

“NOTHING THAT IS NOT ZEUS”:

THE UNKNOWABILITY OF THE GODS

AND THE LIMITS OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

IN SOPHOCLEAN TRAGEDY

by

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SUMMARY

In the present thesis the author professes to offer neither a systematic account of Sophoclean theology (if indeed there is such a thing) nor a study of the epistemological problem *per se* in Sophoclean tragedy. His purpose is rather to illuminate — partly expanding on a brief but suggestive study by Hans Diller (“Göttliches und menschliches Wissen bei Sophokles”, Kiel 1950) — the ways in which the epistemological chasm between Man and God in Sophoclean tragedy becomes manifest through a ‘collision’ between the incompleteness and limitedness of human knowledge on the one hand and the transcendence and the unknowability of the gods on the other. An introductory chapter is prefixed which deals with the development of the idea of divine unknowability in archaic Greek literature and in Presocratic philosophy. There follows a detailed examination of the extant plays one by one (with special emphasis on the close reading of practically all the choral odes), by means of which the author endeavours to demonstrate that the centrality of the epistemological problem (in relation, always, to the inscrutability of the Godhead) in Sophocles, far from reducing his dramas to abstract philosophical treatises, contains a tremendous tragic potential and makes for powerful plays. Aspects of each play’s structure, of its thematic articulation and of its vocabulary are studied, while a variety of methodological approaches are employed in order to illuminate problems of interpretation. All important secondary literature is cited and / or discussed. Thus, while never losing sight of its central concern (divine unknowability, limitedness of human knowledge), the present thesis also aims to be a thorough study of Sophoclean tragedy as a whole.

For my family;

and for KS

νά 'χα τὸν οὐρανὸ χαρτί,

τὴ θάλασσα μελάνι

FOREWORD

It seems customary for authors of works on subjects as well-worn as, say, Sophoclean tragedy to offer their apologies for producing “yet another book” about such an unoriginal topic. I wish to offer none: for one thing, as we have long realized, there can be no such thing as a ‘definitive interpretation’ of a literary work — or of any work of art, for that matter; every new interpretation should be welcome, no matter how widely (or even well) explored the subject may be. For another, Sophocles has long suffered from exposure to the harmful radiation of his supposed ‘classical’ halo: one of the aims of this work is to show that the ‘pious’ Sophocles, the ‘serene’ Sophocles can be more subversive and more disturbing than, say, Euripides was in his most ‘anarchic’ moments. When all has been said and done, however, one feels that a work on Sophocles should need no further justification than the famous line of Kostis Palamas, one of modern Greece’s national poets: “the nightingale of Colonus still sings on”.

A word on method: as will no doubt be evident to the careful reader, I have been eclectic, and have drawn freely from various theoretical ‘schools’ of literary criticism: my close reading of the text, and especially of the ways that the selection and organization of its vocabulary point to central themes of the play, is basically along the lines of the New Criticism, while incorporating to a large extent the precepts of the School of Prague (mainly as propounded in the works of its founder and most brilliant exponent, Roman Jakobson). It will also be apparent that I have been unable to resist the temptations of the structuralist grid and its ubiquitous binary oppositions, especially as these can often square so nicely with the more traditional approaches mentioned above. In a few places I have also made use (sometimes, as in the *Ajax*, extensive use) of recent sociological and / or anthropological research (especially the study of ritual). Although my approach is

basically a *literary* one, I have made every effort to avoid the text-centred and a-historical excesses of New Criticism (or of modern narratological approaches, for that matter). Thus, a certain predilection for the historical aspects of the plays will be noted (notably in the *Antigone*). Nonetheless, the word 'historical' should not be taken to refer to the, now largely outfashioned, trend of discovering (or rather devising) historical or political allegories in the plays, but to the application, where possible, of the study of institutions and ideology to the interpretation of the plays.

It is, as always, a pleasant task to record my debt of gratitude to all those who have helped me bear the burden of writing this study. First and foremost, my warmest thanks go to my supervisor, Mr A. F. Garvie, who has stoically borne with my importunacy and has always been happy to go through tediously lengthy drafts and discuss my outlandish ideas. His exemplary scholarship, his careful reading of texts, as well as his well-known kindness and generosity saved me from numerous embarrassing errors (many of his suggestions are duly acknowledged, although it would have been impossible to mention all of them). I am also grateful to Professor D. M. MacDowell who has spared time and effort to discuss various problems, and to teach me to be careful in my handling of the sources and not to jump into conclusions (which I am prone to do by nature). These two persons have put me further in their debt by earnestly supporting my applications for financial support — first to the Department of Classics, which granted me a generous scholarship for the first year of my studies, and then to the Higher Degrees Committee of the Faculty of Arts, which extended the scholarship, with equal generosity, for two more years.

Special thanks are also due to Professor P.E. Easterling, who offered helpful criticisms and kindly provided me with an unpublished paper of hers on the *OC*; to Drs E. Moignard and H. Breckenridge for archaeological advice; to Ms P. Karavia for bibliographical help; to Mr A.F.L. Hurlstone for letting me avail myself of his impeccable knowledge of English; and to Dr S. Greger, Dr K. Kapparis, and Ms T. Gergel for sharing with me valuable written material. Of my academic tutors in Athens, Greece, I

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On a more personal level, I wish warmly to thank my friend Dr Costas Panayotakis, who eased me into the academic life of Glasgow University and showed unremitting interest in the progress of my work throughout my three-year study. His kindness and supportiveness, as well as his exemplary devotion to his vocation, did a lot to boost my enthusiasm. Moreover, my colleagues and friends Alexis Alexiou and Giana Tsailakopoulou, apart from their usual geniality, offered valuable ideas and drew my attention to important literature. A debt of a very different nature is owed to Katerina Stebili, who managed to persuade me that there is also a life to be lived. Finally, I wish to thank *ab imo pectore* my parents and first teachers of Greek, Eleni and Yannis, and my sister Nadia for their warm love and support. The dedication is a small token of affection to those ὧν ἀνευ οὔ.

Glasgow, September 1997

V.L.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ABV = J.D. Beazley, *Attic Black-figure Vase Painters* (Oxford 1956).
- ARV² = J.D. Beazley, *Attic Red-figure Vase Painters* (Oxford ²1963).
- CPG = *Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum*, vol. I ed. E.L. Leutsch & F.G. Schneidewin (Göttingen 1839); vol. II ed. E.L. Leutsch (Göttingen 1851).
- D.-K. = H. Diels & W. Kranz (eds), *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. Vols I-III (Berlin ⁶1951-52).
- Dale, *Analyses* = A.M. Dale, *Metrical Analyses of Tragic Choruses*, Fasc. 2 [*BICS* Suppl. 21.1]. London 1981.
- Denniston, *GP*² = J.D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles* (Oxford ²1954).
- Descroix, *Trimètre* = J. Descroix, *Le trimètre iambique* (Macon 1931).
- FGrHist* (Jacoby) = F. Jacoby (ed.), *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Vols I-IIIc (Berlin / Leiden 1923-58).
- Goodwin = W.W. Goodwin, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses of the Greek Verb*. London: Macmillan ²1897.
- K.-A. = R. Kassel & C. Austin (eds), *Poetae Comici Graeci* (Berlin & New York 1983—).
- Kühner-Gerth (K.-G.) *Gr.Gr.* = R. Kühner & B. Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache*. Vol. II. 1-2 (Hannover & Leipzig 1898-1904).
- LIMC* = *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*. Vols I— (Zürich & München 1981—).
- LSJ = H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, H.S. Jones & R. McKenzie (eds), *A Greek English Lexicon* (Oxford ⁹1940). Revised Supplement by P.G.W. Glare & A.A. Thompson (1996).
- N.² = A. Nauck (ed.), *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (with suppl. by B. Snell). Hildesheim 1964.
- Peek = W. Peek (ed.), *Griechische Vers-Inschriften. Band I: Grab-Epigramme*. Berlin.
- PMG* (Page) = D.L. Page (ed.), *Poetae Melici Graeci* (Oxford 1962).

PMGF (Davies) = M. Davies (ed.), *Poetarum Melicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (Oxford 1991—).

Radt (R.) = S. Radt (ed.), *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*. Vol. III ([Aeschylus] 1985), Vol. IV ([Sophocles] 1977). Göttingen.

RE = A. Pauly, G. Wissowa, W. Kroll & K. Ziegler (eds), *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart & München 1894–1978).

Smyth *Gr.Gr.* = H.W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (revised ed., Cambridge, Mass. 1956).

West, *GM* = M.L. West, *Greek Metre* (Oxford 1982).

Some more technicalities:

For references to the bibliography I have adopted the Harvard system, e.g. Edmunds (1996: 53). Exceptionally, standard Sophoclean commentaries are referred to without date: thus, e.g., in Chapter One (*Electra*) “Kamerbeek (*ad* 957)” means “Kamerbeek (1974: *ad* 957)”; in Chapter Three (*Trachiniae*) “Easterling (p. 133)” means “Easterling (1982: 133)”; and so forth. When reference is made to a commentary on a play other than the one dealt with in the chapter, then the full date is given; thus, a reference, in the *Trachiniae* chapter, to Kamerbeek’s commentary on the *OT* will appear as “Kamerbeek (1967)”.

Names of ancient authors and of their works are generally abbreviated as in LSJ; so are papyrological and epigraphical publications. Otherwise the abbreviations should be self-explanatory.

For scholarly periodicals the abbreviations of *L’ Année Philologique* have been used.

Finally, reports of MSS. readings are reproduced from Dawe (1996). The grouping according to MSS. families adopted by Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990a) is perhaps more economical, but often results in overlapping which can be confusing and sometimes misleading.

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(relating to Chapter Five)

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Plate II: Attic cup by the Foundry painter (ca. 480). Berlin, Antikenmus., Staatl. Mus. Preuss. Kulturbesitz F 2294 (from Vulci) = Beazley *ARV*² 400, 1 = *LIMC* IV. 1, No 5. Hephaistos hands to Thetis Achilles' new weapons, which are clearly the weapons of a hoplite: note especially the scalloped shield. Cf. Ducrey (1986: 41 pl. 23)

Plate III: Attic amphora by Exekias. Boulogne, Musée Municipal 558 = Beazley *ABV* 145, 18 = *LIMC* I.1, No 104. Note the scalloped hoplite shield at the right hand-side.

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INTRODUCTION

*The musical notation of another world
the ancient belief that there always exists
the very near yet still unseen*

*Odysseus Elytis, The Axion Esti
(transl. E. Keeley & G. Savidis)*

0.0.1 Preliminary remarks

As the title of this thesis implies, my subject is neither “gods in Sophocles” nor “knowledge in Sophocles”; the former topic has been dealt with, cursorily or in detail, by almost every scholar who has written on Sophocles; while of the latter we have a splendid examination in Lawrence (1978) as well as a detailed study of the words belonging to the *Wortfeld* “Wissen und Erkennen” by Marina Coray (1993). That means that I pretend to offer neither a systematic account of Sophoclean theology (if indeed there is such a thing) nor a study of the epistemological problem *per se* in Sophoclean tragedy. My purpose is rather to illuminate — partly expanding on a brief but suggestive study by Hans Diller (1950) — the ways in which the epistemological chasm between Man and God in Sophoclean tragedy becomes manifest through an *Auseinandersetzung* (Diller [1950: 1]) between the incompleteness and limitedness of human knowledge on the one hand and the transcendence and the unknowability of the gods¹ on the other. Through a detailed examination of the extant plays, I shall endeavour to demonstrate that the centrality of the epistemological problem (in relation, always, to the inscrutability of the Godhead) in Sophocles, far from reducing his dramas to abstract philosophical treatises, contains a tremendous tragic potential

¹ “The gods”, “divinity”, “God”, “the Godhead” are treated throughout as essentially synonymous.

and makes for powerful plays. For as E.R. Dodds (1966: 47) has seen with admirable clarity, the Sophoclean dramatic universe is beset by the irresolvable contradiction between, on the one hand, the existence of an objective world-order which Man must respect and, on the other, Man's failure fully to understand this world-order. This contradiction produces a fundamental tragic paradox: to quote Diller (1950: 10) again, "im sophokleischen Drama wird das Geschehen in seiner Unentrinnbarkeit ohne Rest durchschaubar gemacht, nicht aber der Zweifel an der Gerechtigkeit oder der Moralität der Weltordnung, soweit er überhaupt ausgesprochen wird, geklärt".

In emphasizing the epistemological 'alterity' of the Godhead Sophocles seems to take over and develop a trend first found in some Presocratics, according to which God is above and beyond the confines of human mind, on a wholly different plane from men and essentially inaccessible to their mode of thinking. To put this in epistemological terms, God transcends the reality (or, more accurately, its organization into an ontological system) which the human intellect is accustomed to regard as 'natural'; therefore God resists any attempt to be circumscribed by the ontological attributes through which we conceptualize this world of ours. This view of divinity we shall be calling, for reasons of convenience, 'apophatism', despite the glaring anachronism.² Such a perception of the epistemological chasm between Man and God is a far cry from the older Greek idea that the gods' knowledge is simply *broader* (in terms of the sheer *quantity* of received information) than men's (see

² By the anachronistic use of the term 'apophatism' / 'apophatic' I indicate the refusal to assign to God any ontological attribute whatsoever (cf. Yannaras [1988: 69]: ἡ ἄρνηση νὰ ἀποδώσουμε στὸν Θεὸ τοὺς προσδιορισμοὺς τοῦ ὄντος); cf. Lossky (1957: 38-9): apophatism "is, above all, an attitude of mind which refuses to form concepts about God". The apophatic approach to divinity has found its fullest expression in the so-called 'Areopagitic' writings, i.e. the theological treatises attributed to St Denys the Areopagite. These writings have exerted a tremendous shaping influence on the theology of both the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches. See further Yannaras (1988: *passim*).

below section 0.1.1 for instances); for such an idea naively implies that both gods and men *do* possess knowledge, except that the former possess it in larger quantities. However, the difference is not one of quantity, but of *quality*: divine knowledge is of a wholly different *order* or *kind* from human knowledge. This realization that our knowledge is totally *unlike* that of the gods has mainly two important implications:

- a) only divine knowledge must be truly perfect knowledge; human beings have got only an imperfect (and all too often illusory) kind of knowledge.
- b) what we humans can know *about* the gods (their nature, their function, etc.) must therefore be only partial and fragmentary.

As my title indicates, these two points are obviously interconnected: the fundamental ‘alterity’ of the Godhead *both* implies its essential unknowability *and* sets the limits within which human knowledge must be inescapably circumscribed.

0.1.1 The literary background

That divine knowledge is immensely broader than human knowledge is one of the most traditional concepts in Greek literature, appearing as early as Homer. In *Il.* 2. 484-92, “the most sober section of the *Iliad*”, as Bruno Snell (1975: 127) has called it, we are presented with what seems to be the archaic view on the epistemological aspect of the difference between Man and God. The poet finds himself compelled to invoke the Muses to assist him in his arduous task of naming the Achaean leaders who took part in the war — a task that no one could accomplish by relying solely on his own capacity. This is because men *know nothing*; they must rely on hearsay (486 κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν). The Muses, on the other hand, do possess true knowledge, because they

have first-hand evidence: they are eye-witnesses, they are able to run everywhere and witness everything (485 *πάρεστέ τε ἴστε τε πάντα*); the very fact that they can *experience* more things than men can guarantees that they also *know* more things than men do.³ So, it seems that, for Homer, the gods are, epistemologically speaking, simply men brought to perfection: their knowledge covers a much wider field; their difference is one of quantity, not quality; one of range, not of kind.⁴ A second point that emerges from the Homeric passage is that the only way for men to enhance their knowledge is through divine revelation; intellectual effort or special insight seem not to count as possibilities.

This chasm between human and divine knowledge is also a recurrent theme in lyric poetry, but it seems that it is there felt more intensely, with greater pathos. For Solon, our inability to have insight into the *noos* of the gods (17W: *πάντη δ' ἀθανάτων ἀφανῆς νόος ἀνθρώποισιν*) means practically that we have almost no access to true knowledge at all: “It is most difficult to have insight into the invisible measure of judgement, which yet alone holds the boundaries of everything” (16W: *γνωμοσύνης⁵ δ' ἀφανῆς χαλεπώτατόν ἐστι νοῆσαι ἢ μέτρον, ὃ δὴ πάντων πείρατα μοῦνον ἔχει*).⁶ There is a similar feeling in Simon. 21 (PMG 526 Page): *θεὸς ὁ πάμμητις· ἀπή- ἢ μαντον δ'*

³ See further Snell's (1975: 127-8) excellent analysis (with essential older bibliography).

⁴ On the omniscience (in 'quantitative' terms only!) of the gods see also *Od.* 4. 379, 468. *Pi.* N. 6. 1-7 is perhaps an exception in that he regards human *noos* as 'similar', in some (unspecified) respects to divine *noos*: *ἐν ἀνδρῶν, ἐν θεῶν γένος· [...] διείργει δὲ πᾶσα κεκριμένα ἢ δύναμις, ὡς τὸ μὲν οὐδέν, ὃ δὲ ἢ χάλκεος ἀσφαλὲς αἰὲν ἔδος ἢ μένει οὐρανός. ἀλλά τι προσφέρομεν ἔμπαν ἢ μέγαν ἢ νόον ἢτοι φύσιν ἀθανάτοις, ἢ καίπερ ἔφαμερίαν οὐκ εἰδότες οὐδὲ μετὰ νύκτας ἢ ἄμμε πότμος ἢ ἄντιν' ἔγραψε δραμεῖν ποτὶ στάθμαν*. Cf. also *P.* 8. 96 (a suggestion I owe to Mr Garvie).

⁵ On the word see Jäger (1947: 233 n.58).

⁶ Translation according to Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 104).

οὐδέν ἐστι θνατοῖς,⁷ or in 20 (PMG 525 Page): ῥεῖα θεοὶ κλέπτουσι
 ἀνθρώπων νόον; in both these fragments the clear and unadulterated
 knowledge of the Godhead (πάμμητις) is contrasted with the limitedness
 of the human intellectual resources — which inevitably leads to illusion
 (κλέπτουσι ἀνθρώπων νόον) and, ultimately, to misery (ἀπήμαντον δ'
 οὐδέν ἐστι θνατοῖς). The most memorable formulation of this feeling is,
 perhaps, given in the following Theognidean verses (133-42):

οὐδεὶς Κύρν' ἄτης καὶ κέρδεος αἴτιος αὐτός,
 ἀλλὰ θεοὶ τούτων δώτορες ἀμφοτέρων·
 135 οὐδέ τις ἀνθρώπων ἐργάζεται ἐν φρεσὶν εἰδῶς
 ἐς τέλος εἴτ' ἀγαθὸν γίνεται εἴτε κακόν.
 πολλάκι γὰρ δοκέων θήσειν κακὸν ἐσθλὸν ἔθηκεν,
 καί τε δοκῶν θήσειν ἐσθλὸν ἔθηκε κακόν.
 οὐδέ τῳ ἀνθρώπων παραγίνεται ὅσσ' ἐθέλησιν·
 140 ἴσχει γὰρ χαλεπῆς πεύρατ' ἀμηχανίης.
 ἄνθρωποι δὲ μάταια νομίζομεν, εἰδότες οὐδέν.
 θεοὶ δὲ κατὰ σφέτερον πάντα τελοῦσι νόον.

The achievement of a set goal (137 τέλος, 142 τελοῦσι) is a matter not
 of active effort (135 ἐργάζεται), but of knowledge: Man cannot know how
 his efforts will fare; in other words, Man, despite his perpetual struggle,
 cannot control the outcome of his actions (135-38; cf. esp. 135 οὐδέ ...
 ἐν φρεσὶν εἰδῶς; 137 δοκέων, 138 δοκῶν; 141 μάταια ... εἰδότες
 οὐδέν), because of the limitations imposed on him by his helplessness

⁷ I give, *exempli gratia*, the text as emended by Bergk (Page prints the MSS δ'
 οὐδέν ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς *inter cruces*).

(140 ἴσχει ... πείρατ' ἀμηχανίης). The gods, on the other hand, achieve all their goals (142 τελοῦσι) according to the plan conceived by their mind (142 κατὰ σφέτερον ... νόον). The practical character of these lines is obvious: the human praxis is hampered by the limitedness of our means and resources, our ἀμηχανία, which is in the final analysis a lack of complete and accurate knowledge. How close to some well-known formulations of 'traditional wisdom' these lines are, becomes immediately obvious by the mere quotation of a few parallels:

Semon. 1. 1-5 W.: ὦ παῖ, τέλος μὲν Ζεὺς ἔχει βαρύκτυπος | πάντων
ὄσ' ἐστὶ καὶ τίθησ' ὄκη θέλει, | νοῦς δ' οὐκ ἐπ' ἀνθρώποισιν, ἀλλ'
ἐπήμεροι⁸ | ἅ δὴ βοτὰ ζόουσιν, οὐδὲν εἰδότες | ὅκως ἕκαστον
ἐκτελευτήσει θεός.

Solon 13. 63-70 W. (esp. 65-6): πᾶσι δέ τοι κίνδυνος ἐπ' ἔργμασιν,
οὐδέ τις οἶδεν | πῆ μέλλει σχήσειν χρήματος ἀρχομένου.

Simon. 22 (PMG 527 Page): οὐκ ἔστιν κακὸν | ἀνεπιδόκητον
ἀνθρώποις· ὀλίγω δὲ χρόνῳ | πάντα μεταρρίπτει θεός.

Xen. Cyr. 1. 6. 19: ἄνθρωποι μὲν αἰροῦνται πράξεις εἰκάζοντες,
εἰδότες δὲ οὐδὲν ἀπὸ ποίας ἔσται αὐτοῖς τάγαθόν.⁹

Cf. also the epigram *apud* Dem. 18. 289: μηδὲν ἀμαρτεῖν ἐστὶ θεῶν καὶ
πάντα κατορθοῦν.

⁸ With the idea expressed here cf. *Ol.* 18. 136-7.

⁹ Mimnermus 2. 4-5 W. seems to provide a concise formulation of the same idea: "the gods have revealed to us neither the bad nor the good things" (that are to happen, we may understand). For further parallels (esp. *Pi.* Q 7. 24f.) see van Groningen (1966: 57). Similarly conventional conceptions are also to be found in Diogenes of Apollonia, a second-rate Presocratic, who naively asserts that air, the divine *Urstoff* (see 64B 5 D.-K.), as well as being great and powerful and eternal and immortal (i.e. God's traditional attributes from Homer onwards), is also πολλὰ εἶδος (64B 8 D.-K.): again divinity is epistemologically differentiated from the human sphere in purely 'quantitative' terms.

Such a conception of human intellect, as opposed to divine *noos*, allows for the possibility that, if we had *more* knowledge (e.g. about the parameters conditioning our actions, about their outcome etc.), we would achieve our purposes *κατὰ νόον*, as the gods do. In other words, if the gods are but men writ large, and their knowledge differs from the human one only in terms of quantity (range), it follows that men may have the potential to acquire god-like knowledge. However, such a possibility remains purely *theoretical* and, logically consistent though it is, seems never to be taken into account in archaic poetry: hence the incessant lament over the human inability to attain true knowledge or insight into the divine *noos*. The traditional view is, therefore, not only crude and naive, but also illogical and self-contradictory.¹⁰

0.2.1 The philosophical background. Some Presocratic ideas

This picture, however, seems to change radically with the Presocratics — which in this case means basically Xenophanes and Heraclitus (and, to a lesser extent, Alcmaeon, Parmenides, Empedocles and Philolaus). In those surviving fragments that may be taken to bear on the relation of human and divine knowledge¹¹ there emerges a new idea of God as being, epistemologically speaking, of a wholly different order from Man; the crude and superficial conceptions of God as merely more knowledgeable (in ‘quantitative’ terms) than Man are radically reconsidered, and the chasm separating human from divine knowledge is now viewed, much

¹⁰ It goes without saying that Bowra’s (1944: 376) attempt to foist on Sophocles such archaic ideas cannot stand.

¹¹ I am concerned here neither with Presocratic epistemology in general (in which case I should have devoted a good part of this Introduction to the epistemological views of Democritus, Protagoras and Gorgias) nor with Presocratic theology (in which case I should have dealt practically with the entirety of the surviving fragments, especially in the case of the early Ionian thinkers as well as of the thinkers of the Italian colonies).

more subtly, in terms of *quality*: divine *noos* differs from Man's not in that it contains a larger quantity of information, but in that its nature and order is wholly alien, inconceivable and indescribable.

0.2.2 Xenophanes

I begin with three fragments in which Xenophanes' view on the epistemological aspect of the chasm between Man and God is most clearly stated:

21 B 23 D.-K.:

εἷς θεός, ἕν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος,
οὔτι δέμας θνητοῖσιν ὁμοίος οὔδὲ νόημα.

B 24 D.-K.:

οὔλος ὄρα, οὔλος δὲ νοεῖ, οὔλος δὲ τ' ἀκούει.

B 25 D.-K.:

ἀλλ' ἀπάνευθε πόνοιο νόου φρενὶ πάντα κραδαίνει.

What is so remarkable about these fragments is that they explicitly place God on a totally different, transcendent plane: he is, as B 23 puts it, "nothing like mortals, either in shape or in thought". God is not simply stronger, bigger, swifter or, for that matter, more knowledgeable than Man, as Homeric gods are; God is simply *other*.¹² Thus, for instance, it is

¹² Therefore, views that ascribe a specific (spherical) shape to Xenophanes' god must be discarded (cf. Leshner [1992: 100-2]). The fundamental 'alterity' of the

meaningless to imagine that God is anthropomorphic or theriomorphic (21 B 14, B 15, B 16; cf. also Empedocles 31 B 29, B 134), or that he has the moral fabric or attitude of a mortal (21 B 11, B 12);¹³ likewise, it is also meaningless to imagine that God's perceptual modes or the nature of his mind can be compared to human ones: as B 24 makes clear, God's faculties of perception, being of a wholly different order than Man's, cannot be located in specific sensory organs;¹⁴ God has a 'holistic',¹⁵ 'synthetic' (and, we must assume, perfect) perception, whereas Man's perception is partial (as it depends on the data provided by his *specific* sensory organs) and therefore imperfect (for the idea cf. also Empedocles 31 B 2: στεινωποὶ μὲν γὰρ παλάμαι κατὰ γυῖα κέχυνται κτλ., where παλάμαι = 'sensory organs', "Sinneswerkzeuge" [D.-K.]¹⁶). To quote

divine *noos* is further emphasized in 21 B 25 (quoted above) where, as Leshner (1992: 110) has finely demonstrated, Xenophanes is contradistinguishing his novel idea of an "effortlessly telekinetic divine *noos*" from such a crudely physical image as e.g. that of Homeric Zeus shaking Olympus with a single nod of his brow (*Il.* 1. 528-30).

¹³ See von Fritz (1993: 31 with nn. 26 & 27). Note that when Xenophanes claims that gods cannot have human vices he cannot mean merely that gods are moral by human measures. This would merely turn the gods into perfect counterparts of us imperfect humans. Xenophanes explicitly stresses that God is not merely superior to Man in his shape (μορφή) or in his mind (νόημα): he says that God is, in these respects, *nothing like* Man.

¹⁴ The verb νοεῖν seems at first sight to keep strange company with the other two verbs of the fragment; however, as von Fritz (1993: 32-3) has excellently demonstrated, νοεῖν is *not* here particularly associated with intellectual activity, but preserves its Homeric meaning ("perceiving through the senses").

¹⁵ Cf. Fränkel (1993a: 130 n. 51); Jäger (1947: 44).

¹⁶ For this meaning of the word in Empedocles cf. 31 B 3. 9 ἄθρει πάση παλάμη immediately followed by an enumeration of the senses — which shows that παλάμη is here a generic term for all organs of sensual perception: von Fritz (1993: 58), Wright (1981: *ad loc.*). That Empedocles defended the evidence of the senses as a means for the acquisition of true knowledge (Kirk, Raven & Schofield [1983: 284-5]) does not cancel his reservations in 31 B 2 about the sufficiency of such evidence.

Fränkel (1993a: 130), for Xenophanes “the absolute does not fit into human modes of representation precisely because they are especially adapted to the grasping of what is earthly. Xenophanes separates these two regions from one another plainly and fundamentally.”¹⁷

The above thoughts can be excellently supplemented by some very perceptive remarks offered by H. Fränkel (1993a: 130) and K. von Fritz (1993: 34-5). The former draws our attention to two *testimonia* (21 A 52 D.-K.), according to which Xenophanes denied “that divinity speaks to men in signs and oracles [...]. In this way he made the chasm between the here and the beyond unbridgeable” (Fränkel *l.c.*). Indeed, this squares perfectly with Xenophanes’ view on the epistemological ‘otherness’ of God: if God’s knowledge is perfect, and Man’s only partial and imperfect, then it follows that the idea of a *rapprochement* between these two incommensurably different cognitive levels is a *non sequitur*.¹⁸

Moreover, K. von Fritz (1993: 34-5) notes that nowhere in the extant fragments does Xenophanes use *νόος* in connection with human beings; he reserves the word exclusively for the divine mind. If this is not accidental, then it may indicate yet another important deviation from Homeric epistemology: it is no longer the case, as it is in Homer, that all people have *νόος* (of varying quality and degree), while the gods, with their omniscient *νόος*, are simply perfected men (epistemologically speaking). For Xenophanes, human knowledge, *qua* inherently imperfect and illusory, is so incommensurably inferior to divine knowledge that it seems virtually non-existent in comparison to it; divine modes of

¹⁷ On the chasm between human and divine knowledge, in terms of quality, not quantity (a point missed by Lesher [1992: 106]), see further my remarks on Heraclitus 22 B 78 D.-K. (p. xxx below).

¹⁸ Cf. also Lesher (1978: 7-8, 15-6). It follows that I cannot agree with Snell (1975: 130) when he remarks: “Und doch gleicht der Gott, den er [sc. Xenophanes] begreift, noch sichtlich ihm selbst und dem, was er erstrebt: Das Göttliche ist das Komplement zu dem Menschlichen [...]: da ihm die Weisheit das Höchste am Menschen ist, ist sie es ihm auch an der Gottheit; nur hat der Mensch unvollkommenes Wissen, Gott aber desto vollkommeneres [...]”.

perception deserve to be termed νόος, whereas human ones do not.¹⁹ Xenophanes' "extreme skepticism concerning the capacity of human beings for true insight" (von Fritz [1993: 34]) is also illustrated by such fragments as 21 B 35 (ταῦτα δεδοξάσθω μὲν εἰκότα τοῖς ἐτύμοισι ...)²⁰ and 36 (ὅπποσα δὴ θνητοῖσι πεφήνασιν εἰσοράασθαι ...),²¹ but above all by the celebrated 21 B 34:

καὶ τὸ μὲν οὖν σαφὲς οὔτις ἀνὴρ ἴδεν οὐδέ τις ἔσται
εἰδὼς ἀμφὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἄσσα λέγω περὶ πάντων·
εἰ γὰρ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα τύχοι τετελεσμένον εἰπών,
αὐτὸς ὅμως οὐκ οἶδε· δόκος δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσι τέτυκται.

That the imperfect knowledge (cf. 4: δόκος, "assumptions") of men must have been here *contrasted* with the perfect knowledge of the gods seems a probable inference from the closely resembling postscripts to the quotations of this passage by Areius Didymus (*apud* Stob. II. 1. 17 [II, p. 6, 16-8 Wachsmuth] = 21 A 24 D.-K.: ὡς ἄρα θεὸς μὲν οἶδε τὴν ἀλήθειαν, δόκος δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσι τέτυκται) and by Varro (*apud* St Augustine, *De Civ. Dei* 7. 17: *hominis est enim haec opinari, Dei scire*).²² After all, a similar contrast between the completeness of divine and the incompleteness of human knowledge is made in 21 B 18. It is now interesting to see how this contrast between the σαφές (fully accessible only to divine knowledge) and the δόκος (human assumptions) is formulated in the above quoted B 34: as Barnes (1979: 143) has demonstrated, "Xenophanes' point is that many of my beliefs are explicable by a causal hypothesis which has no direct connexion with the content of those beliefs. I believe that *P* [where *P* = any proposition] and *P*

¹⁹ Heraclitus seems also to have adopted a similar point of view: see p. xxix ff.

²⁰ On B 35 see Lesher (1992: 169-76).

²¹ On the epistemological import of B 36 see Fränkel (1993a: 123); more perceptively Lesher (1992: 176-9).

is true: yet there is a causal chain explaining my belief which was neither originated nor at any stage supplemented by the fact that *P*. And that is why my belief is not knowledge.” Thus, there is a causal chain explaining the Thracians’ belief that gods are blue-eyed and red-haired, or the Ethiopians’ own belief that gods are black and snub-nosed (21 B 16): the Thracians themselves having blue eyes and red hair, and the Ethiopians being black and snub-nosed, they assume that the gods look like them; similarly, a person who has never tasted honey thinks that figs are sweetest by far (21 B 38).²³ The fact that such beliefs are causally explicable has nothing to do with the fact that their content is true (which it is not). Likewise, our belief that the First World War took place — which is, to the best of our knowledge, a true belief (Xenophanes’ τετελεσμένον²⁴) — can be explained by our possessing evidence suggesting that there was a World War between 1914 and 1918; this belief does not, however, stem directly from the fact that the First World War did actually take place. What must be stressed here, especially as it is not made clear by Barnes,²⁵ is that, when Xenophanes criticizes the beliefs of the Thracians or the Ethiopians, it is *his own vantage point* that enables him to appreciate how the inescapable limitedness of human experience, the inherently partial and incomplete nature of human knowledge, can lead to false assumptions.²⁶ Scholars²⁷ have rightly compared this to the end of the first chapter of the Hippocratic *On Ancient Medicine* I. 3 (I. 572, 4-8 Littré): ἄ (sc. τὰ ἀφανέα καὶ ἀπορεόμενα), εἴ τις λέγοι καὶ

²² See Fränkel (1993a: 128-9), Barnes (1979: 139), Lesher (1992: 167).

²³ On B 38 see Lesher (1992: 180-2).

²⁴ On the word see Fränkel (1993a: 126), Snell (1975: 131), Lesher (1992: 158).

²⁵ On this shortcoming of Barnes’ exposition see also Lesher (1992: 166).

²⁶ See further Fränkel (1975: 332-3) and cf. below n. 31. Wiesner (1997: 24-5, 29, 31) stresses the polemic tone of B 34 (a point already made by C.J. Classen and by S. Yonezawa: full references in Wiesner [1997: 24 nn. 32, 33]) and thinks that Xenophanes exempts himself from the cognitive limitations imposed on other people; but this is surely an exaggeration.

²⁷ See most recently Finkelberg (1990: 134 n.84) and Lesher (1992: 168); cf. also J. Jouanna (ed.), *Hippocrate*, vol. II.1 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres 1990), 158 n. 6 for further material.

γινώσκοι²⁸ ὡς ἔχει, οὐτ' ἂν αὐτῷ τῷ λέγοντι οὔτε τοῖς ἀκούουσι
δῆλα ἂν εἴη εἴτε ἀληθέα ἐστὶν εἴτε μή· οὐ γάρ ἐστι πρὸς ὅ,τι χρὴ
ἐπανενέγκαντα εἰδέναι τὸ σαφές. Further illustration may be provided
 by Empedocles (31 B 2 D.-K.):

παῦρον δ' ἐν ζωῆσι βίου μέρος ἀθρήσαντες [sc. ἄνθρωποι]
 ὠκύμοροι καπνοῖο δίκην ἀρθέντες ἀπέπταν
αὐτὸ μόνον πεισθέντες, ὅτῳ προσέκυρσεν ἕκαστος
πάντοσ' ἐλαυνόμενοι· τὸ δ' ὅλον <τίς ἄρ'>²⁹ εὔχεται εὐρεῖν;
 οὕτως οὐτ' ἐπιδερκτὰ τὰδ' ἀνδράσιν οὐτ' ἐπακουστὰ
 οὔτε νόῳ περιληπτὰ...

Men's beliefs are formed according to their individual experiences, which are by nature partial and incomplete, i.e. cannot provide insight into the entirety of knowledge (τὸ ὅλον).³⁰ Enlightened people like Xenophanes may have access to a privileged vantage point (thanks to their broader range of experience, their intelligence etc.) which allows them to realize and criticize the false beliefs of mortals; nonetheless, even the insights of such exceptional people are bound to appear hopelessly limited in comparison with divine knowledge. For the gods, by definition, occupy the ultimate vantage point, epistemologically speaking, as only they have complete knowledge of τὸ σαφές; in other words, their position in relation to the clouded human knowledge is *analogous* to Xenophanes' position in relation to the false assumptions of the Thracians or the

²⁸ Littré in his app. crit. ad loc. proposed ἄ, εἰ λέγοι τις καὶ γινώσκειν.

²⁹ τίς ἄρ' H. Fränkel, followed by Kirk, Raven & Schofield (1983: 284) : πᾶς Bergk, followed by D.-K. (in the latter case the phrase is a statement, not a question).

³⁰ Cf. Wright (1981: 156); for further possible instances of the idea in ancient literature see Lesher (1992: 181).

Ethiopians, or those who have never tasted honey. This analogy makes Xenophanes realize that, even if some of our assumptions may correspond to what is actually the case (τετελεσμένον), still we can never securely assess their truth or their untruth (αὐτὸς ὅμως οὐκ οἶδε), because we have no means of checking them against the true and complete knowledge possessed by the gods: in other words, due to our inherently limited circle of experience, we can never boast to have known what Empedocles called τὸ ὄλον; we can never be sure that we are not like those who assume figs to be sweetest because they have never tasted honey.³¹ An important implication of the above considerations is that one could not possibly hope to attain to positive knowledge of divinity; one can, at best, point out what God is *not* (as Xenophanes himself does in B 23 [p. xx]), because human intellect is fundamentally incapable of understanding what God actually *is*.³² Even when Xenophanes ventures a description of what God is (B 24–26), it is to stress his fundamental *alterity* rather than to give a positive picture of him: as we saw, God, *unlike humans*, has a ‘holistic’ perception (B 24); he does not move, but he moves everything with the power of his thought (B 25, 26); etc. Thus, there is no real contradiction between the ‘apophatic’ B 34 (quoted above,

³¹ See further Heitsch’s (1983: 177–84) most excellent exposition, closely followed by Lesher (1992: 166–69); Finkelberg (1990: 134 n. 83) adopts an unnecessarily restrictive approach. I fully agree with Barnes (1979: 138) and Lesher (1978: 5–6), (1992: 157–8, 160, 162–3) that Fränkel’s (1993a) attempt to strain the Greek of B 34 in order to turn it into a defence of empirically gained knowledge cannot stand. See also Finkelberg (1990: 131 n. 73) for further literature on the correct interpretation of the fragment; full doxography in Lesher (1992: 161–66).

³² This is of course another instance of ‘apophatic’ theology; the idea reappears in a far more elaborate form in Plotinus, e.g. *Enn.* VI. 9, 3. In Christian philosophy this point would be further developed to the effect that God eludes all affirmation as well as all negation: see esp. Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, *De myst. theol.* chs. IV & V with the commentary of Lossky (1957: 29, 31), who also provides further instances of this idea in Christian fathers (*op. cit.*, pp. 34–7).

p. xxiii) and B 23-26, as it has been sometimes argued — most recently by Finkelberg (1990: 131-6).³³

With the above interpretation it would appear that B 34 should shatter our confidence in the reliability of human cognition: just as the Thracians could realize the erroneousness of their beliefs only if they had Xenophanes' comparative material and viewed things from his vantage point, so men can check the validity of their beliefs only if they assume the vantage point of the gods. This would seem practically to deny the possibility of obtaining secure knowledge. Nonetheless, Xenophanes does not seem to have been a hard-core sceptic *avant la lettre*; and there is much to commend Barnes' (1979: 136-43) view,³⁴ who sees Xenophanes as a mild, John Locke-style, sceptic. The following fragment (21 B 18) asserts that some kind of knowledge is attainable:

οὔτοι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς πάντα θεοὶ θνητοῖσ' ὑπέδειξαν
ἀλλὰ χρόνῳ ζητοῦντες ἐφευρίσκουσιν ἄμεινον.³⁵

Although the ultimate vantage point, that provides full, accurate and perfect knowledge, is an exclusive prerogative of divinity, still people can

³³ See further Heitsch's (1983: 175-6) excellent remarks; also Wiesner (1997: 20-22, 29-30, 32). Finkelberg (1990: 156 with n.113) underplays the importance of divine alterity in Xenophanes, and assumes (1990: 146-7 n. 101, and 160) that Xenophanes denied the possibility of certain knowledge about natural phenomena (which cannot be apodeictically argued to), but *not* about the gods (who can be apodeictically argued to). But what about the unknowability of the gods propounded in B 34 (cf. περὶ θεῶν)? It is "merely the archaic description of the domain later known as meteorology", answers Finkelberg (1990: 147 n. 101), thus demonstrating to what extent one is capable of going in order to 'prove' an erroneous thesis. Further criticism of Finkelberg in Lesher (1992: 163-4).

³⁴ See already Jäger (1947: 43 with n.20); most recently Wiesner (1997).

³⁵ On the interpretation of this fragment I am in essential agreement with Lesher (1992: 153-5).

ἀμφι /

attain, if gradually, to relatively safe assumptions about things — with the proviso, of course, that these assumptions may be superseded (due to new evidence or new insights etc.) by even more reliable ones, and so forth. We are always bound to think that figs are sweetest, until we discover honey.³⁶

0.2.3 Heraclitus

The immeasurably superior, ‘holistic’ / synthetical and transcendent (and therefore essentially inconceivable, indescribable and unknowable) nature of God’s *noos* as against Man’s clouded, partial and imperfect knowledge is a fundamental idea in the extant fragments of Heraclitus. In fact, the ‘apophatic’ (see p. xiv with n. 2) approach to divinity seems to have constituted the core of Heraclitus’ epistemology.³⁷ The refusal to attribute ontological predicates to the transcendental God is excellently illustrated, in a quaint and graphic manner, in 22 B 79 D.-K.:

ἀνὴρ νήπιος ἤκουσε πρὸς δαίμονος ὅκωσπερ παῖς πρὸς ἀνδρός.

Bearing in mind that, as Petersen (1879) was the first to show, ἤκουσε should be taken here as equivalent to καλεῖται, then the point of the fragment is that, just as a child seems infantile to a grown-up, so human knowledge would appear puerile in comparison with divine knowledge; in D.-K.’s translation: “Der Mann heißt kindisch von der Gottheit so wie der Knabe vor dem Manne”. This use of analogical modes of expression (e.g.

³⁶ I cannot agree with Gigon (1954: 143-4, 161-2) when he thinks he detects grains of *hard-core* scepticism in Xenophanes. *Contra* rightly Snell (*apud* Gigon [1954: 160]), who manages to encapsulate the essence of Xenophanean epistemology, particularly in relation to the gods, in a few admirably terse lines.

³⁷ On Heraclitus as a precursor of the later (Christian) apophatism see Yannaras (1988: 19 n.2, 22).

“God is to Man what Man is to child”, or: $\text{God} / \text{Man} = \text{Man} / \text{child}$, or more abstractly still: $A / B = B / C$),³⁸ in order to illustrate the immense gap separating the here-and-now from the Absolute and the Beyond, is typical of Heraclitus. See, for instance, fr. 22 B 83:

ἀνθρώπων ὁ σοφώτατος πρὸς θεὸν πίθηκος φανεῖται καὶ σοφία καὶ κάλλει καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις πᾶσιν.³⁹

As Fränkel (1993b: 217) has aptly demonstrated, in such analogical patterns of thought the term C (child, ape etc.) is a well-known thing with notorious defects; the term B (ordinary Man) is supposed to be the commonly accepted standard, i.e. a well-known magnitude and a worthy subject. And yet Heraclitus’ analogies show that Man, when compared with term A (the Absolute, or God), proves to be as unworthy as a child or an ape is to him. The true standard, that dwarfs Man’s aspirations to excellence, is God, whose nature is completely beyond the ken of common experience, essentially inaccessible to human imagination and description. The only way for Man to have a measure of God’s ‘otherness’ and superiority is by means of Heraclitus’ expressive analogies (or “the scheme of the geometrical mean”, as Fränkel has called it) — these analogies, indeed are as close as human beings can come to expressing the inexpressible and explaining the inexplicable: “What is God? God is that compared to which the most perfect man will appear as an infant or as a hideous and ridiculous ape” (Fränkel [1993b: 217]).⁴⁰

³⁸ See Petersen (1879: 306) and, more systematically, Fränkel (1993b: 214)..

³⁹ The authenticity of this fragment has been doubted by Marcovich (1967: 488-9), T.M. Robinson (1987: *ad loc.*) and others; see however Kahn’s (1979: 174) defence of it.

⁴⁰ Cf. also Fränkel (1975: 381-2) and Kahn (1979: 174); for a useful caveat regarding Fränkel’s interpretation see, however, Marcovich (1967: 488). Thus, one should be reluctant to agree with Snell (1975: 134) that “Heraklit nur von verschiedenen Graden der Einsicht bei Tier, Mensch und Gott spricht, so daß ihr Verhältnis zueinander in einer Proportion ausdrückbar ist...”: such a

Further insight into this alterity of divine *noos* is provided by 22 B 78 D.-K., which seems closely connected with B 79 (quoted above on p. xxviii)⁴¹

ἦθος γὰρ ἀνθρώπειον μὲν οὐκ ἔχει γνώμας,⁴² θεῖον δὲ ἔχει.

The traditional (Homeric etc.) view that the divine knowledge is simply *wider* than the human one is here most radically modified, perhaps along the lines of Xenophanes: polymathy, after all, is not conducive to true *noos* (22 B 40 πολυμαθίη νόον ἔχειν οὐ διδάσκει ...).⁴³ What really differentiates Man from God is that only God has true judgement (γνώμη), whereas men do not; the difference between divine and human knowledge is one not of quantity, but of quality; not of range (or scope), but of kind (or nature). In other words, as I suggested above (p. xiv), it is not the case that knowledge is something that both gods and men possess, except that the former have it in larger quantities: knowledge is, quite simply, something that gods do possess, whereas men virtually do not. To be more precise, what knowledge men possess is so inferior to the true and perfect knowledge possessed only by the gods that it appears, to all intents and purposes, as inexistent in comparison with that.⁴⁴ As Kirk,

statement implies that the difference between human and divine knowledge is only one of quantity, of 'grade'.

⁴¹ That B 79 is closely connected with B 78 is also the view of D.-K., as appears from their (slightly cryptic) note on the former fragment: "nach 78".

⁴² On the word see Jäger (1947:233 n.58).

⁴³ See further Kahn (1979: 108); K. Pritzl, *Phoenix* 39 (1985) 308. We saw above (p. xxii) that Xenophanes seems to have refrained from using *noos* to designate the perceptual faculties of human beings; he probably reserved the word for the gods only, thus paving, perhaps, the way for Heraclitus' sharp divorcing of polymathy from true *noos*. It is ironical, however, that one of the polymaths attacked in the rest of 22 B 40 (not quoted here) is Xenophanes himself!

⁴⁴ This is very emphatically —and rightly —urged by Marcovich (1967: 479, 488); see also Kirk (1954: 385, 387, 399). Cf. my similar remarks on Xenophanes above, p. xxii.

Raven & Schofield (1983: 191 n.1) further remark, Heraclitus here avers “the superiority [...] of the divine synthetic view of things to the human chaotic view [...] One saying specifically asserts that for god the separateness implied by opposites does not exist: [22 B 102 D.-K.] τῷ μὲν θεῷ κατὰ πάντα καὶ δίκαια,⁴⁵ ἄνθρωποι δὲ ἅ μὲν ἄδικα ὑπειλήφασιν ἅ δὲ δίκαια”.⁴⁶

Along similar lines is also another important fragment, namely 22 B 108:

ὁκόσων λόγους ἤκουσα, οὐδεὶς ἀφικνεῖται ἐς τοῦτο, ὥστε γινώσκειν ὅτι σοφὸν ἐστὶ πάντων κεχωρισμένον.

Pace D.-K., who prefer to interpret this fragment along the lines of B 102 (quoted above, p. xxxi),⁴⁷ I should plump for Kahn’s (1979: 309 n. 83) interpretation: “none has got so far as this: to recognize that the wise is set apart from all”;⁴⁸ this rendering, which (*pace* Fatouros [1994: 68 n.

⁴⁵ Before καὶ δίκαια the MSS give καὶ ἀγαθὰ, which was deleted by Marcovich (1967:481) on very reasonable grounds.

⁴⁶ On God’s synoptic view of things cf. also 22 B 67 D.-K. See also Fränkel’s (1975: 375) admirable analysis, and cf. Diller (1950: 26). Kirk, Raven & Schofield (*l.c.*) also compare the Hebrew concept (Isaiah 55. 8-9): “For ‘my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways’, saith the LORD, ‘for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.’” —On the relevance of 22 B 78 to Sophocles’ view of divinity cf. E. Dönt, *A&A* 17 (1971) 45-55, albeit with some excesses rightly criticized by Strohm (1971:162).

⁴⁷ See their app. crit. *ad loc.* “Die ἀφανῆς ἁρμονία Gottes (B67) und seine im λόγος verkörperte Einheit tritt der irdischen Dissonanz und ihrem steten Wechsel als das Absolute gegenüber; vgl. B102 [...]”

⁴⁸ This is actually Kahn’s second-best interpretation, which I prefer nonetheless on stylistic grounds (cf. Fatouros [1994: 68 n. 11]). As Marcovich (1967: 441) explains, κεχωρισμένον means ‘qualitatively different from’, and

11]) aptly preserves the ambiguity of πάντων (=‘all people’ / ‘all things’), emphasizes that true wisdom is, in its totality, inaccessible to humans by virtue of its transcendent separateness, *qua* cosmic or divine principle, from all things. For the idea (which I shall attempt to clarify immediately below) cf. Anaxagoras 59 B 12 D.-K. νοῦς ... μέμεικται οὐδενὶ χρήματι, ἀλλὰ μόνος αὐτὸς ἐπ’ ἐωυτοῦ ἐστίν; ?Philolaus 44 B 20 D.-K. (ἔστι γὰρ ἡγεμὼν καὶ ἄρχων ἀπάντων θεός, εἷς, ἀεὶ ὢν, μόνιμος, ἀκίνητος, αὐτὸς ἐαυτῷ ὅμοιος, ἕτερος τῶν ἄλλων) and Apollonius of Tyana *apud* Euseb. *P.E.* IV 13 (θεῶ ... ἐνὶ τε ὄντι κεχωρισμένῳ πάντων).⁴⁹

Now, this *sophon*, which “stands apart from everything”, can be relatively safely identified with Divinity (which is similarly pronounced “the only *sophon*” in B 32 D.-K.) and the Logos (knowledge of which is conducive to *sophia*, as appears from B 50 D.-K.).⁵⁰ At the same time, however, this κεχωρισμένος Logos is called in B 2 D.-K. ξυνός (τοῦ λόγου δ’ ἐόντος ξυνοῦ ζώουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ ὡς ἰδίαν ἔχοντες φρόνησιν; cf. also B 1 D.-K.; B 113 D.-K.: ξυνόν ἐστὶ πᾶσι⁵¹ τὸ φρονέειν).⁵² This is far from self-contradictory: the Logos / Divinity /

not ‘to be separated from’, as it is usually taken. Differently Kirk (1954:398–400) and T.M. Robinson (1987:*ad loc.*).

⁴⁹ In fact D.-K. curiously cite these two fragments in support of their own interpretation of B 108 (see previous note), but I fail to see how they could be right.

⁵⁰ Cf. Darcus Sullivan (1984) —with the older literature on the relation between τὸ σοφόν and the divinity (*ibid.* 292 n. 37) —notwithstanding her ‘quantitative’ view of the epistemological difference between Man and God (cf. n. 53).

⁵¹ I take πᾶσι to mean “to all people”, not “to all things”, *pace* Kahn (1979: 119) and T.M. Robinson (1987: *ad loc.*). To credit Heraclitus with believing in some kind of ‘awareness’ (φρονέειν) innate in all things, as Robinson and Kahn do, would be to turn him, unwarrantably, into a hylozoist—panpsychist. As many have remarked, the sense of this fragment is, of course, not that all people are wise, but that all people have the *potential* for true wisdom.

⁵² The authenticity of B 113 is doubted by Kirk (1954: 55–6, 63) and Marcovich (1967:89).

sophon is *xynon*, 'shared', insofar as every single individual has, potentially, his share of it — in other words, insofar as he can have (partial) access to the inexhaustible common repository that is the Logos (cf. on this idea B 114 D.-K., quoted below on p. xxxiv). On the other hand, the Logos / Divinity / *sophon* is also 'separate' in that no single individual can have *full* access to it, as this is a transcendental entity that lies *beyond* the cognitive capacity of single individuals — a capacity that is inescapably limited. Thus, the partial and imperfect knowledge possessed by human individuals is again contrasted to the full and perfect knowledge possessed only by God.⁵³ This concept may be better illustrated through a comparison with the concepts of *langue* and *parole* introduced by the founding father of modern linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure: *parole* is a term for language as manifested in the individual speech acts of individual speakers; it is the *Verwirklichung* of every single individual's knowledge of a language — a knowledge that is inescapably imperfect, for no one (not even a native speaker) can claim full and perfect knowledge of every aspect of a language (morphology, syntax, vocabulary, usage etc.). On the other hand, *langue* (the Heraclitean Logos, *mutatis mutandis*) is an abstraction that extends far beyond the mere sum of the individual *paroles*; it is language considered not as individual manifestation, but as common possession of a speech community.⁵⁴ Thus, as in de Saussure the individual *paroles* are partial and imperfect manifestations of the abstract *langue*, so are in Heraclitus the individual intellects partial and imperfect manifestations of the abstract system of the Logos, which is thus both ξυνός and κεχωρισμένος.⁵⁵

⁵³ Cf. Axelos (1962: 62, 70-1, 83). For Darcus Sullivan (1984) such manifestations of divinity as λόγος, γνώμη, νόμος or τὸ σοφόν can be described as ξυνόν in that they can be 'shared', in differing degrees, both by humans and by the divinity. This, however, leads her to define the epistemological difference between Man and God in purely 'quantitative' terms (Darcus Sullivan [1984: 292]), which I find unacceptable.

⁵⁴ See the relevant passage from de Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale* quoted in the Appendix.

⁵⁵ Cf. also Yannaras (1988: 22): the Heraclitean Logos is a peculiarly Greek way (τρόπος) of verifying knowledge through the experience of relationship or

This interpretation of Heraclitus through de Saussure is not as anachronistic as it may seem. It can be justified by B 114 D.-K.:

ξὺν νόῳ λέγοντας ἰσχυρίζεσθαι χρὴ τῷ ξυνῶ πάντων [note the telling word-play ξὺν νόῳ — ξυνῶ!], ὅκωσπερ νόμῳ πόλις, καὶ πολὺ ἰσχυροτέρως. τρέφονται γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἀνθρώπειοι νόμοι ὑπὸ ἐνὸς τοῦ θείου· κρατεῖ γὰρ τοσοῦτον ὀκόσον ἐθέλει καὶ ἐξαρκεῖ πᾶσι καὶ περιγίνεται.

A polis, *qua* communal institution, must base its laws on the universal divine law that is superior to all individual laws, since it exists independently of them (this I take to be the implication of κρατεῖ τοσοῦτον ὀκόσον ἐθέλει καὶ ἐξαρκεῖ πᾶσι καὶ περιγίνεται).⁵⁶ Similarly, individual intellectual activity, in order to be truly ξὺν νόῳ, must be based on the ξυνόν — or the Logos, the abstraction which is the ultimate source of each and every individual intellect, while being itself beyond and above them. To put it in Saussurean terms, individual intellectual activity, like *parole*, depending as it does on each subject's individual volition, is but a partial, imperfect and shadowy manifestation of the abstraction that is the Logos (or the *langue*), *without being in any way identical to it*. For Logos, like *langue*, exists independently of the will of individuals; it not only comprises all its individual realizations, but it also transcends them. And it is for this reason that the Logos, despite being partly 'materialized' in individual

through the social dynamics of relationships (“... τῆς ἐλληνικῆς κατανόησης τοῦ λόγου ... ὡς ... τοῦ τρόπου ποὺ ἐπαληθεύει τὴ γνώση μέσω τῆς ἐμπειρικῆς σχέσης ἢ τῆς κοινωνικῆς δυναμικῆς τῶν σχέσεων (τοῦ ἡρακλείτειου “κοινοῦ λόγου”)”). Jäger (1947: 125) adopts an extreme interpretation both of this fragment and of B 78 as downright agnostic statements.

⁵⁶ On περιγίνεται see T.M. Robinson (1987: 156). The political metaphor is *not* the main point of the fragment (as Kirk, Raven & Schofield [1984: 212]) seem to think, but merely an analogy that illustrates the dependence of every individual *noos* on the communal (*xynos*) property that is the Logos: see von Fritz (1993: 37-8), and cf. Axelos (1962: 131).

intellects, remains essentially *inaccessible to the human mind*.⁵⁷ This is a revolutionary, radically new approach to an age-old problem: Heraclitus, on the one hand, refuses to adopt a downright agnostic position, for he allows for the possibility that human thought partakes of true knowledge, insofar as it stems from the transcendent Logos. At the same time, he successfully avoids compromising in any respect the epistemological ‘alterity’ of the divine sphere (a *sine qua non*, to be sure): the Logos, as well as being the ultimate source of individual intellect, is also an abstraction, a philosophical projection of human *noos* taken as a *totality*; Logos, true and perfect knowledge, is a transcendent entity of an essentially alien order, accessible in its entirety solely to the Godhead.

0.2.4 Some other Presocratics

It seems that much of Presocratic thought was more or less in the same vein: clear and unimpaired knowledge is a divine preserve, but men can still attain, through persistent and systematic effort, to some scraps of true knowledge.

Alcmaeon

Such a view is expressed in a famous fragment of Alcmaeon (24 B 1 D.-K.):

⁵⁷ Cf. Axelos (1962: 131): “Jamais la sagesse humaine n’ atteindra la sagesse divine, et elle n’ est vraie sagesse que si elle se reconnaît comme manifestation particulière de la sagesse universelle. [...] L’ homme, en prenant âprement conscience de sa particularité, peut, puisque sa part est la partie d’ un Tout, atteindre la Totalité, sans pouvoir jamais s’ identifier à elle.”

... περὶ τῶν ἀφανέων, περὶ τῶν θνητῶν σαφήνειαν μὲν θεοὶ ἔχοντι, ὡς δὲ ἀνθρώποις τεκμαίρεσθαι ...⁵⁸

The best commentary on this fragment known to me is Snell's (1975: 134): "Den alten Gegensatz von göttlichem und menschlichem Wissen verbindet er [sc. Alcmaeon] mit dem Gegensatz vom Unsichtbaren und Sichtbaren, denn man darf der zugrundeliegenden Gedanken dahin ergänzen, daß die Menschen über das Sichtbare einige Kenntnisse haben; aber über das 'Nicht-Erscheinende', wie es wörtlich heißt, wissen nur die Götter Klares. [...] Dem Nicht-Gesehenen steht nun aber nicht wie für Homer das nur vom Hörensagen Bekannte gegenüber oder das, was dem Wähnen und dem 'Schein' verfallen ist wie bei Xenophanes, sondern das nicht Offenbare, das *noch* nicht Offenbare, wie man sagen darf, denn Alkmaion gibt einen Weg an, auf dem der Mensch, wenn auch vielleicht unvollkommen, an das Unsichtbare gelangen kann, das 'Schließen', das Folgen aus bestimmten Zeichen."

Philolaus

Along the same lines is a fragment by Philolaus (44 B 6 D.-K.):

... ἃ μὲν ἐστὼ τῶν πραγμάτων αἰδῖος ἔσσα καὶ αὐτὰ μὲν ἃ φύσις θείαν γὰ καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρωπίνην ἐνδέχεται γνῶσιν πλάν γὰ ἦ ὅτι οὐχ οἶόν τ' ἦν οὐθὲν τῶν ἐόντων καὶ γιγνωσκομένων ὑφ' ἡμῶν γὰ γενέσθαι μὴ ὑπαρχούσας τᾶς ἐστοῦς τῶν πραγμάτων, ἐξ ὧν συνέστα ὁ κόσμος, καὶ τῶν περαινόντων καὶ τῶν ἀπείρων ...⁵⁹

⁵⁸ "Über das Unsichtbare wie über das Irdische haben Gewißheit die Götter, *uns* aber als Menschen *ist nur* das Erschließen *gestattet*." (D.-K.); so also Snell (1975:134).

⁵⁹ "The being of the objects, being eternal, and nature itself admit of divine, not human, knowledge —except that it was not possible for any of the things that exist and are known by us to have come into being, without there existing the

Without going into further detail about Philolaus' views on the limiters and the unlimiteds, we may remark that this fragment stands in the tradition of Xenophanes, Heraclitus and Alcmaeon in that it represents a deep awareness of the limitedness of human knowledge in relation to the gods' clear and perfect knowledge, but also in that it argues that we can know something about the real substance of things (namely that "it must be such as to supply the necessary conditions of the existence of the temporal things with which we are acquainted"⁶⁰).

Empedocles

The same intellectual current runs through Empedoclean thought as well: following the 'apophatic'⁶¹ trend that we have identified in many Presocratics, he asserts the immeasurable difference between the Godhead on the one hand and the conceptions and categories with which the limited *noos* of human beings is familiar on the other (31 B 134):

οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀνδρομέη κεφαλῆ κατὰ γυῖα κέκασται,
οὐ μὲν ἀπαὶ νώτοιο δύο κλάδοι αἴσσουνται,
οὐ πόδες, οὐ θοὰ γοῦν', οὐ μήδεα λαχνήεντα,
ἀλλὰ φρῆν ἱερὴ καὶ ἀθέσφατος ἔπλετο μοῦνον,
φροντίσι κόσμον ἅπαντα καταίσσουσα θεῶσιν.

This is why, according to another Empedoclean fragment (B 133) God cannot be comprehended by the senses — which otherwise are the main vehicles of knowledge:

being of those things from which the universe was composed, the limiters and the unlimiteds." (Kirk, Raven & Schofield [1983:327]).

⁶⁰ Quotation from Kirk, Raven & Schofield (1983:328).

⁶¹ For the term see again p. xiv with n. 2.

οὐκ ἔστιν πελάσασθαι ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἐφικτὸν
 ἡμετέροις ἢ χερσὶ λαβεῖν, ἧπὲρ τε μεγίστη
 πειθοῦς ἀνθρώποισιν ἀμαξιτὸς εἰς φρένα πίπτει.

As was the case with other Presocratics, however, Empedocles' philosophical system seems to have allowed for the possibility that human beings attain to some knowledge of the true nature of divinity; this is the point of B 132:

ὄλβιος ὃς θείων πραπίδων ἐκτήσατο πλοῦτον,
 δειλὸς δ' ὧ σκοτόεσσα θεῶν πέρι δόξα μέμηλεν.⁶²

Parmenides

Parmenides' position as to the possibility of true human knowledge appears to have represented a deviation from the Presocratic trend: he too maintains, like Xenophanes or Heraclitus, that ordinary mortals are ignorant and misguided (28 B 6, 4-7 βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδὲν ... κωφοὶ ... τυφλοὶ τε, τεθηπότες, ἄκριτα φύλα; B 1, 30 βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθείης),⁶³ but he goes much further than other Presocratics in claiming that full and complete knowledge of the ultimate truth is possible and that it assumes the form of divine revelation, reserved for

⁶² “[Empedocles] knows [...] that bliss and doom for any man depend upon his approach, right or wrong, to the gods — as the expounders of the mysteries were wont to assert, a basic formula of whose preaching (ὄλβιος ὃς ...) he makes his own”: Zuntz (1971: 258). On the echoes from the language of the Mysteries in this passage see also Norden (1913: 100 n.1).

⁶³ Cf. Snell (1975: 134-5), Coxon (1986: *ad loc.*).

exceptional individuals like him (28B 1, B 2 D.-K.).⁶⁴ In this point Parmenidean thought represents a retrogression to earlier modes of mystical / apocalyptic cognition, an example of which is the Muses' visitation to Hesiod in the *Theogony*.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, even Parmenides is encouraged by the goddess to submit his newly acquired knowledge to critical scrutiny (B 7 D.-K.: κρῖναι δὲ λόγῳ...);⁶⁶ it is Parmenides' faculty of reason (λόγος) that helps him distinguish himself from the mob of ἄκριτοι (cf. B 6. 7) men.

0.3.1 Some conclusions

As a conclusion (and bearing in mind that any conclusions we draw are bound to be provisional, given the fragmentary state of the evidence) we may state that, as far as the philosophers we have been examining are concerned, one main point can be established: contrary to Homer and, especially, to early lyric poetry, in which Man can only deplore, in a mood of grim resignation, the incomprehensibility of the divine *noos*, the Presocratics in general accept the chasm between the gods' clear and complete knowledge and man's chaotic view as a fact of life; indeed, as we saw, their philosophical activity redefined the nature of this chasm in much subtler and sounder terms: transcendent entities like the gods are essentially unknowable, inaccessible to the limited intellectual resources of human beings. To ascertain, as earlier thought did, their superiority by means of crudely 'quantitative' criteria (gods are superior because, quite

⁶⁴ Such ideas, being thoroughly un-Greek, may be implicitly criticized by Empedocles, when he asks the Muse to reveal to him "as much as it is permitted ephemeral beings to hear" (31 B 3. 4 ὧν θέμις ἐστὶν ἐφημερίοισιν ἀκούειν): see further Jäger (1947:134); *contra* Wright (1981:158).

⁶⁵ Snell (1975:135).

⁶⁶ See Barnes' (1979:297-8) excellent commentary; cf. Coxon (1986: *ad loc.*). Most fully J.H. Lesher, *OSAPh* 2 (1984) 1-30.

simply, they are more knowledgeable than men) means to circumscribe them within the unacceptably narrow confines of purely human, earthly conceptions, to entrap them within the here-and-now of humanly defined (and therefore conventional) categories, and thus to cancel their transcendental character — their very divinity.

This, however, does not lead the Presocratics to a wholesale denial of the possibility of human knowledge: on the contrary, they adopt, in general, a more energetic approach, as they wholeheartedly engage in a systematic philosophical activity whose ultimate goal is evidently to gain (no doubt, limited and imperfect) insights into true knowledge. The Presocratics greatly value the use of the intellect and, to some extent, of the senses as pathways to true knowledge, but they are also aware that it is humanly impossible to have clear, complete and perfect knowledge. The sensory data or the power of the intellect are useful and relatively reliable tools, so far as they go — which may not be very far. To put it briefly, the Presocratics believe that human knowledge is possible, but also limited. We have seen (p. xix above) that earlier thought (e.g. Homer or archaic lyric poetry) viewed human knowledge as impossible: Homer asks the Muse for reliable information, for men know nothing whatsoever; whereas the deplorable human ignorance is a recurrent theme in lyric poetry. We have also suggested that such an attitude is illogical, for the perception of the inferiority of human knowledge in purely ‘quantitative’ terms (i.e. in terms of the sheer information possessed) allowed, logically, for the possibility that Man can have true knowledge (see again p. xix). By contrast, the Presocratics’ position on the matter can be argued, with complete logical consistency, from the premises of their philosophical systems (different though these systems may be in a variety of other respects); it stems naturally from them and it can be fully supported by their logic. This can be most clearly illustrated by another look at a few examples of what we called ‘analogical mode of thought’ (see p. xxix) — a mode of thought and expression so dear both to Xenophanes and to Heraclitus. When Heraclitus says that a man is to God what a child is to man (22B 79; see p. xxx), the implication is not only that Man’s intellect appears puerile in comparison to God’s, but also that Man *does* possess

intellect (as a child does), if only ἐν δυνάμει and in undeveloped and elementary form; after all, Heraclitus' complaints that ordinary people are like sleepers (B 1, B 73) or deaf (B 34), or his criticism against people who lay false claims on knowledge (B 17, B 40) acquire their full meaning only if his philosophical system *did* allow for a (limited) possibility of true knowledge (a possibility implied also in: B 1, B 2, B 41, B 50, B 72) — a goal attainable only by people who manage to rise above the mob of sleepers or deaf people.⁶⁷

0.4.1 Divine and human knowledge in Sophocles

We suggested in section 0.0.1 that Sophocles is an expounder of the 'apophatic'⁶⁸ approach to divinity initiated by Presocratic philosophers like Xenophanes and Heraclitus — no matter whether he was actually familiar with their philosophy or not.⁶⁹ It should be clear by now that apophatism, as opposed to agnosticism, does not entirely deny the possibility that the human mind might attain to some knowledge of divinity (we have already seen how this idea presents itself in some of the most eminent Presocratics). That means that Sophocles would probably

⁶⁷ On Xenophanes 21 B 38 as implying that improvements on the state of human knowledge are indeed possible (an idea that is explicit in 21 B 18) see p. xxvii above.

⁶⁸ See again p. xiv with n. 2.

⁶⁹ As Diller (1950: 27) excellently remarked, "es ist nicht einmal entscheidend, ob Sophokles den Heraklit tatsächlich gekannt hat oder nicht. Wesentlich ist aber zu sehen, daß zwischen Heraklit und die älteren Tragödien des Sophokles [I should say: *all* Sophoclean tragedies] eine tiefgehende Gleichartigkeit in der Auffassung des Verhältnisses von göttlichem und menschlichem Wissen besteht. Diese Feststellung diene nicht zum Nachweis literarischer oder geistgeschichtlicher Abhängigkeiten, wohl aber zur Befestigung der Einsicht, wie sehr in einer geistig geschlossenen Zeit das Werk des Philosophen und des Tragikers von denselben Kräften bewegt wird." For further possible affinities between Heraclitus and Sophocles see Diller (1950: 26-7); Kamerbeek (1948) is hesitant.

not have endorsed Protagoras' famous statement about the ultimate unknowability of the gods — and indeed of their very existence (80 B 4 D.-K.: περί μὲν θεῶν οὐκ ἔχω εἰδέναι, οὔθ' ὡς εἰσὶν οὔθ' ὡς οὐκ εἰσὶν ...). What the apophatic approach *does* deny is the assumption that the essence of the Godhead can be *completely* and *fully* described by ontological attributes — that the limited intellectual resources of human beings can provide exhaustive and unimpaired knowledge of divinity in its totality. This means that Sophocles, like many Presocratics, does not completely deny the possibility of catching some glimpses of true knowledge through oracles or prophecies. As Sophocles himself has put it in fr. 771 R.: καὶ τὸν θεὸν τοιοῦτον ἐξεπίσταμαι, ἢ σοφοῖς μὲν αἰνικτῆρα θεσφάτων ἀεί, ἢ σκαιοῖς δὲ φαῦλον κἂν βραχεῖ διδάσκαλον.⁷⁰ Indeed, one of our sources for this fragment, namely Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 5. 4. 24. 2 [II, p. 341 Stählin-Früchtel]), in what may not be an entirely distorting Christian interpretation, took its meaning to be that human beings do have, at least *in posse*, the ability to reach the truth by means of cryptic divine signs: ὄνειροί τε καὶ σύμβολα ἀφανέστερα πάντα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις οὐ φθόνῳ (οὐ γὰρ θέμις ἐμπαθῆ νοεῖν τὸν θεόν), ἀλλ' ὅπως εἰς τὴν τῶν αἰνιγμάτων ἔννοιαν ἢ ζήτησις παρεισδύουσα ἐπὶ τὴν εὔρεσιν τῆς ἀληθείας ἀναδράμη.

All surviving Sophoclean plays are concerned, in one way or another, with the problem of *knowing* the Godhead and its will — a problem that is often expressed as Man's struggle to communicate with divinity by means of oracles (or kindred rituals, such as ornithomancy, *empyroskopia* etc.). The gods send us σημεῖα containing 'clues', as it were, that can, theoretically, lead to true knowledge;⁷¹ and whereas the possibility of a complete and accurate interpretation of such σημεῖα is

⁷⁰ Pearson (1917: III. *ad loc.*) seems to take ἐν βραχεῖ διδάσκαλον to mean "a plain person, of few words [...] an expounder in brief"; another alternative would be Naber's κἂν βράχη ("even if [the god] roars": cf. Radt's *app. crit.*).

⁷¹ On oracles as manifestations of an all-encompassing (though not entirely intelligible) order see Kitto (1954: 176-80).

not excluded (cf. e.g. exceptional cases like Themistocles' famous interpretation of the Delphic oracle about the "wooden walls": Hdt. 8. 141-43; Plut. *Them.* 10.2), it is their misinterpretation that contains, for obvious reasons, an immense tragic potential. It is precisely because true knowledge of divinity can, to a certain extent, be acquired that Sophoclean tragic individuals are carried away into assuming that divinity can be *fully* and *perfectly* known in its *entirety*; this leads invariably to the all-too-late realization that the Godhead is essentially unknowable; that it cannot be exhaustively understood by the human intellect nor can human ontological categories be foisted upon it, as this would amount to an *ipso facto* compromise of its transcendental nature. Any attempt of the human intellect to inquire any further into the nature of divinity and divine will, to delve into the infiniteness of the Beyond, is bound to fail: ἀλλ' οὐ γὰρ ἄν τὰ θεῖα κρυπτόντων θεῶν ἰ μάθοις ἄν, οὐδ' εἰ πάντ' ἐπεξέλθοις σκοπῶν (S. fr. 919 R.).⁷²

As the chronology of most of the extant Sophoclean plays remains a notoriously insoluble conundrum, I have preferred not to treat them in what would be a necessarily arbitrary chronological order, but to divide them into two groups, according to criteria which I shall presently explain.

In the first group of plays, which contains *Electra*, *Philoctetes* and *Trachiniae*, the understanding or the implementation of the terms of an oracle / prophecy is a theme of capital importance. The central characters either try to acquire, or even presume to have, complete and unimpaired knowledge of the gods and their plans. Eventually, however,

⁷² The idea is present also in Euripides, e.g. E. *Hel.* 711-12: ὁ θεὸς ὡς ἔφυ τι ποικίλον ἰ καὶ δυστέκμαρτον; 1137-50: ὅ,τι θεὸς ἢ μὴ θεὸς ἢ τὸ μέσον, ἰ τίς φησ' ἐρευνήσας βροτῶν ἰ μακρότατον πέρας εὐρεῖν κτλ. In E. *Ba.* 199-203 (del. Diggle), 395, 427-31, 890-96, 1150-52 the implication seems to be that we humans, with our limited intellectual resources (cf. E. *Su.* 216-8), had better not scrutinize an essentially inscrutable divinity, but observe the established ordinances related to it.

the imperviousness of divinity to the cognitive attempts of the human mind is once again established as an undeniable fact.

Thus, in the *Electra* (Chapter One), Orestes relies on what he thinks is Apollo's clear and unambiguous oracle, only to find out at the end that the god's advice may not have been, after all, entirely καλῶς (1425), as it does not guarantee (nor does it profess to guarantee) that the Πελοπιδῶν κακά (1498) are over. Nonetheless, the playwright has taken care to show us that following the god's advice, unknowable though it was, was practically the only viable solution: the best part of the play's 1510 lines is devoted to presenting, in an elaborately emotional fashion, Electra's wretchedness, as well as to establishing that (since Electra's heroic decision to kill Aegisthus would be merely an act of suicidal bravado) the only way out of her plight is Orestes' homecoming — a homecoming which, however, turns out not to guarantee a complete deliverance from evils! So, misery prevails, whether Apollo's oracle is implemented or not. To be sure, this is a most desperate deadlock: obeying divinity seems imperative, but such an obedience can by no means secure us what a Christian would call divine succour or safe guidance. This is not to say that gods are conceived as malevolent entities, having their sport with human beings: the gods are neither benevolent nor malevolent; such categories are only conventions of the human mind which struggles to create taxonomies, a mental framework, that is, wherein divinity could be accommodated and explained. But the gods are not explicable: they are just divine.

In the *Philoctetes* (Chapter Two) we encounter, in a somewhat different form, the same divine transcendence of human moral categories. Odysseus, I argue, far from misunderstanding or self-servingly distorting Helenus' prophecy, is the person who knows it best and adheres to it most closely. This is certainly provocative, but I believe that this is precisely the point of the play: divinity is not concerned with secular morality; divine will can be known to, and carried out by, a person whose moral calibre is, to say the least, doubtful. This is, after all, the reason why the divine plan, whose human agent Odysseus is, was bound to be

severely encumbered by the ethical considerations of the other two characters: Philoctetes, who adheres to his heroic pride, and Neoptolemus, who becomes increasingly aware how cruel and inconsiderate, by human measures, this plan was. These two characters are deliberately cast as undeniably attractive figures: the audience, sympathizing with their (and especially Neoptolemus') moral struggle, identify themselves with them, until they realize, at the end, that the tragedy of Philoctetes is also their own tragedy: while watching the play, they have been involved in a fruitless struggle to understand the divine will and to explain it by human moral measures. Yet, the gods are unknowable, which also means that they are above such categories as morality, justice, fairness or their opposites.⁷³ The eventual implementation of the divine plan with the intervention of Heracles confirms this view, foiling as it does the two heroes' opposition to it as well as frustrating the audience's sympathies and expectations.

The belief that divine will, as expressed in oracles, is not fully accessible to the human mind, unless when it is too late, informs also the *Trachiniae* (Chapter Three). The oracles regarding Heracles' future after the sack of Oechalia are put in the form of a disjunction between two alternatives: either death or a life of ease. So, when the good tidings of his safe homecoming arrive in Trachis, it is naturally assumed that the disjunctive form of the oracle in fact amounts to a single categoric statement: Heracles has won a life free from πόννοι. However, it soon turns

⁷³ Thus, Bowra's (1944: 365-7, 377-8) generalization that all Sophoclean plays (and especially those of the later period) end in a realization of the essential justice of the gods cannot be accepted. The same must hold for Lloyd-Jones' (1983: 109, 128) contention that the Sophoclean conception of justice included the idea that the gods are just "and just in a sense in which the word was in [Sophocles'] day applied to men". To suggest, as these scholars seem to do, that justice was held to be a divine attribute as if by default is a misleading generalization: Mikalson (1991: ch. 1 & 178-9) remarks that, contrary to literary or philosophical speculation, popular religion seems not to have been concerned with whether the gods were just with a justice similar or identical to that expected in human affairs. And at least this aspect of popular religion informs, I argue, Sophocles' plays.

out that the *oikos*, to which Heracles has finally returned, far from being a civilized place of repose and insouciance, as it well should be, is paradoxically transformed into a *locus* where the wild (in the shape, primarily, of Nessus' ointment), in spite of Heracles' life-long struggle to tame it, will eventually defeat the civilizing hero. So, the oracle's mutually exclusive alternatives do indeed turn out to amount to one and the same thing — but in a very sinister way: Heracles' colossal civilizing effort is annihilated as the boundaries between civilization (*oikos*) and savagery (the wild) collapse, and the world of untamed wilderness prevails. Release from toils is now possible only *beyond* this world; deliverance from πόννοι can come only with *death*. Oracles, though not unreliable in themselves, are nonetheless potentially deceptive: they often appear under a veneer of clarity and precision, thus giving the impression that they can be interpreted by means of the human mind's limited resources in a monosemous, unambiguous, straightforward way; at the end, however, it is revealed that the gods' signs are disastrously polysemous, ambiguous, polymorphic, only partly accessible to human mental faculties. Indeed, the farthest point that the human mind can reach is the realization of our inability to comprehend divinity and cosmic order in their entirety. The Chorus' resigned acceptance of divine presence in all the frightful events that have happened (1278 κούδ' ἐν τούτων ὅ τι μὴ Ζεὺς)⁷⁴ expresses exactly this feeling of utter desolation in front of the tremendously overwhelming, yet entirely incomprehensible and unaccountable, ways of the gods.

The essence of the epistemological chasm between God and Man as presented in the plays of this first group is well formulated by Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 78–80): “From the human point of view, [‘true’] reality is not clear and distinct [...] but dangerous, ambiguous and paradoxical. This state of affairs may be inferred from contact with power by means of

⁷⁴ I hasten to make clear (the more so as an English rendering of this phrase forms part of my title) that, *pace* West (1979: 112) who understands ἐπραξεν as the verb of this clause, I adhere to the traditional view that the verb to be mentally supplied here is ἐστίν: see Davies (1991: *ad* 1278).

oracles and divination. In both cases the resulting knowledge, supposed to be truer than ordinary knowledge, is multi-interpretable and potentially dangerous. [...] Man's problem is that he realizes that divine truth exists, that his cosmological order is not all there is, but that he is unable to endure the dangerous contact with true power. Truth exceeds his finite endurance. Therefore man has to resort to the ordering of experience [...]. When man is confronted with ambiguous reality outside his own conception, he realizes that his human order in reality is disorder: his conceptions of true and false, of good and evil are constantly overthrown. Because man ignores the true designs of the gods (but knows that they are there), his life consists of inevitable tragic erring. [...] This tragic position may be reflected in the language embodying ambiguous truth. This language contains surface meanings on a purely human level, concealing the real meaning hidden from man's finite understanding and only revealed after disaster has overtaken him."

In the second group of plays, the limitedness of human knowledge is highlighted in a subtler and rather more complex way: divinity is shown to defy all attempts of the human mind to bring it under its all-too crisply defined categories; thus the *Gegenüberstellung* with the absolute, transcendent character of divinity helps set off the ephemeral and imperfect nature of such categories all the more sharply.

In the *Oedipus at Colonus* (Chapter Four), the ἄπολις central character has to effect his integration into his new home, Athens, by wholeheartedly accepting the city's νόμιμα — an acceptance exemplified in the performance, on his behalf, of an (elaborately described) expiatory ritual, a νόμιμον *par excellence*. However, it soon transpires that the heroic status he is about to assume requires him to throw all human νόμιμα into disarray: apart from severing his bonds with the polis of Thebes (by discomfiting its representative, Creon) and with his own family (by cursing his sons to die at the hands of each other), he also upsets several ritual ordinances — most notably, he gives specific instructions for his tomb to remain secret, which blatantly violates Greek νόμιμα, as tombs (including those of heroes) were prominent places and

centres of (funeral or heroic) cult. What is more, his passing away is associated, in many respects, with the notorious sin of his champion Theseus, namely his anomic *κάθοδος* to the Underworld in order to abduct Persephone. This play, quite in keeping with what I have termed Sophoclean ‘apophatism’, demonstrates that *νόμιμα*, venerable though they may be, are nevertheless merely human conventions: they represent the construction only of a single mental and social reality out of the chaos of innumerable possibilities that can potentially be substantiated — structured and conceptualized — as mental and social categories. An exceptional individual like a hero must transcend the coherence and predictability of the social framework, notably as substantiated in its *νόμιμα*, in order to pass over, as a hero, into the obscure inscrutability of the Beyond.

In the *Ajax* (Chapter Five) the hero becomes entrapped in an impossible situation: he is as if excluded both from the civilized space of the polis / encampment and from the wild / outdoors. This impasse is more specifically expressed, *inter alia*, in his inability to remain the exemplary hoplite (symbol of the organized polis) that he has always been, as he abnormally regresses to a perverse ephebate: he displays, in a *distorted* form, traits normally associated with that antipode of the hoplite, the ‘black hunter’. Thus, he can be neither a proper hoplite nor a proper ‘black hunter’; he belongs neither to the polis nor to the wild. This collapse of the ubiquitous, all-encompassing polarity “polis : wild” signifies, on a deeper level, an essential failure to comply with the social categories and taxonomies by which humans lend coherence and accountability to what would be otherwise a chaos of innumerable possible forms of social structuralization. But refusing to adopt what is the currently valid conceptualization of the world comes down to being incapable of living in this world; and incapable of bringing himself under any of this world’s taxonomies is exactly what Ajax is (hence he opts for the only possible way out, namely suicide) and, what is more, this is what

he remains even after his death — thus being translated to a status that lies beyond the *Diesseits*, i.e. to the praeterhuman status of the hero.⁷⁵

Finally, the *Antigone* (Chapter Six), although it stands somewhat apart from the other plays of its group (namely the *Ajax* and the *OC*), as it is not concerned with a hero's transition from the here-and-now into the Beyond, still belongs with them, because its main preoccupation is with what was for the 5th century Athenian a central category, a central mode of ordering human experience, namely the polis. The play dramatizes the clash between an accursed aristocratic genos, the Labdacids, and the polis of Thebes that is struggling to release itself from the sequence of woes that successive generations of that very family have accumulated on it. This clash develops into an impasse that is left unresolved: on the one hand, Antigone, the representative of the accursed house, ends up like all the members of her natal family: she destroys herself (see esp. 875); on the other hand, Creon, the champion of the common cause (the σωτηρία of the polis), despite proclaiming sound political principles at the beginning of the play, ends up identifying the city with himself, thus negating its very essence, namely its communal character (see esp. 736–9). The impasse which the play presents runs deeper still: the polis appropriates and controls funerary ritual in an earnest attempt to serve long-term political ends, i.e. to crack down on anti-polis practices like Polyneices' treachery; the political and the religious spheres are assumed unproblematically to coincide, and so a traitor is *ipso facto* held guilty for offences not only against the state, but also against religion. By thus appropriating religion, however, the state runs the risk of secularizing things that are by definition transcendental.

⁷⁵ The concept of the divinity's transcendence of the human categories and taxonomies has been much explored, along the lines set by L. Gernet, by the Paris school (esp. J.-P. Vernant and M. Detienne), who have given it the now fashionable term 'alterité'. Nonetheless, they have focused mainly on Dionysus' 'alterity', thus ignoring the fact that —as was subsequently shown by Sourvinou-Inwood (1989a: 137, 148), (1989b: 164), (1990: 303) and by Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 198–9) —unknowability is a fundamental and all-encompassing category in Greek religion generally.

So Creon, trying to keep the polis in good order, finds himself subverting the cosmic order, whereas Antigone's persistence in championing the funerary rights of a traitorous brother is eventually justified. The tragic, and unresolved, dilemma of this play may be a reflection of a historical fact, namely of a very frail balance that the Athenian polis had to maintain: on the one hand, it was imperative for the state to safeguard the communal character of the polis, which means that religion — the 'royal way' for the few aristocratic families to confirm their solidarity and power — had to be subsumed under the control of the state; on the other hand, special care should be taken against any secularizing trends that might mar the essential attribute of divinity, i.e. transcendence: the dialectic between these two opposing tendencies is what constitutes the tragic world of the *Antigone*.

As a general comment on the plays of this second category I should quote Segal's (1978: 1184) very apposite remarks: "Eternity, being and non-being, cannot be confined or comprehended within the categories of human reason. The power of Sophocles' tragic heroism lies in its passionate and fearless openness to the forces which challenge and threaten the orderly framework of human existence: time, death, hatred, love. For this reason the tragic hero is always in some sense beyond the pale of civilization which can exist only by blocking out or delimiting those forces. It is part of the greatness of the fifth century that it allows the dialogue between the two sides to develop so fully. Tragedy is the outgrowth of this dialogue, this irresolvable dialectic, between the limited and the infinite, between man's civilizing, ordering energies and all that those energies cannot comprehend and master in the structures they so ambitiously create."

The Epilogue (Chapter Seven) deals briefly with the antithesis between human rationality and divine supra-rationality as manifested in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*. As it shows how the carefully constructed schemes and categories of the human reason collapse before the inscrutability of the Godhead, it can also be seen as a summary of the central point of this thesis.

0.4.2 Sophoclean ‘apophatism’ and the problem of language: conditional and interrogative clauses

The ‘apophatic’ approach, as we saw, precludes the use of ontological attributes as a descriptive framework within the confines of which to circumscribe the essence of the Godhead. This means that sentences like “God is just”, “God is benevolent”, “God willed it this way”, or their negations, are simply meaningless, for they seek to conceive and describe God in terms of human qualities, which is impossible. If we take this ‘apophatic’ principle to its logical extremes, we will have to admit that even the use of language is, in the case of transcendent entities like the gods, inappropriate and, in fact, equally meaningless; for even simply to speak of God entails an encroachment into spheres that cannot be reduced to human terms, so as to be described by human language.⁷⁶ Admittedly, we do not often find this idea explicitly stated in ancient texts; there is, however, a famous Pindaric passage that provides a striking instance thereof: it is O. 1. 35. The poet chastises the tradition about the Olympians’ unwittingly eating part of Pelops and offers his own ‘cleansed’ version of the story, in which there is no trace of Olympian cannibalism; nonetheless, Pindar still feels obliged to *apologize for speaking of the gods at all*: ἔστι δ’ ἀνδρὶ φάμεν εἰκότος ἀμφὶ δαιμόνων καλά· μείων γὰρ αἰτία. *Pace Verdenius,*⁷⁷ I fully endorse Gerber’s⁷⁸ (1982: 71) exegetical note on these lines: “When Pindar says that the ‘blame is less’, he presumably means that the risk of incurring blame is less, and the implication seems to be that such a risk is always present whenever one says anything about the gods, but that the risk is diminished if what one says is καλόν”. A similar idea can also be detected in Aeschylus too:⁷⁹ in

⁷⁶ The impossibility of using language in relation to the Godhead was fully argued for by Christian thinkers: see Lossky (1957:37).

⁷⁷ W.J. Verdenius, *Commentaries on Pindar*, Vol. II (Leiden 1988), p. 22.

⁷⁸ D.E. Gerber, *Pindar’s Olympian One: A Commentary* (Toronto 1982), p. 71.

⁷⁹ See Fraenkel (1950:II. 112) with bibliography.

passages like *Ag.* 182 (δαιμόνων δέ που χάρις βίαιος), *Pers.* 740-1, *Suppl.* 101-103 ([Zeus] ἤμενος ὄν φρόνημά πως ... ἐξέπραξεν ...) the use of *που* and *πως* suggests a tendency to avoid absolute statements regarding the gods. This is put much more explicitly in e.g. *A. Su.* 1057-8 (τί δὲ μέλλω φρένα Δίαν ἰ καθορᾶν, ὄψιν ἄβυσσον;) or *A. Su.* 87-90 (Διὸς ἕμερος οὐκ εὐθήρατος ἐτύχθη· δαυλοὶ γὰρ πραπίδων δάσκειό τε τείνουσιν πόροι κατιδεῖν ἄφραστοι).⁸⁰

The origin of such ideas may be detected in the liturgical tradition, and especially in cultic hymns. Thus, e.g., in the fifth stasimon of the *Antigone* (which is evidently modelled on liturgical forms) Dionysus is addressed as “god of many names” (1115 πολυώνυμε); in *?A. PV* 209-10 Prometheus’ mother is Θέμις ἰ καὶ Γαῖα, πολλῶν ὀνομάτων μορφὴ μία;⁸¹ similarly, Pindar (*I.* 5.1) says μάτερ Ἰλίου πολυώνυμε Θεία, while in *Call. Dian.* 3.7 Artemis asks for πολυωνυμίην, ἵνα μή μοι Φοῖβος ἐρίζῃ (cf. also *idem, Ap.* 69-71), and Aphrodite is addressed as πολυώνυμε καὶ πολύναιε in *Theocr.* 15. 109.⁸² In all these cases the implication seems to be that to address the god by a single name would appear to circumscribe him within the all-too-narrow confines of a single attribute, thus compromising his essential quality, which is the transcendence of all attributes; so, the plurality of names corresponds to the elusive multifariousness of the god’s essence. A similar feeling seems to underlie Heraclitus’ statement (22 B 32 D.-K.): ἔν τὸ σοφὸν μοῦνον

⁸⁰ According to Fraenkel (1950: II. 112 n. 1) both these passages are influenced by Hesiod, *Op.* 483f. ἄλλοτε δ’ ἄλλοῖος Ζηνὸς νόος αἰγιόχοιο, ἀργαλέος δ’ ἄνδρεςσι καταθνητοῖσι νοῆσαι.

⁸¹ See Griffith (1983: *ad loc.*).

⁸² Many of the instances have been drawn from Gow (1952: *ad loc.*). One may also compare the somewhat different *S. fr.* 941 R. and *Ar. Plut.* 1164. And in the Derveni papyrus (col. xviii. 12, as published, provisionally, in *ZPE* 47 [1982] following p.300) we read Δημήτηρ [Ἰ]έα Γῆ Μή[τ]ηρ Ἐστία Δηιώ, which implies the existence of a single deity behind those different names: West (1983b: 81, 93).

λέγεσθαι οὐκ ἐθέλει καὶ ἐθέλει Ζηνὸς ὄνομα:⁸³ the name “Zeus” of the traditional religion does convey something of the God’s real essence,⁸⁴ but is also inappropriate insofar as it implies the attribution of a limiting predicate to an entity that is beyond attributes.⁸⁵ This idea is even clearer in a celebrated passage from A. Ag. 160-1: Ζεὺς ὅστις ποτ’ ἐστίν, εἰ τόδ’ αὐτῷ φίλον κεκλημένω: as Fraenkel (1950: II. 99-100) points out, it is an age-old religious practice to invoke a god by a plurality of names, in order to make sure one does not offend him or fail to attract his attention by using the wrong name.⁸⁶ What is of great importance, however, is that “Aeschylus here takes over the heritage of a more primitive belief because he can make it serve his own advanced convictions. ὅστις ποτ’ ἐστίν: that means here not merely the god’s name and identity but his real nature and character. [...] Of the true nature of the almighty Lord of Justice we possess no real knowledge [...]”

⁸³ Pace Fatouros (1994: 69-70), I stick to D.-K.’s translation: “Eins, das allein Weise, will nicht und will doch mit dem Namen des Zeus benannt werden.”

⁸⁴ Cf. Axelos (1962: 124). Perhaps Heraclitus “in dem Namen des Zeus (Ζηνὸς ὄνομα) einen Hinweis auf das Urprinzip des Lebens (ζῆν) sieht”: Verdenius *apud* Gigon (1954: 159); Verdenius (and other scholars before him: see e.g. the literature cited by Marcovich [1967: 445] and Darcus Sullivan [1984: 288 n. 17]) seems to have been anticipated by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 5. 14. 115. 1 [II, p. 404 Stählin-Früchtel]) who associates this Heraclitean fragment with a Platonic passage (οἶδα ἐγὼ καὶ Πλάτωνα προσμαρτυροῦντα Ἡρακλείτῳ ...) which may be *Crat.* 396a-b: συμβαίνει οὖν ὀρθῶς ὀνομάζεσθαι οὗτος ὁ θεὸς [sc. Zeus] εἶναι, δι’ ὃν [cf. Δία] ζῆν ἀεὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ζῶσιν ὑπάρχει. On Zeus as a “speaking name” revealing (part of) the god’s essence cf. also Hes. *Op.* 2-4 Δί’ ἐννέπετε ... ὃν τε Δία βροτοὶ ἄνδρες ὁμῶς ἄφατοὶ τε φατοὶ τε, ῥητοὶ τ’ ἄρητοὶ τε Διὸς μέγαλοιο ἔκητι (see further Norden [1913: 259 n.1], West *ad loc.* and Snell [1975: 53], especially for the accentuation Δία, not Διά); also A. Ag. 1485 διὰ Διὸς παναιτίου ... (with the excellent commentary of Fraenkel [1950: III. *ad* 1495f.]).

⁸⁵ Cf. Kirk (1954: 392-3).

⁸⁶ See also Lloyd-Jones (1983: 85), who overstresses however the traditional element in the Aeschylean passage. For a classic typological analysis of such modes of address see Norden (1913: 144-47); on addresses to gods in general in Greek religion see again Norden (1913: 143-76).

(Fraenkel, *l.c.*).⁸⁷ Later, Euripides, in a typically philosophizing manner, takes up this idea in a famous passage (*Tro.* 884ff.): ὦ γῆς ὄχημα καπὶ γῆς ἔχων ἔδραν, ἰὸς τις ποτ' εἶ σύ, δυστόπαστος εἰδέναι, ἰ Ζεὺς, εἴτ' ἀνάγκη φύσεος εἴτε νοῦς βροτῶν, ἰ προσηυξάμην σε· πάντα γὰρ δι' ἀψόφου ἰ βαίνων κελεύθου κατὰ δίκην τὰ θνήτ' ἄγεις.⁸⁸ Cf. also *E. Or.* 418: δουλεύομεν θεοῖς, ὅ,τι ποτ' εἰσὶν οἱ θεοί; *Ba.* 894 ὅ,τι

⁸⁷ Cf. also Snell *apud* Kitto (1954: 200): “Es steckt [...] offenbar ursprünglich die Angst darin, dass es nicht der richtige Name ist. Aber ich glaube auch dass Äschylus diese populäre Volksmeinung dazu benützte um zu sagen [...] dass Zeus etwas so Grosses ist, das es für uns nicht vorstellbar ist”. See also L. Golden, “Zeus, whoever he is...”, *TAPhA* 92 (1961) 163–4. Lloyd-Jones (1983: 85–6) doubts the relation of the Aeschylean passage with the Heraclitean fragment B 32 D–K. quoted above in the text; but he barely offers any argument for that. — Mr Garvie suggests to me that the widely attested idea that men use one name for a person or a thing whereas gods use another (abundant material in West [1966: *ad* 831]; Kirk [1985: *ad* 1. 403–4]) may also reflect a belief in the fundamental epistemological / cognitive alterity of the gods: if the name reveals the nature (for instances of this idea see e.g. Kirk [1954: 117–20]), then the fact that men and gods use different names for the same persons or objects might imply that they also perceive the nature of this person or object differently.

⁸⁸ True, this last sentence, with its asseveration of Zeus' justice, diverges from the general stream of ‘apophatism’ which we have established as characteristic of Greek thought; cf. also e.g. *Eur. IT* 380–91: [Artemis cannot rejoice in human blood] οὐδένα γὰρ οἶμαι δαιμόνων εἶναι κακόν (391); also *HF* 1341–6 (despite the stories of the poets, the gods cannot have human vices and weaknesses); *fr.* 292.7N.: εἰ θεοί τι δρῶσιν αἰσχρόν, οὐκ εἰσὶν θεοί; *Tro.* 969–82. Such views go as far back as Hesiod who makes Zeus the protector of dike (*Op.* 36, 238–9, 252–4, 256–73, 279–85 etc.); indeed, Dike is Zeus' daughter (*Th.* 902; *Op.* 256). On the moral integrity of the gods see also e.g. *Pl. Euthphr.* 6a; *R.* 377e–383c (this idea is indeed a hallmark of Platonic theology); *Isocr.* 11. 41. Nonetheless, in both Euripides and Plato the presentation of such views has a polemic character (e.g. *HF* 1346 explicitly mentions the ‘wretched words’ of the ἀοιδοί; *Pl. R.* 377e–383c also castigates the singers' blasphemous tales), which implies that it is the *a-moral* (or *supra-moral*) character of the gods that must have been prevalent in earlier religious thought; cf. again Mikalson (1991: ch. 1 & 178–9), cited in n. 73.

ποτ' ἄρα τὸ δαιμόνιον;⁸⁹ HF 1263 Ζεὺς δ', ὅστις ὁ Ζεὺς;⁹⁰ also fr. 480 N.: Ζεὺς, ὅστις ὁ Ζεὺς, οὐ γὰρ οἶδα πλὴν λόγῳ, which, despite Chapouthier (1954: 213) and Rose (*apud* Kitto [1954: 199]), far from indicating an atheist (or even agnostic) point of view, is perfectly along the lines of the tradition whose earliest poetic expression is the above quoted A. Ag. 160-1.⁹¹

Although I am not generally concerned here with post-Sophoclean literature or thought, I think it useful to point to a manifestation of this idea in Plato (*Crat.* 400d-e), because it most categorically confirms the interpretation propounded here: the plurality of divine names implies that the essence of the gods cannot be contained in a single attribute; gods have many names because none of them suffices to describe their true nature.

ΕΡΜΟΓΕΝΗΣ. ... περὶ δὲ τῶν θεῶν τῶν ὀνομάτων [...] ἔχομεν ἄν που κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ἐπισκέψασθαι, κατὰ τίνα ποτὲ ὀρθότητα αὐτῶν τὰ ὀνόματα κεῖται;

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ. Ναὶ μὰ Δία ἡμεῖς γε [...] εἶπερ γε νοῦν ἔχομεν, ἓνα μὲν τὸν κάλλιστον τρόπον, ὅτι περὶ θεῶν οὐδὲν ἴσμεν, οὔτε

⁸⁹ Dodds (1960: *ad* 893-4) cites Dem. 21. 126 τὸ τῆς ὀσίας ὀτιδήποτ' ἐστί, τὸ σεμνὸν καὶ τὸ δαιμόνιον.

⁹⁰ Cf. Bond (1981: *ad loc.*), on whose remarks I have drawn.

⁹¹ Curiously enough Chapouthier (*l.c.*) sees the connection with the Aeschylean passage, but fails to appreciate its true significance: “mais comme il y a loin dans l' intention de l' une à l' autre formule: ce qui n' était qu' embarras devant les multiples aspects de Zeus [sc. in A. Ag. 160] devient incertitude sur sa propre existence [sc. in E. fr. 480 N.]; même intention dans *Oreste* 418: “nous sommes esclaves des dieux, quels que soient ces dieux”. Similarly Rose (*apud* Kitto [1954:199]): “[E. fr. 480N.] implies that the speaker does not even know if Zeus exists; for Aeschylus, his existence is certain, the doubt extending only to the detail of whether he should be called Zeus or by some other name.” Far from that: for Aeschylus the use of a name implies the assignment of certain attributes to the god, which unavoidably compromises the god's transcendence; basically the same idea underlies the Euripidean passages too.

περὶ αὐτῶν οὔτε περὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων, ἅττα ποτὲ αὐτοὶ ἑαυτοὺς
καλοῦσιν· δῆλον γὰρ ὅτι ἐκεῖνοί γε τᾶληθῆ καλοῦσι. δεῦτερος δ' αὖ
τρόπος ὀρθότητος, ὥσπερ ἐν ταῖς εὐχαῖς νόμος ἐστὶν ἡμῖν
εὐχεσθαι, οἵτινές τε καὶ ὀπόθεν χαίρουσιν ὀνομαζόμενοι, ταῦτα καὶ
ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς καλεῖν, ὡς ἄλλο μηδὲν εἰδότας· καλῶς γὰρ δὴ ἔμοιγε
δοκεῖ νενομίσθαι.⁹²

Sophocles evades this problem by couching references to gods or anything supernatural or transcendent in *conditional* or *interrogative* terms; direct assertions (or direct negations) are carefully avoided. A good and simple example of this *usus* is OT 904: ἀλλ', ὦ κρατύνων, εἴπερ ὀρθ' ἀκούεις, Ζεῦ πάντ' ἀνάσσων ...⁹³ The speaker feels compelled to qualify his absolute statement about the gods with an almost formulaic conditional clause, because such statements run counter to the apophatic view of divinity (God does not admit of humanly defined attributes).⁹⁴ Perhaps the most famous instance of this Sophoclean use of conditional clauses is Orestes' sinister reply to his sister's inquiry after the matricide has been performed (El. 1424-5): ἐν δόμοισι μὲν ἰκαλῶς, Ἀπόλλων εἰκαλῶς ἐθέσπισεν. The implications of this conditional clause are fully discussed in Chapter One, section 1.5.1; here I must confine myself to stressing that Orestes' frightful realization that he cannot know whether

⁹² Plato, of course, in other places does indeed make assertions about the gods' nature (e.g. *Phdr.* 246d-247e; *R.* 377e-383c); but he must have felt this to be an unusual deviation from traditional Greek attitudes on the matter, for he almost always took care to emphasize that such assertions are bound to be *provisional*, by reason of the irremediable limitedness and uncertainty of all human knowledge: e.g. *Phdr.* 246a; *Phd.* 85c-d; *Ti.* 29c (I owe these references to Ms Tania Gergel).

⁹³ I see no reason for Kane's (1975: 200) heretical translation: "if you truly deserve this name". For the mainstream interpretation, which I follow here, see Bollack (1990:III. 588-90).

⁹⁴ Cf. the similar thought in *S. fr.* 368 R.: θεοὶ γὰρ οὔποτ', εἴ τι χρὴ βροτῶν λέγειν, [...] ξυναινέσονται.

Apollo's oracle was καλῶς or not is set against his previous overconfidence that he has the god on his side.

Such a use of conditional clauses (especially with εἰ+indic.) may of course represent the equivalent of a causal clause with assertive force; cf. Moorhouse (1982: 279-80). There are, however, instances in which this syntagm may express an open condition (e.g. E. fr. 292.7 Ν² εἰ θεοί τι δρῶσιν αἰσχρόν, οὐκ εἰσὶν θεοί), or even a negation of the content of the protasis (e.g. Pl. *Phdr.* 228a εἰ Φαῖδρον ἀγνοῶ, καὶ ἑμαυτοῦ ἐπιλέλησμαι, where the *adynaton* in the apodosis cancels the truth of the protasis). The definition given by Ellendt-Genthe (1872: 198 s.v. εἰ, II) neatly preserves the balance between the assertive and the conditional force of such clauses: “εἰ significat *siquidem* et *quandoquidem*, quod ubi fit, non fit ratiocinatio, sed refertur εἰ ad unum quiddam vocabulum alterius enuntiati, quod circumlocutione amplius exponitur *cum dubitandi quaedam adsignificatione*” (emphasis mine). Of course, in theological contexts this *dubitandi quaedam adsignificatio*⁹⁵ implicit in the use of εἰ does not express literal *doubts* as to the *existence* of the gods (Sophocles is neither an agnostic nor an atheist); rather, it represents a refusal to make *absolute* statements about divinity. Such a refusal seems to me to be present even in passages like OC 621-3 ἴν' οὐμὸς ... νέκυς ... αἶμα πίεται, εἰ Ζεὺς ἔτι Ζεὺς χῶ Διὸς Φοῖβος σαφής:⁹⁶ granted, the events of the play may indicate that Zeus is still existent and Phoebus' oracles true; it is interesting, however, that this is never said in so many words, and that the conditional modality is preferred instead

⁹⁵ On which see also Chapouthier (1954: 214) à propos of Euripides: “‘Εἰ’ est un autre mot, d’ une ambiguïté perfide, car il signifie à la fois ‘si’ et ‘puisque’; il est susceptible d’ appuyer la croyance ou de l’ ébranler [...] ‘εἰ σοφὸς πέφυκας’ (*Phén.* 86) signifie-t-il ‘puisque tu es sage, étant donné ta sagesse’, ou au contraire, ‘si tu es sage, si l’ on doit croire à ta sagesse’”.

⁹⁶ The prophetess Cassandra speaks with similar caution in E. *Tro.* 356-8: εἰ γὰρ ἔστι Λοξίας, Ἰλένης γαμεῖ με δυσχερέστερον γάμον ἰὸ τῶν Ἀχαιῶν κλεινὸς Ἀγαμέμνων ἄναξ.

(cf. also 628 εἶπερ μὴ θεοὶ ψεύδουσί με). Speaking of divinity in assertive terms, even in order to affirm the validity of its decrees, is carefully avoided.

Much less commendable is to assume that manifestations of divine will in oracles, prophecies or dreams can be fully understood by humans. Even the ruthless Clytaemestra hesitates to give a definite interpretation of the frightening dream she has had (*El.* 646): εἰ μὲν πέφηνεν ἐσθλά, δὸς τελεσφόρα, ἢ εἰ δ' ἐχθρά, τοῖς ἐχθροῖσιν ἔμπαλιν μέθες, she prays to Apollo.⁹⁷ By contrast, the sympathetic Chorus rashly draw conclusions out of this dream: it seems to them to guarantee an unequivocally happy outcome (Chrysothemis, however, has repeatedly stressed that her report of the dream only *partially* reveals its content [e.g. 414, 426] — and therefore its significance is not patent). Granted, they *do* express this confidence in the conditional modality: εἰ μὴ ἔγωγε παράφρων μάντις ἔφην καὶ γνώμας λειπομένα σοφᾶς, εἴσιν ἂ πρόμαντις Δίκη (*El.* 472ff.);⁹⁸ also: ἦτοι μαντεῖαι βροτῶν οὐκ εἰσὶν ἐν δεινοῖς ὄνειροις οὐδ' ἐν θεσφάτοις εἰ μὴ τόδε φάσμα νυκτὸς εὖ κατασχήσει (*El.* 498). Nonetheless, one may safely assume that their use of conditional clauses is a mere formality, and that they do in fact regard themselves as seers able to utilize oracular divination and the interpretation of dreams as safe guides to the truth: after all, their overconfidence in their cognitive potential is all too clear in the rest of the song, where their certainty about the dream as an unproblematically good portent is expressed in the most unambiguous terms: cf. esp. 479-81 ... ὕπεστί μοι θάρσος ἀδυπνῶων κλύουσιν ... ὄνειράτων; 489-91 ἦξει ... Ἐρινύς; 495-8 πρὸ τῶνδε τοι θάρσος ἢ μήποτε μήποθ' ... ἢ ἀψεγὲς

⁹⁷ For reasons why the dream is ambiguous see Bowra (1944: 224-25); cf. Devereux (1976: 229).

⁹⁸ Cf. *OT* 1086-7 εἶπερ ἐγὼ μάντις εἰ-ἢ μὴ καὶ κατὰ γνώμαν ἴδρις; again the Chorus couch their (evident) self-assuredness in conditional terms. They will, of course, prove woefully wrong.

πελᾶν τέρας ἢ τοῖς δρῶσι καὶ συνδρῶσιν.⁹⁹ Yet, the far from unequivocal ending of the play severely qualifies their certainty.

Much the same is the use of the interrogative mode in *Ant.* 522, where Antigone's reply to Creon's carefully argued thesis is a mere question: τίς οἶδεν εἰ κάτω ἔστιν εὐαγῆ τάδε; The divine law which the heroine claims to value more than human laws is deliberately left unspecified: all things divine are by definition inscrutable, unapproachable by the cognitive faculties of the human intellect. It is this same idea of the unknowability of divinity that also underlies Antigone's conditional clauses at 925: εἰ μὲν οὖν τάδ' ἐστὶν ἐν θεοῖς καλά, ... εἰ δ' οἶδ' ἁμαρτάνουσιν... No one can know for sure which things are approved by the gods and which are not. The only person who professes to have full and secure knowledge (cf. 1044-5 εὖ γὰρ οἶδ'...) that surpasses even that of seers (cf. 631: τάχ' εἰσόμεσθα μάντεων ὑπέρτερον) is Creon, who eventually finds his over-confidence shattered: the seer Teiresias points out to him that, far from having superior knowledge, he suffers from the disease of folly (1051-2).

There is a similar situation in the *Oedipus at Colonus*. At *OC* 1267-8 Polyneices claims with excessive confidence that ἔστι γὰρ καὶ Ζηνὶ σύνθακος θρόνων Αἰδῶς ἐπ' ἔργοις πᾶσι. Yet little does he know about the grim destiny that his father is about to impose on him with his curses. Oedipus, who has acquired prophetic power, enjoins what we know is the truth (1381-2): [you and your brother will perish] εἴπερ ἐστὶν ἡ παλαίφατος Δίκη ξύνεδρος Ζηνὸς ἀρχαίοις νόμοις. Amazingly, even he who has now acquired prophetic power carefully avoids making categorical statements about divinity: he uses conditional clauses! And Polyneices, as if realizing now that no assertion about things transcendental can be valid, adopts, in his parting words, the conditional

⁹⁹ Text according to Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990a). Cf. Kaibel (1896: ad 498): "was der Chor Anfangs als Ahnung und Vermuthung, dann immer zuversichtlicher ausgesprochen, das wird ihm zum Schluss unumstössliche Sicherheit".

modality (OC 1407): ἐάν αἱ τοῦδ' ἀραὶ πατρὸς τελῶνται [...] μή μ' ἀτιμάσητέ γε.

The same excessive certainty about the gods turns out to be erroneous in the *Philoctetes* too. The hero vehemently asserts in the most categorical terms his secure knowledge of the divine plan (*Phil.* 1035-39): ὀλεῖσθε δ' ἠδικηκότες | τὸν ἄνδρα τόνδε, θεοῖσιν εἰ δίκης μέλει. | ἔξοιδα δ' ὡς μέλει γ'· ἐπεὶ οὔποτ' ἂν στόλον | ἐπλεύσατ' ἂν τόνδ' οὔνεκ' ἀνδρὸς ἀθλίου — | εἰ μή τι κέντρον θεῖον ἦγ' ὑμᾶς — ἐμοῦ. True, the κέντρον that spurred on the Greeks was indeed θεῖον; still, despite Philoctetes' ἔξοιδα, it is far from certain that the gods have incited the Greek expedition because they care about Philoctetes: his intention to go back to Greece with the help of Neoptolemus is thwarted by Heracles, who leaves him with no other alternative but to endure what he has been most loath to do, namely fight on the side of the Greeks.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ I have found only one apparent exception to the Sophoclean use of conditional or interrogative clauses with reference to divinity: it is the famous second stasimon of *OT*, esp. 863-72. The laws “generated in aether”, “by Olympus”, and having a “great immortal god in them” have been taken by most commentators (Jebb [1893: ad 865]; Kamerbeek [1967: ad 866]; Bollack [1990: III. 544-6]) to mean the *human* ‘unwritten laws’ (cf. also e.g. Krause [1976: 180-1]). With this view, the Chorus would attribute divine character to what is plainly a human construction, projecting, as it were, human moral preoccupations on the divine plane —an idea that would be surprisingly un-Sophoclean. Such a view can be discarded: the Chorus’ concern throughout this stasimon is with the demonstration of the *validity of oracles*; and I should rather think that it is this validity that the Chorus present as the universal ‘divine law generated in aether’ etc. Thus interpreted, the passage fits nicely into the general picture we have created so far: Sophocles makes no direct statements about the gods, save to assert their existence and the validity of their pronouncements.

0.4.3 Some conclusions on divine and human knowledge in Sophocles

A fundamental principle of the Sophoclean tragic cosmology is that divinity is essentially unapproachable to the human mind; that means that divine will cannot be communicated in its entirety by any means — oracles, dreams, prophecies etc. Nevertheless, we should not go as far as to suggest that Sophocles (*qua* dramatist, at least) shared Xenophanes' extreme position that communication between God and Man through oracles is entirely impossible (see again p. xxii). Far from arriving at a wholesale denial of the validity of oracular divination, he asseverates it either explicitly (as e.g. in the first stasimon of *Oedipus Tyrannus*) or implicitly, through the oracles' eventual coming-to-pass as represented in the development of individual plays.¹⁰¹ Nonetheless, for Sophocles divine *noos* and human mind still represent two incommensurably different cognitive levels, which means that oracles, *qua* manifestation of the divine will, do not, as a rule, fit completely into the human modes of perception and understanding — that they normally transcend the narrow confines of human mental categories.¹⁰² It is precisely this point that Sophocles chooses to exploit dramatically: the *tension* between the natural human tendency to assume that oracles — and therefore divine will, and even divinity itself — can be *fully* and *perfectly* known to Man, on the one hand, and the essential impossibility thereof on the other. Oracles *do* contain the truth, but only *in posse*: as they are almost invariably couched in ambiguous, multi-interpretable terms, Man should

¹⁰¹ I am not suggesting that Sophocles *qua* person believed in oracles: this is not only impossible to know, but is also of no importance to my argument. What I am concerned with is rather the use Sophocles makes of oracles in his plays, and the tragic world-view that this use evinces; such a world-view is primarily an artistic means, a way of moulding the human experience of the world into a specific artistic form; it may therefore not coincide with Sophocles' personal *Weltanschauung*. On the artistic function of oracles in epic and tragedy see further Bushnell (1988:Ch. 1 *passim*, esp. 4-5).

¹⁰² Cf. Ehrenberg (1954:27).

beware of assuming all-too-easily that he can attain to a complete understanding of divine will. And even when an oracle is clear in its phrasing (as is the case with Apollo's oracle in the *Electra*), this is no guarantee that full and clear insight can be gained into the plans of the gods: the human perspective still remains too limited, incapable of gaining a synthetic view of things; yet, we are all too often tempted uncritically to assume that the essence of divinity can be exhaustively conceived by our limited intellectual faculties, or described by the poor resources of our language — thereby reducing the infiniteness and incomprehensibility of divine *noos* to the level of our limited view, only to realize, too late, that we are ineluctably prey to our limited understanding.

APPENDIX

Logos in Heraclitus

Langue and parole in F. de Saussure

The following are quoted from Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale* (ed. by C. Bally & A. Sechehaye). Lausanne & Paris: Payot 1916, p. 39. Emphasis added.

“La langue existe dans la collectivité sous la forme d’ une somme d’ empreints déposées dans chaque cerveau, à peu près comme un dictionnaire dont tous les exemplaires, identiques, seraient répartis entre les individus [...] *C’ est donc quelque chose qui est dans chacun d’ eux, tout en étant commun à tous et placé en dehors de la volonté des dépositaires.* Ce mode d’ existence de la langue peut être représenté par la formule:

$1+1+1+1 \dots = I$ (modèle collectif).

De quelle manière la parole est-elle présente dans cette même collectivité? Elle est la somme de ce que les gens disent, et elle comprend: a) des combinaisons individuelles *dépendant de la volonté de ceux qui parlent*, b) des actes de phonation *également volontaires*, nécessaires pour l'exécution de ces combinaisons.

Il n'y a donc rien de collectif dans la parole; les manifestations en sont individuelles et momentanées. Ici il n'y a rien de plus que la somme des ces particuliers selon la formule:

$(1+1'+1''+1''' \dots).$

ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ ΕΙ ΚΑΛΩΣ ΕΘΕΣΠΙΣΕΝ:
KNOWLEDGE AND UNKNOWABILITY
IN THE *ELECTRA*

Somebody will have to be Agamemnon, somebody the murderess
Odysseus Elytis, "Agamemnon"

1.0.1 Introduction. Orestes in Attic tradition and in the *Electra*

If an Athenian spectator, already familiar with the Homeric version of Orestes' legend, expected to see a similarly heroic Orestes in the Sophoclean version too, then surely the first lines of the play would confirm his expectations.¹ The Paedagogus, emphasizing that Orestes is the offspring of the glorious leader of the Greek army at Troy (1-2), shows to the young man his native city, which he had always been craving to see (2-3). The "old Argos, sacred land of Inachus' daughter" (4-5), the "agora of the wolf-slaying god" (6-7), the "glorious temple of Hera" (7-8), and the markedly Homeric πολύχρυσοι Μυκῆναι (cf. 9) — all of them create a heroic atmosphere and recall a heroic past which Orestes supposedly has come back to restore to its ancient glory. However, it is this very description of the action's setting that contains the first sinister

¹ See *Od.* 1.298-300 (cf. 40-41), 3.196-98. Orestes is there presented as a paragon of male virtue. The similarity of language between the Homeric passages and our play is, perhaps, significant: e.g. *Od.* 1.298 οἶον κλέος ἔλαβε δῖος Ὀρέστης ~ *El.* 60 κάξενέγκωμαι κλέος; *Od.* 1.299-300 ἔκτανε πατροφονῆα ... ὅς οἱ πατέρα κλυτὸν ἔκτα (cf. *Od.* 3.197-98) ~ *El.* 14 πατρὶ τιμωρὸν φόνου; *Od.* 1.41 ὀππὸτ' ἄν ἠβήσῃ ~ *El.* 159 ἐν ἠβᾷ; *Od.* 1.41 καὶ ἦς ἰμείρεται αἴης ~ *El.* 4 τὸ παλαιὸν Ἄργος οὐπόθεις. For a detailed account of the Homeric reminiscences in the prologue see Davidson (1988: 50).

hints:² Argos is further defined by an one-line apposition (5 τῆς οἰστροπλήγος ἄλσος Ἰνάχου κόρης) which unexpectedly obscures the heroic splendour of the passage, since the ensuing reference to Hera's temple inevitably recalls Io's nightmarish pursuit by her jealous rival. Moreover, the derivation (perhaps pseudo-etymologizing) of Apollo's cult-epithet Lykeios from his slaughtering of a wolf³ (6) is an appositely bloody preamble to the apex of this series of ambiguities, namely the juxtaposition of Μυκήνας τὰς πολυχρύσους (9) with πολύφθορον [...] δῶμα Πελοπιδῶν (10), where the chiasmus and the use of πολυ- as first component underscore the paradox of Orestes' mission:⁴ he will try to restore the wealth and prosperity of his race (cf. 72) but only by bloodshed and destruction (37 σφαγᾶς).⁵ What is more, this bloody struggle will not be a heroic battle in the Iliadic mould, but an act of sheer δόλος (36-37).

By this point the audience must have suspected that Orestes perhaps will not perform an unblemished act of happy heroism. Later in the prologue the disturbing forebodings are intensified. However, in order fully to understand them, it will be necessary to make a digression at this point and make a rough survey of Orestes' image in Attic folklore. In gen-

² On these hints cf. Segal's (1981: 268-69) different perspective.

³ For Apollo Lykeios see Jebb (205-206), Farnell (1907b: 113-23), Nilsson (1967: 536-38). Farnell (1907b: 113-16) rejects the derivation (accepted by Jebb, among others) of Λύκειος from root *λυκ—(='light', cf. ἀμφιλύκη, λυκάβας) and associates it with λύκος (familiar animal of the god, a remnant, perhaps, of direct animal-worship). *Contra* Nilsson (1967: 537): "es ist ausgeschlossen, daß Apollon einmal in Wolfgestalt auftrat". However, this did not prevent the poets from associating the name Lykeios with the wolf; cf. Nilsson (1967: 536 with nn. 12, 13), Segal (1966: 477 with n.11), (1981: 465 n.57). Jebb (205) also correctly remarks: "The sense which Sophocles here affixes to Λύκειος was undoubtedly that which had the widest acceptance in ancient Greece: the 'wolf-god' was the 'wolf-slayer'".

⁴ Cf. Kamerbeek (*ad* 10). On the modification of the Homeric colouring of πολυχρύσους because of its juxtaposition with the sinister πολύφθορον see also Davidson (1988: 51 n.44).

⁵ Cf. Segal (1981: 252; cf. 268). For a different interpretation of the Paedagogus' speech see Sheppard (1918: 82).

eral, it seems that in Attic popular belief Orestes was a most malicious and most fearsome ἥρως. Far from being a heroic (in our meaning of the word) model, he was believed to wander at night (presumably as a ghost), beating Athenian passers-by and, perhaps, stripping them of their clothes.

Three passages from Aristophanes are particularly illuminating:

a) Ar. Av. 1482ff.: ἔστι δ' αὖ χώρα πρὸς αὐτῷ | τῷ σκότῳ πόρρω
τις ἐν | τῇ λύχνων ἐρημία, | ἔνθα τοῖς ἥρωσιν ἄνθρω- | ποι
ξυναριστῶσι καὶ ξύν- | εἰσι πλὴν τῆς ἐσπέρας. | τηνικαῦτα δ' οὐκέτ'
ἦν | ἀσφαλὲς ξυντυγχάνειν. | εἰ γὰρ ἐντύχοι τις ἥρῳ | τῶν βροτῶν
νύκτωρ Ὀρέστη, | γυμνὸς ἦν πληγεὶς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ | πάντα τὰπιδέξια.

b) Ar. Av. 712: εἶτα δ' Ὀρέστη χλαῖναν ὑφαίνειν, ἵνα μὴ ῥιγῶν
ἀποδύη.

c) Ar. Ach. 1162 ff.: τοῦτο μὲν αὐτῷ κακὸν ἐν, κἄθ' ἕτερον
νυκτερινὸν γένοιτο. | ἠπιαλῶν γὰρ οἴκαδ' ἐξ ἰππασίας βαδίζων, |
εἶτα κατάξειέ τις αὐτοῦ μεθύων τῆς κεφαλῆς Ὀρέστης |
μαινόμενος.

Many controversial interpretations have been proposed for the above cited passages. According to the scholiast on Ar. Av. 1484b and 1490a (p. 215 Holwerda), who is followed by some modern scholars,⁶ we have to assume here a reference to a certain (Athenian?) Orestes, son of Timocrates, who at nights used to strip passers-by of their clothes; in that case, the phrase ἥρῳ Ὀρέστη would jocularly associate him with the homonymous son of Agamemnon (cf. schol. on 1490a: ἥρῳα αὐτόν φησι διὰ τὴν ὁμωνυμίαν τὴν πρὸς τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονος υἱὸν Ὀρέστην). Others suppose that “Orestes” had become a nickname for highwaymen or drunken hooligans who used to attack and rob passers-by (cf. Alex. fr. 112 K.-A.). This could be confirmed by Is. viii. 3 (Διοκλέα τὸν Φλυέα τὸν Ὀρέστην ἐπικαλούμενον; *ibid.* 44: τὸν Ὀρέστην τοῦτον τὸν

⁶ E.g. Rogers (1906: ad 1482); Lesky (RE 18.1 [1939] col. 982); Sommerstein (1987: ad 1490-3); Dunbar (1995: ad 712, 1490-93). Cf. also Woodard (1964: 165).

κακῶς ἀπολούμενον). This latter view seems to me more plausible,⁷ but I should, at any rate, fully endorse Nilsson's (1967: 183) prudently cautious conclusion on Ar. Av. 1482ff.: "Der Witz, der dahinter steckt, entgeht uns, echter Volksglaube muß dem aber zugrunde liegen" (cf. also Wilamowitz [1959: II, 14]). Whether a man named (or nicknamed) Orestes once lived in Athens or whether "Orestes" was a generic name for violent revellers, Aristophanes' jokes would probably not work unless a popular belief existed that the *Mycenaean hero Orestes'* ghost appeared at nights and harmed the people.

One further point: the belief was current in antiquity that ἥρωες in general were evil-doers, and would especially harm whoever would pass by their tombs. One should consider, *inter alia*, the following passages:

a) Men. fr. 394 Koerte: οἱ γὰρ ἥρωες | κακοῦν ἔτοιμοι μάλλον ἢπερ ὠφελεῖν [ἢ εὐεργετεῖν *vulg.*].⁸

b) Chamael. *apud* Ath. 11. 461 c: χαλεπούς γὰρ καὶ πλήκτας τοὺς ἥρωας νομίζουσι καὶ μάλλον νύκτωρ ἢ μεθ' ἡμέραν.

c) Hsch. κ 4040 Latte: κρείττονας: τοὺς ἥρωας οὕτω λέγουσιν. δοκοῦσι δὲ κακωτικοί τινες εἶναι. διὰ τοῦτο καὶ οἱ παριόντες τὰ ἥρωα σιγὴν ἔχουσι μή τι βλαβῶσιν. Cf. also Phot. s.v. κρείττονες (I,

⁷ Arguments in favour of this view have been provided by e.g. Zanetto & Del Corno (1987: ad 712, 1482/3-92/3) and, with very sound argumentation, by Rennie (1909: ad 1166) and Starkie (1909: ad 1168); cf. Rogers (1910: ad 1163) and Higham (1932: 103, cf.105). Van Leeuwen (1901: ad 1166sq.) accepts that Orestes is a nickname but still thinks that it refers to a real person (*coll.* Eupol. fr. *179 K.-A., Suid. β 374 [I, 479 Adler]). His arguments however (cf. also van Leeuwen [1902: ad 712, 1485-1493]) are unconvincing. Hofmann (1976: 201-202) agrees that "Orestes" must be here "ein Spitzname oder Stereotyp" but does not accept any relation with Agamemnon's son; he would rather follow Müller-Strübing's (*Aristophanes und die historische Kritik*, Leipzig 1873, p. 33) suggestion that the nickname stemmed from Echekratidas' son Orestes, the Thessalian pretender to the throne (Thuc. 1.111). Nonetheless, I cannot see any reason why, as Hofmann (1976: 201-202) puts it, "der Name Orestes aber rühre sicher nicht von dem tragischen Heros her, auf den mit μαινόμενος und ἥρωας angespielt sei ..." [cf. Ar. Ach. 1165].

350 Naber).

Of course, the ἦρωες were not imagined *only* as malicious revenants: their power to harm was complemented by a beneficent function, with the resulting duality being a typical trait of cult-heroes *qua* chthonic figures.⁹ Thus e.g. Oedipus in S. *OC* (1518ff.) promises that his tomb will help the Athenians against the Thebans, while we are told that Cimon transferred Theseus' relics from Scyros to Athens;¹⁰ moreover, according to Herodotus (i. 67-68) the Spartans (NB: *not* the Athenians!) had to bring Orestes' bones from Tegea to Sparta, in the belief that they were thus enlisting his help in the war against Arcadia.¹¹ Therefore, one should not suppose that in the *Aves* passage Orestes is presented as an evil-doer merely because heroes were believed to be evil-doers: it must have been particularly Orestes' name itself that bore sinister connotations. A passage from Pl. *Cra.* (394e) excellently illuminates what must have been the typical Attic view of Orestes: ὥσπερ γε καὶ ὁ Ὀρέστης [...] κινδυνεύει ὀρθῶς ἔχειν, εἴτε τις τύχη ἔθετο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα εἴτε καὶ ποιητῆς τις, τὸ θηριῶδες τῆς φύσεως καὶ τὸ ἄγριον αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ ὀρεινὸν¹² ἐνδεικνύμενος τῷ ὀνόματι.

Turning now to our main argument, I think that these disturbing connotations of Orestes' name, along with his peculiarly Attic aspect as a malicious spirit of the Underworld, are exploited in this play. First of all, Orestes himself devotes nine lines (56-64) to show, with a strikingly emphatic phrasing, that spreading the tidings of one's own death is of

⁸ Cf. Zenob. V. 60 (*CPG* I, p. 145 Leutsch & Schneidewin).

⁹ On this dual power of the chthonians, including cult-heroes, see above all A. Henrichs in H. Hofmann & A. Harder (eds), *Fragmenta Dramatica* (Göttingen 1991), 161-201, esp. 192-3. Hofmann (1976: 204 n.3) feasibly argues that in Aristophanes' lost play *Ἡρώες* the heroes themselves explicitly claimed to punish evil-doers but also to reward good people; cf. R. Merkelbach *ZPE* 1 (1967) 161-2.

¹⁰ Plu. *Thes.* 36, *Cim.* 8; Paus. iii.3.7.

¹¹ Cf. e.g. Nilsson (1967: 189).

¹² Cf. Phot. (II, 26 Naber): ὀρέστης ('Ορ—Porson): ἐν ὄρεσι διαιτῶμενος; also Suid. ο 537 (III, 554 Adler).

course ominous, but when such false news results in salvation, glory (60) and κέρδος (61), one must not hesitate.¹³ So, by line 65 the audience have realized that Orestes' death will be a sham. However, at 65-66 a suprisingly contradictory statement comes forth: as a result of those false tidings (65 φήμης), alive (66 δεδορκότα) as he will be, he will shine *like a star* upon his foes (66). Most critics have seen here an allusion to the Homeric image of a star as a sign of disaster (*Il.* 11.62, 22.26ff.).¹⁴ It should be added that this image is here combined with the popular belief that *people become stars after their death* (cf. *Ar. Pax* 832-33: οὐκ ἦν ἄρ' οὐδ' ὃ λέγουσι, κατὰ τὸν ἀέρα | ὡς ἀστέρες γιγνόμεθ', ὅταν τις ἀποθάνῃ; also *AP* 7.670 ['Plato'], imitated by the anonymous funeral epigram 585 Peek).¹⁵ So, Orestes will be a living dead (this must be the point of the juxtaposition of δεδορκώς with ἄστρον [66]), and indeed a maleficent one, recalling the Homeric οὐλιος ἀστήρ.

My hypothesis that Sophocles exploits Attic popular perceptions of Orestes may be further corroborated. At 1228-29 Electra suggestively remarks that both her brother's death and his 'resurrection' have been effected by means of tricks, μηχαναί. This, as well as the Paedagogus' ambivalent phrase at 1342 (he says that Orestes is, for those in the palace, εἷς τῶν ἐν "Αἰδου, carefully avoiding the word τεθνηκότα used by Orestes one line before), are consistent with the folk belief that Orestes, as a ἦρωσ, was neither dead nor alive: he was a revenant. Likewise, as Segal (1966: 524) has remarked, the image of Hermes leading Orestes into

¹³ Cf. Jebb (*ad* 59f.) with the parallel *E. Hel.* 1050 there cited. See also Winnington-Ingram (1980: 236 with n.63). Adams (1957: 64) curiously suggests that Orestes' "misgivings" about being reported dead stem from his "scruples" about killing his mother; but as Linforth (1963: 91 n.1) has remarked, "there is not the slightest hint [...] that he feels any such scruple until the deed is done".

¹⁴ E.g. Jebb (*ad* 65f.), Davidson (1988: 60). Of course, a star is also a stock image of beauty and splendour (e.g. *Il.* 6. 401; cf. *Hor. Carm.* 3.9.21); however, Orestes' beauty is manifestly irrelevant here!

¹⁵ For discussion see D.L. Page, *Further Greek Epigrams* (Cambridge 1981), 161. Cf. also Segal (1966: 491). Seaford (1994b: 278-9) sees here allusions to mystic ritual.

the dark palace (1396 σκότῳ) may recall the god's function as νεκροπομπός, conductor of souls to the dark Hades. Finally, the statement of the Chorus at 1417-8 (ζῶσιν οἱ ἰγᾶς ὑπαὶ κείμενοι¹⁶) as well as the riddle of Orestes at 1477-78 (as interpreted by Longman [1954: 193-94]¹⁷) seem further to confirm the view expounded here.

Still, it could be objected that in Athens of Sophocles' time these disturbing associations of Orestes' persona might have been less acutely felt in the light of A. *Eu.*, produced only a generation earlier, which dramatized Orestes' acquittal before the Areopagus court (thus e.g. Linforth [1963: 122], endorsed by Stinton [1990: 476]);¹⁸ indeed, Aeschylus specifically refers to Orestes' *posthumous* status as a *protector* of Athens against its enemies (*Eu.* 762ff., esp. 767 ἐν τάφοις). However, Jacoby (*FGrHist* 3b Suppl. [vol. I] pp. 24-25 with the relevant notes) has convincingly shown, I think,¹⁹ that Orestes' acquittal before the Areopagus seems to have been not the common Attic belief, but only Aeschylus' personal solution to the dilemma between vengeance for a father's death on one hand and the horror of matricide on the other, between paternal and maternal rights, between new and old gods.²⁰ Clearly, a literary work,

¹⁶ ὑπαὶ κείμενοι Brunck: ὑποκείμενοι codd.

¹⁷ "thou, a living man, art replying to the dead on equal terms", i.e. not being superior to them as you had previously thought. For the idea of the dead (Agamemnon) taking revenge through the living (Orestes) cf. A. *Cho.* 886.

¹⁸ Other ancient sources: Hellanic. *FGrHist* 4 F 169 Jacoby; Dem. 23.66, 74; Aristid. *Or.* 1.48 (I.1, p. 24 Lenz) etc. For more references see e.g. Sommerstein (1989: 4 with nn.).

¹⁹ Those who, like e.g. Parker (1983: 386) or Sommerstein (1989: 5), reject Jacoby's theory do so without any arguments. Podlecki (1989: 4-5) understands that Jacoby was right.

