DRAMATIC INNOVATIONS OF EURIPIDES IN *PHOENISSAE*, *ELECTRA* AND *ORESTES*

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the most important innovations of Euripides in *Phoenissae, Electra* and *Orestes*. The choice of the particular tragedies is due to the their thematic relation with extant tragedies of the other two great tragedians of Athens. Only major innovations have been taken under consideration - innovations with crucial influence on the Euripidean shaping of the myth.

In the Introduction there is a synoptic survey of the latitudes for innovations the tragic poet has. The conclusion is that these latitudes are broad, although some features of the myths are rigidly established.

In the next chapter I research some elements of the *Phoenissae*: the role of Polynices and his enmity with Eteocles, the presentation of Jocasta and Oedipus, the Menoeceus scene and the differences concerning the Seven Argive leaders between *Phoenissae* and *Septem* . *Electra's* chapter deals with the relation of this play with Sophocles' *Electra* and Aeschylus' *Choephori*, mainly in regard of the personality of Electra and Orestes, and the futility of the matricide. In *Orestes* we face a different problem: do the striking Euripidean innovations of this tragedy aim to present a criminal Orestes or does he want to stress the alienation of the main heroes from the their social environment ?

Euripides the Athenian

He grew old between the fires of Troy
and the quarries of Sicily.

He liked sea-shore caves and pictures of the sea.
He saw the veins of men
as a net the gods made to catch us like wild beasts:
he tried to break through it.
He was a sour man, his friends were few;
when his time came he was torn to pieces by dogs.

George Seferis, *Logbook III*
(translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard)

For my parents,

οὐκ ἔστι παισὶ τοῦδε κάλλιον γέρας
ἢ πατρὸς ἐσθλοῦ κἀγαθοῦ πεφυκέναι.

οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν μητρὸς ἥδιον τέκνοις.

for my brother,

τὸν τῇ φύσει
οἰκεῖον οὐδεὶς καιρὸς ἀλλότριον ποιεῖ.

and for Evi, with boundless love and gratitude

ἔρωτα δ᾽ ὅστις μὴ θεὸν κρίνει μέγαν
καὶ τῶν ἁπάντων δαιμόνων ὑπέρτατον
ἢ σκαιός ἐστιν ἢ καλῶν ἄπειρος ὢν
οὐκ οἶδε τὸν μέγιστον ἀνθρώποις θεόν.

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INTRODUCTION

μακάριόν ἐστι ἡ τραγῳδία
ποίημα κατὰ πάντ', εἴ γε πρῶτον οἱ λόγοι
ὑπὸ τῶν θεατῶν εἰσιν ἐγνωρισμένοι,
πρὶν καί τιν' εἰπεῖν· ὥσθ' ὑπομνῆσαι μόνον
δεῖ τὸν ποιητήν. Οἰδίπουν γὰρ + φῶ
τὰ δ' ἄλλα πάντ' ἴσασιν· ὁ πατὴρ Λάιος,
μήτηρ Ἰοκάστη, θυγατέρες, παῖδες τίνες,
τί πείσεθ' οὗτος, τί πεποίηκεν.
Antiphanes, fr. 189 *PCG* (Kassel-Austin)

The Athenian theatre was in many respects very conventional. Innumerable conventions governing diction, tone and propriety defined the genre and contributed to its elevation. These unwritten laws are not really restrictions or limitations, they are rather the familiar framework which supports any great cultural flourishing. When the artist has accepted forms and his audience shares a complex of expectations, then, since the audience is more sensitive and receptive, the art form can be more highly developed.

The story of the tragedies derives from the mythical stock, formulated for many centuries before the acme of tragedy, the 5th century. These myths were, more or less, common knowledge of the Athenians - many of the audience even believed in them as being historical facts. Among the extant tragedies, only *Persae* derives its story from current history.[1] However, the fact that the audience had a rough knowledge[2], at least, of

[1] We know also two tragedies of Phrynichus, the *Fall of Miletus* and the *Phoenicians* which derive their plot from the contemporary historical events of the Persian wars, and a tragedy of Agathon, *Antheus*, in which both the story and the characters are sheer invention of the poet, according to Aristotle's *Poetics*, 1451b, 21.
[2] I think that Aristotle's statement that τὰ γνώριμα ὀλίγοις γνώριμά ἐστιν (*Poetics*, 1451b, 25-6) goes too far. Antiphanes's opinion also, fr. 189 *PCG* (Kassel-Austin), has a tone of comic exaggeration. The truth, probably, lies somewhere in between: for example, the vast majority of the audience knew the myth of Orestes or of Oedipus, but they have to be informed about Polymestor in *Hecuba*, or Lycus in *Heracles*.

the stories does not mean that the Greek tragedy was simply a repository of traditional tales, which lacks suspense or surprise.

Greek tragedy drew on stories about the distant heroic age of Greece, the period which in historical terms is called the Late Bronze Age or 'The Mycenaean Age', those few generations of mighty deeds, turmoil and splendour, which were the setting of most traditional Greek heroic songs, both in epic and lyric. But these stories were not canonized in any definitive collection of 'Greek myths'. Their oral transmission was no doubt subject to the huge variations which characterise almost all such oral traditions, variations in both the style of the stories and their contents. The tragedians probably drew their stories from the literary sources. Here, too, there was extensive variation, the result of centuries of rearrangement and invention, a process which the tragedians themselves continued. Not even the myths of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are definitive. In the story of Orestes, for example, it is implied several times in the *Odyssey* (and also in early lyric) that Aegisthus is the chief agent of Agamemnon's murder and chief object of Orestes' vengeance; but the whole shape of the *Oresteia* is formed by Aeschylus' decision to make Clytaemestra the chief murderer and the crucial victim of vengeance[3]. According to Sophocles when Oedipus discovered the truth he blinded himself and went into exile, while Jocasta hanged herself. In the version in *Odyssey* 11 Epicaste (as she is called) hangs herself, but there is nothing about Oedipus' blinding: he continues ruling in Thebes. And a line in the *Iliad* (23. 679) implies that he died there.[4] In Euripides

[3]Probably Stesichorus in his lost *Oresteia* gave to Clytaemestra an important role in Agamemnon's murder, see Garvie, 1986, xx. In addition in Pindar's *Pythian* 11, 15 ff. Clytaemestra has a leading role in the murder.
[4] Cf. *Antigone* 50, which could imply that Oedipus died in Thebes. See Jebb, 1888, ad loc.

Phoenissae Oedipus is blind but still in Thebes many years after the discovery of the truth, and Jocasta is still alive.

Although the myths were established in the collective understanding, the important feature for the drama is the way the poet turned the myth into drama. The myth was shared by good and bad dramatists alike, but the difference lies in the way each poet shapes the plot. The artistic initiative had to take the decisions in answering crucial questions such as which section of the myth is most proper for dramatisation, which events are to be emphasised or not, which characters will be used. Other issues in which the dramatist had to take a decision were the identity and the role of the chorus[5], the sequence of the events[6], the shape of the acts and the ending, the use of lyrics - choral, monody, or lyric dialogue - and last, but not least, all the aspects of theatrical and visual technique.

The audience did not know the plot in advance, for they did not know what variations [7]and innovations the playwright would use - no doubt they were eager to find out.[8] Still less did they know how he would shape his plot, how he would dramatise it: that is precisely what they went to see. The dramatist would, of course, prepare for and foreshadow the course of the plot, creating the tragic irony. He might call to mind previous versions of his story, earlier dramatisations or Homer; he will then arouse complex associations and expectations which he can confirm or contradict.

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[5] Note the difference in the choruses between *Phoenissae*, *Seven against Thebes* and *Antigone*.
[6] On this aspect one may note the reversal of the order of the murders in Sophocles' *Electra*.
[7] Lattimore, 3-5, attempts to define the latitude for choice the poet has, in his study of the versions of the Oedipus' myth. The critic wrongly maintains that the dramatist always had to choose one of the already existing versions of the myth in order to shape his plot.
[8] Cf. Webster, 1968, 33-4.

If we would like to assess the connection between a Greek tragedian of the fifth century and the mythic matter from which his plots are drawn we would have to face a nexus of questions concerning the relative antiquity of differing versions of a particular myth, their geographical links and their association with cultic practice. Nonetheless, few would dispute a general assertion that Euripides' plays are rife with mythic innovations, both major and minor. A commentary on any Euripidean play will almost inevitably cite more than one plot element which seems to have been Euripides' own introduction to the saga. Unfortunately, however, the key words here are "seems to have been", for the intrinsic difficulty of reconstructing pre-Euripidean mythic sources often makes it impossible to demonstrate with certainty that a particular instance of variation must be attributed to a consciously innovative Euripides. Was he the first to have Medea deliberately kill her children? Had the motif of the wrestling for a soul from death been attached to the story of Admetus and Alcestis before Euripides? How much did Hermione and Andromache have to do with each other before the murderous plottings of the *Andromache*?[9]

Euripides was a *"poiêtês sophos"* according to Winnington-Ingram[10]. Increasingly, critics have called attention to instances of Euripidean cleverness. Long recognised examples of wit at the expense of the literary traditions, such as the scene of recognition in *Electra*, have been joined by others in which the playwright consciously shapes a certain tension between his characters' words or actions and the conventional dramatic form within which they were, perforce, circumscribed. Thus, Winnington-

[9] Cf. Webster, 1968, 27-8.

[10] The characterisation is taken from the title of a study which is a milestone in the examination of Euripidean wit. R.P. Winnington-Ingram, "Euripides: *Poiêtês Sophos*", *Arethusa* 2 (1969), pp. 127-42.

Ingram has pointed out that Electra's query, ποῦ γὰρ ἄγγελοι; at *Electra* 759 contains an unorthodox glance at the dramatic convention according to which off-stage events are promptly reported to the characters and audiences of the Greek tragedy by the arrival of messengers.

Despite his bold innovations, however, Euripides seems to remain loyal to a broad mythic framework. Some of the mythical elements seem to be untouchable by any tragedian. Eteocles and Polynices must kill each other in a single combat before the walls of Thebes, whether their enmity is due to the paternal curse, as happens in Aeschylus' version of the story, or due to mainly personal interest, as Euripides portrays it in the *Phoenissae.* A reconciliation between them is unimaginable for both the dramatist and his audience. The possibility that this could be achieved emerges only in order to highlight the final impossibility of such an event. Oedipus must be blinded, either by himself or by the servants of Laius, as happens in the lost Euripidean tragedy *Oedipus*[11].

The same, more or less, occurs in the case of Orestes' myth. Orestes is traditionally known as the matricide; he can not 'escape' from this role, attributed to him by Homer on the literary level.[12] The Greek audience knows, also, that Orestes was neither the killer of Helen, nor of Hermione, as the former had either a peaceful end in

[11] *Oedipus*, fr. 541 *TGF* (N^2). Antigone could be an exception as we do not know clearly what happens at the end of Euripides' *Antigone*; According to Webster, 1967, 181 ff., Antigone and Haemon are eventually saved through the intervention of Dionysus as *deus ex machina*. This would indicate a major and radical innovation to the norm of the Theban myth. But Hyginus in his *Fabula* 72, which derives probably from the Euripidean tragedy, says that Haemon killed Antigone and himself, under the pressure of Creon, a version which does not differ very much from the shaped myth.

[12] *Odyssey*, 3. 310; the killing of Clyteamestra is indicated only by hints (note also 11.453, 24. 200), but I think that it is clearly implied. Orestes in the epic is the example that Telemachus should follow, and the matricide does not fit well with this example. This is the reason that Homer does not explicitly mention the killing of Clytaemestra, although the Scholiast maintains that οὐκ οἶδεν ὁ ποιητὴς τὸν Κλυταιμνήστρας ὑπὸ τοῦ παιδὸς μόρον. (Σ *Od.* 1. 300).

her home in Sparta or, according another tradition, she had been deified, and the latter was destined to marry eventually Orestes, despite her betrothal to Neoptolemus.[13]

Unfortunately we can not define a single criterion for which features of a mythical tradition are inviolable and which are susceptible to change and differentiation. For the breadth of artistic initiative is not restricted to details such as the instrument of Agamemnon's murder. A Jocasta who has survived the discovery of her marriage with her son, and lives in the palace of Thebes, an Electra who was forced to marry a humble peasant and lives in a rustic hut somewhere in the mountain Argive frontiers, an Orestes who has to face an Argive Assembly which will judge and condemn him for the matricide are not expendable details; they are striking and bold innovations of Euripides' creative imagination, which aim to serve the intentions of the poet regarding the treatment of the mythical matter.

The only criterion which may apply in the distinction of unchangeable elements of the myth could be that some important features have been formed before the birth of tragedy. But even this is too vague and is put forward more as a working assumption. The main support for this is the tendency of Euripides to use the *deus ex machina* as a means to take the events of the plot, no matter how innovatory the plot is, back to the course of the tradition. Among the other functions[14] of the device of *deus ex machina* , and in close connection with them, the restoration of the given tradition is particularly striking. The most obvious example of that is Apollo in *Orestes*.

[13] Even in Euripides' *Andromache*, where Hermione has been married to Neoptolemus, her final husband is Orestes.

[14] For example the establishment of a local cult, the rescue of the heroes, or an interpretation of the events of the plot (as happens with the Dioscuri in *Electra*).

If this is true then one must examine the question of Euripides' deeper purposes in his treatment of the myth, apart from the fact that mythology is for the poet an inexhaustible source with exploitable matter in order to create a tragedy.[15] What is the connection according to Euripides of the world of mythology to the world of reality? The most fashionable answer to this is that Euripides uses the myth in order to undermine it.[16] He has an ironic approach to the given tradition, especially in what concerns the divine will, the decisions and the actions of the gods and their impact on human affairs. Euripides considered the old myths as out-of-date and he criticised them very strictly through the comparison of the myth with the contemporary world of reality. I can not agree with this theory completely, but I will not deal with this question here as the thorough examination of Euripides' perception and use of the world of myth requires a whole thesis for itself.

In the following pages I shall examine three tragedies of Euripides which are full of mythical and dramatic innovations. Another reason for the specific choice is that for these two myths, the myth of Labdacids and the myth of the Atreids, we have the extant plays of the two other great tragedians of the 5th century and thus the comparison can be more clearly established. In each tragedy the major innovations are located and their contribution to the plot and the meaning of the play is researched.

[15] Cf. Webster, 1968, 45,: "Traditional mythology is a world of beautiful phantasy. Chorus and characters can escape into it; the audience appreciate it as a foil to the realism of modern interpretation."
[16] Cf., e.g., Whitman, 104-47, especially pp. 105-15, for the ironic approach of Euripides to the given myths, Michelini, 52-69, Eisner, 156-7.

PHOENISSAE:

The παραπληρωματικὸν drama?

I. Introduction

Euripides' *Phoenissae* was one of the most popular plays of the tragedian from its very first performance[1], through the later antiquity and the Byzantine era (in the latter it was just a play for reading, not for performing). This is obvious from the number of papyrus fragments, manuscripts (more surviving pieces than any other tragedy)[2], its adaptation by Seneca in his tragedy of the same name, and from the fact that it was included in the so-called Byzantine Triad, together with *Orestes* and *Hecuba*. *Phoenissae* has also the fullest scholia of any Euripidean play, which indicates the interest of the ancient and Middle Ages' scholars in this play. However, 20th century scholars had quite divergent views and statements on this play, not only concerning the problem of interpolated lines[3], but also on its value.[4]

[1] We do not have specific evidence for a precise date of the play, but a date between 411-409 seems most probable, as Mastronarde 1994, pp. 11-4 proposes. For other estimates about the date see Craik, pp. 40-1, Webster, 1967, 5, Lesky , 330-1, Conacher, 1967a, 228 -9 (although he wrongly connects *Phoenissae* with *Oenomaus* and *Chrysippus* in a trilogy), Powell, pp. 34 -8, Pearson xxxii-xxxiv. All the above agree, with small deviations, in a date after 412.

[2] See Mastronarde and Bremer 1-19, Diggle, 1994, 72-4, Bremer, 1983, 293-305, Bremer and Worp 240-260.

[3] A significant example of the constant disagreement about the authenticity of major parts of the play are the two most recent editions: Mastronarde's in Teubner (1988) series and Diggle's in OCT (1994). Our study on this tragedy is based on the former text, which is reprinted in Mastronarde's memorable commentary (1994). In his text Mastronarde brackets only 62 lines (3,5% of the whole play), while, on the other hand, Diggle adopts all the proposed interpolations through the history of the text and, as he tends to do in his editions, adds also some of his own initiative. The result of his method is that 440 lines (24,91%) are athetized, including the major part of the Exodos: If Diggle's view of the text was to be followed, the interpretation of the play's structure and unity would have been quite different. I will, however, mention the lines which I will treat, and are considered as interpolated.

[4] Pearson commented in his edition: "It is a small wonder that the play has always been a favourite". A short review of the recently expressed views and theories about the value and unity of *Phoenissae*. Luschnig, the most recent interpreter of this tragedy, 230, traces in Jocasta's role a uniting element in a play

The main point of criticism has focused on the problem of unity of the structure and the relation between the individual episodes and the whole play. The third *Hypothesis* , an anonymous one, charges the drama with being overstuffed: [τὸ δρᾶμα] ἔστι δὲ καὶ παραπληρωματικόν· ἥ τε ἀπὸ τῶν τειχέων Ἀντιγόνη θεωροῦσα μέρος οὐκ ἔστι δράματος, καὶ <ὁ> ὑπόσπονδος Πολυνείκης οὐδενὸς ἕνεκα παραγίνεται, ὅ τε ἐπὶ πᾶσι μετ᾽ ᾠδῆς ἀδολέσχου φυγαδευόμενος Οἰδίπους προσέρραπται διακενῆς. (*Hypothesis* III, 1-5).

These three episodes, which are major innovations of Euripides in comparison with the Theban plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles (except, of course, the later *Oedipus at Colonus*), together with the Menoeceus episode, another striking Euripidean novelty, will be the subject of this study, focusing especially on their function as integral and necessary parts of the *Phoenissae*.

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with so many characters (*Phoenissae* includes the most tragedy characters of the exact ones. It includes eleven persons, with only *Orestes* coming close with ten persons). Murray, 96, maintains that "The *Phoenissae* seems like an attempt to run the matter of a whole trilogy into one play". Grube, 354, believes that the thematic unit of the drama lays upon Oedipus' fate. Vellacott, 167, considers that this play is about the influence of the war on human behaviour. Kitto,1961, 350-1, denies to this play the characteristics of a tragedy and so affixes on it the characterisation of 'melodrama'. He thinks that it is nothing more than a dramatic pageant and concludes (360) that this play may not be a tragedy "...but it is a very good cinema". Norwood, 36-7, strictly condemns the play as a bad, or at least, an unsatisfactory one. He also considers Antigone's presence useless. Webster's opinion is that Euripides transformed the Aeschylean story of the *Septem* in an 'ordinary' level. The theme of the play, from his point of view, is not anymore the fratricide, but the strife between human characters. This is the reason for increasing so much the number of characters (13, 164). Lesky, 339-40, defends the coherence of *Phoenissae,* as it is obtained with the interlinking of Thebes' fate with the Labdacids' lot. Foley, 107 argues in favour of the choral odes, which form a cycle about the history and pre-history of Thebes, as a uniting element. At the same conclusion arrived also Arthur, 184, eight years before Foley. V.d. Valk, 15, claims that the theme of *Phoenissae* is only the ruin of the Labdacids. Podlecki, 356, supports the unity of the play on four patterns which lay on it: the 'light-dark', the 'sight-blindness', the 'beasts', and the 'Ares-Dionysus' one. Conacher ,233-5, has a similar approach. He believes in the coexistence of the 'fate/human choice' theme (although the second one bears a greater degree of importance) which together with the series of myth's ironic variation from the unity of the episodes. Rawson, 112, 114, thinks that the uniting theme is the relation between country and royal family. Craik observes that Euripides does not treat the play under a totally new perspective (as he did in his *Antigone*), but combines old components into a new composition. She also thinks (p.42) that the key for this play is the amalgamation and the contrast of different themes. Her note that the organic structure parallelisms and the balance in presentation is expressed with direct correspondence of the scenes (pp 43-4), is very accurate. Finally, Mastronarde ,1994, 3-4 classifies the play in those with 'open' structure, a structure with deliberately diminishing concentration and hierarchy and pin-points the major

II. The *Teichoskopia* (88-201)

This is what the second part of the prologue is called, just after Jocasta's exit and return to the palace (87). Euripides, in this tragedy, uses a technique that can be found in some of his other tragedies as well. That is, the prologue rhesis (Jocasta's rhesis is the longest of the extant ones) is followed by a more lively, in dramatic terms, and usually more dialogical part. An amoibaion is present here between a Servant (who is also Jocasta's envoy to the Argive camp in order to arrange a truce (83)) and Antigone. The Servant speaks in iambic trimeters (all of them are antilabai in the Servant's lines) but Antigone mostly sings in various lyric metres.

The scene is called Teichoskopia[5] and resembles an analogous scene in *Iliad* 3.121-244, in which Helen, standing on the walls of the West Gate of Troy, shows to the Trojan elders the Achaian army and describes many of the Achaian leaders[6]. A similar procedure takes place in this scene of *Phoenissae*, but here the roles are reversed. The one who does not have the knowledge is the young woman (but she is eager for it) and the one who guides her is the old Servant. He is also the one who cares about her safety and dignity (92-5, 100, 193-5). In the Exodos we will see the striking reversal of the roles between young and old persons: there the young person – the same one who in this scene is continuously under her Tutor's wing – will be the leader and the guide of the blind

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elements which form the action in the search for salvation and the interplay of loyalties to self, to him and to the country (p.4).

[5] The whole scene has been condemned as an interpolation by Dihle, 60-72, who considers the third *Hypothesis* as a textual criticism rather than as a literal critical evaluation. Burges, passim, defends the authenticity, the integrity and the function of the scene with minute criticism of Dihle's theories. Kitto 1961, 354-5, maintains that *Teichoskopia*, as well as the description of the attackers by the Messenger, are just decorative elements. Lesky, 332, expresses a positive judgement about the *Teichoskopia*.

[6] Foley, 116-120, makes useful observations about the relationship between Antigone in *Phoenissae* and Helen in *Iliad* 3.

Oedipus. The scene is externally connected with the rest of the play by the identical person of Jocasta's envoy and Antigone's Servant and with the announcement of the Chorus' arrival, just before the Parodos (196-7).

Jocasta's Prologue was focussed on the genealogy of the Theban Royal Family and on the chain of past events which resulted in the present situation. For the latter Jocasta just makes some short references and offers hints (76-83). In the *Teichoskopia* there is quite a different aspect: we see now the tangible threat against the city. What was for Jocasta just an Argive army (which has been organised and guided by her tragic son 77-8) now obtains individuality: men with names and character appear in front of our eyes, through Antigone's and the Servant's eyes. This scene has to do with the present more than the past. The latter is only a presupposition as it, more or less, happens also in the *Iliad*. With this scene we really enter the play; Jocasta tells us about the past setting of the play, but Antigone is the one who shows and exposes to us the present situation, the real tragic subject of the play.

The use of the rooftop for this scene is a good example of Euripides' effective use of the levels of the Greek scenic space[7]. With this choice he achieves an interesting combination of interior and exterior sets, of private and public aspects (a motive which runs – up to a point – through the whole of the play) as the rooftop is part of the house and, at the same time, a place open to the public eye[8].

The observation of the enemy army by Antigone, her description and comments on it, are quite different from those of the first messenger. Here, there is a feeling of

[7] For a thorough treatment of Euripides' use of the rooftop see Hourmouziades, 30-2, Mastronarde, 1990, 255-7, 261.

[8] Hourmouziades, 123-4, explains why the description of exteriors in the *Teichoskopia* is necessary. This happens because of the very important events that will take place there.

excitement, dread and even compassion. The *Teichoskopia's* Antigone is still an innocent girl, more child than woman, not yet a doer, not yet a victim either: the sufferings of the house (of which her mother had spoken in some detail) have not occurred yet in her eyes in all their tragic depth and results; she can still hope for an ordinary life, which she renounces at the end of the drama, when she prefers her loyalty towards her natal family. In that way she seems much more immature, or at least, younger than her Sophoclean namesake[9]. And as Burgess comments: "The maturity and depth of character which Antigone shows in the final scene of the *Phoenissae* is made more powerful by her childlike character in the *Teichoskopia*"[10]. Although this scene lacks any action and its dramatic relevance to the rest of the play could be considered as small, it in fact enriches the drama. The character of Antigone (who will hesitate in 1275-9 to accompany her mother in her desperate attempt to dissuade the mutual fratricide because of her virginal decency, but returns from the battlefield no longer as a child relying on her elders but as a tragic sufferer and doer), is fuller, more persuasive and eventually more true because of this scene.

There is a peculiarity of this scene which is lacking in most of the play, and in Theban plays in general, with the exception of Euripides' *Suppliants*. In this scene and until the end of the first episode, the besiegers are treated with familiarity and even some sympathy. This happens because of the enthusiasm of Antigone as she sees her beloved brother again. Her excitement and affection towards her brother is reflected also on his colleagues and fellows. And as Euripides makes her express her desire to meet and embrace him (163-7) he deliberately creates a false expectation of a possible meeting

[9] On Antigone's virginal view and statement see Goff, 1988, 140-1. Also Grube ,355, who highlights the impression of Antigone's maiden youth in the *Teichoskopia*.

with her brother.

In the *Teichoskopia* Antigone's questioning of the Servant occurs realistically, concerning fear and expectation. Her impatience is the restless inquisitiveness (seen in her enthusiasm, her exaggeration, 127-30, her curse on Parthenopaeus, 151-3) of a preadolescent woman not yet corrupted into submissiveness, as she will be at the Exodus.

At 156 she asks about her brother. It is indicative of her emotions of affection, by which she is completely occupied, that she calls the Servant φίλτατε (158). Her view of Polynices is very indistinct. She sees only his shape. Her desire, expressed here, to run to him is ironically fulfilled at the moment when the duel has already ended, and she, with her mother, has arrived too late. He is seen now ὡς ὅπλοισι χρυσέοισιν ἐκπρεπής... ἑῴοις ὅμοια φλεγέθων βολαῖς (167-9). The tone here is very different from Aeschylus' play: the enthusiastic Antigone and the hazy visual aspect of the weapons glinting in the early light, the indistinctness of the figures on the plain scene from a distance, do not resemble at all the description of the Argive leaders in *Septem* in which they are seen and reported by the Spy Messenger at a much closer distance (*Septem* 40-1, 375).

From now on we will attempt a comparison between the image and the impression which Antigone has in this scene of the Argive leaders and their description by the Messenger to Jocasta at 1104- 1140[11]. The first man who is chosen is the one who leads the army, πρόπαρ ὃς ἀγεῖται στρατῷ (120). He is Hippomedon from Mycenae. Antigone chooses him because of his white crest (119) and his παγχάλκον shield

[10] Burgess, 108.

[11] These lines have been rejected by many scholars as interpolation. Even conservative scholars can be found among them, as Grube, 364- 5, Lesky, 336. These lines are also deleted by Diggle, Willink, 196, Page, 21, Fraenkel 1963, 53-6. Even Dihle, 644, who generally rejects Fraenkel's interpolations, athetises these lines. For an effective defence of them see Mastronarde, 1978, passim.

(121).[12] After hearing his name from the Servant she is able to see more than just his shape. She focuses on his appearance and character as she imagines him, using a metaphor from the visual arts[13] (γίγαντι γηγενέτᾳ προσόμοιος ἀστερωπὸς < ὡς> ἐν γραφαῖσιν, 128-9). Antigone, having had little experience of the world, has seen only in paintings or sculpture someone who she could compare with these men who attack Thebes. Hippomedon is like a monstrous, inhuman giant. So, as we will hear from the Messenger, he is carrying a shield with an emblem showing the monster Panoptes[14]. He is one of the three Argive leaders about whom we hear clearly that they die (1118), which is appropriate to his monstrous and hideous form. In *Septem* he is in the centre (486-500) and he is also huge (488). The description of him has some echoes of Capaneus' description in *Septem* 424.

The next one, who is crossing Dirce's water (131), is Tydeus, the Aetolian. He is especially troubling because he is very foreign (ἀλλόχρως, μειξοβάρβαρος 138) and connected with Thebes, through the royal family. He is the brother-in-law of Polynices, as they have both married the daughters of Adrastus. It is remarkable that the two men were identified by Adrastus with the beasts, the lion and the boar of Apollo's oracle (409-423). This seems indicative of Polynices' lost status as he is not only married away from the family and forced to live in the home of his wife's family, but also he has as brother-in-law someone who is not completely Greek, as Antigone implies with her words full of wonder and disappointment (135-7). Tydeus is fourth in the Messenger's description, and carries a shield which has as emblem the torch-bearing Prometheus with a lion skin

[12]Cf. *Septem*, 489.
[13] See Barlow 57-9, about Antigone's view of the besiegers.
[14] See Goff, 1988, 146, about the possible connections between Panoptes and Thebes.

thrown over the shield (1119-22)[15]. In *Septem* 377-94 Tydeus comes first followed by Capaneus who carries a man with a torch on his shield. The two men form a noisy and arrogant pair.

The one who is passing around the memorial of Zethus (145) is Parthenopaeus, curly-haired, with a fully armed army following him (145-50). Antigone curses him to go back to his own mountains for his destruction (151-3). He is the first who will be named in the Messenger's speech (1104-9) and the first to be killed (1153-62). The justice (just as it is) of Polynices' cause does not extend to the mercenaries (despite 154 σὺν δίκῃ δ' ἥκουσι γῆν) who come with him. The foreigners have no claim (ὅς ἐπ' ἐμὰν πόλιν ἔβα περσῶν, 153). In the *Septem* 533-51 Parthenopaeus is equally true to his name in youthful good looks. His shield in the Aeschylean version shows the Sphinx carrying off a Cadmean (*Septem* 538-44). In this play it is Adrastus' shield that depicts a monster (the Hydra) carrying off Cadmeans (1135-8). His shield in *Phoenissae* depicts just a family emblem; his mother shooting a boar with a bow.[16]

The mention of the justice of the cause turns Antigone's thoughts to Polynices (156-8)[17]. Antigone asks the old man to find her brother in the mass of armed men. He is with Adrastus (159-60). Adrastus is not one of the seven attackers in *Septem*, but he is mentioned in the Spy-Messengers' first speech, because before the battle he is collecting tokens from the men to take home to their parents (49-50). He is not given any full treatment here and he is overshadowed by his son-in-law in Antigone's eyes. Polynices

[15] See Goff, 1988, 146-7, on the potential relationship between Tydeus and Prometheus. Mastronarde 1994 ad loc maintains that Tydeus like Prometheus is holding a torch while Craik, ad loc, believes it is just Prometheus depicted. Mastronarde had explained at length his arguments in his essay, 1978, 122-4.

[16] See Goff, 1988, 138-42, who makes original interconnections between the emblem on Parthenopaeus' shield and the total expedition of the Argives. De Jong, 1991, 78, traces an interesting meaning in the relation of Parthenopaeus and his mother Atalante.

