive? At the same time the audience gains a vivid picture, through reports, of other scenes: the female children within the temple; the field of battle. This

18 Zuntz (1955) 35–37; Burian (1977) 17; Allan (2001) 206–207, 211.

19 The burial of Eurystheus at Pallene is attested in other sources: see Kearns (1989) 164. There is, however, no other evidence of a hero-cult of Eurystheus. At lines 1040–1041 Eurystheus instructs the Athenians not to allow libations or sacrifice at his tomb. It is plausible that these lines are in the play precisely because the original audience of the play knew that there was no cult of Eurystheus and Euripides did not want to be assumed to be inventing one: see Kearns (1989) 49, cf. Dunn (1996) 56. Against this view: Seaford (1994) 127–128; Allan (2001) 218–219.

20 Burian (1977) gives a reading of the play that plausibly makes a virtue of the episodic composition of the play and its several changes of register.

second offstage scene, the setting for much of the third and most of the fourth episodes, is where we see and hear Hyllus, who becomes one of the main characters in the play even though he never appears onstage.²¹ Likewise, Eurystheus is a sinister offstage presence until the final scene of the drama. His physical presence onstage is delayed until the very end, and his speech a little longer than that. By this time, he is no longer a threat.

3 Athens and Political Space

One further place that can be imagined in *Children of Heracles* is the city of Athens itself: presumably down Eisodos B and further away than Marathon. The city is mentioned constantly in the play.²² The word πόλις (city) is used forty-two times, and πόλισμα twice, thirty-four of them of Athens. In total the city or the land of Athens is referred to more than seventy times in the play, including seven times by name. This constant presence reveals itself partly through consciousness of the vulnerability of the city. The suppliant children, present onstage, are the most obviously vulnerable people in the drama, but the people of Athens become exposed through Demophon's decision to protect the suppliants and Eurystheus' consequent military action. A large number of Athenian citizens can be imagined on the field of battle down Eisodos A.

The constant presence of Athens also reveals itself in the authority of the city, and in Demophon's authority as an extension of it. When, during the parodos, Iolaus introduces the children to the Chorus, he says they 'have come as suppliants to you and your city' (ικέται σέθεν τε και πόλεως ἀφιγμένοι, 94). As in any suppliant tragedy, it is for the city to receive the suppliants because the city must be able to stand by the decision and back it up with force if need be.²³ What varies from play to play is the extent to which this decision is placed in the hands of the citizens themselves. In Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, set in a mythologised pseudo-democratic Argos, it appears that King Pelasgus has the ability to make the decision on his own, but he chooses to consult the people in assembly rather than decide on his own and risk public censure (*A. Suppl.* 398–401); the people hear his speech and vote unanimously in favour (600–624).²⁴ In Euripi-

21 On Hyllus in this play, see Wilkins (1993) xxii.

22 The political distinction between Marathon and Athens is frequently blurred in *Children of Heracles*: see Wilkins (1993) 52.

23 Tzanetou (2012) 9–10.

24 Burian (1974) 7–9; Friis Johansen/Whittle (1980) 2.314–315; Podlecki (1986) 82–85; Rohweder (1998) 53–54; West (2006) 35–37. For a different view, see Garvie (2006) xvi.

des' *Suppliant Women*, set at Athens, King Theseus has turned his city into a democracy by giving power to the popular assembly; the decision to accept the suppliants belongs to the people on his advice (E. *Suppl.* 350–353). In procedural terms *Children of Heracles* is the least democratic of these three plays. Demophon decides to accept the suppliants without any form of public consultation. However, as we have seen, this risky decision is every bit as vulnerable to public censure as one made by the Aeschylean Pelasgus. The possibility is raised by the Argive herald in his *agôn* speech (E. *Hclid.* 165–168):

ἦ κακὸν λόγον
κτήση πρὸς ἀστῶν, εἰ γέροντος οὐνεκα
τύμβου, τὸ μηδὲν ὄντος, ὡς εἰπεῖν ἔπος,
παιδῶν τε τῶνδ' ἐς ἄντλον ἐμβήσῃ πόδα.

Your citizens will have nothing good to say of you if for an old man's sake, a nullity as good as dead, and for these children you put your foot in the mire.

And the same fear is raised by Demophon himself in the speech quoted above (415–424). No meeting of the Athenian assembly is envisaged in this play but Demophon can envisage crowded meetings (*πυκνάς ... συστάσεις*, 415) in the plural, which we can presumably imagine as the more informal caucusing of political factions within Athens.²⁵ Demophon was able to make the decision to accept suppliants in the public space in front of the temple at Marathon, but this authority has quickly been undone in public arenas back at Athens.

Thus, the city of Athens is in the background of the drama as a kind of collective political personality. Two aspects of this personality are at stake in the drama. First, Athens is described as a free city. Second, questions are asked throughout the play on whether and how this city should act justly. Discussion of these two aspects of Athenian civic personality will bring us back to some of the prominent themes and issues mentioned above. Euripides, as I have already argued, is writing a piece for the stage, not a set-text to be decoded in the examination hall. So, it may be mistaken to try to identify the given themes of a play. It is helpful, however, to explore the political *values* that lie behind the drama. These will be the values of the principal political player in the drama (Athens) and they can be contrasted with those of Argos under Eurystheus.

25 Cf. Allan (2001) 167.

4 Freedom

Athens in *Children of Heracles* is described repeatedly, especially in the first half of the play, as a free city. This begins with Iolaus' words at lines 61–62 of the prologue, as soon as the children have been threatened by the Theban herald:

οὐ δῆτ', ἐπεὶ μοι βωμὸς ἀρκέσει θεοῦ,
ἔλευθέρα τε γαί' ἐν ἧ βεβήκαμεν.

No, since the god's altar will protect me, and since the land on which we stand is free.

In some ways it is unsurprising that the first time in the play when freedom (*eleutheria*) is mentioned is the first point at which it is under threat. Certainly, in the modern liberal tradition freedom is conceived of in negative terms: I am free to do something if nobody stops me. But this idea of freedom, associated in the modern era with the writings of Immanuel Kant, the utilitarians and Isaiah Berlin, is entirely absent from Euripides' play.²⁶ Further, although *eleutheria* is talked about and promoted in connection with the non-oppression of the children, they are never in so many words described, even in ideal terms, as free. Freedom is a quality that is associated almost exclusively with the Athenians and not their suppliants. The connection between the freedom of Athens and the protection of the children is indirect.

The closest we get to a description of the children as free is in a statement given by one of the children, the girl who has offered herself to be sacrificed to Demeter. Iolaus, impressed at her resolve but grieving in advance, suggests that all of the daughters of Heracles should draw lots to see who will die (539–546). The girl responds that she prefers to give up her life willingly and not through compulsion (τὴν ἐμήν ψυχὴν ἐγὼ / δίδωμ' ἐκούσα τοῖσδ', ἀναγκασθεῖσα δ' οὐ, 550–551); the drawing of lots would remove any sense that she was going willingly to her death. Iolaus, in admiration at these words, says that he neither orders nor forbids the girl to die (556). The girl responds that there is no danger that Iolaus will be polluted through being complicit in her death; but, she says, 'let me die freely' (ἔλευθέρως θάνω, 559). She has complete ownership of her own decision. So 'freely' is best understood as 'willingly'.²⁷

26 On the contrast between ancient Greek and modern ideas of freedom, see *inter al.* Hansen (1989); Raaflaub (2004); Liddel (2007); Nippel (2008); Edge (2009); Vlassopoulos (2010); Cartledge/Edge (2010); Carter (2013).

27 Cf. Wilkins (1993) 122.

In all other respects the language of *eleutheria* is used not to describe the children but to explain the city of Athens, contrasted in this respect with other cities. See for example a claim made by Iolaus, addressing the herald during the *agôn* (193–198):

οὐ γάρ τι Τραχίς ἐστὶν οὐδ' Ἀχαιικὸν
 πόλισμ', ὄθεν σὺ τοῦσδε, τῇ δίκῃ μὲν οὔ,
 τὸ δ' Ἄργος ὀγκῶν, οἵάπερ καὶ νῦν λέγεις,
 ἧλαυνες ἰκέτας βωμίους καθημένους.
 εἰ γὰρ τόδ' ἔσται καὶ λόγους κρινούσι σοῦς,
 οὐκ οἶδ' Ἀθήνας τάσδ' ἔλευθέρας ἔτι.

This is not Trachis or some Achaean town, places from which you expelled these children, suppliants though they were and seated at the altar. You did not do this by any lawful plea but by prating of Argos' importance, just as you are doing today. If that happens here and they judge your case the winner, Athens in my judgment is no longer free.

The children's hoped-for non-oppression by the Argives is not in itself understood as a form of freedom; rather, the freedom of the Athenians is a condition of their non-oppression.²⁸ And Athenian freedom, just like the freedom of the girl who goes willingly to sacrifice, is best understood as autonomy.²⁹ This freedom has three aspects that are revealed during the play: the integrity of the city's sacred spaces; the ability of the Athenian king, Demophon, to decide the city's affairs; and the ability of the people of Athens, notwithstanding this royal authority, to dissent. I shall discuss these three aspects in turn.

In order to understand how the freedom of the Athenians is a condition of the children's non-oppression, we need to see how Athenian freedom relates to the integrity of its sacred spaces. The space in front of the temple of Zeus Agoraios at Marathon is a public space—anyone can enter it—and it is where Iolaus, Alcmene and the children settle when they arrive on Athenian soil. By supplicating the altar, they hope to gain the protection not only of Zeus but also of the Athenians, who would not want to see their suppliants removed by force. In other words, the children of Heracles become the responsibility of the Athenians simply by supplicating an Athenian altar, and before Iolaus personally supplicates Demophon at lines 226–231. One of the three considerations that

28 Cf. Tzanetou (2012) 79–80.

29 Cf. Wilkins (1993) 57.

drives Demophon to receive and protect the suppliants (see section 5 below on the other two) is the integrity of this sacred space (243–246):

εἰ γὰρ παρήσω τόνδε συλᾶσθαι βία
 ξένου πρὸς ἀνδρὸς βωμόν, οὐκ ἔλευθέραν
 οἰκεῖν δοκήσω γαίαν, Ἀργείων δ' ὄκνῳ
 ἰκέτας προδοῦναι.

For if I am to allow this altar to be robbed by a foreigner, it will be thought that it is no free land I govern but that I have betrayed suppliants for fear of the Argives.

So, it would be unfitting and unfree for the Athenians to be dictated to by the Argives. Violation of Athenian sacred space would significantly undermine Athenian autonomy; and the threatened forcible removal of the Athenians' suppliants is an extension of this threat to autonomy.

The Theban herald has difficulty understanding this principle. Why, he says, should Demophon care about the children of Heracles? It costs him nothing if they are removed by the Argives (255). But it does harm him to drag the children away, replies Demophon (256). The herald's next suggestion, therefore, is for Demophon to send the children beyond the limits of Attic territory so that he will bear no responsibility for their fate (257). Demophon finds this course of action equally impious (258) because, he says, 'the gods' sanctuaries are a common defence for us all' (ἅπασι κοινὸν ῥῦμα δαιμόνων ἔδρα, 260). The herald's reply is a veiled threat: 'Perhaps the Mycenaeans will not think so' (ταῦτ' οὐ δοκήσει τοῖς Μυκηναίοις ἴσως, 261). Demophon responds angrily: 'Am I not then the master of matters here?' (οὐκ οὖν ἐγὼ τῶν ἐνθάδ' εἰμὶ κύριος, 262).

Demophon understands that, even if he hands the children over without a fight, he will have rendered his city effectively unfree because it will have acted under the threat of military force from Argos.³⁰ Following further heated exchanges, in which the threat of Argive military action is laid bare, Demophon sees the herald offstage with these words (284–287):

φθείρου· τὸ σὸν γὰρ Ἄργος οὐ δέδοικ' ἐγώ.
 ἐνθ' ἔνδε δ' οὐκ ἔμελλες αἰσχύναις ἐμέ
 ἄξιον βία τούσδ'· οὐ γὰρ Ἀργείων πόλιν
 ὑπήκοον τήνδ' ἀλλ' ἔλευθέραν ἔχω.

30 Cf. Raaflaub (2004) 183.

Clear out! I am not afraid of your Argos. It was not destined that you would remove these suppliants from Athens and disgrace me. For the city that I rule is not Argos' subject but free.

So Demophon does not see the Argive challenge simply as a challenge to his personal authority. Rather, he associates this authority (his ability to be κύριος, 262) with the freedom of the Athenians. His authority is an extension and an expression of Athenian *eleutheria*.

This particular position—the close association of the king's power with the freedom of the city—is a rhetorical move that we associate elsewhere in tragedy with tyranny. For example, Creon, in Sophocles' *Antigone*, claims to rule in the public interest (184–191); but he is reduced later in the drama to saying not only that the city should obey him, but also that the city exists for his own good (734–738). However, I do not think Demophon is behaving in this way. There is no contradiction between the royal power of Demophon and the freedom of the city. Athens in this play is not a democracy but an idealised heroic monarchy into which democratic values have anachronistically been imported. Freedom in this play is not for the most part individual freedom; rather, it belongs collectively to the people of Athens and is exercised by Demophon in their name. He is closer, in Aristotle's taxonomy of constitutions (*Arist. Pol.* 1279a29–b10), to a *basileus*, a monarch who rules in the collective interest, than a *tyrannos*, a monarch who rules in his own interest. He is introduced as a *tyrannos* early in the play (the word can be used in tragedy as a neutral word for sole ruler), but in such a way as to align his authority with collective autonomy (E. *Held.* 111–113):

οὐκ οὖν τυράννοις τῆσδε γῆς φράσαντά σε
 χρῆν ταῦτα τολμᾶν, ἀλλὰ μὴ βίᾳ ξένους
 θεῶν ἀφέλκειν, γῆν σέβοντ' ἔλευθέραν;

Should you not have respected the freedom of this land by telling its king before showing this boldness rather than forcibly dragging these strangers from the gods' sanctuary?

And Demophon himself is at pains to point out that he is not like some barbarian king but must treat his citizens with justice and expect them to treat him justly in return (423–424). The proof of this is the ability of the Athenians to show dissent and question his decisions, as Demophon himself explains (415 ff.). We have seen that this Athenian principle, of finding consensus through opposition and debate, is demonstrated in the *agôn* that forms the

first episode of the play. I have observed that the Chorus underline this point in their interjection between the long speeches by the herald and Iolaus (179–180). What is striking is the way in which Iolaus then claims this privilege for himself (181–183):

ἀναξ, ὑπάρχει γὰρ τόδ' ἐν τῇ σῆι χθονί,
εἰπεῖν ἀκοῦσαί τ' ἐν μέρει πάρεστί μοι,
κούδεις μ' ἀπώσει πρόσθεν ὥσπερ ἄλλοθεν.

My lord, since this is the law in your land, I have the right to hear and to speak in reply, and no one shall thrust me away before I am done, as they have elsewhere.

Iolaus here makes a claim to share in the Athenian principle of *isêgoria* (equality of speech), exemplified by the equal time given to opposing speeches (timed carefully using water clocks) in the Athenian law courts. This is a somewhat unusual claim for a non-Athenian to make in Greek tragedy. We have several examples where characters in tragedies set away from Athens petition, often in the face of tyrannical oppression, for their voice to be heard on equal terms (e.g. *S. El.* 552–557; *E. Ba.* 668–672). Euripides also gives us examples in which the quality of uninhibited speech (*parrhêsia*) is celebrated as characteristically Athenian (e.g. *E. Hipp.* 490–497, *Ion* 671–675). This, however, is the only example that I know of in tragedy where a non-Athenian comes to Athens and claims the privilege of *isêgoria* as if he were an Athenian himself. It is a bold claim to make but he succeeds.

Therefore *eleutheria* (freedom) in this play is best understood as the autonomy of the Athenian people. This autonomy is exercised in their name by Demophon, but his authority is in turn tempered by popular dissent, a feature of Athenian *isêgoria*. When Iolaus brings the children of Heracles to Marathon he is hoping—successfully as it turns out—that this Athenian ideal of freedom can be worked to their advantage. He thus invokes the Athenian principle of *isêgoria* in order to make his case. It works to their advantage because the Argive threat to the sacred space in front of the temple, and, by extension, to the suppliants gathered there, is seen as a threat to Athenian autonomy, which Demophon feels bound to defend.

5 Justice

Athens is also described in this play as a just city, although there is considerable vagueness around what this means, and this civic self-definition is apparently undermined at the very end of the play. Insofar as an explanation is given, a just city appears to be one or both of two things: a city that helps the weak (329–332); and a city that honours the gods (901).

This being a work of drama, and not primarily an essay on politics or ethics, there is no obligation on Euripides to explain to us why it is just to help the weak. In this play it is only implicitly said that the children of Heracles deserve the protection of Athens. A more explicit argument is made around what the gods deserve: not to protect the children would be in various ways to dishonour the gods, and especially Zeus, at whose altar they are suppliants (101–103):

εἰκὸς θεῶν ἰκτῆρας αἰδεῖσθαι, ξένε,
καὶ μὴ βιάω χειρὶ δαιμόνων ἀπολιπεῖν σφ' ἔδη·
πότνια γὰρ Δίκα τάδ' οὐ πείσεται.

It is right to respect the gods' suppliants, stranger. They [the children] should not be made to leave their sanctuaries with violence. For Lady Justice will not be so treated.

Therefore, justice and piety are closely linked in this play. To honour the gods is to act justly because it gives them what they ought to have.

These issues are explored in the *agôn* between Iolaus and the Argive herald, and in Demophon's subsequent judgement. It is interesting that, of the two cases made in this scene, only the herald's speech attempts to make an argument from justice: the children have been condemned according to Argive law and this gives him a just claim; the Argives are entitled to settle matters according to their own laws (137–143).³¹ For the rest of his speech the herald makes his argument in terms of Athenian self-interest: the Athenians have nothing to gain from protecting the suppliants but plenty to gain if they have Argos as an ally (153–157); equally, they have a great deal to lose if they defy Argos and precipitate war (158–161), apparently defending no interests of their own (162–165). He concludes in characteristically cynical terms (169–178):

If you let go of your true advantage, you will find only hope, and that is a thing that falls far short of cash in hand. Against the Argives in their

31 On the weakness of this argument, given that the herald is speaking in a different jurisdiction, see Wilkins (1993) 69–70.

panoply these boys, when grown to manhood, would be but poor fighters, if it is this prospect that raises your spirits, and there is a long stretch of time before then, when they might well be killed. But take my advice: give me nothing but merely allow me to take what is mine and thereby win Mycenae for an ally. Do not make the mistake you Athenians so often make, taking the weak for your friends when you might have chosen the strong.

Iolaus in his response offers a counterargument to the supremacy of Argive law (185–188), pointing out that the Argives have no jurisdiction beyond their own borders, but he offers no positive argument from justice of his own. Instead, he stresses the ties of kinship between Demophon and the children of Heracles (203–213) and the debt that Theseus (Demophon's father) owed Heracles for having rescued him from Hades (215–222); and he emphasizes the sense of shame the Athenians would feel if they do not protect suppliants at their altars (223–225). Finally, he throws himself at Theseus' mercy as a suppliant himself (226–231). It is telling that Demophon, when he rules in favour of the suppliant children, echoes much of Iolaus' argument. The three things that compel him to reject Argos and help the children of Heracles are: piety to Zeus (238–239); ties of kinship and prior obligation (240–241); and the shame of allowing his city's altars to be compromised by force, in which case he would not be the ruler of a free city (243–246, quoted above). Two ideas of justice are therefore at work in this play, informed by two competing underlying principles: the Argive interest and Athenian religious piety.

The Argive herald's conception of justice emerges as cynical, self-interested and uninformed by conventional piety. There are obvious resonances with some sophistic thought of the late fifth century, and especially with the view that it is just to seek one's own advantage.³² As a particularly striking parallel we can briefly consider the Melian Dialogue of Thucydides. The dialogue, from the end of book 5, is an account of the discussions that might have taken place between Athenian envoys and representatives of the island of Melos in the summer of 416 BC. Thucydides tells us that Melos was originally a colony of Sparta and tried to stay neutral in the Peloponnesian War until threatened by the Athenians (Thuc. 5.84). The Athenians' interest in Melos was to add the island to their empire.

There is a superficial similarity in that Thucydides presents two contrasting ideas of justice in dramatic form, but there are deeper correspondences too. In the Melian Dialogue it is the Athenians who aggressively promote their own

32 Conacher (1998) 92–93.

interests, on the assumption that it is just to seek one's own advantage and therefore that the stronger should prevail. They set the terms of debate in this way (5.89) and the Melians quickly agree to debate in terms of self-interest rather than any more conventional idea of justice (5.90). The dialogue then continues along the lines of whether it is really in the interests of the Athenians to crush the Melians, and whether it is really best for the Melians to avoid this fate. Therefore, rather like the Argive herald in Euripides, the Athenians work on the assumption that justice is informed by self-interest, and appeal to the Melians' instinct for self-preservation. In Thucydides the Athenians find their interlocutors ready to work with this assumption. In Euripides' *Children of Heracles*, by contrast, the Argive herald and Demophon make such radically different assumptions around the nature of justice that they tend, as it were, to talk past each other.

Euripides therefore presents two very different ideas of justice in the same play. In the first view justice is given to us by Zeus; defiance of religious conventions (for example, that suppliants are sacred) is an injustice to the gods. The second view shows little awareness of conventional pieties and argues in terms of what is best for each party, the assumption being that the stronger party will naturally get what they want. A work of drama presents opportunities for ideas of this sort to be tested against each other. There is, however, no Hegelian balance of views in this particular play. The audience is given a strong steer towards the conventional view. This is apparent through the presence onstage of Deomophon, who rules in favour of Iolaus and against the Argive position in the *agôn*. It is perhaps demonstrated still more forcefully by the outcome of the ensuing battle: for all the herald's bluster, it is in fact the Athenians who prevail in a contest of arms. We are also given a firm steer in this direction by Iolaus in the first few lines of the play (E. *Hclld.* 1–5):

πάλαι ποτ' ἐστὶ τοῦτ' ἐμοὶ δεδογμένον·
ὁ μὲν δίκαιος τοῖς πέλας πέφυκ' ἀνὴρ
ὁ δ' ἐς τὸ κέρδος λῆμ' ἔχων ἀνειμένον
πόλει τ' ἄχρηστος καὶ συναλλάσσειν βαρὺς,
αὐτῷ δ' ἄριστος.

I have long ago come to this conclusion: one man is just to his neighbours by nature, while the man whose heart runs untrammelled toward gain is of no use to his city and hard to deal with but to himself the best of friends.³³

33 Kovacs inserts an extra line between lines 2 and 3, which I have missed out. I have adapted his translation slightly to accommodate it. Either version of the text makes sense.

So, if the *Children of Heracles* does have a theme, it is the preferment of public virtue to private gain.³⁴

6 The Final Scene of the Play

This idea of Athenian justice, however, is apparently undermined during the exodos of the play. A different idea of justice—arguably a more primitive one—asserts itself increasingly during the course of the drama: justice as just deserts, visited on Eurystheus following his capture. In the *agôn* scene Demophon concludes his long speech with a threat of justice against Eurystheus (250–254):

Δη. σὺ δ' Ἄργος ἐλθὼν ταῦτά τ' Εὐρυσθεῖ φράσον,
 πρὸς τοῖσδέ τ', εἴ τι τοισίδ' ἐγκαλεῖ ξένοις,
 δίκης κυρήσειν· τούσδε δ' οὐκ ἄξεις ποτέ.
 Κη. οὐδ' ἦν δίκαιον ἦ τι καὶ νικῶ λόγῳ;
 Δη. καὶ πῶς δίκαιον τὸν ἰκέτην ἄγειν βίᾳ;

DEMOPHON: As for you, go to Argos and report this to Eurystheus, and say in addition that if he makes any charge against these foreigners, he shall receive his due. But you shall never take these children away.
 HERALD: Not even if I have a just cause and am victorious in my plea?
 DEMOPHON: And how is it just to abduct a suppliant?

Demophon's threat of justice against Eurystheus is made in the event that he even 'makes a charge' against the children of Heracles. The Greek word here, *ἐγκαλεῖ*, is one an Athenian would have used when making an accusation in a court of law. By the end of the play Eurystheus will have met with justice for backing up his claim with violence; but it is striking that here he is threatened with justice for making any kind of claim at all.

When we get to the end of the play, and see the captured Eurystheus onstage, his punishment apparently goes against established Athenian legal conventions for the treatment of people captured in war.³⁵ During this final scene the Chorus of old men of Marathon, all of them Athenian citizens, shift their position on whether Eurystheus should be killed. They are persuaded to do this

34 Cf. Conacher (1998) 90.

35 The jarring effect of this scene is all the more pronounced given that Euripides did not have to end the play in this way. In other literary accounts Eurystheus dies in battle. Cf. Burian (1977) 1.

by Alcmena. The Chorus' shifting position, which I shall presently discuss in detail, undermines these established legal conventions. Their shifting position might, by extension, be seen to undermine Athenian principles of justice. But these principles, as we have seen, are presented in only the vaguest terms during the drama. That a prisoner of war should not be killed is presented either as Athenian law (963–964) or as the will of the Athenians (964, 1019) but never as a principle of justice. In fact, the language of justice is repeatedly deployed by Alcmena in opposition to the Athenian position (941, 971, 1025). Her argument, however, is inconsistent and confuses a number of issues, as we shall now see.

In the first place Alcmena is informed by a servant (or in some manuscripts the Chorus) that the execution of a prisoner of war is illegal at Athens (961–966). This advice is echoed soon afterwards by the Chorus. Alcmena gives an extraordinary response (1018–1025):

Χο. παραινέσαι σοι σμικρόν, Ἀλκμήνη, θέλω,
 τὸν ἄνδρ' ἀφείναι τόνδ', ἐπεὶ δοκεῖ πόλει.
 Ἀλ. τί δ', ἦν θάνη τε καὶ πόλει πιθώμεθα;
 Χο. τὰ λῶστ' ἄν εἴη· πῶς τὰδ' οὖν γενήσεται;
 Ἀλ. ἐγὼ διδάξω ῥαδίως· κτανούσα γὰρ
 τόνδ' εἶτα νεκρὸν τοῖς μετελθοῦσιν φίλων
 δώσω· τὸ γὰρ σώμ' οὐκ ἀπιστήσω χθονί,
 οὔτος δὲ δώσει τὴν δίκην θανῶν ἐμοί.

Chorus: Alcmena, I want to give you a little advice: release this man since that is what the city has decided.

Alcmena: What if he were to be killed and yet we were to comply with the city's wish?

Chorus: That would be the best. How can this be done?

Alcmena: I shall easily show you. I shall kill him and then I will give the corpse to those of his kin who come to fetch it. As regards his body I shall not be disobeying the city, yet by his death he will pay the penalty to me.

The first thing to notice here is that the Chorus' advice at 1019 is not exactly the same as the servant's earlier in the scene. The servant says that the rulers of Athens do not allow prisoners of war to be killed (961–974); he gives this as general legal advice and says nothing about whether or not they should be released. The Chorus leader at 1019 echoes the servant by using the kind of language normally associated with political decision making (ἐπεὶ δοκεῖ πόλει, 1019, cf. τοῖς τῆσδε χώρας προστάταισιν οὐ δοκεῖ, 964). However, he goes further and

is more specific, saying that Eurystheus must be released. This gives Alcmene room in which to present a compromise solution: why not let me kill the man and give his body to his friends? Her 'give' (δώσω) echoes the Chorus' 'release' (ἀφείναι), but it is a cruel play on words since of course there is a big difference between setting a prisoner free and handing over his dead body. The wordplay is developed with a cruel twist in the very next line: οὗτος δὲ δώσει τὴν δίκην ἐμοί (he will *pay* the penalty to me).³⁶

We do not know whether the Chorus is persuaded by this rather slippery argument because at that point Eurystheus himself intervenes with his promise to act as a defence for the city if he is buried at Athens (1026–1044). Alcmene seizes on these words and addresses the Chorus again (1045–1052):

τί δῆτα μέλλετ', εἰ πόλει σωτηρίαν
κατεργάσασθαι τοῖσι τ' ἐξ ἡμῶν χρεῶν
κτείνειν τὸν ἄνδρα τόνδ', ἀκούοντες τάδε;
δείκνυσι γὰρ κέλευθον ἀσφαλεστάτην·
ἐχθρὸς μὲν ἀνήρ, ὠφελεῖ δὲ κατθανών.
κομίζετ' αὐτόν, δμῶες, ἔνθα χρὴ †κυσίν†
δοῦναι κτανόντας· μὴ γὰρ ἐλπίσης ὅπως
αὐθις πατρῴας ζῶν ἔμ' ἐκβαλεῖς χθονός.

Why then do you hesitate, if you can secure safety for the city and for your descendants, to kill this man, hearing these things. He shows us the path of greatest safety. For the man is an enemy, and by dying he does us good. Take him away, servants, to the place where we must kill and bury him. For you must not hope that you will live to exile me yet again from my native land.

Alcmene's argument thus switches from an argument based on (mis)interpretation of Athenian law to one of what the Athenians have to gain from killing Eurystheus. One might say that this brings her down to the level of argument employed earlier in the play by the Theban Herald, who similarly tries to interest the Athenians in what is seemingly in their interest.³⁷ The Chorus is any case persuaded (1053–1055, the final lines of the play as we have it):

36 Burian (1977) 18.

37 But apparently against her own interest, given the threat posed to her descendants by Eurystheus' prophecy: see e.g. Burian (1977) 18.

ταῦτα δοκεῖ μοι. στείχετ', ὄπαδοί.
 τὰ γὰρ ἐξ ἡμῶν
 καθαρῶς ἔσται βασιλευσιν.

This course seems best to me also. Be off, servants. For our acts will not bring taint upon the two kings.

These lines appear to be designed to put some distance between the doubtful legality of the deed and the integrity of Athenian law.

The argumentation of the last few lines of the play (which in any case include a number of lacunae and doubtful readings) is therefore highly confused. In the first place Alcmene makes an argument, based on the Chorus' interpretation of Athenian law, that it will satisfy that law to give up the body of Eurystheus for burial once he has been killed; but that contradicts the previous legal advice that she was given, which forbade the killing of a prisoner of war. Then the Chorus is persuaded to allow the killing of Eurystheus through the prospect of his burial on Athenian soil; this undermines the previous argument, which is based on the release of his body for burial.

The conclusion of the *Children of Heracles* is in some respects satisfying. It provides closure through the imminent death of the play's villain and it facilitates a typically Euripidean *aition* (a statement of the origins of a present-day religious cult). At the same time this sense of closure appears to be loosely reconciled with the will of the Athenian people. We have seen, however, that the way in which these two principles are reconciled is deeply confused. Perhaps the best that can be said is that most of the confusion is in the minds of the Chorus members and that they are not representative of the whole citizen body of Athens. In this sense it is correct to say, in the final line of the drama, that their actions will not bring pollution upon the rulers of Athens. Whether Athenian justice has been undermined by making the Chorus members complicit in the killing of Eurystheus is hard to see. They certainly go against the law and the stated will of the Athenians more generally. But justice in this play is, as we have seen, rather harder to pin down.

7 Conclusion

The *Children of Heracles* does not portray Athens as a democracy, but it does create a heroic context in which the political values of freedom and justice are tested through dialogue. Freedom, and especially the freedom of Athens

to decides its own affairs, is well understood in the drama. Justice turns out to a more slippery concept, around which competing claims are made right up until the end of the drama. Athens in this play makes a special claim to be a city of freedom and justice. Argos, itself a democracy during the fifth century, is presented as a city that gets justice wrong. Other cities are less free than Athens because they give in to Argive pressure not to protect the suppliants.

The Athens of *Children of Heracles* is a monarchy. Demophon can decide things for himself, subject to popular opposition and dissent. There is, however, a democratic texture to the play. This is revealed in the way that competing arguments around freedom and justice are deployed against each other. The *Children of Heracles* may promote Athenian values, but it does so in a particularly Athenian way, through opposition and debate. There is nothing artificial about this in the drama. Rather, different people who appear onstage represent different points of view. In purely dramatic terms their claims and counter-claims matter enough to keep the audience watching because they all relate to the matter in hand: the vulnerable position of the children in view. If we want to understand the political impact of a Greek tragedy on its original audience, we must think about how it was first staged.³⁸

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38 My thanks to Jaroslav Daneš, who read an early draft of this chapter and was very generous with his comments.

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Hippolytus

Melissa Mueller

Our *Hippolytus* (428 BC) is a revision of an earlier production which covered much the same mythological ground.¹ This was a tragedy whose unfavourable reception apparently drove Euripides to ‘correct’ its ‘unseemly’ elements. The surviving fragments suggest that the earlier *Phaedra* (from Euripides’ *Hippolytus Veiled*) succumbed much more willingly to desire; she supposedly propositioned her stepson directly, and he may have covered his head with a veil to avoid being polluted (Sophocles also wrote a play called *Phaedra* but it is impossible to pin down the chronological sequence of these three similarly-themed tragedies).² Euripides’ first *Phaedra* appears to fit the model of Potiphar’s wife, a married woman who falls in love with a man against whom she plots a bitter revenge after he rejects her. The challenge, then, for Euripides in composing his second *Hippolytus* was to create a *Phaedra* whom audiences could respect, and even admire, in spite of her adulterous proclivities. The extant play clearly distinguishes between the divine and human spheres, encouraging us to regard the story of *Phaedra*’s desire for *Hippolytus* as choreographed, on the one hand, by *Aphrodite*, yet emerging, on the other hand, holistically from her Cretan ancestry and her literary (and dramaturgic) biography. *Phaedra*’s attempt to silence *Hippolytus*—a move that extends the reach

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- 1 Roisman (1999) and Hutchinson (2004) 19–23, however, dispute this view, Roisman by suggesting (with little textual support) that the first *Phaedra* may have been planning a political coup while Hutchinson argues on the basis of the papyrus hypothesis that there are important elements in the lost play that clearly are not present in the extant version.
 - 2 The extant tragedy was known in antiquity as the *Hippolytus Stephanias* or *Stephanephoros* to distinguish it from the lost, and most likely prior, play which was known as the *Hippolytus Kalypomenos—Hippolytus Veiled*. The lost play survives only in fragments, about forty lines in total [on these, see Barrett (2001) 6–45, Halleran (1995) 24–36, as well as Zwierlein (1987), in connection with Seneca’s *Phaedra*]; its earlier date is confirmed by the second hypothesis written by Aristophanes of Byzantium, which relays that what was considered ‘unseemly and worthy of condemnation’ (*ἀπρεπές καὶ κατηγορίας ἄξιον*), presumably in the earlier production, has been ‘corrected’ in the later play. [See further McDermott (2000) and Michelini (1987) 287; Gibert (1997) and Hutchinson (2004) question the traditional ordering of the two plays; Cropp /Fick (2005) defend the traditional dating of the extant *Hippolytus* while also acknowledging that the rate of metrical resolution is ‘compatible with a date at any time in the first thirty years or so of Euripides’ career’ (45)].

of the tragic action into the realm of materialized writing—adds another fold to the fabric of this drama, ensuring that we never see Phaedra simply as Aphrodite's pawn.³

I centre my discussion here on *Hippolytus*' three main characters (the Nurse, Hippolytus, and Phaedra), their distinctive worldviews, and how their desires and agencies build up quasi-plots, each of which starts off in competition with the others before finally coalescing into Aphrodite's masterful revenge-drama.⁴ Hippolytus' worldview is intensely misogynistic, and he avoids any sort of intimacy with the other sex. When it comes to influencing the dramatic design of the whole—forging the play's plan—Hippolytus is in the weakest position of all because of the oath of silence he has sworn to the Nurse, promising not to reveal to Theseus Phaedra's incestuous desire for him. Hippolytus thus finds himself unable to speak up in his own defence later on when his father accuses him of raping Phaedra. The Nurse appears closely aligned with Aphrodite, especially in her intensive questioning of her mistress and her rhetorical defence of the naturalness of desire, even Phaedra's illicit desire for her stepson. But in the end, it is Phaedra herself, obsessively focused on *sôphrosynê* (chastity, self-control), who develops a plot that at first seems likely to impede Aphrodite's master plot but ultimately advances the goddess' vengeful aims.

Hippolytus alone of all the citizens of Troezen spurns Aphrodite, calling her the worst of divinities (12–13). Two early scenes are representative of the tension throughout this tragedy between sexual purity and *erôs*. First, in the prologue, Aphrodite describes how Hippolytus falls into 'a more than mortal relationship' (μείζω βροτείας προσπεσών όμιλίας, 19) with Artemis, staying always by the side of this virginal goddess (ξυνών, 17). With the verb *suneimi*, used typically of sexual relations, Aphrodite highlights the eroticism underpinning Hippolytus' interactions with Artemis. Moreover, the expression *meizô broteias*, 'more than mortal', (19) anticipates the blurring of ontologies that will later manifest when Hippolytus relegates women to the realm of mute beasts. Second, Hippolytus himself recalls the idyllic and 'untouched' meadow from which he has plucked the flowers that he weaves into a garland for Artemis (73–87). Chastity was not an absolute virtue for the Greeks. Girls were expected to remain virgins until marriage, but beyond a certain age, virginity for either sex was regarded as unnatural. On the surface, Hippolytus' language is concerned with purity: he speaks of *sôphrosynê*, control over the passions, and sexual self-mastery (80). Yet, the meadow that Hippolytus has conjured as a locus of purity

3 On Phaedra's letter, see Mueller (2016) 163–178.

4 I use the OCT edition of the *Hippolytus* edited by James Diggle. Translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

is itself an erotically charged space, evoking scenarios such as Hades' rape of the flower-picking Persephone. Like Phaedra, who is similarly drawn to a forbidden love object, Hippolytus pursues what is off-limits; he courts disaster in a dangerous, almost reckless fashion.

1 Aphrodite and (or as) the Nurse

A marvel of verbal economy, Aphrodite's prologue speech introduces the major themes of the drama in language that will reverberate elsewhere in the play. The very first word of the tragedy—*pollé* (many, much, strong)—captures Aphrodite's ubiquitous presence in human affairs ('I am much among mortals ...', πολλή μὲν ἐν βροτοῖσι, she proclaims) as well as in the cosmos more generally (2–5). Later, the Nurse reminds Phaedra that 'Kypris is not bearable if she comes on strong' (Κύπρις γὰρ οὐ φορητὸν ἦν πολλή ῥύη, 443). In trying to coax Phaedra to give in to her desire, the Nurse echoes Aphrodite's πολλή. The adjective itself is not commonly used of individuals, which makes its connection with Aphrodite particularly noteworthy, especially when we factor in that the same actor would have spoken both of these lines. With all the roles being parcelled out among three actors (in the fifth-century tragic theatre), the actor playing Aphrodite would have reappeared onstage in the guise of the Nurse. Not only, then, does the Nurse share with the goddess a belief in the omnipotence of *erôs*, but, uncannily, she even *sounds* like Aphrodite.

Aphrodite predicts that none of the household slaves will identify the cause of Phaedra's *noson* (40), her 'illness', or 'disease'. In connection with Phaedra, *nosos*, as W.S. Barrett (1964, 246) notes, sometimes refers to 'the illness induced by her love', that is, to the symptoms of physical weakness and depletion Phaedra incurs from refusing nourishment; at other times, however, it refers simply to her desire for Hippolytus 'considered, since it is illicit, as a mental affliction'. To this J.C. Kosak (2004, 51) adds that Phaedra uses the word more often 'to denote her love for Hippolytus (394, 405)' and only once in the generalized sense of suffering (730), while the Nurse 'always uses the word *nosos* to refer to Phaedra's sickness or to sickness in general'. Based on her physical symptoms alone (pallor, lack of appetite, silence, weakness, a body wracked with pains, and a heavy head), the Nurse assumes Phaedra must be suffering from one of the 'hateful diseases' that plague mortals: 'Oh, evils of mortals and hateful diseases ...' (ὦ κακὰ θνητῶν στυγεραὶ τε νόσοι, 176) she laments, as she leads her mistress out of the palace and into the view of the audience for the first time. The Troezenian women pick up her refrain in their song: 'It is unclear to us what this *nosos* is, but we would like to hear more about it from you' (269–

270). At this point, they have no idea what ails Phaedra. Only when she mentions her familial pathology do they perhaps begin to suspect that her ‘disease’ is in fact desire.

Aphrodite also reports in the prologue that Phaedra ‘groans aloud, having been struck by the goads of passion (κέντροις ἔρωτος)’ (39). A ‘goad’, *kentron* in Greek, would normally be applied to horses and oxen.⁵ But the Nurse’s voicing of Hippolytus’ name (310) acts as a verbal goad, breaking Phaedra’s silence: ὄμοι, she cries out, to which the Nurse replies, ‘Does this *touch* you?’ (θιγγάνει σέθεν τόδε;). The Nurse is focused on Phaedra’s tactile response, just as if she had been physically stung. Phaedra comes from a family where transgressive couplings are the norm, and her unusual biography lends to the *erôs*-as-goad metaphor a more poignant realism than it would normally have had. When Phaedra finally alludes to the familial nature of her distress—‘Oh, wretched mother, what an awful passion you conceived’ (337)—the Nurse articulates the unspeakable: ‘Do you mean her passion for the bull, my child? But why do you mention this?’ (338) Why indeed? It is odd, to say the least, for Phaedra to dwell on this dark family secret at such a moment. Her *erôs* is obviously not directed at a bull. Yet, in lusting after Hippolytus, Phaedra falls victim to the familial pattern. Desire has had a dehumanizing effect on her, causing her first to adopt a bestial muteness as she tries to suppress and conceal this new flare up of her mother’s curse. She starves herself in an attempt to sap it of strength,⁶ but then gives away the true cause of her illness in her flinching reaction to the Nurse’s unexpected verbal ‘goad’.

The Nurse and Chorus frame Phaedra’s suffering as a diagnosable and curable medical ailment, something a doctor should be called in to assess (296). But when Phaedra shares her plan to conquer Kypris by taking her own life, the Nurse downplays the seriousness of her *pathos*, reminding Phaedra that she is hardly the first to fall in love: ‘You are full of desire. What’s remarkable about that? You and a million other mortals’ (439). The key thing is not to resist Aphrodite.⁷ She punishes only those ‘whom she discovers are arrogant and proud’ (ὄν δ’ ἂν περισσὸν καὶ φρονοῦνθ’ εὕρη μέγα, 445). Here the Nurse echoes directly what Aphrodite had said in the prologue when she admitted to ‘trip-

5 At the end of the tragedy, when Hippolytus spurs his team of horses into action, he takes the *kentron* into his hands and urges them on: *κάν τῶδ’ ἐπήγε κέντρον εἰς χεῖρας λαβῶν / πῶλοις ἀμαρτῆ* (1194–1195).

6 On starvation as Phaedra’s chosen method of self-mastery, see Holmes (2010) 254–256.

7 But the mythical exempla chosen by the Nurse undermine her argument (451–458): Semele and Cephalus both meet terrible ends, Semele dying in a conflagration caused by Zeus’ epiphany, while Cephalus has the life force drained from him until he is reduced to chirping insecthood, as Eos successfully secured immortality but not agelessness for her consort.

ping up those who think too big' (6). Better not to resist the overwhelming force of *erôs*, the Nurse advises Phaedra, for 'wanting to be stronger than the gods is nothing other than hubris (474–476)'.

No sooner has she described Phaedra's resistance as a form of hubris than the Nurse promises to find a drug that will cure her of her disease (*φάρμακον νόσου*, 479). The Nurse and Phaedra each use the language of disease and healing, but they speak at cross-purposes. Whereas the Nurse sees her role as facilitating an adulterous affair—the only viable way, in her view, for her mistress to overcome and survive her sickness (*nosos*)—Phaedra's primary concern is with her good reputation. Since illicit desire is a disease that will inevitably destroy her reputation (*τὴν νόσον τε δυσκλεῖα*, 405), the only acceptable 'cure' is one that will restore her good name, her *eukleia*. The Nurse's goal is to keep Phaedra alive, while Phaedra's is to ensure an unblemished reputation for herself and her children, even if it means taking her own life.

2 Cretan Passions (Phaedra's Story)

Phaedra's Cretan ancestry is not as prominent a theme in our *Hippolytus* as it would become in Seneca's *Phaedra*,⁸ or, much later, in Racine's *Phèdre*. But already in the Euripidean *Hippolytus*, Crete appears at pivotal moments in the action; it is clear that in crafting Phaedra's tragic character, Euripides availed himself of her Cretan backstory.⁹ The human-animal erotics in Phaedra's family's past speak to the over-determined quality of her own infatuation with Hippolytus; her natal family ties, as they are evoked by Phaedra herself, lend a peculiarly Cretan cast to her lovesickness (her *nosos*). This has been dubbed the 'pull backward' in so far as Phaedra re-enacts her mother, Pasiphae's, fatal attraction to the Cretan bull.¹⁰ In Phaedra's case, the taboo being broken is incest (combined with adultery), rather than sex between different species. Yet, Hippolytus, who is Theseus' son by an unnamed Amazon woman, calls to mind in his own person the nexus of hybrid Cretan couplings with which he becomes entangled.

In Troezen, Hippolytus is preoccupied with his 'bastard' status, the fact that he is an illegitimate son (a *nothos*). Not unlike Phaedra's half-brother, the half-human half-bull Minotaur, Hippolytus is the product of a sexual union unsanctioned by marriage; he is the child who will never lay claim to his father's title

8 See, for example, Paschalis (1994) 107–110.

9 See further Armstrong (2006) 7–12.

10 Reckford (1974).

(nor to his kingdom), and who will always carry the stigma of illegitimacy. His obsession with purity clearly emerges from this natal family history. But in his death, Hippolytus comes closer than ever to re-enacting the bastardized couplings within Phaedra's family. Hippolytus is killed when he falls off his chariot and gets tangled up in the reins of his beloved horses. These normally gentle beasts are terrified by a bull that rises out of the sea, manifesting Aphrodite's power and evoking the bull of Pasiphae, Phaedra's mother.¹¹ The bull also, as Charles Segal emphasizes, recalls 'the Minoan passion, pride, and savagery in Phaedra's heredity which Aphrodite could work upon'. Hippolytus is seemingly transformed in death into the second 'minotaur' who dies at Theseus' hands.

At the end of the play, Artemis appears *ex machina* to exonerate Phaedra and she tells Theseus that she has come to demonstrate to him the 'just disposition' of his son, as well as his wife's 'sting (οἷστρον), or her nobility of character' (1298–1301). What Artemis calls Phaedra's *oistros* (1300) is normally translated simply as 'lust'. The metaphoricity, however, cuts to the core of Phaedra's plight. An *oistros* is a biting or stinging insect, such as a gadfly. Applied to humans, the *oistros* usually refers to the 'sting' of madness, passion, or lust. In Euripides' *Bacchae*, for example, the Theban women, goaded by Dionysus (οἰστροηθείς Διονύσω, 119), flee their looms and head to the mountains, while in *Orestes*, the title character warns Pylades not to touch him lest he contract his disease (i.e., madness): Orestes fears that the Furies will subdue him *with their sting* (μὴ θεαί μ' οἷστρον κατὰσχῶσ', 791). In Phaedra's case, *oistros* is barely a metaphor. What she suffers is a version of the family curse, that fateful desire which transforms Cretan women into bovine creatures of various kinds. A few lines later, Artemis clarifies her statement. Phaedra, she explains to Theseus, developed a passion for his son after 'having been bitten by the goads (δηχθεῖσα κέντροις)' of Aphrodite (1301–1303). We have come full circle. The 'goads' which Aphrodite in the prologue described Phaedra as already groaning under have now claimed her life (cf. 39). What has emerged more clearly in the meantime are the Cretan roots of her malady.

Desire deprives Phaedra of her humanity, as it did Europa (her grandmother) and Pasiphae (her mother) before her. *Erôs* hurtles the women of this unfortunate clan into the arms of their forbidden lovers unless, at even greater cost, they are capable of resisting. Zeus metamorphosed into a bull to seduce Europa, whom he carried on his back to Crete. There she eventually gave birth to Minos, Phaedra's father. Europa herself is descended from Io, whom Zeus

11 Segal (1965) 145.

had transformed into a cow so he could enjoy her without Hera's interference; Io was nevertheless forced to wander the earth endlessly, pursued by a gadfly, which was sent, of course, by Hera. In the next generation, Minos' wife Pasiphae, gripped by unshakeable lust for the Cretan bull, enlisted the help of the Athenian craftsman Daedalus, who fashioned for her a cow membrane. Donning it, she consummates her passion and carries to term the Minotaur. Meanwhile, Ariadne, Phaedra's sister, is seduced and, in some versions of the tale, abandoned by Theseus; she is later rescued by Dionysus, the god who reveals himself to his initiates in the form of a bull. In *Hippolytus*, Phaedra grapples with her own iteration of this hereditary disease.

The ancestral curse greatly facilitates Aphrodite's manipulation of Phaedra, to be sure. But there is another sense in which Phaedra is pulled back into the past, a victim of her dramatic precursor(s). The Phaedra of *Hippolytus Veiled* casts her shadow over nearly every word spoken by our extant heroine. Many who were in the audience at the premiere production of *Hippolytus* in 428 BC would already have seen the earlier tragedy. Authorial motivations are notoriously difficult to fathom, but spectators would nevertheless have sought out clues in the current production. How to interpret the second Phaedra in light of the first? Why revisit this fatal attraction? Surely the emphasis on *sôphrosynê* must be part of the answer. The second Phaedra's plotting to preserve her chastity perhaps mirrors Euripides' own re-plotting of *Hippolytus* in an effort to salvage his damaged reputation. But before we (re)turn to the metatheatrical aspects of the tragedy, let us hear Hippolytus' side of the story.

3 Misogynistic Fantasies (Hippolytus' Story)

The self-consciousness of the extant play reaches a climax in the trial-like *agôn* between Theseus and Hippolytus (902–1101). For Hippolytus, too, has a dramatic past to reckon with. Have his misogynistic rantings been fuelled by lingering bitterness? Is his obsession with purity in part a reaction to the licentiousness of the first Phaedra, and her polluting desire (to which his character was subjected in Euripides' first *Hippolytus*)?¹² Our Hippolytus shuns *all* erotic discourse. The mere mention of *erôs* makes him to want to 'wash out his ears'.¹³ And yet, as we have seen, it is for a misdirected passion that Aphrodite

12 See in particular McDermott (2000) on the textual traces of the lost play which are skillfully interwoven into and evoked by our *Hippolytus*.

13 Hippolytus refers to the need to 'wash out his ears' from the Nurse's speech at 653–655.

indicts him: his overfamiliarity with one who is erotically off-limits (both to other gods and to mortals) and his concomitant neglect of the proper object of *erôs*, Aphrodite herself.

At the beginning of an extended misogynistic diatribe (616–668), Hippolytus wishes that men could bypass women completely for purposes of procreation. Hippolytus compares females to a counterfeit currency (κίβδηλον ... κακόν, 616), highlighting the circuitous and duplicitous forms of exchange necessitated by the cultural institution of marriage. If only a man could deposit money in a temple and receive in return a child of corresponding value to his economic outlay, he would avoid entirely the κακόν μέγα ('great evil') of womankind (627). But Hippolytus also likens women in the flesh to a 'ruinous life form'—ἀτηρόν ... φυτόν (630). *Phuton*, the nominalized form of the Greek verb φύω, which is at the root of *phusis* (nature), means simply 'living thing'. It is the most comprehensive, least specialized category of animate existence: all living things, whether, human, plant, or animal, qualify as *phuta* (meaning they are endowed with life). Yet, in the sense that Hippolytus uses it here,¹⁴ the term is intensely derogatory, implying that women as a species are a subhuman form of life. Hippolytus goes on to nuance this, positing two types of women: the statuesque but brainless specimen, on the one hand, and the clever woman, on the other hand. It is the latter type that earns Hippolytus' greatest scorn: σοφήν δὲ μισῶ ('The clever woman is the one I hate', 640). For the clever woman is the one through whom Aphrodite is best able to work her mischief. While the beautiful but not very smart woman—the wife whom one rejoices in adorning like a statue (631)—may drain her husband's resources, the clever wife is far more insidious. 'It is in clever women that Kyprius more often brings to birth nefarious work' (τὸ γὰρ κακοῦργον μᾶλλον ἐντίκτει Κύπρις / ἐν ταῖς σοφαῖσιν, 642–643).¹⁵ Hippolytus could here be alluding to Phaedra. He keeps his comments abstract, however, as if drawing up a blueprint for a future form of humanity, one where the threat posed by female sexuality will be more effectively neutralized.

In the misogynist's utopia envisioned by Hippolytus, women are committed to solitary confinement, denied human attendants, and prevented from participating in any sort of discourse. Instead, they share the company of 'voiceless biting beasts' (ἄφθογγα δ' αὐταῖς συγκατοικίζειν δάκη / θηρῶν, 646–647). Phaedra's self-enforced silence makes her a forerunner of this dystopian class of

14 And also in the way that Medea, in the play named after her, deploys the term. Compare what she says to the Chorus of Corinthian women, 'we women are the most pathetic life form' (γυναῖκές ἐσμεν ἀθλιώτατον φυτόν, 231).

15 Here I slightly adapt Barrett's translation.

women. In the first part of the action, she embodies the muteness Hippolytus considers appropriate for the entire female race. As soon as she speaks, she recognizes her mistake but does even further damage to her cause by recalling her family's history of dehumanizing passions. In this tragedy, merely voicing illicit desire is akin to experiencing and acting on it.¹⁶

Hippolytus expresses a particular animosity toward attendants (like the Nurse) who act as vocal intermediaries between their mistresses and the outside world (645–650); these are the slaves who should be replaced by deaf and dumb creatures. Phaedra's own confession of her illness to the Nurse in fact underlines the dangers posed by domestics. Had she not spoken, the Nurse would never have had the chance to betray her mistress' trust. Where Hippolytus distorts reality is in supposing that it was Phaedra's plan all along to have the Nurse approach him (a plot twist reminiscent of Euripides' first *Hippolytus*). Still, there is no denying that by giving voice to what should not have been spoken Phaedra sets in motion Aphrodite's plot. She assumes—wrongly, as it turns out—that Hippolytus will break the oath of silence he swore to the Nurse. Not knowing in advance how he will act, and, caught in between the bestial dumbness that Hippolytus wants to establish as the norm for the entire female race and her own self-indicting speech, Phaedra turns to a different sort of discourse, which she calls 'new words' (*kainoi logoi*).

4 Converging Plotlines, Difficult Passageways

Had she lived in classical Athens, Phaedra would have had no recourse to legal measures for clearing her name.¹⁷ She would not have been allowed to defend herself in a court of law, nor would her own silence have silenced her accusers. Although she is hardly constrained by the legal culture of Euripidean Athens, Phaedra's attempts to find a mode of discourse more powerful than either speech or silence would surely have resonated with Euripides' contemporaries. It is this sort of magical thinking that informs her plea for *kainoi logoi*. Phaedra has just overheard Hippolytus condemning her and the whole female race when she says, 'I need *kainoi logoi*' (ἀλλὰ δεῖ με δὴ καινῶν λόγων, 688). She is grasping for something that will be powerful enough to counteract Hip-

16 On the permutations of speech and silence in the tragedy, see Knox (1952); Turato (1976); Longo (1989); and Goff (1990).

17 On the preoccupation of fifth-century tragedy with policing women's speech and protecting the city from female gossip, see McClure (1999).

polytus' blame speech. And her anxiety here stems not just from Hippolytus' current defamation. She is even more concerned about her posthumous reputation (687–688). She has been a mostly passive presence thus far, resisting the demands placed on her by others, warding off the Nurse's entreaties and dealing as best she can with the symptoms of her disease. But now, for the first time, she seizes authorial control, and the balance shifts noticeably from the Nurse (as the goddess' human proxy) to Phaedra. Two remarkable moments signal the convergence of the plotlines of Phaedra and Aphrodite: first (as we saw earlier), when the Nurse utters Hippolytus' name in passing (310), causing Phaedra to cry οἴμοι, a tragic interjection of pain and despair, and second, when the heroine settles on death and writing as the surest means of repairing her already damaged reputation.

Phaedra has been viewed as both a villain and a victim because of her manipulative language, particularly her suicide message.¹⁸ But by framing the discussion of Phaedra's agency in terms of her relationship to this one act of writing, critics have misunderstood its purpose and implementation. Phaedra is much more focused on de-activating and neutralizing the 'most shameful words' she anticipates Hippolytus will speak against her than on punishing him for unrequited love (692). She has found 'a solution' (εὕρημα δὴ τι, 716) which she assumes will allow her a dignified exit: 'I will not even bring disgrace to my Cretan household', she proclaims (719). Her goal is to remain irreproachable in the eyes of both her families (her relatives by birth and marriage). After her final speech (724–731), she exits into the *skênê* (stage-building) where she will hang herself from her bedroom rafters, having attached to her wrist a written message indicting Hippolytus. Though this marks Phaedra's last act in life, her death will continue to shape the action.

Phaedra's defensive strategy subjects her potential accuser to precisely the kind of slander she most fears from him. When Theseus hears of his wife's death from the Chorus, he demands that the doors of the palace be opened at once so that he can witness the 'bitter spectacle' (πικρὸν θέαν, 809). Theseus positions himself in this way as a viewer of his wife's corpse. But as in other

18 Rabinowitz (1987) 135, for example, takes Phaedra's case as exemplary of the 'disturbing possibilities of female writing' more generally. Her revenge, according to Rabinowitz, is more pitiful than terrifying (1987, 134): 'We may understand her revenge, but we are not intended to admire it. As woman and character, Phaedra is destroyed by speech and writing; she loses her honour and her moral superiority to Hippolytus'. McClure suggests that in contrast to the Aeschylean Clytemnestra's complete mastery over language, Phaedra displays a 'loss of self-control brought about by her sickness. She vacillates involuntarily, not from masculine to feminine poles, as does Clytemnestra, but from virtuous wife to incipient betrayer of the oikos' (1999, 117).

Euripidean contexts (Pentheus' transformation from hunter to hunted in the *Bacchae* being a notable example), the spectator all too soon becomes the spectacle. As Theseus notices the writing-tablet—the *deltos* (856)—hanging from Phaedra's wrist, he assumes that his dead wife has left him 'instructions' (ἐπιστολάς, 858) for the care of their children (856–865). He reassures her that no other woman will enter his house or his bed. But as he moves closer to examine and open the folded tablet, he notices the imprints (τύποι, 862) of Phaedra's signet ring. Already the tenor of the scene changes: Theseus reports that the impressions of the bronze-crafted seal 'fawn' on him (προσσαίνουσί με, 863), as if in this way they are selecting him as a privileged reader. The text of the tablet is never, in fact, read aloud. The audience is left to judge its contents by its effect on its solitary reader (i.e., Theseus).

The writing tablet brings a new dimension to the traditional storyline. As filtered through Theseus' perceptions and interactions with it, the object appears unusually lifelike. And as Theseus begins silently to read, he says that the tablet 'shouts' out and sings—the written words becoming a *melos*, 'a song' voiced in writing (874–880). From where does the tablet derive its strange power? Are we to view it as a magical talisman, or as an object animated by Phaedra's vengeful ghost? This magical interpretation could find confirmation in Theseus' choice of words, particularly the term ἄλαστα—as in βοῶ βοῶ δέλτος ἄλαστα ('it shouts out, shouts out cursed things', 877)—which may be related to ἀλάστωρ, a vengeful spirit. It is important to keep in mind, however, Phaedra's self-stated goals for her writing. The tendency has been to conflate Phaedra's motivations with those of Aphrodite, which has resulted in the caricaturing of Phaedra as a spurned and spiteful lover. Phaedra's concerns are, however, not with punishment and revenge *per se*, but rather with the remediation of her own good name.¹⁹

Earlier, Phaedra had articulated the hope that her death, while bringing harm, would teach Hippolytus not to gloat over her misfortunes (ἴν' εἰδῆ μὴ 'πὶ τοῖς ἐμοῖς κακοῖς / ὑψηλὸς εἶναι, 729–730), and that by sharing in her sickness he would be taught *sôphrosynê* (σωφρονεῖν μαθήσεται, 731). Given the frequent appearances of the *erôs*-as-disease metaphor in the first half of the play,²⁰ it certainly seems as if Phaedra is plotting to make Hippolytus fall in love with

19 This argument is made at greater length at Mueller (2011), from which the following paragraphs have been adapted.

20 There are twenty-four instances of νόσος, νοσεῖν, and νοσερός in *Hipp.*, most of which occur in the first 700 lines. On the distinctive uses of νόσος by different speakers in the play, see Kosak (2004) 51, and on the symptoms of Phaedra's desire as (un)articulated in speech, Goff (1990) 30–39.

her.²¹ The trial-like atmosphere of the second half of the drama, where Hippolytus attempts to defend himself as if he were being prosecuted in a court of law, adds a further twist. If he is the defendant, Theseus and Phaedra are both plaintiffs, and the supposition that even Phaedra sees herself as preparing for an upcoming trial gains credibility from Artemis' observation that it was 'for fear of falling into an *elenchus*' (εἰς ἔλεγχον μὴ πέσῃ φοβουμένη, 1310) that Phaedra wrote her misleading text.

Phaedra's text is best understood as some form of a pre-emptive judicial strike.²² For, like the commissioners of judicial curses, Phaedra seeks desperate measures to avoid losing what is most precious to her—her reputation. The primary aim of judicial curses is to foreclose the possibility of a victory for the plaintiff rather than to avenge that victory after the fact. In this regard the judicial curse offers an attractive model for Phaedra's tablet, which likewise seeks to shape the future rather than to avenge the past. Commissioners of judicial curses, moreover, frequently targeted the tongues of their antagonists, the tongue being the body part responsible for speech and therefore the plaintiff's most valuable asset during the trial. Phaedra fears the damage Hippolytus' tongue may do her—the tongue that swore, leaving the mind unsworn (612)—and in preparing a defence strategy she has naturally been concerned to minimize his ability to speak.

It should not be forgotten, of course, that Phaedra herself is a victim of Aphrodite. From a more global perspective, it is Aphrodite who has designed and directed everything that unfolds before our eyes.²³ As we know from the play's prologue, Phaedra has been forced into playing a part in the goddess' revenge plot. The mortal woman's weakened body and desperate fear of speaking are in themselves symptoms, both of Aphrodite's assault on her and of Phaedra's resistance. But even while being victimized by the goddess, Phaedra develops a strategy of her own for preserving *eukleia* (a good reputation) for both herself and her children. Having decided definitively in favour of suicide, Phaedra concedes that she has been beaten by 'bitter *erós*'. She recognizes that her death 'on this day' will delight Aphrodite. But Phaedra draws consolation from the thought that in dying, as she says, 'I will become a *κακόν* to another' (ἀτὰρ κακόν γε χἄτέρῳ γενήσομαι / θανούσ', 728–729). Phaedra could

21 Relevant here is Faraone's (1999) 55 observation that the essential difference between curses and erotic spells is that 'the former torture their victims with fever or pain until they die, while the latter do so *only until they yield*' (my emphasis).

22 Faraone (1991) 4, on judicial curses as 'pre-emptive strikes' rather than 'after-the-fact measures of vengeful spite'.

23 On Aphrodite assuming a directorial role in the play, see Zeitlin (1996) 225–232.

be understood here as proclaiming her intention to punish Hippolytus. But it is important to read her words in context, paying particular attention to the purpose clause in which she spells out her motivation (725–731):

725 ἐγὼ δὲ Κύπριν, ἥπερ ἐξόλλυσί με,
 ψυχῆς ἀπαλλαχθεῖσα τῆδ' ἐν ἡμέρᾳ
 τέρψω· πικροῦ δ' ἔρωτος ἡσσηθήσομαι.
 ἀτὰρ κακὸν γε χᾶτέρω γενήσομαι
 θανούσ', ἴν' εἰδῆ μὴ 'πί τοῖς ἐμοῖς κακοῖς
 730 ὑψηλὸς εἶναι· τῆς νόσου δὲ τῆσδέ μοι
 κοινῇ μετασχὼν σωφρονεῖν μαθήσεται.

I know that in giving up my life on this very day I will delight the one who destroys me: Aphrodite. And I will have been beaten by bitter *eros*. But by dying I in turn will become a curse to another, so that he may learn not to gloat over my misfortunes and, by sharing in this disease of mine, he will learn to practice *sophrosune*.

Notice that Phaedra acknowledges Aphrodite as her destroyer; she does not blame Hippolytus. Phaedra ascribes the pleasure of revenge to Aphrodite, but she crafts her own ‘curse’ in very different language; she speaks of learning and self-restraint (*sôphrosynê*), eschewing the pleasure-infused rhetoric of revenge. Phaedra’s design is not to avenge a prior humiliation but to influence Hippolytus’ future behaviour, and in this respect, she projects a purpose for her death that mirrors the magical effect of a binding spell. Death furnishes the means by which Phaedra will transform herself into a *κακόν*, enabling her to control the speech-acts of others from beyond the grave.

The temporal frame announced at the beginning of our *Hippolytus*, namely that the revenge will take place *on this day*, creates a sense of urgency. For the time being, we breathe the same air and see the same light as Phaedra and Hippolytus, but this will soon change. Phaedra’s refusal to speak when she is first questioned by the Nurse and Chorus creates a temporary block, stalling Aphrodite’s plan and preventing the tragedy itself from getting off the ground. Eventually, however, Phaedra’s commitment to *sôphrosynê* and her overwhelming desire to protect her good name get exploited by the goddess. Aphrodite sees an opportunity to vanquish Hippolytus. Though Phaedra herself is not motivated by vengeful feelings, her interest in silencing Hippolytus renders him defenceless against Theseus’ indictment. Because Aphrodite has told us how it all will end, the ensuing dramatic action takes on a predestined quality. We know that Hippolytus will be punished, that Theseus will use one of the three

prayers promised him by his father Poseidon to kill his son (44–45). And we know too that Phaedra will die. The suspense lies not in figuring out what will happen but rather in trying to piece together how Aphrodite's unsuspecting victims will be co-opted into acting against their own interests.

Crete was a place of wonder and mystery for the nineteenth-century travellers, such as Arthur Evans, who unearthed its great palaces, naming the people who once dwelt there 'Minoans' after the mythical king Minos. It was a civilization rebuilt by Evans to reflect the ambitions, desires, and anxieties of those who 'discovered' it.²⁴ Yet, already in antiquity, Crete was a tangle of contradictions, being at once the 'cradle of law' as well as an island where 'wildness' and 'savagery' refused 'to bow to the laws of man and even the laws of nature.'²⁵ As an island, Crete was accessible only by sea. The Chorus, in fact, sing of Phaedra's journey from her native island to her new Attic homeland. Yet it was also a surreal place of sorts, a repository for strange and fascinating tales.

The more distance Phaedra places between herself and Crete, the more intensely she experiences the 'pull backward' into her family's past. Her sense of family history repeating itself, a curse that flows through her blood, follows her across the sea. The inescapability of this family inheritance heightens the viewer's sense of being caught, along with Phaedra, in this dangerous undertow. Phaedra's horrifying realization, when it finally comes, that she is re-enacting the erotic maladies of her mother and sister, also underlies and reinforces the audience's experience of *déjà vu*, given that they too are witnessing something they had experienced earlier—in (at least) two different plays.

The second Phaedra's reaction to her lusty illness is likely very different from that of the first. If we can trust reconstructions of the earlier production, Phaedra there shamelessly pursued Hippolytus, petitioning him in person, and only killed herself once her adulterous behaviour had been divulged to Theseus. The second time around, Phaedra is passively caught up in a web of familial and dramatic history which she cannot fully overwrite. Women in Minos' clan are punished for male transgressions.²⁶ While Phaedra in the extant *Hippolytus*

24 See Gere (2009) in particular on the excavation and reconstruction of Knossos as a modernist project.

25 Armstrong (2006) 70. Padel (1996) 87 puts it well when she writes that 'Crete stands also for the lowly, reflective *impasse*: that all myth, new and old, is interpretation of ourselves'.

26 Pasiphae is adamant on this point; the following words are addressed to Minos (*Cretans* fr. 472e 34–35 Kannicht): σύ τοί μ' ἀπόλλυς, σὴ γὰρ ἡ 'ξ[αμ]αρτία, / ἐκ σοῦ νοσοῦμεν ('You are the one destroying me: the fault is yours, and it's your doing that I'm sickened with passion').

becomes the collateral damage in Aphrodite's quest for vengeance against Hippolytus, Pasiphae in the *Cretans* has been cursed with her attraction to a bull because Minos did not fulfil his promise to sacrifice the animal to Poseidon. Unlike Hippolytus, Minos is an oath-breaker.²⁷

Is Pasiphae deceiving herself in ascribing her crime to Minos? As she says, sophisticatedly perhaps, What is there to be attracted to in a bull?²⁸ He has neither beautiful blond hair nor nice clothes. Only a god, she reasons, could have made her fall in love with such a creature. Both Pasiphae and Phaedra conceive passions they know are morally wrong. Yet, they are powerless against the divine, familial, and even dramaturgical forces which conspire against them.

The rhetoric of 'difficult passage' occurs repeatedly in *Hippolytus*, where it captures both the physical and psychological strains of *erôs* and links these with Phaedra's own voyage across the Aegean. Phaedra, for example, describes her *pathos* as having a 'difficult-to-navigate crossing' (τὸ γὰρ παρ' ἡμῖν πάθος / πέραν δυσσεκπέρατον ἔρχεται βίου, 677–678). Moreover, the Chorus' second stasimon (732–775) begins as an escape ode; here they express a desire to take to the air, like birds, flying over the Ocean. By the third stanza they reprise the theme of Phaedra's controversial inheritance. She comes from a heroic brood, but it is a family cursed with bestial passions on both sides, male and female lines being similarly afflicted by uncontrollable impulses. At 752 they apostrophize the ship that bore her across the Aegean—ὦ λευκόπτερε Κρησία πορθμῖς—from her 'most blessed home', a journey they sum up with the striking expression, κακονυμοτάταν ὄνασιν, 'most badly fated bridal profit' (756).

The Chorus regards Phaedra as having been cursed by Aphrodite 'in requital for unholy passions' (ἀνθ' ὧν οὐχ ὀσίων ἐρώ-/των, 764–765) from the moment she set foot on Attic soil. Are these the passions she has brought with her from Crete? Or do their words allude to the disease that will grip Phaedra when she first sets eyes on Hippolytus? Presenting us with two competing paradigms of *erôs*, Euripides suggests that Phaedra's *pathos* is both the manifestation of a latent feature of her ancestral biography—what today we would call her genetic profile—as well as a consequence of Aphrodite's machinations. The-

27 This plot twist is mentioned by, for example, Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.1, 3–4 (*TGrF* 5.1.41) and also by Pasiphae in her monologue at *Cretans* fr. 472e 23–33 Kannicht. See further (Rivier) 1958; Dolfi (1984); and Sansone (2013).

28 E.g., Pasiphae to Minos (*Cretans* fr. 472e 11–12 Kannicht): ἔχει γὰρ οὐδὲν εἰκόσ· ἐς τί γὰρ βοός / βλέψασ' ἐδήχθη θυμὸν αἰσχίστη νόσω; ('My passion had zero probability, for what could I have seen in a bull that would have made me fall most shamefully in love?'). Notice here the similar language of disease (νόσω) and 'biting' (ἐδήχθη) to that which characterizes the discourse about Phaedra's illicit passion in *Hippolytus*.

seus suspects that someone's past misdeeds are to blame for what has happened to Phaedra (ἀμπλακίαισι τῶν / πάρορθέν τινος, 832–833), but he is unable to say whose.

Hippolytus is bound by oath not to disclose what the Nurse has confessed to him. It is his verbal self-restraint (*sôphrosynê*) that in the end kills him, just as Phaedra's *sôphrosynê* destroys her.²⁹ Hippolytus begins the long speech of his *agôn* (at line 983) with a trope well suited to the defendant in a trial; he plays up his lack of rhetorical skill, particularly his ineptitude at speaking before a crowd.³⁰ As many have noticed, Hippolytus' language comes from the courtroom and creates a forensic context for this 'contest of words' (*agôn logôn*) between father and son.³¹ But the familiar forensic language comes to an abrupt end when Hippolytus makes the unusual declaration, at 990–991, that the arrival of misfortune drives him to *let loose his tongue* (γλώσσάν μ' ἀφείναι). This recalls Hippolytus' earlier equivocation about his tongue's being sworn (ἡ γλώσσ' ὀμώμοχ', 612), and at the same time echoes what Phaedra had said, when she was distancing herself from the impious actions of adulterous wives. How could such women, she wondered, not fear that their bedroom walls might 'let loose a voice' (μή ποτε φθογγὴν ἀφῆ, 418)?³² Phaedra uses φθογγή rather than γλώσσα (a term reserved for articulate human speech), but she makes a similar point: the voice, once released, exposes shameful behaviour.³³

Hippolytus concludes with the piously intoned opinion that 'it is not allowed for me to say more' (ἐμοὶ γὰρ οὐ θέμις πέρα λέγειν, 1033); with the language of ritual propriety he justifies his refusal to speculate on why Phaedra has killed herself. Theseus has every right to be puzzled by Hippolytus' tongue-twisted and opaque speech, for he is ignorant of the earlier oath of silence his son swore in the Nurse's presence, an oath whose binding power may now be reasserting itself in Hippolytus' reluctance to say more. In so far as Hippolytus articulates a reason for his silence, that reason appears to be the ritually binding authority

29 Holmes (2010) 264, noting that the 'most decisive acts of aggression against the self' arise from *sôphrosynê* rather than *erôs*, concludes that 'the tragedy ... seems to cast the desire to resist Aphrodite as a force no less powerful and destructive than Aphrodite herself'.

30 See further Lloyd (1992) 48.

31 On the forensic language and context of the *agôn*, see McClure (1999) 147–152 and Mirhady (2004).

32 See Loraux (1978) 53, and on other forms of nonverbal speech in the play, Turato (1976) 179. It is worth noting that Hippolytus wishes that the royal house could make an utterance (φθέγμα) in support of his innocence (1074–1075) and that the voice of the bull that rises from the sea is also called φθόγγος (*Hipp.* 1205) and is later referenced as φθέγμα (1215).

33 For the tongue in connection with the rhetoric of abuse, see Worman (2008) 236, 265–266, and 323.

of the oath. However, neither Hippolytus nor Theseus is fully aware of all the facets of Phaedra's plotting. The audience is in a position to weigh both factors and to recognize in Hippolytus' silence the combined effects of the oath and the tablet. They may also recognize another powerful force at play: the web of familial entanglements that invisibly binds Phaedra to her Cretan past.

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Andromache

Elizabeth Scharffenberger

Andromache is one of the three extant tragedies by Euripides that dramatize the experiences of the women of Troy after the city's destruction by the Greeks. In contrast to the two other dramas, *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, which are set near Troy in the immediate aftermath of its fall, the action of *Andromache* takes place years later and is set in Phthia, the homeland of Achilles and his Myrmidon warriors in Thessaly.¹ The key events in the tragedy's background, as outlined in Andromache's opening speech (1–55), are:

1. Andromache, the widow of the Trojan champion Hector and daughter-in-law of Troy's king Priam, witnessed the devastation of the city, the death of her husband at the hands of Achilles, and the murder of her young son Astyanax by the victorious Greeks. She was claimed as a war prize by Achilles' son Neoptolemus, who joined the Greek forces after his father's death and took part in the city's sacking, and was subsequently brought in captivity to Phthia, where she bore another son to Neoptolemus.
2. Neoptolemus also took Hermione, the daughter of Menelaus and Helen, as his legitimate wife.² According to the account in *Andromache* 968–970, Menelaus had previously betrothed Hermione to his nephew Orestes, the son of his brother Agamemnon; eager to secure Neoptolemus' help in capturing Troy, he arranged Hermione's marriage to Achilles' son right before the city's fall.
3. Neoptolemus faulted Apollo for the death of Achilles.³ Upon realizing his error in censuring the god, Neoptolemus has travelled to Delphi in order to make expiatory offerings and win back Apollo's favour.

1 See Lloyd (2005) 10–11 and Mariani (2018). More precisely, the setting is Thetideion (20), which derived its name from Achilles' mother Thetis; as Lloyd notes, Thetideion was a 'real place ... but its exact location and nature remain unknown'.

2 Cf. *Odyssey* 4.3–7. Lloyd (2005) 1–2 and Mariani (2017) 92–94 review the different accounts in other sources of the circumstances leading to Neoptolemus' marriage to Hermione.

3 It appears taken for granted, at least by Neoptolemus, that Apollo guided the fatal arrow shot by the Trojan prince Paris, Helen's lover and one of Hector's many brothers.

Euripides' tragedy initially focuses on the plight of Andromache. The bitterly jealous Hermione has accused Andromache of making Neoptolemus hate her, and she has blamed her childlessness on Andromache's use of magic (32–35; cf. 155–160). Now that Neoptolemus is away at Delphi, she seeks to kill her husband's concubine and son with Menelaus' help (39–42; cf. 162–163). Andromache has sent the child into hiding and tries to protect herself by taking refuge at the shrine of Achilles' divine mother Thetis, which stands in front of the royal family's home (42–48).⁴ After a contentious confrontation in front of the Chorus of local Phthian women, Hermione fails to force Andromache to abandon her sanctuary (147–272). But Menelaus, who has discovered the child's whereabouts, dupes her into leaving it with the false promise that the boy's life will be spared if she gives up her own (309–463). Menelaus is in the process of leading Andromache and her son, who has been condemned to die by Hermione, to their deaths when Peleus, Neoptolemus' grandfather, arrives and saves them from execution. Menelaus verbally spars with the old man and strives to legitimate his intervention in Neoptolemus' household (501–726). Bested by Peleus, he departs for Sparta but threatens to return; Peleus then escorts Andromache and his great-grandson to safety (727–765).

After a choral song celebrating Peleus' youthful exploits, the focus shifts to Hermione's panicked reaction to her father's departure and the failure of their plot. Hermione is convinced that, upon his return, Neoptolemus will thrust her from his home or, worse yet, kill her (804–865). The arrival of her cousin Orestes raises her hope that she can escape from Phthia and certain retribution at the hands of her husband (922–928). Orestes happily reclaims Hermione as his own bride, having long nursed a grudge against Neoptolemus for denying him the chance to marry her (964–986), and he ominously suggests that his patron Apollo will not look favourably on Neoptolemus' efforts to atone for his blasphemy (993–1008). The final, conjoined points of focus are the news of Neoptolemus' death and the grief of Peleus, who returns upon hearing of Hermione's elopement and learns that the Delphians, at the instigation of Orestes, have murdered his grandson in Apollo's sanctuary at Delphi (1047–1225). When Neoptolemus' corpse is brought before him, Peleus mourns over it, but his sorrow is allayed by the *ex machina* appearance of Thetis. The goddess instructs Peleus to bury Neoptolemus at Delphi (1239–1241, 1263–1268); she assures the old man that, upon his death, he will be divinized and reunited with Achilles and herself (1253–1262), and offers him the additional comfort that his family

4 Rehm (1988) argues that such sanctuaries in Athenian tragedies were located in the middle of the orchestra. See also Mirto (2012) 46 n. 2 and Mariani (2018) 151.

line, as well as that of Troy's royal house, will survive through the descendants of Andromache and Neoptolemus' son in Molossia on the Illyrian coast, where Andromache is to be resettled in a new marriage to Helenus (1243–1252).⁵

Several elements of Euripides' plot and its backstory are attested in epic, lyric, and dramatic poetry of the archaic and classical periods. Neoptolemus' exploits in the final days of the Trojan War, briefly described in *Odyssey* 11.506–537, were treated extensively in epic poems now lost to us, and, according to one tradition, Neoptolemus, rather than Odysseus, is responsible for having Astyanax killed.⁶ The wedding of Neoptolemus and Hermione is mentioned in *Odyssey* 4.5–14. A Sophoclean tragedy titled *Hermione* (or perhaps *The Women of Phthia*), of which a few fragments survive, represented Hermione as unhappy in her marriage, but (it appears) because she remained attached to Orestes and not because of Neoptolemus' relationship with Andromache.⁷ Andromache was almost certainly not a character in *Hermione*, and Hermione's rivalry with Andromache does not seem to have figured in Sophocles' tragedy or in any other treatment of the myth before Euripides.⁸ It seems likely, then, that the conflict between Neoptolemus' wife and concubine, Hermione's plot to kill Andromache and her son, and the attendant interferences by Menelaus and Peleus are all the inventions of Euripides.⁹

As in *Andromache*, Orestes apparently arrived in Sophocles' *Hermione* to take Hermione from Phthia. But in Sophocles' version Hermione had already

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- 5 Helenus is not explicitly identified as Hector's brother in *Andromache* 1245, but Lloyd (2005) 175 and others assume that this Helenus is the son of Priam mentioned in *Iliad* 6.76 and elsewhere. The son of Andromache and Neoptolemus is identified as 'Molottus' in the list of *dramatis personae* attached to the hypothesis of Aristophanes of Byzantium, but the name is used nowhere in Euripides' tragedy. See Stevens (1971) 94 and Fantham (1986).
- 6 *Little Iliad*, fr. 19 Allen (= Pausanias, *Geography of Greece* 10.25.9). Nowhere in *Andromache* is Neoptolemus identified as Astyanax's killer. For more detailed reviews of the mythological traditions concerning the figures in Euripides' *Andromache*, see Garzya (1952a); Stevens (1971) 1–5; Allan (2000) 4–39; Lloyd (2005) 1–3 and (2014) 347; Sommerstein et al. (2006) 1–3; Ambühl (2010); and Centanni (2011).
- 7 Sommerstein et al. (2006) 1–40 review the fragments and testimonia for Sophocles' *Hermione* and argue (14–17) that the two titles, *Hermione* and *The Women of Phthia*, refer to the same drama. If this is correct, then Euripides' and Sophocles' tragedies would have both featured Choruses of Phthian women. Mariani (2017) 82–90, however, challenges the identification of Hermione and The Women of Phthia and questions the assumption that Hermione was set in Phthia.
- 8 On the absence of Andromache from *Hermione*, see Sommerstein et al. (2006) 5; cf. Stevens (1971) 4 and Allan (2000) 17–18, and Mariani (2017) 86. The evidence suggests that Neoptolemus (who does not appear in *Andromache*) and Peleus (who does) were both characters in *Hermione*; see Sommerstein et al. (2006) 17–20, 32–33.
- 9 Allan (2000) 17; Sommerstein et al. (2006) 5; Vester (2009) 293.

been married to Orestes by her grandfather Tyndareus before Menelaus' battlefield deal transferred her to Neoptolemus.¹⁰ The tomb of Neoptolemus at Delphi was a well-known landmark by the fifth century BC, but extant accounts of how and why he came to die there, the first of which date to the early fifth century, vary.¹¹ In Pindar's *Nemean* 7.34–49, Neoptolemus visits Delphi to offer Apollo spoils from Troy; he is killed in a quarrel with the locals over sacrificial meat, and there is no mention of recriminations concerning Achilles' death.¹² In Sophocles' *Hermione*, however, Neoptolemus appears to have been killed while attempting to plunder the temple in retaliation for Apollo's involvement in the fatal wounding of his father.¹³ Hence it is also possible that the details in *Andromache* concerning Neoptolemus' motive for visiting Delphi (i.e., to atone for a previous threat or attack) and the circumstances of his death (at the instigation of the embittered Orestes) are Euripidean innovations.¹⁴

Andromache's appearances in the *Iliad* (6.371–502, 22.437–515, and 24.723–746) anticipate her fate as a captive and slave.¹⁵ That Neoptolemus, the son of the man who killed her husband, wins her as his prize and fathers her child is attested in the epic tradition,¹⁶ but her experiences after the fall of Troy do not seem to have received significant treatments before Euripides.¹⁷ In addition to her important role in her eponymous tragedy, Euripides brings Andromache to the stage in *Trojan Women* 577–781, where she laments her imminent enslavement to Neoptolemus and then learns, to her horror, that the Greeks plan to kill Astyanax. In this passage as in *Andromache*, she repeatedly invokes Hector's name and fondly recalls their life together. In both tragedies, she represents herself as a model wife; she emphasizes her modesty, self-seclusion, and deference to her husband in *Trojan Women* 645–656, and in *Andromache* 222–227, while denouncing Hermione's jealous possessiveness, she claims to have duti-

10 See Stevens (1971) 4–5 and Mariani (2017) 94. According to the scholiast on *Andromache* 32, the account of Hermione's prior marriage to Orestes was also presented in fifth-century tragedies by Philocles and Theognis.

11 Lloyd (2005) 3; Sommerstein et al. (2006) 11 with n. 36; Mariani (2017) 94–107.

12 According to the other Pindaric account (*Paeon* 6.100–120), Neoptolemus' execution of the unarmed Priam at Troy prompts Apollo to strike him down during a quarrel with temple attendants.

13 Sommerstein et al. (2006) 10–13. But Mariani (2017) 113 holds forth the possibility that in *Hermione* the inhabitants of Delphi, as much as or even more so than Neoptolemus, were represented as the transgressors.

14 So also Allan (2000) 17. According to Sommerstein et al. (2006) 20–22, 'there can be little doubt that Sophocles' play is the earlier' than *Andromache*. But Stevens (1971) 5 and others are more cautious about attempting to discern the relative dates of the two tragedies.

15 Cf. Lloyd (2005) 2 and (2014) 348; Ambühl (2010) 106.

16 *Little Iliad* fr. 19 Allen; see Stevens (1971) 3 and Lloyd (2005) 1–2.

17 See e.g. Allan (2000) 14–15.

fully tolerated Hector's infidelities and even suckled his out-of-wedlock children. Equally evident in both dramas is her maternal devotion—to the doomed Astyanax in *Trojan Women* 740–779 and to Neoptolemus' son, for whose sake she resolves to die, in *Andromache* 406–420.

There is no external evidence for the dating of *Andromache*, aside from the ancient scholiast's remark on 445 that the tragedy 'was clearly composed in the beginnings of the Peloponnesian War' (γεγραμμένον φαίνεται τὸ δράμα ἐν ἀρχαίς τοῦ Πελοποννησιακοῦ πολέμου). Although it is not certain what is meant by the 'beginnings' (ἀρχαί) of the war, which lasted from 431 until 404 BC, several formal features of *Andromache*, such as the rate of resolution in its iambic trimeters, dispose modern scholars to date the tragedy to the mid-420s BC.¹⁸ Recent editors have settled on 425 as a possible year for its first performance; there are no grounds for challenging this conjecture, as long as we keep in mind its provisional nature.¹⁹ This places *Andromache* in the same period as *Hecuba*²⁰ and some years earlier than *Trojan Women*, which was performed in 415 BC.

Questions about the venue of *Andromache*'s first performance are raised by the same scholiast's explanation that it is not possible to date the tragedy precisely 'because it was not produced at Athens' (οὐ δεδιδάχεται γὰρ Ἀθήνησιν). The scholiast or his source likely did not find *Andromache*'s title in his copy of the official 'didascalical' records for dramas performed in Athens during the classical period; it is impossible to tell whether this omission occurred because of an error, or reflected the fact that the tragedy was not performed at one of the two major festivals featuring dramatic competitions, the Great Dionysia and the Lenaia, which took place annually in the Athenian Theatre of Dionysus. Adding to the puzzle is the scholiast's report that the Hellenistic scholar and poet Callimachus 'says that Democrates was inscribed to the tragedy' (ἐπιγράφῃναι ... τῇ τραγωδίᾳ Δημόκράτην), which would appear to mean that someone named Democrates (otherwise unknown), and not Euripides, oversaw *Andromache*'s production and served as its *didaskalos*—a job comparable to that of a modern director, which was usually assumed by the playwright.²¹ Various communities outside Attica have been proposed as the site of *Andromache*'s first performance.²² But certain elements, such as the denunciations of the Spartans

18 Garzya (1952) 358; Stevens (1971) 18–19; Allan 2000: 149–150; Lloyd (2005) 12–13; also Gregory (1999) xii–xv.

19 So Stevens (1971) 19; cf. Diggle (1984) 276; Lloyd (2005) 13 and (2014) 346. Garzya (1952) 362–364 dates *Andromache* to 422, whereas Storey (1993) 188–189 argues for 427 or 426.

20 See e.g. Gregory (1999) xii–xv.

21 See Butrica (2001) 188–193 for a review of the interpretations scholars have offered of the scholiast's remarks.

22 See Stevens (1971) 20–21 and, more recently, Stewart (2017) 139–140 for summaries of pro-

by Andromache and Peleus (445–453, 595–601), seem to address distinctively Athenian prejudices *au courant* at the time of the Peloponnesian War,²³ and they may indicate a performance in Attica, if not at one of the major festivals in Athens, then in a regional theatre in one of Attica's demes or in the port city Piraeus, perhaps with a Democrates who was a contemporary of Euripides serving as *didaskalos*.²⁴

Wherever *Andromache* was first performed, the conventions governing its staging likely resembled those in effect for productions at the Dionysia and Lenaea. All the female figures, including the Phthian women of the Chorus, would have been played by men, and three masked actors would have shared the speaking roles, with Andromache's child, who sings a brief duet with his mother in 501–544, played by an ancillary performer (*παραχορήγημα*).²⁵ Scholars disagree about whether Andromache and her son reappear as mute figures (*κωφὰ πρόσωπα*) with Peleus in the fifth episode (1047–1288).²⁶

posed venues. To cite just a few of the proposals: Butrica (2001) 189–190 and 196–197 argues that the tragedy was originally performed in Molossia, whereas Centanni (2011) 42–43 suggests that the original venue was Dodona. Stewart (2017) 139–144 makes the case that *Andromache* was likely composed for a 'foreign tour' (and perhaps for performances at more than one location) with King Tharyps of Molossia as its principal patron; he notes that it 'is in fact a tragedy that could have appealed to multiple audiences, and specifically a Panhellenic one', and that its 'general appeal' may have derived from its interests in travel, as it 'links the Molossian kings to the overall narrative of the Returns of the heroes from Troy' (141).

- 23 Cf. Garzya (1952) 365–366 and Millender (1999) 359–361. The tragedy's interest in the status of Andromache and Neoptolemus' son also suggests that it was intended for performance in Attica, where a strict law governing eligibility for citizenship—and classifying sons of Athenian men and non-Athenian mothers as 'illegitimates' (*νόθοι*; cf. the identification of Neoptolemus' son as a *νόθος* in 636–638)—had been in effect since 451 BC. Scholars disagree about whether the reference to 'two marriage beds' (*δίδυμα λέκτρα*, 464–470; cf. 178–180, 909) alludes to a law permitting Athenian men to have legitimate children by other women while remaining married to their wives, since this law may not have been in effect in the 420s. For further discussion, see Vester (2009); also Storey (1988) 183–184 and Allan (2000) 167–172.
- 24 Allan (2000) 158 considers the possibility of a performance in Attica but outside Athens. He nonetheless concludes that *Andromache*, 'with its non-Attic cultural references [i.e., to Thessaly and Molossia], is better suited to the cosmopolitan character of the Dionysia'. Allan also suggests (152) that the tragedy may have been composed with a 'secondary Thes-salian audience in mind'.
- 25 Lloyd (2014) 345 offers a possible division of the speaking roles and discusses the non-speaking extras needed to play the parts of the attendants of Menelaus, Peleus, and Hermione. On the *παραχορήγημα*, see e.g. Norwood (1906) xxii–xxiii. Sifakis (1979), esp. 72–73, persuasively argues that child performers played children in Athenian tragedies.
- 26 The presence of Andromache and her son is not explicitly indicated in 1047–1288. For arguments against their presence, see Burnett (1971) 154; Kovacs (1980) 43–45; Storey (1988) 180;

Andromache was dismissed, especially in the first part of the twentieth century, as an inferior drama because of its episodic construction and abrupt shifts of focus.²⁷ Marking the beginning of a new interpretative trend in the 1950s and 1960s, the tragedy's defenders asserted that it satisfies Aristotelian criteria of unity because it possesses a dominant main character who remains at the centre of attention despite physical absence from the stage.²⁸ Since then, scholars have become more open-minded about *Andromache's* episodic construction, viewing it as a confident and deliberate artistic choice. Recent criticism has drawn attention to the carefully wrought symmetries of the tragedy's three 'movements', which invite comparison of the experiences of Andromache, Hermione, and Peleus, and to other formal features that create coherence, such as the deployments of evocative lyric rhythms in the songs sung by the Chorus and characters.²⁹ The tragedy's main themes have been variously identified. The nature of moral excellence and 'nobility', and the shifting significance of terminology associated with moral qualities such as 'wisdom' and 'self-restraint',³⁰ the opposition between what is natural and what is conventional,³¹ the experiences of women and problems associated with marriage,³² as well as anxieties about women's behaviour and speech,³³ civic identity and cultural prejudices,³⁴ the lasting dislocations caused by war and the legacy of

and Mastronarde (1988) 156; Mirto (2012) 60–61. Arguments for their reappearance with Peleus are offered by Kamerbeek (1940) 63–64; Erbse (1966) 294–295; Golder (1983); van der Valk (1985) 64–65; and Allan (2000) 74–77. I am inclined to agree that Andromache and her son accompany Peleus in the finale.

27 The judgment of Wilamowitz (1962) 383, echoed by Schmid/Stählin (1940) 400, is exemplary; see Erbse (1966) 276–277 and Stevens (1971) 7–8 for brief overviews of other negative assessments.

28 For Garzya (1951) and (1963) 24, and also Norwood (1906) lx–lxii, this central character is Hermione; for Erbse (1966), Andromache remains the dominant figure, despite her silence after 756.

29 See especially Burnett (1971) 130–156; Lee (1975); Rabinowitz (1984); Sorum (1995); Storey (1993); Waldron (1999); Allan (2000) 40–85; Lloyd (2005) 3–7; Centanni (2011); also Kamerbeek (1943). Lloyd (2005) 5 discusses the recurrent use of lyric dialogues to express the despair of Andromache, Hermione, and Peleus, each of whom are eventually rescued by the sudden arrival of an unexpected savior (Peleus, Orestes, and Thetis). Van der Valk (1985) 66–72 discusses the unifying function of the choral songs; cf. Allan (2000) 196–232.

30 Erbse (1966); Boulter (1966); also Kovacs (1980).

31 Lee (1975); Kovacs (1980).

32 Albini (1974); Rabinowitz (1984); Storey (1993); Allan (2000) 161–195; Papadimitropoulos (2006); also Portulas (1988), Amoroso (1994), and Mirto (2012), who focuses on Thetis' importance to the tragedy's treatment of marriage.

33 McClure (1999) 158–204.

34 Vester (2009), also Millender (1999) 359–361.

past acts of violence,³⁵ questions about divine justice³⁶—all of these themes and topics, and more, have received well warranted attention in recent scholarship on *Andromache*. We might reasonably conclude that ‘the play has no unifying theme’,³⁷ but that, through its three distinct but interrelated movements, it broaches a range of concerns that were important to Athenians and to Greeks more generally.

Capitalizing on the fruits of these scholarly labours, the rest of this essay will outline a few interrelated themes and concerns that give *Andromache* its coherence and power. The starting point of this examination is *Andromache*’s intense interest in the vulnerability of human beings to loss and disaster.³⁸ This interest is shared, of course, by most extant tragedies, and it has particular prominence in the dramas concerned with the fall of the once flourishing city of Troy, notably Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* and Euripides’ *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*. *Andromache*’s exploration of this vulnerability is distinctive, I suggest, not only because of its sustained probing into the factors that cause loss, but also because it thematizes the very impetus to seek out the causes of and affix blame for loss.

In the first verses of the prologue, *Andromache* contrasts the happy day on which she was given (δοθείσα, 4) in marriage to Hector, accompanied by ‘the golden finery’ of her dowry (ἔδνων σὺν πολυχρύσῳ χλιδῆ, 2), with the misery of her present circumstances, which find her once again ‘given’ (δοθείσα, 15) to Neoptolemus as a ‘prize of the spear’.³⁹ This is the first of many juxtapositions in the tragedy’s opening scenes that draw attention to the losses *Andromache* has endured. Addressed by one of her former attendants as ‘mistress’ (δέσποινα, 56), *Andromache* instead uses the term ‘fellow slave’ (σύνδουλος, 64).⁴⁰ In the parodos, the Phthian women of the Chorus, though sympathetic, bluntly remind the ‘most wretched woman’ (δυστυχεστάτα, 139; cf. δυστυχεστάτη γυνή in line 6) that she is now ‘nothing’ (οὐδὲν οὐσα, 134), and their repeated references to

35 Stevens (1971) 13–15; Rabinowicz (1984); Kyriakou (1997); Waldron (1999); Allan (2000) esp. 268–270.

36 Allan (2000) 233–266.

37 Allan (2000) 268; cf. Vester (2009) 294 n. 8.

38 The theme of loss is underscored by repeated references to the absence of longed-for figures such as Achilles, Hector, Neoptolemus, and even Hermione’s ‘missing’ children.

39 Cf. Allan (2000) 94 and 173. Like the repetition of the participle δοθείσα in 4 and 15, the verb (εἰς)ἀφικόμεν (‘I arrived’) at verse end in 3 and 13 establish a link between *Andromache*’s past prosperity and present misfortune.

40 But Yoon (2012) 72–74 notes that the deference of the ‘Maid-servant’ to *Andromache* in this exchange makes it clear that *Andromache* ‘is still a noblewoman’; cf. Lee (1975) 10 and Gregory (2002) 159.

Hermione and Menelaus as ‘masters’ (δεσπότες, 127; cf. 132, 142) underscore that Hector’s widow is a ‘mistress’ no more. Arriving right after this parodos, Hermione bids Andromache to grovel ‘instead of your former pretensions of prosperity’ (ἀντί τῶν πρὶν ὀλβίων φρονημάτων, 164), as she reminds her rival that she now has no recourse to the family and riches she once possessed (168–169).⁴¹

Andromache’s debasement is also contrasted with the wealth, power, and freedom flaunted by Hermione during their encounter in the first episode (147–272). The differences in their situations are visually underscored by their physical appearances. Evoking Andromache’s description of her own wedding finery (2), Hermione’s first verses (147–153) calls attention to the beautifully wrought garments and gold jewelry bestowed on her by her father,⁴² which would have been immediately distinguishable from the plain garments Andromache now wears as a slave.⁴³ Physical movements emphasize Andromache’s humility as well; although she refuses to grovel at Hermione’s feet, she later instructs her son to fall before Menelaus (529–543) and herself drops to her knees, hands tied behind her back, as a suppliant in front of Peleus (572–574).

Yet Hermione eventually becomes assimilated to Andromache in a manner that underscores how prosperity is never immune from the sort of reversal Andromache has suffered. Insofar as it is largely self-inflicted (834–839; cf. 902), the crisis in which Hermione envisions herself after her father’s departure, alone and vulnerable to retribution from her angry husband, obviously differs from the suffering that war and slavery have inflicted on Andromache.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, several features of Hermione’s appearance in the fourth episode (802–1008) reinforce the impression that she has been reduced to a plight identical to that of her husband’s concubine. Like Andromache, who resists commands that she abandon Thetis’ shrine (384–434; cf. 129–130; 135; 253–254), Hermione disregards her nurse’s bid to usher her indoors (876–877); as Andro-

41 In contrast to the predominantly negative appraisals of Hermione’s conduct [e.g., Kamerbeek (1940) 54–56; Erbse (1966) 291–292; Millender (1999) 360–361], see Lee (1975) 11; Allan (2000) 98–100; and Yoon (2012) 74 offer nuanced explanations of Hermione’s character and behaviour.

42 As Erbse (1966) 81 and others observe, Hermione’s description of the ‘adornment of golden finery’ on her head (κόσμον μὲν ἀμφὶ κρατὶ χρυσέας χλιδῆς, 147) echoes τὸν πολυχρύσων χλιδῆν in line 2. Millender (1999) 360 notes the ‘barbarism’ attached to the luxury flaunted by Hermione. Battezzato (1999/2000) 356–359 argues that the dress of Hermione and other Spartan female figures on the tragic stage was marked as Dorian (and simultaneously ‘oriental’); cf. Stavrinou (2016).

43 On Andromache’s ‘servile garb’, see Allan (2000) 53 and Vester (2009) 296.

44 Lloyd (2005) 5.

mache falls at Peleus' feet to beg for his intervention (572–576), so Hermione falls before Orestes as a suppliant (892–895), addressing him as her 'safe harbour' (λιμὴν, 891), the very word used by Peleus to reassure Andromache of his intention to protect her (749), and she proclaims her fear that she will be enslaved (δουλεύσομεν, 927; cf. 860).⁴⁵ Even Andromache's lingering anxieties concerning an ambush by Menelaus' men (752–756) are replicated in Hermione's worries that her elopement with Orestes will precipitate a pursuit by Neoptolemus or Peleus (989–992). Very conspicuously, Hermione seeks to cast from her body the adornments she had earlier identified as the 'golden finery' that, in her own estimation, set her apart from Andromache (826–832).

Similar echoes of language and movement in the fifth and final episode (1047–1288) encourage the perception that not just Hermione, but Peleus and even Neoptolemus himself are subject to the shifts in fortune that have transformed Andromache from the royal consort of Hector to the slave and concubine of the man whose father killed her husband.⁴⁶ Peleus falls to the ground at the news of Neoptolemus' death in a gesture that resembles the suppliant postures previously adopted by Andromache and Hermione (1076–1080).⁴⁷ He cries out that he is 'nothing' (οὐδέν εἶμ(ί), 1077), evoking the Chorus' earlier description of Andromache as 'being nothing' (οὐδέν οἶσα, 134).⁴⁸ Aspects of Andromache's dire situation in the first episodes are again recalled in the messenger's account of the attack by the Delphians on Neoptolemus, who finds himself, like Andromache, hemmed in by his enemies in a sacred space.⁴⁹ The rumours Orestes spreads in order to foster the Delphians' suspicions of his rival as a would-be temple-robber (1092–1095; cf. 1109–1111) mirror Hermione's accusations that Andromache has maliciously caused her childlessness in a bid to usurp her place as Neoptolemus' wife.⁵⁰ Unlike Andromache, Neoptole-

45 Cf. e.g. Kamerbeek (1940) 65; Lee (1975) 8.

46 Aspects of Andromache's situation also resemble that of Thetis; cf. Golder (1983) 132–133; Rabinowitz (1984) 121–122; Amoroso (1994) 146 n. 21; and Allan (2000) 30–31.

47 E.g., Burnett (1971) 146–147; Lee (1975) 7; Rabinowitz (1984) 114–117.

48 Peleus' cry in 1077 also evokes his insulting dismissals of Menelaus and Hermione as 'nothing' in 641 and 700. If Andromache and her son are in Peleus' company onstage, it would be possible for them to raise and steady Peleus in his moment of distress, recalling the physical assistance Peleus gives Andromache at 717.

49 Cf. Lloyd (2005) 5.

50 The verse-end placement of forms of the verb θέλω ('to want') facilitates the association of the rumour Orestes spreads about Neoptolemus (1095) with Hermione's charge against Andromache (156; cf. 34–35). The messenger's description of Orestes as a 'stitcher of plots' (μηχανορράφος, 116) looks back to the Nurse's characterization of Hermione's plotting ('stitching murder', φόνον βάψασα, 836) and Andromache's condemnation of Spartan

mus dies while fighting, and his conduct in his final battle recalls the valor he and his father displayed at Troy (1129–1140).⁵¹ But the Delphians' mutilation of his corpse (1153–1155) recalls the Greeks' treatment of Hector's body in *Iliad* 22.371,⁵² levelling the differences between him and the enemies whom he and the Greeks once defeated.⁵³

Andromache's prologue speech also establishes the tragedy's interest in identifying the causes of the losses suffered by its characters. This interest finds its most palpable manifestation in the attempts of individual figures to assign blame for their misfortunes. Hermione, spectators are told, identifies Andromache as the cause of her childlessness (32–36); Neoptolemus had blamed Apollo for Achilles' death (51–55). Such finger-pointing becomes a dominant feature of the confrontations that follow. In the first episode, Hermione accuses Andromache and the 'entire race of barbarians' (173) of incest and other sexual transgressions (170–180); her jibe that the image of Thetis to which Andromache clings 'hates your homeland because of Achilles' death' (247) provokes from Andromache the counteraccusation that 'your mother Helen, not I, destroyed him' (248). Upon his arrival in the second episode, Menelaus charges Andromache with criminal trespass against his daughter (317–318). When she realizes that Menelaus has tricked her into leaving Thetis' shrine, Andromache reproaches not just Menelaus personally, but all Spartans for their deceptiveness and greed (445–452), a charge that Peleus amplifies in the third episode when he faults the licentiousness of Spartan women (595–609). Taking up the controversy over Achilles' death instigated by Hermione, Peleus alleges that Menelaus is the murderer of Achilles, responsible as well for the deaths of many others (610–615). In response, Menelaus angrily asserts that Andromache 'has a share in your son's blood' (654) because Paris was Hector's brother.

Even when the onstage confrontations come to an end, accusations of wrong-doing figure prominently in the ensuing episodes. In her encounter with Orestes, Hermione initially accepts partial responsibility for her troubles (e.g. 902–903, 920), but she quickly abandons this self-critical stance and chooses, instead, to lay the blame at the feet of 'bad women' who, she alleges, fanned

duplicity ('plot-stitchers of evils'; *μηχανορράφοι κακῶν*, 447). For an analysis with different emphases, see McClure (1999) 198–200.

51 E.g. Borthwick (1967).

52 E.g. Stevens (1971) 234; Storey (1993) 192.

53 A similar levelling effect can be detected in the closely juxtaposed forms of the verb *βαίνω* ('to go [to one's death]') in the first antistrophe and second strophe of the fourth stasimon: *βεβᾶσιν* in 1022 describes the deaths of Troy's 'kings'; *βέβακε* in 1028 the death of Agamemnon in Argos.

the flames of her jealousy with their malicious talk (929–953).⁵⁴ Orestes holds Neoptolemus responsible for humiliating him as a matricide and depriving him of his rightful wife (971–981). While narrating the circumstances of Neoptolemus' death, the messenger reports that Orestes incited the Delphians against Neoptolemus with false accusations of thievery (1090–1095). The conclusion of the messenger's narrative looks back at the beginning of the tragedy, as he finds fault with Apollo—this time, not for killing Achilles, but for nursing grudges 'like a bad man' (1164–1165).

This summary shows how, in *Andromache*, claims of wrongdoing directed at individuals regularly occasion fault-finding concerning the conduct of entire groups, such as non-Greek 'barbarians' and Spartans, who were the regular objects of negative stereotypes in Athens. Blanket condemnations accrue to no group more than women, and, in keeping with well-established poetic traditions of misogyny, women are repeatedly castigated for their disposition to sexual jealousy (181–182, 220–221; cf. 932–935), capacity for cunning and nefarious plotting (911; cf. 85), balefulness (271–272, 354–355), as well as their fondness for gossip and vulnerability to fear-mongering (929–953). It is, notably, the female characters and Chorus who take the lead in these recriminations, regularly using the term 'sickness' (νόσος) and its cognates to characterize the deficiencies of women (220, 906, 948, 950, 956).

Yet, even though the characters and Chorus of *Andromache* articulate prejudices that members of its original audience may have harboured, its action arguably encourages spectators to take a step back from such biases.⁵⁵ Hermione cannot accomplish anything without the aid of her father; the man, not the woman, threatens Peleus' family with extinction.⁵⁶ Moreover, the Spartan Menelaus is not responsible for bringing actual harm to Phthia's royal family; it is the Argive Orestes, supported by Apollo, who orchestrates the death of Neoptolemus.⁵⁷ In the closing antistrophe of its fourth stasimon, the Chorus sings of the 'sickness' that has swept over the lands of the Trojans and Greeks alike (1038–1046). The reference to sickness (νόσος) in 1044 resonates against the many earlier references to 'sickness'. But the song eschews the generalized condemnations of women that have previously been associated with the word

54 Hermione directs these allegations, I believe, against the women of the Chorus. Rabinowitz (1984) 115 argues that Euripides has Hermione 'adopt Andromache's view of their sex'.

55 Cf. Allan (2000) 131, 194, 232; cf. Sorum (1995) 378–379.

56 Lee (1975) 11 notes Hermione's 'extreme' dependence on her father. In contrast, Millender (1999) 361 argues that Hermione, like Helen, manipulates Menelaus.

57 The Chorus' 'othering' of Orestes as 'this strange-looking foreigner from afar' (ὄδ' ἀλλόχρωσ τις ἔκδημος ξένος, 879) is conspicuous.

νόσος, even as it recounts Agamemnon's murder at Clytemnestra's hands (1028). It focuses, instead, on the abandonment of the walls of Troy by their divine builders, Apollo and Poseidon (1010–1018), and on Apollo's authorization of Clytemnestra's execution (1028–1036).⁵⁸ The fact that the foreign and female Andromache defends the integrity of her master's household presents an additional challenge to the very prejudices to which she and other characters give voice.⁵⁹

This challenging of entrenched prejudices is a key component in *Andromache's* broader interrogation of the causes of the losses suffered by all who were touched by the war at Troy—an interrogation that encompasses and transcends individual efforts to affix blame for a particular misfortune on a particular individual or group. Tracing the origins of the 'great griefs' (μεγάλων ἀχέων, 274) suffered by the Trojans and the Greeks, the Chorus' first stasimon (274–308) immediately focuses on the 'hateful strife' (ἔριδι στυγερά, 279) that arose among the three goddesses (Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite) who competed to be judged the most beautiful. Their dispute, adjudicated on Mount Ida by Priam's son Paris, led to his abduction of Menelaus' wife Helen and thus precipitated the Trojan War.⁶⁰ The same phrase is used earlier in the parodos to characterize Hermione's enmity toward Andromache (ἔριδι στυγερά, 122), and the word 'strife' (ἔρις) recurs elsewhere in the tragedy to describe the contention between

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- 58 Cf. van der Valk (1985) 71–72. The analysis of 1279–1282 in McClure (1999) 202 reaches a different conclusion and suggests that the tragedy's action does not undermine the 'blame discourse against women'. These verses, athetized by Stevens (1971) 246 and Diggle (1984) 332, are defended as genuine by Sommerstein (1988).
- 59 Allan (2000) 188–195 offers a persuasive analysis of the ways in which Euripides 'challenges his audience to reflect critically on certain core assumptions of sexual politics in their society'. Yet, as Rabinowitz (1984) rightly observes, *Andromache* does little to disturb the basic identification of the 'good woman' with the woman who accepts the 'values' of 'patriarchy'; cf. the characterization of Andromache's 'rhetoric' as 'male-serving' in Allan (2000) 190. Gregory (2002) 161 notes more generally that 'while Euripides goes out of his way to question received ideas [about marginalized groups], he is far less interested in emending the actual position of these marginalized members of society'.
- 60 According to tradition, the dispute among the three Olympian goddesses originated in their quarrel over an apple, which the goddess Eris (i.e., 'Strife' personified) had thrown into their midst at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis; on orders from Zeus, they are escorted to Mount Ida by Hermes so that Paris can adjudicate their dispute. Paris' elopement with Helen is made possible by Aphrodite, whom he judged winner of the beauty contest, which took place before he returned to Troy from Mount Ida and was recognized as Priam's son. The second strophe and antistrophe in the first stasimon (293–308) allude to the exposure of Paris as an infant, which was prompted by his sister Cassandra's prediction that, if he survived to adulthood, he would bring destruction to Troy. For additional details, see Stinton (1965) 1–28 and Wilson (1979) 8–10.

the women in Neoptolemus' household (490, 563, 960) and also Menelaus' quarrel with Paris over Helen (362).⁶¹ Strife fomented by jealousy is thus singled out as the phenomenon that initially caused and now threatens to magnify Andromache's misfortunes in both Troy and Phthia, and so it is also the cause of the losses endured by countless others.⁶²

In *Andromache*, ἔρις most frequently refers to the 'rivalry' between Hermione and Andromache, and this usage, in conjunction with the first stasimon's description of the goddesses' 'hateful strife', might seem at first to corroborate the disparagements of women enumerated above. Yet the later episodes correct the impression that strife and sexual rivalry constitute a problem that afflicts females more than males or is more dangerous when female figures are the principal agents. The phrase γυναικείων ἔριον, used by Andromache in 362 to signify simultaneously Hermione's jealousy (i.e., as 'strife between women') and also Menelaus' rivalry with Paris (i.e., as 'strife over a woman'), anticipates the shift in focus during the fourth episode, when Orestes' intense resentment of Neoptolemus supplants Hermione's contest with Andromache as the centre of attention (esp. 966–984). Hermione proves unable to damage Neoptolemus' line by killing his only son; Orestes, in contrast, effects Neoptolemus' death and also steals his wife, striking a potentially crippling blow against his entire family and community. The enmity between Orestes and Neoptolemus thus becomes a miniature version of deadly γυναικεία ἔρις of Paris and Menelaus, and it reinforces what the events of the Trojan War have already made plain—that, among mortals, rivalry between men is supremely destructive.⁶³

Andromache's wide-ranging interrogation of the causes of the losses suffered in the Trojan War and its aftermath is both emotionally and intellectually provocative. But even as it engages in a search for the sources of its characters' sufferings, the tragedy also problematizes the impetus to articulate causes and affix blame. As we have seen, in the three verbal battles dominating the first episodes, accusations and counteraccusations concerning responsibility for misfortunes ranging from Hermione's estrangement from Neoptolemus to Achilles' death at Troy are freely exchanged. Many of the allegations are unprovable at best or downright baseless, and differences are never resolved.⁶⁴ In

61 Stinton (1965) 16 n. 1 observes that the word ἔρις occurs nine times in *Andromache*—more frequently than in any other Euripidean drama. Wilson (1979) 8 notes the 'thematic importance' of ἔρις in *Andromache*; cf. Storey (1993) 184–185.

62 Cf. Rabinowitz (1984) 119–120.

63 Cf. Rabinowitz (1984) 118–120 and McClure (1999) 198–200, both with different emphases.

64 Lloyd (1992) 52 notes that the *agôn* between Hermione and Andromache 'has no real chance of achieving anything'.

describing his quarrel with Neoptolemus, Orestes explains that his rival had blamed him for killing Clytemnestra, thus fuelling their antagonism (977–978), and the Chorus' description of the goddesses' 'hateful strife' calls attention to their reliance on 'excesses of spiteful words' (ὑπερβολαίς λόγων δυσφρόνων, 287–288) when contesting their claims to beauty before Paris. It is no surprise, then, that words and arguments are a source of great anxiety for the Chorus, who criticize not only Menelaus and Hermione, but also Andromache and Peleus for failing to refrain from inflammatory accusations (364–365, 642–643, 692–693, 727–728, 954–956).⁶⁵ Moreover, the sense of injury that prompts Hermione, Menelaus, and Orestes to point accusing fingers at their perceived enemies—expressed in the vocabulary of legal complaint familiar from Athenian lawcourts⁶⁶—becomes the pretext for disregarding Neoptolemus' prerogatives as the head of his household, posing a grave threat to Neoptolemus, his family, and his community.⁶⁷

The sense of threat is intensified by the many echoes in *Andromache's* action of the events of the Trojan War, from the original quarrel among the goddesses (recapitulated by the 'hateful strife' of Hermione and Andromache), to the abduction of Helen (reenacted by Orestes' elopement with Hermione), to the deaths of both Achilles and Hector (recalled in Neoptolemus' battle with the Delphians), to the execution of Astyanax (evoked by Hermione and Menelaus' plan to kill Andromache's child).⁶⁸ These echoes arguably generate two different, but equally sobering perspectives on what transpires in the tragedy. On the one hand, they foster an impression of continuity between the unhappy circumstances of the present and the past, with a new generation caught up in the same web of dysfunction that entangled their parents, bringing ruin once again on parties already traumatized by the war at Troy. On the other, they invite an unflattering contrast of the present with the past, insofar as the nasty squabbling and under-handed plotting of Hermione, Menelaus, and Orestes seem

65 McClure (1999) 158–204 argues at length that *Andromache's* depictions of 'male and female discursive practices' are 'negative' (161), and that the tragedy 'deploys feminine verbal treachery as a model for the duplicitous speech of men' (203). Examinations of the tragedy's interest in speech and argumentation include Lloyd (1992) 51–54; Goebel (1989); and Allan (2000) 118–148.

66 I.e., 'criminal fault' (ἄμαρτία, 317–318): 'criminal outrage' (ὑβρις, 434, 977, 994).

67 Hermione and Menelaus refuse to wait for Neoptolemus to return before dealing with Andromache (255, 379–380). Menelaus' claim to have far greater authority over Andromache (τῆσδε πολλῶ κυριώτερος γέγώς, 580) than Peleus, Neoptolemus' nearest adult male relative, seems particularly egregious.

68 Cf., e.g., Wilson (1979) 8–10; Sorum (1995) 377–378; Philippo (1995); Kyriakou (1997); Lloyd (2014) 348.

petty and degenerate when compared with the grand feats of heroism that distinguished the conflicts of previous generations.⁶⁹ Yet it is also the case that Andromache and Neoptolemus' child is spared from Astyanax' terrible fate, thanks to the vigorous resistance of Peleus, who defends his grandson's prerogatives and his great-grandson's standing as the family's legitimate heir, and to Andromache's intense love, which is closely coupled with a willingness to support Neoptolemus' privileges as master of his home.⁷⁰ This crucial disruption of the pattern of loss and misfortune associated with Trojan War makes the finale of *Andromache* hopeful as well as filled with sorrow.⁷¹ As modern critics are divided about whether hope or sorrow prevails when Peleus exits with Neoptolemus' corpse, so too, we may imagine, *Andromache's* first spectators would have been caught between two powerful, competing emotions.⁷²

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- 69 Complicating the relationship of present to past is the (gently) humorous treatment of the aged Peleus, whose threats of physical violence (551–553, 577, 589, 634, 706–710, 758) border on the comic. See Swift (2010) 120 on the mixture of humour and 'genuine admiration' in the Chorus's third stasimon (766–801), which celebrates Peleus' victory over Menelaus by recounting his youthful exploits.
- 70 The anonymous reviewer points out that the issue of succession is thematized in *Andromache* from the very start, beginning with Hermione's anxiety over her failure to have provided an heir to Neoptolemus. Because of Neoptolemus' death, the succession of kings in Phthia/Molossia skips two generations, passing from Peleus to his great-grandson; the reviewer suggests a comparison with the 'skipped generation' succession in *Bacchae*, in which Pentheus succeeds his grandfather Cadmus as king of Thebes.
- 71 The gradual assimilation of the relationship of Andromache and Neoptolemus to a legitimate marriage, along with the diminished attention to Andromache's foreignness, might also be thought to contribute to sense of happy resolution in the tragedy's finale. See Golder (1983) and Rabinowitz (1984), with different emphases.
- 72 Burnett (1971) 17 groups *Andromache* among Euripides' 'plays of mixed reversal' in which 'rescue is sometimes muted, sometimes distorted ... but present ... to provide the symbolic action of catastrophe survived'. Exemplary of the contrasting views of the mood of the tragedy's finale are Golder (1983) 132–133, who believes that with Thetis' appearance Peleus is 'visibly renewed in a manner reminiscent of Iolaos in *Herakleida*', Waldron (1999) 139–140, who argues that the 'collapse of [Neoptolemus'] household ... undermines the apparently happy ending of the drama', and Albini (1974) 95, for whom *Andromache* is 'un dramma di una tristezza infinita' ('a drama of an infinite sadness').

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Hecuba

Angeliki Tzanetou

1 Introduction¹

Much of the criticism on Euripides' *Hecuba* focuses on the character of Hecuba as victimized mother who rightfully avenges the murder of her son, Polydorus. At the same time, critics have found Hecuba's revenge against Polymestor savage and unsettling: Hecuba blinds the Thracian king *and* murders his children. If Hecuba herself ends up a pitiless avenger, does the play also militate against her victimization? In this sense, if we follow the second major line of criticism of the play, does *Hecuba's* double plot of sacrifice and revenge provide the dramatic backdrop against which the play unravels the moral deterioration of her character?² The moral issues the play raises about Hecuba's character are admittedly complex. Set against the mythical landscape of the Fall of Troy, they are, first and foremost, the corollary of suffering, that of Hecuba and of others. The choice of Thrace as the last, intermediary stop before the Greeks return home from Troy, moreover, furnishes the immediate setting in which the drama of the army's outrage against Polyxena and the Trojan prisoners of war unfolds, prompting reflection on war violence and its consequences for all. In revisiting the treatment of the vanquished enemy, the article departs in a new direction by taking stock of the elements that constitute *Hecuba's* hegemonic narrative.³

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2 Text from Diggle (1984) and translation from Kovacs (1995). Among those who condemn Hecuba's revenge are: Kirkwood (1947) 61–68; Abrahamson (1952) 120–129; Conacher (1967) 161–162; Reckford (1985); Nussbaum (1986) 414–416; Segal (1990); Mitchell-Boyask (1993). The opposite view is represented by: Meridor (1978) 26–35; Pucci (1980) 216–217; Kovacs (1987) 78–114; Schlesier (1988) 11–135; Gregory (1991) 85–120, (1999) xxxiii–xxxiv; Zeitlin (1991) 53–94; Matthiessen (2010) 31–34. On the reception of Hecuba's revenge, since the Renaissance, see Heath (1987). For a detailed discussion and bibliography on this topic, see Mossman (1995) 164–203. On the play's double plot, sacrifice and revenge, and problems of structure, see Mossman (1995) 48–68; Mastronarde (2010) 71–73; Torrance (2013) 206–217.

3 I use hegemony to refer to Athens' moral leadership, as distinct from empire (*archê, kratos*)

It examines specifically how the dramatic articulation of relations of power can furnish a basis for interpreting Hecuba's revenge and its aftermath.⁴ For examined from a political vantage point, Hecuba's emphatic insistence on the obligations of the powerful toward the weak and of masters toward slaves in her supplications toward Odysseus and Agamemnon furnishes an important counterpoint to power politics, relevant for thinking about the Athenian empire and its policies in the 420s BC.

At the same time, the violence the Greeks perpetrate against the Trojan captives and its iteration in Hecuba's revenge against Polymestor is equally consequential for grasping the play's outlook on morality and politics. Hecuba's revenge mirrors the violence that she has suffered. Polymestor's prophecy of her transformation into a dog (1265), however, attempts to link the protagonist's uncompromising revenge to her loss of humanity, signalling her abjection.⁵ The ambivalent role that Hecuba inhabits as suffering mother and vicious avenger is critical for thinking about how Euripides' *Hecuba* frames arguments pertinent to the evaluation of the exercise of Athens' power and the risks it portended for the Athenian body politic.⁶

2 Hecuba as Imperial Drama

The lead character's revenge in *Hecuba* offers a bleak commentary on war, suffering and power. The play, which takes place immediately after the fall of Troy, when the Greek army puts in at the shores of the Chersonese in Thrace, offers the audience the opportunity to reflect upon the consequences of war—a matter of great and grave concern to all Athenians in the 420s. Of particular interest with regard to the dramatic events are the connections that emerge between the plight of the mythical war captives and that of Athens' imperial subjects who faced cruel punishments for revolting against its rule during the Peloponnesian war: the revolt at Mytilene in 427 BC is a case in point. In the famous debate of the second assembly, held to decide the fate of the Mytileneans (Thuc. 3.36–49), Cleon and Diodotus put forward opposite proposals—Cleon

which carries the negative connotations of domination. On the terminology of empire, see Low (2007) 201–202. My discussion also draws on the use of hegemony in critical theory (see below, '*Hecuba's* Counterhegemonic Argument').

4 On the play's dating (ca. 425–424 BC) and historical background, see Collard (1991) 34–35; Gregory (1999) xii–xv; Matthiessen (2010) 3–6. On the myth and its literary antecedents, see Collard (1991) 32–34; Mossman (1995) 1–47; Gregory (1999) xvii–xxiii; Matthiessen (2010) 6–8.

5 See n. 2.

6 Collard (1991) 30–31.

urging the Athenians to commit severe acts of violence, and Diodotus, calling for moderation toward their allies.⁷ Though Cleon's proposal did not prevail, the number of atrocities, committed by the Athenians against other Greek cities, during the Peloponnesian war continued to rise (Thyrea [Thuc. 4. 56–57], Scione [Thuc. 4. 122], Torone [Thuc. 5. 2–4]). The play's topicality, however, extends beyond potential connections with any one of these recent events.⁸ Building upon Gregory (1999) and Dué (2006), this essay argues that *Hecuba* addresses imperial politics and has much to say about the consequences of tactical subjection that Athens pursued as a matter of course in interstate politics.⁹ In line with this aim, the main portion of this chapter analyzes the play's two supplication scenes¹⁰ and focuses on the uses of *charis* ('favour'), resonant of the contemporary political rhetoric and vocabulary of the Athenian Assembly.¹¹ It is followed by a brief discussion of the trial debate scene after Hecuba's revenge where the adjudication of the participants' guilt amplifies the relevance of Athenian politics for reflecting on the devastating outcomes of the protagonist's merciless revenge.¹²

To begin with, *Hecuba's* reception of the Fall of Troy is part of a well-established tradition that linked this myth with the history of Athenian hegemony. Prominent representations of the Fall of Troy in Athenian public art in the wake of Athens' victories against the Persians were especially rife in ideological meanings.¹³ Cast as the archetypal Greek victory against an eastern

7 As Konstan (2002, 83) notes: 'No abstract moral principle limited the Athenians' freedom to annihilate a conquered enemy. The vanquished had no rights'. The play, however, problematizes the transgression of bonds of reciprocity as emblematic of the erosion of Athenian power. On the impact of the revolt at Mytilene on *Hecuba*, see Hogan (1972).

8 Dué (2006) 134. For a representative sample of current trends and approaches to historicism in tragedy, see Carter (2011). On tragedy's engagement with Athenian imperialism, see Mills (1997); Rosenbloom (1995), (2006), (2011); Futo-Kennedy (2009); Papadopoulou (2012); Tzanetou (2012).

9 On the antithesis between democrats (Greeks) and aristocrats (*Hecuba*), see Kovacs (1987) 78–114. See also, Matthiessen (2010) 36–37.

10 On the play's structure, see Kirkwood (1947); Abrahamson (1952); Conacher (1961) 7; Reckford (1985) 209 n. 1; Strohm (1957) 32–34; Heath (1987).

11 Collard (1991) 25–27; Matthiessen (2010) 35–36.

12 The dramatic correlation of Polyxena's sacrifice and Polymestor's murder begins early in the play (43–46); Hecuba's revenge, moreover, requites the wrongdoing, perpetrated against both her children, by killing Polymestor's two sons (1049–1053). See especially, Torrance (2013). Note also her admonition to Agamemnon to hold back the funeral of Polyxena, so that she may bury both her children together after her revenge (894–897).

13 For discussion of the representations of the Sack of Troy on the Parthenon, in Polygnotus' painting in the *Stoa Poikile* in Athens (Paus. 1. 15. 1–3) and the Cnidian *Lesche* at Delphi, see Anderson (1997) 247–255; Dué (2006) 91–116.

foe, the Fall of Troy prefigured the Persian defeat and heralded Athens' rise to power. But, once the Persian threat had been eliminated, following the naval battle at Eurymedon (467 BC), the myth's earlier symbolism was subject to revision. Athens' tyrannical conduct against its allies and the Athenians' own losses during the Peloponnesian war would have elicited more ambivalent feelings, not entirely in line with the myth's earlier panegyric tone.

In *Hecuba* the emplotment of the Fall of Troy focuses on the Greeks' homeward journey and, by placing the action temporally after the end of the war, delivers a series of warnings about the victors' precarious behaviour. The play ends on a note of anxious foreboding, as Polymestor at the end of the play also prophesies the death of Agamemnon (1279–1281). *Hecuba's* dramatic prequel to Agamemnon's death in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, a play that already in 458 BC may have warned Athenians about empire-building, mines the political symbolism of Agamemnon's and the Greeks' return from Troy.¹⁴ *Hecuba's* version of Agamemnon's accountability for failing to check the army's violence against Polyxena not only hearkens back to Iphigenia's sacrifice in Aeschylus' play, but by ending with the prophecy of Agamemnon's death, it also retrojects a pessimistic reading of the promise of Athenian hegemony, heralded by Athena in *Eumenides*. The *Oresteia* serves as an important intertext for *Hecuba*, not least because of the trilogy's large-scale exploration of the complex meanings that the Greeks' war against Troy and Agamemnon's rehabilitation carried for Athenian imperialism.¹⁵

Hecuba affords us the opportunity of drawing even bolder connections between the myth of the sack of Troy and the current realities of imperial warfare. Specifically, the power the Greeks wield over the life and death of their female captives can be said to be modelled upon that of Athens' own subject allies, many of whom were increasingly kept under Athens' rule through violent subjection. But it is not only through her degraded standing alone that the former queen of Troy may serve as an analogue for Athens' imperial subjects. Her interactions with the army's leaders allude to and challenge arguments heard in Assembly debates about the unqualified use of force against dissenting subjects, as mentioned above. Polymestor, on the other hand, plays the part of the subservient king-ally of the Greeks, supporting as he does their interests and his own. This triangular relationship in which the strong abuse powerless victims and maintain alliances of political interest with the morally corrupt provides the framework for relating the characters' use and abuse of power to

14 On the Panhellenic expedition to Troy as paradigmatic of Athenian expansionism, see Rosenbloom (1995), (2011).

15 On intertextual connections between *Agamemnon* and *Hecuba*, see Thalmann (1993).

the inequalities of status between Athenians and their subjects in the present. Polymestor, cast in the role of friend of the Greeks, is their ally and dependent, while Hecuba and the Trojan captives possess an inferior status to his as enslaved subjects. Not incidentally, the play's setting in the region of the Chersonese evoked Thrace's ties with the Athenian empire, which can be traced back to the establishment of the Delian League in 478 BC, following the capture of Sestos and Byzantium.¹⁶

It is against this setting that the critical decisions over the death of Polyxena and the guilt of Hecuba refer anachronistically to bodies in charge of imperial administration: the decision of the army assembly to sacrifice Polyxena alludes to the Athenian assembly and the trial debate after Hecuba's revenge recalls, albeit obliquely, the Athenian courts' jurisdiction over trials from allied cities. The Athenian Assembly was the main instrument for shaping foreign policy and passed measures affecting the sovereignty of the allies, known to us from imperial decrees.¹⁷ By the 420s, moreover, Athenian courts heard cases of homicide, exile and treason from allied cities—a measure that benefitted the Athenians financially and allowed them to maintain more stringent control over their allies' affairs.¹⁸

3 Hecuba's Counterhegemonic Argument

Hecuba's bearing on contemporary politics relies heavily on the authority with which Hecuba's character is invested. Resisting the brutality of war, her powerful laments over the loss of her children, her husband, and her city haunt the play from beginning to end. Motherly suffering imparts authority on the aged queen whose losses are the deepest and heaviest among the other survivors.¹⁹ Hecuba also laments the loss of her freedom and royal status, dwelling time and again on the miseries of slavery (60–61, 154–157, 233–236, 291–295, 807–809).²⁰

16 Athenian involvement in Thrace begins with Cimon; Athenians established cleruchies in the Chersonese in 448 BC (Diod. Sic. 11. 88. 3; Plut. *Per.* 19. 2). Five cities of the Thracian Chersonese appear in the Athenian Tribute Lists. See further Isaac (1986); Sears (2013).

17 For a selection and discussion of the dating of Athenian imperial decrees, see Samons (1998).

18 Thuc. 1. 77; Arist. *Birds* 1021–1075; Xen. [*Ath. Pol.*] 1. 16–18; Ant. *On the Murder of Herodes* (5.47); Isoc. 12. 63–66. For a survey of the relevant bibliography on the Athenian empire's jurisdiction over the allied states, see Low (2013) (and esp. p. 25 n. 1).

19 On the laments in *Hecuba*, see especially Dué (2006) 117–135. On the subversive power of lament in tragedy, see Loraux (1998); Foley (2001).

20 On slavery in Euripides, see Synodinou (1977).

While the reversal of fortune lies at the core of the tragic, Hecuba's marginal standing as a character is complex: at once a slave and the former queen of Troy, Euripides endows her with the authority to speak out against the vagaries of hegemonic power.²¹

Along these lines, it is useful to remember that Euripides' character in Aristophanes' *Frogs* touted his predilection for marginal figures,²² naming as examples, women, slaves, maidens, and the old (949–951) and defended his inclusion of such characters as a 'most democratic' practice (953) against Aeschylus' mordant criticism (952–955). In *Hecuba* too he adopts the view from below, using the perspective of a marginal, subaltern character, excluded from access to political decision-making, as a vehicle for interrogating power.²³

The play subjects the behaviour of the Greeks to careful scrutiny. Their failure to respond to Hecuba's suffering, an enemy captive, deserving of pity, diverges sharply from Athens' cherished ideals of compassion and generosity toward the weak, the old, and the disenfranchized. Significantly, the favours that Athens had granted mythical suppliants were memorialized in tragedy and funeral speeches.²⁴ Specifically, Athenian hegemonic ideology embraced the ideals of openness toward suppliants and strangers, vouching in this way for the city's moral leadership in Greece.²⁵ It is helpful to think of the brutality of the Greek conquerors against the female war captives as the inverse of this image and as symptomatic of power politics in contemporary Athens.

Seen in this light, the treatment Hecuba suffers at the hands of the Greeks and Polymestor is not too distant from the Athenians' violent tactics of dominance. It is Hecuba who points out the failure of the powerful to alleviate the suffering of others. In so doing, she speaks up against the brutality of power and adopts a position which is counter-hegemonic in word and deed. The

21 The use of the terms hegemony and the subaltern is limited to a discussion of how we can construe the political implications of the characters' relations with one another in the play, but they do not represent the views of Athens' subjects. See Low (2008) 8.

22 For a definition and useful general discussion of marginal figures in tragedy, see Ebbott (2005). On the free-slave opposition in this play, see Matthiessen (2010) 40–42.

23 On hegemony and the subaltern, see Gramsci (1971); Fontana (2000); Smith (2010). The classic theoretical discussion of the 'subaltern' is Spivak (1988); and see also Guha (1982). As Low (1988) 8 notes, the theoretical vocabulary, developed by Marxist and post-colonial critics on hegemony and the subaltern does not readily apply to an analysis of the Athenian empire, largely because almost all of the available evidence, literary and documentary, derives from Athens. Thus, the use of the terms hegemony and the subaltern is limited to a discussion of the political implications of the characters' relations with one another, but they do not represent the views of Athens' subjects.

24 On the institution of the funeral oration and Athenian civic ideology, see Loraux (1986).

25 Mills (1997); Tzanetou (2012).

asymmetry of power between the powerful Greeks and their Trojan captive, framed within the play's dramatic supplications, offer a template for envisaging Hecuba's role in political terms: a subaltern, non-Greek character, who voices opposition to war and power politics.

If *Hecuba* qualifies as a text that enacts ideologies of power, then, the construction of counter-hegemonic resistance, enacted through Hecuba's culminating act of revenge against Polymestor, deserves closer attention. As such, I argue that Hecuba's progress from suffering to vengeance is indicative of the play's exploration of the process whereby the powerful undo the weak. I explore this argument by analyzing the face-to-face interactions that take place between the hegemonic Greeks and their subaltern captive in the context of Hecuba's two supplications and the debate scene at the end of the play.

4 Hecuba's First Supplication: The Politics of *Charis*

Hecuba's supplication takes place after the army assembly that decides Polyxena's sacrifice. The news reaches Hecuba first via the Chorus (98–152) who arrive onstage in haste, visibly distressed, and preface their painful report, calling it a source of woes for Hecuba (ἀλλ' ἀγγελίας βάρος ἀραμένη / μέγα σοί τε, γύναι, κήρυξ ἀχέων, 105–106). The Chorus' familiarity with the procedure of fifth-century popular assemblies lends credibility to their account, despite their absence from the assembly proper.²⁶ The Chorus draws attention to the process of alternating speakers, observed in the Athenian assembly, and their use of terminology, found in Athenian Assembly decrees: δόξαι ('it was decreed', 108–109, 195, 218–220) further echoes the 'enactment formula' ('it has been resolved by the Council and the Assembly').²⁷ The anachronistic flavour of their report is reinforced by their mention of Theseus' sons, who share Athens' kingship. Significantly, the latter are said to have lent their support to the dead Achilles by taking a stand against Agamemnon who opposed the motion to sacrifice Polyxena (127–129).²⁸ Within this context, the Chorus' depiction of Odysseus in the stereotypical image of contemporary demagogues, vividly captured by the

26 On anachronism, see Easterling (1997).

27 On the Athenian Council, see Rhodes (1985). On the strong imperialist tone of the play, see Gregory (1991) 85–120.

28 On the epic sources connecting Theseus' sons with Polyxena's sacrifice, see Torrance (2013) 213–214. The vote of Theseus' sons in favour of the sacrifice is taken by a number of critics as an indication of Athenian responsibility. See King (1985) 63–64 n. 85; Segal (1993) 172; Thalmann (1993) 138; Dué (2006) 95–96, 134. Mossman (1995) 41–42 argues that the political language does not necessarily implicate Athens.

adjective ‘crowd-pleaser’ (ὁ δημοχαριστῆς Λαερτιάδης, 132–133) brings the dramatic debate closer to Athenian realities and sets the stage for Hecuba’s portrait of Odysseus as a ruthless demagogue at the opening of her speech (254–255).²⁹

When Odysseus comes onstage to announce the army’s decision to Hecuba and lead Polyxena away (218–228), Hecuba asks Odysseus as preamble to her supplication to recall his former meeting with the queen of Troy:

Εκ. εἰ δ’ ἔστι τοῖς δούλοισι τοὺς ἐλευθέρους
 μὴ λυπρὰ μηδὲ καρδίας δηκτῆρια
 ἐξιστορήσαι, ἥ σοι μὲν εἰρήσθαι† χρεῶν,
 ἡμᾶς δ’ ἀκούσαι τοὺς ἐρωτῶντας τάδε.
 Οδ. ἔξεστ’, ἐρώτα· τοῦ χρόνου γὰρ οὐ φθονῶ.
 234–238

Hec. But if slaves may address the free such questions as do not cause them pain or sting their hearts, it is right for you to reply and for us the askers to listen.

Od. It is permitted: ask your questions. I do not begrudge you the time.

In this short exchange, Hecuba seeks Odysseus’ permission to question him, but also deftly challenges his authority to set limits to her speech. Recalling Odysseus’ former supplication to her, Hecuba attempts to hold him accountable for his present behaviour. Hecuba looks back at the episode of Odysseus’ entry in Troy as a spy, recounted by Helen in the *Odyssey* (4. 245–258). Hecuba claims here that she, not Helen, recognized Odysseus, and that she did not betray him to the Trojans:

Εκ. ἔγνω δέ σ’ Ἑλένη καὶ μόνῃ κατεῖπ’ ἐμοί;

 Εκ. ἔσωσα δῆτά σ’ ἐξέπεμψά τε χθονός;
 Οδ. ὥστ’ εἰσορᾶν γε φέγγος ἡλίου τόδε.
 243, 247–248

Hec. Did Helen recognize you and reveal you to me alone?

.....

Hec. And did I spare your life and send you out of the country?

Od. Yes, and that is why today I am looking on the sun’s light.

29 Morwood (2009).

This innovation, as Gregory notes, underscores Odysseus' debt to Hecuba and furnishes her strongest position argument as a suppliant, demanding reciprocity in exchange for a former favour.³⁰ Suppliants in tragedy enhanced their prospects of success by bringing up bonds of kinship, ritualized friendship or alliances.³¹ As an enemy, Hecuba is disadvantaged; enemies who supplicated an adversary on the battlefield were not likely to meet with success.³² And she is further disadvantaged presently by her slavery. Keenly aware that she is not negotiating from a position of power, Hecuba perceptively underscores the reversal of roles: *she* now comes to him as a slave (235) much like Odysseus did, when he begged the erstwhile queen for his life (249).

Next, Hecuba begins her supplication speech with an attack against demagogues, directed against Odysseus (254–257), itself an allusion to the contemporary political scene in Athens, picking up on the Chorus' earlier assessment of Odysseus that, as noted, had already cued in the audience to the intrusion of contemporary politics:

ἀχάριστον ὑμῶν σπέρμ', ὅσοι δημηγόρους
 ζηλοῦτε τιμάς· μηδὲ γιγνώσκουσθέ μοι,
 οἱ τοὺς φίλους βλάπτοντες οὐ φροντίζετε,
 ἦν τοῖσι πολλοῖς πρὸς χάριν λέγητ'.

254–257

An ungrateful lot you all are, who want to be political leaders! Never may you be acquaintances of mine! You do not care that you harm your friends provided that you say something to gratify the crowd!

Fuelled by anger and grief, Hecuba here lashes out against Odysseus and censures him for orchestrating and securing the army's vote for the sacrifice. She rebukes Odysseus and his lot for lack of generosity (ἀχάριστον ὑμῶν σπέρμ', 254) and brands him as a demagogue (254–257), an iteration of the Chorus' earlier unflattering characterization of Odysseus as 'crowd-pleaser' (132). Hecuba correctly attributes Odysseus' backing of the motion to sacrifice Polyxena to political ambition. Furthermore, because Athenian civic ideology held Athens' generosity toward suppliants in the distant past as a point of pride, the politi-

30 Gregory (1999) 74 (*ad* 239–250); on *charis* and reciprocity in Hecuba's speech, see Mastronarde (2010) 230–231; on *charis* in *Hecuba*, see also Battezzato (2003).

31 On *xenia*, see Herman (1987). On the use of reciprocity in interstate diplomacy, see Low (2007) 43–54.

32 On supplication in general, see Naiden (2006).

cal attack Hecuba delivers against Odysseus may have resonated more strongly with the audience on that count.

Hecuba's initial reproach against the harmful *charis* of the demagogues sets the tone for her overarching argument whereby she relates the distortion of religious *charis* (258–261) to the Greeks' abuse of their power (282–283). The connotations of *charis* are intrinsic to relations of reciprocity, favours incurred and returned among mortals, between cities, and those that men regularly offer the gods. Hecuba imputes to the Greeks the corruption of religious *charis* for Polyxena's sacrifice. To begin with, human sacrifice in tragedy signifies a perversion of the norms that govern the ritual communication between the god and the human community of worshipers.³³ Euripides in particular routinely problematizes moments of civic crisis by juxtaposing the willingness of the victim to act patriotically with the failure of political and military leaders to forestall it. The corruption that Polyxena's sacrifice discloses, however, may be deeper, not least because the victim is claimed by a mortal rather than by a god. There is precedent for Achilles' demand of human sacrifice in the *Iliad* with the sacrifice of twelve Trojans, killed on the pyre of Patroclus (*Il.* 23.166–183). While their sacrifice marks Achilles' excessive wrath and abiding grief over the death of Patroclus, the anger of the dead hero and the need to propitiate him remain curiously unjustified.³⁴

Specifically, Hecuba highlights the corruption of sacrificial norms, asking with biting sarcasm whether it was for lack of proper sacrificial victims that the Greeks decided to honour Achilles with the sacrifice of her daughter (τὸ χρή σφ' ἐπήγαγ' ἀνθρωποσφαγαῖν / πρὸς τύμβον, ἔνθα βουθυτεῖν μᾶλλον πρέπει, 260–261). Achilles, she argues, is acting unjustly (263) by claiming Polyxena as his victim instead of directing his anger against the culprit for the war, Helen, whose beauty, she adds cynically, makes her the most fitting victim of all (263–270).³⁵ In urging Odysseus to change the army's mind, Hecuba asks him to consider that the violence that the Greeks are about to unleash is all the more excessive, targeting those whose lives they had spared (287–290).

33 On human sacrifice in Euripides, see especially, O'Connor-Visser (1987); Wilkins (1990); Roselli (2006). On Iphigenia's and Polyxena's sacrifices, see Scodel (1996). Achilles' indeterminate status in the play also poses difficulties for interpreting Polyxena's sacrifice. See further, Michelakis (2002) 58–83. As he notes: 'Achilles is portrayed something between a deceased warrior, heroised warrior, an epic hero, a vengeful cult hero and deity' (p. 83).

34 Seaford (1994) 164–165.

35 Homicide, she also argues, applies equally to free men and slaves alike (290–291), countering Odysseus' derogatory reference to Polyxena as a 'slave's sacrifice' (δούλων σφαγιῶν εἶνεκ', 135). On the anachronistic legal references, see further Gregory (1999) 81–82 (*ad* 291–292).

Moreover, Hecuba's statement that the Greeks 'ought not to rule over what they should not rule' (282–283) would have resonated with the audience: her use of *κρατεῖν* perceptively echoes the very definition of Athens' rule over other Greeks. It is worth noting that Athenian inscriptions from this period use the same verb to define the relationship between Athenians and their subject allies, marking a change from the formula 'the Athenians and their allies' to 'the cities over which the Athenians rule'.³⁶ *κρατεῖν* thus here refers equally to the corruption of religious norms and to the illegitimate use of power. If we accept that Hecuba's moral condemnation of the Greeks on the grounds of impiety is invested with political meaning, then the critique of imperial politics that is placed in the mouth of a subaltern character, an enemy of the Greeks, acquires special poignancy and comes full circle in Hecuba's speech. Beginning with the critique of contemporary demagoguery, Hecuba presents the sacrifice as a corruption of religious *charis*, while the language of mastery connects by way of allusion the corruption of religious norms with the overreaching of Athenian power.

Her formal plea at the end of her speech emphasizes reciprocity as her due (271–278). Hecuba demands payback from Odysseus (*ἀντιδοῦναι, ἀπαιτούσης ἐμοῦ*, 273), entreating him to return her erstwhile favour (*χάριν ... τὴν τόθ'*, 'the favor which was given then', 276). She reinforces her plea by asking him to recall that he too had fallen upon her knees as her suppliant (*ἀνθάπτομαι σου τῶνδε τῶν αὐτῶν ἐγὼ*, 'in my turn I grasp you in the same way', 275), as she now abases herself as a suppliant before Odysseus.

The highly emotional plea with which Hecuba ends her speech creates singular intensity and clashes sharply with Odysseus' response who proffers the prerogatives of honour, Achilles' and his own, brushing Hecuba's suffering aside. Specifically, Odysseus' rejection of her supplication on these grounds exposes expediency and self-advancement as the real motives for disavowing his suppliant's claims to *charis*. As such, the pair of speeches in the supplication scene mirror each other antithetically, offering opportunities to reflect on the current state of power politics in Athens.

Odysseus responds to Hecuba's demand for *charis* with a specious rejoinder, claiming that while he would show himself eager to save Hecuba's life, if it came to that, he nonetheless cannot save Polyxena, because refusing the request of a war hero (*οὐκ ἀρνήσομαι, / Τροίας ἀλούσης ἀνδρὶ τῷ πρώτῳ στρατοῦ*, 304–305) would amount to a singular dishonour toward Achilles (*ἡμῖν δ' Ἀχιλλεὺς ἄξιος τιμῆς, γύναι*, 'Achilles is worthy of honour, in our eyes, lady', 309). Though this

36 Hornblower (2002) 17.

episode is reminiscent of the epic conflict between Agamemnon and Achilles in *Iliad* 1, a conflict of honour, revolving around the exchange of women whose value as spoils of war is intrinsic to the economy of *kleos* ('renown') in the epic context, the absence of any motivation for this demand renders Polyxena's sacrifice a cipher for the victors' excessive greed;³⁷ for Polyxena is no Chryseis or Cassandra, but a spear-bride headed for Hades to meet her groom, if we follow the perverse subtext of Odysseus' argument that Persephone would otherwise deem the Greeks ungrateful to those deserving of honour (136–140).³⁸ If again, Polyxena is meant as a propitiatory sacrifice to Achilles, the motive for his wrath is lacking—there is no indication that Achilles has been wronged by the Greeks and is deserving of restitution.

Odysseus' next argument that failing to reward properly those who serve the city (306–316) carries the risk of civic desertion (*πότερα μαχούμεθ' ἢ φιλοψυχῆσομεν, / τὸν κατθανόνθ' ὀρώντες οὐ τιμώμενον*; 'Will we fight, or will we save our skins since we notice that those who die receive no honour?', 315–316) is at odds with the rejection of *philopsychia*, as it is understood within the praise rhetoric of Athens' war dead by the orators in their speeches at the city's annual public funeral annually at the cemetery in Kerameikos.³⁹ Odysseus' adoption of the Homeric ideals of honour and renown, if taken at face value, diverges from the ideology of democratic civic equality that levelled personal distinctions and valorized instead the hoplite's self-sacrifice on behalf of the city. Odysseus also tellingly aligns honour with gratitude in his peroration, wishing to secure lasting benefits for himself, similar to those he seeks to procure for Achilles in claiming Polyxena's life.⁴⁰

Furthermore, Odysseus prioritizes exchanges among members of the warrior-group, not least because they secure personal advantage. As Odysseus elaborates on the honours due Achilles, he communicates his own desire to be honoured in like manner by seeking to ascertain for himself enduring *charis* (*διὰ μακροῦ γὰρ ἢ χάρις*, 320). Though he refers broadly to the heroic pursuit for posthumous recognition, his use of *charis* as an expression of civic gratitude on the part of the community is significant. Used almost metonymically or even euphemistically in reference to Polyxena's sacrifice, it merges heroic

37 For Homeric influences, especially the conflict between Agamemnon and Achilles, on *Hecuba*, see King (1985). Against the position taken by King, see Torrance (2013) 206 n. 78.

38 On the construction of Polyxena's heroic identity, see Dué (2006) 122–129.

39 Loraux (1986); Wilkins (1990); Michelakis (2002) 64–65.

40 Rosenbloom (2010) argues along the same lines that 'If the war-dead merited compensation such as Achilles', chaos would ensue. Odysseus fails to address contradictions between the honourific decree and general principles of justice, holiness, and legality that Hecuba stressed in her counter-arguments (258–70).'

with divine honours uncomfortably. The grim *charis* that attaches to the sacrifice exceeds, as we have seen, the proper means of pleasing the gods, serving as a mark of the overweening pride, greed and self-interest of its would-be recipient(s).

But above all, the misuse of *charis* by Odysseus is rife with political meanings for the audience. For one, the Athenian politician Cleon had advocated in his famous speech in the second Mytilenean debate a stringent no-favour policy toward the allies:

[...] καὶ ἐς τοὺς ξυμμαχούς τὸ αὐτὸ ἔχετε, καὶ ὅτι ἂν ἡ λόγῳ πεισθέντες ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἀμάρτητε ἢ οἴκτω ἐνδῶτε, οὐκ ἐπικινδύνως ἡγείσθε ἐς ὑμᾶς καὶ οὐκ ἐς τὴν τῶν ξυμμαχῶν χάριν μαλακίζεσθαι οὐ σκοποῦντες ὅτι τυραννίδα ἔχετε τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ πρὸς ἐπιβουλευόντας αὐτοὺς καὶ ἄκοντας ἀρχομένους, οἳ οὐκ ἐξ ὧν ἂν χαρίζησθε βλαπτόμενοι αὐτοὶ ἀκροῶνται ὑμῶν, ἀλλ' ἐξ ὧν ἂν ἰσχύι μᾶλλον ἢ τῇ ἐκείνων εὐνοίᾳ περιγένησθε.

THUC. 3. 37. 2–3

[...] you have the same attitude towards your allies also, and you forget that whenever you are led into error by their representations or yield out of pity, your weakness involves you in danger and does not win the gratitude of your allies. For you do not reflect that the empire you hold is a despotism imposed upon subjects who, for their part, do intrigue against you and submit to your rule against their will, who render obedience, not because of any kindnesses you may do them to your own hurt, but because of such superiority as you may have established by reason of your strength rather than of their goodwill.

transl. SMITH 1920

Cleon warns his fellow Athenians that attempting to obtain their allies' goodwill by granting favours (ἐς τὴν τῶν ξυμμαχῶν χάριν ... ἂν χαρίζησθε ... τῇ ἐκείνων εὐνοίᾳ) is risky business. He emphasizes the subordinate, subaltern status of the allies who were excluded from Athenian democracy, and their hostility (πρὸς ἐπιβουλευόντας αὐτοὺς καὶ ἄκοντας ἀρχομένους), acknowledging that it is the result of Athens' tyrannical rule. Odysseus similarly rejects Hecuba's anguished pleas for pity. His exhortation (τάδ' ἀντάκουέ μου, 321) that she endure her sufferings (τόλμα τάδ', 326) signals his near-contemptuous indifference for Hecuba's suffering (εἰ δ' οἴκτρα πάσχειν φῆς, 321).

The exclusion of any consideration for the unjust suffering of the victims and Odysseus' chilling advice to Hecuba that she accept her suffering, because there are many others in Greece as well who are in a similar or worse plight than she

is (322–325), is at variance with the Athenians' civic self-image as piteous and compassionate, willing to undertake countless risks to alleviate the suffering of others, an image encased in the Athenian suppliant plays that depict Athens and her mythical rulers as willing to reciprocate their debts of favour and also to augment Athens' network of political friendships by incurring favours, generously repaid by those they assisted. Such is the image of Athenian generosity advertised by Pericles in his funeral oration who emphasizes Athens' exceptionality on the grounds of her success in securing the gratitude of their allies by bestowing favours rather than expecting a return (Thuc. 2. 40. 4–5).

But the Athenian suppliant plays schematize relationships of dependency between Athens and mythical suppliants in positive terms. This positive representation of Athenian political ideals harkens back to the founding of the Delian League. Regardless of how one thinks about the ways in which the empire changed over time,⁴¹ the ideological representation of Athenian power underscores the empire's obligation to protect and abet their allies. Because the Athenian suppliant plays are set in Athens, they construct the relationship between Athenians and their allies in positive terms, avoiding the thorny realities of Athenian domination that had emerged fully before and certainly by the 420s.⁴² By contrast, in *Hecuba*, as we have seen, the analogy between ruler and ruled comes closer to representing the realities of power politics under Athens' imperial democracy. *Hecuba* probes the consequences of the Athenians' violent subjection of their allies in light of the master-slave relationship between the Greek victors and their Trojan captives.

To conclude: Odysseus' calculated breach of *charis* toward Hecuba is similarly born out of self-interest. Like Cleon, he ascribes a utilitarian meaning to the concept of *charis*, reserving it for exchanges among members of the sovereign army alone. Hecuba's claims on reciprocity, on the other hand, lay a strong foundation for the play's counter-hegemonic argument, as Odysseus' conduct violates the principles of supplication and their idealised expression in myths, showcasing Athens' pity and generosity. In this vein, the play's interrogation of the Athenian reprisals against their discontented subjects centres on a conflict of values between the dictates of power and the ethical mandate of abetting the powerless.

41 For a discussion of the development of Athenian imperialism, see Samons/Fornara (1991); Samons (2004); and Low (2013) 26 n. 3.

42 Papadopoulou (2012); Tzanetou (2012).

5 Hecuba's Second Supplication: Hegemony and Accountability

Hecuba's second supplication to Agamemnon takes place after the slave attendant's discovery of the mangled, sea-tossed corpse of her son, Polydorus, which is onstage when Agamemnon arrives (725–726). Agamemnon first asks Hecuba why Polyxena's funeral is being delayed and then immediately takes note of the presence of Polydorus' dead body (727–736). But Hecuba does not answer his questions at first, but briefly turns aside and speaks to herself:

δύστην', ἑμαυτὴν γὰρ λέγω λέγουσα σέ,
 Ἐκάβη, τί δράσω; πότερα προσπέσω γόνυ
 Ἄγαμέμνονος τοῦδ' ἢ φέρω σιγῇ κακά;
 736–738

Luckless one—in saying 'you', Hecuba, I mean myself—what am I to do? Shall I fall as a suppliant before the knees of Agamemnon or shall I bear my misery in silence?

Her self-address carries metatheatrical meaning, as her character deliberates over the course of action Hecuba should pursue. It is marked by polyptoton (*ἑμαυτὴν γὰρ λέγω λέγουσα σέ*, / *Ἐκάβη*, 737–738), followed by the aporetic (*τί δράσω*; 'what am I to do?', 738) and a second explanatory question (*πότερα προσπέσω γόνυ / Ἄγαμέμνονος τοῦδ' ἢ φέρω σιγῇ κακά*; 'Shall I fall as a suppliant before the knees of Agamemnon or shall I bear my misery in silence?', 738–739) which articulates her quandary and communicates the cause of her emotional distress, expressed in the emphatically placed *δύστην'* ('miserable one') at the beginning of line 737.⁴³ Lending voice to her apprehension about her slavery, Hecuba's dramatic asides offer the audience the opportunity to empathize with her despair in the face of powerlessness, as they too are privy to her inner turmoil and her dilemma. The second supplication corroborates Hecuba's programmatic self-disclosure and explores the limits built into relationships of domination. In this regard, the second supplication offers a clear view of Hecuba's perspective on the devaluation of the powerless by way of her calling attention to the limits built into her interaction with Agamemnon.

Reluctant to answer Agamemnon's questions, Hecuba anxiously goes back and forth on whether to supplicate him or not. Her dilemma, as she reveals next, is related to her own growing awareness of her degraded status: she fears

43 On tragic asides, see Bain (1977) esp. 11–15, 56.

that Agamemnon will not be receptive to the plea of an enemy slave (ἀλλ', εἴ με δούλην πολεμίαν θ' ἡγοῦμενος / γονάτων ἀπώσαιτ', ἄλγος ἂν προσθίμεθ' ἂν, 'If he should thrust me away from his knees, regarding me as a slave and an enemy, I would only add to my pain?', 741–742), but recognizes that as his dependent she has no other alternative but to supplicate him (οὐκ ἂν δυνάιμην τοῦδε τιμωρεῖν ἄτερ/τέκνοισι τοῖς ἐμοῖσι. τί στρέφω τάδε;, 'I cannot have vengeance for my children without his help. Why do I keep pondering this question?', 751–752).

A slave addressing her master, Hecuba seeks Agamemnon's advocacy in his capacity as leader of the army as well and structures her speech around two arguments: the first sets out the claims of her case against Polymestor, based on justice and the law, as if she were pleading in a court of law, while the second is a personal appeal, based on claims to *charis*.⁴⁴ She invokes first the Athenian principle of *isonomia*,⁴⁵ seeking to establish her right to seek redress against Polymestor in spite of her relegation. She next calls upon the sovereignty of the law over gods and men alike⁴⁶ and directs attention toward the egregiously impious crime of *xenoktonia* ('murder of a guest-friend', 787–794), as she exhorts Agamemnon to punish Polymestor, arguing that the continued existence of the law depends upon the punishment of such grave crimes (798–806).⁴⁷ The presence of Polydorus' dead body would have served to amplify the audience's sympathy for Hecuba, as she urges Agamemnon to hold in his eye's mind the disproportionate suffering of Troy's former queen, now an exile, bereft of her children, and to respond, as is fitting, displaying pity and regard for the gods (807–811).

Agamemnon, however, turns away and attempts to disengage from Hecuba in the course of her supplicatory plea (812–813). Hecuba, then, delivers a personal plea, making as discrete and euphemistic an allusion as is possible to Cassandra's bestowal of sexual favours upon Agamemnon as his concubine (826–832),⁴⁸ asking him in return to grant her the favour she now seeks and to punish Polydorus' murderer, as though he were his kinsman (833–835).

44 On the debate scene, see Lloyd (1990) 95–97; Mastronarde (2010) 231–234.

45 Compare the similar claim Hecuba makes in supplicating Odysseus (783–785).

46 On *nomos* here, see Kirkwood (1947); Kovacs (1987) 101 with n. 53; Gregory (1999) 138–139 (*ad* 798–801). On the transgression of *nomos* and the breach of trust in connection with Hecuba's moral deterioration, see Nussbaum (1986) 397–421.

47 Rosenbloom (2010) amplifies this point by arguing that the examples of crimes that Hecuba chooses, killing for guests, and the pillaging of temples, allude to the Greeks' acts of violence against Troy which remain unavenged.

48 Earlier critics have been uneasy about Hecuba's appeal to sexual *charis*: Kirkwood (1947) 66; Conacher (1967) 158; Reckford (1985) 121; Michelini (1987) 151–152. For a defence of this

Agamemnon's response begins with a nominal nod to pity, justice and piety (850–853), even as he distances himself from Hecuba's request, calculating its political costs to himself.⁴⁹ As he explains, he must refrain from assisting Hecuba openly to avoid the army's censure for granting this favour for Cassandra's sake (854–856). Though he had previously expressed pity for her extreme suffering (783–785), he does not (and will not) make himself a proponent of justice on Hecuba's behalf, but responds to her supplication on the basis of pragmatic considerations, coldly detailing why helping Hecuba is politically inexpedient. Moreover, Agamemnon defines the obligations of reciprocity⁵⁰ in political terms, placing himself firmly on Polymestor's side on the grounds that he is the Greeks' ally, while Polydorus is their enemy (857–860). He further dismisses Hecuba's personal plea and summarily rejects her attempt to stretch the limits of the master-slave relationship by entreating him to avenge her son's murder as though Polydorus were in fact his kin (859–860).

The inversion of what Agamemnon himself recognizes as principled action, pity for the suffering of the victim and punishment against the wrongdoer (850–852), is politically motivated, choosing as he does to expend justice for military benefits.⁵¹ In this light, Hecuba's negative characterization of Agamemnon as a slave of the mob is consistent with her earlier anachronistic critique of demagogues (866–869) and is, as Rosenbloom argues, critical of the workings of contemporary Athenian democracy.⁵² At the same time, Agamemnon's response and Hecuba's rejoinder also help clarify the way in which relations of power inform Hecuba's recourse to self-redress.⁵³ On Agamemnon's

argument, see Gregory (1991) 106–107 and for a more detailed treatment of the constraints, facing the female captive, see (1998).

49 Lloyd (1990) and Mastronarde (2010) 232–233 regard Hecuba's personal appeal to *charis* as moderately successful, since Agamemnon concedes to allow her to pursue the revenge on her own. Rosenbloom (2010) argues that Agamemnon's co-operation with Hecuba in punishing Polymestor 'redefines moral order as the good's punishment of the bad' and that 'he and Hecuba inflict vengeance on Polymestor and on the system of collective self-interest that enables and sanctions his crime'. While Rosenbloom rightly notes that Hecuba's critique of democracy here echoes the contemporary disjunction between democracy and moral order, it is open to question whether or not her gruesome vengeance underscores Agamemnon's very failure to uphold moral order by punishing Polymestor.

50 On revenge and reciprocity in tragedy, see further Blundell (1989); Belfiore (1998).

51 On Agamemnon's accountability, see further Collard (1991) 24–25 with n. 51.

52 Rosenbloom (2010).

53 Hecuba too asserts the limits of the slave-master relationship (841–845). In the trial debate after the revenge, she acknowledges the impossibility of *charis* between enemies (1199–1205). See further, Mastronarde (2010) 232–234.

end, Hecuba's suffering is dispensable because she is an enemy-slave and hence not a viable exchange partner, unlike Polymestor who enjoys the favour of the Greeks as their host and ally. The dichotomy drawn between Trojan enemy-slave vs. Thracian military ally, however, is also germane to the opposition that *Hecuba* consistently draws between justice and expediency. As such, it comes full circle in raising concerns about the long-term consequences of the Athenians' own investment in expedient causes.

In sum, the questions that the play raises about Hecuba's revenge delve into the ethical consequences of the misuse of hegemonic prerogatives. The play's two movements, sacrifice and revenge, are both preceded by Hecuba's first and second supplication, respectively. Odysseus' and Agamemnon's rejection of her pleas contribute to and serve to exemplify her progressive exclusion from any recourse to social mechanisms of redress. Agamemnon's devaluation of Hecuba, conveyed through his reluctance to recognize her as a viable exchange partner by supporting her plea in deed, contributes to the play's commentary on the making of the subaltern. The supplication further furnishes an apposite framework for evaluating Agamemnon's (and the Greeks') accountability for Hecuba's revenge. By refusing to undertake Hecuba's cause and punish Polymestor, Agamemnon also severs her last viable social bond, that of slave to master, deepening her isolation by depriving her of the only kind of advocacy available to the powerless.

6 'Judging the Wrongs of Strangers': The Making of the Subaltern

The two unsuccessful supplications draw attention to the Greek victors' abuse of their power and cannot be viewed in isolation from Hecuba's revenge. Hecuba's loss of her human form⁵⁴ is indicative of the social and emotional alienation her character comes to experience.⁵⁵ If her revenge serves to sig-

54 Hecuba's transformation into a dog is also known from Euripides' *Alexandros* (F 62h *TrGF* Kannicht) but harkens back to Hom. *Il.* 24.208–213 as well, where Hecuba expresses her ardent desire to eat Achilles' liver raw. On Hecuba's transformation as a sign of her dehumanization, see especially, Nussbaum (1986) 414–417; Segal (1993) 161–162. For Hecuba's association with the dog-like Erinyes, see Gregory (1991) 107–111; Mossman (1995) 196–197. For the dog as a symbol of maternal protection, see Gregory (1999) xxxiv–xxxv; Dué (2006) 132–135. Though I agree with Dué that the play engages the audience's sympathy with the suffering of the enemy, the play's critique goes further in interrogating Athens' conduct during the war than her reading allows.

55 On Hecuba's revenge as a corollary of her isolation, see also Nussbaum (1986) 410–411.

nal her barbarization, her dehumanization also qualifies the negative projections,⁵⁶ attendant upon the victors' devaluation of the enemy as barbarian 'other'.⁵⁷

Moreover, Hecuba's social alienation is relevant for understanding her personality, that is, the psychological motives that explain her revenge. For while Hecuba's revenge may be regarded as acceptable to the internal and external audiences of the play on the grounds that she was punishing the death of her son and the violation of the bonds of *xenia*, the psychological motives of her revenge are not readily apparent. For Hecuba does not, like Achilles or Medea, expound on them nor does anything she says suggest that her revenge is an attempt to uphold the values that are important for human life.⁵⁸ In this play, we see the character progress from extreme loss and suffering to revenge and dehumanization.⁵⁹ But the agency that she undertakes is not the outcome of extreme suffering alone. Rather, it is the result of the inhumane treatment that the Greeks and Polymestor inflict upon those that lack the power to protect themselves by devaluing the ethical stances, necessary for realizing interpersonal relations. The breaches of reciprocity in the course of the supplicatory exchanges with Odysseus and Agamemnon as well Polymestor's crime provide meaning to Hecuba's personality, that is, the psychological forces that underlie her revenge, causing her eventual alienation from others. Though Hecuba herself does not speak about her revenge, itself an act of negative reciprocity, we can attribute the motives for her revenge to the external pressures to which she is subject.⁶⁰ The moral questions that the play raises about victors and defeated alike may shock and terrify; but they also create a frame for probing the ways in

56 See especially Odysseus' comments, 328–331 and Hall (1989) 198–199.

57 On the Greek-barbarian opposition, see especially Hall (1989). On the figure of the barbarian in Euripides, see Saïd (2001) 62–100. As she notes, *Hecuba* stresses the bestiality of the barbarian (1069–1078, 1124–1126, 1171–1175), but also problematizes the Greeks' ascription of the stereotype in view of their own savagery against Polyxena (87–88). For the mirroring of the Greeks' violence and its projection onto the 'barbarian' non-Greek characters, see Segal (1993); Ihm (2004). See further Matthiessen (2010) 38–40.

58 On the distinction between 'character' and 'personality', see Gill (1990) 1–9. The discussion of the motivation of Hecuba's revenge draws upon the centrality of reciprocity in defining the Greek self, developed by Gill (1996) 131–174, 179–243. On Achilles' and Medea's defence of the ethics of reciprocity, see further Gill (1996) 131–174 and especially, 158–162.

59 The only indication regarding Hecuba's emotional motivation is given by Agamemnon, who, upon seeing the blind Polymestor, exclaims that this is the work of 'great rage' (1118). On anger and gender, see the excellent discussion in Harris (2001) 264–282.

60 In effect, we are not given first-hand access to Hecuba's process of deliberation, as in the case of Achilles and Medea. For a discussion of the dialogic exploration of the Greek self in connection with characters' revenge in tragedy, see further Gill (1996) 175–243.

which the abuse of power affects what matters most: the dignity of human life. The play is consistent in following through the exploration of the responsibility of the victors, so the focus on politics remains constant to the end.

After the revenge takes place, not one, but two victims stand in front of Agamemnon who arbitrates the crime (1109–1131). They are both dehumanized: Polymestor crawls on all fours onstage like a dog (1058); he likens Hecuba and the Trojan captives to dogs (1173)⁶¹ and there is no mending to be done nor is there anything in what each says to the other that bodes any hope or safeguard for the future, but the prediction of more evils to come (1252–1281). That possibility has been foreclosed by Agamemnon's failure to assist Hecuba. His role as judge in the debate scene that follows (1129–1250) does not in effect serve to confirm Hecuba's innocence and Polymestor's guilt.⁶² Rather, it exposes the failure of the powerful to contain violence. The trial itself, a war tribunal of sorts, judging the crimes of an ally of the Greeks and one of their enemy captives (τάλλότρια κρίνειν κακὰ, 1240), does not mirror but may allude to the trials that Athenians held in their courts where cases of murder, exile and treason from allied states were referred to.⁶³ The trial judges the culpability of the Greeks' ally, Polymestor, and their enemy captive, Hecuba. As subordinates, their fates are placed under the jurisdiction of the Greeks. If this trial resembles by way of anachronism an imperial trial, the force of the contemporary allusion allows us also to project the responsibility that Agamemnon carries for his belated and ineffective intervention to the Athenians' accountability toward their subjects.

If we look at the debate as an 'allied trial', a possible reading of Agamemnon's 'judgment of the crimes, perpetrated by foreigners' (1240), it follows that the powerful judge belatedly and ineffectively those whom they themselves have also harmed.⁶⁴ As Polymestor and Hecuba turn against each other, their plight exposes their roles more clearly as participants in the play's depiction of the making of the subaltern: the inferior, victimized, dehumanized subjects whose suffering and culpability reflects the unpalatable side of the Athenian imperial

61 Line 1181–1182 is an allusion to Aesch. *Eum.* 58–60 that assimilates the female avengers to the bestial Erinyes.

62 Meridor (1983).

63 See n. 17 above. For a recent discussion of Athens' legal jurisdiction over the cities of the empire, see Low (2013) 25–44.

64 While Agamemnon had earlier refused to punish Polymestor (852–863), as he deserved (1233–1237), he now resolves to judge his crime to avoid the army's censure (1249). See further Matthiessen (2010) 413 (*ad* 1249 f.). Polymestor undercuts his main argument that he killed Polydorus as a 'favour' (1175) to the Greeks by exposing the advantages he derived from the murder (1142–1144). See further Mastronarde (2010) 233.

self and the harm it portends for rulers and the ruled alike. Polymestor takes his revenge upon Agamemnon as well, prophesying his death at the hands of Clytemnestra.

In this light, Hecuba's death at sea and the Bitch's tomb at the treacherous Thracian promontory bear everlasting testament to the losses of the mother and of the alienation of the victim from her own self: the tomb's name 'Cynossema' (1273) reifies the loss of the 'self', contributing to the making of the subaltern as distant, fearful and other-worldly, a bleak tribute to the Greeks' last stop before coming home from Troy.⁶⁵

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65 Note that the tomb will serve as "a sign for sailors" both literally and metaphorically' [Gregory (1999) 194 ad 1272]. See further Burnett (1994) 159–160.

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Suppliant Women

James Morwood †

Suppliant Women begins before a word is spoken, with an explosion of activity on a far larger scale than any other extant Greek tragedy.^{1,2} We cannot know the detail of how it was stage-managed at its first production some time between 424 and 416 BC,³ but what must have happened is that a secondary Chorus of boys entered with the Argive king Adrastus and took up a position at the doors of the temple at Eleusis while the main Chorus of Argive women, the boys' grandmothers, arrived and intercepted the Athenian queen mother Aethra as she proceeded to the temple, forcing her to sit at the altar in the middle of the orchestra.⁴ Theseus, the play's protagonist, has yet to appear, but the other leading figures around whom the tightly-constructed action revolves are now before our eyes. The ageing Adrastus, at present lying in a state of abject, tearful depression (21, 111), will be transformed as the tragedy proceeds; the boys will respond to the suffering they undergo and a collective identity will emerge with startling force in the final scenes; Aethra will disappear from the action but she is the first portrait in a triptych of female characters which, together with the Chorus of Argive women, will give us an accumulating insight as the dramatist explores different aspects of the female psyche throughout the play; and the main Chorus itself, who both launch and conclude the action, will be subjected to extremes of emotion and will be radically different when they eventually leave the stage.

The Chorus' entry before the prologue is quite possibly unique in surviving tragedy⁵ and this arresting violation of a dramatic norm is soon reflected in the tale of religious transgression that Aethra now unfolds from her position at the altar. The women are here at Eleusis, she tells us, because the Thebans, the

1 I have drawn upon material previously published in the *Classical Quarterly* and *Mnemosyne* in this chapter. I am very grateful to Professors Chris Collard and Andreas Markantonatos for comments on a draft of these pages.

2 Rehm (1988) 275.

3 Collard (2007) 138–140; Morwood (2007) 26–30.

4 For suggested scenarios for the opening, see Scully (1996/7) 71–72 and Storey (2008) 107–108.

5 The Chorus in Aesch. *Supp.* arrive before the main actors, but they chant the anapaests that begin the play.

victors in a battle against The Seven, are denying their sons burial, thus 'making light of the laws of the gods' (19).⁶ Their cause is a good one and Aethra is certainly sympathetic to them. However, their presence at Eleusis is problematic. They are dressed as mourners (97), presumably in black, and thus their robes are in stark contrast (I take it) to the brightly coloured (certainly expensive, 286) costume of the queen. Ominously garbed, they have cut short Aethra's intention to sacrifice in a fertility festival (generally assumed to be the Proerosia).⁷ Indeed it appears that she goes back to Athens never having made the sacrifice. Theseus reminds us of the importance of fertility in the development of human civilization (205–207), but the two emphatic agricultural images that occur later in the play are anything but reassuring:⁸ a tyrant cuts and destroys the flower of the young men, lopping them off like the ears of corn in a spring meadow (448–449); Theseus snaps necks like stalks with his club and crops helmets like ears of summer wheat (716–717). In addition, the Chorus themselves tell us that they have not come 'in a holy manner' (63–64). As mourners (97) they could not have attended the ceremonies at Eleusis. There is also a problem with their status as suppliants carrying suppliant branches. In Athenian law, the penalty for leaving such a branch at the temple of Demeter and Kore in Athens at the time of the Eleusinian mysteries was a thousand drachmas and possibly even death (Andoc. *De Mysteriis* 110–116). The play is not in fact set at the time of those mysteries and its location at Eleusis rather than Athens is of course important.⁹ Even so, the Argive women are a possible cause of offence and certainly offer a challenge to the Athenian royal family. The emotionally responsive Aethra, while apparently unfazed at being trapped by them, tells us that they are a cause of distress (38).

The play has dispensed with the traditional entrance song for the Chorus (the *parodos*). Already onstage as we have seen, the Argive women now burst, with an arresting immediacy, into song and dance. They appeal to Aethra as a fellow mother to persuade her son Theseus, king of Athens, to recover the bodies of their dead sons from Thebes (55–62). They call their attendants to their dance 'that Hades celebrates' (74–75) and urge them to indulge in extremes of

6 For the dysfunctional nature of Thebes as portrayed in Attic tragedy, see Zeitlin (1990) and (1993).

7 For the musical aspect here, see Vinh (2011) 328–329.

8 See *contra* Conacher (1956) 16 n. 26 = (1967) 98 n. 11: Aethra's 'mention of her interrupted prayer to Kore and Demeter for the Athenian crops ... permits us, for a moment, to see the whole of the subsequent action as a kind of fertility ritual ensuring Athenian and Argive prosperity'.

9 Morwood (2007) 17–20: cf. Goff (1995); Smith (1966) 154–155; Bowie (1997) 54; Mendelsohn (2002) 135–148; Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 313–314.

mourning: 'Across your white cheek make your skin blood-red with your nails' (76–77). We shall return to this invitation to self-mutilation later. The Chorus' grief and their manner of expressing it are shocking indeed.

Theseus, the youthful king of Athens, now enters; he has come from that city in a flutter of anxiety about his mother's long absence. Having heard the ill-omened sounds of mourning as he approached (87–89), he is now disconcerted to see the cropped hair and mourning dress of the foreign women which are 'not appropriate for visitors to a shrine' (97). He now invites Adrastus to tell him what is going on. 'Nothing', he remarks, 'is achieved except by discussion' (literally, 'through the tongue', 112). The play will insist on the importance of coherent talk, but also—possibly—reveal its limitations.¹⁰

In the abrasive stichomythia that follows (113–162) Adrastus totally fails to win Theseus' good will. One reason for this is his admission that leading the expedition against Thebes was a catastrophic mistake. He had been sucked into it through his support of his non-Argive son-in-law Polynices, the claimant to the Theban throne. And he had disregarded the gods' will, not only failing to consult prophets and seek auguries but also going against the warning of the seer Amphiaraus (155–159). Then, when Adrastus supplicates Theseus, he begins his speech disastrously by asserting that he is ashamed to do so (164–166) but has been driven to it by necessity (167). In addition, he has the bad luck to refer to himself as a *τύραννος* (tyrant), a word to which Theseus will prove to be allergic (403–404). The actual supplication, with its appeal to Athenian pity¹¹ and its tribute to Athens itself, carries real conviction, but in view of his grudging prelude it is surely unsurprising that Theseus rejects it. Adrastus' response to this is informed with the resentment of wounded pride (253–257) and he throws in the sponge, telling the women to depart and, with spiteful menace,¹² calling Demeter to witness the failure of their supplication (260–262). His defeatist attitude may lead one to question whether his heart has really been in his supplication.

The Chorus of Argive women pay no attention to him. They are not so easily deterred.¹³ They move away from the altar to supplicate Theseus and their appeal has so visceral an intensity and directness that it pierces Theseus' heart

10 112, 203–204, 243, 332–333, 347–348, 547, 849–852, 902–903, 1227.

11 As Macleod (1983) 74 writes, 'pity is one of the leading ideals of Athenian democracy'. He cites 'especially' Pl. *Menex.* 244e. There was an altar of Pity in Athens (Paus. 1.17.1), and the artist Parrhasios included pity among the conflicting passions he attempted to represent in his portrait of the Athenian demos (Pliny *HN* 35.69).

12 For the sense of menace, see Smith (1966), 154–155; cf. Krummen (1993) 203–208.

13 Cf. Kavoulaki (2008) 297–298.

(288). As Chaucer writes in his favourite line, ‘pitee renneth soone in gentil herte’; and Theseus may find that emotions are a more reliable incentive to emotion than the logic of words. Near the start of the stichomythia with Adrastus, he had observed that it was holy (123) to bury the corpses, and now that he has been supplicated by the women, he is certainly ripe for a change of feeling. His mother now lists the reasons why he should make that change. Piety and the greatness of Athens demand it. At the centre of her speech is her needling observation to her son that he will be accused of cowardice if he declines the challenge (314–319). Theseus—up to a point justly—responds that he was right in what he had said about Adrastus and his error, but he now *does* undertake the task of recovering the corpses with vigorous enthusiasm. He proudly states that it is in his nature to shoulder labours and he cannot give them up (340–342). His heroic spirit asserts itself.

Yet his previous stance had been a perfectly defensible one. While he hopes until the last minute—on the battlefield itself—to recover the corpses by diplomacy (670–672—cf. 347, 385–390, 558–560), war cannot be avoided in the event as it is in Pindar (*Ol.* 6.15–16, *Nem.* 9.22–24), and the battle is a close-run thing (706). Why should Theseus risk Athenian blood to repair the consequences of a foolhardy and impious expedition? He scathingly denounces Adrastus, saying,

ἐς δὲ στρατείαν πάντας Ἀργείους ἄγων,
μάντεων λεγόντων θέσφατ', εἴτ' ἀτιμάσας
βίᾳ παρελθῶν θεοὺς ἀπώλεσας πόλιν ...

229–231

When you led all the Argives on an expedition and then scorned the prophets after they uttered the god's oracles, you used force and went against the gods and destroyed your city ...

There are textual problems with the last two lines of the speech, but it is likely that they mean:

On your way and good luck to you! For if you have not planned things well yourself, why should your fortune oppress us?¹⁴

248–249

14 χαίρων ἴθ'· εἰ γὰρ μὴ βεβούλευσαι καλῶς
αὐτός, πιέζειν σὴν τύχην ἡμᾶς τί δεῖ;
I follow Headlam's conjecture in the second line.

Why indeed should Athens not adopt an isolationist stance—as the historical Sparta famously did: its expulsion of foreigners is one symptom of this.¹⁵ Indeed, according to the conventions of ancient supplication identified by F.S. Naiden in his important revisionist book of 2006, Theseus would be perfectly within his rights to reject the suppliants. ‘The gods ... do not punish mortals’, argues Naiden, ‘for rejecting suppliants, and mortals follow the gods’ lead. This conclusion emerges especially from the rejection of those requesting burial ...’¹⁶ Yet Theseus’ initial rejection has stirred modern writers to indignation. Mastronarde dubs the rejection ‘a surprising, even shocking development’.¹⁷ Mills finds that in initially denying his help, he is behaving ‘like an inflexible Theban’.¹⁸ But we should remember that the play was performed before an audience which in the second half of the fifth century ‘put up a police station at the entrance to the Acropolis with the clear aim of keeping undesirable suppliants away from the sanctuaries in the fortress’.¹⁹

There is one respect, however, in which Theseus does Adrastus far less than justice. As we have seen, the latter became involved in the campaign against Thebes through his support of his son-in-law, the Theban exile Polynices. Theseus appears shocked when he discovers that the Argive king had married his daughters to foreigners (135; cf. 220–228).²⁰ But Adrastus was simply falling in with the god Apollo’s oracle that he should marry his daughters to a boar and a lion. Tydeus and Polynices had arrived at his house and started fighting; and a scholiast tells us that the blazon on the former’s shield was the Calydonian boar while that on the latter’s was the lion-faced Sphinx.²¹ Witnessing their animalistic conflict (146), Adrastus had come to the reasonable conclusion that these were the sons-in-law referred to in Apollo’s oracle. He is surely wrong to consider the god’s pronouncement enigmatic (138). What else could it have meant?

15 Thuc. 2.39.1. See also Thuc. 1.144.2; Ar. *Birds* 1012–1013, Pl. *Prt.* 342a–d.

16 Naiden (2006) 146; burial: Hom. *Il.* 22.337–360, Aeschin. 1.99. In a famous article published in *JHS* in 1973, J. Gould argued that if a suppliant got his approach to the person supplicated and his subsequent gestures right, he was likely to be successful. Naiden, who bases his argument on the whole of Greek and Latin literature as well as the bible, disputes this. Rejection or acceptance, he argues, would depend on the nature of the appeal and the record of the suppliant, among other factors.

17 Mastronarde (1986) 203.

18 Mills (1997) 108.

19 Sinn (2000) 161; Wernicke (1891) 51–57; *IG* 1 Suppl. 26A.

20 Kovacs (1996) 73–76 would wish to exclude 222–245 (apart from 229 and 231) of Theseus’ speech. I find his arguments less than persuasive. Certainly, if the view of the play that I am advancing here is a just one, the lines fit well into its schema.

21 Scholiast on Eur. *Phoen.* 409.

Adrastus' blunder lay not in marrying his daughters to non-Argives but, as he frankly admits, in his going to war against the advice of the prophet Amphiaraus and under pressure from young men (154–160; cf. 230–232). Theseus completely fails to see the former point. To his shocked initial reaction, he adds that in marrying his daughters to foreigners Adrastus had wounded his house, mingling its brightness with mud (221–223). I have suggested elsewhere that behind Theseus' adherence to the concept of racial purity there may lie Pericles' marriage legislation of 451 BC which laid it down that Athenian citizenship should be confined to persons of citizen birth on both sides.²² Whether or not that is the case, Theseus is certainly evincing a narrow nationalism. He will be educated out of this in the course of the play and emerge as a truly Panhellenic figure.

Now that he has agreed to get the bodies from the Thebans, Theseus asserts his democratic credentials. He presents himself at one and the same time as the king of Athens and the creator of its democracy (352–353).²³ He is unwilling to embark on an undertaking in which there is a strong risk of war without the consent of the people (349–351) and he goes off to Athens to gain it,²⁴ taking his mother with him as well as Adrastus, the latter as a kind of stage prop to back up the case for intervention. In various forms the idea of 'Theseus and the city' sounds repeatedly in the course of the play like a musical motto, occurring twelve times (27–28, 114, 246–247, 293, 349, 394, 562, 576, 1168, 1181, 1233). And in their subsequent song, the Chorus appear to be gravely anxious about the city's decision (374–376). Their anxiety reflects their feeling that the Athenians may reject their king's recommendation, i.e. that they are serious about democracy.

Theseus has earlier praised the god who had brought men from chaos and the bestial to civilization (201–213). But though he had remarked on the faculty of reason and the gift of language as a means of communication (203–204), he had not commented on the invention systems of government and of political discourse. Now he has gained the people's support for his proposed action. He, the leader of a democracy, is about to intervene in the affairs of Thebes, a tyranny. The democratic motif had been established at the end of the previous scene and had evoked an emotional response from the Chorus. It is thus highly appropriate that we should at this point be confronted with a debate (the play's

22 Morwood (2012); *Ath. Pol.* 26.4.

23 For ancient and modern authorities who feel that there is no problem about seeing king Theseus as the founder of democracy, see Morwood (2007) 9.

24 His action here is in line with the American Declaration of Independence of 1776 which affirmed that legitimate governments 'derive their just powers from the consent of the governed'.

agôn) between Theseus, whom we have seen portrayed as the founder and passionate proponent of Athenian democracy, and a cocky Theban herald who offers a justification of tyranny (399–456). This is one of the Urtexts of political theory, but it seems to me that modern scholars have too often failed to look at it with the objectivity that it deserves. We can readily leave on one side those who have played the simplistic game of identifying the play's Theseus with political figures from the second half of the fifth century, viz. Pericles, Alcibiades and Nicias.²⁵ However, there is a rather more serious problem in the modern readings of this debate. In his advocacy of tyranny, the Theban herald makes some criticisms of democracy. He says (410–425),

πόλις γὰρ ἦς ἐγὼ πάρειμ' ἄπο
 ἑνὸς πρὸς ἀνδρὸς οὐκ ὄχλω κρατύνεται·
 οὐδ' ἔστιν αὐτὴν ὅστις ἐκχαυνῶν λόγοις
 πρὸς κέρδος ἴδιον ἄλλοτ' ἄλλοσε στρέφει,
 τὸ δ' αὐτίχ' ἠδὺς καὶ διδοὺς πολλὴν χάριν
 415 ἐσαυθίς ἔβλαψ', εἶτα διαβολαῖς νέαις
 κλέψας τὰ πρόσθε σφάλματ' ἐξέδου δίκης.
 ἄλλως τε πῶς ἂν μὴ διορθεύων λόγους
 ὀρθῶς δύναιτ' ἂν δῆμος εὐθύνειν πόλιν;
 ὁ γὰρ χρόνος μάθησιν ἀντὶ τοῦ τάχους
 420 κρείσσω δίδωσι. γαπόνος δ' ἀνὴρ πένης,
 εἰ καὶ γένοιτο μὴ ἀμαθῆς, ἔργων ὑπο
 οὐκ ἂν δύναιτο πρὸς τὰ κοῖν' ἀποβλέπειν.
 ἦ δὴ νοσῶδες τοῦτο τοῖς ἀμείνοσιν,
 ὅταν πονηρὸς ἀξίωμ' ἀνὴρ ἔχη
 γλώσση κατασχῶν δῆμον, οὐδὲν ὦν τὸ πρίν.

The city I come from [i.e. Thebes] is ruled by one man, not by a rabble. There is no-one who puffs up the city with his words, twists it now this way, now that for his private gain, and though pleasing and giving much gratification in the short term, later damages it, and then conceals his former blunders behind fresh slanders and evades justice. And besides how could the people direct the city on a straight course if they do not assess speeches correctly? For time, not haste, brings superior knowledge. The poor farmer, even if he were born no fool, would not be able to pay atten-

25 Morrison (1950) 76–77; Goosens (1962) 435, 440–446; Croally (1994) 210; Podlecki (1975–1976) 7–26; Delebecque (1951) 212–213; Michelinì (1997).

tion to politics because of his toil. Yes indeed, it is a plague for the better class of men whenever a man of low class has high esteem, having gained a hold on the people through his speaking, when he was a nobody before.

The last lines of this passage support Harvey Yunis' contention that in the writing of this period the opponents of democracy speak 'with a blatant disdain for the common people who form the vast majority of the citizen population and, therefore, of the decision-making audience in the Assembly and courts'²⁶—and, one can surely add, of the theatre audience as well. One might reasonably suspect that Euripides is here satirizing blimpish attitudes to democracy.²⁷ Good modern scholars, however, such as Collard in 1975, Macleod in 1983, Rehm in 1992 and Micheline in 1994, have tended to feel that the Theban herald scores palpable hits in his attack on Athenian democracy.²⁸ And in 2007, in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre*, Jon Hesk stated that 'the herald's critique underlines certain vulnerabilities and imperfections in popular sovereignty'.²⁹

Of course, in its way this may be true. (It will be argued in the next paragraph that it isn't.) But it strikes me as seriously misleading in suggesting that anyone would expect democracy to be perfect. If there is any justice in the herald's criticisms, the response of adherents of democracy would surely be, 'OK, but so what?' All the evidence suggests that the vast majority of Athenians cherished their democracy.³⁰ Established (arguably) in 508/7 BC and developing along increasingly radical lines, it was interrupted only once before the end of Peloponnesian War. This was in 411 when power was handed over by a depleted assembly to a body of 400, later expanded to 5,000. Within twelve months democracy had been restored. I would have thought that by far the greater part of an Athenian audience could have related to President Kennedy's declaration in Berlin on 26 June 1963: 'Freedom has many difficulties and democracy is not perfect, but we never had to put up a wall to keep our people in'. And they might have seen the force of Churchill's words to the House of Commons

26 Yunis (1996) 39.

27 See Morwood (2007) n. at 409–425, on how the 'conservative clichés roll forth': cf. above all the Old Oligarch *passim*. In an e-mail to me the London *Times* journalist Philip Howard, a former President of the Classical Association, referred to the herald's 'fascistic ranting'.

28 Collard (1975) 211–212; Macleod (1983) 148; Rehm (1992) 127; Micheline (1994) 232.

29 Hesk (2007) 80. Hesk does acknowledge that 'the Athenian who watches this debate is undoubtedly having his democratic way of life affirmed'.

30 It may have paid for their seats in the theatre (Plut. *Per.* 9), though there is of course doubt about when the *theōrika* was instituted.

on 11 Nov. 1947: 'No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time'. *Of course*, democracy is by its nature imperfect. It is surely decidedly odd that anyone should think otherwise. Theseus himself, the great advocate of this form of government in *Supplikes*, candidly acknowledges some of its problems at 232–243. I find it hard to believe that the confidence in democracy of the vast majority of Euripides' audience would have been in any way undermined by the herald's reactionary clichés.³¹

Let us consider how an Athenian audience might in fact have responded to them. Their hackles would surely have risen at the outset at the herald's breathtaking impertinence as he starts to argue with the great king of Athens instead of simply doing his job by delivering his message (426–428). Then they would have reacted badly to his praise of tyranny. For not only at every meeting of the assembly was a curse pronounced against whoever intended to become a tyrant or to join in restoring the tyranny,³² but also, in the highly relevant context of the City Dionysia, a decree was read out annually, probably through most of the fifth century, proclaiming a reward for killing any of the tyrants.³³ While the curse and the decree may have appeared increasingly anachronistic as the century progressed, Dunbar is surely right to say that 'the threat of a return of tyrants ... continued to haunt Athens for many years'.³⁴ And then just how much justice *is* there in the herald's criticisms of democracy? The view of the demagogues which he advances in 412–417, that they are self-serving politicians who carry favour with the people through flattery, is now viewed as outdated and mistaken.³⁵ In his comedy *Knights* (424), probably produced about the same time as *Suppliant Women*, Aristophanes certainly echoes the view that politicians use unscrupulous flattery, but then, at 1111–1150 for example, his text

31 The passage contains 'many of the standard charges against the demagogue' [Yunis (1996) 39].

32 See *Ar. Thesm.* 338–339 with Sommerstein's note at 331–351.

33 See *Ar. Av.* 1074–1075 with Dunbar's note *ad loc.*; Wilson (2009) 23–26.

34 For a summary of the evidence for tyranny as a live issue at Athens throughout the fifth century, see Seaford (2000) 34–35. See also Wilson (2009) 10–16: adducing a decree of the Athenian demos (*IG* 1–3 102) 'so familiar to students of fifth-century democracy yet never introduced into discussion of the history of the theatre' (p. 10), he shows how in 409 the city Dionysia had been the momentous occasion for a set of highly politicized rituals, the taking of the oath of Demophantus against anti-democrats by the assembled citizenry and the announcement of honours for Thrasybulus of Calydon, the assassin of the oligarch Phrynichus, architect and leading agent of the anti-democratic revolution of 411.

35 For a full argument to support this see Morwood (2009).

contradicts the herald's next point about the political ignorance of the people (*Supp.* 418–420).³⁶ As for the criticism of the farmer's lack of political expertise (420–421), in the context of the 420s it could well be an unjust charge.³⁷ For the first half of the Archidamian War the country population had usually been cooped up in the city during the summer and they would, of course, have been able to attend the assembly with no difficulty. Indeed, their presence may have been significant enough to influence the style of public speaking there, since 'war-time conditions in the 420s, above all the larger assembly attendances resulting from the evacuation of Attica, may have called for different and more strident oratorical techniques'.³⁸ Finally, we have already seen how in the last three lines of the speech the herald displays what Yunis refers to as 'blatant disdain for the common people who form the vast majority of the citizen population'.³⁹ His hostile analysis may well be as unfounded—or at the least as tendentious—as it is prejudiced, and an alienated audience may have felt that his criticisms were not palpable hits but bosh shots.⁴⁰

This is a matter of some dramatic importance. In his response Theseus does not argue with any of the herald's specific attacks, and so, if they do indeed underline 'vulnerabilities and imperfections in popular sovereignty', his failure to answer them will lend them credence. If, on the other hand, the audience feels that they are rebarbatively or/and comically blimpish, unproven or simply wrong, the democratic king's speech in reply can ring out with the superbly resonant assertiveness which Milton clearly identified in it when he made 438–441 the epigraph of his *Areopagitica*, translating the lines:

This is true Liberty when free born men
Having to advise the public may speak free,
Which he who can, and will, deserv's high praise,

36 See Carter (2007) 125–126.

37 Collard (1975) *ad* 420–422 comments that there is 'exactly the right tone of sarcastic condescension in this criticism of part-time politics by common farmers, one familiar to Athenian ears but actively countered in the fifth century by Protagoras (*Pl. Prt.* 322d–323b) and Pericles especially (*Thuc.* 2.40.2)'. Dicaeopolis in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (425) is just such a countryman forced to stay in the city. One of the comic poet's most sympathetic characters, he is first to arrive at the assembly and understands its procedures well. His name means 'honest citizen'.

38 Hornblower (1991) 346, following D.M. Lewis.

39 Yunis (1996) 39.

40 Later in the scene, the herald observes that when the people vote on war, no-one thinks about his own death (481–485). Yet, as Carter (2007) 126 observes, citing Finley (1983) 60–61, 'it could be presented as one of the *strengths* of democracy that the very people who might be risking their lives in battle chose whether or not to declare war'.

Who neither can nor will may hold his peace;
 What can be juster in a State than this?

Far from evading the herald's critique, Theseus can trump it magnificently. The episode surely gives strong endorsement to the description of the play by Aristophanes of Byzantium in his hypothesis as 'an encomium of Athens'.

But before we leave this scene, we should remark on one of its most remarkable features. Adrastus has been totally silent for 114 lines and then breaks in to deliver an enraged onslaught on the herald. He gets no further than his second word before Theseus cuts him off:

σῖγ', Ἄδραστ', ἔχε στόμα,
 καὶ μὴ πῖπροσθεν τῶν ἐμῶν τοὺς σοὺς λόγους
 θῆς. οὐ γὰρ ἤκει πρὸς σέ κηρύσσων ὄδε
 ἀλλ' ὡς ἔμ'.
 513–516

Silence, Adrastus, keep your mouth shut and don't place your words before mine. For this man has not come with his message to you but to me.

I can find no parallel in surviving tragedy for Theseus' brutal interruption.⁴¹ It is uniquely offensive and Adrastus does indeed remain silent for the rest of the scene. Then, before he leads his army to Thebes, Theseus inflicts another humiliation on the Argive, telling him to remain behind. 'Do not mingle your fortunes with mine', he remarks (591–592), recalling his earlier words to Adrastus when rebuking him for contracting exogamous marriages for his daughters (223–227). Theseus is, of course, magnificent, but after his earlier racism⁴² his continuing disdain for Adrastus may leave us with the feeling that this youthful king (190, 283, 580) still has his limitations.

The song of the Chorus which follows covers the time of Theseus' expedition to Thebes. They divide into two half-Choruses, one of which feels fearful

41 At Soph. *OC* 654 Theseus cuts short a sentence of Oedipus, telling him not to teach him what to do. But this is part of a sympathetic exchange. The closest parallel is at *Hec.* 1283 when Agamemnon tells Polymestor to shut his mouth; but latter comes back with the remark that he has said all he wants to say (1284).

42 That Athenians were capable of racism in their view of their fellow Greeks is suggested by the mocking episode with the Megarian (792–835) in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (425 BC). The Boeotians are a constant butt of Attic comedy, e.g. Cratinos *PCG* 77–78, Pherecrates *PCG* 171 ('if you've got a brain, steer clear of Boeotia'), Strattis *PCG* 49. Plutarch wrote that the people of Attica used to call 'us Boeotians thick-witted and imperceptive and foolish' (*Mor.* 12.995E).

mistrust of the gods while the other is more confident of success. This division of the Chorus is a striking effect, only found in *stasima* here, at Eur. *Or.* 1258 ff. and (arguably) at *Hipp.* 1102–1150. Even if it may have been Euripides' intention overall to make the women's keening relentless and oppressive, he varies the ways in which it is expressed with considerable dramatic and musical resourcefulness. While the two *kommoi* (794–837, 1114–1164) are largely iambic like this *stasimon*, they will surely have sounded very different, the first in antiphony with a presumably baritone or bass Adrastus, the second with tenor or even alto or treble boys.⁴³

A Messenger now arrives with news of Theseus' conquest of the Thebans. His vivid and exciting account conveys the grisly violence of the close-run battle and culminates in his recollection of how, when the enemy eventually fled, he shouted the victory shout and danced with joy and clapped his hands (719–720). He gives us a grimly saturnine glimpse of Creon, the king of Thebes, and, of course, a dazzling portrait of Theseus, who tries to settle the issue without conflict until the very last minute (668–674: Creon fails to respond)⁴⁴ and then provides inspirational leadership during the fighting (707–717), 'Such', the Messenger concludes, 'is the general one should choose, one who is courageous in terrible situations and who hates an insolent people which, seeking amid success to reach the topmost rungs of the ladder, destroys the prosperity which it could have enjoyed.' (726–730)

Adrastus, so far silent during the Messenger's appearance, now speaks. He had, of course, led his army to total defeat at the hands of these same Thebans and is understandably demoralized by the implicit contrast between the triumphant Theseus and himself. He shows no joy at the Athenian victory—which will, of course, lead to the restitution of the corpses—and resorts to gloomy moral reflection (734–749). He is deep in a slough of despond.

Adrastus now questions the Messenger about the bodies. The latter admirably informs him that Theseus brought them back onto Athenian territory (759) and washed them, laid them out and covered them with his own hands (763–767). It seems that he has learnt a lesson in humanity, moving beyond his previous narrow view that bad fortune is infectious (223–228, 591–593). He had, of course, started to free himself from a hermetically sealed nationalism far earlier. After the supplication of the Chorus and the urging of his mother, both of whom point the way (277, 311), Theseus found himself thinking in Panhellenic terms (340–341, 538, 561–563), twice asserting his wish to preserve the custom

43 Cf. Vinh (2011) 330.

44 Cf. Adrastus' expression of regret that the Argives did not make peace with Eteocles when he was willing to agree to it on moderate terms (739–740).

of all the Greeks (526–527, 671–672 (via a herald)). And of course he has led an Athenian army and fought a great battle in order to preserve the Panhellenic law. The verb ἀγαπάω that the Messenger uses in 764 to describe his treatment of the Theban dead is glossed by Collard as ‘tended’, but as his note makes clear it means rather more than that: it also conveys the emotions of honour and affection.⁴⁵ He *cares* about the war dead and his treatment of them sets the capstone on his rejection of narrow Athenocentrism. His heart now seems a surer guide than the words on which he had previously relied, and his new-found generosity of spirit will be the key to his characterization for the rest of the play.

Adrastus leaves the stage to greet the corpses, and then, in the shortest *stasimon* in surviving Greek tragedy (778–793), the Chorus first sing of their conflicting emotions. While they acknowledge that to see their dead children will be a good spectacle, the prospect of their arrival throws them into despair. Then they give way to total desolation as they express the wish that they had never married or had children. Adrastus now re-enters with the bodies and, in the first *kommos* he and the Chorus sing unrestrainedly of their bitter grief (794–836).

The great-hearted Theseus now reappears and begins a process of rehabilitation for Adrastus. Behaving towards him with the utmost magnanimity, he asks him to give the funeral oration over the dead heroes (838–843). Thus at the king of Athens’ request the king of Argos pays tribute on Attic soil to his fellow Argives as well as the Arcadian Parthenopaeus and the Aetolian Tydeus. I see no call for an ironic/satirical reading of the oration (857–917).⁴⁶ Theseus asks Adrastus to answer the question of how these man came to be pre-eminent in courage (841–842). This the Argive does, adding personal and/or civic information and observing the *de mortuis nil nisi bonum* principle which was, according to Plutarch (*Sol.* 21.1), enshrined in the law which Solon bequeathed to the Athenians. But whatever the tone of the oration, it serves as an emblem of Hellenic integration; and this is confirmed when Theseus adds his own tributes to the Argive Amphiaraus and the Theban Polynices (925–931). A custom unique to

45 Cf. Mastronarde’s note on *Phoen.* 1327 with scholiast’s note, and Allan’s note on *Hel.* 937.

46 For a summary of the very different critical responses to the speech, see Morwood (2007) *ad* 857–917. For satirical/ironical interpretations, see especially Greenwood (1953) 92–120; Fitton (1961) 437–440; Smith (1966) 162–164; Gamble (1970) 403–404; Mendelsohn (2002) 187–196. For positive readings, see Zuntz (1955) 13–16, 19, 23, 24; Collard (1972); Morwood (2007); Storey (2008) 65–70; Mastronarde (2010) 82; Vinh (2011) 242; Daneš (2012) 132–136. For a middle way—Adrastus’ speech reflects the tension between the truth reported by tragedy and the ideal of the funeral oration—see Grethlein (2003) 173–174.

Athens (Thuc. 2.34.2–6, Dem. 20.141) which involved the people (including the women, as in our play) gathering in Kerameikos, the graveyard of Athens, to hold a public funeral for citizens who had died in combat is here replicated. Adrastus, the orator, and the seven dead warriors to whom he and Theseus pay tribute are transmuted by dramatic alchemy into Athenian citizens.

The Argive mothers are not permitted to approach their son's bodies (941–947), which are now carried off to be cremated. At this point the Chorus break out into despairing song: 'My life is no life', they sing, 'but like some wandering cloud I flit to and fro, driven by cruel winds ... Tears are all that are left for me'. (960–971). There now follows one of the most extraordinary scenes in Greek tragedy. Evadne, attired presumably in a wedding dress (1054–1056), rushes onto the cliff above the temple, in terms of staging the roof of the *skênê*, ecstatically intending to fling herself on the funeral pyre of her beloved husband Kapaneus. This 'totally unprepared entry'⁴⁷ is astonishing in a number of ways. It is one of the very small number of occasions in Greek tragedy when a human character, as opposed to a divinity, appears aloft (the others in Euripides are Antigone and the Servant at *Phoen.* 88 ff., Orestes, Pylades and Hermione at *Or.* 1567—and, on the crane, Medea at 1317, Bellerophon at *Bellerophon* F 306–308, and Perseus at *Andromeda* F 124). Secondly, after the Chorus' sung *stasimon* (955–979) and their chanted anapaests, the audience will be expecting the next scene to be in spoken iambic trimeters, the regular metre of the non-choral parts of Greek tragedy. Instead they are given the wild ecstasy of Evadne's monody, sung in the aeolic rhythm. Thirdly, the wedding dress of this frenzied new arrival will make a startling contrast with the mourning garb of the Argive women.⁴⁸

The horror of Evadne's leap onto her husband's pyre is given further emphasis by the arrival of her old father Iphis, who tries ineffectually to dissuade her from suicide. Both he and the Chorus are appalled by her self-immolation (1072–1079). And she has indeed resorted to a very un-Greek way of demonstrating her fidelity. Her suttee (a Sanskrit word referring to a Hindu widow who immolates herself on her husband's pyre or, as here, the act of self-immolation itself) suggests uncontrolled Eastern behaviour.⁴⁹ In a grimly despairing speech

47 Allan (2000) 72: cf. Taplin (1977) 11 n. 3. Rutherford (2012) 259–260 writes perceptively of this scene. See also Chong-Gossard (2008) 213–227 for an illuminating analysis of the Evadne/Iphis exchange.

48 Is Rehm (1994) 112 going too far when he writes that 'As far as we know, nothing like [the Evadne scene] ever took place in fifth-century tragedy before or after *Supplikes*, and it would be hard to find a more theatrically daring moment in the history of the stage'? It is certainly a tremendous *coup de théâtre*.

49 Morwood (2002) 34. The editor of this volume feels very differently about the presenta-

(1080–1113), Iphis laments his desolation and determines to starve himself to death. We may feel that Evadne's ecstatic suicide and her father's total negativity scarcely seem healthy responses to the tragic losses they have suffered.⁵⁰

The Chorus of boys now enter, carrying the ashes of their now cremated fathers. There is an interesting correspondence here between actors and the original Athenian audience. In one of the ceremonies performed in the theatre at the outset of the dramatic festival of the Dionysia, a herald would lead into the theatre the Athenian orphans whose fathers had died in war. They would be clad in full armour. The herald would then declare that these young men had been brought up to adulthood by the people, who have now clad them in armour and are sending them on their way with prayers for success. After that, they would be invited to sit in the front seats of the theatre (Isoc. *De Pace* 82, Aeschin., *In Ctes.* 154). In a remarkable *coup de théâtre*, these orphans in the front seats now find themselves represented onstage. This is not only an arresting instance of a civic ceremony directly impinging on a play which it preceded;⁵¹ it also adds a powerful tragic charge, especially to the lines where the sons in the play wonder whether they will ever take up their shields to repay their father's murder (1143–1144, 1150), for the orphans in the front seats are dressed in full armour.⁵²

In the play's second *kommos* (1123–1164), the boys join with their grandmothers in intense lamentation. Here we are confronted with a significant problem of staging. The grieving women express the desire to clasp their sons' ashes to their breasts (1159) and Adrastus had promised them this at 948–949. Do they ever do so? I have argued elsewhere [Morwood (2007) 231–232] that they do not. Earlier in the play, when the corpses were onstage before their cremation, Adrastus had invited the Argive mothers to approach the corpses of their sons (941) but Theseus had forestalled this in order to spare them the extra grief (946) of looking on their mutilated sons: 'they would die if they saw these disfigured bodies', 944. It is, of course, possible to argue along with Foley and others that Theseus 'seems to be at pains to take control of the funerary rites for the

tion of Evadne. He argues that Evadne's self-immolation is symbolic of the semi-divine status of the war dead which deserves human sacrifice. Thus, the Evadne scene is a striking instance of intermingling between the human and the divine [cf. Markantonatos (2012) 27–32].

50 Vinh (2011) 332 writes illuminatingly of the musical ensemble here.

51 Goldhill (1987/1990). For the scholarly debate on this issue, see Carter (2004) 1–25; Wilson (2011) 30–32.

52 It appears that Rehm (1988) 290 n. 103, was the first to draw attention to this correspondence.

champions [from the women] in a striking fashion'.⁵³ I would prefer to accept that he means what he says.

Indeed, what is going on here strikes me as rather more interesting than a straightforward assumption of control by the Athenian king. We surely have a reflection of the Athenian mourning legislation which sought to tame the excesses of female grief at funerals. In geometric and archaic Greece, funeral rites had become 'costly and filled with lamentations' (Cicero, *On the Laws* 2.63–64). Among the laws passed to restrict such excess was Solon's (Athens, early sixth century BC) which forbade mourners to lacerate their flesh, to recite set lamentations, and to lament one person at the funeral of another (Plut. *Sol.* 21.4, Dem. 43.62). H.A. Shapiro cites evidence from fifth-century vases which suggests that the legislation was successfully enforced and assimilated.⁵⁴ For example, women no longer tear at their hair or lacerate their flesh.

Certainly the Chorus of Argive women in our play are far from economical in their wailing, they tear their flesh (49–51, 76–77, 826), they pour dust over their heads (826–827), they have cut their hair (973–974) and they have given their mourning the maximum publicity by obtruding on an Eleusinian festival. In view of all this, it is possible that Theseus' wish to spare the women further paroxysms of grief (944, 946) indicates that their continuing keening has so far been certainly un-Athenian and probably un-Greek, thus relating the Chorus' lamentations to Evadne's Eastern act of *suttee*.

And yet it may be that after Adrastus' funeral speech the Argive women become more Attic in their mourning. As we have seen, Theseus spares them the most intolerable extreme of grief (914–916) and their physical expression of their sorrow seems to become less violent after the oration: after 827 they no longer talk of tearing their flesh or of pouring dust over their heads, even in their second great *kommos* of lamentation. They are appalled by Evadne's hysterical suicide (1072). Then in their final lines, in total contrast to Evadne and Iphis, they appear to have come to terms with their loss and can move on into the future. The second half of the play makes significant use of the motif of education (841–842, 842–843, 902–903, 911, 913–914, 914–917, 1026–1030). However incompletely, the women of Argos have learnt a lesson in female Attic mourning in the Periclean era. Like Adrastus they have been assimilated to Athenian ways of thought and behaviour.

At the same time as the Argives have been schooled to Attic attitudes, Theseus had left behind his limited Athenocentrism and become a Panhellenic fig-

53 Foley (2001) 39; cf. Scully (1996/7) 77; Mendelsohn (2002) 23.

54 Shapiro (1991) 649–650. My discussion here is an abbreviation of Morwood (2007) 242–244.

ure. They have all received an entirely beneficial education in new and broader modes of thought. In the play's final scene Theseus sends the Argives on their way with noble and heartening words (1165–1175) and Adrastus responds in kind:

Θησεῦ, ξύνισμεν πάνθ' ὅσ' Ἀργεῖαν χθόνα
 δέδρακακας ἐσθλὰ δεομένην εὐεργετῶν
 χάριν τ' ἀγήρων ἔξομεν: γενναῖα γὰρ
 παθόντες ὑμᾶς ἀντιδρᾶν ὀφείλομεν.

1176–1179

Theseus, we are conscious of all the many good deeds you have done for the Argive land, doing it good service in its need, and we shall feel a gratitude that does not grow old. For we have met with noble treatment and have an obligation to pay you back in kind.

We have seen the Athenian and the Argive move from tense antipathy to respectful harmony.

The play does not in fact find rest in Theseus' great-hearted statesmanship. Athena appears *ex machina* and instructs him to extract an oath of perpetual alliance from Adrastus. She also makes it clear that before very long the cycle of warfare will continue with the revenge of boys (the Epigonoι) once they have come to adulthood (1213–1226). While Theseus' nobility of spirit had for a moment looked as if it could solve all the problems, the goddess sounds a note of harsh reality. You cannot trust people unless they are bound by an oath. Warfare is ineradicably endemic in the human experience. Athena's intervention is true to the harsh facts of Greek myth and history. Yet in her demand that Adrastus should swear that the Argives will never attack Athens and will help the city if others do, she is working against the hard-won sense of mutual respect and obligation at which the two kings have arrived (1165–1182). While the men are employing the language of reciprocal *charis* (Theseus uses the word at 1169, Adrastus at 1178),⁵⁵ the goddess, as Zuntz observes, demands that Argos subscribe to a 'wholly one-sided obligation such as in reality could only be dictated to a completely vanquished enemy'.⁵⁶ She is in fact evincing an assertive Athenocentrism which insists on this grossly asymmetrical relationship with another nation; and when she goes on to foretell the renewal of

55 For the use and abuse of this concept, see Wohl (1998) 152–158 (a discussion of Eur. *Alc.*).

56 Zuntz (1955) 75. The alliance actually contracted between Athens and Argos in 420 BC was, in contrast, totally reciprocal (Tod 72 = *IG* 1–3 83).

warfare, that Athenocentrism is linked with the knowledge of yet more tragic killings of Greeks by Greeks. We had glimpsed the boys' violent future at 1149–1151; now Athena spells it out. The chilling asexual goddess at the end of the play makes a strong contrast with Aethra, the sympathetic mother figure (see especially 55–57) who opened it. The contrast, heightened perhaps by the fact that they were played by the same actor, does not work in the goddess' favour.

Theseus, of course, says that he will obey her words (1227) and the Chorus are not reluctant to swear their oath (1232–1233). Yet on the final count the great-heartedness of Theseus' new-found Panhellenism cannot be cancelled out. Indeed, while the Chorus in their concluding epode look back to Athena's words at 1187, their use of the infinitive *σέβεσθαι* (to revere—the final word of the play) recreates the tone of elevated respect of the exchange between Theseus and Adrastus before the goddess' appearance (1165–1182):

στείχωμεν, Ἄδρασθ', ὄρκια δῶμεν
 τῷδ' ἀνδρὶ πόλει τ' ἄξια δ' ἡμῖν
 προμεμοχθήκασι σέβεσθαι.

1232–1234

Let us go, Adrastus, let us give our oaths to this man and [his] city. For what they have done on our behalf with so much toil is worthy of our reverence.

In this tightly-knit play, the Argives are schooled in Athenian values on Attic soil while Theseus remains very decidedly the king of Athens. Indeed it is highly appropriate that all the characters should go off to Athens at the end of the play to swear their oath—an apt conclusion to a work dubbed (as we have seen) 'a praise of Athens' in the ancient hypothesis. However, Theseus too has learnt key lessons. He has won through to a Panhellenic generosity of spirit and he now follows the dictates not simply of spoken words⁵⁷ but—in a process inaugurated at 288 and movingly confirmed at 764—of his human heart. In the course of the play the great hero has become a great man.

57 See n. 9.

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Heracles

Markus Dubischar

1 Introduction

It is one of the ironies of textual transmission that Euripides' *Heracles* owes its 'immortality' (if this is what we may call the play's survival) not to the heroism or greatness of its protagonist but instead to the banal fact that his name in Greek begins with the letter *êta*. This secured a place for *Heracles* in a fortuitously preserved section—comprising ten tragedies whose titles begin with the letters *epsilon*, *êta*, or *iôta*—of what was once an alphabetically arranged complete edition of the works of Euripides.¹ Considering, in addition, that the name 'Hera' forms the first part of the name 'Heracles'² and that the *êta* is therefore originally Hera's, it turns out, as a further irony, that Zeus' wife helped preserve the Euripidean *Heracles*.

As a superhumanly strong son of Zeus, monster-slayer, villain-killer, and champion of civilization, Heracles is categorically different from and 'larger' than the characters that typically populate the Greek tragic stage. It is for this reason, it seems, that the Athenian playwrights did not often make this overdimensioned figure a central character in their tragedies.³ It is therefore all the more noteworthy that, in *Heracles*, Euripides does not sidestep the 'hugeness' that defines this hero but rather embraces it, making it the thematic centre of this daring and 'baffling' tragedy.⁴

We have no external information about the date of *Heracles* because scholia and erudite (not simply paraphrasing) *hypotheses* going back to Alexandrian scholarship are not preserved for the 'alphabetic' plays. The tragedy's metrical features, our most reliable internal evidence, suggest that Euripides composed the play sometime between *Electra* (probably 422–417 BC) and *Troades* (415 BC).⁵ The title of this tragedy is *Heracles*; the alternative *Heracles main-*

1 Snell (1935).

2 Cf. Stafford (2012) 8–9, esp. on Pindar fr. 291 SM.

3 Silk (1985) 3–5; Stafford (2012) 79–80.

4 On 'bafflement', see Buxton (2013) 166–172; see also Revermann (2008) 110–111 and 113–114 about the 'appeal of bigness' and 'extreme theater'; related also Hall (2007) 144–148.

5 Bond (1981) xxxi–ii; Barlow (1996) 180.

omenos (*The Mad Heracles*) is a later specification that entered the textual tradition partly in analogy to Seneca's *Hercules furens*.⁶

When Albin Lesky took stock of Euripidean scholarship in the early 1970s, he identified four areas as crucial to the understanding of *Heracles*: the play's structure, the cause for and root of the hero's madness, the role of the gods in this tragedy, and the figure of Theseus and his relationship with Heracles.⁷ These topics and the debates they provoke have lost nothing of their importance. Since then, however, further interpretive issues have risen to prominence. One of them, sociologically oriented, is the tension in *Heracles* between 'traditional' (Homeric, aristocratic, heroic) and 'modern' (secular, democratic, cooperative) norms and values in late fifth-century Athens.⁸ Another, falling under the study of intertextuality, is the relationship between the Euripidean *Heracles* and its mythological and literary 'sources' as well as the play's later reception.⁹ These topics have continued to dominate the discussions of this tragedy in more recent times,¹⁰ with a notable intensification of explorations of *Heracles'* intertextual ties.¹¹ In addition, a considerable number of publications now offer comprehensive interpretations of the play as a whole.¹² Finally, going beyond *Heracles* in particular, scholars have also cast a broader look on the roles this multi-faceted hero plays as a half-god or *hērōs* in Greek myth, cult, religion, and in the visual arts.¹³

Preceding scholarship on *Heracles* along these lines may provide a starting point for future work on this play in many different directions. This contribution, however, will now focus on a particular topic that has become ripe for systematic investigation and is important for our understanding of Euripides' *Heracles*. It is a two-fold topic, as it were, comprising two closely interrelated issues: first, the appropriateness or inappropriateness of a 'critical reading' approach for *Heracles* and, second, Euripides' representational strategy of *amplificatio* that he systematically pursues in this tragedy. Both will have important exegetical implications for the play as a whole.

6 Wilamowitz (1959) 1.211–212.

7 Lesky (1972) 379–381.

8 Cf. the survey of scholarship in Schrieffl (2005) 330–331.

9 Schrieffl (2005) 361–364.

10 For the years 2001–2005, see 'bibliographisches addendum' in Hose (2005) 718–719.

11 Burzacchini (2002); Kirkpatrick/Dunn (2002); Padilla (2002); Riley (2008); Gärtner (2012); Wyles (2013).

12 Papadopoulou (2005); Griffiths (2006); Hose (2008) 101–114; Hall (2010) 264–268; Mastronarde 2010 [for particular plays best accessible through the index]; Buxton (2013) 166–172; Lawrence (2013) esp. 245–267; Lefkowitz, (2016) 49–76.

13 Galinsky (1972); Uhlenbrock (1986); Griffiths (2006) 15–29; Van den Hoff (2009); Bezner (2010); Stafford (2012).

2 The Seeming Simplicity of *Heracles*

The reason why in the scholarship on *Heracles* the ‘critical reading’ approach has enjoyed some prominence seems to lie in a peculiar feature of this tragedy, its seeming simplicity. In several important aspects *Heracles* presents itself as a remarkably straightforward and uncomplicated play. Not that it *is*—on the contrary, it is as sophisticated and complex a tragedy as one would expect from this poet. But *Heracles*’ plot, formal composition, and cast of characters all contain a striking number of simple and plain elements that must be pointed out before other issues can be discussed.

The plot of this tragedy is more or less single-stranded. Its complications come in the form of no less than three reversals (*peripeteiai*).¹⁴ They are all externally initiated and brought about by entries—of Heracles, Iris and Lyssa, and Theseus—for whose integration into the play Euripides relies on the basic plot devices of suspense and surprise. The three characters that effect the reversals act in isolation, never meet, and never interact with one another. The tragedy’s second, central *peripeteia* is so massive and disruptive that it has been seen to seriously harm the work’s dramatic unity (see below, section 5). In addition, in the first half of the play the action advances through relatively conventional plot patterns and character configurations, such as an opening altar-flight tableau, ensuing confrontations between the persecutor and his victims, arrival of a rescuer, joyful family reunion, the planning of a revenge intrigue (*mêchanê*), and the intrigue’s successful execution inside the *skênê* resembling here as often a palace.¹⁵ The main focus throughout the tragedy rests on Heracles. He occupies the other characters’ thoughts while he is absent and after his arrival remains the centre of attention and concern.

The formal composition of *Heracles* is also remarkably lucid and straightforward. The first ca. 700 lines closely follow Greek tragedy’s most basic formal structure with a regular alternation of actors’ scenes and choral songs:¹⁶ 1–106 prologue; 107–137 parodos; 138–347 first episode; 348–450 first stasimon; 451–636 second episode; 637–700 second stasimon. The only deviation from this regular pattern is the Chorus’ 17-line speech in the middle of the first episode (252–274). The turbulences in the play’s central section inevitably express themselves in more complicated and agitated structural units.¹⁷ But

14 Seidensticker (1996) 384–385.

15 Cf. Barlow (1996) 5–6 with notes; Mastronarde (2010); similarly, Galinsky (1971) 58–62; in general, see Jens (1971); Collard (1981) 14–16; Dubischar (2017) 370–377.

16 Taplin (1977) 49–60, esp. 55.

17 Dubischar (2017) 381–382.

when the events slow down again, the play falls back to a markedly simple formal structure, for the remainder (1089–1428) consisting of spoken iambic dialogue only once punctuated by a half-lyric amoibaion (1178–1213).

Finally, and most unusually for a Euripidean tragedy, the cast of characters in *Heracles* is surprisingly clear-cut. Their individual roles, the relationships between them, and their moral qualities are sharply delineated. Heracles and his family, although happily united only for a short time, are at the centre of the play, and Heracles forms the dominant centre of that group. The other figures constitute the family's environment and are defined by their attitudes toward Heracles and/or his family. All characters are portrayed in clear and forceful strokes (see in more detail below). Heracles is idealized in many ways, a shining model of noble male heroism. He is strong, a man of action, and boundlessly effective at everything he does. Amphitryon and Megara are brave and noble as well but also pityingly weak and, with Heracles absent, utterly defenceless. The boys are a unit of three whose behaviour and utterances, both reported and staged, express their need for parental and especially fatherly closeness and protection.

The family's environment cleanly falls into two opposite camps, the 'aggressors' and the 'supporters' (see in more detail below). The aggressors, thoroughly hostile and unjust, cause the hero's and his family's undeserved troubles and, eventually, catastrophe: Lycus is a brutal and calculating usurper; his temporary power is absolute but entirely contingent on Heracles' absence. Hera, Heracles' life-long enemy, is ever-vindictive and has willed now to destroy the hero. All-powerful, she acts through subordinates whether they want to (Iris) or not (Lyssa). The supporters, on the other hand, are the Chorus and the idealized young Athenian king Theseus. They do what they can to help Heracles' family and Heracles, but there are limits to what they are able to achieve. The Chorus of Theban men, old and weak like Amphitryon, give emphatic moral support but they cannot effectually intervene. Theseus, by contrast, is in a position to decide and act self-determinedly. But when he arrives, the play's catastrophe has already happened so that he can only help Heracles cope with the consequences.

There is of course much more to *Heracles* than this rather simplistic description reflects. *Heracles* is not a simple play. If anything, its seeming simplicity is deceptive. On the other hand, the preceding description is not false in so far as *Heracles* really does possess the outlined traits. In their sum, they do make *Heracles* a peculiar Euripidean tragedy. Many of this poet's plays have more intricate plots, employ and combine a greater number of complex formal elements, and strive for greater psychological realism and ethical shades of gray rather than black and white. It will be argued here that this peculiar-

ity of *Heracles*, its ‘simplicity’—but it is only a seeming simplicity—has led to the noteworthy continual stream of ‘critical readings’ in the scholarship on this tragedy.

3 In Search of Ambiguity: Critical Readings of *Heracles*

The described aspects concerning plot, composition, and the characters in *Heracles* seem to have elicited two particular kinds of scholarly responses. First, the play has been criticized by some, mostly in the first half of the twentieth century, for its supposed lack of technical sophistication, not only but especially in its stark, inorganic bipartition resulting from the surprising entry of Iris and Lyssa. These criticisms, however, have in the meantime been answered by showing that those unusual features are not flaws but rather intensify the thematic issues arising in *Heracles*.¹⁸

The second noteworthy strand of scholarly responses to the seeming straightforwardness and plainness of *Heracles* may be called ‘critical readings’. They merit closer attention here for two reasons. First, even though this exegetical approach has found a considerable number of proponents in the recent as well as more distant past, their interpretations of *Heracles* have never been viewed together, as a group of studies whose methods and results share essential characteristics. Second, the ‘critical readings’ of this tragedy reliably target issues that are central to its interpretation. Regardless of whether one finds the critical-reading approach productive in the case of *Heracles* or not, an informed understanding of this tragedy and the exegetical discussions surrounding it should take these thought-provoking interpretations into account and come to terms with them.

The many critical readings, it seems, respond to the striking directness and plainness of many aspects of *Heracles* by assuming that the real meaning of key passages of the play lies not in what the characters’ words explicitly say, and that therefore taking characters’ utterances always at face value leads to a naïve and superficial understanding of the passages in question and, ultimately, of the play as a whole. Instead, critical readings assume that Euripides, a sophisticated writer and critical thinker himself, counted on his audience to understand that they should at times, prompted by certain subtle signals, go beyond the text’s explicit sense and pick up on what is said ‘between the lines’. The proponents of this critical-reading approach assume that it alone leads to

18 Bond (1981) xvii–xxvi; see also below, section 5.

an adequate understanding of *Heracles* because only the deliberate reading ‘against the grain’, as they argue, brings out the tragedy’s ambiguities, critical undertones, and complex thematic layers.¹⁹

A condensed overview of a good number of such critical interpretations proposed in the past²⁰ will make things more concrete. Critical readings argue that characters and actions in *Heracles* that are commonly interpreted as virtuous (heroic, brave, noble, pious, loyal, or patriotic) are in fact less so, or perhaps even not so at all. To begin with the tragedy’s most horrific element and central catastrophe, Heracles’ madness and killing of his family: proponents of critical readings have argued that the destructive madness reflects or is rooted in troubling aspects of the hero’s own personality or biography. The eruption of deadly violence has been linked at least in part to one or more of the following causes: to psychologically transferred violent urges against his father;²¹ to a psychological breakdown due to continual overexertion,²² to innate megalomania and delight in destructive violence;²³ to the violent nature of Heracles and the type of heroism he embodies;²⁴ to hubristic self-isolation that sets Heracles at odds with Thebes and the Thebans, whom was also ready to kill;²⁵ to situational and personal similarities between Heracles and Lycus;²⁶ finally, to Heracles’ fatal transgression of boundaries between mortals and gods either in descending to Hades²⁷ or even in many transgressive actions.²⁸

Heracles’ relationship with his family, which is understood by most readers to be positive and close, has also come under critical scrutiny. Heracles

19 This approach is similar to what, especially in the case of the ‘melodramatic’ Euripidean plays—on which, see Marshall (2014) 49–54; also, Mastrorarde (2010) 61–62—has long been known as ‘ironic’ interpretation; e.g., Verrall (1895); Vellacott (1975). On the notion of the ‘divided’ Athenian theatre audience, which serves as one of the justifications for preferring an ‘ironic’ interpretation, see in Roselli (2011) 51–54. The playful connotations, however, of the adjective ‘ironic’ are out of place in *Heracles*. What is at stake here—even according to the proponents of critical readings of this tragedy—are not witty, tongue-in-cheek ironies but, as will be seen momentarily, issues of great moment and gravity. The term ‘critical’ is therefore more appropriate to describe this exegetical approach in the case of *Heracles*.

20 Many are cited by Griffiths (2006).

21 Griffiths (2006) 69 with a misleading reference to Griffith (1998) [see Griffith (1998) 33 n. 43 and 79]; Padilla (1994) 295–296.

22 Desch (1986).

23 Wilamowitz (1895) 127–129, an interpretation Wilamowitz later retracted (1926) 853.

24 Fitzgerald (1991) 91–93.

25 George (1994) 154.

26 Ruck (1976) 57–58; Higgins (1984) 91; Krauss (1998) 142.

27 Griffiths (2002) 648–650; Shelton (1979) 105.

28 Desch (1986); Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 365–366.

has been faulted for neglecting his duties toward his family by putting them in danger when in pursuit of his heroic exploits he leaves them in the care of the aged Amphitryon.²⁹ Heracles has also been diagnosed with an inability to psychologically connect to his family's reality because, caught up in his own romantic pursuit of heroism, he is unable upon his return quickly to understand the family's situation.³⁰ Furthermore, darker and problematic layers have been identified in the relationship between Amphitryon and Heracles that supposedly make this father-son relationship psychologically troublesome.³¹ It has also been pointed out that Heracles by going to Athens will fail to provide the mandatory care (*tropheia*) for his old father, for which the psychological explanation is offered that since Heracles as a child never required support from his father he is now unable to provide it.³² Similarly, the hero's relationship with his children has been argued to be not as close and harmonious as a strictly literal understanding of the text suggests; attention is then drawn to supposed unsettling thematic parallels, such as, that Heracles allowed his children to play with the weapons with which he later kills them, or that by killing his children he sends them to the very place from where he had earlier stolen Cerberus.³³ Heracles' delusion of killing Eurystheus' children has even been interpreted as conveying the hero's repressed hostile feelings against his own sons.³⁴ In an interesting contrast, Heracles has also been criticized for loving only his own children because he is seen happy to kill those of another man.³⁵ The conclusion drawn from all these observations is that Heracles' priorities and life as a hero are incompatible with fulfilling the role of a father in a family.³⁶ This sentiment, however, has also been turned upside down, as it were, in the characterization of Heracles as an ultimately disappointing hero figure because, among other things, upon returning home he quickly loses interest in his public and Panhellenic efforts and only focuses on his family.³⁷

Similarly, the friendship between Heracles and Theseus has also provoked critical responses that question both men's moral quality or moral authority, the nature of their friendship, and the value of Theseus' offer.³⁸ It has

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- 29 Griffiths (2006) 69–70, 112–113.
 30 Grummond (1983) 88–89.
 31 Padilla (1994) 281, 294–295; Griffiths (2006) 70.
 32 Griffiths (2006) 71–72.
 33 Griffiths (2006) 73.
 34 Padilla (1994) 292.
 35 Griffiths (2006) 73.
 36 Griffiths (2006) 74.
 37 Foley (1985) 190.
 38 For the following, see Griffiths (2006) 104–105.

been argued that Heracles' proclamation about the supreme value of friendship (1425–1426) is made questionable by the way it is structurally placed in the play and because Heracles, given his role in this tragedy, may not be a good judge of philosophical issues. The character of Theseus has been seen as tainted as well, partly on account of episodes elsewhere in Greek mythology that show the Athenian hero in a questionable light (abductions of Helen and Hippolyte, desertion of Ariadne, responsibility for Aegeus' death). Even Theseus' extension of hospitality to Heracles has been criticized because, as is argued, welcoming someone who killed his own children is problematic within the play itself and uncomfortably reminds the audience of moral compromises Athens, too, has made in order to acquire and maintain its empire.³⁹ Doubts have also been cast over the nature of the friendship between Heracles and Theseus,⁴⁰ which has been described as lacking a sound moral basis because of both men's ethical deficiencies: it has been questioned whether since Theseus went to the Underworld with Pirithous for foolish if not hubristic reasons (attempting to help Pirithous abduct Persephone), it was even right for Heracles to rescue Theseus in the first place. It has also been seen as problematic that there is no true reciprocity of action between Heracles and Theseus, that the latter, portrayed by Euripides with irony, only superficially understands the situation of the former,⁴¹ that Heracles long rejects Theseus' offer, that Theseus' display of magnanimity lacks authority, and that both men are in the end portrayed as bickering friends.⁴² Finally, it has been claimed that in the conversation between Theseus and Heracles the latter's amoral self-interest and cowardice become noticeable.⁴³

Even Heracles' family has in one instance been criticized for acting with hubris when in the face of Lycus' threats they abandon hope and choose to leave the altar of Zeus even though they are suppliants. Their deaths are then interpreted as this hubris' punishment.⁴⁴

Should all, or even some, of these 'accusations' stand, they would indeed require a fundamental reinterpretation of *Heracles*. However, the methods of critical readings must themselves be examined critically. The problem, to be sure, is not that those who favour the critical-reading approach want to recover

39 Griffiths (2006) 106–110.

40 For the following, see Griffiths (2006) 105–106.

41 Michellini (1987) 261–262.

42 Dunn (1997) 89–91.

43 Fitzgerald (1991) 94.

44 Burnett (1971) 157–164, 181.

the meaning 'intended' by Euripides.⁴⁵ What appears to be problematic, however, is that this approach assumes, as was mentioned above, that the intended meaning of key passages in *Heracles* is not, or not limited to, their face-value or surface meaning, and that Euripides, in these passages, intended to guide the recipient through subtle signals to a very different, or additional, critical meaning. According to the proponents of the critical approach, these signals, which in their opinion have often been overlooked, steer the recipient to different evaluative criteria. These inevitably have their grounding outside the textual passage in question, for instance: in another passage elsewhere in *Heracles*; or in a mythological episode documented elsewhere in Greek literature; or in moral standards (assumedly) shared by Euripides and his audience; or in (assumed) universal human psychological factors. The key postulate for all critical readings, regardless whether this is openly acknowledged or left implicit, is that the meaning drawn from those external *loci* calls into question or even subverts the examined passage's explicit and direct meaning, which, as the proponents of critical interpretation strongly believe, must therefore be rejected.

This line of reasoning is not infrequently complemented by a secondary argumentative or persuasive strategy. It consists in reducing the assertiveness with which the favoured interpretation is phrased by proposing that a certain passage only 'may indicate' or 'seems to suggest' the preferred critical understanding (more elaborate is, 'does seem to indicate a possible criticism'⁴⁶). Such expressions do not add clarity to the argument when, while clearly still insisting on the preferred interpretation, they also indicate that a given passage's face-value meaning is not (or not entirely?) rejected but also remains (partly?) acceptable as an interpretive option (for some, e.g., the less discerning?)⁴⁷ or as a kind of basic (but still acceptable?) sense that is enriched (or inverted?) by an additional layer of critical meaning that is seen to add much needed depth and ambiguity to *Heracles*.

The described method does of course not automatically disqualify this exegetical approach.⁴⁸ Euripides is a sophisticated poet whose technical repertoire

45 On the 'perspective structure' of dramas and, especially important in the present context, the 'reception-perspective intended by the author' see Pfister (1988) 57–68. Cf. also Heath (1987) 30–31, 44–47, and elsewhere on recovering the intended 'meaning' of a Greek tragedy through literary analysis.

46 Griffiths (2006) 70.

47 Vellacott (1975) 4 and elsewhere.

48 Cf. especially Goldhill (1986). For important contributions about, e.g., *Med.* and *Ba.* see Pucci (1980) and Segal (1997), respectively.

certainly contains critical and poignant ironic enrichments and subversions of the explicit meanings of certain text passages. For all four types of irony in serious drama distinguished by Rosenmeyer [(1996) 501–509], examples can easily be found in Euripides. It is certainly not unreasonable to expect in any work of Euripides thematic depth, competing perspectives, ethical ambiguities, and exegetical open-endedness.⁴⁹ The method of critical reading thus appears to be an attempt to reconcile the observable and peculiar plainness and straightforwardness of many aspects of *Heracles* with our justified expectation that Euripides, like good writers in general,⁵⁰ is not interested in producing simplistic and un-nuanced stories but rather aims for complex, rich, and layered representations of reality that in the end may leave the recipient with more open questions than definitive answers. We must ask, however, whether an interpretation of *Heracles* that is primarily based on what the text explicitly says is really bound to be naïve and inadequate, and whether it is really necessary to take recourse to the implicit, to reading ‘between the lines’ and ‘against the grain’ in order to arrive at a worthwhile interpretation.

It will be proposed here that critical reading in fact does not recommend itself as the most productive exegetical approach to *Heracles*. For one, apart from their overall critical tendency, the numerous interpretations summarized above rarely concur and are occasionally even incompatible with one another. Moreover, they target so many different passages and thematic aspects, and they base their exegeses on such a variety of externally adduced criteria,⁵¹ whose validity or relevance, in addition, is sometimes questionable, that the undertaking of attempting to identify and then interpret ‘critical’ signals in *Heracles* appears dishearteningly arbitrary.⁵² Finally, it is hardly plausible that a dramatist, operating under a ‘rigorous economy of means’ as was the case for Athenian tragedy,⁵³ should keep clues on which the play’s interpretation hinges so subtle and oblique that they can easily be—and as the proponents of critical readings claim, for a long time have been—missed by interpreters.⁵⁴

There is no doubt that the themes and questions on which the described critical readings focus are intriguing. They could well be the material for serious drama. However, it will be argued here that a more evenly attentive reading of

49 Mastronarde (2010) esp. 161–206, 222–245, 307–312.

50 Gelfert (2006) 66–72.

51 Recognized even by Griffiths (2006) 87.

52 See also Heath (1987) 53–55; Lefkowitz (2016) 60–65.

53 Seidensticker (2008) 345 in a different context (characterization in Greek tragedy) but his basic tenet applies here as well.

54 See also Stinton (1986) 71 and throughout.

Heracles, to which the critical approach does challenge readers, will show that the text of the play more strongly supports a different interpretation.

4 *Amplificatio* in *Heracles*

Focus on a different compositional principle promises to be heuristically and exegetically more productive than the critical approach discussed so far. The compositional principle in question is that of *amplificatio* (Greek: *auxêsis*), a concept originating in ancient rhetorical theory.⁵⁵ It is important here not so much because of Euripides' well-studied fondness for 'rhetoric' (most conspicuously in his debate scenes)⁵⁶ but rather because rhetorical categories are also helpful for literary analyses of style and presentation in general.⁵⁷ This is especially true for Greek tragedy, a genre so geared to affect the audience both cognitively and emotionally.⁵⁸

Amplificatio, whose prevalence in *Heracles* has not been systematically investigated so far, denotes various methods of enlarging, heightening, intensifying, and thus, in a word, 'amplifying' both cognitively and/or emotionally an idea or a sequence of ideas.⁵⁹ There are four main methods of *amplificatio*, easily identifiable in the following analyses even without, due to space constraints, their explicit labelling each time. The methods of *amplificatio* are: first, placing the *amplificandum* at the end of a rising sequence of thoughts (*incrementum*); second, comparing the *amplificandum* with something already large but still smaller than the *amplificandum* itself (*comparatio*); third, suggesting conclusions about the extreme size or degree of the *amplificandum* from a description of its circumstances (*ratiocinatio*); finally, the amassing of closely related ideas in order to 'hammer home' the intended point concerning the *amplificandum* (*congeries*). In every case, the purpose of *amplificatio* is to express a given idea or sequence of ideas with extraordinary force in the interest of the author's persuasive or literary goals.

The analyses in the sections to follow will attempt to show that *amplificatio* is ubiquitous in *Heracles* and deeply woven into the very fabric of this play from beginning to end. Amplifying methods will be seen to work on two levels. Many of the play's elements are heightened and intensified individually; in

55 Cf. Quintilian *Inst. or.* 8.4.

56 Cf. Lloyd (1992); also Mastrorarde (2010) 222–245.

57 Cf. Lausberg (1990) 9–10 and throughout.

58 Cf. Heath (1987) 11–17 and 37–89.

59 For the following, in addition to Quintilian, cited above, see also Lausberg (1990) 35–39.

addition, their combinations create further amplifying effects that either unidirectionally reinforce one another or violently clash in jarring juxtapositions. Many of the observations presented here concerning *Heracles'* plot, themes, or characters have been made in earlier studies. However, the ways in which these reveal a strong underlying drive toward *amplificatio* and how they work together to create a tight and coherent larger structure of meaning has not yet been systematically explored. The next sections will therefore investigate how Euripides consistently amplifies the three key ideas that form the backbone, so to speak, of this tragedy—the steepness of Heracles' fall, its undeservedness, and the nobility of Theseus' friendship. It will also emerge from these explorations that the observable amplifying strategy does not make *Heracles* a 'simpler' but instead a more difficult and interpretively challenging tragedy, one that repeatedly confronts the recipient with questions, dissonances, and ambiguities arguably more uncomfortable than those that this play's critical readings construct. While present space limitation does not allow for an explicit engagement with the issues raised in those readings, they will all be implicitly addressed in the course of the following three sections.

5 *Amplificatio* of the Steepness of Heracles' Fall

Heracles is boldly and masterfully built around the play's central catastrophe, which both violently breaks the play in two and tightly binds it together.⁶⁰ Euripides gives this catastrophe the structural and thematic weight that it therefore requires by heavily emphasizing the enormous steepness of Heracles' fall. To that end, Euripides amplifies three distinct but related aspects: the great height from which Heracles falls, the low depths to which he falls, and the suddenness and unexpectedness of this downfall.

The extraordinary height that Heracles has reached before the catastrophe is emphasized in several ways. Euripides chooses as the play's central character not simply *a* mythological hero but rather *the* quintessential and in many respects most prominent and greatest hero of Greek mythology.⁶¹ Heracles' singular physical strength, the unparalleled number and difficulty of his achievements, his Panhellenic fame and mythological as well as cultic relevance, his half-divine origin, with the king of gods himself as his biological father, and his traditional eventual apotheosis, all these traits make Heracles stand out even

60 Lesky (1972) 379 with references; Schwinge (1972); Cropp (1976); Porter (1987); also Bond (1988) xviii–xxvi; Mastronarde (2010) 71.

61 Silk (1985) 5–7; Stafford (2010) 237–244.

among the other Greek mythological heroes. If Euripides wanted to show the destruction of a great man (1305–1307), he could not have selected an *a priori* greater figure than Heracles, who so towers above the rest of mankind. Moreover, Euripides structures the plot of this tragedy in such a way that Heracles is precisely at the pinnacle of his career when Hera crushes him. He has just completed his signature feat, the Twelve Labours, eleven of which are on glorious display in the first stasimon (348–450),⁶² and we see him return from the last, most difficult and dangerous of the Labours, the descent to Hades. The circumstances of his homecoming further elevate Heracles. Returning in the nick of time, he swiftly saves his family from the most extreme of threats, that of being killed, which makes this challenge his most ‘personal’ (774–782).

Euripides also stresses to what unfathomable depths Heracles falls. He amplifies, first, the horrific nature of Heracles’ mad deed. This hero’s fate is among the very worst that any character suffers in surviving Greek tragedy, and it makes him, along with the Sophoclean King Oedipus and the Euripidean Trojan Women, an iconic sufferer whom life has defeated. While in Greek tragedy there is no shortage of violence within families (Arist. *Poet.* Ch. 14), there are no extant tragic parallels to Heracles’ crimes of triple filicide, uxoricide, and attempted patricide. Euripides explicitly casts Heracles’ misfortune as singular and incomprehensible when, following the messenger report, the Chorus (unlike, for instance, the Chorus in Soph. *Ant.* 944–987) are unable to think of parallels, in this case, to what Heracles has just done. Therefore, they do not know how to adequately mourn and lament in this situation (1016–1038).⁶³ Correspondingly, passages abound that express Heracles’ misery, pain, guilt, ‘pollution’ (*miasma*), and shame. It is stressed that he has become not simply *a* but *the most* miserable mortal (1195–1197, 1239–1240). Heracles’ devastating review of his own life (1255–1310) is without parallel in Greek tragedy (longer than Oedipus’ account in Soph. *OT* 1391–1408). Already his initial death wish (1146–1152), later of course even developed much more fully, is among the longest comparable expressions in Greek tragedy.⁶⁴ When Theseus arrives, Heracles, still on the ground, covers himself both for shame and in order to prevent his ‘pollution’ (*miasma*) from spreading by sight or touch (1159–1162).⁶⁵ In a powerful feat of stagecraft, he remains silent and visibly invisible, as it were, for approximately 70 lines of stage action (1159–1229/31), longer than Hecuba in

62 Cf. Hose (1990/91) 11.120–122; Swift (2010) 124–129.

63 Cf. Hose (1990/91) 11.123–126, especially his remarks about the thwarted consolation, so to speak, because no matching exemplum can be found. See also *Med.* 1282–1289.

64 Cf. Schauer (2002) 249–250 on *desiderium mortis*.

65 Padel (1995) 147, 155.

Hec. 440–505. Finally, and crucially important, due to Euripides' bold change of the traditional order of events in Heracles' mythical biography—having the Twelve Labours precede instead of following the madness sent by Hera,⁶⁶ this path to self-atonement is in *Heracles* no longer available to the destroyed hero. Since the apotheosis, the gods' late reward for the tormented Heracles, does also not seem to be a possibility in this tragedy (see below, section 7), there is no silver lining that might induce even the slightest hope for a better future for Heracles prior to Theseus' arrival.

Euripides also aims for drastic effects in the theatrical presentation of Heracles' catastrophe. It is often noted that *Heracles* contains the longest and most detailed surviving description in Greek tragedy of the onslaught, the symptoms and effect, and the gradual ceasing of madness (approx. 861–1089). But Euripides does more to amplify this horrific event. Heracles' family murder also receives more elaborate coverage than any other tragic catastrophe in extant Greek tragedy in so far as Euripides subjects his spectators to no less than eight accounts of the terrible events taking place inside the palace, each given from a different angle and reflecting a different phase in the course of events, thus even outdoing Sophocles' 'repeated presentation' of Ajax' madness:⁶⁷ (1) Iris and Lyssa's announcements (831–832, 835–841, 865–867); (2) 'acoustic staging' in an amoibaion featuring Amphitryon's cries from within in (886, 891, 894, 899, reacting to Athena's intervention 906–908); (3) a long, vivid, and evocative messenger report (922–1015);⁶⁸ (4) the Chorus' attempt to grasp what happened in the already mentioned short astrophic song (1016–1038); (5) *ekkyklêma* tableau that makes visible the slaughter's result and the unconscious Heracles tied to a pillar (beginning at 1029); (6) the Chorus and Amphitryon's 'whisper *kommos*' (1042–1088);⁶⁹ (7) Amphitryon informing the awakened Heracles (1098–1108);⁷⁰ (8) Amphitryon informing the newly arrived Theseus (amoibaion 1178–1213). This lavish coverage, which comprises narration and reflection, speech and song, and acoustic and visual presentation, maximizes the sense of horror and devastation that has come over Heracles' *oikos* and the hero himself by forcing the audience to witness and/or to imagine the catastrophe in relentless repetition.

Euripides also employs other fine strokes and touches in order to further intensify the horrific nature of Heracles' deed of madness and, by extension, its

66 Cf. Bond (1981) xxviii–xxx.

67 De Jong (2006).

68 Cf. de Jong (1991) 165–171.

69 Hose (1990/91) I.241–245.

70 Schwinge (1968) 414–418; Bond (1981) *ad* 1089–1145.

devastating consequences for the hero himself. For instance, the order in which Heracles kills his family closely resembles the order which Amphitryon had earlier characterized as particularly unholy and unbearable (killing the children before the adults) and from which he had therefore asked Lycus to refrain (323–325). Since Heracles is the father (whereas Lycus was an enemy) and since he kills his family in the course of a derailed and thus ‘perverted sacrifice’⁷¹ around the altar of *Zeus herkeios* (whereas earlier the family had left the onstage altar of *Zeus sôtêr*; 327–338), Heracles’ mad slaughter entails sacrilegious elements that make this deed even worse than the abominable crime that Lycus would have committed. There are also no emotionally charged *amoibaia* in the play’s first half, very unusual for Euripides,⁷² especially considering the family’s desperate situation before the return of Heracles. But Euripides, it seems, does not want to tap into the emotional potential of *amoibaic* exchanges too soon; their affective power is only fully released in the context of the tragedy’s central catastrophe.

Euripides also employs *amplificatio* to maximize the sense of the disaster’s swiftness and unexpectedness. The tragedy’s pace both prior to the catastrophe and following Theseus’ entry is slow to moderate, with an unhurried progression of generously sized and clear-cut compositional units. Even the killing of Lycus (735–762) is so quick and for Heracles so easy that it is smoothly integrated into the larger structural units and, in addition, followed by more than 50 lines of choral lyrics of reflection and relief in the third stasimon (763–814) that bring the action to a near standstill now that, as it seems, justice and joyful stability has been achieved. But when the catastrophe sets in, Euripides quickly accelerates the play’s tempo to a dizzying pace. In the space of only approximately 270 lines, six compositional units (mentioned above as different modes of account) take the audience through the disaster’s precipitous course, via Iris and Lyssa’s dialogue (note the faster trochaic tetrameters after 855), the massacre’s ‘acoustic staging,’ a messenger scene, a short Choral song, the *ekkyklêma* tableau, and the whisper *kommos*. In this already fast-paced section of the play, Euripides further intensifies the sense of rapidity by interlacing plot phases and formal units: the Chorus are still finishing the joyful third stasimon when Iris and Lyssa descend (815–820); Lyssa still speaks when the madness already seizes Heracles (867–874); the Chorus still reacts to the announced *peripeteia* when Amphitryon’s cries are already heard from within (886–909); with Amphitryon’s cries still in the air, the messenger steps out of the palace

71 Foley (1985) 155–162.

72 Dubischar (2017) 382–385.

(910); the Chorus still ponder how to react to messenger's report when the *ekkyklêma* makes the horrific tableau visible (1029–1041). Greek tragic plots characteristically involve disasters that take place within the compressed span of one day;⁷³ the catastrophe in *Heracles*, however, is only a matter of minutes, both in 'fictional' and in 'performance time'.⁷⁴

Euripides also amplifies the catastrophe's unexpectedness. In terms of tragedy's plot and formal conventions, the arrival of Iris and Lyssa is a surprise for the audience because gods in Euripidean tragedy usually appear at the beginning or the end of plays, not in the middle.⁷⁵ Even in this basic regard, the audience had no reason to expect Iris and Lyssa's appearance. More specifically, neither the tragedy's human characters nor the audience have received any advance information about the impending divine revenge prior to Iris and Lyssa's appearance 'out of the blue' in line 814. By contrast, in *Hipp.*, *Bacch.*, *Tro.* (modified), and *Soph. Aj.*, the prologues already sufficiently inform the audience about the coming divine punishment. This comparison already makes clear that in *Heracles* Euripides wants Iris and Lyssa's entry to be a complete surprise. In addition, in the tragedy's earlier parts Euripides systematically and misleadingly occupies the characters' and spectators' thoughts and concerns about the future exclusively with the increasingly suspenseful question whether or not Heracles will return,⁷⁶ as if this was the ultimate determinant variable for the play's outcome. Euripides also enhances the moment of shocking surprise by having disaster strike precisely when Heracles' family and the Chorus no longer expect it, having just regained the joyous confidence that with Heracles returned, justice served, and order restored, a bright prospect now awaits their *oikos* and the city of Thebes (especially 763–814). By igniting this short-lived but intense optimism, Euripides makes its sudden, definitive extinction felt all the more brutally. Of course, false optimism, red herrings, and surprise entrances, are by no means unique to *Heracles*; they are staple elements of the craftsmanship of tragedy-writing and occur in other plays as well.⁷⁷ What is, however, remarkable in this tragedy is how these compositional strategies are employed here concurrently for only one goal, to make the unexpectedness of Heracles' catastrophe as drastic as possible.

73 Schwindt (1994).

74 Pfister (1988) 283–288.

75 Mastronarde (2010) 174–195, esp. 175; Lawrence (2012) 345.

76 Schwindt (1994) 106.

77 Cf. Taplin (1977) 11–12, 94–96, 180–184.

6 *Amplificatio* of the Undeservedness of Heracles' Fall

Euripides, we have seen, amplifies with great effort the steepness of Heracles' fall and presents in this play a *peripeteia* that is enormous even by the standards of Greek tragedy. With this literary strategy, Euripides forces pressing questions on the characters in the play as well as on the perceptive recipient. Why did this catastrophe happen? Is it fair, or rather, how can this be fair? The many signals Euripides deploys throughout the drama add up to an unsettling answer.

In *Heracles* prior to the catastrophe we get a Euripidean rarity,⁷⁸ an idealized, shining male hero. Continuing and even surpassing the Pindaric tradition of glorifying Heracles,⁷⁹ Euripides creates in this play 'the most meaningful and thoroughgoing idealization of Herakles for his time and, we may add, for ours.'⁸⁰ The troubling qualities that are elsewhere a part of his nature and of his greatness, like brutishness and inclination toward excessive violence, are present in this tragedy, but relegated to his externally induced madness.⁸¹

More specifically, this Euripidean Heracles is admired and admirable both for his personal traits and for his unparalleled achievements. Euripides goes to great lengths to amplify these points. First, the characters that continually praise Heracles, and while he is absent desperately miss him, deserve brief attention themselves for their own determinedly positive characterization. Amphitryon, Megara, and the Chorus, all of noble or otherwise impressive ancestry (for the Chorus see 252–253) display moral excellence beyond what could normally be expected considering their circumstances and social roles. Amphitryon, who was once a glorious warrior (60–61, 230–235, 288), is now an old and weak man but he still possesses enough courageous 'fighter spirit' to squarely challenge Lycus argumentatively (236–237) and to stay hopeful for a long time that Heracles will return (105–106), not, as Euripides makes clear (and Amphitryon makes clear to Megara), because he clings to his life but for the sake of Heracles' sons (317). Megara shows exceeding 'womanly' strength and dignity⁸² by not begging for their lives (Euripides does not give her a supplication speech) or lamenting (she never turns to anapaests or lyrics as many other victimized female characters do early on in Euripidean tragedies).⁸³ Commit-

78 Cf. Mastronarde (2010) 297–306.

79 Galinsky (1972) 23–38.

80 Galinsky (1972) 56.

81 On the portrayal of Heracles between his return and the onset of madness, see also Konstan (1999); Lawrence (2013) 250–251.

82 See also Mastronarde (2010) 261–270.

83 Popp (1971) 260–261; see also Chong-Gossard (2008) e.g. 66–68.

ted herself to the high moral standards set by Heracles (290–294, 338), she bravely faces what to her seems inevitable and even gives up the altar of Zeus on her own accord so that the children may at least die with dignity (327–331, 451–455, 548–549). The Chorus, like Amphitryon, are old and weak but were also valiant fighters when they were younger (128–130, 436–440, also 268–269). Unlike most Thebans, who opportunistically do not oppose Lycus (55–59, 217–228, 558–561), the Chorus have chosen to side with Heracles' family against the new tyrant. Risking their own safety (247–251, 275–278), they offer spectacular verbal resistance by lashing out against Lycus in a long iambic speech (252–274) that has almost no formal parallel in Euripidean tragedy⁸⁴ and finds Megara's explicit approval (275). These thoroughly positive characterizations establish Amphitryon, Megara, and the Chorus for the recipient as reliable judges of moral issues whose collective and entirely congruent admiration of Heracles⁸⁵ significantly elevates the hero. Lycus, by contrast, is continually disqualified as a power-hungry, merciless, calculating, cowardly, and impious usurper with an ignoble background, whose rule has no legitimacy. This Lycus, a mythological invention by Euripides,⁸⁶ serves as a clearly delineated threat and contrast figure to the weak and noble characters that temporarily suffer under him.

Now to Heracles: the son of Zeus and Greece's 'first man' (1306) stands out for many things. It is with singular braveness, strength, and determination that Heracles has been able to master so many extraordinarily difficult trials (19–25, 171–184, 220, 680–681, 698 with 700, 805–806), the most dangerous of which is the descent to the Underworld, which is frequently mentioned as the play's characters for a long time do not know whether the hero will return, and are later happy that he does (37, 45–46, 117–118, 145, 262–263, 296, 425–429, 490–491, 516, 607–619, 736, 770, 807–808). Removing dangers and fighting savagery, Heracles has long become a benefactor of Thebes (221, 265, 560) as well as of Greece and mankind in general (20, 225–226, 698–699, 851, 876–878, 1252, 1309–1310). Heracles is also an exemplar of continual active reverence for the gods (48–49, 176–180, 359–360, 375–379, 599–600 with 606–609, 850, 1190–1192). He is equally uncompromising in the commitment to his family. Even when they miss and desperately need him, his past or present absences are never criticized (esp. 13–25, 618–620). The hero's relationship with his family is portrayed as close and, especially with his children, even affectionate (14–19, 73–79, 171–176, 462–475, 520–522, 523–555, 574–578, 622–635, 1367–1370). Heracles has earned universal fame for embodying true greatness and nobility (12, 50, 150, 183–184,

84 Barlow (1996) *ad* 252–274.

85 Cf. Pfister (1988) 64–68 on possible arrangements of figure perspectives.

86 Bond (1981) xxviii.

290–292, 444–445, 696–697, 735, 805–806). Euripides outrightly monumentalizes Heracles and his *aretai* in the mighty first stasimon (348–450), the longest extant choral ode in Euripides,⁸⁷ which the Chorus, convinced at this point that the hero is dead, deliver before an empty stage. The fact that this ode of both praise (*egkômion*, with strong epinician elements) and mourning (*thrênos*)⁸⁸ does not address the more immediate calamity, the impending deaths of Lycus' victims, but instead amplifies Heracles keeps the audience's focus on the hero's virtues and accomplishments and makes them shine brightly—prior to the catastrophic *peripeteia*. This amassing of unidirectional reception-guiding signals only allows for one conclusion: this 'male hero of strength *par excellence*, who is also a loyal family man, ally of civilization and justice, and closely tied to the highest god',⁸⁹ is the greatest man living, and both humanity and the gods have many reasons to admire and to thank him. Why, then, was he destroyed? Euripides' continued *amplificatio* of Heracles' stature and moral excellence makes this question particularly urgent.

The thrust of this question is inevitably directed toward the gods, who are very much a reality in *Heracles*,⁹⁰ and at Hera in particular, who is the catastrophe's origin, as the audience learns from Iris and Lyssa and as the play's surviving characters afterward easily recognize (1127, 1189, 1253, 1263–1264, 1303–1310, 1311–1312, 1392–1393; see also 20–21, 1266–1268). Hera's role in *Heracles* is perplexing. In all of Euripidean drama no major antagonist figure, whether divine or human, remains as distant and obscure as this goddess does. Not only does she, all-powerful, remain invisible in the background and majestically acts through subordinates, but Iris' explanations about Hera's reason for punishing Heracles also remain painfully sparse.

What little the audience does learn from Iris is hard to reconcile with a human sense of basic justice. Iris takes much time to introduce herself and Lyssa (822–824), to state who their target will be (824–826), to explain the timing of the attack (827–830), and to announce what is about to happen (831–832). But in stark contrast, Iris describes the reasons for Hera's strike in only three lines that are vague and puzzling:⁹¹ Heracles must learn what the anger of Hera and Iris is like (840), for otherwise, should he go unpunished, 'the gods will be worth nothing, but human affairs will thrive [lit. "be great"]' (841–842). It emerges from this answer that Hera thinks—and Iris concurs—that Her-

87 Bond (1981) *ad* 348 ff.

88 Hose (1990/91) 11.120–122; Swift (2010) 124–129.

89 Mastronarde (2010) 303.

90 Lefkowitz (2016).

91 Hose (2008) 107–108; Buxton (2013) 167–168.

acles deserves to and must be punished. But this extremely brief rationale, which does not even specify the offence for which Heracles will suffer punishment, is so at odds with the idealizing characterization of Heracles up to this point that the impression that a scandalous injustice is about to happen is confirmed rather than dispelled. But Euripides emphasizes this point even further. It is telling that even the horrible Lyssa, ‘wolfish “fighting rage”’,⁹² is revolted by the order she has been given.⁹³ In a visually gripping conversation,⁹⁴ the frightening-looking Lyssa (822–823, 880–883) reminds the radiant but ice-cold Iris of Heracles’ fame and his heroic services to men and to gods (!) (849–853), she implores Iris not to act wrongly by harming instead of supporting Heracles (847–848, 854, 856), and she stresses twice that she must act against her will (846, 858), the second time even calling the god Helios as a witness. Iris does not refute Lyssa’s rejections but instead chastises her for unduly *sôphronein* (‘being reasonable and moderate’, 857), which amounts to an implicit concession that the attack about to take place is in fact unreasonable and excessive.

This chilling exchange between the goddesses answers some questions but raises many others. Among them: what exactly, in the eyes of Hera, is Heracles’ offence for which he is now punished? Is it simply his origin and greatness? Is it, more abstractly, the superhuman aspects in Heracles’ nature that make him a threat to cosmic order?⁹⁵ Does Hera act out of jealousy (but this otherwise well-known motive only receives one late mention here [1308–1309] while emphasis is on Hera’s general enmity toward Heracles [20–21, 1127, 1189, 1253, 1263–1264, 1266–1268, 1303–1307, 1311–1312, 1392–1393])? Should not Heracles’ virtues and accomplishments be factored in, regardless what his ‘offence’ may have been? Or has Hera factored them in, are they even part of the ‘offence’? Is the gods’ concept of justice fundamentally different from that of humans [Lee (1982)]? Or, in light of Lyssa’s appeal to fairness, are there competing concepts of justice even among the gods? Are the gods even bound by considerations for justice? And above all, why does Iris (and Euripides) not give a fuller explanation of this most crucial of points? Considering, first, how generously Euripides usually informs (especially in prologues and debate scenes) the recipient about the competing and opposing perspectives that constitute his other plays’ fundamental conflicts, and considering, second, how clearly Euripides elsewhere presents the flaws of characters who are about to become victims of divine revenge (both through divine explanation and through behaviour exhibited by

92 Cf. Padel (1995) 17–18.

93 Lawrence (2013) 253–254.

94 Dingel (1971) 367.

95 Silk (1985) 17–18 in a carefully nuanced interpretation; Desch (1986).

the victim [*Hipp., Bacch.*]), the conclusion seems inevitable that Euripides pursues a deliberate strategy of withholding information in *Heracles*. Questions are raised and, by means of *amplificatio*, made extremely vexing; but, in a kind of inverse *amplificatio*, no sufficient answers are given. This strategy creates strong dissonances whose ‘theological implications [are] far from comforting.’⁹⁶

What the short Iris-Lyssa scene does make clear and even plain to see through its staging—as Lyssa arrives from above and then enters the palace (where she will with elemental force rush into Heracles’ heart; 861–863)—is that Heracles’ madness is entirely externally caused. While the strength and determination with which Heracles kills his family are ‘his’, fueled perhaps by his justified anger against Eurystheus [Bataille (1988) 150], the madness is not. If interpretive accounts like this⁹⁷ seem extremely one-sided [Griffiths (2006) 87], they are so because they mirror the one-sidedness of the convergent reception-guiding signals systematically deployed by Euripides.