²⁰ Sheppard's (1927a: 3) view on the matter is also worth considering. As to an allegedly older version about an ἐξενιαυτισμός — a purificatory exile — of Orestes (to be inferred from E. *Or.* 1643ff.), it does not seem to have been an Athenian tradition. Lesky (*RE* 18.1 [1939] col. 985) speaks of an "Arkadische Version", since it is well known that "...Euripides gerne entlegene Lokalsagen aufgreift...". Besides, the possibility that the Athenian clan of Eupatridae claimed to be Orestes' descendants is no argument against my view of Orestes as a harmful *revenant* in Athenian folklore: such a descent was

however influential, would hardly be likely to alter so fundamentally a feeling entrenched, no doubt, in the Athenian psyche²¹ — especially since this feeling was conceivably associated with, and *regularly* expressed through, established Athenian cult practices. For Orestes' unpurified guilt was arguably kept alive in the memory of the Athenians by the festival of the Choes. On that day, everyone had to drink the new wine from a separate jug; the *aition* for this custom, according to our sources,²² was that the Athenian king Demophon (or Pandion) offered hospitality to Orestes who had sought refuge in Athens, but had him drink from a separate cup, so as not to pollute his fellow-drinkers, defiled as he was from matricide.²³ Now, as Jacoby (*FGrHist* 3b Suppl. [vol. II] p.28 n.28) remarks, “the aition of the Choes, like all these aitia, originally was an independent story, invented for explaining the custom, with nothing in view beyond that”; therefore, it is possible that the story had no conclusion (although Jacoby [*l.c.*] thinks it might have had one), thus focusing exclusively on Orestes' religious impurity. Even if we assume that the story *did* have a conclusion (presumably Orestes' purification by the king Demophon / Pandion), there is still another aspect of the Choes festival that verifies Orestes' associations with the harmful spirits of the Underworld: the day of the Choes was a *μιαρὰ ἡμέρα*, on which the souls were believed to come up on the earth from Hades,²⁴ so the people used a

never claimed, as has been conclusively shown, on independent grounds, by F. Jacoby, *Atthis. The Local Chronicles of Ancient Athens* (Oxford 1949) 263 n.156.

²¹ Euripides, for one, felt free to deviate from the Aeschylean precedent at least once: at *IT* 968-82 only some of the Erinyes accept the Areopagus' verdict, whereas the others carry on persecuting Orestes.

²² E.g. E. *IT* 947-60; Phanodem. *FGrHist* 325 F 11 Jacoby; Plu. *Mor.* 613b, 643a; schol. *Ar. Eq.* 95 (p. 34 Mervyn Jones & Wilson); schol. *Ar. Ach.* 961a (p. 122 Wilson). A full list of references is provided by Pickard-Cambridge (1968:1-8).

²³ See Burkert (1983: 221-22), (1985a: 238). Cf. also Knox (1979: 185); Brelich (1958: 228 n.5): “... proprio ad Atene il personaggio di Oreste era circondato da un' atmosfera inquietante: si pensi all' *aition* della festa Choes ...”. *Contra* Stinton (1990:473).

²⁴ Photius s.v. *μιαρὰ ἡμέρα* (I, 423 Naber), Deubner (1932: 111-12). Photius (*l.c.*) says that the *ψυχὰι τῶν τελευτησάντων* were believed to ascend during the whole month Anthesterion, and Hesychius (μ 1314 Latte) speaks of all the days

number of apotropaic means (such as chewing on hawthorn, ῥάμνος, painting the doors with pitch etc.; perhaps also τὰ ἐκ τῶν ἀμαξῶν, sc. σκώμματα: Phot. s.v. [II, 197 Naber]) in order to ward off ghosts.²⁵ There was also perhaps on the same day (although it seems to have formally belonged to the next day, that of the Chytroi) a sacrifice to Hermes Chthonios.²⁶ Therefore, the Anthesteria festival, and particularly the day of the Choes, would not only recall Orestes as a defiled murderer but also place him on a par with the spirits of the Underworld imagined to haunt Athens on that day — an association that would nicely square with Orestes' status as a *revenant*.

1.0.2 Agamemnon and Orestes: hero and anti-hero

Before I proceed to my main argument, I would like to refer briefly to the important passage from Plato's *Cratylus* mentioned above (p. 5). This passage makes clear that Agamemnon was considered a paradigm of

of Anthesterion as *μιαραία*. At any rate, Burkert (1983: 218 with n.11) is right to criticize the view (held by e.g. Pickard-Cambridge [1968: 13-14]) that the Choes were the day of merriment, and the Chytroi the day of the dead (*μιαρὰ ἡμέρα*).

²⁵ See Phot. *l.c.* and s.v. ῥάμνος (II, 128 Naber). Significant is also the phrase *θύραζε Κᾶρες* (or *Κῆρες*), whether it refers to the dead souls that were imagined to haunt the city at the Anthesteria (thus e.g. Deubner [1932: 113-14]) or, as Burkert (1983: 228-29) suggests, to mummers viewed as spirits of the dead (or “aboriginal inhabitants”; cf. Burkert [1985a: 238]).

²⁶ See Theopomp. Hist. *FGrHist* 115 F 347b Jacoby with Wilfstrand's emendation *τοῖς Χουσίῳ* for the MSS. *ἔχουσιν* (*apud* Nilsson [1967: 594 n.7], who brilliantly defends the correction); cf. Burkert (1983: 239-40 with nn.4 & 6). In view of Didymus' information (*ap. schol. Ar. Ach.* 1076a(ii), p. 134 Wilson) that the Choes and the Chytroi took place on the same day, Nilsson's (1967: 594 n.7, 596) explanation seems quite plausible: the sacrifice to Hermes “an dem Vorabend der Chytren, d.h. dem Abend nach dem Choentag, stattfand” (cf. also Burkert [1983: 239]), because, according to the religious calendar, the new day (Chytroi) began in the evening of the previous day (Choes); so, a ritual that formally took place on the Chytroi day (i.e. in the Choes evening) “wurde [...] *volkstümlich dem Choentag zugerechnet*” (my emphasis).

heroic virtue and loftiness, so that in comparison to him Orestes seemed to be an abnormality (παρὰ φύσιν). Pl. Cra. 394d-395b is worth quoting: ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ. τοῖς μὲν δὴ κατὰ φύσιν γιγνομένοις τὰ αὐτὰ ἀποδοτέον ὀνόματα. ΕΡΜΟΓΕΝΗΣ. πάνυ γε. ΣΩ. τί δὲ τοῖς παρὰ φύσιν, οἳ ἂν ἐν τέρατος εἶδει γένωνται; οἷον ὅταν ἐξ ἀνδρός ἀγαθοῦ καὶ θεοσεβοῦς ἀσεβῆς γένηται, ἄρ' οὐχ ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν, κἄν ἵππος βοῶς ἔκγονον τέκη, οὐ τοῦ τεκόντος δήπου ἔδει τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ γένους οὐ εἶη; ΕΡΜ. πάνυ γε. [...] ΣΩ. ὥσπερ γε καὶ ὁ Ὀρέστης [...] κινδυνεύει ὀρθῶς ἔχειν, εἴτε τις τύχη ἔθετο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα εἴτε καὶ ποιητῆς τις, τὸ θηριῶδες τῆς φύσεως καὶ τὸ ἄγριον αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ ὀρεινὸν ἐνδεικνύμενος τῷ ὀνόματι. [...] ἔοικεν δέ γε καὶ τῷ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ κατὰ φύσιν τὸ ὄνομα εἶναι. [...] κινδυνεύει γὰρ τοιοῦτός τις εἶναι ὁ Ἀγαμέμνων, οἷος ἂ δόξειεν αὐτῷ διαπονεῖσθαι καὶ καρτερεῖν, τέλος ἐπιτιθεὶς τοῖς δόξασι δι' ἀρετὴν. σημεῖον δὲ αὐτοῦ ἢ ἐν Τροίᾳ μονὴ τοῦ πλήθους τε καὶ καρτερία. ὅτι οὖν ἀγαστὸς κατὰ τὴν ἐπιμονὴν οὗτος ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐνσημαίνει τὸ ὄνομα ὁ Ἀγαμέμνων.

This view about Agamemnon is, I think, confirmed in our play as well, and indeed at its first line, where, as I remarked above (p. 1), Agamemnon is honourably mentioned.²⁷ Besides, 365-66 (ἐξὸν πατρὸς ἰ πάντων ἀρίστου παῖδα κεκλήσθαι; cf. 341 πατρὸς οὐ σὺ παῖς ἔφυς), and 694-95 (τοῦ τὸ κλεινὸν Ἑλλάδος ἰ Ἀγαμέμνονος στρατεύμ' ἀγείραντός ποτε) importantly add to Agamemnon's heroic image. This fact will serve as a foil to highlight the unheroic deed undertaken by Orestes, who thus turns out to be a παρὰ φύσιν offspring of a heroic father, just as Plato saw him.²⁸

²⁷ It follows that I consider Haslam's (1975: 166-68) deletion of line 1 —accepted unfortunately by Dawe in the 2nd (1984) and 3rd (1996) editions of his Teubner text—to be, to say the least, unwarranted. See the just criticism of Seale (1982: 80 n. 1) and Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 42).

²⁸ In the light of this evidence I think that any attempt to see in Orestes an admirable Sophoclean hero (thus e.g. Woodard [1964: 171-72] and Davidson

1.1.1 Electra's (ineffective) heroism

In 110–20 Electra asks the deities of the Underworld to send her brother to her; the invocation of those deities — especially of Ἄρὰ and the Erinyes (emphatically mentioned in 112) — along with the significant τείσασθε (115), initiates, on the part of Electra, the all-important theme of revenge. Thus, this basic notion of retaliatory justice, clearly established in the prologue with regard to Orestes (14, 34, 37, 70), is now mirrored in Electra's lyrical lament, *but in a completely different way*: while Orestes has come to kill, Electra is not yet prepared *actively* to avenge her father. While, that is, she lives up to the audience's expectations by heroically fulfilling her filial duty towards her dead father — that is, by lamenting him in spite of the potential dangers of such an act (cf. 213–20) and by fervidly desiring the punishment of his murderers as an act of αἰδώς²⁹ and εὐσέβεια (cf. 245–50) — she does not envisage taking any action against her father's murderers, which would most likely entail matricide. The initiative in taking avenging action is transferred to Orestes (118–20, 303–306, 319, 323); as for Electra's stance on the matricide issue there is deliberate vagueness. The themes prevailing in the whole parodos and in the first episode serve to extol her heroism on the one hand, and to underscore its practical ineffectiveness

[1988: 53–54], who find similarities with the Homeric Odysseus; Machin [1981: 427]) will be in vain. On Orestes' unheroic persona in the *Electra* see Segal (1981: 253–54), (1966: 510–12), who aptly opposes him to his heroic sister; also Seale (1982: 56–7) and Blundell (1989: 173 with nn.84, 85). Di Benedetto (1983: 161–64) has rightly perceived that Sophocles does not present Orestes under a favourable light; nevertheless, I would not agree that the playwright, by distancing his Orestes from the Aeschylean one, “ha avuto il coraggio di compiere una radicale opera di ristrutturazione a proposito di un personaggio come Oreste, che pure sembrava indelebilmente marcato [...] dal mito e dalla tradizione letteraria precedente” (Di Benedetto *l.c.* p.164). The evidence I have adduced demonstrates that, on the contrary, Orestes was an anti-hero already in Attic tradition, so (for an Athenian audience) no “ristrutturazione” was needed.
²⁹ Cf. Cairns (1993: 247–8).

on the other. It would be useful to examine those themes, especially as they are often in significant contrast with the themes dominating the prologue.

First, Electra in her lyric monologue (86-109) displays a marked lack of concern for time: even the rudimentary distinction between night and day is virtually inexistent for her, since her incessant lamentation extends indiscriminately over day and night (see esp. 86-95, 103-106). She prefers to live with the memories of the past (100-102, 124 πάλαι, 145-46, 236-50); for her time is an undifferentiated sequence of undistinguishable moments.³⁰ This is in diametric antithesis with Orestes' and the Paedagogus' anxiety about καιρός,³¹ the right time for action (21-22,³² 39, 75-76; cf. 1259, 1292, 1368) and, what is more, with their sharp awareness of the distinction between night and day (17-19).³³ Electra is repeatedly admonished by the Chorus for her timeless dirge (122-23, 140-41) and she herself recognizes this (131-32, 222) but refuses to refrain from her

³⁰ Cf. Woodard (1965: 199). Segal (1966: 505-506) stresses the destructive effects past time has had on Electra's physical condition; I would not agree, however, that those effects have also affected her moral being: what I am arguing is exactly that Electra's physical reduction is to be viewed in contradistinction to her high-minded heroism.

³¹ Cf. Kells (87) and Di Benedetto (1983: 163) who rightly associate Orestes' care about καιρός with his deceitful practices. Smith (1990) explores the irony resulting from the semantic association of the word καιρός (in its older sense 'mark', 'boundary line') with the notion of justice, which is problematic in this play. According to Trédé (1993: 203), of the twenty-two occurrences of the word καιρός in Sophocles seven appear in the *Electra*, and indeed with markedly temporal nuances (Trédé [1993: 208-209]). On the antithesis between Orestes' and the Paedagogus' opportunistic obsession with καιρός on the one hand and Electra's 'timelessness' on the other see Woodard (1965: 196-204); Segal (1981: 265-67); Schein (1982: 72); Trédé (1993: 210).

³² λόγοισιν (21) is not opposed to ἔργα but preparatory to them; cf. Kells (*ad* 21): "these λόγοι are only preparatory to action, and their effect is immediately overshadowed by the insistence on καιρός (time for action, also at 39), and ἔργων ἀκμή in the following line." On λόγοι as preliminary to ἔργα see also Woodard (1964: 175-76); cf. Kitzinger (1993: 302-4).

³³ Cf. Woodard (1965: 198 with n.8).

ceaseless wail (103 ff., 132–36, 223–25,³⁴ 230³⁵–32): she sets up Procne (147–49, cf. 107) and Niobe (150–52) as examples of eternal lamentation, to which she is prepared to adhere (147 ἄραρεν φρένας).³⁶

These two mythological paradigms illustrate also another aspect of Electra's attitude: its fruitlessness, its sterility and its ineffectiveness. Both the nightingale³⁷ and Niobe are legendary archetypes of eternal dirge³⁸ and sterility.³⁹ Similarly, Electra's misfortunes are endless (166–67), and her sterility (164–65 ἄτεκνος ... ἀνύμφευτος; cf. 187 ἄνευ τεκέων⁴⁰)

³⁴ Here the ambivalence of ἄτας (=‘plaints’ [Jebb 39], but also ‘calamitous ways’ [L. Campbell *ad* 223,4]) underscores the disastrous nature of Electra's laments.

³⁵ Fröhlich's κεκλαύσεται (cf. κεκλύσεται R, Zc) would highlight Electra's obstinate persistence (ἄλυτα) in her *lament*.

³⁶ Cf. Bowra (1944: 243–44), Gellie (1972: 109). Seaford (1985: 316) sets the anomalous prolongation of Electra's dirge against normal funerary practice, while Davidson (1988:55) finds parallels with Penelope's grief in the *Odyssey*.

³⁷ It is significantly called Διὸς ἄγγελος at 149: Electra thinks that the nightingale is an ὄρνις, a sign indicating that Zeus himself approves of her eternal wail; see Kaibel (p. 94) and Kamerbeek (*ad* 147–149), who rightly dismiss the interpretation “harbinger of spring” (favoured, among others, by Jebb [*ad* 149]) as an irrelevance; cf. also Bowra (1944: 243); an intermediate opinion is held by Segal (1966:492–93 with n.25). If Kaibel and Kamerbeek are correct, then the Chorus' Διὸς εὐφρονη ἰ βήματι (162–63) is perhaps meant to refute Electra's assertion, by implying that what Zeus really wants is not inactive lament but the restoration of Orestes to his ancestral power.

³⁸ Thus, αἰεί (cf. αἰέν V) at 152 is perhaps to be preferred to αἰαῖ (*cett.*), because it makes clearer the idea of unceasing lament (see Jebb [*ad* 152]), although it destroys the verbal symmetry with the strophe (136 αἰαῖ): as Dawe (1973: 177) remarks, such symmetries are not always exact. The need for αἰαῖ to be changed into αἰεί has been understood also by Woodard (1965: 198 with n.10) and Segal (1966:496).

³⁹ I think that Jebb (*ad* 107) is not right in maintaining that τεκνολέπειρα (107) means “slayer of her child” rather than “she who has lost a child”; of course Procne did kill Itys, but if one presses this too far, then the parallelism with Niobe's myth is destroyed. Cf. Kells' (*ad* 107ff.) right remarks. Segal (1966: 495 with n.30) accepts both meanings; cf. L. Campbell (*ad* 107).

⁴⁰ τεκέων Wa (s.l.), Vind. phil. gr. 281 (already conjectured by Meineke): τοκέων *rell.* The pseudo-etymologizing derivation of Electra's name (Ἠλέκτρα /

always dire. She begets only war and misfortunes (218-19 *τίκτους' αἰεὶ | [...] πολέμους*, 235 *τίκτειν σ' ἄταν ἄταις*), and it is only her woes that are over-abundant (217 *πολὺ γάρ τι κακῶν ὑπέρεκτήσω*, cf. 260 [*πήματα*] *θάλλοντα μᾶλλον ἢ καταφθίνονθ'*). Sterility also dominates her life on a more material level, as she is denied basic goods (note the abundance of words denoting deprivation: 186 *ἀνέλπιστος*, 187 *ἄνευ*, 188 *οὔτις*, 189 *ἀναξία*, 191 *ἀεικεῖ*, 192 *κεναῖς*), whereas the murderous act of Aegisthus and Clytaemestra is, surprisingly, phrased in terms of fecundity (197 *ἔρος*,⁴¹ 198 *προφυτεύσαντες*)! We recall that Orestes is going to restore prosperity (cf. 72 *ἀρχέπλουτον*) and 'fertility' (in the widest sense of the word) by murderous revenge (14) — a paradox encapsulated in the antithesis *Μυκῆνας τὰς πολυχρύσους* (9) : *πολύφθορον [...] δῶμα Πελοπιδῶν* (10).⁴² He initiates his murderous plan by offering his luxurious hair (52 *καρατόμοις χλιδαῖς*) at his father's tomb; but his sister's offerings are limited to her unanointed hair (451 *τήνδ' ἀλιπαρῆ*⁴³ *τρίχα*) and her poorly-decorated belt (452 *ζῶμα τοῦμόν οὐ χλιδαῖς ἡσκημένον*; the repetition of *χλιδαῖς* creates a contrast with 52).⁴⁴ Thus, both Clytaemestra / Aegisthus and Orestes are

'Αλέκτρα) from *ἄλεκτρος* (Ael. VH 4.26 = Xanth. PMG 700 Page) implies that infertility was probably thought of as a typical feature of Electra's mythical image. Cf. 962 *ἄλεκτρα γηράσκουσαν*. See Jebb (pp. xix-xx).

⁴¹ Notice especially the striking oxymoron *ἔρος ὁ κτείνας* (against Wakefield's swapping of *ἔρος* and *δόλος* see Kaibel [ad 197]). For a different interpretation see Minadeo (1967: 137-38); his views on *προφυτεύσαντες* I do not accept.

⁴² Cf. above p. 2.

⁴³ *ἀλιπαρῆ* codd.: *ἀλίπαρον* Hartung. Renehan (1992: 354-6) powerfully argues that *ἀλιπαρῆ* (ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀύχμηράν Schol.) is a perfectly possible formation. Stinton (1990: 277) argued in favour of *ἀλίπαρον* which, pace Dawe (1976: 231) and Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 50), is certainly possible but (as Renehan [l.c.] shows) unnecessary. In relation to Electra's plight, note also her brother's surprise at 1177.

⁴⁴ Cf. Kells (ad 452), Segal (1981: 261). To 'undo a new bride's belt' is an epic euphemism for sexual congress (e.g. *Od.* 11.245; *Pi.* I. 8.45); also a belt was typically dedicated by newly-wed women as a symbol of their lost virginity: J.H.

markedly prosperous and 'fertile', while being vengeful and murderous at the same time; whereas Electra remains confined in her sterility and her reluctance to take real action. What is more, both Orestes and the murderous couple indulge (or have indulged) in underhand practices (37; 124-25, 197), whereas Electra characteristically rejects with disdain the advice that she should prudently refrain from voicing her true feelings for Clytaemestra and Aegisthus (cf. e.g. 213-20, 328-37).⁴⁵

The ineffectiveness of Electra's behaviour, but also her admirable heroism, are ultimately stressed by the fact that she paradoxically conceives her inert contentment with words as effective activity.⁴⁶ When Chrysothemis admonishes her for her incautious shower of words (328-36), Electra answers that words are her own means of revenge (355 *λυπῶ δὲ τούτους*),⁴⁷ and that, for her, they are equivalent to dutiful *deeds* towards her dead father (349-50 *ἐμοῦ δὲ πατρὶ πάντα τιμωρουμένης ἢ οὔτοι ξυνέρδεις τήν τε δρῶσαν ἐκτρέπεις*). However, both the Chorus (369 *τοῖς λόγοις*) and Chrysothemis (373 *τῶν τῆσδε μύθων*) remind us that the deeds which Electra claims to perform are mere words. Chrysothemis very clearly epitomizes her sister's attitude at 336: *καὶ μὴ δοκεῖν μὲν δρᾶν τι, πημαίνειν δὲ μή*.⁴⁸ To conclude, Sophocles

Oakley & R.H. Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens* (Madison, Wisconsin 1993) 14-5 with nn. 21 & 27. In Electra's case, however, her poorly wrought belt only highlights her enforced celibacy. On the infertility theme see further Segal (1966: 487-88, 490, 495-96 and *passim*); Sorum (1981-82: 208-10).

⁴⁵ See Schein (1982: 73).

⁴⁶ On Electra's world as one of words see Woodard's (1964: 174ff.) excellent analysis. On the *λόγοι*-theme see also Minadeo (1967: 116ff.), and Gellie (1972: 112, 117, 120). Kitzinger (1991: 301-2 with n. 13, 305-11 with n.34 etc.), in the spirit of J.L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford 1962), sees Electra's *logoi* as no less valid than *erga*.

⁴⁷ This is confirmed later by Clytaemestra herself (784-87), and also by the fact that the couple want to imprison her in a subterranean cavern, so that she will not be able to annoy them with her wails (379-82).

⁴⁸ Moreover, as Di Benedetto (1983: 169-70) points out, the persistent use of the verb *δρᾶν* in Electra's *rhexis* (258, 260, 267, 268, 271, 282) may underline her "passività". On Electra's not taking any real action see again Di Benedetto (1983:

manages to have it both ways: his heroine is not forgetful of her filial duty towards her father, because she keeps his memory alive with her wails, i.e. with words, and she voices her desire for the punishment of the killers. At the same time, however, words are not deeds, so Electra is not, as yet, in danger of being defiled by the only conceivable end of non-verbal revenge, namely matricide.⁴⁹ The audience are prevented from thinking too early of the horror that is to come, and their attention is focused exclusively on Electra's desperate heroic struggle.

Electra has to carry out her struggle all alone: Orestes seems to have forgotten her (168-69). She lives in a state of permanent *ignorance* as to whether she is to reckon on her brother's assistance, since the tidings about his homecoming are, in the event, invariably belied (169-70). Hearsay is, in Greek thought, notoriously untrustworthy: it is one's eyes, and not one's ears, that one should regard as reliable sources of information⁵⁰ (cf. Electra's complaint at 172: οὐκ ἀξιοῖ φανῆναι); so, as long as she does not see her brother, he is inexistent for her. Apart from having given up hope as regards the living, Electra does not expect any help from the dead either: although she appeals to the chthonic deities at 110-14, it is significant that she faces the possibility of her father being γὰρ τε καὶ οὐδέν (245).⁵¹ The Chorus had already expressed this idea in

183). Contrast the use of words as preparatory to action in Orestes' world (above, n. 32).

⁴⁹ Cf. Gardiner (1987:170). Lines 245-50 must *not* be perceived as implying that Electra is prepared for active vengeance: Electra is merely justifying (cf. 245 γάρ) her outpouring of words (242-43) which, as we saw, she thinks to be equivalent to deeds. *Contra* Segal (1966: 532-33), and Winnington-Ingram (1980: 221 n.19, 222-23 with n.22, 225) who deny that Electra's use of words instead of deeds preserves her heroic stature.

⁵⁰ This typical Greek belief is illustrated by e.g. Heraclitus 22 B 101a D.-K. ὀφθαλμοὶ γὰρ τῶν ὠτῶν ἀκριβέστεροι μάρτυρες; Hdt. 1.8 ὦτα γὰρ τυγχάνει ἀνθρώποισι ἐόντα ἀπιστότερα ὀφθαλμῶν; Dio Chrys. 12.71; Polyb. 12.27.1; Luc. 45. 78. In Apost. 18.71 and Arsen. 56.18 we find the proverb ὠτίων πιστότεροι ὀφθαλμοί. For more references see CPG (II, p. 744 Leutsch).

⁵¹ The conditional clause denotes something *possible* with no commitment on the issue of realization (εἰ+ind. fut. in the hypoth. —opt. with ἄν in the apod.):

the form of an *adynaton*, a traditional *topos* of consolation: “you cannot bring the dead back” (137-39);⁵² but while they at least try to persuade her that neither her brother nor her dead father are forgetful of her (180-84), she firmly declares that she no longer expects such help (185-86).⁵³

The themes of Electra’s misery having been established in this lengthy lament, they are further elaborated in her ensuing *rhexis* (251ff.), in which the impression that her plight makes on us is greatly deepened by an interesting dramatic technique: the themes that have marked Electra’s destitution are now presented from the viewpoint of her enemies; in other words, her plight is presented as Aegisthus’ and Clytaemestra’s prosperity and power, thus being all the more boldly highlighted. We now learn that Electra is absolutely dependent, for her maintenance, on her enemies (264-65) — who on the contrary prosper, as we are left to infer by implication.⁵⁴ Furthermore, whereas in the parodos’ lyrical lament Electra’s misery was causally associated with the theme of absence of potential helpers (e.g. 172), now it is rather connected with her enemies’ distasteful presence (264 ξύνειμι). That Aegisthus is *temporarily* (313 νῦν) absent only underscores Orestes’ and Agamemnon’s *permanent* absence — an absence all the more stressed by Aegisthus’ being Agamemnon’s replacement not only ~~on~~^{on} the throne (267-68) but also in every aspect of the former king’s everyday life: he wears his clothes (268-69), he offers libations by the very hearth where he slew him (269-70), and he is his widow’s sexual partner (a fact particularly emphasized: 271-74). The lamentation, in the parodos, for a glorious father and king has now given way to indignation at a despicable step-father and

Moorhouse (1982:277). Cf. Jebb (*ad* 244ff.) and, more cautiously, Kamerbeek (*ad* 245-248).

⁵² Cf. Segal (1981:462 n.18).

⁵³ Only at 1315-17, i.e. after the Recognition, does Electra take into account the possibility of her father being alive again.

⁵⁴ As Machin (1981: 208-209) remarks, Electra had already hinted at her destitution in her lyrical lament (191-92), but those responsible for her state were there left unspecified, whereas at 264-65 they are explicitly mentioned.

usurper.⁵⁵ Moreover, even Electra's incessant θρήνοι (a theme so dominant in the parodos) appear to have been rendered impossible: for one thing, she is obliged to lament αὐτὴ πρὸς αὐτὴν (285)⁵⁶ in order not to incur her mother's wrath and insults (282-93; esp. 293 ἐξυβρίζει); what is more, her laments' markedly *ritual* quality (cf. 88 θρήνων ὠδάς, 94 θρηνώ,⁵⁷ 92 παννυχίδων,⁵⁸ 139 γόοισιν ... λιταῖς, 283 κάπικωκύω⁵⁹), as well as their commemorative function, is counterpoised by the *rites* Clytaemestra has established to *celebrate* Agamemnon's murder (277-81).⁶⁰ The contrast between Electra's misfortunes and her enemies' happiness is rounded off in the ensuing first Chrysothemis' scene:⁶¹ there,

⁵⁵ Cf. Di Benedetto (1983: 170): "la figura del padre viene contrapposta, come dato positivo a dato negativo, a quella di Egisto".

⁵⁶ However, the θρήνος is by definition "an expression of communal or familial grief" (Segal [1981:273]).

⁵⁷ On θρήνος as ritual dirge see Alexiou (1974: 11-13, 102ff.). Woodard (1964: 178) too recognizes the ritual character of Electra's laments. Di Benedetto (1983: 175) remarks that "l' Elettra è la tragedia di Sofocle dove il gruppo θρήνος/θρηνώ è maggiormente attestato".

⁵⁸ codd.: παννυχίων Blaydes, accepted by Dawe, who was bothered by "the joyous sense of παννυχίδων" (Dawe [1976: 230]). However, for Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 45) and Segal (1981: 272), this is precisely the point: παννυχίδες ('joyous religious festivals') in a context of lamentation is ironical. Alternatively, the word may be meant to recall the ritual wake in honour of the dead which was, and still is, an indispensable part of Greek funerary practice (Alexiou [1974: 15, 27ff., 42]). On the markedly ritual connotations of the word παννυχίδες see L. Campbell (*ad* 92,3), Kells (*ad* 86ff.).

⁵⁹ For the ritual nuances of κωκύειν cf. e.g. *Il.* 22.407 (cf.409); *Od.* 24.295 (where ὡς ἐπέωκει indicates the formal, ritual aspect of the dirge); *A. Ag.* 1313; *S. Ant.* 28, 204, 1302; Di Benedetto (1983: 170 n.21).

⁶⁰ For the probably historical background of these rites see Jebb (*ad* 280f.). Seyffert's conjecture (278) ἑροῦσ' (MSS. εὐροῦσ'), accepted by Dawe (1996), would pinpoint all the more clearly the ritual aspect of Clytaemestra's festivities. See further Seaford's (1985: 316 n.20, 317) interesting remarks.

⁶¹ Chrysothemis should not, strictly speaking, be called an 'enemy' of Electra: her position is "intermédiaire entre les amies et l' ennemie" (Jouanna [1993:

Electra's heroism and its concomitant hardships (189-92) are sharply opposed to her sister's care for expediency (359-64). The image is now complete, and the audience must surely think that they have seen Electra in the *non plus ultra* of her plight. This is something particularly stressed by Electra herself: φέρ' εἶπέ δὴ τὸ δεινόν· εἰ γὰρ τῶνδε μοι | μεῖζόν τι λέξεις... (376-77).

1.1.2 The first Chrysothemis scene

However, that is not all: the worst is still to come. Sophocles, having just established the motifs of Electra's misery (both *per se* and in contrast to her enemies' prosperity), now surprises us by an unexpected twist: Electra will no longer be able even to be miserable, because she simply will no longer be able to be alive. In her speech (341-68) Electra had declared that she is prepared to heroically continue that miserable life of hers (354, 359-63), as long as she keeps her father's memory alive (341-42, 346, 349, 355-56) and vexes her enemies (355). Nevertheless, the news announced by Chrysothemis makes clear that it is exactly the remaining morsels of her life (with which she had been content) that she is going to lose, since she will be imprisoned in a *κατηρεφῆς στέγη* (381-82) and be left to die there (380-81 μήποθ' ἡλίου | φέγγος προσόψη,⁶² cf. 392). Electra will have, finally, to stop her ceaseless wails (375 τῶν μακρῶν

178-79]). However, in Electra's system of values those who do not share her absolute devotion to her φίλοι are bound to be her enemies (cf. esp. 1027 στυγῶ).

⁶² Electra's prospective death is only allusively but (I think) unmistakably hinted at: μήποθ' ἡλίου φέγγος προσόψη can be a euphemism for "you will die" (φῶς ὄρᾶν and sim. are standard Greek phrases for 'being alive'); and ζῶσα (381) is no indication that Electra will remain alive in her subterranean enclosure: one might compare the (deceptively disjunctive) phrasing used at *Ant.* 887-8 (εἶτε χρῆ θανεῖν | εἴτ[ε] ... ζῶσα τυμβεύειν), where nonetheless there are no other prospects for Antigone than imminent death (cf. esp. 806ff.). On the linguistic resemblance with Antigone's immurement see Musurillo (1967:96) and, most importantly, Seaford (1990:80).

σχήσει γόων) — carrying on her peculiar verbal revenge will be, of course, out of the question. Nonetheless, one single theme is not cancelled: Electra's heroism. On the contrary, she appears prepared to lose her life if it is for her father (399); it is indicative that as recently as 352-54 she considered life a κέρδος, whereas now she calls for death (387,⁶³ 389) as a delivery from her woes (393). Both her misery and her heroism are now at their zenith.

Electra's heroism is all the more exalted by another motif (already present, but not stressed, in the parodos) that is picked up and rounded off in this scene, namely Electra's heroic ἀφροσύνη (cf. e.g. 213 φράζου, 214 οὐ γνώμαν ἴσχεις). Now Chrysothemis lays particular emphasis on that: 330 διδαχθῆναι, 383 φράζου, 384 φρονεῖν, 390 ποῦ ποτ' εἶ φρενῶν, 394 εἶ φρονεῖν ἠπίστασο, 398 ἀβουλίας, 429 ἀβουλία⁶⁴ etc. What, however, is of great interest is that Electra does *not* admit that she is foolish.⁶⁵ She defends her case not by appealing to heroic moral values but by claiming that *she* is the one who is really wise: 145 νήπιος, 227-28 ... φρονοῦντι καίρια, 345 φρονεῖν κακῶς,⁶⁶ 365 σῶφρων γ' οὔσα, 403

⁶³ Cf. Kells (*ad* 387): "At 385 she was unprepared for death. At 386 she is ready and eager for it". I cannot understand Machin's (1981:219) labour to prove that Electra is not being entirely sincere.

⁶⁴ Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 49-50) accept Morstadt's deletion of 428-30. For discussion see Jebb (*ad* 428-430) and Kamerbeek (*ad* 428-430), both of whom retain the lines.

⁶⁵ Contrast Antigone whose admission of her self-destructive folly (*Ant.* 95), even if it is sarcastic, points to an important theme of that play, namely the heroine's being under the baneful influence of her clan's hereditary folly (cf. esp. the second stasimon, *Ant.* 582-625). See further Chapter Six, esp. section 6.4.1; cf. Huys (1993:311-12).

⁶⁶ I would tend to recognize a more or less intellectual, not moral, meaning in φρονεῖν κακῶς; thus Jebb (*ad* 345), Kamerbeek (*ad* 345,6) and, most recently, Coray (1993: 158). Electra's point is that Chrysothemis indulges in intellectual fallacy: she claims on the one hand to be willing to express her hatred against the murderers (347-8) but fails to assist her sister who does exactly this (349-50). Alexanderson (1966:84) wrongly thinks that Electra uses φρονεῖν κακῶς, in bitter irony, with reference to *herself*.

μήπω νοῦ τοσόνδ' εἶην κενή. Nonetheless, we have seen that Electra is actually in a state of sheer ignorance, as her only source of information is the scarcely reliable tidings of her brother's homecoming. Thus, we are presented with an all-important paradox (which will be further clarified later [cf. section 1.4.3]): Electra claims to possess good sense and true knowledge, while at the same time she is actually *ignorant* of important facts concerning herself.⁶⁷

1.2.1 The first reversal: Clytaemestra's dream

The second part of the Chrysothemis scene (404ff.) signals an important twist of events. Reportedly, Clytaemestra has had a frightening dream (410), whose content Chrysothemis has partly overheard (414, 424-6). The dream seems manifestly to foreshadow a major reversal of the dramatic situation, as it stands thematically in sharp opposition to the motifs of Electra's misery with which we are by now familiar.⁶⁸ Agamemnon comes up from the darkness of Hades to the light (419

⁶⁷ Cf. Kells (*ad* 403). On 'good sense' in the *Electra* see Kirkwood (1958: 137, 233), Winnigton-Ingram (1980: 239-40); on the inherent paradox of Electra's claims to good sense see Blundell (1989: 156 with n.34; 158-59; 160). Segal (1966: 489) perceives the paradox but fails to see its point. Woodard (1965: 212-13 with nn. 57-58) holds that "Electra asserts her own lack of *to phronein* and *nous*" and that "she is willing to be considered insane"; but in absolutely no passage of those he adduces does Electra speak of herself as foolish (135 ἀλύειν and 149 ἀτυζομένα merely mean 'to be distraught of grief' and are, of course, figurative). Jouan's (1993: 273-74) argument that Chrysothemis is the one who "invoque le plus souvent les arguments de la raison", whereas such words are "beaucoup plus rares dans la bouche d'Électre" proves nothing: what really matters is not statistics but the fact that Electra's contention that her stance 'makes sense' is set emphatically against what the audience know to be her complete and utter ignorance. Thus the playwright calls attention to his heroine's paradoxical behaviour and makes sure that it will be remembered until the last scenes of the play, where its significance is fully revealed.

⁶⁸ On the reversal with which the dream is associated see also Vernant's (1983: 134-6) perspective.

ἐλθόντος ἐς φῶς), whereas Electra would, inversely, descend from the daylight to the darkness of her underground prison (380-82). Furthermore, Agamemnon's resurrection in the dream, indicating as it does his concern (459 μέλειν, cf. 482), belies Electra's strong disbelief in the possibility of help from Hades (185-86, 245, cf. 137-39), as well as counterbalancing, thematically, Electra's living death that we have witnessed in the parodos (cf. esp. 141 διόλλυσαι, 185-86 ὁ πολὺς ἀπολέλοιπεν ἤδη ἢ βίος, 187 κατατάκομαι, 207-8 τὸν ἐμὸν εἶλον βίον ... ἀπώλεσαν, 304 ἀπόλλυμαι). Besides, the dream seems to be a good omen as regards Electra's deplorable powerlessness too (219-20, 264-65, 285-86, 312-13): Agamemnon is restored to his royal power (420). What is more, the dream reverses the theme of Electra's infertility, so clearly described in the parodos (see above p. 13f.): the barren piece of wood (420 σκῆπτρον) puts out a fresh shoot (422 θαλλόν⁶⁹) which blooms in such profusion as to overshadow the entire Mycenae.⁷⁰

Most importantly, however, the dream marks the enactment of the retaliatory process: it is strongly stressed that Agamemnon has taken *again* the sceptre which was wielded once by himself (420-21), but now by Aegisthus (421). This (otherwise pointless) mention of facts already known must be meant to emphasize that retaliation is again at work. Electra makes this clear in her ensuing speech: an unbridgeable gulf yawns between φίλοι (431, 442, 453, 462) and ἐχθροί (433, 440, 444, 454, 456); should Orestes surpass his enemies in power (455 ἐξ ὑπερτέρας χερὸς, 456 ἐχθροῖσιν [...] ἐπεμβῆναι ποδί), they would all be restored to

⁶⁹ At 951-52 Electra uses the phrase βίω θάλλοντ' for Orestes' being alive (cf. Kamerbeek [ad 952]).

⁷⁰ Jebb (ad 421ff.) aptly refers to *Il.* 1. 234ff. (cf. Devereux [1976: 239]). The dream has strong sexual connotations: see Devereux (1976: 231-33, 246-48), Kamerbeek (ad 417-419, 419-421) and especially Kells (ad 417ff); so the sceptre may perhaps carry phallic connotations (Devereux [1976: 238-46]) — another possible aspect of its transparent fertility-symbolism. Moreover, as Devereux (1976: 223) has remarked, the wooden sceptre harks back to 98-99: Agamemnon, who has been compared with a felled oak, now returns as a piece of wood that sprouts unexpectedly.

prosperity (457-58 ἀφνεωτέρας ἢ χερσί). The Chorus in the first stasimon (472-515) confirm this: they see the dream as a sign from Dike (retaliatory justice⁷¹) itself (475-77), and anticipate that the Erinyes will eventually come (489-91). The emphasis, in the above passages, on hands and feet as symbols of power and superiority (476 φερομένα χεροῖν κράτη, 489 πολύπους⁷² ... πολύχειρ, 491 χαλκόπους) provides a thematic contrast with the all-important ἐμασχαλίσθη (445):⁷³ Agamemnon's corpse was mutilated so that his spirit should be incapable of taking revenge, but now Revenge itself (Dike, Erinyes) and Orestes, their human agent, are coming with overwhelming power in their hands and feet.⁷⁴ Moreover, this stasimon contains one or two cryptic but significant allusions to the revengeful plan of Orestes as expounded in the prologue: the axe with which Agamemnon was murdered is referred to by a heavy circumlocution (484-5 ἡ παλαιὰ χαλκόπλη- ἰκτος ἀμφήκης γένυς) which recalls the similarly heavy τύπωμα χαλκόπλευρον (54) used of the urn, the instrument of deceit and revenge. What is more, the reference to Pelops' chariot-race in 504ff. evokes 25-28 where the Paedagogus, rigorously devoted to revenge, is likened to a horse. These thematic and verbal *Fernverbindungen* between this stasimon and the prologue are evidently meant to remind us that the revenge announced in the prologue is already under way and should soon provide the much longed-for release from toils.

Nevertheless, it is the very mention of Pelops' chariot-race that taints the cheerful tone of the song (as expressed esp. in 480 ἀδυπνώων,

⁷¹ Kitto (1958: 47-50), (1961: 134-37) has pointed out that the retaliatory aspect of δίκη is prevalent in this play: it is that universal force that tends to make amends for every deviation from normal order.

⁷² West's (1979: 104) conjecture πολύφρων is unfortunate.

⁷³ On μασχαλισμός see Jebb (*ad* 444ff., also pp. 211-12); Rohde (1925: 582-6). Detailed analysis with comparative material in G.L. Kittredge, *AJPh* 6(1885) 151-69.

⁷⁴ The same hands-and-feet imagery will recur later, when Orestes will announce his and Pylades' arrival as κοινόπους παρουσία (1104), and when Electra will bless the Paedagogus' hands and feet (1357-58).

495 θάρσος⁷⁵): defeated at the chariot-race against Pelops, the dying Oenomaus cursed the person responsible for his death, namely his charioteer Myrtilus, to die; when the latter was in turn killed by Pelops, he cursed his murderer's whole race to perish.⁷⁶ The over-abundance of ominous words (505 πολύπονος, 506 αἰανής,⁷⁷ 511 δυστάνοις αἰκείαις, 515 πολύπονος αἰκεία⁷⁸) warns us that the hereditary curse of the Pelopids, which has accumulated so many grievous misfortunes on their house, is still at work.⁷⁹ So, Orestes' avenging action (note that a chariot-race will be at the centre of the Paedagogus' fictitious story, which is one of the main instruments of the revenge) is not auspiciously launched: the first stasimon may suggestively reproduce basic themes associated with the forthcoming revenge; nevertheless, the epode (504ff.) casts an ominous light on those themes, by associating them with the story of Pelops, a story similarly involving revenge, and moreover closely connected with Orestes through the hereditary curse besetting the Pelopids.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ θάρσος Wunder (accepted by Lloyd-Jones & Wilson [1990a]); μ' ἔχει θάρσος PGR; μ' ἔχει cett.

⁷⁶ See e.g. schol. E. Or. 990 (I, 196-7 Schwartz); schol. A.R. 1.752 (p. 345 Keil, citing Pherecydes *FGrHist* 3F37 Jacoby); Apollod. *Epit.* 2.7 (with Frazer [1921: 161 n.3]); Tz. *ad Lyc.* 157. Cf. also G. Scherling, "Myrtilos", *RE* 16.1 (1933) 1152-1164; Stinton (1990: 246 n.25); I. Triantis, "Myrtilos", *LIMC* VI.1 (1992) 693-96; Gantz (1993: 541-3).

⁷⁷ Cf. Jebb (*ad* 506): "αἰανής suits the idea of *persistent* calamity. Whatever its etymology, it was associated with ἀεί".

⁷⁸ I think Kells (*ad* 487) is wrong in holding that the repetition of αἰκεία is idle. See Winnington-Ingram (1980: 219 n.10); McDevitt (1983b: 5-6).

⁷⁹ See Sheppard (1927a: 7), Kells (*ad* 504ff). *Contra* Alexanderson (1966: 85), Stinton (1990: 471).

⁸⁰ On the sinister analogies between Pelops' legendary chariot-race and Orestes' fictitious one see Winnington-Ingram (1980: 219 with n. 10), with special reference to retributive justice; also Burton (1980: 201-203), Segal (1981: 267-9), and especially Schein (1982: 76). Errandonea (1955: 380-1), Musurillo (1967: 99) and McDevitt (1983b: 9) perceive the connection but fail to see its meaning. Di Benedetto's (1983: 166) objections as to these connotations of the story of Pelops are entirely inadequate (similarly Lesky [1972: 232]). Gardiner

Pelops' story is one not only of revenge but also of deceit: Pelops bribed Myrtilus to tamper deceitfully with the linchpin of Oenomaus' chariot; then Myrtilus deceitfully tried to rape Hippodameia.⁸¹ Thus, this story also has ominous implications for the instrument of Orestes' revenge, namely deceit (36-7). Still, deceit is also the first step towards effective action that Electra takes:⁸² for immediately before the first stasimon with its disturbing reference to Pelops' story Electra suddenly abandoned her heroic (but ineffective) abstention from deeds that might lead to morally questionable results (cf. above p. 15f.), and decided to take guileful action. By appealing to the "help friends - harm enemies" maxim (432-47),⁸³ i.e. to the epitome of vengeance ideology, she asks her sister not to deposit Clytaemestra's offerings at Agamemnon's tomb. The demand that the Chorus keep *silence* (in significant opposition to Electra's previous heroic carelessness, cf. 213-20, 328-37) is an indisputable sign that the obstruction of the rite that is about to take place *is* an unheroic instance of δόλος requiring secrecy. Having now resorted for the first time to deceitful deeds, Electra significantly relinquishes her fondness for λόγοι, which have been so far equivalent to deeds of reverence to her father (cf. again p. 15f.). Thus, in her ensuing debate with Clytaemestra she not only condemns Clytaemestra's λόγοι as αἰσχροί (559, 593) but also admits that *her own* words are shameful too (597, 606-9, to be read in conjunction with 616-18) and equivalent to Clytaemestra's foul deeds (621, 624-25).⁸⁴ So, λόγοι, that used to preserve

(1987: 148-49) places too much emphasis on its sexual aspect. On the ominous character of the Pelops—Myrtilus exemplum in Euripides' *Orestes* plays see Myrick (1994: 135-8).

⁸¹ According to Apoll. *Epit.* 2.8, Myrtilus insulted Hippodameia while Pelops had gone to fetch water for his thirsty wife. See also Tz. *ad Lyc.* 157.

⁸² Cf. Minadeo (1967: 122).

⁸³ For instances of this maxim in the *Electra* see Blundell (1989: 149-57).

⁸⁴ On words and deeds in the Electra-Clytaemestra debate see Woodard's (1964: 184-86) very perceptive remarks, on which I have in part drawn for this paragraph. Sheppard (1918: 85) had already perceived Electra's "tragic relation to her mother" as highlighted in this scene. See also Kirkwood (1958: 140-41, 228-29), Friis Johansen (1964: 16-17), Cairns (1993: 246-8).

Electra's heroic decency *before* the revelation of Clytaemestra's dream, now degenerate into instruments and symbols of her assimilation with her mother's deceitful and immoral practices.

The fact that the Chorus (464-65) congratulate Electra on her εὐσέβεια and σωφροσύνη must be unsettling for an alert audience: the Chorus have been constantly admonishing Electra for her 'folly' (213-20), advocating expediency (370 κέρδος) exactly like Orestes (61), and contenting themselves with conventional piety (121-28, 137-44, 173-84);⁸⁵ now, however, they suddenly decide that Electra is being σώφρων and εὐσεβής! This use of σωφρονεῖν (evidently an exception to Coray's [1993: 184] definition: "bedeutet [...] 'vernünftig, besonnen sein' und bezeichnet eine Haltung die mit Kompromissfähigkeit und *dem Zurückstellen der eigenen Interessen verbunden ist*")⁸⁶ comes down to serving expediency by committing a δόλος; while their praise of Electra's εὐσέβεια (apart from indicating their approval of her fulfilment of a pious duty towards her dead father) refers to the simple 'piety' of contenting herself with the authority of such an unquestionable, *qua* supernatural, source of knowledge as a dream (note that at 500 the prophetic dream is viewed as being on a par with divine decrees, θέσφατα; we shall see, however, on p. 57ff. that the knowledge provided by the dream is anything but certain). Thus, the praise of a Chorus who have been constantly advocating mediocrity, conventional common sense and convenient piety is rather to be taken as a sign of Electra's debasement from a status of all-defying heroism to disgraceful connivance. What is more, Electra herself had stated (307-309) that retaliation on the one hand and σωφροσύνη / εὐσέβεια on the other are mutually exclusive; since, however, the δόλος in which she is

⁸⁵ Likewise, they will advocate 'good sense' at 990-91 and 1015-16 (again with emphasis on κέρδος) when Electra is being again as heroic as could be.

⁸⁶ Emphasis mine. H. North, *Sophrosyne. Self-Knowledge and Self-Restraint in Greek Literature* [Cornell Stud. Class. Philol. 35] (Ithaca, NY 1966), 56 notes that the use of σωφρονεῖν here is highly conventional, "a cliché in comedy and oratory towards the close of the fifth century."

indulging is manifestly a form of retaliation (the murderers had also resorted to it, cf. 197), it follows that the εὐσέβεια and σωφροσύνη for which the Chorus praise her are simply impossible. After all, we have just seen that Electra, in the quarrel with her mother, admitted her debasement. To quote Cairns (1993: 244), “injustice, wrong, or insult against oneself or a member of one’s family calls forth retribution (*dike*), and the requirement to pursue *dike* is a powerful one, but to pursue it within one’s family must inevitably involve an action which is *aischron*.”⁸⁷ Nonetheless, Electra, for all her unheroic disgrace, is now for the first time (albeit unawares) in accordance with Apollo’s oracle who ordered guileful revenge! This paradox (upon which I shall attempt to elaborate later in this chapter) will underlie the whole play and define its basic meaning.

1.2.2 The *lex talionis* on a scale

Thus, the two basic themes dominant in Orestes’ world as glimpsed in the prologue, namely guile (37, 56) and avenging deeds (34, 37, 70), are now present in Electra’s world as well.⁸⁸ Electra’s world appears now as a microcosm that condenses basic themes and shows remarkable analogies with Orestes’ full-scale avenging enterprise: action generated by a supernatural source of knowledge (Clytaemestra’s dream, Apollo’s oracle), as well as involving deceit against the mother along with revenge for the father. Another analogy is that Electra’s deceitful action leads paradoxically (if accidentally) to true knowledge (Chrysothemis discovers Orestes’ offerings), which is however rendered ineffective because of the Paedagogus’ deceitful story; likewise, Orestes’ guile leads paradoxically (if accidentally) to the Recognition, where however, as we shall see, the restoration of true knowledge over illusion is soon counteracted by the

⁸⁷ See further Cairns (1993: 243–4, 246–9); cf. Stinton (1990: 477–8)

⁸⁸ As noted above (section 1.1.1) the invocation of avenging spirits at 115 does not mean active revenge on Electra’s part —and, at any rate, it does not mean guile.

revelation of the siblings' defective knowledge (section 1.4.3). In both cases it is the finiteness, fragility and relativity of human knowledge that is pinpointed. For the time being, however, it would be interesting to see how the course of events in Electra's microcosm anticipates the outcome of Orestes' action — i.e. of the plot's central thread.

When Clytaemestra appears on stage, the audience expects a confirmation of what Electra had said about her at 254ff. Sophocles however loves to belie the audience's expectations: in the debate between mother and daughter the playwright will furnish Clytaemestra with such arguments as to counterbalance Electra's assertions one by one. Thus, at the end of the debate (which we are clearly meant to perceive as representative of an *everyday situation*⁸⁹) we are presented with two diametrically opposed and exactly equivalent cases. There are no winners and no losers: we find ourselves totally unable to decide which one of them is right. There is only a strong polar antithesis between two people who claim to have justice on their part, and act accordingly. Most recently, Cairns (1993: 245) has rightly emphasized "the equilibrium and parallelism which exists in the arguments of both parties".⁹⁰ Electra had justified her unfilial behaviour in terms of retributive justice: it is her mother's insults (she argued) that she has been compelled to reciprocate with further insults (221 ἐν δεινοῖς δεῖν' ἠναγκάσθη,⁹¹ 256 ἡ βία [...] ταῦτ' ἀναγκάζει με δρᾶν, 308-309 ἐν τοῖς κακοῖς | πολλή 'στ' ἀνάγκη κάπιτηδεύειν κακά; cf. also 618-20). Clytaemestra, however, argues for exactly the opposite: κακῶς δέ σε | λέγω κακῶς κλύουσα πρὸς σέθεν θαμά (523-24). Significantly, immediately after the Chorus have sung about the forthcoming Dike that will vindicate Electra's cause (475f.), Clytaemestra strongly appeals to it too (528, cf. 538, 551).⁹² Furthermore,

⁸⁹ See e.g. Cairns (1993: 242 with n. 95).

⁹⁰ See further Cairns (1993: 241-9 *passim*, esp. 242-3).

⁹¹ I adopt Kaibel's (p. 105) tentative emendation (printed by Lloyd-Jones & Wilson [1990a]) for the impossible MSS. ἐν δεινοῖς ἠναγκάσθη ἐν δεινοῖς (Triclinius [cod. T] conjectured ἐν δεινοῖς ἠναγκάσθη δή).

⁹² Commentators rightly adduce as parallels A. Ag. 1432f., 1497ff. (Jebb [*ad* 528], Kamerbeek [*ad* 528]; cf. Kaibel [p. 156]). For Dike as an avenger see Jebb (*ad*

it is highly ironical that Electra herself undermines her own cause: having appealed (at the above cited passages) to the retaliation axiom, she comes suddenly forth (577ff.) with a severe censuring of it, thus contradicting her proclaimed beliefs and rendering her excuse for her unfilial behaviour baseless.⁹³ Even as she condemns the *lex talionis*, Electra steadfastly adheres to it, as appears further from her self-avowed desire to see Orestes acting as a μιάστωρ (601-605).⁹⁴ That Electra self-contradictorily indulges in the same retaliatory practices of which she accuses her mother, is also pointed out by Clytaemestra: at 784-86 she insinuates that her daughter has been a blood-drinking βλάβη (most probably an Erinyes, an instrument of vindictive retribution)⁹⁵ to her — at least upon the mental plane, as Winnington-Ingram (1980: 233) has argued. After all, Orestes, for whose return Electra has been praying, is characteristically associated (either explicitly or implicitly) with the Erinyes (e.g. 110-18, 489-91 with 455-56,⁹⁶ 1386-88,⁹⁷ 1420, 1475-78⁹⁸).

475f., 528). The Chorus themselves had strangely foreshadowed Clytaemestra's allegations that she had had some supernatural assistance in Agamemnon's murder: see 199-200 εἴτ' οὖν θεὸς εἴτε βροτῶν | ἦν ὁ ταῦτα πράσσων and cf. Jebb (198f.); Burton (1980: 193); Winnington-Ingram (1980: 224); Machin (1981: 214 with n.398); *contra* Minadeo (1967: 135-36); Lesky's (1972: 230 n.98) explanation is insufficient.

⁹³ Cf. Segal (1966: 537), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 221 with n. 19), Cairns (1993: 245 with n. 107). This is undeniable even if we assume —as Machin (1981: 223) does (cf. also Kitzinger [1991: 315-6]) —that Electra is here resorting merely to a “procédé de rhétorique”. See rightly Blundell (1989: 168 with n. 64).

⁹⁴ On the sinister implications of Orestes' designation as μιάστωρ see below p. 38 with n. 127.

⁹⁵ The Erinyes were similarly imagined as drinkers of human blood (e.g. A. Cho. 577-8, *Eu.* 183-4) and were called euphemistically Ἀβλαβίαι (E. Wüst, *RE Suppl.* 8 [1956], 86). It may even be that Βλάβαι was perhaps another name for them (*S. Ant.* 1104 is a possible instance, cf. Dawe [1968: 104]). So perhaps βλάβη at 784 should be capitalized.

⁹⁶ Winnington-Ingram (1980: 219) rightly interprets 489-91 as referring to the Erinyes who are “embodied in the avenging son and his helpers”.

⁹⁷ The reference to Erinyes is almost universally admitted for this passage; see Burton (1980: 216) and Winnington-Ingram (1980: 218). Cf. below n. 228.

The chain of counterbalanced arguments does not end here. We remember Electra's asseverations that she is completely under her mother's and Aegisthus' power (262-65); now, however, Clytaemestra avows her inability to control her daughter (517, 519-20). Besides, Electra had accused her mother of ὕβρις (271, cf. 522), but Clytaemestra now forcefully denies the charge (523; the contrast with Menelaus' freely admitting his hybristic attitude in *Aj.* 1088 is instructive⁹⁹). This balanced contrast between two equally valid positions extends also to the opponents' way of life and values. Electra has proclaimed that she struggles for her kin's (φίλοι) benefit (346, 368, 395 etc.) but Clytaemestra accuses her of bringing disgrace on her φίλοι (518). Furthermore, Electra's infertility has been a central theme, but now Clytaemestra reminds us that she has lost a child too (530-33). Finally, the fruitlessness of the retaliatory process is prominent also in the central arguments of the two parts: neither manages to refute her opponent's basic arguments. For we must realize that Clytaemestra's main thesis, namely that there was no *force majeure* to justify Agamemnon's killing of his own daughter, is never adequately answered: it is evident from Electra's narrative that Agamemnon was *not* actually forced by Artemis to sacrifice Iphigeneia; it was not the case that he was left with no other choice but to sacrifice his daughter. In point of fact, what Artemis threatened to do was that she *would not let the fleet depart* unless Iphigeneia was sacrificed (570-72). It follows that Agamemnon could have forgotten about Troy and, quite simply, dismissed the troops, thus avoiding the death of his daughter; nonetheless, he preferred the success of the enterprise to his daughter's life. And Electra's fleetingly introduced argument (573-74) that the Greek army, stalled in Aulis, could not go back home (a contention termed "artificial or inhuman" by Bowra [1944: 238])¹⁰⁰ is specious: for in the

⁹⁸ For the significance of these lines see Winnington-Ingram (1980: 237 with n.69), whose careful and detailed analysis of the importance of the Erinyes-theme is indispensable for the interpretation of this play.

⁹⁹ I owe the suggestion to Mr. Garvie.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Jebb (*ad* 573). Winnington-Ingram (1980: 220 with n.15) is rightly reserved as to how cogent Electra's speech is meant to sound; cf. also Sheppard's (1927a: 7), and Segal's (1966: 536-37 with nn.), (1981: 271)

event Agamemnon *did* utilize the sacrifice in order to achieve his ulterior purpose which was, of course, not the army's release and homecoming, but the expedition against Troy (exactly as Clytaemestra has argued: 530ff.). Hair-splitting as such distinctions may seem to a modern audience, they must have been of considerable moment for the Athenian spectators — people well versed in the clever subtleties of forensic speeches, whose structure and style the Electra-Clytaemestra *agon* evidently reproduces.¹⁰¹ Such an audience would, of course, observe that Electra has a strong case too: her argument that Clytaemestra has gone beyond the limits of retribution by marrying Aegisthus (585ff.) is undoubtedly right; and Clytaemestra's case does not become any stronger by her failure to use the argument of her Aeschylean counterpart, namely that Agamemnon brought Cassandra into her house (A. Ag. 1440-6).¹⁰² Thus, by the end of the debate there has been created an unresolved tension between the main arguments of both sides. As Winnington-Ingram (1980: 222) has remarked, "Sophocles was the supreme ironist, and perhaps we can now see that he was making ironical use of the form of a sophistic (or forensic) debate, the entire rational aspect of which turns out to be a sham."¹⁰³

All in all, one must not unproblematically pronounce Electra the unequivocal winner of the debate, as many a critic has done.¹⁰⁴ The

misgivings; even Waldock (1951: 181-82) and Linforth (1963: 97-98) felt uneasy about Electra's argumentation. *Contra* Kitto (1961: 137) and van Erp Taalman Kip (1996: 517-21).

¹⁰¹ On the forensic quality of the debate cf. Woodard (1964: 183-84). Winnington-Ingram (1980: 219-20 with n.13) aptly compares it (*pace* Reinhardt [1979: 140, 147]) with Euripides' set speeches; cf. esp. the striking equilibrium he observes in the number of lines that are attributed to Clytaemestra (36 lines) and of those that are committed to the *rational* part (558-94) of Electra's speech (37 lines).

¹⁰² Cf. e.g. Bowra (1944: 237); Letters (1953: 257); Segal (1966: 495); Gellie (1972: 114); Erbse (1978: 290); Machin (1981: 209-10, 221).

¹⁰³ Cf. also Blundell's (1989: 161-72) detailed analysis of the debate — esp. pp. 163-64 and 171-72 for the *talio's* inherent fruitlessness.

¹⁰⁴ E.g. Reinhardt (1979: 149 with n.15); Waldock (1951: 180); Friis Johansen (1964: 16); Gellie (1972: 113-15); Kells (*ad* 626f); Kamerbeek (p. 79); Machin

abuse and threats that Clytaemestra showers on Electra at 622ff., far from indicating frustration at her supposed defeat,¹⁰⁵ are a justified reaction against her daughter's practices: for Electra has swerved from her main course, and instead of sticking to her promised argument (554-55), has launched a fierce, all-encompassing invective against her mother (595ff.); as Jebb (*ad* 610f.) remarks, "Electra's speech, which began with temperate argument, has passed (at v. 595) into a strain of angry reproach".¹⁰⁶ Even the Chorus themselves (610-11) express serious doubts as to whether Electra is at all concerned with justice any more.¹⁰⁷ To conclude: lines 405-659, which stand for a scale representation of the wider vengeance framework (condensing as they do central themes of Orestes' world), end with the two opponents being level. Each one claims to have justice on her side, and each one appeals to the retaliation axiom to justify her actions.¹⁰⁸ However, this practice turns out to be completely fruitless, as it does not lead to any result other than an endless chain of retribution that does not allow anyone to win or to be defeated. Is this not a sinister but clear foreshadowing of the outcome that is to be expected from Orestes' revengeful action as well? If in the microcosm of Electra and

(1981: 222, 223); Gardiner (1987: 169). An honourable exception is Blundell (1989: 172).

¹⁰⁵ As e.g. Kaibel (pp. 169-71), Friis Johansen (1964: 16) and Gellie (1972: 114) seem to have thought.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Linforth (1963: 98-99); Woodard (1964: 184); Winnington-Ingram (1980: 222); Di Benedetto (1983: 184-85). Kitzinger (1991: 316) fails to see this.

¹⁰⁷ See Blundell (1989: 169-70 with n.71). Lines 610-11 must refer to Electra; see Jebb (*ad* 610f.); Segal (1966: 536 n.83); Lilley (1975: 310) —but his assignment of the lines to Clytaemestra I cannot accept —; Dawe (1976: 232); Machin (1981: 224); Segal (1981: 462 n.13); also Gardiner (1987: 149-51) for doxography and literature (however, "Electra seems to have lost all fear of punishment" is not what the Greek says). Burton (1980: 187) seems reserved. Others think that the lines refer to Clytaemestra: Gregor (1950: 87-88), Fitton Brown (1956: 38) —who gives the lines to Electra —, Kells (*ad* 610f), and Kamerbeek (*ad* 610, 11); the latter, like virtually all the scholars of this second group, "cannot imagine the Chorus calling into question Electra's concern for justice". A conclusive answer to this and other pseudo-problems has been given by Booth (1977: 466-67).

Clytaemestra the *lex talionis* results in a sterile recycling of the same retributive pattern, why then should things be different in Orestes' analogously modelled world? This has been noted, from a different perspective, by Cairns (1993: 242) too: "the pattern of insult and retaliation exhibited in the *agon* and adumbrated elsewhere in the play [...] must influence our attitude towards the issues raised by the larger pattern of crime and revenge within the family".

1.3.1 The Paedagogus' scene

The Paedagogus' coming on stage marks the end of this microcosm and the beginning of the actual course of deceitful and avenging action. Complying with the oracle's demand for deceit, the Paedagogus' narrative establishes a fictitious world that is completely different from the actual one as we have known it so far.¹⁰⁹ The most striking feature of this fake world is that Orestes' image is here as heroic as could be.¹¹⁰ He does not only participate in the Pythian games, "glorious ornament of Greece" (681-82) but also gains everyone's respect (685) and wins all the prizes (686-92). The pompous mention of his name, his native city, and his father's name¹¹¹ (693-95) contribute to the splendour of this fictitious

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Winnington-Ingram (1954-55:22-3), Blundell (1989: 161-62).

¹⁰⁹ On the function of the Paedagogus' scene see Sheppard (1918: 86); also Musurillo (1967: 98-99), Reinhardt (1979: 151) —both seeing the scene as little more than a virtuoso display —, Winnington-Ingram (1980: 236-37), and especially Blundell (1989: 173-74). Linforth (1963: 99) fails to see any meaning in this scene.

¹¹⁰ On the contradiction between heroic language and unheroic purpose in the Paedagogus' speech see Segal (1981: 281-90 with n.94); differently Davidson (1988: 54).

¹¹¹ As we have seen (section 1.0.2), Agamemnon was an indisputably heroic model; and as Di Benedetto (1983: 162) has put it, "in questo ordine di idee affiora il motivo tradizionale del nesso padre/figlio, di un patrimonio —a livello del κλέος —che si trasmette dal padre al figlio"; cf. also Masaracchia (1978: 1030 with n. 16). However, if the Platonic view of Orestes as a *παρὰ φύσιν* son of Agamemnon (see again section 1.0.2) reflects to some extent the typical Attic

image,¹¹² while we know that his practices are anything but heroic.¹¹³ The illusion is expanded even further: Orestes takes part in a chariot-race in which the whole Greek world is represented; even his Thessalian horses, the most famous in antiquity,¹¹⁴ add to his pseudo-heroic glamour (698-708). Significantly, this chariot-race is more than once compared to a (naval) battle: ναυαγίων [...] ἵππικῶν (730), κἀνοκωχεύει (732),¹¹⁵ κλύδων' ἔφιππον (733).¹¹⁶ The use of στρατός (749) instead of λαός, the emphatic οἱ' ἔργα δράσας (751)¹¹⁷ as well as the suggestive contrast of Orestes' μέγιστον σῶμα (758) to the small vessel in which he is contained (757-58; cf. A. Ag. 442-4), further contribute to the military imagery and / or to the creation of a distinctly heroic atmosphere.¹¹⁸ Moreover, as Jebb (*ad* 712) has remarked, in the narrative of Orestes' chariot-race Sophocles imitates the Homeric description of the chariot-race in honour of the dead Patroclus (*Il.* 23. 257ff.). Here is a selective

view, then Orestes' association with his father in the Paedagogus' false narrative would — in the eyes of an Athenian audience — mar the heroic illusion; cf. Blundell (1989:173-74).

¹¹² Cf. further Masaracchia (1978:1032-3).

¹¹³ Mantziou (1994:255-56,263-67) strangely argues that the Sophoclean Orestes represents the traditional heroic-aristocratic world, and, what is more, that the Paedagogus' tale reveals this inherent nobility! If, as she argues (*op. cit.*: 256-58), we accept Orestes' 'heroic' guile because it restores the unity of the *oikos*, then Clytaemestra's guile must be accepted too, since it counterbalanced the disruption of the *oikos* generated by Iphigeneia's sacrifice.

¹¹⁴ For the Thessalians' reputation for horsemanship cf. E. *El.* 815-7; Pl. *Men.* 70a; Anon. *Iambl.* 90.2.11 D.-K.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Jebb (*ad* 731ff.): “[ἀνοκωχεύειν] may have been a nautical term”. Kells (*ad* 731ff.) aptly cites Hdt. 6.116: “ἀνακωχέυσαντες τὰς νέας”.

¹¹⁶ Ironically, this naval battle-metaphor will be repeated by Aegisthus at 1444, at the high point of Orestes' unheroic guile (cf. 1493-94).

¹¹⁷ On ἔργον in military contexts ('deed of war') see LSJ s.v. I.1.

¹¹⁸ See Jebb (*ad* 757f.). Hdt. 1.68 remarks *à propos* of Orestes' alleged grave at Sparta: ἐπέτυχον σορῶ ἐπταπήχει· ὑπὸ δὲ ἀπιστίας μὴ μὲν γενέσθαι μηδαμὰ μέζονας ἀνθρώπους τῶν νῦν ἀνοιξα αὐτὴν καὶ εἶδον τὸν νεκρὸν μήκει ἴσον ἔοντα τῇ σορῶ.

account of the similarities between the two passages:¹¹⁹ *El.* 698-99 (ἵππικῶν ἢ ... ὠκύπους ἀγών) ~ *Il.* 262 (ἵππεῦσιν ... ποδώκεσιν) / *Il.* 504 (ἵπποις ὠκυπόδεσσι); the contestants in the Homeric passage are five, whereas in Sophocles their number is exactly doubled; *El.* 710 (κλήρους [C, conl. Wunder : -οῖς codd.] ἔπηλαν) ~ *Il.* 352-53 (ἐν δὲ κλήρους ἐβάλοντο ἢ πάλλ' Ἀχιλεὺς); *El.* 712 (ὀμοκλήσαντες) ~ *Il.* 363 (ὀμόκλησαν); *El.* 712-13 (ἡνίας χεροῖν ἢ ἔσεισαν) ~ *Il.* 363 (πέπληγόν θ' ἱμάσιν); *El.* 714-15 (κόνις δ' ἄνω ἢ φορεῖθ') ~ *Il.* 365-66 (κονίη ἢ ἴστατ' ἀειρομένη ὡς τε νέφος ἢ θύελλα); *El.* 718-19 (... ἀμφὶ νῶτα ... ἢ ... εἰσέβαλλον ἵππικαὶ πνοαί) ~ *Il.* 380-81 (πνοῖη δ' Εὐμήλοιο μετάφρενον εὐρέε τ' ὤμω ἢ θέρμετ'); *El.* 720-21 / 743-46 ~ *Il.* 334-41; *El.* 745-48 ~ *Il.* 392-96.

On the other hand, in this same passage we can detect sinister hints that mar ominously the heroic illusion:

a) The very fact that the Paedagogus' story concerns a Pelopid's participation in a chariot-race (albeit a fictitious one) is bound to remind the audience that, as they have already heard in 504-15 (cf. above, p. 24 with n. 76), the endless evils besetting the Pelopids can be traced back to another chariot-race, that of Pelops. Pelops' chariot-race apparently ended with his triumph and the establishment of his power, but eventually turned out to be disastrous; conversely, Orestes' supposed chariot-race, although it apparently ends with his death, in reality marks the beginning of his triumph over his enemies; however, the Pelops-parallel is there exactly to prevent us from believing that Orestes' triumph will be permanent and undisturbed. Significantly (and ominously) Orestes' murderous enterprise is itself envisaged, later in the play, as a chariot-race (1397 πρὸς αὐτὸ τέρμα).¹²⁰

b) The curious emphasis on linchpins (χνόας 717, 745; σύριγγα 721¹²¹)

¹¹⁹ For most of the parallels I have consulted Jebb's edition. Cf. also Davidson (1988:65-67); Masaracchia (1978:1030-1).

¹²⁰ Cf. Segal (1981:260).

¹²¹ "Here [σύριγγξ] is a synonym for the χνόη (717) or nave itself" (Jebb [ad 721f.]).

cannot, I think, be explained unless as an allusion to the legend of Pelops' chariot-race: the ultimate cause of the Pelopids' hereditary evils — the ἀρχὴ κακῶν — was their patriarch's decision to bribe Myrtilus in order to tamper with the *linchpin* of Oenomaus' chariot. This engineered a chain-reaction of revengeful and / or guileful acts: the dying Oenomaus *retaliated* by cursing Myrtilus to die by Pelops' hand; Myrtilus tried *treacherously* to rape Hippodameia, and was duly *punished* by being thrown into the sea by Pelops; as he sank, he cursed Pelops' house in *revenge*, hence the misfortunes of the Pelopids.¹²²

c) The Paedagogus emphatically mentions that he has been sent by Phanoteus, who is Clytaemestra's and Aegisthus' ally (667, 671; he is called a δορύξενος [46], a friend acquired in battle). On the other hand, Orestes had been offered hospitality by Strophius (1111). Now, Sophocles' audience might well have been familiar with the story according to which Strophius' father was Crisus whose enmity with his twin brother Phanoteus had already begun when they were both in their mother's womb.¹²³ That is to say, Sophocles provides the Paedagogus' false narrative with a background of endless hostility. Given that the ensuing deceitful story is supposed to smooth the ground for an apparently happy ending (Orestes' restoration to his ancestral power), the allusion to the perennial strife between Phanoteus and Crisus is surely a grim prelude to what one might expect to be Orestes' unproblematic victory: the retaliation process cannot stop so easily. We are clearly not encouraged to envision Orestes' impending revenge as the final blow that will put an end to the self-renewing and self-reproducing chain of revenge and counter-revenge that has been besetting the Pelopids.

All in all, the Paedagogus' fake story provides extremely significant, and ominous, allusions to grim legends of deceit, murder and perpetuated retaliation. This should warn an alert audience that the ^enterprise undertaken by the actual Orestes, who is indeed concerned with deceit,

¹²² It might also be significant that the Paedagogus says Orestes was entangled in the reins of his chariot (746-7). According to Apollod. *Epit.* 2.7 Oenomaus was killed in exactly the same way.

¹²³ See e.g. Lycophr. 939-42; Tz. *ad Lyc.* 939. Cf. also Jebb (*ad* 45).

murder and retaliation, may not end all that well.

Clytaemestra's unexpected reaction at 766–68, 770–71 is significant. Instead of exulting over her son's doom, she expresses gloomy thoughts about the dreadful paradox of being saved by the death of one's offspring.¹²⁴ The Paedagogus' genuine surprise (769,¹²⁵ 772) is a spontaneous reaction to this unexpected behaviour. It is also important that even in her expression of relief, a little later, at her son's death, Clytaemestra is not utterly devoid of maternal feelings: at 775ff. she complains that the son who was life of her life (775), whom her own breasts had fed, had become a stranger (777) to her (later [1400–1] we hear that she even prepares the funeral rites for her supposedly dead son). Thus, it is obvious that the *Electra* is not a melodrama, where the characters are either purely good or purely base;¹²⁶ and if black-and-white distinctions do not exist — if, that is, Clytaemestra is not, as we might have thought, a *totally* unmotherly and cruel figure — then why should Orestes be a wholly admirable hero, bravely performing his duty towards his dead father? This lack of clear-cut distinctions is also apparent on the level of vocabulary: Electra (apparently quoting Clytaemestra) refers to Orestes by the term *μιάστωρ* (603) which is ominously ambivalent: it can mean “avenger of a *μιαρός* act”, *but also*

¹²⁴ There is no point in trying to deny the sincerity of her reaction, as e.g. Machin (1981: 226) does. That Clytaemestra's maternal feelings are eventually “stifled by an over-mastering relief from fear” only “brings out the tragic character of the situation” (Winnington-Ingram [1980: 232]; cf. Reinhardt [1979: 152–53 with n.19], Stevens [1978: 115]). Certainly Clytaemestra is not a *mater dolorosa*, but the sincere expression of her maternal sorrow surely prevents us from regarding her *merely* as a wholly evil character set against her children's moral excellence. On Clytaemestra's positive aspects see Webster (1969: 77), Segal (1981: 260–61 with n.39); on her mixed reaction: Tycho von Wilamowitz (1917: 187–8).

¹²⁵ See Kells (*ad* 769).

¹²⁶ See Kitto (1958: 14) and Kells (227). Machin (1981: 208; cf. 214–15) seems to take the opposite view: “... dans *Electre*, [...] l' autorité morale du personnage principal progresse en relation étroite avec les torts de ses ennemis”; that is to say, the more the play proceeds the more odious Aegisthus and Clytaemestra become, and the more we tend to forgive Electra's and Orestes' attitude.

“crime-stained wretch who pollutes others”¹²⁷ — and so it was appropriately used of *Aegisthus* at 275! This sinister blurring of dichotomies between the avengers and their enemies is also expressed in the use of words like *δύστηνος* (121, 806), *τάλαινα* (273), *τλήμων* (275) both of the guilty *Clytaemestra* and of *Electra* and *Agamemnon*.¹²⁸ These words, like the English ‘wretch(ed)’, are distinctly ambiguous: they can imply both an expression of pity and an adverse moral judgement. That they are used with reference to persons whom one might be tempted to regard as diametrically opposed (from a moral point of view) throws a much more ambiguous light on them, thus warning us against moral over-simplifications: both *Aegisthus* and *Clytaemestra* and *Orestes* and *Electra* are at the same time pitiable and despicable.

I think that we can now appreciate the dramaturgical importance both of the debate scene and of the *Paedagogus*’ narrative. Had the former not been there, the retaliation issue would not have been given enough scope, and the audience would not have been adequately warned of the fruitlessness of self-perpetuating revenge. It is only in the light of this scene that the *Paedagogus*’ narrative reveals its full meaning: apart from creating a pseudo-heroic image of *Orestes* (deftly opposed to *Electra*’s genuine, and almost self-destructive, heroism in the ensuing scenes), it also warns us that the punishment of *Aegisthus* and *Clytaemestra* may be divinely ordained, but we are not naively to see in it the triumph of virtue against vice. We realize that retribution results only in its endless self-reproduction; and that a clear-cut distinction between the evil usurpers and the good *Orestes* — a distinction that might mitigate the unpleasant effect of the murderous revenge — simply does not exist.

¹²⁷ LSJ s.v., Jebb (*ad* 275f.); cf. Winnington-Ingram (1980: 245 n.93), Blundell (1989: 169 with n.69) and above all Parker (1983: 108-9) who groups *μιάστωρ* with such words as *προστρόπαιος*, *παλαμναῖος*, *ἀλάστωρ*, *ἀλιτήριος* which can designate both the polluted killer and the victim in his anger or his avengers (human or superhuman): as examples of the first meaning he cites *A. Cho.* 944, *S. El.* 275, *Or* 353, *E. El.* 683, *Andr.* 615; of the second: *A. Eum.* 176-8, *S. El.* 603, *E. Med.* 1371.

1.3.2 Electra's heroism once more

We have seen that the heroic image of Orestes that the Paedagogus tries to present in his false story is adroitly counterpoised by ominous allusions to the possible implications of his unheroic deeds. However, the heroic motifs of that narrative, fictitious though they may be as far as Orestes is concerned, are put into practice by Electra immediately afterwards. This time the heroism is true and entirely unmarred. A close examination of the ensuing scenes will show how the heroic themes dominating the parodos and, partly, the first episode (see section 1.1.1) now recur,¹²⁹ but in a much more intense fashion.

First of all, the death theme undergoes a powerful δείνωσις, and is now hammered in with unremitting persistence. Electra acknowledges that she is virtually dead (808, cf. 1152,¹³⁰ 1163-64) and announces her intention to let herself physically wither away (818-22, cf. 1165-70).¹³¹ The contrast with Orestes' fictitious death, as related by the Paedagogus, is tragically bold: while for the *revenant* Orestes his own death is nothing more than a *jeu d'esprit* (as Woodard [1965: 220] has put it), for Electra it is an all too palpable reality.¹³² Moreover, the theme of Electra's despair and disbelief in any possibility of help from Hades now recurs in a much more intensified form: at 940-41 Electra says that she would be ἄφρων to believe that the dead might be resurrected.¹³³ The despair theme is elaborated upon in 823ff.: not only has Electra lost her hopes but she even forbids the Chorus to offer any consolation to her (831-36,

¹²⁸ Cf. Segal (1966: 501 n.34).

¹²⁹ On the thematic analogy of the two scenes see Minadeo (1967: 125), and cf. Segal's (1966: 480) ingenious scheme, justly acclaimed by Lesky (1972: 236 n.105).

¹³⁰ For the meaning see Kells (*ad* 1151f) and Kamerbeek (*ad* 1151,2).

¹³¹ On Electra's passivity in this scene cf. Huys (1993: 309-10).

¹³² See Woodard (1965: 220-22); cf. Reinhardt (1979: 137-38).

¹³³ Ironically, it will be the unheroic Orestes who τοὺς θανόντας ἐξαναστήσει (940): cf. 1417 ζῶσιν οἱ γὰρ ὑπαὶ κείμενοι. Cf. Woodard (1965: 224).

854-59). She even manages to reverse the mythological example of πάμψυχος Amphiaraus (841) put forward by the Chorus as a consolation,¹³⁴ and to convert it into an argument in favour of her absolute despair: unlike Amphiaraus, Agamemnon will not have an avenger to care for him (846 μελέτωρ), and therefore he will be anything but πάμψυχος (contr. A. Cho. 354-62). The same applies to her brother: she is so sure that his death is an undeniable fact, that she refers to it as though it were something *visible* (831 φανερώς),¹³⁵ whereas she knows it only by hearsay, i.e. from the Paedagogus' false narrative.¹³⁶

However, one must have always in mind that Electra's despair is only another aspect of her heroism, being in significant contrast with Orestes' self-confident guile. Now we are presented with a *Steigerung* of the heroism-theme: Electra, no longer confining herself to words (as she did in the first part of the play), decides to proceed with heroic deeds — she will kill Aegisthus (956-57). The notion of accomplishing an ἔργον is particularly stressed: 943 (δρῶσαν), 947 (τελεῖν), 986-87 (συμπόνει ... σύγκαμν'), 1019-20 (αὐτόχειρι ... δραστήον | τοῦργον), 1045 (ποήσω). At the same time, Electra develops a new attitude towards time: at 951-4 she contrasts her indefinite, 'timeless' hopes of the past with the concrete, pressing necessities of the present (ἕως μὲν ... νῦν δ' ἡνίκ' οὐκέτ' ἔστιν). The same contrast is also present at 961, where suffering in length of time is implicitly opposed to the exigencies of the moment, which demand salutary action. Chrysothemis is mere foil to her sister's heroism:

¹³⁴ For the myth and cult of Amphiaraus see Jebb (*ad* 836f., 837f., 841, 846). For the function of the mythological example see Lesky (1972: 233), Kamerbeek (*ad* 837-848, 841) and esp. Stinton (1990: 474).

¹³⁵ The Paedagogus had indeed purported to be an eyewitness of Orestes' death, but this only makes the fictitiousness of his speech all the more palpable for the audience (cf. Kamerbeek [*ad* 762, 3]).

¹³⁶ I disagree with Jebb's (*ad* 986f.) remark that 986-87 συμπόνει πατρί, | σύγκαμν' ἀδελφῶ suggest Electra's belief in assistance from the dead (thus also Kells [1979: *ad* 986ff]): πατρί and ἀδελφῶ must be ethic datives (with ἐμοί understood as dat. obj. from the two συν-verbs); thus rightly Kaibel (*ad* 986), L. Campbell (*ad* 986), Kamerbeek (986-988).

she prefers inaction (1012 ἀτελή, 1026) and words (1050), while she views time as infinite repetition (999–1000, 1024, 1030).¹³⁷ She also dwells on her female identity (997; cf. 1001), whereas her sister's masculinity receives emphasis (983 ἀνδρείας). In the parodos / first episode Electra's feminine weakness was highlighted by the emphasis put on the absence of males (cf. esp. 117–20, 164–6, 188, 303–6 etc.), whereas now it is this very absence (951–7, 961–6, 986–7) that stimulates her manly qualities.¹³⁸ Chrysothemis' promise for secrecy (1011–12), proudly unheeded by her sister, now underlines Electra's heroic carelessness — a telling contrast with her preceding *dolos* of preventing Clytaemestra's offerings from reaching Agamemnon's tomb (431ff.).

Sophocles, strongly though he may be emphasizing Electra's resolution to act, again makes it clear that it is unlikely to be practically effective, because she is completely impotent — a fact that is especially emphasized by the more level-headed Chrysothemis and the Chorus: 998, 1014, 1091–95 (esp. 1092 ὑπόχειρ).¹³⁹ This is also underscored by a feature of structure: Electra's resolution to act is framed — or rather encased — by two explicit mentions of her intention to let herself wither away (817–22, and 1165–70); thus, on one hand her decision to kill Aegisthus contradicts her previous statement at 817–22, whereas her forcefulness is mitigated by her new passivity at 1165–70.¹⁴⁰

What is more, for all her determination to act, Electra never envisages taking violent action against her *mother*: she proposes the murder of Aegisthus, *not* of Clytaemestra (956–57; cf. 1001), thus avoiding the stain of matricide and managing to live up to the moral standards that have been so typical of her heroism.¹⁴¹ True, some have

¹³⁷ Cf. also Woodard (1965: 200).

¹³⁸ Cf. Kells (*ad* 983). On Electra's ambivalence towards her sex see Woodard (1964: 168).

¹³⁹ Woodard (1964: 188–89) correctly remarks that “affirming an intention to act, [Electra] highlights her limited power”.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Minadeo (1967: 127). *Contra* Kirkwood (1942: 88).

¹⁴¹ Cf. Jebb (*ad* 957): “Sophocles [at this stage, we may add] avoids everything that could qualify our sympathy with Electra”; also Adams (1957: 73): “she means Aegisthus, and Aegisthus only”. See also Sheppard (1918: 86–87), (1927a:

thought that Electra in fact has in mind to kill her mother too, but such a contention rests on flimsy arguments. Thus, *pace* e.g. Friis Johansen (1964: 22) and Kamerbeek (*ad* 957),¹⁴² τοῖσιν ἐχθροῖς (979) is too generic to prove that Electra has in mind to kill Clytaemestra as well;¹⁴³ and at 582-83 and 603-605 Electra presents the possibility of killing her mother as a merely *hypothetical* one: σκῆψιν οὐκ οὔσαν (584) clearly dismisses the premises upon which such action would be founded;¹⁴⁴ cf. also the *conditional* clause at 604-605. Finally, 1080 διδύμαν ἔλοῦσ' Ἐρινύων is the only passage that could possibly imply an intention of matricide; but here there are good reasons for emendation (see Appendix).¹⁴⁵

Furthermore, the references to the revenge theme (whose disturbing implications have been made clear in the debate scene between Electra and her mother) are remarkably minimized (953, 955), while Electra's decision is 'idealized' by her persistence in the *moral* rewards of this action: a repute for reverence towards the dead (968-69),¹⁴⁶ a worthy marriage (961-66, 970-72), and most of all a renown for bravery (973-85). Here, the more or less clear reminiscences of the Attic *skolia* in

7), Machin (1981: 228), Gardiner (1987: 165), Huys (1993: 340-1). *Contra* Segal (1981: 284), quite unconvincingly; Linforth's (1963: 103) explanations are inadequate too, whereas Kirkwood's (1942: 88-90) interpretation (= Electra subconsciously suppresses the fact that Clytaemestra must be killed too, because presumably she feels uneasy about it) is too psychological (later Kirkwood [1958: 169 n.56] changed his mind). Doxography: Gellie (1972: 119 with nn.16-19), Juffras (1991: 106 with n.20).

¹⁴² Similarly, if more subtly, also Owen (1927: 51).

¹⁴³ So rightly Waldock (1951: 185) and Gardiner (1987: 165).

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Erbse (1978: 290-1).

¹⁴⁵ For discussion of this passage see Burton (1980: 211-12), although I am not convinced by his arguments. Sheppard's (1918: 87) solution ("[unlike Electra] the Chorus, who are not daughters of Clytaemestra, include her in the vengeance") is unconvincing.

¹⁴⁶ This is the most plausible explanation of εὐσέβειαν at 968; see Kamerbeek (*ad* 968, 9). On the εὐσέβεια-theme see Long (1968: 151-2).

honour of Harmodios and Aristogeiton¹⁴⁷ finish off the idealized heroic image, and blur any grim aspects of the proposed deed:¹⁴⁸ thus, λόγων ... εὐκλειαν (973) and ζώσαιν θανούσαιν θ' ὥστε μὴ κλιπεῖν κλέος (985) are comparable with *PMG* 896. 1-2 Page (αἰεὶ σφῶν κλέος ἔσσεται κατ' αἶαν, ἰ φίλταθ' Ἀρμόδιε καὶ Ἀριστόγειτον); and the emphatically repeated duals at 977-85, in a context of public praise for the regicidal pair of sisters, must have conjured up for an Athenian audience the famous pair of the tyrannicides, similarly referred to in the dual in Attic *skolia*: e.g. *PMG* 893.3-4 Page ὅτε τὸν τύραννον κτανέτην ἰ ἰσονόμους τ' Ἀθήνας ἐποίησάτην (cf. also *PMG* 896. 3-4 Page). Finally, the whole of the third stasimon (1058-97) is committed to the praise of Electra's heroism and filial devotion, by lyrically elaborating upon the previous episode's antithesis between her and her sister. Electra complies with the divinely established cosmic order (1058-65; notice the mention of Zeus and Themis¹⁴⁹) and is prepared to bear alone the burden of double revenge (1074 πρόδοτος ... μόνα; 1080 διδύμαν ... Ἐρινύν¹⁵⁰). She is εὐπατρις, "noble child of noble sire"¹⁵¹ (1081; cf. 968, 986 etc.), she is one of the ἀγαθοί (1082), she seeks εὐκλεία (1083), and respects the laws of

¹⁴⁷ Masaracchia (1978: 1037 with n. 27) and Knox (1983: 8) also comment, if *en passant*, on the allusion to the *skolia*. Juffras (1991: esp. 103-104), without mentioning the similarities with the *skolia*, holds that what Electra refers to is a public statue commemorating herself and her sister, on a parallel with the paired statues of Harmodios and Aristogeiton in the Athenian Agora. Whitman (1951: 167-8) sees an echo of Tyrtaeus' exhortatory poems. Cf. also Mantziou (1995: 83 n.1).

¹⁴⁸ Kirkwood (1942: 89) remarks on the difference between Electra's concern about heroism in this scene, and her acknowledgement of her unseemly behaviour in the debate with her mother.

¹⁴⁹ On Themis cf. Jebb (*ad* 1064) and Kamerbeek (*ad* 1064). On Electra's being in harmony with the natural and moral order see Woodard (1965: 214).

¹⁵⁰ With my emendation ἔχουσ' for ἐλοῦσ' (see Appendix) the meaning of 1080 is that Electra embodies the avenging spirits of both her father and her brother.

¹⁵¹ Jebb's (147) translation.

Zeus (1096-97¹⁵²); thus, she deserves eternal glory (1082-89; cf. Electra's arguments at 973-85).¹⁵³ It is to the credit of Electra's heroic image that the ominous theme of revenge is again, as before, carefully suppressed, whereas the noble aspect of the deed is given excellent prominence.¹⁵⁴ This encomium of Electra's heroism and true piety is cast in the highest relief by means of its opposition to Chrysothemis' unfilial behaviour which, as the Chorus remark, is disgraceful news for the dead Atreidae (1066-73); she will certainly inflict upon herself the punishment of Zeus (1063-65) because she runs counter to natural order (1058-62).¹⁵⁵ Significantly, Electra's behaviour is commended, among other things, for its εὐσέβεια (1097; the last word of this stasimon). This word, used by the Chorus at 464 of conventional piety, is now radically modified: in the present context, the heroic language and the references to the supreme cosmic order place the word in a wider framework, rubbing off the utilitarian connotations of its commonplace counterpart at 464.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Sheppard (1927a: 7) misleads.

¹⁵³ The nightingale-motif, characteristic of Electra's desperate heroism, recurs in this stasimon (1075-7); cf. Sheppard (1918: 87). On the heroic language of this stasimon and of Electra's speech (947-89) see Schein (1982: 76-77).

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Gellie (1972: 120-21).

¹⁵⁵ Kells (pp. 179-81) has proposed that the Chorus, far from castigating Chrysothemis whose good sense they had previously praised (1015-6; for the dramatic point of this inconsistency cf. below p. 47f.), in fact align with her attitude, and implicitly complain against Agamemnon's failure to help his children. However, if the purpose of this song were "to stir the lethargic soul of Agamemnon to rise up and take vengeance upon his enemies" (Kells, p. 181), one should expect this to be more prominently indicated, as it is in *A. Cho.* 315ff. Instead, the song is conspicuously committed to the unreserved praise of Electra (cf. esp. 1082-97) and the (implicit but clear) castigation of Chrysothemis — a fact which Kells prefers staggeringly to ignore rather than explain. For criticism see Stinton (1990: 478 n. 80). Errandonea's (1955: 385-96) view (the Chorus chastises both Chrysothemis and Electra for their failure to take revenge) is preposterous.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Lesky's (1972: 234) wise remarks: "Es beleuchtet die Dialektik der Zentralen Gestalt, wenn an derselben Elektra, die (308) klagt, daß ihr das εὐσεβεῖν (fromm sein) versagt sei, nun mit dem letzten Worte des Liedes ihre εὐσέβεια (Frömmigkeit) hoch gepriesen wird."

Nevertheless, now more than ever Electra is failing to comply (though unknowingly) with Apollo's will — i.e. is distancing herself from an important aspect of what the Greeks would normally call εὐσέβεια!

1.3.3 Electra's ignorance

It is a striking feature of this play that Electra displays the most admirable heroism only when she is in a state of deplorable ignorance. This was the case in the parodos (as well as in the first part of the first episode), when her knowledge was all but non-existent (she had only *tidings*, i.e. *aurally* imparted information, which were eventually belied, 169–70); and this is the case now, when Electra keeps relying on her ears (cf. 883–84) and defends the (false) aural experience she has acquired from the Paedagogus (920ff.; esp. 926 τοῦ τὰδ' ἤκουσας). Her persistence is all the more strange, since now Chrysothemis sees (885–86, 892, 894, 897, 899, 900, 902–903, 904)¹⁵⁷ indisputable evidence of Orestes' presence, namely his offerings at Agamemnon's tomb, and we know that what she sees is the truth. She naturally defends the reliability of her new knowledge (907–15, 923), but Electra scornfully rejects the news (cf. her quashing of Chrysothemis' visual experience at 925 μηδὲν ἐς κεῖνόν γ' ὄρα¹⁵⁸) and taunts her sister for her supposed foolishness (879, 920, 922¹⁵⁹)! Electra's disbelief in her sister's news must have been a great surprise to a Greek audience, and not only because visual perception was thought to be much more reliable than aural one:¹⁶⁰ the audience, familiar with the Aeschylean (*Cho.* 164ff.) version, in which Orestes' funeral offerings had an important role in the Recognition, must have surely

¹⁵⁷ On the emphasis on Chrysothemis' *seeing* cf. Easterling (1973: 27), Seale (1982: 67–8).

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Kamerbeek (*ad* 924, 5).

¹⁵⁹ As commentators remark, this line may echo the proverb ποῦ γῆς ἢ θαλάττης ὑπῆρχες; ἐπὶ τῶν ἀνοήτων (Apostol. 14.57 [CPG II, 619 Leutsch]).

¹⁶⁰ See again n. 50. On the paradox of hearsay prevailing over visual evidence in this scene see Solmsen (1967: 21–22).

expected Chrysothemis' news to be believed and to lead to the Recognition. Sophocles however, consciously deviating from the Aeschylean precedent, throws his Electra into the deepest ignorance by making a false narrative take precedence, in her mind, over concrete visual experience; thus, the paradoxical association between her lack of knowledge and the bravery which she displays immediately afterwards becomes all the more prominent.¹⁶¹ We cannot help recalling another significant paradox: Electra indulged her first act of guile, namely the suppression of Clytaemestra's offerings, only when her knowledge had been enhanced by the dream that she believed to be sent by Agamemnon. It seems that in this play knowledge and heroism are mutually exclusive.

This paradox also clarifies another of the dramaturgical *raisons d'être* of the Paedagogus scene: had that scene not been there, Orestes would have brought the news of his death himself, which would have instantly led to the Recognition. Now, however, the Recognition is postponed, and there is enough dramatic time for the second Chrysothemis scene where a) Electra's heroism is put against her sister's unheroic care for expediency, and b) Electra's ignorance is contrasted with her sister's knowledge, thus building up the aforementioned paradox: only the one who is ignorant laudably takes the decision to risk her life, whereas the one who knows prefers submissive inaction.¹⁶²

However, there is yet another paradox associated with Electra's ignorance. As I have already suggested (above, p. 20), Electra never accepts that she lacks good sense. Thus, she now defends her reckless behaviour not on moral grounds but by maintaining that *she* is the one

¹⁶¹ Thus, we must dismiss such views as Tycho von Wilamowitz's (1917: 191-3) and Webster's (1969: 118), who think that the audience, having identified themselves with Electra, share her belief in the Paedagogus' story and her disbelief in her sister's tokens. The audience *have* to be constantly aware of Electra's delusion. We may add that this delusion is rendered unmistakable by a unique formal feature: "dies ist das einzige Mal, daß ein Trug sich in der sophokleischen Tragödie 'verzweigt', indem er zwei gegensätzlich auf die Trugbotschaft reagierende Menschen [i.e. Electra and Clytaemestra] trifft": Parlavantza-Friedrich (1969:34).

who is being really wise (1023,¹⁶³ 1027 [the irony only emphasizes, I think, Electra's strong confidence in her own νοῦς], 1039,¹⁶⁴ 1047, 1054¹⁶⁵). It is surprising, but very significant, that, despite Chrysothemis' admonitions about her sister's lack of good sense (992-93, 1013, 1021-22,¹⁶⁶ 1024, 1032, 1038, 1046, 1055-56), the Chorus find themselves compelled to call Electra σοφά (1089); cf. also 1058 where obviously Electra is thought of as following the example of φρονιμώτατοι οἰωνοί; the Chorus implicitly pick up and refute Chrysothemis' φρονεῖν (1056). They indicatively attribute to Electra the very quality the Chorus-leader denied her at 1016, but now (as in the case of εὐσεβεῖν: see above, p. 44) they no longer use σοφά in the conventional sense of self-seeking common sense as they did at 1016 (cf. also their use of σωφρονήσεις at 465).¹⁶⁷ This seems an inexplicable paradox, given Electra's most

¹⁶² On the dramaturgic purpose of the second Chrysothemis scene cf. Reinhardt (1979: 154) and Gellie (1972: 118).

¹⁶³ See Kamerbeek (*ad* 1023), Coray (1993: 267).

¹⁶⁴ See Jebb (*ad* 1039).

¹⁶⁵ Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990a) delete this line, along with 1050-3, as interpolated.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Jebb (*ad* 1021f.), Coray (1993: 267-8).

¹⁶⁷ Pace Burton (1980: 208). Kells (*ad* 1066), (1986: 158-60) fails to see how the Chorus could now praise Electra whom they had previously blamed for her attitude. So, he emends 1087 into τὰ μὴ κάλ' οὐ καθοπλίσασα, thus making the Chorus say "Electra has *not* chosen to have two prizes at once, so as to be called once for all a daughter *both* wise *and* very good" (i.e. she has chosen to be *only* ἀρίστα). With my interpretation this emendation is needless, as is Stokes' (1979: 141-2) very strained view that for the Chorus Electra, in avenging a father, is a wise and very good *child* (παῖς) but, in inciting murder, she is a bad woman; there is nothing in the text to suggest such an antithesis. τὸ μὴ καλόν (1087) should either be taken to be an ironical 'quotation', by the Chorus, of the conventional (i.e. Chrysothemis') judgement of Electra's planned actions (thus Stinton [1990: 478]), or alternatively be emended into ἄκος καλόν as Lloyd-Jones (1954: 95) has proposed. Errandonea's (1955: 393-4) solution (dissociate τὸ μὴ from καλόν and associate it with φέρειν) is impossible. In general see Winnington-Ingram's (1980: 242 n.82; cf. 241 with n.77) excellent remarks; also

deplorable ignorance; however, as I shall point out, it acquires its full importance later, after the Recognition, when everyone's knowledge (but the usurpers') is supposed to have been restored (see section 1.4.3). For the moment, it suffices to bear in mind that Electra's and the Chorus' asseverations about her cognitive competence must be taken at face value: the fact that they are in so stark a contrast with the castigation of her foolishness only a short while ago (e.g. 1016) presumably means that they are intended to attract our attention and, thus, make us take them seriously into account.

1.4.1 The second reversal: Recognition

When Orestes reappears on stage at 1098, the audience are immediately presented with a most striking paradox: Orestes' purpose is to complete the Paedagogus' false story by providing visible 'proof' of his supposed death, i.e. by coming forward with an urn supposed to contain his ashes (the Paedagogus has already prepared Orestes' entrance, 757-60). The urn achieves its *deceitful* purpose because it is supposed to be a token of Orestes' *heroic* death in the Pythian games; in other words, two opposites (heroic force and guile) are comprised in one and the same object, and indeed the latter is a corollary of the former. This paradoxical coexistence marks the beginning of the end of Electra's heroism. She witnessed, through the Paedagogus' story, the heroic end of her brother, and fake though this may have been, she took over his supposed heroism and went as far as to plan Aegisthus' murder. Now, however, she will soon find out that the alleged token of her brother's heroism, i.e. the urn, is in fact only the symbol of his unheroic guile; what is more, she will happily embrace her brother's attitude and will be converted into his ruthless accomplice, instantly abandoning her former care for heroic decency and abstention from bloodshed.

The paradoxical situation becomes all the more manifest when one

Burton (1980: 208-14), Coray (1993: 123-4). On the Chorus' change of attitude in 1087-89cf. also Gellie (1972: 120), who fails however to explain σοφά.

considers that a means of knowledge considered to be reliable by definition, i.e. visual experience (above, n. 50), is now used to consolidate a state of ignorance and illusion (that the urn is a visual token is more than once mentioned; cf. 1109 ἐμφανῆ τεκμήρια, 1114 ὡς ὁρᾶς, 1116 δέρκομαι).¹⁶⁸ However, by a further paradox, the urn is soon (and in spite of Orestes' intentions) converted from an instrument of deceit into a means of true knowledge: when Electra holds it and laments her brother (1119-20, 1123) she is obviously a victim of his guile, but at the same time she unawares discloses to him who she is. The plan that was intended to withhold knowledge (or to enforce ignorance) leads in fact, despite Orestes' calculations, to true knowledge, both for him and for his sister. Knowledge and ignorance are amalgamated into an undifferentiated blend, eluding human control, undermining Orestes' carefully planned machinations, and proving his confidence in his guileful intelligence to be misguided. Orestes asks for the urn to be returned to him (1205-17) in an attempt to regain control of the situation, to resume his role as a dispenser of knowledge and ignorance: thus, he first reveals to Electra who he really is, and then he gets ready to use the urn again as an instrument of guile against Clytaemestra (cf. 1400-1401).¹⁶⁹ Still, a typically Sophoclean *coup de théâtre* lies ahead: much as we have been looking forward to the full restoration of Electra's knowledge in this scene, the situation turns out not to be so

¹⁶⁸ We remember the paradox of the second Chrysothemis scene where Chrysothemis' true (i.e. visually acquired) knowledge was outweighed by her sister's false (i.e. aurally acquired) knowledge. The limits between knowledge and ignorance are confusingly blurred in this play: eyes, which are reliable by definition, are won over by ears (second Chrysothemis scene) or, as in the recognition scene, are used to deceive, i.e. to be an extension of the false aural information imparted by the Paedagogus. On the other hand, Orestes' recognition by Electra (i.e. a visual experience) is phrased in terms of aural perception: 1225 φθέγγμ', 1225 πύθη, cf. 1220 & 1223 λέγω! Cf. Solmsen's (1967: 25) discussion of τεκμήρια.

¹⁶⁹ On the various functions of the urn see Segal's (1981: 277-79, 287-88) views — rather far-fetched though some of them may be. Reinhardt (1979: 156) has excellently epitomized the ambiguity of this scene: "[Electra's lament] misses its target, and in missing it comes to find it."

unproblematic. For, contrary to our expectations, the new knowledge is first imparted *not* to Electra, but to Orestes who finds himself entirely ignorant of his woes (1185 τῶν ἐμῶν ... κακῶν)!¹⁷⁰ It is significant that verbs denoting vision and / or knowledge are used almost exclusively with reference to *him*: 1184 ἐπισκοπῶν, 1185 ἤδη, 1186 διέγνωσ, 1187 ὄρῶν — ἐμπρέπουσαν, 1188 ὄρας, 1189 βλέπειν, 1191 ἐξεσήμηνας, 1199 ὄρῶν. Thus, the anticipation that Orestes would only have to communicate his knowledge to Electra for things to be sorted out is sensationally belied.¹⁷¹ On the other hand, when at last we are presented with the recognition *stricto sensu* (i.e. with Electra's realization that it is her brother who stands before her), we are surprised to find out that it is reduced to a few lines (1220–26) and almost hastily passed over. Whereas Aeschylus and Euripides spend many lines and lay much emphasis on providing sufficient recognition tokens, Sophocles adroitly belies his audience's expectations: he first postpones the recognition, thus making the whole drama lead up to it, but then swiftly disposes of it, by simply providing a conventional token (1223 σφραγίδα πατρός) which passes almost unnoticed.¹⁷² By that point, the audience must have begun to suspect that Sophocles' purpose is *not* to celebrate the prevalence of true knowledge over long-lived delusion, but on the contrary to undermine a traditional element of the myth and to point out that here we have not,

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¹⁷⁰ Cf. Woodard (1964: 190–91) and, above all, Solmsen (1967: 28–30). Saïd (1993: 325) sees this interjection in a different way. For another approach see Kirkwood (1958: 143 n.33).

¹⁷¹ I cannot understand such views as e.g. Kaibel's (p. 242) and Jebb's (*ad* 1106) who maintain that Orestes is from the beginning fully aware of Electra's identity. Cf. Tycho von Wilamowitz's (1917: 204–6), Reinhardt's (1979: 263 n.24), Solmsen's (1967: 26–28), and Kamerbeek's (*ad* 1105, 1117, 8) right objections.

¹⁷² See Jebb (*ad* 1222f.): "It is remarkable how swiftly Sophocles glides over the incident, as if conscious that the σημεῖον was little more than conventional." I cannot agree with Saïd (1993: 326) who puts too much emphasis on the σφραγίς as a symbol of the link between the siblings. I also disagree with Tycho von Wilamowitz (1917: 210), Reinhardt (1979: 160 with n.26) and Solmsen (1967: 32–33) who think that the psychic reunion of sister and brother makes any formal tokens superfluous.

after all, the unproblematic restoration of knowledge we might have been tempted to expect.

1.4.2 Unheroic Electra

That the Recognition is far from being a happy restoration of impaired knowledge is more clearly shown in the last part of the play. First of all, the joy of this scene is grievously spoiled by the fact that the moral standards of the two siblings disappointingly fail to coincide. Thus, in the Recognition duet (1232ff.) we see, at first, Electra happily thinking that the time at last has come when her heroism can be displayed. She bravely declares that she will never deem it worthy of herself to fear the female good-for-nothings that live inside the house (1240-42): the contemptuous *γυναικῶν* (1242) shows that Electra's virile aspect is now at its zenith. However, her heroism is rendered ineffective by her brothers' ^{r's} deceitful practices. No matter how much she dwells on her well known (cf. e.g. 213ff., 328ff.) heroic carelessness and fearless expression of her true feelings (1239-42, 1253-56, 1260-63, 1281-87¹⁷³), Orestes remarks (1243-4) that "Ares inheres in women too" (thus throwing in a sharper focus the antithesis between the heroic female and the unheroic male¹⁷⁴) and insists on the need for silence (1236, 1238, 1259), an important

¹⁷³ The text here is badly mutilated, but it seems possible that the general meaning can be retrieved (esp. with Dawe's [1996: *in app. crit.*] tentative supplement *πρὶν μὲν οὖν ἐπέσχον*): what Electra seems to say is that all this time she has been forcing (1282 *ἐπέσχον*) herself not to voice her feelings (1282-83 *ὄργαν ἄναυδον | οὐδὲ σὺν βοᾷ*), although she has been receiving tidings about Orestes' coming (1284 *κλύουσ' ἅ τάλαινα*). Differently Kaibel (*ad* 1281). Discussion in Kamerbeek (*ad* 1281-1287).

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Segal (1981: 254). The invocation of the virile Artemis (1239) is also significant in relation to Electra's masculinity. Although Seaford (1985: 321-22) prefers to associate it with the anomalous extension of Electra's virginity, the antithesis is here not between marriage and celibacy, but between female idleness (1241-2 *ἔνδον ... ὅν αἰεὶ [ὁ ναίει Viketos]*) and the heroic, manly Electra.

prerequisite of any guileful action, but totally alien to the heroic Electra we have known and admired.

Nonetheless, the gap between the siblings is not only moral; it is also sentimental. Electra's happy song after the Recognition (1232ff.) seems to be an auspicious prelude: the two siblings, having met again after all this time, will at last join each other in a cheerful celebration. However, this is far from being the case. Electra's emotional outburst on the one hand and Orestes' rational restraint on the other are reflected on the form of their duet: while Electra *sings* in a variety of lyric metres (mainly dochmiacs [a markedly emotional metre] and iambics), Orestes only *speaks* in conventional iambic trimeters.¹⁷⁵ It is true, of course, that in 1276-80 Orestes seems to make concessions to his sister's frantic joy; and as we have already seen him once showing signs of emotional sensitivity (80-81),¹⁷⁶ one might suppose that after all Orestes is not the business-like avenger we thought, but can also be an affectionate brother. Nevertheless, this is not true; it is only Sophocles being tricky: the audience, having witnessed Orestes' strenuous efforts to make his sister hush, must by now be craving to see at last some genuine fraternal love, which could possibly mitigate the horror of the act that is about to be performed. These lines, along with the couplet from the prologue, seem to provide this excuse; but Orestes instantly resumes his original behaviour (1288ff.; cf. also the curt 1353) and frigidly asks his sister to stifle her feelings and concentrate on the execution of the plan. The violent antithesis of the latter passages with Orestes' would-be fraternal affection make his callousness appear even more distasteful.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ See Woodard (1964: 192-93 with n.78), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 229 with n.43), Di Benedetto (1983: 189); *contra* Gardiner (1987: 155-56). The sole exceptions are 1276 (τί μὴ ποήσω;) and 1280 (τί μὴν οὔ;). Dale's view (1969: 225) that Orestes (and the Paedagogus!) eventually "glow with the inner warmth of [Electra's] inner fires" is unacceptable.

¹⁷⁶ Sandbach (1977: 721-73), however, attributed 78-81 to the Paedagogus and 82-85 to Orestes.

¹⁷⁷ See also Schein (1982: 77-78), Blundell (1989: 174), and cf. Gellie (1972: 122-23 with n.21). The opposite view has been held by Segal (1966: 513-16) and most powerfully by Woodard (1964: 169-70 and *passim*), who thinks that Orestes and

Orestes' unsavoury practices will soon be shared by his sister. In this latter part of the play, Electra undergoes a radical change: she gives up the remarkable heroism she had displayed during the first part of the play (i.e. before the Recognition), and is suddenly transformed into an unfeeling and unheroic executor of a murderous plan.¹⁷⁸ It is significant as well as surprisingly disappointing that the themes of utter grief and despair that had dominated the first part of the play are now used to serve the treacherous action. First of all, Electra's incessant lament, so far a symbol of her unflinching heroism, is now converted into an instrument of δόλος: at 1309-13 she declares that from now on she will be using her tears in order deceitfully to persuade her mother that she is lamenting her brother's death (1298-99 ὡς ἐπ' ἄτη τῆ μάτην λελεγμένη | στέναζ'). Furthermore, Electra's words are no longer tokens of her fearlessness, nor are they equivalent to heroic deeds as before; they are simply instruments of deceit (cf. esp. her misleading use of words in her conversation with Aegisthus, 1442ff.), and are to give way to murderous deeds (1483-84, 1487);¹⁷⁹ now λόγοι have become undesirable

Electra, previously standing for cosmic antitheses, eventually unite and create "a double image of excellence". Minadeo (1967: 129-30) thinks that Orestes yields to Electra's emotionalism in the same way as the play proceeds from the Apollonian rationalism of the beginning to the irrational passion of the end; on this supposed transformation of Orestes see also Adams (1933: 209-10), (1957: 74-76), Webster (1969: 73) —the latter regards Orestes as another Neoptolemus recovering his heroic identity (!). For an essentially emotional Orestes cf. also Letters (1953: 251); for his supposed qualms see Adams (1957: 64).

¹⁷⁸ Electra's giving up her heroism and embracing Orestes' practices is appositely condensed in 1319-21: had she been alone, she would have either died heroically or won heroically (cf. the repetition of καλῶς and see above p. 43f.); but now she leaves all initiative to the unheroic Orestes. On Electra's transformation cf. Sheppard (1918: 87), Minadeo (1967: 119-20), Schein (1982: 78). Kirkwood (1958: 167-68) fails to explain this change of heart. Segal (1966: 522-3), on the evidence of 1485-86, tries to show that Electra retains something of her initial emotionality; however, these lines (athetized by Dindorf, omitted in L^{ac}) are now generally accepted to be spurious: see e.g. Dawe (1996: *in textu*) and Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990a: *in textu*).

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Woodard (1964: 197), Minadeo (1967: 132), Segal (1981: 285).

as they may inhibit timely action (cf. 1292), whereas ἔργα are called ἠδιστα (1360). As Woodard (1964: 198) has put it, “with her use of verbal *dolos*, Electra reaches, in the last scene, the farthest remove from her attempt in the Prologue to make *logoi* replace *erga*” (cf. also Kitzinger [1991: 325]). It is only too significant that she also gives up the virility she had previously displayed (983): now it is (the unheroic!) Orestes and Pylades that are called ‘men’ (1398).¹⁸⁰ Moreover, she even abandons what has been perhaps the most typical feature of her personality, namely her love and devotion for her father and her deep respect for his memory. At 1316–17 she states that, now that her brother has come back, she is prepared to accept even the possibility of her father rising from the dead; given Orestes’ associations (as a *revenant*) with Hades we can easily understand this equation of Orestes’ homecoming with the resurrection of Agamemnon.¹⁸¹ Thus, we might reasonably think that Electra does at last believe in help from the dead and that her former despair (we remember how strongly she has been denying any possibility of assistance from the dead: pp. 16 & 39) is over. Nevertheless, exactly at the moment when her devotion to her father seems to be reaching a new peak, as she confidently states that she is almost waiting for him to appear, Sophocles gives a fatal blow to Electra’s heroic image he has been building up; for her father indeed appears but instead of the heroic Agamemnon (see section 1.0.2) it is the treacherous, unheroic Paedagogus who is given the honour of that name (1361 πατέρα γὰρ εἰσορᾶν δοκῶ)!¹⁸² Electra’s distancing from her previous devotion to her father is so great that she

¹⁸⁰ Reinhardt (1979: 161) is certainly justified in thinking that “[Electra is] happy to be once more within the bounds of her femininity”, but I doubt whether we are meant to understand as a happy outcome her display of attitudes that she formerly held to be despicable (e.g. 1240–2).

¹⁸¹ Cf. above section 1.0.1. On the reversal of living and dead cf. Blundell (1989: 153 with n.15).

¹⁸² As Jebb (*ad* 1361) remarks, “this is the only tragic trimeter in which the third foot is formed by a single word of three short syllables”. Thus, the crucial word πατέρα is extremely emphasized, as “the movement of the verse begins afresh at πατέρα”. Kells’ (*ad* 1315) bizzare view that Electra has gone mad is a perverse invention of his; see Stevens (1978: 116).

does not even mention him in her final prayer (1376-83)¹⁸³ — contrast however her prayer at 453-54! The Paedagogus' hasty eagerness for swift action completely discloses the unheroic nature of the deed that is about to happen: Clytaemestra must be caught and killed alone, before the men arrive (1368-69); however, the man of whom the Paedagogus is afraid is the effeminate (300-302) Aegisthus! So, two men must hurry to kill a lone woman, because they are afraid of confronting a womanish man!¹⁸⁴ What is more, the Paedagogus at 1326ff. significantly uses the same key-words as the unheroic Chrysothemis in the two Chrysothemis scenes: 1326 φρενῶν τητῶμενοι ~ 992-93 φρενῶν | ... κακῶν; 1327 παρ' οὐδὲν τοῦ βίου κήδεσθ' ἔτι ~ 392 βίου δὲ τοῦ παρόντος οὐ μνείαν ἔχεις; 1329-30 κακοῖς | τοῖσιν μεγίστοις ~ 335 ἐν κακοῖς / 374 κακὸν μέγιστον / 1003 κακῶς πράσσοντε; 1334 εὐλάβειαν ~ 994 εὐλάβειαν. It is exactly her sister's 'reasonable' advice that Electra had scornfully — and admirably — rejected; now, however, far from pouring scorn on the man who offers her the same advice, she sees in him her dead father! Furthermore, Electra's behaviour now appears incongruous with the advice she herself had offered her sister. She had admonished her for being forgetful of her father and for caring only about her mother (341-42), but now it is a stranger, not even her mother, that takes her father's part in her heart! She had formerly asseverated (145-46) that νήπιος ὅς τῶν οἰκτρῶς | οἰχομένων γονέων ἐπιλάθεται; but if so, she is now being as νήπιος as anyone, since she is the one who τῶν οἰκτρῶς οἰχομένων γονέων ἐπιλάθεται; so, despite her newly acquired knowledge, she is not really σοφά (1089).

Electra is being rapidly transformed into a bloodthirsty creature, irretrievably incapable of regaining her humane heroism. She all but

¹⁸³ See Kamerbeek (ad 453, 4).

¹⁸⁴ See Kells (ad 1368f), and Blundell (1989: 175) who nicely contradistinguishes Orestes' attitude from Electra's bravery towards both her mother and Aegisthus. At the crucial moment of the murder Clytaemestra calls for Aegisthus (1409), thus reminding the audience of her female impotence (she needs her effeminate husband to protect her!), and stressing the unmanly deed of her son.

physically delivers the fatal blows against her mother, as she exhorts her brother with the terrifying cry (1415) παῖσον, εἰ σθένεις, διπλῆν.¹⁸⁵ Sophocles anything but dissociates Electra from the matricide: that she, firstly, enters the palace along with Orestes and Pylades (cf. 1386–88) serves to associate her, on the visual-theatrical level, with the murderers. As Easterling (1987: 19–21) points out, the interior of the palace is fraught with disturbing connotations (cf. e.g. 10, 820–1, etc.): ‘those within’ are evil, sinister, murderous, but now Electra associates herself with them in spatial terms. It is while she is still inside with them that we hear the Chorus sing of guile (1392 δολιόπους, 1396 δόλον) and bloodshed (1385, 1394 αἶμα)¹⁸⁶ — and if ‘bloodshed caused by unholy strife’ is what δυσέριστον αἶμα (1385) means,¹⁸⁷ then the abominable nature of the action is all the more underscored. That Electra reappears on stage immediately afterwards (cf. the Chorus’ surprised question at 1402: σὺ δ’ ἐκτὸς ἦξας πρὸς τί;), so far from implying her non-participation in the deed as some have thought,¹⁸⁸ serves to underscore her active assistance to the murderers: for as Machin (1981: 425) has seen, Electra re-enters “non pas pour éviter le cruel spectacle qui s’ y prépare [i.e. in the palace], mais pour prévenir de l’ arrivée d’ Egisthe”, i.e. in order to back

¹⁸⁵ See Gellie (1972: 127 with n.24). Machin (1981: 425) emphasizes that Electra, with her verbal interventions during the matricide (1411–16), “accomplit sa vengeance, à cela près qu’ elle ne manie pas l’ arme”; cf. Taplin and Seidensticker *apud* Winnington-Ingram (1983: 257). Musurillo (1967: 105–106) and Huys (1993: 339) unacceptably deny that the phrase indicates the degeneration of the heroine. Linforth’s (1963: 109 n.5) interpretation of the phrase as a derisive exhortation to Clytaemestra to return the blow is not to be accepted: see Winnington-Ingram (1980: 230 n.45).

¹⁸⁶ For a convincing defence of the traditional reading at 1394 see Jebb (*ad* 1394), Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 73).

¹⁸⁷ This meaning, already proposed by the scholiast (p. 156 Papageorgius), has been accepted by, among others, LSJ s.v. and L. Campbell (*ad* 1384,5), (1907: 152), but rejected by Jebb (*ad* 1385) and Kamerbeek (*ad* 1385).

¹⁸⁸ E.g. Letters (1953: 259), Gellie (1972: 126), Gardiner (1987: 157).

up the murder as a lookout and thus further the deceitful plan.¹⁸⁹ What is more, her gruesome demand, later, to throw Aegisthus' corpse to dogs and vultures (1487-89)¹⁹⁰ — one might compare *Od.* 3. 256-61 — seals her transformation into a female counterpart of her ruthless brother. Denial of burial was deemed by Plato (*Leg.* 873b-c) a worthy punishment for (among others) *kin-killers*. The irony is obvious: Electra demands for Aegisthus a death that she herself, *qua* matricide, deserves!

1.4.3 Curtain: ignorant Electra and ignorant Orestes

We have witnessed a similar change in Electra's behaviour at the first Chrysothemis scene, when after the announcement of Clytaemestra's dream Electra gave up her heroic attitude and set a treacherous plan into practice (above, p. 21ff.). We can now gain a broader perspective on that change. Clytaemestra's dream, like Apollo's oracle, was a supernatural source of knowledge. However, that knowledge was far from certain: Chrysothemis significantly dwelt on the fact that she knew *only a few details* about the dream: 410, 414, 426. She made it clear that she had heard about it from someone else who happened to be present at the moment when Clytaemestra related it to the Sun (417 λόγος τις ... ἐστίν; 424-425 τοιαῦτά του παρόντος ... ἔκλυον ἐξηγουμένου).¹⁹¹ What is more, Clytaemestra herself, i.e. the only person who had full

¹⁸⁹ See Woodard's (1964: 195-96) excellent remarks on the matter; cf. Lesky (1972: 236). Linforth (1963: 108), having adopted an optimistic interpretation of the play, finds himself unable to explain why Electra goes in only to come out again almost immediately.

¹⁹⁰ This is the interpretation of ταφεῦσιν (1488) favoured by, among others, L. Campbell (*ad* 1488), Jebb (*ad* 1488f.), Kaibel (pp. 298-9), Linforth (1963: 110), Gellie (1972: 128 with n.25), Erbse (1978: 297), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 230 n.45), Segal (1981: 465 n.63). *Contra* Bowra (1944: 255), Letters (1953: 260), Segal (1966: 520-21 with n.60), Friis-Johansen (1964: 28 n.34), Gardiner (1987: 167).

¹⁹¹ Van Lieshout's (1980: 171-72) suggestion that ἐξηγουμένου refers to an official interpreter of the dream (ἐξηγητής) is unconvincing.

knowledge of the dream, called it “ambiguous” (645 δισσῶν ὀνείρων¹⁹²); that is to say, even if Electra knew the full content of the dream, she would still be unable to deduce safe conclusions from it.¹⁹³ Thus, some uncertain shreds of information were enough to make Electra give up only too easily her heroic values and indulge in deceitful revenge. The Chorus had applauded her good sense and piety (464-65), significantly applying to her the standards of their self-serving morality. Like the Chorus in the third stasimon (1086ff.) of the *OT*, the *Electra* Chorus relied on their ability in μαντική (cf. 472-74)¹⁹⁴ and purported to know the meaning of the dream. Still, too much confidence in one’s intellect is never commendable in Sophoclean drama: in the *OT* the Chorus’ self-assuredness very soon turned out to be woefully wrong. It will soon appear that this is the case with the *Electra* Chorus as well.

There is an analogy between the practical impact that access to privileged knowledge has on the world of Electra and on that of Orestes. He also thinks that his knowledge suffices to bring deceit and revenge against his mother to completion. However, his knowledge (as well as Electra’s) turns out to be terribly deficient: we find out that Orestes too ignores a lot. First of all, as we saw (p. 50), his deceitful plan goes amiss,

¹⁹² For this meaning of δισσός see Jebb (*ad* 644f.), L. Campbell (1907: 137). For reasons why the dream is ambiguous see Bowra (1944: 224-25); cf. Devereux (1976: 229); at this point Letters (1953: 250) is wrong. For detailed analyses of the dream see Letters (1953: 248-50), Musurillo (1967: 101-102); especially Devereux (1976: 220-55).

¹⁹³ Linforth (1963: 96) rightly observes that Electra does not explain why she is hopeful; however, instead of seeing that this undermines Electra’s overconfidence, he (all too lightheartedly) explains away the difficulty by making arbitrary assumptions. That Clytaemestra is afraid of the dream cannot be used as an *e contrario* explanation of Electra’s extreme confidence in supernatural assistance: 412-13 suggest that the evidence provided by Clytaemestra’s fear *per se* is inconclusive.

¹⁹⁴ On the μαντική—theme see Burton (1980: 197-98); on its ominous similarities with *OT* 1086ff. see Friis Johansen (1964: 15 with n.16). I argue in the Introduction (section 0.4.2) that the Chorus’ use of the conditional mode (e.g. 472f., 501) is a mere formality, and that practically their confidence in their ability to interpret the dream is absolute.

as he actually reveals (albeit unwittingly) his identity to Electra; moreover, his first reaction after the Recognition is one of surprise at the realization of his own woes of which he has been totally ignorant. Orestes' and Electra's deficient knowledge becomes all the more prominent in Electra's prayer to Apollo (1376-83). We remember that there is only one other prayer to Apollo in this play, namely Clytaemestra's (637-59).¹⁹⁵ Now, that prayer had come at a very crucial moment. Immediately after it, the Paedagogus came forth with a narrative that seemed to be Apollo's answer to Clytaemestra's prayers (the fact that Orestes was supposedly killed in the Pythian games, which were sacred to Apollo, perhaps reinforces this feeling); the old man's tale sounded to her like "trustworthy evidence" (πιστ[ά] ... τεκμήρια, 774) of Orestes' death. Reasonably enough, therefore, Clytaemestra thought that it was Nemesis that ordained her son's catastrophe (792-93), thus (presumably) inflicting just punishment upon him for his unfilial behaviour (cf. 775-82)¹⁹⁶ — cf. Aegisthus' words at 1466-67: Orestes' death was due to φθόνος, divine resentment.¹⁹⁷ The audience, of course, knew that what Clytaemestra considered to be her triumph marked in fact the beginning of her doom (similarly Aegisthus' exultation over the supposed corpse of Orestes throws him into the avengers' trap). The analogy between her prayer and Electra's own has very sinister implications: the two siblings also think, like their mother, that justice and εὐσέβεια are on their side (cf. 1382-83); besides, the successful outcome of their enterprise will appear as their ultimate triumph over their enemies, exactly as

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Kamerbeek (*ad* 1376-1383): "Electra's addressing Apollo before the deed is a dramatic 'rhyme' of Clytaemestra's praying to the same god before the messenger's report [...]". Cf. Sheppard (1927a: 8), (1927b: 164); Kitto (1958: 33); Segal (1981: 273). Cf. below, n. 198.

¹⁹⁶ For Nemesis as goddess of retribution see Jebb (*ad* 792, 793); cf. Kamerbeek (*ad* 792): "the genitive [sc. τοῦ θανάτου] brings Νέμεσις very close to Erinys or Δίκη". Cf. Kells (*ad* 793), and below n. 229.

¹⁹⁷ Jebb (*ad* 1466f.) rightly remarks that "the invocation, ὦ Ζεῦ, at once indicates the sense of φθόνου as = the *divine jealousy*", and compares *Ph.* 776 τὸν φθόνον δὲ πρόσκυσον. Moreover, the ominous connotations of the word φάσμα at 1466 have been very wisely explored by Kamerbeek (*ad* 1466).

Clytaemestra thought that the Paedagogus' story was the answer to her prayer. However, Clytaemestra did not know, and her ignorance resulted in her catastrophe. Her children think they know: they have Apollo's oracle to guide them.¹⁹⁸ And as the Chorus had backed up the δόλος in 464-65, so do they now see the gods helping the guileful doers (1384-97) and rejoice in the happy ending of the enterprise (1413-14,¹⁹⁹ 1422-23²⁰⁰).

But are things really so unproblematic? The Chorus, for all their gaiety, had ominously sung just a few lines before (1417): τελοῦσ' ἀραί.²⁰¹ This must be for the audience a sign of increasing uncertainty: it may refer to Electra's invocation of Ἄρα, 'Curse' at 111; but "those long dead retrieving the killers' blood" fits not only the dead Agamemnon exacting revenge through Orestes, but also (on a much more sinister level) Myrtilus exacting revenge from his killer Pelops by *cursing* his whole race. In other words, the Chorus at a crucial moment of the play remind us (unawares or not) that the ancestral curse is still at work, which means that not everything has ended yet. Indeed, in a few lines Aegisthus will grimly predict that there is still evil to come for the Pelopids: τὰ τ' ὄντα καὶ

¹⁹⁸ Winnington-Ingram (1980:234 n. 60) has underlined the importance of the corresponding prayers to Apollo, especially in relation to the significant repetitions of καλῶς after the Paedagogus' news (790, 791, 793, 816) on the one hand, and after the matricide (1425) on the other (cf. Sheppard [1927a: 7] and Kirkwood [1958:241 n.22]). See also Segal's (1966:525) and Blundell's (1989: 175, 176 with n.102) important remarks (*contra* Mantziou [1994: 269: n.8]). Waldock (1951: 188) completely misses the point. As to Minadeo's (1967: 131-32 with n.11) view that Electra has no idea of Apollo's involvement before 1425, one can only stress the importance of 1264-70, sadly misinterpreted by Minadeo.

¹⁹⁹ Accepting Hermann's σοι for the MSS. σε; cf. Jebb (*ad* 1413f., and pp.222-23). Note however Segal's (1966:524) remarks on the sinister implications of φθίνειν in this passage. On the apparent incongruity with 1407 see Dawe (1976: 233-34), Stevens (1978: 113), Machin (1981: 234 with n.443). On the Chorus' approval of the matricide see especially Gardiner (1987:158) and Juffras (1991:107).

²⁰⁰ With Erfurdt's ψέγειν for the MSS. λέγειν; cf. Jebb (*ad* 1422f.), L. Campbell (1907:153).

²⁰¹ On the suggestive rhythm of this passage see Webster (1969:131).

μέλλοντα Πελοπιδῶν κακά (1498) — a line that throws a “tiefe Schatten von Ungewissheit über die wahre Bedeutung und rechte Beurteilung der Rachetat”, as Friis Johansen (1964: 29) has remarked.²⁰² This is the same Aegisthus who, a few lines before, realized — only too late — the snare in which he has been caught (1476, 1479-80); Orestes, sure of his knowledge as he was, fully displayed his intellectual arrogance in the gruesome (as well as horribly prolonged) play with Clytaemestra’s body which Aegisthus thought was Orestes’ (1454-75).²⁰³ However, Aegisthus is very soon at a cognitive state superior to Orestes’; now he is the one who plays with Orestes’ ignorance, taunting him for his limited understanding (1497-98, 1500), whereas his opponent, not being able to take his hints,

²⁰² Cf. Jebb (*ad* 1497f.), Kells (*ad* 1497f). On the import of these words see Winnington-Ingram (1980:226-28), although it does not necessarily follow that it is the persecution by the *Erinyes* that is implied. *Contra* Bowra (1944: 258), Alexanderson (1966:95-97), Erbse (1978: 297-8), Gardiner (1987: 159 n.32). Could it not also be, as Friis-Johansen (1964: 26-7) argues, that Clytaemestra’s cries (1415 ὦμοι πέπληγμαι, 1416 ὦμοι μάλ’ αὐθις) are meant to recall A. Ag. 1343, 1345, thus highlighting the ominous analogies between the two events? See also Bowra (1944:252), and Segal (1966:501), (1981: 262); Minadeo (1967: 134-39) provides a very detailed thematic analysis of the analogies between the matricide and the murder of Agamemnon as described succinctly at 193-200. *Contra* —wrongly, I think —Woodard (1965: 225-26), Alexanderson (1966: 92), Erbse (1978:295-6),Stinton (1990:474).

²⁰³ On the tragic irony of this section see esp. Salmon (1961: 250-62). One reason why Sophocles inverted the order of the murders (whereas both in A. *Cho.* and in E. *El.* Aegisthus is the one who is killed first) was, I think, to gain this abhorrent play with the corpse: had he wished to divert our attention from the horror of matricide, he could just as well have used again the urn, as he did with Clytaemestra, to ensnare Aegisthus (for the reversal of the murders’ order cf. further below p. 63 with n. 210). The urn has been of central importance as a means of deceit already from the outset; thus, its unexpected replacement by Clytaemestra’s corpse can only be explained if we recognize that the dramatist wished to place special emphasis upon the grim act of matricide (Segal’s [1981: 289] explanation is unsatisfactory). Reinhardt (1979:161) is certainly wrong in writing off this scene as “theatrical rather than poetic tragedy”: the theatrical/visual spectacle furthers the poetic purpose.

does not heed his warnings (1499).²⁰⁴ Nevertheless, it is not only Aegisthus' predictions that suggest that the action does not end here. Electra has strongly wished Aegisthus' death (1416) and has emphasized that only Aegisthus' death would deliver her from her misfortunes of old (1489-90), but we find out that the play ends with Aegisthus still alive.²⁰⁵ So, the *κακῶν ἢ μόνον τῶν πάλαι λυτήριον* (1489-90) never comes,²⁰⁶ although it is Aegisthus that has been proclaimed by Electra as the guilty one *par excellence* of Agamemnon's murder (561-62). Nor are we encouraged to hope that Orestes' promise at 1299-1300 or the Paedagogus' at 1365-6 will be ever fulfilled — the less so since their rejoicing is vaguely postponed to a future that strangely recalls Electra's endless misfortunes before the matricide (1365 *πολλὰ κυκλοῦνται νύκτες ἡμέραι τ' ἴσαι* sounds like a sinister reminiscence of 86-93 and 103-106, where the endless succession of night and day meant only the perpetuation of old woes²⁰⁷). The Chorus' last word — 1510 *τελεωθέν* — comes as a sinister irony, since no *τέλος* seems to be forthcoming.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ See Sheppard (1927b: 164-65), rightly refuting Owen's (1927: 50-51) baseless remarks; also Linforth (1963: 124); Winnington-Ingram (1980: 238); Blundell (1989: 176-77). Perhaps Kells (*ad* 1481) is not entirely wrong in suggesting that 1481 "implies that Aegisthus had some special qualifications in *μαντική*" — these being part of the background story which appears to have been lost (cf. *E. El.* 826f., where Aegisthus inspects the entrails of the sacrificial victims). If this is the case, then Aegisthus' prophecy about the Pelopids' future evils carries great weight.

²⁰⁵ Pace Gellie (1972: 129), the fact that theatrical convention did not permit a murder to be shown on stage does not explain anything: Aegisthus' death could have been signalled to the audience by off-stage screams, just as Clytaemestra's has been.

²⁰⁶ Segal (1981: 276) aptly remarks on the ominous similarity of *λυτήριον* with Clytaemestra's frustrated *λυτήριοι εὐχαί* (635-36). See also Seaford (1985: 321).

²⁰⁷ See further Segal (1966: 519), (1981: 263-64). *Contra* Waldock (1951: 190).

²⁰⁸ See Sheppard (1927a: 9), (1927b: 165); Kamerbeek (*ad* 1498); Friis Johansen (1964: 29); Segal (1981: 264). Kells (231) sees another kind of irony in this passage: *τελεωθέν* according to him is meant to recall *τέλειος* used of beasts ripe for sacrifice (cf. *A. Ag.* 972f.). For the ironic use of words implying finality in the closing scenes of the play see Winnington-Ingram (1980: 226 with n.30); for

What is more, the mention of Atreus (1508 σπέρμ' Ἀτρέως) seems to me to recapitulate the allusions to the hereditary curse of the House made earlier in the play (504-15, 1417).²⁰⁹ We can now identify a further reason why Sophocles inverted the order of the murders: not only has he gained the opportunity to present the gruesome play with Clytaemestra's corpse (1458ff.), thus making sure that the horror of the matricide is indelibly impressed on the audience's minds (cf. above n. 203); he has also avoided including Aegisthus' death in the play, thus insinuating that not everything is over yet, and that the sequence of woes that has been dogging the Pelopids may go on for much longer.²¹⁰

1.5.1 Conclusions: divine unknowability

So, the play is rounded off with a sinister ring-composition: it begins with an oracle and it ends with a prophecy, both of which Orestes does not fully understand. For the grim uncertainty about the motivation of the whole action, namely Apollo's oracle, is avowed by Orestes himself,

a similar irony in Euripides see Myrick (1994: 141-8). Above all, see Blundell's (1989: 178) most important remarks, and cf. Kirkwood (1942: 94-95). *Contra* Letters (1953: 260); Woodard (1965: 203-204); Alexanderson (1966: 97); Erbse (1978: 300); Burton (1980: 220).