[17] See the splendid treatment of Polynices' case by Goff, 1988, 148-9, also Grube, 357.

and Adrastus are near the tomb of the seven virgin daughters of Niobe (159-60, all killed on the same day, a bad omen for the seven attackers). She sees the τύπωμα of his μορφῆς (162), but she does not see him clearly (ὁρῶ δῆτ' οὐ σαφῶς, 161). First he is located; then he is seen vaguely as a faint form and she desires to fly to him (163-5). By the end of her wish she begins to distinguish him more clearly. She can even see his armor ὡς ὅπλοισι χρυσέοισιν ἐκπρεπής, γέρον, ἑῴοις ὅμοια φλεγέθων βολαῖς ἀελίου (167-9). He is like the golden warrior on his own shield in *Septem*, 644. However when the outline she stares at comes alive after the Parodos he will not enjoy the same sympathy from anyone as he does now from his sister. Antigone's visual perception is analogous to the development of his character and his cause, which at first is seen abstractly. The more we get to know him and his "justice", the more we reject it. He is fifth in the Messenger's speech. Adrastus is last. Of course, in *Septem* (631-48) Polynices is mentioned last carrying his image on his shield. Despite the cunning craftmanship of his shield in *Phoenissae* (1124-7), and the depiction of the Ποτνιάδες πῶλοι δρομάδες from a story associated with Thebes, it does not have the meaning it had in the earlier play. Actually none of the shields have the meaning they had in Aeschylus. With his maddened horses he seems to emulate the attacker Eteoclus (461-4) in *Septem*.

Amphiaraus is distinguished by his white chariot[18], 171. While golden Polynices is like the sun, Amphiaraus suggests the moon, 175-8[19]. He is mentioned second in the Messenger's speech and, as in Septem 590-1 (where he is significantly sixth, just before rather than after Polynices), he has no design on his shield. In the Phoenissae his Aeschylean role of pointing out the folly of Polynices' mission is taken partly by Jocasta.

[18] On Amphiaraus see Goff, 1988, 143-4.

[19] Podlecki, 357-8, maintains that in the *Teichoskopia* the light-darkness motif has a neutral aspect without

In both plays the adjective σώφρων is characteristic of him.

Capaneus[20], finally, is opposed to Amphiaraus. His anxious and nervous movement (180-1) contrasts with the controlled dignity of the seer. Antigone's last two invocations are to Selene 175-6 (after seeing Amphiaraus) and to Nemesis and to the loud roaring lightning of Zeus, 182 (after Capaneus has been pointed out). Capaneus' threats (through which Antigone characterises the man even before she sees him ὅς τὰ δεινὰ τῇδ' ἐφυβρίζει πόλει Καπανεύς, 179-80) place the city under total danger: the women are threatened too. Antigone's fate will be enslavement if the walls fall to these men (185-9). Capaneus is sixth in the Messenger's speech carrying an earthborn giant on his shield, and, of course, he is struck by lightning (1180-6)[21]. His shield device is like the picture which Antigone has seen and compared Hippomedon to, 1130-3. He himself has come alive from the *Septem's* Eteoclus' shield device (466-7) of an armed man, climbing a ladder, who threatened Thebes with slavery (Phoenissae 1177-9). In both plays Capaneus threatens the walls, uttering δεινά (*Septem* 426, *Phoenissae* 179). In *Septem*, where he appears early to establish the arrogance of the attackers, he is γίγας (424); here his shield device is of a giant carrying a whole city on his shoulders, 1131.

The relationship between the warriors and their Aeschylean counterparts is very complex[22], with most of the shields changed considerably, but with some of the warriors transformed into others' shield devices and some of them stepping out of the shields and

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moral evaluations.

[20] See Goff, 1988, 149.

[21] See v.d. Valk, 1-6, for a complete defence of 1183-5, which describe Capaneus' death. Generally v.d. Valk tends to be conservative in his judgments about interpolations. Contra Grube , 364-5. See also De Jong , 1991, 83-4, 91-2.

[22] Vellacott, 167-8, wrongly proposes a relationship between the Argive besiegers and the Spartans, who besieged Athens at the time of *Phoenissae's* performance. He bases his idea on Tutor's words at 154-5, asserting that Euripides is speaking with Tutor's mouth. I think that it is completely absurd that Euripides could connect 154-5 with the Spartans.

becoming warriors, as Capaneus is an embodiment of Eteoclus' shield device[23].

The old man and Antigone disappear into the house at the sight and the sound of the Chorus approaching. The slave's final words are an unwarranted bitter comment about women, an indirect Euripidean comment, perhaps, on the Eteocles of *Septem*.

III. " ... ὑπόσπονδος Πολυνείκης οὐδενὸς ἕνεκα παραγίνεται."

Polynices is a native returning to his homeland after a long time of absence; he is a stranger among strangers[24]. No Theban soldiers have been seen yet as they have in the *Septem*, at least in the persons of the Spy-Messengers and Eteocles, so the first armed man we see in *Phoenissae* is the enemy. His loneliness and alienation are quite obvious. The truce is already in practice but he is still mistrustful, in case someone may trap him as a stranger and enemy, 263-4. His actions are characterised by stealth. No one sees him and he sees no one until he reaches the palace and is questioned by the Chorus (286). The sword he bears in his hand (267, 276) gives him whatever confidence he has, not the justice of his cause. In the *Septem*, Polynices' shield shows an armed man being led by a

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[23] Vidal-Naquet , 142, first observed that Euripides deliberately deconstructs the Aeschylean image of the shields. Craik, p. 164, maintains that Teichoskopia has a different dramatic purpose from 1104-1140, which however duplicate what is said here. Mastronarde 1978, 110, responds to the argument that lines 1104-40 are irrelevant to the main theme, which is the conflict of the two brothers. The fact is that this is not the only theme in Phoenissae. He also responds to the argument of repetition of the Teichoskopia in 1104-40, and proves the different function of the two scenes. On p. 111 he does not agree that Euripides has as his main aim to criticise Aeschylus in 751-2 and 1104-40. Garner, 158-9, believes that these lines are more allusion than criticism or imitation. Foley, 114, 127-8, makes very accurate observations of how Euripides gives the impression of criticising Aeschylus in the Teichoskopia and in 1104-40, without in fact doing it. The treatment of the shields' scene is not tragic but has more epic influences according to Foley. Kitto 1961, 352, also does not believe that in these scenes there is necessarily a criticism of Aeschylus, but they are literally reminiscence.

[24] Murray, 27, even said that he has his face hidden. See for good treatment of Polynices' entrance Hourmouziades 79, Halleran 66. Norwood, who generally believes that the meeting between Jocasta and her son in structurally useless (44) thinks also that Polynices' entrance is just melodramatic and not tragic (26).

female figure representing Justice, with the inscription " κατάξω δ' ἄνδρα τόνδε, καὶ πόλιν ἕξει πατρῴαν δωμάτων τ' ἐπιστροφάς" 647-8. Of course, like the earlier Polynices, he does claim the justice of his cause.

Like the Chorus of the *Septem* (84-5, 100, 103, 151, 153, 160), Polynices fears every sound (269). By contrast, the Chorus of the *Phoenissae* is calm. In *Septem* the inscription on his shield says that justice is leading him back from exile to reclaim his home, his city and his father's palace. Here it is as if the Chorus of foreigners is taking the place of the words on the shield device and expanding the figure of justice as a group.

Polynices surprises us especially as his timidity is contrasted to the confidence of his offstage arrogance in *Septem*. Here he cries out in alarm at a sound, claiming that ἅπαντα γὰρ τολμῶσι δεινὰ φαίνεται, 270 (almost a self-parodic line) as if he was a spy sent behind enemy line. But in fact he has come home to a familiar scene, made unfamiliar by the presence of a Chorus of foreign women, unknown to him. He does not recognise the first people he sees, nor do they recognise him, so they both ask for each other's identity (278-9, 286-7). Although it is home, he refers to the native land as enemy territory (ἐχθρᾶς χθονός, 271). Certainly he is an enemy to his fellow citizens and even to the sister who loves him and whom he loves. The distinction between friend/enemy (cf 373, 1446) and native/foreigner appears in various ways (his marriage abroad, his coming inside his native city under a truce and in fear, his simultaneous trust and distrust of even his mother, 272-3). Polynices really is both alien and native.

In the scene between mother and son young and old are contrasted[25]. He is in bright armour, carrying a sword (this sword or his brother's similar one will be used for Jocasta's suicide and will play a part in the brothers' mutual slaughter). Jocasta is

dressed in black, 372-3. She is so eager to see him that she expresses no hesitation or fear. She embraces him tenderly, 306-7, touches his cheek, feels his hair on her neck 308-9. Jocasta actually dances around him for a few lines (312-7). The fact that she sings shows her deep emotion. Her joy at seeing him is mixed with her sorrow. She is already mourning as if she has already lost her son. The tune of her song changes to the sorrows of the parents 317-9, her own and Oedipus', 327-30, and then to the alienation of Polynices through his marriage with a foreigner, away from home, 337-43.

Oedipus' existence in the house is most vividly described in Jocasta's monody. The blind man is alienated, passing his time in tearful expectation. He has made more than one suicide attempt with the sword or the noose, 331-3. Her monody transfers us back to the end of her monologue: the miseries of the house and her own miseries. Thebes was silent at her son's wedding, 347-8. The women of the Chorus respond to Jocasta's monody by speaking of women's love for their children, 355-6.

Polynices begins his speech with a show of patriotism as a universal necessity:ἀναγκαίως ἔχει πατρίδος ἐρᾶν ἅπαντας, 358-9. Patriotism for the brothers hardly seems to include the citizens, but only the walls, the towers, the gates, other physical features and monuments and above all the sceptre, the symbol of ownership of this land. According to Polynices the worst thing is being deprived of speaking openly, 391, because this is characteristic of a slave, 392. These lines lead to 393, τὰς τῶν κρατούντων ἀμαθίας φέρειν χρεών. But under the circumstances, Polynices is ready to agree with Adrastus, though Adrastus' plan was from the beginning ill-conceived, as it aimed at two wars of aggression, 427-9. On the other hand, having once raised the army for the purpose of regaining the monarchy, Polynices is not in a position to accept the

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[25] Most of the scenes are between old and young throughout the play.

compromise offered by Eteocles, that he may return home and, therefore remain in possession of all, except of the ruling power[26]. Polynices was last sighted with Adrastus before he entered the city, 159-60, emphasising his new connection and his new alliances to people like the half-barbarian Tydeus, his brother-in-law, whose cause he must support if he succeeds in the campaign against Thebes. Next in the list of woes is the lack of daily bread, 401, 403, 405, at least before his marriage, 400.

Polynices swears that the attack on his country is against his will (θεοὺς δ' ἐπώμοσ' ὡς ἀκουσίως τοῖς φιλτάτοις ἑκοῦσιν ἠράμην δόρυ, 433-4), and asks his mother to put an end to his and also to the general troubles (παῦσαι πόνων σέ κἀμὲ καὶ πᾶσαν πόλιν, 437). But his first desire, and also his first loss, is τὰ χρήματα, 439-40[27]. His poverty has made him ignoble (404-5). He admits that he came for τὰ χρήματα[28], 440-2. And later Eteocles will be accused of desire for wealth, of demanding more than his share allows. And he does not deny it; he would be disgraced if he were fair to his brother and had accepted less when he has and can continue to have more.

Polynices tells, 409, the oracle about the beasts and stimulates Jocasta's interest in it[29]. Is this genuine interest or just stichomythic convention to get the audience to notice that Polynices is turned into a beast in the eyes of the gods? According to her maternal character, Jocasta would be interested and indeed has already expressed interest in her son's marriage outside the community. She speaks of the foreign marriage as abhorrent to her (ξένον τε κῆδος ἀμφέπειν, ἄλαστα ματρὶ τᾷδε, 339-40). Polynices says he does not know (413) what the name of beasts has to do with him, and he simply tells the story of

[26] Despite Luschnig's opinion, 202. Cf. ll. 69-74.
[27] Diggle, following Fraenkel, 1963, 25-6, deletes 438-42.
[28] See Mastronarde 1986, 210 on uses of terms of wealth by the two brothers.
[29] See Mastronarde 1979, 48-51, where he defends the order of lines 408-415, because they reveal

his confrontation with Tydeus at the palace gate. This is a definite reference to one of the brothers as beast. In the battle both brothers are θῆρες 1296 and κάπροι 1380. Here the oracle correctly identifies Polynices and Tydeus and prepares the way for the identification of both brothers as beasts. The characteristic identification of the brothers with beasts is noticed even by outsiders, by both the prophetic god and Adrastus.

The scene is full of pity and fear. It allows Polynices to introduce himself in a formal way to the Chorus who have never seen him before, 288-90; it makes Jocasta's greeting and happiness to see him again possible. However, the fact that Polynices has the sympathy of the Chorus and the family (his mother, his sister, the old Servant) up to a point is itself a surprise.

Polynices' words are full of contradiction: φρονῶν εὖ κοὐ φρονῶν (357), πέποιθα μέντοι μητρί, κοὐ πέποιθ' ἅμα (272), ὡς δεινόν ἔχθρα, μῆτερ, οἰκείων φίλων (357). Although he came pursuing the conquest of the city, he is πολύδακρυς (366) when he sees the places familiar to him. All this confirms the ambiguity of his position. In the agon, Polynices will claim to speak the plain truth in plain words (469 ff), but from the first line he utters to his mother (357) it is clear that truth is not simple at all[30]. Reason and persuasion in Thebes are generally ineffective. The mythical past is so strong that it overwhelms any other kind of logic[31].

As Eteocles enters, his haste is apparent throughout his speech. His first two lines

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Polynices' blindness as he does not recognise himself as a beast. For the brothers as beasts see also Podlecki 365, who accepts the beast theme as one of the basic themes in this play.

[30] See Lloyd, 1992, 86. The simplicity of Polynices speech reflects the simplicity of the truth he believes, but he does not refer to the question if his invasion is justified.

[31] See Mastronarde 1986, 205-6. Jocasta's rationalistic arguments (traditional and philosophic-sophistic) end in tragic failure. Also Craik 187, who opposes the second appearance of Jocasta to her first one. She maintains that this is emotional, while the first one was absolutely rational, which is not completely right, as there were points of emotional expression and many hints (4, 30, 33, 43, 53-4, 60, 84-7) of high emotional involvement.

of speech consist of four short and sharp sentences (μῆτερ, πάρειμι· τὴν χάριν δέ σοι διδοὺς ἦλθον. τί χρὴ δρᾶν; ἀρχέτω δέ τις λόγου 446-7). Jocasta hopes that the emotional argument will work: this is your brother, look at him, 455-7. But it does not work. Love or forgiveness or compassion between the brothers comes too late and is inarticulate, just in the moment before their mutual expiry. Jocasta's generalisation in 461-4 and her talk about the eyes meeting (εἰς ἓν συνελθὼν ὄμματ' ὄμμασιν διδῷ, 462) sets the scene for their final duel, when they seek each other's eyes, for the kill, and for their reported death scene when all that the dying and voiceless Eteocles can do is to look soulfully at his mother, 1440-1.

Polynices and Eteocles offer matched speeches. The arguments are these which each brother would be expected to make. Eteocles has no justification for his action[32], but since he has the power he does not need any and he even admits that he is acting unjustly, 524-5. Justice does not have much to do with power, with politics, 506-8. Perhaps his passion for tyranny and calm acceptance of injustice are surprising in view of his brother's traditional claim to Justice, 484-7, since in a law court we do not expect one of the litigants to admit injustice and insist upon his claim to keep his unfair gains anyway. But this is not a court of law: Jocasta is not a jury, but just a moral arbiter[33]. The eloquent defence of equality, which comes from her, the defender of the family, is a political argument. Like her older son, Jocasta expresses an ideology, but one which allows compromise. She pleads for equality for personal, familiar, political and cosmic levels[34]. Jocasta's speech would win if this were a rhetorical display, but under the present

[32] For a presentation of Eteocles' character see Craik 38.
[33] Cf. Collard 67, for the Jocasta's tragic turn from a judge to a victim. Also Lloyd , 1992, 90, accurately notes "this is the only agon in Euripides in which the two opposing speeches do not dominate the scene".
[34] Webster, 1967, 23, believes that this Jocasta's ideas come from Protagoras.

circumstances equality is just another empty name.

The entrance of Polynices had been pre-declared by the Chorus before they even saw him: οὐ γὰρ ἄδικον εἰς ἀγῶνα τόνδ' ἔνοπλος ὁρμᾷ ὃς μετέρχεται δόμους, 258-60. At the end of the agon Eteocles, always in a hurry, announces the end of the λόγων ἀγών, 588. Nothing is accomplished by the agon except the heightened animosity of the two interlocutors, their decision to meet in mortal combat, 621-2, and the despair of their mother who has tried to mediate the dispute, 623-4. The outcome of the agon is of course not unexpected; there is hardly any progress in the agones of Euripides. No new factual or mythical information is gained. The facts are inarguable. Eteocles does not deny the justice of his brother's claim; he simply will not yield. Nor will his brother, even after his mother (using as her proof the words of the prayers he will make if he win, 574-6) points out that he is in a situation in which real victory is impossible[35]. As usual the agon breaks down in brutal threats. The brothers return now to the struggle of weapons, after the struggle of words.

Both brothers tend to a devaluation of the traditional values. Both favour a materialistic view. Polynices loves his country and misses its buildings and places and his natal family, but most of all he wants the ruling power[36]. The experience of losing one's country, Polynices had pointed out, is greater than the word 389[37]. The exile does not have the ability to speak properly, 391, and must agree with the mindless actions of the rulers, 393. Jocasta's speech on equality-though she does not say so-takes into account that monarchy is not the ideal government system, something implied by her younger

[35] See de Jong, 1991, 128, about the Chorus' anticipation of mutual death in 1284-1306.
[36] Lesky, 333, has a lot of sympathy for Polynices' motivations. Also Conacher, 1967a, 236-7.
[37] According to Stefanopoulos, 114 f, the glancing allusions to the voluntary exile of Polynices in Euripides' *Supplices* imply that this is already an established version.

son, when he speaks about the folly of those in power (κρατούντων ἀμαθία, 393). Next Polynices rejected the value of friends (τὰ φίλων δ' οὐδέν, 403) and even their existence in misfortune[38].Nobility and high origins are equally meaningless when it comes feeding someone (τὸ γένος οὐκ ἔβοσκέ με, 405, πένης γὰρ οὐδὲν εὐγενὴς ἀνήρ, 442). Such is his patriotism that it allows him to bring an army to sack his own city[39]. He accepts for himself the name of "beast". Not virtue nor justice nor courage but τὰ χρήματ' ἀνθρώποισι τιμιώτατα, 439. Already before his major speech in the agon he has reduced the value of the terms friendship, trust, love of country and nobility to nothing: all are less than money and power. His brother is perhaps no worse. He is just even more straight.

Polynices maintains that ὁ δ' ἄδικος λόγος νοσῶν ἐν αὐτῷ φαρμάκων δεῖται σοφῶν, 471-2. This statement is clear enough; since Eteocles does not deny it, we must surely accept it as accurate. The Chorus agrees that Polynices has spoken ξυνετά, 498. He admits at the end of his speech that he will attack the towers and destroy his fatherland. Some things can not be argued. Words and logic fail. At least now Polynices does not claim to lead the army against Thebes for the principle of justice, but for his share of the power and wealth.

How true is what he says in his speech? He says that his speech is simple, but, in fact, it is deliberately sophisticated. It is not surprising that a speaker in a debate should claim to speak justly and tell the plain truth. His oration is full of value terms (τῆς ἀληθείας 469, τἄνδιχ' 470, καιρόν, ἄδικος λόγος 471, κακόν 480, δίκῃ δίκης 490, σὺν

[38] MacDonald , 211, says that there are more terms for unhappiness and misfortune in this play that any other of Euripides.
[39] Garrison, 128, has some good observations on the blurring of ideas like friend and enemy, and the general human relationships in this tragedy.

δίκης ἄτερ 492, ἀνοσιώτατα 493, ἔνδιχ' 496). He begins and ends with protestations of his simplicity and of the justice of his cause. Most of the speech tells what happened, something that is never in doubt. The logical argument against Eteocles is left to Jocasta, as is that against Polynices.

Names and naming are important throughout the play[40]. In Eteocles' speech he makes a distinction between the name and the fact (πλὴν ὀνομάσαι· τὸ δ' ἔργον οὐκ ἔστι τόδε, 502). Only the names are ἴσον and ὅμοιον, 501[41]. But the definitions and the importance vary. On the other hand, Eteocles' speech (unlike his brother's) is full of surprises[42], most of which are directly related to his values. He admits that there is a time when injustice is allowable. Eteocles immediately turns to what he thinks is good: τήν θεῶν μεγίστην ὥστ' ἔχειν Τυραννίδα, τοῦτ' οὖν τὸ χρηστόν, 506-7. ' Ανανδρία is to accept less when one can have more (509-10). What he is ashamed of (αἰσχύνομαι, 510) is to yield to his brother's force, but the facts both inside and outside the action show he would not yield to his brother's just and peaceful plea either. He will not in any case surrender the ruling power. We can understand his phrase τυραννίδος πέρι κάλλιστον ἀδικεῖν, 524-5, as he defines the things according to his interest.

Eteocles' passion and eloquence are his defence. He too claims to speak openly (503), showing that sincerity is not necessarily a virtue. His claim that it would be a disgrace for Thebes to yield to the Mycenean spear is certainly a pretext, 512-3. His defence of λόγος as being as effective as force, 516-7, sounds as a lie since he never has any intention of listening to his brother or mother. Justice does not exist among unequals;

[40] Lushnig, 207, makes out a complete list of all the references to naming in *Phoenissae*.
[41] See Craik ad loc.
[42] See Lesky ,333, about the relation between Eteocles and the Sophists. Also Foley, 122-3, about the sophistic ideas in his and his mother's speeches.

Eteocles does not say that in so many words, but his mother's answering plea for equality shows that it is on her mind. The argument of Eteocles applies equally to Polynices; this refusal to yield prevents Polynices from yielding.

The truce and debate offer to the audience the opportunity to consider the impossible possibility that Polynices and the Argives will not attack; the tradition is held in suspense. But as Eteocles closes his speech, he gives a military command (521-2, cf. *Septem* 675-6); the failure of the reconciliation and the inevitability of the known end are now definite.

Unlike Eteocles of the *Septem*, this Eteocles is not defending Thebes, but his regime[43]. In Aeschylus the family curse is almost neutral, not attached more to either of the brothers. Eteocles in *Septem*, whatever he may have done in the past has remarkable abilities as a leader. How the curse manifests itself in the Euripidean play is in the self-delusion of the brothers. Both brothers' actions are finally the same: both endanger the city for the kingship. And in the tradition they endanger the city for the opportunity to destroy each other. When they finally agree to the politically more reasonable, but personally more horrific, course, to engage in single combat, even that does not put an end to the fighting. Much is at stake for the Thebans and it is not unrealistic that they do not put down their weapons with a hostile army on their land. Thebes can be victorious and free because the sons of Oedipus are dead, because the Thebans are cleverer than the Argives and because, finally, the Thebans cheat. Jocasta's inappropriately democratic ἰσότης wins in the outcome (e.g. 1402, 1454) as the tyrant and the would-be tyrant are equally dead.

[43] Foley, 124-6, makes helpful comparison of Eteocles in *Septem* and in *Phoenissae*. See also Conacher, 1967a, 239-40. Willink, 1990, 186-7, maintains that Eteocles' motivation, especially when he takes the

Jocasta's plea is for equality[44]: the goddess Φιλοτιμία is the most wicked and unjust, 531-2. Responding to Eteocles' argument that equality exists in name only, Jocasta tries to demonstrate how it does exist outside of the individual and even the state[45]. Weights and measures are an objective equality, not just a name, 541. Cycles of nature also demonstrate equality: night and day yield to each other, 542-4. Τὸ πλέον, too, is just a name, 553. Equality, like justice, is a social virtue (' Ισότητα τιμῶν, ἣ φίλους ἀεὶ φίλοις πόλεις τε πόλεσι συμμάχους τε συμμάχοις συνδεῖ, 536-8). Ambition is personal and depends on the existence of inequality. Jocasta's speech is surprisingly abstract while maintaining its personal and familiar touch. She addresses first Eteocles as is natural since he spoke second and was the most provocative. The brothers in fact, hardly address one another. Not until his sixth line, the last line of his entrance speech does Eteocles acknowledge the presence of his brother (τόνδ' 451). They call each other 'this man' and the only time either of them uses the other's name is when Eteocles taunts his brother etymologically (ἀληθῶς δ' ὄνομα Πολυνείκη πατὴρ ἔθετό σοι θείᾳ προνοίᾳ νεικέων ἐπώνυμον, 636-7).

Despite her motherly love Jocasta answers both of the sons masterfully[46]. First to Eteocles she opposes abstraction to abstraction. He honours τυραννίς to which she opposes the more pragmatic ἰσότης which all can share justly and which alone could reconcile the brothers. The subject of Polynices' speech had been his share. Jocasta,

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initiative to challenge his brother to a single final combat, is mainly the interest of the city.

[44] See Lloyd, 1992, 87, for the word equal in the agon.

[45] Kovacs, 1982, 42-5, deletes 549-647 as a later interpolation, because he believes that the passage is irrelevant to the concrete dramatic situation and contradicts Greek ethics. Mastronarde, 1994, 307-8, defends the passage effectively.

[46] I strongly disagree with Vellacott, 169, who maintains that Euripides makes his Jocasta utter her replying speech only on the surface to her children, but basically to the contemporary besieged Athens, trying to warn them against the war. Lloyd, 93 also finds a political relevance in Jocasta's speech to contemporary politics.

speaking for him, elevates sharing (a central theme in Phoenissae, cf 80, 478, 482-3, 486, 541-2, 602, 603, 1433, 1655) into a universal principle that governs the rising and setting of the sun and the stars, as well as the most basic elements of human dealing (measuring, weighing and counting). No one denies that Polynices has been cheated of his share; the theme reaches its climax here in Jocasta's speech. Polynices speaks constantly about it (478, 483, 486). Jocasta puts her younger son's claim into a cosmic and social perspective with her explanation of the power of Ἰσότης in the world. Polynices repeats his demand twice, only to be rejected by his brother (601, 603). The word μέρος occurs twice more after the catastrophe (1433, 1655). On seeing her sons lying close each other half-dead, Jocasta embraces them in turn. They have reached an equal death, as both together have harvested their father's curse. Both have acted in such a way as to guarantee fulfillment. But at the end this impartiality will be denied to them by Creon. This also could give another meaning to Antigone's question τί πλημμελήσας, τὸ μέρος εἰ μετῆλθε γῆς; (1655): Polynices has not in fact found even this μέρος γῆς needed for burial.

Jocasta supports her position with arguments. Eteocles had simply dismissed the common definitions (499-500) and keeps as only proof of his position the fact that human beings disagree. His real argument is that power needs no proof.

Before the agon it could be assumed that, despite the well known myth, the two brothers would survive. By the end of their stichomythia there is no such hope. But even before the two brothers face each other in a duel, Jocasta's arguments go so far in equating them that mutual murder becomes the only believable outcome. She turns from the abstract and philosophical remarks to address her son (ἄγ,' ἥν σ' ἔρωμαι, 559). She

asks Eteocles if he chooses to be king or to save the city (560). Eteocles' actions make the answer obvious; but thus he cannot win. If his brother wins, the city will be destroyed. Having said that to her first son, she does not need to repeat it to her second son: it is condemnation for him as well. To Polynices, on whom she turns at 568, she is even more mordantly disapproving. She wishes (571, with the same words as the Chorus did at 242, ὃ μή τύχοι ποτέ) that he will not win, something she cannot say to Eteocles. She still imagines him coming out alive and going home to Argos, even if he is defeated (578-9). Jocasta's argument makes both brothers equally unworthy of victory[47].

Their own words, finally, make it certain that the story is back on its mythical course and they will both die. It is true that 'each time it is Eteocles who interrupts, and scores a point'[48], but it is Polynices whose final point is the challenge to meet in battlefield (621-2). At the end Polynices is allowed a longer speech (625-35), a farewell and a closing impious statement that he will kill his brother (τόνδ᾽ ἀποκτείνας κρατήσειν τῆσδε Θηβαίας χθονός, 634-5). Eteocles has already thoughtlessly (for a cursed man) damned the whole house (ἐρρέτω πρόπας δόμος, 624). His brother can still speak of hopes (634), but the hope is to commit fratricide. It is easy to condemn Eteocles in this play (as it is usual to condemn Polynices in *Septem*), but how many rulers have the σωφροσύνη to yield for the good of others? In the agon the brothers are perfectly matched. At the end of their reunion, the brothers, by their mutual threats and insults, are reaching a kind of equality in shamelessness as they will reach an equality in death[49].

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[47] About the mutual fratricidal desire, see Willink, 1990, 197.
[48] Craik, 200.
[49] Burian-Swann, 14, note the equality of blows in the final duel.

IV. The Menoeceus' scene[50]

This episode is the centre of the play. Tiresias blind and weak, enters with his daughter[51]. This is the first surprise of the scene. Usually he is guided by a boy or a servant. His departure at the end of the scene will be visually repeated at the end of the drama; Tiresias says his words, argues with Creon and leaves, guided by his daughter, who is his eyes, as Oedipus will also do at the end of the play[52]. Tiresias refers to an early beginning, the slaying of the dragon, not earlier than Jocasta's first beginning, but shortly after it. Jocasta had begun with the arrival of Cadmus in Thebes (5-6); in her rhesis she prefers not to speak about Thebes and the landscape where the drama takes place, but about the royal family. Tiresias begins with the changes Cadmus made, especially the taming of the place which involves the slaughter of the dragon and waves of violence from the earth: first the dragon in its lair, second the sown men sprung from the earth. Tiresias confirms Jocasta's opinion that Thebes was doomed from the beginning. Tiresias asks Menoeceus to inform him how much further from the palace they are, 841-3, but instead of Menoeceus, Creon answers him. We might assume at this point that Menoeceus is a mute character like the blind man's daughter and, in fact, he does not speak until after the old seer has left[53].

Tiresias brags about his recent success, so recent that he is still wearing a golden crown (στέφανον, 856), bestowed as reward[54]. Creon considers the crown as a good

[50] About Menoeceus as Euripidean innovation see Mastronarde, 1994, 28-9, Stephanopoulos, 115-22, Wilkins, 1990, 182, who also demonstrates the requirements for the proper victim.
[51] About Manto, his daughter's name according to the Scholiast, Σ 834, see Podlecki, 361. See, also, Rawson, 177 about the resemblance of this entrance to the exit of the blind Oedipus guided by his young daughter Antigone.
[52] About Tiresias' role in Theban plays see Zeitlin, 1986, 116.
[53] See Mastronarde, 1994, 395, 1978, 93.
[54] About Tiresias' appearance see O'Connor-Visser 74.

omen (858), because he does not know what it cost the Athenians[55]. Tiresias' confidence is either grotesque or appalling when he states as a fact that καλλινίκους Κεκροπίδας ἔθηκ' ἐγώ, 855. Glorious victory is a recurrent theme in Phoenissae and, as usually in Euripides, it has ironic allusions.

Among the surprises is the fact that all three actors are present, but no one of Oedipus' family. The third episode is designed to disentangle the fate of the city from the fate of the family of Oedipus[56], while it further explores the relative valuation of kinship, private interests and public good. Creon is the statesman, more fully than in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, who is concerned about the πόλις. Creon, used as a sensible foil to the rash Eteocles in the second episode, is now tested in a parallel fashion and is shown to be almost equally lacking in self-knowledge and, in his own way, willing to sacrifice the city's interests for his own.