The role of Zeus in *Heracles* also deserves scrutiny.⁹⁸ Euripides amplifies, paradoxically, his absence and inactivity. Zeus is firmly on the minds of the play’s characters and thus of the recipient. His fatherhood of Heracles [Gregory (1991) 128–132] is assumed by all except the irreligious Lycus, is frequently mentioned (1–3, 149, 353, 696, 798–804, 1262–1263), and explicitly confirmed by Iris (828–829). Heracles’ religious piety was already pointed out above. Moreover, not only one but two altars of Zeus figure prominently as the family flees from Lycus to the altar (built by Heracles) of *Zeus sôtêr* (‘Zeus the Rescuer’, 47–49) and is later piously gathered inside the palace around the altar of *Zeus herkeios* (‘Zeus [Protector] of the House’, 922). Furthermore, Heracles’ completion of the Twelve Labours suggests, again confirmed by Iris (828–829), the effectiveness of Zeus’ protection in the past. Except for Lycus, all firmly hold the expectation that king of gods should uphold justice in the world. Their opinions only sway as to whether or not Zeus actually does that. When it initially seems that Zeus has forgotten his son and ignores the family’s plight, Amphitryon is disillusioned and angry [212, 339–347, 498–502; also 170–171; Mikalson, (1986) 93–95]. But when Heracles returns, saves his family, and kills Lycus, the Chorus are overjoyed and relieved to see that the gods do care for justice after all (739, 758–759, 772–773, 813–814; see also Amphitryon 719). Hera’s attack then quickly and irreversibly destroys that recently regained religious optimism, confirms that the initial theological despair and pessimism were in fact well-founded, and leads

96 Mastrorarde (2010) 71; see also Buxton (2013) 166–172; Lefkowitz (2016).

97 And, e.g., Hartigan (1987); Padel (1995) 19–20; Barlow (1996) 8 and *ad* 822–873; Mastrorarde (2010) 167–168.

98 Mikalson (1986); Barlow (1996) 9; Gregory (1991) 136–137.

to renewed questions and accusations directed at Zeus (1087–1088, 1127, and esp. 1262–1265 Heracles' spectacular rejection of Zeus' fatherhood in favour of Amphitryon).

Euripides thus establishes in many different ways that fatherly responsibility, the recognition of Heracles' along with his family's merits and piety, and, above all, the care for basic justice would have made it appropriate if not mandatory, by human moral standards at any rate, for Zeus to intervene and not to abandon Heracles after the Labours' completion. More questions now arise: why did Zeus' protection end after his son had completed the Labours?⁹⁹ Could Zeus have prevented or lessened his wife's attack against Heracles (after all, Athena intervenes to prevent the patricide [906, 1002–1006])? Was there a non-interference policy between him and Hera (cf. *Hipp.* 1327–1334 and 1420–1422)? Will there still be an apotheosis for Heracles (but see below, section 7)? Euripides withholds all answers as he shrouds the absent and inactive Zeus in absolute silence. In no other Euripidean tragedy is there a starker contrast than in *Heracles* between the number of invocations and other mentions of a god, on the one hand, and the god's unexplained silence and absence (after having been supportive earlier), on the other hand.¹⁰⁰

Heracles' catastrophe confirms Megara's early statement about the obscurity of the ways of the gods for men (61). The world Euripides constructs in *Heracles* is ruled by all-powerful gods who are, or can become at any moment, cruel or indifferent. If Homer's gods 'live lightly,' the gods in *Heracles* destroy and tolerate destruction lightly. In that world, human life is unstable (see also 101–102, 216, 460–461, 480–482, 506–510, 765–766, 771, 884, 1238, 1305–1307, 1314) and without protection against catastrophe. The ethical weight of these theological conclusions falls back on the mortals: how should or how can one face and cope with life's potentially extreme and absurdly unfair adversities, whether one's own or those of others? The closing scene of *Heracles* addresses this issue.

7 *Amplificatio* of the Nobility of Theseus' Friendship with Heracles

The entry of the young Athenian king Theseus comes as a surprise for the characters in the play as well as the spectators. Euripides, however, has long laid the ground for this moment. Heracles mentions earlier that Theseus was rescued by him in the Underworld and subsequently returned to Athens (619–621). More

99 Erbse (1984) 179; Gregory (1991) 137.

100 On gods in Euripidean tragedy that remain 'behind the scenes,' see Lefkowitz (2016) 161–192.

importantly, the preceding plot is constructed so that when Theseus arrives Heracles has just reached his lowest point in this tragedy. This in itself already intensifies the final *peripeteia*, which the Athenian king will bring about.

An obvious intended contrast is that Theseus helps where others did not or could not. But it should not go unnoticed how determinedly Euripides amplifies this antithesis so that Theseus' loyalty and friendship shine especially brightly. When the tyrant Lycus was in power, no Theban or Greek intervened even though they should have because all had benefitted from Heracles' good deeds; this obligation, however, was largely ignored as most people opportunistically arranged themselves with the new ruler, and the willing few were too weak to be effective (55–57, 84–85, 217–228, 558–561).¹⁰¹ The loyal Theseus, on the other hand, recognizes and embraces his duty to reciprocate the great help he received from Heracles earlier [1169–1170, also 1221–1222, 1236, 1336–1337; Johnson (2016) 131–135]. Therefore, having heard that Lycus had taken over power, he comes with a valiant army to help his friend (1171, 1178–1188).

The fact that Theseus thus initially offers precisely the kind of military assistance that would have been appropriate before the catastrophe, and that others had denied, brings out more strongly that what Theseus eventually does give is much more. After learning what happened (1172–1213), compassionately acknowledging the catastrophe's dimension and Heracles' wretched state (1195, 1216–1217, 1230, 1240), and valuing friendship (*philia*) and the reciprocity of help among friends more highly than anything else, Theseus readily increases the level of his support. What he offers exceeds what, in light of Heracles' 'pollution' (*miasma*), religious morality prescribes and Heracles deems acceptable, so that Theseus even must overcome his friend's resistance (1218, 1223–1225, 1231–1233, 1219–1220, 1232, 1284, 1398–1402), beginning with the fearless removal of Heracles' cover (1231 following 1202–1204, 1215, 1226–1227), just as he will later fearlessly help him get up (1398–1402). In the course of their long and somber conversation, which combines analysis, consolation, negotiation, and exhortation,¹⁰² Theseus manages to turn the situation around: Heracles drops his suicide plan and thankfully accepts the invitation to Athens (1347–1352). There, Theseus promises, he will be purified, find permanent residence, receive a share of Theseus' wealth and land plots (dedicated to him as *Hêrakteia*), and after his death will be honoured by the city of Athens through sacrifices and memorials (1322–1333).

101 Cf. Hose (1990/91) 1.287–293; in the context of Greek tragedy's 'Athenocentrism' [Hall (2010) 98–103] any tyrant figure, like Lycus, will appear particularly negative.

102 For the progression of thought, see Mills (1997) 140–158.

Euripides further amplifies Theseus' friendship by modifying two points of generic convention and mythological tradition. First, Theseus functions as a human near equivalent of a *deus ex machina*, as an *amicus ex machina*, so to speak [specifying the expression *homo ex machina* brought into play by Silk (1985) 16] as he arrives unannounced, toward the end of the play, in a catastrophically derailed situation, and provides closure through reconciliation and by issuing arrangements concerning the near and distant future and involving aetiological elements (1328–1333). Second, Euripides alters Heracles' apotheosis. This late but generous reward by the gods for Heracles, traditionally a core element of the hero's biography,¹⁰³ is absent (see esp. 1331) in this tragedy,¹⁰⁴ leaving a metaphysical void. But again, there is a human near substitute. The announced *Hērakleia* and the posthumous memorials and sacrifices for Heracles,¹⁰⁵ while not an apotheosis proper but rather cultic 'heroification',¹⁰⁶ can be seen as the closest approximation to immortality and deification that humans can grant a fellow human. By thus 'humanizing' two prominent elements that are traditionally exclusively associated with the gods—a tendency also underlying Heracles' preference of Amphitryon's fatherhood instead of Zeus' (1262–1265)—Euripides extols the character of Theseus to a level far beyond the ordinarily human.

It remains to be asked why Euripides so amplifies Theseus' 'heroic compassion and *philia*'.¹⁰⁷ One obvious factor is Athenian patriotic ideology.¹⁰⁸ The virtues embodied by the young Theseus are those that fifth-century Athenians also readily ascribed to themselves including righteousness, rationality, hospitality, confidence, flexibility, and the readiness to help those in distress. The splendid exhibition of these qualities in Theseus pleasantly reaffirms these favourable aspects of the Athenian collective self-concept. Moreover, since the great Heracles in the moment of his greatest calamity relies on Athenian generosity, since Euripides boldly redirects the hero's mythical biography to Athens, and since Heracles will even consider Theseus as his son (1461), the great Panhellenic hero's former glory is now partly appropriated by Theseus and Athens (see also 1334–1335).

103 Cf. Stafford (2012) 172–175.

104 Cf. Mills (1997) 146–147.

105 Cf. Dunn (1996) 117 (elsewhere in this study, Dunn also discusses other cult *aitia* in Euripidean tragedy); Van den Hoff (2009); Stafford (2012) 176–180.

106 Cf. Bond (1981) *ad* 1331–1333.

107 Johnson (2016) 131.

108 Mills (1997) 131–159; succinctly Hall (2010) 98–102.

The optimism of patriotic self-affirmation notwithstanding, the *amplificatio* of Theseus' loyalty and friendship also serves to produce extremely poignant antitheses and ambiguities. It highlights, on the one hand, that even this very significant reversal for the better is not enough to give the tragedy a happy ending. Hera's agency and her triumph are universally acknowledged (1127, 1189, 1253, 1263–1264, 1303–1310, 1311–1312, 1392–1393; see also 20–21, 1266–1268). The situation created by her vicious attack is beyond human repair, and Heracles' heroic career has ended in catastrophe and ignominy. The former hero will have to live with the pain and shame of having killed his family, a fact that is frequently mentioned, for the last time as late as line 1423. Heracles can do no more from now on than use whatever strength he still has to 'endure' his life [1351; Lawrence (2013) 259–260, 267]. He is a broken man at the end of the play and can hardly bear parting from his dead children and wife (1367–1376 and again 1406); the thought of taking his weapons with him pains him (1377–1385); he cannot get back up on his feet alone (1394–1395), he is nearly overwhelmed by the final farewell and embrace between him and his aged father, whom he will never see again alive (1408–1420); Heracles like never before now weeps (1356, 1394) and behaves 'like a woman' (1412). In the end, Theseus leads Heracles away, who follows his Athenian friend, willingly but also passively, like a 'boat in tow' (1424), a 'weighty' image [Rutherford (2012) 90] and striking verbal and visual reminiscence of a happier moment, when Heracles led his children into the palace (629–632).

On the other hand, the solidarity between Theseus and Heracles still shines radiantly against this dark background. *Philia* cannot undo the effects of Hera's strike, but it can mitigate them [Johnson (2016) 141–142]. Theseus rekindles enough resolve in Heracles to reject the idea of suicide [1347–1350; Mills (1997) 154]. In this context, Heracles' already mentioned announcement that he will 'endure' the rest of life is also a sign of the resilience that *philia*, and only *philia*, can bring about. Heracles and Theseus' tow-boat exit therefore symbolizes not only the former hero's brokenness but also the strength of loyalty and solidarity among humans, rare and precious in a world ruled by gods that are cruel or indifferent—and, not to forget, in which fellow humans are mostly ungrateful and selfish. The tragedy's last two utterances are conspicuously devoted to *philia* as, first, Heracles praises friends as the most valuable possession (1425–1426) and, second, the Chorus mourns the loss of their greatest friend (1427–1428).¹⁰⁹

109 On 'survivors' of tragic catastrophes, see Hall (2007) and (2010) 147.

8 Conclusion

The three preceding sections have attempted to show that Euripides in *Heracles* systematically employs the strategy of *amplificatio* to emphasize and intensify key elements of plot, character, and theme. This abundance of amplifying signals cannot be accidental. It is more plausible to see in them the result of the dramatist's deliberate effort and to take them therefore as purposefully deployed reception-guiding signals,¹¹⁰ whose function it is consistently to emphasize and amplify the many elements that collectively contribute to and form the three ideas that are most central to this tragedy: the steepness of Heracles' fall, its undeservedness, and the nobility of Theseus' friendship with Heracles.

This interpretation speaks against the 'critical readings' of *Heracles*. A final consideration can now be added to the remarks made above that question the appropriateness of that approach for *Heracles*. The proposed critical readings presuppose an emotionally and intellectually 'detached' recipient, that is, a recipient who is cognitively and emotionally sufficiently distanced from the performance so as to feel invited and inclined critically to question explicit and obvious meanings and, upon recognizing them as in some way insufficient, to turn to the implicit and subversive to arrive at the play's interpretation. We can now say, however, that *Heracles*' continuous *amplificatio* seems designed precisely to work against such an inner detachment of the audience. The strong cognitive and emotional stimuli to which Euripides continually exposes the audience of *Heracles* are more likely to draw spectators into the performance¹¹¹ than to keep them 'critically' or 'ironically' distanced—and we must of course assume one performance, not multiple readings and re-readings as the mode of reception for which Euripides primarily composed his dramas.

In short, *Heracles* is a tragedy of pointed extremes and drastic contrasts. This does not make the play flat or simple or uninteresting—and therefore in need of 'critical' enrichment or subversion—but rather allows for profound and head-on explorations of issues and polarities that are a part of the human condition: baseness and nobility, triumph and catastrophe, fame and ignominy, joy and pain, expectations and reality, hope and despair, defeat and resilience, continuity and disruption, cruelty and compassion, solidarity and indifference, and above all, the divide between humans and gods. The questions, dissonances, and ambiguities with which *Heracles* relentlessly confronts the audi-

¹¹⁰ Cf. generally Pfister (1988) 57–68.

¹¹¹ Cf. Heath (1987).

ence owe their intellectual and emotional force to the very strategy of *amplificatio*. Considering Heracles' 'hugeness' (see above, Introduction), this strategy seems particularly fitting and proves, in the hands of Euripides, to be dramatically highly productive.

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Ion

John Gibert

Ion: But what if Phoebus has taken him to raise in secret?

Creusa: Then he does wrong in enjoying alone a pleasure that is to be shared.

Ion 357–358

•••

Creusa: No longer am I childless, barren!

The house has its hearth, the land its kings!

Erechtheus is young once more!

The house of the earthborn race no longer looks upon night
but recovers its sight in the rays of the sun!

Ion 1463–1467

•••

Ion: Is the god truthful, or does he prophesy falsely? With good reason this question troubles my mind, mother.

Ion 1537–1538

••

Ion is one of countless children in Greek myth—sons, mostly—born to mortal princesses raped by Olympian gods. In myth, such sons exist to be exposed, rescued, raised in exile or obscurity, and eventually returned to their native land, where they enter their rightful status as prince or king. Plays that dramatize these myths usually centre on either the birth, exposure, and rescue of the newborn, or on his arrival at the threshold of maturity and encounter with his birth family. *Ion* is our best surviving example of the latter type, and it also includes vivid recollections of Ion's birth and exposure, so that it well illustrates the typical motifs of the former type as

well.¹ Some of the dramatic potential Euripides found in the story pattern is suggested by the quotations above. When Ion's question in the first passage unknowingly hits on the truth known to spectators from Hermes' prologue, that Apollo has seen to the secret rescue and upbringing of his child—the child his mother Creusa has come to the oracle to inquire about, although at the moment she is pretending to the nameless temple servant with whom she is conversing (her unrecognized son Ion, in fact) that she wants to ask about a child born not to herself, but to a friend—Creusa responds that if that is what Apollo is doing, he is committing injustice (*ou dikaia drai*, 358). The raising of a child is meant to be a pleasure shared by two parents. How does Apollo imagine it feels for a mother not only to be deprived of this joy, but not even to know for eighteen years (or however long we assume it has taken Ion to come of age) whether her child is alive or dead? The play will suggest that it never occurred to Apollo to think about this. Creusa can think of nothing else.

A modern reader or spectator expects a girl or woman in Creusa's position to dwell on the pain and humiliation of rape and feel anger towards her assailant. That she does not do this—or not much, anyway—says something about representations of rape in ancient Greek literature and culture. Can it be that Euripides did not also see dramatic potential in *these* emotions? The answer must be that, well, yes, it *can* be, for there are many literary treatments of rape that give no voice to the victim or give her a voice but do not go out of their way to invite reflection on her experience of rape. Also, Creusa has been spared some of the usual dire consequences of her situation; she has not, for example, been punished by an angry father, or suspected of fabricating her story.² She has, however, remained infertile in her marriage to the mortal Xuthus. The eventual reversal of this condition foretold by Athena (1589–1594) suggests that it has been imposed by Apollo as a temporary inconvenience to secure Ion's birthright. Creusa's anxiety about not yet having provided an heir for Xuthus (and more importantly, unless her rape-child survived, an heir for her father Erechtheus) can be separated from any feelings she may have about having been raped. As we shall see, she is not entirely silent about rape, but when,

1 See the thorough and insightful study of Huys (1995). What Ion's story looked like before Euripides is largely unknown.

2 Fear of the father is implied at 14 and 340. This traditional motif is actually incompatible with the presuppositions of *Ion's* plot, which include the death of Creusa's father when she was an infant. One passage might imply that Creusa was afraid of her *mother* (a less common motif), but a different explanation is possible (898–899: Creusa says she exposed Ion *phrikai matros*, either 'through fear of my mother' or 'with a mother's shudder'). As for suspicion of fabrication (cf. e.g. *Bacchae* 26–31), the motif occurs in *Ion* in relatively benign variations at 341 and 1523–1527.

after recovering her grown son, she sings the second passage quoted above, she dwells on maternal joy, along with the benefit Ion brings to the Athenian royal line, which ‘no longer looks upon night, but recovers its sight in the rays of the sun’ (1466–1467).³

The production of a supremely elite heir, simultaneously royal and semi-divine, is without a doubt one of the original motivations of myths like Ion’s, and Greek literature of all periods can celebrate the divine grace they are meant to reflect. This is an unmistakable source of much of the pleasure experienced by *Ion*’s spectators.⁴ Yet by the time of Euripides, it has also become possible to question the god’s actions even while celebrating them. We see Creusa doing this in the first of the quotations above, and we see questioning by both her and Ion at several other points in the play as well. Once reunited with Ion, however, she pronounces herself fully satisfied and retracts her former blame of the god (1609–1613), even though she had implied she would not (425–428). With Ion, things are less clear. His acceptance of Athena’s dispensations (1606–1608) is formulaic and mostly colourless, although if one is looking for emotion in them, a better case can be made for disillusionment than joy. Such a case would build on the third passage quoted above, where Ion asks his mother a question that Athena’s impending epiphany will prevent him from putting directly to Apollo as well: Is the god truthful, or does he prophesy falsely? Athena does not say, but spectators already know that Apollo did prophesy falsely. Now Ion knows it too, and his relationship with Apollo can never be what it once was. Ion’s new, adult insight into Apollo’s imperfections (at least as measured by human standards) is another of Euripides’ developments of the familiar mythical pattern. About ‘the girl’s tragedy’, Robert Parker writes aptly that ‘Apollo’s abandoned bride Creusa, and many another god-raped maid, become in [the tragedians’] hands living and breathing problems in theology’.⁵ The same is clearly true of the rape-child Ion as well, whose devotion to Apollo had been sustained not just by gratitude, but by belief in the god’s justice and morality.

In this essay, after considering the place of *Ion* in Euripides’ literary output and career, I discuss the play’s innovative use of imaginary and theatrical space; its divine epiphanies and their relation to Apollo’s non-appearance; further aspects of the representation of its two human protagonists, Ion and Creusa; and some issues touching on myth, ritual, and dramatic metaphor.

3 On the representation of rape in *Ion*, see further Gibert (2019) Introduction § 2.3.

4 See recently Wohl (2015), who argues that spectators also become invested in the successful resolution of *Ion*’s unusually intricate plot, and that this investment represents a kind of ideological attachment, so that political meaning inheres in the play’s literary form.

5 Parker (2005) 144.

1 A Play for Its Time

Ion resembles several near-contemporary plays, that is, plays of the 410s BC. (On the date of *Ion*, see further below.) Among surviving works by Euripides, it has most in common with *Helen* and *Iphigenia among the Taurians*.⁶ All three plays have happy endings and contain many light touches. They feature recognitions, reunion duets, and ‘intrigues’, and they share many other formal and thematic elements, for example, gods from the machine, important songs sung by actors, long passages of stichomythia, and the perception by human characters that *tuchê* (‘chance’) plays a crucial role in their lives. Among plays surviving only in fragments, *Alexandros*, *Hypsipyle*, and *Antiope* especially invite comparison.⁷ Like *Ion*, *Alexandros* involves narrowly averted kin murder and a mother’s recognition of a son (supposed to have been) exposed at birth. The comparison is interesting for showing that such actions are compatible with a conventionally ‘tragic’ atmosphere, since we know that *Alexandros* was the first play in a Trojan trilogy to which the extant, extremely bleak *Trojan Women* also belonged (415 BC). In *Hypsipyle* and *Antiope*, actual and threatened violence does not include murder of close kin, but the reunions of mothers and long-lost sons seem to be closely comparable to *Ion*’s.

The relationship between this phase of Euripidean production and its historical context can be interpreted in various ways. Many see an escapist tendency: as the Peloponnesian War drags on, Euripides produces plays with light touches and happy endings involving exotic settings and unfamiliar myths. There is truth in this, but connections with Athens are not altogether lacking. For example, the divine epiphany at the end of *Iphigenia among the Taurians* ties its events to Attic cult, and comparable links with Athens and contemporary reality are found in the other plays as well. In the case of *Ion*, no one would speak simply of escapism, despite the fairy-tale-like atmosphere of its Delphic setting. It is one of the few surviving tragedies on Athenian myth, and its themes of autochthony and Ionianism would have been topical at any point during the Peloponnesian War.⁸ In Athens, ‘autochthony’ refers to Athenians’ belief that they had always inhabited Attica, and/or that they were descended, liter-

6 On these, which together with the lost *Andromeda* form a set of ‘escape-tragedies’, see especially Wright 2005.

7 So probably would *Captive Melanippe*, if more of it survived. There is disagreement about the dates of *Antiope* and *Captive Melanippe*.

8 These have been the subject of much stimulating work on the play in recent decades, for example, Loraux (1993) [French original 1981]; Saxonhouse (1986); Zeitlin (1996); Zacharia (2003). See further n. 22 below.

ally or metaphorically, from earthborn proto-kings. These beliefs increasingly became 'official' after the Persian Wars and were promulgated in public monuments, visual arts, and oratory. *Ion* is one of our most important literary sources for autochthony. Another is Euripides' fragmentary *Erechtheus* (probably late 420s BC), which draws its subject from the same mythical stock as *Ion*. 'Ionianism' is the belief that Ion, eponym of the Ionian Greeks, was an Athenian king, with the consequence that Ionians (many of them military allies or subjects of Athens at the time of first production), as descendants of Athenian colonists, both participate in Athenian greatness and are at the same time obligated to Athens as their mother city. In *Ion*, the theme of Ionianism is found in prologue and epilogue. Hermes glances at it while bestowing a name on the young man who has until now been a nameless temple slave (74–75), and Athena expands on it when she talks of the strength Athens derives from Ion's Ionian descendants (1581–1588).

Study of *Ion*'s topicality has led some to argue that it is precisely datable. There is no external evidence, but as noted, *Ion* has much in common with plays dating mostly to the 410s, and the metrical indications strongly support such a date.⁹ It would be of great interest to know whether *Ion*'s particular take on Ionianism was first disseminated before, during, or after the crisis following the failure of the Athenians' Sicilian expedition. The massive expedition met its demise in the summer of 413, and Ionian allies and subjects began to revolt as soon as they got the news. The empire did not collapse, however, and Athens had the situation back under control in a year or two. It has been argued that *Ion* reflects a partly conciliatory, partly admonitory attitude towards Ionians. If so, the question arises whether the attitude is uniquely suited to just one stage of these developments. Many have thought so, but their opinions vary about which stage. Of those who believe that *Ion*'s Ionianism best suits the atmosphere after the Sicilian disaster, one has recently advanced a separate argument to rule out any date later than the oligarchic revolution at Athens in 411.¹⁰ The most appropriate date for the play's imperial political tendency would then be 412.¹¹ Others have proposed dates as early as 418 or as late as

9 Cropp/Fick (1985) 23.

10 Zacharia (2003) 3–7. Zacharia claims that after the revolution, Athena's emphasis on the four Ionian tribes (1575–1581) would have been an unwelcome reminder that the oligarchs, in constituting themselves as a body of four hundred, had deliberately evoked the Solonian Council, which consisted of one hundred councillors from each of the four old tribes. The problem is that ancient sources do not make the association and in fact describe the oligarchs' constitution or proposed constitution of various bodies of four hundred in ways that undermine it.

11 Or 411, which Zacharia excludes on the grounds that the proposals of the oligarchs were

410, but none of the arguments are conclusive.¹² Unfortunately, we will probably never know the exact chronological relationship of *Ion* to events of the Peloponnesian War and domestic politics.

2 Delphi, Athens, and the Playing Space

Set at Delphi, *Ion* works hard, at times, to create Delphic atmosphere. On entering, Ion chants,

The trackless peaks of Parnassus gleam with light and receive for mortals the sun's chariot wheels. The smoke of dry incense rises up to Phoebus' rafters. Upon her holy tripod sits the Delphian priestess, who cries aloud to the Greeks whatever Apollo utters. So, you Delphian servants of Apollo, go to the silvery streams of Castalia, and when you have bathed in the pure water, return to the temple.

86–97

Then, singing, he addresses his broom:

Come, O broom fresh-grown,
servant made of lovely laurel,
sweeper of Phoebus' altar
near his temple,
you that are sprung from groves immortal,
where the holy springs,
gushing forth from earth
a stream ever-flowing,
water the holy myrtle growing in profusion:
with you I sweep the god's temple floor.

112–127

And again,

from a vessel of gold I shall cast
the water the earth produces,

probably already known to the public by the time of the Dionysia in 411, even though the revolution did not occur until the summer.

12 For an ingenious argument in favour of 410, see Klimek-Winter (2010).

which gushes out
from the eddies of Castalia.

146–149

A little later, the Chorus of Creusa's female servants enters singing about sights along Delphi's Sacred Way or seen as they enter the playing area before the east façade of Apollo's temple. The understandable hope that descriptions such as these might confirm what we are told by later sources or can reconstruct from the archaeological record about the spatial arrangements and architectural and sculptural program of the classical sanctuary and the so-called Alcmaeonid temple, or even that they might contribute reliable new information, proves to be largely vain.¹³ Euripides writes for the theatre, in the first instance the Theatre of Dionysus at Athens. During the festival, changes to the set for individual plays were probably limited, and what goes on behind the central doors of the stage building is simply 'inside'. From *Ion* 226–229, for example, we do not really learn anything about ritual procedures at Delphi for gaining access to progressively more restricted areas within the temple. The play's picture of Delphi is a mainly verbal construct meant to evoke features of the landscape (Castalian spring, peaks of Parnassus) and buildings (temple and altar) familiar to many Athenian spectators.

The text evokes Athens, and especially the Athenian Acropolis, no less insistently than Delphi. Two locations come sharply into focus: an imagined fore-runner of the complex building we know as the Erechtheum (the extant remains of which represent a rebuilding phase roughly contemporary with the play's first production), and the caves along the steep northern slope, which in *Ion* are called *Makrai Petrai* 'Long Rocks'. The former is thought of as both the palace of Creusa's royal family and Athena's temple, as in Homer (*Il.* 2.546–551, *Od.* 7.80–81). It is where Creusa gave birth, according to Hermes (16), and the three daughters of Cecrops and Aglaurus are imagined dancing in front of it in the Chorus' second song (495–498). Athenians knew the spot where Poseidon's trident struck and the earth swallowed Creusa's father Erechtheus (*Ion* 281–282) as a sacred enclosure in the temple precinct, and Athena's olive tree, a miraculously preserved branch of which is among Ion's birth tokens (1433–1436; cf. 1480), stood nearby. The cliffs below are associated with both Apollo and Pan. Here Creusa was raped, gave birth (in her version, 949), and exposed the infant Ion. The place is evoked in each of the passages relating the rape

13 Koster (1976); Winnington-Ingram (1976); Roux (1984); Zeitlin (1994); Neer (2004); Athanassaki (2010); Stieber (2011).

and exposure (10–13, 492–509, 891–904, 936–965, 1478–1496), and once Ion's mention of it stirs a painful memory in Creusa (283–288). In the choral song especially, Pan and his music contribute an eerie atmosphere, tinged with sexual violence and a hint of panic (492–502). The vertical axis linking Creusa's home atop the Acropolis and the site of her ordeal below has thematic significance. For example, her mythical prototypes the daughters of Cecrops died a bloody death as they fell from the Acropolis onto the jagged rocks below, after disobeying Athena's command not to look inside the vessel holding baby Erichthonius (271–274). Ion threatens Creusa with similar punishment on the rocks of Delphi for her attempt on his life (1266–1268).¹⁴

The actual space in the theatre, meanwhile, is also used to excellent effect. The side entrances (*eisodoi*) correspond well enough to Delphic reality if characters arriving from Athens, or more immediately from the lower reaches of the Sacred Way, enter from the left, while those with business near the temple, or more distantly on the uplands below Parnassus, where the feast celebrating the bond between Xuthus and Ion takes place, use the right. More importantly, entrances and exits from the temple are used to convey a few simple, powerful meanings. After Hermes' prologue, Ion enters from the temple, to which he will never return. This suggests the impossibility of prolonging his enchanted Delphic childhood, a point driven home by the moment, symmetrically placed just before Athena's divine epiphany, when he is blocked from going back inside to put his question about Apollo's truthfulness (see above). Two other characters, in contrast, enter and exit the temple freely. First Xuthus, after a brief time onstage with Creusa and Ion, goes in for his oracular consultation, after which he comes back out and hails Ion as his son. The conformity of his movements with Apollo's will is underscored by the form of the oracle he receives: the first person he meets on leaving the temple, the god says, is his son (534–536). The other character who comes and goes unhindered is the Pythian Priestess, who enters from the temple to intervene suddenly and crucially in the play's action and goes back in when her work is done. Most spectators will guess that Apollo prompts her timely arrival (as Athena later indicates, 1563–1565), and her return to his temple implies her permanent connection with him.

Contrast Creusa, whose movements in regard to the temple are highly fraught and ultimately signify that her connection with Apollo could never be anything but fleeting. Creusa first approaches the temple hesitantly, shamefully. Whereas her servants rejoice in its beauty, she can hardly bear to look at

14 For more on the play's use of imaginary space, see Loraux (1993) esp. 195–198, 220–228; Zacharia (2003) 7–43. On the daughters of Cecrops, see further below.

it and bursts into tears when she does (241–246); she then protests the injustice of ‘the gods’ (252–254). It emerges that she wants a secret consultation to inquire about her child’s fate (334). When she is denied access by Ion, she elaborates her complaint about injustice, this time aiming it at Apollo specifically (384–391). At this point, she risks becoming an opponent of divinity (*theomachos*) and incurring severe punishment—like Neoptolemus, who reproaches Delphic Apollo and dies for it in offstage events related in Euripides’ *Andromache*.

For a while after this, Creusa defers meekly to her husband, but when told by the Chorus-leader, correctly, that Apollo has given Xuthus a son, and, incorrectly, that Apollo has also said she herself will never hold or suckle a child, and when stirred up still further by her trusted slave, the Old Man, she makes another, even more hostile approach to the god. During her solo song (on which more later), Creusa goes right up to the door of Apollo’s temple. Her words ‘You there, I mean the son of Leto’ (907) are a vigorous summons and may even indicate that she pounds on the door. When Apollo fails to appear, she bitterly denounces him and begins a movement away from him and against Ion, whom she now sees as her enemy.

This ‘centrifugal’ phase involves all three of the play’s protagonists. After Ion and Xuthus leave together for their celebration (after 675), they split off in different directions, as we learn only later from the Servant’s ‘messenger’ speech. Xuthus

departed for the place where the god’s Bacchic fire leaps up, so that he might sprinkle with victims’ blood the twin peaks of Dionysus in place of birth offerings for his son.

1125–1127

As it happens, Xuthus does not return in time for the feast, and he is not seen or heard from again. This convenient dismissal of the non-Athenian is part of the play’s masterful use of onstage and offstage space. The Servant reports that Ion, meanwhile, erected a tent, an elaborately described, womb-like space that symbolizes his imminent departure from Delphi and emerging identity and destiny, but is also, and perhaps more immediately, an enclosure like Pan’s or Apollo’s cave where he faces renewed danger from his mother.¹⁵ The Old Man goes to the tent armed with Creusa’s poison; Creusa herself, at the end of the plotting scene, wanders off to no place in particular (to the home of unspecified Delphic

15 Goff (1988); Zeitlin (1996) 316–320.

hosts, 1039), suggesting that at this point, after her monody and the plotting have transferred her energy to the Old Man, she is a spent force.

At this moment, then, the principals are maximally dispersed, and only two of them will converge again in the playing area in front of Apollo's temple. This happens when Creusa, having learned of her plot's exposure and Ion's determination to punish her, enters in flight; Ion and his men soon follow, and a stylized chase ensues. The Chorus-leader advises Creusa to seek the protection of Apollo's altar (1255, 1258–1260), but she probably does not do so until just before it is signalled in the text (1279–1281). If she is reluctant to throw herself on the god's mercy, that is understandable, in the light both of their history and of her recent attempt on his acolyte's life. On the other hand, once she does come into contact with Apollo's altar, she marks her action as a repetition of what once happened between them:

I give my body to the god to hold as sacred.

1285

A repetition, but with a crucial difference: what Apollo once took by force, Creusa now gives freely. By itself, however, this 'centripetal' movement is not enough to save her. Ion raises his hand against her,¹⁶ and the Priestess' entrance is needed to divert him. Then Ion's own pious reasoning about Apollo's will (1385–1388) gives Creusa a chance to recognize the basket in which she exposed him as an infant.¹⁷ When Ion unwraps the basket and Creusa recognizes it, she makes her next-to-last significant stage movement, her most courageous and important, away from Apollo's protection and towards her son. Ion:

Seize her! Deranged by some god she has leapt from the altar, leaving the statue behind!

1402–1403

'Deranged by some god' (*theomanês*) and 'leapt' (*hêlato*) again unmistakably evoke the daughters of Cecrops, who—in one of the versions of their story known to Apollodorus—became mad (*emmaneis*) because of Athena's anger and threw themselves down from the Acropolis (*Library* 3.14.6). But Ion does not execute Creusa summarily. Instead, impressed by her boldness, he allows her to name the basket's contents and thereby establish the relationship

16 Probably, although some maintain that he abandons his violent intent after his reflections in 1312–1319.

17 On the description of Ion's basket as a 'treasure' (1394), see n. 30 below and text.

between them. It is tempting to call Creusa's act a 'leap of faith', but if we do, we must call it faith in herself and Ion, since she surrenders Apollo's protection when she leaves his altar.¹⁸

After Athena's speech *ex machina*, Creusa approaches Apollo's temple one last time. Replacing blame with praise (1609), she remarks that

Lovely now in my eyes are the gates of the god's oracular shrine, which I once hated. Now my hands cling with pleasure to the door knocker as I bid the gates farewell.

1612–1613

This gesture is unknown as a mode of worship or thanks; in terms of staging, it indicates that for all her joy at being reunited with her son, Creusa can never recreate the physical intimacy Apollo once visited upon her violently, at a time and place of his choosing. Her literal clinging to the door knocker can be seen as a poignant visual emblem of the gulf separating god and mortal. After a moment, it is followed by her exit towards Athens, with her son, under the escort of Athena.

3 Gods and Mortals

Years earlier, a different god played the part of escort. Hermes rescued Creusa's exposed infant and conveyed him to the very doors of Apollo's temple. He did so on Apollo's instructions, as we learn from Hermes himself (28–40), whose prologue pairs with Athena's speech *ex machina* to give the play a divine frame. Hermes is the right god for many reasons: he has a close relationship with his brother Apollo; in other myths, he conveys newborn heroes to foster-parents, not to mention the souls of the dead to Hades; and he is the patron god of lucky discoveries, in which *Ion* abounds. He is also curious and playfully rivalrous: he guesses what his brother is up to (69–73), and after usurping Apollo's privilege

18 Here I differ from Zacharia (2003), for whom the 'turning point' is Creusa's refuge at Apollo's altar. Creusa later recognizes Apollo's beneficence towards Ion (1540–1545) and praises him (only) for returning Ion to her (1609–1610). It is an exaggeration to say that she recognizes his wisdom, becomes a devout worshiper, acknowledges his omnipotence, and 'reinterprets the divine assault and accepts it as a necessary sacrifice for the benefit of the autochthonous Athenian line' (98). For Zacharia, these are all necessary conditions of 'redemption' (77, 78), a suspect notion in interpreting a Greek play. See further the conclusion of this essay.

of naming his son (80–81), he goes into hiding to see how things turn out (cf. 76–77). That is, the actor disappears behind a stage property allowing him to exit and return later in another role, but the god is to be imagined silently watching throughout. Above all, Hermes is an appropriate choice because he presides over transitions.

Ion thus has two escorts in the play. That Athena too is an appropriate choice hardly needs demonstration. Patron goddess of Athens and mythical Athenian royalty, she likewise appears at the ends of, for example, *Suppliant Women*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, and Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. But only here is she so obviously a surrogate for the god who 'should' have appeared, as her ambiguous explanation of Apollo's absence only emphasizes (1557–1558). The point is made in subtle ways, too. For example, the Chorus do not see Apollo in the sculpted scenes they describe in their entrance song, but they do see Athena (209–211). When Athena appears on high at the end, she occupies approximately the place the arriving Apollo held in the east pediment of the Alcmaeonid temple, and she displays her bright face opposite the sun (*antêlion*, 1550, which also means 'in place of the sun', i.e. Apollo).

Apollo's absence is the essential mystery of the play, hardly lessened by the fact that Athena corroborates all of Hermes' guesses about what Apollo planned, or that she too reports acting on Apollo's instructions (1559, 1569–1570). Crucially, one part of Apollo's plan is frustrated. Creusa and Ion are reunited in Delphi, not Athens (cf. 71–73, 1566–1568). This is because they act in ways the oracular god apparently did not foresee. Athena confirms, what spectators will have guessed, that the god had to intervene to keep mother and son from killing each other and accomplish *most* of what he intended (1563–1565). Everything that makes the play worth watching is driven by mortal passions, which the god seems not to understand: Creusa's and Ion's attempts on each other's lives, Ion's determination to unseal the basket holding his birth tokens and begin the search for his mother at once (1385–1388), Creusa's daring leap away from Apollo's protection.

Apollo may not fully comprehend what Ion and Creusa express in their monodies, either. These solo songs, like the framing epiphanies and many of the play's other structural elements, form an artfully constructed pair.¹⁹ Each dwells on the absent Apollo, the most significant 'presence' in each singer's life, although in very different ways. Ion, after opening in recitative anapaests

19 Compare, for example, the two recognition scenes (one 'false' and one 'true'), the two *amoibaia* (scenes in which Creusa sings in exchange with speaking male characters), and the reciprocal attempts at killing.

with the scene-setting Delphic touches noted earlier, accompanies his sweeping with a 'work-song' modelled, in some respects, on Apollo's cult song, the paeon. The theme of its refrain,

O Paian, O Paian
blessed, blessed
may you be, son of Leto!

125–127 = 141–143

is developed in the following anapaests (also sung):

Thus always for Phoebus
may I not stop toiling—or stop but with heaven's blessing!

151–153

The translation by David Kovacs fittingly implies that Apollo's 'blessedness' is at the same time active, a 'blessing' for the son who will indeed stop toiling *agathai moirai* (literally 'because of a noble destiny', an echo of the formula used by the democratic Athenian government to invoke blessings on its official acts). After sprinkling the ground with holy water and fending off birds who would foul the temple, Ion closes with a variation on his wish:

I shall duly perform
the tasks I am devoted to for Phoebus and never cease
serving him who feeds me.

181–183

Altogether, Ion names Phoebus twelve times in his song. This alternate name for Apollo associates him with brightness and purity, constant themes of Ion's song.

The contrast with Creusa's song, sung at her lowest point of despair, is stark. Creusa avoids naming Apollo, instead calling him 'Leto's child' (885, 907, cf. 919–921) and identifying him by his lyre; her description of his music seems designed to emphasize Apollo's indifference to human suffering and his own ugly actions (881–886, 905–906). Creusa's song is explicitly a song of blame (885, *momphan*), contrasting with Ion's song of praise (138, *eulogô*), and serving as a foil for Creusa's own eventual praise (1609, *ainô*, discussed above). Its rhythms convey nothing of the serenity of Ion's aeolics; instead, they are mostly lugubrious lyric anapaests and tense, emotional dochmiacs. There is, however, a significant rhythmic (and probably also melodic) echo. A rare, unnamed

colon, used elsewhere in *Ion* only when Ion, sprinkling pure water from a golden pitcher, proclaims his chastity (149–150), recurs in Creusa's song exactly where she describes Apollo's rape of her as 'doing what gladdens Cypris' [i.e. Aphrodite's] heart' (896). Here it is in context:

Seizing me by my pale white wrists
as I cried out 'Mother!'
into the cave that was your bed
you took me, divine ravisher,
without pity,
doing what gladdens Cypris' heart.

891–896

It is astonishing that this narrative has ever been considered part of a strategy to obscure or minimize the god's violence by setting it amid beauty, splendour, and music;²⁰ on the contrary, we could not expect a tragic description of rape to be any more explicit. The word translated 'without pity' is *anaideiai*, literally 'shamelessly'. The quality or emotion *aidôs* ('shame, reverence') is, like justice, a cornerstone of human social interaction. To accuse the god of lacking it is damning—but it is up for debate whether gods can or should be held to such standards.

Creusa is not the only one who holds such values dear. Just as her stage movements provide insight into the varying intensity of her feelings towards Apollo and his temple (see above), so Ion follows a course of *moral* development—something of a rarity in Greek tragedy, although the example of Neoptolemus in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* comes immediately to mind. Ion's solo song is dominated by the gratitude he feels towards Apollo, on whom he bestows the name of 'father' because the god benefits him (138–140), and by an ideal of purity the god represents in his devotee's mind.²¹ The ideal is challenged by the story of Creusa's 'friend', but early on, Ion is unwilling to embarrass or anger the god by asking him a question implying that he has been *kakos* (370), 'base' or 'immoral'. Even so, he is troubled by human suffering and the potential of divine misbehaviour to undermine piety (436–451). Later, facing the possibility that his cherished benefactor and, as he now knows, actual father has used his oracle to tell a lie, Ion resolves to enter the temple and seek an explanation (1546–1548); he no longer worries about embarrassing the god. From Athena, he hears an

²⁰ Burnett (1962).

²¹ Yunis (1988) 121–138.

account of Apollo's reasons for giving him to Xuthus that essentially matches Creusa's (1561–1562 ~ 1539–1546); Athena also confirms that Apollo truly is his father. Ion accepts the news piously, adding 'Even before this was not incredible' (1608). Concerning Ion's concluding state of mind, this is all we have to go on; certainly, there is no trace of Creusa's effusiveness, in word or action. It is possible, but no more than that, that Ion has in mind (which is to say, his words invite spectators to think about) a contrast between what was believable even before (that Apollo is his father) and what was not (that Apollo told a lie through his oracle). Ion barely speaks again before departing for Athens.

4 Myth, Ritual, and Dramatic Metaphor

Early on, Hermes quotes Apollo's mention of 'the people of famous Athens, who are *autochthones*' (28–29). The adjective, meaning 'never having immigrated', 'descended from earthborn proto-kings', or both, occurs only twice more in *Ion* (589, 737), but the theme is pervasive.²² Creusa and Ion are the only surviving descendants of Erichthonius and Erechtheus; the even earlier king Cecrops and his daughters are mentioned and evoked in important ways (see below). My brief discussion of this complex topic aims to show only how autochthony is involved in certain paradoxes of Athenian political identity and gender ideology, and how it relates to one of the play's guiding metaphors and its background in ritual.

Myths of autochthony affirm a people's right to rule the land they claim always to have inhabited. Athenian autochthony also emphasizes the city's uniquely close connection to Athena and implies the superiority of Athenians to Dorians, including Spartans, whose foundation myths involve immigration and conquest. Finally, autochthony in a democratic context 'aristocratizes' the entire citizen body; it is a prized identity to which all Athenians, not just the elite, lay claim. Through his mother, Ion enjoys these benefits. Yet he would not even qualify as an Athenian citizen under the terms of the citizenship law enacted under Pericles in 451/0, which required citizens to be born of two Athenian parents. This is true whether he is known as the son of Apollo or of Xuthus. It is not simply to be assumed that citizenship as defined in the clas-

22 Rosivach (1987) makes a strong case that 'never having immigrated' is the earlier meaning; by the late fifth century, the two meanings are fused and, in Athens, infused with jingoistic pride (e.g. Eur. *Erech.* fr. 360.7–13, Ar. *Wasps* 1075–1080). On the myths of early Athens, see, besides the works cited in n. 8 above, Parker (1986); Gantz (1993); Shapiro (1998); Sourvinou-Inwood (2011).

sical city is relevant to a tragedy set in the mythical, pre-democratic past, but certain passages of *Ion* do invite reflection on Ion's status in such terms (e.g. 670–675, 1296–1299, 1540–1545, 1561–1562). Moreover, Ion suffers from the further disadvantage of illegitimate birth; this would be a bar to citizenship in classical Athens, and Ion believes it will be a political or social liability even in the (mythical, but anachronistically imagined) world in which Xuthus assures him he will have a privileged position (589–594; cf. 578–581).²³ In her epiphany speech, Athena states baldly that Ion deserves to rule in Athens because he is 'born of Erechtheus' descendants' (1573–1574), but his status remains paradoxical. According to the fiction, he will be known to Xuthus and everyone else not privy to Athena's speech as the bastard son of a non-Athenian father and an unknown mother, but still 'he will be renowned throughout Greece' (1575). Small wonder that many think Euripides uses Ion's myth to question the exclusivity implied by Athenian autochthony.²⁴

Another paradox arises from the transmission of Ion's claims through Creusa. At one level, myths of autochthony exist to deny women what is usually seen as their most important role in real life: motherhood. Such myths represent, among other things, a fantasy of origins without sexual reproduction. Perhaps for this very reason, mythical earthborns seem to have a hard time perpetuating themselves. Cecrops produced three daughters and a son, but they all died while he was still king. *Ion* presents Erichthonius as the grandfather (or perhaps more distant ancestor) of Erechtheus, but the line nearly died out when Erechtheus, who had no sons, sacrificed all of his daughters except Creusa to save Athens during a crisis (the subject of *Erechtheus*; cf. *Ion* 277–282). In *Ion*, Euripides makes continuation of the autochthonous line depend on a woman, that is, on one of those logically excluded by autochthony. He heightens the paradox by representing the bond between mother and child as by far the strongest in the play.²⁵

Yet the legacy that Creusa and Ion share is not unambiguously positive. To be born from the earth is to be associated with certain monstrous creatures, above all Giants, snakes, and, in *Ion*, the Gorgon. The Chorus' description, in their entrance song, of a Gigantomachy among the sculptures on Apollo's temple (205–218) illustrates their preoccupation with themes already familiar to

23 On bastardy and Athenian citizenship, see Ogden (1996) 151–165, Kamen (2013) 62–70. On concessions against the spirit and lapses in the enforcement of Pericles' law during the Peloponnesian War, and its reestablishment immediately afterwards, see Ogden (1996) 70–81.

24 E.g. Walsh (1978); Saxonhouse (1986).

25 On these points, see especially Loraux (1993) 184–236.

them from Athens, where similar depictions are generally taken to symbolize the triumph of civilizing Olympian forces over chthonic disorder and rebellion. The battle is mentioned again when Creusa tells the Old Man how Erichthonius came to possess magical drops of Gorgon's blood as a gift from Athena, who is said to have killed an earthborn Gorgon during the Gigantomachy.²⁶ As for snakes, they symbolize a connection with the earth that can be benign (like the half-snake Cecrops placed by Ion at the entrance to his tent, 1163–1165) or threatening (like Creusa when Ion compares her to a viper or fiery-eyed serpent and to the drops of Gorgon's blood with which she tried to kill him, 1262–1265). The earthborn connections of Creusa and Ion highlight the violence of which they too are capable.²⁷

Danger also comes in other forms related to the myths of early Athens. Within *Ion*, Creusa does not seem capable of murder until her monody transforms her. Interestingly, the song follows the Old Man's command to 'do something womanly' (843). According to ancient Greek stereotypes (known mainly from male-dominated sources, of course), it would be womanly for Creusa to kill Ion 'by some trick or by drugs', as the Old Man goes on to suggest, but the first of his proposed methods of revenge is actually 'taking up a sword', a 'manly' act (844–845). Indeed, the word 'womanly' all by itself probably evokes the more common 'manly', which can simply mean 'courageous'. Nicole Loraux thus reads the Old Man's command as to 'act like a woman acting like a man'. The thematic payoff, she argues, comes when Creusa, by turning her monody into an 'anti-hymn' that perverts elements of Apollo's cult song, the paeon, fulfills 'a desire most dear to the race of women', namely 'to borrow the men's own language, Apollo's own song, the better to denounce those men and that god'.²⁸ She might have added that in Euripides, solo song itself is mainly reserved for women.²⁹

The song is linked to Athenian myth and ritual not only by some of its content, but by the Chorus-leader's description of it as an act of opening:

Ah, what a great storehouse³⁰ of misery is opening, misery to make every-one weep!

923–924

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- 26 987–1017. The story, first in *Ion* and then only in authors who may depend on Euripides, also explains how Athena got her aegis, and how the aegis got its name.
- 27 Immerwahr (1972); Mastronarde (1975); Rosivach (1977); Goff (1988); Hoffer (1996).
- 28 Loraux (1993) 192.
- 29 Hall (2006) 288–320. Ion's song, discussed above, is a rare exception.
- 30 The Greek here is *thésauros*, which describes anything from a jewelry-box to a store-room

We noted earlier that the daughters of Cecrops received baby Erichthonius from Athena in a closed vessel they were told not to open. One, two, or all three of them disobeyed, and as a result they died a bloody death on the Acropolis rocks; their punishment finds an echo in Ion's threatened punishment of Creusa at 1266–1268.³¹ In *Ion*, it seems that all the daughters died (271–274); in other accounts, one of them (usually Pandrosos, when named) survived. 'Vessel' translates *teuchos*, a generic word (*Ion* 273); in art, it is wicker-work, like Ion's basket. The latter is called *antipêx*, a word not found outside *Ion* and the lexicographers. It is usually assumed that Euripides gives Ion's basket a distinctive name to emphasize its connections with Erichthonius and ritual. From Hermes' prologue, we learn that Athena put a pair of snakes in with Erichthonius to protect him (21–24); her act became a 'custom' (*nomos*) imitated by Creusa when she attached snake amulets to baby Ion (26–27, cf. 1427–1429), and by 'descendants of Erechtheus' (i.e. Athenians) ever since. In some accounts, the daughters of Cecrops are done in by these snakes (or, more often, just one snake). We saw earlier that Creusa's leap from Apollo's altar when she sees Ion unwrapping his basket recalls this moment (1402–1403, pp. 242–243 above). Within the play, the literal opening of the basket mirrors and transforms Creusa's opening of a '*thésaurus* of misery' in her monody, and both recall the action taken by the daughters of Cecrops.

The mythical girls disobeyed the command of a goddess. Is Creusa guilty of a similar crime? Many think so. To conclude this essay, I will consider an idea put forward by Katerina Zacharia, whose important book about *Ion* includes a valuable close reading of Creusa's monody.³² Zacharia wants to use myth and ritual to explain why Creusa's story ends happily, when that of the daughters of Cecrops ends in death. After all, Creusa 'seems to be repeating inherited patterns of action and if one repeats a crime, one would expect to be punished for it'.³³ The reason Creusa is not punished, she argues, is that her monody 'is a quasi-ritual re-enactment of the mythical crime of the Kekropids, a 'repetition with a difference' that makes it possible for Kreousa's story to be ultimately

to one of the magnificent buildings lining the approach to Apollo's Delphic temple. A related word, *thésaurismata*, describes Ion's basket when he begins to unwrap it (1394); see above, text to n. 17, and Gibert (1995) 173–189.

31 Above, p. 9. At *Ion* 267–270, Erichthonius is said to have been born from the Earth; Athena then raised him and took him into her arms as a surrogate mother, though still a virgin. The story of Erichthonius' conception, not told in *Ion*, is found elsewhere in Euripides (fr. 925, possibly from *Erechtheus*): Hephaestus desired Athena but was rejected; he ejaculated onto Earth, and Earth became pregnant with Erichthonius.

32 Zacharia (2003) 76–99.

33 Zacharia (2003) 87.

successful and “redemptive” rather than a catastrophic failure’.³⁴ The difference she identifies is that before revealing her secret, Creusa ‘requests the benevolence of the starry seat of Zeus and the goddess Athena’.³⁵ This is ‘repetition with significant difference within the ritual context of Greek theatre performance, and the outcome can be positive’.³⁶

But can pious invocation of the right deities explain why one tragic character prospers, when so many others come to grief? Zacharia’s phrase ‘quasi-ritual reenactment’ points to an additional explanation. It alludes to the Athenian ritual of the Arrhephoria, for which the story of the daughters of Cecrops is generally agreed to be the *aition*.³⁷ Much about this ritual performed annually by two elite Athenian girls is obscure, but as a part of the extra-dramatic reality of Athenian spectators, it could inform response to Creusa. It did not end in the death of any of its participants, and it must have been thought conducive, like most rituals, to good relations between the worshipping community and the deity honoured. If Creusa acts as a quasi-*arrhephoros*, the analogy might help explain her success. However, there is one very large obstacle to this approach. When our main source for the ritual, Pausanias (1.27.3), writes that the *arrhephoroi* ‘place on their heads objects which the priestess of Athena gives them to carry; neither she who gives it knows what kind of thing she is giving, nor do those who carry it understand’, and then that ‘They leave below what they were carrying and bring back another covered object which they got there’, he clearly implies that the girls refrained from opening what was meant to remain closed. That is, the *arrhephoroi* ‘pass a test which their mythical prototypes [the daughters of Cecrops] have failed’.³⁸ And since Creusa too fails the test, she ‘should’ suffer the fate of the mythical girls, not the real ones.

It is probably best to abandon the search for either a mythical or a ritual paradigm that is robustly explanatory. What such paradigms do, I would argue, is provide pleasingly suggestive points of departure for dramatic actions, creating expectations that can be met, frustrated, or shaped in altogether new ways. Zacharia finds Creusa guilty of *akrasia* ‘lack of self-control’, but we are

34 Zacharia (2003) 77.

35 Zacharia (2003) 87; cf. 85: Creusa calls upon ‘the starry seat of Zeus and her poliadic (‘city-protecting’) goddess Athena’.

36 Zacharia (2003) 87. The ‘ritual context of Greek theatre performance’ might suggest the protection of Dionysus as well, but Zacharia does not develop the point.

37 As argued by Burkert (2001) [German original 1966]. Zacharia discusses the Arrhephoria on her pp. 86–87; see further Goff (2004) 98–105; Parker (2005) 219–223, Gibert (2019) Introduction § 7.2.

38 Parker (2005) 222, citing Redfield (2003) 120. The translations of Pausanias are also from Parker (p. 221).

not told that Apollo instructed her to keep quiet about the rape. A human standard of behaviour (in fact, a sense of shame, *aidôs*, 859–861) leads her to keep silent as long as she has hope (866–869), and when she concludes that Xuthus and Apollo are failing to meet their obligations to her (862–864, 876–880), she chooses to speak out quite deliberately. Creusa comes to Delphi for an answer, and she gets it because of her own persistence and agency. Of course, this outcome requires Apollo's cooperation and protection; otherwise, things could have turned out for her as they did for Neoptolemus. It is her good fortune that Apollo could not allow her to murder their son. It does not follow that the play demonstrates only providence and benevolence on his part and misguided human frailty on hers, and not also her (praiseworthy, human, female) determination and strength. Euripides uses all of these elements to shape the play. Backgrounds in Athenian myth and ritual enrich the action without explaining it.

5 Conclusion

Ion explores the dramatic potential Euripides found in the popular story types of the hero exposed at birth and the princess raped and abandoned by a god. Its treatment of mythical and patriotic material of topical interest, such as Athenian autochthony and Athens as the metropolis of the Ionians, must have delighted and may also have challenged its mainly Athenian spectators, even if we cannot say exactly how it fits into the events of the decade in which it was almost certainly first produced. The play presents a constant, imaginative dialectic of two important places, Delphi and Athens, while making masterful use of the spatial arrangements of the actual theatre of Dionysus. It invites deep reflection on the god Apollo, who plays the critical role in this 'girl's tragedy' and is represented by turns as intimate, remote, mysterious, and all too understandable. When all is said and done, our sympathy remains with the human characters Ion and Creusa, whose experiences and emotions on the way to a happy ending give this unusual tragedy its distinctive tone and meaning.

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Trojan Women

Joe P. Poe

Trojan Women, or *Troades*, takes place in Troy on the day following the night attack and capture of the city by the Greeks. The men have been killed and the women who survive are awaiting their assignments to the new masters whom they will serve. The only males who appear onstage after the prologue are Menelaus (in one episode), the Greek herald Talthybius, who comes and goes bringing information about decisions of the Greek army and carrying them out, and the small son of Hector, Astyanax. The principal character is the aged queen Hecuba, who never leaves the playing area until she makes her way to her own slavery at the play's end. Each of the first three episodes is devoted to a dialogue between Hecuba and one of three young women, Hecuba's daughter Cassandra, Andromache, the widow of her son Hector, and Helen, each of whom at the episode's end is led away to the ships. In the final scene Hecuba prepares her grandson for burial and, during a final lyric lament with the Chorus, witnesses the burning of the city.

The episodic character of the play has often been remarked either in critical or in apologetic terms. It 'falls apart into single acts'. It is 'without true dramatic development'. It 'lacks movement or direction'.¹ To say that the play falls apart is an exaggeration, but it is true that the connections among the episodes are not easy to see. Aristotle, who is much concerned with tragedy's intelligibility, regards an episodic plot as the weakest (*Poe*. 1451b33–35). This intelligibility is created by a chain of probable or necessary causality (*Poe*. 1450b22–34): even the *peripeteia*, or reversal (if there is one), should follow as a consequence of the things that precede (*Poe*. 1452a18–21). The central figure, moreover, of a proper Aristotelian tragedy is one element (albeit not the only one) of that chain. He is a purposeful agent (*Poe*. 1448a1–5, 1449b24),² who is not a person of bad character but one who nevertheless bears responsibility for his own downfall (*Poe*. 1452b34–1453a17).

1 Respectively Geffken (1926) 205; Pohlenz (1954) 366; Dunn (1996) 101. Cf. Rutherford (2001) 99; Biehl (1989) 25.

2 On the implications of the words *spoudaios* and *praxis*, see Lucas (1968) 62–63, 96–97.

In *Troades* there is no causal relationship between any two adjacent units of action.³ Nothing that happens during Cassandra's appearance affects the dialogue of Hecuba with Andromache that follows, nor does that dialogue in any way contribute to what is said in Hecuba's debate with Helen. Rather, all three episodes as well as the exodus represent plausible—that is, 'probable'—responses to events that have taken place before the start of the dramatic action. The women are not able to give 'movement or direction' to the play because they, as prisoners, are powerless. Their status as slave to one or the other of the Greek leaders has been decided before their appearance, and each is led away at the end of the episode without having changed what has been decided about her future. Even Helen, who is given the opportunity to try to change the decision that has been made about her, is not able to succeed within the course of the play.

So, Euripides at the beginning offers his audience a ruined city full of defenceless women who have suffered the loss of loved ones and of life as they have known it. By the end of the play the process of enslavement is coming to completion and the city is set in flames. That is, the situation has deteriorated somewhat as a result of Greek initiatives. There is never any hint that any of the Trojan women does anything to further this deterioration. What did Euripides expect his audience to think about what happens? Looking for the significance of the human suffering that is presented, students of *Troades* have often tried to find relevance outside the confines of the play's action by setting it in one or the other of two broader contexts. The first of these is a set of military/political events that raised issues of current, and grave, importance to the Athenian spectators.

The trilogy of which *Troades* was the third play is dated firmly to the year 415.⁴ Late in the year 416, probably in December,⁵ the men of the island of Melos were massacred and the women and children sold into slavery. In the spring of 415 the Athenian Assembly voted to undertake a military expedition to Sicily. It sometimes has been suggested that *Troades* represented a revulsion of feeling against the outrage of Melos and/or a warning against the aggressive spirit that gave rise to the Sicilian expedition. That Euripides wrote *Troades* in protest against what happened at Melos seems chronologically impossible,⁶ but enthu-

3 One event, the preparation of the body of Astyanax in the fourth episode, follows as a consequence of an action in a predecessor, episode two, where the child is led away to his death.

4 Aelian, *Varia Historia* 2.8 and scholia to Aristophanes' *Birds* 1326b and *Wasps* 842.

5 Van Earp Taalman Kip (1987) 414–419.

6 Van Earp Taalman Kip (1987). Scepticism expressed less strongly: Erbse (1984) 72; Lesky (1983) 290; Hose (1995) 35–36.

siasm for the Sicilian adventure may have been in the air for some time before the vote in the Assembly.⁷ A reminder to the Athenians that conquest can be followed by a disastrous reversal is what we might expect from Euripides. But if that was his intended message, why did he choose to focus his attention on the Trojans, who were not the invaders? Would his meaning not have been clearer if the plot had centred on the unexpected disasters that were to fall upon the Achaeans?⁸ *Troades*' emphasis on the plight of the defeated Trojans, therefore, may well reflect Euripides' general concern about Athens' aggressive foreign policy, but there is no firm evidence that it represents a protest against specific political acts or proposals.

A much more specific connection with *Troades*—one which certainly would have influenced the audience's interpretation of this play—is to be found in *Alexander*, the first piece of the trilogy. While we have no more than a sketchy knowledge of the second play, *Palamedes*, a relatively large number of surviving fragments of *Alexander* and a 32-line hypothesis, or summary (*TrGF* 5, testimonium iii), give us a general outline of the plot. Some details of that plot will be considered below, in our discussion of the debate in *Troades* between Hecuba and Helen. For now, it is enough to say that *Alexander* presents the meeting of the young herdsman Alexander with Priam and his family and their eventual recognition of him as the son whom his parents thought to have exposed at birth. The event that some have seen as most relevant to the audience's understanding of the suffering of the Trojan women is the decision to accept Alexander into the family. The spectators, as they witnessed the decision's being made in *Alexander*, would have understood its likely consequence, and as they saw that consequence played out in *Troades* they surely would have thought that it was a mistake to allow Alexander to live. And for critics who want to interpret *Troades* in Aristotelian terms that mistake turns Hecuba into a causal agent. So, does that mean that the suffering that we see in *Troades* is condign punishment?

The first indication in *Troades*, that any Trojan besides Alexander⁹ may have been responsible for the war does not occur until the last one-third of the play, when Helen at vv. 919–922 accuses Hecuba and, presumably, Priam ('the old man'). Until that point the focus of the play has been on suffering rather than guilt. The Trojan women are remarkably passive through most of the play and unresistant to what is happening to them. The passivity is derived from hopelessness, which is vividly expressed without words by Hecuba, as she lies supine

7 Cf. Scodel (1980) 139; Maxwell-Stuart (1973) 397–400; Latacz (1993) 332–334.

8 Steidle (1968) 55.

9 At line 598 Andromache says that Alexander destroyed Troy for the sake of a hateful marriage.

on the ground through most of the play's prologue. Her stillness is a response to the chaotic activity behind her, which is described by the god Poseidon. The gold of the city and other spoils are being sent to the Greek ships (18–19). The Scamander echoes with the cries of captive women who are being allotted to their new masters (28–29). The city is smoking (8) and the shrines of the gods stream with blood (15–16). Hecuba's husband Priam has fallen at the base of the altar of Zeus Herkeios (16–17). In other words, the situation at the beginning of the play is outside of Hecuba's control, and, as we shall see, it is out of the control of the other Trojan women as well. For what we have in *Troades* is not high tragedy with its strong—if also hubristic—hero, but a play that comes very close to what Northrop Frye called 'ironic tragedy', a genre in which the tragic character is inferior in power to us, the spectators or readers, 'so that we have a sense of looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity'. Ironic tragedy conveys the idea that the victim has been simply unfortunate, and if there is a reason for his catastrophe it is an insufficient one. At its furthest extreme ironic tragedy presents a nightmare of 'shock and horror'.¹⁰

I say that the play 'comes very close' because two of the Trojan women do not quite yield to their helplessness. Cassandra makes a claim—which is not completely valid—to have the power to exact revenge. Hecuba eventually shakes off her passivity and tries to persuade Menelaus to punish Helen. (Whether she succeeds is a question that Euripides leaves open.) And Hecuba urges Andromache to come to terms with her situation, making a new life with her new master so that the family may survive through Hector's son. This son Hecuba prepares for burial in the exodus of the play.

Surprisingly—since in the *Iliad* he is hostile toward Troy—Poseidon in his opening monologue claims a long history of affection for the city (4–7). But now he is leaving the city and his altars (25). One function of Poseidon's expressions of friendliness is to convey to the audience that the surviving Trojans are worthy of sympathetic feeling; but it is not to suggest that the gods are generally benign. For Athena's arrival at v. 48 demonstrates that their good will is unreliable. Athena's anger has been aroused toward the Greeks, not because of their violence toward the Trojans but because of their failure to punish the desecration of her temple by one of the Greek leaders (69–71). For this she seeks Poseidon's help to destroy the Greek fleet as it sails home (75–86). Athena's intended punishment is fearful not only because it is disproportionate but because it is capricious and arbitrary, a fact to which Poseidon calls attention (67–68): 'Why do you leap about in one direction or another, and when you happen to

¹⁰ Frye (1957) 34, 41, 222.

hate or love do you do it excessively?' Nevertheless, Poseidon shows himself to be not much more consistent. In his monologue he has twice blamed Athena (once with Hera) for destroying Troy, implying his opposition (23–24, 46–47). But when Athena asks for his help he consents without hesitation, promising that the shores of the Aegean will be filled with bodies of the dead (87–94).

After Poseidon and Athena exit the audience will have expected the conventional choral entry-song. Hecuba, however, continues to lie alone on the ground. When she breaks her silence, she employs a new rhythm of speech, which signals that her utterance does not represent a response to the conversation of Poseidon and Athena. The gods have spoken in iambic trimeter, in tragedy the most common metre of dialogue, while Hecuba's words are in non-lyric anapaests, which usually are thought to be chanted. Since the intonation would have been very different from that of dialogue, the change would have conveyed a very different emotional tone.¹¹

The first, recitative, section of Hecuba's anapaests (98–121), however, is not a simple lamentation for her misfortunes. Rather it begins as an attempt to rouse herself to face her new situation. 'Get up. Lift your head and neck from the ground ... Bear your changed fortune (98–99, 101)'. It is a thinking-out-loud speech,¹² heavily larded, like a dialogic exchange, with commands and questions to herself. Lines 98–99 are undoubtedly accompanied by movement. Hecuba partially raises herself, but only partially. For at lines 112–114 she is still lying on the ground. Complaining of discomfort, she describes her desire to turn her body from one side to the other (116–118). It is at this point that she probably stands up, since she begins to sing in lyric anapaests.¹³

Hecuba's monody leads into the *parodos*, the entry song of the Chorus, and it introduces three themes that are important in the *parodos* and in subsequent episodes: ships, hatred of Helen, and slavery (122–142). The thought of slavery is a reminder to her that others share her fate. Her call (143–147) to the unhappy wives of the Trojans, 'Let us wail ... I will lead the lament', is a cue for the beginning of the *parodos*, which proceeds in an unconventional way. The women of the Chorus enter not from a side entrance but from the scene-building, which represents their place of confinement, and they arrive in two groups (at lines 153 and 176), responding to Hecuba in lyric anapaests. In the course of the dialogue Hecuba delivers the new information that the Greek oarsmen are moving toward their ships (159–160), and she thinks that the allot-

11 Hall (1999) 105–108.

12 Cf. Schadewaldt (1926) 155.

13 On the uncertainties distinguishing lyric from non-lyric anapaests, see Lee (1976) 80 and Hall (1999) 106.

ment of the women to new masters will happen soon (186). The reaction of the Chorus to this news shows the audience that despair is not the only element of the women's distress. They lament for what has happened to Troy but they also fear for their future (156–158, 176–181). 'The Greeks don't intend to kill me, do they (178–179)?'. 'Will they take me in their ships from my homeland (161–162)?'. Although Hecuba earlier encouraged herself to adapt to her changed situation (98–101), even she shares this anxiety: 'Whom will I, an old woman, serve? In what land (191)?'. Questions about what the future holds are asked or, in Cassandra's case, answered by every woman in the play.

The earlier part of the first episode continues the motif of fear and intensifies it. Hecuba's prediction is confirmed by the appearance of the Greek herald Talthybius, who tells her (240–243) that the women have been assigned to various men. Over the course of the next 31 verses Hecuba manages to elicit from him information about the assignments of Cassandra and Andromache, and she accepts, if she does not quite believe (269, cf. 624–625), the herald's hedging reply that her daughter Polyxena has been stationed to serve at Achilles' tomb (264–270). The brevity of Hecuba's questions and their repetition convey a sense of impatience and consternation. When Talthybius answers her last question with the news that her own master will be Odysseus, her anxiety erupts into an extended lament (279–292).

Following Hecuba's lament, the arrival of Cassandra brings a radically different perspective and a radical, albeit transitory, change of tone. Hecuba and the Chorus have taken as a given their inability to control or limit the direction and degree of their misfortune. Now, in place of their anxiety and uncertainty, Cassandra brings a confidence that she knows the future and welcomes it.

The Chorus at lines 203–204 expressed the fear that slavery would bring sexual abuse. The rationality of that fear is confirmed by Talthybius' announcement that Agamemnon has been struck by lust for Cassandra (252), the least appropriate of the Trojan women. To this Hecuba objects in surprise that Cassandra was given the privilege of a celibate life (253–254), adding that Cassandra should strip off the emblems of her office as Apollo's priestess. Cassandra herself, however, when she appears, celebrates her new status joyfully. She emerges from the tent where the captives have been confined, singing a hymn to Hymenaeus (308–341). The song includes several of the motifs customary in wedding ceremonies:¹⁴ (1) summons of the god with repeated cries, 'Hymen O Hymenai' Hymen!' (314, 331); (2) a declaration of the blessedness of the bride and groom (311–313); (3) the brandishing of a torch that Cassandra

14 Mueller-Goldingen (1996) 34–35; cf. Seaford (1987) 129; Hose (1991) 11.300.

declares that she lights for Hymenaeus (308–310, 319–322). The torch traditionally accompanies weddings, but it is carried by the bride's mother rather than the bride. At this point a feature of Cassandra's song that seems less appropriate to a marriage ceremony is worth noting. At line 323 Cassandra declares that she lights her torch not only for Hymenaeus but also for Hecate, a chthonic deity who sometimes is associated with Artemis.¹⁵ The invocation of Artemis' presence would be appropriate at a wedding ceremony. But, as Mueller-Goldingen remarks, the address to Hecate in this context is gruesome.¹⁶ In two plays of Euripides Hecate presides over revenge, *Medea* 395–398 and *Ion* 1048–1057. Here Cassandra's mention of Hecate is ironic, as Cassandra later confirms (445) with an assertion that she will marry her bridegroom in Hades.

The irony, however, is lost on her mother, whom she asks three times to share in her wild dance. When she also calls on the Chorus, as 'daughters of Phrygia in your beautiful gowns' to share in her song (338–340), the women, who have lived through a bloody slaughter and could hardly be well-dressed,¹⁷ reject her conceit, turning to Hecuba to urge her to make her demented daughter cease (341–342). Hecuba's response (343–350) is to take the torch from Cassandra, telling her that it is not right for her to brandish a torch in her manic state, when her fate has not brought her to her senses.

Hecuba and the women of the Chorus stand apart from Cassandra's celebration because for them the past is grievous, and the future is to be feared. For Cassandra the struggle is not over. She is destined to kill Agamemnon and to devastate his house in revenge for her father and brothers (357–360). More significantly, she refuses to recognize the present tragedy. The Trojans are better off than the Greeks (365–366), many of whom died without knowing their children and lie buried in a foreign land (368–382). The Trojans died in defence of their country, which is the finest glory, and each day enjoyed the company of their wives and children. Hector died with a reputation for great bravery, which would have gone unnoticed if the Greeks had not come (386–399). So war is not something that a sensible person would choose (400), but if it should come it has its compensations. To die well is not a shameful prize (401–402). The present situation, moreover, Cassandra does not regard as something just to be endured. 'You must not pity our land or my marriage,' she tells her mother. For in her future she sees a victory: 'Cover with garlands my victorious head and be joyful' (353–354).

15 Biehl (1989) 180 *ad* lines 322 ff. Lee (1976) 129–130 *ad* line 323 says that, although the functions of the two goddesses overlap, Hecate is not a marriage-goddess.

16 Mueller-Goldingen (1996) 35.

17 Hose (1991) 11.300.

Shortly before her confident (cf. 460–461) departure Cassandra tears off the insignia that she wears as priestess of Apollo (451–454), an act that is clearly modelled on Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* 1264–1267, where she discards her prophetic staff and fillets.¹⁸ There is, however, a telling difference in the meanings of the two gestures. In *Agamemnon* the action represents the rejection ('Go to perdition!', 1267) of her service to Apollo, whom she has addressed bitterly as her destroyer (1080–1082, 1085–1086). Euripides' Cassandra abandons the emblems of 'the dearest god' in order to prevent their pollution, and she consigns them to the winds so that they may carry them away to him (*Tro.* 453–454).

Of her dependence on the god's help in punishing Agamemnon Euripides' Cassandra is very conscious. Agamemnon will marry a wife worse than Helen 'if Loxias exists' (356–358). She is a servant of Apollo (450). Even so, she calls herself a Fury as she departs to Agamemnon's ship (457), and several times she speaks of herself as the agent of the punishment: 'I shall kill him. I shall lay waste to the house' (359). 'I shall come to the dead victorious, having destroyed the house of the Atreidae' (460–461; cf. 353). The first-person verbs imply a power to act that she does not truly possess. She is a bearer of victory only in a very qualified sense. Cassandra has a strength of character and a bravery that allows her to look her own future in the eye. But the god's patronage has limits. She is held as tightly in bondage as Hecuba; and her future suffering—which she has the misfortune to see—will be just as severe. She will be struck in the neck by an axe (361–362), and her naked body will be thrown out and given to the beasts to tear apart near her bridegroom's tomb (448–450).

As Cassandra takes leave from her mother, she tells her not to cry (458). But Hecuba does not share Cassandra's satisfaction with a revenge that is so costly. It is clear that, as her daughter makes her way to the parodos, Hecuba attempts to hold on to her, then falls to the ground.¹⁹ For the Chorus remarks that she has fallen, and indignantly demands that attendants raise her (464–465, cf. 616–617). At lines 466–468 Hecuba, after first telling the women around her to leave her where she is, subsequently gives in as they again try to raise her (505) and asks them to lead her to her rocky pallet on the ground so that she may fall on it and waste away with weeping (506–509).

At the beginning of the second episode the Chorus announces the arrival of Andromache in a wagon with her son Astyanax pressed to her breast. Beside her are the arms of Hector and other spoils with which Neoptolemus will decorate

18 Fraenkel (1950) 585 *ad* line 1267.

19 Cassandra's exit is an unambiguous reminiscence of Polyxena's departure to her death at *Hecuba* 438–443. Cf. Spitzbarth (1946) 92.

the temples of Phthia (568–576). Thus, visually as well as verbally she is presented to the spectators as wife of Hector and mother of his child. Her reactions in *Troades* to what has happened and what is happening to her are strongly conditioned by the way she is represented in the *Iliad*.²⁰ In *Iliad* 6, when she unexpectedly meets Hector as he returns to battle, her dominant emotions are love and anxiety. She fears that his prowess as a warrior will be his death (6. 407). If he should be killed it would be better for the earth to swallow her up (6. 410–411). She attempts to reduce the danger by urging him to employ the defensive strategy of fighting from the city wall (6. 431–439). Hector, in turn, fears not his own death as much as the slavery that Andromache must experience with the fall of the city (6.441–465). Nevertheless, he rejects her suggestion of a defensive strategy, declaring that it would shame him not to fight among the foremost. When she returns home her tears arouse grief among the servants so that they mourn Hector while he is alive (6. 497–502). Andromache appears only twice more in the *Iliad*. In book 22 she faints as she sees Hector's body dragged around the city (462–474). In book 24, after his body has been returned, she holds his head in her arms (723–724).

In both books Andromache (22.475–515, 24.725–745) and Hecuba (22.431–436, 24.748–759) deliver separate laments for Hector. The second episode of *Troades* begins with another lamentation (577–606), a lyric exchange between the two women, who mourn Hector, the destruction of the city, and the deaths of Hecuba's other children.²¹ Now the fall of the city and Andromache's entry into slavery, which Hector had feared, have been realized. 'My Greek masters are taking me away' (577). 'Our blessedness is in the past, Troy is in the past' (582–583). 'Bloody bodies of the dead are stretched out beside the temple of Athena for the vultures to take away' (599–600). Andromache, in her grief, calls on her husband to come, but Hecuba, also apostrophizing Hector, asks rhetorically whether he can protect his wife in Hades (587–590).

For Andromache there is no protection. Her destined concubinage 'in the house of a murderer' is abhorrent to her (660). But she is defenceless and unable to modify what will happen. In any case, she is convinced that earlier, when she had more freedom of choice as Hector's wife, her efforts accomplished nothing. She tried to conduct herself with the modesty expected of a woman (643–656), but she failed to achieve good fortune (644). Although she did acquire a good reputation, that is what destroyed her; for it attracted Neoptolemus (643, 657–660).

20 Davidson (2000) 71.

21 Davidson (2000) 78 points out that the female laments in *Troades* are inspired by those in the *Iliad*. Cf. Suter (2003) 13–14.

Soon after the end of the lyric lament Andromache gives Hecuba the news that she has covered the body of Hecuba's daughter Polyxena, who was sacrificed at Achilles' tomb (622–623, 626–627). In response to Hecuba's cry of grief Andromache asserts that Polyxena is more fortunate than she, since she knows nothing of her miseries (630–631, 641–642). Andromache herself, she adds later, is without hope, which is conceded to all mortals, 'nor do I deceive my mind that I will fare at all well' (681–683). Hecuba is unexpectedly alarmed by Andromache's defeatist language, which she contradicts: 'Child, dying is not the same as seeing the light. For the former is nothing; in the other remain hopes' (632–633).

The audience will not have expected Hecuba's reaction because, in the closing speech of the first episode, as she lay on the ground, she rhetorically asked what hope there was for her (505). Here it is clear that she clings to a fantasy that all is not lost. She has a slim hope that the family will survive through Hector's son Astyanax and that Troy will be reborn (701–705). That can only be realized if Andromache is willing to reconcile her feelings with the reality of her situation. 'Your tears, dear child, will not save Hector. Honor your present master, giving the man the allurements of your personality' (698–700). The destruction of Troy is still not complete, she assures Andromache, holding out the prospect of a new life that may not be intolerable.

The possibility of 'unfolding [her] heart' to a new husband has indeed occurred to Andromache (661–662), and it has been suggested that these words show that she 'contemplates her future sexual experience positively'.²² But at best they betray some inner conflict, for she also insists that she has contempt for a woman who throws over her former husband and loves another (667–668; cf. 663). So, whether Andromache would allow herself to try to build a new future remains an open question. It is also a misplaced one. For Euripides shatters any interest that Andromache might have in survival by intensifying the 'shock and horror' of the moment. When Talthybius announces, with some reluctance, at lines 709–719 that Astyanax must die, Andromache recognizes at once that no life as Neoptolemus' concubine can compensate for the loss of her child. 'This is a greater evil than my marriage!' she exclaims in the next verse (720). Immediately before her departure she remarks ironically,²³ 'I am going to a fine marriage, having lost my child' (778–779).

What is remarkable about Andromache's reaction to Talthybius' news is her lack of resistance as the child is taken away. Her final speech, which begins as a

22 Craik (1990) 7–8.

23 Biehl (1989) 300 *ad* lines 778 ff.; Lee (1976) 207 *ad* lines 777–779. See Dyson/Lee (2000b).

farewell to the child, is a moment of deep pathos, and that is fully exploited. The mother's anguish, as she embraces the child for the last time, is expressed by several conventional tropes of departure from a small child (cf. *Medea* 1030–1043).²⁴ 'Oh sweet scent of your flesh!' she exclaims. 'This breath nourished you. I laboured in vain, and I was worn away by my Labours. Kiss your mother now and never again. Embrace the one who gave you birth. Wrap your arms around my body, and fit your lips to mine' (758–763). The child is inarticulate but nevertheless communicates his emotions to his mother and to the audience. 'Oh child, are you crying? Do you comprehend your evil? Why do you grasp me with your hands and hang on my dress?' (749–750). At the end of the speech Andromache surrenders entirely. 'We are not able to protect the child against death. Cover my poor body and hurl me into the ship' (776–778). The desire to hide oneself from the sight of others is an expression of despair. At *Trach.* 903 Deianeira is said to have covered herself after she had learned of the injury of Heracles.²⁵ And, as Biehl points out, the rather violent word that is here translated as 'hurl' is pregnant with meaning. At line 725 Talthybius uses it in speaking of Odysseus' advice to throw Astyanax from the towers of Troy, and Andromache, speaking of her child, has just said (774), 'Hurl him, if that is what you have decided!'.²⁶

Despite her passivity Andromache in her speech of departure does burst out in anger against the Greeks, bitterly urging them to feast on the child's body (775) and calling them inventors of barbarian evils (764). But in a play that speaks so often about bondage, the loss of husbands and fathers, and the prospect of sexual misuse, it is striking that the victims have been relatively reticent in their expressions of hostility toward their conquerors. Part of the reason for this is that so much of the play has been devoted to lamentation.²⁷ In laments, of course, anger and vengefulness can be implicit, and they may inspire such emotions in the audience.²⁸ But anger may be closer to the surface in some laments than in others. In this play most utterances are put in the mouths of the relatively weak female victims, and it is clear that Euripides is more interested in conveying their suffering than the guilt of their male persecutors. Euripides pointedly misses the opportunity in this

24 Biehl (1989) 295–296; Lee (1976) 206; Spitzbarth (1946) 29–30.

25 Lee (1976) 207 *ad* lines 777–779 interprets this as an ironic reference to veiling a bride. Cf. Biehl (1989) 300 *ad* lines 777 ff.

26 Biehl (1989) 300 *ad* lines 777 ff.

27 Suter (2003) 5 notes that there are more laments in *Troades* than in any other extant play. Cf. Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 351.

28 Dué (2006) 143.

episode to intensify anger toward the Greeks and toward Odysseus in particular, who, we are told (721–725), has persuaded the army that it is bad policy to allow the son of Hector to live. In *Hecuba*, which appeared several years earlier, it is Hecuba's daughter Polyxena whose sacrifice Odysseus urges. In that play Odysseus is brought onstage to lead Hecuba's daughter Polyxena to her death after cynically (and speciously) denying that he has a moral obligation to save her (*Hec.* 218–401). In *Troades* it is the herald Talthybius whom Euripides sends to fetch Astyanax. Because Talthybius is not a persecutor but an intermediate who expresses sorrow as he leads the child away, he is a less suitable target for Andromache's wrath or that of the audience. I am not arguing that Euripides absolves the Greek conquerors of guilt. The seizure of Astyanax is a confirmation of their cruelty. But the poet stops short of demonizing them. And Andromache's criticism of them (764, 774–775), even as she embraces her child for the last time, is briefer and less virulent than her attack on Helen, who 'with [her] beautiful eyes shamefully destroyed the renowned plains of the Phrygians' (772–773). Helen, she asserts, was daughter not of Zeus but of 'the god of vengeance, of envy, slaughter, death, and all the evils that the earth contains' (766–771).

The opening of the third episode brings another complete change of mood. Menelaus, Helen's former husband, opens the scene with a cheerful apostrophe (860), 'Oh beautiful light of the sun today', and an announcement (869–879) that he has come to fetch Helen and that he will execute her upon their return to Sparta. At this news Hecuba reacts with a prayer of thanksgiving to Zeus (884–888).

Oh you who are the support of the earth and have your seat upon the earth, whoever you are, difficult to perceive and to understand, Zeus, whether you are the necessity of nature or the mind of mortals, I call upon you. For striding along a silent path, you guide all mortal things in accordance with justice.

When Helen has entered, dragged out by her hair (880–882; cf. 896–897), she asks permission to argue that putting her to death would be unjust (903–904). Although Menelaus shows reluctance, Hecuba intervenes in support of the request, provided that she be allowed to rebut Helen's claims (906–910). In the debate, or *agôn*, that follows Lloyd complains that, '... Hecuba's manner and attitudes are difficult to relate to her behaviour elsewhere in the play'.²⁹ The

29 Lloyd (1992) 94.

change in Hecuba's demeanour, however, is not made in a vacuum. The situation of the moment has brought her an opportunity to abandon her passivity and to act. The audience will have tolerated this abrupt change because it is licensed by the conventional form and character of the *agôn*. The Euripidean *agôn* consists of two opposing speeches of substantial length (Helen's 52 lines, Hecuba's 64 lines), usually, as in this scene, separated by a short comment of the Chorus. Modelled on debates in the law courts, *agônes* are formal and rhetorical in structure, with coherently organized arguments that are calculated to give the effect of considered reason.³⁰

Before this debate the audience has heard several expressions of resentment against Helen as a cause of the war. Andromache, as we have seen, curses Helen shortly before Helen's arrival onstage (766–773). Cassandra calls her a woman abducted willingly (373) and promises that she herself will be a wife to Agamemnon worse than Helen (357). Hecuba in the prologue calls Helen the hateful wife of Menelaus and accuses her outright of being the killer of Priam, who has brought disaster on Hecuba herself (131–137). These brief attacks, however, are expressions of emotion by victims who make no attempt to justify their hatred of Helen. The *agôn* examines the issue of Helen's guilt in more detail and from different perspectives.

It does not, however, put Helen alone on trial. Helen in her defence (914–965) blames others for the disaster: Aphrodite and the two other goddesses whom Alexander judged (923–937), Hecuba and 'the old man' (Priam or the herdsman who should have exposed the baby Alexander [919–921]), Alexander himself (940–942), and even Menelaus (943–944). The kernel of her defence is the assertion that she was helpless before the power of Aphrodite.³¹ The debate offers conflicting views of this claim, which are never entirely resolved, and it raises, explicitly or implicitly, a set of equally unresolved and broader questions. Are the gods just? What are the gods? Does justice have absolute existence? Are humans capable of moral action?

That Aphrodite played a direct role in her downfall is a claim that Helen makes without qualification (929–942), and in the course of her speech she criticizes two other divinities for their lack of concern about men. Athena, she asserts, offered Alexander victory over Greece if he should choose her, while Hera promised him rule over Asia and Europe (925–928; cf. 933–934).³² Blam-

30 Lloyd (1992) 13–18.

31 Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 356.

32 This version of what the two goddesses offered is found in no other source, and it may be Euripides' own elaboration of the tradition. See Lloyd (1992) 102–103; Stinton (1990) 44–45.

ing the gods is common in Greek heroic literature, and it is found especially in the mouths of characters who are suffering or in despair.³³ Several times various Trojan women blame Athena or simply 'the gods' for their situation. Hecuba, for instance, as she sees Andromache entering on her way into slavery, comments that the gods elevate what is nothing and destroy things that are thought good (612–613).³⁴

If the claim that a god or the gods are responsible is made by an individual as an excuse for his comportment, it is normally accompanied by some recognition of personal responsibility. So at *Iliad* 2. 375–378 Agamemnon complains that Zeus has thrown him into unprofitable quarrels and strife. Then, however, he adds that he and Achilles fought with violent words but he (Agamemnon) was the first to be angry.³⁵ What is unusual about Helen's claim is that she denies that she is responsible in any degree. She was a victim first of Aphrodite and secondarily of Alexander. She was 'sold' [by Aphrodite to Alexander] because of her beauty and this was her ruin (935–936). He was her destroyer (941), and he took her by force (962). Helen's claim to have been forced by Aphrodite relies on a very old tradition that is reflected in the third book of the *Iliad*. At lines 383–420, Helen is confronted by Aphrodite, and when she rejects the goddess' command she is cowed into submission by Aphrodite's threats. In *Troades* Helen proclaims that Alexander 'came having a not-small goddess with him' (940), observing that even Zeus is a slave to that goddess (948–950). Helen's version of Aphrodite, then, represents an external will, which she claims that she had to obey.

Hecuba, with her surge of hope following Menelaus' declaration that Helen will be executed, offers a prayer (see above) that implies a conception of a Zeus who is very different from Helen's philanderer and much more benign than her Aphrodite. The *epiklesis* of Zeus follows a traditional formula that attempts to insure contact with the god by enumerating, or at least summarizing, the names by which he may prefer to be called.³⁶ The names, however, that are given here of Zeus and his attributes are not traditional but are influenced by fifth-century speculation of philosophers who were concerned with the material cosmos and its relation to human nature and the divine. Hecuba's address of Zeus (*Tro.* 884) as 'the support of the earth, having your seat on the earth',

33 Mastrorarde (2010) 161–162, 169.

34 See also lines 469–471, 560–561, 597–600, 696.

35 Occasionally a character cites divine authority to console someone who blames himself. See, for instance, *Iliad* 3.164–165, where Priam assures Helen that the gods, not she, are responsible for the war.

36 Fraenkel (1950) 99–100 *ad Ag.* 160; Norden (1913) 144–147.

refers to air,³⁷ which Diogenes of Apollonia, a contemporary of Euripides and his audience, identified with the divine (64 B 5 D-K, cf. 64 A 19). 'Whether you [Zeus] are ... the mind of mortals ...' (*Tro.* 886): '*Air is the soul and intelligence for living things*' (Diogenes 64 B 4b). 'You guide all mortal things in accordance with justice' (*Tro.* 888): '*By the air all things are guided and governed. For it seems to be god, and it reaches everywhere, and manages all things, and is inside everything*' (Diogenes 64 B 5). The Zeus of Hecuba's prayer, then, is not anthropomorphic, but a cosmic power that is immanent in the material world, shares with us his intelligence, and is the source of our justice.³⁸

Hecuba's response to Helen's defence begins with a refutation of Helen's account of the offers that the goddesses made to Alexander. As an 'ally' of the goddesses (969) she maintains something of the idealistic view of the gods' treatment of men that we saw in her prayer to Zeus.³⁹ Hera would not have been so unthinking that she would have sold Argos to the barbarians, nor would Athena have enslaved Athens to the Phrygians (971–974). The absurdity of the story of the beauty contest she exposes with a series of rhetorical questions.⁴⁰ Why would Hera have wanted so much to be considered beautiful? In order to attract a better husband than Zeus? Would Athena, who had demanded from her father perpetual virginity, seek marriage with some god (976–981)?

That Aphrodite pushed Helen to elope with Alexander Hecuba does not explicitly deny. But she slyly redefines (989) what Aphrodite is ('All stupid things⁴¹ are Aphrodite to mortals'), and she comes close to denying (983–986) that Aphrodite labours under the same anthropomorphic limitations as the Aphrodite of the *Iliad*. Would the goddess have needed to accompany Alexander to Sparta? 'Could she not have stayed quietly in the sky as she led Helen to Troy?'. Hecuba recognizes, moreover, that the emotion of love can have a powerful impact on the mind. 'My son was a very handsome man', she says to Helen, 'and seeing him shining in barbarian finery and gold your mind became Aphrodite' (987–988). 'Your mind was overcome with lust' (992). In other words, Helen's decision to run away with Alexander was, according to Hecuba, submission to an internal impulse.

37 Hippocrates, *De flatibus* 3 (64 C 2 D-K) calls air the supporter of earth and the earth its foundation.

38 Solmsen (1942) 45: 'Ideas of a divine mind ordering the universe and theories suggesting that the human mind is homogeneous with the divine were in the air'.

39 Cf. Lloyd (1992) 106–107.

40 Biehl (1989) 362 *ad* lines 976–981.

41 Deriving the name from *aphrosynê*.

Hecuba clearly believes that Helen should have resisted a temptation whose destructive consequences were clearly foreseeable, and she makes a case for punishment that is strongly moralistic. She demands the opportunity to speak against Helen so that Menelaus may be aware of the evils that the Trojans suffered because of Helen's actions (906–910). She begs Menelaus not to betray his allies whom Helen has killed (1044–1045; cf. 876–879). Helen's claim (952–958) that, after Alexander's death, it was against her will that she continued to be separated from Menelaus Hecuba counters with the observation that the noble course of action in that case would have been suicide (1010–1014).

Helen, however, asserts that she deserves no blame but rather a garland for her head. For her marriage to Alexander, from her perspective, was not all bad. It saved Greece from foreign tyranny (932–937). That is, she denies, on the one hand, that she was an agent of her actions and on the other appropriates credit for supposed events that were not of her doing. This upside-down interpretation of what she has done and suffered is consistent with the individualistic, relativistic ethic that is associated with the Sophists: Man is the measure of all things, and these things are measured differently by different men. For nothing is absolutely true, but what each person perceives as true is true for him (Protagoras 80 A 21a, 80 B 1 D-K). Helen's perception, we should notice, has a narrow focus. She does not claim that what she did was a generally good thing but only that it was of benefit to Greece; for the destruction of Troy and the sorry condition of the Trojan women she expresses neither sorrow nor sympathy.

It is no coincidence that a defence of Helen's innocence was written by another Sophist, Gorgias, who, like Protagoras, was a contemporary of Euripides and his audience.⁴² Gorgias is far from being a moralist, but like Hecuba he suggests love as a possible motive for Helen's elopement (82 B 11.15 D-K), and he admits that love can be an internal mental drive (82 B 11.19). But he argues that Helen's personal choice to yield to love does not make her personally responsible. If love is a disease of the soul and a misapprehension, it should not be blamed as wrongdoing but should be thought of as misfortune. Human beings, argues Gorgias, are highly susceptible to things that they have seen, whether the things are fearful or desirable: 'Through sight the soul is stamped in its very character (82 B 11.15)'. 'The sight engraves on the consciousness images of things seen' (82 B 11.17). So, it is hardly amazing if 'Helen's eyes, pleased by the body of Alexander transmitted to the soul desire and the struggle of love' (82 B 11.19).

42 Lloyd (1992) 100–101 denies that Helen's defence necessarily betrays any sophistic influence.

In other words, the human mind is capable of allowing sensory impressions of the present and the past to trump moral judgement.

If Helen professes to believe that she ran away with Alexander against her will, that is a ‘truth’ that most of the play’s audience probably would be sceptical of. When she asserts that there are others who share responsibility for the present destruction, which is confirmed by what the audience has seen or heard earlier in the play. When she accuses Hecuba of having given birth to ‘the beginnings of the evils’ and ‘the old man’ of having destroyed Troy by having failed to kill the child Alexander (919–922), the audience of 415 BC would have regarded this as a plausible, if somewhat overstated, claim.⁴³ And some modern critics, sniffing out an Aristotelian *hamartia*, consider this accusation especially significant, arguing that it reminds the audience that Hecuba is not just a pitiable victim. The failure to do away with Alexander ‘would have made Hecuba far from blameless in the eyes of an ancient audience’, asserts Sourvinou-Inwood.⁴⁴ Hose observes that Hecuba does not respond to Helen’s accusation, and suggests—with a question mark—that her silence is an admission.⁴⁵ The accusation will, moreover, have reminded the spectators that Alexander was spared a second time, twenty years after his birth. And in *Alexander*, the first play of the trilogy, they will have seen Hecuba and Priam making a considered decision not to kill their new-found son, in full knowledge of what that would mean for the city. ‘A look at the *Alexander* makes it impossible to deny that the Trojan royal couple had a share in the guilt for the catastrophe’.⁴⁶

I am not about to claim that *Alexander* justifies the decisions that Hecuba and Priam make. But a look at the play’s surviving fragments show that it does not represent the sparing of Alexander as unconditionally wrong. Rather, the play asks why and in what circumstances persons might take an action that ultimately proves destructive. The fragmentary state of our evidence leaves some of these questions unanswered, but a papyrus fragment containing a hypothesis, or summary, of *Alexander* (*TrGF* 5 testimonium iii) offers a broad outline of events that shows us that the main theme of the plot is the youthful Alexander’s movement, in the face of obstacles, toward recognition and acceptance by his family. Details of certain parts of the plot can be filled in from fragments of the so-called Strasbourg papyrus as well as from a considerable number of literary fragments.

43 Cf. Lloyd (1992) 102.

44 Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 353, cf. 359–361. See also Barlow (1986) 205–206.

45 Hose (2008) 133.

46 Hose (2008) 134.

The hypothesis begins with background information—probably narrated in a prologue—about the disposal of the baby after his birth and the state of mind of his mother. Because of Hecuba's visions in her sleep the newly born child was given to be exposed (test. iii 4–5). But a cowherd brought him up as his son. Hecuba, grieving for the lost child, persuaded Priam to establish elaborate games in the child's honour (test. iii 7–12). Hecuba's continued grief seems to be confirmed by fragments 43–46, a dialogue probably between the Chorus and Hecuba. Frg. 43, in a lyric metre, tries to comfort someone who is mourning.⁴⁷ Fragments 45 and 46 line 5 both establish that the grief is one of long duration. Lines 1–3 of fr. 46 show that the mourning person must be Hecuba, for that person has children and Priam is spoken of (line 3) in the third person. Hecuba's expressions of mourning, along with the establishment of a festival memorializing the lost child, convey to the audience a sense of the unhappiness that the decision not to allow the child to live has brought her.

The first step toward the return of Alexander to the bosom of his family is occasioned, according to the hypothesis, by the anger of his fellow-herdsmen at his arrogant behaviour (test. iii 15–21). They seize him and accuse him before the king, but he 'catches out' one by one those maligning him and is allowed to take part in the games established in his memory. How the possibility of a herdsman's participation in the competitions comes about is not mentioned in the hypothesis. But several fragments (48–51) show that it is fiercely opposed by someone (his brother Deiphobus?) because of his social status as a claimant: 'When a slave thinks bigger thoughts than he should ... there is not a worse possession [than he] nor one more useless to houses' (fr. 48, cf. frs. 49, 51). Slaves should stay in their place. To this assumption of superiority Alexander replies that wealth is not a measure of real virtue: 'Wealth is an unjust thing, and it does many things not correctly' (fr. 55). 'Poverty brings up children to be better at toiling and accomplishing (fr. 54)'. The argument that it is natural ability, not social convention that bestows true nobility will have been attractive to Athenians in the fifth century. It is articulated more explicitly in the choral ode that probably follows this debate (fr. 61b),⁴⁸ and the idea seems to gain Priam's tentative approval. 'With time we will learn whether you (sc. Alexander) are a worthy person' (fr. 60). Priam allows the young herdsman to compete in the games where he confirms his virtue by winning contests in several fields (test. iii 19–22). The herdsman's success does not, however, win the favour of Deiphobus, who tells his brother Hector that Hector's prizes have been stolen by a

47 'All men die, and it is wise to feel grief in moderation'. Cf. Scodel (1980) 26.

48 Scodel (1980) 87–88.

slave (fr. 62a9–10). Hector disagrees, implying that the ‘slave’s’ triumph shows his natural superiority (fr. 62b31–34), but Deiphobus is able to persuade his mother to undertake the murder of the stranger.

Hecuba’s willingness is disconcerting—even though it looks as if she resists at first: ‘You will do things that we will grieve about, killing a slave’ (fr. 62b41–42).⁴⁹ Why Hecuba should be so susceptible to anger or fear is not clear from the surviving text. It is plausible, as Scodel has suggested,⁵⁰ that Hecuba suspects that Alexander is a bastard son of Priam and thus a threat to her own sons. But it is not necessary to find a special motive for Hecuba. The motif of a mother’s threat to a long-lost and unrecognized son, along with the nick-of-time intervention of the truth, is a theatrical strategy that Euripides employs to heighten tension in two other plays, *Ion* and the fragmentary *Cresphontes*. In any case Hecuba’s intent to kill Alexander is irrelevant to Helen’s charge in *Troades*, that it was the failure to kill that destroyed Troy.

Hecuba sends for Alexander with the intention to attack him (fr. 62d 29). When he arrives and is at the point of being killed (fr. 62i) Cassandra recognizes him and predicts the future, so that Hecuba’s purpose is thwarted until the foster-father arrives and is forced to tell the truth (test. iii 25–32). About the reaction of the family to the discovery of Alexander’s identity I know of no information beyond what is written in the hypothesis. Presumably the mood of the end of the final scene is a happy one. Hecuba is reunited with her son (test. iii 32), whose presumed death as an infant she has mourned for twenty years. But the spectators will have been aware that the return of Alexander will have the tragic consequences that they later will witness in *Troades*. We have to assume that Hecuba and Priam are conscious of the dangers as well. They have just heard Cassandra’s warning. Cassandra, we should recall, is fated never to be believed (cf. fr. 62g). But the parents will at least have been conscious of the risk. Just as Helen later will have been conscious of an analogous risk before she leaves Sparta and Menelaus.

So, what would the spectators of *Troades*—who had seen *Alexander*—have thought when they witnessed Hecuba’s suffering? Might they have thought that Hecuba had made a choice, understanding her alternatives, and she had brought it all on herself?⁵¹ Perhaps. But they would have thought other things as well. For in *Alexander* the new son’s killing is not presented as a simple and

49 Huys (1986) 20 points out that Deiphobus’ name is in the vocative case, and that the word ‘child’, which immediately precedes, should also be vocative. The speaker must therefore be his mother, Hecuba. Cf. Huys (1986) 22–23.

50 Scodel (1980) 33–34.

51 Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 353.

unqualified moral imperative. They would have remembered her mourning for the loss of her child. They would have remembered that Euripides had presented Alexander as a young man of special strength and courage, and one whose views about the recognition of natural superiority over social status were shared by Priam and Hector. Since these views almost certainly were shared by the spectators themselves, would the spectators not have thought that the parents' refusal to kill such a man, however tragic the outcome, was a decision at least worthy of sympathy?⁵² One of the messages conveyed by *Alexander* is that humans sometimes are faced with moral conflicts from which there is no escape.

If Euripides in *Troades* brings up the question of Hecuba's responsibility, he shows no interest in turning that into a major theme because that would undercut her role in the play. Before line 860 the play's focus has been on misery, loss, and suffering. The spectators have learned to feel sorry for Hecuba, and they would hardly be in a mood to see her put on trial by Helen's accusation. But what about Helen? She too made a reckless decision, ignoring the likely consequences; but, as we have seen, she is made the object of universal criticism before the *agôn*, while in the ode that follows the Chorus sings of the shame that she brought to Greece and to the Trojans sad sufferings (1114–1117).

Helen is far from being the sole agent of the destruction that will soon come to completion. So much antagonism is directed toward her because in this play she is out of place.⁵³ For other women—even for Cassandra, however resistant she is to the idea—the fall of Troy marks an end. But not for Helen. Although Helen is threatened with death, the audience knows from the *Odyssey*⁵⁴ that Menelaus surely will change his mind, and Euripides hints strongly that that will be so. Hecuba, even before the *agôn* begins, understands and fears the power that Helen's beauty can have over Menelaus. 'Avoid looking at her lest she take you with desire, for she seizes the eyes of men (891–892, cf. 1049, 1051)'. Hecuba angrily criticizes Helen for appearing before Menelaus all gussied up (1022–1228), because she recognizes that this is an effort to exercise that power. Helen is still in the game of life, and there is reason to believe that she has a future. Hecuba in the scene that follows buries her own future.

52 Cf. Barlow (1986) 210 *ad* line 921.

53 Gellie (1986) 114–118 asserts that Helen's 'impropriety' makes her 'comic'.

54 Lloyd (1984) 303–304 argues that we are not entitled to use other sources to affect our interpretation of this play. Cf. Lloyd (1992) 111; Croally (1994) 158–159. But see Mastrorarde (2010) 109 on the background knowledge of an audience and their interpretation of what they witness.

Hecuba's effort in the third episode to salvage some success out of the defeat has come to nothing. Whether Helen will be punished or not is an indifferent. For Hecuba is confronted with the reality that the end is at hand. The exodus opens with the arrival of Talthybius bearing the body of Astyanax on his father's shield (1119–1122).

Normally a killing that takes place offstage is followed by a messenger report that describes the attack in violent and bloody detail. At *Bacchae* 1173–1254 and *Hippolytus* 1043–1152 such a report precedes the entrance of the dead or dying victim. Here, however, Euripides spares Hecuba and his audience the 'shock and horror' of experiencing the innocent child's last moments. Talthybius' report (1123–1155) makes no mention of the manner of Astyanax' death. His information is almost solely concerned with the child's burial: Andromache's persuasion of Neoptolemus to give up Hector's shield, her wish that Hecuba prepare the body for burial, Talthybius' assurance that he has washed the body and will dig a grave for it.

The final destruction of the city—what Hecuba later will call the 'ultimate goal of my evils' (1272–1273)—is imminent. Over the course of the last night and day Hecuba has lost, in succession, Priam, Polyxena, Cassandra, and Andromache, who have taken with them the life that she used to know. But Astyanax is not yet quite lost to her. The care of his body is her last connection to that life and the last duty⁵⁵ that she will perform in it. It is a bitter duty because the present condition of the body reflects the pain that the child has suffered. The city's walls have shorn the head pitifully (1173–1174). There the blood smiles forth from his broken skull (1176–1177). His hands, which look so much like his father's, lie limp at the joints (1178–1179). But Hecuba's affection for the child enables her to see more than the wounds. The body's features, even as they are, are reminders of what used to be.⁵⁶ His curls were combed by his mother (or grandmother?), who gave them kisses (1175–1176). His dear lips used to boast, promising falsely, as he held on to her skirt (or jumped onto her bed?), to offer his locks at her tomb (1180–1183). 'Oh, those many embraces', she exclaims, 'and my care of you, and our naps together are all gone' (1187–1188)! Hecuba cannot escape the present grief, but she is briefly allowed the comfort of a retreat into the past.

55 On the preservation of ritual tradition in the funeral-scene, see Dyson/Lee (2000a) 30. Hecuba's speech at lines 1156–1206, although it is very personal, retains the traditional topoi of a conventional funeral speech. For details, see Biehl (1989) 395.

56 Dyson/Lee (2000a) 23–28. On Hecuba's memories in this speech of Hector as well as Astyanax, see Barlow (1986) 220–221 *ad* lines 1156 ff.

The present does not take long to intrude. As Hecuba sends the body to its grave the firing of the city brings the destruction of Troy to a violent climax (1260–1262). Hecuba, in despair, makes a feeble attempt to run into the flames (1282–1286). When that fails, she leads the Chorus in a lyric lament (1294–1332), as they sink to their knees, pounding the earth in farewell to the land and to their dead (1305–1309), before marching to the ships and their slavery (1328–1332).

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*Electra**James Barrett*

1 The Inheritance

By the time Euripides' *Electra* was first performed, the Oresteia story—and Electra's role in it—had been a familiar presence in Athens for generations.¹ Although absent from the legend of Agamemnon's return according to Homer, Electra appears in poetry beginning in the sixth century, perhaps even earlier; artistic representations of the myth are not uncommon in the fifth century.² Paramount among the works that would have made Electra familiar to an Athenian theatre audience, however, was Aeschylus' *Oresteia*.³ The central play in Aeschylus' trilogy, the *Choephoroi*, stages the same part of the myth as that treated by Euripides' play: the return of Orestes, the mutual recognition of brother and sister, and the killing of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus.⁴ Electra's role no doubt showed some variation prior to Euripides' treatment in our play, but two particular aspects of the myth essential to Aeschylus' version (and to others as well) become crucial for appreciating what Euripides has done in his version: the Aeschylean Electra is unmarried (her name means as much),⁵ and she lives virtually cloistered in the palace.⁶

The lengthy and rich mythic inheritance—and the Aeschylean version in particular—is invoked and then reframed when Euripides' play opens. In the

1 See below on the date of Euripides' play.

2 Hes. *Cat.* 23 M-W; Stesich. *Orest.* (*PMG* 217). Perhaps earlier: see on Xanthus below. Iconography: see Vermeule (1966); Prag (1985) 51–57 *LIMC* s.v. Elektra 1.1–23, 34–41.

3 Indeed, many of the vase paintings may have been influenced by Aeschylus' trilogy, staged in 458 B.C. There is reason to believe that the *Oresteia* may have been staged (again) at Athens in the years before Eur. *El.* appeared: see Newiger (1961) 422–430; Dover (1993) 23; Olson (2002) 69; Biles (1999/2000).

4 On Euripides' debt and response to Aesch. *Cho.*, see Aéliou (1983) 111–143.

5 According to Aelian *VH* 4.26 (= *PMG* 700), in the *Oresteia* of the seventh-/sixth-century poet Xanthus, Electra was so named because she was 'bedless' (ἄλεκτρος). Aelian also reports that Stesichorus borrowed from Xanthus in writing his own *Oresteia*.

6 Much the same is true in Sophocles' *Electra*, although Dunn shrewdly notes that in Sophocles' play, she is literally and figuratively 'at the threshold' of the palace, which 'in terms of dramatic space, is nowhere' [Dunn (2009) 347–348]; cf. Medda (2007). On the date of Sophocles' play, see below.

prologue the Peasant sets out the background of the story to be presented, recalling the outlines of the story familiar to spectators: Agamemnon's departure for Troy and subsequent death at the hands of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus; Orestes' exile in Phocis; and Electra's continued residence in the palace. As the Peasant continues his summary, however, the familiar background suddenly shifts: he reveals that he is Electra's husband, and we soon learn that the married couple live in the remote, rustic shack that forms the *skênê* in the theatre. The prologue, then, sends a strong signal about the relationship between this play and its inheritance, inasmuch as two of the fundamental premises of the myth are jettisoned by Euripides: the 'bedless' Electra, that is, now has a bed (of sorts: she is, after all, still a virgin), and she lives with her peasant husband in a hut. Along with this shift in marital, if not sexual, status comes a profound change in Electra's social status. In other words, this version of the story will be more than merely different from what we might have expected, the prologue lets us know; it will be 'remarkably bold' [Jones (1962) 239] in turning much of the expected upside-down as it brings a familiar story up to date.⁷

Indeed, this kind of updating is ridiculed in Aristophanes' *Frogs* (405 BC), which stages a contest in the underworld between Aeschylus (ca. 525–456 BC) and Euripides (ca. 484–406 BC). Competing for the 'Chair in Tragedy' (769), each of these poets hurls abuse at and claims to surpass the other. The *agôn* (830–1117) represents in stark and symbolic, if exaggerated, terms the conflict between the old and the new, between values somehow still cherished yet obviously outdated and others more familiar yet somehow suspect. Although this 'debate' covers a broad range of topics, its treatment of Euripides' style can serve as a suggestive guide to some of the key elements of *Electra*. In this contest, each of the two poets embraces qualities disparaged by his rival. In particular, Euripides proudly claims to have put onstage 'household matters' or 'everyday affairs' (*οικεῖα πράγματα*, 959), and to have encouraged spectators to think clearly (*φρονεῖν*) by incorporating reasoning (*λογισμός*) and scrutiny (*σκέψις*) (971–974) into his plays.

Although exaggerated in *Frogs*, these two Euripidean favourites—the staging of everyday affairs and the incitement to critical thought—feature prominently in *Electra*. Indeed, the particular boast of the Aristophanic Euripides and the qualities of his plays that it points to, as well as the criticisms voiced by the Aristophanic Aeschylus, have had a rich afterlife. Taking a cue from Aristophanes, the nineteenth-century condemnation of Euripides inaugurated by the Schlegel brothers found much to dislike in Euripides, including the presence in

7 Cf. Aéliou (1983) 112–113. A minority view is that of Kubo, who finds 'nothing modern' here (1967, 22).

his dramas of everyday affairs such as we find in *Electra*.⁸ A.W. Schlegel, in fact, judged *Electra* to be ‘perhaps the very worst of Euripides pieces’, so bad in fact that ‘it has ceased to be a tragedy’ [(1846) 133]. Following Schlegel,⁹ Nietzsche condemns Euripides for, among other things, bringing ‘the man of everyday life’ onto the stage and presenting ‘the faithful mask of reality’ [(2000) ch. 11]. Such views of the play also echo Aristotle’s report that Sophocles claimed to have represented people as they should be, whereas Euripides represented them as they are (*Poet.* 1460b).¹⁰

I begin, then, by considering the play’s use of realism, a topic that has attracted much scholarly attention. Closely allied to this realism, I will suggest, is the interest shown by the play in its own theatricality, the topic of the third section below. In short, both strands of the text—the use of realism and the attention to theatricality—serve to manipulate a source of tension inherent in all Greek tragedy, namely the tension between the onstage world of myth and the offstage world of the spectators. The final section below addresses the play’s extensive use of intertextuality, another topic of significant critical interest that exploits the tension between onstage and offstage worlds. These three broad topics do not encompass every important aspect of Euripides’ *Electra*, of course, but they do provide a framework for approaching the play as a whole with an eye to the ways in which it provokes clear thinking (φρονεῖν) and scrutiny (σκέψις).

2 Realism

If more recently scholars have abandoned wholesale condemnation of Euripides, interest in Euripidean realism has remained keen since Nietzsche: Denniston finds ‘stern realism’ (1939, xii), Knox ‘domestic realism’ (1979, 253), Porter ‘disconcerting realism’ (1990, 255), and Gellie ‘literal-minded and prosaic naturalism’ (1981, 6). For Micheline, the contrast between ‘the foreground of myth

8 Snell (1953) 113–121; Behler (1986).

9 Snell (1953) 119–121; Henrichs (1986).

10 The correspondences between features of *Electra* and the characterization of Euripides’ style found in *Frogs* suggest the typicality of this play, even if the sheer number of lost plays prevents us from making final judgment. The play’s status as one of the ‘alphabetic’ plays, moreover, would seem to corroborate the suggestion as it implies that *Electra* was considered unexceptional. As such, the *Electra* provides an unparalleled example of (characteristic) Euripidean dramaturgy inasmuch as it stages a mythic moment which was also the subject of plays by the other two great tragedians of fifth-century Athens, Aeschylus and Sophocles.

imagined as reality and the background of myth as unreal and undramatizable fantasy' sets *Electra* apart (1987, 184). The wealth of critical interest in Euripides' use of realism leads John Gould to include a section devoted to the subject in his 1996 article on Euripides in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

The term 'realism' has been used to mean many things in connection with the play. In a helpful summary of scholarly attention to the play's realism, Goff (1999/2000) identifies four principal categories: psychological realism, material realism, realism catering to expectations of the fifth-century spectators, and realism reflecting the broader fifth-century historical contexts. Although for our purposes here, these four categories may be subsumed under a single rubric—that which would have passed as familiar to spectators from their own everyday experience—I will discuss each type briefly. It is nonetheless helpful to keep in mind that such a definition implies a significant distance from the conventionally heroic world of myth.

Psychological realism has been seen broadly in the play, as when W.G. Arnott finds the characters of the play to be 'contemporary, unheroic people' (1981, 185), but it is most commonly noted in the portraits of Electra and Orestes, figures resembling those seated in the theatre more closely than their namesakes in other mythic accounts. Kitto measures the distance between the two principal characters, on one hand, and their earlier incarnations, on the other, speaking of the 'hideousness' of Electra and Orestes (1961, 336). For Knox, we spectators (readers) of the play 'are being invited not to identify ourselves with the passions and destinies of heroic souls but to detach ourselves and observe the actions and reactions of ordinary human beings'.¹¹

Material realism appears in many forms in this play, such as the squalor of the rustic hut that is now Electra's home or the clothes she wears; similarly the presence of the Old Man with his lamb, his cheese, and his wine presents a picture in vivid contrast to the elegant, and elite, palace in which earlier Electras lived [Aélión (1983) 133]. Likewise, Electra's entrance with a pitcher for carrying water—not a vessel for ritual libations as at the opening of Aeschylus' *Choephoroi*—turns that earlier act of pious worship into a scene of domestic labour. These theatrical props in concert with the *skênê*, that is, call up visions that spectators in the theatre might well have seen outside the theatre.

The two forms of historical realism are captured by Gellie's claim that Euripides insisted 'that his play be measured against everyday norms and practices' (1981, 3). A telling example occurs in the first stasimon (432–486) when the Chorus describe the images on Achilles' shield: they explain that their source

11 (1979) 252–253; cf. Gellie (1981) 1.

was ‘someone from Troy who had stopped at the port of Nafplio’ (452–453). Tragic Choruses do not typically document their sources in this way, as they are conventionally endowed with a broad knowledge of myth. As Gellie notes, the Chorus here reveal that they have learned about Achilles’ shield ‘the way ordinary people find things out’ (3). Similarly, Vickers finds realism in the vivid detail of the messenger’s report of Aegisthus’ death (1973, 561).

Others have seen in such realisms something more, or other, than representations of everyday life. M. Lloyd, for example, argues for seeing much of *Electra*’s behaviour through the lens of conventional lamentation (1986, 2), a convention visible in large part in literary form.¹² B. Knox goes further, suggesting that much of the play’s realism proves to be generic experimentation mobilizing resources of both comedy and satyr play (1979, 253–254). Indeed A. Michelini finds that the play’s realism is a key part of its ‘vigorous attack on tragic literary norms’ (1987, 182), one that ‘challenges the basic split between the “laughable” (*geloion*) and the “serious” (*spoudaion*)’ (182). Goldhill challenges the notion of realism itself, suggesting that it is ‘a self-conscious literary mode’ rather than a transparent reflection of the world (1986a, 252). Goff finds the play’s realism vanishing amid gestures toward many other genres: epic, rhetoric, philosophy, comedy and even tragedy itself (1999/2000, 93). She even speaks of the play ‘flying apart generically in multiple directions’ (98).

Given the many uses of the term ‘realism’ and the range of critical response to it, one may wonder whether the term is of any value here. Is it a guide to a central thread of the play? Or is it a mirage that may veil or distract us from the ‘real’ work being done by the ‘antitragic and nonheroic materials’ [Michelini (1987) 209]? I will answer ‘Yes’ to both questions and propose to embrace the full range of (apparently) contradictory views mentioned above by suggesting that the disparate effects of *Electra*’s realism are in fact complementary inasmuch as they form part of a broader phenomenon: the fact that the elements identified as part of this ‘realism’ gesture *both* toward everyday life *and* away from it suggests a way to appreciate one of the play’s more persistent concerns as an engagement with a fundamental premise of the genre.

Greek tragedy is predicated upon a provocative encounter with figures and events remote in both time and space. The moment of performance conjoins the present of spectators and actors with the realm inhabited by the masked figures onstage, as this distant realm is made present and the fifth-century present is retrojected into the world of myth. Indeed the mask alone signals the fundamental provocation here: while these figures of myth, and the world

12 Cf. Cropp (2013) 144 on Homeric parallels.

that embraces them, bear only qualified resemblance to those seated in the theatre and their everyday experience, the masked figures—supported as they are by the narrative that tells their story, by song, by dance, and by costume—command a powerful presence that might well displace those everyday concerns. In short, these figures of fiction may become quite ‘real’. As Vernant sees it, tragic characters ‘are made to seem present ... although at the same time they are portrayed as figures who cannot possibly be there ...’ (1988b, 243); for D. Wiles, ‘[t]he actor both *is* Clytaemnestra and *represents* Clytaemnestra’.¹³ The tension between the distance that embraces these figures of myth, on one hand, and the powerful presence of the mimesis, on the other, constitutes a fundamental premise, and resource, of the genre.

In this context, I suggest, *Electra*’s realism forms part of an extended interest in manipulating the tension between the fictive and the real: the symbolic distance between the world embracing the figures of myth and that of the spectators in the theatre is repeatedly collapsed and reinstated in another form, often at the same moment. There is more than realism in the play that serves this purpose, but realism is perhaps the anchor of *Electra*’s exploitation, and extension, of this familiar premise.

Consider the Peasant and the Old Man. Although the first 33 lines of the play are unremarkable for a Euripidean prologue, once the Peasant informs the spectators that Electra is his wife (δάμαρτα, 35), his appearance and status begin to produce novel effects. We see and hear (37–38) that he is poor and that he is no stranger to the type of drudgery from which he tries to protect Electra (64–76). This characterization signals first and foremost the departure from earlier representations of the myth (especially Aesch. *Ch.*), as it collapses the distance between the world nominally represented onstage and that of the spectators: figures like the Peasant might well have been a familiar sight in the Attic countryside.¹⁴ Through both his class positioning, then, and the tethering of the story to his hut and its rustic location, the Peasant enables much of the play’s realism. And the arrival of the Old Man (487)—stooped and rickety, bringing lamb, cheese, and wine—extends the work carried out by the presence of the Peasant, rendering the general specific and concrete via stage props. Indeed, by the time the Old Man enters, the Peasant—having been sent to fetch the Old Man—has left the stage, and the Chorus have just completed the first stasimon. One might have expected the choral song to signal a change of tone, and yet it is at this moment, with the song of Achilles’ shield still ringing in

13 (2007) 258; see Calame (1995) 107 on the ‘imperfect bonding of enunciator and narrative actor’ in tragedy; cf. Gellie (1998).

14 Cf. Basta Donzelli (1978) 243.

the theatre, that the Old Man appears. Soon it becomes clear just how keen is the play's interest in the kind of 'unglamorous mundaneness' represented by both Peasant and Old Man [Porter (1990) 255]. At least momentarily, a spectator could be forgiven for thinking not only that the Peasant's hut had displaced the palace at Argos (or Mycenae), but also that the fifth-century Attic countryside had displaced the distant and distinctly heroic landscape in which this story was conventionally set.

And yet. As Knox and others remind us, much of the stage action surrounding the Peasant and his hut 'smacks of comedy' (1979, 54). Goff goes further, finding extensive generic mixing 'around the Autourgos and his domestic environment ... [where] ... signs of comedy, oratory and philosophy cluster' (1999/2000, 103–104). In the end, Goff finds that the 'real' is highly elusive in the play, disappearing into 'generic instability' (99). Whereas critics who have pointed out such generic mixing find in it the displacement of any realism worthy of the name, I suggest that without losing sight of these gestures toward other genres we can appreciate the significance of the clear invocations of the everyday as well. In other words, things which at one moment collapse the distance between spectator and mimesis (by recalling everyday figures resembling the Peasant and the Old Man) simultaneously establish a different kind of distance by presenting the everyday in a conventional, generic form—albeit one from an alien genre. The 'real' poverty of the Peasant, that is, proves to be indistinguishable from the incursion of other conventional generic forms. And these non-tragic elements serve to distance what has just been made familiar: the two seemingly opposed processes occur simultaneously, and we do well to keep our sights on both.¹⁵

3 Theatricality

Such realism finds a parallel in the marked attention the play pays to its own theatricality: by pushing the performance *qua* performance to the fore at times, the play similarly collapses the symbolic distance discussed above while simultaneously producing yet another kind of distancing. Borrowing from Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, some have used the term 'alienation' to identify this kind of distancing in the play.¹⁶ In particular, the *Electra's* self-reflexive highlighting of tragic conventions, and of its own peculiar engagement with them, has long

15 Cf. Kamerbeek (1958) 12–15.

16 Walsh (1977) 278–279; cf. Goldhill (1986b) 170.

been recognized. Not content simply to make use of familiar theatrical practices, Euripides in this play focuses the spectator's attention at key moments on some of the building blocks of the genre, on occasion sharply compromising their success.

Electra is not Euripides' only play to make use of its own theatricality—*Bacchae* is perhaps the most well-known example—and indeed the distancing I refer to here constitutes something of a fundamental resource of the genre itself. While Walsh finds that '*Verfremdung* should perhaps be regarded as a standard feature of Euripidean dramaturgy' (1977, 279 n. 3), there is much in the fundamental make-up of Greek tragedy that produces some degree of such 'alienation': mask, costume, song, dance, etc. With these generic qualities in mind, Peter Arnott identifies Greek tragedy as an example of 'presentational'—as opposed to 'representational'—theatre (1981, 47–49). Presentational theatre 'makes no attempt to offer a plausible and realistic illusion or representation of everyday life ... Rather, it communicates with the audience by a series of agreed conventions ... [which] are openly admitted and become the primary language of the play' (47–48). In short, the examples of 'alienation' or *Verfremdungseffekt* discussed here mobilize a resource always present in the genre. My aim, then, is not to claim uniqueness for the play in this regard; rather, it is to show how the play exploits this particular resource in the service of the larger phenomenon at work, that of manipulating the symbolic distance between stage-world and theatron.

Most conspicuous among moments in which the play highlights its own theatricality is Electra's pointed anticipation of the messenger who arrives at 761. Following the second stasimon (699–746), with Orestes and Pylades having gone off to kill Aegisthus, Electra and the coryphaeus hear a shout in the distance and wonder whether the two have succeeded or failed. The coryphaeus urges patience, but Electra replies gloomily, 'We are defeated'. She then explains why she is worried: 'Where are the messengers, after all?' (ποῦ γὰρ ἄγγελοι; 759). The coryphaeus immediately reassures her that the messenger(s) will arrive, and in fact the next line is spoken by the messenger who arrives from the scene of the murder to recount the killing of Aegisthus. Many critics find in Electra's well-timed question a reference to the tragic convention of the messenger-speech.¹⁷ Such a speech, after all, is standard for reporting offstage events, particularly those that are unstageable. This highlighting of the convention gains further emphasis through Electra's subsequent questioning of the messenger:

17 Winnington-Ingram (1969) 131–132; Arnott (1973) 51; Goldhill (1986a) 250–251; for another view, see Marshall (1999/2000).

when the latter announces that Aegisthus is dead, Electra asks, ‘Who are you? Should I believe what you are saying?’. As Gellie points out, this questioning of a messenger’s reliability is unique in Greek tragedy (1981, 4 with n. 7). Electra’s ‘interrogation’ of the messenger serves to underscore, as it calls into question, the authority conventionally granted to such figures [cf. Barrett (2002)]. Altogether, then, this brief passage identifies by name, deploys, and questions one of the genre’s more characteristic features.

To similar effect the Chorus highlight the fictionality of their song’s subject in the second stasimon. As they set out to recount Thyestes’ theft of the golden lamb to gain the throne and Zeus’ intervention on Atreus’ behalf, the Chorus bracket what they are about to sing with a qualification: ‘the tale persists among ancient legends ...’ (κληδῶν / ἐν πολιαῖσι μένει φήμαις, 700–701). In other words, they mark their song as one that reports not what happened but rather what has been said (or sung). At story’s end, the initial hedging culminates in a brusque expression of disbelief in what they have just sung: ‘So is it said, but with little credit from me’ (λέγεται, τὰν δὲ πίστιν / σμικρὰν παρ’ ἔμοιγ’ ἔχει, 737–738).¹⁸ This passage resembles *HF* 1340–1346, where Heracles announces that he doesn’t believe the myths as told: they are poets’ wretched lies (ἀοιδῶν οἶδε δύστηνοι λόγοι, 1346). Here, however, the Chorus add that even such stories have a benefit: they induce people to respect the gods (743–745). As with the messenger discussed above, conventionality—here of a Chorus recounting mythic episodes—is exposed in such a way that its efficacy can only be compromised by the self-reflection: rather than (merely) narrating a myth, the Chorus provoke scrutiny of tragic convention.

Electra’s concern with making a show reveals another mode in which the play focuses attention on its own theatricality. As she declares shortly after her entry at 54, Electra carries out the menial task of fetching water not because she has been reduced to such a state of need, but rather because she aims to put on display the hubris of Aegisthus (ὡς ὕβριν δεῖξωμεν Αἰγίσθου θεοῖς, 58): her act of fetching water is a performance. Although the Peasant is onstage, her remarks make little sense understood as directed at him [Cropp (2013) ad loc.]. She addresses the night and specifies the gods as those for whom she puts Aegisthus’ hubris on display by carrying the pitcher, but of course it is the spectators in the theatre who witness this display. Electra’s acknowledgement that the act of carrying the pitcher is a kind of show accomplishes two things at once: first, it threatens to blur the distinction between character and actor; second, it shows that Electra’s acts are rhetorical gestures, aimed at produc-

18 See Stinton (1989) 79–81 for a different view, with the riposte of Cropp (2013) 196.

ing an effect not necessarily apparent at first glance. The first of these effects collapses the symbolic distance between myth and performance, while the second produces an ‘alienation’ that opens the way to seeing Electra’s actions as demanding scrutiny. Both of these distance Electra from her act of carrying the pitcher as they manipulate the charged symbolic distance in differing ways.

A similar deployment of *Verfremdungseffekt* occurs in Electra’s monody (112–166), one that underscores the theatricality of the performance: Electra’s eight-fold use of the imperative addressed to herself (112 = 127, 113 = 128, 125, 126, 140, 150). Although not unparalleled, such imperatives are not common (cf. Eur. *Tr.* 98–99). Roisman and Luschnig note that among the 73 imperatives in this play, only in this passage are they addressed to the speaker (2011, 113). One cannot, of course, predict the effect of this phenomenon on any given spectator, but Electra’s repeated speaking to herself *as if to another* bears a kinship to Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt*, one that is intensified by her peculiar use of the imperative at line 140.

Critics generally find the imperatives in Electra’s monody unremarkable, with one exception. At 140–141 Electra says, ‘Take this vase from my head and set it down’ (θέξ τόδε τεύχος ἐμάς ἀπό κρατὸς ἐλοῦσ’). The unusual conjunction of a second-person imperative (θέξ) and a first-person possessive (ἐμάς) has led to the suggestion that Electra must be accompanied by a servant whom she here addresses. Denniston, for example, calling this conjunction ‘impossibly difficult’, asks rhetorically, ‘In what language can one say to oneself “Put down this pot from my head”?’¹⁹ The scholion, however, identifies the addressee of the imperative here as Electra herself, while Basta Donzelli answers Denniston incisively (1978, 294): one can say this (‘Put down this pot from my head’) ‘in Electra’s language’.²⁰

Concerning the imperatives in this monody (aside from θέξ at 140), Cropp notes that Electra ‘acts like an *exarchos*’ (2013, 143) in giving direction to herself: she is both leader and led, both choral director and Chorus. If we understand Electra to be her own addressee also at 140, the ‘split’ in her character effected by the double role she assumes throughout the monody becomes explicit at 140. In other words, θέξ at 140 may be both consistent with the other imperatives in the monody and something of an exceptional case that clarifies what is at work throughout Electra’s song. In particular, these imperatives put Electra’s gestures on exhibit, distancing them from the speaker: Electra as the one who performs these gestures is at a remove from Electra as ‘*exarchos*’. As with

19 (1939) *ad* 112–113; cf. Cropp (2013) *ad* 140.

20 Cf. Roisman/Luschnig (2011) *ad loc.*

Electra's making a 'show' of fetching water discussed above, the imperatives produce something of a rift within Electra, who invites us to view her at a remove, as if framed and held up for scrutiny.

Much like realism, then, the play's attention to its own theatricality collapses the symbolic distance between the mythic realm nominally presented onstage and the world of the spectators in the theatron. But it also distances the enactment from the spectators as it frames the onstage action in a manner akin to the workings of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, thereby complicating and perhaps even frustrating efforts on the part of spectators to empathize with the characters. The 'split' in Electra, for example, like the Chorus' self-reflective commentary, constitutes a pointed invitation—if not an injunction—to spectators to experience what is enacted onstage as theatre, in the first instance, rather than myth.²¹

4 Intertextuality

Euripides' *Electra* makes particularly rich use of intertextual engagement. Principal among the intertexts are the Homeric poems and, of course, Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. Because of dating difficulties, the play's relationship with the *Electra* of Sophocles is far from clear. Like Sophocles' play, Euripides' *Electra* is of unknown date, although there is a general consensus that the play belongs to the decade between 422 and 413 BC. The late date has been advocated by those finding in the play allusions to real events: lines 1278–1283 (in which Castor reveals that Helen went not to Troy but rather to Egypt) as a proleptic reference to Euripides' *Helen*, performed in 412; and the mention of the 'Sicilian sea' (πόντος Σικελός) at 1347 as an allusion to the Athenian debacle in Sicily of 413. Since Zuntz (1955, 64–71), however, most reject the notion that these lines contain such allusions, accepting instead an earlier date largely on metrical grounds.²² Perhaps the most fruitful approach to this intractable problem is that of working toward a kind of triangulation by evaluating the uses made of Homer and Aeschylus by each play [Finglass (2007) 3]. Here I limit my discussion of Sophocles' play.

The first stasimon recounts the departure of Greek ships for Troy, carrying Agamemnon and Achilles 'of light step' (κοῦφον ἄλμα ποδῶν, 439–440). The Iliadic epithet of Achilles, πῶδας ὠκύς ('swift-footed'; *Il.* 1.58, etc), is here

21 Some have seen extensive metatheatre in the play; see Luschnig (1995) 93, 109, 134, e.g.

22 Cropp provides a concise summary of views (2013, 31–33); for a thorough history, see Basta Donzelli (1978) 27–71; cf. Ameduri (2006).

reworked but the source is impossible to miss. In fact, much of the vocabulary is Homeric [Cropp (2013) 166]. But the principal rewriting of Iliadic material in this stasimon lies in the ekphrasis of Achilles' armour (452–477). Although clearly drawing on the ekphrasis of Achilles' shield in *Iliad* 18, the Euripidean ekphrasis introduces telling changes that propose a reconsideration of such paradigmatic exemplars from the past. Adams, for example, finds that in Euripides' play the 'glamour' of Achilles is inseparable from the monstrosities of Gorgon, Sphinx, and Chimaera.²³ O'Brien (1964, 16–18) and Walsh (1977) provide sustained analyses of the choral ode in a similar vein. King finds that 'in the real world of Electra and Orestes, unholy acts (1204–1205) and utter misery are the result of accepting as paradigmatic the traditional heroes of the past' (1980, 210). Such readings of the ekphrasis and the stasimon that contains it illustrate Vernant's claim that in tragedy 'the hero has ceased to be a model. He has become ... a problem' (1988, 25).

At the same time, however, the movement in the first stasimon—from its initial optimism about Achilles and the Greek expedition (432–451) to the murder of Agamemnon and the Chorus' prophetic imagination of Clytemnestra's own death (479–485)—frames the killing of Agamemnon as the contemporary equivalent of the heroic achievements of Achilles [Zeitlin (1970) 655]. As it does so, the ode opens the way to seeing Orestes as the 'heroic' avenger of Agamemnon, 'sharing the aura of Achilles, Perseus, and Bellerophon' [Cropp (2013) 167]. But of course, this comparison does little for Orestes who proves to inhabit a world far more 'real' than that of the Achilles evoked here. The epic model, then, serves two seemingly opposed purposes: to highlight the distance between the Homeric figures and those of our play, on one hand, and, on the other, to challenge the value of the Homeric model itself. Indeed, Walsh writes that 'Electra and Orestes follow the model of the past, and in so doing reveal the horrors that are concealed beneath the charm of the ode's narrative' (1977, 288).

Electra's (misguided) vision of her brother as a heroic figure furthers the play's epic engagements. Before the recognition, Electra idealizes Orestes 'as a hero with virtues and values straight out of the *Iliad*' [W.G. Arnott (1981) 182]. For example, at 336–338 she compares Orestes to their father, Agamemnon, asserting Orestes' superiority to Aegisthus and his ability to kill his father's assassin as an Iliadic figure would, one on one (ἄνδρ' ἐν' εἰς ὦν). She insists further at 524–526 that Orestes would never come to Argos in secrecy (κρυπτόν). Herein lies a thinly veiled allusion to an Iliadic, or Achillean, as opposed to

23 (1935) 121; cf. Morwood (1981) 364; Grube (1941) 304–305; see Morin (2004) for a discussion of these monsters.

Odyssean, quality: the reliance upon force (*biê*) rather than guile (*mêtis*)—an opposition that lies at the heart of what distinguishes Achilles from Odysseus [Nagy (1979) 47]. It is, of course, Odysseus—following the advice he receives from Agamemnon in *Od.* 11—who returns home in secrecy. Electra's (false) claim that Orestes could only adhere to the Achillean model serves two purposes: it illustrates the gap between what she imagines and what is in fact the case, and it also suggests the distance between the heroic and the real, as it reveals the value of the *Odyssey* in the play.

The *Odyssey* looms large in the play. Indeed, the *Odyssey* itself might be thought to make this necessary inasmuch as the Oresteia story is crucial to the epic.²⁴ Michelini singles out the *Electra* as the Euripidean play that 'most directly and consistently echoes the mood and setting' of the *Odyssey* (1987, 185–186).²⁵ The play's exploitation of the *Odyssey*, then, serves a range of purposes, from characterization to a broader framing of the story. The play uses the *Odyssey* to assert the domesticity of its own story as well as 'the strong incongruity between the somber material and the setting' (Michelini 1987, 186).

The most productive use of the *Odyssey* made by the play lies in its presentation of Orestes as a figure to be understood on the model of Odysseus, a strong thread in the text that is thrown into relief by Electra's fantasy of her brother as an Iliadic figure. As the play exploits the opposition between the Iliadic and the Odyssean—and between *mêtis* and *biê*—the distance of Orestes from the Iliadic model renders even more poignant the suggestion that he is to be seen as a version of Odysseus: an exile who returns in secrecy, relying upon *mêtis* to effect his triumph. One key aspect of the Odysseus-Orestes parallel as construed by the play, however, is also an essential component of the play's response to Aeschylus' *Choephoroi*: unlike his Aeschylean and Sophoclean namesakes, Euripides' Orestes bears a decidedly Odyssean scar. And this scar plays a key role in the recognition scene, serving as the deciding factor in convincing both the Old Man and Electra that it is Orestes who stands before them (572–578).

The recognition scene (487–584) constitutes the play's foremost engagement with Aeschylus' *Choephoroi*, one that has received much comment.²⁶ In Euripides' play, the dialogue between Electra and the Old Man about the lock of

24 See Garvie (1986) ix–xiii; on Aesch. *Cho.*, see Goldhill (1984) 183–195.

25 On the Laertes of *Odyssey* 24 as a model for Electra and the parallels between Odysseus and Orestes, see Dingel (1969).

26 Because this passage mocks Aeschylus' *Cho.*, the authenticity of lines 518–544 has been challenged; for a summary of views, see Cropp (2013) 180–181; for a vigorous defence of the passage, see Gallagher (2003).

hair, footprints, and woven cloth (508–544) takes direct aim at its Aeschylean predecessor which incorporates all three of these elements into its recognition scene: here Electra rejects as foolish the deductions of the Old Man based on these tokens, namely that Orestes must have returned to Argos. Whereas in Aeschylus these signs point reliably to Orestes' return, here such use is mocked as implausible.²⁷ Among other things, this criticism of the Aeschylean recognition scene continues the play's championing of realism discussed above. At the same time, however, the play ironizes Electra's criticism of the Old Man's reasoning, and hence its own criticism of Aeschylus, insofar as the signs prove to indicate here precisely what they indicate in Aeschylus: Orestes has, of course, returned. In spite of the implausibility of the Old Man's interpretation, then, his logic turns out to be flawless.²⁸ The impasse between Electra and the Old Man, however, is broken by the appearance of Orestes' scar.

As a boy Orestes fell while chasing a fawn, the Old Man reminds Electra, and the mark on his brow is the sign of this fall (πτώματος τεκμήριον, 575). Electra acknowledges this and finally concurs with the Old Man that the stranger in front of them is Orestes. This turning point in the recognition derives, of course, from the scene in *Odyssey* 19 when Eurycleia recognizes Odysseus from the scar on his leg. The inconclusiveness of the Aeschylean tokens, then, gives way to a novel sign of identity taken from the *Odyssey*: it is an Orestes conceived along Odyssean lines who proves recognizable. The 'tragic' Orestes familiar from Aeschylus yields, if only momentarily, to an 'epic'—and Odyssean—Orestes.

The comparison with Odysseus, however, does not go well for Orestes: Odysseus' scar is a sign of his heroic achievements while hunting a wild boar, whereas Orestes merely fell while chasing a fawn. As Tarkow suggests, the mythical exemplum here (Odysseus) constitutes a foil that highlights 'the essentially unheroic' Orestes of the play (1981, 147). Indeed, the comparison invoked by the scar lends a biting clarity to the Old Man's comment at 550–551, where, echoing the comments made by Orestes earlier, he notes that the strangers may be counterfeit (κίβδηλος), since many who are noble are in fact vile (κακοί). If at this point we still cling to some notion of Orestes as a heroic figure, then, the scar and the Old Man's comment make clear that just as Orestes is no Iliadic figure so is he no Odysseus. Goff extends Tarkow's analysis, observing that the scar of Odysseus 'proves him a man', whereas the scar of Orestes 'marks him as a child' (1991, 264). Tarkow takes the scar to be even more broadly significant: inasmuch as Orestes is a hero *manqué*, the scar recapitulates a key motif in the

27 Cropp (2013) 176–177 with references; cf. Paduano (1970).

28 Pucci (1967); Goldhill (1986a) 247–249.

play, namely the sharp contrast between truth (Odysseus as the true hero) and falsehood (Orestes as the fraud) (1981, 148).

Although Euripides' *Electra* exploits and responds to Homer, Stesichorus' *Oresteia*, and perhaps Pindar's *Pythian* 11 and Sophocles' *Electra* as well as other texts, its chief intertextual interlocutor is Aeschylus' *Choephoroi*—and to a lesser degree the *Oresteia* trilogy that contains it. For example, Castor's explanation at 1244–1246 that Clytemnestra's punishment is just but what Orestes did is not—and that Apollo lacked wisdom in instructing Orestes to kill his mother—constitutes a rejection of the theodicy on display in Aeschylus' presentation (*Eum.* 614–618, etc). Similarly, the relatively sympathetic portrait of Clytemnestra in Euripides' play (e.g., as a mother attentive to her daughter at a critical ritual moment) serves to distance this Clytemnestra from Aeschylus' domineering and dangerous figure [cf. Cropp (2013) 4]. The difference between Euripides' version and that of Aeschylus, in fact, underpins some of the play's more far-reaching commentary. The impugning of Orestes and Electra, for example, together with the relatively sympathetic presentation of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus—characterizations that run counter to those found in Aeschylus' treatment—results in the 'essential sameness of Electra and Clytemnestra, of Orestes and Aegisthus' and thereby 'renders morally irrelevant all the conventional ways of distinguishing good from wicked' [O'Brien (1964) 38]. This flatness of moral landscape in the play, that is, comes into focus in part by means of its difference from what is to be found in Aeschylus.

Other specific echoes and revisions of the Aeschylean texts include Electra's entrance with a water jug and Clytemnestra's entrance by chariot. The first sharply revises the opening of Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* in which Electra appears with a jug to pour a libation at Agamemnon's tomb. The Aeschylean pot marks the drama from the outset as one concerned with religious ritual (here exploited by Electra against the instructions of Clytemnestra who has sent her to the tomb), whereas Euripides' Electra carries a pot to fetch water, an act marking both Electra's fallen status and the play's nearly unswerving attention to the mundane.²⁹ Some find here a parody of Aeschylus (Hammond 1984, 180), but at a minimum this intertextual moment suggests a theme that pervades the play: the intrusion of the 'low' into a hitherto more exalted realm.³⁰

Clytemnestra's entrance similarly conjures an Aeschylean precedent: the entry of Agamemnon in the play bearing his name. Like Agamemnon, Clytemnestra rides into the theatre on a chariot with Trojan captives at her

29 Cf. the Peasant's comment at 64–66.

30 Michelin (1987) 181–230; cf. Luschnig (1995) 87–92.

side. Indeed, her opening words to her attendants (ἔκβητ' ἀπήνης, Τρωάδες, 998) echo those addressed by Aeschylus' Clytemnestra first to Agamemnon and then to Cassandra (ἔκβαιν' ἀπήνης τῆσδε, *Ag.* 906 & 1039). In Euripides' version, Clytemnestra plays Agamemnon (having arrived on a chariot, she will soon be killed within), and yet continues to speak the line(s) assigned to her by Aeschylus. Among other things, such intertextual revision highlights the play's theatricality, predicated in this case on the exploitation of an earlier performance: this play, the scene suggests, can be understood only via reference to theatrical history.

In a different kind of intertextual engagement—one that relies upon broad generic references—many of the principal or key figures in the play identify Orestes as a victor worthy of recognition in the manner accorded to Olympic victors, as we see on display in the poems of Pindar and Bacchylides. As killer of Aegisthus, Orestes is crowned by Aegisthus' attendants at 854 and again by Electra at 880–888. He is also explicitly, and favourably, compared by the Chorus to real Olympic victors (862–864). Furthermore, following the killing of Aegisthus, Electra applies to Orestes what is nearly a technical term for an athletic victor (καλλίνικος, 880); the Chorus use this same term (καλλίνικος) to describe their song in Orestes' honour (865); and the messenger applies it to the Chorus members themselves (761), presaging the song they will soon sing. As if to underscore the point, their song at 859–879 employs the dactylo-epitrite, a metre typical of epinician verse. (Other references to victory and crowns in the play at 591, 614, 675, 872.) In the end, this elevated form of praise produces an irony inasmuch as Orestes' 'victory' is thoroughly problematized by the play and emptied of anything resembling the stature accorded to victories at Olympia. As the play's dénouement makes clear, this is a 'victory' that calls for something other than celebration. If we recognize the myopia of the messenger, the Chorus, Electra, and Orestes himself in this regard, we may also appreciate that the many references to Olympic victory and to crowns, and the use of highly marked language, serve principally to emphasize (by contrast) both the horror of Orestes' 'victory' and the remarkably flawed understanding displayed by those onstage.³¹

One of the more intriguing, and frustrating, questions concerning intertextuality in Euripides' *Electra* concerns its relationship with Sophocles' play of the same name: uncertainties of dating cloud any effort to determine which play makes use of the other. It is perhaps nonetheless fitting to note that the motif

31 Cf. Arnott (1981) 187–190; O'Brien (1964) 23–24; Zeitlin (1970) 656–657; on epinician elements in our play, see Swift (2010) 156–170.

of Orestes as Panhellenic athlete is one shared by the two plays. In Sophocles' play, the Paidagogus reports in the (false) messenger-speech that Orestes was killed while driving a chariot in the games at Delphi. This ruse, of course, facilitates the revenge in part by convincing Clytemnestra (and Electra) that Orestes is dead and, therefore, that the strangers in their midst (Orestes and Pylades) present no danger. Although this speech borrows more from Homer than from epinician poetry,³² it conjures an athletic Orestes in performing its deceptive work. In Euripides' play, a similar Orestes is imagined not by one in full control of the 'conjuring', but rather by those who thereby display their failure both to understand and to persuade: if the narratees of Sophocles' Paidagogus—both those onstage and those in the theatre—are susceptible to his fiction, his counterparts in Euripides' play fail utterly to persuade anyone (other than themselves) that the killing of Aegisthus (and Clytemnestra) constitutes a 'victory' worthy of those at Olympia. The effective, rhetorical presentation of Orestes by Sophocles' Paidagogus stands in sharp contrast to the transparent delusion on the part of the figures in our play.

5 Conclusion: How Are We to Judge Correctly?

After the initial exchange between Electra and the unrecognized Orestes—in which Electra learns that Orestes is alive, and Orestes learns about Electra's 'married' life and about her new 'husband' (220–338)—the Peasant reappears onstage. Upon learning that the strangers are friends of Orestes, he invites the pair into the house, insisting that in spite of his poverty he will not show himself to be of poor breeding (*καὶ γὰρ εἰ πένης ἔφυν, / οὔτοι τό γ' ἦθος δυσγενὲς παρέξομαι*, 362–363). The apparent contradiction he claims to embody—he is poor, yet of noble character—is immediately seized upon by Orestes, who then delivers a speech that has become one of the most well-known passages of the play. There is no sure way, says Orestes, to know a person's moral status: he has seen a worthless man born from a noble father, as well as worthy children born of base parents. How, then, are we to distinguish such differing types and judge correctly? (367–373, esp. 373: *πῶς οὖν τις ἀτὰ διαλαβῶν ὀρθῶς κρίνει;*).

Orestes' speech has generally been read as a key element of the play's attention to the difference between being and seeming [Tarkow (1981) 148–150, e.g.], one that highlights Orestes' own dubious status. Goldhill notes, for example, that 'Orestes is his own best example' (1986b, 164) of a worthless man born from

32 See Barrett (2002) 132–160.

a noble father (ἄνδρα γενναίου πατρός / τὸ μηδὲν ὄντα, 369–370). And Egli sees Orestes' trenchant question lingering in the minds of spectators at play's end (2003, 229). Additionally, however, this well-studied speech—and its concern with a rupture in the system of moral knowledge—highlights the epistemological challenges presented by the elements of the play discussed above: realism, theatricality, and intertextuality. These three elements, that is, elicit comparable epistemological ruptures insofar as they unsettle spectators and provoke them to rethink what they thought they knew. In this way the play illustrates what the Aristophanic Euripides proudly claims for his plays generally (*Frogs* 971–974, quoted above): *Electra* does indeed prod spectators to think clearly (φρονεῖν). The Aristophanic Euripides also links such prodding to the putting onstage of 'household matters' (οἰκειὰ πράγματα, 959), a practice that reaches an extreme in our play, not least in the appearance of the Peasant himself. In pushing the audience to confront the gap between (conventional) figures of myth and those onstage, in compelling spectators to accommodate the slippage between onstage and offstage worlds more broadly, and in highlighting the conventions and conventionality on which tragedy relies, Euripides' *Electra* urges spectators to ponder not only the moral and theological problems intrinsic to any telling of the myth of Orestes' return, but also the particular telling carried out by this *Electra* itself. In other words, the play demands that we consider the moral conundrum of the matricide, for example, or the perplexing state of a world in which Apollo is no longer wise, and at the same time it encourages scrutiny of the workings of the performance itself in making such demands. The play, then, enacts at the level of form one of the key thematic elements as articulated by the famous speech of Orestes.

Indeed, the Brechtian qualities of this play encourage us to think with the Chorus as they explain that a false story can be much more than merely false: it can produce certain effects (737–745, see above). Like *Electra's* fetching of water which constitutes an accusation of hubris against Aegisthus (57–58), the Chorus' telling of the story of the golden lamb constitutes a rhetorical act: an utterance that turns telling into doing. Both of these emblematic moments, then, draw a distinction between speech as sincere, transparent expression and speech as rhetorical act. Indeed, the play as a whole draws the same distinction: the 'alienation' engendered by the play, the ongoing tension between the world of myth and that of the spectators in the theatre, the highlighting of the performance *as performance*—all of these aspects of the drama demand that we be able to understand telling as a form of doing. As it tells its story, that is, the play does many things, and in the process, it puts its own rhetoricity on display. In the end, then, Euripides' *Electra* invites the engaged spectator to ponder not only the myth presented, but also the workings of tragic theatre itself.

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Iphigenia among the Taurians

Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz

Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (414 or 413 BC?) has had an uneven reputation; although highly regarded by Aristotle especially for its plot,¹ it has not been one of the most studied of Euripides' tragedies.² Some question whether it is even a tragedy at all, since it is one of Euripides' plays of 'catastrophe survived' or 'escape'.³ I will treat the 'happy ending' as it is related to important considerations of gender, sexuality, and ritual.

Euripides turned to the House of Atreus often, writing an *Electra*, an *Orestes*, and two Iphigenia plays. Like the *Orestes*, the *IT* is startling in its plot; Iphigenia was neither ritually killed by Agamemnon at Aulis, as she was in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, nor made immortal by Artemis, as the contested last scene of Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* suggests; rather, the plot maintains that at the moment of sacrifice, she was whisked away to the land of the Taurians.⁴ She is now Artemis' priestess and responsible for the ritual sacrifice of all foreigners who come to this faraway place. According to Euripides, Orestes has been through the trial in Athens, but his acquittal left some loose ends in the form of a band of resistant Erinyes who now have to be appeased. Apollo has once again intervened; he has sent Orestes to Tauris on a mission to rescue (steal) the cult statue of Artemis and return it to Athens; that action promises to complete his purification. After a long delay, Orestes and Iphigenia finally recognize one another, and they develop a plan to steal the statue and rescue the priestess herself. For those familiar with Iphigenia as a sacrificial victim, it is noteworthy that here she is the architect and agent of her own escape. In the climax, the goddess Athena appears to ensure a happy ending. She pacifies Thoas, King of the Taurians, secures the escape of the young people, and ordains that they establish two rituals (at Halai and Brauron) in Attica.

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- 1 The play, hereinafter referred to as *IT*, is mentioned several times very favourably; Aristotle considers its plot and *anagnorisis* to be of the best sort (*Poetics* 14–17, 1454a4–10, 1455b 1–16).
 - 2 This point is made by most recent scholars: Hall (2013) xxv; Wright (2005) 2 n. 10; Cropp (2000) 62–65; Kyriakou (2006) 6–7. On performance tradition, see Hall (2013).
 - 3 Burnett (1972); Wright (2005); Conacher (1967). Platnauer (1938) says that it 'has never been ranked as among its author's greatest plays ... To begin with, the *Iphigenia* is not a tragedy at all'. See Hall (2013) 4 on Platnauer, however.
 - 4 See Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* fr. 23(a) M-W, 17–24.

Importantly, the *IT*, as this brief plot summary makes clear, is to some extent a rewriting of the *Oresteia* and is profitably examined in the context of the trilogy.⁵ In terms of character and plot, Euripides' changes to the story introduce an expanded relationship for Orestes and Pylades, as well as a completely new role for Iphigenia; the new resolution emphasizes ritual and aetiology.

Most recent scholarship that directly addresses the play has focused on the genre (tragedy or romance) or ritual, but not sex and gender. On the other hand, studies of sexuality and gender commonly discuss Orestes and Pylades and address the question of whether they were *just* friends or if they were also lovers, but they don't analyze this play as a whole.⁶ In this essay, I will bring together four of these foci (genre, ritual, sexuality, and gender) via a consideration of initiation. The resolution of the play, and thus its happy ending, depends on successful completion of initiation. Since initiation rituals function to produce men and women from boys and girls, they are closely involved with the institution of cultural norms of sex and gender and are moreover dependent on a period of homosocial/homoerotic relations. Though both Iphigenia and Orestes are initiatory figures, and both have ritual conclusions to their sojourn in the wilderness, it is important to note that the process is meant to prepare them for *gendered* adult roles. Thus, these threads are interwoven together in the play and will be in my discussion.

Feminist critics have devoted much time to the House of Atreus myth. In French feminism, in particular, the *Oresteia* takes pride of place: Simone de Beauvoir said it 'illustrated the triumph of patriarchy over maternal right'. Hélène Cixous names Freud on the *Oresteia* as a source of phallogentrism.⁷ Luce Irigaray asserts that matricide, not the murder of the father, is the 'originary' murder, on which culture is founded.⁸ In her view, the *Eumenides* facilitates 'the advent of the image of the virgin goddess'.⁹ The citizens 'bury beneath their sanctuary women in struggle so that they will no longer disturb the new order of the home, the order of the polis, now the only order'.¹⁰ This virgin goddess (and thus the new female) is identified with the father, Zeus, who is her only parent; she announces that she will always side with the male.¹¹

5 Zeitlin (2005).

6 For instance, Halperin (1990); Williams (2012); Davidson (2007).

7 de Beauvoir (2009) 88; Cixous (1986) 100; cf. Leonard (2000); Chesi (2014) 1–2, citing others. See also Zeitlin (1996) and Rabinowitz (1981), among American scholars.

8 Schwab (2010) 80.

9 Irigaray (1991) 37–38.

10 Irigaray (1991) 37.

11 Millett (1970) 111–115; Zeitlin (1996); Jacobs (2007); Lawler (2011).

In the revenge phase of the Orestes myth, the murder of the mother clearly cements men in their relationships to other men: first the murder is done for the sake of the father; second, it is done at the behest of the god Apollo; and third it is done with a male friend. Male bonding is an essential part of the plot.¹² This pattern is related to what I have called ‘a strategy of containment’ in Euripidean tragedy, through which women though seemingly granted subjectivity were actually subjected to male power.¹³ In particular, in ancient Greek culture (as elsewhere), the exchange of women in marriage leads to the creation and strengthening of homosocial relations between men.¹⁴

Orestes’ mythic past fits in with an interpretation of the hero as an initiatory youth. He exemplifies the ephebe who is on the border of society and in an ambiguous state until re-entry is accomplished; the three-part initiation structure sketched in by anthropologists Arthur van Gennep and Victor Turner can be seen in his exile, stealthy return, and final reintegration into mature male identity.¹⁵ The *Oresteia* sets the paradigm for later tragedy here. It first emphasizes Orestes’ exile and return. He is made heroic, like others with missions to accomplish, because his matricide is recast as a dragon-slaying—Aeschylus uses language that vilifies Clytemnestra and makes her a monster. Orestes can then be seen as like Apollo, a dragon slayer and bringer of order.¹⁶ In *Libation Bearers*, he is strongly identified with masculinity; he has his trusty companion, Pylades, and the god Apollo as mentor. While he must flee the Furies at the end of the play, his transition is completed by his acquittal and subsequent reintegration into community in *Eumenides*.¹⁷

Euripides revises this picture in important ways. In *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, Orestes is still wandering and must complete a new heroic task in order to return to Greece. While in the earlier plays involving Orestes, Clytemnestra, and Electra, the mission requires the murder and denigration of female figures, here a more positive dynamic of rescue obtains. The relationship of the two special friends develops in strength and intensity, but not only is the woman not harmed but she is included in the plot and is an important agent of her own rescue.¹⁸

12 Schwab (2010) 80.

13 Rabinowitz (1993); see also Wohl (1998).

14 Lévi-Strauss (1949); Rubin (1975). Homosocial is a term first developed by Eve K. Sedgwick (1985).

15 Vidal-Naquet (1983); Turner (1977); Vian (1963) 114–118, discusses exile and initiation; Orestes as related to Apollo in Sergent (1985); Papadopoulou (2005).

16 Rabinowitz (1981); Zeitlin (1978) used the phrase misogyny to describe the myth.

17 Porter (2005) 32 discusses the *Eumenides* as an example of failed initiation; Goff (2004) 341–343.

18 See McHardy (2016), on *xenia* and possible familial relationship of the pair.

Both Iphigenia and Orestes are initiates in the play. Martin Cropp finds further significance in that ritual dimension, arguing that ‘The element of initiation reflected in Euripides’ story must have enriched its communal significance.’¹⁹ Orestes has gone to the wilds in this his second or third (depending on whether you count his rescue as a child) rescue. The setting emphasizes that element: on the outskirts of civilization, an inhospitable place, as the text reiterates through the references to hostile sea and crashing rocks, the Symplegades: ‘the twin converging rocks of the Unfriendly sea!’ (*pontou ... axeinou*, 124–125, cf. 241, 260, 260–263).²⁰ Because the danger comes in part from the location and the barbarian king, Thoas, the plot thread of peril and exile are also related to the theme of barbarian vs. Greek. Whereas he had to kill his mother in his first stage of reintegration into the family, now he has to traverse the globe.²¹

Orestes is still suffering at the opening of the play; he is ill and in a weakened condition; even more importantly, he is still pursued by the Erinyes who have once again made him an outcast (79–81). As at the end of the *Libation Bearers*, he is mad. Having hunted down his mother and Aegisthus, he is now in a net himself, driven there by following the god’s edict that he should kill his mother to avenge his father (77–79). He complains that the god is at fault: when the Erinyes chased him as fugitive from the land, and he ‘had completed many twisting laps’, he says: ‘I came and asked you how I might reach an end of my wheeling madness.’²² The herdsman’s description of his condition emphasizes his madness (*maniais*, 284), as do the visions he has of the Erinyes attacking him (286–294). The ‘yoke of madness’ imagery often used in regard to him (cf. *Cho.* 1021–1025) arguably marks the liminal stage in the rite of passage because it places him outside of civilization by virtue of being out of his mind.²³ Angeliki Tzanetou argues that ‘by decoding their return [to Greece] as the conclusion of a rite of passage, we may view Iphigenia and Orestes through the spectators’ eyes as archetypal ritual passengers whose ritual identities bear the indelible marks of their thwarted pasts.’²⁴ But in the end, he is restored to health and citizenship.

The text supports the initiation reading in some very clear ways. Orestes and Pylades are young men, the age of initiates, as the text emphasizes (122,

19 Cropp (2000) 55–56, 55 n. 104 on *choes*; cf. Kyriakou (2006) 5, 27.

20 Translations will be from Cropp (2000), unless otherwise noted.

21 In some ways space has replaced the mother, harking back to Freud’s view of women’s sexuality as a dark continent, akin to colonialist views of Africa. Freud (1926/1959b) 212.

22 Cropp (2000) 81–84.

23 Tzanetou (1999–2000) 211.

24 Tzanetou (1999–2000) 201.

242); they face a difficult task (92, 114, 121–122), a typical requirement for status change. Their position as youths *becoming* men is also mentioned (*neanias*, 242, 304, 474 vs. *anêr* 1005). Then too, like Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* and Sophocles' and Euripides' *Electras*, the play introduces Orestes and Pylades arriving and hiding (68–70). Euripides highlights the elements that allude to their ephebic position in the initial scene between them. For instance, Orestes suggests fleeing (103), and Pylades refuses, saying it 'is not acceptable ... we must not dishonour the god's instruction' (104–105). He ends his speech of exhortation thus: 'Noble men face up to ordeals while cowards count for nothing anywhere' (114–115). Orestes accepts the advice and decides to stay but conceal himself (instead of fleeing). That decision sounds the note of initiation. He has been in exile, which is analogous to the initiatory time spent in the wilderness; as is appropriate, the youth must still use deceitful methods of fighting, not observing a hoplite's or warrior's ethic of confrontation.²⁵ By staging this as a choice, not to fight openly but to hide (119), Euripides draws attention to the means used.

In the earlier plays, as is consistent with his initiatory role, Orestes has returned not only to avenge his father's death, but also to assert his rights to his estate ('claim my inheritance like a bull' *A. Ch.* 275); the Paidagogos opens Sophocles' *Electra* with a description of the rich palace that is his by right (*S. E.* 1–10), and which he is by implication returning to take over. In the *IT*, the god has not given Orestes any assurance of establishing his house or lineage, but he is promised release from his toils if he fulfills his task of stealing the statue (*IT* 91–93). In that language there is an echo of the ritual words of salvation offered by mystery cult (which recur in the escape scene). As Anne Burnett says, 'Its central event is the permanent interruption of that ancient catastrophe, human sacrifice, and this interruption is seen as a form of divine rescue for mortals'.²⁶ The ritual underpinnings are extremely important in this play, especially since the play concludes with the establishment of two Athenian practices that are related to initiation.²⁷

In Orestes' long speech to his sister about his life, he makes reference to a scene that would have resonated with the Athenian audience as an *aition* of the *choes*, one day in the longer festival of the Anthesteria, which 'was a necessary preliminary to a young male's attainment of citizenship at around the age of eighteen'.²⁸ He recounts his experience as an exile, when no one was willing

25 Cropp (2000) 178 on living by wits and concealment.

26 Burnett (1971) 47.

27 Cropp (2000) 57 on ritual leitmotif; Zeitlin (2011).

28 Smith (2007).

to welcome him. The Athenians gave him a separate table, and he sat there in silence. He concludes by saying 'Pallas' people still have the custom of honouring the three-quart pitcher' (959–960). That connection to the *choes* festival thus marks him as an initiate.²⁹

As an initiate, Orestes is being appropriately gendered; he must become a man, that is, he must adopt normative masculinity. For instance, the cutting of his hair and dedication of it to his father in Aeschylus and Euripides' *Electra* (where it is mocked) is related to initiation practices; in ritual the hair is seen as feminine,³⁰ and the cutting represents part of the necessary rejection of femininity in the transition to adult masculinity. As in the *Oresteia*, Orestes depends not only on the god's orders but on Pylades' advice (95–118); because that is based on what is suitable for their character, class and gender, we can see that Pylades is helping Orestes become a man.

In this process, Euripides introduces some interesting changes from other plays using the ritual underpinnings of initiation. In Aeschylus and Sophocles, the staged action defines this process of becoming a man as first turning from female emotion and then murdering the mother, or female principle. In both plays, the opening emphasizes the gendered dynamic. For instance, in *Choephoroi*, Orestes recognizes Electra, but he does not reveal himself immediately; instead he says 'Pylades let us stand out of the way, so that I might understand clearly the supplication of the women' (20–21). Instead of moving toward her when he notes her suffering, he calls on Zeus to give him strength to get recompense for the death of his father (18). He is performing masculinity with this act, which inevitably extends however briefly, his sister's suffering.

In Sophocles the pattern is even more pronounced. There, Orestes asks the Paidagogus whether he should not stay to hear the laments of the young woman mourning and if it is actually Electra (*S. E.* 80). The separation of male and female is made overt when the Paidagogus states vigorously that they can't stay and gives Apollo's command as the reason why. In Sophocles, the delay is painfully extended, even baroque in its length, including as it does Electra's famous lament over the urn that purportedly contains her brother's ashes. The man must avoid feelings and the feminine in order to succeed in the vengeance plot (1292–1293). That it is a matter of feeling is made clear in that Electra is repeatedly defined as too emotional and too noisy (by Chrysothemis and the Chorus at first, then by the Paidagogus 1326, Orestes 1236, 1288, 1302).

29 Cropp (2000) 230–231, on 947–960; cf. Goff (2004) 346–348.

30 Leitao (1995) 120.

Orestes' relationship to the feminine is different in the *IT* in important ways, yet it has commonalities with the earlier representations. Orestes' suffering is enjoined on him by the Furies. Thus, he becomes a man by surviving the attack by female divinities. As in earlier versions, the problem he faces is female again. Orestes is subjected to the snaky Erinyes (*drakaina*, 286, *echidnais*, 287), and they are still strongly connected to his mother, who is referred to as being in the arms of the 'serpent woman' (287–289). This description is reminiscent of Aeschylus' deployment of the Erinyes and his characterization of Clytemnestra as a monster.³¹ There is a strong taboo operating: Orestes does not wish to speak of his mother (927), and the goddesses are the Nameless ones (944). While this evasion is psychologically motivated, it is also ritually correct.

In Orestes' full disclosure of his history to his sister, it becomes even more clear that he has been rendered passive by and subjected to the female deities:

O. Fear of the Furies cast me out of the land
 Iph: I see; the goddesses drove you because of our mother
 O.: And forced their bloody bit into my mouth.

934–935

The rump party of Erinyes, who were not appeased by the trial in Aeschylus' version of the myth (970), have driven him endlessly from Athens. These are the females who would not be satisfied with a place under the city; thus, the unpersuaded, unmollified feminine principle continues to plague him. Importantly, however, the act of matricide in the earlier portions of the myth is here replaced by the less aggressive act of theft, and the positive act of rescuing his sister. Thus, he is through this plot able to undo some of the earlier violence against a woman.³²

The theme of male initiation leads inexorably to relationships between men. Orestes is associated with Apollo,³³ the ephebe par excellence and also a god of initiation.³⁴ In an article on initiation and Hermes, Sara Johnston makes the connection between Hermes, his initiatory role, and spaces of the symposium, athletics, and pedagogy ('the older male will accept, support, and even train the younger male in skills that he himself has mastered, so long as the younger

31 Rabinowitz (1981).

32 Zeitlin (2005; 2011).

33 In Aeschylus, for instance, Orestes opens with a call on Hermes, a god associated with maturation.

34 Apollo 'the eternal ephebe' and Orestes' doublet [Mitchell-Boyask (2006) 293; Bier (1994) 84; Burkert (1985) 144–145; 260–265; and Harrison (1961) 440–444].

male acquiesces in his proper, subordinate role').³⁵ These locations and her description of the activities are suggestive of the code of pederastic desire and behaviours.

Initiatory pederasty has a vexed pedigree, but it was definitely a part of the ancient discourse on sexuality. Historians in antiquity related the institution of pederasty to initiation in two cases: Sparta and Crete. In Sparta, it is closely associated with education, though not any ritual *per se*. Andrew Lear points out that 'The initiation theory's advocates also rely on Sparta's highly regulated education system for boys, which many see as constituting (or deriving from) a multi-year initiation system—and in which pederasty seems to have played an official or quasi-official role'.³⁶ According to Aristotle, the Spartan custom came from Crete where a ritual of pederastic abduction was practiced.³⁷ The historian Ephorus (*FGrH* 149) reports a tradition of pseudo-abduction in Crete by an *erastês* (adult male lover) of his *erômenos* (his beloved boy/youth); the abduction of the worthy boy by an equally worthy man is followed by a period when they reside outside the city; there is a formal ritual of return after which the boy receives many gifts and honours, makes sacrifices to Zeus, and receives a special suit of clothing that marks him as *kleinos*. Thus, it fits the three parts of initiation, and the pederastic model.

There are further connections between initiation rituals and gender/sexuality. David Leitao (1995) reviews many instances of initiatory transvestism in an extensive article on Leukippos. Interestingly enough a wedding, which is a ritual of transition for the couple, could involve crossdressing: Plutarch describes a practice that involved dressing the bride up like a boy and cutting her hair short, indicating perhaps that a young man was more comfortable with another man (*Lyc.* 15.3). Walter Burkert accepts role reversal as a necessary part of initiation, one which makes it possible for a male youth to adopt the required adult role; he further asserts that repressed desires are expressed here. Burkert also accepts sexual initiation as part of the process as well as the 'institutionalized homosexuality' of the Ephorus example, which explicitly cites Ganymede as the origin.³⁸ He connects many parallel examples of crossdressing, including those of Achilles and Theseus.

35 Johnston (2003) 165.

36 Lear (2015) 119, citing Xenophon *Constitution of the Lacedaimonians* 2. 12–14; Aelian 3.12; see also Plutarch *Lycurgus* 17–18, *Pelopidas* 18–19 on Sparta.

37 *Pol.* 2. 10. 1272a22–26.

38 Burkert (1985) 260–264 with citations; Cohen (1987) 16–19 acknowledges and problematizes same sex behaviour as a transition to adult male heterosexual masculinity; Lloyd-Jones (1983) 97.

Looking at Orestes in this context, we can recognize Apollo as the initiator, and according to some interpretations, the lover of Orestes. Bernard Sergent, for instance, takes Apollo as the lover of several heroes (including Admetos), but he also sees him as having been an *erômenos* in his youth.³⁹ Apollo is involved in pederasty as an *erômenos* on the vases that Lear studies but also *erastês* of Hyacinth.⁴⁰ Thus Apollo is known as both lover and beloved of boys and men and might have played either role with Orestes.

More to the point with regard to the *IT*, Orestes and Pylades have been seen as an erotic couple. A pederastic interpretation for the pair is asserted by William Percy in his book *Pederasty and Pedagogy in Archaic Greece* as part of his argument about the institutionalization of pederasty in the fifth century: 'As a result of the new tales, most heroes, including Orestes and Theseus, were now portrayed as having been in their youth the *eromenoi* of gods or other heroes [that is, Orestes is involved in service to the god as he would be to an *erastes*] or, conversely, of having become *erastes*. Some imagined that Orestes took his companion Pylades as an *eromenos*'.⁴¹ He cites Bernard Sergent in *Homosexuality in Greek Myth*, who quotes Xenophon's symposium; but unfortunately this passage from Xenophon underlines the ambiguity lurking at every turn in these discussions. In point of fact, at the same time that Xenophon links Orestes and Pylades to Achilles and Patroclus, he also denies the possibility of desire between any of them, saying:

Moreover, Niceratus, Homer portrays Achilles so gloriously taking revenge for Patroclus' death not as his boyfriend but as his comrade. Orestes and Pylades, Theseus and Perithoos, and many other excellent demigods are praised in song not because they slept together but because they had the greatest admiration for each other and together performed fine deeds.

XEN. *Sym* 8.31

Xenophon's polarizing view is not the only one possible, however. Nor is the hierarchical pederastic model the only ancient conceptualization of affective relationships between men. For instance, soldiers in the Theban military were considered excellent because they were lovers, according to Plutarch (*Pelop.* 18–19), late evidence to be sure. But elsewhere Xenophon also alludes to Pausanias' argument that an army of lovers would be invincible (*Sym.* 8.64–67). The soldiers' love for one another makes them better soldiers in this ideology, which

39 Sergent (1985) 102, 107.

40 Lear/Canterella (2008) 139–140, fig. 4.12; 152–154, fig. 4.12.

41 Percy (1996) 55, 199 n. 6.

continued through the nineteenth century, in, for instance, the essay by John Symonds on *A Problem in Greek Ethics*.⁴²

Though some, such as Anton Bierl, take Pylades simply as a double for the god, he may also be seen to take on the role of soldier-lover to Orestes.⁴³ In the *Oresteia*, he speaks only to hold Orestes up to the mark. When Orestes asks if he should not be ashamed (*aidesthô*) to kill his mother, Pylades responds ‘what then becomes of the oaths of Loxias, the sworn oaths’ (900–901). He articulates the model of masculinity, as we have seen above, in the opening scene of *IT*. However, in both Euripides’ *Orestes* and *IT* the relationship between the two youths expands and heats up. The initiatory paradigm continues in effect, but now there are explicit signs of feeling between the men; the emotional aura is intensified. The specific words here are further significant of their relationship: they have shared a cloak, and Pylades has acted as his *therapôn*, arguably like Patroclus and Achilles (314).⁴⁴ The intimacy between them and the protective role of Pylades echo Euripides’ *Orestes*. But the relationship between the two is now a more fully loving and compassionate one. Orestes’ madness is described by the messenger who comes to Iphigenia, and I would underline here the care that Pylades devotes to his comrade: ‘The stranger fell, throwing off the assaults of madness, dripping foam down his jowl ... But the other stranger wiped off the foam and gave his body protection, and shielded him with his well-woven cloak, watching out for the wounds that were coming his way, and succouring his comrade with kindly assistance’ (307–314).

Thus, the relationship is very loving in the fifth-century text if not explicitly sexual. In the second century AD, Lucian construes their friendship as erotic.⁴⁵ As part of a defence of male love, the character Callicratidas gives Orestes and Pylades as exempla (47), saying:

That’s how things stand. When an honest love, nourished from childhood, gathers strength and reaches the manly age of reason, then he whom we have long loved is able to return that love. It is hard to tell who is whose lover; just like in a mirror, the tenderness of the lover is reflected by that of the beloved. Why ever do you reproach us with a lust alien to human life, when it is one decreed by divine law, and handed down from one gen-

42 Symonds (1883; 2002).

43 Bierl (1994) 88.

44 Konstan (1997) 37–40.

45 On male friendship, see Boyarin (2015); Halperin (1990) 75–87, on the relationship of such friendships to kinship structure, in particular siblings, on homoeroticism as a later lens, 86–87.

eration to another? That which we have received with joy we cherish as sacred treasure. Truly happy is he, as the wise have justly said, who has:

Young boys and strong-hooved horses!

Joyfully ages the old man

Whom youths do love. (Callimachus, *Aetia* Fr. 4)

The precepts of Socrates, that admirable judge of virtue, were sanctified by the Delphic tripod. The Sybil spoke sooth when she said: ‘Of all men, Socrates is the wisest ...’ Besides all the teachings by which he benefited the human race, did he not teach us that there is nothing better than the love of boys?⁴⁶

Euripides has recourse to many contortions to bring about the recognition scene: Iphigenia has offered to let one of the Greeks go free to take a letter home for her. We might ask why does Iphigenia *have* such a letter (on tablets) and why is it inside? Burnett points out the oddity of the strategy used in the recognition, and Barbara Goff finds it incredible.⁴⁷ The effect of the device is to leave the two men onstage alone together to discuss what they have heard from Iphigenia, but not yet interpreted correctly. Thus, it makes space for their declarations of love.

Given the contrivances created and deployed to bring it about, it surely behoves us to attend to and take seriously the feelings that are expressed by the men. When Iphigenia interrogates them about who they are, she thinks that they are perhaps brothers, and they say they are ‘brothers in *philotêti* not by birth’ (498). When she later offers one of them life for taking her letter home for her, she provokes an extended dialogue about ideal male heroic behaviour, and statements of affection between Orestes and Pylades abound. Orestes believes he cannot benefit from the harm of one of his *philoî* (605–608), and Iphigenia hears the statement as an expression of *philia* (610). After Iphigenia leaves to get the letter, Pylades objects to staying alive. He sailed with Orestes, he says, and should die in common with him (*koinêi*, 675); as his *philos*, he fears blame for his behaviour if he does not (685–686). Orestes replies with this speech which emphasizes not only their intimacy but their reciprocity: ‘Don’t say such things! I must bear my own troubles—but I won’t bear double pains when they can be single [...] Of all my friends I have found you the dearest (*philtaton s’hêuron philôn*, 708) my fellow huntsman, fellow in upbringing (*sugkunage kai sunektrapheis*, 709) (687–715).

46 Transl. Alexander Kallimachos (Diotima).

47 Burnett (1971) 53–56; Goff (2004) 349.

This language draws attention to the relationship between these two friends; the woman in the story, Electra, Pylades' wife at this point, is less important than her brother: Pylades will remain faithful to her not by returning to her alive but by dying with Orestes (716–718). The marriage to Electra is always a convenience or convention. In *IT* Electra is married but has been once again abandoned by the men. One might see that the heterosexual marriage only exists to make possible the men's prolonged relationship—routing through Electra the desire *between men* (even the little-known *Il Pistolero dell' Ave Maria*, a spaghetti western on the myth made in 1969, similarly focuses on the relationship between the men).⁴⁸ Although married, Pylades is once more in limbo with his companion Orestes. From this perspective, the quest to steal the statue may function primarily to allow Pylades to escape his marriage by travelling with Orestes.

So far, I have been discussing initiation as it affects Orestes; we have seen that male coming of age requires turning from the female and affiliation with the male. While in the past, Orestes' actions were violent against the women in his life, in the plot of the *IT*, Orestes does not have to kill anyone and thus does not have to redeem himself from matricide, as Froma Zeitlin has argued persuasively.⁴⁹ While in the past, he abandoned his sister, Electra, he has a very different relationship to this sister.

With regard to feminine gender construction, *IT* is reminiscent of earlier plays, but it is also a very striking revision; the heroine is somewhat like her sister Electra in the tradition in that it is her recognition that is at stake—not however for the purpose of killing the mother, but for the saving of the son. Thus, this is a reciprocal salvation story.⁵⁰ And importantly, unlike Electra, Iphigenia is not excluded from the crucial element of the plot: the rescue.

If we return to earlier parts of the myth, the contrast with Electra in the other plays on the theme is significant. While, as I said above, Electra seems to have been abandoned again so that Pylades can participate in this mission with Orestes, Iphigenia is a different case: the brother does not abandon his sister. Indeed, although Iphigenia articulates the traditional view of the unimportance of a woman, compared to a man (1005–1006), she is in fact essential to the successful conclusion to the adventure.⁵¹ Iphigenia both originates and participates in the rescue phase of the action. She remembers Aulis and her treatment

48 Hall (2013) on adventure theme.

49 Zeitlin (2011).

50 Burnett (1971) 49; cf. Zeitlin (2005) on brother/sister pairs.

51 See Hall (2015) ch. 11 on Iphigenia as a quest heroine.

by her father, emphasizing how unfatherly it was (211, 864); but things have changed. In short, this Iphigenia is no longer a victim. In fact, she remembers daring to do terrible things as a priestess (869–872).

Furthermore, now she will be the saviour ('I will send you home', 878–879). She uses mystery language, calling on some god or mortal or some unexpected event,⁵² but ultimately, she needs to discover a solution for these insoluble problems (*aporon poron*, 897). Orestes calls on her to complete the salvation promised by the god (979–980).

Rejecting the idea that they might have to murder Thoas (1021), Iphigenia comes up with a new device (1029), and she is essential to the success of the plan, which depends on her knowledge of ritual to deceive the king. At this point, she calls on the women of the Chorus to keep her secret, and here the community of women is used for good not ill (as in *Medea*). She further underlines the female element of salvation by calling on Artemis, not the one who demanded her sacrifice, but the one who saved her. As 'you did then, do so again', as in traditional ritual formulation (1082–1088). Thus, the female protagonist is not written off, nor is she exchanged between men. She is a full-fledged heroine. As if to emphasize the point, the power of Iphigenia is exerted through the very ritual that had threatened her and constrained her, but now she is free to manipulate it as she sees fit.⁵³

Are brother and sister parallel? In some ways, yes. We clearly can take both Iphigenia and Orestes as initiation figures.⁵⁴ But their journeys are interestingly different because of their gender. As Jean-Pierre Vernant said in an oft-cited line: 'Marriage is for the girl what war is for the boy: For each of them these mark the fulfilment of their respective natures as they emerge from a state in which each still shared in the nature of the other'.⁵⁵ Since the role they are being prepared for is different, so initiation is gendered; it is asymmetrically invoked.

One way to see Iphigenia's initiation is through the first sacrifice; as Graf argues, initiation and sacrifice may share the same structure.⁵⁶ The promised marriage to Achilles that brought her to Aulis in Euripides' *IA* would also have concluded her girlhood if it had taken place. If we take her as an example of the Bride of Hades motif, we can see her sacrifice at Aulis as analogous to initiation in that it stands for the termination of girlhood.⁵⁷ Though according to

52 Cropp (2000).

53 Goff (2004) 113, 339.

54 Cropp (2000) 55; versus Kyriakou.

55 Vernant (1990) 34.

56 Graf (2003) 19; Lloyd-Jones (1983).

57 Dowden (1989) 3, 30.

the *IT* and the corrupt ending of *IA*, Iphigenia was saved,⁵⁸ and an animal was put in her place at the scene of slaughter, she has nonetheless not completed her transition to adult womanhood via marriage. She is stuck in the state of virginity. As a priestess of Artemis in the current play, her unmarried condition is part of her role; although she is presumably not dangerous in the way that an ordinary untamed virgin was conceptualized as being (cf. *Electra*), she nonetheless remains quite dangerous since she has been made the sacrificer of others.

In the representation of her mental state she is in some ways not unlike the melancholic virgin *Electra*.⁵⁹ Has she been deranged by her experience of ritual violence? Has she escaped the curse of the family—these are contested issues? Gilbert Murray gives this description of Iphigenia; though it is dated, it still reveals a great deal about perspectives on her character:

Iphigenia is no mere 'sympathetic heroine', she is a worthy member of her great but sinister house; a haggard and exiled woman, eating out her heart in two conflicting emotions: intense longing for home and all that she had loved in childhood and bitter self-pitying rage against 'her murderers'. The altar of Aulis is constantly in her thoughts.⁶⁰

Others rush to call her a normal girl,⁶¹ but what does that even mean for a character like Iphigenia? Like *Electra* in the tradition, she mourns her situation for its lack of the marks of normative femininity and heterosexuality, or womanhood: she stresses that she is 'unmarried, without children, without city, and without loved ones' (220). She bemoans her status as a bride who is 'ill-married' (*nymphaiian ... dusnumphon*, 216). When she refers to the sacrifice scene at Aulis, she expands on her virgin status via the failed marriage to Achilles, making clear the theme of marriage to Hades (361–377; cf. 856). And like *Electra* in Euripides' *Electra*, she holds herself back from the rituals of Hera, which are traditionally associated with marriage (221).⁶² Moreover, Iphigenia does not engage in weaving as would have been appropriate for a girl in the Panathenaia.⁶³ Finally, the Chorus, when facing abandonment by Iphi-

58 Hall (2013) for recent discussion.

59 Rabinowitz (2015).

60 Murray (2010) viii.

61 Platnauer (1938) vii.

62 Papadopoulou (2005) relates to the Panathenaia and Athenian ritual; Goff (2004) 338–339.

63 Cropp (2000) 190, on 222–224.

genia, expresses this wish that emphasizes Iphigenia's and their virgin status: 'If only I could take my place in Choruses where once/as a girl at illustrious weddings, whirling my foot beside my dear agemates in rivalry of grace and luxurious finery, rousing myself for the contest I threw about me richly worked robes and tresses darkening my cheeks' (1143–1152). Thus, Euripides emphasizes the failed transition from maidenhood. Her gender is marked—and her age. Though Orestes twice calls her *gynê*, that word only underlines the difference between how she looks (like a woman) and how she feels (like a maiden).

Iphigenia is always associated with Artemis and may even be a faded form of the goddess.⁶⁴ That association lends further weight to her initiatory status, since the goddess is associated with rituals of transition for girls—especially relevant is the Athenian festival at Brauron where girls 'played the bear'. Athenian girls' initiation has been the source of much controversy, but we know that at least some Attic girls spent time at the sanctuary of Artemis in Brauron; they wore crocus-coloured dresses, which they took off in the ritual. From the images on small vases called *krateriskoi* we think that the girls ran, danced, and played, sometimes in the nude, and sometimes in the presence of older women and the signs of Artemis' precinct. In one there is a little bear, and in another two are shown wearing bear masks. Thus, based on the work of Lily Kahil, critics typically see the pots as representing one or two moments of initiation. The separation from the city was arguably part of their ritual preparation for marriage,⁶⁵ though Chris Faraone sees it as a rite of sacrifice or appeasement in fear of the goddess' anger in childbirth.⁶⁶ The girl who plays the bear is being tamed; on her return from the wild zone, she is ready for marriage; as Nancy Demand says 'by service to Artemis, little bears were transformed into potential citizen mothers'.⁶⁷

The relationship between male god and his acolyte and Artemis and her acolyte may have similarly involved homoeroticism. As usual we know far less about women than about men, and initiation was typically shrouded in secrecy. As I have argued elsewhere, there is evidence that girls' initiation was, like that of male youths, related to same sex desire.⁶⁸ However, while Orestes' relationship with the god gives him other close ties to men, namely the association with Pylades, Iphigenia has no attendant woman (though admittedly she is sur-

64 See Cropp (2000) 50–53; Dowden (1989).

65 Sourvinou-Inwood (1988).

66 See Faraone (2003) 59–62 for summary. See also Kyriakou (2006).

67 Demand (1994) 112.

68 Rabinowitz (2002); Calame (2001 [1997]).

rounded by the Chorus of captive women). Thus, the parallels are not complete because of the differences in gender of the pair.

Initiatory significance and differences continue into the conclusion to the action. As in the *Oresteia*, mortal actions are not sufficient to bring the plot to a satisfactory conclusion: Thoas is ready to organize a pursuit until Athena appears. She addresses each character in turn. Thoas is to 'cease his pursuing' (1437) because Orestes was following the oracles of Apollo (1438). Both of the young protagonists are to establish cults related to rites of passage, though not themselves explicitly initiatory. Yet again there are differences. Athena instructs Orestes to establish a sanctuary at Halai for Artemis Tauropolos which will commemorate his struggles; he will finally have release from toils (1441b Cropp), a real purification.⁶⁹ The ritual there corrects the bloodiness of the previous sacrifices (1461) and restores Artemis' good name. The epithet of Artemis here (1457) is associated not only with the geography of the play, but also with the bull, and thus it must conjure up male sexuality.⁷⁰

Iphigenia, by contrast, will become a priestess of Artemis at Brauron, and after her death she will be honoured with offerings 'of finely-woven clothing from women who died in childbirth' (1464–1466). There is no archaeological evidence for the practice or cult, so this is possibly Euripides' invention.⁷¹ Rather than dismissing the rite because it is not based on fact, I would suggest that we give it increased importance as a sign of Euripides' intentions; it is very relevant in an interpretation focused on gender relations, as this one is. Brauron is the site of the Athenian *arkteia*, one point of the female life cycle; and now Iphigenia will be a priestess there, receiving offerings that mark the final journey to death. Though death is universal, these deaths are marked by gender since the robes belong to women who died in childbirth. She who was a sacrificial offering, an *agalma* in Aeschylus (*A.* 208), and later officiated at the sacrifice of others, will receive the robes, called *agalmata*. In this way she will be honoured by women who died performing their important cultural role of reproducing the family; the labour (weaving) and dangers (childbirth) of mature femininity are underscored in this worship ascribed to Iphigenia who did not succeed in making the transition to womanhood.

How are we to read the salvation of the ending? The ritual structure that provides the armature for the play seems entirely positive; violent sacrifice at

69 Goff (2004) 339; Wolff (1992) 317–319.

70 Cropp (2000) 50–54; Brelich (1969) 245–246; Lloyd-Jones (1983) 97, 98–101.

71 There is a debate on this, as so much else; Kyriakou (2006) 458 summarizes; Cropp (2000) 50–51, 51 n. 74 refers to a 'supposed tomb' that 'may have been located in this area'.

Tauris becomes a symbolic representation of violence at Halai. Iphigenia saves her brother and is herself rescued from the outskirts of civilization. Thus, the *IT* is somewhat more optimistic from the position of the study of sexuality and from a feminist perspective. There are strong, positive and loving ties between men, but they are not forged at the expense of women. Moreover, the plot of the play depends on the intelligence and energy of Iphigenia to come up with the salvation; the resolution is effected by Athena.

To what extent is that reading undercut by the fact that the journeys of these two initiatory figures are asymmetrical? That is, while Orestes' heroic mission comes to a successful conclusion and allows him to return from his wanderings healed, Iphigenia's fate is to continue much as she is, excluded from the family and isolated.⁷² Does life as a priestess at Brauron, even one who does not have to sacrifice foreigners, offer what gender theorist Judith Butler calls a 'possible life'?⁷³ The answer to that question most definitely depends on point of view. On the one hand, Iphigenia is able to accomplish a heroic task and live. On the other hand, she is only able to access power in the public realm through the goddess and by living an isolated life. The play then raises the question of the compatibility of female power and sexuality. The details of the ritual established at the end point up the problems of womanhood in antiquity (and since then, as well), since the gifts are made by women who die in childbirth. Iphigenia was rescued from death as a girl, and she is rescued from the dangers of bodily femininity by being made into a priestess.

The interpretation of this ending is related to a fundamental ambiguity about women in antiquity. While it is a critical commonplace that women of the upper classes were restricted to the private sphere, ritual offered an arena where a woman could act in public. At the same time, the role of priestess was limited and limiting.⁷⁴ As readers, we decide which aspect to emphasize. We can imagine an Iphigenia not simply alone and celebrated with robes donated in the name of women already deceased, but with the young girls who participated in the *Arkteia* at Brauron. From that perspective, one sees that Iphigenia has exchanged her violent role in Tauris for a more positive one in Brauron, and that she is perhaps part of a community there. So, she is not isolated and may even lead an active affectional life with other women. She may be involved with the initiation of young girls, in addition to receiving gifts from those who do not successfully complete the passage to adult womanhood as mothers. Of

72 Kyriakou (2006) 460 on lines 1462–1467, though she interprets this detail as being about the many uncertainties of the play.

73 Butler (2000) 24.

74 Goff (2004) 6, 349. On agency, see also Blundell/Williamson (1998) 1.

course, there is another more cynical reading underlying that one, which will depend on how we feel about such acculturation. Euripides at least enables us to understand it.

To sum up, *Iphigenia among the Taurians* is a powerful reworking of the *Oresteia*. Euripides revises some of the most negative aspects of the myth; he develops strong ties between men but not at the expense of women; he creates a heroine out of a traditional victim and gives her a powerful role in ritual. The so-called ‘happy ending’ may be criticized from our present-day vantage point for its gender asymmetries, but that does not minimize what Euripides has accomplished within the norms of gender of his day.

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*Helen**Emma Griffiths*

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

MARLOWE, *Dr. Faustus*, Act V, scene 1, 97–98



This characterization from *Dr. Faustus*, the phantom summoned as ‘the admirablest lady that ever lived’, has a strong hold over modern conceptions of the mythical figure of Helen.¹ Her ambiguity is a strong feature of her continued appeal to scholarly and popular audiences, as demonstrated by the success of Blondell’s 2015 monograph *Helen of Troy*, which the *New Statesman* magazine reviewed favourably as an insightful alternative to the ‘bizarre claims’ of Bethany Hughes’ 2007 bestseller.² To look back at Euripides’ play *Helen* in its fifth-century context requires a conscious effort to put aside multiple different versions of the great ‘Helen of Troy’, but there is reason to suppose that Helen was just as complex and confusing a figure for an ancient audience as a modern one. From the earliest surviving epics, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, we find contrasting pictures of the woman who ran away with Paris, and now chafes at her role in Troy, before returning to Greece, appearing as the comfortable, settled wife who welcomes Telemachus to Sparta in *Odyssey* book 4. These two earliest portrayals give us a figure who is mysterious and liminal, as the mortal daughter of Zeus. Euripides’ Helen begins her story by presenting the paradox of her birth, claiming to be the daughter of Leda and Tyndareus, but also telling

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- 1 Popular culture references are numerous. The Wolfgang Petersen 2004 movie *Troy* presented her as an iconic figure in the film’s narrative of love and war, see further Cyrino (2007). More recently, the US drama series *Scandal* (ABC, Series 4, Ep. 7) compared the lead character to Helen, as a powerful figure who inspires strange devotion and has serious father issues. For the reception history of *Helen* as a play, see Allan (2008) 72–82. For the way the figure of Helen reached Marlow via different sources, including Lucian, see Rhodes (2013).
 - 2 Review 29th April 2014, ‘Slut-shaming Helen of Troy’, *New Statesman*.

the story that she was born from an egg, and is the daughter of Zeus who pursued her mother in the form of a swan (16–21).³ Throughout the Greek mythic tradition, she can be portrayed as a dangerous example of female sexual power or a tragic victim of divine strategy, sympathetic and intelligent, or cunning, with a knack for misdirection. Even within each individual epic her portrayal is multi-faceted, possibly due to her original mythic connections with Aphrodite and near-Eastern goddesses (Friedrich 1978, 61; Jackson 2006). In the *Iliad* she has chosen to abandon her husband and child, but now expresses contempt towards Paris, displaying a very knowing form of regret for her decision. The closest anyone comes to blaming Helen for the whole mess is when Hector calls her a μέγα πῆμα ‘a great burden’ (*Il.* 3.51), yet at the end of the poem she is shown genuinely grieving for Hector (*Il.* 24.763–775). In the *Odyssey*, safely restored to her marital home, Helen is on one level the good hostess, offering food and comfort to her guests, but this is subverted by her addition of magical herbs to the wine (*Od.* 4. 219–221), raising the spectre of dangerous women who bewitch men. In both epics her mastery of language, and her skill as a storyteller, distinguish her as a strong female voice and an actor in events, but the overriding divine narrative of the epics still figures her as a tool of the gods, a bribe given to Paris by Aphrodite.⁴

These Homeric images would have been well known by Euripides’ audience, at the forefront of what Segal (1987, 174) has called the ‘mythic megatext’: ‘This “megatext” is an artificial construct, necessarily invisible and unconscious to the society whose exemplary narratives and symbolic projections of what “reality” is, are located within that system’. There were, however, many more accounts of Helen within this ‘megatext’, which presented different versions of her character, actions, and motivations; visual imagery presented complex images of Helen from different periods in her life, including the first abduction when Theseus attempted to claim her (Shapiro 2005); the lyric poetry of Sappho evoked Helen’s story as a precedent for succumbing to love (*Fragment* 16; Boedeker 2012); the Chorus of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* reflected on the aptness of her name, linking the first syllable with the adjectival prefix for destruction, ἑλένας, ἑλανδρος, ἑλέπτολις (*helenas, helandros, heleptolis*—‘destroyer of ships, men and cities’, 689–690). These versions of Helen’s character presented her a dangerous woman, whose beauty caused mass destruc-

3 Cf. 256–259, although the authenticity of these lines is disputed.

4 The authenticity of a Homeric reference to this event (*Il.* 24, 25–30) is contested, see Davies (1981), but idea of a dangerous gift belongs to the earliest strands of Greek myth, see further Heath (1992).

tion, but this negative view was not universal. In the late fifth century, Gorgias' *Encomium* used Helen's story as a challenge for rhetorical display, rehabilitating her character and absolving her of blame.⁵ The poet Stesichorus (late seventh/early sixth century BC) had also deflected from her the responsibility for the Trojan War in his *Palinode*, a now-lost poem which told how a phantom Helen was created and went to Troy, while the real woman remained chaste and uncorrupted.⁶ It is from this reading of the myth that Euripides begins his *Helen*.

The play opens with Helen in Egypt, where she has been under the protection of King Proteus. He has recently died, and his son, Theoclymenus, is not following his father's wishes, desiring to claim Helen as his own—she describes his attempt to marry her as a 'hunt' (63), and similar vocabulary is used when Helen first sees Menelaus and fears his wild appearance, believing him to be one of Theoclymenus' men sent to capture her (544–545). She has resisted his advances, and has taken refuge at the tomb of Proteus, so the play begins with a scene of supplication. Helen has been promised by Hermes that she will return home to Sparta one day, but she is now besieged and the threat level increases when the Greek hero Teucer arrives on his return to Greece after the fall of Troy. His first response is one of hatred, claiming that all of Greece hates her, as she is 'the woman who brought destruction to me and all the Greeks' (ἡ μ' ἀπώλεσεν / πάντας τ' Ἀχαιοῦς, 73–74), but his speech also is heavy with irony; Teucer reflects that 'she looks like Helen', but his practical mind tells him she cannot be Helen, and he apologizes for his outburst, rationalizing the encounter as a case of mistaken identity. When Teucer leaves, Helen reflects on the news he has shared of the fall of Troy and mourns the loss of life and the part played by the phantom that bore her name. She grieves for her mother, Leda, who has taken her own life in shame about the disgrace brought on her family, and she grieves for her husband, Menelaus, as she now believes he has died on the return home. Despairing that she will ever return to Sparta, Helen resolves to die, even though her reputation cannot be salvaged (293–298). The motif of suicide is central to the play, and as Garrison (1995, 168) notes: 'Euripides' *Helen* presents in microcosm the range of possibilities for the suicide motif in Greek tragedy'. While Leda's suicide is a response to a sense of real dishonour, Helen

5 The date of Gorgias' *Encomium* is uncertain, but the Attic dialect in which it is written may suggest a late fifth century date, which may be after the production of Euripides' *Helen*. See further Bieda (2011); Makin (2013); Schiappa (1995).

6 The fragmentary material from Stesichorus' account has led to discussion of two possible poems but see Kelly (2007) for the argument that there was only one *Palinode*, combining different elements. See further Finglass/Kelly (2015).

contemplates this option even though she knows the dishonour is not based on fact. Her death will only prolong the contradictions of her life, tying into her lament that beauty is normally a benefit to women, but has only brought her suffering (304–305).

At this point in the play, although Helen and Teucer have flagged problems of reality and illusion, the emphasis has been on the suffering of the characters, but the mood of the drama changes when it is revealed that Menelaus is not dead. The information has come from Theonoe, sister of Theoclymenus, who has the gift of divination, and is quickly confirmed, as Menelaus arrives, battered and bruised after a shipwreck. The appearance of the hero in rags provokes moments of humour through incongruity, and the scenes of recognition and reconciliation between Helen and Menelaus play up the comic potential of this theme, before the drama shifts once again into a plot to escape from the clutches of the villain, Theoclymenus. The couple's plot is successfully concluded, with the help of Theonoe, and the escape of Menelaus and Helen is reported in a messenger speech. The play seems about to take a further tragic turn, as Theoclymenus threatens to kill his sister for her treachery, but the final scene (1642–1692) sees Helen's brothers, the divine Dioscuri, arrive to set matters straight, diverting Theoclymenus' anger, saving Theonoe and thus ensuring a 'happy' ending. The Chorus concludes with a familiar Euripidean reflection on mortal inability to predict the actions of gods. As this brief summary indicates, the play includes many familiar tragic motifs and scene types, but the arrangement and sequence of events is unusual.

The play was first produced in 412 BC, and Euripides had already used the myth of Helen in previous plays. Her only onstage appearance in his extant plays is in *Trojan Women* where she is not a sympathetic figure but displays cunning and a strong sense of self-preservation (Amerasinghe 1973). Her role in the Trojan War is also flagged in the background of Euripides' play *Hecuba* (Coo 2006). The decision to produce an account of Helen's story in the tradition of Stesichorus' *Palinode* was not an obvious one and may well have contributed to characterization of Euripides as 'gimmicky', producing works that were too *avant garde* (Torrance 2013, 282). The idea of novelty was espoused by Euripides himself (Eur. *Tr.* 511–515) and was part of his public identity as a poet (D'Angour 2011, 194). It formed part of the character of 'Euripides' created by Aristophanes in *Frogs*, and *Thesmophoriazusaë* parodies elements of the *Helen*, a feat which may have relied on study of a written text of the play (Nieddu 2004). Euripides himself would return to the negative characterization of Helen as Torrance (2013, 46) notes: 'Euripides claims to have recreated the "old" Helen in *Orestes* (129), disregarding the "new" Helen of his own *Helen*'.

We owe the survival of the play largely to chance, as is the case for all extant plays. *Helen* is one of the 'alphabet plays', preserved in a single manuscript.⁷ This manuscript (L) forms the basis of modern editions, of which Diggle's 1999 OCT is the main starting point for textual discussion. There remain considerable points of conjecture over textual details where there is still no scholarly consensus. Allan's 2008 commentary contains the fullest discussion of these points, but as many detailed arguments are tied to particular issues of interpretation, lively discussion of the text is likely to continue.

The play has troubled critics because of the shifts in emotional level and plotline, and the question of how seriously Euripides intended his audience to take the overall story. Was it created as a comedy, a tragedy with comic elements, a subtle philosophical meditation on the nature of storytelling or a dark allegory about contemporary politics? Until the 1970s critics generally found the play incompatible with their own understanding of tragedy as a genre, and emphasized the comic, and at times bathetic, treatment of popular themes, formulating categories of 'pro-satyrical drama' or 'tragi-comedy'. The Aristophanic response to the play was given a prominent place in scholarship, and while we must be careful not to over-privilege the Aristophanic material, the Trojan War was a popular subject for fifth-century comedy (Wright 2007). Although the same mythological subjects could have both comic and tragic personas, for example Odysseus or Heracles, the mention of the birth from the egg at the start of *Helen* may be more of a comic marker than we see in other tragedies. A comic image of Helen emerging from an egg is found on a fourth-century Apulian krater (Taplin 1994, 82–83), and the fragments of Cratinus' fifth-century comedy *Nemesis* seem to have referred to the same episode (Henderson 2012). Scholars such as Marshall (1995 and 2015) have also argued that Aeschylus' satyrical *Proteus* was an important intertext for Euripides' play. For many years one of the most authoritative commentaries (Dale 1967) supported this line of interpretation, but the most recent commentators have strongly rejected this, and argued that our definition of tragedy must be broad enough to include plays such as *Helen*, which do not immediately fit into a simple Aristotelian model. Allan (2008, 66–72) emphasizes that the features of the play which have troubled critics can be paralleled in earlier literature. The serious elements of the play have been further explored by the most recent scholarship, with Stober (2014, 166) seeing in the play 'a vision of catastrophe as inherent in the human

7 See Garland (2004) on the transmission history of the extant plays. The *ms.* of *Helen* (L) has been supplemented by only brief papyrus fragments, although these have contributed to particular academic debates, e.g. Robertson (2009) 120 on the religious terminology of Eur. *Hel.* 1343.

condition', and Stavarinou (2015) examining the play's intellectual engagement with literary and dramatic traditions.

1 Illusion and Reality

The question of genre is related to one of the major themes of the play, the nature of illusion and reality, the role of storytelling and the power of narrative in shaping human/divine interaction. The basic premise of the play—that the 'physical woman' was taken to Egypt, while the 'phantom woman' went to Troy—is addressed directly many times. Helen claims that she has no control over her name and reputation but hopes to retain control of her physical integrity. Her contrasting of 'name' and 'body' is central to her drive for honour as she resists the marriage offered by Theoclymenus (lines 66–67) and plans to die when she believes that Menelaus is dead. The narrative of the play presents the onstage figure as the true physical 'Helen', and she laments the way her name and reputation has been detached and given to the 'phantom' Helen. The play's emphasis on illusion, however, gives the audience pause to consider who they believe—given the displacement and peculiar actions of both 'Helens', how can we tell which one is 'real' Helen? Perception is presented as fallible, but also as the only guide available to mortals.

The dilemma is encapsulated in the exchange between Helen and Menelaus (575–560) when he questions his sanity and his eyesight, before Helen convinces him to trust the evidence of his eyes and believe it is really her. She has earlier claimed that there will be physical proof of her identity and chastity in the form of tokens only she and Menelaus and she would know, a physical proof of her fidelity similar to the manifestation of knowledge in the wooden bed which seals the recognition between Penelope and Odysseus in the *Odyssey*. In the event, however, she attempts to persuade him to believe the evidence of perception, and it is only a piece of outside information that finally convinces him, when the disappearance of the phantom Helen is reported, and Menelaus takes this as proof that her story is true (622–624). He accepts the story now without question, even though the messenger interprets his own narrative differently, saying with a comic tinge 'Oh, there you are!' when he sees Helen, assuming that the phantom and real Helens are one and the same (ὦ χαίρει, Λήδας θυγάτηρ, ἐνθάδ' ἦσθ' ἄρα; 'Greetings, daughter of Leda. Turns out you were here, after all?', 616).

This central recognition of husband and wife has a serious message, but a light-hearted tone, but the earlier confrontation with Teucer is more emotionally charged, showing the painful consequences of mistaken trust in an illusion.

When Teucer sees Helen, his reaction is one of pure hatred, but when he comes to accept that she is not the woman he fought over in Troy, he allows himself to express the grief that fuelled that hatred. The war has caused him great personal suffering, and devastated whole sections of the Mediterranean, so now he asks, 'What was it all for?' In the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* characters contemplated the meaning of the Trojan War, and questioned its value, but there was at least a sense of cause and effect. The idea that the entire war could have been triggered by an illusion is still more troubling. The values of honour, and Greek national pride have been undermined, and Helen's assessment of the situation is bleak: Zeus brought about the war between Greece and the poor Trojans, in order to reduce the number of men that burdened Mother Earth, and to bring fame to Greece's greatest hero (38–39). Teucer shows us the human cost of this war, while at the same time his role increases the fragmented nature of Helen. The phantom who went to Troy transforms into a further Helen, the focus of all the pain and hatred expressed in the war; the physical Helen in response creates another Helen, the fictional woman she pretends to be. Teucer in some ways is the most sympathetic character, because he is able to set aside his preconceptions and engage with the woman in front of him, displaying compassion, which proves to be more powerful than any philosophical contemplation of the nature of reality.

The examination of illusion is related to the common Euripidean exploitation of metatheatre or metapoetry (Torrance 2013, 1–3). We see in other plays how characters question the actions of the gods and distrust what they can see: Heracles believes he is seeing the children of his enemy in his violent rage, and comes to reject traditional narratives of divine intervention as 'the pathetic stories of poets' (Eur. *Her.* 1346); Agave in the *Bacchae* believes she is seeing a mountain lion as she tears apart her own son, and ends the play realizing her mistake, devastated by the cruelty of Dionysus. These parallels warn us to beware of seeing characters as simple victims of the gods, unable to resist the delusion, for both Heracles and Agave contributed to their own downfall. In *Helen*, there is a subtle awareness that other conditions had to be in place before the phantom Helen could catalyze the Trojan War, and that succumbing to delusion paradoxically involved some degree of choice. The clearest apparent victim of the gods is Helen, who is not taken in by the illusion, but is physically taken and transplanted into a different location. She does not, however, simply 'go with the flow', but retains a hold on her previous values and beliefs. To paraphrase Kipling, Helen is the only figure in the play who 'keeps her head while all around are losing theirs and blaming it on her'. The fact that the most clear-sighted and skilful figure in the play is a woman is not a problem for a modern audience, but we must question whether the original audience would

have reacted to this positively. Plays where women display intelligence generally end badly, unless they are comedies, a point which weighs heavily with those who see the play as having a less serious tone. The question can be posed and answered in either direction, seeing the play as an allegorical or exaggerated response to philosophical questions, which allows serious contemplation, or as a simple inversion of reality which allows the audience a temporary break, and then a reaffirmation of their own values.⁸

For the original audience, the issue of suspending disbelief and the problem of assessing information raised parallels with political skills of judgement and evaluation required in the *ekklêsia*, as the cognitive processes of drama and politics overlapped (Arnott 1991, 52). Philosophical discussion of the nature of reality may have been limited to times of leisure, but occasions to judge events, with the difficulty of establishing the truth of information, were central to Athenian life as the population debated contrasting strategies for the ongoing war with Sparta. While there is a distinction between the mythic Sparta of the play and the 'real' Sparta of 412 BC, the pressures of war, with the Spartans often camped outside the walls of Athens, made the need for clear sight all the more pressing. Burian (2007, 35) summarizes the importance of cause and effect in the play: 'If Helen is "about" anything, it is about the consequences of allowing appearance to overtake reality and the joys and pains of emerging from delusion'. Many scholars have seen a parallel with the failed Sicilian expedition—the decision to attempt expansion of the Athenian empire while in the midst of the Peloponnesian War had proved disastrous, and questions were asked about how and why that campaign had begun (Lebow 2003, 318). There was an obvious need to learn from mistakes, and questions about the underlying motives for military action in the aftermath of such a military disaster, but we should be careful not to simplify the likely psychological mood of the Athenian audience in 412 BC.⁹ Our view of the Sicilian defeat is largely coloured by Thucydides' account, given with the benefit of hindsight. It is not clear that contemporary reactions to the defeat *did* run along those lines, with philosophical analysis of their decision making, rather than an outward-looking assignment of blame, and a desire to draw a line under events, turning instead to the hopes of a brighter future. Although Euripides' play contains a great deal of material about the tragedy of

8 The ambiguity of all drama where men play female roles is a central argument of Butler (2006). Drag artists either challenge the boundaries of gender, by exposing their artificiality, or they reinforce the boundaries by emphasizing the penalties for transgression.

9 The psychological temperature of the audience cannot be accurately judged but some investigation is possible, given what we know of contemporary social dynamics, see Crowley (2012) on hoplite psychology.

war and the dangers of illusion, it concludes on a positive note. The Athenians may have applied a similar positive spin to their own situation, believing that divine support would eventually bring them success, just as Helen's suffering is ended through the support of divine relatives and the help of Theonoe.

2 Myth and Metis

The theme of illusion and reality is central to any interpretation of the play and is mediated by reflections on the ability to control events by human or divine means. At the start of the play Euripides' Helen appears far less resourceful than her traditional, Homeric persona, where she has *mêtis*, a key element of women's cunning. (In *Odyssey* 4. 227–228 her drugs are described as 'full of *mêtis*' as she drugs and manipulates Menelaus and Telemachus on her return to Sparta).¹⁰ The idea is linked to control of women in a cosmological sense (Metis, mother of Athena, was eaten by Zeus) and by extension to the dangerous properties of women with similar names such as Medea and Medusa. Helen is often seen as part of this dynamic, her beauty and intelligence combining to form a dangerous threat to men, not least because she is an expert storyteller.¹¹ As the play opens, however, Helen is a victim, rather than a manipulator of stories—her opening description of her birth as a 'logos' implies a diffidence to her own ability to shape her destiny. When Teucer distinguishes her from the 'other Helen', telling her you have a different 'mind' (160), we are encouraged to re-evaluate our view of the character. This forms part of a wider debate in the play about the value of different mental features and attitudes to the world. At the start, Zeus chose Proteus as Helen's protector because he had the greatest 'common sense'; the Chorus reframes the debate by musing that 'good planning' is better than relying on prophecy, and at the end of this play Theoclymenus says he has been defeated by feminine 'skills'. In this world, Helen is a shifting figure just as malleable as her cloud ghost. In the creation and execution of the escape plot, Helen's role is more forward looking and mercenary, as an attempt to re-establish her position in Sparta. It is Theonoe who is initially the representative of wisdom, as Teucer explains he had come to see her advice about reaching Cyprus (145–151). It is only once Helen follows the Chorus' advice and consults Theonoe that her powers of rhetoric, foresight and planning become more evident, yet she still despairs of ever finding a way home (595–596). In contrast,

10 See further Clayton (2004) ix; Meagher (2002) 63–68.

11 On Helen's ability to improvise, see Dougherty (2015).

Theonoe retains her authority throughout, and her decision-making process is presented in terms of rational, legal thought, culminating at 1006 when she says that she will ‘cast her vote’ with Hera and help Helen. The link to legal terminology highlights the role of probability in the play, and the underlying analysis of human strategy in mythological paradigms.¹² Throughout the play the agency of women touches upon familiar tropes about their cunning abilities, yet Helen consciously moves away from this. She frames her words as having ‘wisdom’ (although this might be a disingenuous signal of modesty), then castigates Aphrodite for her use of deceit (1101–1103). The Egyptian reactions to her escape present two different ways of viewing the situation. The Chorus focus on male agency, amazed that Menelaus could have accomplished such a deception, but Theoclymenus turns his focus to the women and their ‘skills’, conflating hostility towards Helen and Theonoe, and casting female agency in a negative light.

3 Staging

The physical setting of the play in Egypt provided the playwright with a great deal of material for colourful spectacle. Egyptian iconography had influenced Greek art and architecture for centuries but was still distinctive enough for its appearance in the theatre to be a novelty. The use of colour would have conveyed particular messages about social interactions such as the construction of gender (Eaverly 2013), as well as the relative importance of different divine and human priorities (Vaou 2009). The shared Egyptian features of Theoclymenus and Theonoe flagged their ethnic and familial relationship but also provided a challenge to simple ethnic stereotypes due to their opposed ethical stances. Egypt had figured in the Greek imagination from an early period, as *Odyssey* book 4 contains a meeting between the Egyptian Proteus and Menelaus during his *nostos*, but direct interactions between Greece and Egypt were well established by the late fifth century. Many sections of Athenian society had contact with Egypt, ranging from personal involvement in trade or military action, to private recognition of Egyptian artistic motifs and religious features (Erhardt 1990; Vasunia 2001). Herodotus’ *Histories* from the mid-fifth century display contemporary interest in Egypt, at times presenting Egypt as the opposite of Greek life. It also indicates how Greeks could situate Egypt in their own mental geography, particularly in relation to Athenian plans for expan-

¹² On the role of probability in the play, see Wohl (2014).

sion in the Mediterranean (Harrison 2007). In the political maelstrom of 412 BC Athens, Egypt may have been viewed both as a fantasyland, and as a prospective ally/conquest/enemy in the ongoing Peloponnesian War. The mythic worlds of Troy and Sparta are important points of navigation within the play, as Egypt presents a transition between the worlds of war and peace, but the main focus is on the question of space within the setting of Egypt. The negotiation of static and dynamic states contributes to the changing tone of the drama: Helen's celibate inactivity in Egypt is contrasted with the inappropriate sexual inactivity of her phantom; her static position of suppliant at the tomb of Proteus is contrasted with the panicked return to the sanctuary, when she has consulted Theonoe, and races to the tomb 'like a colt or a Maenad' (543); the false, slow-paced ritual mourning of the dead allows Helen to effect a dramatic escape with her living husband, a contrast highlighted in the messenger speech—the plot was revealed as Menelaus called his men to 'Why do you delay?' (1593). These narrative changes of pace are echoed in the staging, with the unusual creation of an empty stage when Helen and the Chorus leave (385), the extended restriction of the door when Menelaus arrives immediately after, the confusion about who bars the way of Theoclymenus (Stanley-Porter 1977), and the twin divine appearance of the Dioscuri at the close of the play.

The most famous scene may be the arrival of Menelaus, who is dressed in rags, and is abused by the doorkeeper, not recognizing his heroic identity. The interest of the scene is increased because the doorkeeper is female and elderly, but clearly willing to use physical force to drive him away from the house. Menelaus is, thus, given an inferior status, by dint of gender, economics and physical power. This was not the first time Euripides had used this form of costuming, and the incongruity of a Greek hero appearing in rags attracted the comic eye of Aristophanes, from *Acharnians* (410–417) where Dicaeopolis mocks Euripides' tendency to dress his characters in rags, to *Frogs* (1063–1066) where the character of Aeschylus claims that Euripides' costume choice provoked political unrest, inspiring people to wear rags and plead poverty to avoid paying liturgies. In *Helen*, however, Euripides goes further than before, using the rags to signify more than poverty. Menelaus' whole identity is constructed around the contrast between the current clothing and his previous fine garments. Clothing is important throughout the play and presents a point of intersection between male/female interactions, social value and the relationship between the gods and men.¹³ His clothes are so ragged, that he questions whether they can even be called clothes, resembling more closely the used

13 See further Darab (2006) and Zuckerberg (2016) on the motif of clothing in the play.

cleaning cloths which would have been discarded (421–422). If ragged clothes are used as cleaning cloths, he is now wearing items which have exhausted even this final function. Menelaus' identity as a socially acceptable human being is thus in doubt, and the staging of the play may well have flagged up the problem of defining what makes a human being—the images of Proteus' tomb, the physical presence of the actor playing Helen, and the contrasting images of exotic luxury and danger, all dovetail with the exploration of identity centred on the figure of Helen. The question of gender is always an issue in drama where men play female roles, but this play takes it further, confusing categories of men/women, gods/mortals, humans/animals and living/dead. The physical staging has the potential to create striking visual counterpoints to the linguistic interplay of reality and illusion. This is signposted at key points where the audience is encouraged to reflect on their own vision. Stavarinou has argued that the use of staging, in particular the visual dimension, *opsis*, was deliberately experimental as part of Euripides' style of 'performative intertextuality' (2015, 132), and the analyses of Marshall (2015) highlight the different ways decisions about performance interact with the architecture of the play. While these and similar analyses owe some debt to modern and post-modern theories about structure and performance, we should note that the text itself contains strong hints that Euripides would have understood the critical stance, if not the terminology. One example is Helen's complaint about her beauty, and the wish she could be altered like an image of a statue or painting (262–263), a radical statement of female subjectivity which is central to tragic exploitation of the motif of *opsis* (Rabinowitz 2013).

Our understanding of the visual aspects of the play must rely on clues from the text, plus evidence of contemporary art and later representations of theatrical scenes. These sources provide less material than we might like, but still allow us to make educated guesses about visual aspects of the play. We may further combine this with analysis of the cultural context of sight, and consideration of how racial stereotypes may influence perception (Murray 2000 on Gorgias). In contrast, our knowledge of the aural aspects of the play is extremely limited, relying on the metrical scheme of the language and our knowledge of contemporary debates about music.¹⁴ Willink (1989) has analyzed the impact of metrical devices on the emotional tone of the reconciliation between Menelaus and Helen (lines 625–697), and Steiner (2011) has argued that the musical style of this play was particularly innovative, combining new techniques with a

14 The idea of 'new music' in the fifth century is still not well understood but see Leven (2010) on the reflections in Athenaeus, and Hagel (2009) 19–20 on the papyrus evidence for Euripides' practice.

revision of ideas about the origins and nature of choral song. A combination of aural and visual innovation may have created a lasting impression in the minds of the audience, which allowed Aristophanes an opportunity for easy parody. We should note, however, one final challenge in assessing the staging of this play comes from the lack of information about the other plays in the trilogy, which may well have introduced their own striking visual and aural elements.¹⁵ The staging of *Andromeda* at the same time as *Helen* is strongly supported (Marshall 2015, 11), and would have used the tableau of the chained Andromeda. The impact of that play on art has been widely accepted, but we should remember that visual spectacle was an important part of tragedy even in the time of Aeschylus, and Podlecki (2009) has argued for parallels between the visual dynamics of *Andromeda* and an Aeschylean *Prometheia*. Recent suggestions for other plays staged with *Helen* include *Ion* (Zacharia 2003, 107), the satyr play *Cyclops*, and *Iphigenia in Tauris* (Wright 2005, 54–55), but as Marshall (2015, 12) concludes: ‘There are strong reasons to doubt all of these [sc. suggestions]’.

4 Religion

If imagination is required to reconstruct elements of staging, then we must also address one of the fundamental differences separating ancient from modern audiences, namely the festival context. At the very least, the atmosphere and visual frame of the theatre of Dionysus during the festival would have provided points of reference for the audience as they formed their opinion on the actions presented in the play. By the late fifth century the Temple of Dionysus and the nearby temple of the cult of Aesclepius dominated the side of the Athenian Acropolis (Mitchell-Boyask 2007). While the relationship between tragedy and the Dionysiac festival is a matter for debate (Scullion 2002), the religious aspects of this play are prominent. Dionysus is not a focus, but Helen’s comment that she flees back to the altar like a ‘follower of Bacchus’ is noticeable given the actual setting of the Theatre of Dionysus. Traditional Olympian religion is not part of the Egyptian setting for the play, but a traditional framework exists in the background, with Helen’s divine parentage, the actions of Aphrodite and Hera, and the role of Hermes in conveying Helen to Egypt. No consistent theology is promoted, but the play works with a range of attitudes

15 See the commentary on the fragments of *Andromeda* by Pagano (2010) plus articles on the staging and comic parodies of the play by Major (2013); Mastromarco (2012).

which might be considered part of a traditional Greek religious framework, from the relationship between family and religion, to the sense of caution required in dealing with matters of life and death. When Menelaus expresses unease about the ruse to pretend he is dead, we may read this as a slightly comic touch of characterization, but it could also be seen as a genuine Greek anxiety about crossing a line, and ‘tempting fate’.¹⁶ Menelaus’ eventual translation to Elysium has been read in connection with Egyptian rituals about the ferrying of the dead (Griffith 2001), so the setting may give this expressed anxiety a greater significance.

A common feature of late fifth-century drama is the challenge to belief in oracles and divination, reflecting sophistic debate and fears about religious fakery (Mikalson 1983, 41). In *Helen* we see both sides of the discussion. The messenger concludes that the words of seers are useless (744–757) because the Trojan War was animated by the prophecies of Calchas, and the Chorus leader agrees with this assessment. The contrast, however, is provided by Theonoe, introduced at the start of the play as one blessed with divine insight, who correctly tells Helen that Menelaus is alive. The figure of Theonoe performs many dramatic functions, giving a family connection for the villain, Theoclymenus (Sansone 1985), as well as presenting a face of divine information, giving Helen a confidante, and eventually providing the means by which Helen and Menelaus can escape. Euripides has developed her character beyond these functional parameters, and some have seen a parallel with the sixth-century figure, Theano (Germain 1972). Theonoe is a tragic figure, struggling with a conflict of loyalties to her brother and her guest, and she makes a decision about the morally correct action even when it threatens her personal safety (Chong-Gossard 2004). The final drama of the play comes from the very real threat to her life, which is only averted when Helen’s divine brothers intervene.

Further to this, Euripides has created in Theonoe a figure who is more than a simple mouthpiece for traditional religious practice. Her comments about men and gods (lines 1002 ff.) present a strange combination of ideas which the original audience would have recognized as derived from different philosophical traditions. It is not clear whether we should understand her comments as a reasoned synthesis of different ideas, a collection of thought-provoking expressions, or a jumble of unrelated soundbites which amounts to a parody of contemporary religious discourse.¹⁷ There is no steer from the Chorus at the

16 On the ritual role of the mask as a distancing object, separating actor from character, see Meineck (2010); Wiles (2008).

17 See Pucci (2012) on Helen in the late fifth-century mindset, and cf. Post (1964) on the way the figure of Theonoe relates to religious discussion in Menander’s comedy.

end of the play, as their final reflection is a general comment on correct attitudes towards the gods, rather than any specific response to the outcome of this drama. The philosophical discussion of beauty in the play can also be framed as a traditional or innovative take on mythology (Zeitlin 2010, 273), and Theonoe provides a different ideal of female behaviour within a wider temporal field (Campos Daroca 2013).

5 Helen as a Woman in War

'She was incomprehensible, for, in her, soul and spirit were one—the beauty of her body was the essence of her soul.' (*The Beautiful and Damned*, Book 1, chapter 1, A Flashback in Paradise).¹⁸ This comment by Scott Fitzgerald on the figure of 'Beauty' gives us one way to understand the figure of Helen in Euripides' play—she is not to be understood, except perhaps through Aristotle's formulation of 'consistently inconsistent' (*Poetics* 1454a26–28)—but the Aristotelian notion of tragic character being revealed through choice (*Poetics* 1450b8–10) gives us another way to consider Helen's central position in the story. At first, we see her as a choiceless victim, taken by the gods, but she has immediately reacted to Theoclymenus' pursuit by resisting, and claiming the protection of Proteus' tomb. As the play progresses, she makes many choices, some of which are frustrated (as in her desire to die), but others prove to be exactly what was needed. She chooses to trust Theonoe and devises a complex plan which exploits the vulnerabilities of Theoclymenus' position, turning Menelaus' weakness into strength. Her character can be seen defined by her fundamental choice to remain loyal to Menelaus, but the range of scenarios she is forced to contemplate suggests a more flexible figure, able to adapt to changing circumstances.

Multiple perspectives in the play contrast Helen's own self-image with the ideas of the men around her. We learn that the former king, Proteus, respected her as figure under his care, but at the start of the play Theoclymenus views her primarily as a desirable woman, and then as a suppliant at his father's tomb. Teucer gives us a wider Greek perspective, but it is Menelaus who ultimately defines Helen, providing the reason she resists the advances of Theoclymenus

18 Scott Fitzgerald's interest in classical literature is well known, particularly in relation to *The Great Gatsby* (1925) which had a provisional title of *Trimalchio* [MacKendrick (1950)]. The passage 'Flashback in Paradise' has a strong flavour of Euripides' play, with the emphasis on the 'bogus' and the role of mirrors and disguise. Cf. Arnold (1975) 152 on similarities between *The Great Gatsby* and the comedies of Menander.

(even when she believes Menelaus is dead). Her skills of persuasion are only fully deployed in the attempt to manipulate Theoclymenus and restore her marriage. Although she directs the action to enable the ruse, and her behaviour with Menelaus suggests a partnership, once they escape Helen returns to a passive role, both as wife and as sister, accepting male protection. When Theoclymenus asks about her escape, imagining her flying or walking, the messenger reframes the narrative and describes her as being 'carried off by sea' like an object (1517). We should note, however, that the men are also characterized through Helen: Theoclymenus appears as an almost cartoon-like villain, Teucer is shown to be a true Greek hero both in his reaction to Helen and his willingness to show courtesy once he realizes his 'mistake', and Menelaus is restored to his role as hero through Helen's agency (Darab 2006; Jansen 2012).

The overriding narrative absolves Helen of any blame for causing the Trojan War, making her a victim of the gods, and Steiner (2011) has argued that the songs establish this Helen as the 'authentic' figure of the myth. For a modern audience, the degree of self-reflection Helen displays may further engage our sympathies, but an ancient audience may have approached such a psychological reading with greater scepticism. This Helen did not elope with Paris, but she does show herself to be intelligent, eloquent and able to deceive men—characteristics which were not compatible with the ideal Greek woman. As the daughter of Zeus, she is potentially even more dangerous, as goddesses were unpredictable and often hostile towards mortals. This 'real' Helen thus displays many of the characteristics that made the 'phantom' Helen such a powerful destructive force, and the emphasis on how both figures 'look the same' encourages caution about accepting the 'real' Helen at face value.¹⁹ This theatrical creation can be read as an intense manifestation of the occlusion of female agency in Athenian culture. The play paradoxically establishes her as a challenge to the accepted norms of female behaviour while simultaneously restoring the *status quo*. It is not, therefore, a question of 'the real' versus 'the phantom' Helen, but more that she is both figures in one.

Her multi-faceted character makes it difficult to understand the relationship between gender and warfare. O'Gorman (2008) has argued that the myth of Helen can illuminate the role of women in the ancient discourse of warfare, but Euripides' play resists such analysis. If there is a female perspective in the play it most likely comes via Theonoe, in her struggle with loyalty to natal fam-

19 See further Fulkerson (2013) on how different instantiations of the myth of Helen promote the ambiguity of her figure and interact with the critical tradition.

ily over a higher responsibility to ethical and religious beliefs. She is, however, not a symbol for Greek womanhood, as she is both a foreigner and outside the normal structure of female roles, due to her divine inspiration.

If Helen herself does engage the audience's sympathies, it is as a victim of the gods as much as a woman left behind while the men go to war, so both issues must be addressed if we are to see her as a tragic figure. Allen (2008, 69) argues that the play is essentially serious in tone: 'While it is important that we do not deny *Helen's* lighter elements [...] it remains typically tragic insofar as the audience see its protagonists suffer, even if they do escape'. Helen's suffering for the long period of her stay in Egypt is largely unstated, and her extreme distress only appears to last through the course of the play—brief episodes of fear, learning of bereavement, suicidal ideation, are followed by an apparently triumphant escape and a return to a home, where her family support is ensured by Castor and Polydeuces, even though her mother has already taken her own life. The *nature* of Helen's suffering, therefore, brings her closer to human experience, but the short duration of her pain, and the happy outcome makes her less sympathetic. We begin the play with a focus on the long, widespread suffering of the Trojan War, but end with reports of her energetically cheering the sailors on (1602–1603) before returning to a married life (1654–1655). The future may not be entirely rosy, as we see in *Odyssey* 4 (Doyle 2010), but she has material comfort and status. As a divine figure Helen is not plagued by the loss of her looks which provides the tragedy for Gloria Gilbert, the manifestation of beauty in *The Beautiful and Damned*, who leaves on a ship with her husband and wealth but has lost the glow of youth—Helen seems to have been suspended in time.²⁰

6 Conclusions and Further Directions

We face many of the same problems of conflict today as those facing the audience of 412 BC and the mythical Greeks who fought the Trojan War. It may seem that arguing about details of a play is self-indulgent, when we could be directly engaging in humanitarian aid efforts or negotiating immediate political solutions. This accusation can be levelled against most study in the field of humanities, but the subject matter of *Helen* blurs the distinction between

20 Gloria Gilbert, who is initially the physical incarnation of divine beauty, is judged at the end of the novel as 'sort of dyed and unclean' (book 3, chapter 2, Together with the sparrows).

study and action. While knotty problems of metrical analysis may seem matters of mere antiquarian interest, the overall project of engaging with a play about war and illusion can be seen as central to our efforts to engage positively with our own world. The final decades of the fifth century BC produced ideas which would shape the intellectual direction of Western culture; the early twentieth century gave humanity new tools with which to explore the human mind, yet also witnessed great qualitative as well as quantitative changes in the nature of warfare (Hymans 2009); the first decades of the twenty-first century hold the promise of even greater change, as the discrete natures of religion and science are challenged in the development of quantum theory (Sturm 2014).

Current scholarly approaches to the play focus on Helen as a metapoetic figure, with the traditional interplay seen in the Homeric epics intensified in the interaction between Euripidean tragedy and Aristophanic comedy (Alfonso 2017; Malta 2016). While the negotiation of gender identity and the role of names continues to provoke new analysis (Assaël 2014), the silence of Theonoe and the soundscape of the play have been given new prominence both in scholarship, and in modern productions.²¹ Exploration of the myth in a comparative perspective has highlighted the peculiar qualities of Euripides' version when set against alternative 'Abducted wife' narratives (Edmunds 2016), and the generic status of the play has been questioned once more in Zuckerman's (2016) exploration of Aristophanes. The reception of the play continues to develop its own narrative (de Fátima Silva 2015), and the final word should be given to contemporary engagement with the play. The production of *Helen* at the Getty Villa in 2012 was heavy with modern cultural references, and depicted a 'witty, delightful, and remarkably resourceful heroine', in the words of the Museum curator (Lyons 2012). This characterization may not accord with some current scholarly views, but any analysis of the play which sidelines modern popular culture may simply create an ivory tower of phantoms. Regardless of any meaning we assign, *Helen* merits its place in attempts to understand our relationship with the ancient world, and thus to understand our own place in the modern world.

21 See Ford (2010); Weiss (2018) 153–157. Cf. the University of Vermont 2018 production scored with music from ancient instruments: <https://www.sevendaysvt.com/vermont/vvm-stages-euripides-classic-with-new-music/Content?oid=13827913>.

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Phoenician Women

Laura Swift

1 Play and Text

Phoenician Women reminds us that the judgements we make in studying Greek drama are not aesthetic absolutes but are grounded in our cultural preconceptions. It is rarely performed today and generally regarded as one of Euripides' lesser works, but in the Byzantine period it was, along with *Orestes* and *Hecuba*, one of his most popular plays.¹ It offers an action-packed exploration of the troubled Labdacid house, featuring almost every important figure from Theban myth. Unlike tragedies that focus on a single character or pivotal moment, *Phoenician Women* contains several different plotlines. It follows Jocasta's doomed attempts to reconcile her sons Polynices and Eteocles, Creon's dilemma as to whether to sacrifice his son to save the city, Antigone's journey from naïve young girl to an assertive figure prepared to defy Creon, and finishes with a surprise appearance by Oedipus. This varied succession of incidents is overseen by the Chorus, a group of Phoenician maidens on their way to Delphi, who are trapped in Thebes because of the war.

The play opens with Jocasta, who, unlike in other versions of the myth, remains alive after the discovery of her incestuous marriage. Her *prologue* recounts the 'story so far', explaining the circumstances of Oedipus' birth, the discovery of his identity, and the conflict between Eteocles and Polynices (1–87). Euripides inserts an additional scene between the prologue and the *parodos*, where the young Antigone climbs to the roof of the palace to look at the invading army (88–201). This scene is known as the *teichoskopia*, after the Iliadic scene where Helen views the Achaean army from the walls of Troy (*Iliad* 3.161–244). The Chorus of Phoenician women then enter, and in their *parodos* (202–260) explain that they are on their way to serve as temple slaves at Delphi. In the *first episode*, Polynices enters Thebes and is greeted warmly by Jocasta. However, her attempt to mediate her sons' quarrel ends in failure (443–637). This is followed by the *first stasimon*, where the Chorus sing of the foundation of Thebes, and of how Cadmus slew the dragon of Ares which was

¹ See Bremer (1985); Cribbore (2001).

guarding the sacred spring and sowed its teeth in the earth. These turned into warriors, thus producing the first generation of Thebans (638–688). In the *second episode*, Creon and Eteocles meet to discuss military strategy, and Eteocles agrees to station his best fighters at the city's seven gates (697–783). The *second stasimon* (784–832) contrasts the sphere of Dionysus with that of Ares, and then returns to the history of Thebes, including Oedipus' defeat of the Sphinx. The prophet Tiresias makes an appearance in the *third episode* in order to warn Creon that Thebes can only be saved if he sacrifices his son Menoecus (845–959). The god Ares has cursed Thebes because Cadmus, its founder, killed his sacred dragon, and Ares now demands a sacrifice from one of the descendants of the dragon's teeth. Creon orders Menoecus to save himself by fleeing (960–990) and the young man appears to obey, but when left alone onstage he reveals to the Chorus that he intends to sacrifice himself to save the city (990–1018). In the *third stasimon*, the Chorus sing again of the Sphinx and Oedipus, and praise Menoecus (1018–1065). The *fourth episode* begins with a messenger, who has come to report affairs on the battlefield. He warns Jocasta that her sons are about to fight each other in single combat (1066–1264), and she orders Antigone to leave the palace and come with her to supplicate her brothers (1265–1283). The Chorus express their fear for the brothers in the *fourth stasimon* (1284–1307), and these fears are quickly realized, since the *fifth episode* (1308–1479) contains a second messenger speech, reporting Eteocles' and Polynices' deaths and Jocasta's suicide over their bodies (1310–1479). Antigone now arrives and mourns her family in a lyric aria (1485–1538), at the end of which she summons Oedipus from the house. Father and daughter sing of their grief in a duet (1539–1581). In the *exodos* (1582–1709), Creon announces that Oedipus must go into exile, refuses Polynices burial, and orders Antigone to marry Haemon, but Antigone defies him and goes into exile with her father.

The lavish scale of the action, with its many twists and turns, was presumably part of what appealed to Byzantine audiences, along with the play's innovation with myth, flamboyant monodies, and exotic Chorus.² However, the complexity of the plot was also criticized in antiquity, and the critic whose views are preserved in the third hypothesis to the play described it as 'over-stuffed', and singles out several scenes as being unnecessary. The question of coherence has dogged studies of *Phoenician Women* ever since, and scholars' desire to streamline the play can be seen in attempts beginning in the eighteenth century to excise awkward passages as interpolations. The state of the text remains a prob-

2 For a positive view of the play's variegated style, see Micheline (2009).

lem for those wishing to study the play, since there is little agreement on how much is authentically Euripidean. A detailed study of the text and its most controversial passages goes beyond the scope of a Companion volume, and for the purposes of this chapter, I follow the analysis of Donald Mastronarde's large scale commentary, which errs on the side of generosity regarding which passages should be retained.

The wide-ranging plot allows Euripides to explore many aspects of Theban myth, and this chapter will begin with an overview of how *Phoenician Women* reflects and adapts earlier versions of the Theban stories. However the play's complicated structure should not make us overlook how the divergent narratives are connected, and so I will also outline ways in which *Phoenician Women* can be said to be a coherent whole.³ It is important not to be beguiled by Aristotle's analysis of tragedy as depicting the fall of a great individual, since this is only one strategy for a tragedian to choose. *Phoenician Women* makes better sense if, rather than focusing on individual characters, we look for overarching ideas that connect the separate plotlines and make them more than a series of vignettes. The chapter will therefore explore three of the most important themes, those of community, family, and the history of Thebes. The chapter will close with an examination of the Chorus. This group of Phoenician women are the most surprising choice in any Euripidean play, since they lack any connection with the play's action or setting, yet as we shall see, the Chorus provide an essential unity to the play, by shedding light on many of its central ideas.

2 Myth

Phoenician Women highlights Euripides' creativity with myth, as well as the way that he self-consciously positions his work within the mythological and literary tradition. The myths of Thebes and the Labdacid house were well-worn territory for poets, and the story was established enough by Homer's day that he could simply allude to it in Odysseus' journey to the underworld (*Od.* 11.271–280). As well as treatments of the myth by the epic and lyric poets, Euripides had to position his work against previous tragic versions, notably Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, which like *Phoenician Women* focuses on Polyneices'

3 For discussion of the unity of the play, see Podlecki (1962); Mastronarde (1974) 267–296; Mueller-Goldingen (1985) 1–5; Foley (1985) 112–132; Luschnig (1995) 173. For scholars instead arguing for a lack of unity, cf. e.g. Lesky (1956) 191; Kitto (1961) 351.

attack on Thebes and the brothers' duel and death. Far from ignoring the existence of the Aeschylean treatment, Euripides draws his audience's attention to it, and so highlights ways in which his own play diverges.⁴ For example, when Eteocles decides to position champions at each of the city's seven gates, he remarks to Creon 'To tell you the name of each man would consume too much time with the enemy encamped at our very gates' (751–752), a playful dig at Aeschylus' treatment, where the ordering of the warriors at the gates forms the centrepiece of the play. This kind of self-consciousness is typical of Euripides' style; and as well as showing the poet's awareness of his role in the tradition, it also flatters the audience's learning.⁵ Similarly, Euripides presents familiar characters in a new light, and so alludes to his awareness of their previous incarnations. Eteocles is not the duty-driven king of Aeschylus, but a selfish tyrant who admits that his only concern is to keep power for himself (503–508). His brother Polynices enters the stage not as a fearsome aggressor, but as a timid man who jumps at shadows (269–270), while Creon, who in Sophocles' *Antigone* advocates duty to the city above all else, cries out 'city be damned' (919) when required to sacrifice his own family.

Any innovative poet would adapt a myth to suit his own ends, and by Euripides' day multiple versions of the story existed. For example, in the *Odyssey*, though Oedipus' mother-wife (here called Epicaste) kills herself upon discovering her husband's true identity, Oedipus himself lives on as king of Thebes. In the epic tradition, Oedipus' children are not the products of incest, and making them such seems to have been an innovation of the tragedians.⁶ Tragedy tends to explore the darker side of human nature and prioritizes myths of dysfunctional families, so it is not surprising that the tragedians increased the horror of Oedipus' marriage by extending its consequences into the next generation. In Euripides' play, the pollution of the incestuous marriage is taken still further, since Jocasta has not killed herself in shame but lives on in Thebes as

4 For Euripides' self-conscious use of intertextuality, see Papadopoulou (2008) 27–48; Burian (2009) 17–20; Lamari (2009).

5 Audience-members who were unfamiliar with Aeschylus' version would not feel excluded, since the allusion would simply pass unnoticed.

6 No incestuous children are mentioned in the *Odyssey*, and the gods reveal the truth soon after the marriage: on the details of how we should interpret this passage, see Tsitsibakou-Vasalos (1989); Davies/Finglass (2014) 360 n. 18. In the *Oedipodeia* Oedipus' children are the products of a second marriage (*Oedipodeia* fr. 1 *GEF*, Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.5.8, and the Pisander scholion, *PEG* 1 17–19), while in Pherecydes Eteocles and Polynices are born from this second marriage, and Oedipus' earlier incestuous children are killed (fr. 95 *EGM*). Conversely, Oedipus' mother-wife is also the mother of his children in Aesch. *Seven*, Soph. *Ant.*, *OT*.

the Queen Mother. The incestuous nature of the marriage appears to be of relatively little importance to the characters, and as March notes, ‘there seems to be no frenzied sense of horror and shame about the incest ..., but rather a quiet feeling of resigned sadness.’⁷ Jocasta acts with authority throughout the play and appears unsullied by her past. This lack of concern by the characters need not, of course, be shared by the audience, and Jocasta’s insouciance about her marriage must have been shocking. Euripides here adapts the Sophoclean innovation that makes Oedipus live on in the palace, with his exile delayed to a future date, a motif we find in both *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus*. In *Phoenician Women*, Oedipus is kept in Thebes despite (as Creon reveals at the end of the play) a prophecy by Tiresias that his presence in Thebes will blight the city (1590–1591), a further indication of the problems for the wider community caused by the Labdacids’ sexual distortions. As we shall see later in this chapter, dysfunctional sexuality is a central theme of *Phoenician Women*, and Jocasta and Oedipus’ ongoing presence in Thebes is crucial in establishing this pattern.

If the incestuous queen living on is probably Euripides’ innovation, other aspects of Jocasta’s characterization allude to earlier treatments of the myth, and in particular Stesichorus’ *Thebais*, a lyric poem that dealt with the quarrel between Eteocles and Polynices.⁸ In the surviving section of the poem, the mother of Eteocles and Polynices (who is probably not Oedipus’ mother but a second wife) attempts to mediate between her sons, hoping that her intervention may prevent disaster. Euripides adapts the details of this intervention, since in Stesichorus, the mediation occurs at the time of the original conflict between the brothers. Whereas epic and narrative lyric can tell long sections of a myth, the temporal action of tragedy is compressed (usually to a single day), and so by placing Jocasta’s intervention later, Euripides makes it possible to portray it directly within his play. Moving it also changes the tone: whereas the Stesichorean queen hopes that she can pre-empt catastrophe, Jocasta is involved in a last-ditch attempt to save her sons when they are far gone in their hatred, which makes for a more desperate situation. Nevertheless, the authority with which Jocasta speaks and acts reflects Stesichorus’ portrayal of a queen who takes a leading role in public life.⁹

7 March (1987) 130.

8 Fr. 97 Finglass. The original title of this poem is not attested, but in calling it *Thebais* I follow Davies/Finglass (2014). For Stesichorus’ influence on *Phoenician Women*, see Maingon (1989) 52; Zeitlin (2008) 329; Lamari (2010); Ercoles/Fiorentini (2011); Swift (2015); Finglass (forthcoming).

9 For further discussion, see Swift (2015) 140–143.

The characterization of the two brothers is possibly also inspired by Stesichorus. The names of Eteocles ('true glory') and Polynices ('many quarrels') suggest that Eteocles was originally felt to be the virtuous brother and Polynices the wicked one. In Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, culpability is unclear, but Eteocles defends the justice of his position (658–671), while in Sophocles' *Antigone*, Creon argues that Polynices' actions make him an enemy of the city (198–210). In *Phoenician Women*, on the other hand, Euripides goes further in reversing the original relationship between the brothers, by making it clear that Eteocles has reneged on an agreement to share power (69–76) and by having him openly declare that he cares less for justice than for power (503–525). Though the fragmentary state of Stesichorus' text means we must be cautious, he too appears to have placed Eteocles in the wrong, since Tiresias appears to criticize him and to forewarn that he will withhold what belongs to Polynices (282–283).¹⁰ In *Phoenician Women*, while Polynices may act wrongly in attacking his homeland, Euripides creates sympathy by allowing him to describe the sorrows of his life in exile (388–407), and by showing the love he feels for his mother and sister (616–618). Conversely, Eteocles is criticized by his own mother as an avaricious usurper (549–567), and fulfils many of the negative stereotypes the Greeks held about tyrants: greed, inability to control his desires, and lack of concern for justice.¹¹

The most significant Euripidean innovation is the episode involving Menoeceus, which appears to have been created for this play.¹² Euripides elsewhere shows a fondness for the motif of self-sacrifice, and several plays contain virgins who willingly lay down their lives (*Children of Heracles*, *Hecuba*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Erechtheus*). In *Children of Heracles* and *Erechtheus*, this sacrifice is required to preserve the wider community, and so is likened to the sacrifice a soldier makes when he risks his life defending his country. In *Phoenician Women* Euripides adapts this trope, making the character in question a youth rather than a girl. Menoeceus is thus contrasted with the other two young men in the play, Eteocles and Polynices, and his true patriotism is set against their selfishness. Menoeceus is chosen for sacrifice because he is a virgin (944–946), and because he is a descendant of the Spartoi, rather than a member of the Labdacid house (940–943), and thus his fate highlights the themes of family and distorted sexuality that run through the play. The Menoeceus episode also unites Thebes' past history with its present, and the cost of imposing civiliza-

10 See Swift (2015) 142.

11 On the characterization of the two brothers, see Mueller-Goldingen (1985) 36; Mastro-narde (1994) 27–28. For justice as a theme in the play, see Papadodima (2011) 31–35.

12 See Mastronarde (1994) 28–29.

tion on the wilderness, another central theme of the play. It now remains for us to turn directly to these themes and investigate what they contribute to our understanding of *Phoenician Women*.

3 City and Homeland

The fate of Thebes forms the constant backdrop to the decisions made by the characters, and each of them must grapple with the question of how much they owe to their community, and how they should relate to it.¹³ In a city at war, the fate of the city and of its inhabitants are linked, yet this is a conflict caused by a disagreement over who should rule the city, and raises questions of how far an individual can press his claims to justice when this endangers the wider group. The Chorus stand in contrast, since as foreigners who are merely passing through Thebes on their way to Delphi, they are entirely distanced from the city and her struggles.¹⁴ While they express warm sentiments about Thebes, their detachment sets into relief the other characters' close connection with their city.

As we have seen, *Phoenician Women* overturns mythological convention by presenting Polynices as the righteous brother, with Eteocles a usurper. But although Polynices has a legitimate grievance, since he has been exiled from his homeland, he addresses it by endangering the community he claims to love. This tension is highlighted early in the play, and is one of the functions of the *teichoskopia* scene, where we see through Antigone how the lives of individuals depend on the safety of the wider community.¹⁵ When Antigone sees the warrior Parthenopaeus, she prays that Artemis will kill him, explaining 'he has come to my city to sack it!' (153). Her old slave's reply explains why Thebes is in a dangerous predicament:

That is my prayer too, my child! But they are coming to the land with justice on their side. And I am afraid that the gods may see this all too clearly.

154–155

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- 13 The fullest study of this theme is Rawson (1970), though it has long been identified as significant, cf. Hartung (1843–1844) ii.442–444; Riemschneider (1940).
- 14 Cf. de Romilly (1967) 114; Rawson (1970) 112. On the objectivity of the Chorus, see also Luschign (1995) 196.
- 15 For the importance of the *teichoskopia* scene in framing a female perspective, see Lamari (2007) 14–17.

The slave, a neutral observer, sees Polynices not as a vicious aggressor but as a wronged man, and fears that divine justice may favour his cause above the safety of Thebes and its inhabitants. Yet the slave also echoes Antigone's fear and her prayer that the gods will protect them. Thus, while he implicitly criticizes Eteocles for his unjust deeds, we can also appreciate that Polynices is blameworthy for bringing violence to his community. Antigone herself attempts to keep her feelings for her brother separate from her emotions about the danger she is in. When she sees Polynices she wishes she could embrace him and feels pity for his position as an exile (163–167). Yet shortly afterwards, she expresses anger and hatred when she sees Capaneus, and reflects upon the life of slavery that awaits women in a conquered city (182–192). The audience is aware that while Capaneus may have uttered the boast that he can enslave the Thebans, it is Polynices, as the expedition's leader, who is ultimately responsible.

Love of country and duty to it are explored further in the scene that follows between Jocasta, Polynices, and Eteocles. In his dialogue with Jocasta, Polynices emphasizes the horrors of exile, which he describes as 'the greatest calamity' (389). His description of the disadvantages faced by exiles (lack of free speech, a hand-to-mouth existence, fickle friendships) highlights the benefits of belonging to a community, as Jocasta confirms: 'Dearest to men, it seems, is native soil' (406). Polynices' love for Thebes may be eloquently expressed but it is also selfish, since he prioritises his own needs above the wellbeing of others in his community, a point he himself admits when he tells his mother that the members of his army are 'rendering me a favour that I need but that brings me pain: it is my country that I am marching against' (431–433). Moreover, Eteocles' later agreement that Polynices may remain in Thebes provided that he does not aspire to kingship (518–519) exposes the shallowness of Polynices' love of his homeland, since his real motivation is merely the desire to rule. Conversely, Eteocles appears to lack any feelings for Thebes whatsoever. His speech to Jocasta focuses on his love of power, and the sense of shame he would feel if he yielded to Polynices (503–525). Eteocles acknowledges that his actions are unjust (524) but makes no mention of the possible consequences of war, and it is left to Jocasta in her response to him to describe the misery that the sack of Thebes would inflict upon its inhabitants (561–567). Jocasta questions whether Eteocles would prefer to save his city or to be king (559–561), but it is clear to the audience that he has already made his choice, and that the safety of Thebes weighs little in the balance. Indeed, Eteocles does not respond to Jocasta's points, but merely reiterates his position, and tells her to give up her attempts to persuade him (588–593). Jocasta speaks in political terms, but her primary concern is the safety of her sons and the preservation of her family,

and it is to save their lives, rather than out of a sense of political duty, that she attempts to stop the war.¹⁶

The attitude of Eteocles and Polynices is contrasted with that of Menoecus, who willingly sacrifices his life to save Thebes.¹⁷ Menoecus' death in fact makes the duel between the brothers irrelevant to the fate of the city, since his sacrifice has already guaranteed Thebes' safety before the duel. Thus, the battle between the brothers determines only who shall hold power, and so strips bare the selfishness of their ambitions. Menoecus must die because he is the last descendant of the Sown Men, the autochthonous first inhabitants of Thebes, and as someone who was literally born from the soil, he represents the closest possible relationship an individual can have with his community.¹⁸ Menoecus likens the sacrifice he makes to the soldiers who are defending Thebes (999–1002). Thus, while the audience may be struck by his heroism, they are also reminded that putting the wider good before individual desires is no more than what the *polis* expects of all its male citizens who must risk their lives in battle. The Chorus in turn praise Menoecus and hope to be mothers of men like him (1061–1062), reinforcing the idea that everyone in a community has a role to play in ensuring its survival, even those such as unmarried girls who play little role in public life.

Menoecus' decision emphasizes another important aspect of the theme of homeland: the potential conflict between duty to family and to city.¹⁹ Despite Creon's initial patriotism ('How can I not wish to save my country?', 560), when he learns the true nature of the choice he must make, his immediate response is to save his son at the cost of the city. Unlike Eteocles and Polynices, Creon is capable of putting others before himself, and he offers to die in Menoecus' place (968–969). However, he sees his responsibility to his own household as greater than that to the community and claims that everyone would feel the same way ('All men alive love their children, and no one would give his own child to be killed', 965–966). When Menoecus justifies his decision to sacrifice himself, however, he conceptualizes it not as prioritizing the city over the needs of his family, but as protecting both. Fleeing to save his own skin would, in his eyes, be to 'betray father, brother, and my own city' (1003–1004). Yet the audience is aware that Menoecus' choice is not as straightforward as he claims, as is reinforced by the Chorus, who praise him but comment that he is 'leaving lamentation to Creon' (1057). It is ironic that Creon, who unashamedly favours

16 Cf. Burian (2009) 24–25.

17 See Garzya (1962) 104–105; de Romilly (1967); Rawson (1970); Arthur (1977).

18 Cf. Papadopoulou (2001) 24; Burian (2009) 32.

19 On individual vs collective safety, see Carter (2006) 153–157.

the claims of kin over those of community, takes the opposite stance when elevated to kingship. At the end of the play, he refuses Antigone the right to bury Polynices, and argues that those who betray the city must become enemies to their loved ones (1652). We might wonder whether Creon is a hypocrite who tried to avoid practising what he now preaches, or whether his change of attitude show a recognition of his own past error. The audience's awareness that Creon himself refused to put family in second place also foreshadows Antigone's own refusal to do so, since it highlights the deep emotions that we feel towards our loved ones.

4 Family and Sexuality

The fate of the city is entwined with that of the Labdacid house, and it is the curse upon this family that has brought Thebes into its current danger. Unlike treatments such as Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, which focus on the decisions of the human agents, *Phoenician Women* shows the role of inherited guilt in shaping the family's destiny. While the individuals in the play may believe themselves to be acting freely, they are part of a broader cycle from which they cannot extricate themselves, and we see the same pattern of mistakes across the generations.²⁰ In the case of the Labdacids, the trait that brings the family into ruin is their inability to manage sexual and familial relationships appropriately. In the prologue, Jocasta highlights this theme, as she explains how Laius begat Oedipus against divine will, and so brought a curse upon the house. In this version, Laius is clearly warned of the consequences of begetting a child (17–20) and ignored this advice in a moment of drunken lust (21). The audience would have known of Laius' own history of sexual transgression, since in one version of the myth (told in Euripides' play *Chrysippus*), he had incurred divine anger by raping Chrysippus, the young son of his host.²¹ Jocasta's forbidden pregnancy leads to further sexual and familial transgressions, since the child Oedipus grows up to murder his father and marry his mother. The sons of this incestuous marriage are, the Chorus suggest, doomed from their origins, and it is therefore unsurprising that they come to no good (814–817).²² Jocasta

20 On inherited guilt in the play, see Sewell-Rutter (2007) 37–48; Gagné (2013) 378–386.

21 Whether Euripides directly alludes to this myth in *Phoenician Women* is disputed: for discussion, see Mastronarde (1994) 31–38; West (1999) 42–43.

22 These lines are very corrupt, but the general sense is that nothing good can come from bad beginnings, as shown by the case of the sons of Oedipus. For discussion of the variant readings and attempts to translate, see Mastronarde (1994) ad loc.

too sees Laius' error, and her marriage to Oedipus, as the reasons that her household cannot escape ruin (379–381). Indeed, the youngest generation repeat the Labdacid inability to form functional sexual relationships, and so perpetuate the family curse through their own behaviour. Polynices is not only the son of a forbidden marriage, but himself makes a marriage that destroys his family, since it is through his father-in-law, Adrastus, that he has access to the army with which he will attack Thebes (427–428).

The Labdacid distortion of sexuality is further shown through the corruption of Antigone from a sheltered virgin to a maenadic figure prepared not only to defy male authority but also to reject the transition to the adult life of a married woman.²³ On Antigone's first appearances in the play she acts as a virtuous Greek maiden would be expected to: she asks her mother's permission when she wishes to leave the protection of the maiden-quarters, and is accompanied by a chaperone (89–95). Even when she does appear onstage, she is viewing events from the roof-top of the palace rather than out in the streets, and she retreats as soon as she might be noticed by outsiders (193–201). When Jocasta orders Antigone to accompany her to the battlefield, she is hesitant, and afraid to be seen in public (1275–1276). Yet once the curse has exacted its toll on her brothers and mother, Antigone undergoes a drastic change, and the girl who appears in the final scene is a very different character, who rejects maidenly modesty in an ostentatious display of grief, and who describes herself as a bacchant (1485–1492). Just as Laius at the start of the play was said to commit his crime (forbidden relations with Jocasta) under the influence of Dionysus (21), so too Antigone is likened to a devotee of the god at the point where she transgresses against the normal sexual and social boundaries. When Creon orders Antigone to return to her maidenly lifestyle within the house (1635–1638), she refuses, and threatens to murder her betrothed, Haemon, if she is forced to marry him (1675). Thus, the Antigone of the final scene is an ambiguous figure: while we may admire her devotion to her father and brother, we also see how her life is shaped by the family curse, and how she too comes to perpetuate the Labdacid inability to form healthy sexual relationships.

The dangers of mismanaged sexuality are explored at the symbolic level through the figure of the Sphinx, who is mentioned throughout the play from Jocasta's history of Thebes in the prologue (45–49) to Oedipus' final lament (1760). The Sphinx is sent as a divine punishment (1031–1032), and according to the Pisander scholion on line 1760, her presence was Laius' punishment for

23 See Burian (2009) 28–31; Swift (2009) 62–69.

conceiving a child.²⁴ If we assume that the audience were familiar with this tradition, the Sphinx's existence is therefore entwined in the Labdacid distortion of sexual norms: she is sent to Thebes because of Laius' sexual transgression, and her defeat by Oedipus enables his incestuous marriage. While in Thebes, the Sphinx preyed upon the young men, snatching them from their prospective brides before they could reach maturity, as described by the Chorus in the third stasimon (1033–1042). As a destructive maiden who attacks her sexual partners, the Sphinx thus reflects Antigone's journey within the play, since she too is a dangerous virgin who rejects the transition to adulthood and instead threatens to prey upon young men. Her effects on the city are connected with her role as a symbol of corrupted marriage, and the failings of the Labdacids result in the disruption of other Theban families, as mothers lose their sons and girls their bridegrooms.

5 The History of Thebes

The Sphinx is only one in a series of monsters and traumatic events that shaped Theban history, and to which *Phoenician Women* repeatedly refers. The play situates Thebes' current crisis within a broader narrative of her struggles, and traces these back to the city's original foundation. Thus, it emphasizes the way that history consists of repeated patterns, and how individuals cannot escape the wider context which shapes their destinies. This theme is foregrounded in the drama's opening words, where Jocasta recalls Cadmus' arrival in the land and his foundation of Thebes and describes it as an 'unblest' day for the city (4). Since the foundation of a city is normally a cause of celebration, Jocasta's words subvert the audience's expectations of how a community should refer to its past and indicate that Thebes suffers from a curse that can be traced back to its origins. These ideas are reinforced throughout the play and are explored with particular force in the choral odes.²⁵ It is common in tragedy for the choral odes to provide a wider perspective on events of the play, drawing on the world of myth or on wider moral issues. Yet the Phoenician women are themselves a reminder of Thebes' ancient history, since Cadmus came to Thebes from Phoenicia, and it is particularly appropriate that they should be the ones to investigate how Thebes' past shapes its present.²⁶

24 Teubner arg. 11 = Σ 1760. This scholion is much discussed: for an overview, see Mastronarde (1994) 31–38; Lloyd-Jones (2002) 3–4.

25 For a detailed discussion, see Arthur (1977).

26 See Michelini (1999–2000) 43; Hartigan (2000).

Thebes' foundational act is Cadmus' slaying of Ares' dragon, which guards the sacred spring from which he must fetch water, and this story is told in the first stasimon (637–689). As in Jocasta's prologue, it is presented not as a moment of glorious heroism but as a troubling deed. Before Cadmus' arrival, Thebes is presented in utopian terms as a blessed land, whose fertility and luxuriance is emphasized (638–657). The dragon is connected with this prelapsarian state of harmony, and he is the guardian of the sacred spring (658). Euripides highlights the violence of this moment in the detail of the scene, dwelling on the choice of weaponry (a stone, 663) and the dragon's bloodied head (664). The destructive nature of Cadmus' actions is also emphasized by the repetition of the word ὄλεσε ('destroyed'), which recurs first as a verb (663) and then in the striking adjective ὄλεσιθῆρος ('beast-slayer', 664). The dragon's brutal death immediately leads to further violence, since its teeth generate the Sown Men who are no sooner born than they begin to kill each other (670–673).

This choral ode is performed immediately after the quarrel between Eteocles and Polynices, where Jocasta's attempt at mediation rapidly degenerates into bitterness. The conflict between the two brothers is reflected in the Chorus' account of the fratricide of the Sown Men. Thebes' history explains why the attempt at reconciliation was doomed, since from its foundation the city is enmeshed in internecine strife. As the play continues, it becomes clear that the killing of the dragon is not merely mythological background but continues to shape the fate of Thebes. Tiresias explains that Cadmus' actions incurred the anger of Ares, who now wants vengeance for the dragon's death (931–936). Menoeceus is revealed to be one of the last descendants of the Sown Men and is therefore doomed by his connection to Thebes' autochthonous first settlers. The survival of Thebes once again depends on innocent blood, and the city's inhabitants are constrained by its past.