²⁰⁹ Calder (1963: 215-16) thinks that it is only Electra that is meant by σπέρμ' Ἀτρέως, but this is implausible; cf. Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 77-78).

²¹⁰ The dramaturgical purpose usually ascribed to this reversal is that Sophocles wished to mitigate the appalling effect of the matricide; see e.g. Owen (1927: 51); Waldock (1951: 177-79); Linforth (1963: 125); Lesky (1972: 235-36); Vickers (1973: 571); Stevens (1978: 117); Machin (1981: 231); for a far more plausible, though not totally satisfactory, account see Kirkwood (1942: 91-94). Of course, people who content themselves with Schlegel-like views about 'happy matricide' (cf. the just criticism by Sheppard [1927a: 2]) would resort to such solutions as Owen's (1927: 50): "Is it natural for a writer, who intended each play to be complete in itself, to close with so indefinite a hint?". A similar view about a "self-contained play" is also held by Gellie (1972: 129). However, for a play concerned to point out the endlessly self-reproductive nature of *talio*, such an ending is the only conceivable one.

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immediately after the matricide (1425): Ἐπὶ καλῶς ἐθέσπισεν.²¹¹ We are never told whether the oracle was καλῶς or not: Sophocles, in keeping with his ‘apophatic’ approach, neither justifies (like Aeschylus) nor condemns (like Euripides) the god; he simply does not scrutinize this issue.²¹² What he is concerned with is the illusory quality of human knowledge. Both Clytaemestra and her children were sure of their knowledge of divine will. Clytaemestra thought that her prayers were heard and that Nemesis punished her evil son; on the other hand, Electra (both after the announcement of her mother’s dream and after the Recognition) and, of course, Orestes believed that they knew: they thought that the gods favoured them (e.g. 70, 411,²¹³ 1264, 1372–83) and that justice (34, 70, 466) and εὐσέβεια (1383) have been restored by their murderous act. However, they eventually find themselves totally ignorant about their own fortunes; and, although their actions were undoubtedly in keeping with the oracle and punished their enemies’ δυσσέβεια (1383), they are unable to reconcile their own εὐσέβεια (obedience to the god) with the meanness (cf. 1493–94²¹⁴) of the deed he ordained. Nor is such a reconciliation possible in the Sophoclean dramatic universe:

²¹¹ Bowra (1944: 252–53), Linforth (1963: 124) and Friis Johansen (1964: 27) see in these lines obscurity and uncertainty (cf. Kamerbeek [ad 1424,5]). However, Jebb (ad 1425) sees here “the calm confidence of Orestes”; cf. also Letters (1953: 247), Kitto (1958: 34), Musurillo (1967: 105), Stevens (1978: 113), Di Benedetto (1983: 180). It is true that ἐὶ+indic. can be used as a causal clause with assertive force; cf. Moorhouse (1982: 279–80), Erbse (1978: 287–8), and Diggle *apud* Mantziou (1994: 270 n.3). There are, however, cases in which this syntagm may express an open condition or even a negation of the content of the protasis: see further Introduction, section 0.4.2. Thus, the conditional clause at 1425 may well be expressing at least an *ambiguity* in Orestes’ state of knowledge: if ἐὶ καλῶς ἐθέσπισεν may be an assertion, it is equally possible that it is meant to be understood as a doubt.

²¹² If Sophocles does nothing to question the justice of the matricide, as Vickers (1973: 567, 571) insists, he does nothing to *affirm* it either.

²¹³ See Jebb (ad 411). For the idea that the dream is a sign of the gods’ interest and that “[it] is equated with oracles and prophecies, and they in turn with Dikê and Justice” see Kitto (1958: 30–31), (1961: 133); cf. Kamerbeek (ad 410).

obeying the god does not necessarily coincide with what, by human standards, is considered καλόν or εὐσέβεια. In this play, indeed, Orestes' and Electra's obedience to the god strongly contradicts human morality, and — far from ensuring for them an undisturbed happiness — leads them to an impasse, to a state in which they (and the audience) cannot tell whether Ἀπόλλων καλῶς ἐθέσπισεν.²¹⁵ We perceived a similarly unsettling uncertainty about true knowledge and true εὐσέβεια when Electra, encouraged by the report about Clytaemestra's dream, was involved in a guileful deed of retaliation: however, the fact is that neither had she full knowledge of the dream nor did she preserve her εὐσέβεια (cf. 307-308!²¹⁶); and this was only too ironically indicated by the doubtful reward for 'good sense' and 'piety' (i.e. for the sad compromise of her heroism) that the Chorus granted her (464-65).

Thus, as Kirkwood (1958: 259, 262-63) has perceived, we are presented with an irreconcilable contradiction: Electra knows, and we know, that it is εὐσέβεια to avenge a father (245-50); at the same time, however, the heroine herself admits that revenge (paying back evils for evils) excludes εὐσέβεια and σωφροσύνη (cf. 307-309).²¹⁷ This inherent antithesis, found in germ at the outset, is dominant throughout the play:

²¹⁴ Cf. Kamerbeek (*ad* 1493).

²¹⁵ Machin (1981: 432-33) is inexplicably certain about the divine approval of the matricide.

²¹⁶ Cf. Kells (*ad* 307ff). See further the following paragraph.

²¹⁷ On this contradiction cf. also Adams (1957: 67); Friis Johansen (1964: 13); Lesky (1972: 231); De Wet (1977: 28-36); Burton (1980: 195); Schein (1982: 74) and, most importantly, Cairns (1993: 248-9). Long (1968: 151), if I understand him correctly, and McDevitt (1983b) try to reconcile the contradiction. This ambivalence is, I think, also substantiated in Clytaemestra's character: the Sophoclean Clytaemestra is neither utterly cruel (cf. above, p. 37f.) nor, of course, does she resemble her sympathetic Euripidean counterpart. She is undoubtedly a criminal, but also able to show her affection when she hears about her son's supposed death. It follows that the killing of such a mother is on one hand just (cf. e.g. 1154, 1194, 1426-27) and on the other an act of moral debasement, an act that both distorts Electra's heroic nature and, what is more, reveals that being the god's instrument does not necessarily coincide with human morality.

Electra, when adopting δόλος and vengeful action (suppression of Clytaemestra's offerings, matricide, ensnaring of Aegisthus), conspicuously lacks εὐσέβεια, as she herself admits, but at the same time paradoxically acts in accordance with the god's decree. On the other hand, when she avenges her father by mere lamentation and words (that is, before she learns about Clytaemestra's dream, as well as after the Paedagogus' story and before the Recognition), she respects divine law (1095) and Ζηνὸς εὐσέβεια (1097),²¹⁸ but at the same time fails to comply with what Apollo demanded.

Therefore, it seems that εὐσέβεια towards the gods is impossible — and so is the knowledge of their will. We have seen that, when Electra's knowledge seemed to have been restored with the Recognition, there came Aegisthus' sinister prophecies to darken the bright picture; whereas only when Electra was in a state of utter ignorance was she truly (and paradoxically) σοφά (1089). This paradox is what, I think, constitutes a major aspect of the tragic issue in this play: Electra complies with the god's will, but finds herself lacking her previous heroic εὐσέβεια; she thinks that eventually she comes to know her true condition, but we soon realize how defective this new knowledge is and how genuine the σοφία of her ignorance was. What is more, in either case Electra is miserable: when she is ignorant and heroic she simply perpetuates her misery, for even her decision to deliver herself from her woes by killing Aegisthus is simply suicidal; on the other hand, when she is imparted her brother's knowledge about the will of the god (1264–70) and indulges in unheroic guile, we are reminded that there are still woes for the Pelopids to come — woes of which the siblings are still unaware. This is a most desperate deadlock: Electra's living up to her moral status is on a par with being sadly ignorant, living in misery and disobeying (though involuntarily) the god; whereas knowledge of the oracle and compliance with it means not only descending to guileful practices but also realizing that there is still too much ignorance of her own condition as well as of the gods' will. It is no use trying to justify the gods by resorting, like Sheppard (1927a:

²¹⁸ See Woodard's (1964: 198–99) brilliant remarks.

3-4) for instance, to simplistic excuses about Orestes' supposedly wrong question to the oracle: as Winnington-Ingram (1980: 236) has put it, "if Orestes asked about means and not ends, we are given no reason to suppose that the god did not approve the end or, for that matter, that the gods of Sophocles are not behind the *lex talionis*".²¹⁹ Thus, divine will is not only inscrutable but also can hardly be called beneficent — at least by human measures.²²⁰ The gods are neither benevolent nor malevolent: such categories are only conventions of the human mind which struggles to create taxonomies, a mental framework, that is, wherein divinity could be accommodated and explained. The gods are not comprehensible: they are just there. One cannot rely on one's intellectual capacity in order to understand them, nor could it ever be possible to be sure that obedience to divine orders means tranquillity and insouciance.²²¹ To quote Ehrenberg (1954: 26), "the power and the amorality of the gods are the cause of human tragedy. Sophocles' gods are neither just nor evil — both would comply with human moral standards; they are the one thing that

²¹⁹ See also the correct remarks of Bowra (1944: 215-18), Waldock (1951: 172-73), Letters (1953: 246), Kitto (1961: 132 ff.), Alexanderson (1966: 81), Gellie (1972: 107), Erbse (1978: 285-6), and Blundell (1989: 182 n.124). Stevens (1978: 112-13) rightly asserts that Apollo's sanctioning of the matricide is undeniable, but falls victim to what might be called 'moralistic fallacy': if the god ordered the deed, then it must be unquestionably just. Hester (1981) too, albeit successfully refuting Sheppard, takes too uncomplicated a view of the matricide.

²²⁰ I have more sympathy for such views as Segal's (1966: 539), and especially Minadeo's (1967: 139-42), which pinpoint the inscrutability of *dike* and cosmic order rather than Woodard's (1965: 216-17) or Kirkwood's (1958: 279), which imply the existence of a higher law and of an objective universal order which Sophocles reveals to us.

²²¹ Cf. Winnington-Ingram (1980: 246): "... in the tragic circumstances there is no mode of conduct which can be truly salutary and truly laudable ... [Electra] operates within a world of Sophoclean gods: an Apollo who recommends a vengeance of Aeschylean craft, and a Zeus who demands a vengeance which, as in Aeschylus, is itself a crime against the law it follows ...". Sophocles does not provide any way out of this deadlock; cf. again Winnington-Ingram (1954-55: 26): "[Sophocles] is dealing with a situation in which [...] only deplorable alternatives are open. It is a grim play." Schein's (1982: 79-80) remarks are also highly pertinent.

human beings are not: divine. The order of the world is their order, and thus again neither good nor evil, but created and directed by divine power and greatness." The human race is prey to its limited understanding, without hope ever to be able "to justify the ways of God to man" — the ways with which, however, it must comply.²²²

APPENDIX

S. *El.* 1080 emended

The explanation commonly proposed for διδύμαν ἑλοῦσ' Ἐρινύν (1080) is "could she but quell the two Furies of her house" (Jebb), with διδύμαν Ἐρινύν taken to refer to Aegisthus and Clytaemestra. A first objection against the *communis opinio* would be that in this play the term Ἐρινύς is never applied to anyone but the punishers — either human or superhuman — of Aegisthus' and Clytaemestra's crimes (see 112-20, 275-76, 489-94, and cf. 1386-88); thus, the use of the same word to designate the murderers themselves would be inconsistent. Granted, Winnington-Ingram (1980: 244) and Burton (1980: 211-12) have put forward (independently, it seems) an interpretation that might seem to meet this objection: Aegisthus and Clytaemestra have themselves been instruments of divine punishment against Agamemnon, as Orestes and Electra are to avenge their father by punishing the murderous couple.²²³ Nonetheless, it would be awkward, in the first place, for the Chorus to remind us, at a moment when their song is committed to the praise of Electra's heroism,

²²² See again Ehrenberg (1954: 26): "[Man] will never be able to determine his own fate, and yet he has to shape his life, his community, his actions and thoughts in accordance with the eternal laws of the gods. [...] It is the tragic irony of man's fate that just in trying to do this he meets his doom."

²²³ Indeed, the term 'Erinyes' may be used of persons functioning as agents of the Erinyes in such passages as A. *Ag.* 749 or E. *Med.* 1260; *contra*, however, Kaibel (*ad* 1078), and J.D. Denniston & D.L. Page on A. *Ag.* 744ff.

that Clytaemestra and Aegisthus have functioned as agents of divine revenge (Erinyes) no less than Orestes and Electra will soon do. Moreover, διδύμαν would create an unintelligible and unnecessary incongruity with Electra's conspicuous reticence as to the lot that lies in store for Clytaemestra (957).

Kaibel (*ad* 1078) thought that διδύμαν Ἐρινύν refers to the Erinyes that Electra would 'win', 'obtain' as a result of her double killing of Aegisthus and Clytaemestra: "[Elektra] ist bereit zu sterben für die That die sie plant, wenn sie nur zuvor die doppelte Erinys der von ihr zu erschlagenden Unholde gewonnen hat". The objection that Electra has not mentioned Clytaemestra as a prospective victim Kaibel tries to meet by assuming that the Chorus here indulge in (baseless and dramaturgically unwarranted) speculations: "der Chor wol richtig empfand, dass der Tod des Herren den Tod der Herrin im Gefolge gehabt hätte." But, as Errandonea (1955: 390) points out, "le chœur ne parle pas de ce qui en soi et objectivement pourrait s' ensuivre, mais de ce qu' Électre s' était proposé." Kaibel's interpretation must be dismissed also on linguistic grounds: as Kamerbeek (*ad* 1078-80) suggests, ἐλεῖν would be unsuitable in this context; for both the meaning 'win', 'gain' (in a positive sense!) and the alternative meaning 'overpower', 'kill' are obviously impossible: the Erinyes can neither be envisaged as 'gain' nor be overpowered or killed. Kaibel's interpretation would be much better served by the middle ἐλομένη which would give the desired *neutral* meaning 'obtain'.

Errandonea's alternative interpretation (*ibid.*, 389-92) is even more unsatisfactory: he takes ἐλοῦσ' to be governed by τὸ μὴ βλέπειν (1079), the meaning being 'elle ne considère pas qu' elle αἰρεῖ [...] une double Érinnye'²²⁴ (with αἰρεῖν having the sense 'gewinnen' posited by Kaibel) — i.e. Electra, by failing to avenge her father and her brother, will attract a double Erinys from them. The problem with this interpretation is, again, the unnatural use of αἰρεῖν in this context (cf. above), and also the fact

²²⁴ For this syntax cf. e.g. Thuc. 1. 32. 5: ἡμεῖς ἀδύνατοι ὁρώμεν ὄντες ... περιγενέσθαι and see further Errandonea (1955:389 n. 18).

that βλέπειν is the wrong verb: its essential meaning ‘have the power of sight’, ‘look’, ‘fix one’s eyes on’ makes it highly unsuitable for the idea “elle ne considère pas”, which would require τὸ μὴ ὁρᾶν (=‘she does not perceive’, ‘she does not pay heed to’, ‘she is not aware of’). Moreover, the ‘synoptic’ or ‘instant’ verbal aspect expressed by the aorist participle ἐλοῦσ’²²⁵ does not sit very well with the notion of *permanent* persecution by the Erinyes — a notion that would be better expressed by the present participle (NB that Errandonea [*ibid.*, p. 389] paraphrases μὴ βλέπειν ἐλοῦσ’ by μὴ βλέπειν ὅτι αἰρεῖ!). More importantly perhaps, making τότε μὴ βλέπειν etc. continue into the following phrase destroys the syntactic ‘self-containedness’ of the nicely symmetrical σχῆμα κατὰ θέσιν καὶ ἄρσιν (cf. οὔτε τοῦ θανεῖν ... τότε μὴ βλέπειν).

Thus, both the *communis opinio* and the alternative interpretations proposed by Kaibel and Errandonea are inadmissible. We must therefore accept that the text in 1080 is corrupt. I would suggest that only a minimal emendation is needed: read ἔχουσ’ instead of ἐλοῦσ’ — mistaking χ for λ is a fairly common error. This simple alteration yields the meaning required: Electra is viewed as *bearing* (ἔχουσα), i.e. *embodying*, being *possessed* by, the avenging spirits of both her father and her brother; for διδύμαν Ἐρινύων will now be taken to refer not to Aegisthus and Clytaemestra, but, as it should, to the avenging spirits of Agamemnon and (the supposedly dead) Orestes. The use of ἔχω in this sense is paralleled by, most notably, Hippocr. *Morb. Sacr.* 1 (VI. 362. 9 Littré): καθαίρουσι γὰρ τοὺς ἐχομένους τῇ νούσῳ αἵματί τε καὶ ἄλλοισι τοιούτοισιν ὥσπερ μίασμα τι ἔχοντας ἢ ἀλάστορας ...²²⁶ Such cases, in which the human personality is lost and submerged

²²⁵ Cf. Goodwin § 148; Smyth, *Gr.Gr.* § 2112 a. N.

²²⁶ I disagree here with Parker (1983: 224 n. 92): “The run of the sentence makes ἀλάστορας object of καθαίρουσι rather than ἔχοντας, and thus human not demonic. It indicates that being an *alastor* is a condition an individual might acknowledge in himself.” Parker bases his interpretation entirely on personal, subjective *Stilgefühl*, and ignores instances like A. Ag. 1497ff. (on which see immediately below in the text).

in that of the supernatural power whose agent and instrument the individual is, are far from unparalleled in Greek literature: apart from the famous A. Ag. 1497ff., where Clytaemestra sees herself as a *superhuman, demonic* ἀλάστωρ, cf. also A. Pers. 353ff. and see on the whole the excellent discussion by Dodds (1951: 40).

A further improvement gained with the emendation proposed here is that the Chorus' vagueness as to the person(s) against whom the διδύμα Ἐρινύς is directed is absolutely congruent with the fact that Electra has mentioned only Aegisthus as the person to be punished, whereas she has been reticent as to whether Clytaemestra is to be killed too.

True, Aegisthus and Clytaemestra are often referred to as a dyad (e.g. 97-8, 206 διδύμαιν χειροῖν, 272-4, 299-300, 358, 492-3 etc.), so διδύμαν Ἐρινύν would most naturally refer to them.²²⁷ However, the supposedly dead Orestes and Agamemnon are also referred to as a dyad (813-4, 968-9, 986-7) that must be avenged. At 1384ff. Orestes — who is about to accomplish the act of revenge that Electra would have carried out had her brother not appeared (cf. 1318-21) — is thought of as embodying the Erinyes (cf. 1388 ἄφυκτοι κύνες)²²⁸ that will finally avenge Agamemnon.

One point remains to be clarified: why should Orestes' death be avenged at all, since he was not murdered but (supposedly) killed in an accident? The Erinyes were thought to avenge only victims of murder or of unjust death in general (as in *Od.* 11.280 they avenge Epicaste's suicide). Nonetheless, there are a number of passages in our play in which a feeling that vengeance should be exacted for Orestes' death too is clearly conveyed. At 792 Electra invokes the "Nemesis of him who hath lately died" (Jebb), Νέμεσι τοῦ θανόντος ἀρτίως, i.e. the avenging spirit of Orestes;²²⁹ while at 986-87 she views the killing of Aegisthus, properly an

²²⁷ This has been pointed out to me by Professor P.E. Easterling in private correspondence.

²²⁸ Erinyes in canine form: A. Cho. 1054 (cf. *Eum.* 111-3, 131-2); E. *El.* 1252 with Denniston (1939: *ad loc.*).

²²⁹ It is universally —and rightly —accepted that Nemesis is here practically

act of revenge for Agamemnon, as a service towards her supposedly dead brother as well (συμπόνει πατρὶ, σύγκαμν' ἀδελφῶ). It follows that, even though Orestes was not literally a victim of murder, it is felt that his death should be avenged all the same. The reason might well be, as Herter (*art. cit.* [n. 229] 2366-67) has pointed out, that “jegliche Überhebung gegenüber Menschen ist sie [sc. Nemesis] zu strafen berufen [...]. Klytimestra glaubt, daß Orestes wegen solcher Gesinnung von N.[emesis] bestraft sei [...], während Elektra vorher die N.[emesis] ihres Bruders angerufen hatte, die haßerfüllten Worte der über seinen vermeintlichen Tod triumphierenden Mutter zu hören.”²³⁰

equivalent to Erinys: the similarity of the syntax Νέμεσι τοῦ θανόντος with Δίκη τινός, Ἐρινύς τινος speaks for itself. See H. Herter, “Nemesis”, *RE* 16.2 (1935) 2339, 2365, 2366-67; Jebb (*ad* 792); Kamerbeek (*ad* 792).

²³⁰ Cf. Kaibel's (*ad* 792 & 793) similar remarks, on which Herter has drawn.

CHAPTER TWO

ΠΟΤΜΟΣ ΔΑΙΜΟΝΩΝ ΤΑΔΕ:

HUMAN KNOWLEDGE AND DIVINE WILL IN THE *PHILOCTETES*

*In the sea caves
there's a thirst there's a love
there's an ecstasy
all hard like shells
you can hold them in your palm
In the sea caves
for whole days I gazed into your eyes
and I didn't know you nor did you know me.*

G. Seferis (transl. E. Keely & P. Sherrard)

2.1.1 A working hypothesis: Odysseus as an instrument of divine will

I begin with a working hypothesis: Odysseus, despite his cruel and unethical practices, fully knows and fully complies with the divine will as expressed in the prophecy of Helenus.¹ He neither blasphemously uses the gods as a mere pretext to achieve his own base purposes, nor does he deliberately distort the prophecy to match it to his own interests, as many critics have assumed.² Such assumptions, as has been pointed out,³

¹ This is far from novel: on Odysseus' full knowledge of the prophecy see Knox (1964: 126); on his adhering to its terms and being on the gods' side see Poe (1974: 25-26, cf. 47), my indebtedness to whose article I readily acknowledge. Cf. also e.g. Kirkwood (1958: 149, 260); Masaracchia (1964: 80 n.3); Hinds (1967: 178-79); Lesky (1972: 247); Buxton (1982: 130).

² E.g. Bowra (1944: 265-271 etc.); Diller (1950: 20-21, cf. 25); Alt (1961: 143); Knox (1964: 127); Erbse (1966: 183-5); Segal (1977: 140-41); Pucci (1994: 39). Further literature in Steidle (1968: 169 n. 1).

³ Cf. the list of critics cited in n. 1.

totally lack support from the text, and are rather to be seen as a product of their authors' religious or moral sensibilities. My working hypothesis will attempt to take seriously such textual evidence as e.g. lines 603ff., 989-90, 1324-47, where it is explicitly said that the plan Odysseus has undertaken to carry out is divinely ordained and sanctioned. In the present section I shall also argue that this working hypothesis is never contradicted and may actually be seen to underlie a number of earlier passages, which can thus function as reminders, to the audience, of Odysseus' role as a divine agent.⁴ In the following sections I shall attempt to show how this hypothesis can be used as a tool for the overall interpretation of the play, and how it coheres with the Sophoclean 'apophatism'.

The first confirmation of our hypothesis seems to be provided as early as 191-200: not only was the accident on Chryse's isle ordered by the gods (191-194), but also Philoctetes' present misery forms part of a divine plan to ensure that Troy is taken at the right time (195-200). Neoptolemus seems to have no doubt that the Greek mission to fetch Philoctetes to Troy is part of a wider divine scheme.⁵ It is consistent with

⁴ Some scholars —e.g. Musurillo (1967: 127), Segal (1977: 141), (1981: 331 with n.8) —hold what seems to me a compromise view, namely that Odysseus is “a twisted instrument of the divine will”. Twisted or not, he is a divine agent; this is why he “is felt as a presence all through the play” (Kirkwood [1958: 58]), although at the end Sophocles allows him “to fade from the picture” (Musurillo [1967: 114]; cf. Taplin [1978: 154] and, from a narratological point of view, Roberts [1989: 173]) —and although Odysseus may even be seen to display comic features: Taplin (1971: 36-37), Craik (1979: 26-27), Kirkwood (1994: 29-31). This “fading”, as well as the possible comic traits, have a specific dramatic purpose, since, as we shall see, the dramatist wants the divine will to be (until 1408) flouted.

⁵ Neoptolemus repeats much more confidently these assumptions at 1324-47: see below, p. 102f.; on the ‘illogicality’ of his knowledge see below p. 119f. However, I should not go as far as Pucci (1994: 31-32) who sees 191-200 as the first cryptic revelation of the *prophecy itself*; all they indicate is Neoptolemus' belief in the divine sanctioning of their mission. The importance of these lines has been all too often downplayed: see e.g. Kitto (1956: 112), (1961: 301); Harsh (1960: 413); Masaracchia (1964: 86); Rose (1976: 65 with n.39). Minadeo (1993: 91-92 with n.6)

Neoptolemus' confidence in the divine sanctioning of their expedition that he should bring in the gods at a point at which his deceitful plan seems to have been successfully concluded: I mean the notoriously ambiguous 528-29, "Only may the gods convey us safely out of this land, and hence to our haven, wheresoever it be!".⁶ The gods are also brought in by the Chorus who assist Neoptolemus in carrying out the deceitful plan: at 391-402 (in a song with strong cultic resonances) they use no less than the name of the mother of Zeus himself, the goddess Ge, in order to support a blatant lie, namely that they witnessed the Greeks offend Neoptolemus by denying him his father's arms. What would be otherwise a grave blasphemy⁷ is now justified because deceit furthers the plans of the gods. It is no use pretending, like Gardiner (1987: 24 with n. 23), that the Chorus avoids blasphemy by invoking a foreign goddess, the Phrygian Cybele; as Haldane (1963: 56) has pointed out, "Sophocles [...] attempts

perhaps voices an assumption implicitly made by all these critics when he argues (in the belief that gods must be fair and just) that "Neoptolemus' machinations of entrapment and deceit disavow any real faith in divine providence" and that 191-200 are a mere excuse that Neoptolemus makes to himself, in order to justify Philoctetes' misfortunes; so also Linforth (1956: 107). Kirkwood (1958: 80-81, 144) offers a similar but substantially modified view. —Lines 191-200 are no doubt inconsistent. However, Machin (1981: 68-69) thinks that the inconsistency is moderated by the fact that Neoptolemus' assertions about the divine plan are presented as mere hypotheses. Hinds (1967: 176) denies that there is any inconsistency at all: already in 112 Neoptolemus knows that Philoctetes must come to Troy. But 112 does not explain Neoptolemus' assumption that Philoctetes' plight was ordered by the gods. This inconsistency has a point and should not be explained away: see below p. 119f.

⁶ Jebb's translation. On the ambiguity see further S.K. Johnson (1928b: 210). On the function of verbal ambiguity in general see again S.K. Johnson (1928b: 210-11).

⁷ See e.g. Machin (1981: 80), Minadeo (1993: 93). *Contra* Calder (1971: 159 with n.27) on the assumption that the Chorus consists of Achilles' Myrmidons who, of course, had witnessed the award of their late king's arms to Odysseus. But why are they never identified as such? Stokes (1988: 158-9) is at pains to prove that the Chorus do not *literally* commit *perjury*; true, but they call on the goddess as a means of making Neoptolemus' lie sound more credible.

to draw the foreign goddess more closely into the sphere of orthodox Greek religion by identifying her [...] with the Greek Mother of the Gods [...] and for the first time with both Ge — appositely since Ge was an oath goddess (*Il.* 19.259, cf. 3.278) — and Rhea, who is significantly referred to as the mother of Zeus”.⁸ The blasphemy is avoided only because the Chorus with their lies back Neoptolemus’ efforts to carry out the divine plan.⁹ The Chorus continue the “same misuse of religious matters”¹⁰ in the antistrophe (507-518) too.¹¹ Their advice to Neoptolemus to take Philoctetes aboard in order to avoid τὰν θεῶν νέμεσιν (517-8) is ambiguous: it can refer not only to the wrath of the gods for offending a suppliant (a reference to Philoctetes’ invocation of Zeus Hikesios at 484) but also to the wrath of the gods if Neoptolemus should defy their plan to take Philoctetes to Troy.¹² In the light of these considerations, we are also perhaps allowed to conclude, retrospectively, that Odysseus’ invocation of Hermes ‘the trickster’ (δόλιος)¹³ and of Athena Nike at the end of the prologue (133-34) is not to be taken as hypocritical or impious: Odysseus is launching a deceitful plan in order to promote what he knows to be the will of the gods; so he quite legiti-

⁸ For other attempts to exculpate the Chorus see Adams (1957: 143-44), and more recently Webster (pp. 95-96 *passim*), well refuted by Bers (1981: 502-503). Segal (1981: 324) adds an interesting remark: “the rather jarring intrusion of Odysseus’ patronymic, ‘son of Laertes’, into the attributes of Earth in the last line (402) is a reminder of Odyssean guile and of the practice of that guile in the very lie which this ode attempts to support.”

⁹ As to whether the divine will, as expressed in Helenus’ prophecy, allows deceit, see below pp. 83-85.

¹⁰ Reinhardt (1979: 267 n.9).

¹¹ The correspondence in content between strophe and antistrophe is probably underlined by the correspondence in form, as Gardiner (1987: 29-30) has convincingly shown. Cook (1968: 91) is, I think, wrong when he states that in 507-18 “the same heavy dochmiacs and bacchiacs express a pity this time unfeigned!”

¹² On the Chorus’ ruse here cf. Bowra (1944: 273); Linforth (1956: 114); Adams (1957: 145); Rose (1976: 68-69); Segal (1977: 138).

mately invokes their assistance. No doubt, such an invocation may seem irreligious to some modern readers,¹⁴ but presumably it was not considered as such by Sophocles himself: to take only one example, at *S. El.* 1395-97¹⁵ Hermes is supposed to assist Orestes' deceitful plan which has been sanctioned *expressis verbis* by Apollo himself (35-7).

As I mentioned above (p. 73), that Odysseus knows and tries to carry out the divine plan is explicitly stated in (or can be inferred from) such passages as 605-619, 1324-1347 and, most strikingly, 989-990, where Odysseus declares in the strongest possible terms that the whole plan of capturing Philoctetes was a *decision made by Zeus himself* (990 Ζεὺς, ᾧ δέδοκται ταῦθ'), and that he is merely his servant. Philoctetes' resentful objections (991-2) he counters with the flat and straightforward answer that with his actions he shows the gods to be truthful (993) — which indeed will turn out to be the case when Heracles will demand Philoctetes' presence at Troy.¹⁶ What is more, Odysseus' claims are never doubted either by Neoptolemus or by the Chorus. Indeed, the Chorus (1116-17), in reply to Philoctetes' complaints about Odysseus' deceitful plan which deprived him of his bow, state: "this [i.e. Philoctetes' present

¹³ On Hermes δόλιος see e.g. Garvie (1986: ad 726-7).

¹⁴ Fraenkel (1977: 47), for instance, thought that especially the invocation of Athena would be a "mostruosità" for the pious Sophocles; so, he wished to delete 133-34! (see Lloyd-Jones & Wilson [1990b: 181] for an answer). Similarly Calder (1971: 169 n.94) and Kitto (1961: 300). *Contra* rightly Schucard (1973/74: 137).

¹⁵ A parallel adduced also by Webster (ad 133). Cf. *A. Cho.* 726-9.

¹⁶ Bowra (1944: 284): "He [sc. Odysseus] believes that he is carrying out the gods' will, and *he is not to be suspected of hypocrisy* [...]" (my italics); cf. Linforth (1956: 134); Alt (1961: 164); Reinhardt (1979: 185); Minadeo (1993: 99). *Contra* Harsh (1960: 409-410); Musurillo (1967: 113). Gellie (1972: 151) rightly sees that "when Odysseus replies 'No, I make them truthful' (993), we are forced to give at least intellectual assent." Segal (1977: 141-42), albeit doubting the sincerity of Odysseus' claiming to be the servant of Zeus, sees a deep irony in that Odysseus is the one who will eventually turn out to be in harmony with the gods' will. As Kirkwood (1958: 260) remarks, Heracles "substantiates Odysseus' claim, making clear beyond all doubt that it is the will of Zeus that Philoctetes go to Troy". See below, p. 110f.

state] is your destiny ordained by the gods (πότημος ... δαιμόνων τάδ'), and not a deceit contrived by me"!¹⁷ True, the Chorus may be mainly concerned to maintain good relations with Philoctetes (cf. 1121): they indicatively urge him to direct his curses not against them, but against those responsible (1120) — presumably Odysseus, or even perhaps Neoptolemus. But it is significant that they should mention, in the same breath, both the gods and Odysseus as responsible for what Philoctetes has suffered. The *deceitful* plan against Philoctetes is to be seen in the context of *divinely ordained destiny*. To restate my working hypothesis in the light of the corroborative evidence adduced above: Odysseus' actions, albeit morally objectionable, are to be seen as promoting the divine will; and his assertion (989-90) that he is the carrier-out of plans decreed by Zeus himself is to be taken seriously.

I have repeatedly used the phrase "the will of the gods" or "the divine plan" with reference to Philoctetes' coming to Troy. It may be objected that this misrepresents the facts: a great number of scholars¹⁸ have argued that the prophecy, because negatively / conditionally phrased ("Troy will *not* be taken, *unless* Philoctetes' bow is used": 68-69, 611-13, cf. also 1329-1335), implies that Philoctetes' coming to Troy is not demanded by the gods, but is left at the Greeks' discretion. This I cannot accept: early in the play Neoptolemus views the sack of Troy by Philoctetes' shafts as a divinely ordained *necessity* (195-200; NB 200 χρηναί); this is confirmed by Odysseus at 998 (Τροίαν σ' ἐλεῖν δεῖ...),

¹⁷ Cf. Beye (1970: 73): "As the chorus proceeds to make clear (1083 ff.), [*sic*; read: 1118ff.] the action is destined, Odysseus is acting as destiny's agent as Philoctetes is its victim." See also Poe (1974: 25). On the sincerity of the Chorus see Winnington-Ingram (1980: 294 n.44). They must be regarded as much more knowledgeable about the gods' plans than Segal (1977: 137-38) thinks.

¹⁸ E.g. Jebb (xxvi); Kitto (1956: 136); Linforth (1956: 153); D.B. Robinson (1969: 52) with strong argumentation; Gellie (1972: 155-56); Schmidt (1973: 43-4); Winnington-Ingram (1980: 300 n. 62). For criticism see Vidal-Naquet (1972: 167 n.27).

and by Neoptolemus at 1339 (ὡς δεῖ γενέσθαι ταῦτα)¹⁹ and at 1340–41 (ὡς ἔστ' ἀνάγκη τοῦ παρεστῶτος θέρους ἰ Τροίαν ἀλῶναι πᾶσαν).²⁰ The above passages, in combination with the prophecy as reported (conditionally) at 611–13 and 1329–35, form a simple syllogism which leads to the conclusion that Philoctetes' coming to Troy is obligatory:

- a) if Philoctetes does not come, Troy will not fall (611–13, 1329–35)
- b) Troy *must* fall during the summer (1340–41; cf., for the idea of necessity, 200, 998, 1339)

CONCLUSION: Philoctetes *must* come to Troy.

The audience's knowledge of the fact that Troy *did* eventually fall to the Greeks must have, no doubt, reinforced their sense of the *necessity* of Philoctetes' coming to Troy.²¹

Before bringing this section to a close, I shall endeavour further to corroborate the view propounded here by anticipating two objections that might be raised against it. First, at the problematic and much discussed lines 839–842 Neoptolemus seems to realize suddenly that his obedience to Odysseus and, consequently, his whole course of action up to this point has been in stark opposition to the divine will (cf. esp. 841 θεός): it is not the bow alone that is required; it is Philoctetes *and* the bow. However, Odysseus never *really* said that only the bow, and not Philoctetes, was to be fetched to Troy; his instructions in the prologue

¹⁹ The importance of this line D.B. Robinson (1969: 52) tries to belittle; Segal (1977: 140 n.19) sets things straight.

²⁰ Cf. already 921–2 πολλή κρατεῖ ἰ τούτων ἀνάγκη. On the importance of 'Shicksal' in the play cf. Alt (1961: 144, 161, 164, 167–8 and *passim*).

²¹ Cf. Hoppin (1981: 29 n. 56), although she exaggerates the point. Jebb (p. xxvi) labours to reconcile the allegedly conditional character of the prophecy with its obligatory quality as revealed in such passages as 1340–1: "The Greeks would understand this [i.e. the prophecy] only in a conditional sense, since he [i.e. Helenus] had told them that their victory depended on the return of Philoctetes (611ff.). But the absolute statement in v.1340 is intelligible, if the seer be conceived as having a prevision of the event, and therefore a conviction that, by some means, Philoctetes would be brought". This, as well as being speculative, amounts to having one's cake and eating it.

have been deliberately vague, with the result that it has remained unclear whether it is Philoctetes or only his weapons that are needed. Whereas at 68-9 and 77-8 the emphasis is on the bow, at 14, 90, 101-3, 107 (λαβόντα [λαθόντα Blaydes], where ἐκεῖνον [sc. Φιλοκτήτην] is to be supplied from 106) we hear that it is Philoctetes who must come to Troy. The ambiguity is further complicated by the use of such verbs as αἰρεῖν and λαμβάνειν at 14 and 101; for, as Knox (1964: 187 n. 20) remarks, “to ‘take’ or ‘capture’ Philoctetes might be necessary to get the bow, but the words used by Odysseus do not necessarily imply taking him to Troy as Neoptolemos’ ἄγειν [90, 102] does.”²² This ambiguity is set out with particular force in the contrast between 112 (τοῦτου [sc. Φιλοκτήτην] ἐς Τροίαν μολεῖν) and 113 (αἰρεῖ τὰ τόξα ταῦτα τὴν Τροίαν μόνα).²³ And although the matter seems for the moment to be settled with lines 115-16 (which imply that it is the bow that Neoptolemus will have to get hold of), there come a little later lines 197-200 which contain, in

²² Or, as Gill (1980: 145 n. 20) has put it, “this [i.e. δόλω λαβεῖν etc.] may simply mean ‘tricking’ Philoctetes to make him give up his bow”. NB, however, that, as Hoppin (1981: 11 n. 20) points out, λάβοις at 103 can only mean “to capture (not ‘trick’) Philoctetes” (because of πρὸς βίαν and because it answers Neoptolemos’ ἄγειν at 102); this probably holds for 107 too (because of the precedence of the unambiguous 103). That Odysseus generally stresses the bow rather than Philoctetes does not mean that he is after the bow only (thus misunderstanding the oracle): if Philoctetes is to be captured, his unerring bow must first be taken from him; see Linforth (1956: 103); Hinds (1967: 171-2); Steidle (1968: 172-3); D.B. Robinson (1969: 49); Hoppin (1981: 10, 12-3); Seale (1982: 30). Cf. also below n. 27.

²³ On the ambiguities of these passages (pace e.g. Linforth [1956: 101-4], Masaracchia [1964: 84], Musurillo [1967: 112 n.1], Steidle [1968: 172] and, most forcefully, Hoppin [1981: 10-15]) see primarily Tycho von Wilamowitz (1917: 273-7, 302-6); also: Waldock (1951: 199); Hinds (1967: 176-77); D.B. Robinson (1969: 49); Gellie (1972: 133-34, cf. 145); Seale (1972: 95-96), (1982: 30); Easterling (1978a: 27, 30). I am not convinced by Craik (1979: 19-21, 22) who sees melodramatic qualities in these ambiguities. J.A. Johnson (1988) has recently argued that the bow is both necessary and sufficient for the sack of Troy; but this is unacceptable.

Neoptolemus' mouth, a significant ambiguity. Their obvious meaning is that, as e.g. Webster (p. 84) writes, "in spite of Odysseus, Neoptolemus has no doubt that Philoctetes must himself use the bow". Nonetheless, the pronoun τόνδε (197) creates an ambiguity, which, to my knowledge, has gone unnoticed: it may well refer to Philoctetes, although he is not present;²⁴ on the other hand, ὄδε (or ὄδε ὁ ἀνὴρ and sim.) is common tragic idiom for "I". Thus, Neoptolemus' words may be taken to mean a) that the gods want Philoctetes to use the bow on time (such an interpretation of his words might be retrospectively supported by e.g. the "false departures"²⁵ at 533ff., 645ff., 730ff., which suggest that the youth has in mind to take Philoctetes with him) or b) that the gods want *him* to use the bow on time;²⁶ it would be only natural for the ambitious young man to think that *he* is after all the one who will use the bow, especially in view of 114-15²⁷ (retrospective support for such an interpretation might be provided by such lines as 654-67, 774-75, which evince Neoptolemus' desire for the *bow* itself). This is a very instructive example of Sophocles' ability to make dramatic capital of his use of verbal ambiguity. To conclude, the notorious 839-842 are by no means a *non sequitur*, nor do they imply that Odysseus has misinterpreted the prophecy: for, up to this point, its terms have been left deliberately vague and ambiguous.

²⁴ On ὄδε referring "to someone not present on the stage but clearly implied by the context and visible to the speaker's imagination" see Garvie (1986: *ad* 893).

²⁵ On which see Hinds (1967: 172-73); Seale (1972: 98-100); Taplin (1978: 67-9).

²⁶ "On time" in Neoptolemus' case might seem somewhat dissonant, but it is not: the young man had also to wait for ten years, in order to take over his father's position in the Greek army. Cf. Kieffer (1942: 48): "Neoptolemus [...] is still thinking of the time fated for the capture of Troy as determined by his own coming of fighting age".

²⁷ Kirkwood (1958: 80) and Hinds (1967: 172), after the scholiast on 68 (p. 352 Papageorgius), rightly suggest that Odysseus in 115 puts emphasis on the bow and not on Philoctetes, in order not to undercut Neoptolemus' ambitious enthusiasm (cf. also above, n. 22). The young man himself seems, in 352-53, to admit this trait of his personality, on which see e.g. Segal (1977: 145), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 283).

A second possible objection to my interpretation would be that in 1054ff. Odysseus, bow in hand, professes himself determined to depart to Troy, leaving Philoctetes behind. Nonetheless, there is evidence to suggest that Odysseus is bluffing in order to lure the obdurate exile into fighting for the Greek cause (this is in accordance with the prophecy's requirement for *πειθῶ*, on which see below p. 84f., as it can be regarded as a combination of crafty *πειθῶ* with what Dio Chrysostom [52.2] has called *πειθῶ ἀναγκαία*, i.e. blackmail).²⁸ For otherwise his attempt verbally to *persuade* Philoctetes to come to Troy (997-8) would be pointless; nor would he have reasons to prevent him from committing suicide (1003).²⁹ The Chorus seem to further Odysseus' bluff: in a lengthy epirrhematic scene (1081-1216), in which Philoctetes "swallows Odysseus' bait" (Calder [1971: 162]),³⁰ the Chorus try to convince him that he must grasp the opportunity and come to Troy where he will be healed; indeed, taking up Odysseus' bluffing techniques, they even pretend to be determined to leave the island (1178-80), thereby causing a desperate response on Philoctetes' part (1181-5). What is more, Neoptolemus seems to grasp his superior's true intentions when he expresses the hope that, while they are at the seashore making ready their departure, Philoctetes

²⁸ ... ἀφαιρούμενός γε τῶν ὄπλων ἦν Φιλοκτήτης ὑπὸ τοῦ Ὀδυσσεύος καὶ αὐτὸς εἰς τὴν Τροίαν ἀναγόμενος, τὸ μὲν πλεον ἐκῶν, τὸ δέ τι καὶ πειθοῖ ἀναγκαία, ἐπειδὴ τῶν ὄπλων ἐστέρητο Cf. primarily Hoppin (1981: 5-6 with n. 14, 24-5); Schlesinger (1968: 118, 123-4). On Odysseus' bluff see also: Kitto (1956: 98, 124); Linforth (1956: 135-6); Erbse (1966: 184); Hinds (1967: 177-78); Calder (1971: 160-62); Gellie (1972: 151-2); Reinhardt (1979: 186); and, hesitantly, Waldock (1951: 213), Webster (*ad* 1055), and Winnington-Ingram (1980: 293). Further bibliography in Steidle (1968: 171 n. 10). *Contra* e.g. Tycho von Wilamowitz (1917: 302-7); Knox (1964: 134); Steidle (1968: 171); D.B. Robinson (1969: 45-51); Taplin (1971: 35-36 with n.24), (1978: 49 with n. 17); Garvie (1972: 220); Rose (1976: 93 with n.90); Blundell (1989: 208 n.89). Seale (1972: 99-100) and Poe (1974: 11, 20-21) remain agnostic.

²⁹ Knox (1964: 192 n. 38) tries unsuccessfully to answer these objections.

³⁰ Garvie (1972: 222) seems to regard this scene as an attempt at *honest* persuasion. For the Chorus as an active *dramatis persona* see Jebb (p. xxix), Kirkwood (1958: 184ff.).

may “make a more profitable decision” for them (1078-9).³¹ Finally, even when Neoptolemus reacts against Odysseus’ practices (1222ff.), he never as much as mentions Odysseus’ supposed *intention* cruelly to make off with the bow leaving Philoctetes behind; it is only to the dishonesty of the means used by him that he objects (1228 ἀπάταισιν ... δόλοισι, 1234, 1246, 1251a) — which is conspicuously less than what one should expect, if Odysseus’ professed intention to abandon Philoctetes was more than a bluff.³² That Odysseus meticulously adheres to the prophecy’s requirement for πειθῶ is further demonstrated by the fact that, despite his threats (983, 985, 1297-98), he never uses force (except, of course, in order to prevent Philoctetes from killing himself: 1003).³³ Thus, in 1054ff. he avoids having Philoctetes led handcuffed to Troy, although he certainly has the power to do so — a behaviour that is inexplicable unless we assume that Odysseus strictly obeys that clause of the prophecy which explicitly precludes violence. I regard as insubstantial (nay, erroneous) the objection, raised by Tycho von Wilamowitz (1917: 306-7) and D.B. Robinson (1969: 45),³⁴ that, if the audience are meant to perceive Odysseus’ threatened abandonment of Philoctetes as a mere bluff, then the emotional power of the *kommos* at 1081ff. is severely diminished. For one thing, such an argument would collapse in the face of a Sophoclean parallel that has strangely been missed so far, namely *S. El.* 1126ff.: there, the audience know full well that Orestes is alive and, indeed, standing before Electra; still, this hardly detracts from the emotionality of her lament.³⁵ More importantly, the scene acquires much greater dramatic

³¹ Cf. further Hoppin (1981: 25 n. 50). *Contra* Stokes (1988: 164).

³² Cf. also Hoppin (1981: 27).

³³ Cf. Hinds (1967: 179), Beye (1970: 73), Hoppin (1981: 19 n. 37, 25-6), *pace* e.g. Garvie (1972: 219-22 with nn. 21, 26), Gellie (1972: 151), Minadeo (1993: 94 with n.8). On the contrary, it is Odysseus himself who later (1299) becomes the target of Philoctetes’ bow!

³⁴ And endorsed by Garvie (1972: 220).

³⁵ Vickers (1973: 570) thought that it is “impossible for us to be really moved by [Electra’s] sorrow at the news of Orestes death, for the news is false and her sorrow comes to seem false, worked up.” This I find unacceptable.

tension and pathos if we *do* assume a bluff on Odysseus' part: for only on such an assumption can an audience be faced with the distressing possibility that Philoctetes' heroic resistance might actually break down under the pressure of what we know to be no more than a (divinely ordained!) *sham*. Could anything strike us as more demeaning for a hero of Philoctetes' calibre?³⁶ An audience consisting of Wilamowitzes and Robinsons would completely miss the dramatic potential of this scene: for them, all Philoctetes is now left with is the prospect of certain death; *there are no choices to be made*.³⁷ For such an audience the Chorus' persistence at 1095ff. would be, at best, driven by humanitarian concerns, and, at worst, dramatically pointless; and the drama should be soon drawn to an end.

We can now attempt to reach a final conclusion, as far as Odysseus' dramatic function in the play is concerned. The gods, we hear, want Philoctetes to come to Troy by means of πειθῶ (cf. 612 πείσαντες λόγῳ, which admittedly forms part of the Emporos'³⁸ ambiguous story but is never doubted by anyone). Now, πειθῶ has a socially desirable aspect and a socially undesirable one. Buxton (1982: 64–66) gives a good account of the existing evidence about this fundamental ambiguity: e.g. in A. Cho. 726 Πειθῶ is qualified by the epithet δολία; besides, “the Hesiodic *femme fatale* in the adorning of whom Peitho was said to have participated is described elsewhere by Hesiod as a *dolos* (Th. 589, W.D. 83)” (Buxton, *op. cit.* p. 65); and Hera's “deception of Zeus” in *Iliad* 14 “is perfectly summed up in the phrase *peitho dolia*, ‘tricky persuasion’” (Buxton *l.c.*).

³⁶ The importance of this point has been made clearer to me by Hoppin's (1981: 26) lucid treatment.

³⁷ *Contra* Taplin (1971: 35): “the desertion and helplessness of Philoctetes must be taken seriously. We, the audience, must believe that he is faced with the choice of going to Troy, or of starving to death; for we know of no alternative.” But surely if we take the desertion seriously, then Philoctetes is faced with no choice whatsoever: Odysseus has made off with the bow, which he or Teucer will use to capture Troy, with Philoctetes being left on Lemnos forever.

³⁸ I use Emporos (=‘traveller’) throughout, as the usual ‘Merchant’ or ‘Trader’ is inaccurate.

Of the greatest interest to us are Buxton's (pp. 65-66) conclusions: "In some contexts, then, *peitho* is characterized by frankness, and is opposed to *dolos* and indeed to any subversion of the normal values of the polis. This is the socially desirable *peitho* [...]. But other contexts emphasize that *peitho* can have another face, which retains the seductiveness of its twin, but uses that seductiveness to put the values of the polis in jeopardy. So, far from being opposed to *dolos*, this *peitho* may become virtually indistinguishable from it. [emphasis mine] ... This ambiguity is one of *peitho*'s fundamental qualities."³⁹ Thus, Odysseus, in advocating deceit instead of honest persuasion, is anything but disobeying the divine requirement for *πειθῶ*: verbal trickery is still *πειθῶ*, albeit with its 'anti-social' aspect prevailing. This is confirmed by Philoctetes when he protests to Neoptolemus (1268-69): καὶ τὰ πρὶν γὰρ ἐκ λόγων ἰ καλῶν κακῶς ἔπραξα σοῖς πεισθεῖς λόγοις.⁴⁰

³⁹ Cf. also Blundell (1989: 190), who aptly defines persuasion as "the honest counterpart of deception (since both employ words rather than deeds)", and Hoppin (1981: 18-19 with n. 34), with excellent argumentation. Cf. also Linforth (1956: 115); Garvie (1972: 218 n.16); Gellie (1972: 144); Poe (1974: 26); Winnington-Ingram (1980: 292). — Buxton, however, fails to apply his conclusions on the duality of *πειθῶ* to the specific case of the *Philoctetes*. Schlesinger (1968: 122-4), albeit fully aware of the ambiguity of *πειθῶ*, insists that it is honest persuasion that is meant by *πείσαντες* λόγῳ (612).

⁴⁰ Cf. Hinds (1967: 179). On the association between *πειθῶ*, *λόγος* and *ἀπάτη* cf. Gorgias (82 B 11.8 D.-K.): λόγος ὁ πείσας καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπατήσας; also *ibid.* 11.11: ὅσοι δὲ ὅσους περὶ ὅσων καὶ ἔπεισαν καὶ πείθουσι δὲ ψευδῆ λόγον πλάσαντες; cf. Rose (1977: 83), Blundell (1987: 327). Admittedly, at 102 Neoptolemus does make a distinction between *δόλος* and *πειθῶ*; but this is simply the only possible way of distinguishing, in Greek, tricky persuasion from honest persuasion, and does not imply that *πειθῶ* cannot be *δολία* as well. Neoptolemus' typical preference for straightforward means (force or honest persuasion) has to be established as early as that, as it will prove to be dramatically crucial in the Emporos scene: see below, pp. 92-99.

2.2.1 Increasing understanding of, and increasing deviation from, the prophecy

In the parodos, the Chorus ask their commander about the course of action that is to be followed (135-143), only to realize that Neoptolemus is not quite certain either: his answer (144-9) is a rather self-evident statement, and this is the point of the Chorus' remark (150): μέλον πάλαι μέλημά μοι λέγεις, ἄναξ ...⁴¹ The young man, being at a loss, often can do no more than repeat verbatim Odysseus' words:⁴² 159-60 οἶκον [...] ἀμφίθυρον | πετρίνης κοίτης ~ 16 δίστομος πέτρα, 32 οἰκοποιὸς [...] τροφή; 162-63 δῆλον ἔμοιγ' ὡς φορβῆς χρεία | στίβον ὄγμεύει τῆδε πέλας που ~ 40-41 ἀνὴρ κατοικεῖ τούσδε τοὺς τόπους σαφῶς | κᾶστ' οὐχ' ἑκάς που & 43 ἀλλ' ἢ 'πὶ φορβῆς νόστον⁴³ ἐξελήλυθεν ... (the Chorus too sometimes echo Odysseus, e.g. 156 μὴ προσπεσὼν με λάθη ποθέν ~ 46 μὴ καὶ λάθη με προσπεσὼν).⁴⁴ These verbal echoes, as well as showing Neoptolemus' ignorance, pinpoint his complete compliance with his commander's orders. Significantly, when the Chorus (169-90) express their sympathy for the man who has had to go through unimaginable hardship in order to survive,⁴⁵ Neoptolemus asseverates, in a matter-of-fact tone, that this misery, as well as their mission, are part of a divine plan (191-200, on which see above, p. 74f.).⁴⁶ Despite his ignorance (or, perhaps, because of it), his commitment

⁴¹ I cannot see how Masaracchia (1964: 85) concludes that Neoptolemus knows exactly what Odysseus wants him to do. See Minadeo (1993: 91).

⁴² Cf. Winnington-Ingram (1980: 284 n.14). I cannot agree with Inoue (1979: 223 n.19) that Neoptolemus' echoing of Odysseus indicates a dissonance between them.

⁴³ For various attempts to emend νόστον (of which Toup's μαστύν seems the best) see Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 180).

⁴⁴ Cf. Gardiner (1987: 20 with n. 11). For further echoes see Schmidt (1973: 50).

⁴⁵ Contra Gardiner (1987: 18) who thinks that the Chorus' "statement is hardly an emotional commitment".

⁴⁶ Cf. Kott (1974: 168).

to the cause is absolute.

Nonetheless, this absolute commitment will be eventually shaken by the gradual revelation of Philoctetes' pitiable state. Even before Philoctetes appears, Neoptolemus becomes increasingly acquainted with the miserable conditions of his life. In the prologue Neoptolemus gains a preliminary knowledge of Philoctetes' miserable manner of life from the observation of inanimate objects (33, 35-6, 38-9).⁴⁷ The discovery in progress is repeatedly marked by a remarkable accumulation of words denoting *visual or mental perception*: 27 εἰσορᾶν, 30 ὄρα, 31 ὄρῶ, 37 σημαίνεις, 40 σαφῶς. A similar accumulation of such *verba percipiendi* is also to be noted in 135ff., where Neoptolemus invites the Chorus to join him in the observation of inanimate objects (Philoctetes' cave): 145 προσιδεῖν, 146 δέρκου, 155 μαθεῖν, 159 ὄρᾶς, 162 δῆλον. Soon however they are to have direct experience of the man himself: it is noteworthy that the theme of visual perception is now abruptly abandoned, and we are presented with a concentration of words denoting *aural perception* instead: 201 προυφάνη κτύπος;⁴⁸ 205-209 βάλλει, βάλλει μ' ... ἰ φθογγά [...] οὐδέ με λά-ἰθει [...] αὐδά [...] διάσημα γὰρ θρηνεῖ.⁴⁹ Philoctetes, trying to establish contact with the Greeks, stresses the *verbal / aural* aspect of their communication: 225 φωνῆς, ἀκοῦσαι, 229 φωνήσατ', 230 ἀνταμείψασθ', 234 φώνημα, 235 πρόσφθεγμα, 238 γέγωνε.⁵⁰ The emphasis on aural experience serves to play down, on the verbal level, the new *visual* experience offered on the theatrical level, now that Neoptolemus actually sees the man he has only heard of — an experience

⁴⁷ See on this point Rose (1976: 58-59), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 290), and especially Inoue (1979: 218-220).

⁴⁸ On the 'synaesthesia' (blending of different senses [hearing and sight] into the same image) here cf. also 189, 216, and see C.P. Segal, *ICIS* 2 (1977) 92.

⁴⁹ θρηνεῖ Dindorf : θροεῖ MSS. See Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 183-84).

⁵⁰ Cf. Podlecki (1966b: 235-6); Buxton (1982: 121).

which is undoubtedly much more crude and direct.⁵¹ For the time being, the effect of Philoctetes' pitiable *sight* on Neoptolemus must be suspended, and so it is never referred to in this part of the play. When words denoting knowledge and / or sight⁵² are used, it is always in a context of lies and trickery, with the purpose of furthering the deceitful plan. In other words, Neoptolemus, far from being affected by the new visual experience, manipulates the theme of sight / knowledge in order to obscure his victim's vision. Thus, 241 οἶσθ', 250 κάτοιδ' ... εἶδον (taking up 249 οἶσθα, εἰσορᾶς), 253 μηδὲν εἰδότη' ἴσθι, 319 μάρτυς, 320 οἶδα signal the imparting of information that we know to be deliberately false, in keeping with Neoptolemus' role as a trickster. Nonetheless, this same Neoptolemus who now manipulates his knowledge with such certainty and self-confidence, will soon find out that there are many things that he does not yet know — most importantly, the horror of Philoctetes' disease. Neoptolemus' attempt to conceal knowledge from Philoctetes will (in a sort of dramatic *contrappunto*) develop along with his own progressive acquisition of new and crucial knowledge. The gradual realization of Philoctetes' misery, of the callousness of men and gods toward him, of the immorality or injustice of their means, will lead Neoptolemus to gradual deviation from, and eventual defiance of, the prophecy.

Much new knowledge is revealed in Philoctetes' account of his life (254-316) which, quite naturally, is in the sharpest contrast with the distinctly cavalier tone of Odysseus' version thereof in the prologue. Thus, his description of his agonizing pain is substantially more elaborate (265-268, 311-313; NB the significant ring-composition) and far more powerful than Odysseus' one-line, neutral statement at 7. The gloomy description of the cave (272-274, 286) is worlds apart from the almost idyllic description of it by Odysseus (16-19), and his reference to his possessions

⁵¹ Kitto (1956: 113) rightly emphasizes the importance of the visual experience for the whole design of the play. On the antithesis between sound and sight in this scene see Inoue (1979: 226-27).

⁵² On the affinity between words denoting knowledge and words denoting sight see Jebb (*ad* 846f.) and Kamerbeek (*ad* 250), and especially Snell (1924: 26-7) and Coray (1993: 11-18).

by the qualification ἐπωφέλημα⁵³ μικρόν (275) neatly counterbalances Odysseus' glib θησαύρισμα (37). All in all, Philoctetes' crude presentation of the excruciating hardship he has had to face on Lemnos (276-313)⁵⁴ is meant to be set, as a whole, against the rather embellished picture offered by Odysseus in the prologue.⁵⁵ Neoptolemus, whose knowledge of Philoctetes' situation depended entirely on Odysseus' account, is now faced with unsettling 'first-hand' information. What is more, the gods' role in Philoctetes' misery is now seen in a much more sinister light: the religious considerations which Odysseus put forth in the prologue (8-11) as a justification of the Greek leaders' decision to abandon Philoctetes,⁵⁶ have been, it appears, fully accepted by Neoptolemus, who cocksurely pronounced Philoctetes' plight to be but a means to an ulterior, and divinely sanctioned, purpose (191-200; cf. above, p. 74f.). Now, however, his complacency is bound to be shaken: Philoctetes declares his abandonment to have been ἀνοσίως (257),⁵⁷ thus refusing to acquiesce in the consoling assumption that his woes are part of a divinely sanctioned order. All he can offer as an explanation of his plight is divine *hatred*: his exclamation ὦ πικρὸς θεοῖς (254) must surely be a complaint against what he perceives as divine injustice,⁵⁸ as is his vehement protest, a little

⁵³ This is a unique coinage (Long [1968: 98], Rose [1976: 61 n.33]) and thus perhaps designed to attract attention.

⁵⁴ Di Benedetto (1983: 195-98, 200) has offered a helpful analysis of the novel (and therefore all the more impressive) "vocabulary of suffering" used by Sophocles in the description of Philoctetes' sufferings.

⁵⁵ On the differences between Odysseus' and Philoctetes' accounts see Blundell (1989: 194), Rose (1976: 63). Inoue (1979: 220-24) sets Odysseus' rhetoric against Neoptolemus' own visual experience.

⁵⁶ Cf. Segal (1977: 136-37; but contr. 138). Kitto (1956: 102, 130; cf. 109) would rather emphasize the political aspect of Philoctetes' exposure; cf. Pratt (1949: 277 n. 21).

⁵⁷ Cf. Kitto (1956: 114-15), Webster (*ad* 257), Segal (1977: 150). Cf. 1031-34 where Philoctetes sarcastically dismisses these religious excuses: see Machin (1981: 96), Segal (1981: 300).

⁵⁸ Thus Poe (1974: 34).

later, that the gods care only about the base (446-7), and indeed that they are base themselves (452).⁵⁹ Such a reprobation against divine justice cannot leave the young man untouched: lines 601-2 may suggest⁶⁰ (although not unequivocally, as they fit the plotter's role just as well)⁶¹ that Neoptolemus starts suspecting that divine justice may not, after all, be on the Greeks' side. That Neoptolemus' erstwhile absolute confidence has been dealt some severe blows by his direct acquaintance with Philoctetes may also be inferred from such passages as 431-32 and 441, which (as many have remarked) seem to indicate his growing disapproval of Odysseus' practices — and therefore of what he knows to be the gods' plan. Of course, in both these instances his qualms are, at best, only implicit; at the moment nothing seems to disturb the *status quo*: at 461-7 he resumes his role as a trickster, pretending to be in a hurry to leave, with the obvious purpose of exciting Philoctetes' desire to follow them wherever they take him. The trick works admirably well, and in a long speech (468-506) Philoctetes entreats Neoptolemus to carry him back to Greece. Still, successful as he is in his role as a crafty manipulator of his victim's ignorance, Neoptolemus is soon to face the possibility that (as I have already implied) his own knowledge may also be shown to be deficient. For Philoctetes invites him to a new *visual experience*, to a further enhancement of his knowledge, with regard to his miserable life. A concentration of *verba videndi* again marks the new knowledge about to

⁵⁹ Cf. esp. Gellie (1972: 292 n.7), Poe (1974: 32-7) and Segal (1977: 135 with n.7, 148) against the pietistic view (held by Kitto [1956: 116-17]; cf. D.B. Robinson [1969: 55-56]) that Sophocles avoids raising the issue of Divine Providence. — Linforth (1956: 111 n. 9) takes τὰ θεῖα to mean 'religious faith and practice' (to which Philoctetes professes loyalty: ἐπαινῶν) as opposed to the gods themselves (τοὺς θεούς, whom he finds base); I would rather take both to mean basically the same thing ('divinity'), with ἐπαινῶν having a conative force: 'I try to praise all things divine, but I find the gods to be base' (thus in essence L. Campbell and Jebb). I am not convinced by Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 189) who change ἐπαινῶν into ἐπαθρῶν (Postgate).

⁶⁰ Cf. e.g. Adams (1957: 145), Machin (1981: 92).

⁶¹ Gellie (1972: 143).

be acquired: 534 μάθης, 536-37 ὄμμασιν ... θέαν | ... λαβόντα.⁶² The extreme conditions in which Philoctetes has had to live, so far known to Neoptolemus only by the οὐραν^ς's narrative (cf. 472 ἐξήκουσας), will be now visually evidenced, thus acquiring the status of certain and undeniable knowledge.⁶³

2.2.2 The Emporos scene: de facto confirmation of guile as the only feasible means of action

However, this visual / cognitive experience has to be briefly postponed,⁶⁴ for a new character is announced by the Chorus; he has clearly *new information* to deliver: 539 μάθωμεν,⁶⁵ 541 μαθόντες. This information, in spite of what some scholars have thought,⁶⁶ is not to be dismissed as a complete lie from start to end; it has been made clear in the prologue that the Emporos will speak *not* entirely falsely, but 'in a craftily iridescent fashion' (130 ποικίλως αὐδωμένου).⁶⁷ The purportedly genuine information communicated by the Emporos' speech is tripartite: firstly, there is a *prophecy* spoken through Helenus (604ff.); secondly, according

⁶² An emphatic periphrasis for ἰδεῖν. On the theme of forthcoming new knowledge here cf. Rose (1976:97).

⁶³ On the Greek idea that visual experience is more trustworthy than aural one see Chapter One, p. 16 n. 50.

⁶⁴ For the dramatic function of this postponement as a preparation for what is going to follow see Webster (1933:120-21).

⁶⁵ Both Fraenkel (1977: 59) and Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 192) suspect μάθωμεν to be corrupt in view of 538 προύμαθον and 541 μαθόντες. Nonetheless, this repetition is not pointless, because it emphasizes the new knowledge that is forthcoming. The same cannot be said of Hense's σταθῶμεν (favoured by Lloyd-Jones & Wilson [*l.c.*]) which creates an idle pleonasm after 539 ἐπίσχετον (see Fraenkel's [*l.c.*] misgivings about this emendation).

⁶⁶ E.g. Kitto (1956:97f.); Steidle (1968:171).

⁶⁷ See Machin (1981: 70): "Ulysse lui-même a promis des discours non pas faux, mais 'ambigus' (130)"; cf. Minadeo (1993:88 n.3).

to this prophecy Troy will not fall unless Philoctetes *himself* decides, by means of *verbal* *πειθῶ*, to come there (611-13); thirdly, Odysseus has pledged to bring Philoctetes to Troy, *even by violence* if need be (594, 617-19).⁶⁸

The mention of a prophecy specifying that Philoctetes is indispensable if Troy is to be taken has to be accepted as genuine, even though it is given in the context of an ambiguous speech. There are two reasons for this: on the one hand, the reported prophecy is consistent with the speculative assumption already made by Neoptolemus (191-200) that the Greek expedition to fetch Philoctetes forms part of a divine plan; on the other hand, the report is validated a little later, when Neoptolemus (who has been advised to accept such parts of the Emporos' speech as he sees useful: 130-1) explicitly acknowledges (839-42) that it was the god himself who ordered that Philoctetes should be brought to Troy.⁶⁹ As for the mention of the 'πέισαντες λόγῳ' clause (612), far from contradicting Odysseus' preference for guile (*πειθῶ* can be both honest and tricky: see above, pp. 83-85), it shows this preference to have been justified; for Philoctetes vehemently denies that he might be persuaded to fight on the side of those who have cast him out:⁷⁰ the sarcastic tone of 622-25 (NB the dismissive use of words related to persuasion: 623 *πέισας*, 624 *πεισθήσομαι*) and the indignant determination of 628-634 (NB esp. 629 *λόγοισι μαλθακοῖς*, 632 *κλύοιμ'*, 633 *πάντα λεκτά*: verbal persuasion is out of the question) leave no doubt that Odysseus was after all right:

⁶⁸ For a similar (though slightly different in details) tripartite segmentation of the new information see Machin (1981:69-70).

⁶⁹ Knox (1964: 126). So, D.B. Robinson's (1969:49) argument —accepted by Garvie (1972: 213-4) and Seale (1972: 96), (1982: 35 with n. 23) —that "Sophocles at no point allows any of his characters to purport to quote the exact words of the oracle of Helenus *verbatim* and in full [...]" must be seriously qualified.

⁷⁰ Alt (1961: 155-6); Steidle (1968: 170); Garvie (1972: 217-18); Blundell (1989: 203). Older doxography on the Emporos scene: Masaracchia (1964:92-95).

οὐ μὴ πίθηται (103).⁷¹ Thus, one of the more acceptable alternatives to guile that Neoptolemus proposed in the prologue (102 πείσαντ') no longer counts.

However, honest persuasion was for Neoptolemus only a second-best alternative; by far his preferred course of action would have been force (90 πρὸς βίαν). Indeed, the Emporos reports that Odysseus has indeed threatened to use force against Philoctetes, should he not come of his own volition — a threat which, despite glaringly violating the 'πείσαντες λόγῳ' clause, is not meant to suggest that Odysseus disobeys the requirements of the prophecy (we have seen that he never actually uses force against Philoctetes: above, p. 83), but to remind us that violence is the means that, due to its inherent straightforwardness, would be most conformable with Neoptolemus' heroic code. And even though Neoptolemus knows that violence is precluded by the 'πείσαντες λόγῳ' clause, he also knows that the Messenger speaks ποικίλως, and so (only for the time being) he can not be sure whether Odysseus' reported readiness to use violence is or is not to be taken seriously — the Messenger twice stresses the possibility of using forcible means: πρὸς ἰσχύος κράτος (594), εἰ μὴ θέλοι δ', ἄκοντα (618). As a true son of Achilles, Neoptolemus (and also, conceivably, a sympathetic audience that would be loath to see Philoctetes deceived) might be tempted seriously to consider using force, especially after it becomes clear (622ff.) that persuasion will not do. However, it will soon appear that violence will not do either, not only because it is precluded by the reported prophecy, but also because of a forthcoming upsurge of pity on Neoptolemus' part: as in the case of honest persuasion, the exclusion of the possibility of violence by Odysseus in the prologue is validated *de facto* through the young

⁷¹ Many have tried to explain away the failure of Neoptolemus' final attempt to persuade Philoctetes (1314ff.) as a result of his failure to use honest persuasion: thus e.g. Bowra (1944: 267, 282-83, 299); Kitto (1961: 304); Knox (1964: 119-20, 137); Podlecki (1966b: 244, 245); Schlesinger (1968: 102-3); Buxton (1982: 124). The passages cited above in the text show that this would have been impossible: cf. rightly Steidle (1968: 170), Garvie (1972: 218 n. 15).

man's *direct experience*. An unexpected attack of Philoctetes' disease (730ff.) will exclude this possibility once and for all: Neoptolemus cannot harm a man whose sufferings, made for the first time visually evident to him, move him to deep pity⁷² — a man who is, indeed, as good as dead (cf. 882-5, 946). To Philoctetes' repeated entreaties for extreme violence (747-9, 799-803), Neoptolemus responds, for the first time,⁷³ with his genuine expression of sympathy: ἰὼ ἰὼ δύστηνε σύ (759);⁷⁴ notable is also the most explicit ἀλγῶ πάλαι δὴ... στένων... (806) as well as Neoptolemus' tell-tale silence (805), which reveal how shattering an effect the sight of the suffering Philoctetes has had upon him.⁷⁵ For it is the

⁷² Blundell (1989: 206-207 with n.86). In fact, as many have argued, one might discern hints of Neoptolemus' growing qualms even earlier, namely in his excuses about the adverse wind (639-40, contrast 466-67): see e.g. Kirkwood (1958: 59-60); Alt (1961: 156); Beye (1970: 72-73); Garvie (1972: 215-16 & n.9) with bibliography; Poe (1974: 40). Still, it is only now (i.e. at 759, 806 etc.) that Neoptolemus will find himself compelled explicitly to show his genuine pity.

⁷³ See Rose (1976: 71-72 with n.52), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 284, 286).

⁷⁴ Cf. Minadeo (1993: 96). Probably the next line also (760) is spoken by Neoptolemus: see Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 199). For further analysis of 759-60 (from a predominantly stylistic point of view) see Segal (1981: 303); cf. Inoue (1979: 224 with n.24). On Neoptolemus' cries of internal distress (esp. 895 παπαῖ) as echoing Philoctetes' cries of physical pain (e.g. 746, 754, 785ff., 792f.) — a fact which underlines the effect the latter has had upon the former — see e.g. Taplin (1978: 133), Buxton (1982: 122, 124 with n. 24), Cairns (1993: 257 with n.153). Incidentally, 895-909, along with the heated altercation between Odysseus and Neoptolemus in the prologue, suffice to refute Calder's (1971: 163-69) preposterous opinion (accepted in general also by Kiso [1984: 93-97; cf. 150 n.27] and advanced independently, on a much smaller scale, by Raubitschek [1986]) that Neoptolemus is, from first to last, an unrepentant deceiver (there are of course many more weaknesses in this view [e.g. the pointlessness of confessing the deceit at 895ff.]; some of them are well summarized by Segal [1981: 476 n.32]). Fuqua (1976: 49-62) shows how the Neoptolemus of the *Philoctetes* deviates from his basically negative image in the mythic tradition.

⁷⁵ I cannot understand how Craik (1979: 25, 27-29) can detect burlesque elements in the representation of Philoctetes' sufferings (similarly, though

visual experience of sufferings only heard of previously (an experience which has been anticipated at 533ff. [cf. above, p. 91]) that causes Neoptolemus to swerve from his role as a cold-blooded trickster. This new visual experience is marked again by a concentration of related words: 753 οἶσθ' (twice), 754 οὐκ οἶδα — πῶς οὐκ οἶσθα; 755 δῆλόν γε (Dawe: δεινόν γε codd.).⁷⁶ And if we are to see in 671 (οὐκ ἄχθομαί σ' ἰδών...) Neoptolemus' attempt to disguise, by an *antiphrasis* of sorts, his growing unease at the sight of such misery, as Winnington-Ingram (1980: 286) has proposed, then we have an early subtle hint of the association between sight and pity that is soon to be of central importance.⁷⁷

This association between visual experience and pity is foreshadowed in the single proper stasimon⁷⁸ of this play. Such passages as 676 (λόγῳ μὲν ἐξήκουσ', ὄπῳπα δ' οὐ μάλα) imply that, whereas the Chorus have *heard* of sufferings as great as Philoctetes' (namely Ixion's), they have never *witnessed* such misery with their own eyes (this is also, in effect, the meaning of 682 ἄλλον δ' οὕτιν' ... οἶδα κλυῶν οὐδ' ἐσιδών).⁷⁹ The mythological paradigm of Ixion takes up, if only implicitly, a

more reservedly, Greengard [1987: 54-5]); she herself (*ibid.* p. 28 n.35 & n.36) provides decisive arguments against this view.

⁷⁶ Cf. Pratt (1949: 281), Adams (1957: 149). For the emendation see Dawe (1978: 128-29); *contra* Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 198).

⁷⁷ On the importance of *sight* cf. Beye (1970: 73), Garvie (1972: 216), Gellie (1972: 148) and, most helpfully, Inoue (1979: esp. 224-26). On Neoptolemus' first signs of pity here see S.K. Johnson (1928b: 210), Gellie (1972: 136-42, cf. 149), Machin (1981: 89); see however Erbse (1966: 189-93), Rose (1976: 71 n.52) and Strohm (1986: 117-8) for a warning against the tendency (a prime example of which is Steidle [1968: 179-80]; cf. Schmidt [1973: 62ff.]) to discover hints of Neoptolemus' pity too early in the play.

⁷⁸ Cf. Jebb (p. 111). This formal feature is by no means insignificant; in Sophocles' late plays the tendency is to decrease autonomous stasima, and to increase the kommoi (Kirkwood [1958: 192]). Therefore, the presence of a complete stasimon in a play of 409 BC must have a special dramatic significance. *Contra* Kitto (1956: 103; cf. 118), excellently answered by Segal (1977: 151).

⁷⁹ Cf. Winnington-Ingram (1980: 286 n. 21) and esp. Tarrant (1986: 129).

suggestion made by Philoctetes as early as 446-52 (cf. above, p. 89): how can one accept that the gods care for justice when the punishment they inflict on a man as guilty as Ixion is no more horrendous than the fate a man as innocent as Philoctetes (676-686; NB 685 ἀναξίως) has to endure?⁸⁰ Perhaps the expression of the Chorus' genuine sympathy continues until the end of the stasimon, including the enigmatic lines 719-29: instead of assuming that in these lines the Chorus, in view of Philoctetes' reappearing from his cave with Neoptolemus, resume their role as assistant tricksters⁸¹ (a role they had naturally abandoned in 676-718), we should perhaps see here a foreshadowing of what will eventually happen in 1402ff.: Neoptolemus, after a long emotional and moral struggle, will make up his mind to take Philoctetes home, thus diametrically opposing himself to the divine plan.⁸²

Thus, to return to the point made on pp. 92-93, the two alternatives approved by Neoptolemus in the prologue, namely violence and honest persuasion, are now out of the question.⁸³ Deceit is the only viable option, just as Odysseus pointed out in the prologue; Neoptolemus has come to realize this through his own direct experience. Thus, the dramatic purpose of the Emporos' scene is evidently *neither* to speed things up by frightening or enraging Philoctetes on to Neoptolemus' ship⁸⁴

⁸⁰ On the implicit questioning of the gods' justice cf. Segal (1977: 138, 150-51).

⁸¹ Thus e.g. Jebb (*ad* 718); Linforth (1956: 120-3); Adams (1957: 148); Knox (1964: 130); Minadeo (1993: 96 with n.11). *Contra* Taplin (1971: 33 n.18), Tarrant (1986: 125-7). For doxography on the staging of this part see Gardiner (1987: 30-36); refutation of earlier views in Linforth (1956: 121).

⁸² I was happy to see that Tarrant (1986: 129-30) takes a similar view of these lines (although I disagree with him in matters of detail). Knox (1964: 130), although he thinks that at 719-29 the Chorus are lying, remarks that their heartfelt sympathy as expressed in the rest of this ode provides us with a measure by which to gauge the inner turmoil that must be torturing Neoptolemus; for criticism of this view see Tarrant (1986: 124).

⁸³ I do not understand how Seale (1972: 96-97) can maintain that the options of force and persuasion remain open even after the Emporos' speech.

⁸⁴ Thus e.g. (with minor differences in emphasis) Linforth (1956: 116); Steidle (1968: 171); D.B. Robinson (1969: 49); Strohm (1986: 117).

(Philoctetes has been all too willing to follow Neoptolemus: 468ff.) *nor*, as Buxton (1982: 121-2) has more thoughtfully proposed, to misdirect Philoctetes' attention towards the prospect of persuasion or violence, so that deception can proceed unhindered (for deception *has* proceeded unhindered anyway):⁸⁵ its purpose is rather to show Neoptolemus (and the audience) that there is, *de facto*, no other choice than deception. This narrowing-down of possibilities is, however, well calculated to lead to an impasse. In 839-42 Neoptolemus, in response to the Chorus' veiled suggestion (827ff.) to make off with the bow,⁸⁶ voices his sudden realization (cf. 839 ὁρῶ)⁸⁷ of the true meaning of the prophecy (a realization that occurs in a μεσῳδός conspicuously inserted between strophe and antistrophe,⁸⁸ and spoken in hexameters intended, perhaps, to convey something of the oracular style⁸⁹): it is Philoctetes himself, not merely the bow⁹⁰ that they must fetch to Troy. Neoptolemus is the kind of man who would prefer to fail honestly than to win dishonestly (94-95); but now he has both indulged in dishonesty and failed to carry out his mission! In Winnington-Ingram's (1969: 49) words, "to boast over the capture and conveyance of the bow alone is to boast of an uncompleted

⁸⁵ For analytical doxography on the Emporos scene see Østerud (1973: 16-9).

⁸⁶ Cf. e.g. Jebb (p. 134), Dain & Mazon (1960: 42 n.1), Webster (p. 119); *contra* Hinds (1967: 175-6). D.M. Jones, *CR* 63 (1949) 83-85 has argued that esp. 828-38, with the summoning of Hypnos, allude to the 'Deception of Zeus' in *Il.* 14. 230-91, thus suggesting that the Chorus too have treachery in mind.

⁸⁷ On ὁρῶ cf. Easterling (1978a: 34), Seale (1982: 39).

⁸⁸ Jebb (p. 134). That the Chorus do not seem particularly to heed Neoptolemus' new realization is, *pace* D.B. Robinson (1969: 46), no argument against its validity: Neoptolemus' sudden insight becomes all the more prominent by breaking through in the midst of the Chorus' misguided views (cf. Segal [1977: 146]).

⁸⁹ Thus Bowra (1944: 281), Knox (1964: 131); differently Webster (1936: 136-37), Winnington-Ingram (1969: 49).

⁹⁰ Lines 942-5 are perfectly consistent with this new realization if we punctuate lightly, or not at all, at the end of 944: "he wishes it to appear to the Argives that he has captured...". See Webster's (*ad* 944) excellent remarks, who disposes of the notion that φήνασθαι (944) can have τὰ τόξα as its object.

task (ἀτελή) and so shameful (αἰσχρὸν ὄνειδος). But σὺν ψεύδεσιν echoes the prologue and betrays the misgivings of Neoptolemus. To take Philoctetes by fraud is bad enough, but (Neoptolemus has been persuaded) might be justified by success: to seize the bow alone would be futile as well as dishonest.”⁹¹ The dramatist fully exploits here the ambiguity he has carefully created as to whether it is Philoctetes or merely the bow that is required (114-15, 191-200;⁹² cf. 345-7⁹³): thanks to this ambiguity he can now become more specific as to the requirements of the prophecy, without offending dramatic plausibility. And the dramatic point of his giving out more specific information about the content of the prophecy is, paradoxically, to make Neoptolemus move a step further from its requirements, namely to reveal to Philoctetes the true purpose of his mission (915ff.). Neoptolemus proceeds from wrong premises: the newly realized prophecy simply states that Philoctetes must come to Troy himself, it does not demand honest persuasion;⁹⁴ so, Neoptolemus could have perfectly well kept using tricky persuasion (guile), having now as his object Philoctetes himself, not merely the bow. In a sense, Neoptolemus ‘overinterprets’ the prophecy in an attempt to combine the divinely sanctioned plan to capture Troy with the demands of his code of ethics and of his noble φύσις (902)⁹⁵ — honest persuasion

⁹¹ Cf. Gellie (1972: 149), Cairns (1993: 256). Hinds (1967: 172-73) holds that Neoptolemus knew from the beginning that his object was Philoctetes himself; so also Steidle (1968: 173, 175) and Hoppin (1981: 20-3 & *passim*). But why should 839-42 be so emphatically phrased if they do not contain some important new point?

⁹² See above, p. 78.

⁹³ Cf. Adams (1957: 142). Also Tycho von Wilamowitz (1917: 304-5).

⁹⁴ Cf. Hinds (1967: 175).

⁹⁵ This is quite different from maintaining —with e.g. Linforth (1956: 127, 130), Masaracchia (1964: 97), and esp. D.B. Robinson (1969: 46-48) and Garvie (1972: 216, 217 n.13); cf. Poe (1974: 29-30)—that Neoptolemus, so far from realizing the true meaning of the prophecy at 839-42, merely uses ‘the god’s will’ as a pretext that thinly veils his growing pity (895ff.) and / or his moral considerations. If Neoptolemus felt his change of heart to have originated *only* in his morals or pity, then surely he could have explicitly said so (as he does e.g. at 895ff.),

is after all the course of action he would rather have taken in the first place if force were impossible (102). However, such a combination, laudable as it is *per se*, proves impracticable. In his attempt to reconcile human notions of justice and morality with obedience to divine will (two things that all too often prove irreconcilable), Neoptolemus will eventually jeopardize the whole divine plan: it has been established that deceit is the only means of achieving the divinely-sanctioned purpose, since Philoctetes is entirely unwilling to give in to any kind of persuasion (622-25, 628-32). The impasse created by Neoptolemus' inner conflict has been well formulated (with its religious aspects appropriately stressed) by Pratt (1949: 280): "...the evil of Philoctetes' suffering exists under an order of things in which the gods rule. Thus the moral issue of justice is ultimately a religious issue. And yet, over against this greater understanding in Neoptolemus stands the fact that the gods will that Troy now fall. Neoptolemus will soon cry (908): ὦ Ζεῦ, τί δράσω;" Paradoxically, the new realization of the prophecy leads, it seems, not to its fulfilment, but to its frustration. Knowledge of the divine will and adherence to it appear to be in inverse proportion.

2.2.3 Further deviation from the prophecy. Failure of πειθῶ

Neoptolemus does not give in to his scruples all at once. His distancing from what he knows to be an order of his superior and, what is more, the will of the gods, takes place progressively,⁹⁶ and his eventual concession to honest persuasion comes only after a long and painful inner struggle.⁹⁷ At a first stage he reveals to Philoctetes the truth about his mission (915-6), but he still insists on keeping the bow, of which he has managed to get hold (762ff.) by having first carefully smoothed the way into obtaining

instead of focusing exclusively on what *the god* has said (841). Cf. rightly Cairns (1993: 256-7).

⁹⁶ Cf. Rose (1976: 88-89), Segal (1977: 146-47).

⁹⁷ Kirkwood (1958: 148 n.38).

Philoctetes' permission to do so (654–675).⁹⁸ Neoptolemus has moved from deceit to blackmail — a more 'straightforward' means, but hardly a more ethical one.⁹⁹ After Odysseus' intervention, he complies with his superior (1074–80), in the hope that Philoctetes might submit to the blackmail and "make a more profitable decision" for them (1078–79).¹⁰⁰ Still, pity and ethical considerations do eventually overwhelm the young man. His hundred-line silence in 974–1073 (as well as his much shorter silence at 934–5, misunderstood by Philoctetes as a sign of inexorability) is undoubtedly a sign of inner turmoil between his sense of duty and his growing pity and shame:¹⁰¹ οὐ νῦν πρῶτον ἀλλὰ καὶ πάλαι (966) indicates exactly this long and painful upsurge of οἶκτος δεινός (965) he is experiencing.¹⁰² His emotional distress, apparent from such passages as 970, 1011–12, 1068–69, 1074 (οἴκτου πλέως), will cause Neoptolemus to crack up (1222 ff.).¹⁰³ This outbreak of pity has *moral* dimensions as

⁹⁸ See e.g. Bowra (1944: 273), Kirkwood (1958: 59). Of course, Neoptolemus' hypocrisy is not restricted to these lines: for a detailed analysis of his well-crafted deceit see Calder (1971: *passim*), notwithstanding his conclusion that Neoptolemus is the "arch-deceiver" throughout the play (cf. above, n. 74).

⁹⁹ Bowra (1944: 296); Gellie (1972: 150); Gill (1980: 142); Machin (1981: 412).

¹⁰⁰ Reinhardt (1979: 186); Calder (1971: 161–62); Winnington-Ingram (1980: 289). Neoptolemus is complying with Odysseus' bluff: see above, p. 82.

¹⁰¹ On Neoptolemus' silences cf. e.g. Podlecki (1966b: 240–1); Taplin (1971: 33); Garvie (1972: 216); Schmidt (1973: 176); Segal (1981: 336, 341); and esp. Steidle (1968: 181–4 *passim*).

¹⁰² Kirkwood (1958: 159–60); Taplin (1978: 114); Strohm (1986: 118–9); Cairns (1993: 257).

¹⁰³ On 1222ff. as mirroring 974ff. see Taplin (1978: 132–3). Tycho von Wilamowitz (1917: 307–9; cf. 294–8) was, predictably, hostile to the idea of an inner development in Neoptolemus, and thought that his cracking up is totally unprepared and comes as a complete surprise; see however Steidle (1968: 175–81), who shows that "Mitleid und Trug schließen sich [...] nicht von vornherein aus" (p. 177) — although he does tend to detect hints of Neoptolemus' pity too early in the play (cf. n. 77). On Neoptolemus' pity as gradually undermining the intrigue cf. also Parlavantza-Friedrich (1969: 50–65 *passim*).

well:¹⁰⁴ Philoctetes himself has closely connected the notions of pity and justice in 1040–42,¹⁰⁵ and Neoptolemus explicitly describes his previous conduct as unethical, as appears from such passages as 1224 (ἐξήμαρτον) in conjunction with 1248–9 (τὴν ἁμαρτίαν | αἰσχρὰν ἁμαρτῶν),¹⁰⁶ 1228 (ἀπάταισιν αἰσχροῖς ... δόλοισι), 1234 (αἰσχροῦς ... κοῦ δίκη), 1246, 1251a. He has to act in accordance with his φύσις (cf. 902)¹⁰⁷ and his heroic code of honour. Thus, he returns the bow (1287ff.). At the same time, however, he deviates even further from the terms of the prophecy.¹⁰⁸ As Winnington-Ingram (1980: 299) remarks, “the pious Sophocles constantly surprises us; the ironist operates at the divine level also. It is ironical that Neoptolemus, by behaving well [i.e. by complying with his moral principles and his feelings], should endanger the designs of the gods”. This second deviation from the requirements of the prophecy is also preceded, paradoxically, by a refreshed awareness thereof (cf. also above, p. 98f.): at 989–90 Odysseus proclaims himself to be the

¹⁰⁴ Machin (1981: 411); cf. Adams (1957: 150). Gill (1980: 142) puts it well: “This combination of moral unease and ‘terrible compassion’ (965–6) leads Neoptolemus to abandon the policy of deceit and to deal openly with Philoctetes for the first time.”

¹⁰⁵ The point is excellently made by Blundell (1989: 200).

¹⁰⁶ On the moral sense of the root ἁμαρτ—at 1224 and 1248 see Bremer (1969: 34); Cairns (1993: 260).

¹⁰⁷ Cf. esp. 902–903, 950, 971, 1007–15. See Di Benedetto (1983: 209–10). I refrain from giving a more detailed account of Neoptolemus’ course towards the reassertion of his innate nobility through his contact with Philoctetes, as Blundell (1988) has recently offered a thorough analysis thereof. See also Bowra (1944: 274, 276, 279–80 etc.); Kitto (1956: 114, 116); Alt (1961: *passim*); Knox (1964: 220–21); Torrance (1965: 316–7); Beye (1970: 70–73); Rose (1976: 66ff., cf. 85ff., 97 with n.97). For older bibliography on the subject see Fuqua (1976: 36 n.14).

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Pratt (1949: 282–83). Bowra (1944: 298) and Kitto (1956: 126) think that Neoptolemus acts in accordance with the gods’ will, but this is what we might call ‘moralistic fallacy’: one accepts *a priori* that the gods *must* be (by human measures) just and good, and therefore an honest act like the return of the bow *must* be in accordance with divine will.

agent of divine will in the strongest terms possible (NB the threefold repetition of the name of Zeus in the former passage), and at 997-8 he stresses the (divinely ordained, we may infer) necessity of Philoctetes' coming to Troy;¹⁰⁹ he thus confirms the content of the prophecy as reported by the Emporos (603-19) and as realized by Neoptolemus (839-42).¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, no sooner has Neoptolemus' knowledge of the prophecy been consolidated, than he proceeds one step farther from it. Even at the very moment when the bow is returned to its owner (1291-2), Odysseus inserts a last desperate reminder of the gods (1293 ὡς θεοὶ ξυνίστορες) whose designs he feels unable to prevent from being foiled.

A paramount role in this further deviation is played, no doubt, by Philoctetes' counter-claims that the time has come for the injustice against him to be rectified: Odysseus' claim to have Zeus on his side (989-90) cannot be true (991-2), he claims, because it is the gods' concern for δίκη, i.e. for Philoctetes' restitution, that has spurred on the Greek mission (1035-39); the gods will hearken to Philoctetes' curses and destroy the loathsome Greeks (1040-44). This is, of course, only wishful thinking¹¹¹ (as is apparent from his bitter complaint at 1020), but, as it emphatically involves the gods, it is bound to shake Neoptolemus' confidence in the divine sanction of the Greek plan (on pp. 89-90 I argue for a similar effect of 446-52 on Neoptolemus). Nonetheless, the young man is still fully aware of the main object of his mission, namely to bring Philoctetes to Troy; thus, in accordance with his principles, he makes a last attempt honestly to persuade Philoctetes to comply with the divine decrees. Now the young man seems to possess full and complete knowledge of the prophecy, which he wishes to communicate to

¹⁰⁹ Cf. above, p. 77.

¹¹⁰ See e.g. Lesky (1972:243).

¹¹¹ Pace Rose (1977:100). What is more, Philoctetes' certainty about the plans of the gods is misguided: the κέντρον that initiated the Greek mission was indeed θεῖον (1039), but we know that the divine plan is primarily concerned not with Philoctetes' restitution but with the promotion of the Greek cause. Cf. Intro. section 0.4.2.

Philoctetes; this is indicated by yet another accumulation of words denoting sensory or mental *perception*: 1316 ἄκουσον, 1325 ἐπίστω, γράφου φρενῶν ἔσω, 1329 ἴσθι, 1336 οἶδα, 1343 κάποισθα; cf. also 1381 ὄρω, 1387 διδάσκου, 1389 μανθάνειν, 1391 ὄρα. Neoptolemus' account (which we must accept as fully accurate, since it is entirely consistent with Heracles' undoubtedly authentic version at 1421ff.¹¹²) recapitulates and confirms previous references to divine involvement in Philoctetes' fate, thus creating a coherent picture of the prophecy and the divine will expressed through it: his disease was a god-sent misfortune (1326 ἐκ θείας τύχης) related to his trespassing upon Chryse's shrine (cf. Neoptolemus' speculative assumption at 191-4).¹¹³ His disease will never be cured unless he comes to Troy of his own free will (1329-32) — a reiteration, basically, of the Emporos' account at 610-13,¹¹⁴ except that his πείσαντες λόγῳ (612) is now replaced by ἐκὼν αὐτός (1332), which, in keeping with Neoptolemus' ethical approach, clearly precludes guile. He will be healed by the sons of Asclepius and gain supreme glory by sacking Troy (a fact already alluded to at 919-20). Finally, we hear again (cf. the Emporos' speech, 604ff.) that all the above have the seal of divine authority, as they have been pronounced by the seer Helenus.¹¹⁵

¹¹² See e.g. Easterling (1978a: 32-33). I am unable to comprehend how D.B. Robinson (1969: 50) can maintain that "what Heracles says [...] is not evidence for what the oracle [he means: the prophecy] said; Heracles has his own divine foreknowledge." In other words, we either have to dismiss whatever is said in the play about the prophecy as an irrelevance, or to accept that the divine will as expressed through the prophecy and the divine will as expressed through Heracles are two different things!

¹¹³ Pucci (1994: 40) aptly points out that Neoptolemus no longer speaks of θεῶν μελέτη (as he did at 196) but uses the phrase θεία τύχη instead (1326): "after all the excruciating experience of assisting and persuading Philoctetes, Neoptolemus is no longer sure that his friend's sufferings are really caused by a divine care [i.e. a μελέτη], and prefers a less committed expression"; cf. Poe (1974: 44), Rose (1976: 74 n.57), Segal (1981: 356).

¹¹⁴ Cf. Gellie (1972: 154-55).

¹¹⁵ Cf. Podlecki (1966b: 239 n.15).

According to the pattern we have identified, however, Neoptolemus' being in a position to give a full and accurate account of the prophecy is combined, paradoxically, with his ultimate deviation from it. Well may Neoptolemus attempt honestly to persuade Philoctetes to comply with the divine plan (NB the concentration of λόγος-words: 1267, 1278-9, 1322, 1324, 1374, 1385, 1393-95), but Philoctetes remains intractable, and words are precisely what he finds most distasteful:¹¹⁶ 1268-69, 1271-72, 1275-76, 1280, 1288 (εἶπας—δολούμεθα: a meaningful juxtaposition), 1290, 1306-7, 1380, 1382, 1388, and 1401 ἄλις ... τεθρύληται λόγος¹¹⁷ (ruling out every possibility of continuing the debate).¹¹⁸ Philoctetes, far from being persuaded, is on the contrary the one who will eventually persuade Neoptolemus — with λόγοι, of course! — to give up entirely the divine plan he has been trying to carry out, and to bring him back to Greece instead. Being no longer at the receiving end of πειθῶ (either honest or tricky), Philoctetes is now able to make effective use of πειθῶ to achieve his own ends.

Ironically, this successful attempt at persuasion is based on the false premises that Neoptolemus' use of tricky πειθῶ has established:

First, Philoctetes reprimands the young man for encouraging him to help the same men who have deprived him of his father's arms (1362-6).¹¹⁹ Although Neoptolemus knows this to be untrue (it is one of the lies he was instructed by Odysseus to tell: 60-64, cf. 362-84), he cannot use this

¹¹⁶ Cf. Podlecki (1966b: 242-43 with n.19); Easterling (1973: 29); Pucci (1994: 39).

¹¹⁷ τεθρύληται Hermann : τεθρήληται or τεθρύλληται or τεθρήνηται MSS. λόγος ΚΑΥΥ : λόγοις rell. : γόοις γρ in L^sGUYT. See Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 211).

¹¹⁸ On the repetition of λόγος-words see Podlecki (1966b: 242): "it is clearly not accidental that the λόγος-theme recurs in this climactic scene with almost embarrassing frequency". Cf. Hoppin (1981: 28). Segal's (1981: 337) view that at the end of the play Neoptolemus and Philoctetes overcome false speech and establish true communication is belied by the passages I have just cited. Until the end of the play Philoctetes remains impervious to human πειθῶ.

¹¹⁹ Bers' (1981: 501-2) textual objections do not affect the essence of my argument.

as an argument against Philoctetes' demands, as this would further expose his treacherous behaviour and thus ruin even his last chance to win over Philoctetes.¹²⁰ The only reply he can give is λέγεις μὲν εἰκότ[α] (1373), thus giving Philoctetes the opportunity to score off him on false grounds.¹²¹

Second, the main argument on which Philoctetes' case rests is that Neoptolemus has sworn (1367-8 ξυνώμοσας; cf. already 941 ὁμόσας) to bring him back home (1397-9); but this relies on false grounds too. Neoptolemus never swore such an oath — in fact, swear an oath was exactly what he did *not* do (cf. 811 οὐ μὴν σ' ἔνορκόν γ' ἀξιῶ θέσθαι). What he actually did was to pledge not to abandon Philoctetes during the attack of his disease (809-13), whereas his earlier promise to bring him to Greece (524-29; cf. 779-81), to which Philoctetes is evidently referring, was clearly part of his attempt to trick him into embarking with them to Troy. Some scholars¹²² have tried to explain away the inconsistency by psychologizing or rationalizing considerations. However, I believe that the inconsistency is meant to be perceived, not glossed over. Sophocles deliberately makes Philoctetes use, and Neoptolemus succumb to, a kind

¹²⁰ Cf. Lesky (1972: 245); Schmidt (1973: 234-5); Easterling (1978a: 33); Winnington-Ingram (1980: 296). There is no point in the much-repeated speculation (e.g. by Adams [1957: 142, but cf. n.7!], Podlecki [1966b: 236-37; but contrast 239 & n.14!], Machin [1981: 74-81]) that Neoptolemus has really been refused his father's weapons. See Bers (1981: 501-502) for discussion.

¹²¹ Cf. Winnington-Ingram (1980: 296): "The fact remains that *this* evidence for the villainy of the Atridae is spurious and Philoctetes is trying to turn his friend against his enemies on non-existent grounds." Cf. also Taplin (1987: 70). See further Hamilton (1975).

¹²² Taplin (1971: 38-39) — but contr. Taplin (1987: 71-2)! —, Machin (1981: 81-83), Winnington-Ingram (1981: 297 n.53). Recently Stokes (1988: 155-66) has interestingly argued that, although Neoptolemus never *formally* swore an oath, he nonetheless led Philoctetes to believe that he did so in essence. To my mind, this only underlines the (non-deliberate) falsity of Philoctetes' πειθῶ, and thus heightens the irony of the situation: Philoctetes' πειθῶ imposes itself on Neoptolemus because it is a corollary of his own deceitful practices. See immediately below in the text.

of *πειθῶ* which (regardless of the intention of the person who uses it) rests on blatantly false premises¹²³ — indeed they are a side-effect of his own deceitful practices, of his own tricky *πειθῶ*. For it is Neoptolemus' lies about his having been deprived of his father's arms that Philoctetes now holds against the young man's willingness to have him fight for the Greeks in Troy. And it is Neoptolemus' false promise to carry him back to Greece that Philoctetes now uses in order to achieve his own purposes. Neoptolemus' use of guile (or rather, ironically, his failure properly to carry out the deceitful plan) now backfires, with the result that the young man finds himself compelled to do exactly the opposite of what he knows to be a divinely sanctioned plan — a plan of which he gave a full account a few moments before: 1324–47. Knowledge of the divine will is again combined with deviation from it; indeed, this ultimate deviation comes as a result of Neoptolemus' erstwhile commitment to the promotion of the divine plan by means of guile.

2.3.1 Heracles' epiphany: the divine plan salvaged

The divine plan has been jeopardized because of the failure of *πειθῶ*: Neoptolemus has used both tricky and honest *πειθῶ*, but to little avail; whereas Philoctetes has successfully used a perverse kind of honest *πειθῶ* that rested on false premises established by (Neoptolemus') guile. In the former case the divine plan was not promoted at all, while in the latter it is in danger of being foiled. Heracles comes to reroute the plan by means of proper and effective *πειθῶ*, and thus to impose, at last, the divine will: his speech begins with a strong *μήπω* (1409), reinforced by a prohibitive *κατερητύσω* (1416), and continues in either the imperative (1417, 1421,

¹²³ That is why I cannot accept Segal's (1981: 335) suggestion that Philoctetes' (allegedly) natural language, unlike Odysseus' smooth rhetoric, "can touch a chord of instinctive communication lost in a world of ruthless cleverness and pitiless artifice". Buxton (1982: 124) also regards Philoctetes' persuasion as genuine.

1433, 1436, 1440) or the future indicative mood (1424, 1427, 1428, 1438). Linforth (1956: 115, 150) and D.B. Robinson (1969: 53) thought that Heracles does not, properly speaking, *persuade* Philoctetes, but as Easterling (1978a: 33-34) has pointed out, the question whether Philoctetes is 'persuaded' by Heracles or not "can easily turn into a rather pointless debate if we allow ourselves to be mesmerised by English terminology and make a rigid distinction between obedience to a command and compliance in response to argument: the Greeks after all used *peithomai* for both ideas."¹²⁴ This is fully consistent with Philoctetes' reply: οὐκ ἀπιθήσω τοῖς σοῖς μύθοις (1447).

That Heracles uses *πειθῶ* to bring Philoctetes to Troy does not mean that he speaks as an old and beloved friend, as some critics have thought.¹²⁵ He has come rather as a god who is concerned to bring an errant mortal to reason.¹²⁶ His imperatives and future indicatives show that the god does not leave room for choice: he either gives orders or

¹²⁴ See also Buxton (1982: 129), Blundell (1989: 221). C. Campbell (1972: 83) is therefore wrong in preferring 'I am persuaded' to 'I obey' as a translation of *οὐκ ἀπιθήσω* (1447), in order to make the oracle take "care of human free will."

¹²⁵ E.g. Bowra (1944: 301-303); Linforth (1956: 155); Easterling (1978a: 35); Pucci (1994: 35-36). Pratt (1949: 285-89) holds a more moderate view, according to which Heracles' epiphany presents us with a combination of kindness and authority. For Whitman (1951: 186-89) the epiphany is merely the projection of Philoctetes' inner greatness. Others think that the epiphany is simply a continuation and ratification of the newly-forged friendship between Philoctetes and Neoptolemus: see e.g. (with differences in emphasis) Kirkwood (1958: 39, 40, 58, 84, 155), (1994: 424, 432-6); Musurillo (1967: 112); Segal (1976: 81, 86); C. Campbell (1972: 82-3); Matthiesen (1981: 22); Seale (1982: 45-6); cf. Webster (1969: 66, 67 but contr. 69!); further references in Garvie (1972: 224 n. 30) who rightly rejects this view, as Pratt (1949: 276) and Linforth (1956: 151-2) also do. — Doxography on Heracles' epiphany: Hamilton (1975: 135 n.17); Easterling (1978a: 35-6).

¹²⁶ See e.g. Beye (1970: 74-75), Gellie (1972: 157), Di Benedetto (1983: 214). It goes without saying that I cannot agree with Craik (1979: 21-22, 25-26) who sees Heracles as a burlesque figure; Craik herself (1979: 26 n.30) shows the weaknesses of such a view.

predicts what is bound to happen.¹²⁷ As Blundell (1989: 223) has put it, “the gods, it seems, are more concerned with what will be than with what ought to be”. Heracles’ discourse is entirely devoid of emotion or personal feeling; it may even sound peremptory or business-like.¹²⁸ Even the reference to Philoctetes’ future glory (1422; cf. 1425, 1429) is hardly to be construed as a recompense for his toils, i.e. as an unambiguous sign of divine benevolence: as Garvie (1972: 225–26) has pointed out, 1422 is ambiguous, for ἐκ τῶν πόνων τῶνδ’ can mean not only “as a result of these toils” (in which case a *kind* of theodicy may be implied — although ἐκ is not quite διὰ = ‘because of’) but also, simply, “after these toils” (cf. for this use 271, 720), in which case, as Linforth (1956: 154 n. 32) remarks, “the sentiment expressed [...] is the familiar one of the inevitable alternation in human fortunes, from good to bad and from bad to good; in itself it is not an idea of moral or religious import.”¹²⁹ Significantly, Philoctetes never utters as much as a word of joy or relief, never does he console himself with the thought of future glory: he merely accepts his destiny (1466–68).¹³⁰ Despite the view of some critics,¹³¹ I

¹²⁷ Cf. Winnington-Ingram (1980: 300), Blundell (1989: 223). *Contra* Schmidt (1973: 246–47), followed by Pucci (1994: 41 n.49).

¹²⁸ It may, or may not, be significant that, as Podlecki (1966b: 244–45 with n. 24) has remarked, Heracles’ utterances are designated not as λόγοι but as μῦθοι (1410, 1417, 1447): this lexical feature may perhaps be seen (in this particular context) as investing Heracles’ commands with the special status of superhuman discourse, thus rendering them all the more authoritative. Cf. also Segal (1981: 334, 337–39, 348, 351–52 and *passim*); Buxton (1982: 128); Pucci (1994: 36–37); Rabel (1997: 301–3).

¹²⁹ This ambiguity of ἐκ is missed by Harrison (1989: 175) who treats it as a synonym for ἀντί and uses it to support his idea that Philoctetes’ prospective cult (intimations of which Harrison thinks he can detect in the play [*ibid.*, 173–5]) will be a *compensation* for his sufferings. For a comparable ambiguity — in relation to Heracles’ own fate — cf. 1419: the participles can be either causal or temporal (suggestion of Mr Garvie).

¹³⁰ Cf. Garvie (1972: 225–6), Pucci (1994: 43). On the absence of theodicy in the play see D.B. Robinson (1969: 54), Poe (1974: 7, 9–10 with n.25, 48–51), Reinhardt (1979: 191). Segal (1977: 158), although he labours to trace optimistic per-

cannot agree that Philoctetes leaves Lemnos in a mood of joyful acceptance. His moving farewell to the island, with its ‘humanization’ of the landscape that Segal (1981: 323-24, 353-55, 359-60) has so well described, does not indicate a sense of calm and reconciliation between human and divine;¹³² if anything, it suggests a feeling of nostalgia¹³³ for the place that, despite its harsh conditions, has preserved Philoctetes’ heroic decency — a decency that he will now have to abandon (cf. 1352-61), submitting as he does to the divine will.¹³⁴

But if Heracles does not come as an old friend bringing to his *protégé* the good news of his future rehabilitation, then for what specific reason has the dramatist chosen him in particular to enforce the will of the gods? Why Heracles and not just any god? I think the answer is not hard to find. Only three lines before Heracles’ appearance (1406) Philoctetes had mentioned his name in connection with the prospective

spectives in the ending of the play (like e.g. Bowra [1944: 305-6], Taplin [1971: 39], Gill [1980: 144]), finds himself obliged to admit that “what Philoctetes most passionately wants, justice in this life, he is denied”; cf. also Segal (1976: 71-2, 81, 87), (1981: 347-48). Pucci (1994: 37-38) seems to bring in theodicy by the back door when he maintains that Heracles’ “epic epiphany signals the switch from tragedy to epic, from a bitter view of the business of life to its trusting acceptance [...]”. Even Matthiesen, who argues for Philoctetes’ ‘*Resozialisierung*’ at the end of the play (but see Kirkwood’s criticism [1994: 425 with n. 2]) admits that, even after the supposedly beneficiary intervention of the gods, “am Schluß viele Fragen offen bleiben”.

¹³¹ E.g. Easterling (1978a: 34), Buxton (1982: 129), Kirkwood (1994: 428).

¹³² As e.g. Vidal-Naquet (1972: 179-80), Rose (1976: 103), Segal (*l.c.*) and (1977: 154-6) have argued.

¹³³ Cf. Knox (1964: 141), (1983: 21); Torrance (1965: 318). Linforth (1956: 156) points out that in Philoctetes’ last words “there is no trace of the eagerness to leave the island which he had shown when he pleaded with Neoptolemos to take him home, no trace of the joy he had felt when Neoptolemos consented.”

¹³⁴ Cf. Linforth (1956: 154). Greengard (1987: 21) remarks that the tragic effect of the shattering of Philoctetes’ heroic nature is brought about, paradoxically, by the apparently ‘comic’ (=‘happy’) ending (although she then [e.g. 62-3, 105 etc.] proceeds to qualify her argument, to the effect that the epiphany, with its fusion of the tragic and the comic genres, does provide full resolution).

use of his bow to resist even further the divine plan — i.e. to fight off the Greeks should they attempt to invade Neoptolemus' land by way of reprisal for his apostasy (1404ff.; note the emphatic position of the phrase βέλεσι τοῖς Ἡρακλέους¹³⁵ [1406] in a sequence of *antilabai*). Heracles, jealously defending his prerogatives as any Greek deity would do, is concerned to rectify this impending misuse of *his* bow — a misuse which would, moreover, seal definitely the failure of the divine plan:¹³⁶ in other words, Heracles' intervention is motivated both by personal and by broader (communal, cosmic) considerations. Heracles' ownership of the bow has been referred to in numerous passages (e.g. 801-3, 942-3, 1131-3), while Heracles himself twice indicates how *his* bow is to be used: it will be the instrument of Paris' death (1426-27; NB 1427 τόξοισι τοῖς ἐμοῖσι)¹³⁷ and it will capture Troy for the second time (1439-40; NB, again, τοῖς ἐμοῖς ... τόξοις). Instead of explicitly disapproving of Odysseus' practices (which is what one should expect if Odysseus had really been ungodly), Heracles — in what is undoubtedly a *tour de force* of Sophoclean irony — echoes Odysseus' discourse in announcing to Philoctetes that he must comply with the divine will:¹³⁸ cf. e.g. 1409

¹³⁵ Ἡρακλέους Brunck (*prob.* Dawe [1996]): — εἰοῖς codd.: —έοῖς Wackernagel (*prob.* Lloyd-Jones & Wilson [1990a]).

¹³⁶ The point is brilliantly made by Harsh (1960: 412, cf. 414); cf. Segal (1976: 76-7, 79). *Contra* Poe (1974: 22), Rose (1976: 79 n.69) and most recently R.J. Newman, *CJ* 86 (1991) 307 with n. 8, who argues that Heracles actually ratifies Philoctetes' willingness to defend his newly-formed heroic friendship with Neoptolemus; cf. Rabel (1997: 303). On the bow's role see also Knox (1964: 139-40); Musurillo (1967: 121-22); Beye (1970: 67); Gellie (1972: 156); Segal (1977: 152-53), (1981: 298-99, 320-22); Di Benedetto (1983: 193).

¹³⁷ Is the indication of Paris as target of the bow an implicit disapproval of Philoctetes' attempt to shoot Odysseus (1299ff.)?

¹³⁸ See Blundell (1989: 224 n. 136). Cf. Beye (1970: 74): "Heracles stops every forward thrust of the story, save the will of Odysseus". Kirkwood (1965: 66) has also rightly pointed out the essential similarity between Odysseus and Heracles as carriers-out of the divine will. *Contra* Schmidt (1973: 246), who thinks that, because Odysseus himself fails to achieve his purpose, he cannot have been an instrument of the divine will. Knox (1964: 221) incomprehensibly argues that

μήπω γε ~ 1293 ἐγὼ δ' ἀπαυδῶ γε (both in a context of preventing the foiling of the divine plan); 1415 τὰ Διὸς τε φράσων βουλεύματα ~ 990 Ζεὺς, ᾧ δέδοκται ταῦθ'; 1425 ἀρετῇ τε πρῶτος ἐκκριθεὶς στρατεύματος ~ 997 ὁμοίους τοῖς ἀριστεύουσιν;¹³⁹ 1428 πέρσεις τε Τροίαν & 1440-41 ὅταν ἰπορθῆτε γαῖαν ~ 998 Τροίαν σ' ἐλεῖν δεῖ καὶ κατασκάψαι βία; 1434-35 οὔτε γὰρ σὺ τοῦδ' ἄτερ σθένεις ἰ ἐλεῖν τὸ Τροίας πεδίου οὔθ' οὔτος σέθεν ~ 115 οὔτ' ἂν σὺ κείνων χωρὶς οὔτ' ἐκεῖνα σοῦ.¹⁴⁰ It is not, then, Odysseus who must be chastised — after all he is the only one who fully and unswervingly adhered to the requirements of the prophecy. It is rather Philoctetes and Neoptolemus.¹⁴¹ This is, I suggest, the point of the final exhortation to εὐσέβεια (1440-44):¹⁴² both Philoctetes and Neoptolemus have failed to be εὐσεβεῖς. Neoptolemus' progressive acquaintance with Philoctetes' misery, along with the latter's complaints against divine injustice (e.g. 446-52, 1020), have given rise to preoccupations with fairness and to feelings of compassion, which have led to a gradual deviation from the divine plan. Philoctetes, even when briefed on the details of this plan (1324-47), remained intransigently preoccupied with retributive justice (e.g. 1035-44, 1113-6, 1369) and heroic pride (e.g. 995-6, 1352-61), and chose to ignore the will of the gods (cf. esp. his provocative defiance of Zeus himself at 1197-9, a passage with distinctly 'Promethean' echoes: cf. ?A.

Odysseus is ignominiously ignored by Heracles, who reserves his blessing (!) for Neoptolemus and Philoctetes.

¹³⁹ ἀριστεύουσιν Nauck : —σι G : ἀριστεύσασι R : ἀρίστοισι rell.

¹⁴⁰ Line 115 must be read in the light of the ambiguity (permeating the prologue) as to whether Philoctetes or only the bow is needed. See above, p. 79. For further Odyssean echoes in Heracles' speech see Schucard (1973/74: 135 with n. 17).

¹⁴¹ D.B. Robinson (1969: 54) fails to see this.

¹⁴² Lines 1443-44 are undoubtedly genuine; see Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 212). I cannot see how Kieffer (1942: 49) concludes that the exhortation to εὐσέβεια is actually addressed to Odysseus.

PV 992-6).¹⁴³ I see no other point in this strong admonition to εὐσέβεια — apart, perhaps, from that proposed by Winnington-Ingram (1980: 302-303), according to whom at this point the ironist Sophocles is merely opening “a window upon a tragic future”.¹⁴⁴ True, in its immediate context, the exhortation to εὐσέβεια evidently refers to what should be the heroes’ conduct while sacking Troy (cf. 1440-41), and may perfectly well allude to Neoptolemus’ atrocities against Priam, Polyxena and Astyanax (cf. e.g. Webster [ad 1441]).¹⁴⁵ Still, an allusion to this tragic future would apply only to Neoptolemus, not (as far as I can see) to Philoctetes. It seems completely improbable that Heracles, who has abandoned his heavenly abode for Philoctetes’ sake (1413-14), should spend the final lines of his speech (and the last iambic lines of the play)¹⁴⁶ sermonizing about Neoptolemus’ future, which is definitely *not* a central issue of the play. The undeniable fact that the admonition to εὐσέβεια is closely connected with the sack of Troy is perfectly explicable along the lines of my interpretation: it is exactly on the battlefield that these two ferocious lions (see n. 147) are most likely to reiterate such deeds of ἀσέβεια as their flouting of the divine will in this play.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ For further possible associations between Philoctetes and Prometheus see Greengard (1987: 84 n. 47) and especially Stokes (1988: 166-73). On Philoctetes’ lack of εὐσέβεια see e.g. Bowra (1944: 304), Diller (1950: 21), Kirkwood (1958: 265). Cf. Segal (1977: 137, 157), who sees however a basically optimistic tone in Heracles’ final words about piety. Kitto (1961: 308) preposterously thinks that the admonition to εὐσέβεια is irrelevant, while Pucci (1994: 36, 38-39) offers a completely different interpretation thereof.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Rose (1976: 102-3); Taplin (1983: 166).

¹⁴⁵ For the relevant ancient sources see Gantz (1993: 650, 658). On Neoptolemus’ sinister persona in the mythic tradition, and in Sophocles’ lost plays, see Fuqua (1976: 34-49).

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Segal (1977: 134).

¹⁴⁷ Pace e.g. Bowra (1944: 304-305), Steidle (1968: 187), Gill (1980: 139) and Machin (1981: 414), the lion-simile is not unequivocally flattering. Wolff (1979), who offers a detailed examination of lion-similes in Homer and tragedy, concludes that in the present passage the associations of lions with savagery and impiety are unmistakable — especially in view of A. Cho. 937 (cf. Garvie

It is obvious, then, that Heracles' epiphany forms an integral part of the play.¹⁴⁸ To deny this is to assume an artistic failure on Sophocles' part (a failure of the kind castigated by Aristotle in *Po.* 1454a37-1454b2¹⁴⁹); such an assumption however should be resorted to only when all other arguments in defence of the artistic unity of the play have failed. Such an artistic failure is assumed by those critics who suggest that Sophocles used the *deus* (according to some of them, under the influence of Euripides) in order to reconcile the ending of the play with the mythological data; as Tycho von Wilamowitz (1917: 311) amusingly remarked, Heracles comes "um im Namen des Zeus, wir könnten ebensogut sagen im Namen Homers, Philoktet die Fahrt nach Troja zu befehlen".¹⁵⁰ Some of the critics that fall into this category (see n. 150) feel that the first ('false') ending — departure to Greece — is necessary, because we *must* see Philoctetes' heroic obduracy duly celebrated. In other words, those critics want to have it both ways (even at the price of artistic disunity): on the one hand their moral and / or emotional preoccupations are satisfied because Philoctetes does not give in to mortal pressurizing, while on the other hand they may rest assured that Troy

[1986: *ad* 935-8]) and *E. Or.* 1401-2, 1554-5 (cf. Willink [1986: *ad* 1400-1]). Fuqua (1976: 93) inconsistently sees the lions as symbols of degrading ferocity in the *Orestes* passages, and as images of heroic friendship in the *Philoctetes* passage.

¹⁴⁸ For a most forceful support of this view see esp. Reinhardt (1979: 190-91), Segal (1977: 135 and *passim*). Cf. also the theatrical arguments of Seale (1982: 46).

¹⁴⁹ φανερόν οὖν ὅτι καὶ τὰς λύσεις τῶν μύθων ἐξ αὐτοῦ δεῖ τοῦ μύθου συμβαίνειν, καὶ μὴ ὡσπερ ἐν τῇ Μηδείᾳ ἀπὸ μηχανῆς. Indeed, D.W. Lucas (*Aristotle. Poetics* [Oxford 1968] *ad loc.*) thought that the *Philoctetes* falls into this category. — For other pieces of ancient criticism against the inconsequential use of the *deus* see Spira (1960: 149-52).

¹⁵⁰ Other critics sharing this view are, e.g., Adams (1957: 159); Linforth (1956: 151-52); D.B. Robinson (1969: 51-56); Garvie (1971: 224-25); Gellie (1972: 156-58); Taplin (1983: 164-6). Pucci (1994: 37-38, 42-44) is a special case: his view of the epiphany as something external is based on the substantial differences of language and context discerning the epic genre (whose traces he identifies in the epiphany) from the tragic genre.

was after all taken. Others felt that their religious or moral sensibilities were offended by the god's peremptoriness: Kitto (1956: 103-105, 134, 136-37), (1961: 306-308), for instance, striving to discover a theodicy in the play, demurred at the fact that Heracles does not restore moral order; so, he issued the verdict that the epiphany is not a culmination of any kind, it is only a conventional "cutting of the knot". My interpretation has the advantage of preserving the unity of the play without having to resort to such desperate measures as hypothesizing, contrary to the evidence of the text (cf. above, p. 107ff. with n. 125), that the reason why Heracles' epiphany is an integral part of the play is because it supposedly ratifies and rewards the newly-forged heroic friendship between Neoptolemus and Philoctetes. I should rather insist that the epiphany is the natural ending to the play because it duly imposes the will of the gods that has been increasingly resisted and all but frustrated. This was seen most clearly by Spira (1960: 29) who interpreted Heracles' appearance as part and parcel of the play's dramatic structure: "Von der dramatischen Struktur her gesehen bedeutet also der D.[eus] e.[x] m.[achina] die Einführung eines *neuen Motivs*, nachdem die in der *Exposition* angelegten *Motive erschöpft* sind und das Ziel der Handlung *nicht* hatten *erreichen können*" (his emphasis).¹⁵¹

2.4.1 Summary and conclusions

A prerequisite of my interpretation has been that Odysseus, far from misunderstanding or distorting the prophecy to match it to his own interests, is the person who knows it best and adheres to it most. Of

¹⁵¹ My main disagreement with Spira is his insistence (1960: 25, 27) that Heracles' epiphany is essentially beneficent, because it stops Philoctetes' "Starrsinn" and reveals to him the will of Zeus which Philoctetes has (not refused but) failed to see, and which involves healing and glory. I have argued on p. 111 that Philoctetes knowingly defies the will of Zeus; and on pp. 107-109 that there is no reason to perceive Heracles' intervention as necessarily beneficent.

course, this does not mean that we have to see Odysseus as a good character; he is beyond doubt a villain who will not hesitate to achieve his purpose by hook or by crook. And although he fights for a common cause (cf. 1143–45),¹⁵² he is not free from egotism and ambition (cf. e.g. 1052). But this is precisely one of the main points of this play: the gods are above and beyond human morality; if Odysseus is the best person to carry out their plan, they will choose Odysseus.¹⁵³ One of the most fascinating aspects of this play is that the divine will is not revealed through an irreproachable human agent (e.g. an oracle, as it happens in the *Electra*) but through a person whose trustworthiness is, to say the least, doubtful: we first hear about the prophecy from the Emporos, Odysseus' agent, who uses an ambiguous discourse (130 ποικίλως).¹⁵⁴ And although, as we saw, Neoptolemus *does* take seriously the prophecy and the divine plan revealed by it, Odysseus' despicable character and practices are hardly creditable to the divine plan he earnestly tries to carry out. As

¹⁵² These lines seem to me to refer to Odysseus: see e.g. Jebb (*ad* 1140, 1143ff.), Webster (*ad* 1140ff, 1143), Rose (1976: 91). However Kamerbeek (p. 157) and Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 207) take them to allude to Neoptolemus. Dain & Mazon evasively translate: "L' homme dont tu parles".

¹⁵³ Many scholars have tried to demonstrate 'positive' aspects of Odysseus' persona; see e.g. Beye (1970: 68–69), a very sober and helpful analysis; Gellie (1972: 132–33); Poe (1974: 23); Winnington-Ingram (1980: 282); Kiso (1984: 105–106); Strohm (1986: 112–14). I feel however that such attempts may stem from an implicit pietistic assumption that the agent of the gods *must* be (even partly) justified on moral grounds. On Odysseus' amoral pragmatism in the *Philoctetes* see esp. Blundell's (1987) thorough analysis, as against M. Nussbaum's attempt at moral justification (*Phil. & Lit.* 1 [1976–7] 25–53). On Odysseus' image as an (often malicious) trickster in the archaic and classical eras see W.B. Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme* (Oxford 1954), 90–117; in Sophocles' lost plays: Kiso (1984: 87–92).

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Buxton (1982: 130 with n. 40); Pucci (1994: 42 n.52); Gellie (1972: 144–45); Greengard (1987: 5–6, 25–6); Roberts (1989: 171). In general, see Segal (1977: 138): "in this play [...] the divine will appears embedded in falsehoods, ambiguous statements, oracles which are partly suppressed or of uncertain reliability". Pucci's (1994: 33 n.34) relevant remarks put the matter in a broader perspective.

Bowra (1944: 262) remarked, “those who resist [the divine will] are more attractive and more noble than those who claim that they work for it”, with the result, I believe, that the divine plan *itself* is bound to appear (quite justifiably) less attractive and less noble.¹⁵⁵ We have seen that Neoptolemus views the designs of the gods in an increasingly unfavourable light as he becomes more and more acquainted with Philoctetes’ plight and his protests against divine injustice. It is, after all, to Philoctetes’ *moral* considerations concerning this plan that Neoptolemus gives in, thus forsaking the plan (1352ff.). An audience is very likely to be carried away into seeing Odysseus from first to last as a hypocritical villain who blasphemously tries to forward his base plans in the name of the gods; still, such an audience would be no doubt shocked at the end of the play, when Heracles has nothing to blame Odysseus for (indeed, he often echoes Odysseus’ discourse!), whereas he is concerned to correct the course of action Philoctetes and Neoptolemus have been following up to that point. This does not mean that Sophoclean gods are immoral; they are rather “supramoral”,¹⁵⁶ i.e. their will does not necessarily comply with human notions of justice or morality, and their actions, therefore, are not to be judged by human measures. Actually, they are not to be judged at all.

However, this is exactly what Philoctetes does — and leads Neoptolemus gradually to do. Philoctetes directly doubts the justice of the gods (e.g. 446-452) and attributes his misfortunes to their hatred against him (254, 1020 etc). Neoptolemus, albeit never explicitly questioning the gods, tries to reconcile the terms of the prophecy with his own feelings and morals, in the belief (at least until 1402) that divine will and human morality and compassion can perfectly coincide. His conduct betrays an increasing concern with ethics; this concern leads him, first, to an attempt to adjust the divine plan to his own moral preoccupations by using honest instead of tricky *πειθώ* (915ff.; 1287-92 & 1314-47) —

¹⁵⁵ Bowra’s (1944: 263) pietistic prejudice prevented him from seeing this: “We can hardly believe that Sophocles intended our moral feelings to run counter to what is desired by the gods”.

although he is aware that, well may this be the fairest way, it is bound to be ineffective, and that by doing so he may endanger the whole plan. At the end, however, he goes so far as to frustrate completely the divine scheme by taking Philoctetes together with himself home, evidently persuaded by him that going to Troy will be humiliating for the poor outcast (cf. 1352-61); thus, pity and ethics work once more against divine will. As we have seen, Neoptolemus' progressive change of action is effected through successive stages of gradually increasing awareness of Philoctetes' misery; this awareness, along with his growing pity, are the main inner workings which will lead the young man to his final action of utter irreverence and, at the same time, of utmost heroism. He has indeed grown to be a man through his effort to understand and to judge the ends and means imposed by the gods; now he has also to learn to respect their will without scrutinizing it, just like his former master, Odysseus. Finite human understanding is too restricted to know — let alone judge — divine will; οὐ γὰρ ἄν τὰ θεῖα κρυπτόντων θεῶν ἴ μάθοις ἄν, οὐδ' εἰ πάντ' ἐπεξέλθοις σκοπῶν (S.fr. 919 Radt).¹⁵⁷ As E.R. Dodds has demonstrated long ago, *à propos* of the *Oedipus Rex*, a) Sophocles “did not believe (or did not always believe) that the gods are in any human sense ‘just’” and b) “he did believe that the gods exist and that man should revere them”.¹⁵⁸ As the same scholar has put it (*op. cit.* 47), “for him [i.e. Sophocles], as for Heraclitus, there is an objective world-order which man must respect, but which he cannot hope fully to understand”.¹⁵⁹ A similar point has also been made by Diller (1950: 24):

¹⁵⁶ Whitman's (1951: 245) terminology.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Lesky (1972: 269).

¹⁵⁸ Both quotations from Dodds (1966: 46; cf. 47). Cf. Segal's (1981: 355-56) similar, though more moderate, view: “there is something intransigent about the demands of the gods, something not entirely congruent with human justice” (quotation from p. 355).

¹⁵⁹ Bowra (1944: 295-96) maintains that men should not criticize the gods but acquiesce in their will; if this were not hollow pietism, but implied that gods are unknowable (and therefore cannot be criticized), I would endorse it. However, Bowra insists that the gods are just and benevolent (Bowra [*ibid.*: 263,

“[...] Sophokles nichts daran liegt, das Geschehen in seinen Tragödien mit menschlichen Vorstellungen von Gerechtigkeit oder Moral, sei es positiv oder negativ, zu konfrontieren. Wohl aber liegt ihm daran, die eindeutige Klarheit der göttlichen Aussage gegenüber allem menschlichen Fehlwissen darzutun.”

Neoptolemus' gradual deviation from the divine will (as expressed in the prophecy) parallels the progressive revelation of the prophecy: at 191-200 the young man infers — apparently without having been informed by anyone, and certainly not by Odysseus (cf. εἶπερ καὶ γὰρ τι φρονῶ 192) — that his mission forms part of a divine plan. Significantly, as well as paradoxically, his utter ignorance of the divine will is combined with his complete devotion to it; whereas, the more familiar he becomes with the details of the prophecy the more he flouts it. Thus, when the Emporos introduces specific information about the prophecy, Neoptolemus ('overinterpreting' the information: 839-42; cf. above, p. 98) gradually begins to oppose what he knows to be the designs of the gods. His first step is to reveal the plan to Philoctetes (915ff.). A little later, after his knowledge of Odysseus' divine agency has been confirmed (989-90), he takes a second step away from the prophecy by giving the bow back to its owner (1222 ff.). Finally, when at 1314ff. he appears capable (no matter how) of giving a detailed account of the prophecy, he gives the *coup de grâce* to the divine plan: Philoctetes, far from being persuaded (despite the young man's frankness) to come to Troy, will instead persuade Neoptolemus to carry him back to Greece.

It is for the sake of the pattern we identified above (i.e. the more fully Neoptolemus knows the prophecy, the more he deviates from it)

290, 294, 296 etc.), whereas to my view Sophoclean gods do not conform with human ethics. I agree with Kirkwood's remarks (1958: 265-66) that “man must obey and trust [i.e. the gods] but cannot hope to comprehend”, notwithstanding his view that Sophoclean gods do care for justice, although this is not always obvious to men (*op. cit.* 273, 279, 287). For the gulf between human *doxa* and divine *aletheia* see again Kirkwood (1958: 286-87). Cf. also Reinhardt (1979: 191), Segal (1981: 356-57).

that Sophocles allows himself such ‘illogicalities’ as that of 191-200:¹⁶⁰ Neoptolemus’ speculations about the plans of the gods *must* be unjustified, they *must* constitute a *coup de théâtre*; in other words, they *must not* stem from what he has heard from Odysseus in the prologue, so that the arising inconsistency highlights all the more emphatically that Neoptolemus, albeit in a state of sheer ignorance, puts complete faith in what he thinks is some inscrutable divine plan. On the other hand, his progressive knowledge of the terms of the prophecy — which parallels his progressive acquaintance with Philoctetes’ plight (depicted by the dramatist in full detail) and with the divine injustice that seems to have caused it — will lead him finally to flout (1402ff.) this same divine plan that he (in his ignorance) respected so much at 191-200.¹⁶¹ The same explanation can be applied to the similarly ‘illogical’ lines 1324ff., where Neoptolemus’ inexplicable knowledge of the full version of the prophecy is intended to be contrasted with his complete defiance thereof in 1402ff.¹⁶² The more glaring the inexplicability of Neoptolemus’ insight into the plans of the gods, the more blatant his defiance of these plans.

Sophocles deliberately presents Philoctetes and Neoptolemus, two undeniably attractive characters, as resisting the divine will, but eventually complying with it. The audience, sympathizing with the heroes’ moral struggle, identify with them,¹⁶³ until they realize, at the end, that they have their own share in the tragedy of Philoctetes: while

¹⁶⁰ The most noteworthy (albeit, as I argue in the text, quite needless) attempts to explain away these illogicalities are those by Kitto (1956: 87ff.), Knox (1964: 187 n.21) and, more recently, by Machin (1981: 61-103).

¹⁶¹ Adams (1957: 140) and Gellie (1972: 135-36) seem to be the only critics who hint (but only hint) at the important point that Neoptolemus’ firm belief in a divine plan is meant to be contrasted with the eventual frustration thereof.

¹⁶² The importance of Neoptolemus’ gradual comprehension of the prophecy is perceived by Gill (1980: 141-42) as well, but interpreted in a quite different way. Cf. also Kieffer (1942: 47-48), Segal (1977: 140 n.19).

¹⁶³ Cf. the quotation from Bowra on p. 116. Kitto (1956: 121-22, 123, 125-26, 130); (1961: 304-307) rightly remarks — pace Strohm (1986: 120) — that Sophocles presents Philoctetes as reasonably resisting every attempt at persuasion, so that the audience are not irritated against him; cf. Linforth (1956: 118).

watching the play, they have been involved in a fruitless struggle to understand the divine will and to explain it by human moral measures. In the end however they realize that divinity is beyond comprehension and above human standards of morality; it does not necessarily conform to our (intellectual, moral etc.) preconceptions, and it cannot be accommodated within the categories created by the human mind. The most that can be known about the gods is that, regardless of our comprehension and / or compliance, they eventually impose their will. Heracles' epiphany confirms this inexorable teleology.

OIKOS AND THE WILD, CIVILIZATION AND SAVAGERY IN THE *TRACHINIAE*

*Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm:
for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave:
the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.
Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.*

The Song of Solomon, 8. 6–7

*Sinks whoever raises the great stones;
I 've raised these stones as long as I was able
I 've loved these stones as long as I was able
these stones, my fate.
Wounded by my own soil
tortured by my own shirt
condemned by my own gods,
these stones.*

*George Seferis, *Gymnopaïdia, II: Mycenae**

(trans. by Edmund Keeley & Philip Sherrard)

3.0.1 Introduction

Heracles in Greek myth is the embodiment of a set of symmetrically arranged contradictions that define his nature. Kirk (1977: 286) has drawn an instructive diagram to illustrate them:

humane : bestial

serious : burlesque

sane : mad

salutary : destructive

free : slave

human : divine

Loraux (1995: 116-39) pointed out that yet another contradiction, namely “man : woman” (or, as she puts it, “virile : feminine”), may be of equal importance. In this chapter I intend to explore some of these pairs of contradictions, predominantly the polarity “Culture : Nature” (or “Civilization : Savagery”, or even, to put it in more concrete terms, “humane : bestial”),¹ because I believe that they constitute an important thematic axis of the *Trachiniae* and are, therefore, central to our understanding of it. In this respect, I have found Segal’s method of analysis of Sophoclean tragedy highly applicable to this play, precisely because it acknowledges the capital importance of the basic dichotomy “Civilization : Savagery”.² This general polarity, already fully formulated in the mythical background, may reveal an underlying pattern which would account for the contradictions between the humane and the bestial aspects and actions of Heracles both in myth and in the *Trachiniae*. Important dichotomies like “masculine : feminine” or “salutary : destructive” will, of course, be brought into consideration, in order to supplement and illustrate the basic antinomy “Civilization : Savagery”.

¹ On the importance of this contrast in Heracles see Kirk (1974: 206-209) and (1977: 291); cf. Fuqua (1980: 11 n.29). Burkert (1979: 97), in a masterly exploration of shaman parallels to the Heracles myth, has shown that this contrast may be intrinsic to Heracles’ nature: “Heracles ‘civilizes’ the earth by destruction.” Silk (1985: 6-7, 11), however, is only partly in agreement: he recognizes Heracles’ ‘interstitial’ nature, but views him as being betwixt and between not Nature and Culture, but divine and human status. For Heracles as the intersection of human and divine attributes — an embodiment of contradictions — see also Friis Johansen (1986: 57-61).