After Tiresias' prophecy of mutual slaughter of the brothers (880)[57] comes the gods' command: Creon has to sacrifice his child, Menoeceus (913-4). It will be evil for Creon, but salvation for the πατρίς (917-8). Creon had been the only adult man interested in the city (cf. 898), but now even he can follow his nephew's example in saying χαιρέτω πόλις (919, cf. ἐρρέτω πρόπας δόμος. 624) . He is not willing to kill his son, obviously a much loved son, for the city. Tiresias at first refuses to tell the horrible news, agreeing to suffer whatever the city would suffer (891-5). But when Creon tries to reject his command, he threatens to make it public (this would explain, although such explanations are hardly necessary in ancient drama, how Menoeceus' act becomes public

[55] On this and the role of Tiresias in Euripides' lost play *Erechtheus* see Vellacott, 198, Mastronarde 1994, 393, 399.
[56] It seems very odd that Lesky, 335, maintains that the connection between Thebes and the Royal Family takes place in this episode. See Rawson, 1970, 112, 114 about how the relation between family and country

knowledge by the end of the third stasimon). Now Tiresias, also, mocks Creon (ἀνὴρ ὅδ' οὐκέθ' αὑτός, 920). However, there is a modal ambiguity in the god's command: ἐκσώσειεν ἄν (948), is a potential optative and can be translated both as 'could save' and 'might save'.

Here at the centre of the play appears a revelation of mixed darkness and clarity. Thebes has its centre, the den of the dragon[58], described by the words θαλάμαις and σηκός. The place of Menoeceus' sacrifice is θαλάμαις, οὗ δράκων ὁ γηγενὴς ἐγένετο, 931. Menoeceus calls it σηκὸν ἐς μελαμβαθῆ δράκοντος, 1010-1. According to Tiresias's explanations it is not only Laius who made the city diseased, nor his polluted child and cursed grandchildren, but as far back as the slain of the dragon of Ares the people of Cadmus have been haunted. The darkness of the dragon's lair suggests irrational terrors, monstrous imaginings, such things as have plagued Thebes since its founding. Menoeceus leaves to die, confident that he is saving his city (997, 1014), optimistically praising patriotism and good citizenship (1015-8)[59]. He will win Ares' good will and a crown for his bravery.But his stage life is lived between two choral odes about war and monsters bred in earth, from which he is descended[60]The rational way of good people working for the common good does not apply in Thebes, a city made sick by selfish men, greedy monsters and vengeful, bloodthirsty gods. For Menoeceus the interests of city and family come together (1003-4), and for him, unlike Eteocles[61] and Polynices the rejection

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applies to the scene.

[57] This line, as well as the twelve previous ones, is deleted by Diggle and by Fraenkel, 1963, 40-2.

[58] See Podlecki, 364, about the role of the dragon in Thebes' history.

[59] Conacher, 1967a, 241, stresses that the self-sacrifice of Menoeceus is the result only of his free choice.

[60] See Arthur, 173, about the curse of Earth against Thebes, which is, according to her interpretation, the prize of civilization.

[61] O'Connor-Visser, 86-7, although he refuses to identify Menoeceus' character with Eteocles' in *Septem*, emphasises that the function of this scene is to exhibit the positive model, opposite to Eteocles' selfishness in *Phoenissae*. See also Vellacott, 197. Grube, 370, believes that Menoeceus' scene exists just to provide a

of exile can be combined with the safety of the city.

This scene contributes, also, to the feeling that whatever is at work in this tragedy is not order, but chaos. Menoeceus' death, which has no clear effect on the outcome of the battle[62], is another element which contributes to the above conclusion[63]. However his self-sacrifice[64] illuminates the unbridgeable gap between his heroic gesture and the sordid political and military efforts it serves[65].

V. *Exodos* and Oedipus' presence in *Phoenissae* (1480-1766)[66]

With the entrance of Antigone, with the three corpses, and the pitiful Oedipus, the play becomes more and more a dirge[67]. It ends in the chaos of mourning as we have the

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criterion of judgment of the two brothers' behaviour. Craik, 217, 230, shows thoroughly the relation of Menoeceus' episode to the rest of the play.

[62] However, Mastronarde 1978, 116, explains persuasively that the short mention of the first Messenger of Menoeceus' death (only three lines 1090-2), is precisely what is dramatically necessary at this point of the action. Contra Conacher, 1967a, 241-2.

[63] Foley, 109-10, notes that Menoeceus' sacrifice is simply ἄλλη μηχανὴ σωτηρίας (890).

[64] Garrison, 130-1, maintains that Menoeceus' death is a suicide and not a ritual sacrifice, so its results are not the expected ones. In 142-4, she thinks that Menoeceus has misunderstood Tiresias' commands and he goes beyond the limits by committing suicide. O'Connor-Visser, 79-80, also notes the deviation of Menoeceus' death from the commanded sacrifice. However, the manner in which Meneoceus committed his self-sacrifice was the only possible one, as it had to take place stealthily because of his father's opposition to it.

[65] Rawson, 1970, 111, finds political meaning in Menoeceus' death which does not concern any specific political person of contemporary Athenian life.

[66] The major part of the *Exodos* has been considered spurious by many critics. For a short history of it see Mastronarde, 1994, 591-4. Kitto, 1939, passim, rejects the marriage theme and the departure of Antigone, deleting 1595-614, 1661-82, 1702-22. Fraenkel, 1963, 69 ff, rejects the whole *Exodos* after 1581 as an interpolation. Page, 22-4, also had rejected the whole passage 1582-end. Willink,1990, 182 and Diggle follow them. On the other hand Lesky, 341 defends the originality of the *Exodos* at least in part. Conacher, 1967b, 100-1, accepts as interpolation only Antigone's return to the burial theme in 1743-66, as Mastronarde also does but from 1737 ff. Podlecki, 361 accepts all the final lines even the absurd evocation ὦ πάτρας πολῖται (1758). Erbse ,32, vindicates all the extant lines as he believes that Antigone will return to her companions after Oedipus death. Craik ,accepts as spurious only 1604-7, 1744-6 and 1758-63. Diller, 648-50, in her review of Fraenkel's book defends the major part of the *Exodos* and underlines that if we remove the burial motive from the *Exodos* then the sharpness of Antigone, as she rejects her marriage with Haemon, would be inexplicable.

[67] V.d.Valk, 22-3, notes accurately how the virgin character of Antigone makes her the most effective person for lamenting.

death of a great family that has been an institution for five generations. Antigone talks in detail of her appearance (1485-91), as Jocasta had done in her monody of welcome to Polynices. She, too, dances around the corpses. The concentration on Polynices is again evident. The calling of Oedipus (1530-7) is another reminiscence of Jocasta's scene of monody to Polynices, as Antigone pictures Oedipus wandering blindly into the palace. The structural balance between this scene and the lyric scenes of the first part of the play is completed with the parallelisms to the Teichoskopia: there Antigone is in need of the guidance and protection of an old man, she is full of questions and furthermore she expresses freely her almost childlike emotions; in this scene though she has matured and become independent[68], as a result of misfortune, and also responds to the questions of the old man (Oedipus), who is her partner in the duet in this scene. Antigone becomes a real tragic person[69].

Antigone, whose relationship to Polynices has been hinted at in the *Teichoskopia* and who is now the only survivor on whom his appeal for burial (1447-50) can depend, vehemently rejects the propriety of Creon's orders. The motif of the burial is firmly embedded in the play's'fabric by 774-7 [70]and 1447-50. Many critics have seen a contradiction between the theme of Polynices' burial by Antigone and the theme of Antigone's assistance to Oedipus in his exile. But within the scene it is clear that the second intention (to accompany her father) replaces the first (to bury Polynices), after the

[68] Meredith 98-9, maintains that Antigone is the real dominant character of the Exodos – not Oedipus or Creon. Especially Creon, in his opinion, is not strong at all.
[69] Kitto 1961, 357 considers as interpolation the departure of Antigone with Oedipus because this end does not fit a melodrama!
[70] These lines are deleted by Freankel, 1963, 34-6, and Diggle. Webster, 1967, 217, defends the genuiness of the lines with very logical arguments. See also Mastronarde, 1994, 368-70, for an effective defence of these lines. Lesky, 335, expresses his opinion that Polynices is not bound in 774-7 to be buried in another land than Thebes. Conacher, 1967b, defends with detailed arguments the burial motif and its anticipations through the play

latter has been made impossible because of Creon's opposition. The betrothal of Antigone to Haemon, which has been announced at 757-60, 944-6, is crucial to her conflict with Creon. He not only refuses the burial of Polynices' corpse, according to Eteocles' testament (774-7), but also does not allow any expression of ritual mourning towards the corpse, when Antigone abandons the hope of burial and gradually reduces her requests (1667, 1669).[71] The only thing she eventually succeeds in is to kiss the corpse of her brother.[72] But she matches Creon's refusal of her brother's burial, by her devotion to her father and her rejection of the marriage with Haemon. When she threatens that, in case of a forced marriage, she will kill Haemon, Creon, changing his mind for the second time in the play, permits her departure.

Oedipus' appearance on the stage is dramatically necessary[73]. Often in *Phoenissae* the tragic person who lives in the palace is mentioned in an insistent manner. Consequently, we expect to see the reaction of the person mentioned, and because of that Oedipus' appearance is definitely natural and necessary. In the prologue Jocasta told his story in many details, referring to him constantly as her son (30, 33, 44, 50, 54-5). In the first episode Jocasta's monody includes a long description (327-36) of the blind man who dwells in the halls. We must not forget that he is there. Each reminder brings him closer. What characterises him is darkness and the moan of despair and pain. He is mentioned in

[71]Lesky, 342, attempts successfully to interpret Antigone's yielding about Polynices' burial. See also Foley, 130-1. According to her opinion (pp. 141-2) Antigone's failure concerning Polynices' burial is because of her transition from the world of Dionysus to the world of Ares – a new role which does not fit her well. V. d. Valk, 55, believes that Antigone will try to bury her brother in the near future. Contra Meredith, 97-8.
[72] Seaford, 350-1, focuses on the almost erotic devotion of Antigone to her brother and her father (cf. 1659, 1671). He compares Antigone's shedding of her head covering with the marital ritual of *anacalypteria* and he considers this anomaly as an "expression of the introversion and self-destruction of the family" (351). For a very different opinion see Conacher, 1967b, 100.
[73] Grube, 369-70, insists on the major role that Oedipus has in this tragedy, although a few pages further down (373) he characterises him as a symbol rather than as a person. For a thorough presentation of the dramatic reasons for Oedipus' presence in the *Exodos*, see Conacher, 1967b, 94.

the second episode by Eteocles, when he is making his instructions concerning the disposition of his kin (πατὴρ δ' ἐς αὐτὸν ἀμαθίαν ὀφλισκάνει, ὄψιν τυφλώσας· οὐκ ἄγαν σφ' ἐπῄνεσα· ἡμᾶς δ' ἀραῖσιν, ἢν τύχῃ, κατακτενεῖ, 763-5). The Chorus, lamenting Ares and Eris deplore the saving of Oedipus in the second stasimon, βρέφος ἔκβολον οἴκων (804). They lament the arrival of the Sphinx but do not mention Oedipus' solution to the riddle (806-11). Tiresias in the third episode says that Oedipus was brutalised by his sons (ἄνδρα δυστυχῆ ἐξηγρίωσαν, 875-6). At last the Chorus celebrates Oedipus' victory over the Sphinx in the third stasimon (1042 ff.). He is kept alive in the audience's mind constantly.

Finally in the *Exodos* the long awaited and pitiful Oedipus emerges from his dark enclosure. He reviews his famous past. Moira made him the most wretched of men[74] : while he was still unborn, Apollo's oracle foretold that he would kill his father (1595-9); his own father tried to kill him (1600-1); he served at the house of Polybus (1606-7); he killed his father and slept with his mother, becoming father of the sons who were his brothers and caused their death by cursing them (1608-11); the god's hand was at work in all this (1612-4)[75]. Now his exile is death (1621). But at the end of all his sorrows[76], he is still a man and he will not betray his dignity by begging Creon (1623-4). His life comes full circle to the condition of exile (the final application of this motif in the play). He resists his daughter's aid just enough in order for her nobility to be demonstrated.[77] Finally, with all issues settled, he reveals the ultimate goal of his wandering (1703-7) and

[74] He is like εἴδωλον αἰθέρος. For this expression see Diggle, 1989, 203-4.
[75] See Foley, 111, 121-2, for stimulating observations on the relation between divine will and human acts in this play.
[76] March, 130, points out the absence of the horror of incest in *Phoenissae* – instead there is only sorrow, especially at the end of the play.
[77] For a different opinion see Foley, 142. Meredith, 102, thinks that Oedipus starts losing his mind and so he does not understands Antigone's behaviour. His view is completely inconsistent with Oedipus' character

then receives the support and guidance of his daughter.[78]

and role in the play.

[78] Craik, 246, discusses the elements of the realistic presentation of Oedipus in the *Exodos*.

ELECTRA

Suddenly I was enchanted
yes, I was enthralled by the idea
the possibility of me being coloured
in irrevocable ash,
shading and making havoc the sunlight
that had set them on fire and gone to
their heads.
Stavros Vavouris,
Electra's Monologue

I. Problems of dating and priority

The recent editors of *Electra*, Diggle and Basta Donzelli, in OCT and Teubner respectively, accept a date between 422 and 416 B.C. Cropp[1], also, in his commentary on the play dates it in this period. All of them follow Zuntz's very influential views on the absence of contemporary political references in Euripides' plays[2]. The old dating in 413, accepted by Denniston and others[3], was based on 1278-83, where the phantom Helen seemed to be an "advance note " of the production of *Helen* in 412, and on 1347-8 which, referring to ships which are in danger in the Sicilian sea, seemed to be an allusion to the Athenian expedition against Syracuse and specifically to the relief expedition of Demosthenes which took place in spring 413. Against these indications Zuntz argued convincingly that allusions so inorganic to the dramatic context are alien to Greek Tragedy and that both of these passages make sense purely in terms of

[1] Cropp, 1988, I
[2] Zuntz, *The political plays of Euripides*, especially 63-71.
[3]Denniston, pxxxiii: "it is generally, *and no doubt rightly*, agreed that Euripides' *Electra* was produced in 413 B.C. " (the italics are mine). See also Norwood, 252.

their dramatic context[4]. The precise way that happens will be exhibited in the following pages.

There are also two stylistic features that suggest an earlier date than 413. In frequency of resolutions, *Electra* (17% of the lines) is considerably less developed than *Helen* (27.5%, 412), *Ion* (25.8%) and *Iphigeneia in Tauris* (23.4%)-both thought close to *Helen*- slightly less developed than *Troades*(21.2%, 415) and *Heracles*(21.5%), and more developed than *Supplices* (14.2%), *Andromache* (12%) and *Hecuba* (14.7%)[5]. The last three plays belong probably to the period between 427 and 422, although we do not have any external evidence for their dating. Secondly, trochaic tetrameters occur in none of Euripides' earlier plays but in all of *Troades*, *Heracles* and the remaining later plays. Their absence from *Electra*, when combined with the resolution-characteristics, tends to favour an earlier date.[6]

Everyone who inquires into Euripidean *Electra* is in the awkward situation of having to declare himself on the perennial problem of the chronological relationship between the Sophoclean and Euripidean *Electra*. All the expressed views are mere conjectures. It is even doubtful if the discovery of a single piece of archaeological evidence (such as *P. Oxy.*2256, fr.3, important for the dating of Aeschylus' *Supplices*) would solve the problem of priority. Only two pieces of archaeological evidence, one for each tragedy, would settle the problem definitely. Both sides of the question have been well exposed by various critics. That an outstanding scholar, such as Wilamowitz, reversed his position regarding priority, changing from Euripides to

[4] *op. cit.* 66
[5]See Zuntz, 69-70.
[6] However, after Zuntz there are attempts at restoring the old dating for *Electra*. The most serious among them belongs to Vögler p.53 ff., where he tries to deny Zuntz's observations-even Zielinski's statistical criteria for the relative dating of Euripides' plays on the basis of the resolutions (p. 61)-on dating *Electra* before 416. Especially in 65-7 he strongly holds his opinion that the structural

Sophocles[7], reveals that the problem defies solution.[8] However, although a clear decision is not admitted, we will try to form a statement about Sophocles' priority basing our arguments on the elements which can be traced in the two texts.

In our opinion the most decisive argument is the centrality of Electra. In Aeschylus' *Choephori*, she not only disappears in the second part of the play[9], where the matricide takes place, but also she does not participate in the planning of the vengeance against Clytaemestra and Aegisthus. Her role in Aeschylus' play is mainly to enlighten Orestes about the current situation in his fatherland, to introduce him in his major mission and to present a contrasting female character to Clytaemestra. To that contribute both her recognition of the returning brother (avenger, personal saviour for her, and rightful heir of the Argive throne) and her participation in the magnificent Kommos.

But, in contrast with Aeschylus, his successors, Sophocles and Euripides, present Electra as the heroine of their namesake plays. Who could be the first to focus on Electra (because down to Aeschylus, Orestes is the main person both in literary and iconographical sources) and to make her the central point of tragic interest? As in Euripides she is not only central but actively controls the plot against Clytaemestra (while Sophocles keeps Orestes as the one who works out the plan of vengeance) it is less likely that this is a direct development in a single step from Aeschylus, than a farther step along a path broken by Sophocles, whose play, with its emphasis on the emotions and will of the suffering heroine could be seen as a development, according

differences between *Heracles* and *Electra* do not have to be explained in developmental terms (against Matthiessen 71-80, 161-3, 177-80). Arnott, 1981, 204, also accepts the old dating.

[7] In *Hermes*,18 (1883), 214 he expresses his preference for Euripides' priority, while sixteen years later, in *Hermes*, 34 (1899), 57, n. 2 he declares that he has changed his opinion in favour of Sophoclean priority.

[8] For an extensive discussion of the classicists' controversy on the priority see Vögler , 17-51

to Sophoclean technique, of materials available in the tradition represented by Aeschylus.This argument can find support in the distribution of the spoken lines: in Euripides Electra and Orestes are almost equal in their spoken lines (and the audience's interest which derives from that), while in Sophocles this factor weighs heavily on Electra. If Euripides'play balances the role of the two siblings, then it seems more natural, though not certain, that his play follows Sophocles'one.

The fact that Euripides' Electra asks her mother not to punish her (μέμνησο, μῆτερ, οὓς ἔλεξας ὑστάτους λόγους, διδοῦσα πρὸς σέ μοι παρρησίαν , 1055-6, and immediately after she adds ἆρ᾽ ἂν κλύουσα, μῆτερ, εἶτ᾽ ἔρξαις κακῶς; , 1058) sounds more artificial than in Sophocles. At that stage she is in control of the situation, and she knows it very well. She does not have any doubt that in a few minutes her mother will fall dead by her brother's and her own hands.[10] She knows that Clytaemestra is practically defenceless. I do not think that these lines have any other function for the debate (e.g. they are not necessary in terms of maintenance of the debate's interest) and also, Electra has already indulged in pretending to be the weak daughter (1004-6). These lines sound to me like echoes of Sophocles *Electra* 552-5, ἐρεῖς μὲν οὐχὶ νῦν γέ μ᾽ ὡς ἄρξασά τι λυπηρὸν εἶτα σοῦ τάδ᾽ ἐξήκουσ᾽ ὕπο. ἀλλ᾽ ἢν ἐφῇς μοι, τοῦ τεθνηκότος θ᾽ ὕπερ λέξαιμ᾽ ἂν ὀρθῶς, τῆς κασιγνήτης θ᾽ ὁμοῦ. But in the latter this permission seems much more natural, as Clytaemestra there has the power to punish Electra, if she considers herself abused by her daughter's accusations[11].

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[9]It is accepted nowadays that *Cho.* 691-9 are spoken by Clytaemestra, despite their attribution to Electra by the 1518 Aldine edition. See Garvie, 1986, ad loc.
[10] Vickers, 562, maintains that "this is another of those Euripidean debates on the outcome of which a life depends". This is completely wrong: the fate of Clytaemestra has already been predecided.
[11] See Lloyd, 1992, 65-6. And also Jebb, 1894, xliii-xliv, liv-lvi.

I will mention some cases where it is possible that Euripides had in his mind Sophocles' play[12]: lines 1030-48 of Euripides *Electra*, where Clytaemestra tries to justify her crime, seem like an answer to Sophoclean Electra's accusation οὐ γὰρ καλὸν ἐχθροῖς γαμεῖσθαι τῆς θυγατρὸς οὕνεκα (593-4). Maybe, also, Euripidean Orestes' words ζῇ. πρῶτα γάρ σοι τἀγάθ' ἀγγέλλειν θέλω (230) come in deliberate contrast with Sophocles' false story about Orestes' death. The building of the recognition scene on a chance visit to the tomb by the Old Man, whereas Chrysothemis, like Aeschylus' Electra, is sent with libations to Agamemnon's tomb after Clytaemestra's dream, and the absence of the dream in Euripides' tragedy (despite the integral role it has in Sophocles' *Electra*) brings Sophocles much closer to Aeschylus than he is to Euripides[13]. We could also add as indications of the Sophoclean priority that Orestes advises the Paedagogos to announce that he comes from Phocis, as happens in *Choephori* and the faked death of Orestes (both of them absent in Euripidean version of the story). It may be that Sophocles would not like to differentiate his play from the Aeschylean one in these aspects, as he has done it in major issues (e.g. centrality of Electra, moral problems of matricide)[14] but this, among the most of the other arguments, could be understood as a deliberate return to the Aeschylean tradition by a Sophocles dissatisfied with the Euripidean version[15].

The fact that Euripides does not refer to Chrysothemis made some critics[16] consider it as a proof of his priority. They held that after the important role

[12] Although someone could argue the opposite, i.e., that Sophocles had in his mind Euripides' *Electra*. See next, p.
[13] Although the Sophoclean use of the dream could be considered as a return not to Aeschylean, but to Stesichorean tradition *PMG* fr.219(P)
[14] Nevertheless, there is a differentiation even in this point from Aeschylus: the Paedagogos, according to Sophocles, is sent by Phanoteus ; he does not come from Crisa, as Orestes and Pylades do in *Choephori*. See Jebb, 1894, ad 45.
[15] Conacher, 1967a, 202 maintains the Sophoclean priority on the basis of changes in declension in Euripides' *Electra* , among the literary changes.
[16] Especially Owen, 147-8.

Chrysothemis has in the Sophoclean play, she has established her position in the Atreids saga and thus she cannot be neglected by anyone who aspires to create a play on the vengeance of Orestes. But the presence of Chrysothemis in Euripides'*Electra* would reduce the feeling of complete isolation which Electra so emphatically feels.

In Euripides' play Clytaemestra uses the next odd argument: εἰ δ', ἐκ δόμων ἥρπαστο Μενέλεως λάθρᾳ, κτανεῖν μ' Ὀρέστην χρῆν, κασιγνήτης πόσιν Μενέλαον ὡς σώσαιμι; (1041-3)[17]. I think, with Denniston[18], that it refers to Sophocles' *Electra* 539-45, where Clytaemestra expresses her legitimate complaint that, as there used to be two children of Helen and Menelaus, the victim for the sacrifice should be one of them, and not her daughter Iphigeneia. I am not sure if we could charge Euripides with a deliberate grotesque intention in this point, or if it is just a misunderstanding of the Sophoclean passage (I find the Sophoclean passage blameless and I do not see why Euripides should distort it. I consider the case of misunderstanding much more possible).

Another argument in favour of Sophoclean priority is derived from 190-1 of his play. In these lines Electra expresses the next complaint (the only time, I think, she utters a word of grievance about her appearance, and general material situation): οἰκονομῶ θαλάμους πατρός, ὧδε μὲν ἀεικεῖ σὺν στολᾷ. My feeling[19] is that

[17]Wilamowitz, 223 and Kovacs, 1996, 121 delete these lines as very odd. Kovacs also maintains that these lines contradict the previous 1024-6, where Clytaemestra says that Iphigeneia's death might have been, under some circumstances, forgivable. Lloyd, 1992, offers, according to my opinion, the most attractive treatment of these lines, writing that Clytaemestra's argument is "brilliantly recherche' *reductio ad absurdum*" (65). He, also maintains, in the same page, that we should not compare the two tragedians' 'similar' passages, as the essential independence of the two plays does not allow comparisons in such details. On the contrary, I believe that such details could enlighten us, to a point only of course, as to the possible influences of the one play on the other.

[18]p.xxxix

[19] With Kitto 1961, 330. See also Michelini 201-2. The author in the same pages offers an illuminating point on how the function of the recognition scene in Euripidean *Electra* could be an interesting criterion to form a judgement about the order of the two *Electras* . But on 336-7 she puts the whole issue on the basis of its unsolved nature: "Relations between individual plays, where they have been preserved for us, illuminate a general opposition between Euripidean tragedy and Sophoclean tragedy, or a general allusiveness of the one artist to the other, rather than rigidly defined and temporally fixed

Sophocles probably would have avoided provoking comparisons with Euripidean Electra on this ground, as this was one of the most striking characteristics of his rival's heroine. And, in any case, these lines are of less importance and almost marginal, compared to many similar lines in Euripides where Electra's clothes are referred to.

On the other hand , there are many arguments which could support the Euripidean priority. In fact, as all the arguments are absolutely subjective, even the 'strongest' argument in favour of the one's priority, could easily turn in favour of the other side. It is true that impressive and self-evident references to the Sophoclean play do not occur in Euripides' *Electra* (as there are, e.g., the references to *Oresteia*: the Recognition scene, Electra libation bearer-Electra water bearer , Agamemnon's fatal arrival on a luxurious chariot - Clytaemestra's equivalent one in *Electra*). But this is a matter of the poet's sheer intention and initiative and, if we wish, we can find some, more or less, firm hints to the Sophoclean play, as we did above. Moreover Aeschylus already embodied the tradition and Sophocles does not diverge too much from the Aeschylean line (only in the introduction of Chrysothemis, the change of the murders' order and Electra's delusion about Orestes' faked death. There is, of course the major innovation of the transposition of the focus on Electra). However, there are points which could support Euripidean priority[20].

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relations between pairs of matched dramas." Vögler, 123-5,137-41, 168-71, argues that the postponement of the recognition and the reuse of the Aeschylean tokens, as they proceed directly out of the dramatic structure, indicate the Sophoclean priority-because in Sophocles' *Electra* both the postponement and the token of the recognition are integral parts of the structure of the play. Matthiessen, 82-8 tries to derive the Euripidean *Electra* from Sophocles' play , but I think that he seems to overlook the role of *Choephori* as primary literary model- as some others, also , do who see the structure as the key to the *Prioritätsfrage*

[20] Among the supporters of the Euripidean priority, the most vigorous is Webster, 1967, 15 where he insists on the theory that it is Sophocles who answers Euripides' version of Electras' story. Webster's ideas are repeated by Vickers , 554. Also Hammond, 386-7, accepts Euripides' priority , because he had, according to Hammond's reading of the play, as his only source of inspiration the alleged recent revival of the *Oresteia*. (On this theory, see H.-J. Newiger, "Elektra in Aristophanes' Wolken", *Hermes*

The most interesting among them is the scene of the unsuccessful murder attempt against Helen in *Orestes* . In this scene Orestes and Pylades try to kill, as a last act of punishment and justice, Helen, while Electra stays out of the palace, and encourages and provokes them to complete their mission. This scene probably resembles the matricide scene in Sophoclean *Electra,* and it could be asserted that, since Euripides had not exploited in his *Electra* Sophocles' scenical version of the matricide (and yet was so fascinated by this, that he adopted it in his later *Orestes*), he simply had not seen it. But it is easy to understand that the adoption of the Sophoclean scene in his *Electra* would be not in keeping with and out of the play's intentions, as Euripides in his version wanted Electra to be not only the main instigator of the matricide, but also to share the responsibility of the actual accomplishment of the hideous deed.

The supporters of the Euripidean priority could maintain that the Paidagogos' assumption in Sophocles that Electra's voice is a slave's might seem a reminiscence of Euripides' *Electra* 107-10, ἀλλ' εἰσορῶ γὰρ τήνδε πρόσπολόν τινα...δούλης γυναικός, ἤν τι δεξώμεσθ ' ἔπος. In any case, the Paidagogos' conjecture is reasonable, 'because a daughter of the house was not to be expected at the gates.'[21] The fact, also, that Sophoclean Electra seems aware of her excess(ἔξοιδ', οὐ λάθει μ' ὀργά, 222, and more clear in 254-5 αἰσχύνομαι, μέν, ὦ γυναῖκες, εἰ δοκῶ πολλοῖσι θρήνοις δυσφορεῖν ὑμῖν ἄγαν), while Euripides' heroine indulges pathetically in

89 (1961), 427 ff. Bain, 111-3 attempts to discredit Newiger's theory.) March, 116, also accepts, rather uncritically, the priority of Euripides, on the basis only of the Zuntz' dating of *Electra*, which does not prove by any means its priority (Zuntz does not declare himself on the problem of priority), and the assumption that Sophocles tried to restore the dignity of the myth after its violation by Euripides. Kamerbeek, 1974, 7, assumes the priority of Euripides as a working hypothesis, based on the fact that Euripides criticises Aeschylus and not Sophocles (while Euripides criticises Sophocles in *Orestes*). In any case such an argument is not firm at all.

[21] Jebb, 1894, ad 78 f.

sentimental excess, could be a deliberate attempt of Sophocles to restore Electra's dignity.

II. Innovations in staging[22]

The audience of a play which has to deal with the motif of Electra's and Orestes' vengeance for their father's death would be definitely surprised when it saw instead of the usual palace of the Atreids in Mycenae or Argos, a rustic setting with a humble cottage being represented by the scene. Even from the prologue it is obvious that this version of the myth is quite different from the previous ones[23]. The fact that the identity of the location is not revealed until 96 heightens the surprise[24].

Euripides has transplanted Electra and her story far away from where she would like to be, from her natural place, the Royal Court of Argos. Although Sophoclean Electra declares that the worst for her is to live under the same roof with the murderers of her father , the heroine of our drama would not repeat, I think, the words of her Sophoclean namesake. Remoteness and poverty, the two greatest ordeals of the Euripidean Electra, are the main reasons for the chronic accumulation of her hatred against her mother, and so the words and the movements of the play show and keep on reminding us of both of these elements. The Peasant's words in 77-81 when he departs to the fields and Electra to the spring, the arrivals of the Chorus (167-70), and the Old Man (487-92), the sighting of Clytaemestra (962-3), all these add to the image of the former princess who now is doomed to live in the uplands of the Argolid, close to the border (79, 96, 168-70, 298). Electra's hut, with all the realistic

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[22] For a general account of locale and staging in *Electra*, see Cropp,1988, xli-xlii

[23] "The only thing that is left from the staging of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, or Sophocles' *Electra*, is the altar of Apollon in front of the house", according to Saïd, 180.

appearance (such as its sooty doorstep) which the conventions of the ancient stage allow, dominates the atmosphere of the play, declaring constantly the exceptional version of the myth.[25] The setting may, also, imply the serenity of the countryside (something like Homer's Ithaca), but this will contribute as well in Euripides' dramatic purposes, as in this *locus amoenus* [26], (just as in the Nymph's shrine where the killing of Aegisthus will take place) horrible actions will happen.

In contrast to *Choephori* (where Agamemnon's tomb is not only visible, but very functional[27] as well) and to Sophoclean *Electra* (where the tomb is at a conceivable distance from the stage of the action), in our play the tomb of the murdered king is exiled not only from the city (as his children and the Old Man are), but from the play's interests as well[28].

Electra's clothing, physical condition and toil are made to stand in visual and verbal contrast with the luxury of Clytaemestra, and presumably their costumes along with those of the Peasant, the Old Man (501-2) and Clytaemestra's luxurious Trojan slave-women (cf. 317-8) will have supported these effects in the original production. Electra definitely does not have any πολύπηνα φάρεα (191) and χρύσεα προσθήματα (192) - although this is not, as we will see later, her reason for rejecting the kind offer of the Chorus to lend her all the necessary clothes and jewellery in order to participate in Hera's festival.