As Menoeceus goes to his death, the Chorus sing an ode that describes the visitation of another monster, the Sphinx. Their opening words, ἔβας, ἔβας ('you came, you came', 1018) might at first appear to be directed to Menoeceus, who has just departed the stage, but it soon becomes clear that the Chorus is describing significant moments in the past where a new arrival brought disaster to Thebes, first the Sphinx, and then Oedipus (1043).²⁷ Oedipus and the Sphinx repeat the pattern established by Cadmus and the dragon, whereby a human defeats a monster to help the city, but rather than being a glorious act, it ends up bringing a curse upon the community. This chain can only be broken by

27 See Craik (1988); Mastronarde (1994) ad loc.

Menoecus' willingness to sacrifice his life, but the audience is struck by the irony that the city can only be saved by the destruction of the best of its citizens.

6 The Chorus

The Chorus of Phoenician Women is among the play's most baffling elements. Euripides rejects the convention whereby the Chorus has a strong connection to the events of the play or to the location where it is set, and instead chooses a Chorus distanced as much as possible from the action. Though the Chorus speak fondly of Thebes, and express sympathy for the play's characters, little is at stake for them. Their presence in Thebes is accidental, and the war that devastates the characters' lives is merely a temporary inconvenience that prevents them reaching Delphi. Nevertheless, the Chorus is in fact thoroughly integrated in the play at a thematic level, and their own story ties together many of the play's underlying ideas.

As we have seen, the Chorus' identity as Phoenicians allows for an exploration of Thebes' past, and their odes demonstrate how the events of the play are not random but shaped by what has gone before.²⁸ Though they dwell on the crises and monsters in Theban history, they also acknowledge brighter moments that emerge from the chaos. In the first stasimon, for example, Cadmus' slaying of the dragon is bookended by references to the divine favour that Thebes also enjoys. They sing of Thebes' special relationship with Dionysus, and the beauty of his birth there (649–657), and they pray for the protection of Persephone and Demeter, fertility goddesses who will redeem the bloodying of the earth that was begun by Cadmus and the Sown Men (681–689). Similarly, the second stasimon contrasts the bloodshed of Ares with the beauty of Dionysus' realm, and suggests that Thebes has a share in both horrors and delights (784–800). Later in the ode they refer once again to the slaughter of the dragon and the birth of the Sown Men, which they call the 'fairest reproach' to the city (821). While the slaughter of the dragon is a violent act that generated divine anger and fratricide, the militaristic origins of the city and its close ties with the land are also a source of pride. The Chorus then go on to sing of gentler moments in Theban history: how the gods attended the wedding of Cadmus and Harmonia, and how Amphion built the walls of Thebes by charming the very rocks with his music (824–832). The Chorus thus finish the ode by

²⁸ For discussion of the odes, see Arthur (1977); Papadopoulou (2008) 78–87.

reminding the audience that Thebes is a place not only of brutal conflict, but also of harmony and music, and that the gods have blessed as well as cursed it.

The Chorus' own backstory also offers a positive model that contrasts with the dysfunctional lives of the characters. Their detachment from Thebes forms a contrast with the characters, who are too intimately caught up in the history of their city, since their ancestors' faults have caused damage to the city and bring about their own doom.²⁹ As foreigners displaced from their own country, and trapped before they can reach their real destination (Delphi), their position sheds light on the importance of homeland elsewhere in the play. The Chorus have left their native land, yet unlike Polynices, who laments the horrors of exile, they anticipate their new life in Greece with joy, praising Delphi's landmarks and history, and praying that they may arrive safely there and serve the god (226–238). Their story reflects that of Antigone in that they are maidens who abandon their home and the conventions that govern women's lives in order to follow some higher calling. Yet while Antigone's story highlights the sexual dysfunctionality of her household, the Chorus are involved in a religiously sanctioned *rite-de-passage*, which appears to increase their maidenly desirability (222–225), and which may one day lead to marriage and children (1060–1061).³⁰ Both in their odes and through their characterization, the Chorus therefore hint at an alternative world where the distortions of the play are resolved, and where the relationships individuals have with their family, city, and history can be both harmonious and productive.

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30 On the nature of the Chorus' service at Delphi, see Swift (2009) 79–82.

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Orestes

Mark Ringer

Classicists and theatre practitioners often speak of Euripides' 'modernity'. But how much 'modernity' is actually possible in an artist functioning over twenty-four centuries in the past? What was or is still 'modern' about him? Certainly, the most important Euripidean innovation was the unprecedented realism of his character portrayal. In stark contrast to his rival Sophocles' nobly idealized dramatic figures, Euripides' gifts of characterization put living, breathing human beings on the Athenian stage. Euripides' characters are capable of all the inconsistencies, virtues and foibles as any member of his audience whether in his own day or ours. This frankness of character portrayal was still presented within the framework of the theatre's traditional masking, chanting, singing and dancing elements. Euripides was attempting to update the human subject on the tragic stage to ensure the continuance of the tragic tradition. Coupled with this fresh view of humanity on stage Euripides was profoundly concerned with the maintenance of the larger patterns of heroic tradition. The gods of Euripides are the divinities encountered in Homer and Hesiod. They are often cruel, distant, usually indifferent to human suffering and only occasionally overtly helpful to mankind as he strives on the stage below. Euripides painted this picture of the gods consistently, from play to play, because it is likely that this is indeed how he perceived them in reality. The archaic poets' expression of divinity seemed to make the best sense of the world as it really was. The traditional gods help to stabilize the often chaotic sublunary world of Euripides' human characters. This paradox of the very 'modern' human characterization and the almost equally severe retrograde view of the gods create much of the powerful tensions that hold Euripidean drama together. His gods were not the relatively approachable ones of Aeschylus nor the highly mysterious forces found in Sophocles. Euripidean drama affords its ancient and twenty first century audiences theatrical experiences permeated by the very 'old' and the very 'new'. This is the embodiment of artistic continuity and renewal that I believe Euripides was offering as his life's work in the service of Dionysus.

Euripides' *Orestes* (408BC) is a work unique in its unpredictability and its seeming wildness. It is often described formally and informally as a 'radical' work. Along with this 'radicalness' comes much modern interpretive baggage

that Euripides has been burdened with since the denunciations of Nietzsche and the still regrettably influential ideas of Verrall. Schlegel found the work little more than tasteless spectacle. Reinhardt, in an influential lecture, saw the play as anticipating the then current Theatre of the Absurd and authors like Ionesco and Beckett. Vellacott's monograph on Euripides is a useful guide to the most commonly held view of the play as a repository of perhaps the most corrosive irony in Euripides' output. Arrowsmith's introduction to his influential translation follows this same line of interpretation. Almost all roads seem to lead to interpreting Orestes as well as Electra and Pylades as juvenile delinquents anticipating the protagonists of Oliver Stone's 1994 film, *Natural Born Killers*.¹ It is passé and impossible to seek for an author's 'intention' nowadays, but I believe it is possible to utilize our scant surviving evidence as a starting point in an exploration of the play's potential meanings for a late fifth-century Athenian audience.

Orestes was Euripides' most popular play in antiquity. It was part of the Byzantine triad as well as numbering among the canon of ten plays selected for the Roman schools. The title role afforded the ancient actor a spectacular starring vehicle of great range and variety. The first critical statement to survive comes from Strattis called *Anthroporestes* (Orestes the Man) near the very end of the fifth century. The relevant fragment praises the parodied work as the 'the most clever drama'.² *Orestes*' unexpected turns of plot seem to be at the forefront of this author's mind. Aristotle in the *Poetics* has a passage of chastisement for *Orestes* (*Poetics*, 1461b21). The philosopher is not bothered by the *deus* at the close, or by the character of Orestes, Electra, and Pylades that modern critics have sometimes characterized as homicidally insane. What bothers Aristotle is the conspicuous badness of Orestes' adversary: Menelaus. To Aristotle, Orestes' attempt on Helen's life is not a notable issue while Menelaus' betrayal of his beleaguered family members is too much to take. This alone suggests that an ancient audience could potentially empathize quite strongly with Orestes and his faction perhaps even to the play's (nearly) harrowing end. Another voice from antiquity, Aristophanes of Byzantium, referred to *Orestes* climatic scene as 'more of the comic type' than what one expects for tragedy.³ It is worth remembering that for all the talk of mayhem in *Orestes*, the tragedy ends surprisingly bloodlessly.⁴ Like Aristophanes' comic protagonists in *Acharnians*,

1 Conacher (1967) for instance, sees the play as gradually revealing Orestes as 'a monster' (p. 217).

2 *Drama deksiotaton*, cited in Porter (1994) 1.

3 *To komikoteran echei ten katastrophen*. Cited by Hall (1993) 277.

4 See also Lefkowitz (2002) 53.

Birds, and *Lysistrata* the protagonist of *Orestes* successfully fights off all interlopers, the *alazones* who would impede him and attains complete vindication by the end of the work, along with the Chorus' cries anticipating 'victory' (1691) for the hero and, no doubt suggesting a similar outcome for Euripides' production of 408 BC. These suggestive hints from antiquity may serve as signposts on the road to interpreting this most unusual tragedy that Christian Wolff dubbed Euripides' 'most experimental play'⁵ and James Morwood has described as an 'exhilarating celebration of the whole corpus of Attic drama.'⁶

The year of its presentation is also suggestive theatrically as well as politically. 408 BC was the fiftieth anniversary of Aeschylus' already classic *Oresteia* trilogy. The anniversary year may well have led him to consider the many ways Athens had changed in the intervening decades. *Orestes* appears to query how the events of the *Oresteia* might transpire in the atmosphere of the later fifth century. In 408 Athens was a *polis* besieged from without by the Spartans and from within by warring factions of radical democrats and oligarchic sympathizers. Three years before, revolution and counterrevolution had included political bloodshed by both sides. It may well have seemed that the centre could not hold for much longer. *Orestes* may have been part of the last tragedy presentation Euripides composed before leaving Athens for the court of Archelaus in Macedon. This incidental information meshes well with the play's mood. *Orestes* is a work by a playwright at the height of their powers, but its staggering virtuosity begs the question of what its author could possibly produce next. The play presents a dysfunctional world on the edge of disaster. Euripides' closing *deus* in this play serves as a kind of dramaturgical rabbit out of a hat. One wonders just how many tricks could remain up its creator's sleeve. It is easy to imagine the strain of such a play exhausting its creator and that creator seeing his migration to Northern Greece as a chance for artistic and spiritual renewal. Fortunately, that renewal would come in the few years remaining to Euripides in the creation of *Iphigenia at Aulis* and *The Bacchae*.

But these later plays lay in the near future. With *Orestes*, the playwright continues his ongoing project of seeking to renew the mythological tradition he has inherited. As in virtually all of his work, Euripides preserves tradition as much as he innovates. The divine framework and mythic patterns manage to hold steady while his great innovative powers are to be seen especially in the unprecedented realism in which he portrays his human subjects.

5 Wolff (1983) 356.

6 Morwood (2002) 69.

The cast of the play offers a broad cross section of humanity such as one might find in the audience in the Theatre of Dionysus that spring day in 408 BC. Aristocrats and their sympathizers might find themselves rooting for Orestes and his close circle of Electra and Pylades. The two men refer to their relationship as a *hetaireia* (1072, 1079), a word connoting 'companionship' but also 'club'. This later sense might contain associations of aristocratic, oligarchic factions in Athens. The virtues of the honest peasant are extolled who (it is worth noting) stands for the exoneration of Orestes. Even slaves get their memorable moment in the form of the Slave's virtuosic performance later in the play. The dramatic picture is of a varied society dancing precariously around a volcano.

Aeschylus had been as adept as Euripides in bringing his mythic stories up to date. Aeschylus' heroic age Orestes finds his final redemption in an Athens relatively similar to the democratic city of 458 BC. But Aeschylus' mixture of Mycenaean and more recent civic myth offers smoother contours than what one encounters in *Orestes*. Here the solutions of the epic and Aeschylean worlds seem to offer no relief until the play's final blinding moment of divine apotheosis. As in the first two *Oresteia* plays the setting is the palace at Argos. The killings of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus have taken place and the Furies have made their presence known to Orestes, who lies collapsed on a bed in feverish sleep attended by Electra. Orestes' onstage slumber is an 'inversion' of the opening of Aeschylus' *Eumenides* with its sleeping Furies.⁷ Today the Argives will vote on whether to stone the siblings to death for the matricide (49–50). The negative reaction of the Argive people to the tyrannicides contrasts sharply with the versions of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides in his own *Electra* play. The disconnect between the 'democratic' process of voting and the 'barbaric' punishment of stoning is characteristic of the whole operation of Euripides in *Orestes*. It is as though heroic age Orestes has committed his killings in the midst of late fifth-century Athens instead of in a pre-democratic Mycenaean world. The people he has nominally liberated from tyranny are in large measure unexpectedly hostile to him and the heroic rules of conduct under which he has been functioning now seem no longer to apply. If democracy and law were already established, how did the murder of Agamemnon go unpunished? The play seems to ask, 'How did we get to this situation?'. Orestes committed the killing under orders of Apollo and this divine injunction is symbolized throughout the play by one of Greek tragedy's most significant props: the divine bow that the god has given his acolyte. The bow's physical presence throughout the action of the play recalls Apollo's agency and his promise to defend

7 Wright (2013) 80.

Orestes, a promise fulfilled by the play's climax.⁸ The prop hints that there is indeed a traditional metaphysical element operating behind the action despite the frequent expressions of doubt by the characters. This frequent expression of rationalistic doubt by his characters and the eventual validation of mythic-religious tradition is one of the most salient characteristics of Euripidean drama.

We learn from *Electra* that Helen and Menelaus have arrived in Argos and that the Spartan king's presence offers 'some hope' (53–54) of redemption from the cauldron of hatred that threatens the siblings. This trust in their uncle will of course prove a delusion that brings about the play's shocking reversal. But before we are introduced to Menelaus, we are given a memorable though brief portrait of Helen. Helen's daughter Hermione has been raised in the Argive palace by Clytemnestra and Helen is eager to see her. Helen fears death at the hands of the Argives and already fears the anger of the gods (19–20). She attempts to commiserate over Electra, her wretched niece, and proceeds to blame the gods for all of her own indiscretions. She urges Electra to carry a lock of her hair to Clytemnestra's grave as an offering as she fears being seen by the citizens. Electra urges the task onto Hermione who, after all 'owes it to the dead woman for her bringing up' (109). This allows us to see the silent figure of Hermione crossing the stage to carry out her mother's obsequies to her sister. Though she has no lines, she serves visually as a surrogate Helen, placing the young woman subtly in the camp of the dead Clytemnestra. With both mother and daughter off stage Electra speaks one of the most searing lines of character observation in the whole of Euripides. 'O inborn nature mankind! See how she cut off just the ends of her hair, trying to keep her beauty unchanged! She is the same old Helen still' (126, 128–129). Grube observes that the Helen of *Orestes* is 'a triumph of characterization, [a person] supremely indifferent to everything but herself, she cannot ... open her mouth without putting her foot in it'.⁹ Euripides is clearly signalling that the Helen of this play is indeed the 'old' one of Homeric tradition and not the 'new' one he had presented a few years earlier in his own *Helen*. Webster reminds us that the earlier 'Egyptian Helen did not spare her hair in feigned mourning for Menelaus'.¹⁰

Orestes' awakening and outburst of madness is superbly crafted theatre. The Chorus of sympathetic Argive Women enters *sotto voce*, not wishing to bring the sleeping man into a frenzy. Euripides defies this expectation by having the

8 See also Kovacs (2002).

9 Grube (1941) 376.

10 Webster (1967) 247.

protagonist awake in full, calm sanity. His outburst is only triggered by his rage upon learning that Helen is in the house, the cause of all the disasters that have fallen upon their family. The madness subsides as well, leaving the young man appalled at the fear he sees in his on-stage companions. It is little wonder that this part was so attractive to ancient actors. From the outset Orestes generates pity and fear in the audience with the role's striking contrasts and realistic shifts of emotion. The psychological insight persists throughout Orestes' important encounter with his uncle, Menelaus.

This is perhaps a good point to note the unusual telescoping of events within the play. Agamemnon appears to have been killed upon his arrival back from Troy as the myth always suggests. But Orestes' vengeance appears to have followed hard upon his father's assassination. Menelaus and Helen make no mention of being sent off course several years and have now arrived in Argos just days after Clytemnestra's cremation. All of this contraction of time makes the action seem that much more uncontrollable and unpredictable. Time for deliberation has been removed; there is only space for drastic action and reaction in the *Orestes* world.

The first exchange with Menelaus consists of Orestes' desperate supplication of his uncle who in place of comfort reveals his callous nature by repeatedly remonstrating with his nephew on his haggard, miserable appearance. The older man cannot believe Apollo would order such a heinous crime as matricide. Orestes and his uncle engage in a telling exchange.

Orestes. We are slaves of the gods, whatever 'the gods' are.

Menelaus. Then does Loxias give you no help in your troubles?

Orestes. He bides his time: that's the way gods are.

418–420

These lines are axiomatic of so much of divine and human interaction in Euripidean drama.¹¹ Orestes, with his naturally limited human perspective cannot see the larger divine pattern unfolding around him. Euripides' telescoping of events has made any such vision all the more impossible. But the god's presence is signalled by the bow Orestes possesses, recalling the god's patronage. By the end of the play Loxias will share the same dramatic space as the doubting Orestes. As always in Euripides, it is impossible for humans to fully comprehend the ways of the gods.

11 See also Lefkowitz (2002) 50.

Menelaus is only really interested in one thing, as is found in another important exchange between the relatives.

Menelaus. Does the city allow you to hold Agamemnon's scepter?

Orestes. Scepter? They will not allow me even to live!

437–438

Menelaus sees the vacancy of his brother's throne looming before him and he is willing to betray his brother's surviving family in order to get it. This is the character that Aristotle found so appalling.

Now Tyndareus appears, raving at Orestes as 'a mother-killing snake' (479). He warns Menelaus from seeking to defend his nephew in any way. He utters one of the most extraordinary passages in the play when he rounds on his grandson. 'He did not consider justice or have recourse to the common law of the Greeks' (494–495). When Agamemnon was murdered, Orestes 'ought as prosecutor to have imposed a murder penalty consistent with piety and expelled his mother from the house' (500–502). This is perhaps the most wrenching anachronism in Greek tragedy. The whole basis of the Agamemnon story is that the heroic age existed in a pre-law, pre-democratic condition. Blood vendetta was the rule of the day, that is until Orestes' coming to Athens to stand trial at the Areopagus. Euripides has turned 'history' upside down as an expression of a world he considers upside down. The tragic theatre was obliged to tell the ancient myths in new ways to make them ever relevant to the audience. Euripides has spent his career, as did Aeschylus and Sophocles at fashioning and reshaping myth to keep the ancient stories alive and relevant to his spectators. With *Orestes* one senses an artist almost torn down the middle in trying to reconcile the mighty opposites of respect and continuance of tradition and the obligation to relate the form of tragedy to the actual world. Tyndareus' assertion suggest a frightening devolution from the heroic past, and it will take every dramaturgical trick in the playwright's storehouse to set it right again. Orestes is an epic hero trapped in a sordid, late fifth-century Athenian reality. Tyndareus leaves vowing to 'incite' (614–618) the assembly to vote for the siblings' death.

Menelaus is visibly uncomfortable even standing so near his nephew and begins to pace as Orestes kneels in fruitless supplication yet again. Orestes isn't asking for the kind of 'sacrifice' Agamemnon made of Iphigenia for Menelaus. Hermione is safe, a reference that will be turned on its head by the play's closing scene. All he needs is Menelaus' help for 'one day' (657). The Chorus become involved as well begging Menelaus 'to come to the aid of those who ask it' (681) a fairly sure sign of where audience sympathies lie. Menelaus bows out of the

situation with sickening mendacity pleading that he has no army at his side and that he will attempt 'with soothing words' (692) to calm the mob. The false *philos* Menelaus exits out of one *eisodos* just as the true *philos*, Pylades enters from the other.¹² This is exceptionally elegant stagecraft. Pylades has been banished from his own home for his role in helping Orestes and he has come as a true friend to be by his friend's side no matter what the cost. He helps to literally get Orestes on his feet again. Friendship is one of life's most important values in Euripidean drama. The image of Pylades assisting his stricken friend out of the theatre to take the stand in his own defence recalls the memorable closing scene of *Heracles* where that great, broken hero leans on his friend Theseus.¹³

The ensuing Chorus reinforces the mythic context of the troubled House of Atreus. As in Aeschylus, the matricide is seen as an action 'both right and not right' (*to kalon ou kalon*, 819). The 'traditional' nature of this Chorus contrasts with the tale the Messenger is about to relate to Electra. The anachronistic assembly has met and condemned the siblings. The Messenger is an honest rustic of the type increasingly found in later Euripides representing the salt of the earth. With his uncorrupted sympathies to the house of Agamemnon he offers a glimpse of a better, prelapsarian world. The meeting he describes represents 'the worst type of behavior that can take place in a supposedly democratic assembly'.¹⁴ This is exactly the sort of civic behaviour typical of Athenian politics in the closing years of the Peloponnesian War. Those speaking against Orestes were largely in the pay of Tyndareus. A lone farmer, a man similar to the Messenger himself, delivered a ringing endorsement of Orestes' actions that was applauded by 'the better sort' (925), probably aristocrats clinging to the old heroic code. 'No one else spoke' (*koudeis et' eipe*, 930–931). Within these few words the entire perfidy of the opportunistic Menelaus is contained. (Porter observes 'Menelaus betrayal is unmatched by any except Jason in *Medea*')¹⁵ Next Orestes spoke for himself with surprising self control. His argument is Aeschylean: if women are allowed to kill their husbands Greece devolves into a matriarchy. But there is no persuading this assembly-mob and he and his sister are condemned. As Mastronarde observes, there is 'no place for Athena's grace to intervene during such an assembly as this'.¹⁶ Orestes wins a small heroic concession that he and Electra may be allowed to commit suicide. A dirge

12 See also Porter (1994) 79.

13 See also Webster (1967) 249.

14 Wright (2013) 106.

15 Porter (1994) 71.

16 Mastronarde (2011) 85.

begins between Electra and the Chorus where only the reference to ‘Persephone underground’ (963–964) hints at the unseen possibility of a renewal from destruction.

Orestes and Pylades return in defeat. Orestes reveals to his distraught sister that their uncle did not even show his face at the assembly, his only concern being to seize upon his brother’s kingdom once the siblings are dead. As Orestes tries to calm his sister Electra cries ‘How can I keep still? We in our misery can no longer look on the god’s sunlight here’ (1025–1026) The audience may be reminded that as desperate as the situation has become, the characters as well as the spectators are still surrounded by Apollo’s light. His presence is manifest even before its unambiguous display in the exodos. Pylades, who had been originally betrothed to Electra heroically proclaims that he will die with his two friends. Orestes tries to dissuade him in a scene that strongly recalls the arguments between the two male characters in *Iphigenia among the Taurians* as to which friend will survive. Euripides is making the bond between the three characters ever stronger. With all three prepared to die, a new idea strikes Pylades and the plot begins to veer into a startling new direction, and Orestes’ friend becomes ‘the driving force of the drama.’¹⁷ ‘But since we are going to die, let us plan how Menelaus may suffer with us’ (1098–1099). Orestes is all ears and Pylades soon offers up a plan to kill Helen as the guilty woman busies herself inside the palace ‘putting the whole house under her seal’ (1108). She will be guarded only by ineffectual Phrygian slaves. The great cause of all of the tragedy of the house of Agamemnon and Greece may be destroyed and Menelaus dealt ‘a sharp grief’ (1105).

A modern audience may well recoil at such a violent proposal and one can imagine an ancient one reeling at the sheer unexpected audacity. But Greek literature has innumerable instances where ‘good’ people call for Helen’s death. One that conveniently comes to mind from the Euripidean corpus is the wish expressed by the highly sympathetic Chorus of Greek captive women in *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (IT 439–446). Helen is, it bears recalling, the most hated woman in Greek antiquity. Pylades reasons, ‘If we were to take the sword to a woman of greater virtue, the bloodletting would bring disgrace on us. As things are, she’ll be paying for her crimes against all of Hellas, those whose fathers she slew and whose sons she destroyed while depriving brides of their husbands. There will be shouts of joy, they will light altar fires for the gods and pray many blessings on your head and mine for killing a wicked woman! You won’t be known as “the matricide” once you have killed her: you’ll leave all that

17 Wright (2013) 43.

behind for a better lot and be called “the killer of deadly Helen” (1132–1142). Pylades offers in addition that should Helen escape, they will burn the palace to the ground so that Menelaus loses the royal seat of which he is so covetous. The last-ditch effort at revenge is slowly morphing into a possible means of escape and survival. Pylades anticipates a heroic result whatever the outcome, ‘We will be successful at one or the other of these and win renown either gloriously dying or by gloriously saving our lives’ (1151–1152). The bedrock of Greek morality was to help one’s friends and harm one’s enemies and that is what the three friends resolve to do under the caveat, so frequently encountered in tragedy, that the ‘enemies’ (*echthroï*) in this situation are also technically family of ‘dear ones’ (*philoï*).¹⁸ Orestes expresses the kind of archaic heroic values that rest at the core of the Greek tragic tradition. ‘Now since I am in any case going to breathe out my life, I want to do something to my enemies before I die so that I can repay with destruction those who have betrayed me and so that those who have made me miserable may smart for it. I am, after all, the son of Agamemnon, who ruled Greece not by right of kingship but because he was thought deserving (though he did acquire a certain god-like might.) I shall not bring disgrace on him by dying a slavish death. Rather I shall expend my life like a free man and punish Menelaus’ (1163–1171). These are the heroic values of a Homeric Achilles placed with the debased circumstances of 408 BC.

Electra furthers the scheme to enable their possible escape and survival. Hermione, Helen’s daughter and Clytemnestra’s ward, would make the perfect hostage, forcing Menelaus to let the three friends go. In modern thinking this is of course morally reprehensible, but within the world of the ancient play Hermione is twice compromised by her relationship with her evil mother and aunt. The plan set, Electra stations herself at the *skênê* door with help from the Chorus as a look out while the two men enter to conduct their bloody mission. Soon Helen’s death cries echo from within the *skênê* just as Agamemnon and Clytemnestra’s voices had fifty years before in the *Oresteia*. The Chorus is as bloodthirsty as the killers. ‘Slay, slay, smite, destroy her, [...] slay the betrayer of country and husband, who killed so many Greeks’ (1303, 1305–1306). After this tumult, Electra calls for silence as Hermione, fresh from leaving offerings at Clytemnestra’s grave enters and moves unsuspectingly into the trap laid for her. The cries Hermione has heard must have come from Orestes supplicating Helen, explains Electra (1332–1334). Electra urges the girl into the house to help in the supplication. ‘Come, you who were brought up by my mother, take pity on us and relieve us from trouble. Come to the contest (*agôna*): I shall lead the

18 See Belfiore (2000).

way. You alone are our final salvation (*sôtêrias*, 1340–1343)'. We are reminded of Hermione's connection to Clytemnestra, presumably an obedient daughter substitute for the recalcitrant Electra. The reference to an *agôn* gently recalls that we are indeed watching a 'competition piece' at the City Dionysia.¹⁹ The notion of 'salvation' has haunted this play as it probably did many in the audience who perceived the worsening military and political situation in Athens. Today, at least during the performance of *Orestes*, salvation will be made manifest.

The Chorus in their ensuing song long to see the body of Helen or at least 'hear some report from a servant' (1359) and these are surely the longings of the theatre spectators as well. Euripides is creating the expectation that the *ekkyklêma* will be rolled out or at least a juicy messenger speech will deliver the gory details of Helen's end. The Chorus' desire also subtly begs the question of what has just really happened. In every other tragedy we possess, Helen's off-stage cries would definitively signal her death. But now, in the skewed world of *Orestes*, even this sure signifier is questionable. With this feint toward the *ekkyklêma* or the traditional messenger speech, Euripides baffles all expectation with a messenger speech of sorts: the wild, airy, barely coherent aria of the terrified Phrygian slave. As Wolff notes, 'Euripides' theatre cannot be more surprising' than this.²⁰ His song is a loopy, jazz-like riff that barely satisfies our curiosity about what has transpired inside. At one point he appears to parody the style of many Euripidean Choruses when he sings, 'Shall I fly up to the white upper air or to the sea, which Ocean, the bull-headed river god, encircles in his arms as he goes around the earth?' (1375–1379). Orestes and Pylades, we learn, came into the house like 'Greek lions' (1402). The men supplicated Helen with maudlin tears, a parody of Orestes' own failed supplications of Menelaus. Orestes seized Helen by the hair and seemed on the verge of killing her when Hermione entered the house to be seized as hostage by the armed men. 'Then back they turned to the slaying of Zeus' daughter. But she was nowhere to be seen throughout the house—[...] What happened thereafter I do not know' (1494–1495, 1498). The indeterminacy of this speech is virtually unique in Greek tragedy.

Orestes enters to torment the slave 'as he himself has been taunted and bedevilled and harassed by circumstances, gods, men, and the impulses of his own mind'.²¹ The brief scene of threats and cowering, tragic and comic by starts, shows Orestes in his unpleasant light while humanizing the slave's character.

19 See Zeitlin (2003) for a detailed examination of the play's metatheatricality.

20 Wolff (1983) 347.

21 Wolff (1983) 345.

Grube calls the exchange ‘probably the boldest mixture of the tragic and the comic to be found even in Euripides’.²² It is interesting to consider that the actor who played Menelaus almost certainly doubled as the Phrygian Slave. Often doubling of roles invites comparisons between the roles an actor is playing.²³ Here Orestes is allowed to manhandle and lord it over the ‘Menelaus’ actor in preparation for their ‘real’, more serious encounter in the final scene. Porter observes: ‘The Phrygian’s complete lack of loyalty to his former mistress, and his conspicuous verbal agility ally him, not with Orestes, but Menelaus, whose specious excuses, ... and emphasis on wisdom and “the wise” ... all find echoes in the Phrygian’s brief interview with Orestes.’²⁴ By the scene’s end Orestes allows the slave to flee. He had accosted him only to prevent him bringing the Argives to the palace. As Orestes exits inside, the increasingly panicked Chorus spot smoke arising from the palace roof. The Chorus sing, ‘They are lighting torches in order to set fire to the house of Tantalus, they do not rest from toil. The outcome for mortals is sent by God, the outcome as he wishes’ (1543–1546). We may recall the celebratory torches that led the Chorus out of the theatre in the *Oresteia* fifty years before now becoming a sinister device of destruction. The Chorus’ reference to God is another faint but important harbinger of events yet to come. Menelaus storms into the orchestra with military backup. He has heard of terrible acts committed by the two young men and he orders his troops to break open the doors of the palace. Just as the audience expects a revealed scene from the *ekkyklêma* Euripides has yet another dramaturgical card up his sleeve as the theologeion fills with the characters of Orestes, his sword at Hermione’s throat, along with Pylades, and Electra each presumably brandishing torches. Orestes is now in charge for the moment.

Orestes. You there, keep your hands off those doors! I mean you, Menelaus, so towering in your pride! Or with this coping stone, broken off from the ancient cornice masons have made, I shall smash your head!

1567–1570

The ancient house of Tantalus risks being torn apart before our eyes in a frenzy of intrafamilial violence. Menelaus and his forces must back down and allow the three friends to escape or Hermione will die, and the palace burn. ‘Your mother’s blood already on your hands was not enough for you?’, Menelaus asks

22 Grube (1941) 394.

23 See the present author’s (2016) and (1998) for detailed analysis of the theatrical effect of such doubling.

24 Porter (1994) 247.

(1589). Orestes responds, 'I won't grow weary of always killing wicked women' (1590). Orestes is clearly in a frenzy, but it is perhaps worth noting that his threatened victims are 'wicked women' (*has kakas*) not 'whores' as Arrowsmith offers in his influential translation. Arrowsmith also utilizes this questionable choice at line 1584. Orestes' sanity is certainly questionable, but he is not Jack the Ripper.

Menelaus turns to Pylades in an interesting potential exchange interrupted by Orestes.

Menelaus. Pylades, are you also taking part in this murder?

Orestes. By his silence he says yes. It is enough that I do the talking.

1591–1592

Of course, Pylades cannot answer Menelaus because he is being represented by a 'silent mask' extra. Two of the three speaking actors are presently engaged as Orestes and his uncle. The third actor is waiting backstage to appear momentarily as Apollo. Euripides is engaged in a subtle intertextual homage to the *Oresteia* at this moment. In *Libation Bearers* Aeschylus held back on allowing Pylades to speak until Orestes, confronted by his mother at last turns to his friend to ask, 'What shall I do?' (*LB* 899) to which Pylades utters his only lines in that play: a reminder to follow the murderous will of Apollo (*LB* 900–902). Frank Nisetch writes, 'Pylades has been a tireless talker up to the moment Euripides openly muffles him [at 1592] ... hint[ing] to [the] audience that a new speaker is about to appear. This turns out to be Apollo, whose voice heard at last, restores the chaotic debacle on stage to something like traditional equilibrium, something like what the audience would remember from Aeschylus'.²⁵

Orestes orders his companions to torch the house and Menelaus orders the army to the rescue. At this most impossible of injunctions, with action swirling in the orchestra and on the theologeion, Apollo swings into view on the machine. Virtually all of the theatre's performing levels and resources are being spectacularly engaged. Porter observes that Apollo's entrance is 'a visual expression of the gap separating divine knowledge from human ignorance: from Apollo's perspective, Orestes and Menelaus are on an equal level, both mired in a sublunary world of appearance'.²⁶ As the present author has noted elsewhere, 'The riddle of Pylades' silence is answered [in Apollo's speech]'.²⁷ The gulf that

25 Nisetch (1986) 53.

26 Porter (1994) 265.

27 Ringer (2016) 287.

separates human understanding from the divine, one of the central themes of Euripidean drama is here given its most spectacular visualization. The human characters appear to freeze in their moment of highest perplexity as Apollo renders his aetiological speech so common from the *deus* at the end of a Euripidean play. Helen has been metamorphosed into a goddess and a constellation to guide sailors at sea. Menelaus must choose a new wife and reconcile with Orestes. This will be concretized by Orestes marrying Hermione. Pylades shall marry Electra. Orestes must travel to Athens and be tried by a jury of the gods and acquitted. Apollo promises to restore Orestes' relations with Argos so that the young man may peacefully rule there 'since it was I who compelled him to kill his mother' (1685). Both hostile parties agree to reconcile. 'Go your ways, then,' Apollo commands, 'holding Peace, loveliest of the gods, in honour' (1682–1683). The Chorus escorts the cast out of the theatron with a payer to Victory. 'Victory, may you have my life in your charge and never cease garlanding my head!' (1691–1693).

The swiftness of the play's resolution hardly gives the audience room to breathe. The situation of assured destruction is wrenched back violently into conformity with mythic tradition. Wolff's observations on the *deus* are worth recalling. 'Apollo's appearance is a sign of the extreme range of life's possible reversals. His coming suggests how fantastic it is that we survive at all'.²⁸ It is worth remembering that Sophocles only a year before in his *Philoctetes* had performed something of the same theatrical experimentation. In both plays, as Mastronarde observes, 'the decisions of the characters may burst the bonds of tradition, that the creativity displayed with such virtuosity within the course of the drama has taken on a life of its own'.²⁹ Euripides is like a master magician pulling the proverbial rabbit out of the hat at the last conceivable moment. A grand harmony is divinely imposed on the proceedings. The story has 'righted itself' but dissonances remain that are hard to reconcile. Orestes is to marry the very woman whose life he has been threatening. Perhaps strangest of all, Apollo specifies that a jury of *gods* are to preside over Orestes' Athenian trial in contrast to the human jury Athena establishes for that purpose on the Areopagus in the *Oresteia*. It is as though humanity is now so corrupt that such an important responsibility must be distributed elsewhere. One may well imagine the audience sharing in Apollo's prayer for Peace and the vague invocation of Victory in this late stage of the Peloponnesian War. But one might well consider the exceptional theatrical brinkmanship that has allowed the myth to work its

28 Wolff (1983) 355.

29 Mastronarde (2011) 192.

way towards this (barely) passable conclusion. On another level however, the play's ending is 'more of the comic type' as Aristophanes of Byzantium suggested. After weathering terrible vicissitudes, Orestes, with the help of Apollo stands ready to inherit a world that has been new made in the image of his wishes. He leaves at the end of his play vindicated and on top of (his) world. Read this way the play has more than a passing similarity to the overall pattern of comedies such as *Acharnians*, *Peace*, and *Birds*.

This must have been an exhausting tragedy to compose. What could an author do as an encore to such a tour de force? One can imagine the elderly playwright, soon to move north, as looking forward to a chance for creative renewal from new surroundings. We are fortunate that the move north gave Euripides the space and freedom to create his last surviving masterpieces, those works of renewal and consolidation, *Iphigenia at Aulis* and *The Bacchae*.

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*Bacchae**Joshua Billings*

Bacchae is the most impossible drama of the most impossible Greek dramatist. The play has baffled many of the interpreters who have sought to come to grips with it, and divided critics into starkly opposed camps. If there is anything like a critical dogma concerning the play, it is that the text is irreducibly ambiguous and multivalent—though this view, too, has its detractors.¹ The ambiguity can be understood primarily theologically,² reflecting the well-acknowledged polar quality of Dionysus in ritual practice, or dramatically, emphasizing the play of reality and illusion that the work so forcefully depicts.³ Though critics have tended to concentrate on one or the other, the two are by no means mutually exclusive, and can easily feed into one another. Both strands point to the exceptionally porous boundary between the play's own representation and the realities surrounding it—between rituals suggested or enacted onstage and Dionysiac ritual in and beyond the theatre, and between the metatheatrical or metatragic dimensions of the work and the theatrical conventions of Euripides' time. Reflexivity concerning ritual and drama is so elaborately constructed that it can seem to preempt the metalanguages that critics construct to stabilize their objects; *Bacchae* always seems to be a step ahead of us. Whether this elusiveness is a product of the play itself or of contemporary critical interests (or some combination of the two), the play is one of the most discussed and taught works of Euripides, but also one of the plays on which opinions most widely diverge.

The impossibility of *Bacchae* has given rise to some persistent canards of criticism. It may be valuable to address these at the outset, for they speak, if inadequately, to some of the most urgent questions posed by the play. First is the idea that it is the 'last' of Euripides' works, and so somehow different from all the others. *Bacchae* does come from the last trilogy Euripides wrote, appar-

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- 1 See, in wholly different modes, Leinieks (1996); Seaford (1996), 46–52; Radke (2003), 95–114.
 - 2 Most forcefully in recent years by Versnel (1990), 96–205, but this is also in broad strokes the position of classic works by Dodds and Winnington-Ingram: Dodds (1960); Winnington-Ingram (1948).
 - 3 Most influentially by Segal (1997) [originally published 1982], as well as by Bierl (1991); Foley (1980), (1985) 205–258; Holzhausen (2003).

ently while in exile from Athens in Macedon, but it is not appreciably 'later' than its companion plays, the transmitted *Iphigenia at Aulis* (which seems to have been unfinished at the poet's death) and the lost *Alcmaeon in Corinth*. The play's lateness has given rise to the 'palinode theory', which was current in the nineteenth century (cited both by the young Nietzsche and Wilamowitz), but still lingers on in certain approaches to the play.⁴ This mode of reading took *Bacchae* to be a recantation of Euripides' earlier, sophistic rationalism, a hymn to the gods that he had so long rejected. Though the specifics of the theory are clearly untenable, the play has nevertheless often been considered special because of its temporal place in Euripides' career, as in Dodds' contention that the atmosphere of Macedonia 'had released some spring in the aged poet's mind'.⁵ Though there are certainly distinctive qualities to *Bacchae*, a more productive approach to the play's lateness would consider it within the context of Euripides' last dramas, and the intellectual and political climate of late fifth-century Athens.

The palinode theory is based on a biographical assumption that has coloured criticism of the play, to the effect that we can read Euripides' own beliefs on divinity in the drama, or (in a slightly more acceptable form) that the play aims to transmit a 'message' of some sort about worship of Dionysus. This misunderstands the way that the play is 'about' religion: *Bacchae* does not take as its subject Dionysiac ritual in general, but rather one particular myth associated with Dionysus. To read it as a comment on Dionysus and Dionysiac practice fails to recognize the flexibility with which Greek tragedy relates to the myths it portrays. To be sure, *Bacchae* is one of the Greek tragedies most concerned with interrogating the relationship of human and divine, but it is hardly unique in doing so (Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, and Euripides' *Hippolytus*, for examples, all probe divinity quite profoundly). *Bacchae* is unusual in having as its main character a god (though the pseudo-Aeschylean *Prometheus Bound* has an immortal protagonist and a whole cast of divine characters), but it shared this with other, now lost Dionysiac tragedies.⁶ None of this is to deny the importance of the text as a document of Greek religious practice and ideas, but only to suggest that it is both more and less than a drama 'about' Dionysus and Dionysiac ritual.

4 See Billings (2017).

5 Dodds (1960) xlvi. Scullion has cast doubt on the biographical detail that Euripides died in Macedon, and that *Bacchae* was therefore written for that court: Scullion (2003).

6 There are attested tragedies by Aeschylus (discussed below) as well as non-canonical tragedies on Dionysiac stories. See Sommerstein 2016.



The myth Euripides stages is one of arrival and return: arrival because in it Dionysus makes his first appearance in Greece, bringing with him novel cult practices from the barbarian east, and return because Thebes is the home of his mother, Semele, a daughter of the city's ruler.⁷ After being seduced by Zeus, Semele was tricked into asking the god to appear to her in his divine form, which resulted in her death and the destruction of the palace by thunder and lightning. The story of Dionysus' double birth, which is often and variously recalled (88–100, 286–297, 521–529) is curious: Dionysus was born first at Semele's death, saved from destruction by Zeus, and sewn into the god's thigh, out of which he was born a second time. The double-birth serves to explain why it is that, unique among the children of human women who consorted with gods, Dionysus is born immortal.⁸ As a notional latecomer to the pantheon, Dionysus must announce his divinity within Greece, and chooses Thebes to begin establishing his cult because it is the place of his birth.⁹ Until the final scene, Dionysus appears on the stage in human form, as 'the Stranger', the leader of the Chorus of female celebrants who have arrived in Thebes from Asia Minor. Though the audience knows to identify the Stranger with the god himself, none of the characters do, and this disguise creates a dramatic irony that emphasizes the tension between Dionysus' human and divine qualities, as well as his well-attested ability to take on different shapes and characters.¹⁰

Euripidean prologues are often spoken by a god, but Dionysus' prologue differs from other divine prologues in that the god who speaks it will be directly involved in the whole of the action. In this respect, it resembles much more prologues spoken by mortals.¹¹ Indeed, as Dionysus tells us, he arrives in Thebes 'having changed form from divine to mortal' (*μορφὴν δ' ἀμείψας ἐκ θεοῦ βροτησίαν*, 4),¹² and remains in human costume at least until his final appearance

7 On Thebes and Dionysus in tragedy, see Zeitlin (1993).

8 On Dionysus' difference from other gods, see the essays in Schlesier (2011), especially Gödde (2011).

9 Dionysus' lateness and foreignness, we now know, is only a mythical one, and does not reflect the reality of his early cult. See Versnel (1990) 131–155. Even before the discovery of the Linear B tablets proving Dionysus' early roots in Greece, Otto (1965; originally 1933) had pointed to Dionysus' mythological lateness, and the work remains one of the most searching discussions of the god to be found (if somewhat more speculative than contemporary scholarly norms allow).

10 On the tension of human and divine, see Henrichs (1993).

11 On divine prologues, see Mastronarde (2010) 174–181.

12 All translations based on Kovacs' Loeb (with minor modification).

as *deus ex machina* (it is possible there was some kind of change of costume, but there is no proof of it).¹³ He situates us in time and space by describing Semele's death, pointing to her tomb and the remains of the royal house, all of which place the story in the aftermath of catastrophe. Dionysus' birth in Thebes was the occasion for one violent death in the ruling family; his return will be the cause of another, because the royal family, with one exception, now denies his divinity. He describes the first steps of his revenge: he has 'stung with madness' (ῥστροησ' ... μανίαις, 32–33) the sisters of Semele, causing them to flee to Cithaeron with all the female population of the city. Emptied of its women, the city is in crisis, but the ruler Pentheus, instead of recognizing the power of Dionysus, 'fights with the god' (θεομαχεῖ, 45),¹⁴ and threatens the Theban maenads. The two targets of Dionysus' anger, the women of Thebes and Pentheus, are established by the prologue, and set against one another.

Dionysus' relation to women—especially, large bands of women known as bacchantes or maenads (from the word *mania*, madness)—was a focus of Dionysiac myth, and constitutes a major concern, implicit and explicit, of the drama.¹⁵ Two groups of women are important to the play: first is the Chorus of foreign women, who have come from Lydia as followers of Dionysus, and who are given one of the most substantial choral roles in Euripidean drama. In addition to the foreign women who make up the Chorus, there is the second group of native, Theban women, who have taken up residence on Mt. Cithaeron, possessed by Bacchic frenzy. Often discussed and reported on, they form an implicit offstage Chorus in counterpart to the one onstage.¹⁶ The two groups of women are in important ways distinguished: the play's Chorus is foreign, made up of long-time converts to Dionysiac ritual, while the other group, explicitly described as afflicted by *mania*, has a more violent—though also more ephemeral—relation to Dionysiac worship. Yet the onstage Chorus can seem to mirror the emotions of the offstage group and speaks for both collectives to the liberating power of Dionysiac experience.

13 Pace Dodds, Winnington-Ingram, and many more recent commentators, there is no evidence for Dionysus appearing in a smiling mask: Billings (2018).

14 On the valences of the word, see Kamerbeek (1948).

15 On Greek maenadism, see Henrichs (1978); Schlesier (1993). On women's ritual practice generally (with attention to *Bacchae*), see Goff (2004).

16 Some critics have tried to distinguish rigorously between the 'real' bacchantes of the Chorus and the 'false' bacchantes of the offstage group, but this is difficult to uphold given the miraculous portrayal of the Theban maenads in the first Messenger speech, and how closely the emotions of the two track one another (say, in the blood-thirsty fourth stasimon). See especially Holzhausen (2003) 229–236.

The Chorus frequently refers to its own song and dance, creating a reflexive texture of language and music, and collapsing the distance between the dramatic myth presented in the play and the Dionysiac ritual contemporary to its performance.¹⁷ This collapse is only notional—the songs of the Lydian women evoke Dionysiac practice but are not themselves the practice they describe—but the evocation foregrounds the dynamic relation between the dramatic story of *Bacchae* and the Dionysiac festival of which it is a part. Choral self-reference is a constant possibility of tragedy, especially late in the fifth century, but *Bacchae*'s group is an extreme case, in that its dramatic identity is largely constituted by its role as a ritual Chorus.¹⁸ Playing the role of a Dionysiac *thiasos*, the eastern women actualize to a greater degree than any other tragic Chorus the constant possibility for choral reflexivity that is inherent in the genre. Critics have sometimes overlooked the way that ritual is framed by choral identity in the play, but this is essential to understanding how *Bacchae* reflects and takes part in Dionysiac cult while at the same time retaining the flexibility that all tragedy has in relation to its ritual origins and context.

The *parodos* introduces the ecstatic, celebratory side of Dionysiac ritual, as the Chorus of eastern women enters playing instruments associated with the cult. Their song recounts Dionysus' double birth, describing the aetiology of their own practices, and joyously calling on Thebes to join in their ritual. The first episode shows that some in the city have accepted the cult already. This is an outlandish sight: first Tiresias, the blind seer, and then Cadmus, the founder of the city and the one member of the royal house to accept the god, enter draped in fawn skins and carrying *thyrsos*, the garb of Dionysiac celebrants.¹⁹ At Tiresias' urging, they have agreed to join the rites on Cithaeron, and set out for the mountain despite their decrepitude. Over the course of the scene, a contrast emerges between the two: the severe, religiously minded Tiresias takes the ritual as a solemn duty, while Cadmus' investment in recognition of the new god (his grandson, as he recalls at line 181) seems to have worldly, and even opportunistic motivations (i.e., at lines 333–336). One of the enduring particularities of this scene is Tiresias' reliance on apparently 'sophistic' reasoning, as when he explains (286–297) the birth of Dionysus from Zeus' thigh (*μηρός*) as a confusion with the word for hostage (*ᾠμηρος*). There need be no contradiction between the roles of seer and the kind of debunking or naturalizing

17 Bierl (2013); Weiss (2018) 241–246.

18 On choral self-referentiality generally, see Henrichs (1994/1995); Henrichs (1996).

19 Seidensticker (1978). As Seidensticker points out, there is no reason to assume that what is comic cannot also have a serious thrust—here the rejuvenation of the older men through Dionysiac practice.

explanations practised by intellectuals of Euripides' time, but Tiresias' undermining of the traditional double-birth story (told by the Chorus just previously, 88–104, and again at 519–527) does seem curious.²⁰ The situation is complicated by a clear rejection of novel philosophical reasoning earlier in the scene, and a professed allegiance to the 'the ancestral traditions' (πατρίους παραδοχάς, 201). Tiresias seems to be at once a representative of tradition and novelty—an apparent incongruity that reflects the paradox of a god whose worship is novel within the drama but is seen to have acquired a timeless venerability.

Pentheus enters, incensed at reports of the Theban women's flight from the city, and believing (from what source we do not know) the Dionysiac celebrations to be a mere pretext for drunkenness and amorous encounters. As a nephew of Semele, Pentheus is Dionysus' cousin, and the two are structural and characterological foils. Pentheus promises to 'hunt [the Theban women] out of the mountains' (ἐξ ὄρους θηράσομαι, 228) and put an end to the Bacchic celebrations that have taken root. The other target of his anger is the Lydian Stranger, 'a wizard, an enchanter' (γόης ἐπωδός, 234), whom he believes to be using the rites as a cover for sex with the city's women. The violence of Pentheus' first speech—after promising to hunt the maenads, he threatens first to decapitate the Stranger (241) and then imagines hanging him (246)²¹—establishes the tone that will characterize him for the first half of the play: from the beginning, he is vigorously opposed to and angrily suspicious of the cult of Dionysus. One can speculate productively (if necessarily inconclusively) on his psychology. As a recently ascended ruler, he may be insecure about his power in the city, or he may feel drawn, with conflicted feelings, to the sexual license he imagines. Regardless of his motivations, the portrayal of Pentheus emphasizes callowness and irascibility, the latter a familiar characterization of the tragic *tyrannos*.²² As a *theomachos*, Pentheus is doomed from the start, but what surprises in *Bacchae*'s staging of the myth is how completely he is transformed by the encounter with Dionysus.



Pentheus and the Stranger meet in three central confrontations spanning the second, third, and fourth episodes. The direct conflict of two strongly opposed figures is familiar from other Greek tragedies, but here the confrontation is

20 Roth (1984).

21 I take this line, against Kovacs but with most other recent commentators, as referring to hanging the Stranger, rather than to Pentheus' suicide.

22 See Seidensticker (1972).

unbalanced from the beginning because of Dionysus' divine power, and the god's presence rules the action from prologue to exodos. The doubling of actors' roles would have lent even greater power to the protagonist figure: the actor playing Dionysus must also play Tiresias, a religious authority and the only Theban to escape punishment, while Pentheus doubles Agave, the other primary victim of the god. Over the course of the interactions between the Stranger and Pentheus, the balance of power changes completely. In the second episode, the Stranger is led on bound, arrested by a guard at Pentheus' orders. The confinement of the Stranger, though, does not undermine his dominance of the scene, which is first manifested in language, as he evades Pentheus' suspicious questions with coy, often riddling responses:

Π. ὁ θεός, ὁρᾶν γὰρ φῆς σαφῶς, ποῖός τις ἦν;
 Δ. ὁποῖος ἤθελ'· οὐκ ἐγὼ ἴτασσον τόδε.
 Π. τοῦτ' αὖ παρωχέτευσσας εὔ γ' οὐδὲν λέγων.
 Δ. δόξει τις ἀμαθεῖ σοφὰ λέγων οὐκ εὔ φρονεῖν.

P. The god—what did he look like? You claim you saw him clearly.
 D. He looked as he wished to look: I had no say in the matter.
 P. Another evasive answer: you talk nonsense so cleverly
 D. Speak wisdom to a fool and he will think you foolish.

477–480

The tense give-and-take of stichomythia is the characteristic mode for the confrontations of the Stranger and Pentheus, and each of their encounters includes an extended passage of such repartee. The prevalence of the form confirms the structural opposition between the two figures, but also offers repeated opportunities for the Stranger to demonstrate his ability to manipulate his opponent, which is clear long before Pentheus gives himself over completely. From this first meeting, Pentheus seems to be intrigued by Dionysiac ritual, even as he acts brutally to suppress it, threatening the Chorus with enslavement and jailing the Stranger.

Following this initial encounter, a series of events, both witnessed and reported, serve as demonstrations of the power of the god, all of which go unheeded by Pentheus. The first of the play's great *coups de théâtre*, the 'Palace Miracles' scene, shows the Stranger liberated from confinement by a divine earthquake. Accompanied by the god's booming voice, the palace is destroyed (for a second time), and the Stranger walks out of his prison free and unharmed. In fact, as he relates to the Chorus, he was never even tied up, but Pentheus experienced the first of what will be a series of hallucinations and was mis-

led into tying up a bull instead (618–619).²³ Deluded again, Pentheus chased a phantasm of the Stranger through the house, trying to kill him. This is not the first miraculous escape Pentheus has been privy to—a servant had informed him in the previous episode that the imprisoned maenads had been magically released (443–448)—but it is the only one he has witnessed with his own eyes. Yet in Pentheus’ interaction with the Stranger immediately following the miracles, he does not show the slightest change from his previous opposition, dismissing all possibility of a divinity at work, and growing increasingly frustrated with the Stranger’s evasions. Their confrontation pits two concepts of what it means to be *sophos* against one another:

Π. σοφὸς σοφὸς σύ, πλὴν ἃ δεῖ σ’ εἶναι σοφόν.
 Δ. ἃ δεῖ μάλιστα, ταῦτ’ ἔγωγ’ ἔφυν σοφός.

P. You are clever, clever, except where you ought to be clever.
 D. Where it is most needed, there I am clever.

655–656

What the Stranger means will emerge over the course of the action, as his supernatural power over Pentheus becomes more and more apparent. Where Pentheus understands cleverness simply as verbal facility, the Stranger is *sophos* in that he is adept in the ways of the god. Distinguishing true from false wisdom, permanent from temporary happiness, will be a major concern of the play, which sharply juxtaposes conflicting values and religious conceptions.

Pentheus is shortly confronted with another, even more alarming, sign of the power of the god, as a messenger enters from Cithaeron to tell him of the events there. The first of two lengthy messenger speeches, this one is spoken by a cattle-herd who came upon the Theban bacchantes while grazing his flock. The narrative begins with an understated but very definite reproach to Pentheus’ suspicions of the Theban women’s activities, emphasizing their sobriety and chastity (686–688), and describing miraculous natural occurrences (704–711). But the miracles turn to horrors as the herdsman, attempting to curry favour with Pentheus, try to seize Agave, and call down the full fury of the maenads against themselves. Unable to catch the men, the maenads brutally attack the flocks in a spontaneous *sparagmos*, then go marauding through the nearby towns. When it comes to a violent confrontation with the villagers, the men are

23 Bull-imagery is associated with Dionysus also at lines 100, 920–922, 1017, 1159. The failure to tie Dionysus recalls the *Hymn. Hom. Bacch.* 12–15.

put to ignominious flight. The women are apparently invincible themselves, yet able to wound the men—acting ‘not without one of the gods’ (οὐκ ἄνευ θεῶν τινος, 764), as the Messenger remarks. Committing extraordinary and gratuitous acts of violence, the maenads reveal the awesome and terrifying power of Dionysus.

Yet Pentheus still refuses to heed the warnings of the Messenger. The Messenger’s narrative does have the effect of redirecting Pentheus’ anger from the Stranger to the Theban women, and Pentheus orders his attendants to prepare for an armed expedition to Cithaeron (as had been forecast in Dionysus’ prologue, 50–52). Pentheus is about to leave the scene and arm for battle, when the Stranger interjects, ‘Ah! Do you want to see them sitting together on the mountains?’ (810–811, ἀ. / βούλη σφ’ ἐν ὄρεσι συγκαθημένους ἰδεῖν;). The question diverts Pentheus from his violent intentions by dangling the prospect of seeing the Bacchic rites.²⁴ The Stranger taps into the fascination Pentheus has shown from the beginning of the play with the (as far as we can tell purely imagined) licentiousness of the maenads. This moment also likely represents the pivot point at which the Euripidean plot begins to diverge from previous versions, in which Pentheus would have set out for a military expedition against the bacchants (as he repeatedly has threatened to do).²⁵ The Stranger’s ‘Ah!’ signals a new possibility for the myth, one that the audience will not have expected, and which will foreground issues of sexuality, identity, and drama itself.

To observe them on the mountain, Pentheus would, he replies ‘give a great measure of gold’ (μυρίον γε δούς χρυσοῦ σταθμόν, 812). His wish to see the bacchic rites is full of erotic tension: from the beginning, he has imagined the rites as pretences for sexual license and seems impelled by the thought of viewing them firsthand. The Stranger even taunts him with the contradictory nature of his desire, asking, ‘You would gladly see what pains you?’ (ἴδοις ἂν ἠδέως ἃ σοι πικρά; 815). The Stranger’s question addresses not only Pentheus’ desire, but also implicitly to the pleasure that viewing the tragedy itself brings.²⁶ Both the audience and Pentheus are in the position of witnessing Dionysiac rites that bring a mixed pleasure, composed of disgust and exhilaration. Pentheus will

24 Pentheus’ desire for autopsy is discussed in Barrett (1998).

25 March (1989); Sommerstein (2016) 33. Pentheus threatens to take up arms against the maenads repeatedly (most prominently, 778–785), and this had been suggested by Dionysus in his prologue (50–52), so the consistent invocation of this alternate course of events would have served to increase the surprise at the bizarre turn they do take. This is not to deny that transvestitism could be practised in Dionysiac ritual, and so would be at home in the story: Seaford (1996) 222.

26 Segal (1997) 226–228.

go to the mountains as a θεατής ('viewer', 829), a word that can denote both mystical and theatrical viewing.²⁷ Dramatic and ritual contexts coincide and make Pentheus' viewing a distorted mirror of the audience's.

Complexities of gender and sexuality deepen as a plan takes shape under the influence of the Stranger: Pentheus will go disguised in female dress, apparently so that, if spotted, he will not be hunted down like the herdsmen. To this proposal by the Stranger, Pentheus cheerfully replies, 'You were quite the clever fellow all along!' (ὥς τις εἶ πάλαι σοφός., 824). Following the previous battles between the two as to which is truly *sophos*, Pentheus' abrupt recognition of the wisdom of the Stranger is an indication of how profoundly the tide has turned. The change in attitude is too stark to be accounted for in purely psychological terms, and the Stranger will call on Dionysus to drive Pentheus out of his mind to complete his plan (850–851). Nevertheless, Pentheus' prurient fixation on the bacchant's sexual activities has been evident from the start. When the Stranger then presents him with the chance to join voyeuristically, the opportunity proves irresistible. Dionysus was often associated with transgression of gender boundaries, and Pentheus' desire to go among the maenads and his assent to cross-dressing show him to be under the power of the god. Where previously he had mocked the effeminate appearance of the Stranger, Pentheus now shows himself willing to be wholly feminized himself.

Pentheus' madness is portrayed in the next scene, as he assumes the garb of a bacchant and is dressed by the Stranger with a mixture of care and mockery. The scene, as Seaford has argued, suggests aspects of initiation ritual in the visions Pentheus experiences and the details of his dressing and conduct.²⁸ It is at the same time the locus for many of the metatheatrical readings of the play, which emphasize Pentheus' assumption of the dramatic role of bacchant, and his minute attention to playing the part of the women he had previously thought were his bitter enemies.²⁹ Both of these ways of reading (though they are sometimes opposed to one another) point to ways that Dionysiac ritual involves the taking-on of different identities, and nowhere more so than in the theatre. The scene does not just reproduce aspects of Dionysiac ritual, but causes the audience to reflect on their theatrical nature, with the Stranger continually reminding us of the gap between Pentheus' understanding of his role, and our own: 'Now you have [the thoughts] you ought to have' (νῦν δ' ἔχεις οἷα σέ δεῖ., 948), 'You will find such hiding as you should find' (κρύψῃ σὺ κρύψιν ἦν

27 Seaford (1996) 214.

28 See the commentary on the fourth episode: Seaford (1996) 222–227.

29 Foley (1985) 223–234; Segal (1997), 222–232 and *passim*; Zeitlin (1996).

σε κρυφθῆναι χρεών, 955), and ‘you alone bear the burden for this city’ (μόνος σὺ πάλεως τῆσδ’ ὑπερκάμνεις, 963). These utterances, only partly intelligible to Pentheus, gain fuller meaning when understood to characterize Pentheus’ role within a ritual-dramatic context that the Stranger has constructed.



After three episodes that have led all the main characters up to Cithaeron, the final episode and exodos bring them back to the city. A second Messenger tells the events from Pentheus’ perspective, a narrative full of amazement and horror.³⁰ The Chorus—which previously had almost no role in dialogue—becomes the main interlocutor for a second Messenger, and then for Agave, as both recount the overwhelming violence of the maenads.³¹ The Chorus’ increased presence in these episodes reflects the absence of any authority in Thebes and their sense of triumph over Pentheus. The Messenger reports on Pentheus’ expedition, describing how they set out to ‘see without being seen’ (ὡς ὀρώμεν οὐχ ὀρώμενοι, 1050). The emphasis on vision, which had been evident in the Stranger’s persuasion of Pentheus, grows stronger in the narrative, which is both an account of Pentheus’ seeing (and being seen), and a vivid record of the Messenger’s sight (1058, 1062, 1063). As the story goes on, its occurrences become more and more extraordinary, with the Stranger bending a full-grown tree to the ground so that Pentheus can climb on it, and then raising the tree back up. This perch immediately backfires, and Pentheus ‘was seen more than he saw the maenads’ (ὥφθη δὲ μάλλον ἢ κατείδε μαινάδας, 1075). The messenger recounts in detail the maenads’ assault on Pentheus: they rip the tree he clings to out of the ground and pursue him as he tears off his woman’s clothes to reveal his identity. ‘Not thinking as she should think’ (οὐ φρονοῦσ’ ἂ χρῆ φρονεῖν, 1123), Agave assaults him with her bare hands. The maenads do not relent until they have rent him limb from limb and parade his body parts as trophies of their ‘hunt.’³² Impressed and appalled by this display of Dionysiac frenzy, the messenger closes his speech with a warning (1150–1152),

τὸ σωφρονεῖν δὲ καὶ σέβειν τὰ τῶν θεῶν
 κάλλιστον· οἶμαι δ’ αὐτὸ καὶ σοφώτατον
 θνητοῖσιν εἶναι κτήμα τοῖσι χρωμένοις.

30 See the narratological analysis in de Jong (2014) 197–224.

31 See Perris (2011) on the work’s portrayal of violence.

32 There is a pervasive image-pattern surrounding hunting: Thumiger (2006).

The best thing of all is to practice moderation and worship the gods. That is also, I think, the wisest possession a mortal can make use of.

The experience of viewing the maenads in action has inspired the second Messenger, like the first, with a new respect for Bacchic rites, and his speech closes maybe surprisingly with a reassertion of theological orthodoxy.³³ One possible response to witnessing the power of Dionysus is a simple acquiescence to the overwhelming power of the god.

The Chorus sings an exultant stasimon at the news, and are soon joined in song by Agave, still mad and triumphant at her success in what she imagines to have been a 'blessed hunt' (μακάριον θήραν, 1171). She holds the head of Pentheus, thinking it to be that of a lion and proudly retells the story of her slaughter in a lyric exchange with the Chorus.³⁴ The next entrant from Cithaeron is Cadmus, who brings the rest of Pentheus' body with him. With a series of questions, he gradually brings Agave out of her maddened state, and to a realization of what she has done.³⁵ Together, they lament the destruction of their house while the Chorus emphasizes the justice of Pentheus' punishment. At this point, a major lacuna in our one manuscript for the scene intervenes and complicates the reconstruction. Dionysus, now *in propria persona*, must have appeared above the scene (whether on a crane or simply standing on the roof is unclear) to declare his divinity, order the establishment of his cult, and foretell the future. Our text picks up with the prophecy that Cadmus will be turned into a snake and endure an exile campaigning in barbarian lands before he is finally received into the Isles of the Blessed, while Agave will go into exile with her sisters (the details of this are fuzzy because of the lacuna). The ruling family in Thebes has been entirely destroyed or driven out, and Dionysus' revenge is complete.³⁶

Before the play closes, though, Cadmus and Agave have a chance to react to the justice of Dionysus in a striking exchange:

K. Διόνυσε, λισσόμεσθά σ', ἡδικήκαμεν.
 Δ. ὄψ' ἐμάθεθ' ἡμάς, ὅτε δὲ χρῆν οὐκ ἦδετε.
 K. ἐγνώκαμεν ταῦτ'· ἀλλ' ἐπεξέρχῃ λίαν.
 Δ. καὶ γὰρ πρὸς ὑμῶν θεὸς γεγῶς ὑβριζόμεν.

33 On the two messengers see Buxton (1991).

34 Agave's relation to the Chorus of eastern bacchantes is discussed in Murnaghan (2006).

35 The scene has been thought to prefigure psychoanalysis: Devereux (1970).

36 Seaford points out that the pattern of a ruling family's destruction is pervasive in tragedy: Seaford (1994) 344–362.

K. ὀργὰς πρέπει θεοὺς οὐχ ὁμοιοῦσθαι βροτοῖς.
 Δ. πάλαι τάδε Ζεὺς οὐμὸς ἐπένευσεν πατήρ.

- C. Dionysus, we entreat your mercy: we have wronged you!
 D. Late is your knowledge of me: you did not have it when you needed it.
 C. We recognize this. But you chastize us too harshly.
 D. Well, I was treated with contempt though a god.
 C. Gods ought not to be like mortals in their tempers.
 D. Long ago Zeus my father ordained this.

1344–1349

Greek gods, as a cursory glance through tragedy shows, were not expected to be just, and mortals were not expected to condone or justify divine actions. So, it may be surprising here that Cadmus does protest, and Dionysus answers, as if human objections *could* have any force. Cadmus seeks to understand Dionysus' revenge in human terms, in terms of a sense of proportion between crime and punishment, and in relation to mortal ethics. But this possibility of a reckoning fails, as all attempts to explain divinity in the play so far have failed. Critics have often asked whether Euripides here is affirming this inscrutability or protesting it. This may be the wrong question. *Bacchae* presents both ways of making sense of the gods (and many others besides), and Athenians may have responded as variously as critics today.



The story of *Bacchae* is simple: a god punishes those who doubt his divinity and establishes his cult in a new city. Such stories of triumph over a *theomachos* were often associated with Dionysus.³⁷ While *Bacchae* stages Dionysus' arrival in Thebes and struggle with the ruler Pentheus, stories connected to Thrace centred on the king Lycurgus, who denied Dionysus' worship and was struck blind (or mad) in retribution.³⁸ Both Theban and Thracian myths had been staged earlier by Aeschylus: there is solid testimony for a Thracian trilogy made up of *Edonians*, *Bassarids*, *Youths*, and the satyr-play *Lycurgus*;³⁹ the

37 McGinty (1978).

38 Hom. *Il.* 6.130–140, one of only a few mentions of Dionysus in the Homeric epics; cf. also Soph. *Ant.* 955–965.

39 Σ Ar. *Thesm.* 135. For a reconstruction, see Jouan (1992); West (1990) 26–50. We also have fragments of a Roman drama, Naevius' *Lycurgus*, which may have hewed quite close to the Aeschylean model.

evidence for a Theban cycle is less secure, but scholars have hypothesized a tetralogy including a *Semele* and a *Pentheus* (probably also known as *Wool-Carders*, and a direct parallel for Euripides' play).⁴⁰ The few passages that have been transmitted from Aeschylus' Dionysiac dramas suggest that *Bacchae* is in close intertextual dialogue with the older dramatist. Given the fragmentary nature of the evidence, it is hard to say much about correspondences in plot between Euripides' *Bacchae* and Aeschylus' *Pentheus*, but Euripides seems to have borrowed a number of elements directly from *Edonians*: cult imagery in the parodos (fr. 57 Radt), outlines of the confrontation between Dionysus and Pentheus (fr. 59, 61–61a, 62 Radt), and the staging of Dionysus' miraculous release from captivity (fr. 58 Radt).⁴¹ It is, of course, likely that both dramatists were drawing on typical Dionysiac imagery in the plays, and so some correspondence would be expected, but the verbal parallels are in places so strong that a more direct reliance seems certain. If we had more of the Aeschylean cycles, we would be able to understand better the distinctive quality of Euripides' staging of the story.

Bacchae's archaizing tendency is apparent in the relatively straightforward design of the play: in comparison to the other works of Euripides produced around or after 410 BC, *Bacchae* has a notably unified structure (unlike the episodic *Phoenissae*), no unexpected reversals (unlike the *deus ex machina* of the *Orestes*), and characters who largely conform to what we can discern of their traditional roles (unlike the *IA*, which inverts Homeric and Aeschylean paradigms). In its construction, *Bacchae* is among the most unified of Euripides' tragedies, evoking a closeness to tragedy's ritual origins appropriate to the Dionysiac story.⁴² And yet to interpret *Bacchae* primarily in traditional terms is to ignore the complexity of Euripides' relation to myth in his other late dramas, and to posit an incongruous change in dramaturgy reminiscent of the palinode theory. Euripides rarely if ever staged a myth 'straight'. Moreover, such a view of the drama overlooks the wild and sometimes grotesque juxtapositions of joy, sobriety, hilarity, and horror, and the jarring oscillations between pious and profane. This elusive breadth of tone has proven one of the persistent stumbling blocks for critics of the play. Yet this multiplicity can be understood as one of the sources of the play's much-misunderstood 'lateness': in *Bacchae*, Euripides presents a work that is at once strikingly archaic and absolutely of its moment.

40 See Sommerstein (2013).

41 See Xanthaki-Karamanou (2012); Sommerstein (2016) 36–40.

42 Seaford (1996) 26–30.

Euripides' contemporaneity in *Bacchae* takes many forms: there are surely political facets, reflecting tensions in Athens in the late fifth century. Under the pressures of the Peloponnesian War and especially following the oligarchic coup of 411–410 BC, the social fabric of the city became increasingly frayed, and public life tense with danger and suspicion. Much of the contemporary drama displays a sense of mistrust and even paranoia about the political process.⁴³ *Bacchae* and its companion piece *Iphigenia at Aulis* both present a vision of compromised political authority that, wherever they were written, must have resonated deeply on their performances in Athens. The politics of cult practice, too, were at a tense moment, as accepted ritual in Athens was being challenged and enlarged by new cults, many of them coming from the east.⁴⁴ Staging a city's struggle to come to terms with new cults, *Bacchae* unmistakably inscribed itself into questions of contemporary Athenian practice. The choice to return in 406 BC to a story of resistance to Dionysus placed pressing questions about Athenian social organization and religious practice into a Theban mythological frame.

Bacchae's relation to its moment in time, though, runs deeper than thematic parallels. The intellectual world of *Bacchae*—and this is broadly true of Euripides' dramas—is the intellectual world of late fifth-century Athens. This fact was not lost on the Athenians, who associated Euripides with the so-called 'sophists', chief among them Socrates.⁴⁵ *Bacchae's* characters are evidently creatures of this world: we see signs of 'sophistic' reasoning in Tiresias' character, and the figure of the Stranger himself may reflect in part the many charismatic foreign *sophistai* who took up residence in Athens. These intellectuals often brought with them new ways of thinking about the gods: Protagoras' agnosticism was famous and notorious, and Socrates was satirized by Aristophanes for recognizing a host of novel divinities. In its persistent concern with σοφία and τὸ σοφόν, the play stages an uncertainty about philosophical and religious values that seems to have been one response to the intellectual revolutions of the late fifth century. This 'Enlightenment' context is obviously not unique to *Bacchae*, but because of the work's archaizing frame, these novel features make themselves felt as incongruity to an extent that they do not in any other of Euripides' works. *Bacchae* stages questions of the role of religious tradition in an age of intellectual upheaval.

43 Holzhausen (2003) draws particularly on political contexts for his reading of *Orestes* and *Bacchae*.

44 Versnel (1990) 102–123.

45 See Testimonia 35–48 Kannicht.

A final factor, which has been increasingly recognized in recent years, is a changing artistic climate. Euripides was a visible exponent of the ‘new music,’ and his late works show an increasing adoption of this style, which is manifest in the increasing significance and complexity of actor’s song, and a corresponding reduction in the choral role. *Bacchae* has an interesting place in this development: like its companion piece, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, it has a strikingly large choral role, but unlike the *IA*, it has almost no music sung by actors.⁴⁶ What song there is—nearly all the Chorus’—is full of Dionysiac and meta-musical imagery, another hallmark of the new musical style, which seems to have presented itself, paradoxically, as a (novel) return to musical origins. This is one of the contexts in which we can make sense of *Bacchae*: not as a palinodic attempt at restoration of the Dionysiac origins of dramatic ritual, but as a presentation of a traditional religious story using ‘enlightened’ means.⁴⁷ Writing an archaizing drama in 406 BC could be understood as a form of avant-gardism, flouting audience expectations by resurrecting then-outmoded dramatic conventions. Placing contemporary artistic elements, philosophical ideas, and religious questions into an archaic form and story, *Bacchae* brings out the novelty of the archaic.

This helps to explain the surprising and even grotesque interventions in the story, the closeness to cult song in the choral odes, and the heavy linguistic borrowing from Aeschylus (evident also in the *IA*’s and *Orestes*’ relation to the *Oresteia*).⁴⁸ Coming to the end of a century of great works of tragedy, it was, perhaps, only by returning to the primal scenes of the genre—and especially to Aeschylus’ great trilogies—that Euripides could innovate. As a drama about Dionysiac origins, *Bacchae* is indeed of all our extant tragedies ‘in a sense the closest to the beginnings of the genre’ (Seaford’s words),⁴⁹ but it is in an equal sense the furthest from these origins, distanced by its presentation of traditional elements in novel contexts, and by its striking interventions in the established story. Teasing out new from old, representation from reflection has been the bane of modern critics, and this speaks to the work’s double consciousness of religious practice, which renders it amenable to reading both as a presentation of ritual origins, and as a dramatic reflection on them. All Greek tragedies stage a drama within the frame of Dionysiac ritual, and all reflect, implicitly or explicitly, on that ritual itself, if only in the use of a Chorus.⁵⁰

46 See Csapo (1999–2000).

47 My argument here is in parallel with that of Weiss (2018) 244–246.

48 On Euripides and the *Oresteia*, see Torrance (2013) 13–61.

49 Seaford (1996) 28.

50 A thoughtful discussion of this relation is Kowalzig (2007); see further Henrichs (2000) esp. 175–177.

Yet in *Bacchae*, because Dionysus provides both the ritual frame and the dramatic content, this process of reflection is turned in on itself. *Bacchae* is unique in that it is conscious of itself *both* as ritual *and* as drama and presents this duality to its viewers and readers in the form of paradox.⁵¹

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51 For helpful reading and comments on the article, I am grateful to Jessica Blum, Melissa Mueller, and the anonymous reviewer. In the interim between submission of this chapter and publication, a number of studies of the play—including some of my own—have appeared, which I regret could not be better integrated (though I have tried to signal them in the notes).

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Iphigenia at Aulis

Justina Gregory

The date of production and the state of the text are standard reference points for approaching any ancient play, but in the case of *Iphigenia at Aulis* (henceforth, *IA*) they disclose more than the standard perspectives. For one thing, we must reckon with the different implications of the play's external and internal chronology. *IA* is assumed to be one of Euripides' last plays; its 'uneven quality'¹ suggests a work left unfinished and revised by later hands. That hypothesis gains credence from the information (recorded in a scholion to Aristophanes' *Frogs*) that *IA* was produced posthumously at Athens, together with *Bacchae* and *Alcmeon in Corinth*, by Euripides the Younger.² If (as this information suggests) the play's date of production was ca. 405 BC, it postdates all surviving dramatic treatments of the Atreids: Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Sophocles' *Electra*, and Euripides' *Electra*, *Orestes*, and *Iphigenia among the Taurians*. It also postdates tragedies centring on the house of Atreus that have not survived.³ Beyond tragedy, *IA* subsumes Stesichorus' (lost) *Oresteia* and the (lost) *Cypria*, not to speak of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.⁴ Readers who keep this external chronology firmly in mind will recognize that the extant play represents tragedy's last word on the Atreids and resist the temptation to read the details that *IA* provides into other dramatic treatments of that unhappy family.

The play's internal chronology, however, points readers toward beginnings rather than endings. The action unfolds during the run-up to the Trojan war, when the Greek fleet found itself becalmed at Aulis—a period treated in the *Iphigenia* plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles and in the *Cypria* but not by the other texts enumerated above, to which it accordingly forms the backstory or prequel. By adumbrating the early experiences of Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Achilles and Orestes, *IA* adds depth to their mature characterizations. This

1 Bain (1977) 19.

2 Schol. Ar. *Ran.* 67.

3 Aeschylus and Sophocles each wrote an *Iphigenia* [see Stockert (1992) 153–54]. For a list of other lost tragedies by Sophocles and Euripides dealing with the house of Atreus, see Cropp (2005) 278 and 281.

4 See Stockert (1992) 156–62.

effect is sometimes achieved by allusions to well-known material (for example, the tradition that Achilles was educated by Cheiron the Centaur)⁵ and sometimes by arresting innovations (for example, the story that Agamemnon murdered Clytemnestra's first husband, Tantalus, together with their infant son).⁶ The play casts light on earlier works even though the causal, ethical, and psychological background it supplies cannot be assumed for them: it reveals which of the elements found in (for example) the *Iliad* or the *Oresteia* struck the play's various authors as requiring 'interpretation, intervention, modification, subversion and rewriting'.⁷ In short, it offers a valuable glimpse of ancient responses to earlier treatments of the myth.⁸

1 The Text

The interpretative perspectives multiply when we turn our attention to the text. *IA* does not belong to the canon of ten tragedies that was selected from Euripides' complete works during the Roman period, but rather to the cache of nine 'alphabetic' plays (so-called because their Greek titles begin with epsilon, eta, iota, or kappa) that survived by lucky chance. What this means is that the play was transmitted in only two fourteenth-century manuscripts, one a copy of the other, plus a handful of papyri.⁹ From the eighteenth century on scholars have identified many anomalies in the text, particularly in the prologue and the conclusion.¹⁰ Whether the prologue as transmitted should be viewed as a single entity or as two prologues composed separately and subsequently stitched together, and (if the latter) which (if either) is attributable to Euripides, are questions that have yet to receive definitive answers. Euripides characteristically begins his plays with an expository narrative in iambic trimeter spoken by a divinity or a human character, setting forth background information and giving at least a partial glimpse of events to follow. The received text of *IA*, in

5 For discussion of this motif, see below, 406–407.

6 *IA* 1148–1156. For discussion and bibliography, see Gibert (2005).

7 Michelakis (2002) 129.

8 Page (1934) x comments that identifying actors' interpolations 'will teach [the critic] something of the history of such old tragedies as were popular in the fourth century and later, and dissipate at least a part of the darkness which encompasses all tragic texts for nearly two hundred years'.

9 See Stockert (1992) 1.64–66.

10 See Diggle 1994, whose edition uses four different sigla to identify passages as *fortasse Euripidei*, *fortasse non Euripidei*, *vix Euripidei*, and *non Euripidei*. For discussion of selected editions dating from 1762 to 2003, see Gurd (2005) 59–168.

contrast, opens with a dialogue in (spoken) anapaests (anomalous if not quite unexampled)¹¹ between Agamemnon and his old slave. This dialogue gives way to a narrative in trimeters spoken by Agamemnon, followed by another dialogue passage in (mostly lyric) anapaests. Awkward transitions between the segments strengthen doubts raised by the irregular structure. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to conclude that the content if not the structure of the prologue that we have is consistent with Euripides' intentions or, if such a thing existed, his original draft.¹²

The exodos is even more worrisome. A messenger speech (1540–1612) describes Iphigenia's unflinching courage as she goes to her death and her last-minute rescue by Artemis, who substitutes a doe for the human victim. The speech is beset with stylistic and metrical irregularities, with the second half markedly faultier than the first, and it contains suspicious echoes of the description of Polyxena's sacrifice by Talthybius in Euripides' *Hecuba*, produced ca. 424 BC.¹³ To complicate matters further Aelian, writing in the second century AD, quotes three lines from an unspecified *Iphigenia* of Euripides that predicts the substitution of a sacrificial doe for Iphigenia, and that evidently belong to an *ex machina* appearance by Artemis. The lines are clumsy, and no such epiphany is attested in the transmitted text.¹⁴ If the prologue invites suspicion, the exodos compels distrust.

No attempt to resolve these textual issues has achieved general acceptance. The very aim of editorial evaluation is contested: should critics seek to identify what passages are original to Euripides?¹⁵ Should they renounce that goal, and rather seek to identify what is original to the version presented by Euripides the Younger at the play's initial performance?¹⁶ Or should they engage with the transmitted text as representing a cumulative process of interpretation, while keeping in mind that a given passage may be the work not of Euripides but of Euripides the Younger, fourth-century actors, or Byzantine editors?¹⁷ In what follows I assume that the exodos is spurious but otherwise adhere to the third position. I begin by considering the two aspects of *IA* that have attracted the

11 For the anapaestic monody that opens *Andromeda*, see Babel (1991) 45–49.

12 At least the iambic portion of the prologue was known to Aristotle. For the quotation of *IA* 80 at *Rhet.* 3.1411b30, see Stockert (1992) 11.196–197.

13 See Stockert (1992) 11.627–628 and 630.

14 See Stockert (1992) 1.152 and 11.642–643.

15 So Diggle (1994).

16 So Kovacs (2003), who asks (77), 'What did the audience at the first performance hear and see?' and undertakes to answer the question by identifying themes and ideas added by a subsequent 'Reviser'.

17 So Michelakis (2002) 129.

greatest critical attention: the play's contemporary political resonance and its pattern of changes of mind. I then set forth my own reading of the play as tracing a dual process of education.

2 Panhellenism and Nostalgia for the Past

Tragedy's relationship to its political and social milieu has been a focus of critical study since the 1980s. In this context the motif of Panhellenism in *IA*—that is, the proposal that Greece should unite in a concerted campaign against the barbarians—has attracted renewed attention.¹⁸ The concept would have been familiar to a late fifth-century Athenian audience: tragedy framed itself (on some though not all occasions) as a Panhellenic genre,¹⁹ and in 408 BC²⁰ Gorgias had delivered an address at Olympia urging the Greeks to make common cause and attack the barbarians rather than each other. There is no question that the Panhellenic theme is prominent in the play. After intercepting Agamemnon's second letter, Menelaus suggests that his brother's change of mind is a disaster for Hellas, 'who, though desiring to accomplish something worthwhile, will leave the worthless barbarians free to laugh at us on account of you and your girl' (371–372; cf. 410). After his double-dealing has been exposed Agamemnon tells Iphigenia that Hellas, not his brother or himself, is responsible for her death: 'Menelaus has not made me his slave, nor have I gone over to his wishes, but [I am constrained by] Hellas, to whom I have to sacrifice you whether I wish to or not' (1269–1272). Iphigenia, finally, construes her death as promoting freedom for Hellas and glory for herself: 'Hellas in all its majesty now has me in its sights my reputation for freeing Hellas will be a blessed one' (1378–1384). As Markantonatos notes, there is a difference between Agamemnon's deployment of the Panhellenic theme and Iphigenia's: whereas Agamemnon invokes 'Hellas' to evade blame for sacrificing his daughter, Iphigenia takes responsibility for enabling not only the

18 For an early defence of the motif's significance, see Mellert-Hofmann (1969) 9–90. Markantonatos (2012) 192 n. 6 itemizes recent discussions; to his list add Rosenbloom (2011).

19 Finkelberg (2006) 18–19 cautions that tragedy was produced not only at the great Dionysia but also at the Lenaea and the rural Dionysia; that is, its context was sometimes thoroughly domestic. For the argument, however, that 'tragedy as a genre was always orientated towards a wider Panhellenic audience', see Stewart (2017) 11 and *passim*.

20 This date is not universally accepted. For the alternate proposed date of 392, see Rosenbloom (2011) 374 n. 59.

expedition but also, as she sees it, the salvation of Greece.²¹ Indeed, Iphigenia's Panhellenism differs from Menelaus' as well as Agamemnon's, for both brothers describe the expedition's goals in patriotic terms to obscure their personal reasons for undertaking it: Menelaus' desire to recover Helen, and Agamemnon's ambition to be the supreme commander. A theme that at first glance appears to link the three characters ultimately sets Iphigenia apart: even as it exposes the dubious motives of her father and uncle, it sets her idealism in sharp relief.

Another political approach to the play focuses on historical nostalgia rather than Panhellenism. Markantonatos suggests that *IA* limns a contrast between the astute politicians of the past (exemplified by Tyndareus) and those of the confused and corrupt present (exemplified by Agamemnon and Menelaus). The play thereby invites the audience to draw a comparison with the political crisis in Athens during the last years of the Peloponnesian War, to bethink themselves of the effective statesmen of their own past, and to recognize 'the importance [for Athens] of diplomatic manipulation and political pragmatism in the defusing of rivalries.'²² Although the conduct of the Greeks taken as a whole is reprehensible, Iphigenia provides a redemptive counterforce: 'by arguing for the priority of communal happiness over private suffering, as well as by resisting the temptation to indulge her resentment, Iphigenia shares her forebears' courage and values.'²³

Markantonatos' interpretation of Iphigenia's self-sacrifice as high-minded and inspiring (as opposed to deluded and ironic)²⁴ is supported by the text. More questionable is his contention that Tyndareus represents an example for Iphigenia and a model for the politicians of contemporary Athens. In debate with Menelaus Agamemnon suggests that Tyndareus took advantage of the suitors to extract an oath that the gods do not consider binding (394a–395). He implies that the suitors would not have allied themselves with Helen's husband-to-be if they had not been blinded by desire, and that the gods will therefore not be angry if the expedition to recover her is now dissolved. To be sure, Agamemnon has a personal stake in making this claim.²⁵ Yet the

21 Markantonatos (2012) 207.

22 Markantonatos (2011) 197. For the relevance of the Trojan War to the Athenians in the last years of the Peloponnesian War, see Blume (2012) 182.

23 Markantonatos (2012) 206.

24 As argued by (e.g.) Dimock in Merwin/Dimock (1978) 11; Siegel (1980) 314–315; and Burgess (2004) 51–54.

25 For the mythological tradition concerning Tyndareus' oath, see Markantonatos (2012) 197. For Agamemnon's claim that the oath is not binding, see Torrance (2014) 49–51.

play portrays the entire expedition as unnecessary and unjustifiable, while attributing its origins to Tyndareus' scheme. Markantonatos' non-ironic reading of Iphigenia's sacrifice does not depend, however, on his positive account of Tyndareus. If we assume that the play comes to a close with her farewell to light and life (1509), Iphigenia's death proceeds without the last-minute substitution that would convey divine approbation of her resolve. Her idealism is the more remarkable because it lacks familial precedent and meets with no reward.

3 Changes of Mind in *IA*

Changes of mind by Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Iphigenia constitute the play's most distinctive and notorious feature. In the *Poetics* Aristotle remarks disapprovingly (à propos of his statement that dramatic characters should be either consistent or, if inconsistent, consistently so), that in the case of Iphigenia in *IA*, 'the girl who supplicates in no way resembles the girl [who speaks] later' (*Poetics* 1454a32–33). As we shall see, even though Iphigenia shifts from arguing that 'it is better to live ignobly than to die nobly' (1252) to affirming that 'it is surely not right for me to love life overmuch' (1385), she is recognizably the same individual before and after her decision to embrace her compulsory death.

Aristotle does not observe, as modern scholars have,²⁶ that volatility emerges as a recurrent pattern in the play well before Iphigenia changes her mind. Agamemnon is the most mercurial character in *IA*. A production that staged the prologue in its entirety would convey his indecision both visually and verbally. In the opening anapaests the old slave describes Agamemnon's restless uneasiness as he revises his letter to Clytemnestra, seals it only to break the seal, and throws his writing tablet on the ground, all the while weeping copiously (34–40). In the iambic portion Agamemnon explains that he has already changed his mind three times about sacrificing his daughter. When he first heard Calchas' prophecy his impulse was to dissolve the army; Menelaus persuaded him otherwise, but now he has altered his purpose once again (94–110). Subsequently Agamemnon changes his mind for the fourth time. When he learns that Iphigenia has arrived in camp, he concludes that plans for her sacrifice are so far advanced that he has no choice but to move ahead (511–512). Although he offers shifting justifications, arguing now that Calchas, Odysseus,

26 Knox (1966) 23–32; Gibert (1995) 202–252.

and the Greek army will force him to sacrifice his daughter (518–535) and now that Hellas compels him to do so (1269–1275), he adheres to his decision for the remainder of the play.

Agamemnon's volatility is a feature of the literary tradition. Homer's Agamemnon repeatedly makes hasty and ill-considered decisions and then reverses them.²⁷ In *Iliad* 1, for example, he returns Chryseis to her father after initially refusing to do so, and in *Iliad* 9 he dispatches representatives to placate Achilles after initially insulting him. While Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* is set in the aftermath of the Trojan War, in the parodos the Chorus flashes back to the sacrifice of Iphigenia and quotes Agamemnon as he struggles with his dilemma: he foresees a 'heavy doom' (Aesch. *Ag.* 206) whether he spares his daughter or puts her to death.²⁸ Aeschylus' Agamemnon, like Euripides', ultimately 'change[s] his mind to a disposition that dared everything' (Aesch. *Ag.* 221) and carries through the sacrifice. Whether portrayed by Homer, Aeschylus, or Euripides, Agamemnon can be relied on to shift course. He is, in short, one of Aristotle's 'consistently inconsistent' characters.

Menelaus too changes his mind, but once only, and critics disagree on his sincerity in making the switch.²⁹ When Menelaus intercepts Agamemnon's second letter a quarrel ensues, with Menelaus accusing his brother of inconsistency in the service of personal ambition. According to Menelaus, Agamemnon lobbied the common soldiers for leadership of the expedition to Troy;³⁰ his ambition once attained, he turned remote and standoffish (337–345). In a subsequent display of inconsistency, Agamemnon initially welcomed the sacrifice because it would preserve his military command; only later did he change his mind (358–365).

Rather than refute his brother Agamemnon goes on the offensive (378–401), accusing Menelaus of wishing above all to recover his promiscuous wife, of relying on hope rather than reason in his quest, and of taking advantage of the oath that Tyndareus foisted on the unwary suitors. He flatly refuses to sacrifice his daughter in his brother's interest. Matters seem to have reached an impasse when the messenger enters to say that Iphigenia has arrived at the army camp, accompanied by her mother and her baby brother Orestes. At this

27 For his 'indecisiveness' in Homer, see Griffin (1990) 140.

28 On Agamemnon's dilemma, see Lawrence (2013) 75–77, with references to previous discussions.

29 See Bogaert (1965) for a tabulation of the scholars who doubt Menelaus' good faith (he himself takes the opposite view).

30 337–345. As Rosenbloom (2011) 356 explains, Agamemnon is here assimilated to a fifth-century Athenian general who seeks elective office.

news Agamemnon succumbs to despair and Menelaus abruptly shifts course, avowing that he has changed his mind out of pity for his brother and now desires Iphigenia to be spared (473–503). Agamemnon thanks him but affirms that it is too late to save the girl: Calchas and Odysseus will reveal the oracle to the Greek soldiers, who will kill the entire family if they are balked of the sacrifice.

Should Menelaus' conversion be interpreted as genuine or tactical? I favour the latter explanation, for four reasons. Since Menelaus has just denounced his brother for his volatility, he would presumably be hesitant to adopt the same course himself. Second, Menelaus knows his brother well, as his withering account of Agamemnon as a political aspirant reveals, and can therefore anticipate his reactions. Menelaus' proposal to dismiss the fleet ('let the fleet be disbanded and depart from Aulis', 495) is a particularly deft example of reverse psychology, calculated to reawaken his brother's fear that he will be deprived of the command with its opportunities for glory.³¹ Third, in the opening of his speech (473–476) 'Menelaus "protests too much";³² swearing (by Pelops and Atreus, those conspicuous examples of rectitude and fraternal love!) that what he is about to say is in no way contrived. Finally, when the debate between the brothers reaches an impasse just before the messenger's entrance, Menelaus threatens that he will have recourse to 'other stratagems and other friends' (413–414). His simulated change of heart is presumably the stratagem that the composer of these lines had in mind.

Iphigenia's reversal is quite different from her father's and uncle's. She shifts course only once, and even critics who regard her as deluded do not question her sincerity. As with Panhellenism, a motif that initially seems to conjoin the three characters ultimately sets the young woman apart. As we shall see, Iphigenia's change of mind represents an emotional and psychic evolution that, while not explicit in the text, can be justified psychologically, rhetorically, and in terms of the literary tradition.

4 Iphigenia: Continuities and Change

The audience has the opportunity to observe Iphigenia responding to a variety of situations and speaking or singing in a variety of registers, as well as to hear reports of her from others. Upon her arrival at Aulis she engages her father

³¹ England (1891) xvi.

³² England (1891) 51.

in dialogue (640–676)—wistful and whimsical on her part, tormented and double-edged on his. In the fourth episode Clytemnestra reports her daughter's tearful reaction to her father's perfidy (1100–1102), and the young woman then supplicates Agamemnon in an extended *rhêsis* (1211–1252). After Agamemnon rebuffs her and takes his leave, Iphigenia laments her fate in a lyric monody (1279–1335). In the fifth episode Achilles enters to report that his own soldiers are threatening to stone him because he has championed Iphigenia, but that he remains determined to protect her. As Achilles and Clytemnestra converse (in a conversation whose urgency is underscored by trochaic tetrameter and anti-labe), Iphigenia interrupts them to announce (also in trochaic tetrameter) her determination to die as a willing sacrifice (1368–1401). She explains her decision to Achilles (1416–1420) and bids farewell to her mother, her brother Orestes, the women of the Chorus, and the sunlight which stands for life itself (1433–1509). Finally, a messenger's speech (undoubtedly spurious) reports the unflinching bravery of her last words (1552–1560). By comparing these passages, the audience can judge how much the young woman changes and how much she stays the same, and consider the role of nature and acculturation in her development.

Affection and attentiveness characterize Iphigenia from first to last. When she arrives at Aulis her first impulse, overmastering the demure, retiring demeanor expected of a well brought up young woman, is to run and embrace her father.³³ Iphigenia's speech of supplication, spoken after she has learned the truth, continues to reflect affection for Agamemnon, now tinged with heart-broken sadness. The young woman recalls sitting on her father's lap and exchanging affectionate caresses (*φίλας χάριτας ἔδωκα κἀντεδεξάμην*, 1222). Iphigenia begs Agamemnon to meet her gaze and to kiss her, even if he remains unmoved by her plea (1238–1240). A flash of bitterness is detectable in her lyric monody as she accuses her father of deserting her and characterizes as impious both the sacrifice itself and the sacrificial agent (1314, 1318). Affection re-emerges, however, as the keynote of Iphigenia's final exchange with her mother: she urges Clytemnestra not to hate Agamemnon (1454) and suggests that her father is sacrificing her 'unwillingly, for the sake of Hellas' (1456). As we shall see, Iphigenia's loving nature predisposes her to experience empathy for Achilles. Iphigenia is also conspicuously observant. She takes note of her father's sorrowful uneasiness (644, 648, 650), her toddler brother's childish understanding (1243–1244), and her mother's silence and tears (1433). She attends no less carefully to Achilles' words, for she echoes his prediction that

33 631–632 (635–637 are redundant and metrically faulty).

she will soon be dragged to the altar by the hair (1458; cf. 1366). Iphigenia's scrutiny of Achilles (who, as the Chorus' descriptions attest, cuts a striking and glamorous figure) goes unremarked in the text, but the audience can infer that it is crucial to her change of heart.

Throughout the play Iphigenia exemplifies the values and behaviours instilled by elite female education. Having grown up (like her sisters, 738) under the watchful eye of minders, she has assimilated the cultural expectations implicit in the terms *sôphrosynê* (roughly, 'restraint') and *aidôs* (roughly, 'respect'). These concepts are broad in connotation and generally kept distinct; with reference to youthful education, however, they can be used almost interchangeably, signifying a sense of modesty and decorum.³⁴ As Clytemnestra and Achilles, having discovered Agamemnon's perfidy, discuss the way forward, both take into account the need for Iphigenia to observe the proprieties (992–997, 998–1001). Iphigenia herself does the same. She had earlier recognized that rushing to greet her father upon her arrival at Aulis was a breach of decorum, and apologized to Clytemnestra for her impetuous action (631–632). At the conclusion of her monody Iphigenia sees a group of unknown men—Myrmidons who have remained loyal to Achilles, led by Achilles himself—approaching, and her instinct is to retreat indoors (1338–1342). Clytemnestra, who as an experienced adult understands that 'one should observe αἰδώς only as far as possible' (997), cautions her daughter that this is not the moment to worry about decorum (1343–1344). Iphigenia shows that she has transcended her anxiety about breaking the rules governing female behaviour when she insists on walking to her death in full view of the Greek soldiery, unescorted by her mother (1459).

Like other elite young women, Iphigenia has been brought up to regard marriage as the culminating experience of her life.³⁵ When Agamemnon speaks of an impending voyage that will make her forget her father (667) he is alluding to her death, but Iphigenia assumes that he is referring to her marriage. Iphigenia's education has apparently included regular reminders that her marriage would affect her father's reputation for good or ill. She recalls that Agamemnon used to ask her, 'Child, shall I see you flourishing in your husband's home, vital and blooming as befits my position?'.³⁶ When she declares that the destruction

34 For overlap and distinctions between the two concepts, see Cairns (1993) 104 and *passim*, and Rademaker (2005) 50–54.

35 For epitaphs illustrating this assumption, see Griessmair (1966) 63–74.

36 1223–1225. The story of Megacles and Pisistratus confirms that an elite father was implicated in his daughter's marital fortunes. When Megacles discovered that his son-in-law was taking measures to avoid getting his daughter pregnant, 'anger seized him at being dishonoured by Pisistratus' (Hdt. 1.61.2).

of Troy will be ‘my memorial through time, my children, my marriage, and my reputation’, she frames her very resolve to die in terms of her enculturation.³⁷

In other contexts too, Iphigenia manifests stereotypically feminine responses. She urges Agamemnon to remain at home with his family instead of going to war (656) and repeatedly takes refuge in tears (1100–1102, 1214–1215).³⁸ To be sure, ultimately she embraces her sacrifice in order to die εὐκλεῶς, ‘gloriously’ (1376; cf. 1383–1384), and her aspirations may thus appear to have shifted toward the masculine sphere.³⁹ Examples of female glory are well attested, however, in both epic and tragedy.⁴⁰ Female *kleos* differs from male in one of two ways (and sometimes in both). First, the woman actively courts her death;⁴¹ second, she grounds her act in imitation of a male exemplar.⁴² As we shall see, Iphigenia’s choice meets both criteria.

Iphigenia’s attitude undergoes a shift, explicable both in psychological and rhetorical terms, once she understands that death rather than marriage awaits her at Aulis, and her language reflects her disillusionment. The balance that a hero traditionally struck between life and death is summed up in the Sophoclean Ajax’s aphorism (spoken after he has chosen suicide over disgrace) that ‘a man who is well born should either live nobly or die nobly’.⁴³ As Iphigenia supplicates Agamemnon to spare her life, she inverts and thereby defamiliarizes Ajax’s sentiment by claiming that ‘it is better to live ingloriously than to die gloriously’ (1252).⁴⁴ In the *rhêsis* explaining her change of mind she executes a similar pivot, declaring that ‘it is more important for one man to continue living

37 1398–1399. For the play’s repeated linking of sacrifice and marriage, see Foley (1985) 68–78 and *passim*.

38 For tearfulness as stereotypically feminine in drama, see Finglass (2011) 308 on *κάρτα τοι φιλοκίστον γυνή*, Soph. *Aj.* 580.

39 For *kleos* as a male heroic value, see Nagy (1979) 16–17 and *passim*. Walsh (1974) 46–47 claims that since Iphigenia’s *αἰδώς* does not help her at Aulis, she decides instead to achieve something closer to masculine *ἀρετή*. I would argue, however, that she never abandons her traditional female orientation.

40 For a survey, see Kyriakou (2008).

41 For example, Euripides’ Alcestis volunteers to die to save her husband’s life (Eur. *Alc.* 17–18, 154–155, 284, 525), and Euripides’ Evadne resolves on suicide (Eur. *Supp.* 1065).

42 Heracles’ wife Megara wishes to die gloriously in overt imitation of her husband (Eur. *HF* 294). When Capaneus’ widow Evadne announces that she is going to commit suicide by leaping onto her husband’s pyre (Eur. *Supp.* 1065), ‘there is little doubt that she wishes to imitate the ... extraordinary death of her husband’ [Kyriakou (2011) 262].

43 Cf. Tr. Adespot. fr. 537 *TrGF* [cited by Finglass (2011) 277 on Soph. *Aj.* 479–480] and Soph. *El.* 989.

44 Soph. *Aj.* 479–480. For a novel ethical preference expressed by another youthful character cf. Soph. *Phil.* 94–95.

than ten thousand women' (1394). Wars fought for the sake of a single woman and resulting in the loss of many men are a *topos* of history and drama; the Trojan War, in particular, is often described in these terms.⁴⁵ While Iphigenia's maxim reflects 'the low self-esteem of ancient women,'⁴⁶ it also shows her giving her own creative twist to a familiar motif, reflecting, as she weighs Achilles' life against her own, on the relative valuation of male and female existence.⁴⁷ Such experiments with familiar *topoi* enable her to probe her situation, question it, and ultimately come to terms with it.

5 A Dual Education

The motifs of Panhellenism and of change of mind both put Iphigenia in the spotlight. Reading *IA* as a drama of education does the same; rather than isolating her, however, it links her to Achilles.⁴⁸ The Chorus lays the groundwork for such a reading with its programmatic remark that the 'what is upright and good is always clear. But habits inculcated by education contribute greatly to ἀρετή, for a sense of αἰδώς constitutes wisdom.'⁴⁹ While acknowledging that nature and education both shape character, this formulation puts the emphasis on education, as does the play. While the formation of the young is a recurrent theme of late fifth-century drama,⁵⁰ *IA* is unique in depicting a young man and a young woman who instruct one another in turn.

45 For conflict between Europe and Asia sparked by the abductions of Io, Europa, Medea, and climactically Helen see Hdt. 1.1–1.5. 2. For the motif burlesqued in comedy see Ar. *Ach.* 524–529. For 'many men [killed] for the sake of one woman' (i.e., Helen) cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 1455 and Eur. *Tro.* 498–499 and 780–781. For killing 'one woman [i.e., Iphigenia] for the sake of many men', cf. Eur. *El.* 1026.

46 Stockert (1992) 11.589. Cf. Phaedra's definition of women as 'an object of hatred to all' (Eur. *Hipp.* 406), and the Taurian Iphigenia's statement that 'a man's loss to the household inspires longing, but a woman's has [only] a weak effect' (Eur. *IT* 1005–1006).

47 This statement has additional resonances in the literary tradition. In her (temporary) preference for an ignoble life over a noble death Iphigenia calls to mind both the Achilles of *Il.* 9.398–316, who is briefly tempted to choose a long inglorious life rather than a short glorious one, and, even more insistently, the ghostly Achilles whom Odysseus encounters in the underworld and who maintains that it is preferable to be poor oneself and work for a poor master than to rule over all the dead (Hom. *Od.* 11.489–491). See Sorum (1992) 540 n. 38.

48 In contrast, Michelakis (2006) 31 follows earlier scholars in arguing for the play's increasing focus on Iphigenia alone.

49 *IA* 559–563: τὸ δ' ὄρ- / θῶς ἐσθλὸν σαφὲς αἰετ' / τροφαὶ θ' αἰ παιδεύμεναι / μέγα φέρουσι' ἐς τὰν ἀρετάν' / τὸ τε γὰρ αἰδεῖσθαι σοφία (this, the *ms.* reading, is retained by Diggles).

50 Sommerstein (2010) 52. He lists tragedies that show 'a major concern with the adolescent male' but omits *IA* from consideration, presumably because of the state of its text.

Achilles' careful upbringing, like Iphigenia's, is reflected in his deportment. At the opening of the third episode the hero enters in search of Agamemnon; he is anxious to report to the commander his Myrmidons' impatience at the enforced delay. Astonished to encounter an unknown, attractive woman in front of Agamemnon's tent, Achilles reflexively appeals to personified αἰδώς (821). Clytemnestra takes approving note of Achilles' *sôphrosynê* (824; cf. 1024) and *aidôs* (839), confirming the virtual interchangeability of the two concepts when they refer to the education of the young. She addresses Achilles effusively under the impression that he is her future son-in-law, but the young man responds that it is 'disgraceful' for him to converse with a woman (830), and invokes his respect for Agamemnon (αἰδοίμεθ' ἄν / Ἀγαμέμνον', 833–834) as he declines to take her proffered hand. The misunderstandings that mark the initial encounter of Clytemnestra and Achilles originate in Agamemnon's ruse, but are compounded by the young man's reliance on *aidôs*. Like Iphigenia, Achilles initially follows the rules instilled by his education, but progresses as a result of direct experience first to disillusionment and then to unanticipated empathy.

Building on the motifs of nature and culture, *sôphrosynê* and *aidôs*, textual references to Cheiron, Achilles' boyhood instructor, further the motif of education. In the parodos the Chalcidian women who make up the Chorus describe a visit to the seashore to see the Greek encampment. They single out Achilles (whom they identify as Thetis' son and Cheiron's pupil, 208–209) for extended description: they have seen the youthful hero racing in full armour against a four-horse chariot, and winning the race.

While this passage alludes anachronistically to an actual fifth-century exercise,⁵¹ it also resonates with the literary tradition. Pindar describes the six-year-old Achilles killing lions and wild boars and outracing deer on Mount Pelion, while Cheiron waits in his cave to welcome him home (Pind. *Nem.* 3. 43–52). That sport prepared him indirectly for battle, but in *IA* the rehearsal has become explicit. In another contrast with Pindar the locale, having shifted from Achilles' childhood scene, now evokes the future more strongly than the past. The young man practises his running not in the mountains but on the beach; this setting evokes Homer's Achilles, weeping 'on the shore of the grey sea, gazing out on the wine-dark water' after his quarrel with Agamemnon (Hom. *Il.* 1.350). As the young, untried Achilles of *IA* passes the time by racing on the beach, he has no notion of the trials that await him. He

51 For ὀπλιτοδρομεῖν (racing in armour), see Stockert (1992) 1.251. For the 'choreographic' language of the passage, see Weiss (2014) 121.

will receive his first, anticipatory humiliation at the hands of Agamemnon in the course of the play.

If the setting of Achilles' race hints at his future withdrawal from battle, its content calls to mind another memorable Iliadic scene. As Hector circles the walls of Troy in flight from Achilles, Homer compares the contest to a horse race (Hom. *Il.* 22.162–166). The Chorus' description of Achilles thus suggestively draws together the hero's past, present, and future.

In the second episode Cheiron's name awakens different expectations. Clytemnestra, still ignorant of Agamemnon's intentions, interrogates her husband about the bridegroom he has chosen for their daughter and is reassured to hear that Peleus entrusted his son to the centaur 'so that he would not learn the habits of wicked men' (709). This exchange prepares both Clytemnestra and the audience for the naïve, scrupulous Achilles who will soon make his appearance.

After the old slave has exposed Agamemnon's false marriage scheme, Achilles responds with a speech that again refers to Cheiron. It begins with a string of sententious generalizations (920–925) that perhaps evoke Cheiron's pedagogic technique, for what follows is Achilles' summary of his training and inclinations (926–931). Achilles explains that as Cheiron's pupil he has learned 'to have simple ways'—that is, to eschew deception of the kind Agamemnon has just practised on him.⁵² In the next few lines the young man explains that he does not owe the Atreids unconditional obedience. Rather, he will obey or disobey them according to his own assessment of their orders (928–929) and will manifest a 'free nature' (ἐλευθέραν φύσιν, 930) both in Aulis and in Troy.

When Achilles ascribes his disposition to the centaur's pedagogic influence, the members of the audience (who, unlike Achilles himself, know what lies ahead for the hero)⁵³ are invited to discern Cheiron's training at work in the hero's subsequent Iliadic career. The independence of mind that Achilles proudly asserts will bring him into confrontation with Agamemnon in *Iliad* 1, and the deceptiveness that he energetically disavows will stir him to anger in *Iliad* 9 (Hom. *Il.* 9. 312–313). Whoever wrote these lines⁵⁴ felt the need and saw the opportunity to ground the reactions of the Homeric Achilles in the hero's

52 For the sense of ἀπλοῦς (927), see Mastronarde (1994) 280–281, on Eur. *Pho.* 469–472.

53 Cf. Sorum (1992) 529 on the audience's "divine" knowledge of the past and future stories' about the characters.

54 Diggle condemns Achilles' entire *rhêsis* (and indeed the remainder of the episode) as *vix Euripidei*. For selected critical remedies, see Michelakis (2002) 130–134. For my purposes 926–931 are significant, whether or not they are Euripidean, as furthering the motif of education. For their connection with 558–564, see Luschnig (1988) 60.

history. It is in passages like this one that we can see the current of intertextuality flowing from Euripides to Homer as well as from Homer to Euripides.

As Achilles' *rhêsis* continues it offers additional insight into his formation. Although he expresses pity for Clytemnestra, he is inhibited by the sense that a young man's sympathy should extend only so far (933–934). For him, as for Iphigenia, the conventions he has been taught as part of his upbringing exercise a powerful sway. Another comment casts further light on his 'ethical immaturity'.⁵⁵ If, Achilles volunteers, Agamemnon had sought permission to use his name as the bait that lured Iphigenia to Aulis, he would have assented in the army's interest (961–967). As a result of Cheiron's education the youthful hero has internalized the concept of the common good, just as he has internalized the concept of *aidôs*; he does not, however, have any concept of what Iphigenia has already suffered and has yet to suffer from Agamemnon's scheme. He will acquire the empathetic understanding he lacks from his subsequent encounter with the young woman herself.

The final mention of Cheiron comes in the third stasimon, which contrasts the marriage of Peleus and Thetis with the ill-omened nuptials of Achilles and Iphigenia.⁵⁶ At the wedding the centaurs recount Cheiron's prophecy that the child born of the union will be 'a great light to Thessaly' (1063) and will arrive at Troy clad in 'the golden armour manufactured by Hephaestus' (1071–1073). The members of the Chorus here describe Achilles in heroizing terms that mirror their awestruck description in the parodos and foreshadow how Iphigenia in turn will view the young man. When Iphigenia catches her first glimpse of Achilles, his Myrmidons will be carrying the very armour described by the Chorus (1359), which he is prepared to don in her defence.⁵⁷ Since 'sight ... is pivotal'⁵⁸ to the experience of pity or empathy, we may infer that Achilles' dazzling appearance contributes to Iphigenia's change of heart.

6 Empathy and Its Consequences

Although Iphigenia explains her sudden resolution to go willingly to her death, the justification she offers is not entirely satisfactory. In a convergence of the Panhellenic theme with the change-of-mind pattern, she tells Clytemnestra

55 Blundell (1988) 138 applies this phrase to Sophocles' Neoptolemus.

56 Walsh (1974) 241.

57 Smith (1979) 179 suggests that in the episode as staged Achilles 'probably ... begins to arm in heroic fashion', thus enhancing the visual effect.

58 Steinberg (2005) 26.

that 'upon reflection' (ἐννοουμένην, 1374) she has decided to die for Greece. If patriotism were the decisive consideration, however, we would expect Iphigenia to have announced her change of mind soon after her father advanced the Panhellenic rationale for her sacrifice (1269–1275).⁵⁹ Instead she uses the lyric monody that follows Agamemnon's speech to denounce both her father and her own death as 'unholy' (1318) and to express a futile wish that the expedition had never mustered at Aulis (1319–1322). The factor that changes her mind must be sought, and indeed has been found, in the dialogue between Clytemnestra and Achilles that opens the fifth episode.

The play has already established that Iphigenia is both affectionate and observant, and that Achilles cuts a striking, glamorous figure. It is against this background that the stichomythia between Clytemnestra and Achilles unfolds (1345–1367), while Iphigenia listens and watches. As the desperate mother questions the young hero about the army's mood it becomes clear to Iphigenia (as Sansone has shown) that she and Achilles are in a similar position. Both are in danger of being killed by their fellow Greeks: Iphigenia is threatened with sacrifice, Achilles with stoning. There is, however, this difference: whereas Iphigenia has in no way courted her fate, Achilles has aroused the soldiers' rage by his free choice⁶⁰ to defend Iphigenia, whom he describes as his bride. 'To experience pity', Konstan observes, 'one has to recognize a resemblance with the sufferer, but at the same time not find oneself in precisely the same circumstances'.⁶¹ As the end of the play reveals, the two young people meet both criteria. Their mutual pity and empathy prompts Iphigenia to embrace her death in order to save Achilles' life (1392–1393, 1419–1420), and Achilles to reaffirm his determination to defend her if she should change her mind at the last moment (1426–1429).

At this point Iphigenia and Achilles complete the final stage of their education. I have argued elsewhere that the development of Achilles in the *Iliad* serves as the template for certain youthful protagonists of tragedy.⁶² The Iliadic Achilles' evolution over the course of the epic illustrates three stages of elite formation. In the first stage the young person is drilled in traditional cultural assumptions that are generally enshrined in gnomic advice. While such guidance is essential to ethical development, it does not on its own ensure a complete education. The aristocratic youth must negotiate two further passages

59 So Sansone (1991) 164: 'Nearly all of [Iphigenia's points] could equally well have been made ... fifty lines earlier'.

60 Sansone (1991) 163.

61 Konstan (2006) 201–202.

62 Gregory (2016) 129–130 and (2018) 108 and *passim*.

that require independent thinking as opposed to heeding advice. The first passage entails questioning and if necessary rejecting lessons learned in the past; I call this the crisis of disillusionment. The second passage entails recognizing someone else's suffering; I call this the crisis of empathy. In a variation unique to *IA*, the tripartite Iliadic pattern applies to a young woman as well as a young man.

Not surprisingly, the Achilles of *IA* follows the same trajectory as his Homeric namesake. When he finds himself implicated in Agamemnon's deception of his wife and daughter, he experiences a crisis of disillusionment. When he pities Clytemnestra 'insofar as applies to a young man' (934), he experiences an empathetic impulse whose scope is restricted by considerations of propriety. Only at the end of the play is he swept by empathy for Iphigenia, whose age and circumstances match his own.

Iphigenia's observant, affectionate nature prepares her for an ethical and emotional development that parallels Achilles'. Her crisis of disillusionment begins offstage, when she discovers the real reason for her summons to Aulis and reacts with tears and lamentation (1100–1102). It continues as she supplicates her father for her life and reflects her shock and dismay in her speech. In the fifth episode Iphigenia experiences a crisis of empathy for Achilles, and it is this that triggers her change of mind.⁶³ Achilles has expressed his willingness to fight and die for her sake, one man against many (as Clytemnestra notes, 1358) for the sake of one woman (as Iphigenia notes, 1392–1393). That is precisely what Iphigenia does not want, and she forestalls it by volunteering to die and recasting her life not as her own possession or Clytemnestra's, but as common to all the Greeks (1386).

Two additional factors may be thought to affect Iphigenia's decision. The members of the Chorus have twice drawn attention to Achilles' heroic glamour; arguably it has an effect on Iphigenia, who like them is an impressionable young woman. I have noted that for Euripidean female characters such as Megara in *HF* and Evadne in *Supplices*, heroic glory (*kleos*) is achieved by emulating a male exemplar. Now Iphigenia, recognizing that Achilles is prepared to die to save her life, resolves to do the same for him. The process of imitation does not stop there, for the young woman's courageous offer triggers a reciprocal reaction. Before laying eyes on Iphigenia Achilles had already committed himself to defending her, but that was on account of his own honour (944–951,

63 Sansone (1991) 167 notes that Iphigenia's 'response is dictated by two circumstances: the pity that is aroused in her by witnessing Achilles' situation and the fact that she is herself in a similar situation'. As Konstan (2006) 201–202 clarifies, the two circumstances are actually one: the fact that she is herself in a similar situation sparks Iphigenia's pity.

961–972). Now he expresses a wistful desire to win Iphigenia for his wife (1404–1413), an admiring appreciation of her character (1421–1423), and a renewed determination to defend her to the end (1414–1415, 1426–1432)—for her sake, not his.

The two young people spend little time together and, true to their upbringing, they address one another throughout with reticence and formality.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, they achieve a concord reminiscent of the ‘likemindedness’ (ὁμοφροσύνη) that Homer identifies as intrinsic to both marriage and friendship.⁶⁵ Each wishes to die in order to save the other from the same fate, and each sees death as the right choice for him or herself but the wrong choice for the other—even though it was a readiness to die that kindled the spirit of emulation in the first place. Each completes the education of the other, inspiring mutual empathy and an admiration that is akin to love.⁶⁶ Euripides’ adolescent characters are typically more high-minded than the adults who surround them, and Iphigenia and Achilles are no exception. Their idealism shines all the more brightly in contrast to the duplicity and corruption that surrounds them and the ordeals they have yet to face.⁶⁷ Although their time onstage is brief, they dominate the play.

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64 Michelini (1999–2000) 51.

65 Hom. *Od.* 6.181 and 15.198. As David Kovacs reminds me, the determination of Orestes and Pylades to die for one another (Eur. *IT* 674–699) is another example of this relationship.

66 Smith (1979) 174. For the rarity of the motif in Attic tragedy, see Gibert (1999–2000) 83.

67 I thank David Kovacs and an anonymous reader for comments on an earlier version of this paper.

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Rhesus

Marco Fantuzzi

1 Introduction

The tragedy *Rhesus* has come down to us within the corpus of Euripides' tragedies; it belonged in the *sylloge*, the anthology of his ten 'canonical' plays, destined for use in schools and thus later equipped with scholia excerpted from the scholarly commentaries. But already one of the ancient *hypotheses* prefacing the text in some manuscripts (*hyp.* b Diggle) records that 'some supposed that this drama is inauthentic (νόθον), believing it is not by Euripides, and that it shows more the stamp of Sophocles (τὸν ... Σοφοκλεῖον ... χαρακτῆρα)'. According to the *hypothesis*, however, these doubts about *Rhesus* were misplaced, because 'in the *Didaskaliai* the play is recorded as authentic (γνήσιον)' (the *Didaskaliai* 'Production Records' were lists of dramatic and choral productions of Athens with relevant information, arranged by Aristotle). In fact, at least at the end of the fourth century, the text that was suspected may have been our text, most probably pseudo-Euripidean, and of the original play by Euripides only the title may have been preserved by the inscriptional records of the dramatic productions on which Aristotle's *Didaskaliai* must have relied.¹

1 A plausible conjecture, most recently re-proposed by Kovacs (2002) 352 and Liapis (2009) 84–85, is that our text crept into the Euripidean corpus by replacing an original play by Euripides, which will have disappeared rather early (scholars probably did not have a chance to compare a text considered genuine to a text supposed to be spurious, as they could with Aeschylus' *Αἰτναῖαι γνήσιοι* / *Αἰτναῖαι νόθοι*, cf. *TrGF* iii T 78); cf. Cropp (2015) 158–159. But it is probable that more than one *Rhesus* version existed in the pre-Hellenistic age. Dicaearchus, whose name is to be reconstructed in one of the *hypotheses* (informative prefaces to the play transmitted in some Mediaeval MSS), knew of a version of the beginning that included a *prologos* and knew that 'in some copies' (ἐν ἐνίοις τῶν ἀντιγραφῶν) the text begun with a different *prologos*; and the text we read is without *prologos*. The replacement of our text for the original of Euripides may have been the initiative of a tragic author or actor who passed off his own text as Euripidean in the context of the fourth-century boom of Euripides' re-performances. Or alternatively (more probably in my opinion) it may have been the consequence of the theatrical fortune of a radical reworking of the original text by an actor-interpolator or plural actor-interpolators, like the ones, professionally expert at mastering and imitating more or less successfully the style of their authors, who are suspected to have written entire pseudo-Euripidean sections of the *Iphigenia at Aulis* and added many lines in

A scholion on *Rhesus* 528 records that Crates forgave what he considered an astronomical mistake by observing that Euripides would have been young and therefore no expert in ‘astronomical theory’ when he wrote the tragedy. Apparently, the ancient doubters of the authenticity of *Rhesus* did not go so far as to consider the play the work of a lesser poet. Rather, they even deemed *Rhesus* worthy of ‘Sophocles’ stamp’, and Crates preferred to adduce Euripides’ young age as the reason for an astronomical mistake—not dramaturgic immaturity but lack of encyclopedic knowledge. We have no evidence that the ancients considered *Rhesus* an inferior work that could not be by Euripides because of its failure to live up to Euripides’ standard.

The history of modern scholarly discussions of the authenticity of *Rhesus* starts out with Joseph Justus Scaliger.² His doubts on the Euripidean authorship relied on the fact that *Rhesus* seemed to have pursued a verbal sublimity *grandiloquentior* than that of Euripides; he thus suggested that the tragedy might have been by Sophocles, perhaps in the wake of *hyp. b*, which however he did not quote. Sophoclean or Aeschylean authorship continued to be endorsed by some authoritative scholars: K. Lachmann, for instance, argued from the lyric structures of choral songs of *Rhesus* that the play was by Aeschylus, rather than by Sophocles,³ and A.H. Matthiae suggested that *Rhesus* was authored either by a contemporary of Euripides or by an *older* tragic poet.⁴

Objections to dramaturgic or stylistic features of *Rhesus* were formulated first of all by Samuel Petit and Jacques Hardion.⁵ The disparaging approaches by these two scholars gave rise to the thesis that *Rhesus* cannot be by Euripides, and also cannot be by Sophocles, and therefore has to be by a lesser author, not only because it is *different* from their standards but also because it is *inferior* to their standards. More than a century later, however, L.C. Valckenaer adopted and better argued the criticism of Petit and Hardion, which mainly concerned the inadequacy of *Rhesus* as a tragedy and highlighted the boastfulness and ineffectiveness of the protagonists Hector and Rhesus as inadequate tragic characters.⁶

other tragedies. I agree in fact with Ragone (1979) and Liapis (2009) and (2012) that *Rhesus* may have been composed by actors/interpolators; for arguments in favour of this conjecture, cf. Fantuzzi (2015).

2 Scaliger (1599–600) 6–8. Del Rio (1593) i.22 had already ascribed *Rhesus* to Euripides Junior or Senior, with no motivation.

3 Lachmann (1819) 116–117.

4 Matthiae (1824) 2–5.

5 Petit (1630) 185–197; Hardion (1737) 331–333.

6 Valckenaer (1767) 98–107.

The first systematic and authoritative attack on Euripidean authorship stemmed from the pen of G. Hermann.⁷ Hermann endorsed the idea that *Rhesus* would have been produced by an enthusiastic but incompetent lesser poet, and charged him above all with a lack of attention to the arousing of emotional responses in large audiences—not surprisingly, Hermann dated the play to the Hellenistic age, in tune with his contemporary Robert Morstadt.⁸ In later nineteenth-century scholarship the ‘lesser talent’ who wrote *Rhesus* was commonly thought to have lived not in the Hellenistic age, but in the fourth century BC (more specifically its first half).⁹

Euripidean authorship was again reasserted in the twentieth century. One assertion was made by R. Goossens and H. Grégoire in the 1930s, who believed that *Rhesus* reflected on the relations between Athens and its Thracian allies in the 420s.¹⁰ The other was by W. Ritchie.¹¹ Ritchie provided a most detailed stylistic and metrical analysis of the tragedy, and listed formidable evidence in favour of the thesis that *Rhesus* could be by Euripides, suggesting in accordance with Crates that *Rhesus* is the earliest of Euripides’ extant works and hypothesizing that it was composed between 455 and 440. His book has been the reference work on this tragedy for half a century, but its main conclusions on the authenticity of the play did not meet with great favour: immediately after the appearance of the book, E. Fraenkel’s review (1965) expressed the greatest appreciation for the scholarly acumen of its contributions to several stylistic aspects of the tragedy, but reaffirmed the idea of the play’s composition by a lesser, fourth-century author. Two decades later the cards of the game were shuffled again: the lack of consistent tragic pathos and the presence of frequent comic elements in *Rhesus*, elements/aspects which had often been deployed since Valckenaer to demonstrate non-Euripidean authorship, were re-interpreted by A.P. Burnett as suitable to the work of a young Euripides who ‘has not yet found his own mode; he loves but distrusts the conventional forms, and so he raids and ridicules the work of others without a qualm’.¹²

7 Hermann (1828).

8 Morstadt (1827). After Hermann, the hypothesis that the author of *Rhesus* was a tragedian of the Hellenistic Pleiad was picked up by Menzer (1867).

9 The same chronology had been already suggested by Hardion (1736) 336–337. Fourth century is the standard dating by all twentieth-century scholars who did not believe the tragedy authentic—among them Pearson, Wilamowitz, Rolfe, Macurdy, Porter, Geffcken, Schmid, Pohlenz, Lucas, Björck, Lesky.

10 See first of all Goossens (1932); Grégoire (1933).

11 Ritchie (1964).

12 Burnett (1985) 51.

Neither the team of ancient and modern supporters of *Rhesus*' Euripidean authorship nor its opponents have so far scored enough points to definitely win the game. This is not surprising, since *slight* differences or analogies between Euripides and *Rhesus* in vocabulary, metrics, dramatic technique, and so forth can hardly prove that *Rhesus* is or is not by Euripides, as an author does not necessarily have to write in the same way for his whole life.¹³ And Euripides in particular certainly changed his stylistic and metrical preferences. Nevertheless, a series of historical and stylistic details, which mainly surfaced in the last two decades of thriving *Rhesus* scholarship, drove all three of the commentaries of the tragedy recently published,¹⁴ as well as the fourth, forthcoming by the author of these pages, to share the idea that *Rhesus* belongs in the fourth century BC—in my opinion more probably in the age of Macedon, namely second half of the fourth century.¹⁵

2 New Evidence for the Dating of the *Rhesus*

An intriguing piece of evidence that has so far escaped scholarly notice suggests that the second stasimon of *Rhesus*, the song celebrating Rhesus as a god (341–379), and the following anapaestic introduction of Rhesus' entrance (380–387) parallel a precise orientation of theatrical tastes that the ancients attributed to a famous actor operating in the second half of the fourth century. According to Diod. Sic. 16.92, it was on the night before he was assassinated, at the state symposium at Aegae after the wedding of his daughter Cleopatra, that Philip II commissioned the actor Neoptolemus¹⁶ to sing 'some of his most successful pieces', 'in particular such pieces as bore on the Persian expedition'. Neoptolemus chose a piece on 'sudden, unpredictable death' that 'robs us of our distant hopes' (adesp. *TrGF* 127). He had the intention—or so comments Diodorus—to suggest to Philip II that even the great Persian Empire could some day be overturned by fortune and thereby to encourage Philip to pursue his planned expedition against it. In an extreme instance of tragic irony,¹⁷ Neoptolemus would have put on this performance in the early morning hours and in the very theatre where Philip II would be assassinated immediately after

13 As restated e.g. by Tuilier (1983).

14 Feickert (2005); Liapis (2012); Fries (2014).

15 See below section 5, in particular n. 62.

16 A very famous actor, whose connections with Philip II are also recorded by *hypothesis* (2) to Demosthenes 19 (335 Butcher).

17 Cf. Easterling (1997b).

being deified in a parade of the twelve Olympian gods in which his statue featured as the thirteenth.¹⁸ From Stobaeus (4.34.70), we learn of Neoptolemus' reaction to this unexpected twist:

Someone asked the tragic actor Neoptolemus what amazed him most in the stories told by Aeschylus, Sophocles, or Euripides. He said, 'None of those,' but instead something he himself had seen take place on a greater stage: Philip, who had taken part in the procession at the wedding of his daughter Cleopatra and had been acclaimed the thirteenth god, murdered on the next day in the theatre and lying face down.

Real life thus provided Neoptolemus with the exceptionally amazing sight of a deification and supposed immortalization followed almost immediately by death that he could not find in the texts of the three canonical tragedians (nor can we find in the surviving tragic texts), but whose great tragic potential he promptly acknowledged—after all, it had happened in a theatre, thus inviting comparison with the tragic texts. In a way, then, Neoptolemus' reaction provides an intriguing glimpse at his poetics of tragedy. Of course, we have no way to be sure whether Stobaeus' source recorded the actor's actual words or embroidered the historical records of his familiarity with Philip II and his presence at the wedding of Cleopatra and at the theatre where the assassination occurred. But in order to accomplish this embroidery—if that is what it was—the biographer used by Stobaeus would have relied on his knowledge of the fourth century's taste in tragedy, inferred from a quantity of texts that was vastly more numerous than the fragments handed down to us. What is more, the question addressed to Neoptolemus, τί θαυμάζοι, uses a verb redolent of fourth-century literary theory.¹⁹

It is thus appealing to surmise that it was around the time when Neoptolemus lived that the hymn to Rhesus in *Rh.* 341–387 was composed, where the Thracian leader is addressed by the Chorus as a proper god (Zeus and Ares) only to die immediately afterwards. Neoptolemus' poetics of tragic 'amazement' provide a fragment of the tastes that must have been prevailing among the theatre-goers of his age, and the *Rhesus* stasimon appears to be a striking application of the tastes that generated that poetics. The death of Philip II need not necessarily be a *terminus post quem* for the *Rhesus*, as Neoptolemus (or the biographer who may have invented his words in accordance with the tastes of

18 Suet. *Calig.* 57.4 Flavius Josephus, *Ant. Jud.* 19.94.

19 Cf. Arist. *Rhet.* 1.1371b24–25, *Poet.* 1456a19–21, 1460a11–12.

the time) may have forgotten a pre-existing *Rhesus* with its divinization and almost immediate death of Rhesus. But it certainly also fair to think that the second stasimon of the Rhesus spoke specifically to the aesthetics of Neoptolemus' age and pleased its taste for the motif of divinization and in particular divinization immediately followed by death.

Cultural history and history of religion do provide further support of this thesis, as we can observe that the divinization of a leading political or military figure because of or in connection with his salvific arrival and his imminent help (see respectively *Rh.* 357–369, 370–379) finds very few parallels in the fifth century,²⁰ and in fact (Neoptolemus was correct) no parallel in the surviving texts and fragments of fifth- and fourth-century tragedy. Instead, and revealingly, it is paralleled by the honours (and song) the Athenians bestowed on Demetrius Poliorcetes in 291 or 290 (Athen 6.253d–f = CA 173–174) or the divine honours Athenians and other Greeks bestowed on Philip II and Alexander the Great.²¹

3 Political Tragedy

Almost everything in the first half of *Rhesus* that does not find parallels in *Iliad* 10 can and should be (but has not yet been) explained in terms 'political tragedy'. Tragedians often hint at contemporary political issues, ideas, values and disvalues, which we know were or can surmise to have been topics of more or less heated discussion in public assemblies at the time their plays were performed and shape their myths as exemplary foils for these debates. This way of playing out, by means of myth, the concerns of the audience as a group of citizens is what has been called the 'political art of Greek tragedy'.²² Its frequency makes Greek tragedy a rather special example of a social body carrying out in a most public way the maintenance, refinement, and development of the mental infrastructure of their decision-making. Apart from being spectacles, and thus a break from everyday routine, and apart from being religious experiences of a sort, strongly connected to the Dionysiac festival hosting them, tragic performances were also an essential complement to everyday routine, which

20 Cf. Wilamowitz (1931/1932) 11.259–260; Hall (1989) 92; Liapis (2007) 381.

21 On the obvious similarities in structure and motifs between the *Rh.* stasimon and the song for Demetrius, the occasional and local episodes of divinization of military leaders or athletes in the fifth century [thoroughly reviewed by Currie (2005)], and the frequency of widespread divine cults of the kings in the age of Macedon, cf. Fantuzzi (2018).

22 To quote the definition suggested by the pioneering work on this topic by Meier (1993). See now Carter (2007).

regularly included debates in the *ekklêsia* or the *boulê*. They were thus occasions at which the spectators could continue to reflect on some of the issues they were debating or had been recently debating as citizens in the assembly,²³ and also had a chance of considering them not from the everyday outlook of the practical decision-making, but from the distanced viewpoint of a timeless 'heroic vagueness'.²⁴

The first half of *Rhesus* appears to feature three main scenes of debate that dramatize the preliminaries to the spy-mission of Dolon: 52–130 debating about the choice between a night attack (Hector) and a rather the spy mission to acquire more certain information about the enemies' intentions (Aeneas); 150–201 about the reward to be assigned to Dolon for volunteering for the spy mission, involving an analysis of the motivations of his action; 320–526 about the problem whether Rhesus could be accepted as an ally or not. As these scenes take place in the Trojan camp, they are totally new with respect to Homer, and it is a fair guess to suppose that the author of *Rhesus* fictionalized them from scratch. With a substantial consistency that is telling about the poetics of *Rhesus* but has escaped attention so far, all of them appear to have been conceived as pieces of political tragedy, as they are related to issues scenes of discussion of issues of fifth/fourth century dicastic and bouletic models.

3a) The debate of *Rhesus* 52–130 about night attack or reconnaissance mission may have sounded to its audience like a mythological exemplum of a sort, reflecting on tactical alternatives which may indeed have been a relevant bone of contention in the popular assemblies of Athens or other cities from the late fifth and fourth century, or in battlefield debates between generals of Athenian as well as non-Athenian armies. Reconnaissance was probably not a new military practice of the late classical age, but it acquired a special relevance in historiography only in the fourth century, and certainly was in contrast with the ideology of epic warfare, pivoted on face-to-face combat in the daylight.²⁵ In fact the use of scouts, the most widespread method of military reconnaissance in the ancient world, is not found in the action of the *Iliad* outside book 10,

23 On the 'imbrication' of the audience's *paideusis* by the democratic polis and, in particular, the strong emotions inherent in tragic poetics, cf. Goldhill (2000).

24 Namely the special setting made up by the locale of remote past and the medium of elevated poetic language, in which even the most problematic questions could be addressed without over divisiveness and 'made comfortable because expressed in ... glamorous and dignified terms': Easterling (1997a) 28–29. See also Pelling (2000) 164–167.

25 How consistent was the classical practice of using scouts or rather lookouts in fixed position is debated e.g. by Pritchett (1971–1991) 1.127–133 and Andrewes (1981) 458–460.

which is extravagant from the rest of poem in many details of its warfare,²⁶ although scouts are depicted on the shield of Achilles (18.520–529: two σκοποί advance ahead of an army) and in a simile (5.767–772: one leap of Hera’s horses flying in the air takes them as far into the distance as one can see from a σκοπή ‘lookout’ over the sea). These passages show that limiting the references to operations of military intelligence was simply the effect of a choice of poetics of the *Iliad* and its focus on open combat.²⁷ However for the late archaic and early classical age too we have only ambiguous evidence in our sources about the use of scouts, and some modern historians maintain that they were not systematically employed until the age of Xenophon.²⁸ But this may well have depended on the paucity of the sources, or on their specific character: even in the case of, specifically, Xenophon, *Anabasis*, *Hipparchicus*, and *Cyropaedia* are rich in detailed information about reconnaissance practices, whereas the *Hellenica*, a more general history which does not often indulge in detailed descriptions of marching and camping, gives no greater emphasis to them than the analogous works of Herodotus and Thucydides.²⁹ In any case it was only in the fourth century that emphasis on scouting increased. Xenophon used his cavalry to scout ahead of his contingent of the Ten Thousands in Thrace and later let the Thracian cavalry of Seuthes take out this role; Agesilaus used scouts while campaigning in Asia, which was also Alexander’s usual practice.³⁰ The initial debate between Hector, Aeneas, and the Chorus thus belongs on the one hand to the mise-en-abyme of Dolon’s spy mission as ‘the other war’ (the war of intelligence, ambushes, and night raids, which is featured by *Iliad* 10 and *Rhesus*) in opposition to the face-to-face combat in the open field preferred by Homer. On the other hand, it may also have been enjoyed by the audience as a piece of ‘political tragedy’ mirroring contemporary debates on the relative import and timing of the two tactical options: rapid engagement in the battlefield vs. back-stage intelligence preparation.³¹

3b) The debate between Dolon and Hector, the second major addition of *Rhesus* to the plot of the night of *Iliad* 10. Apart from strongly highlighting the final

26 Cf. Williams (2000) and below pp. 429–430.

27 Williams (2000).

28 Pritchett (1971–1991) 1.127–132; Wheeler/Strauss (2007) 202.

29 As Russell (1999) 14 n. 15 pointedly observes.

30 Cf. Engels (1980); Spence (1993) 145–146; Russell (1999) 15–16.

31 Hesk (2011), 141 correctly concludes about the dialogue between Hector and Aeneas that ‘the play models the importance of dialogue and debate in the specific situation of decision-making within a polis at war’.

choice of the horses of Achilles, with its bitter message of tragic irony,³² this guessing game is also a piece of ‘political tragedy’ that does not contribute at all to the play action but may have been a kind of prop for the audience to reflect on the issue of who is the ‘benefactor’ of a *polis*, and above all how he should be rewarded. When Hector advertises the spy mission and looks for a volunteer, he only speaks of performing good services for the fatherland, and thus becoming its ‘benefactor’ (151) and showing oneself to be a ‘patriot’ (158). The spy raid on the Greek camp is going to be a risky mission that exceeds normal military duties, and Hector therefore encourages the emergence of a volunteer by describing his operation as a *εὐεργεσία* for the city and establishes a glory- and honour-centred perspective for this future benefactor and his family (158–160). In the following stichomythia about the prize to be assigned to Dolon Hector suggests several alternatives, and Dolon rejects them one after the other until Hector apparently runs out of ideas: only at this point does Hector ask a direct question (181) and thus occasions Dolon’s direct answer. Down to 169, Hector emphasizes rewards that are honorific, or provide Dolon with social distinction. Even after Dolon has formulated the request of a material *μισθός* and Hector has agreed (161–165), Hector seems not to be on Dolon’s wavelength and continues to think in terms of honour—the honour of acquiring political power (165) or social distinction by marrying a princess (167). Even when he acknowledges that the *χέρδος* that Dolon requests is of a material kind (at 169) he briefly explores the possibility that Dolon may want ‘gold’ but comes back immediately to suggesting that Dolon may be interested in awards of martial/heroic but not practical relevance such as being consigned Greek prisoners on whom to take revenge (173–176). This long discussion between Hector and Dolon may presuppose, and evoke to the theatre audience, the public debates on the honours that *poleis* granted to citizens or (more often) foreigners who deserved to be called ‘benefactors’ of the city. In particular, evidence stemming from the orators and inscriptions attests to the frequency with which similar discussions were conducted about the adequate size and appropriate nature of such rewards in the fifth and (above all) fourth century.

32 The fact that the reward finally agreed consists of Achilles’ horses brings the ‘guessing game’ to a surprise ending which is highlighted by being contrasted with long review of more obvious suggested rewards that precedes it. Its tragic irony arises as (a) not only will Dolon not live to receive the horses of Achilles, but Hector will not live to claim the horses himself or award them to anyone else. Moreover, (b) the focus on capturing Achilles’ horses foreshadows (and is presumably motivated by) the later seizure of Rhesus’ horses by Odysseus and Diomedes, which, again, amounts to a sort of *peripeteia* for Hector’s expectations.

The rewards which fifth- or fourth-century benefactors of the cities were entitled to ask for, or received at the city's own instigation, were a series of variously combined honorific (= non-monetary) privileges that usually also extended to other members of the family and/or were hereditary: *προξενία* either alone or with other distinctions; the titles *πρόξενος* and *εὐεργέτης* either alone or with other distinctions; the title *εὐεργέτης* accompanied by other privileges but not *προξενία*; the title of *πρόξενος* associated with other privileges but not *εὐεργεσία*. Honours other than *προξενία* and *εὐεργεσία* consisted mainly of public praise, or the privileges of front row seating in the theatre and at the festivals (*προεδρία*), immunity from some or all taxes and liturgies (*ἀτέλεια*), safety to the person (*ἀσυλία*), right of landownership (*ἔγκτησις*), access to the *βουλή* and the *ἐκκλησία*, free meals at the *prytaneum* (*σῆτησις*), direct access to the law-court of the *polemarchos* (normally without paying), a promise of compensation if the honoree was injured (*ἐπιμέλεια*), publication of the honorific decree, in particular through erection of a *stèle* financed by the *polis*.³³ Hector's advertising of the spy mission as an act of *εὐεργεσία* and his initial focus on honours or social distinctions perfectly matches the practice of praising and compensating civic benefactors, and discussing in the assembly which honours to include for which benefactor, and which not. For Aristotle, being benefactor of the city and gaining honour were two faces of the same coin: cf. *Eth.Nic.* 8.1163b 'honour is the reward of virtue and benefaction (*τῆς μὲν γὰρ ἀρετῆς καὶ τῆς εὐεργεσίας ἡ τιμὴ γέρας*) ... A citizen who contributes nothing of value to the community is not held in honour (*οὐ γὰρ τιμᾶται ὁ μηδὲν ἀγαθὸν τῶι κοινῶι πορίζων*), for the common property is given to the benefactor of the community (*τῶι τὸ κοινὸν εὐεργετοῦντι*), and honour belongs to the community (*ἡ τιμὴ δὲ κοινόν*), *Rhet.* 1.1361a 'honour is a sign of reputation for being a benefactor (*τιμὴ δ' ἐστὶν μὲν σημεῖον εὐεργετικῆς εὐδοξίας*), and benefactors are the people most honoured, rightly'. To my knowledge, *εὐεργέτης*-inscriptions in fact hardly ever decreed a monetary compensation for a city benefactor.

The question of which honorific rewards were to be assigned to the civic benefactors may have been discussed in public as early as the fifth century, but it certifiably became a more frequent topic of discussion in Athens only around the mid-fourth century. In the fourth century the number of recompenses awarded to benefactors increased, and the correct functioning of the system of exchange between benefaction and compensation from the city seems—from the evidence we have—to have acquired a renewed relevance: Athenian politicians of the second half of the fourth century very often attacked their

33 Cf. Gauthier (1985) 103–128.

rivals for passing allegedly unconstitutional decrees conferring excessive honours on dubiously meritorious individuals, and more than half of the *graphai paranomôn* (indictments against illegal proposals) concern precisely this kind of decree.³⁴

3c) The third major addition of the tragic author to the epic plot, *Rhesus* 319–526, is also a piece of ‘political tragedy’ that comments on the pros and cons of alliance or overly dependent alignment of Athenian politics with the Thracian kings. Because of their crucial role for the strong Athenian interests in the North, both in the late fifth and fourth century, the kings of Thrace were courted by the Athenians again and again, though seldom effectively, and Athenian foreign politics was dotted with episodes demonstrating (at least from Athens’ viewpoint) the Thracians’ unreliability or ingratitude. These kings were in fact notorious as ‘gift receivers’ who cared very little about the reciprocal ‘gift giving’ (Thuc. 2.97.3–4). Particularly famous were the troubles which the Athenians endured with their phantom-ally Sitalces from 431 to 429; they were recorded by both Aristoph. (*Ach.* 141–172) and Thuc. (2.29; 2.95; 2.101). However, the Athenian need to interact with the unreliable but indispensable Thracian allies did not stop with the Peloponnesian war. The ingratitude of Seuthes II toward Xenophon in 399 BC is narrated at length in *An.* 7.2.10–7.7.57. Later on, Cotys became king of most of Thrace in 383 and the Athenians, trying to court his favour, granted him citizenship and a gold crown. But, at least in Demosthenes’ words, which expose him to the public rebuke, he badly exploited the loyalty to his Thracian family demonstrated by the Athenian general Iphicrates, who had married into Cotys’ family (Demosth. 23.131–132).³⁵ Perhaps the most time-serving of all the Thracian kings was Cersebleptes, son of Cotys and king of Eastern Thrace. Cersebleptes and Athens concluded a treaty in 357, which acknowledged Athenian control over the Thracian Chersonese. But the Athenians courted and made alliance with all of the three Thracian kings—in 358 with Berisades and Amadocus, in 355 with Cersobleptes. In 356 Athens finalized an anti-Macedonian alliance with the king of Western Thrace Cetriporis and kings of Paeonia and Illyria (*IG* 11² 127). Nonetheless, at least according to Demosthenes, turncoat Cersebleptes and Philip II seemed to plot against Athens and Athenian interests in Chersonese at the diplomatic conference of Maroneia, although in the end Cersebleptes was swift to change plans and come again to

34 Liddel (2007) 162, after Hansen (1974) 22–27, 62. For more details on the ideology of the rewards to benefactors, cf. Domingo Gygas (2016); on this ideology as enacted by the stichomythia of Dolon and Hector, Fantuzzi (2016).

35 Iliescu (1976) surmised that *Rhesus* may reflect the Athenians’ troubles with Cotys.

arrangements with the Athenians (354 or 353?). The anti-Macedonian plotting of Athenians and Thracians escalated again in 347 and 346, with some Athenian fortresses introduced on the Thracian coast, probably at the request of Cersebleptes.³⁶

The discourse on the risks from alliances with Thracians meshes well in *Rhesus* with the terminological/ideological problem of the relations between the concepts of ξενία, φιλία, and συμμαχία, which was absent from Homer (where only the idea of ξενία was widely operative, and the protocols of political alliance seem yet unknown) but must have been widely discussed at the end of the fifth and in the fourth century. *Rhesus* 336–338 focus on a situation diametrically opposed to the one between Croesus and the Spartans when they decided to embrace a reciprocal ξεινίη and συμμαχίη, according to Herod. 1.69.1–70.1. Unlike the Spartans, who renewed their old connections with Croesus in the past (ξενία), at the beginning Hector refuses to enter a συμμαχία with Rhesus: like the Spartans, he acknowledges that he has ties of ξενία with Rhesus, but because of the bad φιλία for Troy that Rhesus had shown through his belated intervention, Hector maintains that he cannot accept the offer of Rhesus' συμμαχία. A new, or stronger distinction is drawn between the idea of political alliance (συμμαχία or φιλία) and the idea of ξενία. The latter term never occurs in the surviving diplomatic documents of the classical age and is not used by Thucydides or Xenophon to characterize the relationships between states; the word φιλία is used in their stead. Herodotus had adopted the term ξενία twenty times and ξένος sixteen times for the interstate relationship between individuals or communities. However, in almost all cases Herodotus used these terms to describe treaties and relationships between tyrants or those between tyrants and different rulers³⁷—it may be not coincidental that at 337 Hector uses the term ξενία for the connection which exists between himself the 'king' of Troy (as he is called in the play) and Rhesus the Thracian king, but at 324 he speaks of Rhesus' lack of φιλία, as far as Troy is concerned. The dialogue in Xenophon (*Hell.* 4.1.34–38) between the Spartan king Agesilaus and the satrap Pharnabazus, who had formerly been an ally of Sparta against Athens, provides a very interesting case of this antithesis between the private affairs of ξενία and the interpersonal rules imposed by the city at war—among which was the need of renewing preexisting connections of ξενία/φιλία through a formally established, new and operative συμμαχία.³⁸ Likewise at the beginning Hector is only

36 Cf. Demosth. 7.37; 8.64; 9.15; 10.8, 65; 18.27; 19.56; Aeschin. 3.82.

37 Cf. Bauslaugh (1991) 60–61, 88–89.

38 Cf. Herman (1987) 1–9, to be read with the specifications of Konstan (1997) 83–87.

willing to respect the obligations of *ξενία* at a personal level. Hence Rhesus' admission to the table at *Rhesus* 336–337 and not to *συμμαχία*. But in Hector's preliminary, retrospective opinion (321–326) Rhesus' *φιλία* for/from Troy had, in a way, expired. Only after pondering (with the help of the watchmen and of the shepherd-messenger) the opportunities provided by the powerful army of Rhesus does Hector entertain the idea of establishing a new operative *συμμαχία* (341),³⁹ in a sophisticated lesson on meditately progressive decision-making about choosing and confirming allies.

3d) In their enacting specific issues that may have been familiar from many occasions of public decision-making, the debates in the first part of *Rhesus*, all involving Hector as the supreme commander who has to pass the final decisions, seem a micro-anthology of case-studies of decision-making. Many tragedies enacted episodes of *εὐβουλία* and *δυσβουλία*, and plays like Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and Euripides' *Suppliant Women* did so consistently.⁴⁰ Both in the debate with Aeneas (plus watchmen) and in the debates first with the shepherd-messenger and later with Rhesus (plus watchmen), Hector, at least in his first reactions and stances, seems rash or prejudicial or both, and demonstrates a lack of self-generated capacity for *εὐβουλία*. But after engaging in dialogue with the watchmen, his consistent interlocutors (a sort of representative of the citizen body), and competent peers like Aeneas or powerful potential helpers like Rhesus, he overcomes his first inclinations and, in the end, reaches wiser decisions. *Rhesus* thus practically advertises the importance of collegial decision-making. True, Aeneas' reasonable caution leads to a plan which is only seemingly the most reasonable, because the spy mission after all will not fulfil its task: Dolon does not gather the required intelligence and thanks (at least in part) to the information he gives to Odysseus and Diomedes, the two Greeks can create the greatest havoc and massacre in the Thracian camp; so 'it turns out that Hector would have been better off ignoring Aeneas' advice and attacking the Greeks immediately'.⁴¹ In tune with the poetics of tragedy, *Rhesus* makes its audience reflect not only on what is or is not *εὐβουλία*, but also on the limits and downfall of *εὐβουλία*, when it is hampered by hostile *τύχη*.

39 A detailed discussion of Thracian unreliability and the ideas of *ξενία*, *φιλία*, and *συμμαχία* in Fantuzzi (2011b).

40 Cf. Hall (2009) for the former; Hesk (2011) 127–136 for the latter.

41 Cf. Hesk (2011) 142; the whole paragraph is in debt to Hesk (2011) 136–143.

4 Smiles are Allowed

Rhesus evidently diverges in many details from the standard of fifth-century tragedy; in particular, brief hints at jokes and the comic can be found more or less often e.g. in Euripides' *Electra*, or *Bacchae*, or *Alcestis* and all the so called melodramatic plays, where interest for adventure seems to prevail over the tragedy of the *peripeteia*.⁴² But *Rhesus* seems incongruously experimental in its frequent use of *extended* comic scenes even when it is compared to Euripides' late experimental oeuvre. Gottfried Hermann had already correctly pointed to the incongruously comic nature of *Rhesus*' parodos and epiparodos, and the epiparodos in particular had reminded him of Plautus' *Amphitryon*.⁴³ The parodos, featuring watchmen who are so anxious to make Hector aware of fires unexpectedly flaring in the Greek camp that they are suspected of paranoiac panic, finds its best parallels either in comedy (above all Aristoph. *Ach.* 564–571) or in the 'Hilferuf' scenes of satyr drama.⁴⁴ Later on in the play, after leaving the stage at 564, the Chorus re-enters the scene (epiparodos). Just before they left, the Trojan watchmen had missed Odysseus and Diomedes by a hair's breadth (527–564). As the two Greeks and the watchmen run into each other again at 675, the epiparodos turns into a messy comedy of errors: instead of leading to what we would consider the natural result of such an encounter, i.e. the defeat and capture of Odysseus and Diomedes, Odysseus' trickery (he pretends to be a Trojan) turns this scene into another potentially comic encounter like the one between Paris and Athena at 642–674 (see below). Examples of physical aggression between Chorus and actor(s) are not common in tragedy (the closest parallels are Aesch. *Suppl.* 836–910 and Soph. *OC* 856–857; there seems to have been some kind of search and pursuit scene in Euripides' *Telephus*, *TrGF* 727a), and there certainly is nothing in all of fifth-century tragedy like the blind turmoil and remarkable physicality of *Rhesus*' chase-scene. The watchmen's excited calls at its opening—*ἕα ἕα· βάλε βάλε βάλε βάλε· θένε θένε· / τίς ἀνήρ; / λεύσσε· τούτον αὐδῶ· / δεῦρο δεῦρο πάς*, 'What is this? Shoot shoot shoot shoot: smite smite. Who is the man? Look, here is the one I mean', 675–680—only find a close parallel in Aristoph. *Ach.* 280–283, another brief astrophic song that includes a similar series of imperatives and is sung by a Chorus likewise rushing out from a hiding place: *οὔτος αὐτός ἐστιν, οὔτος· / βάλλε, βάλλε, βάλλε, βάλλε, / παίε παίε τὸν μιαρὸν· / οὐ βαλεῖς, οὐ*

42 Cf. first of all Seidensticker (1982); Goldhill (2006).

43 Hermann (1828) 283–284.

44 Burnett (1985) 18.

βαλεῖς; ‘There he is, the very man. Shoot shoot shoot; hit hit the bastard. Will you not shoot? Will you not shoot?’. The Aristophanic passage was sometimes suspected of being a parody of *Rhesus*, and thus also used to demonstrate the Euripidean authorship of *Rhesus*.⁴⁵ But instead of being an isolated tragic model for Aristophanes’ parody, the author of *Rhesus* will more probably have imitated this passage of Aristophanes or a typical comic scene⁴⁶ (apart from Aristoph. *Ach.* 280–283 see, e.g., Aristoph. *Eq.* 247–254), as he apparently also does with the parodos, and probably with the guessing game between Dolon and Hector.⁴⁷

In addition to the *Rhesus*’ parodos and epiparodos, we can note the presence of another comic scene immediately preceding the epiparodos. At *Rhesus* 642–664, Athena, disguised as Aphrodite, makes fun of Paris and successfully pretends to be Aphrodite. Gods disguised as other gods are otherwise only attested in comedy: Dionysus dressed as Heracles in Aristoph. *Ran.* 495–496, or disguised as Paris and as a ram in Cratinus’ *Dionysalexandros* (*PCG* 39–51); or Zeus disguising himself as Artemis and thus entering Callisto’s bed in a comedy of unknown title by Amphis (*PCG* 46). Besides, it is especially comic that the virgin goddess of intelligence is disguised as the goddess of love. Last but not least, the ‘guessing game’ scene in 164–183, a sort of dialogue of the deaf that ridicules both Hector’s focus on heroic values and Dolon’s venality,⁴⁸ finds its only parallels in some briefer comic scenes of riddle repartees such as, e.g., Aristoph. *Ach.* 418–431, *Vesp.* 74–85, *Ran.* 55–67, or *Men. Per.* 276–292.⁴⁹

It turns out, then, that *Rhesus* includes at least four scenes that the audience had probably to perceive as properly comic, both because they are really inducive to laugh, and because they transgress the generic restraints of (at least) fifth-century tragedy. These comic influences seem too numerous and too recognizable and too structurally emphatic to be a pure unintentional coincidence. We have then to assume that the author of *Rhesus* purposefully *wanted* to write a tragedy where comic ‘smiles are more than occasionally allowed’.⁵⁰ But, again, is this contamination the fruit of some hack’s lack of tragic competence and a sort of pre-Hellenistic isolated and failed experiment? I think that we should rather deem this contamination to be part of a systematic imitation of the peculiarities of *Iliad* 10.

45 Cf. 421–423; Bates (1916) 5–8.

46 I agree with Liapis (2012) 256.

47 See below.

48 See above pp. 423–424.

49 Cf. Fantuzzi/Konstan (2013).

50 To paraphrase the title of Burnett (1985).

According to a scholion exeg. on *Iliad* 10.1 ‘it is said that this rhapsody was arranged by Homer separately and was not a part of the *Iliad* but was arranged into the poem by Peisistratus (ὑφ’ Ὀμήρου ἰδία τετάχθαι καὶ μὴ εἶναι μέρος τῆς Ἰλιάδος, ὑπὸ δὲ Πεισιστράτου τετάχθαι εἰς τὴν ποιήσιν)’. The compositional ‘separation’ from the rest of the *Iliad*, of which the ancients speak in the case of book 10, has led some modern scholars to assume that the contents of this book were not part of the oral tradition that resulted in the *Iliad*. Of course, the phrasing of the scholion quoted above does not necessarily mean what it has often but wrongly been assumed to mean—that the book is not Homeric.⁵¹ The scholion simply appears to suggest that for some of the ancients the *Iliad* as a whole appeared not to presuppose book 10 and that this book seemed external to the whole. That peculiarity of *Iliad* 10 may then have been the model inspiring the peculiarity of *Rhesus*. *Rhesus* may have been written in a fashion that was peculiar and deviated from the standards of fifth-century tragedy precisely because he wanted to imitate the impression of ‘separatedness’ that his principal model *Iliad* 10 gave.⁵²

The hypothesis of *Iliad* 10 as a model for *Rhesus* of a narrative which sets itself apart from the stylistic and ideological standards of the work or set of works to which it belongs (‘a piece of poetry that doesn’t “quite fit”’⁵³) has never been suggested, according to my knowledge. This suggestion cannot be more than a hypothesis, as it strives to ascribe to a thoughtful reflection of poetics a result that in principle critics may deem to be simply the fruit of incompetent mastery of tragedy. But it can hardly be a coincidence that *Rhesus* turns out to be especially ‘peculiar’, in comparison with the tragic tradition, precisely in one of the ways in which *Iliad* 10 was probably felt to be by the ancients. The reasons why modern scholars doubted and still doubt that book 10 was part of the *Iliad*’s original structure, and which may also have oriented ancient commentators in the same direction, are on the one hand several details in which this book reflects ideas of epic style and epic warfare that are at odds with the poetics of the *Iliad* at large, and on the other hand a very frequent and epically incongruous drift towards the comic.

First of all, there is the burlesque braggartism of Dolon and his cowardice during Odysseus’ interrogation, which diminishes the pathos of his death.

51 Cf. Dué/Ebbott (2010) 5–6.

52 *Rhesus* may also have been influenced by other literary texts, such as, first of all, Pindar’s poem from which F 262 Maehler survives, or the cyclic tradition which has been conjectured to underlie Pindar; cf. Fenik (1964). But the dearth of the evidence on this cyclic/lyric background should caution us to avoid conjectures.

53 Lavigne (2008) 119.

There are then further hints at unconventional behaviour interspersed throughout the whole book, and they involve not only the Trojans, but also the Greeks, and even the gods: they range from the way Diomedes comments on Nestor's indefatigable old age (10.164) when he is awoken by Nestor's kick (– a kick!, 10.158), to Agamemnon's concern for the survival of his weak brother Menelaus (10.240). Among the divinities, Apollo will have struck the viewers as surprisingly ineffectual, but he is incongruously said to 'have done no blind watch' (10.515), although he intervenes only *after* Athena's and Diomedes' scheming has led already to the slaughter of Rhesus; as a result, he merely manages to wake and incite Rhesus' cousin Hippocoon to mourn for the slaughtered Rhesus⁵⁴ and (perhaps not without some effect of dark humour) to acknowledge and lament the absence of the precious horses (10.520) even before the slaughter of Rhesus and the other Thracians (10.521). Furthermore, *Iliad* 10 has been correctly seen to develop iambic resonances that are concentrated and relevant in this book as nowhere else in the *Iliad*. Prominent among them is the figure of the trickster, often emblemized by the wolf in archaic poetry. At the beginning it is Dolon (= 'The Tricky One') who wears a wolf pelt and (at least in *Rhesus*, see line 205) tries to imitate the 'thievish steps' of the wolf; in fact he seems destined to play this role, though later on his cowardice under interrogation by Odysseus, which derives from being raised with five sisters (10.317), and his ugliness (10.316), make him similar to the disreputable iambic Thersites of *Iliad* 2, and he soon dies dishonoured at the hands of Odysseus (who had already beaten Thersites in *Iliad* 2).⁵⁵ Iambic mocking of the Trojans is also implied in their foolishly haphazard joy and feasting at the beginning of the book, which is based on the ungrounded presumption of victory (10.11–13). Accordingly, Nestor decides to call the assembly because of his fear of becoming 'a cause of rejoicing to our foes' (μὴ χάριμα γενώμεθα δυσμενέεσσιν, 10.193).⁵⁶ These Trojan feelings of joy are radically overturned by the laugh of Odysseus and the other Greeks when he returns victorious to the Greek camp—a laugh both of joy and scorn for the enemies (10.564–565). Hints of invective and mocking are not absent from the *Iliad* (book 2: Thersites; book 3: Paris), but their concentration in *Iliad* 10 makes this book amount to a peculiar variety of epic narrative that focuses often and most evidently on blame and ridicule.

It is thus perhaps an attempt at imitating what seems a distinctively non-Iliadic drift to iambic comicity of epic *Iliad* 10 that may have led the author of *Rhesus* to include comic elements in his tragedy.

54 See Henry (1905); Shewan (1911) 199–204.

55 Lavigne (2008) 132–133.

56 On the enemy's defeat or scorn as an iambic motif, see for instance Nagy (1979) 257–259 and Lavigne (2008) 121–130.

But this hybridization could also easily find its place within the synchronic system of literary genres of the fourth century BC. *Rhesus* would then be an example of the ongoing and subtle exchanges that both distinguished and united the two major dramatic genres of tragedy and comedy in (at least) the second half of that century. Euripides' tragedies of reversed catastrophe do without a doubt evidence a trend toward partial overlapping, and in the second half of the fourth century New Comedy so successfully reshaped and internalized tragic scenes and myths that they could hardly be perceived as extraneous.⁵⁷ But during the fourth century and especially with Menander, tragedy became a genetic component of a sort of hybrid comedy.⁵⁸ Seen from this perspective, and if we accept the nowadays widespread idea of its late chronology, *Rhesus* may be supposed to develop a literary strategy opposite but symmetrical to New Comedy and therefore fully in tune with the rules of the contemporary system of literary genres—it would represent the only extant, but perhaps not a surprising comi-tragic pendant to the tragi-comic hybrid of Menander's comedy.

5 Plausible Audiences

We have already seen that *Rhesus*, like fifth-century tragedy, devotes ample attention to the issue of decision-making, but unlike fifth-century tragedy, it does not deal with the issue of the proper exercise of power in the *polis*; instead, *Rhesus* is a 'Soldatenstück',⁵⁹ where the problem of decision-making is analyzed with regard to its military dimension, and with a keen attention for military details and technical jargon. All of the debates that *Rhesus* privileges as a 'political' tragedy may have belonged in principle to Athenian assemblies of the last two decades of the fifth or the fourth century. But at least the debate on the awards for the benefactors, as we have seen,⁶⁰ befits the fourth much more than the fifth century. Most importantly, the idea of a military 'panic' is presupposed at *Rhesus* 15–22 and expressed at 36–37, 138–139. This idea is not in itself new or rare, but its origination from the god Pan (hence the term itself) is not attested before fourth-century *Polioretica* of Aeneas Tacticus; besides, the

57 On the overlaps between tragedy and comedy in the fifth century, see most recently Medda/Mirto/Pattoni (2006); for the fourth century, Xanthakis-Karamanos (1991); on Menander and tragedy, Petrides (2010).

58 Petrides (2010) 100–111.

59 As Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1926) 286 contemptuously called *Rhesus*.

60 Above, pp. 421–424.

Hector of *Rhesus* seems obsessively concerned with the need and practice of preventing/restraining panic, which is also presented as a crucial know-how of military commanders by Aeneas Tacticus 27 and the *Homeric Problems* of Aristotle's school (F 384 Gigon).⁶¹

Last but not least, a few hints interspersed in *Rhesus* converge to present Hector as a Macedonian 'king', and the Trojan military have a Macedonian scent.⁶² Tragic authors of the fifth century had often dwelt with the 'others' in whom their own times were most interested. In this respect, the Persians in Aeschylus and Trojans in Euripides are consistently depicted with derogatory features as oriental barbarians (effeminate and/or cowards, prone to luxuriousness and excessive emotions),⁶³ even though they do sometimes rise to the level of 'noble barbarians' and serve as a foil that highlights the degeneration of bad Greeks,⁶⁴ and the Trojans, as a rule, are often more aligned with Athenian culture than with barbarian culture.⁶⁵ If *Rhesus* belongs to the fourth century,

61 Cf. Fantuzzi (2011a).

62 The first scenario the audience is asked to contemplate is Hector's bivouac, and Hector is presented as βασιλεύς 'king' surrounded by 'ὑπασπισταί of the king' (2). ὑπασπιστής may simply recall the 'squire', that is the attendant who carries a hoplite's shield, arms, and additional equipment. The term is not found before the fifth century, and its basic/common meaning 'squire' is the only one attested outside the Macedonian army. But in *Rhesus* the term probably is the Macedonian military's technical word designating the 'bodyguards' of the Macedonian king, as the ὑπασπισταί of Hector clearly mediate between Hector's bivouac and the space outside of it like a ring of security—the watchmen believe that they have first to get in touch with these ὑπασπισταί before they can communicate with Hector (4–6). Immediately after the ὑπασπισταί of the king, *Rhesus* makes us encounter the φίλοι of the king (26), possibly the designation of the royal retinue, also called ἐταῖροι, who permanently accompanied Philip II and Alexander at war, in hunting, and in feasting. At 26, the watchmen ask Hector to order these φίλοι to summon σὸς λόχος. In light of the task this λόχος is supposed to perform—'fit bridles to the horses' (27)—λόχος should be understood as signifying the cavalry of the king. The Iliadic Hector had no cavalry, but chariots, and we cannot rule out the possibility that 27 simply refers to chariot-horses, as in 616–617. But *Rhesus* may also evoke here the specific λόχος of knights of 'king' Hector. It would be an innovation reflecting the reality of the Macedonian army, as the word λόχος is never used of an equestrian unit except at Arrian, *An.* 3.16.11 and *Acies in Alan.* 20, where λόχος is a subdivision of the ἵλη, which would have been established by Alexander at Susa. Arrian's categorical statement that 'there were no equestrian λόχοι' before Alexander's initiative of 331/330 does not necessarily constitute a *terminus post quem* for *Rhesus*, as Alexander may have used officially λόχος in the sense of 'cavalry unit' in the wake of pre-existing informal Macedonian terminology; but this information confirms at least the Macedonicity of the term λόχος when used for horsemen.

63 Cf. Hall (1989) 26–32, 68–74.

64 Cf. Hall (1989) 211–222; Saïd (2002).

65 Main point in Croally (1994) 103–115; Mattison (2009).

then the Trojans' Macedonian flavour would adapt this fifth-century idea of the 'others' to a new context and function: Macedonizing Trojans instead of orientalizing Trojans. For a fourth-century play, in fact, the Macedonians would have been the Greeks' closest neighbouring 'others', both for Athens and for most other powerful Greek cities; and hinting at them would have been quite in tune with the flair for 'political' instruction in *Rhesus*.⁶⁶

These 'Macedonizing' Trojans, as well as the Thracians, are seen with some sympathy in the play.⁶⁷ Rhesus (612) and Hector (404, 833) still remain 'barbarians', but this epithet seems to be freer in *Rhesus* from derogatory associations than even in Euripides' Trojan plays, and means simply 'non-Greek'.⁶⁸ The Trojans of fifth-century tragedy were usually considered cowards, whereas *Rhesus* portrays Hector, at least, as a fighter of valour and a competent (although unlucky) military leader; and Rhesus seems to have had at least the potential to turn into a good fighter, though his inclination to despotic arrogance do resemble features most commonly ascribed to the Orientals in tragedy, and he certainly does commit the misstep of not arranging for a more proficient service of night-sentinels in the camp (763–769).

Furthermore, the Macedonians were 'others' who at least in the fourth century strove most actively to be acknowledged as a fully-fledged part of Greek culture.⁶⁹ And in fact we see that the Muse is characterized most emphatically as Thracian, since we learn from 915–925 that she conceived Rhesus from the river Strymon during a trip to Mount Pangaeon (Homer had ignored or at least not mentioned this paternity); besides, she constructs in her mourning a kind of aetiology of the cultural priority of Northern Greece. At the acme of her fury against Athena, the principal in the killing of Rhesus, the Muse presents one of Athens' oldest sources of poetical pride, Musaeus, as her pupil, and she brags about her role in the initiative of Orpheus, Rhesus' cousin, to introduce the mysteries to Athens (941–947).⁷⁰ By reinterpreting Athens' cultural success as the fruit of what we might call the input of the wisdom of Northern Greece that she personifies, the Thracian Muse not only seems to endorse the Macedonians' attempt at getting a Greek cultural identity bestowed upon them, but goes as far as claiming that Northern Greece would have nurtured the roots of Athenian culture.

66 See above section 3.

67 According to a felicitous definition by Mattison (2009) 68 *Rhesus* ascribes to the Trojans a national characterization that 'has left the more egalitarian context of Homeric epic, but ... has not been transformed into a contemporary Persian'.

68 As observed by Liapis (2009) 83.

69 Badian (1982 = 2012); Revermann (1999–2000) 454–467.

70 Cf. Markantonatos (2004).

Archelaus' court doubtless would have been a very plausible place of performance for Euripides' *Archelaus* and, in principle, a *Rhesus* by an imitator of Euripides might have targeted the same audience. If it is the case that *Rhesus* belongs in the second half of the fourth century, it might still have been composed for Macedonian viewers, as the Macedonians continued after Archelaus to exercise a strong control over theatrical activity, which Lycurgus' initiatives of valorization of fifth-century tragic heritage may have counterattacked. Macedonians may also have appreciated the play's misplaced attribution to Euripides, since they liked to place a retrospective emphasis on the Macedonian phase in the life of the late Euripides. They seem, in fact, to have encouraged the biographers under their patronage to adopt the same trend.⁷¹

Nevertheless, the frequent focus of *Rhesus* on Northern Greece does not prove that the play was composed for a Macedonian audience.⁷² All of the interest of *Rhesus* for the military and the culture of Northern Greece may simply prove that in the age in which *Rhesus* was composed the audience(s) that its author envisaged were interested in the cultural, military, or religious reality of Northern Greece (we do not have to forget that Thrace was totally annexed to the kingdom of Macedon around 340 BC). After all, the 'Macedonizing' non-Greeks of *Rhesus*—its Hector, its Thracians, and its Rhesus—do remain the 'others' and are the foes of the Greeks. Apart from being the losers in the match of opposed spy-missions, and in the whole war, they do from time to time slip into stupidity (first of all in their preposterous belief that the war is over and won), buffoonery (Dolon's case), or megalomania (Hector's and above all Rhesus' cases). However, in light of the role of defeated 'others' that the 'Macedonizing' Trojans and the Thracians play in *Rhesus*, I prefer to think that the ambiguity of these cultural and national identities in our play rather resembles the polysemous ambiguity of, in particular, the 'other' sinister god of Euripides' *Bacchae*. This tragedy, as has been re-proposed in recent years,⁷³ could have been staged not only at the great Dionysia in Athens, but also at the court of Archelaus, as it includes elements which, when read in appropriate ways, might appeal to both audiences—Macedonian recipients will have looked for different religious connotations than the Athenians, and, for instance, felt more sympathy for Dionysus as an aggressive, vengeful outsider, or will have enjoyed the descriptive hints to Macedonian geography at lines 560–575. The *Rhesus*' references to Macedonian or Northern life/culture may also have 'spoken double' and intrigued two different audiences. In these references a Macedonian

71 Cf. Hanink (2014).

72 As speculated by Liapis (2009).

73 Revermann (1999–2000); Duncan (2011) 80–82.

audience may have found reflections of their cultural reality and ambitions. The Athenians may have enjoyed listening and learning about the relatively unfamiliar religious and military culture of the warlords of their time, who, from what we read in the orators, seem to have attracted the attention of political debate most often from Demosthenes' *First Philippic* (350 BC) onwards. But at the same time, they will have enjoyed identifying themselves, at least in the reassuring fiction of theatre, with the veterans Odysseus and Diomedes, who won the night.⁷⁴

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74 Many of these pages profited from Martin Cropp's suggestions and criticism. I am also grateful to Emma Greensmith (Cambridge) for her help with the revision of the English expression, and most perceptive comments.

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Fragments and Lost Tragedies: *Alexandros* and Later Euripidean Tragedy

Ioanna Karamanou

This chapter sets out to explore key features of Euripides' *Alexandros* with regard to plot-construction, stagecraft and performance.¹ *Alexandros* (produced in 415 BC) is fortunately one of the best-preserved fragmentary plays of Euripides. I shall argue that the evidence for this tragedy could contribute to our understanding of the trends of later Euripidean drama, as this play brings forward typical elements of the poet's dramatic production from 415 BC onwards. From this viewpoint, I shall investigate the generic affiliations of *Alexandros* with plays of later Euripidean production, focusing in particular on the use of specific plot-patterns and staging techniques.

At the same time, it should be borne in mind that this tragedy cannot be interpreted effectively severed from its original performance context. *Alexandros* was staged as the first tragedy of the production comprising *Palamedes*, *Trojan Women* and the satyr-play *Sisyphus*.² All three tragedies draw on the Trojan myth, display unity of locale with Troy as the place of action and share dominant themes, concepts and dramatic characters. Consequently, scholarly consensus from Gilbert Murray until now, including a seminal monograph by Ruth Scodel, regards this Euripidean production as presenting the features of a 'connected trilogy'.³ The nature of the 'Trojan trilogy', nonetheless, differs

1 I am grateful to Professor Christopher Collard and Professor Martin Cropp for valuable comments on certain aspects of this paper.

2 Certain aspects of this chapter are discussed in Karamanou (2017) 23–24, 26–31. This date is attested in schol. Ar. *Vesp.* 1326b and Ael. *VH* 2. 8.

3 Murray (1932) 645–656 and (1946) 127–148 [cf. earlier Schöll (1839) 47 ff.; Krausse (1905) 178–184; Wilamowitz (19062) 259–263 and Parmentier (1925) 4–6, 9, conjecturing that this was a firmly connected trilogy]; Scodel (1980) esp. 64–121; Schmid/Stählin (1940) 474–480; Menegazzi (1951) 190–191; Pertusi (1952) 251–273; Friedrich (1953) 61–75; Mason (1959) 86–88; Scarcella (1959) 66–70; Webster (1966) 208–213; Wilson (1967) 221–223; Stössl (1968) 11.232–233, 288–289; Barlow (1986) 27–30; Sopina (1986) 117–130; Ritoók (1993) 109–125; Hose (1995) 33–57; Kovacs (1997) 162–176; Falchetto (2002) 21–37 (with rich bibliography on this matter); Cropp (2004) 47–48; Sansone (2009) 193–203; Karamanou (2016) esp. 355–360. Cf. the scepticism expressed by Planck (1840) 25–35; Conacher (1967) 132–134 and Koniaris (1973) 85–122.

from that of Aeschylean connected trilogies, in that each of these plays, according to the available evidence, seems to have been a coherent drama having a self-contained plot (and the extant *Trojan Women* provides eloquent proof of this). Thus, the three tragedies are not interrelated on the basis of a tight plot-sequence as in Aeschylus, but they display an undeniably powerful thematic and conceptual interaction.⁴ Accordingly, in this chapter *Alexandros* will be explored in its own right as a coherent drama, but also in the light of its original production, which could shape its reading to a certain degree and could contribute to elucidating its ideological and dramatic implications. In view of the wealth of the material preserved from *Alexandros*, its certain date and its provenance from a trilogy of the connected type, this play could give scope for a case study yielding insight into the features of later Euripidean tragedy and of the dramatist's constant experimentation with dramatic and staging techniques.

1 Plot Outline

The direct evidence for Euripides' lost plays comprises their surviving fragments, which may be either papyrus (or parchment) fragments coming from the original plays, or book fragments, that is, excerpts or quotations in the works of other authors. The indirect evidence consists of the testimonia for the plays, either textual or artistic.⁵ Research on *Alexandros* has benefited enormously from papyrus finds preserving a large number of fragments (P. Stras. 2342–2344) first published in 1922 and a major part of its narrative hypothesis (P. Oxy. 3650, col. i).⁶ To estimate the extent of the contribution of papyrus evi-

4 See Karamanou (2016) 360 arguing that the 'Trojan trilogy' features a 'sequence of thought' rather than a 'sequence of plot' of an Aeschylean kind.

5 On the methodology of approaching the evidence for Euripidean lost plays, see Kannicht (1997) 67–77; Collard (2005) 49–51; Cropp (2005) 271–272; Mastronarde (2009) 63–76; for the assessment of the information provided by fragments, see also Laks (1997) 237–239. For a thorough survey of the various sources for Euripidean fragments, cf. van Looy (1964) 14–57 and Jouan/van Looy (1998–2003) I xxxvii–lviii.

6 The Strasbourg papyrus preserving a considerable amount of lines from Euripides' *Alexandros* was first edited by Crönert (1922) 1–17 and then by Lefke (1936) 26–35; Snell (1937) 1–21; Coles (1974) 38–58; Kannicht (2004) I 180–204; selected fragments were published by Page (1941) 54–60 and Diggle (1998) 80–84. For the first edition of the hypothesis, see Coles (1974) 1–22; it was re-edited by Luppe (1976) 12–20; Diggle (1998) 80–81; van Rossum-Steenbeek (1998) 186–187 and Kannicht (2004) I 174–176. The text of the play along with an English translation, an introduction and a concise, mainly interpretative commentary was edited by Cropp (2004) 35–87; for English and French translations of the fragments with an introduction, see

dence to our knowledge of Euripides' *Alexandros* it may suffice to go through *TGF*² (the papyrus fragments of this play were not included in Snell's supplement in 1964); one will realize that the book fragments enumerated only 51 lines largely deriving from gnomological sources, which are, as a rule, uninformative with regard to the context of the cited lines. The publication of the Strasbourg papyrus increased dramatically the amount of fragmentary material offering valuable information which was unattested in the book fragments. Moreover, the larger papyrus fragments provide the context of the attested lines, which is of vital importance for the reconstruction of the dramatic plot. Furthermore, the publication of the papyrus hypothesis in 1974 shed new light on the plot, thus outdating, to a certain degree, prior reconstructions of the play, which nonetheless remain useful with regard to aspects of the plot not elucidated in the hypothesis.⁷

The latter mentions that when Alexandros was born, his mother Hecabe had him exposed due to an ill-omened dream, according to which he would bring disaster to Troy. The child was raised by a herdsman, who named him Paris. Queen Hecabe, still grieving over his exposure, persuaded Priam to establish athletic games in his memory. When twenty years had passed, the boy excelled among his fellow herdsmen, who accused him of arrogance in front of Priam. After defending himself before the king as a judge, Alexandros was allowed to participate in his own funeral games. Having been crowned winner, he infuriated his brother Deiphobus and his companions, who, realizing that they had been defeated by a slave, demanded that Hecabe should kill him. The hypothesis then reports a series of events without clarifying how they were organized dramatically: Alexandros re-appeared onstage; Cassandra recognized him at a state of prophetic frenzy foretelling of the future disaster; Hecabe was prevented from killing him (no specification about the circumstances of the attack is provided). His foster-father arrived and because of the danger was compelled to tell the truth. Alexandros thus returned to the Trojan palace.

We turn now to the direct evidence provided in the papyrus and book fragments. Fr. 41a Kannicht (henceforth abbreviated as K.) referring to 'famous Troy' has been transmitted in the papyrus hypothesis and preserves the sec-

Collard/Cropp (2008) 1.33–75 and Jouan/van Looy (1998–2003) 1.39–76 respectively. For an extensive reconstruction of the plot and an exploration of prominent themes of this play, see Scodel (1980) 20–42, 68–121, 138–142 and more recently Di Giuseppe (2012).

7 For the reconstruction of *Alexandros* following the publication of the hypothesis, see Coles (1974) esp. 23–32; Scodel (1980) 20–42; Kovacs (1984) 47–70; Huys (1986) 9–33 and (1995) *passim*; Jouan/van Looy (1998–2003) 1.43–58; Kannicht (2004) 1 179–202; Cropp (2004) 36–42; Collard/Cropp (2008) 1.33–37; Di Giuseppe (2012) 45–180.

ond half of the first line of the prologue. Fr. 42 K. recounting the progress of time probably from the baby's exposure to his present manhood is likely to have derived from the expository prologue. Frs. 43–46 K. belong to a consolation addressed to Hecabe by the Chorus, first in anapaests (fr. 43) and then in an iambic dialogue (frs. 44–46), with the purpose of alleviating her continuing grief for her child's supposed demise. Fr. 46a K. is suggestive of king Priam's entrance on a horse-drawn carriage (l. 6) and of his participation in the performance of a ritual preceding the funeral athletic contest (ll. 10–12).⁸ Priam is likely to have remained onstage to participate as a judge in the formal debate in which Alexandros was accused of haughty behaviour by his fellow herdsmen, according to the hypothesis. Frs. 48, 50, 56 and 61 K. can be placed in this trial-debate with a degree of confidence, as they refer to the hostility aroused by the arrogant behaviour of a slave (fr. 48 and 50) and include comments on the rhetorical capacities of the speakers (frs. 56, 61). Fr. 60 K. evidently comprises Priam's decision to grant permission to the unknown herdsman Alexandros to participate in the games, expressing his confidence in the power of time to reveal the herdsman's qualities. The hypothesis mentions that Alexandros was brought bound before Priam by his fellow herdsmen, who are reported to have formed a secondary Chorus (see schol. E. *Hipp.* 58). The collective character of subsidiary Choruses could suggest that this group may have served to introduce the social context to which Alexandros seemingly belongs, as well as stressing his incompatibility and conflict with this environment.⁹

Fr. 61d K. (and perhaps also frs. 54 and 61a K.¹⁰) preserves remains of the messenger scene, in which Alexandros' victory at the athletic contest is reported. The metrically and thematically congruent lyric fragments 61b–c K. evidently derive from a stasimon. These lines provide a redefinition of virtue through rejection of traditional criteria of *eugeneia*, such as high birth and wealth, in favour of qualities such as good sense and efficacy, which are regarded as valid indicators of virtue, in view of the competences of the herdsman Alexandros. There is an underlying irony in these fragments, as the Chorus and most of the dramatic characters are unaware of his noble birth. This stasimon may have followed either the trial-debate, in which Alexandros succeeds in persuading Priam to reject the prejudice against his seemingly low status by allowing

8 Scodel (1980) 27–28; Cropp (2004) 73–74; Kannicht (2004) 1.184; Karamanou (2012b) 400–404.

9 On the collective dimension of secondary Choruses, see Carrière (1977) esp. 15–17, 51–19, 77–79; Taplin (1978) 134–136, and (1977) 236–237; Swift (2010) 262–265, 307.

10 For more detail about the placement of these two fragments, see Cropp (2004) 79–80.

him to participate in the games or, perhaps even likelier, the messenger-speech reporting his athletic victory and thus referring to his proven worth.¹¹

Frr. 62a–b K. comprise parts of an altercation between Hector and Deiphobus before their mother Hecabe as a judge. This scene has the form of an *agôn*, in which Deiphobus is trying to persuade Hector to conspire with him against the herdsman who has deprived the royal sons of the prize in the games, which Deiphobus regards as his rightful possession (see esp. fr. 62a5–10 K.).¹² Hector rejects his brother's murderous plans, but Deiphobus manages to convince Hecabe to plot with him against Alexandros (frr. 62c–d K.), by arguing that the herdsman, who has won the admiration of the Trojans, may constitute a threat to the royal status of her sons (see esp. fr. 62d30 K.).¹³ The hypothesis mentions that Hecabe attacked Alexandros and was prevented from killing him, without specifying the exact manner in which this was attained (for more detail, see § 3). Fr. 62i K. includes an exclamation uttered by Alexandros during the attack scene. According to the hypothesis, Cassandra appeared raving, recognized him and foretold of the future calamities (fr. 62e–h K.). A series of fragments coming from Ennius' *Alexander* (frr. 17, 25, 26 Jocelyn), which was probably modelled upon the Euripidean tragedy,¹⁴ preserve lines from Cassandra's great prophetic scene. Alexandros' foster-father arrived and identified him, thus leading to the *anagnorisis* and putting a definite end to the attack. Fr. 62 K., which seems to be located after the recognition and towards the end of the play, contains a remark on the unexpectability of divine action bringing about the reversals of human fortune.

11 For these alternatives, see also Cropp (2004) 76–77.

12 On the agonistic character of this scene, see Karamanou (2011) 35–47. Frr. 49, 51 and 59 K. revolving around the idea of nobility versus slavery and fr. 55 K. comprising counter-argumentation against wealth have been placed by the majority of scholars in the trial-debate [Coles (1974) 24; Scodel (1980) 30–31, 82; Jouan/van Looy (1998–2003) 1.50; Cropp (2004) 39; Collard/Cropp (2008) 1.36; Di Giuseppe (2012) 80–81]. Nonetheless, it is possible that they could have belonged to the *agôn* between Hector and Deiphobus focusing on the contrast between high and low birth, since Deiphobus disparages Alexandros' lowly status, resenting his defeat by a (seemingly) socially inferior.

13 See Scodel (1980) 32–34; Huys (1986) 20–22; Cropp (2004) 40; Di Giuseppe (2012) 186–187.

14 See Snell (1937) 59; Jocelyn (1967) 204; Timpanaro (1996) 6–69; Jouan/van Looy (1998–2003) 1.46 ff.; Skutsch (1968) 161; Cropp (2004) 36; Di Giuseppe (2012) 24–27.

2 The Plot-Pattern of 'Family Reunion'

The dramatic plot of *Alexandros* recounted in the previous section indicates that it is a play of 'catastrophe survived',¹⁵ in which the tragic deed that is about to occur unwittingly between close relatives is averted in the nick of time. The *anagnorisis* of the long-lost son leads to his reunion with his natal family. The theme of the reunion of long separated kin was regularly treated in a series of Euripidean plays produced from 415 BC until the end of the dramatist's career in 406 BC. Apart from *Alexandros*, the pattern of 'family reunion' is represented in the extant *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Ion* and *Helen*, as well as in the fragmentarily preserved *Captive Melanippe*, *Antiope*, *Hypsipyle* and *Alcmeon in Corinth*.¹⁶ The general typology of all these plays involves the plot-patterns of recognition and reunion of close relatives after a major crisis threatening the life of at least one of them. This plight may be caused by an outsider, as in *Helen*, *Hypsipyle*, *Antiope*, *Captive Melanippe* and perhaps *Alcmeon in Corinth*,¹⁷ or may occur between blood kin, as in *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Ion* and *Alexandros*. It is worth noting that near-catastrophic events between close kin occurred sporadically in earlier Euripidean plays, such as *Cresphontes* and *Aegeus*.¹⁸ In his earlier tragedies Euripides had only occasionally employed this plot-pattern, which developed into a trend with the wide production of 'family reunion' plays.

The plays of this group feature a last-minute rescue or escape and a happy ending, thus being distinguished from 'typical' tragedies ending in misfor-

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- 15 This term was coined by Burnett (1971). Euripides' penchant for the dramatic treatment of hindered actions was observed as early as Friedrich (1953) 58–60.
- 16 *Helen* was produced in 412 BC (see schol. Ar. Ra. 53 in combination with schol. Th. 1012); for the late date of the rest of these plays, see for instance Diggle (1981–1994) II.242 on *Iphigenia in Tauris* and II.306 on *Ion*; Kambitsis (1972) xxxi–xxxiv; Collard/Cropp/Gibert (2004) 269 and Collard/Cropp (2008) 1.175 on *Antiope*; Collard/Cropp (2008) 1.589 on *Captive Melanippe* and II.254 on *Hypsipyle*. *Alexandros*, *Ion*, *Captive Melanippe* and *Antiope* along with *Oedipus* were studied by Huys (1995) from the specific viewpoint of the exposed hero motif.
- 17 On the plot of *Hypsipyle*, see Bond (1963) 7–20; Cockle (1987) 39–49; Collard/Cropp/Gibert (2004) 170–176; Jouan/van Looy (1998–2003) III.155 ff. On *Antiope*, see Hyg. *fab.* 8, [Apollod.] 3.5.5, schol. A.R. 4.1090; cf. Kambitsis (1972) ix–xxx; Collard/Cropp/Gibert (2004) 262–268; Jouan/van Looy (1998–2003) I.223–237 and Huys (1995) *passim*. On *Captive Melanippe*, see Hyg. *fab.* 186, D.S. 4.67; cf. van Looy (1964) 244–256; Collard/Cropp/Lee (1995) 242–244; Collard/Cropp (2008) 1.587–589 and Huys (1995) *passim*. On *Alcmeon in Corinth*, see [Apollod.] 3.7.7; cf. van Looy (1964) 103–108; Collard/Cropp (2008) 1.87–89; Jouan/van Looy (1998–2003) 1.98–100; Webster (1967) 265–268.
- 18 *Cresphontes* is dated to 430–424 BC [see Harder (1985) 4 and for its plot, op. cit. 7–18; Collard/Cropp/Lee (1995) 121–125] and *Aegeus* between 455 and 430 BC [Cropp/Fick (1985) 70–71 and for the plot, see Mills (1997) 239–245].

tune. These factors have given rise to the question of their generic definition and to the use of terms of later dramaturgy or literature, such as ‘romantic plays’, ‘tragicomedies’ or ‘melodramas’.¹⁹ The task of re-establishing these plays into the genre of ‘tragedy’ was quite recently undertaken by Matthew Wright (2005) focusing, in particular, on *Helen*, *Iphigenia in Tauris* and *Andromeda*. Among the arguments of his extensive monograph, those that I deem to be the strongest are based on the evidence for ancient genre distinction.²⁰ Strictly speaking, these plays were generically defined as tragedies in the dramatic contests in which they were produced. Moreover, the absence of any different generic classification of these dramas by Aristotle in the *Poetics* and, most importantly, his very description of the averted murder in *Iphigenia in Tauris* as an exemplary tragic *pathos* placed at the top of his list of tragic deeds (*Poet.* 1454a4–9) constitute eloquent proof that these plays were clearly regarded in antiquity as belonging to the tragic genre. In essence they are tragedies insofar as their characters suffer, even if catastrophe is ultimately averted.²¹ Euripides’ recurrent experimentation with tragic conventions in terms of plot-construction and stagecraft (see below, §3) showcases the variety and the development of the tragic genre. Later terminology might only be useful in indicating particular dramatic overtones, but it should be employed with much caution and with respect for the wealth of the tragic tradition.²²

The ‘family reunion’ plays were staged in a turbulent period of Athenian history; the Sicilian expedition and its disastrous aftermath, the constitutional upheaval caused by the oligarchic coup of 411 BC and the ensuing party strife resulted in the collapse of social cohesion, bringing about an acute political crisis and ethical dissolution. It is thus essential for the interpretation of these tragedies to take into consideration their socio-historical context and ideological implications.²³

19 Mostly in earlier scholarship: for the term ‘romantic play’, see Murray (1913) 142; Conacher (1967) 14; Taplin (1978) 28; Knox (1985) 318; for ‘tragicomedy’, see Verrall (1895) 43–133; Kitto (19613) 316; Vickers (1973) 299; Vellacott (1975) 56; for ‘melodrama’, see Verrall (1905) x; Vellacott (1975) 56; the latter term was most recently revisited by Marshall (2014) 49–54. For further bibliography on this terminology and its implications, see Wright (2005) 6–12.

20 See Wright (2005) 6–25. Cf. also Taplin (1986) 163–174.

21 See Allan (2008) 66–72. Cf. also Mastronarde (1999/2000) 23–30; Cropp (2000) 42–43.

22 See Mastronarde (2010) 59–62.

23 On the events from the Sicilian expedition until the end of the Peloponnesian War, see Kagan (1987); Davies (1983) 147–154; Dynneson (2008) 77–83; Markantonatos (2007) ch. 4; Ober (1994) 149–171. On the responsiveness of late fifth-century drama to this crisis, see the collective volume edited by Markantonatos/Zimmermann (2012).

The plot-pattern of 'family reunion' after a life-threatening crisis and the near-murder of close kin based on misconception showcase the ambiguity of human fortune and the limitations of human knowledge.²⁴ This idea pervades the plays of this group and is made dramatically effective through its association with the sophistic doctrine of 'reality versus appearance'.²⁵ The most typical treatment of this concept is provided in *Helen*, in which the title-heroine is presented as embodying the *truth-illusion* antithesis. *Alexandros* is similarly imbued with the essence of this ironic contrast: the title hero seems to be dead, while in reality being alive; he seems to be a low-born herdsman, while being of noble descent; his final reunion with his natal family is only seemingly happy, but in reality it will bring disaster to his household and Troy. The repercussions of his homecoming are powerfully illustrated in the next two tragedies of this production, *Palamedes* and *Trojan Women*.

The polarity between reality and appearance in the production of 415 BC is conveyed by Cassandra, whose prophecies become a vehicle of powerful dramatic irony. The dramatic and ideological meaning of Cassandra's prophecies may only be grasped in the light of the 'Trojan trilogy'. In *Tr.* 308–461 the priestess foresees victory out of defeat, while in the earlier, equivalent scene in *Alexandros* (fr. 62e–h K.) she prophesied disaster out of prosperity. Her prophecies in *Trojan Women* thus involve an inversion of those in *Alexandros*.²⁶ I thus suggest that the pair of Cassandra's prophetic scenes in this production could acquire a dramatic and conceptual function parallel to that of the 'mirror scenes' of Aeschylean trilogies (i.e. scenes reflecting and recalling in a striking manner earlier scenes from the previous tragedies of the same trilogy).²⁷ In dramatic terms, the two episodes draw an eloquent contrast between the events before and after the reversal of fortune for Troy, while, in conceptual terms, Cassandra's prophecies (seemingly unbelievable, albeit true) constitute a means of highlighting the ironical antithesis between seeming and being. Considering that *Alexandros* was produced at the beginning of the Sicilian expedition,

24 For these ideas, see for instance Gorgias DK 82 B3; Protagoras DK 80 B4; cf. Hartigan (1991) 69–106, 183–186; Burnett (1971) 67–72; Rabinowitz (1993) 215–217.

25 See Kannicht (1969) 1.57–60, 62–68; Segal (1971); Seidensticker (1982) 156–199; Wright (2005) 278–337; Kyriakou (2006) 15–19; Valakas (2009) 179–207; Egli (2003) 214–216; Assaël (2001) 73–92; Kraus (1987) 143–146.

26 Scodel (1980) 69; see also Mazzoldi (2001) 138–165; Gartzidou-Tatti (1997) 322–323; Croally (1994) 228–231; Di Giuseppe (2012) 189–190.

27 On this Aeschylean technique, see Taplin (1977) 100–103, 357–359, and on its exploitation in Euripidean drama, see Strohm (1957) 165–182; Mastronarde (2010) 68–77; Burnett (1971) 37–38, 42, 61–62, 146–147, 163 n. 9, 169–173; Dingel (1967) 192–195; Steidle (1968) 15–17; Halleran (1985) 86–87.

when the military fate of Athens was held in the balance, it could be argued that the ambiguous tone of the play's ending and the sinister nuances of the 'Trojan trilogy' as a whole, in conjunction with the emphasis placed on the theme of human self-delusion, may be suggestive of Euripides' acute perception in his assessment of the impending crisis.²⁸

In an earlier publication I have argued that the group of 'family reunion' plays, albeit involving 'domestic tragedies' on the surface, could bear socio-political implications.²⁹ Long separated members of the same *oikos* reunite after a life-threatening crisis, which poses a threat to the integrity of their household. The *oikos* is saved with the return of the missing male heir, who is essential for the continuity of the household (*Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Ion*, *Hypsipyle*, *Antiope* and *Captive Melanippe*), or the husband/father who is the head of the family (*Helen* and *Alcmeon in Corinth*). The *oikos* was a constituent element of the classical *polis*, and the theoretical foundation for its significance is provided by Aristotle in *Politics* (1252a24–1253b23). Consequently, the continuity of each household was considered to be essential to the stability of the city-state as a whole, and the fate of the *oikos* was intrinsically interwoven with the fate of the *polis* in fifth-century Athens.³⁰ Therefore, Euripides' dramatization of the rescue of the *oikos* in each of these plays could be related to the socio-political crisis of late fifth-century Athens. In a time of political insecurity and social dissolution the protection of the household as the backbone of the city-state could contribute to the re-establishment of the disturbed social order. The safety of the domestic hearth could thus serve as a prerequisite for the restoration of the integrity of the *polis*.

Alexandros, nonetheless, constitutes a special case, if we consider that the title-hero's reunion with his natal family ultimately leads to the devastation of the royal *oikos* and the Trojan city, as foreseen by Cassandra, and has widespread ramifications within the 'Trojan trilogy'. If the socio-historical context of the production of *Alexandros* is taken into account, then the particularity of this play could perhaps be attributed to the fact that it *antedates* the crisis caused by the Sicilian disaster and the ensuing socio-political turmoil, as distinguished from the rest of the 'family reunion' plays, which, according to the available evidence, were staged *during* the crisis. The sinister tone of the 'Trojan

28 On the sinister overtones of *Alexandros* from the viewpoint of the 'Trojan trilogy', see Scodel (1980) 64–79; Murray (1946) 129–136; Vellacott (1975) 140–142; Barlow (1986) 27–30; Cropp (2004) 47–48; Karamanou (2012a) 243–244, 249 and (2012b) 403–404.

29 Karamanou (2012a); this position has recently been favoured by Meinel (2015) 212 n. 140.

30 On the *oikos-polis* interrelation, see Nagle (2006); Hansen (2006) esp. 109–112; Patterson (1998) esp. 85–91; Hall (1997) 104–110; Pomeroy (1997) 36–39.

trilogy' of 415 BC may implicitly convey the uncertainty and ambiguity of those political and military circumstances which eventually led to this turbulence. It is possibly due to the critical events taking place from that period onwards that Euripides further developed this pattern in the rest of the plays of this group bringing forward the rescue of the *oikos* presumably as the basis for the restoration of the *polis*. *Alexandros* thus seems to have been the dramatic forerunner of the crisis-generated plays treating the 'family reunion' plot-pattern. The 'state-saving' strategy tacitly underlying the tragic treatment of these mythical paradigms may be considered as parallel, in cross-generic terms, to the *polis*-based mission of comedy in the same period; a telling example could be provided in the concluding scene of *Frogs* (405 BC), in which the theatre-god Dionysus chooses to 'resurrect' Aeschylus, in order to reaffirm the 'politico-religious' identity of Athens.³¹

3 'Catastrophe Survived': Stagecraft and Performance

As previously discussed (§ 2), the plot-pattern of 'catastrophe survived' involves the dramatization of a scene of averted murder. On the basis of the available evidence, I shall attempt to explore the circumstances under which the unsuccessful attack against *Alexandros* was staged, in conjunction with Euripidean stagecraft in similar dramatic situations. The hypothesis is admittedly quite vague with regard to the exact circumstances of the attack (see § 1),³² but the fragments and the indirect evidence for the play could shed light on this scene.

The papyrus fragments preserving a crucial part of the plotting scene between Deiphobus and Hecabe could provide evidence for the staging of the early phase of this averted murder. In more specific terms, fr. 62d25 K. indicates that it is probably the Queen who undertakes the task of killing *Alexandros* by her own hand.³³ Nonetheless, it is reasonable to assume that Hecabe would not have attacked *Alexandros* unassisted, as she would need to have him overpowered first, before attacking him herself. She is likely to have launched the attack with Deiphobus' assistance (see the use of the plural with reference to the attackers in fr. 62b42 K.: *κατάνόντες ἄνδρα δοῦ[λον]*) or perhaps even with the additional assistance of Deiphobus' companions (as mute characters), who are reported in the hypothesis to have demanded that Hecabe should have the

31 See Lada-Richards (1999) 219–223.

32 The vagueness of the hypothesis at this point has been noted by Coles (1974) 32; Scodel (1980) 21, 42; Jouan/van Looy (1998–2003) 1.53; Cropp (2004) 40.

33 See Coles (1974) 51; Kannicht (2004) 1.198; Cropp (2004) 83.

herdsman eliminated.³⁴ Likewise, in *Cresphontes* Merope is about to attack the title-hero whilst he is asleep, and Hecabe blinds Polymestor with the assistance of the Trojan women.³⁵

According to Hecabe's plan, when Alexandros arrives at the palace (which the façade of the *skênê*-building represents), he will fall into their ambush (fr. 62d29 K.); this line suggests that the prospective victim is likely to be lured into the stage-building, where the attack is planned to take place, according to the well-known tragic convention imposing that murder acts should be committed offstage.³⁶ The tattered lines that follow preserve a lyric passage in dochmiacs (fr. 62d44–50 K.), which convey great intensity of emotion and are regularly employed to anticipate, or follow offstage violence.³⁷ The two *coronides* preserved in this papyrus fragment (fr. 62d44 and 48) could indicate lyric exchanges³⁸ and may thus hint at the division of the Chorus into two semichoruses. I suggest that such agitated lyric exchanges could provide a scene conspiratorial in tone and action, like the lyrics similarly anticipating the attack in *Or.* 1246–1285, which are also composed in dochmiacs and are sung by the Chorus divided into semichoruses.

The next lines hint at an encounter between Alexandros and Hecabe, during which the latter could have tricked the former into entering the palace, where Deiphobus may be lying in wait. More specifically, the first speaker in this dialogue is evidently an arriving character looking for Hecabe (fr. 62d52 K.). This character is likely to be the crowned winner Alexandros,³⁹ whose arrival has been expected by Deiphobus and Hecabe (fr. 62d29 K.), and his appearance at this point of the plot is reported in the hypothesis (see above, § 1). Additionally, the reference to leaves (probably the leaves of victory) in fr. 62d50 K. and to the *kallinikos* song (the victory ode) in fr. 62d53 K. reinforce the possibility of the victor's onstage appearance. Hecabe is thus likely to have tricked Alexandros

34 So Jouan (1966) 128–130; Scodel (1980) 37; Huys (1986) 18–24; Cropp (2004) 40; Collard/Cropp (2008) 1.36.

35 See Hyg. *fab.* 184 and *Hec.* 1051–1052, 1060 ff. respectively. For more detail about the attack in *Cresphontes*, see the discussion below.

36 Cf. Cropp (2004) 40. For this convention, see Dale (1969) 119–129; Goward (1999) 33–35; Bremer (1976) 29–49; De Jong (1991) 117–120.

37 See similarly *Med.* 1251–1292 [and Mastronarde (2002) 107, 363–364], *Hec.* 1023–1034, *El.* 1147–1164 [and Cropp (1988) 176–177], *HF* 734–762, 875–909 [and Bond (1981) 255–256, 295–296], *Or.* 1246–1285 [cf. Willink (1986) 287 and West (1987) 269], *Antiope* fr. 223.77–87 K. On the strong emotional connotations of the dochmiacs, see Dale (19682) 104–119; West (1982) 108–114; Herington (1985) 113–115; Battezzato (2005) 158.

38 See Coles (1974) 54; Scodel (1980) 34. Huys (1985) 252.

39 See also Cropp (2004) 84–85; Collard/Cropp (2008) 1.36; Di Giuseppe (2012) 151.

into entering the stage-building, which is a regular means of entrapment in Euripidean revenge plays, as in *Hec.* 1019 ff., *El.* 1139 ff., *HF* 720 ff., *Or.* 1337–1346 and *Antiope* fr. 223.15–74 K. (the scenes of *Orestes* and *Antiope* will be further discussed below).

The textual evidence indicating a swift development of the dramatic action from plotting to attack leaves no obvious place for Cassandra's scene of prophetic frenzy before the murder-attempt against Alexandros. Her entering between plotting and attack could have loosened the tight structure of this revenge scene. Cassandra's prophetic scene is thus likely to have occurred after the attack against Alexandros and before the foster-father's arrival and the final *anagnorisis*.⁴⁰

At this point the papyrus breaks off, and the sequence of the attack scene is suggested by indirect evidence. Hyginus (*fab.* 91) reports that Alexandros fled to the altar of Zeus Herkeios to escape death. His supplication is also represented in a series of reliefs from twenty-two Etruscan mirror-backs dating from the late fourth to the third century BC (*LIMC* I, s.v. 'Alexandros', figg. 21–23), in which, however, the god to whom the altar is dedicated remains unspecified. Alexandros is presented as kneeling on the altar and as being threatened on the left by a man, who is drawing a sword against him, and on the right by a woman, who is attacking him with an axe. The latter is congruent with the Euripidean plot presenting Hecabe and Deiphobus as Alexandros' aggressors.⁴¹ Moreover, the relief-representation of Hecabe's attack against Alexandros with an axe corresponds to the aforementioned fragment in which she declares that she will kill him by her own hand and is strikingly reminiscent of Merope's attempted murder of Cresphontes with an axe.⁴² The refuge at the altar is a very common Euripidean practice⁴³ and may well provide a reason why the crime against Alexandros was temporarily averted before the foster-father's entrance—this

40 This placement has also been suggested by Jouan/van Looy (1998–2003) 1.55–56; Di Benedetto (1998) 91; Cropp (2004) 41; Di Giuseppe (2012) 156–157.

41 For the identification of the depicted woman as Hecabe, see Snell (1937) 46 and n. 3; Hanson (1964) 178; Timpanaro (1996) 47–48 n. 3; Cropp (2004) 45; Collard/Cropp (2008) 1.38; Karamanou (2013) 419–420.

42 For this scene of *Cresphontes*, see Plut. *Mor.* 998e; Hyg. *fab.* 184.

43 *Heracl.* 33, *Andr.* 43f., *Supp.* 10, *HF* 48, *Ion* 1254–1256, *Hel.* 64f. For the altar scenes of Euripidean drama, see Strohm (1957) 17–30; Dingel (1967) 54–55; Kopperschmidt (1971) 335–343; Naiden (2006) *passim*. Alexandros' refuge at the altar has been supported by Snell (1937) 46–48; Hanson (1964) 181; Jouan (1966) 132; Stoessl (1968) 220–221; Coles (1974) 27; Scodel (1980) 37; Jouan/van Looy (1998–2003) 1.54–55; Cropp (2004) 41, 49; Kannicht (2004) 1.178; Collard/Cropp (2008) 1.37; Di Giuseppe (2012) 154–155. On the relation of the testimony of Hyginus and the Etruscan representations to Euripides' *Alexandros*, see the discussion in Karamanou (2013).

element is missing from the hypothesis, as observed above. This testimony would thus be suggestive of an altar scene similar to Creusa's supplication in *Ion* 1254 ff., which averts Ion's attack against his mother before the arrival of the priestess, who brings about the *anagnorisis*, like the foster-father in *Alexandros*.⁴⁴

Alexandros seems to have been tricked probably by Hecabe into entering the stage-building, where the Queen and Deiphobus launched the attack against him. Subsequently, as suggested by Hyginus and the iconographic evidence, he fled to an altar to escape death (the question whether this altar was that of Zeus Herkeios or not will be addressed below). The altar scene needs to be performed before the eyes of the audience, like all supplication scenes in tragedy. Moreover, fr. 62i K. preserves a distich which would have been delivered by Alexandros, while he was being threatened with death (οἴμοι, θανούμαι διὰ τὸ χρήσιμον φρενῶν, / ἢ τοῖσιν ἄλλοις γίγνεται σωτηρία).⁴⁵ These lines are likely to have been uttered by Alexandros onstage, as the line spoken by Lycus whilst being persecuted by Antiope's sons before the eyes of the audience in *Antiope* fr. 223.88 K. (οἴμοι: θανούμαι πρὸς δυοῖν ἀσύμμαχος). The latter provides the closest parallel to this fragment not only in stylistic terms [as noted by Kannicht (2004) 1.203], but with regard to dramatic circumstances as well, since both cases involve an abortive murder attack.

The available evidence thus suggests a movement from the interior of the stage-building towards the audience. Euripides applies this staging practice in tragedies similarly belonging to his later production, such as *Orestes* (408 BC) and *Antiope* (for its date, see above, n. 15), which also present unsuccessful murder attempts. In *Or.* 1245 Orestes and Pylades enter the stage-building, with the purpose of murdering Helen indoors. At the same time, Electra remains onstage waiting for Hermione, in order to lure her also into the *skênê*-building (1216–1217). As in the similar scene in *Alexandros*, the Chorus sings divided into semichoruses (1258–1280), whilst guarding the *parodoi*.⁴⁶ Hermione arrives and is trapped by Electra into entering the palace, so that she is seized by Orestes and Pylades (1323–1352). After a brief choral passage (1352–1365), the spectators will not witness Helen's murdered body brought on the *ekkyklêma*, as expected (Helen has disappeared after the attack in 1296–1301), but instead they will be surprised to see her Phrygian slave rushing out of the palace

44 See also Cropp (2004) 41; Di Giuseppe (2012) 185.

45 See Snell (1937) 48; Huys (1986) 35–38; Kannicht (2004) ad loc.; Cropp (2004) 87; Di Giuseppe (2012) 158.

46 For the tension conveyed through the choral division into semichoruses in *Orestes*, see Hose (1990–1991) 1.239.

(1370 ff.). He is being persecuted onstage by Orestes, who is threatening to kill him, but he ultimately spares his life (1506–1530).⁴⁷

Likewise, in *Antiope* the twins Amphion and Zethus enter the stage-building, which represents a cave, the dwelling of their foster-father. They are lying there in wait for Lycus (fr. 223.15–16 K.), with the purpose of killing him to avenge the injustice done to their mother Antiope. As in *Orestes* and *Alexandros*, a character (in this case, the foster-father of the twins) undertakes the task of luring the prospective victim into the stage-building (fr. 223.61 K.). Lycus enters the cave, and his cries are heard from inside at the moment of the attack (fr. 223.79b, 82, 84 K.). As in *Orestes*, the Chorus is an ally of the attackers and is commenting on the events occurring offstage (fr. 223.80–81, 83, 85–87 K.). Lycus then appears before the eyes of the audience being persecuted by the twins, who are prevented from killing him by Hermes emerging *ex machina* (fr. 223.96–132 K.).

These cases involving the performance of an averted murder are suggestive of a specific staging typology: the prospective victim is trapped into entering the stage-building, where the murder is planned to be committed conventionally as an offstage event; the intended victim manages to escape and emerges onstage pursued by his attackers; the attack is ultimately prevented from taking place. This staging technique relies upon the conventional, structural opposition between ‘unseen space’ (the interior of the *skênê*-building) and ‘seen space’ (the acting area); the central barrier between ‘seen’ and ‘unseen’ is the façade of the stage-building and, more specifically, the *skênê* door, which keeps the interior hidden from the eyes of the audience.⁴⁸ At the same time, the dramatic effect derives from the surprise of the spectators at the intended victim’s escape from death and appearance onstage instead of the display of the murdered body on the *ekkyklêma*, as they would expect.⁴⁹

This Euripidean technique seems to have been anticipated in *Cresphontes*.⁵⁰ Hyginus (*fab.* 184) mentions that Merope’s murder attempt against her son Cresphontes in ignorance of his true identity takes place while he is asleep in the

47 On the staging of the attack in *Orestes*, see Hourmouziades (1965) 86–88; West (1987) 269, 273–277, 283; Porter (1994) 173–214; Burnett (1971) 191; Vellacott (1975) 75–78.

48 For these spatial divisions, see Hourmouziades (1965) 83–127; Wiles (1997) 14–22, 161–174; Padel (1990) 336–347, 359–365; Joerden (1971) 392–401; Rehm (2002) 21–22; Ubersfeld (19962) 79–84.

49 On Euripides’ penchant for audience surprise, see Arnott (1973) 49–64; Dunn (2007) 88–110; Seidensticker (1982) 104–105, 108, 210–211; Porter (1994) 173–174; Halleran (1985) ch. 3.

50 For the earlier date of *Cresphontes*, see above, n. 17.

guest-quarters, that is, inside the stage-building. Then, according to Plutarch's testimony (*Mor.* 998e), Cresphontes probably runs onto the stage persecuted by his axe-wielding mother, who is stopped in the nick of time by the old servant in an astoundingly effective scene 'turning the audience rigid with fright'.⁵¹ This attack scene similarly indicates a movement from the interior of the *skênê*-building onto the stage. Nonetheless, it is probably not until later in his career that Euripides reiterates the 'catastrophe survived' pattern and this staging technique, further developing it into a trend, as it emerges from the aforementioned cases in *Alexandros*, *Antiope* and *Orestes*.

The sources for the performance of the altar scene in *Alexandros* need to be further interrogated. Hyginus is the sole literary source to mention that the altar to which Alexandros sought refuge was dedicated to Zeus Herkeios. Though the Roman mythographer largely reflects elements which are congruent with the evidence for the Euripidean *Alexandros*, it is worth bearing in mind that his account is not a hypothesis and, therefore, does not necessarily report every aspect of this tragic plot with accuracy. This detail recurs only in a Coptic textile medallion (Hermitage Museum, inv. nr. 11507), which is dated to the fifth century AD.⁵² In view of its late date, it is possible that the Coptic representation could have either been modelled upon an earlier (and now lost) artistic source or may have drawn on an intermediary literary source, such as Hyginus' mythographical handbook, which was a common source for mythological lore in late antiquity. If the representation of the Coptic textile did rely on Hyginus, then naturally it cannot substantiate the relation of this detail to the Euripidean plot for the aforementioned reasons.

The validity of this piece of information provided by Hyginus is therefore uncertain; nonetheless, for the sake of completeness it might be useful to explore its dramatic and staging implications. If Alexandros sought refuge at the particular altar of Zeus Herkeios ('Zeus of the Courtyard'), who was the presiding deity of the household protecting the integrity of the *oikos* and family bonds,⁵³ this could bear specific dramatic connotations. His being threatened with death by his own mother and brother at the household altar may have underscored the ironic significance of the murder attempt launched by mem-

51 For this attack, see the discussion in Harder (1985) 48–53, 114–117; Collard/Cropp/Lee (1995) 122–123, 125, 146.

52 See Kannicht (2004) 1.178; Nauerth (1986) pl. 7.1; Kakovkin (2007) 273.

53 For the cult of Zeus Herkeios, see *Il.* 11.771–775; *Od.* 22.335; *Hdt.* 6.68; *S. Ant.* 487 and Griffith (1999) ad loc.; schol. *Pl. Euthd.* 302d (Greene); *Harp. s.v. Ἐρκεῖος Ζεὺς* p. 134 (Dindorff); cf. also Nilsson (19673) 1.125; Burkert (1985) 255; Boedeker (2012) 231–233; Wiles (1997) 75, 187; Dowden (2006) 80–81.

bers of his natal family, who are ignorant of his true identity.⁵⁴ This powerful irony could have further been enhanced in the light of the ‘Trojan trilogy’: Alexandros’ flight to this altar and, in turn, his rescue signpost the beginning of the end for the royal *oikos* of Troy, if we consider that in *Tr.* 16–17 (and 481–483) Priam is reported to have been slaughtered at the very same altar of the god who represented the integrity of his household.⁵⁵

Despite these dramatic merits, Alexandros’ refuge at the altar of Zeus Herkeios would involve several staging complications. The altar of Zeus Herkeios was the focal point of the domestic realm and stood in the middle of the courtyard of each house. In tragedy this altar seems to have been located in the interior of the stage-building representing a house or palace, as suggested in *S. Ant.* 1293–1301 (referring to Eurydice’s suicide offstage at the household altar, most probably that of Zeus Herkeios) and possibly also in *E. HF* 922 (reporting that Heracles became possessed by frenzy during his sacrifice at the same household altar).⁵⁶ The crucial question that arises, then, concerns the manner in which Alexandros’ refuge at the indoor altar of Zeus Herkeios could have been presented in view of the audience, as in all supplication scenes, as previously argued. This would admittedly be a rare dramatic situation, for the performance of which not much evidence can be provided.

To explore this issue, one could resort to the aforementioned passage of *Antigone* involving the onstage revelation of an event that has taken place at an interior altar and, in all likelihood, that of Zeus Herkeios. The corpse of Creon’s wife Eurydice, who has committed suicide at this particular altar inside the palace, is brought into the audience’s view (*S. Ant.* 1293: ὀρᾶν πάρεστιν οὐ γὰρ ἐν μυχοῖς ἔτι). There is an additional reference to the altar on which she fell (1301: τῆ δ’ ὀξύθηκτος ἦδε βωμία πέριξ† edd. Lloyd-Jones/Wilson; cf. schol. vet. ad loc.: βωμία πέριξ ὡς ἱερεῖον περὶ τὸν βωμὸν ἐσφάγη). The Sophoclean line is corrupt, but it does seem to indicate Eurydice’s dying posture, as well as that her corpse was draped over the altar. Accordingly, most critics have reasonably reckoned that the *ekkyklēma* could have been employed to reveal the interior scene, that is, Eurydice’s body lying over the altar, before the eyes of the spectators.⁵⁷ The *ekkyklēma* was also used in similar cases of interior scenes which

54 See also Menegazzi (1951) 186; Ritoók (1993) 116.

55 For poetic and artistic treatments of Priam’s slaughter at the altar of Zeus Herkeios, see Anderson (1997) 27–29, 37–38, 90–91, 193–199, 220, 235.

56 See Bond (1981) ad loc.; Rehm (1999/2000) 368–369 and (2002) 106.

57 For the use of the *ekkyklēma* in that scene, see Jebb (19003) on *S. Ant.* 1293; Kamerbeek (1978) and Brown (1987) ad loc.; Dale (1969) 122; Wiles (1997) 167; Rehm (2002) 122–123, 171 and (2012) 326.

need to be made visible to the audience, as for instance in *S. Ai.* 348–595 (Ajax being brought into view amid the slaughtered cattle).⁵⁸

Still, the use of the *ekkyklêma* to bring Alexandros' supplication at the interior altar of Zeus Herkeios into the view of the audience would present certain staging difficulties. As Professor Martin Cropp points out to me, a lengthy scene (comprising the attack, Cassandra's prophetic scene, the arrival of the foster-father and the recognition) with Alexandros confined to the *ekkyklêma*, which reveals a tableau, would be quite difficult to enact. The obvious alternative would be the use of an altar located in the acting area, to which the young man would have fled at the climax of the crisis, like Creusa (in *Ion* 1254 ff.) and perhaps Telephus in the tragedy of the same title.⁵⁹ In such a case, Alexandros could have emerged from the interior of the stage-building chased by his attackers and taking refuge at the onstage altar. On balance, although the dramatic connotations of a supplication at the altar of Zeus Herkeios could be tempting, the uncertainty of Hyginus' piece of detail and its staging difficulties also need to be taken into account. The available sources do not enable us to draw any firm conclusion as to the specific staging of the altar scene, which may well have been more complicated than we can infer.

On the whole, the evidence for the performance of the abortive murder attempt in *Alexandros* suggests that it was articulated conventionally through spatial dualities, that is, through the distinction between 'seen' and 'unseen' dramatic space and through the movement of the near victim, who has escaped death, from offstage towards the acting area. I have argued that *Alexandros*, *Orestes* and *Antiope* belonging to later Euripidean production (along with the earlier treatment of this pattern in *Cresphontes*) feature this specific staging typology, as well as the challenges posed to audience expectations in each of these cases.

4 Concluding Remarks

This discussion has attempted to explore the trends of later Euripidean tragedy represented in *Alexandros* with particular focus on innovation in plot-construction and stagecraft. It has been argued that the investigation of such distinctive elements and of their recurrence in other plays of the period from

58 See e.g. Kamerbeek (1963) 80; Garvie (1998) 157–158, 180 and most recently Finglass (2011) 21, 238, 241, 312. For the use of the *ekkyklêma* to reveal interior scenes, see also Taplin (1977) 442–443; Belardinelli (2000) 243–249; Green (2014) 121–122; Padel (1990) 361.

59 See Kannicht (2004) 11.685–686; Collard/Cropp/Lee (1995) 18–20, 23.

415 BC onwards could yield insight into crucial aspects of the plot and staging typology of later Euripidean drama. These typical features emerge from the dramatist's manipulation of a combination of plot-patterns (averted murder, rescue, recognition and reunion) that bring forward the final restoration of family bonds. In fact, *Alexandros* seems to be a forerunner of the group of Euripides' 'family reunion' plays, which, as it has been suggested, bear socio-political resonances in a period of acute political crisis. This type of plot-structure is combined in the case of *Alexandros* with a specific staging typology represented in later Euripidean drama (as in *Orestes* and *Antiope*) and involving the performance of an averted murder that leads to a dramatic climax and challenges audience-expectations. Euripides' recurrent experimentation with plot-patterns and theatre conventions thus demonstrates the novelty and dynamics of his dramatic and staging techniques.

This chapter focused on the study of *Alexandros* in conjunction with extant and fragmentary tragedies which treat parallel plot-patterns and staging techniques. Its underlying purpose has been to draw attention to the necessity of investigating the evidence deriving from fragmentarily preserved plays, as they can shed light on Euripidean plot-construction and performance, by contributing to a more comprehensive picture of the dramatist's technique, not least because the surviving plays represent only a small portion of his oeuvre. The interplay of the extant and the fragmentary also indicates the complexity of the process of interpretation; for instance, even though *Alexandros* bears generic affiliations with the tragedies treating the 'family reunion' plot-pattern, its very production as part of the 'Trojan trilogy' suggests an ironic inversion of its seemingly happy ending, to judge from the extant *Trojan Women*. The information which can be recovered through the study of the rich fragmentary material contributes to supplementing and contextualizing the extant corpus, as well as showcasing the vitality and multiformity of Euripidean drama as a whole.

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Euripides and Satyr Drama

Carl Shaw

1 Introduction

Like all Athenian tragedians competing at the fifth-century City Dionysia, Euripides staged a satyr play after his three tragedies.¹ These theatrical performances included a Chorus of young men dressed as half-horse, half-man satyrs. They wore furry shorts with a horse tail and attached phallus, and donned a bearded, often balding, mask with pointed ears.² Plots were typically drawn from traditional mythology and explored the (inevitably humorous) effects of introducing a group of satyrs to new mythological contexts.³ These productions appear to have been shorter than tragedies, but many of the specifics of satyr drama are uncertain. Out of the hundreds of Athenian satyr plays staged during the classical period, only one play is extant in its entirety, Euripides' *Cyclops*. This accident of transmission places us in a better position to understand Euripidean satyr drama than any other ancient dramatist's satyr plays,⁴ but there is little additional evidence with which to round out the picture. Nine or ten titles of Euripides' twenty or so plays are known: *Autolycus*,⁵ *Busiris*, *Epeius*, *Eurystheus*, *Cyclops*, *Sisyphus*, *Sciron*, *Syleus*, *Theristae*, and (perhaps) *Lamia*.⁶ From these plays, approximately forty to fifty fragments are extant

1 On the basics of satyr drama, see especially Seaford (1984) 1–60; Krumeich/Pechstein/Seidensticker [*KPS*] (1999) 1–73; O'Sullivan/Collard (2013) 1–57; and Lämmle (2013) 19–107.

2 The best classical representation of the satyr costume is found on the famous Pronomos Vase. For more on satyric costumes and masks, see Krumeich/Pechstein/Seidensticker (1999) 53–55.

3 Lissarrague (1992) 236 famously provides the following as a recipe for satyr drama: 'Take one myth, add satyrs, observe the result.'

4 The existence of Euripides' sole complete satyr play is thanks more to fortune than to the play's importance in the canon. The *Cyclops* is one of nine Euripidean plays found in a fourteenth-century manuscript (L) from the Laurentian Library in Florence (Cod. Laur. 32.2). Since all nine plays are preserved in alphabetical order (from epsilon to kappa), they presumably come from a multi-codex 'complete' set of Euripides' plays. This volume, however, is the only one to survive, which highlights just how fortunate we are to have a complete satyr play at all.

5 Euripides apparently staged two separate satyr plays with this title.

6 Only the title and two verses speculatively associated with *Lamia* (*TrGF inc.* 922) remain

(depending on the status of *incerta* and *adespota*), totalling close to a hundred complete verses. Evaluating Euripidean satyr drama on such limited material is challenging, if not impossible, and conclusions must be drawn cautiously and taken with a grain of salt. Nevertheless, a close study does provide a rough sense of some characteristic elements. On the whole, Euripides seems to fit into our larger understanding of the genre,⁷ but he also has some unique interests and approaches to satyr play. In the first section of this chapter, I will provide a brief overview of Euripides' known satyric plays, and in the second part, I will attempt to put these plays in the larger context of fifth-century Athenian satyr drama, isolating some particularly Euripidean features.

2 Plays, Titles, and Plots

The plot of Euripides' *Cyclops* presents the story from book 9 of Homer's *Odyssey*, in which Odysseus, returning from the Trojan War, lands on the island of the Cyclopes and comes across the cave of the monophthalmus giant Polyphemus.⁸ Euripides' version is set in Sicily, on Mt. Aetna, where Silenus and his satyr children live and work as slaves, cleaning the Cyclopes' cave and shepherding his flocks. After a typically Euripidean prologue, in which papa-Silenus laments his present state and explains how he arrived there (he was shipwrecked while searching for Dionysus, who had been abducted by Tyrrhenian pirates),⁹ the Chorus of satyrs makes a boisterous entrance and attempts to herd the monster's flock into the cave. When Odysseus arrives in need of food and water, Silenus agrees to exchange Polyphemus' cheese and sheep for some of the hero's wine, which he has lacked since he landed on the island. To the dismay of all characters involved, Polyphemus returns home during this transaction, at which point Silenus lies to his master and claims that Odysseus

from antiquity. On the epigraphic list of Euripides' dramas from the Esquiline Hill, which contains the dramas alphabetically from K-M, the title is missing, and the play was apparently lost at such an early stage that it was not known at the library of Alexandria. However, a fragment of Varro (*Antiquitates Rerum Divinarum* F 56a Cardauns) mentions the play without any notice of genre. For more on the *Lamia*, which could have been either a tragedy or a satyr play, see Pechstein (1998) 177–184 and Krumeich/Pechstein/Seidensticker (1999) 475–476.

7 An inherent hazard of making such a claim is, of course, that most of our knowledge about satyr drama comes from Euripides' *Cyclops*.

8 For a useful collection of texts, commentaries, concordances, and translations of Euripides' *Cyclops*, see Lämmle (2013) 449–450. See also, O'Sullivan/Collard (2013).

9 On narrative prologues being an important formal element of Euripidean tragedy, see Micheli (1987) 102–105. On 'Der Silen als Prologsprecher' in the *Cyclops*, see Conrad (1997) 165–169.

and his men are stealing the giant's goods. Polyphemus forces the strangers into the cave, and kills and eats two men. Since there is no stone blocking the exit as in Homer's version, Odysseus sneaks out and devises a plan for retribution and escape: he will get Polyphemus drunk, sharpen a huge olive branch, and—with the help of the satyrs—stab it into the monster's eye. After a lengthy symposium, in which Silenus repeatedly steals the Cyclops' wine, Polyphemus drags the elderly satyr into the cave for a sexual encounter and passes out. Odysseus accomplishes his plan (without the help of the satyrs, who feign injury to escape peril), and the play concludes with the satyrs dancing offstage to board Odysseus' ship and again become the servants of Dionysus.

The general structure of the *Cyclops*, in which an ogre-ish character serves as the main protagonist to a victorious hero, appears to have been a favourite plot of Euripides, if the scant remains of his satyr plays serve as a reliable indicator. Euripides' *Sciron*, for example, staged the myth of the villainous Sciron, who forced strangers walking by his home near the cliffs of Megara to wash his feet. Then, after they finished this task, he would rob them and kick them off the precipice into the sea. He persisted in these activities until Theseus, making his way from the Peloponnese to Athens, came across the villain and subjected him to his own abuse. The *hypothesis* suggests that Euripides offered a unique version of the myth, in which the satyrs and/or Silenus served as intermediaries in the process, luring in unsuspecting passers-by for Sciron with the promise of prostitutes.¹⁰ The play begins with (what is probably) a prayer by Silenus to Hermes for escape from his current situation (*TrGF* 674a): Ἐρμῆ, σὺ γὰρ δὴ [] ἔχεις ('Hermes, for you indeed have/hold ...').¹¹ After a prologue establishing the play's wider context (how the satyrs arrived there, what their role is in serving Sciron, etc.), the satyrs presumably sang an entrance song and were followed onstage shortly after by Theseus. At this point, Silenus attempted to trap the hero by enticing him with access to different hetaerae:

καὶ τὰς μὲν ἄξει, πῶλον ἦν διδῶς ἔνα,
τὰς δ' ἦν ξυνωρίδ'· αἱ δὲ καπὶ τεσσάρων

10 For more on the *Sciron*, see Sutton (1980) 62–65; Gantz (1993) 252; Conrad (1997) 189–195; Pechstein (1998) 218–242; Krumeich/Pechstein/Seidensticker (1999) 449–456; Voelke (2001) 225–228. O'Sullivan/Collard (2013) 398–403.

11 Like the *Cyclops*, which begins with a monologue and prayer to Dionysus, the god being addressed probably did not appear onstage, but why Silenus would call upon Hermes rather than Dionysus is uncertain. All translations of Euripides' fragments and testimonia come from or are adapted from Collard/Cropp (2008).

φοιτώσιν ἴππων ἀργυρῶν. φιλοῦσι δὲ
τὸν ἐξ Ἀθηνῶν παρθένους ὅταν φέρῃ
πολλάς <τις> ...

EURIPIDES, *Sciron TrGF* 675

You can take these (women) with you if you pay one ‘colt’, and those if you give ‘a pair in harness’; and these others actually go for four ‘silver horses’. Men like the ‘girls from Athens’, when someone has plenty with him ...

Here, Silenus moves between groups of women, naming their various prices with colloquial, fifth-century terms for local coins. This use of hetaerae is distinctive, not only because prostitutes were not part of the original myth, but also because they are not found in any other known satyr plays.¹² Euripides’ inventiveness no doubt created ample opportunity for sexual jokes by Silenus and the permanently sexually-frustrated, ithyphallic satyrs.¹³

The hypothesis to *Sciron* breaks off into a lacunose jumble of fragments, leaving many details of the play’s remainder up for debate, but the performance undoubtedly ended with the defeat of Sciron and the liberation of the satyrs. Exactly how these events played out onstage, though, is unclear. Unlike the *Cyclops*, where Odysseus blinds Polyphemus before his escape, the *Sciron* staged a myth that ends in the death of the antagonist. It seems unlikely that the hero would actually kill Sciron in a satyr play, but he could perhaps have bound and carried him offstage, with the intent of hurling him to his death. Perhaps even more problematic is the mention of Heracles at what appears to be the end of the hypothesis. The hero supposedly ‘seizes’ someone or something, but it is difficult to imagine why Heracles would be part of this tale. Some scholars have suggested that Heracles appeared onstage at the end of the play to help subdue the villain, and although this option is not outside the realm of possibilities, the myth is so Theseus-centric (and Theseus was such an important Athenian hero) that it seems more likely the reference to Heracles belongs to the next play’s hypothesis.¹⁴

Another of Euripides’ satyr plays that pits a traditional Greek hero against a tyrannical figure is the *Busiris*.¹⁵ According to Pseudo-Apollodorus (*Bibliotheca* 2.5.11), Busiris was the son of Poseidon and ruler of Egypt during a time of

12 Cf. Voelke (2001) 225–227.

13 For an alternate plot suggestion, see below.

14 Cf. Conrad (1997) 193–195.

15 On Euripides *Busiris*, see Pechstein (1998) 123–140; Krumeich/Pechstein/Seidensticker (1999) 413–419.

famine.¹⁶ When the Cypriot seer Phrasius entered his domain, he informed the tyrant that he could end the crisis by sacrificing one foreigner/guest each year to Zeus. The despot began immediately to remedy the situation by slaying the prophet who had given him the divination. He continued to sacrifice strangers entering his city until he captured Heracles, who was journeying through North Africa after obtaining the apples of the Hesperides. Busiris was no match for the son of Zeus, who broke his bonds and killed the king. This mythological plot was fairly common in ancient comedy and on ancient vases, but Euripides' production is the only known satyr play to treat this myth.¹⁷ Euripides' play most likely covered the events from just before Heracles' arrival at the court of Busiris up to the defeat of the tyrant, but very few fragments from the *Busiris* remain. The hypothesis includes part of the opening line, where again, as in *Cyclops* and *Sciron*, we see Silenus calling on a god to end his troubles: (*TrGF* 312b) 'O deity' (or 'O ... of the deity'). But the only sizeable fragment from the play is more difficult to place:

δούλω γὰρ οὐχ οἶόν τε τὰληθῆ λέγειν,
εἰ δεσπότηισι μὴ πρέποντα τυγχάνοι

EURIPIDES, *Busiris TrGF* 313

It is not possible for a slave to speak the truth if it happens not to suit his masters (or 'if things happen which may not suit his masters.')

These verses may have been spoken by Busiris to the insolent slave Heracles after he said something disagreeable, but it is also possible that Silenus or the satyrs, fearful for Heracles' well-being, addressed these lines to the newly enslaved hero as advice. *Busiris* probably proceeded rather predictably, ending with Heracles' defeat of the tyrant and his escape with the satyrs, but again we are unsure how the death of Busiris would have been treated. As with the *Sciron*, one has to wonder if there was not some alternate ending, in which Heracles merely injures or binds the ruler before exiting the stage.

Euripides' *Syleus*, which has more extant fragments and testimonia than any other fragmentary Euripidean satyr play, also stages the mythological story of

16 Cf. Gantz (1993) 418.

17 This fact perhaps lends weight to the suggestion that an Attic red-figure cup from around 450 (*LIMC* III.1.147–152, no. 2) represents this Euripidean production, since it depicts Heracles in bonds on the outside and Heracles with a satyr on the inside. Cf. Krumeich/Pechstein/Seidensticker (1999) 416–417.

a tyrannical figure killed by Heracles.¹⁸ According to the myth, when strangers happened upon Syleus' property in Northern Greece, he forced them to work in his vineyard, but after they completed their tasks, he slaughtered them. The testimonia to Euripides' version of the myth suggest that the play began with Heracles being sold as a slave to Syleus as punishment for murdering his friend Iphitus (carried out during a fit of madness inspired by Hera).¹⁹ As in the previously-discussed satyric productions, the Chorus of satyrs was probably already enslaved when the protagonist arrived, and although much of the play's action is uncertain, a major theme appears to have been Heracles' unwillingness to be subjected to slavery. For example, at the start of the play, Heracles vividly describes the physical suffering he would endure to preserve his honour:

πίμπρη, κάταιθε σάρκας, ἐμπλήσθητί μου
 πίνων κελαινὸν αἶμα· πρόσθε γὰρ κάτω
 γῆς εἶσιν ἄστρα, γῆ δ' ἄνεισ' ἐς αἰθέρα,
 πρὶν ἐξ ἐμοῦ σοι θῶπ' ἀπαντήσαι λόγον.

EURIPIDES, *Syleus TrGF* 687

Set fire to me, burn my flesh up, sate yourself in drinking my dark blood!
 The stars will go down below the earth, and the earth rise up into the
 heaven, before you meet with any fawning talk from me!

Philo preserves many similar quotes treating the idea that a noble man should not be a slave to an inferior (and evil) man, and Tzetzes notes that Heracles' enslavement completely backfires for Syleus.²⁰ Heracles uproots the villain's vines, feasts on his best bull, and drinks his finest wine; and the play culminates in Syleus' failed attempt to punish the hero, who—instead of doing what he is ordered—orders Syleus to fetch some fruits and cakes for dessert. Heracles ultimately kills (or binds or injures) Syleus, exclaiming (*TrGF* 693) 'Come on then, my dear club, stir yourself, please, and be bold'. Then, according to Tzetzes, the play ends with Heracles diverting a river to destroy the farm and taking Syleus' daughter Xenodoce (or Xenodice) as a prize.

18 On Euripides' *Syleus*, see especially van Groningen (1930); Sutton (1980) 66–67; Gantz (1993) 440–441; Conrad (1997) 195–199; Pechstein (1998) 243–283; Krumeich/Pechstein/Seidensticker (1999) 457–473; Voelke (2001) 330–338.

19 Although the source(s) fail to mention the role of satyrs in the play, one of the testimonia (T221b) insists that this play in particular encapsulates the nature of satyr drama: ἡ σατυρική δὲ ποιήσις ... ἀμιγῆ καὶ χαριέντα καὶ θυμελικὸν ἔχει τὸν γέλωτα, 'Satyric poetry has pure, pleasant, and theatrical laughter'.

20 Tzetzes, *Prolegomena on Comedy* 11.59–70 (pp. 35–36 Koster).

Heracles also functions as the primary protagonist of Euripides' *Eurystheus*, which stages the hero's famous twelfth labour, the transportation of the three-headed dog Cerberus from Hades to the court of Heracles' cousin (and temporary master), Eurystheus.²¹ At the start of the play, Heracles, having just received the order for his twelfth labour, says:

πέμψεις δ' ἐς Ἅιδου ζῶντα κού τεθνηκότα,
καί μοι τὸ τέρθρον δῆλον εἰσπορεύομαι.

EURIPIDES, *Eurystheus TrGF* 371

You will be sending a living man into Hades, not a dead one;
and the end towards which I make my way is clear to me.

Again, Silenus and the Chorus of satyrs would have almost certainly been enslaved by Eurystheus prior to the start of the play. The next stage of action, though, is uncertain. The most logical course would be for Heracles to disappear offstage to fetch Cerberus from Hades, while the satyrs perform a choral ode, but one fragment in particular suggests a less orthodox plot for the play:

οὐκ ἔστιν, ὦ γεραῖέ, μὴ δείσης τάδε·
τὰ Δαιδάλεια πάντα κινεῖσθαι δοκεῖ
βλέπειν τ' ἀγάλμαθ' ὧδ' ἀνήρ κείνος σοφός.

EURIPIDES, *Eurystheus TrGF* 372

They aren't real, old man; do not fear them: all the figures made by
Daedalus seem to move and look, so clever is that man!

These verses are presumably spoken to the 'old man' Silenus by Heracles, but it is difficult to know why Daedalus' creations appear in this play. It is possible that ἀγάλματα is an extra-/meta-theatrical reference to the man-made Cerberus brought onstage by Heracles, but this type of overt theatrical reference is unparalleled in satyr drama.²² I would suggest a less 'meta' scenario, in which Heracles, disinclined to travel to Hades, visits Daedalus' workshop with

21 Sutton (1980) 61–62; Gantz (1993) 413–416; Pechstein (1998) 145–176; Krumeich/Pechstein/Seidensticker (1999) 422–430; and O'Sullivan/Collard (2013) 392–397 offer further discussion of Euripides' *Eurystheus*.

22 The use of the plural τάδε in the first line could refer to Cerberus' three heads, but it seems more likely that there were multiple statues onstage. For an alternate interpretation, see O'Sullivan/Collard (2013) 395. On meta-theatrics in satyr drama, see Kaimio et al. (2001).

the satyrs in order to acquire a simulacrum of the hell-hound Cerberus. Upon seeing the various lifelike statues in Daedalus' court, Silenus—in typical fashion²³—is terrified, and Heracles attempts to reassure him that the creations are not real. Daedalus would appear onstage and provide the hero with a likeness of Cerberus, which Heracles would transport back to Eurystheus. This plot twist would also explain the sentiment expressed in *TrGF* 375:

†πιστὸν μὲν οὖν εἶναι χρὴ τὸν διάκονον
τοιούτου εἶναι† καὶ στέγειν τὰ δεσποτῶν.

EURIPIDES, *Eurystheus TrGF* 375

†Such a servant must be loyal† and keep his masters' business secret.

Although the text is corrupt, the sense is fairly clear, but who would speak these lines is less clear. Heracles would never address such a sentiment to Eurystheus; nor would Eurystheus have any particular affairs to be hidden by the slavish satyrs. Silenus, though, might say this to reassure his temporary master Heracles that he will not reveal Cerberus' status as a mere simulacrum. Whether or not this reconstruction of the play is accurate, the fact that Cerberus was brought onstage would have provided the opportunity for an exciting spectacle prior to the inevitable panic of Eurystheus and the liberation of the satyrs.

The myth of Autolycus has similar opportunities for exciting and amusing stage action, which may explain why Euripides composed two separate plays with this title.²⁴ Athenaeus (10.413c) notes that Euripides composed a 'first' *Autolycus* (obviously suggesting that he also wrote a second), but the idea that there were two '*Autolyci*' was considered dubious until a papyrus fragment from the second-century AD (published in 1939, P. Vindob. 19766) validated Athenaeus' account.²⁵ The content of Euripides' two plays, though, can only be

23 For perhaps the best representation of Silenus' extreme fearfulness, see Sophocles' satyric *Ichneutae* vv. 131–210, where after chastising his satyr children for being afraid of a noise, Silenus hears a noise and runs offstage in a fit of terror.

24 For more on Euripides' *Autolycus*, see especially Sutton (1980) 59–60; Kyle (1987) 128–130; Masciadri (1987) 1–7; Kannicht (1991) 91–99; d'Angio (1992) 83–94; Pechstein (1998) 39–122; Krumeich/Pechstein/Seidensticker (1999) 403–412; Mangidis (2003); Harris (2009) 163–166; Pritchard (2012) 11–16.

25 Even after the papyrus was found, there were still a number of critics of this idea. Mangidis (2003) 110–118 interprets the evidence not as a reference to two separate plays, but to two separate performances of the same play. d'Angio (1992) contends that there were two separate plays, but one of them—the one which contained *TrGF* 282 (discussed below)—was

very tentatively reconstructed. As the son of Hermes, Autolycus was a trickster figure, who could steal an item and replace it with something (or someone) of lesser value, deluding the owner into believing nothing had changed. Hyginus (*Fab.* 201) offers what has long been considered the plot of one play, a skirmish between Autolycus and Sisyphus over cattle.²⁶ When Autolycus' herds began growing and Sisyphus' began shrinking, Sisyphus suspected that Hermes' son was using his abilities to steal from him. He put hidden marks on the hooves of his cattle to prove the crime, and succeeded in recovering his possessions. As a punishment, he seduced Autolycus' daughter, Anticleia (who later married Laertes), and impregnated her with Odysseus. The inclusion of the satyrs in this conflict (perhaps as stand-ins for the cattle) would have led to some entertaining scenes, and the satyrs would have no doubt expressed their desire to seduce Anticleia when she was brought onstage in the final scene.

Tzetzes refers to what was probably the plot of Euripides' second *Autolycus* in a detailed description of Autolycus' mythological legend:

κλέπτων καὶ γὰρ μετήμειβεν ἄλλα διδοὺς ἀντ' ἄλλων. ἐδόκουν δ' οἱ λαμβάνον-
τες τὰ σφῶν λαμβάνειν πάλιν, οὐκ ἠπατήσθαι τούτῳ δὲ καὶ ἕτερα λαμβάνειν.
Ἴππον γὰρ κλέπτων ἄριστον ὄνον τῶν ψωριῶντων διδοὺς ἐποίει δόκησιν ἐκείνον
δεδωκέναι· καὶ κόρην νύμφην νεαράν κλέπτων ἄριστον ἐδίδου πάλιν ἢ σειλη-
νὸν ἢ σάτυρον, γερόντιον σαπρόν τι, σιμόν, νωδόν, καὶ φαλακρόν, μυξῶδες, τῶν
δυσμόρφων. καὶ ὁ πατήρ ἐνόμιζε τούτον ὡς θυγατέρα. ἐν Αὐτολύκῳ δράματι
σατυρικῷ τὰ πάντα ὁ Εὐριπίδης ἀκριβῶς τὰ περὶ τούτου γράφει

TZETZES, *Chiliades* 8.443–453 = T. Iv

Whenever he stole, he did an exchange and returned one thing for another; the receivers thought they were getting their own things back again, not that they had been deceived by him and were getting different things. He would steal a very good horse and give (back) an ass, one of the mangy sort, and made it seem he had returned the former; and when he stole a marriageable young girl, he gave back again either a silenus or

tragic. Pechstein (1998) 39–40, 114, on the other hand, wonders if the play containing fragment *TrGF* 282 was, instead, pro-satyric (i.e., a play performed in the space of a satyr drama without a satyr Chorus; see below for more on pro-satyric drama). The simplest conclusion, though, is that there were two plays, and both were satyric.

26 The details of this plot are perhaps supported by a second-century Boeotian jug (now lost, *LIMC* 1.1.828–830 'Antikleia' no. 2). Cf. Krumeich/Pechstein/Seidensticker (1999) 408–409, with Tafel 25b.

a satyr, some decrepit little old man, snub-nosed, toothless and bald, all snotty, one of the uglies—and her father thought of him as his daughter. In his satyr-play *Autolycus* Euripides has written the whole story about him accurately.

Tzetzēs explicitly connects Euripides' *Autolycus* with the events he describes, making it fairly likely that Euripides' play actually contained both of these episodes. In fact, *TrGF* 283 mentions asses (played by the satyrs themselves, perhaps): ... τοὺς ὄνους τοὺς λαρκαγωγοὺς ἐξ ὄρους οἴσειν ξύλα ... '... that the asses which carry charcoal-baskets will bring wood from the mountain ...' And the swapping of a beautiful female character with an old, ugly satyr (undoubtedly papa-Silenus) seems to be alluded to in *TrGF* 282a: μηδὲν τῷ πατρὶ / μέμφεσθ' ἄωρον ἀποκαλοῦντες ἀνδρίον, 'Don't criticize our father, calling him an ugly little man!' These verses would have been amusing if spoken by the satyrs later in the play, when the father of the maiden was no longer under *Autolycus*' spell and wondered who the 'ugly, little man' was in his daughter's clothes. These *Autolycus* plays would have been very different from the ogre-plays, with the 'excuse' for the satyrs' presence being the protagonist's trickery rather than an antagonist's enslavement.

Three additional satyric productions are known from their titles, but are too fragmentary to link to any particular plot. In 415, Euripides staged his *Sisyphus* after *Trojan Women*, *Alexander*, and *Palamedes*.²⁷ Although these tragedies clearly formed an inter-related trilogy based on myths surrounding the Trojan War, the satyric *Sisyphus* must have treated a completely different plot. Sisyphus' penchant for killing travellers and guests would fit with the storylines of many Euripidean satyr plays, but the narrative cannot be pieced together from the remaining hypothesis and fragments. One fragment clearly includes a reference to Heracles (*TrGF* 673 χαίρω γέ σ', ὦ βέλτιστον Ἀλκμήνης τέκος, / [...] τόν τε μίαρὸν ἐξολωλότα, 'I do rejoice, O most excellent son of Alcmena, that you [have come?] and [that] the foul creature has been destroyed'), but no myth in which the two figures meet is extant, making speculation particularly difficult.²⁸ The situation is even more bleak with Euripides' satyric *Theristae* (*Harvesters*). In the hypothesis to Euripides' *Medea*, Aristophanes of Byzantium notes that this satyr play was staged after *Medea*, *Dictys*, and *Philoctetes*,

27 According to Aelian *Var. Hist.* 2.8, Euripides' plays came in second place behind Xenocles' productions.

28 For more detailed discussion of Euripides' *Sisyphus*, see Pechstein (1998) 185–217 and Krumeich/Pechstein/Seidensticker (1999) 442–448.

but that it was already lost by the time of his writing (around the end of the third century BC). The ambiguous, non-mythological title offers no particular direction for speculation.²⁹ Euripides' *Epeius* is known only from a Roman inscription (Paris, Louvre Ma 343. IG XIV 1152 col. 1.25), on which various titles of Euripidean satyr plays are inscribed.³⁰ Epeius was most famous for building the Trojan horse (he also fought at both Patroclus' and Achilles' funeral games), and Euripides' play presumably treated an aspect of this adventure, perhaps with the Chorus of satyrs preparing to climb in the horse and go into battle.

3 Features of Euripidean Satyr Drama

Upon surveying the titles and plots of known Euripidean satyr plays, a few details become apparent. First, Euripides seems to have drawn most of his plots from myths with ogre-ish villains. It is impossible to know Euripides' motivations for this choice,³¹ but the records clearly suggest that Euripides was both fonder of this plot structure than other plots, and fonder of this plot than other fifth- (and fourth-) century dramatists. Another observation that becomes evident is Euripides' frequent use of hero-based satyr plays. This, of course, correlates to the ogre plot structure (Greek myth tends to include heroes who fight villains), but it becomes potentially more meaningful when considered in light of Euripides' tragedies, where there is a distinct focus on gods rather than heroes, and in light of other poets' classical satyr plays, where gods are frequently brought onstage.³² To get a fuller sense of Euripidean satyr drama, though, it is important to move beyond titles and plots, and put other stylistic choices in context. As we examine these elements of Euripidean satyr drama, we will see that Euripides was probably fairly traditional in his satyr plays, offering nothing particularly unorthodox (except for the *Alcestis*, a fascinating satyr-

29 For tentative reconstructions and relevant bibliography on *Theristae*, see Pechstein (1998) 284–286.

30 Pechstein (1998) 141–144 and Krumeich/Pechstein/Seidensticker (1999) 420–421 offer useful analyses of Euripides' *Epeius*.

31 It is conceivable that convenience was, in fact, a key motivator for Euripides, since this motif was the easiest way to explain the satyrs' presence in foreign mythological settings.

32 The birth and youth of a god was a popular theme throughout satyr drama, but Sophocles brought gods onstage in his satyr plays especially frequently [Seidensticker (2012) 220].

less play that was performed in place of a satyr play),³³ but also that he was not averse to experimenting or developing particular features in his satyr plays.

When aiming to understand satyr drama, scholars often turn to the earliest surviving account of the genre, a brief description found in Demetrius' *De Elocutione*, which classifies satyr drama as 'playful tragedy', (τραγωδία παιζουσα).³⁴ Although the phrase, taken out of context, fails to capture the nuances of Demetrius' broader observations about the genre, it does roughly convey satyr drama's formal connections to tragedy and the spirited humour of its Chorus.³⁵ Satyr drama was a fundamental piece of the 'tragic experience'.³⁶ It was staged as part of the tragedians' competition and included the same actors and choreuts as the preceding tragedies; and non-satyr characters wore the same tragic costumes and used similarly tragic metres. The main differences between tragedy and satyr drama were the romantic themes and motifs that were not used in tragedy ('pastoral settings, ogres, adventures and miraculous escapes, necromancy and resurrections from the dead, dinners, symposia, musical and athletic competitions, and successful erotic encounters [meetings, falling in love, courtship] often ending in matrimony'.³⁷) and the persistent use of the lewd and laughable satyr Chorus.

At the formal level, the remains of Euripides' satyr plays correspond to these broader trends in classical satyr drama. For example, his use of metre and compound forms is consistent with that of other fifth-century satyr dramatists. He deviates from tragedy's strict iambic trimeter in only three respects: he occasionally violates Porson's law,³⁸ he allows anapaestic resolutions outside of the first foot, and he sometimes uses three tribrachs in a row.³⁹ In the *Cyclops*, for example, resolutions are slightly more common than in Euripides' tragedies,

33 The issue of the *Alcestis* is too complex to discuss here. For a recent discussion of the *Alcestis* and satyr drama, including relevant bibliography, see Shaw (2014) 94–100.

34 Seaford (1984) 1; Lämmle (2013) 53; and O'Sullivan/Collard (2013) 1, for example, use this phrase as the header to sections of their studies of satyr drama, and Harrison (2005b) uses it as the title of his edited collection of essays on the genre. Demetrius probably wrote in the third- or second-century BC. On the date and authorship of Demetrius' work, see Innes in Halliwell et al. (1995) 312–321.

35 For a more detailed treatment of Demetrius' remarks, see Shaw (2014) 13–14.

36 On satyr drama's connections to tragedy, see especially Griffith (2002), (2005), (2006), (2010); Seaford (1984) 44–48; Krumeich/Pechstein/Seidensticker (1999) 12–34; and Lämmle's recent 'Tragödienreflexion' in (2013) 111–290.

37 Griffith (2008) 73–74.

38 Porson's law prohibits a break between the first arsis and the following longum if the arsis is long. For more on this metrical rule, cf. West (1982) 42 & 84.

39 For general discussion of satyr drama's metre, cf. Krumeich/Pechstein/Seidensticker (1999) 16–17.

and are permissible in more metrical *sedes* throughout the play.⁴⁰ Euripides also uses anapaests outside of the first foot very sparingly in the trimeters of his tragedies (and even then they are restricted to proper names), but in his satyr play he uses anapaests in all feet but the sixth.⁴¹ Similarly, Euripides violates Porson's Law in five lines of the *Cyclops*,⁴² an average of once per one-hundred and forty-one verses (.7%), whereas he appears never to break this law in his tragedies.⁴³ Euripides also uses approximately the same percentage of compound nouns, adjectives, and adverbs (a measure of 'elevation') in his tragedies and the *Cyclops*.⁴⁴

These various statistics demonstrate Euripides' general adherence to the metre and tenor of fifth-century satyr drama, and this can also be noted in his use of obscenity. As Jeffrey Henderson notes in the introduction to his *Maculate Muse*, authors of classical satyr drama avoided much outright obscenity like that found in Old Comedy, preferring instead to use less explicit sexual and scatological references.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, this playful style of obscenity is a key piece of the genre.⁴⁶ In the *Cyclops*, for example, when Silenus takes his first sip of wine, he points to his costume phallus and says that the wine makes him erect (ὀρθός, 169), gives him the urge to 'grab a breast' (μαστός, 170) and to run his hand through someone's 'grassy meadow' (i.e., pubic hair, λιμῶν, 171). And in verses 177–187, when the satyrs ask Odysseus about his exploits in Troy, they also inquire whether the Greek heroes all 'took turns banging' (διεκρατήσατ' ἐν μέρει, 181) Helen, since she delights in being 'married' (γαμουμένη, 182) to lots of men. The satyrs employ vivid language of 'driving a hole through' to imply having sex with Helen and then complete the thought with a euphemistic use of γαμέω, which can mean both to marry and to have intercourse.⁴⁷ Euripides also uses double-entendres, as when the satyrs speak of their phalloi as a 'siphon' (σίφωνα) in a slightly corrupt passage (439–440), drawing on the phallic shape of the tool used for extracting wine out of a jar.⁴⁸ Outside of the *Cyclops*, we

40 Ceadel (1941)70. These statistics, of course, are tinged by the fact that the *Cyclops* is our only complete satyr play, but the fragments of other fifth-century satyr dramatists suggest that their plays were similarly constructed.

41 For a detailed treatment of *Cyclops*' metre, see Ussher (1978) 208–212.

42 Verses 120, 210, 672, 681, 682.

43 For the very few exceptions to Porson's Law (most of which are found in satyr play), see West (1982) 84–85.

44 Griffith (2006) 54–57.

45 Henderson (1991) 26.

46 See Redondo (2003) 413–431; López Eire (2003) 387–412; and Slenders (2005).

47 *LSJ ad. loc.* 2b.

48 Lissarrague (1990) 61 examines a sherd from a fifth-century Attic red-figure kylix (Pal-

see Heracles (or Silenus) make a similarly playful allusion to sex in a fragment that probably came from the end of the *Syleus*: (βαυβῶμεν εἰσελθόντες· ἀπόμορξαι σέθεν / τὰ δάκρυα, *TrGF* 694) ‘Let’s go in and cuddle up! Wipe away your tears’. These verses are presumably spoken to Syleus’ daughter Xenodoce after the defeat of her father, and although the verb βαυβῶ means ‘to lull to sleep’, it has clear aural similarity with βαυβῶν, a synonym of the Greek word ὄλισβος, meaning dildo.⁴⁹ The effect of this joke is clear: Heracles wants to ‘sleep with’ his new partner. Henderson views this style of obscenity as a particularly Euripidean innovation, concluding that it ‘may indicate an idiosyncratic loosening of standards of diction and propriety by that iconoclastic writer’.⁵⁰ But Euripides’ use of obscenity corresponds to that of earlier authors, or if there is any change, it is probably toward less obscenity, since the remains of his fragments offer fewer obscene jokes than those of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and other fifth-century dramatists.⁵¹

In addition to a traditional use of plots, metres, and obscenity, Euripides also engages with what appear to be typical satyric themes, the most important of which is ‘Dionysian chorality’. Griffith (2013) has shown that the remains of satyr drama from the early fifth century provide numerous passages in which music, costume, dance, and other performance elements are expressly mentioned or alluded to. He argues that these features brought satyr play ‘closer to the orbit of dithyrambic performance than was usually expected in tragedy or even comedy’, especially because the satyr Chorus ‘intrinsically resemble the boys and men of the dithyrambic Choruses in being officially devoted to Dionysos and to celebrating and ‘serving’ him in the best ways possible’.⁵² Griffith’s observations are very compelling, especially when considered alongside the ‘Nothing to do with Dionysus’ (οὐδέν πρὸς τὸν Διόνυσον) anecdote, which suggests that the genre was officially instituted at the City Dionysia in response to the complaint that tragedy had evolved to have too little to do with the festival’s patron deity, Dionysus.⁵³ Zenobius summarizes the issue:

ermo v 651) that depicts this same double entendre visually, with a satyr inserting his penis into a wine container.

49 Cf. Henderson (1991) 221.

50 Henderson (1991) 26.

51 See note 46 above.

52 Griffith (2013) 258 and 263–264. For a recent study on Dionysus in satyr drama, see Lämmle (2013) 111–147 and (2007) 335–386.

53 For a useful collection of essays on Dionysus’ role in drama, including satyr drama, see Winkler/Zeitlin (1990).

Ἐπειδὴ τῶν χορῶν ἐξ ἀρχῆς εἰθισμένων διθύραμβον ἄδειν εἰς τὸν Διόνυσον, οἱ ποιηταὶ ὕστερον ἐκβάντες τὴν συνήθειαν ταύτην, Αἴαντας καὶ Κενταύρους γράφειν ἐπεχείρουν. Ὅθεν οἱ θεώμενοι σκώπτοντες ἔλεγον, Οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸν Διόνυσον. Διὰ γοῦν τοῦτο τοὺς Σατύρους ὕστερον ἔδοξεν αὐτοῖς προεισάγειν, ἵνα μὴ δοκῶσιν ἐπιλανθάνεσθαι τοῦ θεοῦ.

ZENOBIUS 5.40 = IERANÒ 1997 no. 65

After that time, when, from the beginning, Choruses were accustomed to sing the dithyramb to Dionysus, poets later departed from this habit, and put their hand to writing 'Ajaxes' and 'Centaurus'. Because of this the spectators joking around said, 'Nothing to do with Dionysus'. For this reason, it seemed good to them later to introduce satyr plays as a prelude, so that they might not seem to be forgetful of the god.

Although Zenobius wrote around six hundred years after these developments, and although there are clear factual problems with parts of Zenobius' quote (e.g., dithyramb continued into the classical period, and satyr plays were not introduced as a 'prelude'), his suggestion would explain a good deal about the genre, from its continued performance for hundreds of years to its continued engagement with Dionysiac chorality.⁵⁴ In fact, satyr drama's overt Dionysian performativity extends well beyond the first half of the fifth century and is a prominent feature of Euripidean satyr drama.

The fragmentary nature of Euripides' satyric remains make it difficult to prove the importance of Dionysian chorality in Euripides' satyr plays, but in many ways the *Cyclops* is the best example we could hope for, since the original myth does not involve Dionysus or Dionysiac performance.⁵⁵ The first instance of Euripides' engagement with Dionysiac performativity in the *Cyclops* is near the start of the play (vv. 36–40), when Silenus wraps up his opening monologue with a highly Dionysiac and highly meta-performative description of the Chorus' entrance:

ἤδη δὲ παῖδας προσνέμοντας εἰσορῶ
ποιίμνας. τί ταῦτα; μῶν κρότος σικινίδων
ὁμοῖος ὑμῖν νῦν τε χῶτε Βακχίῳ
κῶμος συνασπίζοντες Ἀλθαίας δόμου
προσητ' ἀοιδαῖς βαρβίτων σαυλούμενοι;

EURIPIDES, *Cyclops* 36–40

54 Seaford (1976) 209–221 has provided a persuasive argument for satyr drama's origins being grounded in the 'Nothing to do with Dionysus' story'.

55 On the 'ab-/anwesend' of Dionysus in Euripides' *Cyclops*, see Lämmle (2013) 113–125.

But now I see my sons driving the flocks this way. What is this, lads? Can it be that you have the same rhythm to your lively dance as when you went reveling at Bacchus' side to the house of Althaea, swaggering in to the music of the lyre?⁵⁶

In these verses, Silenus juxtaposes the satyrs' Dionysiac dancing with their decidedly non-Dionysiac setting, drawing attention to the performance of their *parodos*. The satyrs enter the stage dancing and singing, but Silenus does not use generic terminology. Instead of asking why his sons are dancing, he specifically asks about the *sikinnis*, using the official, theatrical name of the satyr's dance in satyr play.⁵⁷ He also implicitly refers to their dancing as a *kômos*, a term that denotes Dionysiac performances at the festival,⁵⁸ and he amplifies these meta-theatrical references by the explicit mention of Bacchus.

The satyrs follow up Silenus' allusion to Dionysiac performance with their choral ode, performing a Dionysiac song and dance while singing that there is no Dionysiac song or dance on the island of the Cyclops:

οὐ τὰδε Βρόμιος, οὐ τὰδε χοροὶ
 Βακχεῖαι τε θυρσοφόροι,
 οὐ τυμπάνων ἀλαλαγ-
 μοὶ κρήναις παρ' ὕδροχύτοις,
 οὐκ οἴνου χλωραὶ σταγόνες·
 οὐδ' ἐν Νύσαι μετὰ Νυμ-
 φᾶν Ἰακχον Ἰακχον ᾠ-
 δᾶν μέλπω

EURIPIDES, *Cyclops* 63–70

No Bromius is here, no Choruses either,
 no thyrsus-bearing Bacchants,
 no ecstatic noise of drums
 by the gushing springs of water,
 no fresh drops of wine.
 Nor can I sing with the Nymphs on Nysa
 the song 'Iacchus! Iacchus!'

56 All translations of Euripides' *Cyclops* come from or are adapted from Kovacs (2001).

57 For further discussion of the satyric dance, see Festa (1918); Krumeich/Pechstein/Seidensticker (1999) 21–23; and Seidensticker (2010).

58 On the performance of *kômos*, see Rossi (1971); Frontisi-Ducroux (1992); Rothwell (2007) *passim* but esp. 7–8; and Shaw (2014) 31–33.

There is an inherent irony in these verses. The Chorus of satyrs, dancing as a Chorus in front of a statue of Dionysus in the Athenian theatre, states that there are no Choruses and no Dionysus, drawing attention to their own choral and Dionysiac nature. They even use the official terminology *χοροί*, highlighting the irony even more. They underscore the meta-performative, Dionysiac song again by saying that they cannot sing 'Iacchus! Iacchus!' (an epithet of Dionysus) as they in fact sing 'Iacchus! Iacchus!'.