² See in particular Segal (1975a) and (1981). His important article “Sophocles’ *Trachiniae*: Myth, Poetry, and Heroic Values”, *YCS* 25 (1977) 99-158 has been reproduced in Segal (1995), to which the citations refer.

3.1.1 Heracles and the wild; Heracles and the οἶκος

At the outset of the play we are presented with the traditional image of the heroic Heracles, fighter of monsters and preserver of civilized order. We first hear of him in an account of his battle-like fight (20) with the fiendish Achelous: the agonistic vocabulary³ of this and other passages (e.g. 19 κλεινός,⁴ 20,⁵ 26,⁶ 36 etc.) is a reminder of Heracles' wondrous exploits and an affirmation of his heroic image, so well established in Panhellenic legend.⁷ Interestingly, the mention of the fight against Achelous reveals Heracles' civilizing function both in macrocosmic and in microcosmic terms: the hero is not only the performer of deeds of wider significance (such as the defeat of a monster), but also a creator of a household, i.e. of what is the elementary constituent of society and the basic form of civilized life. The fight against the river is essentially an act of restoration of domestic order: thanks to Heracles, Deianeira has been spared a horrible perversion of a wedding (cf. 9, 15, 17)⁸ and has instead been ensured a proper and distinguished marriage (27) to the best of men (cf. 176-77).

Very soon, however, the bright image of the glorious Heracles is

³ On this vocabulary see Easterling (*ad* 80).

⁴ On κλεινός in association with Heracles see Davies (*ad* 19).

⁵ Military—agonistic connotations are to be seen not only in ἀγῶνα μάχης (on which see Davies [*ad* 20]), but also in συμπεσών, which Kamerbeek (*ad* 20) renders as '*concurrrens pugnando*' and appositely compares with *Aj.* 467.

⁶ On ἀγώνιος as an epithet applied to gods who preside over trials of strength see commentators.

⁷ On the 'halo of epic light' in which Heracles makes his first appearance see Schiassi as cited by Easterling (*ad* 19). On Heracles' aspect as "eroe acculturante" see Gentili (1977) and cf. Galinsky (1972: 16, 29-35); *contra* Kirk (1974: 204).

⁸ On Achelous as a monstrous parody of a suitor see Sorum (1978: 61); *contra* Heiden (1989: 26-7); wrongly Wender (1974: 5).

clouded by disturbing hints. Was the outcome of the fight between him and Achelous, i.e. Heracles' winning of Deianeira's hand, really *καλῶς* (27)? As Stinton (1990: 413) has remarked, "it is Deianeira's particular fate that she is cheated of the conjugal bliss which a bride is led at her wedding to expect."⁹ Deianeira's nights, far from being devoted to the mutual sexual gratification of the married couple, as they should be, are on the contrary beset by an endless succession of *πόννοι* (30; cf. 149-50);¹⁰ her bridal bed is 'husbandless' (109-10) and witnesses not her marital happiness but her incessant agony.¹¹ The couple may have had numerous children (31, 54), but, as appears from lines 31-33, their importance in the life of the household is minimal; ironically, the word *ὠδίνες*, instead of referring to the birth-pangs which are normally accompanied by joy for the new life that comes to the household, is used of Deianeira's anxiety on her husband's account (41-42).¹² Her generalizations about the troubles of married life at 144-52 as opposed to the insouciance of youth may be seen as simply reflecting her own individual experience.¹³ What is more, with Heracles' having to leave

⁹ For documentation about the Greek ideal of a happy marriage see again Stinton (1990:413 n.38).

¹⁰ On Deianeira's *πόννοι* cf. Hoey's (1972:142,146) remarks.

¹¹ Cf. Easterling (1968: 59) who also points out that the use of *τρέφω* at 28 underlines, as a foil, that a marriage's normal function should be the nurturing of children, not of fears; see also Wender (1974: 5) and, most exhaustively, Segal (1975a: 42-43), (1975b: 613-17), (1981: 75) for the sinister tones of fertility imagery in general.

¹² The use of *ὠδίνες* here is of course metaphorical: see Easterling (*ad* 42). I do not believe, however, that the choice of this particular word to describe Deianeira's mental anguish is accidental; cf. Segal's (1975b: 616) and Rehm's (1994: 73) interesting remarks. On A. Cho. 211 see Lebeck as cited by Garvie (1986: *ad* 211).

¹³ Cf. Adams (1957: 115), Easterling (1968: 60). As Stinton (1990: 411) remarks, considerations about the carefree life lost by marriage are a *topos* of the wedding-song; this, however, does not alter the highly individual character of Deianeira's remarks. Seaford (1986: 55) sees Deianeira's fears as an abnormal extension of her ritualized premarital anxiety. On the theme of Deianeira's fear

home almost as soon as he comes there (34), the normal distinction between domestic and outdoors space has collapsed: for the Greek mind the οἶκος is a *locus* of central importance, which serves as the *par excellence* criterion for the geographical categorization of the world; it is “the node and starting point of the orientation and arrangement of human space”¹⁴ (cf. such distinctions as οἶκοι : θύραζε¹⁵); yet, in Heracles’ case the household has abnormally become an outdoors-like place, an ἄρουρα ἔκτοπος (32).¹⁶ Significantly, Deianeira uses, in order to describe her and her children’s lives as members of Heracles’ household, a word signifying the exact negation of the οἶκος-concept, namely ἀνάστατοι (39), a word used later of the sacked Oechalia (240)!¹⁷ We already suspect that Heracles’ relation to that nucleus of civilized social life, the household, is, to say the least, ambiguous. His function as creator of a household (warding off from Deianeira a monstrous ‘marriage’ and offering her a legitimate and distinguished marriage) is alarmingly counteracted by his marginalization of this household, whereby he has been reduced to a stranger to his own house (65 ἐξενωμένου),¹⁸ a man whose abode is unknown to his own kin (68).

In the parodos this essential ambiguity (the gulf between husband and wife, on the one hand, as opposed to the potential reunion of the couple along with the re-establishment of their household on the other) is still a dominant theme. Firstly, the agonizing πόθι μοι πόθι γὰρ ναίει

in general cf. Winnington-Ingram (1980:75-81 *passim*).

¹⁴ Vernant (1983:128).

¹⁵ Cf. e.g. *Phil.* 158 ἔναυλον ἢ θυραῖον; also *Tr.* 531-33 κατ’ οἶκον ... θυραῖος, 1021 οὔτ’ ἔνδοθεν οὔτε θύραθεν. On the confusion of inner and outer space in the *Trachiniae* cf. Segal (1981:67-68,83-84).

¹⁶ Cf. Heiden (1989:29).

¹⁷ Cf. Segal (1981:80), (1995:29).

¹⁸ Explained as ‘foreigner’ or ‘exile’ by Jebb (*ad* 65f.) and Davies (*ad* 65) respectively. For Heracles’ ambiguous relation to his οἶκος cf. Sorum (1978:62).

πoτ' (98-99)¹⁹ reprises the theme of Heracles' extreme alienation from the domestic environment where he normally belongs — a theme already announced at 68. Of his whereabouts there is utter ignorance: he may be at the extreme points of earth, "either west or east" (cf. 100-101).²⁰ This rudimentary disjunction is the closest the Chorus can get to an attempt to locate Heracles' 'abode' (99): as a matter of fact, Heracles has no abode at all; he is thought of as being engaged in an incessant wandering all over the four ends of the earth, east and west (100-101), south and north (113). The simile of the troubled Cretan sea (116-19) with its emphasis on the perpetual succession of waves (112-15) points to a negation, an exact antithesis, of the calm fixity that normally characterizes the οἶκος; at any moment Heracles is in danger of becoming one of the 'dwellers' of the 'house' of Hades (119-21),²¹ i.e. of a place that is not a house at all.²²

¹⁹ γᾶς is Schneidewin's emendation (printed by Dawe [1996]) for the MSS μοι παῖς. Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990a) prefer a different alternative, but see Davies (*ad* 97-8). I feel that γᾶς has the advantage of fitting better the prominent theme of Heracles' geographical alienation: if we accept it, then we gain a subtle *Fernverbindung* with 236, where the persisting question ποῦ γῆς is at last answered.

²⁰ This is Lloyd-Jones' (1954:91-2) ingenious interpretation of 100-101 (reading Ποντίας for π-), based on the ancient scholiast *ad* 101 (p. 285 Papageorgius): καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἑῶα καὶ δυτικά; cf. also Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 152-53) and see Davies (*ad* 100) for doxography and criticism of other, less plausible, views. Davies has further elaborated on this view, with original argumentation, in *Prometheus* 18 (1992) 217-26. Hoey (1972: 144-46), although he considers this interpretation too restrictive, shows how it can fit into the solar imagery of the parodos — an imagery that underscores the extreme geographical breadth of Heracles' wanderings.

²¹ This idea is more clearly brought out with Triclinius' ἐρύκοι (121), approved by Davies (*ad* 119ff). Hooker's (1977: 72) view that πολύπονον ... πέλαγος does not mean 'sea of troubles', but refers to Heracles' heroic exploits (πόννοι) is perverse: see McDevitt (1983a: 9 n.12).

²² Despite its being called a δόμος here and in other passages, and despite the idiomatically Sophoclean use of οἰκήτωρ for the 'dwellers' of Hades, the

Whereas it is one's οἶκος (homeland or household) that is normally considered one's τροφεύς (cf. e.g. A. Sept. 16-9, 477; Pl. R. 414e, Menex. 237b-c; Isocr. 6. 108), in Heracles' case, ironically, it is that restless sea of troubles, so unlike his οἶκος, that 'nurtures', τρέφει, him (116-19),²³ as if it were his homeland.

However, in the second antistrophe and in the epode of the parodos it is implied that Heracles' household may not miss him for very long. The regular succession of joy and sorrow in the cosmos as well as in human affairs (129-35) suggests that there is a predictable order in this world of ours, and that, since Heracles has had his share of toils, he is now entitled to some peace and happiness. The *darkness* of Deianeira's husbandless nights (29-30) should now give way to the *light* of joy and salvation; the Chorus' appeal to the Sun, with its pervading light-imagery (95 φλογιζόμενον, 99 λαμπρᾶ στεροπᾶ φλεγέθων),²⁴ already foreshadows the splendid news of Heracles' homecoming that is soon to be heard (203-204). It seems that, in the parodos, the otherwise important idea of regular alternation (cf. e.g. 94-95, 132-35), which implies a predictable succession of darkness by light *and vice versa*, is

deceased, I argue elsewhere (see Chapter Four, section 4.6.1; Chapter Five, section 5.3.1) that in Greek thought Hades is nothing like an abode. Whereas one's οἶκος in the Upperworld is part of a familiar ἐνθάδε, the 'house' of Hades is its negation, a place totally alien to one's usual experience of an οἶκος; this is why it is referred to with a vague ἐκεῖ.

²³ Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 154) convincingly defend the paradosis τρέφει (117) against Reiske's στρέφει: "the sea of troubles can perfectly well be said to 'feed' Heracles, in the sense of being the element in which he lives and gets his daily sustenance"; cf. Macro (1973: 3); *contra* McDevitt (1983a). However, they do not explain very well the strong contrast implied in the juxtaposition τρέφει, τὸ δ' αὔξει (=τὸ μὲν τρέφει, τὸ δ' αὔξει); see Stinton (1990: 209-12), who argued that perhaps αὔξει is the corrupt word (being originally a gloss on τρέφει) and that something like τρέφει τόδ' αἰὲ βιότου πολύποννον ... πέλαγος gives the sense required; cf. Burton (1980: 47). I fully accept the point.

²⁴ For possible sinister innuendos see, however, Seale (1982: 185 with n.10).

eventually superseded by the notion of *perpetual light*: when the Chorus put forth the ἄρκτος-paradigm (129-30) to reinforce their consolatory arguments, this may well be seen as yet another illustration of the principle of cyclicity (cf. στροφάδες κέλευθοι, and ἐπὶ ... κυκλοῦσιν). Nonetheless, the Greeks of Sophocles' time knew from Homer that, unlike the other constellations, the Great Bear always revolves *in the same place* (*Il.* 18. 488 ἢ τ' αὐτοῦ στρέφεται) and therefore *never sets and always shines* (*Il.* 18. 489, *Od.* 5.275: οἷη δ' ἄμμορός ἐστι λοετρῶν Ὀκεανοῖο). To quote Jones' (1962: 175) formulation, the Great Bear's "enduring cyclical movement issu[es] from an ultimate fixity"; so this cosmic parallel evokes the idea of permanent, never-setting, light, even in dead of night.²⁵ The idea of darkness yielding to light is also negatively expressed at 132-33: 'night does not remain fixed for mortals' might be an expression of the principle of perpetual alternation, if it were followed by something like 'and day is succeeded by night too', but it is not: the emphasis is laid on the succession of night by day, not the opposite.²⁶ This idea is emphatically brought out by the last sentence of the parodos, the climax of the whole structure, as Burton (1980: 49) has seen: "for who has ever seen Zeus so unmindful of his own children?" (139-40). All in all, the parodos ends not as a lecture on the law of eternal change, as it began, but on a more optimistic note: as light eventually drives darkness out, so the light of Heracles' homecoming (203-204) will finally scatter

²⁵ As far as I know, Jones (1962: 175) and Burton (1980: 48-9) are the only critics to concur with the interpretation of the Great Bear parallel advanced here.

²⁶ De Romilly (1968: 89-92), Segal (1995: 31 & 61) and Easterling (1968: 59-60), (1982: 2 & *ad* 132-40) see here only an image of cyclicity. Hoey (1972: 140-41) is closer to the truth when he remarks that the principle of cyclicity is appealed to here as a proof that there cannot be continuous unhappiness (contr. e.g. *Il.* 24. 525-33); cf. Krause (1976: 186-8), Lawrence (1978: 288), Holt (1987: 206, 208 with n. 9). Curiously, the same observation leads Winnington-Ingram (1980: 330-1) to exactly the opposite conclusion! Heiden's (1989: 36-9) treatment of the cyclicity theme in the parodos goes much too far.

away the darkness in which Deianeira has been living (29-30).

The movement of the parodos from darkness and despair to light, joy and hope is taken up in the first episode, which similarly begins with ominous considerations on Deianeira's part, but ends, as we have already remarked, on a note of joyous relief (200-204) thanks to 'the unexpected dawning of the radiant news' of Heracles' homecoming (203-204).²⁷ We remember that in the prologue Heracles' relation to his household was described in, to say the least, ambiguous terms. The point is picked up at the gloomy beginning of this episode (161-63), when Heracles' aspect as potential destroyer of his own household is presented as his most prominent feature. Treating his household as an ἄρουρα ἔκτοπος (32) was bad enough, but at least Heracles has been 'sowing and reaping' children (31-33), thus fulfilling, to a more-than-satisfactory degree (54), a marriage's main purpose, namely procreation (cf. the marriage contract formula ἐπ' ἀρότῳ παίδων γνησίῳ)²⁸ and sustaining in this way his household. All the same, it now becomes clear that there can be no talk of procreation and preservation of the house, for there is, virtually, no marriage: Deianeira, far from being merely husbandless (109-10), has been all but a widow; her forebodings of Heracles' death are presented almost as a certainty (175-77; cf. already 43, 46).²⁹ The feeling that

²⁷ I paraphrase Easterling's (*ad* 203-4) translation; for the imagery see Kamerbeek (*ad* 203,4) and Easterling (*l.c.*), who explain that ὄμμα means 'bright thing', suggesting the metaphorical light of salvation, and that ἀνασχόν evokes the image of a heavenly body which rises, probably the sun, as is suggested by the ancient scholiast *ad* 203 (p. 292 Papageorgius). See also Lawrence (1978: 289), Seale (1982: 187).

²⁸ Cf. Rehm (1994: 73, 181 n.7). For the formula see Men. *Dysc.* 842, *Pk.* 1010 with Gomme & Sandbach (1973: *ad locc.*).

²⁹ Rehm (1994: 73 with n.6) notices that Deianeira's longing for Heracles is termed πόθος (103, 107), a word that often refers to longing for a marriage partner or for the deceased (in *A. Pers.* 135 it refers to both, as Mr Garvie has pointed out to me); cf. Vermeule (1979: 154). On the accumulation of τέλος-words in Deianeira's narrative and its implications see C.S. Kraus (1991: 82-83). Also in

Deianeira is practically a widow is intensified when we learn that her husband, before embarking on his last errand, gave his testamentary instructions, 'as if he were a doomed man' (161),³⁰ telling her what she should take as her marriage-property³¹ and what disposition of his patrimony he made for his children (161-63).³² With the Messenger's arrival, however, all those fears seem to be over. Deianeira's state of virtual widowhood has reached an end, and Heracles' homecoming is, quite naturally, envisaged as a wedding (205-207) — "the wedding in this case being the reunion in wedlock of Deianeira and Heracles"³³ or, in other words, the re-establishment of the couple's marriage, which has been severely impaired by their excessively prolonged separation.³⁴ The choral song of ll. 205-24 is a hymn to Apollo and Artemis (209, 214) who, together with the Nymphs (215) and Dionysus (219), are especially associated with wedlock;³⁵ it also seems that the choirs of boys and girls (207, 211) who are invited to raise their song in honour of Apollo and Artemis formed the customary choirs to celebrate a wedding.³⁶ The imminent re-establishment of the household by means of the

E. *HF* (e.g. 295-7, 426-29 etc.) Heracles, who has descended to Hades to catch Cerberus, is thought of as already dead.

³⁰ Jebb's translation; cf. Easterling (*ad* 161).

³¹ Kamerbeek (*ad* 161,2) interprets slightly differently.

³² I paraphrase Easterling's (*ad* 161-8) rendering of the passage.

³³ Quotation from Stinton (1990: 419), whose reading and interpretation of the passage (*ibid.* 417-21) I follow. His view has been adopted by Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990a) and (1990b: 156-57). See also Easterling's (*ad* 205-7) and Seaford's (1986: 56), (1987: 128) excellent remarks.

³⁴ The obvious parallel to this, as Mr Garvie points out to me, is the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope in the *Odyssey* — a reunion presented in terms suggestive of a wedding (23. 130-40); for a detailed analysis see Seaford (1994a: 31-8).

³⁵ See Stinton (1990: 409 n.23) and Rehm (1994: 74 with n.9) for full documentation. On the possible ominous undertones of the invocation of Dionysus see, however, Schlesier (1993: 105-8).

³⁶ This is argued by Stinton (1990: 419 with n.49; cf. 409 n.23).

forthcoming wedding is succinctly expressed in the phrase ἐφεστίοις ἀλαλαγαῖς (206): Heracles' homecoming means that the ἐστία, the hearth, will acquire again its central importance as symbol of the οἶκος.³⁷ Thus, after we have been presented with what seemed Heracles' almost certain dissolution of his household (i.e. Deianeira's virtual widowhood), we are now reassured that this negative trend has been reversed: the χηρεία will be succeeded by a γάμος, the household that was verging on dissolution will be recreated, and fear of death will give way to hope for life.

The hope for the restitution of the family hearth seems to be confirmed by the Messenger's narrative: almost the first thing we learn about Heracles (237-38) is that he is demarcating the sacred ground on which new altars are to stand — an act that is practically equivalent to the setting up of altars, as Kamerbeek (*ad* 237) remarks.³⁸ Thus, his function as creator of a household, which has already been substantiated in his marriage to Deianeira, becomes also apparent in his building of altars — an act typical of the civilizing hero who transfigures the wild into domestic space. Altars / hearths are nuclei and symbols of humanized space such as the polis and the household: Protagoras in Plato's homonymous dialogue (322a) states that the setting up of altars distinguishes human beings from animals and approximates them to the gods.³⁹ Nonetheless, Sophocles the ironist presents us with an unexpected

³⁷ Cf. Segal (1995: 46). On the hearth as the core of the household and a symbol of its coherence and continuation see e.g. Vernant (1983: 128, 133-34, 141), Burkert (1985a: 255); the latter remarks that Greek has no special word for the family: "one speaks of house and hearth, thus consciously designating the domestic sacrificial site". He also notes (*ibid.*: 170 with n.3): "to banish or destroy a family is to drive out a hearth"; cf. Hdt. 5.72.1, 73.1.

³⁸ Cf. Burkert (1985b: 15).

³⁹ ἐπειδὴ δὲ ὁ ἄνθρωπος θείας μετέσχε μοίρας, πρῶτον μὲν διὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ συγγένειαν ζώων μόνον θεοὺς ἐνόμισεν, καὶ ἐπεχείρει βωμούς τε ἰδρύεσθαι καὶ ἀγάλματα θεῶν. Cf. also Segal (1975a: 32-33), (1981: 61, 65-74). On the hearth

dramatic twist: Lichas informs Deianeira that her husband is offering thanksgiving sacrifices in fulfilment of a vow he made when he was about to sack Oechalia (239–41; cf. 287–88) and make Eurytus' family 'dwellers of Hades' (282), i.e. of an 'abode' which, as I have argued, forms the exact negation of our familiar dwellings in the Upperworld.⁴⁰ So, Heracles' setting up of new altars, which should mark the establishment of a new city and new households, is in fact the result of his successful destruction of a city and a household! The 'civilizing hero' is setting up altars at Cenaean, having first destroyed the hearths of Oechalia.⁴¹

Further indications in the text seem to suggest that we are witnessing a new, alarming upsurge of Heracles' ambiguous attitude towards the household, the polis, and towards civilized life in general. Lichas' narrative shows that Heracles, paradoxically, seems to be able to retain his heroic status only in his encounters with the beasts of which he has been ridding Greece; when in domestic contexts, his heroism is challenged and his valour, otherwise undisputable, seems to be seriously

as the domestic sacrificial site, and on the duty of the head of the house to sacrifice at it see Burkert (1985a: 255). For the hearth's *sacrificial* function, on which see Burkert (1985a: 61), cf. the fact that *ἑστία* and *βωμός* can be synonyms: see Diggle (1981: 33–34) for copious evidence (as Sophoclean examples he cites *Tr.* 658, *CC* 1495; add *Tr.* 607), and cf. Segal (1975a: 34). On the association between the family hearth and the public Hearth, which is the centre of collective sacrificial activity, see Gernet (1981: 323, 325–27, 333). "Hearth-houses", early forms of Greek temples (Burkert [1983: 10 n.43] and [1985a: 61]), were apparently connected with sacrificial activity. For archaeological evidence of such activity in rulers' dwellings (probably the original form of Greek temples) cf. most recently Mazarakis Ainian (1988: 105–19 *passim*).

⁴⁰ Cf. Segal (1995: 237 n.58).

⁴¹ Segal (1975a: 36–37) makes a similar point, appropriately emphasizing the use of *ὀρίζειν* / *-εσθαι* (237) in Sophocles to imply "les actes constitutifs de la civilization"; this usage is ironically reversed in our passage, where "cet acte de *ὀρίζειν*, de créer un espace humain, solennise la destruction d' une communauté humaine." Cf. also Segal (1981: 65–6).

doubted. Thus, it is at the house of Eurytus (262; the pleonasm ἐς δόμους ἐφέστιον, along with marking Eurytus' violation of hospitality,⁴² emphasizes the domestic setting of the action) that Heracles' qualities as an archer are questioned; it is at that same house where he, the liberator of Greece (cf. 1010-12), is scorned as a slave (267-68).⁴³ It is ~~at~~ ⁱⁿ a domestic setting — indeed, at Tiryns (270-71), Heracles' own home before he was exiled — that the hero indulges in his sole unheroic deed, the guileful murder of Iphitus (272-73, 277-78) who was hurled from the walls of the city (273).⁴⁴ One is perhaps meant to recall here the Homeric description of Iphitus' murder (*Od.* 21.22-30),⁴⁵ where it is emphasized that the foul deed was done in Heracles' own house, with no respect either for their guest-friendship or for their having dined together (incidentally, in Sophocles' account [262-69] it is precisely Eurytus' violation of guest-friendship that accounts for Heracles' grudge against him and for the subsequent murder of Iphitus!).⁴⁶ The outrageousness of

⁴² So Jebb (*ad* 262), Heiden (1988a: 18).

⁴³ The text is corrupt, but the contrast between the words δουῖλος and ἐλευθέρου at 267 seems clear. Stinton (1990: 218) proposed to read πόνω for the MSS φώνει (or φωνεῖ), taking the resulting phrase 'crushed by hard labour, as befits a free man's thrall' to refer to Heracles' servitude to Eurystheus.

⁴⁴ I adopt Jebb's (*ad* 272f.) and Kamerbeek's (*ad* 273) interpretation of πυργώδους πλακός as 'a tower-like building', not 'a flat top of a towering cliff', for it is in accordance with the current version of the myth (already attested in Pherecydes, *FGrHist* 3F82b Jacoby); cf. now Heiden (1988a: 21-22). What is more, as Jebb (*l.c.*) remarks, "the word πύργος oft.=a city wall with its towers (*QT.* 56 n.)" (he might have added e.g. *A. Ag.* 127 and *S. OC* 14); and as Kamerbeek (*l.c.*) adds, "—ώδης indeed so often becomes merely a suffix that πυργώδης can surely have the function of πύργου".

⁴⁵ On which see generally Galinsky (1972: 11-12).

⁴⁶ The oblique reference to Homer has been also noted by Davies (1984: 482), Halleran (1986: 242) and Heiden (1988a: 18), (1989: 58); cf. also Fuqua (1980: 13 n.36). The verbal parallels between the Homeric and the Sophoclean accounts are remarkable: *Od.* 21. 27 ὅς (sc. Heracles) μιν (sc. Iphitus) ξεῖνον ἐόντα κατέκτανεν ᾧ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ ~ *S. Tr.* 262-63 ὅς (sc. Eurytus) αὐτὸν (sc. Heracles) ἐλθόντ'

such an act angered Zeus (274–75) and led to further, enforced, diminution of Heracles' heroism: for the supermale hero not only has suffered loss of his freedom (276) but has also been reduced to a woman's (Omphale's) thrall (70, 248–52)⁴⁷ — a fact whose abnormality is commented upon by Deianeira (71). To conclude: paradoxically, Heracles remains the celebrated civilizing hero only in the wild, amongst the monsters he fights; when in a tamed, humanized context (household, city), his destructive potential is released and at the same time his heroism (superiority, manhood) is seriously diminished.⁴⁸ This raises the question whether his long-awaited homecoming will be as unproblematic as one might have thought.

3.1.2 Marriage and sacrifice

An unproblematic homecoming seems indeed to be the hope of Heracles'

ἐς δόμους ἐφέστιον, ἢ ξένον παλαιὸν ὄντα ...; also *Al.* 21. 28–29 οὐδὲ τράπεζαν (sc. αἰδέσατο), ἢ τὴν ἣν οἱ παρέθηκεν ~ *S. Tr.* 268–69 δείπνοισ δ' ἠνίκ' ἦν ὠνωμένος ἔρριψεν ἐκτὸς αὐτόν.

⁴⁷ Scodel (1984: 36) reminds us that craft is a woman's weapon, so Heracles' guile results, quite appropriately, in subordination to a woman. What is more, guile itself is considered ἀνελεύθερον: cf. 453–54. So, by indulging in deceitful practices, Heracles himself undermined his own status as a free man, regardless of his subsequent servitude to Omphale. Cf. also Heiden (1988a: 22). In both my *Electra* and my *Ajax* chapters I attempt to demonstrate that the use of unheroic means like guile is never unproblematical for the Sophoclean hero — even when it is commanded by a god, as is the case in the *Electra*.

⁴⁸ I refer the reader again to Kirk's diagram cited in section 3.0.1; cf. also Burkert (1985a: 210) on Heracles as being, potentially, his own antithesis. Segal (1971: 101) rightly remarks that “in molti punti del dramma Sofocle sottolinea l' ironia di questo rapporto fra l' eroe difensore e l' eroe distruttore.” That Greek heroes in general contain the very sub- or superhuman forces against which they contend has been demonstrated by Brelich (1958: 233–48); cf. Fuqua (1980: 8).

friends and relatives: he has now been delivered from his enslavement to a woman (72); he can be again the best of men (177) and the valiant warrior (182-83, 186) he used to be. It soon turns out, however, that this is far from being the case, for it is exactly his homecoming that will put the stability (or even the very existence) of his own household in jeopardy. Deianeira pities the Euboean captives for being ἄοικοι (300) and prays to Zeus Tropaios to avert such a fate from her family (303-305), but fears lest her own household may suffer a similar blow (306). Indeed, as soon as Lichas' deceit is revealed, it becomes clear that the household which was about to celebrate Heracles' and Deianeira's reunion in wedlock (205-207) will shortly witness a different, disturbingly sinister, wedding, which will undermine the οἶκος's coherence: Heracles has brought into his home a new 'bride' (cf. 894 νύμφα) who may be formally a concubine, but is referred to in language pertaining to the standard vocabulary of legitimate wedlock. She has been sent 'not in careless fashion [...] nor like a slave' (366-67; Jebb's transl.), a phrase which probably suggests that her state is *not* that of a παλλακή;⁴⁹ on the contrary, she is Heracles' wife-to-be, his δάμαρ (428, 429), a word normally signifying 'lawfully wedded wife' in tragedy, and which indeed is used of Deianeira herself only a few lines before (406); as Segal (1981: 75) remarks, δάμαρ "might also mean 'concubine', but Sophocles exploits the ambiguity of the marital terms to suggest the confusion wrought upon the house by this new bride and new marriage".⁵⁰ What is more, Heracles' union to her is clearly referred to as γάμος (cf. 546, 843,

⁴⁹ Concubines who were kept not 'with a view to free children' were normally, perhaps always, slaves; see MacDowell (1978: 89). Admittedly, there could be free concubines as well: see again MacDowell (*l.c.*). MacKinnon (1971: 34), contrary to the indications of the text, insists that Iole *is* a slave.

⁵⁰ Cf. also Segal (1975a: 49 n.30), de Wet (1983: 221-2), Davies (*ad* 429), Rehm (1994: 74), Loraux (1995: 39 with n.144). *Contra* Easterling (*ad* 428).

1139).⁵¹ So, Heracles' household is again on the verge of collapsing: the new 'bride' is a 'bane under the roof' (376 πημονή ὑπόστεγος; Jebb's transl.). The prospective wedding that the Chorus have been gaily celebrating turns out to be a perversion of a wedding, destroying the harmonious symmetry that should normally characterize a marriage: two women in the same man's bed (539-40), living in the same house and sharing the same marital union (545-46) is as exorbitant an asymmetry as a married woman's being practically a widow (which, one recalls, has been the case with Deianeira so far). Paradoxically, Heracles is destroying the household by means of an act of a clearly domestic character, namely a marriage. Once again the domestic context becomes the setting for the undermining of Heracles' heroism: the best of men, the most valiant of heroes, has become again a complete slave to a woman, namely Iole (488-89: τοῦ τῆσδ' ἔρωτος εἰς ἅπανθ' ἦσσων ἔφυ). This takes up the theme of enslavement to a female, which was initiated with his enforced *λατρεία* to Omphale and is continued with his all too voluntary submission to Iole — both taking place under similar circumstances: the servitude to Omphale was the result of an unheroic, deceitful act (Iphitus' murder) that caused a severe damage to a household (Eurytus'); similarly, the enslavement to Iole is set against a background of *δόλος* (she was originally meant to be an illegitimate liaison, a *κρύφλιον λέχος*, 360) that led to the total devastation of Eurytus' household.⁵² Guile, curtailment of Heracles' heroic straightforwardness, reduction to female status — all

⁵¹ Easterling (*ad* 546 & 842-3) insists that *γάμος* in those passages need not refer to formal marriage; but see again Segal (1981: 75-6). Suffice it to note, with Stinton (1990: 413), that the *γάμος* that Deianeira is worried about, i.e. the fact that her husband is actually bringing home a new bride (894 *νύμφα*), should be, and indeed is, sharply distinguished from the occasional and trivial '*γάμοι*' (=temporary love affairs) Heracles has many a time contracted (460). Cf. also Biggs (1966: 230), Kitto (1966: 168-69), Hester (1980a: 3), Scodel (1984: 38-9).

⁵² For Heracles as destroyer of the family cf. Sorum (1978: 64-65).

take place, again, in a domestic, humanized ground, away from the wild where Heracles performs his labours. This paradox seems indeed to be thematic.

The first stasimon (497–530) starts off as a hymn to the power of love, apparently inspired by the news of Heracles' lust for Iole that has been disclosed in the previous episode. Nonetheless, the Chorus, instead of singing about this new love-affair, relate the old story of the duel between Heracles and Achelous over Deianeira's hand — a story with which we are already familiar, since it was with this that the play virtually began.⁵³ The correspondences in theme, rhetorical structure and phraseology between this choral ode and the prologue are, as Davies (pp. 136–37) has pointed out, unmistakable, despite the fact that the two treatments are separated by a large number of lines. A further similarity between this stasimon and the prologue is again the abundance of agonistic vocabulary in the description of the fight of Heracles and Achelous: note, *inter alia*, “the agonistic language used of the duel, e.g. κατέβαν 504 and ἄεθλ' ἀγώνων 506, which suggest[s] a contest of athletes rather than a fight between rival suitors” (Easterling [p. 133]). The “strong flavour of the epinician ode” (Easterling *l.c.*) and the Pindaric echoes both in the opening generalization (Davies [*ad* 497]) and in the use of “the technique whereby the poet answers the question he himself has just asked” (503–506; see Davies [*ad* 505–6]) strongly add to this effect.⁵⁴ The point of this lyrical reworking of themes already dealt with in the prologue is, I think, to create a highly ironic contrast. We remember that the use of agonistic language at the outset served as a reminder of Heracles' glorious aspects in heroic legend; his struggle against monsters contributes to the transformation of Greece into a civilized place, while, on a smaller scale, his saving of Deianeira from a

⁵³ “... the present, Iole and Heracles' passion for her, is indirectly represented by the story of Deianeira and Heracles' passion for *her*”: C.S. Kraus (1991:78).

⁵⁴ See also Fuqua (1980:42) and Heiden (1989:77).

perverted ‘wedding’ to a monster effectuates the establishment of a legitimate household (cf. above p. 123). In other words, Heracles in the prologue was almost unequivocally on the side of civilization. Although there have certainly been disturbing hints of his ambiguous relation to his household, his imminent homecoming was still envisaged as the only hope for the restoration of his οἶκος to its appropriate status. Now, however, we realize that the hero’s homecoming definitely signals not the re-establishment of his marriage to Deianeira, but its perversion (cf. 536-37, 539-40, 545-46). His struggle against Achelous, despite the heroic light in which it is visualized, has been, as it turns out, much more ambivalent than one may have initially thought. Significantly, the outcome of the fight (Heracles’ defeat of Achelous) is not, this time, quickly and clearly stated, as in the prologue (26-27). Now we are presented with a long description of the fight, that takes no less than 16 lines (507-22),⁵⁵ whereas such a detailed account was artfully avoided in the prologue (21-25).⁵⁶ The emphasis falls on the equal strength displayed as well as the equal amount of labour spent by both opponents (517-22), which results in the duel’s remaining undecided for long; as a matter of fact, *the*

⁵⁵ Zielinski’s emendation θατήρ (a rare Doric word, and therefore liable to corruption) for the MSS μάτηρ at 526 would appropriately emphasize that the Chorus describe the battle as if they were a spectator — which would be consistent with their insistence on its details; so, *pace van der Valk* (1967: 124-5), it does not offer “une interprétation banale”. I cannot understand Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 161) who think that the Chorus offer no such description; see W. Kraus’ (1986: 98) eloquent approval of the emendation; cf. also Easterling (*ad* 526-8), Davies (*ad* 526) and C.S. Kraus (1991: 87 n.36) who note the *Fernverbindung* with 22-23. For discussion see Burton (1980: 57-8).

⁵⁶ For another explanation of this narrative omission see C.S. Kraus (1991: 81). She rightly points out (p. 87) that in narrative terms the importance of this stasimon “lies in its return to the temporal setting of the prologue to tell the one detail of Deianeira’s youth that she had omitted — the battle between Heracles and Achelous.”

outcome of the contest is never stated!⁵⁷ The civilizing hero's gloriously prevailing over his bestial enemies is no longer presented as an indisputable certainty. On the contrary, it is implied that, whoever the winner and Deianeira's future husband, the bride's lot would be piteous anyway (528 ἐλεινὸν ἀμμένει <λέχος>);⁵⁸ the contrast with the prologue, where it was stated that Heracles' victory was, at least in principle, καλῶς (26) is obvious. Ironically, whereas τοιόνδ' ἐγὼ μνηστῆρα προσδεγεμένη (15) clearly referred only to Achelous, from whom Heracles saved Deianeira, now the similarly constructed phrase τὸν ὄν προσμένουσ' ἀκοίταν (525)⁵⁹ fits Heracles just as well, and implies that Deianeira's marriage to him was not, after all, a deliverance from her woes. Her prospective marriage, far from being the λέχος κριτόν (27) of the prologue, marks only her sudden and brutal alienation from her familiar domestic environment (she is likened to a calf weaned from her mother: 529-30)⁶⁰ without offering, as it should, the consolatory alternative of her incorporation into a new household. The equipoise characterizing the fight is eventually discreditable to Heracles, for he is

⁵⁷ The ancient scholion on the corrupt 526 (ἐγὼ παρεῖσα τὰ πολλά, τὰ τέλη λέγω τῶν πραγμάτων, unaccountably omitted by Papageorgius) cannot point to a text in which the outcome of the fight (τὰ τέλη τῶν πραγμάτων) was stated; as Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 161) remark, "this is made to look out of place by the sentence that follows"; cf. also Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990a: *in app. crit.*): "exspectares ut de pugna adhuc ancipiti diceretur".

⁵⁸ It seems that a supplement of the metrical form υ— is needed after ἀμμένει (although Kamerbeek [*ad* 528], as he would, refuses to alter the paradosis); I prefer Gildersleeves' (1985: 155) λέχος to Gleditsch's τέλος or λάχος, since it makes the ironic echo of 27-28 all the more prominent; cf. Stinton (1990: 412 n.34), Davies (*ad* 528). W. Kraus (1986: 98) unfortunately misses the point.

⁵⁹ The similarity is noted by Davies (p. 137).

⁶⁰ On the image see Seaford (1986: 50-54, esp. 53), Rehm (1994: 74-75). On the contrast between this stasimon and the prologue cf. Sorum (1978: 63). "Thematically, then, the stasimon both brings Deianeira's marriage to a close and assimilates her to Iole (and vice-versa), both victims of a bestial love": C.S. Kraus (1991: 87).

equated with one of the monsters he was supposed to be extinguishing. Significantly, as well as ironically, “the contest itself is described in terms which bring out the primitive violence of the scene, and there is no attempt to distinguish the glorious Heracles from his monstrous opponent Achelous [...]”, to quote Easterling’s (p. 134) excellent remark.⁶¹ If there is a winner in this fight, it is neither Heracles nor Achelous, but Kypris herself, who ἐκφέρεται νίκας ἀεί (497);⁶² at the same time, she is also the ‘umpire’ of the contest (516), but a very peculiar umpire indeed: she does not simply regulate the contest, but also exercises absolute control over it and, in fact, determines its outcome,⁶³ despite the fact that she is alone (515) whereas the contestants are described, by a bold catachresis, as a massed group (513 ἀολλεῖς).⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Aphrodite is

⁶¹ Anticipated by Wender (1974: 10). The refined formal parallelism (noted by Kamerbeek [*ad* 512] and Sorum [1978: 63]), with which the two opponents are introduced, may add to the impression of the hero’s being dangerously close to the monster (Fuqua [1980: 42 with n.111] however is more sympathetic to Heracles). Kirk (1977: 287) also comments on Heracles’ “power to wrestle on equal terms with monsters” as a sign of his uncanny proximity to animality — an aspect of Heracles that is particularly stressed by G. Murray (1946: 113-26 *passim*) and Galinsky (1972: 46-52). Cf. also Gellie’s (1972: 63-4) remarks, wrongly condemned by Winnington-Ingram (1980: 86), and see generally Kott (1974: 134). Biggs (1966: 228) and Silk (1985: 8) think that we are to think of Achelous as a river-god, so that Heracles’ parallelism with him is a reminder of his (partly) divine nature (“he fights gods ... because he is (in part) one too”, writes Silk); however this is a misemphasis, for Achelous in our play is viewed as a monster, not as a god.

⁶² We remember that Eros was the only opponent that Heracles has not been able to defeat (488-89).

⁶³ I owe the point to Winnington-Ingram (1980: 87). Cf. also Kamerbeek (*ad* 515,6), Heiden (1989: 77-8). Van der Valk (1967: 118-20) aptly demonstrates “1’ aspect ambivalent de l’ amour” in this ode. Gardiner (1987: 130) misunderstands Aphrodite’s role.

⁶⁴ The catachresis was already noted by the scholiast *ad* 513 (p. 307 Papageorgius): καταχρηστικῶς εἶπεν ἐπὶ δύο τὸ ἀολλεῖς· ἐπὶ πλήθους γὰρ λέγεται; see Burton (1980: 57), Easterling (*ad* 513) and Davies (*ad* 513).

not present here as the cosmic force of regeneration and procreation, nor as the goddess normally presiding over weddings;⁶⁵ it is rather her destructive aspect that is prominent:⁶⁶ her absolute dominance has occasioned the destruction of one household (Eurytus'), by means of a 'marriage' (Heracles' to Iole) and is about to generate the dissolution of another one (Heracles' own), by means of another 'marriage' (Deianeira's to Heracles).⁶⁷

As I have already remarked (p. 136), the household of Heracles seems never to be symmetrical: either there is no husband in it, with Deianeira being practically a 'married widow', or there are two wives in the same husband's bed. This lack of symmetry is also expressed in the 'gifts' that Heracles and Deianeira exchange before the former's return: Deianeira has been keeping the house during his long absence, but Heracles' 'reward' to his wife for that (542 οἰκούρια) is, preposterously, a second wife, i.e. a factor that impedes the normal function of the household and is potentially a destructive force, 'a bane under the roof' (376). Deianeira will respond with "such gifts as it is right to give in recompense for gifts"⁶⁸ (494 ἄ τ' ἀντὶ δῶρων δῶρα χρῆ προσαρμόσαι) — a phrase of whose full implications she is still unaware. She certainly

⁶⁵ On this role of Aphrodite see Seaford (1987: 116–17 with nn. 114–16).

⁶⁶ An aspect with which the Greeks were familiar from lyric poetry: e.g. Sapph. 47, 130 L.-P.; Archil. 193 W.; Ibyc. 286, 287 P. For Sophoclean examples of the ruinous power of love see *Ant.* 781–800 and *fr.* 941 R. cited by Burton (1980: 54 n. 28).

⁶⁷ I mean that Deianeira's desire to win Heracles back, and thus celebrate eventually in true fashion the 'wedding' announced at 205–20, will lead her to send him the fatal robe, thus contributing her share to the destruction of their household. Cf. Segal (1975a: 44), Rehm (1994: 82); on Deianeira's sexuality as a motive force in the play see Winnington-Ingram (1983: 240). It will appear that, *pace* Segal (1981: 86 and *passim*), I view Deianeira's share in the destruction of the οἶκος as much smaller than Heracles'.

⁶⁸ I quote Easterling's (*ad* 494–5) rendering of the passage. Cf. also Jebb (*ad* 494ff.), Kamerbeek (*ad* 494).

intends the robe to be a means of saving her household from dissolution and of preventing the intolerable ‘wedding’ that is about to happen by re-establishing her own marriage; however, it is this robe that will seal the fate of the household — a suitable gift indeed for Heracles’ perverted οἰκούρια to her. Thus, the ‘positive’ reciprocity of the exchange of marital gifts (a common practice in weddings) is replaced (though inadvertently on Deianeira’s part) by the ‘negative’ reciprocity of returning destruction of a marriage (death of Heracles and Deianeira) for perversion of a marriage (Iole as a second wife).⁶⁹

Thus, it appears that the anointed robe is both a potential saviour and a potential destroyer of the household; it is intended to save the οἶκος, but it eventually destroys it. This is a fundamental ambiguity, the first of a whole series of ambiguities that make this piece of garment a symbol of Heracles himself. To begin with, the robe, like Heracles himself, belongs to the μεταίχμιον between savagery and civilization. The poison (or the love-charm, as Deianeira thinks) came from a beast (556 θηρός), the Centaur Nessus, who is clearly described as belonging entirely to the wild: he is associated with the elemental force of ravaging water, the “deep-flowing river Euenus” (559),⁷⁰ across which he ferried people, not with civilized means (560–61 οὔτε πομπίμοις κώπαις ἐρέσσω οὔτε

⁶⁹ On the capital importance of reciprocity (χάρις) in Greek marriage see Vernant (1983: 132): “... the union of the sexes is a contract [...] In this connection, one of the essential aspects of Greek *charis* should be emphasized: *charis* is the divine power that is manifest in all aspects of gift-giving and reciprocity (the round of generous liberality, the cordial exchange of gifts), which, in spite of all divisions, spins a web of reciprocal obligations, and one of the oldest of all of the functions of *charis* is the giving of herself by a woman to a man.” In this aspect, *Aj.* 522 is a very instructive passage; cf. also Redfield (1982: 196), Scodel (1984: 33–4) with very important remarks, and Segal (1981: 70), (1995: 82).

⁷⁰ Euenus is “one of the fiercest and most treacherous torrents in Greece”: see Tozer as cited by Jebb (*ad* 559f.).

λαίφεσιν νεώς) but with his bare hands (560 χερσίν).⁷¹ The poison / love-charm consists not only of the beast's blood but also of the venom of another beast, namely the Lernaean Hydra (574), in which Heracles' arrows were dipped. (Incidentally, this is yet another indication of Heracles' veering between civilization and savagery: the arrows with which he performs his feats against monsters are active because of the power of a monster!). At the same time, however, the poison / love-charm has strong associations with civilization and, especially, with the household: it is smeared — with a tuft of wool (695 κάταγμα)⁷² taken from a ewe, a domestic animal (675, 690 κτησίου βοτοῦ λάχνην) — on a robe which is markedly a product of the household: it is woven by Deianeira herself (603 τῆς ἐμῆς χειρός),⁷³ who has been keeping it all these years in the deepest recesses of the house (578-79 δόμοις [...] ἐγκεκλημένον καλῶς, 686 ἐν μυχοῖς), inside a domestic utensil (556 λέβητι χαλκέῳ). Before it is given to Lichas, a herald belonging to the household (cf. the pleonasm at 757 ἀπ' οἴκων ... οἰκεῖος),⁷⁴ it is sealed

⁷¹ Cf. Segal (1975a: 46): “son [i.e. Nessus'] métier, comme sa forme même, constitue une espèce de parodie de la civilisation humaine.” Cf. also Segal (1981: 91-2), (1995: 30).

⁷² κάταγμα has markedly domestic associations, as it is properly used of “the ball of wool on the distaff, from which the thread is drawn down (κατάγεται, *deducitur*) by the spinner” (Jebb [*ad* 695ff.]); cf. Kamerbeek (*ad* 695) and Easterling (*ad* 695).

⁷³ See Kamerbeek (*ad* 603) and Easterling (*ad* 603). Hsch. s.v. ἰστία (ι 1017 Latte): “ἡ ὑφαίνουσα γυνή. καὶ οἰκία” indicates, in a very convenient (although etymologically wrong) manner, the intrinsic association of weaving (as a domestic occupation *par excellence*) with the household. Cf. Segal (1975a: 36), (1981: 64), (1995: 45) and above all Redfield (1982: 194-5) and Seidensticker (1995: 159).

⁷⁴ See Easterling's (*ad* 757) comment, and cf. Davies (*ad* 757). Dawe (1996) has οἰκεῖος between daggers, whereas Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 166) keep the word, but think it means no more than ‘his own’ (so also Jebb [*ad* 757] and Kamerbeek [*ad* 757]). I believe that οἰκεῖος has its full force (‘from the house’) and that the pleonasm is deliberate; Segal (1981: 80) seems to have grasped the

with Deianeira's signet (615 σφραγιῖδος ἔρκει), by which Heracles will undoubtedly recognize the robe as coming from his own house (cf. 614 εὐμαθές). The phrasing used in this passage is interesting: ἔρκος certainly refers to the bezel, i.e. the part of the ring which bears the signet;⁷⁵ given however that the current Greek word for 'bezel' was σφενδόνη, perhaps we should see in the (rather elaborate) circumlocution σφραγιῖδος ἔρκει a word-play with ἔρκος='sacred enclosure (that may contain an *altar*)'⁷⁶ In that case, the robe would be all the more closely associated with the tamed, domesticated space of the house or the city (cf. above p. 131 with n. 39). At any rate, it is highly ironical, as well as of paramount importance for our understanding of the play, that another ἔρκος (607), namely the altar at which Heracles sacrifices (604-13, cf. 765-71, 993-95), will activate the fatal power of the poisoned robe. Thus, the robe, so closely associated with the safety and certitude of domestic environment (cf. again 614-15), contains a destructive potential that leads eventually to a negation of the οἶκος (the robe's fatal clinging on Heracles' body is ironically referred to at 1055 as ξυνοικοῦν!⁷⁷), insofar as it brings about a negation of an οἶκος's very centre, namely the hearth (ἑστία), the domestic sacrificial site.⁷⁸ For Heracles' thanksgiving sacrifice is nothing like the sacrifice at the hearth

point.

⁷⁵ See Jebb (*ad* 614f.) and cf. Davies (*ad* 614-15).

⁷⁶ Cf. Segal (1975a: 34, 38), (1981: 68).

⁷⁷ Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 175-76) well explain the meaning of ξυνοικοῦν here: "... the robe [...] is thought of as though it were a person, a secret sharer of Heracles' life"; see also Davies (*ad* 1055), who refutes Dawe's (1978: 95) unjustified complaints and rightly condemns his unfortunate conjecture ξυνοικοῦν. On the theme of the house's destruction from within cf. Easterling (1987: 19).

⁷⁸ Deianeira stressed with all possible emphasis that the robe should not come in contact with light, especially *altar-fire* (606-609, 685-86 etc.). On the destructive potential of the hearth / altar in the play cf. Segal (1975a: 41), (1981: 68), (1995: 79).

which it was the duty of the *pater familias* to perform by way of reaffirmation of the household's cohesion; on the contrary, this sacrifice is, by means (paradoxically) of a domestic product (the robe), corrupted into a gruesome distortion of the ritual, whereby the sacrificer himself becomes the victim, to the ultimate detriment of the household. This is succinctly expressed in the phrase (613) θυτήρα καινῶ καινὸν ἐν πεπλώματι: as Easterling (*ad* 610-13) perceptively remarks, “καινός often has a sinister meaning, ‘strange’ rather than simply ‘new’”, and “[a] sacrificer might be ‘strange’ if he turned out to be the victim instead”.⁷⁹ This confusion between the roles of sacrificer and victim is confirmed, as Seaford (1994a: 391) has remarked, by i) the parallelism between Heracles' flesh being devoured by the flames (cf. 840 ἐπιζέσαντα) and the sacrificial victim's flesh being burned by the altar flame (cf. 766 φλόξ αίματηρά), and ii) by the memorable image of Heracles' being shrouded by the murky altar-smoke: προσέδρου λιγνύος (794)⁸⁰ — a phrase which, as Kamerbeek (*ad* 794) notes, may also suggest Heracles' being shrouded by the burning garment (cf. schol. *ad loc.* [p. 324 Papageorgius]: ἡ τῆς παρακειμένης καὶ περικεχυμένης αὐτὸν φλογώδους νόσου). The robe, a product of the house, in association with the altar-flame, a symbol of the house, effects a grim parody of an act so central to the notion of οἶκος as sacrifice.

At this critical moment the ambiguity of the robe (hovering betwixt and between civilization and savagery) is appropriately brought up again: we hear that it clung to Heracles' body like a sweaty artisan's cloak sticking to his body (768-69)⁸¹ — a familiar image of a civilized (and

⁷⁹ Seaford (1994a: 391 n.101) calls 613 “an (unconsciously) ironically appropriate phrase”. Cf. also Segal (1975a: 38), (1981: 71), (1995: 46-47, 55-56).

⁸⁰ On the meaning here see Jebb (*ad* 794f. and his transl.) and Easterling (*ad* 794).

⁸¹ This interpretation was first proposed, as far as I am aware, by West (1980: 366 n.9). Zijderveld (1935-36: 175-76) had arrived at a similar solution, but went on to say that “fabri [...] et opifices vestimenta arte restricta induere solebant,

civilizing) activity. At the same time, the robe's uncanny nature is revealed when it is said to have devoured Heracles' flesh like the deadly venom of a hateful viper (770-71)⁸² — an image that clearly places the robe in the domain of savagery, but on the other hand ironically connects it again with the household, since, as Borthwick reminds us, “the most notorious belief about the echidna in antiquity was that the female bit the male to death in the act of mating”.⁸³ Thus, the viper's bite “becomes ‘the image for domestic treachery’ (Jebb on Soph. Ant. 531), and it is appropriate that Sophocles likens Deianeira's love-gift for Heracles to an echidna's poison feeding on his flesh”.⁸⁴ Likewise, the piece of sheep's wool, another domestic product (cf. above, p. 143), with which Deianeira has anointed the robe, crumbles away (678,⁸⁵ 697-98) under the effect of the poison's contact with sunlight, thus foreshadowing the fate of the entire household. Ironically, however, the woollen tuft's combustion is described in imagery recalling civilized activity: it looks like sawdust (699-700: the elaborate circumlocution lends emphasis to

ne labore assiduo occupati impedirentur sinu ampliore” (*ibid.*: p. 176). Heracles' sweat, however, is important, for it is thus that the poison seems to be activated (767). For a list of other interpretations see commentators, especially Easterling (*ad* 768-9) and Davies (*ad* 768). They both reject the view advocated here on the grounds that, as Davies puts it, it “supplies a merely familiar idea instead of a characteristic blend of the sinister and the mundane”. Nonetheless, it is precisely this “merely familiar idea” that we need here. Dawe (1978: 91-92), (1996) obelizes the line, but, as West (*l.c.*) shows, he has misunderstood the text.

⁸² At 770 read φοίνιος (Pierson), with Dawe (1996) and Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990a) for the MSS φοινίας; see Davies (*ad* 770). Dawe (1978: 92) did not understand the blending of *illustrans* and *illustrandum* in this passage, well explained by Davies (*ad* 770-71).

⁸³ E.K. Borthwick, *CR* n.s. 17 (1967), 250, with ample evidence for this widespread belief (pp. 250-51). The earliest instances are Hdt. 3. 109 and A. Cho. 247-9.

⁸⁴ Borthwick, *art. cit.*, 251.

⁸⁵ If the text is sound: see Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 165) and commentators. Dawe (1996) resorts to the *cruces desperationis*.

the phrase, which thus cannot fail to contribute to the imagery of civilized activity), while “from the earth, where it was strewn, clots of foam seethed up, as when the rich juice of the blue fruit from the vine of Bacchus is poured upon the ground” (701-704; Jebb’s transl.); a description recalling the ritual σπονδή (another ironic link with images of civilized domestic life).⁸⁶

The symbolism of this blending of the domestic and the wild in the imagery surrounding the robe (and, secondarily, the tuft of wool) is clear enough: ironically, it is on domestic, humanized ground that the world of savagery will eventually best the civilizing hero; Heracles has been fighting monsters all his life, only to be defeated by them, in an unexpected intrusion of the wild into his own household.⁸⁷ As one should expect, the νόσος that attacks Heracles as a result of his donning of the robe is (*qua* manifestation of the world of the wild) described in terms strongly reminiscent of its savage nature: it is ἀγρία (975, 1030)⁸⁸ and ἀποτίβατος (1030),⁸⁹ and is envisaged as a beast that can spring from its lair at any moment (979-81),⁹⁰ while civilization has no means of curing

⁸⁶ See Segal (1975a: 46), (1981: 89-91), (1995: 52-53).

⁸⁷ On the ambiguity of the robe cf. also Segal (1995: 32-33). March (1987: 52-56, 62-65) has argued with great plausibility that the arrowshot which killed Nessos and produced the lovecharm was perhaps an innovation introduced by Sophocles himself, who was thus the first to connect Nessos with Herakles’ death. If so, then the motif of the defeated monsters’ defeating Heracles, as well as the wider theme of the tension between civilization and wilderness, must have been a central preoccupation in Sophocles’ mind.

⁸⁸ On the image of the νόσος as a wild animal and its implications see Biggs (1966: 227-8), Sorum (1978: 59-60), Segal (1971: 101), (1981: 93), (1995: 36) and Easterling (1968: 67), (1981: 59), (1982: *ad* 974-5).

⁸⁹ The word is a *hapax*. Jebb (*ad* 1027ff.) and Kamerbeek (*ad* 1030) rightly compare 1093.

⁹⁰ The point is excellently made by Sorum (1978: 60) and Easterling (*ad* 979-81). Cf. also the imagery at 1053-56. See further Sorum (1978: 62).

it: neither a charmer (ᾄοιδός)⁹¹ nor a practitioner of medicine (χειροτέχνης ἰατορίας) could successfully cope with it (1000–1002).⁹²

Heracles' fatal sacrifice (whose perverted character was demonstrated above, p. 145f.) represents yet another instance of this merging of civilization and wilderness.⁹³ It may well be, as Plato has it (*Prot.* 322a; cf. above p. 131 with n. 39), that the sacrificial act distinguishes humans from beasts and reveals their affinity to the divine, but in Heracles' case it only signals, on the one hand, his defeat by the bestial νόσος (and, ultimately, by the untamed wilderness), while on the other it marks the impossibility of communication with divinity: as the hero himself complains at the important lines 993–95, his terrible predicament is far from what one should normally expect from the performance of a pious duty such as sacrifice.⁹⁴ Furthermore, this fatal sacrifice takes place at Cape Cenaeum, a 'sea-girdled shore' (237, 752–53 ἀκτὴ τις ἀμφίκλυστος, cf. 993), i.e. an area that is dangerously close to the sea: one recalls that Heracles' perilous wandering in the wild has been compared, in the parodos, to being tossed about at sea (112–21), so it seems possible that the sea is, in this play at least, a symbol of the hero's toils.⁹⁵ Moreover, it is important that both the Hydra and Nessus are

⁹¹ The catachrestic use of ᾄοιδός for ἐπωδός is unique: Kamerbeek (*ad* 1000).

⁹² In *Od.* 17.383–85, the ἰητῆρ κακῶν and the ᾄοιδός are two of the δημιοεργοί, the people who are at the service of the organized community —an infallible sign of a civilized society.

⁹³ Cf. Segal (1975a: 35), (1981: 62).

⁹⁴ Cf. Burkert (1985b: 16).

⁹⁵ Cf. the words of the Chorus in E. *HF* 697–700: [Heracles] μοχθήσας τὸν ἄκυμον ἰθῆκεν βίοτον βροτοῖς ἰπέρσας δείματα θηρῶν. The phrase νασιῶτιν ἐστίαν (658) must not deceive us into believing that Euboea is thought of as having a domestic character (ἐστία): the use of a word meaning 'hearth, home' here creates a pointed irony, for Heracles' sacrifice is a thanksgiving for his having destroyed one ἐστία (Eurytus'), and is about to become the means of the destruction of yet another one (Heracles' own). See below in the text (section 3.2.1). On the sea as a hostile, untamed element in this play cf. Segal (1981: 92).

closely associated with water: Nessus ferries people across the river Euenus,⁹⁶ while Hydra, the ‘water-serpent’ as her name signifies, lives at the Lernaean swamp; one also recalls that Heracles had to fight with the river Achelous in order to win Deianeira’s hand and create a new household.⁹⁷ Victory over those three monsters probably signified the victory of the civilizing hero over the overwhelming power of water, one of the most uncontrollable elements of nature — a power, however, which eventually defeats him.⁹⁸ Thus, it is a sinister irony that the sacrifice which is supposed to signal the end of Heracles’ labours is associated, by means of locale (sea), with the raging sea of Heracles’ toils — of his struggle against alien, untamed, undomesticated elements. Through the corrupted sacrifice by the seashore, the beasts Heracles has been fighting, the wilderness he has been trying to tame, seem now to re-appear, in the form of Nessus and the Hydra⁹⁹ whose blood and venom anointed the fatal robe, and to invade Heracles’ own οἶκος, in order to deal a final deadly blow against both the hero himself and his household.¹⁰⁰ This

⁹⁶ Jebb (*ad* 557f.) plausibly suggests that Nessus’ very name symbolizes “the roar of the angry torrent” and adduces comparative linguistic evidence (Greek and Sanskrit) to support his view. It is interesting that, as he points out, Νέστος (in Thrace) and Νέδα (in Arcadia) are river-names, while Δούπων and Ὀμαδος (names denoting noise, like Νέσσος) are names of Centaurs. Fontenrose (1959: 354) sees Nessus as the spirit of the river Euenus.

⁹⁷ On the structural equivalence of Achelous and Nessus-Euenus as river-spirits see Fontenrose (1959: 355); cf. Segal (1981: 79).

⁹⁸ On the role of water in Heracles’ legend see Fontenrose (1959: 109, 354) and cf. Kirk’s (1974: 201) *en passant* remark. Water in the *Trachiniae*: Heiden (1989: 86-7, 95-6, 123-4). The bitter irony of nautical metaphors such as 468, 815-16 and 827 (on which see Segal [1995: 227 n.88]) may be yet another allusion to the destructive function of water in the Heracles’ myth.

⁹⁹ Interestingly, at 1090ff. the monsters Heracles has fought are described in terms recalling either the Nessus or the Hydra: see Appendix.

¹⁰⁰ After having written these lines I found that Easterling (1968: 65) also reached a similar conclusion via a different path, namely by noting the thematic and verbal parallelisms between first and third stasimon.

startling paradox is well formulated by Heracles himself towards the end of the play (1159-63): the θήρ Κένταυρος (1162), a representative of the wild and a 'dweller' of as inhabitable a place as Hades (1161 "Αιδου ... οικήτωρ), encroaches on the world of the living (1163 ζῶντα)¹⁰¹ and turns him and his wife into 'dwellers' of Hades, by devastating their normal abode, namely their οἶκος.

3.2.1 The second and third stasima: Heracles' homecoming as wedding

The contrast between Heracles' much desired return from the wild, with a view to the restoration of his marriage and household, and the ultimate devastation of this household becomes all the more conspicuous through the contrast of the second (633ff.) with the third stasimon (821ff.). In the former, the familiar imagery of the polis and the household, as opposed to the wild and the outdoors, is a prominent feature. To begin with, "the opening invocation to the dwellers around Heracles' home [...] serves to give a feeling of local background, rather as the Colonus ode does in *Oedipus Coloneus*" (Stinton [1990: 408-409]). The Chorus address places markedly associated with the inhabitants' communal life or with their civilized activities. Thus, in contrast with the stormy sea-imagery so conspicuously used in the parodos (112-21), it is the calm and safe ναύλοχα (633)¹⁰² that gain prominence now, along with the security of

¹⁰¹ Segal (1995: 30, 38, 42) and Easterling (pp. 3-4) have some fine remarks on the important theme of the past's threatening and influencing the present; Reinhardt (1979: 47) rather missed the point. The theme of the dead killing the living, a theme common especially in Sophocles (cf. e.g. *Aj.* 1026-7, *El.* 1420-1), is well explored by Kitto (1956: 193), (1966: 180-8).

¹⁰² Some take ναύλοχα to be an adjective, with λουτρά; Davies (*ad* 633), however, gives good reasons for considering it a substantive ('haven, harbour').

the μέσσα Μηλῖς λίμνα (635-36).¹⁰³ Oeta, which is generally associated in this play with the untamed wilderness (e.g. 200, 436-7, 1191 [reading ὕψιστον with the MSS.]¹⁰⁴), is now exceptionally seen as, almost, part of the domesticated space of human abodes: 634-5 πάγους | Οἴτας παραναιετάοντες. Even the Amphictyonic League is, somewhat unexpectedly, brought into the picture (638-39), in order to make all the clearer Trachis' association with the communal activities of organized societies — an unmistakable sign of civilized life, implicitly opposed to Heracles' being ἀπόπτολις (647) for such a long time.¹⁰⁵ Now Heracles' prolonged wandering at sea (649 πελάγιος; we remember again the parodos' sea imagery), and his relatives' and friends' total ignorance of his whereabouts (649) are hopefully over (655ff.): Heracles is at last hurrying back home (645). Not unexpectedly, marital imagery is used again, as in the choral song at 205ff.: as Stinton (1990: 404) has pointed out, θείας ἀντίλυρον μούσας (642-43) does not simply mean 'a sound of divine music equalling the lyre', but 'a sound of divine music answering to the lyre', the implication being that the aulos (instrument of Dionysus), mentioned at 641, will be used in conjunction with the lyre (instrument of Apollo); so, if we also take into account the particular reference to Artemis in the strophe (637),¹⁰⁶ then all three gods who

¹⁰³ There are two possible meanings for μέσσαν: i) "surrounded by the lands of Euboea, Trachis, and Phthiotis" (L. Campbell [ad 635]), or ii) "the part of the gulf between the two extremities, i.e. the innermost part of the deep recess which it forms" (Jebb [ad 633-639]). Jebb's translation of μέσσαν as 'landlocked' fits both meanings while successfully conveying the sense of security implicit in the word. The meaning remains virtually unchanged with Heiden's (1988b), (1989: 94-5) reasonable explanation of λίμνα as 'marsh' (his own interpretation of μέσσα is unnecessarily restrictive).

¹⁰⁴ Cf. below n. 157.

¹⁰⁵ The above considerations should perhaps qualify Knox's (1983: 7) remark about the complete lack of political background in the Sophoclean Trachis.

¹⁰⁶ All commentators agree that χρυσαλακάτου ... κόρας must mean Artemis.

preside over marriage in 205-20 are again invoked. The Chorus' final wish that Heracles should come 'full of desire' (660 πανίμερος¹⁰⁷), along with the erotic connotations of Πειθοῦς ... παρφάσει (661-62),¹⁰⁸ rounds off the wedding-theme by expressing a hope for the re-union of Heracles and Deianeira, for a restoration of the disrupted mutual affection and conjugal harmony, in what is envisaged as a re-enactment of the marriage ritual. Since the Greeks often thought of marriage as a harbour (cf. e.g. *OT* 422-23, 1208-10),¹⁰⁹ the contrast between Heracles' imminent marriage and his previous wandering over the seas becomes all the sharper, thus conveying a feeling of relief.

The third stasimon, as I have already intimated, is contradistinguished from the joyful second stasimon in its alarmed realization of the advancing destruction of Heracles' household (cf. 849-50). *La racine du mal* is, quite naturally, traced back to Nessus' treacherous 'gift' (837-40).¹¹⁰ That 'gift' had followed a fatal 'intercourse'

¹⁰⁷ Mudge: πανάμ-codd. Jebb (*ad* 660), Easterling (*ad* 660) and, most eloquently, Stinton (1990: 405 & 424-26) accept the emendation, whereas Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 165) and Davies (*ad* 660) seem undecided, and Kamerbeek (*ad* 660) is entirely averse to it.

¹⁰⁸ παρφάσει is the word most likely to have been ousted by the MSS's impossible προφάσει: see Stinton (1990: 426-28). He also provides copious evidence (*ibid.*, 428) for the use of πάρφασις, 'beguilement', in erotic or marital contexts; he shows that persuasion and beguilement are needed not only by a bridegroom in his wooing but also by a wife using her seductive charm on her husband to restore φιλοφροσύνη and ὁμόφρων εὐνή. Cf. on this point Redfield (1982: 196-98).

¹⁰⁹ See Kamerbeek (1967: *ad* 422, 423); also D.A. Campbell in Cropp, Fantham & Scully (1986: 118). On nautical imagery in marital contexts see the important remarks of Seaford (1987: 124); on nautical metaphors suggesting sexual congress in Attic comedy see J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse* (New York & Oxford 21991), 142, 161-66.

¹¹⁰ On the supposed love-charm as Nessus' δῶρον to Deianeira see 555.

(845 ὀλεθρίαισι συναλλαγαῖς;¹¹¹ cf. also 565) between Deianeira and Nessus, which threatened Heracles' and Deianeira's new marriage (562-63)¹¹² and ended with the death of the offender-donor. Needless to say, Nessus' 'gift' constitutes a violation of reciprocity. As Deianeira realizes only too late (707-11), Nessus' εὐνοία (708) cannot but have been false: what he presented as a sign of 'positive' reciprocity, i.e. a gift, could not, in fact, be called properly so, for it was actually given in return for death; it could only have been an implementation of 'negative' reciprocity (revenge). In these considerations a pattern of intertwined themes can already be identified: Nessus' lawless *lust* for Deianeira threatens Heracles' legitimate *marriage* as well as his *household*; before his death from the poisonous shafts of Heracles, the Centaur presents Deianeira with a 'gift' (seemingly a token of 'positive' reciprocity), which is supposed to ensure the stability of Deianeira's and Heracles' *household*, but turns out to be a means of 'tit-for-tat' *vengeance* (death for death), thus perverting what seemed to be 'positive' reciprocity into its opposite. This pattern, in its general outlines, seems to hold good in Heracles' case too. Heracles' *lust* for Iole (like Nessus' lust for Deianeira) is a threat to his *marriage* to Deianeira and a serious danger for his *household*. He may have once averted the collapse of his οἶκος by warding the libidinous Nessus off Deianeira, but now it is his own lechery, his lawless lust for Iole, that constitutes a danger for his own οἶκος.¹¹³ Furthermore, the 'positive' reciprocity (exchange of gifts and counter-gifts) that should be the symbol of the balanced life of a household is superseded by a *perverted*

¹¹¹ For the erotic connotations of συναλλάσσεσθαι cf. *Aj.* 493 εὐνήσ ... ἢ συνηλλάχθης ἐμοί; *E. Hipp.* 652 λέκτρων ἀθίκτων ἦλθες ἐς συναλλαγάς.

¹¹² Rehm (1994: 75-76) has some interesting observations about Nessus' attempt at rape as a threat to marital ritual; cf. Segal (1975a: 45), Sorum (1978: 61-62) and esp. Armstrong's original remarks in Armstrong & Ellis Hanson (1986: 101-2).

¹¹³ Cf. Segal (1995: 88-89).

form of reciprocity:¹¹⁴ Heracles' οἰκούρια (542), namely the new 'marriage' conceived by the Chorus as μεγάλην [...] δόμοισι βλάβαν νέων [...] γάμων (842-43), far from rewarding his wife's care for the household, result, on the contrary, in the dissolution of the household, for they pervert his expected wedding (=re-establishment of his marriage) to Deianeira into a 'wedding' to another woman — a most undeserved 'reward' for Deianeira's keeping of the house, to be sure.¹¹⁵ Thus, Heracles' 'gift' to Deianeira is in fact a blatant violation of 'positive' reciprocity, as Nessus' purported 'gift' to her was a perversion of 'positive' reciprocity in that it presented as a gift what was in fact a means of destruction, i.e. the exact negation of a gift. Ironically, Deianeira's sending of (Nessus') 'gift' (603, 668, 692, 758, 776, 872) is envisaged as an attempt to redress the balance of 'positive' reciprocity that has been destroyed by Heracles. Nonetheless, its having originated in a perversion (by Nessus) of 'positive' reciprocity makes such a positive function impossible; this 'gift' has been from the first a means of revenge and such it remains until the end: in spite of Deianeira's good intentions,¹¹⁶ the 'gift' turns out to be, as it

¹¹⁴ On the importance of reciprocity in Greek marriage see n. 69.

¹¹⁵ Cf. above, p. 141.

¹¹⁶ It is pointless to involve oneself in the idle debate over Deianeira's moral innocence; Hyllus' defence of her (1113-42) is eloquent enough; cf. e.g. Winnington-Ingram (1980:77 with n.16); for an answer to Bowra's (1944: 126-8) objections as to the use of philtres (repeated recently by Gasti [1993: 25-6]) see Waldock (1951:98-100), Whitman (1951: 114), Gellie (1972: 65). Such passages as Arist. *MM* 1188b29-38 (cf. MacDowell [1963: 45-7; 58-69, 147]) indicate beyond doubt that to a Greek mind Deianeira must have been held innocent; this is something even Bowra (1944: 147-8) concedes. Her so-called 'deception speech' (436-69) has been thought sometimes to reveal her malice; many scholars, however, from Tycho von Wilamowitz (1917: 145-9) to Fuqua (1980: 40 n.108), have objected to this, and Hester (1980a: 7-8) definitely settled the matter by proving beyond doubt that Deianeira meant well and that her supposed 'deception speech' has a far more poignant dramatic point; see also Reinhardt's (1979: 45-7 with n.11), Gellie's (1972: 61-2) and Lesky's (1972: 216-7) sensitive remarks. On Deianeira as a timorous, passive being, incapable of taking any

would, an implementation of ‘negative’ reciprocity (Heracles receives a deserved reward [494 ἀντὶ δῶρων δῶρα] for his perverted οἰκούρια to his wife), which brings only great woes (871–72).¹¹⁷

Let it be repeated once more: Heracles is assimilated to one of the beasts he fought, i.e. Nessus, in his uncontrolled lawless lust and his destructive perversion of reciprocity.¹¹⁸ In this respect, Deianeira’s (Nessus’) ‘gift’ marks yet another intrusion of the wilderness into Heracles’ own household. Significantly, at the end of the third stasimon the hero is ominously associated with the ‘dark’ world of his monstrous opponents: the spear by which Heracles won his new ‘bride’ (894 νύμφα) — the immediate cause of all this evil — is appropriately called κελαινά (856),¹¹⁹ like the μελαγχαίτας Nessus (837), the μελάγχολος poison (573–74) of the Hydra¹²⁰ and the ἰὸς αἵματος μέλας (717), the supposed love-charm consisting in Hydra’s black gall and in the Centaur’s blood. This point has been excellently made by Segal (1995: 81), who adds: “The spear that might defend a marriage and household (cf. *promachos*, ‘in the front of the battle’, 856) here destroys both; and it is evoked at just the point where Aphrodite’s damage to this house has become manifest (863).”¹²¹ Indeed, Kypris, apparently an ‘attendant’ (860 ἀμφίπολος)¹²²

initiative whatsoever see McCall (1972: 143–55), Gardiner (1987: 128–9); cf. already Kirkwood (1941: 205–7), Bowra (1944: 120–1, 124–5).

¹¹⁷ On the ambiguity of the gift cf. Winnington-Ingram (1980: 86) and, most eloquently, Parry (1986: 105).

¹¹⁸ On Heracles’ overall similarity with the Centaurs as evidence for his animality see Kirk (1974: 207–9) and (1977: 287). Cf. also Winnington-Ingram (1980: 89) and Segal (1995: 58, 87, 233 n.14), and see above p. 140 with n. 61.

¹¹⁹ Easterling (*ad* 856) cites Dodds (1960: *ad* 628), who suggests that κελαινά here may carry the sinister associations of Lat. ‘ater’, Engl. ‘dark’.

¹²⁰ On θρέμμα as referring to Hydra’s venom see Long (1967: 275–7) and Davies (*ad* 572ff.); I follow the latter’s reading of the passage. Cf. also Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 163).

¹²¹ He probably means 860–2.

¹²² The possible marital connotations of ἀμφίπολος here have been noted by

to the several ‘marriages’ of this play (cf. the first stasimon, where Aphrodite was thought of as having excited Heracles’ passion for both Deianeira and, implicitly, Iole¹²³), has finally revealed herself as plainly the πράκτωρ (861) of these deeds. The word πράκτωρ is ironically ambivalent: it does not simply mean ‘doer’ here (nor at 251), as Easterling (*ad* 251; cf. *ad* 860–1) suggests; for, as she herself remarks, “more often it derives its meaning from πράσσειν = ‘exact’ and has the sense of ‘avenger’ or (as a technical term) ‘bailiff’ or ‘tax-collector’”.¹²⁴ Precisely: at 251 Zeus may be seen in his retaliatory function as restorer of balance: Heracles has exceptionally indulged in guile, a markedly unheroic practice, and therefore must pay for that by a diminution of his heroism and masculinity, i.e. by his becoming a slave to a woman. I suggest that at 861 Kypris should be similarly viewed in her retributive function: she punishes Heracles’ illegitimate *lust* for Iole by seeing to it that he is poisoned with what has been the result of Nessus’ illegitimate *lust* for Deianeira. To paraphrase Segal’s (1995: 30) formulation, the violent, primitive past, in the form of the apparently defeated beasts but also of primitive, uncontrollable lust, encroaches upon and destroys a civilized house. Ironically, this intrusion is effected by way of two women (Deianeira and Iole) who act as its instruments. The paradox here lies in that those all too fearful and weak creatures (Deianeira: 24, 28, 37, 150,

Winnington-Ingram (1980: 88) and Segal (1995: 80–1). Jebb (*ad* 860ff.) thinks that Aphrodite is ‘ministering in silence’ to the purposes of the gods, not to the desire of Heracles; *contra* Kamerbeek (*ad* 860–62) who, following Linforth (1952: 260 n.6), takes exactly the opposite view. Easterling’s (*ad* 860–1) intermediate position is probably preferable: “Cypris works by stimulating and gratifying her victims’ passions, but [is] also ‘attendant’ of the gods, fulfilling their purposes.” At any rate, a meaning ‘attendant at a marriage’ for ἀμφίπολος cannot, I think, be precluded.

¹²³ Cf. above, p. 137 with n. 53.

¹²⁴ See LSJ s.v., II. 1–3 for instances. Heiden (1988a: 14), (1989: 54) fully develops the point.

175-76, 181; Iole: 322-28) become fearsome fiends, destructive viragos, who overpower the most valiant of men (Iole: 488-89; Deianeira: 1062-63) exactly by adhering to their female nature. Iole's status can be defined in terms of a woman's procreative power (cf. Deianeira's exploratory question at 308: ἄνδρος ἢ τεκνοῦσα); as we shall presently see in more detail, she will indeed be τεκνοῦσα very soon, but her scion will be a pernicious Erinys (895). Deianeira, on the other hand, remains tied to her household throughout the play (cf. her farewell to her ὄργανα at 905-906), but it is exactly this adherence to her femininity that proves fatal: she has kept the Centaur's poison in a domestic utensil (556), safeguarded in the dark recesses of the house (578-79, 686), and has used her loom to weave the robe that will prove an Ἐρινύων ὑφαντὸν ἀμφίβληστρον (1051-52).¹²⁵

Thus, these two women, despite remaining typically female and keeping themselves strictly within the boundaries of the household, cross the limits of their femininity and acquire male traits.¹²⁶ This has an exact counterpart in Heracles' becoming a woman in domestic contexts. His complaint, in his final monologue, that he, the defeater of monsters,

¹²⁵ Cf. above, p. 143 and see, most recently, Conacher (1997: *passim*, esp. 30-1). On Deianeira's bondage to the house cf. Segal (1971: 100, 106), (1995: 43, 83), Seidensticker (1995: 161-2) and, above all, Winnington-Ingram (1983: 239-40).

¹²⁶ Probably Deianeira's rather un-feminine mode of suicide (sword, a weapon of male combat) indicates an unexpected proximity to masculinity (the Chorus' reaction at 898 may be significant). It could be indicative that in the other versions of the myth (Apollod. 2.7.7, D.S. 4.38.3) Deianeira hangs herself — the noose being by far the females' preferred means of suicide in tragedy (cf. Frazer [1921: 269 n.3]). Thus, the contrast with Heracles' undignified death 'in the hands of a woman' (1058-63) would become all the more pointed. "The instrument of his death is a robe, and of hers a sword", writes Hoey (1970b: 16) — for the implications of the πέπλος as a female garment worn by the supermale Heracles see Loraux (1995: 125-31). See in general Rehm (1994: 78), Segal (1995: 74 with n.19), Loraux (1987: 14-17, 55) and especially (1995: 41-2). Differently Winnington-Ingram (1980: 81 n.28).

has been defeated by a woman, i.e. Deianeira (1048-52, 1058-63), thus having been reduced to a female (1071 ὥστε παρθένος, 1075 θῆλυς), is quite significant: it reminds us of two earlier occasions on which Heracles became feminine, namely of his servitude to Omphale as well as of his defeat by Iole (or, more precisely, by his lust for her: 488-89).¹²⁷ Those occasions were disturbing warnings of a paradoxical tendency of Heracles, on which we have already commented (p. 132ff.): he displays admirable heroism while being in the wild, but his heroism is severely diminished, or even totally obliterated, in domestic contexts. The civilizing hero *par excellence* fails to remain unequivocally on the side of civilization, because he is overcome by bestiality; the supermale fails to be a model κύριος of his οἶκος (as would be only natural in a patriarchal society like the Greek¹²⁸), because he becomes ^{feminised} ~~effeminated~~ and, what is more, ^{feminis} destroys his own household by means, quite paradoxically, of a perversion of a markedly domestic function, namely marriage.¹²⁹

feminisation

^{feminisation}
¹²⁷ ~~Effemination~~: Sorum (1978: 65-6). Enslavement to women: Winnington-Ingram (1980: 85-6), Segal (1981: 79-80). Silk's (1985: 9) reading of Heracles' ^{feminisation} ~~effemination~~ is perhaps too fanciful.

¹²⁸ On headship of a family (κυρίαία) as a male preserve see Lacey (1968:21).

¹²⁹ Hoey (1970b: 10-20) has shown, on the evidence of mainly formal features, that the *Trachiniae* is about the failure of Heracles and Deianeira to achieve union, therefore to construct an οἶκος. The paradox of the civilizing hero who destroys the household seems to have been inherent in the Heracles myth: as G. Dumézil, *Marriages indo-européens* (Paris 1979), 60-3 (teste Loraux [1995: 120 n.20]) points out, Heracles, on the one hand, has a strong bond with marriage, and the recurrence of marriage in his career is structural; on the other hand, however, violation of marriage (Iole) and destruction of the οἶκος (killing of his first wife, Megara, and his children — the subject-matter of Euripides' *Heracles*) are also central incidents and substantial features of the Heracles legend.

3.3.1 The collapse of the οἶκος (1): a monstrous 'marriage',

Aphrodite and Erinyes

The Nurse's narrative is a kind of recapitulation of the themes that are associated with the collapse of Heracles' household. The symbols of the conjugal bed and of the altar / hearth are, as one should expect, prominent in this narrative, since they represent the very essence of a household: the former stands for the marital union that constitutes an οἶκος, while the latter symbolizes the actual *locus*, in which the οἶκος consists, since the hearth is the household's navel, the centre at which its coherence and unity are regularly reconfirmed by means of the sacrificial act. Deianeira's farewell to the household begins with the altars, which would henceforth be doomed to desolation (904-905).¹³⁰ She laments over familiar *household* objects (905-906) and weeps at the sight of her *household* slaves (908 οἰκετῶν). These actions doubtless symbolize the impending disintegration and collapse of the domestic *locus* as a physical entity; indeed, they are paralleled by a similar, but much stronger, feeling of disintegration of the οἶκος's physical, local dimension which is conveyed towards the end of the play. When Heracles, trying to collect his scattered family, asks for his mother and all his children (1147 τὸ πᾶν [...] σπέρμα) to be present (1146-50), Hyllus replies that none of

¹³⁰ At 905 I read γένοιοντ' ἐρήμοι (Nauck) for the MSS γένοιτ' ἐρήμη: see Jebb (*ad* 904ff.) and Easterling (*ad* 905-6); the reason for the corruption might well be that the subject of all preceding clauses (from 900 onwards) is Deianeira. Admittedly, Seaford (1986: 58) offers a most eloquent defence of the MSS reading. Davies (*ad* 905) objects that, whereas prodelision (ἔκλαϊε) after -η (ἐρήμη) is perfectly normal, such a phenomenon after -οι (ἐρήμοι) is a good deal less certain. I do not think, however, that one should exclude, as Davies does, the alternative of κλαϊε being an unaugmented form: true, as Dodds (1960: *ad* 1133-6) remarks, "the augment is ordinarily omitted only at the beginning of the line", but he also provides a list of possible exceptions (*ibid.*). For a detailed treatment of the subject see Davies (*ad* 560, 767, 905).

his siblings is nearby: some of them are in Tiryns with their grandmother (1151-53), while the rest are in Thebes (1154), and only Hyllus is in Trachis (1155). Here, the dismemberment of Heracles' οἶκος is effectively put again in terms of locality: Heracles' offspring (the potential continuation of his οἶκος) have been scattered to three cities; so, the household has, as it were, three hearths, three seats, namely Tiryns, Thebes and Trachis. Significantly, these are the three places which have been *only temporarily* Heracles' abodes, thus symbolizing his inherent inability to dwell permanently at one place, his inherent incompatibility with any sense of locality.¹³¹ Ironically, ritual reception at the family *hearth* was, for the Greeks, a means of (re)integration of ξένοι or of individuals returning from abroad;¹³² Heracles, however, who has been ἐξενωμένος (65) for so long, has no household into which to re-incorporate himself, because he has no hearth. The play begins with Heracles' treating his household like an ἄρουρα ἔκτοπος (32) and with his family being ἀνάστατοι (39), and ends with similar images of displacement, lack of fixity and, in the final analysis, lack of locality. The *locus*, the domestic place in its physical dimension, is utterly disintegrated, and with it an essential constituent of an οἶκος is irretrievably lost.

For a household's destruction, nonetheless, to be complete, the obliteration of its *locus* (the domestic space with its hearth) is not enough: the οἶκος's constitutive act, namely marriage, must be cancelled as well. And this is what happens, on a symbolic level, when, finally, Deianeira rushes into the bedroom (912-13) and makes the bed ready for

¹³¹ Cf. Winnington-Ingram (1969:45): "there is a certain rootlessness about the hero, who has no settled home". Gellie (1972: 73-4) gives a short doxography as well as his own (unsuccessful) explanation of Heracles' calling for his mother and children. Sorum (1978:67-8) and Segal (1995: 49) miss the point. C.S. Kraus' (1991:97-98) reading of this passage seems to me perverse.

¹³² For the meaning of this ritual see Gernet (1981:333), Vernant (1983:141).

her husband, who (as we have repeatedly stressed) has been expected as a bridegroom. Nonetheless, Deianeira makes the bed ready only to die on it: her loosening of her robe (924-26) is a gesture fraught with marital / sexual connotations, as it recalls the ritualized act of a new bride's undressing on her first night (e.g. Hom. *Od.* 11.245; Pi. *I.* 8.45), but in this case this gesture is only a preparation for Deianeira's suicide.¹³³ In the sinister assimilation of the conjugal bed to the death-bed one observes an eerie merging of marriage and death imagery, which is further confirmed by the parallelism of two images: Hyllus' making ready (902 *στορνύνθ'*) what is going to be practically his father's death-bed (901 *δέμνια*, presumably a hammock-like bed¹³⁴) is nicely balanced by Deianeira's making ready (916 *στρωτὰ βάλλουσαν φάρη*¹³⁵) Heracles' bed (915-16 *δεμνίοις τοῖς Ἡρακλείοις*).¹³⁶ If one recalls that 'to make a bed for a man' is in Homer a standard euphemism for 'having sex with a man' (as Easterling [ad 915-16] points out),¹³⁷ one easily sees how the marital bed becomes for Deianeira the death-bed, while Heracles' death-bed is referred to in terms reminiscent of a marital bed (901).¹³⁸ Furthermore, the use of *ξυνοικοῦν* a little later (1055) to signify the clinging of the fatal robe to Heracles' body (a usage for whose grim irony see again p. 144) adds to the dismal effect, for *ξυνοικεῖν* is the word normally used

¹³³ Cf. Segal (1995: 74-5).

¹³⁴ Jebb (ad 901f.), Easterling (ad 901). Seaford (1986: 57 with nn.32, 33) adds the interesting point that *κοῖλα* (901), applied to *δέμνια*, "suggests both the grave and the enclosing hollow of the marriage bed".

¹³⁵ Interestingly, *φᾶρος* can also be a shroud: see Garvie (1986: ad 1011) (I owe the point to Mr Garvie).

¹³⁶ Cf. Winnington-Ingram (1969: 47 n.18).

¹³⁷ Cf. Rehm (1994: 77 with n.21).

¹³⁸ On the fusion of marriage and funeral rituals in the play see Seaford (1986: 56-7), Segal (1995: 73, 81-2) and cf. Ormand (1993: 225-6). On the similarities between nuptial and funeral rituals in general see Redfield (1982: 188-91) and, most exhaustively, Rehm (1994: 11-42).

in Attic legal language to denote legitimate marriage.¹³⁹ The same uncanny merging of marriage / sexuality and death becomes prominent when Hyllus, with bitter irony, remarks that Deianeira deserves to get the same kind of 'pleasure' (819 *τέρψιν*) that she has given to his father. Here, the 'negative' reciprocity of retaliating death for death is perversely put in terms of the mutual *τέρψις* that the married couple should be enjoying in a healthily reciprocal relationship. The longed-for wedding of Heracles to Deianeira has not only been corrupted, with the introduction of Iole, into intolerable bigamy, but has finally resulted in death.

The dissolution of Heracles' *οἶκος* reveals itself not only in the perversion of the relationship between husband and wife, but also in that between mother and son. Their blood relationship seems at first to be cancelled out altogether when Hyllus disowns his mother and wishes her dead (735-6, 817-20). That this act is not confined only to Hyllus and Deianeira but implies a wider disruption of familial bonds seems to be suggested by the somewhat curious phrase *τὰς ἄπαιδας ἐς τὸ λοιπὸν τοῦσίας†* (911):¹⁴⁰ Deianeira's rejection by her son means for her that she

¹³⁹ I owe the observation to Segal (1975a: 35), (1981: 65); cf. Ormand (1993: 225), Rehm (1994: 77-78). See also Lacey (1968: 110), MacDowell (1978: 87) and for further literature Rehm (1994: 18 with n.34). True, *ξυνοικεῖν* is regularly used of feelings, circumstances etc. affecting people (see LSJ s.v. *συνοικέω*, II. 3); but this would not preclude such a master of irony as Sophocles from exploiting the marital associations of the word: the *locus classicus* is *Οἶ* 337-8 (where the synonym *ναίω* is used).

¹⁴⁰ Easterling (*ad* 910-11) has shown that what we need here is a balanced lament over Deianeira's own fate and that of her household / family. She rightly suspects that the fault must lie in *οῦσίας*, and recommends Reiske's *ἐστίας*. To her paleographic argument that ECT could have been lost by haplography after ECT in ECTOΛOΙΠION, one might add that there are at least two reasons why *οῦσίας* must have been the word most likely to fill the gap: a) as Dawe (1996: *in app. crit.*) has ingeniously hypothesized, ΘΥΣΙΑΣ might have been (part of) a gloss on *ἐστίας*, thus giving rise to ΟΥΣΙΑΣ. b) etymologizing derivations of *Ἔστια* from *ἐσσία* / *οῦσία* such as the one we find in Pl. *Crat.* 401

is cut off from all her children, that she has become practically childless (ἄπαις). It is as if her marriage has been cancelled out, as if her offspring never existed. What is more, ἄπαις also implies that there are going to be no more descendants in the house of Heracles, the destruction of his οἶκος being thus absolute.¹⁴¹ Thus, the symmetry of the blood relation uniting mother and son(s) is destroyed, for the son(s), in the person of Hyllus, renounce their role as kin. Nonetheless, one is surprised to find out that this symmetry is disrupted not only by Hyllus' being too 'far' from his mother, i.e. by his being alienated from her, but also by his being too 'close' to her. When he realizes that his imputations against his mother were unjustified (940), he runs back into the house and falls over Deianeira's semi-naked body (cf. 924-26), showers kisses on her lips (938) and — a most striking detail — 'lets his side fall at her side' and lies beside her (938-39 πλευρόθεν ἢ πλευρὰν παρῆς ἔκειτο). Now, the wording used of Hyllus' last action is repeated, almost verbatim, in an explicitly sexual context, namely when Heracles compels Hyllus to marry Iole, so as to not let any other man have the woman who 'has lain by my side' (1225-26 τοῖς ἑμοῖς πλευροῖς ὁμοῦ ἢ κλιθεῖσαν).¹⁴² The similarity

c-d may also have been part of a scholion or marginal note, thus further facilitating the insertion of οὐσίας after ἐστίας was lost. Pearson's (CR 39 [1925] 4-5) οἰκίας, favoured by Mazon (1951: 10), also gives the sense required, but is untragic. See in general Davies (ad 911). I think that ἄπαιδας must be retained (cf. Mazon, *l.c.*); the sense obtained by Nauck's ἀπάτορας is more easily understandable, but for this very reason his emendation should perhaps be considered a *'correctio facilior'*. Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 171) accept Dindorf's deletion of the line.

¹⁴¹ On the cardinal importance of children for the very existence of the οἶκος see Lacey (1968: 15-16). There is nothing "illogical" in the passage, as Segal (1975b: 614) claims. On the apparent incongruence with the legend, according to which Hyllus and Iole were the ancestors of the Heraclids, see below n. 151.

¹⁴² MacKinnon (1971) has suggested that Heracles intends Iole to be only a concubine to Hyllus, not his wife; this view is shared by McCall (1972: 161 n.20), while Stinton too (1990: 484 n.105) is sympathetic. Such a view, however, is

between the two passages is too obvious to allow for a 'neutral' or 'innocent' interpretation of Hyllus' lying by his mother's body;¹⁴³ and an incestuous tendency (if only implicitly suggested) on Hyllus' part would be an exorbitant violation of kin-ties which would nicely balance his other extreme reaction, namely his disowning of his mother. Hyllus can no longer have a normal relationship with his mother; he would indulge either in extreme extroversion (renouncing her) or, on the other hand, in extreme introversion (betraying incestuous feelings towards her).

The perversion of familial bonds that besets this fated household only becomes worse: Hyllus is forced to marry Iole, his father's concubine. It should be borne in mind that a father's handing over of his paramour to his son, even if it was not, strictly speaking, incestuous, was highly unusual. Frazer (1921: 269 n. 4) notes that similar customs are attested for African polygamous tribes and, formerly, for Israel, but emphasizes that this is an entirely un-Greek practice. Since the detail of Iole's being handed over to the son by the father is first attested in Sophocles,¹⁴⁴ it would be tempting to assume that it was invented by him, in order to highlight all the more the theme of the distortion of family bonds which dominates the end of the play. Be that as it may, we cannot forget that,

untenable: see Rehm (1994: 189 n.33), Segal (1975a: 49 n.30), (1995: 237 n.59). In strictly legal terms Iole is certainly Heracles' concubine, not his wife (cf. 550-51); her status, however, is practically that of lawfully wedded wife, since she has been preferred to the actual wife (547-49); cf. above, p. 134f.

¹⁴³ Easterling (1968: 66) e.g. saw here only "the great lovability of Deianeira as a mother". Later, however, she seems to have taken a different point of view (1981: 58): "[Hyllus] embraces Deianira's corpse with the ardour of a lover." The incestuous innuendos have been fleetingly remarked upon by Hoey (1970b: 15), (1977: 286) and reservedly by Segal (1981: 82). Rehm (1994: 77) also recognizes the erotic overtones of Hyllus' mourning over his mother's body, but fails to adduce adequate supportive evidence or to see its full significance.

¹⁴⁴ Apollod. 2.7.7 and Ov. Met. 9.278-80 presumably derive from him. In Pherecydes' version of the story (*FGrHist* 3F82a Jacoby) Heracles asks Eurytus for Iole as a wife for Hyllus, not himself.

as Hyllus protests (1233-4), Iole is (if unwittingly) the ‘murderer’ of both of his parents and is, therefore, a source of double pollution. Such persons, according to Greek religion, were to be shunned by all means — for instance, the polluted murderer of Laius in the *OT* was to be kept clear from everyone’s houses (*OT* 241) — but Hyllus on the contrary has to ‘share the same house’ (1237) with the doubly polluted Iole.¹⁴⁵ We already suspect that Hyllus’ and Iole’s marriage is far from being an attempt at restoring the subverted order. This suspicion is confirmed, when we consider that marriage is by definition a means of creating a new οἶκος and new familial bonds, but the woman Hyllus is ordered to marry is the very woman who, by occasioning the death of both his parents, has caused the destruction of his paternal οἶκος. To be sure, Iole is not an ordinary bride: her advent was, ominously, ‘uncelebrated’ (894 ἀνέορτος),¹⁴⁶ and the offspring of her ‘marriage’ to Heracles was an *Erinyes* for the household (893-95).¹⁴⁷ Ironically, Hyllus’ prospective marriage to Iole is referred to in terms disturbingly similar to Heracles’ disastrous marriage to Deianeira: for that marriage, albeit apparently legitimate and

¹⁴⁵ Segal (1995: 86) emphasizes that Hyllus’ union to Iole is dangerously endogamous, and as such may be a further cause of pollution; cf. Heiden (1989: 154-5). This approach looks promising, but, as Ehrenberg (1965: 389) reminds us, incest is not among the objections Hyllus raises to his father’s demands.

¹⁴⁶ Thus codd.: ἀ νέορτος schol. ad 894 (p. 331 Papageorgius). For a defence of the MSS reading see Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 170) and cf. Stinton (1990: 129). *Contra* Easterling (ad 893-5). For the implications of ἀνέορτος cf. Segal (1995: 76).

¹⁴⁷ Heracles’ ‘marriage’ to her is called βλάβαι at 842 and ἄτα at 850; this is perhaps yet another allusion to the *Erinyes*-like status of Iole, since Ἄτη is closely connected with the *Erinyes* at e.g. *A. Ag.* 1432 (cf. E. Wüst, *RE* Suppl. 8 [1956], 87). Furthermore, Ἀβλαβίαι was evidently a euphemistic appellation of the *Erinyes* (Wüst, *ibid.* 86), and it may be that Βλάβαι was perhaps another name for those avenging demons (*S. Ant.* 1104 is a possible instance, cf. Dawe [1968: 104]). On the formal association of the keywords βλάβαι, ἄτα and Ἐρινύς in our passage see Burton (1980: 72-3).

distinguished, has turned out to be a *δυσπάρεινον λέκτρον* (791) and a *λυμαντῆς βίου* (793; cf. 856-61), while the bride herself (Deianeira) is seen, like Iole, as an instrument of the *Erinyes* (1051-52).¹⁴⁸ This certainly does not bode well for Hyllus' union with her; the 'wedding' with which the play ends, far from marking a fresh start for Heracles' household and a re-establishment thereof on sounder foundations, means only the perpetuation of a monstrosity, of a marital union whose fruit is death instead of new life.¹⁴⁹ True, according to the legend Hyllus and Iole were the ancestors of a famous historical race, the Heraclids. In this particular play, however, there is not the slightest hint of a continuation of Heracles' line; on the contrary it is on the monstrosity of Hyllus' marriage to Iole that the emphasis falls, not on its procreative function.¹⁵⁰ Thus, I should

¹⁴⁸ Cf. the similar passage in *A. Ag.* 1580 (also 1382-83), where Clytaemestra does indeed act as an Erinyes (she embodies the *δριμύς ἀλάστωρ* of the house: *Ag.* 1497-1503); at *Ag.* 749 Helen may be visualized as an Erinyes too. See Dodds (1951: 40), Kitto (1966: 176), March (1987: 70).

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Segal (1995: 86, 89-90). Rehm (1994: 80-82) strangely believes that this heinous marriage actually ensures the survival of the *οἶκος*; cf. Kane (1988: 205-8). Iole's presence on stage, which Hoey (1977: 288) postulates as a sign of the new household that is about to be established from the ruins of the old one, is of course out of the question: see Hourmouziades (1968: 280-84), Easterling (1981: 70-71). W. Kraus (1986: 105-108) argues that Iole, without of course being on stage, is nonetheless addressed at 1275 (cf. Burton [1980: 81-2]). This cannot be: how are the audience to understand that such a vague word as *παρθένη* refers specifically to Iole and not to the girls of the Chorus? Iole's marital state in the play is, at least, ambiguous (cf. 536); true, she is referred to as *παρθένος* at 1219, but there Sophocles is careful enough to add the specification *Εὐρυτείαν*.

¹⁵⁰ See Kitto's (1961: 296-7), (1966: 170-72) excellent remarks, and cf. Winnington-Ingram (1980: 85). It is surely a distortion of the dramatic facts to say, as C.S. Kraus (1991: 97) does (cf. Kane [1988: 207-8] and, already, Musurillo [1967: 75]), that Heracles' "brutal demand that Hyllus marry Iole makes us aware that Heracles will continue to live through his descendants, the Heracleidae." This is precisely what the play does not say! Cf. Di Benedetto's (1983: 152) correct remarks.

not agree with e.g. Segal (1995: 51, 63) or Easterling (1981: 68-69), (1981: 10-11) who see in the prospective marriage of Hyllus and Iole a kind of ironic link with the legendary / historic facts.¹⁵¹ As Easterling (1981: 67) herself has remarked, in a different connection, "... a dramatist was (and is) always free to impose his own reading on a tradition and (an even more fundamental point) any myth and any play that is written about it are essentially different media".¹⁵²

All in all, marriage in this play is never fully and properly accomplished.¹⁵³ It is always undermined by the overwhelming power of unbridled, lawless lust — a crude natural drive that proves impossible to confine within the socially sanctioned institution of marriage. Nessus' lawless lust for Deianeira, as well as Heracles' lust for Iole, equally threaten the marriage (and, ultimately, the household) of Heracles and Deianeira. What is more, in both cases lust engenders a perversion of 'positive' reciprocity (an important component of a sound household¹⁵⁴): Nessus' 'gift' is not a gift, and Heracles' οἰκούρια (542) are in fact a πημονή ὑπόστεγος (376). Even Deianeira, who confines her sexuality strictly within marriage and attempts to restore the 'positive' reciprocity of the spouses' mutual desire, eventually becomes unwittingly enmeshed in the complex mechanisms of 'negative' reciprocity, engineered by Nessus' and Heracles' unbridled lust. Trying to quench her husband's *lust*

¹⁵¹ The relevant legendary background is very poorly documented, for all extant references to an offspring of Hyllus and Iole (conveniently listed by Jebb [ad 1224]) are effectively *nomina nuda*: Hes. fr. 231 M.-W. (=Schol. A.R. 1.824 [p. 350 Keil]), fr. 251 (a) M.-W. (=P.Oxy. 2498, naturally missing from Jebb's list), 251 (b) M.-W. (=Paus. 4.2.1), Hdt. 6.52.1, 8.131.2, Theopompos *FGrHist* 115 F393 (Jacoby).

¹⁵² Cf. also Heiden (1989: 150, 156-7), Rehm (1994: 189: 32)

¹⁵³ Ironically, even Alcmena's union with Zeus turns out to have been μάτην (1148-49); cf. Amphitryon's protest in E. *HF* 339ff. On the ambiguities of marriage in this play see Segal (1975b: 612-13), (1995: 70, 89-90, 92); cf. also Gellie (1972: 75).

¹⁵⁴ Cf. again *Aj.* 522 and Vernant (1983: 132), quoted above (n. 69).

for another woman, she finds herself obliged to resort to what is the token of Nessus' own *lust* for her — and, simultaneously, the means of his *revenge* ('negative' reciprocity) against Heracles. The grim result of this eerie combination of lust and 'negative' (indeed, perverted) reciprocity is, as we have seen (pp. 152–155), death (for Nessus, Heracles, and Deianeira) and destruction of the household. If one wished to put the play's action in terms of the divine powers that act in it, one could say that *Aphrodite* — who has been looming ominously in the background of the play since, at least, the first stasimon — finally reveals herself as a deadly power that operates like an *Erinyes*: the power she administers, namely *sexual desire*, whether contained within marriage or not, eventually coincides with what is the Erinyes' typical function, namely *retributive justice, revenge* (i.e. what, on the purely human plane, we could also call 'negative' reciprocity).¹⁵⁵ Sexual desire, instead of leading to its socially sanctioned form, namely marriage, and to the setting up of a household, becomes destructive lust that perverts the harmonious mutuality of a healthy οἶκος into a lethal chain of retributive action and counter-action. Deianeira's beauty apparently caused her the ἄλγος she feared (25), for her marriage to Heracles was in fact anything but καλῶς (27; cf. again p. 124ff.); similarly, Iole's beauty destroyed her life and her native land (465–67). In both cases, desire, even when it takes the socially acceptable form of marriage, eventually results in the utter destruction of the household, whether it is located in Trachis or in Oechalia.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ On the replacement of Aphrodite by Erinyes in contexts of perverted marriage see Seaford (1987: 125, 129). On Aphrodite's 'chthonic' aspect and her association with the Erinyes see above all Parry (1986: 108–11 and *passim*), although he goes too far sometimes; for the ambiguity of Aphrodite cf. Segal (1995: 81, 93). Gellie (1972: 69), Wender (1974: 14) and Heiden (1989: 120–3) wrongly undervalue the importance of Aphrodite and Eros.

¹⁵⁶ For the destructive power of sex in this play see Wender (1974: *passim*, esp. 15), Sorum (1978: 63), Segal (1995: 37).

3.3.2 The collapse of the οἶκος (2): a monstrous ‘funeral’

The enforcement of a monstrous ritual (marriage to Iole) is supplemented by a similarly enforced, and equally monstrous, ritual, namely the cremation of Heracles’ body in the pyre on Mt Oeta. Strangely, Heracles commands his transportation to “the summit of Oeta” (1191 ὑψίστου πάγον),¹⁵⁷ an utterly remote place, therefore inappropriate for funerary ceremonies, which, as a rule, took place within the household.¹⁵⁸ How much death in one’s homeland was valued by the Greeks is clearly pointed out when Heracles asks his son to ship him away from Euboea (801-802), presumably in order to avoid a death on foreign land.¹⁵⁹ So, Heracles’ cremation on Oeta is a major departure from Greek funerary νόμιμα — a departure which, it seems, one should not disassociate from an all-important theme of the play, namely the destruction of the household by the forces of the wild. For Oeta, the highest mountain in Malls (cf. again 436-37 with its powerful recalling of Zeus’ lightning,¹⁶⁰ and 1191), clearly belongs to the remote, untamed wild: sacrifices may be regularly performed on its summit (cf. 1192), but, as is normally the case

¹⁵⁷ Easterling (*ad* 1191) keeps the MSS reading as having more dramatic poignancy, and Jebb (*ad* 1191) appositely compares 436 τοῦ κατ’ ἄκρον Οἰταῖον νάπος | Διὸς καταστράπτουτος. Wakefield’s ὑψίστου has been accepted by Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990a) and (1990b: 177), and by Davies (*ad* 1191).

¹⁵⁸ Especially after Solon’s restrictive regulations, the *prothesis* took place most probably indoors, or at least in the courtyard within the household: see Kurtz & Boardman (1971: 144), Alexiou (1974: 5), Garland (1985: 27-28).

¹⁵⁹ On the Greek desire for death at home cf. also A. Ag. 503-7 and 539, where the herald states that his only hope that was not shattered is to die in his homeland; also *El.* 1131-42, where Electra most poignantly expresses her despair at the fact that her brother has, as she thinks, died in a foreign land and has not received the proper funerary rites. Cf. Kurtz & Boardman (1971: 143) and Vermeule (1979: 12). In A. Cho. 345-53 this theme is reversed, creating tragic pathos.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Segal (1995: 60).

with peak sanctuaries, it is removed from human settlements.¹⁶¹ Its first mention in the play (200 τὸν Οἴτης ἄτομον [...] λειμῶν ’) suggests lack of civilized activity,¹⁶² while Heracles’ meticulous instructions as to the gathering and piling up of *wild* wood for the pyre (cf. especially 1196-97 ἄρσεν’ [...] ἰ ἄγριον ἔλαιον)¹⁶³ only confirm our initial impression.¹⁶⁴ So, Heracles’ incompatibility with the notion of the household seems to be pushed to extremes: even his funeral, a markedly domestic function, will take place in the wild, away from the familiar, humanized ground of the household, thus providing yet another confirmation of the essential antinomy we have established: the civilizing hero cannot help being, at the same time, overwhelmed by untamed destructive forces. Heracles’ ‘funeral’ taking place in the wilderness is not, however, as shocking as his request that his very son should kindle with his own hands (1194 αὐτόχειρα) the fire that will consume his body. Hyllus’ reaction is one of sheer horror at the prospect of such an abominable pollution (1203-10),¹⁶⁵ and only at the eleventh hour does he manage to persuade his father to spare him the obligation to commit patricide (1211-15). As if these perversions of funeral ritual were not enough, Heracles also asks his son *not* to lament him with γόοι (1199-200), that is not to mourn him properly, not to perform what is not only yet another markedly family

¹⁶¹ Cf. Burkert (1985a: 26).

¹⁶² The exceptional mention of Oeta in a context of *civilized* life at 634-5 must be construed as serving the specific dramatic purposes of the second stasimon (cf. above, p. 151). As a single exception, it must not be taken to detract from, but actually to confirm, the mountain’s general associations with the undomesticated wilderness.

¹⁶³ Jebb (*ad* 1195ff.) and Kamerbeek (*ad* 1196) suggest that ἄρσενα may refer to the “sturdy vigour” or to the “rough and hard wood” of the olive-branch. A wholly different view is taken by Hoey (1977: 281-82).

¹⁶⁴ I cannot agree with Segal (1975a: 47, 49) that Heracles’ incineration on Oeta must be viewed as a sacrifice that restores the order which has been disrupted by the perverted sacrifice at Cenaeum.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Easterling (1981: 64), (1982: 9).

task, but also an opportunity for display of kin-solidarity and family cohesion.¹⁶⁶ That a father's demand for the violation of domestic νόμιμα pertaining to the proper conduct of his own funeral is most astonishing, especially in conjunction with his highly unusual insistence to hand his own 'bride' (cf. 894 νύμφα) over to his son, should be clear enough to an ancient as well as to a modern audience. The absurdity of such practices is, nonetheless, further highlighted by a series of startling paradoxes, which create a highly ironical effect:

i) Heracles displays an almost compulsive preoccupation with ritual prescriptions and meticulously binds his son with an elaborate ritual oath, that takes ten lines to be formulated and sworn (1181-90), even as he forces him (cf. 1258 ἐξαναγκάζεις) to pervert wedding and funerary rituals. He puts forth obedience to the Father (1178) as the 'best of laws' (1177-78 νόμον | κάλλιστον) — a phrase in which one is tempted to detect a grimly ironic allusion to the blatant perversion of family νόμιμα

¹⁶⁶ Lamentation is an indispensable part of a funeral (cf. e.g. A. *Cho.* 432-3; *Ag.* 1554); inextricably interconnected with burial, it forms with it the axis of the funeral rites: Alexiou (1974: 4), Garland (1985: 29-31). For lamentation, esp. γόος, as a duty of kinsfolk see Alexiou (1974: 10-13), Garland (1985: 30), and cf. Vermeule (1979: 15). On funeral rites in general as a family responsibility see Kurtz & Boardman (1971: 143) and Vermeule (1979: 13-17); as display of kin-solidarity: Garland (1985: 21). In Hom. *Od.* 11. 72-73 Elpenor warns Odysseus that he will incur the wrath of the gods if he leaves his body ἄκλαυτον. Kane (1988: 205-8), Segal (1981: 100-1) and Rehm (1994: 80) curiously fail to realize that Heracles' instructions concerning his funeral are in fact a parody of funerary ritual.

that obedience to this νόμος entails in this case.¹⁶⁷

ii) Heracles becomes obsessed with Hyllus' proving himself a true son of his glorious father (which comes down to his affirming the coherence of patrilinear bonds and the continuity of the οἶκος), even as he pressurizes him to contribute to the destruction of their household. Thus, at 1064 (ὦ παῖ, γενοῦ μοι παῖς ἐτήτυμος γεγώς; note the emphasis on the notion of 'true son') he asks Hyllus to bring his mother out of the house, his intention being (as we realize from 1064–69 and, most explicitly, from 1133) to *kill* her. In other words, Heracles preposterously asks his son to prove his bonding with his father by disrupting the bonds with his mother (the bonds that Hyllus himself renounced, as we recall, but which he will soon reassert, cf. 1114–42).¹⁶⁸ Even more absurdly, Heracles insists again on Hyllus' behaving as his true son (1157–58, 1200–1201, 1204–1205) at the very moment when he asks him to practically disown his father and behave as if he were a complete stranger to him: he is to light the fire that will burn him *alive* (evidently a parody of the customary

¹⁶⁷ Sorum (1978: 69) misses the irony here. I disagree with Rehm (1994: 82), who thinks that ritual order is restored at the end of the play, and that this “mitigates some of the bleakness that modern critics ascribe to the drama” (cf. also Sorum [1978: 70–71]). For criticism see Segal (1995: 236 n.47), who had nonetheless formerly held a similar opinion (Segal [1975a: 49–50], [1995: 45]). Nor can I agree with Easterling (1981: 65) who argues that the horror of Heracles' instructions is mitigated by the fact that there was a fire ritual actually performed on Mt Oeta (see on this subject the classic study by Nilsson [1951: 348–54]): Heracles *does* demand the performance of a perverse ritual, regardless of the cultic reality of Sophocles' time; in this respect, Hyllus' revulsion is very indicative and should not be dismissed as merely a lack of perspective. Kott (1974: 141) has some interesting remarks —albeit from a different (existentialist) point of view —on the overturning of all values in the logic of the absurd.

¹⁶⁸ The point is also made, briefly but clearly, by Sorum (1978:66). Cf. also Segal (1981: 86), (1995: 80). One recalls that at 798 Heracles even considered having his very son dead; how important a son was for the continuation of the οἶκος needs hardly to be stressed. See again Lacey (1968: 15–16).

lighting of the funeral pyre by a kinsperson) and, what is more, he is not to mourn him properly. As Vernant (1980: 51) notes, taking up the important remarks of H.J. Wolff,¹⁶⁹ “the key to the entire marriage system of Attica lies in the clearcut distinction made between the *nothoi* and the *gnesioi*, marriage being considered in the framework of the city as the means of ensuring that a house should have a legitimate line of descent, the father’s existence being continued through a son who is ‘like him’, his own issue [...]. This ensured that none of the limited number of matrimonial hearths which go to make up the city was at any time left deserted.” Still, the “matrimonial hearth” of the house of Heracles has collapsed, while Heracles himself, by wishing to kill his wife, is simply dealing the *coup de grâce* to his marriage and his household. Thus, little indeed does it matter whether Hyllus proves to be Heracles’ γνήσιος son, since there is no longer an οἶκος to preserve and perpetuate, while he himself is asked to behave as a γνήσιος son would never do.

iii) What, however, unmistakably pinpoints the outrageousness of Heracles’ requests is that he keeps threatening his son with the visitation of supernatural avengers (1202 ἀπαῖος,¹⁷⁰ 1239 θεῶν ἀπά) in case he will not indulge his father’s whims; at the same time, however, what he asks Hyllus to perform is the very act that avenging spirits should care to punish, namely patricide. Given that a central role of such supernatural forces is to avenge *intrafamilial killing*,¹⁷¹ it is uncanny that Heracles should insist that those spirits will persecute Hyllus exactly if he does *not* pollute himself by committing patricide or by marrying the woman

¹⁶⁹ In *Traditio* 2 (1944) 43-95.

¹⁷⁰ As Parker (1983: 192 n.11) remarks, ἀπαῖος seems in this passage to have become a noun, ‘curse-demon’. On the word see Hatch (1908: 165-69) who seems, however, not to accept the meaning ‘curse demon’ for the word.

¹⁷¹ On this central function of avenging demons such as the Erinyes see e.g. Rohde (1925: 179), Parker (1983: 107), Lloyd-Jones (1990: 204, 207), and cf. E. Wüst *RESuppl.* 8 (1956) 116-17.

responsible for the deaths of both his parents!¹⁷² Hyllus' rejoinders at his father's demands nicely balance this perverse appeal to supernatural avengers, for the young man points out what the normal state of affairs truly is: such superhuman agents protect the coherence and stability of the household and punish the subversion of family taboos; thus, if he kindles the fire that will burn his father, he will be a *παλαμναῖος* himself (1207), thus incurring the wrath of avenging demons.¹⁷³ Hyllus also points out that to obey his father's commands regarding Iole would be virtually a crime against his own family, since he would have to be united in wedlock (1237 *συνναίειν ὁμοῦ*¹⁷⁴) with the person responsible for the deaths of both his mother and his father (1233-37); thus, far from avoiding his father's 'curse demon', he would on the contrary prove to be afflicted by such a demon — an *ἀλάστωρ* (1235).¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Silk (1985: 9-10) and Friis Johansen (1986: 56-57) fail to consider this important point.

¹⁷³ The meaning of *παλαμναῖος* here seems to be primarily “ὁ ἐνεχόμενος μιάσματι οἰκείῳ” (Hsch. s.v. [= iii. 258. 51 Schmidt], cited by Kamerbeek [ad 1207]). However, Parker (1983: 108) points out that terms like *παλαμναῖος* can equally well be “applied to the killer, the demons that attack him, and the (demonic) pollution that radiates from him”. As he goes on to explain (*ibid.*, p. 109), “the unifying factor is the polluting act, which sets up a chain of abnormal relations between humans —victim, killer, associates of killer —the connecting links in which are supernatural powers.” On this polysemy of the word see also Hatch (1908: 175-80). So, Hyllus' *παλαμναῖος*, may well mean ‘polluted killer’ in this specific context; still, the word, because of its polysemy, is bound to recall its other meanings too, notably the ‘curse demons’ that attack the polluted killer. This would certainly be an appropriate retort to Heracles' perverse insistence on ‘curse-demons’.

¹⁷⁴ For the marital connotations of *συνναίειν*, *συνοικεῖν* etc. cf. above p. 162 with n. 139.

¹⁷⁵ On *ἀλάστορες* as inciting intrafamilial crimes see e.g. E. *El.* 979, Or. 1668-9 and cf. Willink (1986: ad 337). Sorum (1978: 71) distorts the meaning of this phrase. Interestingly, it is to a polluting act of (involuntary) intrafamilial murder that Heracles' attributes his miserable lot in life in E. *HF* 1258ff. (he even uses the word *προστρόπαιος*, semantically akin to *παλαμναῖος* and

To conclude: the contradictions and ambiguities that have been dogging Heracles throughout his life are all too conspicuous at the moment of his death. First and foremost, he has devoted his life to ridding Greece of monsters and to making a habitable place out of her (1010-13), but we have seen that on more than one occasion he has shown a dangerous proximity to animality, and now we realize that his own home (a habitable place *par excellence*) provides the setting for the wild to prevail eventually. Furthermore, Heracles, as the prototype of the supermale, could have been a model figure for the male-oriented society that was Greece, but eventually fails to maintain this role, for his end is tainted by his verging on femininity (1071-72, 1075).¹⁷⁶ He has been notably the creator of households (his marriage to Deianeira was conspicuously such an occasion), but he has also been the destroyer of households (he sacked a whole city, Oechalia, to get Iole as his concubine), and just before his end he becomes the destroyer of his own οἶκος too. At his last moments he tries to create for his wrecked οἶκος an illusion of family coherence and solidity, of observance of family rules (such as obedience to the Father) and rituals (such as marriage and funeral), but he tries in vain: his family is scattered, and his son is asked to display his obedience by incurring a double pollution (contributing to his father's death and contracting a marriage with the fiendish woman who killed both his parents). The hero finds himself incapable of rising above the ambiguities and tensions in which he has been trapped. His demise is quite alien to the uncanny atmosphere surrounding the deaths of Oedipus or Ajax; for both those heroes, as I argue in Chapters Four and Five respectively, finally rise above the world as it is perceived, conceptualized and constructed by humans, above its current categories and dichotomies, to attain an otherworldly status, the status of a hero.

ἀλάστωρ!)

¹⁷⁶ Cf. *Aj.* 319-20, 651-2 for a comparable anomaly.

Heracles' case, however, is different: granted, he destroys his own household and he perverts family ties, almost like Oedipus in the *OC*, and is tortured by irresolvable contradictions (such as between Savagery and Culture), like Ajax. Nonetheless, nowhere in the *Trachiniae* are we encouraged to think that Heracles is on his way to attain a superhuman status, in which currently valid distinctions and categories collapse, as in Ajax's and Oedipus' case.¹⁷⁷

This may seem too strong a contention, especially since many a critic¹⁷⁸ has suggested that the pyre on Mt Oeta, where Heracles is to be incinerated, must give a hint of his eventual apotheosis. True, Heracles had superhuman (indeed divine) status in cult, and, as Nilsson (1951: 348-54) has shown, the summit of Mt Oeta had a very prominent role in this cult.¹⁷⁹ What is more, Heracles' divine status is already attested in Hesiod (*Th.* 950-55) and in many literary sources and artistic representations,¹⁸⁰ while Sophocles himself in a later play explicitly

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Fuqua (1980: 78).

¹⁷⁸ For a comprehensive list of such critics see Stinton (1990: 480 n.89); to this list add now Segal (1975a: 49), Scodel (1984: 40-2), Friis Johansen (1986: 55-6), March (1987: 72-7), Kane (1988: 208-11), Holt (1989: 70-6) and C.S. Kraus (1991: 96-8); also Gardiner (1987: 135-7), with original, but very strained arguments. For a list of critics who do not favour apotheosis see again Stinton (*l.c.*), Hoey (1977: 290 n.2) and Holt (1989: 69 n.1); against apotheosis are also Ehrenberg (1965: 390-1), Di Benedetto (1983: 158-60), and Mikalson (1986: 92 n.6, 97-8) who makes the important point that Sophocles (unlike Euripides in his *HF*) does not seem to link the end of his play with actual Athenian cultic practice. Easterling (1981: 64-9) remains noncommittal.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. further Burkert (1985b: 17).

¹⁸⁰ See Stinton (1990: 464 n.31) and Holt (1989: 70-74) for full documentation.

connects pyre and deification (*Ph.* 727-29).¹⁸¹ Thus, those critics have assumed, the audience of the *Trachiniae* would watch the play fully aware that they are watching a god *in fieri*, as it were; so it is only natural to suppose that they would latch on to any hint, even the slightest one, to assure themselves that Heracles, despite his horrible demise, is after all soon to join the company of the Olympians. Several objections, however, suggest themselves: first, as Stinton (1990: 464-65) rightly reminds us, previous familiarity with the apotheosis-version by no means compels an audience to expect allusions to this particular version in any other treatment of the myth, especially if it is a tragic one (cf. also Easterling [1981: 67] quoted on p. 167). In Euripides' *Heracles*, for instance, despite some critics' fanciful hypotheses, there is no hint of apotheosis: no other end is thinkable but death.¹⁸² This, I think, is enough to warn us against over-hasty assumptions: Euripides was able to write a play in which Heracles' apotheosis, without being denied, was nonetheless not confirmed either; it may be, then, that Sophocles (as Stinton [1990: 479-90] has most powerfully argued¹⁸³) has done something similar in this play, especially since according to the Homeric version of the myth (*Il.* 18. 117-19) even Heracles could not avoid death.¹⁸⁴ One should certainly

¹⁸¹ This, *pace* Easterling (1981: 66), seems to be the earliest literary association of pyre and apotheosis —*E. Hclid.* 910-16 (ca. 430 BC) has been shown by Stinton (1990: 481-82 with n.94), after Zielinski, to refer simply to two different and incompatible versions concerning Heracles' demise. In fact, as Holt (1989: 72-73) allows, the *Heraclidae* passage may suggest that death in the pyre with no ensuing apotheosis was the current version in Athens circa, perhaps, 430. Indeed, Stinton (1990: 493-507), while accepting that Heracles' divine status was already a well-known fact at the time of the play's production, argues that apotheosis *by means of* the pyre was probably not the version likely to be widely known then. See however, *contra*, Holt (1989: 73-74), with admittedly strong argumentation.

¹⁸² *Contra*, implausibly, Holt (1989: 73).

¹⁸³ Cf. already Jebb (p. xxxv) and Linforth (1952).

¹⁸⁴ March (1987: 73) surprisingly undervalues the influence of the Homeric

not play down the importance of the cultic and legendary background which certainly favoured apotheosis and against which the play would be performed; on the other hand, however, Sophocles could exploit the audience's knowledge of the undoubtedly influential Iliadic version, in order not to encourage them to take apotheosis for granted.¹⁸⁵ In Stinton's (1990: 489) words, "the audience's knowledge of the version in Hesiod and in cult, which ends in apotheosis, will already modify their response to the play, by making them aware that Sophocles is diverging from it, after the *Iliad*. This divergence itself attests the poet's confidence in his own particular version."¹⁸⁶ Heracles' demise must surely be viewed as a grim finality, beyond which there is no deification, but only Hades: see 1040-43, 1201-1202 (νέρθεν ὄν), 1256 (τελευτή ... ὑστάτη).¹⁸⁷ It is pointless to look for 'hints' at apotheosis in our play: the repeated mentions of Oeta (200, 436, 635, 1191), the implications of 1270 etc.¹⁸⁸ If

version of the myth (death without apotheosis) in a 5th century audience's reception of relevant dramatizations; similarly Holt (1989: 72). There is also another Homeric passage related to Heracles' afterlife, namely *Od.* 11. 601ff. (most probably interpolated: A. Heubeck in Heubeck & Hoekstra [1989: ad 11. 601-27]): there, Heracles' *eidolon* is in Hades, but he himself lives in Olympus. Even in this version, however, the combination of death and immortality is awkward, and hardly mitigates the dismalness of Heracles' fate: significantly, Heracles himself never as much as hints at his immortality as a compensation for his toils (*Od.* 11. 617-26).

¹⁸⁵ Hoey (1977: 272-73), pressing this point further, has argued that the play leaves the question of apotheosis open, "as though [it] had weighed both options and felt itself unable to decide." According to this view, the play remains 'agnostic' regarding any possible afterlife for Heracles. This is perhaps going a little too far in the direction of an ambiguous approach to drama: see Easterling (1981: 68) and Stinton (1990: 483) for criticism.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. also Roberts (1988: 191-2) and Stinton (1990: 500 n.50).

¹⁸⁷ Contra e.g. Hoey (1977: 271-72), Friis Johansen (1986: 57 n.43, 59), March (1987: 76 with n.156), who have variously tried to dispute the sense of finality implicit in these passages.

¹⁸⁸ G.W. Dickerson, *The Structure and Interpretation of Sophocles' 'Trachiniae'* (diss., Princeton 1972), 467-70, 497-500 (cited by Holt [1989: 75 n.29]) ingeniously

Sophocles wished to soothe his audience by bringing the apotheosis into the play, he did not need to resort to 'hints' of doubtful clarity: as Hoey (1977: 291 n.9) reminds us, according to some versions of the myth "Heracles had foreknowledge of the future immortality which had been promised him by oracle if he should successfully complete the twelve labors" (Apollod. 2.4.12, D.S. 4.10.7). Whether those versions pre-date the *Trachiniae* or not, they are instructive in that they show what a dramatist could do in order to introduce apotheosis into his dramatic treatment of the myth. Apotheosis can be either clearly indicated or simply left out; to suppose that Sophocles does hint at it, but only implicitly, is a compromise whose dramatic purpose must remain inexplicable, unless of course we assume, along with e.g. Bowra (1944: 159-60), Lloyd-Jones (1983: 127-28), and Holt (1989: 76), that the allusion to apotheosis is only faint in order not to spoil the overall sombre effect of the play. However, as Stinton (1990: 482) has put it, this in fact boils down to having one's cake and eating it: if the hint of apotheosis is clear enough to be taken by the audience, then it *will* of course qualify, if not destroy, the sombre effect.¹⁸⁹ To conclude, Heracles' ambiguous position betwixt and between savagery and civilization, οἶκος and wilderness, male and female, heroism and animality is not an indication of some superhuman, otherworldly status he is about to attain, but only of his "human, all too human" predicament, from which he proves unable to disentangle himself.

explains the hints of the coming apotheosis as intended to raise hopes that are deliberately left unfulfilled; something similar has been proposed also by Gellie (1972: 77). As for 1270 in particular, Hoey (1977: 273-77, esp. 276-77) shows how it can be perfectly well interpreted without any reference to a future apotheosis.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. already Hoey (1977: 273).

3.4.1 The oracles in the *Trachiniae*. Conclusions

The fundamental antithesis between οἶκος and the wild is formulated also by means of a special mode of discourse, namely oracles, whose role in the *Trachiniae*, as in the whole of the extant Sophoclean dramaturgy, is central. But first we shall glance at a rather exceptional feature of the oracles in this play, namely the fact that they seem to be exceptionally precise: they give accurate specifications as to the exact time in which Heracles should face a crisis (82 ῥοπή), prophesying that fifteen months after his last departure (44-48, 155-68) and immediately after the sack of Oechalia (79-81) he would either die (79, 166) or enjoy a happy life (81) free of toils (168). Throughout the play meticulous calculations are persistently made about the precise time in which the oracle is to come true (44-45,¹⁹⁰ 76-77 & 79-81, 164-68, 821-26¹⁹¹), thus conveying a feeling of certitude and reliability, of knowledge that can be fully achieved by rational means. This feeling is certainly reinforced by the fact that the text of the oracles is impervious to distortion, since it is

¹⁹⁰ Strictly speaking, these lines do not actually mention the period of fifteen months as critical, but only as 'long': see Reeve (1970: 283-6) who suggested deleting 43-8 altogether (after Wunder, who deleted 44-8). Nonetheless, as Reeve (1970: 284) himself suggests, there is probably a less radical way out: "punctuate lightly after 45, so that the δέλτος can serve to explain why the fifteen months disquiet [Deianeira]."

¹⁹¹ The Chorus speak here of 'twelve years', not fifteen months as in 44f. and 164f. This has been considered an inconsistency, but Jebb's (*ad* 44f. & 824f.) explanation remains sound: the oracle at Dodona specified that Heracles should have rest at the end of twelve years (824); "in 44f. and 164f., the reference is merely to the fifteen months which, when Heracles left home, were still wanting to those twelve years"; cf. Lesky (1972: 212). For an attempt to fit the mention of twelve years into its dramatic context see Machin (1981: 157). The question "whence do the Chorus derive their knowledge of the twelve years?" is irrelevant dramatically and interests only those who see Greek dramas as detective stories: cf. Hester (1979a: 13) and above all C.S. Kraus (1991: 92-93 with n.53).

securely written down (157-58, 1165-68).¹⁹² Thus, it seems that, in this case at least, the oracles are a safe means of knowledge, allowing no room for misunderstandings.

After Heracles has been located and his family have been assured that he is safe and sound and soon due to arrive, everyone reasonably assumes that the dilemma that the oracle put, namely 'death or delivery from toils', is no longer meaningful: death is simply out of the question, and therefore the oracle needs no longer be put in an ambiguously disjunctive form (death or life free from πόνου), but in a positively categoric one (release from πόνου). As 821-30 and 1164-73 show, however, the dilemma 'death or release from toils' does collapse, and the initially disjunctive form of the oracle does eventually give way to an unequivocal one, but in a sense that is, ironically, exactly the opposite of what the Chorus had thought: they (821ff.) and Heracles (1164ff.) realize only too late¹⁹³ that the disjunction 'deliverance from toils or death' no longer holds good, because, quite simply, deliverance from toils is death, and

¹⁹² The same point is made by Scodel (1984: 36). Cf. Easterling's (p.3) fine remarks on the subject.

¹⁹³ Most valuable insights on the motif of late learning in the play are offered by Reinhardt (1979: 61-2), Whitman (1951: 103-21 *passim*), Easterling (1981: 58-59), (1982: 3), Di Benedetto (1983: 144-5), Kane (1988). Heiden (1989: 3-17), from a deconstructive point of view, has challenged (with only partial success, I believe) the importance of this theme in our play; according to him, there is no knowledge to be acquired, even too late: everything is a matter of interpretation.

death only (not easeful life, as they thought).¹⁹⁴ There is a general world-view implied in this twist of events: “the open alternatives suggestive of man’s freedom to change his destiny are replaced by a revelation of the decision already made by the gods.” (Davies [p. 269]). In the light that the preceding analysis has thrown on the play, one easily understands how this world-view is exemplified in Heracles’ case. It is Heracles’ fate not to be able to get rid of his constant πόννοι, whether he is in the wilderness, running errands that a fretful Eurystheus imposes on him, or in domestic, civilized contexts. For we have seen how being on humanized ground has dramatically untoward effects on the hero who, paradoxically, is the very embodiment of the values of civilized life: in domestic settings he is transformed into a woman; his heroism is challenged by Eurytus’ insults, his ἀρετή marred by his exceptional indulgence in deceitful practices (murder of Iphitus); finally, in an utter reversal of his civilizing function, he becomes himself the destroyer of οἴκοι, for he reduces a whole city, Oechalia, to ashes, and causes Eurytus’ family to dwell no longer in their οἶκος but in the δόμος of Hades, that negation of an abode. What is more, in an ultimately ironic twist of events, it is at home that Heracles has to face the intrusion of the wild, of the beasts he has seemingly defeated; his excruciating πόννοι, from which it was hoped that the hero would at last be released, are continued even

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Diller (1950: 11–4), Gellie (1972: 62, 69), Hoey (1977: 271), Lawrence (1978: 291), Hester (1979a: 12–13), Segal (1995: 70–71). From the point of view of dramatic technique, as Hester (1979a: 13) and Davies (pp. 268–69) have shown, the ‘alternative’ version of the oracles (‘either...or’) used in the former part of the play served to indicate a time of crisis; whereas now their categoric form serves to denote the fulfilment of a long-predicted destiny. Cf. also Kirkwood (1958: 78–9 with n.41), Lesky (1972: 215–6), Machin (1981: 151–62), Lloyd-Jones (1982: 229), Scodel (1984: 37–8). Bowra’s (1944: 151) attempt to explain away the inconsistencies in the various reports of the oracle in terms of character portrayal is futile, as is Heiden’s (1989: 45–7) view that they are a genuine misinterpretation on Deianeira’s part. These inconsistencies have been demonstrated in detail by Tycho von Wilamowitz (1917: 119–33).

within his household.¹⁹⁵ In Heracles' case, the division between the house and the outdoors is invalidated, for the house is not a "domestic enclosure, a place of security where each feels at home" (Vernant [1983: 140]), but turns into a space that is all too similar to the wild, in that it not only brings no release from toils, but on the contrary ensures their definite overpowering of the great hero.¹⁹⁶ The only release from πόνου is death, since the 'abode' of Hades, being a negation of locality, lies beyond the division between the house and the outdoors, and thus is the only space that can accommodate a hero who cannot escape toil at any place. For his toils to end, Heracles himself must be turned into an 'inhabitant' of Hades (cf. 1041-43; contr. 119-21!); and, in keeping with Heracles' incompatibility with the notion of οἶκος, his death (and the concomitant release from toils) comes from a "Αιδου οἰκήτωρ (1161), as that oracle of old had predicted (1159-61).

So (to return to the issue of the oracles' deceptive precision and clarity in the *Trachiniae*) one reaches again the conclusion which seems to be valid for Sophoclean tragedy in general: the tragedy of the human condition consists in the fact that our knowledge is woefully limited. There are, however, numerous occasions on which an appearance of certainty, and, as a result, a confidence in one's cognitive potential, is created by circumstances largely depending on the gods who often offer *signs*, pointers to the right direction, through oracular utterances (Heraclitus' famous *dictum* about the Delphic god who οὔτε λέγει οὔτε

¹⁹⁵ Interestingly, in E. *HF* 1279-80 Heracles explicitly regards his destruction of his own house (killing of Megara and his children) as the last of his πόνου. Loraux (1995: 40 with n.153, 54 with n.76), in a different context, has made the important remark that the term πόνος (and the cognate μόχθος) is used in the play to describe both Heracles' laborious exploits in the wild and his physical suffering when at last he is back home. Kirkwood (1958: 74) saw that an essential part of Heracles' persona is his inability to find rest so far as his life goes on.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Segal (1975b: 616).

κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει [22 B 93 D.-K.] springs immediately to mind). One is tempted to rely on those utterances which, paradoxically, though not unreliable in themselves, are nonetheless potentially deceptive, and often appear under a veneer of clarity, precision and certain guidance (as in the *Trachiniae*). Thus, one is tempted to assume that those divine signs can be safely interpreted by means of rational procedures, so as to yield an unambiguous and fully understandable meaning. However, one eventually (and always too late) realizes that what seemed to be a clear sign from the gods, interpretable in a wholly unequivocal way, did in fact admit of more than one interpretation, not immediately accessible to the human mind, and that this hidden ‘polysemy’ proves catastrophic.¹⁹⁷ “Die Gottheit redet in der Sprache ihres Wissens, der Mensch versteht nach der Fähigkeit seiner Aufnahmeorgane und versteht notwendig falsch, aber nicht, weil die Gottheit ihn irreführen will, sondern aus der strukturellen Verschiedenheit göttlicher und menschlicher Einsicht heraus”, remarks Diller (1950: 26–7), while Lesky (1972: 216) puts it more memorably: “Der Wille des Gottes ist eindeutig, seine Kundgabe im Orakel aber ist menschlichem Wähnen und Irren ausgesetzt”. It is as if the oracles’ *raison d’être*, as it were, was only to pinpoint how great is the gap between human and divine knowledge, and how people fail, to their ultimate detriment, to make full and right use of the divine signs.¹⁹⁸ As Whitman (1951: 108) has put it, “the supposed clarity and helpfulness of these oracles are deliberately confusing. They represent what hindsight, or knowledge free from time, might know, but which no one in the moment

¹⁹⁷ On the ambiguous discourse of prophecy see Bushnell (1988: 3–4, 14–7, 24–6); cf. also Diller (1950: 13).

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Bowra (1944: 152–4), Kitto (1961: 291–2), Solmsen (1985: 493 n.13). I should not accept Gellie’s (1972: 70) contention that the revelation of the true meaning of the oracles conveys a feeling that there is at least a certain order, a knowable pattern in all this suffering; Kott (1974: 139–40) is a little better in this. Heiden (1989: 144–8) gratuitously questions the validity of Heracles’ exposition of the true meaning of the oracles at the end of the *Trachiniae*.

of action could conceivably know.” The realization of the essential human inability to comprehend divinity and cosmic order is the farthest point that the human mind, with its limited capacity, can reach. Hyllus’ last words (1264–74), along with the Chorus’ final ‘tag’ (1275–78),¹⁹⁹ with the bitter complaint, on the one hand, about the gods’ callousness (1267 ἀγνωμοσύνη) and ‘shameful deeds’ (1272 αἰσχρά)²⁰⁰ and with the resigned acceptance, on the other hand, of divine presence in all that has happened (1278 κούδέν τούτων ὄτι μὴ Ζεὺς) express exactly this feeling of utter desolation in front of the tremendously overwhelming, yet incomprehensible and unaccountable, ways of the gods.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ With Kamerbeek (*ad* 1278), Hourmouziades (1968: 285), Burton (1980: 79–81), Easterling (*ad* 1275–8), W. Kraus (1986: 103), Stinton (1990: 486) I take the lines to be spoken by the Chorus, not Hyllus. *Contra* Jebb (*ad* 1275–1278) and, most recently, Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 177–78). At any rate, as Easterling (1981: 70) remarks, the interpretation of the play remains much the same either way. I cannot accept the view propounded by Webster (1936: 179), Kirkwood (1958: 278), Lesky (1972: 215) and others that, if the Chorus speak the final lines, then Hyllus’ condemnation of the gods is modified: see rightly Torrance (1965: 326 n. 35); nor can I agree with e.g. Musurillo (1967: 78–9 with n.1) and Hoey (1977: 286–88) that these closing lines express serenity: it is the horrified realization of human powerlessness in front of the gods (as well as of the limitations of human knowledge) that is the central point, whether we give the lines to Hyllus or to the Chorus; cf. the right views of G. Murray (1946: 122–3), Whitman (1951: 120), Gellie (1972: 77–8), Lawrence (1978: 304), Buxton (1982: 115–16), Mikalson (1986: 92 with n.5). Even Bowra (1944: 157), who was usually only too eager to justify the Sophoclean gods, found himself obliged to admit that the play’s “close raises more questions than it answers.”

²⁰⁰ Whether αἰσχρά is a general moral judgement or, as Winnington-Ingram (1980: 74 n.3) suggests, a specific reference to Zeus’ neglect of his paternal obligations towards his son, my point remains essentially unaffected.

²⁰¹ On the contrast between the clouded human understanding and the incomprehensible divine purposes see Kamerbeek (1948: 87–8), Fuqua (1980: 61, 71), Easterling (1981: 63, 67–8), Stinton (1990: 487), Segal (1981: 107–8), (1995: 63–65, 94), Heiden (1989: 160). *Pace* Segal (1971: 107), (1975a: 47–49), Sorum (1978: 66–73 *passim*, esp. 73), Fuqua (1980: 58–9), Silk (1985: 9; but *contr.* 11–12!), Friis Johansen (1986: 59) and (somewhat differently) Holt (1987: 215–7), Heracles is

This pattern is also exemplified, with particular clarity, in Deianeira's case. "As the play begins, night dominates", writes Segal (1995: 56), and one is tempted to associate the physical darkness with the darkness of Deianeira's utter ignorance of her husband's whereabouts. As she says, such a state of affairs 'brings shame' (66 αἰσχύνην φέρειν); ignorance is undesirable, and reluctance to search for truth seems to be shameful. Before the prologue ends, however, there is already a glimpse of light — and knowledge: Hyllus brings some fresh news about his father (67ff.) and Deianeira, prompted by her knowledge of an oracle, has her son investigate the fortunes of the missing Heracles (76–85). At the end of the first episode, as we have already remarked (pp. 127–129), the news of the hero's homecoming (186 φανέντα)²⁰² is likened to the rising of a celestial body, probably the sun (203–204);²⁰³ similarly, the arrival of the messenger Lichas, bringer of presumably good news (228 χαρτόν), is described with an accumulation of *verba videndi* (224 βλέπειν ... ἐναργῆ, 225–26 ὄρω ... ὄμματος φρουρὰν ... λεύσσειν), while at 291 the two themes of good news and light-imagery are combined: τέρψις ἐμφανής.²⁰⁴ Soon, however, Deianeira will be thrown again into the

not freed at the end from the limitations of human knowledge: his (only too late) understanding of the oracles does not endow him with superhuman, or even clearer, vision, for all he does is simply to piece together all the various oracles (cf. 1164–65): cf. Hoey (1977: 272), notwithstanding his arguing in favour of apotheosis. On the impenetrability of divine νοῦς cf. Easterling's (1968: 68) remarks; her view that the tragic universe is orderly, not chaotic (*ibid.*, pp. 65, 68) should be read in the light of Kitto's (1966: 186–7) important qualification: "[Sophocles] is seeing our universe as one which is orderly throughout [...] or let us say, since we are apt to confuse order with comfort and 'natural justice', a universe which has its own steady mode of working and is the reverse of chaotic." Erbse's (1993: 65, 67) moralistic view is to be rejected.

²⁰² On the function of visual vocabulary here cf. Seale (1982: 186).

²⁰³ So Holt (1987: 209–10).

²⁰⁴ For light imagery in a similar context cf. *A. Pers.* 299–301 (suggestion of Mr Garvie). ἐναργῆ and λεύσσειν (cf. λευκός) are also particularly associated with

darkness of ignorance, through Lichas' lies; this time, the revelation of truth by the Messenger will be accompanied not by the light of joy, but by the realization of how dangerous the 'most resplendent' (379 κάρτα λαμπρά) Iole is;²⁰⁵ light imagery is now associated with the imminent collapse of the household: the sudden manifestation of Heracles' lust for Iole is described with the word φανείς (433), which, as Jebb (*ad* 432f.) remarks, implies "... that this manifestation was sudden and violent, — *like a fire blazing forth*" (my emphasis). So, Deianeira's quest for knowledge has yielded no agreeable results so far: the darkness of her initial ignorance has been replaced by the light of a preliminary knowledge of Heracles' condition (he is alive, safe and sound, and soon to appear, cf. 181-86); not long after that, however, the scorching light of undesirable knowledge will shine forth: Iole's ominous 'splendour' threatens Deianeira's status, and the fire of Heracles' lust for her (cf. 368) is an immediate threat to his οἶκος. Deianeira's realization of her husband's feelings for Iole is an unbearable burden (cf. 537-38); still, as human thirst for knowing is unquenchable, knowledge is what Deianeira desires most, even if she feels that learning will only lead to suffering. She has been informed by the Messenger (335ff.) that Iole is her husband's new δάμαρ, and has fully realized what that means (375-79), but insists on hearing the bitter truth from Lichas too.²⁰⁶ Albeit aware that what she is about to hear is painful, she nevertheless claims that what would really

the notions of light and brightness; cf. Seale (1982: 189). The most thorough exploration of light-and-darkness imagery in this play is offered by Segal (1975a: 41-42), (1981: 74), (1995: 45, 56-58 with n.128) and by Holt (1987), on whose fine remarks I have freely drawn for this and the following paragraphs.
²⁰⁵ Cf. Seale (1982: 196).

²⁰⁶ Deianeira's persistence in finding out the whole truth has been naturally compared to that of Oedipus: Kott (1974: 130) has some very fine remarks on this: see also Whitman (1951: 117), Beck (1953: 18-20), Lawrence (1978: 294-95). On the correspondences between the *Trachiniae* and the *OT* see Di Benedetto (1983: 145-9).

hurt her is to remain in the dark (458), whereas knowing cannot be δεινόν (459).²⁰⁷ As in the prologue she considered reluctance to track Heracles down as αἰσχρόν, so now, on realizing that Lichas has been trying to conceal from her the crucial fact that Iole is Heracles' new δάμαρ (428, 429), she insists four times that lying (=concealing knowledge) is κακόν (450, 452, 454, 468), debasing, and ill becomes a free person (453-54). Her impasse becomes apparent: not knowing is shameful, as is concealing knowledge; knowing, on the other hand, brings suffering, for it seems that all one ends up knowing is the misery of one's own condition; as Lawrence (1978: 295) remarks, Lichas' scene reveals "the naivety of the notion that the truth is always for the best."²⁰⁸

All the same, Deianeira herself will all too soon indulge in shameful practices similar to those of Lichas, for she will try, for the first and last time, to manipulate her knowledge in order to commit deceit. Now she thinks she knows: she has learned the truth about Iole, and she remembers (578 ἐννοήσασ') that she possesses a secure source of useful knowledge, namely Nessus' instructions about the philtre, which she decides to put into practice as accurately as if they were safely written down (680-83).²⁰⁹ A similarity with the oracles, which were likewise written down (this being no guarantee of their correct interpretation,

²⁰⁷ The importance of 458-9 has been made clearer to me thanks to Whitman (1951: 111-12) and Di Benedetto (1983: 143); the latter also remarks that at 321 Deianeira described lack of knowledge as ξυμφορά. "Uncertainty, darkness, night, the inability to judge — these are the sources of Deianeira's fear and misery": Whitman (1951: 117); cf. Gellie (1972: 56), Coray (1993: 4).

²⁰⁸ Cf. Whitman (1951: 110); Seale (1982: 196-7, 209-11); Holt (1987: 207, 211-13). If, as Beck (1953: 13-4, 16-20) plausibly argues, Iole's presence on stage and, subsequently, Lichas' *Lügenszene* were Sophocles' own innovation, then it seems all the more probable that Sophocles took care to give special prominence to the theme of knowledge and ignorance: see Halleran (1986: 239-40). On Sophocles' independence from earlier tradition in this respect see further Davies (1984), as against Tycho von Wilamowitz (1917: 108-16, esp. 112).

²⁰⁹ Cf. Heiden (1989: 89, 102-4), C.S. Kraus (1991: 90).

however), may be seen here, especially since Nessus' dying words are quoted as almost oracular (cf. 682 θεσμῶν);²¹⁰ in both cases, the fact that the oracular (or *quasi*-oracular) utterances are thought of as safely written down implies that the human recipients can acquire accurate knowledge thereof. In fact, however, as Lawrence (1978: 297-98, 303) points out, Deianeira proceeds on grossly insufficient evidence, for as she admits (cf. 588-93) her knowledge actually consists only in τὸ δοκεῖν (590) and has not been verified by πείρα (591).²¹¹ Nonetheless, she resorts all too eagerly to 'dark' (cf. 596 σκότῳ), deceitful practices, shameful (597 αἰσχρά) as they are, hoping that if she takes all necessary precautions (596 εὖ στεγοίμεθ') she will avoid shame (597 οὔποτ' αἰσχύνῃ πεσῆ).²¹² Excessive confidence in one's knowledge, however, is always dangerous, and, in fact, shame is exactly what will accrue to Deianeira: as soon as she realizes the real nature of the 'philtre', she understands what a disgrace her act will incur (721 κακῶς κλύουσιν; cf. 722 μὴ κακῆ πεφυκέναι); the repetition of κακός-words helps bring out the correspondence with the Lichas scene, where manipulation of knowledge

²¹⁰ The point is made by Scodel (1984: 36) and C.S. Kraus (1991: 88 n.39); somewhat differently Heiden (1989: 103).

²¹¹ Cf. also Long's (1968: 135) excellent remarks, who points out that "πίστις and δοκεῖν (590-1) are contrasted with πείρα and δρῶσαν (591-2)." See also Di Benedetto (1983: 144). The insufficiency of the evidence possessed by Deianeira would be all the more poignantly emphasized if one accepts Solmsen's (1985) and W. Kraus' (1986: 99-100) interpretations of 591-92 (cf. Coray [1993: 14]); for criticism see Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 163). On the unreliability of knowledge in the *Trachiniae* see also Whitman (1951: 110-11), Bröcker (1971: 15) and Gellie (1972: 62); Torrance (1965: 302) seems rather to have missed the point.

²¹² Whitman (1951: 266 n.37) thought that αἰσχρὰ πράσσης (597) means 'fare shamefully', not 'act shamefully'. But see Kirkwood (1958: 114 n.16) and Winnington-Ingram (1980: 79 n.23). For an examination of the shame-theme in this play, with special reference to its social parameters, see Gasti (1993). On Deianeira's δόλος as bound to end in disaster, as do all cases of δόλος in this play, see Halleran (1986); cf. Cairns (1993: 360 n. 52, 363 n. 59).

by way of guile was unequivocally condemned by Deianeira herself as κακόν. Disgrace, however, is not the only fruit of her deceit: as in the case of her learning about her husband's intentions regarding Iole, Deianeira's realization of the horrible truth also brings unbearable suffering. This realization is significantly surrounded again by *verba videndi* (666 φανήσομαι,²¹³ 706 ὀρώ, 711 μάθησιν, 714 οἶδα, cf. 739 ἴσθι, 742-43 τὸ φανθέν);²¹⁴ the *light* of knowledge, of course, is no longer associated with joy and relief, as in the prologue and in the first episode, but with the destruction of the piece of wool by the *sunlight* (695ff.)²¹⁵ — an ominous portent (693 φάτιν) foreshadowing the fate of Heracles himself.²¹⁶ The *enlightenment* for which the Chorus prayed in the parodos (esp. 94-102) turns out to be the *revelation* of Aphrodite's pernicious role (860-61 φανερά ... ἐφάνη).²¹⁷ The 'dark' implications of *light* imagery are also apparent in such events as the 'foreshadowing' (cf. 849 προφαίνει) of a forthcoming ἄτα (850), the burning energy of the fatal robe (cf. 840 ἐπιζέσαντα), after it was 'shown forth' to the light (608-609 φανερός ἐμφανῶς ... ἰδείξην), and finally, of course, the oracles' coming forth to *light* (1159, 1163 πρόφαντον, 1164 φανῶ, 1174 λαμπρά²¹⁸) — the oracles which reveal, however, only that Heracles is soon to be bereft of the *light* of life (1144 φέγγος οὐκέτ' ἔστι μοι).

To sum up, Deianeira goes through two distinct phases, as far as

²¹³ See Seale (1982: 200).

²¹⁴ "ἐκμανθάνειν and ἐκδιδάσκειν and words of 'showing' and 'seeing' are insistently repeated": Easterling (p. 3 with n.6).

²¹⁵ Cf. Holt (1987: 211).

²¹⁶ The meaning 'omen, portent, *monstrum, prodigium*' for the word φάτις is convincingly defended by Holt (1988).

²¹⁷ Cf. Seale (1982: 202-3).

²¹⁸ Differently, Segal (1981: 101). Lawrence (1978: 302 n.16) reminds us that λαμπρός is the epithet used of the sun's light at 99. For the use of light-imagery in relation to the revelation of the oracles see Seale (1982: 206-7), Holt (1987: 214).

the state of her knowledge is concerned: at first, she is utterly *ignorant* of her husband's condition, and makes clear that she considers this ignorance *shameful*. When she acquires *positive information* about Heracles, however, she realizes (and we realize too) how *painful* her new *knowledge* is. As soon as she learns the alarming news, and obviously prompted by it, the deceived and ignorant Deianeira is suddenly turned, to our surprise, into the *knowing deceiver* (*shameful* though such practices are), only to find out that her *knowledge* has, yet again, been *defective* and has caused her not only more *disgrace* but also more *suffering* and, ultimately, death for herself and her husband. Shame and suffering seem to be Deianeira's lot in life, whether she possesses knowledge or not, whether she deceives or is deceived. The Sophoclean dramatic universe as it appears from the *Trachiniae*, is (to quote Scodel's [1984: 36] formulation) "a world where to act without full knowledge is dangerous, yet knowledge is almost impossible to obtain." All sources of significant knowledge are in this play, as so often in Sophocles, non-human: it is either the gods' oracles or a beast's secret advice that seem to offer us safe and privileged knowledge. However, the vantage point which we are tempted to believe this knowledge ensures us turns out, too late, to be an illusion: confined within the restricted boundaries of human knowledge as we are, we are bound to misunderstand the gods' σημεῖα or not to suspect the beast's guile; in both cases the outcome is, invariably, shame, suffering and catastrophe.²¹⁹

²¹⁹ The above remarks can be read as supplementary to the excellent article by Lawrence (1978). He gives a careful account of the theme of illusory and uncertain knowledge, concentrating on the epistemologic terminology used in the play. He too notices that knowledge, though desirable in principle, can all too often be painful. C.S. Kraus (1991) emphasizes Deianeira's inability to interpret the past in a definitive way as the cause of her catastrophe; again, that is, the central problem of the play is put in epistemological / cognitive terms. Kane (1988) offers a good analysis of the various *anagnoriseis* contained in the play and of their role in defining its structure.

APPENDIX

In the recapitulation of Heracles' labours towards the end of the play (1090ff.), not only is special prominence given to the Centaurs and the Hydra, i.e. the two original perpetrators of his death (Centaurs: 1059,²²⁰ 1095-96 with extraordinary emphasis on their uncivilized nature;²²¹ Hydra: 1094), but also the rest of his monstrous opponents are arranged into two main groups which may be viewed as bearing typical traits of either Nessus or the Hydra: the Erymanthian boar is a θήρ (1097), like Nessus himself (556, 568, 680, 707, 935, 1162) and the rest of the Centaurs (1059, 1096). The monster that guards the golden apples of Hesperides is a serpent, δράκων (1100), while Cerberus too is the offspring of a serpent, δεινῆς Ἐχίδνης θρέμμα (1099) — both resembling, in their serpentine nature, the Lernaean Hydra, which was itself also born from Echidna (Hes. *Th.* 313-4) and of which the word δράκων is used at 834. Finally, the Nemean lion is ἄπλατον θρέμμα κάπροσήγορον (1093)²²² — the phrasing recalls the Centaurs (1095 ἄμεικτον, 'not mingling with others', i.e. 'savage'²²³). By contrast, our introduction to the play was, virtually, Heracles' triumphal defeat of Achelous, a monster that could assume, among other things, a serpent-like (11-12 αἰόλος | δράκων) and a Centaur-like (12-13 ἀνδρείω κύτει | βούπρωρος)²²⁴ guise.

²²⁰ As commentators note, Cicero (*Tusc.* 2.8: "non biformato impetu | Centaurus") took the phrase to refer specifically to the Centaurs; Kamerbeek (*ad.* 1059) unreservedly shares this view, whereas Jebb (*ad.* 1058f.) and Easterling (*ad.* 1059) think it is unnecessarily restrictive.

²²¹ Cf. Segal (1975a: 45).

²²² Jebb (*ad.* 1092f.) translates "unapproachable" and "not affable" respectively.

²²³ I give Easterling's (*ad.* 1095-6) rendering of the word. Commentators appositely adduce E. *Cycl.* 429 ἄμεικτον ἄνδρα (of Cyclops). Davies (*ad.* 1093) compares the use of privative ἀ- in emphatic litotes at 1093 with the similar use thereof at 1095-6. On the imagery surrounding these monsters as enemies of civilization in general see Sorum (1978:61).

²²⁴ With Easterling (*ad.* 12-14) and Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 150-51) I accept

the reading offered by Strabo (10. 458; cf. Philostr. jun. *Imag.* 4.1) as against the MSS ἀνδρείω τύπω βούκρανος. Davies (*ad* 12-13) offers a judicious discussion of this passage. I also agree with Easterling (*ad* 10-14) that the mixed creature of our passage is “a kind of centaur, with human torso and arms and the face and beard of a man, but a bull’s forehead, ears and horn, and animal legs”; for *Kentaurgestalt*-depictions of Achelous in general see H.P. Isler, *LIMC* I.1 (1989) 25-28,30; in his battle with Heracles: Isler, *ibid.* 27-8; on the *Mannstier* type in general (human-headed, horned quadruped) see again Isler (*ibid.* pp. 13-18,30). As Easterling (*l.c.*) again points out, “on vases illustrating the fight between Achelous and Heracles the bull always has a man’s face and beard” (cf. Isler *ibid.* p. 32) and remarks (*ad* 12-14) that βούπρωρος would be especially appropriate of a horned creature (πρωρ- possibly suggesting ‘that which protrudes furthest’, the ‘forward end’ of a thing); thus, I should hesitate to agree with Isler (*ibid.* p. 30) and Davies (*ad* 12-13) that our lines imply a Minotaur-like monster, with a bull’s head—an assumption which, furthermore, would be contradicted by δασκίου γενειάδος (13).

CHAPTER FOUR

WITHIN AND BEYOND THE POLIS:
INTEGRATION AND TRANSCENDENCE
IN THE *OEDIPUS AT COLONUS*

*For he is Death and he Life
He the Unforeseen and he the Laws*

*Odysseus Elytis, The Axion Esti
(transl. E. Keeley & G. Savidis)*

4.1.1 The place: between the polis and the outdoors

The title of the play, whether original or not,¹ is particularly significant: as it implies, the notion of the polis² (and the concomitant concepts of locality and custom, νόμιμον) plays a major part in the *Oedipus at Colonus*. But regardless of the title, the importance of the polis-notion is manifest already at the first lines of the play: 1-2 τίνας ἢ χώρους ... ἢ τίνων ἀνδρῶν πόλιν;³ Nonetheless, it will soon transpire that the place is neither an outdoor χώρος nor a “city of men”, i.e. it is neither within nor

¹ It seems more probable that the title is not the original one: O. Taplin, *JHS* 95 (1975) 184-6.

² By the term ‘polis’ I mean here the politically organized community, with its set laws and customs, as against the wild, the outdoors space, that lacks by definition such organization. Thus, ‘polis’ in the *OC* can mean both the ἄστυ of Athens and the political community of local people at Colonus: see Krummen (1993:194 with n.7), Blundell (1993:289, 290). On the complexities in the use of the terms polis and ἄστυ see, however, Henrichs (1990:259 with n.11). I have gained valuable insights into the concept of the polis in the *OC* thanks to the kindness of Professor P.E. Easterling, who provided me with an unpublished paper of hers delivered in Athens in 1994 (: Easterling 1994).

³ On this disjunction cf. Edmunds (1996:101).

without the framework of the polis.⁴ For the character of this place is defined by a striking ambiguity: on the one hand, it is inhabited by people who clearly form a political society (they are called *δημόται* at 78,⁵ and we are told that they are subject to a central authority, the king in the *ἄστυ*, 67); these *δημόται*, according to normal Attic practice, are named after a hero (59–61, 65; note the technical term *ἐπώνυμοι* used in the latter instance, alluding to the *ἐπώνυμος ἥρωας* of each tribe),⁶ whom they worship along with Poseidon and Prometheus (54–56), gods of the official cult of the polis. At the same time, however, Colonus is quite distinct — not only geographically — from the polis of Athens: whereas Antigone is perfectly able to understand that what she sees in the distance is a city, because its walls leave no doubt about it (14–15), she has difficulties in identifying the place they are in (24), for it bears no recognizable trait of a polis (16–19: abundant vegetation and an unhewn rock⁷ are suggestive of an uninhabited place, beyond the borders of the polis). And although she assumes at first that the place is certainly habitable (28; note the assentient *ἀλλ' ἔστι μὴν*⁸ *οἰκητός*), this turns out eventually not to be the case: the Coloniote Stranger, who soon enters, clearly warns them that the place is not to be trodden; this is specially stressed by an accumulation of synonyms (37 *χωρὸν οὐχ*

⁴ For a different interpretation see Allison (1984: 70).

⁵ I cannot agree with Ulrich von Wilamowitz in Tycho von Wilamowitz (1917: 329 n. 1), when he claims that “*δημότης* nicht im technischen Sinne gesagt ist, der für diesen Stil auch nicht paßt”.

⁶ See Walker (1995: 176 with n. 17). On the eponymous heroes of the demes see Kearns (1989: 92–102).

⁷ *ἐπ' ἀξέστου πέτρου* (19). Contrast *Ol.* 8.6, where *ξεστοὶ λίθοι* (whether it means ‘hewn’ or ‘polished’ stones: see Garvie [1994: *ad* 8.6]) are signs of civilized life (I owe the reference to Mr. A.F. Garvie).

⁸ Jebb (*ad* 28), Denniston *GP*² 343 (3).

ἀγνὸν πατεῖν, 39 ἄθικτος οὐδ' οἰκητός; cf. 126 ἀστιβὲς ἄλσος, 167 ἀβάτων). This place is a Hades-like territory (57 χαλκόπους ὁδός; cf. the χάλκεος οὐδός of Hades in epic, e.g. *Il.* 8.15, Hes. *Th.* 811, and the schol. *ad* 57 [p. 9 De Marco]: “φησὶ δὲ Ἀπολλόδωρος δι' αὐτοῦ κατάβασιν εἶναι εἰς Ἄιδου”),⁹ haunted by the dreadful daughters of Earth and primordial Darkness (39–40)¹⁰ — a fact which would normally exclude any notion of civic life (note again ἄθικτος οὐδ' οἰκητός, 39). Still, as we learn from the Stranger, the *deme* Colonus is [οἰκητός] καὶ κάρτα (65), the grove is the ‘stay of Athens’ (58 ἔρεισμός Ἀθηνῶν)¹¹ and the chthonic Semnai coexist, somewhat paradoxically, with the Olympian deities of the official cult (54–56): note that both in 40 and in 54 the same verb, namely ἔχειν, is used;¹² thus, the whole place is incorporated

⁹ See also Jebb (*ad* 57), Gruppe (1912: 361–64), Kamerbeek (*ad* 56–58). *Contra* Robert (1915:I. 23ff.).

¹⁰ The terms Erinyes, Eumenides or Semnai will be used interchangeably, since these three names, in Greek *literature* at least, reflect only different aspects of the same deities: see most recently (against A.L. Brown, *Q* n.s. 34 [1987] 260–81) Lloyd-Jones (1990: 208–11), with special reference to *OC*; also Henrichs (1984: 264 with n. 39) on their association in Athenian *cult* (despite his reservations on their cultic associations in general). On the connection between Eumenides and Erinyes in the *OC* see Linforth's (1951: 96), Knox's (1964: 194 n.12) and Blundell's (1989: 257) important remarks (*contra* Di Benedetto [1983: 241 n.62]). Such views as Krummen's (1993: 201), namely that “the *semai theai* are so peaceful in this play and exclusively referred to as ‘Eumenides’ (not as Erinyes)” are misleading: the Chorus' attitude to the goddesses' grove (125–33) indicates anything but peacefulness; while it is their dreadful aspect as *Erinyes* that Oedipus invokes when cursing his sons (1391).

¹¹ On ἔρεισμα see Kirkwood (1986: 104–105).

¹² On ἔχειν in this context cf. Krummen (1993: 195 n. 9). That the Erinyes were thought of as somewhat incompatible with the Olympian gods is, I think, adequately evidenced. Even if the distinction drawn in *A. Eu.* 71–73 (ἐπεὶ κακὸν ἢ σκότον νέμονται [sc. Ἐρινύες] Τάρταρόν θ' ὑπὸ χθονός, ἢ μισήματ' ἀνδρῶν καὶ θεῶν Ὀλυμπίων) is thought to be too clear-cut, one must also take into account

into the framework of the city, whereas at the same time it paradoxically lies (in more than one aspect) beyond it.¹³

The ambivalence of the place seems to be fully embraced by Oedipus.¹⁴ For the reason why he proclaims himself determined to make his *abode* in this place (see esp. 90 ἔδραν ... ξενόστασιν, 92 οἰκήσαντα¹⁵), is, it seems, the fact that it, precisely, *lacks* all traits of a civilized *dwelling*: it is significant, Oedipus says, that he sat on this βάθρον ... ἀσκέπαρον (101), this visual symbol of the wilderness (cf. above p. 194 with n. 7), and also that he has come to a place whose

that, e.g., sacrifices to them differed from those offered to the other gods in that they should not contain wine (Henrichs [1983: 97 with n.52] reminds us that wineless libations had a distinctly abnormal and 'liminal' character; does this not imply a 'regular irregularity', an abnormality inherent in the very nature of the Eumenides?) and that they were performed at night, ὄραν οὐδενὸς κοινῆν θεῶν (A. *Eu.* 108-109); also, people did not greet them when passing by their sanctuary (130ff.), which was clearly against common Greek practice. On Olympian and chthonic see Winnington-Ingram (1980: 269), Burkert (1985a: 199-203), Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 95 n.9) and esp. S. Scullion, *ClAnt* 13 (1994) 75-119.

¹³The paradox that dominates Colonus (it is habitable and non-habitable at the same time) has been noticed by Winnington-Ingram (1980: 339), and fully explored by Segal (1981: 364-65, 371-72); cf. also Gould (1973: 90) on "the primitively mysterious power of boundaries and thresholds" in the *OC*. This ambivalence has not been understood by Krummen (1993: 196 and *passim*). Vidal-Naquet (1986a: 205-208), Blundell (1993: 287; cf. 288) and Easterling (1994) rightly stress the liminal character of Colonus in relation to the Athenian polis, while Walker (1995: 174-75) perceives the sharp distinction drawn between the city of Athens and Colonus.

¹⁴ Cf. Segal (1981: 363-64), Easterling (1994).

¹⁵ This is the MSS. reading, rightly preferred by the editors to Hermann's οἰκίσ-. See Jebb (*ad* 92f.).

‘inhabitants’, the Semnai, share with him a distinctive trait,¹⁶ namely abstinence from wine (100 νήφων ἀοίνοισ) — wine being characteristically a trait of civilized life (see e.g. *S. Ph.* 715: the outcast [ἄπολις, 1018] Philoctetes has not tasted wine for ten years).¹⁷ It is this ambivalent ‘uninhabitable abode’ that, paradoxically, will provide the setting for Oedipus’ reintegration into the framework of the polis.

It is a further paradox that Oedipus’ course towards integration is initiated with a violation of the νόμιμα of the very place into which he wishes (cf. 12-13) to integrate: his firm intention to settle in the grove (45 ὡς οὐχ ἔδρας γῆς¹⁸ τῆσδ’ ἂν ἐξέλθοιμ’ ἔτι) marks a first reversal of the polis’ order; the νόμιμα are violated (167-68 ἀβάτων ἀποβάς, ἵνα

¹⁶ On Oedipus’ “kinship” with the Erinyes see further Winnington-Ingram (1980: 267-68), Segal (1981: 375-76) and Blundell (1989: 257-58); cf. also Kirkwood (1958: 62) and Wallace (1979: 41). *Contra* Linforth (1951: 94).

¹⁷ On wineless libations in general see Henrichs (1984: 257-60). Fitton-Brown (1976: 103-105) has denied that νήφων ἀοίνοισ denotes an affinity between Oedipus and the Eumenides, but the alternative interpretation he propounds is strained and rather irrelevant, whereas he himself (*ibid.* 104) accepts that we have to recognize a kind of affinity —even a “negative” one —between the man and the goddesses. This is also admitted by Henrichs (1983: 93 n.25), who nevertheless explains the passage in terms of “ritual reciprocity” between Oedipus (the potential worshipper —by way of wineless offerings —of the deities) and the Eumenides (the potential receivers of Oedipus’ wineless offerings). Nonetheless, one should view line 100 in its wider context, which undoubtedly suggests an affinity between Oedipus and the Eumenides — an affinity which I trust is best explained with my consideration of the antitheses between civilized life in the polis and lack of civilization in the wild.

¹⁸ The MSS. reading γῆς is significant, because it denotes Oedipus’ special bond with the land in which he intends to settle (cf. Allison [1984: 72]; Edmunds [1996: 46 with n.20; 101 with n.42]). Therefore, it should not be changed into γε (Musgrave, printed by Pearson [1923] and Lloyd-Jones & Wilson [1990a]) or γ’ ἐκ (Tournier). See Jebb (*ad* 45), Kamerbeek (*ad* 44-46). The arguments put forward by Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 215) have been adequately answered by Bremer (1993: 99-100).

πᾶσι νόμος; cf. 142 ἄνομον), and the sacred becomes profane (cf. 52 βεβήκαμεν, harking back to 10 βεβήλοισ; cf. also 56 ἐπιστείβεις with 37 πατεῖν; also 126 ἀστιβέ, 155-57 περᾶς ... περᾶς ... προπέσης, and 167 ἀβάτων). This is later emphasized anew by the Chorus (117-36): whereas people normally avoid any utterance or glance when passing by the Eumenides' grove (129-33), this foreigner (123-24 πλανάτας ... οὐδ' ἔγχωρος) has reversed the normal order, for now the Chorus are obliged to speak and look (118, 121-22, 134).¹⁹ The paradox is further enhanced when we learn that the violation of this sacrosanct (39) territory has been prompted, insofar as it was prophesied, by Apollo himself (86-93, cf. 101-103)!²⁰ Thus, there emerges a tension between the Erinyes and Apollo which has to be resolved (86),²¹ so that the god's oracle may not be thwarted (cf. 102-103), and Oedipus may be admitted into the sanctuary and 'entertained' (90 ξενόστασιν) by the Semnai. Consequently, Oedipus, although he feels he has been summoned there by the

¹⁹ It seems that the disjunction Oedipus has used with reference to the place (10 ἢ πρὸς βεβήλοισ ἢ πρὸς ἄλσεσιν θεῶν) turns out to have been ironically significant: the grove is an ἄσος θεῶν which has become βέβηλον because Oedipus has trespassed on it. This threatened collapse of the distinction between sacred and profane is associated with the danger of confusion of social categories —a danger inherent in the very act of supplication, as Gould (1973: 90, 100, 101) has pointed out. Cf. Segal (1981: 366-67).

²⁰ On the paradox of the grove's being forbidden to all, yet reserved for one see Birge (1984: 14-15, 17).

²¹ One should perhaps compare the situation in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, where a similar tension exists between Apollo and the Erinyes. Cf. Winnington-Ingram (1980: 265 n.48).

Eumenides themselves (97-98),²² knows that he has to propitiate them all the same (84-110).²³

To conclude, two main paradoxes have suggested themselves so far: first, the setting for Oedipus' incorporation into the polis will be provided by a markedly un-civic and uncivilized place; and second, Oedipus' course towards political integration is initiated by a violation of the polis' θεσμοί, while his fulfilment of Apollo's oracle must run counter to the prerogatives of another divine power, namely the Eumenides.

4.2.1 Oedipus embarks on his integration

Oedipus' willingness to learn, and comply with, the land's νόμιμα is voiced already at the outset (12-13).²⁴ It is noteworthy that this *gradual* compliance is theatrically enacted through Oedipus' movements on the stage: the more his eagerness to comply with the νόμιμα is manifested, the further he moves away from the wild, forbidden grove, and the closer he comes to the civilized, civic space of Colonus. Thus, when he first appears before the Chorus of citizens (138ff.) standing inside the grove, he implores them not to regard him as a lawless one (142 ἄνομον); after a while, when he is exhorted by the Chorus to stand and address them

²² On πτερόν ('omen', 'sign') see L. Campbell (*ad* 97), Jebb (*ad* 97), Kamerbeek (*ad* 96-98).

²³ Note Oedipus' apologetic persistence on his act of encroachment (84-85 ἔδρας ἰ ... ἔκαμψ', 90 ἔδραν ... ξενόστασιν, 100 ἐζόμην) and his plea for acceptance (86, 96-98, 101-10).

²⁴ Oedipus' "docility and eagerness to be instructed in matters of religion" is also demonstrated by Knox (1964: 151-52 with n.16) *à propos* of 464-85.

“where it is lawful for all” (168 ἵνα πᾶσι νόμος),²⁵ and accepts Antigone’s suggestion that they must conform to the customs of the ἄστοί (171–72), he starts to move out of the sacrosanct ground (173ff.; note the verbs denoting movement: 175 μεταναστάς, 179 ἔτι βαῖνε²⁶ πόρσω, 180–81 προβίβαζε, κοῦρα, πόρσω, 182 ἔπεο); finally, the Chorus’ command (184–87) that Oedipus fully comply with the city’s settled predilections and dislikes (with its whole political framework, that is)²⁷ is met by Oedipus’ complete agreement, and is followed by his settling in permitted ground (189 εὐσεβίας ἐπιβαίνοντες),²⁸ and indeed on a βῆμα (192) — a term which inevitably recalls the assembly of the people.²⁹ This *settling* of Oedipus is given in remarkable detail: the Chorus bid him stop at a certain point (192–93 αὐτοῦ· μηκέτι ... ἔξω πόδα κλίνης, 194 ἄλις) and sit down (195–96) — an action that is focused on through its detailed description (197–202).³⁰ This prolongation of Oedipus’ settling

²⁵ The term λέσχα (167) might also have political connotations (=“serious and authoritative discussion that takes place in a political assembly of the people”: Walker [1995:176]). In that case, the idea of Oedipus’ compliance with Athenian political νόμιμα is all the more underlined.

²⁶ ἔτι βαῖνε Reiske: ἐπίβαινε codd.

²⁷ On the use of the perfect tense τέτροφεν in this context see Jebb’s (*ad* 186) excellent remarks. Cf. also Daly (1986b: 67–68).

²⁸ Jebb (*ad* 189ff.) and Kamerbeek (*ad* 188–191) rightly remark that the literal (as well as the figurative) meaning of ἐπιβαίνοντες is clearly to be perceived here. On εὐσεβίας see Birge’s (1984: 15–16) interesting remarks.

²⁹ Cf., *en passant*, Edmunds (1996: 51). This βῆμα must be different from the ἄξεστος πέτρος of line 19 (Jebb [*ad* 192ff.]); and if the MSS. ἀντιπέτρου (or the word that has been ousted by it) could be understood as implying that “à la pierre non taillée sur laquelle était installé Oedipe s’oppose un degré taillé” (Vidal-Naquet [1986a:209 n. 95]), then Oedipus’ progress from the wild towards civilization would be all the more stressed.

³⁰ On the singularity of the whole scene see Jones (1962: 219); cf. Allison (1984: 72–73).

down is certainly meant to recall *and annul* the lack of fixity that characterized his life so far. One remembers that Oedipus has been almost continuously on the move: after a long journey (20) he finally sat on a rock (19), which however he was soon forced to leave withdrawing into the grove (113-14), whence he came forth again after a while (138). Now this continuous and painful movement must stop.

Up to this point it was Oedipus who, being *πλανάτας οὐδ' ἔγχωρος* (124-25), has been running counter to the polis' customs and rules, by his trespassing upon the sanctuary. Now, however, it is exactly this *ἀπόπολις* (208) who, veering though he is between the polis and the outdoors, will teach the Coloniates citizens to respect their own rules and customs! For the Chorus, as soon as they realize Oedipus' identity, forcefully summon him to leave their polis and regress to the wild whence he has come. Oedipus, however, is in a position to reproach the Coloniates for this violation of the *νόμιμα* of their own country: Athens' reputation for *θεοσέβεια* (260, cf. 277-81; note the resulting ring-composition) will prove to be false (258-59), if they expel a suppliant despite their promise (176-77, cf. 227, 263-64). The Chorus' annulment of their own laws is all the more stressed by the fact that, while casting Oedipus out of their land, they use the same language as when they invited him to leave forbidden ground and approach the part of the land where it is lawful for all to stand:³¹ 226 *ἔξω πόρσω βαίνετε χώρας* (contr. 179 *ἔτι βαῖνε πόρσω*), 232 *ἔκτοπος* (contr. 119 *ἐκτόπιος συθείς*), 234 *ἄφορμος ἐμᾶς χθονὸς ἔκθορε* (contr. 162-64 *μετάσταθ', ἀπόβαθι. πολλὰ κέλευθος ἐρατύοι*³²), 235-36 *μή τι πέρα χρέος | ἐμᾶ πόλει προσάψης* (contr. 153-54 *οὐ μὰν ἔν γ' ἐμοὶ | προσθήση τάσδ' ἀράς*). Having adopted the Coloniates' polis-standards (184-91), the two Thebans are now, as

³¹ Cf. Walker (1995:177 with n. 24).

³² *ἐρατύοι* Musgrave : -ύει codd.

Antigone says, practically their kinspeople (245-46), who can appeal to the patriotic values of the Coloniates (250-51³³), in order to induce them not to annihilate the νόμιμα of their own home, and not to denigrate the splendour of Athens by indulging in ἔργα ἀνόσια (282-83).

Oedipus' impetus to be incorporated into the city's body is such that he not only readjusts the locals to the observance of their νόμιμα, but also effects a kind of reconciliation between them and the central authority, the κατ' ἄστυ βασιλεύς (67). For it seems that (surprising though this may sound) a sort of political rift exists between the Coloniates and their king. The Coloniote Stranger has already declared that he would refer the matter of Oedipus' supplication to the ἐνθάδ' αὐτοῦ δημόται — who constitute some kind of local authority as appears from 145 τῆσδ' ἔφοροι χώρας (cf. 831 γῆς ἄνακτες, 1348 ἄνδρες τῆσδε δημοῦχοι χθονός)³⁴ — and not to “those in the ἄστυ” (78), a fact that reveals perhaps an underlying resentfulness, on the Coloniates' part, at the fact that their land is officially administered by “the king in the ἄστυ” (67).³⁵ Now, however, the dispute becomes instantly settled: the Stranger, despite his expressed intention to refer the matter only to his fellow-demesmen, turns out to have gone to Athens, in order to fetch the king himself (297-98) — the king who is no longer the κατ' ἄστυ

³³ Elmsley's οἴκοθεν, instead of the MSS. ἐκ σέθεν or ἔκαθεν seems indispensable; cf. *Ph.* 469. On the patriotic ring of Antigone's appeal at 250-1 cf. e.g. *A. Pers.* 402-5.

³⁴ See Walker (1995: 175). Burton's (1980: 295) attempt to reduce the Chorus to “simple countrymen” and mere guardians of the grove is rightly criticized by Gardiner (1987: 110 with n. 38).

³⁵ As Walker (1995: 175) remarks (but in reference to 297, which seems to me wrong; cf. below n. 37), the word ἄστυ (unlike the ambiguous πόλις) opposes the city to Colonus, and may imply a touch of resentment on the Coloniates' part. Cf. Allison (1984: 69-70). *Contra* Blundell (1989: 44, 125-27), (1993: 295); Edmunds (1996: 103). Cf. above n. 2.

βασιλεύς, but τῆσδε γῆς ἄναξ (cf. 294-95; contrast the Coryphaeus' explicitness with Oedipus' carefully vague wording [289]: ὑμῶν ὅστις ἐστὶν ἡγεμών),³⁶ whereas the ἄστυ is now significantly termed πατῶν (297),³⁷ and viewed as an organic part of their land (297 γῆς). One may maintain that this reinforcement of the deme's bonds with the ἄστυ comes down to a reassertion of the spirit of Theseus' colossal political reform, namely the Synoikismos.³⁸ Paradoxically, the upheaval in the structures of the polis caused by the presence of the ἄνομος Theban has nonetheless brought about for his hosts an invigorated sense of attachment to their νόμιμα, as well as a fresh atmosphere of concord with their king.

4.2.2 The Ismene scene

The anomalies that denigrated Athens' image as a city of eunomic order having been smoothed away, there comes, as a foil, its negative mirror-image, namely Thebes (or the "anti-Athens", as it has been termed,³⁹

³⁶ Cf. Edmunds (1996: 104). Kamerbeek (*ad* 288-91) has missed the point.

³⁷ This can mean Theseus' hereditary kingdom, but also (in spite of Jebb [*ad* 297] and Kamerbeek [*ad* 296-298]) the people's patrimonial possession. So 297 does not necessarily imply resentment, as Walker (1995: 175) thought (cf. above n. 35).

³⁸ Ancient sources: Thuc. 2.15.2, Isoc. 10.35, Plut. *Thes.* 24 with Ampolo & Manfredini (1988: *ad loc.*). Cf. Krummen (1993: 202): "the concept of the *synoikismos* appears in the fact that the deme is both a self-contained unit and oriented towards a strong centre, the city, by which it is also ruled". On the concept of Synoikismos in the history of the political origins of Athens and Rome see J. Cobet in P. Oliva & A. Frolíková (eds), *Concilium Eirene XVI*, Vol. I (Prague 1983) 21-6.

³⁹ Zeitlin (1990: 144-50); cf. Vidal-Naquet (1986a: 181-82).

being Athens' anomic counterpart). Ismene's unexpected arrival (310ff.) will serve to reveal all aspects of Theban disorder as opposed, one by one, to Athenian ordered life. To begin with, Oedipus, as soon as he learns that his sons εἶσ' οὐπὲρ εἶσι (336), i.e. have not followed Ismene, bursts into a fierce tirade, in which he voices his indignation at the fact that his sons' behaviour has caused the νόμιμα in Thebes to undergo a radical reversal. Alluding, perhaps, to the homonymy between Greek and Egyptian Thebes, he declares that Eteocles and Polyneices, by remaining at home and letting their sisters toil for their father, have adopted the Egyptian customs (337 τοῖς ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ νόμοις), according to which men are to stay at home and do the housework, whereas women labour to win the daily bread. Considering now that Sophocles is certainly alluding to Herodotus' (2.35.2) statement that Αἰγύπτιοι [...] τὰ πολλὰ πάντα ἔμπαλιν τοῖσι ἄλλοισι ἀνθρώποισι ἐστήσαντο ἥθεά τε καὶ νόμους,⁴⁰ the extent of Theban anomia can be fully comprehended. However, it will soon become obvious that the reversal of νόμιμα in Thebes does not consist only in that Oedipus' sons have unduly remained at home, but also in that they have not made sure that they both stay at home! To put it more clearly, Ismene tells us that Eteocles, albeit being younger, has deprived his elder brother of the throne and has cast him out of the land (376); the anomic character of this act is brought out by the extreme emphasis on the violation of Polyneices' primogeniture: 374 νεάζων καὶ χρόνῳ μείων γεγώς, 375 τὸν πρόσθε γεννηθέντα Πολυνείκη.⁴¹ So, Thebes, being initially ordered and united (367-69),⁴²

⁴⁰ See Jebb (*ad* 337), Daly (1986a: 79-80).

⁴¹ Cf. Burian (1974: 424 n.38). Blundell (1989: 244-45) tries unsuccessfully to undervalue the importance of primogeniture.

⁴² At 367 the MSS. ἦν ἔρις cannot stand: Thebes is clearly viewed as degenerating from a state of unanimity to a state of strife and disorder; therefore, Brunck's ἤρεσεν (revived by Winnington-Ingram [1979 : 11], and

has become the city of strife (372 ἔρις κακή), unlike Athens that (as we have seen) has moved in the opposite direction.

Thus, the image of Thebes as anti-Athens is now complete, and at this point Oedipus' willingness to integrate into Athens, having already been 'positively' displayed (by his eagerness to adopt the polis' νόμιμα), is also 'negatively' confirmed by his desire to cut himself off from his Theban past (421-60). His momentary hesitation as he veers between his old and his new polis (406-407) Oedipus overcomes immediately, and proceeds by giving vent to his anger in a second tirade, in which he declares the reasons why he denounces so categorically his fatherland. As one should expect, he resorts mainly to political arguments: for one thing, he says, he was violently cast away (note the technical terms 428 πατρίδος ἐξωθούμενον,⁴³ 429 ἀνάστατος,⁴⁴ 430 & 444 φυγάς,⁴⁵ 442 ἤλαυνε⁴⁶). What is more, Thebes will place him at a borderline area just outside its boundaries (399-405; cf. 602, 785), unlike Athens that is about to provide a stable space within its territory for him to settle in (Colonus' marginal and ambivalent character, albeit clearly established in the prologue, is for the time being glossed over; see further section 4.2.3). Therefore, not only will he refuse to offer himself as an ally to the polis

printed by Lloyd-Jones & Wilson [1990a]; cf. [1990b: 227]) is preferable. Vidal-Naquet (1986a: 183 with n. 20) refers to the Hesiodic (*Op.* 11ff.) concept of 'double Eris' (=good and bad strife); cf. Daly (1986a: 86-87): according to this view, Oedipus' sons would move from a good, constructive ἔρις (367) to a bad, disastrous one (372). Surely, however, Oedipus' sons could not have *competed* against each other in order to leave the throne to Creon.

⁴³ For the use of ἐξωθεῖσθαι in a political context see below 770, 1296, 1363 and cf. *Hdt.* 4.13, 5.124.

⁴⁴ See *LSJ* s.v., I.1 for instances.

⁴⁵ See *LSJ* s.v., I.

⁴⁶ Cf. the political uses of ἀπελαύνειν and ἐξελαύνειν (instances in *LSJ* s.vv.). On Oedipus' blaming of the polis, here as well as at 510-48, see Knox (1983: 22-23).

(456) that has expelled him (450), but also he will energetically league with the polis in which he has just been incorporated (459) against the one he has just denounced (458-60).⁴⁷

4.2.3 θοῦ νῦν καθαρμὸν τῶνδε δαιμόνων: the ritual offerings to the Eumenides and the restoration of νόμος

The ensuing ritual to the Eumenides marks Oedipus' complete admittance into his new land, and seals the restoration of order that has been disrupted by transgressions and violations of νόμιμα on the part both of Oedipus (with his trespassing on the sanctuary of the Eumenides) and of the Coloniates (who broke their promise trying to expel the suppliant). Naturally enough, a νόμιμον *par excellence*, namely a ritual, is now resorted to for civic order to be restored: the καθαρμός, on the one hand, legitimizes Oedipus' presence in the grove, while on the other it releases the Coloniates from their fear of the Eumenides' wrath (490-92; contrast e.g. 39-40, 126-33 etc., and note that it is the goddesses' benevolent aspect that is now stressed: 486-87),⁴⁸ thus obliterating any possibility of their indulging again in anomic practices in their attempt to protect the inviolability of their νόμιμα. The detail in which the ritual is described⁴⁹ stresses the completeness of Oedipus' compliance with every aspect of his new land's νόμιμα, even with the most idiosyncratic (note

⁴⁷ Cf. Slatkin's (1986: 218) fine remarks, although she adopts a different standpoint.

⁴⁸ On this double function of the ritual cf. Krummen (1993: 197-98).

⁴⁹ Linforth (1951: 141), attempting to belittle the significance of the religious element in the play (an attempt exemplified in an extreme form in Bröcker [1971: 46-9]), fails to appreciate the meaning of this ritual. On its integrative function see rightly Burkert (1985b: 8-14, esp. 12-3).

that the Coloniote Stranger has implied that the cult of Eumenides is peculiar to Colonus: 42–43⁵⁰). The marginal character of the place (betwixt and between the polis and the outdoors; cf. section 4.1.1) seems no longer to be prominent: now it is the existence of specific νόμιμα, of set rules and customs, that is underlined by means of the detailed account of the ritual. The antithesis between the polis (the politically ordered community, with its set rules and customs) and the anomic wild, an antithesis that seemed to be typical of Colonus, is clouded over, while the implicit tension between Apollo and the Eumenides is finally resolved. Oedipus will no longer be a trespasser, for he is at last ‘officially’ (i.e. by way of ritual) accepted into a place where he is to settle and remain for ever.

The lyric dialogue at 510–48 comes as a conclusion to the description of the ritual, and firmly asserts Oedipus’ position within the polis’ frame. A comparison of this lyric dialogue with the previous ‘epirrhematic’ scene of 138–253 (esp. 203–36) proves particularly instructive: then Oedipus was not allowed to speak because he stood on forbidden ground (166–69, 188–91),⁵¹ whereas now he is not only free to speak, but is also urged by the Chorus to do so (510–20) — the Chorus who now suggestively implore (519 ἱκετεύω)⁵² the former suppliant (cf. 142 ἱκετεύω); he is no longer an ἄνομος outcast (142, 168) but has been

⁵⁰ ἄλλα δ’ ἄλλαχοῦ καλά means ‘in other places other νόμοι are practised’: cf. Plut. *Them.* 27 ὦ ξένε, νόμοι διαφέρουσιν ἀνθρώπων· ἄλλα δ’ ἄλλοις καλά, and see further L. Campbell (*ad* 43), Kamerbeek (*ad* 41–43). *Contra* Jebb (*ad* 43), Winnington-Ingram (1980:264,267).

⁵¹ Even when the Chorus bade Oedipus speak (203ff.), they soon regressed and ordered him to stop and leave the place (226).

⁵² This, of course, is only ‘figurative supplication’, as Gould (1973: 77) has termed it.

offered ξενία by the Coloniates (515), thus becoming a member of the community.

This lyric dialogue also shows how Oedipus' newly acquired sense of political identity may constitute the background for a fresh vindication of his innocence. Significantly, he draws on the laws of his new polis in order to defend his case: Athenian homicide law provided that a killing was justified if it was proved to have been committed unintentionally⁵³ and / or in self-defence.⁵⁴ So, Oedipus contends that he is not guilty of parricide (as he puts it, his act had πρὸς δίκας τι [546], and he is νόμῳ καθαρὸς) on the basis precisely of these two provisos of Athenian law: he did the deed unawares (ἄιδρις),⁵⁵ and (if Mekler's restoration of 547 is correct) he acted in self-defence: καὶ γὰρ ἄν, οὓς ἐφόνευσ', ἔμ'

⁵³ Ostwald (1969: 47), MacDowell (1963: 45–47, 58–69); (1978: 114–16).

⁵⁴ MacDowell (1978: 114). Cf. also H. Funke, *Die sogenannte tragische Schuld. Studien zur Rechtsidee in der griechischen Tragödie* (Diss. Köln 1963), 54–62: an Athenian lawcourt would have acquitted Oedipus on the grounds that his act was committed in self-defence without premeditation. See now Edmunds (1996: 134–8).

⁵⁵ Oedipus' killing of Laius, albeit not involuntary, was committed without knowledge of the victim's identity: since cases of unwitting parricide (as in the case of Oedipus) do not seem to have been taken into account in Attic law, one has to accept that the important distinction (fundamental in Attic law: see above n. 53) between act and intention, which Oedipus draws here, is justification enough for his past act: see Arist. *EN* 1109b30–11b3, and esp. 1135a28–30; cf. e.g. Blundell (1989: 249 with n. 79), Bowra (1944: 317), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 261–62). I am grateful to Professor D.M. MacDowell for discussing this matter with me.

ἀπώλεσαν.⁵⁶ Obviously he now picks up and rounds off the twofold argument he put forward (rather tentatively) at 270–74,⁵⁷ namely that he acted in ignorance as well as in self-defence. Moreover, he now attempts (practically for the first time; contrast 270–74) to justify his incest too, again in terms of the polis.⁵⁸ His marriage to his own mother was not his own choice (cf. 539 οὐκ ἔρεξα), but a *political* decision by the city of Thebes (cf. 525 πόλις, 541 πόλεος⁵⁹), which he accepted *in ignorance* (525 οὐδὲν ἴδριν): the harm that one polis (Thebes) has done can be undone by another polis (Athens) which provides the necessary legal framework (i.e. the all-important distinction between act and intention [cf. n. 53]) for Oedipus to vindicate his innocence.

4.3.1 The Theseus scene: Oedipus ἔμπολις. Transition to the second part of the play: the first signs of reversal

The intense struggle we have been witnessing since the outset between Oedipus the newcomer and the Coloniote citizens (a struggle the

⁵⁶ Mekler's text is printed by Jebb; see however Burton's (1980: 263) misgivings; cf. also Ulrich von Wilamowitz in Tycho von Wilamowitz (1917: 349 n. 1), who has put forward (*ibid.* 349) an interpretation along the same lines (on the basis of Dem. 23. 53), reading Hermann's ἀλούς for the MSS ἄλλους. Even if, as Howe (1962: 140–41) proposes, we regard as a Sophoclean innovation the plea that one should not be considered as guilty who kills even his father in self-defence, Oedipus still appeals to the 'self-defence' proviso of Attic law. Rosenmeyer (1952: 96–97) is entirely unjustified in dismissing Oedipus' apology as specious.

⁵⁷ On the connection between the two scenes cf. Burton (1980: 262–63). Lesky (1952: 101) does not see the point of this seeming reiteration.

⁵⁸ Reinhardt (1979: 207).

⁵⁹ Hermann's slight correction of the MSS. πόλεως is thematically appropriate (cf. 525) and should be retained, *pace* Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990a) —cf. (1990b: 234–35)—who print Rauchenstein's ὄφελον instead.

Coloniote Stranger had succinctly encapsulated in a disjunction: *μίμνειν ἢ πορεύεσθαι πάλιν* 80), seems to have reached an end. Oedipus has at last wholeheartedly complied with the *νόμοι* of his new polis, and has been incorporated into the political framework within which his blessings will be fully manifested and conferred on the polis: being *ἔμπολις*⁶⁰ (637), he will pay proper *δασμός* to his new land (635) by protecting them against their enemies (576-78, 621-23). Theseus merely ratifies Oedipus' integration into the polis — an integration that has been essentially effected with the ritual to the Eumenides. Significantly, Theseus picks up where the Chorus have left off, taking over from them and rounding off the procedure of Oedipus' admission: he begins by expressing his pity (556) for the stranger, whereas the Chorus had begun with downright hostility (226), moved on to fear (292 *ταρβεῖν*) and only at 461 (*κατοικτίσαι*) did they end up pitying him. Theseus is not afraid of listening to or looking at Oedipus (551 *ἀκούων*, 554 *λεύσσω*⁶¹), whereas for the Chorus the blind man was *δεινὸς μὲν ὄραν*, *δεινὸς δὲ κλύειν* (141); finally, Theseus urges Oedipus to speak (557 *ὑπέρεσθαι*, 560 *δίδασκέ*, 561 *λέξασ*, 575 *δίδασχ'*), whereas the Chorus had reached this point only at 510-48.⁶² The Theseus scene suggests itself as the end of

⁶⁰ *ἔμπολιν* is Musgrave's widely (and correctly) accepted correction of the MSS. *ἔμπαλιν*. See Jebb (*ad* 637). Vidal-Naquet (1986a: 191-204) does not favour the emendation, and maintains that Oedipus is not granted full citizenship, but becomes "un métèque privilégié" (*ibid.* 204); however, it is no use to pretend that the MSS. *ἔμπαλιν* makes sense. Vidal-Naquet's view is justly criticized by Easterling (1994).

⁶¹ Nauck's emendation for the MSS. dittography (cf. 551) *ἀκούων*.

⁶² Cf. also Burian (1974: 414-15). I would not, as Blundell (1993: 292-93) does, draw too sharp a distinction between the Chorus' religious anxiety about pollution and Theseus' concern for ethics: Theseus' behaviour is rather the culmination and ratification of the Chorus' progressively changing attitude. See Slatkin (1986: 219); *contra* Walker (1995: 179).

Oedipus' long-lasting troubles, and conveys a marked feeling of permanence and stability: even when the king mentions the mutability of the human condition (562-64, 566-68), he does so only in order to stress that he will by all means see to it that, in Oedipus' case, the vicissitudes of fortune come to an end: for he will now be accepted into Athens, whose political framework ensures coherence, certitude, and predictability in human life.⁶³

Oedipus, however, will destroy quite soon this illusion by pointing out that this is not, after all, the end of his painful struggle towards reintegration. For he makes it quite clear that keeping him within their borders will be a test for his new fellow-citizens (587; note the emphatic repetition of οὐ); what is more, he will teach (607ff.) the statesman Theseus that nothing but the gods is permanent, whereas politics is as fickle and mutable a business as anything. In the prospect of long time (609, 617-18) nothing can be certain or predictable (614-5);⁶⁴ in fact, even in the short term certitude and insouciance are by no means guaranteed (586-7). These unsettling considerations seem to qualify even Oedipus' confidence in Theseus' ability to protect him, for he manifests thrice his anxiety that the king should keep his word (625-6, 648, 650), while the agitated ἀντιλαβαί at 652-6 underline this fact with the starkest clarity. Nonetheless, Theseus, as I have already implied, is a statesman, unaware of what lies beyond the determinate, fixed frame of the polis; so, he is not able (or willing) to comprehend such admonitions. Thus, in his answer (631-41) he conspicuously fails to take into

⁶³ Thus, I cannot agree with Knox (1964: 152), who prefers to see a "tragic sense of life" in Theseus' words; similar views in Bowra (1944: 332), Buxton (1982: 135), Di Benedetto (1983: 231). However, Lesky (1952: 102) has carefully reminded us that Theseus' youth, although he was a ξένος, was free of sorrow (unlike Oedipus' old age).

⁶⁴ See Sgroi (1962: 286); Torrance (1965: 287); De Romilly (1968: 99-100).

consideration Oedipus' meditations on the vicissitudes of life: the old man has emphatically referred to a future disruption of the Athenian-Theban alliance (616-23), but Theseus dwells on the present friendship between the two cities — a friendship which he significantly calls 'eternal' (633 αἰέν); he also says that the old suppliant is a benefactor sent by the gods (634-35), whereas Oedipus himself has twice qualified, with conditional clauses, his certainty about the gods' plan (623 εἰ Ζεὺς ἔτι Ζεὺς χὼ Διὸς Φοῖβος σαφής, 628 εἴπερ μὴ θεοὶ ψεύσουσι [ψεύδουσι K] με).⁶⁵ Therefore, it turns out that what we have been expecting to be Oedipus' unperturbed settling in his new polis may actually be only a temporary state of affairs, liable to be thwarted by unpredictable factors.

Indeed, the first unsettling signs indicating a reversal of the procedure of Oedipus' naturalization are not long to appear. We have witnessed the tensions and ambivalences that defined Colonus (section 4.1.1) being happily resolved, with Oedipus being ensured permanent residence there, but now (in a typically Sophoclean *coup de théâtre*) we are presented with unmistakable hints suggesting that the painfully gained fixity and immutability are gradually disintegrating into instability and impermanence. Such hints are offered in the first stasimon (668-719).⁶⁶ *Prima facie*, this is an ode meant to bid Oedipus welcome to his new land, and this is of course its chief function. However, as often in Sophocles, appearance deludes. For all its specific references to Attic locale, which create a distinct feeling of fixedness and permanence, this song also reverses the themes that characterized the procedure of

⁶⁵ Cf. Linforth (1951: 88-89, 145). Note, at the former passage, the ἔτι: the time factor seems to be important even for the gods! On the significance of conditional clauses in Sophocles see Introduction, section 0.4.2.

⁶⁶ For three different, but equally interesting, interpretations of this famous ode see Knox (1964: 154-56), Burton (1980: 274-80), Segal (1981: 373-74). Most recently, Edmunds (1996: 92-4) has offered a political interpretation thereof.

Oedipus' settling in the land. So, the word ἔπαυλα (669) used of Colonus is ambiguous, for it can mean both 'dwelling, abode' and 'fold for cattle' (see LSJ s.v.), while the cognate ἔπαυλις is generally used of farmsteads or military bivouacs (cf. ἀυλίζεσθαι, 'to bivouac');⁶⁷ in both cases, that is, the word clearly does not refer to permanent civilized residence as we know it, but either to housings for animals or to temporary quarters — a first indication that Colonus is *not* going, after all, to be the place where Oedipus will settle for good. Furthermore, the vineyards of Colonus are suggestively referred to with the adjective ἄβατος (675; only Dionysus ἐμβατεύει there, 679⁶⁸), which unmistakably recalls 167 ἀβάτων ἀποβάς; so, as soon as Oedipus has (or seems to have) settled at Colonus for good, we are again reminded that this is a place *not to be trodden upon*. A similar effect is created by the allusion to the Μορίαί (cf. 705 Μορίου Διός),⁶⁹ the sacred olives that were state property not to be approached by individuals; again, that is, the idea of forbidden ground is brought up. And if the motifs of stability and permanence recur once more (672 θαμίζουσα μάλιστα, 674 ἔχουσα, 679 αἰεί, 682 κατ' ἡμαρ αἰεί, 688 αἰὲν ἐπ' ἡματι),⁷⁰ it is only in order to be set off by an upsurge of the themes of motion and restlessness (685-86 ἄυπνοι, 687 νομάδες,⁷¹ 716-17

⁶⁷ See LSJ s.vv. The latter meaning is not taken into account either by McDevitt (1972b: 230) or by Kirkwood (1986: 106).

⁶⁸ One should not, as Vicaire (1968: 366-67) does, see a "tableau idyllique" in this reference to Dionysus — a view underlying even the much subtler treatment of Zeitlin (1990: 164-5). It is Dionysus' uncanny aspect that is recalled here.

⁶⁹ See Jebb (*ad* 705).

⁷⁰ Cf. Burton (1980: 275 with n. 25).

⁷¹ Jebb (*ad* 687) thinks that irrigation canals are meant; but Kirsten (1973: 22) correctly considers "mit wechselndem Bett" as a possible meaning.

χέρσον | παραπτομένα πλάτα⁷²): to be sure, Colonus is an area defined by pervasive antitheses between stability and change, permanence and temporariness.⁷³ Furthermore, as Di Benedetto (1983: 236–37) has remarked, the political dimension is totally absent from this ode: Attica seems to be inhabited by plants, animals, and gods, but not by people (contrast the third stasimon in *E. Med.* where the Erechtheids are given a prominent place); that is to say, “la polis come organizzazione politica è del tutto fuori campo” (*ibid.* 236).⁷⁴ Far from being a place that would provide (as we have been expecting) a permanent framework for Oedipus’ incorporation into the polis, it proves to be a borderline area in which limits are subverted: even the fundamental distinction between Upperworld and Underworld is confounded, for on the one hand the powers of life seem to reign there (673 χλωραῖς, 676 μυριόκαρπον, 681 & 700 θάλλει, 682 καλίβοτρυς, 689 ὠκυτόκος, 697 βλαστόν, 701 παιδοτρόφου, etc.), whereas on the other the presence of death looms ominous over the place, for the narcissus (683) and the crocus (685) are plants usually associated with the dead;⁷⁵ even the numerous nightingales that chirped harmoniously at the outset (17–18) have been now replaced by a solitary ἀηδών that laments with a plaintive voice (671 λίγεια μινύρεται).⁷⁶ To sum up: once Oedipus’ long and painful

⁷² With Dawe’s (1996: *in textu*) very plausible emendation of the MSS. χερσί. See Dawe (1978: 141–42). Another solution is propounded by Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 238–39). Stinton’s (1990: 268–69) speculations are unconvincing.

⁷³ For a brilliant discussion of the antitheses between death and life, light and darkness, joy and gloom in this ode see McDevitt (1972b: 232–35), although I do not fully agree with his conclusions (*ibid.* 236–37).

⁷⁴ Cf. Sgroi (1962: 284–85).

⁷⁵ See Jebb (*ad* 683, and 685), McDevitt (1972b: 233–34).

⁷⁶ See LSJ s.v. λιγύς, II: “mostly of sad sounds”. On μινύρεσθαι see Knox (1964: 195 n.22). McDevitt (1972b: 231–32) deftly explores the nightingale’s associations with lamentation and death; in the light of his remarks, I think that Whitman

struggle towards integration into the polis seems to have reached an end, there come disturbing signs, warning us that what we think of as settled and established is in fact liable to change and reversal. Locality, a most important constituent of the polis-concept, starts to disintegrate, as the notions of incoherence and confusion of limits prevail. One may now suspect that, after the fixedness of locality has been disturbed, a major subversion of the polis' νόμιμα, which Oedipus has been so eager to embrace, will ensue. And this is indeed what happens in the following Creon scene.

4.4.1 Second part. The Creon scene. The polis of Athens, the polis of Thebes, and Oedipus the autonomous individual

No doubt, Creon is an unqualified scoundrel. My concern, however, is not to offer yet another castigation of his wretchedness, but to detect the dramatic importance of his part for the interplay between Oedipus' incorporation into the polis' framework and his subversion of its νόμιμα — an interplay that seems to have established itself as the main pattern of the play. And one must admit that Creon, for all his baseness, firmly adheres to the interests of his polis and tries to serve the common purpose.

These generalizations can be illustrated by a detailed examination of Creon's debates first with Oedipus and then with Theseus. In the former scene, a most striking fact is that Oedipus unexpectedly gives up his previous persistence in the polis-concept (a concept by virtue of which, one recalls, he has defended his right not only to remain in the

(1951:201-202) makes too much of the nightingale's supposedly idyllic song in this ode.

sanctuary as a suppliant, but also to be incorporated into the Athenian political framework, by accepting its νόμοι; see sections 4.2.1-4.2.3 *passim*); thus, the clash with Thebes is no longer a political matter for Oedipus: surprisingly, it is its personal dimension that now prevails by far. The contrast between Creon the statesman and Oedipus the autonomous individual is striking. Creon emphatically proclaims that he represents the entire Thebes (737-38, 741-42, 850-51);⁷⁷ he is fully aware that he has come to a foreign πόλις (733) where he no longer possesses the authority he does in Thebes (732-34; cf. 1018, 1036-37), but he also points out that Oedipus should be equally aware of his patriotic duties towards his native polis of Thebes (757-60; cf. 849-55)⁷⁸ — an important reminder which, on the level of form, is graphically expressed by the sharp distinction τούσδ', οὐ σέ (813): here, as Jebb (*ad* 813f.) has seen, “Creon refuses to identify [Oedipus] with [the Coloniates], bitterly reminding the Theban that his real ties are elsewhere”.⁷⁹ Creon’s

⁷⁷ Bowra (1944:335-37) has fully perceived the political background of Creon’s actions; see also Seidensticker (1972:270). Machin’s (1981:115), and especially Blundell’s (1993:304) —cf. *idem* (1989:236-37) — attempts to dissociate Creon’s practices from the Theban mandate, which allegedly demanded “persuasion” (cf. 736) stumbles on the notorious ambiguity and polysemy of the word πειθῶ in Greek: see Buxton (1982:64-66). Segal (1981:379) argues that Creon violates the laws of the polis because he intends to keep Oedipus as a πάραυλος, thus denying him a basic property of a citizen. In fact, however, Creon only protects his own city from Oedipus’ pollution (407) — a pollution that Oedipus never denies (as a matter of fact, he confirms it at 1130-37). Cf. below p. 219.

⁷⁸ Note that Creon’s argument at 854-55 is also used by Theseus (592) and by Antigone (1197 -1200); therefore it cannot be rejected out of hand (as is done e.g. by Blundell [1989:241]), the more so since it further demonstrates how Oedipus allows his *individual* temperament (θυμός) to prevail over any other consideration. On the theme of Oedipus’ θυμός, which is beyond the scope of this chapter, see Winnington-Ingram (1980:159-60 with n.35) and cf. below p. 234.

awareness of the distinct character of the Athenian political framework is made all the more obvious when he resorts, after Oedipus' refusal to come to Thebes (811), to a markedly Athenian legal practice, namely "calling on any onlookers to act as witnesses, who will be prepared to testify if the victim brings a case to court":⁸⁰ he even uses the formula μαρτύρομαι (813), which was the standard phrase for this political act.

Oedipus, on the other hand, resorts to distinctly *non-political* arguments: whereas at 421-60 his exile was regarded as effected by the polis as a whole (see p. 205f.), now it becomes completely devoid of its political significance, and the whole matter is presented by Oedipus as a *personal* dispute between himself and Creon⁸¹ (note the second person singular constantly used: 767, 770-71, 772, 774, 781, 784, 785, 787, 794; contrast 455-56 where it was against Thebes as a *political* power, not against a particular individual, that Oedipus was ready to fight: καὶ Κρέοντα ... κεί τις ἄλλος ἐν πόλει σθένει). The *argumentum ad hominem* in 776-780 is very instructive for the extremely personal colour that Oedipus attempts to lend to the dispute with Thebes, while 797-99 and 802-803 further confirm the element of personal hostility against Creon. Even when the polis comes into question (785-86), it is referred to as if it were Creon's private property (785 πόλις δέ σοι — "thy city"

⁷⁹ *Contra* Daly (1986b: 71-72); see further Edmunds (1996: 118). Creon of course ignores the fact that Oedipus has already denounced his native land and has been made ἔμπολις in a new land. This only casts the markedly political character of his practices in a higher relief: we know that in fact he struggles to regain a former Theban citizen.

⁸⁰ Dunbar (1995: *ad* 1031); see also Dover (1993: *ad* 528), MacDowell (1971: *ad* 1436). Antipho i. 29 is an instructive relevant passage. Even if μαρτύρεσθαι was a Theban practice as well (which we have no means of verifying), an Athenian audience would inevitably see here a reference to *their own* legal system.

⁸¹ This has been noted, in passing, by Bowra (1944: 337), and in more detail by Sgroi (1962: 289-90).

Jebb), i.e. the matter is put again in terms of personal dispute.⁸² Likewise, whereas at 457-60 he invoked the assistance of Eumenides (along with the Coloniates') against the *polis* of Thebes, now his ἀλάστωρ is viewed as a *personal* punishment against Creon only (note the emphatically doubled σοι in 787 and the significant personal pronoun ἀλάστωρ οὐμός in 788).

A similar attitude is easily detectable at 887ff. too:⁸³ Oedipus no longer uses the distinctly political concept νόμῳ καθάρως, put forward at 548, in order to defend himself against the accusation of parricide. On the contrary, he remarkably resorts to arguments that are as un-political as any, namely divine wrath (964-65; cf. 998), fate and oracles predetermining the course of events (969-73), even metaphysical speculation (998-99);⁸⁴ and whereas, for his murder of Laius to be justified, the appeal to δίκη was previously an all-important argument (547 πρὸς δίκας τι), it is now dismissed only too easily (996 οὐδὲ τοῦνδικον περιβλέποις). It is indicative that an argument which could have absolved Oedipus before an Athenian court, namely that he committed the killing in self-defence (an argument which Oedipus used at 270-72 and perhaps at 547: see above p. 208f.), is transformed into yet another *argumentum ad hominem* (991-96), thus losing its potential political power. Likewise, although Oedipus attempts to extenuate his parricide and incest by appealing again to ignorance (967, 983), as he did back at 525 and 548, this time the potentially political character of this argument remains inert: for this specific argument forms part and parcel of a wider *context* of accumulated *un-political* arguments; so it

⁸² Knox (1964: 156) sees in this only that Oedipus speaks now as an Athenian.

⁸³ This somewhat topsy-turvy treatment of the scenes will, I hope, be conceded for the sake of coherence and homogeneity.

⁸⁴ Machin (1981: 136) remarks that what is new in this last apology of Oedipus is the attribution of his past horrors to divinity; cf. Torrance (1965: 289).

inescapably becomes divested of its potential political force. The personal, non-political, character of Oedipus' defence is further stressed, on the formal level, by the repetition of the first person pronoun *twenty-three* times in 960-1013, three times consecutively at verse-end (983-5).⁸⁵ Oedipus is shifting from the state of a fully integrated citizen to an unrestrained individualism that ignores the polis' framework and prevails over its functions, customs, and institutions. So, it is not surprising that now even the Erinyes are summoned not as allies of Athens against Thebes, as in 457-60, but as protectresses of Oedipus alone (1010 ἐμοί; cf. 788).

Interestingly, even when it (unavoidably) comes to politics (1004-13), Sophocles makes Oedipus pick a rather double-edged argument in favour of Athens, namely that it honours the gods (1005-1009): for he knows, and we know, only too well that the Coloniates may have respected the sanctuary's sacrosanct character, when they decided to expel him forcefully out of their land, but on the other hand they showed disrespect to the gods by violating the sacred rights of a suppliant (cf. Oedipus' appeal to their alleged θεοσέβεια, 258-62, 275-85; cf. above. p. 201f.). In other words, the Coloniates, when confronted with conflicting claims, reckoned that Oedipus' status as suppliant was not of such importance as to counterbalance his pollution, and that it was not sufficient to prevent them from driving him out of the place of his supplication. The Chorus, that is, displayed the same attitude as Creon does now (cf. 944-50 where he claims that Oedipus' rights as suppliant must be forfeited on account of his μίασμα); still, Creon is called ἀσεβής (823), which means that, inevitably, Oedipus' praise of Athenian εὐσέβεια cannot but strike us as severely qualified. Therefore, yet

⁸⁵ Cf. Daly (1986b: 80). We noted an analogous (and equally indicative) recurrence of the *second* person pronoun above, p. 217.

another argument that could seem to be of a political nature backfires because, although it is seemingly a eulogy of Athens' respect for τὰ θεῖα, it subliminally brings out sinister similarities with what Oedipus has termed Creon's ἀσέβεια; thus, the argument turns out to be self-cancelling or, at least, self-mitigating.⁸⁶ It seems that every dramatic fact, every feature of structure and language, confirms the scheme propounded here: *Oedipus is shifting from the polis' νόμοι to the state of the autonomous individual.* This change accounts for, and at the same time is confirmed by, another remarkable change that can be detected in the Chorus' attitude: while at 629-30 they stress the political aspect of Oedipus' settling at Colonus (note esp. γῆ τῆδε) and at 726-27 they foreshadow the political character of the ensuing debate with Creon (cf. τὸ τῆσδε χώρας ... σθένος), suddenly at 1014-15 they give up all political considerations and they attune themselves to Oedipus' change of attitude by significantly mentioning only his personal asseverations and demands.

4.4.2 The abduction of the κόραι (Ismene and Antigone)

Creon's adherence to the polis-concept does not, of course, make him a man of morals. Immediately upon Oedipus' refusal to return to Thebes, Creon sets out to implement in full his political power. He reveals that he has already abducted Ismene, and that he intends to do the same with

⁸⁶ On the Chorus' ambivalent εὐσέβεια, liable to be shaken by competing religious obligations, cf. Bowra (1944: 333), Blundell (1989: 230), (1993: 291-92); Burton (1980: 253) calls it "a conventional view of morality". Slatkin (1986: 213-17) explores the tension between conflicting religious and moral claims, and emphasizes the political implications of the reproach which Oedipus addresses to the Chorus (lines 258-91).

Antigone as well (818–19). There is no doubt that this is an inhuman and immoral action, a fitting supplement of his blatant lies about Oedipus' homecoming (741, 757–58; we know the truth from Ismene's account: 399–400, 404–405). Still, Creon displays a characteristically political frame of mind (although, as Knox [1982: 23] has put it, "the case for the *polis* could hardly have had a more contemptible spokesman"), and clearly respects the limits between different cities: it is important to note that, against common practices, he carries off as hostages not Athenian citizens, but only 'his own people' (832 τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἄγω), i.e. his kin and fellow-Thebans, who (unlike Oedipus himself) are *not* suppliants⁸⁷ (cf. 830 οὐχ ἄψομαι τοῦδ' ἀνδρός, ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐμῆς). Even his use of ῥύσιον (858) may imply a normal political procedure.⁸⁸ What is more, his threat

⁸⁷ Nowhere in the play are the girls referred to as ἰκέτιδες: cf. esp. 1008–1009 (τὸν ἰκέτην γέροντ' ἐμὲ | αὐτόν τ' ... τὰς κόρας τ') where a distinction between the suppliant Oedipus and his daughters seems to be implied. Theseus' words in 923 might seem to contradict this, but a) Creon's avoidance of abducting Oedipus (see immediately below in the text) is inexplicable, unless we assume that he *is* a suppliant, while his daughters are not; b) the word φῶς is normally used of a man (E. *Hel.* 1094 is admittedly an exception), and so φωτῶν ἰκτήρια=φῶτας ἰκτηρίους can hardly comprise the girls, as Jebb (*ad* 922f.) and Kamerbeek (*ad* 919–923) think. I think that the passage could perfectly well mean: "this wretched man's ἰκτηρία ῥάβδοι" (an interpretation known to Jebb [*ad* 922f.] but rejected by him). The girls are at least twice likened to their blind father's 'crutches' (σκῆπτρα 848, 1109) because he cannot walk without them; could they not also be his 'staff of supplication' as well (since he cannot perform his supplication without them)? Admittedly, such a meaning of ἰκτήρια (=ἰκτηρία) is not attested, but I cannot see any objection to it. At any rate, emendation into ἰκτηρίας is easy: line-ends being often corrupted, ἰκτηρίας could have been easily misread for -ρία. I treat the problem more fully in my unpublished article "Sophoclea".

⁸⁸ Cf. e.g. A. *Su.* 412, 424, 728 (suggested to me by Mr Garvie). See most recently Edmunds (1996: 9). *Contra* Vidal-Naquet (1986a: 185 with n. 26). On the political uses of hostages see e.g. M. Amit, *RFIC* 98 (1970) 129–47 (esp. 147) and A.

to abduct Oedipus as well (a threat that is never effected)⁸⁹ is significantly qualified by an important proviso that shows his respect for the ruler even of a rival polis (862): ἦν μή μ' ὁ κραιῖνων τῆσδε γῆσ ἀπειργάθη.⁹⁰ This cannot be only an idle contention, for Creon adheres to this principle throughout this scene: obedient to the Athenian king's will, he never carries Oedipus off; moreover, he completely conforms with Theseus' commands at 1018-37, significantly stressing (1036-37) that it is his state as ξένος (note the antithesis between ἐνθάδ' and οἴκοι) that compels him to obey.⁹¹ On the whole, the 'abduction scene' signifies a wider *political* clash between the city of Thebes (837 πόλει μαχῆ, 858-59 ῥύσιον πόλει τάχα | θήσεις), and the city of Athens (842 πόλις ἐναίρεται, πόλις ἐμά, σθένει, 879 τάνδ' ἄρ' οὐκέτι νέμω πόλιν, 884 ἰὼ πᾶσ λεῶσ, ἰὼ γᾶσ πρόμοι). Creon is fully aware of this, and this is reflected in his actions. This provides a further contrast with Oedipus' remarkably un-political turn of mind and his attempts to reduce the

Panagopoulos, *Captives and Hostages in the Peloponnesian War* (Athens 1978) 187-91; cf. Edmunds (1996: 120-1). Detailed treatment of the subject in B. Bravo, "Sulân. Représailles et justice privée contre des étrangers dans les cités grecques", *ASNP* 10 (1980) 675-987.

⁸⁹ Sophocles could just as well have made Creon take away the suppliant Oedipus too, had he wished to show Creon defying the polis-concept (cf. Gellie [1972: 172]). However, Creon (by way of the delay caused by the theatrical pretext mentioned in the text, namely his threat to carry off Oedipus too) remains on stage and makes his case in front of Theseus, putting forth again *political* arguments that, as we shall see, deserve serious consideration. — Of course, Creon's threats also serve the more practical purpose of creating dramatic tension.

⁹⁰ Piderit's attribution of the line to the Chorus (with σ' instead of μ'), defended by Jebb (*ad* 862), misses the point: Creon *is*, after all, aware that he is in a foreign polis which is ruled by its own laws and leaders. Most later editors rightly stick to the tradition.

⁹¹ The majority of critics have wrongly denied that Creon is aware of the distinctions between different cities: thus, most recently, Bushnell (1988: 93).

tension between the two political poles, Athens and Thebes, to a personal dispute between himself and Creon.

4.4.2.1 Subversion of Athenian νόμιμα. The abduction of the Κόρη (Persephone)

When Theseus enters again, it is to restore order, at the request of the Chorus (884–86). Indeed, in his ensuing *rhexis* he dwells on what he regards as Creon's anomic practices (see esp. 913–18, 924–28). He sets out to refute Creon's claim that he would respect the king's will (862), by accusing him of having acted without his prior permission (926 ἄνευ γε τοῦ κραίνοντος ... χθονός; the verbal similarities with 862 are noteworthy). Moreover, like Oedipus, Theseus attempts to undervalue the political character of the controversy and to reduce it to the level of personal dispute. So, he stresses the fact that Thebes is not an anomic polis (912, 919–23, 929–30),⁹² his syllogism being that, since Thebes respects laws, Creon's lawless practices cannot represent Thebes; therefore Creon is not performing a political duty (contr. 737–38, 837, 850–51, 858 etc.), but only trying to impose his own perverse personal 'νόμοι' (907; cf.

⁹² Theseus is thus deviating from Thebes' standard image in tragedy as 'anti-Athens' (i.e. Athens' negative counterpart), on which see above, p. 203 with n. 39. If Athens' political superiority is no longer defined *e contrario* by Thebes' negative example, then her distinct image as paragon of political integrity can scarcely be maintained. It is indicative that Robert (1915 I: 483–5), disturbed by this unexpected '*laus Thebarum*' (on which see Di Benedetto [1983: 231–32]), wished to delete 919–23! Daly's (1986b: 72–73) approach is also completely off the mark. For a helpful discussion of the attempts to interpret this passage see Burian (1974: 420 n.30), Easterling (1993: 192–97); literature also in Blundell (1993: 301 n. 58).

1032–33).⁹³ Nonetheless, Theseus' encomium of Athenian εὐνομία is significantly encircled by two important statements suggesting that the champion of the polis' νόμιμα is only too ready to give them up: first, at 907–908 Theseus surprisingly states that he, the king of a polis that “sanctions nothing without law” (914; Jebb's transl.), will adopt Creon's νόμοι, for all their perversity;⁹⁴ second, at 934–35 he further undermines his own polis' νόμοι by declaring that he will not only seize Creon as a hostage but also make him a μέτοικος *by force* (935 βία τε κούχ' ἐκών) — which is of course completely inconceivable, for the very essence of this Athenian institution was its optional character!⁹⁵ Granted, 907–908 may simply mean that Creon will be held hostage just as he has taken Antigone and Ismene hostages (this is, in effect, the explanation given already by the ancient scholiast *ad* 908);⁹⁶ and 934–35 may be only a sarcastic metaphor.⁹⁷ Nonetheless, to begin with the latter objection, Whitehead (1977: 34–35) has rightly stressed that “all three major tragedians were drawing upon the characteristics and implications of a

⁹³ Zeitlin (1990: 167) correctly remarks that Theseus' dissociation of Creon's practices from the city of Thebes is in fact “the furthest extension of Oedipus' emphasis on individual responsibility”; however, she fails to notice that Theseus generally continues the un-political argumentation initiated by Oedipus.

⁹⁴ The political connotations of 908 ἀρμοσθήσεται —cf. the Spartan ἀρμοσταί — may be of importance: a political procedure that is aimed at the preservation of order (ἀρμόττειν) results in the disarray of Athenian laws through the adoption of Creon's νόμοι.

⁹⁵ Furthermore, βία τε κούχ' ἐκών harks back to 922 βία, thus significantly emphasizing that Theseus adopts the very practices he has just condemned! Vidal-Naquet (1986a: 197) notices the absurdity but fails to perceive its implications.

⁹⁶ p. 43 De Marco: ὡς ἀπὸ ξένης γῆς ἀπέσπασεν, οὕτω καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπὶ ξένης γῆς ἀποσπασθήσεται. Cf. Bowra (1944: 338), Blundell (1989: 250).

⁹⁷ The lines are thus interpreted by e.g. Jebb (*ad* 934).

contemporary institution when they illustrated their ideas by reference to the *metoikos* and the *metoikia...*”:⁹⁸ in other words, designating a person as ‘metic’ in Greek tragedy is never just a harmless metaphor; it always has hidden implications.⁹⁹ Turning now to the former objection, suffice it to say that in a context loaded with such notions as polis or νόμος, permeated by the theme of integration into the polis-framework, and marked by forceful contrasts between conflicting political claims, there is no room for innocent ironies: any slight hint, any latent innuendo associated with the pervasive themes of polis and νόμος is bound to be construed in the light of the polis-related notions, which have proved by now to be thematic.

For the absurdity of the situation to be further amplified, Creon reminds Theseus not only that he attempted merely to take his ξύναιμοι (943) back where they belong, but also that the Areopagus (947), an institution almost ‘rooted’ in Attic soil (948 χθόνιον),¹⁰⁰ would not permit the residence in Athens of defiled (945 ἄναγνον) persons like Oedipus;¹⁰¹ in other words, the Theban has to correct the Athenian as to

⁹⁸ Cf. also Garvie (1986: ad 684). Especially on Eurystheus’ status as a *metoikos* hero in Euripides’ *Heracleidae* see Kearns (1990: 333–4).

⁹⁹ Whitehead (*ibid.* 38) further adds that “all three poets introduced the metic in contexts which, to a citizen audience, suggested something unattractive, precarious [...] and pathetic.”

¹⁰⁰ On the meaning of χθόνιος see Ellendt & Genthe (1872: s.v.): “[χθόνιοι] ... quasi qui radices in patrio solo fixerint altissime”; cf. Walker (1995: 180). Bergk’s emendation χρόνιον, revived by Page and printed by Dawe (1996), is in my view unnecessary. See Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 245).

¹⁰¹ See Jebb (ad 947), Parker (1983: 118); cf. *E. Med.* 846–50, where the Chorus wonder how a pious city like Athens will welcome a murderess like Medea; also *E. El.* 1194–7 (a suggestion I owe to Mr Garvie). Not even Oedipus himself denies he is defiled: see 1130–36. Creon’s emphasis on Oedipus’ ritual pollution does not contradict Oedipus’ defence of his moral and legal innocence: pollution and moral guilt are fundamentally distinct (see here n. 175).

the observance of Attic laws from which the latter has deviated!¹⁰² Despite Oedipus' and Theseus' attempts to deprive the controversy with Thebes of any political meaning, its political impact does not fail to reveal itself.¹⁰³ What is more, there are hints that Athens' νόμοι emerge out of this clash with Thebes less solid than they seemed to be, the more so since Theseus, whose legendary labour, the Synoikismos, brought order and political coherence to Athens,¹⁰⁴ seems strangely to run counter to the θεσμοί of his own land, thus jeopardizing his own life's work. Interestingly, Theseus goes as far as to suspect (1028–31) that Creon has been assisted by Attic accomplices¹⁰⁵ — a fact which, despite Theseus' eloquent praise of Athenian good order (913–18), is certainly neither to his nor to his polis' credit.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Gellie (1972: 172) notes that Creon's point is not answered by Theseus (how could it be?), but conspicuously fails — by reason of his rigidly formalistic method — to give an adequate explanation of this dramatic fact.

¹⁰³ Such views as Knox's (1964: 157–58), Wallace's (1979: 50), Krummen's (1993: 199), and Walker's (1995: 181), namely that Oedipus speaks as if he were pleading before the Areopagus, seem to me not to take account of the crucial fact that it is exactly the Athenian institutions that are undermined by Oedipus' attitude in this second part of the play.

¹⁰⁴ We recall the reaffirmation of its spirit, at the outset of the play, thanks to Oedipus' 'reconciliation' of the Coloniates and Theseus: cf. above, p. 203.

¹⁰⁵ Jebb (*ad* 1028ff.), Blundell (1993: 296). *Pace* Kamerbeek (*ad* 1028–1031), if we assume that Theseus does not suspect Attic assistance to Creon, then there is no point in his insistence on taking care of the matter personally without entrusting it to anyone else (1019, 1028). Moreover, *pace* Easterling (1993: 197), (1994), I think that Housman's transposition of 1028–1033 between 1019 and 1020 only underlines Theseus' suspicions.

¹⁰⁶ The vast majority of scholars regard Theseus as an ideal patriot, a paragon of 'enlightened monarchy', and a protector of νόμοι. See e.g. Reinhardt (1979: 213), Bushnell (1988: 94), Walker (1995: 171); older literature in Wallace (1979: 46–7). However, if my view (however iconoclastic) has some validity, then the avoidance of all clear-cut distinctions, of all melodramatic disjunctions between

The hints at Theseus' subversion of νόμιμα become more numerous and clear later. For, as I shall venture to demonstrate, Sophocles allusively likens the quest for Oedipus' κόραι (902) to Theseus' and Peirithous' dismal sin, namely their abortive attempt to abduct Persephone.¹⁰⁷ The clearest hints are provided by the second stasimon (1044–95), where the Chorus curiously dwells on details of Attic geography that are markedly associated with Persephone or Demeter;¹⁰⁸ note e.g. their extensive reference to Eleusis (1047ff.) and to the Eleusinian Mysteries (esp. 1049 λαμπάσιν ἄκταῖς — an allusion to the λαμπαδηφορία performed during the Mysteries; 1050 πότνιαι, Demeter and Persephone; 1053 προσπόλων Εὐμολπιδᾶν — chief ministrants of the Eleusinia).¹⁰⁹ Although, regrettably, we cannot today recover the meaning of the other geographical reference in this ode, namely 1059–61,¹¹⁰ the fact remains that the insistence on the Eleusinia seems pointless in an ode so closely related to Theseus (cf. 1054–55 τὸν ἐγρεμάχαν Θησέα, 1066 Θησειδᾶν), unless we suppose that Theseus' κατάβασις is meant to be, obliquely, recalled. Moreover, immediately after this ode the language used is strangely reminiscent of keywords closely associated with the Mysteries: cf. esp. 1097–98 τὰς κόρας ... προσπολουμένας (hinting at

'good' and 'bad' characters, is confirmed once more as a typical Sophoclean trait.

¹⁰⁷ This story is “among our earliest attested examples of a Theseus exploit”: Gantz (1993:291) with all the relevant sources.

¹⁰⁸ Demeter and Kore/Persephone seem to have been originally a single personality dualized into two personalities, which were hardly dissociable even in classical times; cf. their names τὸ θεῶ and Δημήτερες. See Farnell (1907a: 114), Nilsson (1967:463, cf. 480), Richardson (1974:14), Burkert (1985a:159).

¹⁰⁹ For an illumination of these allusions see Jebb (*ad* 1046ff.–1053).

¹¹⁰ See discussion in Jebb (*ad* 1059ff., and pp. 286–88). The location of the demes Oa and Oe, one of which must be referred to here, is disputed: see S. Dow, *AJPh* 84 (1963) 166–81 (esp. 167, 175); cf. Kirsten (1973:12 n.13).

the Κόρη and her πρόσπολοι [1053]),¹¹¹ as well as the key-words δρώμενα (1144) and δείκνυμι (1145),¹¹² which are heard at the end of this enterprise. It is not only these cryptic hints, however, that — creating as they do an eerie atmosphere reminiscent of the Mysteries — underline Theseus' sinister associations with Persephone; there is also another series of implications confirming these associations: Theseus, when embarking on the pursuit of the abductors, suggestively terms the forthcoming mission ἐκεῖ ὁδός (1019), and refers to himself as πομπός; now, ἐκεῖ being a quite common euphemism for Hades (copious evidence in LSJ s.v., I .2), ὁδός being often used of a person's last travel to the Underworld (e.g. *Ant.* 807 τὰν νεάταν ὁδόν), and finally πομπός being a stock-epithet of Hermes, the escort of the dead (cf. 1548), the conclusion comes inevitably that the whole scene of the girls' rescue has been deliberately (if cryptically) tinted by allusions to Theseus' sinful attempt to carry off Persephone — particularly if one considers that the battle takes place where three roads meet (900-901), and that τρίοδοι were typically chthonic places.¹¹³ The meaning of these allusions for the play

¹¹¹ προσπολουμένας should not be suspected (Dawe [1996] prints Hartung's emendation προσπελωμένας): see Jebb (*ad* 1098). The fact that it is, as Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990a: *in app. crit.*) say, "*hoc sensu unicum*" shows that it was meant to be all the more distinctly felt as an allusion to the πρόσπολοι (it is not simply a "catachresis", as Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 249) suggest).

¹¹² δρώμενα was the standard term used with reference to the Mysteries (see Richardson [1974: *ad* 476] for discussion and literature); Edmunds (1996: 79-81) prefers to see a metatheatrical significance in the word. As for δεικνύναι in the vocabulary of the Eleusinia see Richardson (1974: *ad* 474-76).

¹¹³ See recently Halliwell (1986: 187-90). The fact that in 900 the roads are called δίστομοι must not cause misgivings: a τρίοδος can just as well be described as the bifurcation of one road. Cf. *Theog.* 911: ἐν τριόδῳ δ' ἔστηκα: δύ ' εἰσι τὸ πρόσθεν ὁδοί μοι, and Irigoien *apud* Taplin (1983: 181): "une τρίοδος est [...] un endroit où la route se divise en deux [...], comme un Y avec ses deux branches."

should be clear enough: he who has given Creon a piece of his mind for violating Athenian civic order, and has set out to restore this order by bringing back the κόραι (902), turns out to be a man who has subverted not merely civic but also cosmic order, by confounding the limits between Upperworld and Underworld in his attempt to abduct the Κόρη.¹¹⁴ The destruction of the frameworks that lend coherence to our world (a destruction substantiated either as subversion of a polis' νόμοι or as disarranging of cosmic order) seems indeed to be a major theme in this play.

4.5.1 The Polyneices scene. Utter destruction of the Labdacids

The next, and final, stage in this progressive confusion of limits, categories and distinctions is the destruction of family bonds, which is brought about in the Polyneices scene.

One of the most striking facts of this scene is the conspicuous similarity between Oedipus' and Polyneices' states.¹¹⁵ Both of them are ex-kings (Pol.: 1354) who have been beset by their race's hereditary curse (Pol.: 369-72, cf. 1298-99; Oed.: 964-65, 997-98), have been banished

¹¹⁴ The emphasis on bridles, horsemen, and horses at 1067-73 may be viewed as alluding to the myths about the birth of the first horse from Poseidon's rape of Demeter; this would be a *dédoublement* of Theseus' sin against Persephone (remember that Peirithous wished to marry Persephone: Hes. *fr.* 280 M.-W.; Hellanikos *FGrHist* 4F134 Jacoby; Diod. 4.63; Hyg. *Fab.* 79), establishing the scheme: Theseus / Poseidon (=son and father) vs. Persephone / Demeter (=daughter and mother). See Appendix for a more detailed treatment of the mythological data in relation to our play.

¹¹⁵ On this similarity see Burian (1974: 422-23), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 277). Easterling (1967: 7-8), albeit aware of it, plays down its importance.

(Polyneices: 374-76; Oedipus: 427-30, 440-44 etc.),¹¹⁶ have become their country's enemies (Pol.: 377-81; Oed.: 450, 457-60 etc.), and have sought refuge as suppliants at Athens (Pol.: 1156-59;¹¹⁷ Oed.: 258ff. etc.); all that Polyneices requires is to be granted an audience and depart safely (1164-65, cf. 1285-90), exactly as Oedipus has done (174-75, cf. 263-65). However, for all their similarities — emphatically summarized by Polyn^eices at 1335-39, and acknowledged by Oedipus himself too at 1358-60 — there is a great difference between them: Oedipus' supplication, despite the difficulties, has been successful, whereas Polyneices' own is practically frustrated before he even enters the stage. Oedipus fiercely refuses to listen to his son (1173-74, 1177-78), even though all Polyneices wishes to communicate to his father is a βραχὺς μῦθος (1162), in contrast to Creon's 'forensic' verbosity which Oedipus has disdainfully castigated (794-96, 808-809). Even when at last he condescends to lend an ear to his son, he does so not out of respect for Polyneices' status as a suppliant (whereas this was exactly what he had asked the Chorus to respect at 258ff., and what Theseus bids him do now, 1179-80¹¹⁸), but as a favour he begrudges to Theseus and Antigone (1204 βαρεῖαν ἡδονήν)! And, as if to warn us that the failure of Polyneices' supplication is predetermined, Sophocles has Oedipus concluding with a strong refusal to give up his obstinacy and yield to his son's pleas (1206-1207): he has made up his mind to reject his son's supplication (ἀτιμάσαι; cf. 1273, 1278), i.e. to do exactly what he had implored not to be done to him (49, 286 etc.)! Furthermore, Oedipus' silence at his son's supplication (1271-

¹¹⁶ Buxton (1982: 142) draws attention to the fact that Theseus is also a former exile (562-66).

¹¹⁷ Machin (1981: 142-43 with n.259), following Moulinier, tries in an unusually pettifogging way to prove that Polyneices is not, properly speaking, an ἰκέτης.

¹¹⁸ See Blundell (1989: 238).

80, 1283)¹¹⁹ is starkly contrasted with Theseus' emphatically asking the suppliant Oedipus to speak (see above, p. 210). Antigone significantly says with reference to her father's behaviour (1203-1204): αὐτὸν μὲν εὔ | πᾶσχειν, παθόντα δ' οὐκ ἐπίστασθαι τίνειν.¹²⁰

When Polyneices actually appears, we realize all the more clearly how unjustified is Oedipus' attitude towards him. For, as turns out, Polyneices fully complies with his father's wishes (exactly as they were expressed in his complaints at 414-19):¹²¹ namely, he declares that he has come, incited by the new oracle (1331-32), to make up for his unfilial behaviour (whose dismal effects upon his father he does not try to conceal, cf. 1254-66¹²²) and restore him to his house (1342); without his

¹¹⁹ Interesting analyses of Oedipus' silence are provided, from different standpoints, by Segal (1981:397) and Bushnell (1988:98-99).

¹²⁰ I think that Blundell (1989: 241) misses the point when she writes that Oedipus avoids "inconsistency with two fundamental principles, the piety of respecting suppliants and the justice of reciprocal *charis*".

¹²¹ Blundell (1989: 244 n. 57) tries to avoid this inevitable conclusion by resorting to a completely impossible interpretation of 418-19: 'my sons value power more than their father, because only on hearing the new oracle did they become concerned about me' is not what the Greek says; therefore, the only acceptable interpretation of 418-19 remains that of Jebb and most editors (Oedipus complains that his sons, despite being aware of the oracles that made him posthumously arbiter of Theban welfare, preferred to keep the throne for themselves).

¹²² Polyneices' sincere repentance is a most conspicuous trait: contrast his openness, esp. at 1265-66 (μαρτυρῶ ... τὰμὰ μὴ ἕ ἄλλων πύθη), with Creon's hypocritical keenness on "concealing the shame" (755-57) of Oedipus' misery (on the reading 757 κρύψον, which seems to be sound, see Jebb [ad 754ff.], Kamerbeek [ad 755-760]; contra Lloyd-Jones & Wilson [1990b: 240]): the tears streaming from his eyes (1250-51) —the first thing Antigone notices as her brother enters the stage —show his true repentance. His sincerity is proved by two more details: a) his account of the situation in Thebes (1292-1307) is not different from Ismene's own (367-81); b) we clearly remember that Creon avoided mentioning the oracle, whereas Polyneices is quite articulate about it

father's support, he does not even have the power (or the will)¹²³ to stay alive (1344-45). Still, Oedipus does not hesitate to designate his own son as *στυγνὸς παῖς* (1173) and his voice as *ἔχθιστον φθέγμα πατρί* (1177) — a grim reversal of Antigone's maxim *τῷ τεκόντι πᾶν φίλον* (1108)!¹²⁴ Antigone has also underlined in the most emphatic manner that a father's revenge against his son, even if he has suffered the most terrible *δυσσέβεια* from him, is simply inconceivable (1189-91),¹²⁵ and that *αἰδώς* in that case is only natural (1192-94).¹²⁶ And although Polyneices reiterates the plea for *αἰδώς*, the goddess who is seated by the throne of Zeus (1267-69), Oedipus declares that, for him, the true *ξύνεδρος Ζηνός* is only *Δίκη* (1382), i.e. retaliation.¹²⁷ Accordingly, he

(1331-32; cf. 1300, if sound); see further Burian (1974: 423-25) and Taplin (1983: 160). Commentators have been, I think, too unsympathetic against Polyneices: cf. e.g. Linforth (1951: 160-61); Easterling (1967: 6-12); Hester (1977: 29-30); Segal (1981: 383-84, 386-92); Kirkwood (1986: 114); their main arguments are that Polyneices is selfish (but so is Oedipus, cf. Rosenmeyer [1952: 101]); that he hates his brother (but Oedipus also hates his own sons); and that he insists on destroying his own homeland (but Oedipus will also be hostile to Thebes after his heroisation). An important exception is Taplin (1983: 159-60), who has made an excellent case in favour of Polyneices in terms of his movements within the theatrical space in relation to the overall geography of the play. For another sympathetic account of Polyneices see Cairns (1993: 224 n. 27).

¹²³ Depending on whether we read *σθένω* (*codd. plurr.*) or *θέλω* (QR) at 1345.

¹²⁴ On the "gnomic ring" of this formulation see Kamerbeek (*ad* 1106-1109).

¹²⁵ Dover (1974: 274) notes that a child telling her parent what to do "is a note unusual for the fifth century". "The more remarkable, therefore", adds Winnington-Ingram (1980: 262 n. 41).

¹²⁶ I accept Jebb's (*ad* 1192) tentative, but paleographically very plausible, suggestion to read *αἰδοῦ νιν* at 1192 (printed by Lloyd-Jones & Wilson [1990a]). Ironically, at 237ff. Antigone implored the Chorus, on her *father's* behalf, to show *αἰδώς* (237 *αἰδόφρονες*, with Jebb's note).

¹²⁷ On Polyneices' appeal to *Αἰδώς* see Taplin (1983: 161-62). On *αἰδώς* and the rights of suppliants see Gould (1973: 85-90) and especially Cairns (1993: 276-87).

denounces his paternity of Polyneices and Eteocles (1369 ὑμεῖς δ' ἀπ' ἄλλου κούκ ἐμοῦ πεφύκατον, 1383 ἀπάτωρ ἐμοῦ), thus confirming Polyneices' worst fears, namely that he may actually be the son not of his father, but of κακὸς πότμος (1323-24).¹²⁸ This is no idle play with words: Oedipus truly shows his disowned sons to be the offspring of "ill fate", for he proceeds to cast upon them an all-encompassing curse, whose effects (as we shall see forthwith) spread over the entire γένος of the Labdacids. He curses Polyneices to kill his ξύναιμος, by whom he has been banished (1388), and to be killed by him (1373-74, 1387-88). Now, in the house of Oedipus the word ξύναιμος has sinister implications, for Oedipus is at the same time his sons' *brother* (cf. 534-35, with reference to Antigone and Ismene). So, by cursing Polyneices to kill his brother, he simultaneously perpetuates the present dismal situation, for Polyneices is already the murderer of his brother-father (1361 σοῦ φονέως μεμνημένω), since he has not prevented his exile;¹²⁹ while by cursing him to be killed by his brother by whom he has been also sent into exile, he commits both fratricide and filicide, for Polyneices is both his brother (already condemned by Oedipus to exile: 425-27!) and his son. In short, Polyneices is to kill both his brother (Eteocles) and his brother-father (Oedipus), whereas he will at the same time be killed by his brother and his brother-father. To put it differently, Oedipus with his curses has perpetrated (for it is an indubitable fact, cf. 1440 ἐς προὔπτον "Αἰδην) a

On the retaliation-theme in the Polyneices scene see Winnington-Ingram (1980: 263-64), Blundell (1989: 239), and cf. Reinhardt (1979: 216). That Oedipus' harshness, despite his appeal to Dike, may not be presented unambiguously for the audience's approval has been pointed out by Cairns (1993: 225-26).

¹²⁸ Note the telling contrast with the rest of the Seven, who are mentioned along with their parent's name! Differently Easterling (1967: 8).

¹²⁹ On the apparent inconsistencies (not affecting my argument) in Oedipus' attribution of responsibility for his exile see Machin (1981: 108-20).

quadruple killing: Polyneices' by Eteocles and vice-versa, Polyneices' by Oedipus and vice-versa.¹³⁰ The bonds of kinship are no longer valid, and the coherence they used to create has ceased to exist: the patrimonial Erinyes (1299, 1434, cf. 421-22 τὴν πεπρωμένην Ἰέρην) will now take hold of the Labdacids' race.¹³¹

A brief digression is necessary. Despite the widespread view that the dismal future awaiting Polyneices is his own free choice,¹³² it is clear that his destruction (as well as his brother's) is Oedipus' own desire of old (422-23; esp. 1426 χρήζει γάρ¹³³), a desire he fulfils by gratuitously indulging in his own revengeful θυμός (1193) which was also responsible for his parricide and incest, as Antigone has already reminded us (1195-98).¹³⁴ The paternal curse binds Polyneices to be doomed, since it leaves no room for choice: Polyneices' emphasis (1298-99, 1434) on his father's Erinyes as a cause of his misfortune is hardly disputable,¹³⁵ if one compares Ismene's account at 371 (where supernatural motivation counts at least as much as the sons' responsibility), and especially

¹³⁰ On the complicated network of relations in the house of Labdacids cf. Zeitlin (1990: 134).

¹³¹ Cf. Winnington-Ingram (1980: 266).

¹³² See e.g. Whitman (1951: 211-12), Zeitlin (1990: 161-2), Blundell (1989: 248) and, a little more reservedly, Daly (1986a: 83-85 with n. 27); in the same vein, Linforth (1951: 113-14) tries to minimize the importance of Oedipus' curse.

¹³³ See Jebb (*ad* 1426); cf. Ferrari (1983: 61).

¹³⁴ On Oedipus' θυμός cf. above n. 78.

¹³⁵ Pace e.g. Machin (1981: 144). Disagreeing also with e.g. Reinhardt (1979: 219) and Knox (1964: 151, 159-60), I do not interpret 1443-44 as meaning that Polyneices dismisses Oedipus' prophecy: see Taplin (1983: 161), Bushnell (1988: 100; cf. further 96-7). Finally, line 1426, with Ferrari's (1983: 61-2) interrogative punctuation, accepted by Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 257), shows Polyneices succumbing to his father's will in a mood of grim resignation.

Oedipus' own invocation of the dread goddesses against his son at 1391.¹³⁶

To return to our main argument: ironically, the man who — by eagerly accepting Athenian (political and religious) νόμιμα — managed to gain admittance into a new polis and even to appease the Erinyes, thus mitigating, up to a point, his previous violation of (familial) νόμιμα through patricide and incest — that very man is now effecting the destruction of his entire race, thereby perpetrating another violation of νόμιμα. For the shattering of patrilineal bonds is, *par excellence*, a disintegration of νόμοι, of the settled structures of kinship; this is all too obvious in the last words of Oedipus' *rhesis*: paternal γέρα (1396), which would normally assert and reinforce family ties, are now perverted into their opposite, namely utter destruction of the γένος. To quote Segal (1981: 388): "What Polyneices will inherit as the privileges of rank from his father, (*gera*, 1396) should include both the prerogatives of the house and the royal power, but they are replaced by death outside the city at the hand of a brother".¹³⁷

¹³⁶ τάσδε δαίμονας, i.e. the Semnai / Eumenides: on their identification with the Erinyes cf. above, n. 10. The future tenses at 1372-74 doubtlessly contribute to the feeling that Oedipus' curses inexorably predetermine his sons' future (cf. the interesting comparison of this scene with the Teiresias scene in the *OT* by Seidensticker [1972: 268-69]). Moreover, if L. Campbell's (*ad* 1375) idea, adopted by Rosenmeyer (1952: 109 with n.70) and Knox (1964: 194 n.14), that 1375 refers to curses already pronounced before Oedipus' departure from Thebes has some validity, (although, as Winnington-Ingram [1980: 266 n.50] notes, such an assumption "spoils rather than enhances a carefully designed effect of cumulative wrath"), then the sons' strife would indeed be a result of their father's curse, as in earlier versions (e.g. *A. Sept.* 785-91, *E. Ph.* 67-68).

¹³⁷ On Oedipus' transcendence of the family cf. also Torrance (1965: 284-6). As will become clear later, I am not concerned with either justifying or condemning Oedipus' curse and the subsequent destruction of νόμιμα; for a useful summary of attempts in both directions see Burian (1974: 426 n.41), who

The perversion of νόμιμα is also stressed, *e contrario* as it were, by Polyneices' beseeching his sisters to grant him all due funerary honours (1405-13), i.e. to perform a markedly *familial* duty, affirmative of kinship ties — now that their father has thrown into utter disarray all family bonds and their concomitant system of νόμιμα! The pathos of the scene is all the more enhanced through sinister allusions to Antigone's future: her brother wishes her well if she performs the proper rites to his dead body (1435; cf. 1444-46), but the audience know that Antigone's woes and, eventually, her death will result exactly from her observance of these νόμιμα, i.e. from her attempt to reaffirm the family bonds which her father has disrupted. Therefore, Oedipus, by condemning his sons to death, unwittingly casts the same curse upon his beloved daughter, thus causing his entire race to be utterly destroyed.¹³⁸ This perversion of family νόμιμα is also translated into terms of political and cosmic order: Polyneices' death is closely associated (by force of his father's curse) with a total reversal and annulment of the polis-concept: his new abode will be not another land, but the Underworld (1389-90 καὶ καλῶ τὸ Ταρτάρου ἢ στυγνὸν πατρῶον ἔρεβος, ὡς σ' ἀποικίση) — a place where by definition the standards of civic life cease to exist. The word πατρῶον, used of Polyneices' new abode, is of extreme significance: the ἔρεβος of the Underworld holds already Oedipus' father, Laius, killed by

rightly points out (*ibid.* 427) that "Oedipus' curse stands outside the boundaries of ordinary moral judgment".

¹³⁸ See Winnington-Ingram (1980: 255, 274-75), Taplin (1983: 162) and cf. Kirkwood (1986: 114), Blundell (1989: 259) and Lloyd-Jones (1990: 210) as against Bowra's (1944: 349) jejune opinion that at the end of the play no unresolved discords remain (a view similar to Bowra's is taken by Linforth [1951: 180] and Gellie [1972: 182]). I think, however, that both Winnington-Ingram and Taplin overstress Oedipus' limited foreknowledge (he does not foresee his daughter's catastrophe): I would put more emphasis on the fact that his curse spreads over his whole race, regardless of his being aware or unaware of it.

his son's *hand*, whereas it will soon receive Eteocles and Polyneices, killed by their father's *word*,¹³⁹ and will thus be their sole *patrimony* (cf. again 1396 γέρα).¹⁴⁰

In the light of these remarks, I believe that the famous third stasimon (1211–48) can be interpreted as a foreshadowing of the literal 'genocide' (the extinction of the Labdacid γένος) that is going to follow. This ode is, so to speak, a synopsis of Oedipus' long and painful life: longevity can only bring grief, say the Chorus (1211–20). Life¹⁴¹ means only κοῦφαι ἀφροσύναι (1230), πλαγὰ πολύμοχθος (1231),¹⁴² and

¹³⁹ Cf. Winnington-Ingram (1980: 257) on words being as powerful as deeds. Bushnell (1988: 96) has perceived that "Oedipus speaks not promises and vows, the discourse of civilization, but curses, a primeval binding language" (see also *ibid.* 95, 98 on the "magic" of words in the context of curse); Slatkin (1986: 219) remarks that "what Polyneices and Oedipus say to each other replaces what Oedipus and Laius *did* to each other" (her italics); on the power of language in the *OC* see Segal (1981: 392–99). In Steven Berkoff's resplendently sordid play *Greek* the central character Eddie (~Oedipus) kills his father (whom, of course, he takes to be a stranger) by *verbal*, not physical, violence.

¹⁴⁰ See discussion of πατρῶον in Jebb (*ad* 1390) and in Bowra (1944: 329), who perceptively notes: "Oedipus condemns Polynices to uttermost destruction, to severance from the ordered life of the world, to a place in primal chaos and pain."

¹⁴¹ Lines 1229ff. may need some explanation. Neither Jebb's (*ad* 1229f.) nor Kamerbeek's (*ad* 1229–1232) interpretations are satisfactory: if, as they say, τὸ νέον (1229) refers to the short happy span of life *before* adult age (cf. Burton's [1980: 286] similar view), then we miss the poet's point, i.e. that 'the best is not to be born at all' (1224–25), a statement that implies that there cannot be even a short period of happiness in human life. Both youth and old age are full of trouble and sorrow. On the other hand, Winnington-Ingram's (1980: 252 n.10) view that "what is said of youth (1229ff.) relates to Polynices (and his brother); what is said of age is true of Oedipus" is too restrictive, given the connotations of such words as ἀφροσύνη or πλαγὰ (see below in the text).

¹⁴² Dawe's (1978: 145) objections to Herwerden's πλαγὰ (for the MSS. πλάγχθη) fortunately did not affect his text (1996).

στάσεις, ἔρις, μάχαι | καὶ φόνοι (1234-35)¹⁴³ — a statement which, in the context of Oedipus' past, creates a penetrating irony: ἀφροσύνη, being a euphemism for 'illicit love',¹⁴⁴ cannot but recall Oedipus' incestuous relationship with his mother, while πλαγὰ πολύμοχθος would be the most suitable word to describe Oedipus' fatal blow against Laius; finally, ἔρις (372, 422) and μάχη (423) have already been used of Eteocles' and Polyneices' strife, which is to end with their mutual φόνος.¹⁴⁵ On the other hand, from this wretched life only death can deliver Oedipus. So, death is ἐπίκουρος (1220), but (significantly enough) it is also ἀνυμέναιος, 'wedless': wedding is, *par excellence*, an institution creative of family ties, but Oedipus has undermined the very essence of these ties; death, albeit ἐπίκουρος for himself, will be ἀνυμέναιος both for Polyneices (for his death will annul his κῆδος καινόν, 379) and for Antigone (who, in *Ant.* 813-16, is married to Acheron!). Oedipus' γῆρας has indeed proved ἄ-φίλον (1237), for it has destroyed φιλία, kinship.

4.6.1 No νόμος, no place, no sight: the final moments

However, the disintegration of familial νόμιμα is not over yet: Oedipus' tomb will, abnormally, remain unknown to his daughters (1529, 1640-44,

¹⁴³ φθόνος ... φόνοι (for the MSS. φόνοι... φθόνος or sim.) is Faehse's emendation, restoring the climax: see Kamerbeek (*ad* 1234,5). Lloyd-Jones & Wilson's (1990b: 252) objections, based as they are on as late an author as Horace, do not seem cogent to me.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. the uses of σῶφρων = 'having control over the sensual desires' (LSJ s.v., II for examples), and of μωρία in e.g. *E. Hipp.* 644 (on which see Barrett [1964]), *Ion* 545.

¹⁴⁵ Edmunds (1996: 94-5) prefers to see in these words a political / historical significance.

1724-36, 1756-67); contrary to common Greek practice, there will be no σῆμα (cf. 1681 ἄσκοποι πλάκες),¹⁴⁶ and Oedipus — although he is honoured with the preparatory funerary offices described at 1598-1603¹⁴⁷ — will not receive the proper rites at his tomb (cf. Antigone's ἔρημος ἔθανες ᾧδέ μοι [1714]). Still, an extraordinary paradox suggests itself: the ties of φιλία (kinship) having been blasted, the mutual φιλία (love) between father and daughters (and, of course, between sisters and

¹⁴⁶ Edmunds (1996: 95-100) points out that the playwright seems to have assumed widespread contemporary uncertainty about, or even ignorance of, Oedipus' grave at Colonus. He also points out, after a careful examination of the evidence (cf. also Edmunds [1981a]), that the existence of a *tradition* about Oedipus' death at Colonus (which is well evidenced) does not imply the existence of a *grave*, let alone of cult. Even if a grave *did* exist, its hiddenness would clearly be an anomaly: cf. Kearns (1989:208-209), despite the parallels of secret tombs she provides (*ibid.* 51-52); this important fact has not been taken into account by Seaford (1994a: 134-35). Jacoby on *FGrHist* 324F62 (Suppl. 3b [vol. II], p. 155 n.5) has completely denied that Oedipus had either a tomb or a cult in Athens; according to him, the tomb in the precinct of the Semnai (Paus. I.28.7) would be a later invention; cf. also Colchester (1942:23) and Rosenmeyer (1952: 99-100 with n.30). Henrichs (1983: 94 with nn.28, 29; 95 with n.33), although he tentatively assumes the existence of a hero-cult of Oedipus, is aware of the uncertainty about Oedipus' tomb and cult in Sophocles' time. Linforth (1951: 103) cautiously leaves the question open. — On the grave monument's "indexical function" as σῆμα, i.e. as sign and symbol of the dead person see the synopsis offered by Sourvinou-Inwood (1995: 139-42). Cf. also Burkert (1985a: 193-94). Albin (1974: 228-29) and Segal (1981: 402, 405) make some interesting points on the concealment of Oedipus' burial place.

¹⁴⁷ These offices are referred to by the significant verb νομίζεται (1603); on funerary νομιζόμενα see Kurtz & Boardman (1971: 143-44), Alexiou (1974: 5, 39). But even in this case the νόμιμα are not fully observed, not only because it is a *living* person who receives them, but also because the lament ("un θρήνος *sui generis*": Di Benedetto [1983: 240]) abnormally *precedes* the death; cf. Alexiou (1974: 4, 38).

brother¹⁴⁸) remains admirably unaffected (1615–19, esp. 1617 τὸ ... φιλεῖν, 1697–98, 1702–3);¹⁴⁹ indeed, while mere words were able to destroy φιλία-bonds (in the form of Oedipus' curses against his son), a simple word (1615–16 ἔν ... μόνον ... ἔπος), i.e. τὸ φιλεῖν (1617), are equally able to reassert them.¹⁵⁰ The disruption of φιλία is at the same time its assertion. In other words, the system of kinship ties (a νόμος, in the broadest sense of the term) is at the same time destroyed and preserved: the destruction of family bonds in the case of Oedipus' sons is combined with their affirmation in the case of his daughters.

This holds good on the level of the polis as well. On the one hand, the very essence of the polis (i.e. its constituent notions of locality and νόμος) ^{is} ~~are~~ destroyed. To start with the former, one easily perceives that the end of the play is generally marked by an overall disintegration of the notion of locality. The lack of fixedness of place was already foreshadowed in the epode (1239–48) of the third stasimon: Oedipus stands, as it were, in a no man's land, where the four corners of the world seem to meet — an impossibility stressing the disarray into which locality disintegrates.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, Oedipus' curse against Polyneices combines the destruction of locality with the destruction of family structures: his son will be driven away from his land and become an ἄποικος of Hades (1389–90),¹⁵² an abode which is nothing like the kinds of locality with which we are familiar, and which is commonly (and significantly) referred to by a vague ἐκεῖ, as opposed to the palpable ἐνθάδε of our

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Di Benedetto (1983: 227–28).

¹⁴⁹ On this paradox see Burian (1974: 428), Segal (1981: 382), Bushnell (1988: 101–102). On the φιλία-theme see further Edmunds (1996: 125–8).

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Kirkwood (1958: 245), Jones (1962: 234), Segal (1981: 398, 399).

¹⁵¹ Cf. Segal (1981: 377).

¹⁵² “Send away from home” and “colonize a place” are the two basic senses of ἀποικίζειν (see LSJ s.v.). On Oedipus' curses against his sons cf. above p. 233.

common experience in the Upperworld.¹⁵³ His daughters too will painfully experience the absence of fixed place: their life henceforth will consist in wandering over distant lands or angry seas (1685–88); they feel they have no way to go back home (1742–43).¹⁵⁴ Moreover, the transcendence of the polis' frame will manifest itself in another aspect: for Oedipus' promised boons to lie always unmarried in the polis (1518–19, 1524–25, 1533–34), no citizen must ever know where the source of these blessings, namely his tomb, is hidden (1522–23, 1528 ἀστῶν); the common good of his presence in Athens will be known only to a single person, i.e. to each successive leader (1531–32). Nonetheless, to quote Bowra (1944: 341), “the circumstances and their consequences are unusual. A hero's grave was usually known and was the place where he was honored”.¹⁵⁵ Thus, Oedipus, although he throws his new city's

¹⁵³ Vermeule (1979: 48) remarks that house-like tombs are but an exception in the Greek world: Hades, despite often being called a ‘house’ in Greek literature, must have been envisaged as a negation of the familiarity of the Upperworld — as an unknowable, disturbing realm, as the absolute ‘other’. Sourvinou-Inwood (1995: 303–56) further argues that the development (as evidenced by the literary and archeological record) of such ‘mediating’ figures as Charon the ferryman or Hermes the guide of the dead in the archaic and classical eras betrays a growing anxiety and uncertainty about the unknown kingdom of the dead—i.e. an increasing awareness of its ‘otherness’.

¹⁵⁴ Gellie (1972: 182) refuses to see the obvious when he writes: “There is a danger that the protracted dirge will take us away from the mood of contentment in which Oedipus went to his death [...]” (similar views in Bowra [1944: 346]). This mood of contentment, however, has been achieved at the expense of both the polis' νόμιμα and the ties of kinship; the dirge reveals all too clearly how painful, on the human plane, Oedipus' translation into quasi-divine status has been. See Burton's (1980: 272 with n.22) salutary remarks, as well as Di Benedetto's (1983: 239–42) interesting views.

¹⁵⁵ See also Bushnell (1988: 105), who also quotes Bowra. So, with Oedipus' tomb remaining unknown, we have a twofold disruption of νόμιμα: familial ones (his

political structures into utter disorder, will through this destruction benefit the city all the same; in other words, he must transcend the polis' νόμιμα, and disassemble its political framework, in order to fully grant his blessings to this polis. Nonetheless, an important warning is heard: the benefits emanating from this tomb may not remain intact in the long term; for if Athens ignore such νόμιμα as the rules of political decency (1535) and the religious observances (1537), the gods will certainly take notice of it (1534–38);¹⁵⁶ in other words, the transcendence of νόμιμα, through which Oedipus will confer welfare on Athens, will be catastrophic if practised by Athens itself! The autonomous individual may well have to transcend the νόμιμα of the political community in order to benefit the community itself; the polis, however, must keep well within the limits imposed by this set framework of νόμιμα, for the blessings to become permanent.¹⁵⁷ This paradoxical tension between observing and transcending the νόμιμα dominates the play and is essential for its interpretation. Its full significance in relation to the typically Sophoclean notion of the unknowable God will be examined at the end of this chapter.

At the end of the play it is implied that Oedipus transcends even the final and most frightful limit, the limit between Hades and Upperworld, by reiterating Theseus' anomic κατάβασις: absurd though it may seem, his forthcoming descent to Hades is, at 1590–97, curiously

kin will not be able to tend the grave) and political ones (the citizens will not be able to honour the hero at his tomb).

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Kirkwood (1986: 113 with n.33), Blundell (1993: 305).

¹⁵⁷ Knox (1964: 153) perceives another relevant paradox: Oedipus may well admonish Theseus (607–28) as to the mutability of the human condition, but he himself, insofar as he is about to become a *heros*, is not bound by it: “[Oedipus] speaks not as one subject to the law he lays down but as one of the powers that administer it”.

associated with Theseus' and Peirithous' hubristic journey there. Oedipus pauses at the καταράκτης ὁδός (1590), where, according to the scholiast *ad* 1590 (p. 62 De Marco), Persephone was abducted and led to the Underworld by Pluto;¹⁵⁸ the water for his last bath is fetched from a hill on which a temple of Demeter Euchloos was situated (1600)¹⁵⁹ — we remember the dual antitheses Demeter / Persephone vs. Poseidon / Theseus (above, n. 114). Moreover, if the Θορίκιος πέτρος (1595) was the rock whence the first horse sprang, born from Poseidon's spilt semen, θορός,¹⁶⁰ then a further allusion to the myth of Demeter's rape by Poseidon is here provided. This would multiply the connections between the place of Oedipus' descent and the old insults against Persephone / Demeter, perpetrated by Theseus / Poseidon (respectively, king and ἐπιστάτης [889] of Colonus, the place where Oedipus is to be heroised). Be that as it may, our text provides us with more, and more certain, sinister innuendos: Oedipus stands by the κοῖλος κρατήρ (1593-94) where Theseus' and Peirithous' oaths of friendship were engraved;¹⁶¹ and

¹⁵⁸ Jebb (*ad* 1596) plausibly suggests, on the analogy of parallels from popular religion, that perhaps the κοίλη ἄχερδος (1596) was also associated with Persephone's abduction by Pluto. However, one should not, like Allison (1984: 88-89), overstress the importance of locale in this last scene; I have already argued that any notion of fixedness and stability is disintegrated at the end of the play. Thus, there may be some plausibility in Rosenmeyer's (1952: 104-106 with n.48) suggestion that one should not try to equate the various data in the text with identifiable landmarks in the vicinity of Colonus (but Kirsten's [1973: 19-21] remarks are very much worth considering).

¹⁵⁹ With LRV's προσόψιον; see Jebb (*ad* 1600f.), Kamerbeek (*ad* 1600-1603). On Demeter Euchloos see Kirsten (1973: 22-23).

¹⁶⁰ See Gruppe (1912: 365-66) but contr. *ibid.* 373; Robert (1915: I. 20), Segal (1981: 369 with n.25) and, most recently, Nagy (1990a: 231). *Contra* Ulrich von Wilamowitz in Tycho von Wilamowitz (1917: 325 n. 1). See further Appendix.

¹⁶¹ See Jebb (*ad* 1593, 1594). Probably this was supposed to be the very place whence Theseus and Peirithous were thought to have descended to Hades: see

it is all the more remarkable that similar pledges of oath are given by Theseus to Oedipus at that very place (1631-37; cf. 1767-68). The subversion of cosmic order, implicit in all these associations of Oedipus' κατάβασις with Theseus' sin, is confirmed at the end of the Messenger's speech, who reveals that the limits between Olympus and Hades, the two poles defining the stability of cosmic order, have been confounded too: Theseus makes reverence simultaneously to the Earth and to the θεῶν Ὀλυμπος (1654-55),¹⁶² while the Messenger himself (1661-62) puts forward as equally plausible possibilities the assumption of Oedipus to heaven and his descent to Hades.¹⁶³ Nonetheless, Oedipus' κατάβασις will not end as Theseus' did: Persephone (1556 τὰν ἀφανῆ θεόν; cf. Oedipus' own words at 1548 ἢ τε νερτέρα θεός) will benevolently receive the descending Oedipus (as implored by the Chorus, 1556-64), in spite of the fact that this polluted man has been granted asylum by Theseus, who once tried to abduct her, and has been declared ἔμπολις in a place whose pride are horses (58-61, 668, 711), offspring of Poseidon's (the place's

Judeich (1931: 414), Kirsten (1973: 9, 18), Burkert (1985b: 12); discussion in Robert (1915:I. 23, 30).

¹⁶² Winnington-Ingram (1980: 271 with n. 60) remarks that this must have been a familiar ritual gesture (cf. *Ar. Eq.* 156); but, as he rightly points out, this gesture receives too much emphasis (cf. 1654-5 ἅμα ... ἐν ταύτῳ χρόνῳ [Blaydes : λόγῳ codd.) to be insignificant.

¹⁶³ On the collapse of limits between Olympian and chthonic cf. Benardete (1966: 121), Segal (1981: 369, 399-400 with n.91, 404), Kirkwood (1986: 109). Winnington-Ingram (1980: 270-71) adds two more points: first, at 1460-61 Oedipus says that "the winged thunder of Zeus will lead him to Hades" (so the two poles, heaven and Hades, are brought together again); secondly, the thunderous noises summoning Oedipus are described by the Chorus (1456) as coming from the heaven (αἰθήρ), whereas the Messenger (1606) says κτύπησε μὲν Ζεὺς χθόνιος.

ἐπιστάτης [889]) rape of Demeter.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, if the χθόνια θεαί (1568) who are asked to welcome Oedipus are indeed the Erinyes, as the scholiast *ad* 1568 (p. 60 De Marco) and Jebb (*ad* 1568) have suggested, then this might serve as a kind of synopsis of the polarities dominating the play: on the one hand the initial tension between Oedipus and the Eumenides (because of the violation of their sanctuary) is clearly recalled, while on the other hand their close association with Demeter / Persephone¹⁶⁵ is perhaps meant to remind us again (this time from a different standpoint) that there is also a tension between Poseidon / Theseus and Demeter / Persephone — in spite of which Oedipus is now welcomed by the gods of the Underworld. Finally, Cerberus who, according to one version of the myth,¹⁶⁶ devoured Peirithous during his infamous journey along with Theseus, will now clear the way¹⁶⁷ for the dying Oedipus (1568–78).

¹⁶⁴ Colchester (1942: 24–28), followed by Bernidaki-Aldous (1990: 198–200), has detected interesting innuendos in the text that may be construed as implying a connection of Oedipus with the Eleusinian Mysteries —culminating in his final transformation into a Hierophant. In that case, Oedipus' initiation into the Mysteries of the Two Goddesses paradoxically takes place under the auspices of Theseus —an archetypal 'opposite pole' (along with Poseidon) to Persephone / Demeter.

¹⁶⁵ Farnell (1907a: 54–55), Richardson (1974: 306); cf. Bernidaki-Aldous (1990: 196). Edmunds (1981a: 229–38) makes an interesting case for an original cultic association between Oedipus on the one hand and Demeter and the Erinyes on the other. On the connection between Demeter and the Erinyes see Appendix n. 185.

¹⁶⁶ See Hellanikos *FGrHist* 323F18 Jacoby (=Plut. *Th.* 31), Tzetzes on Ar. *Ra.* 142a (IV.3, p. 743 Koster). Cf. also Plut. *Th.* 35.1 for a rationalization of this version. Kamerbeek (*ad* 1568–1573) seems to have felt the allusion to the Theseus-Peirithous saga.

¹⁶⁷ If this is the correct interpretation of 1575 ἐν καθαρῷ βῆναι —a text perhaps corrupt. See Jebb (*ad* 1575f.), Ulrich von Wilamowitz in Tycho von Wilamowitz

To be sure, all these paradoxes are ἀλόγιστα (1675), unfathomable and unintelligible.¹⁶⁸ It is of supreme significance that the ultimate reversal of the play is that of the notions of vision and blindness: the daughters, who were virtually their father's eyes (866-67), now use the vocabulary of blindness (1681 ἄσκοποι, 1682 ἀφανεῖ, 1683-84 νῶν δ' ὀλεθρία | νύξ ἐπ' ὄμμασιν βέβακε,¹⁶⁹ 1689 οὐ κάτοιδα, 1701 σκότον), whereas their father has acquired a kind of wondrous vision and become a καινὸς ἠγεμὼν (1542-43) to those who used to guide him (cf. also 1521, 1587-89).¹⁷⁰ The Chorus are basically in the same position: their repeatedly expressed terror in view of the uncanny natural phenomena that have suddenly broken out (1462-71, 1477-85), is contrasted to Oedipus' remarkable certainty of what is in store for him (1460-61, 1472-76); it is not the blind (ἀφειγγής, cf. 1549)¹⁷¹ Oedipus, but the 'seeing' Chorus that cannot explain these wondrous occurrences, which they significantly term ἀφειγγές τι (1480-81), 'dark', 'uncanny', 'inexplicable'.¹⁷² Sophocles, using a device dear to him since, at least, the time of his *Oedipus Tyrannus* (cf. e.g. *OT* 284-5, 370-73, 747), opposes

(1917: 364 n. 2), Kamerbeek (*ad* 1574-1578), Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 260-61).