[24] See Goldhill, 1986a, 246. Not only the location, but also the identity of the speaker and the arranged marriage of Electra are delayed.
[25] Even Jones, 245, who is very unsatisfied with the structure of the play, finds an element of unity in the presentation of the hut; like a frame for the play's coherence.
[26] See De Jong, 1991, 153-4, for a very enlightening handling of the shrine of the nymphs, where Aegisthus' killing takes place.
[27] See Garvie 1986, xli-xlvi.
[28] See Luschnig, 133-4.

There are many references in our play to everyday life's activities and objects[29] (fetching water, luggage of Orestes and Pylades, lack of provisions in the house which will be covered by the food carried by the Old Man, so many details in the ox sacrifice). All these are not mere ornaments or interludes, but they serve, I think[30] , as an explicit, prolonged and sharp contrast which is linked to the central themes of the drama, so that we can not bridge the gulf between the heroic world, in which the displaced characters of the play imagine themselves to be and the world of the reality. This contrast between imagination and reality, heroic past and declined present, and, eventually, human acts and divine perception of the world of the mortals, spreads through the play.

III. The unheroic Electra

In Euripides' play the heroine has already taken her decision about her vengeance (277-81), and there is no apparent progression towards the undertaking of this decision. Her desperation, which could depend on her ignorance about Orestes' fortune, is withdrawn in good time. She is informed very early (230), that her brother is alive. Therefore her situation in this regard is much more steady than that of Sophocles' Electra.

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[29] Thury, 8-9, speaks about 'materialism' of the play, expressed even in the crowning of the victorious Orestes and Pylades by Electra.

[30] Together with Michelini, 184, who writes: "*Electra* makes of all the extant plays the most garish contrast between the foreground of myth imagined as reality and the background of myth as unreal and undramatisable fantasy." See,also, Saïd, 184: "This paradoxical setting is well in keeping with a play that undermines the tradition in every level". I think that Denniston, xii, misunderstands Euripides'intentions writing "he goes so far, in fact, as to depict the squalor of her surroundings in terms which seem exaggerated for the wife of a yeoman farmer". Probably Denniston here is influenced by Aristophanes'*Acharnians* , 407 ff. (performed almost certainly before *Electra*). However, even the best clothes and the accommodation of a farmer's wife can not be suitable to a princess.

However, her sinking into poverty and desperation is excessive, and her insistence on showing her situation is presented with extreme precision. One of the main contributions of Euripides to the legend is this social transfer. Electra's status, in order not to give birth to potential avengers of her father, is lowered by her marriage to an anonymous farmer (20-35). Although he is originally of good family (35-6), he unintentionally imposes on her his own way of living. However, he respects her noble origins, by deliberately avoiding sleeping with her (42-3). Electra gains the favour of the audience at the moment when she recognises her husband's kind, almost noble, attitude towards her (67-8, 71-3, 253). In any case this marriage is a real calamity for her ἐγημάμεσθ', ὦ ξεῖνε, θανάσιμον γάμον (247)[31].

Electra lives in the misery of the poor cottage, that does not even have the basic comforts (360). She is doing all the work of a country-woman[32], and her husband has to do all the ploughing by himself[33]. Her clothes are filthy, almost rags, compared at least with the clothes she ought to be wearing as a princess[34]. But, on the other hand, she insists on keeping herself in a situation like this[35]. She is not obliged to do all the home labour by herself, not even to wear all these disgraceful clothes. She admits that she amplifies her misery (57-9). Her obsession with exhibiting her

[31] It is very important that through her marriage and the consequent social degradation Electra loses the possibility of vengeance, cf. Michelini, 189.

[32] She probably has a servant in her service (cf. 140 - but only this imperative of her monody, all the others- 112-3, 125-8, 150- are addressed to herself. So Hourmouziades, 74, Cropp, 1988, ad loc., Basta Donzelli, 288 ff., Lloyd, 1986, 3, Hammond, 378-9. Contra Denniston ad loc.) but this is not enough, of course, for the princess of Argos.

[33] See Conacher,1967a, 203, for the 'realistic' and 'unheroic' intention of Euripides in Electra's portrayal. Michelini, 192-3, maintains that the transformation of Electra deprives her of the ability to be heroic- and that Electra is aware of it.

[34] In the simile of herself as a swan (150-6), she expresses how she thinks she ought to be. See Barlow, 53-4, 102-3.

[35] Grube, 299, offers a fair account of Electra's mixed motives for participating in the house labours.

filthiness is almost pathetic. The social alienation that she has been put in by her mother, is systematically underlined by herself[36].

Living in an unheroic environment, which is the least suitable for the daughter of Agamemnon, she creates in her mind a fake image of Orestes. She imagines him as a 'romantic' traditional hero, just like the heroes of the past generations, who are mentioned in the Chorus' words in the first stasimon. Electra believes that Orestes' being a son of a noble father is indeed a guarantee of nobility. She is sure that he will boldly come, without the necessity of disguising himself, in order to regain his paternal property and to liberate her from her current calamities. This is the deeper reason why Electra rejects the tokens spoken of by the Old Man of Orestes' return. She is possessed by a neurotic rejection of any hope for improving or changing her situation, because she is scared of a potential disappointment. I think this is the reason for her rationalism, as it is expressed in the recognition scene.

Electra's feelings about her mother are worse than in Aeschylus' *Choephori* and Sophocles' *Electra* . She is the first one who willingly undertakes the initiative to plan her mother's murder: ἐγὼ φόνον γε μητρὸς ἐξαρτύσομαι (647)[37], although she has no pressure from any divine command (1303-4). At the time of her repentance she declares that she is mainly responsible for the murder, αἰτία δ' ἐγώ (1182). In the scene of Clytaemestra's reception Electra tries to be very careful in her words in order not to betray her plan (1004-6). But as the dialogue progresses, Electra full of self-confidence, knowing that the defenceless Clytaemestra can not avoid her inevitable death, declares that she herself and her brother will kill her: ἀποκτενῶ σ' ἐγὼ καὶ παῖς

[36] Cf. her rejection (175 ff.) of the Chorus' invitation to participate in the festival of Hera (171-4) . See Zeitlin, 652-3. Lloyd, 1986, 6-7, rather arbitrarily, argues that the only reason for not participating in the festival is her sorrow for Agamemnon.
[37] See Mastronarde, 1979, 94, about the emphatic initial ἐγώ.

Ορέστης πατρὶ τιμωρούμενοι (1094-5)[38]. At this point Electra's excitement does not allow her to realise that Clytaemestra's forthcoming murder has the same moral value as that of Agamemnon εἰ γὰρ δίκαι' ἐκεῖνα, καὶ τάδ' ἔνδικα (1096). Even at that point, when she is almost certain about her forthcoming victory, she can not get rid of her obsession that her status is lower than Clytaemestra's, even in her physical beauty and that makes her ironical and sarcastic (1062-3, 1071-5) as she is also when she warns her to watch out not to soil her clothes (1139-40). Eventually she will be the one who will press Orestes' sword against her mother's body (1224-6).

Her morbid insistence on Clytaemestra's and Aegisthus' cohabitation is quite noticeable. Let us not forget that Electra at this point finds herself in the embarrassing situation of being neither a virgin nor a complete woman: ἀναίνομαι γυναῖκας οὖσα παρθένος (311), and even in her lamenting kommos one of her statements is that, after being a matricide, it will be difficult for her to find a worthy husband (1198-200). Especially in the scene of her emotional explosion over Aegisthus' corpse[39] she expresses all her feelings. She mocks his immoral attitude towards women (although she confesses that these words are not proper for a virgin, 945-6) and his effeminate look (948-51)[40].

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[38] Kubo, 28-9, makes a good point on it, showing the inescapable power of the myth. In terms of real life, Clytaemestra could feel abused by her daughter's attack and refuse to perform the ritual to her grandchild.

[39] And not to the severed head only. Contra Denniston, ad loc., Webster, 1967, 145. Sider, 16-7, even thinks that Electra holds Aegisthus' head aloft, as she insults it. That would be too gruesome and out of the Greek theatre's atmosphere.

[40] Even Cropp, 1988, xxix-xxx, who has a generally sympathetic view of Electra and Orestes, as do the majority of the modern critics is completely negative about her behaviour towards Aegisthus corpse. Lesky, 296, attacks the hybristic speech of Electra as one of "the most unpleasant passages Euripides ever composed". However, I do not think that Euripides intended this paragraph to be pleasant for the audience. Conacher, 1967a, 207-8, maintains that through the insults against Aegisthus' corpse, which are absolutely irrelevant to Agamemnon's murder, Euripides wants to deprive his heroine of every possible sympathy from the audience. See, also, Conacher, 1981, 16-7, where the author shows the dramatic functions, for a more detailed characterisation of Electra, of the supposed irrelevant parts of her speech against Aegisthus. It must be noted, however, that Kovacs, 1996, 113-4, brackets many lines of the speech, such as 916-24, 930-7, 945-51.

In her long speech (300-38) Electra reveals her real motives for her vengeance: firstly, her own miserable situation (304-13), secondly, and closely connected with the former, her envy towards her unworthy prosperous mother (314-8) and finally her bitterness for her dead father (318-25). I believe that the order of the above reasons indicates the priority they have for Electra.[41] It is worth noticing that Electra accuses Clytaemestra, in her response (1060-99) to Clytaemestra's arguments, only on the two first grounds. She insists on vengeance for the dead father only when she tries to convince Orestes to kill their mother (970, 974, 976, 978).

Euripides' Electra, on stage for six-sevenths of the play, dominates the action no less than Sophocles', even though the focus of the play is not on her rescue. Her monody, the parodos (where her part outweighs the Chorus') and her dialogue with the disguised Orestes are an exposition of her suffering. The early scenes sketch the nature of Electra's hatred; it is not frivolous, neither unreasonable, but it is fuelled mainly by her own sufferings and only secondly by her desire to see Agamemnon avenged. Despite their exaggeration, the sincerity of Electra's grievances about her life can not be seriously doubted.[42] Yet, as she returns to them again and again , Euripides portrays not merely her personal pathos but a spirit obsessed with a need for personal redress. These personal grievances feed her vengelfuness and induce that single-minded extremity of hatred which leads to matricide.

This portrayal sets Euripides' Electra apart from Sophocles'heroine, who is almost a symbol of the family and dynasty awaiting deliverance through Orestes' return, and whose unbearable personal situation, while providing the driving

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[41] Only Norwood, 1928, 255, misunderstood-as he usually did-Electra's motives and thought that her primary one is her devotion to her father's memory.

[42] The most forthright recent denial of the validity of Electra's complaints is made by Arnott, 1981, 182-6, Conacher, 1967a, 204-6, and, previously, by Kitto, 1961 333-4. The last even calls Electra a "middle-aged virago" (333).

emotional force of the play, is not distinctly self-centred. In Euripides' portrayal the youth and femininity of Electra are significant. She had not reached marriageable age when Agamemnon was murdered (19-21) [43], and now she must be little over twenty. When she treats her husband and the Old Man officiously, the immediate effects are somewhat sentimentally comic; but these scenes also foreshadow the determination with which she drives Orestes to the matricide. 'Female' emotionalism is probably portrayed in her devotion to lamentation (a distinctively female office) and in her near-suicidal anxiety and confusion as she waits for news of the attack on Aegisthus (751-66). A 'female' preoccupation with sex colours her speech over Aegisthus' body and her attitude to Clytaemestra's relationship with him (60-3, 166, 207-12, 1068-90, 1142-6). The luxurious self-indulgence of Clytaemestra is similarly contrasted with Electra's poverty and squalor-a contrast expressed particularly through references to their physical appearance and clothing (184-5, 239-41, 304-18, 998-1010, 1139-40).

Electra draws contrasts between herself and Clytaemestra, but her guile, vengefulness and ruthlessness are shared with the Aeschylean Clytaemestra.[44] Euripides points the daughter's heritage both verbally and visually-Electra greeting the carriage-borne queen and Trojan captives before her house; Electra trapping her victim with words and celebrating the impending sacrifice as the victim passes through the doors to her death; Electra triumphantly insulting Aegisthus' body, then (in pathetic contrast) lamenting over the bodies of the queen and her lover lying together before the doors. In rebutting her mother's argument about justice she casts a shadow on her own case; her regrets are prefigured by Clytaemestra's, and her fear of

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[43] Orestes is returning in the eighth year from the death of Agamemnon, according to Homer (cf. *Odyssey* 3.304-8).
[44] The comparison itself is Aeschylean. Cf *Choephori*, 421-2, and Garvie, 1986, ad loc.

public opinion. The Aeschylean Electra prayed αὐτῇ τέ μοι δὸς σωφρονεστέραν πολὺ μητρὸς γενέσθαι χεῖρά τ' εὐσεβεστέραν (140-1). Euripides portrays her as achieving only her mother's unholiness.

The myth determined that Orestes should be the slayer of his mother, but Electra in this play grasped the sword along with Orestes (ξίφους τ' ἐφηψάμαν ἅμα 1225), virtually sharing the deed. Again the point is underlined by the transference to Electra the words of the Aeschylean Orestes (959-87). In portraying her anger as the decisive factor, Euripides makes his Electra into a figure comparable with his Medea or his Hecuba, both driven by extremes of suffering and alienation to extremes of vengeful brutality. Like Medea, Electra retains at the end some sympathy from the Chorus (φίλα 1205)[45]; from Castor she receives at least a formal extenuation (1305-7) and a promise of future prosperity, to console her in her exile (1284-5, 1311-3). This final solution, as we will see in the final chapter, vindicates the human error as the result of the divine irresponsibility and this is the final manifestation that Electra and Orestes are tragic figures. The matricide is a real moral error but results from past wrongs and present misunderstandings. The deed of Orestes and Electra must be condemned, but the various reasons for it indicate the complexity of moral valuation.

Electra's husband, the Peasant, displaying a straightforward honesty and a reliance on simple, proverbial moral certainties, has sometimes been thought to stand as a model of morality which reflects badly on Electra and Orestes. Yet they acknowledge his values (67-76, 262, 364-95) and he theirs (45-9), and the Peasant himself is portrayed with some humour as he fails to understand fully the differences between him and Electra, her grief (64-6) or her difficulties with guests (420-5). The dramatic point of the Peasant's reflections on nobility is perhaps not that he holds a

correct view which Orestes and Electra fail to adopt, but that their situation is more complicated, with more moral risk, than his simple experience and viewpoint will comprehend.

IV. Orestes, a new kind of hero

Orestes has been variously seen as weak and indecisive, as having positive moral faults[46], as "plausible and sympathetic"[47], or as having no particular character at all. In Euripides'portrayal Orestes arrives on Apollo's instructions to avenge Agamemnon and restore his own position by killing Aegisthus and Clytaemestra (85-9). He has not envisaged the implications of matricide . He approaches the task with caution, for adequate reasons: the Old Man's "briefing" confirms how difficult and dangerous it is (605-616) and Orestes' weakness as a fugitive is often stressed (84-5, 130-1, 203-5, 233-6). Two features of his behaviour are puzzling (at least in "real-life" terms): he maintains his anonymity even after he is sure of Electra's resolve and the loyalty of Peasant and Chorus; and he moralises extensively. The prolonged anonymity has complex literary and dramatic motives from *Odyssey* and onwards. In the epic poem Odysseus reveals himself to his son only when they are alone and withholds his identity from his wife even when he is assured of her loyalty and from

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[45] Cf. *Medea* 1273-93.

[46] For Denniston, xxvi-xxvii, he is timid, unresourceful, petulant, cynical and callous. Cf., also, Adams, 120, O'Brien, 1964, 13-39, Arnott,1981, 182-3.

his father, until it almost breaks his heart. With Orestes' disguise Euripides creates similar dramatic effects of suspense and paradox[48], while also reworking motifs from the equivalent scenes of Aeschylus and Sophocles, if Sophocles came first. There are also factors internal to his own tragic design. First, the early scenes of the play are not so much about Orestes as about Electra, and the portrayal of Electra's grief and isolation requires a postponement of the recognition comparable with (though different in scale and method from) the postponement in Sophocles'play. Secondly, the prolonged disguise actually limits the characterisation of Orestes (again the Sophoclean Orestes is comparable), because between lines 215 and 579 he speaks and acts not as himself, but in the *persona* of a friend of Orestes. At times, indeed, we seem to see the emotions of the real Orestes in conflict with the formality, reserve and politeness of this assumed *persona.* (220-89, 290). Thus (to come to the second problem) the moralising speeches about pity (290-6) and the criteria of nobility (367-90), come from the disguised *persona*-and the first at least seems distinctly designed to divert attention from Orestes'identity. The words in these speeches will certainly be recalled when the act of matricide is recognised as pitiless, insensitive and ignoble at the end, and in this sense they are a dramatic irony related to the moral framework of the play[49]. but it is hard to see them as revealing the innermost Orestes, showing him to be a hypocrite or reducing our sympathy for him.

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[47] Lloyd, 1986, 19 is the warmest 'supporter' of Orestes among modern critics. Thury, 13-5, also praises Orestes as realistic and effective.
[48] Cf. Solmsen, 41, " not Orestes but Euripides wishes to keep on pursuing the game so full of surprises and frustration". In other words, Orestes fails to reveal his real identity not because of psychological reasons, but because of dramatic purposes.
[49] There have been attempts to delete 367-400 as spurious. Reeve, 151-3, deletes 368-79, 383-90, 396-400. Sheppard, 138,was the first to realise the dramatic function of these lines as a foil to Electra's view about real nobility. Diggle in his edition retains the lines. Basta Donzelli,1978, 241 shows that the syntax and grammar of the speech as transmitted do not deserve to be made the key of an argument for deletion. Goldhill,1986b, sufficiently rejects Kovacs' deletion of the speech (158) and proceeds to show how illuminating this speech is about Orestes himself- "the speaker is his own best example" (164) Most recently Slings, 147 retains the speech.

Euripides' dramatic strategy makes Orestes, in fact, a young man open to direction like Telemachus in the *Odyssey* , undertaking the deed because he is inexperienced and not too perceptive, performing it under the impulsion of Apollo and the vehemence of Electra. He need not be seen as irresolute in the early scenes, nor supplied with alternative personal motives for maintaining his disguise.[50] He does proceed with his mission as soon as he is recognised. Electra's earlier expectations of heroic action and courage from him (135-9, 274-7, 336-8, 524-6, 693, 982-3) emphasise his actual ordinariness, but tell us at least as much about her as about him. For Orestes' character is shaped in a large part as a foil to Electra's. An important effect of his long disguise is to concentrate attention on her predicament and emotions while the matricide is taken for granted . Even when the recognition and the reunion are achieved, he is dissociated from anticipation of the matricide, taking virtually no part in its planning (which Electra appropriates), and concentrating on the killing of Aegisthus (though he does not take the lead) up to the moment of Clytaemestra's approach and the overwhelming of his better judgement by Electra's will (962-87). Electra, not Orestes, confronts Clytaemestra. Even the verbal part of the confrontation with Aegisthus belongs to herself.

Sacrifice is a pervasive image in Greek tragedy and in the *Oresteia* tradition where Aeschylus associates it with hunting.[51] In *Electra* too Orestes is imagined as hunter[52] both verbally (582, 965) and visually as he returns with the body of

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[50] Such as horror at Electra's bloodthirstiness (Grube, 302). About the many suggestions which have been made as to why he maintains his disguise for so long, see the extensive presentation by *Basta* Donzelli,1978, 73-135.
[51] For the sacrificial imagery of the play, and, generally, the association between murder and sacrifice in Euripides'*Electra*, see Zeitlin, 1970, 659 ff.
[52] We can also find an analogy of Orestes with Perseus, in the first stasimon. This analogy occurs in *Choephori* 832 ff., as well. Both of them are hunters and killers of beasts-Aegisthus and Clytaemestra are imagined very often as wild beasts. For a thorough survey of the Orestes-Perseus parallel, see O'Brien, 1964, 17-23, Walsh, 285, Garner, 124

Aegisthus. His commitment to guile, his isolation and stealth as he enters the Argive borderlands of Euripides' setting (beginning, incidentally, by ambushing and trapping Electra, 215 ff.) mark him out as a hunter. And the prey, once trapped, become sacrificial victims-Aegisthus almost literally (839-43), succeeding Agamemnon as a bull for the slaughter.[53] The final sacrificial image of the play shows Orestes veiling his eyes in horror as his mother's executioner (ἐγὼ μὲν ἐπιβαλὼν φάρη κόραις ἐμαῖς φασγάνῳ κατηρξάμαν 1221-2).

V. The recognition scene

It is difficult to appreciate the design of this scene except in the light of narrative and poetic traditions. There are features reminiscent of the *Odyssey*,[54] where (amongst numerous sophisticated recognition-scenes) Odysseus is identified through an ancient scar by his old nurse Eurycleia and later pushes his disguise to its limits before breaking down and declaring himself to his father Laertes. Whether Orestes will so identify himself, as he does in Sophocles'*Electra* (1174ff.), is a question which Euripides has intentionally left open as long as possible. Electra's condition may be compared with Laertes'[55], her extreme scepticism and cleverness with Penelope's . In insisting on paradox, emotional impact and dramatic irony, even at the cost of some implausibilities, Euripides is attending to what conventionally made a "good" [56]recognition: for Orestes to declare himself directly is too straightforward,

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[53] See O'Brien, 1964, 31
[54] See Matthiessen, 107-8.
[55] See Halporn, 107
[56] However, this kind of recognition did not satisfy the theatrical taste of Aristotle, who regards the ἀναγνώρισις διὰ τῶν σημείων (*Poetics*, 1454 b 20 ff.), as the least successful artistically and the type offered here (the scar pointed to) as the worst of these types of recognition (*Poetics*, 1454 b 25 ff.).

and even the Old Man's simple task can become the vehicle of a *peripeteia* through Electra's utter unpreparedness to believe.

At the same time Euripides echoes the equivalent scenes in *Choephori* [57]and probably in Sophocles' *Electra* and advertises the difference of his own scene, most obviously in the discussion of the possible recognition-tokens. The proofs so eagerly accepted by Electra in *Choephori* (164-234) are here dismissed on the *a priori* grounds that they could not prove anything and/or could not exist - whereas in Sophocles'*Electra* (871-93) she rejects her sister's interpretation of the lock and grave-offerings because she has just been assured that Orestes is dead. This seems to be more than a device of Euripides to achieve his dramatic purposes, though it does do that[58]. Critics have differed as to the further aim, suggesting either that it is essentially an extraneous one (the discussion being a humorous or literary-critical diversion[59]) or that it sets a new tone for the recognition and thus contributes to Euripides' re-evaluation of Electra's character and hence of the revenge myth.[60] Dismissive mockery of Aeschylus[61] seems to me an unlikely explanation, for the

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Aristotle, of course, wrote his work almost ninety years after the performance of *Electra* and it is natural to disagree with his criteria.

[57] Bain, 109-11 argues that Euripides could not expect his audience to compare the scene with the similar one from a play performed more than forty years ago, so "the allusiveness of the passage may be the result of a reader of tragedy writing for readers of tragedy". But the main purpose of the recognition scene is not to criticise or to parody the Aeschylean scene - there are internal dramatic purposes.
[58] See Goldhill,1986a, 247-9, for a good account of the recognition scene in reference to its tradition.
[59] Winnington-Ingram, 129, believes that the main reason for Euripides' presentation of the recognition scene in the way he does it, is that he wanted to exhibit his cleverness.
[60] So Pucci, 368-9, who accepts the humouristic aspect of the recognition scene, but also marks that what is significant is not the evidence *per se*, but the faith it supports. His view is shared by Michelini, 204-6, who treats the rejection of the tokens as a comic feature, which accords with the contradiction between 'great' and 'low', occurring throughout the play. Garvie, 1986, pp.86-7, has a similar view.
[61] Solmsen, 43-4, maintains that the main target of Euripides in the recognition scene was to "score points against his great precursor" (43). See also Foley, 112-3. Bond also, 7 interprets Euripides' purpose as a "light-hearted" burlesque of Aeschylus. The same characterisation is used by Knox, 254. Lloyd-Jones, 1961, 179, insists on the ridicule of Aeschylus, but thinks that it is not a strict one, as Euripides puts his criticism in the mouth of an unsympathetic character, who, eventually, is proven wrong. Norwood, 1954, 45, even characterises the "attack on Aeschylus' recognition tokens" as "wantonings" ! Hammond, 382-3, calls the recognition "a malicious ridicule". Arnott,1981, 210,

distortion of Aeschylus is so great that any mockery could well rebound on Euripides. Rather, where Aeschylus portrayed with unaffected simplicity the eager reunion at Agamemnon's graveside of two willing partners, and Sophocles used Electra's disbelief of a report from the grave to motivate her desperate decision to act alone against Aegisthus and heighten the tension before Orestes' ultimate self-declaration, Euripides has developed both and contrived a scene in which both parties are recalcitrant and Electra is made to appear wilful and without any intuition.[62] The tragic aspect of these features will emerge later. This self-consciously heretical recognition does, in fact, have a strain of humour (in the simplicity of Orestes final unmasking, as well as in Electra's false reasoning) which invites us to share the excitement and sentimentality[63] of the moment, rather than to adopt a critical or ironic stance.

There is a further particular effect in Euripides' handling of the recognition. When in *Choephori* Orestes immediately declares himself to Electra, her presence and claims are added, as the *kommos* emphasises, to the motives which compel him to his fateful act and assure him of his justice. Sophocles'*Electra* delays the recognition scene and the reunion until near the end, combining Electra's release with the restoration of the house through the murders. Euripides brings the two together early in the play, but they do not communicate as brother and sister until the recognition[64]

consistently with his furious anti-Electra point of view, argues that the main aim of Euripides is not to ridicule Aeschylus, but Electra.

[62] Luschnig, 125 ff., offers a fair account of the reasons for postponement of the recognition.
[63] So the difficulty of the climb, the wrinkled and crabbed old age portrayed by the Old Man is intended to increase pathos, not to create laughter. See Luschnig, 96, for a comparison of the human tones of this Old Man, the Nurse in *Choephori* and the Paedagogos in Sophocles' *Electra*.
[64] Matthiessen, 121, regards this delay of recognition as essentially a dramatic weakness- according to his opinion- of the play, reflecting a misplaced emulation of the *Odyssey*.

which is, significantly, fortuitous. Once reunited[65], they interact in preparing the murders, in receiving Aegisthus' body, in reacting to Clytaemestra's approach, in killing and lamenting their mother. Whereas Orestes retains his autonomy in the murder of Aegisthus, which Euripides separates from the matricide through his dramatic structure and setting, all the scenes of interaction show Electra's emotions and will dominating and supplanting his other motivations, making him more an instrument than an agent of the matricide. This is the outcome of their brief coming together, and after this they depart into permanent separation. Even the actual token for the recognition, the scar[66] of Orestes, adds to the isolation [67]of the siblings: it does not indicate family ties, as happens with the cloth woven by Electra in Aeschylus or Agamemnon's ring in Sophocles.[68]

The recognition scene of *Choephori* used three tokens of Orestes' identity- lock, footprints, woven cloth. The lock[69] may have been more traditional than the others, being the only one attested in our slim evidence for Stesichorus'*Oresteia* (*PMG* 217), the hallmark of Electra's story for Aristophanes' audience (*Clouds*, 534-6), and the only one exploited in Sophocles *Electra* (892 ff.). It is also integrally related to the context of grave offerings. Electra's rejection[70] of this evidence has

[65] The short choral song (585-95) of happiness, performed by the Chorus, is characteristic of how short joy lasts in this drama. Cf. Solmsen, 44-5. Lloyd, 1986, 10, on the contrary, maintains that the lack of lyric scene after the recognition is due to the climax of the play, which is the matricide (not, as in Sophocles, the recognition). They hope that they will later have time for celebrations. Matthiessen, 124-5, maintains that Euripides did not want to duplicate the recognition scene of Sophoclean *Electra*, so he does not create a long lyric scene after the recognition.
[66] Goff,1991 264-5, argues that Orestes'scar- in contrast with Odysseus'one, acquired in a manly activity-indicates Orestes' immaturity. I do not agree completely with her conclusions, but her argument has grounds. The same opinion is expressed also by Tarkow, 145-8.
[67] There is isolation and lack of comprehension between the persons of this drama, but not to the point that Electra misunderstands that the φίλτατον (567) is an indecent erotic recommendation by the Old Man to Electra, about the emissaries of Orestes, as Poole, 116 thinks.
[68] According to Goldhill, 1986a, 249, through the recognition scene, Euripides "rewrites the interrelations within the family and culture of the avengers."
[69] See Garner, 118, on a useful discussion of the juxtaposition of the language concerning the lock of hair in *Choephori* and *Electra*.
[70] See the excellent analysis of Electra's arguments in Paduano, 388-94.

provoked suspicions that the passage is wholly or partly spurious.[71] The main arguments can be briefly summarised:

I. *Dramatic context.* a. The emotional tension of the recognition is compromised if an aimless and somewhat comical argument intervenes before the climax. b. Why does the Old Man speculate and suggest tests when he could simply ask Orestes' representatives (as he does in 547 ff.)[72]? c. Why does Electra deny the possibility of Orestes coming in secret (524-6) when his isolation and powerlessness are presumed throughout the play? [73] Against these points [74]: a. Removing 518-44 leaves the recognition too simplified and abrupt, lacking any negative movement which precedes the positive movement to the climax; this is not provided by 213-431 since there Electra has not imagined the possibility of Orestes' presence. b,c. The emphasis is on Electra's mind, not the Old Man's, and Electra has shown signs of expecting more open action from Orestes (ἦρου τόδ' ; 275, 336-8).[75] d. Deletion, moreover, makes the introduction of his grave offerings and lock in 509-17 almost pointless[76], even if some point can be found in the rousing of the Old Man's expectations, or in advertisement by Euripides his departure from the Stesichorian tradition

II. *Internal weakness.* Verbal echoes prove that Aeschylus is the specific target; but this scene gives a travesty rather than a serious critique of his scene.

[71] Most recently, Kovacs,1989, who argues (77-8) that 518-44 have been written by a comic poet of the 4th century, who parodied *Choephori*.

[72] Bain, 110, adds that the second and the third token are adduced in a highly hypothetical manner and the first one needs the presence of the lock, presence which is hardly possible- theatrically- to occur.Contra, Bond, 6, who argues that the grotesqueness is not obvious, simply because it is not worked out on the stage. Kovacs, 1989, 73-4, maintains that if the Old Man suspected that one of these two men is Orestes, he would speak to him in a different way. But probably the Old Man thinks that they are real emissaries of Orestes and himself is somewhere nearby, hidden, waiting for the news his emissaries will bring to him.

[73] See Fraenkel, 1950, 823. His arguments are repeated by Kovacs,1989, 68-9.

[74] For the most thorough defence of 518-44, see Vögler, 168-75., with extensive bibliography.

[75] See Lloyd-Jones, 1961, 178-9

Footprints and weaving become purely hypothetical, while the main inference from the lock in Aeschylus is ignored. However, this feature of the scene may call for interpretation rather than deletion.