These allusions to the absence of Dionysus occur throughout the play in similarly meta-performative contexts. When Odysseus arrives on the island, he asks (123–124), 'Do they possess Bromius' drink, that flows from the vine?', and rather than answer directly, Silenus makes a reference to Dionysiac performance: 'Not at all! The land they inhabit knows no dancing'. Silenus equates wine (metonymically Dionysus himself) with dance, and says there is no Dionysian performance in Sicily. He repeats this sentiment when he gets his first taste of Odysseus' wine (again, a metonym for Dionysus, 156): 'Oo la la! Bacchus invites me to the dance! Ah! Ah! Ah!' Later, when Polyphemus enters the stage and wonders why the satyrs are dancing and singing, he uses official Dionysiac terminology to describe their actions (204): 'What is this Bacchic revel?' Then, when Polyphemus gets his first taste of wine/Dionysus, he wants to sing (425) and wishes enter a revel (*kômos*) with his brothers. And the satyrs conclude their subsequent choral song (495–498) by singing, 'Happy the man who shouts the Bacchic cry, off to the revel, the well-beloved juice of the vine putting the wind in his sails, his arm around his trusty friend'. Here and throughout the play, Euripides' satyrs perform revels, shouting, singing, and dancing for Dionysus, both as part of the play's fiction, but also as part of the reality of the Dionysian theatrical performance. Euripides draws attention to the performative elements, adapting non-Dionysiac myths to the Dionysiac performance of a satyr play.

Another element found in the remains of Euripides' satyr plays that may be more distinctly Euripidean is a focus on philosophy, ethics, and religion, including issues of slavery, human fortune, wisdom, and the power of the gods. In fact, these themes appear more prominently in Euripides' fragments than references to music and dance, and more prominently than philosophical references found in other authors' satyric fragments. In Euripides' *Syleus*, for example, a description of Heracles addresses one of the most common Greek principles, helping one's friends and harming one's enemies:⁵⁹

59 Cf. Knox (1961) 3–4: 'T]he maxim "Help your friends, harm your enemies" stares out at us from the pages of the poets. It is to be found in Archilochus, in Solon, in Theognis, in

τοῖς μὲν δίκαιοις ἔνδικος, τοῖς δ' αὖ κακοῖς
πάντων μέγιστος πολέμιος κατὰ χθόνα.

EURIPIDES, *Syleus TrGF* 692

(Heracles) ... just to the just, but the greatest of all enemies on earth to the wicked.

Euripides associates Heracles with traditional Greek justice, and many of the other extant fragments from this play address justice through the lens of slavery and nobility. Heracles, who is often depicted in comedy and satyr drama as a buffoonish glutton, is painted throughout the *Syleus* as an impressive hero who will not be subjected to slavery even as he is sold into slavery.⁶⁰ As we saw above (*TrGF* 687), Heracles asserts his dominance and freedom, choosing extreme bodily pain over defeat. Euripides raises the contemporary social-philosophical issue of slavery and the question of whether a noble man can be made slave to a less noble man. Other characters in the play address this theme as well, both in general terms (οὐδεὶς δ' ἐς οἴκους δεσπότης ἀμείνωνας / αὐτοῦ πρίασθαι βούλεται· *TrGF* 689, 'No master wants to buy men better than himself for his household') and in specific terms, regarding Heracles:

... τό γ' εἶδος αὐτὸ σοῦ κατηγορεῖ
σιγῶντος ὡς εἴης ἄν οὐχ ὑπήκοος,
τάσσειν δὲ μᾶλλον ἢ ἐπιτάσσεσθαι θέλοις.

EURIPIDES, *Syleus TrGF* 690

... your very appearance, though you are silent, indicates that you would not be subservient, but would prefer giving orders to being given them.

Euripides' interest in the issue of slavery and nobility is no doubt available to us because the source for these quotes, Philo, presents them in a treatise on slavery, *Every Good Man is Free*; but Stobaeus (4.19.24) also preserves a quote

Pindar, and was attributed to Simonides. It continued to be a rule of conduct universally accepted and admired in spite of Plato's rejection of it ...'

60 Heracles' gluttonous nature also materializes in the *Syleus*, when he says in *TrGF* 691, κλιθῆτι καὶ πίωμεν· ἐν τούτῳ δέ μου / τὴν πείραν εὐθὺς λάμβαν' εἰ κρείσσων ἔση, 'Lie down and let's drink! And then test me right away to see if you'll be better at this than I am!'. And his boorishness appears in *TrGF* 907, which may come from this play: κρέασι βοεῖσις χλωρὰ σὺκ' ἐπήσθιεν / ἄμουσ' ὑλακτῶν, ὥστε βαρβάρῳ μαθεῖν, '(Heracles) was eating green figs along with portions of ox-flesh, howling unmusically enough for a barbarian to notice it'. On Heracles' resistance to submission, see Jourdain-Annequin (2007).

on slavery from Euripides' *Busiris* (*TrGF* 313, above), which perhaps suggests a greater Euripidean interest in using satyr drama to explore slaves and slavery.⁶¹

The theme of slavery is also found in Euripides' *Cyclops*, particularly in the satyrs' desire to escape their servitude to Polyphemus and again become the slaves of Dionysus, but this play explores a number of other contemporaneous philosophical issues. In fact, one of the most fertile areas of scholarly discussion has been the 'sophistic' representation of Polyphemus. Schmid was the first to suggest that the giant embodied certain late fifth-century philosophical/intellectual currents, and a number of scholars have supported these assertions, even finding correlations to specific sophists, especially to Thrasymachus and Callicles.⁶² O'Sullivan (2005), however, has shown that there are problems with the 'Polyphemus-Sophist nexus'. He dismantles many of the specific connections to fifth-century sophists, arguing instead that Euripides creates a Polyphemus more associated with tyrants and tyranny than philosophers and philosophy. O'Sullivan is certainly correct about the tyrannical qualities of the giant, and he may be right to deny the relationship to specific sophists, but this does not negate the various philosophical points with which Euripides (both in the figures of Polyphemus and Odysseus) engages in the *Cyclops*.

The bulk of philosophical discourse succeeds Odysseus' appeal for his life and the life of his men. After Odysseus calls upon the importance of gods and customs, and the idea that 'base gain brings punishment', Polyphemus responds by actively engaging with a number of contemporary philosophical points. He begins by stating that (316) 'the wise regard wealth as the god to worship',⁶³ and further maintains that he pays no heed to gods or customs, since he has the comforts of food and shelter (336–338): 'To guzzle and eat day by day and to give oneself no pain—this is Zeus in the eyes of men of sense'. Polyphemus' discussion may boil down to hedonism, but his use of the phrase *ἀνθρώποισι τοῖσι σῶφροσιν* puts it in the context of larger philosophical deliberations of 'reasonable' men. Odysseus' response to Polyphemus also brings up philosophical questions about the existence of the gods, directly instructing Zeus that if he fails to take no note of the giant's atrocities (355), 'men mistakenly worship you as Zeus when you are in fact a worthless god'. Later, Odysseus expresses a similar sentiment when ordering Hephaestus and Night

61 Slavery was, though, admittedly a common subject in much satyr drama. Cf. Griffith (2002).

62 Schmid (1896) 57. Cf. Wilamowitz (1926) 21; Steffen (1971) 206; Seaford (1984) 52; and Konstan (1990) 216–217.

63 Euripides *Eurystheus TrGF* 378 also addresses wealth: ... τὰ δ' ἔργ' ἐλάσσω χρημάτων νομίζομεν, 'and we regard his actions less than we do his money'.

to harm the Cyclops, for (606–607) ‘Otherwise, we will have to regard Chance as God and the gods as weaker than Chance’. Although neither Polyphemus nor Odysseus is atheistic, both of them engage with serious philosophical questions about the gods, particularly the age-old question ‘Why do good people suffer, while “bad” people flourish?’.⁶⁴

Euripides explores philosophical/religious/ethical issues not found in the remains of other satyr dramatists, and in at least one play, Euripides even offers straightforward advice in a vivid critique of the contemporary Greek world. In a lengthy fragment from *Autolykus*, a character criticizes athletes and their supporters:

κακῶν γὰρ ὄντων μυρίων καθ’ Ἑλλάδα
οὐδὲν κάκιόν ἐστιν ἀθλητῶν γένους·
οἱ πρῶτον οἰκεῖν οὔτε μανθάνουσιν εὖ
οὔτ’ ἂν δύναιντο· πῶς γὰρ ὅστις ἔστ’ ἀνήρ
γνάθου τε δοῦλος νηδύος θ’ ἠσσημένος
κτήσαιτ’ ἂν ὄλβον εἰς ὑπερβολὴν πατρός;
οὐδ’ αὖ πένεσθαι κάξυπηρετεῖν τύχαις
οἰοί τ’· ἔθῃ γὰρ οὐκ ἐθισθέντες καλὰ
σκληρῶς μεταλλάσσουσιν εἰς τὰμήχανον.
λαμπροὶ δ’ ἐν ἤβῃ καὶ πόλεως ἀγάλματα
φοιτῶσ’· ὅταν δὲ προσπέσῃ γῆρας πικρόν,
τρίβωνες ἐκβαλόντες οἴχονται κρόκας.
ἐμεμψάμην δὲ καὶ τὸν Ἑλλήνων νόμον,
οἱ τῶνδ’ ἕκατι σύλλογον ποιούμενοι
τιμῶσ’ ἀχρείους ἡδονὰς δαιτὸς χάριν.
τίς γὰρ παλαίστας εὖ, τίς ὠκύπους ἀνήρ
ἢ δίσκον ἄρας ἢ γνάθον παίστας καλῶς
πόλει πατρῶα στέφανον ἤρκεσεν λαβῶν;
πότερα μαχοῦνται πολεμίοισιν ἐν χεροῖν
δίσκους ἔχοντες ἢ δι’ ἀσπίδων χερὶ
θείνοντες ἐκβαλοῦσι πολεμίους πάτρας;
οὐδεὶς σιδήρου ταῦτα μωραίνει πέλας
†στὰς†. ἀνδρας χρὴ σοφούς τε ἀγαθοὺς
φύλλοις στέφεσθαι, χῶςτις ἡγείται πόλει
κάλλιστα σῶφρων καὶ δίκαιος ὦν ἀνήρ,

64 Cf. Euripides *Eurystheus TrGF* 376, which also looks at the fortune of men: οὐκ οἶδ’ ὅτῳ χρὴ κανόνι τὰς βροτῶν τύχας / ὀρθῶς σταθμήσαντ’ εἰδέναι τὸ δραστήον, ‘I do not know by what measure one rightly considers the fortunes of men, and knows what is to be done’.

ὄστις τε μύθοις ἔργ' ἀπαλλάσσει κακὰ
 μάχας τ' ἀφαιρῶν καὶ στάσεις· τοιαῦτα γὰρ
 πόλει τε πάση πᾶσι θ' Ἕλλησιν καλά.

EURIPIDES, *Autolycus* TrGF 282

Of countless evils existing throughout Greece none is worse than athletes as a breed. First, they neither learn well how to manage household, nor would they be able to learn—for how could a man who is a slave to his jaws and a minion to his belly acquire wealth to exceed his father's? Moreover, they cannot manage poverty or cope with misfortunes. Since they have not learned good habits, a change toward difficulties is hard on them. They are splendid in their prime and go proudly about as ornaments to a city, but when old age in its harshness falls upon them, they fade away like cloaks that have lost their threads. I blame too the Greeks' custom of gathering in crowds because of these men to value useless pleasures for the sake of a feast. Why—what man who has wrestled well, what sprinter or discus-thrower, or man who has boxed well, has defended his ancestral city by winning a wreath? Are they going to fight enemies with a discus in their hands or drive enemies from a fatherland by punching through shields with a fist? No one is this stupid when standing (?) near a sword! Wreathing with leaves should be for men who are wise and brave, and for the man who leads a city best through being prudent and just, and whose words deliver it from evil acts by removing feuds and factions: such are the things good for every city and all Greeks.

The unknown character speaking these verses censures athletes, arguing that they are the worst evil, slaves to their appetites (perhaps with the satyrs providing a parallel here, since a satyr too is 'slave to his jaws and a minion to his belly?'), and have no positive habits. The speaker also takes to task the Greek people for honouring athletes over wise people. These verses bring a contemporary issue into the mythological realm of satyr drama, and Euripides moves beyond philosophical themes to offer a philosophical diatribe that explicitly rebukes the Greeks.⁶⁵

This diatribe also reveals another of Euripides' unique satyric characteristics, the use of a sort of sophisticated playfulness akin to that used in comedy. Although Greek comic poets tended to play with genre and allusion more

65 Athenaeus (10.413f.), in fact, suggests that this passage is inspired by the pre-Socratic philosopher Xenophanes (fr. B 2 West 2). For more on satyr drama and athletes, see Voelke (2001) 264–272.

explicitly than poets of satyr drama and tragedy,⁶⁶ Euripides here crosses generic bounds, both by using a comic convention and by referring rather explicitly to a contemporary issue.⁶⁷ In fact, by having a character treat what was probably a genuine issue of Euripides' day in a straightforward speech to the audience, Euripides adopts a parabasis-like format, in which the audience is directly addressed and advised by the Chorus, a technique commonly found in contemporaneous Attic Old Comedy.⁶⁸ This type of comic allusion may not have been noticed by every spectator, but it represents the type of sophisticated and playful references that Euripides seems to employ repeatedly in his satyr plays.

This type of complex, comical game can also be seen near the start of Euripides' *Cyclops*. When Odysseus first approaches Polyphemus' cave, Silenus asks the hero his name and homeland, and the following exchange ensues (103–105):

Οδ. Ἴθακος Ὀδυσσεύς, γῆς Κεφαλλήνων ἄναξ.
 Σι. οἶδ' ἄνδρα, κρόταλον δριμύ, Σισύφου γένος.
 Οδ. ἐκεῖνος αὐτός εἰμι· λοιδορεῖ δὲ μή.

Odysseus: I am Odysseus of Ithaca, lord of the Cephallanians.

Silenus: I know of the man, the clever chatterer, Sisyphus' son.

Odysseus: The very same. But spare me these aspersions.

Silenus makes a joke at the hero's expense by alluding to a different version of Odysseus' genealogy, in which Laertes married Odysseus' mother, Anticleia, after she was already impregnated by Sisyphus.⁶⁹ This type of humorous and insulting reference to Odysseus' alternative parentage is certainly comical, but Euripides enhances the 'comic-ness' by also making a playful reference to the *Odyssey*. When Silenus says he knows the ἄνδρα, which is the first (and, therefore, titular) word of Homer's epic, it is as if he tells the hero not just 'I know who you are', but also, 'I know the *Odyssey*'. This double entendre makes a clever literary reference (and a literary critique of Odysseus' character) in a playful, allusion that comically points out the *Cyclops*' reliance on Homer's epic.

66 For a recent volume of essays that examine such 'Comic Interactions', see Bakola/Prauscello/Telò (2013).

67 d'Angiò (1992) suggests instead that the subject matter is particularly tragic.

68 Goldhill (1990) 196–205 provides an especially useful look at the complexities of the comic parabasis.

69 On Odysseus' alternate genealogy, see Gantz (1993) 175–176, who lists and discusses the various sources for this tradition.

In the *Sciron*, Euripides employs similarly playful references, both to myth and, it seems, again to comedy. As noted earlier, the play integrates hetaerae into the famous Theseus myth, but Euripides also integrates a clever allusion to the hero's other Labours, including his (not-yet-encountered) battle with the monstrous metal-smith Procrustes:

σχεδὸν χαμεύνη σύμμετρος Κορινθίας
 παιδός, κνεφάλλου δ' οὐχ ὑπερτείνεις πόδα.

TrGF 676

... (you are) almost the same size as a Corinthian girl's mattress,
 and your foot won't stretch beyond the cushion.

Here, (probably) Silenus tells Theseus that if he has sex with the Corinthian hetaera, he will fit just fine because the hero is about as tall as her mattress is long. In saying this, though, Euripides refers to Theseus' later battle with Procrustes, who rather sinisterly invited travellers to spend the night in his bed. If the guest was too tall for the bed, he would sever the part(s) of the body hanging off the edge, and if the guest was too short, he would stretch the body until it fit. Euripides skilfully and playfully weaves this labour into his play, foreshadowing Theseus' troubles to come.⁷⁰ These verses are also noteworthy because they suggest that the prostitutes played a sizeable role in the play, and it is perhaps worth entertaining the idea that the satyrs (or some of the satyrs) were dressed up as prostitutes. This transvestism would not only explain Euripides' choice to add hetaerae to the myth (it would have opened the door for a number of hilarious gags, especially if the satyrs still had their erect stage phallos under their female garments), but it would also again connect the satyr play with comedy, where transvestism of this sort was common.⁷¹ Ultimately, we cannot know whether the hetaerae were played by the satyrs or a separate, silent group, but if the satyrs were dressed as prostitutes, it would fit with Euripidean satyr drama's larger trend of playful, comic allusion.

70 Euripides also refers back to Theseus previous labour with the robber Sinis, when an unknown character says (*TrGF* 679) ἢ προσπηγνύναι / κράδαις ἐρυναίς, '... or fix (them) to the branches of wild fig trees ...'.

71 For the best example, consider Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*. Cf. Zeitlin (1996) 375–416.

4 Conclusion

With only one complete satyr play and a handful of fragments extant, it is difficult to draw conclusions about Euripidean satyr drama with much certainty, but we can perhaps make a few meaningful observations about Euripidean satyr drama. On the whole, Euripides appears to employ a more or less 'traditional' (if we can use such a term with so fragmentary a genre) approach to satyr drama. Like other satyr dramatists, he presents satyr plays with conventional mythological plots, typical satyric metre and obscenity, and frequent reference to Dionysiac performativity. However, Euripides also appears to employ certain techniques more frequently than other satyr dramatists, some of which can perhaps even be classified as 'Euripidean'. For example, he was fond of writing satyr plays with ogre-based plots, and typically focused on heroes (rather than gods), especially Heracles. He also rather frequently engages with philosophical/ethical debate, and plays clever, comical literary and generic games, whether making a crafty reference to Homer's *Odyssey* or staging a parabasis-like social critique of athletes. Some of Euripides' satyr plays also included fascinating rewriting of traditional mythology (e.g., the inclusion of prostitutes in the myth of Theseus and Sciron), and some of his scenes must have been marvellously creative and entertaining (e.g., bringing Cerberus onstage). In the end, the *Cyclops* is the most valuable single piece of evidence we have for understanding Euripidean satyr drama, but the remains of Euripides' other satyr plays suggest that the *Cyclops* provides only a glimpse of the varied and exciting methods and style that made up Euripidean satyr play as a whole.

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PART 2

*Euripidean Intertextuality:
Epic Poetry and Attic Tragedy*



Euripides: Epic Sources and Models

John Davidson

1 Introduction

When epic poetry and tragedy are mentioned in the same breath, it is perhaps not the name of Euripides which immediately springs to mind. More likely, attention is directed in that context to the remark of Aeschylus, at least as recorded by Athenaeus (8.347e), that his plays were merely slices from Homer's great banquets, or even more so to the ancient *testimonia* labelling Sophocles as Ὀμηρικός or φιλόμηρος. A closer examination of his surviving work, however, reveals Euripides too as a master of the art of absorbing and adapting epic poetry, especially the Homeric corpus, to serve his own agenda. That Euripides should be so involved with Homer is not surprising, of course, when we consider the epic poet's status as the 'Educator of Hellas'. At the same time, we need to bear in mind that whereas it is primarily the elevated register of epic which is associated with the 'Homeric' aspects of Aeschylus and Sophocles, it is often something very different that seems to be going on in the case of Euripides.

The whole question of a tragic poet's relationship with Homer is, moreover, complicated by the possibility that 'Homer', perhaps until the fourth century BC, may have been understood by Greeks to mean the author not only of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* but also of the whole Epic Cycle, or at least the 'Trojan' parts of this.¹ Because so little of what we know as the Cyclic material exists today, it is extremely difficult to gauge Euripides' possible indebtedness to it for language, themes, and scenic structure. Moreover, we have no knowledge of whether, for example, he had access to texts of the poems, whether he drew on oral performances of them or indeed of other epic poems never included in the 'official' Cycle, whether one source for him might have been relevant plays by rival playwrights that he witnessed, whether he could draw on material from other genres as well, especially lyric, and so on. What we do have, however, are the titles of the works and a general idea of what events they covered. When we add to this our considerable knowledge of both the titles and surviving frag-

¹ See, in general, West (2013).

ments of Euripides' lost plays, we are least in a position to form some sense of his reliance on epic sources in general.

Statistics provided by Richard Kannicht are most helpful in this regard.² From the total of 75 Euripidean plays which have either survived or whose titles are known, as many as sixteen (including the pseudo-Euripidean *Rhesus*), or 21.3%, take their subject matter from the Trojan cycle as a whole. However, the only one of these from the *Iliad* is *Rhesus*, while the single one from the *Odyssey* is the satyr play *Cyclops*. When we add eight plays with Theban content, which derives ultimately from the Theban part of the Epic Cycle, we find a total of twenty-four plays, or 32%, for which Euripides has in some sense at least used the Cycle as a source. With regard to the Trojan part of the Cycle (excluding the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*), six plays take their subject matter from the *Cypria* and eight from the post-Homeric poems (one from the *Little Iliad*, three from the *Iliou Persis*, and four from the *Nostoi*).

These statistics do not reveal a fondness on the part of Euripides for subject matter from the non-Homeric part of the Epic Cycle on the same scale as that shown by equivalent statistics for Sophocles. Nevertheless, they point to the Cycle as a significant source for him. An interesting feature is that we possess today in full the greater part of his Trojan cycle plays, that is four (excluding *Rhesus*) from the ten so-called 'select plays' and five from the 'alphabetical' group. Remaining 'lost' is *Philoctetes* from plays with post-Homeric subject matter and, from plays with ante-Homeric subject matter, *Alexandros*, *Palamedes*, *Scyrioi*, *Telephus*, and *Protesilaus*. We can say virtually nothing about any detailed use which Euripides may have made of the texts of any of the non-Homeric Epic Cycle poems. On the basis of the surviving evidence with regard to *Scyrioi* and *Protesilaus*, however, Kannicht concludes that these two plays offer 'zwei unerwartet instruktive Beispiele für euripideische Entheroisierung der epischen Stoffe, positiv gewendet: für ihre Öffnung in die οικεία πράγματα der Lebenswelt.'³ It is time now to consider aspects of Euripides' engagement in a selection of plays with the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, these plays in almost all cases, of course, having plot lines taken from elsewhere. We shall receive significant assistance in this from Klaus Lange's thorough study of the issue in a number of the plays.⁴

² Kannicht (2004).

³ Kannicht (2004) 198.

⁴ Lange (2002).

2 *Electra*

In the *Odyssey*, the return of Orestes and his successful accomplishment of revenge is held up to Telemachus as a pattern of filial dedication to emulate. Reference is made to the story on a number of occasions and this, no doubt in conjunction with the narrative in the Cyclic *Nostoi* and later lyric treatments, offers the basic plotline for the tragic dramatists to follow. All of them, of course, develop it markedly by emphasizing the matricide with all its emotional and moral complexity, a dimension totally lacking in the *Odyssey*. It is not, however, in terms of the detail of *this story in itself* that Sophocles and Euripides engage with the text of the Homeric epic, but rather with the overarching story of the return and revenge of Odysseus. There are clear allusions to this in Euripides' play in which, more than in any other, an ever-present network of Homeric allusions in general can be identified.⁵ More controversial is what point or points he is making, and a range of differing scholarly opinions on this will be noted. Given the matricide, however, we would probably be safe to assume a consensus to begin with that there is more involved here than simply a case of the Odyssean model with its trickery and subterfuge serving to validate the actions of Orestes.

As a brief prelude to our discussion of Odyssean elements, let us consider some of the shadows cast on *Electra* by the *Iliad*. Lange notes, for example, that Electra's speculation about her absent brother's menial state (202–206) recalls Andromache's lament about the probable ill-treatment of her son, if he survives (*Il.* 22.484 ff.), and that her lament for her father (140 ff.) echoes a range of laments for the dead in the *Iliad*. Moreover, the spectre of the *Iliad* hovers ironically over Electra's ecstatic welcome to her brother, after the murder of Aegisthus, as son of Troy's conqueror (880–881), while the play's first stasimon bristles with contrasts with the *Iliad*.⁶ Lange emphasizes too how Iliadic and Odyssean allusions are integrated, a good example being Electra's vision of Aegisthus jumping on Agamemnon's tomb (328–331) which recalls not only Agamemnon's fear about the mockery which may be awaiting Menelaus' tomb under the feet of exultant Trojans (*Il.* 4.176–177) but also the drunken and hubristic behaviour of the suitors in the *Odyssey*, as emphasized by Martin Cropp.⁷

With regard to the *Odyssey*, it is not unreasonable to see Euripides as having consciously modelled the whole of *Electra* in essence on the second half of the

5 Lange (2002) 101.

6 Lange (2002) 63, 64, 97–99.

7 Lange (2002) 66–67; Cropp (2013) [1988] notes at lines 326 and 907–956.

Homeric epic. Parallels are striking but the relationship between model and 'copy' is rightly seen as extremely complicated.⁸ Thus Orestes is the returning avenger figure like Odysseus, but he is also the assisting Telemachus-like figure, while Electra is the waiting and grieving Penelope figure who yet takes the avenging lead in the matricide. The country hut as the setting for the plan of vengeance and the Autourgos' hospitality towards the unrecognized Orestes points on the one hand to Eumaeus. But, as Joachim Dingel well illustrated,⁹ it also evokes the dwelling on Laertes' farm in book 24 of the *Odyssey*, while the menial garb and work of Electra, observed with sympathy by the newly arrived Orestes, recalls the similar circumstances of Odysseus' father as witnessed by his son. There is even the similarity between Electra's keen awareness of the royal status from which she has fallen and Odysseus' words to his father before he reveals himself that the old man before him is like a king in form and stature (*Od.* 24.253).¹⁰ Crucial too for the comparison is the delayed recognition which, among other things, allows Euripides to focus on Electra's state of mind.¹¹ And there are further details such as the guest meal for which preparations are made in the play recalling the meal which Odysseus shares before facing the suitors' relatives.

The most intriguing point of comparison between play and epic poem, however, is the means of recognition, namely the scar which Euripides uses in a subtle and complex mingling of two incidents in the *Odyssey*. It is through the scar that Eurycleia recognizes the hero in book 19, but it is then used by Odysseus himself in book 24 as the first sign to convince his father of his identity. Commentators have duly pointed out, however, that whereas Odysseus acquired his scar in the course of a boar hunt, described in some detail at its first mention in book 19, which served as a kind of coming-of-age trial for the young man, Orestes acquired his by tripping over as a child at home when chasing a pet fawn with Electra.¹²

The report by the Old Man (who is in a sense the 'descendant' of the Odyssean Dolios as well as Eurycleia) of an incident from Orestes' childhood confirming his identity echoes the second 'sign' which Odysseus gives his father, that is the trees and vines which Laertes promised him when, as a child, he followed him through the garden. But it is the motif of the scar which is crucial, one influential interpretation being that the clear difference in the circum-

8 Goff (1991) 266.

9 Dingel (1969).

10 Dingel (1969) 104.

11 Cropp (1986) 193.

12 See e.g. Luschign (1995).

stances by which it was acquired indicates that Euripides is underlining the essential lack of heroism displayed by the hesitant Orestes in comparison with that of the Odyssean avenger.¹³

Barbara Goff, however, building on the idea of the hunt as explicated by Pierre Vidal-Naquet,¹⁴ stresses that the relation between the scars is also that between man's estate and childhood, the Odysseus paradigm therefore locking Orestes by contrast into childhood and thus unsuitability for the task of vengeance.¹⁵ Victoria Wohl, in discussing the point that the scar is immediately accepted as proof after the earlier tokens have been dismissed as laughable, observes: 'The overt allusion to the *Odyssey* denaturalizes this marker of identity, even as it is stamped on Orestes' very skin.'¹⁶ In conclusion, no matter how one interprets Euripides' play in general, it is clear that he is using the Odyssean exemplum for subtle and thought-provoking purposes.

3 *Iphigenia in Tauris*

When we turn to *IT*, we find that, although the Odyssean background does not shape patterns to the same extent as seen in *Electra*, it nevertheless still maintains a tangible 'presence'. Although Orestes is not returning home as an avenger, he is involved in a recognition which, however, does depart slightly from the Odyssean model because neither party at first knows the other's identity.¹⁷ As in other plays, he is accompanied by Pylades, an arrangement recalling the association in the *Odyssey* of Peisistratus with Telemachus. In addition, he lands on barbarian shores, as Odysseus makes landfall in the land of the Cyclopes. Cropp well points out that the uncivilized behaviour of the Taurians not only reflects the characteristics of non-Greeks as portrayed by Greek writers, but also the type of mythical subhumanity shown by Homer's Cyclopes.¹⁸

The ogre figure whom Odysseus encounters in Polyphemus is transformed in Euripides' play into the barbarian king Thoas, responsible for the human sacrifices, as well as his priestess Iphigenia, who reflects some aspects of the dangerous Circe-type figure but also of the Cyclops figure, especially in the sequence

13 Tarkow (1981).

14 Vidal-Naquet (1981) and (1986).

15 Goff (1991), endorsed by Lange (2002) 95–96. Cf. also Torrance (2013) 28–31.

16 Wohl (2015) 69.

17 See e.g. Rutherford (2012) 336.

18 Cropp (2000) 47–50.

where she interrogates the captive Orestes. Odysseus famously responds to the question of his identity by calling himself 'Outis', while Orestes responds to the same question by answering that in all justice he should be called 'Unfortunate'. The circumstances are quite different, of course, but there seems little doubt as to what Euripides' model is. In connection with the specific question about Odysseus which Iphigenia puts to Orestes, Lange captures the Odyssean dimension in the play nicely. Discussing Menelaus' report to Telemachus of what Proteus had told him about the missing hero and noting Orestes' 'surprising' knowledge of Odysseus' problems, he adds: 'Orest hat gewissermaßen eine «metamythische» Quelle, eben die *Odyssee*'.¹⁹

The extended sequence itself in which one character, lacking news about the Trojan War and/or its aftermath, questions a second character who has the information, appears to be modelled on a passage in *Odyssey* book 3 where Telemachus is in Pylos asking Nestor for news of his father (79–101).²⁰ Nestor responds by recalling the miseries endured by the Greeks at Troy before cataloguing the deaths of Ajax, Achilles, Patroclus and, nearest to his own heart, his son Antilochus (108–112). Sophocles clearly uses this passage as the model in his *Philoctetes* for the hero's questioning of Neoptolemus, since the list of dead heroes is identical.

Euripides adds a new dimension to the force of the Homeric source passage by developing the emotional entanglement of questioner and informant. There is a somewhat similar passage in *Helen* (78–141) involving Teucer and Helen which is in turn related to another passage featuring Helen and Menelaus where the latter itemizes the deaths of Achilles, Ajax, and Antilochus (842–850). The motif is also exploited for humorous effect in *Cyclops*, where the satyr Chorus respond to Odysseus' information about Helen's capture by imagining all the Greeks lining up to share her favours.

In *IT*, Orestes is able to convince his sister of his identity by recalling Pelops' spear stored in the 'girls' apartments' in their father's palace (822–826). This is reminiscent of the special room where Odysseus' bow is stored but, more significantly, of the hero's knowledge of the marriage bed by which he convinces Penelope that he is in fact her husband. We may also note the incident, reported by the messenger, of the remarkable wave which drives the escaping Greek ship back to shore, just as the first boulder thrown by Polyphemus threatens the survival of Odysseus in his escaping ship. And the striking similarities, as well as pointed contrasts, between Iphigenia's dream of the single remaining col-

19 Lange (2002) 113.

20 See Davidson (2006).

umn of the palace assuming human features and voice, and Penlope's dream in *Odyssey* book 19 where the eagle also speaks with a human voice, have been well documented.²¹

But Euripides is never 'just imitating' Homer, since there are clear distinctions always to be seen between the situations and experiences of the cast of characters in the *Odyssey*, and those of the characters in the play. Thus Odysseus is pursued throughout by the anger of Poseidon, while Orestes is only briefly threatened by the god through one special wave.²² Moreover, while a supportive Athene is always shadowing Odysseus, Apollo is never any use to Orestes, despite sending him on a dangerous mission, and it is in fact Athene who manifests herself at the end to save the day. And whereas Odysseus clearly has a justified case in seeking vengeance and reclaiming his heritage, Orestes the hesitant matricide is an intruder in a foreign land with the theft of a sacred object as his goal. Iphigenia herself is a complex amalgam of 'barbarian' enemy, potentially dangerous female religious figure like Theonoe in *Helen*, and lamenting Penelope-type figure, while displaying aspects of Odysseus himself in her deep feeling about 'exile' (τηλόσε ... πατρίδος 175–176, echoing the frequently employed Homeric formula τηλόθι πάτρης) and longing for home.

4 *Orestes*

We find even denser layers of complexity when we turn to *Orestes* whose action is based on a slight variation of the idea found in both the *Nostoi* and *Odyssey* by which Menelaus' arrival home in Greece, seven years after the fall of Troy, coincides with the death and burial of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra. There is an immediate reference to the *Odyssey* at *Orestes* 30 where Electra, in her prologue speech, describes her brother's Apollo-driven matricide as producing for him πρὸς οὐχ ἅπαντας εὐκλειαν, words which appear to modify Athene/Mentes' statement to Telemachus in *Odyssey* 1.298–299 that, in killing Aegisthus, Orestes κλέος ἔλλαβε [...] πάντας ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους.

Generally typical of the former interpretation of this echo is Werner Biehl's note on the Euripidean line which states: 'Die "Litotes" (πρὸς οὐχ ἅπαντας εὐκλειαν) ist Polemik gegen Homer.'²³ Recent scholarship, however, has approached the issue more subtly, noting that what we find here is not so much 'Polemik' as a pointer to the fact that the matricide, lacking in Homer, is

21 Schwindt (1998) 8–10 and 12–14.

22 Lange (2002) 103.

23 Biehl (1965) ad loc.

to become central for Euripides. Lange argues in addition²⁴ that even though Euripides may in general be rejecting old heroic ideals he is not 'waging war' on Homer but rather rejecting the artistic transplanting of these ideals into Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, a play securely dated to the year before the production of *Orestes*.

Lange does this in the context of a close consideration of the article by Charles Fuqua²⁵ whose argument is that Euripides is responding to Sophocles' presentation of the young Neoptolemus (himself modelled on Telemachus in the *Odyssey* for whom Orestes is held up as an example to follow), thus questioning, through his own figure of Orestes, the traditional hero model adopted by Sophocles. Important in this is *Orestes* 588–590 in which the hero is made to offer an unfavourable contrast between his own family history and that of Telemachus, Euripides again drawing on the Odyssean paradigm, only to signal a new direction for it.²⁶ These lines, which directly point to the *Odyssey*, figure prominently in Fuqua's analysis, but they may well be a later interpolation, as Lange notes,²⁷ though they are accepted as genuine by Willink²⁸ and West.²⁹ Even without not only these lines, however, but also without the nexus postulated by Fuqua, the referencing of the *Odyssey* by Euripides in his play is undeniable, as is his engagement with the *Iliad*, the fabric of the two Homeric epics often being interwoven in the dramatic text.

Lange identifies further Homeric echoes, for example through the Chorus' call, in a context of apparently imminent murder, to start dancing as a manoeuvre to prevent the Argives coming to the palace to investigate (*Or.* 1353 ff.), just as Odysseus advises Telemachus that music should strike up for the dance, so that passers-by or neighbours would simply think a wedding was in process.³⁰ Lange also sees Diomedes' various speeches to the army in the *Iliad* and his favourable reception as the model for this hero's appearance at the Argive assembly convened to decide the fate of Orestes and Electra,³¹ his very introduction into this aspect of the story of Agamemnon's family most probably being Euripides' innovation.³²

24 Lange (2002) 166.

25 Fuqua (1976) 29–95.

26 Eisner (1979) 158.

27 Lange (2002) 160.

28 Willink (1986).

29 West (1987).

30 Lange (2002) 168–169.

31 Lange (2002) 171–172.

32 Stephanopoulos (1980) 156.

As Christian Wolff³³ well underlined too, the *Iliad* also makes its presence felt in the aria sung by the Phrygian, a compelling parody of heroism, who evokes the battleground of Ajax and Hector and envisages Orestes and Pylades as twin lions first (λέοντες "Ἕλληνας δύο διδύμω, *Or.* 1401), and then mountain boars (ὡς κάπροι δ' ὀρέστεροι, 1460), only to emphasize that their actions do not match these epic descriptions. Froma Zeitlin,³⁴ in an exemplary analysis of the Euripidean play's intertextual resonances with a wide variety of sources (Homeric and otherwise), demonstrates in detail how an Iliadic battle overlaps with an Odyssean one (early in his aria the Phrygian calls Pylades κακομάντις ἀνήρ, / οἶος Ὀδυσσεύς, σιγᾶ δόλιος, 1403–1404), as servants are locked up, and cunning and strategic planning lead to chaos inside the ancestral house. The figure who had served as a model for Telemachus now 'needs Ithaca to revive his old emblematic self in a new guise'.³⁵ Orestes clings to the false hope that by killing Helen he will win κλέος once more and be held up as a model as he was in the *Odyssey*. Or as Fuqua in a second article puts it: 'Orestes is portrayed as a creature of myth placed in a world where this identity no longer suffices'.³⁶

The figure of Helen is crucial in all this. She has rightly been seen as reflecting the basically positive Helens of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.³⁷ At *Orestes* 76, for example, she blames Phoebus for the matricide and then claims compulsion by a θεομανεῖ πότμω (79) for her action in going to Troy, as well as accepting Electra's harsh reproach and admitting to bad behaviour (100). This is in line with her attitude in the *Iliad* (6.344 ff.) where she blames herself as well as the gods. In terms of the *Iliad* too, we can agree with Fuqua that the assault on her by Orestes and Pylades 'forms not only a re-enactment of that on Clytemnestra [...] but also a reflection of the heroic enterprise against Troy itself'.³⁸

Moreover, the Phrygian relates that she is preparing φάρεα πορφύρεα (*Or.* 1436) for her dead sister, thus pointing to Penelope, the prototypical artisan of funeral garments, so that the situation in which Odysseus attacks those harassing a faithful wife is transformed in terms of Orestes attacking an unfaithful wife who is ironically associated with the faithful wife. Lange³⁹ also sets out in full the intertextual links between *Orestes* 1431 ff. and *Odyssey* 4.120 ff. involving

33 Wolff (1983) 348–349.

34 Zeitlin (1980) 61.

35 Zeitlin (1980) 62.

36 Fuqua (1978) 27.

37 See e.g. Willink (1986) note at lines 71–125.

38 Fuqua (1978) 21.

39 Lange (2002) 180–181.

forms of ἡλακάτη and κλισμός, which are clear, even without West's emendation χρυσέα at *Orestes* 1431⁴⁰ which would directly echo the χρυσηλακάτῳ of *Odyssey* 4.122. An echo of the 'Cyclic' Helen can also be seen in Electra's fear, expressed at *Orestes* 1287, that the sight of Helen's beauty may have deterred Orestes and Pylades from killing her. This alludes to an incident in the *Little Iliad* in which Menelaus withdrew the sword with which he was going to kill her when he caught sight of her breasts.⁴¹

5 *Helen*

The genre-elusive drama *Helen* is perhaps even more challenging than *Orestes* when it comes to defining the precise relationship between Euripides and Homer, efforts to do so including the formulation of Gary Meltzer that 'the portress's comment that Menelaus was great "there" [that is, in Troy] but not "here" [that is, in Egypt] could be read metaphorically to underline the distance' between the two poets.⁴² Lange rightly concludes⁴³ also that no other Euripidean tragedy includes such a broad spectrum of Homeric reminiscences, stemming not only from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* but also from the Epic Cycle, since the action is tied through allusion to events treated in the *Cypria*, *Little Iliad*, *Iliou Persis*, and *Nostoi*. It is also fascinating to see, in a context of the paradoxes of illusion and reality, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* played off against each other, with interpretations usually seeing 'the play's Odyssean critique of Iliadic values'.⁴⁴

Charles Segal⁴⁵ emphasized the Scheria-like status of Egypt in Euripides' play as a mysterious transition point between worlds, also stating that the contrast between Egypt and Troy is also the contrast between the two Homeric epics. The Νείλου [...] καλλιπάρθενοι ῥοαί which Helen invokes in the opening line of the play mingle their waters with the Σκαμανδρείους ῥοαίσιν of lines 52–53, in which ψυχαι πολλαι δι' ἔμ' ἔθανον, the ψυχαι πολλαι evoking the πολλὰς ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς of the *Iliad's* proem. It is the presence of the *Odyssey* which is predominant in the *Helen*, but the *Iliad* is always in the close background, starting with the prologue, continuing immediately with the arrival of Teucer, and

40 West (1987) ad loc.

41 Davies (1988) Fr. 19 (= Bernabé [1996] Fr. 19).

42 Meltzer (1994) 245. Cf. Melzer (2006) 205.

43 Lange (2002) 151.

44 Meltzer (1994) 252. Cf. Melzer (2006) 219.

45 Segal ((1971) 572–573 (= [1986] 229–231).

receiving further impetus with the appearance of Menelaus and his references to events and individuals bound up with the Trojan campaign, including his own achievements.

While the *eidolon* idea associated with Helen, the basic pre-condition of Euripides' drama, perhaps only goes back as far as Stesichorus, the *eidolon* idea itself is found already in *Iliad* book 5 in connection with Aeneas. Helen tells the story concerning herself in her prologue speech which also glances at the *Iliad* in the statement that part of Zeus' plan was to make known τὸν κράτιστον Ἑλλάδος (41), the other part being the motivation, found already in the *Cypria*, to reduce the world's overpopulation.⁴⁶ The *Cypria* may be the source of another of Helen's statements too, if Kannicht is correct in arguing that her comment to Teucer that Achilles had been one of 'her' suitors (99) can be seen as Euripides' development of an incident reported for the Cyclic epic that the two met at some stage.⁴⁷ Various Cyclic sources too originally provide the story of Ajax's suicide related by Teucer immediately prior to this (94–97).

With regard to the *Iliad* again, Lange builds on Kannicht's comment about the suicide of Leda for shame at Helen's actions and the two conflicting accounts of the situation of the Dioscuri (one of which is that they also killed themselves because of their sister) about which Teucer tells Helen (134–142).⁴⁸ The source for this version of events is plausibly suggested as *Iliad* 3, 236–242. While on the walls of Troy, Helen is unable to see her brothers among the warriors of the Greek army and says that they have either not come to Troy or are hiding themselves because of the shame attached to their sister. Euripides appears to have given a new application to the shame motif while echoing the Homeric Helen's offering of two options with regard to her brothers.

When we turn to the *Odyssey*, we find a considerable number of ideas and contexts which Euripides appears to have adapted. The arrival of the shipwrecked Menelaus in Egypt naturally recalls his account to Telemachus in *Odyssey* book 4 of his adventures in Egypt (including his dealings with Eidothea and Proteus, essential models for the Euripidean good Egyptian king and his daughter Eido/Theonoe). Then too there is Odysseus' fictitious account to Eumaeus (*Od.* 14.245 ff.) of *his* time in Egypt which includes an initial hostile reception and danger from the local inhabitants, along with protection from a good king. Odysseus is also linked to Menelaus through their shared experiences of shipwreck and being cast up on alien and potentially dangerous shores. In this connection too, there may perhaps be a specific link through

46 Davies (1988) Fr. 1 (= Bernabé [1996] Fr. 1).

47 Kannicht (1969) note at line 99.

48 Kannicht (1969) note at lines 137–142; Lange (2002) 126.

Menelaus' sudden appearance before a startled Helen who turns out to be his faithful wife, in that Odysseus confronts a startled Nausicaa (who would clearly like the stranger to become her husband) before he meets his faithful wife Penelope.⁴⁹

The appearance, before the eyes of the reunited Menelaus and Helen, of the potentially dangerous Theonoe from the palace appears to be a variation of a motif in the *Odyssey*, also used by Aeschylus and Sophocles—the danger threatening a moment of recognition, the warning given about this, and the call for speedy action.⁵⁰ In *Odyssey* book 21, the hero confirms his identity to Eumaeus and Philoetius, puts a stop to their wildly emotional reaction in case someone inside the palace might hear them, and then quickly outlines a revenge strategy, while in book 24 he reveals himself to Laertes who, however, after an emotional reaction, gives a warning that the Ithacans may soon arrive to avenge the suitors' deaths, only for Odysseus to brush these fears aside and suggest going inside for the meal which is being made ready for them. In *IT*, Pylades is the one to give a warning, which is brushed aside by Iphigenia. Once again, *Cyclops* offers a humorous variation in that Odysseus comes out of the cave to chastise the satyrs for making noise likely to wake Polyphemus up.

Lange points to a further range of specific Odyssean reminiscences, most of which are compelling.⁵¹ These include Theonoe's news of Hera's support in an Olympian council of the safe return of Menelaus and Helen (880–883), just as Athene champions Odysseus in similar councils at the beginning of *Odyssey* books 1 and 5.⁵² Then there is Menelaus' mention of the τρώπις (411) through which he was saved when the rest of his ship was wrecked (the same word is used as the means of Odysseus' escape from drowning), the fact that Menelaus upon landing in Egypt hides the *eidolon* in a cave, just as Odysseus uses the cave of the Nymphs to conceal his assets, and the circumstance by which Menelaus goes alone on a scouting expedition, as Odysseus does on Circe's island. There are also clear similarities between the situations of Helen and Penelope in being saved by a husband from suitor harassment and conflicting reports of the death or survival of the absent heroes.

It is important to consider, however, what the comparison between Odysseus and Menelaus is designed to signify. It is usually concluded that Menelaus is simply a lesser version of Odysseus who meets a stropky old woman instead of the attractive Nausicaa and whose overall depiction represents a process

49 Eisner (1980) 32; Davidson (2000a) 123.

50 See Davidson (2000b).

51 Lange (2002) 132–141.

52 Cf. also Eisner (1980) 33.

of epic diminution.⁵³ He is also shown to be the intellectual inferior of Helen who is the one to devise the escape plan, though it must be remembered that Penelope's intelligence and initiative is also pronounced. Interestingly, both Odysseus and Menelaus have use of their weapons in the final showdown with their enemies, and both have a bath before D-Day.⁵⁴ There is a difference, of course, in the fact that the recognition scene takes place at different stages of the process in the two cases.

Which brings us to Menelaus' escape and the massacre of the Egyptians through a surprise attack similar in essence to Odysseus' slaughter of the suitors, the question being the extent to which Menelaus may be seen to have recovered his epic dignity. A.M. Dale felt able to say of him: 'But in general, and especially in the escape, his portrait is now given full heroic stature, and his ultimate translation to bliss (foretold at 1676) is made to sound better earned than in *Odyssey* 4. 561 ff.'⁵⁵ More recent criticism has usually not been so kind, the killing of the boat crew being seen as a sort of anti-hero's heroics. However, much depends on what Homeric model is supposed to be primarily evoked by the escape at sea. We could see it (and the defeat of 'barbarians') as echoing Odysseus' escape from Polyphemus. On the other hand, as Meltzer stresses,⁵⁶ Menelaus has earlier affirmed, at the point where he states his intention of killing Helen and then himself after fighting to the end, that he will not disgrace his Trojan reputation or glory (842–845). This points to the heroic code of the *Iliad* which has, however, been called into question by the *eidolon* substitution, so that the reputation of the Iliadic fighters may be seen as illusory as Paris' abduction of Helen. Meltzer also argues that the deception of Theoclymenus and the Egyptians indicates the superiority of Odyssean trickery advocated by Helen over Iliadic aggression advocated by Menelaus.⁵⁷ The very differences of opinion on this issue well illustrate the extremely complex and subtle revisioning of the epic tradition demonstrated by Euripides in this play, where the *Odyssey* outshines the *Iliad*. In any case, as Eisner concludes: '[...] the *Helen* is a parody of the *Odyssey*, but a parody as a tribute, not as a burlesque.'⁵⁸

53 See e.g. Allan (2008) 27.

54 Cf. also Eisner (1980) 33–34.

55 Dale (1967) xii.

56 Meltzer (1994) 234. Cf. Melzer (2006) 189.

57 Meltzer (1994) 251. Cf. Melzer (2006) 215.

58 Eisner (1980) 37.

6 *Heracles and Cyclops*

In connection with the *Odyssey*, brief comments should also be made about *Heracles*, and *Cyclops* in particular. With regard to the former, Cropp⁵⁹ emphasizes that this play too repeats the pattern of the return of an absent hero to save his threatened *oikos*, pursued by a hostile deity and after a return from an Underworld experience. The obvious differences from the story in the *Odyssey* should not be allowed to obscure the similarities. Also, Heracles' revenge can be seen to echo the excesses of Achilles,⁶⁰ and Lycus' scorn for archery brings into play a range of associations pertinent to both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.⁶¹

In connection with *Cyclops*, while the action of Euripides' play derives ultimately from the incident in *Odyssey* book 9 (with a nod towards the seventh *Homeric Hymn* in Silenus' account of the capture of Dionysus by pirates), there are also significant differences which Richard Seaford neatly summarizes as resulting from differences firstly of medium, secondly of the intellectual and social environment, and thirdly of genre.⁶² Some of these differences may, for a start, stem from earlier dramatic treatments, both satyric and comic.⁶³ And dramatic considerations render the Homeric detail of the stone placed in front of the cave's entrance unsuitable. The Sicilian location of the play, with its harsh environment, makes a pointed contrast with the Homeric land of the Cyclopes, as does the absence of wine, as well as the fact that Odysseus arrives as a result of being blown off course rather than purposely approaching a strange land. The intellectualizing of the Euripidean Cyclops is un-Homeric, as is his cooking of his victims, and the failure in the event of the satyr Chorus to help with the blinding adds an extra dimension to the assistance motif.

Mention may also be made of Silenus' dismissal of the Iliadic Odysseus' powers of oratory as babble, though his Odyssean manifestation certainly demonstrates long-windedness and mendacity,⁶⁴ and the satyr father's boasting about his exploits in former times may perhaps invite us to recall the Iliadic Nestor.⁶⁵ Odysseus' famous ruse of calling himself 'Outis' is replicated by Euripides. Lange emphasizes too that the Trojan War references in the play suggest that we are not dealing with the dramatization of an isolated incident from the *Odyssey*

59 Cropp (1986) 190–192.

60 Papadopoulou (2005) 41–42.

61 Papadopoulou (2005) 142–144.

62 Seaford (1988) 51.

63 Lange (2002) 192; O'Sullivan/Collard (2013) 42.

64 O'Sullivan/Collard (2013) 44 and note at line 104.

65 Lange (2002) 192–193.

so much as a satyric take on the heroic image of Odysseus, who is actually more 'Iliadic' than the Homeric one seen in the Cyclops episode of the *Odyssey*.⁶⁶

7 *Iphigenia at Aulis and Andromache*

We turn now to plays where the shadow of the *Iliad* is predominant. *Rhesus* will not be considered, given its probable inauthenticity. The introductory sections of two recent commentaries on the play summarize its relationship with the *Doloneia* and other epic sources.⁶⁷ The late play *IA*, and *Andromache*, dramatize incidents from the immediate prelude to the Trojan expedition and its aftermath in Greece respectively. In the former case, Agamemnon, Menelaus and Achilles all appear in the story of Iphigenia's sacrifice, about which Homer is silent (although it is found already in the *Cypria* and the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*). These leading figures, however, as presented by Euripides in a pre-war setting, provide a significant contrast with their counterparts in the *Iliad*, with Menelaus becoming manipulative, and Agamemnon's Iliadic tendencies to vanity and vacillation and his acute awareness of public opinion being heightened.

The most significant change from a Homeric model, however, concerns Achilles. Pantelis Michelakis comments as follows: 'His Homeric features are reduced to narrative devices brought up by characters in need of a saviour, but they fail to materialize. The character who emblematically stands as a symbol of heroism in the *Iliad* [...] is now reduced to a figure unable to defend Iphigenia and his own heroic identity'.⁶⁸ This is despite the fact that while the Iliadic Achilles implores his divine mother for help, his Euripidean clone says to Clytemnestra (assuming that lines 973–974 are authentic): ἀλλ' ἡσύχαζε. θεὸς ἐγὼ πέφηνά σοι / μέγιστος, οὐκ ὦν. ἀλλ' ὄμως γενήσομαι.⁶⁹

The young married women of the Chorus, in their entry song, serve to point up the contrast between the Homeric and Euripidean visions as they idealize the Greek heroes engaged in various activities, and in particular Achilles displaying the speed reflected in his Iliadic descriptive formula. Most pointedly, he is testing this speed against a chariot driven by Eumelus, one of the competitors in the race set up by Achilles as part of the funeral games for Patroclus in *Iliad* book 23. As Helene Foley puts it: 'The epic tone of the ode creates a strong

66 Lange (2002) 219–221.

67 Liapis (2012); Fries (2014).

68 Michelakis (2006) 40.

69 Hose (2008) 228.

counterpressure for a return to past myth and a more glorious world than that of the *stasis*-ridden army and its leadership presented up to this point in the play'.⁷⁰

It is Achilles' son Neoptolemus who becomes one focus in the *Andromache*. While it is usually understood that he becomes Iliadized, as it were, in the description of his death, there are different views as to what this means. Anne Pippin Burnett, for example, comments: 'The Neoptolemus of the messenger's narrative has the full stature of a hero of tragedy. He is a warrior, a veteran of Troy, all that Menelaus only seemed to be, a point Euripides insists upon with the echo between lines 458 and 1123'.⁷¹ This echo involves the term γοργός ὀπλίτης which Andromache uses of Menelaus when he is about to kill her, the same designation being applied at line 1123 to Neoptolemus as he makes his last stand against the Delphians. But Judith Mossman sees Neoptolemus quite differently: 'He is also the conqueror of Troy, who can be seen as an outmoded heroic figure blundering about in the more sophisticated, more wicked world of Menelaus and Orestes'.⁷² Allan too draws attention to the reprise of the topic of Menelaus' inferiority as a warrior, noted by the poet at *Iliad* 7.104–105, and cast in his face by Andromache in her *agôn* with him (456–457).⁷³

In any case, the absent hero is seen in Iliadic terms, specifically in terms of his father because of the images of missiles flying like a snowstorm and the Delphians fleeing like doves before a hawk. Richard Garner⁷⁴ seems correct too in identifying in the detail by which the Delphians wound Neoptolemus' corpse, an allusion to the abuse of Hector's corpse in *Iliad* book 22. This detail also seems to belong in a grouping of Iliadic allusions which centre on the figure of Andromache herself who seems destined to suffer the loss of another man and child. This starts with the invocation of her home city of Thebe which recalls her reference to its destruction at *Iliad* 6.411–430 and thus heightens the tragic strength of the play's opening.⁷⁵ The situational connection is then reinforced by further details such as her use of the expression δούλειον ἦμαρ (99) which echoes Hector's foreboding about her (there is a similar echo at both *Hecabe* 56 and *Troades* 1330).

70 Foley (1985) 79–80.

71 Burnett (1971) 151.

72 Mossman (1996) 144.

73 Allan (2000) 20.

74 Garner (1990) 134.

75 Stevens (1971) note at line 1.

8 *Hecabe and Troades*

These two plays dramatize even more immediately the situation foreshadowed throughout the *Iliad*, namely the destruction and burning of Troy and the enslavement of the female captives. Post-Iliadic epics, and Stesichorus' *Iliou Persis*, not to mention earlier non-extant tragedies, provided the actual plot sources, but it is reasonable to assume that it was the *Iliad* which held a special status for Euripides in his treatment of the subject.⁷⁶ Thus the image accompanying the Trojan lament at the sight of Hector being dragged through the dust, which imagines Troy burning (*Il.* 22.410–411), as Adrian Poole puts it, 'marches straight into Euripides' play [i.e. *Troades*].⁷⁷

For *Hecabe*, Justina Gregory⁷⁸ neatly summarizes Euripides' adaptation of aspects of the *Little Iliad*, *Iliou Persis*, and *Nostoi*, as well as the two Homeric epics, including the portrayal of Polydorus and Polyxena, and Judith Mossman⁷⁹ provides a detailed discussion. She identifies five Iliadic passages as key sources: the latter part of book 6, where Hector disregards the pleas of Hecabe, Helen, and Andromache, and insists on responding to his duty to fight, book 22.38 ff., where his parents attempt to prevent him fighting, and books 22.405 ff., 24.159 ff., and 24.697 ff., where he is mourned. And she adds the simile at *Odyssey* 8.523–530 where the hero is compared to a woman crying for her dead husband after the sack of a city. In Euripides' play, the Trojan fears have all been realized.⁸⁰

Other echoes from the *Iliad* include Polyxena's contrasting of her former life with her present circumstances (349 ff.) which clearly recalls Hector's words regarding Andromache at *Iliad* 6.456 ff., Hecabe's mourning for her children and the supporting 'community' of fellow female mourners, and the concept of *χάρις*. Then there is the argument between Agamemnon and the ghost of Achilles over a woman where the roles of the two heroes in book 1 of the *Iliad* are reversed, the brutality of Achilles' ghost which picks up an aspect of the Iliadic hero, and the vicious mentality displayed by Hecabe towards Polymestor which may at least partly find its origin in the Trojan queen's expressed desire to devour Achilles' liver (*Il.* 24.212–213).⁸¹ Donald Mastronade sees in Polyxena's determination to die bravely and nobly an echo of Hector's thinking as he goes

76 Cf. e.g. Croally (1994) 50, and Mossman (1995) 21.

77 Poole (1976) 278.

78 Gregory (1999) xviii–xix.

79 Mossman (1995) 19–47.

80 Mossman (1995) 22–23.

81 Mossman (1995) 23–37.

to face Achilles (*Il.* 22.105–106), similar sentiments also being expressed by Heracles' daughter in *Heracidae* and Iphigenia in *IA*.⁸²

Zeitlin is perhaps over speculative in finding links between the epic and Euripides' tragedy in the themes of treasure and *peploi*, and the blinding of Lycurgus (as described in *Il.* 6.130–140) and that of Polymestor.⁸³ She is perhaps on safer ground in associating Polymestor with Polyphemus which brings Odysseus into play as well.⁸⁴ Segal develops this same link⁸⁵ as well as emphasizing the transformations of Achilles and Odysseus by Euripides, and how a tomb standing for immortal glory in the epic world has become the site of human sacrifice and bloodthirsty epiphany.⁸⁶ Katherine Callen King, in arguing that Euripides' interest in this play is in the truth about a war mentality, concludes: 'Euripides [...] attempts to banish Homer spiritually: he reconstitutes the *Iliad*-engendered myth and creates thereby a substitute *reaction*—dismay for the original adulation'.⁸⁷

With regard to Euripides' engagement with the events of the Trojan War, we could perhaps see the *Troades* as the jewel in the crown and a moving footnote to the *Iliad* itself. Once again, the situation foreshadowed in a number of Iliadic contexts is found to have been realized. There is admittedly not a large amount of direct linguistic allusion⁸⁸ and only a limited amount of more general linguistic similarity.⁸⁹ However, there is a wealth of situational allusion that complements and reinforces the basic situation as foreshadowed by Homer.⁹⁰ The fate of Troy and the Trojans in Euripides' play looks back to a number of Iliadic contexts in addition to those already mentioned in connection with *Hecabe*. For example, Achilles requests from his mother that he be able to make some Trojan or Dardanian woman lament bitterly (*Il.* 18.121–124), Phoenix makes Meleager's wife remind him of the misfortunes befalling a captured city (*Il.* 9.591–594), Priam foresees his own vision of disaster (*Il.* 22.62–71), and, in connection with *Il.* 24.697 ff., and with specific application to *Troades*, Andromache anticipates the possibility of Astyanax' fall to his death (*Il.* 24.734–735).

82 Mastronade (2010) 265–268.

83 Zeitlin (1991) 57–62.

84 Zeitlin (1991) 70–71.

85 Segal (1993) 162–163 and 185.

86 Segal (1993) 158–159.

87 King (1985) 60.

88 See Garner (1990) 165 and 253 n. 53.

89 See e.g. Lee (1976) notes at lines 1094, 1315–1316; Barlow (1986) notes at lines 508, 673–674.

90 Davidson (2001) 69–74.

Barlow⁹¹ notes in the play the recurrent themes of ships, fire, and walls, which immediately relates back to the *Iliad*. With regard to walls, Croally⁹² notes that the sacral nature of Troy and its walls, often emphasized in the *Iliad*, is only alluded to once in *Troades*, an indication that the gods have abandoned the city which has now been destroyed. Simon Goldhill reflects further on this link which binds Euripides so closely to the epic precedent.⁹³ In connection with Astyanax, the Euripidean Talthybius tells Hecabe that he has washed the corpse in the waters of the Scamander, which recalls the detail from Homer that Hector called his son Scamandrius, the name Astyanax being used by others.

Among many other points of contact, mention can be made of the poignancy by which a cart is the conveyance for Hector's widow, fatherless son, and empty armour, which recalls the cart in which Priam brings back Hector's body in the *Iliad*, also of the fact that it is Cassandra who notes the return of Priam with the body (*Il.* 24.700ff.) and it is Cassandra's exit in *Troades* which clears the stage for the arrival of Andromache in her cart, and again of the fact that whereas Priam took specified treasure to ransom Hector's body, all the Trojan gold is now going to the Greek ships. C.W. Marshall⁹⁴ argues convincingly too that the appearance of Cassandra, Andromache, and Helen, in that order, given that Hecabe is set apart as the foregrounded figure, is specifically designed by Euripides to recall the contributions of these four women in the climactic lamentations in *Iliad* book 24, so that his play is seamlessly attached to the epic model.

Troades too offers much food for thought in the *agôn* where the *Iliad* is immediately brought into play both for comparison and contrast (firstly, in Helen's argument that she was not responsible for the war, and secondly, in her characterization and the logic she uses) and the *Odyssey* too, in that critical opinion is divided as to whether or not the debate is to be seen against the background showing Menelaus having offered forgiveness and resumed his life in Greece with her.⁹⁵

Finally, we should focus on the opening of the first stasimon: ἀμφί μοι Ἴλιον, ᾧ / Μοῦσα, καινῶν ὕμνων / ἄισον σὺν δακρῦοις ᾧδᾶν ἐπικήδειον (511–514). The epic-style invocation to the Muse is immediately modified in the reference to a 'new song' which has been said to mark a contrast with the joyful song men-

91 Barlow (1986) 32.

92 Croally (1994) 193–194.

93 Goldhill (2007) 133–136.

94 Marshall (2012) 36.

95 See e.g. Lloyd-Jones (1971) 150–151; Desch (1985) 83; Gellie (1986) 116–118; Lloyd (1992) 99–112; Croally (1994) 158–159.

tioned later in the stasimon (when the Trojans welcomed the wooden horse) as well as indicating a contemporary departure from earlier epic accounts,⁹⁶ or that the lament is seen not through the eyes of warriors but of women.⁹⁷ However, given the displays of female grief in the *Iliad*, on the Greek side by Thetis and Briseis, but more especially on the Trojan side, it seems rather that Euripides' song is 'new' because he is making female lament for Troy the centre piece of his vision, when it was only a comparatively minor part of that of the *Iliad*.⁹⁸

9 Conclusion

There is much that has only been briefly touched on or omitted altogether from this discussion, such as Euripides' use of epic-style linguistic features like compound epithets, the language of messenger speeches, and the mythically-oriented descriptive prologues. A number of the plays have also had to be neglected, along with any consideration of the Homeric background to figures of heroic stature such as Medea. Moreover, given the loss of virtually all of the Epic Cycle and of much other pre-Euripidean literature, especially Stesichorus, the privileging as source material of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* may have got the picture to some degree distorted.⁹⁹ In addition, we have not considered the vexed question of the extent, in different contexts, to which Euripides was intentionally referencing some epic sources on the understanding that at least most of his audience would appreciate this, and other sources for the benefit of what he might have considered the intellectual elite, whereas at other times the echoes of epic might have been unconscious on the part of a poet whose mind was steeped in the poetic tradition that he had inherited. And it has not been possible to accommodate the vast amount of relevant modern scholarship.

For all that, what has been presented here does appear to go some way towards demonstrating the range and subtlety of Euripides' engagement with his epic sources and models. For some scholars, Euripides has been seen as constantly undercutting the exemplars of epic, and undermining the values paraded by Homer. But the situation is far more complex than this. Euripides may always shine a critical light on tradition, and he may always be seeking to find new relevance for his contemporary world in the mythical world of epic,

96 Lee (1976) note at lines 511–514.

97 Barlow (1986) note at lines 511 ff.

98 Croally (1994) 245; Davidson (2001) 78.

99 See e.g. Zimmermann (2014) 596–597.

and to reshape world views, but at the same time he honours the past and builds on its foundations. As John Gould has said:

For however much it is true that the relation of fifth-century theatre to the world of the Homeric epic is repeatedly an ironic and ambiguous one, still we should be all too obviously wrong to conclude that the heroic imagery of Homeric epic could not be handled by the fifth-century dramatists except ironically and was without directly accessible meaning to fifth-century audiences.¹⁰⁰

This is a judgement that we totally endorse. Euripides was undoubtedly proud of his culture and traditions and sought to draw on this background wherever possible. At the same time, he challenged his audience, being well aware that he lived in a world very different from that of the heroic and often idealized past, and he strove to make this past live again, with its vices as well as its virtues laid bare, and to have relevance for a new age.

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100 Gould (1983) 39.

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Intertextuality in Euripidean Tragedy

Pietro Pucci

Euripides' characters impress audiences and readers instantly as being intellectually and emotionally different from the same-name characters of the mythical/poetic hypertext. It is possible to define the specific quality that marks Euripides' characters and makes them distant from their ancestors: they breathe the air of the late fifth-century wisdom, that abstract and polemical thought we call the *sophia* of that time. This specific facet affects the characters in two different and concordant ways. First and foremost, they speak and act as persons of that culture, in which the 'word' has become the substitute, or at least the main provision, of the 'action'.¹ Furthermore, and this is the most salient effect of this trait, Euripides conceives and constructs his characters so that they may convey to the spectators the intellectual results and achievements of that *sophia*. Thus, even if the characters themselves are not *sophoi*, or only partially *sophoi*, they are shaped in such a way that they can transmit to the audience the benefits and instruction of the new thought (*sophia*). Among those beneficial and enlightening accomplishments, there are a new social sensibility, a mistrust of certain anthropomorphic aspects of the traditional religion, and a positive appraisal of pity. All these intellectual attainments shape and shake the tragic world of Euripides as a sort of revolutionary *re-writing* of traditional characters and understandings.

I shall begin with my thoughts about the spiritual backbones of Euripides' characters, in other words, how they compare with the characters of the mythical/poetic hypertext; and then I shall analyze the intertextual effects of Euripides' tragic *sophia*, what I call his re-writing—or symbiosis of the characters, or their transfiguration. The traditional Menelauses, Agamemmons, Achilleses,

1 Euripides places language in the foreground in relation to actions; moreover, he makes language play the role of an autonomous accomplice of human activities. This applies to all his plays and is characteristic of the sophistic age. Scholars have noted this trend in both language and society in general. Kerferd (1981) 78, more radically and more suggestively than others, speaks of a fundamental change in Athens towards a society 'in which what people thought and said was beginning to be more important than what was actually the case. In its extreme modern form this leads to the doctrine that there are no facts and no truths, only ideological and conceptual models and the choice between these is an individual matter'. See also Scullion (1999–2000).

Oresteses, Hecubas, Andromaches, Helens etc. were poetically viewed as members of an aristocratic elite, for whom heroic behaviour was a natural duty; and their relationship with the gods, however difficult, led to the enhancing of their standing, exploits, and glory. In Euripides' plays these larger than life figures have become smaller. An immense ethical and ontological distance separates them from the Euripidean characters: in some plays, Euripidean Menelaus is a fearful figure, a coward, or a false friend; in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Agamemnon is a despicable liar unable to face his situation; many other monumental figures of the epic and tragic tradition lack aristocratic grandeur, and excel instead in intellectual and practical talents: they are shrewd operators, acute philosophers, scheming, eloquent, and subtle debaters, and often mistrustful of the gods. Only some young sacrificial victims tend to be heroic and great-hearted.

Both a sustained criticism of old beliefs and a secularized view of Olympus subjected the traditional *muthoi* to the closest scrutiny. The stimulus for a new conception of the 'word' comes to Euripides from the Presocratic philosophers, especially Xenophanes and the Sophists. There are in Euripides' plays strong, wise personalities that seem to be generated through a philosophical symbiosis. They are few but remarkably impressive: they strike us as original creations, unheard-of in the long mythical tradition. In the first part of *Suppliant Women*, Theseus elaborates on a theory of social progress on the grounds of which he refuses to help the unjust Adrastus. Tiresias (in *Bacchae*) identifies Dionysus as 'wine'² in accordance with the sophist Prodicus.³ He is no longer the prophet of Apollo who led the Greeks to Troy as in *Iliad* I; he is instead a *sophos*, a teacher who instructs king Pentheus on the true nature of Dionysus. Hippolytus, Heracles, Ion, and Helen are characterized by some aspects of *sophia*, such as, for instance, excessive sensibility, unconventional beliefs, and awkward relations with the gods. They are all truly Euripidean characters.

Many of the wise characters fail to be heard by the establishment: when *sophia* questions the anthropomorphic aspect of the gods, or produces new theories, it provokes a violent reaction. Pentheus, for instance, destroys the holy seat of Tiresias to punish him for his instructions. There are noticeably unwise characters as well: one of them is Apollo who in *Orestes* leaves Orestes

2 This is his teaching (*Ba.* 275–279): 'There are two primary principles among mankind (τὰ πρῶτ' ἐν ἀνθρώποισι), young man. There is the goddess Demeter (she is Earth—call her by whatever name you please): she feeds men on dry foods, while he who has come after, Semele's offspring, discovered the complementary element and introduced to mortals the moist draught of the vine (βότρυος ὑγρὸν πῶμ' ἡῶρε)'.
3 Prodicus asserts that 'the ancients considered all the things useful to life gods ... and accordingly bread was considered Demeter and wine Dionysus' (D-K 84 B 5).

in the lurch after the matricide: more than this, Euripides has Pylades arriving and advising extreme violence against Menelaus. Apollo is injudicious when, in *Electra*, he urges a son, Orestes, to kill his mother, Clytemnestra: she deserves death to be sure, but by the hand of another person. Apollo is also unwise when he refuses to grant the gift of poetic inspiration to women (*Medea* 428–430).⁴ Gods openly accused of this constantly rash and harmful conduct do not belong to the epic and tragic tradition. Unfortunately, *sophia*, as a cultural lens, does not provide a simple and transparent view: the wise and eloquent persons can also use their *sophia* to obtain questionable benefits for themselves, such as, for instance, Jason, Medea, and Hecuba (in her name-play).

This rapid overview of one specific aspect that separates Euripidean characters from those of the tradition shows the dramatic power of Euripides' tragic vision. The most decisive element that fashions his tragic idea consists in both the excitation and amplification of the feelings of tender pity and deep empathy. As Aristotle convincingly argues in the *Poetics*, this intensification of feelings of concern and compassion makes him the most tragic (*tragikôtatos*) among the Athenian tragedians. It follows that his rewriting of traditional plots, the symbiosis of his characters with familiar mythical figures, and the filtering of tragic language through a new discourse, have the intended effect of arousing the sensation of pity in the souls of the spectators. Pity, however, is not a natural and universal feeling,⁵ but an emotional state that either aids or harms only the wise, the *sophoi*: *sophia* is therefore the condition and source of pity.

It is Orestes in *Electra* (291–296) who reveals the intellectual and refined source of pity. Once he hears from his sister of the atrocious murder of Agamemnon, while pretending to be someone else, he defends his emotional pain:

Because of sensitivity (αἴσθησις), mortals are stung when they learn of misfortune, even when it is not their own. Pity is found not in ignorant people (ἀμαθῆαι) but in the wise (σοφοῖσι δ' ἀνδρῶν). And in fact, it is not without paying a price that the wise have minds that are too wise (γνώμην ἐνεῖναι τοῖς σοφοῖς λίαν σοφῆν).

4 Denniston (1939) xxii: '... again and again in the Euripidean plays which show Orestes after the murder, Apollo, by common consent, is an *asophos*, *amathês theos* who has deceived an unhappy mortal, and the left him in the lurch (*El.* 1302, *IT* 570–571, 711, *Or.* 28–30, 1160–1165, 191, 417, 591–601, 955–56). At the end of *Orestes*, as Denniston argues, Apollo is 'seemingly vindicated. But the frigidity of the Euripidean exodus carries no conviction'.

5 In *Andromache* 421–422, the Chorus states that 'misery elicits pity from all mortals even if the sufferer is no kin', thus implying the universal nature of pity: but this recognition is circumstantial and intended to invite a hostile Menelaus to feel pity as every person in the world feels the same at the presence of human misery.

Orestes means to say that only sophisticated and educated persons—as he implicitly suggests that he himself is—have the ability to feel pity for the misfortunes of strangers; and of course, this pity causes them distress and pain. Thus, those persons add even more sorrows to those they already have. This definition of the educated source of pity goes well beyond the character of Orestes in the play. In this case, Orestes is given the privilege of expressing a principle that grounds the theatrical vision of the poet himself: the self-inflicted sorrow, this is the powerful tragic effect which the plays of Euripides bring about, when arousing the sensations of pity and compassion in their wise audiences. A strong feeling of pity encourages people to focus on the painful conditions in which humans often live. It diverts men's minds from optimistic and metaphysical views, such as the belief in theodicy—that is, the idea that gods lead human affairs towards final justice. By adhering to such a belief, humans do not need to pity their neighbours and themselves but can explain their pains and sorrows as being conducive to the gods' fair and well-chosen purposes. Aeschylus' plays elaborate on this reassuring and edifying belief: in the *Oresteia*, Apollo and Athena, in person, preside over the closing trial and eventually acquit Orestes. Even in Sophocles, often the dramatic characters yield to divine determination or even praise the will of the gods: in *Electra*, *Philoctetes*, and *Oedipus at Colonus*, human suffering is finally justified by the divine plans. Therefore, as audiences are being induced to feel pity for the human condition, the Euripidean plays promote a new kind of ethics: it is all the wiser to face the irrationality of violence, injustice, and evil by enduring those calamities without taking refuge in temporary expedients and invalid reasonings. Paradoxically, this is a gain, a remedy for the human mind, not simply because it clears the spirit of false expectations, but also because, through pity, each individual can feel that they are part of the same universal destiny. Finally, the pitier suffers vicariously, while he is often free from the evil he watches in others: his pain may be attended by a sense of immediate relief.

Before Euripides no Orestes had used such an intellectually refined language on the tragic stage: *ἄσθησις* and *ἄμαθία* never appear in Aeschylus, and, of the two words, only *ἄμαθία* occurs—just once—in Sophocles. This linguistic observation should be extended to include the whole language of Euripides' tragedies: cultural and philosophical expressions abound in the speeches of Euripidean characters, and more often than not particular phrasings can strike a principal dramatic character as totally incomprehensible. In *Orestes*, Orestes confuses Menelaus by telling him: 'my *synêsis* (conscience)' troubles me 'because I am aware that I have done awful things', i.e. I committed a crime in killing my mother (*Orestes* 396). Menelaus fails to appreciate both the

term⁶ and the principle, and replies (397): ‘What do you mean? Clarity is wise, not unclarity’. Menelaus finds Orestes’ words muddled, almost an exuberant nonsense: of course, he expected from the start that Orestes would mention the traditional Erinyes, not his own conscience, as the entities that punish and torture him. The linguistic novelty introduces the ethical novelty. Through Orestes’ assertion that his conscience tortures him, Euripides suggests that the infamous Erinyes, who have terrified the spectators of so many earlier plays, are simply symbolic figures of human conscience. Contrary to Aeschylus, he never stages the Erinyes as real beings, but only as hallucinations haunting Orestes during his fit of madness (*Orestes* 255–275). By presenting the Erinyes only as dreadful phantasms, Euripides invites us to question the status and origin of the poetic/mythical process that transforms feelings into symbolic images, and these images into religious presences. Indeed, the poet’s intellectual provocation is admirable.

In *Electra* Orestes’ definition of pity serves Euripides’ purpose of directing the audience towards the appropriate and/or richest way of responding to the dramatic power of his masterworks: by granting *sophia* (wisdom and sensitivity) to the spectators who feel pity, the tragic text encourages them to let themselves be driven by feelings of compassion and their consequent emotional pain. Those spectators who naturally feel so disposed recognize themselves in the definition, which then works as a sort of *captatio benevolentiae*. There will be spectators who will feel no pity: the definition given by Orestes assumes as a fact that the theatrical audience is split in two cultural sections. This fragmentation is felt and recorded also by Sophocles, who draws a distinction between the wise and the unwise in relation to the interpretation of oracles (fr. 771 Radt):

Of the nature of god, I know well the following aspect: for the wise (*sophois*) he makes always enigma (*ainiktêra*, ‘puzzles’) with his prophecies, but for the simple people he is an easy and quick teacher.⁷

6 The word *synesis* is not found in the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles. Porter (1994) 302: ‘Orestes’ reference to *synesis* that haunts him is cited repeatedly in histories of Greek thought and ethics as the earliest extant reference to what today we call “a guilty consciousness”. Porter (1994) 311 correctly argues that “[a] good deal of the surprise occasioned by Orestes’ words lies in the manner in which he discounts the religious obligations that formsuch an important part of his motivation in the earlier tradition and are invoked by Orestes himself in his later speech at 579 ff.’

7 We do not know the identity of the speaker, but we recognize that the style of the arguments resembles that of Heraclitus (see, for instance, fr. 93 D-K): ‘The Lord whose oracle is in Delphi does not tell, does nor hides, he makes signs (*sêmainei*)’. If the Lord of the oracle does not tell and does not hide, his signs must be enigmatic as the oracles in Soph. fr. 771. The suggestive

Given that Sophocles' plays often not only stage the words and effects of oracles but are themselves enigmatic as the oracles are for the wise, this definition may have directed the audience towards the right ways of receiving the plays and may have been approved by the wise spectators.

Euripides' Orestes offers the sophisticated definition of pity in a moment in which he has to explain his pain for himself while pretending to be someone else. No Aeschylus' or Sophocles' Orestes would have theorized so swiftly and spontaneously on the source and nature of these sentiments. Euripides introduces here one of his dearest motifs; but this meditation on grief is also appropriate to his dramatic character, since Orestes is sensitive, refined, and enlightened: he is some sort of philosopher conscious of the tragic nature of pity. The spiritual attitudes that are woven around Orestes' simple act of speaking about pity in that specific way show his distance from all epic or tragic models: all his aristocratic and heroic heritage becomes hardly perceptible and unimportant since he appears here as a sort of *sophos*. Because of his *sophia* he is not conceived and staged as traditional and heroic as Aeschylus' Orestes who, until his mother's dramatic gesture of showing her breast, has no apprehensions or qualms about the matricide.⁸ Critics have placed Euripides' Orestes of *Electra* under psychological analysis and rigorous scrutiny, and found that he is cautious, prudent, confused, and un-heroic:⁹ in fact, he is sensitive and bears some marks of a *sophos*. As such he has doubts about Apollo's wisdom, he needs help to accomplish the murder, and thereupon he feels awful remorse

force of fr. 771 may help the students of Sophocles understand the basic tenet of his tragic vision: in Sophoclean plays the divine will is often present and active, but its intentions and purposes are mostly hidden and enigmatic as those of an oracle. The characters are often victims of that will and order of things without ever knowing the reason for their tribulation. Yet at the end the characters follow and often even praise the divine will. See Pucci (2003) xxiv–xxx.

8 See Garvie's relevant comment in (1986) xxxiif.

9 He is 'prudent and anxious' in a brilliant analysis of Albini (1962), who defines the main characteristic of *Electra* as a lack of 'eroicità' (99). Goff (1991) 264, comparing Odysseus' and Orestes' scars, suggests that '[t]he differences between this narrative [in the *Odyssey*] and the Euripidean account systematically deprive Orestes of any analogous claim to manhood'. For Kitto (1966), Orestes is irresolute, and Euripides chose to portray Orestes as irresolute about revealing his identity because of 'the theatrical value of this Orestes in this situation' (358). Kitto also considers *Electra* a melodrama, meaning that the characters are conceived so as to serve specific stage effects. O'Brien (1964) 28: 'Besides exciting sympathy for the victims, Euripides in everyway darkens the characters of the two children. Orestes seems for a long time uncertain what to do, and hesitates for no good reason to reveal his identity'. Sheppard (1918) 139: 'Frankly I believe that a spectator of the play should see and would be expected to see that Electra is disappointed in Orestes and Orestes ... is also disappointed in Electra'.

and profound self-pity for the crime he has committed. No trial and no divine acquittal would free him from those feelings.

In a sung passage Orestes and Electra reach the conclusion that they committed the crime because they foolishly followed Apollo's mistaken and unwise command. With this inference they take full responsibility for their wrongdoing. In line 1177 Orestes begins his song of repentance:

O Earth and you, Zeus, who sees whatever mortals do, glance at this murderous, abominable carnage, the two corpses stretched on the ground, by a blow of my hand, in payment for my woes.¹⁰

Orestes invites Earth and Zeus¹¹ to view the deplorable spectacle of the blood-bath (ἴδετε τὰδ' ἔργα φόνια μυσσάρα); he is recalling what he did and then he is inviting his sister, himself, and the audience to look at the wretched deeds and events of the horrible scene (1206–1207). The whole action is relived through theatricality.¹² This dramatic method is very important in Euripides' re-making of the traditional tragic scenes. Here, by inviting the gods and himself to see the carnage his hand accomplished, Orestes speaks as both a doer and a spectator of his own actions. The address to the gods and to himself is essentially a hint for the audience: the tragic deed turns into dramatic speech that shows Orestes' own misery and regret. By this display of utter grief, the audience are encouraged not so much to glance at the ferocious murder itself, but to listen to the cries of self-pity of the actual doer; the resultant theatrical effect is that the audience empathizes with the pain of the doer.¹³ In a world where the gods give wrong and foolish counsel, wise humans should first ignore that guidance, but if they fail to do so, they should accept responsibility and feel pain and remorse for the accomplished deed. This is one of the tragic lessons of Euripides' *Electra*. In other Euripidean plays, the ill-advised or aggressive intervention of the gods arouses similar feelings of pity and sorrow for the struggling characters: Creusa (in *Ion*), Phaedra, and Heracles.¹⁴

10 In this invocation, Earth and Zeus merely serve as two witnesses; Orestes attributes to Zeus the power of the Sun who sees everything (as Aesch. *Eum.* 1046, Soph. *OC* 1086, Eur. *Medea* 1251–1252). After the dochmiac in line 1177, the passage continues in iambics.

11 The choice seems purposeful: Earth and Heaven, not all the Olympian gods.

12 Theatricality implies that the character experiences what he is actually and directly suffering through an awareness of his play-acting. Some Euripidean characters, like Medea and Helen are especially noticeable for this quality. On theatricality, see Weber (2004).

13 De Romilly (1961) describes with fine sensibility the invasion of pathetic feelings and words in Euripides' plays as they replace dramatic actions.

14 The violence of the pain aroused by pity is described by the Chorus in *Phoenician Women*

The spectacle Orestes invites Earth and Zeus to watch ends with a strong emphasis on ‘my hand’. The synecdoche is important, principally because it picks out the material agent of the murder and leaves the moral agent unmentioned until Apollo’s responsibility emerges later on. The god’s instruction, Orestes claims, was not just (1190–1193):

ὦ Φοῖβ', νύμνησας δίκαι'
 ἄφαντα, φανερά δ' ἐξέπρα-
 ξας ἄχρα, φόνια δ' ὤπασας
 λάχε' πὸ γὰς Ἑλλανίδος.

O Phoebus you sang an obscure
 justice, but clear are the griefs
 you have exacted and the criminal lot
 you gave me as banished from Greece.¹⁵

As a free-thinking *sophos*, Orestes has doubts about the *sophia* of Apollo and expresses those misgivings without reticence. Castor comes to buttress his qualms about the crime; as *deus ex machina* at the end of the play (1244–1246) he speaks to Orestes as follows:

[The punishment of your mother] is just but not your act.
 Phoebus, yes, Phoebus—but since he is my lord—I am silent:
 yet, though he is wise, he did not give you a wise oracle.¹⁶

There is no possible theodicy here: even a god friendly to Apollo accuses him of a serious fault. Many characters in Euripides’ plays express critical views

1285–1295: ‘Ah, ah! My heart is trembling, trembling with fear. Pity, pity for the unhappy mother goes through my flesh’ (διὰ σάρκα δ’ ἐμὴν/ἔλεος ἔλεος ἔμολε ματέρος δειλαίας). See also *Orestes* 333–339, 968–970, where ἔλεος seems to be personified.

- 15 The wording is impressive and powerful: the chiasmus, anticipated by the address to Phoebus ‘the Radiant’, opposes song to action, an opposition that Euripides knows very well since he often produces the one in the place of the other. Here the Radiant sings about obscure justice, and the polarity ἄφαντα, φανερά reveals the opposition between obscure and obvious, through the same root, as the one is simply the negation of the other in the register of ‘showing’, ‘displaying’, and ‘appearing’.
- 16 Castor does not give any reason for Apollo’s lack of wisdom: Aélion (1983) 140 and Cropp (1988) xxxi and 183 think that ‘Apollo was unwise in appointing the wrong person to do the right job’. In Pucci (2009) 234 n. 21, I implied that perhaps Apollo lacked compassion for Orestes when he orders him to kill his mother.

about the gods and speak like Xenophanes or, even more sceptically, like the Sophists. To mention only a few: Phaedra, Heracles, Helen, Tiresias, Hecuba, and the Chorus of *Trojan Women*.¹⁷

Orestes is one of them, and he accuses Apollo, while singing in a sort of symbiosis with Aeschylus' Orestes. By showing that Orestes is a victim of divine injustice, Euripides takes to task Aeschylus' theodicy in the *Oresteia*. *Electra* stages both humorous and serious re-writings of the *Choephoroi* from a perspective that is broader than Aeschylean metaphysics.¹⁸ There we see a virtuoso transfiguration of the most dramatic scenes of Aeschylus' play: the famous episode (Aesch. *Cho.*) in which Electra recognizes the identity of Orestes by the similarity of his hair and feet with hers—impossible evidence indeed (Eur. *El.* 518 ff.);¹⁹ and the scene with Clytemnestra showing her breast to Orestes and begging him to spare her life. Euripides reworks this very scene in Orestes' and Electra's chanted recollection of their murder (Eur. *El.* 1206–1207). Orestes sings to Electra:

did you see how she, the luckless one, stripped off
her robe and barred her breast as we killed her?

and (1214–1217):

she screamed this word grasping my chin
with her hand: 'My child, I beg you!'
From my cheeks
she hung so that my hands let go the sword.

The audience would have felt sharp emotions at this lyric piece. First of all, the spectators would have recognized the Aeschylean source of the theme and would have admired or reproved this tuneful adaptation: the unexpected gesture of Clytemnestra that in *Choephoroi* shocked and paralyzed Orestes is here transformed into a pathetic memory. We would call it an operatic moment. Then, the doer takes again the posture of the spectator ('did you see ...'), thereby inviting the audience to see with him what for the spectators is only

17 In Sophocles' plays the absence or the incomprehensible action of the gods is painfully felt, since the Sophoclean gods are often stern and difficult to understand, but eventually they come forth into view as pious and respected. More than that, there is a theodicy even in Sophocles, though not so evident and noticeable as in Aeschylus.

18 See Aélion (1983).

19 See Fitton-Brown (1961) 365; Solmsen (1967) 4; Pucci (1967) 365–371.

an emblematic Aeschylean scene, since Clytemnestra's dramatic move is not performed in Euripides' play. From the perspective of the characters' symbiosis, it is as if Orestes were singing to his audience: 'did you see how, in Aeschylus play, I experienced the unbearably dramatic supplication of my mother? Since I did not spare her, I feel, in this new play, distressed by pain and remorse'.

The differences between the two scenes display the whole register of particular qualities that transform the Euripidean characters from their traditional shapes into new dramatic figures.²⁰ In Aeschylus' play, at the sight of his mother's extraordinary supplication, Orestes becomes unexpectedly disheartened: he questions Pylades as to whether he should respect his mother and spare her life; but Pylades replies with merciless words, the only ones he utters during the entire play (*Cho.* 896–902):

Where henceforth shall be the oracles of Apollo declared at Pytho, and the covenant you pledged on oath? Count all men your enemies rather than the gods.

Orestes does not hesitate any longer and kills his mother. Theodicy suppresses the son's instinctual reverence for the mother. On the contrary, the Euripidean *sophos* knows that Apollo's oracle is unjust: he finds no Pylades close to him, and the sword falls from his hand. Near enough stands his sister who, when Orestes covers his eyes with his garment, helps him to thrust the sword into their mother's throat (*Eur. El.* 1218–1226). In the case of Electra, the divine theodicy is replaced by human violent passion.²¹

Clytemnestra's heart-stirring entreaty, Orestes' moment of hesitation, and the quick recovery of his murderous purpose are re-experienced by the audience of Euripides' *Electra* through many filters: a musical performance, an action recalled, and a dramatic display of the doer's agony, remorse, and self-pity. The drama is no longer about Clytemnestra's desperate attempt to save herself and the divine will which rightly halts that attempt, as in Aeschylus, but about the pathetic re-living of a crime: plain words are replaced by musical and harmonious voices, events are replaced by haunting memories, action is

20 A heroic, aristocratic, and fully determined Orestes is already present in the *Odyssey*; he remains the same in Sophocles' *Electra*: Euripides has really revolutionized the image of this character.

21 Electra does not accuse any god of inducing her to take part in the murder: she knows that it is the hatred for her mother that drove her to the killing (*Electra* 1182–1184): 'Lamentable indeed, my brother [is this sight] and I am the cause of it / for I, wretched one, burned with hatred against this mother /who gave me birth, me, her daughter!'.

replaced by pathetic argument, violence is replaced by remorseful pain and comforting metaphysics in the face of both divine injustice and the consequent spiritual solitude. The characters' actions and minds are constructed in order to bring about a sharp intensification of the audience's emotions as their recollection of the Aeschylean scene merges with the Euripidean remaking of the earlier prototype. The symbiosis, as well as exciting admiration for the intelligence and virtuosity of the intertextual re-writing, is responsible for positively-valenced emotions. Furthermore, this same symbiosis evokes pity for the human condition and gives rise to critical questions about traditional theodicy and religious beliefs.²² I have now described in detail some of Orestes' mental and emotional responses to a concourse of untoward events, primarily because they show that the various aspects of *sophia* clarify more profoundly the delineation of his character rather than all other psychological explanations and classifications. Most of Euripides' tragic characters are similarly affected by the touches of *sophia* in different degrees and proportions.

Another important achievement of enlightened *sophia* is the questioning of the anthropomorphic nature of the traditional gods. This debate has been going on for a long time since the time of the allegorist Theagenes of Regium, Xenophanes, and Heraclitus, to mention only a few prominent ancient philosophers. It holds strong even to this very day.²³ Euripides often introduces passages with the polemical force of destabilizing traditional views, setting up intertextual comparisons, and raising critical difficulties regarding interpretation and understanding. The clearest and most consistent example is Heracles in Euripides' *Heracles* 1340–1346, when the mighty hero surprisingly declares that the gods are not responsible for his madness. The tradition of Hera's persecution of Heracles is well attested: it begins with the *Iliad*, where her unrelenting and cruel persecution of Heracles, the destroyer of Troy, is widely acknowledged (for instance see 14.249–256). In Euripides' play, Hera orders Lyssa (Madness) to make Heracles insane, so that he kills his own children and wife. Heracles becomes mad and slays part of his family in one of the most gruesome scenes of any theatrical tradition. When, after the horrible murder,

22 Among the effects of the re-writing Meltzer (2006) sees a sort of nostalgia for Aeschylus' solid religious world.

23 See Detienne (1996) and especially (1992), in which he demonstrates how simplistic is the notion of anthropomorphism still used today to define the Greek gods, who were thought to reside in their marble statues, transform in whatever shape and form they wanted, and manifest themselves in some cases at once as gods of both natural elements and abstract notions, such as 'Necessity of nature'. In fact, Euripides mentions this last divine entity in *Trojan Women* 886.

he recovers his reason, he decides to kill himself, since no mortal can survive the devastation determinedly brought upon him by an all-mighty god. As he says to Theseus (1263): 'Zeus—whoever Zeus is—begot me as an object of Hera's hatred'. Theseus passionately argues that Heracles should not kill himself on account of Hera's loathing. Gods, Theseus suggests, when acting among themselves with enmity and violence, prove that they can endure all painful calamities (1314–1321). Heracles replies as follows (1340–1346):

Alas! What you say is only subsidiary to my pains.
 And I do not think that the gods have illicit love affairs,
 that they bind each other with chains, and I have
 never believed, and I will never be convinced,
 that one is master of the other.
 A god, if he is truly a god, needs nothing.
 These are the sad stories (δύστηνοι λόγοι) of the poets.

This statement falls like a bomb on the ancient stage. The unravelling of its meaning is extremely difficult and in part highly speculative. Here the metadramatic function of Euripides' character is explicit—that is, even clearer than in the previous examples. Unexpectedly, Heracles denies the divine cause of his madness, although its source and destructive effect have been declared and performed in the course of the play. He himself had identified Hera as the cause of his madness when speaking with Theseus. By saying that the stories about the gods' reciprocal hostilities are the sad stories of the poets, the text suggests that even what the audience have watched until this point of the play is just a falsehood of traditional poetry, of the hypertext, and does not deserve any credence. In modern terms, Euripides would tell his audience: the performance you just watched is mere fiction; the facts have no connection with reality.²⁴

The idea that the gods, if they are truly gods, need nothing comes probably from Xenophanes (see, for instance, B 11 and 14–16 D-K) and Antiphon the Sophist (B 10 D-K): the audience would have recognized the incongruity of a Heracles who knows the Presocratic philosophers. I call this incongruity a met-

24 Whether Heracles' belief represents or not Euripides' own view is an unanswerable question: what is sufficient to underline is that with this provocative statement Euripides certainly intended to stimulate questions about what poetry should do with traditional themes and ideas. See Bond (1981) 400: '1341–46 may well represent Euripides' own considered view, but that is another matter. Ancient critics several times complain that Euripides puts his own views in the mouth of his characters ... The doctrine of divine self-sufficiency recurs (probably) in Antiphon the Sophist fr B 10 D-K'.

alepsis.²⁵ By speaking as he does, Heracles denies the entire myth of his glorious life—the divine paternity, Hera’s jealousy, and the relentless persecution of the hero at the hands of Hera. In other words, if the events happened as they have been staged, they may be either fictional or real, but they were not caused by the will of the gods. Hera is simply the name of what might be called ‘chance’, as Heracles suggests rather cryptically in lines 1392–1393: ‘We all have miserably perished, struck by the blow of Hera’s chance’. Earlier, in line 1357, he states: ‘We must be, as it seems, slaves of Chance’.²⁶

Heracles corrects the myth, while at the same time attributing the cause of his madness to the power of chance lingering behind the figure of Hera.²⁷ By denying Hera’s responsibility and ascribing his madness to *Tuchê* (‘Chance’), Heracles reveals and explores a new type of ethics and piety. He will not follow the example of Ajax who, in Sophocles’ homonymous play, could not overcome the humiliation overtly inflicted upon him by Athena and consequently killed himself.²⁸ In striking contrast with the Sophoclean hero, Heracles, recognizing that he, as all human beings, is slave to *Tuchê*, discovers the virtue and piety of endurance and thus braces himself to live in Athens thanks to Theseus’ hospitality and friendship. As Heracles’ decision to hold on to his weapons seems to

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- 25 The rhetorical technique called ‘metalepsis describes the change in narrative sequence, in the logic and tone of the argument, theme, and images’ [Genette (1980) 234–237. For the adaptation of this rhetorical device in art and literature at the end of the fifth century BC, see Lorenz (2007) 116–143].
- 26 Papadopoulou (2005) 85 ff. examines with great learning and sensitivity the legitimacy of the interpretation that I am advancing here; she seems attracted by it, but decides against it—calling it an ‘authorial intrusion’ (92). This is the reason, I should think, that she offers an excessively ‘literal’ approach to the text, while failing to identify exactly the specific nature and purpose of this intrusion. Thus, she concludes by arguing that the characters’ criticism of myth ‘does not invalidate the myth in question. In other words, Euripides does not use his characters in order to undermine myth’ (113). By contrast, I argue that these ‘authorial intrusions’ do undermine myth, but in a specific and distinct way: Hera, besides being the anthropomorphic jealous wife of Zeus, stands, as Papadopoulou brilliantly suggests (p. 174), as a divine figure of chance.
- 27 Euripides also suggests that a cosmic or impersonal force lies behind the figure of a traditional god in *Alcestis* 962–983, where *Anankê* is closely associated with Zeus in such a way that the two become inseparable and almost undistinguishable: ‘And what Zeus decides is accomplished with your [i.e. *Anankê*’s] agreement’. Similarly, in speaking of Hera’s *tuchê*, after his open denial of divine interference, Heracles suggests that if the name of Hera is used one should think of the force of ‘Chance’ which is divinized under the name of the anthropomorphic jealous goddess.
- 28 Though Heracles’ death in *Trachiniae* is caused by Nessus’ garment, his appeals to death and his wish to be burnt on Mount Oeta suggest some sort of acceptance of death. On the similarity of some expressions in both *Heracles* and *Trachiniae*, see Kroeker (1938).

intimate, his wise endurance entails upon him to withstand the consciousness of the terrible deeds he has committed. The traditional heroism of an Ajax is dismissed by *sophos* Heracles: here suicide is replaced by the painful awareness of his failures. The solution is not unlike that sought out in the case of Orestes: Orestes' conscience in *Electra* will not acquit him or provide him with some mitigating arguments; but it will torment him, and he will have to endure that anguish.

The pain stemming from Heracles' conscience is difficult or impossible to suppress: Heracles realizes that he cannot stop crying (1412), a painful experience that he has never undergone before in his life of perils and pains (1351–1355):

I shall have the courage to endure life (ἐγκαρτερήσω βίον). I shall come to your city ... I have experienced countless trials ... I never shed tears and I never thought I should come to this that I should weep now.

It must have been a shock for the Athenian audience to watch Heracles weeping like a woman (1412), though Athena in *Iliad* 8.364 describes Heracles, *in malam partem*, 'whining aloud to the high skies'.²⁹ But here Euripides shows that to weep means a new positive ethical attitude in view of human frailty in a world deprived of divine presence and purpose. When facing entities like *Tuchê* and Necessity, the protest of suicide makes no sense. Endurance, human succour, and compassion are the resources that help humans overcome the crises of their lives. Tears are part of a new piety. Orestes' destiny in *Electra* will be comparable to that of Heracles, though from the *theologeion* Castor declares that Orestes will follow the same path he follows in *Eumenides* (1249 ff.). As Castor imposes on the plot of *Electra* an impossible ending—it goes without saying that now Apollo would not be willing to defend Orestes in the wake of his accusations—the text aims at displaying ironically and emphatically the vast difference between the two plays. The intelligent audience would have realized how incongruous is Castor's attempt to hammer the new Euripidean plot into a traditional shape and form.³⁰

29 Similarly, Sophocles' Heracles marvels at his weeping. Turning to his son Hyllus, Heracles asks for his mercy (*Trach.* 1070–1075): 'Pity me, pitiable in many ways, I who am crying out, weeping like a girl, and no one can say he saw this man do such a thing before, but though raked by torments I never would lament! But now such a thing has shown me as a womanish creature' (transl. Hugh Lloyd-Jones). One wonders whether Euripides echoes the Sophoclean passage. See Bond (1981) 403–404.

30 See Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 292 ff. For a detailed discussion, see Pucci (2012) 316.

Alongside Heracles and Orestes, other Euripidean characters, such as Hecuba and the Chorus in *Trojan Women* and Cadmus in *Bacchae*, will endure their lives in the desolate world of *Tuchê*, or of Necessity, or even of the gods' senseless violence. At the end of *Trojan Women* Hecuba and the Chorus have learnt to which master they have been assigned as slaves, they know that Astyanax has been brutally killed, and while they are moving towards the Greek ships, they see that Troy, their beloved city is still burning. Hecuba tries to find an explanation for her terrible suffering, her fall from royal grandeur to a miserable life of slavery, and the ruination of the famous and prosperous city of Troy by devouring flames that are now destroying even the venerable temples of the Olympian gods.³¹ The *Iliad* refuses to have Zeus explain his special reasons for the destruction of Troy, but the Achaean commanders imply that Troy will fall because of the Trojan prince Paris who has eloped with Helen and thereby infringed the sacred laws of hospitality. They search for a theodicy and find one.³²

In Euripides' play Hecuba cannot have recourse to this theodicy. The epic heroes, when dying, know that their name will be widely known and their glory (*kleos*) will be sung by the poets. This is what Hector declares as he realizes that his death is near (*Il.* 22.304–305):

Well, may I not die without a struggle and without glory,
 (μή μὲν ἀσπουδί γε καὶ ἀκλειῶς ἀπολοίμην,)³³
 but in accomplishing a great deed, to be known by the men to come.
 (ἀλλὰ μέγα ῥέξας τι καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι.)

It is within the realm of theodicy that *kleos* is granted to Heracles by the poet who knows the will of the gods. Hecuba calls upon this epic theme to explain the fall of Troy (*Trojan Women* 1242–1245):

If a deity had not overturned things, throwing what was above ground below, we would have been unknown and not sung of, nor would we have provided themes to the Muses of men to come.

31 Cf. the Choral Ode in *Trojan Women* 1060–1080.

32 See, for instance, *Il.* 4.160–168: 'A solemn and moving profession of faith'. Kirk (1985) 348.

33 The negative force of the expression is remarkable: the figure of *litotes* replaces the positive form that would make a much weaker phrase: 'May I die with glory'. Through the rhetorical figure of *litotes*, the phrase 'May I not die without glory' graphically denies death, as if, because of his glory, Hector would not die. The force of the expression is intensified by the desiderative verb, while the line is emphasized by the repetition of the alpha privative.

According to this explanation from the very beginning the gods had planned the Trojan war, the heroic resistance of the Trojans, their final defeat, and the devastation of their city, in order to make known for ever the glory that has been Troy. The theodicy is unapparent in Hecuba's words, but still it is perceptible in the reference to the divine Muses who inspire the poets to sing the splendour and renown of Troy. The compensation for both the long Trojan suffering and the final obliteration of the city appears modest; but the Homeric account of those calamities fascinates the high-minded aristocratic elite.

As Hecuba continues honouring the dead Astyanax, she reaches a more radical feeling, that nothing, not even glory, justifies such a massive destruction (1248–1250):

He [Astyanax] has all the funeral adornments that he needs. But I believe that it makes little difference to the dead whether they get a rich funeral. That is the empty vaunt of the living.

If the same principle is applied to Hector and the other heroes, it reduces their motivation for a heroic life to a sheer nonsense. Their glory will not grant them any compensation when they will be in Hades, as Achilles in the *Odyssey* had already experienced and thereupon frankly declared to Odysseus (11.488–491):

Do not try to console me about my death, shining Odysseus: I would prefer to serve as a hireling of another, a landless man, with hardly enough to live on, rather than to be the lord over all the dead that have perished.³⁴

Hecuba abandons the sublime horizon of the *Iliad* and approaches the less heroic view of the *Odyssey* for which *kleos* is not a heroic ambition.³⁵

The Chorus of the Trojan women, who abide by less aristocratic feelings than Hecuba, reach a totally sceptic position (1319–1323):

CHORUS: Soon you [temples of the gods] will fall down to the lovable earth, and be without a name.

HECUBA: Dust rises with the wings of smoke toward heaven: I do not see my house any longer.

34 Glory, which is apparently granted to Achilles as a special honour in Hades, does not replace or even reduce his desire of seeking to be alive again at any cost. See Pucci (1987): It is this sentiment that Hecuba seems to echo in the Euripidean play. An analysis of the intertextual dialogue Euripides holds with the *Odyssey* would be instructive.

35 I have argued this point in Pucci (1987) 216–219.

CHORUS: The name of this land will also disappear (1323: ὄνομα δὲ γὰρ ἀφανὲς εἶσιν).

To be 'without a name' is a scandalously unheroic condition in Iliadic poetry (*Il.* 13.227): it means no remembrance or glory. The temples are the sacred places where the gods reside in the form of their statues: their destruction challenges divine power. The Chorus asserts that nothing, absolutely nothing, will remain of Troy: centuries of courage, civilization, and piety will disappear without a lingering sign or a lasting proof. No theodicy comes from the gods. Here the contrast with epic poetry is piercingly sharp.

In *Trojan Women* Hecuba is marked by complex and somehow bizarre forms of *sophia*. Her prayer to Zeus (884–888), before her debate with Helen, surprises Menelaus for its strangeness and novelty (889). Indeed, it is a combination of philosophical intimations and ethical suggestions originating from, among others, Anaxagoras and Diogenes of Apollonia³⁶ and programmatically introduces Hecuba's 'rationalistic' attack upon Helen's various claims that seek to clear her of guilt (915–965).³⁷ Hecuba finds Helen's assertions ludicrous, especially the one according to which Paris came to Helen's palace in Sparta accompanied by Aphrodite herself, and of course Helen could not resist the goddess' power to which even Zeus yields (940–950 and 983–986).³⁸ While Hecuba's tone and argumentation recall the attitude and reasoning of the Sophists, the figure of Helen is modelled on *Iliad* 3, where Helen submits to Aphrodite's command. It is easy to see some correspondence of tone and argument between Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* 19:

36 She ends her prayer by praising Zeus who leads human affairs towards justice: she is thinking of the punishment that Helen deserves; but, of course, Helen will not be punished, and Zeus therefore has not resolved this case in a just way.

37 Helen's speech is extremely well argued: she speaks as a *sophê* in the sense of a shrewd debater within the context of *dissoi logoi*, knowing all the appropriate hypertexts and using them skilfully. In *Helen*, Euripides goes to great lengths to conceive a Helen who is *sophê* in the modern sense of the word: she casts serious doubts upon her divine paternity (18–20), she is devious like a Medea or a Hecuba (in *Hecuba*), she is truly and overtly sensual, and yet, paradoxically, this Helen remains faithful to Menelaus. Apparently, modern *sophia* leads to ethical results. Euripides can be a great ironist at times.

38 The theme that even the gods are unable to resist the seductive power of Eros is found in much of the literature of this period: see Eur. *Hipp.* 453–456, *HF* 1314–1319; Ar. *Clouds* 1074–1082; Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen* 6, 7. In Eur. *Hipp.* and Ar. *Clouds*, the motif is used by shady characters with a corrupting purpose or a cynical slant. Theseus deploys this theme in Eur. *HF*, but he is confronted by Heracles.

What wonder, then, if the eye of Helen, delighted by Paris's body, provoked in her soul desire and craving for love?

and *Trojan Women* 988–990:

[Hecuba:] My son was very handsome and when you saw him [Paris], your mind [*nous*] was turned into Cypris (ὁ σὸς δ' ἰδὼν νιν νοῦς ἐποιήθη Κύπρις)

Love has a very earthly source: the amorous delight that beauty, contemplated through the eyes, arouses in the mind. No need to trouble Aphrodite herself. Of course, Aphrodite symbolizes sex, the folly of sex, the reproductive instinct of all living things and as such she can affect Paris' eyes, without inconveniencing her anthropomorphic image. Contesting the mythological version and the associated mythical characters, Euripides introduces fictional elements that would strike us as purely literary.

Further, Euripides places emphasis on the magnificence of Paris' beauty, duly mentioned in *Iliad* 3.390–392, when Aphrodite enflames Helen to join Paris in bed:

Alexander urges you to come home; he is in the bed with spiral ornaments, shining in his beauty and raiment (κάλλει τε στιλβων καὶ εἴμασιν)

and moreover, he presents Hecuba addressing Helen and describing the splendour of Paris' exotic dress (*Trojan Women* 987 and 991–992):

My son was exceptionally handsome ... You [Helen] held him before
 your eyes, a splendor in his exotic raiment and gold
 (ἦν οὐμὸς υἱὸς κάλλος ἐκπρεπέστατος,
 [...]
 ὄν εἰσιδοῦσα βαρβάρους ἐσθήμασιν
 χρυσῶι τε λαμπρόν,)

Hecuba refers to the shining of gold because she wants to suggest Helen's interest in Paris' wealth, but in both texts Paris shines through his beauty and majestic raiment, an oriental raiment indeed (in both texts the word is derived from the verb *ennyμι*). The brilliance of Paris' beauty and attire is the source of his power of seduction, but in Homer the goddess Aphrodite praises this seductive influence, whereas in Euripides Hecuba considers it the force to which Helen ought not to submit. Helen should have turned away her eyes from Paris and should have remained faithful to Menelaus. In Homer, the goddess of love

keeps corrupting Helen, whereas, in accordance with Euripidean mortal wisdom, humans are not corrupted by the gods but by their own wickedness. Again, 'conscience' (*synesis*) is the spiritual centre of man, not divine inspiration.

More than that, Euripides' literary freedom and versatility become evident in his representation of the heroic death of young sacrificial victims. Polyxena, Macaria, Menoeceus, and Iphigenia are sacrificed for the benefit and glory of the *genos*, of the fatherland, and of the dead Achilles, but Euripides presents their sacrifices as 'voluntary'. The victims act surprisingly like noble courageous heroes who not only prefer death to a life of humiliation and misery but also hate to refuse the benefits their sacrifice will provide to their communities. There is no need therefore to tie up those brave adolescents and gag their mouths as it is necessary to do for Aeschylus' Iphigenia, who is lifted 'face downward as a goat³⁹ above the altar' (*Agam.* 232–237). The Chorus describes the next moment of the sacrifice as follows (238–243):

βία χαλινῶν δ', ἀναύδῳ μένει,
κρόκου βαφᾶς [δ'] ἐς πέδον χέουσα,
240 ἔβαλλ' ἕκαστον θυτή-
ρων ἀπ' ὄμματος βέλει φιλοίκτω,
πρέπουσα τῶς ἐν γραφαίς, προσεννέπειν
θέλουσ',

Under the silent violence of the forcible constraint,
and with her saffron dyed robe falling towards the ground⁴⁰
she was shooting each of the sacrificers
with a dart of pity from her eyes,
conspicuous as in a picture, wishing
to address each by name ...

In Euripides' *Hecuba*, Polyxena, Hecuba's daughter, is slain as a sacrificial offering in honour of Achilles: this is an absurd cause. Talthybius, the messenger of the Achaeans, is happy to narrate the scene attesting Polyxena's nobility and graciousness. But first, as the Euripidean characters most often do when they

39 Commenting on the Greek δίκαν χιμαίρας, Loraux (1990) 262 remarks: 'la terrible ironie de cette utilisation à contre—employ de δίκη. Une jeune fille n'est pas une chèvre; lui en appliquer la règle est une épouvantable transgression'. Of course, Iphigenia is the substitute for the goat that was given to Artemis.

40 Lloyd-Jones (1952) 135: 'with her robe of saffron hanging down towards the ground'.

begin a speech, he qualifies the nature and likelihood of his narrative. Hecuba's request, as he says, that he describe the sacrifice in detail means (*Hecuba* 518–520):

for me to get twice the gain of tears⁴¹
shed in pity for your daughter. For in telling of her misfortune
I shall drench my eyes with tears
as I did at the tomb when she was been killed.

Expressing admiration for the noble girl, but conscious of narrating a gruesome event, Talthibius recounts that Polyxena refused to be touched and bravely offered her throat to Neoptolemus' blade. It is evident that he wanted to die; she shouted to him to make haste. She acted as a free person and a true princess, not as a slave. Then the following happened (558–560):

she seized her robe and tore it from the shoulders
to the middle of her waist, by the navel
and showed her breasts most beautiful as a goddess' statue

She invited Neoptolemus to hit her with the knife, thereby arousing enormous pity in him; Neoptolemus was both willing and reluctant until he cut her throat.

I have elsewhere analyzed this scene and compared it with Iphigenia's scene in *Agamemnon*;⁴² and here I shall highlight a few intertextual remarks with which I had concluded my previous discussion. In both passages the beauty of the virgin victim is strongly emphasized by the narrator: Iphigenia's imposing presence emerges in the middle of the cruellest of events, while Polyxena's beauty crowns the sentimental description of her tribulation. Iphigenia's pitiful glances, hard and piercing like iron darts, fail to move any of the onlookers, even less her father. In Aeschylus, pity has little persuasive power, as we have already seen in the confrontation between Clytemnestra and her son, Orestes, when theodicy eliminates filial sympathy. Yet Iphigenia acquires a lasting presence in that marvellous pose. The simile: 'Iphigenia conspicuous as in the pictures' compares the girl's impressive posture to the painted images of which we have some examples⁴³ and produces two significant effects. On the one hand,

41 When scholars fail to understand the paradoxical effect of pity in Euripides, they miss the proper sense of *kerdantai* and translate 'pay the penalty of tears'. See Pucci (2003b) 144–145.

42 Pucci (2009) 236–240.

43 See Mossman (1995) 258.

by assimilating Iphigenia's striking and shining presence to that of familiar painted figures, the simile lessens the immediate vividness and unique importance of the event. On the other hand, by inscribing Iphigenia in the realm of art, the simile confers on her powerful presence a lasting significance by transforming Iphigenia into an object of art for all eternity. The monstrous event has become an artistic masterpiece. The theatrical audience will be able to purchase vases decorated with this image and keep on glancing at the immense power and violence of that scene: a violence that is ensconced into a slowly unfurling, yet still enigmatic vision; a theodicy that has now no compensation, unless that provided by art.

In Euripides Polyxena flaunts her freedom and offers herself to death as a welcome liberation from a life of slavery and humiliation. Her dramatic and unexpected move to show her barren breast can be interpreted as a provocation, whereby she lays much stress upon the absurdity of the sacrificers who are now destroying her perfect body: 'Take it, she says, I am helping you with your task: here is my neck and breast for your knife!' (*Hec.* 547–565). This provocation allows her to rise triumphant in the eyes of the world and speaks volumes about her nobility. But this would be too simple and too heroic: Talthybius the narrator is the focalizer of the scene for the soldiers (and for the audience), who admire the beauty of Polyxena's breasts: 'she showed her breasts most beautiful as a goddess' statue' (μαστούς τ' ἔδειξε στέρνα θ' ὡς ἀγάλματος / κάλλιστα).⁴⁴ For Talthybius and the soldiers, nobility, pride, and high-mindedness do not come across with their pure and full significance. They feel that aristocratic arrogance is making a spectacle of itself, and they cherish and applaud the spectacular beauty of nobility (*Hec.* 553). This spectacle intensifies their pity as the text repeatedly remarks (518–520, 566, 571–580). This is a theatrical scene *par excellence*.

While in Aeschylus Iphigenia tries to inject a feeling of pity and compassion in the shielded hearts of her murderers, Euripides presents the victim happy to die and, by transferring that feeling of shame into the killers, describes them as drenched with tears. It follows that, whereas the audience will feel pity at the vain effort of Iphigenia and her senseless execution by cruel forces she cannot bend, in Euripides the audience will not cry for the absurd sacrifice, that is, for the gruesome event *per se*, but will shed tears in the wake of the tears of the slayers, who here serve as the audience's avatars. Again, Euripides transforms the immediacy of a cruel action into a pathetic visualization of it.

44 It is easy to think of a statue of Aphrodite.

Any erotic phantasy the 'sexualization of the virgin victim'⁴⁵ should elicit from the Greek army (and from Euripides' audience) would add a revolting tone to the scene. Of course, Polyxena acted as she did out of pride and with contempt. But the army did misread her and consequently felt admiration and pity for her action. Probably, it is also what Euripides expected of his audience to feel. Thus, pity can become the feeling that justifies violence, in that the perpetrator thinks he is noble in empathizing with his own victim. *Sophia* reverses its own power, as it validates evil.⁴⁶ The scene is fictional, theatrical, with no reference to reality, and shows the enormous distance that separated contemporary sensibility from the 'mythical' nobility of the very old elites. We must never forget that these stories—gods and dead demanding human sacrifices—'are the sad stories of the poets' and produce no conviction (Eur. *Her.* 130–146). This, however, is *the* story: these archaic elites died heroically and the new generations, as they were killing them, shed tears for their honourable death. Perhaps this is inevitable in every revolution, even in the literary revolution of Euripides: his mistreatment of Aeschylus serves as a striking example. There would be then some grain of truth in the sad story of the ancient poet.

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45 Scholars suggest different reasons for this phenomenon; see Osborne (1993) 396; Burkert (1979) 75.

46 It is also possible to see another aspect of the scene: the idea of dying with contempt for death itself, though death remains cold as to the value of human life, would have touched a chord with audiences in view of constant war cutting down so many young lives. The voluntary sacrifice of Macaria and Menoeceus accords fully with this historical reality: The State can be seen as the admiring and commiserating sacrificer.

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PART 3

*Euripides the Innovator: Language,
Rhetoric, Realism, and Emotion*



The Language of Euripides

Luigi Battezzato

1 Aristophanes and the Languages of Euripides

Aristophanes set the agenda for the interpretation of the language of Euripides a long time ago. He makes his character ‘Euripides’ stress that his tragic style is in opposition to that of Aeschylus. ‘Euripides’ states that he ‘slimmed down’ tragedy, making her drink ‘chatter-juice strained off from books’, and then feeding her up ‘on a diet of arias’ (*Ar. Ran.* 939–944):

No, as soon as I first took over the art from you, swollen as it was with bombast and overweight vocabulary, I began by reducing its swelling and removing its excess weight with a course of bite-size phrases, walking exercise and small white beets, while dosing it with chatter-juice strained off from books; then I fed it up again on a diet of arias, mixing in some Cephisophon

transl. SOMMERSTEIN (1996), here and below

Even more importantly, ‘Euripides’ claims he made all sort of people speak in his plays. His characters offer a faithful specimen of all Athenian society. In modern terms, he is implying that his plays offer a representative sociolinguistic sample of ancient Athens (*Ar. Ran.* 949–951):¹

Euripides: I would make the wife speak, and the slave just as much, and the master, and the maiden, and the old crone.

Aeschylus: Well, really, you surely deserved to be put to *death* for such audacity.

Euripides: Not at all, by Apollo; I did it in the name of democracy.

Language is the basis of democracy: ‘free speech’ (παρρησία) and ‘equal right of speech’ (ισηγορία) are almost a synonym of government by the people.²

1 On the food metaphors in ancient literary criticism in general, and in this passage in particular, see Wright (2012) 129–139, esp. 137; on the contrast between the language of comedy and that of tragedy, see Silk (2000) 42–97.

2 See Hdt. 5.78; Foucault (2001); Sluiter/Rosen (2004); Carter (2004); Saxonhouse (2006).

In Aristophanes' play, 'Aeschylus' seems to criticize 'Euripides' for granting equality of speech to women and slaves, an accusation moved by some anti-democratic sources against the Athenian democratic state organization.³ This was a special concern for Socrates in Plato's *Republic* (557b1–7):

'what are the characteristics of such a constitution? I'm sure it's clear that a man to suit it will be shown to be a democrat.'

'Clearly,' he said.

'First of all, aren't people free, and doesn't the state abound in freedom and freedom of speech, and isn't there the means to do whatever one wishes?'

transl. EMLYN-JONES/PREDDY (2013)

Socrates goes on to stress, in a paradoxical and controversial passage, that freedom of speech leads to absolute, and at times even absurd, freedom: in a democracy not only slaves, but even asses and horses act as they please (563c).⁴ The *Frogs* apparently anticipate Socrates' parody of democratic freedom of speech; in Aristophanes' play, 'Aeschylus' implies that Euripides' language is intrinsically subversive.⁵ In Aristophanes, 'Euripides' makes precisely the point that his theatre 'teaches' people how to speak (*Ar. Ran.* 954):

Then I taught these people here [indicating the audience] how to talk—

Euripides is thus the arch-rhetorician,⁶ the arch-democrat who ends up helping the riff-raff with his 'argumentative speeches and his twistings and weavings' (771–778).⁷

'Euripides' praises the subtlety (956) and (implicitly) stresses the 'clarity' of his language, criticizing Aeschylus for his obscurity (927).⁸ This clarity is also due to the subject matter that Euripides allegedly chooses for his dramas. Everyday matters occupy the speeches of his characters (*Ar. Ran.* 959–962):

3 See Gray (2007) and Marr/Rhodes (2008) on Xen. [*Ath. Pol.*] 1.12.

4 See the observations of Saxonhouse (2006) 48 and Raalte (2004) 306 ('in a democracy everything is arbitrary and indiscriminate') on this passage.

5 On tragic language, rhetoric, and society, see Goldhill (1997) and (2012).

6 See Allan (2000) 118–124.

7 Aristophanes has Hermes say that Euripides was 'a poet of juridical little phrases': see *Ar. Pax* 534 and Olson (1998) ad loc.

8 Aristophanes makes 'Euripides' fail to meet his own standards later in the play, when Dionysus asks him to speak 'less cleverly and more clearly' (1445: ἀμαθέστερον ... καὶ σαφέστερον). See also *Ar. Ran.* 1434.

by bringing everyday matters on stage, things we're used to, things we're familiar with, things about which I was open to *refutation*, because these people knew all about and could have exposed any flaws in my art. I didn't distract them from serious thinking with bluster and bombast, nor did I try to terrify them

Euripides thus talks about matters that Athenian theatre-goers knew well.

At the same time, in Aristophanes, 'Aeschylus' mocks Euripides for the high-flown language and for the mannerisms of his monodies. This is one of the longest parodic sections of the play (1297–1363), exerting a long-lasting influence on ancient reception and on modern scholarship. Many ancient and modern critics comment on the artificiality of the language of lyric sections of late Euripides, which was often perceived to be similar to that of the so-called 'New Music', in turn often subject to negative aesthetic judgments.⁹ In Aristophanes 'Aeschylus' stresses again the multiformity (and, as consequence, inappropriateness to the tragic genre) of the language of Euripides' songs, which are presented as a jumble of geographically and socially diverse songs (*Ar. Ran.* 1301–1303):

But *this* fellow collects his honey from any source—prostitutes' songs, drinking—songs by Meletus, pipe-tunes and dirges and dances from Caria

Plutarch and many other ancient readers accepted many aspects of Aristophanes' interpretive framework, often adding nit-picking criticism.¹⁰ Modern studies, whether or not they acknowledge their debt, often follow Aristophanes footsteps very closely.¹¹ The importance of Aristophanes' agenda can be appreciated once we observe that the major studies on the language of Euripides focus on the peculiar style of his lyric sections,¹² on his employment of techni-

9 Kranz (1933) esp. 235–243 was very influential in spreading this view in the twentieth century. On 'New Music' and Euripides, see Csapo (1999/2000) and (2009); Battezzato (2005); Sansone (2009). On the language of New Music see LeVen (2014) 150–188 and Budelmann/LeVen (2014).

10 See esp. Elsperger (1908).

11 Hunter (2009) 10–52 and Wright (2012) discuss the importance of ancient comedy in the tradition of classical literary criticism. Halliwell (2011) 92–153 offers a fine interpretation of Aristophanes' literary interpretation of tragedy, complementing and correcting the commentaries of Dover (1993) and Sommerstein (1996). See also Willi (2003) 87–94 on the language of literary criticism.

12 Breitenbach (1934).

cal language (e.g. medical and philosophical language),¹³ on female language,¹⁴ and on his colloquialisms.¹⁵

The language of Euripides appears ‘fragmented’: torn between lowly colloquial tones and elevated mannerisms, it allegedly lacks coherence. While the language of Aeschylus is perceived to be harsh and lofty, and that of Sophocles as subtle and complex, but stylistically unified,¹⁶ Euripides is often considered to be especially fragmented. As Rutherford (2010) 451 notes: ‘Greater lucidity and crispness in dialogue (e.g., *Hec.* 1272–1283) are balanced by an extravagance of emotion and self-conscious lyricism in the sung sections (e.g., *IT* 1089–1152, *Helen* 1451–511).’¹⁷

Modern readers and theatre-goers are more appreciative of fragmentation and variety, but the fact remains that the interpretive framework is an ancient one. Is it possible to break free from Aristophanes’ net of interpretations? Is it fruitful to do so?

2 Phonetics and Morphology: Tradition and Innovation

The text of Aristophanes’ *Frogs* draws attention to the sharp divide between the language of sung (or ‘lyric’) and recited sections and to the differences between Euripides and Aeschylus. The language of Euripides, and of tragic poetry in general, is characterized by some clearly marked phonetic, morphological, syntactical and lexical traits that are unacceptable or rare in Attic, as attested e.g.

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- 13 On the language of craft, see Stieber (2011). Medical language in general has received much attention, and is frequently used by all tragic authors: Collinge (1962); Smith (1967); Ferrini (1978); Guardasole (2000); Craik (2001); Kosak (2004); Holmes (2008); Jouanna (2012) 55–79; Allan (2014). Studies on Euripides and the sophists focus on ideas rather than language: Allan (1999–2000); Conacher (1998); Egli (2003) with further references.
- 14 McClure (1999a) esp. 112–204; Mossman (2001); Chong-Gossard (2008); van Emde Boas (2015) and (2017) 27–31 with further references. See also Willi (2003) 176–192 on female language in comedy.
- 15 Stevens (1976); Collard (2005); Collard/Stevens (2018).
- 16 This is in accordance with an ancient biographical tradition: Plut. *De prof. virt.* 79b attributes to Sophocles the statement that ‘only after handling with a light touch the turgidity of Aeschylus (τὸν Αἰσχύλου ... ὄγκον) and next his harshness and artificiality in composition, did he, as a third step, change the character of the language, which has the most to do with moral character and goodness’ (transl. Babbitt (1927)); on the interpretation and reception of this judgment, see Earp (1944) 1 (‘he can say a simple thing in what seems simple language, and yet contrive to take our breath away’) and 171–172 (echoing Plutarch); Pinnoy (1984); Budelmann (2000) 1.
- 17 Rutherford (2012) explores the differences in the language between (and within) the three major tragic authors.

in inscriptions and in comedy. It is not possible to discuss in detail here all the peculiarities of the language of Euripides.¹⁸ The distance from Attic Greek, and in particular from Attic prose, is well investigated.¹⁹ This section and the next one will draw attention to some differences between sung and spoken sections, and between the language of the three main tragic authors, showing how Euripides often mixes 'poetic', standard, and even colloquial linguistic characteristics.

Both spoken and lyric sections of tragedy avoid some traits that are peculiar of Attic phonetics, esp. -ττ- (deriving from e.g. *xy, *xy, and *τϕ) and -ρρ- (a peculiarly Attic modification of inherited -ρσ-), which are eliminated in favour of (Ionic) -σσ- and -ρσ-: see e.g. *Alc.* 326 and *Med.* 926 θάρρει, *Med.* 320 φυλάσσειν as opposed to Aristoph. *Ach.* 830 θάρρει, *Vesp.* 69 φυλάττειν.²⁰ Tragedy alternates Ionic forms such as ἐς with Attic εἰς, and old Attic ξύν with σύν.²¹ The most notable trait that distinguishes sung from spoken sections is the use of non-Attic [ā] (written α), representing the original common Greek phonology, instead of instead of Attic [ē], written η, an innovation that is peculiar of Attic and, more extensively, of Ionic.²² All classical tragic authors share these characteristics.

Lyric sections occasionally use the non-Attic genitive singular ending in -α in masculine names of the first declension, a form deriving from contraction ($\bar{\alpha} + \omicron/\omega > \bar{\alpha}$): see e.g. *Pho.* 353, 813, Οἰδιπόδα 'of Oedipus' (as in Pind. *Pyth.* 4.263; cf. the non-contracted form Οἰδιπόδαο in e.g. *Od.* 11.271). The first declension genitive plural occasionally presents the ending -ᾶν in lyric sections (*Med.* 66ο καθαράν), instead of Attic -ᾶν, regularly used in spoken sections. Lyric sections

18 Grammars of Greek, useful for studying tragic language, include Kühner/Blass (1890–1892); Kühner/Gerth (1904); Schwyzer (1939); Schwyzer/Debrunner (1950); Cooper/Krüger (1998) and (2002). Giannakis (2014) is now the standard reference tool for Greek linguistics. On Attic inscriptions, see Threatte (1980) and (1996).

19 For an excellent discussion of this and other related topics, see Mastronarde (2002) 81–96. On phonology, morphology and syntax in Sophocles, see Battezzato (2012) 306–311 with further references; many of the phenomena discussed in that paper equally apply to Euripides. Willi (2003) 232–269 offers an excellent survey of Aristophanes' Attic, with frequent comparison with tragic, and especially Euripidean, usage. Willi (2010a) offers a concise survey on the language of Greek comedy in general with references to tragic language.

20 See Mastronarde (2002) 82; Willi (2003) 237 and (2010a) 479.

21 West (1990) xli argues in favour of printing εἰς and ξύν whenever metrically possible in Aeschylus. See Willi (2003) 234–235 and 237–238. Mastronarde (2002) 85 favours printing ἐς whenever metrically possible in Euripides, following the practice in Diggle (1981), (1984) and (1994b). For Sophocles, see Finglass (2009) 212–215.

22 For details, see Cassio (2016) 66–67; Samuels (2014).

also occasionally employ the Homeric genitive ending in $-οιο$.²³ These non-Attic traits are also attested in the lyric sections of the other classical tragic authors, except for the genitives in $-οιο$, which are not found in Sophocles.²⁴

Articles can be occasionally used as relative pronouns both in spoken and sung sections, a remarkable Ionism.²⁵ Diggle argues that, in the trimeters of Euripides, this usage is genuine only when a relative pronoun proper would be metrically impossible.²⁶ In lyric sections, the syllabic and temporal augment is frequently omitted, in imitation of epic language; in spoken sections, the omission occurs sporadically in messenger speeches, also in imitation of epic.²⁷

There are other minor differences in morphology. For instance, Euripides is the only tragic author who uses the ending in $-α$ in second person singular imperatives of compounds of $βαίνω$ (instead of $-ῆθι$), an ending common in Aristophanes and found also in inscriptions: see, in lyric sections, *Alc.* 872 $πρόβα$, $βᾶθι$, *El.* 113 and 128 $ἔμβα$, $ἔμβα$, *Ion* 167 $ἐπίβα$, and, in a spoken section, *Pho.* 193 $ἔσβα$.²⁸ It is especially interesting that Euripides allows this less established form in lyric sections, which normally show a more poetic, less colloquial style.²⁹ Aristophanes (65%) and Euripides (78,6%) use uncontracted forms of the imperatives of athematic verbs (such as $ἴστασο$, $τίθεσο$, $κάθησο$) much more

23 See Eur. *Alc.* 458, *Hipp.* 560, *Tro.* 838, *Or.* 822, *IA* 1069, fr. 727c25, 752f26.

24 This may be due to chance or to a conscious avoidance of a characteristically Homeric trait. For references, see Finglass (2011) on *Soph. Aj.* 210.

25 López Eire (2003) 392.

26 See Barrett (1964) on Eur. *Hipp.* 525–526; Diggle (1994a) 32–33 and 466–467. Diggle argues for conjectural elimination of all instances of ‘articles’ used as relative pronouns in spoken sections of Euripides, eliminating e.g. $τῶν$ at *Suppl.* 858 and $τὸν$ (manuscript L: $δὲν$ P and Tr) at *Ba.* 338. ‘Articles’ as relatives are guaranteed by metre in Eur. *Andr.* 810 (a line considered spurious by Diggle and Kovacs), *El.* 279, *Ba.* 712, fr. 853.1. Diggle (1984) prints an instance of a metrically non-necessary article used instead of a relative pronoun in a lyric section at Eur. *Hec.* 473. West (1990) xl argues that Aeschylus used articles as relative pronouns also when not metrically necessary, both in spoken (*Suppl.* 265, *Ag.* 342) and lyric sections (*Cho.* 604 and 953).

27 See Bergson (1959) (who explains the lack of augment as due to metrical constraints); Rijksbaron (2006) (discussing the relation with historical presents); Battezzato (2007); Finglass (2007) on *Soph. El.* 715; Boter (2012) 227 n. 45 [criticizing Rijksbaron (2006)].

28 See e.g. Ar. *Ach.* 262 $πρόβα$ (spoken), *Ra.* 377 $ἔμβα$ (sung); Stevens (1976) 63; Mastronarde (1994) on Eur. *Pho.* 193; Collard (2005) 365, Collard/Stevens (2018) 130. Lautensach (1911) 4–5 explains these forms as originating from a present imperative from $βάω$. Euripides may have felt them to be assimilated to aorists: *Alc.* 872 $πρόβα$, $βᾶθι$.

29 The only Euripidean instance of the more common ending $-ῆθι$ is found in trimeters: *IT* 1086 $ἔκβῆθι$.

frequently than the contracted forms (ἴστω, τίθου, κάθου), whereas Aeschylus (40%) and Sophocles (38,9%) display a higher rate of contracted forms: the number of instances are few, but we find again a similarity between Euripides and Aristophanes. Euripides and Aristophanes either conservatively use the older forms, which remained somehow in use, or reconstructed them by analogy; the treatment probably shows ‘concern for morphological clarity’.³⁰ Euripides also uses some colloquialisms, such as the crasis ἐγώιδα, attested in late Sophocles, but not in Aeschylus.³¹

3 Syntax and Vocabulary: Tradition and Innovation

The syntax of Euripides is not especially different from that of other tragic authors.³² It is not easy to measure the difference, in part because most existing studies focus on what is syntactically acceptable and what is not, rather than on assessing what is more or less frequent, in part because some syntactic phenomena are not easily measurable. Some interesting characteristics and peculiarities are however identifiable.

The analysis of sentence length (in a large sample of texts) shows that Euripides sides with Aeschylus against Sophocles: in particular, short sentences (up to ten words) account for 46% of sentences in Aeschylus and 45% in Euripides, whereas Sophocles presents a much lower percentage (38%). Sophocles has higher rates of long sentences.³³

In some respects, the syntax of Euripides is closer to spoken language and less ‘poetic’ than that of Aeschylus or Sophocles. Euripides uses syntactic colloquialisms not paralleled in other tragic authors, such as the genitive of exclamation without interjection (*Med.* 1051 ἄλλὰ τῆς ἐμῆς κάκης ‘it is mere weakness in me’),³⁴ or not attested in Aeschylus, but occurring in Sophocles, especially in his late works: for instance ἄν with imperfect indicative describing repeated

30 So Willi (2003) 247. See Lautensach (1918) 83–90; Willi (2010a) 481. The number of instances (uncontracted/contracted) are: Aeschylus 2/3; Sophocles 7/11; Euripides 11/3; Aristophanes 13/7.

31 E.g. Eur. *Med.* 39, Soph. *OC* 452, Ar. *Ach.* 5; Stevens (1976) 59; Collard (2005) 365, Collard/Stevens (2018) 126.

32 See the survey in Mastronarde (2002) 86–92. On poetic syntax, see Bers (1984). Moorhouse (1982) surveys the syntax of Sophocles, comparing it with that of other contemporary authors.

33 For detailed data about the sample and the collection of data, see Griffith (1977) 214–217 and (2005) 58.

34 See Stevens (1976) 61–62; Mastronarde (2002) ad loc.; Collard/Stevens (2018) 129–130.

action,³⁵ βούλει or θέλεις with subjunctive,³⁶ the articular infinitive in exclamations,³⁷ the imperfect of sudden realization.³⁸

Classical prose normally uses ὅτι for introducing causal clauses, a usage considered not suitable for poetry, which overwhelmingly prefers ὡς, a poetic construction, severely restricted in Attic prose. Aeschylus and Sophocles have one instance of causal ὅτι each (Aesch. *Eum.* 970, Soph. *Trach.* 464), whereas Euripides uses causal ὅτι more frequently, but still very rarely, and especially in his late works (14 instances of causal ὅτι against 120 of causal ὡς).³⁹

There are also areas where Euripides differs from other tragic authors in the direction of a more ‘poetic’ syntax, or sides with Aeschylus against Sophocles. For instance, Greek poets often place disyllabic preposition after a noun or pronoun (e.g. *Hec.* 615, αἰχμαλωτῖδων πάρα ‘from the captive women’) or a noun phrase (e.g. *Hec.* 778, ποντίας ἀκτῆς ἐπι ‘on the beach’, literally ‘on the marine coast’). This phenomenon is called ‘anastrophe’; the preposition in anastrophe is accented on the first, not on the last syllable. Classical prose admits the phenomenon only for περί. A study of occurrences of ἀπό, ἐπί, κατά, μετά, παρά, ὑπό, διά, περί, ὑπέρ in iambic trimeters shows that Euripides uses anastrophe much more frequently (26.3%) than Aeschylus (16.3%) and Sophocles (15.9%).⁴⁰

Another area where Euripides favours poetic syntax is article usage.⁴¹ The omission of definite articles is a poetic feature, meant to echo Homeric language. In tragedy definite articles account for about 3–5% of all words (Aeschylus, excluding *PV*: 3.3%; *PV*: 4.2%; Sophocles: 4.8%; Euripides: 3.8%; *Rhesus*: 2.8%), whereas the figure for comedy and prose is much higher (Herodotus book 2: 13.9%; Herodotus book 7: 11.2%; Thucydides: 13.9%; Xenophon: 8.9%; Aristophanes 7.8%; Lysias: 6.5%; Demosthenes: 8.54%). All these differences are statistically significant.⁴² Historiographic texts use the article much more

35 Mastronarde (1994) on *Pho.* 401, Soph. *Phil.* 291.

36 E.g. Eur. *Hec.* 1042 βούλεισθ’ ἐπεσπέσωμεν;, Ar. *Lys.* 938, Soph. *El.* 80 θέλεις μείνωμεν;.

37 E.g. Eur. *Alc.* 832, Soph. *Phil.* 234, Ar. *Av.* 5.

38 Ar. *Eq.* 384, Eur. *Hipp.* 359, Soph. *Phil.* 978; on these and other colloquialisms discussed in the paragraph, see Stevens (1976) 59–63; Collard (2005) 365; Collard/Stevens (2018) 127–129, 174–175.

39 See Willi (2003) 266–267 with references and statistics; Moorhouse (1982) 301–302.

40 See Baechle (2007) 145–146. For further details on anastrophe, see Devine/Stephens (2000) 213–215.

41 Bakker (2009) 145–213 offers an especially useful general discussion on the article in classical Greek with extensive bibliography. On the article in Greek, see also Napoli (2009); Guardiano (2012).

42 Except for Herodotus, the data are taken from a *TLG* search (<http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu>, accessed June 2016), using a lemma search (δ) for determining the numbers of definite articles. Fragments of drama have been left out of the calculations, since *TLG* data include

frequently that orations, possibly because of narrative needs. Here again Euripides is more 'poetic' than Sophocles: his figure is lower, and the difference is statistically significant, showing again Euripides as the author who is more distant from prose usage. The omission of definite articles must have been perceived as a major distinctive feature of poetic language.⁴³ This rough quantitative analysis however needs to be refined by qualitative and quantitative analyses that are still lacking. Existing electronic corpora are not organized in a way that would make it possible to assess easily the differences between sung and spoken sections.

Greek dialects progressively reduced and eventually lost the dual. Attic is remarkably conservative in its employment of duals. Aristophanes used duals in 56.7% of cases when a plural form was possible. Tragedians used them less frequently (43.3% of cases); Thucydides constrained the use of duals to a much greater extent (5% of all possible cases).⁴⁴ Scholars conclude that the dual was perceived as too parochial for formal literary texts, and its usage was restrained in favour of the plural, normal in all dialects and in Ionic iambic poetry. Among tragic authors, Sophocles has the highest number of duals; in some plays, such as the *Oedipus at Colonus* (88 ×),⁴⁵ the dual forms convey the sense of family relation: they are often used by Oedipus in reference to his daughters.⁴⁶ If one takes into consideration the size of the sample, Sophocles comes closest to Aristophanes, while Euripides, like Aeschylus, prefers to restrict the usage of 'provincial' dual forms; *Prometheus Bound* and *Rhesus* use duals very sparingly.⁴⁷

some duplicates, which may distort the general picture. *TLG* data for Herodotus give the percentage of 13.64%, but that includes instances of 'articles' used as relative pronouns. The figures given above for books 2 and 7 of Herodotus are taken from word count of the individual books (respectively 25896 and 26963 words), as published in www.perseus.tufts.edu (accessed June 2016) and instances of articles as counted in Bakker (2009) 212 (respectively 3460 and 3021 articles). These data are meant to give a general idea of the differences between authors. The chi square test was used to determine the statistical significance of the differences.

- 43 Bers (1984) 190–194; Willi (2003) 255–256. Mastering the usage of definite and indefinite articles is a notoriously difficult task for people learning a foreign language. Non-native speakers (like us, when we read ancient Greek) often fail to perceive how disturbing unusual omissions of articles were to native speakers.
- 44 Statistics on the basis of data in Bers (1984) 59. On duals, see Cuny (1906) 88–161; Moorhouse (1982) 2–4; Willi (2003) 253–254 and (2010a) 253–254.
- 45 Statistics from Hasse (1891) 24.
- 46 See Battezzato (2012) 308.
- 47 Hasse (1891) 24 lists instances of duals (except forms of δῦο, δυοῖν) for the non-fragmentary plays of classical drama. These are the instances and the rates of duals in Attic drama:

Another characteristic of tragic syntax is the usage of $\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ ($\acute{\alpha}\nu$) for final clauses. The traditional Attic form was $\delta\pi\omega\varsigma$ $\acute{\alpha}\nu$, but $\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha$ became more and more frequent, greatly prevailing over $\delta\pi\omega\varsigma$ $\acute{\alpha}\nu$ in Aristophanes and in fourth-century prose.⁴⁸ Euripides, characteristically, has the highest rates of the tragic corpus for both the more poetic form $\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ ($\acute{\alpha}\nu$) and the more prosaic one ($\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha$), whereas Sophocles has the lowest percentage of the poetic form among tragedians. Euripides, like the orators, and to an even higher degree than Aristophanes and Plato, constrains the usage of the older Attic⁴⁹ form $\delta\pi\omega\varsigma$ ($\acute{\alpha}\nu$), favoured by Thucydides. On the basis of data in Willi (2003) 265 one can construct the following table of percentages:

	$\delta\pi\omega\varsigma$ ($\acute{\alpha}\nu$)	$\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ ($\acute{\alpha}\nu$)	$\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha$
Aesch.	30.8	65.4	3.8
Soph.	31.7	54.8	13.5
Eur.	8.5	68.3	23.2
Aristoph.	17.4	7.0	75.6
Thuc.	67.9	1.2	31.0
Plato	11.5	0.2	88.2
Ten orators	8.5	0.5	91.0

The same trend is apparent in the construction of consecutive clauses ($\acute{\omega}\sigma\tau\epsilon/\acute{\omega}\varsigma$): Euripides (84%), like Aeschylus (94.7%), greatly prefers the infinitive construction over constructions with finite verbs, whereas Sophocles (37.9%) comes close to Aristophanes (24.1%) and Lysias (17%) in limiting the infinitive construction.⁵⁰

In substantive clauses, tragedy favours poetic $\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ over standard Attic $\delta\tau\iota$. Euripides has the highest percentage (88.8%) of the more poetic conjunction $\acute{\omega}\varsigma$, a percentage even higher than that of Aeschylus (77.7%), whereas Sophocles (61.5%) constrains again the poetic construction, in comparison with the

Aeschylus (without the *PV*) [63 duals/12 forms of $\delta\acute{\upsilon}\omicron$, $\delta\upsilon\omicron\iota\nu$]: 1.8‰ (2.1‰); *PV* [4/2]: 0.6‰ (1‰); Soph. [264/22]: 4.2‰ (4.5‰); Eur. [364/60]: 2.5‰ (2.9‰); Ar. [618/42]: 6.1‰ (6.5‰); *Rhesus* [11/0] 2‰ (2‰).

48 See Weber (1884); Moorhouse (1982) 284; Willi (2003) 176 and 264–265, and (2010a) 482–483.

49 Willi (2003) 264: ‘traditional Attic’.

50 See Willi (2003) 265–266.

other tragic authors. The text of Aristophanes, which includes paratragic passages, has a rate of $\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ in substantive clauses (51.8%) that is considerably higher than that found in Lysias (31.5%).⁵¹

These examples show how Euripides is at times both more and less poetic than contemporary tragic authors, a mix well captured by Aristophanes in his parodies.⁵²

Pragmatics is a burgeoning field of linguistic research,⁵³ and several important studies appeared in recent years on the pragmatics of ancient Greek.⁵⁴ Word order in ancient Greek was notoriously 'free', in the sense that the constituents of a sentence could be placed in different sequences: an adjective may or may be not contiguous to the noun it refers to ('hyperbaton'), and the same applies to genitive phrases;⁵⁵ constituents of a subordinate clause may be placed within the main sentence, or before the conjunction that would normally mark the beginning of the clause ('prolepsis').⁵⁶ The analysis of these and other complex phenomena shows that in Greek 'surface word order' and 'information structure' are correlated, even if 'syntactic structure plays a far greater role than that previous work acknowledges' in determining word order.⁵⁷ This is a complex and promising area for new research.

In the area of lexical choices, Euripides often mixes (or juxtaposes) colloquial and high-flown language. In fact, if one looks at his vocabulary, Euripides is less diverse than Aeschylus and Sophocles. Euripides uses a number of lemmata (11206) that is analogous to that used by Aeschylus (10787) in a much smaller corpus; Sophocles uses 8654 lemmata, which suggests that his linguistic inventiveness focuses on syntax, pragmatics and rhetoric, rather than on selecting rare lexical items.⁵⁸

51 For detailed data, see Willi (2003) 263 with bibliography.

52 The frequencies discussed in this paragraph are all statistically significant according to the chi square test. On the parodies, see esp. Ar. *Ran.* 1198–1247 with Dover (1993) and Sommerstein (1996) ad loc.

53 See in general Huang (2014).

54 On pragmatics, see Slings (2002) (on Herodotus); Dik (2007); Goldstein (2008); Battezzato (2008) and (2012) 311–318; Schuren (2014) 11–90; Goldstein (2016); van Emde Boas (2017) with extensive bibliography. Goldstein (2016) focuses on Herodotus, but in fact reaches very important general implications for classical Greek, revising, among other things, the approach of Dik (1995).

55 See Devine/Stephens (2000).

56 Fraser (2001).

57 Quotations from Goldstein (2016) 37 and 290. Goldstein (2016) 17–43 offers an excellent survey of these syntactic problems, with ample comparative evidence, sophisticated discussion of linguistic theory, and extensive bibliographical references.

58 Data from *TLG* statistics, which include all fragments, as well as *Prometheus Bound* and

Lexical colloquialisms are well investigated and show that Euripides often uses phrases found in Aristophanes (and in late Sophocles), but absent in Aeschylus. For instance, Euripides often uses the colloquial ἔρρε ‘go to hell’ (*Med.* 1364, *El.* 952), a usage common in comedy, and paralleled in tragedy only in Sophocles’ last play (*OC* 1383).⁵⁹ Other colloquial phrases are modified by the linguistic context of tragedy. For instance, τί πράττεις; ‘what’s up?’ is a frequent phrase in colloquial Attic, but it occurs in Eur. *Or.* 732, in a passage in trochaic tetrameters, with the non-Attic -σσ-, and in a stylistically elevated context; these factors clearly alter the colloquial nature of the phrase.⁶⁰ The distribution of colloquialisms does not seem to depend on chronological evolution; unsurprisingly, satyr plays use them more frequently.⁶¹

Another major feature of tragic vocabulary is the fondness for compound adjectives. Euripides has the lowest rate of compound adjectives among the three tragedians, and Aeschylus the highest one.⁶² Tragic authors also often coin *new* compound adjectives. Aeschylus is predictably the author who is fondest of new compound adjectives: they account for 2.8% of all words in lyric passages of his work, whereas the figures are 1.6% for Sophocles and 1.3% for Euripides.⁶³ Euripides’ rich lyric vocabulary becomes more and more complex and ‘poetic’ with time. New formations in general (not just new compound adjectives) are rare in early plays, such as *Medea* (1.4% of words in lyric passages), and increase remarkably in late plays (3.4% *Pho.*, 3.9% *IA*, 4.3% *Ba.*, in lyric sections).⁶⁴ Euripides also uses several ‘poetic’ words, taken from the epic and lyric tradition, both in spoken and sung sections. Plays with epic subjects often display a very high number of epic words in lyric sections (8.3% *Cycl.*; 8.2% *Andr.*; 7.8% *Hec.*) but that may vary (4.9% *IA*; 6.2% *Tro.*).⁶⁵ As for spoken

Rhesus in the corpora of respectively Aeschylus and Euripides. See also Breitenbach (1934) 9–11 on the number of words used by the main tragic authors, Pindar and Bacchylides.

59 See Stevens (1976) 12–13, Collard/Stevens (2018) 45–46.

60 Stevens (1976) 3 and 41; Bers (1984) 6–7; Collard/Stevens (2018) 94.

61 See Stevens (1976) 64–65; 8% of spoken lines of *Cyclops* contain a colloquial expression, as defined by Stevens. The percentage for plays of Euripides varies between 2.5% (*Troades*) and 4.4% (*Orestes* and *Heracles*). These figures should be taken as indicative: some colloquialisms are harsher than others. See now Collard/Stevens (2018) 30–31, 218.

62 Griffith (2005) 55 assesses the lowest and highest figures per 1000 lines as: 248 (*Eumenides*)—316 (*Suppliant Women*) for Aeschylus; 126 (*Philoctetes*)—200 (*Antigone*) for Sophocles; 104 (*Children of Heracles*)—173 (*Phoenician Women*) for Euripides. Rates for other genres, such as comedy, are significantly lower.

63 Calculations are based on Breitenbach (1934) 124–130, which must be consulted for detailed figures and references.

64 Breitenbach (1934) 120–122.

65 Breitenbach (1934) 122.

sections, Euripides severely restricts the number of new compound adjectives (2.2 new compound adjectives every 1000 words), a ratio much lower than Sophocles' (4%) and Aeschylus' (9.8%). Euripides also repeats these 'new formations' more often than Aeschylus and Sophocles⁶⁶ and prefers simple forms that are easy to interpret.⁶⁷

The language of satyr play is subtly different from that of tragedy. It is 'sometimes noble, sometimes full of licentiousness and impudence' and 'much *more* tolerant of archaisms, Homerisms, rare words and outdated and poetic forms than the language of tragedy',⁶⁸ thus taking to the extreme a tendency (deviation from standard tragic language, both in the direction of the poetic and the colloquial) that is already apparent in Euripides.

The metre of Euripides evolved significantly over time,⁶⁹ and so did his style, especially in the lyric sections. Some rhetorical figures, such as anadiplosis, are remarkably more frequent in some late plays of Euripides (esp. *Orestes*: 34 instances in 1934 words, or 17.6%), whereas the rate for early plays is very low (*Alc.* 6.3%, *Med.* 3.9%, *Hipp.* 6%) but the evolution is not linear at all (*Hec.* 14.8%, *Tro.* 5%).⁷⁰ Some lyric sections in late Euripides, especially, but not only,⁷¹ monodies and lyric dialogues (e.g. *Hel.* 167–251, 625–697, 1301–1368, *Pho.* 1484–581, *Or.* 1369–502), present an accumulation of stylistic peculiarities (e.g. the 'heaping of polysyllabic epithets'),⁷² often linked to the expression of a mixture of different emotions (joy and sorrow: *Pho.* 301–354).⁷³ This style was the object of Aristophanes' parody.⁷⁴

66 Data from Breitenbach (1934) 130–131: Aeschylus has 276 new compound adjectives; Sophocles 232; Euripides 285. In the dialogues of Aeschylus, 85.8% of new adjectives are used only once, and the same applies for Sophocles (87.5%), whereas in Euripides the percentage drops to 66.3%. Percentages are calculated against the word counts provided by Breitenbach.

67 Breitenbach (1934) 117.

68 López Eire (2003) 388 and 393, part of a perceptive discussion of the language of satyr play; see also Ussher (1978) 204–208 (focusing on vocabulary); Seaford (1984) 47–48; Griffith (2005); Dettori (2016).

69 See Cropp/Fick (1985) for spoken metres and Lourenço (2011) for lyric sections, with references; above, n. 9.

70 See Breitenbach (1934) 10–11 and 214–221 for figures and lists; Diggle (1994a) 150, 296–297, 376–378 for philological and metrical considerations.

71 On 'dithyrambic' stasima, see Panagl (1971).

72 Mastronarde (1994) 373 on *Pho.* 784–833.

73 See Kannicht (1969); Allan (2008); Mastronarde (1994); and Willink (1989) ad loc. for detailed stylistic and linguistic analyses.

74 See above, section 1.

The present-day consensus considers *Rhesus* not authentic especially on the basis of the analysis of the vocabulary used in the play⁷⁵

Many promising areas of research are still open, such as register variation⁷⁶ and sociolinguistics.⁷⁷ The next section discusses a sociolinguistic aspect, female language.

4 Languages and Gender: Medea, Phaedra, Hermione, and the Manipulation of Language

4.1 *Ancient Criticism of the Language of Euripides' Female Characters*

Origen, a third-century AD Church father, briefly discusses the language of female characters in Euripides (*C. Cels.* 7.36):

Εὐριπίδης δὲ ὑπὸ Ἀριστοφάνους κωμῳδεῖται ὡς ἀκαιρορρήμων διὰ τὸ πολλάκις περιτεθεικέναι λόγους δογμάτων, ὧν ἀπὸ Ἀναξαγόρου ἢ τινοῦ ἔμαθε τῶν σοφῶν, βαρβάροις, γυναιξίν ἢ οἰκέταις.

Aristophanes mocks Euripides as a person who speaks inappropriately since in his plays barbarians, women, or slaves are made to deliver speeches reporting the opinions that he learned from Anaxagoras or from other wise men.⁷⁸

This rephrases Aristophanes' remarks reported above (*Ar. Ran.* 949–951) in accordance to a theory of rhetoric that insists on appropriateness: women should speak and act as women, not as men—and, as a consequence, should be ignorant of philosophy. Origen writes that (*C. Cels.* 7.36):

ἀρετὴ μὲν προσωποποιούντος ἐστὶ τηρῆσαι τὸ βούλημα καὶ τὸ ἦθος τοῦ προσωποποιουμένου, κακία δέ, ὅτε τὰ μὴ ἀρμόζοντά τις περιτίθησι ῥήματα τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ λέγοντος

75 See Liapis (2012) liii–lxiv and Fries (2014) 28–38, both arguing against authenticity, with different arguments, and full bibliography.

76 Willi (2003) and (2010b) with further references.

77 See Dickey (1996).

78 Most editions [see Borret (1967), Marcovich (2001)] consider 'barbarian' an adjective referring to 'women' but, as my student M. Catrambone pointed out to me, it is probably a substantive here, and one should print a comma after it.

The excellence of a writer who portrays characters consists in preserving the intent and the disposition of the character portrayed; his artistic poor-ness consists in attributing words that are not appropriate to the character of the speaker

Appropriateness is an important tenet of ancient rhetoric. Aristotle is of course one of the early advocates of this theory, and he applies it to female language in Euripides (Arist. *Poet.* 1454a23–33): Aristotle quotes the speech of Melanippe, a female philosopher, as an example of ‘inappropriate’ speech.⁷⁹ However, Euripides’ linguistic characterization of women (and men) is much more complex than Aristotle’s and Origen’s very compressed judgments.⁸⁰

4.2 *Ancient and Modern Approaches to Female and Male Language*

The differences between female and male language have been the object of extensive and complex research.⁸¹ In tragedy, female and male language do not show significant differences in the realms of phonetics, morphology, syntax or vocabulary.⁸² Origen assumes that the language of women (just like the language of barbarians and slaves) is defective in comparison with the language of men; women are not capable of philosophical language and poets who assign this kind of speech genre to women are artistically defective (Aristophanes, more subtly, mentioned the speech of old and young women, as well as that of male masters). Aristophanes, Aristotle, and Origen focus on lexicon and content: philosophical argumentation⁸³ and the use of technical lexicon is considered typical of men, and inappropriate for women. There are however other areas of linguistic research where differences between male and female speech can be detected: detailed studies of female language show that, especially in social conditions of male dominance, women resorted to ‘a more cooperative and face-respecting [...] style of conversation’, and this is reflected for instance in the language of Aristophanes.⁸⁴

79 Aristotle probably had in mind the speech that partly survives as Eur. fr. 484, from *Melanippe Wise*.

80 See McClure (1999a) 25 for a short discussion of these passages.

81 For general linguistic discussions, see Romaine (1998); Talbot (2010); Eckert/McConnell-Ginet (2013) with further references. On ancient Greece in general, see Lardinois/McClure (2001); Fögen (2010) with further references; on Greek tragedy, see above, n. 14; on Aristophanes, see Willi (2003) 157–197; Sommerstein (2009) 14–42.

82 McClure (1995).

83 See e.g. Melanippe’s cosmological theories, only partially known to us (Eur. fr. 482–484).

84 See Willi (2003) 195; see also 166. On politeness theory and Greek tragedy, see Lloyd (2006); Battezzato (2012) 318–321; Catrambone (2016) with further references.

4.3 *Speech Genres and Gender: Gossip, Lament, Self-blame*

In Greek literature, some speech genres are constantly associated with women: gossip, for instance, but also lament.⁸⁵ One of the key components of female speech genres is blame of the female gender. It is a linguistic gesture of self-humiliation, which defuses any potential threat to the ‘face’ of the interlocutor: by blaming oneself and/or one’s gender, the speaker begs others not to criticize her. Much of Greek archaic and classical literature focuses on genres of blame and praise.⁸⁶ Characteristically, male speakers often express blame and praise; female speakers often focus on self-blame (or on avoiding blame), and have more limited occasions for praise.⁸⁷ Some of the best known examples of self-blame occur in Homer, when Helen calls herself ‘dog-faced’ both in front of Priam (*Il.* 3.180 *κυνώπιδος*) and Menelaus (*Od.* 4.154), accusing herself respectively of abandoning her husband and of causing the war. Greek men often blame or curse that the ‘race of women’ (e.g. Aesch. *Sept.* 256, Eur. *Hipp.* 1252).⁸⁸ They may say that the ‘race of human beings’ is miserable or powerless, when compared with the life of the gods (see e.g. Achilles in *Il.* 24.525–526), but they never say that ‘the race of *men*’ is accursed, miserable, or culpable.⁸⁹ Women are thus the focus of blame-speech (when not of hate speech, as in Semonides fr. 7 West).

Melanippe, the character blamed by Aristotle as inappropriately philosophical, appears in two plays of Euripides. In the second one, *Melanippe Captive*, she delivers a well-argued attack against the tradition of ‘blame against women’ (Eur. fr. 494). Even Melanippe, however, ends up accepting part of the male blame: ‘on the one hand nothing is worse than a bad woman, but on the other nothing excels a good one in goodness’ [fr. 494.27–29, transl. Collard/Cropp (2008) 597, who refer to fr. 657 for a similar sentiment], a phrase that echoes the fragment of the most misogynistic Greek poet, Semonides of Amorgos, fr. 6.1–2 West ‘of the things that a man can acquire, there is nothing better than a good wife, and nothing more horrible than a bad one’ (*γυναικὸς οὐδὲν χρεῖμ’ ἀνήρ ληϊζέται / ἐσθλής ἀμεινον οὐδὲ ῥίγιον κακῆς*). Is it possible for women to escape blame? The rest of this chapter will offer an analysis of some prominent examples of the use and manipulation of traditional blame speech against women by female characters in Euripides.

85 See McClure (1999a) 32–69 for a survey with references.

86 See Nagy (1990) 187–199, 393–395 and *passim*.

87 McClure (1999b) 373–379 surveys the traditions of blame by women and against women in ancient Greek discourse and literature and Mastronarde (2010) 271–279.

88 On the ‘race of women’, see Loraux (1993) 72–110.

89 See, however, Hesiod, *Works and Days* 174–201.

4.4 *Self-blame and Female Characters in Euripides: Medea*

The Chorus of *Medea* regards the tradition of blame against women as widespread, and vainly fantasize that the events unfolding in the play will reverse it (Eur. *Med.* 410–430).⁹⁰ As the Nurse noted (190–204), men were able to invent songs to accompany ‘festivities’, but failed at creating songs that would relieve sorrow and angst; the Nurse, speaking in an exclusively female group, can express blame against men, calling them ‘foolish, not at all wise’ (190).

When Medea finally appears onstage, her speech subtly manipulates the misogynistic tradition in order to acquire the sympathy of the Chorus.⁹¹ She begins with an apology, explaining that she arrived to avoid being blamed by the female Chorus (214–215: ‘I have come out of the house lest you find fault with me’). Blame hovers over women. Like Pericles in Thuc. 2.60.1, Medea is able to sense what people think of her, and to use language so as to guide people’s thoughts. In order to avoid blame from the chorus, she blames herself and the condition of women, but stresses that her situation is much worse than the Chorus: ‘of all creatures that have breath and sensation, we women are the most unfortunate’ (230–231), a statement that emphasizes the misery of the female condition and is designed to elicit pity. Medea acquires the sympathy of the Chorus by indirectly praising their courage in giving birth to children as greater than the courage displayed by men in war (248–251). Using this technique of indirect praise, Medea presents herself as sharing with the Chorus the experience of having survived the same, extremely difficult trial. The bond between women, Medea indirectly suggest, is stronger than the bond created between fellow soldiers, whose life depend on the courage of the hoplite standing near them. She can thus end her speech with a request of complicity in the revenge plot. Her request again starts with female self-blame, echoing typical male accusations of female cowardice (‘in all other things a woman is full of fear, incapable of looking on battle or cold steel’: 263–264), a misogynistic definition that encompasses the Chorus. The final, shocking request of complicity in revenge is couched in terms of indirect praise to the female Chorus (‘when she injured in love, no mind is more murderous’ than that of a woman: 264–265), but also echoes the traditional account of female behaviour: jealousy makes women resort to violence.⁹² Medea will echo these

90 On the Chorus of *Medea*, see Mastronarde (1998) 72–78 and (2002) *passim*; Swift (2013). On praise and blame in the play, see McClure (1999b).

91 See Mastronarde (2010) 272; Foley (2001) 264–265 reads these echoes of misogynistic speech as a distancing technique of Medea, who is intent on proclaiming her heroic, and consequently ‘non-female’ identity.

92 See Seidensticker (1995) 162–163.

words at the end of the episode, at 407–409 ('we are women, unable to perform noble deeds, but most skilful architects of every sort of harm'), provoking the extremely favourable reaction of the Chorus, who, in the stasimon that immediately follows, voice their wish for a reversal of all misogynistic talk (410–430).⁹³

In her second meeting with Jason, Medea adopts (or feigns) the kind of self-blaming language that is typical of female characters in Greek literature. She blames herself ('I reproached myself thus': 873) and employs words of self-abuse ('foolish creature, why am I raving [...]?' 873; 'I was being very foolish' 882; 'it is I who am the fool': 885). Medea renounces her previous 'storm of [...] wearisome prattling' (525) and turns to the language of self-blame, which Jason finds appropriate. Medea's generalization about the ethical and intellectual inferiority of women is perceived by Jason as in keeping with the frequent language of self-abasement adopted by women (889–891):

ἀλλ' ἐσμέν οἶόν ἐσμεν, οὐκ ἐρῶ κακόν,
 γυναῖκες· οὐκ οὖν χρῆν σ' ὁμοιοῦσθαι κακοῖς,
 οὐδ' ἀντιτείνειν νήπι' ἀντὶ νηπίων.

Well, we women are, I will not say bad creatures, but we are what we are.
 So you ought not to imitate our nature or return our childishness with childishness.

Modern audiences may perceive these words as exaggerated and, as consequence, as a clue revealing Medea's insincerity. In fact, this statement makes her appear more, not less believable to Jason, who, like the prototypical misogynist Hippolytus (Eur. *Hipp.* 615–624), fantasizes a world without women (Eur. *Med.* 573–575). Medea voices an opinion which other female characters express with similar words (see below, section 4.4, on Andromache's words in Eur. *Andr.* 352–354). Medea will later present herself as manly and heroic,⁹⁴ and the evolution of the plot will progressively alienate the Chorus, who will realize with shock how misguided their sympathy for Medea was.

93 See above, n. 90.

94 See esp. Knox (1977) = Knox (1979) 295–322.

4.4 *Self-blame and Female Characters in Euripides: Phaedra and Hermione*

In *Hipp.* 373–430,⁹⁵ Phaedra delivers a long, quasi-philosophical speech, like Melanippe. Her speech ends with extended blame of female behaviour. Phaedra starts by discussing why we mortals ‘fail to carry out’ ‘what we know and understand to be noble’ (380–381): humans fail for different reasons, ‘some from laziness, other because they give precedent to some other pleasure’ (381–382). However, she focuses on typically ‘feminine’ pleasures (‘talks and leisure, a pleasant bane, and modest restraint’, 384–385).⁹⁶ After applying these reflections to her case, she concludes that self-destruction is better than blame: suicide is better than incurring in the sort of blame that adulterous women incur in, i.e. deserved blame. She devotes a long section of her speech (405–418) to female adultery, starting from the premise that women are ‘an object of hate for all’ (407).⁹⁷ This section of her speech is in fact formulated as a curse against adulterous women (‘Damnation take the woman who first began to besmirch her marriage bed with other men!’, 407–409),⁹⁸ and ends on a nightmarish evocation of the speech of inanimate objects who might denounce them: ‘how can they not be afraid that the darkness, their accomplice, and the timbers of the house will break into speech?’ (417–418). Phaedra voices a general accusation against the action that she is trying to avoid at the cost of her life. She uses male language of blame against women rhetorically, in order to argue in favour of her suicide. Phaedra seems to say that death is the only way for women to avoid blame.

Blame of women occurs prominently in the speeches of one of the most unsympathetic female characters in Euripides: Hermione.⁹⁹ After the failure of her plot to kill Andromache and her son, Hermione’s only chance resides in Orestes, who will eventually marry her, after the death of her husband Neoptolemus. In addressing Orestes, she starts with blaming herself, but also others (‘it is in part my doing, in part my husband’s, and in part one of the god to blame’, 902–903). In the *rhêsis*, she blames herself (I ‘became inflated with foolish thoughts’, 938), while at the same time accusing other women (‘I lis-

95 Cairns (1993) 322–328 offers a perceptive discussion of this complex passage, with references to the major scholarly and interpretive controversies.

96 See Mastrorarde (2010) 273.

97 My translation of *μίσημα πάσι*. Kovacs translates ‘a thing all men hate’, but *πάσι* may include women.

98 On curses in the *Hippolytus*, see Mueller (2011). On the language of curses in Greek poetry, see Faraone (1985); Finglass (2006).

99 For an analysis of the character of Hermione in Euripides and its reception, see Mariani (2019) with further references.

tened to these Sirens' words', 936) who led the to the wrong path. She however uses self-blame, and blame of the female sex, as a way to blame her husband: 'But never, never (for I say it again and again) should husbands who have sense allow women to come to visit their wives in the house! They are the ones who teach evil' (943–946). The assumption is that women are incapable of ethical behaviour and that their speech is by nature harmful. In this way, Hermione transforms her self-blaming gesture into an accusation of other women and (more importantly) of her husband. In the same play, Andromache is a subtler manipulator of language when rephrasing misogynistic accusations. This is especially clear in the debate with Menelaus: Andromache observes that 'if we women are a ruinous evil' men should not 'imitate our nature' (354–356). Andromache does not explicitly explain her stance in relation to misogynistic speech, but taking it for granted, turns it against her opponent, thus paving the way for the accusation of cowardice and unmanliness voiced by Peleus against Menelaus ('What, do you belong with the men then, you utter coward?', 590).

5 Conclusion

In Euripides, women do appropriate 'male' language, and in particular misogynistic speech: this, to some extent, vindicates the claims of 'Euripides' in Aristophanes. He did teach women how to use male language against male speakers. However, these passages cannot be read, as Aristotle and other ancient critics saw them, as misuses of male language, aesthetic failures, or instances of inappropriate characterization. Women prove to be very competent and, often, manipulative users of male language, including male blame-speech. These female characters, though, are masks used by the male impersonator Euripides.¹⁰⁰ The language of Euripides is highly mimetic, not simply in its use of morphology, syntax and vocabulary, but also in sociolinguistic and pragmatic subtleties. 'Aeschylus' in Aristophanes' *Frogs* identified some crucial elements of Euripides' linguistic usage, that is his peculiar mix of poetic and colloquial elements, and his ability to imitate very diverse characters. Modern interpreters can make that picture more complex not simply by a more sympathetic evaluation, but through the use of modern linguistic tools.

100 On the dynamics of 'playing the other' in Greek tragedy, see Zeitlin (1996).

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Rhetoric in Euripides

Patrick O'Sullivan

1 Prolegomena

As early as Aristophanes, reception of Euripides acknowledged the importance of rhetoric within his dramas:¹ the stylized, self-conscious attempts at persuasion by characters, often in a clearly sign-posted debate, or formal *agôn*. Rhetoric, as now recognized, comes into play any time anyone deploys language or another medium to create a desired effect or response in a listener, reader or onlooker.² For the ancients it was more specifically about techniques of argumentation, which they considered more central to the plays of Euripides than those of Aeschylus or Sophocles. That said, Aeschylus' *Eumenides* has the only law-court scene in extant tragedy, in which the concept of *peithô*, or persuasion, emerges as crucial for the resolution of the *Oresteia*.³ But nowhere in extant Greek drama are rhetorical techniques more evident or elaborately developed than in Euripides' plays, especially in the *agônes*. As has been pointed out, 'the virtual universalization of rhetorical skill among characters of different status ... seems indeed to be a major differentiating feature that sets Euripides apart from earlier tragedians'.⁴

Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1355b25–26) identifies rhetoric as the 'faculty (*dunamis*) of discovering the possible means of what is persuasive (*pithanon*) on any given

1 This trend is evident in other fifth-century comic poets such as Callias and Teleclides, and ancient biographies of Euripides (see below). Amongst modern scholars, see, for instance, Duchemin (1945) 73–104, 117–123; Strohm (1957) 3–49; Collard (1975a); Conacher (1981); Jouan (1984); Lloyd (1992); Mossman (1995) 94–141; Allan (1999–2000); Scodel (1999–2000); Dubischar (2001) and (2017); Mastronarde (2010) 207–245 esp. 209–210 also offers a useful overview of Euripides' reputation from antiquity to the twentieth century (*ib.*) 1–15; Sansone (2012) 163–184; see also Scharfenberger (2015).

2 Wardy (1996) 1 notes: '... as soon as one person addresses another, rhetoric is present'. Kennedy (2007) 7 writes: 'Rhetoric ... can be regarded as a form of mental or emotional energy imparted to a communication to affect a situation in the interest of the speaker'. Cf. Balliff/Moran (2005) 1–13, esp. 1–5.

3 Discussion of rhetoric in Aeschylus' and Sophocles' tragedies is beyond the scope of the present chapter; on this, see Buxton (1982) 67–145; Goldhill (1986) esp. 222–243, (1997), and (2009); Pelling (2005); McDonald (2007); Worman (2012).

4 Mastronarde (2010) 210.

subject'. For him, there are three main types of oratory (*Rhet.* 1358a36–b20): judicial (to determine facts in court); *sumbouleutic* or deliberative (to determine the best course of action for the future); *epideictic* or display pieces (speeches of praise or blame). Aristotle is building on the earlier views of the Sicilian sophist Gorgias, whose rhetorical style during his visit to Athens in 427 BC created such a sensation, as we learn from his compatriots Timaeus (fr. 95 *FHG* 1.216) and Diodorus Siculus (12.53.3). In his *epideictic* speech, *Encomium of Helen* (B 11.8–14 DK), Gorgias tells us that *logos* (speech, language) is a 'great master' (δυναστικὴς μέγας) capable of producing an extraordinary range of emotions in the listener whose soul it beguiles, drugs, and bewitches by a kind of 'evil persuasion' (*Hel.* 14). Gorgias' description of *logos* as a *dunastês* anticipates Aristotle's use of the cognate term *dunamis* in his later definition of rhetoric. The Platonic Socrates ascribes to Gorgias the view that rhetoric is the 'craftsman of persuasion' (πειθοῦς δημιουργός); in the same dialogue Socrates unites tragedy and conventional rhetoric both as a mere 'knack' (*empeiria*), which, he says, pander to their audiences' baser instincts in the form of 'flattery' (*kolakeia*).⁵ Socrates denies that rhetoric as conventionally practised is a *technê*—an art or skill that can give an account of its procedures (*Gorg.* 465a5–6); conversely, Aristotle does see rhetoric as a *technê* (*Rhet.* 1354a11, 1355b27, etc.).⁶ Incorporating these diverse views, Euripides presents rhetoric as a complex phenomenon, drawing attention to its powers and pitfalls, and much else besides.

The centrality of formal debates or attempts at persuasion within Euripides' plays has meant that many have considered him the most 'rhetorical' of Greek dramatists;⁷ some have pointed, for instance, to a number of similarities between what Gorgias says on *logos* in the *Encomium* and Helen's defence speech in the *Troades*.⁸ Modern critics see this as symptomatic of Euripides' overall sophistication which finds parallels among a number of other intellectuals and philosophers of his day.⁹ This does not mean that all

5 Plato, *Gorgias* (453a, 463b–c, 465a–b, 502b–d).

6 However, Socrates entertains the possibility of a philosophically-sound rhetoric (*Gorg.* 503a, 504d–e), a topic explored more fully in the *Phaedrus*.

7 E.g. Conacher (1981) 82; Michelini (1987) 123; McDonald (2007) 474; Mastronarde (2010) 209; Sansone (2012) 125. Buxton (1982) 153 sees Euripidean theatre as a 'drama of the persuasive word'.

8 Jouan (1966) 185–186; Goldhill (1986) 236–238; Croally (1994) 155–156; cf. 222–227; McDonald (2007) 481. Lloyd (1992) 100–101 rightly notes that there is insufficient evidence to show that one text has directly influenced the other; yet this does not preclude the existence of parallels between them.

9 E.g., Winnington-Ingram (1969). Heath (1987) 48–65 tries to downplay intellectual elements

instances of rhetorical discourse in the dramas of Euripides are attributable to the sophists and professional speech-writers, as once commonly assumed.¹⁰ Numerous influences could be at work in shaping Euripides' interest in rhetoric, not least Homeric epic which demonstrates a profound interest in the workings of the persuasive word and emphasizes that heroes should aspire to verbal skill *and* physical prowess. Homer describes the battlefield as *κυδιάνειρα* 'where men win glory' (*Il.* 4.225, 6.124, etc.); the *agora*, or meeting place, where the warriors convene to hold counsel and debate, is likewise *κυδιάνειρα* (*Il.* 1.490).¹¹ Similarly, Hesiod recognized the importance of eloquence and persuasive speech, linking it to his own conception of poetry, whereby singers and *basileis* (counselors, judges) enjoy the gifts of the Muses (*Th.* 81–103, esp. 86–90; cf. Hes. *WD* 225–237).¹²

The interest in techniques of persuasion shared by poets and intellectuals of Euripides' day could have come about by mutual influence. Plato attests to Protagoras' interest in correct usage of words (*Pl. Crat.* 391b–c; *Phdr.* 267c), which is paralleled by Democritus' interest in Homer (B 20a DK); Protagoras considered the understanding of poetry central to a proper education, arguing with Socrates over a passage from Simonides (*Pl. Prot.* 339a–d, etc.). According to Aristotle (*SE* 173b19), Protagoras criticizes Homer for 'incorrect' use of language beginning with the first word of the *Iliad*! Gorgias had a well-attested interest in tragedy (B23 DK) and epic, speculating on Homer's ancestry (B 25 DK) and evidently admiring Aeschylus (B 24 DK). Plato tells us the self-professed polymath Hippias appeared at Olympia with epic poems, dithyrambs, tragedies and works of prose (*Hipp. Min.* 368c; cf. also *Hipp. A* 12 DK). Aelian (*VH* 12.32) refers to sophists appearing at Panhellenic festivals in the purple attire of rhap-

within Euripides' dramas, but acknowledges (p. 64) 'the sophistic and rhetorical wit so distinctive of the surface of Euripides' writing'. For Euripides and the sophists, see Conacher (1998); Allan (1999–2000); cf. also Dunn (2017); Worman (2017).

10 As Lloyd (1992) 23 n. 21 points out, a number of nineteenth-century scholars believed that Euripides was following the instructions laid out in rhetorical handbooks of his day.

11 Homer praises Nestor's eloquence (*Il.* 1.247–249) and singles out Odysseus as both powerful speaker (*Il.* 3.204–224, etc.) and (in)famous liar (*Od.* 13.256–286, 291–295, 19.203, etc.). Phoenix recalls that he taught Achilles to be a 'doer of deeds and speaker of words' (*Il.* 9.443); the word for 'speaker' here is *ρήτορ*, a cognate of 'rhetoric'; cf. also *Il.* 9.431–432, *Od.* 1.345–361, 368–387, etc. Knudsen (2014) plausibly sees Homeric speech as embodying the principles of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*; but her claim (esp. 38–87) that Homer's characters see rhetoric, like Aristotle, as a systematic *technê* is questionable.

12 On links between poetics and rhetoric made by Hesiod, see Kirby (1992); Walker (2000) 3–16.

sodes, professional reciters of poetry, usually Homeric. These sophists, then, are clearly addressing the legacy of the poets with whom they critically engage.¹³ The shared interests of poets and intellectuals are thus too deep and broad to posit a simple one-way influence of the latter on Euripides, as is too often assumed in ancient biographical claims made about him.¹⁴ The prominence of rhetoric in both drama and intellectual speculations of Euripides' day is one important manifestation of such shared interests.¹⁵ Indeed Greek tragedy, as has been noted, is essentially a rhetorical genre.¹⁶

2 Euripides and Rhetoric in the Ancient Tradition

The rhetorical aspects of Euripides' dramas were clear to Aristophanes, whose jokes influenced much in the Euripidean ancient biographical tradition.¹⁷ In his *Acharnians* Aristophanes has Dicaeopolis visit Euripides so that the tragedian will lend him some rags and props belonging to one of his characters; Dicaeopolis believes these will somehow give him the speechifying skills he will need to

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- 13 See Bers (1994) 189–191 for the use of poetic tropes by, for instance, Antiphon, Aeschines (1.152) and Lycurgus, who quotes at length from Euripides' *Erechtheus* (*Against Leocrates*, esp. 100–102).
- 14 This does not, however, justify the central thesis of Sansone (2012) that the origins of rhetoric and rhetorical theories lie in tragedy; this, too, oversimplifies the question of influence, but in reverse.
- 15 Cicero (*Brutus* 12.46–47) ascribes to Aristotle (= fr. 137), the view that formal rhetoric resulted from the establishment of democracy in Syracuse in 467–466 BC and was pioneered in law courts by Corax and Tisias, who wrote rhetorical handbooks or *technai* (cf. also Plato, *Phdr.* 273b–d). Cole (1991), esp. 1–2; Schiappa (1999) 3–82, esp. 14–29 deny the existence of formal rhetorical theory in the fifth century BC and claim that Plato coined the term *rhêtorikê* (*Gorg.* 448d) and thus the concept of rhetoric. There are strong objections to this view, which, although made already by scholars, are worth restating here, since it has found new adherents, e.g. Major (2005); cf. Balliff/Moran (2005) 1; Timmerman/Schiappa (2010) esp. 8–11. Firstly, Cole's and Schiappa's claim rests on the dubious lexical assumption that a society has no concept of 'x' if it does not have a specific word to denote 'x'. Secondly, the claim about Plato's alleged coining of *rhêtorikê* rests on an *argumentum e silentio* that is extremely weak, given the loss of so many prior sophistic and other writings in which the word could have occurred. Thirdly, as many scholars have noted [cited by Schiappa (1999) 17–18], Socrates in the *Gorgias* refers to τὴν καλουμένην ῥητορικὴν 'the so-called rhetoric', which makes clear that by Plato's time the term 'rhetoric' is already known. Finally, one of Plato's older contemporaries, Alcidas, uses *rhêtorikê* in his treatise *On the Sophists* (1.4, 10). There is no compelling reason, then, to doubt the existence of 'rhetoric' and rhetorical theorizing in Euripides' own lifetime.
- 16 Collard (1975a) 64; Mossman (1995) 94.
- 17 As recently reiterated by Mastronarde (2010) 1–3; Lefkowitz (2012) 87–103 esp. 89.

fend off his fellow citizens who wish to kill him for making a private peace with the Spartans (*Ach.* 409–488). He uses the props of Telephus whom he describes as: *στωμύλος, δεινὸς λέγειν* ‘a smooth talker, powerful at speaking’ (*Ach.* 429; cf. also 446–447). It is true that Aristophanes singles out this figure because much in Dicaeopolis’ subsequent speech will be a parody of Euripides’ tragedy *Telephus*. But the comic poet describes the Euripidean Telephus in sophistic terms, since being *δεινὸς λέγειν* was seen as the sophistic area of expertise *par excellence*; according to Plato, Meno sees this as the goal of Gorgias’ teaching (Pl. *Meno* 95c), and Socrates describes the sophist Thrasymachus as *δεινός* in his ability to arouse strong emotions in his audience (Pl. *Phdr.* 267c–d). Indeed, rhetorical finesse within Euripides’ *Telephus* was evident to this sophist, who adapted a line from the play for one of his own speeches (Thrasym. B 2 DK = Eur. fr. 719 K). Like Aristophanes, Thrasymachus is another fifth-century observer of Euripides’ rhetorical skill.

Above all, Aristophanes’ *Frogs* famously depicts Euripides as the playwright of incessant chatter and gratuitous rhetorical display, which the comic poet presents as so inimical to the nature of tragedy (esp. 1491–1499). A slave recounts how even in death the poet continues his displays of cleverness and thus gains a cult following amongst the undesirables among the dead (*Frogs* 771–776). Moreover, Aristophanes has Euripides himself brag about giving a significant voice to all of his characters, including slaves, maidens, and old women (*Frogs* 948–954):

Ευ. ἔπειτ’ ἀπὸ τῶν πρώτων ἐπῶν οὐδένα παρήκ’ ἂν ἀργὸν
 ἀλλ’ ἔλεγεν ἢ γυνή τέ μοι χῶ δοῦλος οὐδὲν ἦττον
 τοῦ δεσπότης χῆ παρθένος χῆ γράυς ἄν.
 Αι. εἶτα δῆτα
 οὐκ ἀποθανεῖν σε ταῦτ’ ἐχρήν τολμῶντα;
 Ευ. μὰ τὸν Ἀπόλλω·
 δημοκρατικὸν γὰρ αὐτ’ ἔδρων.
 ...
 ἔπειτα τουτουσί λαλεῖν ἐδίδαξα—

Eur: Then from the first words I wouldn’t allow anyone to be idle, but the woman would speak, as did the slave no less than the master and the maiden and the old woman.

Aesch: And so shouldn’t you have been killed for having such effrontery?

Eur: No, by Apollo! For I was doing something that was democratic ...
 And then I taught these people here to chatter.

This gesture was not 'democratic' in the strict sense as far as fifth-century Athenian democracy was concerned, since the very figures Euripides mentions as active and articulate in his plays were normally denied a public voice within Attic democratic culture.¹⁸ In any case, the boast which Aristophanes puts into Euripides' mouth in the *Frogs* seems to undercut itself, as does his claim that he taught people to 'chatter' (λαλεῖν)—something which he, along with Socrates, is castigated for by the Chorus at the end of the play after he loses to Aeschylus (1491–1492).¹⁹ Like other poets of Old Comedy, such as Callias (fr. 15 KA) and Teleclides (fr. 39, 40 KA), Aristophanes claimed that Socrates even helped write some of Euripides' tragedies for him (D. L. 2.18),²⁰ which the comic poet calls περιαλούσας 'full of chatter' (fr. 392 KA). Close to five centuries after Aristophanes, Plutarch says that Euripides makes women such as Phaedra in his *Hippolytus* or Helen in his *Troades* capable of producing ἤθεσι φάυλοις καὶ ἀτόποις πράγμασι λόγους ἐπιγελῶντας καὶ φιλανθρώπους αἰτίας 'gratifying words and benign reasons for their base characters and inhuman actions' (Plut. *Aud. Po.* 27f–28a).²¹ In the third century AD Origen (*Contra Celsum* 7.36.34–36) says this is one reason why Aristophanes mocked Euripides.²² Modern scholarship has recognized other important links between gender and speech within Euripides' dramas, particularly the implications rhetoric has for his female characters.²³

The idea of the 'rhetorical' and intellectual Euripides is entrenched by the third century BC when Satyrus of Callatis wrote a 'life' of the playwright. Satyrus associated him with Socrates (fr. 39 ii), and Anaxagoras (fr. 37 i, iii)—the philosopher of *Nous* (Mind) and friend of Pericles. The *Ancient Life* (or *Vita*) of Euripides, of unknown date and authorship, claimed that he was a student also of Protagoras and Prodicus; following Aristophanes and Satyrus, the *Vita*

18 As Mastronarde notes (2010) 210. Euripides' claim is arguably more akin to notions of *isonomia*, equality under the law (Hdt. 3.80.6), or *isēgoria*, the equal right to speak (Dem. 21.124; cf. Isoc. 8.14).

19 For λαλεῖν denoting idle, incessant chatter, see Eur. *Suppl.* 462; Eupolis (fr. 91 KA) contrasts λαλεῖν with proper speaking, i.e. λέγειν. Cf. also Demosthenes (21.118).

20 The charge has an ironic afterlife, given the Platonic Socrates' hostility to tragedy and rhetoric. Nietzsche recalls this tradition in his *Birth of Tragedy* (ch. 13), a text which likewise contains, *inter al.*, a sustained attack on both Euripides and Socrates.

21 Plutarch cites the actions and speeches of these Euripidean characters as undermining Sophocles' supposed belief that it is impossible for noble words to arise from ignoble deeds.

22 As noted by Hall (1997) 120.

23 See, for instance, McClure (1999) esp. 1–69; Foley (2001) esp. 272–299; Mueller (2017) esp. 505, 507–509.

also presents the tragedian as a friend of Socrates (1A.2).²⁴ Ancient biographers may have fabricated pupil-teacher links between Euripides and these figures because all of them were believed to have been charged with impiety (cf. Arist. *Rhet.* 1416a28–37).²⁵ But such claims also indicate an ancient perception that they all held similar ideas and interests. Theorizing about adversarial and other forms of rhetoric was a hallmark of many sophistic speculations in the fifth century, as were semantics and the analysis of language. These areas in particular came under the purview of Protagoras, who wrote on combative (eristic) argumentation and contrasting speeches (A1; B 1, 5, 6–6b DK). Prodicus was well known enough to be parodied by Plato in the next century (*Prot.* 337a–d) for his penchant for distinguishing between synonyms (cf. Prodicus A 11 DK, etc.). As will be seen, these concepts are evident in Euripides' plays as well.

In the late first century AD, Quintilian saw that an understanding of comic poets such as Aristophanes and Eupolis was ideal for purposes of rhetorical training; Quintilian also saw that tragedy had value for training in forensic rhetoric and considered Euripides far more useful for this purpose than he did Sophocles (*Inst. Or.* 10.1.66–70), while admiring both tragedians. Around the same time, Dio Chrysostom saw that comic and tragic poets had much to offer the aspiring politician and exponent of forensic rhetoric. Dio identifies Menander, a poet of Middle or New Comedy, as the best model for aspiring orators, but agrees with Quintilian that, among tragedians, Euripides is the most valuable model for politically ambitious men (Dio Chrys. *Orat.* 18.6–8). Elsewhere, Dio emphasizes what he sees as the 'most political and rhetorical' (πολιτικωτάτη και ῥητορικωτάτη) dramaturgy of Euripides, compared to the supposed simplicity and grandeur of Aeschylus' treatment (*Orat.* 52.11; cf. 52.15)—a stylistic contrast traceable to Aristophanes. Euripides has been widely noted for his 'rhetorical' traits by modern critics not simply because his surviving plays more than double those of Aeschylus and Sophocles. Ancient critics, who had access to vast numbers of plays forever lost to us, persisted in seeing these traits as emblematic of Euripides' achievement; their judgement, then, supports the modern scholarly consensus.

Modern critics have noted the prevalence of rhetoric in Euripidean drama as one manifestation of the playwright's formalism, i.e., his deployment of recurrent narrative structures and dramaturgical patterns, especially in regard to

24 For further discussion, see Fairweather (1974); Mastronarde (2010) 1–9; Lefkowitz (2012) 87–103; cf. also Irwin (1983).

25 As claimed by Lefkowitz (2012) 89, 94.

the *agôn*.²⁶ Formalist analyses of tragedies into parts sung by the Chorus and parts spoken by actors have been occurring since Aristotle (*Po.* 1452b14–27), although some divisions remain controversial.²⁷ As for rhetoric in Euripides' dramas, such formalism generally works on two major levels. Firstly, the poet includes the *agôn* as a clearly demarcated 'type scene' with recognizable patterns of action across many dramas, even though significant variations exist from one *agôn* to the next. Secondly, the types of arguments used in these *agônes* and other scenes of persuasion often conform to well-known rhetorical tropes found in forensic speeches and sophistic speculations. Details about these specific types of argumentation used by Euripides' characters will be explored more fully below (albeit perforce selectively), but a few brief points about his deployment of rhetoric in broader formal terms are worth making. Often *agônes* involve two characters who argue in speeches of roughly equal length, sometimes in the presence of an arbitrator. These kinds of speeches are, in Aristotelian terms, 'judicial', since an accused faces an accuser, as in, for instance, *Hecuba*, *Hippolytus*, *Electra*, *Troades*. As for stage action, such confrontations are often framed by the arrival and departure of one or more of the figures involved, emphasising the scene's dramatic distinctness (*Tro.* 860–1059; *Pho.* 465–525, *El.* 998–1137, etc.). Moreover, the long speeches (*rhêseis*) are often framed by shorter acrimonious exchanges by the 'litigants' sometimes in stichomythia (exchanges of dialogue line by line) and punctuated by a short interjection by the Chorus or other spectator, sometimes conciliatory in tone (*Alc.* 673–674; *Or.* 542–543; but cf. *Tro.* 966–968; *Cyc.* 313–315). Others take the form of supplication speeches whereby one character pleads for help from another (*Med.* 324, cf. 340–347; *Suppl.* 162–192; *Hec.* 251–295; cf. also *Cyc.* 285–346, etc.). On occasion Euripides indulges in heavy-handed 'sign-posting' that an *agôn* is about to take place; characters sometimes see themselves as having to engage in a 'contest of words' (*Med.* 522–525, 546; cf. *Hipp.* 971–972); or they specifically outline the arrangement (*taxis*) of their speech to follow (*Med.* 475, 515; *Tro.* 970, etc.); other figures demand that an *agôn* be held in the first-place order to establish the truth of past actions (*Tro.*

26 As noted by many: for instance, Strohm (1957) 30–49; Lloyd (1992) esp. 1–2, 4–5; Clausen (1997) *passim*, esp. 136–146, 273–301; Dubischar (2001) esp. 56–80 and (2017), esp. 370–373; Mastrorarde (2010) esp. 222–245; Roselli (2017) esp. 396–399.

27 Taplin (1977) 49–60 rejects much in Aristotle's schematization of tragedy's form; he suggests a key aspect of tragedy's formal structure is the alternation of speech and song 'bound up' with actors' exits before songs and entries after songs (54–55); cf. Dubischar (2017) 368–369.

906–910, etc.). The dramatic formalism underpinning Euripides' handling of rhetoric has led some to criticize him for a certain artificiality or a charge traceable to Aristophanes.²⁸ But the formal rhetorical techniques in Euripides' plays, even if not achieving the desired persuasion or satisfactory resolution of the conflict, nevertheless can have a significant dramatic impact.

The details of these virtuosic rhetorical displays take a number of different forms, including one or more of the following tropes: a self-consciousness shown by the speaker(s) about what is needed to be persuasive; a clear structure to one's speech involving introduction (*prooimion*), narrative, proofs, point-by-point rebuttal and recapitulation;²⁹ an awareness of the likelihood of success or failure in the attempt at persuasion; use of arguments based on probability or *eikos*, which Plato (*Phdr.* 267a, 273b–d) and Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1402a 17) saw as a preeminent rhetorical technique;³⁰ attempts to ingratiate oneself to the audience—sometimes called *captatio benevolentiae*; arguments based on character or *êthos* (e.g. Arist. *Rhet.* 1356a4–13); use of *reductio ad absurdum* or pushing an argument to an extreme or paradoxical position; anticipating an opponent's objections to an argument, or *prokatalêpsis*.³¹ At times Euripides will use such formal tropes to impel the play's narrative, reveal the complexities of the situations and moral dilemmas in his dramas, or hint at aspects of character—suspicion of accomplished or glib speakers attaches to figures like Odysseus in the (*Hec.* 131–133) or *IA* (526).³² As some have noted, some agonistic speeches do not affect the speaker's attitudes, coming after a decision has already been made about a character's guilt or innocence, as in the *Hippolytus*, *Cretans* or *Electra*;³³ others do affect the subsequent action. Yet such scenes—often underpinned by clear formal components—invariably generate much interest because of the verbal dexterity, multiplicity of viewpoints and intellectual acumen with which Euripides' characters imbue the dramatic situation. In

28 Duchemin (1945); Collard (1975) 59; Michelini (1987) 123 sees this as leading to an 'anti-poetic effect' in Euripides' writing. Lloyd (1992) 2 sees Sophocles' *agônes* as 'more naturalistic' than those of Euripides; cf., however, Roselli (2017) 397.

29 Plato (*Phdr.* 266d–267a) and Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1414b19–1420a8) outline these features in their analyses of rhetoric.

30 For fuller discussion of probability in fifth-century rhetorical theory, see Goebel (1989); Gagarin (2007).

31 Lloyd (1992) 21, 30–31; see also Mastronarde (2010) 209–210.

32 See, e.g. Jouan (1984); Mossman (1995) 94–141 discusses at length how rhetoric reveals character, especially in the *Hecuba* (esp. 98–99); see also Mastronarde (2010) 207–245.

33 As noted by Strohm (1957) 37–38; Collard (1975); Lloyd (1992) 44–45.

such scenes we find parallels to the writings and ideas of the sophists, Thucydides and others, and thus connections to the broader intellectual context of Euripides' day.³⁴

3 Rhetoric in Action

3.1 *Problematic Prooimia and Suspicious Minds*

In the *Hecuba*, after the aged Trojan queen has avenged herself on the Thracian king Polymestor who has killed her son, a clearly signposted *agôn* takes place in which Agamemnon announces that he will act as judge, after hearing each speaker in turn, to determine if Hecuba's actions were just (*Hec.* 1129–1131). Significantly, at the outset of the debate, he tells Polymestor 'cast out your barbarian nature and speak' (ἐκβαλὼν δὲ καρδίας τὸ βάρβαρον / λέγ', 1129–1130). Euripides thus presents the ability to debate and hear both sides of an issue as a quintessentially Greek characteristic. After a simple λέγοιμι ἄν ('May I speak': 1132), the Thracian king launches into the narrative of the horrific events in which he was blinded and his sons killed; by contrast, Hecuba muses on the nature of speech-making itself, referring to her own 'preamble' and the rest of her speech to 'come' (1187–1196):

Ἀγάμεμνον, ἀνθρώποισιν οὐκ ἐχρῆν ποτε
τῶν πραγμάτων τὴν γλῶσσαν ἰσχύειν πλέον·
ἀλλ' εἴτε χρήστ' ἔδρασε χρήστ' ἔδει λέγειν,
εἴτ' αὖ πονηρὰ τοὺς λόγους εἶναι σαθρούς,
καὶ μὴ δύνασθαι τᾶδικ' εὖ λέγειν ποτέ.
σοφοὶ μὲν οὖν εἰσ' οἱ τὰδ' ἠκριβωκότες,
ἀλλ' οὐ δύνανται διὰ τέλους εἶναι σοφοί,
κακῶς δ' ἀπώλοντ'· οὐτις ἐξήλυξέ πω.
καὶ μοι τὸ μὲν σὸν ᾧδε φροίμοις ἔχει·
πρὸς τόνδε δ' εἶμι καὶ λόγοις ἀμείψομαι·

Agamemnon, men's tongues ought never to have more force than their doings: if a man has done good deeds, his speech ought to be good, if bad, then his words should ring false, and he should never be able to give injustice a fair name. Clever (σοφοί) are the men who have mastered this art, yet their cleverness cannot endure to the end. They die a wretched death:

34 See Finley (1938); more recently, Dunn (2017); Worman (2017).

not one has yet escaped. This is what I have to say to you in my preamble.
But now I shall turn to this man and make my reply.³⁵

This is no attack on rhetoric as such; rather it shows awareness of how language can be manipulated to conceal evils, but that such attempts inevitably fail, however σοφοί people are. Conversely, there is an optimistic belief that good deeds can be reflected in good speech—an idea echoed by the, admittedly partisan, Chorus (*Hec.* 1238–1239; cf. *Her.* 236–237). While objections to clever speakers occur in other fifth-century texts, for instance, the views of the bullish demagogue, Cleon as recounted by Thucydides (3.37.4–5, 3.42.2, etc.), Hecuba's optimistic faith that speech can reflect reality more closely parallels the ideas of Protagoras and Prodicus (Pl. *Crat.* 391b–c; *Phdr.* 267c) on the precise referentiality of language; it also contrasts with the scepticism of Gorgias on this subject (e.g. *Hel.* 11).³⁶

In the build-up to the *agôn* in the *Troades* between Helen and Hecuba (*Tro.* 904–913), Menelaus announces he has no time for speeches (*logoi*) and intends to put his wife to death. But Hecuba insists that Helen be heard so that she herself can present opposite arguments (τοὺς ἐναντίους λόγους); she believes that her entire account (ὁ πᾶς λόγος)—an expression with forensic overtones in Aeschylean drama³⁷—will condemn Helen (*Tro.* 907, 909). Hecuba's approach to the situation also recalls Protagoras' interest in contrasting and eristic arguments (Protag. A1, B1, 5, 6–6b DK). Like Gorgias' Palamedes,³⁸ she expresses a faith in the efficacy of rhetoric properly deployed to arrive at the truth, even though ultimately she fails to achieve her goal and can see that Menelaus is still under Helen's thrall, captivated by her seductive presence. She berates Helen for appearing not in humble attire and for having adorned her body (δέμας ... ἀσκήσασα, *Tro.* 1022–1023), indicating her 'shamelessness' (ἀναιδεία, 1027). In an echo of the Chorus' condemnation of Helen in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (690), Euripides' Hecuba had earlier warned Menelaus that Helen steals men's eyes and destroys cities, such are her 'spells' (κηλήματα, *Tro.* 891–893). The failure of Hecuba's rhetoric here thus has a deeply ironizing effect about the efficacy of *logos*. The sight of Helen undoes Hecuba's case and Menelaus' resolve; and

35 All translations of passages from Euripides are from Kovacs (1994–2002).

36 Cf. Gorgias' *On Not Being* (B 3.83–87 DK).

37 In *Dicteulci* Danae's plaintive speech to Zeus concludes with this expression (fr. 47a col. 1.21); cf. also Aesch. *Ag.* 582; for discussion, see O'Sullivan (2019, 58).

38 As Segal (1962) 119–121 argued, Gorgias' *Defence of Palamedes* (B 11a DK) ostensibly presents *logos* as a vehicle which can rationally convey truth with accuracy (see esp. Gorg. *Pal.* 4, 5, 15, 24, 28, 33). Gorgias presents us with a deeper irony here; despite the innocent Palamedes' meticulous argument, he fails to win his own acquittal, as he seems to anticipate (cf. *Pal.* 35).

those familiar with Homer will know from book 4 of the *Odyssey* husband and wife seem to enjoy a relatively peaceful life back in Sparta. Hecuba sees the forces of *erôs* (desire) at work in Menelaus' actions—or lack of them (*Tro.* 1051); and it is worth recalling that Perseus, in Euripides' *Andromeda* describes *erôs* as a 'tyrant' over gods and mortals (fr. 136.1).³⁹

In the *agôn* between husband and wife in *Medea*, for all the passion and anger that she directs at Jason (*Med.* 465–466, etc.), Medea wishes from the outset to find exactly the right word to describe Jason's actions. Demonstrating an interest in linguistic precision reminiscent of Protagoras (A 24 DK, etc.) or Prodicus (A 11 DK, etc.), she points out that Jason has not shown boldness (*θράσος*) or courage (*εὐτολμία*), but shamelessness (*ἀναίδεια*) in coming to see the family he has abandoned (469–472). Later (598–599) she distinguishes between synonyms in saying that she wishes for neither a 'prosperous life' (*εὐδαίμων βίος*) or wealth (*ἄλβος*) if it causes her pain.⁴⁰ When making her case against Jason, Medea continues to use rhetorical tropes, and embarks on what Plato in his analysis of speech (*Phdr.* 267a) calls the narrative (*διήγησις*); as has been recognized, her language is notably forensic: 'I shall begin my speech from the beginning' *ἐκ τῶν δὲ πρώτων πρώτον ἄρξομαι λέγειν* (475).⁴¹

After Medea has made her powerful case against him and outlined her own plight with a series of rhetorical questions (esp. 500–504), Jason realizes the rhetorical task ahead of him: 'It appears that I must be no mean speaker ...' (*δεῖ μ', ὡς ἔοικε, μὴ κακὸν φῦναι λέγειν*: 522); in effect, he must be *δεινὸς λέγειν*—a feature seen as typical of sophists such as Gorgias and Thrasymachus.⁴² He also sees himself as being embroiled in a 'contest of words' (*ἄμιλλαν ... λόγων*) which he says Medea has started (546). Variations of this expression recur elsewhere in Euripidean drama, notably the *Hippolytus* (971–972, 1021–1024), *Hecuba* (271) and *Suppliants* (195, 426–428), and Gorgias also uses the expression to describe debates among philosophers (*Hel.* 13). The first part of Jason's speech in *Medea* (526–544) is smug and misogynistic in its dismissal of everything his former

39 A visual analogue to this scene is found in fifth-century vase painting; Menelaus drops his sword after seeing Helen's exposed breasts as she flees from him (*LIMC* IV.1, s.v. 'Helene' 260, 262, 264–266, 269–272, 274, 275, 277); Aristophanes also refers to the episode (*Lys.* 155–156).

40 As noted by McDonald (2007) 479–480.

41 See Lloyd (1992) 34–35; Scodel (2000) 134, 138–139; Mastronarde (2002) 251–252, who notes that the words recall, for instance, Lysias (1.5, 12.3) and Demosthenes (21.12). The polyptoton—repetition of the same word in different cases—of *πρώτων πρώτων* adds to the stylized, rhetorical nature of Medea's words here.

42 Gorgias (A 21 DK = Pl. *Meno* 95c); and cf. the Platonic Socrates' verdict on Thrasymachus (*Phdr.* 267c–d).

wife has done for him; this tenor continues in the second part of his speech whose contents he outlines in a kind of *prooimion* in which he thinks he will show (δείξω) three points: that he was ‘wise’, ‘sensible’ and a ‘great friend’ to Medea and his children (548–550). Cassandra in the *Troades* gives a speech in which she argues that Troy is more blessed than the Greeks who have conquered the city—an exercise in paradoxical rhetoric typically associated with sophists.⁴³ She, too, begins with δείξω, the word Hecuba also uses to outline the case she will make against Helen later in the play (*Tro.* 970). Gorgias uses similar language; in enunciating the emotional powers of *logos*, Gorgias says he ‘will show’ how this is the case: ταῦτα δὲ ὡς οὕτως ἔχει δείξω (*Hel.* 8).

At times Euripides’ characters begin confidently, referring to their clarity and directness of speaking which they consider will be crucial to their persuasiveness, as does Agamemnon in *Iphigenia at Aulis* (378–380, 400). When making his claim to the throne of Thebes, Polynices in the *Phoenissae* draws attention to his speaking style; for him simplicity, truth and justice are all linked, and the unjust *logos* is diseased (469–472):

ἀπλοῦς ὁ μῦθος τῆς ἀληθείας ἔφω,
 κού ποικίλων δεῖ τᾶνδιχ’ ἐρμηνευμάτων·
 ἔχει γὰρ αὐτὰ καιρόν· ὁ δ’ ἄδικος λόγος
 νοσῶν ἐν αὐτῷ φαρμάκων δεῖται σοφῶν.

Truth’s argument is simple, and justice needs no elaborate presentation: all by itself it shows the proper measure. But unjust argument, being diseased in itself, requires clever medicines.

Euripides here may be invoking ideas of correctness of language associated with Protagoras (A 24 DK, etc.) or Prodicus (A 11 DK, etc.); but ‘keeping it simple’ is something that seems to have appealed to Cleon (Thuc. 3.37.4–5), who may afford another parallel here, even though he uses such a trope to argue for brutal expediency, as opposed to justice, in the Mytilenean debate.⁴⁴ Polynices’ linking of an ‘unjust argument’ with drugs or medicines (φαρμάκα) has

43 Apart from Gorgias’ *Encomium of Helen*, Polycrates eulogized pebbles and urns (Alex. *Rhet.* 3.3.10 Sp.), and a mouse (Arist. *Rhet.* 1401b15); Alcidamas eulogized death (Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.48.116) and a prostitute (Athen. 592c). Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1402a23) associates Protagoras with ‘making the weaker argument stronger’, and Aristophanes (*Clouds* 112–114) links this activity to sophists generally.

44 Comparable to Cleon’s view is that of Euripides’ Polyphemus, who, in rejecting Odysseus’ pleas to uphold the ritual of guest-friendship (*xenia*), says those who complicate (ποικίλοντες) human life with laws ‘can go hang!’ (*κλαίειν ἄνωγα*: Cyc. 338–340).

something Gorgianic about it, too, as the Sicilian orator tells us that *logoi* in general affect the soul like *φαρμάκα* affect the body, and states that the persuasive effects of *logos* both 'drug and bewitch the soul through evil persuasion' (οἱ (sc. λόγοι) δὲ πειθοῖ τινα κακῆι τὴν ψυχὴν ἐφαρμάκευσαν καὶ ἐξεγοήτευσαν: *Hel.* 14).⁴⁵ Polynices ends the way he began, reiterating the simplicity of his words (*logoi*), and claiming to speak just things (*endika*) to the wise (*sophoi*) and simple (*phauloi*). By drawing attention to his onstage audience, he underlines his awareness that he is putting on a rhetorical display (*Pho.* 494–496). Unsurprisingly, Eteocles begins his speech by attacking his brother's belief in the link between simplicity of word and truth; he argues that while people use the same words or names (ὀνόματα), the meaning or reality (ἔργον) they attach to those words is not the same (499–502). Some have seen links here to the supposed 'relativism' of Protagoras or scepticism of Gorgias,⁴⁶ but parallels from other fifth-century intellectual currents suggest themselves. The sophistic treatise *Dissoi Logoi* focuses on how the one phenomenon can be both 'good' for one person and 'bad' for another (90 DK 1.1–17); and Thucydides tells us that in the stasis in Corcyra people changed the accepted meanings of words to fit in with actions they considered justified (3.82.4).⁴⁷

At times speakers' preambles become more vexed as the need for rhetorical skill becomes evident. When about to make her speech against her mother, Clytemnestra, Electra asks how she is to arrange her *logos* which she has been rehearsing (θρῦλοῦσα) since early morning (*El.* 907–910); the same trope occurs in speeches by orators such as Hyperides (6.6–9) and Andocides (1.8). Hippolytus, when defending himself against the false charge of having raped his stepmother, Phaedra, refers to his own inexperience as a speaker (986–991), a technique used by Socrates at his trial, according to Plato (*Apol.* 17d–18a), and found also in speeches by Lysias (12.3, etc.) and Demosthenes (27.2, etc.), where it

45 In *Hippolytus*, as the Nurse speaks of finding a drug (φάρμακον) to help Phaedra, she also mentions 'epodes and words that have beguiling charm' (ἐπιωδαὶ καὶ λόγοι θελκτῆριοι, 478–479); likewise, Gorgias speaks of *logos* in the form of 'inspired epodes' (ἐνθεοὶ ἐπιωδαὶ) whose power, he tells us, 'charms' (ἔθειλξε) and persuades the soul (*Hel.* 10).

46 E.g. Mastroratte (1994) 288. Each speaker also reflects aspects of the *nomos-phusis* debate pioneered by the sophists. Polynices seems to think language, properly used, can reflect reality in a 'natural' way (*phusis*); for Eteocles, language reflects convention (*nomos*) and can vary from one person to the next. The Platonic Calicles, himself no sophist, likewise talks of 'justice' by *phusis* and *nomos* (*Gorg.* 482e–484c); see Heiniman (1945); Dubischar (2001) 358–363.

47 For instance, 'irrational daring' (τόλμα ἀλόγιστος) became called 'loyal courage' (ἀνδρεία φιλέταρος), etc. Cf. also Thuc. 2.65.9, where we are told that Athens under Pericles was a democracy in word (λόγῳ); but in fact (ἔργῳ) it was government by the first citizen.

ostensibly aims at gaining sympathy from the jury.⁴⁸ Some *prooimia* draw attention to the complex nature of rhetoric itself—its powers and limitations—or the dangers faced by speakers if they are seen to be too eloquent even if their life may depend on their speech-making abilities. The beginning of Andromache's strong speech in response to the unfounded accusations that she has made Hermione infertile (*Andr.* 184–234) highlights her own vulnerability especially as a slave; but it also reveals a strength of character as she will not baulk from defending herself (186–190):

ἐγὼ δὲ ταρβῶ μὴ τὸ δουλεύειν μέ σοι
 λόγων ἀπώσηι πόλλ' ἔχουσαν ἔνδικα,
 ἦν δ' αὖ κρατήσω, μὴ 'πί τῶιδ' ὄφλω βλάβην·
 οἱ γὰρ πνέοντες μεγάλα τοὺς κρείσσους λόγους
 πικρῶς φέρουσι τῶν ἔλασσόνων ὕπο·

I am afraid that my being your slave will prevent me from speaking, even though my case is strong, and that if I win the argument I may for that very reason suffer harm. Those whose pride is great do not take kindly to hearing superior arguments from their inferiors.

Rhetorical skill is necessary to her cause even if she realizes it may antagonize her opponent further. These sentiments could apply to a slave of Euripides' own day; and it is significant that Andromache extrapolates from her own situation to the problems generally faced by slaves when falsely accused by their masters. It is true that Homer makes Andromache speak passionately and at length to her husband in public (*Il.* 6.407–439), so an eloquent, impassioned Andromache is not entirely new. But her dwelling on the nature of *logos* is a post-Homeric development and highlights the implications that speech-making has for power relations and social status. Andromache's spirited self-defence leads to her being called σοφή twice by the embittered Hermione (*Andr.* 245), thus becoming a figure of suspicion in her eyes.

Suspicion of speakers considered too 'clever' is notable elsewhere in Euripidean drama. As often happens in formal *agônes*, the Chorus comment on one or both *rhêseis* made by the combatants; in *Medea* the Chorus of Corinthian women note the clarity of Jason's argument, but it is likely that they speak for many in the ancient and modern worlds when they tell him (576–578):

48 Barrett (1964) on 986–987 plausibly sees a certain priggishness in Hippolytus' claim; see also Dubischar (2001) 371–384.

Ἰάσον, εὖ μὲν τοῦσδ' ἐκόσμησας λόγους·
 ὅμως δ' ἔμοιγε, κεῖ παρὰ γνώμην ἔρω,
 δοκεῖς προδοῦς σὴν ἄλοχον οὐ δίκαια δρᾶν.

Jason, you have marshalled your arguments very skillfully, but I think, even though it may be imprudent to say so, that in abandoning your wife you are not doing right.

Of interest here is that the Chorus recognize an important distinction between the content and form of a speech; also, like Andromache, their social status makes them reluctant to speak. Medea echoes the Chorus' sentiments (580–583):

ἔμοι γὰρ ὅστις ἄδικος ὦν σοφὸς λέγειν
 πέφυκε, πλείστην ζημίαν ὀφλισκάνει·
 γλώσσηι γὰρ ἀνύχων τᾶδικ' εὖ περιστελεῖν
 τολμαῖι πανουργεῖν· ἔστι δ' οὐκ ἄγαν σοφός.

To my mind, the plausible speaker who is a scoundrel incurs the greatest punishment. For since he is confident that he can cleverly cloak injustice with his words, his boldness stops at no knavery. Yet he is not as wise (σοφός) as all that.

Characters elsewhere voice suspicions that clever speakers can obscure facts, or that 'excessively beautiful words' (οἱ καλοὶ λίαν λόγοι) can even destroy cities and households, as Phaedra tells her Nurse (*Hipp.* 486–489). The Chorus in the *Troades* see Helen's defence speech in a similar light; in oxymoronic language that recalls Hesiod's Pandora as a 'beautiful evil' (καλὸν κακόν: *Th.* 585), they say that Helen 'speaks beautifully although she works evil' (λέγει / κακοῦργος καλῶς οὔσα). But in calling on Hecuba to refute Helen's arguments also the Chorus implicitly show faith in the ability of rhetoric to establish the truth (*Tro.* 966–968).

Euripides also explores the problem of the 'clever speaker' from the other side, i.e. the perspective of the speaker in question. Medea's eloquence has been extensively analyzed,⁴⁹ but when we first hear her, she is behind the *skéné* building bewailing her lot as abandoned wife and mother in Corinth, in highly

49 See, for instance, Buxton (1982) 147–153; Lloyd 41–43; McClure (1999) esp. 19–29 who emphasizes the significance of gender in the speeches of Euripides' female characters; Mastrorarde (2002) and (2010) 226–227.

emotive lyrics (96–98, 111–114, 144–147, 160–167). But when she does appear, she delivers the famous ‘Women of Corinth’ speech (214–266) in which she articulates the plight of being a woman in a man’s world. Throughout this speech, she is as lucid as she is vulnerable. When the ruler of Corinth, Creon, tells her she is to be banished immediately because she is ‘clever/skilled’ (σοφή) and may harm his daughter, now betrothed to Jason (271–276, 282–291), Medea reflects on how her reputation (δόξα) has harmed her and extrapolates on the fate of all those who encounter difficulties because of a reputation for cleverness (292–303). Clytemnestra in Euripides’ *Electra* makes the same point at the outset of her speech justifying her killing of Agamemnon (1011–1050); like Medea, she generalizes from her own situation; when an evil δόξα has taken hold of a woman unjustly, people will not listen to her (1013–1017). For both women, their gender puts them at a disadvantage, which, for Medea, becomes worsened because of her ethnicity, since she is also a foreigner in world dominated by Greek men.

Euripides’ *Suppliant Women* adds a political dimension to this suspicion of clever speakers. This drama, telling of Theseus’ righteous intervention after the Theban War to ensure proper burial of the Argive attackers, has attracted attention not least for its political content, manifest especially in the *agôn* between the ‘democratic’ Attic king and the monarchically-inclined Theban herald (*Suppl.* 381–597).⁵⁰ Similar to Cleon’s distaste for those who supposedly try to be too clever (σοφώτεροι) for a city’s laws (Thuc. 3.37.4–5),⁵¹ is the herald’s resentment of speakers who manipulate the city, ‘flattering it with words/speeches’ (ἐκχαυνῶν λόγοις, 412), especially if they are of low birth (423–425); the herald now make’s one’s status an issue in the acceptability of one’s rhetoric. This idea anticipates the hostility of the Platonic Socrates—no lover of democracy—to conventional rhetoric which, as noted above, he considered a form of *κολακεία* (*Gorg.* 465a–b, 502b–d). Theseus’ square-jawed defence of democracy is well known,⁵² but its rhetorical self-consciousness is clear from his reference to the herald’s speechifying, calling him κομψός (‘over ingenious’).⁵³ He responds to the Theban’s attack on democratic procedure by

50 See Collard (1975b) 23–31, 207–256; Goldhill (1987); Morwood (2007) 5–11; cf. also Rhodes (2003).

51 Cleon shares the Euripidean herald’s political views; he tells the Athenians that their empire is really a ‘tyranny’ and should act like one (Thuc. 3.37.2).

52 Mastronarde (1986) and (2010) 215–222, argues that Theseus is, like Jocasta in the *Phoenician Women* or Tiresias in the *Bacchae* (esp. 265–329), an ‘optimistic rationalist’ with belief in orderly and intelligible universe.

53 In *Cyclops* 313–315, the satyr Silenus tells Polyphemus with malicious glee that he will become κομψός and a great ‘chatterer’ (λαλίστατος) if he eats Odysseus’ tongue; see O’Sullivan/Collard (2013) ad loc.

extolling the idea of equality before the law, access to free speech and involvement in government for rich and poor citizen alike (esp. 433–438), recalling much in Pericles' Funeral Speech (Thuc. 2.37.1, etc.).⁵⁴ In fact, *Suppliant Women* contains an extended echo of the particularly Athenian annual ritual of the public Funeral Oration for the war dead; this time it is given by the king Adrastus for the fallen Argive warriors (*Suppl.* 857–917). Scholars are divided as to whether or not the speech is a parody of or genuine homage to Athens' Funeral Orations.⁵⁵

3.2 *Rhetorical Counter Attacks and Pre-emptive Moves*

The technique of attacking one's accusers, known as ἀντικατηγορία, occurs in Antiphon's tetralogies (3.2) and is mentioned in the *Rhetoric to Alexander* (1442b7);⁵⁶ it occurs in the conflict between Admetus and his father, Pheres, from the *Alcestis* (esp. 629–705), often taken as the first complete *agôn* we have from Euripides.⁵⁷ Apollo has granted Admetus a chance to avoid death if he can find someone to die in his place, a task which he expected someone of his parents' age to fulfill, but which eventually falls to wife, Alcestis. This undignified stoush involves a personal attack by Admetus, followed by a counter-attack by his father; it ends acrimoniously, largely in stichomythia (706–738). Pheres reasserts his position as father of Admetus in calling him 'Boy' (παῖ) and outlines exactly what he as a father has bequeathed him and what he does not owe him; fathers, he says, are not obliged to die for their sons (675–685). He continues with a series of rhetorical questions (689–691), like Pasiphae in *Cretans* (fr. 472.11–19), and, indulging in some ἀντικατηγορία, accuses Admetus of what he himself has been accused of, namely cowardice and excessive love of life (696–705); he calls his son ὦ κάκιστε 'o most worthless man' (697), a recurrent insult in such scenes. Elsewhere counter claims attempt to put the accuser at the very heart of the problem. In the *Cretans*, Pasiphae, addition to citing the gods as a cause of her actions, turns directly on

54 Loraux (1986, rev. 1993)—the most thorough study of the Greek funeral oration—sees parallels between the Theseus' words in the *agôn* of *Suppliant Women* and Pericles' *Epitaphios* (pp. 243–244; cf. 259–260). For notions of *isonomia* or *isêgoria* elsewhere, see Hdt. (3.80.6); Dem. (21.124); cf. Isoc. (8.14).

55 See Collard (1975b) 323–338; Morwood (2007) 14–16. Loraux (1986, rev. 1993) 82–84; 443 n. 109 sees no hint of parody in Euripides' play.

56 A late fourth-century BC treatise generally, but not universally, ascribed to Anaximenes, largely on the basis of a passage from Quintilian (3.4.9; cf. 3.10.4); for a judicious overview, see Chiron (2007) esp. 101–104.

57 See, for instance, Duchemin (1945); Lloyd (1992) 36–41; Dubischar (2001) 295–307; Mastronarde (2010) 227–229.

Minos himself, blaming him for her predicament in not sacrificing the bull to Poseidon (fr. 472e21–26). Likewise, Helen's defence speech in *Troades* blames her antagonist Hecuba as the cause of the troubles for not killing Paris at birth (919–922). Helen also berates Menelaus for leaving her alone with Paris when he came to Sparta, calling him ὦ κάκιστε 'o most worthless man' (943–944), an echo of Pasiphae's words to Minos ὦ κάκιστε ἀνδρῶν 'o most worthless of men' (fr. 472e32), and Pheres' jibe at his son (*Alc.* 697). Similarly, Orestes undercuts the claim of his grandfather, Tyndareus, who wishes to put him to death for the murder of Clytemnestra; Orestes at the end of his long speech of self-defence (*Or.* 544–604) blames the old man for begetting a wicked (κακῆ) daughter whose own wantonness (θράσος) caused him to become a matricide (*Or.* 585–587).

In using *reductio ad absurdum* arguments, Euripidean characters redirect their opponent's thinking back at them, and create a hypothetical situation in which the tables are turned. Clytemnestra, when trying to save her daughter Iphigenia from being sacrificed by Agamemnon (*IA* 1146–1208), suggests that he should tell the rest of the Greeks to draw lots to see whose child must die; in this way she demonstrates the cruel and arbitrary nature of the oracle that her innocent daughter must be sacrificed. Alternatively, she demands that Menelaus should kill his daughter, Hermione, since, as the husband of Helen, it is his 'affair' (πράγμα: 1202). In Euripides' *Electra* Clytemnestra again uses the same argument to point out the injustice of her daughter's death and the justice of her murder of Agamemnon. Here she faces up to her accusers—and surviving children—Orestes and Electra who are intent on killing her, and she hypothetically substitutes Menelaus for Helen and Orestes for Iphigenia (*El.* 1041–1045):

εἰ δ' ἐκ δόμων ἤρπαστο Μενέλεως λάθρῃ,
 κτανεῖν μ' Ὀρέστην χρῆν, κασιγνήτης πόσιν
 Μενέλαον ὡς σώσαιμι; σὸς δὲ πῶς πατήρ
 ἠνέσχετ' ἄν ταῦτ';

If Menelaus had been abducted from his house in secret, would I have been right to kill Orestes in order to preserve Menelaus, my sister's husband? How would your father have put up with that?

Again, she effectively draws attention to the unjust and arbitrary ways in which people reacted to the abduction of Helen, since she realizes how unacceptable the hypothetical situation she has conjured up would be. At the same time, she also highlights her own suffering as a mother which would be no less than

Agamemnon's as a father in losing his son. As so often in Euripidean drama, we are confronted here with a powerful alternative voice.

The technique of *prokatalêpsis* aims to undermine the opposition case before it is even stated; Clytemnestra immediately uses this form of argument after her positing her hypothetical alternative noted above (*El.* 1046).⁵⁸ Helen in her defence speech⁵⁹ in the *Troades* uses *prokatalêpsis* a number of times: 'you will claim that I am not yet talking about the obvious point' (οὐπω με φήσεις αὐτὰ τὰν ποσὶν λέγειν, *Tro.* 938). Again, she says, explaining why she did not return to the Greeks after Paris' death: 'at this point you might raise a specious objection against me' (ἔνθεν δ' ἔχοις ἂν εἰς ἔμ' εὐπρεπῆ λόγον, *Tro.* 951) and calls for witnesses (now conveniently slaughtered?) who could back up her claims that she did try to escape.⁶⁰ Helen takes *prokatalêpsis* further to put herself in her opponents' position and asks herself the sort of questions which she imagines they would ask of her; in lines reminiscent of Sappho (fr. 16.5–11 LP), she says (*Tro.* 945–947):

οὐ σ', ἀλλ' ἑμαυτὴν τοῦπι τῶιδ' ἐρήσομαι·
 τί δὴ φρονοῦσά γ' ἐκ δόμων ἄμ' ἐσπόμεν
 ξένωι, προδοῦσα πατρίδα καὶ δόμους ἐμούς;

Well then, in what follows I will question myself and not you. What was I thinking of, that I left the house in the company of a stranger, abandoning my country and my home?

As Helen shows, this argumentation can be an effective technique in front of a particularly hostile opponent or judge; then as now, it can allow one to dictate the terms of a debate.

Euripides' *Heraclidae*—which tells of Athens' protection of the innocent children of Heracles who were being persecuted by their father's former overlord, Eurystheus—can be seen as the dramatic counterpart to public speeches which lauded Athenian prowess and defence of the weak, by, for instance, Lysias (2.11–16), Isocrates (4.54–60) and Demosthenes (60.8). Euripides' play

58 For *prokatalêpsis* in contemporary rhetorical exercises, see, e.g. Gorgias (*Pal.* 23); Plato (*Apol.* 20c); Lysias (6.13); Demosthenes (19.237).

59 NB the legalistic tone is evident in the formal indicators to various parts of her speech (*Tro.* 923, 931, 938, 945, 951, 961).

60 For summoning of witnesses as a typical feature of a forensic speech, see Antiphon (1.28; cf. 2.2.7); Plato (*Gorg.* 471e; *Phdr.* 266e); Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1375b26–30); see also Duchemin (1945) 198–199; Lloyd (1992) 33–34.

can thus be seen as an 'encomium of Athens', as his *Suppliant Women* is described in its *Hypothesis*.⁶¹ In the *agôn* between the Argive herald and Iolaus we witness *prokatalêpsis* and arguments emphasising kinship and pity. Mid-way through the *agôn* the Chorus emphasize the rhetorical self-consciousness of this encounter by asking how it is possible for anyone to make a sound judgement of a case before hearing 'a statement from both sides' (*παρ' ἀμφοῖν μῦθον*, 179–180), a sentiment consistent with Protagoras' *Antilogiai* or *Contrasting Arguments* (A1, B1, 5, 6–6b DK). The menacing Argive herald, when trying to drag the fugitives from the altar and take them back to Eurystheus, asks rhetorical questions of Demophon (= 'voice of the people'), the Attic king and children's defender; he also attempts to anticipate the Athenian's response.⁶² The *prokatalêpsis* here is designed to undermine Demophon's altruistic motives for helping the fugitives and cynically appeals to Attic self-interest (153–168). But this has little traction with the Athenians, in the wake of Iolaus' plea to Demophon which stresses ties of kinship and pity (esp. 205–231) and which wins the endorsement of the Chorus (232–235). At such times the (mis)use of *prokatalêpsis* indicates that one speaker has profoundly misunderstood the character of the other; the herald (wrongly) thinks that Demophon and he share the same motivations.

3.3 Arguments from Pity, Probabilities and Ethos

Arguments from probability or *eikos* are important in many Euripidean *agônes*. This type of argument finds parallels in Antiphon's forensic speeches (fr. 1a18; 2.2.3–6, etc.) and Gorgias' *Helen* (5). The Platonic Socrates even claimed that Tisias and Gorgias prized *eikota* (probabilities) over the truth (*Phdr.* 267a), and for Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1377b22–1378a5) the argument from *eikos* was an important weapon in the rhetorical panoply. A possibly early use of this argument occurs in *Cretans*.⁶³ In somewhat bizarre circumstances, Pasiphae says it was 'in no way probable' (*ἔχει γὰρ οὐδεν εἰκόσ*, fr. 472e11) that she would voluntarily mate with the bull and produce the Minotaur and bolsters her claim by a series of rhetorical questions (fr. 472.11–19), while also blaming the gods for her predica-

61 The theme of Attic altruism is evident also in Pericles' Funeral Speech (Thuc. 2.40.4–5), even though Pericles, and Cleon after him (Thuc. 2.63.2–3, cf. 3.37.2), acknowledge their empire as a tyranny.

62 *Prokatalêpsis* as a series of rhetorical questions also occurs in Adrastus' plea to Theseus (*Suppl.* 184–192); Andromache's defiance of Menelaus (*Andr.* 338–348), and Orestes' speeches to Tyndareus (*Or.* 579–584) and uncle Menelaus (665–668).

63 Metrical considerations, such as the absence of resolution in all the extant iambic trimeters, have suggested to some a date near *Alcestis* of 438 or earlier; see Collard/Cropp/Lee (1995) 58.

ment. Elsewhere, the *eikos* argument is implied. In *Heraclidae* the deposed Eurystheus sees himself as the 'contriver', literally, a 'sophist' (σοφιστής)⁶⁴ of his own troubles (993), and argues that he acted out of rational self-interest, and that Alcmena would have done the same (*Hclld.* 1000–1008). He sees his actions as grounded in human nature: wanting to maintain power and destroy one's enemies—much like the ideology of the Athenians in the Melian Dialogue (Thuc. 5.84–109) and Plato's Callicles (*Gorg.* 482e–484c). In *Suppliant Women* Theseus combines *prokatalêpsis* with an implied argument from *eikos* to challenge the Theban's view that the dead Argive attackers deserve no burial (*Suppl.* 543–548):

νεκρούς δὲ ταρβεῖτ' εἰ κρυφήσονται χθονί;
 τί μὴ γένηται; μὴ κατασκάψωσι γῆν
 ταφέντες ὑμῶν; ἢ τέκν' ἐν μυχοῖς χθονός
 φύσωσιν, ἐξ ὧν εἰσί τις τιμωρία;
 σκαιόν γε τάνάλωμα τῆς γλώσσης τόδε,
 φόβους πονηρῶν καὶ κενῶν δεδοικέναι.

... are you nevertheless afraid of the dead if they are hidden in the earth? What are you afraid may happen? That they will overthrow your land from the grave? Or that in the depths of the earth they will beget children who will avenge them? It is a foolish waste of breath to give voice to fears that are base and idle.

Here the *prokatalêpsis* takes the form of a series of rhetorical questions, which goes beyond anticipating an opponent's response; Theseus aims to expose the assumptions behind the Theban's views and to show how improbable—or lacking in *eikos*—they are. Like many other Euripidean debates, this one ends in mutual acrimony. But the failure of Theseus to succeed here would, for the original Athenian audience, say more about his opponent than about the high-minded and principled Attic king himself.⁶⁵

In other Euripidean encounters the *eikos* argument is combined with emotional appeals. After Creon has decided to banish Medea from Corinth, she wins him over by grabbing his hand and adopting the role of a suppliant (339). The king, having earlier dismissed her 'soothing words' (μαλθάχα), warily grants

64 It is tempting to see this loaded word here as having some self-referential force, as if Eurystheus is drawing attention to his to his own stylized speech-making.

65 *Mutatis mutandis*, the same would apply to Andromache in her clash with Menelaus which ends, as it began, in rancour (*Andr.* esp. 338–348).

her a day's grace, evidently moved, against his better judgement as he realizes. Here, Medea prevails with a particularly emotional use of the *eikos* argument, which is part of an impassioned plea for pity. Referring to her children, she pleads (344–347):

οἴκτιρε δ' αὐτούς· καὶ σύ τοι παίδων πατήρ
πέφυκας· εἰκὸς δέ σφιν εὖνοιάν σ' ἔχειν.
τοῦμοῦ γὰρ οὐ μοι φροντίς, εἰ φευξόμεθα,
κείνους δὲ κλαίω συμφορᾶι κεχρημένους.

Have pity on them. You too are a parent: it would be natural (εἰκὸς) for you to show kindness toward them. I do not care if I myself go into exile. It is *their* experience of misfortune I weep for.

Such appeals are known from Homeric epic, most famously when Priam ransoms Hector's corpse and moves Achilles to pity by his powerful act of supplication of kissing the hands of his son's killer and delivering a speech comparing himself to Achilles' own father (esp. *Il.* 24.477–506). Appeals to pity also became part of the rhetorical repertoire of the fifth and fourth centuries. Thrasymachus wrote a work called *Eleoi* on techniques to arouse pity (B 5 DK; cf. Arist. *Rhet.* 1385b11–1386b7). Pity-arousing rhetorical techniques invoking the plight of one's children appear in speeches by Andocides (1.148) and Demosthenes (21.99, 186–188) and were well-known enough for Aristophanes to parody them in his *Wasps* (568–569, 967–978). Socrates famously announces in his trial that he will *not* use that tactic when defending himself, as if flouting convention (Pl. *Apol.* 34c–d). In other Euripidean dramas appeals to pity do not always work (*Hec.* 285–286).

The *eikos* argument recurs in different contexts in *Medea* when she feigns a reconciliation with Jason so she can carry out her revenge; she thus embodies what she earlier despised: being a smooth but false talker (cf. *Med.* 580–583). In asking Jason to forgive her earlier outburst, Medea says it is 'reasonable' (*eikos*, 871) that Jason should forgive her because of their old love. She plays up to his misogyny in admitting her own foolishness (872–893) which she presents as typical of women generally (889–890) and pretends to agree to his plans for a new marriage. Medea has the measure of her audience here, something which Aristotle later acknowledged as important in attempts at persuasion (*Rhet.* 1377b22–1378a5); Medea cleverly expresses sentiments which she knows Jason is only too willing to hear. She also employs something akin to *captatio benevolentiae*, the technique of ingratiating oneself to the audience and adopting the kind of persona (*ēthos*) which will be seen in sympathetic terms; this enables

her to persuade Jason to help grant her ostensible request that her children not go into exile (939–940). The important tropes of *eikos* and *êthos* are here grounded in deceit.

Euripides thus raises an interesting problem about arguments from *eikos* and *êthos* here; do such arguments simply pander to common prejudices? In this context it is worth recalling the Platonic Socrates' complaint (*Gorg.* 465a–b, 502b–d) that conventional rhetoric is a form of flattery or pandering (κολακεία). Certainly Aristotle addresses some of the pitfalls of the argument from *eikos*, and such problems may have been evident to Tisias or Corax, according to tradition, the pioneers of such arguments (*Rhet.* 1402a18–23, etc.).⁶⁶ In any case, Euripides deepens the irony further by having Jason completely taken in by the ruse; he says that it is *eikos* that Medea was angry earlier and that now her deeds are those of a 'prudent woman' (γυναικὸς ... σώφρονος, 913). Medea's success in persuading Jason is central to the play's narrative as it enables her to take her terrible revenge and to depart in triumph.

In *Hippolytus* rhetorical tropes of *eikos* and *êthos* become problematic again but for different reasons. Before defending himself against the false charge of raping Phaedra, Hippolytus is already a condemned man, cursed by Theseus before their *agôn* begins (887–890). Both figures use forensic language and see themselves engaging in a 'contest of words' (971–972; 1021–1024).⁶⁷ Theseus derides his son's ascetic lifestyle (950–957) then uses *prokatalêpsis* (958–970) to anticipate claims Hippolytus might make in his defence; in doing so, Theseus removes himself further from the truth of the situation. From here more problems accrue. Hippolytus attempts to defend himself with an appeal to his own character, stating that nobody is 'more self-controlled' (σωφρονέστερος) than he, referring to his own piety and eschewal of all things to do with sex (995–1006). In the light of his notorious misogynistic rant (616–668), it is difficult not to see these lines as sanctimonious and likely to alienate Theseus further, just as Socrates alienates the jury by referring to the Delphic Oracle which said nobody in Greece was wiser than he (*Pl. Apol.* 21a).⁶⁸ Hippolytus has arguably missed an opportunity to present himself favourably to his accuser, a rhetorical technique acknowledged as important by Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1377b22–1378a5).

66 Gagarin (2007) 31–34.

67 Theseus asks rhetorically why he contends against Hippolytus' words (ἀμιλλῶμαι λόγοις: 971–972); Hippolytus uses the imperfect of ἀγωνίζομαι (1023), a verb with forensic connotations: e.g., Antiphon 5.7; Lysias 3.20; Demosthenes 23.100.

68 Twice Socrates tells the jurors not to shout (μὴ θορυβεῖτε), after telling them that Athens has never had a better good than himself (*Apol.* 21a, 30a–c).

Hippolytus embarks on an implicit argument from *eikos*, claiming tactlessly in a couple of rhetorical questions that Phaedra was neither attractive enough nor rich enough to interest him sexually (1009–1011). After this he states that he has no interest in assuming the tyranny because of the dangers involved, much like Creon in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* after being falsely accused of conspiring against the king (Soph. *OT* 583–615); both Creon and Hippolytus fail to persuade their accusers. The forensic tone of Hippolytus' speech continues in his reference to hypothetical witnesses who would confirm his innocence (1021–1024; cf. 1074–1077). While Hippolytus' final oath convinces the Chorus, Theseus, unmoved, sends his bastard son to his death. In this scene Euripides presents the efficacy of rhetorical arguments as vulnerable both to the mindset of the combatants and to immediate time and context—one might say *kairos*⁶⁹—in which such arguments are deployed. In the heat of the moment Theseus condemns his son; too late does he realize his mistake.

The *Hecuba*, even among Euripides' rhetorical tragedies, 'is remarkable for its interest in words and persuasion, their use and abuse, their powers and limitations'.⁷⁰ Three important rhetorically-informed encounters occur in this drama: Hecuba's plea to Odysseus to spare her daughter Polyxena from being sacrificed to the ghost of Achilles; Hecuba's speech to Agamemnon to allow her to take revenge on Polymestor, the Thracian king who has killed her son; and the *agôn* between her and the king whom she has blinded and whose sons she has killed. The first two are essentially supplication speeches, the last a judicial one. Self-consciousness, at times verges on punning, abounds in all these speeches. Hecuba mentions the *ἀγῶν μέγας* (229) before her on hearing the news that Polyxena must die; the old woman could be referring to 'great struggle' of the miserable life ahead of her, or the actual debate, or both. Hecuba engages Odysseus in a brief *stichomythia* to establish that he is in her debt since she spared him after discovering he had entered Troy as a spy (239–248). The rhetorical point here then is that Polyxena should also be spared, and this discussion resembles a Socratic *elenchus* whereby one speaker makes a point to another through question and answer rather than long discourse (Pl. *Phdr.* 273c), a technique Euripides uses elsewhere (*Hipp.* 88–105). Hecuba's ensu-

69 Dionysius of Halicarnassus remarks that Gorgias wrote on *kairos*, adding tartly that it contained nothing worth mentioning (Gorg. B 13 DK); for a more positive appraisal, see Consigny (2001) 42–48.

70 As noted by Mossman (1995) 94, whose detailed analysis (pp. 94–141) remains important. See also Duchemin (1945) 74–75, 142–143; Michelini (1987) 141–157; Gregory (1991) 85–120; Collard (1991) 25–32; Lloyd (1992) 94–99; Kastely (1993); Dubischar (2001) esp. 334–341; Mastronarde (2010) 227–234.

ing speech (251–295) includes bitter rhetorical questions with *prokatalêpsis*, a demand that Helen be killed instead, and a plea for justice bolstered with an act of supplication (273–278). With this plea Hecuba sees herself, like Jason (*Med.* 546) and Theseus (*Hipp.* 971–972), as embroiled in a ‘contest of words’ (*Hec.* 271):

τῶι μὲν δικάϊωι τόνδ’ ἀμιλλῶμαι λόγον·

Justice is the ground on which I make this plea.

After this comes a veiled warning that those in power will not have it always. This technique of combining pleas with veiled threats or warnings was associated with Gorgias (B 27 DK), and occurs in other Euripidean encounters, such as that between Odysseus and Polyphemus in the *Cyclops* (285–346).⁷¹ Hecuba finishes with another recourse to pity (286–287). She thus uses an array of techniques and suggests that even if Odysseus does not speak well to his fellow Greeks, his own prestige (ἄξιωμα, 293) should be enough to persuade them. Persuasion, then, is more than about words. The status of the speaker can be the decisive factor; the *êthos* argument comes into play again.

The failure of Hecuba’s speech here raises important questions about whether rhetorical finesse can have any relevance in situations of such a power imbalance.⁷² Yet, skilled speech will emerge again as important later in the play for Hecuba, who hopes to exact revenge on Polymestor. She invokes sophisticated imagery as part of her tactics to win Agamemnon’s approval to carry out revenge on the Thracian. When seeking Agamemnon’s pity, she imagines herself an icon of misery, and calls on him to pity her and view her ‘like a painter’ (ὡς γραφεύς 807–808), an idea invoking contemporary aesthetic notions on the emotional engagement expected between poets or painters and their works.⁷³ Euripides’ references to contemporary ideas become even more heavy-handed when, after Agamemnon has turned away from her pleas, Hecuba asks in exasperation (814–819):

71 See Duchemin (1945) 74, 142–144, 146–147; O’Sullivan/Collard (2013) 48–50, 169.

72 Kastely (1993). Thucydides’ account of the Melian Dialogue raises the same issue (Thuc. 5.84–116).

73 E.g., Eur. *Suppl.* 180–183; cf. Ar. *Thesm.* 149–152; Arist. *Po.* 1455a30–32; for full discussion, see O’Sullivan (2008) esp. 188–195. At *Hec.* 836–840 the aged queen wishes to have a voice in her arms, hair, voice and feet to press Agamemnon with ‘all sorts of arguments’ (παντοίους λόγους: 840), and imagines herself a creation of Daedalus, famous for making moving and talking statues (Eur. fr. 372 K; Cratin. fr. 75 KA; Pl. Com. fr. 204 KA).

τί δῆτα θνητοὶ τᾶλλα μὲν μαθήματα
 μοχθοῦμεν ὡς χρὴ πάντα καὶ ματεύομεν,
 πειθῶ δὲ τὴν τύραννον ἀνθρώποις μόνην
 οὐδέν τι μᾶλλον ἐς τέλος σπουδάζομεν
 μισθοὺς διδόντες μανθάνειν, ἴν' ἦν ποτε
 πείθειν ἅ τις βούλοιο τυγχάνειν θ' ἅμα;

Why is it that we mortals take pains to study all other branches of knowledge as we ought, yet we take no further pains, by paying a fee, to learn thoroughly the art of persuasive speaking, sole ruler where mortals are concerned, so that we might be able to persuade people of whatever we wish and gain our ends?

This looks like an admission of inexperience at speaking, made by others in Euripidean dramas (e.g., *Hipp.* 986–991) and elsewhere in forensic and other rhetoric;⁷⁴ and the allusion to paying for rhetorical instruction would unmistakably conjure up for a fifth-century audience the teaching provided by sophists (cf. Gorgias A 21 DK; Pl. *Prot.* 311c; *Hipp. Maj.* 282b, etc.). The image of ‘persuasion’ as ‘sole ruler’ (πειθῶ ... τύραννον ... μόνην) closely parallels Gorgias’ idea of *logos* as a ‘great master’ (*Hel.* 8, etc.). The link between *peithō* and the ability to get what you want likewise finds an echo in the view Plato ascribes to Gorgias that the ability to persuade gives one power to enslave others (e.g., Pl. *Gorg.* 452e).⁷⁵ Moreover, there are erotic undertones behind the idea of *peithō* here. In being ‘called sole ruler (literally, ‘tyrant’) for mortals’ (τύραννον ἀνθρώποις μόνην, *Hec.* 821), *peithō* is elevated to a similar status to that of Eros itself, which Euripides elsewhere calls a ‘tyrant’ over gods and mortals (fr. 136.1). As recognized since Hesiod, who has Peithō present at the creation of the ‘beautiful bane’ Pandora (*Th.* 585; *WD* 73), persuasion can be a byword for seduction.

Hecuba, then, self-consciously adopts a new tactic to win Agamemnon’s favour, which now has a distinctly eroticized basis. Her daughter Cassandra is now his concubine, and Hecuba lays a claim to *charis* (reciprocal goodwill) from Agamemnon arguing that Polydorus is his kinsman who needs to be avenged (826–835). Some have found this ploy distasteful on the part of Hecuba;⁷⁶ but it is not the only time a desperate Euripidean character uses

74 E.g. Socrates (Pl. *Apol.* 17d–18a); Lysias (12.3, etc.); Demosthenes (27.2, etc.).

75 See Buxton (1982) esp. 31–57 for ideas of *peithō* as ranging from a semi-divine personification to secular abstraction to denote ‘persuasion’.

76 E.g., Buxton (1982) 179; Michelini (1987) 151 who consider the old queen to be prostituting her daughter; cf., however, Gregory (1991) 106.

a questionable argument to get their way.⁷⁷ This appeal, which speaks to the Greek leader's lechery, succeeds where appeals based on more high-minded notions of pity and justice did not. It is a form of rhetoric that metaphorically seduces its addressee, while alluding to a literal seduction—or rape—that will take place when Cassandra becomes Agamemnon's concubine. This tactic shows that Hecuba has the measure of her addressee, as Medea had Jason's measure, a recommendation in the rhetorical theories of Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1377b22–1378a5). Euripides here unites the realms of seduction and persuasion, and, like Gorgias in the *Encomium of Helen*, seems to emphasize the non-rational ways in which rhetoric can prevail upon a person.⁷⁸ Agamemnon responds that he is willing to help Hecuba, but, in a fine piece of hypocrisy, does not want to be seen acting in his own personal interest for the sake (*charis*) of Cassandra (850–863). Yet Hecuba prevails, and, like Menelaus in the *Troades* who refrains from killing Helen, Agamemnon here feels the persuasive force of erotic desire.

After she has blinded Polymestor and killed his sons, Hecuba, confronted by her victim, argues like an accomplished orator, asking rhetorical questions implicitly based on *eikos* to show that Polymestor was no friend of the Greeks, and that Greek and barbarian could never become friends (esp. 1199–1201). This cultural gulf had informed the arguments of Odysseus that led to the sacrifice of Polyxena at Achilles' tomb (309–312, 328–331). Hecuba adds that Polymestor acted from the worst motives, not supporting the Greeks and violating bonds of friendship with the Trojans (1217–1232). Hecuba's speech ends, as it began, with an address to Agamemnon and a stern warning that his stature will diminish if he sides with Polymestor (1233–1237), a ploy used elsewhere by Euripidean characters and linked to Gorgias' trope of mingling threats with imprecations (B 27 DK).⁷⁹ But Hecuba's victory here is short-lived, as the play finishes with Polymestor's prophecies of her transformation into a dog and the murders of Agamemnon and Cassandra (1259–1284). In this relentlessly bleak and blood-soaked play Hecuba's eventual triumph, due in part to her rhetorical skills, is a bitter and hollow one at best.

77 Cf. Odysseus in *Cyclops* (290–298) who, in attempting to save his men, claims that Polyphemus' homeland is Greek and was kept safe from Trojan aggression.

78 Gorgias' *Helen* (esp. 8–14) emphasizes the irresistible persuasive powers of *logos*.

79 Cf. Aethra's arguments to Theseus in *Suppliant Women* (314–319), or Odysseus' final plea to Polyphemus in *Cyclops* (309–312).

4 Epilogue

It has been said that Plato's critique of the sophists has influenced many to ignore the hypocrisy of those attacking 'sophistic rhetoric' and to be unduly dismissive of what is valuable in the contestation of ideas.⁸⁰ Euripidean dramas, with their accomplished displays of rhetoric, amply testify to the value of such contestation and disputing. Few attempts at persuasion are successful, such as Aethra's speech to Theseus in *Suppliant Women* (297–331); other instances of successful persuasion have disturbing undercurrents such as Medea's exploitation of the *eikos* argument to trick Jason and carry out her bloody revenge (*Med.* 869–907). In fact, most attempts at persuasion in Euripides' plays either end inconclusively or fail altogether, even when such speeches deploy rhetorical techniques associated with professionals such as Antiphon and Gorgias or expounded by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* or in Anaximenes' (?) *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*. Some speeches were doomed to fail from the start, such as Theseus' attempt to secure burial for the Argive warriors without a fight in *Suppliant Women*, or Jocasta's attempt at reconciliation in *Phoenissae*, or Hippolytus' self-defence.

But such failures typically have dramatic impact and can engage the audience's intellectual faculties. Sometimes the failure of rhetoric draws attention to the issues of power politics, status and identity, as in *Suppliant Women*, *Andromache*, *Hecuba* and *Heraclidae*; it can result in making the plight of figures onstage more poignant or desperate, such as Hippolytus, Andromache, or Hecuba after her speech to Odysseus, or Jocasta. Again, it can cause audiences, ancient and modern alike, to re-examine just what constitutes a persuasive speech in the first place; rational argument does not seem to determine the actions of Agamemnon in *Hecuba* or Menelaus in *Troades*. Scrutiny of rhetoric in Euripides' plays enables us to see more fully what motivates his characters, as well as revealing the complexities of the circumstances in which they find themselves. For Euripides, rhetoric becomes a vehicle to explore and problematize human psychology, erotics, emotion and ideology. The poet's deployment of this medium not only engaged with his own intellectual milieu but can speak to us powerfully now in a world where demagogic sound-bites and glib verbal attacks increasingly trump nuance and dialogue in contemporary public discourse.

Deep ambivalence about rhetorical skill is a notable feature of Euripides' plays and oratory of the classical period.⁸¹ Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* tells

80 As noted by Mastronarde (2010) 212.

81 On ambivalent attitudes in drama generally to rhetoric, see Pelling (2005); Mastronarde (2010) 212–214.

us that all who persuade do so, 'fabricating a false *logos*' (ψευδῆ λόγον πλάσσαντες: *Hel.* 11), that is yet psychologically powerful (*Hel.* 8–10, 14).⁸² Thucydides presents Cleon as hostile to the idea of elaborate speech-making by sophists which he claimed kept the citizenry in its thrall—notwithstanding his own bombastic rhetorical powers (3.37.4–5, etc.). But Thucydides also tells us Cleon's opponent, Diodotus, upholds the value of debate in determining correct action (esp. 3.42.2), an echo of Pericles who in the Funeral Speech asserts that 'debates' (λόγοι) are not inimical to action, but are essential to understanding correctly (ὀρθῶς) what actions are to be taken (2.40.2–3).⁸³ As in Thucydides' accounts, the setting up of Euripidean *agônes* is often a conspicuous process that draws attention to the stylized rhetorical exchange that will follow. Pericles gives an extended preamble to his famous Funeral Speech on the challenges confronting orators if they are to persuade their audience (*Thuc.* 2.35.1–3); so, too, do some Euripidean characters (*Med.* 522–525; cf. *Hec.* 229). Sometimes, Euripides' characters express suspicion as to the ethics and truth value of rhetoric (*Med.* 576–578, etc.); at other moments there is confidence that proper speech-making can ensure that justice will prevail or be a legitimate basis for well-informed action (*Hec.* 1187–1196; *Suppl.* 203–204, *Pho.* 496–572, etc.). Such a range of attitudes demonstrates the multi-faceted nature of rhetoric and frequently serves to demonstrate the complexities in the ensuing debate.

The varied fortunes of rhetoric within Euripides' plays also invite us to contemplate a deep irony: that this 'most rhetorical of playwrights' could undercut the efficacy of self-conscious attempts at persuasion which for so long have been recognized as central to his art. Yet in doing so Euripides also demonstrates the dramatic power of accomplished speech-making, since he allows characters to articulate key issues of the narrative with extraordinary skill, insight and passion. In (in)famously giving a plurality of voices to his characters, Euripides presents rhetoric itself as a complex phenomenon. It rarely, if ever, leads to straightforward resolutions to the central dilemmas of his plays. But Euripides' profoundly sophisticated handling of rhetorical devices immeasurably enriches our thinking about the conflicts he brings to the dramatic stage. As a result, these features of his plays are rightly considered amongst the finest and most characteristic achievements not only of this poet, but of Greek theatre overall.

82 De Romilly (1973) more fully discusses the magical and drug-like qualities which Gorgias ascribes to *logos*; see also Segal (1962).

83 For Aristotle, this is deliberative or *sumbouleutic* rhetoric (*Rhet.* 1358a36–b20).

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Realism in Euripides

Michael Lloyd

Realism as a literary mode is relevant to Euripides in both a broader and a narrower sense. His plays are realistic in the broader sense of representing actions which in general observe the laws of nature. They contrast in this with the plays of Aristophanes, in which it is possible to fly to heaven on a dung beetle (*Peace*), build a city in the air (*Birds*), or interact with dead poets in the underworld (*Frogs*). Place, time, and character in Euripides are relatively consistent and coherent. People and things follow continuous paths through time and space. This contrasts with Aristophanes' more flexible treatment (e.g. in *Acharnians* or *Clouds*), and with his frequent indifference to consistency of character.¹ Any attempt to distinguish realistic from non-realistic literature or art clearly depends on the belief that 'representation' and 'reality' are usable concepts, if not necessarily easy to define or the same in all cultural contexts.²

Euripides resembles Sophocles in being a realist in this broader sense, but also invites interpretation in terms of realism as it developed as a literary and artistic movement in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, most self-consciously in France in the 1850s. This is a particular manifestation of what J.P. Stern calls 'a perennial mode of representing the world', and does not imply limiting 'realism' to what he calls a 'period term'.³ George Eliot's classic statement of a realist aesthetic in *Adam Bede* (1859) associates truthfulness with the representation of commonplace things. This is contrasted as an appropriate subject of literature with 'a life of pomp or of absolute indigence, of tragic suffering or of world-stirring actions'.⁴ This is elaborated by René Wellek: 'It [realism] rejects the fantastic, the fairytale-like, the allegorical and the symbolic, the highly stylized, the purely abstract and decorative ... The term "reality" is

1 See Lowe (2000) 164–173; Budelmann (2014).

2 For useful criticisms of Roland Barthes in this context, see Stern (1973) 165–167; Silk (2000) 212 n. 8.

3 Stern (1973) 32, 52. Contrast Grant (1970) 47: 'The usual meaning of realism was, and is, that provided by the realist movement (or tendency) of the third quarter of the nineteenth century'. Zanker (1987) 3–8 gives a good account of what is involved in applying the term 'realism' to Greek literature, in his case Alexandrian poetry, stressing the aim of realism 'to relate the objects of literature to the audience's experience of nearby reality' (8).

4 G. Eliot, *Adam Bede* (1859), Book Second, Chapter XVII = Furst (1992) 38.

also a term of inclusion: the ugly, the revolting, the low are legitimate subjects of art.⁵ These moral and literary values go back to Homer's *Odyssey*, with its sympathetic and indeed heroic portrayal of the swineherd Eumaeus.⁶

George Eliot's interest in the commonplace points to a feature of Euripides' plays which was noted in his own time. The 'Euripides' of Aristophanes' *Frogs* offers something of a realist manifesto (907–991), rejecting Aeschylus' pretentious and exotic subject matter and stressing his own focus on the domestic, familiar, and everyday (*oikeia pragmata*, 959).⁷ In Euripides' plays, this involves both taking lower-status characters more seriously and treating the heroes of myth in a down-to-earth fashion. The former aspect of his realism has clear parallels with the nineteenth-century realists, who avoided traditionally elevated subject matter in order to focus on ordinary people. Aristophanes' Euripides alleges that this is more democratic (*Frogs* 952), anticipating Courbet: 'La fond du réalisme c'est la négation de l'idéal ... J'arrive en plein à l'émancipation de l'individu, et finalement, à la démocratie.'⁸ Euripides differs from the nineteenth-century realists in that the dramatic conventions within which he worked required subject matter taken from the gods and heroes of myth, so that his realism has the complementary aspect of treating elevated subject matter in everyday terms. This has a nineteenth-century parallel in the operas of Richard Wagner, who chose to take his subject matter from myth but often focused on its more domestic aspects. Bernard Williams thus remarked that 'Wagner is Ibsen inside out', in that Ibsen gave bourgeois domestic drama the quality of Sophoclean tragedy while Wagner treated myth in terms of bourgeois domestic drama.⁹ Euripides both elevates the lower-status characters in his plays and treats the heroic characters as ordinary people, bringing about a convergence which is one of the most distinctive features of his art.

Realism can be discussed to some extent in literary terms, with reference to subject matter and style. David Lodge has exploited Roman Jakobson's distinction between metaphor and metonymy to analyze realism in stylistic rather than referential terms: 'Realistic fiction is dominantly metonymic: it connects actions that are contiguous in time and space and connected by cause and effect'.¹⁰ A work which is realistic in the broader sense defined above will rep-

5 Wellek (1963) 241.

6 For a good account of this aspect of the *Odyssey*, see Bowie (2013) 16–23.

7 On Aristophanes' critique of Euripides, and its later influence, see Snell (1953) 113–135; Michelini (1987) 3–10; Kovacs (1994) 22–32; Halliwell (2011) 93–154.

8 Cited by Taylor (1989) 432. Cf. Csapo (2010) 122–123.

9 Williams (2014) 394 (in an article first published in 2000).

10 Lodge (1981) 22 = Furst (1992) 147; cf. Lodge (1977).

resent a world which is internally coherent, with a verisimilitude achieved by transparency of style and (in Henry James' term) 'solidity of specification'.¹¹ Roland Barthes' term *effet de réel* ('reality effect') is widely used for literary devices which signify 'reality' even as they are unable to denote it.¹² Philippe Hamon, influenced by Barthes, produced a list of fifteen procedures which constitute criteria for realist discourse. He admits that the list is neither systematic nor exhaustive,¹³ but it contains some suggestive ideas which are relevant to realism in Euripides. Hamon stresses the importance of coherence to realism, which is emphasized by analepsis ('le texte renvoie à son déjà-dit') and prolepsis (e.g. prediction). Psychological motivation is essential to realist literature for the same reason. For Hamon, the realistic text is supported and validated by a 'megastory' which is already known to the reader; this could be a sacred text (Hamon mentions the use of Genesis as a structuring myth in Zola's *La Faute de l'abbé Mouret*), or historical and geographical reality. The realistic author possesses technical or specialized knowledge, which in a novel is often assigned to a suitably qualified specialist (e.g. a doctor explaining illness). Realism as a perennial literary mode typically defines itself against its predecessors: 'In every gesture toward the real ... there is an echo of some literature that has imagined a very different reality'.¹⁴ Euripides may thus seem realistic when compared to Aeschylus, but not when compared to Ibsen.

It is a further question how far a work in a realistic style actually represents real life, either in the broader sense defined in the first paragraph of this chapter or in the more specific sense of focusing on the commonplace and everyday. Much science fiction is written in a realistic style without representing the world as it is usually understood.¹⁵ Simon Dentith writes: 'the reader who mistook *The Lord of the Rings* for a real history of the earth would not be misunderstanding the internal logic of the text but would rather be showing ignorance of some fundamental facts of history and geography'.¹⁶ The more

11 H. James, 'The Art of Fiction' (1884), cited from Furst (1992) 43–44. Zanker (1987) 5 cites Diderot's *Éloge de Richardson* (1762): 'Sachez que c'est à cette multitude de petites choses que tient l'illusion'. Homer is praised for this in the scholia: see Nünlist (2009) 185–193.

12 Barthes (1968) applies *effet de réel* specifically to insignificant details which have no other function in the narrative than to mark it as realistic; cf. Culler (1975) 193–194; Herman (1996) 161–168.

13 Hamon (1973) 424 = Furst (1992) 166. There is an interesting critique of Hamon in Brooke-Rose (1981) 85–102.

14 Levine (2010) 15. Cf. Michelini (1987) 182: 'The "realism" of *Elektra* cannot be treated apart from the play's vigorous attack on tragic literary norms'.

15 See Brooke-Rose (1981) 99–102.

16 Dentith (2010) 34.

reflective theorists and practitioners of realism have never supposed that paintings or literary works offer an unmediated reflection of the external world, but nevertheless at some level fidelity of representation is fundamental to realism. George Eliot qualifies her aim 'to give a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind' by adding '[t]he mirror is doubtless defective; the outlines will sometimes be disturbed, the reflection faint or confused'.¹⁷

Euripides' representation of characters was the aspect of his plays which most suggested to ancient authors a type of realism comparable to that of Eliot or Balzac. Aristotle reports this anecdote: 'Sophocles said that he portrayed men as they ought to be, while Euripides portrayed them as they are' (*Poetics* 1460b32–35).¹⁸ The first half of the statement implies that there is more to Euripides' realism than truthfulness to life, and that it has an aesthetic or moral aspect which contrasts with other, perhaps preferable, literary modes. Euripides is thus regularly mocked in Aristophanes for bringing on beggars, cripples, and characters dressed in rags (*Ach.* 410–413, *Peace* 146–148, *Frogs* 842, 846).¹⁹ 'Aeschylus' notes in particular that Euripides dresses kings in rags in order to excite pity (*Frogs* 1063–1064), whereas 'demigods' (i.e. heroes from myth) should wear grander clothes than we do. 'Euripides' does not explicitly defend his portrayal of heroes but stresses the wider range of characters to which he gives voice (*Frogs* 948–950). Menelaus (*Helen*) is the only example in Euripides' surviving plays of a character in rags, although Electra regards her clothing as unworthy of her status (*El.* 184–189) and Orestes is shown in a squalid physical state (*Or.* 225–226, 387–391). Royalty reduced to slavery is a favourite theme (*Andromache*, *Hecuba*, *Troades*). Many of Euripides' characters are remarkably base. Aristotle condemns the 'unnecessary' wickedness of Menelaus in *Orestes* (*Poetics* 1454a29, 1461b21), and the hypothesis ascribed to Aristophanes of Byzantium states, 'apart from Pylades all the characters are bad'. Polymestor (*Hecuba*) and Lycus (*Heracles*), both invented by Euripides, are notable for their cruelty and greed.

Realistic and explicit motivation of behaviour is one of the most notable features of Euripides' plays. All his main characters explain their actions in

17 G. Eliot, *Adam Bede* (1859), Book Second, Chapter XVII = Furst (1992) 36; note additionally Beaumont (2010) 4 on how *Adam Bede* is '[o]penly and restlessly conscious of its rhetorical strategies throughout'. Cf. Halliwell (2002) 133–147 for the mirror metaphor (e.g. *Pl. Resp.* 596d–e), though he argues for an enriched view of mimesis which goes far beyond mere imitation.

18 For discussion of this statement, see (e.g.) Csapo (2010) 124–125.

19 Cf. Wyles (2011) 97–98, 100–104. Sommerstein (1996) 230, note on *Frogs* 841–842, observes that this reputation had already been acquired by 425 BC, the date of *Acharnians*.

humanly intelligible terms, often at considerable length. Sometimes these explanations are mundane or even disreputable. One aspect of the unheroic portrayal of Jason in *Medea* is his frequent mention of money (*Med.* 461–463, 559–565, 610–613, 959–963), although ancient criticism of Polynices (*Phoenissae*) for this may be unjust.²⁰ Orestes (*Electra*) has often been regarded as unheroic, although his caution may better be regarded as sensible in realistic terms.²¹ Menelaus (*Andromache*) is characterized by his addiction to clichés.²² Odysseus is portrayed as an unscrupulous politician in *Hecuba*, *Troades*, and *Iphigenia at Aulis*, where the grimmer aspects of war are emphasized. Euripides' portrayal of 'bad women' is noted by Aristophanes (*Frogs* 1043–1044, *Thesm.* 497, 544–550). The most cited example is Phaedra in the lost first version of *Hippolytus*, and there are extreme examples in the lost plays *Aeolus* and *Cretans*. The comic poet's attention is caught by aberrant sexual behaviour, but this also appears in Aeschylus and it is explicit discussion of their feelings by women that is especially distinctive of Euripides.²³ Phaedra is a notable example (*Hipp.* 392–402):

When love wounded me, I considered how I might best bear it. My starting point was this, to conceal my malady in silence. For the tongue is not to be trusted: it knows well how to admonish the thoughts of others but gets from itself a great deal of trouble. My second intention was to bear this madness nobly, overcoming it by means of self-control. But third, when with these means I was unable to master Cypris, I resolved on death, the best of plans, as no one shall deny.