¹⁶⁸ "Things which baffle λογισμός, things which transcend human reason": Jebb (*ad* 1675f.). Cf. Coray (1993: 407).

¹⁶⁹ On the figurative use of νύξ for 'blindness' cf. *OT* 374-75. Jebb (*ad* 1683f.) and Kamerbeek (*ad* 1683,4) give different interpretations. An intermediate position is held by Segal (1981: 401).

¹⁷⁰ On the splendid dramatic effect of Oedipus guiding his former guides, as if he had his eyes, see Jebb (*ad* 1542-1555), Shields (1961: 71-72), Knox (1964: 161), Seidensticker (1972: 262), Di Benedetto (1983: 223-24), Seale (1982: 136-7), Allison (1984: 86). On its theatrical significance see Linforth (1951: 174).

¹⁷¹ Cf. the use of σκοτεινός = 'blind' in *OT* 1326.

¹⁷² Cf. Burian (1974: 428) and Segal (1981: 396, 400).

delusive physical eyesight to (genuine) mental vision:¹⁷³ this is his way to illustrate his view on the unreliability of human perception, and the illusory character of human knowledge.

To conclude: the play demonstrates, along the lines of Sophoclean ‘apophatism’, that νόμιμα, respectable though they may be, are nevertheless merely human conventions: they are only a single mental and social reality out of the chaos of innumerable possibilities that can potentially be substantiated — structured and conceptualized — as mental and social categories. To quote Knox (1982: 26), “the *polis*, as Sophocles had his chorus sing in *Antigone*, is a human invention, perhaps man’s greatest creation, but it is no more than that.” Moreover, what is considered εὐσέβεια or ἀγνεία by man is not necessarily so for god: Oedipus, despite his shattering of all νόμοι and frameworks (kinship, polis, cosmic order), is finally translated by the gods into a level of god-like existence. The more Oedipus’ prophetic power grows in him,¹⁷⁴ the more he proceeds towards the transcendence of all kinds of νόμιμα; in other words, the more he acquires a gift that, by definition, is a non-communal property of an exceptional individual, the more he transcends the coherence and predictability of social framework, notably as substantiated in its νόμιμα, in which, by definition, it is the collective identity of a social entity (not the exceptional individual) that is manifested. Thus, the utter destruction of all kinds of νόμιμα coincides

¹⁷³ On this paradox see Shields (1961: 65-73), Buxton (1980: 23).

¹⁷⁴ According to the pattern that Knox (1964: 148-61) has detected and described. The demonic power displayed gradually by Oedipus is rightly recognized by Bowra (1944: 329-30), Wassermann (1953: 565-67), Kitto (1961: 386-89), Sgroi (1962: 294), Burian (1974: 425 and *passim*), Edmunds (1981a: 228-29), Allison (1984: 85-86), and very convincingly by Daly (1986b: 82-83). It is undervalued (with his human aspects being brought out instead) by Linforth (1951: 119-29), Waldock (1951: 225-26), Easterling (1967: 1-2, 10), Hester (1977: 30), Di Benedetto (1983: 225), and Blundell (1989: 253-54).

with Oedipus' assumption to a superhuman status. The Chorus fear that they may be punished for having associated with a polluted man (1480-84) They do not understand how a man who remains polluted until the end — a fact not denied even by Oedipus himself (1132-36)¹⁷⁵ — can still be summoned by the gods (1460, 1511-12, 1514-15), and indeed in such a splendidly mysterious way (1626-28).¹⁷⁶ The common man's limited understanding of the cosmos (as against the heroised individual's superhuman perception) is condensed in the Chorus' comment on the impending destruction of the Labdacids: they state that, if these woes are ἀξίωμα δαιμόνων (1451-52), they cannot be meaningless (ματᾶν, 1451).¹⁷⁷ They do not attempt to explain this new turnabout: their words at 1565-67, and especially δαίμων δίκαιος, only observe — they do not interpret — the counterbalancing vicissitudes of human fortune, the

¹⁷⁵ See the interesting remarks of Jebb (*ad* 1132ff.), Bowra (1944: 310, 314), Knox (1964: 152), Gellie (1972: 162-63, 167-68), Parker (1983: 310); wrongly Colchester (1942:27), Letters (1953: 300), Segal (1981: 385), Gardiner (1987: 112-13 with n.41), Blundell (1989: 249 with n. 80), and Walker (1995: 184); the passage is deplorably misunderstood by Bernidaki-Aldous (1990: 189). Pace Adkins (1960: 136), εὐσεβής at 287 does not mean 'ritually clean'. On the contrary, the important distinction between 'pollution' (μίασμα) and moral innocence holds good in this passage as well as throughout the play; on this distinction see Adkins (1960: 87-91, 105-106) and Parker (1983: 116-7, 310 etc.); cf. also Whitman (1951: 203-204), Jones (1962: 229-31), Lesky (1972: 250), Hester (1977: 25-26), Cairns (1993: 222 n. 19). Nor should one introduce such psychological interpretations as "the blush of unexpungeable shame" (Howe [1962: 141 with n.59; cf. 134]) neglecting the all too important, and much more tangible, factor of the *miasma* of pollution; the same goes also for Linforth (1951: 106-109) who does not clearly distinguish between pollution and moral innocence.

¹⁷⁶ On the uncanny character of this scene see e.g. Reinhardt (1979: 223), Knox (1964: 161), Kirkwood (1958: 272), Lesky (1960: 377-78) and (1972: 255).

¹⁷⁷ See Jebb's (*ad* 1447ff.) interesting remarks; also, more recently, Krause (1976: 195-6).

“impersonal universal cycle, dispensing alternately good and bad fortune to mortals with little regard for merit” (Blundell [1989: 254]).¹⁷⁸ They simply avow their compliance with an unintelligible and inexplicable cosmic order: “Time” (in Jebb’s translation of 1454–55) is “overthrowing some fortunes, and on the morrow lifting others, again, to honour”. This is as far into divine decrees as human understanding can possibly go.

APPENDIX

At 887–89 Theseus announces that he was obliged to interrupt a sacrifice he has been performing in honour of Poseidon (for this important sacrifice cf. also 1492–95). It is well known that Poseidon was Theseus’ divine father,¹⁷⁹ and that the Attic hero was very closely associated with

¹⁷⁸ Sophocles has already (394–95) warned us against the idea of a simple theodicy; it is not the case that gods eventually make up for the woes they inflicted long ago. See Linforth (1951: 100–104, 114–17, 190–91), Kitto (1958: 47–54), Kitto (1961: 393), Jones (1962: 233), Blundell (1989: 254–55 with n. 96); cf. De Romilly (1968: 93). Whitman (1951: 199–200), albeit rejecting the idea of ‘divine amends’ in the play, wrongly thinks that the Chorus interpret Oedipus’ heroization in this way. The most fervid advocate of the ‘divine amends’ view is perhaps Bowra (1944: 314–15); see also Letters (1953: 299), Wassermann (1953: 563), Albini (1974: 231), Burton (1980: 293–94). I also disagree with Di Benedetto’s (1983: 245–46) view that the ending of the play, far from demonstrating the gods’ justice, shows a bitter reality, i.e. that “la giustizia del dio nel favorire l’ uomo consiste esclusivamente nel procurargli una buona morte”.

¹⁷⁹ E. *Hipp.* 887, 1169f., 1315, 1318, 1411. Barrett (1964: ad 887) points out that, although it was at Trozen that Theseus was thought to be Poseidon’s son (whereas at Athens he was Aegeus’ son), Athens had to “accept Poseidon’s paternity in legends of which it forms an integral part. The resultant joint paternity, divine and human, is far from unique: cf. Herakles son of Zeus and

him in cult, as it may be inferred from the place their feasts occupied in the Athenian religious calendar: one of the reasons Plutarch (*Thes.* 36. 4–6) offers as an explanation of the Athenian custom of honouring Theseus on the eighth day of each month (apart from their “major sacrifice” to him, i.e. the Theseia) is that they thought ἐτέρου μᾶλλον ἐκείνω [sc. Theseus] προσήκειν τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦτον [sc. eight] ἐκ Ποσειδῶνος γεγονέναι λεγομένω· καὶ γὰρ Ποσειδῶνα ταῖς ὀγδόαις τιμῶσιν ...¹⁸⁰ On the other hand, Poseidon is also the horse-god, protector (889 ἐπιστάτη) of εὔιππος (668) Colonus (cf. also 58–61, 711, and see above, p. 244), where, Sophocles tells us, he first created the bridle for the horse (712–15). If the scholiast on 712 (p. 40 De Marco) is to be trusted, the Sophoclean version of the myth is an ἐπὶ τὸ σεμνότερον modification of an Attic legend, which is presumably summarized by Tz. *ad Lyc.* 766 (II. 244 Scheer):

καὶ περὶ τοὺς πέτρους τοῦ ἐν Ἀθήναις Κολωνοῦ καθευδήσας [sc. ὁ Ποσειδῶν] ἀπεσπέρμηγε καὶ ἵππος Σκύφιος ἐξῆλθεν ὁ καὶ Σκιρωνίτης¹⁸¹ λεγόμενος.

Cf. also schol. Pi. P. 4. 246 (II. 131 Drachmann):

Amphitryon, and the Dioskoroï who are also Tyndaridai.” See also Gantz (1993: 248–9). For a genetic examination of the ‘double paternity’ motif (and of the conflation of the Trozenian and the Athenian versions) in the Theseus myth see Sourvinou-Inwood (1979: 18–21).

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Deubner (1932: 215), and the commentary of Ampolo & Manfredini (1988) *ad loc.* Calame (1990: 266) misinterprets this passage as implying “la coïncidence de la célébration des Théséïa avec le jour consacré, le 8 Hécatombaïon, au dieu des assises de la terre”: the Posidea were, of course, celebrated in the month Posideon (probably on the 8th: Deubner *l.c.*), the Theseia on the 8th of Pyanopsion (Deubner [1932: 224]).

¹⁸¹ On the spelling Σκιρ—rather than Σκειρ—see L. Threatte, *The Grammar of Attic Inscriptions, Vol. I: Phonology* (Berlin & New York 1980), 193.

Πετραῖος τιμᾶται Ποσειδῶν παρὰ Θεσσαλοῖς [...] ὅτι ἐπὶ τινος πέτρας κοιμηθεὶς ἀπεσπερμάτισε, καὶ τὸν θορὸν δεξαμένη ἡ γῆ ἀνέδωκεν ἵππον πρῶτον, ὃν ἐπεκάλεσαν Σκύφιον.¹⁸²

The scholiasts' καθευδήσας and κοιμηθεὶς have been taken (most recently by Nagy [1990a: 231–33]) at face value: Poseidon falls asleep and has, apparently, an ὄνειρώξις. Nonetheless, one is tempted to detect here an attenuated version of a story in which, originally, Poseidon spilled his semen during *intercourse*. Such a hypothesis is strongly reinforced by a parallel Boeotian (and, secondarily, Arcadian) legend:¹⁸³ Demeter was pursued by Poseidon, so she changed herself into a mare to avoid him; but the god assumed the form of a stallion, raped her, and begat upon her the first horse, Arion.¹⁸⁴ Demeter became indignant at the insult, and

¹⁸² Cf. also Burkert (1985a: 403 n.32), Nagy (1990a: 231–33).

¹⁸³ The Boeotian version: *Thebais* frr. 8(I), 8(II) Bernabé = frr. 6c, 6b Davies (=schol. *Il.* 23.346 [II 259, 24 Dind., cf. V 424 Erbse]; Schol. *Il.* 247 [V 424–25 Erbse]). Sources for the Arcadian version: Fontenrose (1959: 367 with n.4). Wüst (“Erinyes”, *RE* Suppl. VIII [1956] 96–100) and others have supposed with great probability that the clearly prior Boeotian legend was later transferred to Arcadia, where it was mingled with the earlier local cult of Demeter and Kore; Burkert (1979: 127) too seems to opt for the priority of the Boeotian legend. *Contra*, however, Kern (s.v. “Demeter”, *RE* 4 [1901] 2733–34), Wilamowitz (1959 I: 401), Nilsson (1967: 447 n.5). Fontenrose (1959: 369–70) adopts an agnostic point of view; so also, more recently, A. Schachter, *Cults of Boiotia* (*BICS* Suppl. 38.1), Vol. I (London 1981), 164 who seems, however, too sceptical as to the validity of the Boeotian version.

¹⁸⁴ Farnell (1907a: 50); Burkert (1985a: 138 with nn.32–35). Demeter’s transformation into a mare is not mentioned in the Boeotian version of the legend as it has reached us. In Attica, the close connection between Demeter and Poseidon has left its traces in their common temple at the deme Lakiadai (Paus. 1.37.2) — see Wüst (s.v. “Poseidon”, *RE* 22.1 [1953] 508–509) — and also elsewhere: see Kern, s.v. “Demeter”, *RE* 4 (1901) 2739 and, above all, Schachermeyr (1950: 36–7).

was subsequently given the name Erinyes;¹⁸⁵ thus, the first horse “was brought forth by an *infuriated, wrathful mother*”.¹⁸⁶ This version of the legend has left no traces in Attica, as far as our sources let us see. However, given that the Boeotian version seems to be the original one (n. 183), and that it has most probably influenced the shaping of the Arcadian version, one should not hold it improbable that it has also shaped or influenced, in one way or another, the Athenian legend about the birth of the first horse at Colonus.¹⁸⁷ In fact, Carl Robert (1915: I. 19–20) has forcefully advocated this view: “Erwägt man nun, daß auf dem Kolonos auch die Erinyen eine hochheilige Kultstätte haben, und daß anderwärts in der Entwicklung des Mythos vom Ur-Roß schon früh anstelle des den Samen aufnehmenden Erd- oder Felsbodens die Erdgöttin selbst tritt, als Demeter Erinyes in Thelpusa [i.e. Arcadia], einfach als Erinyes in der Thebais, so erscheint der Schluß nicht nur erlaubt, sondern

¹⁸⁵ In the Boeotian sources (see above n. 183) we are told of Poseidon’s mating with a deity named simply Erinyes. However, Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.6.8 (Δημήτηρ είκασθεῖσα Ἐρινύι κατὰ τὴν συνουσίαν) and the later Arcadian version (see again n. 183) speak clearly of Demeter (or Gaia), who assumed the epithet Ἐρινύς “τοῦ μηνίματος ἔνεκα [...], ὅτι τῷ θυμῷ χρῆσθαι καλοῦσιν ἔρινύειν οἱ Ἀρκάδες” (Paus. 8. 25. 6). There is evidence to suggest that Demeter and the Erinyes were associated: see Colchester (1942: 27–28), Fontenrose (1959: 367 n. 4), Kirkwood (1986: 108–109).

¹⁸⁶ Burkert (1979: 127). Emphasis mine.

¹⁸⁷ Religious contact between Athens and Boeotia is indubitably established in the case of Demeter’s cult: Hdt. 5.61.2 says that fugitives from Γέφυρα (Tanagra’s former name: see Hekataios *FGrHist* 1 F 118 Jacoby = Steph. Byz. s.v. Γέφυρα) transferred to Athens the cult of Ἀχαιίη Δημήτηρ (cf. also Ar. *Ach.* 708–709 with schol. *ad* 708 c [p. 94 Wilson]; *EM* 180, 34 Gaisford = 2204 Lasserre-Livadaras). See Kern (s.v. “Demeter”, *RE* 4 [1901] 2719).

direkt geboten, daß auch auf dem Kolonos schon bald die Demeter Erinys als Mutter des Rosses gedacht wurde [...]”.¹⁸⁸

There is also a (less close) Orphic parallel, according to which Zeus — indeed, Zeus *chthonios*,¹⁸⁹ who perhaps should not be too sharply divorced from his brother Poseidon, the god of the earth’s entrails¹⁹⁰ — mated with his mother Rhea (fr. 153 Kern), who is *identical with Demeter*

¹⁸⁸ This view seems to have been accepted by Schachermeyr (1950: 142 n. 61). Robert (*l.c.*) also makes the point that Poseidon’s Attic epithet Μέλανθος (schol. Lycophr. 766) betrays a further association with Demeter Melaina in Phigaleia (Paus. 8.42.4). Even the Hesiodic (and thus perhaps Panhellenic) version of the myth (*Th.* 280ff.), according to which the horse Pegasus was born, along with Chrysaor, from Medusa’s head, after her copulation with Poseidon, can be subordinated to the Demeter-Erinys myth, since she was originally identical with Medusa (see Fontenrose [1959: 370-71], Richardson [1974: 140]). Another version of the same story is evidently Pegasus’ birth from Gorgon (Apollod. 2[32]3,2,1); see Burkert (1979: 127). — If the hypothesis suggested here is right, then the ‘censorship’ detected in the euphemisms *καθευδήσας* and *κοιμηθείς* (above, p. 251) would be paralleled by another such euphemism in the schol. Pi. P. 4. 246: τὸν θορὸν δεξαμένη ἢ γῆ may well be a tamer version of the story about the rape of Demeter—Earth.

¹⁸⁹ See West (1983b: 95).

¹⁹⁰ The three brothers, Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades, are sometimes represented as a single divinity combining emblems of all three of them (Farnell [1907b: 59-60]; on Zenoposeidon cf. also Schachermeyr [1950: 188]), a fact that may suggest their essential identity. Farnell (1907b: 6-7, 49-52) unwisely denied Poseidon any chthonic character whatsoever, but subsequent research has established his chthonic aspect beyond any doubt: see above all Schachermeyr (1950), index s.v. “Poseidon als chthonischer Gott”; also s.v. “P.[oseidon] neben Da, Demeter und Ge” and “neben Medusa”. For the cultic associations of Poseidon and Demeter particularly in Attica see above, n. 184. On the name Poseidon as meaning “spouse (πόσις) of Da” (cf. Da-mater) see Schachermeyr (1950: 13-15). On the chthonic associations of the horse, Poseidon’s animal, see Schachermeyr (1950) index, s.v. “Pferd — Verhältnis zu Unterwelt und Tod”; also Detienne & Vernant (1978: 187-96 *passim*) with further bibliography.

(fr. 145 Kern); the fruit of this copulation was Persephone.¹⁹¹ What is more, in the version of the story found in the Derveni papyrus,¹⁹² the violence of the copulation is particularly stressed: in col. xviii. 13 the author states that “the goddess is also called Deo ‘because she was ravaged (δηλοῦν—Δηιώ) in her copulation’”.¹⁹³ Although, admittedly, there is no mention of the horse in this myth, it seems probable that the *wrath* of Demeter might have been implicit in it.

To sum up: Theseus incurs the hostility of Demeter and the Kore not only on account of his attempted abduction of the latter (above, p. 227 with n. 107), but also by virtue of his being Poseidon’s son and double — after all, as I stress in n. 114, Poseidon’s and Theseus’ crimes seem to be *dédoublements* of each other, as they are both committed for sexual purposes against essentially the same unwilling goddess.¹⁹⁴ Of this hostility the horse would have been a perpetual reminder, a powerful visual symbol; and so, the emphasis on horses and horsemen in the important second stasimon (1044–95; esp. 1067–73)¹⁹⁵ finds an adequate and dramatically significant explanation: beside the allusion to Theseus’ abortive attempt to abduct Persephone, the pursuit of the Thebans by Athenian horsemen probably alludes to Demeter’s pursuit by the *stallion*-Poseidon. Lines 897–900 seem to reinforce this view: the horsemen are bid to rush forth ἀπὸ ῥυτῆρος (900), ‘with slack rein’;¹⁹⁶ now, that is, the violent, unchecked, wild aspect of the horse is stressed (to match the

¹⁹¹ See further West (1983b: 93 with n. 43).

¹⁹² Provisional publication in *ZPE* 47 (1982), following p. 300.

¹⁹³ Quotation from West (1983b: 93–4).

¹⁹⁴ On the essential identity of Demeter and Kore / Persephone see again n. 108.

¹⁹⁵ On the recurrent equine element of the *OC* see Kirkwood (1986: 107), although he takes a different viewpoint.

¹⁹⁶ Jebb (*ad* 899ff.) rightly remarks that “these horsemen are the important pursuers, ἀνιππων being added merely to give the notion of a pursuit *en masse*.”

myth of Demeter's rape), and that certainly reverses Poseidon's image as creator of the bridle (712-15)¹⁹⁷ which 'heals' (714 ἀκεστῆρα) the rage of wild horses.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ Stinton (1990: 266-67) wanted to see a second meaning in χαλινόν, namely 'anchor' or 'mooring cable'; but this is impossible in the context of the ode (714 ἵπποισιν, 715 ἀγυιαῖς).

¹⁹⁸ See Jebb (*ad* 714), Burton (1980: 278 with n.27), Kamerbeek (*ad* 712-715). Detienne & Vernant (1978: 196-206, 212 n. 92) note that the mention of Poseidon as the creator of the bridle here is exceptional, since it was Athena who was normally associated therewith. This would intensify the ironical contrast with the equine Poseidon's 'unbridled' assault on Demeter.

CHAPTER FIVE

MADNESS, DEATH, HEROIZATION, AND THE COLLAPSE OF LIMITS IN THE AJAX

*"THE REST I WILL TELL TO THOSE
DOWN TO HADES"*

*"Indeed," said the proconsul, closing the book,
"this line is beautiful and very true.
Sophocles wrote it in a deeply philosophic mood.
How much we 'll tell down there, how much,
and how very different we 'll appear.
What we protect here like sleepless guards,
wounds and secrets locked inside us,
protect with such great anxiety day after day,
we 'll reveal freely and clearly down there."*

*"You might add," said the sophist, half smiling,
"if they talk about things like that down there,
if they bother about them at all any more."*

*C.P. Cavafy
(trans. by Edmund Keely & Philip Sherrard)*

5.0.1 Ajax's first impasse: belonging neither to the polis nor to the wild

The basic thesis of this chapter is that Ajax's death as well as his subsequent heroization are the result of a series of impossible situations, of impasses. In a major part of this chapter (namely sections 5.1.1, 5.1.2 and 5.2.1) we shall be examining a fundamental aspect of these impasses, namely Ajax's veering between the world of the polis and that of the wild, without belonging to either. The reason why this constitutes

an unsurmountable deadlock is clear enough: such a vacillation between the polis and the outdoors signifies an essential inability to belong to either of the two basic categories, by means of which the archaic Greek mind conceived and interpreted the world; in other words, if one belongs neither to the polis nor to the wild, one can belong nowhere — and this, to be sure, is a tremendous impasse; this will be further clarified in section 5.3.1.

In particular, in sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 we shall be dealing with Ajax's veering between retaining his status as a hoplite and, on the other hand, assuming the qualities of a 'black hunter' (more on this term later). This is an impossible situation, whose symbolic meaning is obvious: the hoplite, being but a citizen in arms,¹ stands for the ordered world of the polis with its set structures (laws, rules, rituals), whereas the 'black hunter' represents the wild, with its systematic inversion of all categories; as we said, however, Ajax belongs to neither world.

Finally, in section 5.2.1 we shall be looking at Ajax's inability either to perform a proper sacrifice (a function typical of the polis) or to be a proper hunter (i.e. to belong fully to the wild).

5.1.1 Belonging neither to the polis nor to the wild (1): Ajax can be neither a hoplite nor a 'black hunter'

The play begins with a pointed antithesis between Odysseus the hunter on the one hand and Ajax the hoplite on the other. The very first line makes clear that hunting is Odysseus' typical feature, his unaltering characteristic (1-2 ἀεὶ ... θηρώμενον, 5 κυνηγετοῦντα, 8, 37 κυναγία);²

¹ See below p. 308 with n. 147.

² On the hunting metaphor see Kamerbeek (*ad* 2, 31, 32, 33), Stanford (*ad* 2, 5-6,

Ajax on the other hand appears to be a typical hoplite³ (4 τάξιιν ἐσχάτην;⁴ 19 Αἴαντι τῷ σακεσφόρῳ: the descriptive epithet refers to a permanent and typical feature, and alludes to the Iliadic formula σάκος ἤύτε πύργον,⁵ said of Ajax's shield — a shield which seems to have been visualized, in 5th Athens, as a normal *hoplite* shield, either circular or scalloped, and *not* as a tower-shield, despite the Homeric formula: see Appendix A.).⁶ It seems, however, that in this night normality has been subverted: Odysseus, despite Athena's praise for his hunting skills (7-8), has been unsuccessful in his hunt (23, 33), so he needs the goddess' help (13, 34-35) — a help consisting essentially in her providing Odysseus with a skill which, albeit typical of a hunter, he is paradoxically lacking, namely the power of *perception*, of seeing and knowing⁷ (cf. e.g. 13

19, 32-33, 59-60) and, most importantly, Jouanna (1977); on Odysseus as a hunter *par excellence* see Taplin (1978: 41). That Odysseus is a hunter, belonging therefore to the wild, does not mean that he cannot at the same time serve the community, the polis: his admirable versatility (a traditional trait of his persona) makes him belong to both worlds. He is thus starkly contrasted with the monolithic Ajax, who hovers between the polis and the wild without belonging to either. See further p. 267.

³ In 5th century, as well as in this play, Ajax was thought of, anachronistically, as a hoplite; see Appendix A.

⁴ Pace Segal (1981: 122) and Bowie (1983: 114), Ajax's having his station at the end of the Greek encampment implies anything but his 'liminality' or his anti-hoplite ethos; see Jebb (*ad* 4): "... the posts of danger and honour at the eastern and western ends respectively were held by Achilles and Ajax [...] (*Il.* 11. 8f.)"; cf. Sorum (1986: 363-64).

⁵ E.g. *Il.* 7. 219. See Kamerbeek (*ad* 19), Stanford (*ad* 159); cf. von der Mühl (1930: 10-11, 38).

⁶ On the centrality of the shield in the hoplite ideology see esp. Tyrtaeus 11. 21-38 West.

⁷ Cf. Guthrie (1947: 116): "The one-time wily Odysseus is completely at a loss". That seeing and knowing is normally a typical feature of the hunter Odysseus is apparent from 379-80 ἰὼ πάνθ' ὄρων [...] τέκνον Λαρτίου.

μάθης, 35 φρενί, 66 περιφανῆ, 67 εἰσιδών, 81 περιφανῶς). On the other hand, Ajax seems no longer to be a pure hoplite; we learn (41) that his hoplite honour has suffered a grave insult, for Achilles' arms were awarded not to him but to Odysseus (Athena at 41 says in fact much less than that, but an audience familiar with the myth should have, no doubt, taken her hint so as to reconstruct the outlines of the myth; Ajax will soon clarify this at 98, 100). What is more, Ajax, in his attempt to exact retribution for his slighted honour, 'regressed', as it were, to a type of behaviour expected not of a hoplite but of a 'black hunter' (to use a term coined by Vidal-Naquet [1986b: 106ff.]), i.e. of an ephebe⁸ who, before becoming a full hoplite (as well as a full member of the community) by joining the phalanx, spends, paradoxically, a period of complete and systematic anti-hoplite behaviour (by way of what Vidal-Naquet [1986b: 114] calls "the law of symmetrical inversion"):

— unlike a hoplite, he remains *outwith the phalanx* (he is usually situated in such a peripheral area as the countryside or the borders), and lives as a solitary warrior, i.e. with *no solidarity* for his fellow soldiers;

— he bears *no heavy armour*,

⁸ This does not mean, of course, that Ajax is an ephebe or is undergoing a kind of initiation process: see further p. 262.

— he practises *guile*, and fights at *night*.⁹

In other words, the pre-hoplite ephebe, before becoming a hoplite, had to be an anti-hoplite (Vidal-Naquet [1986b: 120]).¹⁰ This is the kind of behaviour to which Ajax, formerly an exemplary hoplite, seems to have anomalously relapsed this night: without, of course, becoming literally a hunter, he nonetheless displays several anti-hoplite or non-hoplite

⁹ Vidal-Naquet (1986b: 89, 147–48). On the systematic antithesis between the hoplite on the one hand and the pre-hoplite / anti-hoplite ephebe ('black hunter') on the other see the list drawn up by Vidal-Naquet (1986b: 113; cf. 140–41, 147–48); for the *Ajax* case cf. Bowie (1983: 114). An important distinction must be made: the Athenian ephebeia apparently had its roots in rites of passage, in which the ephebe, before being fully admitted into the community as a member of the hoplite phalanx, was sent out to the frontier area to perform, as a guileful 'black hunter', a symbolic exploit (Vidal-Naquet [1986b: 144]). Nonetheless, in classical Athens —at the time when the *Ajax* was written—only traces of these initiatory rituals can be perceived, e.g. in passages like Thuc. 4.67–68, 8.92.2 (on which see Vidal-Naquet [1986b: 107–108, 143]), whereas in societies like Sparta or Crete rituals of this type were real enough (Vidal-Naquet *l.c.* and p. 144). In other words, in Athens it is only *at the level of myth* that the antithesis between the pre-hoplite ephebe and the full hoplite is demonstrated —and myth is the area *par excellence* which tragedy exploits.

¹⁰ Regarding the term 'black hunter' it is notable that vase-paintings often depict non-hoplites (e.g. archers, *peltastai*, etc.) as *Negroids*: Lissarague (1990: 21–34, 177–87). This could hardly have been the case in real life: it is rather a strict polarity, i.e. "hoplite / Greek : non-hoplite / non-Greek", that seems to be implied here —a polarity that is, conceivably, an extreme expression of the fact that hoplites were *full* members of the community whereas non-hoplites were not (Sage [1996: 33–4] points out that citizenship and hoplite status were identified). Indeed, many (although not, of course, all) non-hoplites were foreigners, e.g. Scythian archers (cf. Sage [1996: 40–1]); also, in the *Ajax*, there is a clear-cut antithesis between Ajax as a γνήσιος son and (normally) a fully integrated citizen and a hoplite, and Teucer as a νόθος son (1013), a barbarian (1262–3) —at least in Agamemnon's eyes —and an archer (1120–22). In *A. Pers.* 147–9, 239–40 and in *Ar. Vesp.* 1081–85 the bow is a markedly non-Greek weapon; cf. Hall (1989: 85–6). Cf. in general below nn. 145 and 149.

features, which are succinctly summarized by Athena (47): Ajax has been acting *treacherously* (δόλιος),¹¹ *alone* (μόνος), and *at night* (νύκτωρ).¹² A little later, we hear again, this time from Tecmessa, that Ajax set out on his expedition at dead of night (285-86);¹³ his enterprise is significantly called *πεῖρα* (290), a term used of Odysseus' *hunt* at line 2, while the fact that it took place, abnormally, at night (as a 'black hunt' does) gains more emphasis by the following temporal clause (285-86) ἠνίχ' ἔσπεροι λαμπτήρες οὐκέτ' ἦθον.¹⁴ What is more, Ajax apparently bore no armour except for his sword (286-87)¹⁵ and went out without having

¹¹ Bradshaw (1991: 116) erroneously treats *dolos* as a rather normal feature of Ajax. In [E.] *Rhes.* 510ff. the *hoplite* (see below p. 338 with n. 221) Rhesus sees treachery as unworthy of a true warrior.

¹² Cf. Bowie (1983: 114). Cohen (1978: 27) perceives the importance of this line and contrasts it with *Il.* 17.645-46, where Ajax prays to Zeus that, if he must die, may it at least be in the light; cf. Stanford (1978: *passim*). On the strangeness of Ajax's behaviour see also Rosenmeyer (1971: 176-77), Segal (1981: 110, 124), Gardiner (1987: 74, 77), Poe (1987: 38 with n. 69), Blundell (1989: 85). Interestingly, in Ovid, *Met.* 13. 14-5, 100 Ajax accuses Odysseus of having achieved none of his feats in the light of day (cf. on this point e.g. Sen., *Tro.* 755-6).

¹³ On the meaning of ἄκρας νυκτός see Jebb (*ad* 285), Stanford (*ad* 285-86). On the association of night with guile see Buxton (1982: 64).

¹⁴ On the importance of the darkness-theme throughout the opening scenes of the play see Davidson (1975: 166); cf. generally Stanford (1978).

¹⁵ This is admittedly an *argumentum e silentio*, but I do not see why Sophocles should have Tecmessa mentioning only the sword if Ajax was in full armour. Cf. Ovid, *Met.* 13. 103-4 (Ajax speaking of the guileful Odysseus): '...qui clam, qui semper inermis | rem gerit' etc. —I believe with Taplin (1978: 85 with n.7), *pace* Seale (1982: 177 n. 10), Heath (1987: 168 n. 7) and Ley (1988: 89), that Ajax in his first appearance in the prologue must carry the sword, not a whip. Athena's questions at 95 and 97 seem to refer to a visible stage-prop: if she assumes that Ajax has been using the sword, it is probably because she sees him holding it. Contrast 108-10: Ajax has to *specify* that he intends to use a *whip* (110 μάστιγι) because this is probably not visible.

been summoned by a messenger nor having been warned by a trumpet (289-91),¹⁶ as was the normal military practice. Ajax's image as a 'black hunter' is completed, it would seem, by the fact that his act took place not in the battlefield, but in the peripheral, remote space of the ἀγρός (30 πεδία, cf. also 233 κεῖθεν κεῖθεν, 295 ἐκεῖ, which suggest an area outwith the camp, within which a hoplite is normally supposed to stay).

All the above are, however, qualified by an important parameter: Ajax's 'regression' to anti-hoplite practices is an exceptional, temporary situation, which (and this is most important) *aims at the restoration of his offended hoplite honour* (we remember that this was the reason of his night attack, cf. 41). The fact that this is an anomalous situation, and that Ajax did not normally display characteristics of a 'black hunter', is made clear by Tecmessa: as appears from 216-17, it is only on this fatal night that the famous warrior (216 κλεινός) Ajax has indulged in an activity typically associated with the 'black hunter', namely night expeditions (217 νύκτερος); the juxtaposition of κλεινός and νύκτερος (the former at the end of one line, the latter at the beginning of the following) underlines the antithesis between Ajax's normal status and his anomalous deviation from it.¹⁷ That is not to say, of course, that Ajax's regression to a 'black hunter' status means that he is to be regarded as an ephebe or as undergoing an initiation process: Ajax is a mature man, and has been a full hoplite, fully integrated into the army, for a long time. His

¹⁶ ἄκλητος is emphatically elaborated upon by the two following clauses (joined by the emphatic οὔτε ... οὔτε): see Jebb (*ad* 289ff.).

¹⁷ Stanford (*ad* 216-17) suspects the truth when he writes: "But the word-order is peculiar —perhaps to express anguish that so famous a warrior should be so ignominiously dishonoured in the darkness". Cf. Cohen (1978: 28), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 17 n. 19). As Davidson (1975: 166) has remarked, the *epithet* νύκτερος, "used instead of an adverb, associates Ajax himself more directly with darkness".

regression should rather be viewed in terms of the precarious 'liminality' that characterizes transitional phases such as between adolescence and manhood. In other words, Ajax, without being literally an adolescent, finds himself in a critical situation analogous to that of a 'black hunter': he is betwixt and between the communality of the army and the solitariness of the hunt; betwixt and between the order and its reversal; betwixt and between the polis and the wild. *Limina* are by definition dangerous, uncertain, dark:¹⁸ the human mind, with its penchant for classification and clear-cut taxonomies, cannot easily accommodate such ambiguous states. Ajax oscillates between the two opposite poles of the polis and of the wild without belonging to either, and this is what reduces him to the liminal, precarious state of a (*cum grano salis*) 'black hunter',¹⁹ who also hovers between two worlds.

Ajax's impasse is lyrically elaborated upon and becomes much clearer in the parodos (134-200). The introductory anapaestic lines (134-71), emphatically placed outside the strophic system, highlight Ajax's hoplite ἀρετή. His solidarity for his comrades is emphasized (158-61),²⁰ and his heroic qualities are conjured up in the audience's minds: πύργου ῥῦμα (159) recalls the Homeric σάκος ἥύτε πύργου (see above p. 258

¹⁸ See Douglas (1966: 95-6, 103-5). (I owe this point to Dr Sonia Greger). It is not, perhaps, accidental that the Greek word for 'being on the verge of' is κινδυνεύω (lit. 'to be in danger').

¹⁹ As I have already intimated (p. 260f.), the term 'black hunter' must not be taken too literally: I use it as a collective term for any non-hoplite or anti-hoplite kind of behaviour.

²⁰ I do not mean, of course, to suggest that Sophocles' Ajax lacks entirely the individualism and the anxiety for personal κλέος that characterizes Homeric heroes; however, I think that these should not be overstressed, as is done by e.g. Knox (1979: 145-47), Blundell (1989: 68-81 & *passim*) and others. See Appendix A.

with n. 5), ἔρκος Ἀχαιῶν (e.g. *Il.* 3.229)²¹ and πύργος (once in the *Od.* 11.556). On the other hand, there are hints reminding an alert audience that Ajax is no longer a pure hoplite: lines 172–81 are quite important in that they implicitly reflect the paradox (hoplite vs. hunter) which is besetting Ajax on this day. Artemis, the hunting-goddess (cf. 178 ἐλαφβολίαις), is surprisingly referred to in *military-hoplite* terms (176 νίκας, 177 κλυτῶν ἐνάρων), whereas Enyalios, the war-god (cf. 179 χαλκοθώραξ, 180 ξυνοῦ δορός),²² is assigned traits of the '*black hunter*' (180–81 ἐννυχίοις μαχαναῖς)!²³ So, the disarray in the limits between hoplite and hunter (due to Ajax's deviation from his normal hoplite status), and the resulting 'liminal', marginal condition in which Ajax finds himself, turn out not to be merely an anomaly confined to the human world, but to bear an eerie similarity to what seems to be the case in the world of the gods. Such a disorder that obliterates distinctions and categories which are otherwise clear-cut can only be the result of divine intervention: as the Chorus suggestively remark (185), ἦκοι γὰρ ἄν θεία νόσος.²⁴ Sophoclean gods are characteristically beyond and above the categories and taxonomies set by the human mind.

Not surprisingly, the same confusion of limits is also extended to the goddess ultimately responsible for Ajax's plight, namely Athena

²¹ See further Stanford (xiv n.13).

²² On the probable equivalence of Enyalios and Ares (despite their originally distinct character) see G. Nagy, *Comparative Studies in Greek and Indic Meter* (Cambridge, Mass. 1974) 136; also Burkert (1985a: 43–44). On Ares as a hoplite in art see Appendix B. *Contra* Jebb (222–23) and Kamerbeek (*ad* 179) who think that, in our passage, Enyalios should be distinguished from Ares.

²³ Similarities between Ajax and the gods Artemis and Enyalios have also been noticed by Blundell (1989:66), but from a different standpoint.

²⁴ Winnington-Ingram (1980: 25 n. 44) gives to this phrase an entirely different meaning which I cannot accept.

herself.²⁵ She is the hoplite goddess *par excellence*, the goddess of the shield: γοργῶπις (450), an allusion to the Gorgon's head which Athena wore as an emblem of terror, is an appropriate epithet for the war-goddess,²⁶ while the likening of her voice to an Etruscan trumpet at 17²⁷ is probably meant to associate her with the phalanx. However, on this fatal day she seems to have become a *huntress* as well: she hurls Ajax into hunting nets (60 ἔρκη),²⁸ and she obviously practises hunting guile (her infliction of madness upon her prey is thought of as deceit: 86 τεχνωμένου).²⁹ Her hunt is totally successful, unlike Ajax's, whose attempt to deviate from his normal hoplite status and indulge in hunting practices is thwarted: Athena deprives him of his *visual* and *mental* faculties (51-52; cf. 69-70,³⁰ 85), i.e. of what a hunter needs most.³¹ So, Ajax's hunt — which would have certainly been successful (48-49), but for the goddess' intervention (45; cf. 451-52) — is corrupted: it

²⁵ Blundell (1989: 65), from a different point of view, notices Ajax's similarity with Athena, but associates it with the Aristotelian doctrine that the unsociable man, like Ajax, is either god or beast (*ibid.* 69 with n. 42). For an explanation on the basis of Vernant's structuralist analysis of Greek sacrifice see Tyrell (1985: 162).

²⁶ See Farnell (1896: 288). For the Gorgoneion as *Schildepisema* see I. Krauskopf, *LIMC* IV.1, 300-303. Seale (1982: 155), after L. Campbell (*ad* 450), interprets the word differently.

²⁷ On this kind of trumpet see Jebb (*ad* 17; also p.213). On the meaning of the simile cf. Segal (1981: 130).

²⁸ On the use of nets in 'black hunt' see Vidal-Naquet (1986b: 117-19).

²⁹ Cf. Podlecki (1980: 55): "... the proper emphasis is to be placed on τεχνωμένου."

³⁰ For a case against the deletion of 68-70 (Fraenkel [1963], after Reichard) see Long (1964); also Heath (1987: 168 n. 6) with bibliography.

³¹ We recall, however, that the same goddess helped Odysseus out, when his *hunting* skills failed him, by backing up exactly his powers of *perception*, of *sight* and *understanding* (see p. 258)! Cf. Jouanna (1977: 182-3).

becomes an abnormal hunt, a hunt of *domestic* animals (53 ποίμνας, 54 βουκόλων φρουρήματα). We know that it was normally *wild* animals that were hunted like enemies;³² however, Ajax treats the sheep and cattle he has attacked as ‘game’, ἄγρα (64, 93, 407). Moreover, not only did Athena, through her intervention, prevent Ajax from becoming a proper hunter, but she also turned him into a hunter’s exact opposite, namely into her *prey*.³³

To conclude: Ajax is now facing his first impasse: he can be neither a hoplite proper nor a normal hunter. His attempt to regain his hoplite honour, which has been offended by his not having been awarded the arms of Achilles, fails because the hunt by means of which he tries, exceptionally, to achieve his purpose, is not merely impeded but also *perverted* by Athena, who thus deprives him of the chance both to remain a hoplite and to become a hunter. On the other hand, Odysseus is helped by Athena to remain a hunter (although he seemed to be failing in his hunting expedition), while at the same time assuming an extraordinary hoplite status by being awarded the glorious arms of Achilles (a status which he retains throughout the play, although he

³² Vernant (1991:298): “... in Greece wild beasts [...] were killed without scruple like enemies in the hunt.”

³³ See Kamerbeek (*ad* 60), Stanford (*ad* 59-60), Jouanna (1977: 183-5) and Segal (1981: 123-24,130) on Ajax as the hunter who is finally hunted himself.

admits to being inferior to Ajax [1339–41]³⁴). Thus, Odysseus' traditional versatility is confirmed once again: he can belong both to the polis (hoplite) and to the wild (hunter); more impressively still, he can serve the community, the polis, not as a hoplite but as a hunter (cf. 24, where it is implied that his hunting expedition has been taken up on behalf of the army). By contrast, Ajax fails to accommodate himself into either world and, far from continuing to serve his community, incurs its hostility.

5.1.2 Ajax's impasse continued

My contention is that the irresolvable ambiguities, the impasses, one of which we have just examined, are continued throughout the play and, in fact, constitute its main axes. What is more, Ajax finds himself unable to avoid them: they are interwoven, as it were, into his fate, into the very essence that his name signifies (this is what his exclamation at 430–32 means). Let us examine first how the ambiguity between Ajax as a hoplite and Ajax as a 'black hunter' is developed in the remaining part of the play. In his first speech (430–80) Ajax makes clear that, as far as he is concerned, he has by no means fallen short of his glorious father (434–39)

³⁴ This is a controversial point: I share the views of Knox (1979: 146 with n. 112), Cresci (1974: 224 n. 19), Fisher (1992: 312 n. 92) and March (1991–1993: 7–8); cf. the words of the Homeric Odysseus (*Od.* 11. 550–1, 556–8). See *contra*, however, Kirkwood (1958: 72), Gellie (1972: 282 n. 24), Hester (1979b: 245); also Poe (1987: 37 n. 68; 97 n. 176), Blundell (1989: 100–101) and Van Erp Taalman Kip (1996: 524–31) with very sound argumentation. Machin (1981: 31–59) takes an intermediate view: by means of imperceptible dramatic shifts, Sophocles makes the audience believe, at the outset, that the vote was impeccable, whereas by the end of the play he has them persuaded that the Atreidae are undoubtedly culpable. Perhaps the point should not be pressed too far in either direction.

and that his hoplite valour is his most permanent and indisputable trait, a fact which Achilles himself would certainly have been prepared to appreciate (441-44). It is the anomalous events of the past night, brought about by Athena's intervention, that have made him lose his hoplite honour (ἄτιμος 440). What he deplores is that he has proved unable to be a *proper hoplite* and to defend his heroic τιμή by becoming (if temporarily and exceptionally) a *proper hunter*, thus restoring to himself Achilles' arms; that but for Athena he would have inflicted the much-desired punishment upon the Argives (447-53). At any rate, his dishonour is now *fait accompli*, and Ajax subsequently devotes lines 457-80 to a consideration of possible ways of restoring his denigrated honour, in an attempt to escape the impossible situation in which he has found himself (Reinhardt [1979: 19] has appositely called this speech "Ajax's powerful survey of the hopelessness of his position"; cf. also Moore [1977: 58]).

The encounter with Eurysaces (545ff.) helps define this irresolvable ambiguity even more clearly. He entrusts his son's upbringing to Teucer the hunter (cf. 564 θήραν)³⁵ on the one hand, and to his soldiers on the other, who are significantly called ἀσπιστῆρες (565) — the shield being a

³⁵ Admittedly, at 564 Teucer is said to be on an expedition against the δυσμενεῖς, apparently using his hunting skills for the sake of the community (cf. also 1288). However, nowhere else in this play is Teucer said to be an integral part of the army; on the contrary, it is his *marginal* position that is emphasized: cf. Menelaus' (prejudiced but not necessarily untrue) remarks at 1120, 1122. Significantly, the mission referred to at 564 is clearly *outwith* the camp: 564 τηλωπός; 720-1 Μυσίων ἀπὸ Ἰ κρημνῶν. Moreover, that the *whole* of the army (719-32, esp. 722 τοῖς πᾶσιν Ἀργείοις ὁμοῦ, 725 οὔτις ἔσθ' ὅς οὔ) can shower abuse on him (722, 724-5) may be a corollary not only of his being a relative of Ajax, but also, perhaps, of his lower and peripheral status in relation to the rest of the army.

hoplite's most conspicuous feature.³⁶ The symbolic meaning of this act is clear enough: Ajax is trying to escape from his ambiguous state (being neither a hoplite nor a hunter) by seeing to it that his son should be *both a hoplite and a hunter* (i.e. assume a privileged state similar to Odysseus'). Likewise, Ajax's first (548 αὐτίκ') wish about his son is ὠμοῖς αὐτὸν ἐν νόμοις πατρὸς | [...] πωλοδαμνεῖν κάξομοιοῦσθαι φύσιν (548–49). This passage encapsulates the essential antinomy which is besetting Ajax and to which he is paradoxically adhering: Eurysaces' nature must be assimilated to his father's ὠμοὶ νόμοι, i.e. to the *anomalous* state of affairs (ὠμότης being associated with the world of the wild, of 'the raw', which the 'black hunter' represents³⁷) in which Ajax has found himself on this day; as Linforth (1931: 197) has written, "the oxymoron latent in ὠμοὶ νόμοι, which is equivalent to νόμοι ἄνομοι, suggests that the boy is to be an outlaw like his father, beyond the pale of society with its civilizing restraints."³⁸ At the same time, however, Eurysaces' upbringing is paradoxically termed πωλοδαμνεῖν: this word, unmistakably associated with the taming of wild temper (such as a hunter's free spirit), is an appropriate metaphor for the discipline and

³⁶ That the Chorus are sailors as well as warriors has been demonstrated by Gardiner (1987:52) as against Burton (1980:6).

³⁷ Vidal-Naquet (1986b:113).

³⁸ On the oxymoron see also Goldhill (1986:187). On Ajax's ὠμότης see Stanford (xxvii-xxix), although he treats it as an inborn trait of Ajax. In my opinion, both the ancient scholiast on 548a (p. 132 Christodoulou) and Kamerbeek (*ad* 548, 549) —cf. also Di Benedetto (1983:74) —are wrong in insisting that Ajax νόμους τὴν φύσιν ὠνόμασεν καὶ τὸ ἔθος τοῦ γεγεννηκότος. I doubt whether Sophocles could so easily mix up two concepts (φύσις and νόμος) whose definition and boundaries were so forcefully debated in the fifth century: on this debate see e.g. W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. III (Cambridge 1969) 55-134. On another possible paradox in the phrase ὠμοὶ νόμοι see Segal (1981:116).

the orderly life of a hoplite, and constitutes a fitting preamble to the culmination of this scene, namely Ajax's bequeathing of his hoplite *shield* to his son. Now it is stressed that this *shield* (described by a majestic accumulation of adjectives, with the essential word, σάκος, being reserved for the last place in the sentence: 574–76) will define Eurysaces' essence, as it has defined his father's up to this day, by giving him his name (574 ἐπώνυμον).³⁹ So, Ajax wishes the part of himself that will survive, namely his son, to maintain and integrate naturally into his φύσις what was for himself only an irreconcilable paradox, an ὤμῶς (=ἄνομος) νόμος, a violent rearrangement of normal order amounting to a collapse of categories and distinctions and resulting in irresolvable tension.

This irresolvable tension is, I think, what the Chorus deplore in the first stasimon (596–645). However, before we proceed to an examination of this important ode, we must get rid, once and for all, of such misconceptions as Winnington-Ingram's (1980: 26, 32–43); namely that the Chorus still think that their chief has not yet recovered from his madness. Tecmessa has clearly stated that Ajax's crisis is past (257), a fact which the Chorus acknowledge forthwith (263–64); and although they momentarily have doubts about the mental state of their chief (337–38), they soon realize that he seems to have recovered (344) and that what he says is not "supposititious" (481 ὑπόβλητον), but "born of his own soul" (482 τῆς σαυτοῦ φρενός) — a pointed distinction between Ajax's present state and his previous derangement which was described as οὐ ... φρενόθεν (182)!⁴⁰ Padel (1995: 32–33) has shown that, for the

³⁹ On the traditional practice of naming the son after his father's primary heroic characteristics see Nagy (1979: 146 §9n2). Pace Heath (1987: 183 n. 36) I think that the shield *is* on the stage (it could have been on the *ekkyklema* representing the interior of Ajax's hut); Taplin (1978: 64) and Seale (1982: 157) are hesitant.

⁴⁰ For views similar to Winnington-Ingram's see Musurillo (1967: 11–12, 14 n. 4,

Greeks, madness is a temporary phenomenon, and lasts as long as its external signs last. So, what the Chorus lament in the first stasimon is not their chief's madness (as one might be led to believe by words like e.g. 609 *δυσθεράπευτος*), but its *results*, “the gloomy and ominous despair which has replaced his frenzy” (Jebb *ad* 614),⁴¹ as well as the impossible situation in which he has been trapped because of his past derangement, namely the impasse of falling into neither of two opposite categories, i.e. of being neither a hoplite nor a hunter, of belonging neither to the polis nor to the wild.

To return to the first stasimon: there are unmistakable hints of Ajax's deadlock. In 612–20 Ajax's military-hoplite prowess is unreservedly praised (612–13 *θουρίῳ κρατοῦντ' ἐν Ἄρει*). However, all too soon an all-important *νῦν δ' αὖ* (614) is heard: Ajax has now deviated from his usual ethos; he is “a lonely pasturer of his thoughts” (Jebb *ad* 614), not caring about the *πένθος* he has unduly inflicted upon his *φίλοι* (615).⁴²

20–22), Vandvik (1952), Seale (1982: 153). For criticism of such views see Hester (1979b: 247 n. 8), Holt (1980: 22 with n. 3); cf. Burton (1980: 19–20), Di Benedetto (1983: 39), Gardiner (1987: 64–65, cf. 77). Less extreme is the position of Biggs (1966: 224–25), Gellie (1972: 7–8) and Segal (1981: 128), who think that Ajax's madness was inherent in his natural disposition; see however criticism of such views in Di Benedetto (1983: 34 n. 5). I cannot accept Simpson's (1969: 89–92, 100 n. 21) view that Ajax is already mad when he sets off to kill the Atreidae — a madness originating in the fact that he can restore his slighted honour only by harming his *φίλοι*, whom he was supposed to help. Lines 447–49 are enough to disprove this perverse view; Simpson (1969: 102 n. 33) is perfectly aware of this *non liquet*, but fails to tackle it. Moreover, Simpson has to resort to the naively allegorizing view that Athena's infliction of madness on Ajax is merely a ‘personification’ of the derangement of his mental faculties (see, *contra*, Kirkwood [1958: 274]). All in all, one should heed Mattes' (1970: 82, 97) salutary remark that Sophocles is not interested in the depiction of the madness as such.

⁴¹ Cf. also Holt (1980: 24–25, 31 n. 11).

⁴² Moreover, if in *φρενὸς οἰοβώτας* one sees an allusion to Ajax's solitary (*οἰο-*) expedition that degenerated into a slaughter of sheep (*οἰο-βώτας* may hide a

He is no longer the heroic Ajax he used to be: the deeds of his supreme valour (618-19; note the use of standard terms for heroic-hoplite excellence: ἔργα, ἀρετᾶς) are now past (618 πρίν): Ajax has breached, with his guileful night attack, a fundamental rule of the hoplite code, namely solidarity between fellow-warriors (cf. the oath of the Athenian ephebes: οὐδὲ λείψω τὸν παραστάτην ὅπου ἂν στοιχήσω).⁴³ His former heroic deeds have now been reduced to hostile acts (620 ἄφιλα ... ἔπεσε), exactly as the Atreidae have shown themselves to be ἄφιλοι (620, evidently alluding to the Contest of the Arms, as Stanford *ad* 619-20 and Heath (1987: 185] rightly remark). The same feeling is discernible at 639-40 (οὐκέτι συντρόφοις ὀργαῖς ἔμπεδος, ἀλλ' ἐκτὸς ὀμιλεῖ). Apart from the obvious interpretation of the lines as referring to Ajax's mental disarray (an interpretation put forward most clearly by Stanford *ad* 639-40), I think it not implausible to suggest that this passage contains also allusions to Ajax's ambiguous position: he is no longer true to his σύντροφοι ὀργαί, namely the ethos of the hoplite.⁴⁴ Ajax now lies *beyond* (ἐκτός) what used to be his usual mode of life. This is made clear by the contrast between Ajax's present state and the unambiguously heroic past of his race (636 εἰς πατρώας ἦκων γενεᾶς ἄριστα,⁴⁵ 643-45 ἄταν, ἂν οὐπω τις ἔθρεψεν αἰὼν Αἰακιδᾶν ἄτερθε τοῦδε;⁴⁶ cf. also

word-play with ὄιες and βοτά), then Ajax's abnormal deviation from his former status would be all the more highlighted.

⁴³ For ancient sources, as well as modern published texts, of the oath see Siewert (1977: 102 n.4). On its antiquity see Pélékidis (1962: 75-76).

⁴⁴ Differently Winnington-Ingram (1980: 36-38).

⁴⁵ I print here Lloyd-Jones & Wilson's text (1990a); cf. (1990b: 22). εἰς is Lloyd-Jones' (*JHS* [1956] 112) elegant emendation of the MSS. ἐκ (cf. Dawe [1973: 147-48]); ἄριστα was only in the now lost codex Livineius 'V', and was also known to the schol. LN (see the *app. crit.* of Christodoulou's edition, p. 150).

⁴⁶ The mention of the Aeacidae may be meant to recall also the other great

434–36). However, as we have already seen, even this deviation from Ajax's normal state cannot be completed, for Athena's intervention has deprived him of both possibilities: he can neither regain his hoplite honour by taking Achilles' arms nor become a proper hunter. What Athena does is cause utter chaos by destroying the limits between what Ajax used to be (i.e. a hoplite) and what he attempted to become (i.e. a hunter). The only way out of this *δύσφορος ἄτα* (643) seems to be death (479–80): with so many unsurmountable impasses to confront, life is certainly no longer livable.⁴⁷

So, the first stasimon brings out the irresolvable tensions and ambiguities inflicted upon Ajax by the gods. The second stasimon (693–718) is a song of the same kind, since it highlights the same impasses from a different viewpoint. It begins with an invitation to Pan to lead the Chorus' joyful dance (693–701); but is Pan not the god of wild frenzy too?⁴⁸ As Burkert (1985a: 110) rightly remarks, the 'blessed' madness of song and dance (cf. here 698 *χοροποί' ἀναξ*) is only the other aspect of god-sent madness. Should we construe the invocation to such a god, after all the trouble Ajax's frenzy has caused, as an innocent demonstration of

descendant of this glorious clan, namely Achilles (Ajax was second only after Achilles, cf. 1340–41); cf. Stanford (1963: *ad* 644–45). If this is correct, then Ajax's deviation from the great traditions of his race is highlighted all the more conspicuously. On Ajax's Aeacid genealogy see von der Mühl (1930: 21–22).

⁴⁷ Interestingly, the Chorus think that Eriboia will lament far more strongly over Ajax's desperate impasse (originating in his temporary crisis of madness) than she would have lamented over his death (624–34): *γάρ* at 635 makes this clear. This, as e.g. Tycho von Wilamowitz (1917: 63 n. 1), Cohen (1978: 25) and Burton (1980: 25) have seen, seems to suggest that Ajax would be better dead than entangled in such a senseless confusion of categories.

⁴⁸ See Mattes (1970: 43–44). On Pan's associations with dance cf. e.g. *A. Pers.* 448–49 and see Burton (1980: 28).

sheer joy? I think not: although the Chorus, *qua dramatis persona*, is of course supposed not to be aware of these implications, the audience are bound to perceive them and appreciate them, the more so since there are more sinister hints to come. The strophe ends with an invocation of Apollo, the god of the *bow* (a markedly non-hopliteic weapon), who is thus contrasted with Ares, the *hoplite* god, whose name is heard in the first line of the antistrophe (706):⁴⁹ wild frenzy (Pan) in relation with the antinomy between hoplitical (Ares) and non-hoplitical / anti-hoplitical modes of behaviour (Apollo) has been the theme dominating the play so far — a theme already announced, perhaps, in the parodos, 172-81, with the tentative attribution of Ajax's madness to Enyalios (~Ares, paradigm of the *hoplite*) or to Apollo's twin sister, the *archer* Artemis.⁵⁰ This theme is now taken up and lyrically reworked in this ode. So, although the Chorus think that their chief μεταεγνώσθη (717) and that εὐνομία (713), viz. the opposite of the utter disorder which has thrown Ajax's life into ruins, will after all reign, we realize that nothing could be farther from the truth: Ajax is still trapped in the same unsurmountable impasses.

5.1.3 The 'deception' and the 'suicide' speeches

In both the 'deception' and the 'suicide' speeches a common basic pattern can be identified. In each there are hints suggesting that the tension will be at last resolved and that the balance will be finally tipped

⁴⁹ Granted, neither Apollo's nor Ares' typical attributes, namely the bow and the hoplite armour, are explicitly referred to here. However, the bow and the hoplite armour were part of those gods' 'canonic' representation in art, and therefore they must have been their standard attributes. See Appendix B for documentation.

⁵⁰ Cf. above p. 264f.

towards either the order for which the hoplite stands, or the systematic reversal of categories which the 'black hunter' represents. However, it eventually turns out that neither is the case, and that the tension is definitely irresolvable.

The 'deception speech' is on the whole an ἀπάτη (this is confirmed by Tecmessa's exclamation at 807-808⁵¹) — and one hardly needs to restate that *guile* constitutes the very essence of 'black hunt'. However, it is an unusual deceit: it is not a false story, but an ambiguous one, for almost everything in it has a double meaning.⁵² Thus, as many have remarked,⁵³ ἐθελύνην στόμα (651), due to the ambiguity of the word στόμα (= 'mouth' and 'edge of sword'), may mean 'the edge of my sword has become obtuse' (therefore, 'I am not going to commit suicide'; this is how the Chorus understand it) or 'I have weakened only verbally'. Likewise, 652-53 can mean both 'I will not leave Tecmessa a widow and my son an orphan' (= 'I will not die') and 'I will not abandon my widow and my orphan son to the enemies' (= 'I will die, but I will entrust these two to Teucer'; cf. 567-71).⁵⁴ Lines 654-56 contain a double ambiguity: as

⁵¹ Knox (1979: 138) and Taplin (1979: 129) unduly play down the importance of these lines, which has been recognized by Waldock (1966: 74-75) and others.

⁵² See Appendix C.

⁵³ E.g. Jebb *ad* 650f., Kamerbeek *ad* 650-652, Moore (1977: 49 n. 5), Knox (1979: 138-9), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 48 n. 111), Di Benedetto (1983: 47 n. 33), Stevens (1986: 330). *Contra* Fraenkel (1967: 80 n. 4), Sicherl (1977: 90 n. 99).

⁵⁴ Winnington-Ingram (1980: 31) argued that Ajax's confidence in Teucer is unrealistic; Heath (1987: 183) has given the correct answer to this. — Jebb *ad* 652f., Kamerbeek *ad* 652, 653, Stanford *ad* 652-3, Simpson (1969: 97), Burton (1980: 26) and Di Benedetto (1983: 48) have curiously seen another ambiguity in this passage, namely that οἰκτίρω λιπεῖν = 1) 'pity forbids me to leave her', and 2) 'I regret to leave her'. This I cannot accept: only the former meaning is possible, because verbs like οἰκτίρειν, αἰσχύνεσθαι, αἰδεῖσθαι + inf. mean 'regret, shame etc. forbid one to do something'; the latter meaning would only be obtained if a participle followed; *contra* Stevens [1986: 330 with n. 18]).

Knox (1979: 134-35 with n. 65) has remarked, λουτρά (654) may refer both to Ajax's purification and to his funeral bath;⁵⁵ furthermore, 655 λύμαθ' ἀγνίσας ἐμά may suggest to the on-stage audience 'I will purify myself (with water, cf. λουτρά)',⁵⁶ but for the spectators it may also carry the meaning 'I will purify myself with (my own) blood'⁵⁷ (therefore 'I will kill myself'). Finally, 658-60 contain an ambiguity on which many commentators have remarked: Ajax will bury his sword, as was the practice with polluted objects,⁵⁸ but he will also 'bury' / 'hide' the sword inside his own body.⁵⁹ Even 688-9, which for many a commentator unequivocally reveal Ajax's true intentions, may be interpreted ambiguously, if one accepts West's (1978: 112-3) very plausible reading μέλειν μὲν ὑμῶν, εὐνοεῖν δ' ἡμῖν ἅμα, as well as his explanation that "Ajax may well seek benevolence for himself both in the overt situation and in view of his actual intentions."

What is more, these verbal double entendres form, at the same time, a *second class of ambiguities*, much deeper and more significant. Their function is to make it appear, at the same time, *both* that Ajax is going to assume again the status of a proper hoplite *and* that he is going to opt for the world of 'black hunt'. Thus, Ajax clearly states that he is off

Sicherl (1977: 92 n. 105) appositely cites Kühner-Gerth, *Gr.Gr.* II, pp. 6.2 and 73, n.3. See also Smyth, *Gr.Gr.* § 2100 and 2126.

⁵⁵ Cf. also Sicherl (1977: 78), Poe (1987: 53-54).

⁵⁶ On the cathartic power of sea-water see the bibliography provided by Sicherl (1977: 78 n. 42).

⁵⁷ I cannot agree with Segal's (1981: 138, 140) and Easterling's (1988: 98) view that Ajax is here rejecting the 'normal' ritual purification with water. Purification from bloodshed with blood was extremely common in antiquity: see Parker (1983: 371-73).

⁵⁸ Scullion (1994: 112 n. 93), with full bibliography.

⁵⁹ See Kamerbeek *ad* 658 & 660; Sicherl (1977: 79-80). *Contra*, wrongly, Poe (1987: 54).

to the seashore (654–55):⁶⁰ as we have already seen, this apparently means that he is going to purify himself, that is to perform a νόμιμον, an act that belongs by definition to the world of the polis, the world of the hoplite. At the same time, however, the seashore is a place typically belonging to the outdoors, beyond the polis (cf. 657 χώρον ... ἀστιβῆ), exactly like the places where the ‘black hunter’ roams. Furthermore, he says that he is going to hide his weapon in the earth, an act which apparently means (as Ajax explains at 661: γάρ) that he will denounce those who should be his enemies (Hector, cf. 664–65) and reaffirm, therefore (666 τοιγάρ),⁶¹ his bonds of alliance with the Atreidae. This apparently suggests that he will become a proper hoplite, harming his foes and assisting his fellow warriors, but there comes yet another warning against such an over-simplification: Ajax significantly terms his sword, the centre of all these thoughts, βέλος (658).⁶² Arrows and bows are associated with marginal modes of fighting, not fully integrated into the

⁶⁰ I strongly disagree with Scullion (1994: 116–28), who thinks that Ajax does not go to the seashore but comes back to his hut and commits suicide in a nearby thicket. Teucer (997) says clearly that he has been ‘hunting down’ Ajax—which implies that he did not look for Ajax in the “likeliest” place, i.e. near his hut, as Scullion (1994: 122) thinks. What is more, the most natural interpretation of 983–86 is, *pace* Scullion (1994: 123–24), that Eurysaces is in Ajax’s hut, which seems to be at a considerable distance, since it takes some 180 lines for Tecmessa (or whoever lines 985ff. are addressed to) to fetch him (1168ff.); cf. Segal (1981: 127 with n. 52). Finally, Gardiner (1979: 12) has shown that there is insistent verbal preparation for the shift of scene from Ajax’s hut to the seashore.

⁶¹ For possible interpretations of τοιγάρ see Sicherl (1977: 81), Heath (1987: 187), Seaford (1994a: 393).

⁶² The catachrestic use of βέλος = ‘weapon’ (and, indeed, ‘sword’) does not seem to be common in Sophocles; see Ellendt-Genthe (1872) s.v. Thus, its occurrence here is all the more remarkable.

standard hoplite battle; consequently, the archer often stands for the antipode of the hoplite.⁶³

However, despite all these allusions to non-hoplitic or anti-hoplitic forms of behaviour, the apparent meaning of the deception speech is diametrically different: as its recipients, viz. the Chorus, think, Ajax, far from indulging in a reversal of the polis' set categories, embraces its θέσμια (712), its institutions, its organization. On the other hand, we, the audience, know that the speech is a δόλος, or at least that it does deceive the on-stage audience. Thus, due to its fundamental ambiguity, the meaning of this speech hovers between, on the one hand, a vindication of the lack of νόμοι (of standards and absolutes) characterizing the wild, the world beyond the polis, and, on the other hand, a reaffirmation of the εὐνομία (713) characterizing the world of the polis. Thus, what marks this speech so far is a feeling of instability and uncertainty: Ajax is still hovering between two worlds, the polis (hoplite) and the wild ('black hunter'), which means that he is still trapped in the same impasses. This feeling is reinforced by Ajax's theorizing on the instability of all things (669-83). His thoughts about winter giving way to summer or night giving way to day are an expression of the law of eternal change, of the *lack of absolutes*,⁶⁴ of the *impossibility of maintaining any set distinctions or categories*. This is confirmed by the Chorus' words at 714: πάνθ' ὁ μέγας

⁶³ See below n. 149 for documentation. Cf. also above, n. 10.

⁶⁴ Winnington-Ingram (1980: 52), Heath (1987: 187-88), Bradshaw (1991: 120 n. 42); for possible Heraclitean / mystic influences see Seaford (1994a: 401-402). The reference to the instability of the oath (648-49) may of course be a reference to the oath Ajax swore to Tyndareos, as Knox (1979: 138 with n. 82) suggested. But an Athenian audience might have perceived a further allusion to the *hoplite oath*, from which Ajax is deviating so blatantly. Linforth (1954: 13) and Heath (1987: 186) do not see any particular significance in the mention of δεινὸς ὄρκος.

χρόνος μαραίνει τε καὶ φλέγει,⁶⁵ evidently referring to Ajax's supposed change of heart: everything in nature is bound to become its opposite. This train of thought culminates in the maxim of 678–83: the categories 'friend' and 'enemy' are fictitious and conventional distinctions, for what we call a 'friend' is liable to become a 'foe', and, inversely, what we call a 'foe' can just as well become a 'friend'. The key word for the character and quality of the world in which we live is ἄπιστος (683), 'not to be counted upon' — evidently because of its ultimate instability and lack of standards and absolutes. Nonetheless, one should not complacently content oneself with an absolute conviction about the impermanence of all things. What Sophocles continuously does, as we have seen, is challenge the human propensity to form fixed conceptual frameworks; and, in a sense, belief in a *complete* lack of absolutes is such a fixed conceptual framework. Thus, as if to mock this natural tendency, Sophocles inserts, in the core of this speech about impermanence, a slight hint at a possibility that even impermanence might not be permanent: shortly before his meditations about friends becoming enemies and vice versa, Ajax appeals to a proverb (παροιμία: 664–65) — i.e. to what is *par excellence* an expression of a set and ordered state of affairs — in order to reassert the traditional belief that an enemy can never be beneficent, and that a gift from an enemy is bound to be, in fact, a 'non-gift' (665 ἐχθρῶν

⁶⁵ Thus the majority of MSS, but Stobaeus I. 8. 24 (I. 97 Wachsmuth) omits τε καὶ φλέγει. Accepting τε καὶ φλέγει means destroying responson with the strophe; instead of assuming a lacuna at 701, critics (after Livineius) have deleted the words τε καὶ φλέγει. However, Knox's (1979: 159 n. 128) arguments in favour of the majority of the MSS seem to me compelling; cf. De Romilly (1968: 100), Kamerbeek *ad* 714, whereas Winnington-Ingram (1980: 43 n. 95) is doubtful. Rosenmeyer (1971: 161) bases his interpretation on Stobaeus' text, but does not even mention the textual problem. Goldhill (1986: 191 with n. 46) is duly cautious.

ἄδωρα δῶρα κούκ ὀνήσιμα). As Blundell (1989: 87) has put it, “this proverb, which asserts the permanence of enmity, undermines Ajax’s specious submission to transience”. So, at a moment when one has been led to believe that one might hold, at least, a firm belief in the instability of all things, the playwright warns us against such an indulgence in fixed ideas: the all-pervading flux he puts forward as his hero’s *Weltanschauung* excludes systematically anything that is set and permanent, even a set and permanent belief in the impermanence and instability of the cosmos!

So, what the deception speech is about is *not*, after all, the inversion of all categories, i.e. the typical feature of the world of the ‘black hunter’, for even such an inversion is a ‘symmetrical’, a systematic and ordered, one.⁶⁶ On the contrary, what the deception speech is about is the lack of order and permanence;⁶⁷ about Ajax’s inability to accommodate himself into some kind of structured framework, be it the polis or the wild. A similar pattern is also discernible in the ‘suicide speech’ (815-65). This time one thinks that it is the order, the normality and predictability of the hoplite’s world (i.e. of the world of the polis) that is going to prevail: Ajax’s speech is replete with images of universal order. He invokes the gods, and first of all he appeals to Zeus, as is natural (824 καὶ γὰρ εἰκός), since he is the god who warrants cosmic

⁶⁶ Cf. above p. 259. Vidal-Naquet (1986b: 113) rightly notes that the life of the hoplite and the life of the hunter (in particular, of the pre-hoplite ephebe) are “symmetrical opposites”; however, I cannot agree with his suggestion that in a hunter’s world “there is nothing but [...] *disorder, irrationality*” (my emphasis): one must see hunt as a no less ‘rational’, organized and orderly activity than hoplite life, precisely because the former is the latter’s symmetrical opposite. Vidal-Naquet (1986c: 138) seems to correct himself when he says: “the ‘disorder’ is here a constructed one, an organized disorder”.

⁶⁷ Pace Kamerbeek (1948: 89).

order. He prays for his body not to be thrown away, thus implicitly asking for a proper funerary ritual (826-30) — ritual being *par excellence* a νόμιμον, an expression of the community's wish to construct a commonly accepted, recognizable and repeatable (i.e. an ordered) reality. Then, he proceeds to an invocation of Hermes by his standard epithet, πομπαῖος (831-34), as well as of the Erinyes, significantly stressing the *permanence* of their existence and of their function as avengers (835-36 ἀεί τε ... ἀεί θ').⁶⁸ Finally, the wish that the Sun should stop and announce his death to his parents (845-51), far from being a megalomaniac desire to interfere with the order of the universe, as Vandvik (1942: 173) and Winnington-Ingram (1980: 45 n. 104) have implied, has literary parallels elsewhere⁶⁹ and must be taken as a *traditional* function of the Sun-god. This feeling of order and permanence is reinforced by Ajax's reference to his mother's dirge spreading all over the city (851) — yet another allusion to the *order* expressed by the funerary νόμιμα —, as well as by his address to characteristic *landmarks* which lend coherence to a person's life, serve as points of reference and help make the world less disorderly: Ajax addresses his homeland (859-60), the hearth (ἑστία) of his father's house (860), and the famous Athens along with the *genos* of the Salaminians (861) — an unmistakable reference to the ordered framework of the polis. As Knox (1979: 150) has put it, Ajax's "final words are addressed to things

⁶⁸ Especially if, with Jebb (*ad* 835f.), we translate τὰς ἀεί τε παρθένους by "the maidens who live for ever"; but Stanford's (*ad* 835-8) translation "those who are ever virgins" is also possible; in any case, ἀεί is of central importance. Cf. Knox (1979: 142) and Seaford (1994a: 136). Rosenmeyer (1971: 185-86) sees the invocation to Erinyes as Ajax's attempt "to re-establish the sacred fixity without which he cannot live".

⁶⁹ *Od.* 8.270-71, A. Ag. 632-33, S. Tr. 94-102; see Stinton (1990: 446-49).

eternal, unchanging, timeless”.⁷⁰ The end of his speech, however, comes as a surprise: the springs, the rivers, and the land of Troy, which are no doubt *hostile* to Ajax (Troy was termed πολεμία at the outset of this speech [819]), are now called, in a characteristically Sophoclean *coup de théâtre*, Ajax’s τροφής, assuming an equal status with his σύντροφον γένος of the Salaminians, i.e. with the people who are his φίλοι by definition!⁷¹ A similar surprise marked the beginning of the suicide speech: Hector was unequivocally called there the most hated of Ajax’s ξένοι (818 μάλιστα μισσηθέντος, ἐχθίστου δ’ ὄραν: the accumulation of near-synonyms is again significant), while the sword he gave to Ajax is placed in the *hostile* land of Troy (819). Nonetheless, the sword itself — an ἄδωρον δῶρον, an enemy’s gift which should have been as hostile as the giver — was called ‘most friendly’ (822 εὐνούστατον)!⁷² The reversal of seemingly strict antitheses (such as “friend : enemy”), the collapse of what seem to be sets of clear-cut distinctions, the obliteration of self-evident oppositions and symmetries, is an incessant procedure, in which Sophocles engages himself in his unremitting struggle to challenge the way we perceive, construe and conceptualize the world.

⁷⁰ *Contra*, wrongly, Segal (1981: 115, 123, 124).

⁷¹ Cf. Tyrell (1985: 170), Rose (1995: 77). Cohen (1978: 32) fails to see this *coup de théâtre*. Segal (1981: 123) notices the paradox, but gives a different interpretation.

⁷² On this paradox see Taplin (1978: 85-88), (1979: 127), Heath (1987: 194), Blundell (1989: 87-88), Rose (1995: 77) and, above all, Tyrell (1985: 169) and Seaford (1994a: 392-93). Cohen (1978: 26-33) makes some fine remarks on the prominence of the sword in this play (on which cf. also Kirkwood [1958: 222-23] and Seale [1982: 175]), but fails, I think, to see the paradox (*ibid.*, 31-32).

5.2.1 Belonging neither to the polis nor to the wild (2): Ajax can neither hunt nor sacrifice

Nonetheless, the annulment of the way the world is construed, along with the subsequent collapse of all categories (“friend : enemy”, “polis : wild”, “hoplite : black hunter”), is not over yet. We shall now proceed to see how two markedly different rituals, namely hunt and sacrifice, are similarly confused as well as rendered impossible. This is but a *dédoublement*, on the level of ritual, of Ajax’s failure either to remain a hoplite or to become a ‘black hunter’: sacrifice *qua* communal ceremony is fundamental to the structure of the polis,⁷³ whereas ‘black hunt’ is a markedly non-domestic act, confined to the wild, where the familiar structures of the polis cease to exist (or, rather, are systematically inverted);⁷⁴ thus, Ajax’s inability either to perform a proper sacrifice or to hunt properly is yet another manifestation of his general and fundamental failure to accommodate himself either to the world of the polis or to that of the wild.

For our treatment of the subject to be clearer and more coherent, we shall be examining the theme of hunt and sacrifice in its development from the very beginning of the play, thus necessarily overlapping with topics touched upon in the previous sections.

⁷³ Sacrifice as an act central to the polis: e.g. Pl. *Prot.* 322a; see also Gernet (1981: 323, 325-7, 329-31, 333) on the public sacrificial Hearth as a symbol of civic collectivity. The hoplite, being also a manifestation of the collectivity that is the polis, is, not surprisingly, often associated pictorially with scenes of sacrifice: Lissarague (1990: 55-69; cf. 51, 137, 181-3) examines depictions of hoplites donning their armour in the context of such activities as *empyroskopia*, libation, etc.

⁷⁴ See again n. 66.

We saw on p. 265 how Ajax's hunt is corrupted in a twofold manner, namely by his hunting of domestic animals and, then, by his becoming a hunted animal himself. The corruption and final annulment of his hunt is soon transformed into an equally perverted sacrifice. This is achieved by a simple but ingenious dramatic device: Ajax kills some of the animals outside the camp (53–56), thus performing his corrupted hunt of domestic animals; however, the rest he brings as if they were *game* (64,⁷⁵ 93, 407) into his hut (61–65; 233–44, 295–300) where he completes the slaughter by performing a *sacrifice* (it is explicitly referred to as such at 219: σφάγι' and 220: χρηστήρια;⁷⁶ cf. 235 σφάζ', 299 ἔσφαζε)⁷⁷ of *hunted* animals — i.e. a sacrifice which is corrupted by definition, since it was *domestic* (not hunted) animals that were normally sacrificed.⁷⁸

Nonetheless, this is not the only reason why the sacrifice is corrupt. There is, I believe, a whole series of hints which would easily suggest to an alert audience that Ajax's 'sacrifice' of the sheep and cattle is in fact a totally anomic procedure, amounting to a blatant violation of the rules of sacrifice and, consequently, to an offence against the whole community, since sacrifice is a communal act *par excellence*.⁷⁹ First of all, the 'sacrifice' is surprisingly disorderly, in contrast to the strict order which should normally be maintained at a ritual: Ajax ties the animals

⁷⁵ Ajax of course thinks the game are men, not animals; nonetheless, animals or men, the result is, undoubtedly, an anomic and perverted hunt.

⁷⁶ On the χρηστήρια-sacrifice see Jebb (*ad* 218ff.), Stanford (*ad* 219–20) and especially Kamerbeek (*ad* 220).

⁷⁷ Cf. Tyrell (1985: 162–3).

⁷⁸ See e.g. Nilsson (1967: 145 n. 2): "nur gezähmte Tiere, fast nie wilde geopfert werden". Cf. also Bowie (1983: 114).

⁷⁹ On the shock-effect of the perversion of sacrifice see Poe (1987: 31 with n. 55).

and drags them to his hut (62, 65, 71-72, 234, 240, 296-97), whereas ideally the sacrificial animal should “go to the sacrifice complaisantly, or rather voluntarily” (Burkert [1983: 3-4]; [1985a: 56]).⁸⁰ Moreover, it is insistently stressed that he not only slew the animals in wild rage with uncontrolled, successive blows (not, that is, in the ceremonial manner of a proper sacrifice),⁸¹ but also that he cleft them in two (56 ῥαχίζων,⁸² 236, 299), thus diametrically deviating from the proper way of killing an animal which is to slit its throat (see again Burkert [1985a: 56]). Even when the sacrificial rules seem to be observed, as is the case with the cutting of the victims’ tongues (238-39), the illusion immediately gives way to grim reality: the tongue is thrown away (239 ῥιπτεῖ), instead of being offered separately to the god, as was the normal practice.⁸³ Finally, in an orderly sacrifice the blood is carefully collected in a vessel and sprayed over the altar (the technical term for this procedure is αἰμάσσειν; see Burkert *l.c.*); however, it is one of the most striking as well as gruesome details of this ‘sacrifice’ that the animals’ blood spreads all over the place, and indeed Ajax lies in the middle of the slaughtered animals, all but swimming in their blood (308-309, 324-25). Moreover, if at 97 we read ἥμαξας with Reiske⁸⁴ (a word undoubtedly used at 453 of

⁸⁰ Some ancient sources: A. Ag. 1297-8 (with Fraenkel [1950: III. *ad* 1297f.]); Ael. NA 10. 50; *oraculum apud* Porph. *Abst.* 2.9.3; Plut. *Mor.* 729f.

⁸¹ On the “senseless confusion” of the sacrifice cf. Rosenmeyer (1971: 178); also Girard (1977: 9), Segal (1981: 139).

⁸² See Jebb (*ad* 56f.) and Stanford (*ad* 55-7) on the meaning of ῥαχίζων.

⁸³ Jebb (*ad* 238) cites *Ql.* 3.332 and *Ar. Pax* 1060, but doubts “whether there is any reference here [i.e. at the *Ajax* passage] to the sacrificial ritual”!

⁸⁴ This reading is supported by the gloss ἥμάτωσας of codd. FODZc; note that ἥμαξας itself appears as a gloss for ἔβαψας at 95 in codd. DXrXsZc (*teste* Dawe [1996] *in app. crit ad* 97). Regrettably, commentators do not consider seriously this attractive alternative; Jebb (*ad* 97), for instance, rejects it out of hand. As far as I am aware, only Dawe (1973: 130) discusses the problem thoroughly and

the animals' 'sacrifice'⁸⁵), we gain an allusion to the technical term αἰμάσσειν, which would create a pointed irony: Ajax's ^edy^eing his hands in the animals' blood is nothing like the proper αἰμάσσειν, i.e. the orderly spraying of blood over the altar. The anomic character of this 'sacrifice' is summarized by Ajax himself in the phrase νεοσφαγῆς φόνος (546), which paradoxically combines the root σφαγ-, denoting sacrifice, and the word φόνος, denoting *unsacrificial* murder.⁸⁶

Moreover, Ajax's anomic 'sacrifice' has also important political implications. Not only did he intend to slaughter the whole army, as Rosivach (1975: 201) has demonstrated, but also the animals he has killed are constantly referred to as *common* property: ἄδαστα (54),⁸⁷ [λεία] λοιπή (146),⁸⁸ πανδάμους ἐπὶ βοῦς ἀγελαίας (175) etc. Ajax has destroyed the collectivity that is the sacrifice by slaughtering for himself what belonged to the community, what was inviolable because it was ἄδαστον. So, it is not surprising that the Argives want to execute Ajax by stoning (254, cf. 728),⁸⁹ i.e. by a typically communal means of killing,⁹⁰

critically, but in the end rejects ἧμαξας.

⁸⁵ The scholion on 453 (p. 117 Christodoulou) apparently read αἰχμάσαι, which is evidently wrong. This might provide a parallel for the corruption of ἧμαξας to ἧχμασας at 97.

⁸⁶ I owe this point to Tyrell (1985: 156-7). On the diametrical difference between sacrifice and φόνος see Vernant (1991: 294), quoted below on p. 304.

⁸⁷ See commentators *ad loc.* L. Campbell (*ad* 53,4) perceptively remarks that ἄδαστα (= 'undivided from spoil') is added "to show that the act of Ajax would provoke the whole army to be enraged against him with one consent"; cf. Sorum (1986: 366). I will further clarify the point in the text.

⁸⁸ Jebb (*ad* 145ff.) renders λοιπή by ἄδαστος. However, West's (1978: 109) preference for the γρ-variant (in G) κοινή (cf. the Homeric ξυνήϊα) may well be justified.

⁸⁹ Cf. also 409, where the reference is not specifically to stoning, but to a *communal* (cf. πᾶς στρατός) way of execution.

which bears striking similarities to the sacrificial act itself.⁹¹ The perversion of the *communal* act of sacrifice, that is, must be answered with an equally *communal* act, i.e. with *another sacrifice*, for the balance to be redressed and normality to be restored.

This is not, however, what is going to happen eventually. Ajax will indeed be sacrificed, but only by way of suicide. There are hints implying that Ajax's suicide is clearly thought of as a sacrifice: first of all, as Sicherl (1977: 96) has seen, "Ajax calls himself αὐτοσφαγῆς (841); the chorus [*sic*; he means: Tecmessa] call him νεοσφαγῆς (898). σφάζω is the technical term for slaughtering a victim".⁹² He also remarks that σφαγεύς at 815 may hint at the sword's function as a sacrificial knife.⁹³ A little earlier, the Chorus had supposed that their chief was *sacrificing* to the gods (711-13 θεῶν δ' αὖ πάνθ' θυτά θέσμι' ἐξήνυσ'), while we knew that he was in fact going to commit *suicide*; thus, suicide and sacrifice are directly associated in our minds.⁹⁴ Nonetheless, this 'sacrifice', far from restoring normality and order (as might appear from the word θέσμια used of it by the Chorus at 712), will turn out to be yet another *perverted ritual*, as the sacrificial victim will be a human being, Ajax himself.

⁹⁰ Fraenkel (1977: 25); see further Rosivach (1987).

⁹¹ See Burkert (1983: 46-47). Segal (1981: 140) sees here an allusion to the *pharmakos*-ritual, which I cannot accept.

⁹² 841 may be interpolated (cf. below n. 143), but this does not substantially affect my point, because of the occurrence of the root σφαγ —at the genuine 898.

⁹³ Adams (1955: 105) saw in the word an allusion to the officiating priest, which, for our purpose, comes down to the same thing; cf. Seaford (1994a: 392 with n. 106). Stevens (1986: 332) refuses to see any allusion to sacrificial ritual.

⁹⁴ Cf. Segal (1981: 139). Guépin (1968: 3-4, 39-40) has seen the associations between Ajax's suicide and his killing of the animals with sacrificial ritual, but has failed to perceive their anomalous character.

So, an important pattern which has been permeating the play is now completed: we have seen how Ajax tried to become a 'black hunter' (exceptionally, in order to restore his *hoplite* honour: above, p. 262ff.) but Athena thwarted his purpose by leading him to perform a perverted hunt of domestic animals and by eventually making him a hunted animal himself (above, p. 265); thus, Ajax could no longer be either a hoplite or a 'black hunter'. We now realize that he can be neither a hunter nor a sacrificer either, for his sacrifice (like his hunt) has been corrupted in a twofold manner: he has been led to sacrifice hunted animals, and finally he became himself the sacrificial victim. The fact that he is, characteristically, likened to a *bull* (322, 1253)⁹⁵ may be seen as a reminder of the anomic sacrifice of the cattle and sheep, as well as of the equally anomic sacrifice of himself: the self-same person who performed a perverted sacrifice of bulls is eventually turned into a bull himself and submits to a similarly corrupted sacrifice. The rich symbolism with which the sword is laden also points in the same direction: the same object that should be used in the battlefield to defend the polis against its enemies is now utilized to subvert its order, by perverting a ritual act, namely sacrifice, which would normally assert the communality of the polis. So, the boundaries between two activities (or ritualized acts) which are normally quite distinct, namely hunt and sacrifice, are dangerously confused: this terrible impasse is briefly, but unmistakably, described by Ajax at 405-409: εἰ τὰ μὲν φθίνει, φίλοι, τοῖσδ' ὁμοῦ πέλας, μώραις δ' ἄγραις προσκείμεθα, πᾶς δὲ στρατὸς δίπαλτος ἄν με χειρὶ φονεύοι.⁹⁶ What Ajax seems to be saying is that

⁹⁵ On Ajax as a bull and on the related yoke-metaphor see again Stanford (p. 274). Rosenmeyer (1971:178-79) offers a different interpretation.

⁹⁶ I give the text of the majority of MSS. Since the colometry is uncertain, I have deliberately not added division marks (|). For discussions of this difficult

this irresolvable tension, this irreconcilable ambiguity consisting in the exorbitant combination of a corrupted sacrifice (τοῖσδ' ὄμοῦ) and an abnormal hunt (μῶραις δ' ἄγραις) causes the set standards of the entire community to collapse (hence the impending public execution), leading unavoidably to a mortal deadlock. This deadlock Ajax will try to escape with the final 'sacrifice' / suicide, but all he will manage to do is become all the more entangled in this impasse: his suicide / 'sacrifice', being yet another perverted ritual, instead of liberating him from this deadlock will only consolidate abnormality and disorder.⁹⁷

5.3.1 Ajax's impasse put in terms of locality

It has become clear by now that the impasses we have been looking at arise from the hero's failure to maintain fundamental social dichotomies, from his inability to belong to either of the antithetical categories ('poles') which form these dichotomies. Ajax transcends both the world of the polis and that of the wild; neither world can accommodate him any longer; he does not belong to the human world, he is excluded from it.

passage see Jebb (*ad* 405ff.; also pp. 224-26), Stanford (*ad* 405-7), Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 19), and especially Stinton (1990: 271-73). In any case, there is a general consensus amongst scholars (rightly, it seems) that εἰ τὰ μὲν φθίνει means 'if my previous glory is perishing', and that τοῖσδ' ὄμοῦ πέλας, whether left unaltered or not (Stinton *l.c.* supplies, *exempli gratia*, τοῖσδ' ὄμοῦ φόνους θηρῶν>, φίλοι), should refer to the slaughtered animals.

⁹⁷ It follows that I cannot agree with those who maintain that Ajax's death marks his salvation. This view has been held by the majority of scholars, most explicitly by Sicherl (1977: 87-88), Taplin (1979: 125-7). Moreover, Sicherl (1977: 96) holds the untenable view that Ajax's suicide is to be understood as a sacrifice by which he atones for his offences against Athena: there is nothing in the text to suggest this; see, rightly, Tyrell (1985: 170).

Accordingly, his impasses are also translated in terms of geographical space: Ajax, not belonging any longer to this world, finds it impossible either to go anywhere or to stay anywhere; as he goes beyond the categories by which human mind imposes order and coherence on this world, so does he transcend a notion fundamental to the human way of perceiving and organizing the world, namely *locality*.

This spatial impasse is expressed especially in terms of the binary opposition “indoors : outdoors” — an opposition which, along with all other categories, antitheses and distinctions in this play, eventually collapses. Ajax’s permanent *home*, Salamis (=indoors), is impossible to live in: if he comes back without the glory his father once won, this will mark a further compromise of his heroic-hoplite honour (460–65).⁹⁸ Heroism is no longer possible *away from home* (away from Salamis, i.e. at Troy, *outdoors*) either: any attempt to gain a glorious death will unavoidably please his enemies, the Atreidae (466–70). What is more, thanks to Sophocles’ ingenious dramatic device (see above, p. 284) to have Ajax killing some of the animals *outdoors* and the rest of them *indoors*, the collapse of the distinction “indoors : outdoors” is further illustrated from another point of view: Ajax can neither stay at his temporary *home* (i.e. his hut, *indoors*), because he has to face the results of his anomic sacrifice (218–20 σκηνηῆς ἔνδον ... σφάγι’ αἰμοβαφῆ ... χρηστήρια),⁹⁹ nor go to the space *beyond* the camp (30 πεδία, *outdoors*), because it has been equally tinged by his abnormal hunt (406 μώραις δ’

⁹⁸ On Ajax contrasting his own ἀτιμία with the εὐκλεία of his father see Tyrell (1985: 179–84), Cairns (1993: 231 with n. 49). Cf. also Gellie (1972: 10–11), Seale (1982: 155), Di Benedetto (1983: 69–72), Seidensticker (1983: 138–39), Heath (1987: 180).

⁹⁹ Cf. Segal (1981: 126): “the inner space [i.e. the tent], befouled by the blood and gore of beasts, becomes the place of carnage where no civilized man could dwell”. Cf. also Cohen (1978: 30).

ἄγραις): Troy, like Salamis, has become a place impossible to live in (459 “Troy hates me”¹⁰⁰). So, neither ‘indoors’ (Salamis / hut) nor ‘outdoors’ (Troy / πεδία) are possible places any longer. “[E]r kann nicht gehen, und er kann auch nicht bleiben (403f.)”, as Seidensticker (1983: 129) has put it.¹⁰¹ This deadlock is neatly expressed in the conjunction of two antithetical passages: at 193-200 the Chorus think that Ajax’s coming out of his hut should mark the end of his troubles; however, later in the play we learn that Calchas advised Teucer *not* to let Ajax go out of his hut until this day is past (741-42, 753-55). Here, that is, what we might call the ‘impossibility of place’¹⁰² is presented from another angle: in the former passage it seems that Ajax will be saved if he goes *out*; whereas in the latter the suggestion is that, on the contrary, he will be saved if he stays *in*.

To sum up, a more ‘palpable’, as it were, expression of Ajax’s impasses is the spatial / geographical deadlock in which he finds himself. Hence his desperate address to the Trojan landscape (412-27): no land is able to sustain him any longer (414-15). It is quite characteristic that his death takes place in such an ultimately remote and isolated place (657 χώρον ... ἀσπιβῆ) that no one will be able to spot it: the Chorus scan through the whole area (both its eastern and western ends: 805-6, 874, 877-78) and yet are unable to find their chief; their repeated πᾶ πᾶ πᾶ at 867 marks the extraordinary remoteness and, in a way, marginality of this area — an area which, it might be said with some exaggeration, amounts almost to a non-existent place (cf. 869 κούδεις ... τόπος). No

¹⁰⁰ Cf. 420, where Lloyd-Jones & Wilson’s (1990a) *κακόφρονες* misses the point; see Renehan (1992: 345).

¹⁰¹ Cf. Jones (1962: 180), Kott (1974: 55-57), Sorum (1986: 366-67).

¹⁰² Seidensticker (1983: 128-30), in an interesting treatment of the topic, uses the terms “situative Einengung” and “Ausweglosigkeit”.

wonder that, in fact, Ajax can be an οἰκήτωρ *only* of Hades (393–97): Hades, albeit conventionally called an ‘abode’ in Greek literature, is nothing like the familiar reality of the Upperworld; it is commonly and characteristically described by a vague ἐκεῖ, in contrast to ἐνθάδε, a term undeniably fraught with the certitude of our common experience in this world. So, the typically Sophoclean use of οἰκήτωρ with reference to the ‘dwellers’ of Hades, the dead,¹⁰³ could nowhere be more appropriate than in this play, in which (for Ajax at least) the only space that can be habitable is Hades, a ‘place’ that is no place at all.¹⁰⁴

5.4.1 Ajax’s second impasse: not being able to avoid dishonour

We saw on p. 290 that Ajax is no longer able to preserve his usual heroic honour either at Troy or at home. This important factor, namely heroic honour and avoidance of insult and humiliation, of dishonour and shame, is central to Ajax’s second impasse: his fatal inability to avoid ὕβρις,¹⁰⁵ whether committed *by* him or inflicted *upon* him. Before we proceed to an examination of this topic, a point of cardinal significance must be clarified: the first instance of ὕβρις in this play is the maltreatment of the ‘Greeks’ (actually of the sheep and cattle) by Ajax. Although it has been maintained¹⁰⁶ that this act of Ajax is explicitly

¹⁰³ See Ellendt–Genthe (1872) s.v., and Kamerbeek (*ad* 396).

¹⁰⁴ For more on Hades as a ‘non-place’ —as the absolute ‘other’, *qua* negation of current categories —see Chapter Four, section 4.6.1.

¹⁰⁵ It should be made clear, once and for all, that the term ὕβρις signifies the offensive behaviour of a human being towards another human being, not an offence against the gods: see Blundell (1989: 61 n.6), Fisher (1992: *passim*), Garvie (1993: 246).

¹⁰⁶ Most clearly by Cairns (1993: 235 n. 66).

termed ὕβρις *only* in the latter part of the play, it is indubitably referred to as αἰκίζεσθαι already at the outset (65, 111, 300); that ὑβρίζειν and αἰκίζεσθαι are semantically cognate is clear enough, and the terms should not be sharply divorced from each other.¹⁰⁷ Nonetheless, should someone quibble over the semantic difference of these words, there is still a passage in which the very word ὕβρις is used (if ambivalently) to designate not only Ajax's humiliation at the Contest of Arms but also his infliction of ὕβρις in return for the insult suffered. The passage is 303–304 (συντιθεῖς γέλων πολύν, ἴ ὅσῃν κατ' αὐτῶν [sc. Odysseus and the Atreidae] ὕβριν ἐκτίσαιτ' ἰών). Certainly, the phrasing is ambiguous, as Stanford (*ad* 304) rightly suggests:¹⁰⁸ “Sophocles is combining two ideas here, the ὕβρις which the Atreidae showed towards Ajax and the ὕβρις which Ajax has inflicted in return on them (as he thinks)”. At any rate, Ajax's indulging in ὕβρις against the Atreidae is, in this passage, put forward as, at least, a possibility to be reckoned with. After all, is his malicious γέλωσ (303) not a typical sign of ὕβρις (cf. 79, 367, 382, 454, 958, 961 and 969 with 971, 1042–43 etc.)?¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless, Ajax's attempt to inflict dishonour will recoil upon himself: it will in fact result in graver disgrace for himself, when he realizes that he has slaughtered not the Greeks but sheep and cattle (Garvie [1993: 246] appositely remarks that “même la phrase συντιθεῖς γέλων πολύν peut être ambiguë. Ajax donne

¹⁰⁷ For full documentation and illuminating discussion see Fisher (1992: 39–40, 45, 51–53, 56–57, 88); on the connection between ὕβρις and αἰκεία in the *Ajax* see *idem* 314.

¹⁰⁸ Garvie (1993: 246) is in agreement. See also the important remarks of Fisher (1992: 313–14), who is however somewhat more reserved.

¹⁰⁹ On mocking laughter in this play see Grossmann (1968: 80–83), Burton (1980: 15), Blundell (1989: 62), Fisher (1992: 316–17), Garvie (1993: 245, 246). On this theme in Sophoclean tragedy see Arnould (1990: 36–39).

ainsi à ses ennemis l' occasion de se moquer de lui"). Ajax cannot help being humiliated, even when he tries (righteously!) to humiliate others.

To the above arguments, I should add a somewhat subtle detail, which, as far as I am aware, has escaped scholars, but might be significant for the corroboration of the case made here. In the epode of the parodos (192-200) there is a clear juxtaposition between, on the one hand, Ajax's ἄτα οὐρανία (195) set ablaze (φλέγων) by himself, and, on the other, his enemies' ὕβρις (196) which is graphically (if implicitly) presented as a forest fire working its way through the wooded glens helped by the favourable winds.¹¹⁰ Now, one should consider a) that ἄτα οὐρανία ('disaster reaching the sky')¹¹¹ recalls a Homeric formula closely associated with ὕβρις, namely τῶν ὕβρις τε βίη τε σιδήρεον οὐρανὸν ἵκει (*Od.* 15.329, 17.565),¹¹² and b) that it is ὕβρις, not ἄτη, that is traditionally likened to fire (cf. Heracl. B 43 D.-K. ὕβριν χρῆ σβεννύναι μᾶλλον ἢ πυρκαϊήν; epigr. *apud* Hdt. 5.77 ἔσβεσαν ὕβριν;¹¹³ Nagy

¹¹⁰ The point has been made already by the scholiast on 198a (p. 67 Christodoulou): λείπει τό· ὡς πῦρ, <ἴν' ἦ· ὡς πῦρ> ἐν εὐανέμοις βήσσαις. Cf. Kamerbeek (*ad* 196, 197). I take the meaning of εὐανέμοις (197) to be "where the winds are favourable" (cf. Jebb's trans. "breezy glens"). Davidson (1976: 132-35) disagrees and thinks that εὐανέμοις means 'sheltered'; however, he still recognizes that the fire imagery in this passage is suggestive of ὕβρις (*ibid.* 134 with nn. 9, 10).

¹¹¹ Pace Rosenmeyer (1971: 173), ἄταν οὐρανίαν φλέγων can only mean 'setting ablaze an ate that reaches the sky', not 'burning with an ate sent from the sky': φλέγειν at 195 is transitive (contr. 673, 1278), and can only mean 'set ablaze'. What is more, Padel (1995: 253-55) has shown that ἄτη in Sophocles means 'disaster', not 'delusion', as Rosenmeyer thinks; cf. also Holt (1980: 31 n. 8). *Contra* Dawe (1968: 115) and Doyle (1984: 96-122).

¹¹² Cf. Stanford (*ad* 196-7).

¹¹³ On "fire imagery traditionally used for the dangers of the rush of *hybris* through a society (or an army)" see Fisher (1992: 314 n. 105; 315 with n. 112). A similar association of ὕβρις, ἄτη and fire imagery occurs also in Sol. 13. 11-15

[1979: 122 §5n3] also points out that, according to Schol. T on *Il.* 13.302a-b [III. 456-7 Erbse], the verb φλεγυᾶν in the dialect of Phocis means ὑβρίζειν); it is not perhaps irrelevant that both Ajax himself (222) and his sword (147) are called ‘blazing’ (αἶθων) — note that αἶθων defines ὑβριστής at 1088.¹¹⁴ So, it is obvious that Sophocles has attributed to Ajax’s ἄτη characteristics that markedly belong to ὕβρις, thus implicitly bringing out the idea that Ajax’s ἄτη is not to be dissociated from the ὕβρις he tries to inflict upon his enemies in return for the disgrace of the Ὀπλων Κρίσις: in fact, his ἄτη is the immediate result of his attempted ὕβρις against the Greeks. Ajax, trying to avenge the ὕβρις he has suffered from the Atreidae (304), himself inflicts ὕβρις on what he thinks is the Greek army, but turns out eventually to be only sheep and cattle — a fact which inevitably results in Ajax’s suffering further, and worse, ὕβρις (367 οἶον ὑβρίσθην ἄρα), which is ultimately the reason for his ἄτη.¹¹⁵

So, Ajax’s second impasse seems to be that, while he tries to practise ὕβρις in order to avenge previously committed ὕβρις, eventually it is upon himself that the ὕβρις recoils.¹¹⁶ The same idea is also expressed in

West; see Davidson (1989:96).

¹¹⁴ Cf. Fisher (1992:315). Cohen (1978: 27) sees the *Fernverbindungen*, without associating them with ὕβρις-imagery.

¹¹⁵ To attribute Ajax’s fall to his abortive attempt to inflict ὕβρις upon the Greeks is, of course, quite different from saying that Ajax falls because he has committed ὕβρις against Athena, as a large number of critics have maintained, mainly on the basis of 756-77 (most recently Winnington-Ingram [1980: 11-56 *passim*], Heath [1987: 170-71]). As I stressed above (n. 105), I share the view of Fisher (1992) and Garvie (1993) that ὕβρις means offensive behaviour against human beings, not against gods. My contention here is simply that Ajax is trapped in a sort of vicious circle, in which it is impossible for him to avoid suffering ὕβρις (= humiliation, dishonour), even when he tries to inflict it upon others.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Bradshaw (1991: 117-18).

a different context, namely at the part of the play that could, not inappropriately, be called Αἴαντος καὶ Τεκμήσσης ὁμιλία, since it is so conspicuously modelled on *Il.* 6.407ff.¹¹⁷ As we have already remarked, Ajax realizes that, whatever his future course of life, he is bound to compromise his heroic honour in some way or another. So, he reckons that only death could save the few morsels of heroic honour that have been left to him (cf. esp. 479-80); continuing to lead such a life would be clearly αἰσχρόν (473) and detrimental to his τιμή. However, as Tecmessa points out to him from a different viewpoint (485-524), *his death will likewise result in diminution of his τιμή*. I shall not insist too much on the details of her argumentation and on how they are related to Ajax's τιμή, since Cairns (1993: 231-33) has brilliantly illuminated these matters. It should suffice to draw attention to important lines such as 494 (βάξιν ἀλγεινήν), 500-501 (πικρὸν πρόσφθεγμα ... ἰ λόγοις ἰάπτων), 505 (αἰσχρὰ τ' ἄπη ταῦτα, harking back to Ajax's αἰσχρόν at 473), all pointing to the shameful prospect of Ajax's τιμή being further slighted as a result of his death. Furthermore, Tecmessa in the second part of her speech (506-24) stresses that, if Ajax puts an end to his life, then he will have to abolish such principles as respect for his father, care for his son, and the obligation to reciprocate his concubine's gratitude; and this will certainly be discreditable to a hero who claims to be εὐγενής (524; cf. 480).¹¹⁸ So, the essence of her speech is that, whether Ajax continues to live or dies, diminution of his τιμή is unavoidable.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ See commentators, Winnington-Ingram (1980: 16) and Easterling (1984: 1-8). The important differences between the two scenes, on which see Bowra (1944: 21-25), Reinhardt (1979: 20-22), Kirkwood (1965: 56-59), Di Benedetto (1983: 72-74), Sorum (1986: 369-71), should not be overstressed: see again Easterling *l.c.* Certainly, one should not go as far as Poe (1987: 45-49) who suggests that the Sophoclean scene is a parody of the Homeric one.

¹¹⁸ These points are neatly, and in appropriate detail, documented by Cairns

It seems that Ajax cannot escape dishonour precisely because he is so great; it is his greatness that attracts, as it were, insult and humiliation. This feeling is clearly expressed in the parodos, where the Chorus still think that the rumours about Ajax's deeds — rumours bringing dishonour to Ajax (143 ἐπὶ δυσκλείᾳ, 153 καθυβρίζων, 174 αἰσχύνῃς,¹²⁰ 196 ἐχθρῶν ... ὕβρις, 198 πάντων καχαζόντων¹²¹) — are mere slander (138, 148, 186, 187-88, 191), provoked ultimately by Ajax's greatness (154 τῶν γὰρ μεγάλων ψυχῶν ἰεῖς οὐκ ἂν ἀμάρτοι, 157 πρὸς γὰρ τὸν ἔχονθ' ὁ φθόνος ἔρπει; cf. also the majestic 'eagle-simile'¹²² at 167-71). It is no wonder if, as Winnington-Ingram (1980: 22) has remarked, the power of the rumour spread among the people is 'great' (142, 173, 226), as Ajax himself is great. Finally, a similar idea is

(1993: 232-33), to whose book the reader is referred; see also the excellent treatments by Holt (1981: 277-79), Easterling (1984: 3-4) and Sorum (1986: 367-68). Cf. also Reinhardt (1979: 21-22); Kirkwood (1958: 105-106); Simpson (1969: 95-96); Seidensticker (1983: 133); Poe (1987: 48-49); Blundell (1989: 75). Heath (1987: 181-83) gives a good analysis of Tecmessa's speech but (like Seale [1982: 155-6]) he fails to see that both her and Ajax's *rheseis* are meant to counterbalance each other, with neither carrying the day. Minadeo (1987) is wrong to see this scene as unequivocal proof of Ajax's *kakia*.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Kott (1974:62).

¹²⁰ Here Ajax's dishonour becomes also his soldiers' αἰσχύνα. See Blundell (1989: 73), Cairns (1993:229).

¹²¹ Ferrari (1983: 24-25), followed by Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 14), opts for the v.l. βακχαζόντων.

¹²² That αἰγυπιός here means 'eagle', not 'vulture' as elsewhere, is the view of Stanford (*ad* 167-71); see also D' Arcy W. Thompson, *A Glossary of Greek Birds* (London ²1936), pp. 25-6, and Kamerbeek (*ad* 167-171). On the theme of Ajax's greatness see Knox (1979: 144 with n. 98), Burton (1980: 15-16), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 22 with n. 35) and especially March (1991-1993: 11-18). On the φθόνος / slander theme in the parodos see Burton (1980: 14-15); on its literary background see Davidson (1989: 92-93). On the 'loaded language' of the parodos see Heath (1987: 175 with n. 18).

neatly brought out by the contrast between 955-960 and 961-973: the Chorus deplore the dishonour inflicted upon their dead chief (955 ἐφουβρίζει, 958 πολὺν γέλωτα), but Tecmessa objects that, although Ajax's dishonour is an indisputable fact (961, 971),¹²³ his greatness remains unmarred, for his heroic valour will be all the more conspicuous now that the Argives will no longer have his assistance on the battlefield (962-63). So, the paradox of Ajax's suffering dishonour as well as retaining his heroic stature at the same time, turns out to be an unavoidable state of affairs, amounting to yet another impasse: so long as Ajax is great (which he is by nature), he is bound to suffer ignominy from the φθονεροί (cf. again 157), thus being trapped, as it were, in an ambivalent state between honour and dishonour.

What is more, this impasse, like all the other impasses in this play, seems to have ultimately originated in Athena's involvement. The goddess displays from the very beginning a shockingly hybristic behaviour: she directly exhorts Odysseus to laugh at his enemy's plight (79), a kind of behaviour which could perfectly well be termed ὕβρις¹²⁴

¹²³ It seems to me that Schneidewin's deletion of 969 is rightly adopted by Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990a), (1990b: 31). For one thing, its inferential meaning (cf. δῆτα) in fact creates an illogicality: that Ajax has had the death he wanted (966-8) should anything but diminish the *Schadenfreude* of the Atreidae. Moreover, as Cairns (1993: 229-30; 235) has remarked, the enemies' ὕβρις at one's misfortunes is certainly *expected* as a natural reaction, although not a laudable one (cf. Blundell [1989: 62 with n. 10], Garvie [1993: 246-47]): so, Tecmessa could hardly say that she cannot see why Ajax's enemies should rejoice at his woes (969) —indeed, she says quite the opposite at 961, 971. What Tecmessa points out is that the malicious joy of Ajax's enemies will be in vain (971 ἐν κενοῖς), for they will soon realize what a great loss Ajax's death has been (962-63): see Cairns (1993: 235 n. 64). —Some would delete 966-70 altogether (Reeve [1973: 160-61], following Nauck). For a thorough discussion of this problematic passage see Dawe (1973: 158-61).

¹²⁴ See Garvie (1993: 248). Scholars like Jebb (*ad* 79), Adams (1955: 97) and,

(cf. again 955 ἐφυβρίζει in conjunction with 958 πολλὸν γέλων and see further above, p. 293 with n. 109). Moreover in the parodos Ajax's madness, evidently a work of the gods (185), is equated, in its effects, to the slighting rumours spread by Odysseus and the Atreidae (186); the disgracing θεία νόσος along with the human κακὰ φάτις are thus jointly presented as producing the same result: Ajax's dishonour and humiliation. This is achieved by an impressive παρὰ προσδοκίαν: at 185 the Chorus pray to Zeus and to Apollo to keep away from their chief *not* the 'disease', the θεία νόσος mentioned immediately before, as one should expect, but the slanderous rumour, the κακὰ φάτις (186)!¹²⁵ This 'shared responsibility' of gods and humans in the demeaning of Ajax can be inferred from other passages too: Ajax's dishonour, caused by the madness sent by Athena, is described at 217 with essentially the same word (ἀπελωβήθη)¹²⁶ as the dishonour inflicted upon him by the Atreidae (cf. 561 λώβαις). Similarly, the disaster (954 πῆμ') Athena has visited upon Ajax is thought of as being on a par with Odysseus' and the Atreidae's hybristic laughter at his misfortunes (955-60).¹²⁷ Implicit

apparently, Grossmann (1968:77) have wrongly tried to 'exonerate' Athena by suggesting that she is simply trying Odysseus' 'humanism'.

¹²⁵ I owe the remark to Winnington-Ingram (1980: 22). The surprising effect is stylistically all the more heightened by the position of ἀπερύκοι at the beginning of the sentence, with its unexpected object (φάτις instead of νόσον) being reserved for the end. I do not agree with Heath's (1987: 176) explanation of this stylistic effect.

¹²⁶ On "the use of the strong term *lobe* for physical and mental humiliations" see Fisher (1992: 321 n. 138). Cf. Nagy (1979: 255-58 *passim*).

¹²⁷ Cf. Linforth (1954: 3). Knox (1979: 132) makes a similar point, but stresses the similarity of Athena's hubristic behaviour with that of Ajax. Tycho von Wilamowitz (1917: 53-54) has ingeniously argued that the content of Odysseus' rumours, which the Chorus so strongly disparage, is not his initial vague suspicion (cf. 28), but Athena's disclosures about Ajax's criminal attempt (cf. Schlesinger [1970: 369], Davidson [1975: 164], Burton [1980: 10]; *contra* Guthrie

though this last hint may be, the audience will take it, because they have witnessed Athena inviting Odysseus to commit ὕβρις (79).

To sum up: all the above passages could not, probably, have constituted sufficient evidence, if taken one by one; it is their cumulative effect that shows, if implicitly, that Athena is as much involved in Ajax's dishonour as the Atreidae. Ajax is greater than a human being is allowed to be (758 περισσὰ σώματα, 761 μὴ κατ' ἄνθρωπον φρονῆ, 776 οὐ κατ' ἄνθρωπον φρονῶν), and this is why he stirs Athena's wrath (756 μῆνις, 777 ὀργήν), exactly as he moves, with his excellence, the φθόνος of the Argives (cf. again 154–57). Both Athena's wrath and the Argives' envy result in Ajax's dishonour (ὕβρις, αἰκεία, λώβη), either because of the slanderous rumours spread about by his enemies or by Athena's infliction of madness upon him. So, Athena's actions in this play are placed on a level (i.e. have similar motives and similar results on Ajax) with the actions of the most despicable characters (for the Atreidae are unequivocally described as such in the parodos) — a fact which seems to corroborate my thesis that Sophoclean gods stand above and beyond human θεσμοί, moral principles included.¹²⁸ Athena's causing Ajax's dishonour is as incomprehensible as her causing the taxonomies of Ajax's world to collapse; in both cases the result is deadlock, havoc, and death.

[1947: 118]); thus, the audience receive yet another indication that the ὕβρις (cf. 153) of which the Chorus accuse the Argives has in fact originated in Athena's intervention.

¹²⁸ Gellie (1972: 5) has some very fine remarks on the incomprehensible character of divinity.

5.5.1 Second part: Ajax's dualization into the persons of Teucer the hunter and Eurysaces the hoplite

The Chorus' epiparodos (866ff.) marks a new start. As we shall see, the second part of the play is, in many aspects, a mirror-image (if not an exact one) of the first part, whose basic themes are now picked up and led, by a reverse procedure, to what seems to be a final resolution.

Before we see how these generalizations apply to the play, I shall attempt to justify the title of this section. My contention is that Ajax's basic antinomy between hoplite and 'black hunter' (see sections 5.1.1-5.1.2) is now divided, 'dualized', between his brother, a typical hunter, and his son, a typical hoplite (a potential one, at this stage) bearing the shield. Sophocles, I suggest, enacted theatrically this dualization by presenting both Eurysaces and Teucer as 'embodiments' of Ajax; in other words, to show that, even after Ajax's death, a part of him (his hoplite aspect) still lives in his son, whereas another part (his hunter aspect) is embodied in his brother. In Eurysaces' case this was not difficult: in Greek thought a man's son ensures the continuation of his stock; he is his father's 'extension' into the future, i.e. what remains of him when he dies.¹²⁹ As Stanford (li) has already remarked, Eurysaces "is [...] an emblem of survival after death for Ajax"; the hero's extraordinary insistence that his son should be brought up to become like him (cf. 545-77, and esp. 549 κἀξομοιοῦσθαι φύσιν, 551 τὰ δ' ἄλλ' ὅμοιος) suffices to confirm this view.

In Teucer's case things are similar. As Saïd (1993: 300, 303-304 with n. 32) reminds us, fraternal couples are almost identical, indistinguishable beings; one is the other's 'double'. Furthermore, Teucer's

¹²⁹ See Lacey (1968: 15-16), Golden (1990: 23-38 *passim*); cf. Heath (1987: 183 n. 33).

close connection with his brother is explicitly established when at 339 Ajax cries ἰὼ παῖ παῖ — which, as Tecmessa (340) says,¹³⁰ refers to Eurysaces — and proceeds immediately to call Teucer by name (342). Ajax’s mentioning both the son and the brother in the same breath is indicative: they are both his embodiments, the emblems of the continuation of his existence into the future. Significantly, Teucer has the same anxieties as his brother about the deadlock in which he has found himself: his agonizing question ποῖ γὰρ μολεῖν μοι δυνατόν; (1006) is a clear reminiscence of Ajax’s ποῖ τις οὖν φύγη; ποῖ μολῶν μενῶ; (404–405). Like Ajax (section 5.3.1), he feels that neither Salamis nor Troy can sustain him any longer (1021–22), and wonders how he will face their father Telamon (1008–1020 ~ 434–40, esp. 462–65). Finally, it is equally significant that the Greeks abuse Teucer verbally, and even threaten to stone him and physically attack him (721–32) for crimes committed by his brother. The analogies between the two brothers are unmistakable: Teucer is clearly a ‘second Ajax’, a ‘projection’ of his dead brother (cf. Saïd [1993: 314–15]).¹³¹ It is crucial, however, to realize that neither Teucer nor, of course, Eurysaces should be regarded as mere substitutes for Ajax: they are both his embodiments, the former of his ‘black hunter’ aspect, the latter of his hoplite one.

¹³⁰ The scholiast (*ad* 339, p. 96 Christodoulou), followed by L. Campbell (*ad* 339), Fraenkel (1977: 12–13), Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 17) and Saïd (1993: 311), has Tecmessa misunderstanding Ajax. This, as Mr Garvie points out to me, is gratuitous and adds nothing to the understanding of the passage. See also Renehan’s (1992: 344) fine remarks.

¹³¹ On the similarities between the two brothers see also Blundell (1989: 80–81). I cannot agree with Cresci (1974: 222–23) that Teucer is “un’ immagine deformata di Aiace”.

5.5.2 The themes of the first part taken up: Teucer attempts to legitimize Ajax's suicide / 'sacrifice'

Teucer is a non-hoplite, an archer / hunter (1120-22; 564), and this essential feature is clearly underlined when, having entered the stage, he describes his searching for his dead brother as a hunt (997 δλώκων κάξιχνοσκοπούμενος). A hunter, almost by definition, represents the space beyond the polis, the wild, where the ordered framework of civic νόμιμα that lends coherence to human life ceases to exist (or, rather, is systematically inversed). Moreover, being a νόθος son (1013) and an archer (1120-22), he is a marginal figure, not fully integrated into the political / military community (cf. above, n. 10). Paradoxically, however, it is this marginal non-hoplite who will attempt to reintegrate Ajax to the community from which he has been cut off; this is why he makes every effort to see to it that his brother's burial take place. The burial, *qua* νόμιμον, is not only a communal act *par excellence*, but also a typical manifestation of order and normality (by way of its repetitive, predictable and accountable character). Teucer stresses more than once that his brother's burial is in accordance with τὸ δίκαιον (1110, 1125; cf. 1126) and that failing to bury him properly would amount to a violation of the laws of the gods (1129-31). Moreover, contrary to the utter disarray into which Ajax threw the, normally distinct, categories 'friend' and 'enemy' in his deception and suicide speeches, Teucer seems to be trying to restore normality in this matter too: he unequivocally describes the sword as a hostile weapon presented by an unqualified foe (1025-27),¹³²

¹³² Moreover, if 1028-39 are genuine (discussion in West [1978: 116-7], who concludes that only 1035 is interpolated), I should endorse Kitto's (1956: 193-95) very pertinent remark: Teucer sees the sword as fulfilling at last Ajax's enmity against Hector, which was left unslaked on the battlefield after the exchange of gifts; cf. Sicherl (1977: 88-89), Cohen (1978: 32); differently Kott (1974: 65-66);

while he seems to reject Ajax's characterization as πολέμιος of the Greek army, put forward by Menelaus (1132-33) — Teucer's point being apparently that the appropriate term would be ἐχθρός,¹³³ since the hostility between Ajax and Menelaus was a strictly *personal* one (1134 μισοῦντ' ἐμίσει: Menelaus' own words!); and this personal feud was initiated, according to Teucer, not by Ajax, but by Menelaus (1135, 1137). Teucer does his best to restore the *status quo ante*, so that the Trojans can become again Ajax's enemies and the Greeks his friends.

Furthermore, Teucer also tries to legitimize his brother's anomic sacrifice / suicide. This is implemented mainly on the visual-theatrical level, in the scene of Teucer's uncovering of Ajax's body (1003ff.) which Tecmessa had shrouded in a robe (915ff.). Tecmessa says clearly that she will cover the body completely (916 καλύψω ... παμπήδην) because it is not to be looked upon (915 οὔτοι θεατός); she stresses particularly that what she intends to conceal is the fatal wound (918-19) — and also, presumably, the sword that caused it.¹³⁴ The meaning of these scenic movements becomes clear as soon as one recalls the important fact that in Greek sacrifice every effort was made to gloss over anything related to the animal's death; as Vernant (1991: 294) has put it, "the sacrificial ceremony might be precisely defined as follows: the sum of procedures

wrongly Adams (1955:106-107). Contrast the irresolvably ambiguous attitude of Ajax towards the sword, as analyzed above, p. 282 with n. 72.

¹³³ Cf. Stanford (*ad* 1132, 1133-4), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 64 n. 20), Fisher (1992: 319 with n. 127), Coray (1993: 73-4). I disagree with Blundell (1989: 39, 92-93) who sees no more than a sophistic quibble in this semantic distinction.

¹³⁴ Note the verbal echoes: the robe will *shroud* (915-6 περιπτυχῆς φᾶρος) Ajax's body which in turn '*shrouds*' the sword (899 κρυφαίω φασγάνῳ περιπτυχῆς). Clearly, Tecmessa is anxious to cover not only the wound but also the sword. Segal (1981: 117) sees a different meaning in the repetition of περιπτυχῆς.

permitting the slaughter of an animal under such conditions that violence seems excluded and the slaying is unequivocally imbued with a characteristic that distinguishes it from murder and places it in a different category from the blood-crime that the Greeks call *phonos*.” Thus, for instance, the sacrificial *knife* was *hidden* in the *κανοῦν* under a heap of grain.¹³⁵ Moreover, there are no representations of the very moment of sacrifice in Greek art; “la geste qui ouvre le passage de la mort dans la gorge des bêtes n’ est jamais représenté” (Durand [1979: 138]).¹³⁶ When sacrificial knives are depicted, it is only as implements of skinning, never of killing; likewise, never is the animal’s flowing blood depicted in vase paintings.¹³⁷ So, Tecmessa’s covering of the body, being at the same time a covering of the sword, should probably be seen as a reaffirmation of what is already clear to the audience, namely that Ajax’s suicide *is* indeed a sacrifice (898 νεοσφαγῆς, 919 οἰκείας σφαγῆς; cf. the Chorus’ αἰμάχθης [909]¹³⁸), albeit an anomic one, and must therefore be glossed over.¹³⁹ Inverting this procedure, Teucer *uncovers* (1003 ἐκκάλυψον) the

¹³⁵ E.g. Vernant (1991:294), Burkert (1983:5).

¹³⁶ Cf. also Vernant (1991:294) and Marinatos (1988:15, 17).

¹³⁷ Durand (1979: 138-39) and Vernant (1991: 295) remark that, when Greek vases depict human sacrifices, like the sacrifice of Polyxena, there are no longer inhibitions as to the representation of the moment of death or of the victim’s flowing blood. However, as this generalization seems to be based on a *single* piece of evidence (see van Straten [1995:114]), it seems fair to regard it as an anomaly which, if anything, *confirms* the rule that the very moment of the sacrifice is generally *not* depicted.

¹³⁸ On the sacrificial connotations of αἰμάσσειν see above p. 285.

¹³⁹ It follows that Ajax’s suicide/sacrifice must take place off-stage or, at any rate, in such a manner as to be *invisible* to the audience. This is the view taken by e.g. Arnott (1962: 131-33), Lesky (1972: 191), Heath (1987: 192-93), Ley (1988: 92), Scullion (1994: 95-128); *contra* Seale (1982: 163-65 with n. 47), Taplin (1978: 86). For a review of opinions on the staging of Ajax’s suicide see Scullion (1994: 91-95); for an (independently ^{r/} argued) case against a visible suicide see again

body and insists on seeing it (1003 ὡς ἴδω; 1004 δυσθέατον ὄμμα);¹⁴⁰ what is more, he explicitly, as well as graphically, refers to the sword (a taboo object for Tecmessa) at 1024-26 (his considerations at 1028-39, if the lines are to be retained, draw attention to the sword all the more emphatically).¹⁴¹ Therefore Teucer's act should probably be viewed as a symbolic *legitimization* of his brother's suicide: Ajax is no longer a σφάγιον, but merely a killed man. His death is a φόνος, not a σφαγή, and is therefore no longer treated as a sacrifice (let alone an anomic one): quite characteristically, Teucer calls the sword a φονεύς (1026), not a σφαγεύς as Ajax had called it at 815 (we recall that for Tecmessa and the Chorus too Ajax's death was clearly a sacrificial act, a σφαγή: see above, p. 305). This is why, for Teucer, it is no longer forbidden to look upon Ajax's body, and the sword is no longer the sacrificial knife which must be hidden. What is more, if we assume, as is not implausible, that Teucer at

Scullion (1994: 95-107). Following Heath (*l.c.*), I would even be prepared to doubt whether the sword was on stage during the suicide speech; the deictics (828, 834) do not necessarily imply that the sword is visible, as Arnott (1962: 132) thinks: on ὄδε referring "to someone not present on the stage but clearly implied by the context and visible to the speaker's imagination" see Garvie (1986: *ad* 893); cf. Gardiner (1979: 12 with n.8). I also agree with Scullion (1994: 125) that the shrouding of the dummy representing Ajax is accomplished before it is brought into view (however that was effected); *contra* Arnott (1962: 132).

¹⁴⁰ On the high concentration of visual terms in this passage see Seale (1982: 168-69; cf. 174).

¹⁴¹ The connection between Tecmessa's covering of the body and Teucer's uncovering of it has been perceived by Cohen (1978: 33), who viewed however the latter action as a continuation, not an antithesis, of the former. Against Taplin (1978: 189 n. 5) and Mills (1980-81: 133) who think that this action might be connected with the replacement of the 'dead' actor with a dummy see Seale (1982: 179 n. 58) and Heath (1987: 199 n. 70), whose own explanations are however as unsatisfactory as the others'.

some point after 1024ff. wrenches the body away from the sword,¹⁴² then this action theatrically enacts the complete inversion of Ajax's falling over the sword (828, 833, 841,¹⁴³ 907¹⁴⁴).

5.5.3 The ἀγών with Menelaus. Teucer attempts to legitimize Ajax as a 'black hunter'

In his debate with Menelaus Teucer tries to defend his brother as a 'black hunter', by presenting his deviation from his characteristic hoplite ethos as if it were totally normal and legitimate. This deviation is succinctly phrased by Menelaus at the outset of the debate (1052-54): Ajax started off as an exemplary warrior, but turned out to be a guileful 'black hunter' who fights at night (1056 νύκτωρ). This unexpected reversal is, as we have already remarked, part of a broader confusion of categories and limits: Ajax was thought to be an ally to the Greeks (1053) but has been

¹⁴² Kamerbeek *ad* 1028 (following Masqueray), Taplin (1978: 87), Mills (1980-81: 133 with n.16); *contra* Gardiner (1979: 13 with n.11). I find Scullion's (1994: 125-26) staging of this scene attractive, the more so as it insists on the revelation of the sword.

¹⁴³ 841 is amongst the lines deleted by Wesseling, who is followed by Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990a), (1990b: 28). Since, however, in this passage *alii alia secludunt*, the deletion of αὐτοσφαγῆ πίπτοντα is by no means certain.

¹⁴⁴ If the MSS. περιπετές is retained, then Ellendt-Genthe's (1872: s.v. περιπετής) explanation is to be adopted: "Sed audacissime novator verborum Sophocles de gladio in quem Ajax incubuerat quasi circumdatum corpore, igitur *passive* dicit" (cf. Eust. 644.47 ὃ περιπέπτωκεν Αἴας). But perhaps H. Lloyd-Jones (CR n.s. 2 [1952] 133) is right in holding such a meaning as "not probable" and accepting Musgrave's emendation into περιπετοῦς; cf. Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 30). In any case, the fundamental idea of Ajax's *falling* upon the sword is not changed.

proved to be an enemy worse than Phrygians (1054)¹⁴⁵ — we remember the confusion of the categories ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’, so prominent in Ajax’s deception and suicide speeches. Later in his speech, Menelaus’ accusations against Ajax for anti-hoplite behaviour are far more downright (1069ff.): Ajax was supposed to be a δημότης (1071)¹⁴⁶ and to obey the ἐφειστώτες (1072). As Winnington-Ingram (1980: 63) has seen, “here Menelaus, where it is essentially a question of military discipline, is made to drag in the civil state” — which is natural, since the 5th century Athenian hoplite was simply a citizen in arms.¹⁴⁷ The political terms δημότης and ἐφειστώτες are of crucial importance, because the former reminds us that Ajax was thought to be a fully integrated δημότης but proved to have turned into a ‘black hunter’ instead, i.e. into a δημότης on probation;¹⁴⁸ the latter term is probably meant to remind us of the

¹⁴⁵ Probably, the fact that Tecmessa is of Phrygian descent (487-88) and that Teucer’s name means ‘Trojan’ (cf. e.g. A. Ag. 112) are meant to form a background to Menelaus’ remarks. We owe to Lissarague (1990: 21-34) the important observation that in Attic iconography the binary oppositions “hoplite : non hoplite” and “Greek : non Greek” are parallel and complementary: “en pareil contexte, être un héros épique, c’ est être hoplite, sur le modèle grec, et qui n’ est pas grec ou assimilé n’ est pas davantage hoplite.” (quotation from p. 26); cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 103, 106, 111, 121, 127. Cf. above, n. 10, and below n. 149.

¹⁴⁶ Pace Heath (1987: 200), there is nothing inherently depreciatory in the term δημότης: in the *OC*, for instance, the Coloniates can be called δημόται (78) as well as τῆσδ’ ἔφοροι χώρας (145) and γῆς ἀνακτες (831).

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Meier (1993: 179). In general see Ducrey (1986: 61-2); Bowden (1993: 47-9) with bibliography; cf. also Sage (1996: 33).

¹⁴⁸ After the probationary period of the ephebeia the young man left the state of the ‘black hunter’ and became a hoplite as well as a member of the tribe and the *deme* (on the probable equation between hoplite and *stricto sensu* citizen [δημότης] in classical Athens cf. Vidal-Naquet [1986b: 88]). I think that Vidal-Naquet (1986c: 133) is wrong when he states that, at the time of Aristotle’s *Ath. Pol.* (ch. 42), “the admission of a young man into the deme of his father, i.e. into

ephebic oath (εὐηκοήσω τῶν ἀεὶ κραινόντων), to which all δημόται were supposed to adhere; Ajax, however, has regressed, anomalously, to the status of the ephebe who has not sworn to it yet. Thus, his indulgence in the ‘black hunter’ practices which we examined in sections 5.1.1–5.1.2 is brought up yet again. Menelaus ends his tirade with a lecture on the role of fear and αἰδώς / αἰσχύνη in the well-being of a polis or of an army, elaborating upon his main point that Ajax failed to be a proper hoplite.

Teucer does not try to prove that the core of Menelaus’ argumentation is wrong, namely that Ajax did not display anti-hoplite behaviour; on the contrary, he accepts this point and tries to justify his brother’s ways. His diatribe at 1093–17 is, in its major part, committed to theorizing over Ajax’s autonomy and his independence both from Menelaus and from Agamemnon (a contention causing an angry reaction on Agamemnon’s part at 1232–34). Ajax, he argues, was essentially autonomous (1097–98); he joined the expedition ὡς αὐτοῦ κρατῶν (1099). Thus, what is a fundamental requirement for a hoplite, namely that he should obey his superiors and display solidarity with his fellow-citizenship, precedes [...] the ‘probationary period’ and is definitely not its consequence”: what precedes the ‘probationary period’ (ephebeia) is the enrollment in the ληξιαρχικὸν γραμματεῖον (Pélékidis [1962: 52–53]): full citizenship is officially acquired only after the two years of liability for ephebic service (Reinmuth [1971:126–28]). This is in accord with what seems to have been the original character of ephebeia, i.e. a probationary period before the young warrior’s definitive admission into the ranks of the army. As such it must have been an institution of ancient origin; cf. Pélékidis (1962: 71–79), according to whom “l’*éphébie* remonte au moins à la première moitié du Ve siècle av. J.-C.” (quotation from p. 78); cf. Reinmuth (1952:34–50) and (1971: 133–38) who argues for the period after the Persian Wars. —Cresci (1974:223) misses the point when she holds that Menelaus interprets “secondo una visuale omerica la legge de la πόλις”: it is the 5th century polis ideology to which Menelaus is appealing.

warriors (on the latter point cf. again the ephebic oath: οὐδὲ λείψω τὸν παραστάτην ὅπου ἄν στοιχήσω), is dismissed by Teucer in the name of the autonomy characterizing the ‘black hunter’. This point is pressed further on, when Teucer proudly defends bowmanship at 1120–23; this forceful altercation, a variation on the old theme of the controversy between the archer and the hoplite (cf. e.g. *Il.* 11. 385–95; E. *HF* 157–64 with Bond [1981: *ad* 161]), would have been meaningless if the fact that Teucer is Ajax’s embodiment had not been already firmly established (section 5.5.1). In other words, here Teucer is actually speaking not so much for himself, as for Ajax; and his defence of his bowmanship (i.e. of his being a marginal, non-hoplite warrior) is in fact a defence of the anti-hoplite practices in which Ajax anomalously indulged.¹⁴⁹ So, it seems that Ajax’s deviation from his normal hoplite status — a deviation whose abnormality loomed so large in the first part of the play — can, after all, be justified and legitimized, as was his sacrifice.

This feeling is reinforced by the fact that Teucer clearly avoids becoming involved in the vicious circle of reciprocating ὕβρις for ὕβρις — a procedure in which Ajax became entangled to his utter detriment (section 5.4.1). Teucer, like his brother, suffers insults and humiliation from the Greeks: the first substantial information we have about him is

¹⁴⁹ Ajax of course did not practise archery; he was, however, *quasi*-assimilated to an archer (i.e. a *non-hoplite*), insofar as he abnormally relapsed to the status of a ‘black hunter’, i.e. an *anti-hoplite*. On the Bowman’s social inferiority see Adkins (1972: 66–67), Sage (1996: 40–1) and, most importantly, Lissarrague (1990: 13–34) with full literary and iconographic evidence; in Homer: Sage (1996: 10); cf. above, n. 10. Winnington-Ingram (1980: 64) thought that “the old quarrel of the Bowman and the hoplite is staggeringly irrelevant to the tragic issue”, but see the right objections of Bowie (1983: 115). Untenable is also Bowra’s (1944: 53–54) view, followed by Sorum (1986: 374), that in 5th century Athens the attitude towards archers was far more sympathetic than in Homeric society or in contemporary Sparta: see the criticism of Bond (1981: *ad* 161).

that he is chided by the Argives (722 *κυδάζεται*, 724-25 *ὄνειδεσιν ἢ ἥρασσον*, 731 *ἔρις*¹⁵⁰). What is more, in the debate with Menelaus we realize that the *ἔρις* of the Greeks against him has not abated yet (as the Messenger implied at 731-32): Menelaus uses, as his last card, an *αἶνος* (1142-49), an allegory, that is, whose aim is in this case (as is often the case with *αἶνοι*)¹⁵¹ to blame (*ψέγειν*) and inflict disgrace upon its recipient. Teucer, however, conspicuously avoids replying with a similar allegory: as Stanford (*ad* 1150ff.; cf. *ad* 1142) has remarked, Teucer's story is not a proper *αἶνος*: its meaning is absolutely clear and there are no allegories.¹⁵² In fact, Teucer explicitly challenges the *αἶνος* as a genre,¹⁵³ he *parodies* it by totally destroying the mythopoeic illusion at the end of his reply (1157-58), which thus comes as a punch-line: *μῶν ἠνιξάμην*;¹⁵⁴ The ironic use of the verb *αἰνίσσομαι*, etymologically cognate to *αἶνος*,¹⁵⁵ is, I think, an obvious indication of his reluctance to adopt a form of

¹⁵⁰ On *ἔρις* as a key-word in the language of blame see Nagy (1979: 222-23; 230-31).