III. *Textual and linguistic symptoms.* The passage contains some corruption (especially 538, 545-6), but not glaringly non-Euripidean language. The most serious textual argument against the passage as a whole is the suggestion that 545-6 should follow 517 immediately and belong to the Old Man, since a. 518 resembles 548, so that 518-44 might be a substitute for 545-6; b. the topic of hair offering is resumed at 545 after being dropped at 531; c αὐτοῦ in 545 appears to refer to Agamemnon, who was last mentioned in 509 and 519. But this argument is not strong: a. 545-6 are very likely a false explanation offered by Electra, as at *Choephori*, 180 and Sophocles'*Electra*, 932-3; b. reversion to the subject of the lock is natural, since the lock is the focus of the whole discussion, and Electra must arrive at some conclusion about the grave offerings before the subject is dropped; c. the reference of αὐτοῦ is a minor difficulty, perhaps due to careless writing or to the corruption in 545-6. It has also been doubted whether Euripides could have wanted to create the effects that this scene creates; but the subjective nature of such considerations is evident, and no convincing explanation has been offered of why anyone else should have written them or how they could have intruded into this text.[77]

[76] The first who observed it was Wilamowitz, 236.
[77] West, 1980, 20, attempts to meet this difficulty by suggesting that Euripides himself wrote them as a light-hearted by-product of the play proper. He accepts as integral to the scene as a whole only 519-20 (or 545-6) and 524-6. According to West Euripides wanted to make fun of Aeschylus, and so added after the performance 520-3 and 527-44. The question which remains unanswered is whom did Euripides add these lines for.

VI. Tyrannicide and matricide

Aegisthus, according to Euripides, is killed after welcoming Orestes and Pylades as guests and during a religious ceremony. Aegisthus is quite unready for and vulnerable to Orestes' guile and this is stressed by the charm and peaceful rustic setting (777-8), his warm and open welcome (779-92) and the goal of his ceremony, to provide welfare for his family (799 ff.). By contrast, Orestes breaks the rules of ritual[78] by pretending to be clean (793)[79] and praying silently for his host's death. Many have thought that this discredits Orestes[80] and the tradition of his noble vengeance against Aegisthus but the case is not so simple: a. Aegisthus is the very enemy[81] of Orestes and Greek ethics did not recommend fair play towards enemies. In all accounts of Orestes' vengeance Aegisthus is taken by surprise and unprotected. Actually, Aegisthus prays to continue enjoying the fruits of his crime, while Orestes contemplates a prayer for restoration. Aegisthus acts in the same way as Sophoclean Clytaemestra, who, in S. *El.* 634-59, prays to Apollo for continued control of the Atreid house and power and confusion to her enemies, euphemising the latter because of Electra's presence. b. The killing of a tyrant during a religious festival has as historic precedent the killing of Hipparchus by Harmodios and Aristogiton, the famous tyrannicides, in 514 B.C., at the Panathenaea.[82] So Greek ethics did not wholeheartedly condemn using religious ceremonies as occasions for justified

[78] But he does not commits sacrilege, according to De Jong, 1990, 18, as he rejects Aegisthus' invitation to wash himself, i.e. to participate fully in the sacrifice. And he succeeds in it in the most unsuspicious way, through the perfect excuse of Olympia. So, also, Thury, 19.
[79] See Cropp, 1988, ad loc.
[80] Arnott, 1981, 208-9, 211-3, in the most emphatic manner. He presents the death of Aegisthus only as a hideous murder.
[81] Konstan, 180, treats the terms of *philos* and *echthros*, in this play in what concerns its political aspect. He concludes that these terms become increasingly political as the play develops. Aegisthus could never be a friend of Orestes and Electra, but this does not apply to Clytaemestra. She is φίλα τε κοὐ φίλα (1230), as Electra too late realises. Friend, because of the natural tie, and enemy in the struggle over the royal house. In other words, tyrannicide is a very different act, in substantial terms, from the matricide.

killings[83]. c. Aegisthus' present behaviour does nothing to lighten his enormous past crimes; the pleasant light in which he is now put is partly designed to show how the guilty one brings punishment on himself by his own blindness to danger - Aegisthus even takes the initiative to give Orestes the chance to kill him by inviting him to butcher the sacrificial victim (815-8)[84]. d. The imaging of Aegisthus' murder as a sacrifice responds to that of Agamemnon in *Agamemnon*, 1118, 1433, 1504.

Still, the murder of Aegisthus is an ugly event. The speech of the Messenger[85] leaves his personality something of an enigma: we know him in this play only through the reports of the others, who are his enemies (Peasant, Electra, Messenger). Euripides (in contrast with Aeschylus and, especially, Sophocles) does not allow Aegisthus to present himself, adding another dark point in this puzzling play. Aegisthus enters the scenic area only dead, in order to be abused by the long embittered Electra. In this play the distinctive lines between 'good' and 'bad' are so thin and pervasive that the evil can pollute everyone, at least in what concerns behaviour, who comes close to it. Aegisthus, too, never recognises Orestes or his inescapable fall. In these respects it resembles the murder of Clytaemestra, but it is also contrasted with it in that Aegisthus has no moral or emotional claim on his murderers and is lamented by no one.

The presentation of the murders in Euripidean *Electra* highlights and stresses the substantial difference between them. The tyrannicide belongs to a very different

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[82] See Porter, 1990, 278-80.

[83] See Lloyd,1986, 16

[84] Cf. Cropp,1988, ad 837, and the possibility that *Choephori*, 859-62 influenced Euripides. See, also Garvie, 1986, ad loc. About the retardation in Aegisthus' killing, see Arnott, 1973, 143-4.

[85] Interesting is the play with the dramatic conventions before the entrance of the Messenger. Electra, being in a very unstable psychological situation, cries in agony for the Messengers- she thinks that their delay indicates her calamity (759). See Halporn, 45-6, Winnington-Ingram, 131. Taplin, 169, is sceptical on this as the theatrical terminology, of the term 'messenger', may have not developed by the time of Euripides.

category from the matricide. The latter is the tragic essence of the play and this is emphasised by the placing before the killing of Clytaemestra the killing of Aegisthus, as happens also in *Choephori*.

In fact, the killing of Clytaemestra could be avoided, in terms of real life, as with Aegisthus dead Electra's oppression is over and Orestes is restored as the master of his house.[86] And without Aegisthus Clytaemestra is no threat and has no defence. At this point a contrast between tyrannicide and matricide begins to come into focus. Electra dismisses Aegisthus (ἔρρ', οὐδὲν εἰδὼς ὧν ἐφευρεθεὶς χρόνῳ δίκην δέδωκας 952), and the Chorus agrees that his fate exemplifies the triumph of Justice over wickedness. Then attention is turned towards the murder of Clytaemestra (959 ff.). She is seen approaching the cottage and for the first time the problem of matricide is raised. Orestes asks τί δῆτα δρῶμεν; μητέρ' ἦ φονεύσομεν (967) . Faced with the very sight of her, he loses confidence in Apollo's instruction[87] to kill the mother who bore and nurtured him (969). Her presence reminds him of the natural, physical link between mother and son which makes her a forbidden victim (973). Electra, on the other side, insists on the father's claims to vengeance (in one of the rare references to Agamemnon in this play- one could say that Electra remembers Agamemnon only when it is in the interest of her purposes, in contrast with the Sophoclean heroine, who is haunted with the vengeance of her murdered father), as validated by Apollo's bidding. Orestes finally and reluctantly obeys: εἰ θεοῖς δοκεῖ τάδε, ἔστω (986-7). Clytaemestra's fate is sealed, and the tragic act of matricide assured.

But before the act takes place, Clytaemestra has to face Electra. An extended honorific address in anapaestic rhythm, comparable with the welcome given to

[86] Cf. the opinion of Segal, 354.

Agamemnon in *Agamemnon* 783-809 creates dramatic irony, deepened by the reminiscence of Aeschylus' doomed Agamemnon with his Trojan spoils. The debate about Clytaemestra's guilt has a direct parallel in Sophocles'*Electra* (especially 1018-23, 1041-8, 1051-9, 1067-8, 1086-96, 1105-6) but it differs crucially in its setting.[88] Euripides has juxtaposed Electra's confrontations with her defeated oppressors and hinged them on the argument about the morality of the matricide, emphasising Clytaemestra's helplessness and the ruthlessness which Electra, unlike Orestes, carries forward from the first to the second victim. Her feelings of hatred for the two are inextricably linked. To Clytaemestra she expresses the same hostility, the same sense of personal grievance (1004-10), the same insistence on corrupt sexual motivation, as she did to Aegisthus. Even Clytaemestra will not suggest that the accusations are unfounded, however biased they may be.[89] Yet her attempt at a defence (1011-50) draws attention to the blindness of Electra's hatred- blindness to the possibility of making a mistake and living to regret it (like Clytaemestra herself, 1105-10), and to the natural tie between mother and child. Electra, the virgin wife, has used an imaginary childbirth and Clytaemestra's sense of maternal duty to lure her to her death (652-8)[90]. It is very elucidating for understanding the character of this Electra to juxtapose the line 1117 (καὶ σὺ δ᾽αὐθάδης ἔφυς) with *Choephori*, 140-1. Euripidean Electra has moments of surpassing even her mother in being ruthless.

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[87] I agree with Kells, 53, interpretation of 981: "even on the authority of a μάντις, I would not accept this thing as well-advised".
[88] See Lloyd, 1992, for a detailed and thorough comparison of the agon in the two plays, especially pp. 11, 56.
[89] Actually this Clytaemestra is very aware of the importance of her crimes and cares about public opinion, even when is opposite to her own. So, I would prefer, with Basta Donzelli (in her edition ad loc., and Kamerbeek, 1987, 283. See, also, Cropp,1988, ad loc.) the καλῶς of the manuscript at 1015, instead of Diggle's κακῶς (Diggle, 1994, 163-5). This is supported, also, by Cropp, 1982, 52-4, who believes that the πικρότης which γλώσσῃ ἔνεστι (1014) belongs to the detractors of Clytaemestra, not Clytaemestra herself, as Denniston, ad loc., assumes.
[90] Cf.Cropp,1988, ad loc.

Another substantive difference between the two Clytaemestra-Electra debate scenes is that Euripidean Clytaemestra discusses Cassandra[91], and Electra fails to answer, while Sophocles' Electra claims that the sacrifice of Iphigeneia was unavoidable after Agamemnon had unwittingly offended Artemis (S.*Electra*, 563-76).[92]

Clytaemestra's progress into the house (1132-46) and the choral song which follows (1147-64) are packed with reminiscences of her crime and allusions to retribution. Δίκην ἐμοὶ πατρός is Electra's last word to her (1146); μὴ κτάνητε μητέρα is Clytaemestra's to her children (1165). Clytaemestra has rightly died; but her children have killed her wrongly. Tyrannicide should not have led to matricide. These distinctions are crucial and we should not see the murders simply as crimes achieving personal vengeance for Orestes and Electra. On this view the play has no serious tragic element[93]. Yet the distinctions are there. Aegisthus is shown (even only through the descriptions of his enemies) as a fully deserving victim; in fear of retribution for killing Agamemnon (25, 39, 614-7, 830-5) he has tried to bring death on both Orestes (17, 28, 85) and Electra (27). He has been hybristic in his treatment of Electra and her marriage (46, 59, 266) and of the corpse, tomb, property and household of Agamemnon (166, 289, 318-31, 947). His murder is a welcome triumph of right over wrong (584, 675-6, 761-5, 771, 851-79, 952-8). These views are shared amongst the Peasant, the Old Man, the Messenger and the Chorus as well as Electra. Nor are they disproved by Aegisthus' hospitality towards the disguised Orestes. There is nothing contradictory in this confident display of geniality towards supposed

[91] See Basta Donzelli, 1978, 168-78, about Clytaemestra's obsession with Agamemnon's adultery.
[92] See the analysis by Lloyd, 1992, 63.
[93] Thus Kitto, 1961, 327-38, analyses it as melodrama and Gellie, 9-10, as antitragic and foreshadowing Chekhov.

strangers, as we have seen before. [94] The event has an ugliness which may be felt as an apt comment on political and dynastic feuds and (more probably) generally the practice of violence and vengeance, but it does not rehabilitate Aegisthus or compromise the justice of the tyrannicide.

Clytaemestra shares Aegisthus' guilt, even if Euripides makes her a less independent agent than Aeschylus. She too lives in fear of punishment from Orestes (1114-5), and Electra's claim that her mother would be glad to hear of Orestes' death (418-9) is as plausible here as the comparable suggestions in the Aeschylean and Sophoclean plays (cf. the expectation of Clytaemestra's pleasure at news of Orestes death in Sophocles'*Electra* 56-7, 666-7, 766ff. In *Choephori* there is an actual ambivalence in 696-9[95] , but the Nurse in 734-41 gives the real account of the true feelings of Clytaemestra on the alleged death of her son.). Euripides substitutes reasoned fears for those provoked in Clytaemestra by a foreboding dream[96] in Stesichorus (fr.42 P), Aeschylus and Sophocles. Her saving of Electra's life (27-30) dulls her ruthlessness, yet the Peasant, in relating this, minimises it by adding that she acted in spite of herself and with an eye to public opinion (30)[97] Her self-justification before Electra is hardly convincing. Euripides needed a Clytaemestra with some human feelings, first to motivate Electra's marriage to the Peasant and the mother's willingness to visit the daughter, then to make her a pathetic figure and a foil for

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[94] Lloyd, 1992, 57, maintains that all the good qualities which this Aegisthus may display "are of comparatively minor importance, when set against the enormity of his past crimes."
[95] See Garvie, 1986, ad loc.
[96] Lesky, 297, writes accurately that this Clytaemestra "needs no dream to shake her confidence".
[97] See Cropp,1988, ad loc. with the comparison of the behaviour of Euripidean Clytaemestra towards her children and Clytaemestra of Euripides' predecessors. The lack of genuine sympathy towards Electra, would increase if we accept the interpretation of Lloyd-Jones, 1957, 99-100, of 1059. I do not agree with his view - that Clytaemestra says directly to Electra that she tries not to make her happy by allowing her to speak - but it could have some grounds.

Electra's ruthlessness as she approaches her death.[98] The sympathy expressed by the Chorus during and after the murder is sympathy for a victim, and for a mother ἄλαστα μέλεα καὶ πέρα παθοῦσα σῶν τέκνων ὑπαί (1186-7, cf. also 1168). Earlier, however, the Chorus has supported the children's condemnation (213-4, 745-6, 1051)[99] and shared their longing for her death: ἔτ' ἔτι φόνιον ὑπὸ δέραν ὄψομαι αἷμα χυθὲν σιδάρῳ (485-6; cf. the Old Man, 663).

Euripides, then, lightens Clytaemestra's wickedness just enough to allow her murder to be a tragic one- a just punishment, but morally repugnant in its execution. The words of the Chorus δίκαι' ἔλεξας, ἡ δίκη δ'αἰσχρῶς ἔχει (1051), addressed to Clytaemestra, could also be perfectly applied to her children - and this is one of the essential tragic elements of this play, as the victims are turning to victimisers.[100] The siblings' revulsion after the act and Orestes' doubts before it show filial instinct rejecting the demands of justice and revenge. Orestes has previously seen the second murder as a natural corollary of the first.[101] He mentions matricide rarely, but this does not leave his intention in question (89, 276-82, 600, 640-50); rather it shows him taking it for granted, missing its implications up to the moment when he faces the act. However, the Orestes-Electra stichomythia recalls constantly the killing of Clytaemestra in *Choephori*.[102] Especially 967 brings to mind *Cho.* 899, where Clytaemestra has bared her breast to Orestes and he asks, Πυλάδη, τί δράσω ; μητέρ' αἰδεσθῶ κτανεῖν; In both lines the word 'mother' is positioned with great impact . In

[98] So Whitehorne, 7-8, who distinguishes the revulsion at the act of matricide from the genuine sympathy towards Clytaemestra.
[99] See Cropp, 1986, 193-4.
[100] Myrick, 140-1, expresses a very interesting view about the equation of the double murder and diaulus race. In 954-6 what Orestes is meant to run is a diaulus. Electra, of course, considers as the second stage of the diaulus the matricide, but- as diaulus is a race which doubles to its start- we could possibly think that the results of these acts return back to their agents.
[101] This, of course, does not confirm the view of Vellacott, 236, that Orestes has changed because of the horror of Aegisthus' killing.

Choephori (900) Pylades' first and only answer is a reminder of Apollo's will. In *Electra* (968, 970) the main appeal of the heroine concerns vengeance; she sees Orestes' hesitation as due to pity rather than filial feeling.

VII. The *Exodos* of the play

During the 19th century Euripidean *Electra* had been strictly criticised, especially by the two brothers Schlegel and their followers, as the 'very worst' of all Euripidean tragedies, bringing down to low, everyday rustic life, as they thought, the majestic figure of Sophoclean Electra, or practising a blasphemous mockery on Aeschylean *Choephori* - and not only in the notorious recognition scene. Our century has tried to restore *Electra*, but the puzzlement of the critics was obvious enough in characterisations such as Kitto's "melodrama"[103]. This is not a real tragedy, according to him, it can not bear meanings with general importance and value, because it does not include any cosmic conflict. It is just a personal case, a conflict between individuals who happen to be kin, and are driven by idiosyncratic passions and obsessions.[104] Especially the epilogue of the drama was quite incomprehensible:[105] Vickers [106]in 1973 wrote that it would be much better if Euripides had avoided writing the Exodos, because with it the whole drama "falls in pieces".[107] The most

[102] For the similarities and the differences of these dialogues, fatal for Clytaemestra's lot, in Aeschylus and Euripides, see Lloyd,1992, 58-9, Segal, 354-5-especially for the verbal echoes.
[103] p.332-3 "Electra... is an entirely private and personal assemblage of faults with no universal significance. She is a Medea without her tragedy-but with all Medea's *Grand Guignol* effects; in other words, a heroine of melodrama".
[104] So, also, Gellie, 1.
[105] The only early exception is the positive view of Murray, 102.
[106] Vickers, 564-6.
[107] op.cit., 566.

moderate critics, like Grube[108] and Conacher[109], maintained that the epilogue serves some conventional uses - common in many Euripidean epilogues - such as the reference to some mythical elements about Orestes' and Electra's future and a deep emotional finale of Orestes' and Electra's permanent separation.[110]

I think that the main function of the epilogue is to upgrade the drama to a cosmic level and, in that way to cast light on and clarify some of its main meanings, namely the absurdity of human fate in the light of gods' decisions, which are completely impervious to the human prediction, or even comprehension.

In 1278-83 Castor[111] announces the arrival, with Menelaus, of Helen. Some details of what Euripides refers to here occur even in the *Odyssey* (her return from Egypt) but one can be almost certain that these features reflect Stesichorus' *Palinode*. Definitely Castor here is not outlining a startling new innovation which Euripides intended to present at length on a later occasion . The brother of Helen refers to her story in a form which, though not Homeric, could by no means surprise the audience. And, of course, there is no parallel in the extant dramas-and we do not have reason to believe that it could be- according to which a dramatist announces in the performance of an irrelevant play a still unwritten tragedy. There can be references to other tragedies - *Electra*, as we have already seen, is full of them - but only in already performed plays, not in forthcoming ones.

In 1347-1356 Castor says that they are going to the πόντος Σικελός to save ships. Before rushing to the conclusion that these words refer to Demosthenes' relief

[108] p. 312 f.
[109] Conacher, 1967a, 210.
[110] This is the opinion of Heath, 60, who generally maintains that the tragedian's task is not to present moral assessments of stories, but to exploit their emotional potential.
[111] About his presence in the play and the long preparation of his appearance see Kovacs, 1985, especially 307-10.

expedition to Sicily in the spring of 413, one might well consider the particular meaning of πόντος Σικέλος. According to many passages[112] in Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius and Strabo the Sicilian sea does not denote only the sea around Sicily, but all the waters between South Italy and Greece (including even the Corinthian gulf). At any date which can possibly be assigned to *Electra*, some Athenian ships were sailing on these vast waters.

Another element about Dioscuri is the direction of their course.They arrive from the sea, that is from the Aegean sea. On their way they have sighted Menelaus and Helen at Nauplia. Their message delivered, they continue on their flight. They are not confined to the Aegean sea. While Orestes is to go towards Athens, they intend to go on to the next sea , the Sicilian sea. They return to their own wide realm which covers the sea in general. They have come from the East, they now keep on flighting towards the Western sea.[113] There is not the slightest indication that their benevolence is directed towards any particular ship or fleet; least of all one outside the sphere of the tragedy.

The passage under discussion is thus seen to be directly connected with the central problem of the *Electra*. The appearance of the Dioscuri is by no means a detachable embellishment but offers a clue for the interpretation of the whole drama. Castor's words widen the sphere in which the children of Agamemnon, with their deed and guilt, are confined: he serveys a wider expanse of space and time, but still can not give to the wretched siblings a more persuasive answer to their agony than that Apollo's oracles were unwise, in the case of Orestes, and the imposition of fate and necessity in the case of Electra. The Dioscuri command indeed more power and

[112] For detailed quotation of the passages, see Zuntz, 67
[113] See the ingenious note of Hartigan, 123.

more truth than the mortals, but their power is not absolute, nor is the final truth. They cannot go too far in criticising Apollo for his disastrous oracles, because he is their master. And they cannot offer much more consolation[114] to Orestes than the weak promise that Orestes after his acquittal in the Athenian trial, will find good fortune and happiness in his new home, in the Oresteium. Concerning Electra, they believe that her future marriage with Pylades will solve all her problems. However, Orestes and Electra know very well what their real desires and purposes used to be and how little satisfied they can feel with the future promised by Dioscuri. So their separation is in very high emotional tones, which can move even the Gods who are first and most responsible for their present situation. [115]

Lines 1278-83 clearly exculpate Helen. Dioscuri add a significant element to the tragic ambiguity which is the essence of this grim and ironical play. Helen's sin was the origin of the calamities, including the evils Electra has been lamenting - and it was not real. Suffering and death were real - and they were the will of Zeus, that is the outcome of a final necessity.

Lines 1280-83 appropriately stress the futility of human purposes, sufferings and ignorance and contrast the fortunes of the unscathed couple with the havoc that

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[114] Actually, at the end of the play Orestes and Electra neglect the Dioscuri and look for consolation to each other. The only one who may be considered as happy is the Peasant, cf. McDonald, 176

[115] The second stasimon could be interpreted in this context, as well. The Chorus seems to say that the justice which rules nature belongs to a world other than that of men. It is a reality equally valid, but has nothing to do with mortals. "If mortals transgress nature, the δίκην διδόναι is their own and, though parallel is not that of immortals." Halporn, 109. This is a confusion Electra and Orestes have fallen into. The same opinion is expressed by Goldhill,1986a, 257 "the choric ode also points towards the theme of the complex relations between paradigm and behaviour, between a myth and the people who live it out". Cf. also, the clever interpretation of the same stasimon offered by Stinton, 79-82 (contra Denniston, ad loc.). So Rosivach, 196-9, who takes a more positive view about the gods' role in the play. In the first ode, on the other hand, there are gods everywhere, guiding and legitimising the deeds of heroes. Perseus has his parallel in Orestes, but the latter's relationship with the gods is far different from the former's. See Walsh, 286-7. And King, 210, points out that "the [first] ode's vision of glamorous superhuman heroes leads inexorably to an unglamorous vision of human victims; so in the real world of Electra and Orestes unholy acts (1204-5) and utter misery are the result of accepting as paradigmatic the traditional

revolves around them at home as much as at Troy. Another element indicating the superficial thoughts and decisions of the gods is that no reason for this strife and bloodshed between men is mentioned. In *Cypria* fr.1 Zeus decides to cause the Trojan war in order to lighten the Earth from the load of mankind. This is a naive reason, but still an attempt to interpret in a way the will of the superior god. Here, and generally in Euripidean tragedy the will and the decision of god are beyond reason even in case it has the results of the Trojan war in nations, societies, cities, families and individuals.[116]

In Euripides' *Helen* 705-6 the messenger wonders: Τί φῄς; νεφέλης ἄρ' ἄλλως εἴχομεν πόνους πέρι; I think that this exclamative question, indicating a mixture of disappointment, anger and an immediate realisation of the futility of their long toils, could fit very well in the mouth of Orestes and Electra.

heroes of the past". The first scholar who found a relation between the tragic essence of the play and its choral odes is Adams, 121-2.

[116] Cf. the accurate conclusion of the play according to Whitehorne, 13, "we have learned that there is no such thing as an explanation from a god. We had been led step by step to expect one only to find that all that was offered was a paradox; that Apollo is wise but his oracles are not; that this murder was just, but Orestes' part in it was not." See, also, Michelini, 226 ff., Hartigan, 125, Cropp,1986, 195-6.

ORESTES

"Your life began in fear and flight.
And, instead of struggles, fights
and victories (...)
you found a more narrow target:
Vengeance".
Athos Dimoulas,
Orestes-in another time and place

I.Introduction

In the spring of 408 Euripides presents his last play before the Athenian audience[1]. In the same year he accepts the invitation of Archelaos, king of Macedonia, and departs to his court, where he will die two years later. *Orestes*, produced probably with *Auge* and *Oedipus*[2], is one of the most curious dramas presented on the Athenian stage, not only full of innovations (an Assembly which condemns the murderers to death through suicide, Menelaus' and Tyndareus' share in the chaos, an extremely vocal Pylades, whose arrival signals a new direction of the play's course, an almost comic figure of a Phrygian slave who functions as the ἐξάγγελος) but with its main structural plot being a striking innovation; according to Aristophanes of Byzantium, who wrote the second hypothesis in the play, **παρ᾽ οὐδενὶ κεῖται ἡ μυθοποιία**

There is a consensus that *Orestes* belongs not in the first range in the Euripidean production[3]. Although the drama enjoyed remarkable popularity throughout antiquity and the Byzantine era, since the nineteenth century it has been subject to strong and sometimes vituperative criticism. Commentators and critics

[1] Not the last he wrote; in Macedonia he wrote and presented *Archelaos*. His son, also, produced at the City Dionysia under the same name *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Alkmaion in Corinth* and *Bacchae*.
[2] According to Webster 1967, 238.
[3] Cf. West 1987, 28, although he is among the warmest defenders of the play against the numerous attacks it has received from antiquity up to recent years.

have, at one time or another, either praised or damned every element of the play. Orestes has been viewed on a spectrum that ranges from homicidal maniac through helpless victim of circumstances to noble but misunderstood hero. In any case, it is a complex and intriguing play and exhibits the culmination of Euripides' technique. The struggles of the young Orestes against a host of opponents offer to the poet the opportunity for a virtuoso display of his theatrical craftsmanship and also a study of the effects of alienation and moral outrage not only on his protagonist, but on Orestes' social environment as well. Euripides throughout his career portrays a world in moral confusion; in *Orestes* that confusion dominates the action of the play to the point that the arising chaos threatens to overwhelm not only the characters but also the mythic traditions and theatrical conventions, so much so that the intervention of the *deus ex machina* is more radical and necessary than, perhaps, in any other play[4].

Orestes, on the first frivolous sight, seems to be the continuation of *Electra*, as it starts off in the aftermath of the matricide[5] and deals with the fate of the two siblings after their heinous deed. But, in fact, a more careful reading of the play reveals a very different atmosphere, not only in the settings of this tragedy (as we are transferred from the peasant's hut in *Electra* to the royal palace of Atreids in Argos), but most significantly in the emphasis of the play: the focus changes from the characters to the plot[6], from the individuals to the situations they face and against which they react[7].

[4] With the exception of *Philoctetes*, where Heracles inverts the course of the action and averts the absolute reversal of the traditional myth.
[5] Specifically, the sixth day after the murder, 39-40.
[6] Cf. Willink, 1986, xlix: "*Orestes* is not primarily a character play (though it is indeed a play with interesting characters)".
[7] See Porter, 1994, 47-8, who stresses that, despite *Electra*, in *Orestes* there are no obvious moral points against the siblings.

Orestes is not a study of matricide[8] so much as an account of Orestes' desperate plight following the commission of that dreadful but unavoidable crime. Rather than a study of criminal psychology or of degraded heroism, *Orestes* is best regarded as a study of betrayal, frustration and outrage and as the portrayal of the extremes to which individuals can be driven when faced with the injustice of a corrupt and malevolent world. This approach to the work has the advantage of allowing us to explain both the sympathetic picture of Orestes and his friends early in the play and the extreme savagery of the final scenes.

Betrayed on all sides, with his expectations repeatedly frustrated by a world where the old rules of nobility and heroic values no longer seem to apply, Orestes threatens to destroy his ancestral house and, with it, the entire mythical tradition associated with the house of Atreus[9]. But this is as far as Euripides can go: Apollo appears at the end to put things right, back on their mythical course. However, Euripides' main purpose through his innovative handling of the myth has been accomplished: the audience departs from *Orestes* with the sense, not of a final reconciliation, but of a wild world in chaos. Euripides is still bound within the frames, even if broad, of a mythical tradition which prevents him from presenting facts like the death of Helen or Orestes and his companions in situations completely unfamiliar to his audience through previous handling (by himself or other, earlier poets) of the same mythical stock[10].

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[8] Even less "a pathological study of criminality" as Mullens, 153, asserts.

[9] Cf. Schein, 50, who assigns to the threatened burning of the palace a symbol for the end of the traditional myth.

[10] Cf. Dunn, 1996, 170 about the poetic licence for changing even numerous details, but not the untouchable spine of the myth. Zeitlin, 1980, 52, notes that "it [the play] both marks a radical break with the mythic tradition and, at the same time, asserts the irresistibility of the mythical paradigm...The *Orestes* is a drama that for all its novelties and innovations is more preoccupied with and more consciously reflective of the past than any other play in the tragic repertory." See also the Introduction, passim.

II. Τλήμων Orestes

The critics who argue for a criminal personality of Orestes (double-faced villain whose real character is revealed as the plot proceeds and culminates in the finale of the play), usually ignore, or underestimate, the apparent sympathy presented to Orestes in the opening scenes of the play. The Orestes of the play's initial 469 lines may be a pathetic person, but he clearly is intended to be an object of our compassion. Ruined by remorse at the deed he has committed he lies in squalor κάμνων ὑπὸ μανίας καὶ κείμενος ἐπὶ κλινιδίου[11] (39-45, 83-5, 200, 219-20, 223-6, 385-91) tormented by the memory of Clytaemestra's death (ἡ σύνεσις, ὅτι σύνοιδα δείν' εἰργασμένος 396), and by a sickness that is partly physical, partly psychological and partly supernatural in origin[12].

At 253 occurs the onset of mania in Orestes and it lasts for the next twenty four lines. He already has had many onsets of this mania, which has placed him in the miserable situation he is in since the day they buried their mother. The onset of λύσσα is sudden, unexpected and can appear at any moment, even at the most calm and sober one. It is very characteristic that one of Orestes' last words before the attack of the Furies is φρόνει (252), when he advises Electra (an echo of *Choephori* 140-1), to be a different woman from the κακαί women, the daughters of Tyndareus- and exactly that is emphasised by 254 (ἄρτι σωφρονῶν).

Electra, of course, does not see the αἱματωποὺς καὶ δρακοντώδεις κόρας

[11] *Hypothesis* II 29. I agree with Arnott, 1983, 18, on the effect of suspense the prolonged silence of Orestes has on the audience, but I do not follow him in his view (p.19-20) that the audience would worry if Orestes is alive or dead. Fuqua, 1976, 68, draws very interesting parallels between the first scenes of *Orestes* and *Philoctetes*, which was performed just the previous year and, as we will see below, could have influenced Euripides. There are sleeping scenes and disease attacks against the protagonists in both of the plays.