Realistic psychology is not confined to female characters, and there are detailed studies of morbid mental states in Orestes (*Orestes*) and Pentheus (*Bacchae*).

Euripides not only portrays heroic characters in down-to-earth terms but also gives more important parts to lower-status characters. Notable examples are the Farmer (*Electra*) and the Nurse (*Hippolytus*), who are major characters in their respective plays. Important roles are also played by the old servants in *Electra*, *Ion*, and *Iphigenia at Aulis* (all described as 'Old Man' in the Loeb translations). The Nurse in *Medea* is a good example of a lower-status character who comments at length on the action from the point of view of the ordinary person; it is this articulacy which was already noted in Aristophanes' *Frogs* as a

20 See Mastronarde (1994) note on line 395; cf. his note on line 269.

21 See Cropp (2013 [1988]) 5–8, and note on line 96.

22 See Lloyd (2005 [1994]) index s.v. 'Menelaus, language of'.

23 See Griffith (2013) 125–126.

feature of Euripides' treatment of such characters.²⁴ The old servant in *Helen* offers a particularly elaborate interpretation of events, the value of which has been variously assessed by scholars.²⁵ Choruses give further opportunities for expression of the viewpoint of the ordinary person (e.g. *Med.* 629–644). The common soldier's attitude to generals taking all the credit is voiced by Peleus (*Andr.* 693–698; cf. *Hom. Il.* 1.163–171).

The language of Euripides is discussed in detail elsewhere in this volume, and there is no need to do more here than indicate those elements which could be considered realistic. Aristophanes' Euripides boasts that he slimmed down the bombastic art which he inherited from Aeschylus and made his characters speak like ordinary people (*Frogs* 937–991, 1056–1073). Aristotle recommends giving the impression of speaking naturally rather than artificially by choosing words taken from ordinary language, and comments that Euripides showed the way in doing this (*Rhetoric* 1404b24–25). His increasing use of resolutions (two short syllables in place of one long syllable) made his verse more flexible and less weighty, and allowed for a wider range of word-shapes. On the other hand, it has been argued that there is a limit to Euripides' realism: '[i]n a sense there is a greater degree of realism [in Aeschylus and Sophocles] than in much of the work of Euripides, whose tendency is to reduce the legendary heroes and heroines to a more everyday level both in thought and in speech, so that there is less room for distinction between them and characters of humbler status'.²⁶ The convergence between Euripides' higher- and lower-status characters could also be regarded as representing a reality which would be obscured by superficial differences in mode of utterance: the point is that there is really no significant difference between them.

Political features of his own time make regular appearances in Euripides' plays, especially the later ones. An example is Ion's rejection of Xuthus' proposal that he come to Athens (*Ion* 595–606):

If I attempt to be somebody by aspiring to the city's helm, I shall be hated by the powerless: men always hate what is above them. As for all those who are of good character and have an aptitude for wisdom but live quietly and do not exert themselves in public affairs, they will think I am laughably foolish not to keep quiet in a city full of fear. But if I invade the prestige of those who speak in public and engage in politics, by their votes

24 On the Old Man in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, see Michelakis (2006) 43–44; on the nurse in *Medea*, see Ruffell (2014).

25 See Lloyd (2013) 218–219.

26 Stevens (1945) 95, cited by Csapo (2010) 131.

I will be kept in check even more. That is the way things usually happen, father. Those who hold office in their cities are always most hostile to their competitors.

Xuthus is actually offering Ion kingship (578–581, 659–660, 1296), but public prominence and success is interpreted here in terms of competing in Athenian democratic politics. Ion's language evokes debates about the perils and benefits of political engagement of which there is evidence in Thucydides (e.g. 2.40.2, 2.64.4–5, 6.16.5–6, 8.68.1).²⁷ Euripides grounds Ion's decision in the political circumstances which were familiar to his audience. Tragedy combines contemporary democracy with heroic kingship, and it is distinctive of Euripides to bring out the less elevated aspects of pursuing a political career. This is a fairly minor aspect of *Ion*, but is central in *Phoenissae* where Eteocles' speech in the *agôn* (*Pho.* 499–525) can be related to the attitude of the Athenians in Thucydides' Melian Dialogue (5.85–111) as well as to Plato's Callicles (*Gorgias*) and Thrasymachus (*Republic*). Contemporary politics is even more pervasive in *Orestes*, where scholars have rightly noted the relevance of the stasis chapters in Thucydides, especially 3.82.²⁸ Mythical heroes behave like contemporary politicians.

Aristophanes' Euripides boasts of introducing 'reasoning and inquiry' into his plays (*Frogs* 973–974). George Gellie gives an amusing account of Euripides planning the plot of *Electra* in terms of 'an acceptable sequence of probabilities'.²⁹ In a similar vein, it could be noted how the prologue speech of *Phoenissae* addresses a variety of questions of motivation in realistic terms: why Laius sired a son in defiance of Apollo (*Pho.* 21), what aroused Oedipus' suspicions about his parentage (*Pho.* 33), why Laius went to Delphi (*Pho.* 35–37), how Oedipus answered the riddle of the Sphinx (*Pho.* 49–50), and what his sons did to evade his curse (*Pho.* 69–74). There is no reason to doubt that Euripides was always alert to such considerations, although they are easier to demonstrate in *Electra* and *Phoenissae* where a contrast with Aeschylus is readily available. *Electra*'s rationalistic assessment of the recognition tokens from Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* (*El.* 518–544) is often cited in this connection, but this is a problematic episode as her reasoning leads to the wrong conclusion. Mis-

27 See (e.g.) Wolff (1965) 191 n. 15; Lee (1997) 225–226, and notes on lines 598–601 and 602–604.

28 See further Lloyd (1992) 80–81 (on *Supplikes*), 89–90 (on *Phoenissae*), and 114–117, 118 n. 20, 126–127 (on *Orestes*). On contemporary features of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, see Michelakis (2006) 79–80.

29 Gellie (1981) 2; cf. Goff (1999–2000) 95.

guided rationalism can be found in several plays.³⁰ The alleged criticisms of improbabilities in Aeschylus at *Supp.* 846–856 and *Pho.* 751–752 are equally difficult to assess, but the discussion of tactics at *Pho.* 705–750 does indeed seem to appeal to the military experience of the audience, doubtless derived in some cases from the recent Sicilian campaign.³¹

The representation of mundane activities is often cited as an aspect of Euripides' realism (the *oikeia pragmata* of Ar., *Frogs* 959).³² This is especially prominent in *Electra*, where Electra's marriage to the Farmer is illustrated by such homely features as carrying water (*El.* 54–56), borrowing clothes (*El.* 190–192), and arguing with her husband about their ability to entertain guests (*El.* 404–407). *Hypsipyle* shows the heroine looking after a baby and sweeping the entrance to the house (*Hyps.* fr. 752d.2–3, 752f.16–18). Sweeping is something of a motif in Euripides, one of the menial tasks performed by Ion at Delphi (*Ion* 82–183) and by the Chorus of slave women in *Phaethon* (*Phaeth.* 54–58), and mentioned elsewhere as one of the duties awaiting royal characters reduced to slavery (*An.* 166–167; *Hec.* 363). Electra's tending of the sick Orestes is shown at length, including realistic representation of the illness itself (*Or.* 131–315). The physical effects of old age are a favourite topic in Euripides' later plays (*El.* 489–492; *HF* 107–130; *Ion* 738–746; *Pho.* 302–303, 837, 1539–1545; *Ba.* 170–214). The emotive effect of mundane details is apparent in Hecuba's address to Hector's shield (*Tro.* 1196–1199): 'How lovely is the mark of his body upon your strap and the sweat on your well-turned rim, sweat which Hector often in his toil dripped from his forehead as he pressed you against his chin!'

Bernard Knox influentially argued that the term 'realistic' is inadequate for these mundane features of Euripides' plays, and concluded on the basis of a brief and somewhat exaggerated discussion of *Electra* that they are in fact comic.³³ He points out that in comedy 'people eat and drink with gusto, prepare enormous meals and drink gigantic quantities of wine,'³⁴ which hardly resembles the modest if generous hospitality in *Electra* (493–499). He goes on to suggest that the first half of *Electra* is notable for 'situation, character, and style proper to a satyric play,'³⁵ observing that Euripides' *Cyclops* also shows

30 On the 'optimistic rationalist', see Mastronarde (2010) 215–222 (based on work first published in 1986).

31 See Mastronarde (1994) 356, note on *Pho.* 724–731.

32 See Stieber (2011) xvii; the whole book is an excellent commentary on many aspects of Euripides' realism.

33 Knox (1979) 251–254. Cf. Goff (1999–2000) 97–99; Seidensticker (2005) 51–52.

34 Knox (1979) 254.

35 Knox (1979) 255.

domestic chores (*Cyc.* 23–35). The problem here is that the satyrs regard as beneath their dignity the menial tasks to which they have been reduced by their servitude, and Silenus' lament may even be paratragic.³⁶ It is no doubt true in general that comedy deals more with the mundane than tragedy does, but Euripides' plays do not especially resemble what we know of the comedy of his own time for all that they may seem to anticipate the New Comedy of the following century.³⁷ In any case, there is only a contradiction between a particular motif being comic and being realistic if realism is treated merely as unmediated reflection of reality. In practice, realism regularly involves adjusting the traditional balance of genre and content. It is indeed a central purpose of Erich Auerbach's classic study to show how the main aim of realism is 'to represent the most everyday phenomena of reality in a serious and significant context',³⁸ rather than merely for the purpose of comedy or entertainment. Mundane elements in Euripides may indeed have comic analogues, albeit from a later period, but interest in food or difficulty walking are features of real life as well as of particular literary genres.

These features of Euripides' style relate the subject matter of the plays to the audience's experience of life, and in particular to its more mundane aspects. Scholars have often contrasted this with the setting of the plays in the world of myth.³⁹ There is a useful introduction to the issues in Kamerbeek (1960), and in particular in the published discussion after the paper involving some leading Euripidean scholars of the day. This view of an opposition between myth and reality in Euripides has been especially prominent in the interpretation of *Electra*, where there has often been thought to be a significant contrast between the glamorous treatment of myth in the choral odes and its realistic presentation in the rest of the play. The first stasimon thus begins by addressing the ships which carried Achilles to Troy (*El.* 432–441):

Glorious ships that once went to Troy,
ships that with those numberless oars
escorted the dances of the Nereids,
dances wherein the dolphin that loves the sound of the pipe
gambled in company
with the dark-blue prows:
you ferried Thetis' son,

36 So O'Sullivan/Collard (2013) 135–136, note on line 33.

37 Cf. Michelakis (2006) 103, 116.

38 Auerbach (1953 [1946]) 555.

39 E.g. Zeitlin (1980) 52 = Mossman (2003) 310, criticized by Allan (2000) 7 n. 10.

Achilles of the swiftly leaping feet,
with Agamemnon to the banks
of the Simois, Troy's river.

The ode concludes by pointing out that Clytemnestra will be justly punished for killing Agamemnon, the leader of this glorious expedition (*El.* 479–486). The influential discussion by George B. Walsh remarks on the ‘uneasy coexistence of realistic and mythological elements in Euripides’ plays’, and then states, ‘because ode and play evoke different realities, the spectator may not assume that any part of what he sees represents a single, simple reality.’⁴⁰ Walsh’s argument as a whole, despite its conclusion, tends rather to reinforce the coherence of the reality represented in the play. He sees Electra as a Don Quixote figure, inspired to her own detriment by romantic stories, which of course implies a clear contrast between the real and the unreal.⁴¹ On the other hand, Walsh also argues that there are ‘horrors ... concealed beneath the charm of the ode’s narrative’, so the ode and the action are not so different in significance after all.⁴²

Euripides is careful to align the version of events in the ode with what we have heard earlier in the play. This is clear from a comparison with the Farmer’s account of the story in the prologue (*El.* 2–10):

King Agamemnon set forth for war with a thousand ships and sailed to the land of Troy. When he had killed Priam, Troy’s ruler, and captured the glorious city of Dardanus, he returned here to Argos, and on our lofty temples he hung the rich spoils of the barbarian. In Troy his fortunes were good, but at home he was treacherously slain by his wife Clytaemestra and by the hand of Thyestes’ son Aegisthus.

The style may differ, but the version of events is coherent. Agamemnon’s glory as leader of the expedition to Troy is frequently mentioned by Electra (e.g. *El.* 186–189, 336–338, 880–881), and treated as motivation and validation for the

40 Walsh (1977) 289, cited with approval by Goldhill (1986) 252. See also Easterling (1985) 9–10; Michelini (1987) 184; Goff (1999–2000) 99–100.

41 Walsh (1977) 283–284. Electra would thus resemble Antigone in the *teichoskopia* of *Phoenissae* (88–201) and the Chorus in the parodos of *Iphigenia at Aulis* (164–302). Goldhill (1986) 256 writes of ‘different illusions of reality’, but his examples suggest that there is a standard of reality in the play according to which mistaken opinions can be evaluated.

42 Walsh (1977) 288. On the style of the ode, emphasizing its seriousness, see Csapo (2009); Cropp (2013 [1988]) 166–168.

revenge. She may or may not be misguided, but the Agamemnon of the ode is consistent with the Agamemnon of her imagination.⁴³

There is a somewhat similar contrast in *Heracles* between the account of Heracles' labours in the first stasimon (*HF* 359–429) and his violence during the play especially as described in the messenger speech (*HF* 922–1015). This has been described in terms of 'contrasting levels of dramatic reality',⁴⁴ but this is a rather misleading way of putting it as the reality of the labours is accepted by everyone in the play (e.g. 17–25, 151–164, 174–187, 1269–1278).

Another example of the continuity between iambic and lyric parts of a play may be seen in *Andromache*. Peleus drives off the dastardly Menelaus in an episode which is at best domestic and at times undignified. The Chorus follows this with an encomium of him which concludes (*An.* 790–801):

O aged son of Aeacus, I am convinced that with your illustrious spear you joined battle at the side of the Lapiths against the Centaurs, that on the ship Argo you passed through the inhospitable waters of the seaborne Symplegades on a voyage of fame, and when on that earlier day the son of Zeus encircled with destruction the glorious city of Troy, you came back to Europe with a share of high renown!

This explicitly links Peleus' defeat of Menelaus with three of the most famous episodes in Greek myth. There would be little point in this merely being a romantic exaggeration of Peleus' achievement in the preceding scene, which was undoubtedly creditable. Furthermore, the ode acts as a bridge between the domestic focus of the earlier part of the play and the more public event of the death at Delphi of Peleus' grandson Neoptolemus and the tragic stature of his grief at the end of the play.

Euripides' realism goes beyond relating the mythical stories to the audience's everyday experience and treats them with a solidity of specification which makes them seem real in themselves. This aspect of his treatment of myth can also be analyzed in terms of the techniques of realism in the wider sense. He grounds his plays in the megastory of myth, and presents the fictive world as coherent, objective, and verifiable.

Authentication is fundamental to realism, which can include relating the story in detail to a larger story which is accepted as truthful. In a nineteenth-century novel this might be a historical narrative which includes real persons

43 See (e.g.) King (1980) 196.

44 Barlow (1982) 124 = McAuslan/Walcot (1993) 202.

and events. In the case of Euripides, the megastory is the whole corpus of myth. It is not necessary to address here the question of how far Euripides and his audience distinguished between history and myth in order to identify how this realist technique functions in his plays. It is especially notable in his prologue speeches, which give a lucid and factual account of the background to the play. A typical example is the beginning of *Heracles* (1–12):

What mortal does not know me, Amphitryon of Argos, the man who shared his wife with Zeus? My father was Alcaeus, son of Perseus, and I am the father of Heracles. I took this city of Thebes as my home, the place where the earthborn harvest, the Sown Men, once sprang up. Only a small number of their race were spared by Ares, but they begot in their posterity the city of Cadmus. It was from them that this land's king, Creon, son of Menoeceus, was descended, and Creon was the father of Megara here. All the people of Thebes once sang her wedding song to the music of the pipe on the day when the illustrious Heracles brought her to my house as his bride.

Euripides is especially careful to supply a detailed and convincing background to plays which are innovative in their handling of myth (e.g. *Helen*, *Phoenissae*, *Orestes*) or which deal with unfamiliar segments of well-known myths (e.g. *Heracles*, *Medea*, *Andromache*). The style of these prologue speeches reinforces the realism of their content. Hamon writes: 'Realist discourse, like pedagogic discourse, will in general reject reference to the process of articulation, and move instead towards a "transparent" writing dominated only by the transmission of information'.⁴⁵ This feature of Euripides' prologue-speeches was already noted in his own time (*Ar. Ran.* 945–947, 1122). The Greek word *saphêneia* ('clarity') is the title of a detailed study of this aspect of his style.⁴⁶

Sophocles is much less concerned to locate his plays in the mythical megastory. Neoptolemus mixes truth and falsehood in his account of events at Troy (*Phil.* 329–452), and the significance even of the truth is mainly in its impact on Philoctetes: 'he hears the distant sound of praise bestowed upon fortunate but unworthy men'.⁴⁷ Contrast the more detailed and objective accounts of the Trojan War in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* and *Andromache*.⁴⁸ An extreme example of Sophocles' neglect of the megastory is his highly allusive treatment of the

45 Hamon (1973) 434 = Furst (1992) 175.

46 Ludwig (1954); cf. Allan (2008) 45.

47 Reinhardt (1979 [1947]) 172.

48 On this aspect of *Andromache*, see Lloyd (2007) 296–297.

wider mythical background in *Antigone* (e.g. 49–57, 170–174, 595–603). He usually fills in the background in a piecemeal and often anachronistic fashion, subordinating it to the dramatic action and to the focalization of the characters.⁴⁹

The mythical megastory is itself verified by aetiology, which is especially prominent at the ends of plays.⁵⁰ Athena thus addresses Orestes at the end of *Iphigenia in Tauris* (1449–1461):

When you come to god-built Athens, there is a place near the borders of Attica, neighboring the cliff of Carystus, a sacred place: my people call it Halae. There build a temple and set up the statue: it will be called after the Taurian land and your woes, the ones you suffered as you fared over Greece goaded on by the Erinyes. For all time to come mortals will sing hymns in honor of Artemis the Taurian-faring goddess. This is the custom you must establish: when the people keep the feast, to atone for your sacrifice let them hold a sword to the neck of a man and draw blood: thus will piety be satisfied and the goddess receive honor.

Scott Scullion has argued that many of these *aitia*, rituals, and cults in Euripides are imaginary, and have been invented for the internal literary purposes of the plays.⁵¹ One purpose of Scullion's discussion is to liberate tragedy from 'subordination' to something outside itself, in this case the world of actual cult, but this perhaps underestimates the importance to the realistic mode of grounding the play in something outside itself and familiar to the audience. J.P. Stern thus discusses how, in the *Eumenides*, Aeschylus builds a bridge between the visible institution of the Areopagus and the invisible world of the gods.⁵²

Euripides is much concerned with verifiability. Events are confirmed by different witnesses, giving the impression that they exist independently of observers whose reports on them can be compared.⁵³ This technique lends the fictive world the objectivity of the real world, which is especially striking when the events themselves are improbable or supernatural. Helen thus begins her autobiography with a traditional account of her parentage and the Judgement of Paris (*Hel.* 16–30), but then moves on to less familiar territory (*Hel.* 31–36, 53–55):

49 See de Jong (2007) 276–282.

50 Contrast Sophocles: Kamerbeek (1960) 11; de Jong (2007) 285–286.

51 Scullion (1999–2000), criticized by Seaford (2009) and Mastrorarde (2010) 183.

52 Stern (1973) 168–172; cf. Zanker (1987) 6–7, 16–17, 120–124.

53 Cf. Lodge (1977) 40, 47 on the realist assumption that there is 'a common phenomenal world that may be reliably described by the methods of empirical history'.

But Hera, annoyed that she did not defeat the other goddesses, made Alexandros' union with me as vain as the wind: she gave to king Priam's son not me but a breathing image [*eidôlon*] she fashioned from the heavens to resemble me. He imagines—vain imagination—that he has me, though he does not ... And I, who have suffered everything, am cursed by men, and all think that I have abandoned my husband and brought a great war upon the Greeks.

This bizarre story is confirmed when Teucer enters, and immediately notes the similarity of Helen to what we know to be the *eidôlon* at Troy and reveals the hatred which the Greeks feel for her (*Hel.* 71–77). He supplies new information, and of course does not know the truth about Helen, but the effect is to confirm Helen's remarkable story.⁵⁴ The story is further confirmed in her scene with Menelaus (*Hel.* 557–596), and finally by the Servant's account of the disappearance of the *eidôlon* (*Hel.* 605–615).

One of Euripides' favourite techniques, exemplified by Teucer in *Helen*, is to introduce a character from outside who elicits, often in stichomythia, a full account of what is going on which recapitulates what the audience has already seen and heard.⁵⁵ Analepsis is in itself a technique of realism, and these arrivals also connect the action of the play with a wider world. Aegeus (*Med.* 689–708) is the classic example, who supplies an objective or at least independent view of what has happened so far. Orestes says little about his own activities (*El.* 228–236), but questions Electra at length about her situation (*El.* 237–338; cf. *Ion* 247–380). He has a similar, although shorter, scene with Hermione in *Andromache* (*An.* 901–920). These scenes complement the objective accounts in prologue speeches and *deus ex machina* speeches. *Bacchae* notably lacks a scene of this kind, and it is interesting to imagine the effect of a figure like Aegeus (*Medea*) turning up in the middle of the play and questioning Pentheus in sympathetic terms about his problems. It is significant here that Dionysus, a central character in the action, also delivers the prologue and *deus ex machina* speeches. The play denies us an external and objective viewpoint, as is also normally the case in Sophocles, where Theseus (*Oedipus Coloneus*) is a rare example. The Paedagogus (*Electra*) and the False Merchant (*Philoctetes*) are ostensibly figures of this type but are in reality not only internal to the action but also deceptive; they provide no external standpoint from which to assess what is going on.

54 Cf. Allan (2008) 157; Burian (2007) 195.

55 Cf. Ludwig (1954) 54–63. Other examples include Peleus (*An.* 547–571), Heracles (*HF* 533–561), and Theseus (*HF* 1178–1213).

All three tragedians treat space in a basically realistic way: 'the impression we have is of a pre-existing stable reality, appropriately and ... meticulously verbalized'.⁵⁶ Euripides goes to greater lengths than the other two tragedians in creating a detailed topography for each play, in which the stage space is related systematically to a number of offstage locations. *Orestes* can serve as an example here. The play is set in front of the royal palace at Argos, where Orestes is confined by armed men in the surrounding streets. In the city, there is also the assembly-place (866–956), and the tombs of Clytemnestra (94, 124–125, 402, 1321–1323) and Agamemnon (796). Characters are careful to describe their movements between these places (e.g. 470–475, 729–730, 866–873). Outside the city, but not far away, are the countryside from which the messenger comes (866) and the port of Nauplia (54, 241–242, 369). More distant places which the characters come from or go to are Troy (55), Sparta (65, 1661), and Phocis (726). All this creates an illusion of the action taking place in a world in which places are coherently related as they are in the real world.⁵⁷

The topographical realism discussed in the previous paragraph derives essentially from its internal coherence. Another aspect of Euripides' realism is to relate the action of a play in detail to real places with which the audience was actually or potentially familiar. This is analogous to the descriptions of London in Dickens or of Paris in Balzac, although Euripides has to take account of differences between his own day and the mythical period in which the plays are set.⁵⁸ Euripides shows quite detailed knowledge of Troezenian topography in *Hippolytus*, especially in the messenger's description of Hippolytus' journey. Barrett argues that the descriptions are 'basically accurate', and even plots Hippolytus' route on a map.⁵⁹ Commentators have produced maps for other plays, including *Supplikes*, *Ion*, and *Phoenissae*.⁶⁰ Delphi is described in some detail in *Ion* and in the messenger speech of *Andromache*. The descriptions include both

56 Silk (2000) 274, contrasting Aristophanes. Lowe (2006) argues convincingly that Aristophanes' construction of space is coherent but does not claim that it is realistic.

57 For a detailed account of the topography of Troy in *Troades*, see Stieber (2011) 12–16; on the topography of *Electra*, see Lloyd (2012) 343.

58 Zanker (1987) 115–116 discusses geographical realism: 'the reference to existing and still observable geographical phenomena and landmarks, the history of which was connected with the mythical events being narrated'.

59 Barrett (1964) 382–384 (note on lines 1198–1200); cf. his notes on lines 121–122 and 148–150. Fitton (1967) 23–25 offers a rival map but has similar confidence in the basic reliability of Euripides' geography.

60 *Supplikes*: Diggle (1973) 260 = (1994) 79. *Ion*: Loraux (1993 [1984]) 197. *Phoenissae*: Mastronarde (1994) 648 ('the circumstantial details used for literary effect by Eur. do not introduce any proven gross improbabilities', 650).

physical features (e.g. the temple of Apollo, the treasuries, Parnassus, Castalia, the oracle of Trophonius) and cultic and other activities which took place there (e.g. consultation of the oracle, the festival of Dionysus, sightseeing). Most immediate of all for the first audience of the play are the extensive and detailed references to the Acropolis in *Ion*: the Long Rocks (13, 283, 494, 937, 1400), the grave of Erechtheus (281–282), the shrine of Pan (492, 938), and ‘Pallas’ temples’ (498).⁶¹ Sophocles, by contrast, avoids realistic topography at the beginning of his *Electra*, creating a synthetic Mycenae-Argos which combines the features of both.⁶² Lemnos in his *Philoctetes* is in effect a desert island, detached both from historical reality and from literary tradition.⁶³

Messenger speeches have been much studied as realistic narratives.⁶⁴ They are notable for the *enargeia* (vividness), which was highly valued in ancient literary criticism.⁶⁵ One aspect of this is their use of technical descriptions. Realism has an obvious literary ancestry here, as such descriptions are also common in Homer. They give an illusion of reality through ‘solidity of specification’ (in Henry James’ term, cited above), but also engage with the audience’s understanding of how things are done in real life. An example is the description of Hippolytus’ attempt to control his chariot (*Hipp.* 1219–1226):

My master, who had lived long with the ways of horses, seized the reins in his hands and pulled them, as a sailor pulls an oar, letting his body hang backwards from the straps. But they took the fire-wrought bit in their teeth and carried him against his will, paying no heed to their captain’s hand or the harness or the tight-glued chariot.

The most detailed technical description in Sophocles, also of a chariot crash (*El.* 709–756), is part of a deceptive narrative (also with epic background). Sophocles, as often, detaches the reality effect from the representation of reality.

A messenger speech also contributes to the realism of the play as a whole by corroborating what we have seen and relating it to the wider world. In *Hecuba*, for example, we see Polyxena refuse to supplicate Odysseus and explain why she prefers death to slavery (*Hec.* 342–378). The messenger speech later describes her sacrifice in the presence of the whole Greek army (*Hec.* 521, 530, 533, 542, 553), where she again insists that she is going willingly to her death

61 See further Stieber (2011) 278–284.

62 See Jebb (1894), note on lines 4–8.

63 See Schein (2013) 7–8.

64 See especially Barlow (2008 [1971]) ch. 4; cf. Bremer (1976); de Jong (1991); Barrett (2002).

65 See (e.g.) Zanker (1987) 39–54; Zeitlin (1994); Nünlist (2009) 194–198.

(*Hec.* 546–565). The army and Talthybius reiterate Hecuba's admiration for her nobility (*Hec.* 571–582). The attitudes and intentions which we have seen expressed in a comparatively intimate context onstage are enacted in public before a large audience and described in a messenger speech which is marked as truthful both by the conventions of such speeches and by the vividness of its description. The reality of Polyxena's nobility is reinforced by mutually corroborating presentations in different dramatic modes.⁶⁶ Sophocles' treatment of messenger speeches is different. The events described by the messengers in *Antigone*, *Oedipus the King*, and *Oedipus at Colonus* are even less public than what we have witnessed onstage. There is of course no suggestion that the messengers are lying, unlike the Paedagogus in *Electra*, but their accounts lack the additional verification of a mass of witnesses in a public space. This is undoubtedly a feature of the messenger speech in *Trachiniae* (note the reference to 'many witnesses' at line 352), but the events described are distinct from anything we have witnessed so far and this part of the play does indeed foreground the possibility of conflicting narratives. *Ajax* 719–732 is the nearest Sophocles comes to Euripides' use of the messenger to project events into a public domain, but it is notable that the messenger then proceeds to report a private conversation (*Soph., Aj.* 748–783).

Projection of private intentions into public enactment described by a messenger occurs in many of Euripides' plays. This is especially striking when messengers describe miracles, as in *Medea*, *Heracleidae*, and *Bacchae*. The following passage describes the effect of Medea's poison on Jason's new wife (*Med.* 1190–1203):

All aflame she leapt from the chair and fled, tossing her hair this way and that, trying to shake off the diadem. But the gold crown held its fastenings firmly, and when she shook her hair, the fire merely blazed up twice as high. She fell to the floor, overwhelmed by disaster, barely recognizable to any but her father. Her eyes no longer kept their wonted form nor did her shapely face. From the top of her head blood dripped, mingled with fire, and her flesh dropped from her bones like resin from a pine torch, torn by the unseen jaws of the poison, a dreadful sight to behold. We were all afraid to touch the corpse, taught well by the event we had seen.

66 In *Electra*, some scholars have seen a contradiction between Electra's view of Aegisthus and the description of his behaviour in the messenger speech: for discussion, see Lloyd (1992) 56–57.

This is in itself a realistic narrative, presenting events in a systematic sequence of cause and effect, and relating them to everyday experience. The *enargeia* (vividness) is focalized by the messenger's reference to the effect of these events on the bystanders. The narrative is also intricately related to what we have seen and heard in the play so far. Medea supplied a detailed prolepsis when she described her plot to the Chorus (*Med.* 772–789), expanding on the intention to use poison which she expressed in less specific terms earlier (*Med.* 384–385). Creon (*Med.* 285) and Aegeus (*Med.* 677) both regard her as 'clever' (*sophos*), and the Aegeus scene additionally reveals her knowledge of drugs (*pharmaka*, *Med.* 718). Medea's skills are well known in Greece (cf. *Med.* 539–540), and her intellectual capacity is illustrated throughout the play. The result is that the supernatural events described in the messenger speech are not only narrated in a realistic style but are also authenticated by the way they are embedded in the play as a whole. Furthermore, much of the play is realistic in the more specific sense of treating the action in everyday terms, with an emphasis on the less elevated aspects of human motivation and behaviour. The reality of the play is a continuum, including both mundane behaviour and the miraculous effect of Medea's poison.

Poetic dramas based on myth will inevitably differ in their realism from *La Comédie humaine* or *Middlemarch*, although Euripides finds room for commonplace things (the *oikeia pragmata* of Ar., *Frogs* 959) and treats lower-status characters in a more serious and extended way than the other tragedians. A complementary aspect of his realism is the down-to-earth presentation of heroic characters. He also treats myth realistically on its own terms, giving the stories coherence and solidity of specification. This makes it impossible to set myth in opposition to reality in his plays, as he treats both the mythical and the everyday with impartial realism. The entry on Euripides in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* has a section entitled "Realism", fragmentation, formalism'.⁶⁷ 'Realism' and 'realist' are invariably enclosed in scare quotes in the discussion which follows. The implication seems to be that realism as a literary mode cannot do justice to a fragmented reality, but perhaps also that it attributes to Euripides an unproblematic or transparent representation of the world. This chapter has argued both that Euripides' reality is not fragmented, and also that all its aspects can usefully be analyzed in terms of the techniques of realism.

67 Gould (2012 [1996]) 551–552.

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Emotion in Euripides

Eirene Visvardi

‘Will you let go the cause (*archên*) and attack the effect that came after?’.^{1,2} This protestation by one of Euripides’ characters succinctly articulates an attitude in tragedy toward the more vehement emotions. Characters often criticize such emotions for motivating violent acts, and the plays themselves raise demanding questions about their very *archê*—the beginning or cause that ties them to ethical, social, and other considerations. As tragedy invites examination of decision-making in private and public life, how tragic characters and theatre audiences engage with such emotional beginnings may be seen as being among the central concerns of the genre.

Such a consideration of the emotions enacted in and evoked through tragedy assumes the so-called cognitive approach. Emotions are understood as complex processes of response (to real or imagined inducements) that encompass both physiological change and cognition, the latter being based on beliefs and judgments. Rooted as they are in the human body, emotions thus connect members across different cultures, although their power and meaning varies according to each culture’s values and ideologies.³ With regard to the fifth century BC, we may view democratic Athens as a culture of passions: debates in different public spaces make clear that deliberation does not aim to expel or neutralize emotion in the interest of pure reason, but rather both to elicit and to define the emotions deemed appropriate for subsequent action. Decisions, that is, are to be passionate but ‘beneficially’ so.⁴ If, as numerous scholars assert,

1 I am thankful to Andy Szegedy-Maszak and Kate Birney for their input at the final stages of the chapter. Many thanks also to the anonymous reader for helpful comments and to the editor of the volume Andreas Markantonatos.

2 *Andromache* 392–393. All translations are from the most recent Loeb edition, unless otherwise stated. In the play, Andromache addresses Menelaus who arrives to put her to death for being Neoptolemus’ concubine, a reality she was forced into against her will.

3 Work in Classics that explores this dynamic in different genres includes: Lada-Richards (1993); Cairns (1993), (2015); Nussbaum (1994), (2001); Braund/Gill (1997); Konstan (1999), (2000), (2001), (2006); Harris (2001); Fortenbaugh (2002); Braund/Most (2003); Konstan/Rutter (2003); Kaster (2005); Sternberg (2005), (2006); Budelmann (2010); Munteanu (2011), (2012); Sanders (2014).

4 Visvardi (2015) 3–4.

political culture and dramatic performance in Athens influence each other in dynamic ways, tragedy participates in enacting, engaging, and theorizing the emotions together with their ethical and political underpinnings.⁵

All three major tragedians explore the ways in which emotions undermine or foster attachments to individuals, communities, and ideals. Tragedy in the fifth century ought not to be seen as a fixed genre but as dynamically evolving in form and content within Athenian performance culture.⁶ Indeed, by the end of the fifth century, a debate develops over the media and overall effects of *mousikê*—the arts of the Muses, namely music, poetry, and dance, variously combined. Euripides attracts special attention as a creative force who reshapes and expands—or destroys—the boundaries of the tragic genre. Aristophanes' critical engagement and fascination with Euripides, for instance, is well known.⁷ Euripides' corpus indeed presents a remarkable variety of plot-structures, characters, and uses of the Chorus, intergeneric play, new forms of lyricism influenced by the New Music, and different degrees of self-consciousness regarding the workings and effects of dramatic art itself. Embedded in this varied poetics is a wide-ranging exploration of emotional experiences. Such exploration often brings out individual and collective priorities, by dramatizing and often articulating in markedly self-conscious ways the visceral and evaluative aspects of the emotions.

One challenge in examining emotion is that of definition. Drawing analogies—especially lexical ones—with contemporary emotions requires caution as these, while often valid, can also be misleading. The act of defining and tracing individual emotions, moreover, may obscure the fact that emotions are complex 'events'; that different emotions are often inextricably interconnected, to be seen more as Venn diagrams than discrete psychological phenomena; and that certain emotions may not be acknowledged even when experienced.

5 The civic function of tragedy has numerous proponents. E.g. Vernant (1988) 23–28, 29–48; Euben (1986); Winkler/Zeitlin (1990); Meier (1993); Croally (1994); Goff (1995); Seaford (1994), (2000); Griffith (1995), (2005); Hall (1996), (2006); Friedrich (1996); Zeitlin (1996); Pelling (1997); Griffin (1998); Goldhill (2000); Foley (2001); Rhodes (2003); Carter (2011); Rosenbloom (2012); Tzanetou (2012). These works either explicate the notion of 'civic function' or interpret plays by assuming it.

6 On generic differences between tragedy and comedy, see Taplin (1983), (1986), (1996). On Euripidean manipulations of genre, see Knox (1979a); Foley (2008) esp. 28–33; Mastronarde (2010) 44–62. Works on individual plays, too extensive to cite, discuss the mixture of different generic elements. On Euripidean conceptions of the tragic and the poet's participation in the debate around *mousikê*, see Wilson (1999–2000). On the New Music, with examples from Euripides, see Csapo (2004). For the most recent contribution to the discussion of Euripidean innovations in *mousikê*, see Weiss (2018) with analysis of four late tragedies.

7 Silk (2000) 42–97; Pucci (2007).

Scholars, for instance, have debated the very existence of erotic jealousy as an emotion known to the Greeks of the fifth century.⁸ The terminology of shame (*aidôs*, *aischunê*), which is prominent in the plays, covers the notions of feeling shame and having a sense of shame (a prospective and retrospective dimension) that raise important questions of personal experience and internalized cultural norms.⁹ Whether *erôs* is a mere sex drive or an emotion proper, moreover, is also a question already raised in antiquity.

A second challenge is one of choice: which emotions, if any, can be said to be most representative of Euripidean poetics? Aristotle famously defines pity and fear as the quintessential tragic emotions and characterizes Euripides as ‘most tragic’ (*tragikôtatos*) for his plots.¹⁰ Fear and pity indeed permeate Euripides’ plays. Fear may stand out as an experience of individual characters and Choruses, but it often also interconnects with other emotions, especially pity.¹¹ Supplication, for example, occurs in almost every play and invites pity for the suppliants’ suffering. At the same time, the act tends to be a vehicle for the expression of the suppliants’ own fears while also evoking a range of fears in their potential protectors.¹² Being central to the genre, lamentation invites pity for the victims’ losses while often communicating both fear and anger.

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- 8 Konstan (2006) 219–243. One way to trace jealousy is to identify a complex of thoughts, perceptions, and responses—‘emotional scenarios’—that point to what today we view as jealousy. See e.g. Sanders (2014). Sanders follows a definition of emotional episode or scenario as ‘the story of an emotional event’ that incorporates perception and interpretation of a situation, psychological and physiological feelings, possibly attempt to cope with the emotion and subsequent verbal expression and action. Such scenarios represent instances of general emotion ‘scripts’ (pp. 1–7).
- 9 See especially Cairns (1993) and Konstan (2003) on *aidôs* as prospective and inhibitory (‘sense of shame’) and *aischunê* as having both a prospective and a retrospective dimension (both ‘shame’ and a ‘sense of shame’).
- 10 *Poet.* 1453a28–30.
- 11 Aristotle points out the close connection between the two emotions in his definition of pity (*Rhet.* 1385b14–1386a41). On fear in particular Euripidean plays, see e.g. Visvardi (2015) 213–238 on *Bacchae*; Papadodima (2016) on *Phoenician Women*; Duranti (2017) on *Electra* and *Orestes*. On pity and fear in *Orestes*, see Munteanu (2011) 218–237.
- 12 The suppliant plays are discussed in the next section. In the rest of the corpus, suppliants include: Medea asking Creon to pity her children; Andromache fearing death for herself and her son and seeking protections at Thetis’ statue (*Andr.*); Hermione in the same play entreating Orestes to save her from punishment; Creusa at Apollo’s altar after her attempt to kill Ion (*Ion*); Helen at Proteus’ tomb fearing that she will be forced to marry king Theoclymenus. Helen subsequently supplicates the king’s sister Theonoe for help and Theoclymenus himself to trick him into helping her escape (*Hel.*). Orestes supplicates Menelaus to save him (*Or.*). Iphigenia supplicates her own father not to kill her. Agamemnon responds: ‘I understand what calls for pity and what does not, and I love my children’ (*IA* 1256).

Trojan Women and *Hecuba* offer powerful examples of captive women, both individual characters and Choruses, invoking pity for their state and expressing fears for their future.¹³ The power of male lament, moreover, stems partly from the appropriation of a female ritual to express devastating grief. Old Cadmus laments over his grandson's dismembered body; Theseus laments his wife's suicide; Admetus' lament after his wife's burial is central to his ethical development and to the plot of the *Alcestis*.¹⁴ Woven throughout the plays, these expressions instigate further responses and action.

Other emotions frequently motivating Euripides' characters include anger, hatred, and shame.¹⁵ Tyrannical figures like Pentheus in the *Bacchae* are quick to anger, an anger that stems from narrow-minded judgments and is used to maintain their (short-lived) power—which they attempt by inspiring fear. Divine anger and hatred complicate human motivation, as is the case with Dionysus (*Bacch.*), Aphrodite (*Hipp.*) and Athena (*TW*). In *Orestes*, we move from the hero's fear of the maddening Erinyes to lamentation and self-pity, to fear of the people of Argos, to hatred and vehement anger at Helen that compel murder. Terrible anger and hatred for Jason's shameless breaking of oaths motivate Medea's killing of her own children. Feelings of shame relate to one's self-esteem and standing in the community as well as to one's effect on beloved ones (*philo*). A sense of shame strongly motivates Phaedra as a woman and wife in *Hippolytus*; Pheres and Admetus debate their own sense of shame, self-respect, and respect for others; Heracles experiences shame upon realizing he killed his family but also because he fears that he may pollute his *philos* Theseus.¹⁶ Envy and jealousy also occur. Medea's anger is likely mixed with envy and jealousy for Jason's new marriage. Hermione too appears to be motivated by hatred, envy, and jealousy towards Andromache, the concubine of her husband Neoptolemus.¹⁷ Jealousy, envy, and spite, however, have been seen as limited in tragedy as a whole. The genre's investment in the public arenas of *polis* and *oikos*, it has been argued, makes for a focus on the grander destructive

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- 13 In the former, the female captives of Troy are first introduced through lament: in a lyric exchange, Hecuba and the Chorus bewail their pitiful fate and their paralyzing fear of slavery (98–229). On the choral odes of both plays, see Visvardi (2011). On lament and other songs communicating the end of *choreia* and the utter devastation of war in *Trojan Women*, see Weiss (2018) 100–139. Specifically on captives' lament and pity, see e.g. Dué (2006). On the politics of tragic lamentation more broadly, see Foley (2001) 19–56.
- 14 See e.g. Segal (1993) 51–72, (1994); Murnaghan (1999–2000). On compassion through violence and lament in *Bacchae*, see Perris (2011).
- 15 On shame in Euripides' corpus, see Cairns (1993) 265–342.
- 16 Segal (1970); Kovacs (1980); Padilla (2000).
- 17 See e.g. Cairns (2014); Sanders (2014) 130–142, 148–156, 166–168.

passions and their impact on the social and political sphere.¹⁸ To the grander emotions, we can add *erôs*. Especially in cases of gender conflict, *erôs* is often intertwined with expressions of anger and/or hatred.¹⁹ Finally, leaving aside the pleasure of murderous revenge, joy and pleasure figure in the experience of recognition of long-lost loved ones and of averted evil.²⁰

Varying configurations of these emotions thus pervade Euripides' corpus. Rather than offering an exhaustive survey of emotions, this chapter will instead present an analysis of some key emotions that motivate decision-making and action: pity, anger, *erôs*, and joy. These emotions reflect central ethical and political concerns in Euripides' work, powerfully illustrating the conditions and impact of the emotions in individual and collective life within the plays. In addition to being seen as one of the quintessential tragic emotions, pity figures prominently in decision-making processes in fifth-century public spaces such as the courts and the assembly. Anger too stands out in these contexts.²¹ Regarding *erôs*, scholars have made the case that it is no mere instinct: it qualifies as an emotion in the Aristotelian sense of *pathos* because it incorporates a cognitive component of thought (*dianoia*) or belief.²² It is as such that it will be analyzed in plays of gender conflict which are often seen as emblematic of Euripidean poetics. *Erôs* can, at the same time, stand for passionate desire *per se*, as an act of (over)valuation that drives individual and collective goals. In *Iphigenia at Aulis*, for instance, it is a terrible (*deinos*) *erôs* that stirs all Hellas to pursue the expedition against Troy (808).²³ It was *erôs* too that, according to Thucydides (6.24.2–3), motivated the Athenians to undertake the ultimately disastrous expedition against Sicily. Decades earlier, moreover, Pericles had urged his fellow citizens to feel *erôs* for their exceptional city, rendering *erôs* a passion that motivated political participation.²⁴ Tragic *erôs* was thus in dialogue with other fifth-century discursive transfigurations of desire. Last, by looking

18 Goldhill (2003) 171.

19 Medea, Phaedra, and Hermione stand out as examples.

20 See the recognition scenes between Ion and Creusa (1435–1449), Menelaus and Helen (625–655), Iphigenia and Orestes (788–841), and Admetus and Alcestis (1119–1158), in *Ion*, *Helen*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, and *Alcestis* respectively.

21 On pity and anger in different public contexts, see e.g. Allen (2000) (2003); Konstan (2001); Sternberg (2005) (2006); Rosenbloom (2012) includes fear and indignation as well among the emotions that 'constitute an essential part of Athenian political culture' (p. 270).

22 E.g. Konstan (2013).

23 Also l. 1264: 'a great longing runs riot (*memêne d' Aphroditê tis*) in the Greek army to sail with all speed'.

24 Famously in Pericles' funeral oration. On the Athenian citizen as a lover of the city, see e.g. Monson (1994); Ludwig (2002); Wohl (2002); Farenga (2006) esp. 436–438.

at joy, we can turn to a subset of dramas that are often labelled as other than tragedy (tragicomedy, melodrama, romantic tragedy, among others) and examine the tension between happy endings and tragic emotion as part of Euripides' play with generic expectations. Through representative case studies, namely an extensive reading of *Hecuba* and brief discussion of seven more plays, the study that follows aims to bring out the workings and scope of these emotions: how they develop through plot, how they emerge as intertwined in different contexts, what they communicate and problematize, and, through these spheres, their role in decision-making.

A question remains: whose emotions are we considering? We take the emotional engagement of the audience for granted—a power for which tragedy was already praised or vilified in antiquity. Even so, in the absence of evidence about audience reactions, the emotional discourse of the plays offers the only secure ground for gauging their potential effect.²⁵ It thus helps us gauge the emotional—and, therefore, ethical and political—topicality of Euripidean tragedy.

1 Pity, Anger, and Power

Pity, one of the 'quintessential' tragic emotions, is defined by Aristotle as a kind of pain one experiences at encountering a victim of undeserved suffering.²⁶ The cognitive basis of pity rests on the evaluation of desert. Yet, '[...] despite its cognitive aspects, pity lacks intellectual rigor' and can be manipulated for political expedience.²⁷ Prosecutors and defendants in the courts, and speakers in the assembly constantly redefine the relationship between pity, law, and self- and collective interest to influence decision-making and policy. For this reason, an 'impartial' or—more accurately—an appropriately partial decision may derive from pity so long as pity is shown to have a rigorous intellectual basis.

Euripidean tragedy raises questions about what renders pity efficacious and challenges the idea that intellectual rigour would suffice to instigate action motivated by pity. As Aristotle points out, we ought to have some affinity, yet not too close a connection to a subject to be able to pity them. What may comprise legitimate affinities is at the heart of Euripides' dramatization of pity.

25 On tragedy and other texts conditioning external-audience response by depicting internal audiences, see Cairns (2015).

26 *Rhet.* 1385b14–1386a41.

27 Sternberg (2005) 42.

When requests for pity fail, moreover, we often witness the emergence of anger. Aristotle is helpful once again. Anger is defined as ‘a desire, accompanied by pain, for a perceived revenge, on account of a perceived slight on the part of the people who are not fit to slight one or one’s own.’²⁸ In Euripides, pitiers who do not offer help can become the *archê*, if not always the target, of anger and revenge. The two emotions appear together, for instance, in plays that focus on the morality of war and the treatment of slaves or other victims. Some of these plays, such as *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women* are set in spaces and times of transition, which approximate moments requiring processes of transitional justice—as these are defined by modern political theory.²⁹ If pity and anger are among the emotions that ‘underwrite the rule of law in democratic Athens,’³⁰ Euripidean drama uses mythic moments of transition to ask what it takes for these emotions to be genuinely conducive to just treatment.

1.1 *Euripides’ Hecuba*

Hecuba takes place right after the Trojan war, when the victorious Greeks are held up in Thrace for lack of winds to sail back home. At this mythic moment and space of transition, familiar laws and customs are put to the test through a plot built around two appeals to pity and the gradual emergence of vengeful rage.³¹ Both appeals to pity bring out the connection between emotional responsiveness and action. Entreating for pity constitutes a demand that the pitier act on his emotional experience, which is based on evaluating the victim’s misfortune as undeserved and therefore worthy of repair.

Odysseus is the first figure of authority that Hecuba supplicates in an attempt to prevent her daughter’s sacrifice, which is meant to appease Achilles’ ghost and the hostile winds. The queen bases her appeal on the demands of both personal obligation and respect for customary law (271): not only did she save Odysseus’ life when he entered Troy during the war; it is also against Greek

28 *Rhet.* 1378a31–33, transl. by Konstan (2006) 41.

29 Transitional Justice ‘seeks recognition for victims [of widespread violation of human rights] and promotion of possibilities for peace, reconciliation and democracy’ (see: <https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Global-Transitional-Justice-2009-English.pdf>). Procedures of transitional justice often include different kinds of trials such as criminal trials and truth commissions. Both the mythic moment after the mass violence at Troy and Thrace as a space with no institutions of justice help dramatize demands similar to those addressed through transitional justice.

30 Rosenbloom (2012) 275.

31 On the play’s (often vilified) structure, see Kirkwood (1947); Abrahamson (1952); Conacher (1961), (1967) 155–165; Heath (1987); Michelini (1987) 131–135; Segal (1990); Mastrorarde (2010) 71–73; Foley (2015) 29–34.

law to kill slaves who were shown pity at war time (286–292). While expressing pity for Hecuba, Odysseus offers a counter-argument built on the same principles of reciprocity and justice. Had this been about Hecuba's life, he would reciprocate the favour. Honouring Achilles' service to the Greek army, on the other hand, both meets the moral demands of reciprocity and carries long-term political advantage for the Greeks: it will encourage men to pursue honour in future wars (313–329). Regarding Hecuba herself, Odysseus thus defines reciprocity very narrowly. Moreover, by not addressing the very nature of Achilles' demand—the sacrifice of a human being—he presents it as a matter of justice that also serves state-interest. Despite his purported pity for Hecuba, then, he opts for a narrow conception of political advantage that conveniently bypasses the moral complications that are inherent in conflicting obligations. Considering what the suppliant deserves, in this case, does not affect policy at all.

Hecuba's second attempt to evoke pity implicates Agamemnon. Finding out that, entrusted with her youngest son, her guest-friend Polymestor killed the boy and threw the body into the sea, Hecuba entreats the king to help her re-establish justice. By so doing, he will contribute to upholding reverence for the gods and respect for social customs such as guest-friendship—namely, the human conventions that allow for clear distinctions between just and unjust, ensure accountability, and make fairness possible and sustainable (788 ff.). To make her appeal more compelling, however, Hecuba adds a request based on a different kind of reciprocity. She asks: 'Where will you tally your pleasurable nights then, lord, or for those passionate embraces in the bed what thanks will my daughter have? and I for her?'. Referring to her daughter Cassandra and Agamemnon's new concubine, this request has made critics shudder at Hecuba's morality, yet it appears to be somewhat efficacious.

While expressing his pity for Hecuba, Agamemnon argues that the rest of the Greeks will only suspect him of partiality because of his attachment to Cassandra and will side with their ally Polymestor. He shows no inclination to advocate actively the long-term benefit that would stem from siding with Hecuba's just cause. Even though Agamemnon's pity has an evaluative foundation, the only relation motivating him to act on his pity is his connection with Cassandra, which cannot—at least not openly—create the basis for policy. Thereby both his experience of compassion and his notion of justice remain narrowly focused and undependable on the institutional level: he explicitly wishes that justice be established without himself assuming the responsibility to act.³² This

32 On the absence of any credible civic infrastructure in the play, see also Lawrence (2013) 223–224.

is where the limited efficacy of Hecuba's supplication lies: Agamemnon at least allows Hecuba to take justice in her own hands, and creates the conditions for the major emotional shift in the play.

Hecuba subsequently turns wrathful. Just as her interlocutors warped arguments of reciprocity and justice, she will warp acts of reciprocity for justice. The pivotal moment of revenge takes place in the women's tent, a space that Polymestor calls a 'deserted place' (*erêmia*, 981). This space is 'deserted' only because there are no men; the exclusive occupation by slave women is thus discounted by Polymestor as real presence until he feels it at its most brutal.³³ In this space signification itself is decided and directed by Hecuba. Language is intentionally deceptive, maternal behaviour turns violent against children, and rage takes over. In a perverted act of guest-friendship, Hecuba and her women host Polymestor and his boys, until they turn him into a captive (woman). 'Stripping' him of his javelins and holding him down by hands and legs, they blind him with the brooches from their dresses after forcing him to witness the murder of his children. Polymestor pursues the women like an animal smashing everything within the tent. When he re-appears on stage, he is on all fours, 'boiling with Thracian anger' (1055) and wishing to take his fill of the women's flesh and bones (1071–1072). Upon encountering him, Agamemnon exclaims that the perpetrator of such crimes, must have nursed a great anger (*megan cholon*, 1118) against him. Anger for anger ends up being the only genuine reciprocal act in the play.

It is only then that Agamemnon oversees a trial and proclaims Polymestor's punishment to be just. While affirming Hecuba's justice, this trial raises numerous questions: why was not Agamemnon able or willing to reach the same verdict regarding the violation of guest-friendship before the murder of innocent children? Why was wrathful violence necessary? And to what extent is this trial to be trusted, since Agamemnon has decided the outcome in advance? How are we to understand the role of pity and anger in this process?

The choral voice in the play puts Hecuba's experience of Greek 'justice' into perspective and helps us address these questions. In their first song, the captive women envision the Greek places where they may serve as slaves, by describing prestigious rituals—the religious venues where citizen women could have their status recognized and so contribute to the prosperity of their communities.³⁴ Ironically, the Chorus' status precludes any possibility of their participation in

33 Rehm (2002) 114 argues that eremitic space for the Greeks of the fifth century is defined as such because it lacks human beings and has no positive valence.

34 See ll. 444–474, with references to the Great Panathenaea and Apollo's Panionian festival on Delos.

these rituals. The collective voice of the play thus pointedly shows personal loss to be part of a broader loss of community that defines female identity through ritual activity. In their next song, the women recast this interdependence between private and public. They contrast the individual leaders who carry the responsibility for war and the Trojan community of victims who suffer the consequences (629–633, 640–644); they also expand the suffering community to include the women of Greece who have experienced similar losses (649–656).

Interwoven with Hecuba's supplications, the songs of the Trojan captives point to the Greek mothers and girls lamenting in Greece and are themselves performed partly as laments, enacting on stage the suffering shared by barbarian and Greek women.³⁵ They too thus invite pity by questioning the politics of its elimination: by pointing to the absence of political accountability, these women reassert the malfunction of institutional justice that Hecuba encounters; by communicating their collective displacement and the impossibility for institutional integration through ritual, they expand Hecuba's experience in the play; and by performing as a choral body, they embody an anonymous collective of potential wrathful agents of justice. Such agents, they seem to warn, can be found at any place that lacks functional institutions of justice. We may recall that the play ends with the prophecy of Agamemnon's murder at the hands of his wife back home.

Where do pity and anger leave us? As we saw, Hecuba invokes Agamemnon's attachment to Cassandra to compel him to act on his pity for herself. Hecuba's move indicates that the rational basis of pity, namely the evaluation of the victim's suffering as unjust, is insufficient to motivate action. It is an intimate connection with the sufferer that can translate sympathy into action. The women of the Chorus, moreover, present the private and public realms as more integrated than Odysseus and Agamemnon allow for and thus prompt reconsideration of what constitutes meaningful attachments and the policies that (can) sustain them. In other words, the final establishment of justice, limited and morally dissatisfying as it is, suggests that pity can lead to more functional forms of institutional justice, only if a rigorous assessment of desert is combined with healthier, more reliable, and more inclusive attachments. This connection between characters and Chorus points to a need for more comprehensive considerations of responsibility and accountability that can render pity beneficial for the larger community. In this case, political expedience itself

35 For a discussion of these odes and similar odes in *Trojan Women*, see Visvardi (2011) 274–287.

would be redefined, since it would require a radical reconsideration of political alliance and interest. What the play points to, however, is the challenge of finding ways that contribute to such expansion of thinking and feeling for and with others.

Paying attention to anger may indicate one such way, but a difficult and demanding one at that. Hecuba's daughter already in the first part of the play asks Odysseus to see Hecuba's anger as justified (403). When supplicating Agamemnon, Hecuba expresses both self-pity and anger at her unjust treatment. It is Agamemnon's resistance to commit fully to her just cause that leads to Hecuba's anger taking over. Such anger, as we saw, drives Hecuba's revenge, becomes the cause of Polymestor's wrath, and boils over, overwhelming institutional practices. Agamemnon, in turn, angry at Polymestor's prophecies, orders his confinement on a desert island.

The demand for pity, therefore, allows for a contained expression of anger against the source of one's pitiful state. Such anger is potent, yet justified, under control, and possible to mollify or negotiate. Recent work on institutions of transitional justice such as truth commissions and the ad hoc local trials that they institute proposes that listening carefully to the expression of anger after mass violence can be beneficial. Difficult, demanding, and risky as such encounters are, they reveal the deeper needs of victims and can facilitate the building of trust necessary for transitioning to a more inclusive citizenry.³⁶ In fifth-century Athens, moreover, anger 'was a central term in the ethical discourses that produced Athenian definitions of the good citizen, justice, and just behavior'.³⁷ This meant that, 'if anger was to be channeled into a legitimate act of punishment, it had to be used correctly'.³⁸ Pity and anger in *Hecuba* help delineate some of the demanding conditions necessary for envisioning satisfying forms of justice and enabling such correct use. Euripidean emotion returns to this problematic, partly through powerful female figures.

36 Chakravarti (2014) 127–171.

37 Allen (2003) 78.

38 Allen (2003) 79. Allen points out that female anger in tragedy leads to actions that cannot qualify as political since 'women were defined as being incapable of guiding their anger into structures of legitimate action' (87). Euripidean emotion builds on this perception to reveal the shortcomings of narrowly defined male anger and the institutions that encapsulate it.

1.2 *Suppliant Plays*

When we move to plays in which supplication drives the plot, appeals to pity are frequently associated with considerations of what constitutes political freedom for both individuals and states. In *Children of Heracles*, a double supplication raises issues of law, political freedom, and humanitarian goals across states. At the altar of Zeus, Iolaus and Heracles' sons supplicate Demophon, king of Athens, for protection against Argos' king Eurystheus, while Alcmene guards Heracles' daughters inside the temple. Eurystheus' representative warns Demophon that pity for the suppliants would be an emotional response devoid of thoughtful deliberation (*aboulos symphora katoiktiein*, 152) and a political act that would necessarily lead to war, since Argos still holds legal power over the suppliants. Arguing that their banishment from Argos eliminates any legal claims on them, Iolaus on the other hand, construes Demophon's potential inability to show pity as lack of freedom combined with lack of shame (*aischunê*). Athens' king agrees: 'it will be thought that it is no sovereign (*eleutheran*) land that I govern but that I have betrayed suppliants for fear of the Argives' (244–245). As Konstan has shown, Demophon does not mention pity in his statement of policy but shifts the argument to considerations of justice with regard to the treatment of suppliants.³⁹ The politics that ensue from appeals to pity involve a display of good sense that combines reverence for the gods, respect for undeservedly suffering victims, and self-respect defined as acknowledgment of one's freedom and of the obligations that this freedom necessitates toward oneself and others. Such good sense includes the ability to show respect towards enemies too: Iolaus vilifies Eurystheus for his inability to offer just treatment to his defeated enemies.

Even in this play, however, the circumstances that allow for the enactment of individual freedom and state sovereignty challenge the ethics of empowerment that freedom facilitates. When an oracle declares that a virgin must be sacrificed to save his city, Demophon refuses to entertain the possibility and feels helpless: he fears that this new demand will divide his people and civil war will spread in his land. The limits of pity become apparent: 'the relationship between the pitiers and the pitied, Athenians and non-Athenians, cannot be rendered equal. Athens extends its help to those who have benefits to offer to the city'.⁴⁰ It is one of Heracles' daughters who saves the day by offering to sacrifice herself. Furthermore, at the conclusion of the play, Alcmene requests permission to kill Eurystheus, the illegality of which she evades by promising to

39 Konstan (2005) 64.

40 Tzanetou (2005) 116.

release his body. Through this act, everyone ends up satisfied: Alcmena gets her revenge; and Athens, praised for good judgment and religious reverence even by Eurystheus, will receive his body as protection for the city. Athens reaps great benefits partly because it bends its laws, or, to put it more accurately, because it allows a woman to bend its laws about captives. This collaboration has been seen as a 'fruitful interaction of ancient tribe and modern city'.⁴¹ Yet the flexibility with which the law is enforced points to an abuse of freedom and power that turns out wholly to Athens' benefit. Alcmena's individuality points to 'the terrible costs exacted in order to maintain the equilibrium conferred by men's laws, customs, *nomoi*'.⁴²

In *Suppliant Women*, Theseus' consideration of Adrastus' request to recover the bodies of the Seven revolves around whether an individual, especially a state-representative, ought to show pity to those who have acted rashly. What kind of ethical and political considerations, if any, can expand the assessment of desert for a victim's suffering and vulnerability? Theseus is initially unmoved, precisely because Adrastus and his city brought their misfortune upon themselves by disregarding the seer Amphiaras. Aethra, however, moved to pity for the mothers of the Seven who supplicate her convinces her son that his decision ought to be based on broader ethical and religious considerations, namely on the display of courage on behalf of the wronged and on respect for the will of the gods. Once again pity is left aside as Aethra introduces a consideration of right and wrong while connecting it with the self-interest of Theseus and his state.⁴³ Theseus, in turn, ratifies his decision to support the suppliants by winning his people's vote. The Theban herald, however, not only questions the ability of the 'rabble' to make informed decisions; he also questions the emotions that conceptions of freedom give rise to: 'do not, from anger at my words, make some boastful answer on slender grounds, claiming that you live in a free city. Hope is a thing not to be trusted, and it has set cities at war with each other by kindling anger to excess' (476–480). Theseus' final decision to go to war for the sake of recovering the dead is based on a conception of expedience that transcends individual city-states: 'Do you think it is Argos you harm by not burying the dead? You are wrong: all Hellas is concerned if the dead are deprived of their due and kept unburied. If your action becomes customary, it will turn brave men into cowards' (537–541). The victorious Theseus brings back from Thebes the bodies of the Seven to be burnt on a pyre. Before, how-

41 Burnett (1976) 25.

42 Mendelsohn (2002) 133.

43 Konstan (2005) 59.

ever, he returns the heroes' bones to their sons to carry them back to Argos, he follows Athena's advice and exacts an oath of obligation from the Argives for generations to come.

In both plays, political acts that originate in invocations of pity express and solidify Athenian freedom and power while entailing significant risk that implicates whole communities. In both cases, helping the weak secures political benefits for Athens. This dramatization of the effectiveness of pity can be seen as both salutary and problematic. On the one hand, with the transition from pity to considerations of self- and other-interest, the plays raise the possibility of creating humane policies that benefit everyone involved and explore what it may take to sustain them. By so doing they also point to the potential—or aspiration—of expanding the criteria for what renders suffering deserved, and therefore of amplifying the obligation to remedy it. Theseus moves in this aspirational direction: by heeding his mother's advice, he is able to re-assess his initial evaluation of the suppliants and to view the demands of war as distinct from the demands of death and burial. Feeling protected regarding the latter, men will also be more willing to support their states at war. In this case, more respectful policy genuinely creates both political benefit and an expansion of humanity that challenges well-worn definitions of the boundaries of care, respect for others, and self-respect: the messenger reports that Theseus himself removed the bodies of the Seven from the carnage and tended them before bringing them back with him. While Adrastus finds this to be a dreadful and shameful task, the messenger retorts: 'why should men consider one another's misfortunes shameful?'.⁴⁴

On the other hand, the preoccupation with sovereignty and power invites us to ask whether action based on pity is so thoroughly co-opted to Athenian interests that it becomes a mere political tool severed from its humane basis. We saw Demophon's vacillation in his commitment to help the suppliants and Alcmena's abuse of power. Some scholars see even in Demophon's perplexity a connection between persistent compassion and the virtue of the Athenian protector.⁴⁵ Others see the rhetoric of pity in both plays as a conscious projection of ideology that promotes openness toward foreigners and the privilege of being a member of the Athenian community and thus serves to mask Athenian

44 Mendelsohn (2002) views Theseus' enlightenment as a result of appropriating the feminine duty of burying their children. His new moral system 'relies on an ability to "feel" others' suffering' (187). *Trojan Women* dramatizes the opposite extreme by showing the pitiful state of captive women as thoroughly unheeded by the victors. This inability for sympathy seems to justify further the anger of the gods expressed in that play's prologue.

45 Johnson/Clapp (2005) 136.

hegemonic tactics.⁴⁶ Last, by focusing on modulations of gender throughout the action, it has been argued, we may also trace a non-patriarchal argument for a better assimilation of the feminine, otherness, and diversity. Alcmena's act can be seen as the tragic residue of exclusion.⁴⁷

In the process of defining policy, pity clearly brings into sharp focus power differentials and the ethics and politics of exclusion. One aspect of the discourse of pity remains particularly potent: its explicit manipulation indeed has the capacity to mask hegemonic tactics; but the deliberate elimination of pity from policy-negotiations that benefit others while serving self-interest may also conceal its residual effects.⁴⁸ The plays seem to dramatize an ambivalence about aligning compassion with the exercise of power, precisely because of the demands of empire. They thus recast the questions about political accountability and responsibility as well as true political expedience that we saw in *Hecuba*.

2 *Erôs* and Anger

Anger also plays a central role in plays of erotic conflict, as part of a constellation of emotions that often includes fear, pity, and shame. As such it offers a lens into the workings and complexities of erotic desire. Metaphors applied to *erôs*, moreover, such as madness, pollution (*miasma*), wrestling, war, and disease (*nosos*) vividly reconfigure both anger and desire—how they are experienced, enacted, and theorized by both characters and Choruses.

In her discussion of punishment and its tragic problems, Danielle Allen argues that anger was not just a personal passion but a social phenomenon that operated as a disease hard to cure not only because of the violence it might engender but also because it endured.⁴⁹ 'The tragic grammars of anger, disease, necessity, and law represent punishment as a response to diseased forms of intersubjectivity and problems of excessive power and passion in the community'.⁵⁰ The discussion of pity and anger above highlighted some of these prob-

46 Tzanetou (2005) 117–118.

47 Mendelsohn (2002) 232.

48 Gamble (1970) 386–393 sees in the play a Euripidean sensibility advanced for its time: the belief that one ought to get involved in remedying others' suffering irrespective of self-interest. Since established values did not offer the poet the terms to make an argument for shared humanity, he fell back onto familiar arguments regarding the advantages gained from helping others.

49 Allen (2000) 76.

50 Allen (2000) 94.

lems. Similarly, when anger allies with intense *erôs* in gender conflict, erotic desire itself is cast as a problem of excessive passion that is not confined to the private realm but affects the community at large. Contagion does not just happen. The victims of *erôs* decide to be actively contagious, teach lessons, and wage wars. *Hippolytus* and *Medea* offer telling cases of how anger and desire reveal needs and demands that call into question the social structures underlying these very demands.

In *Hippolytus* the infection of erotic desire is tied to anger. In order to sate her anger (1328) against Hippolytus for his singular devotion to Artemis, Aphrodite afflicts Phaedra with ‘terrible desire’ (*erôti deinôi*, 28) that weakens her physically and mentally. The revelation of Phaedra’s desire by her nurse spurs Hippolytus into an angry harangue against the female race that turns Phaedra’s desire into vengeful anger. By falsely accusing him of sexual violence, she then triggers Theseus’ rage (900, 983–984) and curse. While the Chorus, the nurse, and Phaedra herself initially focus on Phaedra’s physical and mental torment, it becomes clear that the intensity of her torment stems from Phaedra’s perception of the social repercussions of her disease.

In her famous speech about one’s inability consistently to put into practice the good one has knowledge of, Phaedra presents the force and effects of female desire in terms that transcend her individual suffering. She presents her own *erôs*—and female desire more broadly—as the object of public scrutiny, since it affects a woman’s status as well as that of her husband and children. A woman’s indulgence in different pleasures, especially in the pleasures of illicit desire, reveals a shamelessness that is hardly containable: it renders domestic life unbearable and ‘enslaves’ (425) the male members of the family. Phaedra’s misconduct at home threatens to tarnish her husband’s and sons’ reputation and, thereby, undermine their political freedom (419–426). Her heightened sense of shame (*aidôs*) thus foregrounds her awareness of the moral demands on female desire and shows the *nosos* of *erôs* to be a public concern.⁵¹ Fearing that Hippolytus ‘will fill the whole land with ugly tales’ (689–690), she decides to force him into sharing in her disease. By choosing deception as her mode of teaching, Phaedra indeed causes her disease to spread in the form of disruptive anger: Theseus’ curse ends up literally tearing Hippolytus’ body apart.

In *Medea*, the *nosos* of *erôs* turns into strife and all-out war fuelled by Medea’s insatiable wrath, which infects everyone who encounters her: the Chorus declares, ‘terrible and hard to heal is the wrath that comes when kin join in

51 On female glory and worth, see Loraux (1987) 26–27. On Phaedra’s *aidôs* speech, see Craik (1993), (1997); Cairns (1995) 322–335; Kovacs (1980); McClure (1999) 127–135.

conflict with kin' (520–521).⁵² This conflict stems from a disease that afflicts the intimate relation between husband and wife (16) and manifests itself in Medea's physical symptoms (24–28), in Jason's shamelessness and hubris,⁵³ and, eventually, in the killing of one's own children: 'Children, how you have perished by your father's disease' (*patrôia nosôil*, 1364).

The war between husband and wife highlights the social and political consequences of gender conflict. Medea's overpowering desire for Jason (8) compels her to leave her family and homeland, kill her brother, and follow Jason to Corinth. Jason's new marriage, allegedly for the sake of social advancement (547–568) for everyone in the family, threatens her with the loss of all social grounding through exile. She will be deprived of husband, home, and *polis*. Such loss is a predicament that the Chorus of Greek women immediately sympathizes with.

As has often been pointed out, however, Medea frustrates traditional definitions of gender. She has characteristics associated with the Sophoclean hero.⁵⁴ Her famous monologue that concludes with her decision to kill her children, moreover, shows her deeply divided along gender lines: her maternal voice opposes her masculine ethos. After her two sides articulate arguments based on both emotion and rational justification, her masculine side prevails: 'By dividing Medea's self along sexual lines, Euripides creates, not a private psychological drama and/or an abstract struggle between reason and passion, but an ambiguous inquiry into the relation between human ethics and social structure.'⁵⁵ With Medea then the war of desire is not a war with Aphrodite, a metaphor for one's resistance to desire itself.⁵⁶ Rather it results from embracing Aphrodite fully, and it turns literal through Medea's decision to remain Jason's equal partner and therefore equally dreadful enemy.

Phaedra's suicide, on the other hand, is an attempt to preserve her reputation for virtue according to traditional demands on female *aidôs*. Combined

52 Medea's anger is referenced explicitly twenty-one times through the use of three terms: *thumos*, *orgê*, *cholos*. For Medea's anger as part of a complex of emotions that points to a jealousy concept, see Sanders (2014) 130–142.

53 See ll. 469–472: 'This is not boldness or courage—to wrong your loved ones and then look them in the face—but the worst of all mortal vice (*nosôn pasôn*), shamelessness'; and l. 1366 on hubris.

54 Knox (1979c) 297.

55 Foley (2001) 268. Lloyd (2006) 115 argues that Medea questions the forces that constitute the polis by manipulating the male discourse around the polarities of *polypragmosynê/apragmosynê* and rusticity/polis-sophistication.

56 Boedeker (1997) 140–142 makes the case that Medea represents Aphrodite through a process of 'implicit assimilation'.

with the force of *nosos*, these demands skew her morality and reveal the ethical shortcomings of everyone involved. Artemis' revelation of the truth articulates Phaedra's ambiguous morality. 'But it was for this purpose that I came, to make plain [...] the maddened frenzy (*oistron*) of your wife or, if I may call it so, her nobility (*gennaiotêta*) (1298–1312)'. Contrasting Hippolytus' just mind with Phaedra's 'frenzy or nobility' invites Theseus and the audience to contemplate how the former state affects the latter virtue. Artemis, moreover, uses legal terminology further pointing to the complexity of assessing guilt and evaluating motivation in cases of *erôs*, especially since Aphrodite's interference complicates the attribution of responsibility.⁵⁷ At the very moment when she believes she controls her passion, Phaedra remains in the grip of Aphrodite and reveals her frenzy. Her attempt to save her honour proves to be an expensive failure.⁵⁸

This failure, however, brings to light Theseus' and Hippolytus' failures as well. Different though they are, theirs are both failures of sympathy. Theseus gets angry about the alleged violation of his marital bed and instantly curses his son to death. He does not question Phaedra's allegation, because he is experienced in Aphrodite's realm and unable to believe in the kind of chastity that Hippolytus is capable of. In the grip of his own anger, Hippolytus vilifies Phaedra and all women, and even wishes to curse the gods. Swayed by Artemis and the unique intimacy they share, however, he is able to let go of his resentment toward divinity and forgive his father. Yet, he has no words for Phaedra and remains a devout opponent to all things erotic till his last breath. His own alliances, in other words, remain essentially unchanged, as does his capacity for entering different emotional positions. Even if redeeming, Hippolytus' forgiveness of his father is pointedly limited. The final divide along gender lines thus makes a point about excessive passion brought to focus through excessive desire. It points up the challenges in assessing responsibility in cases of passion,⁵⁹ and the need to create the circumstances necessary for sharing emotions instead of spreading them like infectious disease. It is instructive that Hippolytus and Phaedra never address each other. Healthier forms of sharing, the play seems to suggest, can only build on both common experience *and* more

57 See ll. 1310–1311, 1321–1322.

58 Knox (1979b) 217.

59 The issue of free will is central in *Hippolytus* because of the role of Aphrodite and Artemis. Segal (1965) 157–158, for instance, argues that the dirge at the end of the play is *something* but may also be the sign of man's ultimate helplessness in a world of divine indifference. Knox (1979b) sees the futility of human choice and action in the play but views Hippolytus' forgiveness of his father as an affirmation of human values.

functional forms of 'conversation' that communicate openly the ethical and ideological commitments of passion.

In the case of *erôs* as war, we witness how it corrupts both sides: Jason explicates his motives in terms of questionable altruism by arguing that his new marriage aims to benefit Medea and their children. Medea herself comes to resemble her enemies, Jason in particular, and perpetrates a horrid crime precisely in order to escape social marginalization and her enemies' scorn. Euripides seems indeed to create an ambiguous inquiry into the relation of human ethics and social structure through the terms of Medea's inner struggle, her crime, and her eventual integration in Athens.⁶⁰ If a woman does not become a Medea in the war of *erôs*, she will become *apolis* and deprived of all resources for social integration. The war of *erôs* in marriage, in other words, can have for women the consequences of real war. By enacting the heroic male ethos, Medea shows that the war of *erôs* implicates both genders equally and can shake the moral and institutional foundations of the *polis*. She thus renders intelligible the immorality and the collective consequences of domestic strife.

Both Medea's brutal male victory in the war of love and Hippolytus' absolute resistance to open up to Phaedra's perspective raise the question of what can contribute to true and effective sympathy, as a remedy of anger, disruptive *erôs*, and their concomitant desires. In a different context, Jack Winkler has argued that all valuation is an act of desire: 'men are perhaps unwilling to see their values as erotic in nature, their ambitions for victory and strength as a kind of choice. But it is clear [...] that men are in love with masculinity'.⁶¹ *Erôs* in these plays highlights the ethics and politics of such valuation.

It is worth pointing out briefly that the need for effective emotional communication is reinstated in yet another context that intertwines anger, erotic desire, and disease: the competition between women. *Andromache*, for instance, dramatizes such competition to recast the politics of marriage and the ways in which it shapes female psychology and conduct and thus affects or infects the world of men. Neoptolemus' 'double bed', that is, keeping a wife and a concubine in the same home, becomes the source of an extensive encounter between his concubine Andromache, who has already borne him a son, and his

60 This relation is further highlighted by the Chorus' emotional discourse, which connects *erôs* in good measure with good life in a polis. The women wish to die before a situation like Medea's afflicts them with helplessness, a most pitiful grief, and the utmost toil, all identified with the loss of homeland (644–653). They connect *erôs* and political prosperity further in a well-known praise of Athens, which even Cypris infuses with moderation and thus makes unsuitable for Medea (824–865). The fact that Aegeus promises to receive Medea in Athens adds to the ethical and political inquiry of the play.

61 Winkler (1981) 72 refers to Sappho's perception of male desire.

wife Hermione who accuses Andromache of making her childless with drugs. Their quarrel develops around what constitutes a good domestic life for a man and, therefore, around the qualifications of a good wife: a good dowry, and virtue that comprises a calm temper and the ability to support one's husband under any circumstances, which for Andromache goes as far as raising her husband's bastards. Cast as the angry wife, Hermione reveals what all women ought to hide: the disease of 'insatiable desire' (218) as well as the pernicious influence of women on each other over matters of sex. She attributes her lack of control to the 'Sirens' who enter her home and delude her with foolish thoughts. This female *nosos* is itself a source of infection in the houses of men (933–950).

By associating 'the "sickness" of women's sexuality with that of their speech', according to one interpretation, the play shows the power of female speech to undermine social hierarchy within both the household and the city.⁶² Thus the tensions between the two women 'become a form of domestic stasis that reverberates in the larger social and political world'.⁶³ This effect on the larger world becomes manifest partly through the ways in which male characters such as Menelaus and Orestes appropriate or exploit female behaviour, in particular women's ready submission to desire. Menelaus even admits: 'whatever an individual happens to desire, that becomes for him a goal greater than the conquest of Troy' (368–369). In showcasing desire as an act of (over)valuation—and the infection that it spreads—the play once again calls for a re-assessment of the very causes of 'diseased' discursive practices and social relations. The call is amplified by the fact that the play also incorporates extensive reflection on female upbringing and the effects of emotional and ethical conditioning that necessarily extend beyond the household.

3 Joy Lost and Regained

In this section, we turn to joy or pleasure to consider the so-called happy-ending plays, which have been at the centre of discussions of Euripidean manipulations of genre. The ways in which they dramatize the tragic and other emotions and engage their audiences, especially through ironies and diverse plot elements (tragic, comic, satyric, fairy-tale), pose questions about the very notions of tragedy and the tragic and the emotions we habitually attach to them. The mixture of different or discordant elements is of course reconfigured

62 McClure (1999) 198, 203. On misogynistic speech in Euripides, see Mastrorarde (2010) 271–279.

63 Foley (2001) 103.

in every play. With varying playfulness, dramas such as *Helen*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Ion*, and *Alcestis* all complicate joy and its ethical and ideological premises for their characters and, more pointedly, for their audiences.

In Aristotelian terms, irremediable acts averted by recognition make for the best (or second best) plot pattern, because they activate the tragic emotions along with the thrill (*ekplêxis*) of recognition.⁶⁴ Victoria Wohl has made a strong case for the ideology of Euripidean drama as being 'less a determinate content than a "structure of feeling"'.⁶⁵ The dramatic structure of the plays and the emotions it evokes often lead their audience to entertain, accept, even take joy in what otherwise would create political discomfort—a kind of cognitive dissonance that carries significant political import. In other words, form and content are not separable, 'because the aesthetic form is the political content'.⁶⁶ Donald Mastronarde, moreover, argues that the open structure of certain plays creates not only variety and surprise but also more 'serious' effects through the disparate or contrasting elements that it brings together: it challenges the audience to make sense both of the personalities and actions they witness and of the swings of their own response.⁶⁷ Space does not allow for a full structural analysis of these plays but looking at the expression of joy at key moments of recognition in two of them—*Iphigenia in Tauris* and *Alcestis* offers us insights into how joy may or may not resonate at the end of the plays. These moments, in other words, can be seen as emblematic of the affective, ethical, and political complexities of joy in the so-called tragicomedies or melodramas.

In *Iphigenia in Tauris* joy is intertwined with pity. With Iphigenia cast as an object and an agent of pity as well as a director of her own sub-plot, the play raises questions about what can promote joy and how the very capacity for pity may factor into it. Ever since she was snatched away from the sacrificial altar in Aulis, Iphigenia has served as a priestess at Artemis' temple with the task of consecrating Greeks before they are sacrificed—a task that the locals see as punishment of Greece for her own sacrifice (337–339). It is for this purpose that Orestes, whom Iphigenia thinks dead, and Pylades are brought to her, when they arrive to steal Artemis' statue. Even though Iphigenia initially claims that Orestes' (alleged) death has turned her savage (347–348) and they will find her unkind, she is moved to pity, which prompts a strong reaction by her brother: 'I do not think it clever, if someone about to kill a man tries to overcome his fear of death by expressions of pity. Foolish too is the man who bewails the near

64 *Poet.* 1454a2–8 with reference to Iphigenia recognizing her brother.

65 Wohl (2015) 18.

66 Wohl (2015) 18.

67 Mastronarde (2010) 85–87.

approach of Hades though he has no hope of life (484 ff.). Yet, it is Iphigenia's pity that motivates a lengthy exchange which brings about the recognition and will save Orestes' life.

In the recognition scene, however, the siblings barely dwell in their joy.⁶⁸ Realizing Iphigenia's identity first, Orestes wishes to communicate his pleasure (*hêdonê*) through the delight (*terpsis*) of embracing his long-lost sister (793–797). Such joyful embrace (*chara*, 831) takes place only after the necessary tokens of recognition help Iphigenia overcome her resistance. Their joy, however, is soon accompanied by a tearful lament (*goos*). The siblings continue to rejoice at their good fortune that is beyond belief (837, 841) and gives a 'strange pleasure' (*atopon hêdonên*, 842) but to Iphigenia's gratitude for his life, Orestes responds: 'in our ancestry we are blessed, but in its chances our life has been unblessed' (850–851). This admission initiates a recollection of sorrows and further lamentation: brother and sister relive the near-sacrifice of Iphigenia at her father's hands and lament even the near-sacrifice of Orestes himself: 'O how unblessed was I in my dread resolve! Dread things I dared, ah me, dread things, my brother, and barely did you escape the unholy fate of slaughter at my hands' (869–873). As more tears follow, it takes Pylades' interference to give an end to these 'pitiful strains' (*oiktôn*, 904) and start devising a plan of escape.

The combination of joy and self-pity at this pivotal moment juxtaposes the pleasure at good fortune with contemplation of the painful acts that led to near-destruction by violence against *philoî*. The justification of such violence is important here. Iphigenia earlier informed the strangers that she performs her duties under compulsion (*anagkên*, 620). This raises a question about Iphigenia's similarity to her father: does Iphigenia's perception of necessity replicate Agamemnon's rationale for sacrificing his daughter? The kinds of acts that such perception can justify point to the dangers of his legacy, as it were: conceived as the punishment of the initial act of violence at Aulis, 'justified' violence in Tauris threatens to continue to eliminate intimate relationships (be that of fellow-Greeks or siblings) through ritual repetition. At the same time, the articulation of joy points to the need for ways to break away from familiar patterns of violence and thus render the current pleasure not without resources (*atopos*) and short-lived but resourceful and productive of lasting good fortune. When Orestes suggests that they kill the king as a way to escape, Iphigenia finds the idea of foreigners murdering their host to be a terrible and unacceptable solution (*deinon*, 1021).⁶⁹

68 For a metapoetic reading of the recognition scene, see Torrance (2011) 192–200.

69 Wright (2005) traces a different kind of 'negativity' in the scene: the joyful effect is soured

Even so, we witness Iphigenia conceive and direct a trick (*sophisma*) to gain freedom: the three of them will sail away by pretending that she is purifying at sea both Artemis' statue and the foreigners in preparation for sacrifice. Her plan succeeds because king Thoas and his men show respect for ritual propriety (1188 ff., esp. 1198, 1221). They are encouraged to do so partly through Iphigenia's vilification of Greek morality at the moment that she most faithfully represents it. In the very act of deceiving the king, she claims that she hates all Hellas for having tried to destroy her and for (1187) being 'utterly untrustworthy' (1205). When her deception is revealed and king Thoas sends his men to interfere, it takes Athena as the *dea ex machina* to preempt the violence and save the happy ending. The goddess sees the siblings off, to blessedness (*ep'eutuchia*) and prosperity (1490–1491).

If we view the earlier moment of recognition as preparatory for the happy ending, the end of the play creates a kind of emotional engagement that tempers the final joy. The three heroes are invited to rejoice at their escape and Athena's blessing—and so is the audience. Within the play, the near-sacrifice brings joy, because of Iphigenia's pity for her fellow-Greeks, despite her initial proclamation to the contrary. For the audience, however, the near-violence of the final scene may complicate their response to Iphigenia's rescue plan, which is built on the resources that she feels compelled to devise. Her strategy not only centres around the perversion of ritual and deception—a deception that simulates hatred for the very deception Greeks are capable of—it also requires an abrupt appearance by Athena to forestall actual violence. Deception and near-violence thus are shared by Agamemnon's unsuccessful sacrifice of Iphigenia, Iphigenia's near-sacrifice of Orestes and Pylades, and Iphigenia's deception of the king, all presented as necessary acts under demanding circumstances. This alignment calls into question not only Iphigenia's resourcefulness but also the different conditions that necessitate violence: it invites the audience to reconsider how ideological commitments and even customary laws come to be perceived as 'forcing' one to bypass the demands of pity and resort to violence. How different is the necessity that compels Iphigenia to sacrifice Greeks in Tauris or to deceive the king and risk further bloodshed from the necessity of the war over Helen that compelled Agamemnon to sacrifice Iphigenia in Aulis? Who decides which circumstances genuinely require extreme measures? Intertwined, joy and pity may thus motivate at least part of the audience to interrogate habitual ways of defining moral and political necessity.

by doubt and confusion because 'the normal conventions of truth and illusion, identity and geography, have all broken down' (306). We witness the limitation of words to prove anything (307).

Each one of the plays in this group offers fascinating insights into the dialectic between joy on the one hand and tragic sensibilities and vehement emotions on the other. With *Alcestis*, we also know that the poet played with audience expectations at the dramatic festival by staging it in the place of the expected satyr-play. Even though a satyr-less play, *Alcestis* was viewed already in antiquity as ‘rather of the satyric kind, because it turns to joy and pleasure, contrary to the tragic kind’.⁷⁰ The play indeed has a happy ending, the ‘happiness’ of which has been extensively debated; it also focuses on what constitutes a truly happy life, through the ways in which its characters respond to an unusual gift, the freedom to choose between life and death.⁷¹

Before we turn to the recognition at end of the play, it is worth pointing out that the entire play sustains a bifurcation of emotional experience for characters and audience. The audience learns in the prologue that things will end well—that a guest-friend will come to Alcestis’ rescue. Tensions and ironies, however, consistently complicate the characters’ emotional trajectory and play with potential audience engagement. Both Alcestis’ self-sacrifice for the sake of her husband Admetus and Admetus’ loss of an exceptional wife are presented as ‘tragic’ and undermined as such. Alcestis heroically offers her life and invites pity by lamenting everything she is giving up. At the same time, however, she demands that her husband never remarry. Admetus vacillates between what appears to be genuine suffering and rash choices. He suffers from losing his wife and promises her that he will live a celibate life of perpetual mourning. Then, on Heracles’ arrival, he conceals Alcestis’ death and commits a (first) breach of his oath to her. He allows celebratory songs in part of his lamenting home in order to be a good host. He also vilifies his father for not sacrificing his life for his son. Then again, after Alcestis’ burial Admetus comes to a ‘tragic’ recognition that he has chosen living death for himself and a shameful desolate existence (*erêmia*) both at home and in public (950–952). His laments invite pity until the final shift and ‘conflict’ in the play lead to the happy ending.

The question whether Admetus commits a second and graver breach of his promise to Alcestis at the end of the play would be key to audience engagement. When Heracles discovers that his friend hosted him despite his grave loss and mourning, he wrestles Alcestis from Death. But he brings her back veiled, pretending that he won her at a competition and now wishes to give her to his host. Admetus denies the gift, fearing the potential accusation by his (dead)

70 *Hypothesis* of the play attributed to Aristophanes the Grammarian.

71 On the play being a defence of death for securing the distinctions that make life worthwhile, see Gregory (1979).

wife and his people for breaking his promise. It is this fear that justifies criticism when he eventually chooses to honour his guest-friendship with Heracles over and above his commitment to Alcestis.⁷² All ends well, however, when Heracles reveals the woman to be Alcestis. Leading her back to their home with a symbolic gesture of (re)marriage, Admetus expresses uncontainable joy that resonates at the end of the play: 'for the new life we have now taken on is better than the old' (1157–1158). While he broadcasts his good fortune and orders state-wide celebrations, Alcestis follows him in ritual silence. This marked silence has the potential to undercut her husband's proclamation of a better life, for Alcestis, at the very least. Are we to feel joy or pity for Alcestis?

Tensions in the play thus consistently invite the audience to sympathize with the main characters and then to reassess such sympathy by evaluating how the characters' suffering and learning affect their actions.⁷³ This is the case especially with Admetus, whose active choices (may) significantly undermine his claims to pity, a complication Euripides effects through his artful play with gender roles and status. Foley, for example, suggests that Euripides points up contradictions in Admetus' masculine ethics of hospitality, namely 'the difficulties of balancing public and private priorities and the destructive consequences that result from pursuing these goals without regard for context'.⁷⁴ While the experience of change/death that husband and wife share creates an unusual moral equality between them, this equivalence remains confined to the private realm of a marital mythical romance. At the end, moreover, the earlier questioning of gendered values ultimately yields to the constrictions of social and political reality as we know it: we return to traditional sex roles.⁷⁵ Wohl adds to this picture from the perspective of class. On the one hand, the plot's twists and turns encourage the audience, regardless of their social status, to join in Admetus' celebration at the end of the play. On the other hand, the fact that the universality of death does not apply in the same terms to elites and non-elites should create discomfort in an audience of democratic citizens.⁷⁶ The fact, however, that *Alcestis* replaced the satyr play on the day of its production may amplify the play's potential for tension in its happy ending in a

72 Whether Admetus betrays Alcestis is a matter of debate. On Admetus' betrayal or overall lack of ethical core, see Smith (1960); Bradley (1980); Schein (1988). For a positive assessment of Admetus, see Myres (1917); Burnett (1965), (1971); Lloyd (1985).

73 On pity and *erôs* in the play contributing to such tensions, see Visvardi (2017).

74 Foley (2001) 329.

75 Foley (2001) 326. Foley sees *Alcestis* (along with *Helen* and *IT*) as an *anodos* play, plotted against the story pattern of Persephone and her final ascent to the upper world.

76 Wohl (2015) 15.

different manner. Satyr plays traditionally end with a re-institution of male privilege and the 'affirmation of masculine sexuality, camaraderie, and more or less harmful aggression'.⁷⁷ The end of *Alcestis* too may be perceived as joyfully reaffirming male entitlement and bonding irrespective of class, and thus giving an additional reason to see a happy resolution in Heracles' gift to Admetus. At the same time, however, the replacement of the expected satyrs with heroes who can be perceived as shameless—Heracles celebrating in the lamenting home, Admetus and Pheres wrangling over whose life is worth more, Admetus desiring the veiled woman and eventually accepting her as a gift—carries the potential that at least part of the audience may feel conflicted about such reaffirmation.

Different emotional possibilities thus remain open. The final joy may prevail in a manner that essentially eliminates any ethical or ideological discomfort caused by the emotional tensions of the play.⁷⁸ Alternatively, a degree of emotional perplexity may render joy at the happy-ending a motive to reconsider the individual traits and ideological structures that allow for such perplexity. In addition to the considerations of gender and class, mentioned above, one of Admetus' failures is his inability to take the initiative to deepen his friendship with Heracles. Relying on familiar patterns of bonding through *xenia*, he chooses to lie about Alcestis' death instead of taking the risk of being honest with his friend. Heracles experiences such dishonesty as terrible suffering (816), short-lived though it is. Even after he buries his wife and reflects on his own mistakes, Admetus resists opening up to Heracles: he does not reveal that the oath he swore to Alcestis is the real reason for resisting Heracles' gift. His 'tragic' loss has not taught him to reassess the value of taking risks to strengthen intimate relationships.⁷⁹ Expanding his sensibilities even within established male commitments would inspire hope for a genuinely new life with the recovered Alcestis as well. Admetus does not, however, opt for such change.

77 Griffith (2005) 185, referring to satyr plays through the use of satyr Choruses.

78 Markantonatos (2013) 161 and *passim*, for instance, views the play's ending as hopeful: it reinforces both Orpheus' mystical promise of bliss and the Heracleian example of endurance in the face of adversity.

79 For an opposite assessment of Admetus' learning in terms of *philia*, see Padilla (2000).

4 Closing Thoughts

One productive way to think about emotion in Euripides is to consider emotional discourse and dramatic form as working together to dramatize and invite emotional engagement in all its cognitive and affective complexity. The plays help to clarify the ideological, ethical, and other considerations behind the emotions and point to a need for experiences that enrich or alter habitual ways of emoting. An underlying question seems to be: can different experiences be encouraged, institutionally and otherwise, so that the vehement emotions (such as anger) become more judicious and the social emotions (such as pity and even joy) become more inclusive and efficacious?

At the same time, Euripidean poetics reflects new degrees of self-consciousness regarding the ways in which (dramatic) art engages its audiences. Different levels and techniques of self-referentiality are either explicitly interlaced with emotional discourse or indirectly affect the emotional tone of the plays. In *Medea*, for instance, the female Chorus rejoices at how the order of things is being reversed and women's ways will soon enjoy good repute and thus alter poetic tradition: 'Phoebus lord of song never endowed our minds with the glorious strains of lyres. Else I could have sounded a hymn in reply to the male sex' (424–429). The Chorus' joy stems from their sympathy with Medea's anger and plan to punish Jason but will soon be frustrated by Medea's murder of her own children. Nevertheless, it invites more self-conscious emotional and ideological engagement with how plays contribute to the exclusive authority of male traditions, poetic and otherwise. In the play that bears her name, Hecuba invites Agamemnon to pity her by standing back like a painter who beholds her and examines her sufferings (807–808). She concludes her entreaty by wishing to embody the power of a living statue, a work of art that may succeed in what she is failing: 'if only voice were in my hands and hair and the step of my feet, whether by the arts of Daedalus or some god, that all together might grasp your knees, weeping, bringing all sorts of speeches' (836–840).

It has been suggested that, in addition to being 'the locus par excellence for seeing', perhaps the Athenian theatre was 'where actual seeing, as a sensory activity was mixed with modes of visualizing the unseeable'.⁸⁰ The women in *Medea* envision a different lyric tradition that includes a resounding female voice. Hecuba invokes different artistic paradigms: Agamemnon must 'see' her pitiful state as if he were looking at a painting that could encompass the totality of her suffering and create the appropriate perspective and emotional

80 Peponi (2016) 2.

response; and he must sense the urgency of her need for help, as if touched, literally and metaphorically, by a magical statue of irresistible beauty, divine power, and eloquence.

While all three tragedians are preoccupied with the contribution of the emotions to forms of communication that expand dialogue, Euripides affords access to a more expansive and diverse corpus. The case studies selected in this chapter offer a small sample of its diversity. Even though numerous plays end by embracing the so-called *status quo* of male citizen reality in the fifth century BC, Hecuba's invitation to see the unseeable and feel its power as if it literally touched one's body and mind is instructive for Euripidean emotion: it invites envisioning the possibility of more powerful, inclusive, and salutary ways of feeling for and with others and, therefore, ways of thinking and acting. How seriously this invitation is taken always depends on the audience. In Euripides' last play *Bacchae*, Pentheus resists Dionysus who then activates theatrical means to reveal his most terrifying side. In disguise, the god announces that Dionysus is, by turn, most terrible (*deinotatos*) and most gentle (*êpiôtatos*) to mortals (860–861).⁸¹ Euripidean emotion brings out both sides of the god and the realities they intimate.

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81 Reading *en merei* (by turn) in l. 860.

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VOLUME 2

Edited by

Andreas Markantonatos



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Abbreviations

D-K	H. Diels/W. Kranz (2004–2016) [1952 ⁶], <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> (Berlin)
FGrHist or FGrH	<i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> , F. Jacoby at al. (Berlin/Leiden 1923–)
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae Consilio et Auctoritate Academiae Borussicae Editae</i>
KPS	R. Krumeich/N. Pechstein/R. Seidensticker (eds.) (1999), <i>Das griechische Satyrspiel</i> (Darmstadt)
LCS	A.D. Trendall, <i>The Red-figured Vases of Lucania, Campania and Sicily</i> (Oxford 1967)
LIMC	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> (with Supplement) (Zurich/Munich/Düsseldorf 1981–2009)
LSJ ⁹	H.G. Liddell/R. Scott/H.S. Jones/R. McKenzie et al., <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> 9th edition (with Revised Supplement) (Oxford 1940, 1968, and 1996)
Magnelli	E. Magnelli (ed.), <i>Alexandri Aetoli Testimonia et Fragmenta</i> (Studi e Testi 15; Florence 1999)
OCD ⁴	S. Hornblower/A. Spawforth/E. Eidinow (eds.) (2012), <i>The Oxford Classical Dictionary</i> , 4th ed. (Oxford)
PCG	<i>Poetae Comici Graeci</i> , ed. R. Kassel/C. Austin, 8 vols. (Berlin/New York 1983–1995)
POxy	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> , B.P. Grenfell/A.S. Hunt et al. (London 1898–)
Schwartz	E. Schwartz (ed.), <i>Scholia in Euripidem</i> , 2 vols. (Berlin 1887–1891)
SM	<i>Pindarus Pars I Epinicia, Pars II Fragmenta—Indices</i> ed. B. Snell/H. Maehler (Stuttgart/Leipzig 1987–1989)
TLG	<i>Theasaurus Linguae Graecae</i> (University of California, Irvine)
TrGF	<i>Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i> , 5 vols. (Göttingen 1971–2004)

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PART 4

Image, Chorus, and Performance



Text and Image: Euripides and Iconography

Mary Louise Hart

1 Performance and Representation

Is there an iconography for the tragedies of Euripides?¹ Celebrated for his narrative invention and twists of plot, his highly visual, descriptive, and spellbinding poetry—realized by innovative stagecraft and costume—has survived in at least forty-nine compositions on elaborate vases from South Italian and Sicilian funerary contexts of the late fifth and fourth centuries B.C.² If theatrical iconography can be described as a polysemic fusion of plot (text) and performance (stagecraft and costumed actors), Euripidean dramas would have much to offer the vase-painter and his patron. The ancient apparatus of performance indicated in some of these scenes are: the *skênê* (the stage building with a low roof set at the back of the orchestra) the *ekkyklêma* (a cart used to move actors and items around the orchestra) and the *mêchanê* (a mechanism used to lift actors above the audience and the *skênê*). Medea's infanticide and her escape in the chariot, for example, are traditionally ascribed to the dramatic inventiveness of Euripides. In antiquity depictions of Medea with her children or alone transcend time and geographic boundaries to become dramatic icons of the play: 'signature scenes', presenting iconography to match literary description with striking clarity.³ With Medea in her flying chariot, the presence of children's corpses, and an emasculated Jason, *The Departure of Medea* from Policoro in Basilicata [3] is an early version of such a scene. And there are others: the poignant drawing of children grasping onto the robes of an old man [4] signal the desperation of young refugees seeking shelter in the *Children of Heracles*, and the brutal punishment of Dirce scene from *Antiope*, thought to be derived from a messenger speech in that play.⁴ Euripides could have used the *ekkyklêma*

1 I am grateful to the anonymous reader and to Oliver Taplin and Helene Foley for their insightful observations on a very early draft of this article.

2 Todisco (2006) 240.

3 Revermann (2005) 6, describes tragic iconography as: 'a scene to match in the preserved textual evidence; high theatricality as conveyed through gesture and proxemics; and reason to believe that the scene depicted is a "signature scene", memorable, flamboyant and climactic enough to function as a tag for the tragedy as a whole'.

4 *Children of Heracles*: Taplin (2012) 231; 232–233; Taplin (1998).

in his *Antiope* to stage the death of Niobe as well as the threatened slaying of Lykos by Amphion and Zethus, while Hermes appeared above, raised by the *méchané*.⁵ There exist many vase-paintings of messenger speeches, with content never staged but brought to life through performed monologues describing dramatic events of unimaginable violence. That the speech be conveyed with honesty and narrative precision was paramount for Euripides, who carefully built them to achieve a highly measured dramatic effect.⁶ The descriptive and factual nature of the narrative conveyed the veracity of the messengers' eye-witness account; for the audience to visualize the events related by the speech, they had to believe them. The creation of visual compositions inspired by these speeches develops from workshop traditions where theatrical iconographies were constructed parallel to the world of theatre production. A distinctively theatrical character, the *paidagogos*, becomes a feature of messenger scenes especially in Apulian vase-painting.⁷ Identified by his costume: the *chlamys* (heavy cloak), *pilos* (traveller's hat), ankle-height laced boots, and often carrying a crooked staff, he could have appeared on stage to deliver a messenger speech, where the violent scene he describes provides unique content for the primary narrative of the vase [7, 8, 9].

2 Theatre Culture in Western Greece

Vase-painting workshops flourished in a sophisticated performance culture with close economic and cultural ties to Athens financed by wealthy tyrants who valued and promoted Athenian drama. Gelon I (r. 485–478 BC) patronized famous Athenian poets including Simonides and Bacchylides, bringing them to Syracuse where they wrote and performed. In this tradition Gelon's successor Hieron I (r. 478–466 BC) imported Aeschylus to celebrate the founding of Aitnai in 476 with a new play (Aeschylus' *Women of Aitnai*) and subsequently to mount a reperformance of *Persians*.⁸ The tyrant Dionysius I (r. 405–367/6 BC), who acquired the stylus and writing tablets of Euripides, wrote tragedies him-

5 See n. [78].

6 De Jong (1991) 118; Barlow (1971) 61–62.

7 Green (1999). An iconographically associated figure is the 'tragic witness', an anonymous male in tragic costume inserted into the scene possibly without playing a role in the plot. Metropolitan Museum of Art 24.97.104 has a figure labelled 'TRAGOIDOS' apparently watching a comic performance on Side A: Taplin (2007a) 39–40 and fig. 5.

8 Dearden (1999) 230–231; Allan (2001) 84 n. 61. Hieron was also courting Aeschylus in the fifth century: Boshier (2012) 97–98. For Euripides ties to Macedon (where he died), see Revermann (1999–2000).

self and was awarded first prize at the Athenian Lenaia in 367 BC.⁹ This period also saw an expansion in the construction and remodeling of theatres in the urban landscape of Sicily and Magna Graecia, where they increasingly became used for civic functions as well as theatrical performance. The imposing stone structures at times surpassed the prominence of temples in the civic environment of Magna Graecia. Identified as sites for ‘reinforcing social cohesion’ in these locales of political complexity: ‘... theater, along with language, was one of the only elements that remained common to most of these Greeks of different provenance, or who belonged to opposing political factions’.¹⁰ The socio-cultural concept of the vase-painter as audience member and viewer incorporates the effect of inspiration on the artist’s imagination.¹¹ And the final function of the vase as a funerary monument plays perhaps an even greater role. Evaluating the material culture of these vases, J.R. Green saw them as evidence for the performance of drama in Magna Graecia and as possessing stories of such vital importance that they were chosen to accompany the dead: ‘Theatre must have been the major source of popular culture, a source of poetry, music, dance and enjoyment as well as an emotional escape that was not restricted to the aristocratic or wealthy segment of the population (as was symposium poetry). ... themes of the tragedies, and particularly their great moments, seem to have become points of reference in their lives and son into their rituals, not least at those key periods of emotional crisis such as the death of a member of the family’.¹² Some early imports from Athens, such as the Pronomos Vase [1], would have been viewed in this context; as would the products of regional workshops which may reflect dramatic adaptations by native poets whose plays have not survived.

Evidence for the theatrical milieu in which these people circulated, the famous Pronomos Vase,¹³ by its import, funerary provenience, artistic skill and remarkable theatrical iconography, marks the sophisticated relationship of the cultural elite to theatrical performance and links the vase-painting workshops of Athens to emerging vase-painting workshops in the west. Produced in Athens and imported to Peucetia, Apulia, around 400 BC, it was presumably buried soon thereafter in a native grave in Ruvo di Puglia. It is a remarkable

9 Nervegna (2014) 162.

10 ‘The spread of theatre construction must have been due to the use of theatres for political functions and assemblies as well as dramatic ones’. Marconi (2012) 185 with nn. 34 and 35.

11 Green (1991) 20 and (1994) 26.

12 Green (1994) 56.

13 Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale H3240 (81673). IGD II, 1; Taplin/Wyles; Hart (2020) no. 44, p. 94–95, with bibliography; Carpenter (2005) 222–226, (2014) 270–271.

record of the apparatus of Athenian tragic performance and its practitioners, especially actors, as acolytes of Dionysus, the god of theatre, who reclines on a couch in the upper register with his consort Ariadne and an actor elaborately costumed and bejeweled in a female role, being offered a gold wreath by a flying erote inscribed as Himeros (desire).¹⁴ Beneath and on either side of them the front of the vase is filled with the actors and Chorus of a tragic tetralogy (which they have apparently just finished given the choreut's satyr costumes). The figures include a pipes-player (inscribed Pronomos, giving the vase its name), nude poet (Demetrios) seated behind him, and lyre-player (Charinos). Three tragic actors in elaborate costumes and holding masks pose in the primary register adjacent to the god: Heracles (inscribed) and Papposilenus stand on the right of the god's couch while an unnamed tragic actor stands to the left of it. In the presence of the god of theatre the highest degree of elaboration is assumed: costumes are opulently embellished with embroidered registers of quadrigas, jewelry, spirals, waves and palmettes, even on the boots, when they are worn. The satyr Chorus (many inscribed with Athenian names¹⁵) lounges and chats half in—half out of costume: still wearing their *perizômata* and holding their masks, all of which have human-style eyes able to focus; some stare out of the vase, some stare around it. None are depictions of real masks; they act themselves, underscoring the theatrical themes of the iconography. The only satyr still costumed and wearing his mask leaps away from his company out of the lower frame, his foot crossing the boundary of the picture plane. Despite the abundance of detailed information about the appearance of ancient Greek theatrical motifs of costume and character, no play has been definitively connected with this vase, as there is no scene to identify. The composition remains a masterful rendition of the artist's painstaking pictorial description of the world of tragedy and its divine patron. Distinctively, there are no boundaries to prevent the scenes on the front and the reverse of the vase from flowing into one another.¹⁶ On the back are Dionysus and Ariadne again, here the central focus, revelling in the company of their *thiasos*, the satyrs and maenads composing the retinue of the god. The smooth transition under the handles—absent decorative barriers and accentuated by the glances of the masks—compositionally integrates mortal and immortal performance, situating a theatrical company as the acolytes of Dionysus, human counterparts to the god's devotees in his immortal domain.

14 For the contents of the very wealthy tomb in which it was found, see Montanaro (2007) 502–522; the vase itself is o, 511 no. 110.16, plates XLV, XLVI, XLVII.

15 Osborne (2010) 150–151.

16 As also Lissarrague (2010) 33, who emphasizes the relationship between the vase's decoration and its 'spatial dimensions'.



FIGURE 29.1 Athenian volute krater with *Actors and Chorus of a tragedy and satyr play in the company of Dionysus and Ariadne (The Pronomos Vase)*. Side A. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale H3240 (81673). Name vase of the Pronomos Painter, ca. 400 BC

PHOTO©ARCHIVIO DELL'ARTE-PEDICINI PHOTOGRAPHERS

3 Theatrical Iconography and Euripidean Iconography

Beginning as early as the 430's BC and continuing to the end of the fourth century BC, the vase-painting workshops of Magna Graecia produced tens of thousands of finely potted, designed and decorated vessels. About 20,000 have survived, recovered principally from the rich burials of the native Peuce-tian and Daunian populations, valuable commissions reflecting the elite status of the deceased whose memory they marked and in whose tomb they were placed.¹⁷ Of these, five hundred and forty-one were decorated with scenes from the plots of tragic plays, and the majority of these are connected to

17 LCS; *RVAp*; *RVP*; Trendall (1989, 1991); Trendall/Cambitoglou (1978–1982); Trendall/Webster (*IGD*, 1971); Montanaro (2007); Todisco (2003), (2006), and (2012a); Carpenter (2009) and (2014).

the tragedies of Euripides, who was still alive when the earliest of them were potted and painted.¹⁸

In 1971AD Trendall and T.B.L. Webster drew attention to the iconography of dramatic literature with the publication of *Illustrations of Greek Drama*.¹⁹ The 1991 and 1994 publications of Richard Green broadened the field from concentration on the dialogue between image and text to an interpretive posture which sought to locate the material art of ancient Greek theatre at the intersection of art and society. Oliver Taplin's 2007 full-length study of tragic iconography, *Pots and Plays*²⁰ stands on the shoulders of these and others, investigating to what extent any of the surviving 'tragedy' vases reflected or were inspired by contemporary performance. Seeking to bridge the divide between his position and those of previous scholars, Taplin presented his case: 'The vases are not, then according to my approach, "banal illustrations", nor are they dependent on or derived from the plays. They are *informed by* the plays; they mean more, and have more interest and depth, for someone who knows the play in question. That is the core of what I mean by calling a vase "related to tragedy"'.²⁰

Incorporated within traditional patterns and processes of vase-painting workshops, theatrical iconography is the response of artisan workshops to the

18 Three hundred and fifty-six with documented provenience: Todisco (2006) 240; Trendall (1989) 12 asserts the popularity of Euripides over Aeschylus and Sophocles.

19 In 1881 Carl Robert devoted a chapter to this topic in his influential work, *Bild und Lied*. He was followed notably by Séchan (1926) and the research was expanded in M. Bieber's 1961 compendium on Greek and Roman theatre (2nd ed., Princeton). See Taplin's 'Note on References' in (2007a) x.

20 Building from previous work in *Comic Angels* (1993), Taplin's analysis of the relationship between vase-painting and tragedy is set out in *Pots and Plays* (2007a) 22–26, particularly p. 25, and includes a summary of the debate between 'philodramatists' (who see a variety of connections between tragic performance and vase iconography) and 'iconocentrists', who see only epic and/or mythic sources in these scenes, as Giuliani (1996) and (2001) following and expanding upon Moret (1975). The debate is complicated by local culture and language, for the vases have been found in native Peucetian graves, such as in the cemetery in Ruvo where the Pronomos Vase was recovered. Much remains to be understood about the local market for Greek vases, not to mention the comprehension of Euripidean poetry by the locals or the performance traditions of the Greek colonists. A list of updated select opinions would include: Bosher (2012) and (2013); Carpenter (2003), (2009), (2014); Dearden (1999); Green (1994) and (1999); Lada-Richards (2009); Marconi (2012); Reverman (1999–2000); Taplin (2007a), (2007b), (2012a), and (2014); and Todisco (2003), (2006), (2012a) and, (2012b). This is not the place to take on that topic, other than to cite Todisco (2012a) 258, who considers the possible role of the vase-painters as interpreters of Greek iconography to the (apparently but not necessarily) uneducated locals. In the same volume, Taplin (2012a) 248–250, supposes the carefully inscribed name-labels in Attic Greek were understood by their owners, and thus may be evidence for native literacy in Greek.

impetus of performed dramatic poetry in the context of regional patterns. In some cases, a performance may have inspired a scene on a vase, alternatively a funerary commission may have been responsible (or both). Ultimately, workshop traditions would have guided the making of every pot, such that the use of a variety of distinctive iconographic features can be expected.

Certain iconographic details can be clues to a vase-painting's connection to performance. These include: theatrical costume, which may include the mask (held or suspended) and/or the early (ca. 400 BC) ornamented chiton and himation [1] often with wave patterns, or the simple *chlamys* (a short, often brown cloak, [7, 8, 9]), and ankle boots, simple or elaborately embroidered [1]. Architectural constructions may recall stage scenery: porticoes (referencing the use of the *skênê*) used to indicate temples or buildings of interest to the plot [6, 9, 10, 11]; and depictions of landscape features, such as Taplin's 'rocky arch,' a distinctive frame for the action which might indicate the presence of a cave. Iconographic features such as these are far from rigid; they are used often or seldom, alone or in combination, and their meaning can shift depending upon their context. They are fluid, communicative, polysemic, multi-valent signs signalling the significance of a certain plot (a 'signature scene' within that plot) at some point in the artist's conception of how that scene could be represented.²¹

Early on vase-shapes and sizes were of the practical sort used at the *symposion*: kraters of different types, especially bell kraters, were favoured by the early, influential, and theatrically inclined Tarporley and Dolon Painters (ca. 400–390 BC), whose workshop (likely in Metaponto) shows affinities with the Athenian vase-painting tradition.²² Over the next century vase-painting workshops flourished in settlements throughout the region, from Lucania and Apulia to Sicily and north to Paestum. In Apulia, the Iliupersis Painter (ca. 360 BC), and his workshop were responsible for an increase in the size and ornamentation of their superbly potted and painted volute kraters, which became the preferred shape for burials. Subsequently the Darius Painter (ca. 340–330 BC) and his followers responded to local funerary custom with further monumentalization of the vessel, realizing the potential of the huge body of the funerary vase to communicate narrative by means of vibrant figural gesture, costumes, props, stage features, and inscriptions.

21 Taplin (2007a) 37 ff. Lada-Richards (2009) 109, cites the 'mutual supplementation' of iconography and vase-painting. This reciprocal interaction is part of what she refers to as 'naturalization', the use of traditional, accepted postures and features common to all artisans in the vase-painting workshop and utilized for a variety of purposes across genres.

22 Denoyelle (2009) 130–131 and (2014).

3.1 *Lucania (about 440–370 BC)*

The earliest vase-painting workshop in Magna Graecia emerged around the 430's BC in the environs of Metaponto on the coast of southern Italy. Some of the most accomplished red-figure work comes from this group, whose originators show strong influence from Athenian models, including a reticence to depict specific costumes or staging devices.²³ An unattributed Athenian vase with a pivotal moment from Euripides' *Telephus* (produced in Athens in 438 BC) and dated to around 400–375 presents the type of Athenian pottery and iconography to which the Lucanians would have been exposed.²⁴ The front of the vase shows the abduction of the infant Orestes by the wounded Telephus as Agamemnon and Clytemnestra approach to save their child. Though the play survives only in fragments, the attention paid to this exact scene by Aristophanes reflects its popularity, as does the repeated iconography of Telephus' pose: knee on altar and (at times) wound prominently displayed, on vases from Policoro (on the reverse of the Cleveland *Medea* vase), to Paestum (signed by Assteas). Near the Pronomos Painter in style and from about the same time (ca. 390) another Athenian calyx krater presents a woman in elaborately embroidered theatrical costume (nearly identical to the male costumes on the Pronomos Vase) tied to foliage fronds attached to a rocky outcropping.²⁵ Long associated with Euripides' *Andromeda*, the representation on this vase does seem to present elemental features suggesting a theatrical source, particularly the 'rocky arch' to which Andromeda is chained.

Springing from this late Athenian tradition, a large red-figure calyx krater presents the *Blinding of Polyphemus* from Euripides' *Cyclops* early in the Lucanian tradition.²⁶

The huge figure of the drunken Polyphemus stretched across the lower breadth of the vase anchors the composition. The satyrs are afraid to engage physically or to get too close to the giant in case they might be eaten by him. Instead they offer an Orphic spell in choral form [line 646] to distract him. On

23 Particularly those ascribed to the Polygnotos Group: Trendall (1989) 18–19; Carpenter (2005) 227; Denoyelle/Iozzo (2009) 100–102.

24 Berlin, Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin VI 3974; *IGD* III.3, 47; Taplin (2007a) 206, no. 75.

25 Berlin, Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin VI 3237; *IGD* III.3, 10; Taplin (2007a) 176–177, no. 59.

26 Name vase of the Cyclops Painter, 420–410 BC, British Museum 1947, 0714.18. *LCS* 27, *85, pl. 8, 1–2; *IGD*, 36, 11, 11: 'directly inspired'. Dearden (1999) 240; Carpenter (2005) 220, 227 (with notes); Denoyelle/Iozzo (2009) 103; Hart (2010) no. 43, p. 93, with bibliography.



FIGURE 29.2 Lucanian calyx krater with *Odysseus with companions preparing to Blind Polyphemus, with Satyrs Dancing*, British Museum 1947,0714.18. Name vase of the Cyclops Painter, ca. 420–410 BC
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the right of the composition two dancing satyrs convey a sense of choral space as they respond to Odysseus' demand: 'If you're too weak to lend a hand, at least cheer them along and put some heart in them with cries and chants'. (650–652²⁷) On the left their human equivalents also dance toward the scene extend-

27 Transl. Arrowsmith (1952, 2013, Chicago).

ing torches to light the cave as, under Odysseus' direction, three more men unearth the tree from which they will fashion the stake to blind the drunken Cyclops. Though the play remains without a confirmed production date, a time late in Euripides' career is plausible,²⁸ and the appearance of the vase may reflect a reperformance of the play in a theatre in Taranto, Policoro or nearby, soon after its Athenian debut.²⁹

In 1963 seven black-figure and twelve red-figure vases, all either hydriae or pelikae, were found in the excavations of a tomb in Policoro (ancient Herakleia).³⁰ They may have been made locally in Herakleia, or like the Cyclops vase in nearby Metaponto, where the earliest kilns in the region have been found.³¹ Their undisputed provenance provides a rare and exclusive glimpse into the commissioning and production of a group of vases unified by their rich mythic and theatrical (in particular Euripidean) iconography. Moreover, they were found in the cemetery of a town with an excavated theatre, where, in addition to the satyr play *Cyclops*, the plays may have been produced during the late lifetime of the poet.³² In this case they would reflect the taste of sophisticated local patronage within the context of a regional workshop populated by vase-painters who may have seen the plays produced locally, perhaps more than once.³³ Their final function was to accompany their patron to the grave, but during his lifetime they may have been used by him in one or more symposia and finally at his funeral banquet.

Of the group, at least three: *The Departure of Medea* [3], the *Children of Heracles (Heraclidae)* [4], and the *Punishment of Dirce* reflect Euripidean content.³⁴ For this reason their presence in the tomb has been considered a possible commission by a theatre-loving client.³⁵ All came from the same workshop and were painted by the same painter (or a painter very close to him in style) named the Policoro Painter by Trendall after the find spot and dated to 420–390 BC

28 Possibly earlier than the 408 BC date offered by Seaford (1982) 171; Dearden (1999) 240–241 and n. 79, on the historical link between the play and this vase, proposing the possibility of a 'non-Athenian first performance'. O'Sullivan/Collard (2013) 39–41.

29 Allan (2001) 71–72.

30 LCS 56–58, pl. 27; Trendall (1989) 22; Dearden (1999) 237; Allan (2001); Denoyelle/Iozzo (2009) 129–130, figs. 187–188; Taplin (2012) 230–237; Todisco (2003) 388–391, L 5–L 11; 533–534.

31 Denoyelle (2013) 117.

32 Taplin (2012) 236.

33 Dearden (1999) 237; Taplin (1998) and (2012) 231–233.

34 The other vases are the *Contest of Poseidon and Athena*, *Pelops and Hippodamia*, and *Polynices and Eriphyle*.: Denoyelle (2009) 129 nn. 44–47; Taplin (2012) figs. 11.2–5.

35 Trendall (1989) 22.

Denoyelle places him within the Lucanian school and stylistically related to the Dolon Painter, whose oeuvre was also early and significantly theatrical.³⁶ Two unprovenanced vases may be added to this group: a *Departure of Medea* on a calyx krater in Cleveland and a *Children of Heracles* on a pelike in Berlin.³⁷ The *Departure of Medea* from the Policoro tomb was conceived and painted within a similar stylistic context and date (around 420 BC) to the *Cyclops* krater. [3]³⁸ Recalling Euripides' climactic use of the *mêchanê* to propel Medea's escape and possibly the most famous use of a piece of stage equipment in the history of theatre, Medea's chariot ('... you shall never lay your hands on me—you see what kind of vehicle the Sun, my father's father, has bestowed on me ...').³⁹ transports her over the capacious shoulder of the hydria, her head centred underneath the floral border encircling the neck of the vase where her name is inscribed. The chariot takes up the centre of the vase's body and the dead children lie on the ground directly beneath it. Jason, heroically nude, runs up from the right ineffectively wielding his dagger, while the grief-stricken tutor kneels by the bodies, raising his left hand to his head in mourning. On the shoulder at top left sits a woman with a mirror—a traditional attribute for Aphrodite—at top right a partially preserved seated winged figure, presumably her son Eros, both personifications of the emotional source of Medea's love for Jason and also of her momentary madness.⁴⁰ The chariot, here drawn through the air by serpents,⁴¹ is painted on the upper reaches of the pot's shoulder where the vase shape enforces the separation of Medea from the ground. Both the Policoro and

36 For the Tarporley and Dolon Painters, *LCS* 97–100; Taplin (2007a) 1, where frontispiece to Part I; Hart (2010) no. 50, 112; Denoyelle/Iozzo (2009) 130–131; Denoyelle/Silvestrelli (2013).

37 *Departure of Medea*: Cleveland Museum of Art 1991.1: Cody (1983) 76–77; Revermann (2005); Taplin (2007a) no. 35, 122–125; Hart (2010) no. 27, 72–73, all with bibliography. The vase is not included in catalogues assembled by Aellen (1994) 39 n. 39; Trendall (1989), or Denoyelle/Iozzo (2009). *Children of Heracles*: Berlin, Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz 1969.6. Taplin (2007a) no. 38, 129–130; Hart (2010) no. 32, 78, with bibliography.

38 Policoro, Museo Nazionale della Siritide 35305. *LCS*, 58, *286, pl. 26; *IGD* III, 3, 4; Taplin (2007a) 117–121; Hart (2010) 74, no. 28. Mastronarde (2002) reviews the evidence for plays inspired by the legend of Medea by Euripides and others: 64–65. At p. 52 he warns against the certainty that Euripides invented the murders but Taplin (2012, p. 231 n. 26) is more ready to attribute the infanticide, escape and chariot to Euripides; 57–69, esp. n. 94, for innovations.

39 Transl. Taplin (2013, Chicago).

40 As Aellen (1994) 40 n. 50. Euripides's *Medea*, lines 526 ff.: Jason speaks: 'it's my belief that it was Cypris alone of gods and humans steered my voyage clear of harm ... You may have a subtle mind, but modesty forbids me to relate just how Desire compelled you with unerring shafts to keep my body safe ...'.

41 As in the text. See Mastronarde (2002) 377–378.



FIGURE 29.3 Lucanian hydria with the *Departure of Medea*. Policoro, Museo Nazionale della Siritide 35305. Attributed to the Policoro Painter, ca. 400 BC
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the Cleveland compositions manipulate the chariot across the surface mass of the vessel, effectively siting Medea between earth and sky. In Euripides' surviving text Medea says she will carry the murdered boy's corpses to the temple of Hera, but in this earliest depiction, painted about a generation after Euripides staged his play in Athens in 431 BC yet possibly still within his lifetime, a different ending shows the corpses on the ground: a reminder of the variations and adaptations existing in post-Euripidean play production in Magna Graecia, where details of the Athenian text were subject to alterations presumably motivated by local talent and interests.⁴² Evidently popular, Euripides' *Medea* is reflected in vase-paintings produced across Lucania, Apulia,

42 Dearden (2012) 281 on 'local tragedians writing for local audiences', while Taplin's compelling arguments show that Athenian tragedy was also being performed as part of the mix. Also Taplin (2014). Medea is shown carrying the boys in the chariot in only one case, the Faliscan red-figured column krater St. Petersburg, Hermitage 5 2083. *LIMC* 'Medeia' 39; Menadier (2002) 87. The rayed nimbus on the Cleveland vase owes to Etruscan workshop practices. *LCS*, 689, a bell krater by a follower of the Amykos Painter, 297a, with a nimbus used outside of Medea iconography, and others, *IGD* II, 2, p. 37.



FIGURE 29.4 Lucanian pelike with the *Children of Heracles*. Policoro, Museo Archeologico Nazionale della Siritide 35302. Attributed as Close to the Karneia Painter, ca. 400 BC

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and Campania from the beginning of the local tradition around 420 BC to the end—in Campania—around 330 BC. In contrast, the poet's *Children of Heracles* appears only twice in all of ancient Greek vase-painting and remarkably both pots seem to have come from the same workshop: a pelike recovered (together with the Medea hydria) from the Policoro tomb [4] and an unprovenanced column krater now in Berlin, both showing the opening scene of the play produced in Athens about 430 BC.⁴³ In Euripides' play, after the death of Heracles his aged companion Iolaus took the boys to the temple of Zeus at Marathon, at that time under the protection of Demophon, the King of Athens,

43 Policoro, Museo Archeologico Nazionale della Siritide 35302, Taplin (2007a), 127 no. 37; Hart (2010), 77 no. 31. Taplin (2012), fig. 11.2. Berlin, Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin-Preussischer Kulturbesitz 1969.6, Taplin (2007a) 129–120 no. 38; Hart (2010) 78 no. 32; Taplin (2012) fig. 11.6.

for safekeeping from the threat of Eurystheus.⁴⁴ Iolaus is here distinguished by his aged appearance, indicated by white hair and beard (Berlin) and in both cases his elaborate, potentially theatrical, attire. The compositions vary: the structure of the Policoro pelike is grounded by a central pyramidal arrangement of Iolaus and the children on the blood-stained altar, where they are symmetrically flanked by the figures of Copeus and Athena. In contrast, the Berlin column krater has Acamas and Demophon riding in on horseback to rescue Iolaus from Copeus, as he grabs the old man by the neck. On the far left Alcmene tends a small statue of Zeus, indicating the scene takes place in his temple. Underscoring the close stylistic similarities within the workshop, the Policoro vase has been attributed to both the Karneia and the Policoro Painters⁴⁵ and the vase in Berlin has been attributed to the Policoro Painter and as close to him,⁴⁶ such that it may be these very different conceptions of the same scene were potted and painted in the same workshop. Thus, two artists, two visions, each anchored by the same altar and Ionic column representing Zeus' temple. The shape of the pelike called for a pyramidal composition while the trapezoidal shape of the column krater provided expansive space to include the Athenian cavalry. When the scenes on both vases refer specifically to the words uttered in the opening act of a play: 'Children, Children, here, hold on to my robes! I see Eurystheus' herald coming for us ...' [48–49]⁴⁷ a special circumstance should have occurred to explain their occurrence, especially when the play is thought not to have been popular in antiquity and the iconography does not reoccur.⁴⁸

First produced in Athens after 412 BC, a reperformance of Euripides' *Antiope* in the theatre in Heraclea has been suggested as an inspiration for the Policoro Painter's pelike with the *Punishment of Dirce*.⁴⁹ Dirce was tied to the horns of a bull by Amphinon and Zethus to trample her to death in return for her cruelty to their mother, Antiope. This violent event was—like Euripides' invention of Medea's infanticide—also a possible innovation of the poet, who wrote it

44 Griffith, 139. Allan (2001) 68–69, for a suggestion of the potential role of this iconography in affirming Greek identity.

45 LCS 55, *283 (Karneia Painter); DeGrassi (1965), (Policoro Painter) pp. 5–37; Hart (2010), 77, no. 31, with bibliography.

46 Denoyelle/Iozzo (2009) 130, fig. 188.

47 Transl. M. Griffith, (2013, Chicago).

48 Dearden (1999), 237; Allan (2001); Taplin has seen the variance in iconography as the result of two painters having attended two different productions of the *Heraclidae* 'staged with different actions and different masks'; Taplin (2012) 244.

49 IGD, III, 3, 14; Trendall (1989) 22. Taplin (1998).

into a messenger speech.⁵⁰ The vases in the Policoro tomb—with innovative dramatic moments inspired by the plays of Euripides—could echo the performance of Euripidean tragedy in the theatre at Herakleia, one of the excavated theatres in Magna Graecia with real potential to have hosted the poet's plays during his lifetime.

3.2 *Apulia (about 390–300 BC)*

The huge Apulian volute krater, approaching five feet or more in height and packed with registers of figures conveying stories from myth, epic, and drama, has been called 'a pure bearer of images, an image-vase'.⁵¹ The full expression of Apulian style emerged from the workshops of the Darius and Underworld Painters, who shook off their Athenian heritage to make their grand memorials a hallmark of ancient art. The earliest workshops were presumably located in ancient Taras (modern Taranto), though evidence for them has not been found, as the modern city overlays the ancient remains. Production appears to have begun around 390–370 BC and vases continued to be made until the end of the fourth century BC.⁵²

The prolific Iliupersis Painter is credited with establishing the 'canons' that would monumentalize the vernacular of this style.⁵³ He and his workshop increased the size of the funerary krater and developed distinctive decorative devices, such as the disposition of figures on two or more pictorial zones and the *mascaron* in the centre of the massive volute handles.⁵⁴ Narrative content, defined locales, and inscribed figures in specific poses combined as in the surviving text comprise an iconographic network connected to performance and characterize the approach of this painter to Euripidean plot. The body is filled with carefully placed *naiskoi*, temple fronts and altars, iconographic signs reused from vase to vase, irregardless of the scene's association with text or performance. Gods and temples fill the upper registers; narrative animates the lower fields. Two mid-fourth century volute kraters with original Euripidean iconography were recovered from wealthy fourth-century BC tombs at Ruvo di Puglia. The 'Meeting of Iphigenia and Orestes' from Euripides' *Iphigenia*

50 Allan (2001) 72; Collard/Cropp (2008) 174; Taplin (1998) and (2012) 231–233, 236, fig. 11.4: Dirce's punishment 'almost certainly derived from' a messenger speech; Allan (2001) 72. The scene is also depicted on a calyx krater in Melbourne of about the 340's BC attributed to the Underworld Painter: Green (1994) figs. 3.4a–b. The theme would also be picked up by the Dirce Painter a generation later in Sicily (see below, pp. 685).

51 Giuliani (1996) 71.

52 Trendall (1989) 23 ff.; Denoyelle (2009) 129, 130 ff.

53 RvAp 185–192 and (1989) 79; Denoyelle (2009) 137–140.

54 Denoyelle (2009) 137–140; Carpenter (2014) 273.



FIGURE 29.5 Apulian volute krater with the *Meeting of Iphigenia and Orestes* from *Iphigenia Among the Taurians*, Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale 3223 (Inv. 82113). Attributed to the Iliupersis Painter, ca. 360 BC
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Among the Taurians [5]⁵⁵ revolves around Iphigenia's unknowing negotiation of her brother's fate: 'Would you be willing, if I saved your life, to take a message to my loved ones at Argos—a writing tablet inscribed for me by a captive who took pity on me once?' [581–585].⁵⁶ Inscriptions identify characters in quiet conversation, where the names Pylades, Orestes, and Iphigenia appear in

55 Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale 3223 (Inv. 82113) from Ruvo; *IGD* III.3, 28; Todisco (2003) 425, no. 73; Taplin (2007a) no. 47, 150–151; Montanaro (2007) 360–361, 55.1, pl. XXI; Hart (2010) 82, no. 35, with bibliography; Carpenter (2014) 272–278, fig. 12.5.

56 Transl. Anne Carson (2013, Chicago).

white gloss above their heads. Orestes sits in the centre, head bowed, and hands clasped, on the altar where he might have awaited sacrifice as a Greek comrade of those who had 'killed' his sister at Aulis (357–358). Iphigenia speaks solemnly in ignorance of her brother's identity, extending her hand into the empty space between them and raising two fingers. She wears an elaborately embroidered chiton and himation. Her long hair is partially secured by a diadem of some elaboration: in possession of the key to the temple, she is a distinguished person in Tauris. Behind Iphigenia a temple servant holding ritual implements for the sacrifice bookends the central scene with Pylades; above, Artemis and Apollo sit adjacent to the temple.

'Orestes' Ambush of Neoptolemos at Delphi'⁵⁷ is known only from a messenger speech in Euripides' *Andromache*, where Euripides is credited with developing Orestes' culpability for the death of Achilles' son: 'Neoptolemos climbed the steps and went in, so that he could pray to Phoebus before the shrine; he was making burnt offerings. A group of swordsmen was lying in wait for him, shadowed by the laurel, and Clytemnestra's son was one of them: he had devised all this' (1111–1116; the full speech is at 1085–1165).⁵⁸ Neoptolemos (inscribed) crouches on an altar and, as the text indicates, he has already sustained a visible torso wound. Behind him an assassin raises his spear to strike again while Orestes (inscribed and clad in his standard traveller's cap and cloak) hides behind the Delphic omphalos (replacing the laurel in the text). Two tripods reinforce the specific holy locale; above Apollo and Artemis flank a temple front nearly identical to that used (in reverse) in the 'Iphigenia in Tauris' scene. This messenger speech was delivered to Peleus, the grandfather of Neoptolemos, and so is sympathetic to the victim, and this depiction follows that pattern. The language of ambush and entrapment in the messenger speech is conveyed visually by the crouching figure of Orestes and the bloodied Neoptolemos, the inevitability of his fate signified by the actively posed figure on the left positioning his stance to wield another blow. While the sibling gods flanking the temple front, the shape of the altar, the lack of specifically theatrical costume, and other details of this representation are a traditionally Apulian formula, the attention to the plot, with inscriptions, reveals a Euripidean source.

A well-known volute krater of the 360's BC from a vase-painter close to the Iliupersis Painter presents a uniquely conceived rendition of the (spurious yet

57 Vicenza, Intesa Sanpaolo Collection Inv. F.G-00111A-E/IS, from Ruvo; *IGD* 111.3, 9; Taplin (2007) 139–140, no. 43; Montanaro (2007) 938–940; 340.1, pl. LXXXIII; Taplin (2007a) no. 43, 139–141; Hart (2010) 80–81 no. 34, with bibliography; Carpenter (2014) fig. 12.6.

58 Transl. Deborah Roberts (2013, Chicago).



FIGURE 29.6 Apulian volute krater with the *Sacrifice of Iphigenia* from the *Iphigenia at Aulis*. British Museum, London 1865,0103.21 (F159). Attributed as Close to the Iliupersis Painter, ca. 360 BC

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ancient) final scene from Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, posthumously produced in Athens in 405 BC.⁵⁹ [6]

Bucrania in the upper register denote a sacred space. An altar—again the same altar repeated by this workshop—anchors the figures in the action of sacrifice when—as the messenger tells Clytemnestra—Artemis sent a deer to replace Iphigenia at the moment before her death: ‘Clearly all heard the blow strike home—but after, with no man knowing where or how, the maiden had vanished from the earth. Then the priest with a great voice cried aloud and the whole army echoed him—this when they saw the apparition which a god had

59 British Museum, London 1865.1–3.21 (F159); *RVAp* (1978) 204 no. 104; Taplin (2007a) 159–160, no. 52; Hart (2010) 83, no. 36, with bibliography.

sent but no man had foreknown. Though our eyes saw, it was a sight incredible: a deer panting its last lay there on the earth ...' [1582–1588].⁶⁰ The artist shows the moment of divine replacement: the girl's profile is silhouetted over the profile of the deer whose forelegs outline her silhouette, following the curve of her forearm. The unparalleled experience of viewing this scene evokes what must have been a great surprise as they listened to it happening in the theatre. Euripides had written his *Iphigenia in Tauris* over a decade earlier, reliant on the narrative efficacy of this magical event (355–372) with her words: 'and my own father was the sacrificing priest!'. From a workshop process noted for its reuse of elements, the iconography of this vase stands out: the altar is of the expected form, but the vase-painter has replaced Calchas with Agamemnon. The unique iconography binds it to the textual deviation of the play's ending and may thus hew more closely to post-Euripidean performance in Apulia.⁶¹

The workshops of the Darius and Underworld Painters expanded the Iliupersis Painter's concept of funerary vases as an instrument for story-telling, ushering in an era of imposing funerary volute kraters—monumental in size and concept—whose scenes could contain dozens of figures on each side. The visual field was typically organized into two or three zones with immortals in the upper register above a mix of mortal and semi-divine figures below, where the narrative of active plot lines is conveyed. The two realms may be linked by a central scene in a white *naiskos*, a small temple structure often used in these funerary vases to memorialize the deceased, or in which one or more figures may communicate a core event in the story.⁶² Apart from this architectural interlude, the mythologically complex groupings were composed by densely arranged, yet carefully drawn and elaborately dressed figures who define the narrative space, often carefully articulated by inscriptions. The depiction of messenger speeches reached its consummate form in the Apulian vase-paintings of the third quarter of the fourth century BC and sometimes included a theatrical figure called a *paidagogos*. He was a regular sort, familiar in Apulian vase-painting, typically depicted as an old man with white hair and beard, costumed in elaborate theatrical boots, long-sleeved chiton and red-banded *chlamys* that could be articulated with a wide red or purple stripe at the lower hem when he was associated with a royal house [7, 8, 9]. His role might

60 Transl. C.R. Walker (2013, Chicago).

61 Collard/Morwood (2017) 620–624 for discussion of inauthentic final scene, especially 622 for possible Byzantine dating, but with lines 1578–1612 as Euripidean in origin, though perhaps posthumously; and 623: 'clearly Post-Classical' yet with a density of scholarly dissent such that a Euripidean idea may lie behind them.

62 Denoyelle (2009) 139.

be tutor, cowherd, or messenger.⁶³ Distinguished by his bearing, costume, and ubiquity⁶⁴ as a human observer and a narrator familiar to members of the audience, his role set him apart from the gods and heroes within whose tales he engaged.

One of the most well-known and moving depictions of a messenger speech is on a volute krater by the Darius Painter in the British Museum [7] showing the crash of the chariot from Euripides' *Hippolytus* (1173–1254), produced in Athens in 428 BC.⁶⁵ The Darius Painter had early in his career rendered the scene in terms of its three essential characters: man-quadriga-bull.⁶⁶ On this later vase of the 340's BC the composition is repeated and the narrative expanded by the inclusion of the elderly *paidagogos* at the left, an active figure throwing out his arm toward the doomed prince on his chariot, drawing attention to the horrific scene. In front of the quadriga a torch-wielding Erinye clutches the forelock of a horse while underneath them the fearsome bull rises to trigger the crash. Like Furies in earlier *Medea* iconography, this one appears at a moment of high emotional pitch. Of the numerous depictions of the *Death of Hippolytus* in Magna Graecia,⁶⁷ the dynamic *paidagogos* here pitifully draws our attention to the narrative of the scene as well as his own tragic inability to change its outcome. He can be read as the messenger who witnessed the tragedy and the actor who delivered the speech, costumed in the same chiton, *chlamys*, and boots he wore when he appeared in the orchestra.⁶⁸ His comparatively simple costume is bordered in purple and clasped with a gold brooch; this is part of the elaborate language of performance costume and remindful that he is a retainer to royalty.

The *paidagogos* appears again, here labelled BOTHP (herdsman) on a volute krater attributed to the Underworld Painter, whose vases were produced in a workshop very close to that of the Darius Painter but slightly later, around 330–310 BC⁶⁹ [8].

63 Green (1999); cf. the Emory Melanippe vase where the *paidagogos* is labelled BOTHP, ('cowherd'), providing a link to the Euripides tragedy: Taplin (2007a) no. 68, 193–196 and (2007b) 190–191.

64 Green's (1999) catalog, 55–60, includes 53 examples.

65 British Museum F279; Green (1999); *IGD* III.3, 24; Oakley (1991) 64 no. 3; Taplin (2007a) no. 42, 137–138.

66 Bari, Museo Archeologico Provinciale 5597. Not attributed by Trendall. Taplin (2007a) 130–138 and nos. 39–42, incorporating Oakley (1991) with extensive references.

67 Oakley (1991) 63–66 cites six Apulian and two Sicilian scenes of the *Death of Hippolytus*.

68 Green (1994) 57–59, (1999), and (2002) 100–101, fig. 17.

69 Denoyelle/Iozzo (2009) 154.



FIGURE 29.7 Apulian volute krater, detail with the *Death of Hippolytus*. London, British Museum 1856,1226.1 (F279). Attributed to the Darius Painter, ca. 340 BC PHOTO@TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM. [CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION-NONCOMMERCIAL-SHAREALIKE 4.0 INTERNATIONAL (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)] FL-000900993

Even without the inscriptions labelling the figures Melanippe, Trophos (nurse), Hellen (founder of the Greeks) Aiolos (Melanippe's father) and Hippo (her mother transformed into a horse) the infant twins in the centre would identify a scene from *Melanippe (The Wise)*, a fragmentarily preserved play otherwise undepicted and with a distinct connection to Euripides, who seems to have been the only playwright (as far as we know) to have dramatized this myth.⁷⁰ Here the goatherd, costumed as a *paidagogos*, saves Melanippe's twins from the death ordered by their father Poseidon. Artemis, Apollo, Athena, Aphrodite with Eros and Poseidon appear in the upper register, serving perhaps as a reminder of the ultimate role of the gods in the afterlife.

Exemplifying the most ambitious works coming out of the Apulian workshop, the Underworld Painter's *Medea* vase [9]⁷¹ shows similarly fine potting and attention to active narrative. The murders of Creon and Creusa at

70 Collard/Cropp (2008) 569. Taplin (2007a) 193–196, no. 68.

71 Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen 3296, from Canosa. *IGD* 111, 5, 4; *RVAp* 11 (1982) 533, pl.195; Denoyelle (2009) 153, Fig. 221. Taplin (2007a) 255–257, no. 102 and (2014) 143–145.



FIGURE 29.8 Apulian volute krater with *Melanippe*. Atlanta, Carlos Museum, Emory University 1994.1. Attributed to the Underworld Painter, ca. 320 BC

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PHOTO BY BRUCE M. WHITE, 2005

the palace of Corinth are featured in the *naïskos*. As Creusa's brother (Hippotes) tries in vain to wrench the poisonous crown from the brow of the dying princess, a *paidagogos* runs up from the left behind her mother (Merope) to witness the gruesome deaths. He will be the servant—the 'tragic witness' wearing the same costume used by the Darius Painter [7] and his own 'Melanippe' vase [8]—who subsequently relates the gruesome deaths to Medea and the audience. In the lower register the chariot delivered by Oistros (personification of her episodic madness and accomplice by placement in her chariot)⁷² dominates the composition, nodding his head toward Medea as she dispatches one of her sons on an altar; the other is rescued by a young man leading him away to the left. Several features demand a closer look: the killing of one child and escape of the other, the ghost of Medea's father, Aeëtes, and the nurse Merope, for example, do not appear in the surviving text. The focus on Medea's Corinthian narrative (as Euripides) and the dominant figure of the *paidagogos* argue for a theatrical association, especially when coupled with iconographic fidelity to the servant's messenger speech (1136–1231). The iconographic program includes a flamboyantly non-Greek Medea in the act of committing a highly charged infanticide directly adjacent to the two theatrical catalysts (the text and the stage) at the centre of Euripides' play: the madness of her act is visualized as the personification Oistros standing in Medea's *mêchanê* of escape, the chariot, set directly beneath the *naïskos* in order to focus attention on the horrific deaths of Creon and Kreusa which she had engineered. The inclusion of other subsidiary characters (as Merope and Aeëtes) are part of Medea's life and journey to Corinth: while the funerary associations of the *naïskos*, the traditional use of personification to represent powerful emotions, the inclusion of theatrical costume and figure, and the reliance of the vase-painters on their own workshop tradition⁷³—including the adoption of a certain size and composition for a funerary vase of definite distinction—create in their combination an iconographic system that may stand above the influence of any singular performance. Here, figural expression and textual communication are fused in a distinguished monument of characteristic Apulian theatricality. In response to the powerful imagery on this vase, Trendall referred to the first-century BC historian Diodorus Siculus (IV.56) that 'it is because of the desire of the tragic poets for the marvellous that so varied and inconsistent an account of Medea has been given out ...'

72 Aellen, (1994), 41.

73 Rebaudo (2013).



FIGURE 29.9 Apulian volute krater with *Medea*. Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen 3296. Attributed to the Underworld Painter, ca. 320 BC
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supporting the existence of reperformances as well as freshly inspired versions by later fourth-century Apulian poets.⁷⁴

3.3 *Sicily and Paestum (about 370–330 BC)*

In step with contemporary theatre culture in cities such as Syracuse and Gela, where the two main Sicilian vase-painting workshops were located,⁷⁵ two Sicilian pots preserve the only depictions of staged tragic performance to have

74 Taplin (2014) 144.

75 Trendall (1989) 233. See Denoyelle/Iozzo (2009) 165–179 and Barresi (2013) for nuanced perspectives on the complex pottery industry of Sicily.

survived. Of these, one is accepted as the recognition scene from the *Oedipus* of (probably) Sophocles, and includes a Sicilian counterpart of the Apulian *paidagogos*, here taking the role of the Old Shepherd.⁷⁶ In both cases actively gesturing figures dressed in lushly embroidered clothing with elaborate long sleeves pose dramatically on wooden stages with floors supported by beams or posts.⁷⁷ This environment contrasts to the carefully composed landscape patterns of the Iliupersis Painter and the stacked figural tableaux favoured by the workshops of the Darius and Underworld Painters. In addition, Sicilian theatre vases—more than any others—present narrative specificity through exaggerated posture and stance. Many of these features occur in the work of the Dirce Painter, an early Sicilian artisan of the 380's BC who may have belonged to a Syracusan workshop.⁷⁸ He typically filled the large expanse of the calyx krater's wide body with energetic figural compositions set in minimal yet evocative scenery. This innovative approach was well suited to theatrical content. The *Antiope* in Berlin⁷⁹ demonstrates his skill in communicating emotion and plot by means of dramatic gesture and pose. The composition is twofold: at left, Dirce has been trampled to death by the bull, who continues to stand on her chest. To the right of Dirce's body a second scene, located in a cave with a panther skin hanging from its ceiling.⁸⁰ On the far right Antiope collapses as she locks gazes with one of her sons, who together with his twin forces Lycus to his knees. The animated gesturing and costuming clues of decorated boots worn by the twins and the baldric crossed over Lycus' chest—all taking place in a space created by the hanging panther skin—evoke theatricality of the Sicilian type, as does Hermes, looming down from above—potentially from the *deus ex machina*—nodding and gesturing toward the scene below.⁸¹

76 Syracuse, Museo Archeologico 'Paolo Orsi' 66557; Calyx krater attributed to the Capodarso Painter: *IGD* 111.2, 8; Trendall (1989) 234, fig. 429; Taplin (2007a) 90–92, no. 22; Hart (2010) 71, no. 26.

77 For the Oedipus vase, also a wooden ceiling supported by columns with ornate capitals. Caltanisetta, Museo Civico; Calyx krater attributed to the Capodarso Painter; *IGD* 111.6,1, suggesting Hypsipyle; Taplin (2007a) 261–262, no. 105; Hart (2010) 71 no. 26.

78 Where several of his pots were found: Trendall (1989) 30.

79 Berlin, Antikensammlung, Staatliches Museen zu Berlin, F3296. *IGD* 111.3,15; Trendall (1989) 30, fig. 61; Taplin (2007a) no. 65, 187–189.

80 Perhaps reflecting the look of a staging device that would presumably have marked an element in a tripartite staging of the play: cave, herdsman's home, and shrine of Dionysus. Collard/Cropp (2008) 176.

81 See Taplin (2007a) 189, on the use of the *ekkyklêma* to stage the Lykos scene.

The island of Lipari is well known for its theatrical terracottas and masks, yet few vases with theatre scenes have been recovered there. An exception is a well preserved anonymous calyx krater which may reflect a Euripidean source in the cultural life of this small island off the north coast of Sicily [10].⁸²

The scene on the obverse of the vase has been connected to fragments from Euripides' *Phoenician Women* (408 ff.) and *The Suppliant Women* (140 ff.), where in a prelude to the *Seven Against Thebes*, Adrastus, the king of Argos, is reported to have stopped a quarrel between two young exiles, Polynices and Tydeus, subsequently marrying them off to his daughters. While none of the characters wear any costume related to the theatre (or much costume at all), the vigorous actions of the figures set within such an elaborately foreshortened portico (commensurate with the Capodarso Painter's stage sets) argues for dramatic explanation. The intuitive perspective of the coffered ceiling and graduated white of columns from foreground to background defines a stage-like space including a set-like door on the left through which the daughters enter, comparable to stage doors used in comic depictions and on other tragic vases, as those from Paestum, heirs to the Sicilian vase-painting tradition.⁸³

Asteas (ca. 350 BC) was the most prominent painter of the Paestan tradition, signing both tragic and comic vases.⁸⁴ His theatrical iconography is thus shared across his oeuvre, presenting a flexible approach to the depiction of architectural features, especially those depicting theatre sets. His krater with the *Madness of Heracles*⁸⁵ [11] has been called 'perhaps the most theatrically tragic of the two thousand or so surviving pots from Poseidonia'.⁸⁶ As such it has inspired attention as to its influence from a performance of a post-Euripidean version of Euripides' *Madness of Heracles*, first staged in Athens about 415 BC.⁸⁷

82 Lipari, Museo Eoliano 10647; Calyx krater attributed by Trendall to the Lloyd Group and the Adrastus Painter; Trendall (1989) 237 and (1991) 173–174; Taplin (2007a) 257–258, no. 103.

83 Trendall (1989) 198.

84 Trendall (1989) 198–205.

85 Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional 11094. Trendall (1989) fig. 355; Todisco (2003) 501, P6; Taplin (2007a) 143–145, no. 45; Hart (2010) 79, no. 33; Denoyelle (2009) 187, fig. 260.

86 Taplin (2007a) 143.

87 Iconographic variations from the existing text of Euripides have been summarized by Taplin (2007a) 145 (who interprets it as a 'macabre fantasy') and are continued by Denoyelle (2009) 187 where she suggests a derivation from a Euripidean theme, or perhaps an unknown 'hilaro-tragedy' popular in Magna Graecia; see also Trendall *RVP*, 89–90.



FIGURE 29.10 Sicilian calyx krater with *Fight of Polynices and Tydeus* from a tragedy concerning Adrastus. Lipari, Museo Eoliano 10647. Attributed to the Adrastus Group, ca. 340 BC

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The largest feature on the krater is the figure of the deranged hero striding toward the left holding one of his children alive and screaming in his arms. His wife, Megara (inscribed) flees toward a stage door on the right, her arm raised above her head in terror. On the left is a flaming pyre of furniture and family heirlooms. These essential dramatic elements all exist within a shallow plane framed by a two-story loggia supported by Ionic columns. Asteas used



FIGURE 29.11 Paestan calyx krater with the *Madness of Heracles*. Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional 11094 (L369). Signed by Assteas, ca. 350's BC
 PHOTO ©MUSEO ARQUEOLÓGICO NACIONAL. FOTO ANTONIO TRIGO ARNAL

windows and colonnades in both tragic and comic scenes to indicate stage settings and to frame characters. His signed comedy vase in Berlin has a wooden stage supported by the same type of colonnade used to support the beamed ceiling in the Madrid vase.⁸⁸ To create an architectural framework where subsidiary roles can be placed is a Paestan feature, and a supporting character in the play is located within each niche of the loggia above Heracles.⁸⁹ From the left appear Mania/Lyssa (personification of Madness) wielding a whip, Iolaus (Heracles' companion), and Alcmene (his mother). At lines 815–873, the introduction to the dialogue of Iris and Mania (Madness)⁹⁰ by the Chorus: 'Look there, old friends: what phantom hovers on the house?' and their subsequent interchange: 'I shall batter through the roof and leap upon the house!'⁹¹ calls

88 Also signed by Assteas (as Asteas): Antikenmuseum F3044; Trendall (1989) fig. 352; Denoyelle (2009) 186, fig. 259.

89 Trendall, *RVP*, 90.

90 In a post-Euripidean version of the play: Taplin (2007a) 145.

91 Transl. Arrowsmith (1959, 2013, Chicago).

attention to their elevated position, each in one frame of the shallow loggia. In performance this should have been the *skênê* above and behind the orchestra, and their higher locale suggests the use of a *mêchanê* to transport the actors up to their places.⁹² Heracles as hero is over life-size, depicted monumentally in relation to the other figures, his out-of-proportion height filling the krater's body so that his head is framed by the centre colonnade above. Wearing military greaves and the helmet of a Samnite warrior, Asteas has distinguished him by size and position; his figure is conceived to dominate the entire composition and narrative.⁹³ This is not a depiction of the costumed actor playing the role of Heracles, in contrast to the Pronomos vase of about fifty years earlier [1]; in an extraordinary and unique blending of the poetic and the pictorial, this is Asteas depicting the hero's mad state of mind by means of his size, movement and attire: an irrational combination of military kit and transparent feminine frippery.⁹⁴ Heracles' ensemble is not commensurate with any known costume or style; it endows him with an appearance that sets him apart from his world, his family and his sanity.

4 Dramatic Encounters: Euripides and Vase Iconography

This brief survey presents examples of the ways in which Euripidean plots and performance can be seen to have provided the narratives for funerary vases created by Western Greek vase-painters. The scenes on these vases conform to the preserved texts of Euripides (often messenger speeches), respond to his theatrical inventions (Medea's chariot), and can include innovative depictions of stage scenery (especially those from Sicily and Paestum). They consistently respond to their own regional workshop traditions, beginning with early Lucanian fidelity to Athenian models in the late fourth century BC and the massive Apulian funerary monuments of the mid-fourth century BC, especially those of the Darius and Underworld Painters. The work of Asteas, coming from the short-lived Paestan workshop at the end of the Western Greek tradition

92 Mastronarde (1990) 260–261, 268–269, and 283.

93 Trendall, *RVP*, 89 n. 9 for depictions of Samnite helmets in Campanian vase-painting.

94 Worman (1999) draws attention to Euripides's use of physicality and descriptions of costume to indicate emotional states, for example: 'The hero's change of costume to the veil of sorrow and snare of ropes, which mirrors both the funereal drapery enwrapping his family and his children's fearful clinging, in the end protects him as his lion's skin and victor's crown could not' (p. 103). I am grateful to Helene Foley for drawing my attention to this article.

(around 330 BC), is perhaps the most inventive of these painters in his replacement of the hero's traditional costume with a local artistic response to the demanding obligation to convey tragic madness. The vases containing this specialized iconography operated within a complex cultural assemblage of text, set, theatre and funeral operating as an element of a physical and performative domain which included the audience. For the vase-painter this inspired the invention of new scenes fusing traditional workshop methods with theatrically adapted iconography in order to depict the idea of what had been played.⁹⁵

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95 With reference to Goldhill/Osborne (1994) 9 n. 8: 'the production and consumption of images within a culture are highly complex processes in which the full range of a society's perceptual and conceptual apparatus is engaged'.

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Euripides and Art, Artifacts, and the Technical Vocabulary of Craft

Mary Stieber

Εὐριπίδης σωκρατογόμφοις¹



A νεώτερος (*neôteros*, ‘youngster’) among the poets, according to scholia,² as well as Aristophanes (*Clouds* 1370), and his work considered *καινός* (*kainos*, ‘newfangled’), Euripides was perhaps more infamous than famous for his ‘modernist’ approach to the high art of tragedy. No one quite knew—not knows yet—how to classify oddball works such as *Helen*, *Ion*, and *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, and above all the prosatyrical singleton, *Alcestis*, with their happy endings, melodramatic plots, comedic touches, and abundant local colour. Scholiasts reproach Euripides for the anachronism of his allusions to contemporary politics [Nünlist (2009) 228], another feature of his works that might be considered modernist. The same might be said about the influence of the emerging genre of rhetoric, which is in evidence in the plays of Euripides to a much higher degree than in Sophocles, who also witnessed rhetoric’s ascendance [Mastrorade (2010) 208–211]. Then there is his notorious tendency to give speaking roles to those under-empowered in real life (e.g., women, slaves, and the aged), in some cases, endowing them with preternatural rhetorical skills—a criticism to which ‘Euripides’ in *Frogs* responds that he ‘was doing the democratic thing’ (*Ra.* 952). Also symptomatic of a modernist approach is Euripides’ readiness on occasion to differentiate himself from the established literary tradition that he without doubt revered, to judge from the frequency of his nods to his great predecessors. When, for instance, he undertakes the description of the mythical shield of Achilles, by then an iconic staple of *ekphrasis*, in the first

1 ‘Euripides bolted together with Socrates’, Teleclides fr. 42 = DL 2. 18 [Storey (2011) 304–305].

2 Nünlist (2009) 14: ‘The term νεώτερος/οι as such can designate any poet younger than Homer ... but most often seems to describe the cyclic poets or Euripides’.

stasimon of *Electra* (lines 432–486), Euripides sidesteps the ‘literary’ imagery of earlier forays in the genre (e.g., Homer’s, Pseudo-Hesiod’s, Aeschylus’) and turns instead for inspiration to the real world, ‘employ[ing] images drawn from the standard repertoire of devices found on real weaponry’ [Csapo (2009) 99–100].

A reliable impression of the unorthodoxies of Euripides’ style that puzzled, offended, or amused his first audiences may be gleaned from *Frogs*, whose inestimable value, humour aside, as a document of contemporary literary criticism is now gaining recognition [Hunter (2009) 10–52; Halliwell (2011) 93–154]. One of the more telling revelations occurs at *Ra.* 959–961, when ‘Euripides’ admits to introducing into his plays *οἰκεῖα πράγματα* (*oikeia pragmata*, ‘the things of everyday life’), in order that his *τέχνη* (*technê*, ‘art, craft’) would be capable of withstanding the test of accuracy when confronted by the ‘knowledgeable critics’ in the audience, in other words, everyone in the audience, since these are the things of everyday life. By the time of Aristotle this reputed quotidianist strain had solidified into received wisdom about the playwright, and as a critic, had lost its edge. Thus, Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 1404b. 28–30) could point with evident admiration to the artfulness behind Euripides’ choice and deployment of ‘the language of the everyday’, and note moreover that Euripides was the innovator of the style, opening the way for others to follow. Similarly, Longinus, or whoever wrote *On the Sublime*, considers Euripides foremost among the poets and other authors who use ‘common and hackneyed words’, sometimes to lofty and magnificent effect (40. 2–4). As for the ‘others to follow’, as Isabelle Torrance has demonstrated, Euripides’ *Alltagssprache* opens the way to none other than Old Comedy itself, with which Euripidean tragedy has much additional in common [(2013) 9, 267–298].

Aristophanes’ *oikeia pragmata* is, if nothing else, a convenient linguistic shorthand for the realism which has long been considered a hallmark of Euripidean drama, and which lies behind most if not all of the contemporary criticisms tallied above. The preoccupation with *oikeia pragmata*, this concern for the familiar, realistic detail, is modelled especially well in Euripides’ copious references and allusions to art and architecture, the subject of this chapter.³ At stake is the identification of a category of intertextuality, not with other texts, but between text and artifact, and as such, the present line of inquiry finds a natural home in the growing body of scholarly work on intertextuality, paratextuality, metapoetry, and the like in Euripides, whose employment of

3 For a more expansive, and particularly astute, interpretation of ‘*oikeia pragmata*’ at *Ra.* 959–961, which nicely accommodates the facet of its meaning that I seize upon here, see Hunter (2009) 18–20.

these elements has been identified as a feature which distinguishes him from both Aeschylus and Sophocles.⁴ A native Athenian whose lifetime spans the fifth century (ca. 485–406 BC), Euripides found himself surrounded by a rapidly changing, avant-garde visual culture. Perhaps he retained a vague impression of the pre-Persian acropolis, if not in its full glory, at least in its ruined state, which persisted for an indefinite period of time after the Persian sack of 480/79, in part, as an outcome of the ‘oath of Plataea’. This visual memory would have included the population of archaic free-standing female statues known as *korai*, a sculptural type that does not reappear after the sack, which, by their beauty and numbers, constituted one of the most commanding sights on the pre-Persian acropolis. The visual culture of the playwright’s maturity, however, would have made a stronger impression. This would encompass the pinnacle of Greek artistic achievement, as manifested in the idealized realism of the sculpture of Pheidias and Polykleitos and the illusionistic naturalism of the painters Polygnotus, and later, Parrhasios and Zeuxis, if our chronologies are correct, as well as the entirety of the building program on the acropolis conceived by Pericles as a testimony to Athens’ hegemony.

The evidence⁵ for Euripides’ intertextual relationship with the artifacts of his momentous century falls into three general groups, with some overlap: (1) literal references or allusions to contemporary works or to objects/images that are to be imagined as present onstage, if not actually represented in some fashion; (2) technical artisanal language; and (3) most impressive of all, passages or images which reflect knowledge of the conceptual or theoretical underpinning of contemporary artisanal activity at the most advanced levels, with special focus on the virtually lost art of monumental painting.⁶ In a large percentage of cases Euripides’ terminology is paralleled rarely if at all elsewhere in Greek poetry, but rather more frequently in non-literary contexts: inscriptions,

4 Torrance (2013) 267; for a full description of intertextuality, see pp. 3–5. Torrance’s (2013) comprehensive treatment of metapoetry in Euripides is exemplary; additional bibliography may be found there.

5 Drawn largely from Stieber (2011) with revisions.

6 If anything may be deduced from the ancient biographical tradition which records that Euripides once studied to be a painter (*TrGF* 5, T A 1 IA. 4; 5, T A 1 IB. 2), it is the implication that the playwright had a special relationship with the art of painting, of the many arts that reached unrivalled levels of excellence within his lifetime. Regardless whether it is to be attributed to this biographical fact, or whether the biographical ‘fact’ owes to it, a noticeable level of sophistication, as we shall see, characterizes Euripides’ engagement with the art of painting that extends beyond his engagement with the other arts. It may also be significant that painting, rather than sculpture, seems to have occupied the leading edge in artistic development during Euripides’ maturity. Pliny (*NH* 35:58) notes that contests for painting were instituted at Corinth and at the Pythian games at Delphi in the mid-fifth century.

prose, and late dictionaries and compilations. Hence, this language cannot be considered 'poetic'; it only becomes so in the hands of a skilful poet, although the transformation of what is in essence workshop vernacular into a bona fide poetic language almost always, in the case of Euripides, retains something of its technical roots. This I would argue is the particular genius of Euripides' realism. A large percentage of the language and imagery presented below, as I interpret it, falls into the broad category of metaphor. Some of these 'metaphorical' uses, to be sure, might strike the reader as so acclimated into the colloquial, ancient as well as modern, as to be considered 'dead'. However, bearing in mind Coleridge's famous definition of poetry, 'the best words in their best order' (*Table Talk*, July 12, 1827), I would counter that there are no dead metaphors in poetic utterance of any time or place, when every word counts. We finish with a brief commentary on the significance of this textual evidence, in light of the epigraph to the chapter.

For those who acknowledge and venture to substantiate the likelihood of Euripides' referencing the material culture of contemporary Athens, attention has most often fallen on the Parthenon, for perfectly good reason, and comes in the form of the suggestive aside, safely stowed away in notes to translations or in commentaries, rather than full-fledged argument, a daunting proposition, with proof all but out of reach. I have little new to add to this stimulating line of thought; a recent sampling, however, is representative: J.B. Connelly [(2014) 205–207 and 214], briefly entertains the possibility of the reverse direction of influence in regard to her controversial thesis about Euripides' *Erechtheus* serving as the inspiration for the Parthenon frieze. Noting, with justification, that '[a] false assumption that text precedes image has long bedeviled our understanding of visual culture', she goes on to point out a number of ways in which 'Euripides seems to draw poetic inspiration from the Parthenon itself'. I.C. Storey and A. Allen [(2014) 149] wonder whether Athena and Poseidon in the prologue to *Trojan Women* strike up poses mimicking those of the famous figures of the two divinities in the west pediment of the Parthenon, meager remnants of which are on view today in the British Museum. And Eric Csapo has detected a heretofore overlooked allusion to the colossal chryselephantine statue housed in the Parthenon in the first stasimon of *Electra*: 'Though it has escaped the notice of modern commentators, few Athenians could have failed to observe that Achilles' armour mimics that of Pheidias' Athena Parthenos' [(2009) 102–103].

It should come as no surprise that the sculptural decoration of the Parthenon, the most costly and ambitious ensemble of the classical period, an immediate reminder of which was a mere swivel-of-the-head away for a spectator seated in the theatre of Dionysus, is referenced in Attic drama of the second

half of the fifth century. However, it was far from the only awe-inducing spectacle of contemporary stonecarving. The art of sculpture, more than any other, offered itself up in inexhaustible measure for ancient writers and thinkers, as a resource for imagery, metaphor, and analogy of every degree and kind [see esp. Steiner (2001)]. No ancient poet, arguably, finds more, and more inventive, uses for statuary than Euripides.⁷ This claim finds immediate support in a simple calculation: No tragedian is more attached to the word ἄγαλμα than Euripides, with some fifty-six occurrences in his extant work.⁸

In a play that centres on a real *agalma* of Artemis, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, a highly unconventional figurative use of this term at lines 273–274 is thereby thrown into high relief. Orestes and Pylades, in the herdsman's telling, have waded ashore at the end of their journey to Tauris; the two take shelter in a cave, where they are spotted by the locals who mistake them for a laundry list of divinities and demigods which finishes with a unexpected twist, '*agalмата* of Nereus', the sea god whose fifty daughters, the Nereids, form a 'noble Chorus'. Stymied by the idea of men being compared to women, and evidently loathe to accept that at this date the term *agalma* routinely denotes 'statue' with little if any residual adjectival force of 'delightful', interpreters desperate to save the image have sometimes arrived at rather bizarre explanations.⁹ A relatively straightforward interpretation lies to hand, however, if one is willing to allow for a paratextual frame of reference. A generic '*agalματα*', which immediately triggers the unmarked visual response, 'statues', is juxtaposed with a verbal description of dancing Nereids and forthwith engenders a secondary, this time marked, visual response. The merging of the two semantic units results in a single image: Orestes and Pylades being likened not to women but to *statues* of women.¹⁰

7 E.g., statues move of their own accord (*IT* 1165–1167), are seized from their pedestals and carted off or threatened with such (*IT*; *Andr.* 266–268), cradled in arms (*IT* 1158), garlanded, etc. (*Hipp.* 82–83); people talk to statues (*Hipp.* 73–87, 1461, etc., *Ph.* 631–632), express interest in becoming statues (*Hec.* 836–838), and compare themselves to statues (*Tr.* 193).

8 Contrast twelve occurrences in Aeschylus, and three in Sophocles (bearing in mind the differences in number of plays preserved), eight in Homer, and five in Pindar. The term is a staple of dedicatory inscriptions.

9 E.g., Kyriakou (2006) 117; Platnauer (1960) 193; England (1950) 149; Paley (1872–1880) 364. Kovacs (1994–2002) 179, translates: 'darling boys of Nereus'. Philipp (1968) 103–106, sees in the Euripidean examples evidence for the term's transition from 'Kultbild' to 'Weihgeschenk', and, by the late fifth century, into simply another word for 'statue'.

10 In this reading 'Nereus' is needed to put a name to the female members of the 'Chorus' who are the actual target of the comparison.

This makes perfect sense: Two men in the prime of life, handsome and robust, have just waded ashore from the sea with their wet linen garments cling tightly to their naked bodies. The eroticized image of beautiful young men in clinging, transparent chitons intertwined with that of dancing sea Nymphs makes one wonder whether *agalmata* here is meant to signal a visual memory of some well-known statues of Nereids or Nymphs—which as it happens are universally represented in later classical art with clinging drapery—or, if not specific statues, some statuary type or sculptural style. We do not have far to look for contemporary paradigms. Since most post-Parthenon representations of females, including those who do not live in the water, are shown with tightly clinging, often transparent drapery, there are plenty of options beginning with the Parthenon sculptures, themselves. For a rare male counterpart to the ‘wet-drapery’ look for females, the ‘Motya Charioteer’, of undetermined date, itself a highly feminized version of an athletic young man, allows us to participate fully in the Euripidean image.¹¹ From a dramatic point of view, the statuesque beauty of the men begins to account for why they are immediately taken for gods by the simple herdsmen (*IT* 266–267), a case of mistaken identity enhanced by the pair’s display of symptoms of madness and solidified when the excellent swordsmanship of the ‘divinities’ is unleashed and the unprepared herdsman scramble for sticks and stones with which to defend themselves and their flocks.

Euripides’ treatment of the sacrifice of Polyxena in *Hecuba* suggests an even more direct connection with a major contemporary innovation in monumental statuary: the semi-nude female. Polyxena, a willing victim, rents her garment down to the waist, exposing to onlookers her exquisite sculpted breasts and torso, whose beauty is likened in simile to those of an *agalma*, before falling to the ground on one knee (lines 560–561). This universally admired image is considered ‘the earliest comparison with statuary in Tragedy’ [Collard (1991) 160]. The aim of the simile, its effects, whether it is meant to be erotic, and its dramatic purpose have all occasioned a great deal of debate.¹² Yet there has been surprisingly little interest in identifying visual sources for such an innovative poetic gesture. If it is indeed the first of its kind, an impetus must then be sought in contemporary art; simply put, if there were no objective frame of reference, the simile would make little sense to a contemporary audience. Now full female nudity in monumental statuary would not arrive until the mid-fourth century, unannounced, so to speak, to judge from accounts of the shocked responses

11 Most recently, Pavese (1996) associates the statue with a victory monument for Theron in the Olympic Games of 476 BC.

12 E.g., Pucci (2003) 158; Scodel (1996) 121–126; Mossman (1995) 159; Rabinowitz (1993) 60.

to Praxiteles' Knidian Aphrodite [Pollitt (1990) 84–88]. However, even partial female nudity on a monumental scale is a novelty in the second half of the fifth century, and some instructive parallels do present themselves, none more perfect than the so-called 'Stumbling (or Dying) Niobid', a marble figure from a famous fifth-century BC pedimental group, possibly an original and probably Attic in origin but transferred to Rome for reuse in antiquity, now housed in the Terme Museum, Rome (inv. 72274). For anyone acquainted with both the statue and the scene in *Hecuba*, it is as easy to imagine as it is impossible to confirm that Euripides had before his mind's eye this very image of a dying young Niobid, struck from behind, her breasts and torso exposed by her cascading garment, dropping to one knee. The generally accepted dates for the play (mid-to-late 420s [Collard (1991) 34–35]), and for the sculpted figure or its prototype, if it is a copy (mid-fifth century [Robertson (1975) 1.319]), accommodates the tantalizing possibility that it could have been known to Euripides and his audience.

Like the sculpted Niobid, Euripides' dying Polyxena, in a gesture that has been considered evidence of her *καλοκαγαθία* (*kalokagathia*), manages to fall *εὐσχημῶν*, 'decorously' (*Hec.* 569) [Kurtz (1985) 416 n. 105]. An unusual choice of modifier, *euschēmôn* first of all refers to the modesty that the young woman seeks to preserve as she dies, as indicated in the next line [cf. Paley (1872–1880) 551]. However, the term could also allude to the drape of Polyxena's slipping dress, which stops short of her genital area (specifying that it reached her navel offers a way of indicating this delicately), yet at the same time uncovers her full left flank, while finally landing disposed in a decorative, as well as decorous, fashion; thus, *euschēmôn*. In this the Niobid statue is again instructive, demonstrating how such an arrangement of drapery can be made to seem totally fortuitous. Moreover, since Polyxena has just been compared to a statue, *euschēmôn* could also indicate that she *falls* like a statue. Contemporary sculptural parallels in addition to the Niobid are ready to hand, including, most prominently, the many variations on a graceful and noble fall, with breast exposed, among the vanquished Amazons portrayed in the Amazonomachy on the exterior of the Parthenos' shield, which were frequently imitated.¹³

It is surely not incidental that, in the parody in *Frogs*, Euripides' language is characterized repeatedly as chiselled, honed, shaved, smoothed, ruled, and squared. For the playwright was especially fond of words and imagery that sug-

13 As reconstructed by Leipen (1971) figs. 81–82, with figs. 23–36, the extant copies of the individual figures and groups upon which the reconstruction is based.

gest a real-life acquaintance with the materials and methods of artisanship, in other words, a certain kind of technical knowledge. These references are not always exclusive to one medium or another, but rather reflect more generally on the ways and means of making in the visual arts, of craft and craftsmanship. A portion of this language is metaphorical or at least figurative in nature, and as such not necessarily exceptional or unusual, if more frequent, for appearing in Euripides. The bulk, however, appears to preserve its connections with the workshop, whether acquired through firsthand observation and questioning, in the manner of Socrates, or through the study of professional craftsmen's manuals, now lost, either of which is plausible.

Euripides' attraction to technical language can reveal itself in subtle ways. For instance, in his choices of craft-inspired verbs, whose signification in the context of the sentiment being expressed is by no means obvious, which give pause and require some pondering before comprehension sets in. I would imagine that, in the theatre, language of this sort would stop the alert spectator short, linger in the mind for a bit, temporarily disengaging him/her from the plot. For example, Hippolytus listens as his father, Theseus, who has just discovered his dead wife, responds to the shocking sight with a litany of what Hippolytus considers excessively refined, and inappropriate for the occasion, observations on the shortcomings of being human. The son interrupts the father to tell him so, to no avail. Of interest to us is the verb used by Hippolytus to characterize Theseus' manner of speech, *λεπτουργέω* (*leptourgeō*) ('to do fine work', *Hipp.* 923), a term 'used primarily of artisans', that appears, with metaphorical sense, 'uniquely here in tragedy' [Halleran (2000) 228]. So too, the verb *μαλάσσω* (*malassō*), used of softening leather or metal (*LSJ*, s.v. i, 1–2), is used figuratively for 'to soften, appease' three times in *Alcestis* (lines 381, 771, 1085), as well as at *Or.* 1201. Also in this class, the verb *τεκταίνομαι* (*tektainomai*) ('to do joiners' work, to frame, devise, plan, contrive') is used figuratively at *IT* 951, where Orestes speaks of an enforced isolation at Athens during his trial.

Another common verb which, I would argue, retains its artisanal inflection in Euripides' hands, is *ἀσκέω* (*askeō*) ('work raw materials, form by art, smooth', *LSJ*, s.v. i, 1). I mention two examples where this appears to be the case without question, which I try to capture in my admittedly cumbersome translations. Hecuba accuses Helen of coming out 'after having polished up your figure' at *Tr.* 1022–1023; the sarcasm could not be more heavy-handed [cf. Lee (1997) 241]. The tone is again derogatory when it is used of Helen's sister, Clytemnestra, at *El.* 1072–1073, where Electra berates her mother for primping while her husband is away: 'The woman who, when her husband is away from home, polishes and buffs for the purpose of beauty, write her off as base'. A verb more exclusively

associated with the plastic arts, πλάσσω (*plassô*) ('to mold, form'), occurs on a couple of occasions. The *eidôlon* of Helen is 'fashioned' (πλάσαντος) at *Hel.* 585. In adjectival form it is used as a synonym for 'fake' at *Ba.* 218 (πλασταίσι βακχείαισιν); since antiquity a metaphor for 'fabrication' in a negative sense, 'plastic' is still used this way.¹⁴ Another term for molding is a *hapax* (coinage?) in Euripides: ἔκμακτρον (*ekmaktron*, noun, 'molded impress'), derived from the verb ἐκμάσσω (*LSJ*, s.v. 11), used of footprints (ποδῶν ἔκμακτρον) in the recognition scene in *Electra* (line 535).¹⁵ M.J. Cropp [(2013) ad loc.] considers it a metaphor, an intriguing idea which, in a scene already chock full of intertextuality (*vis à vis* the comparable scene in Aeschylus' *Choephoroi*), would bring the intertextual artisanal overtones into even higher relief. A prominent example of Euripides' use of συντήκω (*suntékô*, 'to melt down, fuse together, weld') and its variants occurs at fr. 296. 2 (*Bell.*), where it has a figurative sense of one bad man happily 'blending' with another. From the same play, fr. 298.1 has another apparent *hapax* ἐγξέση (*egksesê*) ('plane, whittle', according to Collard; 'scratch, scrape, shred in', according to *LSJ*).¹⁶ Apollo advises Menelaus to ease his 'whetted' (τεθηγμένον) disposition (*Or.* 1625) or, as in Kovacs' translation, 'blunt the keen edge of your heart's anger!'.¹⁷ Odysseus is a 'piece of work' (κρότημα), specifically, a product of hammering, at *Rh.* 499, a characterization which most would agree is apt. The καρκίνοσ (*karkinos*, 'pincers') that will metaphorically grasp the neck of the guest-consuming Cyclops at *Cy.* 608–610 might also be mentioned; as the stake to the eye that he is soon to get is enough to do him in, we should not think of an additional form of torture. When at fr. 724 (*Tel.*) (Austin fr. 132) the cure for Telephus' wound is described as 'filings shaved from the spear', a detail that has been considered an innovation of the tragedian's,¹⁸ we may wonder whether Euripides has witnessed the cold-chasing of an actual spearhead.

Euripides' attentiveness to the mechanics of the craft of joinery also falls in this category of language. Forms of the verb ἀραρίσκω (*arariskô*, 'to fit, join together') are too frequent to enumerate. The related nominal form, ἀρμός (*harmos*), a technical term for 'joint', or 'join', of masonry, metal, or wood, is known

14 On Xenophanes' use of *plasmata* to refer to 'fabrications', both verbal and visual, see Ford (2002) 57–58 and 98.

15 Torrance (2013) 25, who sees in the image a metapoetical allusion to metrical feet.

16 In Collard/Cropp/Lee (1995) 117, noting, however, that "Text and translation are insecure".

17 The metaphor is admittedly not uncommon; see *Aes. Pr.* 311 and *Th.* 715; *Soph. Aj.* 584; *Pi. P.* 1. 86 and *O.* 10. 20.

18 Rust or the point of the spear are the cure elsewhere. Cropp in Collard/Cropp/Lee (1995) 51; see also the full treatment of Preiser (2001).

mostly from buidling inscriptions and Euripides.¹⁹ Fr. 472. 8 (*Cret.*) (Austin fr. 79) contains a precise description of the roof of a temple, whose wooden ceiling beams were composed of planks of indigenous Cretan cypress wood laminated together (ἀτρεχεῖς ἄρμούς) with ox-glue. There can be no doubt that, in this 'remarkable' and 'densely allusive' fragment, as its most recent commentators point out, 'Euripides describes skilled carpentry'.²⁰ At fr. 781. 254 (*Pha.*), the same term refers either to the place where the two leaves of a door meet or to the carpentered joints of the leaves themselves.²¹ The former is more likely, since smoke is issuing through the join. At both *Med.* 1315 and *Hipp.* 809 a first glimpse at dead bodies (Jason's and Medea's children and Phaedra, respectively) is anticipated as the door is opened and the space between the two leaves is widened (ἐκλύεθ' ἄρμούς, in both instances). Commentators suggest that, in both passages, the 'fastening' of the door is meant, rather than the 'joint between them'; however, I prefer an interpretation that preserves the key element of joinery.²² We encounter *harmos* again in fr. 360. 12 (*Erec.*), this time, in a simile borrowed from joinery to characterize the status of a person who moves his residence from one city to another: 'just like a bad join having been made in wood' that, in so many words, keeps coming apart at the seams. Translations tend to draw an analogy with some version of our own proverbial expression 'round peg in a square hole'.²³ While capturing the sentiment, such translations, however, leave out altogether the most essential element of the image, the aspect of joinery inherent in *harmos*, which I have tried to preserve in my rendering.

Joinery is also at issue when, in describing a scene of high drama at *Hipp.* 1225, Euripides deems it important to note that the chariot in which Hippolytus is driven to his death is 'tightly glued and closely joined' (κολλητῶν). A Homeric term, which turns up frequently in inscriptions, it nonetheless appears 'nowhere else in tragedy' [Halleran (2000) 253].²⁴ Another rarity in this category is στροφόριξ (*strophigks*, 'pivot, axle, or pin'), used to specify the mechanics of the device on the shield of Polynices (*Ph.* 1126–1127). Torrance explains how this detail reveals that the frenzied horses of the device are in fact automata; she compares the imagery on the shield of Achilles in *Iliad* 18 (which may or may

19 *IG* II² 1666 A and B, *passim*, and 1675. 4, 5; *IG* VII 3073. 116, 122, 142, 152, 161; *IG* II² 463. 40; in tragedy, *Soph. Ant.* 1216.

20 Collard/Cropp (2008) VII.537 and 539; cf. Collard in Collard/Cropp/Lee (1995) 68–69.

21 Diggle (1970) 163; Collard/Cropp/Lee (1995) 237.

22 Mastronarde (2002) 376; Barrett (1992) 317; Halleran (2000) 218.

23 E.g., Cropp in Collard/Cropp/Lee (1995) 159: 'like a peg ill-fitted in a piece of wood'.

24 For the technical application, see also Hodge (1960) 126, with epigraphical references; *contra* Barrett (1992) 387, who sees the epithet as merely 'ornamental'.

not be similarly intended). While Euripides is clearly emulating the ‘technological sophistication’ of Aeschylus’ shield of Polynices (*Th.* 541–542), the younger playwright’s description, according to Torrance, is of an ‘even more technologically complex’ mechanism with ‘an ingenious system of pivots ... close to the shield’s handle’ [(2013) 123–124]. Torrance’s astute characterization of Polynices’ shield as imaged by Euripides once again points up the playwright’s efforts to sustain vividness through deceptively trivial detail; it is easy to imagine how fearsome was the sight of this hero’s shield.

The specificity of Euripides’ command of practical artisanal knowledge is again on display in a striking simile involving an *agalma* at *Hel.* 262–263, not incidentally, another play whose plot revolves around an image, in this case, an *eidôlon* or ‘double’. Helen is lamenting her looks, the *archê kakôn* of so much death and destruction. In a lengthy monologue, and without a trace of vanity, she reveals a secret wish: that the surface evidence of her loveliness were removable, a foolish idea, whose sincerity may be doubted, but pathetic (or bathetic?) in a play in which Helen is portrayed favourably. The passage in question reads: ‘If only I might assume a plainer aspect instead of this beauty, like an *agalma* made pristine again, its colors obliterated’. There has been considerable disagreement concerning whether painting or sculpture is the intended referent for this instance of *agalma*; both have been argued in the past, with the edge more often given to painting.²⁵

Interpretation hinges on the meaning of the verb ἐξάλειφω. *LSJ* lists the technical, practical meanings first (‘whitewash, plaster or wash over’, and so forth), with additional usages following under ‘metaph.’ (‘wipe out in one’s mind, destroy’, and the like). Among its occurrences with artisanal overtones in Euripides, the *Helen* passage most fully sustains and exploits the technical aspects implicit in the term. The presence of *agalma* and the fact that Helen, the most beautiful of mortal women, is thereby the easiest to liken to a work of art, argue for a more expansive interpretation. Scholars have taken up the gauntlet.²⁶ While there is merit in many of these attempts to unpack Euripides’ image, the ideal solution is to think simply of a *polychromed* statue.²⁷

Plato’s *Republic* 4. 420c–d, a passage often cited as a *locus classicus* for the ancient concept of associating polychromy with beauty in statuary, may be of assistance in our interpretation. Plato is concerned with the *appropriate* application of colouring; he nowhere indicates that polychromy is the *only* compo-

25 For a recent recapitulation of the respective arguments, see Allan (2008) 180–181, who appears to prefer painting; see also Xanthakis-Karamanos (1980) 82–83 n. 3.

26 E.g., Dale (1967) 83; Pearson (1903) 87–88; Paley (1872–1880) 142.

27 Cf. Primavesi (2007) 194–195; Kurtz (1985) 608–609; Kannicht (1969) 11.89–90.

ment of beauty in a statue. Hence, if the paint were removed, the statue would still possess a certain degree of beauty. In this state, that is, having been 'wiped clean', the statue would be *less* beautiful, even uglier, but by no means ugly.²⁸ A prime example is to hand in the archaic korai as seen in the New Acropolis Museum in Athens today, with most of their original polychromy faded or entirely lost, yet retaining a sizeable portion of their loveliness, by all accounts. A fifth-century audience fully acquainted with the practice of painting statues could be expected to retain a mental picture of the before-and-after appearances of a white marble statue even if, as seems likely, there were no real-life occasion for the *removal* of polychromy, though the notion is not nearly as incongruous as obliterating a painting, as some have argued is meant in the *Helen* passage. Assuming a polychromed statue is the intended referent allows the rest of the language of the passage to fall sensibly into line. Helen's use of the comparative, ἀϊσχίον, rather than the superlative to characterize her wished-for physical condition, is revealing. She does not desire to be ugly, just less beautiful, in other words, ordinary. A painting would simply be non-existent if it were 'obliterated', whereas a statue would only be less beautiful, more ugly or just 'plain', if stripped of its polychromy. Finally, the emphatic tautology ἀδῖθις πάλιν makes better sense if one thinks in terms of a statue returned to its original or pristine state.

Another unusual term potentially drawn from the sculptor's milieu is encountered at *El.* 305. Electra, lamenting the state of her physical appearance before the stranger who had yet to reveal himself as her brother, draws attention to the filth on her body: 'I am laden with so much grime'. The unusual term πίνος (*pinos*, 'grime') gives Electra's admission a touch of realism with a distinctively Euripidean cast. 'A rare word of obscure origin', according to one interpreter, that became at some point a term for 'surface-deposit' on a bronze statue, whether 'verdigris' (the undesirable green tinge that disfigures bronze statues exposed to salt air or water) or 'patina' (the desirable evidence of aging) (cf. *LSJ*, s.v. i, 2).²⁹ The former sense is found in Plutarch (*Mor.* 395b; cf. 820 f.), in a lengthy digression on statues in the open air at Delphi that is noteworthy for its display of technical expertise. There the author distinguishes πίνος from *both* 'patina' (ἀνθηρόν) and 'rust' (ίός), suggesting that by Plutarch's time it had become a conventional term for a particular kind of corrosion to which statues were susceptible when exposed to the elements over a period of time. Once again, the specificity of the language suggests that Euripides' reputed pas-

28 Cf. Kurtz (1985) 609; Primavesi (2007) 194.

29 Raman (1975) 202–203; cf. Chantraine (1968) s.v.

sion for learning (spoofed at *Ra.* 892–894) encompassed technical or artisanal knowledge as well as other, more cerebral kinds.

In one of the rarest of Euripides' borrowings from the practical dimension of sculpture, at *Andr.* 266–268 Hermione assures her hated rival Andromache that if necessary, she will remove her from Thetis' sanctuary before the arrival of Neoptolemos even if Andromache were 'soldered to a masonry base like a statue'. Curious is the expression *τηκτὸς μόλυβδος* ('molten lead'), a reference to the ring of lead poured around the plinth of a statue to secure it in the bedding of its base, a prosaic bit of information, it would seem. A fourth-century building inscription from Eleusis (*IG* 11² 1672. 176) records payment to a 'lead-pourer'; likely the craftsman who poured lead to secure clamps in architecture was also employed to secure the plinths of statues. The stuff of tragedy? Hardly. Aristophanes makes a joke of the practice in a burlesque at *Ec.* 1108–1111, where an old woman, rejected as a potential sexual partner by a young man, is instead to be turned, at his request, into a 'bronze' statue by being first covered in pitch, then soldered up to her ankles with a lead ring (*κύκλω*), and finally erected over the tomb of her unwilling young 'suitor' in place of 'a lekythos', the funerary monument of choice in the late fifth century. To compound the insult, the living body of the old woman is called a *sēma* (line 1108), not incidentally, the term used in funerary inscriptions of the archaic period, of which a life-sized funerary statue like the one imagined here more properly belongs, chronologically, as the comedian and his audience well knew. In short Aristophanes' joke assumes familiarity with the process whereby monumental statues were attached to their bases, while in *Andromache* there is an added twist, in that a woman demonstrates such knowledge.

Also in the category of technical terminology, in this case, painting, is *HF* 1118, which features an unorthodox use of an unusual verb, *ὑπογράφω* (*hypographō*), its only occurrence in tragedy [Bond (1981) 351–352], leaving commentators, once again, baffled and reaching for an explanation.³⁰ Heracles has recovered his sanity and awakened, finding himself amidst a chaotic scene of whose causes and consequences he is yet ignorant. He both desires an explanation, but at the same time, anticipates with dread what enlightenment will bring; in this state, Heracles haltingly initiates the process of discovery by prodding his father, Amphitryon for information. Suspecting the truth and half hoping to delay the inevitable, the hero couches his interrogation in an evasive periphrasis: 'Tell me if you are about to reveal [literally, 'sketch out'] some new thing that will change my life'. The verb *hypographō* can have a range of meanings,

30 E.g., Wilamowitz (1895) 233–234; Paley (1872–1880) 83; Bond (1981) *ibid.*

one of which has specific relevance to two-dimensional art forms: 'trace in outline, sketch out' (*LSJ*, s.v. ii, 2). The Byzantine scholar Photius (s.v. ὑπογράφεται) glosses: δείκνυται (*deiknutai*) (Naber, 2. 245), merely 'to show or point out', with no trace of the highly specialized artisanal connotations of the verb. However, these connotations are unmistakably intact in the rather frequent appearances of the verb and its cognates in a writer who is but a couple of generations younger than Euripides, Plato (e.g., *R.* 501a, 504d, 548d; *Laws* 803a, 934c). The term also occurs in a technical capacity in a mid-fourth century BC inventory of the temple of Hera at Samos, in a tally of several linen items, one of which is described as: σπληνίσκος ὑπογεγραμμένος ἰππέα; *LSJ* (s.v. ὑπογράφω, ii, 3) translates: 'with an outline sketch (of a horseman) upon it'.³¹ From this evidence it seems certain that the artisanal overtones of the verb were intact at the time of Euripides and must therefore be taken into account in any interpretation of *HF* 1118 [cf. Kurtz (1985) 588].

In the Euripidean image, the 'sketch' to be imagined is not a preparatory drawing or draft but rather an *underdrawing*, that is, a drawing made under (ὑπό) a painting, in order to facilitate the execution of the painting. Preserved examples of such sketches have been found in the House of the Labyrinth and the House of the Small Fountain at Pompeii [Ling (2000) 56–58, with figs. 30–31]. Aristotle (*GA* 743b 24) helpfully explains how the term is used of the painterly process: 'Painters first draw an outline sketch in preparation to paint in the figure with colors'. Further clarification of the practical application of the term occurs in Plato's *Republic* (6. 500e–501c), in an elaborate simile for how the philosopher-kings might go about creating the perfect city 'like a painter', ὑπογράφω is used interchangeably with διαγράφω to refer to the graphic stages that precede the application of colours in a painting, with the finished product (as distinguished from the preparatory drawing) called properly ἡ γραφή at the simile's conclusion (cf. *R.* 548c–d; *Plt.* 277c).

For Heracles in this scene, then, the sketch or underdrawing implied by *hypographô* should not be regarded as an *outline*, since a real-life example need not necessarily start out that way, but as a tentative *beginning* of something whose *telos* or end resides as yet only in the mind's eye of the artist, in other words, as a speculative venture into the unknown. Thus, Heracles, as much as he dreads what he might hear, means to implore Amphitryon at least to *begin* to tell him those things about which the father intimates, that is, exactly what he (Heracles) has done (he has murdered his children), and that Amphitryon should fill in the details later, just as a wall painter makes his *beginnings* by

31 Michel (1900) no. 832, line 24 (*SEG* 45 [1995] 1163).

sketching out his entire composition on the surface before he paints it in. It is well to recall that the process of recognition for Heracles is driven by a series of *visual* clues, the stricken father, the dead children, the crumpled hero, himself. In this spirit, the verb *hypographô*, signifying ‘painting’ for those in the audience familiar with the technical application of this ‘oikeia’ term, serves as a confirmation of the authority of the *visual* clues through which this great tragedy—Heracles’ tragedy—manifests itself, to the hero and to the spectators in the theatre.

Thus far we have dealt with references and allusions to the visual arts that fall into convenient categories, intended to evoke either specific, in some cases identifiable works of art or an aspect of craft, as it is generally understood. The next, and in my view, most fascinating body of textual evidence under consideration does not lend itself so readily to categorization. Its common thread appears to be an awareness of the theoretical or conceptual dimension that lay beneath the most avant-garde art-making of the fifth century, but which is seldom acknowledged by the majority who subscribe to the misguided notion that ‘banausic’ (a derogatory term for artisanal) activity did not then (nor does now?) greatly tax the intellect. It is well to begin with monumental painting, whose loss is somewhat mitigated by the abundant literary commentary that survives to testify in full to the art form’s unique aspirations, accomplishments, and preoccupations.

There can be no question that the painter’s relationship with perceptible reality is radically different from the sculptor’s, as well as from the lay-viewer’s, if such a category of ‘non-professional viewer’ may be postulated. Euripides’ awareness of this essential distinction is demonstrated in one of the most discussed of Euripidean images inspired by the visual arts. In a striking simile, at *Hec.* 807–808, Hecuba invites Agamemnon to take in the full impact of her suffering by stepping back from her person to gain the perspective of distance: ‘... and after stepping away like a painter, look at me and gaze earnestly at what sort of misfortunes I possess’. Recent interpretations of the scene range broadly.³² As insightful and ingenious as they may be, however, most overlook the main point of Hecuba’s appeal: that only by moving away from her will Agamemnon be able to comprehend the extent of her suffering [cf. Barlow (1986) 155–156 n. 28].

My own interpretation is aided by a tip from J. Gregory, who, though her discussion of the passage ignores what I identify as the most critical aspect of the

32 Noteworthy among them, Steiner (2001) 51–52; Mossman (1995) 111; Zeitlin (1994) 142; Mercier (1993) 159.

simile, nonetheless points out a useful contemporary analogy, a passage from Thucydides on Cleon's exhortation to the Athenian assembly in the Mytilenean debate (3. 40. 7). As Gregory observes, Cleon urges his countrymen 'not to yield to pity for the rebels, but rather to fuel their rage by "getting as close as possible to the state of mind of being injured"' [(1997) 103–104]. The vulnerability of the Athenians to evidence of the suffering of others (at least when it bears upon themselves in some way) is documented on record: their reputed response to Phrynichus' tragedy on the fall of Miletus, which set the audience to such uncontrollable weeping that the playwright was fined and future performances of his drama were banned, according to Herodotus (6. 21). It seems, then, that the close-in view is recommended precisely to contrast with the distant view afforded in the theatre, which had in recent history proven problematic. For Cleon, the renewed acquaintance with the evidence of their own past suffering would allow the Athenians to find the reasons they need to decide on a current course of appropriate punishment for the rebellious Mytileneans. Hecuba requests the opposite, the distanced perspective that lends itself to pity (as in the theatre) rather than the close-up view that encourages a level of empathy that leads to introspection and, ultimately, to an unsympathetic, self-serving response.

What differentiates Euripides' scene from Thucydides', however, is the focus on real, rather than abstract viewing, which permits direct entry into the domain of the simile, painting, and thereby raising the viewing stakes in significant ways. Hecuba's appeal is allied with the painter who has constantly to step back from his work in order to apprehend whether or not his two-dimensional facsimile of the third dimension is operative. More naturally, increased clarity of perception is associated with closer proximity. The counterintuitive notion of drawing back, rather than forward to see more clearly may in fact be best comprehended in the context of the painter's milieu. Full clarity for a painter is only possible when he/she takes into account all prospective views of his/her work. In a metaphorical sense the perspective of distance, as of the 'perspective' of time, is thought to have an ordering effect that is impossible to attain if one does not bother to seek out a second opinion, so to speak, by changing one's vantage point, by viewing events through another lens. In short close-up views can be deceptive; the long view has not become proverbial for objectivity without reason.

There may be an additional dimension to the present reading of *Hec.* 807–808. So similar is Plato's language and imagery at *Republic* 6.484c that I am tempted to believe he is referencing this very passage. Plato too adopts a simile with the praxis of a painter, but the similarities do not end there. Socrates' formulation of the civic responsibilities of enlightened philosophers who have

witnessed the world of the forms incorporates language strikingly similar to Euripides: Like a painter, these philosophers must forcefully *direct their gaze away* (ἀποβλέποντες) from the deceptively ‘real’ world *toward* (εἰς) the truth, here apparently equivalent to the perfect form that the painter holds in his mind’s eye, and regard it studiously (ἀκριβέστατα) as they prepare to enact laws that are beautiful, just, and good. The synchronized visual feat of simultaneously looking *away* and looking *toward* that is implied by the doubling of prepositions (prefix ἀπο- and εἰς) and performing this action repeatedly (ἀεί), so vividly rendered by Plato in this passage, cannot have been easy to accomplish, and suggests, as Hecuba does in Euripides’ play, that a certain perspective (= distance) is required for the most accurate portrayal, whatever the painter’s subject. Translations of the Platonic passage frequently miss the subtlety, and hence the point, of the simile.³³

A gnomic statement found at *Ion* 585–586 may also be associated with the *Hecuba* simile [cf. Paley (1872–1880) 48–49]. After a long exchange in which Ion has questioned the news of his paternity and is convinced that Xuthus is indeed his father, the boy observes: literally, ‘Not the same form appears of things being far away and things seen close up’, or, more loosely, ‘Things far away take on a different appearance when seen from close up.’³⁴ Which view is to be preferred is left unclear, but the sentiment is comparable to Hecuba’s. True, the principle could apply just as well to the real world as to the represented world, and there is no overt reference to painting in the *Ion* passage. However, Ion’s remark takes on added resonance if one thinks in terms of the *Hecuba* simile and the difficulties that mimesis poses for the painter, then as now, who seeks to represent the visible world accurately and convincingly, and whose diverse, often ingenious resolutions invite all to take stock of how we perceive the *real* world. In the second half of the fifth century, as the standards of accuracy in two-dimensional mimesis were raised with each new development in the art form, and the limitations of representation were successively overcome, the powers of nature itself might have seemed within mortal reach. Perhaps, as I suspect, many of the challenges thrown up by the *practice* of

33 Most translators, apparently unaware of the habits of a painter, assume that the painterly equivalent to Plato’s ‘model’ (παράδειγμα) is the model (from nature) that the painter has in front of him. This cannot be the case, as any ‘real’-life model would constitute a deceptive, and defective representation of the object. The painter must look beyond nature to the truth of his subject, which, by virtue of his *technê*, resides in his ‘mind’s eye’.

34 Lee (1997) 226, compares *Rh.* 482; Pausanias’ description of the image of Niobe on Mt. Sipylus (1. 21. 3) is also instructive.

mimetic representation in the fifth century, while the art of painting was still developing, came to the attention of and intrigued those inclined to the contemplative disciplines, some of whom would soon be called ‘philosophers’—most conspicuous among them, Socrates—and spurred them to re-evaluate how humans see the real world and on whose terms. If so, it would not be inappropriate to suggest that the painterly discourse to which, if I am correct, the *Hecuba* and *Ion* passages are indebted, might also be considered ‘philosophical’.³⁵

Viewing is once more the theme in fr. 752c (*Hyps.*), this time, of architecture: ‘Look! Shift your eyes toward the sky and fix your gaze upon the painted sculptures in the pediments.’³⁶ Even out of context, the fragment serves as a rare and valuable testimonium about the ancient experience of architecture. The verb ἐξαμίλλησαι implies that the decision to examine the contents of pediments was conscious and that some discomfort was involved in craning the neck and aligning the eyes directly in the face of the glaring sun in order to attain the ideal vantage point for a full visual apprehension of the extravagant spectacle of a decorated pediment. Plato’s parody at *Rep.* 7. 529b (‘throwing one’s head back to gawk at the decorations on the ceiling’) may be compared. C. Marconi’s characterization of the awesomeness of sculptured temples of the archaic period [(2007) 28, 216] is confirmed by later literary sources such as Euripides’ fr. 752c, as well as the famous *Ion* parodos, which more extensively dramatizes the wonder generated by visual inspection of the decoration of a temple (in this case, Apollo at Delphi). The Greek experience of *theôria*, as Marconi observes [ibid.; cf. Nightingale (2004)], ‘meant both going to a sanctuary and beholding’. Thus, observing ritual and apprehending the spectacle of architectural sculpture were intertwined as acts of viewing in the ancient world, in both cases, then, with religious overtones. A.W. Nightingale’s work on ancient *theoria* significantly adds to our comprehension of this important correlative relationship, specifically, her emphasis on the recurring image of ‘looking upwards’ in Platonic philosophy, although she does not focus on its

35 On painting and philosophy crossing paths: Halliwell (2000) 110 n. 30, suspects that Plato’s comments on distance viewing may be connected to the development of *skiagraphia* in painting; cf., e.g., *Sph.* 234b, *Tht.* 208e, *Prm.* 165c, and *R.* 523b, where it is explicitly mentioned. Paley (1872–1880) 49, noting that the general sentiment of *Ion* 585–586 is ‘a favourite metaphor of Plato’s’, adds further comparanda, *Tht.* 165d, *Prt.* 356c, *R.* 602c. Nightingale (2004) *passim* is particularly instructive and supportive regarding the ideas about viewing presented here, though she does not address the parallel with visual culture.

36 The archaic temple of Zeus at Nemea is the referent; Cropp in Collard/Cropp/Gibert (2004) 228, with further references.

implications in visual culture.³⁷ There is a strong possibility, however, that the image in Plato owes something to ancient viewing practices (the direct reference in *Rep.* cannot be accidental) as revealed in these Euripidean passages and that, conversely, Euripides could have a more profound analogy in mind, the emerging practice of 'theoretical' philosophizing, in addition to a mere stroke of realism, in drawing our attention to the upward gaze.

Theory, in the modern sense, was itself no stranger in the studio of the artisan in Euripides' day. A tantalizing hint of the playwright's awareness of this may be revealed at *Hec.* 601–602, where Hecuba observes: 'If someone learns this [i.e., goodness] well, then he knows the shameful, having learned it by means of the canon of the good (καλόνι τοῦ καλοῦ).'³⁸ The sense is unproblematic, even commonplace: learning about *x* is enough to educate one also about its opposite, since one has then a standard against which to judge. The truism appears, for example, in Aristotle (*EN* 1101b30–32) and in Euripides himself at *El.* 1084–1085, though differently articulated [Paley (1872–1880) 553]. Of interest is the formulation καλόνι τοῦ καλοῦ. While there is no justification for construing the substantive τοῦ καλοῦ as anything other than 'good' as opposed to 'evil' in the present context, I wonder whether we are meant to infer as well a contrast between 'beautiful' and 'ugly', since the concepts 'beautiful' and 'good', as well as their opposites, are never far apart in Greek thought. In this case, καλόνι τοῦ καλοῦ might remind the alert theatre spectator of the works of Polykleitos, the great fifth-century Argive sculptor, for which this language bears a unique significance [cf. Pauer (1935) 71].

For the word κανών is one of the most highly charged in the vocabulary of ancient art history and criticism, as it has been associated with the still unresolved 'Canon of Polykleitos', which is mentioned in a number of ancient sources (Pliny *NH* 34. 55 and Galen *de plac.* 5; *de temp.* 1.9, et al.).³⁹ Whether the expression refers to a treatise on proportion or a statue that exemplified the theory put into practice (the 'Doryphoros', known from multiple copies, is the likeliest candidate), or indeed both at once, is not important for the present argument.⁴⁰ Here we are concerned with the possibility that this 'canon' rep-

37 Nightingale (2004) 80–81, who argues that the intention of these passages is metaphorical, however, rather than literal.

38 The lines in which the phrase is embedded are bracketed by both Diggie and Collard (1991), but not by Murray. Kovacs (1994–2002) vol. 11, who also brackets the lines, prints Wakefield's emendation σταθμῶν for ms. μαθῶν.

39 Pollitt (1990) 75–79; for analysis, Pollitt (1974) 14–22 is still valid; for a complete compilation of the sources, see Kaiser (1990).

40 Galen, *de Plac.* 5, is very clear that they are both called 'Canon'; Quintilian, *Inst.* 5. 12. 21, implies the same; Pliny *NH* 34. 55 confuses things, appearing to name the 'Doryphorus'

resented a highly developed aesthetic ideal. Galen, as Pollitt notes, seems to imply that achieving τὸ καλόν was the goal of Polykleitos' system of συμμετρία: 'Whether he [Galen] is quoting a word used by Polyclitus or whether καλός is his own substitute for Polyclitus' τὸ εὔ is, however, impossible to say'.⁴¹ The adverbial substantive τὸ εὔ is purported to be Polykleitos' own formulation, which survives in a fragment (from the lost treatise?) whose enigmatic wording has been endlessly argued: 'beauty/perfection comes about little by little through many numbers'.⁴² Though uncommon elsewhere, τὸ εὔ happens to appear twice in Euripides.⁴³ At fr. 285. 16 (*Bell.*) Bellerophon observes that the least of men is fortunate in one thing: That he does not know that he is bereft of 'well-being'. And again, voiced by the Chorus, at *HF* 694–695: 'For that which is noble and good is in my hymns'. The meaning in each case is clear; it is the oddity of that phrase, and the unique circumstances in which it is paralleled, that commands our attention.

The Polykleiton ideal is readily identifiable, however it was articulated in theory, in the particularized physique and distinctive *contrapposto* stance of the 'Doryphorus'. It enjoyed unchallenged supremacy until Lysippos of Sikyon set out to improve upon it in the fourth century (Pliny *NH* 34.61–65). Throughout Euripides' floruit, the high classical era, it was *the* standard of beauty, perhaps in life just as in art, influencing representations of males as well as females in both two- and three-dimensional media in all categories and scales, major and minor, in the finest work and in the least prepossessing. It (not the Lysippan 'replacement') passed into western art history as the most conspicuous embodiment of the classical style, its presence in a work of art immediately signalling 'classicism'. If, as I have argued throughout this chapter, Euripides' appropriation of the language of craft invariably involves retaining some measure of its technical origins—an essential component of his realism—it is not out of the

and the 'Canon' as if separate statues; he also alludes to the treatise. The best copy of the Doryphorus is in Naples [Stewart (1990) fig. 378].

41 Pollitt (1974) 193–194; with pp. 15, 20 and 88 n. 6, on τὸ εὔ; and more recently, Philipp (1990) esp. 142–143.

42 DK 40B2; for discussion, see Pollitt (1974) 14–22; Philipp (1990) 137–142. I wonder whether there is a relationship between the phrasing of this famous line and a favourite Euripidean axiom, as expressed, e.g., in fr. 236 (*Arch.*): σὺν μυρίοισι τὰ καλὰ γίγνεται πόνοις ('Fine things come about through many toils'); Collard/Cropp/Gibert (2004) 355, ad loc., consider this 'the commonest of commonplaces'.

43 Pollitt (1974) 88–89 n. 6, suspects the phrase is Pythagorean; cf. Aes. *Ag.* 121, 349. All occurrences of τὸ εὔ may not be equivalent; thus, Fraenkel (1962) [1950] 74, ad *Ag.* 121: 'a substantival use not of the adverb but of the old adjective, of which the masculine form survives in the Homeric εὐς'. Euripides' τὸ εὔ, if adverbial rather than adjectival, would then be closer to Polykleitos', on the likelihood that his also is adverbial.

question that the expression *καλόνι τοῦ καλοῦ* at *Hec.* 602 harbours an intertextual allusion to the most renowned formulation of beauty and decorum in the visual arts of Euripides' day, and indefinitely thereafter. As a parting thought, an apparent correlation, however tenuous, with the Platonic/Socratic notion of a universal 'Form' or 'Idea' of beauty, which is at the heart of many of Plato's 'Socratic' dialogues, is hard to ignore.

This last point allows us to reconsider the possible significance of an observation made earlier in the chapter, that is, regarding the frequency of terms for statues, most conspicuously, *agalma*, in the extant corpus of Euripides. It is, in many ways, an archaic word, so its ubiquity in the work of the most modern of tragedians calls for some explanation. I wonder whether there is some connection with the fact that Plato also favours this term, deploying it in conspicuous and rather extraordinary circumstances that reach well beyond its natural semantic range and elevate it to high metaphysical and possibly even cosmological status. For, as Nightingale has shown, Plato includes *agalma* in the terminology applied in descriptions of the 'form' or 'idea' of beauty at *Phaedr.* 251a, 252d, and elsewhere it is associated with the forms more generally (arguably the most challenging semantic role the term would ever be enlisted to assume). In another high-stakes application of the term, the newly created universe is called an *agalma* at *Tim.* 37c, an image which is adopted and developed by the author (Philip of Opus?) of the *Epinomis*, once assumed to be Plato.⁴⁴ In light of this, the term's remarkable appearance in the famous sileni analogy in Alcibiades' eulogy of Socrates in *Symposium* (215b, 216e–217a), where Socrates is said to be full of '*agalmata* of the gods', is particularly suggestive. If Alcibiades' curious choice of image, or some variation thereof, was a standard trope for characterizations of Socrates by his contemporary admirers, then we are within historical striking distance of Euripides. Plato's appropriation of the term and its association with Socrates could suggest that *agalma* underwent a semantic transformation in Euripides' day, enjoying a renewed currency as a kind of *terminus technicus* in developing philosophical conceptualization which somehow came to the attention of the playwright.

In the face of the ample body of evidence provided by the most authoritative of sources, the plays themselves, it remains to consider the question of what might have been the impetus for Euripides, a playwright, to seek to acquire a rather formidable technical knowledge of the *banaisic* arts and crafts at this particular time and place. To phrase the question differently, why did Euripides, alone of the trio of fifth-century tragedians, place such stock in this class

44 Nightingale (2004) 37, 87, 157–168, 172, 180–186.

of imagery? Yes, it can be said to be an essential component of his realism and hence, if I am correct, a sign of his modernism, as well as simply an ingredient of his personal style, and that would seem to be enough to account for its presence. But there could be something deeper at work. If we direct our attention to Socrates, who has made sporadic appearances throughout the chapter, another answer presents itself: philosophy. Not for nothing was Euripides regarded as ‘the philosopher of the stage’ in antiquity (Vitruvius 8, preface, 1).⁴⁵ W.K.C. Guthrie, who was in a position to judge, puts it well: ‘Euripides was one of the most inquiring spirits in an age of inquiry’ [(1966) 237]. Axiomatic paradoxes such as that expressed in fr. 638 (*Polyidus*) and elsewhere in Euripides, ‘Who knows if “life” is to die, while down below, “death” is considered being alive’, would be quite at home in Plato’s Socratic dialogues, and sure enough, are found there, with Socrates at *Gorgias* 492e quoting this already famous line (parodied at *Ra.* 1082, 1477–1478).

Various ancient testimonia attest, in tantalizing snippets, that Euripides and Socrates were kindred spirits in some fashion or another, so as to fuel a legend (almost certainly erroneous) that the two collaborated on plays (e.g., Tel. fr. 41 = *Vita* fr. 2; D. L. 2. 18). Nietzsche took the truth of these stories for granted, so much so that he held Socrates responsible for the ‘death of tragedy’ that, in his view, must be laid at the feet of Euripides [Sansone (1996) 61]. The association is best encapsulated in a neologism in an Old Comedic fragment (Tel. fr. 42 = D. L. 2. 18), which appears as the epigraph to this chapter: Εὐριπίδης σωκρατογόμφοις, ‘Euripides bolted together with Socrates’, in I. Storey’s felicitous translation.⁴⁶ The two proper names are fused together, both literally and in sense, by means of an appropriately craft-based term, which, though not found in Euripides, is certainly Euripidean in feeling: γόμφοις (*gomphos*, ‘bolt, dowel, bond, fastening’). Now, contemporary accounts attest that Socrates visited artisans’ studios and conversed with artisans, learning through elenchic questioning about what they did, why they did it, and what kind of knowledge they were in possession of. Such conversations as those with the painter Parrhasios, the sculptor Clito, and the armourer Pistias, preserved by Xenophon (*Mem.* 3. 10), as well as others alluded to by Socrates himself in Plato’s account of his defence speech (*Ap.*

45 For a full list of the ‘relatively late’ Greek authors who record this epithet, see Hanink (2010) 555 n. 56.

46 Storey (2011) 305; compare the less satisfying *LSJ* translation (s.v. σωκρατόγομφοις): ‘patched up by Socrates’, taking the expression as a reference to the plays rather than the man. Hicks (1972) 149, has ‘And again he [Tel.] calls Euripides “an engine riveted by Socrates”’, adding an unnecessary element (‘engine’) that effectively deactivates the brilliant concision of the image.

22d–e), provided Socrates with firsthand technical knowledge to think with. Moreover, Socrates, like Euripides, was reputed to have once been a practicing artisan, a sculptor of no mean accomplishment (DL 2. 19; Paus. 1. 22. 8); though the testimonia on this are less than convincing, the same reverse logic that was applied earlier to the claims about Euripides' craft background applies here. While we have no ancient documentation of Euripides similarly visiting studios and conversing with artisans, that the two men were regarded as 'bolted together' in antiquity allows for the possibility that their compatibility was owing not just to a meeting of the minds, but that they shared atypical lifestyle preferences as well.⁴⁷

The circumstantial evidence accumulates when Plato's portrait of Socrates in the 'Socratic' dialogues is considered as a whole. D. Sansone puts it well: 'Just as Socrates had lowered the tone of philosophy and had begun to annoy his interlocutors by discussing such trivial matters as cobblers and cooks, so Euripides was criticized by Aristophanes for introducing *οικεία πράγματα* ... into the noble art of tragedy' [(1996) 61]. In the article where this quotation is found, titled 'Plato and Euripides', Sansone collects and assesses Plato's many references to and quotations from the plays of Euripides, toward the end of making a formidable case for a real affinity between 'the philosopher of the stage' (Euripides) and 'the dramatist of the life of reason' (Plato). In concluding, Sansone proposes that Plato, having decided early on to present his Socratic dialogues in literary form, and understanding and respecting the close connections between his teacher and the great tragedian, may have turned to Euripides for inspiration (*ibid.*).⁴⁸

The plot thickens. F. Solmsen has assembled an impressive tally of verbs associated with crafts (most specifically, the carpenter and/or the builder) that appear in Plato's account of creation in *Timaeus* [(1963) 481–482]. It turns out that a good portion of this language is also Euripidean; indeed, we have encountered some of these terms above. Solmsen does not mention this, as it is of no consequence to his argument. However, a comment that he relegates to a footnote is revealing: 'It is amusing to observe how many of the technical activities that Plato associates with the Demiurge and his helpers—turning, digging, cementing, riveting, molding, etc.—recur in the inscriptions

47 Despite the anecdote about the cave in Salamis, where he was said to retreat in order to escape the public (*Vita* 62–64).

48 Nightingale's (1995) intriguing thesis concerning the motivation for the dialogue format, that Plato adopted traditional literary genres as models as a way of defining and legitimating his own enterprise, philosophy, while she does not focus on Euripides, lends further support to this argument.

which embody the financial account for the work done by various craftsmen on the Erechtheum' [Solmsen (1963) 482 n. 48; cf. Nightingale (2004) 177]. I would counter that it is far more than merely 'amusing'. The construction of the Erechtheum, the jewel in the crown of the Periclean building program, was undertaken and completed in the later fifth century, witnessed by both Euripides and Socrates, but not by Plato. In fact, the building inscriptions from the Erechtheum frequently supply parallels for Euripides' extensive range of architectural language, a subject too large to incorporate into this chapter.⁴⁹ If a preoccupation with *oikeia pragmata*—which would certainly include the business of masons, quarrymen, stone-carvers, et al. in the second half of the fifth century in Athens, of all time and places—was shared by Euripides and Socrates, it is fair to suspect that there is a distinct Socratic ring to this language and imagery when it turns up in full-blown philosophical dress in Plato. (Or might there be a Euripidean ring to the language in Plato?) The impact of the *Nachleben* of this 'humble' language and imagery in the hands of Plato cannot be overestimated: *Timaeus* (in Latin) was the Platonic dialogue all through the middle ages and well into the Renaissance, and its ideas infiltrated every corner of theology and philosophy for centuries. To this must be added the equally, if not even more prolonged influence of the Aristotelean adaptation of this language and imagery. Meanwhile the other major Platonic dialogues, many of which feature the craft analogy prominently, would see the light of translation in the late fifteenth century by the great neoplatonist Marcilio Ficino; their subsequent influence in the Renaissance and beyond is inestimable.

A striking, if entirely speculative, picture emerges from all of this: Plato, under the influence of Socrates, falls into the habit of exploiting craft-inspired terms and concepts for purely philosophical ends without necessarily bothering to replicate his teacher's habit of visiting artisans' workshops, for which we have no independent confirmation. That Socrates, on the other hand, did visit workshops and interview the men who worked there we have no reason to doubt, on the solid evidence of his contemporaries and his own words at his trial, according to Plato, who was present. As for Euripides, we have only the evidence provided by the plays and the admittedly dubious biographical tradition that he had personal experience as an artisan. But if these two larger-than-life personalities of the fifth century, each controversial in his own right, were indeed 'bolted together', it is just possible that Euripides fell into the same habit. If Euripides and Socrates 'collaborated' professionally, as the ancients

49 For a full treatment, with specific references, see Stieber (2011) ch. 1.

would have it, or mutually influenced one another in less tangible ways (Sansone would not deny their ‘similarities’ [(1996) 61]), then, to follow up Solmsen’s line of reasoning, the playwright’s effect on the philosopher trickled down to Plato in highly significant ways. If this scenario or something close to it is correct, then Euripides was truly the ‘philosopher of the stage’ and the seriousness with which he regards the *oikeia pragmata* of the world of the artisan is symptomatic of something even more profound than avant-garde dramatic realism or modernity. It anticipates, and participates in, important aspects of the philosophy of Plato. If we may take a cue from Teleclides, with justice our playwright may just as well be said to be Εὐριπίδης πλατωνογόμφοις (‘bolted together with Plato’) for a long, distinguished, occasionally rough, and very much ongoing ride.

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Euripidean Stagecraft

Sarah Miles

1 Introduction

In Bertolt Brecht's *Der Messingkauf* we are confronted with both a theoretical work and a performance text of dialogue and speeches in which five characters discuss the very nature and function of theatre: Actor, Actress, Electrician (representing the audience), Philosopher (filled with new ideas for theatre) and Dramaturg, who acts as a negotiator between all parties.¹ This idealised Dramaturg is represented by Brecht as a necessary and mediating figure in the creation of contemporary drama, who must combine knowledge of the craft of performance drama, awareness of the restrictions of her/his performance medium together with a creativity that strives to push those restrictions and dramatic conventions in new directions for the benefit of its audiences. This dynamic of craft, creativity and collaboration is something which the three extant Attic tragedians, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides would all have required in their role as διδάσκαλος (producer/instructor) for the plays which they composed. In this chapter it is Euripides' artistic creativity combined with his skill and knowledge of the performance medium of Greek tragedy that we shall explore in order to gain an understanding of Euripidean stagecraft. First, we shall discuss a number of views on Euripidean stagecraft, ancient and modern, before analyzing examples from Euripides' plays that display some of the key features of Euripidean stagecraft. This includes a closer analysis of scenes from Euripides' *Electra*, *Helen*, *Bacchae* and *Heracles*. We shall explore Euripides' use of props and costume, the openings of his tragedies and his prologues, the element of surprise and misdirected entrances, and the use of the *mêchanê* (crane) and *ekkyklêma* (wheeled platform). It is a combination of these elements which works to create the full power of Euripidean tragedy intended for performance.

In the study of stagecraft, one acknowledges that words are not the only means of conveying emotion and meaning, or of providing emphasis and creat-

1 Luckhurst (2006) provides a recent summary discussion of *der Messingkauf*; Willett (1965) remains the key English translation.

ing visual/acoustic effects in a dramatic work. Euripides created a singing and dancing musical extravaganza mixed with powerful speeches, debates and fast-paced dialogue (using stichomythia and antilabe),² horrifying extensive narratives of unseen (offstage) action, moments of silence and pauses of great power, sudden revelations, surprise resolutions, all contained within the theatrical space of the orchestra and in front of the wooden *skênê* building. The *skênê* building provided a door offstage and supported the *mêchanê* and *ekkyklêma*. Characters come and go from the audience's view with purpose and power in their performance, and this action is punctuated with regular episodes of choral lyrics. The signification of a tragic character's action or inaction speaks to an audience without recourse to words. A prop has the power to change its meaning before our eyes without altering its form. This is the power of stagecraft and it lies at the heart of the workings of all Greek tragedy.

Part of a playwright's fame in his own lifetime was due to his stagecraft, which produced a united performance of action, speech, song and dance: this is the full expression of the written words in a dramatic text. The introduction of a prize for actors ca. 449 BC is evidence enough that the performance of the drama was highly valued in fifth-century BC Athens, as are the subsequent revivals of fifth-century tragedy including Euripidean drama from the fourth century BC onward.³ Therefore, to understand the success of Euripides the tragic dramatist we have to analyze his powers of stagecraft. Exploring Euripidean stagecraft aids interpretation of Euripidean tragedy in its performance contexts, but this work is not unproblematic, and it also allows us to explore the limitations and problems with interpreting tragic drama when text is our main source of evidence for the individual Euripidean tragedies.

It is indeed vital to acknowledge the huge gaps in our evidence for discussing the phonic, visual, action-based, spatial and musical elements of tragedy. We do not have direct evidence for the costumes, stage-design, props, masks which Euripides would have used in his first performances during the fifth century BC.⁴ There is discussion about the deployment of the three actors.⁵ There is

2 Stichomythia sees changes of speaker with each metrical line; antilabe involves changes of speaker within a metrical line.

3 Nervegna (2007) 14–42, Stewart (2017), and Lamari in this volume provide recent discussions of reperforming fifth-century drama in antiquity.

4 Ley (2007) 268–285 provides a recent comprehensive survey of stage effects in Greek drama. Powers (2014) is an excellent guide to the study of Greek drama as performance and to the methodological issues at stake.

5 Liapis/Panayotakis/Harrison (2013) 6–8 surveys scholarship on the use of role doubling in tragedy.

an endless debate about the form and look of the theatre of Dionysus: was the orchestra circular or rectilinear? Was there a stage at all in the fifth century BC? How many doors were in the *skênê* building?⁶ The texts of Greek tragedy are not autographs, nor do they contain stage directions,⁷ rather the texts have received interpolations, additional notations and excessive interpretation from the Hellenistic period down to our own. A host of publications has added to our understanding of tragedy in performance,⁸ which can be used alongside older studies of stagecraft.

This earlier scholarly focus on stagecraft in Greek tragedy has revolved around identifying conventions of Greek drama and then exploring the variations and exceptions. Taplin's work has been key in developing the study of stagecraft in all Greek tragedy, particularly through his 1977 monograph *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus: The Dramatic Use of Exits and Entrances in Greek Tragedy*. The significance of Taplin's method was to rely on the text as the primary indicator of stage-action: '... my claim is that all, or at least most, stage actions of significance can be worked out from what we have.:'; '... the significant stage instructions are implicit in the words ... the words accompany and clarify the action.:'; 'the plays themselves are the paramount evidence for their own staging.'⁹ This sparked debate about the problems of analyzing stagecraft, with Goldhill warning against circularity (text used as evidence for stagecraft and stagecraft used to interpret text) and Wiles arguing against both Goldhill and Taplin's text-based focus.¹⁰ However, Taplin's approach has provided huge benefits for our understanding of the formal elements of tragedy, for example: '... the placing of exits and entrances in relation to the songs marks the articulation of the structure and is an integral element in the division of the

6 E.g. Wiles (1997) 51–52 favours a circular orchestra; Csapo (2007) a rectilinear orchestra; Wiles (1997) 63–66 rejects the use of a stage in fifth-century BC performances; Hourmouziades (1965) discusses the use of stage, *skênê* building and stage doors in Euripides; Csapo/Slater (1994) provides an excellent collection of the relevant ancient sources in translation.

7 Taplin (1977b) examines the evidence for ancient stage directions.

8 E.g. Rehm (2002) on spatial dimensions; Wiles (2007) on masks as sacred objects transforming the actor into the role; Wyles (2011) on tragic costuming; Chaston (2010) on props; Pöhlmann/West (2001) on the papyrus fragments of Greek music; Battezzato (2013) on the relationship of tragedy and dithyramb; Swift (2010) for the significance of the choral lyrics within Greek tragedy.

9 Taplin (1977a) 2, 28, 434.

10 Goldhill on circularity (1986) 280 ff., (1989) 176–180; Goldhill (1989) was a direct response to Wiles (1987); Wiles' later work (1997) 5–14 critiques Taplin but does less in responding to Goldhill.

basic parts'.¹¹ In addition, the work of Mastronarde, contemporary with Taplin, revealed the conventions of speech and action while sharing Taplin's view that all significant action is marked in the text. Mastronarde's more recent discussion of the Chorus in Euripides also uses this approach to clarify its role as part of the dramatic unity in Euripidean tragedy, a contentious issue of past scholarship, particularly where Euripides is concerned.¹²

It is all the more remarkable, and shocking, that we lack a definitive and comprehensive study of Euripidean stagecraft in classical scholarship. Halleran (1985, 2001) remains the fullest treatment on the model of Taplin [cf. Seale (1982) on Sophoclean stagecraft]. Halleran explored the numerous ways that the entrances of characters are prepared for by other characters, some entrances are built up, others are complete surprises. Entrances after strophic songs are not announced unless they are part of a 'moving tableau', e.g. Andromache's arrival in *Troades* on a chariot.¹³ The variety of ways that characters make their way on and offstage is a credit to the dramatic skill of Euripides. Both Taplin and Halleran were indebted to the earlier work of Hourmouziades (1965) who had analyzed the function of the *skênê* building and the uses of the central door with a focus on reading Euripidean drama alongside evidence for the problematic physical evidence for Theatre of Dionysus.

Scholars have often remarked on a self-conscious 'staginess' which they detect in Euripides' dramas, e.g. Michelini: 'The multiform volatility of the Euripidean theatre undermines even the dramatic illusion of reality; the plays are "stagey," commenting metatheatrically on their own status as artefacts'; or Seale: '... the staginess of Euripides is well attested in scenes which range from the sordidly realistic to those of ceremonial splendour'.¹⁴ Euripides has received plenty of criticism for perceived weaknesses in his stagecraft,¹⁵ connected to his use of the *mêchanê* and his use of surprise entrances, and these views owe a debt partly to Aristotle's *Poetics*, as we shall see shortly. However, Halleran's work in analyzing Euripidean stagecraft has helped to explain their dramatic function, just as the work of Spira (1960) had long ago argued that the appearance of gods on the *mêchanê* was an integral part of Euripidean and Sophoclean drama.

11 Taplin (1977a) 59.

12 Mastronarde (1979) 3, (2010) 88–152.

13 Halleran (1985) 5–32.

14 Michelini (2002) 52; Seale (1982) 12.

15 See e.g. Mastronarde's recent summary of Euripidean criticism (2010) 1–25.

2 Aristophanes and Aristotle

Extant Euripidean drama covers a period of nearly forty years in the history of performance of Attic tragedy, during which the role of the Chorus in both Sophoclean and Euripidean drama is seen to reduce. Therefore, it is also important to consider developments observable from Euripides' early to late tragedies. In this we are helped by contemporary Greek comedy, which engages and responds to Euripidean performance on the comic stage. Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (425 BC) already observes the power of Euripidean costumes when Euripides appears onstage in charge of his costumes and props, while Dicaeopolis rifles through these in search of a suitably pitiful role (he settles on Telephus).¹⁶ By *Thesmophoriazusae* (411 BC), Aristophanes can deconstruct Euripidean plot structures which involve rescue (μηχανή σωτηρίας, *Thesm.* 209), such as *Andromeda* and *Helen*, in order for Euripides' relative to be rescued, and Aristophanes chooses yet again to incorporate scenes from *Telephus* (438 BC) involving the use of disguise. Even in the distorted world of Aristophanes' *Frogs* (405 BC) the debate between Aeschylus and Euripides is concerned with all aspects of a tragic performance: Euripides comes under comic attack for using formulaic prologue speeches, the style and content of his lyrics and monodies, his ability to connect with his audience by presenting slaves, women and the everyday in tragedy. *Peace* (421 BC) draws our attention to Euripides' use of the *mêchanê* as Trygaeus flies to the gods on a dung beetle in a parody which deconstructs Bellerophon's journey via Pegasus in Euripides' *Bellerophon*. Strattis' *Phoenissae* fr. 46 (early fourth century BC) again focuses on the *mêchanê* and it contains the god Dionysus suspended precariously on the *mêchanê* reciting the opening lines of Euripides' *Hypsipyle*.¹⁷ Euripides' association with the *mêchanê* is certainly one which comic poets recognized. In addition, Platon could make reference to a water-carrying Euripidean female character in his comedy *Skeuai* (*Props*) fr. 142, to which we shall return later in our discussion of *Electra*.

Aristophanes was a contemporary of Euripides, but moreover he was himself a dramatist, and therefore amid the comic distortion and exaggeration it is worth taking seriously Aristophanes' eagle eye, when it comes to conventions of Euripidean stagecraft. Aristophanes and other comic poets draw attention to Euripides' use of: costume and props, costume as a means of disguise, his

16 Macleod (1983) 47–48 provides the insightful suggestion that the costumes were stored and presented as papyrus rolls.

17 Miles (2009) 182–189.

monodies, and his use of the *mêchanê*.¹⁸ Comedy provides a source of evidence which was reacting to those very first performances of Euripidean drama (and at times blowing stage raspberries at it). Therefore, comic drama, despite its exaggerated and ebullient style, is an important source on Euripidean stagecraft in order to reconstruct how the text which we now study would have been presented in performance.¹⁹ Similarly, it is important to acknowledge the continuing success of some dramatic conventions associated with Euripides when they re-emerge in the comedies of Menander in the late fourth century BC, e.g. the use of divine prologue speeches, the plot patterns of recognition, rescue and reunion.²⁰ In the following section we will explore further connections between Euripides' *Electra*, Platon and Menander and between *Bacchae* and Aristophanes.

Aristotle's *Poetics* is an equally important source on Euripidean stagecraft, but only if used with care, because Aristotle grew up amid post-Euripidean and post-Sophoclean tragedy, and so his introduction to tragedy would have been via revivals of this Old tragedy (i.e. new productions not under the control of the original tragedian). Aristotle would have had access to new productions of the rising stars of fourth-century BC tragedy: Astydamos II, Carcinus II, Chaeremon and Theodectes, whose work Aristotle cites.²¹ Therefore, Aristotle's view of tragedy had been shaped by later dramatists and more recent productions. Aristotle's *Poetics* has received criticism for its focus on the text of performance, and for playing down the visual element (*opsis*), something which Taplin observed had influenced scholarship and damaged the study of Aeschylean stagecraft, and we can add Euripides to the casualty list.²² Aristotle (*Poetics*, 1461b19–21) does criticize the sudden entrance of Aegaeus in *Medea* and the unpleasant characterization of Menelaus in *Orestes*, but these are balanced by earlier praise of Euripides' *IT* and *Cresphontes* for its use of recognition scenes (*Poetics* 1454a2–9). Most famously, Aristotle declares Euripides to be τραγικώτατος in response to critics of Euripidean plots.²³ Aristotle argues that these plots which end in misfortune for the protagonists are a sign of their strength, and it is then that he declares: σημείον δὲ μέγιστον· ἐπὶ γὰρ τῶν σκηνῶν

18 Miles (2009) 110–111, 117–125, 182–198.

19 Miles (2018) expands upon this through a study of the *Phoenissae* comedies of Aristophanes and Strattis which respond directly to Euripides' own *Phoenissae*.

20 Gutzwiller (2000) provides a general treatment; Omitowaju (2010) discusses links between *Samia* and *Hippolytus*; Petrides (2014) 124–129 surveys connections between *Dyscolus* and *Electra*.

21 Hanink (2014) 197–211 discusses Aristotle's references to fourth-century BC tragedians.

22 Taplin (1977) 24–25; Appendix F, p. 478.

23 Heath (2013) 92 discusses the apparent contradictions in Arist. *Poet.* 1453a–1454a.

καὶ τῶν ἀγῶνων τραγικώταται αἱ τοιαῦται φαίνονται, ἂν κατορθωθῶσιν, καὶ ὁ Εὐριπίδης, εἰ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα μὴ εὖ οἰκονομεῖ, ἀλλὰ τραγικώτατός γε τῶν ποιητῶν φαίνεται. ‘There is a very good indication of this; for on the *skênê* and in competitions such plays appear the most tragic, if they succeed, and Euripides, even if he does not manage other matters well, is nonetheless seen as the most tragic of poets’ (Arist. *Poetics*, 1453a26–30). Most notably, Aristotle’s label of Euripides as τραγικώτατος follows directly from remarking on the effect of tragedy *in performance*, as seen in his reference to: ‘on the *skênê* and in competitions’. Aristotle too recognized the power of Euripidean stagecraft.

Moreover, at *Poetics*, 1455a22–23 Aristotle provides further acknowledgement of the importance of stagecraft when he discusses visual imagination: δεῖ δὲ τοὺς μύθους συνιστάναι καὶ τῇ λέξει συναπεργάζεσθαι ὅτι μάλιστα πρὸ ὀμμάτων τιθέμενον ‘It is necessary to construct plots and to work in the speech by placing them right before one’s eyes.’ Aristotle explains this statement using the example of Carcinus’ character Amphiarus (from an unknown play). Aristotle notes that this character made the audience angry, and Aristotle faults Carcinus for staging a scene which the tragedian had not visualised first as performance, and which, therefore, confused his audience. The *Poetics* shows a clear understanding of the significance of stagecraft in creating successful tragedies in performance.²⁴

3 Visual Tricks: Props, Costume and Metadrama

The texts of Euripidean tragedies frequently give prominence to props and costume, and we will start by analyzing some Euripidean props, before exploring props and costume in Euripides’ *Electra*, and then turning to other uses of Euripidean costume, including a closer look at a scene from *Bacchae*. Overall, props and costume are a means for the dramatist to command the audience’s visual attention, and thereby add meaning to the words involving the prop or costume so that both word and image act as a way of focusing audience attention. Whereas in film media a director can edit her/his work to force the viewer’s gaze, a dramatist must use a combination of visual and verbal cues to achieve this effect.²⁵

24 For further discussion of Aristotle, *opsis* and staging see Rosenbloom/Davidson (2012).

25 Pudovkin (1976) 86 argued that editing is what makes film art; Kubrick in interview expanded on this [Philips (2001) 199]: ‘acting comes from the theatre, and cinematography comes from photography. Editing is unique to film. You can see something from different points of view almost simultaneously, and it creates a new experience’.

One of the most startling Euripidean props appears at the end of *Bacchae*: the head of Pentheus, wielded by Agave on the tip of a Dionysiac *thyrsus*. In this scene the prop of Pentheus' mask provides the focus of attention. Agave's character undergoes an incredible emotional shift from delusional pride at holding a lion's head to the realization that it is the head of her son Pentheus that stares back at her. This is the most gruesome of recognition scenes in Greek tragedy, and a typical Euripidean perversion of a technique he commonly used in other plays to reunite characters (e.g. *Ion*, *Electra*, *IT*). By comparison, the unexpected discovery of a letter hanging from Phaedra's dead hand mid-way through *Hippolytus* is less horrific in appearance than Pentheus' head in *Bacchae*, but its repercussions are just as destructive. This letter is not something Aphrodite's prologue predicted, but it marks the moment of Theseus' curse and therefore Hippolytus' doom. As well as dramatic power, props can carry the weight of characterization, as seen in *Ion* where Ion's broom introduces us to the son of Apollo (technically a demi-god) as a temple-sweeper clearing out bird excrement from Apollo's temple at Delphi. This prop is also an ironic marker, a sign that speaks louder than any words about the problematic relationship between human and divine, a theme which will be developed in the drama. The limited power of props as recognition tokens is explored towards the end of *Ion* where they provide only a partial resolution and reunion for Creusa and Ion, mother and son. Ion demands more than tokens to prove his parentage, and it takes the surprise entrance of Athena to confirm Apollo as his father. It is notable that the failure of the recognition props to resolve the action leads to Athena's involvement, which draws our attention back to the troubled relationship of mortal and divine at the very close of *Ion*. Lastly, it is worth noting the role of Heracles' bow in *Heracles* for the way that it symbolizes the journey of the protagonist through the play: Heracles first enters holding the bow as hero, he uses it for vengeance to save his family and then as a madman to destroy them, he awakens to find his bow and arrows scattered on the floor, and finally he reclaims the bow in the closing scene with Theseus. Halleran notes that once Heracles accepts his sorry fate, he agrees to continue carrying his bow (*Her.* 1378–1385).²⁶ However, we first met the bow in the debate between Lycus and Amphitryon, in which Lycus characterizes it as a weapon of cowardice. In this play the prop too gains its own characterization based on the range of attitudes towards it. As was the case with Pentheus' mask in *Bacchae*, the bow in *Heracles* takes on ever-shifting meaning even as its visual form remains

26 Halleran (2002) 92.

unchanged.²⁷ All these pivotal props work in conjunction with the text for an impressive variety of effects: to characterize, to create and release dramatic tension, to enable plot progression, as well as emphasizing wider issues of the play.

The example of Euripides' *Electra* provides a way for us to explore in more detail the use of props by Euripides, as well as observing how Euripidean props can work as metadramatic signals across plays. This tragedy is visually distinctive from the outset: the prologue speaker reveals the setting is rural countryside before identifying himself as a lowly farmer, but most shocking is his revelation that he is married to Electra, daughter of Agamemnon, former ruler of Mycenae. Following the *parodos* there is a constant stage presence of a Chorus of country women, all of which gives a visual distinctiveness to Euripides' *Electra*.²⁸ This is in contrast to Sophocles' *Electra* which is set before Agamemnon's palace and Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* which is set at Agamemnon's tomb and then the palace. However, Euripides' character of Electra is represented straightaway as a poor, countryside dweller. This reduction in her standing is emphatically represented by her shorn head, dirty costume and her use of a water-jar, all of which are on display from the moment that she steps before the audience, but it is the water-jar that receives particular attention. Electra's entrance occurs just after the revelation of the prologue speech that she is married to the farmer, and her opening words are:

ὦ νύξ μέλαινα, χρυσέων ἄστρον τροφέ,
 ἐν ἧ τόδ' ἄγγος τῷδ' ἐφεδρεῦον κάρῃ
 φέρουσα πηγᾶς ποταμίας μετέρχομαι

Night, black night, nurse of golden stars,
 night in which I carry this pitcher on my head
 as I go to fetch the waters of the river's streams²⁹

EUR. *El.* 55–56

The first visual image of Electra with water-jar is reinforced by her words, so that both speech and action draw attention to her misfortune. It is this opening image of Electra that could become fixed in the minds of the audience, and, it

27 It is worth noting that the bow of Heracles in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* is also a prominent prop in the play, but it has received far more scholarly attention than Euripides.

28 Barlow (1971) 17–42 discusses the role of the Chorus in setting the scene in Euripidean tragedy.

29 All translations of *Electra* are from Morwood (1997).

appears, in the mind of the speaker of Platon's *Skeuai* (*Props*) fr. 142 who makes mention of a Euripidean water-carrying character, which most probably refers to this Electra.³⁰ When Orestes first lays eyes on Electra he too draws attention to the water-jar prop by which he even mistakes Electra for a slave (*Eur. El.* 107–110). The prominence of this prop is seen as Electra then launches into her first monody, and at the start of the second strophe she again draws attention to her prop:

θές τόδε τεύχος ἐμῆς ἀπὸ κρατὸς ἐ-
 λούσ', ἵνα πατρὶ γόους νυχίους
 ἐπορθοβοάσω.

Let me take this pitcher from my head
 and put it down so that I can cry out to my father
 in the early morning laments which I pour forth all night.

EUR. *El.* 140

Euripides purposefully incorporates the water-jar into her monody and as part of the choreography for her song! The prop is as much a part of her characterization as her costume. Additionally, the water-jar acts as a metadramatic tool, a way of referring beyond the Euripidean drama to other artistic works. This is seen in the entrance of Electra (*El.* 55) making reference to her prop, which alludes to Electra's entrance in Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* 84–87 where Electra speaks of the liquid libations that she is carrying to Agamemnon's tomb (τάσδε κηδείους χόας), as noted by Cropp.³¹ Euripides' *Electra* is recognized as making purposeful links to Aeschylus' *Choephoroi*, which narrated the same episode of the Orestes myth.³² The water-jar prop acts as one of the early indicators of Euripides' conscious debt to Aeschylus' *Choephoroi*. The most well-known example of this is Euripides' reshaping of the recognition scene between Orestes and Electra, which rejects the tokens that Aeschylus' characters used to identify one another only for the validity of Aeschylus' tokens to be confirmed by the recognition that does take place (cf. *Eur. El.* 515–584 and *Aesch. Cho.* 164–234). Euripides both situates himself in the company of his mighty predecessor, Aeschylus, and then differentiates his dramatic technique by means of offering a more convincing recognition token, Orestes' scar. Again, we see that Euripides brings about the allusion to another

30 Miles (2013) 183–200.

31 Cropp (1988) 103.

32 E.g. Torrance (2013); Michelini (1987) 181–230.

drama through the use of props and costume, using visual dramatic cues in addition to textual allusion. It is clear that the water-jar of Electra forms a key tool for characterization and dramatic effect in all three tragedians, as seen from the ironic use of the jar prop at Sophocles' *Electra* 1113–1142 where Orestes pretends to carry his own ashes in an urn and a whole scene develops around Electra's lament over this urn. The prop here takes centre-stage for a brief moment and misdirects Electra's attention away from the real Orestes.³³ Unfortunately there is no secure dating for either Sophocles' or Euripides' *Electra* so that the connection between these texts must remain hypothetical. However, it is clear that each tragedian leaves a memorable image of Electra and her stage-prop, and it is notable that Euripides lingers over her poverty-filled existence and the allusions to the past tragedy of Aeschylus as ways to create a truly Euripidean Electra. Furthermore, this Euripidean water-jar finds an afterlife in Menander's *Dyscolus*,³⁴ and it provides an example of Menander drawing on Euripidean drama and stagecraft, which we noted earlier.

As we turn our focus toward Euripides' use of costume, there is a distinctive feature which deserves a brief survey: the number of Euripidean characters who change their costume in the course of the play and/or use it as a means to deception and disguise within the dramatic action. This is something which both Aristophanes' *Acharnians* and *Thesmophoriazousae* emphasized (discussed above). For example, in *Bacchae* (405 BC) Dionysus' prologue informs the audience that he has appeared in mortal disguise, and yet by the end of the play his final entrance is that of a god, most probably on the *mêchanê*. Euripides emphasizes Dionysus' transition from mortal to immortal presence in the play by means of his use of costume and stage machinery, i.e. his stagecraft. The explanation of a disguise at the start of the play for the audience's benefit is a trick Euripides also used in his *Telephus* (438 BC). *Bacchae* also sees Pentheus change from male to female attire in the play. In *Heracles* Megara and her three sons enter the palace to put on clothes in preparation for their death at Lycus' hands (*Her.* 327–335) and re-emerge in their new costumes awaiting their execution. However, these visual signals seek to mislead the audience; Heracles arrives unexpectedly and rescues them, while notably ordering the children to discard the funeral wreaths from their hair (*Her.* 562). However, they remain in their funeral robes. It is, in fact, the maddened Heracles who murders his wife and children in the house, the visual image of which is left ingrained

33 Chaston (2010) 131–178 provides a recent discussion.

34 Petrides (2014) 124–129 provides a recent discussion.

in the mind of the audience when both killer and victims are then displayed onstage (*Her.* 1028–1034). This was most probably via the *ekkyklêma*, and the children would still be in their funerary robes, which now hold a very different resonance. Their costumes foreshadow the tragic outcome for the characters. In Euripides' *Helen* (412 BC) we have the astonishing scene of Helen, the most beautiful of women, cutting her hair, bloodying her face, wearing black instead of white (*Hel.* 1087–1089) and thereby altering her costume in order to help fool Theoclymenus into allowing Helen and Menelaus to leave Egypt. In addition, Menelaus must pretend to be a shipwrecked sailor and announce his death to Theoclymenus. However, Menelaus requires no costume change since the tattered rags in which Menelaus entered, originally the emblem of his strife and suffering, will now double for his new role as shipwrecked sailor, and thereby his costume too plays an important role in their escape (*Eur. Hel.* 1079–1082). Even Theoclymenus comments on his pitiable appearance and offers him fresh clothing (*Eur. Hel.* 1281–1284). Helen too then urges him to change his attire just before he leaves the stage (*Eur. Hel.* 1296–1297). And sure enough, when Menelaus re-emerges onstage, he is now fitted out in full armour, with shield and spear in hand (*Eur. Hel.* 1376–1377). Menelaus' status is returned to him via his costume change as the audience witness Theoclymenus being outwitted. It is ironic that Menelaus' new costume is no disguise but makes his identity as a Homeric hero unmistakable to all (including the audience) with the notable exception of the Egyptian Theoclymenus, whose failure to recognize Menelaus is costly. The attention given to costume and costume-change in these scenes is exceptional, and the interplay between costume and identity is wholly Euripidean.

Bacchae has been noted for its metadramatic features by e.g. Segal, Foley and Seidensticker, and this is due in part to Euripides' use of costume as a means of disguise.³⁵ *Bacchae* contains both Dionysus disguised as mortal and Dionysus dressing Pentheus as a woman in order to spy on the Theban women. It is to this latter scene that we shall turn briefly in order to observe the metadramatic nature of its manipulation of costume in connection with Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*. Seidensticker has noted the general associations of *Bacchae* with comedy, including the excessive use of stage directions which is reminiscent of the practice of Greek comedy. However, Seidensticker observes that the humour of *Bacchae* takes on a darker, sinister colour as the play progresses.³⁶ Meanwhile Foley has drawn out several connections between *Bac-*

35 Segal (1985), (1997) 215–271; Foley (1985); and Seidensticker (1978), (1982).

36 Seidensticker (1982) 124–125.

chae and Aristophanic comedy through the figure of Dionysus: 'As to the god who presides over both comedy and tragedy in the dramatic festivals, he dissolves and transcends the boundaries between comic and tragic genres'.³⁷ Both Foley and Zeitlin have touched upon the scenic parallels between the dressing of Pentheus and the dressing scene in *Thesmophoriazuae* in which Euripides dresses his relative in order to infiltrate the women's Thesmophoria in secret.³⁸ There is a clear structural parallel between the Euripidean and Aristophanic scenes, but, as we shall shortly explore, the parallels between the two run much deeper, and suggest that Euripides' *Bacchae* of 405 BC was purposefully engaging with Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* of 411 BC on a metadramatic level. We can compare our earlier discussion of Euripides' use of metadrama in his *Electra* in connection with Aeschylus.

The costume change occurs offstage in *Bacchae* and onstage in *Thesmophoriazusae*, but there are a remarkable number of parallels between the two scenes: (1.) Both Pentheus and Euripides' relative don female disguise to enter a female-only ritual space secretly; (2.) when both men appear in their new female attire, their costume affects their behaviour, with Euripides' relative and Pentheus each concerned that their costume sits correctly (*Bacch.* 925–942; *Thesm.* 255–263); (3.) Pentheus and Euripides' relative are treated as sacrificial victims being led to the slaughter. Foley discusses this in *Bacchae*,³⁹ while in *Thesm.* Euripides' relative has a peg stuffed in his mouth like an animal for slaughter and he makes sub-human noises (*Thesm.* 222, 231); (4.) Euripides' relative initially scoffs at the effeminate dress of Agathon, just as Pentheus originally mocks Dionysus' appearance (*Thesm.* 130–145; *Bacch.* 453–460); (5.) both characters will have their disguise revealed once it is announced that there is an intruder in the midst of the women (*Thesm.* 584–651; *Bacch.* 1079–1113). These points of comparison draw out neatly how Dionysus' role in *Bacchae* has an affinity with that of the comic character of Euripides of *Thesmophoriazusae* since both act as tragic dressers for their respective actors: Pentheus and Euripides' relative. This makes more poignant the end of *Bacchae* where the smiling Dionysus looks on as the head of Pentheus is held aloft for all to see. Euripides has the last laugh in this drama as we watch the dismembered Pentheus, with all his affinities to the comic character of the relative, paraded on the stage in a tragic distortion of the comic ending of celebration and rejuvenation.

37 Foley (1985) 232.

38 Foley (1985) 225–228; Zeitlin (1996) 402.

39 Foley (1985) 208 ff.

Here Euripides plays Aristophanes at his own game: whereas Aristophanes had rendered comic elements from Euripidean drama in *Thesmophoriazusae* of 411 BC (e.g. the parodies of *Telephus*, *Helen*, *Andromeda*, and the use of quotations from e.g. *Alcestis* and *Hippolytus* out of context), Euripides in 405 BC reclaims as tragic and serious a scene of changing costume and cross-dressing which is commonly associated with comedy.

4 Tragic Openings, Shock Tactics and Stage Mechanics

Euripides pays great attention to the set-up for his dramatic action, as can be seen from his choice of openings for his tragedies. Supplication scenes mark the start of *Andromache*, *Heraclidae*, *Supplices*, *Heracles* and *Helen*, which led Hourmouziades to remark that this is one of Euripides' favourite openings.⁴⁰ In these plays the stage-altar goes on to hold a pivotal role in the action, and so Euripides prepares for significant stage action from the very opening of the drama. Euripides also favours the use of prologue speeches to begin his dramas, whose formulaic openings are deconstructed in Aristophanes' *Frogs*. However, beneath the comic distortion of Aristophanes, Euripidean prologues reveal a great variety in their use, e.g. Helen's prologue turns into its own defence speech in *Helen*; *Electra's* prologue sees the humble farmer provide the shocking revelation that he is married to Electra (discussed above). Euripides also frequently uses a divine prologue which works to create a different level of knowledge between audience and mortal characters (both Chorus and actors) throughout the majority of the drama.⁴¹ This allows for dramatic irony to play a full role, e.g. in *Hippolytus* and *Bacchae* since the audience are gifted with a higher level of understanding in the play compared to the mortal characters. It is notable that the point of resolution in the drama comes at the moment when the audience's level of understanding is brought into alignment with the mortal characters, thereby creating a symbiosis of audience and actor knowledge by the end of the tragedy. This is often triggered by a divine epiphany at the end of the drama, which is a common device in Euripidean tragedy.⁴² Euripides has crafted the dramatic action always with his audience in mind. And the gods play a key role in this via their presence, absence and stage action. Mortal impotence and

40 Hourmouziades (1965) 49.

41 Euripides' *Alcestis*, *Hippolytus*, *Troades*, *Ion*, *Bacchae* and *Hecuba* (Polydorus' ghost).

42 Euripides' *Andromache* (Thetis), *Bacchae* (Dionysus), *Electra* (Castor), *Helen* (Dioscuri), *Hippolytus* (Artemis), *Ion* (Athena), *Orestes* (Apollo), *Supplices* (Athena), *IT* (Athena), [*Rhesus* (Musa)].

immortal dominance are an aspect which Euripides chooses to illustrate in a number of his plays, and he chooses to do so via the stage action, the arrangement of the stage events and the placing of these events at moments of key dramatic moments in his plays.

This awareness of the audience is also visible from Euripides' repeated use of surprises and shocks in his dramas. Taplin notes that surprise entrances of characters is a common device used by Euripides, and one that he, and many other scholars finds questionable: 'We may find his use of it objectionable or unsuccessful, but we cannot deny that it is calculated and deliberate'.⁴³ The most famous example of this, which Taplin also cites, is Evadne's surprise entrance at the end of *Supplikes* on rocks above the temple (*Suppl.* 980), and her sudden suicide by leaping onto the funeral pyre of her son as her father Iphis looks on in horror. The power of such a scene to shock, rather than just surprise an audience is evident from scholarly reactions, such as Taplin's. Its success as a scene relies on the live-action performance and communal response of the crowd, but it certainly should not be counted as a failure based on the text alone. In the following section, we shall discuss the power of another surprise entrance, this time of Lyssa and Iris in *Heracles*.

Halleran observes that Euripides can use misdirection to mark the sudden entrance of characters, which he calls 'surprises of location'.⁴⁴ This is where a character draws attention to one place onstage, only for action to kick off elsewhere unexpectedly. This misdirection, is a classic trick of conjurors, and Euripides makes full use of its power to surprise and wrong-foot an audience, e.g. *Ion* 1545–1552: Ion is about to enter Apollo's temple when Athena appears above it; *Medea* 1313–1318: Jason orders the doors of the palace to be broken down only for Medea to appear in a chariot; *Orestes* 1561–1572: Menelaus tries to open the gates as Orestes appears on the parapet above. Euripides' use of misdirection in these scenes relies on the use of the wooden *skênê* building behind the orchestra and the attention of both audience and Chorus is directed to the central door only for a character to appear elsewhere. For an audience who had now been watching tragedies for several generations it is not perhaps surprising to find Euripides trying out new techniques to keep his audience on their toes. If tragedy became too much of a hostage to convention, then the art-form would die its own stage-death.

All Euripidean tragedies employ the *skênê* building and its door to represent an entrance to a part of the offstage world, unseen by the audience. Segal

43 Taplin (1977a) 11.

44 Halleran (1985) 42.

notes that in *Alcestis* Euripides plays around with the presentation of male and female space on and offstage through his presentation of Alcestis and Admetus.⁴⁵ A similar but more complex patterning is found in *Hippolytus* concerning the nurse and Phaedra vs. Hippolytus and Theseus. The only occasions when the audience are given a glimpse of this offstage world is when the *ekkyklêma* is used to reveal a scene to the audience. This is often accompanied by the announcement that the doors have been opened e.g. *Hipp.* 808; *Her.* 1028–1034. Aristophanes (*Ach.* 407–408 and *Thesm.* 96, 265) describes wheeling in and out Euripides and Agathon, making its association with tragedians clear. The other piece of stage machinery of which Euripides made use is the *mêchanê* (stage crane). Our main evidence for this comes from comedy, where it is used in paratragic scenes, which we discussed earlier, and this helps us identify Bellerophon's flight on Pegasus in Euripides' *Bellerophon*. In *Heracles*, the audience refer to the arrival of Lyssa and Iris 'over the house' (*Her.* 817), which indicates an elevated entrance, although how the two gods arrived simultaneously is not clear. However, Euripides' use of the crane is most associated with the divine epiphanies, which we have noted are so common at the end of his tragedies. Some scholars have been sceptical about its use,⁴⁶ but it is now common to accept that Euripides in the fifth century BC employed the *mêchanê* for what later is known as θεός ἀπὸ μηχανῆς.⁴⁷ Aristotle, *Poetics* 1454b1 criticizes the sudden entrance of Medea at the end of *Medea* and he notes that she enters via the *mêchanê*. The more cynical idea that tragedians introduce a god on the crane when they are out of ideas is found both in Plato, *Cratylus* 425d and the fourth-century BC comic dramatist Antiphanes, *Poiesis* fr. 189, whereas Menander's *Theophrorumene* fr. 5 notably marks a character's sudden entrance with ἀπὸ μηχανῆς θεὸς ἐπεφάνης 'You've turned up like a god upon a crane!'. This evidence for use of the *mêchanê* for divine epiphanies is from the fourth century BC, but in combination with that from fifth-century BC comedy, it suggests that gods appeared on the *mêchanê* at the end of tragedies. And this is a feature we see Euripides developing and using repeatedly in his tragedies.

As well as stage machinery, the static scenery and *skênê* building could also be used by Euripides in the action of the play. In *Heracles* and *Bacchae*, the backdrop of the palace of Thebes fragments and is destroyed, thereby acting as a demonstration of divine power of the mortals in the dramas. In *Bacchae* the palace of Thebes is hit by an earthquake and crumbles reflecting Dionysus'

45 Segal (1993) 84–85.

46 E.g. Taplin (1977a) 444–445.

47 Mastronarde (2010) 181. Halleran (2002) argues for the use of the *mêchanê* in *Hippolytus*, although he acknowledges that its use is unprovable.

escape from Pentheus (*Bacch.* 585–607). Goldhill discusses the debate in scholarship over whether the destruction of Pentheus' palace was actually staged, although this ignores the fact that different productions could stage the play in different ways; the potential for staging these scenes is clearly in the text.⁴⁸ In *Heracles* the physical collapse of the house follows Lyssa's exit into the house where she drives Heracles to madness (*Her.* 891–908). The significance of her movement inside is contrasted with that of Iris back to the gods. Here the collapse of the palace is a visual display of Heracles' mental collapse. In both tragedies the destruction of the palace of Thebes emphasizes the transient power of even a royal palace once a divinity is present within. This symbolic role for the scenery is also at play in *Troades*, where Talthybius and some Greek soldiers appear at the end with torches in hand to complete the destruction of Troy. Hecuba and the Chorus of Trojan women sing one final lament as they observe the city crumble and burn, and as they too lose their remaining identity in connection with their homeland of Troy at the play's close (*Tro.* 1256–1332).

5 The Power of Stagecraft in *Heracles*: Character Motions and Emotions

Heracles' final words to his children as they are ushered inside the house in Euripides' *Heracles* hold a deadly irony:

ἀλλ' εἴ', ὀμαρτεῖτ', ὦ τέκν', ἐς δόμους πατρί·
καλλιονές τ' ἄρ' εἴσοδοι τῶν ἐξόδων
πάρεισιν ὑμῖν.

Come now, children, accompany your father into the house.
Since entrances are more beautiful than exits for you.

Her. 622–624

In this tragedy which tells of Heracles' return, madness and murder of his wife and three sons, entrances onstage are certainly more blessed than exits for these three children. The children enter the house in joy at reunion with their father, but their final exit from the house will be as corpses, presumably via the *ekkyklēma*, with their delirious father tied to a fallen column. The use of the

⁴⁸ Goldhill (1986) 278–279, (1989) 178–179.

Greek words for ‘entrances’ and ‘exits’ lends a metadramatic quality to the lines, drawing attention to the significance of exits and entrances in this tragedy. Heracles ends his speech with a brief celebration of human’s love for their children. The final phrase: *πάν δὲ φιλότεκνον γένος*. ‘Every race is child-loving’ (*Her.* 636) will come back shortly to haunt the audience as we will witness the fallout from Heracles’ deranged actions when he slaughters his children. This is but one example of the intricate interplay of text and action in Euripides’ *Heracles*. As Halleran rightly notes there is a pronounced connection in this tragedy between the stage actions of characters entering or leaving the stage and the progression of the plot: ‘the three *peripeteiai* of this play are all marked by surprise entrances’.⁴⁹ These changes of fortune are firstly Heracles’ joyous arrival which enables him to save his family from Lycus, secondly Lyssa and Iris’ divine entrance which heralds disaster for the human characters, and lastly Theseus’ unexpected appearance, who offers consolation and a form of rescue for Heracles, now a broken man. The staging of this play is, indeed, remarkable and this will be the final focus of this chapter since it provides examples of the aspects of stagecraft discussed above, which work together to display the impressive qualities of Euripidean stagecraft. We begin with a discussion of what have been perceived as problems with the play, followed by an analysis of how Euripides combines the changes in character motion and emotion to create a drama whose action lives and breathes the tragedy of its human characters.

The sudden, shock double-entrance of the goddesses Lyssa and Iris mid-drama has received criticism, largely due to its uniqueness in extant tragedy, but its dramatic power has also been accepted. As Wolff observes: ‘This abrupt appearance of deities in the middle of the play is a very unusual structural feature, an enactment of disruption’.⁵⁰ Their entrance works as a second divine prologue, which initiates the subsequent course of dramatic action, and it bears little resemblance to the divine epiphanies at the end of the tragedies which focus instead on revelation of truth and closure. We can compare the surprise entrance of Menelaus in *Helen* which acts as a second prologue speech since Helen and the Chorus have just vacated the stage. The positioning of this divine entrance may be unique to *Heracles*, but as Bond notes, the use of sudden reversals is ‘an exciting feature of the later plays of Euripides’,⁵¹ and Bond cites Peleus in *Andromache*, Hermes in *Antiope*, Amphiarus in *Hypsipyle*, the Old man in

49 Halleran (1985) 90.

50 Sleigh/Wolff (2001) 5–6.

51 Bond (1981) xvii.

Cresphontes as further examples. However, the sudden reversals are also evident in earlier Euripidean dramas, e.g. the arrival of Heracles in *Alcestis*, or the appearance of the letter in Phaedra's hand which is an unexpected catalyst for the events in the latter half of *Hippolytus*.

In *Heracles* Euripides' experimentation with dramatic form is most clear to see from the way that he manipulates character movements *in combination with* the changing emotions of those characters. In this play entrances and exits appear to mean life and death for its characters, but the audience's expectations are always thwarted. Firstly, Megara and the children enter the house to put on clothes in preparation for their execution, and their change in costume would mark the sombre mood of the scene, but, as we noted earlier, the costume is a false signal because their entrance onstage does not result in their immediate death. Instead we have the surprise appearance of Heracles, who instructs his children to discard the funeral wreaths before he enters the house and kills Lycus. However, the subsequent arrival at the house of Lyssa and Iris foretells the death of the family at the hands of Heracles in the very place and at the very time when they should be safe at last. Heracles then exits the house on the *ekkyklêma* while tied to a pillar and surrounded by corpses, following his maddened acts of murder. Once Heracles' mind is restored, he is immediately intent on suicide, only to have this aim thwarted by the unexpected arrival of Theseus. The number of surprise entrances in this play is quite exceptional, and every entrance changes the course of the drama from one set of emotions to another: we start with the dread and fear of Heracles' family as suppliants, and then we experience their doom and futility as mother and sons exit the house in new attire in preparation for their death at the hands of Lycus. There even follows a choral ode in the style of a *thrênos* sung of Heracles' exploits as if he were already dead. The next transition to joy and hope is caused by the arrival of Heracles and then the choral ode to youth, which Halleran sees as functioning like an encomium.⁵² The Chorus and Amphitryon then express triumph and satisfaction as Lycus receives his comeuppance and there are shrieks heard from offstage as Heracles kills Lycus.⁵³ However, the arrival of Lyssa and Iris over the house instils fear and awe in the Chorus. This soon turns to horror and shock as Heracles murders his family, with the cries of Amphitryon heard offstage—a staged echo of Lycus' murder earlier. The messenger even informs us of the surprise entrance of Athena within the house (*Her.* 906) heralded by an earthquake which destroys the house (*Her.*

52 Halleran (1985) 87.

53 Cf. the cries of the children in *Medea* which evokes a very different response from characters, Chorus and audience.

905). Finally, in an incredible spectacle Heracles appears on the *ekkyklêma* tied to a pillar surrounded by their corpses. Brought from the house in his guilt, self-pity and sorrow, Heracles realizes his actions and his thoughts turn to suicide. However, the final emotional turn of this tragedy is towards an inkling of hope with the arrival of Theseus and his conversation with Heracles hero-to-hero.