¹⁵¹ Cf. Bowra (1944: 55). I am aware that this is not the primary meaning of the word; it can be used also to designate praise poetry as well as an allusive tale containing an ulterior purpose (cf. Verdenius [1962]); see Nagy (1979: 234-41), (1990b: 149, 392-3). However, its function as blame poetry is quite common (e.g. *Ar. Vesp.* 1381-6, 1401-5, 1427-32, 1435-40, 1446-8; *Hdt.* 1. 141. 1-3; *Call. Iamb.* I & II [frr. 191, 192 Pf.]). Cf. West on *Hes. Op.* 202-12, who also may be right in remarking that the Hesiodic fable about the hawk and the nightingale is an *αἶνος manqué*, as it fails to put the *hybris* of the kings in a ridiculous light or show it to be ill-advised —i.e. fails to be *ψογερός*.

¹⁵² Cf. also Kamerbeek (*ad* 1142).

¹⁵³ Although he adheres, as Fraenkel (1920) has pointed out, to the external form of the *αἶνοι*. Cf. Fraenkel (1977: 35-36). Poe (1987: 23-24) overstresses the comic function of the *αἶνοι* in our passage.

¹⁵⁴ The same point has been made by Heath (1987: 200). Bowra (1944: 55) is wrong.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Nagy (1979: 240).

discourse often associated with blame (ψόγος) and insult (ὑβρις) and appropriately termed by him φλαῦρ' ἔπη (1162).¹⁵⁶ It is Menelaus who is the actual ὑβριστής (1151 ὑβριζε, cf. his own words at 1088: νῦν δ' ἐγὼ μέγ' αὖ φρονῶ¹⁵⁷), not Ajax (as Menelaus alleged: 1061,¹⁵⁸ 1081, 1088). He is the one who is trying to dishonour the dead Ajax by abusive words and deeds, hence Teucer applies to him the language traditionally used to disparage the unjustified blamer: he significantly calls him ἄνολβος (1156), which implies that his lack of ὄλβος makes him resort to ψόγος and ὑβρις.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ On the use of αἶνοι by low-class (φαῦλοι) people see also Fraenkel on A. Ag. 1629f. and Fraenkel (1977: 36). Aristotle (*Po.* 1448b) defines blame poetry (ψόγοι) as poetry dealing with the acts of the φαῦλοι. Is it a coincidence that Teucer uses basically the same term (φλαῦρα instead of φαῦλα) to describe Menelaus' discourse?

¹⁵⁷ Teucer used the same phrase, μέγα φρονεῖν, at 1125, but not in a context of hubristic behaviour (on the contrary, he stressed that his own μέγα φρονεῖν is ξὺν τῷ δικαίῳ). He is not willing to requite ὑβρις, unlike Menelaus who used his own μέγα φρονεῖν as a justification for his requital of ὑβρις with ὑβρις. See Winnington-Ingram (1980: 62), Cairns (1993: 236–37 with n. 73), (1996: 10–13); the latter rightly notes that, in Menelaus' case, μέγα φρονεῖν is not to be sharply divorced from ὑβρίζειν (differently Fisher [1992: 315–16; 323]).

¹⁵⁸ Reeve (1973: 161–62) revived the deletion of the line by Nauck. Even if the deletion is adopted, the overall sense is not severely affected, as Fisher (1992: 314) shows.

¹⁵⁹ On the unjustified blamer's envy (φθόνος) for the ὄλβος of others, and his subsequent indulging in blame (ψόγος, ἔρις, νεῖκος) see Nagy's (1979: 228–32) illuminating analysis. Thgn. 287–92 clearly associates ψόγος (287 κακοψόγω [φιλοψόγω Bergk]), ἄνολβος (288 ἀνολβότεροι) and ὑβρις (291), especially if at 288 we read, with Ahrens, οὐδ' ἐτός, ὡς αἰεί, i.e. “nec mirum (cf. [Thgn.] 25), cum sint semper pauci fortunati” (teste West, in *app. crit. ad loc.*). For other views, explaining ἄνολβος by μῶρος, see Jebb (*ad* 1156) and Kamerbeek (*ad* 1156).

5.5.4 The ἀγών with Agamemnon. Teucer attempts to demonstrate Ajax's valour as a hoplite. The impasses arise again

Significantly, while Teucer was trying to justify Ajax as a 'black hunter' / anti-hoplite, Eurysaces (the embodiment of his father's hoplite aspect) was not present; he had been taken into the hut (578-81) and had not appeared on stage since. Now, he shows up with his mother, εἰς καιρόν (1168), to back up visually Teucer's defence of Ajax's hoplite valour which is going to ensue. It should perhaps be assumed that an attendant brings along Ajax's shield too, so as to highlight all the more strongly the paradoxical duality which Teucer is trying to establish (Ajax must be viewed as both hoplite and 'black hunter' at the same time): Teucer, the *hunter*, is about to defend Ajax's *hoplite* qualities (having already defended his anti-hoplite ones), while Eurysaces, accompanied by the *hoplite shield* (the ἐπώνυμον σάκος), clings to his father's body (1171-81), thus providing a visual confirmation of Teucer's following argumentation (and recalling perhaps Ajax's wish that Eurysaces' *hoplite* honour would be defended *both* by the ἀσπιστῆρες [565] sailors and by Teucer the *hunter* [564] who should prevent the boy from suffering ὕβρις or λώβη [560-61]¹⁶⁰). So, one must fully realize, and constantly bear in mind, that it is not only Ajax's 'abnormalities' (anomalous 'black hunt') that must be justified; it is also his, so to speak, 'normal', usual aspect (that of the exemplary hoplite) that must be defended against the

¹⁶⁰ We realize retrospectively that Ajax's entrusting of Eurysaces both to Teucer and to his soldiers (which seemed at the time a confirmation of his impasse [being trapped betwixt and between hoplite and 'black hunter']; see p. 268f.) is now presented under a different light: it is no longer the case that Ajax cannot be either a hoplite or a 'black hunter'; now what is emphasized is that he can be *both*.

Atreidae's slanderous imputations. In other words, *Teucer's ensuing defence of his brother's hoplite valour should contribute — along with the preceding justification of him as an anti-hoplite, a 'black hunter' — to a full justification of Ajax's duality (both a hoplite and a 'black hunter'), thus liberating him, if posthumously, from the terrible impasse between hoplite and anti-hoplite in which he was trapped, to his eventual disaster.* Otherwise, Ajax will remain on the borderline between hoplite and 'black hunter', unable to be either.

Teucer's argumentation (1266–89) is very impressive, and suggestively fraught with epic reminiscences:¹⁶¹ Ajax displayed in the most difficult moments the most admirable bravery as well as the most laudable care for his fellow-warriors (1272–82¹⁶²). Once again, we are shown what a paragon of hoplite ethos he was — especially when Teucer strongly emphasizes that his brother did not tamper with the lots (1283–87), i.e. did not practise *deceit*, in order to avoid duelling with Hector. This detail may seem insignificant at first sight; however, it signals a major turning point: the fact that abstention from guile is here presented as a further credit to Ajax's hoplite ethos means that Teucer's

¹⁶¹ The fact that these reminiscences do not exactly correspond with anything in the *Iliad* does not really matter. See Jebb (*ad* 1277f.): "... it seems equally possible that [Sophocles] wrote from a general recollection of the *Iliad*, without caring whether he reproduced its details." Cf. Kamerbeek (*ad* 1276, 1277; 1278, 1279). Kirkwood (1965: 63) has rightly remarked that Sophocles offers a judicious selection of incidents from the *Iliad*, in order to add kudos to Ajax's heroic image.

¹⁶² The idea of Ajax defending all alone his fellow Greeks would be clearer if at 1282 we read, with Dawe (1996), ἄμ' ὑμῖν οὗτος ταῦτ' ἔδρασεν ἢ δίχα; (Musgrave's ἄμ' for MSS ἄρ', and Reiske's ἢ δίχα for MSS ἔνδικα). See however Lloyd-Jones & Wilson's (1990b: 38) objections. At any rate, one should not overlook the fact that even Ajax's individual feats are part of his devotion to the *collective cause*: see Segal (1981: 112).

argumentation intimates a wholesale rejection of deceit. As a result, an irresolvable ambiguity arises again: we realize that Ajax cannot be justified in his duality and that, inevitably, the balance between Ajax the hoplite and Ajax the ‘black hunter’ (a balance we thought Teucer was going to redress) is irreparably destroyed: if guile is on the whole unacceptable, then Ajax can be neither justified as a ‘black hunter’, since guile (typical of such anti-hoplite modes of behaviour as ‘black hunting’) is altogether indefensible, nor as a hoplite, for his nightly attack against the Greeks was, after all, an instance of guile (something inconceivable for a hoplite). Ajax’s two aspects (hoplite and ‘black hunter’) remain poles apart, in continuing unresolved *tension*, instead of being reconciled into unperturbed symbiosis. The anomic aspects of ‘black hunting’, made prominent by Teucer, forbid any legitimization of the fundamental duality “hoplite : ‘black hunter’”, which thus becomes again what it initially was: an irresolvable ambiguity.

5.5.4.1. The inevitability of ὕβρις. The anomic sacrifice brought up again

Having invalidated his efforts to vindicate his brother’s duality, Teucer proceeds, at 1290-98, to a kind of argumentation which brings up more of the same old impasses that led to Ajax’s catastrophe. He now becomes involved in the vicious circle of reciprocating ὕβρις for ὕβρις (something he managed to avoid before, when he challenged Menelaus’ resorting to insulting αἶνοι; see above, p. 311f.): he returns Agamemnon’s mockery for his low birth by coming up with some unsavoury details about Agamemnon’s own pedigree. Surprisingly, as well as significantly, the vocabulary traditionally used to disparage unjustified blamers is now

applied by Agamemnon to Teucer, both before and after his reply (1266-1315) which is thus encircled by indications of the abusive character of his words: 1226-27, 1230, 1235, 1244 (κακοῖς βαλεῖτε),¹⁶³ 1258 (note esp. θαρσῶν ὑβρίζεις),¹⁶⁴ 1320; even the impartial Odysseus allows for the possibility that Teucer's words are indeed φλαῦρα [ἔπη] (1323,¹⁶⁵ a phrase used by Teucer of Menelaus' verbal abuse at 1162!). That is not to say that Agamemnon does not indulge in verbal abuse (he calls Teucer a bastard and a slave [1228-29, 1259-63] and this is rightly termed ὀνειδίζειν by Teucer at 1298), and one is certainly tempted to see the 'bad' Agamemnon as the principal abuser.¹⁶⁶ However, the surprise we feel at the overwhelmingly larger number of references to Teucer's verbal abuse is certainly intentional: this is Sophocles' way to alert us to the fact that Teucer, contrary to his restrained attitude in the debate with Menelaus, is now only too keen on reciprocating ὕβρις for his enemies' ὕβρις against him.

¹⁶³ For similar formations of phrases denoting blame cf. 501 λόγοις λάπτων, 724-25 ὀνειδέσιν ἤρασσον (with Jebb's note). Cf. also the epithet ἐπεσβόλος used of the ψογερὸς Thersites in the *Iliad* (2. 275), on which see Nagy (1979: 264).

¹⁶⁴ On θαρσεῖν used of the 'boldness' of the unjustified blamer see Nagy (1979: 260-62). Admittedly, in the above instances Agamemnon refers to Teucer's debate with Menelaus. But why did Sophocles *not* insert such disparaging comments against Teucer during the earlier debate, in which they would have been immediately relevant? My answer is that in that debate Sophocles wanted Teucer to save face, whereas it is in this one that he will indulge in retorting ὕβρις for ὕβρις —a *volte face* for which the audience are *forewarned* as soon as Agamemnon enters (1226ff).

¹⁶⁵ I take ἀνδρί (1322) to refer to Agamemnon, not Teucer. Odysseus is about to ask the leader of the army for a personal favour, and his purpose is far better served if he makes clear from the outset that he considers Agamemnon justified (1322 συγγνώμην ἔχω) in requiting ἔπη κακά for Teucer's φλαῦρα [ἔπη].

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Heath (1987: 87-88 etc.) on the antipathy one normally feels towards the 'adversary' in tragedy.

One cannot help recalling, however, that Ajax's craving to reciprocate the ὕβρις he had suffered, and to restore his offended τιμή, resulted in his suffering further, and worse, ὕβρις (section 5.4.1). This is, *mutatis mutandis*, what happens in this case too, for the mythical examples chosen by Teucer to demean Agamemnon are chiefly archetypal stories of anomic sacrifice, i.e. of the kind of sacrifice in which Ajax has indulged! The mention of the ghastly 'Feast of Thyestes' (1293-94), his devouring of his own children certainly does not particularly strengthen Teucer's case, in view of Ajax's double anomic sacrifice (of the animals and of himself). Nor is the reference to Agamemnon's mother, Aerope (1295-97), as harmless as it seems, since she was also a victim of an anomic sacrifice (which was never effected, according to the myth,¹⁶⁷ but is interestingly presented as such by Sophocles, cf. 1297 ἐφῆκεν!): she was thrown into the sea to be devoured by fishes. That throwing a human being to the fishes was indeed thought to be a sacrifice is evident from myths such as Andromeda's and is made clear by Burkert (1983: 204-12); the *anomalous* character of this sacrifice is indicated by the fact that it is restricted to the level of myth, i.e. to a vague, remote past which was entirely detached from contemporary reality. Now, bearing in mind that fishes were an altogether exceptional sacrificial victim, restricted to barbarians and to marginal areas of the Hellenic world,¹⁶⁸ the reverse situation, namely the devouring of a human being by fishes by way of sacrifice must have seemed totally inconceivable, one of the most anomic kinds of sacrifice possible.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ See e.g. schol. *Ai.* 1297 a (p. 246 Christodoulou), Apollod. 3.2.2.

¹⁶⁸ Burkert (1983: 208-10).

¹⁶⁹ With my interpretation one has no longer to see Menelaus and Agamemnon as mere 'doublets' (Hester [1979b: 255]) nor as an example of comic doubling (Poe [1987: 26-27]). The view that the final scenes serve merely to highlight Ajax's greatness by contrasting it with his adversaries' pettiness (e.g. Kirkwood

5.6.1 πολλοὶ νῦν φίλοι καὶ θῆς πικροί: Odysseus' intervention

Teucer has made a mess of things: instead of vindicating his brother's duality as a 'black hunter' and a hoplite, he rendered it impossible; instead of legitimizing his sacrifice (cf. section 5.5.2), he highlighted its anomic character; what is more, he only managed to perpetuate the vicious circle of reciprocating dishonour — a practice which has proved detrimental for Ajax. What Teucer has done, in effect, is bring up, instead of resolving, all the old impasses which tormented and destroyed his brother; hence the Chorus' desperate appeal to Odysseus "to help not in tying but in loosening the knot" (1317).

Indeed, at first it seems that Odysseus is the one who will, at last, sort things out and restore for Ajax normality and order. In the first place, he shows a special concern for the restitution of Ajax's τιμή (1339, 1342); this, in effect, means restoration of normality and order, since it was Ajax's desire to avenge the insult against his τιμή at the Contest of Arms (41) that brought about utter confusion and disarray (see again section 5.1.1). This is why Odysseus freely recognizes Ajax's superiority (1338-41),¹⁷⁰ implicitly admitting that the verdict did not do justice to Ajax; in the same vein is his generous praise for his former opponent (1319 ἀλκίμω, 1340 ἄριστον, 1345 ἐσθλόν, 1355 γενναῖος, 1357 ἀρετή). What, of course, would mean full restoration of Ajax's τιμή is proper burial, which would signal his reintegration to the community and his

[1958: 107], Knox [1979: 149-50]) does not explain why we have to witness this pettiness twice; see also the criticism of this view by Poe (1987: 21-22). Holt (1981: 281-88) was the first to seriously attempt to explain (with interesting results) the doubling of the *agon* in dramatic terms. For doxography on this doubling see Davidson (1985: 22-23). For doxography on the dramatic function of the latter part of the play see again Davidson (1985: 16-19).

¹⁷⁰ On this controversial point see above, n. 34.

liberation from the abnormality of his impasses, which have subverted normal order. Significantly, Odysseus claims that proper burial will prevent the laws of the gods from being offended (1343-45), i.e. will preserve the order warranted by divine laws.

Nonetheless, this is only a delusive appearance. Very soon, we realize that Odysseus will upset order far more severely than one could fathom. To begin with, the boundaries between praise and blame, therefore between friends and enemies,¹⁷¹ which were so clearly distinct before (the Atreidae blamed their enemy Ajax and his brother Teucer; Teucer praised his φίλος Ajax and blamed his enemies, the Atreidae) are now utterly obscured. While Odysseus praises his friend Agamemnon (1363, 1369), as is expected, he also praises (see preceding paragraph) the man who was his worst enemy (1336 ἔχθιστος στρατοῦ), Ajax. At the same time, he implicitly blames Agamemnon (1361 ἐπαινεῖν οὐ φιλῶ) for his σκληρὰ ψυχή, while in the self-same line he also blames, again implicitly, the characteristically σκληρός Ajax,¹⁷² whom he now proclaims (in a surprising about-face) to be no longer his enemy (1347, 1376-77). The same goes for 1359, which apparently refers to Ajax, but can also be a covered rebuke against Agamemnon's reproach at 1358, as has been long recognized by all commentators.¹⁷³ Thus, Odysseus both blames and praises his former enemy, Ajax, whom he declares now to be

¹⁷¹ That blame is traditionally addressed to enemies, whereas praise is reserved for friends, need hardly be pointed out; see Nagy (1979:242 §21n2).

¹⁷² Σκληρότης, while evidently referring to Agamemnon's obstinacy, is a markedly Ajacian quality (Stanford [xxviii]); cf. 926 στερεόφρων. That 1361 can be applied to both Agamemnon and Ajax has been noticed by the commentators, most notably by Kamerbeek (*ad* 1361) and Stanford (*ad* 1360-1); see also Blundell (1989:98-99).

¹⁷³ See also Blundell (1989:98 n. 188). *Contra* Winnington-Ingram (1979:3-4), (1980:68 with n. 33).

his friend; he also both blames and praises the person who was and still is (1328-29) his friend, namely Agamemnon. This is a first sign of the subversion of order that is to come: it is no longer the case that praise is for friends and blame for enemies, because Odysseus can do both to both categories of people.

The distinction between friends and enemies is, it seems, about to collapse. Odysseus justifies his insistence on burying an enemy by putting forward the maxim that “full many are friends at one time and foes anon” (1359; Jebb’s trans.) and that he hated Ajax only as long as it was καλόν to hate him (1347); on saying that, however, he counts on the stability of Agamemnon’s friendship in order to obtain permission for the burial (1328-29, 1351, 1353)!¹⁷⁴ Evidently, what were once the poles of a strict distinction, namely “φίλος : ἐχθρός”, have now fused into an irresolvable paradox: one can appeal to the value of friendship as if it were clearly distinct from enmity; at the same time, however, one can just as well herald the collapse of the distinction “friendship vs. enmity”. We remember, all the same, that both in the deception speech and in the suicide speech (section 5.1.2) the axiom that “friends can become enemies as easily as enemies can become friends” signified a belief in a *generalized* lack of absolutes, of clear-cut distinctions — a lack that was the very essence of Ajax’s impasses: not being able to make sense of the distinction “friend : enemy” was one instance of Ajax’s wider failure to comply with the social categories by which humans lend coherence and accountability to what would be otherwise a chaos of innumerable possible forms of social structuralization. Adopting a certain way of

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Goldhill (1986: 87-8). Blundell (1989: 101) fails to perceive any contradiction in this. Sorum (1986: 375) appositely remarks that “the chaos created in [...] definitions of alliance that led to Ajax’s tragedy is now used against his foe.”

conceptualizing the world means, in effect, opting for one of the innumerable possible worlds which we could create by using different ways of conceptualizing, different taxonomies and categories. Therefore, refusing to adopt what is the currently valid conceptualization of the world comes down to being incapable of living in this world. This is exactly what Ajax was, hence he opted for the only possible way out, namely suicide. What is more, incapable of living in this world is what Odysseus helps him remain, by causing disarray where he could have restored order, i.e. by negating the current conceptualization of the world for the sake of what lies beyond it.¹⁷⁵ *And what lies beyond the world as we perceive and interpret it is — in this play as well as in the Oedipus at Colonus — the praeterhuman status of the hero.*¹⁷⁶

Unlike Oedipus, however, Ajax's passing to heroization is not signalled by a majestic, if uncanny, invitation by the gods as is Oedipus' in *OC* 1627-28, but by his being engaged in desperate deadlocks, the only way out of which is death. In other words, Ajax's death is not only an intermediate stage before heroization, but also the inevitable end to which he is painfully led through the utter confusion of boundaries and categories. At the same time, however, death is a prerequisite of heroization; a hero, although immortal, is closely bound to the place where his *tomb* is located.¹⁷⁷ As Henrichs (1993: 177-8) has remarked, "what constitutes a cultic hero, in tragedy even more emphatically than

¹⁷⁵ Kott's (1974:76) reading of the final scene seems to me perverse. Torrance's (1965: 276-81) view of it as bringing no resolution whatsoever, as well as Nielsen's (1978:26-7) remarks on "the fluid world of Odysseus", are closer to the point, although they both fail to take into account Ajax's status as a cult hero.

¹⁷⁶ On the nature of a cult hero cf. Segal (1981:142-43), Bowie (1983:115).

¹⁷⁷ That death is fundamental to the essence of the hero in cult has been demonstrated by Brelich (1958: 80-90, esp. 87-90) and Nagy (1979: 174-210); cf. Sicherl (1977:97).

in real life, is the ineluctable experience of death, the concept of the tomb, and the prospect of cult". Ajax falls not because of a moral flaw in his character nor because he is hybristic to Athena,¹⁷⁸ but because he must die in order to become a hero. A god destroying a man in order to make him a hero is a standard motif in Greek mythology. Burkert's (1985a: 202-203) relevant remarks are worth quoting: "In myth [...] the gods often have a mortal double who could almost be mistaken for the god except for the fact that he is subject to death, and indeed is killed by the god himself: Hyakinthos appears with Apollo, Iphigeneia with Artemis, Erechtheus with Poseidon and Iodama with Athena. [...] Myth has separated into two figures what in the sacrificial ritual is present as a tension."¹⁷⁹ Athena's destruction of Ajax seems to be an expression of this cultic symbiosis which in ritual appears as a tension: there is evidence that the goddess and the hero were worshipped jointly, at least in one case (admittedly not in Athens, but in Megara, where there was a cult of Athena Αἰαντίς: Paus. 1.42.4).¹⁸⁰ What is more, our play provides evidence for Ajax's ritual character as Athena's *mortal double who could almost be mistaken for the goddess herself*: we saw on p. 265f. that Ajax's veering between hoplite and hunter was shared not only by Artemis and Enyalios but also by Athena herself (she is the goddess of the *shield*, but she also *hunts* her prey, Ajax). In other words, Athena's eerie *similarity*

¹⁷⁸ On the erroneousness of this view see above, n. 115.

¹⁷⁹ To this list I should add the Thracian king Lycurgus, enemy and persecutor of Dionysus, who, after his punishment by the god, was somehow amalgamated in ritual with Dionysus: see West (1983a: 64 with n.6). For the tension between Ajax and Athena see also Bradshaw (1991: 114 with n. 34), and Seaford (1994a: 130n. 121) with further literature. On the possibly analogous case of Heracles, whose name seems to suggest an affinity with his worst enemy, Hera, see Loraux (1995: 133).

¹⁸⁰ Farnell (1921: 304), for no apparent reason, associates Athena Αἰαντίς with Aias son of Oileus.

with Ajax, as well as her *wrath* against him (133, 756ff., 776-7) form a paradoxical combination which leads to Ajax's catastrophe, and thus constitutes the prerequisite for the permanent *tension* which will define her cultic *symbiosis* with the ἥρωσ Ajax.

I think that, despite the reservedness of some critics, our play contains enough hints at Ajax's hero cult.¹⁸¹ Burian (1972: 154-55) has suggested that Eurysaces' supplication at 1171-81 symbolically enacts his father's transformation into a sacred hero.¹⁸² There^{are} a few more hints at Ajax's heroization during the play, namely at 1166-67 (τὸν ἀείμνηστον τάφον), where ἀείμνηστον may allude to the perpetuity of his cult;¹⁸³ perhaps also Ajax's thought that his mother will extend her lament ἐν πάσῃ πόλει (851) is a further indication of the πάνδημος character of his

¹⁸¹ The importance of Ajax's cult in this play has been recognized by Welcker (1829: 61-66), Jebb (xxx-xxxii), Jones (1962: 188-89), Rosenmeyer (1971: 186-89), Sicherl (1977: 97), Segal (1981: 142 with n. 119), Bradshaw (1991: 114-15), and especially Henrichs (1993) and Seaford (1994a: 129-30); cf. also Adams (1955: 93-95 and *passim*), Musurillo (1967: 22-23 and *passim*) and Poe (1987: 9-18, 74-75 and *passim*), notwithstanding their view that heroes were thought to be morally unblemished. Ajax's cult is unduly undervalued by Kitto (1956: 182), (1961: 121), Gellie (1972: 282 n. 26), Taplin (1978: 189 n. 4) and Winnington-Ingram (1980: 57 n. 2). Adams (1955: 93-96, 109-10), although he suspected the importance of Ajax's cult in this play, wrongly saw Athena as an unequivocally benevolent goddess, who ensures Ajax's burial through her instrument, Odysseus, thus preventing his body from being outraged by the Atreidae; cf. Kirkwood (1958: 275 n. 33), Wigodsky (1962: 152-58), Bergson (1986: 38-40); *contra*, rightly, Stanford (p. 237-8), Di Benedetto (1983: 58 n. 56).

¹⁸² *Contra*, unconvincingly, Di Benedetto (1983: 80). On the joint cult of Ajax and Eurysaces in Athens see Paus. 1.35.3-4. On the cults of Ajax's descendants see the extensive bibliography offered by Henrichs (1993: 175 n. 40).

¹⁸³ See further the detailed analysis by Henrichs (1993).

cult;¹⁸⁴ moreover, the funeral procession at the end of the play, with Ajax being carried to the tomb in full panoply (1408 τὸν ὑπασπίδιον κόσμον), may recall the κλίνη μετὰ πανοπλίας of the Aianteia festival (see below). Even Odysseus' terror at the prologue (74, 76, 80), when Athena proposes to show to him the results of Ajax's νόσος (66-70), may be an indication of the heroic status that Ajax is in the process of acquiring: fear was an Athenian's typical reaction towards heroes; a hero was likely to harm anyone who would pass by his tomb, and he had to be appeased regularly with offerings. "If he was in his mind", Odysseus explains (82), "no fear would have made me shun him". Precisely: his madness is what gives Ajax his praeterhuman status; it is because of his deranged mind that he has been engaged in the impasses, the irresolvable ambiguities (succinctly expounded by Athena at 39-65), which will lead eventually to his death (cf. the equation of his madness with death at 215!) and heroization.¹⁸⁵ Plato (*Phdr.* 265a) says that divine madness is produced ὑπὸ θείας ἐξαλλαγῆς τῶν εἰωθότων νομίμων; and transcendence of the εἰωθότα νόμιμα, disintegration of the world as

¹⁸⁴ Note also the accumulated phrases for ritual mourning in 627-34, pointed out by Burton (1980: 24-25). As Seaford (1994a: 114-20) points out, lamentation in public was the norm in hero-cult, but was strongly disapproved of in the case of private grief (see esp. *Ant.* 1246-50). For more possible hints at Ajax's cult see Seaford (1994a: 130 n. 121).

¹⁸⁵ Stanford (*ad* 82) has put forward another explanation of Odysseus' fear of the mad Ajax, namely that "Odysseus is thinking of the tremendous strength that madmen have and the impossibility of controlling them by reasonable argument"; cf. also Jebb (xxiii). Rosenmeyer (1971: 194) thinks that Odysseus is afraid of the madman's pollution; cf. Padel (1995: 150). Surely, however, Sophocles' extraordinary emphasis on Odysseus' fear (its demonstration takes *fifteen* lines: 74-88!) must be intended as something more than a mere reminder of the well-known fact that mad people are dangerous or agents of pollution. — Poe's (1987: 29-35) contention that Ajax in the prologue is a comic figure, a *miles gloriosus*, is completely beside the mark.

conceptualized and categorized by the human mind, is exactly what distinguishes a superhuman being, such as a hero is, from a mere mortal.¹⁸⁶ After all, it is not accidental that madness can be a typical feature of heroes (Brelich [1958: 264–65]¹⁸⁷).

Let it be repeated: Odysseus' intervention, far from liberating Ajax from the impasses that beset him and led to his death, helps him maintain his ambiguous status; so, Ajax *transcends* the here-and-now of our conventional human perceptions, thus being translated into a kind of existence that lies *beyond* the world as we conceive it. His burial reflects perhaps this essential ambiguity that Ajax retains even after his death: although it is seen as a symbol of his reintegration into the community, it takes place at the markedly peripheral area of the seashore (cf. 1064–65), thus appearing as an act peripheral to the life of the community. It is not clear whether the burial is, as it full well should be, a communal act: Agamemnon clearly presented it as a business concerning only Odysseus and, presumably, Ajax's relatives (1368).¹⁸⁸ Teucer, however, invites Odysseus to fetch *any Greek* willing to help (1396–97), which may imply that there is going to be a proper funeral with the participation of the whole army; but it is not clear from Odysseus' answer what he is going to do: 1401 εἶμι' may mean 'I am going

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Bradshaw (1991: 99–100).

¹⁸⁷ See also Padel (1995: 242–44), who nonetheless considers madness as a characteristic only of *tragic* heroes. Cf. also the stories about hero-athletes (Cleomedes of Astypalaia, Euthycles of Locri, Oibotas of Dyme, Theagenes of Thasos) who are dishonoured by the community, retaliate in anger *or in madness*, are punished, but then, as a consequence of a calamity that befalls the community (and on oracular advice) they are offered cult. See further J. Fontenrose, *CSCA* 1 (1968) 73–104; R.A.S. Seaford, *JHS* 108 (1988) 134; Seaford (1994a: 184).

¹⁸⁸ Cf., on this point, Bowie (1983: 114).

to fetch people to help with the burial' or simply 'I am going away'.¹⁸⁹ Furthermore, Odysseus himself is treated according to the maxim he has put forward at 1359: Teucer praises him (1381 ἐπαινέσαι) like a friend, but would not allow him to participate actively in the burial, since he is not a φίλος (cf. 1400) of the dead Ajax; still, he is allowed to co-operate (1396 ξύμπρασσε) as Ajax's friends will do (1413-15). The collapse of distinctions, the blurring of dichotomies, are still there.

Interestingly, an aspect of this confusion of limits may have been a characteristic feature of the festival of the Aianteia, in which it seems that *both Ajax's hoplite and 'black hunter' aspect were symbolically present*. We are informed by the schol. Pi. N. 2.19 (III, p. 37 Drachmann) that there was a κλίνη, a couch, that was dedicated to him at Athens and *adorned with a panoply*,¹⁹⁰ epigraphic evidence¹⁹¹ suggests that this couch was carried at a solemn procession (πομπή) by, among others, *Athenian epebes*, individuals who were not yet full members of the hoplite community. The epebes also participated in the race (μακρὸς δρόμος) and the λαμπάς,¹⁹² an important part of the Salaminian games called the Aianteia — race being a classic epebic (initiatory) trial, which marked the epebe's transition to the male adult society (for δρόμος was a typically *adult, virile* activity; see the interesting pieces of evidence assembled by Vidal-Naquet [1986b: 116 with nn. 53-55]).¹⁹³ Thus, the

¹⁸⁹ Easterling (1988: 95-96) rightly recognizes the possibility of Odysseus' assisting with Ajax's burial. Segal (1981: 149), Di Benedetto (1983: 79 with n. 25), Bowie (1983: 115) and Blundell (1989: 105) fail to perceive this ambiguity.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Farnell (1921: 308), von der Mühl (1930: 23). On the Aianteia see Toepffer, *RE* 1 (1894) 925-29, Deubner (1932: 228).

¹⁹¹ See Pélékidis (1962: 248 n. 6).

¹⁹² For epigraphical evidence see Toepffer, *RE* 1 (1894) 928. On the role of the epebes see Pélékidis (1962: 247-49).

¹⁹³ Cf. esp. the Cretan use of ἀπόδρομος = 'minor' and δρομεύς = 'adult' (*Leg. Gort.* VII. 35 and 41 respectively). Cf. Aristoph. *Byzant.* *apud* Eust. 727.18ff.,

combination of the κλίνη μετὰ πανοπλίας (symbol of the hoplite) and of the *ephebes* who carried it in procession and also underwent the ephebic racing trial (symbol of the ephebes' transitional status, betwixt and between adolescence and incorporation into the phalanx / civic community) in the Aianteia may have facilitated Sophocles' presentation of Ajax as a man whose heroic essence is defined by an irresolvable tension between opposites.¹⁹⁴

5.7.1 Excursus on knowledge and ignorance in the *Ajax*

This last section will consist in a brief examination of the issue of knowledge and ignorance in relation to the human condition. Ajax's madness is deplored by Odysseus in the prologue with some sad considerations on the frailty of the human condition (121-26). The Chorus take a similar view: if Ajax has recovered from his sudden fit of

1592.55ff. (Κρήτες δὲ ἀποδρόμους [sc. καλοῦσι τοὺς ἐφήβους] οὐ διὰ τὸ πεπαῦσθαι τῶν δρόμων [...], ἀλλὰ δηλαδὴ ἀπόδρομοι ἐν Κρήτῃ οἱ μήπω τῶν κοινῶν δρόμων μετέχοντες ἔφηβοι). See R.F. Willets (ed.), *The Law Code of Gortyn* [Kadmos Suppl. 1] (Berlin 1967), pp. 10-11 and comm. on VII. 35-6, 41. We have no such lexicological evidence from Athens itself, but we know that an Athenian festival strongly associated with passage rites, namely the Oschophoria, included an ephebic race: Vidal-Naquet (1986b: 114-6).

¹⁹⁴ Toepffer, *RE* 1 (1894) 928-29 has plausibly supposed that the Salaminian δρώμενα, attested by Plutarch (*Solon* 9.6), in which an ἀνὴρ ἔνοπλος μετὰ βοῆς ἔθει πρὸς ἄκρον τὸ Σκιράδιον, must have been associated with the *ephebic* δρόμος of the Aianteia. Further, von der Mühl (1930: 24) has put forward the interesting hypothesis that this armed man could well have been, supposedly, Ajax; if this is correct, then the ambiguity inherent in Ajax's character as a ἦρως would have been all the more prominent: the ἔνοπλος *hoplite* hero becomes engaged in a typically *ephebic* contest such as the δρόμος.

fury, then everything will be much better (263-64) — sanity is evidently considered as far preferable to madness. Still, it soon appears that nothing could be farther from the truth. Tecmessa says that, now that Ajax has become aware of his dishonour, his misery, far from being alleviated, has grown unbearable. Resuming his mental faculties is not an unproblematic procedure for Ajax: not only does he feel all too painfully the predicament in which he has found himself, but also (and this is yet another paradox) his first reaction to the realization of the dishonour he has suffered is to break into lamentations (317), *like the κακὸς καὶ βαρύψυχος ἀνὴρ of whom he used to disapprove (319-22)*¹⁹⁵ — one recalls Ajax's inability to avoid dishonour, as analyzed above in section 5.4.1. A little later, Ajax himself describes τὸ μηδὲν φρονεῖν as ἥδιστος βίος (552-555), implicitly contrasting it with his realization of his own discreditable deeds.¹⁹⁶ (For the connection between ignorance and bliss cf. S. fr. 583. 5 R.: *τερπνῶς γὰρ αἰὲ παῖδας ἀνοία τρέφει*). The final confirmation of the typically Sophoclean view that human knowledge is inescapably limited and uncertain comes (naturally!) from the gods: Ajax (as Athena herself made clear in the prologue) undisputably excelled all Greeks in foresight and skill in timely action (119-20).¹⁹⁷ Nonetheless, in Sophoclean tragedy too much intellectual excellence is never commendable: according to Calchas (whom we must accept as Athena's mouthpiece),¹⁹⁸ when Ajax's φρονεῖν transcended the boundaries

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Di Benedetto (1983:37).

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Blundell (1989: 68). Di Benedetto (1983: 33-38) has some fine remarks on what he calls "la tragicità del conoscere".

¹⁹⁷ I paraphrase Stanford's (*ad* 119-20) rendering. Rosenmeyer (1971: 172-73) curiously thinks that Athena's words are "a bare-faced mockery of the truth".

¹⁹⁸ Linforth (1954: 21-25) unduly depreciates Calchas' words, and Rosenmeyer (1971:183) strangely thinks of him as "not, in this play at any rate, an entirely reputable informant"! Schlesinger (1970: 375-84) thinks that Calchas' words

prescribed for man (761, 777), his admirable πρόνοια turned out to be in fact only foolishness (763 ἄνους, 766 ἀφρόνως; perhaps also 758 ἀνόητα¹⁹⁹). Interestingly, Ajax's offence against the gods (i.e. rejecting their help, and particularly Athena's protection) is presented as a shortcoming in his mental faculties, as ἄνοια, not (say) as a moral flaw; thus the contrast with Athena's words at 119-20 becomes all the more pointed, as we realize how insufficient Ajax's excellent πρόνοια in fact was. It may be that no one was προνούστερος than he, but it turns out that what is really enviable is not his intellectual superiority but τὸ μηδὲν φρονεῖν of the baby Eurysaces.

This view seems to be confirmed by some further considerations. In the prologue, Ajax is certainly in a state of utter debasement and, what is more, utter derangement and *ignorance* (interestingly presented as blindness: 51-52, 69-70, 85²⁰⁰). However, as we have already seen (p. 265 and esp. p. 322f.), he is paradoxically *god-like*: his ambiguous status between hoplite and hunter is shared by Athena, and it was probably also a conspicuous feature of Ajax's cult as a hero (cf. my remarks on the Aianteia above, p. 326f.); it is precisely this ambiguous status that leads him to death and *heroization* (assumption of praeterhuman status). Interestingly, it is the mad and, practically, *blind* Ajax who sees Athena in the prologue: Odysseus insists very much on the fact that he can only

are misunderstood and / or misquoted. Criticism of such views in Heath (1987: 191 n. 53), Poe (1987: 80 n. 155).

¹⁹⁹ This is the reading of only one MS, Zc, *ante correctionem*. Pace Kirkwood (1965: 61) it does not mean "rash" rather than "stupid". I find Davis's (1986: 147-48) attempt to 're-interpret' προνούστερος irritatingly fanciful.

²⁰⁰ Cf. Knox (1979: 129 with n. 26), Buxton (1980: 22-23), Seale (1982: 145-46). On madness as blindness see again Buxton (1980: 33) and, most recently, Padel (1995: 68, 74-75). On the association of sight with knowledge (as expressed by the cognate stems ἰδ- [ἰδεῖν] and εἰδ- [εἰδένα]) see the classic treatment by Snell (1924: 26-7); especially in Sophocles: Coray (1993: 11-18).

hear the goddess (15-17),²⁰¹ whereas Ajax's silence on this matter may mean that he can both hear and see her (this is admittedly an *argumentum e silentio*, for what it is worth; but Tecmessa's words at 301-304 seem to corroborate this view, since Ajax is there presented as conversing with an interlocutor he can apparently see: cf. esp. 301-302 σκιᾷ τινι | λόγους ἀνέσπα).²⁰² It is not accidental that the Chorus use the significant word διαπεφοιβάσθαι (332) with reference to Ajax's madness: their chief's derangement seems to translate him to a level of superhuman knowledge, like the knowledge inspired by Φοῖβος, who sends his servants mad (Cassandra in A. Ag. 1072ff.; Sibylla in Verg. Aen. 6. 42ff., esp. 46-51, 77-80) whilst endowing them, at the same time, with a supernatural kind of knowledge.²⁰³ To sum up, only when Ajax is

²⁰¹ With Welcker (1829: 78 with n. 95), Jebb (*ad* 15), Kamerbeek (*ad* 15), Lesky (1972: 190), Buxton (1980: 22 with nn. 1-2), Davis (1986: 144) and Pucci (1994: 18-20) I take ἄποπτος to mean 'invisible', not 'seen at a distance' or "visibile con difficoltà", as Fraenkel (1977: 3) has it. I am not convinced by Stanford's (*ad* 15) compromise, shared by Calder (1965: 114), namely that Athena is at first invisible to Odysseus, but then gradually becomes visible (cf. the objections of Buxton [1980: 22 n. 3]). Nor can I agree with Taplin (1978: 185 n. 12) and Heath (1987: 165-66) that Athena is visible to Odysseus throughout the prologue; Grossmann (1968: 75) also implausibly suggests that Odysseus has a much clearer perception of the goddess than Ajax, and that this has further implications for the interpretation of the play. On Athena's invisibility see Seale's (1982: 145) very fine remarks. Kitto's (1961: 153) view, endorsed by Gellie (1972: 5), that the actor playing Athena was invisible even to the audience, speaking as he did from behind the scene, seems improbable, as his voice would have been hardly audible.

²⁰² On this point, I am fully in agreement with Jebb (*ad* 15); cf. Reinhardt (1979: 9), Calder (1965: 114), Biggs (1966: 224), Davis (1986: 147), Ley (1988: 88) and, above all, Seale (1982: 147-48). *Contra* Welcker (1829: 77), Pucci (1994: 22 n. 16).

²⁰³ Mad people seeing what the sane cannot see is a fairly common motif in tragedy; cf. e.g. E. Ba. 299, and see Padel (1995: 78-81). Plato (*Phdr.* 244a-c) derives μαντική from μανική, and gives as examples of prophetic madness

deranged and blind, only when he loses his intellectual and visual faculties, can he (paradoxically) see the gods and gradually *assimilate* himself to them by becoming a hero.

Further insight into the problem of the limits of human knowledge may be provided by an examination of Calchas' oracle. Why does this oracle come so late as to be of no use? As Diller (1950: 6-7) rightly remarks, this is not merely meant to create suspense; it is intended as a reminder of the *ineluctability* of Ajax's doom. True, the oracle is put in a disjunctive form: this day will signal either Ajax's death or his salvation (cf. 801-2), depending on whether Ajax goes outdoors or stays indoors. Nonetheless, we have already seen (section 5.3.1) that this is a pseudo-dilemma: in the case of Ajax it is meaningless to speak of "indoors" and "outdoors", for this distinction has irretrievably collapsed; the only way out for Ajax is his transition to a state that transcends such distinctions — the state of a cult hero — and to a *locus* which has nothing to do with locality — Hades. What the oracle really predicts, therefore, is Ajax's inescapable catastrophe. As in the *Trachiniae*, the oracle's disjunctive form turns out to be a mere appearance: far from implying that there is scope for free human choice and that, as a consequence, a happy outcome may be, after all, possible, this form turns out to be only a deceptively ambiguous manifestation of the fundamental monosemy of divine will. It is because this monosemy is almost invariably beyond the reach of the limited intellectual resources of human beings that woeful misconceptions about the gods so often arise — misconceptions whose catastrophic implications, highlighting as they do the incommensurable

chasm separating divine from human knowledge, constitute the core of every surviving Sophoclean tragedy.²⁰⁴

APPENDIX A

Ajax the hoplite

It is a well known fact that in 5th century art Homeric warriors are represented as hoplites, by means of an anachronism which is quite understandable. Copious iconographic evidence is provided by e.g. Pierre Ducrey (1986): p. 41 (pl. 23), 47 (pl. 25), 57 (pl. 39), 62 (pl. 43) — see here plates I & II. Ajax is no exception: he is systematically represented as a 5th century hoplite (see here plates III & IV). Even his famous Homeric tower-shield is replaced, in art, by either the scalloped or the circular hoplite shield.²⁰⁵ This is the case in our play too: Ajax's shield is certainly not the Homeric *σάκος ἢ ὕτε πύργον*, as appears from 575–76 *διὰ πολυρράφου στρέφων πόρπακος*; for as Ducrey (1986: 47) says, “whereas [the large Geometric shield] had been carried suspended from a shoulder

²⁰⁴ On the affinities between the disjunctively phrased oracles in the *Ajax* and in the *Trachiniae* see Diller (1950: 13). I refrain from going into further detail, since I have given a full treatment of the subject (i.e. the deceptively disjunctive phrasing of monosemous divine will) in Chapter Three, section 3.4.1.

²⁰⁵ On these two types of hoplite shield see Ducrey (1986: 47–52). Snodgrass (1967: 55) does not accept that the scalloped, ‘Boeotian’, shield ever existed in real life. However, this type of shield, even if it was a mere device of Greek artists (a view to which Ducrey [1986: 50–52] has raised strong and plausible objections), apes the *hoplite shield* both in overall shape (almost circular, much smaller than the older Geometric scalloped shield) and in that it has a *porpax* inside, as Snodgrass himself (*l.c.*) remarks.

strap, the round shield [...] (called a *hoplon*, a generic term whose meaning was to be extended to the weapons as a whole and to the hoplite himself, since it was his principal weapon)²⁰⁶ was held by means of an armhold (*porpax*) [...]. The fighter was thus free to move his shield in any direction". Snodgrass (1967: 53) stresses that the *porpax* was a new invention and peculiar to the hoplite shield. So, the words πόρπακος and, probably, στρέφων (alluding to the hoplite's freedom to move his shield in all directions) in the *Ajax* passage quoted above leave no doubt that in Sophocles' play Ajax's shield was not the Homeric but the hoplite weapon. This view has already been propounded, unreservedly, by von der Mühl (1930: 13), who saw that Ajax must have been thought of as a hoplite hero, like those whose epiphanies are reported by Herodotus (6. 117; 8. 38-39).

There are also other instances in which the *Ajax* text seems to confirm this view. In a striking passage in the parodos the Chorus refer to their chief in terms of the *hoplite ideology*, stressing not only his military excellence, but also his *cooperative* spirit: μετὰ γὰρ μεγάλων βαιὸς ἄριστ' ἄν | καὶ μέγας ὀρθοῖθ' ὑπὸ μικροτέρων (160-61). The Chorus imply that Ajax consciously espouses this view: he is not like the ἀνόητοι (162; presumably Odysseus and the Atreidae), who do not understand it.²⁰⁷ Ajax, far from being after his personal κλέος only, ensures his dependants' well-being: χῆμεῖς οὐδὲν σθένομεν πρὸς ταῦτ' | ἀπαλέξασθαι σοῦ χωρίς, ἄναξ (165-66).²⁰⁸ Critics, in their anxiety to

²⁰⁶ This view has been recently challenged by J.F. Lazenby & D. Whitehead, *Q* n.s. 46 (1996) 27-33.

²⁰⁷ *Contra*, wrongly, Davis (1986: 150).

²⁰⁸ Cf. Adams (1955: 99). On the solidarity between Ajax and his soldiers see, *pace* Whitman (1951: 260 n. 20) and, more recently, Minadeo (1987: 20-21), the excellent remarks of Bowra (1944: 19-21), Burton (1980: 11-12) and Rose (1995: 71). Bradshaw (1991: 111-13, 115, 118) has shown that solidarity was a

stress Ajax's individualism, have disregarded or downplayed the importance of two passages, namely 349 and 406, where the hero addresses his soldiers as φίλοι or, in the former passage, as μόνοι ἐμῶν φίλων. I cannot see a better way of expressing the bond of friendship, the reciprocal solidarity between fellow-warriors.²⁰⁹ A similar feeling is conveyed by Ajax's referring to his soldiers as γένος ναΐας ἄρωγόν τέχνας (357): γένος brings out their aspect as members of the γένος of the Salaminians, emphasizing their fellowship with Ajax (the Salaminians are addressed as σύντροφον γένος also at 861);²¹⁰ while ἄρωγόν refers to the cooperative values uniting the chief and his fellow-warriors.

Furthermore, Ajax's 'political', i.e. communal, cooperative, virtues are reaffirmed in the third stasimon too: the Chorus complain that the negative, mortal, communality of the war (1197 κοινόν Ἄρη) and of death (1193 πολύκοινον Αἶδαν) has replaced the positive communality, the τέρψις (1201, 1204) of life in the polis — which, in this stasimon, is expressed in terms of a *par excellence* collective expression of the polis, namely the symposion (1199-1205), "the most social of all institutions", as Segal (1981: 145) called it.²¹¹ Significantly, the same word, τέρψις

characteristic expression of Ajax's sense of αἰδώς, a trait which he regards as typical of this hero both in Homer and in Sophocles; cf. Sorum (1986: 363-64). I cannot agree with Lesky (1972: 182) that in the lines quoted above in the text "... der Abstand wird sichtbar, der gerade bei Sophokles den Chor als Gruppe von dem im tragischen Schicksal Isolierten trennt." Mr Garvie points out to me that e.g. 467 and 1283, with their emphasis on Ajax's individuality, suggest a heroic/Homeric rather than hoplite ethos; however, individual *aristeia* or *andragathia* was far from unusual in hoplite warfare: W.K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, Part II (Berkeley 1974), pp. 276-90; cf. also Sage (1996: 34).

²⁰⁹ The significance of this point Blundell (1989: 72 n. 62) regrettably tries to belittle; its importance is rightly stressed by Bradshaw (1991: 118).

²¹⁰ Welcker (1829: 63) suggested that σύντροφον γένος means the Αἰαντὶς φυλή (*contra* Jebb xxx n. 3): again, the idea of fellowship would be central.

²¹¹ Schmitt-Pantel (1990: 17-19, 21, 24-25) points out, tentatively, that the

PLATE I



PLATE II





PLATE III

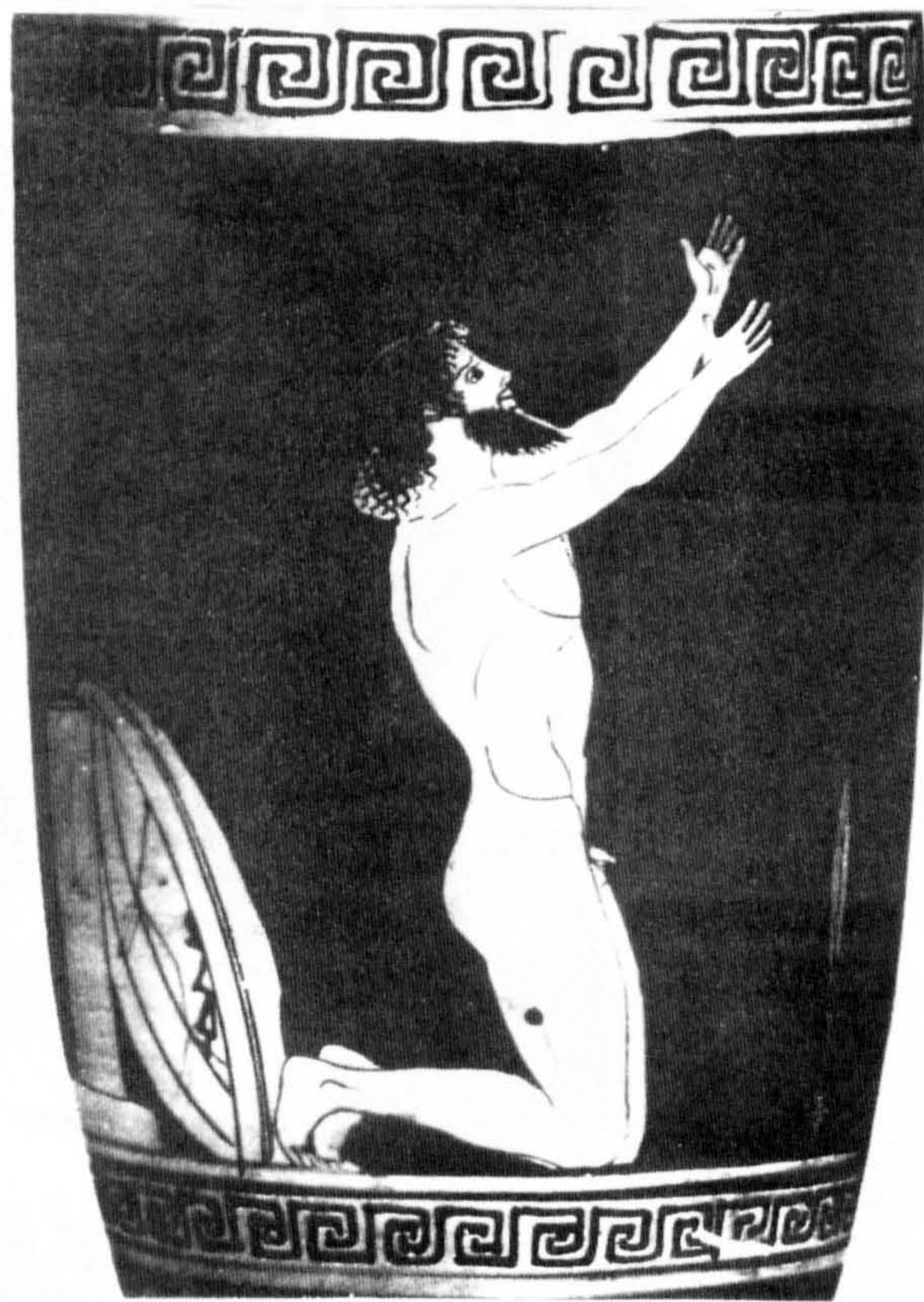


PLATE IV



PLATE V.1



PLATE V. 2

(1215), is also used of the feeling Ajax used to inspire in the Chorus when still alive and protecting them from hostile attacks (1211-13): he was warding off the negative communality of war and Hades, thus ensuring the very existence of his soldiers' community and preserving the *τέρψις* of the positive, pleasurable communality of life in the polis,²¹² exactly as the symposion, *qua* collective, shared, experience, reasserts the coherence of the political body, providing an analogous kind of *τέρψις*.²¹³ After Ajax's death there is to be no *τέρψις* for his soldiers (1215); this is why they end this stasimon with a wish to go back to 'holy Athens' (1221-22): only the polis itself can make up for the loss of the man who reconstructed for his dependants a polis-like environment, an agreeable *κοινότης*, in the midst of the perverted communality of war and death. It appears again that Ajax, far from indulging in an exclusive individualism, rendered important services to the community; his heroic deeds were not simply acts of military prowess, but had also a clear pro-polis function, as they preserved the very existence of the body of soldiers / citizens.

APPENDIX B

Ares the hoplite, Apollo the archer

Ares was thought of as a typical hoplite. P. Bruneau, *LIMC* II.1, 488 says of Ares that "... des monuments épigraphes comme des textes

symposion, the sacrificial meal as well as other forms of commensality "function as the machinery for defining, recognizing, and expressing citizenship" and as models of civic institutions (the quotation is from p. 24).

²¹² The army and the polis are equated in Greek thought; the one is a reflection of the other. The hoplite warrior is simply a citizen in arms. Cf. above, p. 308 with n. 147.

²¹³ On the *τέρψις*-theme in this stasimon see Burton (1980: 37).

littéraires se dégage l' image d' un dieu que rien, dans son aspect physique ni dans son équipement, ne distingue d' un autre guerrier: hoplite au VI^e s., puis plus dénudé, mais comme tout autre combattant dans l' imagerie du temps [...]” (emphasis mine); cf. *ibid.*, 490: Ares “est la seule divinité à conserver son armement en dehors des scènes de bataille [...]. Il se présente donc comme un homme dans le force de l' âge, barbu et armé de pied en cap à la façon d' un hoplite du temps [...]. Les hoplites de la société archaïque ne pouvaient que se reconnaître dans l' image d' un A.[res] toujours armé à leur manière [...]” (emphasis mine).

On the other hand, Apollo was the bow-god *par excellence*: in the ‘Homeric’ hymn to Apollo the bow as a typical attribute of the god is most conspicuous (e.g. 4, 13, 140, 178).²¹⁴ What is more, as an archer-god he may be viewed as an anti-hoplite,²¹⁵ and therefore he is often associated with *night and darkness* (unlike a hoplite who fights in broad daylight, cf. above p. 259f.): in *Il.* 1. 47, for instance, when he descends to the Greek encampment to wreak disaster with his shafts, he is νυκτὶ ἐοικώς²¹⁶ (an interesting parallel is *Od.* 11. 606, where the archer Herakles is ἐρεμνῆ νυκτὶ ἐοικώς!); cf. also [E.] *Rhes.* 226–7 where Apollo is invoked to come τοξήρης and ἐννύχιος, in order to assist Dolon’s *guile*! Furthermore, Apollo’s ‘canonic’ iconographic type is that of an archer: W. Lambrinudakis, *LIMC* II.1, 314 speaks of “Übergang vom geometrischen Kriegestypus des Lanzenschwingers zum kanonischen nackten Bogenschützen”; cf. *ibid.* 315–17; also O. Palagia, *LIMC* II.1, 318–19. Even in the Hellenistic era, when the *kitharôidos*-type prevails over

²¹⁴ Cf. Burkert (1985a: 145–46); P. Bruneau, *LIMC* II.1, 184: “C’ est la figure d’ A.[pollon] archer qui est la plus fréquente [sc. in the literary sources]”

²¹⁵ On the antinomy “hoplite : archer” see above nn. 10, 145 and 149.

²¹⁶ The line was athetized by Zenodotus; see Kirk (1985: 58), who thinks that, whatever the truth is, “‘like night’, at least, is effective”.

the archer-type, the bow is always present in the 'Bogenschütze' type of the god: see G. Kokkorou-Alewras, *LIMC* II.1, 323-34.

There is at least one artistic representation in which the distinction between Apollo the bow-god and Ares the hoplite is drawn quite clearly, exactly as I suggest it is in *Ajax* 703-706: this is the frieze of the Treasury of the Siphnians at Delphi (depiction of the Gigantomachy: see here plates V.1 & V.2). Ares is there represented as a hoplite in full armour, in stark contrast with Apollo (and Artemis) who bears a quiver and stretches out his hands, surely holding his bow (which has not been preserved on the relief).²¹⁷ This is an extremely instructive example of how 5th century Greeks were likely to perceive those two gods, especially when they are juxtaposed, as in the *Ajax* passage discussed above (p. 274). A similar juxtaposition of the two gods occurs also in another Sophoclean passage, namely the parodos of the *OT*: in the third strophe (190-1) Ares is exceptionally visualized as ἄχαλκος ἀσπίδων, which implies that bronze shields are, normally, his *standard* attribute;²¹⁸ whereas in 203-5 (in the corresponding position in the antistrophe!) Apollo's attributes are the bow and the arrow.

I believe that the text of Sophocles' *Ajax* further confirms this contrast between Ares as the archetypal hoplite and Apollo as the archetypal bowman / non-hoplite. At 706 the Chorus say that Ares ἔλυσεν αἶνον ἄχος ἀπ' ὀμμάτων and has let plain daylight shine forth: λευκὸν εὐ- | ἄμερον ... φάος (708-9). The choice of imagery is significant: Ares (significantly devoid, in this passage, of the bloodthirsty

²¹⁷ There are excellent photographs of the relief in Ducrey (1986), p. 255 pl. 170 (Ares), p. 258 pl. 174 (Apollo and Artemis).

²¹⁸ Cf. Dawe (1982: *ad* 191). A.Y. Campbell, *Q* n.s. 4 (1954) 7-8 fails to see the point of ἄχαλκος ἀσπίδων and thinks the passage is corrupt.

cruelty for which he is so often criticized in Greek literature²¹⁹) is clearly visualized as “dispersing a supernatural *cloud* or *mist*”²²⁰ and letting Ajax (or, less probably, the Chorus) see clearly again — the obvious reason for this being that the *hoplite* god is naturally associated with fighting in *broad daylight* (cf. [E.] *Rhes.*, where the *hoplite* [305²²¹] Rhesus is visualized both as Ares [385-7] and as Zeus φαναῖος [355!]). This, subsequently, would make the contrast with Apollo all the more pointed: significantly, Apollo is εὔγνωστος (704) *only in the Chorus’ wishful thinking* (cf. the optative ξυνείη at 705, and contrast it with the indicative ἔλυσεν at 706): being εὔγνωστος is *not* a typical quality of an *archer* who is νυκτὶ εἰκώς.²²²

²¹⁹ The *locus classicus* is *Il.* 5. 31 (cf. 890-8); cf. *A. Sept.* 343-4 with Hutchinson (1985: *ad loc.*). Sophoclean instances: *Ant.* 970ff.; *OT* 190-7, 215; even in *Trach.* 653-4, where Ares is said to have brought relief, the qualification οἰστροθεῖς (αἰστροθεῖς Musgrave) is a reminder of the god’s darker side. Sometimes, however, his aspect as helper of the community in war becomes prominent, as it does e.g. in *Ant.* 124-6, 138-40: in this passage, as well as in the *Ajax* passage in question, the deviation from what is almost a literary *topos* is best explained if we assume that the poet’s intention was to focus exclusively on the god as an archetypal *hoplite*, associated with orderly fighting, far from the uncontrolled rage of war.

²²⁰ Stanford (1978: 194) —my emphasis; see also Jebb *ad* 706, Kamerbeek *ad* 706, Stanford *ad* 706.

²²¹ πέλτη here must be no different from ἀσπίς, as appears from 487 πέλτην ἔρεῖσαι (a verb that could hardly be applied to the small and light shield that was the πέλτη). It is consistent with Rhesus’ *hoplite* ideology that at 510ff. he disparages Odysseus for fighting stealthily.

²²² I am of course aware that this reverses the usual image of Apollo as god of light —an association whose first certain attestations are in *A. Sept.* 859 and *E. Phaethon* 224-6 Diggle (fr. 781. 11-13 N.²), as in *A. Su.* 212-14 this association is achieved only with by emendation (ἴνιν for ὄρνιν at 212 [Kiehl, after Bamberger]; γ’ for τ’ at 214 [Page]) of a passage that originally implied exactly the opposite: see Gantz (1993: 87-8 with n.38); Friis Johansen & Whittle (1980: II.

APPENDIX C

The *Trugrede* (646–92)

The ambiguities permeating the *Trugrede* have been stressed most emphatically by Fraenkel (1977: 21): “è una bugia? No, è ambiguo” (cf. also *idem* 22–25, 37–38). Eventually, however, one of the participants in the seminar, Vincenza Celluprica (*apud* Fraenkel [1977: 38–39]), made him change his mind!²²³ The systematic ambiguity of the speech has been also stressed by Gellie (1972: 12–13), Lesky (1972: 184, 190), Moore (1977: 47–48, 54–55) and Sicherl (1977: 85–93) who has insisted that the speech is not an outright lie (on the essentially ambiguous character of the speech cf. already Jebb [xxxii–xxxviii and *ad* 646–692], Adams [1955: 103–104]); Seaford (1994b: 282–88) sees this ambiguity as part of a nexus of allusions to mystic ritual. The double entendres of this speech have been exhaustively examined by Sicherl (1977: 77–85).²²⁴ Segal (1981: 114) rightly stressed that “[t]his ambiguity, in fact, may be more important than any certainty (remote in any case) about Ajax’ actual aims here”; cf. also Davis (1986: 153–54) and especially Goldhill (1986: 189–92). These ambiguities are not very well accounted for in Taplin’s theory (1979: 128–

ad 212) and West (in his Teubner text, 1990) retain the MSS reading; *contra*, however, Diggle (1970: 147). At any rate, it is significant that Euripides himself could just as easily undermine, with subtle irony, this bright ‘solar’ image of Apollo in another of his plays, namely *Ion*, where the god of light indulges in markedly ‘dark’ practices: at 887ff. the description of his rape of Creusa clearly alludes to *Pluto’s* rape of Persephone, as described in *h. Cer.* 2ff, 425–32! After all, Apollo was in some places worshipped as Cave-Dweller (caves being entrances to the Underworld): Farnell (1907b: 112–13).

²²³ See however Di Benedetto’s (1983: 54 n. 47) reservations as to the accuracy of this information.

²²⁴ Cf. Di Benedetto (1983: 54 n. 48).

29) who thinks that Ajax can foresee a better future for Tecmessa and Eurysaces, after his enemies' anger against him will have abated as a result of his death.²²⁵

On the other hand, according to Reinhardt (1979: 23-27), Ajax, in a mood of bitter irony, uses veiled language resulting in involuntary deception.²²⁶ Similarly Knox (1979: 136-41) believes that the speech is not a *Trugrede* but, in its first part, a soliloquy (i.e. not meant to deceive), and that Ajax expresses his newly acquired perception of cosmic order in ambiguous and veiled language which implies his rejection of this order.²²⁷ His insistence, however, that the speech is *not* a *Trugrede*, because it is simply inconsistent with Ajax's straightforward character (a view shared also by Bowra [1944: 40], Taplin [1979: 129] and Hester [1979b: 248]), is untenable in the light of Tycho von Wilamowitz's (1917: 63-65) important remarks, which are endorsed also by Gellie (1972: 13), Bergson (1986: 44),²²⁸ Heath (1987: 189) and Poe (1987: 54 with n. 104). Musurillo (1967: 14-16) and Seidensticker (1983: 136) believe that the speech expresses an inner clash, whereas Hester (1979b: 251-52) thinks that the speech is delivered in a transitory fit of pique and is not to be

²²⁵ Criticism of Taplin's view in Di Benedetto (1983: 66-67) and Stevens (1986: 336). Bergson (1986: 45 with n. 37) unconvincingly tries to belittle the importance of these ambiguities.

²²⁶ For a summary of Reinhardt's view (endorsed by Kirkwood [1958: 161-62]) see Moore (1977: 51), Sicherl (1977: 76-77).

²²⁷ Heath (1987: 186-88) is also very close to Knox's interpretation. For summary and criticism of Knox's view see Sicherl (1977: 77). He too thinks (*ibid.*, 89-90) that the speech is a soliloquy. That this is *not* the case has been argued, rightly I think, by Taplin (1979: 123 with n. 3), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 47) and, most convincingly, Stevens (1986: 328-29) and Poe (1987: 55-59 with n. 107). Di Benedetto (1983: 53-55), insisting that the speech is a soliloquy, tries to account for its pervasive ambiguity, but his interpretation is too fanciful.

²²⁸ Although Sophocles' attitude towards δόλος is not as unproblematic as this scholar thinks, *ibid.* n. 29.

taken seriously. According to Moore (1977: 56-66), Ajax realizes that, since everything in this world is bound to yield to its opposite, he must yield too; however, in phrasing his decision he uses ambiguous (not deceitful) terms, in order not to hurt Tecmessa and the Chorus, while avoiding actual falsehood (a similar view had been put forward by Linforth [1954: 10-20]; cf. Errandonea's [1958: 28-38] curious suggestion that Ajax initially intended to die heroically by attacking the Atreidae, but then changes his mind moved by Tecmessa's plea and commits suicide²²⁹). Simpson (1969: 92-99) has seen in the speech the transformation of Ajax from a man of deeds to a man of words and thought. Sicherl's (1977: 95) view that Ajax does eventually practice *σωφροσύνη* towards the gods²³⁰ is rightly criticized by Seidensticker (1983: 139), while his contention that Ajax will cease to hate the Atreidae when he is dead²³¹ has been adequately refuted by Hester (1979b: 253) and Winnington-Ingram (1980: 54 n. 131) who drew attention to 835-44 (one might add 1393-95).²³² For doxography on the subject see Errandonea (1958: 24-28), Moore (1977: 48-54), Sicherl (1977: 71-77), Hester (1979b: 247-50), Machin (1981: 482 n. 352), Segal (1981: 432 n. 9), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 46 n. 107).

²²⁹ Criticism of this view in Di Benedetto (1983: 65-66).

²³⁰ Cf. also Bowra (1944: 40), Letters (1953: 139-40), Stevens (1986: 331-32).

²³¹ Cf. also Bowra (1944: 41), Letters (1953: 140).

²³² Cf. Waldock (1966: 72) and Stevens (1986: 331). Machin (1981: 191-98) also insists on Ajax's intractability. Simpson (1969: 98), who takes a line similar to Sicherl's, is aware of this difficulty but fails to explain it.

POLIS : OIKOS, DIONYSUS : HADES,
AND SELF-DESTRUCTIVE FOLLY
IN THE ANTIGONE

*FATHER. That fellow is just looking for trouble. There's bad blood in his veins.
MOTHER. What blood do you expect? He has the same bad blood everyone in his family has. That same blood was in his great-grandfather, a killer, and it has flowed through the veins of the different generations of men in that family — an evil breed, always with knives on their bodies and lying smiles on their faces, happy only when they're killing something, destroying what others sweat and labour to create. The devil's blood is in them.*

*Federico García Lorca, Blood Wedding
(transl. Brendan Kennelly)*

6.0.1 Introduction

It seems that every modern interpretation of the *Antigone* must become involved in an *Auseinandersetzung* with G.W.F. Hegel's reading of the play:¹ according to him, the play dramatizes a clash not between characters but between moral forces; the rights of the *oikos* and of the nether gods collide with the law of the State; each of the two central *dramatis personae* defends one, and only one, of these contrasting claims; because of their one-sidedness the two clashing powers are presented as equally just and equally unjust at the same time: their validity is equalized (*gleichberechtigt*); and

¹ Hegel has given indications of his reading of the play mainly in his *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion* (*Sämtliche Werke* [Stuttgart 1928] 16. 133-34) as well as in his *Ästhetik* (*Sämtliche Werke* 13. 51-2). For reasons of convenience references will be made not to the original editions of Hegel's works, but to Paolucci & Paolucci (1962).

their collision results in a higher synthesis, “in a reconciliation of state and family in a condition of absolute justice”.² That the *Antigone* dramatizes such a clash can hardly be denied; nonetheless, as I shall endeavour to demonstrate, the play provides no scope for the assumption that a higher harmony is achieved out of the two antithetical principles represented by Antigone and Creon: in fact, the two clashing forces, far from producing a new synthesis, annihilate each other.³ Nor do I agree with Hegel that the two colliding spheres are of equal (and equally valid, *gleichberechtigt*) importance: as I am going to argue, the clashing spheres are not equally valid; for, at least in terms of 5th century (Athenian) political ideology, the primacy of the polis over the *genos* was a value to be ardently defended, since it constituted the foundation of democratic ideology (as opposed to the aristocratic prevalence of the *genos*).⁴ The irony of the play lies precisely in that Antigone, who champions the cause of a traitorous blood-relative as against the common cause, seems at the end to prevail over the statesman Creon, the champion of the polis values, who (as it will be shown in the course of this chapter) gradually deteriorates into a tyrant (an anti-polis element by definition) and is eventually shattered in a fashion alarmingly recalling the downfall of the accursed *genos* of the Labdacids.

6.1.1 The self-destructive oikos vs. the polis (1): Antigone the Labdacid

As a prerequisite for the understanding of the *Antigone* I prefix, by way of

² Quotation from Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 116). See further Paolucci & Paolucci (1962: 325); Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 110-17); Steiner (1984: 19-42); Nussbaum (1986: 51-82 *passim*). Cf. also Bröcker (1971: 17-28 *passim*).

³ For some compelling objections against Hegel’s harmonizing view see A. C. Bradley as quoted in Paolucci & Paolucci (1962: 378-9). Cf. also Goldhill (1986: 88-106 *passim*).

⁴ See further Cerri (1979).

introduction, a brief discussion of the problematic relation of the Labdacid family to the polis of Thebes. On the whole, in the Theban legend, the survival of the Labdacid family seems incompatible with the survival of the city: the cohesion and continuation of the royal oikos of Thebes constitutes a menace to the very cohesion and continuation of the polis itself — quite paradoxically, no doubt, since in a monarchy it is normally the ruler who ensures the well-being of the city.⁵ Thus, e.g., Laius was told by Apollo's oracle that by dying with no offspring he will save the city (*A. Sept.* 748-9).⁶ Oedipus' homecoming is another instance of this pattern: for, although in his case the family reunion coincides with the salvation of the polis from the Sphinx, it soon turns out that this homecoming was preceded by parricide and leads to incest: both are acts of excessive, unhealthy family introversion, as in the former the son comes so close to the father that he even takes his place by annihilating him, while in the latter the son, instead of continuing the line by marriage, returns to the womb from which he was issued and fertilizes it. This abomination of family 'cohesion' becomes a source of pollution and danger for Thebes; the royal family is again at odds with the polis. Ruin can be avoided only by the dissolution of the family (death of Jocasta, exile of Oedipus); the pattern is now presented in its converse form: "oikos (self-)destroyed — polis saved". Similar is also the case of the sons of Oedipus: in some versions Polyneices fled willingly into exile to avoid the prophesied mutual fratricide and thus *preserve the family*;⁷ however, there followed his military assault against Thebes, and the

⁵ This is a common Greek idea: cf. e.g. *Od.* 19. 106-14. On this incompatibility (as manifested especially in the *Od.*) see Benardete (1966: 109 and *passim*).

⁶ Seaford (1993: 139), (1994a: 347). Hutchinson (1985: xxviii-xxix) seems to underestimate the significance of the city in the oracle; Gantz (1993: 490-1) is baffled.

⁷ Stesichorus *PMGF* 222b (Davies), Hellanicus *FGrHist* 4 F98 Jacoby: see Gantz (1993: 503). In *E. Pho.* 67-74 we have a (presumably) Euripidean variation: Polyneices goes willingly into exile, having agreed with his brother to rule alternately.

city was saved only by the mutual destruction of the two brothers.

With this accursed family, however, Antigone associates herself all too willingly. At the very first line of the play she identifies her sister (and, by implication, herself too) by stressing that they both are the common (κοινόν)⁸ offspring of the same womb (αὐτάδελφον).⁹ It is by her blood-relations with the other members of her family that Antigone defines her identity. Immediately afterwards the theme of the accursed oikos is brought up: pain, shame, dishonour and (if this is the correct reading at 4) ἄτη¹⁰ is what the daughters of Oedipus have inherited from their father.¹¹ Antigone goes on to explain that the last in this long series of evils is some recent decree by the state authority, the στρατηγός (8);¹² it is a decree with a patently *public* character (7 πανδήμῳ πόλει), which seems to be aimed specifically against the *family* of Oedipus. By treating the φίλοι in a manner appropriate to ἐχθροί (10),¹³ this public decree pinpoints a fundamental contradiction by means of which the whole network of blood ties and of the relevant ritual norms is subverted: Polyneices is an enemy of his native city,

⁸ On the implications of the word see Steiner (1984: 208-9).

⁹ On the word see Loraux (1986: 172-3). Cf. also Segal (1981: 186), Porter (1987: 67).

¹⁰ I should tend to agree with Kamerbeek (*ad* 4-6), who points out that emendations should not do away with ἄτη, because of the thematic importance of ἄτη both in the prologue (cf. 17) and in the whole play. In the same vein, Else (1976: 31) proposed ἀτήσιμον.

¹¹ Cf. Kamerbeek (*ad* 1), Brown (*ad* 2-3); Bryson Bongie (1974: 239-40, 243-4).

¹² For a criticism of Ehrenberg's (1954: 105-112, 173-7) doubts as to whether Creon can be called a *strategos* proper see Calder (1968: 393 n.25); cf. also Goheen (1951: 9-10), Bryson Bongie (1974: 240-1), Sourvinou-Inwood (1989a: 138).

¹³ I take line 10 to mean "that evils belonging to (proper for) our enemies are coming upon our friends", as e.g. Jebb (*ad* 10) and Brown (*ad* 10) do; see further Knox (1964: 80-1), Kells (1963: 48-52) — most eloquently — and Blundell (1989: 107 n.5). *Contra* Müller (p. 30), Kamerbeek (*ad* 9, 10), Benardete (1975a: 150 n.5), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 135 n.55).

a traitor, and must, therefore, suffer the appropriate punishment by being thrown out of the city's borders, there to lie unburied. At the same time, however, Polyneices is, for Antigone, a φίλος (10, 73, 81), a blood-relative who must receive proper burial by his family, according to the norms of Greek ritual practice. The dynastic oikos of the Labdacids is, once again, at odds with the polis of Thebes: as the end of Antigone's speech (34-6) reminds us, the burial of Polyneices is no longer considered by the state a private (and so relatively unimportant, cf. 35 παρ' οὐδέεν) business, but a grave public offence to be punished by stoning, a characteristically *public* mode of execution (36 φόνον ... δημόλευστον ἐν πόλει).¹⁴

This incompatibility of her family with the city Antigone is determined to maintain.¹⁵ What matters for her is whether one proves worthy of one's *lineage* or not (37-8).¹⁶ Ismene, however, takes a different approach: one's own dead do certainly matter (cf. 65-6, 99¹⁷), but one has to yield to the political constraint (66 βιάζομαι) of the νόμος (59), of the

¹⁴ See further Rosivach (1987).

¹⁵ On Antigone's devotion to blood-kin as a profoundly anti-polis kind of behaviour cf. Knox's (1964: 79-86) excellent treatment; see also Sourvinou-Inwood (1989a: *passim*). I cannot agree with Blundell (1989: 146-8) and Meier (1993: 201) who try to justify her stance (cf. also Rohdich [1980: 77-8]), nor with Wiltshire (1976) who denies this stance any political import whatsoever. Foley (1996: *passim*) is far subtler, but I cannot see Antigone as pitting a viable alternative reasoning against that of Creon; see also Trapp's (1996: 79-80) reservations. Likewise, I disagree with Nussbaum (1986: 63-7) who *does* see how one-sided and reductive is Antigone's reasoning, but still deems it superior to that of Creon. The extreme manifestation of such views turn Antigone into a politically conscious activist, who appears to comprehend civic principles better than Creon: so, in effect, Lane & Lane (1986) — a view whose seeds are already to be found in Whitman (1951: 87-9).

¹⁶ Cf. Bryson Bongie (1974: 249), Benardete (1975a: 154-5), Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 171).

¹⁷ With L. Campbell (1907: 6), Kamerbeek (*ad* 98,9) and Müller (pp. 40-1) I take φίλη at 99 to be active.

monarchic ψῆφος or κράτος (60), or finally to the whole of the πολῖται (79); this is, after all, what the rest of the polis does (44).¹⁸ As Kamerbeek (*ad* 58-60) rightly remarks, Ismene does not care to draw subtle distinctions between the body of citizens and the monarch (or even the impersonal νόμος) as political agents: what matters is that all of them represent the will and the power of state authority (63 ἀρχόμεσθ' ἐκ κρεισσόνων, 67 τοῖς ἐν τέλει βεβῶσι) as opposed to the family.¹⁹ That Creon's decree seems here to be viewed as a state law should come as no surprise to the modern reader: for the Greeks νόμος was mostly the work of one man, who was then honoured as a benefactor of the community: Solon in Athens, Lycurgus in Sparta, Zaleucus in Locri Epizephyrioi, Charondas in Catane. Heraclitus probably echoes a broadly accepted idea when he says (22B 33 D.-K.): νόμος καὶ βουλή πείθεσθαι ἐνός.²⁰ Ismene, therefore, makes a not entirely exorbitant assumption when she implicitly equates the violation of Creon's νόμος (59-60 νόμου βία ...) with the violation of the will of the citizens (79 βία πολιτῶν); that, after all, Antigone concedes, if belatedly, at

¹⁸ Cf. Podlecki (1966a: 360), Knox (1983: 13). With Kamerbeek (*ad* 44) I should take πόλει as dative of interest rather than *dativus auctoris*: the decree is regarded as having been issued by the monarch and not by a body of citizens; however, there might be here a significant ambiguity: see Podlecki (1966a: 363 n.14) and especially Blundell (1989: 111 n.24). Calder's (1968: 392 n.20) view is too limiting.

¹⁹ Cf. Calder (1968: 392 n.20), Knox (1964: 63, 82-3).

²⁰ See further Jaeger (1947: 126-7 with n. 63), Kahn (1979: 179-81), T.M. Robinson (1987: *ad loc.*); *contra* Kamerbeek (1948: 94). Marcovich (1967: 537) prefers to translate νόμος as 'conformable to custom and tradition' here, thus mitigating the 'totalitarian' tone of the fragment; but this is no more than one of many possibilities: see T.M. Robinson (1987: 103).

907 (βία πολιτῶν)!²¹

Ismene seems to understand that the source of her, and her sister's, misfortunes is actually their own family's *excessive introversion*.²² In her overview of the mishaps that have beset the house of Oedipus so far (49ff.), she stresses this excessive inwardness, which is expressed either as incest or as kin-killing. This is obvious especially in the case of Eteocles and Polyneices: the two brothers, united by common origin in the same womb (cf. the repeated duals at 13, 21, 55-7),²³ turn against one another and thus pervert their community of birth into the community of their mutual death (56-7 μόρον | κοινόν).²⁴ This mutual killing is described by αὐτοκτονοῦντε (56), on which Jebb's note (*ad* 55f.) is singularly illuminating: "αὐτοκτονοῦντε is not literally, 'slaying themselves,' or 'slaying each other,' but, 'slaying with their own hands' [...] So either (1) *suicide*, or (2) *slaying of kinsfolk*, can be expressed by αὐθέντης, αὐτοκτόνος, αὐτοσφαγῆς, αὐτοφόνος, etc. [...]".²⁵ This brings us to an important stylistic feature of this play, namely the abundance of compounds whose first component is the pronoun αὐτός: Oedipus' intrafamilial crimes that he himself brought to light are called αὐτόφωρα ἀμπλακήματα (51); his self-blinding he performs αὐτὸς αὐτουργῶ χερί (52).²⁶ The use of such compounds to designate, as Jebb explains, both an offence against one's own kin and an offence against oneself brings out with

²¹ Kirkwood (1958: 239 n.21), Rohdich (1980: 171), Sourvinou-Inwood (1989a: 139-40); less convincingly Blundell (1989: 147) and Meier (1993: 198). Rösler (1993: 91-2), perversely insisting that 904-20 are spurious, dismisses 907.

²² Cf. Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 171).

²³ Cf. Knox (1964: 79-80); Porter (1987: 69).

²⁴ Cf. Winnington-Ingram (1980: 132 with n.48) for comparison with *A. Sept.*; also Else (1976: *passim*), Di Benedetto (1983: 2), Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 138-9).

²⁵ On αὐτοκτονοῦντε see also Loraux (1986: 173-4).

remarkable clarity the theme of the Labdacids' disastrous introversion.²⁷ Closely related to this theme is that of the blurring of family identities and roles, the subversion of family hierarchy: instead of being only 'one' in relation to his parents, Oedipus becomes 'two', i.e. he takes also the place of (his own) father and (his mother's) husband; accordingly, Jocasta too turned out to be 'double' (53 διπλοῦν ἔπος), i.e. Oedipus' mother and wife at the same time.²⁸ Thus, what Ismene seems to have realized is that her sister, with her unbalanced adherence to her own kin, only reiterates the destructive patterns that have led her family to almost complete extinction (as μόνα δὴ νῶ λειμμένα at 58 clearly indicates). Significantly, Antigone, far from denying the self-destructive character of her excessive adherence to her family, confirms it in various passages: see e.g. 72, 96-7 and especially 73-76, where her extreme enclosure within her natal family (cf. φίλου μέτα) is explicitly put in terms of the eternal enclosure in the Underworld.²⁹ That burial of a brother may be seen as a matter of moral

²⁶ Cf. Loraux (1986: 174, 176).

²⁷ On αὐτο-compounds in the play see the exhaustive treatment of Loraux (1986); also Knox (1964: 79), Else (1976: 27-8), Segal (1981: 186 with n.103), Rehm (1994: 65-6).

²⁸ Müller (p. 36), albeit offering a not unattractive comment on διπλοῦν ἔπος, fails to perceive its full significance. On the blurring of identities in the Theban myth see Zeitlin (1990: 139-41).

²⁹ Cf. Benardete (1975a: 155-6); Goldhill (1986: 102-3, 105). Some have also detected incestuous innuendos in the use of κείσομαι at 73; this would enhance the impression of unhealthy family introversion: see Benardete (1975a: 159), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 130), Steiner (1984: 88, 158-60), Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 172) with bibliography, Blundell (1989: 108 n.12) and, most importantly, Seaford (1990: 78 with n.9) for documentation; for a comparison with similar quasi-erotic language in E. *Pho.* see Seaford (1994a: 350 n.74); for further possible erotic undertones see Rehm (1994: 59); a schol. on Stat. *Theb.* 11. 371 explicitly mentions an incestuous relationship between Antigone and Polyneices. Moreover, at 423-8 Antigone's lament over her brother's body is likened to that of a bird over the loss

and religious-ritual order should not conceal from us a fact of crucial importance: that Antigone's devotion to her dead stems from her very belonging to a doomed family, where procreation is overwhelmed by self-annihilating introversion. As Benardete (1975a: 157) puts it, "[Antigone] as fully acknowledges consanguinity as she denies generation."

Such behaviour, Ismene says, can only be described as folly: e.g. 49 φρόνησον, 61 ἐννοεῖν, 68 οὐκ ἔχει νοῦν οὐδένα, 99 ἄνους.³⁰ As we shall see later, folly is seen (especially in the second stasimon) as a typical trait of the Labdacids, and indeed as the agent of their catastrophe. So, in this aspect too, Antigone proves again to be a true Labdacid.

Much as she stands up for the rights of her dead kin, however, Antigone's attitude towards her *genos* in general appears, on close inspection, ambivalent. Her extreme closeness to her brother is counterbalanced by an extreme (and equally self-willed) alienation from her sister: she explicitly declares that her sister will be ἐχθρά to her (86, 93) as well as to their dead brother (94); the bonds of consanguinity between the two sisters are irreparably severed.³¹ This kind of ambiguous behaviour towards her kin is perfectly along the lines of the Labdacid family: Oedipus was at the same time too close to his kin (incest) and too far from it (negation of the father-son bond through parricide).³² The same extreme adherence to her blood relations that makes Antigone an enemy of the city

of her fledglings: Antigone, that is, is both a sister and a mother to Polyneices, just as Oedipus (we may recall) was both father and brother to his children. At *El.* 1143-48 Electra is also said to have been a mother to Orestes, and in this case too the substitution of a sister for a mother evinces an anomaly (although not an incestuous one) in family relations: Clytaemestra, the physical mother, is μήτηρ ἀμήτωρ (1154).

³⁰ On the keywords ἄνους and ἄνοια see Coray (1993: 191-2).

³¹ Bryson Bongie (1974: 252), Sorum (1981-81: 206), Winnington-Ingram (1983: 245-6), Scodel (1984: 49).

also makes her an ἐχθρά of her own φίλοι, or at least of those of her φίλοι who do not wish to perpetuate her 'Oedipal' enclosure within the family.³³

6.1.2 The self-destructive oikos vs. the polis (2): Polyneices the Labdacid

The parodos presents us with a very different world. Its theme is the victory of the polis over the self-destructive royal family.³⁴ This perverted family cohesion is brought out in this song in an allusive, yet very graphic manner: the mortal and irreconcilable military *opposition* between Thebes and the Seven is, surprisingly, obscured at the level of poetic diction, since they are referred to by similar, even sometimes identical, imagery. Thus, for instance, already at the outset of the parodos, the *light* of the rising sun is a symbol of the salvation of Thebes (100-5);³⁵ however, in the same strophic system, images of brightness or whiteness are used to describe the Argive enemy (106 λεύκασπιν, 114 λευκῆς χιόνος πτέρυγι; perhaps also 130)³⁶ who came to

³² Cf. Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 171-2), Zeitlin (1990: 132).

³³ Blundell (1989: 113-5) has some excellent remarks on Antigone's ambiguous stance towards kinship-*philia*. Her conclusion, if not her viewpoint, is similar to mine: "... despite [Antigone's] firm devotion to a brother who made war on his own brother and their native city, she rejects her sister for a perceived disloyalty of a much more venial kind." (p. 113). See also, on the emerging rift between the sisters, the detailed examination of Porter (1987: 47-9).

³⁴ Gardiner's (1987: 84) view that the tone in the parodos is personal, not civic, is untenable. Unconvincing is also the attempt of Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 155-8) to underplay the triumphant tone of the ode.

³⁵ On light as poetic symbol of salvation see Fraenkel (1950) on A. Ag. 522, Davidson (1983: 42 with n.6), Sourvinou-Inwood (1989a: 141).

³⁶ Commentators have not failed to note the word-play between ἄργος and ἀργός: Jebb (*ad* 106), Brown (*ad* 106-7). On the white shields of Argive warriors see Craik's (1986: 104-5) original interpretation.

set fire to the Theban towers (122-3).³⁷ Moreover, the warrior (presumably Capaneus [cf. *A. Th.* 432-4, *S. OC* 1318-9], although his name is not mentioned, thus allowing Polyneices' name, uttered at 110, still to resound in the audience's ears)³⁸ who threatened to burn Thebes down, appeared like a Maenad celebrating the rites of Bacchus (135 *μαινομένα ξὺν ὀρμῇ Ἰ βακχεύων*) and brandishing torches (135 *πυρφόρος*).³⁹ It is certainly surprising that the war-frenzy of the enemies of Thebes should be visualized as a celebration of the native god of Thebes, who is indeed invoked in this very song to lead the dances of celebration (153-4); Jebb (*ad* 135ff.) remarks that "this is the only place where Soph. connects evil frenzy with the name of a god whom this same Ode invokes". What is more, as has been recently demonstrated,⁴⁰ Dionysus is especially associated with civic order, solidarity, and concord amongst the citizens; the temporary disorder that

³⁷ On the imagistic correspondence see also Segal (1981: 197).

³⁸ Several scholars, most eloquently Bierl (1989: 47 with n.22), (1991: 63 with n.55) have argued that it is Polyneices who is actually meant here; see also Zeitlin (1993: 156 n.20).

³⁹ In *A. Sept.* 498 a warrior attacking Thebes is similarly compared to a Maenad: Seaford's (1993: 133) explanation is only partly satisfactory. Davidson (1983: 48) perversely denies any allusion to Dionysus here, while Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 156) see an unlikely allusion to Prometheus on the basis of *OC* 55. On the conflation of Martial and Bacchic imagery see in general Lonnoy (1985).

⁴⁰ Bierl (1991: 47-54); Seaford (1994a: 235-327); cf. also (very succinctly) R. Seaford in Silk (1996: 289). These two scholars offer the most up-to-date, detailed and persuasive discussion of the matter, together with extensive bibliography. Recently, F. Kolb, *Agora und Theater, Volks- und Festversammlung* (Berlin 1981, esp. chs. 2 & 3) has argued, combining literary and archaeological evidence, that the orchestra (originally situated in the Lenaion in the NW corner of the agora), as well as being a centre of dramatic performances, was in the period before the early 5th cent. BC also the centre of juridical activity and of political assemblies. This would lend further support to Dionysus' political function put forward here; see however the criticism of R. Seaford, *CR* n.s. 33 (1983) 288-9.

his cult creates serves only as a means of reaffirming and reestablishing order; the temporary negation of civic rules ends in a fresh realization of the order created by these rules.⁴¹ It is therefore all the more remarkable that the disruption of collectivity that has been brought about by the “*quarrels*” (111) of the *native* Polyneices is described almost as a celebration of Bacchic rites: the disorder that Polyneices attempted to create would be, unlike the ‘order-creating’⁴² Dionysiac disorder, permanent and catastrophic. To conclude: the paradox that Polyneices, a native Theban, should attempt to destroy his own land is ironically highlighted through the use of poetic imagery (brightness-imagery, Bacchic imagery) that is similar (or even identical) with that used of Thebes — a stylistic feature which pinpoints the identity of both the attacker and the attacked, an identity eventually negated.

The second function of this use of kindred imagery is to show that the essential identity of attacker and attacked has not only been negated, but also perverted into an excessive and perilous ‘closeness’. This is best illustrated by an unmistakable image used by the Chorus at 112-23: the usurper Polyneices came all too close to his native city, for he actually sought to *devour* it, to make it into a prey of his own greediness and lust for power. The image of the vulture gaping around all seven gates of Thebes (118-9 ἀμφιχανῶν ... ἑπτάπυλον στόμα), ready to swallow the city, is a powerful expression of Polyneices’ dangerous ‘closeness’ to his land.⁴³ The

⁴¹ See further Seaford (1993: 137-8), (1994a: 301). Differently Rohdich (1980: 51).

⁴² I borrow the term from Sourvinou-Inwood (1989a: 141); cf. also Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 92).

⁴³ Though this image may strictly refer to the Argive enemies as a whole, it is Polyneices that is brought out as the primary cause of the expedition: cf. Burton (1980: 93) and especially Craik (1986: 103-4) who further shows how Polyneices comes to be identified with the Argive army by means of poetic ambiguity (*contra* Davidson [1986: 108 with n. 7]). On possible literary precedents for the eagle-simile see Davidson (1983: 44); the eagle and snake omen in *Il.* 12. 200-29 (cf. Burton [1980:

usurper Polyneices has attempted to pervert the common σωτηρία of the whole polis, for which a king is supposed to care, into a gruesome ‘communality’ of mass destruction and death. This combination of excessive distancing from and excessive closeness to the native city may also be seen as typical of the Labdacids: Oedipus too was too far from his native polis when he was exposed on Cithaeron; but he also came too close to it when he proved to be its potential destroyer.⁴⁴

The all-important theme of the Labdacids’ welfare being incompatible with that of their native city recurs at the end of the Chorus’ narrative of the past night’s battle (141-7): fortunately the Seven have been defeated, and the polis has been saved. This collective salvation is starkly contrasted with the internecine end of the last male members of the Labdacid house: on the one hand, the community of the two brothers’ descent (144-5 ὦ πατὴρ ἐνὸς ἢ μητρὸς τε μιᾶς φύντε) is perverted into its exact opposite, namely ‘community’ and ‘unison’ through mutual death; having “set *against each other* [καθ’ αὐτοῖν, another αὐτο-word!]⁴⁵ their *twain* conquering spears” [δικρατεῖς λόγχας],⁴⁶ the two brothers “are sharers in a common death” (146-7 ἔχετον ἢ κοινού θανάτου μέρος ἄμφω).⁴⁷ It is thus that the threatened destruction of Thebes is avoided: this is markedly

93 n.8]) is particularly relevant, since it is Ares’ *serpent* that is in this song a symbol of the Theban defence (124-6).

⁴⁴ Cf. also Segal (1993:55).

⁴⁵ Cf. Loraux (1986:182-3).

⁴⁶ Jebb’s translation; emphasis mine. On δικρατεῖς see Jebb’s (*ad* 144ff.) fine comment: “two spears, each of which was victorious over the wielder of the other”.

⁴⁷ Jebb’s translation. Cf. Segal’s (1981:185) excellent remarks. Complementing the transgression of their mother and father, who were ‘two’ (mother/wife and son/husband) where they should have been only one, Eteocles and Polyneices are, conversely, ‘one’ (in their common death) where they should have been ‘two’: see Oudemans & Lardinois (1987:156-7)—although their arithmetic goes, bizarrely, the other way around —and cf. above p. 349 with n. 28.

indicated by the ἀλλὰ γάρ by which the last antistrophe of the whole song is introduced.⁴⁸ We are again presented with the ubiquitous pattern “Labdacid family destroyed — Thebes saved”.

6.2.1 The case for the σωτηρία of the polis (1): Creon

πόλεος, ἀσφαλῶς, ὄρθωσαν: the image of the Ship of State with which Creon begins his speech from the throne (162–3) aptly illustrates his main preoccupation, which is with the safety and well-being of the polis.⁴⁹ The Ship of the polis has just escaped a tremendous storm (the Chorus have called it “gusts of hostile winds”, ῥιπαῖς ἐχθίστων ἀνέμων [137], Creon calls it σάλος [163]). The new ruler’s fundamentally political frame of mind is most notably expressed at 165–74, where he significantly plays down the fact that the recent woes of Thebes were largely due to its royal family: he takes care to stress that Laius and Oedipus were successful governors, discreetly passing over the unsavoury events related to the succession of the former by the latter (165–7); even Oedipus’ wretched demise (cf. Ismene’s words at 49–52) is reduced in this speech to a neutral διώλετ’ (168). As for the fratricidal conflict of the two last members of the royal family, Creon again is careful to highlight not the narrow family context of their internecine conflict, but its being part of the wider conflict between the city

⁴⁸ Cf. Coleman (1972:6).

⁴⁹ For the use of this image in the play see Goheen (1951: 46–7); in ancient literature: Nussbaum (1986: 438 n.25); for the older bibliography on this subject see V. Pöschl, H. Gärtner & W. Heyke, *Bibliographie zur antiken Bildersprache* (Heidelberg 1964), pp. 561–2 (s.v. ‘Staatsschiff’). On the use of ὀρθοῦν etc. to indicate civic order cf. Kirkwood (1991: *passim*). On the centrality of this concept in Creon’s thought cf. Easterling (1973:22–3).

of Thebes and its enemies.⁵⁰ This is clearly expressed at 194-206, where it is the civic / military aspect of the brother's conflict that is stressed: Eteocles "fought for the polis" (194) and was distinguished as a most valiant warrior (195 ἀριστεύσας, cf. 197 ἀρίστοις); the semantics of the name Ἐτεοκλῆς ('truly glorious') certainly accord with Creon's short encomium. His brother, on the other hand, whose name recalls his νείκεα (111) that engineered the military conflict between Thebes and Argos,⁵¹ turned against his native land (199 γῆν πατρώαν) and wished to destroy its gods (199 θεοὺς τοὺς ἐγγενεῖς).⁵² Being an exile (200 φυγάς), he returned to his land of his own volition, without the consent of the polis,⁵³ and sought to drink the blood of his fellow-Thebans (possibly a deliberate reminiscence of the eagle-simile in the parodos, 112-26) and lead the rest of them into slavery (201-2),⁵⁴ as

⁵⁰ See also Benardete (1975a: 170), Demont (1993: 115). There is, admittedly, one allusion at the familial character of the conflict: αὐτόχειρι σὺν μιάσματι (172); cf. Rosivach (1979: 21-2), Brown (*ad* 173-4), Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 164). This, however, is no more than a hint: that Creon should devote so few words to a matter that, say, Ismene emphasized so much (55-7) only indicates his politically oriented frame of mind.

⁵¹ On the semantics of the names Ἐτεοκλῆς and Πολυνείκης see Nagy (1979: 130 §16n3, 262 §12n3); Hutchinson (1985: *ad* 830).

⁵² As Jebb (*ad* 199ff.) explains, these are the gods of the race, i.e. of the Theban stock on the whole, as opposed to θεοὶ πατῶν, "gods of one's own family". For a (perhaps strained) ambiguous reading of these lines see Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 163)

⁵³ As Jebb (*ad* 199ff.) again explains, Polyneices was κατελθών (200), not καταχθεὶς ὑπὸ τῆς πόλεως.

⁵⁴ All commentators take αἵματος κοινοῦ at 201-2 to mean 'kindred blood', i.e. the blood of his brother Eteocles; see esp. Müller (p. 67). Nonetheless, the political colouring of Creon's speech (cf. especially his emphatic mention of θεοὶ ἐγγενεῖς as distinguished from θεοὶ πατῶν) should make clear that the word κοινός is used here in a wider sense, to indicate one's fellow countrymen. A look at LSJ confirms

a hostile foreign army would do. The much-quoted Athenian law that forbade burial of traitors and sacrileges in Attic soil (Xen. *Hell.* 1.7.22 ἐάν τις ἢ τὴν πόλιν προδιδῶ ἢ τὰ ἱερά κλέπτῃ ... μὴ ταφῆναι ἐν τῇ Ἀττικῇ)⁵⁵ may well have contributed to the favourable perception of Creon's words by an Athenian audience; we know for instance that burial in Attica was prohibited for Themistocles (Thuc. 1. 138. 6), for Antiphon the orator and Archeptolemus (Plut. *Mor.* 833a, 834a), for Phocion (Plut. *Phoc.* 37. 2), and others. The old objection that Creon erred in that he should have simply thrown Polyneices' body beyond the borders instead of completely forbidding its burial can no longer stand, as many scholars⁵⁶ have pointed out that there seems to have been no particular concern for the cast-out bodies: indeed, Plato in his *Laws* specifically prescribes for the

that the uses of the word in political contexts are overwhelmingly more numerous than its uses in family contexts.

⁵⁵ For extensive lists of relevant ancient sources see Hester (1971: 55), Rosivach (1983: 193–4), Diggle *apud* Rehm (1994: 181 n.9); discussion in Rösler (1993: 85–7). Cf. also Ostwald (1986: 151), Sourvinou-Inwood (1989a: 137–8 with n.20) with recent bibliography. Surely this important clause of Athenian funerary legislation should not be ignored (see Knox [1979: 167]), although Mette (1956: 131, 134), who first (I think) drew attention to it, wrongly concluded that in this play Sophocles is proclaiming a new 'law' to replace such legislation — see the right criticism by Müller (p. 14) and Cerri (1979: 46 n.7). On Polyneices as a traitor see in general Bowra (1944: 63–4), Rosivach (1983: 207–8), Sourvinou-Inwood (1989a: 139 with n.25); wrongly Blundell (1989: 115). Foley (1995: 139–42) fails to account for the fact that the burial of the Seven, on which the Athenians prided themselves, was not an internal, Athenian affair; burying one's enemies is one thing, and burying a traitor is another: cf. Nussbaum (1986: 437 n.14), Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 162).

⁵⁶ Cerri (1979: 17–32, 43–4) and Rosivach (1983: 194 with nn.3, 4, 208 n.49) with overwhelming ancient evidence and compelling arguments; cf. also Hester (1971: 20–1) and Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 101, 162). The opposite view has recently been repeated by Sourvinou-Inwood (1989a: 146–7), Kirkwood (1991: 108–9) and Rösler (1993: 87).

bodies of kin-killers (*Leg.* 873b-c) and committers of sacrilegious deeds (*Leg.* 909c; cf. also 960b) not only to be thrown out of the city's borders, but to be left there *uninhumed* and *unmourned*. Plato's prescriptions may not be too far away from actual Greek practice: we learn (*Plut. Phoc.* 37.2) that after Phocion's execution it was ordered that he be cast out of the borders of Attica and that *no Athenian* (μηδένα ... Ἀθηναίων) *cremate his body*; "wherefore", continues Plutarch, "no φίλος of his dared to touch the body" (διὸ φίλος μὲν οὐδεὶς ἐτόλμησεν ἄψασθαι τοῦ σώματος); so a certain Konopion, who used to provide such services for money, was hired to carry the body outside Attica and cremate it. What really matters, therefore, in our play is hardly that Creon did not observe some trivial niceties, but that a traitor's body has received funeral honours by a *Theban citizen*, quite contrary to what, as we have seen, must have been a common Greek way of treating traitors (and also, perhaps, kin-killers and *hierosyloi*). Polyneices, who is most graphically presented both as one who wished to taste of kindred blood (201-2) and as having attempted not simply to rob, but also to destroy the temples with their votive offerings (199-201, 286; cf. p. 361), should be left unburied and unmourned (26-30, 198-206), exactly like Plato's kin-slayers and *hierosyloi*, or real-life traitors such as Phocion was alleged to be.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ See further Rosivach (1983: 206 n.43, 208). However, he (1983: 208-11) and Kells (1963: 63 n.21) have argued that Creon's cruelty in specifically prescribing the mutilation of the body by dogs and scavenger birds (29-30, 205-6) is unparalleled. But is this more cruel than e.g. Plato's (*Leg.* 873b-c) provision that the magistrates should all throw a stone at a kin-killer's body? That the issue of Ajax's burial in *S. Aj.* is resolved in favour of the dead hero does not in any way prove that such was the common practice: in order to meet Agamemnon's very strong objection (Ajax was a traitor), Odysseus has to make an elaborately argued case (which would have been unnecessary if it was commonly held at the time that even traitors are entitled to burial). Ironically, however, Odysseus eventually achieves his purpose

Carefully distancing himself from the disastrous introversion of the Labdacid family (cf. 174: he is but an ἀγχιστεύς to them),⁵⁸ Creon lays the strongest emphasis possible on the opposite pole, namely the σωτηρία of the whole *polis*.⁵⁹ As I stressed on p. 355f., Creon's speech is replete with words signifying, or related to, the safe leading of the Ship of the State through adversities: see further 162-3, 167, 178, 185-6 (with the strong contrast between ἄτη and σωτηρία as mutually exclusive alternatives for the ἀστοί), 191. And what ensures *individual* σωτηρία is the safety of the polis as a whole: 182-3, 187-8, 189-90. The approving quotation of 175-90 by Demosthenes (19. 247) shows that Creon's principles would be perfectly in accordance with the Athenian ideal of civic behaviour;⁶⁰ similar ideas are also expressed in the last of the Periclean speeches reported by Thucydides (2. 60), where the key idea recurs that only in a polis that fares safely

not by the force of his ethico-religious arguments, but by special pleading (he appeals to his friendship with Agamemnon)!

⁵⁸ See further Coleman (1972: 6-7). Rosivach (1979: 21, 26) and Neuburg (1990: 71) go strangely astray here.

⁵⁹ According to Protagoras' myth in Pl. *Prot.* 322b, σωτηρία is the ultimate purpose of an organized community like the polis: primitive men lived scattered and had no poleis; defenceless as they were, they made easy prey for beasts; ἐζήτουν δὴ ἀθροίζεσθαι καὶ σώζεσθαι κτίζοντες πόλεις.

⁶⁰ Cf. Bowra (1944: 68), Calder (1968: 404-7), De Romilly (1971: 118-9), Ostwald (1986: 150). Knox (1983: 14, 28) also offers an instructive comparison with Plato's *Crito* (but cf. Connor [1971: 47-9]). I should also add Arist. *Pol.* 1253a: καὶ πρότερον δὴ τῆ φύσει πόλις ἢ οἰκία καὶ ἕκαστος ἡμῶν ἐστίν. τὸ γὰρ ὅλον πρότερον ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι τοῦ μέρους. It is interesting, however, that the Chorus' non-committal reply (211-14) may, despite Burton's (1980: 86-7) sensible objections, imply a hint of reservation about the rightness of Creon's decree (see esp. Gellie [19]). This slight hint foreshadows, perhaps, Creon's deterioration into a tyrant in the latter part of the play.

(ὀρθουμένην) can the individual be saved (διασώζεται).⁶¹ Being favourable to the polis (209) is, according to Creon, synonymous with being ἔνδικος (208)⁶² and constitutes the sole criterion for the apportioning of τιμή (208, 210). By contrast, it is significant that, for Antigone, acting in accordance with δίκη means adherence to one's own family, regardless of the polis (cf. 23-4 where, despite the textual corruption, the words δίκη and δίκαιος, in whatever form, seem certain; also 94 δίκη); accordingly, it is not the citizen-warrior defending the polis, but the dead relative that Antigone deems worthy of τιμή (25).⁶³ Δίκη and τιμή are political categories for Creon, familial for Antigone. It is not accidental that, in Creon's speech from the throne, the terms φίλος (183, 187) and ξύναιμος (198), when denoting actual blood-relationship (or even simple friendship), are used as terms of disparagement: the former is used in the context of disruptive behaviour against the state (preference for one's φίλοι as an instance of disregard for the safety of the polis), while the latter refers to the traitor Polyneices. The only use of such terms that Creon vouchsafes is the *metaphorical* use of ἀδελφά at 192 to signify the consistency of his present edict with his general

⁶¹ The same idea also in Democritus 68 B 252 D.-K.: πόλις γὰρ εὖ ἀγομένη μεγίστη ὀρθωσίς ἐστι [...] καὶ τούτου σωζομένου πάντα σώζεται καὶ τούτου διαφθειρομένου πάντα διαφθείρεται; see Knox (1964: 86), Nussbaum (439 n. 26). On Creon's pro-polis mentality see further Knox (1964: 86-90), Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 161-3) and, for an extreme position, MacKay (1962: 169); less enthusiastic but well argued is Crane's (1989: 111-5) exposition; less convincing are Winnington-Ingram (1980: 123-4) and Blundell (1989: 115-30); on Creon's single-sidedness see Nussbaum's (1986: 55-8) outstanding analysis. Creon's principles are democratic *topoi* (see further Blundell [1989: 116 n.43, 117-8]) rather than "political platitudes", as Podlecki (1966a: 362) calls them (so also Segal [1981: 162]).

⁶² Cf. Nussbaum (1986: 56). On Creon's perception of δίκη see Santirocco (1980: 183-6).

⁶³ On Antigone's preoccupation with τιμή see esp. Hester (1971: 21-2).

principles.⁶⁴

Last but not least, Creon also insists on the importance of sound-mindedness for the ~~successful~~^{successful} steering of the Ship of the polis: at 175-7 he states that political authority is the touchstone of a man's counsels; and at 179 he insists on the importance of ἄριστα βουλευματα for the avoidance of ἄτη and the achievement of σωτηρία (185-6). These are not mere platitudes: it should be kept in mind that Antigone's wholehearted embrace of Hades and her indifference towards her own σωτηρία have been said (and surely there is more than a grain of truth in these statements, even if they are partial or sarcastic) to be a result of δυσβουλία (95) and ἄνοια / ἀφροσύνη (68, 99; see p. 350). The contrast between sound-mindedness and folly⁶⁵ reflects therefore two opposite attitudes towards the polis: on the one hand the extreme devotion to a self-destructive family whose very existence threatens the polis; on the other hand the struggle for collective welfare.⁶⁶ This contrast will become clearer in the process of examining the rest of the play.

The gap separating Creon's devotion to the σωτηρία of the polis on the one hand and Antigone's obsession with her *dead* relatives on the other becomes even more apparent after the Watchman has announced that funeral rites have been mysteriously performed for the traitor Polyneices (249-58). Angered at the Coryphaeus' suggestion that this may be the work of the gods (278-9),⁶⁷ Creon refuses to recognize that the gods may bestow

⁶⁴ Knox (1964: 87); Nussbaum (1986: 57); Blundell (1989: 118).

⁶⁵ For its importance cf. already Knapp (1916); also Goheen (1951: 83-4), Kirkwood (1958: 234-5), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 121), Nussbaum (1986: 51-2 with n.6), Segal (1986: 141-2), Blundell (1989: 136-45).

⁶⁶ Nussbaum (1986: 54) rightly remarks that "for Creon the healthy mind just *is* the mind completely devoted to civic safety and civic well-being".

⁶⁷ This and other relevant passages have been over-interpreted by Adams (1957: 49-50), Kitto (1956: 153-6), Knox (1964: 68-9 with n.14), Jordan (1979: 92-3), Segal

τιμή on the very man who attempted to burn down their temples along with the votive offerings (285-6; cf. 199-201), to level the land sacred to them and break up the laws sanctioned by them (287). In accordance with his general political principles, he is not prepared to take into account the existence and claims of transcendental values which may run counter to the interests of the polis; for him, the νόμοι of the polis are the νόμοι of the gods, and vice versa: he thinks it inconceivable that anything other than the polis and its interests might be the measure by which to judge what is, and what is not, proper political *and* religious behaviour. Dover (1974: 252, 253) points out that in classical Athens there was a “tendency towards identification of the patriotic, the law-abiding and the pious”, as well as a “convergence of social and political morality with religion”.⁶⁸ As a result, Creon sees τιμή as an exclusive prerogative of the loyal citizens who prove in deed their devotion to the polis (cf. again 207-10), and cannot therefore allow that a traitor like Polyneices could be the recipient of τιμή by the gods, who by definition express and sanction the spirit of the polis (284, 288).⁶⁹

(1981: 159-60) and, most infuriatingly, Minadeo (1985: 143-6) as indications that it is the gods who are at work behind Antigone: for criticism see Hester (1971: 25), Burton (1980: 95-6), Sourvinou-Inwood (1989a: 142 with n. 31).

⁶⁸ See also Sourvinou-Inwood (1989: 144 n.33) and, in greater detail, Yunis (1988: 19-28) with further bibliography.

⁶⁹ On the equivalence of divine and civic laws in Creon's political theology, as well as on his views on τιμή see Müller (pp. 75-6); cf. Goldhill (1986: 95-6). Many scholars have failed to see that this is legitimate political discourse: Gellie (1972: 35), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 125-6), Segal (1981: 169), Scodel (1984: 52), Nussbaum (1986: 58), Blundell (1989: 129), Bennett & Tyrell (1990: 444), etc. It is true that inherent in Creon's (and, I repeat, classical Greece's) equation of gods with the polis is a danger of secularization: see below p. 435 with n. 294. At any rate, it seems certain that, at least at the end of the fifth century, the Athenian polis had full control over all things religious (cf. Ostwald [1986: 161-9]); the most

Having denied the possibility that Polyneices received τιμή from the gods, Creon, quite consistently with his politically oriented view of affairs, spells out what he thinks is the true motive behind the mysterious burial: not some transcendental power, but his all too real political opponents, always intent on undermining the rightful monarch, have bribed the guards into defying his orders (289-94, 302-14). His diatribe on the disastrous effects of avarice on the well-being of a polis, albeit based on false assumptions, is entirely along the lines of a typically Greek tradition of thought, which most clearly manifests itself in the prominently political poetry of the Theognidea. At Theogn. 44-6 and 50 excessive pursuit of personal gain is associated with ὕβρις (cf. also Theogn. 835) and entails the ruin of the δῆμος.⁷⁰ Furthermore, at Theogn. 667-80 the Ship of State is visualized as being in the middle of a seastorm that threatens to engulf it (671-4); the Ship's commander has been deposed in a mutiny caused by people who are after personal κέρδος (675-77); as things are, σωτηρία is extremely difficult: ἦ μάλα τις χαλεπῶς | σώζεται (674-5).⁷¹ The similarities with Creon's *rhexis* are indeed impressive. He too views avarice not as an instance of individual misconduct, but in its wider political dimension as a potential factor of disorder. Excessive lust for money is incompatible with sound political order or σωτηρία: money sacks cities, destroys houses (297 ἐξανίστησιν, a term which, like ἀνάστατος, is usually associated with the destruction of cities) and, what is more, deprives men of

notable exception to this rule, namely Plutarch's (*Alc.* 22.5) story about the priestess Theano who refused to curse Alcibiades, appears to be mere fiction based probably on the *Antigone*: see C. Sourvinou-Inwood, *G&R* 35 (1988) 29-39. Very notable are also the remarks of Kirkwood (1958: 123), Knox (1964: 101-2), Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 160-1) and Ostwald (1986: 151) with the latter's sound criticism of De Romilly (1971: 29-34).

⁷⁰ See the commentary by Nagy (1985: 42-6).

⁷¹ See again Nagy (1985: 66-7); (1990b: 428-9).

that sound-mindedness that, as we saw (p. 361f.), is essential to the good administration of public affairs (298-9). Rapacious greediness (cf. 311 ἀρπάζετε) and the exclusive pursuit of personal κέρδος (310, 312, cf. 313) lead to acts of ὕβρις (309) which inescapably result in ἄτη instead of σωτηρία. Quite appropriately, then, money is called a κακὸν νόμισμα (296), which can mean ‘bad currency’, but also ‘bad institution’,⁷² inasmuch as it is nothing like the sound νόμοι which safeguard the σωτηρία of a polis, but leads instead to its ruin, ἄτη. Thus, the speech is rounded off on a clearly political note, namely the antithesis σωτηρία : ἄτη, whose meaning has been already expounded by Creon in 175-91.⁷³

6.2.2 The case for the σωτηρία of the polis (2): the first stasimon

The first stasimon, sung immediately after the revelation of the miraculous burial of Polyneices and Creon’s diatribe on the disruptive surreptitious activities of the enemies of the polis, centres on two main points, namely the subjugation by Man of the elemental forces of Nature on the one hand, and the possible effects of Man’s admirable achievements on the well-being

⁷² For the word-play hidden in this use of νόμισμα cf. Ar. *Nub.* 248 with Dover (1968: ad 248). Benardete (1975a: 184 n.40) also cites Dem. 24. 212-14, esp. 213: εἰπεῖν [Σόλωνά λέγεται] ὅτι αὐτὸς ἠγεῖται [ἠγοῖτο?] ἀργύριον μὲν νόμισμ’ εἶναι τῶν ἰδίων συναλλαγμάτων εἵνεκα τοῖς ἰδιώταις εὐρημένον, τοὺς δὲ νόμους νόμισμα τῆς πόλεως εἶναι.

⁷³ See also Ar. *Thesm.* 356-67 (esp. the *Leitmotiv* κερδῶν οὐνεκ’ ἐπὶ βλάβῃ at 360 and 365) cited by Reinhardt (1979: 250 n.9) and MacKay (1962: 170-1), two of the few scholars who have grasped the political meaning of the theme of κέρδος here — something that e.g. Adams (1957: 46), Gellie (1972: 35), and Winnington-Ingram (1980: 126) have failed to do. Bennett & Tyrell’s (1990: 448) remarks are beside the point. On the money theme see in general Goheen (1951: 14-9), Else (1976: 90).

of the polis. The idea of Man's miraculously working his way through the apparently impenetrable obstacles raised against him by Nature is mainly expressed by means of words belonging to the semantic field of *περᾶν* (i.e. *πόρος* etc.) which imply penetrating through the natural barriers and enclosures. Thus, Man proceeds *πολιοῦ πέραν | πόντου* (334-5), making a path through (337 *περῶν*) the waves that tower all around him (336-7 *περιβρυχίοισιν ... ὑπ' οἴδμασιν*).⁷⁴ Later in the song we hear that the *only* enclosure Man cannot escape is that of Hades; but even in this case, as Crane (1989: 107) has most clearly pointed out, the emphasis is on the 'only' rather than on the ineluctability of death.⁷⁵

Conversely, in the first antistrophe Man's admirable ability to overcome natural barriers is highlighted from a different viewpoint, namely by the praise of his ability to capture (343 *ἀγρεῖ*), to *enclose* by means of his *τέχνα* (cf. 366), the wilderness, which seems by definition indomitable, uncontainable, uncontrollable. Man manages to *ensnare*, to enclose within "the coils of his woven nets" (346),⁷⁶ creatures that conspicuously belong to the freedom of the wild: the birds (342), the *ἄγριοι θῆρες* (344), and the fishes (345). The same idea of domination and control is expressed in the rest of this antistrophe: by means of his devices (349 *μηχαναί*) Man exerts *control* (348 *κρατεῖ*) over the beast (350 *θηρός*) that has its abode in the wild (349 *ἀγρούλου*),⁷⁷ in the mountains (350 *ὄρεσσιβάτα*), and *subdues* (351 *ὀχμάζεται*)⁷⁸ by means of the *yoke* (351 *ζυγῶ*) the horse and the

⁷⁴ To Jebb's (*ad* 336f.) rather complicated explanation, adopted also by Brown (*ad* 336), I prefer Müller's (p. 90). On the traversing of sea see further Oudemans & Lardinois (1987:126).

⁷⁵ Cf. also Bona (1971:141-2).

⁷⁶ Jebb's (*ad* 345f.) rendering.

⁷⁷ For a different view see Oudemans & Lardinois (1987:122).

⁷⁸ Schöne's generally accepted emendation of the MSS *ἔξεταί*, *ἄξεταί* vel sim.

οὐρειον⁷⁹ ἄδμητα⁸⁰ ταῦρον (352). This imagery of traversing and subduing,⁸¹ with its emphasis on the *overcoming* of barriers, is, I suggest, implicitly contrasted with the imagery of enclosure and confinement that we have associated with Antigone. Survival, civilization and, ultimately, the polis are grounded on Man's ability to *break through* barriers; Antigone is essentially anti-polis in that she consciously chooses to die by remaining within the *confines* of her self-destructive family.⁸²

The list of Man's achievements culminates appropriately in the political field: Man has taught himself language,⁸³ thought and the desire for political organization (354-5 ἀστυνόμους ὀργάς);⁸⁴ these are the essential preconditions of human communication and, consequently, of the constitution of the *polis*, the apex of human achievements, which is starkly to be opposed to the inhabitable (356 δυσάυλων) wilderness (355-7). In this

⁷⁹ On the repetition after ὀρεσιβάτα see Müller (p. 93).

⁸⁰ True, ἄδμητα (thus the majority of the codd.) has to be unmetrical if we scan 352 as aeolo-choriambic enneasyllable (Dale, *Analyses* 24) or as spond.+ithyph. (Dawe [1996] in his *Conspectus Metrorum* to the *Antigone*). I wonder however whether we can scan the line as 2troch., with the second syllable of the first trochee shortened by 'correptio epica' (on which see e.g. West, *GM* 11-12; Descroix, *Trimètre* 21-5, both with many examples). ἄδμητα is "das typische Wort für das nicht domestizierte Tier" (Müller p. 92), and would nicely square with οὐρειον; for parallels see LSJ s.vv. ἄδμης and ἄδμητος. ἀκμητα (LZc) is the error a scribe would be, perhaps, more likely to make after ἀκαμάταν at 339.

⁸¹ For the terminology as well as for further analysis see Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 122, 125-6).

⁸² I disagree here with McDevitt (1972a: 163).

⁸³ For the connection of language and civilization in Greek thought see Segal (1981: 443 n.31), Buxton (1982: 55 with n.104); cf. Steiner (1984: 254).

⁸⁴ Gardiner's (1987: 87-8) underplaying of the political tone of this song is inexplicable; for a far more balanced view see Burton (1980: 98-101). I should also

respect, it is interesting to note that the antithetical pair παντοπόρος : ἄπορος (360), which is dominant in this song, is made to correspond to the polarity ὑψίπολις : ἄπολις in the second antistrophe (370) by means of a series of formal correspondences, which have been well demonstrated by Irigoin *apud* Knox (1983: 31) and need not, therefore, be repeated here. This correspondence in form should indicate also a correspondence in meaning, which I shall now try to explore.

Man is generally παντοπόρος, which, as we saw, provides the means for his taming of the inhabitable wilderness (cf. 356-8) and his creating of well-ordered communities; thus, τὸ μαχανόεν τέχνας (365-6) is the essential presupposition for Man's becoming ὑψίπολις, i.e. citizen of a city that stands aloft.⁸⁵ This, however, is subject to reversal, for τὸ μαχανόεν τέχνας, and therefore Man's παντοπόρος nature, can cut both ways: it can lead him either to κακόν or to ἐσθλόν (367).⁸⁶ Respect for the νόμοι χθονός

disagree with the sinister ambiguities which Rohdich (1980: 65-6) and Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 127) discern here.

⁸⁵ Thus Irigoin *apud* Knox (1983: 31). Knox (1964: 185 n.47), rightly perhaps, detects also a second meaning in this word ("high *in* his city") —a meaning which, in fact, has been proclaimed the only one possible by Ehrenberg (1954: 64 n.1). Bona's (1971: 144 n.2) paraphrase is a successful restatement of Knox's view: "ὑψίπολις allude a colui che è cittadino eccelso, in quanto coll' opera sua rafforza la città."

⁸⁶ This ambiguous nature of τὸ μαχανόεν τέχνας corresponds to the ambiguity of Man's central quality, i.e. his being δεινόν (332-3); see further Goheen (1951: 53-4 with n.1), Segal (1981: 153 with n.4), Nussbaum (1986: 52-3, 73), Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 87, 129); *contra* Linforth (1961: 196), Hester (1971: 26), Judet de la Combe (1993: 136-7) who favour exclusively (and one-sidedly) the meaning "terrible", "effrayant"; but see the right criticism of this view by Gellie (1972: 283 n.11). Bona (1971: 132-3) opts for the neutral rendering "abile", "possente".

(368), the laws of the motherland (=polis),⁸⁷ and for the θεῶν δίκη (369) means positive, constructive exploitation of τὸ μαχανόεν τέχνας that makes Man παντοπόρος and, ultimately, ὑψίπολις. On the other hand, disregard for the laws and the gods of the polis — which is succinctly expressed with τὸ μὴ καλόν (370) — amounts to being ἄπολις, “a person of no city”.⁸⁸ This is the negative aspect of τὸ μαχανόεν τέχνας, which cancels the benefits conferred upon Man by his παντοπόρος struggle against Nature; Man is thereby reduced to a state of being ἄπορος and, therefore, ἄπολις.⁸⁹ Especially notable here is the fact that the Chorus attach equal momentum both to the νόμοι χθονός and to the θεῶν δίκη as indispensable presuppositions for the well-being of a polis; divine and human laws are here assumed to reflect each other:⁹⁰ one can hardly help recalling Creon’s (280–8) implicit identification of εὐσέβεια with loyalty and good offices to the polis (cf. p. 361f.). The contrast with Antigone’s principles should be obvious: the νόμοι and the δίκη of the gods that she upholds are utterly unpolitical and belong to the realm of Hades; they even entail the bestowal of funerary τιμή upon the traitor who threatened to

⁸⁷ Not the laws of the dead, as Müller (pp.86–7) and Knox (1964: 112), (1983: 31) think. That the ‘laws of the land’ are primarily political has been shown by Ostwald (1986: 157 with n.62); cf. Ehrenberg (1954: 63 n.1), Bona (1971: 144 n.4).

⁸⁸ I see no reason why ἄπολις should be taken to refer to a specific individual who violates the laws of the city, as it has been by e.g. Knox (1964: 185 n.47) and Winnington-Ingram (*apud* Knox [1983: 32]). Despite ὅτῳ ... μὴ ξύνεστι at 370 and μήτ’ ἐμοὶ παρέστιος ... ὅς τὰδ’ ἔρδοι at 373–5, the generalizing tone of the passage is unmistakable: the Chorus describe the process whereby Man (in general) can become “citizen of a high city” or, alternatively, “a person of no city”, i.e. a person outside the boundaries of human civilization, whose loftiest achievement is the polis.

⁸⁹ Cf. Kells (1963: 58).

annihilate Thebes, to make its population ἄπολις instead of ὑψίπολις.⁹¹ On the contrary, the νόμοι χθονός and the θεῶν δίκαι that the Chorus praise are all-important elements in Man's struggle to control the Indomitable — the ultimate manifestation of which is the ineluctable Hades (361-2) — by the only means available to him, namely by trying to become ὑψίπολις. All in all, this song celebrates the prevalence of the polis and its laws over the state of being ἄπολις — which is also the cornerstone of Creon's political thought. The complex lyrical restating and re-asserting of Creon's credo helps to hammer it home and emphasizes its central importance in the thematic structure of the play.⁹²

⁹⁰ Cf. Brown (*ad* 454-5).

⁹¹ See further Burton (1980: 95-6, 98); I completely disagree here with Kirkwood (1958: 206).

⁹² I was glad to find that Kells' (1963: 58) and Hester's (1971: 27) careful analyses of the passage have led them to the same view; so also Coleman (1972: 9-10), McDevitt (1972a: 154-7, 161) and Santirocco (1980: 182, 183). The latter, however, goes on to identify a second, ironic, level of meaning; thus he essentially concurs with Ostwald (1986: 157-61, 170-1) who, on the basis of Pl. *Leg.* 8. 843a and [Dem.] 25.11, thinks that the Chorus are arguing for a (*quasi*-Hegelian) balance between two distinct kind of laws, the divine and the human (political) ones, which do not necessarily reflect one another; the same view is shared by e.g. Ehrenberg (1954: 63), Burton (1980: 101-2), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 148 n.87), Segal (1981: 168-9), Meier (1993: 200), Foley (1996: 67-8); the extreme position is represented by Bona (1971: 144-8) who argues that θεῶν δίκαι is in fact not only distinct from but also superior to the νόμοι χθονός. With such an interpretation the Chorus would (unwittingly?) anticipate the last scenes of the play, where Creon will recognize the existence and importance of a transcendental order of laws (1113). Such an anticipation is misleading, not so much because it involves reading the play backwards, but mainly because (as I shall argue later) the end of the play (despite 1113) *does not dramatize an unambiguous triumph of transcendental laws over human (political) ones*. In other words, it would be pointless for the Chorus to anticipate here a development that will never be.

6.3.1 The νόμοι of Hades

The first stasimon having ended on such a note of strong approval of Creon's political principles, Antigone's passionate advocacy of chthonic νόμοι in the second episode is all the more striking. At the very beginning of her *rhesis* she justifies her act by appealing to Zeus and to the Dike of the nether gods. As Knox (1964: 99 with n.33) has seen, Zeus here is not the Olympian god, but the Ζεὺς καταχθόνιος of *Il.* 9. 457 or the Ζεὺς ἄλλος ἐν καμοῦσιν of *A. Su.* 231;⁹³ as MacKay (1962: 167) points out, Antigone otherwise refers to Zeus only as a persecutor of her family (2-3), and generally professes no allegiance to Zeus or any other Olympian (contrast Creon: 184, 304, 758!). Antigone places herself at the extreme opposite of the laws of the polis and the σωτηρία that their observance guarantees: her loyalties are with what constitutes the utter negation of a polis, namely Hades;⁹⁴ instead of caring for σωτηρία, she is determined to join in death the rest of her φίλοι (see p. 349). Above the νόμοι of the polis she clearly sets the νόμοι of Hades (452, 454-5). To the collectivity of the polis, to its collective effort for σωτηρία, she is simply alien: her life has been confined to the privacy of her family κακά (463),⁹⁵ so that death is for her the only

⁹³ Cf. Ostwald (1986: 153). *Contra* Reinhardt (1979: 76 with n.14).

⁹⁴ Bultmann (1967: 313-4); this view seems to have been originally propounded by Hegel: see Paolucci & Paolucci (1962: 68, 178).

⁹⁵ That this is the meaning of 463 has been demonstrated by Kamerbeek (*ad* 463,4), and Brown (*ad* 463) who see here a reference to the prologue, 1-6.

conceivable benefit (463, 464 κέρδος).⁹⁶ Not the collective σωτηρία but the private self-destruction is for her truly profitable, whereas what is truly painful (468 ἥλγουν, ἀλγύνομαι; perhaps also 466 ἄλγος) is not the politically perilous defiance of state laws, but the disregard for the *funerary rites* (cf. 467 ἄθαπτον) due to a *dead blood-relative* (466-7 τὸν ἐξ ἐμῆς ἰμητρὸς θανόντ').⁹⁷ She uses the phrase δίκην διδόναι (459) with reference to her punishment, by the gods below, should she *fail to comply* with the νόμοι of Hades — a striking antithesis to the use of this phrase by Creon (303 δοῦναι δίκην) to designate the punishment, by the state authority, of those who have *observed* the laws of Hades, and thus disobeyed the state laws! Creon regards his niece's transgression of the προκείμενοι νόμοι (481) as a crime that outweighs all blood ties (485-6): even if Antigone were a closer blood-relative than Creon's own ἀδελφή or his closest family (487 Ζηνὸς Ἐρκείου),⁹⁸ she would still not escape punishment for having undermined the legislative framework of the polis for the sake of her ἀδελφός. The gulf separating oikos and polis is definitely unbridgeable, as Antigone observes (499-501):⁹⁹ to Creon's insistence on the *collective*

⁹⁶ Although the κέρδος Antigone is after is nothing like the κέρδος Creon suspected (289-314), her attitude is still as profoundly anti-polis as that of the bribed enemies of the city.

⁹⁷ Padel (1992: 99-102) makes the interesting point that, in ancient Greek male perceptions of the female, women's physical inwardness (they are closely associated with invisible parts of the body, the innards and especially the womb) is on a level with their enclosure within the inner world of the oikos, as well as with Hades, unseen recess of the world outside human beings; cf. also Segal (1978: 1180-81). On Antigone's death-drive see Steiner (1984: 264-66).

⁹⁸ The hybristic mention of Zeus' name is certainly a blasphemy: Creon's initial image of the high-principled leader is, slowly but steadily, being denigrated. Cf. also his even worse blasphemy at 1040-4, and see further p. 435.

⁹⁹ See on this point the detailed treatment of Rosivach (1979).

interest as the sole criterion for bestowing τιμή (514, 516), she opposes the criterion of consanguinity (511, 517); to his sharp νόμῳ distinction between φίλοι and ἐχθροί on the basis of loyalty to the polis (518, 522) she responds with her adherence to the natural, φύσει, bonds of φιλία created by common birth (523: note the ἔφυν)¹⁰⁰ and (once again!) with her loyalty to the νόμοι of Hades (519, cf. 521). Interestingly, the semantics of the names Eteocles and Polyneices are now used by Antigone in a way that implicitly opposes Creon's and the Chorus' use thereof at 192-206 and 111 respectively (see p. 356): at 502-4 she claims that no κλέος could be εὐκλεέστερον to her than to give funeral rites to her brother Polyneices. As Antigone reverses the whole value system of the polis which Creon advocates, so here she associates κλέος εὐκλεέστερον (502) not with Eteocles (whose name is inevitably conjured up by the repetitive formulation), but with the traitor Polyneices, whose name, as we have seen, is connected with the opposite of κλέος, namely νεῖκος (111).¹⁰¹

As we have already noted, Antigone's defiance of the laws of the polis places her at the opposite pole of civilization as manifested in the organized communities that are the cities. When her stern opposition to Creon's pro-polis principles is first demonstrated, the Coryphaeus comments that Antigone is patently the savage (ὠμόν) offspring of a savage father (471-2).¹⁰² Her savagery is described as ὕβρις — a theme that receives

¹⁰⁰ Santirocco (1980: 189); Winnington-Ingram (1980: 133); Steiner (1984: 250-1). On possible sophistic echoes in this passage (the *nomos* vs. *phusis* debate) see Podlecki (1966a: 370); cf. also Goheen (1951: 86-93).

¹⁰¹ See again Nagy (1979: 222-42) on the fundamental opposition between κλέος and νεῖκος, ἔρις etc. in archaic poetry.

¹⁰² On the use of ὠμός here to denote anomic savagery see Linforth (1931: 196) and Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 90-1, 166); cf. also Benardete (1975b: 13). To think that

special emphasis (480, 482) — while she and her sister are viewed as personified ἄτα (533), *qua* potential overthrowers of the legitimate king (533 κάπαναστάσεις θρόνων). Again, Creon's discourse is perfectly along the lines of Greek political thought; cf. e.g. the association between ὕβρις, ὠμότης, and the destruction of the polis in Theogn. 541-2: δειμαίνω μὴ τήνδε πόλιν [...] ὕβρις ἢ ἤπερ Κενταύρους ὠμοφάγους ὀλέση.¹⁰³ Again Antigone's incompatibility with the very notion of the polis is clearly demonstrated.

6.3.2 Hades and kinship

We noted on p. 350 that Antigone's stance towards her kin is highly ambivalent. Whereas on the one hand she consciously chooses to enclose herself within the confines of her blood-family, on the other she renounces her own sister, thus perpetuating the same kind of ambivalence that has been typical of the Labdacids: to be at the same time too 'close' to, and too 'far' from, one's kin. At 526 Ismene appears again on stage and now she too is all too willing to preserve the coherence of her family — to such an extent that she is even prepared to join her sister in death. Her lines are replete with words denoting community, sharing or (of course) consanguinity: 536-7 ὁμοροθῶ,¹⁰⁴ ξυμμετίσχω; 541 ξύμπλου; 545 σὺν σοί; 558 ἴση. Antigone, on the other hand, uses such words only in negative contexts, indicating a complete negation of community with her own sister (a negation that

the word denotes untamed heroism, as Bryson Bongie (1974: 257-8) does, is a distorting understatement.

¹⁰³ Cf. Nagy (1985: 51-2); (1990b: 184, 267).

¹⁰⁴ Nauck's emendation for the MSS. -θεῖ. It is accepted by, among others, E. Fraenkel *ad* A. Ag. 830 (who also reports Wilamowitz's agreement on the matter), Müller (pp.129-30) and Dawe (1996).