(256), as nobody sees them, apart from their victim[13]. This does not mean that the Furies are illusions of the unsettled mind of those who suffer from the attack of mania, as Electra implies at 259[14]. However, that line, together with Orestes' confusion at 264-5 of Electra with a Fury attacking him, functions in a way to increase the sympathy of the audience towards the siblings: in a moment of almost complete isolation and misery, they even reject each other! They lose, at least for a moment, their only firm and confident support: their love and loyalty to each other.

Nevertheless, throughout the whole play the tenderness, the love[15] and the mutual care of Orestes and Electra are some of the few bright elements of this deeply pessimistic tragedy[16]. This is much more dominant in the parodos of the Chorus, where Electra appeals repeatedly to the entering Chorus not to disturb her brother's precious rest and wake him up (135-8, 142, 145-6, 148-50,157-9), to the point of being rude to the Chorus (οὐκ ἀφ'ἡμῶν, οὐκ ἀπ'οἴκων πάλιν ἀνὰ πόδα σὸν εἱλίξεις; 170-2), although the latter consists of girls favourably disposed towards Electra. But the most moving expressions of fraternal tenderness concern the assault of the Furies and its result on Orestes. We see Electra caring for her brother who suffers from the last fit of mania, wiping the foam from his mouth and his eyes (220-2), supporting him as he lies down on the bed (227-30) and standing him up again (231-5). Orestes appreciates her care and mutually expresses his affection towards his sister (280 ff.,

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[12] See Smith, 293-4, on the medical terms Electra uses in her description of Orestes' disease.

[13] With the exception of *Eumenides*, where they are visible, being the Chorus of that tragedy. See also *Ag.* 1183, 1186-90, 1199-201, *Cho.* 1048-62, *IT* 221ff., and probably in E. *El.* 1342-6.

[14] The Chorus in *Cho* 1051 ff. denies, as well, the validity of Orestes' visions. Grube, 375, remarks that, in any case, the Furies are real, at least in what concerns their dramatic function-and this is the important issue. Cf.Greenberg, 163, Heath, 57. Barlow, 125-6, notices that the language Orestes uses in order to describe the Furies varies from the language Electra and Menelaus use when they refer to them.

[15] I can not envisage where Rawson, 1972, 159, sees "a hint of incest", in the relationship between Orestes and Electra.

[16] Damen, 133-5, misunderstands Electra's obedience to Orestes' request that she should have some rest (301 ff., 310-1), and her conventional, though very pathetic, expressions of lamentation at 1018 ff. to characterise her as self-centred.

301ff.).

This scene of the highest emotional expression has a double action in the course of the play: first, it raises and establishes the audience's sympathy towards the siblings , who in the forthcoming scenes will be under several attacks and, under their pressure, they will react in the wildest way, and second, to emphasise the complete isolation and abandonment they suffer, as is strongly pointed out in their words: σὲ γὰρ ἔχω μόνην ἐπίκουρον, ἄλλων, ὡς ὁρᾷς, ἔρημος ὢν (Orestes, 305-6) and ἢν σὺ κατθάνῃς, γυνὴ τί δράσω ; πῶς μόνη σωθήσομαι, ἀνάδελφος ἀπάτωρ ἄφιλος; (Electra, 308-10)[17].

To return to Orestes' mania, there are many critics who maintain that the protagonist is under its influence throughout the play[18]. His answering arguments to Tyndareus, his final plea to Menelaus, his apology in the Assembly, the warm acceptance of Pylades' and Electra's retaliation plans, the confrontation with the Phrygian slave and, most obvious of all according to their view, the order to his comrades to set fire to the palace at the very moment of Menelaus' alleged surrender

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[17] See Lesky, 344 and his eloquent comments on this scene. Cf. West, 1987, 33, Webster, 1967, 248

[18] Murray, 103-4, points out that "the madness of Orestes infects the whole play". Mullens, 153-4, one of the most ardent accusers of Orestes presents him as being in a continuous non-firm and non-stable mental situation. Hartigan, 146-8, maintains that the madness of Orestes afflicts his companions and creates their vengeful mania. Parry, 340-1, asserts that Orestes' sickness is the delusion between reality and illusion, which engulfs everyone at the end of the play. Dunn, 1996, 172, refers, as well, to the epilogue as the "apotheosis of madness", but rather in what concerns the dramatic rhythms than in literal, psychological, meaning. Also Burnett, 216 ff. thinks that the Furies possess Orestes throughout the play and this is the reason for his "almost lunatic behaviour" with his leaping, running and rushing. She generally charges Orestes with not showing fitting confidence in Apollo, but seeking for secular power and so he misses the supernatural aid and surrenders to his supernatural opponents: "his delusions all stem from the essential failure to recognise the real cause of his suffering, and so he has persistently chosen the wrong champion... Here Euripides is in full agreement with Aeschylus, for it is the miasma of the old crime that has pursued Orestes throughout this new play." Burnett's view could be right if the betrayal of Apollo had not been the initial one: the very existence of the Furies proves it, at least in the eyes of Orestes. See pp.86-7, on the function of the bow scene as the extreme scenic presentation of Apollo's absence at the particular moment when his promised help was most needed.

A variation in the above argument is the view of Smith, 306, who maintains that Orestes' failure in his assault against Helen is due to his disease and it could be avoided if he had observed the medical doctrines of Euripides' era ! Her arguments apply absolutely non-dramatic criteria, so they cannot be taken into serious consideration.

to the conditions of their blackmail (1617-8)[19] confirm that Orestes' mind is in continuous instability, which is also contagious to his fellows, Electra and Pylades. This argument, however, is arbitrary, as the text does not provide the slightest indication that Orestes acts and reacts in rage in any other scene of the play, apart from the scene of the real onset of the Furies at 254-76. The elements of the Furies' attack are explicitly presented in this section and in Electra's previous description of Orestes' action during the fit of mania: the victim is leaping (πῶλος ὡς ὑπὸ ζυγοῦ, 45), and sees the Furies running after him (255 ff.). After the fit the victim lies in a miserable situation, with sticky foam in his mouth and eyes (220), and falls completely exhausted in deep sleep[20]. None of this occurs in the play except the passages mentioned above[21]. To put it briefly, while Orestes is affected by mania, he is altogether incapable of any action, let alone to undertake crucial deeds, for example the apology in the Assembly or the salvation plan through the assault against Helen and the kidnapping of Hermione which require the best of his physical and mental abilities[22]. This is admitted by himself when he confesses his fears lest the Furies attack him while he will present his case before the Assembly (790-4).

Much emphasis is put by many of the accusers of Orestes on his self-contradictions, especially on the following.

Having just recovered from the last[23] attack of the Furies, lying in utter desperation, he admits that:

[19] See Grube, 395: "Then a last fit of madness comes upon Orestes and he calls Pylades and Electra to set fire to the house."

[20] Cf. the more detailed description of Orestes' madness during the strike of the Furies in *IT.* 221ff.

[21] Padel, 36-7, argues convincingly that madness is restricted only to the attacks on the patient, not before or after them.

[22] Cf. the second appendix: *Madness and Σύνεσις in "Orestes"* in Porter, 1994, 298-313, who reaches the same conclusions as I do and to whose treatment of the subject I am in debt.

[23] Probably the most serious attack, as during it Orestes feels the necessity to ask for the bow presented

οἶμαι δὲ πατέρα τὸν ἐμόν, εἰ κατ' ὄμματα

ἐξιστόρουν νιν μητέρ' εἰ κτεῖναί με χρή,

πολλὰς γενείου τοῦδ' ἂν ἐκτεῖναι λιτὰς

μήποτε τεκούσης ἐς σφαγὰς ὦσαι ξίφος

εἰ μήτ' ἐκεῖνος ἀναλαβεῖν ἔμελλε φῶς

ἐγώ θ' ὁ τλήμων τοιάδ' ἐκπλήσειν κακά.

(288-93)

This statement seems to contradict Orestes' later views, particularly his arguments in the agon with Tyndareus. In his answering speech to his grandfather, Orestes twice claims that he is ὅσιος to avenge his father's murder: ἐγὼ δ' ἀνόσιός εἰμι μητέρα κτανών, ὅσιος δέ γ' ἕτερον ὄνομα, τιμωρῶν πατρί (546-7)[24]. He repeats his confidence after a few lines, using almost the same words: ἀνόσια μὲν δρῶν, ἀλλὰ τιμωρῶν πατρί (563). An alteration of this argument is presented at 580-2, where the emphasis is put on the paternal Furies who chase the son who fails to take vengeance for his father's murder[25]: εἰ δὲ δὴ τὰ μητέρος σιγῶν ἐπῄνουν, τί μ' ἂν ἔδρασ' ὁ κατθανών; οὐκ ἄν με μισῶν ἀνεχόρευ' Ἐρινύσιν; There is also the short invocation by the three intriguers of the dead Agamemnon at 1231-9, in order to assist them in their salvation plan.

This superficial contradiction is removed when we comprehend lines 288-93 in the light of their dramatic suitability and function. We have noted above that these lines are delivered just after the Furies' attack by a collapsing Orestes and express the

by Apollo to him in order to defend himself against the Furies, and also misperceives Electra as one of them.

[24] Lloyd, 1992, 123, attempts to interpret the contradictions of Orestes regarding the matricide on the basis that in these lines Orestes himself accepts that contradictory moral terms could apply to his action. More convincing is his second argument that it is natural for Orestes to change his position according to the different persons he is addressing. This, also, is relevant to the conventions of an agon. O' Brien, 1988,194, on the other hand, rejects the power of these conventions on the ground that the inconsistencies in Orestes' views about the matricide seem to him deliberately noticeable.

extreme desperation he feels at that moment. So, their meaning is utilitarian and not ethical[26]. Orestes does not doubt that Agamemnon would spare Clytaemestra's life, because he would have considered the matricide as the worst wrongdoing[27]. But *even* Agamemnon would have prevented his son from committing matricide, knowing the dreadful consequences this deed would have had on the doer. As far as the brief invocation to Agamemnon, it takes place after the pattern of the appeal to supernatural powers before the crucial expedition which fluctuates from the magnificent *kommos* of the *Choephori* to the short entreaty of Electra to Apollo, and not to Agamemnon, at Sophocles' *Electra* 1376-83.

One of the main functions of the *Orestes*' first scenes is to stress Apollo's betrayal of Orestes and his sister, after the matricide[28]. The severe criticism against the god who ordered the act and, after its accomplishment, did not provide the promised help to Orestes is prominent in the play, even by characters not directly affected by the Apollonian abandonment of his agent, like Helen (76), Menelaus (417, 419) and the Messenger (955-6). As is natural, the most bitter complaints about Apollo's conduct towards his protégé, come from the immediate victims, Orestes and his sister (Electra: 27-32, 161-5,191-3. Orestes: Λοξίᾳ δὲ μέμφομαι, ὅστις μ' ἐπάρας + ἔργον ἀνοσιώτατον + τοῖς μὲν λόγοις ηὔφρανε τοῖς δ' ἔργοισιν οὔ, 285-7)[29].

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[25] Cf. *Cho.* 271-96, *Eum.* 466f.
[26] See Willink 1986 ad loc.
[27] Cf. Heath, 58, : "[The condemnation of the matricide in the first scenes] must be seen in the light of the emotional effect which Euripides was trying to achieve. He wants to present an appalling picture of object misery and suffering".
[28] See Porter, 1994, 69-70 (especially n.82).
[29] There are, however, critics who, following an absolute psychological interpretation of the play and intending to focus on the supposed initially criminal character of Orestes, try to blame the protagonist even for the Furies' attack; e.g. Conacher 1967a, 217-8, who maintains that Apollo and the Furies are the disguise behind which Orestes and Electra hide their own guilt. Zeitlin, 1980, 67, slightly altering Burnett's arguments (see n. 18), asserts that Orestes never accommodates, never understands the command of Apollo and its consequences. He simply is an instrument of the god, not an individual and responsible agent as he becomes in *Choephori* during the long kommos. This is partly true, only in the sense that Euripidean Orestes lacks any personal interest (apart from avoiding his father's Furies) in

Whereas Orestes in the *Eumenides* has a divine patron to protect him from the Furies and defend him at his trial - a patron who enters with the majestic proclamation οὔτοι προδώσω (64) - this Orestes, deserted by Apollo, has only his sister[30], who is as wretched as he. It can be no accident that Euripides chooses to echo *Eumenides* 64 in this early section of the play, where much emphasis is given to Apollo's neglect of his earlier promises and to the differences between the troubles that afflict this Orestes and those faced by his Aeschylean predecessor.

Many scholars emphasise the fact that references to Apollo's role in Clytaemestra's murder become much less frequent following the parodos and disappear virtually altogether after the agon with Tyndareus, until the god's dramatic appearance in the finale[31]. Like Orestes' insanity, however, Apollo's command and his apparent desertion of Orestes play a crucial role in the initial exposition of Orestes' plight, but are of less relevance to the action that follows. As the play proceeds, the audience's attention is focused upon a more immediate series of betrayals. Repeated reference to Apollo's responsibility would be superfluous and would distract from the more pressing issues at hand. Had Euripides truly attached significance to the diminished emphasis on Apollo as the play proceeds, we would scarcely expect the reference at 955-6.

Apollo's betrayal is characteristically depicted in the bow[32] , promised to Orestes by the Delphic god as a weapon against the Furies. Euripides borrows this

committing the matricide. Orestes, when he needs to justify his deed in the agon with Tyndareus and in front of the Assembly, uses rational arguments (at least according to his logic), for the utility of the particular murder. See Fuqua, 1976, 77 ff., for the awareness of Orestes about his deed and its consequences, for the very reason that he is a divine agent. On the other hand, Vellacott, 61, superficially asserts that Orestes should have disobeyed the divine command !

[30] Electra's cry οὔτοι μεθήσω (262) pointedly echoes Apollo's words in *Eumenides*.

[31] See Schein, 61-2, Greenberg, 160, who maintains that this absence is due to the transgression of the God's command by Orestes: Apollo has asked for the matricide, but he has nothing to do with the plan against Helen.

feature from the Stesichorean *Oresteia* (fr.217 Page)[33], where too Apollo promises Orestes a bow in order to defend himself against the Furies. Unfortunately, we do not know anything about the sequel in Stesichorus' poem, i.e. if Apollo keeps his promises or not. Whatever the effectiveness of the Stesichorean bow may be, the κερουλκὰ τόξα in *Orestes* exist probably only in the imagination of Orestes[34]. The fact that so prominent and spectacular stage object is not referred to anywhere else in the play, is in favour of its real absence. Moreover a realistic shooting with the bow would be very difficult for the restricted area of the ancient scenic place. In any case, Orestes' shooting does not appear to be very successful: the desperate rhetorical questions to the attacking Furies οὐκ εἰσακούετ'; οὐχ' ὁραθ' ἐκηβόλων τόξων πτερωτὰς γλυφίδας ἐξορμωμένας; (273-4) indicate that his imaginary arrows are not well-aimed, or they are, simply, ineffective.

In his stichomythia with Menelaus, Orestes seems more confident in Apollo's eventual help and even defends Apollo when Menelaus maintains that the God ordered the matricide ἀμαθέστερος γ' ὢν τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ τῆς δίκης (417). In this statement Orestes retorts that δουλεύομεν θεοῖς, ὅτι ποτ' εἰσὶν οἱ θεοί (418). And just after, when Menelaus wonders: κᾆιτ' οὐκ ἀμύνει Λοξίας τοῖς σοῖς κακοῖς ; (419). Orestes replies: μέλλει· τὸ θεῖον δ' ἐστὶ τοιοῦτον φύσει (420)[35]. No doubt, Orestes' certainties are not very warm - they are rather intellectual, impersonal and sophisticated. They indicate his growing hopes that Menelaus will eventually be

[32] Cf. Stephanopoulos, 146
[33] See Willink, 1986, ad loc.
[34] Smith, 298, argues for an imaginary bow. Contra Burnett, 202, who argues that there is a real bow, brought to Orestes by Electra. I do not see any textual support for her opinion; the imperative δός(268), is uttered to Electra, but this does not prove the existence of the bow. So also Hartigan, 133-4.
[35] West ("Tragica V", *BICS* 28 (1981), p. 69) makes the tempting emendation- rejected, however, by Diggle in his edition- ἔφυ θεὸς instead of the manuscripts' reading +ἔφυς κακός+, in line 424. This would be the most surprising statement of Orestes in what concerns his relation to Apollo, directly contradicting 1668-9. See Willink, 1986, ad loc., for a thorough discussion of the textual problems of

Apollo's instrument for help and salvation, and, as this is more Orestes' wishful thinking than a reliable possibility, his statements could not be more firmly expressed[36]. Their tone is as warm as necessary for the present stage, in order to increase the disappointment caused later, when Menelaus will be proved not a firm ally and anything but Apollo's instrument for Orestes' and his sister's salvation. In this way even the previous positive, although lukewarm, views expressed by Orestes of Apollo's support, eventually function as another element which contributes to the impression of Apollo's betrayal towards his agent.

Even in a play like this, the plot of which is a sheer innovation of its playwright, the myth plays a remarkable role for understanding and interpreting the situations presented. There are numerous references to the mythical past of Atreids, by Electra[37] and the Chorus, which could cast light on the behaviour and the sufferings of Orestes[38]. The Aeschylean conception of the family curse[39], one of the major motives of his *Oresteia*, which is transferred from one generation to the next, does not, of course, have a dominant role. The family curse occurs only twice. First in the second stasimon, 811-8, and second in Electra's lamentation, at the moment when the last members of the family seem to have no future, after the delivery of the news that she and her brother have been sentenced to death by the Assembly. After the secular trial the θρῆνος of Electra reaffirms and reinstates the mythical background

this passage.

[36] Cf. his clearly negative judgement of the help of his father's spirit at 426 (with the comment of West, 1987, ad 425).

[37] See Fuqua, 1978, 9-10

[38] Generally accurate is the statement of Webster, 1967, 252, that: "here [in *Orestes*] Euripides reserves traditional mythology for prologue, lyric and epilogue". Even a severe critic of the play, Kitto, 1961, 345, admits that: "it [the play] derives a tragic quality from one suggestion in the play that these two [Orestes and Electra] are the last tainted offspring of a tainted house".

[39] Cf. Lesky, 343.

and the continuity which derives from it[40]. At that point Electra makes a long retrospection to her family's story, in order to show a sequence of calamities which have fallen upon the Atreids; this narration has its climax in the oncoming catastrophe on the last offspring of the family: τὰ πανύστατα δ' εἰς ἐμὲ καὶ γενέταν ἐμὸν ἦλυθε δόμων πολυπόνοις ἀνάγκαις (1010-2). The beginning of the ἀρὰ πολύστονος (997) for the house of Atreus came through the advent of the golden lamb (996-1000), as it is presented also in the second stasimon (811-2)[41].

Nevertheless, there is a person from the family's past, who recurs in the play: Tantalus, the ancestor of the Atreids (345-7), who is linked in direct line with Orestes, (11-21). He appears in the first lines of the prologue (4-10), at the end of the first stasimon (345-7)[42], and at the beginning of Electra's dirge (982-8). The major issue Tantalus' presence indicates is the motif of the fall from happiness to misery and this can be attached to Orestes, as well, as he is an Atreid. Although Orestes has not experienced yet the situation of good fortune, he belongs to the most powerful and famous family of Greece. The Chorus reminds us of this theme twice, at 340 (ὁ μέγας ὄλβος οὐ μόνιμος ἐν βροτοῖς) and at 971-3. Orestes exemplifies for the time being the instability of fortune, which Tantalus had illustrated within his own lifetime. O'Brien[43], draws the interesting parallel between Tantalus' stone[44] and the

[40] See Fuqua, 1978, 19-20.

[41] See the more detailed presentation of this legend in Euripides' *Electra's* second stasimon, 699-746. Dunn, 1989,241-2, wrongly asserts that the source of the family curse is Tantalus; he can be considered as the negative exemplar for other disasters (see next page), but he is not responsible for the curse in the family.

[42] See Fuqua, 1978, 12-3, on how this stasimon is integrated into the drama; it is not an ornamental one, but it 'translates' the prologue into mythological language.

[43] See O'Brien, 1988b, 33-8. However, his argument (pp. 39-41) that Menelaus, being also an descendant of Tantalus, loses his μακαριότης (according to the Chorus, 340. See the comments of McDonald, 234-5, on the μακάριος terms in this play), because he suffers at the end at the hands of Orestes, is not very strong- in any case, Menelaus' suffering does not last for more than some minutes.

[44] Hall, 280, associates Tantalus' stone with the theories of the physikoi philosophers and thus she concludes that the sufferings of the Tantalids are part of the natural order. See also Willink, 1986, ad 982-4, and West, 1987, ad 985; both of them refer to the alleged Anaxagorean influences on the theme

threatened stoning of Orestes and Electra: stoning was a public execution for extreme outrages against society or religion, although rare in classical Greece[45]. The same critic also notices that stoning was an important way of defence of beleaguered fighters against their enemies, as Orestes threatens to do against Menelaus at 1569-70. In both of these features Tantalus is analogous to Orestes' afflictions[46].

Generally we could say that the mythical references of *Orestes*, have two main functions: first, to establish a "landscape of myth" in which the action of the drama is set, for despite the innovation of the plot the play must take place within a certain mythical framework, and, second, to form a set of parameters by which the action of the drama can be evaluated and interpreted. Characteristic of the first function could be considered the references to the family's past, of the second, Tantalus' story and the references to the Trojan war by the Phrygian messenger.

III. The secular way to salvation

The most sparkling innovation Euripides made in the story of Orestes, as it had been shaped by the mythical and literary tradition, is that he introduced a new way of salvation for Orestes and his sister, a secular one[47], through the power first of their uncle Menelaus and secondly through the attempt to find justice for the

of the stone between sky and earth.

[45] See Garvie, 1998, ad 254-5.

[46] Dunn, 1996, 164-5, argues that the connection between Tantalus and Orestes is their common unbridled tongue (at 10 Tantalus' fault is defined as being his ἀκόλαστον γλῶσσαν that is αἰσχίστη νόσος. Euripides seems to be the one who introduced that as Tantalus' crime. See Willink, 1986, ad loc., who gives a similar interpretation, and West, 1987, ad loc.)

[47] Cf. Conacher, 1967a, 217-8, on the transition to the secular part of the drama, Hall, 266. Fuqua, 1978, 5-6, notes the desire of all the characters of the drama to gain social approval for their actions. In his earlier study, 1976, 68-9, he maintains that *Orestes* is Euripides' reply to Sophocles' rejection of the social context as a legitimate parameter for heroic conduct in his *Philoctetes*. Burnett, 217, expresses the wrong view that Orestes, by seeking secular power, loses his primary ability to love (as he does in

matricide in the Argive Assembly, an absolutely different court from the Athenian one both in *Eumenides* and in Euripides' *Electra* (1258-69). When this road to salvation will also fail, Orestes and his companions becoming desperate will be dragged to their savage plan of vengeance.

In the prologic account of Electra we meet this element of secular salvation in a prominent position, together with the other constructive features of this play. At 46-50 we have the first reference to the social alienation towards the matricides, as, after an official decision[48], they are excluded from any social intercourse, including the ritual purification of the homicide, as Orestes later will reveal to Menelaus (429-30)[49]. Even worse: an Assembly of the Argives will take place ἐν ᾗ διοίσει ψῆφον Ἀργείων πόλις (49-50). In the conversation between Orestes and Menelaus two more important details will be brought to light: first that there are citizens who, because of personal interest, play a leading part in whipping up the enmity of Argos against the siblings (431-6) and, second, that they are practically captives of the city, as all the citizens of Argos watch lest Orestes and Electra escape (443-6)[50].

Being in a situation like this-betrayed by Apollo and confronted by the most hostile social environment- their one hope lies in the return of Menelaus, their uncle, who has the political, as well as moral authority[51] to obtain their acquittal before the

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the first scenes of the drama) and to feel shame.

[48] See Willink, 1986, ad 46 ff., West 1987, ad 46, for the formal expression ἔδοξε Ἄργει

[49] Contra *Eumenides*, where Orestes seems to have been purified before his trial in Athens either by Apollo or by individuals (237-9, 277, 451-2, 474-5, 577-8).

[50] Saïd, 188, remarks that in *Orestes*, by contrast with *Oresteia*, the relationship between the palace (the royal family) and the *polis* has turned in favour of the latter.

[51] At 688-90 Menelaus claims to have arrived ἀνδρῶν συμμάχων κενὸν δόρυ ἔχων...σμικρᾷ σὺν ἀλκῇ τῶν λελειμμένων φίλων (which seems to imply, but need not, that he has arrived with a single ship remaining from his original fleet of sixty [*Iliad*, 2.587]). In the prologue, however, at 54-5 (our first impression of Menelaus) Electra declares that he fills the harbour of Nauplion with his fleet and at 242 she refers to his ships in the plural (νεῶν), according to Biehl's edition (1975). Di Benedetto, ad loc., agrees with this reading, while Willink, 1986, ad loc.,West, 1987, ad loc. and Diggle in his edition (1994), accept the singular νεώς. So does Menelaus arrive in *Helen*, but in *Odyssey*, 3.299 ff., he arrives in five ships. There, too, Menelaus has many losses before arriving home, but his arrival is magnificent (

Argive Assembly and arrange for Orestes' ritualistic purification from the matricide[52]. The wretched siblings are absolutely dependent on Menelaus, and they are eager for his arrival (52-6, 67-70, 241-4).

Menelaus is conscious of his obligations to Orestes and of the weight of Orestes' various pleas but is unwilling to risk his well-being to champion his nephew's cause. The series of scenes at 348-806 is carefully designed to portray Menelaus in the darkest possible light and to present his refusal to aid Orestes as an act of treachery on the part of a faithless φίλος who yields at the first threat to his own prosperity. The central concern of the agon is not the matricide (which all agree was an abominable act), but the decision of Menelaus as to whether he will help Orestes and Electra or not and his motives for that decision. His rejection of Orestes' claims there is presented as the second and most outrageous in the series of betrayals and injustices that eventually leads Orestes to his violent action for vengeance.

Menelaus' initial reaction to Orestes' plight is sympathetic (417, 425, 429,447), despite his sensitivity to the enormity of Orestes' act (374, 376, 393, 413)[53]. When he is first confronted by Tyndareus, he maintains this sympathetic stance, upholding the principle that he, as Orestes' nearest male relative, is obliged to stand by him in distress (482, 484, 486). More importantly, he reaffirms Orestes' innocence in the death of Clytaemestra, arguing - as do Electra, Helen, the Chorus, and Orestes

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Di Benedetto, ad 55 ff., points out the Homeric language of the lines). It seems that Euripides tries to create expectations of a 'Homeric' Menelaus to his audience, only to undercut them immediately by a 'hero' who, in his fear of the Argives, sends Helen home secretly at night (56-60) and then deserts his nephew when confronted by Tyndareus. The technique here is much like that used of Orestes in Euripides' *Electra* : the long-awaited saviour turns out not to be what he was expected to be. Grube, 376, demolishes Menelaus' claim of lack of power. Only Wolff, 343-5, accepts that "Menelaus seems to be as powerless as he claims" and this is the reason he brings in Helen by night, because he can not support her.

[52] Electra claims that she participated in the matricide οἷα δὴ γυνή (32). Tyndareus will accuse her that she was the instigator of the crime (614-21), but it does not seem possible that she had a more active role,after the pattern of *Electra*, in the deed itself.

[53] See Collard, 70. However, Lesky, 345, notes that Menelaus' shrinking back from the stricken youth is

himself earlier in the play - that Orestes' role in the affair was essentially passive (πᾶν τοὐξ ἀνάγκης δοῦλόν ἐστ' ἐν τοῖς σοφοῖς, 488[54]). Tyndareus' vindictive attitude, on the other hand, is attributed by Menelaus to the unthinking rage of an old man blindly seeking vengeance for his daughter's death (490).

After the agon between Orestes and Tyndareus, however, Menelaus alters his position[55]. The key to understanding the agon must lie in Menelaus' ultimate decision and, more particularly, in the basis for this decision. The high style of Menelaus' speech with its numerous gnomai (684-6, 694, 696-7, 706-7, 708), its frequent use of simile and metaphor (696-701, 706-7, 712-3), his many abstract nouns etc. (685, 687, 690, 694, 702-3, 705, 708, 710, 711, 714), and its obvious lies mark it as the speech of a cowardly but clever villain[56]. Yet the reason for his change of sympathy towards his nephew is that Tyndareus' threats have succeeded in intimidating him.

Menelaus' initial assessment of Tyndareus' vehemence at 490 (ὀργὴ γὰρ ἅμα σου καὶ τὸ γῆρας οὐ σοφόν) is confirmed by the latter's violent attack at 607 ff.. Having had his original arguments countered by those of Orestes, the Spartan elder reveals his true nature by turning to brute force to win his cause. In a fit of anger he drops all references to abstract concepts of justice, admitting that he will provoke Orestes' murder (609) by forcing the Argive Assembly to vote for his death[57], even

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a first intimation of his later retreat.

[54] On the interpretation of this line see Porter, 1994, 101, n. 4. Cf., also, Willink, 1986, ad loc.

[55] Contra Lloyd, 1992, 114, who, although he agrees that Menelaus does not care about the moral point of the matricide, maintains that he has even made up his mind against Orestes before Tyndareus' intervention.

[56] West, 1987, 34, characterises Menelaus as a mediocre man of reason, in a drama of emotion, judging him with great charity. Euben, 238-9, also, considers him as a hypocrite, a seeker of power and a true rival of Orestes for the throne of Argos. Fuqua, 1976, 73 ff. rightly thinks of Menelaus as the person who subordinates everything to his personal ambitions and expediency. He compares Menelaus with Odysseus in *Philoctetes*. Hartigan, 135-6, agrees that Menelaus intends to acquire the power of Argos. Orestes and Pylades do indeed believe that Menelaus has the secret ambition to be king of Argos, as the closest heir to the throne after Orestes, (1058-9,1146-7, 1596).

[57] Note that Tyndareus is asking for Orestes' stoning even from 536. Willink, 1986, ad loc., proposes the deletion of the line, because he believes that only after Orestes' bold apology does Tyndareus get so

against its will: μολὼν γὰρ εἰς ἔκκλητον Ἀργειων ὄχλον ἑκοῦσαν οὐχ ἑκοῦσαν ἐπισείσω πόλιν σοὶ σῇ τ' ἀδελφῇ, λεύσιμον δοῦναι δίκην (612-4). His irrational vehemence at this point is emphasised by his use of the verb ἐπισείω[58]. Tyndareus here drops his earlier appeals[59] to τὸν κοινὸν Ἑλλήνων νόμον (495) and to an ideal portrait of society, based on the rule of an impartial justice[60]. He becomes an enraged old man who is determined to succeed in his aims by whatever means necessary. In his anger he extends his wrath beyond Orestes to include Electra (614 ff.), becoming almost incoherent in his rage. He then concludes his tirade by threatening Menelaus directly: he must either desert Orestes or dissociate himself from Tyndareus' family, including any claims to the throne of Sparta (622-8). Tyndareus angrily exits the stage, leaving the inefficient Menelaus to contemplate the risks in championing Orestes' cause. Despite his appeals to an abstract concept of justice, Tyndareus has proven to be an unreasonable, irascible and vindictive old man[61].

In Orestes' response to Tyndareus'first tirade Euripides masterfully builds a rhetorical apology of a man who must overcome serious misgivings, but whose passion increases steadily as he speaks[62]. Orestes begins with the *captatio*

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irritated that he contemplates the execution of Orestes and Electra. West, 1987, ad loc.and Lloyd, 1992, 119, defend the line; Diggle also preserves the line in his edition.