These sudden, constant tonal shifts place a great weight on the actors to move between these extremes of emotion and to carry the audience with them. The part for the actor of Heracles in particular requires great flexibility. Euripides had created a gift of a part for an actor to display his skill in movement between such extreme emotional registers: from joy at reunion with his family at last, to shock at their situation, determination to avenge them, and then his return from madness to lucidity and the unending horror at his actions in murdering his family. Lastly, Heracles reaches acceptance of his situation through the wise words of a fellow hero, Theseus.

It is with the final exit in *Heracles* that we shall end, since it reflects the unity of Euripides' drama conceived in the text but requiring performance to bring out its signification. As Theseus leads away Heracles to Athens, Heracles calls himself 'a little boat in tow', ἐφολιίδες (*Her.* 1424),⁵⁴ just as when he led his children into the house (*Her.* 631–632) he called his children 'little boats in tow' τούσδ' ἐφολιίδας. Whereas before, Heracles did the leading, now he is childlike in his reliance on Theseus for leadership and protection. As Bond notes: 'The combination of visual image, rare metaphor (see on 631), and conclusive reflection (see on 633–636) can hardly be coincidental'.⁵⁵ The use of the image at the end of *Heracles* recalls the earlier scene in which Heracles notes how his children cling to his clothes for safety and protection. At the very end of the drama Heracles recalls his last moments with his children, and places himself in their vulnerable position. Our mind may also recall the earlier stage-action of Heracles, a father shepherding his children offstage, and now contrast it with the shell of a hero who processes behind Theseus. The visual and verbal echoes work together to create a moment of profound dramatic power. Quite appropriately for the close of an Athenian drama Theseus is here seen symbolically to take the place of the mighty Heracles as the greatest hero of them all as he leads the hero offstage.

Euripides' stagecraft is inventive and creative within the conventions of Greek tragedy. He uses the powers of staging drama to communicate with audi-

54 Halleran's translation (2002) 90.

55 Bond (1981) 415.

ences about the very nature of Greek tragedy, its relationship to the sibling genre of comedy and its heritage in the works of Aeschylus as we saw in the discussion of *Electra*. Euripides presents a rich and complex picture of the dramatic functioning of Attic tragedy in the late fifth century BC, and draws full use from his Chorus, actors, stage space, props and costume change, disguise, and the *mêchanê* to bring his work to life, and these are just some of the qualities that make Aristotle quite right in his claim that Euripides is a dramatist τραγικώτατος (most tragic).

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Euripides and the Aesthetics of Embodiment

Nancy Worman

At a crucial juncture in Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the play that dramatizes Agamemnon's decision to sacrifice his daughter in the interest of reaching Troy, the Greek leader confronts his loss. 'Go away', he says to the loving and emotionally attentive Iphigenia, 'it's not good for young women to be seen'. But then he continues,

First give me a kiss and your right hand,
for you will be away from your father for too long.
Oh breast and cheeks! Oh gleaming hair!
What a burden the Phrygian city and Helen
have become for you.—I stop there, for
a swift flood springs from my eyes as
I touch you. Go inside!¹

IA 679–685

The scene as a whole has a distinctly unnerving intimacy to it, as Iphigenia greets her father eagerly, exclaiming that she desires to embrace 'fatherly breast to my breast' (πρὸς στέρνα πατρὸς στέρνα τὰμά, 632) and that she longs for his gaze (ποθῶ γὰρ ὄμμα δὴ σόν, 637). The latter phrase suggests that his face is turned from her; and soon she is worrying over his shifting facial expressions, which include grimacing and incipient tears (648–650). Within the conventions of Attic tragedy, however, Iphigenia's close watch on her father's expressions takes place in language alone, since the characters are masked. As so often in this unique dramatic genre, powerful directive language tells the audience how and what to see, effectively overlaying the visible action with a linguistic scrim. What then unfolds in tandem with this intimate reading of paternal expressions ('expressions') and gaps between the warm if troubled greeting and Agamemnon's sending his daughter inside is a space of jour-

1 φίλημα δοῦσα δεξιάν τέ μοι, / μέλλουσα δαρὸν πατρὸς ἀποικῆσειν χρόνον. / ὦ στέρνα καὶ παρῆδες, ὦ ξανθαὶ κόμαι, / ὡς ἄχθος ὑμῖν ἐγένεθ' ἢ Φρυγῶν πόλις / Ἑλένη τε, —παῦω τοὺς λόγους· ταχεῖα γὰρ / νοτὶς διώκει μ' ὀμμάτων ψαύσαντά σου. / ἴθ' ἐς μέλαθρα.

neying, as the daughter's leaving-taking (in 'marriage' / sacrifice) overlays the father's campaign to fight the Trojans. And it is this that intervenes at the end of the scene, as the two embrace with Troy and Helen between them, pressed between her breast, cheek, and hair and his tear-flooded eyes and hands.

Euripides' peculiar aesthetics have long encouraged scholars to ponder his purported realism as well as his strategies of alienation and disorientation, which many have characterized as 'contradictory', 'ironic', or 'tasteless'.² And while Sophocles' heroes (or the few that survive in their dramatic details) emanate a strong sense of implacable physicality, Euripides' central characters tend to be elusive, changeable, or askew in their temperaments and sensory presences. Indeed, Euripidean tragedy often deploys distinctive aesthetic markers of tragic embodiment to highlight contact and mingling with bodily surfaces (including of corpses) by those proximate to them.³ In this way certain of his scenes amplify—usually to surreal, paradoxical, and/or artificial effect— aesthetic and affective intimacies at the edges of the human (esp. skin/clothing, living/dead, human/object), between or among characters and by extension between characters and audience.

Some aspects of Euripides' emphasis on aesthetics clearly point to art forms, especially sculpture and painting—of the three canonical tragedies his plays show the greatest attention to visuality.⁴ But the ways in which the plays situate bodies at the intersection of enactment and figuration (as when Iphigenia and Agamemnon clutch 'Helen' and 'Troy' between them) often also foreground bodies as odd assemblages—that is, as combinations, extensions, or layerings of bodies and other entities.⁵ In Euripides' tragedies aesthetic details and staging of bodies taken together reveal a tendency to experiment with tactile, intimate boundary dissolving—body-to-thing, human-to-other, male-to-female, and so on.⁶ The attention paid in the plays to the 'feel' of such mergings also dovetails with affectivity as an embodied emotional dynamic that in drama cir-

2 See Micheleni (1987) 3–51 on the earlier background; Goff (2000) and Torrance (2013) 1–6 on later developments. Contrast Wohl (2015a) on Euripidean politics and the tortuous manipulations of his plots.

3 For the metatheatricity of some of the moves I have in mind, see, e.g., Zeitlin, (1980); Segal (1982); Wright (2005); and Torrance (2011), (2013).

4 Euripides was reputed to be particularly interested in painting; of the dominant dramatists he is by far the most attentive to intimate visual detail. On contemporary painting culture and Euripides, see O'Sullivan (2008); for his imagery of craft, see Stieber (2011).

5 For a radical reworking of human subjectivity in relation to such assemblages see Deleuze/Guattari [1980] (1987) 79–82, 115–117, 398–403.

6 See Wohl (2005) on this type of gendered 'becoming' in the *Bacchae*.

culates among perceivers on and off the stage.⁷ Thus, for instance, when Electra in the *Orestes* leads the Chorus on tiptoe up to the bed of her brother, who is sweating with the Furies' fever, she and they draw in close by means of body-to-body progressions, from the footfall to the piping voice. While the scene is palpably disturbing for its central focus—the sweating and encrusted body of Orestes—it also suggests a gently protective atmospherics that the plotting will soon dislodge and dismiss.

Many extant plays of Euripides share this uniquely intricate mode of tragic representation, emphasizing visual and tactile effects especially in the form of the close relationships between or among bodies, between live bodies and bodies as odd objects or corpses, and between bodies and clothing. Whether this last is marked as mourning or marriage garb or as feminine decoration, the body's accessories, intimate handling, and layers or edges come into view as demonstrative gestures and metaphors fashion these into vibrant indicators of a character's own dangerous or wrong disposition or her menacing at the hands of others. Usually the stuff of realism, in Euripidean drama depictions of physical intimacy, of clothing or its absence, and human-object or living-dead relations instead serve as disturbing flashpoints for the confluence of vanity and violence, aesthetics and death, sentimentality and necrophilia, or other similarly charged combinations.

While theorists of theatre semiotics have gone some way toward indicating how such complexities work, they have not attended much to the triangulation of semiotic reference in relation to sense perception, affect, and what I would call the materiality of signs. By this I mean the particular ways in which scenes in ancient drama highlight figurative images in combination with or layered over mimetic movements and materials, including blocking, deportment, contact, and costuming—making for a ramifying, layered, and multisensory experience.⁸ In the *Orestes* scene, for instance, the circle of Chorus members step lightly forward, enjoined by Electra to breathe (i.e., sing) 'like the delicate reed of a pipe' (σύριγγος ὄπως πνοᾶ / λεπτοῦ δόνακος, 145–146), while Orestes lies panting (cf. ἐμπνέει, 155) as if in response. Close tracking of the enactment

7 Cf. again Deleuze [1970] (2001); Sedgwick (2003); Gregg/Seignworth (2010).

8 Cf. Mueller (2014) on stage objects in tragedy; while she does not engage with signification in this way, her attention to materiality serves to highlight some aspects of the representational effects I am emphasizing here. On the complexities of semiotic reference in drama, see Ubersfeld (1977); Serpieri (1978); Elam (1980); Issacharoff (1989); Aston/Savona (1991); Fischer-Lichte (1992). For a revisionist theorizing of theatrical ways of meaning that advances a materialist semiotics, see Knowles (2004); while the book does not engage with more recent work on materialism and thus focuses more on new historicism and cultural materialism, it is useful for its promotion of 'thick' readings.

indicated by the play script and the theatricality of figurative imagery, as well as its material or ‘material’ extensions (e.g., the reed pipe, as both metaphor and musical accompaniment), can help to nuance our understanding of the ways in which tragedies sort out aesthetic inflections in relation to embodied identity.⁹ This general orientation drives my focus on scenes in Euripides’ tragedies that stage these identifiers as semiotic materializing. Then signs with weighty symbolic resonance distil out onto the dramatic stage (as with ‘piping’ and piping) and form concrete sites for closeness, conflict, and aesthetic intensities.

Many of Euripides’ plays suggest a special interest in bodily coverings. Early and late plays offer chilling examples of attire and its threat: witness Medea’s gift of poisoned dress and diadem, which fires up and melts those whose skin it touches; or the maenad costume in which Dionysus dresses Pentheus in the *Bacchae*, which leads directly to his dismantling and death.¹⁰ As these scenes indicate, clothing has its own unique emotional and sensory extensions—not only as a catalyst of group dynamics but also as encouraging or demanding connection, touching, and handling among central characters.¹¹ Add to this that it serves as a second skin, as the body’s extension or prosthesis and thus as a border of sorts, where human and object fall together or, conversely, where they part ways and expose the human as denuded object—as a leaky container, say, or an ogled statue.¹² When this involves direct mimesis (i.e., manipulation of clothing and bodies onstage), characters or the Chorus frequently urge attention to the visual display and the spectatorial gaze. When, in contrast, a messenger (who is almost always male) describes a body’s coverings, narrating what remains offstage, the speaker tends to highlight his own perceptions—especially his viewing—as a model for sensory and emotional reaction, so that his narrative parallels and even contends with tragic enactment for control of the multisensory experience.

9 From my perspective, these must be taken together if we are to apprehend fully the material quality of dramatic signification—that is, as indexical (i.e., as concrete entities, postures, etc. indicating themes, concepts etc.) and viewing itself as sensuous and mimetic, as a kind of ‘feeling with’ [see Marks (2000)]. For a sustaining of attention to the semiotic in such affective encounters, see Brinkema (2014).

10 Cf. Heracles’ ‘flaying’ (really a poisoning and melting of his skin) in Sophocles’ *Women of Trachis*.

11 This is true even when materials are used successfully to manipulate others to one’s advantage (e.g., Medea, Helen, Dionysus). And whether coverings attach to female or male bodies, a vulnerability that is frequently decorative tends to linger around them, so that they are somehow feminizing (e.g., Heracles, Pentheus). Cf. Segal (1990), who regards the manipulation of clothing as signalling the mutability of human experience.

12 Cf. Bennett (2010) 4–6.

Many plays of Euripides foreground such dynamics, including *Andromache*, *Electra*, *Phoenician Women*, and *Suppliant Women*, offering a range of ways in which they are meaningfully pegged to the dramatic plot, as well as being less familiar territory than *Medea* and *Bacchae*. Their vibrant combinations of effects erupt at isolated moments that pivot around a distinctively dressed or undressed body (or both, in sequence), one that is female, usually *in extremis*, and near to the dead. In all of these plays, intimate handling, clothing or coverings, and disturbing eye-hand coordinations signal violence and vulnerability, pain always somewhere in the making. Further, the fact that these dynamics are prominently focused on female bodies suggests that the charged handling of them is central to Euripides' aesthetic schemes. This is, I should note, very different from the ways in which Sophocles depicts embodiment, at least in the extant plays, where most (although not all) bodies that matter are male.¹³

In what follows I take up first a pair of plays of Euripides that foreground the undressing (real or envisioned) and destructive impulses of barely married female characters left to their own devices, who have erotic needs and a thirst for vengeance (*Electra* and *Andromache*). I then look at two plays that highlight dress and proxemics that either in concert or counterpoint together aestheticize parent-child intimacies, female self-sacrifice, and a fixation on death (*Phoenician Women* and *Suppliant Women*).

1 Vanity and the Urge to Violence

Among the extant plays of Euripides, the two families that most dominate have distinctive connections to dress and bodily proximities: the house of Atreus and the family of Oedipus. I take up the Atreids in the first part of this section and the Thebans in the second section. Aeschylus likely influenced the prominence of the imagery of clothing and contact in this blighted clan: witness the vibrant and tense dynamics of the 'carpet' scene between Clytemnestra and Agamemnon, which Orestes later highlights as involving Agamemnon's own cloak; or those of the face-off between Clytemnestra and Orestes, as she offers her bared breast to his sword point. However, that may be, all of Euripides' dramas involving members of this family turn at some point around bodily adorn-

13 That said, Euripides' representational patterns do dovetail at one point with those of Sophocles, in which characters (especially sisters) liken themselves to corpses and/or seek to lie with them in death (e.g., Soph. *Elec.* 1151–1152, 1165–1167, *Ant.* 73–74; Eur. *Or.* 1147–1154). See Worman (2015).

ment and/or states of undress as vain, perverse, or violent gestures. Clytemnestra and Helen most frequently trail onstage suggestions of vanity and luxurious adornment, and Helen's daughter Hermione follows suit. Electra and Orestes are an odder pair, their charged proxemics and manipulations of dress suggesting 'unnatural' or violent intimacies.

1.1 Electra

Euripides' *Electra* is focused, in a manner that the play's actions increasingly reveal as perverse, on details of physical status. She is obsessed with clothing and bodies, living and dead, a preoccupation that also carries an erotic tinge, so that these and similar connotations closely attend her emotional and sensory orientation. She draws attention to her ragged dress when singing with the female Chorus and to her near nakedness when talking to outsiders; she also characterizes herself as trapped in a 'deadly marriage' (θανάσιμον γάμον, 247), since Aegisthus has consigned her to a farmer in the Argive hinterland (cf. 31–39).¹⁴

Electra thus appears less nobly suffering than wrongly oriented, her priorities distorted almost from the moment she emerges onstage. Situated at the intersection of erotics and brutality, her character repeatedly expresses overly intense and often misdirected reactions to proximate bodies and sensations. All of this intensity comes across as aimed at sex or violence: she flinches from and then engages provocatively with male strangers, seems eager to die by the sword, and takes up a bitter flirtation with the dead. She devises the plot of the murder of Clytemnestra, enticing her perversely with Aegisthus' body and her own, and she plays an intimate role in both her mother's and Aegisthus' deaths: Orestes offers her the latter's body for cruel sport;¹⁵ and in the end she places her hand next to Orestes' on the mother-killing sword.

From early on in the play *Electra* spends her time despairing of her loss of status, which in this play so full of suggestive incongruities manifests itself primarily as a loss of the proper toilette and clothing. Although she tells the Chorus of Argive women who come to invite her to a celebration of the local cult of Hera that her heart is not fluttered by fancy parties and golden necklaces (οὐκ ἐπ' ἀγλαΐταις ... / ἐπὶ χρυσέοις ὄρμοις), she also urges them to consider whether her dirty hair and ragged clothes (πιναρὸν κόμαν / καὶ τρύχα τὰδ' ἐμῶν πέπλων)

14 On the political cast of her situation, see Wohl (2015b); on her 'corporeality', see Segal (1985). Zeitlin ([1970] 2003) 262–263 notes that many scholars have commented on the fact that her appearance is her choice, despite how she deplors it; Zeitlin quotes, among others, Grube (1941) 301, who attributes this choice to 'the perverse pleasure she takes in enlarging upon her poverty'. See also Torrance (2013) 17–18.

15 As the Chorus says Clytemnestra offered Agamemnon's to Aegisthus, cf. 164–166.

are suitable for the daughter of Agamemnon (175–189). They offer to lend her a dress (190–192), but she demurs that she is too much in mourning, wasting away, an outcast from her father's halls.¹⁶

Despite her impoverished and filthy aspect, when she sees Orestes and Pylades moving toward the house, she immediately assumes that they have come with violent intent. She warns the Chorus of women to run away and declares that she will head toward the house for refuge. When she approaches, Orestes seeks to detain her, touching her; Electra reacts violently, crying out and beseeching him not to kill her. He claims a right to this hands-on greeting and begs her to not to run off, to which she responds with a suggestive reference to his physical strength (220–227). The intimations here of violent or sexual touching draw attention to a new mutation of this body's edge, adding a further 'dirty' cast to it: the body that Electra has emphasized as so literally degraded she now imagines threatened with additional debasement.

Orestes then tells Electra that he is a friend of her brother and brings news of him. They exchange information, first passing over in brief some conventional details of her appearance, including her wasted body and closely clipped hair (239–242). They pause to dwell on her odd marital circumstances, since she is wed but still a virgin, untouched by her poor but noble husband (246–263). Soon, however, Electra returns them to the topic of her appearance, asking that he report on her awful clothes, her filth, and the roof under which she works to weave her own clothing, lest her body go naked and stripped (ἢ γυμνὸν ἔξω σώμα κάστερήσομαι, 304–308). Her language is pointedly exaggerated, while the vision of her naked body is a peculiar thing for her to offer a stranger. Her provocative peddling of this body suggests frustration and wilful deviance, as she treads the edges of the familiar and the normative. In fact, Electra repeatedly conjures such images, as she describes her mother lounging on embroidered pillows, while even her Persian slaves are finely dressed and fastened. She claims that Aegisthus' physical presumption mirrors her mother's, as he commandeers her father's chariot and clutches his sceptre with bloody hands (μυαίφονοισι χερσί, 314–322).

In the ensuing action, she continues to tread the margins of sex and violence, especially when she vaunts with a frustrated eroticism over Aegisthus' corpse.

16 In fact, the plot has already suggested a reason that she should be worried about her appearance: before she sings her monody announcing who she is, Orestes thinks her an attendant or slave (cf. 107, 110). Cf. *Choephoroi* 10–20, in which Orestes notes that Electra and her attendants wear mourning dress and thinks he recognizes her; and Sophocles' *Electra* 78–81, in which his tutor hears Electra cry out from within and guesses that it is a servant, but Orestes thinks that he is hearing his sister.

Her speech again borders on the obscene, as she focuses on his feminization and his bedding of her mother, with so much emphasis on his perceived sexual transgressions that she achieves a macabre conversion of the abject dead into fetish object. It is only when she reaches the topic of Aegisthus' philandering that she shows some uncharacteristic fastidiousness, declaring it unsuitable for a virgin to speak of such things (παρθένῳ γὰρ οὐ καλὸν / λέγειν, 945–946). And then two sentences later she is claiming that she would want a manly husband rather than a girl-faced one (παρθενωπός) like Aegisthus, as well as children who would wage war, while Aegisthus' good looks only embellished the dance (κόσμος ἐν χόροις, 948–951). Here the literal and figurative collide, collapsing linguistic codes (i.e., *parthenos* / *parthenôpos*, Electra / Aegisthus) as Electra sets herself in desiring proximity to the dead, again by the use of a figurative merging and a focus on the body's surface effects. Her obsessively sex-oriented rehearsal of Aegisthus' wrongs transforms his corpse into an object of erotic fascination, an entity that recalls—though in quite different terms—Orestes' offering it to her as a plaything (895–898). In confirmation of these dynamics, Electra later uses the dead man as bait, teasing Clytemnestra that she has him 'in her house' and drawing her in so that, with the more hesitant Orestes, she may drive the sword into her mother's naked chest.¹⁷

1.2 Andromache

In the *Andromache* the imagery of dress and bodily proximities contributes to a sense of the play as focused on 'woman's concerns' (i.e., marriage status and child-bearing) by highlighting its aesthetic texture. The charged sexual atmosphere of the play, with its warring wives and absent husband (Achilles' son Neoptolemus), not to mention the overt racism of the Greek characters, makes for a debased and provocative plotting.¹⁸ Fathers menace and insult enemy daughters—Menelaus Andromache and Peleus Hermione—while the women accuse each other of angling for power by violent means. The Trojan War stories (here warriors' denouements) intersect with those of the House of Atreus when Neoptolemus is killed by Orestes, who drops in at drama's end to save Hermione, his cousin and future wife.

The play at first appears to counterpose Hermione's fancy dress and craven deportment to the demeanour of the chaste Andromache, as the *Trojan Women* does with her mother Helen's. But in fact, it soon becomes clear that in this

17 For further details, see Worman (2015).

18 On the sexual dynamics, see Rabinowitz (1993); on the racism, cf. Vasunia (2001) 33–74 on Egyptian otherness in Aeschylus and Euripides.

play embodied aesthetics and their ethics are neither consistent nor fully familiar. And despite a generally corrupt atmosphere of self-interest and prejudice, neither are they merely domesticated and realistic, as readers of Euripides so often assume. Instead some scenes offer aberrant equations, such as luxurious adornment and free speech, or happy marriage and the shared breast. Other scenes foreground bodies and objects in groupings that render concrete and enacted proximities forged by violence and misdirected or misused. Some scenes appear to pivot around enacted tropes such as catachresis (abuse of metaphor) or hypallage (transferred epithet), reorganizing bodies, things, and their characteristics (e.g., surfaces, postures, positions) in relation to each other.

Consider Andromache in the opening scene: after describing her plight as a victim of the war, enslaved consort of Neoptolemus, she explains that she has come outside with the aim of taking suppliant refuge at the shrine of Thetis, mother of the man who killed her husband (i.e., Achilles). A servant enters and quickly leaves, but not before announcing that her son's life is threatened.¹⁹ Alone onstage, she declares that she will 'stretch to the sky' (πρὸς αἰθέρ' ἔκτενοῦμεν) the laments and sorrow-songs and tears in which she lies (οἷσπερ ἐγκείμεσθ'), as if her despair were one giant tapestry or skin reaching up into the aether and enfolding her down below (91–93). Soon she begins to sing, casting Helen as an Ate (curse / devastation) brought to Troy trailing behind her spears, fire, and the 'thousand-shipped, swift Ares' (ὠκύς Ἄρης) of Greece—personified by Achilles, who killed Hector and dragged his body around the city walls (103–108). Then she was led away, 'throwing over her head' (ἀμφιβαλοῦσα κάρῃ) hateful slavery like a veil, and many tears 'slipped down her skin' (κατέβη χροός) when she left city and halls and husband in the dust (ἐν κονίαις). Wondering why she must look upon the light as Hermione's slave, worn down (τειρομένα) by her, she now clutches 'this statue here' (τόδ' ἄγαλμα), melting 'like a stony flowing stream' (ὡς πετρίνα पिδακόεσσα λιβάς) (109–116).

In both would-be and actual proxemics Andromache's clutch holds Thetis and as if Hermione, as well as aligning substances and surfaces in veils, tears, skin, dust, statue, and the stony stream. Andromache's description and deportment in combination renders the effect such that, as registers collide, in between Andromache and Thetis stands Hermione, whose repeated manhandling of Andromache has already had its impact, as if on the surface of metal or stone. The unhappy assemblage captures the rivalry plot in its essential choreography, with Thetis serving as maternal metonymy for the fall of Troy,

19 Her second son, that is, by Neoptolemus rather than Hector; the latter (Astyanax) was thrown from the walls of Troy (cf. *Trojan Women*).

and thus working to bracket, together with Helen and the past on the other side, the present and presence of Andromache with her suppliant grasp.

The tactility and proxemics of Andromache's framing of how she is situated (again, literally and figuratively) is quickly followed by the entrance of Hermione, who immediately foregrounds a contrasting set of bodily prostheses. She makes much of her elaborate carapace, her body's ornate edge (*κόσμον*, 147), including her crown, golden veil, and decorated gown, as visible indications of her father's wealth and power.²⁰ That this is the first thing she says upon entering foregrounds from the outset her frantic vanity and assertions of status. Her gambit reveals the opposite of what it aims to assert—namely, her alienated and insecure relationship to these implements of power, despite the fact that they ought to serve as her own second skin, since she arrived to wed Neoptolemus with a large dowry, while Andromache is a slave (*δοῦλη*, 155). Her insistence that her dress and riches insure that she can speak freely, while on the surface a crude political equation, also suggests something much more unnerving: namely, that a naked Hermione would be a silent one, that divested of such dressy implements of power (to paraphrase Bourdieu) she would have no voice. And of course, clothes are so easily removed, as her later actions make clear.

For now, though, Hermione assumes the power conferred on her by her fancy adornment with indecent zeal. She sets forth a brutal calculation of the differences between Andromache's status and her own, pointing to the latter's lack of defences and Asian ethnicity. The desperation of her disgust at Andromache's very proximity to her in fact (i.e., physically) and status drives her to further bigotry, as she accuses Andromache of drugging her and ruining her chances at pregnancy, casting her as another Medea come to taint and corrupt Greeks (157–160).²¹ She also questions Andromache's self-respect, asking how she could be so stupid as to sleep with her captor. This leads her to broader insult, as she casts aspersions on the sexual practices of the 'barbarian race' more generally (173–176):

This is the way of all barbarians: father lies with
daughter and son with mother, brother with sister,
and kin murder each other²²

20 Emphasized by Lloyd (1994) ad loc.; Kyriakou (1997); Allan (2000) 178–179; Torrance (2005). On the Spartan origin of the clothing and its import, see Stavrinou (2016).

21 Cf. Ahmed (2004) on disgust as working close in like this and generating negative fantasies or replacement images to mask fear of taint.

22 τοιοῦτον πᾶν τὸ βάρβαρον γένος / πατήρ τε θυγατρὶ παῖς τε μητρὶ μείγνυται / κόρη τ' ἀδελφῶ,

Throughout her speech Hermione sustains an emphasis on what we might call an aestheticized (and racist) politics of rank, focusing on the body's affects, postures, and potencies, from the begetting of children (157–160, 170–174), to sexual desire, to the boons that gold can bring. In an vivid assertion of embodied power and its reverse, she declares that if Andromache wishes to avoid death, she must 'give up her opulent thoughts and fall at her [Hermione's] knee, sweeping her house and sprinkling water by hand from golden bowls' (164–167).²³ In this vision, gone is the proud chastity of Andromache's *Iliad* fame, which is now without purchase in her new debased state; since she has slept with the enemy, only grovelling will preserve her life and that of her child. The effect of the speech as a whole is the vicious assertion that the implements of wealth have special powers of augmentation, so that the head adorned with a golden veil tops the one assuming a posture of moral superiority. As with *Electra*, here too Euripides' text offers up a barely married female character as focalizer of the proximity of sex and violence by emphasis on the body's surfaces, covers, and deportments.

Andromache's response only exacerbates this sense of ethical disorientation lodged in physicality, as in cunning periphrasis she envisions arguments that would have persuaded her to take Hermione's place, sardonically sketching circumstances that are not the case and thereby alluding to her former high status, popularity, and body's bloom (192–204). She derides Hermione as unlikeable in her jealousy (205–206) and argues that women must put up with men's philandering ways, even claiming that she gave her breast (μαστόν) to Hector's bastard children, whenever 'Aphrodite tripped [him] up' (222–225). If the ethical orientation of Hermione's speech seems vain and cruel, at least her character has no literary tradition to live up to. By contrast, in relation to tradition Andromache's speech verges on sacrilege. In Euripides' revisionist depiction, her and Hector's traditionally celebrated moral statures have shrunk considerably, revealing them as better than the rest primarily in their domestic compromise.²⁴

In her frustration, Hermione threatens Andromache in vivid terms, claiming that she will set her on fire or cut her skin with terrible wounds (χρωτί δεινῶν τραυμάτων ἀλγῆδονας, 257–259) and wrest her from her suppliant seat, even if 'molten lead holds [her] all around' (εἰ πέριξ σ' ἔχει / τηκτὸς μόλυβδος,

φόνου δ' οἱ φίλτατοι / χωροῦσι ... Her bigotry effectively ironizes the tragic genre itself, since these transgressions constitute some of tragedy's central material.

23 δει σ' ἀντί τῶν πρὶν ὀλβίων φρονημάτων / πτήξαι ταπεινὴν προσπεσεῖν τ' ἐμὸν γόνυ, / σαίρειν τε δῶμα τοῦμόν ἐκ χρυσηλάτων / τευχέων χειρὶ σπεύρουσαν Ἀχελῷου δρόσον.

24 Cf. Allan (2000) 93–96, who discusses this representation of Andromache's character as

267–268). Her words transfer the hard materials of statuary to Andromache, as she claims that her enemy's 'tough boldness' (cf. σκληρόν θράσος, 261) will be no defence when she (Hermione) pries her off of her suppliant seat, like bronze-work from its base.²⁵ The moment foregrounds an irreducible materiality, as well as the specularity in the dramatic text, in this case the statue of Thetis centrally present onstage and Andromache's deportment in relation to it.

Later on in the action, as reasons for Andromache's stalwart grip on Thetis become increasingly clear, Menelaus arrives, threatens Andromache and her child more actively, and is ultimately held off by Peleus. This drives the mercurial Hermione to attempt suicide, as she fears her husband's reprisal for her aggression toward Andromache. When she returns to the stage, she enters tearing crown and veil from her head; and in a provocative turn, her nurse responds in a manner that indicates a fuller dismantling: 'Cover your chest, fasten your robe!' (κάλυπτε στέρνα, σύνδησον πέπλους, 832). Hermione confirms that she has bared more than her head (833), declaring this only right since what she has done stands 'clear and revealed and uncovered' (δῆλα καὶ / ἀμφιφανῆ καὶ ἄκρυπτα, 834–835). Body and actions thus acquire an equal footing in relation to enactment, as she makes her body naked to materialize the exposure of her wrongdoing. That is, the one is visible and literal (within the conventions of the tragic text), the other figurative and ineffable, except insofar as it takes on the 'undress' of the staged gestures.

In her distress she proceeds to threaten her own body in the same ways that she had earlier threatened Andromache's: fire and the sword. Although the conventional options for noble suicide are not many in tragedy, it is striking that her language achieves a bodily pairing with her enemy that directly counters her fierce bigotries and violent competition. And in fact, Hermione indicates that she is pondering such equations, when she cries out in her distress, 'To which of the statues shall I rush as a suppliant? At what slave woman's knees shall I, a slave, fall?' (τίνος ἀγαλμάτων ἰκέτις ὀρμαθῶ; / ἢ δούλα δούλας γόνασι προσπέσω; 859–860). That is, 'Where is *my* Thetis?' Her stripping off of her finery and questioning new possibilities of stature and status together reveal a shocking recognition that clothes do indeed make the woman—or at least, that this is how Hermione understands her relation to her fancy outer shell. From this

conventional and thus sympathetic, a judgment that he refines in the later discussion at 181–183.

25 See Stieber (2011) 128–131 on the vocabulary of craft. A lead seal could apparently be used for either bronze or marble, although Stieber is not very clear on this point; I thank Verity Platt for guidance on statuary conventions.

perspective, the gestures and questions would not register merely as metatheatrical, as a means of indicating costume and role (and perhaps thereby her instability of self) but rather something weirder: that for this character the clothes themselves have a power that she does not.²⁶ That Hermione is Helen's daughter may contribute to a sense that this human is in thrall to her material implements, as the mother trails such vanities through the backgrounds of many Euripidean dramas.²⁷

Despite the transvaluations of status and stature that she fears, however, Hermione proves very different from Andromache in what we might recognize as material inflections of character—that is, how she is dressed, blocked in stage space, and etched by posture and gesture. She inhabits her embodied self as changeable and mobile, while Andromache proves to be both stalwart and statue-like throughout. If Hermione cannot even retain her attachment to the carapace she appears at least initially to clutch with such desperate pride, Andromache faces down Menelaus manfully (as the Chorus fearfully notes, 364) and depicts herself again as stony-faced, as dripping tears like a 'shaded stream down a smooth rock face' (στάζω λισσάδος ὡς πέτρας λιβάς ἀνήλιος, 533–534). At the end of the play, she may well have been present with her child (as deictics indicate),²⁸ standing still and silent onstage for the last two hundred lines of the play. Andromache's inverse in this regard is also Thetis, whose inanimate statue has served as the concrete pivot of the action while Andromache is present and who effectively comes to life at the end, entering from above on the stage machine to deliver the epilogue.

While it may be the case that everyone in the drama is stymied by prejudices that sustain moral myopias, more important for my purposes is the fact that these prejudices are repeatedly cast in concrete, embodied, and often dehumanizing terms—connected to dress and things, such that postures and proximities fashion debasing assemblages. Thus, Andromache's conventional misogyny, as evidenced by her repeated insults against the entire race of women (e.g., 220–221, 272, 353–354), is matched by her focus on the body and the bed (e.g., 201, 207–225, 355–356). Peleus' diatribe against all Spartans, in which he depicts Spartan women as man-following and thigh-revealing (597–599), and Helen in particular as a seductive disrober (629–630), has its match in Hermione's baring of head and chest.²⁹ And, as a counterpoint to

26 See Rosenmeyer (2002) on the overuse of the notion of metatheatricity.

27 Cf., e.g., *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Hecuba*, *Orestes*, *Trojan Women*; and see Worman (2002) 118–122.

28 See Golder (1983).

29 On breast-baring ('baring'), cf. Clytemnestra in *Choephoroi* and in the *Electra*'s; Helen here

Hermione's envisioning of Andromache slaving away at her feet, Peleus urges Andromache's son to drive Hermione out of the house, dragging her by the hair (710–711). While, with the predictable exception of Andromache, scholars have generally regarded the characters in this play with distaste, its orchestration of embodiment—both staged and envisioned—at the nexus of sex and violence ultimately catches all of the characters at one point or another in a state of moral dishabille, as even the traditionally chaste Andromache offers her breast to her philandering husband's children.

2 Virtue and the Aesthetics of Death

A parallel and equally unsettling trend runs through a number of Euripides' plays written earlier and later than *Electra* and *Andromache*: aestheticizing attention to a female character's body and dress at a point of deadly crisis. The characters with which I am primarily concerned are again virginal or bridal (i.e., not a matrons or old women), and the deadly aspects of the scenes involve them directly or proximately. In the plays that I consider here (*Phoenician Women* and *Suppliant Women*), older characters, usually a woman or women, serve as focalizers and / or affective conduits for the audience's apprehension of aesthetic tensions and distress. Precisely at the moment where one may expect that concern for looks and clothes are of least import, striking imagery (mostly detailed by the character herself) pulls the spectator in close, highlighting form, colour, and movement. As in *Hecuba*, which I address elsewhere, these scenes both offer and disrupt prurient viewing; ancient and modern readers have often obliged with the first move, while usually missing the attendant frictions raised by the second.³⁰ That the characters also tend to be presented as virtuous renders these moments conflicted and alienating—although, as I address in more detail below, this too is unsettled by Euripides' tonal variations and attention to aesthetics.

(cf. *Andr.* 629–630) and in *Trojan Women*. Mastronarde (1994) ad 1490–1491 considers this a gesture of mourning, comparing Antigone's uncovering to this moment in *Andromache*, as well as Clytemnestra's in *Choephoroi* [citing Garvie (1986) ad 896–898]; see also Swift (2009) 64–65 and cf. *Hecuba* (558–565), in which Polyxena bares her chest and breasts for sacrifice. See again Stavrinou (2016) on the Spartan costume, as well as the gesture more generally.

30 See Worman (2020).

2.1 Phoenician Women

For somewhat obvious reasons, the plays involving that other troubled clan and especially its patriarch Oedipus emphasize the sensory experience that the audience cannot share: touch. Once Oedipus has lost his sight—among extant tragedies the standard dramatization of which is Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*—he repeatedly calls out for this supplement, asking to touch and be touched, demanding positioning and proximity. The audience witnesses this charged sensory supplement in full force at the end of *Oedipus the King* and pretty much throughout *Oedipus at Colonus*. Given the family history, this emphasis on touching carries with it perverse undertones, the shadow of incest always hovering around any fond familial embrace.³¹

Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, in prominent contrast, foregrounds Jocasta as the play's affective pivot and narrator: she orchestrates much of the looking, the touching, and the telling, with a happenstance Chorus of Phoenician women as her primary audience.³² Produced a few years before *Oedipus at Colonus*, the play covers the action of Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, namely, the attack of the Argive army led by the exiled Polynices and Eteocles' attempted defence of Thebes.³³ In that play Jocasta and Oedipus are nowhere to be seen: the one is dead, the other in exile. Euripides instead surrounds the filial battle and deaths with close-in sibling and parental dynamics, orienting the familial discord by means of an array of aesthetic indicators: dress, postures, proximities, and touching. The most striking of these for our purposes involves Antigone, although her role is importantly calibrated in relation to her mother's initially more dominant affective orchestrations.

From the outset Jocasta and Antigone train their affections and eyes on Polynices, in actual and envisioned embrace (e.g., 161–169, 303–335). But when, much later in the action, Jocasta calls upon Antigone to help her beg the brothers to give up their deadly combat, she responds with reluctance, claiming a maiden's modesty in a move that scholars have regarded as a deliberate departure from Sophocles' bold hero.³⁴ Jocasta declares that now is no time for virgins' dances or similar pursuits (1265), and Antigone eventually agrees.³⁵ The

31 See also Worman (2017).

32 I.e., they are only randomly connected to the plot, being on their way to Delphi, although the Thebans also have an ancient familial connection through Cadmus. See Lamari (2010) 23–29 on Jocasta's multiple narrative modes.

33 Euripides' play is also aesthetically engaged with this play, but more at the level of visual imagery.

34 See esp. Swift (2009) 60–62; cf. Rawson (1970) 123; Foley (1985) 141–144.

35 Cf. Jocasta's earlier 'dance' around Polynices (312–316); and note that Antigone will next enter as a bacchant. Swift argues that this and Antigone's taking of her father's hand at

odd tonal quality with which the attention to maidenly modesty inflects this urgent scene stands in jarring contrast to Antigone's later actions, when she enters announcing herself as shameless bacchant for the dead, insists on kissing Polynices' corpse, declares that she will bury him, and rejects marriage to Haemon.³⁶

Let us consider a few of these actions in turn. When Antigone enters alone with the corpses of her mother and brothers, she emphasizes her own appearance as distinctly immodest. She rushes in, as she says, uncovering her tender cheek shaded by locks of hair, with reddened eyes and blushing face, shamelessly a bacchant for corpses, snatching the veil from her hair and 'loosening the yellow finery of her gown' (στολίδος κροκόεσσαν ἀνεῖσα τρυφάν) (1484–1491).³⁷ She utters this remarkably intricate costume description in running dactyls, the urgent rhythm underscoring her frantic undressing.³⁸ Once again Euripides introduces a scene of supremely disturbing physicality by attention to the body's surfaces, with a young female character as both perceiver and focalizer. The effect is not only metatheatrical, as commentators have noted; it also distances the carapace from the speaking self, highlighting its status as material (in this case both clothing and skin) with colouration, folds, and shaded surfaces all interlaced.

Once she has drawn the gaze of Chorus and audience to her own bodily textures and extensions, Antigone turns to the corpses, which further heightens the sense of a merging and now proliferating assemblage. She addresses her beloved Polynices first, and then angles herself over all of the bodies, wondering to whom she should give the first lock of shorn hair—to her mother's breast that suckled her or to her brothers' terrible wounds (1524–1529). Her juxtaposition of suckling breasts and deadly wounds, both of which emit bodily fluids (one a life giver, the other evidence of life gone) offers grotesque punctuation to her lament. It also suggests their thingness, their status as leaky containers of vital fluids.

the end constitutes a perversion of marriage ritual. Cf. Cassandra as bacchant bride in the *Trojan Women*.

- 36 Swift (2009) 62–69 regards this emphasis on traditional virginity as evidence of Euripidean realism, which would then throw into sharp relief Antigone's rejection of its mandates and her self-sacrifice to the familial curse. She reads this conversion as evidence of character development, even though the earlier scenes are so fleeting that others have considered excising them; cf. Mastronarde's discussion (1994) ad loc.
- 37 Again, cf. Mastronarde (1994) ad loc. on Antigone's fancy dress; also Swift (2009) 60–62.
- 38 The Greek is strikingly swift and interweaving, of veil, hair, skin, and then clothing, clustering around the 'bacchant' in the centre, such that the body and its coverings fold into each other; cf. Seely (2012).

Her elaborate language serves again to draw attention to aesthetics and *aisthēsis*, to crafted image and sense perception, as so often in this play. Her portrait of the ends of the lives of her brothers and mothers sustains this tenor, as in a piteous sequence heightened by metaphor, metonymy, and aesthetic detail she relates how Jocasta went forth with her ‘suppliant breast’ (μαστὸν / ... ἰκέτιν) as a plea to the brothers; how she found them in the meadow filled with lotus flowers (λωτοτρόφον κατὰ λείμακα), like wild lions, already making a blood-cold libation (ψυχρὰν λοιβὰν φονίαν) to Hades; and how she then ‘steeped’ one of their swords in her own flesh (σαρκὸς ἔβαψεν), falling upon them (ἔπεσ’ ἀμφὶ τέκνοισι) (1568–1578). Antigone’s description replays the scene that the messenger relayed to Creon earlier, which highlights haptics more than elevating metaphor: there Eteocles reached out a damp hand (ὑγρὰν χέρα) and wept; Polynices asked his mother to close his eyes with her hand (ξυνάρμοσον δὲ βλέφαρά μου τῇ σῇ χειρί); and finally Jocasta slit her throat and fell upon them, throwing her arms about both (περιβαλοῦσ’ ἀμφοῖν χέρας) (1433–1459). In some contrast to this touching (and ‘touching’) scene, Antigone’s narrative juxtaposes human body parts (especially the maternal breast), nonhuman objects and creatures, and corpses, a cluster that sits at the intersection of enacted deportment and figuration.

After this terrible conversion Creon intervenes in the mourning and (true to his conventional role) seeks to drive Oedipus out, keep Polynices unburied, and marry Antigone off to Haemon. In the course of their confrontation, Antigone declares that she will not leave Polynices and Creon threatens that then she will be interred with him (συνθάψεις, 1658), declaring his burial unlawful. Antigone responds that in the event they will be a famous loving pair (εὐκλεές τοι δύο φίλω), her phrase recalling similarly charged, *erōs*-tinged language in Sophocles’ *Antigone* as well as his *Electra*.³⁹ She persists, requesting at the least to wash his corpse and then to tend his wounds; and when Creon denies these last rites as well, she throws herself on the corpse, saying that she will kiss it (lit., ‘Oh dearest one, I shall enfold your mouth at least [στόμα γε σὸν προσπτύξομαι]!’, 1671).⁴⁰ The moment is shocking, not only because her gesture punctuates her extreme and stubbornly physical attachment to her dead sibling. It also suggests a match between apertures, as if with her kiss she might bind her brother’s mouth as she wishes to bind his wounds. Antigone then confirms this quasi-

39 That is, unmarried sibling pairs whose bonds are over-close; see above, section 1a and Worman (2015, 2020).

40 Cf. her focus on Polynices in the final mourning scene: ‘O name dearest to me’ (ὦ φίλτατον ὄνομα ... ἐμοί, 1702).

necrophilic, object-human assemblage as a form of death ritual that replaces other affections: she rejects Creon's claim on her as daughter-in-law, threatening that she would be a murderous bride (1672–1677).

Taken together these two scenes—one purely narrative (i.e., diegetic and mind's eye) and the other recounting the affective dynamics while only just living of those now lying dead onstage (i.e., combining diegetic and mimetic modes), demand attention to the aestheticized proximities, sense perceptions, and affective responses that tragedy activates, both among characters and among characters, Chorus, and audience. The eventual presence of the blind Oedipus, who cannot see what Antigone, the Chorus, and the audience can, heightens this effect. For the blind, that is, these scenes would remain fully equivalent in sensory terms: only to be imagined, envisioned in the mind's eye, and thus not mimetic in the conventional sense (i.e., as visible fiction).⁴¹ For the sighted, in contrast, the second scene would bring to terrible confrontation what the earlier one only indicated at a distance and in elevated terms. In keeping with this focus on contrasting aesthetic and sensory modes, the actions that Oedipus and Antigone take up at the drama's end revolve around the affective intensities of touching the dead.

2.2 Suppliant Women

Euripides' *Suppliant Women* is a crowded play, from start to finish. Most of the figures onstage are female, and although they serve largely group or background roles, their desires set the plot in motion and orient it throughout. The drama takes place at the temple of Demeter and Persephone at Eleusis, where the mothers of the Argive warriors who lost their lives fighting at Thebes have come with Adrastus (the king of Argos) and their grandsons to supplicate Aethra (the mother of Theseus) for Athenian aid in claiming the bodies of their dead sons. This grim plot stands in striking contrast to the background of the distinctive setting, which offers the counterpoint of community and female fertility in the form of Demeter's celebrants Aethra and her attendants.⁴² Complicating the group dynamics further is the fact that there appears to be little to no agreement as to exactly who and how many are present for audience viewing.⁴³

41 See Edmunds (1991) 40–48 on the non-mimetic register that Oedipus brings onstage in *Oedipus at Colonus*.

42 They are celebrating the Proerosia, an autumn fertility ritual for fostering the health of crops and community, which suggests the contrast to the Argive mothers' grief and self-focused gloom. See esp. Mendelsohn (2002) 136–141; also Smith (1967).

43 See Collard (1975) 18; Willink (1990); Morwood (2007) 143–144; Storey (2009).

What matters for our purposes, however, is not the tally, and perhaps not even who precisely is doing the singing and dancing; for the most part Euripides gives the choral group a unified appearance, perspective, and tenor, which is maternal, older, and Argive. Presumably unlike Aethra and Demeter's attendants, who would be in festive garb, they are draped in mourning, they cry out for the degradation of their aged bodies, encourage this in others (e.g., rending the cheeks, 50–51, 76–77), and match their bodies to those of their slain sons. They yearn only for physical contact and connection, their requests repeatedly highlighting the embrace of the dead.⁴⁴

While conventional expressions of mourning often match mourners' bodies with their dead, it is essential for my purposes to highlight precisely how the affective connections of the Argive mourners operate, since they serve to frame by contrast those of Evadne, in a scene that punctuates my analysis. The Argive women aestheticize their actions from early on, casting their cheek-rending and urgency to embrace corpses as a fitting decoration of the dead for those who see it (τοῖς ὀρώσι κόσμος, 78). In the second choral interlude the aesthetic implications of their emphases bring the relation between mourning and civic honour into closer conjunction. As they await news of Theseus' first attempts to help them retrieve their sons' bodies, they wish that he might 'bring back the mother's bloody ornament [ἄγαλμα]'; and only a few lines later they declare that such pious labour is itself an ornament (ἄγαλμα) for cities (370–373).⁴⁵ As they worry over the outcome of the ensuing battle over the bodies, they deem this ornament 'outraged' (τὸ σὸν ἄγαλμα ... ὑβρισθέν, 632–634), confirming its emotional friction as, like tragedy, a sorrowful delight.

As their sons' corpses are approaching, they reiterate this conflicted pleasure in sensory terms, declaring that it will be 'bitter to see the limbs of children' (παίδων μὲν εἰσιδεῖν μέλι / πικρόν), but a 'beautiful sight' (καλὸν θέαμα) if they are really to see it. And 'seeing that un hoped-for day' (τὰν ἄελπτον ἀμέραν / ἰδοῦσα) they deem the 'greatest pain of all' (πάντων μέγιστον ἄλγος) (782–785). The emphasis on seeing as both joy and pain is in keeping with the Chorus' intense focus on the paradox of the glorious dead, as well as on bodily sensation and reaction.⁴⁶ And in fact from early on they highlight this inhabiting of painful delight as the experience of mourning; in the parodos they sing of 'this insatiable delight of mourning' (ἄπληστος ἄδε ... χάρις γόων), which they

44 E.g., that the bodies of 'corpses once blooming [θαλαρῶν]' be placed in their arms (61–62); that the corpses be placed in their wretched arms, so that they can 'embrace the sorry limbs [ἄμ- / φιβαλεῖν λυγρὰ μέλι]' of their children (69–70).

45 Cf. the virgin as an aesthetic object (ἄγαλμα); see Scodel (1996).

46 Cf. Morwood (2007) ad loc., for whom the 'see-sawing of antitheses' is 'decidedly febrile'.

liken to spring water pouring from a high cliff without end (79–82), so that they mourn like Niobe, stony-faced and eternal.⁴⁷ Not only does the phrase ‘delight of mourning’ draw attention to the paradox of tragic pleasure; it also aestheticizes it as a human-material assemblage and a sensory extension of their experience in which the ever-flowing high mountain spring offers a bitterly beautiful parallel to unending pain.⁴⁸

Once the corpses are carried in, their presence onstage brings to the fore the grislier side of the dead as a ‘bloody ornament’ and ‘beautiful spectacle’. The mothers witness the bodies of their children entering (τάδ’ ἤδη σώματα λεύσσω / τῶν οἰχομένων παίδων) and wish that they could die with them (794–796); and although someone (likely Adrastus)⁴⁹ describes the bodies as ‘dripping with blood’ (αἱματοσταγῆ), they demand that they be handed over, so that ‘fitting [their] arms with enfoldings’ (περιπτυχαῖσι δὴ / χέρας προσαρμόσασ’) they can hold them in their embrace (812–817). While Adrastus encourages the mothers to draw near, Theseus keeps them back from their sons, claiming that they would expire at the sight of the ‘changed’ bodies (cf. ἠλλοιωμένους). Adrastus confirms that ‘blood and wounds of corpses are a bitter sight [πικρὰ γὰρ ὄψεις]’ (944–945), echoing the Chorus’ words earlier. After all the urgency that the mothers voiced over embracing their dead, they are now told that they will get to hold only ashes, once the corpses have been burned on a group pyre. More than that, their energetic yearning to clutch these bloody bodies is now abruptly blocked by the claim that they are too weak to stand even the sight.⁵⁰

They respond with a suitably calibrated affective despair, emphasizing the loss of children as physical absence, absence of life, and the life that remains as blighted (δυσάων), as the weightless wandering of a cloud driven by cruel winds (955–962). Tears are all that they have left; keepsakes of their sons (e.g., locks of hair) lie sadly at home, and they are alone with their mourning bodies, ‘awakened at dawn by their own wailing and drenching with tears the folds of their gowns that cover their chests [πρὸς στέρνῳ πτύχα τέγξω]’ (971–979). Their song is particularly striking for its oblique rejection of Theseus’ assessment of their

47 Cf. Andromache as Niobe, with tears running down her stony face (above, 1b).

48 See Pucci [1977] (2003), who characterizes the phrase as indicating the ‘profit of tears’.

49 The manuscript is corrupt here; see Diggle (1981) 18–21.

50 See Whitehorne (1986) 69–72 on the interweaving of public and private funeral rituals and the Athenian background. Although it is tempting to see this management of the bodies and blocking of the mothers’ desires as dictated by conventional gender hierarchies—that is, male rational control of female emotion and excess—Theseus also represents a more restrained Athenian mode, in the face of Argive immoderation. This is the case from the outset of the play, as embodied first by Adrastus, who lies prone, weeping, and groaning in grief at the temple doors (21–23).

physical states, as they imply that far worse than seeing their slain loved ones is the utter absence of embodiment, even in its bits and pieces. The affective crisis is complete: they cannot see or touch the dead; and their own bodily expressions and sensations are felt as barely human (e.g., living as a wandering cloud), alienated (e.g., awoken by their own wails), and lodged in sorry materials—lost or sodden remnants that offer no protection or comfort (e.g., locks of hair, drenched clothing).

Enter Evadne, who emerges somewhere above the stage, as if on a crag of the acropolis that overhangs Demeter's temple, preparing to jump onto her husband's funeral pyre.⁵¹ Commentators have argued over where this could be, since although the conventional spot would be a platform above the *skênê*, some have felt that it would be too disturbing for her to occupy the same place as Athena in the *deus ex machina* that ends the play.⁵² From the perspective of my analysis, however, this is precisely where she should be, as her enactment of a perverse extreme of wifely dedication and her aim to surpass all women in virtue render her less noble than arrogant and misguided. She thus takes up a lofty position to which she has no claim and carries out a suicidal leap in the face of protests from her aged father Iphis, to his ruin.⁵³ Add to this that she is dressed as if for a festival or indeed a marriage, an outfit that puzzles the heart-broken Iphis.

As an aesthetic spectacle Evadne thus contrasts sharply with the other Argive women in almost every regard except for metre and sheer affective intensity.⁵⁴ She first refers to the sun shining bright on a special day and to running nymphs (990–993); she then directly invokes her wedding, in contrast to which she now comes rushing in as a bacchant (1001), hurrying to 'share the light' of her husband's pyre and tomb (1002–1003). She offers the challenge to the grieving mothers, namely that if 'the sweetest death is to die together with dead loved ones' (1006–1007), one ought to go ahead and make that happen.⁵⁵

51 Capaneus has a separate pyre and a prepared tomb, since he was killed by Zeus' thunderbolt (934–938). Where this is on or offstage is another puzzle, although most commentators place it somewhere behind the *skênê*, so that Evadne's actual death does not take place onstage and against convention [see Collard (1975), Morwood (2007) *ad* 980–981]. But the Chorus claims to see both the tomb and the pyre, which suggests that the tomb could be onstage next to the temple and the pyre just offstage; cf. the deictics *τάσδε* (980) and *τήνδε* (1011), which indicate proximity [see Scullion (1994) 78 and n. 26].

52 See Collard (1975) 15–16; Morwood (2007) *ad loc.*; but contrast Rehm (1994) 111–112 with n. 10.

53 Cf. Garrison (1995) 121–125, who likens Evadne's claims to Capaneus' hubris.

54 Although the text of Evadne's song is quite corrupt, it is clear that she sustains the Aeolic rhythm of the choral strophes that precede her entrance.

55 ἦδιστος γάρ τοι θάνατος / συνθνήσκειν θνήσκουσι φίλοις. While the mothers may ask to be

In the next strophe she expands on this in erotic terms, saying that she will ‘mingle her body with her dear husband’s [σώμα ... πόσει συμμείξασα φίλωι], placing her skin next to his [χρώτα χροῖ πέλας θεμένα], and thereby entering Persephone’s bridal chamber (1119–1122). Although scholars have pointed to conventional parallels between death and marriage imagery, they tend not to emphasize the erotic tenor of the scene, perhaps because of its disturbing proximity to necrophilia.⁵⁶

In contrast to the mothers’ yearnings for sensory connection to the dead—specifically, their expressions of wanting to see and touch their sons’ corpses—Evadne’s desire to join her husband in a fiery, skin-to-skin embrace seems purposefully pitched to unsettle any sense of her as noble in her wifely devotion. It also is of a piece with her bold claims to her father that in leaping onto the pyre she will outstrip all other women in piety (1061), as well as in dress (cf. κοσμεῖς). This she proudly says, ‘intends something famous’, as she is outfitted for a ‘novel deed’ (πράγμα νεοχμόν) (1054–1057). The attention that her father’s questions draw to her visible costume redoubles the sense that her song encourages in relation to her body, of a misdirected (i.e., perverse) aesthetics and erotics. In her vanity and headlong pitch at (self) violence, she resembles Electra and Hermione, although the context of funereal piety has influenced readers to the point that many give her a positive reception as the pious wife that she claims to be. But in fact, the Chorus calls her act ‘terrible’ (δεινόν) and ‘over-bold’ (or ‘reckless’, πάντολμον), indicating the distance between her desires for body-to-body contact and their own.

The play ends with the enactment of this difference, as they embrace and, together with their grandsons, sing over the urns that contain the ashes of their dead. The grandsons of the suppliants finally carry in the ashes (lit. ‘limbs’, μέλη) of their fathers, which they deem ‘a weight not un-heavy [βάρος μὲν οὐκ ἀβριθέξ] because of sorrow, and everything altogether in a small space [ἐν δ’ ὀλίγῳ]’ (1125–1126). The mothers respond with a similar emphasis on the sorry replacement, this ‘small bulk of ashes instead of bodies’ (σποδοῦ τε πλήθος ὀλίγον ἀντί σωμαίων, 1130–1131). They envision their sons as held by the air (αἰθήρ ἔχει) and

destroyed with their children, the desire to lie with the beloved dead tends to be voiced in tragedy by sisters with intense connections to their brothers (esp. Antigone, Electra), as noted. The distinction is subtle, but these sisters usually emphasize lying together or at least being together with loved ones, as with Evadne’s phrase συνθνήσκειν θνήσκουσι φίλοις; again, see further in Worman (2015, 2020).

56 Note Evadne’s emphasis on bodily proximity and skin, as well as her use of the verb συμμίγνυμι, which has sexual connotations. Cf. Seaford (1987) 121–122; Collard (1975), Morwood (2007) ad loc. Also, Rehm (1994) 112.

fluttering off to Hades (1139–1140), but still grasp at the slight remainder, saying, ‘Come, let me embrace the ashes under my breast’ (ἀμφὶ μαστὸν ὑποβάλλω σποδόν, 1160), and crying out that they may no longer look upon the ‘treasure’ (ἄγαλμα) that was their sons (1163–1164, cf. 632). In an eerie turn that lends the scene a ‘slip-slide’ materiality, the containers of the ashes (i.e., the urns) are never mentioned.⁵⁷ This substance that Derrida recognized as the ultimate trace—simultaneously something and nothing—is clutched directly up under the maternal breasts, close in and merging but also a wisp of loss, like the dear kiss (φίλον φίλημα) now gone from the cheek (1154).⁵⁸



My brief survey of a handful of plays may scarcely encourage confidence that the representational strategies that I illuminate are really that dominant in Euripidean tragedy, but I think a case can be made for their centrality not only to Euripides’ aesthetic tactics but also to identifying and exposing differences between the affective and sensory assemblages that he crafts versus those that dominate the dramas of his fellow tragedians. For instance, while the imagery and enactment of touching and handling is quite prominent in Sophocles’ Oedipus plays, once the king is blind and in need of this sensory supplement, those dramas and others such as his *Electra* do not stage what I would call aesthetic crises around the dressing or undressing of female bodies, as well as their surface effects and elastic extensions, as Euripides’ tend to do. The clothing, draping, uncovering, and enfolding of female bodies pitched between sex and violence or death bring to the fore the aesthetic frictions building in his dramas, precipitating reactions and heightened sensitivity to the attractions and terrible vulnerabilities of bodies, as well as their capacities for encouraging vanity, misdirection, and delusion.

Euripides’ tendency to focus on bodies (and especially female ones) as odd objects, as grotesque or barely human assemblages, as well as his sustained emphasis in these plays on the emotional and aesthetic experiences that happen up close to the body’s edges (e.g., from clothing and the skin’s adornment to manhandling and death), further a sense that an eroticism that borders on the obscene often attends tragic female embodiment. The scenes that I highlight here all work like this, drawing spectators into intimate sensory contact by means of baroquely orchestrated, sometimes contradictory, often perverse

57 See Bennett (2010) 4.

58 Derrida [1982] (2014).

details of looking, touching, posturing, and dressing—both encouraging and frustrating the sensory and emotional intensities so central to the tragic idiom. Again, all of these scenes have female Choruses that enact, often together with a primary female character, the onstage engagement with and/or reception of affective dynamics. This also seems essential to understanding how the dramas layer aesthetic and emotional reaction and response as a gendered experience, redoubling emphasis on the erotically charged sensorium that Euripides' dramas orchestrate.

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The Chorus in Euripides

Claude Calame

We may start out, once again, from Aristotle's *Poetics*: 'The Chorus must be considered as one of the actors: it must be part of the totality and participate in the action, not as in Euripides, but as in Sophocles. In all the others, the parts that are sung have no more relation to the story (*muthos*) than they do to another tragedy' (18, 1456a 25–27). On the one hand, from the normative perspective adopted by the author of the *Poetics*, the choral group must take part (*sunagônizesthai*) in the action being represented. On the other hand, while Sophocles, according to Aristotle, seems to respect this rule, moreover, this would not be the case for Euripides, in whose works the choral songs would tend to become mere interludes (*embolima*). What about it?

An answer to this question requires three angles of approach: the question of the identity of the tragic choral group, and consequently that of its place among the protagonists of the dramatized heroic action; then, the semantic and enunciative dimensions of the choral voice, with its internal and external pragmatics (which implies the relations of the choral voice with the poet and the audience); finally, the involvement of the choral group in the action being represented, between the time and place of the dramatic fiction, and the time and place of its ritual performance. These threefold remarks concerning the role of the choral group in the tragedies of Euripides will be illustrated by a few examples taken from tragedies whose complete text has come down to us.

1 Choral Identities in Tragedy

Finally rejecting the Romantic definitions of tragedy based on the destiny of the tragic hero and abandoning the vain attempts at an essentialist definition of 'the tragic', an attempt was made beginning in the sixties of the previous century to resituate Attic tragedy within its context of performance, with its political, historical, and religious dimensions. From the perspective of a tragedy in which the city was representing itself onstage, the Chorus was to be considered as 'the expression of the city that, by its movements, honoured the altar of Dionysus, the god who, among all the gods of Olympus, is the one who is most alien to the city'. Yet if the Chorus is held to express 'the truth of the city', if

the tragic choral group is 'the organ of civic and collective expression', it must be added that it is very rare for it to be made up of figures corresponding to citizen-soldiers, male and adult.¹ There is a considerable difference between the dramatic identity of the Chorus and the community it is supposed to represent.

1.1 *Complex and Marginal Identities*

In fact, a recently proposed statistic reveals that 67% of the tragedies whose entire text has come down to us under the name of Aeschylus feature, in a way that is surprising to us, a Chorus made up of women. This proportion is only 29% for the tragedies of Sophocles but rises to 82% in Euripides!² The author of this statistical observation interprets the feminine identity of the majority of Euripidean choral groups in terms of marginality and dependency. The example provided is that of the *Medea*. Made up of women of Corinth, where the heroine herself is in exile, this choral group is supposedly unable to express coherent judgments, and its collective voice appears as heterogeneous. This lack of choral coherence is said to have its reason not so much in the heroic action that is dramatized onstage, as in the social crisis Athens experienced at the end of the fifth century BC. An essential distinction is thus drawn between the dramatic role of the tragic choral group and its civic function in the tragic performance itself. Indeed, in Attic tragedy the choral group takes on a twofold status: a dramatic and fictional status, on the one hand, and a political and civic status, on the other. Combined with this political and ritual role played by the Chorus members as Athenian citizens, honouring Dionysus Eleuthereus in particular on the occasion of the Great Dionysia, the tragic choral group, as a protagonist involved in the tragic action, is characterized by a complex social and sexual identity.

In addition, the titles of the dramas whose text has come down to us may constitute another indication of a statistical nature with regard to the central role played by the Chorus in Attic tragedy. Out of six or seven tragedies whose text has come down to us under the name of Aeschylus, four have titles that correspond to the choral group, which is generally a feminine group: *Suppliant Women*, *Libation Bearers*, *Eumenides*, to which *Persians* has to be added. In the first of these tragedies, the Chorus of suppliants, made up of the daughters of Danaus, is the main protagonist of the tragedy. For Euripides, however, out of the fifteen or so surviving tragedies, only four titles derive from the name

1 So, Vidal-Naquet in Vernant/Vidal-Naquet (1986) 158–159.

2 Mastronarde (1998) 61–66; see also Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 265–275, as well as the morphology of the female Choruses in complete tragedies established by Trieschnigg (2009) 313–332.

of a Chorus which, for its part, is regularly feminine: *Trojan Women*, *Suppliant Women*, *Phoenician Women*, and *Bacchae*.³ This apparent diminution of the choral share in the tragedy goes hand in hand with the growing importance conferred upon dramatized heroic action, and with the increase in the number of actors onstage reciting in the mode of what Plato (*Republic* 394bc) calls *dia mimêseôs* for the dialogues in Homeric poetry. At first, Attic tragedy apparently consisted in a simple dialogue, both recited and sung, between the poet and the choral group.⁴ In the form of the citharodic nome, the poems, both narrative and choral, of the poet Stesichorus no doubt played a decisive role in the constitution of a tragedy that was still essentially conceived in choral terms in the fifth century.⁵

Whatever may result from statistics established on the basis of a highly lacunary corpus, recent questions about the profile and function of the tragic Chorus have been inspired as much by the contemporary attention paid to performance (musical and ritual) as by the recent debate around myth and fiction. The question of the identity of the tragic Chorus thus requires us to examine both the dramatic role it plays within the heroic, fictional world created in the dramatic staging, and its ritual role in the musical and ritual performance in which this 'possible world' is deployed. The identity of the choral group of classical tragedy is associated, on the one hand, with that of the protagonists of the dramatic action, while on the other it would correspond in general to a position of 'social marginality'.⁶ Thus, the choral dancers of Attic tragedy are generally women, old men, slaves, or strangers, sometimes in statutory combination in an 'intersectional' manner, as it is for instance the case in the *Hecuba* of Euripides: the Chorus members are Trojan women, but who have been reduced to slavery, and what is more, in Thrace! The marginal identity of this choral group is typically an 'intersectional' one.

1.2 *Choral Identities in Euripides*

With regard to the composition of the choral groups in the seventeen complete tragedies of Euripides, what is striking is the wide majority of the Choruses made up of women, beginning with girls. Thus, in *Iphigenia in Tauris*,

3 See the detailed statistics provided by Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 266–269; on the four *Choragödien* of Euripides, see Hose (1990) 11.400–403.

4 On this subject, see the scant testimonies on Thespis: *Marmor Parium FG RHist.* 239 A 43 = Thespis test. 2 Snell (uncertain text) and Diogenes Laertius 3, 56 = Thespis test. 7 Snell; cf. Herington (1985) 97–101.

5 For the relations of Attic tragedy, with regard to form and content, with the citharodic nomes of Stesichorus, the poet 'who established the Chorus' see Calame (2017) 205–221.

6 On this subject, see the fine study by Gould (1996).

the choral group designates itself as early as the *parodos*, in a way that is both self-referential and performative (see *infra*, § 2), as the young servants in the sanctuary of Artemis among the Tauroi of the Black Sea. In their first address to Artemis, they sing: 'I advance in procession (*pempô*) with a pious young girl's step, servant of the holy priestess' (lines 130–131). As Greek captives in Tauris, the young Iphigenia considers them as her friends (*philai*, 852; 1056); yet at the end of the tragedy Athena addresses them as 'Greek women' (1468), and the young women are *gunaikes* throughout the rest of the tragedy.⁷ A somewhat analogous situation with regard to the ambiguous status of the female Choruses of Euripides is provided by the *Electra*. In an initial address to Agamemnon's daughter, the Chorus members sing of their intention to join in, as girls (*parthenikai*, 174), with the sacrifice which the Argives are preparing to offer to Hera. The heroine addresses them in return as *philai* (175). Although they live outside the city (of Argos), at the end of the tragedy the girls are nevertheless designated by Electra as citizens (*politides*, 1335). It is as though the Chorus members were following the progress of heroine, who has returned to the city (her marriage to Pylades). In the *Orestes*, by contrast, the choral group is made up of girls from Mycenae (1246). Like Electra, they are girls (*neanides* at line 375, in an address formulated by Menelaus) who are associated with the heroine's voice in the introduction to the *parodos*; however, several times the heroine refers to them either as *philai*, or as *gunaikes* (or even *philtatai gunaikes* at lines 136 and 1313!). As far as the Phoenician choral members in the homonymous tragedy are concerned, as early as the *parodos* they designate their origin and purpose as servants of Apollo at Delphi (lines 202–207). If Polynices speaks to these probable citizens of Tyre as 'foreign women' (*xenai gunaikes*, 278), Iocasta recognizes the Phoenician accent of their voice to address them as 'girls' (*neanides*, 302).⁸

Coupled with the same hesitation between the status of girl and the status of adult woman, the same type of compound situation, as far as identity is concerned, is presented by the choral group of the *Hecuba*. It is made up of young Trojan women reduced to slavery in Thrace. These young women sing of their desire to join the young Deliades (*korai*, 462), singing of Apollo and Artemis at Delos: they are also designated as *korai* (485, cf. 934), whereas they conceive of themselves as young wives (cf. 919), or even as young mothers (475). In the *Helen*, the *Hellanides korai* (192), reduced to slavery in Egypt, correspond to the *Trôïades korai* of the *Hecuba* (485). Just as Helen herself is presented in turn in

7 Cf. Trieschnigg (2009) 319–320, with some bibliographical indications.

8 On the status of the Phoenician Chorus members, see Mastronarde (1994) 208 and 444–445, who thinks of *hierodouloi* consecrated to the service of Apollo.

the tragedy as girl, young wife, and adult woman, so the young Chorus members present a blurred female status. Although, by a procedure of 'choral projection', to which we will return (*infra* § 3), the Chorus members of the *Helen* are assimilated to the young Leucippides and to the girls who sing in a Chorus while celebrating the Hyacinthia for Amyclean Apollo, the heroine addresses them several times by calling them *philai* and *gunaikes* (see line 255 in particular).

In the complex identity from the feminine, ethnic and geographical viewpoint, the *Trojan Women* present yet another scenario. Right from the prologue, the choral members are presented by Poseidon as captive Trojan women, including Helen 'daughter of Tyndareus, the Laconian one' (32–35). In her inaugural song, in which she attributes to herself the role of Chorus-leader (*ekarxô gô molpan*, 147–148), Hecuba addresses these women who have been reduced to slavery as a collectivity made up of the wives of Trojan soldiers, and of girls who do not yet have the status of young wives (*dusnumphoi*, 144). Although in the course of the drama the reference is repeated to the husbands of the Chorus members, who died to defend Troy, the heroine addresses them once as *korai* (466) and twice as *philai gunaikes* (of Troy; cf. line 239, the text of which is not certain, and line 1238). They themselves evoke the *parthenoi* (545) who greeted the wooden horse in Troy, before it poured forth the Greek soldiers into the city. An analogous ambiguity is found in the feminine status of the Chorus members of the *Andromache*. In an allusion to their weddings and their husbands, they define themselves as married women. At the end of the drama, however, the coryphaeus addresses them as *kourai* (1227). They are not slaves but 'women of Phthiotis' (*Phthiôtides gunaikes*, 1047), whose status is no doubt close to that of Andromache and Hermione.

The *Ion* presents a simpler choral identity, insofar as the choral members are women, the followers and slaves of Creusa the Athenian (for instance, *prospoloi gunaikes* at line 510). Loyal to their mistress, they too wish to have children. In contrast, the choral members of *Iphigenia at Aulis* present themselves as married women who, having crossed the Euripos, have come from their city Chalcis. They nevertheless consider themselves as foreign women (469), and Agamemnon addresses them as such (542; cf. lines 629 and 1276 in the mouth of Clytemnestra). At the end of the tragedy, Iphigenia invites them to sing, for her own destiny, a paean addressed to Artemis, the daughter of Zeus; they then become *neanides* (1457, in a form of address reiterated at line 1491, in ritual form).

In sum, it is as if the status of the feminine Chorus-members was coloured in the course of the tragedy by the status of the interlocutor, and especially the female interlocutor, of the moment. This is the case, for instance, in the *Medea*, where the choreutai are married women, mothers of the city of Corinth. When

they become aware of the crime Medea is in the process of committing in the house, they compare it to the infanticide committed by Ino and deplore the misfortunes that can be generated by ‘the bed of women’; Jason addresses them as *gunaikēs* (1292). But as far as Medea is concerned, although she is a foreigner, she has several exchanges with the choral members whom, until her decision to kill her own children, she too calls her ‘friends’ (*philai*, 377, 765, 797, 1116, and finally 1236).

A Chorus of mothers is present in the *Hippolytus*, women who are not from Corinth, but from nearby Troezen (line 373), where the heroic action represented takes place: ‘noble children of Troezen’ (*paides eugeneis Trozēniai*, 710) is one of the forms of address placed in the mouth of the Cretan Phaedra. Here again, the heroine (as well as her nursemaid) considers the Chorus members as *philai*. Yet the choral identity of this tragedy is more complex, insofar as it also features a choral group of young men, companions of the young Hippolytus.⁹ The *Suppliant Women* also confronts us with a Chorus made up of elderly women. Indeed, they represent the mothers of the Argive heroes who died under the walls of Thebes, who have come as suppliants to the sanctuary of Demeter at Eleusis: they may be accompanied by their followers to reach the number of fifteen Chorus members provided for by tragic staging.¹⁰ In any case, if at the end of the tragedy Theseus addresses them as ‘women of the families of Argos’ (*gunaikēs Argeiai genos*, line 1165); for the elderly Iphis they are ‘daughters of the Argives’ (*Argeiōn korai*, 1073); and, before the conclusive intervention of Athena, they enter into a funerary dialogue sung with the complementary choral group of the children (*paides* at line 1114) of the seven, bearing the funerary urns of their fathers.

There remains the Chorus of the Maenads that animates the *Bacchae*. Those are the two denominations by which the choreutai designate themselves in self-referential acts of song (*ite Bakchai*, 83; *dikete Mainades*, 601). Addressed as *neanides* in the call to vengeance by Dionysus as reported by the messenger (line 1079), the Bacchae are simply called *gunaikēs* by the same messenger (1040). For Dionysus, however, they are ‘foreign women’ (*barbaroi gunaikēs*, 604)! It is true that in the song reacting to the messenger’s narration of the murder of Pentheus by his own mother Agave, the young Chorus members are described as ‘Cadmean bacchantes’ (1160), whereas Cadmos’ daughter addresses them as ‘bacchantes of Asia’ (1168). These Maenadic Chorus members will accept Agave into what Pentheus’ mother interprets as a *thiasos* (lines 1172 and 1180).

9 On this problem of a double Chorus in the *Hippolytus*, see the study I have proposed of this in Calame (2017) 151–154 with n. 4.

10 Cf. Morwood (2007) 143–144, as well as Trieschnigg (2009) 328–329.

As one supposes for the Bacchic cults, girls were probably associated with married women and mothers in the choral group of the bacchantes depicted by Euripides.¹¹

What about the rare male Choruses, however?

If we can believe the text of the argument of the tragedy, and the scholion to the first verse of the parodos, the choral group of the *Alcestis* was made up of old men of the vicinity, that is, of the small city of Pheres in Thessaly. Indeed, Alcestis' servant describes the coryphaeus as an old friend of her masters (212). The Chorus itself, however, in sympathy with the young Admetus, expresses its aspiration to find such a wife (473–474). In the *Heracles*, the choral group is made up of fifteen old men of Thebes. Loyal to Amphitryon, whose status of old man they share (cf. lines 60 and 81, in the mouth of his daughter Megara), the choreutai, led by their coryphaeus, feel themselves to be involved in the dramatic action from the outset. Both king Lycus and Megara herself address the Chorus members as old men (lines 247 and 275). Except for the few concluding verses, the dramatic action, marked by a twofold reversal of fortune, will nevertheless escape the choral group, insofar as Theseus' final intervention shifts the tragedy's spatial focus from Thebes to Athens.¹²

The *Heraclidae* also features a Chorus made up of old men, but the action takes place at Marathon, and the Chorus members are apparently elderly (cf. line 120). Accompanied by the young sons of Heracles, the Theban Iolaos first addresses these Chorus members, aged as he is, as inhabitants of Athens (69), calling them *xenoi* (78), both guests and foreigners; and they themselves, in the last stasimon, address the city (*ô polis*, 901) to evoke the salvation it has assured the sons of Heracles, in parallel to the support given by Athena to the hero himself. One might add to this the Chorus of Trojan guards who face Hector in the *Rhesus*, and especially the choral group of the Satyrs led by their father Silenus in the *Cyclops*.¹³

Relevant here is the contemporary sensitivity to the markers in literary manifestations referring to identities and social roles of sex, with their representations of a cultural nature; this approach has been directed in particular to the forms of Greek poetry. As far as Attic tragedy is concerned, the gender perspective with its new intersectional dimension only confirms, broadly speaking, the marginal social position usually exhibited by the choral groups put onstage by the tragic poets. Tragic Chorus members thus could not be the direct represen-

11 On this subject, see Calame, (1977/2001) 134–138.

12 For more details, cf. Calame (2005b) 220–225.

13 On the Chorus of the satyr drama in general, and more specifically in Euripides' *Cyclops*, cf. Lämmle (2013) 155–215 and 327–350.

tatives, female or male, of the spectators, much less of the politico-religious community to which these spectators belong in one way or another.

Scholars have been able to show, however, that Euripides' Choruses of women are often divided in their loyalty between their local sense of belonging, as Corinthians, Athenians, etc., and their gender status. We will see that the feminine choral group sometimes represents a kind of alter ego of the main protagonist (Helen, Electra, Andromache, etc.). What is more, because of their multiple affiliations, choral identities sometimes turn out to be conflicting, particularly in Euripides.¹⁴ Aside from an 'otherness' that is not relevant for designating the identity of tragic Choruses, especially in Euripides, the variable nature of the identity and authority of the choral group of Attic tragedy has been noted. The persona of the Chorus members is not static, but evolves with the progress of the performance.¹⁵ This is all the more true in that this social, gendered identity is assumed by masked Chorus members, and that it evolves with the action, just as the 'character' of the protagonists is constructed in the drama (as Aristotle recalls at *Poetics* 6, 1450a15–23; cf. *infra* § 4). Thus, the collective voice of the tragic Chorus has none of the common authority of the democratic *polis*, either in its dramatic and heroic identity or in its political and ritual status.¹⁶

2 Choral Polyphonies

Just as in the different forms of melic poetry, the songs of the tragic Chorus are punctuated by verbal forms in *I* and in *we*. When these 'self-referential' forms in *I* and *we* correspond to verbs of speaking, they acquire a performative value: they represent genuine 'speech acts', in this case song acts. Thus, in the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the Chorus of Iphigenia's followers, reduced to slavery, not only sings its arrival in the orchestra (*emolon*, 137), but also its intention to launch into songs (*ôidai*, 179), which responds to the song of lamentation of Iphigenia;

14 Foley (2003) 19–25; then Swift (2013). The question of female participation in *mousikoi agônes* that marked the City Dionysia is still controversial: see, in particular, the studies by Goldhill (1994) and (1997), with the complements I gave in this regard in the 1997 study (1994/1995) 183 n. 4.

15 Cf. Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 274–284, whose definition of the tragic Chorus as a 'segment of a community' (265–266) is nevertheless insufficient.

16 Goldhill (1996) 252–255, relying on Gould (1996) [cf. n. 6]; Goldhill also strongly affirms that the tragic choral *persona* cannot be placed under the label of 'otherness'. On the identities of the choral groups of tragedies, one may also refer to the fine *status quaestionis* provided by Battezzato (2005) 154–156.

she has just addressed it to Orestes, whom she believes to be dead. Echoing the song of their mistress, songs (*hummoi*, 179) of Asia will respond in the mode of the threnody and of songs (*molpai*, 184) of the dead who fill Hades, apart from paeans. *Exaudasô* (181), 'I shall intone and declare': this form of the 'performative future' gives voice to the collective act of song in which the Chorus members engage *hic et nunc*, in an exchange with Iphigenia sung in anapaests; the young priestess of Artemis here plays the role of their choregos, deploring the death of her brother Orestes.¹⁷

As a second example, in the *Bacchae*, the Chorus members begin the choral song inspired by the account of the bloody diasparagmos of Pentheus by a double form, not of a future, but of a performative subjunctive: 'Let us begin to chorally celebrate (*anachoreusômen*, 1153) Bacchios, let us proclaim (*anaboasômen*, 1154) the misfortune of Pentheus'. It is in this song that the Chorus members designate themselves as Cadmean bacchantes, ready to receive the procession (*kômos*, 1167) of the god of the *evohe*, led by Agave, who, as we have seen, takes the young dancers for bacchantes of Asia.

Added to the self-referential parameter of these acts of song is that of place and that of time: the melic *I/we hic et nunc*, in contrast to the *he/she*, the *there* and the past time of the narration. In tragedy, however, the heroic action is dramatized *hic et nunc* by protagonists and a choral group who speak in the first person. The song acts of the choral group have a direct pragmatic impact, both on the unfolding of the heroic action being represented and on the dramatic representation itself as a public ritual to which the audience is associated. Thus, the first-person forms refer only indirectly to the poet or to the audience itself, particularly in Euripides (cf. *infra* § 2.2). Hence the polyphony, both semantic and enunciative, of the Choruses of tragedy; the choral voice is all the more multiform in that neither the social identity of the poet (considered as *chorodidaskalos*) nor that of the heterogeneous audience taking part in the City Dionysia correspond to the composite, generally marginal status of the choral group that is supposed to represent them, and which shares its song acts between dramatized heroic action and theatrical ritual.

17 These acts of song that punctuate the songs of the Choruses of tragedy, sometimes marked by forms of the 'performative future', are identified as 'self-referential' by Henrichs (1994/1995) 65–73; see the complements given, from the viewpoint of spatio-temporal deixis, by Calame (2005a) 1–7. With regard to the ritual relations between Iphigenia and the group of Chorus members, see, most recently, the study by Taddei (2015); on the relation of the songs of tragedy to the form of the partheneion, see Swift (2010) 205–218.

2.1 *Semantic Plurivocality: The 'Performative' Voice*

Dramatized in multiform identities, the tragic choral voice takes on a particularly complex semantic thickness. Instrumentally, one may distinguish three dimensions in the choral melic voices carried over from the orchestra of the sanctuary-theatre of Dionysus Eleuthereus: three vocal registers that correspond to three different functions, assumed in turn by the choral group as the tragedy unfolds.¹⁸

First of all, a 'performative' voice: The Chorus adopts and adapts the traditional forms of melic poetry (hymn, paeon, hymenaion, threnody, etc.) to react and participate ritually, in dramatic mimesis, in the action being represented. By these ritual songs, the Chorus members seek to influence its development. As we shall specify further on (§ 3), this group is in fact implicated in the heroic and tragic action being represented, in dialogue and interaction with its protagonists.

Thus, for instance, the choral songs that punctuate the dramatic development of the *Ion* are strongly marked by hymnic forms. First, at the end of the prologue spoken by the god Hermes, and instead of the anticipated entry of the Chorus, the tragedy depicts its main protagonist, the young Ion. At day-break, the natural son of Apollo and Creusa sings alone before the portico of the sanctuary devoted, at Delphi, to his divine father. While describing the cultural function that has been attributed to him at Delphi and the ritual gestures he is in the process of accomplishing, the young man addresses Apollo. The song, composed in Aeolian rhythm based on choriambes (112–143), apparently features the tripartite structure proper to all hymns: *invocatio—epica laus—preces*. Yet the conclusive part of the prayer is reduced to the simple naming of the god, who is declared to be the father of the poetic *I*. It is accompanied by the *persona cantans* with the affirmation of his cultic service for Phoebus at Delphi, to close, in its turn, with the refrain, 'O Paian, o Paian, be happy, be happy, o son of Leto!' (141–143).¹⁹ Thus, a hymn that is no hymn, assumed by a single singer in a rhythm that is melic, but has no musical accompaniment nor

18 See the conclusions derived from my brief comparative study from 1997 (1994/1995) 201–203, with the fine development henceforth proposed by Trieschnigg (2009) 69–101. With regard to the ritual form assumed by the emotions in Greek tragedy, one may refer in particular to Di Benedetto/Medda (2002) 266–278, who, in the voice of the Choruses of tragedy, distinguish emotional reactions to events which may induce different forms of prayer, reflections of a conceptual order, and evocations of the narrative context of the mythic episode depicted (see also 249–253 and 260–263).

19 A comparison of this 'parahymnic' song with the 'normal' form of the hymn and with that of the ritual refrain punctuating the paeon is given by Furley/Bremer (2000) I.320–324 as well as II.307–312.

audience; a hymn punctuated by a refrain that does not quite correspond to the cultic refrain of the paean (a choral song). The tragic hymn proves itself to be without any practical effect on the course of the dramatic action! Indeed, the substitution of a simple repeated wish for an explicit prayer does not induce any direct pragmatics.²⁰

In contrast, during the consultation of the god's oracle on the subject of his wife's sterility, Xuthus asks Creusa to address the gods by going over their altars, laurel branches in hand. The prayer, in hymnic form, is pronounced by the choral group, made up, as has been noted, of Creusa's servants (lines 452–471). Composed in Aeolian rhythm with its choriambic basis, the choral song assumes the form of a cultic hymn, featuring its tripartite structure. By the form of the supplication (*se hiketeuô*), self-referential and performative (in the proper sense), the Chorus begins by invoking Athena: *invocatio*. Then, in a very brief *epica laus* that recalls that of the shortest *Homeric Hymns*, the Chorus gives the goddess' genealogy: 'who was born from the head of Zeus with the help of Prometheus the Titan' (line 455). Finally, in the concluding part which scholars call *preces*, the Athenian Athena Nikê is invited to go to Delphi to join Artemis, daughter of Leto, *hic et nunc*. In other words, the choral group from the time of heroes invites the Athena honoured by the spectators in the sanctuary which they have consecrated to her at the entrance to the Acropolis to intervene in the space and time of the dramatic action. As often in the choral parts of Attic tragedy, the permeability between the time and place of the dramatized (and hence 'mimetic') heroic action, on the one hand, and the *hic et nunc* of the ritualized tragic performance, on the other, is striking.

Contrary to the monodic hymn sung by Ion, the hymnic supplication delegated to the two virgin goddesses will have the full cultic effect desired by Xuthus: it will prove to be effective ritual speech in the dramatic action that is being represented. Indeed, at the end of the drama it is Athena Pallas, Athena the eponym of Athens, who intervenes as a *dea ex machina* to resolve the intrigue, in another coincidence between the time and space of the heroic action and the moment and place of the dramatic representation. Not only will Ion reign over the land of Attica before colonizing the Cyclades and Ionia (pre-figuring the contemporary Athenian 'empire'); but Creusa and Xuthus will have two sons, the two future eponymous heroes of the Dorians and the Achaeans.²¹

20 On this paean that is not choral, but monodic, see also Rutherford (1994/1995) 129–131.

21 For the aetiological significance of this foundational conclusion, cf. Calame (2009) 279–282.

2.2 *Emotional Registers*

In their effect, of a pragmatic nature, on the dramatized heroic action, the tragic choral voices also take an emotional turn. Emotion is manifested particularly in the metrical cadence impressed on the vocal flux, and consequently on the choreographic gestuality of the Chorus members.

In the *Suppliant Women*, the Chorus is thus made up of women of Argos, the mothers of the seven heroes who fell before Thebes with Polynices. With the help of Theseus, king of Athens, they seek to obtain from the Cadmeans the restitution of their sons' cadavers, in order to bury them. As the main protagonists of the dramatic action, the Chorus members sing of their pain in the fourth stasimon. Henceforth bereft of their sons, they are condemned to the fate of an old age devoted to the rites of mourning. This choral song of lamentation concludes the scene in which the remains of the young Argive heroes are brought back from Thebes. Introduced by a brief choral song (the third stasimon, 778–797) announcing the theme of the misfortune of an old age bereft of children that will be developed in the concluding song of the tragedy, the funeral procession is marked both by the funeral eulogy Adrastus gives of the heroes fallen in the confrontation with Eteocles, and by the lamentations of the Chorus of Argive mothers. 'Now I see it, the most obvious misfortune is to be deprived of one's children' (792–793), sing the mothers of the Seven, in an exchange with Adrastos, who, in a sense, assumes the role of choregos with regard to them. No doubt the funerary catalogue of the heroic virtues of the seven which, after this funerary song, Adrastos pronounces (857–917) before the choral group and Theseus is reminiscent of the custom of the funeral oration familiar to Athenians of the democratic city.

Yet, responding like an echo to those of the old Argive king, the cries of lamentation of the Chorus members which introduce the catalogue evoke, in iambic rhythm, the threnodies depicted in the *Iliad*. 'Woe is me, woe is me! May the earth swallow me up, may the storm tear me away, may the thunderbolt of Zeus fall upon my head' (lines 828–831), sings Adrastos, to whom the Chorus replies: 'Leaving the palace, solitary, the Erinys of Oedipus has come, provoking lamentation' (lines 835–836). In this case, this antiphonic song of threnody develops into a kind of melic dialogue. Already identified as a *kommos* in Aristotle's *Poetics*, this sung dialogue between a protagonist of the action being represented and the choral group is constitutive of many of Euripides' tragedies.²² This register of the threnody, expressing funereal pain in the form

22 For Aristotle, *Poetics* 1452b14–24, the *kommos* is 'a threnody common to the Chorus and to the actors onstage'. Significantly, Loraux (1990) 57–66 is not very sensitive to the melic

of the *kommos*, will mark the entire end of the tragedy: here the sung expression of choral emotion is dominant.

2.3 *Interpretive Voices*

Finally, the commentaries which the Chorus members address to the dramatic action stated and unfolded to their ears and before their eyes define a 'hermeneutic' voice, of an interpretive nature.

Let us turn, as an example, to the denouement of the drama depicted in the *Hippolytus*. Theseus has simultaneously learned of his wife's suicide and the reason she has put forward to justify her act. The king of Athens curses his son Hippolytus before Poseidon, condemning the young man to an exile that will lead to his destruction. Carried by his team at a breakneck pace, entangled in his reins, the young man falls victim to the horses which, at the hunt, he boasted of mastering. He is brought, dying, onto the stage. Previously, Theseus interprets the sudden change of fortune to which the young man has henceforth fallen victim as a just punishment inflicted by the divinity. Evoking 'the blows of fate sent by the gods' (*daimonon sumphorais*, 1267), the king of Athens echoes the terms used a few verses previously by the coryphaeus; faced by this change of fortune (*sumphora*, 1255) and in the form of a *sententia*, he has affirmed the inescapable nature of fate (*moira*, 1256).

In reaction to this exchange of an interpretive nature, the women of Troezen address Aphrodite in a brief song (1268–1281): 'You, Cypris, you lead the mind of gods and men; and with you the being with damask wings envelops it with his rapid flight [...], Cypris, you extend your monarchic power, your sovereign function over all beings'. This choral ode, made up of a single strophe, is sung and danced in the dochmaic rhythm of strong emotion. Because of its form, this choral song has been interpreted as a hymn addressed to Aphrodite and her assistant Eros.²³ As a cultic prayer, this song features only the beginning of a hymnic song: the description belonging to the *invocatio*, without *epica pars* or *preces*. By this means, the Chorus of Troezenian women provides us with a definition of the modes of intervention of the goddess of amorous desire, through the intermediary of Eros, while delimiting their field of application: an unparalleled sovereignty over animals, human beings and gods, on earth and by sea. Beyond the emotion, expressed in particular by the metrical rhythm chosen,

and choral aspect of the complaints of the 'mothers in mourning'. The tragedy features another *kommos* at verses 1114–1164, shared between the choral group of the mothers and children of the heroes fallen before Thebes (cf. *supra* §1.2).

23 Cf. Barrett (1964) 391–396. The functional nature of this stasimon with regard to the reminder of Aphrodite's power is emphasized by Hose (1990) 11.128–130.

two verbal forms in the second person (*su ageis*, 'you, you lead', and *kratuneis*, 'you reign over', at lines 1269 and 1281, in a framing structure) are substituted for the imperative forms expected in a hymn; they transform the cultic requests addressed to the divinity in a hymn into simple statements of fact. These grammatical forms thus metamorphose the performative range of this beginning of a hymnic song into a choral commentary on the dramatic action.

In fact, no sooner has this cultic song, which combines a performative voice and the hermeneutic voice of the Chorus, concluded, when Artemis herself appears in her epiphany. With her voice of divine authority, the goddess henceforth replaces the hero to give the meaning of the narrative action presented dramatically to the Chorus members and the spectators: Hippolytus as well as Phaedrus are both victims of the will and power of Cypris.

Carried by the emotional voice and the performative voice, the hermeneutic polyphony of the Chorus of the women of Troezen thus merely anticipates what Theseus will eventually admit himself, in his last response of the tragedy: 'Cypris, many are your misdeeds, and I will remember them' (1461). Thanks largely to the choral group and its songs, understood as musical performances, the entire motivation of the dramatic intrigue is led back to the might of the two powers of adolescent, then adult femininity: Artemis and Aphrodite. Finally, when the choral group of the women of Troezen sings in the brief exodos: 'this misfortune occurred unexpectedly' (lines 1462–1463), the commentary is obviously shared with the audience.

Adopting a mode that is both ethical and theological, the interpretive voice of Euripides' tragic Chorus relies on traditional wisdom (the reflections on the vicissitudes of the human condition, particularly in the exodoi, for instance in the *Hippolytus*), on the patrimony of the heroic figures to be cited as paradigms or as anti-examples (Inô at *Medea* 1284; Iole and Semele at *Hippolytus*, 545 and 560, or Agamemnon at *Andromache* 1027, etc.), and on the functions and domains of action of the gods implied in the drama. Through reference to the moral principles and divine actors recognized by the spectators, the choral group tries to explain the narrative, ethical and theological stakes of the heroic action, in which, moreover, it participates. It goes without saying that the distinction between the performative, emotional, and interpretive dimensions of the speech of the tragic Chorus in general is purely instrumental, since the rhythmic flux of the choral song intertwines these three voices in a sophisticated vocal counterpoint and a musical poetics. There remains its enunciative component, which involves both the voice of the poet and that of the audience.

2.4 *Polyphonies and Enunciative Postures*

Thus, if the exercise does not seem too abstract, one may propose an initial attempt to integrate into a theoretical model of enunciative pragmatics the three voices of the Chorus, as well as the enunciative positions it assumes, by the choral performance, on the one hand in the action being represented (by its dramatic persona), and on the other in the external and ritual reference (through its political status). Indeed, from the enunciative viewpoint represented, in particular, by the self-referential and sometimes performative forms that have already been pointed out, the tragic Chorus sings as much *qua* persona involved in the dramatic action to which it reacts, as *qua* Chorus members in the orchestra of the theatre-sanctuary consecrated to Dionysus.

In the intersection between semantic polyphony and enunciative polyphony, one could assimilate the ritual and performative voice of the tragic Chorus to that of an actor in the drama; the hermeneutic and evaluative voice would then become that of the poet in his 'authorial function', through the intermediary of the enunciative posture of the implicit or virtual author (with knowledge of the development and meaning of the action which the Chorus possesses only partially, insofar as it too is one of the protagonists of the dramatized action); while the emotional voice would correspond to that of the audience, through the intermediary of the position of the ideal or implicit spectator.

One could recall once more the conclusion drawn by August Wilhelm Schlegel from a reflection on the profile of the Chorus of classical tragedy in the fifth of his *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur* (1809): 'in a word, the Chorus is the ideal spectator'.²⁴ The Chorus is said to appease the deep impression brought about by an intense representation by communicating to the spectators, through music, the emotions which transport them. What is more, the Greek tragic Chorus should also be considered as a representative of the poet. Indeed, still according to the same Romantic definition of his role, the chorus would be the incarnation of the poet's thought, as the 'spokesman of the whole of humanity'. Beyond the spirit of classical Athens with its festivals of Bacchus, it is thus the thought of all of humanity that the Greek tragic Chorus, as a character, is supposed to mobilize!

24 Schlegel (1846) 76–77. The formulation proposed by Schlegel is discussed in particular by Kranz (1933) 219–225 and re-examined with regard to Euripides by Hose (1990) 1.32–37. The complex relations between, on the one hand, the identity and expression of the Chorus, and on the other the audience of tragedy, are the subject of the essay by Loscalzo (2008) 133–156, in particular.

We will finally try to illustrate this by the example of the sung parts of the tragedy which Euripides devoted to Helen.

3 The Involvement of the Choral Group

Thus, the interpretive, affective, and performative voices of the choral group, in their intertwinings, weave a twofold involvement and hence a twofold pragmatics: in the unfolding of the dramatic action with its syntax, marked according to Aristotle by reversal and recognition;²⁵ in the ritual action of the tragic performance, between the enunciative positions of a virtual audience and poet. It is this twofold involvement that is now to be sketched through the example of the Chorus of the *Helen*, a tragedy that is dated in 412 BC, at the end of Euripides' career.²⁶

It is Helen who assumes the prologue of the tragedy that bears her name. If she gives voice to a doubt on the metamorphosis into a swan that enabled Zeus to seduce her mother Leda (a *logos* whose obviousness is not clear, line 21), the *eidôlon* that replaced her at Troy does not give rise to the slightest doubt; this is how the Greeks fought for her name. After an initial exchange with Teucros, who sees in her only a resemblance to the Helen who is the object of the hatred of all the Greeks, the heroine, singing, introduces the choral group, which is made up of her attendants, in captivity in Egypt. Wondering about what mode of song of lament to adopt, and singing the first stanza of the parodos, Helen in fact assumes the role of the choregos of the group of young Greek women, of whom she is, here too, in a sense the alter ego. By the invocation of the Sirens, designated at the same time as *neanides*, *parthenoi* and *korai* (167–168), Helen engages the Chorus members from the outset in one of those games of self-referential 'choral projection' of which Euripides has the knack: choral projection into the heroic past, when the choreutai of the *Trojan Women* begin dancing their own choral song (*emelpoman choroisi*, 554) to Artemis, to respond to the songs and dances (*emelpon*, 547) of the girls who receive the wooden horse into the city of Troy; ritual choral projection by the evocation of the songs of the young people, and to the nocturnal dances (*molpai*, 780) of the Choruses of girls at the Great Panathenaea in the *Heraclidae*; or again, in the

25 Basically *Poetics* 10, 1452a12–18 and 11, 1452a 29–b8.

26 Cf. Dale (1967) xxiv–xxviii. On the question of the action of the choral group in the tragedies of Euripides, one may refer to the chapter devoted to this subject by Hose (1990) 1.287–312, who notes that particularly in the *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the *Phoenician Women* and the *Bacchae*, the choral group is more of a spectator than a 'Mitspieler'.

Heracles, when the old men of Thebes say they find a source of inspiration for their choral songs addressed to the Muses, in the paeon sung (*humnousi*, 688) by the young Deliads at Delos.²⁷ These forms of what I would call ‘embedded chorality’ contribute to reinforcing the authority of the tragic choral group.

Then, in the same rhythm, alternating iambic dimeters and trochaic dimeters, the Chorus members start Helen’s mourning song, an elegy without a lyre which, to their ears, evokes the song of a nymph, like the complaint of Naiad, victim of the loves of Pan.²⁸ Introduced respectively by the ritual cries *iô iô* and *aiai aiai*, the song of lament is then carried out in a second strophe-antistrophe couple. Helen evokes successively the suicide of her mother Leda, the supposed death of her husband Menelaus, and the disappearance of her two brothers the Dioscuri. Joining the voice of lament to the performative voice of mourning, the Chorus members comment on these various disappearances, attributing them to the heroine’s destiny (*moira*), marked by a divine force that gives rise to wailing. In the epode to this antiphonic song, it remains to Helen to shed light on the theological dimension of her fate and her misfortunes: Cypris and Hera for organizing the rape, with the collaboration of Hermes, when the heroine was offering a bouquet of roses to Athena Chalchioicos, the tutelary goddess of Sparta.

The lament then continues in the dialogue with the Chorus members, who encourage Helen to leave the tomb of Proteus to consult the priestess Theonoe. The dialogue leads to a *kommós* dominated by Helen: another anguished question on the destiny reserved to her husband. To the Chorus’ wish for happiness, Helen replies by opposing to the losses caused by Aphrodite to the Trojans and to the Greeks an invocation to Callisto and to the daughter of Merops: both are happy, because they have been metamorphosed, victims of Cypris when they were associated with the choral dances (381) led by Artemis. This long melic exchange, integrated into the dramatic action, thus concludes with a brief process of choral projection. In the affective mode of the ritualized lament, the hermeneutic voice of the choral dancers, in dialogue with the protagonist of the tragedy, can refer both to the figure of the virtual audience, familiar with

27 These last two examples are studied in detail by Henrichs (1996), who mentions many other cases. One finds the same reference to the Chorus of the Deliads in the mouth of the Trojan Chorus members of the *Hecuba*; cf. § 1.2. For details on the role played by the Chorus in the *Trojan Women*, see Hose (1990) 11.225–280.

28 On the rhythm of this sung totality, made up of two strophe/antistrophe couples and an epode, in a text that is not certain, see the commentary by Dale (1967) 76–84; with echos of the partheneion that Swift (2010) 222–238, identifies in the sung portions of the entire tragedy.

the heroic episode being represented, and to that of the poet, who illuminates its theological meaning.

It is then up to the Chorus to announce and sing the prophecy uttered by Theonoe (lines 515–527) and to ensure the contact between Menelaus, who has appeared in the meantime, and Helen, who now knows that her husband is alive. Paradoxically, the Chorus intervenes only once (646–647), in the recognition scene between the two spouses, who, for their part, do not hesitate to make use of sung verses to express their contrasting feelings. It is, moreover, by means of dochmaics that Helen introduces this scene of affective exchange, to which she associates her friends (*philai*, 627), the Chorus members. Two brief interventions, also in iambic trimeters, frame the messenger's intervention which confirms the true Helen's innocence with regard to the Trojan War (698–699 and 758–760): two gnomic interventions that recall the reversals of fortune to which mortal men are subject, and the need to win the gods' support in the face of the silence of soothsayers (the voice of the poet, or of the audience?). This is no doubt the reason why, after witnessing the new exchange between Helen and Menelaus, who have sworn a new faithfulness to one another as they flee Egypt, the Chorus members address the gods, so that the misfortune of the descendants of Tantalus may be transformed into happiness (855–856). Then, each of the two pieces of rhetoric offered by Helen, then by Menelaus to try to convince Theonoe to liberate the Spartan heroine, concludes by a remark on the part of the choral group: the choreutai express the emotion caused by the first speech (944–946), to appeal the young priestess' judgment at the end of the second one (996–997). The choral conclusion, after Theonoe has promised to save the two spouses: 'Never has anyone known happiness who does not respect justice; the hope of salvation is based on law' (1030–1031). It is as though the Chorus members (or their coryphaeus) anticipated what the reactions of the audience could be or should be at the end of their two pleas.

One will have to await the prayer which Helen addresses to Hera and to Cypris, on the advice of Theonoe, for the Chorus to react by a song representing a (first) stasimon properly speaking (1107–1164)! In a sophisticated rhythm based on dactyls, the Chorus members invoke in a performative mode (*anaboasô*, 1108) the nightingale, with its melodious and plaintive voice (another mode of choral projection): they sing the misfortunes of Helen and of her reputation, then the mourning of the women of Troy and the wives of the Achaean heroes. The threnody that evokes the *eidôlon* fashioned by Hera is followed by a question on the nature of the divinity, to affirm the truth of the words of the gods, in contrast to the senseless acts and disputes of the mortals which condemn them, like the Priamides, to Hades. By means of the performative affirmation, the Chorus members sing a threnody which, in its painful

lament, comments on the heroic action that has led to the present situation. The interweaving of the three dimensions of the choral voice, in an enunciative polyphony shared between audience and poet, is thereby fully confirmed.

From this point, the succession of stasima punctuates the rhythm of the action, as in other tragedies. First, at the end of the scene in which Helen deceives Theoclymenes by declaring her intention to render the last honours to Menelaus, we have the famous song, composed in Aeolic rhythm based on choriambic (1301–1368), that evokes the figure of the Mother of the gods. In a double gesture of choral projection, both the circular girls' Choruses from which her daughter Persephone was abducted, and the cries of joy of the Charites are evoked, along with the choral songs of the Muses, which restore the mother's joy in living, not to mention the evocation of Bacchic music which accompanies the nocturnal celebrations consecrated to the goddess.²⁹ Describing the passage for a divinity from mourning to the joy of reunion by the celebrations sung, this song ensures the emotional and pragmatic transition between the threat that weighs on the Spartan couple, and the scene of the deception of Theoclymenes.

Hence, comes a third stasimon (lines 1451–1512), once again in Aeolic-choriambic rhythm. At Menelaus' appeal to Zeus, then to all the gods, for a reversal of fate at the moment when the stratagem of the funeral will enable him to return to Sparta, the Chorus members intone a long song, addressed to the ship that is taking the two spouses to Sparta. By metaphorically denoting this craft as 'team of dolphins with lovely Choruses' (1454–1455), the young Greeks engage the choral 'isotopy' (or semantic register) that traverses the whole of their song. By retrospective anticipation, in a sort a movement of choral projection into the past and the future, the Chorus members evoke, in turn, the Spartan divinities that Helen is preparing to re-encounter in her participation in the choral dances: the Leucippides, Pallas Athena and Amyclaeon Apollo, in the celebration of the Hyacinthia.³⁰ The choral song concludes with a cultic appeal, assuming the form of a hymn, for the intervention of the Dioscuri, to help their sister during the crossing, and to cleanse her of a dishonour that she has done nothing to deserve.

And in fact, at the end of the account of the messenger, who narrates the flight of Helen and Menelaus, triggering a very brief, final reaction from the Chorus (lines 1619–1620), the Dioscuri intervene to prevent Theoclymenes, who

29 With regard to the religious dimension of this song, see the fine study by Cerri (1983); see also Swift (2010) 229–238.

30 On this third stasimon, see the detailed study by Steiner (2011), in relation to the 'new music'.

has been deceived, from taking vengeance on his sister Theonoe. As *dei ex machina*, the sons of Zeus invoke destiny and the will of the gods. They promise that Helen will be divinized beside them, and venerated on an island of Attica, while Menelaus will be able to dwell among the gods in the Isles of the Blessed. Thus, by means of the aetiology, from the space of the dramatized heroic action, divided between an Egypt of poetic fiction and a Sparta of the time of heroes, we return to the space of the performance sung in the Attica of the spectators. It only remains for the choral members to conclude by uttering, in anapaests, the few verses that are found at the end of other tragedies, such as the *Alcestis* or the *Andromache*: 'The divine plans assume many forms, and the gods accomplish many things against all expectation' (1688–1689).³¹ Perhaps assuming the voice of a critical poet who relativizes Delphic wisdom, the *Helen* ends chorally and ritually, like all the tragedies of Euripides.

Thus, far from *embolima*, simple intermissions sung under the effect of the adoption of the 'new music', the *Helen* presents us with a Chorus that is strongly involved in the action being represented, as was the case in the other tragedies we have mentioned here. However, in this highly integrated chorality, both from the dramatic and the musical viewpoint, the choral group of the *Helen*, precisely because of its composite and marginal identity, does not play an essential motive role as agent. In its voice, one can recognize the predominance of the emotional register, which is particularly noticeable, generally speaking, in most of the choral parts composed by Euripides, in a musical lyricism which, alas, escapes us:

You, the adornment of Athens, honey-voiced nightingale of the stage,
You who combine the grace of the Muses with wisdom,

as the poet of one of the epigrams collected in the *Palatine Anthology* (7, 44, 3–4) said of Euripides.

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³¹ The *Medea* or the *Bacchai* feature the same exodos song at their end, without it being formally necessary. The authenticity of these concluding verses is contested; on this controversial question, see Kannicht (1969) II.438–440.

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Ancient Reperformances of Euripides

Anna A. Lamari

Although in his own lifetime Euripides won only four first prizes in (perhaps) twenty-one productions at the Great Dionysia, after his death he quickly eclipsed all other fifth-century dramatists in the performance repertoire. As time went on, performances included not only more or less fully staged complete plays, but virtuoso performance of excerpts with new music and dance. Among early papyri of tragedy, many are not from full texts of the plays, but from selection or anthologies that must reflect the performance tradition.¹



Euripides' poetic afterlife is the fullest amongst the triad of tragic playwrights. Contrary to his poor victory record during his lifetime, Euripides was appreciated more by those who survived him than by his peers.² This chapter investigates the testimonia for the reperformance of Euripides' plays in the context of the increasing interest in his work after his death, but also during his lifetime, as well as the outstanding growth of theatre business in and outside Athens. After a discussion of some biographical data, I will attempt to gather and analyze information on the reperformances of Euripides from literary and inscriptional sources. The chapter concludes with the discussion of two plays, *Archelaus* and *Meleager*, as case studies.

¹ Mastrorarde (2010) 5.

² As also showcased in fourth-century comedy (see e.g. Eubulus fr. 26K.-A., Diphilus fr. 74K.-A.), through quotations, references and allusions to Euripides. For discussion and further citations see Olson 2007, 178–179. For his popularity from the fourth century onwards, see, for instance, Xanthakis-Karamanos (1980) 28–34; Green (1994) 50–58; Easterling (1997) 225; Perrin (1997) 213–214 and n. 64.

1 Biography

As with the other two classical tragedians, the reliability of Euripides' existing biographical information is also challenged.³ Perhaps the most trustworthy material comes from the poets of Old Comedy or from inscriptions, both being the only 'informants' from the time of Euripides to whom we still have access. His *Vita* however still contains some information that should be considered reliable, on the provision that it is combined with other data we can be certain of. The references to reperformances of his work often need to be inferred by grouping evidence gathered from the *Vita*, Aristophanes, as well as Euripides' own tragic corpus.

In the *Suda*, Euripides is credited with five victories, four accomplished while he was alive, and one posthumously, the production being managed by his nephew (νίκας δὲ ἀνείλετο ε', τὰς μὲν δ' περιῶν, τὴν δὲ μίαν μετὰ τὴν τελευτήν, ἐπιδειξαμένου τὸ δράμα τοῦ ἀδελφίδου αὐτοῦ Εὐριπίδου, *TrGF* v test. A 3.24–25). An unspecified number of reperformances is also implied by the information that his youngest son, Euripides, directed several of his father's plays (καὶ υἱοὺς κατέλιπε τρεῖς ... νεώτατον δὲ Εὐριπίδην, ὃς ἐδίδαξε τοῦ πατρὸς ἔνια δράματα, *TrGF* v test. A 1.8). Putting the dates together, Euripides died in 407/6 during the archonship of Antigenes,⁴ which was, according to Plutarch, also the year the tyrant Dionysius came to power.⁵ His successor's or successors' theatrical activity could have started short after that, with reproductions of old plays or premieres of unfinished ones, such as *Bacchae* or *Iphigenia at Aulis*.⁶

3 Cf. the characteristic quote by Kovacs (2001) 1: 'For the biography of Euripides, as for those of ancient writers in general, reliable evidence is in short supply', and in general Lefkowitz (2012).

4 Marmor Parium, *FGrHist* 239 A 63 (= *TrGF* v, DID D A 63).

5 Plutarch, quoting Timaeus, synchronizes Euripides' death with Dionysius' birth, obviously though pointing at the latter's start of tyranny, established in 406 (ἀποθανόντος δὲ [Εὐριπίδου sc.] καθ' ἣν ἴεγεννήθη Διονύσιος ὁ πρεσβύτερος τῶν ἐν Συκελαίαι τυράννων, Timaeus, *FGrHist* fr. 566.105, ap. Plut. *Mor.* 717c).

6 There are many reasons to believe that *Iphigenia at Aulis* was left unfinished by Euripides and completed by his theatrical heir, be it his son or nephew [Kovacs (2002) 157]. In this case, the play's substantial accumulation of histrionic interpolations [see Page (1934)] proves its frequent theatrical 'reuse' through reperformances, from as early as the fourth century.

2 Reperformances

Long before Euripides' death however, reperformances were an inseparable part of fifth-century theatrical business.⁷ With restagings of plays happening in the Attic demes, Magna Graecia, and possibly even in Athens itself, reperformance culture developed from the beginning of the fifth century.⁸ Perhaps the earliest information about reperformances refers to Phrynichus' *Sack of Miletus*. Herodotus reports that after the capture of Miletus in 494, and the subsequent⁹ dramatic enactment of those events onstage, the Athenians fined Phrynichus and banned future reperformances of the play (6.21.2):¹⁰

Ἀθηναῖοι μὲν γὰρ δῆλον ἐποίησαν ὑπεραχθεσθέντες τῇ Μιλήτου ἀλώσει τῇ τε ἄλλῃι πολλαχῆι, καὶ δὴ καὶ ποιήσαντι Φρυνίχῳ δράμα Μιλήτου ἄλωσιν καὶ διδάξαντι ἐς δάκρυά τε ἔπεσε τὸ θέητρον καὶ ἐζημίωσάν μιν ὡς ἀναμνήσαντα οἰκίῃα κακὰ χιλίηισι δραχμῆισι, καὶ ἐπέταξαν μηκέτι μηδένα χρᾶσθαι τούτῳ τῶι δράματι.

The Athenians found many ways to express their sorrow at the fall of Miletus, and in particular, when Phrynichus composed and produced a play called *The Capture of Miletus*, the audience burst into tears and fined him a thousand drachmas for reminding them of their own misfortunes;¹¹ future productions of the play were also banned.¹²

‘Such a ban would make no sense unless the reperformance of a tragedy was more than a remote possibility’;¹³ thus Finglass, following Taplin, according

7 For a broad presentation of many (theatrical, performative, political, historical) aspects of the reperformances institution during the classical period, see Lamari (2015a), (2015b), and (2017); Stewart (2017).

8 Lamari (2017) 17–58.

9 With the sack of Miletus as the *terminus post quem* at 495/494, the play is traditionally placed around this date. One could not exclude however a later dating, assuming that a first performance might have coincided with the Athenians' toils deriving from the Persian sack of their own city in 480/479 [see Badian (1996); Nervegna (2014) 169 n. 79].

10 On this see Finglass (2015a) esp. 207–210; Lamari (2015b) esp. 190–191.

11 The famous *οἰκίῃα κακὰ* could either point at the Athenians' sufferings from the Persians (Roisman 1988), at the Athenians' feeling of guilt for failing to support the Ionian revolt [Badian (1996), followed by Tamiolaki (2010) 62 n. 153], or at the Athenians' sentimental proximity to the Milesians [Zacharia (2003) 49]. A translation of *οἰκίῃα κακὰ* as ‘own misfortunes’, encapsulates all the undertones mentioned above.

12 Translation is adapted from Waterfield (1998).

13 Finglass (2015a) 209. See also Lamari (2017) 34 n. 143, ‘the earliest testimony regarding

to whom, even if the story of Herodotus is fictional, it still works as sufficient evidence for the practice of reperformances in the time of Herodotus.¹⁴ Phrynichus is echoed in Aristophanes,¹⁵ although their theatrical lives are chronologically apart. According to the inscribed victory records of the Great Dionysia (the *Fasti*), Phrynichus' first victory is recorded in 511 and his third and last, thirty-five years later, with his *Phoenician Women* in 476. This is thirty years before Aristophanes' birth (446) and forty-nine years before Aristophanes' first play (*Banqueters*, 427). It is striking how Aristophanes is so well aware of Phrynichus' plays, since numbers make it impossible for him to have witnessed any of these plays' first productions. Circulation of dramatic texts and the developing culture of personal reading¹⁶ are surely accredited for the theatrical literacy of the Athenians of the fifth century. Reperformance culture however is also sketched as crucial to such literacy, and consequently, to the growth of ancient Greek drama.

Analogous is the impression that we get from surveying theatrical production in the Attic demes. A study of archaeological and literary testimonia points to a flourishing culture of first-rate productions, with sets of attested performers in the theatres of the Attic demes, and also in Macedon and Magna Graecia.¹⁷ Theodoros, the great protagonist of women's roles, who was acclaimed by Aristotle,¹⁸ is recorded in a fourth-century inscription as having won a victory in Thorikos.¹⁹ Aeschines participated in a performance of Sophocles' *Oinomaos* at Kollytos,²⁰ where the renowned actor Parmenon also performed.²¹ An inscription of the late fifth century²² commemorating victories either in the City Dionysia, or in the Dionysiac festival at Eleusis,²³ reports two famous winners in the comic and the tragic contest: Aristophanes and Sophocles.

dramatic reperformance in Athens goes back to Phrynichus and the banning of future reperformances of his *Sack of Miletus* (Hdt. 6.21.2)'.
 14 Taplin (1999) 37.
 15 Aristophanes alludes to Phrynichus in the *Wasps*, the *Birds*, the *Thesmophoriazousai*, and the *Frogs* (*TrGF* 1 Test. 10 a–g). See Scodel (2010) 39; Nervegna (2014) 169–170.
 16 See Thomas (1989) esp. 19–24 and (1992) 13, 123.
 17 For a thorough presentation of drama outside Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries BC, see Csapo/Wilson (2015).
 18 In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle praises Theodoros for his 'natural' voice, made to resemble that of the impersonated character (*Rh.* 3.1404b15–25).
 19 *SEG* 34.174.
 20 As mentioned by Demosthenes (*On the Crown* 180).
 21 Aeschin. *Against Timarchus* 157.
 22 *IG* 13 970 = *TrGF* 1 DID B 3 = Ar. test. 21 *PCG*. Clinton (2005) 53 puts it in the late fifth century; Csapo/Slater (1994) 129 place it in the last decade of the fifth century.
 23 Clinton (2008) 53.

Drama was widespread outside Athens, from as early as the middle of the fifth century. In a detailed survey of drama outside Athens, Csapo and Wilson collect evidence for the growth of drama outside and inside Attica from the mid-fifth century. 'It is not clear that Athens ever had a monopoly, but if it did, it did not last long. We have good evidence for drama before or by the mid-fifth century from seven locations, four inside and three outside²⁴ Attica', they remark, while 'the number of venues for dramatic performance doubles every half century from ca. 450'.²⁵ It is unconceivable that those theatres hosted solely premieres, as it is arithmetically impossible that the total number of new plays could manage to supply every single of these theatres with new productions.

3 (Re)Performances of Euripides

3.1 *Peiraeus*

In the second book of *Varia Historia*, Aelian informs his readers that Socrates was not a frequent theatre-goer. He however had a special appreciation for Euripides: he was attending his new plays and he even followed him to Peiraeus, every time Euripides put on a play down there (*VH* 2.13):

ὁ δὲ Σωκράτης σπάνιον μὲν ἐπεφοίτα τοῖς θεάτροις, εἴ ποτε δὲ Εὐριπίδης ὁ τῆς τραγωιδίας ποιητῆς ἠγωνίζετο καινοῖς τραγωιδίαις, τότε γε ἀφικνεῖτο. καὶ Πειραιοὶ δὲ ἀγωνιζομένου τοῦ Εὐριπίδου καὶ ἐκεῖ κατήλει· ἔχαιρε γὰρ τῷ ἀνδρὶ δηλονότι διὰ τε τὴν σοφίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν ἐν τοῖς μέτροις ἀρετὴν.

But Socrates did not often go to the theatre. However, if the tragic poet Euripides was competing with new plays, then he would go. Even if Euripides was competing at Piraeus, he would even go down there, since he enjoyed his work, obviously because of its wisdom and poetic quality.²⁶

The passage first testifies to the differentiation between old and new plays, which, according to Aelian, was prominent from the fifth century, during Socrates' lifetime. ἠγωνίζετο καινοῖς τραγωιδίαις presupposes that Euripides was competing with both new and old plays, only the former of which Socrates was

24 Anagyrus, Halai Aixonides, Ikarion, Megara, Syracuse, Thebes, Thorikos.

25 Csapo/Wilson (2015) 381.

26 Translation is adapted from Wilson (1997).

interested in attending. και Πειραιοῖ δὲ ἀγωνιζομένου τοῦ Εὐριπίδου και ἐκεῖ κατή-
 ιει further implies that Euripides was not putting on new plays only in Athens,
 but also in the demes, like Piraeus, where Socrates was also willing to travel
 to.²⁷

3.2 *Anagyrous*

Euripides' name is also found on an inscription bearing a long list of fourteen
 Chorus-members, datable to ca. 440–431 BC:²⁸

Σωκράτης ἀνέθηκεν·
 Εὐριπίδης ἐδίδασκε·
 τραγωιδοί· νν Ἀμφίδημος
 Πύθων νννν Εὐθύδικος
 Ἐχεκλῆς ννν Λυσίας
 Μενάκλης νν Σῶν
 Φιλοκράτης Κριτόδημος
 Ἐχyllος ννν Χαρίας
 Μέλητος ννν Φαίδων
 Ἐμπορίων *vacat*

Socrates dedicated.

Euripides was director.

Tragic chorusmembers²⁹ νν (were) Amphidemus

Python νννν Euthydicus

Echecles ννν Lysias

Menacles νν Sōn

Philocrates Critodemus

Echyllus ννν Charias

Meletus ννν Phaedon

Emporion *vacat*

This inscription from the deme of Anagyrous commemorates a fifth-century
 tragic contest held in that deme. According to the inscription, Socrates of

27 For a detailed discussion of the passage and the debate over the exact meaning of the
 expression καινοῖς τραγωιδοῖς, see Lamari (2017) 40–43.

28 *IG I³* 969.

29 For the translation of τραγωιδοί as 'Chorus-members', see Csapo (2004) 60 and n. 32; Wil-
 son (2000) 133.

Anagyrous³⁰ was the choregos, Euripides the director, and the rest of the fourteen names (Amphidemus, Python, Euthydicus, Echeclus, Lysias, Menalces, Sôn,³¹ Philocrates, Critodemus, Echyllus, Charias, Meletus, Phaedon, Emporion) were the members of the Chorus.³² The inscription proves that Euripides was directing performances outside Athens. Its dating during the period of Euripides' theatrical activity reinforces the hypothesis that reperformances took place within Euripides' lifetime. In a theatrical culture where dramatic restagings seem more than probable, a single performance of the play that might have been premiered at Anagyrous is very unlikely. At the same time, we have no reason to reject the scenario according to which this inscription might refer to a reperformance of a play that was premiered somewhere else.³³

3.3 *In Sicily*

Sicily was introduced to Athenian tragedy through the cultural policy of the tyrant Hieron I (478–466).³⁴ The theatre of Syracuse was rebuilt in the 460s,³⁵ and Hieron brought some of mainland Greece's greatest poets to Sicily. Aeschylus reperformed his *Persians* in Syracuse soon after their first performance in Athens in 472.³⁶ Hieron had also commissioned the *Aetnaeae*, a play by Aeschylus³⁷ celebrating the foundation of Aetna,³⁸ performed in either Syracuse or Aetna, while Phrynichus may also have enjoyed the tyrant's hospitality at some point in his career.³⁹

Tragic productions in Syracuse remained prominent during the rule of Dionysius I (406–367 BC). He was infamous for his literary ambitions, as well as his

30 Socrates of Anagyrous has been identified with either a general or a grandson of the general who fought at the Samian war. See Csapo (2004) 61 and n. 34.

31 Sôn is a very rare first name, identified as a *demotes* of Anagyrous [Csapo (2004) 61 and n. 35, with reference to Matthaïou (1990–1991) 181].

32 The names correspond to demesmen of Anagyrous because they are listed without patronymics and demotics [Csapo (2004) 61]. See also Wilson (2000) 131–133, according to whom the list refers to a victory in the City, not the Rural Dionysia.

33 For a fuller discussion, see Lamari (2017) 44–45.

34 On the cultural policy of Hieron, see Morgan (2015) esp. 52–53.

35 See Rosetto/Sartorio (1994) III.3–4.

36 Cf. *Vita Aeschyli* (*TrGF* III Test. A 1.68); Schol. Ar. *Ra.* 1028a–g; Broggiato (2014). Boshier (2012) does not exclude even a premiere in Syracuse in 472, followed by a reperformance in Athens.

37 Macrobius would later call Aeschylus *vir utique Siculus* (*Saturnalia* 5.19.17 = *TrGF* III Test. 91).

38 The foundation of Aetna was also celebrated by Simonides (*PMG* fr. 552) and Pindar (*Pythian* 1). See Dougherty (1993) 88.

39 See Csapo/Wilson (2015) 332 and n. 54, as well as Csapo/Wilson (2019) IV A, with discussion of the evidence on the development of drama in Sicily.

poor poetic talent,⁴⁰ producing many unsuccessful tragedies before winning first prize at the Lenaea of 367 with the *Ransom of Hector*.⁴¹ The third-century BC biographer Hermippus of Smyrna describes how Dionysius, determined to gain poetic fame, attempted to associate himself with Euripides, purchasing from his heirs the poet's writing tablet, pen and harp. He then had Euripides' and his own name inscribed on them and consecrated them in the Temple of the Muses.⁴² Almost five centuries later, Lucian⁴³ tells us of Dionysius' attempts to get hold of Aeschylus' wax tablet, implying that the tyrant's poetic lust was developed after his own poetic failures.

Even before Dionysius' philodramatic and philoeuripidean policies however, Euripides appears to have been exceptionally popular in Sicily.⁴⁴ The description of Plutarch about the Greeks who were imprisoned in Syracuse after the downfall of the Sicilian expedition but were finally released by rehearsing bits of Euripides forms a microcosm of the wider picture:⁴⁵

ἔνιοι δὲ καὶ δι' Εὐριπίδην ἐσώθησαν. μάλιστα γάρ, ὡς ἔοικε, τῶν ἐκτὸς Ἑλλήνων ἐπόθησαν αὐτοῦ τὴν μούσαν οἱ περὶ Σικελίαν: καὶ μικρὰ τῶν ἀφικνουμένων ἐκάστοτε δείγματα καὶ γεύματα κομιζόντων ἐκμανθάνοντες ἀγαπητῶς μετεδίδοσαν ἀλλήλοις. τότε γοῦν φασὶ τῶν σωθέντων οἴκαδε συχνοὺς ἀσπάζεσθαι τὸν Εὐριπίδην φιλοφρόνως, καὶ διηγείσθαι τοὺς μὲν, ὅτι δουλεύοντες ἀφείθησαν ἐκδιδάξαντες ὅσα τῶν ἐκείνου ποιημάτων ἐμέμνητο, τοὺς δ', ὅτι πλανώμενοι μετὰ τὴν μάχην τροφῆς καὶ ὕδατος μετέλαβον τῶν μελῶν αἰσαντες.

Some also were saved for the sake of Euripides. For the Sicilians, it would seem, more than any other Hellenes outside the homeland, had a yearn-

40 On Dionysius as a tragedian see Hunter (1983) 116–117; Sanders (1987) 1–5. On his poor poetic talent, cf. characteristically the fragment of the play *Twins* by the middle comedy poet Ehippus (*PCG* fr. 16), where the speaker commits himself to the punishment of learning the dramas of Dionysius by heart, if he lies under oath. Eubulus' comedy *Dionysius* (*PCG* v fr. 24–28) was also devoted to a mockery of Dionysius' literary ambitions, most likely with Dionysius himself and Euripides as speakers [Olson (2007) 179].

41 See Tzetzes *Historiarum Variarum Chiliades* 5.178 (= *TrGF* 1 76 Test. 3); *Ael. VH* 13.18 (= *TrGF* 1 76 Test. 6); *Vita Eur.* 5 (= *TrGF* 1 76 Test. 10). Dionysius might have also sent his plays to other festivals, outside Athens (*Diod. Sic.* 15.7.3). See the discussion in Stewart (2017) 79–80.

42 Hermippus fr. 94 Wehrli (= *TrGF* 1 76 Test. 10). For a general discussion of this aspect of Dionysius' aspirations, see Hanink (2010) esp. 46–48; Nervegna (2014) 162.

43 *Adversus Indoctum* 15.

44 For a discussion of theatrical production in South Italy and Sicily in the fifth and fourth centuries, see Csapo/Wilson (2015) 328–344.

45 *Plut. Nic.* 29.2–3.

ing fondness for his poetry. They were forever learning by heart the little specimens and morsels of it which visitors brought them from time to time, and imparting them to one another with fond delight. In the present case, at any rate, they say that many Athenians who reached home in safety greeted Euripides with affectionate hearts, and recounted to him, some that they had been set free from slavery for rehearsing what they remembered of his works; and some that when they were roaming about after the final battle they had received food and drink for singing some of his choral hymns.⁴⁶

This passage is associated with the controversial information given by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric*, according to which Euripides was sent to Syracuse on a diplomatic mission.⁴⁷ The story is further enriched by the scholiast, who adds that Euripides was sent to Syracuse to release the Athenians enslaved after the expedition's downfall, those same sailors that Plutarch reports as having been freed after reciting Euripidean lines.⁴⁸

This unusual liberation story either derives from or relates to Euripides' unique popularity in Sicily. Some parts of it deserve further discussion. Plutarch reports that the Athenians were able to remember verbatim their favourite tragic parts and perform them. Such learning by heart would have been impossible without repetition, and thus reperformance. What is more striking though is that according to Plutarch, the Sicilians knew of Euripidean poetry through visitors, not actors (μικρὰ τῶν ἀφικνουμένων ἐκάστοτε δείγματα καὶ γέυματα κομιζόντων). Information concerning Athenians visiting Sicily, importing favourite Euripidean 'playlists', points to a culture of theatrical reperformance and experiential theatrical training that was taking place in formal or informal contexts.⁴⁹ Along the same lines, Aristophanes reveals that it was common to remember and recite tragic passages (namely speeches) in symposia. In the *Clouds* (1353–1372), Strepsiades explains how mad he was when his son Pheidippides chose to recite a monologue from Euripides' *Aeolus*, the content of which Strepsiades did not approve.

Getting back to the passage from Plutarch, it is time to ponder the identity of those Athenians who would visit Sicily bringing along their favourite Euripidean gems. Plutarch draws the image of random visitors and impromptu performances, meaning reperformances, which could happen in any informal

46 Text and translation by Perrin (1932).

47 Arist. *Rh.* 1384b15–16.

48 See Dearden (1990) 231.

49 A fuller discussion of the passage in Lamari (2017) 39–40.

context. That is why the size of the performed parts is described as μικρὰ δείγματα. Literature was, however, exported to Sicily in much more organized ways. Texts in general seem to have been circulating in the fifth century, and even specific transmission of texts for the purposes of a public performance has been widely practised. The first evidence comes from choral poetry. Pindar sends a text to the patron that commissioned it and expects him to organize its performance, presumably with local Choruses. *Isthmian 2* (47–48) provides a good example:

ταῦτα, Νικάσιππ', ἀπόνειμον, ὅταν
ξείνον ἐμὸν ἠθαῖον ἔλθῃς.

Import these words to him, Nikasippos,
when you visit my honorable host.⁵⁰

Analogous allusions are found elsewhere in Pindar,⁵¹ and also in several tragic passages, even though that genre's performative character tends to suppress straightforward hints to the tragic text or master script. In various passages from Aristophanes and Aeschylus, the characters allude to written forms of what they are saying or of tragedy in particular.⁵²

But it is not just texts that were 'travelling'. Since a wealthy patron from Sicily could hire Athenian actors to perform in local festivals, the trip from Athens to Sicily could have been taken by guilds of actors, who could have been putting on performances in cooperation with local Choruses or with Choruses travelling with them from Athens.⁵³ Reperformances of Euripidean plays in such a philodramatic environment seem highly possible.⁵⁴ Apart from the 'outbound' movement of the travelling troupes of actors, foreign groups of performers also visited Athens from the West.⁵⁵ An Athenian law from the fifth century forbid-

50 Text and translation by Race (1997).

51 E.g. *Pyth.* 2.66–68; *Pyth.* 3.68–79; fr. 124a–b.

52 Apart from the famous example from the *Frogs*, where Dionysus recalls reading *Andromeda* on the deck of a ship, the Chorus, in the *Frogs* again, reassure the poets about the competence of the audience, each member of which has a book and can thus understand the subtler points (*Frogs* 52–54; 1108–1114). Analogously, in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, Pelasgus alludes to the importance and power of written language (*Supp.* 946–949).

53 Dearden (1999) 226–227.

54 On a reperformance of the *Children of Heracles* in South Italy as suggested by iconographical evidence and historical context, see Allan (2001).

55 Note e.g. the tragic actor Aristodemus of Metapontum [cf. Stephanis (1988) 332]. He was an acknowledged actor and had also participated in the Athenian embassies sent to Philip II

ding foreigners to take part in Athenian Choruses testifies to those visits. The law, described in detail by Plutarch,⁵⁶ institutes a fine of 1000 drachmas for any choregos who invited a non-Athenian to join his Chorus.⁵⁷ Seen the other way around, this ‘inbound’ movement towards Athens also reveals theatrical activity beyond it. It is reasonable to suppose that the actors’ histrionic interest must have been developed by the performances presented by Athenian actors outside Athens.⁵⁸

4 Test Cases

4.1 *Archelaus*

Judging from what we know of Euripides’ *Archelaus* it seems very unlikely that its first performance took place, or even would make sense, in front of an Athenian audience of the late fifth century, and reperformances of this intriguing play are attested as late as the second half of the third century in Argos and Dodona.⁵⁹

Revermann’s statement reflects the orthodoxy regarding this play’s first performance. According to most scholars, Euripides composed *Archelaus* after migrating from Athens.⁶⁰ The main piece of evidence comes from the *Vita* (*TrGF* v Test. A 1.6 = *Archel.* Test. ii a¹):

of Macedon in the 340s BC (Dem. *On the Dishonest Embassy* 19.12; Aeschin. *On the Embassy* 17–19). See Olson/Millis (2012) 218 n. 23.

56 *Phoc.* 30.3.

57 There is however a number of performers that were active in Attica ca. 500–300 who were possibly non-citizens. See Stewart (2017) 73–81 for a discussion.

58 Allan (2001) 68 and n. 8. See also Taplin (2012) for actors’ professional travels in the Greek West (esp. pp. 236–247).

59 Revermann (2006) 69.

60 See Collard/Cropp (2008) 232; Vahtikari (2014) 87–89; Duncan (2015) 300; Lamari (2017) 46–48, *pace* Kuiper (1913) 242, who suggests that the play was (perhaps partially) written while Euripides was still in Athens. Biographical information attributes Euripides’ migration at various motives, including disappointment because of defeats at the City Dionysia, or to avoid mockery by the comic poets or his fellow citizens [for a listing of the testimonia see Kovacs (2001) 21]. For a reappraisal of such anecdotes, see Duncan (2011) 80, according to whom, ‘if Euripides wrote plays for production outside the context of democratic Athens, it may have had less to do with his attitude towards democratic Athens, or with Athens’ attitude toward him, than with a professional interest in additional sources of support for his tragedies’.

Μετέστη δὲ ἐν Μαγνησίαι καὶ προξενία ἐτιμήθη καὶ ἀτελείαι. ἐκεῖθεν δὲ εἰς Μακεδονίαν περὶ Ἀρχέλαον γενόμενος διέτριψε καὶ χαριζόμενος αὐτῷ δρᾶμα ὁμωνύμως ἔγραψε καὶ μάλα ἔπραττε παρ' αὐτῷ, ὅτε καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν διοικήσεων ἐγένετο.

He relocated himself in Magnesia, where he received the honor of being *proxenos* and of exemption from taxation.⁶¹ And from there he went to Macedon and became a member of Archelaus' court. He wrote for him a play named after him [Archelaus]. While there, he was very successful, especially when he undertook administrative duties.

ἔγραψε of the *Vita* implies that the play was not only performed, but also *written* in Macedon, although generally, biographical accuracy of the *vitae* and of that of Euripides in particular has been strongly debated.⁶² A *terminus post quem* for *Archelaus* is provided by Euripides' departure from Athens (after the performance of *Orestes* at the Dionysia of 408),⁶³ while a *terminus ante quem* is provided by his death (in 407/406).⁶⁴ Scholars generally agree that *Archelaus* was first produced in Macedon,⁶⁵ therefore in Pella, Aigai, or Dion.⁶⁶ There

61 For Easterling, this award 'looks like one of the few possibly authentic scraps of information among the fictional constructions' (1994) 76.

62 See Lefkowitz (1979) esp. 209: 'any dating based on the biography must be questioned'. The motif of exile is also recurrent (and often inaccurate) in the narratives of the *vitae* [Lefkowitz (1978) esp. 466]. A projection of Lefkowitz's hypothesis to *Archelaus* would suggest that Euripides' writing of a pro-Macedonian play in celebration of Archelaus' dynasty might have given rise to a tradition regarding a (fictional) sojourn in Macedon. The accuracy of Euripides' travel to Macedon, however, is not only generally acknowledged throughout antiquity, but also gathers indirect support by the fact that many other artists are known to have also visited the court of Archelaus, such as Agathon, the epic poet Choerilus of Samos (*Suda* s.v. Χοιρίλος [IV 834, 24 Adler]), the musician and dithyrambic poet Timotheus of Miletus. According to Aristotle (*Rh.* 1398a24) Socrates was also invited but refused to go, considering it shameful not to be able to return hospitality. See also Harder (1985) 125 n. 1.

63 *TrGF* I DID C19.

64 *TrGF* I DID D1. Cf. also the story about Sophocles' mourning of Euripides' death at the Dionysia of 406, according to which Sophocles' Chorus and actors appeared in the *proagon* wearing dark clothes and no garlands, making the crowds burst into tears (*TrGF* I DID C20).

65 Lacking any other type of evidence regarding a performance in Athens around 408–406 (*TrGF* I DID A: the *Didascaliae* for those years reveal no performance of *Archelaus*). Commenting on the biographical tradition, Kovacs notes that 'the essential point here, that the play was composed for Archelaus and first performed in Macedon, seems reliable' (2008, 232). See also Harder (1985) 126. Scullion (2003) casts doubts on Euripides' visit to Macedon, envisaging an Athenian production of the play, see below.

66 See Harder (1985) 126–127, with bibliography.

would have been no second thoughts regarding such scenarios, were it not for a passage in Aristophanes' *Frogs*. In lines 1206–1208, Euripides the character is supposedly reciting the beginning of one of his plays, being challenged by Aeschylus, who just mocked him for his prologues:

Ἄἰγυπτος, ὡς ὁ πλεῖστος ἔσπαρται λόγος,
 ξὺν παισὶ πενήκοντα ναυτίλωι πλάτηι
 Ἄργος κατασχών⁶⁷

Aegyptus, as the dominant story has been disseminated,
 accompanied by his fifty sons, with ship's oar
 came to land at Argos⁶⁸

The popular joke of Aristophanes, which may have even provoked an enthusiastic shout out from the audience along with the next (recurring) lines (ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν, 1208, 1213, 1218),⁶⁹ might have never been connected with the *Archelaus*, were it not for a puzzling note of the scholiast. The scholion on *Frogs* 1206 goes as follows:

Ἀρχελάου αὕτη ἐστὶν ἢ ἀρχή, ὡς τινες· ψευδῶς. οὐ γὰρ φέρεται νῦν Εὐριπίδου λόγος οὐδεὶς τοιοῦτος. οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶ, φησὶν Ἀρίσταρχος, τοῦ Ἀρχελάου, εἰ μὴ αὐτὸς μετέθηκεν ὕστερον, ὁ δὲ Ἀριστοφάνης τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς κείμενον εἶπεν.⁷⁰

This is the beginning of Archelaus, as some say; falsely. For no such passage of Euripides is now in circulation. For it is not, says Aristarchus, from Archelaus, unless he himself (sc. Euripides) altered it later, but Aristophanes quoted the original beginning.⁷¹

The scholiast believes that the lines are not Euripidean. He then though invokes Aristarchus, according to whom the lines are not from *Archelaus* (but not necessarily non-Euripidean), unless Euripides added later the lines that we now have as the beginning of the play.

67 *TrGF* v 2 fr. 846.

68 Translation by Scullion (2006).

69 The comic effect of the phrase *ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν* 'is heightened by repetition—it is the humour more of children's pantomime than of sophisticated comedy—because the audience can see the fatal phrase coming, and some of them may have shouted it out with Aeschylus after the first two occasions of its use', Dover (1993) *ad* 1200.

70 *TrGF* v 2 *ad* fr. 846.

71 Translation by Scullion (2006) 185.

The prologue that must have been familiar to Aristarchus is the beginning also envisaged by the majority of recent editors⁷² (*TrGF* v 1 fr. 228):

Δαναὸς ὁ πενήκοντα θυγατέρων πατήρ
 Νείλου λιπῶν κάλλιστον †ἐκ γαίας† ὕδωρ,
 {ὄς ἐκ μελαμβρότοιο πληροῦται ῥοὰς
 Αἰθιοπίδος γῆς, ἥνικ' ἄν τακῆι χιῶν
 †τεθριππεύοντος† ἡλίου κατ' αἰθέρα,}
 ἔλθῶν ἐς Ἄργος ὤικισ' Ἰνάχου πόλιν·
 Πελασγιώτας δ' ὠνομασμένους τὸ πρὶν
 Δαναοὺς καλεῖσθαι νόμον ἔθηκ' ἄν' Ἑλλάδα.

Danaus, who fathered fifty daughters, left the most lovely water †in the world† of the Nile {which fills its streams from the dark-peopled land of Ethiopia when the snow melts as the sun †drives his chariot† through the sky} and reaching Argos founded Inachus' city, laying down the rule that hose once named Pelasgians should now be known as Danaans all over Hellas.⁷³

Several theories have been proposed regarding these inconsistencies. Nauck understands the lines of the *Frogs* as mistakenly attributed to *Archelaus* by the Alexandrians, or endorses the possibility of two different beginnings.⁷⁴ Two different versions, with two different beginnings are also put forth by Valckenaer, Welcker, and Koster,⁷⁵ with Bergk, Roemer,⁷⁶ and Van der Valk also adding that the first version of the play might have been written in Athens and the second in Macedon.⁷⁷ Page explained the high accumulation of stylistic oddities of fr. 228 by putting forth the possibility of an actor's interpolation.⁷⁸

After reviewing all proposals, Harder is more favourably disposed towards the hypothesis of mistaken attribution, suggesting that fr. 228 is most probably the 'real' beginning of the play: it has the support of the testimonia, it agrees with the sources of Aristarchus, and Danaus is more appropriate an ances-

72 Collard/Cropp (2008) *ad* fr. 846.

73 Text and translation are by Collard/Cropp (2008).

74 Nauck *ad* fr. 229 (1856) / fr. 846 (1889).

75 Valckenaer (1767) 162; Welcker (1841) 700 f. n. 3; Koster (1971).

76 Bergk (1838) 95 f.; Roemer (1908) 356.

77 Perhaps in order to create a more flattering outcome for Archelaus [Van der Valk (1982) 418 f.].

78 Page (1934) 93.

tor than Aegyptus.⁷⁹ Subsequently Scullion builds a theory⁸⁰ against Harder's, claiming that fragment 847 was more likely to have been the original, although 'the claims of neither fragment can be dismissed'.⁸¹ Scullion goes on to challenge even Euripides' trip to Macedon, maintaining that he probably died in Athens.⁸²

No secure answer can be given. Addressing the problem through the lens of a reperformative culture adds another dimension to the discussion. The issue of the effectiveness of the Aristophanic joke, as well as the spread of reperformances across Greece, may provide a possible answer to the above inconsistencies. Aristophanes' joke would have been meaningless if the audience was not in the position of recognizing the relevant passage (fr. 847), if not as *Archelaus*, at least as Euripidean.⁸³ This brings us to the next question: why do we encounter in first place the possibility that it comes from *Archelaus*? It is because of the information given by the scholiast, according to whom the passage is not from *Archelaus*, unless Euripides himself altered it later, but Aristophanes quoted the original beginning (εἰ μὴ αὐτὸς μετέθηκεν ὕστερον, ὃ δὲ Ἀριστοφάνης τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς κείμενον εἶπεν). The last sentence of the scholion presents these passages as the two possible beginnings of the play. Although the aim of the scholiast was to condemn fr. 847, he actually favours it by introducing the likelihood of two different versions of the prologue. Resuming the argumentation of Scullion, such probability is reinforced by the existence of other plays with double prologues, like *Rhesus*⁸⁴ or *Meleager*, as well as by the fact that given the limited number of plays that failed to survive down to the Alexandrian era, fr. 847 may have belonged to an unknown play.⁸⁵

The possibility of a double prologue is especially bolstered in a reperformative theatrical context. The fact that Aristophanes' spectators should have been able to get the reference to the quoted play means that the play must have been well known amongst the Athenians. At the same time though, the play

79 Harder (1985) 181.

80 Scullion (2003), (2006).

81 Scullion (2006) 191.

82 Scullion (2003) 394–396.

83 There is no doubt that the levels of reception of the joke varied, according to the audience's literacy [Lamari (2015) 201–202; see also Finglass (2018) esp. 36–37, for an example of how members of the audience could appreciate tragedy more if they had some knowledge of Stesichorus]. It is safe though to expect a minimum understanding that would register the reference to the quoted prologue at least as Euripidean.

84 On the prologues of *Rhesus* and their connection to the institution of reperformances, see Fantuzzi (2015).

85 Scullion (2006) 187.

is undoubtedly connected to Macedon. A possible explanation would involve a double beginning, prepared for different audiences, or altered accordingly when prepared for reperformance, even by Euripides' theatrical heirs. In the light of a reperformance culture, which, at the time of the composition of the play, appears as vibrant in Athens as outside it,⁸⁶ Euripides might have written the play either in the south or in the north and then altered it accordingly.⁸⁷

4.2 *Meleager*

The beginning of *Meleager* involves similar problems. In the *Frogs* (1177–1250), Aristophanes alludes to a number of Euripidean beginnings, from *Antigone*, *Hypsipyle*, *Phrixos*, *Melanippe*, *Archelaus*. In lines 1237–1242, the character Euripides is beginning the joke by invoking what Aristophanes treats as the first lines of *Meleager*; Aeschylus is interrupting him with the *ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν* catch-phrase,⁸⁸ and Euripides bounces back, demanding Aeschylus to let him finish the line:

EYP.

‘Οἰνεύς ποτ’ ἐκ γῆς’-

AISX.

ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν

EYP.

ἔασον εἰπεῖν πρῶθ’ ὅλον με τὸν στίχον.

‘Οἰνεύς ποτ’ ἐκ γῆς πολύμετρον λαβῶν στάχυν

θύων ἀπαρχάς’-

AISX.

ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσε.

EUR.

‘Once Oeneus from his land’-

AESCH.

lost his oil bottle.

EUR.

At least let me finish the whole line first! ‘Once Oeneus from his land reaped a bounteous harvest, and while sacrificing the first fruits’-

AESCH.

lost his oil bottle.⁸⁹

86 See Csapo/Wilson (2015); Lamari (2017).

87 See also the discussion in Lamari (2017) 45–50.

88 Cf. the above discussion of *ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν* with reference to *Archelaus*.

89 Text and translation by Henderson (2002).

According to Aristophanes, *Meleager* begins with the lines Οἶνεύς ποτ' ἐκ γῆς πολῦμετρον λαβῶν στάχυν / θύων ἀπαρχάς (= fr. 516, *TrGF* v 1). Some scholia on *Frogs* 1238 however,⁹⁰ place the lines after the line Καλυδῶν μὲν ἦδε γαῖα, Πελοπίας χθονός (= line 1, fr. 515, *TrGF* v 1). The scholia comment on the lines as following:

ἔστι μὲν [fr. 516] ἐκ Μελεάγρου μετὰ ἱκανὰ τῆς ἀρχῆς. ἡ δὲ ἀρχὴ τοῦ δράματος 'Καλυδῶν μὲν-χθονός' [fr. 515]

This could be from *Meleager* after the beginning. For its beginning is the line 'Καλυδῶν μὲν-χθονός'.

The scholiasts possibly rely on an edition in which *Meleager* starts with fr. 515, then followed by fr. 516. This would mean that Euripides the character recited in the *Frogs* not the beginning, but some later part from *Meleager's* prologue.⁹¹

The structure of the Aristophanic scene however makes us expect the very beginning of the play, not simply a part from its prologue, as is the case with the rest of the invoked plays.⁹² This was the main argument put forth by Fritzsche,⁹³ and endorsed by Kannicht,⁹⁴ when proposing that fr. 516 should be considered as the 'initial', 'original' beginning of the play, onto which fr. 515 was later added by Euripides, the son of the playwright. According to this theory, some new lines were added to the prologue by Euripides' son, in order to prevent the audience from shouting *ληγύθιον ἀπώλεσεν* at the end of the famous line,⁹⁵ as they would have done in a (re)performance of the *Frogs*.

This assumption is more tempting given the line structure of the passage, but also the comedy's popularity. The possible tendency of the audience to interrupt Euripides with the *ληγύθιον ἀπώλεσεν* phrase is reinforced by Aristophanes

90 Schol. VEBarbΘ according to Kannicht (*ad* fr. 516, *TrGF* v 1).

91 Cf. Valckenaer (1824) 143 [= (1767) 138a–b]; Welcker (1841) (11) 753; Blass (1897) 152. Those following this explanation also favour the substitution of Οἶνεύς (line 1, fr. 516) with the pronoun οὗτος in order to avoid the repetition of the name, given the fact that fr. 516 follows fr. 515. See Kannicht *ad TrGF* v 1, 515–516.

92 *Frogs* 1182 allude to the first line of Euripides' *Antigone* (fr. 157), 1211 to *Hypsipyle* (fr. 752), 1217 to *Steneboea* (fr. 661), 1225 to *Phrixus* (fr. 819), 1232 to *Iphigenia in Tauris*, and 1244 to *Melanippe* (fr. 481).

93 Fritzsche (1845) 367.

94 Kannicht *ad TrGF* v 1, 515–516.

95 See Dover (1993) 337–338, 'the humour is heightened by repetition ... because the audience can see the fatal phrase coming ... and some of them may have shouted it out with Aeschylus after the first two occasions of its use'.

himself, making Aeschylus interrupt Euripides on line 1238. Euripides manages to finally deliver just a line and a half (1240–1241) after he tells Aeschylus to let him finish the line (ἔασον εἰπεῖν πρῶθ' ὅλον με τὸν στίχον, 1239). The audience's ecstatic interruptions must have been rightly expected by the reviewer of the prologue of *Meleager*, given the *Frogs*' popularity, which granted the play a reperformance, most probably very soon after its premiere.⁹⁶

In the prose hypothesis of the *Frogs*, Dicaearchus is said to have reported that the parabasis of the play was so admired that the play was even re-performed.⁹⁷ Sommerstein argues for a reperformance at the Lenaea of 404,⁹⁸ a proposal also adopted by Dover, who lists further possible lines of the play that might have been revised for that reperformance.⁹⁹ If indeed the *Frogs* were so popular, it can be plausibly argued that its reperformance might have drastically influenced the text script used for a reperformance of a Euripidean favourite. Reperformative practices were from the fifth century a vigorous theatrical reality, whose role was much more critical than just the repetition of favourite theatrical picks.¹⁰⁰ It is only by endorsing such a (re)performative point of view that more flexibility is gained regarding the textual impact of performances and reperformances on the textualization of dramatic compositions.

So far, ancient reperformances of Euripidean tragedies have been roughly considered a characteristic of postclassical theatre. An investigation of the relevant testimonia however points to a growing interest in restagings of Euripides' plays not only posthumously, but even during his lifetime. In parallel with the geographical expansion of theatrical productions across Greece and the theatre's continuous development, reperformances of Euripides formed part of theatrical reality from the fifth century and played a drastic role in the inner mechanics of the evolution of the genre.¹⁰¹

96 On the reperformance of the *Frogs* after its premiere, see Rosen (2015).

97 ὥστε καὶ ἀνεδιδάχθη, Hypoth. 1c Dover=111.32 Wilson. On the hypotheses of Euripides and Sophocles by Dicaearchus, see Verhasselt (2015).

98 Sommerstein (2009) 254–259.

99 Dover (1993) 75–76.

100 On the vital role of ancient reperformances on the transmission of classical texts, see Fin-glass (2015b).

101 Vase-painting can also testify to this, regardless of the necessary cautions about relating vase-painting to plays. Half of the surviving Euripidean plays have related vases, and more specifically, *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, and *Iphigenia Among the Taurians* are widely reflected in iconography [Taplin (2007) 109]. This certainly reflects fourth-century Euripidean restagings, but might also point to earlier Euripidean reperformances, as seems to be the case with Euripides' *Cyclops* and a Lucanian calyx krater of 415–410 (British Museum 1947, 0714.18), which bears important similarities to the play. See Lamari (2017) 131–158 for a

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PART 5

Religion, History, and Politics



Ritual in Euripides

Rush Rehm

1 Overview of Greek Religious Ritual

Although we find no single Greek word for ‘ritual’ as a general concept, ritual practice played an essential role in ancient Greek religion and informed many aspects of Attic tragedy. Rituals offered a formalized way for the ancient Greeks to involve, seek assistance from, and render thanks to the gods. Anthropologists now define ritual as a culturally derived system of symbolic communication,¹ involving practices performed in essentially the same form either at regular intervals (a pattern of behaviour) or on specific occasions (e.g., when a couple marries). Contact with gods or spirits does not appear in this definition, and in popular use the term can refer to any repeated action: taking out the trash, doing one’s taxes, walking the dog, watching the evening news, brushing teeth. Most of today’s ‘rituals’ bear no relationship to religious tradition, divine power, or the sacred. The Greeks of Euripides’ day certainly exhibited habitual behaviour in their daily lives, but I focus here on what we now must label ‘religious’ ritual in Euripides’ plays.

Greek religion involved an exchange with the gods, usually in the form of prayers frequently accompanied by animal (blood) sacrifice, offerings (fruit, cereals, milk, honey, wine, water), hymns, choral dancing, and other ritual protocols aimed at honouring the gods and gaining their assistance.² Aphrodite declares in the prologue of *Hippolytus*, ‘All the gods share this trait: / they delight in receiving honors from mortals’ (*Hipp.* 7–8).³ In the *Bacchae*, Tiresias reminds Pentheus that, just as he enjoys the adulation of his citizens, ‘the gods, too, delight in being honored’ (*Ba.* 319–321). By pleasing the gods, humans could gain their help going through important rites of passage—childbirth, puberty,

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- 1 The oft-quoted, but vague and overly inclusive, definition by Tambiah (1985) 128. For problems with this conception of ritual, see Scullion (2002); Bell (1992); and Smith (1987) 100–107.
 - 2 On prayers, sacrifice, and hymns, see Gould (2001) 216–226 [= Easterling/Muir (1985) 14–24]; Pulleyn (1997); and Ogden 2007 (especially Furley, Bremmer, and Bendlin). Furley (120) notes that animal sacrifice is not the focus of the ritual: ‘the prayer is the point of the ritual; everything else goes toward giving this maximum emphasis and persuasiveness’.
 - 3 Text and translation (occasionally amended by the author) follow Kovacs (1994–2002).

menarche, marriage, death. Ritual offerings also secured divine assistance during the agricultural cycle, promoting fertility and productivity.⁴

In a different vein, ritual divination played an important role in understanding and affecting a world without the explanatory and predictive powers of modern science. Using prophets to interpret natural signs and other occurrences, inductive divination ‘read’ the entrails of sacrificed animals (hieroscopy), bird omens (ornithomancy), the movement of flames in a fire (empyromancy), and dreams (oneiromancy). As Theseus claims in *Suppliant Women*, ‘Unclear matters, about which we have no secure knowledge, / seers help us understand, by examining the flames in fire, /the folds of entrails, and the flight of birds’ (*Supp.* 211–213).⁵

Those with sufficient means could travel to Apollo’s sanctuary at Delphi or Zeus’ at Dodona, undertaking an oracular mission (*theôria*) to learn what might lie ahead and how best to plan for it, a common feature in Greek tragedy.⁶ Theseus in *Hippolytus*, Aegeus in *Medea*, and Orestes in *Electra* arrive onstage after visiting the oracle at Delphi; in *Andromache*, Orestes is heading for the oracle at Dodona when he rescues Hermione in Thessaly, and they change course for Delphi. Sent from Tyre as a choral mission for Apollo’s Delphic sanctuary, the Chorus of maidens in *Phoenissae* must remain in Thebes due to the Argive invasion (*Phoen.* 202–260).

Other Greek rituals included prayers and offerings before a battle or athletic contest and after a victory, which might involve erecting a victory monument (*tropaion*, literally ‘turning point’ or ‘rout’) and singing a hymn of praise (*paian*) to the god who helped in the fight; the rite of supplication for those seeking asylum or pleading for help or mercy (*hiketeia*); swearing an oath or uttering a curse; and purification of a physical space or person by removing pollution.⁷ We find some version of all these rituals in Greek tragedy, and—as we shall see—Euripides uses them to great dramatic effect.

4 Easterling/Muir (1985) offer a fine overview; on cyclical as opposed to transitional rites, see Bremmer (1994) 4 and, generally, 38–54.

5 Non-oracular divination plays a key role in *Heraclidae*, *Hecuba*, *Suppliant Women*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, *Helen*, *Phoenissae*, and *Iphigenia at Aulis*.

6 See Bonnechere in Odgen (2007) 150–156; Nightingale (2004) 40–71. In addition to the plays mentioned here, theoric missions to the oracular site of Delphi—already completed, taking place during the play, or prophesied for the future—also occur in *Ion* (set at Delphi), *Orestes*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, and implied in *Heraclidae* (1028–1044).

7 Battlefield rituals, supplication, oaths, and curses are discussed below; regarding purification, see *Or.* 46–51, 429–430, 512–517, 1602–1604 (the matricide lacks ritual cleansing); *IT* 1196–1233 (polluted statue of Artemis needs purification); *El.* 652–656 and 1124–1133 (*Electra* requires purification after childbirth).

Euripides' plays were performed at the annual City Dionysia in Athens, where various rituals helped set the stage for the competitive performances of dithyrambs, tragedies, and comedies. These included a nocturnal procession, large-scale sacrifice and distribution of the meat in a communal feast and elaborate pre-performance rituals in the orchestra (purifying the theatre space, libations poured by the elected generals [*stratêgoi*], the presentation of tribute from Athenian allies, and a parade of the orphans of veterans who received hoplite armor and took their complimentary seats for the performances).⁸ Nominally presented to Dionysus Eleuthereus, the performances attracted large audiences from Attica and beyond, converting an ostensibly 'religious event' into a civic festival. The archon in charge of the Greater Dionysia was *not* the archon basileus, who oversaw religious festivals like the Eleusinian Mysteries, but the archon eponymous, closer to our contemporary office of mayor or city manager.⁹

Lavish collective offerings, such as those at the great civic festivals, bear little resemblance to the rituals one finds in Greek tragedy, which tend to focus on efficacy rather than display. At the burial of her grandson Astyanax in Euripides' *Trojan Women*, Hecuba insists on the former:

He has all the funeral adornment that he needs.
I think it makes little difference to the dead
if they receive a lavish funeral.
That is merely the idle display of the living.

Tro. 1247–1250

We may contrast Admetus' response to the death of his wife in *Alcestis*. Outlawing all symposia and music in the palace, he vows to remain in mourning the rest of his life, not for the traditional year (*Alc.* 336–347). Not only must all his subjects also wear black and cut their hair; they must cut their *horses' manes* and forbear music (425–431). Admetus' excessive funereal ritual dramatizes his responsibility for Alcestis' sacrifice far more than his respect for her or the gods below, demonstrated by appropriate mourning ritual.

Like the other Attic playwrights, Euripides evokes or enacts an array of rituals in each of his tragedies, emphasizing the importance of a scene and magnifying its impact on the audience. Time and again, he establishes a ritual context in which to mark a dramatic crisis or turning point in the play,

8 On the City Dionysia festival and attendant rituals, see Rehm (2017) 13–21; Goldhill (1987); and Csapo/Slater (1995) 103–165.

9 Parker (1997) 7–8, 27, 92–95, 129; Parke (1977) 17, 57, 105, 110–113, 129–132.

or to reveal important aspects of a dramatic character. He also uses ritual to re-think the nature of tragedy, the theatrical form to which he contributed so vitally and which he helped to transform. The ritual enacted most frequently and with greatest effect by Euripides is that of supplication, to which we now turn.¹⁰

2 Supplication

A Greek facing a desperate situation could place himself at the mercy of another by ritual supplication. Kneeling before a stronger party, grasping their hand or chin, embracing their knees, or showing other signs of deference, the abject person would say *hiketeuô* ('I supplicate ...') and ask for protection or some other boon. The appeal also could take place at a god's altar or at the tomb of a hero, with the suppliant signalling his or her status by bearing (when possible) small branches or wands wound with wool. Calling on the appropriate deity (or on the dead hero, if at a tomb), the suppliant requested help and asylum, with the understanding that the gods—particularly Zeus—protected those who took such an extreme step.¹¹

Supplication provides a ritual particularly suited to Euripidean tragedy, which frequently focuses on a defeated people (*Trojan Women*, *Hecuba*), a marginal group (*Heraclidae*, *Suppliant Women*, the family in *Heracles*), or a vulnerable person (*Medea*, *Andromache*, *Helen*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Creusa in Ion*). The ritual constrains the stronger party by threatening possible divine retribution should they fail to respect the weaker. In *Hippolytus*, the Nurse supplicates Phaedra (*Hipp.* 325–336), begging to learn the source of her distress. Phaedra feels compelled to respond—'You are forcing me' (325); 'Your gesture commands that I honor your request' (335)—and confesses her illicit love. The Nurse reveals all to Hippolytus, whose horrified reaction leads her to supplicate him to honour his oath of silence (607–615). In this tragedy, ritual supplication first reveals, and then conceals, information that proves fatal to both Phaedra and Hippolytus.

10 Euripidean tragedies often arise from a desperate situation involving supplication (seeking political refuge in *Heraclidae*; deprived of burial in *Suppliant Women*; pleading to save innocent life in *Hecuba*, *Phoennissae*, *Trojan Women*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*; etc.). Requiring no theatrical resources other than dramatic characters, supplication has obvious staging advantages over other rituals, such as sacrifice.

11 Gould (2001) 22–77.

Five Euripidean tragedies begin with suppliants at an altar or tomb—*Suppliant Women*, *Heraclidae*, *Heracles*, *Andromache*, and *Helen*.¹² Discussed below, *Suppliant Women* begins with the Argive mothers surrounding Aethra at Demeter's altar in Eleusis, begging for her help in burying their sons. In *Heraclidae*, the sons of Heracles remain at the altar of Zeus Agoraios ('of the market') in Marathon throughout the play; their sisters have taken refuge inside the temple (*Hcl*d. 1–47). Accompanied by Iolaus, the children seek Athens' protection from Eurystheus, whose herald forces Iolaus from the altar (61–79), defiling the sacred rite of supplication and the sovereignty of Athens (101–113, 123–129). When the Athenian leader arrives, Iolaus supplicates Demophon directly, allowing Euripides to present *two* suppliant groups at the same time, one at the altar and one on his knees to the city's ruler. Vowing to defend Heracles' offspring, Demophon links civic duty with ritual observance: 'How is it just to drive suppliants away by force? / ... The gods' sanctuaries are a common defense for all / ... I shall not defile the gods' (254–264).

Heracles also opens with his family in supplication at an altar, that of Zeus Sôter ('Saviour'). When Lycus threatens to immolate them there (*HF* 240–246), Megara abandons the altar but successfully supplicates the tyrant to allow them to dress for burial (327–335). Heracles arrives just in time to learn that his family is now suppliant at the altar of Hestia inside the house (712–725). Heracles kills the tyrant but is struck mad by Hera while performing the ritual purification of his home. Rejecting his wife and sons' suppliant pleas, he murders them at Hestia's altar (967–994) where they had taken refuge. In *Heracles*, one ritual crisis follows another, centring on Lycus' initial violation of the rights of suppliants.

Andromache follows a similar pattern, with the title character discovered in supplication at the altar of Thetis (*Andr.* 1–441). Jealous of her husband's concubine, Hermione threatens to burn Andromache at the altar (273), eliciting the help of her father Menelaus, who threatens to kill Andromache's son (411). The ritual now spreads beyond the altar, as the young boy unsuccessfully supplicates Menelaus for mercy (530–547), Neoptolemus' grandfather Peleus arrives, and in the third enactment of the ritual Andromache supplicates him for help (573–717).¹³ Peleus drives Menelaus off, and the disgraced Hermione doubts that any god would receive *her* supplication: 'Should I fall as a slave before the knees of a slave?' (859–860)—that is, should she supplicate Andromache? Arriving on his way to Dodona, Orestes spares her that indignity, for

12 These take place via a 'cancelled entry' [Taplin (1977) 134–136]; for staging suppliant plays, see Rehm (1988).

13 Menelaus prevents Andromache from making physical contact with Peleus (*Andr.* 572–580), but his efforts fail to weaken Peleus' commitment to honour the gods.

Hermione supplicates *him* (891–986), the fourth supplication enacted onstage. In the final reference to the ritual, we learn that Orestes earlier had begged Apollo at Delphi to remove his pollution (1031–1036). In *Andromache*, Euripides uses the ritual to articulate the twists and turns of his plot, uniting a vulnerable slave and concubine, a jealous and fearful wife, an innocent child, and a matricide who then murders his rival in the very sanctuary where he had begged the god for purification.

Helen, too, begins with the protagonist as suppliant, taking refuge at the tomb of Proteus to avoid marriage to Theoclymenus (*Hel.* 1–330). Leaving the tomb to seek guidance from the Theonoe (317–330, 528–538), Helen races back to her suppliant protection when confronted by the unrecognized Menelaus (541–545). Once reunited with her husband, Helen explains her suppliance (793–801), which prompts yet another supplication, this time to Theonoe to help them escape (894–943). The proud Menelaus refuses to join this supplication (944–951), although he does beg for Proteus' help at the tomb (959–974). When Theoclymenus returns, Helen supplicates the Egyptian ruler to allow her to honour Menelaus' death at sea with burial rites (1237–1249). Euripides uses four onstage supplications, plus fabricated funeral rites, and ersatz wedding preparations, to reconstitute the marriage of Helen and Menelaus, all in the aftermath of a war fought over a phantom.

Ritual supplication also plays a role in tragedies that do not begin with someone at a tomb or altar. In *Bacchae*, we hear that Pentheus supplicated his crazed mother on Mt. Cithaeron, begging her to recognize him and show mercy (*Ba.* 1115–1124). Forced to oversee the ritual sacrifice of Greeks to Artemis, Iphigenia recalls her failed supplication of her father at Artemis' altar in Aulis (*IT* 361–371). In *Iphigenia at Aulis* (*IA* 900–1008), Clytemnestra implores Achilles to defend her daughter: 'I have no altar to flee to except your knees' (911). Later, Iphigenia supplicates Agamemnon directly, even asking her infant brother Orestes to join her ritual plea (1214–1275). At a crucial moment in *Ion*, Creusa flees to Apollo's altar, seeking refuge from Ion, whom she tried to kill and who now seeks her death (*Ion* 1252–1401); happily, supplication soon yields to recognition. In *Orestes*, the protagonist supplicates Menelaus to save him from execution (*Or.* 382–544). Seeking Orestes' death, Tyndareus recalls his daughter Clytemnestra's unsuccessful supplication before the matricide (526–529). Orestes then supplicates Menelaus a *second* time (671–717), but the Greek hero breaks free of his grasp.¹⁴ These three 'failed' supplications (one in the past,

14 Agamemnon does the same in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, breaking free of his daughter's supplication (*IA* 1275).

two performed onstage) set the stage for the murder of Helen, paying Menelaus back for his failure to defend the rights of the suppliant.

In *Phoenissae*, Creon learns that victory against the Argive invaders requires that he sacrifice his son Menoeceus, and he supplicates Tiresias not to make the prophecy public (*Phoen.* 923–929). In her effort to stop kindred bloodshed, Jocasta races to the battlefield to supplicate her sons Polynices and Eteocles (1278), but she arrives too late and kills herself over their corpses (1567–1578). Bringing the ritual home at the end of the play, Euripides has Oedipus *refuse* to supplicate Creon to rescind his exile. The blind man asserts that such abject behaviour would betray his noble blood (1622–1626), just as Menelaus refuses to supplicate Theonoe in *Helen* (*Hel.* 944–951) and Polyxena does the same in *Hecuba* (*Hec.* 334–348).

Medea features four separate onstage supplications and evokes three more. In the prologue, the Nurse supplicates the Tutor to divulge the news of Medea's exile from Thebes (*Med.* 65–66). When she learns of her fate, Medea embraces Creon's knees and begs him for one day's respite to order her affairs (324–356). Confronting Jason, Medea reminds him of his desperate supplication of her in Iolchus (496–498), to no avail. When Aegeus arrives from Delphi, Medea supplicates him for sanctuary in Athens (709–721), which he grants. Revealing her plan to kill her children, Medea becomes the object of the Chorus' supplication (853–855), the fourth enactment of the ritual in the play. They implore Medea to imagine her terrified children supplicating *her* for mercy (862–865). Committed to revenge, however, Medea tells *her children* to supplicate Jason's new bride to allow them to remain in Thebes, using the gifts she has prepared to strengthen their appeal (969–973). As we shall see below, Euripides joins supplication with other rituals to highlight the injustices done to Medea and those she perpetrates herself.

Perhaps no more abject figure appears on the tragic stage than the title character of Euripides' *Hecuba*. We learn of her son's murder in the prologue, and the Chorus inform the fallen queen of the impending sacrifice of her daughter at Achilles' tomb. The Trojan women urge Hecuba to use every means to save Polyxena—supplicating at the altar or in the temple, kneeling before the Greek commander Agamemnon: 'Either your prayers will save her, or you'll watch her blood flow at the tomb' (*Hec.* 144–152). When Odysseus arrives to escort Polyxena to her death, Hecuba recalls how she honoured his desperate supplication when she saved his life at Troy (243–250). She embraces his knees, begging for his help, even offering herself in place of Polyxena, to no avail (271–334).¹⁵ Hecuba then implores Polyxena to kneel before Odysseus, but

15 The Chorus refer to their own failed supplication of Artemis (*Tro.* 933–935) the night Troy fell, when celebration over the Trojan horse turned to horror at the sack of the city.

the young maiden refuses (334–348), knowing her request will be denied. After Hecuba learns of the murder of Polydorus, she debates with herself whether or not to appeal to Agamemnon for help in taking vengeance on Polymestor, who butchered her son (736–753). This time Hecuba's supplication proves successful, aided by her sordid reminder that Agamemnon has taken her daughter Cassandra as his concubine. In the moral quicksand of this troubling play, Hecuba moves from the abjection of a failed suppliant unable to save her children, to the strength of a successful suppliant, who then blinds Polymestor and kills his innocent young sons.¹⁶

3 Oaths and Curses

After successfully supplicating Aegeus, Medea compels him to swear that he will provide sanctuary for her in Athens (*Med.* 731–758). Aegeus' oath marks the play's turning point, for when he leaves Medea reveals her plan to kill her children (764–811). By giving such prominence to this ritual invocation of the gods, Euripides implicitly contrasts Aegeus' oath with those false oaths sworn by Jason (20–23, 160–165), whom the Chorus denounce: 'The grace of oaths has departed; no longer does respect / for oaths remain anywhere in Greece' (439–440).

At the end of *Suppliant Women*, Athena insists that Theseus exact an elaborate oath from Adrastus (*Supp.* 1183–1212), making him swear that the gods will destroy his city if it ever invades Attica. Sealed with the sacrifice of three sheep, slain over the tripod that Theseus dedicated to Apollo, the oath must be carved into the cauldron and displayed at Delphi for all to see. The goddess instructs Theseus to bury the knife used to kill the sheep near the funeral pyres of the Argive Seven, material evidence of the sworn oath. This intricate ritual sequence highlights the long-term political importance of Athens' legendary help in burying the Argive heroes, relevant to the fifth-century Athenian audience concerned with negotiating an alliance with Argos during the Peloponnesian War, in the very year the play was performed.¹⁷

Oaths, prayers, and curses—verbal rituals requiring only a speaker and an occasion—occur frequently in Euripides, but nowhere with more tragic results than *Hippolytus*. By keeping his oath not to divulge Phaedra's passion (*Hipp.*

16 We may contrast Hecuba in *Trojan Women*, who also must endure Polyxena's sacrifice and Agamemnon's rape of Cassandra but has no means of taking revenge. Her sole supplication involves begging Menelaus to punish Helen (*Tro.* 1044–1045).

17 Rehm (2017) 146 and notes.

611–612, 657–660), the protagonist pays with his life. Convinced of Hippolytus' guilt, Theseus uses a curse granted him by Poseidon to bring about his son's death (885–890). Hippolytus counters by swearing an oath to Zeus that he did nothing to Phaedra (1025–1031, 1191–1193), but Theseus rejects this out of hand (1055–1059). As Artemis makes clear, ritual access to god-like power brings disaster in its wake (1282–1324), leading the dying Hippolytus to turn Poseidon's gift back on the giver: 'Would that the race of men could curse the gods!' (1411–1415).

4 Sacrifice

Some scholars argue that ritualized bloodshed lies behind the birth of Greek tragedy.¹⁸ Whatever its origins, tragedy incorporates sacrifice in many forms, and it often arises quite naturally from the setting and context. Before consulting an oracle, for example, the pilgrim would offer a preliminary sacrifice to 'pave the way' to a propitious response, as Ion explains. The young temple slave outlines the protocols at Delphi, with the initial burning of a holy cake, followed by the sacrifice of a sheep (*Ion* 226–229). On his mission to Delphi in *Andromache*, Neoptolemus sacrifices sheep as he prays to Apollo to forgive him (*And.* 1100–1113).

Animal sacrifice also marked significant rites of passage, which Electra exploits when she claims she has given birth and needs her mother to assist her with the necessary sacrifices and purification (*El.* 1123–1134). As part of the sacrifice to celebrate Ion's 'birthday' (*Ion* 651–653), Xuthus invites guests to a communal feast (663–665, 804–807, 1031–1033, 1122–1132, 1168–1170).¹⁹ For the wedding of her daughter at Aulis, Clytemnestra asks Agamemnon about the women's feast and the wedding banquet that should follow the nuptial sacrifices (*IA* 716–729). In *Electra*, Aegisthus invites the unrecognized Orestes and Pylades to join in the feasting after his sacrifice to the Nymphs (*El.* 783–789).

Accompanied by prayers for success, animal sacrifice also preceded military campaigns, as the armies tried to anticipate—and influence—the outcome. Menelaus asks the crazed Orestes how he could imagine himself making pre-battle sacrifices on behalf of the city (*Or.* 1060–1063). In *Phoenissae*, Amphiarus readies a sacrifice before the Argives invade Thebes (*Phoen.* 173–174), and

18 See Burkert (1966) and (1985) 1–4; also Girard (1977); for wise reflection, Easterling (1988).

19 A feast usually followed animal sacrifice; the gods desired only the smoke and burning fat, leaving the edible flesh for humans to consume.

prophets oversee the pre-battle offerings and read the flames for signs of success (1255–1258). Preparing to engage Eurystheus' army, Demophon announces that sacrificial victims stand ready (*Hclid.* 398–401), as does Hyllus when he arrives with his troops (673).

As with athletic victories, Greeks could celebrate military success by garlanding the victors and honouring them with hymns and sacrifice.²⁰ Sacrificial ritual also could precede the raising of a marker to Zeus Tropaïos (*tropaïos*, 'of the rout,' literally 'turning point'). In *Phoenissae*, Jocasta wonders how Polynices could dare to offer sacrifice and dedicate a trophy to Zeus, should he conquer his *own* city (571–577). After defeating the Argive invaders, Theban soldiers do raise a victory marker to Zeus (1472–1473). In *Heracles*, the protagonist has erected an altar to Zeus following his victory over the Minyans (*HF* 47–50), the place where Heracles' family takes refuge from Lycus. In *Andromache*, Peleus describes the perverse custom of setting up a victory trophy that honours the general rather than to those who did the fighting (*Andr.* 693–698). Redeeming the ritual, the Chorus in *Suppliant Women* ask how Theseus and his fellow soldiers set up the victory trophy to Zeus, following their victory over the Thebans (*Supp.* 647–648).²¹

In the world of tragedy, sacrifice before battle can involve a human victim, perverting the traditional ritual. Greek religion neither required nor condoned human sacrifice, but many myths feature the shedding of innocent blood. These include the sacrifice of Iphigenia before the Greeks can sail for Troy (Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Sophocles' *Electra*, and Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, *Electra*, and *Orestes*), and the slaughter of Polyxena at the grave of Achilles, allowing the Greeks to sail home at the end of the war (*Trojan Women*, *Hecuba*). These stories exploit the 'slippage' from animal to human blood-letting, especially in Euripides' version of Iphigenia's death at Aulis, where Artemis substitutes a deer for the maiden at the last minute (*IA* 1577–1612, *IT* 4–33).

We find a similar extension to human victims in the sacrifice of innocent youth before a battle. In *Phoenissae* (discussed above), Creon persuades Tiresias not to divulge the prophecy requiring Menoeceus' sacrifice, apparently

20 At the end of *Phoenissae*, the Chorus praise Victory: 'may it never cease crowning my head' (*Phoen.* 1764–1766). At Orestes' trial, an Athenian proposes a victor's crown for the matricide (*Or.* 923–930). In *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the Chorus contrast the sacrificial garland worn by Iphigenia with 'the most glorious crown' Agamemnon will win for Greece at Troy (*IA* 1477–1479, 1527–1531). Reversing the ritual, Hecuba wins a 'victor's crown' for misfortune (*Hec.* 658–660). Ritual crowning is enacted in *Electra*, discussed below.

21 Euripides also refers to victory trophies at *Hclid.* 786–787, 867, 936–937, and *Phoen.* 1250–1251.

saving his life (*Phoen.* 898–918, 952). Pretending to flee to Dodona for asylum, the young man goes to the place specified by Tiresias and slits his own throat, a patriotic act that saves the city (997–1018, 1090–1093). In *Heraclidae*, prophets reveal to Demophon that Athenian success depends on sacrificing a virgin born of a noble father (*Hclid.* 403–410), and Heracles' daughter Makaria offers herself at the altar (500–601).

As well as substituting a human for an animal victim before battle, the tragedians often place assassination and murder in a sacrificial context.²² In *Andromache*, the Delphians ambush Neoptolemus while he sacrifices at Apollo's temple (*Andr.* 1137–1142). Their deadly weapons include 'double-pointed ox-piercing spits from the slaughter of the sacrificed animals' (1134). Maddened by Hera, Heracles murders his wife and sons during a purification ritual at the altar of Hestia (*HF* 922–941). Forced to oversee the sacrifice of captured Greeks (*IT* 35–41, 241–247), Iphigenia wonders if the barbaric Taurians have twisted Artemis' desires to nefarious ends (*IT* 380–391). The young murderers in *Orestes* imagine that by murdering Helen they will give rise to celebration and sacrifice in Argos (*Or.* 1137–1142).

Euripides integrates ritual and sacrificial motifs so thoroughly in *Electra* that they become part and parcel of the drama. The Chorus of maidens arrive on a ritual mission, inviting Electra (married but still a virgin) to join them at the feast for unmarried girls at Hera's temple (*El.* 167–212).²³ After consulting Apollo's oracle at Delphi, which commands him to murder his mother (87, 971–973), Orestes performs belated rites at his father's grave, offering tears, a lock of hair, and the blood of a sacrificed lamb (90–92). Remaining there when the Old Tutor visits the tomb (509–519), these offerings help lead to Orestes' recognition. The tutor then informs the two siblings that Aegisthus is offering a sacrifice near his pastureland, allowing Orestes to take vengeance without entering the palace (625–646).

Aegisthus graciously invites the disguised Orestes to join the ritual, and the Messenger provides one of the most complete accounts of animal sacrifice we have: garlanding of the participants with myrtle; cleansing the celebrants with lustral water; preparing the sacrificial baskets and bowl to catch the victim's blood; lighting the fire and setting the cauldrons at the altar; offering prayers to accompany the sacrifice; casting barley grains on the flames; burning a lock of the victim's hair; slaying the animal and flaying the hide; exposing the internal organs for prophetic inspection; and carving the flesh for the feast. While

22 For the classic study of perverted sacrifice in tragedy, see Zeitlin (1965).

23 Zeitlin (1970) analyzes Euripides' use of the famous Heraia festival in Argos.

Aegisthus bends over to inspect the malformed organs, Orestes smashes his host's backbone with the cleaver he previously used on the animal (*El.* 777–843).

In the parodos, the Chorus denounce Clytemnestra for failing to garland Agamemnon on his return from Troy, killing him instead (163–166). As if in a distorting mirror, the Chorus join Electra in crowning Orestes and Pylades and singing a victory hymn after Aegisthus' murder (*El.* 860–879), fulfilling Orestes' claim that he had come for the victor's crown (613–614). As he prepares for matricide, however, Orestes hesitates: 'Dreadful is the sacrifice that I am beginning, / and dreadful the act I will perform' (985–986). Although doubting her own actions, Clytemnestra could not forgive Agamemnon for sacrificing Iphigenia, 'slitting her pale white throat at the altar' in Aulis (1020–1029). Electra, in turn, depicts her mother's murder as a sacrificial ritual:

You [Clytemnestra] shall make such sacrifice as is right to the gods.
 The sacrificial basket is ready; sharp is the knife
 that slew the bull, by whose side you will fall,
 struck down. In Hades, you will be bride to the man
 you slept with in life. I will give you this grace,
 as you will give me justice for my father.

El. 1141–1146

After the matricide, the blood-soaked siblings regret their deed, Electra wondering how she will ever join a ritual Chorus or find a real bridal bed. Orestes re-lives the murder, when he rejected his mother's supplication, 'sacrificing her with a sword through the neck' (*El.* 1214–1223). He tells Electra to initiate the death ritual by closing Clytemnestra's wounds and covering her corpse (1227–1232). Appearing unexpectedly on the *machina*, Castor and Pollux call Apollo's oracle urging the matricide unwise (1244–1246). They announce that Electra will marry Pylades (1249, 1311, 1342), the Argives will bury Aegisthus, and Menelaus will bury Clytemnestra. Helen never went to Troy; Zeus fashioned an image of her to fool the Greeks and Trojans, reducing the earth's population by a meaningless war (1276–1283).

In *Electra*, Euripides interweaves rituals involving marriage, funerals, child-birth, purification, prophecy (both oracular and hieroscopy), prayers, victory hymns, and—most powerfully—sacrifice. Almost all of these rituals are skewed in some way: Iphigenia and Clytemnestra are viewed as sacrificial victims; a guest at a sacrifice and feast slays his host during the ritual; a virgin-wife is invited to the festival of Hera, goddess of marriage, only to gain a proper husband after killing her mother; the prophetic utterances of Apollo are called into

question; cold-blooded killers win victory crowns and hymns of praise. These perverted rituals help to shape Euripides' radical reworking of the great myth of the house of Atreus.²⁴

5 Weddings and Funerals

Women played important roles in Greek wedding and funeral rituals, and they feature prominently in tragedy. Female characters who die before marriage use the absence of their wedding as the emotional currency with which to measure their loss. 'I have been robbed of the marriage and wedding hymn I should have had', Polyxena laments (*Hec.* 416). 'You see I am giving up the hour of my wedding,' Makaria declares before her sacrifice (*Hcld.* 579–580). Grieving over her fate at Aulis, Iphigenia tells Orestes, 'It was with no wedding hymn that I was brought to the false marriage bed of Achilles' (*IT* 856–859). Raped by Apollo, Creusa tells Ion that 'the marriage that begot you was blessed with no wedding torches or dances' (*Ion* 1474–1475).

Time and again, tragic mothers grieve over their absent or dead children, invoking the wedding ritual they never had. Speaking to her doomed sons, Medea despairs that she will not 'tend to your nuptial baths and your wives and marriage beds, / and hold up the wedding torches' (*Med.* 1026–1027). Megara laments the marriages she can no longer arrange for her sons; instead of a bridal bath she can offer only tears (*HF* 476–484). Given Polynices' foreign marriage, Jocasta could not light the wedding torch, prepare the nuptial bath, or join the wedding hymns for her son (*Phoen.* 344–349). Helen grieves that her daughter in Sparta remains unmarried (*Hel.* 282–288, 688–690, 933), and the Chorus commiserates: 'Hermione's marriage torches remain unlit' (1476–1478).

Ancient Greek women also bore the main ritual duties associated with death. With their hair shorn in mourning and dressed in black, female kin prepared the body for burial, oversaw the 'laying out' of the corpse, led the ritual lament, and attended subsequent rites at the grave. An ongoing process rather than a single event, Greek death ritual also included commemorating anniversaries with offerings and lamentations at the tomb. In *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, Iphigenia promises the unrecognized Orestes that she will see to his cremation, adorning his corpse, anointing it with oil, and pouring wine and honey over his ashes (*IT* 625–635). Pylades vows that he and Electra will perform Orestes' ongoing funeral rituals back in Argos (699–710, 716–718). Fear-

24 Rehm (2002) 187–200.

ing public censure if she visits Clytemnestra's grave, Helen sends her daughter Hermione with offerings of hair, milk, honey, and wine (*Or.* 92–125). When Orestes seizes Helen near the end of the play, she is preparing rich Trojan robes to offer at her sister's tomb (1431–1436).

Death ritual proves crucial to the plot of several Euripidean tragedies. Lycus' threat to deny burial to Heracles' children motivates Megara to leave the altar (*HF* 327–338), buying just enough time for Heracles to save the day. Talthybius uses the same threat to end Andromache's protest against the killing of her son (*Tro.* 735–739). Achieving burial for the Argive Seven defines the action of *Suppliant Women*, which includes recovering and washing the corpses, cremating the remains, lamenting the dead, and delivering a funeral oration modelled on the *patrios nomos* in Athens (*Supp.* 754–954). *Alcestis* focuses on the death and burial of the title character—the mourners wear funeral raiment, perform other ritual grief, carry the body to the grave (*ekphora*), and lament as the burial party returns (*Alc.* 420–434, 606–635, 739–746, 861–932). The heroine's escape from Egypt in *Helen* depends on performing Menelaus' 'funeral rites' at sea (*Hel.* 1237–1300, 1390–1440, 1526–1613).²⁵ In *Hecuba*, the death ritual for Polyxena includes bathing the body with sea-water, which leads to the discovery of Polydorus' corpse, washed up on the shore (*Hec.* 25–50, 508–509, 609–618, 667–732, 894–897). Agamemnon summarizes Hecuba's fate: 'Go, poor woman, / and bury your two dead children' (1287–1288).

Ensuring burial and funeral rites for the victims marks the end of most Euripidean tragedies: *Electra* (Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, 1276–1280); *Bacchae* (Pentheus, 1216–1226, 1285, 1300–1329); *Andromache* (Neoptolemus, whose body must be returned to Delphi for burial, 1166–1242, 1263–1270); *Heracles* (Megara and her sons, 1358–1366); *Trojan Women* (Astyanax, with the rites performed by Hecuba, the Trojan women, and the sympathetic Greek herald, 1133–1250); and *Phoenissae* (Jocasta, Polynices, and Eteocles, 1476–1529). In *Medea*, *Heraclidae*, *Heracles*, *Hecuba*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, and *Hippolytus*, Euripides merges death ritual with the foundation of a cult, providing an aetiology for contemporary ritual practices known to his audiences.

From the *mêchanê*, Medea announces that she, not Jason, will bury the sons she has just murdered, establishing a festival and ritual in their honour at Hera Akraia (*Med.* 1377–1383). The Argive Eurystheus reveals an oracle predicting his transformation into an 'enemy hero'. Buried in Attic soil after his execution by Alcmena, his corpse will protect Athens from invaders (*Hcld.* 1026–1244). At the end of *Heracles*, Theseus promises his dejected friend a hero cult in Athens

25 Foley (2001) 304–331; Rehm (1994) 84–96, 121–127.

(*HF* 1331–1337). The blind Polymestor prophesies that Hecuba, converted into a demon-eyed dog, will fall from the mast and be buried at a spot called ‘Mound of the Wild Dog’, a marker for sailors (*Hec.* 1259–1273). In *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, Athena tells Iphigenia that she will serve Artemis in her sanctuary at Brauron until her death and burial, at which point her cult will gain ritual honours for women who die in childbirth. The goddess also instructs Orestes to dedicate a temple and introduce ritual worship to Artemis in Halae. In *Hippolytus*, Artemis guarantees that the young man’s grave will receive offerings and songs from the maidens of Troezen before their weddings (*Hipp.* 1423–1430).²⁶

As the cult of Hippolytus suggests, the conflation of marriage and funeral rituals finds its way into many tragedies.²⁷ Cassandra in *Trojan Women* carries what she sees as her wedding torches, celebrating her ‘marriage’ to Agamemnon, but Hecuba removes them as terribly inappropriate, given her daughter’s rape at the sack of Troy. Prophesying that Clytemnestra will kill her and Agamemnon, Cassandra insists: ‘Let me marry my bridegroom in Hades’ (*Tro.* 298–352, 445). Clytemnestra attacks Agamemnon for luring Iphigenia to Aulis with the promise of marriage, only to sacrifice her for the war: ‘You have given her away [as bride] to Hades’ (*IA* 1278). To honour Jason’s new marriage, Medea offers wedding gifts—‘ornaments of Hades’ (*Med.* 980–981)—that make Glauke ‘a bride for those below’ (985). The poisoned dress bursts into flames, converting Jason’s new wife into her own wedding torch (*Med.* 1184–1194). With Heracles’ ‘resurrection’ of the heroine in *Alcestis*, death and funeral rites transform into a marriage ritual, with the veiled bride ‘given away’ to the amazed Admetus (*Alc.* 984–1158).

Even an overtly political play like *Suppliant Women* involves a complex interplay of wedding, funeral, and other rituals. The Argive mothers have come to Eleusis, the ritual centre of the great Mysteries. There the women supplicate Aethra as she offers sacrifice at the Proerosia, an agricultural festival for the fall planting (*Supp.* 28–31). Pleading with her to intervene on their behalf, the suppliants release Aethra from Demeter’s altar after she persuades her son Theseus to recover the unburied Argive bodies. During the funeral ritual that follows Athens’ victory over Thebes, the distracted Evadne arrives from Argos and leaps

26 For the hero cult of Eurystheus, Wilkins (1993) on *Hclid.* 928–1055, and Seaford (1994) 123–129; for *Heracles*, Bond (1981) on *HF* 1326–1333 and 1331–1333; for Hecuba’s end, see Mossman (1995) 196–201; for Iphigenia, Kyriakou (2006) on *IT* 449–462, and Cropp (2000) 50–55, and on *IT* 1435–1489; for Hippolytus, Barrett (1964) on *Hipp.* 1423–1430, also on 29–33.

27 Rehm (1994) discusses this theme in *Trojan Women*, *Alcestis*, *Medea*, *Helen*, and *Suppliant Women*.

onto her husband's funeral pyre (*Supp.* 980–1071). Wearing her wedding dress, she depicts her fiery death as an erotic union with the dead: 'Let the wedding torch [be lit] and the marriage proceed!' (1025).

Set in the Eleusinian sanctuary of Demeter, which commemorated the goddess' search for her daughter Penelope, abducted by Hades as his bride, *Suppliant Women* juxtaposes rituals of war and regeneration, funerals and weddings, supplication and military triumph, neglected prophecies (warning against the Argive siege of Thebes) and ritual oaths. Appearing on high, Athena tells the orphaned sons of the Argive warriors that they must then take up arms against Thebes again when they reach maturity. The patron goddess of Athens evokes the pre-performance ritual at the City Dionysia that honoured orphans of Athenians who fell in battle. Raised at the city's expense, these young men received hoplite armour when they turned eighteen and paraded through the orchestra, taking seats of honour for the festival. Here Euripides deftly moves between the world of the play and the audience, using ritual to bind the mythic narrative with the contemporary reality of Athens caught in the Peloponnesian War.

6 Tragic Performance as Ritual

Classicists increasingly argue that a tragic Chorus who sang and danced in the orchestra during the City Dionysia would have appeared to the original audience as a 'ritual Chorus' existing outside the theatrical fiction of the play. Merging myth (the raw material of tragedy) and ritual (Choruses honouring a god or hero), these scholars point out that tragic Choruses performed in a festival dedicated to Dionysus. The Chorus call attention to their own performance on occasion, and they also refer to singing and dancing in other ritual contexts: hymns praising Delphi (*Phoen.* 214–238), paeans to Apollo (*Ion* 112–143) and Artemis (*Hipp.* 54–87), songs honouring Dionysus (*Ba.* 64–166), wedding hymns and epithalamia (*Tro.* 308–340), funeral laments and threnodies (*Phoen.* 1284–1306, *Or.* 179–202, *Hec.* 147–152, *Supp.* 798–837, 1123–1164), girls' Choruses (*El.* 167–212), victory odes (*El.* 860–879, *Tro.* 914–922), foundation hymns in praise of a city (*Phoen.* 638–689, 818–832, 1018–1066), and so on.

According to Albert Henrichs, 'all instances when the Chorus refers to its own dancing in extant tragedy may be interpreted in terms of its extra-dramatic identity as a performer in the ritual dance'. When the Chorus anticipates dancing at a different time and place, Henrichs claims that their 'choral projection' further distances them from the onstage action and makes them appear as a

non-dramatic 'ritual Chorus'.²⁸ One should note, however, that choral projection always makes 'dramatic sense' within the play. For example, the Trojan women remember how they had danced in honour of Artemis and celebrated when the city welcomed in the Trojan horse (*Tro.* 511–567). The Greek maidens held by the Taurian king Thoas recall better days when they sang and danced (probably at a wedding) at home in Greece (*IT* 1143–1152). The Phoenician maidens wish they could dance for Apollo and Dionysus in Delphi, where they were sent as a choral mission but were detained in Thebes on account of the Argive invasion (*Phoen.* 216–238).

Unlike non-theatrical ritual Choruses, the tragic Chorus wore masks, placing them in the same theatrical world as the masked actors playing mythical characters caught in a narrative, *not* in a ritual.²⁹ Made up of male citizens of Athens, the Chorus members did not appear as themselves and rarely represented other Athenians. Far more frequently they played women (*Ion*, *Helen*, *Orestes*), sometimes old (the Chorus in *Suppliant Women* are grandmothers), sometimes young (*Electra*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*), sometimes non-Greek (*Hecuba*, *Trojan Women*, *Phoenissae*, *Bacchae*). In *Heracles*, they represent feeble old men bemoaning their lost physical prowess.

Although tragic Choruses do not maintain strict consistency of character or conform to conventions of theatrical realism, their presence represents a response to a dramatic situation, not to some external or 'meta' ritual demand. Consider how Euripides motivates the arrival of the Chorus and their ongoing presence in the orchestra. They respond to the cries of the heroine (*Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Andromache*, *Heraclidae*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, *Helen*, *Trojan Women*); they come as suppliants, caught in their own narrative situation (*Suppliant Women*); they display sympathy and solidarity with important characters, often in a manner crucial to the plot (*Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Andromache*, *Ion*, *Hecuba*, *Heracles*, *Iphigenia Among the Taurians*, *Electra*, *Helen*, *Orestes*, *Bacchae*); they accompany the protagonist offstage, and return with them later (*Helen*, *Alcestis*).

A far cry from traditional ritual Choruses, tragic lyric involves a mixing of genres, marked by attention to dramatic rather than ritual effect.³⁰ For exam-

28 Henrichs (1995). Kowalzig (2008) 236 concludes that 'choral projection is not an exceptional state for the chorus to be in but what tragic ritual is really about'.

29 Some non-dramatic ritual Choruses may have worn masks (e.g., Artemis Orthia in Sparta), but these are rare. The oft-claimed association of Dionysiac cult with masks does not seem to have involved masks worn by initiates; also the dithyrambic Choruses most closely associated with Dionysiac worship did not wear masks. See Vernant/Frontisi-Ducroux (1988).

30 For mixing of lyric genres in tragedy, see Herington (1985). Allan (2008) 38–45 offers an

ple, Helen sings a lament that she calls a (ritually inappropriate) 'paean' for the dead (*Hel.* 167–178); wedding hymns become funeral dirges (*Supp.* 990–1030); victory hymns are sung for murderers at a ritual (*El.* 860–879). Tragic lyric is accompanied by the *aulos*, not the standard instrument for lyric (lyre-accompanied) hymns or melic (unaccompanied) songs characteristic of most ritual Choruses. Because they consistently disregard a key element on which ritual depends—attendance to the purity and rigour of the form—we should be wary of considering tragic Choruses in terms of some extra-theatrical ritual.

In spite of these difficulties, scholars promoting the 'new ritualism' claim that the Athenians 'failed to distinguish drama from other, non-dramatic choroï' and that we misread the plays if we refuse to see them functioning *as* ritual.³¹ The argument inevitably invokes Euripides' *Bacchae*, where the Chorus represent followers of Dionysus, the god of the theatre festival in which the drama comes to life. The parodos resembles a dithyramb, recalling Dionysiac processional rituals in other contexts, and meta-theatrical elements emerge with great power as the play unfolds.³² The god converts the entire Theban population into worshippers of his cult, leading one scholar to assert that 'the whole point of the experience seems to lie in becoming part of the shared choral ritual'.³³

The trouble with such a reading of *Bacchae* specifically, and tragedy in general, lies precisely in this last claim. If we accept it, then the audience celebrates its incorporation in a ritual Chorus that lies outside the play. But let us not forget that the *specific play* does the work of that incorporation. In the case of *Bacchae*, the play celebrates the brutal murder of a son by his mother, struck mad by the god whose ritual the audience has been moved to share. Playing Asian bacchantes, the Chorus of Athenian citizens sings in triumph: 'A beautiful endeavor it is to drench / your hands in the blood of your child' (*Ba.* 1163–1164). Pentheus' grandfather Cadmus willingly follows Dionysus and celebrates his cult, only to discover the horror of its reality. He confronts the laughing

excellent summary. Tragic Choruses rarely sustain the form or content of what one would expect of a ritual Chorus. Choral lyric experienced great innovation over the course of the fifth century, including the rise of actor's monodies. See Hall in Easterling/Hall (2002) esp. 5–11.

- 31 Kowalzig (2008) 226; also Csapo/Miller (2008) 4–7, 31–32; Bierl in Gagne/Hopman (2013) 211–226.
- 32 Seaford (1994) 240–243 on dithyramb; Foley (1980) and Segal (1997) on theatrical self-reference.
- 33 Kowalzig (2008) 245; at 229, 'the whole point of Dionysus' arrival in the *Bacchae* lies in the fact that he makes the city dance', noting *Ba.* 21–22, 86–87, 184, 190, 220, 322–323, 482, 511, 566–567, 862, 1199, 1154.

Dionysus: 'Gods ought not to be like mortals in their anger' (1348). If this is the 'shared choral ritual' of Dionysiac worship, then Euripides goes out of his way to expose its horrific, destructive side. A ritual that exposes itself in this way is so far removed from what the Greeks associate with the idea of a ritual that we might be forgiven for calling the experience something else, perhaps 'Euripidean tragedy'.

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Euripides and Mystical Religion

Camille Semenzato

Everyone agrees that the Greeks were a thoroughly religious people.¹ To quote Henrichs (1998, 33): ‘Ancient Greece was polytheistic, hungry for cults and prone to sacrifice. It was not only ‘full of gods’ to speak like Thales, but also full of rituals, cults and festivals.’² This profusion of religious phenomena and events shapes and governs Greek life, generation after generation. The numerous iconographic, architectural, and textual testimonies designate the same thing: each person’s place, rights, and duties in the world—some explicitly, transparently, some indirectly, secretly.

Ancient tragedies also contain numerous religious hints and traces. Performed at the Great Dionysia, the festival dedicated to Dionysus, tragedies, as Krummen puts it (1998, 298), were full of allusions to the ‘whole spectrum of religious-ritual experiences of the Athenian citizen’.³ This constant divine presence shines through the various dramatic plots that recall the great events and heroes from the distant mythical past, when the gods were in contact with men and when the first or at least some of them maintained a special relationship with the latter. Through examples and counter-examples, tragedies educate everyone to behave as they should, in accordance with their proper place, in harmony with the circumstances.

1 Mystical Religion

Among the plethora of rituals, cults, and festivals in ancient Greece, some seem to be linked to a secret and depend on a specific initiation. They fall now into the ‘mystical religion’ category.⁴ The Greek etymology of the adjective ‘mystical’ is revealing of this connection:⁵ *μυστικὸς*, *which concerns the μύστης, mystês.*

1 For a referenced presentation of the history of the word ‘religion’, see Bremmer (1998) 10–14.

2 These are always my translations regarding both Greek texts and modern authors.

3 See the references on pages 296–297; Allan (2004) 113–115.

4 Or ‘mystery cults’, see Graf (2000) 615; Casadio (2006); Bremmer (2014) ix–xi.

5 For a discussion of the various meanings of ‘mystical’, see Casadio (1982) 210–216; Albinus (2000) 155–156; Sfameni Gasparro (2003) 49–52; Bianchi (2004) 255–261.

Already in antiquity the word is considered to derive from the verb *μύειν*, *to close*, especially when speaking of the eyes, but also other openings, such as the ears or lips.⁶ Thus, the *mystai* are often considered to be those who close their eyes or lips: either because they do not yet have access to a vision that only the last degree of initiation can allow, or because they are bound to silence concerning their initiation.⁷ In Greek, τὰ μυστικά refers to the cult-related practices involving mysteries;⁸ generally, the word μυστήρια denotes the cults of Eleusis, not far from Athens, the most famous in antiquity.⁹ On this basis, we nowadays call mysteries all the rituals and practices which lie on the margins of official cults,¹⁰ because they conceal an unknown, secret dimension, shut out of both the sight and language of those who are uninitiated.¹¹

The little we know comes from minor indications that emerge here and there in texts, iconography, archaeological material, etc. They concern the admission of future initiates, the sequence of events during initiations, or the specific practices of the numerous relevant ceremonies. The processes, the various steps, the high moments differ from one cult, place or source to another. Despite this heterogeneity, some general features can be observed. Scholars agree that it was a personal decision for the Greeks to take part in mysteries and join groups of initiates; they do so, especially because they are looking for a deeper, a more direct and intimate connection with life, nature, and the gods than the one provided by daily routine and official cults. Apparently, this connection offers a number of opportunities and benefits, not only in this life, *hic et nunc*, but for all future, including the *post mortem*. Other common features include the following: locations of worship are situated outside the city-space; initiations are not complimentary; ceremonies are nocturnal; there are preliminary purifications.¹² Everyone also agrees that participating in the mysteries is not exclusive and in no way prevents one from partaking in civic cults.¹³

6 Bremmer (2014) vii and n. 5 does not link this word group to *μύειν*, but to the Hittite verb *munnae*, which means *to conceal, hide, shut out of sight*. The general meaning remains, however, the same.

7 E.g. Casadio (1982) 210–212; Chantraine (1999) 728; Clinton (2003) 50; Sfameni Gasparro (2003) 52; Grintser (2008–2009) 90, and the secondary literature they refer to.

8 E.g. Th. 6.28.2.

9 Sfameni Gasparro (2003) 53–54. The Μυστήρια seem to have also been festivals on the official calendar of some cities; see mainly Kerényi (1945) 13–18; Nilsson (1957) 482; Burkert (2006) 4.

10 Graf (2000) 615 presents the mysteries as 'being at the heart of Greco-Roman religion' or, with Bremmer (2014) viii and n. 7, of 'Polis-Religion'.

11 See also Burkert (2006).

12 Henrichs (2010) 87; Ustinova (2013); Bremmer (2014) xii; Ribichini (2016) 166–170.

13 See Burkert (1994) 19.

While mysteries are already varied, secret, and obscure, they are even more difficult to define because they are dependent on syncretic and constantly evolving trends and thought-processes.¹⁴ Most explanations or testimonies that have survived come from later authors, in particular Christians, who are often hypercritical of experiences of people who do not share their worldview.¹⁵ As surprising as it may seem at first glance, far from discouraging scholars, the hidden, enigmatic, almost marginal character of mystery cults fascinates and attracts them. Many specialists are trying to solve the associated riddles and problems, to uncover their nature. The study of mystical religion has not become any easier:¹⁶ every scholar has their own reading, interpretation, based on their discipline, orientation, school, and perspective.¹⁷ The same is true of Euripides' mystical references.

2 Euripides

Euripides is one of the three great tragedians in fifth-century Athens. Although he was accused of impiety by his contemporaries¹⁸ and considered to be a premature rationalist and moralist, like Socrates,¹⁹ he is an excellent witness to his era, fully indebted to the religious tradition. Euripides is extremely useful in the context of a study of mystery cults.²⁰ If the many human destinies that emerge from his surviving plays and the numerous fragments attributed to him are mostly rooted in a world of official gods and cults, one can still detect several mystical traces. First and foremost, there are mystic hints and echoes in *Bacchae*,²¹ which portrays the return of the ambiguous god Dionysus in a city dominated by human reason. More than this, scholars perceive mystical allusions and suggestions in *Alcestis*, *Electra*, *Helen*, *Heracles*, *Hippolytus*, *Ion*, *Rhesus*, in

14 See Colpe (1975) 379; Burkert (1994) 9–18; Scarpi (2002) xi–l; Belayche/Massa (2016) 8–9.

15 Henrichs (2010) 88; Bremmer (2014) 1.

16 See Burkert (2006) 2.

17 See Scarpi (2002) xliv–l; Sfameni Gasparro (2003) 9–47; Casadio (2006); Löhr (2006); Bremmer (2014) viii–xii.

18 Mainly *Ar. Ra.* 882–894.

19 *Arist. Rh.* 3, 15, 8–9 1416a. On the history of this tendency, see Ford (2005). Di Benedetto (1975) 47–72; Mikalson (1991) 225–236; Wildberg (1999–2000) 236–237 argue different positions.

20 Euripides as the author of a body of works and not as a human historical individual. See Wildberg (1999–2000) 237–238.

21 E.g. Dodds (1960) xi–xxxvi; Festugières (1972); Gallistl (1981); Seaford (1981); Blaise (2003); Weinstein (2008); Holzhausen (2008–2009).

the satyr play *Cyclops*, and in the fragments of *Cretans* and *Andromeda*.²² Not only does one come across terms related to mystical religion (μύστης, μυστήριον, ὄργια, τελετή),²³ gods or characters (Demeter, Dionysus, Orpheus, Persephone, Zagreus) linked to a mystical cult or sanctuary (Eleusis, Mount Ida), but also certain mystical topics concerning death, after-life, and the fate of souls.

Greek tragedy does not contain any detailed exegesis, nor does it offer criticism, only latent indications, buried within the dramatic plots themselves. These poetic traces were probably obvious to a Greek audience in the fifth century BC but are vague or even confusing for today's readers and scholars. Euripides does not reveal the nature and secrets of the mysteries any more than his predecessors, contemporaries, and successors. Nonetheless, the analysis of those passages, terms, sites, and gods of mystical belief—first those related to Eleusis, then to Dionysus, before the other cults and gods—makes it possible to weigh the importance of mystical religion in Euripidean tragedies.

3 Eleusinian Shades

It is beyond doubt that the most famous site of mysteries is Eleusis, dedicated to Demeter and her daughter Persephone-Kore. Athenians commonly refer to Eleusinian rites by the generic term τὰ μυστήρια.²⁴ As *Suppliant Women* is set there, one can expect a mystical play *par excellence*. However, it is not so: the Argive mothers come to Eleusis 'as an embassy, not for the mysteries of Demeter' (πρεσβεύματ' οὐ Δήμητρος ἐς μυστήρια, 173). Even if this indicates that usually one goes to Eleusis to celebrate the mysteries of Demeter, the Argive women go there for a purely political reason.²⁵ The second mention of μυστήρια in this

22 E.g., *Alcestis*: Assaël (2004); Markantonatos (2013) 135–159, with a number of references 139 n. 13; *Electra*: Csapo (2008); *Helen*: Cerri (1983); Sfameni Gasparro (2003) 329–372; Swift (2009); Assaël (2012); *Heracles*: Assaël (1994); *Hippolytus*: Soury (1943); *Ion*: Csapo (2008); *Rhesus*: Plichon (2001); Hardie (2004); Markantonatos (2004); Liapis (2007); *Cyclops*: Faraone (2008); *Cretans*: Gallistl (1981); Casadio (1990); Cozzoli (1993); Cozzoli (2001); Bernabé (2004); Magnelli (2009); *Andromeda*: Assaël (2014). See also Macías Otero (2010) on fr. 912 Kannicht.

23 Μυστικὸς is not found in the plays of Euripides. There are, however, five instances of μυστήριον (*El.* 87; *Hipp.* 25; *Rh.* 943; *Supp.* 173, 470) and two of μύστης (*HF* 613; fr. 472. 10 Kannicht). Τελετή and ὄργια appear mainly in *Bacchae*, five (22, 74, 238, 260, 465) and nine times (34, 79, 262, 470, 471, 476, 482, 998, 1080); see also *IT* 959 for τελετή and *HF* 613 for ὄργια.

24 E.g. *Schol. Aeschin.* 3,130. See Sfameni Gasparro (2003) 53.

25 The mothers press Aethra—who is in Eleusis to participate in the Proerosia, obscure ritual celebrations for future harvests [see Conacher (1967) 98 n. 11; Goff (1995); Robertson (1996)]—to convince her son, the Athenian king Theseus, to intervene on their behalf with

play (470) does not make us any wiser: the mysteries are called *σεμνά*, *venerable*, and linked to garlands (*στεμμάτων*). *Σεμνός* derives from *σέβειν-σέβεσθαι*, which means *to feel awe, to honour, to worship with awe*. The venerable character of the mysteries stems from the fact that they are dedicated and consecrated to Demeter and his daughter Persephone, who must be celebrated with respect and fear. Though it recurs in various religious contexts,²⁶ *σεμνός* is not specific to Eleusis nor to mystical religion. In *Suppliant Women*, the term describes the hearths of Demeter (290) and Callichoros well (392), along with the tomb of Amphion (663), the Argives (359), and the King of Thebes (384); and in other plays, the oracle of Apollo (*Ion* 974, *Ph.* 284), of Dodona (*Ph.* 982), and of the Eumenides (*El.* 1272). The mention of garlands also highlights the religious, sacred nature of the Argive women's request: the branches they have brought form a sort of barrier that can only be crossed after their request has been granted.²⁷ Theseus must get rid of this constraint (*λύσαντα*, *Supp.* 470) to obey the command of the Theban Herald and drive out of Attica the King of Argos Adrastus, who came with the mothers of the dead warriors.²⁸ *Μυστήρια* refers to the power of the garlands: a secret power, in this sense mystical,²⁹ but not limited to the mysteries of Eleusis. There is, however, another reading of this verse according to which Theseus should release the venerable mysteries from the garlands (*στεμμάτων* as a separative and not adnominal genitive).³⁰ *μυστήρια* would then simply allude, as in line 173, to Eleusis as a sacred site to celebrate mysteries; an allusion that is fathomable, even by the uninitiated, since the dramatic action unfolds there.

Suppliant Women shows the importance of Eleusis in terms of mystic religion but reveals little more. Aethra recalls, for example, Demeter's actions on Persephone's return³¹ through the ear of corn, one of the main symbols of the rites of the two goddesses in Eleusis and of the cycles of nature, that is, between life and death:³² she mentions in the Prologue the place where 'the fertile ear

Creon, king of Thebes. They want to obtain the bodies of their sons who died at Thebes and were not buried properly.

26 See Rudhardt (2000); Rudhardt (2008) 69–90.

27 See Morwood (2007) 145. On the use and interpretation of *στέμματα* in Greek literature, see Servais (1967).

28 Collard (1975) 235 understands *στέμματα* as 'break' the physical and moral 'hold' of the *λύειν*. See also the examples given by Lavagnini (1947) 84.

29 Von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff (1932) 45–46 n. 4 ('the secret, mystical, link inside them shall be undone'); Collard (1975) 235 speaks of 'mystic power'.

30 As (*ἀπο*) *λύειν τί τινος*, with a local value for *μυστήρια*: Lavagnini (1947) 85; Diggle (1973) 243 n. 11: 'release the *μυστήρια* (Demeter's temple: cf. 173) from the suppliants' garlands'.

31 *H.Cer. passim*.

32 See Graf (1974) 40–78; Richardson (1974) 29–30, 258–260; Foley (1994) 65–75; Albinus (2000) 192–196.

first appeared' (πρῶτα φαίνεται [...] κάρπιμος στάχους, 30–31). The same applies in the other plays: the site of Eleusis and the cults that take place there are mentioned, but in an indirect way, above all through Demeter, the protector of this sacred land,³³ and her daughter, Persephone.³⁴

The Chorus in *Helen* (1301–1365) recounts the kidnapping of Persephone by Hades so as to take her as his wife;³⁵ indeed, kidnapping lies at the heart of the mysteries of Eleusis. In a kind of parenthesis,³⁶ the second stasimon narrates the story of a goddess named 'Mountain Mother of the gods' (ὄρεία Μάτηρ θεῶν, 1301–1302), 'Mother' (1320, 1340), or 'great Mother' (μεγάλας Ματρός, 1355–1356). These names evoke a maternal goddess who guarantees the birth and good growth of everything.³⁷ Sad and angry at the disappearance of her daughter, unable to find her, she withdrew to the tops of Mount Ida, making the soil dry and fruitless. In view of this sad story, together with the reference to 'Δηῶ' (1343), the short and poetic name of Demeter,³⁸ the Chorus clearly speaks here of this goddess. Persephone is not explicitly mentioned either but appears under the formula of 'unspeakable girl' (ἄρρητου κόουρας, 1307).³⁹ Ἄρρητος and its quasi-synonym ἀπόρρητος are found several times in Euripides. They mean *what cannot or should not be said*, most often because of its inappropriateness—such as an adulterous pregnancy (*Hipp.* 293) or the murder of a host (*Hec.* 714)—but also because it belongs to the divine order, which is by nature undeterminable by human speech and logic.⁴⁰ Both recall the silence that marks the initiates.⁴¹ The deployment of the epithet ἄρρητος in the Chorus of *Helen* reinforces the allusion to the mysteries of Eleusis⁴² and makes Persephone, as a parthenic fig-

33 E. *Supp.* 1.

34 See Richardson (1974) 12–20.

35 For a full interpretation of the passage, see Kannicht (1969) 337–359; Sfameni Gasparro (2003) 329–372.

36 For the interpretation of this stasimon as late interpolation or *embolimon*, see Kannicht (1969) 327–328, 333–335; Sfameni Gasparro (2003), 329 and n. 1.

37 Kannicht (1969) 328 describes it as a 'hymnic ἱερὸς λόγος on the mother of the gods Demeter-Cybele'. Scarpi (2002) 467 sees in it an allusion to the 'mystical form, that is to say agrarian form, assumed by Cybele in Greece'. See also below.

38 See *h. Cer.* 47, 211, 492; Kretschmer (1902); Cerri (1983) 156.

39 The expression 'ἄρρητος κόρη' is found twice in Greek literature: in E. fr. 63 Kannicht it is detached from any context. Carc. *TGrF* 70 F 5,1 refers simply to κόρη as the daughter of Demeter kidnapped by Pluto.

40 E.g. the slits that take place in the sanctuary of Artemis (E. *IT* 41), the purifications that Iphigenia claims to have to make to the statue of the goddess (198) and the flame of a sacrifice (1331). See also below the adjective in E. *Rh.* 943.

41 See also Ar. *Ec.* 442; *Nu.* 302.

42 Cerri (1983) 157.

ure removed and separated from her parents before returning to this world, a model for the eponymous heroine.⁴³ However, the Chorus says nothing about the mysteries themselves.

The situation is different in the third stasimon of *Ion* (1048–1105), sung by Creusa's maids in front of the temple of Delphi dedicated to Apollo: Ion must be poisoned so that he never reaches Athens and rises to the throne.⁴⁴ After praying to the chthonian deity Hecate, who is called Demeter's daughter,⁴⁵ to secure the success of the devious plot against Ion, the Chorus relates the consequences of a possible failure: Creusa would commit suicide, but above all Ion would enter the religious and political life of Athens. The young man would become a spectator (θεωρός, 1076) of the night procession, which, in the light of the torches (λαμπάδα εικάδων ἐννύχιον, 1076–1077), on the 19th of Boedromion, leads the Athenian celebrants to the Eleusis sanctuary, near the Callichoros well (1075),⁴⁶ for the completion of the mystic rites.⁴⁷ In other words: he would see (ᾔψεται, 1077)⁴⁸ this procession—an act that the Chorus considers quite shameful towards the god, since Ion is not initiated. Though this god is not named, he is capable of inspiring the votaries according to the many songs that celebrate him (τὸν πολύμυμον θεόν, 1074–1075):⁴⁹ one recognizes here Iacchus-Dionysus.⁵⁰ With its celebrations and night processions, its songs and dances, in connection with Hecate, with Demeter 'venerable Mother' (ματέρα σεμνάν, 1086) and Persephone as 'the girl with the golden crown' (τὴν χρυσοστέφανον κόραν, 1085), with Iacchus-Dionysus, Eleusis encapsulates the religious and institutional heart of the city of Athens not only for Creusa's maids but probably also for the entire audience at the City Dionysia. These few allusions remind the Greeks of a well-known world, with a sacred, festive, and musical atmosphere. Beyond the plot, these allusions also suggest that the uninitiated

43 Swift (2009) 418–419, 432–435.

44 For a discussion of the implications of the third stasimon, see Martin (2018) 405–409.

45 On this filiation, see Martin (2018) 410.

46 See also E. *Supp.* 392, 619.

47 For a description of the development of the Eleusinian mysteries based on the various testimonies available, see e.g. Albinus (2000) 173–191; Clinton (2003); Bremmer (2011); Fabiano (2011) 413–415.

48 On the importance of seeing, see below E. *Hipp.* 25; *HF* 613. See also *h.Cer.* 480; Pi. fr. 137 Maehler; and Richardson (1974) 26–27; Scarpi (2002) 545.

49 This epithet is a *hapax* in the plays of Euripides.

50 Iacchus is an Eleusinian deity in Hdt. 8.65.1. Dionysus is, for example, πολύμυμος in his *Homeric Hymn* (7). The two gods are associated or even assimilated in S. *Ant.* 115–1152; E. *Ba.* 725; *Cycl.* 69–70; Ar. *Ra.* particularly 315–354. See Graf (1974) 51–54 (with ancient examples); Bremmer (2014) 7–8; Martin (2018) 416.

should not be allowed to participate in the ceremonies. They underscore the importance of seeing.

The role of ὄψις, *sight*, is explicit in the prologue-scene of *Hippolytus*. The title-hero travels to Athens 'for the seeing and performances of the venerable mysteries' (σεμνῶν ἐς ὄψιν καὶ τέλη μυστηρίων, 25). In Eleusis—no one doubts that Hippolytus is travelling to the famous Athenian sanctuary—the name of the priest indicates the importance of sight: the ἱεροφάντης, *hierophant*, is the one who makes appear, makes visible (-φάντης) a sacred phenomenon (ἱερο-).⁵¹ In addition, the participants initiated into the celebrations are called ἐπόπται, *epopts*: they are able to see (-όπται), so to speak, from on high, from above (ἐπ-), what the mysteries reveal.⁵² The two cult terms do not appear in Euripides. The simple mention of sight speaks for itself. Similarly, significant is the term τέλος, from which comes the denominative verb τελεῖν, *to perform, to celebrate* a special occasion, including a rite or a cult, mystical or not. More than that, τελετή is the specific term for the *act performed* or *to be performed*, the *celebration*, again without being restricted necessarily to a particular cult or god.⁵³ Used in mystical cults,⁵⁴ τελετή underlines the role of the participants who, far from being passive, contribute to the celebration of the rites and thus fulfil their lives.⁵⁵ In *Hippolytus*, τέλος, a more generic term, is used as a synonym for τελετή.⁵⁶ In this way, participation in mystical celebrations gives Hippolytus a new sight and experience that elevate him to a higher level, making him richer, stronger, more serene, more content in his daily life. In the play, however, Hippolytus' visit to Eleusis is incidental: it allows Phaedra to see the young man and fall in love with him.

The title-hero in *Heracles* has a similar mystical experience. He returns from the netherworld with Cerberus, the frightful three-headed dog, after a victorious battle due to 'a good fate after seeing the ὄργια of the *mystai*' (τὰ μυστῶν δ' ὄργι' εὐτύχησ' ἰδῶν, 613). The vision of ὄργια gives Heracles a good (εὐ-) fate (-τυχεῖν): a divine τύχη well beyond simple luck, which is often how this verb is

51 See Richardson (1974) 302–303; Garland (1984) 101–103. On ἱερά in the context of the mysteries, see Brechet (2007); Rudhardt (2008) 132–141.

52 See Burkert (1972) 292 n. 1, 303–304.

53 See Sfameni Gasparro (2003) 99–117; Schuddeboom (2009) 119–124.

54 In Euripides, the τελεταί belong to Dionysus (*Ba.* 22, 74, 238, 260, 465). In *IT* 959, the rite is related to the Anthesteria [see Schuddeboom (2009) 12–13].

55 Fabiano (2010) 410 also speaks of 'crowning', unlike the Latin translation of the term by *initiatio*, which values the beginning of a new phase of life.

56 See Sfameni Gasparro (2003) 116. In *E. Med.* 1382, τέλος would refer to obscure Corinthian rites [see Schuddeboom (2009) 15].

translated.⁵⁷ This divine fate allows him to return from the realm of the dead.⁵⁸ By linking ὄργια to ἔρδειν, *do*, and ἔργον, *work*, one often translates it as *acts, rites, ceremonies* performed during cults, both official and mystical.⁵⁹ The term also refers to objects unveiled during the ritual and used for the celebration.⁶⁰ It is unclear when and where Heracles saw them. Possibly he was initiated before his descent to Hades.⁶¹ The active seeing of ὄργια thus appears not only as a guarantee of prosperity for the living but also as a guarantee of fortune in the world of the dead. Heracles could also have seen the ceremonies of the mysteries in Hades, after descending there and before emerging to the light.⁶² In any case, the ocular knowledge of the mysteries allows him to overcome human limits: whereas men are usually swallowed up forever in Hades, he is not only able to descend to the Underworld but also strong enough to return from it.

While *Suppliant Women*, which takes place in Eleusis, mentions the mysteries only in passing, *Alcestis*, the action of which takes place in Thessaly, presents what Markantonatos (2013, 132) calls ‘the very essence of the Eleusinian Mysteries’.⁶³ This, despite the fact that there are no references to μυστήρια, ὄργια, or τελεταί. Persephone is named, but only twice (358, 852) and indirectly: as daughter (κόρη) of Demeter, wife of Hades and queen of the netherworld. As the play tells the story of Alcestis’ death, her rescue by Heracles, and her return to her family, it is not surprising that there are many mystical allusions: Alcestis’ choice to die⁶⁴—which makes the Chorus name her μάκαιρα δαίμων, ‘a blessed deity’⁶⁵ (1003); her new birth after her death;⁶⁶ her accession to a better life (βελτίω βίον, 1157) and to a good fate (εὐτυχών, 1122, 1158). As Assaël (2004, 46) argues, Athenian spectators can only recognize Eleusinian themes

57 See the translation by Sleigh in Burian/Shapiro (2009): ‘The Mysteries I witnessed gave me strength’. Bond (1988) 218 associates εὐτύχησ’ with ‘the μακαρισμός of the initiate, addressed as ἄλβιος’ and understands δέ as ‘implying that Heracles did have some divine help, as an initiate’.

58 See also E. fr. 371 Kannicht which mentions the hero’s *katabasis* but without mystical terms.

59 See Richardson (1974) 251; Motte/Pirenne-Delforge (1992); Schuddeboom (2009) 131–144.

60 Motte/Pirenne-Delforge (1992) 128–130.

61 According to Apollod. 2.5.12 and D.S. 4.25.1, Heracles was initiated precisely for his travel to the Underworld. See Markantonatos (2013) 144.

62 Macías Otero (2015) 147–148 makes this interpretation explicit with other references.

63 See also his chapter 4; Assaël (2004).

64 Primarily E. *Alc.* 282–284, 320–322, 524.

65 When he dies, Rhesus also becomes a (ἀνθρωπο)δαίμων (E. *Rh.* 971). For the interpretation of this passage, see Plichon (2001) 14–16 with relevant secondary literature.

66 E.g. E. *Alc.* 130, 142, 146, 520, 853–854.

within themselves, as an echo of their own knowledge and experiences. But these themes and motifs are just allusions. As in all the other passages mentioned above, it is impossible today to go further, in an effort to fully explain the mystical phenomenon by means of an analysis of the Euripidean tragic corpus.

4 Bacchic Celebrations

It is widely known that Dionysus is sometimes celebrated at Eleusis,⁶⁷ only marginally, or even indirectly, as is shown in Euripides' *Ion*. More than this, in the second antistrophe of the second stasimon of *Helen*, after the narrative about Demeter, the Chorus speaks of the power of the night festivals of the goddess (παννυχίδες, 1365).⁶⁸ They associate them with the roaring and thundering Dionysus-Bromius on account of his attributes, such as the nebris, the ivy, the narthex, and the rhombus (1358–1362).

Dionysus is especially known to have his own mystical rites and cults which, unlike the mysteries of Eleusis, are not linked to a specific place, but are celebrated in different ways throughout the diverse communities of the Greek world.⁶⁹ As the only extant tragedy whose entire plot concerns Dionysus,⁷⁰ *Bacchae* contains many references to his mystic celebrations.⁷¹ In the prologue-scene, the god speaks of his τελεταί (22) and ὄργια (34), which he established in Asia and is now making known to all of Greece. Even if their procedures are not fully explained, their occurrences throughout the play offer several useful suggestions and hints. Apparently, as in Euripides' *Helen*, special accoutrements are required:⁷² nebris, thyrsus, narthex, and ivy crown. Dionysus must be recognized, celebrated, served—in chorus, with cries, such as εὐοῖ,⁷³ songs, and

67 See Graf (1974) 52–53 with further references. On Eleusis, Dionysus, and Orpheus, see Sfameni Gasparro (2017).

68 Euripides also refers to such festivals for Dionysus (*Ba.* 862), Athena (*Heracl.* 782), and an unspecified divinity (*Tr.* 1073).

69 Burkert (1994), 12–13; Jaccottet (2006); Schlesier (2011), 178–180; Bremmer (2014), 100–101. On the appellation of bacchic to be preferred to that of dionysiac, see Henrichs (2010) 91–92.

70 For the different instances of Dionysus in Greek tragedies, see Bierl (1991).

71 See mainly Seaford (1981) and (1996); Holzhausen (2008–2009); Semenzato (forthcoming).

72 Primarily a σκευή (ὄργιον, *E. Ba.* 34; θεοῦ, 180).

73 *E. Ba.* 67, 129, 141, 151, 157, 238 (precisely τελετάς εὐίους), 566, 579, 608, 791, 1034, 1167. There is also the ὀλολυγή (24, 689).

dances.⁷⁴ Everyone has to show *σέβας*, *reverential awe*.⁷⁵ On a more historical level, the Chorus specifies that celebrations in honour of the god take place every three years.⁷⁶

The dialogue between Pentheus and the god disguised as a stranger in the second Episode revolves around Dionysus' *τελεταί* and *ἔργια*. Curious and eager for knowledge, Pentheus would like to know everything about them: where they come from (465); whether they impose restrictions (469); when they take place, at night or during the day (469, 485); what they look like (471); the advantage they confer on the votaries (473); how the celebrated god is (477). But like all the non-initiates regarding Bacchus cult (*ἀβακχεύτοισιν*, 472), he is forbidden to know. In the case of the *τελεταί* and *ἔργια* of Dionysus, as well as those of Demeter and Persephone at Eleusis, there are things that cannot be said (*ἄρρητ'*, 472). Any theoretical knowledge of mystical rites is illusory: *τελεταί* and *ἔργια* must be experienced, man must be initiated in the flesh. Thus, the dialogue continues amidst ambiguous allusions on the part of the stranger-Dionysus and misunderstandings on the part of King Pentheus.⁷⁷ It evokes the importance of seeing, which is linked to a certain reciprocity of gaze;⁷⁸ it glorifies the solemnity of night,⁷⁹ and thus of darkness that prevails over light; it preaches the indistinguishability between men,⁸⁰ their social levels, and their age statuses; it highlights the omnipresence of songs and dances.

In the first stanza of the *parodos*, the Chorus praises the worshipper of Dionysus who, unlike Pentheus, puts himself at the service of the god: he becomes *μάκαρ*, *fortunate*, and *εὐδαίμων* (73): not only *happy*, but *provided with a good* (*εὐ-*) *divinity* (*-δαίμων*).⁸¹ While the gods are most often *μάκαρες*, in the sense that they live without pain, in full and perpetual joy,⁸² men can also become so, to a certain degree, on account of the favour granted to them by the gods, and the way they behave. However, this privilege is not offered to them gratuitously. Knowing (*εἰδώς*) the *τελεταί* of the gods (73–74), the man

74 E. *Ba.* 21, 58, 61, 114, 126–128, 132–133, 149, 155–161, 184, 190, 195, 205, 220, 324, 379, 482, 567, 680, 726, 930–931, 1034, 1057, 1153, 1161, 1172.

75 E. *Ba.* 476: Dionysus hates the man who shows *ἀσέβεια* towards his *ἔργια*.

76 E. *Ba.* 132–134. See also Hdt. 4.108; D.S. 4.3; Paus. 8.23.1.

77 For a detailed analysis of this scene, see Semenzato (2020).

78 E.g. E. *Ba.* 22, 61, 470, 477, 500–501, 609, 810–815, 823, 914, 1232, 1256, 1345. It is necessary to see in the right way what is to be seen, which Pentheus does not do (502, 506, 912, 918, 924, 940, 1050, 1058–1062, 1075). See also Marseglia (2016).

79 E. *Ba.* 425, 486, 861 (*παννυχίσις χοροίς*). See also E. *Hel.* 1365.

80 E. *Ba.* 206–209.

81 See de Romilly (1963) 362; Mikalson (2002).

82 Otto (1963) 13; De Heer (1968) 6.

praised by the Chorus sanctifies his life (βιοτάν ἀγιστεύει, 74). He 'is made member of the thiasos in regard to his soul' (θιασεύεται ψυχάν, 75–76),⁸³ when he celebrates Bacchus (βακχεύων, 76–77) with pious purifications (ὀσίοις καθαρμοίσιν, 77). Thiasos denotes any religious group or community—not necessarily Dionysiac—that is distinct from the official civic religion;⁸⁴ βακχεύειν does not only mean the activity of Bacchus worshippers, but any exalted, even ecstatic behaviour.⁸⁵ However, there is no doubt that in this parodos man makes himself faithful to Dionysus, thereby becoming μάκαρ and εὐδαίμων. This privilege concerns his present condition and life here and now, without any suggestion of possible *post mortem* consequences.

Dionysus is a god who gives μανία, who possesses humans, puts them in a trance, inspires them with madness. In Euripides' *Bacchae* there are four types. Μανία is related to mantic (298–301) and panic fear (302–305). Two other types concern more particularly the plot: when μανία affects the opponents of the god, it is a punishment, a blindness of reason. This is the case of the Theban women who are driven mad against their will and act in an unreasonable way.⁸⁶ On the contrary, when the god excites his worshippers, it is a violent, rapid movement, of which Dionysus is the driving force and which results in hectic actions, passion, impetuosity, such as spasm, trance, and ecstasy. Such a μανία takes over, for example, the Lydian faithfuls of the Chorus.⁸⁷ Similarly, the Satyrs, Dionysus' half-man half-horse companions, are considered to be μαινόμενοι (130).

In *Cyclops*, which shows Satyrs in slavery under the one-eyed monster, there are four mentions of μαινέσθαι, which however do not help much to comprehend divine madness. Three of them describe μανία as the result of inebriation.⁸⁸ Almost the same applies to the fourth mention of the verb: at the beginning of the second stasimon, the Chorus of the Satyrs calls μάκαρ the man who cries *euoi*; but he is pictured as lying next to a woman after consuming wine

83 On θιασεύεται as a passive and ψυχάν as an accusative of relation, see Rijksbaron (1991) 16.

84 Jaccottet (2003) 24–28.

85 Jiménez San Cristóbal (2009); Henrichs (2010) 91–92.

86 *E. Ba.* 32–33, 36, 1094, 1295. The case of Pentheus is more complex: his μανία first prevents him from recognizing the god in Dionysus (326, 359, 999). To make him accept to dress as a woman before going in search of the Theban women on the Cithaeron, the god must turn him away from his reason and put him in a state of raging madness (λύσσαν, 850–853).

87 *E. Ba.* 102–103, 570, 601. The distinction between faithful Bacchae and mad Maenads is thus too crude. For an analysis of this question and the modern concept of maenadism, see Porres Caballero (2013).

88 *E. Cyc.* 164, 168, 617. In verse 465, the Satyrs are mad with joy thanks to Odysseus' discoveries.

(495–500). This echoes the state of the worshipper of Dionysus cited in the parodos of *Bacchae*, since the Satyrs do not fail to mention several times their god, his dances, and his attributes.⁸⁹ However, the context suggests that this is more a parody than an evocation of a real mystical experience.⁹⁰

5 Other Gods, Other Cults

At the beginning of Euripides' *Electra*, Orestes says he comes to Argos from the μυστήρια of the god (ἐκ θεοῦ μυστηρίων, 87). Since later on he mentions the invisible decrees (δίικαι' ἄφαντα) that Phoibos sang for him (1190), most scholars agree that he comes from the famous sanctuary of Delphi and that the god is indeed Apollo. The Delphic oracle like Apollo, however, is not usually considered to be mystical. Is Orestes guided by μυστήρια, once well known, now forgotten, in relation to Apollo's oracular power? Although late, certain testimonies link a mystical Apollo to Dionysus, who, moreover, sometimes reigns over Delphi.⁹¹ But today this is most often understood in a broader sense, referring not to mysteries related to Apollo but to the sacredness, in the mystical sense, of the god's abode and command.⁹² According to the interpretation of the passages of *Alcestis* in which Apollo is helping Alcestis to escape death,⁹³ it is possible to link the god to Demeter and Persephone and to give him a role in the mystical struggle between life and death.⁹⁴ In the first stasimon, the Chorus exhorted him to become, under his name of Paeon, the deliverer of death (λυτήριος ἐκ θανάτου, 224). Beside Apollo and Persephone, a third figure to whom mystical practices are attributed appears in *Alcestis*: Orpheus. Unlike Admetus, the famous singer has the ability to influence the deities of Hades and thus to overcome the laws of fate (357–362). In contrast to Heracles, this ability comes from his music and not from initiation into the mysteries.⁹⁵ Furthermore, in *Cyclops* Orpheus is described as capable of going beyond human limits

89 E. *Cyc.* 63–75, 620–621, 709.

90 *Contra* Seaford (1984) 197.

91 Primarily with E. fr. 477 Kannicht. See the different examples and secondary literature in Liapis (2007) 387–388.

92 Von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff (1932) 45–46 n. 4; Denniston (1939) 62; Collard (1975) 235. Weil (1879) 580 and Parmentier/Grégoire (1925) 195 change 'μυστηρίων' into 'χρηστηρίων', *oracles*.

93 E. *Alc.* 10–14, 223–225.

94 Markantonatos (2013) 141–143.

95 On the various references to Orpheus in Greek tragedy in association with μυσσική, see Semenzato (2016).

through his powerful singing (646–648). Nonetheless, the Chorus in *Alcestis* notes, despite the power of Orpheus' chanted words, everyone is subject to *ἀνάγκη*, to a *fate* against which nothing can be done (965–969).

Orpheus' connection with *μυστήρια* is explicitly mentioned in *Rhesus*. In her monologue, the Muse says that Orpheus revealed (*ἔδειξεν*) 'the torches of the unutterable mysteries' (*μυστηρίων τῶν ἀπορρήτων φανάς*, 943). The verb *δεικνύναι* indicates that mysteries can be *shown, revealed*, one might even say *taught*; and in general, the verse suggests that Orpheus is able to do so. It is of secondary importance whether it is a unique revelation, as some translators seem to think, thereby interpreting *δεικνύναι* in the technical sense of establishing a cult, a rite,⁹⁶ or a repeated transmission.⁹⁷ As the Muse, with her words, reinforces the link she maintains with Rhesus, Orpheus, and Athena, these *μυστήρια* are ceremonies related to Athens: the mysteries of Eleusis.⁹⁸ Like Persephone (*Hel.* 1307), the mysteries are described as *ἀπόρρητα*; a suggestion that it is only to the initiated that Orpheus reveals them. This revelation is made in the light of torches: during nocturnal rites; but which is also, in an echo of *Alcestis*, in the order of an 'illumination. It provides light, it brings out the night'.⁹⁹ For Kerényi (1945, 19), Motte (1986, 32), and Burkert (2011, 413), mysteries must not only be kept secret outside the circle of initiates; they are also impossible to disclose (*ἄ- / ἀπό-ρρητος*): their experience is not translatable into everyday parlance, that is, the normative language of method, of reason, of designation, distinction, and definition. If Orpheus succeeds in revealing what is impossible to say, it is with the help of a language other than the one, such as *ἔρειν*, which is widely used: a poetic language stemming from his musical talent. This melodic language can be related to the festive atmosphere previously noted and in which mystic cults take place.

In *Cretans* (fr. 472 Kannicht),¹⁰⁰ the Chorus, consisted of *προφῆται* of Zeus in Crete,¹⁰¹ present themselves as having a sacred life (*ἄγρον βίον*) since each

96 E.g. Plichon (2001) 12: 'inventer et enseigner'; Markantonatos (2004) 30: 'introduce'; Liapis (2012) 320: 'establish'.

97 Bernabé (2009) 89 notes that if *δεικνύναι* is a typical term in the context of mysteries, it does suggest that 'the Thracian poet did not create them, rather transmitted them'.

98 E.g. Moulinier (1955) 17; Graf (1974) 2 n. 7, 22–39 with more ancient testimonies other than *Rhesus*; Markantonatos (2004) 31; Liapis (2012) 320; Fries (2014) 462. For other interpretations, see the secondary literature in Plichon (2001) 13–14; on the link between Orpheus and Eleusis, see Bernabé (2009).

99 Plichon (2001) 12.

100 On the history of the fragment and for an extensive bibliography, see Cozzoli (1993) and (2001) 9–51; Bernabé (2004).

101 Porph. *De abstin.* 4.19 Nauck.

one of them became a 'mystês of Idaean Zeus' (Διὸς Ἰδαίου μύστης, 10). Beside Demeter, Persephone, Dionysus, Apollo, and Orpheus, Zeus himself is explicitly connected with mysteries:¹⁰² Idaean Zeus, named after the Cretan mountain, where he was hidden after birth.¹⁰³ The Chorus explains how they obtained this privilege (11–15): by accomplishing (τελέσας) thunders of night-wandering Zagreus and raw feasts, by holding torches high to the Mother of the mountain (μητρὶ ὄρειᾳ). This is how the Chorus became pious (ὀσωθείς) and is finally called βᾶκχος by the Curetes.

How should this passage be interpreted today: is it a combination of various rites?¹⁰⁴ A hodgepodge of deities and ritual expressions invented by Euripides?¹⁰⁵ Or is it true evidence of a Cretan mystery cult?¹⁰⁶ The picture of a divine family as a triad?¹⁰⁷ According to West (1983, 170), it is impossible that this did not seem 'plausible to his Athenian audience': either it directly reflected people's experiences or it belonged to their cultural knowledge.¹⁰⁸ If Zeus, like Apollo, hardly appears to be related to the mysteries,¹⁰⁹ he is nonetheless surrounded here by other divinities with a distinctly mystical side. The first is Zagreus. As late sources give this name to the Orphic Dionysus,¹¹⁰ the whole passage is sometimes interpreted in the light of Orphism:¹¹¹ βροντάς, *thunders*, is corrected to βούτας/βούτης, *herdsman*, a form which echoes βουκόλος, a technical term that describes a degree of initiation in the circles of Orphic worshipers.¹¹² However, despite the word βᾶκχος, nothing proves that Zagreus is indeed Dionysus. Their first explicit identification dates from the Hellenistic period, in Callimachus (fr. 43,17 Pfeiffer).¹¹³ That is the only occur-

102 See also Macías Otero (2010).

103 E.g. E. Ba. 120–122. On the different ancient versions of the birth of Zeus, see Verbruggen (1981) 21–49.

104 Bremmer (2014) 66.

105 E.g. Moulinier (1955) 63; Holzhausen (2008–2009) 67. See also the secondary literature in Casadio (1990) 280 n. 5; Cozzoli (2001) 18; Magnelli (2009) 130 n. 4.

106 Casadio (1990) 280.

107 E.g. Bernabé (2004) 282.

108 See Verbruggen (1981) 77. In an attempt to offer a historical explanation of this syncretism, Allan (2004) 133 sees it as 'a direct result of the need to incorporate the new gods and cults within the religious framework of the established myths'.

109 Liapis (2007), especially 392–394, suggests further proof of the god's mystical aspect in the expression Ζεὺς ὁ φαναῖος in *Rhesus* (355). See also Markantonatos (2004) 28–29.

110 See Casadio (1990) 287; Cozzoli (2001) 85–86.

111 E.g. Casadio (1990); Bernabé (2004); Bremmer (2014) 66–67.

112 In recent editions: Collard/Cropp/Lee (1995) 60; Diggle (1998) 115; Jouan/van Looy (2000) 323. See Cozzoli (1993) 160–168 and (2001) 86; Magnelli (2009) 130–131 and n. 7.

113 See Gallistl (1981). On the identification of Zagreus with a Cretan Zeus, on the strength of only this fragment, see Verbruggen (1981) 121–125.

rence of Zagreus in Euripides. The three earlier occurrences show a Zagreus associated with chthonian deities, Gaia and Hades.¹¹⁴ More important is his night-wandering character (νυκτιπόλος, 11), which reflects the motifs of shadow and death.¹¹⁵ In *Ion* (717) such are also the maenads who accompany their god on Mount Parnassus.

The Mother of the mountain is the second deity that accompanies Zeus: the figure of the divine Mother appears repeatedly like Demeter in *Helen* (1301–1302, 1320, 1340, 1355–1356). In *Bacchae*, Dionysus is also associated four times with a Mother Goddess: with the great Mother Cybele, whose man, μάκαρ and εὐδαίμων, serving Dionysus also celebrates the ὄργια (78–79); and three times with Rhea (59, 128, 131), when the Chorus honours the invention of the tambourine, which marks the celebrations of the god.¹¹⁶ In *Palamedes* (fr. 586 Kannicht), Dionysus himself entertains a Mother Goddess with tambourines. The Chorus of *Hippolytus* associates the Mother of the mountain—in whom the scholiast sees Rhea—with Hecate, Pan, and the Corybantes (141–144). There are indeed here so many divinities likely to possess men, to drive them mad.

The Curetes, who finally intervene by gathering around Zeus, are known as the youthful warriors who help Rhea to save her offspring, Zeus, from Cronus' anger by clashing their shields in lively dances.¹¹⁷ In the fragment of *Cretans*, they celebrate the fulfilment of the *mystês* who, after their initiation, can be called βάχχοι. The references to βάχχος are not restricted to the worshippers of Dionysus-Bacchus.¹¹⁸ The term, like its entire lexical family, expresses exaltation, ecstasy, not to say madness linked to one or another mystical experience. Thus, Heracles is Hades' βάχχος (*HF* 1119), when he is driven to murderous madness; in view of their excessive behaviour, the Trojan women are also described as such (*Hec.* 1077).¹¹⁹ After several experiences, the *mystai* grow in strength by a new pious connection¹²⁰ with the world and its deities.

114 *Alcmaeonis* fr. 3 Bernabé; A. fr. 5, 228 Radt.

115 On the link between νυκτιπόλος and Hades, see A. fr. 273a, 9 Radt.

116 In *Helen*, Cypris played the drums for the first time (1346–1352), thus leading Demeter to laugh.

117 E.g. *E. Ba.* 120–122; Burkert (2011) 200 with further references. On the identification of the Curetes with the Corybantes, see Bremmer (2014) 48–53.

118 Jiménez San Cristóbal (2009).

119 See also *E. Ph.* 1489.

120 Like the member of the thiasos of Dionysus (*E. Ba.* 77); see further above.

6 Euripides and Mystical Religion

The analysis of the various mystical passages, terms, sacred sites, and gods that one comes across in Euripidean drama suggests that, however obscure and difficult it may be for today's readers to comprehend, the question of mystical religion is by no means unfathomable for fifth-century Athenian spectators. Most of the allusions to mystical cults are indeed linked to Athens (Eleusis, Dionysus) and seem to be obvious for the Athenian citizens. Some of them are specific to the plot (*Cretans*). But no mention is made of mystical cults far from Athens, such as those of Samothrace, which were famous in the classical era.

Even if there are many hints and suggestions, Euripides keeps away from divulging the nature or secrets of mystical celebrations. Some allusions are general, objective, and pragmatic, comprehensible to all (modern readers included); in fact, they indicate the sacred character of a site, of an action, of a god or a hero, or even of nature itself; they enhance a festive, musical atmosphere, which through songs and dances contributes to the glorious celebration of the gods at the time of the mysteries. Most of those allusions, however, are imprecise and enigmatic, and therefore difficult to explain fully: though they are undoubtedly clear and obvious to the initiated, they remain vague and hazy for today's readers and spectators. Except for Euripides' *Bacchae*, mystical traces never occur at key moments of the plays. At any rate, they are perfectly integrated into the enacted stories, thereby giving them an additional dimension and depth. Arguably all these ritual echoes bear testimony to the importance of mystical religion in fifth-century Athenian society; although mystic life is located on the fringe of the city and its official cults, it is no less known and recognized for that.

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Euripides and Athenian Imperialism

Sophie Mills

Although Euripides is typically considered the least conventional of Athens' three greatest tragedians, and most aligned with the sophists and others who questioned established truths, his characters frequently glorify Athenian military action or exemplify virtues that pro-Athenian sources commend as typically Athenian.¹ Older scholarship typically condemns *Heracleidae* and *Suppliant Women* as 'mere' Athenian propaganda,² while subtler recent re-evaluations explore the complications within them which potentially undermine the encomia of Athens they appear to offer, thus vindicating Euripides' progressive credentials.³ But even such nuanced accounts may be misleading precisely by focusing on ironies which detract from their potential for reinforcing their audience's pride in their descent from Theseus, Demophon and others.⁴ I prefer a 'both/and' approach, which acknowledges the complexity of Athenian tragedy, but also allows that some, perhaps many, spectators will not see all its complexities, accepting instead a simpler, unequivocal portrayal of their city in tragedy. I also believe that Euripides always provides such an interpretative option.

Any playwright needs his audience to believe in what he creates. A playwright presenting Athens to Athenians must consider both the preconceptions that his audience is likely to bring, primed by the pervasive images of Athens that they would already have seen and heard, and the inherent paradox in portraying Athens to Athenians: any portrayal that avoids bland insincerity must be able to incorporate complexity and potential criticism. While tragic texts contain many complex questions, which might certainly bear on impe-

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- 1 These virtues are most explicitly expressed in fourth-century panegyrics of Athens, but these are compatible with more haphazardly preserved pro-Athenian sentiments in fifth-century literature and art. Limited space prevents a detailed argument for the propriety of supplementing evidence contemporary with Euripides with later sources but see Strasburger (1958); Mills (1997) 45–48; Pritchard (2000) 13–26. Loraux (1986) 252–262 and Hornblower (1991) 295 are more sceptical.
 - 2 Burian (1977) 2 offers a selection of such assessments.
 - 3 Burian (1977); Allan (2001); Mendelsohn (2002); Tzanetou (2012).
 - 4 Modern academics can be suspicious of overt patriotism, but we are not citizen-soldiers: Swift (2008) 81–82.

rial Athens' role in Greece, these questions are also often entwined with the fates of cities other than Athens. Spectators can therefore, if they want, simultaneously enjoy a conventional image of their city, and feel moved by other cities' sufferings. Doubtless some did view Athens' portrayal critically—what did Thucydides make of the *Heraclidae*?—but they are not compelled to do so, because Athens typically remains distanced from the mistakes from which tragic suffering springs.

The early tragedian Phrynichus was fined by the Athenians for a play which reminded them of 'their own troubles' (Hdt.6.21.2), proving the paradoxical principle that if tragedy is to work properly on its audience, it must offer some emotional distance from what is portrayed on stage.⁵ Tragedy consistently offers that distance. Its aesthetic stylization means that its events are always at least one step removed from lived existence, and any spectator can look away (literally or mentally) from anything unappealing to contemplate and 'escape' if necessary. Each spectator brings his own experiences and prejudices to a play, and can accept, resist, or experience some intermediate reaction to what he sees. If its sentiments match his experiences and prejudices, acceptance may be unproblematic; more challenging ideas may be rejected. The complexity of the tragic texts will elicit diverse responses from a diverse audience, but since most of tragedy's first spectators were Athenian males, who regularly endured military danger to protect their city and its reputation in Greece, it might not be extraordinary if at least some accepted at face value apparently positive portrayals of their city and its traditional heroes. Since the Athenian empire was run by and for the Athenian democracy, Euripides' portrayal of Athenian imperialism clearly connects with more general, and frequently discussed issues of the relationship between Athenian tragedy and Athenian democracy, though space does not permit any detailed discussion of the topic here.⁶ Because of the importance of allowing for a little distance between what happens in tragedy and the conditions of real life, Euripidean tragedy always takes place in the heroic age of kings, so that the portrayal of democracy is a little distanced from reality:⁷ moreover, democracy itself was hard to portray on stage, so that actual democratic assemblies tend to take place offstage or be reported after-

5 Arist. *Poet.* 1448b10–20; Rosenbloom (1995) 101–102. On Phrynichus, see Roisman (1988); Rosenbloom (1993).

6 There is a long-running scholarly debate between those who consider that tragedy can only really be understood as a phenomenon of the Athenian democracy and those who believe that not so much democracy, but more general issues important for any polis, are central to the genre: for the former, see, e.g. Vernant/Vidal-Naquet (1988); Goldhill (1990) and (2000); for the latter, Griffin (1998); Carter (2010); and especially Rhodes (2003).

7 Rhodes (2003) 113.

wards.⁸ Instead, individuals, above all Theseus in the *Suppliant Women*, come to represent democratic Athens and its virtues,⁹ and even to defend the virtues of democracy, for example at *Supp.* 396–462.¹⁰ This can sometimes produce oddities, such as at *Supp.* 349–351 where Theseus claims the need to seek democratic approval for fighting Thebes while saying that the people will do what he wants anyway, or Demophon's unilateral decision to help Heracles' children, only to backtrack later through concern for popular opinion (415–419).¹¹ In general, though, the Athenian leaders represent the collective will of the idealized Athenian democracy portrayed in the *epitaphioi logoi*, which works together at home and especially abroad, helping suppliants and saving the laws of Greece, with a clear contrast between democratic Athenian values and actions and those of tyrannically-ruled non-Athenian cities, such as Thebes in *Suppliant Women* and Argos in *Heraclidae*.¹²

Euripidean tragedy presents a range of possible connections with Athenian imperialism, most closely in the *Heraclidae* (ca. 430) and *Suppliant Women* (later 420s). In *Heracles* (420s–416), the Athenian hero Theseus has a crucial role, while the topic of Athenian autochthony, central to justifications of Athenian superiority, runs through *Ion* (420–410). Hostile references to Sparta, especially in *Andromache*, may reflect the politics of the Peloponnesian War. Fragmentary tragedies (*Erechtheus*, *Theseus* and *Peirithous* ascribed to Critias or Euripides) also seem to portray Athens and Athenians favourably, but limited space forbids any detailed discussion here. Two plays seem at first to offer a different perspective. Though the *Trojan Women* (415) barely mentions Athens, many critics interpret it as a coded condemnation of Athens' treatment of Melos in 416. Theseus in *Hippolytus* (428) is a partial anomaly in Euripides' generally positive portrayal of Athenian heroes, but a close reading suggests that Euripides detaches him from the Athenian imperial rhetoric with which other tragedies characterize him: for this reason, *Hippolytus* will not be discussed here.¹³

The *Heraclidae* and the *Suppliant Women* dramatize stories familiar to anyone who had attended the annual funeral speeches which offered the nearest

8 Carter (2010) 48–49, citing E. *Supp.* 349–350, 454–455, 393–394.

9 Carter (2010) 57–58.

10 All unflattering versions of democracy are either put in the mouths of despicable characters, such as the Herald in *Suppliant Women* or placed in cities other than Athens, such as Argos in *Or.* 871–956.

11 For further discussion of these passages, see also below.

12 Cf. Mills (1997) 70–71, 99–100.

13 See, however, Mills (1997) 186–221 for a discussion of the differences between this Theseus and the Theseus of the plays in which he clearly represents Athens.

to an official history that Athens had.¹⁴ In the *Heracidae*, Demophon, Theseus' son and heir, saves Heracles' defenceless children.¹⁵ In the *Suppliant Women*, Theseus upholds Panhellenic law by forcing the Thebans to allow the burial of the dead of Polynices' failed attack on Thebes.¹⁶ In both stories Athens' representatives use Athenian power to benefit other Greeks, and, though set in the distant past, they are imbued with language and concepts of contemporary Athenian imperialism. Neither concludes with Athenian victory, however, but with the sombre destinies of non-Athenians. Scholarly tradition has therefore typically read them either as a simple glorification, or as pessimistic critique, of Athenian imperial ideals. What we take from them depends on what weight is given to the constituent elements in their combination of traditional Athenian narrative and ominous sequels. Euripides can be made to say that Athenian power to punish the bad and reward the good preserves Greece, although some cities, especially Thebes,¹⁷ are irredeemably corrupted. But a more pessimistic emphasis yields a more Thucydidean Euripides, for whom Athens' virtuous self-presentation is just a self-serving fantasy.

When the *Heracidae* begins, Iolaus is at Marathon,¹⁸ seeking help from Theseus' sons. His virtues are immediately apparent in one telling sentence (6–10), in which he remembers how he chose to help Heracles with his labours (*ponoi*) though he could have lived quietly (*hêsychôs*) in Argos. His acceptance of *ponoi* aligns him with ideals that texts favourable to the Athenian empire frequently claim as typically Athenian. Like Iolaus, Athens is always loyal to its friends and intervenes untiringly for the common good.¹⁹ The word *ponoi* is used both of Heracles' labours for humanity and of Athenian action,²⁰ assimilating Athens and Heracles as saviours. Like Iolaus, the idealized Athens rejects quietness (*hêsychia*) as cowardly and selfish: Theseus' mother in Euripides' other overtly political play condemns it, contrasting Athens' life of glorious *ponoi* with cautious and ungenerous cities that practise *hêsychia* (*Supp.* 324–325). She names no specific city, but a contemporary debate between Athens and its enemies

14 Thomas (1989) 206–213.

15 Lys. 2.11–16; Pl. *Mx.* 239b; Isoc. 4.56, 5.33–34, 10.31, 12.194; Dem. 18.186, 60.8.

16 Lys. 2.7–10; Isoc. 4.55; 12.168–172; Dem. 60.8; Plut. *Thes.* 29.

17 Zeitlin (1990) 145–147.

18 For the potency of this setting, although Euripides largely elides Marathon with Athens, see Allan (2001) 46–49; Mendelsohn (2002) 63–65.

19 Athens often imagined itself as an aristocratic champion, working tirelessly and without reward for Greece, as Achilles claims he does for the Greek army (Hom. *Il.* 9.323–327): Wilkins (1993) 131–132.

20 *Hcl.* 331; cf. E. *HF* 1275; *Supp.* 189, 573, 576–577; Thuc. 2.36.2, 62.3, 63.1, 64.3; Lys. 2.55; Boegehold (1982); Carter (1986) 10–13; Mills (1997) 64–65.

underlies her words. The active foreign policy which Athenians call the altruism which justifies Athenian power is considered interfering in others' business (*polypragmosynê*) by their enemies. Conversely, the reticence on which Sparta prided itself, as self-control is termed slowness and selfishness by the Athenians.²¹ The contrast runs through the plays of Euripides which foreground Athens.

So Iolaus has previously displayed behaviour commendable to Athenians, both within the play and among the spectators. His other appeal is his weakness. To help the weak whose cause is just requiring a rare combination of intellectual and moral wisdom to accept their claims, the power to perform *ponoi* for them and the generosity to avoid any overt request for reciprocation. A key point in Athenian self-glorification is that Athens uniquely combines these virtues.²² And so, when the Argive Herald advances on Iolaus, ripping Heracles' children from the altar and knocking the old man to the ground, the Marathonian Chorus immediately answer Iolaus' cries for assistance, affirming Athens' power to protect suppliants (101–113). They are old men, a type of Chorus whose infirmities tragedy usually emphasizes,²³ but as Marathonians, they uniquely transcend infirmity to exemplify the speed in helping friends that is another attribute of the idealized Athens.²⁴

Vulnerable suppliants had considerable appeal in tragedy, as objects of the Athenian gaze and as clients of Athenian beneficence. Suffering suppliants could evoke a pleasing emotional response in spectators,²⁵ offering them a vision of their city's ability to uphold divine and human laws in pitying, and, where proper, helping the oppressed. Pity enables identification with others' sufferings, but the one who pities also maintains some distance from the one who is pitied,²⁶ and, like tragedy itself, pity combines nearness and distance in its emotional effects. Pity also contains an intellectual element, of judgement that the pitied's condition is undeserved, thereby vindicating the

21 Thuc. 1.70 sets the 'typical' Athens against the 'typical' Sparta. On the fifth-century debate and its vocabulary, see Ehrenberg (1947); Kleve (1964); Allison (1979); Mills (1997) 67–69. Carter (1986) 42–47, 57–58 traces connections between Sparta, *hêsychia*, *sôphrosynê*, *eunomia* and moderation.

22 Thuc. 2.37.1, Pl. *Mx.*238c–d; cf. Tzanetou (2012) 103–104.

23 Aesch. *Ag.* 72–82; E. *HF* 107–114, 435–441.

24 S. *OC* 884–903; Thuc. 1.70.4; Lys. 2.26; Isoc. 4.87, 12.170.

25 Heath (1987) 8–10. Falkner (2005) 166–167 discusses power relations in tragedy, contrasting the spectator's 'power, privilege and security' with the 'suffering, vulnerability, and even humiliation' of those on stage.

26 Ar. *Rhet.* 1385b33–35, 1386b17–24.

wisdom of the pitier.²⁷ Therefore, pro-Athenian sources assert Athens' pre-eminence, in the context of its relationship with the rest of Greece, as the city which freely offers pity and assistance to the needy.²⁸ Athens' strength necessitates others' weakness, in tragedy and in real life, but this power imbalance is softened by Athenian virtues, such as its care for the defenceless:²⁹ pre-eminence in pity indicates both Athenian superiority and its benign quality.³⁰

In his appeal to Demophon, the Herald claims that no sane city would waste time helping Heracles' children when Argos could bring Athens an alliance with a powerful city (144–158; cf. 57–58), and he advises Demophon not to follow Athens' 'usual' policy of preferring inferior allies to strong ones (163–173).³¹ But an Athenian audience, familiar with standard imperial rhetoric, might disagree. It is a cherished principle that Athens risks all to help the oppressed with no thought of reward and uniquely makes friends by doing, not receiving good.³² Helping needy suppliants is a point of pride, and if it brings war, the city has the power to uphold its principles. Athens' services to Greece in myth are sometimes directly connected with its historical service at Marathon in the exceptional daring and surprising success that is typical of the ideal Athens, offering one unbroken line from past to present.³³

The Athenian mission to uphold divine law is often contrasted with the avoidance of war recommended as good sense by enemies such as the Herald, who claims (162 ff.) that Argos' conflict with Heracles' children is not Athens' business. While he does not use the actual term that the Theban herald uses to Theseus at *Supp.* 575 ff., his complaints of Athenian interference recall the *polypragmosynê* of Athens, the opposite of *hêsychia*, of which Athens' enemies frequently complained. For enemies, Athenian interventions are aggression and interference. An Athenian perspective considers them legitimate, espe-

27 Ar. *Rhet.* 1385b14–16, 1386b1–3; Sternberg (2007) 2; Konstan (2007) 55.

28 Thuc. 3.39.2; Dem. 2.4.171; Plut. *Mor.* 790c; Plin. *NH* 35.69; Paus. 1.17.1; Macleod (1983) 74 ff.; Mills (1997) 76–78.

29 Tzanetou (2012) 75–80.

30 On pity and its Athenian dimension, see Mills (1997) 105–106; Konstan (2001) 50–51, 60–66, 77–82, 88–90, 128–136; Tzanetou (2007). Pl. *Mx.* 244e claims that Athens' only fault is excessive compassion.

31 Isoc. 4.53, Andoc. 3.28, Dem. 20.3.

32 Thuc. 2.40.4. Nicias also complains of Athens' tendency to make unprofitable alliances: Thuc. 6.13.2.

33 Hdt. 9.27.2–5; Pl. *Mx.* 240a6–7; Mendelsohn (2002) 86. Athens' desire is deeply ingrained in Greek culture, from Homer onwards. 'Fame ... extends through time, and through space': Carter (1986) 2–3.

cially when Athens' enemies in tragedy try to trivialize Athens' canonical services to Greece as mere 'interference'.

Iolaus' response contains many topoi of pro-Athenian rhetoric. He states that though every other city has rejected them, Athens is different (191–196). The idea that Athens is unique is traceable at least to Athens' (supposed) lone stand in the Persian Wars,³⁴ and underlies the idealized city's unique possession of every virtue, even those, such as deliberation and courage, which might seem contradictory.³⁵ Iolaus cites additional considerations to remind Demophon of ideal Athenian behaviour. Heracles' children are their suppliants and kinsmen, but most importantly, Heracles helped Theseus against the Amazons and rescued him from Hades (215–219). Friendship in Greece was strongly competitive. The receiver of benefits was felt to be inferior to his benefactor, and even a speedy reciprocation merely evened the balance (Ar. *EN* 1167b17–1168a 27): conversely, his benefactor could magnanimously claim indifference to a repayment that he could in fact expect, while enjoying his superior position.³⁶ Such beliefs underlie Athens' relationship with the rest of Greece, as the city that does, rather than receives, good, and shape Theseus' and Heracles' relations in tragedy. The *Heraclidae* and *Heracles* (and the fragmentary *Peirithous*) reconceptualize Theseus, whom Heracles originally saves, as the saviour of Heracles or his children, resetting the balance of benefactions in Theseus' favour.³⁷ The attempted substitution of Theseus for Heracles as Greece's greatest hero, the saviour of the saviour (Dem. 60.8), reflects in mythological terms Athens' real-life ambitions and desire to put her friends/allies/clients/subjects firmly in her debt.³⁸ Helping the oppressed is therefore quintessentially Athenian business, and Demophon ignores the Herald's dire warnings and unhesitatingly accepts Iolaus (236–252). Though he is provocative to the end, so that Demophon threatens him briefly (270–271), no actual violence is committed,³⁹ and Demophon sends him packing.

In Athenian rhetoric, Athens acts without thought of gain, but in tragedy, Athens is always rewarded for risks undertaken, typically with a promise of

34 Hdt. 7.10β. 9.27.5; Thuc. 1.73.4, 74.2,4; Lys. 2.20, Dem. 60.10–11.

35 Gorgias 82 F6 DK; Thuc. 2.37.1, 40.2, 41.1; Pl. *Mx.* 238c–d. For incomplete virtue in other cities, especially Sparta, Thuc. 2.39.1; Isoc. 4.92, 12.46, 208, 217. *Monos* and Athens: *Hclld.* 306; S. *OC* 261; Hdt. 7.10.1, Thuc. 1.73.4; Mills (1997) 73.

36 Ar. *EN* 1155b27–34; 1162b36; Mills (1997) 63–66.

37 *HF* 1169–1428; S. *Trach.* 1.1010–1014. The process begins in the later sixth century: Allan (2001) 25 n. 19.

38 Cf. Kowalzig (2006) 97–98.

39 The Herald is a one-dimensional villain and Demophon's unfulfilled threat need not alarm Athenian spectators: *contra* Allan (2001) 153.

future alliance or protection. Here, Iolaus praises Athens' unique kindness and urges Heracles' children to pledge their eternal friendship (306–319). Since the Spartans with whom Athens was fighting the Peloponnesian War when this play was performed were considered their descendants, his promise is ironic and also invokes Athenian complaints that the Peloponnesian War showed profound ingratitude for Athens' services to Greece.⁴⁰

After some 350 lines, the suppliant plot seems largely complete, as Iolaus asserts that Zeus will punish Argive arrogance, with Athens as his agent (387–388; cf. 766–768).⁴¹ But now the audience learn that victory requires the sacrifice of a maiden to Persephone. Demophon refuses to kill any Athenian maiden. Is Athenian altruism just talk (cf. 461–463), or is he setting reasonable limits?⁴² We should remember the expectations that spectators might bring to this familiar story. In no other version does Athens incur such a burden, and a child of Heracles would be a more suitable victim than an Athenian, since they, rather than the Athenians as such, need victory over Eurystheus. No one condemns Demophon's reluctance (435–436, 503–506), but the dilemma is real, and the limits of Athenian altruism are tested: as a good king-democrat (424),⁴³ Demophon seeks his people's advice, but they themselves are deeply divided.

Instead, Heracles' children help themselves, as his daughter saves Athens' reputation and her brothers' lives by offering hers.⁴⁴ She does not expect Demophon to sacrifice one of his own, but states that Heracles' children must repay the Athenians for the *ponoi* they have already caused them (503–510). Emphasis on the grimmer aspects of her fate are largely absent:⁴⁵ if our text is complete,⁴⁶ there is no description of her death or condemnation of human sacrifice (contrast E. *Hec.* 518–582; *IA* 1146–1208), and she simply performs the role she has accepted. A sceptical spectator might consider Demophon purely lucky in this outcome to his impasse. A favourable perspective on the ideal-

40 Isoc. 4.62; Pl. *Mx.* 244b–c; Ael. Arist. *Panath.* 168; Allan (2001) 218.

41 Athens as upholder of human and divine law by punishing the bad: E. *Supp.* 341, Lys. 2.16, Dem. 60.11, Pl. *Mx.* 240d; Isoc. 12.170, 174; Hyperid. 5. For Zeus *kolastês*, cf. A. *Pers.* 827. Thucydides ignores such sentiments, but his minimization of religious issues is well-known: Hornblower (1992).

42 For Tzanetou (2012) 84–91 this scene reflects Athens' relations with its allies: the allies must willingly offer tribute in reciprocation for Athens' services.

43 A king-democrat is a contradiction in terms, but the Athenian union of opposites can generate such a being: Thuc. 2.40, Mills (1997) 97–103.

44 On human sacrifice in tragedy, see Burkert (1983) 58–72; Wilkins (1993) xxiii–v; Larson (1995) 101–130.

45 Though note 541–542, 579–580, 591, 602–607. Her speech recalls *topoi* found in Athenian funeral speeches: Tzanetou (2011) 323; Mendelsohn (2002) 89–101.

46 See Allan (2001) 35–36.

ized Athens might counter that a uniquely lucky outcome befits a uniquely virtuous city. From this perspective, Athens obtains double benefits for its services: it has secured Iolaus' pledge on the suppliants' behalf, and its courage in accepting the suppliants inspires them to action that rescues Athens from embarrassment. Spectators may enjoy the suppliants' pitiable plights and pity and admire the Maiden. But here, and in almost all Euripides' Athenian plays, Athens too is a spectator, which welcomes and pities suppliants, but remains fundamentally apart from them.

Eurystheus is eventually punished by military defeat, but he is not killed in battle because Iolaus wants Alcmena to confront her family's oppressor directly (879–884). Alcmena seeks vicious revenge, ignoring the immorality of killing a prisoner of war in cold blood, even though the Chorus explicitly deem it unacceptable to Athens' rulers (964).⁴⁷ When Eurystheus finally speaks, he is surprisingly sympathetic, as he explains his previous actions, acknowledging Heracles' excellences (998–999), and Athens' mercy in sparing him (1012). Like Iolaus earlier, he invokes Panhellenic law: though he was willing to die in combat, mercy to a surrendered prisoner is the law, and his murderers will incur pollution. In our transmitted text, the Chorus advise Alcmena to obey the city and release Eurystheus. She proposes instead to kill him and return his body to his friends. The offer is hardly in keeping with Greek law, but the Chorus leader accedes to it (1022–1025). After Eurystheus' next speech, Alcmena orders her servants to throw him to the dogs (1050–1052). Again, the Chorus apparently assent (1053–1055): 'For our deeds will be clean in the sight of our rulers'. Some commentators assume that there must be a lacuna between 1052 and 1053, and often fill it with material absolving the Chorus from this stunning cynicism. The transmitted ending seems so incoherent, especially in the contradiction between 1022–1025 and 1050–1051, that it is tempting to assume that it is incomplete,⁴⁸ but if it is not, then the Chorus' interactions with Alcmena makes Athens' ideals look decidedly hollow.⁴⁹

But Euripides also allows for a less damning interpretation. Though Iolaus' earlier promise that Heracles' descendants will never attack Athens is known by the audience to be false, Eurystheus himself promises to reward Athens by residing in Attic soil as a protector (1015, 1032–1033), while sending pollution on his murderers (Alcmena and her Spartan descendants). Thus, even when the descendants of Heracles' children do attack Athens—Eurystheus himself

47 In the early years of the Peloponnesian War, Athenians, Plataeans and Spartans all killed prisoners without trial: Thuc. 2.5.7, 67.4, 3.68.1.

48 Zuntz (1963) 41–42; Burian (1977) 19–20; Wilkins (1993) 193; Allan (2001) 223–224.

49 Allan (2001) 207; Burian (1977) 15–19.

condemns their ingratitude (1036)!—it will be protected. This ending reflects Athens' increasing interest in cult places of Attica during the Peloponnesian War, partly for strategic reasons, and partly to gain heroic protection.⁵⁰ And so, some spectators might have focused more on Eurystheus' promise than on the Marathonians' apparent failure to vindicate Greek law. Though the play does end on a jarring note, it focuses on the irreconcilable differences between Eurystheus and Alcmena,⁵¹ and the Chorus' mere handful of lines was perhaps less important to Euripides' original audience. Meanwhile, Athens has accomplished its mission and there is little doubt as to whose status is ultimately happiest, where Eurystheus is dead, Alcmena accursed, and Heracles' distant descendants accused of monstrous ingratitude.

The slightly later *Suppliants* also combines pro-Athenian rhetoric and pessimism, and detaches Athens from any inextricable link to suffering. In this play, the mothers of the seven against Thebes, led by Adrastus, are at Eleusis⁵² to ask Theseus' help in retrieving the corpses of their sons from the Theban victors, who are dishonouring divine law by keeping them unburied. Euripides' audience might reasonably have expected Theseus to accept their supplication unquestioningly, since burying the Seven was one of Athens' most famous actions in patriotic mythology, but instead, in a lengthy dialogue (110–161), Theseus relentlessly questions an increasingly cowed Adrastus as to the justice of his request, emphasizing his impiety and incompetent leadership.

Adrastus counters with familiar appeals to Athens' reputation, reminding Theseus of his city's unique qualities, and condemning Sparta's 'rough and shift' ways. Athens 'alone' can undertake this deed (*ponos*) because it always pities the wretched (188–190). Unmoved, Theseus responds with a speech about the gods' essential beneficence and human foolishness and discontent, of which he accuses Adrastus. This self-righteous Theseus rejects alliance with a person who deserves his fate, fearing that Adrastus' misfortune will damage his city. This is not the expected Athenian response, and Adrastus reproaches him: he does not need Athens as judge or punisher (*kolastês*)⁵³ but as a helper of the oppressed.

50 Krummen (1993) 215–217. DS 12.45 reports that the Spartans spared Marathon because the Heraclidae defeated Eurystheus there: apparently, they were not completely ungrateful.

51 Wilkins (1993) xxv.

52 Mendelsohn (2002) 135–146 discusses Eleusis' literary and religious significance. A conjectured reference to the festival of the Proerosia (28–30) has been connected with an inscription (*IG* 1³ 78 = ML 73) recording Athens' requirement that its allies offer first fruits to the Eleusinian goddesses, in an apparent attempt to promote Eleusis as a Panhellenic sanctuary.

53 Cf. above, n. 41.

Theseus' old mother Aethra pities the old mothers of the Chorus and reminds her son of proper Athenian values in a stirring speech. She would have stayed quiet (*hêsychôs*, 305), as a woman should, if the Thebans were not transgressing Panhellenic law by refusing burial to the dead, and as an Athenian, Theseus must help the unjustly treated (304–305). She reminds him that Athens, unlike 'quiet' (*hêsychoi*) and cautious cities (323–325) benefits from *ponoi*. The triumphant Thebans (and, briefly, Theseus) have forgotten one of the cardinal tenets of Greek popular philosophy which is central to tragedy itself, that human fortune is inconstant.⁵⁴ Old Aethra remembers, and she will make Theseus remember and act as an Athenian should.

Theseus' first, 'un-Athenian' response, which is echoed later by the Theban Herald,⁵⁵ helps to throw into stronger focus the rightness of his return to ideal Athenian principles, enabling him to become the voice of moral authority in the play, asserting rhetorical and military superiority over clients and enemies alike. Yet he remains distant from Adrastus. He helps him according to Athenian principles but allows him no share in his campaign or opportunity to speak before it is complete (513; 590–593). The Athenian imperial ideal may partly explain his caution. The idealized Athens does everything easily (Thuc. 2.39.1, 4), but what it does cannot actually *be* easy. Choosing to help the oppressed must be a sufficiently difficult *ponos* for its successful completion to glorify Athens uniquely. Therefore, the potential harm to Athens that may result from helping someone like Adrastus, whether by the taint of his misfortune or from reprisals by his enemies, is not insignificant. Thus Theseus remembers Adrastus' dubious past, but accepts higher priorities of punishing the bad and not shirking *ponoi* (339–342), returning to the 'Athenian script' to help Adrastus, whether by persuading the Thebans to return the bodies⁵⁶ or by forcing them.⁵⁷ He is supremely confident in word and deed, and, like Demophon, king and democrat, seeking the people's sanction yet confident that he will get it (346–351).

A choral ode of gratitude to Athens is followed by a debate between Theseus and a Theban Herald, which, like the equivalent scene in the *Heraclidae*, addresses contemporary politics. The Herald praises monarchy, condemning democracy as rule by the unskilled mob, while Theseus is given more space

54 E.g. Hdt. 1.32: cf. Mills (1997) 107–110.

55 Compare 291 with 472; 214–228 with 496–497.

56 Compare Aeschylus' fragmentary *Eleusinioi*: Plut. *Thes.* 29.4–5; cf. Isoc. 12.168–171; Paus.1.39.2.

57 The more common version, due to its prevalence in funeral orations honouring the deaths of Athenian soldiers.

(29 lines versus 18) to praise democracy and offer an equally stereotyped condemnation of monarchy as tyranny. From Theseus' failure to address the Herald's criticisms, some deduce that Euripides himself directly condemns Athenian democracy through Theseus' words.⁵⁸ Some Athenians might have drawn similar conclusions, but equally, others might not have needed to hear Theseus explicitly refute such obvious falsehoods, enjoying instead their ancestor's attack on tyranny's clear evils.⁵⁹ Some also connect the Herald's claim (479–493) that foolish hope promotes wars that are destroying Greece with Thucydides' judgements on the Peloponnesian War,⁶⁰ and this play certainly shows the pains of endless war. But there are good and bad wars, and Theseus is simply fighting to reassert Panhellenic law (538; cf. Thuc. 2.37.3). Athenian activism is strongly endorsed by Theseus' boasts to the Herald of his previous *ponoi* of punishing the violent and proud, while sparing the good (575). The Herald responds, 'You and your city are always interfering', using the term *prassein polla*, which recalls charges of *polypragmosynê*, but the claim of such an unsympathetic character actually vindicates Athenian interventionism for Athenian spectators, and Theseus asserts that the *ponoi* engendered by *polypragmosynê* bring Athens much (*polla*) happiness.

When Theseus fails to persuade Creon to return the bodies (670–672), he goes successfully to war. Although his army could have sacked Thebes, his mission was merely to reclaim the dead and, unlike the Thebans, he rejects excessive revenge in favour of simple justice (720–725).⁶¹ The image of the just conqueror, who chooses to exercise less power than he could, exemplifies the idealized Athens' combination of power, mercy and wisdom.⁶² Military and moral success demand intelligence, foresight and awareness that human prosperity is precarious, and Theseus is duly rewarded for possessing this rare combination. Moreover, his merciful firmness even causes Adrastus to reflect

58 Grube (1941) 234; Fitton (1961) 433.

59 For an earlier incarnation of Theseus as speaker of truth to tyrannical power, compare Bacchylides 17.20–46.

60 Fitton (1961) 435–436.

61 Some see an allusion to 424's battle of Delium here, in spite of significant differences between history and Euripides' tragedy. Both situations concern Theban violation of Panhellenic burial customs, but the tragedy removes Athens from all moral vulnerability, making it a detached 'policeman', arbitrating between two other Greek cities: Mills (1997) 93–95. For Bowie (1997) 52–53, Euripides comes uncomfortably close to presenting spectators with 'their own troubles'. However, he also provides ample escape routes for those who reject any troubling interpretations.

62 'He who can show mercy may well choose not to': Lateiner (2005) 77.

on his own mistakes, in disastrously rejecting Eteocles' moderate terms (740), through his own stubborn confidence.

Through enlightened *polypragmosynê* Theseus exercises supreme power on behalf of, and over, his fellow Greeks. He rehabilitates the suppliants by returning their dead in spite of their original transgression, apportioning punishment to the Thebans and reward to the mothers of the dead in an almost divine role. Everyone else is essentially a passive client. Theseus crowns his self-controlled prowess in war with an outstandingly compassionate deed which exemplifies Athens' idealized omni-competence, tending the decomposing corpses with his own hands (762–768). Adrastus is at last sufficiently rehabilitated to be allowed to pronounce a funeral oration over the dead (857–917),⁶³ but soon yields again to Theseus, who praises Polynices, arranges a separate burial for Capaneus and rebukes Adrastus for inviting the mothers to view the traumatic sight of their sons before they are cremated (925–947). Adrastus succumbs with a final lament at human bellicosity and a wish to live peacefully (*hêsychoi meth' hêsychôn*) without *ponoi* (952–954): the phrase invokes contemporary politics and favours Spartan policy, but it is spoken by a consistently discredited character. Theseus never expresses such sentiments: for his city alone, just warfare is beneficial.

Argos is on its own miserable path that even Athens cannot alter, and Athens fades out of focus as Capaneus' grieving widow commits suicide and the sons of the dead arrive, carrying their ashes in urns and threatening revenge. At the end of the play, Theseus asks Adrastus simply to remember and honour Athens' services, and even offers more help (1169–1173, 1180), but Athena intervenes to ensure a proper reward for her city's *ponoi* by making Theseus extract an oath from Adrastus not to attack Athens (1191–1213). This promise may evoke the historical treaty that Athens and Argos signed in 421/420 BC, but the fictional version is entirely one-sided, and Athens promises Argos nothing in return for its pledge. The multiple strands of the *Suppliant Women* enable spectators to feel pity and sadness, as Athena prophesies more misery for Argos and Thebes with the future attack of the Epigonoï on Thebes, while being reassured by Athens' security. Athens' imperial mission cannot help everyone, but it does

63 Its tone has occasioned considerable debate, since Adrastus transforms formerly monstrous and impious characters into civic paragons: ironic readings of his speech include Smith (1967) 161–164; Burian (1985) 148–149; Fitton (1961) 438–440; and Mendelsohn (2002) 188–196, contrasting with the readings of Zuntz (1963) 13–16; Collard (1972); and Mills (1997) 124–125. Storey (2008) 66–70 treads a middle path. Historical funeral speeches typically ascribe virtue automatically to the dead, with little specific explanation for so doing: Yoshitake (2010).

help Athens, both now (the mythological past) and for the future (the audience's own present and future.) Spectators were surely moved by the play's depiction of the pain of war because they understood it through their own experiences.⁶⁴ But it was easier for them to do so precisely because it was not their city's pain.

Though it is less exclusively focused on Athens, Euripides' *Heracles* resembles *Heracidae* and *Suppliant Women* in its portrayal of Theseus and Heracles' eventual transfer to Athens.⁶⁵ As the play begins, Heracles is in Hades capturing Cerberus. A tyrant⁶⁶ rules Thebes, rendering his family helpless, and in spite of Heracles' outstanding services to humanity and the gods, no one will help them, whether through apathy or inability (e.g. 217–229, 339–347.) Sorrow turns to joy as Heracles returns from Hades, where he was initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries (613),⁶⁷ which helped him with capturing Cerberus, and where he helped Theseus (619–621). Soon, however, Hera, angry at Heracles' success, sends him mad and he kills all his family except his aged father Amphitryon (815 ff.)

When he understands what he has done, Heracles can only think of suicide (1146–1152), and at Theseus' arrival (1154, foreshadowed by 619–621) he veils his head, in fear of bringing religious pollution on him. Theseus has recently learned of the tyranny at Thebes, and, because Heracles helped him in Hades, has come, with proper Athenian speed, to help him.⁶⁸ He repays Heracles and equalises the balance of favours immediately, unlike his family's false or feeble friends.

Amphitryon explains what has happened, and Theseus instantly attributes the disaster to Hera's machinations (1191). His speedy and correct judgement befits the representative of an intelligent and compassionate city which helps the unjustly treated (Thuc. 2.37.3) and uniquely distinguishes between deserved and undeserved sufferings (Isoc. 4.47). For Theseus, his friendship with Heracles trumps all fear of pollution (1219–1221, 1236, 1400), and he focuses on human solutions to his troubles, arguing that divine moral transgressions allow humans similar license (1314–1321.) The argument is plainly imperfect, but the exemplary human Theseus avoids engagement with the play's theodicy because such unsatisfactory divinities make human acceptance at Athens

64 Zuntz (1963) 20.

65 For Euripides' innovations in Heracles' myth, see Bond (1981) xxvi–xxx.

66 He is characterized by 'un-Athenian' language, such as *eulabeia* (165–166), and *amathia*, another term sometimes opposed to Athenian virtues, Thuc. 1.68.1, 2.40.3, 3.37.2; Mills (1997) 131–132.

67 One of Athens' benefits to humanity: Isoc.4.28–29.

68 The Chorus equated *polypragmosynê* with helping friends (266–267), but they are old, and their good intentions cannot result in the effective action that Theseus instantly offers.

Heracles' only real hope. While panegyrics of Athens often portray Athens as a pious city, beloved by the gods, another strain of thought ascribes to Athens an almost divine wisdom and agency and the ability partially to mitigate divinely-created suffering, as Theseus does for Heracles and Adrastus.⁶⁹

Athens is again the pitying but detached helper, as Heracles himself notes, complaining, when Theseus urges him to be strong (1242–1248; cf. 1410–1417), that since he is outside the tragedy (*ektos ... sumphoras*, 1249), he cannot understand his experience. Athens' human excellence actually limits its ability to offer anything other than human, philosophically imperfect solutions, in a world controlled by obscure and hostile divinities: Heracles understandably considers Theseus' arguments insufficient, and his ideas of divinity simplistic (1255–1321; 1340–1351). Ultimately, however, Greece's greatest hero consents to become Athens' newest mythological recruit. Theseus has already repaid Heracles for his service in Hades, by coming to his family's aid, but now Heracles asks his help in bringing Cerberus to Argos. Cerberus' capture is Heracles' greatest feat, a symbolic conquest of death, but here it is partly transferred to Theseus (though left in the future).⁷⁰ The symbolism of this transfer as a mark of Athenian pre-eminence in Greece is clear. *Heracles* is unusual in emphasizing Athens' help to Heracles over any benefits that he offers to Athens,⁷¹ effecting a further glorification of Athenian generosity and power.

Euripides' *Ion* is marked rather differently by imperial Athens. Central to the Athenians' self-perception were two myths which served different functions in asserting their identity. Athenian panegyric frequently praises Athenian autochthony: because the Athenians came from the soil of Attica and no people inhabited their land before they did, their civilization is the oldest and purest in Greece, and they are the most just, in never driving others from their land to inhabit it.⁷² But as early as Solon (fr. 4), Attica is 'the oldest land of Ionia', and at certain periods, Athens' Ionian connections were emphasized.⁷³ Athens' claims as the Ionians' mother city legitimize Athenian control over the Ionians of the empire.⁷⁴

69 Isoc. 4.28–29, 33, 39–40; Pl. *Mx.* 237d–238b.

70 Theseus offers similar help to Heracles in *Peirithous* (fr. 7.8–14); Collard/Cropp (2009) 655.

71 Contrast *Held.* 1026–1036; *Supp.* 1191–1195.

72 Hdt. 7.161.3; E. *Erechtheus* fr. 360. 5–13; Thuc. 2.36.1; Isoc. 4.24, 12.124; Hyperid. 6.7; Lys. 2.17–18; Dem. 60.4; Pl. *Mx.* 245d. Rosivach (1987); Thomas (1989) 217–218; Zacharia (2003) 44–76.

73 Barron (1964) 46–47.

74 Hdt. 8.22.1; Thuc. 1.95.1, 6.82.3–4. Inscriptions show that the Athenians required their colonists, Ionian and otherwise, to acknowledge Athens as a mother city by sending a cow and panoply to the Panathenaea, punishing those who refused, thus blurring to their own advantage distinctions between allies, subjects and colonists: Dillon (1997) 143–145;

When Apollo raped Creusa, the daughter of the Athenian king Erechtheus, she bore a son, whom Apollo spirited away to Delphi where he is now Apollo's temple attendant, ignorant of his parentage. Creusa subsequently married Xuthus, an Achaean, and the couple come to Delphi for advice on their current childlessness. In his prologue, Hermes reveals that through Apollo's agency, Xuthus will accept the temple attendant as his son so that he can return to Athens with an heir. The boy will be named Ion and found the Ionic settlements in Asia (65–75).

Erechtheid identity and Athenian autochthony pervade the play,⁷⁵ but become particularly significant when Xuthus wants to bring Ion to Athens as his son. Ion hesitates through concern about the Athenians' pride in their descent and the disadvantages a foreigner's son of unknown mother might face (589–594).⁷⁶ His worries are well-founded. Creusa's allies, the Chorus, consider him and his non-Athenian father interlopers (703–708, 719–724; cf. 1058–1060, 1069–1073), and the suspicions of her old servant that the pair might pollute her house with servile blood (808–811, 819, 837) inspire her plan to kill them with the Erechtheids' ancestral gift of the Gorgon's blood, one drop of which is deadly (845–846, 976–978; 999–1019). Euripides raises real questions about non-citizens in Athens and thus about the claims of patriotic literature that Athens is open to foreigners.⁷⁷ But once the tokens from his babyhood presented by Apollo's priestess prove his identity (1427–1436), Ion, Athenian royalty through his mother, and of divine origin through his real father, will represent the ideal Athens excellently in his unique combination of contradictory statuses. Ion's right to rule Athens, which conveniently removes the foreigner Xuthus' descendents from the succession, is affirmed by Athena as *dea ex machina* (1571–1575), who prophesies that Ion's sons, eponyms of the four Ionian tribes, will settle the Cyclades, colonize Europe and Asia, and

Barron (1964) 45–48. *Ion* was probably performed between 420 and 410: some connection between the play and the revolt of Athens' Ionian allies in 412/411 is often conjectured.

75 10, 20–26, 265–282, 737, 999–1003; 1060; cf. 1163–1165. Athens itself is also praised: 30, 184–187, 262–263, 590, 1038. The Erechtheus myth enables the Athenians to be born from the earth as possessors of unique racial purity and also to be 'children of blessed gods' (E. *Med.* 825); Zacharia (2003) 63.

76 Ion's own concern for purity is notable: 94–106, 150, 154–175, 643–645. He commends the noble births of Creusa and her ancestors, 237–240, 262–263, 267–282, 619–620, but calls her a 'foreign woman' (1221) when he accuses her of murder, and fears discovering that his true parents are low-born: 1382–1384; 1473–1476.

77 Thuc. 2.39.1: Wolff (1965) 175. Hoffer (1996) argues that violence is central to this play, reflecting the inherent violence of the Athenian empire, but all of its violence is at its edges. No violence is actually committed and even Apollo is largely forgiven by his own victims: Wolff (1965) 177.

lend strength to Athens, divinely sanctioning the Athenian empire (1575–1593). Moreover, Creusa and Xuthus will have two more children, Dorus and Achaeus, the eponyms of the Dorians and Achaeans. In Hesiod (fr. 9), Dorus is Xuthus' brother, but Euripides demotes him so that the Ionians will be the senior race in Greece with a uniquely divine ancestry.⁷⁸ This arrangement aligns Athens' antiquity and distinction with the autochthony topos in which Athenian civilization is older than that of other cities and makes Athens a kind of mother city for all of Greece. The aetiologies in Greek tragedy often assert a continuity from past to present which is an important part of the idealised Athens, perfect then and perfect now.⁷⁹ That said, this play's complexities are real, especially in the pain Apollo causes Creusa and Ion. Athena credits Apollo for a 'happy' ending, but commentators struggle to believe that Euripides really endorses her claim,⁸⁰ especially since Athena actively prevents Ion from confronting Apollo directly (1546–1548) and Xuthus is left believing a lie. However, Athena eclipses Apollo at the end of the play to offer the spectators a reassuring ending, and Ion and Creusa ultimately express satisfaction with what has transpired (1606–1612). Like Hera in *Heracles*, Apollo acts disappointingly by human standards (1557–1558; cf. 436–451), but whether he should be judged by human standards is left unclear, because the play's end focuses so strongly on the glorious future awaiting Creusa's descendants. Once more, Euripides juxtaposes a human and humane Athens with violent or enigmatic gods. Although he is not entirely innovative in portraying such gods,⁸¹ perhaps one reason for the anti-religious impression he left on his contemporaries and many moderns is the tendency of his Athenian characters to epitomize the highest human virtues to help victims of divine anger or indifference.

The anti-Spartan thread running through the first part of *Andromache* (ca. 425) is notable.⁸² Hermione is rich and spoiled and her Spartan nationality

78 Cole (1997) 88; Bremmer (1997) 12. The Peloponnesian War also becomes a conflict with fratricidal implications: Lee (1997) 34.

79 Cf. Dunn (2000) 4–5, 23–27.

80 Loraux (1993) 209–210; Rabinowitz (1993) 219–222. Wassermann (1940) exonerates Apollo from all criticism. Conacher (1959) usefully summarizes previous judgements, distinguishing between those who emphasize the play's pro-Athenian elements, resisting any unflattering picture of Apollo, and those who consider it anti-Apollo polemic. For Conacher, emphasis on Apollo is misguided, and Euripides' main interest is his dazzlingly intricate plot: cf. Cole (1997) 93. Still, Creusa's rape remains problematic: even if a twenty-first-century AD sensibility finds it more troublesome than a fifth-century BC sensibility would, Euripides emphasizes its traumatic aspects for mother and son alike.

81 Lefkowitz (1989).

82 The ancient commentator on l. 445 directly connects this hostility with the Peloponnesian War: cf. Poole (1994) 3–14. Bradford (1994) 76–77 compares Thucydides' Spartans with

is emphasized (29, 128, 209, 486). She is unkind to Andromache, but self-pitying and feeble (804–813, 854–856) once her equally unsympathetic father Menelaus⁸³ is no longer there to protect her. When Menelaus tricks Andromache into leaving sanctuary at the altar, she violently abuses, not him, but Sparta itself, accusing Spartans of treachery, lies, greed and undeserved good fortune in Greece (445–452). The Chorus follow her denunciation by connecting condemnation of Neoptolemus' shared marriage to two wives with condemnation of shared kingship (471–475; 486–493), in a possible allusion to the double kingship at Sparta. When Peleus comes at last to help Andromache—not as promptly as the old men of Athenian Choruses—he attacks the chastity of Spartan women, condemning both Hermione and her mother, as responsible for the deaths of countless Greeks in the Trojan War, and blames Menelaus for being cuckolded by a Phrygian, the cowardly prosecutor of a destructive war for his adulterous wife and the cause of Iphigenia's murder (595–626). He also claims (724–726) that the Spartans' only virtue is their military ability. Though Athens is not mentioned, the complementary topos to this claim in Athenian panegyric is that of Athenian universal excellence, contrasted with the partial excellence that other cities (notably Sparta) offer at best.⁸⁴ As often happens in Euripides, themes of interest in the first half of the play gradually yield to a different set, and here, Hermione's Spartan nationality fades out of focus.⁸⁵

The *Trojan Women* has often been read as Euripides' response to Athens' massacre of the Melians in 416, the supreme example of Athens' abuse of power, since it was produced in 415.⁸⁶ In more recent years it has become the paradigm anti-war play in which the traumatized Trojan women represent all victims of war. Perhaps some Athenian spectators at the play's premiere did interpret Euripides' words as a condemnation of Athenian action, but significant caveats complicate any idea that Euripides deliberately wrote to equate the Greeks at Troy and the Athenians at Melos, not least simple chronology, since Euripides is most unlikely to have been able to conceive his play, submit

Euripides', arguing that both authors trade on existing Athenian images of Spartans to appeal to their audience's prejudices: cf. Pritchard (2000) 39–44.

- 83 Except in *Helen*, Euripides' Menelaus is 'arrogant, brutal, unscrupulous, deceitful, treacherous, cowardly, weak': Poole (1994) 17–25. In *Or.* 748, Menelaus espouses the Spartan concern for *eulabeia* to justify cowardice.
- 84 Lys. 2.31–32, Thuc. 2.40.2 and 39.1; Isoc. 4.92, 12.46, 198, 208, 217; Gorgias 82 F6DK.
- 85 Allan (2000) 149–160 discusses references in *Andromache* to Thessaly and Molossia, two increasingly important allies for Athens in the later fifth century.
- 86 Raaflaub (2001) 334–339; Croally (1994) 12, cf. 253.

his proposal to the archon to get a Chorus and the write and rehearse it between the sack of Melos in late 416 BC and the Dionysia of 415.⁸⁷

The *Trojan Women* certainly condemns war-making (95–97, 400), but in a non-specific way which cannot be assumed to target contemporary Athens directly.⁸⁸ But, like Hermione in *Andromache*, the hated figure of Helen is frequently dubbed ‘Spartan’ (34, 250, 869; cf. 133, 1110–1113), and especially telling are the Chorus’ speculations about where they will be sent as prizes for the Greek contingents. Their first choice is ‘Theseus’ land’, with Thessaly as their second choice and Sicily or southern Italy as their third (214–229). Such places are of obvious, if general, contemporary relevance to his spectators,⁸⁹ and they are characterized by beauty and a prosperity that even seems to reflect moral superiority.⁹⁰ By contrast, the Chorus dread Sparta (210–213): since Helen is Spartan, their fears may be explained mythologically, but some spectators at least must have understood their preferences in an entirely contemporary context. Athens would naturally be most, and Sparta least, desirable to foreigners. These are not the only reminiscences of the idealized Athens. At 799 ff. the Chorus evoke Salamis (‘holy’ at 1096), mentioning the claim already reported by Herodotus (5.82.2) and popular in Athenian panegyric, that olive trees, the emblem of civilization and one of Athens’ gifts to the world, first grew at Athens; Athens is also given its traditional, even clichéd, epithet of ‘shining’ (803, cf. Pind. *Isthm.* 2.20; Ar. *Ach.* 640).

In their confrontation, Hecuba condemns Helen’s lust and greed for Paris’ oriental splendour in her longing to escape Spartan poverty (991–996). While her charges make sense in a purely mythological context, the figure of the Spartan who is seduced by wealth is also familiar and may have some presence in the Athenian imperial imagination: perhaps some of the audience remembered the Spartan general Pausanias who went eastwards and adopted Persian ways.⁹¹ Whereas Athens offers every attraction but not to excess (Thuc. 2.40.1) and naturally attracts foreigners, Sparta is a city of extremes and therefore lacking in certain respects, causing its inhabitants to look elsewhere for what it cannot provide.

87 See Van Erp Taalman Kip (1987).

88 Roisman (1987) 46–47 believes that 95–97 were more likely to invoke memories of Sparta’s treatment of Plataea than any Athenian transgressions.

89 Cf. Roisman (1987) 42–43. Westlake (1953) 190 concludes that Euripides’ references to contemporary politics could ‘win the favour of his audience by echoing its current opinions’.

90 Visvardi (2011) 275–276; cf. E. *Hec.* 448–474.

91 Hdt. 5.32; Thuc. 1.95.3, 128.3, 130.1–2, 132.1; Roisman (1987) 44–47. For the corruptible Spartan in Euripides, see Poole (1994) 19–21.

Perhaps some spectators did connect their conduct at Melos with Euripides' portrayal of the sack of Troy. No author can control what his audience takes from his work. But the play's potential references to contemporary politics are at least as favourable to Athens and hostile to Sparta as the reverse, and many are explicable in a purely mythological framework. This is exactly what we might expect, given the conditions in which Euripides was writing. If Herodotus is to be believed, any playwright who wrote too specifically about Athenian pain might, like Phrynichus, have been punished for reminding the Athenians of their own troubles, violating the apparent convention that Athens is *ektos sumphoras*. Playwrights also competed for a much-desired first prize. If Euripides did want to prick Athenian consciences, he would have had to tread a fine line and allow 'escape routes' for Athenians resistant to criticism of Athens. Moreover, although Thucydides portrays Melos' sufferings with intense moral seriousness, Aristophanes made a joke of 'Melian hunger' in the roughly contemporary *Birds* (186), and it may be that only after the Peloponnesian War did Melos come to represent the worst excesses of Athenian imperial power.⁹² Modern audiences are also essentially *ektos sumphoras*, if in a slightly different sense. We are so far distant in time (and, typically, scholars, not soldier-spectators) that we can easily compare the sack of Troy and the Melian massacre and feel outrage for the Melians through the Trojan women. For Euripides' contemporaries, 'within the tragedy', or their polis' ideology, the parallels between the two situations may seem less compelling, if only through the marvellous human capacity for not seeing whatever we do not want to see.⁹³

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92 Green (1999) 102–103.

93 Green (1999) 101–102.

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PART 6

*Euripidean Anthropology:
Status, Function, and Gender*



Women's Voices in Euripides

Dana LaCourse Munteanu

1 The Problems with Genre, Euripidean Contradictions

'Women are better than men, and I'll show that', says a character in Euripides' fragmentary *Melanippe Captive*.¹ Conversely, 'we are women, least able to perform good deeds, but most astute architects of bad deeds', we hear in *Medea* (407–409). How can we explain the contradiction? Surely tragedy, a polyphonic genre, does not reflect directly the dramatist's opinions and can incorporate opposite views, such as those expressed above.² Furthermore, generalizations about women remain common in classical tragedy.³ No doubt, Euripidean plays have inherited some cultural complications involved in giving voices to women onstage that characterize Greek classical drama in general.⁴ Fifth-century Greek tragedy, a product of male playwrights, represented or misrepresented women obsessively, prompting the question whether its heroines were 'really women'.⁵ The prominent women of classical drama stand in

1 Collard/Cropp (2008) vol. 7, no. 494, line 3, 595. Following the editorial guidelines for this volume, I am using the Loeb edition for all Euripidean passages. Translations are mine unless otherwise specified. The bibliography on the topic of women in tragedy and, respectively, on women in Euripidean plays is so vast that it is impossible to refer to all the relevant papers here, so I apologize in advance for the inevitable omissions.

2 Allan/Kelly (2013), with a review of earlier bibliography, convincingly propose exploring simultaneously a wide spectrum of messages given in fifth-century Athenian tragedy, even though they may be contradictory at times. They argue that tragedy as a popular genre has something for everyone in the audience: reaffirmation of Athenian democratic ideology and superiority, as well as subversive challenging views of the status quo, through showing the disintegration of the heroic world. For further discussion on this topic, see also Roselli (2011) and (2016).

3 Particularly on Euripides' generalities about women's behaviour and life in the broader context of Greek culture, see, for example, Gregory (2005) 264–265 and Meltzer (2006) 79–89. Overall Murnaghan (2005) 242–245 surveys generalities about women in tragedy, noting that these are much more common than those about men.

4 Mastronarde (2010) 246–260 offers a concise presentation of the topic.

5 Murnaghan (2005) 245 has framed the question in this way. McClure (1999) has analyzed the socio-linguistic elements of feminine discourse in classical tragedy and comedy. Rabinowitz (1993) 1–14 and (2004); Fantham et al. (1994) 68–127; Foley (2001) 1–18 and (2004) summarize well the problems inherent in defining the relationships between the women onstage and

sharp contrast to the silenced women of the fifth-century Athenian society, whose good reputation depended on not being talked about (Thuc. 2.45.2). The former, mythical women on the tragic stage, speak loudly in public, take revenge on their enemies, and exercise political influence. The latter, Athenian women, were confined to the domestic realm and generally excluded from political life (the exception being religious festivals). Consequently, the tragic heroines have been difficult to interpret in relationship with the socio-historical context. Representations of women in Greek drama have been variously understood through structuralist, anthropological, psychological, and socio-historical approaches.⁶ Tragic women have been seen as reflections of male anxieties and projections while ‘playing the other’,⁷ and as complex literary reflections of fifth-century social tensions (for example, restrictions over public mourning in the *Suppliant Women*),⁸ or the Periclean law of citizenship (in the *Ion*).⁹ To a great extent, Euripides’ plays represent women in a way that corresponds to generic norms and to the contemporary cultural milieu.¹⁰

While consistent with many general features of Greek tragedy, Euripides’ dramatic treatment of women appears to have been unique even among Greek playwrights. In Aristophanes’ *Frogs* (1049–1051) and *Thesmophoriazusae* (389–394), Euripides is seen as a slanderer of women, exposing their unbridled sexuality. Similarly, the tragedian’s *Vita* emphasizes Euripides’ portrayal of disreputable adulteresses, explaining it on account of the tragedian’s personal

socio-historical realities. Mossman (2005) also explores in detail the complications involved in understanding women’s voices in tragedy and possible interpretations.

- 6 Goldhill (1986) 107–137 provides a clear and concise overview of theoretical approaches to sexuality in Greek tragedy; more generally on approaches to tragedy, see also Goldhill (1997) and Storey/Allan (2005) 237–252. On how critical approaches to women in classical drama influenced modern performances of Greek tragedy, see Wilmer (2007).
- 7 Zeitlin (1996) remains one of the most influential scholars on gender and society in Greek drama, illustrating, for example, gender dynamics with Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* (pp. 87–122).
- 8 Loraux (1998) and (2002) 21–46 views tragic lament as subverting epic values and ideology; McClure (1999), Foley (2001), and Dué (2006) all explore the relationship between tragic lament, Greek ritual, and Athenian politics. On this topic, see Dué (2006) 117–162, particularly for Euripides’ plays.
- 9 Zacharia (2003) 44–99; Lape (2010) 95–136.
- 10 Some historians, for example, Tritle (2010) 59–60, have seen in Euripidean women more direct and fleeting expressions of the Athenian ethnic prejudices (e.g., Spartan women in the *Andromache*). Kennedy (2014) 38–67 suggests ways in which Athenian prejudices regarding Metic women can be read in Euripides’ *Hippolytus* and *Medea*. On the polarization: men/women in Euripides’ tragedy (especially *Alcestis*, *Medea* and *Hippolytus*), see also Walton (2009) 44–61.

experiences (his first wife's and then second wife's infidelities).¹¹ As the ancient biographies further contend, after being challenged by women, Euripides wrote a 'recantation' in his *Melanippe (Captive)*, proving the usefulness of womankind.¹² Although the biographical details here appear invented *post factum* from the tragedies themselves and from Aristophanic parodies,¹³ they reflect nevertheless the early reception of the playwright. Ancient critics saw, it seems, an opposition between Euripides' representations of women's sexual depravity and a later acknowledgment of women's worth. Modern critics often concentrate on a different Euripidean paradox. They sometimes see an opposition between dramatic accounts of women's miserable condition and, conversely, of the wickedness of female nature. Was then Euripides a proto-feminist or a misogynist?¹⁴ Different emphases in reading the same play have led occasionally to opposite conclusions. Collits (2000) finds some passages describing women's sorrowful life to be anticipating feminism in the *Medea*. By contrast, despite such passages, Cairns (2014) concludes that *Medea* does not change the original male audiences' views about women but reinforces their darkest fears.¹⁵ Therefore, Euripides, at times, appears to both ancients and moderns to present women's matters in a polarizing way. This study will not attempt to find one solution to the divergent dramatic viewpoints,¹⁶ but it will examine some particularities of Euripidean drama concerning women's sexuality, domesticity, heroism, and gendered fame. Since misogynistic stances have been amply analyzed in classical tragedy and these resurface somewhat unsurprisingly in Euripides, more emphasis will be placed on exploring the unique ways in which female voices describe their sorrows, hopes, fears, and merits.

11 *Vita* 60–65; cf. Satyrus' third-century dialogue on the poet, fr. 39 col. x–xii; for a concise analysis of both, see Lefkowitz (1979).

12 *Vita* 105–110; Satyr. fr. 39, col. xi.

13 On this see Lefkowitz (1979) 188–196 and (1981) 87–103; Michelini (1987) 56–57, and, more recently, Hägg (2012) 397, with a review of previous interpretations.

14 March (1990) raises the question in the title of her essay.

15 More generally, on feminist readings of Greek tragedy, see Wohl (2005), who also starts her analysis from Euripides' *Medea*.

16 As Chong-Gossard (2008) 241–246 rightly notes, we cannot talk about universal models in the characterization of women (who are not homogeneous in Euripides plays), but we can discuss relative patterns of a wide range of female experiences represented onstage.

2 Sexuality and Domesticity

References to women's sexuality and, in particular, to their illicit desires, in Euripides' tragedies immediately caused a stir among ancient audiences. A first version of *Hippolytus*, *The Veiled* (*Kalyptomenos*) was ill received by the public; in this, a brazen Phaedra, tired of her husband's infidelities, appears to have made direct sexual advances on her stepson Hippolytus, who veiled himself in shame.¹⁷ Similarly, a lustful Stheneboea, who attempted to seduce the guest at her husband's court, Bellerophon, in the homonymous Euripidean play,¹⁸ triggered comic references in Aristophanes' *Frogs*.¹⁹ These tragedies in which women shamelessly pursue their passion are no longer extant.²⁰ Among the surviving tragedies, several raise the matter of female sexuality sporadically, such as the *Bacchae*, in which Pentheus both worries and desires to see the loose bacchantes; the *Trojan Women*, which alludes to Helen's improper conduct, and the *Andromache*, tackling the theme of extra marital affairs and infertility.²¹ Returning to the figure of Phaedra, who belonged to the doomed gallery, Euripides produced a second and less incendiary *Hippolytus*, successfully performed in 428 BC. In this version, a nurse acts on behalf of the heroine, revealing her forbidden passion without her consent.²² Several themes in this tragedy, which will be briefly discussed next, such as female sexuality and propriety, silence and communication, reverberate throughout Euripidean drama.

17 The *Vita* and Aristophanes of Byzantium suggest this, but on uncertainties regarding the plot and other possible interpretations see, for example, Roisman (1999) 9–11: it is often assumed that Euripides composed the second play in order to correct the flawed character of Phaedra in the first, but we do not know for sure whether Phaedra directly made the indecent proposal in the lost play.

18 Collard/Cropp (2008) 120–127 provide a detailed discussion of the *Stheneboea* and fragments; interestingly, as Dixon (2014) has recently suggested, Euripides' *Bellerophon* may have also brought Stheneboea onstage as well, perhaps as a seductress and atheist.

19 As the character of Aeschylus complains (1051), the Euripidean Stheneboeae 'drive noble women to drinking hemlock' out of shame.

20 On this see Mastronarde (2010) 260 and n. 41.

21 Out of space consideration, I will not be able to discuss these plays here. For example, Segal (1997) 161–163 provides a convenient analysis of the passages dealing with Pentheus' difficulties in accepting the sexuality of the Bacchantes, which he views as pathological; Allan (2000) 196–232 surveys matters of gender and sexuality in the *Andromache*; Blondell (2013) 182–201 explores the variety of voices judging Helen's sexuality and her excuses for running with Paris in the *Trojan Women*, and places it in the larger context of constructing Helen in Greek epic, tragedy, and oratory.

22 A dramatist's second play on the same myth seems to have been unparalleled in Greek practice; on how the extant *Hippolytus* may have echoed the more incendiary first, see Goldhill (1986) 131–132.

At first, pierced by love, Phaedra suffers without words, for it seemed best to her 'to be silent' (σιγᾶν) and 'to conceal her illness' (κρύπτειν νόσον, 394). Generally, silence can be interpreted as a refusal to engage with the ambiguity of language, which affects most characters in this play.²³ But Phaedra's silence here also carries gendered connotations, illustrating the way in which women deal with the burden of a secret. Euripidean women often find themselves in a dilemma: to keep silence regarding matters that could imperil their reputation, or to speak to sympathetic females (choruses or other companions), and thus alleviate their pain but perhaps regret their confession.²⁴ Most prominently, in this situation are Phaedra whose sexual desires may bring her ill-repute in the *Hippolytus* and Creusa in the *Ion* who wonders whether she should break her silence (859) after concealing for a long time her rape (by Apollo), unwanted pregnancy, and exposure of her baby.²⁵ Conversely, the silence of Euripidean men does not relate to secrecy, and, in fact, the difference in gender may reflect the social reality of women's isolation and difficulties in expressing their problems. Hippolytus further dreams about a world where women are completely separated not only from men but also presumably from (female) slaves and other women (*Hipp.* 645–649); where they would sever all ties with articulate human speech, and be surrounded only by inarticulate beasts (ἄφθογγα, 646).²⁶ Hippolytus' extreme vision²⁷ seems to articulate male anxieties surrounding

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- 23 Theseus wishes for a disambiguation of language, to have a way to distinguish between the 'right voice' (929) and the common voice of a man, so that he can judge his son (*Hipp.* 925–931); Phaedra worries about the power of pleasant words to ruin cities and houses (486–489); the destructive potential of language is later materialized through Phaedra's own letter and Theseus' curse. Many scholars have discussed with subtlety the duplicity of language in this tragedy, for example, Zeitlin (1985) 84–87; Goldhill (1989) 107–137; Goff (1990) 20–22 and 71–79; McClure (1999) 112–157; Meltzer (2006) 71–103; Fletcher (2012) 189–194, looks at how the male and female genders keep their oaths (Nurse versus Hippolytus).
- 24 Chong-Gossard (2008) 147–154; cf. more generally on silence in tragedy Montiglio (2000) 193–251 and Stockert (2004).
- 25 The silence preceding confession in Euripidean drama as well as the specific cases of Phaedra and Creusa are persuasively analyzed in Chong-Gossard (2008) 134–147: in both these cases, the theme of illegitimacy occurs,—Phaedra destroys her stepson, whereas Creusa is about to kill her own son, Ion, whom she believes to be a stepson, a twist of plot narrowly avoided in the end.
- 26 Segal (1993) 92 notes how the passage marks the crisis of communication between males and females; in the play the female slave, the nurse, is the one that bridges the separate worlds of male and female speech, indeed with terrible consequences.
- 27 A temporary separation from the civilized world, of the kind imagined here, may have occurred through the Bacchic ritual, yet still with devastating consequences for the opposing male in Euripidean tragedy.

female speech in the household. Female servants play crucial roles in several Euripidean tragedies, giving a voice to lower-class characters.²⁸ Besides *Hippolytus*, a nurse passes love messages from her mistress to Bellerophon in the *Stheneboea* (ca. 430-s), while in the *Cretans*, a female slave helps Pasiphaë—among other things—hide the birth of the Minotaur and receives punishment for her actions.²⁹ In the *Medea*, a nurse speaks the prologue and shows loyalty to the wellbeing of the family, but, despite legitimate worries, she does not intervene to prevent the murder of the children.³⁰ On the lighter side, a formidable Doorkeeper in Egypt stands up to Menelaus in a parodic scene in the *Helen*, proving that an old woman could be a match to the conqueror of Troy.³¹ Returning to women networks, Euripidean tragedies glimpse at the domestic realm of women segregated from men, in which female solidarity likely existed. Choruses of women often express sympathy toward the central female character afflicted by misfortune, although they seem sometimes torn between conflicting loyalties.³² As Iphigenia says, addressing the female Chorus:

Γυναίκες ἐσμεν, φιλόφρον ἀλλήλαις γένος
σῶζειν τε κοινὰ πράγματ' ἀσφαλέσταται.

we are women, a group well minded toward each other,
and most reliable in saving our common interests.

IT 1061–1062

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- 28 Hall (1997) 122–123 well discusses how tragic language extends to classes that were not allowed to speak publicly in Athenian democracy, projecting interesting imaginary perspectives of the lower classes.
- 29 Ruffell (2014) 70–71: Bellerophon seems to call the nurse absolutely evil (*Sthen.* fr. 663), while the nurse in the *Cretans* is called an ‘accomplice’ to her mistress’ crime (fr. 472.e40–50).
- 30 Ruffell (2014) compellingly explores possible motivations of the nurse in the *Medea* and compares her to other similar types in Greek tragedy and epic.
- 31 Allan 198–199 discusses the scene (*Hel.* 435–482) as parodic allusion to the encounter between Odysseus and Nausicaa; on the dramatic effect of the scene within the play, see Yoon (2012) 79–81. Marshall (2014) 272–273 comments on the tragic mask of the Doorkeeper and others in this category representing lower classes.
- 32 Foley (2003) 19–20; Mastronarde (2010) esp. 126–152 comment on gender, ethnicity, and use of myth in a varied way in Euripides compared to his predecessors; Swift (2013) examines emotional attitudes and tensions, particularly in the *Med.* in which choral identity is torn between being women and thus supporting *Medea* and being Corinthians, and thus not accepting the ways of the Colchian foreigner.

The nurse encourages the ailing Phaedra by reminding her: 'if you are suffering (νοσεῖς) from one of those unspeakable (ἀπορήτων) illnesses / here are women who can together correct your malady' (293–294).³³ Certain delicate problems, such as gynecological ailments, unwanted pregnancies,³⁴ rapes and probably indeed also sexuality and gossip about men, must have been aired in conversations among women.³⁵ Giving birth and crises revolving around newborns seem to have been particularly of interest to Euripides,³⁶ and female characters rally on such occasions to support each other, or to stand up to outraged patriarchal figures. Few fragments survive from Euripides' *Alope*, but from the summary of the plot we know that the heroine, daughter of Cercyon, king of Eleusis, was raped by Poseidon and gave birth to a baby (Hippothous).³⁷ Cercyon treated his daughter and grandson harshly, condemning them to die, while a nurse tried to help them. One line reads: 'somehow a woman is naturally an ally (σύμμαχος) to another woman',³⁸ and the interesting term 'ally' points to women's bonds in these domestic battles. Even the quasi-unpleasant Clytemnestra appears ready to help with a grandson, when her daughter strangely fakes a pregnancy in Euripides' *Electra*.³⁹ Illegitimate babies and their mothers incur the wrath of their grandfathers also in the fragmentary *Danae* and *Auge*.⁴⁰ While all these examples of pregnancies remain, of course, mythical,⁴¹ they appear also, as Hall [(2006) 73] has remarked, 'in

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- 33 Ogden (1996) 207–208 explores a range of meanings that 'illness' (νόσος) covers in Euripidean tragedies, from sexual desire, to pregnancy, sterility, and 'diseases of social stigma': bastardy and being a foreigner.
- 34 In the *Ion* Creusa's pregnancy, which she has tried to conceal, is referred to as 'secret illness' (944).
- 35 On women gossiping about men in their quarters, see Phaedra's lines (*Hipp.* 380–384); cf. Demosth. 53.4; 58.40; Theophr. 10.13; Lys. 32.10; for linking tragic texts related to women's social life to texts from oratory and history, see, for example, Fantham et al. (1994) 95–98. Rabinowitz (1986) 130 has seen in Phaedra's characterization of female long sessions of gossip, leisure—a 'pleasant evil' in the *Hippolytus* (384) as a reflection of the patriarchal misogyny and an echo of Hesiod's description of the woman as a 'beautiful evil' (*Theog.* 585).
- 36 On this, see the excellent discussion of Hall (2006) 71–80.
- 37 The baby was exposed and later nursed by a mare; for more details on the plot and on the myth, see Karamanou (2003).
- 38 fr. 108, *TrGF*; Collard/Cropp (2008) 122.
- 39 Hall (2006) 77–80 for a detailed analysis, and also 81–87 on how Menander continues to exploit the motif.
- 40 Cf. *Melanippe the Wise*; fr. 485; Collard/Cropp (2008) 581.
- 41 Griffith (2011) esp. 196–207 for Euripides has recently provided a nuanced discussion of how these tragic myths and later New Comedy plots relate to the realities of the Athenian family, marriage, and relationships with foreigners.

one sense ‘realistic’ in that they provoked harsh mistreatment of the unmarried mothers by their angry fathers’, and, I would add, also in showing women trying to help one another in such familial crises.

Surely, Euripides did not invent the motifs of unwanted pregnancies and child exposure in tragedy,⁴² but the frequency with which he treats these topics seems unprecedented. Likewise, female characters deplore their difficult life in the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles.⁴³ Yet, female voices in Euripides raise the complaints about the women’s fate to incredible heights. There is a sense of deep helplessness when Creusa exclaims ‘O wretched women! O most brazen deeds of gods!’ (*Ion* 252–253). She questions the hope for justice if we are destroyed ‘by the injustices of those in power’ (κρατούντων ἀδικίαις, 254). After breaking her secrecy, Creusa recounts (859–968) the traumatic sexual encounter with Apollo, who dragged her against her will (ἄκουσα, 941),⁴⁴ as well as the anguish of exposing her baby, whom she believes to be dead. Again, the mythical setting of the tragedy often stresses the final benefit of abductions and rape: the birth of successful male heroes.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the detailed account of Creusa’s suffering points with realism to the sexual violence,⁴⁶ which women had to endure.⁴⁷

Through an original manipulation of the myth, Euripides’ *Electra* alludes to the hardships of a woman in exile, who experiences not only the common domestic confinement but also the isolation from the company of other

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- 42 Sophocles’ *Tyro* also dealt with the exposure of divine twins, Pelias and Neleus; for a convenient analysis see, for example, Hahnemann (2012) 179–180.
- 43 E.g., Aesch. *Ch.* 920, Soph. *Trach.* 26–35—which Murnaghan (2005) 241 examines closely.
- 44 Other harrowing details of the story are Creusa’s crying out ‘mother’ (893), while being dragged and the terrible struggle (939).
- 45 Harris (2004) 69–71 notes that rewards follow mythical rape in Greek myth: Ion has a glorious future; Persephone becomes the queen of Hades. Robson (2013) 102–103 observes that a woman’s will is often overlooked, as generally rape was seen as a property crime, affecting the male protector of the victim. Examining comedy and tragedy we can sometimes see traces of moral regret from male heroes. In Euripides’ *Auge* (fr. 272b), for instance, Heracles apologizes for his wrongdoing while giving the excuse of drunkenness.
- 46 As Schuren (2015) 217–219 notes, reviewing carefully previous scholarship: even if Apollo’s violence may ultimately be justified by the birth of Ion, as many commentators note, that does not erase the painful experience of Creusa.
- 47 As Omitowaju (2002) has shown in her book a woman’s consent to a sexual relationship was often irrelevant in ancient Greece, as *kyrioi* (fathers, male relatives, or guardians) regulated the legality of a union for citizen women. While acknowledging the difference between a woman’s consent versus forced sex in law, there was no regulation based on consent alone. On this, see Robson (2013) 101–106, with a convenient review of the sources and of the scholarly views on rape in Greek poetry and art.

women in acceptable social gatherings.⁴⁸ The heroine, sent away by Clytemnestra, has to become the wife of a poor farmer, away in the Argive countryside. Her husband respects her virginity, despite the marriage. Thrown out from her home and city, Electra laments (310–314) having to shun other married women, in spite of being still a maiden. Because of her paradoxical marital status, she has to refuse joining Argive girls at a festival in honour of Hera (171–180).⁴⁹ Again the plight of the mythical heroine seems to allude to the ambiguous position of the foreign women in Athens. This is not unique in Euripidean drama. Most famously, Medea adds another layer of isolation to her list of the unfortunate aspects of domestic life of women because of her position as an outsider (*Med.* 253–258). However, Electra's laments seem to pertain specifically to seclusion from religious life, which probably relates to social realities. In addition to the citizenship law (451/50), mid-fifth century BC laws tightened the rules for participation in some religious festivals to Athenian born women.⁵⁰

In their misfortunes, Euripidean women describe a gendered gap and imagine ways to bridge it, prompting the label of feminism from some modern critics.⁵¹ Phaedra longs escape to the mountains in order to hunt, like Hippolytus (*Hipp.* 215–222).⁵² Surely, such freedom to roam, which the nurse interprets to be a result of delirious fever (*Hipp.* 223–227), was unconceivable in normal circumstances.⁵³ Medea starts systematically counting the misfortunes of women:⁵⁴

48 Ormand (2009) 251–258 offers a convincing analysis of this theme of feminine exile in the play and shows how it appears different from the experience of exiled men.

49 As Zeitlin (1970) 661–666 points out, unmarried women were allowed at the Heraion, the festival celebrating the divine union of Zeus and Hera; Ormand (2009) 253–254 observes that critics have often been puzzled by Electra's complaint regarding lack of fineries and jewelry as an excuse for refusing the invitation, but, in fact, her liminal social status prevents her from enjoying this festival.

50 Goff (2004) 183–185 and Ormand (2009) 256–257; see also see Kennedy (2014) 13–67 on the legal status and vulnerability of foreign women in classical Athens, and the echoes of these problems in tragedy.

51 Messing (2009) offers a summary of some of these views of both classicists and theatre critics.

52 Similarities between Phaedra and Hippolytus have been well noted: both are foreigners, both caught between Aphrodite and Artemis. Goldhill (1987) 124–125, for example, underlines how Phaedra's desire to hunt would relate her to Artemis in a male way.

53 Female worshippers of Dionysus would have enjoyed such freedom of movement.

54 Mastronarde (2010) 272 interestingly suggests a possible reconciliation between this speech (*Med.* 214–251), sympathizing with the terrible condition of women, and the statement that women are incapable of doing anything good (*Med.* 407–409), in the sense that women are prevented by their social condition from accomplishing great deeds, being left only with the bad choices.

Πάνων δ' ὅσ' ἔστ' ἔμψυχα καὶ γνώμην ἔχει
 Γυναϊκῆς ἐσμὲν ἀθλιώτατον φύτον
 ἄς πρῶτα μὲν δεῖ χρημάτων ὑπερβολῇ
 πόσιν πρίασθαι δεσπότην τε σώματος
 λαβεῖν ...

Med. 230–234

Of all creatures that are breathing and have reason
 We women are the most miserable.
 First at an inflated price we have to
 buy a husband and take a master of our bodies.

She continues listing the disgrace of a divorce for women, the tribulations of a new wife needing to accommodate to her husband's rules, the hope for a good marriage, women's need to remain fixated on their spouse, inside the house (237–247).⁵⁵ A daring challenge follows: men mistakenly think that women have safe lives while they go to war, but 'I would rather stand three times in battle with the shield than give birth once' (ὡς τρις ἂν παρ' ἀσπίδα | στῆναι θέλοιμ' ἂν μάλλον ἢ τεκεῖν ἄπαξ, *Med.* 250–251). This incredible redefinition of heroism—childbirth—that should be ranked above male military glory certainly sounded extraordinary to the original (probably mostly male) audience.⁵⁶ The shocking comparison proposes nothing less than a reevaluation of the position of the genders.⁵⁷ The speech is surely rhetorically motivated, as Medea tries to gain the sympathy of the Chorus of Corinthian women, although she herself is no ordinary female.⁵⁸ Yet, the theme of the merits of women recurs in Euripides' drama and we shall return to it. In conclusion, confined by their limited domestic space, Euripidean women sometimes long for the male freedom of movement (Phaedra), or, oppressed by feminine tasks, they provoke men to imaginary exchanges of duties and accomplishments (Medea).

55 Fantham et al. (1994) 70 write that Medea may exaggerate slightly, as for example divorce could be obtained by Athenian women (not by foreigners).

56 The claim must have had justification in reality, as female mortality in childbearing years was very high [on archaeological evidence from examining skeletal remains, see Liston (2012) 130–133] but must have sounded extraordinarily bold. As Hall (1997) 121 points out, Medea's speech is representative of how tragic discourse 'disrupts the dominant ideological discourse about women'; it was used in nineteenth-century England to support women's suffrage.

57 Ironically, from a dramatic perspective, Medea *can* compare childbirth to male heroic deeds, since she killed the dragon guarding the Golden Fleece (480–483).

58 See Cairns (2014) 133–136 on Medea's deceptive rhetoric and behaviour.

There is a sense of uneasiness in accepting Medea as a women's advocate, when she becomes the murderer of her own children. Furthermore, although Euripidean heroines in distress arouse our sympathy, they often prove deceitful in their speech (for example, Phaedra's tablets, Medea's plea to Creon) and actions. As destroyers of their families and communities, they seem to justify the misogynistic speeches uttered in the plays by men, or by the women themselves.⁵⁹ Some have seen in these aspects returns to a traditional Athenian patriarchal discourse and order. While these views remain valid, they do not invalidate the expressions of women's pain, I believe. Female voices in Euripides' plays give lengthy accounts of their problems in domestic life, with a kind of realism that seems unparalleled in extant Greek tragedy. Flawed as they may be, Euripidean heroines allude to taboos, desires, and social prejudices, and, furthermore, they create powerful representations of the pain of social marginalization and isolation of foreigners.

3 Heroism and Fame: Male-Like Glory and Female Glory

The sacrificial maiden and the wife dying voluntarily on account of her devotion to her husband represent recurrent types in Euripides' tragedies. These have been thoroughly analyzed from a variety of scholarly perspectives, such as anthropological (ritual oriented), socio-historical (situated within the fifth-century culture and thought), feminist (exploring the gendered perspective in its original context and beyond), which can be mentioned here only in passing.⁶⁰ In all dramatic variants, the female figure accepts or welcomes her death with bravery, often appropriating the traditionally male heroic rhetoric. In a first dramatic scenario, external demands prompt the sacrifice of a virgin. In

59 In the *Hippolytus*, Artemis designates Theseus and his son as principal sufferers (1337); young girls will remember Hippolytus and Phaedra's love for him (1428–1430), so the heroine is frozen in this posture post mortem through divine decree; on this see, for example, Rabinowitz (1986) 131; Michelini (1987) 315; Meltzer (2006) 77–78. Cairns (2014) points to Medea's actions and power as contradicting her sympathy toward the ordinary women. For a balanced discussion of the place of misogynistic speeches in Euripidean tragedy, see Mastronarde (2010) 271–279.

60 To give only a very select list of scholarly approaches, Bremmer (2007) 55–79 examines Greek tragedies dealing with the sacrifice of a maiden in connection with the ritual of human sacrifice; Mendelsohn (2002) gives a nuanced socio-historical reading of the gendered themes; McHardy (2008) explores a variety of sources (oratory, history, and tragedy) to analyze matters causing retaliation in ancient Greece; for feminist perspectives, see, for example, Rabinowitz (1993); Wohl (1998) particularly on *Alcestis*, 119–176.

the *Hecuba*, Polyxena faces her death courageously after the ghost of Achilles demands her sacrifice on his tomb. She presents her reasons for preferring death to life (342–378), mentioning a desire not to be considered a base (κακή) and cowardly (φιλόψυχος) woman (348), her loss in social status, from princess over Trojan women to slave (354–357), and an overall loss of freedom (375–378). Soon afterwards, Talthybius recounts Polyxena's death in detail to Hecuba, citing the girl's direct speech, which repeats her determination to be free (550). He describes her execution in a vivid series of tableaux: her gesture of baring her breasts, like a beautiful statue (560–561),⁶¹ her invitation to the executioner to strike (563–565), and her careful fall to the ground (568–572); then, he expresses his admiration for both the brave daughter and mother (579–582).⁶² Similarly, in the *Iphigenia at Aulis*, when Iphigenia has to be sacrificed, she shows unwillingness to cling to life and willingness to die, invoking the hope for a glorious death (1368–1401). Unlike Polyxena, however, she finds not only a negative sense in her impending end (avoidance of dishonour) but also a positive purpose, viewing her death as a benefit for all Greece. Iphigenia reminds her mother, Clytemnestra, that she bore her not just for herself but for all the Greeks (πάσι [...] Ἑλλήσι, 1386), subtly comparing her situation to that of the endless men 'standing by their shield' (ἄνδρες ἀσπίσιν πεφαργμένοι, 1387), thus hoplites, and men 'holding the oars' (ἑρέτμ' ἔχοντες, 1388) who fight for their country.⁶³ In the fragmentary *Erechtheus*, the Athenian king had to sacrifice a daughter, according to the oracle of Delphi, in order to secure his victory over a Thracian invader, Eumolpus.⁶⁴ Praxithea, the wife of Erechtheus uses a reasoning very similar to Iphigenia's when she justifies her willingness to give up her girl. She asks rhetorically: 'would I not have offered my sons to the city, if our house had a crop of males instead of females?' (fr. 360, 22–27, Collard/Cropp, p. 376). Then she continues 'I hate women' (μισῶ γυναῖκας) who choose life for their (male) children instead of the honourable course (fr. 360, 30–31). As the daughter has explained to her mother in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, so a mother, Praxithea here, declares that her daughter is not hers but belongs to the *polis* (fr. 360, 39–41). In a line much cited in antiquity⁶⁵ and to which I shall return, summa-

61 A review of interpretations of this gesture is offered by Mastrorarde (2010) 267 with n. 55.

62 The idea emphasized is the nobility of character of the daughter, hence of the mother who raised her, despite the unluckiest of circumstances; similarly, Demophon (*Heracle*. 567–573) praises the maiden as the bravest, though he addresses her as unfortunate.

63 Further on the play's enacting dilemmas of contemporary politics, see Markantonatos (2011).

64 Calame (2011) analyzes the myth of Erechtheus in drama and its importance for Athens.

65 Referred to by Lycurg, *Leocr*; Plut. *Moral*. 809d.; Cic. *Fam*. 12.14.7.

rizing her attitude, Praxithea states emphatically: 'I love my children, but I love my fatherland more' (φιλω τέκν', ἀλλὰ πατριδ' ἐμὴν μᾶλλον φιλω, fr. 360a).

In a second scenario, in the *Heraclidae*, a maiden, daughter of Heracles, in the later tradition called Macaria, offers herself in sacrifice voluntarily. In a way her death is still preordained by an oracle, and yet she is not specifically nominated, so the maiden's readiness to die involves a higher degree of free-will. Again, her sacrifice relates to heroic behaviour and benefits to the community, and directly to her own family, since it will help the Athenians be victorious in a battle defending the descendants from Heracles from Eurystheus. The language used in this play closely resembles the rhetoric of the previous examples and echoes the Homeric epic:⁶⁶ the maiden avoids shameful cowardice (516–518) and plans to die nobly in the service of others (530–534).⁶⁷ From a gender standpoint, although these maidens imitate the heroic male rhetoric in their language, they nevertheless allude to proper social conduct for unmarried girls, or try to maintain propriety according to the norms. Macaria, for example, addresses the strangers, asking them not to deem her coming out in public boldness (θράσος, *Herac.* 474), for she knows silence, modesty, and staying indoors are most becoming to a woman (476–478). Polyxena takes great care to fall to the ground properly, hiding from the male eyes what needed to remain hidden (*Hec.* 568–570). Most of all, the sacrifice replaces the marriage that should have been the proper event in the maiden's life.⁶⁸

The vengeful, mournful mother illustrates another strange kind of heroism, that of a woman who does not hesitate to take revenge on her enemies.⁶⁹ The *matres dolorosae* are aged, frail, and suffering, belonging to a social category that appears to the audience to be quite harmless, and no doubt producing dramatic surprise when they act violently. Hecuba in the homonymous tragedy and Alcmena in the *Heraclidae* fit the profile. Hecuba blinds the Thracian king Polymestor, while the other Trojan women kill his sons, in retaliation for the Thracian king's treachery (his killing of her youngest boy, Polydorus). In the *Heraclidae*, Alcmena accuses the prisoner Eurystheus of crimes against her

66 Mastronarde (2010) 265 compares *Herac.* 516–518 to Hector's words (*Il.* 22.105–106).

67 Burian (1977) 10 interestingly points out that we have Macaria's speech but not details of her death, which keeps this episode in the realm of an idealized heroism, away from realistic gore. Indeed, this is different from the graphic narrative of Polyxena's death in *Hecuba*.

68 The substitution of a wedding with a funeral appears clearly in the plot of *IA* but is present more discreetly in the other plays also. Generally, on the tragic conflation of the rituals, see Rehm (1994).

69 Although Medea and Phaedra are sometimes placed in this category of vengeful women, I think they belong to a different category, as their revenge is also self-destructive.

family and condemns him to many deaths (941–960). On hearing that Athenians do not execute prisoners, she still reasons around this, not abandoning her idea of revenge (*Heracl.* 1022–1025).⁷⁰ Both women pursue vengeance in an unsettling manner, and they do not shrink from the idea of using physical violence. Both attack a bitter foe mercilessly, after their families have suffered tremendous injuries and persecution.

Finally, wives can display extraordinary loyalty to their husbands in Euripidean tragedies, becoming heroic in a manner reminiscent of the maidens, by renouncing their lives. Interrupting the burial of the seven, Evadne, the widow of Capaneus in the *Supplikes*, bursts on the stage and throws herself on the funeral pyre. She anticipates a kind of erotic union with her defunct husband (1012–1024) for the sake of good repute (εὐκλεία, 1015). This self-immolation imagined as a wedding in death by the heroine also offers her an extreme escape from the patriarchal world and its constraints.⁷¹ Alcestis chooses to die as a substitute for her husband. Without ascribing to herself male glory, she calls herself ‘the best’ (ἀρίστη, *Alc.* 324) wife and mother, in the conclusion of a speech (280–325) in which she shows concern for the future of her children.⁷² Even without the claim to heroic glory, Alcestis’ selfless act draws attention to the superior courage of a woman in comparison to men (Pheres and Admetus himself).⁷³

How are we to interpret the examples of this feminine heroism, particularly of the sacrificial maidens who use the language of warlike honour? Doubtlessly, on one level, these women remain in the realm of myth. Sometimes scholars have seen ‘fetishized victims’ (Iphigenia, Alcestis) and ‘vengeful destroyers’ (Hecuba) as projections of male imagination.⁷⁴ On the other hand, moving closer to the ancient context, the fortitude of these tragic women ready to face death has been associated with (1) the type of courage ascribed to sol-

70 Tzanetou (2012) 73–104 explores ways in which the play reflects the complicated ideology and reality of the Athenian imperial democracy.

71 As Mendelsohn (2002) 197–202 has shown, Evadne escapes the authority of her father, Iphis, (who locks her up) and the prospect of remarriage; on the metaphor of her death as marriage and the link to the myth of Persephone, see Rehm (1994) 110–128. Chong-Gossard (2008) 222 points out to Evadne’s using notions of heroism, such as victory, *kallinikos*, and good reputation, *eukleia*.

72 Markantonatos (2013) 70–71 shows how Alcestis’ narrative may reflect the anxiety around remarriage in ancient Athens.

73 On this, see Luschnig/Roisman (2003) 179–180; Mastronarde (2010) 227–229 and 270.

74 I have paraphrased the titles of chapters in Rabinowitz (1993) 31–24; cf. Wohl (1998) 125–175 suggesting that the relationship between Admetus and Heracles cements over the dead body of Alcestis, whose final veiled appearance symbolizes a silent feminine resistance.

diers fallen for Athens, as in Thucydides or Lysias,⁷⁵ with (2) the philosophical attitude of Socrates, undaunted by his imminent execution,⁷⁶ and (3) with the Eleusian and Orphic mysteries.⁷⁷ Interestingly, in the fourth-century (330 BC), Lycurgus praises Praxithea's speech from Euripides' *Erechtheus* as an example of teaching virtue through a woman, in *Against Leocrates* (100–101).⁷⁸ Leocrates was prosecuted for abandoning Athens after the battle of Chaeronea (338 BC), which seemed all the more disgraceful considering how virtuous women can be. Is this fourth-century illustration a random occurrence, or does it have deeper roots? The self-sacrificial maidens in Euripides echo the rhetoric used to describe male glory, similar to praising the fallen soldiers, in plays performed during the Peloponnesian War.⁷⁹ A familial crisis often surrounds the heart-breaking sacrifice scenes, with children trying to convince their parents to accept their death. Now Praxithea is a mother willing to offer her daughter to Athens, thus reversing the usual motif. As mentioned earlier, she (fr. 360) 'hates' the women who want to preserve the lives of their sons—a strange thing to say. Was there some social tension subtly captured in the line? In his Funeral Oration, Pericles addresses the parents of the deceased (Thuc. 2.44.1), to remind them of the eternal glory of their offspring, then the children who will have a difficult model to emulate (2.45) and, finally, the widows reminding them of their feminine virtue, not to cause talk among men. Certainly this last point goes back to a traditional view of decent women separated from public life, as said at the beginning of this essay, but it could acquire here additional connotations: an invitation for women to bear their loss with restraint.⁸⁰ Did women challenge Pericles, because of the price paid in the name of the martial glory of Athens? In Plutarch (*Pericl.* 28) we hear that women offered Pericles garlands after this funeral oration, but Elpinice, sister of Cimon, confronted him saying that he deserved recognition for wasting the lives of brave citizens not in fights against the Persians but against an ally. Even if we doubt the authenticity of the event, it is plausible that an anti-war sentiment, fuelled by women's grief existed. In this case, Praxithea's loathing a certain kind of unpatriotic mothers in the *Erechtheus* receives historical resonance. Euripidean self-sacrificing

75 Thuc. 2.42.4 and, respectively, Lysias 2.62; cf. Mastrorarde (2010) 265.

76 E.g. Michelini (1987) 305.

77 E.g. Markantonatos (2013) 135–159.

78 Hanink (2010) 42–43 discusses this only surviving oration and the 55-line quotation from *Erechtheus* in detail.

79 Following Dugdale (2008) 171 the dates of some of the discussed plays: *Hecuba* 424, *Suppliant Women* ca. 423–420, *Heracleidae* (419 BC); *IA* (written 407, performed posthumously ca. 405). Collard/Cropp (2008) 366 propose either 422 or 411 as a date for the *Erechtheus*.

80 Tyrell/Bennett (1999) elaborate this point.

girls, then, break a gender taboo but reinforce the official ideal: if in myth even women die gloriously for their *polis*, men, therefore, have no excuse.

If certain plays depict female heroism as emulating and reinforcing the Athenian ideal of male glory, a completely different type of fame, propagated by women, sometimes anti-war and explicitly opposite to men, also emerges in Euripidean drama. In the *Trojan Women*, Hecuba wonders whether to be silent or to lament (111), deciding to give voice to her pain for there is a ‘muse’ even for the unfortunate (120–121); afterwards, the captive women sing new songs in which the defeated deserve more glory than their conquerors.⁸¹ Most famously in the first stasimon of the *Medea*, the Chorus of Corinthian women create a magic image (410–411): streams of sacred rivers flow backwards and the entire order of things is reversed (στρέφεται). Since men have proven deceitful in their oaths, rumours are turning around giving female conduct good repute (εὐκλειαν, 415) and more, a new age will come:

ἔρχεται τιμὰ γυναικείῳ γένει
οὔκετι δθσκέλαδος φάμα γυναικάς ἔξει
419–420

Honor is coming to the female gender
No longer disreputable rumor will take hold of women.

This contest of gendered reputation continues with hopes of poetic fame, but that is defined mostly in negative terms: the songs of ancient bards will no longer recount women’s unfaithfulness; Apollo has not bestowed on our (female) mind the melody of lyre, or we could have sung in reply to male kind (422–429); finally, there is implicit hope that time will tell the fate of men’s as well as women’s lot (429–430). As scholars have noted, this hope becomes ironic, considering what Medea will ‘accomplish’ later in the tragedy.⁸² Two elements, however, seem important for my analysis: (1) female repute is constructed not as imitative but as clearly distinct from the male and (2) it remains rather undefined, or negatively defined (will not be as it has been described by

81 I have argued this extensively elsewhere (2010)—e.g., the Trojans ought to receive the greatest ‘glory’ (*Tr.* 386) and the Trojan women rewrite the war from their own perspective, showing themselves in victorious postures. See also for women circulating women’s myths in the fragmentary Euripidean *Hypsipyle* Chong-Gossard (2009).

82 Hopman (2008) suggests that the Chorus tries to construct a kind of gynocentric poem around Medea, but the plan ultimately fails; cf. Swift (2013) 139, pointing to the irony that the reverse of order proposed by the Chorus may not be a good thing in the end.

men so far). In fact, throughout the play, there is a strange sense that existing forms of song neither reflect women's realities well, nor are they useful, so, for example, the nurse laments that no one has found a way to stop human anguish with music and lyre song (*Med.* 195–197).

A more positive idea of female fame, deriving from precise accomplishments of women, occurs in a fragment of *Melanippe Captive*, which was considered in antiquity Euripides' own recantation after his maligning female gender, as specified earlier in the introduction of this essay. The premise is that of undeserved bad reputation, already familiar from the *Medea*: 'blame' (ψόγος) comes 'to women from men' (ἐς γυναῖκας ἐξ ἀνδρῶν) in vain (fr. 494.1).⁸³ Yet women are better than men: they manage households, bringing prosperity (9–11);⁸⁴ they are powerful priestesses at Delphi, Dodona, and in other rituals (12–21). The claim regarding women's role in the households and in religious festivals surely appears true in classical Greek society.⁸⁵ In another lost play on the theme, *Melanippe Wise*, the heroine presents herself in the prologue as the daughter of Hippo,⁸⁶ to whom Zeus gave horse hair, because she sang oracular hymns (ἕμνους ... χρησιμφοδούς, fr. 481.16) to people, 'telling them remedies for their problems and relievers' (ἄκη πόνων φράζουσα καὶ λυτήρια, 17). Across tragedies, Hippo appears to have found the kind of healing song that the nurse in the *Medea* was looking for. Under the guise of myth, again, the figure of Melanippe's mother may allude to social reality, as women appeared indeed to have worked sometimes as healers in ancient Athens.⁸⁷ The 'sophist' Melanippe is ridiculed in Aristophanes,⁸⁸ while later Aristotle finds her character excessively clever for a woman.⁸⁹ But is she? A woman such as Aspasia stood out for her eloquence,⁹⁰ and could have provided a model for the Euripidean heroine. All in all, a unique

83 The motif returns at the end of the preserved passage (lines 23–29), asking that generalizations about women be removed: some women may be bad, but not all, and a great woman is unsurpassable.

84 Lines 6–8 are damaged, but they seem to imply that women mediate conflicts, while men bring hardships on one another.

85 As Hall (1997) 122 rightly points out tragedy reflects 'the importance of one sphere in which women could achieve public authority', priesthood—Delphi being represented in Euripides' *Ion* and a character of high-priestess, Theonoe, in the *Helén*.

86 The wisdom of the daughter is seen as akin to that of her mother in the ancient testimonies [e.g., Melanippe is called 'wise' because she 'philosophizes', and because she is the daughter of such a mother, test. iia, Collard/Cropp (2008) 574; cf. Dion. Hal. *Rh.* 9.11].

87 Kennedy (2014) 140–145, for example, discusses epigraphic and literary evidence of this.

88 *Lys.* 1124 echoes periodically 'I'm a woman and I have a mind (*nous*)'.

89 *Po.* 1454a22–31, for analysis, see Mossman (2005) 353–354.

90 On Aspasia and other women sophists, see Kennedy (2014) 150–153 with a review of previous bibliography.

discourse, underlining women's merits, often obscured in society, appears to have taken shape in these lost plays.

Even this brief survey suggests the enormous variety of dramatic representations of women in Euripidean drama. Finding a unifying conclusion would be certainly difficult and would risk oversimplification. Thus, I shall end instead by reviewing those features that have seemed extraordinary in Euripides: (1) a deep and consistent preoccupation with women's suffering and isolation, as well as, conversely, with the dangers present in their speech and actions; (2) depictions of female solidarity and experiences in matters surrounding childbirth and exile (3) a search for ways to define women's repute, either in alignment with male glory, or, uniquely, by underlining particular feminine merits. Many of the female voices in Euripides' tragedies seem to reinforce the ideas and expectations of the patriarchal fifth-century Athenian society. Yet, some appear to produce a different kind of discourse: anti-war and aimed not at glorifying destruction but at healing pains and sorrows.

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Minor Characters in Euripides

Poulheria Kyriakou

Character and characterization are fraught questions in literary theory in general and Greek literature, especially tragedy, in particular.¹ According to current scholarly consensus, Greek tragedy does engage in characterization, delineating characters with reasonable fullness.² Still, there remain serious challenges facing scholars who study minor speaking tragic characters.³ They form a large and diverse group, which features men, women and even some children, and includes quite memorable figures. By Aristotelian standards, nothing should be redundant or insignificant in a good plot, and thus no character would be minor in terms of their importance to the dramatic structure and development. Even if one disregards what many would dismiss as a later, theoretical and prescriptive straitjacket, stumbling blocks remain. The first of these is the very definition of minor characters, or the criteria for membership in the group.

There are four criteria that most readily present themselves, mythological/literary (no place in the tradition), social (low status, almost always coupled with anonymity), quantitative (limited presence onstage), and dramatic (small or no role in the development of the plot). Characters that satisfy all of these criteria may be classified as minor, but such characters are rare. The case of Choruses illustrates the problem of classification well. Tragic Chorus members always remain anonymous. The great majority have no place in the mythological/literary tradition and contribute little to the development of the plot. Several are socially marginal groups such as slaves. On the basis of social, mythological/literary, and even dramatic criteria, Choruses could then plausibly be classified as minor characters, but I will not deal with them because of the special position they occupy in the conventional matrix of

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- 1 For the absence of a systematic theory of character and an overview of the debates about it in literary history and criticism see Woloch (2004) 14–17.
 - 2 See Kyriakou (2006) 30–31, and cf. Seidensticker (2008) and van Emde Boas (2017) 52–53.
 - 3 Greek tragedy features a good number of mutes, including eponymous figures important in the mythological/literary tradition such as Pylades (*Electra* plays), Iole (*Trachiniae*), and the toddler Astyanax (*Troades*); cf. n. 26 below. I will deal only with speaking characters because I consider speech crucial to characterization.

tragedy. Their extensive presence onstage, or the quantitative criterion, and the weight of their utterances make them too special to classify as minor characters.

Similarly, most messengers and heralds satisfy most criteria of minorhood, but I do not discuss them here because of the importance of their parts in tragedy, and especially Euripidean tragedy.⁴ Most of the minor characters in the complete plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles also belong to this category. The main exceptions are the figure of the watchman that speaks the prologue of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (1–39) and Orestes' nurse in *Choephoroi* (731–782). In *Eumenides* too the two-part prologue (1–33, 34–63) is spoken by the Pythia, a minor character who holds an important office. The watchman and the nurse are among the most sympathetic and vividly portrayed characters in extant tragedy, and they witness or participate in important events. Only the guard in Sophocles' *Antigone* may be considered comparable, but he is a messenger. Although the vagaries of transmission and Sophocles' apparent preference for dialogic prologues may skew the modern view of the handling of minor characters by the three tragedians, Euripides seems to be closer to Aeschylus in the creation of memorable minor figures.⁵

Characters lacking a mythological/literary pedigree, noble status, and mostly personal history, with the exception of their relationship to the protagonists and their family, may be considered as representatives of a homogenous lower class or group. Nevertheless, this is not always the case, as attendants, for instance, are not always unanimous in their views. More important, even if characters have no place in the tradition and are socially inferior, they may have an extensive presence onstage and/or an important role in a plot, and, in principle at least, vice versa. In this light, as most characters in question satisfy only some of the classification criteria, and these often conflict with one another, their relative importance or hierarchization becomes a paramount prerequisite to any study of minor characters.

Unfortunately, given the absence of a theoretical framework, relative importance may hardly be objectively determined. It is unlikely that any combination of classifying criteria will be universally acceptable and accepted, especially as applicable without exception to each and every play. Any choice may appear arbitrary to some scholars, and several characters will indeed remain difficult to classify, a sign of the rich, pliable texture of the genre, irrespective of its

4 For Euripidean Choruses see Calame, and for messengers and heralds Yoon, this volume.

5 Aeschylus' dramaturgical originality is also apparent in the tiny but crucial part of Pylades in *Choephoroi* (900–907) and the small but memorable part of the ghost of Clytemnestra in *Eumenides* (94–139).

highly stylized, rhetorical nature, and a host of formal conventions governing it. In what follows I will use the above criteria in a descending order of importance. I consider crucial the dramatic criterion, a character's place in (the development of) the plot, because it is the poet's crucial choice in the presentation of his characters. Thus, if a character's part does not promote the development of the plot, bringing about or mediating shifts in the action and/or reversals of the protagonists' fortunes, then s/he counts as minor, irrespective of her/his position on the basis of the other criteria (and in relation to the rest of the characters). Second comes a character's place in the mythological/literary tradition, third his/her social status, and fourth the size of his/her part.

For example, according to this classification, the anonymous nurse of Phaedra in *Hippolytus* and the old tutors in *Electra* and *Ion* are not minor characters because of their importance in the development of the plot and the fate of the protagonists. Euripides chose to give them a crucial, and relatively extensive, part.⁶ The male servant of Admetus who reveals the heroine's death to Heracles in *Alceste* (821) also promotes the development of the plot. Heracles could easily have been informed or could have found out otherwise, possibly offstage, but these are not the principal reasons why I classify the slave as a minor character. The man takes no initiative, has no plan, or even wish, to illuminate Heracles, as he can conceive of no benefit from such revelation. Besides, if the only or the main dramatic function of the scene had been to mediate Heracles' struggle with Thanatos, a development already announced much earlier (65–69), it is plausible that the scene would not have been so elaborate and extensive. In other words, paradoxically, Euripides includes an entire scene that only incidentally serves the advancement of the plot but mainly highlights important themes, as will be argued below.⁷

6 The nurse has a much bigger part than the tutors, but this does not affect a classification based primarily on dramatic importance. The relative minorness of characters is another related, and equally thorny, problem, but I will not discuss it, as in my view it exceeds the scope of a companion chapter. In general, the same issues of the hierarchization of classifying criteria need to be settled if one wishes to determine relative minorness.

7 Other minor characters that make important revelations and will be discussed below are Menelaus' servant in *Helen*, the Pythia in *Ion*, and the old man in *IA*. The servant mediates Helen's recognition by her husband (605–621) and may thus be thought to promote the plot, but he does so unwittingly, clearly acting on the basis of divine plans, which determined the disappearance of the phantom, and remains in need of illumination himself. The Pythia is also and has always been an instrument of the divine. The old man reveals Agamemnon's plan to Clytemnestra (*IA* 873–885) but takes his initiative only after Achilles has indicated that he had no idea about his supposed wedding to Iphigenia (841–842).

Of free persons, I also classify Electra's nominal husband in *Electra* as a minor character. This classification may seem even more controversial than the previous one. The farmer's role is a major component of the play's main mythological innovation. He has a moderately sized part, including the introductory monologue (1–53), and Castor provides instructions for his reward at the end (1286–1287). It has been obvious to generations of scholars that the poet took care to provide a quite full sketch of this sympathetic, virtuous character. Nevertheless, he is not as important to the development of the plot as the old tutor, who recognizes Orestes (571–576; cf. 285–287), plots Aegisthus' murder (619–639) and acts as Electra's messenger to Clytemnestra (651–667). Given the fact that the farmer also satisfies the other criteria of minorhood, I count him as minor. By contrast, I classify gods as major characters because of their ontological status, superior knowledge and dramatic capacity as carriers of authority or messengers of such carriers, although at the very least Hermes in *Ion* could probably count as minor.⁸

Greek tragedy being a stylized genre observing multiple conventions, and plays fairly short literary products, there is no tension between story and discourse such as observed e.g. in modern classical novels. Minor tragic characters disappear from the story, and the audience of a Greek play, assuming that they care about them, may like to know what happens to them and how they view the events dramatized or announced after their disappearance. This desire, though, is often partially satisfied by the characters' utterances and relation to the protagonists, whose views and, occasionally, fate may also remain to an extent ambiguous or unclear. Factors such as frequent low social status, brief parts, and generally standard elements in the presentation of minor characters notwithstanding, these characters articulate, sometimes for the first or only time and/or contrapuntally to the protagonists, in a minor key, major themes or aspects thereof in a play. In any case, minor characters are never minor in the sense that they are dramatically unimportant or expendable. In several cases, they are not even easily forgettable.

8 For gods as minor characters in Sophocles cf. Zimmermann (2012) 508. A prologue speaker whose status places him on a level between mortals and gods is the ghost of the unburied dead Polydorus (*Hc.* 1–58). He is similar to divine prologue speakers such as Hermes in *Ion* and Aphrodite in *Hippolytus* but also to mortal ones such as the farmer in *Electra*: he does not provide accurate information about the past or (comprehensive) predictions about the future. I classify Polydorus as a minor character.

1 Attendants and Slaves

Most Euripidean plays feature speaking attendants of the protagonists, presumably always slaves, who are generally loyal to their masters, virtuous, and pragmatic. They try to protect and admonish them, especially the young, often to uphold piety, morality, and social propriety. The loyal and pious slave in *Hippolytus*, who appears very early on, tries to make his master see sense and is the first mortal to acknowledge the greatness of Aphrodite (88–120).⁹ Unlike the goddess herself (1–58), the servant does not focus on divine love of honours but tries unsuccessfully to convince his addressee by making him consider the norm of social graciousness and observe the similarity between humans and gods in this respect. Ironically, neither Hippolytus nor Aphrodite is affable or willing to show moderation or forgiveness. This intolerance will also inform to different degrees the behaviour of Phaedra (728–731) and Theseus (886–890, 948–957).

Likewise, the much more extended scene of *teichoskopia* in *Phoenissae* (88–201) touches on major themes that will run through the entire play. The scene recalls famous literary precedents, Homer's *Iliad* (3.161–244) and Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, mainly by means of dissimilarities. Antigone is apprehensive but also shows interest in family matters while the loyal servant, the go-between for the arrangement of the truce between Eteocles and Polynices (81–83; cf. 97–98), points out the size of the enemy host (101–102, 112–113) and, most significantly, the justice of Polynices' cause (154–155; cf. 74–78, 258–260, 318). However, the slave expresses no wish for Polynices' victory, and thus has no divided loyalties. He is also much more concerned than the slave in *Hippolytus* with conventional propriety because of the sex and age of Antigone (92–95, 99–100, 193–201).¹⁰

When there is a (perceived) conflict of interest, slaves side with the member(s) of the household or others closer to their heart, usually endangered or wronged parties. The two servants in *Alcestis* (141–212, 747–836), not accidentally a woman and a man, experience this kind of tension, although less sharply than in other plays, presumably because of the ambivalent decisions and stance of the royal couple as well as the community's reaction to them.¹¹ Both servants are devoted to Alcestis and lament her imminent and recent

9 At the end of his prayer to Aphrodite (118–119), he adopts an admonitory tone also toward the goddess.

10 For the irony of his misogynistic pronouncements, see Mastrorarde (1994) 205.

11 Cf. n. 29 below. Formally, the woman is a messenger from the house, and I touch here briefly only on the parallels between her statements and those of her male colleague about the royal couple.

death respectively, as well as the servants' loss of a kind and gracious mistress. The woman suggests that Admetus does not yet realize the extent of his misfortune (145) and even that he prays for the impossible (202–203). The man regrets his master's devotion to hospitality, which prevents the servants from participating in Alcestis' funeral or at least indulging their grief at home (761–771; cf. 809).

Belated realization of the consequences of one's choices (the woman is the first character that touches on this issue), the ambivalent preference of (unfortunate) life over (fated) death (197–198), and the unresolved tension between one's emotional commitments and other priorities (cf. 551–567) are major themes in the play. Despite their loyalty to Alcestis, the servants do not blame Admetus as immoral or even foolish and are devoted to his house. The man even tries to hide Alcestis' death from Heracles when he realizes his master's dissimulation (813). On the other hand, the servant replies to Heracles' lament over Admetus' loss of an excellent wife with the assertion that all have perished, not she alone (825). Although Admetus is presumably included in the collective of those affected, it is telling that the servant does not retort, as might be expected, 'we all perished, not he alone'.

Loyalties divided along ethnic or personal lines inform the presentation of some servants such as Andromache's fellow slave in *Andromache* or the old man in *IA*, providing a glimpse of their personal history. These slaves are regularly on the side of justice and moral integrity, sometimes to the point of readiness for self-sacrifice (*Andr.* 89–90, *IA* 312), a feature they share with some Choruses such as the slave-women in *IT* and *Ion*.¹² I find the view that Andromache exploits her former slave and has the attitude of a superior toward her unconvincing.¹³ The slave-woman retains her old stance toward the former mistress (56–59), wishes to avoid blame (88) and claims that her own servile life is not important (89–90). This implies that the life of Andromache is more precious, but Andromache does not say or indicate anything to that effect. She goes to all lengths to save her child, and the only helper she can rely upon when her situation becomes desperate is her compatriot. The two women actually share a very similar worldview and principles. When Andromache decides to die for her son's sake, she invokes the misery of her wretched condition and her wish to avoid blame (408–410), as her former slave does.

Less common but no less noteworthy than loyalty is a directness, ease, or even loquacity in the exchanges of some servants with their (former) superiors

12 The altruistic slave trying to stop Theoclymenus from killing his sister (*HL*. 1627–1641) is identified as Χορός in L but as a male servant by Clark (1858) and others.

13 See Lee (1975) 10, and Torrance (2005) 44–45.

(e.g. *Hc.* 658–701; cf. *Andr.* 80, 82, and *Hl.* 617–621, discussed below). Although the audience cannot know how Hecuba's former slave related or spoke to her in Troy, the verbosity, familiarity and even bitter irony of the slave's statements may have something to do with her new situation as Hecuba's (and the Chorus') fellow-slave. More significant, the woman suggests that it is not easy for mortals to hold their tongue in misfortunes (664), an indication that her ill-omened statements may be her way of achieving some emotional release and thus coping with the disaster. To an extent paradoxically, her hyperbolic announcements of Hecuba's misfortunes and unreserved addresses to her former mistress, who does not object or flinch, highlight the theme of the (incipient) settling of survivors in their new situation and their (eventual) acceptance of their lot, a prominent theme in Euripidean tragedy. The effect of the slave's lack of verbal restraint is likely enhanced by her temporary shift from mute (*Hc.* 609–614) to speaking character, although this shift is intimated, without specifications, long before it occurs (47–48).

In *Heraclidae* the persona of Hyllus' servant (πενέστης, 639) undergoes a more drastic shift, from messenger or escort to reproachful or admonishing attendant, and that twice, in his exchange with Iolaus (682–694; cf. 720–739) and with Alcmena (961–974). This is remarkable not only *per se* but also because of the difference in status and especially the advanced age of his interlocutors. On the other hand, the servant's allegiance is naturally to Hyllus, and his disagreement with the elders does not breach the convention of tragic servant-master interaction. The presentation of the aged and distraught Iolaus as eager to don armor and fight stretches the envelope of tragic conventions by blurring the line between tragedy and comedy or burlesque. A discussion of the scene's effect exceeds the scope of this essay,¹⁴ but it is beyond doubt that Euripides chose to present both Iolaus' eagerness to fight and Alcmena's to kill primarily through the lens of the servant's disapproving reservations and the reasonable moderation he manifests throughout. The Chorus eventually come to an understanding with Alcmena over the fate of Eurystheus (1021, 1053–1055; cf. 981–982), and thus the servant is the only person who consistently upholds the principles of moral and specifically Athenian civic propriety. The servant's silence after the agreement of Alcmena and the Chorus contributes to the ambivalent effect of the exodus.

Quite conspicuous and dramatically just as fruitful is the shift the old Egyptian doorkeeper undergoes in *Helen* (437–482).¹⁵ The woman, who incidentally

14 For an overview, see Yoon (2012) 68.

15 For comic elements in the scene, see e.g. Burnett (1971) 82 and Seidensticker (1982) 175–177; cf. the reservations of Allan (2008) 198–199.

tells Menelaus the truth about Helen (470–476), is a dependable servant intent on fulfilling her duty (443–444). Tellingly, her answers to Menelaus' questions reveal that she is attached to Proteus rather than his son (460, 466). She fears her master (482), as servants often do (e.g. *Andr.* 61, 86, the old man in *IA* [857, 862, 866; cf. *Med.* 184–189]). Her brusqueness is attributed to this fear, and she is actually well disposed to Greeks and thus on the side of justice (481–482). Irrespective of the character's possible affinities with comedy, her presentation highlights the main theme of the play, appearances versus reality, first touched upon in the exchange of Helen and Teucer (68–163).¹⁶

The two old Greek servants, in *Helen* (597–621, 700–757) and *IA* (1–162, 303–316, 855–895), loyal and well-disposed toward the principals, also shift function and touch on important themes. Their connection with the elite couples and especially with the wives provides a historical backdrop that mediates a more nuanced view of the dramatized events. The old servant in *Helen* had been a slave of Tyndareus and attended Helen's wedding (722–725). He enters as a messenger to Menelaus (597–599) but almost immediately becomes the unwitting catalyst for the difficult recognition of the couple (605–615), which had been blocked by Menelaus' inability to make sense of the doorkeeper's information and to distinguish between appearances and reality (567–593). The slave stays onstage during the recognition duet (625–697), without understanding clearly, or being illuminated about, the truth, a sign of the principals' indifference toward the concerns of the minor characters.¹⁷

When the slave has eventually been informed about Helen's situation, his second address to her (711–727), as familiar as the first one (616–621),¹⁸ underscores the theme of honourable reality vs. blameworthy appearances (720–721). Coming from a sort of representative of Helen's family and community, it validates her rehabilitation by registering their joy in it, which replaces their distress at her supposed lapse (720–721, 726–727). It also, and perhaps primarily, highlights the theme of the god-determined futility and disastrousness of misguided human endeavours (703–704, 707–708, 711–712), from the perspective of

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- 16 Yoon (2012) 80 suggests that the common element is the female control of the exchange. The doorkeeper also fails to disclose to the stranger the reason for Theoclymenus' hostility toward the Greeks (477–478), another parallel with the prologue scene (155–157), although not similarly motivated. For the exchange of Helen and Teucer, see the discussion in 3 below.
- 17 Contrast Helen's address to the Chorus at 627 and 648. One might expect that Menelaus would refer to, or address, the bringer of the good news. Instead, he only mentions Helen's words (622). Cf. Wright (2005) 303–304.
- 18 Although he shows no hostility to Helen, his remark on the frivolous cruelty of her supposed new trick in the wake of the long war (619–621) implies disapproval of her morals.

loyal and long-suffering non-elite individuals. In this connection his attack on the trustworthiness of seers (744–757), whether genuine in its entirety or not, is another relevant theme, especially as Theonoe has just been proven correct but not completely accurate (515–527), for realistically unfathomable, although dramatically expedient, reasons. This uncertainty thus plausibly extends to her future behaviour.

The portrayal of the old man in *IA* moves along similar thematic axes. His main attribute is loyalty (45; cf. 114, 304), which goes back several years: he too was Tyndareus' slave and arrived at Agamemnon's house as part of his bride's dowry (46–48, 860, 869–870). This provides a glimpse of the man's history. In the prologue his servile status does not become immediately apparent, and he refers to himself as a decent or noble man and a true attendant of the bride. This may be attributed to an old slave's closeness to his masters, but the detail about Clytemnestra's dowry and his association with her seem dramatically inert. The significance of the detail will be revealed much later on, when Clytemnestra will tell the story of her marriage to Agamemnon (1148–1165)—fraught marital unions are a dominant theme in the play.

Apart from the sham marriage of Iphigenia and Achilles, the unions of Helen and her two consorts, of Thetis and Peleus, and, most important in this connection, Clytemnestra and her two husbands form a convoluted matrix of causality and parallels. Agamemnon is Clytemnestra's second husband, and the killer of her first husband and probably her baby. His new ruse explains the background of the slave's shift of allegiance and initiative. Actually, the sympathetic old man's journey mirrors in miniature that of his mistress: a reluctant bride and her sympathetic slave are sent to Agamemnon's house and become a devoted wife and slave respectively. When Agamemnon decides to sacrifice his daughter, slave and mistress react with horror, and attempt to enlist Achilles' help—the slave does not state this explicitly, but there is no reason why he would not reveal the plot to Clytemnestra only. This contributes to the portrayal of the general revulsion the latest plan of Agamemnon generates. The commander-in-chief of a campaign that may be described as dubiously motivated at best, a filicide-to-be and erstwhile killer, is repudiated not only by his long-suffering spouse but also by the only representative of a group unaffected by the irrational desire for the campaign that has overtaken the entire army (394, 1264–1268, 1349–1353).

2 Nurses and Tutors

The likeliest servants to side or conspire with masters in distress are nurses and tutors. Actually, extant tragedy features few representatives of this category of servants. The complete plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles feature one nurse and one tutor respectively (*Choephoroi*, *Electra*).¹⁹ The complete plays of Euripides feature only one nurse explicitly identified as such, and she is a protagonist (*Hippolytus*). Two old tutors of the fathers of female protagonists (*Electra*, *Ion*) are also important in the development of the plot. For the rest, there is only a female and a male slave in *Medea*, and the female slave of Hermione in *Andromache*.

Medea features the only scene between two anonymous slaves in extant tragedy (49–95). The slaves in *Medea* are old (53, 133), and the male addresses the female as an old possession of his mistress' house (49). The reference to that house indicates that the woman is likely Colchian. There is no indication, though, that the woman is the nurse of Medea, or of the children.²⁰ Whether she is Colchian or not, and most strikingly if she is, she is not particularly close to Medea. Both slaves as well as the Chorus sympathize with the latter, and blame Jason for his callous betrayal, but the slaves do not actively cooperate with the mistress or try to help her.²¹ This suggests that Medea, who has fostered no close relationships in Greece, has severed all ties with her homeland and past (cf. 506–508), assuming that she had ever been close to her female slave. Although the latter twice uses the word 'friends' to refer to people who try in vain to console the mistress (29, 142), she has no intimacy with, or leverage on, Medea.

Despite Jason's faithlessness, and unlike the slaves of other protagonists, the slaves of Medea do not worry about or cherish their mistress, whose fierce temper, ruthlessness and cunning (36–37, 44–45, 80–81, 90–95, 98–110, 115–130, 171–172, 187–189; cf. 176–177, 182–183) apparently discourage tender emotions and relations. Instead, unsurprisingly, the slaves fear for, pity, and try in vain to protect the most innocent and imperilled party, the children, caught helplessly in their parents' strife and personal priorities. The couple's conflict and the danger it entails for the children are at the centre of the play. The old woman also

19 The servant in the prologue of *Trachiniae* is also listed in L as a nurse, and scholars usually identify her with the woman who reports Deianeira's suicide (871ff.), but these assumptions find no support in the text; see Kyriakou (2011) 372.

20 *Contra* Yoon (2012) 43. Similarly, the man is charged with the children's daily escort (1020) but is not necessarily their tutor.

21 The female servant ordered to fetch Jason (820–823; cf. 774–775) is probably different from the servant in the prologue; see Mastronarde (2002) 43–44.

touches on the effects and use of poetry and music, another major theme in the play, expressing again her frustration over the lack of any means that might appease her mistress (190–204).

The prologue sketches a picture of the main events in the background of the play but does not focus on it or the relationship of the couple—it is telling that the crucial issues of Jason's oath and Medea's fratricide come up only in her reported or overheard cries (21–23, 160–167). In the first reference to Jason's betrayal of his first family the old woman mentions the children before Medea (17), perhaps indicatively. She also distances herself from the attitude and concerns of her mistress and all elite individuals (119–130). The old man is completely disillusioned and believes that all mortals look first and foremost after their own interests (85–88). Unlike his master, though, he is not callous, as he would like things to be different (73) and later rejoices when he thinks that they improve (1002–1004). The prologue and his brief later appearance highlight the gap between the power, ruthlessness, and intransigence of the main characters, and the helplessness, integrity, and moderate, pragmatic realism of their sympathetic attendants.

Hermione's servant,²² who appears in a shorter scene (*Andr.* 802–878), is also faced with an acute crisis, Hermione's despair, a major plot reversal she announces to the Chorus. She is exhausted from trying to prevent Hermione's repeated suicide attempts and tries to enlist the Chorus' help (815–819). She is concerned with the modesty of her mistress (832, 876–877), but she also declares that she did not approve of Hermione's behaviour toward Andromache and does not share her present despair (866–868). More important, she puts Hermione's fears in perspective and presents a different view of Neoptolemus and Menelaus. Up to that point, the behaviour of Neoptolemus, at least toward mortals, has been adumbrated in generally positive terms, while Menelaus' has been scathingly disparaged.

As will appear soon, Neoptolemus will die by means of Orestes' plot because he insulted Apollo (993–1008). Orestes hates Achilles' son, who had failed to respect his previous claim to Hermione's hand and had insulted him as a matricide (971–981). Since emotional attachment to the bride is out of the question, Neoptolemus' persistence could conceivably be motivated by arrogance, or greed, or both. Marriage to Hermione, a Greek virgin princess from a rich

22 It is likely, although not certain, that this servant is a nurse. The nurses or tutors of grown, even young, characters are usually elderly. The servant's age is not indicated, but she addresses Hermione as 'child' several times, so she may be thought to be her nurse, and in what follows I will refer to her as such.

and powerful family and city, was apparently too attractive to forsake.²³ The pragmatic nurse's claim that Neoptolemus will not lightly forsake his marriage alliance because of the nobility of Menelaus, the rich dowry of Hermione, and the wealth of Sparta (869–873) corroborates this view of the unfortunate marriage. The dismissive reference to the worthless words of the barbarian Andromache (870; cf. 840) projects Neoptolemus' likely reaction at least as plausibly as, or more so than, Andromache's trust in him (269).²⁴

Even the nurse's claim that Hermione's father will not allow her to be expelled from her husband's house (874–875) may not lack some credibility. Although Menelaus despicably abandoned his daughter to fend for herself in the domestic quarrel with Andromache, it is not suggested or implied that he would take kindly to Hermione's divorce from Neoptolemus (cf. 742), especially now that Andromache and her child have been saved. None of these scenarios will materialize, and the nurse naturally proves no reliable forecaster of the unpredictable future. Nevertheless, her part in the scene puts in a pragmatic, third-party perspective relationships and concerns so far presented to the audience from the viewpoint of the elite characters involved in quarrels motivated by their biased beliefs and/or selfish pursuits.

The only 'nurse' both entirely devoted to her former charge and not bristling about his recent behaviour is the Pythia (*Ion* 1320–1363), who declares her affection for him (1363; cf. 1325). Since she has not literally nursed Ion (319–320), she may more accurately be called his foster mother. She is also different from other nurses in being certainly free, although her status carries little dramatic weight, in contrast to her priestly capacity (1322–1323). She too tries to restrain and thus protect her vindictive foster child (1320, 1327, 1331, 1333). Ion has not decided to drag the suppliant Creusa from the altar, but he is determined to kill her. The Pythia admonishes him, and although it is not clear that he reconsiders about Creusa's fate, he is distracted by the revelation of the cradle in which he was exposed (1337–1339).

Unlike the nurse of Phaedra or the tutors of Erechtheus and Agamemnon, the Pythia does not *suo Marte* (try to) engineer a better future for her charge and his house. Obeying divine prompts in past and present (1343, 1347, 1349, 1353, 1359–1360), she is calm, and very effective, although unknowingly. Actually, despite the drama of the recognition mediated by the tokens the Pythia

23 This is also implied by Peleus (639–641). Although he denigrates mainly the morality of Menelaus and his family, their wealth is mentioned in connection with Neoptolemus' marriage (639–641). Cf. 1281–1282, a textually suspect passage.

24 His neglect of Peleus' warnings (619–22) and arrogant dismissal of Orestes' petition (977–978) may give the audience pause and colour their reception of the nurse's suggestion.

brings, her scene is not even absolutely necessary from the point of view of plot development. Like Apollo in *Orestes* or the Dioscuri in *Elektra* and *Helen*, for instance, Athena could certainly appear *ex machina* to settle matters and provide at least some explanations, as she eventually does (1553–1565). Nevertheless, the poet chose to include this scene featuring an obedient priestess and cool-headed foster mother. The Pythia and her scene contrast sharply with the rest of the characters and the play respectively. Her continued ignorance of Ion's parentage despite her capacity as the god's prophetess has been singled out as a major part of the presentation of divine aloofness in the play.

This may be so, but her unquestioning trust in, and obedience to, Apollo project an image of mortal quietude totally different from the distress, doubts, futile undertakings and frustration of the main characters. The Pythia loves a currently troubled Ion but says or imagines nothing against any mortal or god. By contrast, Ion until the very end fears a servile origin (1382–1383) and doubts Apollo's revelation (1532, 1537–1538, 1547–1548), despite his previous service at the god's temple and the oaths of his mother Creusa (1477–1484, 1528–1531). The latter also doubts Apollo's trustworthiness as lover and father. Even the Chorus of her slave-women, compromised by their attachment to the Athenian royal house and their mistress, are suspicious and prone to accuse mortals and gods (681–694, 832–835, 1090–1105). The impatience and lack of trust of mortals interferes even with divine plans, although eventually the gods manage to fulfill their will and protect their favourites.

It is unlikely that Euripides meant to present an image of unqualifiedly benevolent gods. His divinities always pursue their own agendas, which may be described as amoral, but they are not always wicked, corrupt or malevolent. In a similar vein, it would be schematic or simplistic to suggest that in Euripides' plays unreserved resignation or fatalistic passivity is the recipe for mortal happiness. On the other hand, the best his long-suffering mortal characters can do is retain hope. They do not become necessarily happy, far from it, but the gods may eventually reward their patience, piety and trust. In this light, the anonymous priestess of Apollo, who has been and remains ignorant of the god's designs but faithfully carries out his commands, and who does not even blame the supposed stepmother for her attempt on Ion (1329) or lament his departure, is given the important and unique role of the uncomplicated devotee and trustworthy instrument of the gods.²⁵

25 Ion's initial refusal to follow his alleged father to Athens and his praise of his life as a temple servant (585–647) reflects a similar attitude, but his concerns are not identical with his foster mother's. For the rest, it is Xuthus who most closely approximates the uncomplicated, trusting piety of the priestess. Nevertheless, he too succumbs to his affection for

3 Free Persons

Of the rest of the scenes with free characters, three feature anonymous children,²⁶ who shift from mute to speaking characters. The boy of *Alcestis* and *Admetus*, presumably the elder child, sings, and the sons of *Medea* and *Jason* are only heard shouting and even addressing the Chorus offstage (*Med.* 1270, 1271–1272, 1277–1278), a unique and interesting staging twist. *Andromache's* boy alternates with his mother in a duet (*Andr.* 501–536). All children are innocent sufferers and victims, carriers of great pathos. Their innocence and emotions contrast with, and cast in a bad light, their elders' misplaced or self-centred concerns and/or criminal designs. This is the case mainly with the boy in *Alcestis*. In his lament over his mother's death he does not touch on the thorny issue of its background, his parents' or grandparents' choices. He grieves only over the impact that the loss will have on the family.

Although the boy first naturally laments his own loss (*Al.* 393–403, 406–407), he is not self-centred. The pronoun 'I' (ἐγώ) occurs thrice in four lines (401 [twice], 406), but the boy then sensitively mentions his sister (407–410), his father (411–413), and their entire house (414–415).²⁷ His lament is also a correction of his mother's claim that the father is a male child's bulwark (311). There is no consolation or support left for any member of the family.²⁸ The boy does not imply that his father will not benefit from his mother's sacrifice, as the female servant did (197–198). More remarkably, he nowhere even refers to his mother's death as a sacrifice or touches on the issue of *Alcestis's* glorious excellence. This is a major theme in the play, on which all adult characters comment, but their unanimity ironically serves to underscore its ambivalence and their skewed perspective.²⁹ Given the boy's age, his failure to mention these themes is unsurprising, but his lament seems to indicate a certain attitude rather than a certain

his newfound alleged son and the latter's doubts and reservations and takes initiatives that contribute to the hindrance of Apollo's plan (651–660).

26 The only named children in the extant complete plays of Euripides are silent, the toddler *Astyanax* in *Troades* and, naturally, the baby *Orestes* in *IA*. They are major figures in the tradition and dramatically important in the plays, especially the former, a precious quotation of whose promises to his grandmother is included in her lament for his death (*Tr.* 1182–1184). *Telephus* also featured the baby *Orestes*, and *Hypsipyle* the baby *Opheltes*. For children in tragedy, see Sifakis (1979) and Zeitlin (2008), with previous literature.

27 Cf. Iakov (2012) 152. Euripidean singers are commonly more self-absorbed; see Chong-Gossard (2003) 211. It is indicative that *Admetus*, the beneficiary of his wife's death, always stresses his own loss and mentions it before that of his innocent children, even in the only couplet he contributes to the boy's lament (404–405; cf. 275–279, 379–391, 944–950).

28 Cf. Markantonatos (2013) 80.

29 For *Alcestis's* glory, see Kyriakou (2008) 265–268.

age. The boy is the only character who does not mention the family rift, accuses nobody, seeks no consolation but laments over the stark fact that this precious woman, a young mother, wife and mistress of the house, has perished before her time.

Andromache's boy also laments his own and his mother's fate without accusing anybody. In contrast with the lament in *Alcestis*, to which the father contributes one spoken couplet (404–405), in the duet in *Andromache* the mother always sings first and focuses mainly on her predicament. Unlike her, in the strophe the boy nowhere refers only to himself. This changes in the antistrophe, possibly in order to suggest his growing desperation and panic but also his alienation from his mother's wish for Hector's succour (523–525). Whether the boy takes this as a request for help or not, it suggests to him that his mother used to have a strong protector in the past, whom she fondly recalls. Although she has now lost him and is about to perish, she invokes a scenario in which she might not, and the child registers his own lack of resources in the face of death (526–527). Already in his first utterance he had gently reminded his mother of their shared plight (504–505), and he appealed to his father to return and help his 'friends' (507–509; contrast 523–525). The boy's anguished question, repeated almost verbatim at the end (535–536), shows more starkly his plight as an innocent, helpless victim of war and domestic strife.

Paradoxically, Teucer in *Helen*, on his way to a new home, like Andromache's boy at the end of the play, is also a victim of the war. This distraught veteran is one of a few eponymous minor characters. The ghost of Polydorus in *Hecuba* does not interact with anybody, and Hermione appears very briefly in *Orestes* (1323–45). The bizarre suicide of Euadne and the devastation of Iphis in *Supplices* highlight the impact of the war on civilians.³⁰ The scene with Teucer (*Hl.* 68–163) sets in motion the development of the plot, but he is not the only or likeliest character that might have informed Helen about the outcome of the war (107–108) or the misfortunes of her family (123–142). The information includes nothing that she could not have heard e.g. from Theonoe (cf. 317–320, 1198–1199, 1227–1228) or that she could not have been presented as knowing from unspecified sources or at least rumours. Teucer is also the first and only character who shows and expresses unquenchable hatred of Helen (71–77, 160–163; cf. 81) and thus corroborates her anguished relevant claims (52–54). This

30 See Kyriakou (2008) 261–262. Teiresias in the first episode of *Bacchae* (170–369) may also be considered as a minor character. On the other hand, apart from his authority, his participation in the cult of Dionysus and advice to Pentheus prefigure subsequent developments, not only the triumph of the god but also and especially the downfall of Pentheus. The failure of the latter to heed the advice seals his and his mortal relatives' fate.

hostility, though, is a given in the mythological and especially the tragic tradition, and no character or audience would have doubted it, had Teucer not appeared. Thus, the scene may not plausibly be thought to have been conceived as a means of providing information and/or corroboration of Helen's distress. Instead, it strikes the first note of the tension between appearances and reality, the play's major theme. It also highlights the misfortunes of the war and its aftermath, which afflict not only the casualties and the conquered but also the survivors and the conquerors, and not only those who have not yet returned to Greece.

Teucer is a veteran trapped, emotionally and reputationally, in his war-service, angry (80) and traumatized. Reviews of the war are virtually insufferable to him (143; cf. 110, 120, 769–771), and he relates nothing that is not absolutely necessary, omitting Odysseus' name from his report of Ajax' suicide (102). Except for the semi-divine Theonoe, he is the only mortal character who receives no piece of information and acquires virtually no knowledge. In this respect, he is closest to the Egyptian doorkeeper. Like her (454; cf. 458), Teucer has no interest in learning anything unrelated to his immediate purposes, and readily accepts Helen's assurances that his journey will signal all that he needs to know (151).³¹

Helen sees that no benefit will come from her informing him about the current situation in Egypt (156–157). Her reticence may be attributed in part to her reluctance to reveal her own troubles, or to the presumed difficulty of convincing the confident Teucer, which will become obvious from her failure to disabuse Menelaus. Still, her main, indeed her only explicit, motivation is her wish not to harm him further. Her question is 'how would I benefit you?' (τί γὰρ ἄν ὠφελοῖμί σε; 157) and not, for instance, 'what might be the benefit?' or 'what benefit might there be?'. Although she would be rehabilitated in Teucer's eyes if she managed to convince him, the knowledge of her innocence would not offer him any kind of closure, probably the opposite. The scene is an early reminder that, irrespective of Helen's innocence, not all survivors will eventually fare as well as she and Menelaus. Teucer will reach Cyprus, but there is no indication

31 I do not agree with Ebbot (2003) 58–65, who argues that Helen and Teucer share transferred shame in connection with their alter egos, the phantom and Ajax respectively, and their illegitimate status. Teucer's illegitimacy is not so much as hinted at in the play, and there is no indication that he ever felt shame. The illegitimacy of Helen, the daughter of Zeus, and any shame associated with it are also non-issues. Ebbot suggests that Teucer and Helen will be redeemed after leaving Egypt, and on the surface the similarity holds. Still, there is little closure for Teucer and all mortals in similar situations. The poem *Ἐλένη* of Seferis, inspired by *Helen* and with Teucer at Cyprus as the narrator, captures well the terrible sense of loss they experience.

that he will ever be rehabilitated, happy (cf. 698–699, 855–856, 1450), or richly rewarded for his great sufferings and losses (cf. 1666–1677).

The other adult minor character who will relocate to a new home and even become rich is the farmer in *Electra* (1286–1287). As already pointed out, this anonymous but free man is assigned a relatively large and significant part (1–81, 341–363, 404–431). Like slaves in other plays, he is favourably disposed to the long-suffering protagonists, down to earth, and morally sound. He provides a foil to Electra and Orestes, as Hyllus' servant does to Iolaus and especially Alcmena. The farmer's poverty and the rural setting enhance the play's remoteness from civic/political concerns.³² However, the impression of realism that he has been thought to introduce does not exhaust his dramatic function.³³ Particularly intriguing in this respect is his failure to explain why he accepted Aegisthus' offer and married Electra in the first place, and how this agreement squares with his humane decision not to consummate the marriage.

Euripides was under no obligation, was probably not even expected by the original audience, and possibly had no concern, to tie up all loose ends. If so, the question about the farmer's reason(s) for marrying Electra may be illegitimate. On the other hand, the farmer's reticence about his earlier decision may plausibly not be attributed merely to authorial oversight or indifference. The farmer and the marriage arrangement are Euripides' inventions, and the farmer appears onstage. Most important, both he and other characters comment on his status and circumstances, and especially on his decision not to consummate his marriage (43–46, 68, 255–262, 364–365), but the rationale of his agreement to marry Electra is far from self-evident.

The farmer was not motivated by arrogance, vanity, the prospect of material profit, or, much less, necessity or fear. A motive would be his wish to alleviate Electra's plight as best he could, given the circumstances. Nowhere in the play is there any suggestion that Electra suffered verbal or physical abuse and/or deprivation while living at home with Aegisthus and Clytemnestra. Virtually nothing is said either about her circumstances or life before the marriage arrangements. No one is encouraged or likely to imagine that the situation of the Euripidean Electra at home had been pleasant (cf. 132–134), but at least noble, indeed the cream of suitors asked for her hand (20–21)—nothing similar is mentioned or implied in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Sophocles' *Electra*, or Euripides' own *Orestes*. Her relocation to the farmer's dwelling caused her humiliation

32 The setting, though, is not a rural eutopia; cf. Mastronarde (2010) 244.

33 For a helpful survey and discussion of scholarly attempts to locate the 'real' in the play, see Goff (2000). For the farmer as representative of a social class, see Basta Donzelli (1978) 227–269, and cf. Michelini (1987) 194–197.

and anguish (207–210, 247, 304–310, 1004–1005, 1008–1009, 1092–1093), but at least the farmer respected her social superiority. Another husband might not be so considerate, and the kind farmer perhaps agreed to marry her in order to spare her the ultimate humiliation.

Such assumptions are difficult to substantiate, and it is remarkable that nothing about the farmer's wish to protect Electra is said by him or her. The uncertainty about the farmer's motives and decision is probably a deliberate early sign of the play's failure to provide information about the motives of agents and the background of the dramatized revenge. Euripides has constructed a 'domesticated', even petit bourgeois, version of one of the most terrible internecine conflicts of Greek mythology. The primacy of the domestic sphere does not self-evidently entail the brushing out or removing of the past from the picture of a play, as is obvious from Sophocles' *Electra*. The farmer, the first character to review the remoter past (1–13), provides only annalistic information, focusing exclusively on the achievements and predicament of Agamemnon. He does not shed light on that past, and not even on the background of his own more recent actions.

The audience is thus left to ponder the dramatized action with precious few clues that might provide a moral or causal anchor by means of clear associations with the recent or the remoter past. The motivation and moral evaluation of the characters' decisions, even those who do no wrong and have no obvious ulterior motives, remain puzzling. Castor's injunction about the relocation and enrichment of the farmer is difficult to judge. A non-traditional character, in many respects different from the elite protagonists, the farmer remains just as puzzling as they, from beginning to end. The Chorus' farewell (1357–1359) ironically sums up the view of the uninvolved or exasperated observer: good fortune is the key to mortal happiness. Causality and morality, virtue and vice, past crimes, present contingencies and future prospects reduce to the oscillations of fortune.

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Euripides' Heralds

Florence Yoon

Heralds are crucial figures in the Greek world, standing at the heart of a community's formal interactions. They appear frequently across the full range of ancient sources, from literary texts to inscriptions to pottery. As individuals speaking publicly for an absent individual or community, heralds provide particular opportunities for exploring representation, agency, and individuality, and it is in Euripides that we see the fullest use of this dramatic potential.

In most Greek sources, heralds are minor figures with severely restricted roles. They act either as messengers or as functionaries, depending on the context of the work in which they appear. For example, in the *Iliad* they appear primarily as the bearers of official messages, repeating more or less verbatim the speeches dictated by their senders. They do not, however, enforce the demands that they relay; if they perform actions, it is only with explicit permission, as when Achilles allows Agamemnon's heralds to take away Briseis in *Iliad* 1. In the *Odyssey* they appear more often as mute attendants carrying out ceremonial duties in feast scenes. In the fifth century, heralds are similarly found relaying official messages in times of war or officiating at public events such as games.¹ Very few heralds are identified as individuals by markers such as names, the exceptions being mostly mythological figures of whom Talthybius is the best known, with more obscure figures such as Idaios and Medon appearing only in a single known work. Even fewer heralds show signs of moral agency such as decision-making or even personal perspective. They function as passive media rather than active agents.

When they step onto the Euripidean stage, however, heralds are major characters upon whom both the action and broader interpretation of the plays depend. They are not merely mouthpieces or functionaries, but act in defiance of the conventional restrictions on the actions of heralds. For example, in non-dramatic sources, heralds often convey the threat of physical violence, but as unarmed individuals operating in enemy territory never pose a threat themselves, being instead conventionally protected from violence.² On

1 For heralds in Homer, see Wéry (1967). For heralds in the Greek world at large, see Mosley (1973).

2 See Wéry (1966) for a full discussion of this convention.

the stage, however, heralds adopt violent roles as necessary; thus, the herald of Eurystheus lays hands on Iolaus in *Heraclidae* (63–78) when the old man refuses to obey his commands. The audience is certainly meant to condemn this behaviour,³ but the inappropriateness of a herald adopting an actively violent role does not draw comment, as compared to the Chorus' response to Demophon's threats against the herald later in this play (270–272). Euripidean heralds do sometimes operate in conventionally passive ways, but only in reported narratives.⁴ Onstage, Euripides gives much more active roles to his heralds than is justified by historical convention.

Heralds do not appear as frequently as we might expect, given the importance of official communication in tragedy. It would be entirely in accordance with both fifth-century practice and with the mythical time in which the plays are set for a king or a city to send a herald to make official proclamations and demands instead of appearing in person. However, playwrights are hardly bound by realism in such matters, and Euripides generally omits the expected intermediary and presents kings and other powerful figures onstage as a matter of course. For example, Creon in *Medea* delivers his own edict of her banishment, while Menelaus appears in person in *Andromache*, having come—however improbably—from Sparta to Thessaly to persecute Andromache and her son. Such dramatic economies are both customary and effective; had the news of Medea's banishment been brought by a herald instead of by Creon himself, it would hardly have been possible for Euripides to create the memorable scene in which Medea negotiates with Creon for a day's grace.

The use of a herald onstage in tragedy is therefore not an automatic reflection of historic convention, but an artistic choice. We can therefore meaningfully ask what is gained by the appearance of a herald instead of his master. In each extant case, Euripides goes beyond the historical function of the herald as a message-bearer and plays upon the tension between his personal perspective as an individual, and his role as the onstage representative of an offstage sender. His heralds reflect both senses of the word 'agency'; they are both *representative* agents, acting in the interests of the absent sender, and *personal* agents, autonomous individuals. One herald figure gives the audience access to two identities: that of the absent king or state and that of the character present onstage.

3 Goblot-Cahen (1999) rightly points out that the link between the inviolate status of both suppliants and heralds increases the shocking effect of this action.

4 E.g. *Hec.* 529–533, *El.* 706, *Or.* 885.

The dramatic possibilities inherent in this tension are explored by Aeschylus in his *Agamemnon* and perhaps also his Danaid tetralogy;⁵ however, four extant plays of Euripides depend on them. In *Heraclidae*, *Hecuba*, *Suppliant Women*, and *Trojan Women*, he puts heralds on centre stage as focal characters, and their status as representatives is fully exploited.

Euripides did use heralds in other contexts, but unfortunately there is little material to discuss. It is possible that Euripides also used heralds as silent attendants in various plays, as Aeschylus did at e.g. *Eumenides* 565. However, this is an element of performance that is often not preserved in the text, so the evidence (if any) has not survived. More tantalizingly, the lost *Phaethon* includes a scene in which a 'sacred herald', accompanying the king Merops and his son Phaethon, gives a short formal announcement speech (fragment 773, ll. 109–116). Unfortunately, the text breaks off soon after this speech. It is tempting to speculate that he went on to play a bigger role,⁶ since a strictly ceremonial role would be very unusual for a speaking character in tragedy, and the remarkable simultaneous entrance of three speaking actors is signalled in the text.⁷ However, the surviving fragments that follow indicate only an ensuing *agôn* between Merops and Phaethon, with no evidence for a further role for the herald.

1 Identification of Herald

The herald is one of the most iconographically distinct figures in art.⁸ His identity is unmistakably signalled by his staff (*kerukeion*), travelling hat, and cloak. We cannot be certain whether these elements were presented onstage as there is no direct reference to a herald's costume in any extant play, but the staff is included on a second-century AD list of stage properties,⁹ and a number of vase-paintings that have been identified as representations of scenes from Greek tragedies include an unmistakable herald figure.¹⁰ It is therefore probable that a herald would have been immediately recognized as such by an audience.

5 Cf. Yoon (2012) 48–50 and 113–120.

6 Cf. Webster (1972): 'Euripides must have meant something by his unique and solemn entry. Either he represents the bride, or he is going to accompany Merops on a solemn mission.'

7 The Chorus describes them as 'three joined in company.' Cf. e.g. Kannicht (1972) 7–8; Taplin (1977) 241 and n. 2.

8 See e.g. Goblot-Cahen (2007a).

9 Pollux' *Onomasticon* 4.117.5–6.

10 Cf. e.g. Green (1999), though he conflates a several distinct types of figure; Taplin (2007) 126–130.

Whatever visual cues there may have been, verbal identification is much clearer. Heralds' identities are announced as or soon after they arrive onstage. Not only do these introductions identify the arriving characters, but each also highlights the key to the herald's dramatic function: his subordination to a specific absent authority. In *Heraclidae*, Iolaus sees 'Eurystheus' herald' approaching (*Hclld.* 49) and in a parallel scene later in the play 'the servant of Hyllus' (*Hclld.* 639) is treated as a herald.¹¹ In *Suppliant Women*, Theseus is talking to his own herald, referring to 'this art you practice of carrying proclamations' (*Supp.* 381–382), when he sees a 'Cadmean herald' (*Supp.* 396–397) approaching. Talthybius in *Hecuba* is immediately addressed by name (*Hec.* 487) and soon afterwards introduces himself as 'the servant of the Greeks' (*Hec.* 503), while in *Trojan Women* the Chorus sees him approaching and announces, 'the herald from the Greek army' (*Tro.* 230–231). These identifying phrases associate each herald with a specific absent power and emphasize that he is acting as a representative.

2 Heralds as Official Messengers

Since Greek drama does not use a narrator, the audience has no direct access to the world beyond the stage. The herald is therefore our first and often our only point of contact with the absent sender. The herald's role is accordingly considerably more important than it is in narrative genres as he is the primary source of information about the absent power; he is not merely a representative, but *the* representative.

This representative role in Euripides is centred on the message that the herald brings: an official announcement sent by an offstage power, usually demanding an action of an enemy or bringing a report to an ally. In tragedy, the audience generally has access only to the scene in which the message is received. However, in *Suppliant Women* Euripides stages the delegation of such a message, the only extant example of such a scene. Theseus, having agreed to help Adrastus the king of Argos to recover the bodies of the Argives who have died besieging Thebes, instructs his herald as follows:

As on all other occasions you have served the city and me by this art you practice of carrying proclamations, so now cross the Asopus and the waters of the Ismenus and tell the haughty king of the Cadmeans

¹¹ Cf. Yoon (2015).

the following: 'Theseus asks you as a favor to bury the dead; he is your neighbor and thinks it right that his request be granted; do this and you will make the whole host of the Erechtheids your friends'. If they consent, thank them and hurry back home. But if they refuse to listen, then give them a second message: they should expect revelers of mine at their door, revelers who carry shields. Our army here sits in readiness and is being reviewed around the holy spring of Callichorus. The city gladly and willingly took up this task when they heard that I wished them to do so. (transl. Kovacs)

Supp. 381–394

The opening of this speech mentions two important elements of the herald's role: his service to king and country and the sense of distance and travel. However, the speech above all demonstrates the herald's subordinate agency. The central message places Theseus' name prominently at the beginning, while the use of the second person 'you' shows that this speech is to be repeated directly to the addressee; Theseus is dictating the message to be delivered. He then gives explicit instructions on how the herald should react to either Theban compliance or refusal. The herald himself remains silent; he is a passive medium for the message, completely subordinated to his master. Indeed, the message remains undelivered, pre-empted by the arrival of the Theban herald. It is the character of Theseus that is constructed in this scene: the courtesy of his initial message, with the keywords 'favour' (χάριν), 'neighbour' (συγγείτον' οἰκῶν γαίαν), and 'friends' (φίλον), and his military confidence and foresight, with the 'glad' and 'willing' support of the city (ἐκοῦσά γ' ἄσμένη τ').

In all other cases the audience, along with the internal addressee, hears the message not from the sender but in the mouth of the herald. Unlike so-called messenger speeches in tragedy, in which bystanders report offstage events that they have witnessed, these are formal statements which derive their authority from the heralds' status as official representatives. Accordingly, Euripidean heralds name their absent senders prominently at either the beginning or the end of their messages.

These messages, short or long, bear some resemblance to those of heralds in other genres in which the voice of an absent sender is transmitted through a herald who acts as a passive mouthpiece. Their style draws on two established conventions governing the formal speeches of heralds. In Homer, it is common for heralds to maintain a third person perspective while repeating a message verbatim. For example, in *Iliad* 4, Agamemnon instructs Talthibius: 'Call Machaon here, the hero son of Asklepios the peerless healer, to look at Menelaos, Atreus' warrior son [...]. Talthibius reports Agamemnon's command

in the third person when delivering the message: 'Up, son of Asklepios! Lord Agamemnon sends for you, to look at Menelaos, Atreus' warrior son [...]'.¹² The first person is used by Homeric heralds only with verbs such as 'I proclaim' or 'I announce'. In Herodotus, however, it is more common for a herald to adopt a first-person perspective representing the direct voice of the sender. For example, the herald of Tomyris at the end of book I says to Cyrus: 'I urge you to follow this advice: return my son to me and [...] you may leave this land unharmed.'¹³ The reported speech of the herald is here entirely conflated with the voice of Tomyris. However, in such cases the herald is acting as a representative agent, and there is no doubt whose voice is being heard.

In Euripides, the heralds themselves clearly announce the identity of the sender along with the central message itself, and their imperative demands derive their force from this absent sender. The Theban herald in *Suppliant Women* enters asking: 'to whom shall I bring a message from Creon, who controls Cadmus' land [...]?' (399–400). The actual delivery of his message is somewhat delayed by debate, but his demand is clear when it comes and claims considerable authority: 'I and all the people of Cadmus' city forbid you to admit Adrastus into your land' (467–468). The style contrasts strongly with the speech entrusted to Theseus' herald, with its imperative tone and pressing threats (473–475), constructing a clear opposition between Athenian courtesy and Theban aggression.

The herald of Eurystheus in *Heraclidae* is sent on a similar errand, to demand that Demophon, the king of Athens, should hand over the children of Heracles who have come to ask for refuge. Demophon, arriving just as the herald has been prevented from taking them by force, asks 'from what land is it that you have come here?' (133). The herald not only answers, but volunteers additional information: 'I am an Argive, since that is what you wish to know. But I want to tell you why I have come and at whose behest. Eurystheus, king of Mycenae, has sent me here to fetch these children' (*Hclid.* 134–137). There follows a long speech (139–178) in which he makes his case: that as Argives the children of Heracles are subject to Argive power, that no other Greek city has dared to deny Argive claims, and that Argos and Eurystheus are more powerful as an enemy than the children can be as friends. This repeated emphasis on Argos leaves no doubt as to the source of the herald's assertion of authority and encourages the audience to take this speech as representative of the Argive temperament.

12 *Il.* 4.193–200 and 210–220, transl. Hammond.

13 *Histories* 1.212, transl. Purvis.

At the end of the same play, the herald of Hyllus arrives for the second time. His role is not to recount the battle of Iolaus, Hyllus, and Athens against the Argive forces, but to escort the defeated Eurystheus; as he tells Alcmena: 'Hyllus and brave Iolaus [...] instructed me to bring this man to you' (*Hclid.* 938). His function here is to convey not information, but a prisoner, and accordingly he gives a victory speech (928–940) whose brevity and formal tone contrast with the detailed messenger speech of the preceding scene. Nevertheless, he clearly indicates that he has been sent and by whom, emphasizing his representative role.

Talthybius in *Hecuba* performs his official function more briefly still. He is tasked with conveying the announcement of Polyxena's death to her mother Hecuba, who must bury the body. He does this in just two lines (508–509), and the concision of this speech increases the pointedness with which he identifies his senders both before and afterwards: 'I have come as the servant of the Greeks [at the summons, lady, of Agamemnon]' (503–504), and 'the two sons of Atreus and the Achaean army have sent me' (509–510).

Finally, Talthybius appears in *Trojan Women* four times¹⁴ as both messenger and escort, and his affiliation is still more diffuse. He acts not only for 'the Greeks' in general, but also for a series of different individuals. During his initial appearance, he first reminds Hecuba 'I have made frequent journeys to Troy from the Achaean army as a herald' (234–235) before explaining that he has come 'to report news'—that is, the assignment of the captive Trojan women to their Greek masters (238). He does not name a specific sender but names a number of Greek leaders as he conveys the results of the army's lottery. When this news has been delivered, not as a single speech but in dialogue with Hecuba, he escorts Cassandra offstage to her new master Agamemnon. He appears a second time, declaring 'it is against my will that I shall make my announcement from both the Greeks and the sons of Pelops in common' (710–711). This announcement is that Astyanax, the child of Andromache and the dead Hector, is to be killed. He is as reluctant to act as he is to speak, declaring: 'such herald's errands had best be done by someone who is without pity and is more inclined than I am to heartlessness' (786–789). Nevertheless, he both speaks and acts as he has been commanded, and leaves with the boy. In his last two appearances he does not name a sender; however, when he returns with the body of Astyanax, it is to fulfil the request of Andromache granted by her new master Neoptolemus that Hecuba should prepare for the burial (1142–

14 See e.g. Dyson/Lee (2000) 155–156 on a long-standing debate over the identification of the herald who enters at 706.

1149). Finally, Talthybius returns to bring Hecuba to her new master Odysseus (1269–1271, 1285–1286). He can therefore be said to act not for one individual, but on behalf of the Greek army as a whole.

The representative role of the herald is therefore foregrounded in every scene in which one appears, and his official message or actions are clearly attributed to an offstage power. He executes his official commission regardless of personal doubts, and this always precipitates further action, though not necessarily the action demanded or intended. The message remains at the core of the herald's function in Euripides as in the *Iliad* and in Herodotus.

3 Heralds as Individuals

However, heralds in tragedy are not restricted to the delivery of messages. Their official speeches are often preceded by informal conversation with the Chorus or characters other than the addressee of the sent message, and are almost always followed by dialogic discussion, as befits the dramatic genre. In these more informal exchanges, as well as in the introductions and conclusions of the messages themselves, Euripides can endow his heralds with independent personal perspectives. There is considerable variation in how far Euripides creates a distinct identity for his heralds; the herald's perspective may be indistinguishable from that of his sender, or it may be markedly different. Crucially, these independent perspectives never affect the herald's own actions, or the action of the play, but they do add complexity to the characters' interactions and affect the audience's response.

For example, in *Hecuba* the Greek herald Talthybius clearly alternates between personal and official personas. He enters asking for Hecuba, and the Chorus directs his attention to her lying prostrate 'upon the ground, wrapped in her garments' (486–487), mourning for Polyxena. Talthybius' response is unmistakably personal. His pity for Hecuba is expressed in a spontaneous speech addressed to Zeus that questions divine providence and wonders at the mutability of human fortune. He draws attention to his own old age—not a typical feature of Talthybius' portrayal, but one which draws him closer to Hecuba—and prays to die himself before meeting with such a fate. Only after this private expression, which is entirely unheard by Hecuba, does he fulfil his official function. Faced now with his official addressee, he introduces himself formally (503–504) and delivers his official message as briefly as possible (508–510). These brief exchanges are factual and devoid of emotion, set off from the rest of the scene by the identification of his senders (503–504 and 510). His formal duties discharged, Talthybius becomes a personal agent again,

and accedes to Hecuba's request that he recount the death of Polyxena. The speech that follows (518–582) is not an official herald's report, but a conventional eyewitness account or messenger speech (hence its consideration in de Jong's 1991 study—the only speech by a named character that she includes). His personal perspective is clearly marked, beginning the speech with renewed tears for Polyxena, and ending it with mingled praise and pity for Hecuba. His sympathy is distinct from the reaction of the Greek army; although he reports that 'the host shouted its approval' (553) and that the Greeks urged each other to 'go and bring some tribute' to Polyxena, his are the only tears.¹⁵ Yet when he leaves the stage it is once again as a herald, tasked with a formal message from Hecuba to the Greek army (604–608), and he departs in silence.

Such clear alternation of roles, however, is not the only way in which Euripides manipulates the dramatic potential of the herald's perspective. Euripides also makes use of the convention of first-person narrative for official herald speeches to blur the official voice of the herald with his personal one. The free alternation of singular and plural verb forms, a common feature of Greek verse, adds to this ambiguity. In *Suppliant Women*, the herald engages Theseus in a debate before he even delivers his official message, contending that tyranny is superior to democracy (409–425). His opening words set the tone of the scene: 'Your words put me/us (ἡμῖν) one point ahead, as in a game of draughts. The city I have come from (ἐγὼ πάριμι)' is ruled by one man and not by a rabble'. These few lines demonstrate an apparently personal 'I' which is blended into a representative 'I'. Through his use of the plural ἡμῖν, the herald frames the debate—which is unrelated to his official function—as a competition not merely between individual speakers, but between cities. A similar effect is produced by his emphatic association of his city (πόλις) and himself (ἐγὼ); he is speaking on behalf of Thebes, but also emphasizes his personal interest in the matter. His unexpected focus on comparing two political systems accordingly encourages the audience to consider both his city and himself as representatives of the whole institution of tyranny.

That this digression is independent and egregious is emphasized by Theseus, who first exclaims: 'this herald is a clever talker and loves to speak elaborately on what is no part of his errand' (426), and after rebutting his argument demands:

But what is your errand, what do you want from this land? If your city had not sent you, we would have made you regret coming here and talk-

15 Contrast the parallel scene in Seneca's *Trojan Women* 1160–1161.

ing so much. A messenger should say what he has been told to say and then depart at once. Henceforth let Creon send to my city a messenger less talkative than you! (transl. Kovacs)

Supp. 457–462

Theseus here clearly establishes the distinction between the herald and his sender before the message itself is delivered. The herald, however, does not maintain this distinction. Before he gives the message, he gets in a last word: 'As regards our debate, you hold to your opinion and I shall hold to the opposite' (465–466). Only now does he turn to the message: 'But I and all the people of Cadmus' city forbid you to admit Adrastus into your land'. By continuing to use the first person singular, he blurs the distinction between his own voice and Creon's, and by alternating between the singulars and plurals in the rest of the speech, speaking on behalf of the city, he increases this ambiguity. As a result, in the stichomythic dialogue that follows the speeches it is unclear whether the herald is following a script, such as the one given by Theseus to his own herald, or speaking on his own initiative, as in the initial debate.

What is the effect of this? Although Theseus maintains the distinction between the herald and his master, the herald himself identifies fully with his senders.¹⁶ Moreover, it is not only Creon that he has come to represent, but the Theban city and the institution of tyranny. As a result, Euripides uses the herald to contrast Thebes and Athens on three levels. On the most superficial level, the Theban herald—who talks too much and out of turn—is set against the silent Athenian, who receives his instructions passively like a traditional epic herald. Secondly, Creon, as represented through the aggressive, bombastic herald, is set against Theseus. And finally, the institutions of Theban tyranny and (anachronistic) Athenian democracy are contrasted through the characters of their representatives as well as their arguments. The blending of the herald's personal and representative agency allows Euripides to construct all three levels of identity through one figure.

The most memorable and complex herald is Talthybius in *Trojan Women*. He is, accordingly, the only herald in Euripides to have received focused scholarly attention.¹⁷ The primary focus of these discussions is his individuality. This is expressed in a minor way in his first scene, in which he questions Agamemnon's choice of Cassandra as a prize of war. He states this both in general terms

16 Compare the herald of Eurystheus in *Heraclidae*, cf. Yoon (2012) 107–112.

17 E.g. Gilmartin (1970) on his humanity and its importance to the structure and meaning of the play, Dyson/Lee (2000) on his characterization as an individual, Sullivan (2007) on his nonconformity to the Euripidean messenger type.

(‘it seems that those who are looked up to and considered wise are in no way better than those of no account’, 411–412) and in specific (‘I may be a poor man, but I would never have asked to have her as my mistress’, 415–416). This is a personal reaction to an unexpected event—Cassandra’s brief prophetic speech and her comparison of Greek and Trojan fortunes—and it foreshadows a more significant expression of individuality. This is his pity for the Trojan women, as most vividly demonstrated in his explicit dissociation from the Greek orders of Astyanax’ death in his second scene (710, 786–789), but also later in e.g. his reported tears for Andromache (1130–1131) and his parting words to Hecuba (‘You are out of your mind, poor woman, with your misfortune’, 1284).

This unexpected pity is rightly foregrounded in all discussions of his role. No less important, however, is his protection of Greek interests in his actions. Whatever Talthybius may say or feel, he executes each of his orders and intervenes to prevent a supposed suicide attempt by the Trojan women (304–305) and a real one by Hecuba (1282–1286). Especially in the last two scenes, his focus is on speed and efficiency. When, for example, he returns with Astyanax’ body and describes his own part in its tending, there is little sign of the personal pity demonstrated in the previous scene, and considerable emphasis on action:

When you have adorned the body, we for our part will cover it in earth and then set sail. Do you carry out your orders as quickly as possible. I have freed you from one bit of toil: as I was crossing the Scamander River here, I bathed the body and washed the blood from its wounds. So, now I shall go and dig a grave so that your actions and mine, joined together, may quickly send our vessel on its way. (transl. Kovacs)

1147–1155

The tension between these two aspects—personal pity in his reactions and efficient obedience to his senders in his actions—results in ambiguity as to the interpretation of a third: the encouragement that Talthybius gives to the Trojan women to adopt an optimistic perspective. This dominates his first two (and longest) scenes and is the most problematic element of his role. In the first scene, he suggests that it is ‘a great thing for [Cassandra] to win a king’s bed’ (259), jarring against both the immediate response of Hecuba and the audience’s knowledge of Cassandra’s and Agamemnon’s fates. Similarly, he conceals the true fate of Polyxena, using a series of euphemisms to conceal the fact that she will be killed on Achilles’ grave (260–270), and he encourages Hecuba to go quietly with Odysseus, reassuring her: ‘you will be the servant of a virtuous woman’ (421–423). In the next scene, having finally delivered the news of Astyanax’ fate, he advises Andromache at some length to ‘show [her]self wiser,’

reminding her of her weakness and promising her that if she keeps silent, she will be allowed to bury the body and 'win the favor of the Achaeans' (726–739).

Is this the voice of Talthybius' pity, or the voice of Greek efficiency? We cannot know. With extraordinary deftness, Euripides succeeds first in uniting two opposite perspectives in a single character, and then in presenting positions where they merge despite their dissimilarity. The ambiguity is both startling and unresolved.¹⁸

4 Generalizations about Heralds

Euripides occasionally puts critical generalizations about heralds into the mouth of another character. The Chorus of *Heracleidae*, expecting that the herald will give Eurystheus an invented account of maltreatment says: 'That is the way of all heralds: they exaggerate a tale to twice the size of truth' (292–293). A related criticism is expressed in the unattributed fragment 1012: 'Heralds have always been a talkative breed', which resonates also with Theseus' criticisms of the herald in *Suppliant Women*. Cassandra, censuring Talthybius in *Trojan Women*, complains: 'What a clever fellow this servant is! Why are they called 'heralds', these creatures all mortals hate, when they are merely lackeys bustling about tyrants and cities?' (424–426). The messenger in *Orestes*, describing the conduct of an offstage Talthybius, generalizes: 'That is what his kind are like. Heralds are always leaping over to join those in prosperity: whoever has power in the city and enjoys high office is their friend' (895–897).

These negative generalizations are comparable to those often made by Euripidean characters about women and slaves.¹⁹ As in these more well-known cases, the context is crucial to interpretation; in our complete examples the speakers are strongly biased, and these generalizations reflect rather more on them than on the perception of heralds either by Euripides or by Athenian society in general. However, it is also worth noting that the last two statements share another quality with many other social generalizations—both have been suspected to be interpolations.²⁰

18 Contrast Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, where Heracles' herald Lichas tells a lie to Deianira which he later explicitly claims to have told on his own initiative to spare her grief (472–483).

19 See e.g. Gregory (2002) 153–160.

20 See e.g. Kovacs (1996) 425–426 on *Trojan Women* and Oakley (1992) on *Orestes*.

5 Hermes and Iris

Hermes often functions, particularly in art, as the herald of the gods—the messenger of Zeus and the escort of the dead. He might therefore seem to be an excellent candidate for the *deus ex machina* for which Euripides was well known. However, there is only one play in which this was certainly the case: the fragmentary *Antiope*, in which he appears with ‘instructions for you’, ‘bringing Zeus’ proclamation’ (fr. 223.68–70). His speech is typical of a *deus ex machina* speech, in that it outlines the futures of the various characters of the drama, and typical of a herald speech, in its repeated references to the sender. The first person is used primarily for verbs describing speech actions (‘I shall speak’, ‘I say’, ‘I bid’), except for his description of the gift of lyre music that will be given to Amphion: ‘Zeus gives you this honour, and I with him’. This instance of personal agency is connected to the tradition of Hermes’ invention of the lyre, and while it does connect Hermes for a moment with his own independent mythology, the effect is fleeting, and the speech reverts to its emphasis on Zeus’ will.

Elsewhere in Euripides Hermes appears as the prologue-speaker in *Ion*, in which he identifies himself as the ‘servant of the gods’ (*Ion* 4), but he neither brings a message nor executes any particular commission. He appeared also in the lost satyr play *Syleus*, selling Heracles into slavery, but the play is too fragmentary to determine how this role was framed. His presence is conjectured in a few other lost plays, such as *Alcmene*, *Autolycus*, and *Protesilaus*, but there is no evidence for it. We must be careful not to invent roles for Hermes because of the apparently suitability of his identity as the divine herald, as seems to have been done in a spurious late prologue to Euripides’ *Danae* (fr. 1132, probably fifth or sixth century AD).

Iris in *Heracles* provides a clearer example of a divine messenger, with instructive differences from the human heralds we have seen. The technical term ‘herald’ is never used for her, perhaps because of her gender;²¹ however, she calls herself ‘the gods’ servant’ (823) and performs a specific commission representing a specific absent authority, Hera. Yet every time that Iris refers to Hera, she refers to herself as well. The central message is that ‘Hera wishes to stain [Heracles] with kindred bloodshed, the blood of his own children’, but she immediately adds, ‘and that is my will too’ (830–831), and her ‘official’ speech concludes, ‘he may know the nature of Hera’s wrath against him and may know mine’ (840–841). When Iris’ companion Lyssa (the personification of Madness)

21 It is striking that very few female characters in tragedy deliver narrative accounts of any kind; see further Barrett (2002) 100. See also Goblot-Cahen (2007b) for a stimulating discussion of potentially gendered aspects of the herald’s function and presentation.

tries to dissuade her from this action, she seeks to 'give advice to Hera [...], and to you, if you will take it' (848), but Iris replies: 'don't try to correct Hera's plans and mine' (855).

Such insistence on independent agency is striking in a herald and is even more surprising in this case as there is no tradition of enmity between Iris and Heracles. It is Hera's enmity, stemming from her resentment of her husband's affair and its outcome, which is well documented in the mythological tradition. The effect of this is that Iris constantly asserts her independence—which is accepted and respected by Lyssa—but without demonstrating individuality. In this, she is the opposite of Talthybius.



The primary role of heralds in Euripides is certainly functional; they generate action by the transmission of commands and information. However, as representative and personal agents they play much more sophisticated roles in the construction of the drama than any mere messenger. The inherent ambiguity of the herald's voice allows for a range of different effects in the construction of identity and the interplay of the present and the absent. Herald's provide a concise example of the playwright's ability to take a traditional and commonplace fixture and repurpose it to great dramatic effect.

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PART 7

*Euripides: Ancient Culture,
Philosophy, and Comedy*



Affective Attachments in Some Late Tragedies of Euripides

Francis Dunn

If we take the adult male and the public sphere as normative in ancient Athens, Euripides' plays are notable for their deviations from the norm: their reliance upon women and slaves, children and old men as characters, and their portrayal of private emotions and domestic situations. It follows that affective bonds such as those between mother and child or husband and wife figure prominently in his dramas, as they do not in those of Aeschylus and Sophocles. In what follows I explore an unusual, and unusually rare, feature of Greek tragedy, namely the processes of forming and altering such affective bonds. For these special cases I reserve the term 'affective attachments' in recognition of the analogous processes so important in attachment theory in contemporary behavioural psychology.¹

Existing affective bonds are commonly sites of dramatic tension, as in Antigone's love for her brother Polynices and, to a lesser extent, the feelings of Ismene and Haemon for her; the establishment of a social and religious bond by means of the somewhat coercive gesture of supplication is prominent in Homer and Aeschylus' *Suppliants* as well as Euripides; but the gradual process of forming or dissolving an affective attachment is first portrayed in Euripides' lost *Andromeda*.



Andromeda was apparently famous for its portrayal of love. Reading this play aroused in Dionysus a πάθος and ἔμερος for Euripides (Aristophanes, *Frogs* 52–54, 66–67) which Heracles takes to mean sexual desire (67);² and later anecdotes credit *Andromeda*, especially Perseus' speech on Love, with causing epidemics of disease and dramatic recitation.³ What is striking in con-

¹ See conclusion and n. 27.

² Moorton (1987); Gibert (1999/2000) 76–77.

³ Lucian, *Hist. Conscr.* 1; Eunapius, *Hist.* 1.246–248 Dindorf.

nection with my argument is not the romantic plot *per se*, but enactment of the process of falling in love. In a discussion of love in this play and its reception by Aristophanes, John Gibert makes the passing observation that an ‘unusual if not unprecedented aspect of the play is that Perseus began to love Andromeda onstage.’⁴ I shall develop this observation by looking at how attachments between characters change in the course of the play.

Andromeda begins with the female protagonist alone onstage, tied to a cliff as prey for a sea monster. After an experimental prologue in which she exchanges laments with Echo, then the entrance of a Chorus of Ethiopian maidens, Perseus eventually enters, flying and carrying in a bag the head of Medusa (fr. 124).⁵ When Perseus first catches sight of Andromeda he takes her for a carving, and the drama thus begins with a situation where an affective relationship between man and woman is impossible:⁶

ἔα· τὴν ὄχθον τόνδ' ὀρώ περίρρυτον
 ἀφρῶ θαλάσσης παρθένου τ' εἰκῶ τίνα
 ἔξ αὐτομόρφων λαῖνων τυκισμάτων,
 σοφῆς ἄγαλμα χειρός;

fr. 125

What? What hill is this I see, with sea foam
 washing round and what likeness of a girl
 chiseled from stone in her very form, splendid
 image by a clever hand?

The presumed inanimate object causes surprise but does not and cannot engage him emotionally. Apparently, in his curiosity he comes closer to inspect, while she is properly ashamed to be approached and addressed by a strange man, and therefore remains silent. The initial interaction between man and woman is thus restricted by social norms:

4 Gibert (1999/2000) 76. He then adds, ‘As if to confirm the importance of this detail, the expression “to fall in love” (εἰς ἔρωτα πίπτειν) occurs in a fragment of *Andromeda* and almost nowhere else in classical Greek’, although subsequent occurrences of the phrase (Antiphanes fr. 235.3, hyp. Men. *Her.* 4–5) do not imply that falling in love was enacted.

5 Text and discussion of *Andromeda* in Bubel (1991); Klimek-Winter (1993) 55–315; Collard/Cropp/Gibert (2004) 133–168; *TrGF* 5: 233–260 (frs. 114–156).

6 The text and numeration are those of Kannicht in *TrGF* 5, translations are my own.

σιγάς; σιωπή δ' ἄπορος ἐρμηνεὺς λόγων.

fr. 126

You are silent? Silence is ineffective at explaining words.

Although her modesty is culturally appropriate, Perseus knows that in her predicament, shackled in this remote spot, she will not easily find *πόρος*, a 'way out', and the tautology that silence cannot communicate expresses his surprise at her reticence. Somehow, Andromeda is induced to reply, and the two now engage in conversation. What is probably our next fragment⁷ shows Perseus taking a further step, confessing that the spectacle of her suffering arouses his pity:

ὦ παρθέν', οἰκτίρω σε κρεμαμένην ὀρών.

fr. 127

Young woman, I pity you, seeing you hanging there.

What will the hero do now? Both the content of the myth and the story-pattern of 'man meets damsel in distress' lead us to expect that he will rescue her from her bonds, slay the monster to which she has been exposed, and fly away with her in triumph. Yet our expectations are defeated, not by a novel turn of events, but by attention to how people normally interact. Perseus would like to help the young woman, but so far knows nothing about her—and therefore does not even know if she wants to be rescued, or whether she will be grateful if she is. Hence the following famous exchange:⁸

- ὦ παρθέν', εἰ σώσαιμί σ', εἴσῃ μοι χάριν;
- ἄγου δέ μ', ὦ ξέν', εἴτε πρόσπολον θέλεις
εἴτ' ἄλοχον εἴτε δμῶϊδ' ...

frs. 129, 129a

- Young woman, if I rescue you, will you be grateful?
- Take me, stranger, either as servant, wife or slave,
as you like ...

7 The fragment is accepted by Bubel and Kannicht (the latter deems 127 and 128 'fortasse Euripideos'), rejected by Klimek-Winter.

8 Fr. 129 is parodied by Eubulus (fr. 26) and the exchange was wittily appropriated by Crantor and Arcesilaus (D.L. 4.29).

To Perseus' surprise, the woman welcomes freedom at almost any price, and says so boldly, forgetting all her prior modesty. Rhetorically, Andromeda's request is a global expression, encompassing the various social ties between a woman and man not related by blood, and it thus amounts to, 'Rescue me, as long as you accept a social obligation between us—and the nature of that obligation may be whatever you wish'. Yet by mentioning, among these social ties, that of wife to husband, Andromeda either arouses or encourages a romantic interest on the young man's part.⁹

We cannot know in detail how the relationship developed, given the meager nature of what remains, but it must have required time and patience since we next find Perseus trying to reassure the woman of his good intentions:

τὰς συμφορὰς γὰρ τῶν κακῶς πεπραγόντων
οὐ πάποθ' ὕβρις, αὐτὸς ὀρωδῶν παθεῖν.

fr. 130

I have never abused the misfortune of those
in distress, fearing I could suffer the same.

At some point the conversation turned to embrace not just the present feelings of man and woman for one another, but also the future challenges to which their developing relationship might lead. These would include, of course, the major datum of the myth, the danger posed by the sea monster to which Andromeda is exposed; Euripides' version adds a lengthy dispute between the young hero and the woman's parents as well.¹⁰ Some such concerns are reflected in lines probably spoken by Andromeda:

μή μοι προτείνων ἐλπίδ' ἐξάγου δάκρυ·
γένοιτό τᾶν πόλλ' ὧν δόκησις οὐκ ἔνι.

fr. 131

Do not, by holding out hope, call forth my tears;
many things could happen we do not expect.

And her sentiment, if not exact words, is addressed in lines about the uncertain future attributed to Perseus:

9 The woman should thus 'be credited with a decisive initiative', Collard/Cropp/Gibert ad loc.

10 In Ovid (*Met.* 5.1–235), Andromeda's fiancé Phineus with his many followers is another obstacle Perseus must overcome.

ἢ που τὸ μέλλον ἐκφοβεῖ καθ' ἡμέραν
ὥς τοῦ γε πάσχειν τοῦπιδὸν μείζον κακόν.

fr. 135

Day by day, the future surely terrifies,
since the approach of evil is greater than the suffering.

By the time he prepares to fly off and battle the monster, Perseus publicly professes his love for Andromeda and reflects on the obligations this gives rise to. He invokes Eros, calling on the god who inspired his quest to help him succeed, yet goes beyond the usual expression of reciprocity in prayers, such as *do ut des*, 'I give so you will give'.¹¹ Instead he outlines a complicated relationship between Love and lovers. It is Eros, according to Perseus, that causes beautiful things to seem beautiful, thus arousing desire in lovers and consequently giving rise to their attempt to obtain the object of their desire. Yet since lovers run risks impelled by love, Eros has a reciprocal obligation to help them succeed; if he does not, thus failing to follow through on teaching humans to love, lovers will reject him:

σὺ δ' ὦ θεῶν τύραννε ἀνθρώπων Ἔρωσ,
ἢ μὴ δίδασκε τὰ καλὰ φαίνεσθαι καλὰ,
ἢ τοῖς ἐρώσιν, ὧν σὺ δημιουργὸς εἶ
μοχθοῦσι μόχθους, εὐτυχῶς συνεκπόνει.
καὶ ταῦτα μὲν δρῶν τίμιος †θεοῖς† ἔσση,
μὴ δρῶν δ' ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ διδάσκεισθαι φιλεῖν
ἀφαιρεθῆσθαι χάριτας, αἷς τιμῶσί σε.

fr. 136

And you, Eros, ruler of gods and humans,
either do not teach beautiful things to seem beautiful,
or labor well along with lovers as they struggle
in those struggles you have crafted.
If you do, you'll be honored by (mortals),¹²
if not, by the very act of teaching them to love,
you'll lose the gratitude with which they honor you.

11 See for example Pulleyn (1997) 28.

12 The context seems to require βροτοῖς or θνητοῖς (Dobree) but the corruption is hard to explain.

The convoluted syntax conveys the complexity of this relationship, and the role of Eros in instigating the relationship is expressed by two striking phrases: Love causing beautiful things to appear so, τὰ καλὰ φαίνεσθαι καλὰ (136.2), and Love as a craftsman, δημιουργός (136.3), of lovers' travails.¹³

From here on the plot is harder to trace except in broad outline. Most likely Perseus, after killing the monster, returns and tries to persuade Andromeda's parents, Cepheus and Cassiopeia, to let her leave with him. Andromeda takes part in the dispute, as do both her parents,¹⁴ and she plays a decisive role ('after being saved by Perseus, she refused to stay with her father or mother, but left with him for Argos by her own choice, showing nobility of mind', σωθείσα ὑπὸ Περσέως οὐχ εἶλετο τῷ πατρὶ συμμένειν οὐδὲ τῇ μητρὶ, ἀλλ' αὐθαίρετος εἰς τὸ Ἄργος ἀπῆλθε μετ' ἐκείνου, εὐγενές τι φρονήσασα, Eratosth. *Catast.* 17); and the play closes with Athena *ex machina* announcing that all shall become constellations. The dispute over Andromeda, apparently Euripides' contribution to the plot, is a counterpart to the meeting of Perseus and Andromeda insofar as relationships are built up in the earlier scene and loosened in the later one. It also contrasts with Perseus' defeat of the sea monster, one being a heroic exploit requiring strength, assisted by magic (winged sandals and Medusa's head), and narrated by a messenger, the other being a very human disagreement involving competing affections and performed through dialogue. That the human challenge is more important and more difficult is underscored by the fact that, technically, it is unnecessary: Perseus could simply have flown off with Andromeda, ignoring her parents' objections. His decision to remain and debate shows his respect for social and affective bonds. The course of this debate is unknown, but it included issues of wealth versus poverty (frs. 142, 143) and legitimate versus illegitimate children (fr. 141) and presumably Andromeda's wealth and security in Ethiopia versus an uncertain future in Greece. Her parents seem to have shared Perseus' respect for affective bonds, allowing Andromeda to decide the matter herself since, as noted above, she 'left with him for Argos by her own choice'.

This play thus apparently broke new ground in its complex portrayal of love, showing not a given emotional state or bond, but the process by which a man and woman, step by step, form an affective attachment with one another. Fur-

13 In both expressions, Euripides gives bold new form to the traditional notion of love as teacher: ποιητὴν δ' ἄρα / Ἔρωσ διδάσκει, κἂν ἄμουσος ἦ τὸ πρῖν, E. fr. 663, Klimek-Winter (1993) 251–252.

14 As the dispute thus involves four speaking roles, it must have extended over more than one scene, cf. Bubel (1991) 56.

thermore, it explores the implications and consequences of this new relationship, reflecting on the challenges Andromeda will face in leaving home and family for the distant and unknown world of Greece, and dramatizing her more immediate challenges of confronting her parents and abandoning her bonds with them.



Euripides' *Andromeda*, produced in 412 BC, is thus the earliest tragedy to enact human relationships as process. Three years later, Sophocles did something very similar in *Philoctetes*. In that play's prologue, Odysseus instructs the young Neoptolemus in the art of deception so he can swindle Philoctetes of Heracles' bow, which is reportedly required if the Greeks are to take Troy. In the course of the play Neoptolemus comes to sympathize with the suffering Philoctetes, and as their friendship develops, he finds that honouring that bond requires him first to return the bow and then to sail back to Greece with the older man. At the same time, respecting this new relationship means no longer obeying Odysseus and the leaders of the Greek expedition; as in *Andromeda* a new, developing attachment requires reconsidering and abandoning an existing bond with others, but in Sophocles' play the growth of friendship with Philoctetes and corresponding decline of loyalty to Odysseus and the other Greeks are largely simultaneous, rather than sequential. To this extent, Sophocles improves upon Euripides as attachments generally continue to develop along with their consequences. Yet in so doing, the older playwright returns to the normative world of adult men and public affairs (namely, the conduct of war). He explores affective attachments in this less promising context first, by portraying Neoptolemus as a young man who feels deprived of a formative attachment to his father, Achilles, and consequently forms a bond instead with the father-figure Odysseus, and second, by portraying Philoctetes as completely alone and therefore entirely dependent upon Neoptolemus if he is to have any affective bond whatsoever.¹⁵ It is also noteworthy that the formation of attachments in *Philoctetes* largely proceeds with the help of story-telling.¹⁶ Euripides responds to these innovations with a tour-de-force of his own.



15 Two of Sophocles' chief innovations are introducing the character Neoptolemus, and making the island Lemnos uninhabited; see for example Schein (2013) 3–7.

16 For discussion, see Dunn (2020).

Another three years later, Euripides left at his death *Iphigenia at Aulis*. The playwright takes his lead from Sophocles, dramatizing an episode from the Trojan War while focusing on the affective bonds within a family and leaving the Greek army in the background, offstage. To the conflict between Menelaus and Agamemnon, however, Euripides adds a cast of 'others': an old slave, a mother and daughter, even a Chorus of curious women. This cast allows him to do something striking, namely to explore not developing bonds between two individuals but a large nexus of shifting relationships in which one man is enmeshed.

The play stages events leading up to the sacrifice of Iphigenia, and thus turns a single image from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* into a detailed account of how the deed came about. In Aeschylus, the general faces a terrible decision, either to disobey the instructions of Artemis through Calchas or defile a father's hands by sacrificing his daughter (*Ag.* 205–211), either turn deserter or heed Themis (212–217). His decision to kill her is parsed as madess (*παρακοπά*, 224), daring (*ἔτλα*, 224), revenge (*γυναικοποιῶν πολέμων ἄρωγάν*, 226) and ritual (*προτέλεια ναῶν*, 227), and is thus more complex than the initial stark choice suggests.

What in Aeschylus is granted a fleeting complexity, however, in Euripides reveals layer upon layer of motivation. In the prologue, the dramatic world consists of two individuals, a distracted king and an old servant concerned at his state of mind, and as the play advances we find Agamemnon responding to or anticipating one person after another, until it becomes clear that he stands at the centre of a web of bonds and obligations extending to Argos and Troy, into the past and the future, all of which have some bearing on his present behaviour. Early on, Agamemnon tells his servant about the birth of Helen, the oath of Tyndareus, the abduction of Helen by Paris, the mustering of the Greek fleet at Aulis, the oracle of Calchas, his initial refusal, then agreement, to sacrifice his daughter, his first letter announcing Iphigenia's marriage to Achilles, and finally his change of heart and second letter countermanding the first (*IA* 49–114). By placing his new decision at the end of this long and full narrative, Agamemnon tries to make it intelligible (to himself and to his servant) as a response to an accumulating series of demands.

The king's new resolve, expressed and reinforced through his instructions to the Old Man, is rudely intercepted by Menelaus, who goes on to paint a portrait of Agamemnon as so greedy for power he would sacrifice his daughter, and as a poor leader since he is now willing to disband the force he mustered. His brother replies by describing Menelaus' lust as so great he would compel the Greeks to recover his adulterous wife, by contrast with his own decent refusal to kill his daughter. The exchange not only characterizes the two men but also details how Menelaus placed Agamemnon under obligation to him,

and Agamemnon has put himself in debt to the Greek army. But now a messenger announces the arrival of Clytemnestra, and Agamemnon despairs as he imagines his wife's reproaches and his daughter's pleas. It is at this point that the general echoes his Aeschylean counterpart, 'What a yoke of necessity I have fallen into!', ἐς οἴ' ἀνάγκης ζεύγματ' ἐμπεπτώκαμεν (443, recalling *Ag.* 218, ἐπεὶ δ' ἀνάγκας ἔδου λέπαδνον) and laments that as leader he is slave to the mob (τῷ τ' ὄχλῳ δουλεύομεν, 450), simultaneously recognizing the force of his bonds to the army, which he must honour, and to his wife and daughter, which he cannot.

As the action continues, the web of real and perceived bonds widens, and also extends further and further through time. The first stasimon carries us back in time to the Judgement of Paris, which led to the abduction of Helen (582–586) and hence to the present expedition against Troy (587–589). The second stasimon looks to the future, visualizing the fleet's arrival at Troy, the city beset by the Greeks, the destruction of Troy, and the lamentations of its women (751–800). And the third takes us back again, beyond the Judgement of Paris to the Marriage of Peleus and Thetis, which gave rise to it and to the birth of Achilles—he who will bring his Myrmidons to Troy and wear armour made by Hephaestus (1067–1077).

Different people navigate this web in their own ways. Menelaus is selfish and opportunistic, mindful only of how social and affective bonds can help him, not how they might serve others. He takes Agamemnon's letter from the Old Man by force, exploiting the latter's subservient status while failing to show due respect to his brother and his brother's servant. He exploits the obligation other heroes are under by their oath to Tyndareus but never considers what might be the price of invoking that oath. After Agamemnon announces that he must sacrifice his daughter, Menelaus also reverses himself and tells him to spare her—but only to avoid an uncomfortable burden: his brother has pointed out that for Menelaus to insist on the sacrifice regains Helen at the price of advertising the scale of his selfish desire, so Menelaus tells Agamemnon not to make the sacrifice, as if this will absolve him of selfishness, while ignoring the possible cost of *not* killing Iphigenia. Finally, in their closing exchange, when Agamemnon explains that he cannot send his daughter back to Argos since Calchas will publicize his oracle, Menelaus answers, 'Not if he is killed first. That's easy!' (οὐκ, ἦν θάνη γε πρόσθε· τοῦτο δ' εὐμαρές, 519). He can say it is easy only because he sees advantage to himself and is supremely indifferent to the price for his brother.

Agamemnon is the complementary opposite of his brother, mindful of what others will require of him but not what he can rightfully ask of them. In the opening lines, when the Old Man asks what is troubling him, Agamemnon says that he envies him since a prominent life is risky (σφαλερόν, 21) and is ground

down by people's peevish thoughts (ἀνθρώπων / γνώμαι πολλαὶ / καὶ δυσάρεστοι διέκλαισαν, 25–27); he is all too well aware of the burdens of power but not its prerogatives. Throughout the play, Agamemnon explains his decision to sacrifice Iphigenia by claiming that he must bow to the will of others. In his exchange with Menelaus, he says he is a slave to the mob or army (τῷ τ' ὄχλῳ δουλεύομεν, 450), by which he means not that it will physically compel him but that he feels obliged to accede to its wishes. He repeats the point soon after to Menelaus (514, 516) and also later, when speaking to Iphigenia:¹⁷

μέμνηε δ' Ἀφροδίτη τις Ἑλλήνων στρατῷ
πλεῖν ὡς τάχιστα βαρβάρων ἐπὶ χθόνα
παύσαι τε λέκτρων ἀρπαγὰς Ἑλληνικῶν·

1264–1266

Some Aphrodite raged at the Greek army
to sail at once to the foreigners' land
and stop the abduction of Greek marriages;

Rhetorical elevation accompanies the desperate appeal to his daughter, especially the unusual personification of the army's desire to set sail, but also the hyperbolic claim that the expedition will protect all Greek marriages. The exaggeration continues in the following lines:

οἱ τὰς ἐν Ἄργει παρθένους κτενοῦσί μου
ὕμᾶς τε κάμῃ, θέσφατ' εἰ λύσω θεᾶς.

1267–1268

and they will kill my young daughters in Argos
and you and me, if I break the goddess's oracle.

The army would hardly march from Aulis to Argos to kill his daughters; rather the general describes a scene of slaughter to express the degree to which he feels constrained by the army's desires. Likewise, Agamemnon fears Calchas and especially Odysseus because of their ability to arouse the army's feelings (518, 524–531)—hence a similar exaggeration as he imagines Odysseus goading the army to invade and destroy Argos and its territory (531–535).

17 The text is that of Diggle in the *OCT*, translations are my own. Some take literally Agamemnon's hyperbolic fears of the army; see esp. Lush (2015).

Agamemnon's rhetorical inflation reaches a climax at the end of his speech to Iphigenia where he announces that he is not enslaved to Menelaus (οὐ Μενέλεώς με καταδεδούλωται, τέκνον, 1269)—note the metaphor of slavery again used for strong obligation—but to Greece:

ἀλλ' Ἑλλάς, ἧ δεῖ, κἄν θέλω κἄν μὴ θέλω,
 θύσαι σε· τούτου δ' ἥσσανες καθέσταμεν.
 ἔλευθέραν γὰρ δεῖ νιν ὅσον ἐν σοί, τέκνον,
 κάμοι γενέσθαι, μηδὲ βαρβάρων ὑπο
 Ἑλληνας ὄντας λέκτρα συλάσθαι βίᾳ.

1271–1275

... but Greece, to which, whether I wish it or not,
 you must be sacrificed. This is greater than us,
 for Greece must be free, my child, so far as is
 in your power and mine, nor should those who are Greek
 be forcefully robbed of their wives by foreigners.

Agamemnon has traced the present situation all the way back to the birth of Helen, and the Chorus has looked back to the judgement of Paris and forward to the sack of Troy; the general has pondered the obligations incurred by his bonds to Menelaus, Calchas and Odysseus, to Clytemnestra and Iphigenia, and above all to the army; but now for the first time he invokes an almost transcendent obligation to the freedom of all Greece.¹⁸

The gambit is a masterstroke. After all, how could a young and naïve girl sympathize with, or even comprehend, the bonds and obligations that grind away at her father and make him envy an old slave? Earlier, when Iphigenia reminds Agamemnon of the bond between them, she speaks of the promise of a happy future: as the eldest child, Iphigenia was the first to call Agamemnon 'father' and first to sit on his knees and exchange kisses (1220–1222); furthermore:

λόγος δ' ὁ μὲν σὸς ἦν ὄδ'· Ἄρά σ', ὦ τέκνον,
 εὐδαιμόν' ἀνδρὸς ἐν δόμοισιν ὄψομαι,
 ζῶσάν τε καὶ θάλλουσαν ἀξίως ἐμοῦ;

1223–1225

18 Siegel (1981) 264–265, following Funke (1964) 288–291, describes Agamemnon's new rationale as a deliberate lie, but for this we have no evidence.

And this is what you said, 'Surely, my child,
I shall see you living happily in your husband's
house and blossoming as my daughter should'.

A caring father does not burden his young daughter with his own worries but looks to her happy future and she, in turn, promises to care for him in old age:

Τί δ' ἄρ' ἐγὼ σέ; πρέσβυν ἄρ' ἐσδέξομαι
ἐμῶν φίλαισιν ὑποδοχαῖς δόμων, πάτερ,
πόνων τιθηνοὺς ἀποδιδοῦσά σοι τροφάς;

1228–1230

And I for you? When you are old, I'll welcome
you lovingly in my house, father,
returning, for your troubles, nurturing care.

So when Agamemnon at the end of his speech speaks of a duty to Hellas, he is reframing his own (excessive) sense of obligation in the only manner intelligible to Iphigenia—as future promise rather than present burden. Agamemnon's last lines in the play thus mark a surprising change in his attitude toward the web of relationships which seem to require the sacrifice.¹⁹ Because they are his last words, we cannot know if he has undergone a change of heart as great as that attributed to Iphigenia,²⁰ or has merely presented this view in order to win her over. In either case, his turn to transcendent obligation resonates with his daughter and prompts her decision to die for Greece.²¹

By contrast with Menelaus and Agamemnon, Achilles develops new affective bonds in the course of the play and to this extent resembles Neoptolemus and Perseus; yet his character and hence his manner of building relationships is much more impetuous. When he first enters, Achilles is looking for Agamemnon, meaning to report his soldiers' impatience to set sail; instead he encounters Clytemnestra and, in his embarrassment at meeting an unescorted woman

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- 19 Mellert-Hoffmann (1969) 49–61 suggests that the Panhellenic ideal has motivated Agamemnon from the start, but her argument rests upon the assumption that he would reveal his true motives only when confronted by wife and daughter. Neitzel (1987) 216 likewise argues for Agamemnon's consistency—but the consistency of a liar who now deliberately deceives his daughter, as earlier his wife.
- 20 Aristotle singles out her change of mind as an example of inconsistency (*Poetics* 1454a.31–33); on the scholarly debate, see Gibert (1995) 222–254.
- 21 It does not follow, *pace* Gibert (1995) 244–250, that Iphigenia has been educated and reaches a new insight.

cries out, 'Oh, Lady Shame!', ὦ πότνι' Αἰδώς (821)—an invocation paralleled only in Euripides' first *Hippolytus* at Phaedra's advances on Hippolytus (ὦ πότνι' Αἰδώς, εἶθε τοῖς πάσιν βροτοῖς / συνοῦσα τάναισχυντον ἐξηροῦ φρενῶν, fr. 436). His discomfiture continues, however, as Clytemnestra refuses to let him leave and tries to take his hand (831–832) in what must have seemed brazen effrontery, until she explains that he is engaged to her daughter. This social bond would account for her conduct, but when Achilles denies it, she assumes he is bashful at first meeting an in-law (839–840). The scene forms a mini-comedy of social manners with repeated misunderstandings.²² Once she realizes that he has been deceived, it is Clytemnestra's turn to feel ashamed (847–848), and Achilles remarks that maybe they are both actors in someone's comedy, 'Perhaps some one is mocking both you and me', ἴσως ἐκερτόμησε κάμῃ καὶ σέ τις (849). In mutual humiliation, the two prepare to part ways when the Old Man suddenly enters, explains Agamemnon's deceit, and the tone turns serious again.

Realizing that her daughter's life is in jeopardy, Clytemnestra falls on her knees and supplicates Achilles to help her; Achilles responds by vowing to protect Iphigenia, earning the admiration of the Chorus and the gratitude of her mother. Interesting, and sometimes misunderstood, is Achilles' rationale. He proclaims that he learned simplicity from Cheiron (926–927), by contrast with Agamemnon's duplicity, and is willing to defy the Atreidae when they are wrong (928–929), adding:

χρῆν δ' αὐτὸν αἰτεῖν τοῦμὸν ὄνομα' ἐμοῦ πάρα,
 θήραμα παιδός· ἢ Κλυταιμῆστρα δ' ἐμοὶ
 μάλιστ' ἐπέισθη θυγατέρ' ἐκδοῦναι πόσει.
 ἔδωκά τ' ἄν Ἑλλησιν, εἰ πρὸς Ἴλιον
 ἐν τῷδ' ἔκαμνε νόστος· οὐκ ἤρνούμεθ' ἄν
 τὸ κοινὸν ἀΐξειν ὦν μέτ' ἐστρατευόμεν.

962–967

He should have asked me to use my name
 to hunt his child: certainly Clytemnestra
 agreed to give her daughter to me as husband.
 I would have given my name if the journey
 to Ilium labored over this; I would not have refused
 to aid the common cause of those I mustered with.

22 Cf. Cecchi (1959) 56, 'L'episodio ... ha sapore di commedia nuova e serve forse a sollevare la cupa atmosfera tragica'; Stockert (1982) 73, 'reich an Situationskomik'.

Some scholars are puzzled at Achilles' emphasis upon his name, and his concession that he would have agreed to the scheme luring Iphigenia to her death, if only Agamemnon had asked.²³ Achilles does not object to the sacrifice, nor to deceiving Clytemnestra, simply to using his name as a pretext without his knowledge. The point is in part that this resulted in his recent humiliation before Clytemnestra, but more important is the matter of social bonds. In using his name thus, Agamemnon has abused the proper relationship between a general and one of his mightiest warriors; beyond that, Achilles has a strong bond with his fellow warriors, none with Iphigenia whom he has not met, and with Clytemnestra only that of a person recently supplicated. He is impressionable enough to respond favourably to her entreaty, but otherwise he measures the present situation not by abstract ethical principles but by the relations he has entered into with others. Presumably because the bond with Clytemnestra was so recently imposed on him, and threatens to endanger his relationships with Agamemnon and his fellow soldiers, Achilles reconsiders. First Clytemnestra must supplicate Agamemnon, he says, reasoning that what worked upon a stranger should work upon her husband, although if that fails, he will live up to his word and protect Iphigenia (1015–1023).

In the following scene Clytemnestra confronts Agamemnon, then pleads and threatens him—without deigning to turn suppliant, however, as Achilles asked—and is followed by Iphigenia, who elicits her father's final speech. Agamemnon leaves; mother and daughter sing in misery; and Achilles returns. Iphigenia tries to hide herself in shame at his approach, her mother says this is no time for modesty (1338–1344), and it seems we shall have a replay of Achilles' comic scene with Clytemnestra. Instead the warrior is so perturbed at the army's threats against him that he gives no thought to decorum and ignores Iphigenia altogether. His exchange with Clytemnestra, a rapid dialogue in broken tetrameters (1345–1368), is logically incoherent, Achilles pointing out that he is helpless against the whole army even as he continues to insist he will save her daughter. The mighty warrior finds himself between a rock and a hard place, unwilling to renounce his bond with the suppliant, yet aware that he cannot prevail alone. As Clytemnestra presses him, his answers verge on the inconsequentially comic:

23 Michelakis (2002) 84–92 sees the dissociation of Achilles' name from his body as undercutting his dramatic identity, and (2002) 116 normalizes the concession in 962–967 by insisting that it is 'of course well confined within a possible world which contradicts the actuality of the dramatic action'.

- ἐς θόρυβον ἐγὼ τιν' αὐτὸς ἤλυθον ...
 - τίν', ὦ ξένε;
- σώμα λευσθήναι πέτροισι.
 - μῶν κόρην σώζων ἐμήν;
- αὐτὸ τοῦτο.
 - 1349–1351
- I came myself upon a huge commotion ...
 - What kind, stranger?
- meaning to stone my body with rocks.
 - For saving my daughter?
- That's it.
 - ἤξει δ' ὅστις ἄψεται κόρης;
- μύριοι γ', ἄξει δ' Ὀδυσσεύς.
 - ἄρ' ὁ Σισύφου γόνος;
- αὐτὸς οὗτος.
 - 1361–1363
- Will someone come to seize the girl?
 - Thousands and thousands, with Odysseus leading.
 - You mean the son of Sisyphus?
- That's him.
 - ἀλλ ἐγὼ σχήσω νιν.
 - ἄξει δ' οὐχ ἐκούσαν ἀρπάσας;
- δηλαδὴ ξανθῆς ἐθείρας.
 - ἐμὲ δὲ δρᾶν τί χρῆ τότε;
- ἀντέχου θυγατρὸς.
 - ὡς τοῦδ' οὐνεκ' οὐ σφαγήσεται.
- ἀλλὰ μὴν ἐς τοῦτό γ' ἤξει.
 - 1365–1368
- But I'll restrain him.
 - Will he seize and take her unwilling?
- Certainly, by her yellow hair.
 - What should I do then?
- Hold your daughter.
 - If that's what it takes, she will not be slaughtered.
- But that's what it will come to.

At this point, with Achilles bereft of power and almost of words, Iphigenia steps forward to proclaim that she will voluntarily die for the army and for Greece. Achilles, who earlier ignored her presence, responds to her speech by falling in love! The ironies are delicious: that he actively desires a marriage that until a moment ago was an empty ruse; that he admires her for a male warrior's spirit, namely a willingness to die for the community;²⁴ that the empty gesture here anticipates the famous episode involving Achilles and Penthesilea; and that his promise to wait near the altar will prove as pointless as his earlier promise to wait outside Clytemnestra's tent (1028–1032). The paradox that he longs to marry her because she wants to die, and therefore wants her to live and choose not to die, underscores his role as helpless bystander: her transcendent gesture reduces all others to mere observers, just as Achilles' transcendent power in the *Iliad* sets him apart from other humans. He begins:

Ἄγαμέμνωνος παῖ, μακάριόν μέ τις θεῶν
ἔμελλε θήσειν, εἰ τύχοιμι σῶν γάμων.

1404–1405

Child of Agamemnon, some god would make me
blessed, if I won your marriage!

As he looks on her nobility, love steals over him as if he were Perseus seeing the beautiful Andromeda:

μᾶλλον δὲ λέκτρων σῶν πόθος μ' ἐσέρχεται
ἔς τὴν φύσιν βλέψαντα· γενναία γὰρ εἶ.

1410–1411

Longing for your union steals over me all the more
after seeing your nature, for you are noble.

Yet his attempt to persuade her reveals itself as impossible wish, especially in his repeated exhortations (ὄρα ... ἄθρησον ...) to issues she would consider extraneous:

ὄρα δ'· ἐγὼ γὰρ βούλομαι σ' εὐεργετεῖν
λαβεῖν τ' ἐς οἴκουσ' ἄχθομαι δ', ἴστω Θεέτις,

24 Cf. Michelakis (2002) 111, 'In this play the hero is Iphigenia ... Like Achilles' name, his heroism does not belong to him'.

εἰ μὴ σε σώσω Δαναΐδαισι διὰ μάχης
 ἔλθῶν. ἄθρησον· ὁ θάνατος δεινὸν κακόν

1412–1415

Consider: I want to help you and
 take you home; by Thetis I take it hard
 if I fail to save you by facing battle with
 the Greeks. Look, death is a terrible evil.

Iphigenia flatly refuses (1418–1419); Achilles continues to wish she would change her mind (1424, 1428–1429); and after announcing his plan to hide weapons near the altar (1426–1427, 1430–1432), Achilles departs.

Iphigenia at Aulis marks a new development in Greek tragedy in the portrayal of affective bonds.²⁵ First, Euripides portrays Agamemnon as caught in a large web of bonds and obligations extending into the past and the future and reaching from Aulis to Argos and Troy. Second, individuals navigate this web of relations in different ways, Agamemnon being overly responsive to the constraints these bonds place upon him, Menelaus appreciating only how he can exploit others' connections to him, and Achilles getting carried away by the new needs and attachments he encounters. Third, the process of entering into an affective bond is enacted by Achilles when falling in love with Iphigenia, the difference from *Andromeda* and *Philoctetes* being its contingency: Achilles impetuously and illogically feels a desire that is not reciprocated by Iphigenia, and is inconsequential to the plot.

Taken together, these developments show Euripides moving from an interest in the processual nature of a single relationship (in *Andromeda*) to an exploration of the interrelatedness of interpersonal bonds (in *Iphigenia at Aulis*) and the ways in which they may change under pressure, not only from current bonds and obligations, but also by recalling such relations in the past and anticipating those that may arise in the future. Thus, the effect is less a negative one where all is 'fragile, unstable, deceptive, and full of contradictions',²⁶ than a novel and positive attention to the fluid ways in which people interact.



25 The drama's innovation thus goes much further than an 'emphasis on the intimate concerns of family and domestic life', Michelini (1999/2000) 45.

26 So Michelakis (2006) 549.

Attachment theory has been such a success in the past few decades because it combines the universal nature of attachment formation (in most cases starting with an infant's attachment to its mother) with the contingency of process (different people form different kinds of attachments, depending on the caregiver's manner of tending to the child, as well as other circumstances) and attention to consequences (an individual's attachment pattern in childhood will affect how that person forms attachments later in life, especially in romantic relationships).²⁷ None of the plays I have considered has much to do with developmental psychology, but their novel approach to affective bonds has interesting analogues in attachment theory. Whereas tragedy elsewhere treats affective bonds as given, each of these late plays portrays them either as gradually developing or as constantly subject to revision; and whereas other plays may dramatize the consequences of a given bond (thus Antigone's love for her brother leads eventually to her death), in these cases growing or changing attachments cause other attachments to change or grow. Affective relations are thus distinctively fluid and dynamic.

This new direction in some late tragedies was an apparent dead end. We find nothing similar in New Comedy, where at issue is the problem of uniting a couple already in love, not the process and implications of falling in love, and the earliest clear parallels are in Hellenistic poetry, as in the portrait of Medea in Apollonius' *Argonautica*. Yet this may simply be the result of our incomplete evidence. It is possible that playwrights in the following years continued to explore affective attachments in tragedies now lost, and I have elsewhere suggested that we have hints—and no more than hints—of a related interest (in plays by Antiphon, Theodectas and Carcinus) in what happens when affective bonds are subjected to prolonged pressure by external circumstances.²⁸ Thus while it is hard to quantify the later impact of Euripides' innovations, in *Andromeda* and *Iphigenia at Aulis* we see him closely probing the qualities and complexities of interpersonal relations.

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28 Dunn (2018).

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Euripides and Ancient Greek Philosophy

Ruth Scodel

1 Euripides and Philosophy before Philosophy

The works of all the surviving Greek tragedians reveal their engagement with contemporary thought, but Euripides reflects more than any other. ‘Philosophy’ in Euripides’ time must include much that now belongs to other fields. In archaic and early classical Greece various men claimed wisdom, poets among them, and they criticized each other freely. Some thinkers whom we now call ‘Presocratic philosophers’ composed in poetry (Xenophanes, Parmenides, Empedocles). Euripides’ contemporary Gorgias speaks of the debates of ‘philosophers’ in which ‘speed of thought is shown to make belief in an opinion easy to change’ (*Encomium of Helen* 13). Plato used the word ‘philosophy’ to identify what he did (φιλοσοφία appears 147 times, in the Platonic corpus, the verb φιλοσοφῶ 66), while he rejected poetry’s claims to wisdom, establishing the boundaries between poetry and philosophy.¹ Even later, however, ancient ‘philosophy’ could include far more than the modern discipline—not only metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics, but natural science and psychology.

So when Euripides looked at contemporary science, ethics, psychology, or metaphysical speculation, philosophers in the modern sense were not distinguished from others who claimed special wisdom. Even fields with clear disciplinary boundaries, like medicine, were part of this broader intellectual world—Hippocratic medicine has a philosophical basis. Euripides could adapt whatever he chose. So, from a modern perspective, Euripides’ fascination with mystical religion (see Semenzato in this volume) seems quite distinct from his interests in contemporary science or Socratic ethics. Yet the same dissatisfaction with the answers to basic questions about human experience provided by Greek civic religion—the problem of suffering and divine justice, for example—could lead a thinker to a materialist view of the universe or to a belief in metempsychosis. Again, while sophists speculated about how human beings had developed culture and technologies, Euripides shows a deep interest in technologies themselves, including architecture, sculpture, textiles, and

¹ See Nightingale (1995) 14–20.

navigation, as well as medicine—but the sophist Hippias displayed his self-sufficiency at the Olympic Games with clothing, shoes, oil-flask and seal-ring he had made himself (Plato, *Hippias Minor* 368b–e). An interest in crafts could also be ‘philosophical’.² Euripides, then, was not interested in ‘philosophy’ as such; he was interested in the ethical, scientific, theological, and political issues of his time (he adapts most often the philosophical arguments and speculations of his approximate contemporaries).

The later biographical tradition, however, assimilates Euripides to a philosopher, by then a recognized type. While the ancient biographies of poets are not at all reliable, being based on folklore, inferences from the poetry, and comedy, they are revealing about how poets were perceived. In some of the biographies, Euripides is not initiated by the Muses (as poets would be) but converted to the pursuit of wisdom. Satyrus’ biography from the third century BC says that he [something] Anaxagoras (37. col. 1.25) ‘amazingly’, and in one branch of the biographical tradition, Euripides actually becomes a poet precisely in order to avoid the dangers to philosophers who too openly challenged conventional ideas. Satyrus in fr. 6 (39. col. 4.30) speaks of his admiration for Socrates, interpreting a passage of *Danae* as praise of Socrates. In Euripides’ own lifetime, comedy associated him with Socrates. Diogenes Laertius cites three comic fragments joking that Euripides’ plays were co-authored by Socrates (Teleclides fr. 41, Callias fr. 15, Aristophanes fr. 393, cf. *Frogs* 1491–1499), and in Aristophanes’ *Clouds* the young man who has studied with Socrates becomes an admirer of Euripides, performing after dinner a passage about incest (1371, from Euripides’ *Aeolus*). The comic poets treated Euripides as an innovator and challenger of everyday beliefs, like Socrates and scientists. It is worth asking why Euripides, alone among the dramatists, was received this way. It is also worth remembering that Socrates and Euripides surely knew each other, and that Euripides must also have known many of the sophists and scientists who visited or lived in Athens.³

Euripides is not a preachy dramatist; characters are not spokesmen for the poet’s own views. Amphion in the lost *Antiope* was probably the closest, and in debate with his practical-minded brother, he defended a poetic-philosophical-quietist way of life, not a specific doctrine.⁴ It is difficult to extract a coher-

2 Stieber (2011).

3 Egli (2003) 34, on the likelihood that Euripides personally knew leading intellectuals. Egli’s study is a full treatment of the topic. This chapter is less concerned than Egli with identifying the particular sources of Euripidean passages, and more on Euripides’ syncretism and popularization.

4 On the debate, see Collard/Cropp/Gibert (2004) 266–268.

ent set of beliefs about any philosophical question from Euripides' plays and fragments.⁵ The absence of doctrine, however, does not make Euripides less a philosophical poet. He explores every problem with intellectual freedom.

It is all too easy to turn him into a mirror of the interpreter's own concerns. Nietzsche, in a tradition going back to the Schlegels, condemned him for being a rationalist.⁶ He has been seen as the poet of the Greek Enlightenment, and as a precursor of twentieth-century intellectual crisis.⁷ Euripides surely did not regard human reason as always reliable—his characters are very skilled at rationalizing what they desire—or the world as entirely open to understanding. In his tragic world, reason is not an adequate guide, but it is the best we have, even though characters sometimes raise reasonable objections to myths that the plot requires to be true, to perplexing effect.⁸ Even *Bacchae*, with its apparent endorsement of the place of Dionysiac madness in the civic community, can be seen as a study of what kind of rational response is possible before the irrational. Pentheus wrongly rejects Dionysus because Pentheus does not think carefully enough, not allowing events in Thebes to change his initial, false assessment of the situation.⁹

2 Socrates and Other Sources

The exact philosophical source of a Euripidean passage is rarely the most interesting question about it. Euripides avoids precise technical language and rarely fully follows his 'source'. He was a full participant in contemporary intellectual life, not a passive recipient. Furthermore, he was a tragedian, whose task was to affect his audience emotionally and intellectually with stories from the legendary past. Hence, even as contemporary thought is ubiquitous in Euripides, its specifics are often elusive. Anaxagoras was an influence, especially his naturalistic interpretation of celestial phenomena and his identification of Mind as the governing power of the cosmos. From Diogenes of Apollonia Euripides took a fascination with air as at once breath, mind, and the source of everything. As a tragedian, he pondered the causes of human action, and Socrates presented him with the Socratic paradox, according to which nobody does wrong deliberately—moral errors are errors of judgment, and 'weakness of will' (*akra-*

5 See Michelini (1987) 9–10.

6 Nietzsche (1872) 65–70. For the German anti-Euripidean tradition, see Behler (1986).

7 Nestlé (1901); Reinhardt (1959); on the scholarly history, Kullmann (1986) 35–37.

8 Stinton (1976).

9 Lawrence (2013) 292–304.

sia) does not exist. Making the well-being of the soul the highest individual good, Socrates insisted that it was preferable to suffer than to commit injustice, and that returning evil for evil was wrong.¹⁰ Socrates also presented the problem of definition, showing how people use moral terms without understanding what they mean by them. The sophists provided techniques of argument and a fascination with point and counterpoint, often clever and extreme, and Euripides reflects both this delight in paradoxical argument and the anxiety that it created about the danger of persuasive rhetoric. Sophists also offered speculations about the early human past and the origins of culture, the contrast between Nature (*phusis*) and Custom (*nomos*) and the moral relativism prompted by the contemplation of foreign ways. Euripides shared their willingness to question the bedrock beliefs of their culture (including the existence of the gods, Protagoras B 4 D-K). By promising to teach human excellence, *aretê*, the sophists led Socrates to ask whether *aretê* was teachable, and Euripides' Hippolytus at *Hipp.* 79–80 contrasts the 'base' and those who have 'who have nothing by teaching, but rather in whose nature chastity in all respects has permanently been apportioned its place'.

Even when the source of a Euripidean motif is identifiable, Euripides does not reflect it transparently. So, for example, he almost always uses the word *aethêr*, pure upper air, in contexts evoking the teachings of Diogenes of Apollonia. Diogenes, though, seems always to have used the word *aêr*.¹¹ *Aethêr* appears far more often than *aêr* in fifth-century poetry in other contexts, too. In a very different example, Jocasta in *Phoenician Women* tries to persuade her son Eteocles to give up his greed for power by appealing to the principle of Equality (*Isotês*). The word itself was probably a recent coinage (earlier authors use *isonomia*), first attested here. It is common in Plato and Isocrates, not used in later poetry, so that the word alone marked the passage as 'philosophical':

That is better, my child, to honor Equality, which binds friends to friends, cities to cities, allies to allies. The equal is naturally lawful for mortals, but the lesser is always hostile to the greater, and initiates the day of enmity. In fact, Equality arranged measures and divisions of weight for humanity, and she defined Number. The lightless eye of Night and the Sun's light go equally around the annual cycle, and neither is resentful when it is defeated.

Phoen. 535–545

10 Plato's Socrates is surely the historical Socrates on this point: see Vlastos (1991) 179–199.

11 For the history of these terms, see Kahn (1960) 140–154.

Equality here is a goddess, the opposite of Eteocles' bad divinity, Ambition (531–532). Jocasta initially defines her politically, in a way that goes back to the oldest Greek morality (Hesiod's *Works and Days* 40, 'half is more than the whole'): where there is inequality, there will be strife. Then, however, the argument takes a turn. How Equality defined measurement and number is not so obvious, but the argument clearly evokes sophisticatedly-inflected praise of human progress. Perhaps Jocasta is considering that a scale works by equalizing, and that human beings can only define larger or smaller by reference to equality. However, she is also making a claim about the nature of reality, by replacing a personal inventor of measurement and number, whether human or divine (Prometheus, Hermes, or Palamedes) with an abstract principle; all human understanding depends on the ordering of the cosmos, which depends on its balance. In Plato's *Gorgias* (508a), Socrates rebukes Callicles (who resembles Euripides' Eteocles) for a lust for power that neglects geometry and the importance of 'geometric equality' for both gods and mortals (although Socrates' equality is proportionate, unlike Jocasta's). The alternation of day and night and their seasonal change was an example of cosmic order and equity in both Presocratic thought and earlier tragedy (Sophocles, *Ajax* 672–673). Indeed, equality, along with reciprocity and justice, is a pervasive theme in early Greek philosophy.¹² The familiarity of some of these ideas probably made it easy to understand the basic point, even though it is compressed; Jocasta's plea is eloquent even if we cannot fully understand its philosophical basis.

In Euripides, it is not unusual that a woman makes this kind of argument from first principles. Anyone can philosophize.¹³ Furthermore, this is not an abstract discussion. Because Jocasta cannot persuade her sons, they kill each other, she commits suicide, and many others die in battle. This debate matters, and the audience's sympathy for Jocasta and her desperate situation would make many spectators more receptive to her philosophical argument. A supporter of the democracy might be especially inclined to applaud her praise of Equality without much reflection, but for anyone in the audience who paid close attention, or who later memorized the passage for performance, such speeches could have a protreptic effect.

Euripides constantly invites his audience to think philosophically. When his lyrics mix science and myth, a thoughtful spectator is likely to reflect on the second-order questions, wondering not just whether myth in such songs is merely decorative, but what purpose myth serves. When characters debate, the

12 Vlastos (1947).

13 Scodel (1999–2000).

ideal audience would not consider only which side was more convincing, but what made that side more convincing. Even his many gnomic lines, by generalizing the dramatic situations, encourage the audience to consider how the action is or is not normative.¹⁴

Euripides was certainly interested in Socrates' arguments. His *Medea* seems at first hearing to reject the Socratic paradox when she ends her deliberation about whether to kill her children by announcing:

I understand what evils I am about to do,
But passion is stronger than my counsels,
Passion that is responsible for the greatest evils for mortals

Medea 1078–1080¹⁵

This looks like a direct rejection of the famous Socratic claim that people always seek good but do wrong from ignorance or intellectual error. For example, people are confused when the rewards of an action are close and its bad consequences far away. However, *Medea's* lines are confusing, because earlier in this very speech she has called the plan to murder her children her 'counsels' (βουλεύματα, 1044, 1048). *Medea* has both strong emotions and cold reasoning on each side when she debates the murder of her children. *Medea's* thought is not entirely coherent, and it is far from certain that her description of her choice is entirely accurate; *Medea* may present her final choice as anger over reason as a way of closing further internal debate. Indeed, one could interpret *Medea's* speech as a demonstration of Socrates' point, and argue that *Medea* acts wrongly not because she is overcome by emotion, but because she falsely induces herself to believe that she is overcome by emotion—in saying that she is behaving irrationally, she is rationalizing. It may be easier for many spectators, as well as for *Medea* herself, to imagine that she kills her children because she is overwhelmed by anger than because she has calculated that completing her vengeance is worth the loss of her children, but that seems to be *Medea's* calculation. It is impossible to know whether her reason has been distorted by her anger, or whether her underlying character ensures that she will reach this result. Euripides is engaged with Socratic thought, but he is neither refuting the Socratic paradox nor endorsing it.

In *Hippolytus* (428), *Phaedra* says that she has thought deeply about why human lives meet with disaster, and has concluded that people know what is

14 De Romilly (1986) 126–130.

15 See Wildberg (2006).

good, but we do not ‘work it through’ (ἐκπονοῦμεν) some from laziness, others because they put a pleasure before the good (375–387). Phaedra’s use of Socratic thought is no simpler than Medea’s. She appears to be rejecting the Socratic position when she speaks of the effort that the good requires and speaks of those fail under the influence of ‘lack of energy’. Yet she then speaks of ‘setting’ (προθέντες) ‘another pleasure’ ahead of the good, which looks like an intellectual error, not the lack of self-control that Socrates denies. The pleasures she lists are long conversations and leisure, not such the passions, and she includes, surprisingly, *aidôs*, ‘shame’ or ‘inhibition’. Greek poetry had always recognized that sometimes *aidôs* could inhibit not only wrongdoing, but even potentially embarrassing yet necessary action. Phaedra extends this duality of *aidôs*, explaining that there are actually two, one not bad, the other a burden of households: ‘if the occasion (*kairos*) were clear, there would not be two spelled the same way’. That is, if we always knew what was called for in a particular situation, we would have two different words, because good and bad *aidôs* would be easy to tell apart.

This admission that the occasion is not always clear undercuts Phaedra’s earlier claim that people know what is good. While we may know the good generally, that does not mean that we know the best action in a complex situation, and the Socratic paradox points to that problem. Socrates was dedicated to demonstrating that Athenians did not know what their own moral knowledge actually meant, that they could not adequately define ‘justice’ or ‘piety’. Phaedra suggests that the problem is not the intellectual laziness of Socrates’ interlocutors, but the inability of language to answer the complexity of actual moral life. Abstractly, we understand the difference between good and bad *aidôs*, but the genuine unclarity of moral choice in a life full of competing claims renders it difficult to apply that knowledge. Later in the same speech, Phaedra curses the first, elite adulteress: ‘For when shameful acts seem good to the elite, they will certainly seem good to the lower classes’ (407–412). Here, again, we are in a Socratic world, where women do wrong because bad examples have misled their reason.

The two extant passages in which Euripidean characters address this particular philosophical question are close to each other chronologically. Some of Euripides’ philosophical concerns are manifest in many extant plays and fragments, some he seems to have explored for a while before moving on to new questions. Socrates argued that it is better to suffer than to commit injustice, and that we should never seek to do harm. Hence, he distinguished punishment from revenge, rejecting revenge. Tragedy at least since Aeschylus had explored the ethics of vengeance, but Euripides’ tragedies examine especially how revenge damages the avenger even if she escapes external retribution.

To be sure, he does not present the strongest test cases for the Socratic position. No Euripidean character seeks a proportionate revenge that harms no innocents, violates no kinship bonds, but also accomplishes no greater good. Instead, where revenge removes a tyrant (Lycus in *Heracles* or Polyphontes in the lost *Cresphontes*), the tragedy may endorse it, but more often revenge is excessive. Sometimes Euripides guides audience response. So, in *Children of Heracles*, Alcmena insists on killing Eurystheus, even though the Athenians, to whom she owes gratitude, do not want her to (961–982), and the Athenians are surely the correct models for the audience. In *Antiope*, the heroes Amphion and Zethus killed their mother's persecutor Dirce (she was tied to a bull to be torn apart), but at the end Hermes intervened to keep them from killing her husband Lycus, who was ordered to surrender power to Amphion and Zethus (fr. 223, 64–73 *TrGF*).¹⁶ The audience could thereby enjoy the satisfaction of a violent revenge even though the divine intervention implicitly but powerfully rejected vengeance. Medea has good reason to be angry, but the messenger's narrative emphasizes the cruelty of her killing of the princess and Creon, and her revenge includes the murder of her own children, which horrifies the initially sympathetic Chorus; nobody could feel that Medea has chosen the best course. In *Electra*, Electra and Orestes are seized by horror after killing their mother. So, when Hecuba in *Hecuba* blinds Polymestor, who murdered her son, and kills his sons, the conclusion is unsettling, although Hecuba has been a sympathetic character.

Euripides especially portrays how victims of injustice become perpetrators themselves. *Orestes* is practically a case study in the process. From the beginning, Orestes is tormented by guilt after killing his mother. When Orestes, along with Electra and Pylades, is denied help by family members and condemned by the Argive assembly, they first decide to take revenge before killing themselves, and then to take the innocent Hermione hostage in a desperate attempt to survive.

Even though Euripidean characters do not talk about the soul, as Socrates does, Euripides pushes his audience to feel uneasy about the psychology of vengeance. Whether Euripides was directly engaging with Socratic arguments, he was addressing a Socratic question in the way only drama could, by enacting it. Socrates, however, believed that the divine was always benign, while the vengeance of Euripidean gods (Aphrodite in *Hippolytus*, of Dionysus in *Bacchae*) is especially cruel. Even in this disagreement, however, there can be a Socratic note. The Servant, trying to convince the goddess to forgive Hippoly-

16 Collard/Cropp/Gibert (2004) 262–264.

tus his youthful folly in insulting her, tells Aphrodite at *Hipp.* 120 that ‘the gods should be wiser than mortals’. Wisdom lies in the choice not to harm.

These moments of debate with Socratic thought are not likely to have shocked their audiences. Medea and Phaedra can be understood without familiarity with the Socratic paradox, even if the richer implications of their speeches would not be universally accessible. The ethical issues where Euripides and Socrates are in dialogue with each other are obvious tragic issues. Yet only Euripides was so consistently identified with the new and scandalous, even though other tragedians also introduced contemporary issues and contemporary science into their plays. For example, nothing seems more typically Euripidean than the opening lines of his *Helen* (produced in 412 BC). The play is set in Egypt, and he not surprisingly identifies this setting in the first line with a reference to the Nile. Euripides in the next two lines has Helen of Troy inform the audience that the Nile waters Egypt, which receives no rain, with melted snow. The theory that Euripides incorporates into his play was maintained by Anaxagoras. It was also, however, mentioned by both Aeschylus in the 460s (*Supp.* 559, also fr. 300.3–5) and Sophocles (882). The hypothesis of Anaxagoras was not stale news, because the Nile flood was a topic of ongoing debate; Herodotus discusses the problem at length (2.20–24), rejecting the snow-melt hypothesis, and Diogenes of Apollonia also proposed a solution (A18 D-K).¹⁷

3 Euripides the Dangerous Popularizer

Euripides, however, not only referred to contemporary ideas more often than other tragedians, but he included those with the most potential to be socially disturbing. Probably most Athenians and other Greeks assumed that there was a natural explanation for the peculiarity of the Nile flood, even if they did not know for certain what it was. So, a tragedian could allude to the problem of the Nile flood without distressing anyone. Debate about it did not imply that everything was open to rational inquiry. Other speculations, especially those pertaining to astronomy, were difficult for some contemporaries to accept, because everyday belief made the heavenly bodies in some fashion divine. Anyone, therefore, who assumed that the heavenly bodies and their movements were comprehensible under purely natural laws might well be an atheist and believe that human reason could comprehend everything, since the entire uni-

¹⁷ See Thomas (2000) 136 and 182–185.

verse was subject to laws of nature. The *locus classicus* for this cultural anxiety is Plato's *Apology* 26c–e, where Meletus, when Socrates asks whether Meletus is saying that Socrates does not believe that the sun and moon are gods, 'as other people do', and Meletus says that Socrates 'claims that the sun is a stone and the moon is earth'. Socrates then mocks Meletus for attributing to him the views found in the books of Anaxagoras, which anyone could buy for a drachma. While relatively few are likely to have bought and read the books of Anaxagoras, theatre was a popular art.¹⁸

In the *Orestes* (408), Euripides engages with contemporary astronomy, probably that of Anaxagoras. In the opening prologue, Electra refers to her ancestor Tantalus as flying in the air as he fears a rock that hangs over his head,

Τάνταλος
 κορυφῆς ὑπερτέλλοντα δειμαίνων πέτρον
 ἀέρι ποτᾶται
Or. 5–7

Tantalus, fearing a rock that hangs above his head, flies in air

Later, wishing she could fly up and lament the family's troubles to Tantalus, she sings:

μόλοιμι τὰν οὐρανοῦ
 μέσον χθονός (τε) τεταμέναν
 αἰωρήμασιν
 πέτραν ἀλύσει χρυσέαις,
 φερομένην δίναισι,
 βῶλον ἐξ Ὀλύμπου,
Or. 982–984

If only I could go to the rock stretched aloft between earth and heaven on golden chains, carried in the rotations, a clod from Olympus

The style and the singer's longing to be elsewhere are typical of Euripidean characters. The language of this passage is that of Greek lyric, not of the scientists. No philosophical fragment refers to a 'clod' (βῶλος) in the sky, and although δῖνος and δίνη do appear occasionally in philosophical fragments,

18 See Allan/Kelly (2013).

Anaxagoras' crucial term was 'rotation', περιχώρησις. This rotation was central to Anaxagorean cosmology, since it explained both the origins of the different parts of the universe and the movement of the heavenly bodies.¹⁹ For Anaxagoras, the heavenly bodies were rocks moved at immense speed in the aether, held up by centrifugal force. Euripides blends the scientific and the mythical. Maybe the rock is the sun, since the chains holding it are gold, but that is not explicit. Still, the gold strongly suggests that this rock shines.

Later in this same song, Euripides turns to the old story that the sun changed course in horror at the crimes of the previous generation. Euripides was evidently fascinated by this tale, for it appears not only here, but in the *Electra* and the *Iphigenia in Tauris* (811–817). In *Electra*, the Chorus sings

τότε δὴ τότε (δὴ) φαν-
 νὰς ἄστρον μετέβασ' ὁδοῦς
 Ζεὺς καὶ φέγγος ἀελίου
 λευκὸν τε πρόσωπον αὐοῦς,
 τὰ δ' ἔσπερα νῶτ' ἐλαύνει
 θερμαὶ φλογὶ θεοπύρῳι,
 νεφέλαι δ' ἔνυδροι πρὸς ἄρκτον,
 ξηραὶ τ' Ἀμμωνίδες ἔδρα
 φθίνουσ' ἀπειρόδροσοι,
 καλλίστων ὄμβρων Διόθεν στερεῖσαι.

El. 727–736

Then, then, Zeus changed the bright paths of the stars, and the light of the sun, and the white face of dawn, and drove the western side with hot flame of divine fire, but waterbearing clouds to the north, and the dry seats of Ammon perish without dew, deprived of the very splendid rains from Zeus.

A simple change in the sun's direction of movement along the same path would not change the climates of the north and south, so some scholars have suggested that Euripides refers to the ecliptic in this passage.²⁰ While we today know that the earth's axis is tilted relative to its orbit around the Sun (the tilt causes the seasons), from the ancient perspective the sun moved on a tilted path around the earth. Not only are days longer and shorter through the year, but the stars rise and set at different times, and the sun's apparent path moves

19 There is a helpful account in Curd (2008) 235–239.

20 Egli (2003) 53–62; Willink (1986) 253–256.

too, going farthest from the celestial equator at the solstices and returning to it on the equinoxes. Whether this interpretation of the lines is correct, the change is evidently permanent, and its background must lie in contemporary scientific thought about the differences in climate in the known world. The song offers a mythological explanation for the origin of observed cosmological phenomena, and these in turn provide an explanation for differences in climate on the earth.

In *Electra*, the singers immediately doubt what they have just said, because they do not believe the sun reacted to human behaviour:

λέγεται (τάδε), τὰν δὲ πί-
 στιν σμικρὰν παρ' ἔμοιγ' ἔχει,
 στρέψαι θερμὰν ἀέλιον
 χρυσωπὸν ἔδραν ἀλλάξαν-
 τα δυστυχίαι βροτείωι
 θνατᾶς ἔνεκεν δίκας.
 φοβεροὶ δὲ βροτοῖσι μῦθοι
 κέρδος πρὸς θεῶν θεραπείαν.

El. 737–744

This is said, but it gets little belief from me, that the sun turned its golden location and changed for human misfortune because of mortal justice. But scary tales are a benefit for mortals when it comes to care for the gods.

Here Euripides went farther than other tragedians; it would only be a short step from this kind of criticism to the speculation that the story was actually invented as a way of controlling human behaviour. In the fifth century, we hear the proposal that the gods themselves had been invented by human lawgivers in order to convince people that no crime would escape unseen (*Critias TrGF* 43 F19), but Euripides does not allow his Chorus to express actual atheism.²¹ Still, if the singers do not believe that the sun would change its course because of human action, do they believe that the gods react to human justice and injustice at all?

The song seems ambivalent, for in the following lines, the singers wish Clytemnestra had remembered and been restrained by a tale in which they themselves do not believe. This could sound like simple hypocrisy, but the song expresses a genuine perplexity about myth, faith, and rationality. While the singers avoid the decisive step towards atheism, not everyone would have

21 On this fragment, see Bremmer (2006) 8–10.

understood the difference between rejecting traditional myths about the gods and rejecting the gods themselves, or between the poet and his Chorus.²²

The *Orestes* takes the same myth in a different philosophical direction. Electra sings about the murder of Myrtilus, which came as a curse on the house when the portent of the golden lamb appeared:

ὄθεν Ἴρις τό τε πτερωτὸν
 Ἄλιου μετέβαλεν ἄρμα,
 τὰν πρὸς ἑσπέραν κέλευθον
 οὐρανοῦ †προσαρμόσας
 μονόπωλον ἐς Ἄω†,
 ἑπταπόρου τε δραμήματα Πλειάδος
 εἰς ὄδον ἄλλαν [Ζεὺς μεταβάλλει] ...

Or. 1000–1006

whence Strife changed the course of the sun's winged chariot, fitting the westward path of the sky towards the single horse of Dawn; and [Zeus diverted] the career of the seven Pleiads into a new track and exchanged ...

This passage is very difficult and corrupt. The clear and striking new element, however, is the instigator of the change: Eris, Strife. Already in the prologue, Electra called Eris the cause of the contention between Atreus and Thyestes, making her a spinner of thread and so putting her in the place of Fate:

ὦι στέμματα ξήνασ' ἐπέκλωσεν θεὰ
 Ἴρις Θυέστηι πόλεμον ὄντι συγγόνωι
 θέσθαι.

Or. 12–14

[Atreus], for whom the goddess, Strife, carding and spinning threads, appointed that he make war on Thyestes, his brother

The human crimes that led to the sun's movement in other versions were the result of strife between the two brothers, but the song does not specify any action; the adultery of Thyestes with Atreus' wife and the feast of Thyestes seem to follow the cosmic disruption rather than to cause it. So, the song seems to allude to Strife as a cosmic principle in the thought of Heraclitus and Empe-

22 On Euripides and atheism, see Whitmarsh (2015) 106–113.

docles. Even if the name of Zeus is not interpolated here, Zeus is the only mythological god in this passage, and Zeus can easily be treated as the personification of laws of cosmic order. In this version, then, both the change in the paths of the sun and stars and the crimes of the Pelopids may be manifestations of the dominance of Strife at this point in cosmic history.²³

Euripides apparently may reveal Empedoclean influence also in fr. 839, from *Chrysippus*, although some scholars see it as Anaxagorean:

Γαῖα μεγίστη καὶ Διὸς Αἰθήρ,
 ὃ μὲν ἀνθρώπων καὶ θεῶν γενέτωρ,
 ἢ δ' ὑγροβόλους σταγόνας νοτίας
 παραδεξαμένη τίττει θνητούς,
 5 τίττει βοτάνην φύλά τε θηρῶν·
 ὅθεν οὐκ ἀδίκως
 μήτηρ πάντων νενόμισται.
 χῶρεϊ δ' ὀπίσω
 τὰ μὲν ἐκ γαίας φύντ' εἰς γαίαν,
 10 τὰ δ' ἀπ' αἰθερίου βλαστόντα γονῆς
 εἰς οὐράνιον πάλιν ἦλθε πόλον·
 θνήσκει δ' οὐδὲν τῶν γιγνομένων,
 διακρινόμενον δ' ἄλλο πρὸς ἄλλου
 μορφὴν ἐτέραν ἀπέδειξεν.

Greatest Earth and Aether belonging to Zeus, one the father of gods and men, the other, receiving the rainy, moisture-bearing drops, gives birth to mortals, gives birth to plant-life and the tribes of animals, so that not unjustly she is reckoned mother of all. And afterward, what has grown of earth goes to earth, but what has sprung from a birth in aether goes back to the heavenly region. Nothing of what comes into being dies, but as one thing is separated from another, it takes a different form.

Again, to make all life begin with the marriage of Earth and Heaven was entirely traditional. However, heaven is not just replaced by a scientific equivalent, *Aethêr*; *Aethêr* is in some way a property of Zeus. By the end of the surviving fragment, however, we are evidently not within traditional religious thought. Everything is a particular form of universal matter. Significantly, however, what comes from *Aethêr* returns to it. This is surely the mind or soul, as when Theonoe says at *Helen* 1014–1016:

23 Hall (1993).

The mind of the dead does not live, but it has immortal consciousness, falling into the immortal aether.

Such scientific speculation in Euripides is often both unmistakable and fuzzy. The poet uses language associated with philosophy, like *πόλος*, but without precision. It is hard to know whether fr. 839 shows the influence of Empedocles or of Anaxagoras, even though these philosophers had very different views. Euripides does not directly translate scientific arguments into mythical terms; instead he blends myth with language that evokes contemporary science and presents bits of scientific thought, such as the conservation of matter in fr. 839 or the rotation in *Orestes*, without a full context. To the extent that the poetry was hazy, it may have avoided a potential for offence, but insofar as anyone could hear that traditional myth was being reinterpreted as scientific speculation, it could be viewed as dangerous to inherited belief. While fr. 839 explicitly defends traditional mythic language—Earth is ‘rightly’ regarded as ‘mother of all’, that language does not seem truly necessary for understanding the world.

Hecuba at *Trojan Woman* 884–888 prays:

Support of the earth and having your seat on the earth, whoever you are, most hard to know by guessing, Zeus, whether necessity of nature or the mind of mortals, I pray to you. For moving on a soundless path you bring all mortal affairs to justice.

Here, again, the exact sources and affiliations of the passage are hard to determine. Air, as in the philosophy of Diogenes of Apollonia, is surely the substance that upholds and surrounds the earth. The identification of Zeus with mind evokes Anaxagoras, but ‘necessity of nature’ seems to make Zeus only an abbreviation for natural process. Yet Hecuba believes that this Zeus, whatever he is, somehow brings about justice. For Hecuba and Theonoe, making religion philosophical makes it relevant. It is unquestionably new: Menelaus responds to Hecuba by exclaiming ‘What? How you have innovated in prayers to the gods’ (*Tr.* 889). Still, the prayer is also unquestionably pious. However, since Hecuba’s hope that Helen will be killed is not fulfilled, the wider context does not obviously endorse her faith in ultimate justice. The opening of the play, in which Poseidon and Athena agree to take vengeance on the Greeks for their impiety, offers a kind of justice, but it is hardly the inevitable and exalted justice that Hecuba imagines in her prayer.

While Hecuba’s prayer is complicated, in the choral song of *Electra*, in contrast, the singers are completely clear when they doubt that the myth is true but wish Clytemnestra had heeded its moral. The *Electra*’s Chorus of young

women exemplifies another striking feature of the mixture of philosophy and myth in several of these passages: the newest thought is available to everyone in the Euripidean world. Especially on matters of ethics and political thought, Euripides gives all kinds of characters the opportunity to present their views with great lucidity, and these views include everything that was most radical in contemporary debate, even if the speakers or singers do not always take every argument to its limit. This is what made Euripides' philosophical interests so important in fifth-century Athens, but also so potentially disturbing. Even the villains make excellent arguments; everybody is a skilled rhetorician; some of the arguments, if they are accepted, would imply that basic social arrangements should be changed; and anyone can understand them.

The speech from *Aeolus* Aristophanes had in mind in *Clouds* may well have been the passage that included the line Aristophanes mocked repeatedly (fr. 19): 'What is shameful, if it does not seem so to those who practice it?'. In the play, Macareus, whose sister had become pregnant as a result of their incestuous relationship, persuaded his father to marry his sons to his daughters (at *Odyssey* 10.7; Aeolus' sons and daughters are married to each other). What made this play shocking was not just the plot itself, but the straightforward defence of incest. Ethnographic knowledge and reflection made it possible to argue on the basis of the distinction between nature (*phusis*) and custom (*nomos*): *nomos* was local and relative, while nature was universal. The Euripidean character presumably argued that the norms declaring incest 'shameful' were merely local traditions, lacking true authority. Incest, this time between parents and children, appears in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* in a discussion between Hippias and Socrates (4.14–19). While Hippias agrees that worshipping the gods and honouring parents are universal, unwritten laws that must be of divine origin, he is less certain that incest is such a law, because it is transgressed—probably meaning not only that it takes place, but that some societies allow it (in Euripides' *Andromache* 173–176, Hermione claims that the Trojans permitted incest). Socrates argues in answer that such unions are dysgenic and so self-punishing. Incest was evidently a limiting test case. Both interlocutors are willing to discuss the topic and to forego intuitions or expressions of simple disgust—Hippias also questions whether it is a universal law to show gratitude to benefactors, and the two questions are treated in exactly the same tone. The sophist considers the possibility that prohibitions against incest are not universal and so fundamental, but relative. Socrates offers a scientific basis for a universal prohibition. Those outside this circle of philosophers would, like Aristophanes' Strepsiades, rely on intuitive disgust.

Euripides' play did not end well for the incestuous couple. Their father was persuaded to institute the brother-sister marriages, but the couples were chosen by lot, and the lovers, not allocated to each other, were dead by the end of the play. Euripides could thus not fairly be accused of promoting incest. But his Macareus was probably not treated without sympathy, and he presented a reasonable argument in support of a practice that most Athenians surely viewed with revulsion. The play was engaged with philosophy in the profoundest sense, since it could only have been performed on the assumption that everything was open to rational consideration. Macareus the character was far from being a true philosopher, since he was the opposite of disinterested, but the poet who created him was indeed philosophizing. A deeply religious author like Herodotus could point to the differences among burial practices among different peoples (3.38), a topic capable of arousing almost as much moral disgust as incest, without inspiring popular suspicion against 'philosophy', but the Euripidean speaker went further.

Similarly, Euripides' Bellerophon in the play named after him (fr. 286) argued a genuinely atheist position, arguing from the evident injustice in the world:

So someone says there are gods in heaven. There aren't, there aren't, if any human is willing to not be a fool and follow the old account. Consider it for yourself, don't hold a view on the basis of my arguments. I say that tyranny kills very many, and deprives them of property, and sacks cities while violating oaths. And doing these things, they are more fortunate than those who live in piety, quietly day by day. I know of small cities that honor gods who are subject to a greater one that are less reverent, because they were conquered by the number of a greater army. I think that you, if somebody who didn't work were to pray to the gods and not win his livelihood with his arms ...

The character says what he says because he is miserable and desperate, and the play doubtless proved him wrong.²⁴ But whatever the flaws of the speaker, and however the tragedy vindicated divine justice, the speech is a clear argument against the belief in gods who maintain justice, (and it is notable that Bellerophon sets his argument explicitly against the 'old account'). Since Athenians memorized and quoted passages of tragedy, whether as party pieces (like the speech from Aeolus in *Clouds*) or simply as a pointed style of expression (the way characters in Plato casually quote poetry), the lines could reap-

24 Riedwig (1990); Lefkowitz (1989) argue that Euripides was not an atheist.

pear outside their original context; Euripides gave this atheistic argument a memorable and vivid form. Of course, this argument would not necessarily be compelling—anyone who believed firmly in justice in an afterlife, or in a divine justice that might operate only against the descendants of wrongdoers, could easily answer it, but the answer would have to come from articles of faith. Nobody could hear this and not recognize that indeed the wicked often prosper.

It would also be possible to believe in the gods without expecting them to sustain justice, but that would have seemed to many Athenians to be another form of atheism. To be sure, the gods of Aeschylus and Sophocles are not any more obviously just than those of Euripides. The Chorus of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (160–183) and of Sophocles' *Trachiniae* (1276–1278) turn to Zeus as an answer to despair, an answer that answers nothing. Euripides is different because he so directly invites his audience not just to experience how impossible it is to understand how the gods deal with mortals, but consciously to question the traditional gods—the morality of stories about them and their existential status. In *Heracles*, Lyssa, the goddess of madness, expresses her unwillingness to make Heracles kill his children, since he has served the gods, and is bullied by Iris, the servant of Hera: 'Zeus' wife did not send you here to be reasonable (σωφρονεῖν)' (857). It would be hard for any spectator not to ask what it means to believe in such gods, although the scepticism that Euripides invites may not have lasted past the moment. So, in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* (411 BC), a garland-seller complains that she cannot make a living anymore, because Euripides has destroyed the market by convincing people not to believe in the gods anymore (450–451). The core of the joke is surely not that the speaker misunderstands Euripides in thinking that he teaches atheism, but that a tragedian could be so effectual.²⁵

In a play no longer extant, the *Melanippe Sophe*, the title character delivered a speech (fr. 484) that Aristotle in the *Poetics* calls 'inappropriate'. Pregnant by Poseidon, she abandoned her babies in a cattle-pen, and when one of them was seen suckling a cow, they were going to be killed as 'prodigies'. Melanippe tried to prove that there are no events outside nature:

κοῦκ ἐμὸς ὁ μῦθος, ἀλλ' ἐμῆς μητρὸς πάρα,
ὡς οὐρανός τε γαῖά τ' ἦν μορφὴ μία·
ἐπεὶ δ' ἐχωρίσθησαν ἀλλήλων δίχρα,

25 Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 294–297.

τίκτουσι πάντα κἀνέδωκαν εἰς φάος,
 5 δένδρη, πετεινά, θήρας οὓς θ' ἄλμη τρέφει
 γένος τε θνητῶν.

Heaven and Earth were once a single form; but when they were separated from each other into two, they bore and delivered all things into the light, trees, flying animals, the beasts whom the brine nourishes, and the race of mortals.

This looks Anaxagorean, since an original mixture of the different kinds of matter is separated out. However, Melanippe does not speak, as Anaxagoras did, of the cold, dense, and wet that formed earth, and the hot, rare, and dry that receded, and it she does not mention rotation. Instead she moves directly to familiar divinities, Earth and Uranus, and says that they 'give birth' to everything else. She speaks philosophically, but not too aggressively. And she explains that her knowledge comes from her mother Hippo, a prophet and daughter of the wise Centaur Cheiron. Yet Aristotle still found the speech inappropriate, presumably because young women should not speak about the nature of things. Women is Euripides do, and not rarely, although their science is often blurred, mixed with myth, rendered vague but also beautiful. However, the science itself does not lose authority because women deliver it; on the contrary, the plays imply that wisdom is universally available. Although such openness to the possible intelligence of any character was an obvious extension of democratic belief (and Euripides in Aristophanes' *Frogs* calls his variety of speaking characters 'democratic', 952), it was also unsettling.

Sometimes, however, Euripides could place such up-to-date understanding in the mouths of characters at the opposite end of the hierarchy from his surprisingly philosophical women. Tiresias in *Bacchae* is a traditional wisdom character, and he plays the role an audience would expect in advising the foolish young king Pentheus to revere the new god Dionysus. Yet he argues in a very contemporary fashion that is evidently indebted to the thought of the sophist Prodicus. Prodicus argued that human beings developed their belief in gods in two stages—first they saw the 'nourishing and useful' aspects of nature as divine, and later deified the people who discovered what was nourishing or useful.²⁶ This kind of speculation was not inevitably atheistic, but it certainly undercuts ordinary beliefs. After saying that Demeter is the same as Earth, who

26 Henrichs (1975) 109–119.

nourishes mortals with dry food (*Bacch.* 275–277), the Tiresias of Euripides first defines Dionysus as the discoverer of wine, but then identifies him with wine itself:

The one who came next, the son of Semele, found and introduced to mortals the corresponding liquid drink of the grape-cluster, which ends the suffering of miserable mortals, when they are full of what flows from the vine, and provides sleep and forgetfulness of daily troubles, and there is no other drug against their labours. This one, born a god, is poured as a libation to the gods, so that people have their goods through him.

Bacch. 278–285

Tiresias, however, is not using Prodicus' theories to criticize religion. On the contrary, he seems to think that wine is rightly regarded as divine. He proceeds to explain the potentially ridiculous story that Dionysus was sewn in Zeus' thigh as a misunderstanding of the section of *aethêr* that Zeus gave Hera as a hostage (288–297). The explanation itself requires the traditional mythological structure, although it seems to invite allegorical interpretation.

Euripides, then, was not a scientist or an original philosopher, but he was an independent thinker, who adapted contemporary ideas for tragic purposes, synthesizing and modifying them at will. Especially in song, he could be evocatively imprecise in his allusions, but sometimes his characters made daring and shockingly lucid arguments. Euripides made the arguments of intellectual available to broad audiences, and it is not surprising that the later tradition made him a philosopher in disguise.

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Aristophanes' Reception of Euripides

Niall W. Slater

I don't care what the newspapers say about me as long as they spell my name right.

P.T. BARNUM¹

•••

When he came to a halt, Oscar said, 'That has all been most interesting, Mr Shaw, but there's one point you haven't mentioned, and an all-important one—you haven't told us the *title* of your magazine'. 'Oh, as for that,' said Shaw, 'what I'd want to do would be to impress my own personality on the public—I'd call it *Shaw's Magazine: Shaw—Shaw—Shaw!*': and he banged his fist on the table. 'Yes', said Oscar, 'and *how would you spell it?*'

HESKETH PEARSON, *Oscar Wilde, His Life and Wit*, 1946, pp. 140–141

••

From the beginning of his career until the very end, Aristophanes clearly felt that 'attention must be paid' to the most notorious if not most successful tragic poet of his day.² Euripides appeared as a character in probably three Aristophanic plays in the span of just as many years early in the comic poet's career. His portrayal in *Acharnians* of 425 is fully preserved. While only fragments attest to his presence as a character onstage in *Dramas* (either at the Lenaea

1 Also attributed to George M. Cohan and others. <http://www.nku.edu/~turney/prclass/readings/3erasix.html> (consulted 21.i.2016).

2 Texts and translations of Aristophanes, including the fragments, are from Henderson (1998–2007), unless starred, where I have given a modified translation. Texts and translations of other writers of Old Comedy are from Storey (2011). All fragments are numbered according to the edition of Kassel/Austin, *Poetae Comici Graeci*.

in 426 or the City Dionysia in 425) and *Proagon* (at the Lenaea of 422),³ this is certainly a remarkable amount of attention for one poet to pay to another. Euripides then returned to the Aristophanic stage as 'himself' in both *Thesmophoriazousae* and *Frogs*. Moreover three of Aristophanes' plays seem likely to have been structured as a whole as parodic versions of previous Euripides works: *Polyidus* (no certain date), *Phoenician Women* (between 412 and 408), and *Aeolusicon* (possibly in two versions, but the certain production in 386, the last of Aristophanes' plays to be produced new in Athens).⁴ Whether Aristophanes' multiple revisitations of Euripides and his work constituted sustained satire or unabashed fandom was already a question at the time, as the comic poet Cratinus implies by mocking someone as 'a quibbler of words, a maker of maxims, a Euripidaristophaniser' (ὕπολεπτολόγος, γνωμιδιώτης, εὐριπιδαριστοφανίζων, fr. 342).⁵ It would probably be a mistake to assume that Aristophanes' reception of Euripides constituted an unchanging phenomenon over the whole of his career. It may be useful to look at characterizations of Euripides and his work in Old Comedy more broadly before focusing on the Aristophanic reception.

Other poets offer both general insults directed at Euripides and some critique specific to his style and originality. Anonymous fragments deride his mother as a vegetable seller (*comica adespota* fr. 421, 860).⁶ Plato Comicus fr. 29 is the first to mock Euripides' 'sigmatism' (excessive use of the 's' sound) by parodying a line in the *Medea* that had six 's' sounds in as many syllables; Eubulus fr. 26 picks up the same joke a couple generations later, and it becomes one of the standard critiques of Euripides in later handbooks.⁷ Plato fr. 142 also seems to make fun of Euripides' plot innovation (καινόν, more likely conno-

3 Σ *Wasps* 61c οὐ μόνον ἐν τοῖς Δράμασιν εἰσῆκται οὕτως Εὐριπίδης, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ Προάγωνι καὶ ἐν τοῖς Ἀχαρνεύσιν ('Not only was Euripides portrayed this way in *Dramas* but also in *Proagon* and *Acharnians*'). *Proagon* was entered in the competition under the name of the poet and producer Philonides and in fact won first prize, but its Aristophanic authorship seems very likely [essentials of the discussion in Hubbard (1991) 113 n. 6].

4 Sophocles also wrote a *Polyidus*, and fr. 468 of Aristophanes' *Polyidus* quotes Sophocles' *Electra* 1133, but Euripidean inspiration for the whole play seems more likely.

5 Perhaps from Cratinus's last play, *Wineflask*; see Storey (2011) ad loc. and, more insistently, Ruffell (2002) 160; cf. Bakola (2010) 24–25. For fandom, Rosen (2008).

6 For possible phallic/aphrodisiac jokes in this, see Ruck (1975).

7 Eubulus fr. 26. 1–2 quotes it in his send-up of the Sicilian tyrant and dreadful amateur tragedy author, Dionysius: Εὐριπίδου δ' ἔσωσά σ', ὡς ἴσασιν Ἑλλήνων ὄσοι / καὶ παρθέν', εἰ σώσαιμι σ', εἴσῃ μοι χάρις; ('As Euripides says, "I saved you, as so many citizens asseverate" / and "Miss, should saving you signify service for me?"), where the second line, Euripides, *Andromeda* fr. 129, has four 's' sounds in four syllables and a possible sexual connotation to χάρις. See Hunter (1983) 119–120.

tating ‘newfangled’ or ‘strange’ rather than a neutral ‘novel’) in portraying an impoverished Electra carrying water. Intriguingly, the poet Teleclides fr. 41–42 charges Euripides with getting his ideas from Socrates, and Aristophanes himself said the same thing about Socrates in the first version of the *Clouds* (fr. 392: Εὐριπίδη δ’ ὁ τὰς τραγωδίας ποιῶν / τὰς περιλαλούσας οὗτός ἐστι, τὰς σοφάς; ‘this is the man who composes for Euripides / his very chatty, clever tragedies’),⁸ but the charge is absent from the partially revised script of that play that has come down to us. Other comic fragments might attest to admiration for Euripides, although lack of context must make us cautious. For example, if Pheidippides’ praise for Euripides in the *Clouds* had come down to us only as a fragment (οὐκ οὐκ δικαίως, ὅστις οὐκ Εὐριπίδην ἐπαινεῖς, / σοφώτατον; 1377–1378, ‘not therefore justly, since you don’t praise Euripides, the wisest of men?’*), we would know it was a questioner taking Euripides’ brilliance as a given—but not that it was part of the son’s justification for beating up his father Strepsiades.⁹ Thus a character in Strattis’ *Anthropoestes* seems to praise the *Orestes* as ‘Euripides’ most clever play’ (Εὐριπίδου δὲ δράμα δεξιότατον, fr. 1.2), but only in the context of mocking the actor Hegelochus for famously mispronouncing a line in it.¹⁰ When a character in one of the later poets of Old Comedy, Theopompus, cites ‘That excellent line of Euripides, very well put, / that the truly happy man dines off someone else’, (Εὐριπίδου τᾶριστον οὐ κακῶς ἔχον, / τᾶλλότρια δειπνεῖν τὸν καλῶς εὐδαίμονα, *Odysseus* fr. 35), it is definitely a joke, but is it at the expense of the addressee or Euripides?¹¹

8 See Knobl (2008) 55–59 on these co-authorship accusations. Wright (2005) 249–252 takes the intellectual (rather than personal) connection seriously. Callias’s *Men in Chains*, fr. 15, is often cited in this connection: {A.} τί δὴ σὺ σεμνή καὶ φρονεῖς οὕτω μέγα; / {B.} ἔξεστι γὰρ μοι. Σωκράτης γὰρ αἴτιος (A. ‘Why are you [fem.] so haughty and have such high-and-mighty thoughts?’ B. ‘Because I can—and Socrates is why’). Diogenes Laertius, who preserves the fragment, tells us that it shows Euripides worked with Socrates; how the female speaker of the second line represents or speaks for Euripides himself is unclear, however.

9 Hesk (2007) 152–153 suggests that Euripides is the proximate cause of Pheidippides’ attack on his father, showing the potential of social games and verbal exchanges to break down into antisocial violence.

10 Cf. Sannyrion fr. 8, *Frogs* 303, and Strattis fr. 63. On the passage from *Anthropoestes*: Orth (2009) 43–54 and Csapo/Slater (1995) 229–230. For Strattis’ relation to tragedy, see Telò (2013).

11 A dreadful thought crosses the mind about what τᾶλλότρια δειπνεῖν could mean in a play about Odysseus (a Cyclopean self-justification?), but let it pass. I give Henderson’s translation. Others see a more general joke about parasites, and in the next century Euripides may have been the title character in Diphilus’s *Parasite* (fr. 60); see Knobl (2008) 59–60 and n. 107.

Cratinus's lead in suggesting that Aristophanes was as much an imitator of Euripides as he was critic was followed by some scholars in the Hellenistic age and after.¹² Scholia and other works suggest that Aristophanes borrowed particular words or phrases from Euripides.¹³ One thought Aristophanes had explicitly admitted as much. The scholion that preserves fr. 488 from *Women Claiming Tent-Sites* says:

Ἀριστοφάνης ... ἐκωμωδεῖτο δ' ἐπὶ τῷ σκώπτειν μὲν Εὐριπίδην, μιμεῖσθαι δ' αὐτόν ... καὶ αὐτὸς δ' ἐξομολογεῖται Σκηναῖς καταλαμβάνουσαις·
 χρώμαι γὰρ αὐτοῦ τοῦ στόματος τῷ στρογγύλῳ,
 τοὺς νοῦς δ' ἀγοραῖους ἤττον ἢ κείνος ποιῶ

Aristophanes ... was criticized for ridiculing Euripides while at the same time imitating him ... and he himself plainly admits it in *Women Claiming Tent-Sites*:

I make use of his polished, compact style,
 but I compose less vulgar conceptions than he does

Now the scholiast's 'plain admission' is almost certainly a biographical fallacy: the lines are trimeters and therefore not from a parabasis, where the poet might (controversially) speak directly to the audience about his own work.¹⁴ These are lines from a character, and even though the unnamed poet (αὐτοῦ) to whom he compares himself may well be Euripides, the speaker himself was not 'Aristophanes'. Nor do we know that the character who describes Euripides' art as 'like tangled fleece' (στρεψίμαλλος τὴν τέχνην Εὐριπίδης, fr. 682) voiced the comic poet's own judgement.¹⁵ Satyrus in the *Life of Euripides* claims that Aristophanes wanted to 'measure [Euripides'] tongue' (Ἀριστοφάνης ἐπιθυμῆι τὴν γλῶσσαν αὐτοῦ μετρήσαι, fr. 8 col. ii 9), a view he supported by citing a now

12 E.g., Anon. *De Comoedia*, Prolegomena III, p. 9 Koster, where he is characterized as ζήλω δὲ Εὐριπίδου.

13 E.g., Aristophanes fr. 540, 675, though we have only the scholiasts' word (and chronological assumptions?) to assure us that Aristophanes borrowed from Euripides, rather than vice versa (see also below on exchanges between Aristophanes and Euripides).

14 On the parabasis, see Hubbard (1991). The anonymous referee reminds me of Dicaeopolis's speech from the chopping block in *Acharnians* 497–556, where he speaks metatheatrically as someone in a comedy and also someone attacked by Cleon for slandering the city, but we have no further parallels in later complete plays for such a use of trimeter speech in the persona of the poet.

15 Though see the excellent remarks of Torrance (2013) 299–301 on the accuracy of the judgement.

much damaged fragment of Aristophanes about Euripides' words (fr. 656), possibly from *Gerytades*, which we know to have included a delegation of poets sent to the Underworld and thus might well be one of those poets speaking. Diogenes Laertius 4.18–19 tells us that an elaborate culinary comparison for Euripides' style comes from Aristophanes, *Old Age* fr. 128:

ὄξωτά, σιλφιωτά, βολβός, τεύτλιον,
 ὑπότριμμα, θρίον, ἐγκέφαλος, ὀρίγανον,
 καταπυγούνη ταύτ' ἐστὶ πρὸς κρέας μέγα

what's vinegary, silphiumy, bulbs, white beet,
 sour mash, rissoles, heart of palm, oregano:
 this is all faggotry next to a big piece of meat.

The implication that Euripides' words are all spices and flavourings but no real substance contrasts oddly with the much later judgement of Dio Chrysostom, who suggests in contrast to Sophocles' lofty style that Euripides contains 'lots of moralizing and exhortation to virtue' (πολὺ τὸ γνωμικὸν οὐδὲ πρὸς ἀρετὴν παράκλησιν, ὥσπερ τὰ τοῦ Εὐριπίδου, *Declamation* 35.17a).

We may get a better idea of how Aristophanes shaped the reception of Euripides' style by looking at some brief examples in the preserved plays. The *Knights* opens with the two household slaves complaining to each other about the new slave, Paphlagon—but unwilling to be explicit to begin with:

OIK. A'. ἄλλ' εἰπέ θαρρῶν, εἴτα κάγω σοὶ φράσω.
 OIK. B'. πῶς ἂν σύ μοι λέξειας ἀμέχρη λέγειν; [= Eur. *Hippolytus* 345]
 OIK. A'. ἄλλ' οὐκ ἔνι μοι τὸ θρέττε.
 OIK. B'. πῶς ἂν οὖν ποτε
 εἴποιμ' ἂν αὐτὸ δῆτα κομψευριπικῶς;
 OIK. A'. μή μοί γε, μή μοι, μή διασκανδικίσης·
 ἄλλ' εὐρέτιν' ἀπόκινον ἀπὸ τοῦ δεσπότητος.
Kn. 15–20

1st Slave. Come on, out with it; then I'll tell you.

2nd Slave. 'Should you but say for me what I should say!'

1st Slave. But I haven't got an inkling.

2nd Slave. All right, how can I possibly express it in smart Euripidean fashion?

1st Slave. Please don't, please don't, don't chervil me over! Just think of some kind of skidoo away from the master!

The reception here works on at least two levels,¹⁶ with a performative element we cannot certainly recover, though we can guess at some of it. One character coaxes the other to speak and the second answers in the words of Euripides' Phaedra to her nurse, as she tries to get the older woman to understand her incestuous desire for her stepson Hippolytus—without actually putting her desire into words. The notoriety of Euripides' version of Phaedra suggests that some in the audience might well have recognized the specific source apart from the sophistic change-ringing on the verb 'say' and the pronouns, and the actor in delivering the line could easily use stance, gesture, sibilance, and intonation to invoke the original tragic performance.¹⁷ The second slave then reinforces this verbally by labelling his own speech style with a newly made-up adverb, κομψευριπικῶς, which we might also translate 'eleganto-Euripideanly'.¹⁸ Now that Euripides has been named more or less explicitly, the first slave responds with a verb that sounds equally novel, μὴ διασκανδικίσσης ('don't chervil me over'), invoking the now familiar joke about Euripides' mother selling cheap vegetables.¹⁹ In the span of just a few lines then Aristophanes has shown us a slave who can quote Euripides, labelled the source as Euripides and as 'elegant', and then descended to basic name-calling via further linguistic invention. This brief banter authorizes multiple receptions of Euripides, as the audience capable of getting the joke rapidly widens.

In *Wasps*, Aristophanes' return to the stage after the painful failure of the first *Clouds*, the parabasis offers a vigorous defence of novelty in poetry that, while not naming Euripides at that point, certainly speaks to Aristophanes' own dialogue with tragedy. The prologue to the play briefly mentions Euripides, only to insist that cheap comedy about the tragedian will not be part of this play

16 For an insightful reading of the comic strategies of language here, see Hubbard (1991) 64–67.

17 The anonymous referee kindly points out the marked sigmatism of the quotation (πῶς ἄν σὺ μοι λέξειαις ...), which the actor playing the Slave could certainly emphasize (as I have in modifying Henderson's translation). The hypothesis tells us that our surviving version of *Hippolytus* was produced in 428 BC, thus just four years before the *Knights* of 424. The line certainly has a clever ring to it, perhaps not as quotable as 'To be or not to be', although I am reminded of Francis Urquhart's tagline from the original BBC *House of Cards*, 'You might think that. You might very well think that. I couldn't possibly comment'.

18 On the force of κομψός in Aristophanes, see O'Sullivan (1992) 137–139.

19 See below for Aristophanes' use of this joke already to 'Euripides'' face in *Acharnians* 478, where it is so insulting that Euripides terminates the interview. The verb occurs as well in the later Old Comic poet Teleclides fr. 40, where it probably imitates Aristophanes, but we lack the context to be sure.

(οὐδ' αὖθις ἀνασελγαινόμενος Εὐριπίδης, 61, 'no Euripides once again taking outrageous abuse').²⁰ The parabasis, however, defends in poetry in general for its novelty and wit:

ἀλλὰ τὸ λοιπὸν τῶν ποιητῶν,
ὦ δαιμόνιοι, τοὺς ζητοῦντας
καινόν τι λέγειν κάξευρίσκειν
στέργετε μᾶλλον καὶ θεραπεύετε,
καὶ τὰ νοήματα σῶζεσθ' αὐτῶν,
ἐσβάλλετέ τ' εἰς τὰς κιβωτοὺς
μετὰ τῶν μῆλων.
κἄν ταῦτα ποιήθ', ὑμῖν δι' ἔτους
τῶν ἱματίων
ὀζήσει δεξιότητος

Wasps 1051–1060

But from now on, dear people,
cherish and foster more
the poets who seek to find something fresh to say;
save up their ideas
and put them in your hampers
with the potpourri.
If you do that, next year
your clothes will be fragrant
with the sweet scent of wit.

Such a defence of novelty (*καινόν τι*) works as well for Euripides as for Aristophanes himself and is reinforced by a specific Euripidean tag just a few lines later when the Chorus promises to teach the audience something new—which turns out to be why the Chorus in fact appears as wasps:

εἴ τις ὑμῶν, ὦ θεαταί, τὴν ἐμὴν ἰδὼν φύσιν
εἶτα θαυμάζει μ' ὄρων μέσον διεσφηκωμένον,
ἥτις ἡμῶν ἐστὶν ἢ 'πίνοια τῆς ἐγκεντρίδος,
ῥαδίως ἐγὼ διδάξω 'κἄν ἄμουσος ἦ τὸ πρὶν'.

Wasps 1071–1074

²⁰ At the same time Aristophanes seems to invent a new compound verb, ἀνασελγαινόμεαι, to protest that he is not going to treat Euripides as everyone else has: see Biles/Olson (2015) 104 ad loc.

Spectators, if any of you has noticed our appearance and sees our wasp waists, and wonders what's the point of our stingers, I can easily edify him, 'be he ever so unversed before'.

The Chorus leader promises to educate the audience (διδάξω), even if they were 'muse-less' (ἄμουσος) before, the tag casually quoted without further elucidation from Euripides' *Stheneboea* (fr. 663).²¹ The tone is jocular, but for any in the audience who recognize the phrase as Euripidean, the implication is that he is an authority on poetry. Later tradition certainly associated Euripides and Aristophanes in their enthusiasm for the new (καινόν).²²

An examination of larger scale examples of Aristophanic reception of Euripides could easily be swallowed up by a discussion of parody, a rich subject in its own right but not wholly identical with reception.²³ Moreover in the most notorious case, that of the *Telephus*, Aristophanes' reception of Euripides constitutes a large part of the source material for reconstructing the lost work, and there is no small danger of circularity in mining the comic texts for the original Euripidean plot and then using the very same passages as evidence for the comic reinterpretation thereof. With this in mind we may begin by looking at the two large-scale Aristophanic receptions of Euripides' *Telephus*, in the *Acharnians* and then the *Thesmophoriazusae*, where the tragedian is reused in ways both strikingly similar and strikingly different, before turning briefly to some consideration of the lost Aristophanes plays that may have been full scale parodies of Euripidean tragedies, and then finally to the most ostensibly straightforward reception of Euripides, contrasted with that of Aeschylus, in the *Frogs* of 404.

It is worth asking at the outset: what made the *Telephus* so interesting for Aristophanes, and presumably his original audience, already 13 years after the

21 The date of the *Stheneboea* might have been several years earlier than *Wasps*: see Collard/Cropp/Lee (1995) 83.

22 Aelian, *VH* 2.13: εἰ ποτε δὲ Εὐριπίδης ὁ τῆς τραγωδίας ποιητῆς ἠγωνίζετο καινοῖς τραγωδοῖς, τότε γε ἀφικνεῖτο. καὶ Πειραιοὶ δὲ ἀγωνιζομένου τοῦ Εὐριπίδου καὶ ἐκεῖ κατήει' ἔχαιρε γὰρ τῷ ἀνδρὶ δηλονότι διὰ τε τὴν σοφίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν ἐν τοῖς μέτροις ἀρετὴν ('if the tragic poet Euripides was entering the competition with new plays, then [Aristophanes] would go. If Euripides was competing at the Piraeus, he would even go down there, since he enjoyed his work, obviously because of its wisdom and poetic quality'). Cf. again Plato *Comicus*, *Σκευαί* (*Cosmetics*) fr. 142 K-A above on the καινόν in Euripides' *Electra*.

23 Useful for Aristophanic parody are Snell (1953); Rau (1967); and esp. Goldhill (1991). 167–222 [with ample review of previous approaches, including Hutcheon (1985)]. Silk (1993) sought a sharp distinction between paratragedy and parody of tragedy [*contra* Pelling (2000) 143 and n. 7, 283] but relies much less on it in his sweeping Silk (2000).

tragedy's one outing at the City Dionysia in 438—and then again 14 years after that? While the tetralogy containing both the *Alcestis* and the *Telephus* might have been part of the first festival that an adolescent Aristophanes attended and thus made a tremendous impression,²⁴ more must have been involved to convince the poet that his versions of *Telephus* would still find resonance with the Athenian audience years later. It seems very likely that the original production was visually striking, particularly the scene with the baby Orestes held hostage at the altar, and increasing evidence suggests that reperformances of tragedies at the Rural Dionysia and elsewhere were taking place not only in the last quarter of the fifth century but even before.²⁵ We cannot be at all specific, but the extent to which Aristophanes relies on some memory of the *Telephus* residing in his audience's repertoire of theatrical experience for the working of his own *Acharnians* suggests that not only Euripides but also the *Telephus* was very much in the public mind.

Aristophanes nonetheless eases his audience into his evocation of the *Telephus*. Just eight lines into the prologue of *Acharnians*, the as yet unnamed protagonist Dicaeopolis, in talking about his joys and sorrows as a spectator, mentions seeing Cleon coughing up five talents, thanks to the efforts of the *hippeis* ('knights'), and calls this 'a worthy thing for Greece' (ἄξιον γὰρ Ἑλλάδι, 8). It is a very brief tagline but certainly has a tragic ring to it, and a few in the audience may have recognized it as a specific citation from *Telephus* (fr. 720). As far as we know (for of course the scholiasts did not catch every Euripidean quotation when they began their work centuries later), this is the only specific reference to the play until the visual parody begins to join itself to verbal allusion. Dicaeopolis, frustrated by the Assembly's unwillingness to entertain peace, strikes his own treaty with the Spartans and is already celebrating his own Rural Dionysia when the Chorus of old Acharnians arrives to stone him to death as a traitor. When the Chorus members refuse even to listen to Dicaeopolis' arguments, he makes this remarkable offer in hopes of getting a hearing:

24 Sharply doubted by Jouan (1989) 27–28. *Telephus* is the single greatest source of Euripidean quotations in Aristophanes and *Alcestis* the second most frequent, although we know of no sustained parody of the latter.

25 For the reconstructions of *Telephus*, see Handley/Rea (1957); Collard/Cropp/Lee (1995); Preiser (2000); and Olson (2002) liv–lxi [cf. on the myth Gantz (1993) 428–431, 576–579]. For the appeal of the production as a whole, see Pelling (2000) 144–145. The visual impact of the hostage scene made possible the identification of the Würzburg *Telephus* vase and now molded scenes of the *Acharnians* on South Italian vases: Taplin (1993) 36–41; Csapo (2010) 64–65. For reperformance, Csapo/Wilson (2015), with further references.

κἄν γε μὴ λέγω δίκαια μηδὲ τῷ πλήθει δοκῶ,
ὕπερ ἐπιξήνου ἠελήσω τὴν κεφαλὴν ἔχων λέγειν.

317–318

And what's more, if what I say isn't right and doesn't seem right to the people, I'll be happy to speak with my head on a butcher's block!

Here Aristophanes' protagonist takes an image both tragic and heroic used by the disguised king in the *Telephus* and makes it bathetically ordinary.²⁶ When refused the opportunity to speak, Euripides' Mysian king answered Agamemnon thus:

Ἄγαμεμνον, οὐδ' εἰ πέλεκυν ἐν χεροῖν ἔχων
μέλλοι τις εἰς τράχηλον ἐμβαλεῖν ἐμόν,
σιγήσομαι δίκαιά γ' ἀντειπεῖν ἔχων.

Telephus fr. 706

Agamemnon, not even if someone with an axe in his hands were about to strike it on my neck, shall I keep silent; for I have a just reply to make.²⁷

Most in the audience may still not recognize the source as *Telephus*, but the recognition will quickly spread as the visual clues pile up when Dicaeopolis returns to the stage with his 'hostage', a basket of charcoal. The threat to their 'fellow demesman' temporarily stills the threat from the Chorus members, and they even prompt Dicaeopolis to bring out the butcher's block (*Ach.* 359–367), thus making concrete what has only been imagined before. Dicaeopolis decides that he needs still more persuasive help and asks the Chorus to allow him 'to equip myself most pitiably*' (*ἐνσκευάσασθαί μ' οἶον ἀθλιώτατον*, 384). With their permission granted he announces that he must go and see Euripides (*ὡς Εὐριπίδην*, 394).

The subsequent scene is of course brilliant parody on many levels, but its deconstruction of Euripidean drama into component parts also constitutes the first sustained analysis we have of the tragedian's style and dramaturgy. Dicaeopolis confronts Euripides' doorkeeper:

26 The axe in the *Telephus* may subliminally evoke both axes used in battle in ages past and the axe of Clytemnestra [which she calls for at *Libation Bearers* 88g, *δοίη τις ἀνδροκμήτα πέλεκυν ὡς τάχος*, and probably used to kill Agamemnon: so most recently Davies (1987)].

27 Text and translations of the Euripidean fragments from Collard/Cropp/Lee (1995) and Collard/Cropp/Gibert (1998).

Δι. ἔνδον ἔστ' Εὐριπίδης;
 Θε. οὐκ ἔνδον ἔνδον ἐστίν, εἰ γνώμην ἔχεις.
 Δι. πῶς ἔνδον, εἴτ' οὐκ ἔνδον;
 Θε. ὀρθῶς, ὦ γέρον.
 ὁ νοῦς μὲν ἔξω ξυλλέγων ἐπύλλια
 οὐκ ἔνδον, αὐτὸς δ' ἔνδον ἀναβάδην ποιεῖ
 τραγωδίαν.
 Δι. ὦ τρισμακάρι' Εὐριπίδη,
 ὅθ' ὁ δοῦλος οὕτως σοφῶς ὑποκρίνεται.

395–400

Dicaeopolis. Is Euripides at home?

Slave. He's home and not at home, if you get my point.

Dic. Home and not at home—how can that be?

Slave. It's straightforward, old sir. His mind, being outside collecting verses, is not at home, while he himself is at home, with his feet up, composing tragedy.

Dic. Thrice-blessed Euripides, that your slave renders you so convincingly!

The stylistic analysis thus begins immediately, as the slave uses a typical Euripidean sophism to state that something and its opposite are both equally true.²⁸ Dicaeopolis' comment ascribes *sophia* to both slave and master, while suggesting (as Henderson's translation captures) that the slave is giving a performance (ὑποκρίνεται) directed by Euripides.

Denied by the servant, Dicaeopolis persists, and as he demands that Euripides have himself 'wheeled out' (ἐκκυκλήθητ', 407), the emphasis shifts strongly from the specifically verbal toward the visual and performative elements of Euripides' tragedies. Euripides emerges on the *ekkyklêma*, the wheeled platform used for 'reveals' of interior scenes in tragedy, thus visually framing the poet within a specifically tragic device. The servant has just told Dicaeopolis

28 For the numerous parallels (beginning with *Alcestis* 521, ἔστιν τε κούκέτ' ἔστιν, which may be particularly in Aristophanes' mind here), see Olson (2002) 177 ad loc. Rau (1967) 29 notes a phrase in Plato Comicus, *Hyperbolus* fr. 182.3: ἀτὰρ οὐ λαχῶν ὅμως ἔλαχες, ἦν νοῦν ἔχης ('Though you weren't selected, you were, if you understand'); cf. Pirotta (2009) 325. We have enough of the context in Plato, however, to see that there is no very specific allusion to Euripidean style here. Knobl (2008) 37 sees in the opposition between νοῦς and Euripides himself 'a surreal separation of self and mind' while referring to 'Anaxagoras and his influence on Euripides and Euripidean tragedy'.

that Euripides is inside composing his tragedies 'with his feet up' (ἀναβάδην, 398), and Dicaeopolis calls attention to this explicitly again, offering the theory that Euripides creates so many crippled heroes because he does not have his feet on the ground.²⁹ Here we already have the germ of what we might call a 'proto-Method' theory of performance: the poet's own character and bodily experiences shape the characters that he creates.³⁰ Aristophanes will spin this idea out in much greater detail when he reprises this scene with the poet Agathon in the *Thesmophoriazusae* fourteen years later.³¹ Satyrus's *Life of Euripides* tells us that Aristophanes in an unknown play repeated this charge even more succinctly: 'as he makes his characters say, so is he himself' (οἱ[ῆ]α μὲν π[ο]εῖ λέγει[τι]ν / τοῖός ἐστιν, fr. 694).³² Dicaeopolis then asks why Euripides is wearing 'rags from tragedy' (τὰ ῥάκι' ἐκ τραγωδίας, 412) and without pausing for reply, asks for a bit of a rag (ῥάκιόν τι, 415) from one of the poet's old tragedies in order to costume himself most pitifully. The comic guessing routine as to which of Euripides' tragedies has the most wretched hero escalates through six wrong guesses until it finally reaches Telephus—and those are the wrappings Dicaeopolis wants.³³

The rags alone will not suffice, however, and Dicaeopolis begs for more things to go with them. He calls them first τὰκόλουθα ('accompaniments', 438), then σκευαρῶν ('[little] props', 451). In the framework of the modern theatre we tend to divide costumes from props, but Greek σκευαῖ (of which σκευαρία is the

29 410–411: ἀναβάδην ποιεῖς, / ἐξὸν καταβάδην. οὐκ ἐτὸς χλωλοὺς ποεῖς ('Do you compose with your feet up, when they could be down? No wonder you create cripples!'). Knobl (2008) 37 and n. 64 suggests a connotation of both laziness and effeminacy to ἀναβάδην.