[58] Di Benedetto, ad 255-6, points to the singularity of ἐπισείω in a context that does not refer to physical contact. More revealing, perhaps, is the use of the verb at 255 to describe Clytaemestra instigating the Furies. In each case ἐπισείω implies the violent and frenzied activating of irrational creatures. Grube, 383, rather excessively (see 538), characterises Tyndareus as the "living representative of Clytaemestra".

[59] Even a critic as opposed to Orestes as Schein, 57, condemns Tyndareus for taking the law, eventually, into his own hands. Another critic, sympathetic to Tyndareus as well, Will, 99, remarks on the severity and the brutality of the old Spartan.

[60] Even if Tyndareus meant what he claims for the legal prosecution, this was probably impossible for the fugitive Orestes. See Grube, 384, Wolff, 350-1, Vickers, 579. West, 1987, 35, calls Tyndareus' view on Clytaemestra's prosecution "academic", which has nothing to do with the realm of the myth.

[61] Surely, Tyndareus does not expresses here the enlightened views of Euripides himself, as Conacher, 1967a, 219, Burnett, 207, maintain. Greenberg, 173, considers Tyndareus as the representative of society, but this society is not an idealised one (as is the society in *Eumenides*)

[62] It is interesting to note that here Orestes does not present any personal interest, as he does in *Cho.* 301 (see Garvie, xxxi, xxxiii). In *Orestes* the hero has only the quest of his and his friends' salvation to fight for. Contra Conacher, 1967a, 220, who asserts that in the agon especially the personal interests of Orestes are presented.

benevolentiae : at 544-50 he admits his respect for his grandfather, but immediately after that he invokes the argument of a father's greater value, like Apollo and Athena in the trial of the *Eumenides*[63]. He exhibits his cause with modesty (546-7, 563), as he is fully aware of the horror of his deed, but also with insistence on its initial justice (565-78, especially 572 μητέρ' ἐνδίκως ἀπώλεσα). Following the rules of a proper forensic apology he does not hesitate, in the course of the speech, to attack his accuser (585-6)[64]. His strongest defence, Apollo's command, he saves for the end (591-9), when his speech reaches a climax. He thus succeeds in countering Tyndareus' argument at 531-5 that the gods disapprove of Clytaemestra's killing, thus undermining the most important of his opponent's arguments[65].

In his speech[66], after Tyndareus' exit, Orestes addresses the nervously pacing up and down Menelaus (632-3) and alters his tone and his purpose, although the rhetorical devices of the speech are ample, as well[67]. He does not try to prove the justice of the killing of Clytaemestra[68] but aims to win Menelaus' support for the salvation of himself and his sister. The speech is more a supplication plea, which continues the supplication begun at 449-55 and interrupted by Tyndareus entrance. Orestes uses almost commercial language (643, 646, 652, 65, 651[69]) in his desperate

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[63] Cf. *Eum.* 658 ff. Cf. Burnett, 205-7.

[64] This is, I think, the reason and not that Orestes' speech becomes unbridled, as Dunn, 1989, 242-3, maintains.

[65] Contra Lloyd, 1992, 122, who, maintains that Orestes in his reply to Tyndareus does not deal at all with his grandfather's arguments because he belongs to the world of the myth, while Tyndareus belongs to the world of reality.

[66] For the treatment of 630-79 I am in great debt to the discussion of these lines by Porter, 1994, 164-72

[67] See Porter, 1994, 164, Di Benedetto and Biehl, 1965, ad 640, Lloyd, 1992, 126

[68] He admits ἀδικῶ (646), but I think that does not reveal his real thoughts about his deed; it seems to be more of a rhetorical trick. Orestes probably intends to say: "let's take for granted that the killing of Clytaemestra was unjust" in order not to waste time on arguments which Menelaus has already heard during the Tyndareus-Orestes agon. The tone in this speech is more emotional and personal, and there Orestes intends to put the weight of the persuasion.

[69]Diggle, in his edition, transposes 651 after 657. Biehl, 1975, retains it in its manuscript position.

attempt to remind Menelaus of his duties towards Agamemnon and his family[70]. Orestes' supplication reaches a climax of pathos when he pleads in the name of Helen (671-2), whom he himself had characterised as κακὸν μέγαν[71] (248).

As we have seen Orestes loses Menelaus' patronage not because of any objective evaluation of his former deeds, but because of Menelaus' fear derived from Tyndareus' threats. Thus the one and only hope on which Orestes, Electra and the Chorus have dwelt for the first 355 lines of the play has crumbled to dust. The bitterness of Orestes at 717 ff. is fully justified and would have won the sympathy of the audience, which has observed Menelaus in action and noted the less than honourable motivations for his change of attitude[72].

With the entrance of Pylades a second ray of hope for secular salvation appears[73]. Not only does Orestes now have a sympathetic male companion to share his plight, but Pylades' presence and encouragement[74] enable Orestes to attend the

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[70]Porter, 1994, 167, comments on 658-9, where Orestes uses the odd argument that Menelaus does not have to sacrifice his daughter (as Agamemnon had for the sake of his brother): " Iphigenia's sacrifice will be forgotten (Orestes' plight is so desperate that he must offer something of a 'discount')". Orestes' request to receive an ἄδικον repayment from Menelaus (646-50), for the *adikia* Agamemnon committed when he campaigned at Troy for Helen, is considered by Conacher, 1967a, 220, and Willink, 1986, ad 646-51, as the perfect example of the *Adikos Logos* of Aristophanes' *Clouds*. So, also, O'Brien, 1988a, 190-2. Falkner, 295, maintains that Orestes here adopts Menelaus' logic, an indication of his corruption through the encounter with already corrupted male models (Menelaus, Tyndareus). Greenberg, 176-7, argues similarly that Orestes' failure to use the logic of *sophia* becomes almost grotesque in his mouth . I can not follow Dunn, 1989, 243, in his characterisation of the speech as a comic one, "because it seems he can insult his spineless uncle with impunity" and this is a characteristic of comedy, according to the critic. In any case Orestes tries to put Menelaus on his mettle, not to insult him.

[71]Porter, 1994, 168, draws parallels between Orestes' speech, especially his plea to Helen and Hecuba's similar entreaty to Agamemnon, at *Hecuba* 824 ff.

[72] Cf. Lesky, 346, who characterises Menelaus' speech at 682-[716] as "a timeless exemplar of the speeches of all those who shrink from straightforward action." Accurate comments on Menelaus' motives in Grube, 387. Only Vellacott, 55, in his anti-Orestes vehementer rage, presents Menelaus in encomiastic words: " he [Menelaus] behaves with prudence and decency", and he makes a "generous offer to try persuasion with Tyndareus and with the Assembly" . Menelaus, of course, οὐδ' ὄμμ' ἔδειξεν (1058), in the Assembly !

[73] Burnett, 184-7, notices the surprise of Pylades' entrance (instead of the, probably expected, choral song).

[74] There are, however, critics who condemn Pylades for that, see,e.g., Conacher, 1967a, 214, Euben, 240-1, who considers him a real foe for Orestes because of his ineffective advice to his friend. Burnett, 188, even believes that Pylades' spontaneous offer to share Orestes' and Electra's fate is not pure but

Assembly himself and defend his cause in person[75]. However, this positive note is short-lived, since the Messenger soon brings news of the Assembly's vote of condemnation.

In traditional mythology homicide and its punishment are matters between individuals or families. The community may applaud or lament, but it has no judicial role. Euripides is the first to imagine Argos as a *polis* concerning itself with Orestes' guilt and issuing decrees on the subject[76]. He supplies the social dimension that is lacking in the traditional version, only in order to increase the feeling of isolation and desperation of his protagonist and his companions.

It is generally acknowledged that Euripides' portrayal of the Argive Assembly is intended as an indictment of the blind partisanship, the political corruption and the excess which characterised the Athenian ἐκκλησία in the late fifth century[77] . There are critics who include Orestes in the scope of this indictment, condemning both his decision to address the Assembly and the arguments that he uses. Yet the negative verdict is the result not of any folly on the part of Orestes, but of the corrupt nature of the Assembly itself[78]. The two individuals who condemn Orestes (Talthybius and the

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rather selfish!

[75] Pylades is not a rescuing champion (as Menelaus is supposed to be). He is a secondary figure who will lead Orestes to the scene of the public confrontation with the Argive Assembly.

[76] Hourmouziades, 120, remarks that Argos and its citizens are continuously present in the action of the play-much more than in other tragedy- "an invisible chorus, as it were, moving and acting off-stage".

[77] There is disagreement, however, on the degree of specificity in this criticism. Since antiquity it has been fashionable to see in the demagogue of 902 ff. a veiled attack on Cleophon (see Σ *Or* 772, 903, 904); see Hartigan, 143, Hall, 268, who compares also Orestes with Antiphon and Talthybius with Theramenes. Easterling, 33, attempts to trace possible allusions to the Assembly of contemporary Argos. But I think that it is best to regard the demagogue as a generic figure, part of a general indictment of the failings of the decadent democracy. See Willink, 1986, ad 902-16. Greenberg, 171, notes accurately that "unlike Aeschylus... Euripides deals not with the origins of public justice but with its processes." Even more, the contrast between the tribunal of *Eumenides* and the partisan Assembly before which the Euripidean Orestes must defend his actions vividly reinforces the sense of dislocation that typifies *Orestes* as a whole.

[78] Cf. the accurate remark of Euben, 223: "There is no consecration of a just city capable of integrating otherwise warring passions, principles, and forces into a whole that enhances the dignity of all, as there is in the *Oresteia*." Fuqua, 1976, 72, notices that the Assembly in *Orestes* does not represent a more advanced form of justice than the vengeance, as does also Wolff, 351-4,. It is noteworthy that the same

demagogue) are both characterised as typical politicians who speak only to obtain favour for themselves, one from the aristocrats, represented by Aegisthus' φίλοι (893-4), the other, more generally, from the δῆμος. Orestes' condemnation is attributed to the influence of the latter upon the volatile Argive mob, despite the nobility of the young man's self-defence: ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔπειθ' ὅμιλον, εὖ δοκῶν λέγειν νικᾷ δ' ἐκεῖνος ὁ κακὸς ἐν πλήθει χερῶν (943-4)[79].

Those critics who condemn Orestes in this play try to present the Messenger (contrary to convention) as a partisan underling of the house of Atreus whose report is biased in favour of the male representative of that house[80]. Similarly, the αὐτουργὸς who is said to have spoken in Orestes' defence (917 ff.) is regarded as an untutored reactionary who is blind to the larger issues involved and whose arguments present a parodic image of the views of the 'common man'[81].

Those arguments in the Assembly that are reported merely present abbreviated variations of those presented in the agon between Orestes and Tyndareus[82]. Talthybius asserts that Orestes' deed represents a bad precedent for the treatment of parents by their children (ὅτι καθισταίη νόμους ἐς τοὺς τεκόντας οὐ καλούς, 892-3), a faint echo of Tyndareus' earlier argument based on νόμος. And although

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polis which rushes to prosecute Orestes and Electra, did not do anything in the case of Agamemnon's murder, see Lloyd, 1992, 117-8.

[79] Greenberg, 181, on the other hand, evaluates the speech of Orestes in the Assembly as follows: " only the absurd conclusions of a mind buoyed with φιλία [which, according to the critic, has disastrous consequences in this play; cf. also, Schein, 53-4], exhilarated by the delusions of youthful, male, and aristocratic optimism could suppose that such a speech would be successful. It is again madness of a sort."

[80] See Verrall, 1905, 237-8, 241, Mullens, 155, Greenberg, 180, Rawson, 1972, 159, Schein, 61, Vellacott, 69, Falkner, 296, de Jong, 1991, 69-70, 107, 114, Lloyd, 1992, 127

[81] See Mullens 155, Wolff, 144-5, Burnett, 208, Schein, 61, Vellacott, 69, Lloyd, 1992, 127-8. Positive evaluation of the *autourgos* and comparison with the similar *autourgos* in Euripides *Electra* can be found in Lesky, 347, Webster, 1967, 249 Vickers, 582, Willink, 1986, ad 917-30, West, 1987, ad 918-22. The similarity between other expressions of the theme and its expression here in *Orestes*, the length and positioning of the autourgos' account (the last of the four speeches reported before that of Orestes himself), prove, I think, that Euripides intended to lay special weight on it. Contra Easterling, 31, who hesitates to evaluate what each person says, and, especially, to trace Euripides' preference among the speakers of the Assembly.

(significantly) the actual speeches of the *autourgos* and Orestes are recounted in greater detail (917 ff. and 931 ff[83].), on the whole they merely repeat Orestes' earlier arguments at 572 ff. and 564 ff. No new perspective on Orestes' deed is gained from this account, and no general consensus regarding the nature of that deed emerges. Instead, the Messenger's narrative focuses on four aspects of the Assembly as a whole, the last three of which are closely interconnected: the clear diversity of opinion regarding how Orestes should be judged[84], the corrupt motives of those speakers who oppose Orestes[85], the unjust nature of the Assembly's final decision, and the pathos of Orestes' situation. The poet's desire to emphasise the last three themes accounts for the Messenger's open sympathy[86] towards Orestes and for the similarities between his character and that of the *autourgos*: as simple country folk, they are removed from the vicious excesses that characterise the urban mob.

Forgotten by Apollo, plagued by self-doubt and remorse, betrayed by Menelaus, Orestes now finds himself unjustly condemned by the corrupt mind of the Argive mob, who care little for his ancestral claims[87]. The image of his departure from the Assembly, guided by the weeping Pylades and a small group of unnamed φίλοι (949-52), prepares the ground for the melodramatic pathos of the lyrics at 960

[82] See Verrall, 1905, 239, Di Benedetto ad 934 ff., West, 1987, ad 884-945 and especially ad 943.
[83] Concerning Orestes' speech, the deletion of 933 is generally accepted. Diggle, in his edition 1994, deletes 938-42 as well. Willink, 1986, is too extreme in proposing the deletion of 932-42 as a whole.
[84] It can be argued that the verdict of Diomedes (898-902) is inserted solely to illustrate such diversity and should not be accorded great significance in an interpretation of the messenger's report (cf. Lloyd, 1992, 127). Diomedes' speech serves as a foil to that of Talthybius: like Talthybius, Diomedes is a well-known figure from myth (as opposed to the two speakers who follow) and one whom Euripides has included by means of yet another unexpected innovation in mythological tradition (see Willink, 1986, ad 898-902); in contrast to the herald, however, he argues for the moderate course of exile on the grounds that killing Orestes would be wrong (note the implications of εὐσεβεῖν at 900).
[85] Significantly, we are told nothing about the specific arguments employed by the demagogue other than that they are were secretly supplied by Tyndareus (915-[6]). Instead, the messenger deals only with his corrupt methods and, by implication, his equally corrupt motives.
[86] This is the reason that only Orestes' speech is quoted directly, according to de Jong, 1991, 138
[87] The messenger's closing words at 954-6 imply the betrayal of Orestes' ancestral claims as heir to the throne and son of Agamemnon (ηὐγένεια), equivalent to his desertion by Apollo.

ff. and the even more melodramatic farewell scene between Orestes and Electra which follows. It also prepares us for the ferocity of Orestes' eventual rebellion against a world that has been shown to be almost universally hostile and corrupt[88].

Ironic interpretations of the report, in their quest for evidence of Orestes' criminal folly, assign a weight to this scene that, I think, it does not sustain. They assume an audience endowed with an extreme literary sophistication-one that can see beyond the words of the (according to this reading) biased Messenger and the even more fanatical *autourgos*, that can set aside the negative characterisation of the speakers opposed to Orestes and of the Argive mob, and that is able to derive important evidence regarding the protagonist's character from his superfluous apology at 931 ff. I think that it is better to examine the Messenger's speech, and messenger speeches in general, for the basic information which it conveys- in this case, the unjust condemnation of the hero- and not for any ironic undercurrents that can be detected beyond the speaker's words. The speech is maybe not a masterpiece of narrative art, but it effectively presents the third and most threatening betrayal of Orestes' expectations. Piety, the metaphysical way to salvation, and now kinship and nobility, the secular way to the same purpose, all have proved to be useless[89].

IV. Helen in *Orestes* and the vengeance plan.

Willink, in the Introduction of his edition to the play, expresses his belief that

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[88] See Willink, 1986, xxviii, on the function that this bold mythological innovation of Euripides has on the course of the play.

[89] Parry, 345, remarks that "each attempted cure or solution only solidifies the impasse." O'Brien, 1988a, 195-6, partially accepts the argument that Orestes' situation is a typical reaction in an isolated fight for salvation, in which he has to face enemies from all directions. Zeitlin, 1980, 64, expresses the impasse of Orestes' salvation in psychoanalytical terms, namely that Orestes is disappointed by the many 'fathers' (Menelaus, Tyndareus, Apollo) of the play.

the most sparkling innovation of Euripides in *Orestes* is the presentation of Helen's end[90], not, of course, the deification[91] of Helen, but the occasion of it. He argues that the unity of the plot lies in the 'primary idea', which is the plot against Helen. All the elements of the play, according to Willink, contribute to this aim[92]. Apart from this 'primary idea', there is not any *a fortiori* 'message' in the play . The assault against Helen is explained on these grounds: " ...something special was needed for this dramatized transition from mortality to immortality; the passing of Helen must be surpassingly paradoxical"[93] thus "the plot required an Orestes capable *in extremis* of a murderous assault upon Helen"[94]. Although I do not adopt his reading of the play in its entirety, Helen's role in *Orestes*, especially the plot against her as a way of vengeance and salvation, constitutes a major innovation of Euripides and so it will be treated below[95].

The first reference to Helen comes from Electra, in the prologue, and is coloured with negative tones. Electra calls her πολύκτονον (56)[96] and we hear that Menelaus has sent his wife to the palace[97] under the cover of the night lest she should

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[90] Willink, 1986, xxviii-xxix.

[91] Helen's apotheosis is a traditional element, which goes back to Stesichorus (fr. 192,193 *PMG*). In *Helen* 1666-9 (four years before *Orestes*) Euripides had put the deification at the end of Helen's natural life on earth. In that tragedy he had used Stesichorus' story of a phantom that went to Troy instead of the real Helen, and he has the phantom fly off to heaven after the war when its job is done. The same story is referred to his *Electra*, 1280-3, of uncertain date, but definitely older than *Orestes*.

[92] Op. cit., xxx-xxxiii. On Helen's absence in the first and second episode Willink notes: "if Helen is allowed to drop out of mind (as well as out of sight) during parts of the action, that is a feature of the deliberately deceptive movement of the plot towards 'calamity'".

[93] Op. cit., xxxvii.

[94] Op. cit., xlix.

[95] It is surprising that the critics of *Orestes* after 1986, when Willink's commentary was published, did not take into account his idea. Even Porter in his bulky study of the play, published in 1994, spends only three lines (p. 42) just to refer to Willink's reading, without any comment on it.

[96] Introducing a recurrent theme of the calamity Helen caused to Greece, cf 102, 743, 1135-6, 1142, 1306. Diggle, very accurately in my view, prefers Musgrave's reading πολύκτονον, to the manuscripts' πολύστονον. See also Willink, 1986, ad loc. In favour of πολύστονον are Di Benedetto, ad loc., Biehl in his edition and West, 1987, ad loc.

[97] They are already informed about the murder of Agamemnon (and how it has been committed) by Glaucus (362-9) and the matricide of Orestes, by a sailor, as they reached the harbour of Nauplia (369-74). Revealing for the character of Menelaus is his absurd expectation that he will embrace Clytaemestra

be stoned by the fathers of those who died in Troy for her sake (56-60). Helen's brief stichomythia with Electra serves several important functions regarding the future course of the action[98]. In performance, however, the two most striking and immediate features of the scene are the continued note of sympathy for Electra[99] and Orestes, a sympathy expressed even by Helen (75-6, 121), and the contrast between the fortunes of this squalid, miserable pair and those of the beautifully dressed[100], complacent, essentially frivolous[101] Helen. The fortunate Helen, who is the ultimate cause of much of the sorrow on stage, serves as a foil, enhancing our sympathy for the siblings. More importantly, the scene presents Helen as a symbol for the undeserved good fortune of the treacherous Menelaus[102], thus making her the logical target of the later plan of vengeance.

After the decision of the Assembly Orestes and Electra again are thrown into the depths of despair. At 1018 ff. Orestes and Electra have lost all hope. Betrayed by Apollo, Menelaus and the fickle whim of the Argive Assembly, they seem to have no hope of rescue. It is here that Pylades first introduces the notion of punishing Menelaus for his cowardly act of betrayal (1098-9). Orestes' ready acceptance of

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and Orestes ὡς εὐτυχοῦντας (371-3), although 367 (λουτροῖσιν ἀλόχου περιπεσὼν πανυστάτοις) should be clear enough for him to realise that Clytaemestra was the murderer of his brother and hence, in any case , happiness could not dwell in the house of Atreids. I am not convinced by Willink, 1986, ad loc and West, 1987, ad loc. who maintain that 367 could have been interpreted by Menelaus to mean that Clytaemestra had only prepared the bath where Agamemnon was killed. This interpretation sounds too naive. I think that Menelaus deliberately ignored this information because he could not even contemplate that he still has serious problems to face at his return home. The audience has already a hint that Menelaus will not play his expected role of the saviour.

[98] Especially the introducing of Hermione whose lodging with her aunt for the duration of the war is probably an *ad hoc* invention ; see Arnott, 1983, 19-20, Stephanopoulos, 160.

[99] Only critics with prejudice in favour of Helen, like Mullens, 153, can maintain that Electra loses sympathy at the moment she accuses her mild and sympathetic, according to the critic, aunt. West, 1987, 35-6, expresses his moderate sympathy towards Helen. Among those critics who are sympathetic to Helen, Vellacott, 58 ff., depicts the brightest image of Helen.

[100] For the visual impact of her dressing (not explicitly noted but implied by Electra's bitter words at 126 ff.), cf. the reference to Menelaus' appearance at 348-51 and the suggestive 86.

[101] Helen's assumption that Electra should bring the offerings to her dead mother "betrays a total lack of consideration", Lesky, 343. Webster, 1967, 247, characterises the previous idea of Helen, together with her greeting to Electra παρθένε μακρὸν δὴ μῆκος Ἠλέκτρα χρόνου (72), as "superb tactlessness".

Pylades' suggestion comes as a reaction to the various betrayals he has suffered and is meant to be taken as such[103]. To read into the scene a subtle condemnation of Orestes as a habitual criminal with a ready inclination for hideous acts is to ignore the sympathetic details that dominate the first half of the play and the basic pattern of betrayal and rebellion that is at work in this *mechanema* play.

Interesting is the role of Pylades in the weaving of the plot against Helen. Many critics speak about the arbitrary cruelty of Pylades' nature and his influence on Orestes[104]. Yet Pylades' role in the play can scarcely bear such a weighty interpretative burden. Pylades in *Orestes* serves the same function as do the elderly servants in Euripides' *Electra* and *Ion,* that of a relatively minor character whose entrance serves to impel the protagonist to action or to support the protagonist in the execution of a scheme of intrigue. Upon their return from the Assembly, Pylades is silent until Orestes addresses to him a final farewell (1065 ff.). When he speaks, it is to reaffirm his faithfulness to Orestes and to establish once again his position as a friend who, in contrast to Menelaus, stands by his friends even in times of hardship. Yet at 1098, at the conclusion of this impassionate declaration of loyalty, Pylades suddenly[105] introduces the notion of seeking vengeance against Menelaus. The very abruptness of this shift serves a dramatic purpose. Euripides is about to take his audience into a bizarre world of intrigue and attempted homicide - one which, if

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[102] So Grube, 376-8

[103] Cf. the eloquent note of Murray: " like scorpions surrounded by fire, the three, Orestes, Electra and Pylades, begin to strike blindly" (p. 103).

[104] See Greenberg's, 170 ff., lengthy analysis of φιλία in *Orestes*. Negative assessments of the relationship between Orestes and Pylades are legion: see Verrall, 1905, 234 ff., Mullens, 155-6, Parry, 339-40, 342, Burnett, 213-5 (according to her, Pylades is the primary source of crime!), Rawson, 1972, 157-62, Vickers, 582-3, Schein, 53-4, 59, 62, Vellacott, 70-2, Hall, 265-71. Especially, Rawson, 1972, 160-1, draws the parallel of the Orestes-Pylades φιλία and the almost criminal Athenian ἑταιρίαι of those years, which contributed too much to the preparation of the coup in 411. For a thorough analysis, and final rejection , of this point, which is raised by Verrall, 1905, 223,237, see Porter, 1994, 327ff.

[105] Grube, 391, criticises Euripides for the abrupt introduction of the vengeance theme by Pylades. Even more, the critic proceeds to propose how the introduction of the vengeance should have taken place !

permitted to attain maturation, would involve the overturning of all earlier accounts of the later fate of Atreus' descendants. It is fitting that the entry into this surreal environment receive a certain emphasis, and the surprise of Pylades' sudden establishing of the topic at 1098 achieves just such an emphasis.

Any surprise or shock produced by Pylades' plan (and its later modification by Electra) derives, however, from the threat it poses to the accepted version of the myth and not, for example, from the fact it involves deceit or that its objects are 'helpless women'[106].

Five aspects of the vengeance plot deserve particular emphasis: (1) the hatred and the desire for vengeance that form the basis of the scheme; (2) the use of deceit by Orestes and his companions to attain their goal; (3) the fact that the plot is directed not against Menelaus himself, but against Helen - a woman who is not directly responsible for the fate that has befallen Orestes and his friends and (4) who is to be deceived through a perversion of the supplication and murdered as an unholy sacrifice at the hearth of the Atridae[107]; (5) the use of the innocent and thoroughly sympathetic Hermione as a hostage to extort Menelaus' aid.

On the first of the above listed features I would like to stress that *Orestes* concentrates on the σωτηρία of the main characters, and the means for this can be very different in a world without the Christian notions of forgiveness and forbearance, even if this world is the enlightened classical Greece[108], even if the author is so 'advanced' a thinker, as Euripides. That Euripides is capable of presenting the desire

[106] For a defence of the play's dual *mechanema* see West, 1987, 33-4, 36-7. Many scholars have expressed the conviction that such a plot must be abhorrent to right-thinking people of any age, see, e.g., Mullens, 155-6, Conacher, 1967a, 222-4. Rawson, 1972, 160, maintains that: "it seems extraordinary that anyone should ever have thought that Euripides condoned the murder plot".
[107] This point is emphasised by Hartigan, 152.
[108] Heath, 59, argues that revenge is within the framework of Greek ethics. So, also, West, 1987, 33-4, who stresses the criteria the ancient audience would have applied for approving the vengeance plan.

for vengeance in a negative light becomes evident in his *Electra*, but unless somehow explicitly undermined by the poet (as in *Electra*) vengeance should be accepted as a sufficient motive for action[109].

As for the δόλος employed by Orestes and Pylades we have to remember that the deception scene is well known to Euripides' audience from various other plays, including *Choephori* and Sophocles' *Electra*. It is not necessary that the deception must somehow be justified - that it is one thing for the Aeschylean or Sophoclean Orestes to employ deceit when attempting the assassination of a well-guarded monarch, but quite another for Euripides' hero to attack this frivolous Helen. Although the Phrygian's description of the attack on Helen paints a bizarre picture of a world askew, this not need be regarded as a sign of moralistic irony against Orestes.

Regarding the choice of the vengeance's target, Helen seems to be the most appropriate person. As the wife of the hated Menelaus and the cause of the war, Helen is the logical target of Pylades' plot to gain vengeance on the feckless, but well protected, Spartan king. The latter has come through the war untouched by the suffering that he has occasioned. He has refused to aid his nephew out of fear of losing his wife's dowry (the throne of Sparta) and (as Orestes conjectures, not unreasonably, at 1058-9) with the additional hope of acquiring the power in Argos. Pylades' scheme strikes at him in all of these areas.

Finally, it is necessary to consider the kidnapping of Hermione, a particularly repugnant feature of the plot for present day readers, who are tempted to compare with it the actions of modern terrorists. If the attack on Helen seems to reflect a gratuitous cruelty, most admit that it finds at least a superficial justification in the

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[109] Numerous extant plays of Euripides involve vengeance as a basic motive for their action: *Medea, Hippolytus, Hecuba, Heraclidae, Electra, Ion, Cyclops*.

traditional odium against her; Hermione, by contrast, is one of the play's more sympathetic characters (according to many, its only sympathetic character) and has done nothing to deserve such rough treatment. The almost demonic scene in which she is seized, in the very act of interceding on her cousins' behalf, presents her as an innocent victim employed in a cruel act of extortion[110].

These actions of the protagonist can not be defended by the appeal to the conventions of the *mechanema* plays of Euripides. They are definitely not noble or heroic (especially the feverish Electra's excitement at lines 1313 ff., along with the almost joyful cruelty of her words at 1315-6 and 1345 ff.), and I do not think that Euripides simply intended to shock his audience at the nature of the deeds to which Orestes and his companions are driven. Having experienced the lonely desperation of Orestes and the series of betrayals that he must endure, the audience would find in the ensuing action not a hysterical outburst of criminal villainy[111], but an act of rebellion against the corrupt society that tortures him. I maintain that Euripides would like to present Orestes' and his companions' acts as a violent protest against the vicious world in which they find themselves. The dramatist focuses our attention on the nature of the world in which Orestes must live rather than on any moral failings in Orestes himself. Thus he creates a physical chaos on stage that corresponds to the chaos in social, political and moral values that is ranged against him earlier in the play. The bizarre plot against Helen and Hermione and the even more bizarre consequences of that plot bring to fruition the confusion of accepted traditions (mythical as well as ethical) which had been prepared in the early scenes of *Orestes*.

Through this plot Euripides is giving expression to the confused despair and

[110] Even a critic very positive towards Orestes and Electra, Grube, 392-3, disapproves of Hermione's kidnapping.

frustration that he and many of his countrymen must have felt in the declining years of the late fifth century. In the blind violence of Orestes' struggles against an oppressive, disorderly world, Euripides appears to have created a symbol for his age. The play's focus is fixed on the society that surrounds the young hero and not on the failings of Orestes as an individual.

The 'death cries'[112] of Helen ἰὼ Πελασγὸν Ἄργος, ὄλλυμαι κακῶς (1296) and Μενέλαε, θνῄσκω σὺ δὲ παρών μ' οὐκ ὠφελεῖς (1301) and Electra's savage reaction[113] to them at 1297-8, 1302 ff.[114] recall the similar death scene at Sophocles' *Electra* 1398 ff. and, perhaps, the cries of Agamemnon at *Agamemnon* 1343 and 1345. According to Greenberg, the understanding of *Orestes* lies in the perception that Orestes' attempt on Helen in fact repeats, point for point, his murderous attack on Clytaemestra, but is justified by no divine authority[115]. Thus, Greenberg maintains, Euripides deliberately evokes reminiscences of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and of Sophocles' *Electra* throughout the course of *Orestes* in an effort to heighten the similarities between the murder of Clytaemestra and the attempted murder of Helen. Since he regards the latter deed as a heinous and cowardly act, Greenberg argues that Euripides intends his audience to reevaluate Orestes' motives for the earlier murder accordingly[116].

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[111] As Conacher, 1967a, 223-4, maintains.
[112] Usually in the ancient theatre such off-stage cries indicate with certainty the death of the crying person. Thus the audience has the deceptive impression that Helen is being killed by Orestes and Pylades. About the surprises regarding the alleged death of Helen, see Wolff, 347, Arnott, 1973, 52-3, and, more thoroughly, in his studies in 1982, 42-3, and 1983, 26.
[113] Burnett, 190, notes how the single Sophoclean imperative παῖσον, εἰ σθένεις, διπλῆν (S. *El.* 1416) becomes here a frenzied φονεύετε καίνετε θείνετ' ὄλλυτε (1302-3).
[114] The attribution of 1302-10 is doubtful; Diggle, 1994, Willink, 1986, West, 1987, Di Benedetto attribute them to both Electra and the Chorus, while Biehl in his edition (1975) attributes them only to Electra.
[115] Helen for Greenberg, 162, is a 'doublet' of Clytaemestra, as she is vain, self-centred and superficial after the pattern of her sister.
[116] Greenberg, 160. Cf. the modification of Greenberg's theory by Burnett, 210-2. See also her remarks in p. 200: "Helen's grave offering marks her permanently as a silly and charming creature who can only

Greenberg elevates the death of Clytaemestra to the status of a burning emotional issue (a status that it possesses in Euripides' *Electra* but not in *Orestes*, where the discussion of the matter remains, for the most part, on a more abstract, rhetorical, legalistic and political level). More to the point , however, is Greenberg's neglect of a fundamental aspect of *Orestes*: the fact that in *Orestes* Euripides presents a protagonist who, for all his 'modern' weaknesses, still possesses the basic attitudes and expectations of his more traditional, heroic self as presented in the works of earlier poets. Orestes displays a certain helplessness when, having executed his mother in accordance with the commands of Apollo and the dictates of the archaic poetic tradition[117], he suddenly finds himself confronted by a political and judicial system grounded in legal and ethical principles of the late fifth century. The confusion that results adds to the growing sense of chaos that pervades the play and gives another dimension to the confused frustration of Orestes.

Before the entrance of Orestes and Pylades to the palace in order to attack Helen, the three conspirators join their voices in an invocation to Agamemnon's spirit (1225-39). This invocation is reminiscent of the great *kommos* in *Choephori* (Pylades here assuming the role of the Chorus); it seems, of course, a pallid affair when compared to the majestic model; yet, given the world in which these agents must operate, it could be no other. This is not a play where the dead hold any real power among the living. The pitiful tone and miserable length of the appeal are consonant

be innocuous, since vanity like hers will keep a woman from the dishevelment of crime... She is no Clytaemestra, she is rather exactly what Apollo describes at the end of the play, a piece of surpassing loveliness (καλλίστευμα, 1639)... a kind of toy that might be used by the gods to lure men into war". Hartigan, 130-1, goes less far, restricting Helen's καλὸν only to her physical appearance. Murray, 105-6, asserts that Euripides had an obsession, almost mystic, with Helen's beauty; she belongs to a different class from ordinary mortals.

[117] Zeitlin, 1980, 61-3, in a rather exaggerated note, remarks that Orestes tries to repeat the Odyssean, and generally Homeric, prototypes, but he fails completely to follow them; despite that, he resembles all the bad models Helen, Medea, Clytaemestra, Gorgon, Electra.

with its futility, while the contrast between the wretched suppliants of *Orestes* and the urgent, ultimately hopeful suppliants of *Choephori* only emphasises all the more the desperate isolation and helplessness of Euripides' trio.

V. The Phrygian Messenger

At 1352 Hermione has entered the palace, lured by Electra, to be caught as a hostage by Orestes and Pylades[118]. Electra follows her, leaving the stage empty for a short choral intermezzo, before the events indoors are explained in full. Although there is some ambiguity as to whether the Chorus is sure about Helen's death or not[119], I incline to accept that the Chorus takes her death for certain, not only because of her death cries at 1296, 1302, or the past participle ὁ πραχθείς (1354), but also because of 1361-2 (διὰ δίκας ἔβα θεῶν νέμεσις ἐς Ἑλέναν). I do not see any other νέμεσις for Helen, apart from the accomplishment of the plan against her.

Line 1359 foreshadows the advent of the second messenger[120], the ἐξάγγελος, who will narrate the indoors action. But it does not prepare the audience for the unique spectacle which will follow. Euripides upsets his audience's expectations altogether. Rather than the colourless, generic figure commonly associated with such reports, at 1369 a strange messenger enters and starts singing in various lyric

[118] Orestes and Pylades probably do not appear at the stage door to arrest Hermione. Willink, 1986, ad loc. deletes the lines 1347-8, followed by Diggle in his recent edition. West, 1987, ad loc. defends the lines, but he considers implausible the appearance of Orestes and Pylades at the door - Orestes' voice, like Hermione's οἲ 'γώ· τίνας τούσδ' εἰσορῶ; (1347) are off stage cries. Porter, 1994, 342-4, asserts that the two companions appear at the door and kidnap Hermione.

[119] See Willink, 1986 and West, 1987 ad 1354-60. Lines 1357 (πρὶν ἐτύμως ἴδω τὸν Ἑλένας φόνον) and 1360 (τὰ δ' οὐ σαφῶς) express the Chorus' eagerness to see, on the one hand, the corpse of Helen, in order to enjoy more the death of the much-hated Helen, and on the other hand to learn details about the deed. Vellacott, 71-2, speaks about the "depravity" the Chorus shrinks into during the last scenes, while in the first half of the play the Chorus kept its decency.

[120] About his entrance on the stage see Willink, 1986, and West, 1987, ad 1366-8, Porter, 1994, 192-9.

metres[121]. He is a terrified Phrygian slave of Helen, appearing at a moment of particular tension. His account is carefully structured to create the maximum of anxiety to the audience, as it plays with its spectators' curiosity and ignorance and saves the crucial information, the disappearance of Helen, until the climactic finish.

The Phrygian begins his monody with an outburst of extreme terror and danger (ξίφος ἐκ θανάτου πέφευγα, 1369) and he continues with an even more frantic outburst, but he does not reveal anything about Helen's fate in the palace; until 1392 he just laments for Troy[122]. The Chorus asks what has happened within the palace (1393) and then the Phrygian approaches his point with his reference to βασιλέων ὅταν αἷμα χυθῇ κατὰ γᾶν ξίφεσιν σιδαρέοισιν Ἅιδα (1397-9) which could be considered by the audience as alluding to Helen's death[123]. After that point the messenger begins his narrative: the initial approach and supplication of Orestes and Pylades (1400-15) and the suspicious reaction of Helen's Phrygian escort (1416-24). After a question of the Chorus (1425) the messenger makes a digression, describing the household activities interrupted by the arrival of the two Greeks (1426-36). The audience still has not heard anything substantial about Helen's fate. At last, at 1437, Orestes addresses Helen, and guides her to the hearth of the palace, while Pylades

[121] Critics have long argued about the relation between the monody of the Phrygian messenger and the new kind of music in the late fifth century, as it is particularly expressed in Timotheus' *Persae*. See Webster, 1967, 19-20, Willink, 1986, liii-liv, and ad 1474-5, West, 1987, 277, Dunn, 1996, 177-8, (although the scene is not a mime, as the critic maintains) and above all the thorough discussion in Porter, 1994, 199-207. I quote here only his final statement that "in exploiting the artistic possibilities of the New Music Euripides has not fallen prey to that genre's notable weaknesses. He presents his audience with an exciting highly theatrical scene, but not at the expense of coherence or relevance." Burnett, 191, remarks that the Phrygian "is the only tragic messenger we know who has lost the power to speak in ordinary iambics".

[122] Euben, 231, considers that as a parody of the great Trojan War, and I find his idea tempting. See also Fuqua, 1978, 21-3, who notes the Homeric language the Phrygian uses, Wolff, 348, although the latter considers the epic expressions as parody against Orestes and the world he represents.

[123] See Willink, 1986, ad 1395-9 and 1398-9 on the numerous *suggestiones falsi* about Helen's death. Cf. also, de Jong, 1991, 21-3. She also includes (pp. 51-2) among Euripides' means to create a false impression about Helen's supposed death the many negative characterisations of Orestes and Pylades by the Phrygian.

locks the servants in various places, where they would be harmless (1444-52). At 1457 ff. comes the moment of truth. Orestes and Pylades have caught Helen and are ready to kill her (1471-2). Then another interruption occurs: the slaves succeed in escaping and running with everything in their hands which could be used as a weapon to defend their lady. Pylades easily faces them successfully. Amidst this chaotic situation, Hermione enters the palace (1490) only to be taken captive immediately by Orestes and Pylades[124]. Again the two Greeks return to kill Helen, but the latter ἐγένετο διαπρὸ δωμάτων ἄφαντος (1495). What the audience expected for so long, never occurs[125]. The confusion reaches its highest peak with the end of the Phrygian's narrative.

One of the major functions of the Phrygian's long account is to play with the mythical tradition, with the firm knowledge of the Athenian audience of 408 that Helen does not die in the hands of Orestes and Pylades[126]. Before the last lines of the Phrygian's narrative, the audience has every reason to believe that Euripides transgresses the tradition: as we have seen above, the two cries of Helen at 1296, 1301 clearly indicate a dying person[127]. The terrified entrance of the Phrygian, his words at 1397-9, 1455, 1491[128] are designed to enhance the false impression of Helen's death. When, at last, the truth comes, it contributes to the feeling of uncertainty and chaos which all his account has built.

The report of the Phrygian conveys the sense of futility and of chaotic confusion. Here the form of the Phrygian's speech becomes significant. The excited lyrics of his song, with their numerous word repetitions and anguished outcries, not

[124] See n. 118 for Hermione's capture.
[125] See Willink, 1986, ad 1494-7, for a very useful discussion of the running surprises Euripides creates.
[126] See Arnott, 1973, 56-9, Willink, 1986, xxxvii-viii.
[127] See Arnott, 1973, 57, 1982, 38 ff. (especially, 41-3) and 1983, 25-7, Halleran, 74-5.
[128] Despite the relative ambiguity of 1491; see Arnott, 1973, 58, Willink, 1986, ad loc., Di Benedetto, ad

only add to the tense excitement of the scene, but create the impression of a world in helpless disarray. This impression has been growing for some time in the play and will reach a climax in the final confrontation between Orestes and Menelaus. The sudden entrance of the terrified slave dressed in exotic clothes and singing his frenzied song brings a sense of confusion matching his chaotic tale of plots, mobs of frightened slaves, the abduction of Hermione, and Helen with her sudden disappearance.

A number of scholars interpret the chaotic confusion of the monody as reflecting moral confusion on the part of Orestes, an indication of the unholy nature of his schemes against Helen and Hermione. Thus they emphasise the absurdities of the slave's song and use them to form an indictment against the protagonist[129]. The significance of the Phrygian in lines 1369-1502 lies not in his role as possible caricature of Orestes, however, nor in any ironic implications that his account might have for Orestes' actions. The bizarre exoticism of the Phrygian's dress, his exaggerated fear and his confusion might make the spectators smile (or, perhaps, grimace), but there is no reason to assume that their reaction to the Phrygian's comic absurdity would colour their evaluation of Orestes' deeds.

The Phrygian's report is significant because it gives an impression of frenzied incoherence, which reflects the world of the play itself. The excitement of the scene serves a purpose beyond merely providing a lively piece of theatre: it gives poetic expression to the spirit that underlies a world in which the heroic Orestes of the tradition can be called into a court for his deed and tried before a corrupt mob of demagogues and political factions; in which Menelaus can look forward to embrace

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loc.

[129] This view is developed, with particular reference to 1503 ff. by Wolff, 136-7, Parry, 345, Schein, 63,

the murderous Clytaemestra; in which Orestes, Pylades and Electra can be reduced to laying plots against the innocent Hermione.

The exotic confusion generated by the Phrygian's unexpected violations of conventions prepares for the even more surprising scenes that follow. In presenting the messenger speech at 1369 ff. in the form of a monody Euripides achieves more than a mere musical or theatrical *tour de force*. He uses the agitated lyrics of the report to give expression to the troubled, almost surrealistic atmosphere that has pervaded his play from its very beginning and that has been growing steadily since the entrance of Menelaus. He also establishes the mood that will be important in the chaotic scenes that follow.

The monody of the Phrygian is succeeded by an even more peculiar spectacle, a scene that is, by consensus, the most singular of Greek tragedy[130]. As soon as the Phrygian has finished his speech, Orestes enters in pursuit (ἐπτοημένῳ ποδί 1505) of the escaped slave. The ensuing dialogue between Orestes and the Phrygian constitutes another surprise for the audience. The sudden appearance of Orestes and the bizarre nature of the scene that follows add, then, to the confused lack of order that pervades the latter scenes of *Orestes*. Its bizarre nature is in harmony with the direction the play takes in these final scenes.

As he sees Orestes entering, sword in hand, the Phrygian at once begins to flatter him in the elaborate manner customary in the East (1506-7). Orestes recognises the insincerity behind this elaborate act of obedience and proceeds, in the

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and Zeitlin, 1980, 63.

[130] It is so unusual that 1503-36 have been suspected by some critics as interpolated. The first to propose the deletion of the lines was A. Grueninger in his study *De Euripides Oreste ab histrionibus retractata* (Basel, 1898). His arguments have been rejected by Page, 45-8. Gredley tried to reinforce Grueninger's arguments, asserting, mainly that the passage seems irrelevant to the play as a whole. He is followed by Arnott, 1973, 58, n. 1. Willink, 1986, and West, 1987, ad 1503-36 accept that the lines are sound. So also does Biehl in his edition. Diggle in his recent edition brackets only 1533-6. See, also O' Brien,

stichomythia that follows to reveal the Phrygian's cowardly disloyalty to his former masters and his utterly shameless love of life. He begins by criticising the Phrygian's importation of eastern customs to Greece (1508), a charge that the latter faces with the observation that life is sweeter than death everywhere τοῖς σώφροσιν (1509). This open admission of cowardice by the Phrygian leads Orestes to explore further the length to which this slave will proceed in order to save his life. At 1510 he asks the sarcastic question: οὔτι που κραυγὴν ἔθηκας, Μενέλεων βοηδρομεῖν; to which the Phrygian, immediately throwing off all loyalty to his former master- the master for whom he has just expressed such sympathy (1500-2) - responds (1511): σοὶ μὲν οὖν ἔγωγ' ἀμύνειν ἀξιώτερος γὰρ εἶ. It is at this point that Orestes turns to the question related to Helen, the slave's former mistress, and again the Phrygian shows himself more than willing to renounce- in the most extreme, even grotesque terms- a formerly beloved mistress in order to avoid death:

ΟΡ. ἐνδίκως ἡ Τυνδάρειος ἆρα παῖς διώλλυτο;[131]

ΦΡ. ἐνδικώτατ', εἴ γε λαιμοὺς εἶχε τριπτύχους θενεῖν
(1512-3)

The reference to Helen's death adds to the uncertainty, heightening the audience's curiosity regarding her fate. Orestes' question mainly serves to highlight the Phrygian's cowardice, to play with the latter's fears. The culmination of this play

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1986, passim.

[131] So Diggle in his edition, after West, 1987, ad loc. Willink,1986, ad loc. retains the manuscripts' reading διώλετο. See West, 1987, ad loc. for support of his reading. Διώλετο implies that Orestes believes that Helen has perished. This is improbable, because Orestes knows that he has not killed Helen (otherwise we should accept the case of madness- something we have already rejected, see p. 7. Contra O'Brien, 1986, 221, who maintains that Orestes believes that he has killed Helen and only her corpse has been taken, probably by a god). I find Burnett's, 217, translation useful on this point: " then is it just or is it not, that Tyndareus' girl should die?". Orestes, probably, can not contemplate that there was a divine intervention for Helen's disappearance (although the audience already have some hints of this, 1498). He simply believes that she is hidden somewhere in the palace and he will return to complete his vengeance in few minutes. The first clear statement of Orestes that Helen has disappeared in a miraculous manner comes at 1580. He realises that between lines 1537-1566, when, during the Chorus'

comes at 1525-7 when Orestes (probably in his most unheroic moment) threatens to withdraw his leniency from the trembling slave[132]. Orestes' sardonic debate with the Phrygian at these lines serves as an introduction to the following meeting of Orestes with Menelaus. We see Orestes playing with the Phrygian, enjoying a cat-and-mouse game in which, for the first time, he possesses the power while someone else is the suppliant[133].

Orestes' brief appearance on stage adds to the confused frenzy that dominates the later scenes of *Orestes*, confirming the viewers' growing sense of a world in disarray in which the conventions of the myth and heroism no longer apply. In this regard the grim humour of the scene is fitting, to the degree that it serves to heighten the surrealistic atmosphere of the play as it approaches its finale. But the scene functions most importantly as an opportunity for the audience to view the change in Orestes compared with the first scenes and as a preparation for Orestes' savage anger in the following *agon* with Menelaus[134].

The notion of some scholars that the Phrygian should be identified as Orestes' double[135] - i.e. a figure introduced in order to caricature and, eventually, condemn Orestes' actions - is too extreme. The Phrygian's frantic attempts to avoid death are

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short song and Menelaus' arrival, he has withdrawn into the palace in order to find Helen.

[132] Willink, 1986, ad loc. (followed by West, 1987, ad loc.) maintains that Orestes does not play with the Phrygian's fear but simply changes his purposes. Although he initially rushes to prevent the slave from informing Menelaus, now he realises that Menelaus must be informed in one way or another, otherwise his plan will be futile. So he decides to dismiss the Phrygian in order to report to the latter the news about the assault against Helen and the abduction of Hermione. This is, according to the commentators mentioned, the meaning of ἀλλὰ μεταβουλευσόμεσθα (1526), which is misunderstood by the Phrygian, who believes that Orestes will change his mind to spare his life. This interpretation seems too sophisticated to be comprehended by the audience and, in any case, Menelaus could be informed by someone else from the slaves who escaped (1486).

[133] See Greenberg, 188. Contra Falkner, 297, who see an ironic reversal of the earlier scene in which Orestes was the suppliant of Menelaus, but he wrongly presents Orestes as being like Menelaus in this scene.

[134] Contra Lesky, 350, who maintains that the scene "exists mostly for its own sake".

[135] So Euben, 231-2, O' Brien, 1986, 222, Schein, 63 who asserts that the scene's "principal effect is to make the slave's cowardice and desire to live at all cost echo Orestes' own character", Zeitlin, 1980, 63. Parry, 345, even says that Orestes recognises himself in the Phrygian and this is the reason he spares his

based on the typology of the comic and cowardly barbarian[136]; an audience of Euripides' days would not equate his trembling with the pathetic and (more importantly) just claims that Orestes makes on Menelaus at 380 ff. The Phrygian's extreme and, at times openly comic love of life (1513, 1517, 1521) and his utter lack of loyalty provide the central focus of the scene. Both of these qualities set him in the comic tradition.[137] In fact, the Phrygian's complete lack of loyalty to his former masters makes him resemble not Orestes but Menelaus, whose emphasis on wisdom and the 'wise' (397, 415,417, 710) finds echoes in the Phrygian's brief dialogue with Orestes (1509, 1510-7, 1523). It is in the light of these echoes that Orestes' sardonic praise of the Phrygian's σύνεσις (εὖ λέγεις σῴζει σε σύνεσις, 1524) should be understood. The protagonist has recognised not a reflection of himself, but another example (in an absurdly extreme form) of the shameless self-interest that motivates people in the godless, but highly political world of *Orestes*. Orestes' words do not indicate approval, but an extremely cynical scorn. Orestes' intentions were never to kill the slave, only to prevent his calling to the Argives[138]. Thus the entire interview (including 1516) should be read as a game played by Orestes. It is not his σύνεσις that saves the Phrygian: Orestes merely taunts the slave with this scornful sarcasm, as he dismisses him into the palace.

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life.

[136] See 1110-5, 1350-1, 1416-24, 1447, 1474-88.

[137] Grube, 393-5, rejects the overstressing of the comic elements of the scene. See, also, Willink, 1986, lvi-lvii , on the comic elements of the play. Dunn, 1996, 158, reaches the extreme conclusion that "*Orestes* is at each moment both tragedy and comedy; it is not one situation with two different faces, but two competing actions in one". I consider as very unfortunate the parallelism of the Phrygian with Cassandra in *Agamemnon*, drawn by Zeitlin, 1980, 59.

VI. The *Exodos*

Perhaps the most problematic section of *Orestes* is the final scene, the confrontation between Orestes and Menelaus and the *deus ex machina*, Apollo who comes at the end to impose an end according to the mythical order, on the verge of the complete collapse of the Atreids' palace, together with the whole mythical tradition connected with it.

After the exit of Orestes the Chorus sings a brief choral song on the current calamities of the house of Atreus, while the smoke of the torches, with which Orestes intends to burn the palace as an action of utmost revenge, is obvious. At 1549 Menelaus and a group of attendants rush on to the stage. He has heard[139] of the attack against his wife, which he believes is successful (cf. 1579), and thus he hopes merely to save his daughter (1562-3). He orders his attendants to break the doors (1561-2), when Orestes and Pylades appear on the palace's roof [140]. The former holds his sword on Hermione's neck, the latter a torch, ready to set fire to the building. In contrast to their previous encounter Orestes now controls the situation and reduces Menelaus almost to a suppliant's position[141]. An angry debate follows, shifting into rapid *antilabe* at 1600 ff. and culminating in Menelaus' collapse at 1617 (ἔχεις με), but Orestes orders his companions to set fire to the palace. Menelaus then calls the

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[138] Against whom Orestes does not have any means of defence.

[139] Willink, 1986, ad 1554-66, and West, 1987, p. 286, think that the Phrygian escapes and informs Menelaus about the disappearance of Helen and the abduction of Hermione, but at 1524 Orestes orders " βαῖν' ἔσω δόμων". Orestes' main purpose for pursuing the Phrygian is to prevent him from summoning the Argives (1529-30), as we have seen above- so, it would be unreasonable for him to dismiss the slave outdoors.

[140] Electra, probably, is not present, cf. Orestes' order ὕφαπτε (1618) to Electra which implies that Electra is within the palace. See Willink, 1986, and West, 1987, ad loc, Hourmouziades, 30.

[141] The *exodos* of *Orestes* could be compared with the *exodos* of *Medea*: in both scenes a former weak person (Orestes, Medea), who now wields the power, is on the roof of the *skene*, while the person (Menelaus, Jason) on the stage is the one who has been unfair to the former, and now is in the weak position. Both Menelaus and Jason ask their attendants to break the stage-door, in their attempt to take back their children. See Zeitlin, 1980, 62, Dunn, 1996, 159-61. However, I do not follow him in his characterisation of Orestes as a demonic *deus ex machina* (in the pattern of Medea) - this is a point of

Argives to intervene (1621-4)[142]. At this moment of the highest tension, Apollo appears and puts things back to the course of the myth. He reveals that Helen has been saved through his divine intervention, because this is the will of Zeus. She has been the instrument of the gods to punish ὕβρισμα θνητῶν (1642), and from now on she will be goddess, saviour of the sailors, together with her brothers Castor and Polydeuces (1629-43). Orestes will leave the Argive land temporarily, and, after dwelling for a year in the Parrhasian land, he will go to Athens and stand trial against the Eumenides. The gods will give the victory to Orestes, with the Areopagus voting in favour of him (1644-52)[143]. After that he will marry Hermione and reign in Argos. Apollo will reconcile the city with its future king[144]. Pylades will marry Electra and Menelaus will return to Sparta, with the dowry of his wife. All of them will have a happy future, dictated by the mythical tradition (1653-65). Orestes and Menelaus briefly express their acceptance of the divine arrangements (Orestes with obvious relief, 1666-9) and depart to their arranged destinations.

The *exodos* was controversial even in antiquity; Aristophanes of Byzantium, the author of the second *Hypothesis* of the play, notes that τὸ δρᾶμα κωμικωτέραν ἔχει τὴν καταστροφήν[145], mostly because of the happy future and the marriages which appear at the end. In our day the major problems of the critics concern the, inexplicable on first sight, command of Orestes to his companions to set fire to the palace, at the very moment of their salvation plans' objective success, and the degree of seriousness we should assign to Apollo's final arrangement - which seems to be

distinction between the two tragedies.

[142] Willink, 1986, ad 1621-4, suggests that at this moment a group of Argives enters the orchestra, but this would create much confusion and distract the audience from the spectacular *deus ex machina*.

[143] See Wolff, 341, for the differences concerning the trial on the Areopagus between *Orestes* and *Eumenides*

[144] See West, 1987, pp. 284-5, Stephanopoulos, 153 ff. on the blending of mythical traditions here.

[145] *Hypothesis*, II, 32.

most unexpected, in view of plot of the play so far.

I think that the *exodos* fittingly concludes this agitated and innovative play, providing an appropriate climax to Orestes' growing frustration and outrage, while Apollo's appearance at the end, necessary in what concerns the basic lines of the Atreids' myth, does not change the image of a world gone disastrously awry. Apollo's interference will change neither Menelaus' opportunism nor the unreliability and the fickleness of the Argive mob, the main sources for the play's turbulence.

The whole *stichomythia* aims to lift the tension to its highest point, tantalising the audience which sees that nothing on earth can (or, rather, should) achieve a reconciliation between Orestes and Menelaus. The peak of the debate comes at 1617-20. Menelaus at that point admits his disadvantage[146] (without accepting explicitly Orestes' conditions) but Orestes neglects it and proceeds to order his companions to set fire to the palace. I can not find any reasonable psychological explanation of this order and I think that we should not seek for any; Only theatrical logic can apply on this issue: an agreement between Menelaus and Orestes at this point would be extremely flat and completely inconsistent with tragedy's logic. The play requires the impasse in order to create the opportunity for the advent of the *deus ex machina*[147].

[146] Burnett, 193, misunderstands the *exodos*, employing mere psychological arguments in order to conclude that Menelaus is the real winner of the debate, because he does not care for his daughter' s life- he only wants the throne and his plan is to save time until the arrival of the Argive troops. These troops arrive just at the moment of Menelaus' hypocritical acceptance of Orestes' conditions, Orestes sees them and realises that Menelaus succeeded in trapping him so, as he does not have any other way out, orders the arson of the palace. Mastronarde, 1979, 90, rightly rejects Burnett's theories. Nevertheless, Apollo does not refer to any present Argive soldiers.

[147] Grube, 396-7, maintains that Euripides worked out the plot, neglecting the myth. So the end is hasty as he had to come to terms with the mythical world in a single scene, which was impossible. Thus he was obliged to close his play anyhow. Lesky, 352-3, also, considers the finale as a spectacular *tour de force* which permits Euripides to exhibit impressive devices of technique. However, this critic does not neglect the dramatic function: he maintains that only Apollo can solve such an impasse; an arrangement between Orestes and Menelaus,on the human level and under the pressure of Orestes' power, would not solve the ethical and emotional problems of the play. This is the reason, according to Lesky, that Euripides makes Orestes' command the arson of the palace. So, also Webster, 1967, 251-2. Greenberg, 189, on the other hand, interprets 1617 ff. from the point of view of the *sophia-philia* contrast which, according to him, is pervasive in the play. So he maintains that Menelaus' ἔχεις με means that his

In his later plays Euripides shows an increasing tendency to employ the *deus ex machina* and to tie the arrival of the god to the plot by some crisis[148]. Whether this tendency represents the author's personal appreciation of myth and the cults with which it is associated[149] or merely the desire to attain a sense of closure through a return to tradition[150], many in the audience familiar with Euripides' practice must have been expecting the appearance of the *deus* before his actual arrival[151].

The most striking feature of Apollo's epiphany is the manner in which it reverses the action on stage[152]. It is true that the majority of *dei ex machina* in Euripides are called to perform much more modest services than is Apollo in *Orestes*. The use of the *deus* in *Orestes* differs a lot from the norm although Apollo does perform the customary duties of clearing up any mysteries (for the audience as well as for the individuals on stage: 1629-34, 1664-5), of foretelling the futures of the various characters and of providing ties with contemporary society through aetiologies[153]. The fact remains, however, that the *deus* in this play contributes very much to the action, effecting a sudden and miraculous reversal of the dramatic situation that seems to

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sophia can do nothing at the moment - he has no means of action. Orestes' order for the conflagration of the palace indicates the culmination of the *philia* theme: *philia* demands continuous action and can not compromise with reconciliation. Although Greenberg is right in his view on Menelaus, his interpretation of Orestes' motivation is very unhappy.

[148] Note, e.g., *Ion, Iphigeneia In Tauris, Helen*

[149] See Webster, 1967, 258-9.

[150] See Heath, 103. Murray, 113-4, emphasises the appropriateness of the *deus ex machina* for Greek tragedy, with its themes drawn from the tales of myth and epic; the Euripidean epilogue, with its emphatic reassertion of the mythic landscape, provides a particularly hospitable setting for such epiphanies.

[151] A hint of the forthcoming *deus ex machina* could be, for the well experienced audience, the fact that Euripides has employed in this scene only two actors so far. Pylades is a silent person and when Menelaus asks him if he approves the actions of Orestes (1591), the latter replies instead of Pylades: φησὶν σιωπῶν (1592). It is obvious that Euripides reserves the third actor for another role. See Nisetich, 50-1, Winnington-Ingram, 130, Mastronarde, 1979, 93-4. See also Burnett, 221, for other ways in which Euripides prepares us for Apollo's appearance.

[152] Sophocles' *Philoctetes* typically is cited as the only similar instance of a *deus ex machina* being employed to effect an ending that the characters cannot or, in that case, will not produce. See Willink, 1986, xxix-xxx, who remarks that the use of the *deus* in *Philoctetes* constitutes "a new structural idea, making possible almost any anti-traditional story-invention, which Euripides was more than ready to exploit." For a thorough and detailed comparison of the two plays see Fuqua, 1976, 80-3.

overturn completely what has happened before[154].

The major difference in the *deus ex machina* of *Orestes* from those of other plays of Euripides' late period is the degree to which it is bound to the plot and its high theatricality. Euripides, having already put the traditional version of the Orestes myth at risk a number of times in the course of this play, here threatens the complete obliteration of the house of Atreus, only to withdraw that threat with the same abruptness with which Helen disappeared earlier from Orestes' hands. In this sense the finale is remarkable and it presents a suitable climax to the series of the scenes that constitute the second half of the play. But Apollo's sudden epiphany serves many typical aims of the *deus ex machina*: like other Euripidean *dei ex machina,* the god of Delphi here arrives for the purpose of resolving issues or uncertainties and to put things back on their mythical course before the conclusion of the play. The plot of the play ends with the final confrontation between Orestes and Menelaus, an exciting scene that brings the action to its logical climax by effectively expressing the frustration and the outrage that have been building since Orestes' initial confrontation with the Spartan king. Apollo restores order and mythological orthodoxy, but he does not add anything to the understanding of the play[155]. His appearance is necessitated by the boundaries of the mythical tradition in which Euripides is obliged to create his work.

The only hint of an 'ironic' reading of the *deus ex machina* could be Orestes' statement at 1668-9 that he was beginning to fear lest the voice whose commands he had obeyed belonged to an ἀλάστωρ (1669) and not to Apollo. Yet this statement, like

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[153] See 1636-7, 1686-90 (regarding Helen, although, as Willink, 1986, ad 1637 indicates, we know of no marine cult in her honour) and 1646-[7].

[154] A parallel could be found in the entry of the Pythia at *Ion*, 1320, who saves Creusa from Ion's vengeance and contributes to the recognition between mother and son.

[155] Cf. Dunn, 1996, 171, Fuqua, 1978, 24-5

the similar one at 288-93 is presented from the very limited perspective of Orestes' self-interest: when it appeared that Clytaemestra's murder would lead to disaster for Orestes, Apollo's authority for that murder began (note the imperfect: ἐσῄει, 1669) to be doubted; now as Apollo has vindicated both the deed and his earlier prophecies (1666-7) and has effected a resolution (1670), his sanction of Clytaemestra's death is proven beyond doubt.

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