30 The 'Method' is attributed to Stanislavski's *An Actor Prepares*.

31 Esp. *Thesmophoriazusae* 149–150.

32 Intriguingly, though, Satyrus (fr. 39 col. ix 16) uses this quotation to prove his claim that Euripides did not approve of anything that was *not* 'grand or elevated' (μεγαλεῖον ἢ σεμνόν). While the unknown Aristophanes play might have contained an unabashed admirer of Euripides as a character voicing this view, it is perhaps more likely that Satyrus is taking the quotation out of context—an originally more critical context.

33 It seems possible that in performance this guessing game routine might even have been designed to encourage audience participation (as the game at the opening of *Wasps*—what disease does old Philocleon suffer from?—specifically elicits response from the audience). There are still verbal games going on here: when Dicaeopolis affirms that he wants the σπάργανα of Telephus, he uses a word that otherwise in Greek means 'swaddling clothes'. One wonders if there could be an implication of infantilization of Telephus and his demands here. Sommerstein (1980) 176 *ad* 431 suggests that Dicaeopolis may be playing on a meaning first given to the word by Euripides, just as Euripides here invents at least one new word for rags (ῥακώματα, 432; πεπλώματα, 426) on the model of other tragic word formations; cf. Jouan (1989) 24.

diminutive) comprehended both.³⁴ The first is the distinctive barbarian cap of Telephus; once Dicaeopolis is wearing that, he says he can feel himself filling up with ‘little phrases’ (ρήματιων ἐμπίμπλαμαι, 447); it seems that costuming and props are thus generative of Euripidean language. Just before that, however, Euripides himself comments on Dicaeopolis’ language and ability to plot: πυκνή γὰρ λεπτά μηχανᾶ φρενί (‘for you contrive finely with your dense mind’, 445).

The wheedling routine continues, as Dicaeopolis successively obtains from Euripides the beggar’s staff (πτωχικοῦ βακτηρίου, 448) of Telephus and several other accoutrements of poverty that likely have nothing to do with the Mysian king. The jokes move away from specific reference to the *Telephus* to a general but still concretely visual characterization of Euripidean tragedy as an old rag and bone shop. Certainly, this is how Euripides himself is made to interpret events, for he complains that φροῦδά μοι τὰ δράματα (‘Gone are my plays!’), 470). Dicaeopolis’ final request for ‘wild chervil’ of Euripides’ mother (σκάνδικά ... μητρόθεν, 479) is another way of insulting her as a vegetable seller,³⁵ and at this Euripides demands that he be shut back in his house, ending the scene. Dicaeopolis points himself back to the starting line (γραμμῆ, 483),³⁶ asserting that he must be ready now to confront the Acharnians because he has ‘swallowed a dose of Euripides’ (καταπιῶν Εὐριπίδην, 484).

Quotations from and allusions to the *Telephus* will continue through Dicaeopolis’ speech to the Chorus, culminating with one final invocation of the name,³⁷ and sporadically thereafter until nearly the end of the play, but the systematic reception and interpretation of Euripides lies in these scenes. While the picture undoubtedly entails mockery of Euripidean vocabulary and style, the primary strategy is one of rendering his tragedies into their constituent physical elements, which the Aristophanic hero can employ and even

34 The play of Plato Comicus that commented on Euripides’ very different treatment of Electra (fr. 142; see above, p. 987) was entitled *Σχευαί*. Cf. Kaimio/Nykopp (1997) 32–33.

35 On this theme and the broader reception of Euripides as a kind of ‘demagogue’, see Roselli (2005).

36 While γραμμῆ is certainly a racing metaphor [see Biles/Olson (2015) 198 ad loc.] and not the same word as γράμμα, one wonders if there is a metatextual allusion here as well as Dicaeopolis returns from Euripides to his own ‘script’. Eustathius, one of two sources for Plato Comicus fr. 168, apparently a description of a children’s game involving tossing a potsherd (ῥστρακον) to see which group of children chases the other, tells us Plato’s joke is actually about ostracism. A starting line does not actually seem necessary for this game, so Plato’s explicit mention of the γραμμῆ—twice!—seems designed to call attention to the writing on the ῥστρακον.

37 τὸν δὲ Τήλεφον / οὐκ οἴόμεσθα (‘and do we reckon that Telephus wouldn’t?’, 555–556 = *Telephus* fr. 710).

ingest. Moreover, and this point may become lost in the subtleties of parody, the Euripidean tools in the hands and mouth of the Aristophanic hero succeed in persuasion: Dicaeopolis wins over the Chorus of Acharnians and goes on to defend and enjoy his private peace.

Aristophanes' use of this same play fourteen years later displays both striking similarities and differences, in significant part because it is a reception both of the Euripidean original and the previous Aristophanic incarnation. Moreover, the sendup of *Telephus* in the *Thesmophoriazusae* is only one of several re-workings of tragic predecessors, most notably the more recent Euripidean rescue tragedies, *Andromeda* and especially *Helen*, whereby Aristophanes engages in a profound dialogue with Euripides over the nature of representation and theatrical illusion, as shown in a classic study by Froma Zeitlin.³⁸

Given the amount of stage time that Euripides and his poetry occupy in the *Thesmophoriazusae*, we must be very selective in the elements of reception to focus on. It is certainly worth noting that the play essentially begins with Aristophanic self-reception, in that he reprises the notion from *Acharnians* of supplicating a poet for help and rescue. Euripides comes to Agathon for help in finding out what the women of Athens are plotting against him. Structurally the interview with the pretentious servant, the arrival of Agathon on the *ekkyklêma*, and the appeal to the poet look very similar to the scene in *Acharnians*, but the variations tell a rather different story of reception. Euripides explicitly says that he and the Old Relative will stand aside while the servant comes out 'probably to make an offering for his master's success in poetic composition' (προθυσόμενος, ἔοικε, τῆς ποιήσεως, 38). The prayer that follows offers an extensive send-up of Agathon's style, with crude interruptions and commentary by the eavesdropping Old Relative (39–57), in a format that very much looks forward to the stage techniques of New Comedy. While the servant goes in to fetch his fellow tragic poet Agathon, Euripides explains his plan to ask Agathon to penetrate the women's festival of the Thesmophoria in female disguise. The Old Relative's response is tellingly admiring: τὸ πρᾶγμα κομψὸν καὶ σφόδρ' ἐκ τοῦ σοῦ τρόπου (93, 'A pretty cute bit, and just your style').³⁹ When Agathon himself is wheeled out on the *ekkyklêma*, Euripides again labels the performance to come as lyric (μελωδεῖν αὐτὸ παρασκευάζεται, 99: 'he's getting ready to sing his aria'), while the Old Relative supplies the post-performance stylistic analysis

38 Zeitlin (1981a), (1981b).

39 Note the use of κομψός here, the same positive judgement linked with Euripides' name in the invented κομψευριστικῶς of *Knights* 18. Cf. O'Sullivan (1992) 138–139 on κομψός as a stylistic term in Aristophanes.

and commentary (130–145). Once again, the audience hears the theory that the poet must garb and comport himself in accordance to the roles he composes, voiced directly by Agathon (146–152). This evokes yet more mockery from the Old Relative,⁴⁰ which is only halted by this intriguing comment from Euripides:

παύσαι βαῦζων· καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ τοιοῦτος ἦν
ὦν τηλικούτος, ἤνικ' ἤρχόμην ποιεῖν.
173–174

Stop your barking! I was the same way at his age, when I began to write.

Even though the Old Relative promptly makes fun of him for saying so, Euripides' claim to have outgrown the stylistic quirks and self-indulgences that currently mark Agathon's style is not really refuted. Instead Euripides goes on to quote himself (from his lost *Aeolus*, fr. 28):

Ἀγάθων, 'σοφοῦ πρὸς ἀνδρός, ὅστις ἐν βραχεῖ
πολλοὺς καλῶς οἶός τε συντέμνειν λόγους'.
177–178

Agathon, 'tis the sage man who can say much in a few finely trimmed words'.

He is indeed brief in asking for Agathon's help—and Agathon's reply is even briefer:

ἐποίησάς ποτε·
'χαίρεις ὀρών φῶς, πατέρα δ' οὐ χαίρειν δοκεῖς';
193–194

– did you yourself once write, 'You love life, son: do you think your father doesn't?'

An audience might only recognize this in hindsight, but Agathon is in effect refusing to play a role in a Euripidean script (just what the Old Relative *will*

⁴⁰ See Scharffenberger 1996 for a tempting argument that Euripides in his *Antiope* then shaped (67) 'the debate between Zethus and Amphion as a situational and visual parody of the *Thesmophoriazousae*'s prologue'.

later try to do), using Euripides' own words, the words of old Pheres to his son Admetus in Euripides' *Alcestis* (line 691).⁴¹

The opening scene of the *Thesmophoriazusae* thus constitutes an Aristophanic reception of his own previous reception of Euripides, one in which Euripides now plays audience and critic to a manqué version of himself embodied in Agathon. The Old Relative supplies nearly all of the bomolochic humour, while Euripides explicitly admits that his early writing resembled Agathon's and offers only an implicit critique by quoting himself on the virtues of brevity—but Agathon's refusal to act shows his tragedy to be useless, leaving action to Euripides himself.

The new reception of material specifically from the *Telephus* begins when the disguised Old Relative, having successfully penetrated the Thesmophoria festival, gains the floor and begins to speak to the other women on behalf of Euripides. The prologue to his speech (468–472) reuses many of the same lines from the prologue of Dicaeopolis' speech to the Acharnians that also come from *Telephus*.⁴² The substance of his speech, however, is profoundly unperceptive, because his thoroughly comic defence of Euripides against the charge of slandering women is to mention further misdeeds of women that Euripides has left out of his plays.⁴³ The outraged women are ready to attack the Old Relative when Cleisthenes arrives with the news that there is a disguised spy among them, precipitating a search for the intruder. Fearing immediate exposure, the Old Relative seizes the baby from a woman named Mica and takes refuge on the altar, threatening to kill the child unless allowed to go free. Here we return to the parody of *Telephus* and in the proper order of the Euripidean original. Where in *Acharnians* Dicaeopolis first took the basket of charcoal hostage in order to get a hearing from the Chorus, thus reversing the order of events in the Euripidean original, here the hostage-taking follows the failure of the persuasive speech—and itself fails when the Old Relative is forced to stab the 'baby', revealing it to be a skin filled with wine but not saving himself from the angry crowd.

41 Jendza (2015) 456 points out Agathon's metapoetic usage of τέχνασμα in this rejection when he specifically tells Euripides that 'Misfortune should by rights be confronted not with tricky contrivances but in a spirit of submission' (τὰς συμφορὰς γὰρ οὐχὶ τοῖς τεχνάσμασιν / φέρειν δίκαιον, ἀλλὰ τοῖς παθήμασιν, 198–199). Not coincidentally, *Alcestis* was part of the same tetralogy as *Telephus* in 438, a particular 'in-joke' for the most theatrically experienced in the audience.

42 See Austin/Olson (2004) ad loc. Miller (1948) remains useful for the influence of the structure of the *Telephus* as a whole on *Thesmophoriazusae*.

43 See Platter (2007) 167 for the nice irony that: 'the Relative has a more authentic Telephean approach to the situation but lacks the rhetorical ability that made Telephus and his dopelgänger Dicaeopolis effective'.

This will prove to be just the first in a series of borrowed Euripidean plots that failed to achieve their desired goal. Exposed as the male intruder, the Old Relative is held prisoner while Mica goes for the help of the civil authorities and soliloquizes on his fate:

ἄγε δὴ, τίς ἔσται μηχανὴ σωτηρίας;
 τίς πείρα, τίς ἐπίνοι'; ὁ μὲν γὰρ αἴτιος
 κάμ' εἰσκυλίσας εἰς τοιαυτὶ πράγματα
 οὐ φαίνετ' οὐπω.
 765–768

Come on, what scheme of salvation is there now? What move? What idea? The man who tumbled me into this mess in the first place is nowhere to be seen; not yet.

The Old Relative's triple appeal highlights at least two terms with quasi-technical meanings, *μηχανή* and *ἐπίνοια*.⁴⁴ He had originally asked Euripides on the way to Agathon's what scheme or device he had in mind (τίν' ... μηχανήν ἔχεις, 87) and praised Euripides' idea originally as *κομψός* (87, clever, 'a pretty cute bit'). How Euripides' specific devices and their general intentions then work out shapes the rest of this play.

The Old Relative first borrows a device from Euripides' *Palamedes* by trying to carve messages on wooden votive tablets and fling them on their way. He thus fails to write himself out of his dilemma, although he subsequently blames the failure of this device on Euripides' attitude to his own play: τὸν Παλαμήδη ψυχρὸν ὄντ' αἰσχύνεται ('he's ashamed that his *Palamedes* was a flop', 848). Aristophanes elsewhere uses *ψυχρός* to evaluate other tragedians negatively, but this is the only time when one of his characters judges Euripides' work to be 'frigid' or 'dull'.⁴⁵

As Froma Zeitlin shows, the parabasis now divides the Old Relative's failures in the male roles of Telephus and Palamedes from the next two parodic versions of Euripidean tragedy, where he now takes on the roles of the title characters needing to be rescued in the *Helen* and the *Andromeda*.⁴⁶ The details of these

44 For ἐπίνοια as '[m]ost commonly ... schemes of comic characters ... imaginative, usually absurd concepts (i.e. jokes) that engineer narrative developments', see Ruffell (2002) 148–149. On plot devices and μηχανή σωτηρίας as 'escape mechanism', see Wright (2012) 156–157.

45 Kaimio/Nykopp (1997) 27–28.

46 Zeitlin (1981a) 312–313. For the argument that the deception of the barbarian archer, often seen as Euripides' adoption of a purely comic strategy, instead alludes to the plot of *Iphi-*

parodies demonstrate the fertility of Aristophanes' engagement with Euripidean ideas of mimesis, particularly in the case of *Helen*, and discussion of these issues has proliferated in the last 30 years. Zeitlin however captures the essence of the arc of Euripidean reception in the play in this summary:

Read as successive intrusions into the text, the parodies function like metatheatrical variants of the series of different imposters who come to threaten the comic hero's imaginative world and which, like those figures, must be deflated and driven out. If we read the parodies as a sequence, however, we see that the kinsman must move further and further into the high art of mimesis with increasing complications and confusions; at the same time, the comic spectators within the play whom he would entice into performing his dramas move further and further down the scale of comprehension, ending with the barbarian policeman, who speaks only a pidgin Greek.⁴⁷

In broadest outline then, the comic restagings of Euripidean tragedy suggest that the more that the Old Relative attempts to inhabit the roles and world of Euripides' protagonists, the less successful his performances are with audiences that refuse to play along with the dramatic illusion. In the end, it is the comic device of the dancing girl Fawn who successfully lures the barbarian guard away, allowing Euripides to free the Old Relative and, thanks to a hastily negotiated agreement with the women, end the conflict and the play.⁴⁸

At least three lost Aristophanes plays, one closely contemporary to the *Thesmophoriazousae*, another of no certain date, and the third produced at the very end of Aristophanes' career seem to have been full scale parodies of specific Euripidean tragedies, suggesting that this kind of reception of Euripidean drama found an audience, since Aristophanes returned regularly to the format. Of the undated *Polyidus* we can say little based on its nine attributed fragments, although in one King Minos while betrothing his daughter Phaedra to someone suggests, 'I'm likely to be adding fuel to the fire' (fr. 469, ἐπὶ πῦρ δὲ πῦρ ἔοιχ' ἤκειν ἄγων), thus adding to a thread of misogynistic characterizations of women, per-

genia in Tauris, see Bobrick (1991) [with Wright (2005) 50–52, who believes that the *IT* was part of the same trilogy along with *Helen* and *Andromeda* just the year before *Thesmophoriazousae*].

47 Zeitlin 1981a. 311.

48 For the work of this play as 'restor[ing] normality to Euripidean tragedy and so to the city', see Bowie (1993) 217–227, 227.

haps attributable to Euripides' *Aeolosicon*, of which there may have been two versions though the certain performance was Aristophanes' last, produced by his son Araros after 387 BC, which seems to have featured a cook, Sicon, who somehow played the role of Aeolos, the mythical king of the winds. The few fragments mention food, cooking implements, and other items of daily life, but may also have included Heracles as a character (fr. 11). Only in the case of Aristophanes' *Phoenissae* do we have more of a sense of likely plot, precisely because Euripides' original survives.

The notion that Euripides himself responded to Old Comedy and its reception of his work has been discussed for half a century now.⁴⁹ More recent work has sought to discern specific elements of dialogue, reception and counter-reception. While more than one study has looked at comic elements in the *Ion*, Kaiti Diamantakou-Agathou makes an intriguing case that its opening responds specifically to Aristophanes' *Birds*.⁵⁰ Elizabeth Scharffenberger argues that Euripides modelled Jocasta's attempt at reconciling her warring sons in the opening scene of his *Phoenissae* on the heroine's role in the reconciliation scene of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*—all the more intriguing if elements of *Lysistrata*, the play that preceded *Thesmophoriazusae* by just a few weeks in 411, played off Euripides' *Helen*⁵¹ (and of course Aristophanes answered again with his own version of *Phoenissae*). While Matthew Wright suggests that Euripides uses a kind of 'in-joke' in the *Orestes* when he has Electra insist that Helen 'is the old Helen still' (ἔστι δ' ἡ πάλαι γυνή, 129), thus responding to Aristophanes' criticisms of the 'new Helen' in *Thesmophoriazusae* (τὴν καινὴν Ἑλένην, 840),⁵² Craig Jendza proposes an even more complex interlacing of plot interactions wherein:

the escape plot from *Helen*, in which Menelaus and Helen flee with 'sword-bearing' men (ξίφηφόρος), was co-opted in *Thesmophoriazusae*, when Aristophanes staged Euripides escaping with a man described as

49 Two good starting points are Knox (1979) and Seidensticker (1982).

50 Diamantakou-Agathou (2012), picking up a general discussion going back to Wycherley (1946). See also Matthiessen (1990).

51 Scharffenberger (1995), taking a major point to be the tragically different failure of the queen in comparison to *Lysistrata* (334): 'Jocasta loses control of the meeting she has organized and looks on helplessly while her sons' quarrel grows more and more savage'. It is Stavrinou (2015) 124 n. 63, who suggests that Aristophanes may have already borrowed from Menelaus defeated by a female doorkeeper in Euripides' *Helen* for his plot of women defending the citadel of the Acropolis in the *Lysistrata*.

52 Wright (2006) 36–37.

'being a razor-bearer' (ξυροφορέω) [and] Euripides re-appropriates this parody by escalating the quantity of sword-bearing men in *Orestes*.⁵³

Although details will continue to be disputed, there seems to be accumulating evidence that in the last decade of Euripides' career, Aristophanes' reception of the tragedian, whether classed as parody or not, engaged Euripides in dialogue.

Aristophanes gets the final word, of course, by the simple expedient of out-living Euripides. His staging of the *Frogs* in 405 was certainly essential in shaping the later Greek reception of both Euripides and Aeschylus. The play's discussions of plot and the detailed criticisms of style have been mined vigorously for the beginnings of literary criticism and its technical vocabulary. For later readers and spectators, it may seem to be the moment at which the three great tragedians are canonized (even if the recently dead Sophocles gets barely a mention), although undoubtedly other forces had already been at work, including a growing culture of re-performance⁵⁴ and much discussion in the city we can never recover. A few points seem worth emphasizing in what must be for readers of this article a deeply familiar story, including Dionysus' motivations and the premise that a poet is necessary to save the city.

While the brief aetiology of Dionysus' quest has perhaps been most discussed for the history of reading, he tells us that he has been inspired to go to the underworld to get Euripides not just for his general value but specifically because he has been reading the *Andromeda*—which is, we might note, one of the plays whose stratagems and plot failed to rescue the Old Relative in *Thesmophoriazusae*.⁵⁵ The god of the theatre claims to have been serving on a combat ship when he had this epiphanic moment of motivation:

καὶ δῆτ' ἐπὶ τῆς νεῶς ἀναγιγνώσκοντί μοι
τὴν Ἀνδρομέδαν πρὸς ἑμαυτὸν ἐξαίφνης πόθος
τὴν καρδίαν ἐπάταξε πῶς οἶει σφόδρα.

Frogs 52–54

Anyway, as I was on deck reading *Andromeda* to myself, a sudden longing struck my heart, you can't imagine how hard.

53 Jendza (2015) 447.

54 On reperformance of Aeschylus, Lamari (2015), and more generally Vahtikari (2014), Csapo/Wilson (2015), and Stewart (2017).

55 Should this have been an early clue that Euripides might *not* be the poet destined to save Athens?

While it is indeed one of our earliest references to solitary reading,⁵⁶ it seems even more remarkable (however much the joke maybe aimed at the frivolous god of theatre) that Dionysus found a ship in combat a good place for a spot of reading. The immediate context is yet another joke about the effeminate Cleisthenes, one of Aristophanes' favourite targets and supposedly the commander of this particular ship, but the shipboard setting seems necessary neither for targeting Cleisthenes nor Dionysus' moment with Euripides. Does Aristophanes perhaps want to indicate that there is something significantly different about the reception of Euripides via reading from the reception experienced through performance in the theatre?⁵⁷

As he explains to Heracles, Dionysus' plan is to go down to Hades to get a clever poet (ποιητοῦ δεξιού, 71) and that needs to be Euripides. Agathon is dead, Sophocles' son Iophon might be good but needs to prove himself on his own, and the only other two living poets Heracles suggests might be worth something, Xenocles and Pythagelus, are dismissed with contempt.⁵⁸ As for the younger generation capable of 'out-blabbering Euripides' (Εὐριπίδου ... λαλίστερα, 91), Dionysus dismisses them en masse:

ἐπιφυλλίδες ταῦτ' ἐστὶ καὶ στωμύλματα,
 χελιδόνων μουσεῖα, λωβηταὶ τέχνης,
 ἅπαξ προσουρήσαντα τῇ τραγωδίᾳ.

93–95

Those are cast-offs and empty chatter, choirs of swallows, wreckers of their art, who maybe get a Chorus and are soon forgotten, after their single piss against Tragedy.

56 Dover (1993) 196 *ad* 52, also noting that fr. 369.6 of Euripides' *Erectheus* may be earlier. The Chorus there hopes that they may in their old age sing and 'unfold the voice of the tablets in which the wise are celebrated' (δελτῶν τ' ἀναπτύσσοιμι γῆρυν ἧ σοφοὶ κλέονται). If the audience is meant to meditate on this at all, we should not think of these tablets as 'books' (*pace* Kovacs *ad loc.*) of narrative verse or other literature for aesthetic pleasure but sayings and oracles, like the 'Thracian tablets set down by the voice of Orpheus' (Θρηύσσαις ἐν σανίσι, τὰς Ὀρφεῖα κατέγραψεν γῆρυς, *Alcestis* 967–969), with the nice conceit that the voice itself (γῆρυς) writes. While Woodbury (1976) 349–352 is quite right that Dionysus's reminiscence here is far from sober, statistically sound evidence for reading practices on shipboard, noting its absurdity may not be the totality of the joke.

57 Perhaps also anticipating Aeschylus's later claim of unfairness in the competition because his poetry lives on (meaning in performance) while Euripides' poetry has died with him (τούτῳ δὲ συντέθηκεν, 869).

58 See Kaimio/Nykopp (1997) 35–36 for the intriguing suggestion that these might be the two tragedians competing at this very Lenaia festival!

We do not see or hear Euripides himself until both poets appear for the *agôn*. Whether or not they both are revealed on the *ekkyklêma*,⁵⁹ the fight is already in progress from the moment they arrive, with Euripides goading Aeschylus for being 'haughtily aloof' (*ἀποσεμνυνεῖται*, 834), finally provoking a reaction:

- 836 ΕΥ. Ἐγὼ δα τοῦτον καὶ διέσκεμμαι πάλαι,
 ἄνθρωπον ἀγριοποιόν, ἀυθαδόστομον,
 ἔχοντ' ἀχάλινον, ἀκρατές, ἀπύλωτον στόμα,
 840 ἀπεριλάλητον, κομποφακελορρήμονα.
 ΑΙΣ. Ἄληθες, ὦ παῖ τῆς ἀρουραίας θεοῦ;
 σὺ δὴ 'μέ ταῦτ', ὦ στωμυλιοσυλλεκτάδη
 καὶ πτωχοποιεὶ καὶ ρακιοσυρραπτάδη;
 Ἄλλ' οὐ τι χαίρων αὐτ' ἔρεϊς.
 ΔΙ. Παῦ', Αἰσχύλε,
 καὶ μὴ πρὸς ὀργὴν σπλάγχχνα θερμῆνης κότῳ.
 845 ΑΙΣ. Οὐ δῆτα, πρὶν γ' ἂν τοῦτον ἀποφῆνω σαφῶς
 τὸν χωλοποιὸν οἷος ὧν θρασύνεται.

Eur. I know this fellow, and have long had him pegged: he's a creator of savages, a boorish talker, with an unbridled, unruly, ungated mouth, uncircumlocutory, a big bombastolocator.

Aeschylus. Is that so, you scion of the greenery goddess? This about me from you? You babble-collector, you creator of beggars, you rag stitcher! Oh, you'll be sorry you said it!

Dio. Stop it, Aeschylus; heat not your innards with wrathful rage.

Aes. No, not till I've manifestly shown up this creator of cripples for what he is, for all his impudence.

Aeschylus's opening shots re-establish the familiar grounds for criticizing Euripides: the ragged and crippled characters and the endless talk. In his defence Euripides already names a number of his plays centred on a single hero, culminating with the now iconic *Telephus* (864). Notably, however, before he even names these proud exempla, he has already segmented his work into its constituent parts (words, songs, and sinews), anticipating the analytic nature of the contest. Both poets then proceed to a sacrifice, followed by prayers, in Aeschylus's case to Demeter (886), in Euripides' to 'Sky, my nourisher, and Pivot of Tongue, and Smarts, and Keen Nostrils' (*Αἰθήρ, ἐμὸν βόσκημα, καὶ γλώττης*

59 Cf. Dover (1993) 295–296 and Sommerstein (1996) 229 *ad* 830.

στρόφιγξ / και ξύνεσι και μυκτῆρες ὄσφραντήριοι, 892–893)—whereby Euripides has effectively already anatomized his muse into tongue, nose, and brains.

The *agôn* begins with analysis and demonstration as Euripides criticizes Aeschylus for his use of silences—while Aeschylus himself tries, eventually unsuccessfully, to keep silent. Euripides’ parodies of the ‘words as big as an ox’ (ῥήματ’ ... βόεια, 924) and neologisms in Aeschylean language eventually drive the other poet to speech, but this only prompts Euripides to an apparently novel metaphor for his treatment of the tragic art:

940 ἄλλ’ ὡς παρέλαβον τὴν τέχνην παρὰ σοῦ τὸ πρῶτον εὐθύς
 οἰδοῦσαν ὑπὸ κομπασμάτων και ῥημάτων ἐπαχθῶν,
 ἴσχανα μὲν πρῶτιστον αὐτὴν και τὸ βάρος ἀφείλον
 ἐπυλλίοις και περιπάτοις και τευτλίοισι λευκοῖς,
 χυλὸν διδοὺς στωμυλμάτων ἀπὸ βιβλίων ἀπηθῶν·
 εἶτ’ ἀνέτρεφον μονωδίαις Κηφισοφῶντα μειγνύς.
 945 εἶτ’ οὐκ ἐλήρουν ὅ τι τύχοιμ’ οὐδ’ ἐμπεσῶν ἔφουρον,
 ἄλλ’ οὐξίων πρῶτιστα μὲν μοι τὸ γένος εἶπ’ ἄν εὐθύς
 τοῦ δράματος.

No, as soon as I first inherited the art from you, bloated with bombast and obese vocabulary, I immediately put it on a diet and took off the weight with a regimen of wordlets and strolls and little white beets, administering chatter-juice pressed from books; then I built up its strength with an admixture of Cephisophon’s arias. And I didn’t write any old humbug that came into my head, or charge in and make a mess, but the very first character who walked onto my stage started by explaining the origins of the play.

Adopting the language of the new ‘rational’ medicine, Euripides renders the art of tragedy his patient, treating it first with a slimming regime and then a new diet of extracts from books and new musical styles.⁶⁰ He also makes the significant and accurate point, immediately criticized by Aeschylus, that his own plays feature an essentially formulaic opening with a single character explain-

60 See O’Sullivan (1992) 7–16 (and 135 on the relation of Euripides’ language to books). In light of the long-running dispute over just what it means for every audience member to have a book in line 1114 to come (see below), it seems worth emphasizing here that books are treated as familiar objects, even within this fantasy of making juice from them. Nieddu (2004) is a compelling argument that detailed parody, such as the *Thesmophoriazousae*’s restaging of the *Helen*, relied on Aristophanes possessing a written text of Euripides.

ing the background to the drama, a feature not to be found in any extant drama by either Aeschylus or Sophocles.⁶¹ Euripides claims to have made tragedy more democratic (δημοκρατικόν, 952) by allowing all sorts of characters to speak, which in turn taught the members of the audience at Athens themselves to speak (ἔπειτα τουτουσί λαλεῖν ἐδίδαξα, 954), a line Aeschylus angrily interrupts before it is even finished, but launching into the *pnigos* Euripides then sums up how his teaching has actually reshaped audience behaviour:

τοιαῦτα μέντοῦγώ φρονεῖν
 τούτοισιν εἰσηγησάμην,
 λογισμὸν ἐνθεῖς τῇ τέχνῃ
 καὶ σκέψιν, ὥστ' ἤδη νοεῖν
 975 ἅπαντα καὶ διειδέναι
 τὰ τ' ἄλλα καὶ τὰς οἰκίας
 οἰκεῖν ἄμεινον ἢ πρὸ τοῦ
 κάνασκοπεῖν· 'πῶς τοῦτ' ἔχει;
 ποῦ μοι τοδί; τίς τοῦτ' ἔλαβε;'

That's how I encouraged these people to think, by putting rationality and critical thinking into my art, so that now they grasp and really understand everything, especially how to run their households better than they used to, and how to keep an eye on things: 'How's this going?' 'Where'd that get to?' 'Who took that?'

This of course is precisely what Aeschylus thinks is wrong with Euripidean tragedy: it teaches by example, creating citizens who know how to argue and deceive but utterly lacking in physical fitness (1077–1087).⁶²

The Chorus ostensibly calls on both tragedians to bring on more 'intellectualities' (σοφισμάτων, 1104) while in fact talking to the audience. They insist the spectators can master any 'subtleties' (λεπτὰ, 1111) in the arguments:

61 See Sommerstein (1996) 240 *ad* 946–947. As the anonymous referee points out, Deianeira's opening speech of Sophocles' *Trachiniae* does initially resemble the Euripidean formula for beginning a play. Davies (1991) 55, however, stresses the differences between the typical Euripidean prologue that 'will set out with the greatest clarity "the scene, the characters, and their relationship and antecedents"' and 'S's aim ... not so much to set before us facts of this sort but Deianeira's emotional mood and her particular state of dependence upon her husband' Like the poet himself, Aristophanes elides from the *Frogs* any resemblance of Sophoclean experimentation to Euripidean habit.

62 See Rosen (2004) 306, however, on the 'Hesiodic' theme of Euripides teaching household management (τὰς οἰκίας / οἰκεῖν ἄμεινον), a point that Aeschylus utterly ignores.

ἔστρατευμένοι γάρ εἰσι,
 βιβλίον τ' ἔχων ἕκαστος
 μανθάνει τὰ δεξιὰ·
 1115 αἱ φύσεις τ' ἄλλως κράτισται,
 νῦν δὲ καὶ παρηκόνηνται.
 μηδὲν οὖν δείσητον, ἀλλὰ
 πάντ' ἐπέξιτον, θεατῶν γ'
 οὔνεχ', ὡς ὄντων σοφῶν.

For they're veterans, and each one has a book and knows the fine points; their natural endowments are masterful too, and now sharpened up. So have no fear, but tackle it all, resting assured that the spectators are sage.

As Sommerstein notes,⁶³ 'Much—perhaps too much—has been written about the implications of this stanza for the intellectual capacities and interests of the Athenian theatre audience, particularly regarding the reference to "a book" in 1114'. The temptations of reading this passage after the fact as precious evidence for not just the extent of literacy at Athens but also the functioning of literary criticism have been enormous. In the context of the performance, however, and more significantly for the immediate reception of the depiction of Euripides here, the Chorus's statement reassures the audience that they are all σοφοί and more than capable of keeping up.⁶⁴

The exchanges that follow include fine points of style and larger issues of structure. If the audience has difficulty figuring out Euripides' criticisms of Aeschylus's pleonasm, Dionysus lowers the tone with broader comic interjec-

63 Sommerstein (1996) 255 *ad* 1109–1118.

64 Harris (1989) 87: 'The forthcoming contest sounds as if it may be something of a strain for the audience, and the playwright offers an excuse. The excuse is an exaggeration at least, indeed a rather fantastic one, but it makes sense since books are a growing phenomenon in Athens; as the poet interestingly says, conditions are "no longer" what they were'. It may also serve to reassure an audience which by now may be expecting more physical comedy interspersed with the verbal. As Revermann (2006) 144 points out: 'The *agôn* of *Frogs* is an excellent example, as it is arguably the longest stable configuration in the Aristophanic oeuvre. For roughly 550 lines (830–1476) Dionysus, Aeschylus, and Euripides are on stage Configurational framing itself is genre-neutral. The suppression of busyness merely facilitates a focalizing effect on other movements and theatrical codes. But in the case of *Frogs* the heavy and sustained paratragic use of both verbal and non-verbal sign systems within the initially neutral configurational frame starts to affect the ways in which the framing itself is conceptualized. As the paratragic *agôn* progresses, the frozen configuration now begins to echo the characteristically static configurations of tragedy and helps to establish a tragic modality'.

tions. Aeschylus probably gets the better part of the argument with his demonstration that every Euripidean prologue begins with a subject clause that can be finished by the phrase 'lost his little bottle of oil*' (ληχύθιον ἀπώλεσεν, 1208). Aeschylus's criticisms of Euripides' lyrics are reinforced by bringing on the 'Muse' of Euripides who, perhaps costumed as a particularly ugly old woman or otherwise made ridiculous, accompanies Aeschylus's rendition while banging broken potsherds (ἡ τοῖς ὀστράκοις αὕτη κροτουῖσα, 1305–1306).⁶⁵ Aeschylus's longest uninterrupted criticism is his parody of a Euripidean solo lyric or monody, in which a market woman in the most extravagant tragic diction laments the loss of her rooster and suspects her neighbour of stealing it (1331–1363). Intriguingly, Aristophanes apparently felt no need to have the character of Dionysus point out anything about how this parody worked.

The comparison of style and technique culminates in the famous weighing scene. Aeschylus appeals to the balance scales (ἐπὶ τὸν σταθμὸν, 1365), which are probably a visual reminiscence of Aeschylus's own play *The Weighing of Souls* (and thus perhaps a predictor of his own eventual victory in the contest). The conceit here is of the simplest and reinforced by the visible movement of the scales: whichever poet speaks the 'heavier' line wins and, as Sommerstein notes, since Aeschylus always speaks second, he can always come up with a heavier line than Euripides.⁶⁶

In the end, however, poetic style and dramatic construction cannot adjudicate the contest. Dionysus proclaims himself unable to decide, but the heretofore silent Pluto (perhaps in a nod to the decisive role of Pylades in the *Oresteia*) tells Dionysus he must pick one.⁶⁷ The theatre god then offers one last test:

65 Her arrival is also the only visual break since the arrival of incense for the initial sacrifice in 'this otherwise stable configuration': Revermann (2006) 144. The anonymous referee intriguingly suggests to me a connection of this Μοῦσ' Εὐριπίδου (1306) with the *dea ex machina* Muse at the end of the ps.-Euripidean *Rhesus*, who both narrates in trimeters and laments in lyrics for her dead son in her arms, offering a 'novel combination of authoritative aloofness and emotional effusion' [Liapis (2012) 306 and see further ad loc.].

66 Sommerstein (1996) 280 ad 1365.

67 Reconstructions vary on whether Pluto was present from the beginning of the contest or might somehow have been introduced later in lines now lost from the text [cf. Dover (1993) and Sommerstein (1996) ad loc.; MacDowell (1994) 334 and n. 25; Revermann (2006) 144; pace Marshall (1997) 83], but despite the evidence in the scholia that some attributed one of his lines to the Chorus leader, Dover (1993) 369 ad 1414 is undoubtedly right when he says 'it is Pluto, not the Chorus, whose permission to bring someone back from the dead is required'. It seems eminently possible that Pluto is not merely parodying the use of an Aeschylean silence but even one-ups Pylades, who simply quotes a god (Apollo): Pluto speaks as a god. Unlike the ventriloquizing Pylades, however, he does not tell Dionysus which way to decide.

ὀπότερος οὖν ἂν τῇ πόλει παραινέσειν
μέλλῃ τι χρηστόν, τοῦτον ἄξιον μοι δοκῶ.

1420–1421

So whichever of you is prepared to offer the city some good advice, he's the one I've decided to take back with me.

Even at this moment Dionysus stretches out the suspense a little longer, for he poses a first question (πρῶτον, 1422)—what to do about Alcibiades—and neither Euripides' answer nor Aeschylus's suffices to decide. Then he asks for one more opinion on what will bring the city salvation (σωτηρίαν, 1436). The text is a bit problematic here and either Euripides is allowed two answers, the first one involving an aerial attack on the enemy with vinegar cruets (1437–1441, 1451–1453), and then a much more rational one about changing leaders, or gave only the absurdist one in the original performance, while Aeschylus offers a still enigmatic but strategy-based proposal for regarding the enemy's land as their own (1463–1465). Dionysus finally announces he will choose the one his soul desires, prompting a worry from Euripides—and chooses Aeschylus.

ΔΙ. αἰρήσομαι γὰρ ὄνπερ ἡ ψυχὴ θέλει.

ΕΥ. μεμνημένος νυν τῶν θεῶν οὓς ὤμοσας
ἦ μὴν ἀπάξειν μ' οἴκαδ', αἰροῦ τοὺς φίλους.

ΔΙ. ἡ γλῶττ' ὀμώμοκ', Αἰσχύλον δ' αἰρήσομαι.

1468–1471

Dio. I will choose the one that my soul wishes to choose.

Eur. Now remember the gods by whom you swore that you'd take me
back home, and choose your friends.

Dio. It was my tongue that swore: I'm choosing Aeschylus.

Euripides' outraged protests elicit more parodic quotations of his own verse from Dionysus, including the famous statement of Hippolytus about oaths, 'It was my tongue that swore' (ἡ γλῶττ' ὀμώμοκ', 1471),⁶⁸ but no change of mind. Pluto sends Aeschylus off with explicit instructions to 'Save our city with your fine counsels, and educate the thoughtless people' (καὶ σῶζε πόλιν τὴν ἡμετέραν / γνώμαις ἀγαθαῖς, καὶ παιδευσον / τοὺς ἀνοήτους, 1501–1503), and Aeschylus

68 Now so familiar that 'but my mind is unsworn' (*Hipp.* 612, ἡ γλῶσσ' ὀμώμοχ', ἡ δὲ φρὴν ἀνώμοτος) can be left unsaid. Dionysus already used this joke once in this play [in a mangled form for comic effect? so Dover (1993) 203 *ad* 101f.].

promises to do so, leaving Sophocles behind to take care of his chair of tragedy, 'in case I ever come back here' (transl. Sommerstein, ἤν ἄρ' ἐγώ ποτε δεῦρ' ἀφίκωμαι, 1517–1518).⁶⁹

This ending thus seems to work very hard to proclaim that the purpose of poetry is to save the city and that Aeschylus is the man for the job. Despite Dionysus's original proclamation of his mission, one suspects few in the audience were surprised to find Euripides left behind—but the utility of Aeschylus in particular for wartime may be more so. Ralph Rosen has recently offered a rather different light on the choice by suggesting a very significant interplay of the contest of poets here in *Frogs* with the idea of a contest between Homer and Hesiod, known to us now through a work that took its final shape in the early imperial period but certainly with antecedents going back to the fourth century BC and most probably to sophistic debates in the fifth century.⁷⁰ Briefly, the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* stages a competition between the two epic poets at funeral games for a king of Euboea. In the largely one-sided contest, Hesiod poses questions or challenges, while Homer easily answers them successfully—in the view of the audience. In the end the judge of the contest⁷¹ intervenes, asking each poet for his finest passage, but overrules the crowd's choice of Homer's depiction of warriors (a pastiche of *Iliad* 13.126–133, 339–344) in order to award Hesiod the prize for encouraging the people 'towards agriculture and peace' (ἐπι γεωργίαν καὶ εἰρήνην, 13). Rosen suggests this unexpected and 'undemocratic' result imposed from above in the *Contest* might for some in the audience might counterpoint Aristophanes' choice in 405 of the point Athens most needed for war.⁷² It is true that there seems to be an uncomfortably straight

69 Is this Aeschylus' prediction of his own immortality through that of his works?

70 Rosen (2004); cf. O'Sullivan (1992) 63–105. Text and translations of the *Certamen* are from West (2003).

71 He is said in one part of the account to be the brother of the new king, Ganyctor (6), but later he himself is called King Panedes (ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς Πανήδης, 12). Perhaps two traditions have been incompletely merged.

72 Rosen (2004) 315 argues for an even subtler Aristophanic agenda vis à vis the author of the *Certamen*: 'Whether or not their respective authors were fully conscious of it, in fact, there lies behind these scenes a highly nuanced critique of the uses of poetry, and of the criteria traditionally used to assess it. In *Frogs*, despite all the talk of didacticism put into the mouths of Aeschylus and Euripides, Aristophanes seems to have understood the near futility of articulating exactly what it meant to say that an artistic phenomenon as complex as poetry could "teach", especially, at least, when one starts with the assumption that the subject of poetic teaching must be that which is "morally beneficial". It is further worth noting that the *Certamen* starts with the claim that the whole world would like to have both poets, Homer and Hesiod, as 'their own fellow-citizens' (πολίτας ἰδίους, 1), an argument for their 'political' value.

line between an Aeschylean view of the value of poetry as what puts backbone into the soldiers and Plato's views on what kind of poetry should be allowed in his *Republic*. Yet when we look at the tradition that the *Frogs* was accorded the otherwise unparalleled honour of a second performance, based on the value of its parabasis,⁷³ that repeat performance might suggest that the audience of the time received Aristophanes' play in this way. Even if Aristophanes hoped a few in his audience might hear an echo of a contest between Homer and Hesiod in the *Frogs*, he undoubtedly knew that the majority of his audience would experience the *agôn* and the final choice only in the here and now of Athens of war.

The story of Aristophanes' reception of Euripides stretches from the beginning of his own career to the death of Euripides and beyond. While the loss of so much of the work of his comic rivals makes certainty impossible, it does seem that Aristophanes was far more interested in Euripides and the impact of Euripidean tragedy than any other comic poet. Some criticisms were shared (e.g., the insults directed at Euripides' mother), a few turn up only in the other comic poets. More than one poet associates Euripides with the new sophism and particularly Socrates. While we must beware of reading too much into Cratinus' neologistic insult of calling someone a 'Euripidaristophaniser' (εὐριπιδαριστοφανίζων, fr. 342), it does not just seem to be the accident of survival that suggests Aristophanes' critiques included a great deal of fascination with Euripides' linguistic style, performative innovations, and plots. That critique seems sharper in the *Acharnians* than it does when over a decade later Aristophanes returns the same source in *Thesmophoriazusae*, and not solely because Aristophanes opens the play with a scene that suggests Euripides is contemplating a younger and even more ridiculous version of himself in Agathon. Even if one after another of Euripides' plots fails to rescue the Old Relative, the plethora of parodies testifies to shared authorial and audience interest in the plays. The *Frogs* begins with the premise that all the good tragedians are dead or gone, and Dionysus focuses on bringing back the one he misses most. Heracles' attempt to persuade him otherwise fails utterly:

ἦ μὴν κόβαλά γ' ἐστίν, ὡς καὶ σοὶ δοκεῖ.
 Διό. μὴ τὸν ἔμδὸν οἴκει νοῦν· ἔχεις γὰρ οἰκίαν.
 Ἥρ. καὶ μὴν ἀτεχνῶς γε παμπόνηρα φαίνεται.
 Διό. δειπνεῖν με δίδασκε.

104–107

73 *Hyp.* 1.3 *Frogs*: οὕτω δὲ ἐθαυμάσθη τὸ δράμα διὰ τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ παράβασιν, ὥστε καὶ ἀναδιδάχθη, ὡς φησι Δικαίταρχος. See Dover (1993) 73–75, with MacDowell (1995) 297–300 on the political dimensions.

Heracles. It's sheer humbug, I tell you—and that's what you think too.

Dionysus. 'Let my mind be master in its house'; you've got a house of your own.

Her. And what's more, it's plainly, absolutely, utterly rotten stuff.

Dio. Stick to teaching me about food!

transl. SOMMERSTEIN

While making a bad pun, Dionysus nonetheless cites Euripides as the authority that he has the right to control his own mind (μή τὸν ἐμὸν οἴκει νοῦν, fr. 144 of the *Andromeda*), and the final line here ends any further argument from Heracles. The gluttonous Heracles may know about eating and drinking, but his denial of τεχνή (ἀτεχνῶς) or artistry in Euripides merits no other answer. When the play finally reaches the *agôn* between Aeschylus and Euripides, each gives about as good as he gets in criticizing the τεχνή of the other. While attention to the typical structure of the *agôn* and in particular the final weighing scene where Aeschylus regularly gets the final word might alert some spectators to the eventual outcome, the whole premise suggests that the greatest tragedian of the last generation and the most recently departed are worthy competitors for each other.

Indeed, while they historically never competed in their lifetimes, since Aeschylus died before Euripides' first entry at a Dionysia, thanks to reperformance of both, they may well have competed at another festival in the audience's recent experience.⁷⁴ Aristophanes' play summons them both back from the underworld to perform again at a Dionysia for the whole city. Despite the Athenians' enthusiasm for the *Frogs* and its advice for the city, their empire came to an end soon after its performance(s). That profound sense of the end of an era undoubtedly added its force, but as performances of comedy like those of tragedy became repeatable (even if we know of no specific restaging of *Frogs* outside Athens) along with the spread of plays in textual form, Aristophanes' reception of Euripides along with Aeschylus as the framing figures of classical Athenian tragedy helped canonize both, even as Euripides came to dominate in performance in the centuries to follow.

74 Marshall (2017) 46–52 argues in particular for reperformance of Aeschylus in the 420s, possibly even a 'dilogy' of *Libation Bearers* and *Eumenides* at a Lenaeon festival. Stagings at the Peiraeus theatre or deme festivals may also have set reperformances of Aeschylus and Euripides in competition with each other.

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PART 8

*Euripides Made New: Modern Reception,
Translation, and Performance*



Introductory Note

Helene Foley

Brill's Companion to the Reception of Euripides, edited by Rosanna Lauriola and Kyriakos N. Demetriou (Leiden/Boston 2015), dealt with the reception of Euripides' plays across cultures from antiquity to the present in the visual arts, literature (poetry, novels, and plays), and cinema. It grouped discussions of individual plays around important themes: war, accursed royal families, questioning of gods and religion, and the tragic side of Heracles. Stage performance played a role in each essay. *Brill's Companion to Euripides*, by contrast, focuses instead on scholarly interpretation of individual plays and important thematic issues in Euripides' oeuvre.

This final section on Translation and Performance serves as a brief addendum to the earlier volume. It aims to offer examples of approaches to the issue of reception of Euripides on the modern stage that did not receive close attention in the original volume due to its broad focus on the arts.

Translation is central to performance and its reception, but the cross-cultural focus of the earlier volume made it impossible to address this critical issue. Woodruff's discussion of translation of Euripides' lyrics, imagery, and dialogues into English offers a critical supplement to questions posed by both interpretation and performance, which is enriched by his own experience as a translator and the work of eminent contemporary poets.

Although the earlier volume did include brief mentions of a few performances in Japan and South and Central America, a number of the essays noted the growing importance of regional responses to Euripides' plays, but were unable to address them directly. This section offers examples of underserved regional reception. The essay by Smethurst on Japanese reception of Euripides' plays from 1963 to the present permits us to envision these performances in the context of Japanese politics and theatrical traditions and includes the important recent work of Miyagi Satoshi. Fradinger's essay on *Medea* in Argentina (a region not addressed in the earlier volume) examines the resistance to *Medea*'s infanticide in a culture that repeatedly required the sacrifice of children, especially indigenous children. Both of these essays alert the reader to the growing reception of Euripides' tragedy outside Europe and the United States (Africa, the Middle East, India, and Indonesia are equally important locations that have begun to receive similar attention) and the development of different traditions of Euripidean reception within specific cultures.

The other two essays combine a regional with a thematic dimension. Foley's essay compares modern interpretations of *Trojan Women* and *Bacchae* in Britain and the United States in response to a critical set of questions concerning plot structure, gender, metatheatre, cultural liberation, and chorality posed for performance and interpretation of these plays that are only partially shared in the earlier volume. Roisman's close reading of a group of three important French versions of Euripides' *Electra* (Giradoux 1937, Yourcenar 1954, Anouilh 1972) and one Serbian/Yugoslavian (Kis 1968) not addressed by the earlier volume also focuses on a set of thematic questions. In each case these playwrights turned heroes into villains and vice-versa, thus reframing the question of justice posed in the plays.

Euripides' *Electra*—Four Cases of Classical Reception

Hanna M. Roisman

This chapter will focus on the reception of Euripides' *Electra* in the twentieth century in three French plays and one Serbian. The widespread reception of the myth of Electra spans centuries. Three of the most recent studies of the myth and the heroine Electra are by Elke Gisela Steinemeyer (2007) and Anastasia Bakogianni (2011), and Celia Luschnig (2015).¹ The story of Electra and Orestes' revenge for their father Agamemnon's murder, one of the most popular Greek myths, was treated by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, and adapted and reworked as early as sixteenth century in literature, visual arts, and later opera. Most of the adaptations focus on Sophocles' plot and/or his heroine Electra. The Euripidean play drew less attention, maybe due to its less ideological Electra and less courageous Orestes.

I will discuss four literary treatments of the myth that are based to a varying degree on the treatment of Euripides: Hippolyte Jean Giraudoux's *Electra* produced first in Paris in 1937 by the actor-director Louis Jouvet; Marguerite Yourcenar's *Electra or the Fall of the Masks* (*Électre ou la chute des masques*, 1954); Jean Anouilh's *You Were so Sweet when You Were Little* (*Tu étais si gentil quand tu étais petit*, 1972); and Danilo Kiš' *Electra* (1968), which is an adaptation of a translation by Koloman Rac.² The modern renditions were selected because of the author's statement that he based his reworking on Euripides (Giraudoux), the situational background of the work (Yourcenar), or a depiction of some characters closer to those of Euripides, such as Euripides' Aegisthus (Anouilh). While my discussion will at times turn to the changes or

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- 1 Steinemeyer (2007) maintains that the Electra myth owes its longevity to its potential as a platform for addressing political and societal issues. She discusses eight adaptations with strong political connotations. Bakogianni (2011) takes a multi-media approach, discussing the heroine Electra in opera, art, and film. Luschnig (2015) offers a discussion of the reception of Euripides' *Electra* in literature, visual arts, music, onstage and on screen, including Hippolyte Jean Giraudoux's *Electra* which is examined in this chapter as well. For more discussions of Giraudoux, see Roisman/Luschnig (2011); Luschnig (2014) 383.
 - 2 For older adaptations reflecting in some measure the Euripidean use of the myth see, e.g., Thomas Goffe's *Orestes* (1591) and the discussion by O'Donnell (1953) 477–478.

continuities of the depictions of the main characters, I will focus on what each author has tried to accomplish in her/his work, that is, on the purpose to which they put the myth or play and on the issues and themes that their own work deals with.

My assumption is that each author strove to treat the myth in her/his own way. They each intended to produce a work of literature or drama with its own point, rather than to bring Euripides' play or Electra's myth to the audience. The ancient myth as presented by Euripides served only as a springboard for the modern works. At times the modern treatments coincide with Euripides' wider philosophical purpose; at times they swerve from it by developing different aspects of the original, changing it in keeping with their own interests and purposes. The approach of the modern writers is similar to that taken by the fifth century tragedians, who themselves relied on prior sources of their plays and took considerable liberty with the ammunition in the mythic arsenal available to them. Thus, for example, Electra is an innocent young girl in Aeschylus, an unmarried ideologue in Sophocles, and a married woman (of unconsummated marriage) in Euripides.

Euripides differs in his treatment of the myth from his predecessors in the presentation of each one of the characters.³ His Electra is not young, innocent, or idealistic, but calculating and amoral, resentful of being cast out of the palace into a marriage below her status and portraying herself as a victim. Orestes is weak, indecisive, and lacking in courage. He seeks help from his sister because he does not dare to proceed with vengeance on his own. Because both Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are portrayed as more sympathetic than in Aeschylus and Sophocles, the revenge becomes problematic. Euripides' Clytemnestra is no longer the overbearing, calculating queen of Aeschylus with a heart that plans like man (*androboulos*, *Ag.* 11), nor the unmotherly, ruthless Sophoclean ruler who annually celebrates the day of Agamemnon's murder (*El.* 273–274, 278–281, 293–299, 442–447, 597–598, 1154). She is a mellower woman with maternal instincts who regrets her past deed (*El.* 1105–1106, 1109–1110). Likewise, Aegisthus is no longer the cocky, menacing Aeschylean upstart (*Ag.* 1617–1653), nor the Sophoclean ruthless tyrant rejoicing in Orestes' alleged death (*Soph. El.* 1456–1463). Although Aegisthus is not a character in the play, Euripides describes him with more sympathy, despite noting the murderous attempts he has made against Electra and Orestes due to his perennial fear of revenge (*El.* 22–35), or Electra's claim that he pelts Agamemnon's grave with

3 For whether his treatment preceded that of Sophocles' or vice versa, see Roisman/Luschnig (2011) 28–32 with bibliography; Cropp (2013) 26–28.

rocks mocking him for not being yet avenged (326–331). We are told by the more objectively minded messenger how he kindly invited Orestes to the sacrifice to the Nymphs, unaware of his true identity, and how Orestes stabbed him sacrilegiously in the back during the sacrifice (779–789, 839–843). The surroundings of the sacrifice are bucolic. The 'well-watered garden' and 'the tender myrtle' with which Aegisthus weaves his garland in preparation for the sacrifice (777–778) almost rub on him some of their innate gentleness and harmlessness.⁴

This more sympathetic depiction of both Clytemnestra and Aegisthus raises the question of whether they still deserve to be killed. Should people who have committed a crime get a second chance, if they express regret or have changed?⁵ Most of the later discussed treatments touch upon this question.

Électre is Giraudoux's first play with antecedents in Greek drama. Its first performance was a production by Louis Jouvet on May 13th, 1937 in Paris at the Théâtre l'Athénée. Although close to Euripides' treatment of the myth, it stands on its own in terms of plot, themes, and characters.⁶

Euripides' cast is augmented by the Eumenides, portrayed as little girls who grow during the play until they reach the age of Electra and Orestes; Gardener; Judge (*le président du tribunal*) and his wife Agatha, who are the Gardener's relatives; a Beggar, Young Man (Agatha's lover); Captain (of Aegisthus); Narses' wife; Servant and Page. There are also villagers, soldiers, servants, attendants, and beggars. The Beggar (at once god, beggar, and director), semi-detached from the plot, explains how the story unfolds. He recounts the murder of Agamemnon, and also ultimately that of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra.

In an interview in *Le Figaro* in 1937, Giraudoux said:

... Electra, for me, is above all a very pure young girl filled with joy and honor, and who accepts none of it, being devoted to finding out the truth about her father's death. The thesis of my play is this: that humanity, by its ability to forget, and by a fear of complications, absorbs great crimes against it. But in every epoch surge forth these pure beings who don't want the crimes to be absorbed, and who prevent that absorption and call a halt to these means which only provoke more crimes and new disasters. Electra is one of these beings. She attains her goal, but at the price of horrible catastrophes.⁷

4 For further discussion, see Lloyd (1992) 55–70 and bibliography.

5 Cohen (1968) 106.

6 It was translated into English as *Electra* in 1955 by Winfred Smith, and again in 1964 by Phyllis La Farge and Peter H. Judd.

7 Warnod (1937) translated by Cohen (1968) 106.

The main issue of the play is that the unwavering pursuit of the truth breeds disaster. The personalities of the characters are secondary to the main theme and used to underscore it.

The Euripidean treatment with its more positive portrayal of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus readily lends itself to Giraudoux's purpose of undermining the quest for revenge. It allows him to ask, as Cohen puts it [(1968) 106]: 'Can guilt be assuaged by rehabilitation?' And what happens if no forgiveness is offered, to which Giraudoux answers: 'horrible catastrophes'. In Euripides the question and answer are implicit; in Giraudoux they are the play's centre. It is 'justice' rather than 'revenge' proper that propels the plot. The more positive portrayal of the once-upon-a-time murderers asks us to reconsider whether revenge equals justice, and whether even justice should be sought at all costs. Giraudoux discusses the antithesis between seeking truth and justice no matter the consequences and the quest for happiness while ignoring difficult issues of the past. Thus, even before the appearance of Electra, the Judge explains to Agatha that happiness is more important than finding the guilty, and that Electra endangers the happiness of others by her obstinate seeking of justice.

Domestic details are also put to different uses by the two playwrights. While Euripides' portrayal of Electra's fetching water or complaining about lack of proper clothes and jewelry serve to characterize her as wishing to be pitied, Giraudoux's detailed scenes of family life with their now-and-then senselessness, momentarily mute the main theme of revenge, but at the same time render it horrific when committed. Much is made, for example, of the circumstances under which Orestes fell from Clytemnestra's lap when he was a baby. Did Electra, at age fifteen months, try to push him back onto his mother's lap or to pull him off? Was Orestes on Clytemnestra's right arm or her left one? Was he wearing a blue tunic or a mauve one? Eventually we learn from the Beggar that contrary to Clytemnestra's accusation Electra hadn't pushed Orestes off their mother's lap, and the reason Clytemnestra had let him slide off was that the only way she could have stopped his fall would have been to let Electra, whom she was holding in her other arm, drop to the floor and kill herself (163, 185–186, 198–200).⁸ These minute details of the argument detract from the issue of who killed Agamemnon and why. Similarly, the Gardener's wrangling with Clytemnestra about his dirty nails sidelines her serious reason for not allowing Electra to be married to him: if Electra is sick, she should be treated at home and not married off (182–185). The detailed description about Electra's touching her father just before his murder slows down the tense scene in which

⁸ Page numbers follow Giraudoux (1964).

she wants to find out how her father died (231–233). The elaborate description of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus soaping the marble floor and Agamemnon's cuirass and helmet clattering when he slipped and fell as if he were a pile of dishes makes the murder scene border on the grotesque (236–238, 241–244).

These squabbles create an aura of normal family life with which the spectators can identify, but they make the issue of justice secondary. The incongruity, however, between the implied normalcy and the actual revenge renders the murder macabre and absurd, and therefore hateful rather than just.

The idea of justice pursued at all costs is challenged as well. The Judge extols the benefits of a peaceful life effected by moral laxity and warns against the disasters resulting from holding on to past hatreds and seeking redress for past wrongs, as Electra does.⁹ The Judge's viewpoint is valid but overstated. However, when we see the result of Electra's pursuit of 'truth', which for her is bound with 'justice', the Judge's thinking becomes less objectionable. Electra's obstinacy prevents Argos' defence against the invasion of Corinthian army and results in the destruction of the city. Her idealistic claim that the soul of the city can survive only when truth is attained is somewhat ironic, considering that in the process of attaining the ultimate truth, the city itself is destroyed and its inhabitants, innocent and guilty alike, are killed. Giraudoux's point is that extremism has its costs and dangers.

However, while it is clear that one shouldn't place an abstract truth above the life of a city and its inhabitants, the message is unconvincing for its lack of realism. How many people carry the fate of a city in their hands? No one ever faces this black and white, hypothetical situation. While Greek tragedy, usually set in the remote world of myth, was elevated and removed from the daily experience of its audience, modern remakes need more plausibility. Sophocles and Euripides left the external outcome of this myth open-ended. In the Euripidean play, the ending suggests heartbreak for the characters: Electra and Orestes are separated, but the fate of Argos is not discussed beyond the fact that Orestes won't be its ruler. It is unclear what will happen to the city now that the royal couple has been killed and Agamemnon's heir exiled. Giraudoux joins the abstract pursuit of truth to the physical destruction of a city. Giraudoux has sacrificed plausibility for the sake of a good story. In fact, the quest for the ultimate truth

9 For Korzeniowska (2002) 15–18, this play confirms that justice is a gendered phenomenon. Cohen (1970) 108 claims: 'Electra represents the former: and absolutist persistence to root out truth regardless of consequence. Aegisthus represents the latter: a pragmatic realization of the hypocrisy of the world, and a willingness to accept it in return for domestic happiness. Between these two poles lies the vast realm of human behaviour, marked by subtlety and infinite variation'. The Judge represents here Aegisthus' view.

pursued by Electra is undermined at the beginning of the story when the First Little Eumenid says that Electra plans to spit in the face of Orestes when he returns 'That bit isn't true. But it sounds good', she says (163). That is to say, a good story is more important than truth. How then does one know truth from falsehood? Is the Beggar's story about the murder of Agamemnon, a story which leads to the destruction of Argos, true or false? It certainly 'sounds good'.¹⁰

Electra or the Fall of the Masks was written in 1943 by the Belgian-born French writer Marguerite Yourcenar, the first woman elected to the *Académie française* and whose work includes other plays based on Greek myths.¹¹ In her introduction to the play Yourcenar says:

In *Electra or the Fall of the Masks*, I in turn raised an issue that can be phrased thus: what happens to indignation, hatred, and their pale substitute vengeance, which is often glorified as justice, when people seeking vengeance suddenly see their relation to their enemy in a wholly new light. For example, what if the Prince of Denmark were to discover that he is not the assassinated king's son but rather the son of the murderous usurper; or if he were to discover that he was the offspring of the semi-incestuous adultery that he so condemns, and that he shares blood ties and interests with the criminals?

[1954] xxv, my translation/paraphrase

Orestes' myth fits the purpose and the play is an adaptation of Euripides' drama.¹² It includes the main characters and most of the key incidents. Electra is married to the assistant gardener, Theodore; Orestes returns with Pylades, who becomes a major speaking character; Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are killed; and the avengers leave Argos. Because it is so clearly built on the foundations of Euripides' play, it invites comparison.

10 One should also consider seeing the play along Leon Rubin's note in the program of the Stratford Festival's production of Giraudoux' *Electra* directed by him in 2003 and cited by R. Ormsby and further commented by him in drama.ca: 'Giraudoux's version is not really a Greek play; it's more about France in the 1930s, when Hitler was becoming a threat to France and the enemy was on the border'. Indeed, the play strongly suggests the dilemma many European nations faced as Fascism took hold in Germany. Here, the playwright pits Electra's (Sarah Dodd) search for the truth about her father Agamemnon's death against the pleadings of Aegisthus (Scott Wentworth) to join him in saving their kingdom of Argos from the invading Corinthians. Cf. Cohen (1968) 114–115.

11 Yourcenar (1968) 37. E.g., *Le Mystère d'Alceste* (1963) and *Qui n'a pas son Minotaure* (1963).

12 Cf. Yourcenar (1968) 38.

As in the ancient plays, Yourcenar dramatizes the tensions between mother and daughter, but she makes major changes that create a totally different version of the story. Whereas the ancient treatments explored Electra's feelings for her father, Yourcenar gives attention to the father-son relationship, which they do not treat. The theme of vengeance is secondary to the theme of love. Most centrally, she reverses the moral stature of the perpetrators and avengers. Her approach is to take a kernel of each of the Euripidean characters and to develop his or her personality in a way that asks us to reconsider who they may really have been and what really motivated them. Thus, as the play proceeds, one mask after the other falls, exposing the characters as they 'really' are. In the end the heroes of Euripides' play are shown as weak and foolish, or self-serving and manipulative, the villains as generous and essentially moral.

Recalling the opening scene of Euripides' play, which is set outside the Farmer's cottage, Yourcenar's opens on a domestic scene in the assistant gardener's hovel. Like Euripides' Farmer, the assistant gardener is a good man and a good husband, who respects his high-born wife and treats her well. We see him waking her up at five a.m., before he leaves to work in the royal garden, asking solicitously about her nightmare, and bringing her a burning coal to keep her warm and a bowl of oatmeal he had kept warm for her. Electra, as in Euripides' play, is a contentious wife. She rebukes Theodore for being so interested in his garden on the day planned for the vengeance and tells him to throw the oatmeal to the pigs.

There are major differences, however. Although both husbands refrain from conjugal relations, their motives and desires are different. Euripides' farmer refrains of his own accord, out of respect for Electra's vastly superior social status. Yourcenar's assistant gardener is not inhibited by the social gap between them. Although he won't force himself on her against her will, he tries hard to persuade Electra to be a wife in the full sense: to sleep with him and to give him a child. His belief that the two of them can have a normal family life despite the great disparity in their backgrounds, accomplishments (he is illiterate), and social class, leads to the second difference.

As natural as his desire for a normal family life may be, it reveals his naïveté. He is drawn both as an uxorious husband and a dupe. He is inordinately grateful for the privilege of being married to Electra, though she barely shows him any affection. Despite her treatment of him, he caters to her every wish, obeys her every directive, and constantly has her welfare in mind. At the beginning of the play, eager to carry out the murders himself so as to save Electra the trouble of committing them, he allows himself to be set up to take the blame for them. At the end of the play, when he returns to the stage after the murders have been committed without him, he admits his guilt to the guards, who are looking for

a scapegoat. In the last words of the play, as he exits to prison and probable execution, he declares, at once inaccurately and proudly: '... I knew everything. Nothing occurred without me. I am Electra's husband' (113).¹³

Electra is depicted as a cold schemer and prurient spy. Euripides showed her luring her mother to her hovel to be killed. Like Euripides, Yourcenar has Electra tell her mother that she is pregnant and ask her to visit her for the sole purpose of killing her. Yourcenar goes even further. Both in this incident and in the play as a whole, her Electra is colder and crueller than Euripides' heroine. Unlike her Euripidean prototype, and all the Greek versions in fact, Yourcenar's Electra stabs her mother herself rather than relying on Orestes to do so. Moreover, Euripides' Electra schemes in only that one incident; Yourcenar's Electra calculates and schemes throughout the play.

In the first scene, she gets her unsuspecting husband to leave the house on the day she planned for the murders and to return at precisely the time when Aegisthus' guards could be expected to come looking for their murdered king, and thus arrest him (88). She has also schemed to get Orestes out of the palace, but not in order to rescue him from death. He was twelve years old when she abducted him, and many years had passed before she surreptitiously entrusted him to Pylades, arriving at his home in the dark of night. For years, he had been spoilt and doted on by the royal couple, and he was not very happy to have been taken away. Her motive was not fear for his life, but resentment for the love Aegisthus and Clytemnestra showed him, as well as fear that they would turn him into their accomplice. Nor did she engineer only Orestes' removal from the palace. She chose to remain there herself, because, as she tells Pylades, 'Orestes' absence and my presence was the best torture I could think up for them ...' (89). She plans her mother's murder down to the last detail. She will lie under a pile of blankets to hide her flat stomach. Her mother will sit on a stool next to her bed, and she will turn to her with a look of pain on her face so as to win her sympathy (98). She boasts to Aegisthus that she made her mother suffer (105).

The depiction of Electra as a prurient snoop derives from her vitriolic criticism of her mother's sexual liaison with Aegisthus in Euripides' play, as well as in Sophocles'. There is no mention in the ancient plays, however, of her spying on the couple. Yourcenar has Electra tell Orestes how she put her ear to the wall to listen to Clytemnestra's and Aegisthus' love making the night they killed Agamemnon (96). She tells her mother that she watched her secret assignations with Aegisthus in the garden and linen room (101).

13 Page numbers follow Yourcenar (1954).

Pylades, Orestes' silent friend in Euripides' play, becomes a significant figure in Yourcenar's. He is a stripper of masks, who puts into words the truths that are otherwise unstated, as well as a traitor with no conscience. Keenly observant and troublesome, he strips Electra of her illusions. Among other uncomfortable truths, he forces her to see Orestes as the weak and dependent child he is. Pylades' truths are discomfiting, but they are also liberating, freeing Electra from the need to pretend to be better than she is. She can say to him, 'Oh, how good vengeance will be! How good to be able to admit that one hungers for vengeance and not only justice!' (91).

Pylades is also 'a soldier of fortune' 'the black sheep of his family' (106–107), as Aegisthus calls him. All these years Aegisthus has given Pylades money to sustain Orestes in his exile. Pylades was thus double-dealing with both Aegisthus and Electra. He betrayed Electra by revealing Orestes' hiding places to Aegisthus. He betrayed Aegisthus by not tempering the hatred that Electra was pouring into her brother. As Aegisthus comments: 'On this last point Pylades duped me; he's even incapable of honest betrayal' (107). Pylades' own mask is thus stripped by Aegisthus himself.

Although the Euripidean Orestes is depicted as undecided and cowardly, he is not spoilt, confused, and feckless like Yourcenar's. The three revelations: that Pylades was in Aegisthus' pay; that Aegisthus was his real (and loving) father; and that Pylades loved Electra, cause the already agitated and confused youngster even further consternation. Learning about Pylades' financial arrangements with Aegisthus, Orestes states: 'That clean bond of common misfortune wasn't even clean. The solitude of exile wasn't even solitary. I was only taken from one cage to another' (107). He is in dire need of certainty and order in his world but has none.

The revelation that Pylades loves Electra also upsets him. 'And all this happened around me without my knowing it!' (108). He seeks certainty in Electra's love and in the belief that Pylades loved him enough 'to sink into god knows what vile and dangerous plotting for me' (108). Yet these certainties are undermined even as he utters them. Electra found in Orestes a convenient pretext for the murder, and Pylades found in him a connection to Electra, as well as a way of extracting money from Aegisthus. Orestes realizes that Electra loved 'the potential Orestes, the one who would satisfy her ambitions and justify her revenge; she loved me enough to save me or to break me' (108). And indeed, as his stabbing of Aegisthus shows, she did 'break' him. Of Pylades he observes, 'In this confusing world I grope around in, I don't even wonder anymore if he loves the brother of Electra in Orestes, or if he loves the sister of Orestes in Electra'. He also notes that Pylades 'enjoyed the calculations and concentration of the game' (108).

Although doubting Electra and Pylades love him, he turns against Aegisthus, the only one of the three who really cares for him and who has directed all of his energies toward his good. He calls Aegisthus the 'enemy' and 'outsider' (108). He defines the extravagances Aegisthus paid for him as 'your folly'. After Aegisthus tells of the assignations with Clytemnestra that led to his birth, he does not think of how much Aegisthus loves him, but that 'I am the product of this betrayal, of this lie ... So that I've cried for the wrong father since the age of twelve' (109). He is unable to shift allegiances. Pylades tells him to choose which father he'd rather hate.

The result of all the confusion is that, when Electra and Pylades decide to accept Aegisthus' offer to leave without repercussions, Orestes panics. As they start to leave without killing Aegisthus, he asks, 'Have they stopped loving Orestes?' (110). He rejects Aegisthus' offer to prime him to take over the throne. Although he hated Agamemnon, 'the father who forced me to avenge him', this sudden revelation forces him to alter his filial alliance: to resemble, tolerate, and maybe even console a different father, and to carry his history. Becoming even more upset when Aegisthus tells him 'You don't even have to love me. I'm perfectly content to love you as myself', he lunges at him, and stabs him (111). The boy who did not want to kill him now says, 'I never thought I would be so glad to strike you' (111). He then leaves, held up by Electra and Pylades, as he had always been.

The treatment of Clytemnestra expands Euripides' and is more sympathetic. Like Euripides, Yourcenar presents her illicit affairs sympathetically. Similar to other treatments, she justifies the affair with Aegisthus by arguing that she was miserably unhappy with Agamemnon, who was occupied with his wars and his mistresses. What makes Yourcenar's treatment special, however, is the fervour and conviction with which she has her express her love for Aegisthus, even though she has sex with other men as well. In their argument, Electra, with her snooping and strident accusations, is the less sympathetic figure. Electra stabs Clytemnestra at the end of a long argument about her relationship with Aegisthus. In the Greek tragedies, Electra's confrontation with her mother occurs in a separate scene, prior to and separated from the murder. Thus, Clytemnestra's infidelity and Electra's sexual jealousy, to the extent that the ancient plays hint at it, may be seen as contributing to the revenge, but are not intrinsic to it and do not sully it. Yourcenar places the confrontation in the hovel itself, and shows Electra stabbing her mother at the end of increasingly nasty argument about Clytemnestra's illicit sexual activity and Electra's snooping. Electra stabs her in a fit of rage, when Clytemnestra accuses her of being jealous of her relationship with Aegisthus and lusting after him herself.

Aegisthus is drawn with a good deal of sympathy. Despite references to the traditional representation of him, such as his mistreatment of Electra; his police guards, suggestive of tyranny; and Pylades' unflattering description of him as 'a man fed, protected, covered by women—a man of the world, an adventurer who made good, a sly conniver who has only one black mark against him, and who has committed, with all due precautions, only one crime' (107), he is transformed. In the last scene of the play, he shows another side of himself. He is philosophical and courageous, unafraid of death: 'I have resigned myself a long time ago to the idea that all will end badly, that the maniacs will win out, and that the guiltless will go down in history as murderers' (105). Middle aged and past the lusts of youth, he speaks of Clytemnestra as his true partner and companion, as 'half of my life' (106).

Above all, in the most surprising twist of the play, and in a transformation never suggested in any of the previous adaptations, he reveals himself as Orestes' biological father, removing his own mask, so to speak. He describes in tender detail the meetings between the young, neglected Clytemnestra and himself in the woods where Orestes was conceived. Their murder of Agamemnon was necessary, he goes on to say, to keep him from learning the truth, as he counted the months and picked up the servants' gossip. Turning the tables, he puts much of responsibility for the murder in Electra's own lap. If they had not feared her snooping and possibility that she would denounce them, they would have been less precipitous and waited to see how matters worked out.

In all the behaviours he describes, Orestes' well-being and future are at the heart of his considerations. He hid the secret of his paternity so as not to deprive Orestes of the succession to the throne. In maintaining this pretence, he has consigned himself to the position of intruder in his son's mind and has sacrificed the possibility of receiving from the young Orestes the boy's natural affection. He has paid the corruptible Pylades lavishly to keep him abreast of his son's whereabouts and to support Orestes in the style of a prince, while hoping that Pylades might also temper the hatred Electra was trying to foster against their parents. For the sake of Orestes, he then shows himself to be remarkably generous and forgiving. Rather than calling for the guards to apprehend Clytemnestra's killers, he offers to report that she died of a heart attack, to allow Electra and Pylades to leave Argos unimpeded, and to spend the remainder of his days instructing Orestes in the art of statecraft. His motives are not entirely pure, since he sees in Orestes a justification for his own life, but statements like 'I will try to spare you everything I have suffered' (110), express the attitude of a loving parent. After Orestes rejects his offer and stabs him in a rage, the dying Aegisthus, retaining his presence of mind, is still motivated by his concern for his son. He summons his guards to instruct them to let the threesome go, to tell

them that he was wounded by highwaymen, and to command them to report that he upheld to the last Orestes' rights and candidature.

The play presents the act of vengeance as sacrilege and inanity in which no one wins, but at the same time it holds out the possibility of forgiveness, unlike the other treatments.

Jean Anouilh wrote two plays on the myth of Electra. In 1942 he wrote the *Orestes* (*Oreste*), which we have only in a fragmentary form (26 pages) published in 1945.¹⁴ It served Anouilh as precursor for his play *You Were so Sweet when You Were Little!* first performed on January 17, 1972, in the Théâtre Antoine in Paris, directed by Anouilh himself and Rolan Pietri. While being in dialogue with all three ancient treatments of the myth of Electra, Anouilh deals both with the relation between theatre (or art) and life and with less esoteric subjects that speak more to the ordinary theatre-goer: namely, family relations and the pursuit of justice, to which the Greek story lends itself.

The play is constructed of three interwoven strands: the conversations of the four-person Orchestra which Anouilh added to the cast; the 'play' based on the myth, performed by the actors; and the actors' conversations among themselves, in which the characters are aware of their own positions as actors in a play.¹⁵ Theatrical devices separate the three strands: the Orchestra is seated below the actors; changes in lighting and signals in the dialogue mark the transitions between the actors' conversations among themselves and the 'play' they perform. However, there is considerable interweaving and blurring of the distinctions. The actors retain their stage personas when they speak among themselves. For example, near the beginning of the play Aegisthus asks Electra what she is doing. When she responds that she is waiting for Orestes, Aegisthus asks whether 'it' is going to be repeated all again that evening. Electra responds: 'yes, all the evenings'. Aegisthus answers somewhat wearily: 'Orestes has already come, thousands of times, and he has avenged you ...' (19–20).¹⁶ There is an even more caustic exchange between Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, when he says to her: 'I'd end up strangling you—and that's not the way it's supposed to work' (57).

The three strands of the play merge at the end of Anouilh's play, when the female Orchestra members mount the step to abuse Orestes verbally and physically, and the male Pianist goes up to comfort him. The Orchestra members

14 For discussion, see Harvey (1964) 93–94 and Krauss (2004) 122–126.

15 McIntyre (1981) 43 comments: '... Anouilh's earliest heroes were occasionally afflicted by self-consciously theatrical view of themselves as role-players'.

16 Page numbers follow Anouilh (1972). The translations are mine. There is an unpublished translation by S.T. Gardiner (1985), which is her Harvard A.B. thesis.

interact with Orestes as a real person, not as an actor playing a part. Orestes, like the ancient character, understands them as the Erinyes (who appear in Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*), but it is unclear whether it is the character Orestes or the actor Orestes who responds with guilt and disorientation in the aftermath of the murder. In any case, the women's verbal and physical abuse of him eradicates that distinction.

There is a two-way interaction between theatre and life. The Orchestra members react to the 'play' as though it is happening in the present, although the actors project themselves back into the time of the myth. The Orchestra members can be viewed as a generally unsophisticated but otherwise diverse group who represent the contemporary theatre audience. They connect mainly with the family themes of the 'play'. Each member interprets the action in terms of her or his own views about family relations. These issues, which include abandoned children and parents who mistreat, or are mistreated by, their children, remind the Orchestra members of aspects of their own lives and link them with each other during their discussions. The Violinist and Bass Player also speak a good deal about the social differences between themselves and the privileged protagonists of the 'play'. They project their own associations onto the world of the characters. Thus Agamemnon, the King of Kings and commander of a large navy, becomes a rich owner of a global flotilla of oil tankers (17). Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are celebrities who have been spending Agamemnon's money on cruises and grand hotels, while the paparazzi follow. The Orchestra members barely relate to the abstract theme of justice, which the Chorus in the 'play' raises in each of its speeches. The only reference to justice is indirect and concerns the acquittals the rich can expect in court (18). The characters in the play and the actors talking among themselves make similar statements and show similar traits, a device which, while leading to repetition, emphasizes the actors' identification with their parts.

The theme of sex dominates Anouilh's play. Each character is obsessed in one way or another by sex. Their sexual deprivation has affected each of the twenty-year old twins in a different, unwholesome way. Electra yearns for it; Orestes shuns it. Electra fantasizes about being ravished by the stable boys who knock on her door under the rafters of the house. Thoughts of sex overpower her: she asks Orestes, whom she believes is a stranger, whether he used to have sex with girls in Daulis; she fantasizes aloud about other girls' sexual encounters. After recognizing her brother, she tries to seduce him physically and verbally, and anticipates with glee making love to him as they watch 'him [Aegisthus] and his whore' convulse in their blood and their spilt-out guts when they are killed for the murder of Agamemnon. Before she decides that they should be killed in the 'swimming pool', where they had killed Agamemnon,

she proposes killing them while they are making love (49–50). She is consumed by the images of her mother making love with Aegisthus.

Orestes, on the other hand, sounds almost asexual. He tells Electra and Clytemnestra he has never interacted with a girl, let alone slept with one. He is unresponsive to Electra's physical and verbal seductions and refuses Clytemnestra's offer to supply him with pretty girls. 'Seeing' his mother with Aegisthus when he was a young child left an indelible impression on Orestes (88).

Clytemnestra's own obsession with sex affects Aegisthus, who would rather not think about it. Clytemnestra fails to understand why Aegisthus has stopped 'loving' her. Aegisthus shrugs off the word 'love', and says it was just sexual 'desire', which has faded on his part. He admits to having admired her as his queen but is disgusted with her now and regrets what she has made him do and become (78–86).

The sexual theme exposes the main traits of the individuals. Electra is a hypocritical and conniving fanatic who criticizes her mother for having desires that Electra herself shares. Orestes is an emotionless youth. Clytemnestra is self-centred and warped by desire and loneliness, while Aegisthus regrets his past involvement with the Queen and her influence on him.

None of the characters is entirely sympathetic. Electra and Orestes are more one-sided than in any ancient treatment. Electra is the more dominant of the two; she is spiteful, contrary, and masochistic, set on presenting herself as a victim, as in Euripides. She chooses to wash dishes till her hands became red (27, 37, 43, 143), sleep on a straw mattress up in the rafters over the stables so that people will say that Clytemnestra and Aegisthus mistreat her, and wear torn and dirty clothes so as to further embarrass them (27–29). She screams rather than talks and breaks dishes at night to replicate the noise of the clanging of armour when Agamemnon fell.¹⁷ Raised in the woods, Orestes learned from his tutor only how to fight and to kill, with bare hands or a knife. Other than the stereotypical statements he's been taught to make, he hasn't learned to talk about anything (88, 93). He is shrewd however, tricking Clytemnestra about his identity (76). He expresses no emotion in response to Electra's outpourings. He has resigned himself to not having a life, because 'I don't like anything' (100). The only thing that might show another side of him is that he has taught himself to carve and carves a wooden snake—himself (89). He asks Aegisthus what affection is and talks without expression (102). He rejects happiness, as his sister does, and sees the world in terms of black and white, as she does. In

17 For a similar image, see Giraudoux (1964) 242.

contrast to Electra, however, he does engage in conversation with Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, but only because he is sure listening to them won't change his mind (103). As in Euripides, the siblings are separated at the end of the 'play', not due to a divine machination, as in the original, but due to Orestes' disgust with Electra's hatred and self-pity (143–145).

Unlike the Euripidean queen, this Clytemnestra is far from being a good mother. She sees both Electra and Orestes as an extension of her hateful husband Agamemnon (136–137). When she hears about Orestes' death, she says: 'Children should remain young for ever. One could exchange them, like kittens from the farm when they cease being adorable' (69, cf. 94–95). She was happy when the Tutor whisked Orestes away and says of Aegisthus' dismay over the boy's disappearance, 'What absurd sentimentality! We could have never been able to live peacefully with him around' (77). Realizing he is back, she does not mind the idea of Aegisthus killing him.

Aegisthus is the only character in the 'play' one can sympathize with. He exhibits the parental feelings of the Euripidean Clytemnestra as well as her feelings of guilt and remorse. He refuses to allow either the marriage of Electra below her status or the killing of Orestes. He was a handsome stable boy when Clytemnestra seduced him, but lost interest in Clytemnestra after the murder, as if disgusted by her and the crime he joined in committing (87).¹⁸ Both Electra and Orestes regard him as an interloper and are wary and suspicious of his motives, but he is neither a violent man nor covetous of power. He has always cared about Orestes and had no intention of killing him either after the murder of Agamemnon, nor upon his return (21, 26). Anouilh paints him as considerate and kind: he covers Electra when she is cold while waiting on the road for Orestes (20). He tried to be a father to Orestes, teaching him how to ride a horse when he was five years old (109). He remembers Orestes' features better than Clytemnestra, who failed to recognize her own son (76). He tries to engage with Orestes and make him understand what had happened between his parents but fails (111–112). Unlike Clytemnestra, Aegisthus does not expect Orestes to change his mind about killing him. Lonely and out of place, he wishes he could go back to the stables. Above all he wants Orestes to understand him; 'even if just for a minute' he hopes that something in Orestes' eyes will blink. This way he says: 'I'll die less alone' (115).

There is no such positive depiction of Aegisthus in any of the ancient treatments. As for the modern ones, both Giraudoux and Yourcenar focus on his

18 Aegisthus's full realization of what he has done seems to fall in the category of Anouilh's themes about 'the struggle to preserve a sense of personal purity in a degrading world ... rejection of material happiness ...', McIntyre (1985) 10.

kindness and concern for Electra, but this Aegisthus is Anouilh's creation. Anouilh's sympathetic presentation of the character emerges first in the title, which is based on Aegisthus' parent-like words to Orestes: 'You were so sweet when you were little' (109). Anouilh is also alone in capitalizing on the theme of the similarity between Aegisthus and Orestes which is inherent in the ancient myth but not a part of any extant ancient treatment. In the myth, both Aegisthus and Orestes were brought up as avengers of a harm done to their fathers: Aegisthus—to avenge the other children of his father Thyestes, murdered by Agamemnon's father; Orestes—to avenge Agamemnon. Anouilh's Aegisthus sees his own youthful image in the returning Orestes. He used to be as lean, tough, and handsome as Orestes. Like Orestes he used to rebel: he used to spit like Orestes, 'refuse it all' like Orestes, and 'fight' like Orestes. 'I was like you', he tells Orestes (116–117).

The sympathetic depiction of Aegisthus brings up the question Giraudoux explored as well: Should a remorseful person be punished? Are second chances possible? The 'play's' Chorus' reaction to the murder of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, states the 'play's' theme: the revenge is 'a crime', and this kind of 'justice' is self-perpetuating (138–139). Their final words are significant: 'So, all I can do now is to pity all three of them. Poor Clytemnestra! Poor Electra! Poor Orestes!' (139). But no 'Poor Aegisthus'. Even the Chorus does not see Aegisthus as part of the royal family. In death as in life, he is alone and still an interloper; after all he is just a stable hand.

Danilo Kiš, a Serbian and Yugoslavian novelist, poet, essayist and translator, a member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, wrote in Serbo-Croatian.¹⁹ His *Electra*, which he describes as 'after Euripides' was composed in 1968 and premiered in Atelier 212, a theatre in Belgrade, on November 12 that same year. Kiš' text is not based on the original Greek, but on a "free association" of the translation of Koloman Rac: 'I began to compose my own verses, better to say my own strophes, preserving at first only the basic thread of thought ... Later, taken adrift by this game, but cautious about departing from the text too much (for after all, I was paid for the *Electra* of Euripides), I began metaphorically speaking, to open little and big parentheses, to change monologues into dialogues, to "open up" scenes by turning reported speech into stage action, etc.' (from Kiš note 'On *Electra*', intended for the printed program of the performance). Kiš's preference for 'free association over a dramatic text', has yielded the manipulation of 'psychological nuancing' resulting in a different register

19 Translation of the Serbo-Croatian is from an unpublished translation by Goran Vido-
vić.

of both language and content. These adjustments lower the more sublime and distant world of the myth to the everyday life of his spectators.

Kiś leaves the speaking characters to the casting of directors, but he does comment on Pylades: 'I reduced him finally to the right measure, the one that is implicit in Euripides ... a shadow of a man ... I imagine him as a clumsy deaf-mute slave ... in the bloody and tragic scenes ... a creepy and spooky persona, perhaps sensible and terrified, but cruel and intimidating in his helpless howling and mumbling in his blind obedience to the will of Orestes ... Is he not perhaps Orestes' double, his positive and disempowered alter ego, his conscience? Perhaps that could be presented by a mask, a quasi-ancient mask'. The other characters are not changed much. Electra is still the contentious, proud princess who talks down to her lowly husband, who is scared of what she might tell Orestes about him. Absent, however, is the sexual jealousy with which she is tainted in both Sophocles and Euripides. She stabs Clytemnestra onstage, unlike in any ancient treatment. Orestes remains the reluctant avenger when it comes to killing his mother, and his last words when Clytemnestra is gasping are: 'I forgive her!'. At the same time, he proves reckless and ruthless in dragging Aegisthus' corpse all the way to Electra's hut, telling her to 'to chop his flesh asunder, to crush into dust these bones ... or throw him to the pigs ...' (Scene IX). Kiś portrays Aegisthus as an unsophisticated but handsome brute who pelts Agamemnon's burial mound with stones (cf. Eur. *El.* 326–331, 948). Sympathy shifts entirely to Clytemnestra, who becomes a thoughtful feminist countering *viva voce* the accusations against her of being a ruthless murderer for the sake of her lover. She explains in detail how she has turned from a happy young wife and mother to a resentful and hating spouse who blames her glory-craving husband for the loss of Iphigenia. Far from being shameless, she is reflective and remorseful: '... despite the deceptive appearance, remorse and suspicions are confounding my heart ... in the hand of time everything looks tiny: everything except life itself'; 'Do you think that an axe is drawn just like that, out of insolence, out of lust?'; 'O gods, how I cried, how my heart was torn to pieces when they took away my daughter' (Scene X). Unlike the myth, she was faithful to Agamemnon until he returned with another wife. The spectators see a struggling, abused mother and wife forced into crime, a woman who can justify each of her actions however horrible. She took a lover who was willing to slay for her: 'for the sake of my body, of my grief, of my nights, my tears, my heart, my revenge, not for the sake of glory and exotic winds'. And like Euripides' queen she brings up the double standard in judging women more harshly than men when it comes to transgressions (Eur. *El.* 1035–1039). As a good, caring mother would, she hurries to help her daughter when asked to do so. It is hard not to sympathize with her.

As a way of bringing the story closer to the spectators, Kiš has Electra going to the market rather than fetching water from the spring. The Mason, who replaces the Farmer, does not refrain of his own accord from conjugal relations with Electra, but is forced by fear of Orestes into a chastity about which he bitterly complains. It was his reputation for being modest and virtuous that made Clytemnestra entrust him with her virgin daughter. He desires and yearns for Electra, but his 'sleeping bed is set like a deathbed of some corpse!'. He wishes that gods would 'thrust me from the high construction, straight to Hades ... throw me in the dark abyss of death!' (Scene 1).

The play's arguments are straightforward and crass at times, thus bringing the sublime ancient drama down to earth without any pretence. There is vulgarity in Clytemnestra's willful depiction of Agamemnon and Cassandra: 'So he spent nights with her, / whispering some prophetic words to her in the bedroom, / teaching her Greek customs—don't make me tell you—which ones!'. Describing how she consoled herself with Aegisthus, she says: 'I found a handsome manly lover, / young stud, not really smart, / but fond of me, /willing to burn and slay for me', but what spectator wouldn't sympathize with a betrayed wife? Electra's response, 'you were ashamed of your lover, whom you bought ... for gold coins, like an expensive stud' (Scene x), cements the ugliness of her character.

In addition to lowering the linguistic register, Kiš has also adapted the play to modern dramaturgical tastes. He eliminates the Messenger and has both murders scenes performed onstage. The choral parts are shortened and scarce. Castor and Pollux are eliminated, leaving to the audience's imagination what happens to the siblings next.

The justness of revenge is a timeless topic. Euripides' treatment of revenge in his play *Electra* opens the door for a variety of interpretations by not portraying the perpetrators as purely evil as they are in the other ancient dramatic treatments. The treatments of the play discussed here, except for the translation, build on Euripides' quasi-sympathetic rendering of Aegisthus, and thus by implication undermine the validity of seeking revenge at all costs. On the other hand, their approach to the characterization of the siblings and Clytemnestra varies. Electra is portrayed as causing trouble even in her innocent quest for 'truth' in Giraudoux, and almost as a monster in both Yourcenar and Anouilh. Orestes is a reluctant and yet effective avenger in every treatment. An almost sympathetic character in Giraudoux, Clytemnestra is a frustrated woman who dislikes her children in Anouilh, and a caring mother in both Yourcenar and Kiš. These and other variations indicate the vitality and enduring relevance of the myth and of Euripides' treatment of it.

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Euripides in Translation

Paul Woodruff

Readers of English have been fortunate in the translations of Euripides' plays that are available for them. Gilbert Murray, over a hundred years ago, produced elegant verse translations that opened the world of Greek tragedy to a broad audience. In recent years we have seen verse translations and versions of Euripides' plays by eminent poets such as Ted Hughes, Robinson Jeffers, Anne Carson, C.K. Williams, and Reginald Gibbons. We have also seen a proliferation of fine versions designed for the sorts of courses that are taught by way of general education in American universities.

Translation carries some of the qualities of an original text into a host language, but never all of them. Formal qualities are especially resistant to translation, but that does not mean that meaning is easy to translate. Form and meaning are not cleanly divided. Syntax and word order, for example, straddle the gap. Translators cannot attend equally to all the qualities that are relevant to translation. If they attend to syntax, for example, they may have to sacrifice word order and the emphasis that results from word order; if they focus on emphasis, they may have to sacrifice syntax. To preserve emphasis, for example, we may need to change an active to a passive verb or vice versa.

At every step, translators are making choices. They must decide what qualities in the original will be most valuable if made available to readers of translation, and they must decide what expressions in the host language are best able to bear the necessary burdens. Different translators make different choices that may have equally weighty reasons to support them. Translators in such cases have different users in mind or different values in the original text. A performance translation, for example, needs to be easy on the tongue, and also requires certain patterns of emphasis. A translation for a first-year university literature course must be accessible to young readers who are new to the subject matter, while at the same time being true enough to the original to provide exposure for those students to an ancient culture. Such a translation needs to be familiar and foreign at the same time—familiar enough in language to be read with ease, foreign enough to enlarge the minds of the student readers. A translation for the use of scholars need not be easy to read; it should meet high standards of accuracy and also alert its readers to ambiguities and difficulties

in the original text. A literary translation aspires to be a work of literature in its own right, but only fine writers can achieve this goal.¹

In this essay I discuss strategies for translating the plays of Euripides, using a variety of examples, all of which I admire for one reason or another. I leave it to my readers to weigh the values represented in the different versions.

1 **Introductory**

Among the difficulties of translating Euripides are some common to all translation, some belonging to the genre of the plays, and some particular to Euripides himself. Euripides' writing is concise, even compressed, with the result that translators are tempted to expand as they work, and many translations are longer than their originals—more words and a higher line count. Also, Euripides uses figurative devices that are often startling even in the original Greek, and so challenge translators to render a similar startlement in their host languages.

The text of a Greek play is poetry, and poetry is notoriously resistant to translation. What makes Greek poetry poetry (as opposed to prose) is primarily its use of quantitative metre, long complex patterns of long and short quantities unknown in modern languages. The poetry of Euripides' plays does not depend only on metre; he also uses internal rhyme, figurative language, and a concise juxtaposition of images—all available in modern host languages. But his unique concision, his striking collocation of images, and his innovative use of devices such as transferred epithets present special challenges to the translator. Another challenge is his lyricism. His odes are the most lyrical of those we find in the tragic tradition, and translators struggle to find ways to exhibit this in English. We use end-rhyme and repetitive metre for lyrics in English, Greek poets used no end-rhyme and complex metres repeating only at the level of the stanza, or strophe.

In addition to the difficulty of its poetry, Euripides' texts are meant to be performed, the lyrical sections with musical accompaniment. Conventions for performance differ among times and cultures: what could be said or sung in the theatre of Dionysus may not match anything that is sayable on a contemporary stage in Los Angeles or Oxford. And yet many translators want to render Greek performance texts into performable English.

1 Translation raises ethical difficulties, as it inevitably presents a somewhat false view of a culture foreign to its readers. We need to treat cultural difference with respect. For proposals on how to deal with this, see Venuti (1998).

The most general problem in translation is the poor match between one language and another. By 'literal' translation some people seem to mean a translation that puts one word with like meaning in place of another, word for word. The trouble with this is that words don't match across languages. There is no set of meanings set eternally in heaven that words are required to convey. Words develop meanings continually through use in contexts of behaviour that vary across cultures. Sometimes there simply is no perfect match for an ancient Greek word even in modern Greek. The conditions of life change, and with them the meanings of words. In response to this, sensitive translators may use a phrase to render one ancient word, or one modern word for an ancient phrase (though the former is much more common).

Euripides' work has been translated into many languages over many years, but in this essay, I will look only at English translations, starting with those of Gilbert Murray and moving on to the most recent I have seen.² Gilbert Murray was a public intellectual who opened ancient Greek literature to a wide public. Through his translations of Euripides' tragedies—which were said to have sold a half million copies—he made English speakers who were not scholars acquainted with a rich lode of drama. Once censorship was relaxed, his translations were performed, increasing still further the range to which he carried the classics.

I have my own small stake in this, having published a translation of the *Bacchae* [Woodruff (1998)]. But I made that twenty years ago, and my thoughts on translation are no longer the same, so I will not be defending my own work here. Rather, I will compare strategies for meeting the problems of translation. Each strategy has a cost, and each can yield benefits, as we will see from the examples I treat below. Some of the translators are poets first and scholars (if at all) second; Ted Hughes, C.K. Williams, and Seamus Heaney are not working from the Greek. Anne Carson is both poet and scholar, as was Gilbert Murray. Others are scholars first and poets (if at all) second; I list myself in that group.

2 Poetry

In editing volumes of modern poetry in translation, the poet Ted Hughes insisted that his main goal, and the goal of his fellow editors, was literalness. By

2 For a history of English translations of Greek plays, see Walton (2006). In an appendix he has a listing of translations that is informative. He also mentions versions that do not meet his criteria for translation (181–182), while acknowledging the difficulty of making such distinctions.

this he did not mean word-for-word translation. Such translations have been made and published. They are useful for language students as what are called trots or ponies, but because of the mismatch between the languages such versions must be in atrocious English style. Reading trots is nothing like reading the original. What Hughes aims for is not this, but the exclusion of foreign devices. Speaking for himself and his fellow editors, he wrote in an introduction to a volume of translations: 'We feel that as soon as devices extraneous to the original are employed for the purpose of recreating its "spirit" the value of the whole enterprise is called into question'.³ The extraneous devices he wishes to rule out, I suppose, would include rhyme for the translation of a non-rhyming poem, and probably also metaphors or meanings supplied by the translator.

The only justifications Hughes would allow for departing from literalness occur when the translator is an 'interesting and original poet' or becomes so under the influence of the original.⁴ Gilbert Murray could be an example of a scholar who became an interesting poet under the influence of his source, Euripides. Anne Carson shows what a poet-scholar can do in her version of the first stasimon of the *Bacchae*, with a startling image worthy of Euripides, but her own:

Holiness

is a word I love to hear,
it sounds like wings to me,
wings brushing the world, grazing my life.
Pentheus has a harsh sound.
He's a negative person.

This captures the attitude of the Chorus brilliantly, but it does not represent the Greek text.⁵

In Hughes' version (which he does not call a translation) of the *Alcestis* he supplies another striking image, even further from the text, but brilliant. He likens Admetus to a rat in a trap:

3 Hughes (2006) 200. From the introduction to *Modern Poetry in Translation* (1965).

4 Hughes (2006) 201.

5 My pedestrian translation of the same passage reads: 'Oh Reverence, queen of gods, / Reverence, who over earth / spread golden wing, / Have you heard Pentheus?'. For a history of the *Bacchae* in translation, see Perris (2016).

He is trying to chew it off—the whole body.
 Admetos is trying to gnaw himself
 Free from Admetos. Admetos
 Is spitting out the torn flesh and the blood
 Of Admetos.⁶

This is Hughes' poetry at its best, and it suits the play well.⁷ But a translator who is not a gifted poet should hold back from such adventures. Nevertheless, in translating poetry, most of us wish to make it look and sound like poetry in the host language. This is especially important in translating Greek plays. These texts strongly mark the difference between dialogue, which is in plain iambs, and sung lyrics, which are in complex metres. These lyrical passages include choral odes, some exchanges of characters with Chorus, and what we might call arias. Readers of translations need to be able to feel the difference between lyric and dialogue, and so translators need to indicate in some way that the lyrics are poetry.

Translators of Euripides into English have introduced a number of devices as markers of poetry, including: rhyme, modern metres, figurative language, concision, juxtaposition, spacing, repetition. In choosing their markers of poetry as poetry, translators reveal what they take poetry to be. A writer who thinks poetry must have rhyme or metre, for example, may put these devices into a translation of poetry, whether they match the original in any way or not, with the intention to show readers in the host language that the original really is poetry. Another writer may try to ape the original, regardless of differences in poetic tradition—trying, for example, to produce a version of quantitative metre in a language that does not recognize vowel quantity.

Any choice involves sacrifice. Rhyming and metrical translations are constrained by form to lose some of the original's concision, for example, but may nevertheless glow with a beauty comparable to that of the original. In what follows, I work with various versions of choral odes from the *Bacchae* to show the effects of different poetry markers.

In each case I begin with the plain prose version of Seaford. Here is his opening of the parodos (64–68):

⁶ Hughes (1999) 59.

⁷ Another gifted poet working from Euripides is Robinson Jeffers, with versions of the Hippolytus (*The Cretan Woman* 1954) and Medea (*Cawdor* 1970).

Seaford: From the mountains of Asia, leaving behind sacred Tmolus, for Bromius I speed sweet toil and weariness happily unwearingly, exalting with ecstatic cries the Bacchic god.

How is one to make English-language poetry of this? One marker is rhyme. Here is Gilbert Murray's version:

From Asia, from the dayspring that uprises,
 to Bromius ever glorying we came.
 We labored for our Lord in many guises;
 We toiled, but the toil is as the prize is;
 Thou Mystery, we hail thee by thy name!

Repetition is another useful marker of poetry in English. Euripides uses repetition quite sparingly, so that when it occurs, it is striking. Many recent translators, however, seem to think that repetition makes the poetry what it should be. Here is the version of Carl R. Mueller, whose dialogue is prose (p. 173):

Down,
 down
 down from Asia's plains
 down
 down from Tmolus,
 holy mountain,
 I fly,
 I soar ...

Interestingly, some original poets follow the original here more closely without introducing such devices. This is Reginald Gibbons:

Asia I left, sacred
 Tmolus I left behind me,
 And for Bromios I race to sweet toil
 And weariness that is no toil nor weariness,
 And I cry out in praise of the Bakkhic God—

These repetitions are spot on translations. By contrast, Anne Carson, who calls her text a version rather than a translation, depends heavily on spacing. This device is alien to ancient Greek poetry, which is composed (not written) to be performed and heard. In an ancient Greek poem, listeners would know where

a line ends because they would recognize the metrical pattern, which in Greek is too complex for modern listeners. Modern readers of poetry are expected to face a poem on a printed page, but this was not so in the ancient world. In manuscripts on precious papyrus or vellum, which few of Euripides' audience could afford, such spacing would have been too expensive to be permitted even for the affluent. The justification in modern translation is that spacing and placement on a page provide for the modern reader a formal element akin to the complex metres of Euripides. Here is Carson:

From Asia I come,
from Tmolus I hasten,
to this work that I love,
to this love that I live
calling out
Bakkhos!

Some lines resemble material well known to modern readers, and such lines pose a temptation to translators. For example, the parodos of the *Bacchae* made Arrowsmith think of the Beatitudes of the New Testament:

Seaford: O blessed is he who, truly happy, knowing the initiations of the gods is pure in life and joins his soul to the thiasos in the mountains ...

73–75

Arrowsmith:

- Blesséd, blesséd are those who know the mysteries of god.
- Blesséd is he who hallows his life in the worship of god ...
- Blesséd are the dancers ...

He continues with four more beatitudes beginning with 'blesséd'; the original Greek text uses the word thus translated only once. Gilbert Murray follows the Greek in this, but he is nevertheless tempted by the passage to introduce something like the Christian God:

Oh, blesséd he in all wise,
Who hath drunk the Living Fountain,
Whose life no folly staineth,
And his soul is near to God ...

But the poet C.K. Williams uses ‘blesséd’ four times in the passage, and Robertson uses it five times. Reginald Gibbons, poet that he is, gives us the material fairly straight:

O
 Blessed, truly happy is he
 Who knows the rituals
 Of the god, who joins his spirit
 With the holy worshippers in the mountains ...

Poets such as Gibbons are especially good for Euripides because they are able to recognize the poetry inherent in the concise play of ideas and images with which Euripides fills his choral passages. Gibbons does not feel that he needs to lard his translations with the devices of modern poetry, and I agree. Modern rhymes and metres usually require extra words, losing the original’s wonderful conciseness. Euripides’ spectacular imagery, if brought out clearly, is poetic enough. Imagery, however, presents its own problems.

3 Imagery

Euripides’ imagery is striking, original, and hard to translate. Any image is hard to take from one language to another for this reason: the effect of an image is a function of its strangeness to users of the language. An overly familiar metaphor or other figure of speech has little power. If we could rate the strangeness of an expression on a numerical scale, then we could demand that a translator use an image in the host language that has the same strangeness rating as the original expression. But such ratings, of course, are not possible.

Still, in some cases, we know how strange an expression was to Euripides’ audience. He is said to have been the first to use a transferred epithet, when he has a Chorus sing of green joy in the nightlong dances (*Bacchae*, third stasimon, 862–876).⁸ Of course, the joy is not green; the meadows and woods where they dance are green. The strangeness lies in transferring the colour epithet from the place to the joy. Such a transfer was new and startling at the time, and still has some power to startle us now.

Again, I start with Seaford, who softens the effect by using ‘verdant’:

⁸ Of the translations I have seen, only Robertson omits to translate the transferred epithet.

Shall I ever in the all-night dances set my white foot in bacchic revelry, tossing my throat in the dewy air of heaven, like a fawn playing in the verdant pleasures of a meadow, when it escapes the terrifying hunt ...?

This text is a fine opportunity for Murray's lyrical use of rhyme, which sometimes presents a limpid beauty as fine as that of a stanza by A.E. Housman:

Will they ever come to me, ever again,
 The long long dances,
 On through the dark till the dawn-stars wane?
 Shall I feel the dew in my throat, and the stream
 Of wind in my hair? Shall our white feet gleam
 In the dim expanses?
 Oh, feet of a fawn to the greenwood fled,
 Alone in the grass and the loveliness;
 Leap of the hunted, no more in dread ...

This is beautiful, but Murray does not transfer green to joy. Arrowsmith here is succinct:

as a running fawn might frisk
 for the green joy of the wide fields,
 free from the fear of the hunt

Cacoyyanis is fairly straight:

like a fawn that frolics
 in the green delights of the forest,
 free from the deadly snares of the hunt.

C.K. Williams, like Anne Carson, depends heavily on spacing and placement on the page for lyric passages:

Will I
 throw my bared
 throat
 back, to the cool
 night back, the
 way,

oh, in the green joys
 of the meadow, the
 way
 a fawn
 frisks, leaps,
 throws itself ...
 as it finds itself
 safely past
 the frightening
 hunters ...

The disadvantage of this strategy here is that it obscures what is most striking about the passage, the tight juxtaposition of images, for which a fine modern example is William Carlos Williams' poem, 'The Red Wheelbarrow'. The effect of that poem comes from its concision, its tight syllable count, and its direct concatenation of colours.

By contrast, some translators build such passages, sacrificing concision in favour of the poetic beauty of repetition. Here is Mueller:

When,
 when will I again,
 when again will I dance,
 ever dance the nightlong dances ...

While Rudall is simple and elegant:

Like a fawn at play
 In the green joy of the grass

Carson introduces a thought-provoking image which is delightfully out of place for a fawn, 'skylarking', which raises the poem to a new level—something only a poet as good as she should get away with. The image brings out the element of flight in a free form dance:

When shall I
 set my white foot
 in the allnight dances,
 when shall I
 lift my throat
 to the dewy air,

like a fawn
 skylarking
 in the
 green joy of the meadow—

4 Level and Tone

English has a larger vocabulary than Greek and therefore seems to have a wider range of levels or tones. Consider the difference between ‘smear’ and ‘anoint’, both legitimate translations for the same Greek word (*chrisas*) but lying at quite different levels and carrying different values. Vulgar people smear makeup on their faces, gentrified ones apply it, and perhaps gods in poetry would anoint themselves with it. In the context of a sacrament, we would be more inclined to use ‘anoint’ than ‘smear’. But what about Aphrodite’s arrows: are they smeared or anointed with the magic power that makes us fall in love?

Here is Kovacs translation of a few lines from the Chorus at *Medea* 629–635:

Loves that come to us in excess bring no good name or goodness to men.
 If Aphrodite comes in moderation, no other goddess brings such happiness. Never, O goddess, may you smear with desire one of your ineluctable arrows and let it fly against my heart from your golden bow.

For a more literary translation, here is Svarlein:

an inescapable arrow, smeared with desire
 and aimed at my heart.

Raphael introduces an image derived from arrows:

... Unerring arrows, barbed with desire.

And Arnott resolves an ambiguity by choosing to treat these as poison arrows. In doing this he softens the shock value of Euripides’ treatment of desire as an ointment or other smearable substance:

... tipped / In the poison of desire.

Only Rayer uses the higher-toned language, which leaves the question open whether we should think of these arrows as sacred or poisoned:

Anointed with desire

Vellacott alone recognizes the complexity of the word for desire (*himeroi*) and brings it out:

Dipped in sweetness of desire

This is a nice example of a case in which two English words do the work of one Greek one better than would any single English word.

Consider also the difference in tone between different poetic strategies for carrying an image into English. Towards the end of the *Hippolytus*, the Chorus sings of the power of love, just before the love god's opposite, Artemis, makes her appearance (1268 ff.). Here is Murray:

Thou comest to bend the pride
Of the hearts of God and man,

Cypris; and by thy side,
In earth encircling span,
He of the changing plumes, ...

For mad is the heart of Love,
And gold the gleam of his wing;
And all to the spell thereof
Bend, when he makes his spring;

And here, by contrast, is Svarlein:

You, Aphrodite, move what cannot be swayed:
the steely minds of the gods
and of all mankind
rapt beneath the wing of the one who flies with you,
brilliant and sudden. Over the earth he soars ...

Two interesting issues face the translator here. The first is the inflexible mindset of gods and humans (*akampton phrena*). Svarlein nicely takes this into two expressions, 'what cannot be swayed' and 'steely', while Murray captures it economically with 'bend the pride'. The second is the shining gold wings of the god, (*ptanos ... chrusophaes*). Svarlein writes her own poetry here with 'brilliant and sudden', an effective choice, while Murray's lyrical 'and gold the gleam of

his wing' makes poetry of the straight meaning of the Greek. The differences between the two are partly due to the evolution of taste in poetry over a hundred years, but there is more to it. Murray's version is more comfortable and sweeter to the ear, while Svarlein's tone brings out more strongly the menacing danger of love.

5 Concision and the Ambiguity That Results

Greek tragic poets are economical in the use of words, and among these Euripides is especially concise. We have already seen how, in translating choral passages, translators lose concision when they introduce elements from modern poetry. The gain in these passages may well justify the cost; how you judge the issue depends on what you take poetry to be. In dialogue, however, the swiftness of Euripides' lines is even more important, as it represents the compressed action of the plays, which often have the power of a coiled spring. Here is Carson's rendering of Theseus' demand that Hippolytus be brought before him, after being injured in the chariot wreck (*Hippolytus* 1265–1267). Poseidon was behind the accident, and Theseus has forgotten that he brought the god down on his son by cursing him, and wrongly supposes that the chariot accident is proof of the young man's guilt:

Bring him. So I can set eyes on
the man who swore he did not touch my wife
and refute him with his own catastrophe.

This is exactly as the Greek has the three lines. Other translators inflate the speech with rhyme or metre. Svarlein's metrical version, in pentameter, swells to five lines. Here is Murray's rhyming version, in four lines:

Aye, bring him hither. Let me see the face
Of him who durst deny my deep disgrace
And his own sin; yea, speak with him and prove
His clear guilt by God's judgments from above.

Euripides' concision often leaves questions open that translators want to close. For example, when Medea declares she will kill her children, does she do so freely, to prevent their being treated more harshly by others? Or does she represent this as a decision that is forced on her by necessity? The Greek, I think, is open, or, if it leans in any direction, leans toward expressing a freely made

decision, although Medea recognizes that the children will be killed, if not by her, then by her enemies.⁹ Many translators choose to insert the verb ‘must’ in the speech where it has no counterpart in the original, and where it undercuts the freedom of Medea to choose. Here are three such translations of *Medea* 1236–1239:

Friends, my resolve is fixed on the deed,¹⁰ to kill my children with all speed and to flee from this land: I must not, by lingering, deliver my children for murder by a less kindly hand.

KOVACS

My friends, it is decided; as soon as possible
I must kill my children and leave this land
before I give my enemies a chance
to slaughter them with a hand that’s moved by hatred.

SVARLIEN

What’s next, my friends, is clear:
I must kill the children quickly and be gone.
Yes, quickly: delay will yield my sons
To hands more savage than my own.

RAPHAEL/MCLEISH

Rayor, whose line count matches the Greek, offers a balanced translation. Here, Medea is plainly in charge of her decision, while being aware of the inevitability of her children’s fate:

My friends, I am determined to act:
Kill the boys at once, then depart.
I must not, by lingering, give the children
to someone else to murder with a harsher hand ...

This is in keeping with Rayor’s professed intention in the translation, to allow the reader to face the uncertainties of the original. In her introduction, she writes: ‘Rather than narrowing the range of meaning, it is the translator’s

9 ‘It is necessary that they die’ (1240).

10 *dedoktai tourgon hōs tachista moi*. *Ergon* can mean something like my job or my duty. The pronoun *moi* seems to go both with both *ergon* and *dedoktai*: my job, my decision.

responsibility to allow for options of interpretation as open and rich as those available to readers of the original Greek.¹¹ This she has done in the *Medea* passage.

Tragic audiences evidently were fond of speeches that allowed more than one interpretation. Often a character understands a remark one way, while the audience is cued to understand it in another, and this complexity must be passed on to the reader by the translator. In the *Bacchae*, as Pentheus is about to take himself to the mountain, Dionysus promises him a return that Pentheus thinks will be glorious. We in the audience know he will return as a sacrificial victim. Here is the exchange in two versions (968–970):

You'll be carried aloft / What a luxury / In the arms of your mother. / Now you're spoiling me! / Indeed I am. / But I deserve it.

CARSON

You will be carried ... / You'll spoil me! / In your mother's arms. / You'll pamper me to pieces. / I will indeed. / I will have what I deserve.

WOODRUFF

And of course, he will return in his mother's arms, and in pieces. And he will have what he deserves, but like so many tragic characters he has no idea what that is.

6 Expressions of Grief

A particular problem is the language of grief. The poet Anne Carson entitled a volume of Euripides' plays *Grief Lessons*, an apt label in many ways, as the Chorus in a Greek tragedy often seems to be teaching the audience how to grieve over the sufferings represented on stage. Ancient Greek had a rich vocabulary for grief, acceptable in performance, though not outside the theatre in ancient Athens. Pericles was praised for expressing no grief over the deaths of his sons. It is an irony that in modern English that, although we would not admire Pericles for his stiff upper lip, our language of grief is stiff and limited, so that plays in English have few expressions of grief. King Lear's 'Howl' is short but effective. In view of this, what words can we find to translate the longer and more articulate expressions of grief we read in Euripides?

11 Rayor (2013) xxvi.

English does not have the same resources as ancient Greek for expressing grief in ways that would not make an audience cringe. We do not say ‘alas’ or ‘woe is me’ in modern English, but comparable expressions abound in Greek tragedy. Carson, I think, has the best solution, and that is to leave the Greek words untranslated. An audience, hearing good actors keening these sounds, would grasp the meaning immediately. No translation is required. Amateur actors, simply mouthing the words, elicit laughter. Carson supplies only a stage direction, ‘cry’, and prints the cries in upper case. Here, for example, is her version of *Hippolytus* lines 811 and 816; below each I have supplied the Kovacs version in brackets for contrast:

Chorus:

IO IO TALAINA MELON KAKON ... AIAI [*cry*]

[Alas, poor woman, how luckless you are!]

Theseus:

OMOI EGO ... O TALAS! [*cry*]

[What misery is mine! I have suffered, luckless man that I am ...]

Svarlein offers another admirable solution, to put such lines into acceptable English: ‘Oh, my poor Phaedra, no! / Oh, this is agony’ (811).

7 Stichomythia

Stichomythia is a form of dialogue that has the structure of a word game and may well have been based on one. It is a contest in which two characters compete to top each other in a rapid exchange of one-line remarks, delivered as rapidly as a volley in table tennis. One character serves, making a strong point, and the other character returns the volley, reversing the direction by fixing on a single word or concept in the line that was served. Often such scenes are turning points in a drama. For example, in such a scene of the *Bacchae*, Dionysus persuades Pentheus to don woman’s clothes and climb alone into the mountain, where he will be, in effect, sacrificed by a band of women under the leadership of his own mother. Dionysus wins the contest by overcoming Pentheus’ resistance, bringing to the surface the young king’s secret longings through the clever use of stichomythia.

The best translators of stichomythia understand how the contest works and bring out its turning points as sharply as they can, paying close attention to the diction of each line. Here I will examine a scene of stichomythia in which Hip-

polytus responds to Phaedra's nurse, who has evidently just now proposed that he have sex with his stepmother (lines 603–616). Here is Carson's version, from *Grief Lessons*. I have supplied emphasis on the words at which the volley turns:

Nurse: *Silence* child,
 before someone hears you.
 Hippolytus: I can't be *silent* and listen to that.
 Nurse: Please, by your right *hand*!¹²
 Hippolytus: Do not take my *hand* or touch my clothes.
 Nurse: By your knees, *don't*—
 Hippolytus: *Don't* what? You said your words were innocent!
 Nurse: But not for everyone to *hear*.
 Hippolytus: Surely a good story needs *listeners*.
 Nurse: O child, don't break your *oath*.
 Hippolytus: My tongue swore the *oath*. My mind is unsworn.
 Nurse: Child, what will you do? Destroy those who *love* you? (*sous*
filous)
 Hippolytus: Love? I spit on that. *Love* is not corrupt.¹³
 Nurse: Be kind. It is natural for *humans* to make mistakes.¹⁴
 Hippolytus: O Zeus, Why have you settled on *men* this evil in daylight
 ...¹⁵

With this last line, Hippolytus opens a general attack on women as an evil to men. But in both this line and the nurse's line that precede it, the key word is the same, *anthrôpoi*, which the nurse uses to mean 'human', including women, and the young man uses to mean only the males of the species. Here is the kind of turn, from one sense of a word to another, that wins a match of stichomythia. Carson's translation is accurate enough, as the word has both meanings, but loses some of its punch. Kovacs' plain translation uses 'mankind' in both lines and so makes clear how Hippolytus (unlike the nurse) sees humanity as essentially masculine.

The previous volley turns on another ambiguity. The expression translated 'those who love you' might equally be rendered 'your friends' (*sous philous*). Phaedra is a friend to Hippolytus in a common ancient Greek sense of the word

12 Here the nurse uses the feminine for 'right'; the audience would have understood the word 'hand', which Carson rightly supplies.

13 *apeptus*: *oudeis adikos esti moi philos*.

14 *Sungnôth*: *hamartein eikos anthrôpous, teknon*.

15 *Ô Zeu, to de kibdêlon anthrôpois kakon*.

because she is a member of his family, whether they like or care for each other or not. But the Greek word was also used for people one cares about, friends in the modern sense. It is in this sense that Hippolytus hits the word back to her: 'I spit. No one who is in the wrong is *philos* to me'. Our word 'love' does not carry the same ambiguity; again, Kovacs captures this by translating the adjective as 'near and dear': 'Destroy your near and dear? Pah! No criminal shall be near and dear to me!'. But Carson's choice of 'love' works well in the larger context of the play.

8 Parting Words

In this essay I have reviewed the most important problems that translators must solve in doing justice by Euripides. They are not easy problems. Any student with a semester's Greek and a lexicon can quibble with translations published by the most eminent scholars and poets. That is because for most choices a translator makes, there are others that could be justified on the basis of other values. I therefore beg readers to be indulgent to translators, read more than one translation, and make judgments as best they can. But in the end, the best choice is to learn ancient Greek and frolic on your own in the playground of enticing choices that each text presents.

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Euripides on the Modern Anglo-American Stage

Helene Foley

Euripides remains the most popular ancient Greek tragedian on the U.S. and British stages. His plays are generally considered more ‘modern’, more compatible with psychological realism, easier to ‘domesticate’ on the contemporary stage, more generically ambiguous,¹ and more readily compatible with contemporary social and political issues. But these generalizations conceal many complexities. The three most frequently produced plays on the professional stage,² *Medea*, *Trojan Women*, and *Bacchae* have recently been joined by a group of newly popular plays such as *Iphigenia at Aulis* or *Hecuba*.³ Productions of Euripides’ full corpus on the Anglo-American stage deserve an encyclopedic treatment. Instead, due to limits of space, this essay will address a small selection of twentieth- and twenty-first-century productions of *Trojan Women* and *Bacchae* along with adaptations and new versions of them in the U.S. and Britain.⁴ *Medea* was eliminated due to both the unmanageable number of significant productions and versions that deserved an essay of their own and because of multiple discussions by others as well as myself.⁵ Above all, I will consider how a range of versions responded to difficult interpretive choices posed by the original plays themselves. For this reason, I will not isolate a few important productions for detailed analysis but focus on a broader range of responses to each play. Overall, however, important British productions have

1 See Foley (2010).

2 With one exception, this essay includes no university and college productions.

3 See Hall (2005) and (2013) and Foley (2012) 229–237 and Foley (2013) 344–345 on productions of *Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Iphigenia in Tauris* and Foley (2015) on *Hecuba*. For a discussion of U.K. and U.S. performances of other plays of Euripides, see Foley (2003) on *Hippolytus*, and Riley (2004) and (2008) on *Heracles*. The Bloomsbury Companions to Greek and Roman Tragedy include discussions of the reception of each play onstage; for *Trojan Women* and *Bacchae*, see Goff (2008) and Mills (2006). For production data and further information on performances of Euripides, see www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk.

4 I have selected these productions in part on the basis of the depth of available and largely positive recorded reception, and in part on the varied approaches taken to the plays. In the case of U.S. and some British productions I have been able to view the plays directly; in the case of British productions that I did not view I have relied on significantly extensive data.

5 Hartigan (1995); Corti (1998); Hall/Macintosh/Taplin (2000); Wetmore (2003) and (2013); Wilmer (2005); Macintosh (2007); Bartel/Simon (2010); Foley (1999–2000) and (2012).

often had access to more financial resources and rehearsal time than many U.S. productions and were staged for audiences relatively more familiar with these popular Euripides' plays. This may be one of the many reasons that more translations of the original plays have been staged in major venues in the U.K. in contrast to the U.S., which has more often produced smaller scale productions, including relatively more adaptations and new versions.

1 *Trojan Women*

Trojan Women (henceforth *TW*) has been produced regularly in both the U.S. and Britain on professional stages, generally in direct response to twentieth-/twenty-first-century wars. A London performance at the Royal Court Theatre of Gilbert Murray's new translation of the play in 1905 responded (controversially) to the aftermath of the Boer War and established the play's subsequent Anglo-American reputation as 'the world's greatest peace play'.⁶ Two important early twentieth-century professional productions were then deliberately staged to coincide in 1915 as a response to the First World War from both sides of the Atlantic by Harley Granville Barker starring his wife Lillah McCarthy as Hecuba and by Maurice Browne starring his wife Ellen van Volkenberg in the same role. After the performance at the 1905 Royal Court Theatre in London, Barker brought Euripides' *Iphigenia Among the Taurians* and *TW* on a 1915 tour of packed outdoor stadia in the U.S. (Yale [only for *IT*], Harvard, University of Pennsylvania, City College in New York, and Princeton).⁷ The American Women's Peace Party financed an extensive cross-country tour for the Chicago Little Theatre's *TW*, first performed in 1913, which like Barker's, reached an enormous audience (33,000 people). Both Barker and Browne were interested in poetic drama and non-naturalistic theatrical aesthetics and established the play as a central dramatic vehicle for its large number of female actors and Chorus and as an opportunity to experiment in innovative ways with choral performance. Ironically, both productions often impressed audiences and reviewers more for the play's 'modernity' and purported 'feminism' than as vehicle for anti-war propaganda.

In many respects these two productions laid the groundwork both politically and aesthetically for many later performances of the original play in translation that responded to the First and Second World Wars,⁸ the Vietnam

6 Kennedy (1985); Hall/Macintosh (2005) 509–511; Perris (2011) and (2016); and Slater (2011).

7 Dukore (1957) and Foley (2012) 40–42 with further bibliography.

8 In the wake of WW I, see especially Lewis Casson's London production of Gilbert Mur-

War (though not the Korean War), the Gulf Wars, and eventually to broader global violence and unrest in many contexts. Among other productions, the Greek director Michael Cacoyannis' *TW* at New York's Circle in the Square from 1963–1964, translated by Edith Hamilton, and later filmed with a different cast in 1971, established the play's centrality during the Vietnam War after a post-Second World War gap during which it was apparently viewed as incompatible with a period of postwar recovery. After the 1960s, productions of the original play, adaptations, and new versions have continued unabated until the present moment.

Since many performances of *TW* have shared remarkable similarities on both sides of the Atlantic, my discussion will now turn to emphasizing innovations and choices made in productions of the original followed by unusual adaptations and radical new versions. Each production aimed to solve problems posed by representing and interpreting the play in varied modern contexts, such as the play's theological framework. To give one example, Barker's *TW* featured enormous statues of Athena and Poseidon voiced by invisible actors in the play's opening scene, whereas Browne eliminated these gods altogether, a gesture that has been imitated by increasing numbers of productions of the play that aimed to avoid emphasizing either the role of pagan divinities on the modern stage or the post-play catastrophes encountered by the play's Greek heroes, since the prologue that frames the play promises a failed return for many Greeks who played major roles in the war. Other productions, by contrast, have come close to parodying the opening representation of the gods in order to stress the contrast between the insouciant divine powers and the suffering of *TW*'s enslaved female victims of war. A 2006 off-off Broadway New York production of *TW* by The Chekhov Theatre ensemble for Stages of Learning at the TADA! Theatre directed by Linnet Taylor and translated by Nicholas Rudall opened, for example, with a scene where Poseidon, Athena, and an added Apollo engaged in a metatheatrical, almost comic spat.

Whether or not Euripides' 415 BC play was composed in direct response to the 416 Athenian punishment of the allied city of Melos for revolting against it by killing all the defeated men and enslaving their women and children, the poet was clearly responding to the potential for such episodes during the Peloponnesian Wars with Sparta. From the early twentieth-century the question of context and timing has played an equally varied role in framing productions of

ray's translation of *TW* starring Sibyl Thorndike in 1919. Mary Hunter's performance of Edith Hamilton's translation at New York's Master's Institute Theatre and Hallie Flanagan's dance-theatre *Trojan Incident* at New York's St. James Theatre for the Federal Theatre Project were both performed in 1938 [see Foley (2012) 88–92].

TW. Barker, for example, brought his 1915 production to the U.S. from a Britain already involved in the war, whereas Browne's tour was aimed at keeping Americans out of the First World War. Neither production made any attempt to categorize either the Greeks or the Trojans in contemporary terms. Since then radically imagined settings and interpolated scenes have served to contextualize *TW* in many different, less universalizing, and even confrontational ways.⁹ A 1941 production at New York's Cort Theatre staged by Margaret Webster set the play in a Nazi-ravaged Rotterdam in the Netherlands; the play opened with an urban air raid that was introduced by a topical prologue on the plight of refugees written by Robert Turney that some reviewers found unnecessarily literal; the soldiers wore Nazi uniforms, and Marshall Goering was burlesqued. Similarly literal was a 1995 production of Kenneth McLeish's translation for the Royal National Theatre Company in London directed by Annie Castledine that (in the view of critics crudely) defined the Greeks as Americans.¹⁰

By contrast, Katie Mitchell's 2007–2008 London production at the National Theatre of a cut version of Don Taylor's translation set the play in an anonymous postindustrial ferry terminal; the noise of departing ships and soldiers erupted into the playing space whenever the locked doors were opened. Helen, unseen by the other actors, lurked visibly in a space above. The Trojan women themselves danced to big band music and wore high heels and evening gowns suggestive of Britain in the 1940s that evoked the Trojans ill-fated celebration the night before the city was captured. The setting did not develop specific political implications, however. Alfred Preisser's 2006 adaptation at New York's Classical Theatre of Harlem, on the other hand, set the play behind the barbed wire fence of a refugee camp in Africa; armed guards paced a catwalk while Helen reclined in a separate lighted cage above. Searchlights scanned the surrounding rubble, accompanied by a mix of gunshots, sirens, police radios, and jungle sounds. At the conclusion, all the (older or maimed) women, including Hecuba, not chosen to be taken away with the Greek warriors were left behind to be shot. Only one ten-year old girl escaped by slithering under the fence.

Each of these productions also struggled in different ways to confront the problem of the play's episodic nature as a series of striking scenes addressing a postwar catastrophe that offered little hope for resolution or clarification. The 2006 TADA production mentioned above,¹¹ took a novel stance by staging *TW* as a television show emceed by the Trojan herald Talthybius—

9 See Goldhill (2007) 127–145 on generating a successful relation to contemporary politics in productions of Greek tragedy.

10 Goldhill (2007) 127 and n. 9.

11 See further Foley (2012a) 318–319.

“Inside the Trojan Surrender” on Shock and Awe News’. The Euripidean scenes expressing suffering among the Trojan women themselves remained unfiled and retained a serious tone that invited thought and sympathy. By contrast, in scenes that had a more self-consciously performative element in the original, such as the Cassandra’s mad wedding scene, Andromache’s rehearsal of her fidelity, or the debate between Helen and Hecuba, the camera’s aggressive intervention invited certain characters to play to a television audience defined as prurient. The camera aimed to produce shocking entertainment that reminded its audience repeatedly of what the media does to theatre/tragedy/real suffering and this framing gave the play a new structure and point. The first part of one of the many productions of Charles Mee’s *The Trojan Women: A Love Story* (later titled *Trojan Women 2.0*), a remaking of *TW* directed by Tina Landau for En Garde Arts, June 16–July 1996, was set at the back of the abandoned East River Park amphitheatre on New York’s lower East side, a literally collapsing civic structure. The second half, which followed the Trojans who escaped with Aeneas to another future, took place in the brightly lit amphitheatre above and reimagined the love affair between Dido and Aeneas from Vergil’s *Aeneid* and Berlioz’ opera *Les Troyennes*. The setting powerfully invited the audience to visualize the civic destruction envisioned in *TW*, but then pointedly gave its surviving damaged characters a provocative aftermath.¹²

Because the Chorus of *TW* shares sufferings so expressively with the major characters and joins their attempt to remember and imaginatively reconstitute Troy and its past, most productions of the play have tended to have larger and more elaborately performed Choruses than in the case of many other productions of Euripides other than *Bacchae*. This attention to the Chorus has in new versions been elaborated in several democratizing directions that have also helped to unify the play from new perspectives. The Romanian director Andrei Serban and the American Elizabeth Swados’ much revived (four times in New York from 1974 to 2004 as well as international tours) and re-imagined *TW* at La Mama Etc de-emphasized the roles of the aristocratic principal characters in favour of enhancing group suffering.¹³ The Serban/Swados version used language incomprehensible to the audience (above all ancient Greek), and a range of nearly continuous movement and music drawn from world theatre traditions in a performance that closely echoed the shape of Euripides’ plot but reduced it to a skeleton of the original. The major actors briefly emerged to play abbreviated versions of their scenes from a Chorus whose constant and active

12 For Mee’s text, see www.charlesmee.org/plays.shtml; for discussion, see Hartigan (2011).

13 See, especially, Hartigan (1995) 45–46; Menta (1997) 22–32; and Foley (2012) 96–98.

presence defined the whole and then returned to it. Here even the audience became participants as well as spectators in the opening scenes. After audience members entered a darkened theatre, they were separated from their friends and moved about by actors representing Greek soldiers as they glimpsed scenes being played on carts holding prisoners that rolled through their midst or on the scaffold above.

More radically, Mee's and the Classical Theatre of Harlem versions created individualized as well as collective voices for Chorus members with the use of pastiche.¹⁴ In Charles Mee's *TW Hecuba* and the Chorus women recalled and tried to make some sense of female experiences of violence and the fall of cities from different times and places through interpolated quotations drawn from multiple sources. In the Classical Theatre of Harlem production, the African-American cast recalled stories derived from Sierra Leone, Somalia, Rwanda, and Baghdad about memories of home, massacres by guerilla bands, and rapes.

Along similar lines, Ellen McLaughlin's 1996 experimental version for The Balkan Theatre Project of *TW* first performed at New York's Classic Stage Company collectivized the main characters.¹⁵ Each major character was played by two or three recent immigrants or refugees from the Balkans: Serbian, Croatian, Muslim, or Albanian. Each character spoke the same lines of the economical text in combinations of their own language and English that resembled a musical score. The production sought common ground through performing shared—and familiar—suffering by people with whom the amateur actors would not normally have associated. In this version all the characters except the torn, partially sympathetic herald Talthybius were women; the villainous Helen was eliminated. A 2003 student production at Pope Auditorium, Fordham University Lincoln Centre directed by Rachel Dickstein that used a now published McLaughlin adaptation of the play also collectivized the characters by having the major parts except Hecuba and Helen (now included) played by three actors who spoke and moved together with uncanny symmetry and tension. The choral sections created an international flavour by incorporating different languages and suggested a global context for the play.

Many productions also innovated in their treatment of Helen, and thus raised further pointed questions about the origins and futility of war. In the Classical Theatre of Harlem version, a golden-robed Helen departed remarking to the angry women, with whom she had had more than one encounter, 'The men who write history will say this was all the work of a single woman.

14 Foley (2007).

15 McLaughlin (2005) with discussion on 79–88.

But I think you all know those men have been known to lie.¹⁶ The major points in Euripides' debate scene between Hecuba and Helen became a dialogue that included Chorus members more fully. Helen pointed out that all the women were slaves and rape victims now, unable to defend their honour. The anger of Euripides' Chorus at Helen could on the other hand be graphically enacted for the audience in other versions. In the Serban-Swados version a triumphant Helen was wheeled in on a cart; the Trojan women tore off her clothes and smeared her naked body with mud and straw before she was humiliatingly raped by a man dressed as a bear and, in contrast to Greek myth, killed. McLaughlin's adaptation had Helen stripped and humiliated by the women; but it also allowed her to examine her own role in an opening monologue—she too loved Troy, 'the city I came to destroy'¹⁷—and to talk back to the Chorus about her role as pariah/victim at greater length than in Euripides.

2 *Bacchae*

Unlike *TW*, Euripides' *Bacchae* only came into its own in the 1960s when it began to be performed regularly on the professional stage.¹⁸ The play was repeatedly imagined as matching an era that put hippy culture, sexual liberation, and resistance to traditional political authority on centre stage. Euripides' enigmatic play itself resists stable interpretation in performance. Dionysus, the androgynous god of wine, ecstasy, and theatre, introduces his cult from the east to the Greek city from which he was born accompanied by a Chorus of Asian women who are assigned to demonstrate his cult to Thebes and establish his divinity. On the modern stage, how is this foreign invasion envisioned in performance? What kind of challenge does the god's cult make to political and religious authority? How does a performance imagine the god's unsettling of the binary oppositions that traditionally organize Greek cultural thinking and behaviour, and especially traditional ideas of gender? Does the play make a case for sexual liberation? Or is the play's representation of women misogynistic? Is the relation between the Chorus of eastern women and the Theban maenads offstage on the mountain made visible onstage? What form of music, song, and dance legible to a modern audience has been chosen to communicate the god

16 I am grateful to Alfred Preisser for a copy of the script.

17 McLaughlin (2005) 94.

18 Gilbert Murray's 1908 *Bacchae* had two matinees at Royal Court Theatre in London. See Macintosh (2007a).

to the modern audience? How has the destruction of Pentheus' palace onstage been represented?¹⁹ To what degree has the theatre god Dionysus' control of *Bacchae's* plot been explicitly metatheatrical? How have productions managed the play's apparent mix of the tragic and the comic? Are the scenes between Dionysus and Pentheus dressed as a bacchant or the Cadmus and Tiresias scene humorous or, in the first case, horrifying? How have productions dealt with the drastic shift to violence and suffering in the problematically fragmentary conclusion? Finally, to what degree have modern productions clearly conveyed to the audience how and what the production aimed to communicate about both the god and the play; or did these productions remain riddled with contradictions? Given how challenging it has been for classicists to interpret *Bacchae*,²⁰ attempts to engage with these complicated issues in production offer provocative insights into the play's continuing reception from many perspectives.

The two earliest U.S. productions, Harry Partch's new version of *Bacchae* entitled *Revelation in the Courthouse Park*, first performed at the University of Illinois in 1961 and later in a professional production in Philadelphia in 1987,²¹ and Richard Schechner's far more influential *Dionysus in 69* by the Performance Group in New York from 1968–1969 set the tone by re-envisioning the original play to capture contemporary efforts at sexual and cultural liberation. Partch interwove scenes from *Bacchae* with the visit of a rock star named Dion to a Midwestern town. Partch's music, designed for a series of extraordinary string and percussion instruments that he largely built himself, rejected the canonical western twelve-note equal temperament scale for an ancient Greek-inspired tuning system with up to 43 microtones per octave that underlined the actor's speaking voice. The production also included a marching brass band, drum majorettes, clog dancers, tumblers and gymnasts. The play's shy, alienated, and innocent Pentheus figure Sonny observes the rock star Dion's ecstatic reception by the town, and especially Dion's seduction of his dominating mother, and ends up sacrificed to social conformity. The Choruses satirized American evangelical revival meetings and rock concert rituals; Partch called it 'what the majority believes and does.' Euripides' and Partch's story eerily converge at a finale that affirmed this version's ambivalent interpretation of the Dionysiac in a modern context.

19 See Goldhill (2007) 40–42.

20 Most recently, Perris 2016 reviews multiple interpretations of the play by classicists. See also Powers (2009) (on Bill T. Jones' *The Bacchae Project*) and (2014) for problems in interpreting *Bacchae* in performance.

21 See Partch (1974) and (1991) with Wolff (2010), and Foley (2012) 99–104.

Dionysus in 69, by contrast, began as an exploration of how theatre might contribute to a cultural contemporary revolution in which Dionysus seemed already historically present in some form in American popular culture and to reconcile individualism with communal and ecstatic modes of celebration.²² The play's audience was invited at various points to participate in a ritualized performance where divisions between performers and viewers were frequently eliminated to the point where spectator participation eventually got out of control and had to be reined in. Nude actors framed the play by performing Dionysus' birth ritual modelled after an Asmat rite of passage in New Guinea and later reversed the rite in a bloody, arguably gynophobic death ritual for Pentheus. Over the play's run what began as an exploration of cultural liberation and a challenge to traditional authority that degenerated into violence ended up at one point as overtly political satire, where in the final scene a nearly fascist Dionysus ran for President in November 1968 and led the audience out into the street at the conclusion. The script mingled excerpts of *Bacchae* (around 600 of 1300 lines in Arrowsmith's translation) with texts generated by the actors who used both their own and the fictional names of their characters. Pentheus remained largely trapped in the original script whereas Dionysus increasingly moved towards it as the play evolved in the direction of seemingly arbitrary revenge. As Dionysus said to Pentheus: 'Bill (Shephard, the actor playing Pentheus), you don't understand. You're a man. I'm a god. This is a tragedy. The odds are against you'. Pentheus' transformation under Dionysus' influence involved a for-the-time innovative homoerotic encounter with the god. As many critics pointed out, the play's representation of Dionysus was (perhaps deliberately) contradictory and ambiguous. To quote from several versions of the play's own final messenger speech, 'What I can't tell you is the reason why anyone, god or candidate, can promise a man joy, freedom, ecstasy. And then make him settle for a bloodbath'. 'You can have some kind of catharsis. I don't mind that. It's the pornography of death I mind'. 'To act out prevailing taboos is not to be free, no more than to act out the prevailing totems. To destroy property, to get women, will not set you free ...' for 'Violence is as American as apple pie'.²³

Many productions of *Bacchae* have continued to link Dionysus' entrance into Thebes with various forms of popular music, especially rock music, and

22 See especially Schechner (1970); Brecht (1969); Zeitlin (2004); Fischer-Lichte (2014) 27–47; and van Zyl Smit (2016).

23 Schechner (1970) has no page numbers, but these lines are quoted by Zeitlin (2004) 74–75. Brian de Palma also filmed the play.

dance.²⁴ Among these Prospect Theatre Company's *Rockae* directed by Cara Reichel with music and lyrics by Peter Mills and choreography by Marlo Hunter performed at New York's Hudson Guild Theatre in 2007 stood out as a rock opera in which all the characters, even Cadmus, Pentheus, and the messengers, sang many of their lines.²⁵ The opening speech of the play's androgynous Dionysus was sung as 'A God Walks the Earth', and merged with the opening choral song. Pentheus' first response to the captured Dionysus in disguise was represented by a burst into song. The first messenger speech, entitled 'Cowherd's Song' was sung to guitar with a slightly country flavour; from behind his voice a choral hymn emerged that burst into startling dissonance as the bacchants were attacked by the herdsmen. The hard rock destruction of the palace, 'Let the Bedrock Rock', was soon followed by the sultry 'Poison in the Veins' sung by Dionysus, the Chorus, and a Pentheus lyrically fantasizing about going to see the bacchants on the mountain. Danger lurked behind festive music at every stage. The second messenger speech, 'Soldier's Song', began in military style with a slight drum accompaniment that was interrupted by a dreamy sung exchange between Dionysus and Pentheus in high tenors that suggested an encounter between mother and child already anticipated in Euripides' cross-dressing scene when Pentheus imagines returning in his mother's arms. Dionysus' male voice then summoned the bacchants to action while Pentheus continued to address his maddened mother in a childlike voice until the sudden violent musical shift into his destruction.

PENTHEUS:

MOTHER, IT'S YOUR SON.

I KNOW YOU RECOGNIZE THE FACE YOU SEE,

YOU, WHO CARRIED ME ...

MOTHER, I WAS SCARED

BUT NOW I'M IN THE SAFEST PLACE TO BE.

YOU WILL CARRY ME HOME.

SOLDIER:

AND AGAVE APPEARED TO UNDERSTAND.

AS SHE TENDERLY TOOK HIM BY THE HAND

AND ...

LIMB BY LIMB,

SHE STARTED TO RIP HER SON TO PIECES ...

24 See Perris (2016) 39–58.

25 See Foley (2012) 110–116.

The play reintroduced a more detailed lament of Agave over her son's fractured body than has been retained in Euripides' damaged original and closed with a final song that asserted the play's lack of closure:

THERE IS NO MORAL TO THE STORY YOU'VE SEEN HERE, THIS
BLOODY QUARREL 'TWEEN A MAN AND A GOD ...

Yet, despite not offering any definite interpretation of *Bacchae's* mysteries and evoking some negative critical response to the shocking final shift to Agave's extended lamentation, this performance produced in both reviewers and in those with whom I spoke a sense of catharsis promised in *Rockae's* final lines to the audience, perhaps because musically this version never fully came down to earth.

ONLY NOW, WHAT YOU'RE FEELING AT THE MOMENT,
TORN APART, NOT YOUR BODY BUT YOUR SOUL,
ONLY NOW, RIPPED TO PIECES,
DOES THE POWER THIS RELEASES
MAKE YOU WHOLE SOMEHOW.

David Greig's version of *Bacchae*, first performed at the King's Theatre in Edinburgh in 2007 in a co-production between the National Theatre of Edinburgh and the Edinburgh international festival in association with Lyric Hamsmith and later in New York, shared certain familiar features with earlier productions: a Chorus of black women sang Motown-inspired R & B music to celebrate Dionysus as 'the Scream' and the god, played by Alan Cumming, drew attention to his stylish androgyny from his first speech.²⁶ Yet the text throughout drew unusual attention to Dionysus as god of theatre. As Dionysus observed the tomb of his mother in the prologue, he established his role as a stage magician by making flowers sprout from the ground. Later he made the 'palace' visibly collapse. The following exchange in the first scene between Pentheus and the disguised god underlines their dramatic conflict as a contest among script writers and performers:

Pentheus:
You twist words cleverly, stranger,
But I'll make you pay a high price

26 See further Meineck (2007) and Perris (2016) 131–150 on this production.

For this preening performance.
 Dionysus
 I'll pay, but you'll pay too, my friend,
 A fine for failing to applaud
 A theatrical god.
 Pentheus
 He's bold
 This Bakkhic actor from abroad.
 He's learned his lines—I'll give him that—
 But now I am in charge. I'm writing the script.
 Dionysus
 Are you? What happens next?
 Do tell.²⁷

Later the god remarked on enjoying the 'show' created when Pentheus fought a bull in the palace and gave theatrical 'notes' to himself, then dressed Pentheus for his 'denouement' as a tragic 'star' with 'his name in lights forever'. This performance invited the audience to revel in its witty theatricality; Pentheus never had a chance to compete in the game of this play and was almost immediately entrapped in it. In the final scene the golden god even staged a new role for himself as spectator of the violence perpetrated against the royal family by remarking, in a form absent in Euripides, on Agave's return to reality and the mourning of her son:

This scene is hard to watch. This grief.
 It brings me no joy to see
 A mother weeping for her boy.
 A grandfather destroyed. A house—
 A great city—spoiled forever.
 I knew the ending when I wrote
 the script, but still—to see it—here
 In front of me, played for real,
 It's cruel.²⁸

He then added a further almost defensive remark that if he had been recognized in time the characters could have met a happy fate. This sentiment has

²⁷ Greig (2007) 29.

²⁸ Greig (2007) 83–84.

no counterpart in Euripides' final scene. This production's exploitation of the god's theatricality on the one hand put Dionysus vividly in charge of the often self-conscious performance, but the concluding scene did not in my view illuminate the broader point of this theatricality and left the play's conclusion—as has often been the case—elusive and incomprehensible.

The equally metatheatrical *The Bacchae: Torn to Pieces*, a version directed by Susan Fenichel for the Hopeful Monsters in Seattle (1995), Austin, Texas (1996) and New York (2001), adopted a particularly challenging approach to interpreting the play.²⁹ The group interwove a small number of snippets of nontheatrical sources, both literary and historical, into a staged investigation of *Bacchae*. The Oklahoma City bombing stood in the immediate background of the Seattle and Austin productions and the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre in the New York production. The play took the form of a tribunal where three citizens of Thebes were brought before an examiner to bear witness to the events that took place in *Bacchae*. As the examiner announced, 'We've arrived at a place of danger and simplicity—above all of simplicity. I propose that we make the past the present and future happen all at once ... You will realize that these characters are dangerous. They may decide to walk out of the story at any time, leaving us to carry on as best we can'. The actors, named and wearing modern dress, were required both to narrate the events of the play listed on a blackboard and to demonstrate what happened at Thebes by stepping out from their seats at the witness table into *Bacchae's* roles. As the play went on the borderline between the actors and their roles became increasingly blurred in multiple ways despite the inexorable narrative propelling them forward. Dionysus alone could destroy the boundary between story and reality and remain in control of both his identity and the narrative. Even the examiner briefly lost her formal role at moments and entered into the performance.

After the opening speech of the god the witnesses were paralyzed and asserted the wish to 'protect ourselves by becoming mad'. The narrator as well as the actors made choral-style additions at various points, some about the dissolution and mutability of our lives and our selves or the impossibility of controlling human language. At other times the actors resisted the required move into *Bacchae's* roles and clung to simply narrating events that they could not fathom. In an electrifying suddenly intimate scene Dionysus very slowly undressed and dressed Pentheus as a woman onstage as the king muttered military phrases into a microphone and Tibetan bells rang. The scene had no

29 I thank Ellen McLaughlin for a copy of the unpublished script and Lynn Kozak for an excellent unpublished paper on the play.

potentially humorous elements. Pentheus left the stage alone to become a spectator of a mysteriously unspecific kind. The female witness narrating Agave fell into her role midsentence, as she shifted from a third to first person narrative that includes parts of *Bacchae*'s second messenger speech, a speech that was also spoken with additional interpolations by a male speaker and Dionysus. Agave's horrifying realization that the box and plastic bag before her contained the remains of her son resonated painfully with the events of 9/11. She opened the bag and examined the mutilated limbs.

After the exile of Agave and Cadmus the actors picked up texts of *Bacchae* from a pile of books on the table. The examiner had asked for a reckoning. The actors were unable to make sense of either events or characters as witnesses or actors and they simultaneously repeated their puzzled responses and departed emotionally shattered by their experience. As they exited, they intoned a series of disjointed and contradictory phrases—questions, commands, and first-person statements—that they had offered at the beginning of the play. Dionysus alone escaped this dramatic experience unscathed; his final brief speech was a unity of incomprehensible contradictions. Music by David Russell played on guitar, piano and other instruments accompanied many parts of the performance. This often-frightening production refused to offer any answers, any final reckoning that would allow the spectators on and offstage to move forward as witnesses or participants both in the narrative and in the world where modern references continually located it.

Many productions such as Charles Mee's *Bacchae 2.1* and Caryl Churchill and David Lan's *Mouthful of Birds* have adapted or reimagined *Bacchae* to focus on the play's challenge to gender and class binaries.³⁰ Mee's version, first performed at the Mark Taper Theatre in Los Angeles in 1993 under the direction of Brian Kulick, presents a transvestite Dionysus and a Chorus of pointedly foreign third world women who perform exotic nonwestern dance and play exotic instruments. As Mee's notes describe these women:

These women have many qualities, ... but all of them must, first of all, be artists: dancers, singers, operatic singers, players of musical instruments,

30 For Mee's text see www.charlesmee.org/plays.shtml, and for discussion see Foley (1999–2000) 7–9, and Hartigan (2011) 72–88. For discussion of Churchill/Lan (1986), see Hersh (1992). The most assertively 'feminist' productions of Euripides (*Trojan Women* and *Medea*) have been by the Irish playwright Brendan Kennelly; Maureen Duffy's 1969 British new version of *Bacchae*, *Rites*, also explores female violence from a feminist perspective. The American playwright Karen Hartman's *Troy Women* (2005) represents a feminist perspective through its historically conscious and differentiated Chorus.

Butoh performers, animal trainers, ... or possessed of other extraordinary and highly developed arts that they perform with such power and beauty as to break your heart with that alone.

These women are related—politically, historically, and spiritually—to the agrarian, democratic, matriarchal Minoans, who were always shown bare-breasted in Minoan art. Whether or not these women are bare-breasted, they should have large, flowing skirts of spectacular colours, wonderful hair, hundreds of bright ribbons in their hair, astonishing necklaces or other pieces of jewelry.

So, they are not just women, not just third world women, not just people from the revolutionary periphery, not just artists, but Dionysian artists.

Each of the Chorus members have strange unique voices, bodies, and modes of performance that are heard when Pentheus arrives in female disguise on the mountain. Some are tattooed, painted, or pierced. They display an 'aggressive versatility', a capacity for ecstasy and for strange explorations of their own and other people's incomprehensible sexualities. As one woman, a Cook, says:

There are people in the world,
 so strange,
 with tastes so particular,
 you think there are one or two kinds of people in the world
 men and women
 or straight or gay
 and then you discover
 no
 there are hundreds of sorts of people
 thousands
 with tastes so particular
 things to which each one of us responds ...

Dionysus even asserts to Pentheus earlier in the play that 'there are places in the world that I have seen where there are 8 different genders or even more'.

In the end, it is only the maddened western Agave, dressed out of the pages of Vogue magazine, who turns from a non-collective, non-utopian ecstasy to violence and kills her son by slamming him against the ground. The inscrutable Bacchae themselves simply depart the stage with Dionysus, whirling like dervishes as ash or rose petals (the script offers a director's choice) fall on them from above. Cadmus and Agave remain huddling in a despairing embrace and observe a world they cannot comprehend.

In this play Pentheus and his two attendants in Brooks Brothers suits, men who readily express their master's non-elite sides from the beginning with startling crudity, accept frightening traditional clichés about women and their dangerous closeness to nature, revel in their superior military prowess, and gradually reveal under Dionysus' influence complex attractions to both violence and their own sex. Yet this Pentheus also has a powerful dedication to and pleasure in civilization that deliberately resists everything that Dionysus apparently stands for.

And what does he [Dionysus] have to tell us?
 That we should prefer instinct to knowledge.
 Prefer passion to wisdom.
 Prefer whim to plan.
 Is this the advice the gods are giving us these days?
 ...
 I acknowledge my instincts.
 I enjoy my passions.
 I like to indulge a whim.

But there are other pleasures, too.
 The pleasure of a well-ordered society that guarantees us peace in our homes and in our streets.
 The pleasure of living not in mud huts with roofs of thatch but in buildings of marble that may take some careful planning to design, some sense of balance and harmony so that they are built to stand, some years of labor to complete, some sense of understanding to appreciate.
 There is the pleasure of harmonious music.
 The pleasure of elegant dance.
 The pleasure of uncommon food, uncommonly prepared, and served.
 The pleasures of civility.

Mee's Pentheus even briefly plays cocktail bar songs on a piano. The mixture in his mind of rationality and crude binaries about gender is initially challenged as insufficiently complex to deal with life and human nature by the 'old liberals' Cadmus and Tiresias. Cadmus even quotes from Plato's *Republic* to assert women's capacity to be equal to men. Pentheus' contradictory character and aesthetic sensibilities predictably break down under Dionysus' teasing manipulations. In the mysterious global, contemporary world of this play, even the possibility of grasping the meaning of civilization eludes comprehension.

Caryl Churchill and David Lan's equally metatheatrical *A Mouthful of Birds*, performed in 1986 by the Joint Stock Theatre Group and Birmingham Repertory Theatre at a series of venues concluding in the Royal Court Theatre interwove *Bacchae*'s plot with the stories of seven people whose limited and frustrating lives make them open to possession, violence, resistance, and ecstasy. Eventually the play's women all become possessed by Agave and kill a character named Derek who is possessed by Pentheus as Dan (a vicar) and Paul (a businessman) in the role of Dionysus observe. The original set was a dilapidated structure with divided spaces on two levels; separate scenes overlapped with each other. Each character is trapped by memories, addictions, fears, and fantasies. None of the characters return to their previous lives after a shared 'undefended' or 'cancelled' day³¹ in which forces inside and outside themselves possess them. One woman, Lena, trapped in a deadly domestic life, is possessed by a spirit who compels her to kill her daughter in the bath. The Trinidadian Marcia, who works phones for a lingerie company, is no longer able to handle her avocation as a medium. The acupuncturist Yvonne is failing to control her alcoholism. Paul, a wealthy businessman in the meat business, falls in love with a pig, who is slaughtered before he can protect it. Doreen, the play's first Agave, attacks a neighbour who won't turn the radio down. The jobless Derek, who works out with weights, becomes possessed by Herculine Barbin, an historical nineteenth-century French woman who was raised as a girl but finally revealed in adolescence to be a man/hermaphrodite and eventually committed suicide. Derek is then dressed as a woman in the role of Pentheus. Each character shares moments of ecstatic dance and liberation.

At the conclusion, Yvonne has become a butcher, Marcia lives in a boat, Paul has quit his job and become a homeless alcoholic, Derek is happy becoming a transvestite, Lena cares for old people. Lena concludes of her violent act, 'I remember I enjoyed doing it. It's nice to make someone alive and it's nice to make someone dead. Either way. That power is what I like best in the world. The struggle is every day not to use it.'³² Doreen/the first Agave, however, is possessed by birds. 'It seems that my mouth is full of birds which I crunch between my teeth.'³³ They seem to choke her. She has remained a secretary. Dionysus continues to dance. This version radically reimagines what *Bacchae* might be about in a modern context. It concludes with no answers but creates a compelling exploration of internal and external forces

31 Churchill/Lan (1986) 5.

32 Churchill/Lan (1986) 70.

33 Churchill/Lan (1986) 71.

that produce a terrifying Dionysiac moment of liberation, social resistance, and violence with permanent results.

Kneehigh Theatre, a Cornish theatre company that produced the metatheatrical *The Bacchae: A Tragedy in One Act* directed by Emma Rice with a script by Carl Grose and Anna Maria Murphy in 2004 at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, Lyric Hammersmith, the Bristol Old Vic, and Hall for Cornwall in Truro went the furthest since *Dionysus in 69* of any production in deliberately inviting its audience to participate in its radical mixture of tragic rebellion and rage, comedy, and music.³⁴ A climbing frame with steps represented the mountain in the background. A Chorus of six men with shaved heads entered wearing girdles and suspenders and donned white tutus hung above them at the opening. Agave, whose story was more extensively motivated in this play, soon appeared in a plain green dress, headscarf, and sunglasses suggestive of Jackie Kennedy with the aim of escaping a stultifying life in the palace and joining bacchic celebrants representing many age groups. Stripped to her underwear, she was seduced by Dionysus, made love with him halfway up the back wall, then ascended into madness. Pentheus, who was defined by an obsession with boundaries, asserted that 'A king must know his boundaries, without them he is lost'.³⁵ Dionysus, who claims to be a god from the first, later countered with: 'No, without them he is free'.³⁶ Pentheus was eventually stripped and re-clothed as a woman onstage. The bacchants performed a *sparagmos* (ritual tearing apart) of a lamb. Agave, topless and wearing only a red tutu, ripped off the lamb's head and smeared herself with blood. She then danced an erotic dance of death with a naked Pentheus and tore him apart. Dionysus, played by a Hungarian actor, Róbert Lucskay, sometimes spoke, like the Hungarian actress, Éva Maggar, who played Agave, in Hungarian. He abandoned his pinstripe suit, gold high heels, and tall red hat for a white ball gown and white hat in the final scene. Here his only merciless remark to Agave and her father was 'It would have been better you had not been born'.³⁷

From the first moment of the play the characters engaged in various direct ways with the audience. They demonstrated the plot on a blackboard near the opening. Props like the *Bacchae's* thyrsi were made from newspapers by the Chorus onstage. The horrified Agave wrapped the head of Pentheus in news-

34 For reviews, see especially the database at <http://www4.open.ac.uk> on the receptions of *Bacchae* and Stewart (2004). See also Perris (2016) 51, 55–56, and 147–148.

35 Kneehigh (2005) 72.

36 Kneehigh (2005) 109.

37 Kneehigh (2005) 119, repeated using the word 'never' on 120.

paper after she has recognized it. All of the characters played instruments and moved anarchically in and out of song and wild dance. Characters interviewed each other and made sometimes silly jokes to the audience or invited it to join them in song. The performance's attempt actively to create an audience for their tragi-comic, yet merciless version of *Bacchae* was perhaps more successful than the legibility of their interpretation of the Dionysiac, but this version invited the audience in multiple ways to consider and puzzle over the nature of its deliberate theatricality.

According to reviews, these radical re-imaginings of *Bacchae* have repeatedly engaged their audiences more powerfully than more conventional performances of the original in translation. For example, Sir Peter Hall's ambitious and elaborate 2002 production of Colin Teevan's idiomatic, speakable adaptation at London's National Theatre and at Epidauros largely failed to produce strong reactions in or illumination for its audiences.³⁸ The production used often somewhat androgynous but naturalistic masks and was supported by Harrison Birtwistle's sometimes atonal music that mixed percussion and wind and by slow choreography suggestive of Butoh. As in the Greek original three actors played all the roles, and the set was a raked wooden disk with a cyclorama and a steep ramp leading to the mountain at the back where eight silent nude bacchantes appeared in silhouette. The costumes suggested colonial Britain in the 1940s, and the mixed Chorus of fifteen was wrapped in concealing red veils suggestive of chadors worn over revealing leather costumes. Spectacular stage effects included the splitting of the stage at the centre where a chasm replete with fire and smoke appeared when the god destroyed the royal palace and then reclosed. At the conclusion, the mutilated body of Pentheus was covered by the Chorus' red robes; Dionysus, wearing a bull mask, emerged from these remains on a platform that raised him high above the stage to make his final pronouncements and then disappeared back below the stage. Although the production did resonate with its post-9/11 context, the deliberate underlining of east-west conflict, faith and repression, and other familiar binary oppositions became in the view of critics overly literal.

The other play that I have not discussed, *Medea*, remains the most popular Euripides play from the nineteenth century to the present on a global scale. *Medea* has served as an important vehicle for female actors; in this case the heroine literally dominates the stage action. Yet there are a number of other reasons for its popularity, such as the centrality of gender conflict

38 For reviews, including the Hall production, see especially the database at <http://www4.open.ac.uk> on the receptions of *Bacchae* and Perris (2016) 113–130.

in the play that has raised important 'feminist' issues about marriage and divorce, the central tension between Greeks and barbarians/natives and foreigners/immigrants, and the themes of jealousy and infanticide. The play's refusal to be a 'tragedy of fate' allows extensive consideration of psychological and social forces that generate its horrific conclusion and permits scenes of domestic conflict to be played for melodrama and sometimes even tragicomedy, a literary form central to serious plays in the twentieth century. *Bacchae* and *TW* by contrast, address collective issues that have continued to resonate both in the U.S. and Europe. It may be too easy to regret the effects of war once it is too late to challenge them in advance, as is the case with *TW*; yet the play continues to seem powerful in the context of a history of unending modern violence even though it offers little resolution. JoAnne Akalaitis, who produced *TW* in Nicholas Rudall's translation at the Shakespeare Theatre in Washington D.C. in 1999, even sees the play's lack of traditional plot development as an advantage. For her *TW* is like a Handel oratorio, with a dynamic that becomes increasingly intense.³⁹ Unlike *TW*, *Bacchae* has tended to be produced more sporadically ever since the 1960s, and productions seem more conditioned by the mood of particular cultural moments. Yet to the degree that versions of *Bacchae* have focused on questions about gender, theatre, and performance, they have received the most enthusiastic critical reception.

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Euripides Performed in Japan

Mae J. Smethurst

Performances of Greek tragedy have become widespread in Japan since World War II. In 1957, during post-Allied occupation debates over whether Japan should join the Western Anti-Communist alliance, students of aesthetics in the Faculty of Letters of Tokyo University founded the Greek Tragedy Study Circle (*Girisha Higeki Kenkyukai*, abbreviated *Giriken*), and over the course of a decade performed plays by Greek tragedians, including Euripides' *Trojan Women*, *Heracles*, and *Bacchae*. Later, during the reaction to the Vietnam war in the 1970s, director Suzuki Tadashi staged Greek tragedies, followed in the 1980s by Ninagawa Yukio, and in the 1990s until today by Miyagi Satoshi. All three companies have produced Euripidean dramas, most famously Suzuki's *Trojan Women* and *Bacchae*, Ninagawa's *Medea* and *Trojan Women*, and Miyagi's *Medea* and *Trojan Women*. Greek tragedy, because of its universal message, had much to say to postwar Japanese audiences.

Few records of Greek tragedies being staged in Japan before World War II exist. The only three productions, it seems, were of *Oedipus the King*—the first by the famous producer/director Kawakami Otojiro in 1895,¹ the other two in 1916 and 1933. The last, post-Freudian in interpretation, indicates that Japan was not so far out of the global intellectual milieu as to avoid learning of the Oedipus complex.²

Between 1890 and 1940, directors of modern, Western-influenced theatre (as distinguished from the traditional forms of *noh*, *kabuki*, *bunraku* and such offshoots as *shinpa*) leaned toward naturalistic, realistic theatre. Except for an occasional Shakespearian production, most Western plays produced in Japan at the turn of the twentieth century were translations of plays by Ibsen, Strindberg, Tolstoy, Gerhart Hauptmann, and others. Many Japanese writers, such as Kishida Kunio, also followed this tradition. The playwrights and directors of this 'new school of drama' (*shingeki*) rejected existing Japanese moral values and religion and tried to explain the world scientifically and rationally. As

1 Kawakami's production, if inspired by Sophocles' play, was at best a broad adaptation, not a translation.

2 Nishimura (2014) 42–44.

Japan moved toward emperor-centric militarism and war in the 1930s, *shingeki* moved toward Marxism and the radical left. Many of its practitioners suffered persecution and imprisonment. In the first decade after Japan's surrender in 1945, *shingeki's* liberal critique of the wartime order still dominated the non-traditional theatre world. It was only in the late 1950s, as Japanese intellectuals began to question Japan's postwar, American-imposed system, that Japanese directors turned away from realism and that Greek tragedies (to some extent comedies) became popular.³

One could say that within the history of the Giriken lie the true beginnings of performances of Greek tragedies in Japan, these notably within an academic context.⁴ Twenty students met in a small seminar room at Tokyo University in April 1957, to attend a series of lectures on Aristotle's Artistic Theory by Professor Takeuchi Toshio.⁵ Professor Takeuchi directed the students in scholarly sessions during which they vigorously discussed free will and autonomous action, which inevitably led them to the centrality of Greek tragedy. Focusing on Aristotle and Greek tragedy, they asked how without actually viewing performances could they discuss Greek tragedies from the viewpoint of artistic theory? No matter what Aristotle said, they thought they had to see the plays with their own eyes. With this resolve the Giriken was born and the members decided to reproduce a Greek masterpiece to the extent possible in its original form of performance with an emphasis on masks, Chorus, and staging.

By mid-July the group had chosen to produce *Oedipus* for Tokyo University's May festival. From September until January they studied the play and translated it from English versions and Greek texts. With a stroke of luck, they met Professor Kubo Masaaki at the Roualt Coffee Shop outside the gate of the University's Hongo campus. Kubo, a Harvard graduate in classics, became the leader of the group that grew with the addition of members from inside and out of Tokyo University, including professional actors who volunteered.

The Giriken began without funding. What they then received came from alumni until the Asahi Shinbun helped them with advertising. The newspaper's support led them to decide on a public performance, which the dean of the university arranged for at the Hibiya Outdoor Theatre, a semi-circular theatre in a park in central Tokyo. The students were able to rent the theatre each June at an affordable fee.

After *Oedipus* in 1958, in 1959 they performed *Antigone*, then *Prometheus Bound*, *Agamemnon*, *Philoctetes*, and finally a Euripidean play, *Trojan Women*,

3 See Havens (1982), and Goodman's Introduction (1988).

4 Hosoi (1990).

5 Kubo (2011).

followed by two more Euripidean plays, *Heracles* and *Bacchae*. After a year's hiatus, they staged *Suppliant Women*, then *Seven against Thebes*, both performed indoors at a different venue.⁶ 1970 saw their last performance, at the time of the Vietnam War. When the rest of the world mainly saw productions of Greek tragedies by Sophocles and Euripides, it is worth noting that of the eleven Giriken, four were by Aeschylus. It was the Giriken that established the roots of Greek tragedy in Japan.

In order to comment on how Euripides was interpreted in Japan over the years between 1958 and the present, I will treat two Euripidean plays, *Trojan Women* and *Medea*, discussing aspects of the former in the versions of the Giriken and Suzuki, and comparing the performances of *Medea* in the versions of Ninagawa and Miyagi.

I did not see the Giriken's production of *Trojan Women*, hereafter *TW*, performed on June 1 and 2, 1963, but from reading essays written by participants after the performances and from interviews, and reading comments about the group, here are a number of observations.⁷ Kamura Takeo, who played Menelaus, wrote that *TW* was the first Euripidean play performed by the Giriken. He expressed surprise at the differences in the Aeschylean and Sophoclean languages on the one hand and Euripidean on the other. He wrote, 'My view of the stage changed. With Sophocles, characters undergo bitter experiences (both positive and negative) and come to know the truth. This is what we call *fushigi monogatari*, stories with surprising twists. The power of the speeches is hidden in the contradictions and complications of the character ... As I was speaking, I found that no matter how much power I put into my voice I could not do the words justice—because of the dignity of what I was saying. Sophocles is a playwright's playwright. One can understand the relationships between the characters and thus understand the structure of the plot. His plays, and those of Aeschylus as well, move step-by-step in the complications and unfolding of plot. But Euripides is different. His speeches are like sharp spears that reveal the truth as if when spoken they plunge into one's chest. In Euripides' plays, each section is put together skillfully and aims toward one truth. The philosophical aspect tightly weaves the parts together—melodrama, music, and philosophy. The difficulty of performing Euripides is that the actor as a character may not be on the mark when rehearsing'.⁸

6 Kimura (2005) 40–41.

7 Hosoi (1963) provides much of the material about the beginnings of the Giriken.

8 Kamura (1963).

The famous novelist Ōoka Shōhei wrote that the seated audience numbered 6,000 over the two nights.⁹ The Giriken's members attempted to remain true to their interpretation of what the original productions might have been like, at the same time causing the audience to think of the present day through their interpretations of the tragedy. Hosoi, a founder, wrote that under the leadership of Professors Takeuchi and Kubo, the Giriken was held to working strictly with original sources. It performed with both Choruses and masks, using vase paintings and replicas of masks in trying to understand how each was used in antiquity. The Giriken Chorus, Ōoka thought, was particularly successful. Its Chorus members sometimes danced to Greek-sounding music, sometimes writhed and twisted, raising their hands as a way of emoting without speaking. Since the masks hid the faces of the actors, the masks appropriate to the character produced the illusion that the characters were Greek. But because Japanese heads and bodies are smaller than Greeks', the masks had to be smaller. As with noh masks, the angle of the actor's head affected the emotion being shown—the same masks could reveal happiness, sorrow, or pain. The masks muffled the actors' voices so that there was a loss of individuality of speeches and actors. All tended to sound the same and the actors had difficulty projecting their voices. In fact, gestures were used so that the audience knew who was speaking. The Giriken was forced to use three microphones onstage and five in the orchestra.¹⁰ As for the orchestra, Professor Kubo said that given the distance between the raised stage and the floor of the orchestra, the Chorus in the orchestra was, as intended, the medium between actors and audience. It provided the meaning, the significance to the plays. This, he said, was democracy in action.

Unlike many other Greek tragedies they produced, the Giriken noticed that *TW* lacks ups and downs in its plot. It is down all the way throughout. Hecuba reveals the depths of her soul as she falls from queen to slave. Yoko Hayashi wrote that she based the sound of her voice on the depths of the suffering of Hecuba's soul, (*kokoro no naka*). From beginning to end Helen maintains her innocence. The Chorus grieves, without relief, as does Andromache. Cassandra is sure of the future, but it is bleak. The play required the actors to portray suffering from opening until end, when the audience hears the sound of the city crashing. Both the acting and the effects of the production created a feeling of utter desolation. The outdoor space enhanced the sound and overall effects. As the sound of Troy's fall was heard coming from backstage, the stage lights went off. Then with the stage effect of white smoke drifting out from backstage, the

9 Ōoka (1963) 76.

10 On making masks, see Tamura (1963).

Trojan women, still in masks and costumes, reappeared, singing a dirge and beating their chests. The elegy performed by the crushed women, we are told, penetrated the audiences' hearts. They find out at the end the connection to the gods who appeared at the beginning: the gods not only predict the outcome for Troy, but also that troubles await the Greeks on their return home. Since there is no set showing the walls or tower or camp of Troy, it is hard to believe that the audience, viewing this play only a little over a decade after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Tokyo and Japan's surrender in World War II, and in the midst of a debate over whether or not to remain part of America's postwar world order, did not see the relevance of *TW* to their lives.

Just as productions of the *Giriken* came to an end in the late 1960s, a new phenomenon appeared on the scene worldwide and in Japan: The New Left.¹¹ The members of this movement, mostly university students, shared many of the concerns of the Old Left: capitalism, its connections with war and fascism, and opposition to the worldwide American-led anti-communist coalition, of which Japan was a member. But they added a new concern: the hierarchical structure of Japanese society, and especially of their universities. In a strange twist, many of the leading intellectuals of the Old Left headed this hierarchy. In 1969, Masao Maruyama, a social scientist at Tokyo University, who critically analyzed Japan's pre-war and wartime political structure, had his office and library trashed by demonstrating students. The students argued that Maruyama, and other leading intellectuals, had led Japan astray by believing in the efficacy of Japan's 'American' postwar democracy. They believed that these Old Left social scientists, in their analysis of Japan's pre- and immediate postwar society, had not taken into account the horrors of the bombing of Hiroshima. It was in this milieu that gods and spirits began to reappear onstage in an attempt to 'replace the Hegelian-Marxist myth with a more humane one'.¹²

Kitano says that the Vietnam War and 'Soviet attacks on Prague' increased questioning about the origins of respect for human beings and human freedom, such as can be seen in *Antigone* where Antigone disobeys the king by burying her brother. *TW* reflects on how women are trampled upon in wartime. Both plays have contemporary meaning and the key to a new theatre that would deal with these questions was ancient Greece. The *Giriken* had a strong influence but came to it late. The next steps were Suzuki and Ninagawa. Suzuki estab-

11 Politically Mishima Yukio was an exception. In the mid-60's he staged his version of *Heracles*, entitled *The Fall of the House of Suzaku*. Kominz (2007) 45–46.

12 Goodman (1988) 18.

lished his own methods with *TW*, tied contemporary war to ancient legend and created a new classic theatre.¹³

Waseda University, one of Japan's primary private universities, founded in the late nineteenth century as a 'liberal' counterweight to state-run national universities such as Tokyo University, became a centre of student unrest. It was in the 1960s that the director Tadashi Suzuki founded the Waseda Small Theatre Company.¹⁴ He had directed a number of plays by Chekhov, Arthur Miller, and Tennessee Williams before founding this company; only later did he turn to Greek tragedy.

Suzuki's *Trojan Women* opened at Iwanami Hall on December 10, 1974 and ran until January 31, 1975. Iwanami Hall, where the play debuted, was owned and run by the Iwanami Publishing Company, the leading intellectual publishing house in Japan, founded in 1913 and still active today. The production was no small event. I saw this first performance, but I direct the reader to the writings of Paul Allain, Yukihiro Goto, and Marianne McDonald about both this production and its better-known reincarnation in 1977 (it toured the world until 1990) and the development in Suzuki's performance practices.¹⁵

The professor of Classics, Matsudaira Chiaki, who translated the play for Suzuki, writes in his essay on the program that he was first attracted to *TW* when he read Wilamowitz's German translation of the play. Matsudaira thought the translation so beautiful that he undertook to learn ancient Greek and became a distinguished classicist. He added that although *TW* is not a typical Greek tragedy—it does not have plot development in an Aristotelian sense—it moves the audience deeply. Matsudaira writes that in spite of its cruelty the play is 'indescribably beautiful'. He was deeply moved by Hecuba's soliloquy at the beginning, where Suzuki omits the Greek gods of Euripides, and by the Chorus' *skênê* words on the fall of Troy. There is lyricism both in the words, and he adds, in the dance and music, even though we cannot reconstruct these. *TW* is a lyric tragedy or a tragic lyric poem. He concludes, 'I am thankful for the opportunity to see the play directed by Suzuki, and with such a talented cast'.

Makoto Ôoka wrote in the program that he had to adapt the text not only to make the words 'less distant' from his audience, but also because Suzuki wanted to tell two stories simultaneously, one of the fall of Troy and another with contemporary significance—Suzuki was making an anti-war statement. Suzuki and Ôoka also rewrote the play to Suzuki's emphasis on intense bod-

13 Kitano (2008); Goto (1989) 103–123.

14 Goodman (1988) 356–357; McDonald (1991) 21, 23.

15 Alain (2003) and McDonald (1991). McDonald provides a summary of the production in (1991) 36–38.

ily discipline.¹⁶ Suzuki was in the forefront of directors who turned away from naturalism, bringing traditional theatre, and, in his case, noh drama, back into his productions. Suzuki's actors went through rigorous bodily training before appearing onstage. Much of this discipline was drawn from the training noh actors began in childhood. Ōoka continued that Suzuki was also concerned with words and how they sounded. Thus, he did not use masks. Ōoka and Suzuki believed the physical discipline of the actors enhanced their diction. The actors should sound like musical instruments. As Ōoka wrote, Kayoko Shiraiishi, who played both Hecuba and Cassandra, 'reminds him of a pipe organ. Her range is great and smooth, thanks to Suzuki's physical training'. Suzuki also emphasized an important aspect of noh performance: stamping of the feet at critical moments. Noh stages are constructed of wood, with ceramic jars located at a number of places below the stage. Thus, when the actor stamps, the sound reverberates. Suzuki wrote that the stamping not only forced the actor to focus his strength, but also by doing stamping exercises frequently in training, enhanced the actor's endurance.¹⁷

Suzuki recruited Kanze Hisao, generally recognized as the greatest noh actor of postwar Japan. He was a member of Tessenkai, an innovative branch of an important school of noh called Kanze, and together with his brothers and members of the Nomura family of kyogen (a comic counterpart of noh) founded a society to help actors better understand their roles (rather than performing by rote memorization of words and movements). He later formed the *Meinokai*, an organization that included not only noh and kyogen actors, but also actors of newer schools of drama. In France, as a theatrical exchange student at the invitation of the French government, he met the French actor Jean-Louis Barrault. Kanze performed noh several times in France. It was there that Suzuki first saw him perform and decided to cast him in *TW*.

Suzuki writes that the traditional theatre forms in Japan had an important influence on him.¹⁸ Not only did he admire the physical discipline of the noh actor's training and performance, but he also admired the nature of the stage, that is, the place where noh was traditionally performed. He writes that both noh and Greek drama were performed in an open, public space, but that theatre today (1970s and 1980s) has 'become a rite performed in a secret room. The sense of public space has been lost, rendering the art of watching a play quite close to the experience of watching a film or reading a novel. I strongly believe

16 Allain (2003) 152–159 on Suzuki's technique as it developed between the first and second versions of the production.

17 Suzuki (1986) 8.

18 Suzuki (1986) *passim*.

that we must return to open spaces', a la noh and Greek tragedy.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Suzuki was a realist. He understood that in order to have productions staged, you need to put them on in enclosed theatres. One of the aspects of the noh actor's craft that appealed to Suzuki was the actor's ability to fit his performance into a fixed space. All noh stages are the same size, about 320 square feet, even when located out of doors. Through years of practice, the actors have internalized the stage's size, and are able to stay within this space although often wearing masks that make it almost impossible to see the ends of the stage. Thus they 'move on any stage as though it were a noh stage. The actor's body and the space reveal a mutual connection. I call a space that is thus connected to the actor's body a *sacred space*'.²⁰ It was because of Suzuki's desire to perform in a public and 'sacred space' that in 1976 he moved his company to Toga-mura, a mountain village of Toga, near one of the major centres of Zen Buddhism.

To Suzuki, Troy was a victim of the Greeks. He compared the fate of Troy to Japan under the yoke of American cultural imperialism. Japan, dominated politically, economically, and worst of all culturally by the United States, moved away from its own traditions and toward what Suzuki decried as cultural homogeneity, and a vulgar homogeneity at that. Thus, when Suzuki brought the gods back in, it was the bodhisattva Jizo, whose duty is to help people reach the Buddhist paradise, and whose special concern is to help the downtrodden and small children. Jizo is the god who appears onstage in Suzuki's *TW*. However, at the end of the play Suzuki dramatizes the characters' lack of faith in the gods, by showing Andromache now as a modern woman, hurling a bouquet of flowers at Jizo. The text ends with a contemporary song in both Japanese and English about a jilted woman who sings, 'I want you to love me tonight'. 'The modern woman contrasts with the older; both mourn their losses but the younger seems to capitulate to the woman who has replaced her in her lover's arms, the endless substitute. The words 'I want you to love me tonight' appear to be floating signifiers, and love, like the Marlboro wastebaskets, seems to be a new disposable commodity'.²¹ It's worth noting here that Miyagi Satoshi, Suzuki's successor as director of the Shizuoka Performing Arts Center, also staged his *TW* in 2005 in an outdoor theatre. But in Miyagi's version the Japanese are the Greek oppressors and the Koreans their Trojan victims—in fact, the production was trilingual and done collaboratively with the Korean director Jung Ung Yang's Yohanza Theatre Company. The third language was English, spo-

19 Suzuki (1986) 80.

20 Suzuki (1986) 91.

21 McDonald (1991) 38.

ken by Miyagi's gods who are not Buddhist saints, but Roosevelt, Churchill and MacArthur. The Japanese may have caused great suffering in World War II, but even then, they were manipulated by the Anglo-American gods.

Ninagawa, who premiered his version of *Medea* in 1983, did not direct a *TW* until December 2012–January 2013, when he staged the play in Tel Aviv and Tokyo.²² Ninagawa's production was also trilingual, in Japanese, Arabic and Hebrew, starring Shiraishi Kayoko as Hecuba, 40 years after she first played the role in Suzuki's version. Ninagawa's production was an anti-war plea but took no sides in the Israeli-Palestinian debate. As the Israeli actor, Ola Shur-Selektor, who played Cassandra, said, 'Sorrow and grief and war are the same in any language, and in any culture 'war is no good'. Even though we speak our own language, we understand each other'.²³ To Suzuki, Miyagi and Ninagawa, *TW* had a universal message.

Ninagawa and Miyagi both produced versions of *Medea*, Ninagawa originally in 1983 and Miyagi in 1999. Both presented their productions abroad as well as in Japan. They drew on traditional theatre forms, Ninagawa primarily on kabuki and Miyagi primarily on bunraku, the puppet theatre. Ninagawa described his productions as avant garde (*zen'eiteki*), traditional (*dentôteki*), and symbolic (*shôchôteki*) all at the same time.²⁴ In other words, his *Medea* was an eclectic mix of a variety of genres. He had his all-male Chorus speak like kabuki actors passing words from one member to another and then concluding in unison. He also used the three-stringed shamisen, but a non-kabuki version of the instrument, the Tsugaru shamisen, which has a twangier and more resonant sound than the instruments used by geisha and kabuki musicians. And Ninagawa had Mikami Hiroshi, a Japanese pop musician, compose the song 'Deep Feeling' to open the play. The music had a distinctively modern/contemporary Japanese sound to it.²⁵

Suzuki used a noh actor as the male lead in his *TW*; Ninagawa called on Tokusaburo Arashi, an *onnagata*, that is, a kabuki actor who specializes in playing women's roles, to play *Medea* in his Tokyo version of the play. In developing his interpretation of *Medea* as something akin to the male heroes of kabuki, Ninagawa has Arashi switch between the female sound of the voice of an *onnagata*, and his own male voice. Arashi delivers *Medea*'s famous line, 'Of all beings that exist within this world the most pitiable ones are we, that is, women',

22 Asahi Journal Weekly (AJW) Asahi Shinbun (digital) 31 Dec. 2012.

23 Bloomberg Business Blog, 2013/01/11.

24 For a description of his production, Smethurst (2002).

25 Some objected to the use of such music for a classical Greek play. This sounds like the reaction Euripides faced. See Smethurst (2002) n. 31, for a translation of the words.

in an *onnagata* style. Later, when Medea decides to take revenge, Arashi switches to his male voice.

Arashi's elaborate costume weighing fifty pounds is not a kabuki costume although clearly influenced by kabuki. The obi was missing, the sash that binds a woman's kimono over the wearer's chest, waist and abdomen. A proper obi symbolizes female repression. Ninagawa's costumer, Tsujimura Jusaburō, intentionally created Medea's costume by cutting up fifty antique obis and then sewing them back together. Under this elaborate outer robe an inner garment revealed two large (artificial) breasts. A large headdress that evokes the shape and decoration of the wig of a kabuki actor playing a geisha was much more elaborate. It included dangling sequins and ram-like decorations and doll-like faces in place of the usual hair. The blue and black face makeup that Medea wears is modelled on the kabuki makeup worn by a male character or supernatural being, not a human female.

The kabuki infusion is intensified by the use of the wooden clappers (*ki*) struck against the floor of the stage to signify a dramatic and emotional high-point. In the scene where the king condemns Medea and her children to exile, the clack of the *ki* underlines the intensity of this moment. We hear the *ki* once more as Medea tells us, in her *onnagata* voice, that she will take vengeance against the king, her husband Jason, and his bride. At this moment Arashi performs a *mie* pose and laughs kabuki style—a chilling moment. A *mie* is a pose taken by male characters, usually heroes, at very dramatic moments in the play—the actor stands absolutely still, rolls his head around, crosses his eyes with a powerful glare, and laughs demonically.

Ninagawa's borrowing and adaptations from kabuki continue throughout the play. The Chorus sings about hope for empowerment of women through song, lines 976–1001.²⁶

As they sing, Medea and the Chorus perform a dramatic inversion of a kabuki technique. En masse, they slowly pull red ribbons out of their mouth, a movement that suggests that they are spewing blood. Both kabuki and bunraku use red ribbons, but very differently. In the popular and graceful kabuki dance piece *Fuji Musume* (Wisteria Girl), for example, about a young woman in love, the male actor playing her role places the red ribbons attached to his hat into his mouth. The egurgitation of the red ribbons in Medea is a stunning inversion of this kabuki practice.

The language of the actors is another example of Ninagawa's adaptation of kabuki practice. In the Aegeus scene, the man from the capital, which indi-

26 For translation, see Smethurst (2002) 12.

cates Tokyo, speaks standard contemporary Japanese that was created only in the late nineteenth-early twentieth century, based on the language spoken by members of the feudal elite in the city of Edo, the old name of Tokyo, before 1869. In Ninagawa's *Medea*, the 'foreign' woman is referred to as *ikoku no onna* (a woman from a different place), that is, a person not from Tokyo. Since Japanese dialects before the turn of the twentieth century were often mutually unintelligible, an *ikoku no onna* was as foreign as someone from China or Europe. However, *Medea* does not speak a dialect, but various kinds of kabuki language, sometimes in a woman's voice and syntax, at other times in a male voice and language. While Aegeus speaks the Japanese of the audience, *Medea*, pleading with him to grant her asylum in the capital, switches into the most polite and seductive language an *onnagata* could muster. She reinforces her diction with gestures, putting her hands on her large, artificial breasts in a modern style, and raising her sleeve in front of her mouth, geisha style. Once Aegeus has promised to grant her asylum, she abandons her seductive style and speaks to him as an equal. Later, when she entreats Jason to persuade his bride to intervene with her father not to exile the children, she again (perhaps emboldened by her success with Aegeus) reverts to her seductive voice and language. Jason replies in the most boorish, male language possible. At this point, *Medea* hands over a gift box that contains the poisoned robe for the princess.

One of the conflicts of the Tokugawa period, that is, the late feudal period from 1603 to 1868, lay between the individualistic sense of pride and duty of the traditional samurai code and the Neo-Confucian collectivist doctrines propagated by the Tokugawa shoguns in their attempt to create a law-abiding and peaceful society. A safe society does not want skilled swordsmen running amok, so to prevent this, the Tokugawa introduced an ethic of obedience to law. The most famous example of this conflict can be seen in the kabuki play *Chushingura*, based on the story of the forty-seven loyal samurai who in 1703 avenged the honour of their feudal lord by assassinating the man responsible for the lord's suicide. Are they heroes for carrying out their vendetta as much of the public believed and still does, or threats to the social and political order of the day as the shogun's officials thought? *Medea* fits into this context. She is a woman who has been loyal and obedient to her husband but has been discarded and shamed by him. Thus, she will reject the Confucian ethic and become an individualistic hero to avenge her shame. When she speaks to Jason at the end of the play, *Medea* switches from her seductive voice to a strong male voice. Ninagawa at this point elevates *Medea* not only above other women, but also above other human beings. She speaks like one of the famous heroes of kabuki. The play ends with *Medea*, equal to male heroes, returning to a female voice, albeit not the seductive voice. She says in a strong, but female voice, 'Let

no one think this woman is weak, this woman is spineless. No, it is the opposite. I am one who understands no mercy at all toward my enemies and no limit of devotion toward my friends'. Here the Japanese and Greek texts are almost the same; in the epic tradition of both cultures, the language belongs to the heroes.

At the end, Medea, wearing the all-white robes and kabuki make-up of a supernatural being, enters on a dragon chariot attached to a crane about to fly over the audience to the capital. This is a familiar maneuver on the kabuki stage. Those who fly away have become *hitokami* or 'god people'. For example, Ichikawa Ennosuke III, in his kabuki role as Yamato Takeru, a hero of Japanese imperial mythology, departs not by exiting down the walkway from the stage to the back of the theatre, but by flying over the balcony. Ninagawa's Medea exits like the heroes of Japanese legend and kabuki.

Miyagi Satoshi also drew from traditional Japanese theatre to stage his Medea, in his case especially from bunraku in which as many as four men manipulate an almost life-sized puppet from behind, while a chanter speaks as both narrator and for the characters from a dais beside the stage. Miyagi, the founder of the theatre company Ku'Nauka, Russian for 'toward science', and also Suzuki's successor as the director of the Shizuoka Performing Arts Center, has developed a technique, inspired by bunraku, of having two actors play one role. One actor speaks while the other moves onstage. Miyagi thinks that the energy of both actors creates a non-naturalistic dynamic.

The bunraku puppet theatre attained great popularity at the turn of the twentieth century, the Meiji era, in which Miyagi set the production. In an interview he told me that he considered this period closer to fifth- and fourth-century BC Greece than other times in Japan, because both brought civilization to their countries. (In Japan at that time Western was synonymous with civilization.) In addition, Japan introduced Western drama and Greece created its drama. We can see on movable screens used at the beginning as a curtain and then on umbrellas in the background, a set of woodblock prints, a form of art which thrived at that time, depicting Japanese flying Western flags, wearing Western dress, and flaunting Western customs. A Master's Voice RCA radio, anachronistically of the 1920s, provides another Western touch, a device that allowed the separation of the voice and the actor in its own way. A tower displaying Western books serves as the focal point of the set stage right—in the era of the play's setting, the books represent the new 'civilization' and stand out as a symbol of male dominance for which the men of the book club, reading a Western play, were well suited in a scene of presumed sophistication. Women learned the Japanese classics; men's education was Western. The men fought in wars; the women made tea, practised magic, cared for the children, and enter-

tained men. The position of women in Japan under the new laws of the Meiji period was no better than it was for women in ancient Greece. For foreigners, especially, foreign women, it was even worse in both Greece and Japan. Euripides depicted Medea as a foreign woman and Miyagi follows suit. He wanted to bring out the unfortunate position of Japanese women, and even more, of foreign women at the time of Japanese hegemony in Asia. Of course, he is also speaking to a twenty-first-century audience on the subject of women.

Prewar-educated Japanese men were members of a 'new civilization', from which women were excluded. Other Asians and Japanese women represented non-scientific, irrational 'feelings', as represented by shamanism. Men thought they could control society and even nature, but at the same time they were in awe of women and their magic, a fear of something rational thinking could not always control. In *Medea*, this Japanese/Greek male arrogance is represented by the overbearing attitudes of Jason and Creon.²⁷

In *Medea*, Miyagi placed the men in control by separating each role into two parts (the bunraku influence).²⁸ Men spoke for Medea and the other characters, both male and female, and women moved for the characters, both male and female, onstage. The play is set at a male drinking party around 1900, also the meeting of a book club, at an inn where the men, all part of the educated elite and wearing black robes much like those of judges or Oxford dons, have decided that each will choose a maid from the inn for his evening's entertainment. Each man will read parts of *Medea*, in an abbreviated and enhanced version of a translation by the classicist Kazuhiko Tange; some of the maids will enact the roles without speaking. The men choose women for the night on the basis of photos hanging in front of their genitals and laugh and ooh and aah at each choice as the men remove the bags that cover the women's heads. This is chilling, in that during the Meiji period such photographs were used in the red-light districts to advertise prostitutes. The enactors, including those in the roles of Creon, Jason, and the child, are all females, smaller than the guests at the party. The men sit down behind lecterns and read texts in the style of bunraku narrators.

Miyagi also drew on elements from noh and kabuki and buyoh, the geisha's dance, but focused on the bunraku theatre, very popular in the Meiji period. There is no pretence here; the voices are the male actors'; the movements are the women's. The music, played from behind the umbrellas in front of which the men sit, often with instruments like the Okinawan shamisen and Chinese

27 Smethurst (2014).

28 All of these observations are from my attendance at two performances of his *Medea*.

kokyo, and percussions, serves as a link between the narrators and the actors, as the instrumentalists do in bunraku and noh and kabuki. Because the men assume the bunraku mode, they consider themselves in control of the women, as the manipulators in bunraku are in control of the puppets. But Miyagi shows that they are not any more in control than are the male characters in Euripides' tragedy.²⁹

At first the great body control of Mikari, the main actor, playing the role of Medea, seems superhuman. She moves almost imperceptibly, and then very slowly, as would seem natural to a Japanese audience accustomed to noh drama. Creon's movements, like those of Jason and the son as they enter, are stiff, puppet-like. Mikari moves slowly as her vocal counterpart says that she plans to kill her husband's new bride, and that she will brook no humiliation. But then, during the choral section about the changes that will take place, including the role of women who wish they had been endowed with the talent of authors and will no longer be the object of disparagement in men's writings, Miyagi makes his statement about women. He increases the number and intensity of Mikari's movements, as she takes off her outer kimono under which she wears a Korean wedding gown. She reveals herself, a Korean, a foreigner, from the colonial territories of the Japanese empire, the people who are most discriminated against in Japan.

On the Japanese kimono, which Mikari removes, Miyagi uses a painted dragon image, providing Medea with an escape that does not arise out of the plot, but intimately belongs to the construction of the performance as he envisioned it. He chose a stylized tattoo-like design of a dragon, almost a light-motif on the costuming, a family seal. We see it on the costume of Jason. It is no accident that Miyagi chose the tattoo design of a winged female dragon for Medea's kimono, inspired as he was by a story entitled 'Tattoo', written by Miyao Tomiko, a popular, prize-winning female author of today who writes about the yakuza, Japanese criminal thugs, in a world of tattoos. Her bio identifies Miyao as the daughter of a gambler who was a pimp for prostitutes. She took advantage of her sordid background to succeed as a writer in a role the Chorus of the play wish, speaking for the women, they might have enjoyed, or if not as writers, at least no longer as those about whom men write disparagingly. In this particular, there is an ironic use of the winged dragon, an implied source of escape for Medea, you might say, integrated into the plot, at least as *opsis*, and not as a *deus ex machina*. Whenever we see Medea acting in a liberated, non-Japanese way

29 See Hirata for a study of how the audience perceives the voice of an actor 'not directly but as "absence", as a substitute for a "real" voice in the Lacanian sense'.

she takes off the kimono. In other words, she throws away the dragon, rather than allowing it to carry her away.

After Mikari drops the kimono, the instrumentalists move more and more away from the rhythm of the words. At one moment Mikari falls to the ground in the midst of her dance so abruptly that we miss her movements downward and begin to feel Mikari breaking out of her stifling mold and seeming as if about to express her emotions. At one point, her movements replicate those of a shaman, which are appropriate to women and Koreans. Miyagi observed that Japanese men before WWII tried to suppress the influence of this feminizing and foreign tendency.

But then Miyagi takes us back to the world of the puppets. Medea has not yet entirely freed herself from manipulation. When Jason appears, she dons the Japanese kimono and returns to her old role, carrying out a typical wife's duty of offering him a seat, the radio, and some tea, which he rejects because he thinks it is poisoned. As we know, it is. After acting like a genteel geisha, drinking tea properly, she had spat the tea out in a spray.

The other women, the maids in the background, serve sake and tea to the men, that is, the voices in the background, to the point of getting the men drunk enough to start singing instead of reading. At about this point we might expect the Aegeus scene, the one Aristotle termed *alogon*. Miyagi includes no Aegeus scene. Instead the woman, called the nurse, dressed as a present-day, old homeless person, who has been sitting at the side and moving about, comes out onto the stage. She is an unattractive, live human being, not a puppet-like enactor, who wears contemporary clothing and carries a plastic water bottle. She speaks in her own voice with Medea. Here, Miyagi said, he used Heiner Mueller's *Medea Material*. Medea, that is, her narrator's voice, asks the nurse, 'Where is Jason?' The nurse answers in her own voice, 'He is at Creon's daughter's palace'. Medea says, 'You said Creon's place'. The nurse responds, 'Creon's daughter's place'. 'In that case', says Medea, 'he is probably clasping the princess' lovely young knees. Are we crying or laughing?'. The nurse responds, 'I am too old to laugh or cry'. Medea reacts, 'In the wreckage of your body can you live with the ghost of your youth? Bring me a mirror'. Medea looks into the mirror and says, 'This is not Medea'. She then leaves the stage only to return with the robe, a gift for the princess, and repeats the words, 'In the wreckage of your body can you live with the ghost of your youth? Nurse, bring me a mirror'. Medea repeats, 'This is not Medea'. This is the end of the Heiner Mueller material. The nurse, putting on surgeon's gloves, applies the poison to the robe, which Medea gives to Jason and her son as a gift for the princess. Miyagi substitutes for the scene with which Aristotle found fault in Euripides' *Medea* this material from Heiner Mueller, perhaps as *alogon* as the original scene, certainly unprepared

for except by the presence of the nurse moving around the stage. But the scene serves a similar purpose—it provides Medea with an escape route in the future.

Medea's male vocal part laughs in the style of bunraku when the messenger enters and, with the voice of the narrator, graphically reports the death of the princess and her father. Then we see Medea playing out her role. She now drinks the tea and does not spit it out. At last satisfied to make tea and drink it in celebration, she rises up like a monumental statue on top of the Korean candlestick holders carried in by the messenger. She is no longer Medea, as she said, and no longer needs to respond to the men.

During the enactment by the messenger actor and the attendant narrator's narration for her, Miyagi projects a film above the heads of the audience showing a drunk pursuing one of the maids in an attempt to rape her. She strangles him to death with the obi he has unwound from her waist. Miyagi called the film something like a divine view of human action. Medea has acted by killing the princess and the king and now that action can escalate to another level. There is an outlet for women; the women can kill the men. Onstage we have the narrative of a messenger about an action we did not see, the murder of the princess and the king, but assume has happened on the basis of his words and Medea's earlier act of sending the poisoned gift to the princess. In the film another action projected simultaneously in a medium familiar to us in the twenty-first century is taking place offstage. The men were so drunk they started singing, forgot their reading, and we saw one especially drunk man chase a maid offstage. Now that man pays for his actions. We see it on the film depicting the maid and the man as human beings, not as puppets. The words and the actions are separated in the messenger's speech; we do not see the princess' and king's deaths, only the messenger's gestures, and only his words describing them. In the film's action, on the other hand, we do see the murder and it requires no words for us to understand what is happening. The visual and verbal scenes overlay one another.

It is here that Medea enters with Jason's son (there is only one child), wearing a uniform, as all school children did in Japan, but one that resembles the uniform of Gakushuin, the one and only imperial school of the elite. Like Jason before, the son appears reading a book in the mode of typically bookish male gentility. Miyagi fully establishes the dichotomy between the male characters and Medea. However, we must not forget that onstage the voices in the background for Creon, Jason, and the messenger, like that of Medea, are from the male narrators, and these three, like Medea, are female actors. For the murder scene Medea, again in Korean robe, approaches her child with a knife wedged between her teeth. She stabs him, picks him up, and carries the body over her shoulders offstage.

At the finale of the production the books on the tower of learning, and therefore the edifice of power, the main focus of the set throughout, tumble to the ground with an apocalyptic crash. Medea has no connection with the books; that is the male realm. These law books, which the men read, and we assume do not understand, fall in disarray, as do the men's bodies. Then each mover kills her male vocal counterpart and strews the bodies about the floor with the misunderstood books, including the translations of the *Medea*. Miyagi makes room for a new era. The change in women is visually and viscerally explicit—all of the female actors appear as women, who kill the men, that is, those who served as their voices, and drop their assigned costumes and roles for new ones. Looking like modern Western-style women, they wear evening gowns, almost strapless. Only the *suzu* in Medea's hands, a Shinto implement, and the music seem to betray the religious, Japanese side to her persona, one that does not separate her entirely from Japanese society. But she is also still a Korean—the *suzu*, bells handled like a rattle, is the Korean instrument of shamanism, a ritual Medea seems to practise during her dance in Korean dress. She moves in a trance-like way at the end, but not like that of a puppet, she is now a meta-persona.

Miyagi also chose to separate the mover and speaker in this and other productions because he thought Japanese audiences would find that, given the practices of traditional Japanese theatre, it would match their aesthetic preferences.³⁰ We are forced to expand our imagination, he said. Miyagi believes that this technique of using speakers and movers not only helps to extract the essence of the play, as in *bunraku*, but also strengthens both what he calls the *logos*, and the *pathos*, and creates a dynamism beyond everyday reality. Miyagi faults this age for allowing people to become uncritical in what they view and read, like the men, who do not understand the necessary relationship between word and body. When Mikari scratches her back near the beginning of the play, her itchiness is not articulated as part of the words coming from the man's voice. However, we all perceive that she is itchy. There is so much, said Miyagi, that we do not express in language about our body's feeling, and this gesture of hers, he said, provides a good example. The action undercuts the words and makes us laugh when the words are intended to be serious. A book has power only if we read it with full understanding, Miyagi said. And the only place an actor expresses what we find in Euripides' text is near the end—the actor playing the role of the child screams as Medea approaches him. This is the first and only moment in the play that a mover, enactor, acknowledges her own presence vocally, the only moment that an actor herself 'speaks'. This speech act is, like

30 Smethurst (2014).

the scratching, a reflex, but this time the words are in sync with the movements onstage. It is the moment when logos and pathos merge.³¹

Now for the murder. Was it carried out deliberately, eliciting Aristotle's criticism? You may recall that before the murders Medea asked the nurse for a mirror, looked at herself, and said, 'I am no longer Medea'. She means here that she is no longer the puppet Medea, the woman manipulated by men. These words are not in Euripides' text. When her son appears, she chases him and they run around the stage, neither any longer acting like puppets. They act as human actors, like the actors in the film, but no longer separated from the audience through the medium of the film. Then Medea adjusts the child's tie before killing him; the child wipes away her tears. She is a human being for this moment, not the Medea whom we have learned to know. She lives. She is no longer a puppet and, therefore, we could say that the act is not deliberate within the structure of the plot in which puppets are characters controlled by narrators. The actor has stepped out of the persona she portrayed, a convention traditional Japanese drama allows, but Greek tragedy does not. Medea who kills is not Medea. If there is a murder, could we say that it is hardly a deliberate murder of one loved one by another?

Miyagi intended with this performance to raise the audience's level of perception of the world and to pique its imagination. One way in which he tried to create this effect, he said, was to prepare for the finale in which all of the men die at the women's hands. The film discussed above depicts human action, the action of real people not puppets. It is at the same time unlike real life action since we in the audience are watching it above us, not at our own level, and are made fully aware that the action is in a different sphere from what occurs onstage. At the end of the play the women kill all the men. The film has prepared us for this finale.

The play ends with the women in modern dress standing among the dead men and books. There is one more action—by the nurse. At the end she covers Jason's body as if in a burial. Who is she? She is the alter ego of Medea, Miyagi explained. The nurse echoes the words spoken by Medea's narrator, 'I cannot cry or laugh'. That is because she is a puppet, not a human being. However, the nurse, a human being, adds, 'because I am too old', and does so in her own voice. Earlier she put on modern surgeon's gloves to administer the poison to the robe, Medea's gift for the princess, took a polaroid snapshot and handed Medea a mirror into which Medea looked and said, 'I am no longer Medea'. The nurse belongs to our contemporary world. At the end she buries the man who was the

31 The nurse speaks, but she is not a separate character in the play; she is, as we shall see, Medea's *alter ego*.

voice of Jason under the costume of the puppet, that is, Jason's jacket. On behalf of Medea, the alter ego helps in acts of vengeance, and finally closes the play with the burial of the man who was the voice of Jason. The nurse, living 2500 years, is Medea who does not die, said Miyagi. She is the living being throughout who speaks outside the text and maintains the immortality of Medea.



Clearly the Giriken was correct in its conviction that no matter what Aristotle said they, the members, needed to experience a Greek tragedy in performance. Oedipus was a natural choice as their first production not only because Aristotle especially commended it, but also because it had already been performed in Japan. The plays the group produced by Euripides were not mentioned by Aristotle—*TW*, *Bacchae*, *Heracles*. *TW* lacked plot; the other two had plots that Aristotle probably would have impugned. The group learned how Greek tragedy speaks to an audience as their written reactions show.

After the end of the Giriken productions, Suzuki, Ninagawa, and Miyagi also produced Greek tragedies, including *TW*. With these the synthesis of traditional Japanese theatre forms and modern theatre enriched the Japanese versions.³² Suzuki used noh as his inspiration, in particular the full body control of the actors and the need for the feet to tap energy from the ground. He even used a noh actor Kanze Hisao as an actor, Menelaus, in *TW*. Ninagawa found the spectacle, the costumes, from kabuki as a way in which to create thrilling productions. He used a kabuki actor, Arashi Tokusaburo. And Miyagi turned to bunraku with its separation of mover and speaker to infuse his performances with a Japanese quality. In his *Medea*, the actors who move and do not speak are like puppets.

Ninagawa and Miyagi both chose to direct *Medea*, a tragedy that Aristotle explicitly criticized. Ninagawa, following the plot, closely produced a spectacular play, one in which he included the elements of the plot to which Aristotle objected—the Aegeus scene, the deliberate murder, and a *deus ex machina*. But he did so with all of the spectacle, *opsis*, that Aristotle demoted to last place in the creation of a tragedy but is essential to good kabuki. Miyagi on the other hand removed the Aegeus scene, the *deus ex machina* and a deliberate murder of a loved one. But in addition, he separated the audience from the diction and thought. As he said, do not use your brain if you are in the audience. You want to feel, then imagination is released, and the message absorbed.

32 Nishimura (2014) 41.

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Medea in Argentina

Moira Fradinger

1 Introduction: Medea against All Odds¹

Euripides' *Medea* seems to come in a close second to the Argentine penchant for re-imagining Sophocles' *Antigone*. This may also be the case for *Medea* throughout Latin America at least in the twentieth century. The number of Latin American *Antigones* increases as I write, but thus far my research yields forty-six published plays (and eleven unpublished) in the twentieth and twenty-first century.² As to *Medea*, in 2002, Cuban scholar Elina Miranda Cancela registered eight Latin American *Medea* plays; Luisa Campuzano (2007) added three; Francisco Bravo Laguna Romero (2010) added yet two more, and Zayas de Lima (2010) collected eleven in Argentina (including unpublished ones). Both Cancela (2005, 72) and Bravo Laguna (131) complain that *Medea* has been neglected within the already marginalized study of the circulation of Greek myths in Latin American theatre. My own research has yielded thus far thirty-nine versions throughout the region, thirteen of which are available Argentine texts. Most of these *Medeas* are invisible in critical studies.³

Surprisingly, many of the Argentine *Medeas* adhere more closely to Euripides' source-text than the Argentine *Antigones* to Sophocles'. In a few cases, Seneca's *Medea*, Lenormand's *Asie* or Müller's *Material Medea*, appear as sources. Looking at the *Medea* corpus, there is a clear difference between plays that follow the ancient source and a handful of others that 'nationalize' at least the central characters, so that the audience does not necessarily recognize the

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- 1 All translations from Spanish (both from plays and newspapers) in this essay are mine. All Argentine archival material was obtained by myself and my assistant Candela Potente, whom I thank dearly, in Buenos Aires between March 2014 and August 2015 at the following archives: Argentores, INET (Instituto Nacional de Estudios de Teatro), Hemeroteca de la Biblioteca del Congreso, Biblioteca Nacional, Teatro San Martín, Teatro Cervantes.
 - 2 I am finishing a book on Latin American *Antigones*, under contract with Oxford UP. In my corpus, I include one play written in the nineteenth century. I have left out innovative performances that follow the script of the ancient Greek version.
 - 3 Many *Medeas* remain unpublished; twenty-five are published dramatic texts. See Cancela (2014) for the latest research on the Caribbean.

ancient Greek source. This essay focuses on the latter set of plays. My analysis is based on the thesis that even in the national versions, Medea remains 'foreign' to the Argentine imaginary, in ways that Antigone does not. I provide below a list of Argentine titles, (though I am certain that my numbers are incomplete).⁴

- 4 The following list of Medea plays spans from the 1960s onwards and comprehends the state of my research thus far. I consider this a work in progress. The information in this list is fragmentary and reflects the state of the archives. It includes published and unpublished works.
- 1960. *La Frontera*, David Cureses (commented above; second production: Teatro Arlequines, 4-7-1987)
 - 1966. *El hijo de Medea* (*Medea's Son*, short story). Fortunato Nari. Rafaela, Santa Fé. Commented above.
 - 1967. *Medea: los habitantes del fin* (*The inhabitants of The End*). Héctor Schujman. Reviewed by *Clarín* and *La Prensa* on 30-6-1967 and by *La Nación* on 11-7-1967. Premiered at Teatro Agón on June 39th, according to the program found at Argentores.
 - 1977. *Medea*. Juan Carlos Bartolini (the action transpires in a psychiatric asylum; text available at Argentores; it premiered on 23-7-1977 in Córdoba city and won a mention in the National Theatre Competition organized by Universidades Populares Argentinas).
 - 1976–1980. *La Navarro*. Alberto Drago (commented above; premiered at Teatro Bambalinas, 2-9-1976.)
 - 1981. *Un sol oscuro, Medea* (*A Dark Sun, Medea*; unpublished). An adaptation by acclaimed actress Inda Ledesma 1926–2010. Premiered 12-10-1981 (?). Review by Beatriz Iacovello, *La Prensa* (25 Nov 1981) and *Clarín* 10–1981. (reviews found at INET).
 - 1983. *La larga noche de Medea* (*Medea's Long Night*) Francisco Suárez. (I have not found information about this text.)
 - 1985. *Ignea Medeas*. Juan J. Brignone. Published in 2015 with information about the premiere at Teatro Espacios 12-11-1985.
 - 1987. *Medea, paisaje de hembras* (*Medea, A Landscape of Females*). Unpublished, Script by Quique Canellas and Julio Suárez (adapted for the stage by Máximo Salas, Silvina Fernández Farrell and Laura Beltramo). Review by Luis Mazas in *Clarín* (20, June 1987). Premiere at Teatro El Vitral.
 - 1991–1992. *Medea*. Rodolfo Graziano (using Juan Rográ's adaptation of Euripides' *Medea*).
 - 1992. *Despojos para Medea* (*Scraps for Medea*). José Luis Valenzuela. Premiered at Teatrillo de la Ciudad Universitaria de Córdoba; staged on 3-3-1992 at Luz y Fuerza in Córdoba. I have not been able to access the script; briefly commented in Zayas de Lima 2010.
 - 1992. *Medea de Moquegua*. Luis María Salvaneschi.
 - 1992. *Medea y la mariposa* (*Medea and the Butterfly*, play) and *El Canto de Medea* (*Medea's song*), 1992. Fortunato Nari. Rafaela, Santa Fé. Commented above.
 - 1994. *Medea*. Mónica Viñao, adaptation of Muller's *Medea/Material*. Reviews in *Clarín* 20-8-92; *La Nación* (7-8-92); *Página 12* (1-8-92); *Ámbito Financiero* (25-8-92); and *El Cronista* (5-8-92). Premiered at Teatro El Ángel 11-7-1992. See also <http://www.autores.org.ar/mvinao/Obras/Argumentos/argumento1.htm>
 - 1996. *Acerca de los espectros: Medea* (*Regarding specters*). Juan Carlos Gené and Verónica Oddó. Premiered at Teatro San Martín 28-11-96. Reviews: *Clarín* 13–11, 16–11, and 28/29–11, 1992; *La Nación* 13-11-96; *El Cronista* 13-11-96; *La Maga* 4-12-96; *Argentinisches Tageblatt* 14-12-96; *La Razón* 19-11-96. Pá

To get an accurate picture of *Medea* in the country (not to mention the continent) will take *years* of archival research *in situ*, given the catastrophic situation of Latin American archives.⁵

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- 1996–1997. *La Hechicera (The sorcerer)*. José Luis Alves (Premio Municipal Luis José de Tejada, in Córdoba 1996/Teatro Alberdi, in Tucumán, 18-7-1997; commented above).
 - 2000. *Jasón de Alemania*; Javier Roberto González (unpublished, examined in Delbueno Prat)
 - 2002. *Medea, La Otra (Medea, The Other)*. Valeria Folini. Unpublished. Directed by Daniel Misses, Teatro del Abasto.
 - 2004. *Medea del Paraná. (Medea in Paraná)*. Suellen Worstell de Dornbrook. Premiered at Biblioteca teatral El publico, Resistencia, Chaco. 2003; then produced by Teatro la Máscara 25-3-2004.
 - 2004. *Cruzar la frontera (To Cross the Frontier)*. Jorge Accame. Vaguely inspired in the scene of Euripides' *Medea* where she disperses her brother's fragments. Short three act dialogue reminiscent, as the author says, of the assassination and dismemberment of General Juan Lavalle in 1841 in Jujuy, the north of Argentina. Premiered at the Teatro Cervantes in 2004; then at Teatro Sarmiento (Buenos Aires) in 2007; published in 2009. Reviewed *Página12*, 12-3-2004.
 - 2005. *Medea*. Directed by Gustavo Guirado. XX Festival de Teatro de Río Negro. In Buenos Aires in 2007 at the Teatro San Martín.
 - 2006. *Medea Fragmentada (Fragmented Medea)*, Clodet and María Barjacoba Unpublished. (see website: <http://www.mariabarjacoba.blogspot.com.ar>)
 - 2005–2006. *Medea Muerta (Dead Medea)*. Luciano García. Unpublished, incorporates texts by Jean Anouhil; staged by Dos Huérfanos (Teatro sin identidad).
 - 2007. *Medea, una tragedia miserable (Medea, a miserable tragedy)*. Edward Nutkiewicz. Based on Seneca and Euripides. Medea is the leader of a modern fanatic sect. Onstage in June 2008 directed by Gustavo Bonamino, at El Bardo (review in *La Nación* 23-6-2008 <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1023835-medea-tiene-aciertos-pero-no-convence>).
 - 2008. *El término (The End, re-titled Nupcia/Medea)*. Rolando Pérez. Premiered at Teatro de la Universidad Nacional de La Plata 17/10/2008. Information at www.celcit.com.ar; dialogue between Medea and Nupcia, cast as an indigenous woman and a white woman.
 - 2008. *Medea o la guerra (Medea or War)*. Silvia Docampo. Medea is judged and the poet Euripides is brought to the present to participate. Directed by Eduardo Pavelic at Teatro El Vitral.
 - 2012. *Museo Medea*. Guillermo Katz. Winner at the 28th Fiesta Provincial del Teatro de Tucumán, 2012. Performed in 2013 in Venado Tuerto, Santiago del Estero and later in Brazil. Medea commits no infanticide. She transforms her house into a museum to make ends meet. See: <http://www.primerafuente.com.ar/noticia/814008-el-teatro-tucumano-estara-en-blumenao-representada-con-museo-medea>
 - 2012. *Quietud: Fase Uno (Quietness: Phase One)*. Longo and Ivana Catanese, premiered on 17-11-2012. Espacio Cultural Le Parc. Mendoza city. The author explicitly says he wrote something new, about the impossibility of loving and the insecurity of bonds, because 'actualizing an ancient tragedy is despicable; tragedies are always present, they do not need actualization'. See the interview: <http://www.losandes.com.ar/noticia/tragedias-680316>.

5 The problem of archives in Latin America is well known and has been the topic of special

My use of the adverb 'surprisingly' on the first page of this chapter needs contextualization. While *Antigone* has been thoroughly 'nationalized', the Argentine *Medea* has remained closer to the Greek or transformed into the indigenous other that for the Creole imagination was always a 'foreign' body inside the nation, marginalized, persecuted, and exterminated in successive waves of political violence. A thoroughly nationalized *Antigone* was applauded in 1951 as 'our *Antígona*,'⁶ but to find 'our *Medea*' has proven difficult for Argentines. The question that emerges here is: could infanticide be staged other than 'foreign' for the Argentine audience? Judging by texts, reviews, and interviews with Argentine playwrights, *Medea* may actually be one of the most difficult tragedies to translate for the modern Argentine stage. It is not an idle exercise to remember that *Antigone* uncannily echoes real life for Argentines (and Latin Americans) in ways that *Medea* does not. If one of the questions for con-

ferences. Materials are either missing, or unclassified and un-catalogued, or not digitized and instead boxed away (I found at the INET piles of boxes that have never been classified, my deepest thanks to Miranda Aramburu, who helped me go through some of those boxes). While I was doing research for this paper, Argentores was closed 'indefinitely' due to a move and only reopened in July 2015 (I thank Karina Caruso and Eduardo Echániz for helping me in the archive). That same year, the Newspaper Library of the National Congress boxed all newspapers from the interior of the country that I needed, so I could not obtain reviews of the *Medea* plays that premiered in other cities than Buenos Aires in time for this article.

The list of obstacles is too long for a footnote. I can only assume that this difficulty is one of the reasons for the number of scholarly errors in essays on Latin America (mistakes in dates of publication, premieres, names of playwrights, nationality, or even plot content). To give the reader examples, in Zayas de Lima (2010) and Hualde Pascual (2012), the Italian Alvaro Corrado appears in the list of Argentine authors who wrote *Medea* plays, while in fact his 1949 *Lunga notte di Medea: tragedia in due atti* was translated into Spanish by the Argentine César Tiempo in 1956 (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Losange). Hualde Pascual (2012) acknowledges the difficulty of the archives, and the number of mistakes in her article is surprising: i.e. the cycle of *Electras* in Latin America is not initiated with Nelson Rodrigues' *Senhora dos Afogados* in 1947 (p. 195) but with *Electra no circo* (Hermilo Borba Filho, 1944, if not before in Mexico: future research will show); *Antígona Vélez* was not written in 1952 but in 1951 and its action is not set in 1879 but in 1820 (p. 200), Andrade's play is not *As Cofrarias* (the spelling is *Confrarias*) and it was not written in 1970 but only published that year (p. 202); Gambaro's *Antígona Furiosa* is not from 1989, but from 1986 (p. 203); Juan J. Brignone is Argentine, and not 'the European author Iannis Zambalas' (that was his pen name), and the correct spelling is Zómbolas (p. 211 n. 83); Gambon (2012b, 219) writes that De Cecco's version of *Electra* is from 1966 (actually from 1962), and she confuses the name of one of the most important Argentine actresses in the 50s, who played the lead in *Antígona Vélez* (not 'Nancy' but rather Fanny Navarro), etc. The list of archival errors is interminable, even in encyclopedias of Latin American literature, and my comment merely serves to indicate a systemic problem that touches us all.

- 6 I refer to the audience reception of Leopoldo Marechal's *Antígona Vélez*, a play I comment extensively in my forthcoming book on Latin American *Antigones*.

temporary performers may be how to find in their culture the emotional (and intellectual) fulcrum so as to translate the ancient letter into bodily gestures and experience, there is, sadly, no dearth of lived experience from which to excavate the tragedy of the unburied (or disappeared *tout court*) in this region. Latin America has witnessed many 'real life Antigones' over the last century: women's movements almost enact the myth as they pursue the right to bury their missing (in Argentina consider the case of the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo.) There is a common cultural and political experience in place that facilitates the appropriation of a text such as *Antigone*. In fact, a good summary of the difference between the easy access to *Antigone* and the difficult access to *Medea* might have been provided by Argentine theatre director Gustavo Guirado, when interviewed about his 2004 *Medea*: 'the difficulty [is] the approach to this topic in a country where there is a group of mothers who not only do not kill but who also still claim and search for their disappeared children'.⁷ How to translate *Medea*'s tragic 'divided self' (per Helene Foley's illuminating expression),⁸ leading to infanticide, in a Judeo-Christian country such as Argentina—with its added (and very recent) dictatorial history forcing mothers to search for the children that military men killed? What bits and pieces of *Medea*'s text could the 'ruling "Zeitgeist" consider palatable'⁹ for the Argentine stage?

I draw attention to two issues regarding the 'Zeitgeist'. The character of *Medea* is (and has been) absorbed into the web of Argentine representations of colonial legacies insofar as she can be characterized to embody 'a barbaric other': Spanish conquerors first, and Creole elites later, would find a clear image of 'barbarism' in the indigenous populations against whom they posited their version of 'civilization'. The 'barbaric' others at stake in the real life of the nation were considered 'heretic' by the Christian elites who inherited the colony. Not so much—or not only—on account of their religious cosmologies, but rather on account of not yielding the land that Creoles needed to enter the global capitalist exchange system of the nineteenth century. Spaniards had labelled these 'barbaric heretics' with the derogative term 'Indians'. After independence, Creoles did the same to refer to the semi-nomadic nations of the vast plains north and south of the city of Buenos Aires, to the descendants of the Inca empire in what today is the north-west of the country, and to the semi-nomadic nations living toward the north-east and bordering Paraguay and Brazil. Creole elites made their first forays into the plains outside the city

7 <http://www.alternativeatral.com/obra3967-medea>.

8 Foley (2001) 243–272.

9 I use Erika Fischer-Lichte's phrase in her 'Performance as event' in Hall/Harrop (2010) 35.

of Buenos Aires as early as the 1820s. Through the 1870s, they decimated indigenous peoples across these plains with the infamous military campaign known as the 'Conquest of the desert'. Medea the sorceress, the 'uncivilized' because non-Greek, proves an interesting figure to mobilize this part of the nation's history. Until we get to the woman in rage who kills her children.

While Medea as 'barbaric' other is easily appropriable, Medea the mother is not. There are no local narratives that could absorb what is considered the Euripidean invention proper—that is, Medea's *infanticide*. How to make intelligible onstage an act so difficult to translate into the cultural language of motherhood for modern Argentines? How to translate Medea's code of honour, borrowed from the language of the male epic hero, as Foley proves in detail (2001, 243–272)? Could the woman who kills her children find a stage other than as Greek or as 'Indian'? One could say that ancient notions of gender and of motherhood *tout court* are a challenge to translate in modern Latin America. It is not just about the oft commented issue that ancient women were not citizens: consider how difficult it would be for the Creole Latin American imagination to grasp the ancient conception of women as 'vessels' of the male seed; the children's education in the hands of fathers after a certain age; or the fathers' need for children to preserve the immortality of their heroic deeds (thus Euripides' Jason could say that the children were his own, and it was only the foreign Medea who could think that the children were also hers).¹⁰ All of this, one assumes, made room for the possibility of staging infanticide.

Nothing in the Christian ideological construction of motherhood as a *sacred* bond with an offspring, or the secularized ethics of care 'biologically' oriented toward 'natural love', makes the murder of children to revenge a broken pact with a man theatrically "believable". Men do not need children for their immortality: they have monotheistic religion for that. In the nineteenth century in Argentina, the shame of giving birth out of wedlock occasionally generated extreme behaviour in certain social classes; in the twentieth century, however, infanticide is almost impossible to imagine other than as *pathology*. A perusal of the few newspaper cases reported in Argentina over the last decade shows that the language to understand infanticide committed by women in the private sphere is that of 'psychosis'.¹¹

10 I am following here Sala Rose on Medea's infanticide (2002); see other illuminating reflections in Foley (2001); Loraux (1991) and (1995).

11 See most notably the case of Romina Tejerina in 2003; in 2005 she was sentenced to fourteen years in prison for killing her newborn baby, and the defence argued that she had had a 'psychotic' breakdown due to rape. <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/sociedad/3-197164-2012-06-25.html>.

But Medea is certainly not mad. That Argentine infanticide appears under the rubric of madness makes one wonder whether the mythical *Ino*, the primordial Dionysian maenad, would have made for a more appropriate protagonist. Men are far more often reported as killers; women, by contrast, are reported as protecting their children from violent fathers. I find it symptomatic that when the critic Ivana Costa, writing for *Clarín* on November 28th, 1996, reviewed Verónica Oddó as Medea in Oddó's and Juan Carlos Gené's production *Acerca de los espectros: Eurípides/Medea* at the Teatro San Martín in Buenos Aires, the newspaper included an aside with 'real-life facts' on infanticide. Oddó had said in an interview that the performance had relevance for 'real life'. Statistics for 1996 were added in a square box: of the fifteen cases of infanticide mentioned in detail, only eight were committed by women on their own, and four of those were 'post-abortions', that is, newborn babies killed (or neglected) by mothers in despair right at the moment of giving birth.¹² As I write, in Argentina abortion is still illegal: these mothers were reported as not having access/education/means to safe abortions, or given options such as adoption.

One may speculate that there is, nonetheless, an uncanny echo between the figures of Medea and the Virgin Mary. Both are two opposite figures for motherhood, but both can do *without men* to generate/decide the life or the death of children. The Virgin—the figure for a mother proper—conceives without (human) male participation. Medea—the figure for a woman proper—interrupts life, not like men in war, but without male participation and at home. And if the Virgin is granted semi-divine status, Medea too exercises her semi-divine powers (as granddaughter of Helios). In what concerns the reproduction of the species, human males do not play a decisive role for these women-mothers: they give or take life on their own. That said, males and warrior masculinity enter the reproductive imagination with an ironic inverted echo between the Christian imaginary and the Greek: if the Virgin is self-sufficient, this is precisely what the Greek Jason dreams, but in opposite terms—that *males* can reproduce without female participation (lines 573–575)—while the Greek Medea wishes she were not a mother but a warrior (lines 248–250).

Mine is not an abstract question about the contemporary 'relevance' of the classical text or the myth itself. Ancient tragedy seems to have the capacity to always be relevant on account of one of its internal rules: events are not situated in the present and thus can always address the present. My initial surprise

12 See studies of this type of infanticide in the nineteenth century as a problem of 'honour' and social shame (young, marginal, impoverished women who could not bear the social shame involved in pregnancy out of wedlock) in Ruggiero Kristin (1992); Prada (2012); Ini (2000).

at finding so many Medeas was rather provoked by a theatrical puzzle: how to translate the fragment of Medea's infanticide, arguably key in every translation, into a plausible spectacle for this *particular audience*?—other than, of course, by inviting the tried and tired allegory, whereby Medea is the 'nation' that 'kills' its own children with political violence and economic underdevelopment. Aside from the texts that deal with the indigenous question, the majority of Argentine Medeas did not provide me with enough textual or performance elements that would support a reading of 'Medea as nation'.¹³ And in most reviews of performances I have found that practitioners refer to their approach as an experiment about how to conjure up Medea today.

It is not just the naturalization of maternal love that makes the spectacle of infanticide 'as revenge against a man' implausible. We can set aside the pressing public presence of motherhood since the last dictatorship only because this is the latest avatar of the long-standing ideology that values motherhood in Argentina. The 'archetype' of motherhood in Argentina comes from its dominant religious imagination, and the political reverence for motherhood may be understood as a secularization of religious values that served male elites well in their attempt to incorporate women politically when needed for the nation. As is the case throughout Latin America, Argentine discourses on motherhood cannot be thought of without the religious reference (and reverence) of the Virgin Mary, which gave rise to the cult of so-called *marianismo*. In this cultural narrative, women take on a particular significance for the social fabric, on account of the alleged superiority of women's moral values due to the 'natural' care they provide. This ideology is complex and separates sexuality (incarnated by the figure of Eve) from motherhood: Mary redeems women from Eve's sin. Mary becomes not only a model of sacrifice for all other women, but

13 In both Zayas de Lima (2010) and Campuzano (2007) there are general views of Medea's reception. In my eyes, they show more the disorientation of the critic than any textual evidence. For Zayas de Lima 'it would seem that since the 90s to this day, it is a time of Medea in Argentina, maybe because our times are, like those of Euripides, torn and contradictory [...] we are immersed in a reality with no illusions, in a city in which there is neither law, nor justice, nor order, that cannot host anymore pious and sacrificial Antigonas, but Medeas who unleash freely their rage, vengeance and barbarism, aware that the crime can remain impune' (121). For Campuzo 'the traumatic forced multiracial and multi-ethnic composition of the region, with all its cultural consequences, and also the degraded condition of women in societies as patriarchal as Latinamerican society is, foster a fertile dialogue with ancient authors that created in the sorcerer and infanticide Medea an anti-model for a woman' (2006, 406). These historically inaccurate and un-specific remarks make rigorous academic discussion difficult (for one thing, there continue to be more Antigones than Medeas to this day). I prefer to orient my interpretation, when possible, on the basis of the textual evidence or the performance event and its singularity.

also, as is the case with the polysemy inherent in all images, provides a path for female redemption and liberation. Mary presents motherhood as free of male participation; one could even describe the situation as that of ancient Greece reversed: males are almost only 'vessels' (of semen), while the real biological and symbolic work of creating life is accomplished by the mother. But moreover, this cult promotes an almost indissoluble (untouchable and intimate) bond between mother and son, where fathers are almost superfluous: Jesus cannot be thought of without Mary and vice-versa. What situation could involve infanticide to revenge the pact broken by a man, if children are a woman's exclusive concern and, supposedly, only path to fulfilment?

The sacred story of motherhood was secularized into the political discourse of 'republican motherhood' at the dawn of independence. After 1810, male elites granted political significance to motherhood, mobilizing elite women with a political mission of 'care'.¹⁴ The politics of reproduction took on further importance in the 1820s, as Creole elites began their military campaigns to conquer indigenous territory and repopulate it with Christian blood. 'To populate is to govern' would become the political slogan of the 1850s.¹⁵ It is not surprising that Argentina launched in the twentieth century many state-sponsored legal and economic protections to motherhood. Against such a historical background, appropriating Euripides' *Medea*—a story of loyalty and revenge between lovers rather than maternal care—poses challenges for playwrights that the lofty ideals of texts like *Antigone* do not.

Considering the above, Medea's case in Argentina can provide a fit occasion to see how the Anglophone concept of 'post colonial reception' of the classics may work differently once woven into the specificity of Latin American cultural narratives. In Anglophone scholarship, 'reception' appears as an active, creative act on the part of the receptor (whether subversive with respect to the canon or not); the concept stands in contrast with 'tradition' or 'legacy' (with the connotation of inheritance). In Latin America, 'reception' has less currency and changes meaning for it stands in contrast to stronger metaphors, preferred in the region, to think of the activity of the receptor/consumer of the past. The strongest metaphor is cannibalism or anthropophagy as a model for the encounter with the foreign. Here the emphasis is not in receiving but in

14 See Nari (2004). Consider the example of the 1823 'Society of Beneficency' where women aristocrats were given leading roles in the education and health care of women in the city of Buenos Aires.

15 In Spanish, 'governar es poblar': the legendary phrase was written by Juan Bautista Alberdi (1810–1884) in his influential *Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política de la República Argentina*, 1852.

dismembering the (European) past with the aim of finding what, if anything, could still be of use for the formation of national cultures: the 'cultural digestive system' breaks apart, swallows up, absorbs a few elements that can feed the cultural body and finally discharges the cultural waste of texts that may not speak to the present. Indeed, in a volume dedicated to Euripides, we may venture an imaginative link: the Latin American metaphors of cultural cannibalism are similar to the *sparagmos* rituals in Euripides' plays. Interestingly, German theatre scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte has used this metaphor for her work on staging the classics.¹⁶ Medea's tearing apart of her brother is the first scene that comes to mind in the context of this article, but no doubt the *Bacchae*, involving yet another mother and her son, is the greatest example: the *sparagmos* where Pentheus is dismembered by Agave and the Maenads. The violent process of tearing apart a cultural text as animals or humans are dismembered in (sacrificial) rites of cannibalism (real or in the ancient spectacle) is one of the dominant models with which the Latin American artistic and intellectual movements of the twentieth century meditate upon the region's colonial past.

The history of this model goes back to the artistic movement that started during the 1922 modernist avant-garde week in São Paulo, Brazil, and whose now legendary expression was the 'Cannibal Manifesto' written by Oswald de Andrade in 1928.¹⁷ The poetic model of cannibalism¹⁸ describes not the active embrace (as in 'reception') but the violent selection (literally, digestion) of fragmented memories of texts that can speak the language of any given political urgency. To apply the metaphor further: a culture does not appropriate what its

16 Erika Fischer-Lichte ['Performance as event' in Hall/Harrop (2010) 35] makes the case of 'sparagmos' as a metaphor to explain what happens when a text is translated *for the stage*.

17 See Leslie Bary's translation of de Andrade's legendary 'Cannibal Manifesto' in *Latin American Literary Review* 19 (38): 38–47.

18 The metaphor of cannibalism is an appropriation of the label with which the colonizers referred to indigenous peoples who resisted them; it evolved to become a cornerstone to define Latin American identities with respect to their relation to the European past. This metaphor has a western history beyond Latin America; for the Latin American post-colonial tradition, see Carlos Jáuregui's *Canibalia. Canibalismo, calibanismo, antropofagia cultural y consumo en América Latina* (2008) or his entry for 'Antropophagy' for the *Dictionary of Latin American Cultural Studies* (2012): 'cannibalism, as a trope that sustains the very distinction between savagery and civilization, is a cornerstone of colonialism. However, from the European visions of a savage New World to the (post) colonial and postmodern narratives of contemporary cultural production, the metaphor of cannibalism has been not just a paradigm of otherness but also a trope of self-recognition, a model for the incorporation of difference, and a central concept in the definition of Latin American identities'.

'body' cannot 'eat' in any given time—in the context of theatre, what its body cannot stage. By contrast, I suggest that the image of 'reception' placed in this particular cultural net is *the failure* of such cultural appropriation. 'Reception' indicates the challenging encounter with that which *remains* foreign in spite of all attempts to 'incorporate' it. Unlike the history of a cultural cannibalization that would show how Medea becomes 'Argentine', the history of a cultural 'reception' shows attempts and failures to eliminate the text's foreignness. Its starting point is Medea, and Medea remains the focus, in order to explore not *what* can speak to us, but *whether* the myth may still speak to us. In the case of 'cannibal' appropriation it is not a question as to whether the myth may speak to us: we *make* it speak *to us* by cannibalizing it. Cannibalized Medeas could become part of us. But my assessment of Medea in Argentina indicates a history of 'reception' rather than of 'cannibalization'.

Medea has retained her foreignness as she is staged in two main ways. On the one hand, some playwrights have rescued Medea for the nation, but only as the barbaric heretic easily mobilized for or against the official narrative that Argentina constructed of its 'others'—the 'Indians', especially those South of Buenos Aires. These are plays with stage directions and plots that their audiences can follow without knowledge of the ancient text. An 'Indian' woman called Medea (with any Hispanic surname) may recall the ancient Medea for the critic but not necessarily for the audience. Insofar as she is cast as 'the other' she plays the role of the internal foreigner. On the other hand, other playwrights have chosen to stay with Medea's Greek mystery: as an ancient Greek character she represents the challenge of an unfamiliar narrative about motherhood—and thus about 'woman'. In the plays where the character Medea has kept her ancient name, the possibility of a different motherhood, not naturally life-giving, sacrifice-oriented, identity-forming and politically legitimating, is explored via the mystery of antiquity.

Either dramatizing the frontier at which the extermination of indigenous peoples happened, or the non-correspondence between woman and mother that has been elided from national narratives about motherhood, Medea became a focus of theatrical attention after the 1950s. I have chosen to comment on the 'barbaric' Medeas, not only due to space limitations but also because they prove a more interesting case of an attempt to appropriate Euripides in the case of Argentina. In these 'Indian dramas', the Argentine ideology of motherhood does not fully vanish to give room to infanticide.

2 'Indian' Medeas

For 'Bárbara', 'Medea Navarro' or 'Medea González', infanticide is a secondary, or even non-existent, dilemma. The Hispanic names for the Medeas living in urban or rural settings make the focus of these plays clear: it is Medea's 'mestizaje' and thus her ability to articulate the founding drama of the nation. For it is not simply a 'mestizaje' of Greek and Spanish blood: Medea is Indigenous, Spanish and Greek. For indigenous Medeas gender violence is present but the ideology of motherhood remains almost untouched: at stake is not the mother as killer, but the *Creole man* as killer (of the 'Indian'- as indigenous peoples are invariably named in these plays) during colonial and neocolonial wars over land.

To the reader acquainted with the avatars of Argentine colonial history, it will not be surprising that Medea began her Argentine trajectory transformed into a 'barbaric' (hence 'Bárbara') 'Indian' woman by David Cureses (1935–2006) in 1960, when he wrote *La Frontera* (*The Frontier*).¹⁹ For it was really only in the late 1950s, with the appearance of scholars such as Rodolfo Kusch (1922–1979) who pioneered the study and revaluation of indigenous cosmologies,²⁰ that the Argentine intellectual elites began to question the official narrative about the military 'Conquest of the Desert' south of Buenos Aires in 1870–1880. At the centre of this military episode was the aim of land acquisition for the elites who envisioned Argentina as the grain-producer and cattle breeder of the world, ready to serve the growing demands of the British market.²¹ Argentina took considerably longer to question its official narrative with regards the indigenous past than other countries in the region, which had intellectual avant-gardes defending the indigenous legacy as of the late nineteenth century (consider Perú or Ecuador, in whose territories the legacy of the Inca Empire is omnipresent).

The overarching national narrative in the nineteenth century became known as the crusade for 'civilization or barbarism'. As critics have noted,²² this is the frame of Cureses' Medea. It is also the frame of all the plays where Medea

19 Published as *La frontera*, Buenos Aires, Sociedad General de Autores de la Argentina (Argentores), Ediciones del Carro de Tespis, 1964. All quotations come from this edition.

20 See Kusch's seminal *El pensamiento indígena y popular en América* (1970) which was recently translated as *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América* by Duke University Press (2010).

21 For a reference revisiting the official narrative see David Viñas's *Indios, ejército y fronteras* (1982).

22 See Schroeder (1998); Biglieri (2015); Gambon (2014); Pascual (2012); Bravo Laguna (2010); Del Bueno (2013); Pociña (2005).

has a Hispanic name: what may change is the fate of Medea, of her mestizo children—that reminder of violence but also reminder of the nation's future—and of the Creole man who betrays her. These Medeas do not demand that the audience know the Greek referent to understand them, but they also do not fully embrace the key characterization of the ancient Medea.

The review of Cureses' play in *Clarín* (3-12-60) makes clear that the sixties were ready to revisit the 'Conquest of the Desert'. *Clarín's* critic praises Cureses' choice to 'document a historical fact'; 'its best dramatic moment is founded in the fact that [white men] decided to exterminate *rather than win over* the original owners of the land' (signed J.D.T., my emphasis). According to the review, 'the customs were true to historical truth' (*Clarín*, *ibid.*). Cureses put *La Frontera* onstage on December 2, 1960 at the independent theatre he had co-founded in Buenos Aires, Teatro Gorro Escarlata (TEGE).²³

Cureses located the conflict at the geographical frontier separating Indian and Christian (as they are called in the play) land, at the end of the conquest. Two frontiers, then: the land, but also the timeline, which signals the end of the Creole campaign of near extermination of indigenous peoples. Cureses does not spare his audience of the reminders of historical episodes: every action resonates here with consequences of the nineteenth-century wars against 'Indians'—with the probable exception of the children's murder, though Cureses takes good care to soften this cruelty and preserve the Creole ideology of motherhood as quasi-intact. Medea makes her children 'sleep' with herbs and wants to protect them from making the same mistake she made: betraying her Indian nation. Nothing gruesome about this death: the polysemy of sleep as both 'restorative' and 'deadly' makes this death benign. For the question here is not the cruel mother: if the play is set at the end of the 'conquest of the desert' it is to show, in my eyes, the end of a crucial Creole debate in the nineteenth century and the victory of one of its sides.

Critics have spent time with plot development, so I only highlight a frame that seems to remain unnoticed. That the central issue is that of the possibility of an Argentina that is also 'mestiza' is highlighted in ACT 1 when Bárbara and 'the Old Woman' offer exhaustive details of the backstory and we note the emphasis on racial, cultural and linguistic mixings in the in-between space of the frontier during these wars. Bárbara, the Old Woman and the white 'Indianized' children speak a broken form of Spanish that would be recognizable as a mix coming from 'Indian' and rural areas only by the local audience. Cure-

23 The premiere won him the Playwright's Association Argentores' award that year. It was re-staged on July 4, 1987 at another independent theatre, Teatro Arlequines.

ses' Jason is, in reality, a 'captive' of the war: Creole Captain Jasón Ahumada, wounded in the desert and abandoned by his troops, is saved by the 'Indian woman' who falls in love with him. Nothing in him is heroic: he is one of the many white men and women exchanged in the frontier during these wars, either kidnapped by an 'Indian raid' (in Spanish *malón*), or by voluntary crossing the frontier and joining the indigenous nations. When Bárbara kills her father and her brother (who wanted Ahumada dead), the couple escapes to establish roots in a 'ranch' near a Christian military post, bringing with them Bárbara's two mestizo children by Ahumada, and two Creole children. The latter were brought to her tribe by an 'Indian raid'; their Creole mother had died in childbirth. The girl is nicknamed 'Huinca'—the indigenous name for a white person at the time; and the boy is named 'Botijo'—a colloquial rural slang for 'kid'.

The drama really unfolds when one Creole Colonel Ordóñez (Creon) appears to tell Bárbara that Ahumada has abandoned her, that she has to leave the ranch, and that he himself is the biological father of Huinca y Botijo, having recognized the girl upon seeing her pendant, which belonged to his wife. Ordóñez had lost all his family during the 'raid' and he now comes to take them away, claiming *blood* rights. Huinca, his biological teenage daughter whose Christian name was originally Aurora, has fallen in love with Ahumada, and Ordóñez fosters her marriage with Christian rites. The Creole children have always been divided: Huinca believes she belongs in the Creole nation, and Botijo feels he belongs in the Indian nation. When Ahumada arrives, he claims *his* biological rights over his mestizo children with Bárbara. Unlike Botijo, but like Huinca and Ordóñez, he believes that cultural identity is in the blood: and as it was for the real-life elites of the nineteenth century, the issue is living in 'civilization' and not in 'barbarism'. Not without irony, one may say that the barbarism in this play is akin to the ancient Greek use of the term, assigned to peoples without *polis*. The nineteenth-century Creoles famously wrote about indigenous peoples as city-less.²⁴

For Bárbara, the question of blood means that 'wall of blood' (18), as she says, between Indians and Creoles. Cureses puts a twist in her revenge so that it stands for a collective revenge: that of indigenous peoples against those who are preventing them from reproducing. As the story goes, Bárbara's old Indian friend Anambá appears in the ranch because he has been told that killing a Christian and spreading their blood on his genitals will make his wife preg-

24 This notably appears in the foundational text *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism*, written in 1845 by the statesman and intellectual Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811–1888).

nant. In a richly symbolic act, white blood will give life to Indians and death to Creoles. Bárbara sends Anambá to kill the white Huinca-Aurora. We should see her decision to kill the children along these lines too: she will not allow Ahumada to educate them reproducing white culture. When Ahumada arrives, she has already given them the 'sleep herbs'. She leaves the ranch alone, walking toward the threatening desert with nowhere to go, surrounded by vultures over her head. Ahumada screams. Assimilation has failed; extermination will do the remaining historical work.

This is not necessarily, or not only, a drama about the tried and tired narrative of 'civilization or barbarism' rightly identified by critics. Arguably, that narrative is also ancient Greek and it runs too through the colonization of the continent at large. Biglieri rightly sees Cureses' frontier as that space with no real distinctions between 'civilized and non-civilized' (Biglieri 2015). But, perhaps too focused on finding the Greek Medea (instead of her sweetened version), critics forget the wink that Cureses makes to *his* audience about the debate in the nineteenth century that defined a singular fate for the foundation of the Argentine republic—distinct from other republics in the region. And perhaps, also, they miss that there is, after all, one tiny clearing where the frontier establishes a dividing line between civilization and barbarism: with the softening of Bárbara's characterization, we are left with violence only on one side of the gender divide. As Bárbara puts it, in this respect *all men are equal*: whites and Indians alike kidnap women and mistreat them (18).

Due to space limitations, I only focus on one of Cureses' Argentine details to signal the nineteenth century debate: the name of Bárbara's father, a name that matters as much as Helios (or Eethes) may have mattered for the ancient Athenians. Bárbara is none other than the daughter of Coliqueo, not a name that Cureses chose for any phonetic echo with the Spanish for Colquis (Cólquide), as critics with their gaze on Greece tend to think.²⁵ Cureses' audience would not have made the connection between 'Cólquide' and 'Coliqueo': they would more than likely have thought in the towering figure of the real life indigenous (Mapuche) chieftain Ignacio Coliqueo ('the blond one', 1786–1871), in whom one can evoke the entire history of the 'Indian' wars and one of the avatars of the Creole debates that precisely the *Clarín* review sums up: was the best way to acquire indigenous lands to 'Exterminate, rather than win over'? Ignacio Coliqueo had come from Chile with his people and around the 1820s made a pact with Christians to settle in the province of Buenos Aires. He later escaped the attack of another Mapuche chief, Calfucurá ('or blue stone', 1770s–1873), a

25 See Bravo Laguna 132; Delbuono de Prat 31; Pociña (2007) 56.

chief so powerful that he was nicknamed ‘the Napoleon of the Desert’. Coliqueo found refuge in the indigenous nation of the ‘Ranqueles’. He had a daughter who, like Bárbara, had married a Creole captain of the Argentine army: Manuel Baigorria (1809–1875), who also had found refuge among the ‘Ranqueles’ after being defeated in the desert. Coliqueo allied with Baigorria rather than with the Chieftain Calfucurá, who in 1852 declared war against Christians, claiming ‘Indian land for Indians’. Creoles gave land to Coliqueo’s nation, but they also broke several pacts with him. Only five years before his death he finally had legal rights to the land.

Cureses was reworking real-life episodes, attempts at assimilation and friendly relations between Christians and Indians, in the midst of two wars: the so-called ‘armed peace’ existing among different indigenous nations, which was exploited by Creoles in their favour, and the military avatars produced by the debate that Creoles were having since the early 1820s about assimilation until they decided finally for extermination.²⁶ Like Coliqueo and her real life daughter, Cureses’ Bárbara attempts assimilation into the Creole community. She has left her Indian nation, mothered the children of a Captain, and saved Christian children too. She is a mother, allright. What is more, she knows the language of the ‘Republic’, giving Creoles a lesson about what real freedom means. ‘Had you left us all Indians free [...] with no frontiers [...] I may have known what the fatherland is’ (19), ‘here there are no frontiers [...] only blood exists’ (44), says Bárbara to Ordoñez. Her betrayal of her father resembles a betrayal among Indian chieftains, for she does not betray her culture. Her assimilation does not mean forgetting her knowledge; in this respect she remains ‘foreign’ amongst Creoles. Ahumada’s betrayal of her represents the final decision of Creoles to stop assimilation: Ahumada will want the assimilation of his children but only in his own terms—‘to win Indians over’ by whatever means it takes. This debate is also deployed in the language of blood: Ordoñez and Huinca-Aurora believe ‘culture’ is a question of blood, and thus there is no assimilation possible. Bárbara, the Old Woman, and Botijo, have become mestizos: they have preserved their culture but learnt Christian ways too (culture is learnt, and not in blood). The ultimate irony is the polysemy of the Indian Anambá’s revenge. His act of extermination (of a Creole) also shows his dependence on Christian blood—spreading it on his genitals means his rebirth. No escape for Argentina, Cureses says, which will be always ‘mestiza’, no matter what Creoles wanted—just as Marechal had said with his Antig-

26 Extermination as the only solution to the ‘Indian problem’ appears as early as 1823 in the *Diario de Campaña* written by Martín Rodríguez (1771–1845), Buenos Aires governor from 1820 to 1824.

ona Vélez, who dies in the pampas during this same war in 1820, and whose blood will populate the desert, but only thanks to the Indian arrow that kills her. And what of Medea the lover who kills her children for revenge? Cureses yields to the dominant ideology of motherhood: her act must be 'caring'. It is 'caring' of her culture: if Creoles wanted extermination (or complete assimilation), Medea remains Indian in not allowing her children to grow up 'white'. The strangeness of her ancient murder, which Cureses decides to sweeten, becomes her proud wish not to fully assimilate to Creoles.

Captured in the national narratives, all 'Indian' Medeas follow the Argentine ideology of motherhood: they *protect* children. Alberto Drago's *La Navarro* may be the most protective of all: *she kills the man*. Premiered at Teatro Bambalinas (Buenos Aires) on Sept 9, 1976, the play is set in the 1920s, now some decades after the defeat of the majority of indigenous peoples in the plains, and with a new kind of 'malón' in question: the 'white raid' ('el malón blanco'), a term for Creole land-owners to refer to the massive Italian immigration that had been steadily entering the port of Buenos Aires since the end of the nineteenth century, carrying with it the anarchists who would protest against the working conditions propelling the rapid modernization of Buenos Aires.

In Drago's play, one renowned anarchist activist hovers over the characters as a haunting menace: Alberto Ghirardo (1875–1946), lawyer, politician, writer, and editor of the anarchist icon *La Protesta*. His name could even be construed as a point of view from which to assess all sides of the old narrative 'civilization and barbarism' as 'barbaric'. He represents another 'otherness': an ideological otherness, from whose perspective the entire nation was barbaric. Through Medea's father in law, Don Aldao, we know that in Buenos Aires anarchists protest the killing of Sacco and Venzetti in the USA. Aldao complains that one man named Ghirardo investigates his turbulent past. Aldao runs for governor of the province of Buenos Aires and can't afford this: he has 'marked' Ghirardo. Medea is a 'mestiza' in the rural area near the city of Luján in the province of Buenos Aires, well known for its cult of the 'Virgin of Luján'. Aldao sees his son Juan's sentimental choice to live with Medea as a complication that may ruin him politically, though he had seen it as very convenient that the teenage kid should elope with Medea given that she had killed her father, who was Aldao's mestizo political opponent. Not only Ghirardo investigates the murder. The play begins when Medea intuits, with her uncanny sixth sense, that a man of her own blood—her brother—is coming to kill Juan Cruz, in revenge against Medea's killing of their father. Medea sends her protector, the 'gaucho' El Chino, to kill the brother. Aldao in turn has decided to go to Medea's house with a whitening plan for his son: a marriage with a British girl, the daughter of Patagonian landowners who would support him politically. Juan resists

his father's plan but later tries to convince Medea that the children will be educated 'in Europe', and could live 'in Patagonia or in London' instead of the muddy riverbanks where they now live, and that his British wife would allow him to continue seeing Medea.

And barbaric it all is, as if seen from the perspective of the anarchist, for it is a knife play. As it often was in real life in the plains, characters carry knives and knives resolve all conflicts—and violence against mestizos is dramatically staged. Aldao pulls out his belt to brutally beat Medea unconscious on the floor (no stage directions indicate that this would be off stage). Juan Cruz slaps Medea to shut her up. Medea's knife had killed her father and El Chino had knifed a peasant when he was young; we are also led to believe that Juan Cruz had saved Chino's life with a knife. Chino saves Juan Cruz by knifing to death Medea's brother; and finally, Chino's knife, in the hands of Medea, kills the husband Juan Cruz. Per stage directions, the lights, the music, the gestures speak as much as words pronounced. The atmosphere is ghostly, nocturnal, mythical (Medea intuits everything), and rural, featuring 'the evil light' of the pampas, the sound and intuition of animals (Medea's horse stops its gallop 'sensing' that Juan Cruz has returned to the house, etc). But, near the Virgen of Luján, something has to remain sacred. No surprise that it will be motherhood; this play is written by Creoles. Not only the children but also the grandchildren are safe; Medea's daughter is in love with an Indian man and Medea lets them elope. For her, the men are all cut of the same cloth: her mestizo father, the Creole Aldao and her lover, Juan Cruz, who must die. As Medea says, the children represent 'life': they are 'the new. In them lies the truth that comes from the past' (41). They are the future.

When José Luis Alves chose colonial times to situate his 'Medea González' in *La hechicera* (*The Sorceress*, 1996), he ended up producing the most 'demonic' of all Indian Medeas. With the setting of the Spanish Inquisition (as the agent of so-called 'civilization') Alves had no other choice than portraying Medea as a sorcerer. And yet, this Medea also defends her children, like all other Indian Medeas, for the key question is land-ownership—as it would continue to be after independence. Indeed, Medea had been 'part of the land' given in the *encomienda* of colonizer Don Diego Bazán, a man who took her for his companion. The Spanish Crown used to grant lands to colonists *with* their towns and indigenous populations included in them; Alves dramatizes the footprint of the narrative 'civilization or barbarism' that Creoles would inherit.²⁷ Medea González worries about losing her husband as much as about her children's fate. So much stigma, as I discussed above, fell upon children without a father

27 The play won Alves the Municipal Award Luis José Tejeda in the city of Córdoba; it was restaged at the Teatro Alberdi in the northern city of Tucumán on 18-7-1997.

in colonial times (and into the nineteenth century), that in the very first dialogue we hear Medea say to her old companion: 'I think of my children. I think of a woman with no husband. Half a woman. [...] I think of my children, bastards without a home' (12). She also thinks of Diego, as she is preparing a fatal herbal potion, summoning evil spirits, and drawing with her knife the X shape of Saint Andrew's cross.

Indian raids have temporarily ceased, according to Diego. But Medea is 'on' the land that used to belong to her. Her motherly worry is intrinsic to her desire that the children inherit the land. To Diego's proposal that she goes to Spain, Medea responds: 'these lands are still mine' (20), against her mother's belief that 'the only land a woman owns is in her husband's boots' (20). And so, Medea tries to prevent Diego's fathering a new child with the white daughter of the governor, casting a spell to make him sick. It is a motherly fight: as she puts it, 'it is her children or mine' (24) who will own these lands. What ensues is the accusation of witchcraft to the Spanish authorities: the entire play is a show of demonic force against the Church. Once again, heretic she may be, but the crucial issue is the political heresy of not wanting to yield 'her' land to Christians.

The play opens and closes with Saint Andrew's cross, the symbol of humility and valour of the undefeated. Medea survives first the torture chamber. Then she is condemned by the Inquisition to die crucified on Saint Andrew's cross, the same cross she drew for Diego's illness. She miraculously escapes, like her Greek sister, in a carriage led by winged dragons, with her dead children. She has killed them to 'protect' them from the dangers of living in this world (51). Alves does not dwell on the killing; rather he focuses with great detail on Medea's strength as the towering figure of resistance against Spain. The stage directions for the scene of the crucifixion, which happens at the same time than the preparations of Diego's wedding, make for a terrifying scene. And the priest representing the Inquisition, who is sent to hear her confession, ends up defeated: he cannot resist her womanly power and finally consoles her.

Supernatural and motherly is also Medea's subtle and minimal presence in Fortunato Nari's successive re-workings of the myth. In the province of Santa Fé, Nari wrote through the 1990s in three different genres: a play, *Medea y la mariposa* (*Medea and the Butterfly* ND, unpublished), *El canto de Medea* (*Medea's Song* 1992, novella); *El hijo de Medea* (*Medea's Son*, 1966, short story).²⁸

28 *El hijo de Medea* was published in 1966 by Colmegna in Santa Fé. *Medea y la mariposa* can be found at the INET. See newspaper reception at <http://www.rafaela.gov.ar/nuevo/Noticias-amp.aspx?i=6213>; <http://www.fhuc.unl.edu.ar/portalgringo/crear/gringa/escritores/nari/nari.swf>; <http://www.diariolaopinion.com.ar/Sitio/VerNoticia.aspx?s=0&i=110017>.

The play that I found at the INET sets the action in a rural 'estancia': as the author says, it is a 'peasant story' that focuses on mestizo peasant transgressions of the social boundary separating them from landowners. The killing of children is transferred onto male actors: María-Medea is almost absent, always a longed-for mother figure, exonerated from all guilt, appearing at the end with a ghostly and enchanting song foretelling death. As in all the plays above, the sounds, animals, and imagery of the plains, are almost characters; there is also a Chorus of three 'witches' following rural lore. Absalón, the son of María (Medea) works at an 'estancia' and has fallen in love with Cambosu's white daughter (Tusca). The play is the fated story of Cambosu, who only resembles the ancient Jason in that he abandons mother Medea for the white daughter of the landowner. Cambosu's destiny is to confront his past: he had committed a murder in his youth, escaped to the desert, met María only to abandon her with a son, and finally married the rich white woman back at the estancia. He will meet his destiny by killing his own son and losing his daughter. Tusca having been found dead, Cambosu kills the man who is easy to blame, Absalón, only to recognize his own son in him too late. Both father and son have transgressed the boundary of inter-class marriage. Medea is more akin to the folk figure of 'La Llorona': she who weeps the loss of her children.

Completely novel among the 'Indian' Medeas is Suellen Worstell de Dornbrook's *Medea del Paraná*, written in 2004. The colonial/neo-colonial question shifts here from the old treasure of land to the new treasure of the twenty-first century: fresh water. The *Paraná* is the river that runs along the border between Argentina and Uruguay and ends in the crossing of the frontiers between Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil in the Guaraní aquifer, one of the largest in the world. The area is Guaraní and Toba: two indigenous nations that today inhabit the territory. The play is embedded in their mythology and has some words in Qom (Toba) language. Medea lives in the water because she is the daughter of the god of the river, Wedaiq, and the granddaughter of Chi'ishí (the star woman) according to the mythology of the Qom (Toba) nation from the northern Argentine Chaco province. In personal conversation with the author, I learned that she had heard the rumour that United States military operations were taking place in the area of this strategic water reserve. Through her research the author found that some of these rivers are already contaminated.

Medea is divinely protective—of the river and of the children. As we hear Toba songs, on the river Jason appears fishing and patrolling in search for subterranean watersheds. A storm hovers over the crew when Jason catches something strange in the net. Medea emerges (dressed in carnival attire, cast as an actress of indigenous features) and warns him that these waters do not belong

to him. But Jason tells her: 'they will soon come for these waters. The world is thirsty of ... blood and ... water'.²⁹ He manages to seduce Medea into his boat and convinces her that she needs a man to safeguard all these waters from predators. He promises to take her up the river to her ancestral abodes past the damn; she asks for marriage. The river is a character with its own voice, complaining about its contaminated fate.

Medea soon realizes that her river is more and more contaminated with the dirty business in which Jason is involved—including the casinos that Creon owns in the 'land without evil' (a reference to the Guaraní mythology of a promised land). Jason abandons Medea for Creon's daughter who helps in the casinos, but in a moment of high drama Medea irrupts at the casino and hurls a storm over the machines. Creon and his daughter die by electrocution. Medea decides to leave Jason by jumping off the bridge into the deep waters with her two children, disappearing as Jason shouts out that they won't survive because the river has changed. Medea hopes her father will forgive her. As the old woman says to her, he needs his daughter to protect the waters.

As gold once did, water now lies beneath the soil inhabited by indigenous nations. The play deploys the centuries old fight for indigenous land in terms of the fight to preserve water. The vision is dystopic and urgent: nothing much has changed in power balances, as indigenous movements insist that the gold of today, fresh water, can become a possible cause for a third 'world war'. The fate of Medea jumping into the river is uncertain. But, as we know, she is a divine mother, daughter of gods.

The Indian Medeas are caring mothers, even when they kill their children. They retain the familiar Creole ideology of motherhood all the while being foreign bodies inside the nation. The question about 'reception' remains: what could a non-Indian Medea look like in Argentina? If not embodying the 'barbaric' otherness of indigenous peoples, what kind of female foreignness could Medea embody onstage for Argentina, a country so politically occupied with mothers who do not kill but look for those who killed their children?

While the distance of Greece may have proved suitable to represent the 'mysterious' idea for Argentines that a woman who has become a mother is not always caring, the plays that explore the motives of Medea-the-killer follow the ancient plot and are for the most part portrayals of a demoniacal force

29 I am quoting from a manuscript given to me by the author, though the text was published in an anthology of the A.T.T.A.CH (Asociación de técnicos teatrales, actores y coreógrafos del Chaco): *Primer concurso Regional de Dramaturgia del NEA*. Resistencia: Biblioteca Teatral El Público, 2004, 87–103.

threatening men. The earliest version of the female demoniacal force was Héctor Schujman's 1967 *Medea*, focusing on the horror of infanticide so much that the play *starts* with Medea's children dead. Perhaps Gené summarized it all when he talked about his *Medea* production in 1996: the only way he could embody Jason was to tap into his knowledge of Freudian vocabulary and think in the unconscious psychoanalytic fantasies of 'male castration': 'It is a terrible myth, incomprehensible, of difficult assimilation because it incarnates the unconscious danger that one carries inside before that person that is a woman,' (*Teatro* 30). Only in the 2000s playwrights have begun experimenting with a Creole Medea whose foreignness may be cast away from the demonic (and from infanticide) and placed into the situation of women in patriarchal societies. For example, Clodet García's and María Barjacoba's *Medea fragmentada* (*Fragmented Medea*, 2006) inverted infanticide and imagined instead a woman *in search* for her lost children and for herself, thus amalgamating the Mothers of the disappeared and the search for womanhood beyond motherhood. And Rolando Pérez's *El término* (*The End*, re-titled *Nupcia/Medea*, 2008) had Jason kill the children and Medea become a figure for the eternal search for justice, combining the 'never again' to crimes against humanity and the centuries old search for justice for indigenous peoples against the neocolonial violence that permeates Argentine society. As the twenty-first century advances, playwrights experiment more with the 'woman' question and articulate it better with the equally unsolved indigenous question in today's Argentina. Still, *Medea-the-killer*, the lover who avenges herself by harming her children, does not manage to fully become an Argentine Creole woman on stage: as a killer she is an ancient Greek demon even if dressed in modern attire.

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