Ismene, quite significantly, terms ἀτιμάζειν [544], thus bringing out the stark contrast with Antigone's preoccupation with the τιμή of her other ξύναιμος, Polyneices): 539 οὔτ' ... ἰκοινωσάμην; at 543 οὐ στέργω φίλην is sharply contrasted to the mention, at the previous line, of Hades and οἱ κάτω, where she is going to meet her dead φίλοι; 546 μὴ ... κοινά. A strong sense of separation is also conveyed by such lines as 555, 557, and 559-60; the strong μέν-δέ antitheses underline, on the formal plane, the irreconcilable difference between the two sisters.¹⁰⁵ Antigone's contention at 895 and 941 that she is the only surviving Labdacid simply pushes to extremes the idea of her separation from her sister.¹⁰⁶

In her determination to separate herself from as close a blood relative as her sister, Antigone resembles her opponent Creon who, we remember (p. 371), explicitly rejected his blood tie with the offspring of his own sister, in order to be consistent with his edict (486-9). In his altercation with Ismene (568-81) Creon voices again his belief in the supremacy of the polis over the oikos, but now his discourse, albeit absolutely consistent with his expressed principles, sounds almost like an exact replica of the discourse used by Antigone in her own altercation with Ismene (536-60). This parallelism between Creon (the opponent of the oikos *par excellence*) and Antigone brings out all the more emphatically the latter's fundamentally ambiguous stance towards the oikos. To take a few examples, Ismene's words denoting

¹⁰⁵ Bennett & Tyrell (1990: 447-8) are unconvincing.

¹⁰⁶ See above all Kirkwood (1958: 228), with whom I am here in total agreement; also Winnington-Ingram (1980: 134-5), Steiner (1983: 102), Porter (1987: 53). Even at 551 ἀλοῦσα may not connote personal feeling, if one accepts Kells' (1963: 52-5) ingenious interpretation (it is Antigone's family pride that is hurt, ἀλοῦσα; εἰ γελῶ γ' [Heath] would mean 'if I bother to triumph in mockery over you, to score off you'). The idea, favoured by Knox (1964: 65) after Adams (1957: 51, 52), that it is in order to save Ismene from Creon that Antigone denies her any role in the burial, has no support from the text.

community (570 ἡρμοσμένα) are again rejected (571), while Creon's treatment of his φίλτατος son (572)¹⁰⁷ is described with the word ἀτιμάζειν (572), which was used also of Antigone's treatment of Ismene (544). More importantly, Hades, says Creon, will cancel the forthcoming marital union of his son and Antigone (575), just as Antigone, by her utter devotion to Hades and οἱ κάτω (542), has cancelled her blood-tie with Ismene. This surprising concurrence of the champion of the oikos with her opponent, the champion of the polis, has, nonetheless, more far-reaching implications than it seems at first sight: it not only highlights Antigone's ambivalence towards her blood relatives, but also, by means of a slight hint at 575, foreshadows a major reversal that is to take place later in the play. For it is the first time that Creon uses the dread name of Hades not only to indicate the place to which Antigone should be consigned, but also to present him almost as an ally (the ethic dative ἐμοί [L : ἔφυ rell.]¹⁰⁸ is important), who rids him of an undesirable marriage. The defender of the σωτηρία of the polis is now making alliances with its exact negation, Hades: might it be the case that Hades has started to enter surreptitiously the realm of the polis?

6.4.1 The second stasimon

This choral song is in striking contrast with the preceding first stasimon,

¹⁰⁷ φίλτατος is certainly striking in the mouth of Ismene; therefore, apart from making even more remarkable Creon's debasing treatment of his own φίλοι, it also highlights Antigone's distancing from the people *she* should be addressing as φίλτατοι. Attributing 572 to Antigone, as some editors and commentators have done, disrupts the continuity of the stichomythia: for the right view see, most importantly, Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 127-8) with extensive bibliography.

¹⁰⁸ Most commentators and Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 128) prefer ἐμοί. *Contra* Pearson (1928: 182).

with its *περᾶν*-words and its pervading imagery related to the overcoming of barriers and of seemingly impenetrable enclosures. In that stasimon, as we saw (p. 365), the image of the adverse wind (335) and of the towering-around waves (336-7) was there only to extol Man's ability to "make a path through" all those adversities (334, 337). Now, however, similar images (wind: 588 *δυσπνόοις*, 589 *Θρήσσησιν ... πνοαῖς*, 591 *δυσάνεμοι*;¹⁰⁹ stormy sea: 586-92) are there to underline exactly the opposite, namely the uncontrollable elemental forces from which there is no escape; this becomes an unmistakable illustration of the entrapment of the Labdacid *oikos* in the vicious circle of successive misfortunes, of the *ἄτα* (584) that extends its pernicious effects over a multitude of succeeding generations (cf. Jebb [*ad* 583ff.]). There is no hope of ever finding a way out (598 *οὐδ' ἔχει λύσιν*): the repetition of the same self-destructive pattern, the perpetuation of the Labdacids' excessive introversion, seems never to be going to release this accursed race (596 *οὐδ' ἀπαλλάσσει γενεὰν γένος*).¹¹⁰ The full poetic effectiveness of the vocabulary used here will be fully appreciated if contrasted also with the rhetoric used by Creon in his entrance speech to designate the polis' successful fencing off of a hostile assault: "the gods, after having tossed (163 *σεῖσαντες*) [the vessel of] our polis in a stormy sea (163

¹⁰⁹ Hartung for the MSS *-ον*; others prefer Jacobs' *-ω*.

¹¹⁰ With Müller (p. 142), Easterling (1978b: 146) and Kamerbeek (*ad* 596-98), as against Jebb (*ad* 596f.) and Brown (*ad* 596), I take the meaning of these words to be: "a single generation (*γένος*) has taken hold of the whole race (*γενεά*)", and not: "one generation does not release the next" (although, as Easterling writes, in the end this does not matter too much). The evils of the whole race are to be traced back to a single generation —probably Oedipus', as the Chorus' very first remark in relation to Antigone shows (379-80); cf. Easterling (1978b: 156). A. Sept. 742ff. presents us with another possibility: the evils are there traced even further back, to Laius. At any rate, what matters here is that the evils of the Labdacids are seen as of a hereditary nature.

πολλῶ σάλῳ), have raised it back to a state of safety (162-3 ἀσφαλῶς ... ἰ ὤρθωσαν πάλιν)".¹¹¹ In the present stasimon, however, both the σάλος-imagery in general¹¹² and specific words used by Creon to designate the polis' salvation by the gods now refer to exactly the opposite situation: the gods (584 θεόθεν, 597 θεῶν τις) are shaking (584 σεισθῆ)¹¹³ the house of the Labdacids, but now there is no ἀσφαλῶς ὀρθοῦν πάλιν after the storm;¹¹⁴ the polis has been saved, but (as one should expect) the oikos of the Labdacids has been entangled by the gods in an endless succession of woes *falling upon* other woes (595 πῆματα ... ἐπὶ πῆμασι πίπτοντα; note the emphatic alliteration) and are in the process of gradually *striking it down* (597 ἐρείπει).¹¹⁵ The last root of the Labdacid tree that had been left intact, embodying the light of hope for the continuation of the race, has been now chopped off by the "blood-stained scimitar of the gods below" (599-602).¹¹⁶ We see once again that Antigone's obstinate adherence to her kin — regardless of her express appeal to moral-religious principles — has only been part of the family's abnormal introversion (incest, kin-killing), their enclosure and entrapment in the storm of ἄτη, which was to end, appropriately, in the ultimate introversion, namely the confinement of the

¹¹¹ Cf. further p. 355 ff.

¹¹² On which see Goheen (1951:59).

¹¹³ On the sea-imagery cf. Müller (p. 140-1); *contra* Easterling (1978b: 143).

¹¹⁴ Cf. on this point Segal (1978: 1182).

¹¹⁵ In A. Sept. 758-71 similar storm-imagery is used of the accursed Labdacids.

¹¹⁶ Jebb (*ad* 599) gives a fine explanation of this passage; nonetheless, I am inclined to disagree with his preference (*ad* 601f.) for the MSS. κόνις to Jortin's κοπίς — a preference shared also by Booth (1959), Hoey (1970a: 342-4) and Easterling (1978b: 148-9). For arguments in favour of the emendation see Lloyd-Jones (1957: 17), Müller (pp. 142-3), Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 129).

whole family in the enclosed space of Hades.¹¹⁷

We remember from the prologue that Antigone's excessive enclosure within her family — which evidently meant a prospective enclosure within Hades, as all her relatives are dead (e.g. 59, 72-6) — was repudiated by Ismene as an act of *folly* (see p. 350). The theme of folly has been brought up again at the beginning of the second episode, when the Chorus suspected that Antigone was caught ἐν ἀφροσύνῃ (383), and especially at the end of the same episode (ring-composition), when Creon remarked (561-2) that Ismene has just shown herself ἄνους, whereas Antigone has been so all her life¹¹⁸ — a remark confirmed forthwith by Ismene (563-4) to the effect that “even what inborn sense [νοῦς] one has, goes astray [ἐξίσταται] in misfortunes”. This important theme is explored in the second stasimon, where the crucial parameter of hereditary ἄτη (in both its aspects as infatuation and ruin; cf. p. 380 with n. 127) is given exceptional prominence. The “scimitar of the nether gods” that strikes down the last surviving members of the Labdacid family operates through “folly of reasoning¹¹⁹ and an Erinys afflicting the mind” (603 λόγου τ' ἄνοια καὶ φρενῶν Ἐρινύς). With the second strophe we are presented with a treatment of the consequences of transgression (ὑπερβασία) against the

¹¹⁷ Bowra (1944: 89-90) and Winnington-Ingram (1980: 167-9, 172) fail to see this, and dismiss the stasimon as an unsuccessful attempt on the part of the Chorus to explain Antigone's fate; cf. also Müller's (135-40) view that the Chorus' 'Fehlurteil' regarding Antigone is really applicable to Creon. I cannot accept this.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Burton (1980: 108).

¹¹⁹ Not “of speech”, as is commonly translated: for λόγος as ‘reckoning’, ‘reasoning’ etc. see LSJ s.v., I and III; cf. Else (1976: 27), Blundell (1989: 144 n.154). As Lloyd-Jones (1957: 18) has shown, λόγου ... Ἐρινύς stands in apposition to κοπίς, and denotes the agents of the nether gods' destructive action (differently Winnington-Ingram [1979: 7-8]). See also Müller (p. 143), Brown (*ad* 603). *Contra* T. Long, *RhM* 117 (1974) 213-4; Easterling (1978b: 147).

unfailing (606) power of Zeus: his eternal Olympian glory is contrasted to the doom (ἄτη) that is incurred when vast abundance (613-4) comes to human beings.¹²⁰ This sudden turn of phrase, although its connection with what precedes may seem tenuous or, at least, not easy to grasp immediately, may be illuminated if placed in the context of the preceding lyric treatment of the fate of the Labdacids: for what has been the history of the Labdacids, if not a series of transgressions, of violations (in most cases unwilling and / or unknowing) of the limits set to human beings (cf. e.g. the emphasis on παρβασία at A. Sept. 743¹²¹)? In the majority of tragic versions of the myth, Laius is warned by Apollo's oracle that, if he has a child, he will perish (S. OT 711-4, 853-4; E. Pho. 19-20)¹²² and set the city

¹²⁰ I accept Lloyd-Jones's (1957: 20) οὐδέν' ... βίωτος πάμπολυς for the MSS. οὐδέν ... βιώτῳ πάμπολυς (or -ιν). For the idea cf. Pi. P. 3. 105-6 (in Sol. 6 West it is put in conditional form). Differently Jebb (*ad* 613f.) and Müller (p.145), who accept Heath's πάμπολύ γ' but interpret it differently from each other. For a detailed treatment see Easterling (1978b: 151-2). Kitto (1956: 165), Coleman (1972: 13-14), Gellie (1972: 42), and Winnington-Ingram (1980: 169-71) thought they could detect allusions to Creon here, but these can be only anticipatory (i.e. looking forward to passages like 1155-71), and therefore of doubtful effect upon the audience; see rightly Burton (1980: 110-11). On the imagery associated with ὑπερβασία see Goheen (1951: 10-11).

¹²¹ Cf. on this point Else (1976: 16-7).

¹²² Contrary to the *communis opinio* (most eloquently expressed by Dodds [1966: 41]) I believe that the terms in which the oracle is couched in the OT are not unambiguously unconditional: cf. esp. 714, where there is undoubtedly room to construe the ὅστις-clause conditionally ("in case a son was born"): see also Lloyd-Jones (1983: 119-20) who follows G. Perrot^t (*Sofocle* [Milano 1935]), 203; Moorhouse (1982: 233, 235) —pace Bollack (1990: II. *ad* 714) —takes ὅστις γένοιτ' as oblique optative (with potential force) standing for what would be in direct speech subjunctive + ἄν: ὅστις ἄν γένηται. At E. Pho. 17-20 and 1597-9 the oracle is also conditional (the phrasing in the latter passage is slightly vague, but need not imply that the oracle was unconditional). It is only in the OC that the oracle

in danger (cf. *A. Sept.* 748-9), but he invariably fails to obey, no matter whether willingly or not.¹²³ Oedipus' patricide and incest, albeit unwilling, are also both acts of transgression and instances of human illusion which is revealed only too late;¹²⁴ and so is Eteocles' and Polyneices' internecine frenzy.¹²⁵ Delusion leading to disaster is exactly the subject matter of the second antistrophe: hope is a fickle thing, as it can benefit some people, but prove a delusion for others (615-7);¹²⁶ true knowledge comes always too late and is invariably painful (618-9); he whose mind a god leads to ἄτα (624) sees evil things as good, and as a result is soon afflicted by ἄτα (620-5) — the meanings 'infatuation' and 'ruin' being inextricably interconnected in both instances of ἄτα.¹²⁷ Both infatuation / folly and the resulting disaster are in this stasimon viewed as being an inherent trait of the accursed family of the Labdacids; the chain reaction "infatuation - transgression - disaster" is identified as the common denominator of the whole race's career from

becomes clearly unconditional (969-70); for possible reasons for this change see Chapter Four (section 4.4.1).

¹²³ In *A. Sept.* 750, 802, 842 it is Laius' folly that is put forth as a reason; in *E. Pho.* 21-2 it is his drunkenness. In both cases the cause of the misfortunes of the race is put down to a temporary *loss of mental faculties*.

¹²⁴ Cf. (on incest) *A. Sept.* 756-7 παράνοια συνᾶγε νυμφίους φρενώλης; 778 ἐπεὶ δ' ἀρτίφρων ἐγένετο. See Else (1976: 17-8), Burton (1980: 106).

¹²⁵ In *A. Sept.* Eteocles understands that he is doomed only at the end (653ff.), when he realizes that he has to duel with his brother, thus bringing their father's curse to pass. For crucial (and eventually fateful) realizations in the Labdacid history cf. also *E. Pho.* 23, 33, 59 with Mastronarde (1994: 139).

¹²⁶ The word used for 'delusion' is ἀπάτα which is, together with Ἐρινύς (603), the concept most often used as a replacement for ἄτη in fifth century: Padel (1995: 188-90).

¹²⁷ Bremer (1969: 141-5); Easterling (1978b: 153); Padel (1995: 255) sees this as an exceptional instance, for in Sophocles ἄτη (pace Doyle [1984: 96-122]) usually means simply 'disaster'. Wrongly Burton (1980: 106).

generation to generation.¹²⁸ The point of explicitly mentioning the name Λαβδακιδᾶν at 594 (i.e. at the beginning of the first antistrophe which presents us with the specific reference of the generalizations offered in the corresponding strophe) is, I think, significant in this respect: Labdacus is a shadowy figure, and his mention here (as well as at 862) can only be meant to emphasize the *hereditary* nature of the evils of the race.¹²⁹ The themes of extreme *family introversion*, of *self-destruction* and *enclosure in Hades*, and of *folly* are thus intertwined and established as typical of the Labdacids.¹³⁰

6.5.1 The Haemon scene

Despite the qualms expressed by Creon at 631–4, the beginning of Haemon's speech seems to be entirely along the lines of his father's pro-polis ideology. He takes care immediately to praise his father's γνώμας χρηστᾶς (635–6) and their salutary, constructive effect on his life (the use of the word

¹²⁸ In the light of these remarks, the few passages in which Antigone attempts to defend her position by appealing to 'good sense' (e.g. 469–70, 557, 904) must surely be meant not to present her acts as 'reasonable', but rather to underscore, as a foil, her self-destructive folly.

¹²⁹ Cf. Winnington-Ingram (1980: 166). *Contra* Brown (*ad* 593), who misses the point; more subtly Easterling (1978b: 142, 152, 155–8). It may be significant that "Labdakos is not [...] mentioned as an ancestor of the house (or anything else) before Sophokles' *Antigone* (593)": Gantz (1993: 488). For a modern instance of the idea that a person is liable to misdeed only by virtue of his / her belonging to an accursed, polluted family cf. the motto to this chapter.

¹³⁰ Kirkwood (1958: 275) and Easterling (1978b: 156–8) seem to underestimate the importance of the family factor in this stasimon; see *contra* Lloyd-Jones (1957: 16) and (1983: 113–7); also Santirocco (1980: 187), Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 136). For a sober and balanced discussion of fate, as manifested in Antigone's family past, in its relation to freedom of personal choice see Mogyoródi (1996).

ἀπορθοῖς [636]¹³¹ is intended to recall Creon's own preoccupation with the safe faring of the polis: cf. 162-3 ἀσφαλῶς ... | ὤρθωσαν, and see again section 6.2.1). He stresses (637-8) that he prefers his father's good guidance (here Creon's aspect as political leader is given special prominence) to any marriage; that is to say that the wider interests of the polis, safeguarded by Creon's wise (638 καλῶς) leadership, are not to be jeopardized by a family affair like marriage. The oikos is made again subsidiary to the polis.

In his reply Creon underlines again the importance of obedience to γνώμη πατρώα (640), not simply for the sake of the house *per se*, but (and this should be emphasized) for the house (642 ἐν δόμοις) to be able to maintain its relations of amicable or hostile reciprocity with friends and enemies respectively (643-4). As Jebb (*ad* 643f.) has remarked, Creon's phrasing here is strongly reminiscent of the definition of a ξυμμαχία (τοὺς αὐτοὺς ἐχθροὺς καὶ φίλους νομίζειν; cf. Thuc. 1.44.1). In other words, what Creon expounds as his ideal of a good family, is in fact politically nuanced, as it is couched in terms of a political alliance between city-states. A φίλος κακός (652), he continues, is to be treated as a δυσμενής (653): the family relations (φίλος) must conform with the friendships and enmities of the polis; it is the latter that should regulate the former, not vice-versa.¹³² He stresses again, at 655-62, that his duty towards the whole polis overrides his φίλος-relationship with Antigone (cf. 659-60), while 661-2 reveal how he views the oikos as "a sort of training ground for the exercise

¹³¹ If μοι is kept at 635, then με should be mentally supplied (or inserted in the text, as Dawe [1978: 108] tentatively suggests) as the object of ἀπορθοῖς. This is L. Campbell's (*ad* 635) view, accepted also by Kamerbeek (*ad* 635, 6), but rejected by Jebb (*ad* 635f.); see discussion in Kirkwood (1991: 105). Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 131) pronounce Blaydes' με (for MSS μοι at 635) "unnecessary", but print it in their text (1990a)!

¹³² Cf. Knox (1964: 89).

of political virtue" (Knox [1964: 89]).¹³³ Creon's speech soon shifts from the familial to the political / military:¹³⁴ obedience to the laws (663) or to the leader appointed by the city (664, 666-7), steadfastness and loyalty in battle (670-1)¹³⁵ are necessary preconditions for the σωτηρία of the majority (cf. 675-6; note esp. ὀρθουμένων, and the alliteration σώζει ... σώμαθ'). On the contrary, disobedience to any form of political authority (672 ἀναρχία, opposed to 676 πειθαρχία) is the cause of all evils to the polis (673, 674-5) and, consequently, to the oikos (673-4).¹³⁶ Even what seems to be an authoritarian principle, namely that the ruler appointed by the polis must be obeyed in all matters alike (666-7) is in fact an echo of Solon fr. 30 West:

¹³³ See also Rohdich (1980: 124-6), Murnaghan (1987: 200-1), with the important caveat offered by Foley (1995: 139). This point is missed by Segal (1981: 193). In this respect, it is useful to bear in mind Osborne's (1990: 267-77) recent argument that, in 5th century Athens at least, far from the government of larger political units (demos, polis) being organized on lines derived from the government of the pre-existing sub-groups (family, phratry, etc.), it is the latter groups that modelled their organization on that of the polis. Cf. also Strauss (1990: 104-7) with a slightly different emphasis. *Contra* C. Patterson CA 9 (1990) 61, who cites Pericles' law περὶ νόθων as an instance of the appropriation by the polis of the language of family inheritance and property; Seaford (1994a: 214).

¹³⁴ The political and the military aspect should not be seen as distinct: the soldiers of the hoplite phalanx, equal and interdependent parts of a solid whole, were but citizens in arms (something that Goheen [1951: 19-26] has failed to see): see Ducrey (1986: 61-2); Bowden (1993: 47-9) with bibliography; on *Antigone* in particular see Podlecki (1986: 98), notwithstanding his unacceptable conclusions about Creon.

¹³⁵ On possible echoes of the ephebic oath in 671 see Jebb (*ad* 670f.) and, in greater detail, Siewert (1977: 105-7), notwithstanding the latter's unacceptable interpretation of them. Cf. also most recently Sourvinou-Inwood (1989a: 144 with n.37).

¹³⁶ See further Calder (1968: 399).

ἀρχῶν ἄκουε καὶ δικαίως κἀδίκως.¹³⁷ The frequency of words belonging to the semantic field of κόσμος (660 ἄκοσμα, 677 τοῖς κοσμουμένοις, 730 τοὺς ἀκοσμοῦντας) adds to the political load of Creon's speech, for κόσμος is the standard word for 'political order',¹³⁸ or 'government' in general;¹³⁹ ironically, Antigone uses κοσμεῖν to describe her burial of Polyneices (901; cf. 396),¹⁴⁰ i.e. the very act that has undermined the κόσμος of the polis! Creon's diatribe ends in an interesting twist: defending the regulations made by the rulers (677 τοῖς κοσμουμένοις)¹⁴¹ means never to yield to a woman (678-80; cf. also 484-5, 525, 578-9). Whoever has grasped the fundamental polarity "oikos vs. polis" has no problem in seeing the point of this concluding remark on women: what Creon means is that the male-dominated and male-oriented polis would negate its own nature, if it were to yield to the subversive forces embodied by women who (acting,

¹³⁷ D.L. Page's view, as reported by Bremer (1969: 139 n.1); cf. Kamerbeek (*ad* 666,7), Rohdich (1980: 125), Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 182), Meier (1993: 191). This fragment has understandably given trouble to those who tend to see Creon as an unqualified tyrant from start to end: Siewert (1977: 106 n.25); Blundell (1986: 124 n.73). That it was also a slave's duty to obey his master in matters "both just and unjust" (e.g. A. *Cho.* 78-81; E. fr. 419) only indicates how different from ours was the Athenian conception of democracy.

¹³⁸ Theogn. 677, Solon 13.11W with the commentary of Levine (1985: 181-2, 184, 186). For κόσμος as the Spartan word for 'social order' see Nagy (1985: 32, 41 §25n2); for κόσμοι as an official designation of magistrates in Crete see LSJ s.v. κόσμος III, Nagy (1990b: 180 n.141).

¹³⁹ Thuc. 4.76.2; 8.48.4, 67.3, 72.2; Hdt. 1.65.4; Pl. *Prt.* 322c. See LSJ s.v. κόσμος I.4.

¹⁴⁰ I owe this last point to Segal (1981: 188).

¹⁴¹ This is Jebb's (*ad* 677) interpretation of τοῖς κοσμουμένοις (neutr.). *Contra* Kamerbeek (*ad* 677-79), who construes the word as masculine and takes it to mean "the orderly subjects".

abnormally, like men [61-2])¹⁴² seek to impose the interests of the *oikos* — the female domain *par excellence* — on those of the *polis*.¹⁴³

Creon's extreme opposition to the subversive values (*oikos*, Hades, femaleness) embodied by Antigone may be also highlighted by his insistence on soundness of mind — presumably to be contrasted with Antigone's (and Ismene's) folly (cf. above, pp. 350, 378): he advises his son not to lose his mind for the sake of sexual pleasure (648-9), and the Chorus praise his sound opinion (682). It is therefore all the more surprising (and this is indicated by Creon's outburst of anger at 726ff.) that Haemon goes to great lengths to make as subtle a case as possible *against* his father's soundness of opinion. The remarkable frequency, in his speech, of words belonging to the semantic field of φρονεῖν (or sim.) is an indication, on the formal level, of the new important theme of Creon's misjudgement that is being now introduced: 683 φρένας, 707 φρονεῖν, 710 σοφός, μανθάνειν, 719 γνώμη, 721 ἐπιστήμης πλέων, 723 μανθάνειν; cf. also the Chorus' μαθεῖν (725) and Creon's angered διδαξόμεσθα (726), φρενώσεις ... φρενῶν κενός (754).¹⁴⁴ Haemon's point (however one treats lines 687-8)¹⁴⁵ is that his father, quite

¹⁴² Cf. Bryson Bongie (1974: 250), Sorum (1981-82: 205-6); Segal (1986: 145, 151) curiously insists on Antigone's femininity.

¹⁴³ See Segal (1981: 183-6, 192), Steiner (1984: 185-6, 238-41), Goldhill (1986: 98), Sourvinou-Inwood (1989a: 140); on the 'female vs. male' polarity see Knox (1964: 78-9), Segal (1978: 1179), Steiner (1983: 87-8). H.P. Foley (*Reflections of Women in Antiquity* [New York 1981] 148-63) warns us that real life might belie such too clear-cut distinctions; this is of course correct in principle, but what I am concerned here with is the *ideology* of the *polis*, not real life. The political load of Creon's opposition to the female is not understood by Winnington-Ingram (1980: 124-5) and Rehm (1994: 60). Bennett & Tyrell (1990: 454) distort the meaning of these passages.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Else (1976: 51-2).

¹⁴⁵ Dawe (1996) prints σοῦ δ' οὖν πέφυκα at 688, whereas Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990a) delete 687. Either way, the point is that Creon should be informed (by

understandably, may not be aware of the growing discontent amongst citizens (688-91), and so his rigorous pro-polis attitude may actually run counter to public opinion. For, as Haemon reveals, the citizens, who (especially in Creon's rhetoric) have been occupying, until now, the positive pole in the polarity "polis vs. oikos / Hades", are now on Antigone's side, i.e. on the side of the oikos and Hades.¹⁴⁶ Significantly, lines 693-9, in which Haemon claims to quote secret rumours circulating amongst the citizens, repeat almost verbatim the rhetoric used by Antigone in her defence of her actions before Creon. Especially the juxtaposition of εὐκλεεστάτων (695), in which resounds the name *Eteocles*, and αὐτάδελφον (696), referring of course to *Polyneices*, is a reiteration of Antigone's similar association (at 502-3) of κλέος (properly belonging to the bearer of the name *Eteocles*, the glorious defender of the polis) with the traitor *Polyneices*, the "man of many νείκεα".¹⁴⁷ Moreover, lines 697-8, by quoting those terms of Creon's decree that are related to the burial of *Polyneices* (205-6), register the people's protest thereat, thus siding with Antigone, whose similar protest was voiced at 29-30 (and perhaps again at 467, if Semitelos' ingenious ἥσχυναν [-νον Blaydes] κύνες is correct).¹⁴⁸ The τιμή which Creon sought to deny *Polyneices*, on the grounds of his anti-polis stance, is now bestowed by the whole polis to the traitor's sister (699 χρυσῆς ἀξία τιμῆς λαχεῖν), whereas it is Creon himself who is at risk of losing his own εὐκλεία (703-4; an indirect, but clear insinuation).¹⁴⁹ More alarmingly still, Haemon exploits

Haemon) on the feelings of the Theban citizens, of which he is unaware.

¹⁴⁶ Sourvinou-Inwood (1989a: 144, 146) unduly discredits Haemon's report; see rightly Foley (1995: 135-6), Van Erp Taalman Kip (1996: 521-4).

¹⁴⁷ Cf. p. 372.

¹⁴⁸ On these echoings of Antigone's discourse see Else (1976: 55), Brown (*ad* 745), Blundell (1989: 147) and Foley (1996: 62).

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Rohdich (1980: 128), Blundell (1989: 147).

Creon's favourite image of the Ship of State in order to point out that this ship is now about to founder because of Creon's obstinacy (715-7).¹⁵⁰ Indeed, Creon reacts like an unqualified tyrant: as if to confirm the hints at his tyrannical disposition that such lines as 211-14 may have put across to some members of the audience, he says he will not take account of the polis in his government of Thebes (734), for the ruler himself *is* the polis (736-8) — even if that means that there is no longer a polis for him to rule (739)! The state of affairs that we have been accustomed to regard as typical of a well-ordered polis is now suddenly reversed: the male ruler, instead of embodying and expressing the entire polis, turns out to be worlds apart from it, to the point of becoming an autocratic ruler of an inexistent polis.¹⁵¹ On the other hand, the demands of the oikos and the female realm turn out to be far from detrimental to, or even simply incompatible with, the polis: Creon may repeatedly accuse his son of allying with women (740, 748) and of being inferior to women (746, 756), but Haemon persistently claims that he advocates Antigone's cause only out of concern for his father the ruler of the polis (741, 743, 749). What is more, Haemon's claim to be caring both for the interests of his father and for the prerogatives of the nether gods (749; cf. 745) is quite remarkable, as the audience has been until now conditioned to regard polis and Hades as poles apart.¹⁵² So, a most extraordinary paradox emerges: the defender of the σωτηρία of the polis turns out to be the one who reduces it to the point of extinction, for, as Haemon puts it, Creon treats the city as if it were a desert (739, to be read in the context of 734-9), whereas the advocate of the oikos and Hades

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Musurillo (1967:47).

¹⁵¹ Cf. Segal (1978:1176): "Supposing himself the champion of the polis, defending its inner space from attack from the outside, Creon actually is negating this civilized space."

¹⁵² Cf. Bultmann (1967:322).

is the one who truly expresses the feelings of the polis in its entirety.¹⁵³ Besides, folly has been so far typical only of the Labdacids (see esp. the second stasimon); nonetheless, it is Creon who now stands accused not merely of having unwise counsels (755 οὐκ εὔφρονεῖν), but indeed of being nothing short of a ‘madman’ (765 μαίνη)!

The paradoxical reversals, however, do not end here. We have noted (p. 375) Creon’s disturbing (as well as unexpected) reliance on Hades, in order to maintain order in the polis: Hades, he said, will prevent his son from marrying a subversive female (575). The ἄκοσμος Antigone, must be treated as the enemy of the state that she is (653 δυσμενῆ), if the salutary civic πειθαρχία (676) is to be preserved. In this case, marriage, normally a function necessary for the preservation of the city, runs counter to the city’s interests.¹⁵⁴ Haemon, therefore, the royal scion, has to forego his personal ἡδονή (648) for the sake of the whole polis. Antigone, the advocate of the laws of Hades, must, appropriately, marry in Hades (654), for otherwise the marriage will become subversive to the polis; Haemon will no doubt find other fields to plough (569). Soon, however, the alarming suspicion is artfully intimated that Antigone’s marriage in Hades may not leave Creon’s oikos unaffected, and that despite his best efforts his oikos may soon, like the Labdacids, work its own self-destruction. At 750 Creon declares to his son that he stands no chance of marrying Antigone while she is alive: does this mean that he may marry her when she will be dead, thus joining her in her ‘marriage in Hades’? This is very poignantly suggested by Haemon’s

¹⁵³ As Knox (1964: 107–8) remarks, it is in this scene that Creon’s aspect as a tyrant becomes glaringly evident for the first time.

¹⁵⁴ On the antinomy between the civic and the familial aspect of marriage in general see Murnaghan (1987: 201–5).

reply at the next line: “her death will signal someone else’s death too”.¹⁵⁵ Creon’s ensuing command (760–1) that Antigone should be brought there, so that she may die “in the presence of her bridegroom [761 νυμφίω], before his very eyes, at his side” has certainly an ominous ring (is Antigone to die simply “at her bridegroom’s side” or along with him?), and so does Haemon’s response (763–4) that his father will never again see him eye to eye (does this mean that, when his father sees him again, he will be dead?). Creon had hoped that his son would cut himself off from the *δυσμενής* Antigone (653–4), ‘letting go of her’ (653 μέθες), so that she would marry someone else in Hades; now, however, it is the same Creon who causes his son to be all too closely involved in an act (‘marriage in Hades’) that was initially meant not to affect Creon’s *oikos* but, on the contrary, to save it, along with the rest of the polis. With this new turn of events, the effects of Antigone’s marriage in Hades, which seals the fate of the accursed Labdacids, seem to be encroaching on Creon’s *oikos* too.

6.5.2 The third stasimon: Eros and madness, *oikos* and polis

What is the reason for this unexpected turn of events, namely the strife between a father who used to guide his son “along the right path” (635–6) and a son who used to belong entirely to his father (635, 640)? It is Eros, answer the Chorus.¹⁵⁶ Despite Creon’s attempts to persuade his son to

¹⁵⁵ See Rehm (1994: 65). Creon misunderstands this (752) as threatened patricide: see Jebb (*ad* 751), Blundell (1989: 137). This foreshadows 1231–4 (see p. 426), but for the time being it is Haemon’s intention to commit suicide that matters.

¹⁵⁶ K. von Fritz’s (*Antike und Moderne Tragödie* [Berlin 1962] 227–40) attempt to strip Haemon’s defence of his fiancée from all personal motivation has fortunately not gained ground. See now H. Erbse’s (*RhM* n.F. 134 [1991] 253–61) powerful exposition.

sacrifice his personal ἡδονή for the sake of the common good, it is exactly this very ἡδονή, the sexual passion inspired by the universal and inescapable power of Eros, that dooms Creon's cause to failure. This choral song, with its account of Eros' effects on human lives, provides a key for us to assess to what extent the cause of the polis and its main advocate have been undermined by the forces that Creon has been fighting: the female, folly, and Hades.

Eros is presented as a warrior: he is ἀνίκατος μάχαν (781); like a hostile army, he is the "despoiler of possessions" (782);¹⁵⁷ he "keeps his vigil", like a soldier on night-watch (784 ἐννυχεύεις).¹⁵⁸ We are obviously meant to recall that Creon has repeatedly used military vocabulary to illuminate his ideal of an orderly polis (the most striking instance is 668-77); now, however, Eros defeats the στρατηγός (8) Creon on his own field, the battlefield. With the mention of mental derangement as an effect of Eros at 787-90 the important theme of ἄνοια recurs; the emphasis however now falls no longer on the inherent ἄνοια of the Labdacids (see again the second stasimon), but on the sudden onslaught, upon the oikos of Creon, of the madness instigated by Eros. Interestingly, this madness is not seen as afflicting only Haemon, for the phrasing of 793-4 is suitably vague, and suggests that Creon also has had his mind led astray (791-2) and has, therefore, his share of responsibility in the mutual νεῖκος with his son

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Brown's (p. 87) "despoiler of wealth". This is the most widely accepted interpretation of ἐν κτήμασι πίπτεις: see Jebb (*ad* 782), fully endorsed by Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 135-6), who also give a list of other views. Jebb (*l.c.*) compares the military use of ἐμπίπτειν in *Od.* 24.526 ἐν δ' ἔπεσον προμάχοις.

¹⁵⁸ Again, this is the interpretation favoured, with more or less enthusiasm, by the majority of the scholars: see especially Jebb (*ad* 783f.). On Eros as a warrior see also Knox (1979: 179).

(793-4).¹⁵⁹ We have just seen how Haemon directed imputations of madness against his father (765 μαίνη); but such accusations coming from the mouth of the loyal senior citizens of Thebes are indeed surprising and can only verify, from a different point of view, our observation that the folly / madness that has been thus far an exclusive attribute of the accursed Labdacids or of the enemies of Thebes (Capaneus' 'Bacchic' frenzy at 134-6) is indeed making its way into the oikos of the man who should be least susceptible to its effects.

With the mention of ξύναιμον νεῖκος at 793 the process that is gradually leading to Creon's assimilation to the anti-polis elements he has been fighting becomes even clearer. Creon prided himself on having γονάς ἰκατηκούς (641-2), but it now transpires that his oikos has been afflicted by the same spirit of ξύναιμον νεῖκος which led Polyneices to betray his country and to end the male line of the Labdacid oikos, thus dooming it to extinction. A detail of the Labdacid legend that is not mentioned in our play, but may have informed the original audience's perception of it (with some help, perhaps, from such reminders as the one at line 2), is that the ξύναιμον νεῖκος between Eteocles and Polyneices was part of their *father's* curse against them;¹⁶⁰ in such a case the strife between father (Creon) and son (Haemon) that we have witnessed in the previous episode has a disturbing parallel in the hostility between father (Oedipus) and sons (Eteocles and Polyneices) that has resulted in the extinction of their oikos.¹⁶¹ Most striking, however, are lines 795-800 where the outcome of the battle between Eros and the στρατηγός Creon is announced: the winner is the ἕμερος (not to be distinguished from Eros),¹⁶² the desire that had been

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Kirkwood (1958: 208), Goldhill (1986: 177), Zeitlin (1993: 156).

¹⁶⁰ A. Sept. 785-91; S. OC 420-30, 1370-6, 1383-92; E. Pho. 66-8, 351, 1611.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Loraux (1986: 178, 179), Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 144).

¹⁶² See Kamerbeek (*ad* 795, 6).

keeping its *vigil* on the cheeks of a *girl* (784) and that is now presented as *seated in the eyes of the bride* (796-7). The *female*, of whose subversive power Creon has been always afraid, finally carries the day, defeats the male ruler on the battlefield, drives him mad like his anti-polis adversaries, and on the whole assimilates his *oikos* to that of the Labdacids, the race that, before working its own self-destruction, puts the whole polis in danger. Eros plays a most important part in the Labdacid legend: Laius, failing to obey Apollo's oracle, has sex with his wife, with catastrophic results for himself and the city; one of Oedipus' ἀμπλακήματα (51) was his sexual relationship with his mother; and Polyneices' γάμοι to Adrastus' daughter have turned out to be δύσποτμοι, as they sealed his own wretched fate as well as that of his race (869-70).¹⁶³ It is certainly striking, but highly significant, that Eros, despite his catastrophic results, is at 797-8 called τῶν μεγάλων πάρεδρος ἐν ἀρχαῖς ἰθεσμῶν. Many a scholar has been confused by such a blatant incongruity: how, asks Jebb (*ad* 797f.), can a power that is actually in conflict with the θεσμοί be described as their assessor, or peer? An intelligent answer to this question has recently been given by Brown (*ad* 797-9): he argues that θεσμοί are the universal, cosmic powers, which "need have no *moral* implications".¹⁶⁴ That this approach is immensely more

¹⁶³ The crucial role of marriage in the Labdacid family is also indicated in *E. Pho.* 13ff, 53ff, 77ff; see Mastronarde (1994: 139). Rehm (1994: 63) rightly adds that the marriages of Oedipus and Polyneices are, respectively, "hyper-endogamous" and "hyper-exogamous"; cf. Benardete (1975b: 53), Zeitlin (1990: 148). The inability to maintain a healthy balance between those two extremes is typical of the Labdacids. For both exogamy and endogamy have, in their social contexts, certain limits that cannot be crossed: even in endogamous societies incest is still taboo; while in exogamous societies marriage is a means of forging or reinforcing bonds between families, not of destroying one's own community, as Polyneices attempted to do.

¹⁶⁴ Ostwald (1969: 14) argues that our passage alludes to the institution (θεσμός) of marriage, but this is unnecessarily limiting.

sensitive than earlier ones, some of which had even to assume textual corruption,¹⁶⁵ is evident. I suggest, however, that it should be pressed a little further, in order to take also into account the paradox that surprised Jebb: for it is undoubtedly paradoxical that Eros, on the one hand, represents the negation of the constituents of a well-ordered polis (it defeats the military and political leader on his own field; it leads people's wits astray; it brings about the female's supremacy over the male), but is on the other hand pronounced an assessor or peer of the μεγάλοι θεσμοί; Eros appears to be at the same time both an ordering principle (θεσμός) and an uncontrollable force that disrupts order. As Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 180) have put it, "Eros is not only a category, he is also the power undermining all categorical order." Creon's defeat by the subversive powers he has been fighting could not have been put in more striking terms: now the institutions and the νόμοι of the polis he has been upholding have their authority as μεγάλοι θεσμοί usurped by the very embodiment of all anti-polis elements, namely Eros.¹⁶⁶

The Chorus' announcement of Antigone's entrance at 801ff. is

¹⁶⁵ The (mainly metrical) problems of the passage are soberly and judiciously discussed by Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 136), who eventually prefer to keep the lines as they stand.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Bultmann (1967: 319-20), Burton (1980: 115-6), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 95), Segal (1981: 198); for a different, philosophical interpretation see Else (1976: 54-7); wrongly Pearson (1928: 185). Rohdich (1980: 138-44) takes a diametrically opposite view, namely that Eros is here integrated into the norms of civilized society! —The political connotations of πάρεδρος (a word that could be used as a technical term designating either the assistants or advisers of kings and men of power, or, more specifically, the assistants of the archons, the generals, the Euthynoi, and the Hellenotamiai) and ἐν ἀρχαῖς (797) help drive the point home. Special thanks are due to Dr K. Kapparis, who kindly let me see the manuscript of his article "Assessors of Magistrates (πάρεδροι) in Classical Athens" (forthcoming in *Historia*).

prefaced by a statement that calls for comment: νῦν δ' ἤδη ἄνω καὶ τὸς θεσμῶν | ἔξω φέρομαι (801-2). Ostwald (1969: 14), following Jebb (*ad* 801f.), has suggested that what is meant by θεσμοί here is the Chorus' allegiance to constituted authority: at this emotional moment (cf. 802-3) even the loyal Old Men cannot help sympathizing with the enemy of the state.¹⁶⁷ It is significant that this abandonment of the θεσμοί by the very men who should obey them most, the representatives of the Theban citizens, should occur when Antigone embarks on her descent to the realm of Hades, whose ἄνωμοι have been in unrelenting conflict with the νόμοι of the polis. Eros and Hades: these two elements that represent the negation of the θεσμοί and the polis reveal their dread power through a dying, defenceless female.

6.6.1 Kommos: Antigone's ambiguous state

So far, we have seen Creon's cause being gradually undermined: the name θεσμοί is now given to their very negation; Hades is intruding into the house. However, this does not mean that what we have here is a plain and unambiguous justification of Antigone's ways: we shall now see how her cause is also vitiated.

To begin with, the theme of 'marriage in Hades', which was introduced in a rather oblique way by Creon (654, cf. 750, 760-1; see p. 388), is now fully elaborated upon in the mouth of Antigone. She is being led, she wails, not to the bridal κοίτη (implied by 813 ὑμεναίων, 814-5 ἐπὶ νυμφείῳ),¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Cf. also Winnington-Ingram (1980:138).

¹⁶⁸ Bergk's emendation for the MSS ἐπὶ νυμφίδιος (or ἐπινυμφ-). On the meaning Müller (p. 201) is particularly illuminating: "Man wird ἐπὶ νυμφείῳ von der räumlichen Nähe zur Hochzeitskammer verstehen, bei der abends ein Preislied

but to the παγκοίτης θάλαμος (bridal chamber) of Hades (804; cf. 810-11):¹⁶⁹ she will marry Acheron. This theme is recapitulated in the epode of the kommos (876-82): she is being led to Hades ἄκλαυτος and ἀνυμέναιος (876), i.e. without either receiving a proper funeral or enjoying a proper wedding, since her funeral and wedding are conflated into one and the same act, namely her entombment.¹⁷⁰ This is brought out very poignantly when Antigone addresses her subterranean dwelling (cf. 774, 885) as both τύμβος and νυμφεῖον (891). The telescoping of Antigone's marriage and death into the single act of entombment simply reiterates, in as condensed a form as possible, a sequence of events that has been typical of her family: marriage (and sex) in the house of Labdacids is always a taboo, whose defiance ends invariably in *death* and *catastrophe* (see again p. 391 with n. 163). The Chorus explicitly place Antigone's fate in the perspective of her accursed family: πατρῶον δ' ἐκτίνεις τιν' ἄθλον (856);¹⁷¹ this is met with a concise account, by Antigone, of her family misfortunes (857-71), which (as in the second stasimon) are traced back to the beginnings of the race (860-2 τοῦ τε πρόπαντος | ... πότμου | ... Λαβδακίδαισιν). She is the accursed (867 ἀραῖος) offspring of ἄται (863-4), i.e. the incestuous marriage

vorgetragen wird." Jebb (*ad* 568) recognizes only the meaning 'marriage' ("νυμφεῖα, sc. ἱερά, 'nuptials'"), but Müller (*l.c.*) is quite right in pointing out that "die beiden Bedeutungen von νυμφεῖα sind Tra.[chiniae] 920 und 7 klar belegt". The singular νυμφεῖον clearly means 'bridal chamber' in *Ant.* 891.

¹⁶⁹ On the ambiguity of θάλαμος (bridal chamber as well as tomb) see Seaford (1985: 318-9); cf. also Jebb (*ad* 804f.), Goheen (1951: 137 n.3), Brown (*ad* 804).

¹⁷⁰ For an exhaustive examination of the 'marriage in Hades' theme in the play see Seaford (1987: 107-8), Rehm (1994: 63-5); cf. also Goheen (1951: 37-41); Kirkwood (1958: 221); Segal (1981: 180 with n.86) with short bibliography. On the interpenetration of wedding and funeral ritual in general see Seaford (1987: 106-7, 112 and *passim*), Rehm (1994: 11-42).

¹⁷¹ This is deplorably misinterpreted by Bennett & Tyrell (1990: 452).

of her parents (863-6); the recurrence here of another αὐτο-word, namely αὐτογέννητ' (864-5), helps hammer home the theme of the self-destructive family introversion.

Verses 853-6 would seem to be along similar lines: the Chorus, immediately before declaring that Antigone's plight is actually the payment of a debt inherited from her father (856), remark that she went to the farthest extreme, in terms of boldness, and so stumbled upon the throne of Δίκη (853-5).¹⁷² This may be seen as intended to recall the Labdacids' hereditary ὑπερβασία (cf. 605, and see again p. 379),¹⁷³ especially if one bears in mind the fundamental antithesis between Δίκη and ὑπερβασία as expressed in a famous fragment of Heraclitus (22 B 94 D.-K.): "Ἥλιος οὐχ ὑπερβήσεται μέτρα· εἰ δὲ μή, Ἐρινύες μιν Δίκης ἐπίκουροι ἐξευρήσουσιν. After all, her transgression against the νόμοι of the polis was twice described by Creon as an act of ὑπερβαίνειν (449, 481).¹⁷⁴ Nonetheless, to assume that Antigone is punished because of her transgression against Dike, and pronounce the case closed would be an over-simplification: for all these references to Antigone's attempted transgression against Dike must be seen in the light of the very significant premises set at the beginning of the kommos, and esp. at the choral responses of 817-22 and 834-8, which inevitably qualify our perception of the rest of this lyric piece. In their very first address to Antigone, the Chorus

¹⁷² This seems to be the most plausible interpretation of 854-5; for other views see commentators; also Benardete (1975b: 53-4) and Winnington-Ingram (1980: 141 n.68). I am not convinced by D. Pozzi's (*Hermes* 117 [1989] 500-5) suggestion that Antigone is here envisaged as a willing victim at the altar of Dike, and thus as an instrument thereof. Bennett & Tyrell (1990: 450-1), on the basis of a perverse scholion on 853 (p. 257 Papageorgius), misconstrue the passage.

¹⁷³ Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 191); cf. also Lloyd-Jones (1983: 115) and Burton (1980: 123), albeit with no specific reference to ὑπερβασία.

make it clear that she is κλεινή καὶ ἔπαινον ἔχουσα (817):¹⁷⁵ she who honoured by burial the mortal enemy of Ἐτεοκλῆς is to receive κλέος; the ἔπαινος of the whole polis (whose representatives are the Chorus, cf. 806, 842-3)¹⁷⁶ goes fully to Antigone, whereas for Creon, as Haemon has reported, the polis has only ψόγος (cf. 689, 700).¹⁷⁷ For the paradox to be rounded off, at 821-2 we hear that the person who receives the whole-hearted praise of the polis is the very person who has actually flouted the polis' νόμοι and has shown herself to be αὐτόνομος (821) — yet another of the numerous αὐτο-words that indicate Antigone's self-sufficiency, her anti-polis enclosure within the restricted framework of her native family.¹⁷⁸

Immediately upon this last remark of the Chorus Antigone offers a mythical paradigm to illustrate her own condition, namely the paradigm of Niobe. At first sight, the parallels between her and Niobe seem rather restricted: “the stone into which Niobe was changed may be likened to Antigone's rocky tomb”, writes Jebb (*ad* 833); Müller (p. 186) adds that Niobe was also guilty of transgression against the gods — and, although

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Bremer (1969: 141 with n.12).

¹⁷⁵ Knox (1964: 176 n.8) reads οὐκουν at 817 and treats the whole passage as a negative statement; but see Winnington-Ingram (1980: 139 n.63), Di Benedetto (1983: 30 n.75).

¹⁷⁶ Pace Kirkwood (1991: 104).

¹⁷⁷ In the latter passage ἐρεμνή φάτις must certainly mean the ψογεροί rumours of the citizens, as is made clear by the ring-composition (700 τοιάδ' harks back to 691 λόγοις τοιούτοις) as well as by passages like Pi. N. 7. 61 σκοτεινὸν ἀπέχων ψόγον.

¹⁷⁸ Di Benedetto (1983: 29-32) fails to notice the ambiguous treatment of Antigone by the Chorus; Bennett & Tyrell (1990: 449) do notice it, but they give it an entirely different meaning. Foley's (1995: 135, 142-4) remarks are much more to the point. On the use of αὐτόνομος here cf. Burton (1980: 119), Knox (1983: 33), Goldhill (1986: 103), Loraux (1986: 171), Ostwald (1986: 152); also Bultmann (1967: 311 with n.2) with different emphasis.

admittedly no specific mention is made of her own sinful boast,¹⁷⁹ Niobe is actually referred to as daughter of the great transgressor Tantalus (825), as Antigone is daughter of Oedipus and belongs to the Labdacids, race of ὑπερβασία.¹⁸⁰ What these views fail to account for, however, is the emphasis that Niobe's marginality receives: she is called a Phrygian ξένα (824), whose residence in Thebes was only temporary; she is now at the remotest heights of Sipylus (825-6), where she lies exposed to the rage of the natural elements (828-32). Evidently, the *locus* of Niobe's permanent abode is tinted by a marked absence of human activity, of organized communities, of civilization¹⁸¹ — Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 188) appositely remind us of Man's civilizing struggle against the elements in the first stasimon. It is to such a person that Antigone sees herself as ὁμοιοτάταν (833). Indeed, Antigone, like the ξένα Niobe, is later seen as not fully belonging to the body of Theban citizens: as we shall later see in fuller detail, her life in the Upperworld is described as μετοικία by Creon (890), and she maintains her marginal status as μέτοικος even as she goes to her death (850-2, 868). The location of her tomb, like that of Niobe's, is also characteristically marginal: it is at a place where no mortal sets his foot (773),¹⁸² beyond the boundaries

¹⁷⁹ Cf. e.g. Knox (1979: 174-5), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 139 n.64) — a point that is missed by Coleman (1972: 17). Niobe's exoneration, however, has been pushed too far by Whitman (1951: 93-4, 96) as an argument for the exoneration of Antigone; I see a similar tendency in Hester (1971: 34) too.

¹⁸⁰ For other, less plausible, views see Brown (*ad* 832-33). Notable is Seaford's (1990: 87) very interesting analysis.

¹⁸¹ Jebb's (*ad* 825) note on the actual topography of the place only confirms its wild character.

¹⁸² Following Kamerbeek's suggestion (*ad* 773, 4) I read στίβου and take ἐρήμος to refer to Antigone (cf. 919): "taking her to such a place that there she will be destitute of the steps of men" (cf. *Phil.* 487 ἐρήμον οὕτω χωρὶς ἀνθρώπων στίβου).

of the polis.¹⁸³

The Chorus in their reply (834-7) push to extremes the theme of Antigone's similarity with Niobe: Niobe was a goddess, they say; and although Antigone is mortal, it is undoubtedly μέγα (836) for her to hear that she has shared the lot of those who are ἰσόθεοι (837)!¹⁸⁴ The remark may appear exaggerated, and Antigone indignantly dismisses it as derisive (839-41), perhaps because she does not think that anyone can seriously compare a human to a god; however, the Chorus *have* made their point, however obliquely, and we should take it into account. Antigone has defended the *transcendental* laws of Hades and the gods, the laws which may not always coincide with (in fact, they may actually run counter to) the human-made, ephemeral laws of the polis, the laws that are but a reflection of the world as conceptualized and categorized by *humans*¹⁸⁵ (we remember that the champion of the polis, Creon, refused to acknowledge the existence of transcendental values; see p. 361). Antigone, in embracing such values, places herself *above* and *beyond* current human concepts, *above* and *beyond* the framework of the polis; and in this respect she may be thought of as partaking in the divinity of her ὁμοιοτάτα Niobe. To her case Aristotle's (*Pol.* 1253a) aphorism may be applied: ὁ δὲ μὴ δυνάμενος κοινωνεῖν ἢ μηδὲν δεόμενος δι' αὐτάρκειαν οὐδὲν μέρος πόλεως, ὥστε ἢ θηρίον ἢ θεός. Antigone in fact is both θηρίον and θεός: for much

¹⁸³ Cf. Reinhardt (1979: 81): "...the rock-chamber grave in which Antigone is buried alive [...] becomes an image of her halfway position, her rootless hovering."; cf. also Segal (1978: 1177), (1981: 168), Sorum (1981-82: 207), Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 188).

¹⁸⁴ *Contra* Rohdich (1980: 147-8) who feels that the Chorus rather correct Antigone's comparison of her situation with Niobe's.

¹⁸⁵ In this respect, Sourvinou-Inwood's (1990: 301-2) statement on polis religion is particularly instructive: it is, she argues, "above all, a way of articulating the world, of structuring chaos and making it intelligible".

as she resembles the ἰσόθεος Niobe, nonetheless the word ὤμος that is used of her at 471-2 is otherwise in this play reserved only for the dogs (697 ὠμηστῶν) that devoured her brother.¹⁸⁶

In the third strophe Antigone's marginality as well as her ambivalent position towards the νόμοι of the polis is highlighted even more unmistakably. In a long invocation she addresses the whole πόλις and its representatives (842-3), along with important landmarks of Thebes (844 Διρκαῖαι κρήναι)¹⁸⁷ as well as the sacred precinct of Thebes itself, and calls on them to witness the outrage she suffers by the νόμοι (847 οἷσι νόμοις, said in indignation) that the polis itself has set! She, the αὐτόνομος, who has set her own devotion to the νόμοι of Hades above the νόμοι of the polis, now protests to *this very polis* against the injustice done to her.¹⁸⁸ The Chorus' words at 872-5 are a further confirmation of Antigone's marginal and ambiguous position: her act was certainly one of εὐσέβεια (872); still, whoever has authority in his keeping cannot afford to allow any offence (872-4).¹⁸⁹ This is why, as Antigone herself says, her εὐσέβεια won her a reputation for δυσσέβεια (924) — a formulation recalling the famous ὄσια

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Segal (1981: 191), Steiner (1984: 244-5) and note the use of ὤμος (vel sim.) to designate Ajax's alienation from the civilized space of the city (e.g. *Aj.* 205, 548; see further Chapter Five, section 5.1.2).

¹⁸⁷ On κρήναι as representative landmarks cf. *Aj.* 862, *CC* 1333, quoted by Jebb (*ad* 844f.). Dirce is the river that most closely identifies Thebes: Jebb (*ad* 103f.), Davidson (1983: 43). Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 188) miss the point.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 189). For different treatments of this passage see Winnington-Ingram (1980: 140-1), Di Benedetto (1983: 31-2), Bushnell (1988: 64-5).

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Jebb's (*ad* 873f.) rendering of the passage. Foley (1996: 57) fails to see that the Chorus are not unreservedly on Antigone's side; see, rightly, Burton (1980: 123).

πανουργήσασα (74):¹⁹⁰ in both cases what is stressed is Antigone's ambiguous position betwixt and between two conflicting demands. What is more, clearly this position, and the resulting catastrophe, has been entirely her own responsibility, as the Chorus explicitly remark (875 αὐτόγνωτος,¹⁹¹ stressing again Antigone's anti-polis introversion). A similar answer could be given to Antigone's protests that the νόμοι of the state have made her into a (metaphorical) μέτοικος, a person that is permanently in an interstitial condition, living neither amongst the quick nor amongst the dead (850-2; cf. 868): for her marginality ('μετοικία') in death is only a continuation of her marginality in life, her ἄνω μετοικία, as Creon calls it at 890.¹⁹²

Most importantly, all these points are illuminated by Antigone herself in a long iambic passage (891-928). Before any discussion of this passage I should make it clear that I consider the authenticity of 904-20 conclusively proved by Neuburg (1990: esp. 66-76). It was with relief that I saw the problem finally settled not by subjective, culturally conditioned assumptions, but by a sober and systematic consideration of the play's *thematic axes* and *structural patterns* — a consideration that has much in common with my own view of the play. It is, therefore, imperative that this chapter be read in conjunction with Neuburg's masterly article, which not only offers a detailed account of the history of the problem but also expounds some basic methodological presuppositions for its solution, which I fully endorse.

¹⁹⁰ For this paradoxical phrase see Knox (1964: 93), Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 173).

¹⁹¹ The word, as Coray (1993: 257) remarks, "bezeichnet eine Leidenschaft, die man in voller Kenntnis selbst angenommen hat."

¹⁹² See Knox's (1964: 114) most excellent remarks; cf. also Segal (1978: 1177). Seaford (1990: 79) has some very notable remarks, albeit along rather different lines. On the marginality of the metics see Whitehead (1977: 69-72) and, more reservedly, Parker (1983: 261-2).

Antigone repeats her complaint that she dies unmarried at 916-20, where to the usual ἄλεκτρος, ἀνυμέναιος etc., with which we are by now familiar, an important addition is made: “I have not had a share in the upbringing of children” (918). All these would have sounded very much like a further confirmation of Antigone’s devotion to the oikos, had it not been for the preceding part of her speech (esp. 905-12), which throws a much more ambiguous light on her later claims. For, as it appears, it is not unequivocally clear that, had Creon spared her life, Antigone would have followed the only course that was conceivable for Greek women, namely marriage. “Even if the very children that I had born, or if my own husband were lying dead, I would never have buried them against the will of the city (907). For my husband would be replaceable, and so would be my children, whereas I could never have another brother, since both my parents are dead”: this is, in effect, what she says at 905-12.¹⁹³ As I have already implied, these lines severely vitiate Antigone’s claim that it is Creon who has deprived her of what all women must enjoy, namely marriage. For we realize that marriage and childbirth clearly cannot counterbalance her morbid obsession with the dead members of her natal family: it is only for the funeral prerogatives of the latter (*not* of her supposed husband or children) that she is prepared to sacrifice her life. The reason for that is clear enough: Greek marriage normally entailed the involvement of outsiders, of people who were not immediate blood-relatives. Since, however, blood-relatives are at the top of Antigone’s system of values, it follows that marriage *has* to be deemed inferior to them. Quite significantly, Antigone’s ‘marriage’ will take place in the tomb / bridal chamber where she will at last join not some outsider (as in normal marriage), but her dead kin

¹⁹³ It has been remarked that the ‘irreplaceability argument’ is, strictly speaking, illogical, since Polyneices is dead (contr. the situation in Hdt. 3. 119). Reinhardt (1979:83) however has rightly replied that “it is not this one particular action of Antigone, but the *nomos* of her action that is based on the fact that husband and child can be replaced, a brother not.”

(892-4)! In a family beset by abnormal introversion like the Labdacids, marriage ceases to be a means of *perpetuation of the race* through involvement of *outsiders*: it becomes instead a symbol of the race's eternal return to itself, of its abnormal introversion that inescapably leads to the extinction of the family.¹⁹⁴ The *anaphora* of φίλος-words at 898-9 (φίλη, προσφιλής, φίλη), as well as the timely insertion of yet another αὐτο-word, namely αὐτόχειρ, at 900,¹⁹⁵ are a further indication of Antigone's persistence in the excessive and self-destructive family introversion of her race. I do not mean to deny the importance of marriage in Antigone's system of values: it is clear that she does desire marriage and childbirth, and she does sincerely lament that she will never enjoy them. The point, however, is that her failure to marry is primarily a corollary of her own excessive enclosure within the confines of her blood family, and the consequent rejection of prospective bonds with outsiders through marriage. What I am arguing for is Antigone's *ambiguous* position towards marriage, *not* her complete denial thereof.¹⁹⁶ It is the same ambiguous position that she adopts towards the polis too, when, for instance, she says that she would acknowledge the rights of the πολῖται (907) in the case of a dead

¹⁹⁴ Segal (1981: 189), Sorum (1981-82: 207), Jost (1983: 135), Murnaghan (1987: 207), Zeitlin (1990: 148), Seaford (1990: 78), (1993: 141); cf. also Minadeo (1985: 138-9), Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 112-3).

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Loraux (1986: 168, 187).

¹⁹⁶ Murnaghan (1987: 198-206), by stressing exclusively Antigone's belonging to nature (ties of blood) rather than to culture and human institutions (marriage), overlooks this all-important ambiguity (so also Seaford [1994a: 216-7]); a similar failure, albeit from a fundamentally different point of view, is to be seen also in Foley (1995: 138), (1996: 53). Bennett & Tyrell (1990: 452-3) are even more restrictive.

husband or child, but insists on placing her own νόμοι (908, 914)¹⁹⁷ above those of the polis in the case of a dead brother. It is the same ambiguity that she also displays towards the gods: she has argued in front of Creon for the divine approval of her actions; she has appealed to divine νόμος (452, 519 etc.) and δίκη (94, 451, 538 etc.); she has been even compared by the Chorus to the ἰσόθεος Niobe (834–8); now, however, she protests that, without having offended against the δίκη of the gods (921 δαιμόνων δίκη),¹⁹⁸ she has been abandoned by her divine allies: “why should I look to the gods (for help) any more? Which of them should I claim to be my ally?¹⁹⁹ All that my piety has won me is a repute for impiety” (922–4; cf. also 943 τὴν εὐσεβίαν σεβίσασα).²⁰⁰ Most surprisingly, she even seems now to have doubts about the rightness of the cause she stood up for: “if the gods approve of the suffering that has been inflicted upon me, then through this suffering I would realize the error of my ways. But if the wrong is with Creon etc.” (925–8).²⁰¹ Clearly, in the end of this first part of the play it is not only Creon who emerges sooty from his battle with Antigone:

¹⁹⁷ Santirocco (1980: 186–90) and Ostwald (1986: 154 n.49) undervalue the significance of the use of the word νόμος in these passages; see rightly Connor (1971: 51–2), Neuburg (1990: 72).

¹⁹⁸ See further Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 192).

¹⁹⁹ At 923 read τίν’ ... ξυμμαχεῖν with Winckelmann and Bruhn (accepted by Müller [p. 210] and Dawe [1996]), so that τίνα = sc. θεῶν. Cf. Linforth (1961: 230).

²⁰⁰ Dalfen (1977: 19–20) thinks that Antigone remains unswervingly certain of the piety of her act; but see the right objections of Hester (1980b: 6–7), and cf. further Torrance (1965: 300), Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 189).

²⁰¹ Cf. Bowra (1944: 104), Diller (1950: 10), Steiner (1984: 282), Porter (1987: 47, 63–4). Minadeo (1985: 136–7, 151–2) and Bennett & Tyrell (1990: 446) miss the point. It may, of course, be objected that the conditional clauses need not imply that Antigone wavers, since εἰ+indic. can be used as a causal clause with assertive force; cf. Moorhouse (1982: 279–80). There are, however, instances in which this syntagm may express an open condition: see Introduction, section 0.4.2.

we realize that also the defender of the oikos and the transcendent νόμοι is vexed by ambiguities that surely forbid any kind of clear-cut, ‘Manichaean’^{an?} dichotomies that many have wished to impose on the play. What is more, this uncertainty is perfectly in accordance with the pervading Sophoclean (and Greek) conception of the gods as essentially unknowable: as it turns out, Antigone does not possess (nor does she claim insight into) any kind of ‘esoteric’ knowledge about the gods or their laws or the Beyond, that is inaccessible to other people; the νόμοι she believes in are sanctioned by tradition and known to everyone (they are suitably called καθεστῶτες νόμοι by Creon at 1113). All that can be known about these divine, *jenseitig* ordinances is not their origin (cf. 456–7 κούδεις οἶδεν), nor even their universal validity (cf. the ‘apophatic’, *qua* interrogatively phrased, tone of her objection to Creon’s edict: 521 τίς οἶδεν;), but simply that they exist.²⁰²

6.7.1 Second part: Prelude. The fourth stasimon

The fourth stasimon marks the conclusion of the first part of the play, which has dealt mainly with the fate of the last surviving member of the Labdacids. It is also a prelude to the second part of the play, where the hints (offered in the first part) of the future fate of the house of Creon — assimilation to the Labdacids — will be fully developed. It would seem, therefore, appropriate, that the mythological examples with which this song is replete²⁰³ should be equally applicable not only to the departing Antigone, who has dominated the first part and to whom the lyrics are

²⁰² I therefore take issue with Bowra’s (1944: 88) assertion that Antigone acts “from a clear knowledge of the divine will”.

²⁰³ Indeed, as Burton (1980: 129) and Brown [p. 202] remind us, this is the only song in surviving Sophoclean tragedy to consist solely of mythical examples.

expressly addressed, but also to the *oikos* of Creon, which is going to dominate the second part.

The applicability of the first mythical exemplum, that of Danae, to Antigone seems to extend over several levels. Danae too was enclosed in a tomb that was also her bridal chamber (947 *τυμβήρει θαλάμῳ*);²⁰⁴ the verb *κατεζεύχθη* on the one hand, which may be taken to allude to her sexual union with Zeus,²⁰⁵ and the phrase *χαλκοδέτοις | αὐλαῖς* (945-6) on the other, which could conjure up the *χάλκεος οὐδός* of Hades (cf. e.g. *Il.* 8.15, *Hes. Th.* 811), both illustrate the eerie combination of Eros and Hades in the case of Danae — a combination that is also prominent in Antigone's case.²⁰⁶ Moreover, the Chorus stress, rather vaguely, that the dread power of fate (951 *μοιριδία δύνασις*) cannot be escaped. What could Danae not escape? Her entombment, perhaps. But the rest of the strophe does not seem to favour such a view: for how is the mention of wealth, military power (952 *ὄλβος, Ἄρης*), towers and ships (954-5) to be seen as applying to a young girl like Danae? It is rather of her father, the king Acrisius, that one should think: he was the one whose *royal power* (now 952-4 do make sense) proved inadequate to provide him with a means of escape from what was fated, i.e. his being killed by his grandson.²⁰⁷ This mythic schema (murder of ascendant by descendant) is a further point of contact between Danae and Antigone: as Acrisius was killed by Perseus, so Laius was killed by Oedipus;²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ For the conflation of marital and funeral connotations here see Sourvinou-Inwood (1989b: 143); on the ambiguity of *θάλαμος* see n. 169.

²⁰⁵ See Seaford (1987: 111), Sourvinou-Inwood (1989b: 143).

²⁰⁶ Cf. Winnington-Ingram (1980: 101), Seaford (1990: 77). Sourvinou-Inwood (1989b: 145-6) would rather emphasize the differences between Danae and Antigone.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Goheen (1951: 69), Rohdich (1980: 196), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 101), although the latter applies the implied paradigm of Acrisius exclusively to Creon.

²⁰⁸ See Sourvinou-Inwood (1989b: 144, 146-7).

in the case of Antigone, this has much more poignancy, given the incessantly repeated pattern, in her oikos, of excessive family introversion that results in death. The parallels do not seem to end here, for there is also a parallel between Acrisius and Creon: as Acrisius incarcerated his daughter in the hope that he should escape his fate, so Creon confines Antigone thinking that by enforcing discipline he provides for the common σωτηρία. Acrisius failed, and this certainly does not bode well for Creon, the more so since we have already detected premonitions of his imminent sharing of the fate of the Labdacids (see esp. p. 389 and section 6.5.2).

The hints of Creon's forthcoming catastrophe are multiplied in the antistrophe: as has been remarked,²⁰⁹ this is the only one of this stasimon's mythical exempla to deal entirely with a male person, Lycurgus, and this must certainly evoke associations with Creon. I propose, however, to postpone until p. 419ff. the examination of this exemplum, and look at the third and last one, that of the Phineidae and their mother Cleopatra. The second strophe deals with the blinding of the Phineidae by their father's wife (unnamed; other sources call her Idaea or Eidothea);²¹⁰ clearly, the act is meant to be perceived as a case of *intrafamilial* violence, for the fact that Idaea / Eidothea was only the Phineids' stepmother is suitably obscured: all we hear of her is that she was married to their father (973).²¹¹ The phrase used, however, namely ἀγρία δάμαρ, is, as Sourvinou-Inwood (1989b: 154) has seen, a contradiction in terms, for ἄγριος is by definition the opposite of δαμάζεσθαι (whence δάμαρ). Paradoxical is also the nature of the crime she commits, namely the blinding of her (step)children: it is a deed of utter horror and cruelty, evidently dear to the savage god of bloodshed, Ares, who

²⁰⁹ E.g. by Winnington-Ingram (1980: 100), Sourvinou-Inwood (1989b: 151 with n.52).

²¹⁰ See Winnington-Ingram (1980: 105 n.43). For an overview of the available material on this myth see Sourvinou-Inwood (1989b: 153 n.62).

²¹¹ See further Seaford's (1990: 86) interesting remarks.

watched it (972 εἶδεν);²¹² at the same time, however, it is performed by means of a markedly *domestic* utensil, namely the shuttle (976): oikos and wilderness, civilization and cruel bloodshed are here intricately mixed.²¹³ Intrafamilial violence and an ambiguous position betwixt and between civilization and savagery: the parallelism with Antigone is, I think, evident. For she too, on the one hand, belongs to the royal race, i.e. to the heart of the *civilized community*, but on the other hand the first significant comment we hear about her by the Chorus is that she is the ὠμόν offspring of an ὠμός father (471-2)!²¹⁴ Moreover, intrafamilial violence, in the form of parricide and fratricide, has been a notorious feature of the house of Labdacus.²¹⁵

In the second antistrophe we have the positive counterpart of the cruel stepmother Ideaea / Eidothea: it is the suffering Cleopatra. The first thing we hear of her is that her children were “the offspring of an unwedded mother”, ματρὸς ἔχοντες ἀνυμφεύτου γονάν (980).²¹⁶ Why should Cleopatra be called ‘unwedded’ when she was married to Phineus? Clearly, Jebb’s rendering “hapless in her marriage”, accepted also by Winnington-Ingram (1980: 106), cannot stand: all the parallels he gives for the use of ἀνύμφευτος *tout court* in the sense of κακόνυμφος are bogus.²¹⁷ The

²¹² See Jebb (*ad* 970), Müller (p. 224) and Kamerbeek (*ad* 971-73). For Ares’ savage nature cf. esp. *Il.* 5.31 βροτολοιγέ, μαιφόνε.

²¹³ Cf. Segal (1981: 199), Sourvinou-Inwood (1989b: 154-5).

²¹⁴ Cf. Sourvinou-Inwood (1989b: 160). Cf. above, p. 372 with n. 102; p. 400 with n. 186.

²¹⁵ Winnington-Ingram (1980: 107-8) is again all too keen on detecting here exclusive allusions to Creon.

²¹⁶ For the text see below n. 220.

²¹⁷ Eur. *Tr.* 144 (δύσνυμφοι) and *Hipp.* 757 (κακόνυμφοτάταν) are plainly irrelevant, since the word in question is not a compound with α-privative; while in *S. Cf.* 1214 ἀγαμον γάμον the former term belongs with the latter, whose meaning it cancels,

function of ἀνύμφευτος here becomes clear when we take into account that immediately afterwards the poet devotes six whole verses to a strikingly emphatic description of Cleopatra's *pre-marital state*: she is referred to only with her *patronymic* Βορεάς, as is appropriate for an unmarried girl, whose *kyrios* is still her father; moreover, we are given a rather elaborate picture of her upbringing (984 τράφη) amidst her *father's* children the storm-winds (984 θυέλλησιν ἐν πατρώαις), in the distant caves (983) which were presumably her *father's* abode. What we are presented with here is basically a paradoxical regression to Cleopatra's pre-marital life, and therefore a *cancellation of her marriage*.²¹⁸ Now, Antigone too has been an 'unwedded bride', for, although there has been much talk about her prospective marriage to Haemon (see esp. 568-76), she is finally wedded to Hades, thus becoming, like the ἀνύμφευτος Cleopatra, ἄλεκτρος and ἀνυμέναιος (917). Her enclosure within her rocky tomb via which she is going to join at last

and so this is not a case of ἄγαμος *tout court* being used instead of κακόγαμος. Cf. Seaford (1990: 87). For a diametrically different treatment see D. Fehling, *Hermes* 96 (1968) 142-55, according to whom (p.155) "die Form νόμον ἄνομον ist ursprünglich Geminatio des Typs μήτηρ δύσμητηρ, in der das Präfix ἀ- synonym zu δυσ-, αἰνο-, κακο- ist." However, apart from the fact that Fehling himself is compelled to admit that in some passages the prefix ἀ- does have a negating force (p. 153), he also has to make use of extensive hair-splitting, in order to make some obvious instances of the negating prefix ἀ- fit his interpretation. When, for instance, he claims (p. 148) that "noch eindeutiger ist wohl ἄγαμον γάμον S. O.R. 1214, denn hier schlägt die Deutung 'eheliche Verbindung, die keine ist' dem Sinn der Stelle geradezu ins Gesicht, da die Verbindung doch nur allzusehr grausame Wirklichkeit ist", he chooses to ignore that the passage acquires its full poetic effectiveness only if ἄγαμον γάμον is taken to mean not κακόγαμον γ., but 'a marriage that negates, cancels itself'.

²¹⁸ For different interpretations see Sourvinou-Inwood (1989b: 155), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 106-7). Sourvinou-Inwood (1989b: 156-61) argues at length for an ambivalent presentation of Cleopatra here.

her natal family is parallel to Cleopatra's enclosure in the rocky cave that was her father's abode (983 ἄντροις, 985 πάγου); in both cases confinement within the natal family is closely associated with a negation of marriage and maternity. Especially in the case of the Labdacids, the negation of marriage is equivalent to self-destruction: the family, instead of perpetuating itself by means of marriage, perpetually returns to itself and eventually destroys itself by means of either incest or kin-killing. This parallel with the Labdacids' self-destructive negation of marriage would become more poignant with Seaford's (1990: 87) interpretation of the traditional reading ἀνύμφευτον γονάν at 980: γονά can mean both 'birth' and 'offspring',²¹⁹ and so ἀνύμφευτον γονάν associates the absence of marriage both with the mother Cleopatra and with her children, the Phineids (who, being blind, cannot marry);²²⁰ so, the negation of marriage would extend over the last two generations of the line (Cleopatra and her sons), thus exactly paralleling the case of Oedipus and Antigone.²²¹

²¹⁹ Cf. also Kamerbeek (*ad* 980), to the effect that γονά can be associated both with the generator (mother) and with the generated (child).

²²⁰ On the 'entanglement' of ἀνύμφευτον cf. Kamerbeek; *contra* H. Lloyd-Jones, *CR* n.s. 31 (1981) 174. There is, however, a difficulty here: whereas ματρὸς ἔχοντες γονάν can certainly mean 'having their origin (lit. 'birth') from a mother' (see Jebb *ad loc.*), it cannot possibly bear the second meaning 'being the offspring of a mother'. Read ἀχέοντες (with synizesis) instead of ἔχοντες: true, ἀχέω is an almost exclusively epic verb; still, it may be significant that the *only* tragic instance of its collateral form ἄχνημαι is at line 627 of our play! The ambiguity of the passage is now fully restored: "bemoaning their mother's (giving them) unwedded birth" (γονά 'birth' referring to Cleopatra's motherhood) and "bemoaning their (being the) unwedded offspring of (their) mother" (γονά 'offspring' referring to the Phineids). The 'pleonasm' κλαῖον ... ἀχέοντες is no less tolerable than the Homeric κλαῖον ὀδυρόμενοι.

²²¹ Cf. also Sourvinou-Inwood (1989b: 155) for a defence of the *lectio tradita*; Segal (1981: 182), Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 149) and, especially, Rohdich (1980: 192)

6.7.2 Antigone and Dionysus

What I am going to argue in this section is that Antigone's anti-polis attitude is implicitly expressed as a perversion of Dionysiac ritual and ideology. We have noted (p. 352) that one of the most prominent enemies of Thebes (Capaneus, but also implicitly Polyneices, whose name was the only one to be explicitly mentioned in the parodos and who, after all, was the one to motivate the assault) was compared, by the Chorus of Theban citizens, to a Maenad (135-6). Antigone has associated herself with this perverse, anti-polis Maenadism, since she has flouted the νόμοι of the polis by honouring the ringleader of the assault, who sought to destroy his native polis. As I indicated on p. 352, Capaneus' (and probably Polyneices') 'Maenadism' is an ironic symbol of their perversion of the values of the polis. The temporary reversal of order and all νόμοι is the typical feature of Dionysiac cult. To be sure, Dionysiac disorder is "order-creating": the orderly state of affairs is temporarily subverted, only to be established afresh; the experience of a short and controlled period of civic disorder helps the citizens acquire a renewed awareness of its opposite, namely order and law. Antigone, however, erred in that she attempted *permanently* to subvert the νόμοι of the polis: by championing Polyneices she has championed the eagle that almost devoured Thebes (110-26). Against Creon's struggle for collective σωτηρία, achieved only by collective observance of the laws, she pitted her defiance of all laws save those of Hades, and most importantly her desire to die: 72-6, 95-7, 460-8, 555, and especially 559-60 where her devotion to Hades is put in the extremest terms possible: "my soul has long been dead".²²² To use the terminology of the

are also noteworthy. This reading of the Phineids exemplum has been, to a large extent, suggested to me by Seaford (1990) and Sourvinou-Inwood (1989b).

²²² Cf. Benardete (1975b: 22).

first stasimon, she has chosen to be ἄπολις instead of ὑψίπολις. Her excessive 'Maenadism' leads not to a reassertion of the structures of the polis, but to their utter negation; it is therefore essentially anti-Dionysiac. This might in fact be another reason why words related to mental disorder are frequently used of Antigone (cf. especially Creon's use of Dionysiac vocabulary to describe Ismene's bewilderment when the latter decides to join Antigone: 492 λυσσῶσαν²²³ ... οὐδ' ἐπήβολον φρενῶν): her madness, quite unlike the healthy, salutary, pro-polis μανία of Dionysiac cult, is an unhealthy, self-destructive and, of course, anti-polis derangement.

As a corroboration of the above contentions I should adduce Heraclitus' famous fragment 22 B 15 D.-K.: ... ὡτὸς δὲ "Αιδης καὶ Διόνυσος, ὅτεω μαίνονται καὶ ληναίζουσιν. Despite the grave problems that beset the interpretation of this fragment, it seems that it is now generally agreed that what we are presented with here is not a personal conception, a novelty as it were, of Heraclitus, but a generally acknowledged truth.²²⁴ I suggest that the common denominator underlying the assimilation of Hades and Dionysus in the Heraclitean formulation is the reversal, in both cases, of νόμοι (in the widest sense of the word), i.e. of conventional logical taxonomies by which Man conceptualizes and categorizes the world; νόμοι give our world a concrete, palpable shape, they impose on it an intelligible order, a certain way of perceiving it and making sense of it. Dionysiac religion inverts this order, but in a strictly *logical* and *systematic* fashion: civic order is temporarily replaced by its exact opposite,

²²³ For λύσσα denoting madness instigated by Dionysus cf. e.g. E. Ba. 851, 977; Bierl (1991:66 n.68, 84-87).

²²⁴ Marcovich (1967: 254), Seaford (1994a: 321-2), as against A. Lesky, "Dionysos und Hades", WS 54 (1936) 24-32. I disagree with the approaches of Conche (1986: 158-60) and T.M. Robinson (1987: 86-7).

its mirror-image as it were.²²⁵ Hades, on the other hand, is the realm where the orderly principles that underlie the organization of a polis cease completely to exist, not to be superseded by other taxonomic forms, other principles of categorization, but by a state of affairs that is hardly conceivable or describable: the *locus* of Hades can at best be defined by a vague ἐκεῖ, as opposed to the ἐνθάδε, to the specificity and palpability of the Upperworld.²²⁶ Dionysus and Hades are the same in that they both challenge human rationality: the former subverts — in a systematic and ‘orderly’, i.e. order-creating, way — the categories by which the human mind (and, concomitantly, the polis) operates; whereas the latter challenges these categories in an immensely more drastic way, as it causes order not to be replaced by another kind of ‘negative’ order, but to disintegrate into utter chaos and ruin. This lack of any discernible principle of organization in Hades is, I suggest, the *extreme* and *permanent* form of the systematic reversal of current categories, polarities and distinctions imposed *temporarily* by Dionysiac cult. And this is a kind of *coincidentia oppositorum*, of essential similarity between two seeming opposites, that may have inspired the above quoted Heraclitean *dictum*.²²⁷

²²⁵ Zeitlin’s (1993: 151-3) remarks on the reversal of perceptual modes in Dionysiac cult are as far as one should go in the way of stressing Dionysus’ “otherness”; see the caveat of Henrichs (1990: 269).

²²⁶ For more on Hades as a ‘non-place’ — as the absolute ‘other’ *qua* complete negation of current categories — see Chapter Four, section 4.6.1.

²²⁷ On the principle of *coincidentia oppositorum* as expressed in this fragment see Kirk (1954: 121, 144). On Dionysus’ chthonic aspects see C. Metzger (*BCH* 68/69 [1944/45], 296-339); Bierl (1989: 53 with n.54), (1991: 130 with n.56). Add now two extremely important pieces of evidence: a) the bone tablet from Olbia (*SEG* 28 [1978] 659) that reads, *inter alia*, βίος θάνατος βίος [...] Διόνυσος or -νύσω; see in general M.L. West, *ZPE* 45 (1982) 17-29 and West (1983b: 17-8), albeit with no mention of Dionysus’ chthonic associations. b) the Thessalian golden leaves published by K. Tsantsanoglou & G.M. Parássoglou, *Hellenika* 37 (1987) 3-16, where Dionysus has clear eschatological / chthonic associations: illuminating discussion

I trust that the cumulative effect of the above evidence suffices to show that Antigone, in her devotion to Hades and her defiance of the polis, is a Maenad *sui generis*, a 'hyper-Maenad': she has sought to transform the temporary and salutary reversal of civic order in Dionysiac cult into an absolute and permanent suspension of the polis' institutions; instead of effecting the salvation of the polis, she has almost doomed it to destruction. As far as she is concerned, Dionysus has been completely identified with Hades.²²⁸ It would be interesting now to explore the ambiguity of this peculiar 'hyper-Maenadism'. We have already seen in detail on p. 398ff. that Antigone's position is ambiguous, interstitial, since she has both the approval and the condemnation of the polis. Interestingly, her anti-polis behaviour, that alienates her from the rest of the citizens (656 πόλεως ... μόνην)²²⁹ is described by Creon as νόσος (732) — and it is indicative that excessive (therefore potentially detrimental to the polis) maenadic frenzy

in C. Segal, *GRBS* 31 (1990) 411-9, and F. Graf in Carpenter & Faraone (1993: 239-58). Under the light of the new evidence the views of those who have denied Dionysus any chthonic associations whatsoever should be thoroughly reconsidered: e.g. Zuntz (1971: 407-11); M.S. Silk & J.P. Stern (*Nietzsche on Tragedy* [Cambridge 1981] 182-3).

²²⁸ On Antigone as a Maenad see also Bierl (1989: 48-9), (1991: 65-7) and Sourvinou-Inwood (1989a: 141, 146), (1989b: 151-3), although my treatment differs ^{from} ~~from~~ theirs in essential points. Antigone is explicitly called βάκχα νεκύων at *E. Pho.* 1489 [on which see Bierl [1991: 160]]: whether the passage is interpolated or not, the fact is that the idea of Antigone as a Maenad is not as outlandish as it may seem at first. Indeed, as Seaford (1990: 89) suggests, in Euripides' lost *Antigone* the heroine appeared at some point as a captive Maenad. For the not uncommon tragic phrase 'Maenad of Hades' see Seaford (1994a: 323 with n.178).

²²⁹ Even Antigone herself has to compromise the confidence she expresses at 509, and admit that she has been utterly abandoned (839-52, 876-82). Bennett & Tyrell (1990: 445-7 *passim*) offer an entirely different interpretation.

can also be described as a νόσος.²³⁰ On the other hand, according to Haemon's report (693-700) Antigone seems to have the polis' full support; the Chorus of Theban senior citizens similarly praise her for her overall stance (817, 836-8). This characteristic ambivalence of Antigone's position in relation to the polis, along with Creon's description of her anti-polis behaviour as νόσος, may be intended to evoke the pattern of the *pharmakos*.²³¹ For the *pharmakos* is precisely the person sacrificed to save the whole community from an actual or metaphorical disease (plague, etc.). We remember that the punishment initially prescribed for anyone who should violate Creon's edict was public stoning (36): and pelting (with stones or not) is, in myth, especially associated with *pharmakoi*. Even the mode of execution that is eventually imposed on Antigone may be seen as recalling the *pharmakos*-ritual: for Antigone is led out of the borders (773) there to be left to die, exactly as the *pharmakos* was.²³² At the same time, of course, being a member of the royal élite, she is an integral part of the polis,

²³⁰ Seaford (1994a: 317-8), (1995: 214). On the disease imagery of the play see Goheen (1951:41-4), Musurillo (1967:54-5).

²³¹ On the *pharmakos* ritual see Vernant (1972:117-31), Girard (1977:9, 94-8, 293-4), Bremmer (1983), Parker (1983: 24-5, 257-80), Burkert (1985a: 82-4), Kearns (1990: 335-6). That the *pharmakos*-principle operates in the *Antigone* has also been perceived by Segal (1981:175), Seaford (1994a: 349).

²³² This change in the mode of punishment also serves, of course, obvious dramatic purposes, and especially the 'marriage-in-Hades' of Antigone and Haemon. It is also a symbol of Antigone's excessive family introversion, as Seaford (1990) shows in detail. Moreover, as Loraux (1996:193-4 with n.95) argues, the phrase κατηρεφεῖ ἰτύμβῳ περιπτύξαντες (885-6) used of Antigone's imprisonment in the rocky tomb may recall the epic metaphor "cloak of stones" used of stoning (cf. *Il.* 3. 57 λάινον ἔσσο χιτῶνα; also Lycophr. 333 κρύψει κύπασσις χερμάδων ἐπομβρία, with the explanatory scholion *ad loc.* [l. 31 Scheer] καλύψει χιτῶν τις τῆ ἐπομβρία τῶν χειροπληθῶν λίθων). Kitto's (1956:166), Knox's (1964:72-3) and Rosivach's (1979: 23) interpretation of the commutation of penalty is highly speculative.

and this is yet another similarity with the *pharmakos* who, being an integral part of the city (indeed a king in some mythic versions), was expelled (or, in myth, put to death) by the entirety of the citizens, for the rest of the polis to escape destruction and find σωτηρία. In other words, Antigone, in her excessive, and ultimately anti-polis, 'hyper-Maenadism', has incurred the punishment that in myth is often imposed on, among others, the *enemies* of Dionysus (e.g. Pentheus, or Lycurgus):²³³ her 'hyper-Maenadism' is in fact 'anti-Maenadism'.

6.7.2.1. Creon the destroyer of the polis

As we are soon to discover, however, Creon's progressive assimilation to the Labdacids makes him also an enemy of the polis. Teiresias reveals that the champion of the polis, who has been steering the Ship of State through to σωτηρία (cf. 994, 1058), has in fact ended up being himself the cause of a νόσος that threatens to doom the polis to destruction: pollution has befallen the whole city, as the body of Polyneices still lies unburied, and the altars are being befouled by the carrion dropped on them by birds and dogs. The ominous shrieks of the birds and the failure of the sacrifices, both described in strikingly graphic detail (999-1011), leave no doubt about the utter disarray into which the religious order of the polis has been thrown. As the seer goes on to explain, Creon's folly has subverted cosmic order, effecting a complete reversal of Upperworld and Underworld: he has sent a living person down to the Underworld, whereas he has dishonouringly kept a dead man in the Upperworld (1068-73).²³⁴ The ultimate source of the νόσος that has afflicted the polis is Creon's own φρήν (1015), in other

²³³ See further Seaford (1994a: 311-8).

²³⁴ See Brown's (*ad* 1068-71) excellent comments. Also Sourvinou-Inwood (1989a: 146-7).

words his misjudgement, his mental error (cf. also the further imputations of folly directed against him by the seer: 1048-52, 1089-90).²³⁵ The parallel with Antigone's case cannot go unnoticed: she too has attempted to reverse the cosmic boundaries by trying to impose the νόμοι of Hades on the Upperworld; her actions too have been described as 'folly'; Creon is indeed becoming Antigone. For good measure we also hear from Teiresias that the implications of the νόσος caused by Creon are not only religious but also political: we have already heard from Haemon about the burgeoning civic discontentment (692-700), and his report is now confirmed by an undisputable authority: "all cities are subject to a tumult of hatred [ἔχθρα δὲ πᾶσαι συνταράσσονται πόλεις] when mangled bodies are 'hallowed' [in receiving 'burial rites'] by birds, wild beasts or dogs, which pollute the hearths (altars) of the city" (1080-3).²³⁶ Now, as Levine (1985: 181 §9n1) argues à propos of Theogn. 219-20,²³⁷ "the verb [ταράσσω] carries with it a sense of the citizens in turmoil in the manner of a turbulent sea, an image appropriate in the light of the 'Ship of State' metaphor.²³⁸ The poet is portrayed as keeping to a straight path when the citizens are stirred up".

²³⁵ Cf. Goldhill (1986: 177-8).

²³⁶ That these words are a formulation of a *general* truth has been perceived by Boeckh, whose interpretation won the agreement of Schneidewin and Semitelos (*teste* Jebb [p. 264]); unlike most commentators, I do not see here any allusion to the future expedition of the Epigoni. Accepting Reiske's ἔχθρα for the MSS ἐχθραὶ at 1080 greatly smooths the syntax and adds to the generalizing tone of the passage: cf. Benardete (1975b: 169 with n.128). As for ἐστιοῦχον ἐς πόλιν at 1083, I am not convinced that this cannot be a bold way of saying "to the hearths (altars) of the polis that contains them"; cf., somewhat differently, Benardete (1975b: 161 n.121).

²³⁷ μηδὲν ἄγαν ἄσχαλλε ταρασσομένων πολιητέων, | Κύρνε, μέσην δ' ἔρχευσ τὴν ὁδὸν ὥσπερ ἐγώ.

²³⁸ On the use of ταράσσω for a troubled sea Levine (*ibid.*) gives the following instances: *Od.* 5. 291; *Archil.* 105.1 W; *Solon* 12.1 W; *E. Tro.* 88, 692; *Ar. Eq.* 431.

Creon, who has been constantly seeing himself as the wise pilot of the Ship of State, is now in fact himself causing the political storm (1080 *συνταράσσονται*) that threatens to sink the Ship. This association of ritual pollution with political agitation is fully in accordance with the results of recent research on the notion of *miasma*; as especially Girard (1977: 28-31) and Parker (1983: 120-1, 125-6, 132) have demonstrated, *miasma* is but the metaphysical projection of the social tumult and disruption caused by internal strife.²³⁹ In our play Creon's failure on the *religious* plane (Polyneices lies unburied), indicated by the disturbance of *religious* order (bad omens, failure of sacrifices), is also manifested on the political plane as *civil* disruption (mutual hatred and internal strife: 1080) caused by Creon's policies.

With Creon's failure on the political plane is connected the theme of tyranny. We have seen how in his debate with Haemon he showed clear signs of tyrannical disposition (734-9; p. 386) — a feature that was fleetingly hinted at as early as 211 and 506. Now, however, it is the mouthpiece of the gods who confirms beyond doubt that Creon, far from promoting the cause of the polis, has turned out to be an unqualified tyrant (1056).²⁴⁰ Significantly, to the accusation of tyrannical practices Teiresias adds an imputation of *αἰσχροκέρδεια*: ironically, Creon is the man who once vented his anger against his political opponents' lust for illegitimate *κέρδος* (310, 312) and for *αἰσχρὰ λήμματα* (313). The association of tyrants with lust for personal gain, which entails public detriment (especially since it leads to *stasis*), is a *topos* of Greek political

²³⁹ Seaford (1994a: 92-105) has applied Parker's and Girard's conclusions to a concrete historical example, namely the Kylonian pollution: there, ritual pollution (*ἄγος*) and political agitation in the form of civil strife are parallel expressions of social disruption.

²⁴⁰ Di Benedetto (1983: 18 with n.51) is wrong in denying this line any importance whatsoever.

thought, as is demonstrated in detail by Nagy (1985: 36, 43-6, 52-3), (1990b: 181-2, 263-7).

The reversal is now complete: the conscientious ruler of the polis turns out to be its potential destroyer, whereas the subversive female; whom Creon has branded the ultimate menace to the well-being of the polis, wins, we may assume, divine approval. It is at this point that the relevance of the mythological exemplum of Lycurgus in the fourth stasimon (955-65) becomes evident: Lycurgus was persecuting the Maenads and preventing them from performing the rites of Dionysus.²⁴¹ It would be fair to assume that Lycurgus, as his name also implies,²⁴² is to be seen as a defender of the social order and the well-being of the polis; so, his opposition even to the temporary disorder that Dionysiac cult entails should be seen as a corollary of his excessive adherence to the idea of an orderly polis. Lycurgus' opposition to the temporary suspension of normal order in Dionysiac cult, as expressed especially in the liberation of *women*, must also be the point of the special emphasis that is placed on the fact that he taunted the god (956 κερτομίους ὀργαῖς, or 961 ψάυων ... ἐν κερτομίους γλώσσαις):²⁴³ as West (1983a: 63-4) points out,²⁴⁴ it seems plausible that in Aeschylus' *Lykourgeia* Lycurgus (as Pentheus in E. Ba.) taunted Dionysus for his

²⁴¹ Ὀν φίλαυλοι Μοῦσαι (965) = Maenads see Sourvinou-Inwood (1989b: 149).

²⁴² "He who fends off the wolf", the wolf symbolizing the outlaw, a threat to social order (Buxton [1987: 63-4]): this is one of the proposed etymologies of the Spartan lawgiver Lycurgus' name: Nagy (1990a: 272 n.13).

²⁴³ ψάυειν belongs to the vocabulary of blame. Jebb (*ad* 960ff.) aptly compares *Od.* 18.415 καθαπτόμενος ἀντιβίους ἐπέεσσι; cf. Nagy (1979: 225-6). As for κερτομεῖν see Garvie (1994: *ad Od.* 7.17).

²⁴⁴ On the basis, at this point, of the reconstruction of Aeschylus' *Lykourgeia* trilogy by K. Deichgräber, *Gött. Nachr.* 1938/9, I(3), 231-309, which I have not seen.

effeminacy;²⁴⁵ and I cannot think what else Sophocles' cryptic emphasis on Lycurgus' taunts might mean. If this is correct, then we have here yet another parallelism with Creon, who also directs his derisive remarks against his son's supposed effeminacy, his being inferior to women: 742, 746, 756.²⁴⁶ And we have already seen how Creon, like Lycurgus, envisages the female as a subversive anti-polis power that should by no means be indulged (p. 384): this attitude leads him to the extreme point of not allowing even for the temporary and reversible liberation of women, even for that healthy Dionysiac disorder that serves only to reaffirm, as a foil, civic order, and thus contributes to the welfare and safety of the polis. In this respect the anti-Dionysiac madness both of Lycurgus (959 *μανίας*, 960 *μανίαις*) and of Creon (765 *μαίνῃ*) is detrimental to the polis, inasmuch as the pro-Dionysiac madness of the Maenads is salutary to it.²⁴⁷

To recapitulate: Creon, despite his pro-polis ideology, is anti-Dionysiac, therefore anti-polis, because of his excessive 'anti-Maenadism'; whereas Antigone is equally anti-Dionysiac and anti-polis, but by reason of

²⁴⁵ See A. fr. 61 Radt: *ποδαπὸς ὁ γύννις*; and cf. e.g. Bierl (1991: 15 n.35). That the Lycurgus stanza must be based on Aeschylus' lost *Lycurgeia* is plausibly suggested by West (1983:64).

²⁴⁶ Cf. Winnington-Ingram (1980: 103). For a list of ancient sources and modern bibliography on the Lycurgus myth see Sourvinou-Inwood (1989b: 147 n.26); especially on the ancient tradition on Lycurgus' death see K.I. Merentites, *Platon* 16 (1957) 88ff.

²⁴⁷ Cf. Sourvinou-Inwood (1989b: 150-1). Winnington-Ingram (1980: 104) sees in the parallelism between Lycurgus and Creon only an allusion to Creon's resistance to the maddening power of *Eros*. Unlike Winnington-Ingram (1980: 102 n.37, 103) and Sourvinou-Inwood (1989b: 149) I should not press the parallelism so far as to suggest that the emphasis on Lycurgus' madness is meant to recall his killing of his son Dryas, and that this foreshadows Creon's own responsibility in the death of Haemon.

her perverse 'hyper-Maenadism'.²⁴⁸

6.7.2.2. Dionysus and the salvation of the polis

The central importance of the Dionysiac dimension in the transgressions both of Creon and of Antigone can be inferred also from the fifth stasimon.²⁴⁹ We recall that the first choral song of the play ended in a mood of Bacchic celebration (148-54): the perverse 'Maenadism' of the enemies of Thebes (134-6) has been averted, and the polis has been saved. Quite symmetrically, the present stasimon, the last choral song of the play is also a hymn to Dionysus who is now expected to restore the civic order, which has been doubly disrupted, this time from within, i.e. by Antigone and Creon, through their perversions of Dionysiac ideology: the entire polis (1141 πάνδαμος πόλις), say the Chorus, is suffering from a violent νόσος (1140-41), and the god must come as a healer (1142 καθαρσίω ποδί). Quite fittingly, it is Dionysus' pro-polis aspect that is stressed throughout the song. He is first invoked as the president (in his hypostasis as Iacchus) of the Eleusinian mysteries whose *public* character (1120 παγκοίνοις) is significantly brought up, and also as the inhabitant of his native Thebes (1122-25). Thus, in the first strophe, this hymn establishes Dionysus' identity as the god of the community, of the polis, the god who unites everyone in his worship.²⁵⁰ One may see here a healthy response to Antigone's 'hyper-Maenadic' adherence to the mortal communality of the παγκοίτας (810-11) Hades: the communality of Dionysus and the

²⁴⁸ On the catastrophic polarity between excessive Dionysiac liberation and excessive confinement of the female see Seaford (1990: 84-86), (1994a: 301-11).

²⁴⁹ Cf. Seaford (1995: 207).

²⁵⁰ Cf. e.g. Rohdich (1980: 209-14 *passim*), Seaford (1994a: 246).

Eleusinian mysteries grants salvation and liberation from Hades.²⁵¹ By contrast, the emphasis in the second strophe (esp. 1126-35) is on Dionysus' aspect as god of the wilderness, who grants women temporary autonomy from male control and has them roaming in the vast, untamed space beyond the boundaries of the polis.²⁵² Here we may detect, conversely, an answer to Creon's 'anti-Maenadism', i.e. his excessive control over women and the wild element they embody (cf. again 577-9); especially the reference to the Maenads' ritually proper madness (1151 *μαινόμεναι*) may recall Creon's repeated imputations of derangement against Antigone, and also his own eventual affliction by madness (765). Thus, the behaviour of both Antigone and Creon proves to be ultimately anti-Dionysiac, and therefore anti-polis, in that it fails to incorporate important elements of Dionysiac cult that are necessary for the *σωτηρία* of the polis: the former does not see that the order of the polis must be reversed only in order to be reaffirmed, and not in order to become a permanent state of affairs; whereas what the latter does not understand is that the women's temporary release to the wild is (let it be repeated) a means not of negating, but of reaffirming political order (significantly, the first antistrophe, after the description of the Maenads' wild revelry, ends in a reference to the polis of Thebes: 1135-6).²⁵³

²⁵¹ See Henrichs (1990: 265-6). Differently Segal (1981: 179-83, 203-4) and Zeitlin (1993: 155), who see the mention of the Mysteries in a more sinister light. It would be too far-fetched, however, to assume with Henrichs (1990: 266-8) and Bierl (1991: 130-2) that the reference to the mysteries here implies that a bright afterlife, like that of the initiates, is to be expected for Antigone, in contrast with the complete catastrophe that awaits Creon (similarly also Bierl [1989: 54]).

²⁵² See e.g. Segal (1981: 202-3), Seaford (1994a: 257-62, 301-11).

²⁵³ See on this last point Henrichs (1990: 266). Winnington-Ingram (1980: 110-6) sees the whole stasimon in too sinister a light; so also Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 158-9); for criticism see Seaford (1990: 88 with n.82).

6.8.1 Creon the Labdacid

Creon's assimilation with the Labdacids is now proceeding rapidly;²⁵⁴ the themes that we have identified as typical of that accursed oikos are now associated with Creon and his own oikos. To begin with, ἄτη which has been such a conspicuous trait of the self-destructive Labdacids (see esp. the second stasimon; cf. section 6.4.1), now gets the better of Creon, despite his earnest efforts to avert it (cf. esp. his speech from the throne, 184-91): at 1095-7 the man thanks to whom Thebes has found σωτηρία (1058, 1162) finds himself dangerously close to ἄτη — a suspicion that is eventually confirmed a few lines later (1260 ἄτην).²⁵⁵ What is more, he is now compelled to pay reverence to the infernal gods, Hecate and Plouton (1199-1200), like the self-destructive Antigone whom he himself once mocked for revering only Hades of all gods (777-80).²⁵⁶ He even abandons his last stronghold, namely his devotion to the νόμοι of the polis as a precondition for σωτηρία: at 1113-4 he surprisingly utters the keyword σώζειν not with reference to the collective σωτηρία of the polis ensured by the observance of its νόμοι, but to the καθεστῶτες νόμοι, i.e. Antigone's ἄγραπτα νόμιμα.²⁵⁷ The devotee of Hades finally manages to establish her defiance of the polis as the supreme νόμος, thus causing the erstwhile secure legislative framework of the polis to collapse. At the end of the play, Creon even prays

²⁵⁴ Cf. on this point the preliminary remarks of Segal (1981: 190).

²⁵⁵ Cf. Segal (1981: 189-90).

²⁵⁶ Cf. Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 195).

²⁵⁷ Cf. Knox (1964: 113), Dalfen (1977: 14). Pace Calder (1968: 401-2 with n.57) this, far from redeeming Creon, only rounds off his tragic surrendering to his adversary. I also disagree with Ostwald (1986: 152) who thinks that this surrendering does not damage the cause of the polis' νόμοι.

(like Antigone!) for death to come (1307–8, 1330–3); the safe harbour into which he once managed to lead the Ship of Thebes has now become an “Αιδου λιμὴν (1284);²⁵⁸ and the accumulation of words meaning ‘striking’, ‘shaking’, ‘trampling underfoot’, and ‘overturning’ at 1272–6, as well as Creon’s lament, in his last lines, that everything in his hands is askew (1344–5 λέχρια)²⁵⁹ underline the fact that the pilot of the Ship of State is no longer navigating it δι’ ὀρθῆς (contr. 163, 167, 178, 190, 636, 994 etc.).

What seals Creon’s fate, however, and completes the process of his assimilation to the Labdacids is another, even more striking fact: the fatal *introversion* that has destroyed the Labdacids now becomes also a trait of his own *oikos*. The αὐτο-words, that have been repeatedly used to indicate the Labdacids’ self destructive introversion, are now used to signal the operation of a similar process in Creon’s house too: Haemon’s suicide, the first fatal blow dealt to Creon’s family, is described with the phrase αὐτόχειρ αἰμάσσεται (1175), emphasized by the polyptoton αὐτὸς πρὸς αὐτοῦ (1177).²⁶⁰ Not surprisingly, a similar phrase, namely αὐτόχειρ αὐτήν (1315) is also used of Eurydice’s suicide, which completes the collapse of Creon’s *oikos*.²⁶¹

Significantly, the fact that these two deaths are instances of *intrafamilial killing* is repeatedly emphasized: the responsibility for them is put down to Creon. His first address to the Chorus, when he reappears on stage carrying the body of Haemon, makes this clear: both the κτανόντες and the θανόντες are ἐμφύλιοι, members of the same family (1263–4).²⁶²

²⁵⁸ Cf. e.g. Goheen (1951: 48–9), Musurillo (1967: 59).

²⁵⁹ Cf. Segal (1981: 179 with n.85), (1995: 128, 130); in greater detail Kirkwood (1991: 101–3).

²⁶⁰ Cf. Loraux (1986: 176–77).

²⁶¹ On these two occurrences of the word see Segal (1981: 189 with n.107).

²⁶² On the implications of the use of ἐμφύλιοι here see Loraux (1986: 178ff.).

He similarly pronounces himself culpable for Eurydice's death too: ἐγὼ γάρ σ', ἐγὼ σ' ἔκανον ... ἐγὼ (1319-20). The emphatic designation of Eurydice as Haemon's παμμήτωρ (1282) only underlines the disintegration of blood ties into the mayhem of intrafamilial killing that is ruining Creon's *oikos*, as it has destroyed the Labdacids'.²⁶³ A significant detail, fleetingly introduced by the Messenger in his report of Eurydice's suicide, completes the picture of the internecine disorder perpetrated by the man who was once the *kyrios* of an exemplary *oikos* (1161-4): moments before her death Eurydice cursed her husband calling him a παιδοκτόνος (1305) — not only because he has been responsible for Haemon's death, but also because, it is now revealed, he had also consented to the sacrifice of his other son, Megareus (1303)!²⁶⁴ Creon's house has, therefore, no hope of survival: Haemon's prospective marriage has been replaced by a 'marriage in Hades' (1240-1), while Megareus' κενὸν λέχος (1303),²⁶⁵ signifying his cancelled marriage, only confirms that the house is doomed to extinction, as its male

²⁶³ For further possible connotations of the word see Segal (1981: 194). Moreover, if the altar at which Eurydice committed suicide belonged to Zeus Herkeios (thus Jebb [*ad* 1301]) — to the very god, that is, against whom Creon had blasphemed at 487 — then the pollution of this locus of domestic cult would be a powerful indication, on the symbolic level, of the collapse of Creon's *oikos*: see Rehm (1994: 66 with n.25).

²⁶⁴ Cf. Rehm (1994: 67-8); somewhat differently Steiner (1984: 245-7). Whatever the version of the myth that Sophocles had in mind when he wrote the extremely concise, and cryptic, line 1303 (i.e. whether he was thinking of the heroic death foreshadowed at *A. Sept.* 477 or the self-sacrifice described in *E. Pho.* 930-1018 [the name here is Menoecus]), what matters for our case is that Megareus' death is Creon's own responsibility (contr. the Euripidean version in the *Phoenissae*). The identification of Megareus and Menoecus has been argued most fully by Vian (1963: 208-14); doubts have been expressed by Robert (1915: I. 356-9) and, more recently, Mastronarde (1994: 29).

²⁶⁵ Seyffert's emendation, accepted also by Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 149) after Pearson (1928: 190). Segal's (1995: 135) attempt to make sense of the *lectio tradita* should be committed to oblivion.

line has been virtually obliterated.²⁶⁶ Hades has indeed stayed his sons' weddings, as Creon had grimly foretold at 575.²⁶⁷

Nonetheless, not only has Creon been twice a παιδοκτόνος, but also Haemon, as we hear with surprise from the Messenger, has attempted to be a πατροκτόνος: before committing suicide, he drew the sword and attempted to *kill his father*, who escaped at the last moment (1231–4).²⁶⁸ Even so, however, Creon does not escape (virtual) death: at 1325 he calls himself “nothing more than a nobody” (cf. 1167 where the Messenger insinuated that Creon is a “living dead”), while at 1288 he says to the Exangelos: “you have killed a man already dead”. The last time we heard this kind of phrase was at 1030, when Teiresias described Creon's prohibition of the burial of Polyneices as “killing a man already dead”: finally, that is, the dead Polyneices, far from being ‘re-killed’ by Creon, causes the latter's death by means of a complex chain of events: Antigone is ‘killed’ by her dead brother (871); she in her turn ‘kills’ Haemon (751); and

²⁶⁶ As Else (1976: 50) points out, Sophocles, in order to achieve the parallelism between Creon and the Labdacids had to pass over a good deal of traditional material: in the *Oidipodeia* (fr. 1 Bernabé = F1 Davies; also Argum., p. 18. 6 Bernabé = Peisandros [FGrHist 16 F 10 Jacoby] *apud* schol. E. Pho. 1760 [I, 414 Schwartz]) Haemon had been killed by the Sphinx, whereas in *Il.* 4.394 (a text whose version of the story conceivably had the ring of authority for an Athenian audience) there is a mention of a son of Haemon, namely Maeon. So, the objection that Creon could remarry and have other children (Sourvinou-Inwood [1989b: 163]) is but a jejune rationalization: if Sophocles took the trouble first to present Eurydice on stage (which was dramatically unnecessary and unprepared for) and then to have her suicide reported in a markedly emotional tone, certainly it was not to suggest that her loss was not, after all, irreparable.

²⁶⁷ Cf. Segal (1995: 128), Rehm (1994: 69).

²⁶⁸ On the “father-son hostility” schema in the play cf. Sourvinou-Inwood (1989a: 145).

Haemon, with his death, eventually 'kills' his father (1167, 1288, 1325)!²⁶⁹ Thus, the Labdacids finally get the better of Creon's oikos in a twofold manner: first, Creon's oikos collapses under the burden of multiple intrafamilial killings, exactly like the house of Labdacus. Secondly, the very act by which Creon tried to 'rekill' Polyneices, namely the prohibition of burial, in fact recoils and results in the destruction of his own house as well as in his own (symbolic) death.²⁷⁰

6.8.2 The perpetuation of ritual disorder

Still, it might be argued that such an interpretation is too bleak. Surely the very destruction of Creon's oikos must be the means for the restoration of the perturbed order. This is, after all, what Teiresias prophesied: Creon had to pay for having violated ritual order by leaving Polyneices unburied, thus inflicting a νόσος (1015) on the entire polis and jeopardizing its safety; so he must sacrifice a member of his family in return for the dead he has been keeping in the Upperworld as well as for the living he has abnormally sent to Hades. Evidently we are here presented again with the theme of the *pharmakos*, which, in conjunction with the invocation of Dionysus to purify the polis from the νόσος that is besetting her (1140-5), may be taken to mean that the play has finally come to a closure. Order will be restored, if at the expense of the royal oikos.

²⁶⁹ On Creon's symbolic death see Hoey (1970a: 337-8), Rosivach (1979: 26 n.31), Segal (1981: 178), Loraux (1986: 183-4), Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 198), Blundell (1989: 142); wrongly Sourvinou-Inwood (1989b: 152 n.57). On the peculiarly Sophoclean theme of the dead (Polyneices) killing the living (Antigone, Creon) cf. e.g. *Aj.* 1026-7, *Tr.* 1163, *El.* 1420-1; Kitto (1956: 193-5), (1966: 180-8).

²⁷⁰ On Creon's eventual assimilation to the Labdacids see the preliminary remarks of Steiner (1983: 78), Loraux (1986: 183-4), Segal (1995: 131-2); more fully Zeitlin (1990: 150-5).

Nothing, however, could be farther from the truth. For, although Creon may well make amends for his violation of ritual order in the case of Polyneices (1196-1204),²⁷¹ nonetheless the sacrifices of Haemon and Eurydice, which are supposed to be the price Creon has to pay for his transgression, are themselves a new perversion of ritual that requires to be remedied! Haemon's death, to begin with, is a perversion both of wedding and of funerary ritual. The key phrase here is ἀκτέριστον ἀμφὶ παστάδα (1207), which Brown (*ad* 1207) paraphrases: "bridal-chamber that was no ordinary bridal-chamber and tomb that was no ordinary tomb."²⁷² For the conflation of marital and funerary motifs in Haemon's death, as in Antigone's (cf. also 1205 νυμφεῖον "Αἰδου, 1240-41), is an ironic indication that this is neither a wedding nor a funeral, but simply a perversion of both rituals.²⁷³ Eurydice's suicide now, for which Creon is again responsible (1319-20, 1340-1), is a perversion of another ritual, namely sacrifice: it is explicitly said that it took place on an altar (1301; the text is corrupt, but there is no reason why βωμία should be suspected),²⁷⁴ while notable is also the use of σφάγιον at 1291. To repeat: the deaths of Haemon and Eurydice, far from atoning for Creon's failure to perform the necessary (funeral) ritual for Polyneices, constitute themselves a perversion of ritual order.²⁷⁵ The purification that Dionysus has been invited to perform (1143) never actually comes, since Creon's *oikos* seems to be entrapped in a perpetuity of

²⁷¹ Attempts, like that of Bennett & Tyrell (1990: 455-6), to detect ritual impropriety in the burial are perverse: see Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 197), Foley (1995: 136).

²⁷² See also the excellent comments of Jebb (*ad* 1207) and Goheen (1951: 138 n.8).

²⁷³ Cf. Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 183-4), Seaford (1987: 120-1).

²⁷⁴ Cf. Segal (1981: 175 with n.75) who draws attention to the ancient scholion *ad loc.* (p. 275 Papageorgius): ὡς ἱερεῖον περὶ τὸν βωμὸν ἐσφάγη.

²⁷⁵ Cf. Di Benedetto (1983: 9-10), Rehm (1994: 70-1). For a different view of the absence of ritual closure in the play see Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 116-7, 159, 200-1), as against, especially, Rohdich (1980: 225-33 and *passim*).

ritual perversions that are impossible to remedy.

6.9.1 Conclusion: the impasse of the play in its political and epistemological aspects

We may attempt to define the central theme of the *Antigone* as the defeat of the polis and its institutions by the individual, self-contained oikos.²⁷⁶ As I have endeavoured to show, despite some early hints (e.g. 211-14, 509) that may function as warnings for an alert audience, Creon is not to be seen as a tyrant from start to end,²⁷⁷ but as an embodiment of the essential principle on which a polis is grounded, namely νόμος. His prohibition of the burial of Polyneices is directed both against a man who nearly destroyed his own homeland, and against the excessive autonomy of the individual household which may undermine the fundamentally collective nature of the polis. As Alexiou (1974: 19-22) and Seaford (1994a: 74-105), among others, have demonstrated, funerary ritual provided a perfect opportunity for the public display of the power and solidarity of great families; this was not only expressed in excessive lamentation or elaborate funerary monuments, but also in acts of (symbolic or actual) aggression, especially in persistent and emotionally loaded demands for violent revenge, which could easily lead to vendetta practices and so to the disruption of that concord which is indispensable for the very existence of the collectivity that is the polis. It was therefore imperative for the emergent city-state to

²⁷⁶ This has been seen most clearly by MacKay (1962: 166 and *passim*).

²⁷⁷ As he is e.g. by Reinhardt (1979: 68-9), Whitman (1951: 89-90), Kitto (1956: 138-78 *passim*), Gellie (1972: 34), Winnington-Ingram (1980: 125). More perceptively Podlecki (1966a: 359) remarks that “the poet captures [Creon’s] character in the very act of *becoming a tyrant*”; cf. also Goldhill (1986: 94-106 *passim*), Crane (1989: 111); notable are also Jordan’s (1979: 85 with n.133) and Di Benedetto’s (1983: 17-20) healthy, if extreme, reactions.

deprive the individual *oikoi* of such opportunities, so as to restrict their autonomy to the benefit of the community.²⁷⁸ In Athens such a tendency can be demonstrated to underlie the Solonian funerary legislation, which strictly prohibited excessive expressions of mourning in private funerals.²⁷⁹ It is in this context that Creon's prohibition of the burial should be seen: the interest of the community matters for the leader more than the prerogatives of the individual *oikos*.²⁸⁰ Nonetheless, in our play the polis' attempt to exert control on the autonomous house, by placing the collective *σωτηρία* above anything else, is deplorably vitiated: the *oikos*' adherence to the *καθεστῶτες νόμοι*, as opposed to the legislative framework of the city-state, is eventually justified by the gods themselves, whose *ἄγραπτα νόμιμα* Antigone obstinately claimed to obey.²⁸¹ We have been repeatedly reminded

²⁷⁸ On the antagonism between the old *γένη* and the polis see also Knox (1964: 76); Sorum (1981-82: 201-4); Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 98) with important further bibliography.

²⁷⁹ See Alexiou (1974: 14-5, 18-2), Bennett & Tyrell (1990: 444-5, 455), Foley (1993: 103-7), Seaford (1994a: 74-5, 78-92). Certainly, as Alexiou (1974: 19-21) and Seaford (1994a: 100-1) show, Solonian legislation privileged the family (*oikos*) at the expense of the larger family group, the *genos* or clan. However, in our play, as also in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, such nice distinctions are not maintained: what matters is the antinomy "family vs. city-state", which in the *Oresteia* seems to be resolved by the foundation of a polis-institution, the Areopagus (cf. e.g. Knox [1964: 77-8], Seaford [1994a: 74-105]), whereas in our play the antinomy leads to mutual destruction and therefore remains irresolvable.

²⁸⁰ The comparative material Foley (1996: 54-8) adduces in order to exonerate Antigone (to the effect that a girl is allowed to act as an honorary male when all her male relatives are dead), in fact weakens her case. For it seems that the female has such a right mainly in cases of vendetta, i.e. precisely of that civically disruptive practice that Solonian legislation sought to eliminate.

²⁸¹ Cerri (1979: *passim*, esp. 11-15, 33-49) indeed sees the opposition between written and unwritten laws (especially those concerning burial) as the most

that the Thucydidean Pericles (2. 37. 3),²⁸² Plato (*Leg.* 793a-d), Isocrates (12. 169), Xenophon (*Mem.* 4.4.19-25)²⁸³ and Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1373b and 1375a)²⁸⁴ all emphasize the importance of ἄγραπτα νόμιμα in civic life.²⁸⁵ Yet, although no one can deny the importance of such theoretical principles, the situation with which we are presented in our play is far more complex: for it is clear that Antigone's championing of these unwritten laws involved defending the eagle that almost devoured Thebes (110-26), while she herself, the last member of a doomed oikos, expressedly preferred Hades to the σωτηρία which by definition is the *raison d' être* of a polis (see again *Pl. Prot.* 322b, quoted in n. 59). On the other hand Creon, consistently faithful to the cause of the polis and its νόμοι, has transgressed against cosmic order, caused collective pollution and set the whole polis at ultimate risk. What is more, his oikos has been finally destroyed, as we saw,

characteristic manifestation of the opposition between the old γένη and the newly-established polis.

²⁸² Cf. also the testimony of [Lys.] 6. 10, whose remarkable similarities with *Ant.* 453-7 have been demonstrated in detail by Cerri (1979: 36-7); see in general Ehrenberg (1954: 37-47). Cerri (1979: 65-74), however, gives Pericles' defence of unwritten laws a meaning that radically differentiates it from the spirit of the *Antigone*.

²⁸³ It is an irony, however, that the unwritten and inviolable law defended by Socrates in this passage is the incest-taboo, i.e. precisely the law to whose violation Antigone, the champion of such unwritten laws, owes her own existence!

²⁸⁴ See Jebb (*ad* 454f.), Podlecki (1966a: 370), Bennett & Tyrell (1990: 446-7), Foley (1995: 141).

²⁸⁵ On this concept see the convenient overview by De Romilly (1971: 26-38) and, in greater detail, by Ostwald (1973). Knox's (1964: 94-9) view (espoused also by Di Benedetto [1983: 19 n.55] and Oudemans & Lardinois [1987: 168]) that in our play the term ἄγραπτα νόμιμα refers specifically to the ritual obligations to the dead is unnecessarily restrictive: one should not split hairs by insisting that, since Creon's decree was not written, Antigone's unwritten laws cannot be seen as generally opposed to the written laws of the polis (see Podlecki [1966a: 362-3]).

in a fashion disturbingly similar to that of the Labdacids. So, in our play it is not the anomic, unhealthy oikos that submits to the general interest of the polis, but the polis (as represented by the defender of its σωτηρία, Creon) that is reduced to the status of the anomic and unhealthy oikos.²⁸⁶

Still, we saw that Antigone is not free from ambiguities either. She declares herself the champion of oikos values and she sacrifices herself for her dead brother, but on the other hand she is all too ready to sever her blood-ties with her only living sibling. Being a true daughter of Oedipus (379-80, 471-2), she cannot maintain a healthy relation to her blood kin: she will be either excessively close to them (Polyneices) or excessively far from them (Ismene); either way, all she achieves with her excesses is to seal the fate of her whole race by dying a miserable death (895-6). The hereditary self-destructive folly of the Labdacids brings ruin upon their last member with the same inexorability as upon the previous generations (594-603). What is more, the same Theban citizens who praise her (692-700, 817-22) also berate her for her anti-polis action (853-6, 872-5), and Antigone herself is finally compelled to recognize that she has acted against the will of the citizens (907) and even to doubt whether her cause was approved by the gods (925).

The play clearly ends in an atmosphere of uncertainty and anxiety. Creon's seeming φρόνησις proves to be disastrous to the polis and contrary to the divine law; whereas Antigone's folly, albeit reflecting a blatantly anti-polis attitude, is finally sanctioned by the gods, although on the human level it is the agent of her catastrophe.²⁸⁷ What is more, Creon's φρόνησις, as his assimilation to the Labdacids proceeds, deteriorates into delusion and

²⁸⁶ Segal (1995: 120-1, 126-7, 129, 135-7) sees the final outpouring of ritual lament as signalling the male-oriented polis' defeat by the female and the oikos.

²⁸⁷ Blundell's (1989: 110) view that Antigone displays true (if unconventional) sense is untenable. That neither Creon's nor Antigone's ways are viable is stressed by Hester (1980b: 7-8).

folly (ἄτη). That this is the work of the gods, whose inscrutability underlines the limitedness of human knowledge, is admitted by Creon himself (1271-6), but is also demonstrated in a far subtler fashion. Teiresias prefaces his revelations by indicating that he is going to report the σημεῖα sent by the gods (998). As the famous Heraclitean fragment 22 B 93 D.-K. shows, σημαίνειν is *par excellence* the function of oracular responses,²⁸⁸ and this is made clear further in the seer's words: the noise of the birds' wings is οὐκ ἄσημος (1004), and it is characteristic of the seer's ability to interpret the gods' obscure signs that he is able to perceive the meaning of what would be for common people ἀγνώσ and βεβαρβαρωμένος (1001-2), or ἄσημος (1013), or not εὔσημος (1021).²⁸⁹ By contrast, Creon, who is in the grip of ἄτη (1260) like the Labdacids (584, 614, 625), is unable not only to understand the divine σήματα, but also to grasp the meaning of quite simple, human σήματα: his follower perceives the shrill cries coming from Antigone's tomb and then σημαίνει (1208) to Creon; however these same cries are for the deluded king ἄσημα ... βοῆς (1209)! Only when the disaster is irrevocable, and Creon holds his son's body in his hands, does everything become clear: it is only moments before the catastrophe that Creon, suddenly realizing what is happening, almost becomes a μάντις

²⁸⁸ ὁ ἄναξ, οὐ τὸ μαντεῖόν ἐστι τὸ ἐν Δελφοῖς, οὔτε λέγει οὔτε κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει. Heraclitus speaks specifically of Apollo's oracle, but the words can be taken as having a more general application. On the use of σημαίνειν for oracular responses see Nagy (1990b: 234-5).

²⁸⁹ Cf. Burkert's (1985b: 19) and Bushnell's (1988: 57) similar, but not identical, remarks. Even with Dawe's (1978: 112-3) deletion of 1013 and Reeve's (1973: 170) of 1021, my point remains unaffected: Teiresias' ability to make sense even of seemingly unmeaning signs is already implied in the antithesis of 1001-2 and 1004. For a defence of 1013 see Müller (p. 236), Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 140); of 1021: Müller (p. 237), Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (*l.c.*).

(1212);²⁹⁰ and the first σημεῖον that is clear to him is the μνημ' ἐπίσημον (1258) of Haemon's corpse — the funerary undertones of μνημα cannot fail to impress upon the audience's minds how tragically late has the situation become clear, ἐπίσημον, for Creon, and how appropriate was the Messenger's generalization that no one can be a μάντις even for things that are 'firmly settled', καθεστῶτα (1160).²⁹¹ The extreme emphasis on his folly — by Teiresias (1048-52, 1090), by the Messenger (1242-3),²⁹² by the Chorus (1098, 1103-4, 1259-60, 1347, 1353) and finally by Creon himself (1261-69) — show how Creon's sometime exemplary φρόνησις has been now reduced to the folly that has ruined the Labdacids (603).²⁹³

So, both Antigone, with her adherence to transcendent laws, and Creon, with his defence of polis legislation, are victims of self-destructive folly. The rationally organized polis has finally yielded to the dangerous inscrutability of the Beyond. What must be stressed with all possible emphasis is that the problem presented by the play was a very real problem in 5th century Athens. As Sourvinou-Inwood (1990) demonstrates in detail, religion was normally regulated and mediated by the polis; I have argued (p. 361) that Creon's identification of divinity with the polis must have been legitimate religious discourse in the Athens of Sophocles' time. Antigone's act was outwith the limits imposed on religious practices by the polis, and was therefore rightly regarded as disruptive and punishable. In other words, this appropriation of religion by the polis should be considered, in principle, a legitimate attempt to contain within the framework of the state, and to subsume under its authority, any practice that, emanating from devotion to traditional authorities (cult, prerogatives

²⁹⁰ Differently Bushnell (1988:62-3).

²⁹¹ Cf. Winnington-Ingram (1980:112); Oudemans & Lardinois (1987:199).

²⁹² Pace Meier (1993:194) the ἀβουλία here must be Creon's, not Haemon's: thus, correctly, Kamerbeek (*ad* 1242,3) and Brown (*ad* 1242-3).

of the *genos* etc.), could put into jeopardy the cohesion of the polis. At the same time, however, this is a dangerous secularization of beliefs and practices that are by definition transcendental:²⁹⁴ it is a fundamental premise of Sophoclean tragedy that human intellect (and, consequently, legal and moral codes) do not necessarily coincide with divine νοῦς. Granted, it is the gods of the polis who have saved Thebes from the traitorous assault of Polyneices, and who might therefore be identified with the interests of the polis (280–9); still, it is those same gods who demand the burial of the traitor, i.e. of the man who least of all deserved such a τιμή from the polis he almost ruined.²⁹⁵ It is ironical²⁹⁶ that the same Creon who invoked Zeus (304) to affirm his belief that the gods are the polis, should later blaspheme against Zeus Herkeios (487); it is precisely his confidence that all things divine can be clearly and fully known (cf. 1043 εἶ γὰρ οἶδ') that leads him to a second, graver blasphemy against Zeus at 1039–44.²⁹⁷ Divinity, however, extends beyond human rationality and human institutions: it is, as we said, transcendental, and therefore inscrutable and unknowable. Human beings, and their loftiest achievement, the polis (see again the first stasimon), are bound to live by that θεῶν δίκαια (369) which they cannot understand. Incompatible as they are with the polis' rational principles of organization, the gods *must* nevertheless be

²⁹³ On the collapse of Creon's reasoning see also Nussbaum (1986:62–3).

²⁹⁴ Cf. Segal (1981: 161): "In defining the polis in terms of its man-made, rational structures, Creon in fact exposes their fragility." Cf. also Gellie (1972: 52), Bing (1974: 98), Benardete (1975a: 175, 176, 183), Else (1976: 40), Dalfen (1977: 17), Jordan (1979: 91 n. 150), Segal (1986: 143–4) and see further above n. 69.

²⁹⁵ Cf. Benardete (1975a: 195): "The city uneasily exists between the gods who support it and the same gods who cannot sanction its unpurifiable impiety."

²⁹⁶ Cf. Dalfen (1977: 15).

²⁹⁷ On this second blasphemy see further Bing (1974). I disagree with Steiner (1984: 275–6) that this blasphemy reveals Creon's (momentary) insight into the transcendental character of divinity.

incorporated into its framework — an element of a-rationality in constant dialectic tension with the rationally defined categories of the polis. This, to be sure, is a paradox, which, exploited by tragedy, can become a deadlock, as it does in our play; and from this deadlock the *Antigone* (as well as the rest of Sophocles) provides no way out.²⁹⁸ All we can do is admit that our intellectual resources do not allow us to proceed beyond the simple realization that human and divine laws seem to be irreconcilably different and that, worse still, abiding by either of them does not guarantee avoidance of catastrophe. The theme of late learning with which the play ends (e.g. 1270 ὄψε τὴν δίκην ἰδεῖν, and 1353 γήρα τὸ φρονεῖν ἐδίδαξαν) is a reminder that knowledge comes, painfully (*if at all!*), only when it is too late and when no profit can be made of it.²⁹⁹ Thus, it is obvious that, despite the Chorus' assertion at 1347-8, τὸ φρονεῖν can be no real guarantee for happiness. It can simply provide a measure of human blindness.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁸ Cf. Steiner (1984: 262-63). For this deadlock, with emphasis on its ethical aspect, see Trapp (1996: 80-2).

²⁹⁹ Cf. Dawe (1968: 113), Coleman (1972: 26-7), Reinhardt (1979: 91-2); more analytically Di Benedetto (1983: 6-9); excellent treatment in Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 200).

³⁰⁰ That the unknowability of divinity is a central theme in the *Antigone*, as it is in Greek religion generally, has been emphasized also by Sourvinou-Inwood (1989a: 137, 148), (1989b: 164), (1990: 303) and by Oudemans & Lardinois (1987: 198-9); cf. also Goheen (1951: 93-8), Porter (1987: 64-5). For a different, but very interesting approach see Rohdich (1980: 221-3).

CHAPTER SEVEN

EPILOGUE:

HUMAN RATIONALITY

AND DIVINE SUPRA-RATIONALITY

IN THE *OEDIPUS TYRANNUS*

Der König Oedipus hat ein Auge zuviel vielleicht

F. Hölderlin

7.0.1 Preliminary remarks

This thesis has dealt primarily with a specific aspect of Sophoclean tragedy, namely the limitedness of human knowledge as manifested especially in its juxtaposition with the transcendent and essentially unknowable divine *noos*. At the same time, however, I have tried to offer a more or less comprehensive interpretation of Sophoclean tragedy as a *whole*. This is mainly because the problem of the relationship between human and divine knowledge is so pervasive in Sophocles, that it can be examined only in its wider context, in the framework provided by the plays taken both as individual entities and as parts of a more or less coherent dramatic universe, of a tragic world view.

The *Oedipus Tyrannus*, however, is in this respect an exception, as the problem in question is presented in it in such a glaringly obvious manner that it can be separated from its context and studied relatively independently; so, a full analysis of the play may (thankfully) be omitted. References to relevant secondary literature will also be limited to a minimum, as my aim is not to offer a complete picture of the *status quaestionis* regarding this play, but merely to offer a brief account of the

epistemological aspects of the *OT* in an attempt to round off my discussion of the relation between human and divine knowledge in Sophoclean tragedy.

7.1.1 Human rationality and divine knowledge: temporary illusion and ultimate truth

One of the major driving forces of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* is the clash between, on the one hand, the limitedness of rational modes of thought (deductive, analytical, etc.) and, on the other hand, the overwhelming superiority of knowledge acquired ‘apocalyptically’, as it were, i.e. through a conferment of divine vision upon a human agent; such knowledge is entirely independent of human logic, and goes far beyond the domain of human *ratio*.¹ Ugolini (1987: 26) speaks of “due grande modelli gnoseologici”: on the one hand “il modello ‘razionalistico’, antropocentrico, indiziario, sicuro delle proprie possibilità”; it is the model adopted by Oedipus and Jocasta. On the other hand, there is “il modello sacrale-diviantorio” represented by Teiresias and ultimately by Apollo. The human intellect tends, as if by default, to enshrine the whole of reality within its logically and systematically constructed categories — to make sense of the entire world by way of those categories. In order to maintain the stability of this subtly articulated system, the human mind must not allow into it any supra-rational / praeter-rational elements — that is, any elements that might transcend those categories and thus undermine their purportedly all-encompassing character. Thus, the

¹ For the antithesis “seeming vs. being” (“*Schein* vs. *Sein*”) in the play see Reinhardt (1979: 94–134 *passim*); further relevant literature and criticism in Ugolini (1987: 24–6). For the centrality of the theme of knowledge in the play see the extensive treatment of Hay (1978), notwithstanding its unnecessarily heavy psychoanalytical slant.

human *ratio* will simply dismiss such elements as non-existent: that was the way of Parmenides, who pronounced that what can be talked of and thought of must necessarily exist (28 B 6 D.-K.) — the obvious implication being that what cannot be known simply does not exist.²

There are many instances of this tendency of the human mind in the *OT*. The most striking of them is probably the Teiresias scene in which the ‘seeing’ Oedipus (413, 419), an embodiment of human intelligence at its best,³ becomes involved in a struggle to subsume the unknowable under a rationally constructed mental framework. First, he attempts to elicit information about the gods’ plans from an unwilling Teiresias, the prophet who, though blind, “sees the same things as Apollo” (284-5). When this attempt fails, Oedipus, instead of admitting defeat, is led by his over-confidence in the power of his *ratio* to presume that his intellectual excellence can dent the validity of the ‘apocalyptic’, supra-rational knowledge conveyed by oracles and prophecies.⁴ In support of his contention he has a particularly strong argument: his intelligence has saved Thebes from a terrible crisis — the Sphinx, an embodiment of

² This stems from Parmenides’ position that only the knowledge of the Being is genuine, whereas what does not exist cannot be known (28 B 2 D.-K.); in other words, knowledge without an existent referent is impossible (28 B 8. 34: ταῦτόν δ’ ἐστὶ νοεῖν τε καὶ οὐνεκεν ἔστι νόημα; 28 B 3: τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστὶν τε καὶ εἶναι; 28 B 2. 7: οὐ γὰρ ἂν γνοίης τό γε μὴ εἶν...; 28 B 6. 1: χρῆ τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ’ εἶναι ἔμμεναι). The last passage is correctly translated by Kirk, Raven & Schofield (1983: 247) as “what is there to be said and thought must needs be”, whereas Coxon (1986: *ad locc.*), followed by Wyatt (1992: 113 n.2, 118-9), construes the passages in a manner that seems to me unduly to strain the Greek. For further analysis see Gallop (1984: 7-9, 26-7), Barnes (1979: 170-1); cf. Ugolini (1987: 28 with n. 23).

³ On Oedipus’ rational intelligence see Knox (1957: 18-20); Ugolini (1987: 24-31 *passim*); for a detailed examination of the relevant vocabulary see Vegetti (1983: 24-5).

⁴ On the “distanza impermeabile” separating Oedipus and Teiresias from the epistemological point of view see further Ugolini (1987: 28-30).

irrational forces indomitable by human intellect. And that was an occasion ^{ον} ~~in~~ which Teiresias' mantic powers failed conspicuously to render their badly needed services to the community (390-96). The riddle was solved neither with divine help nor with the use of oracular signs, but by the sheer intelligence of Oedipus (cf. 398 γνώμη κυρήσας οὐδ' ἀπ' οἰωνῶν μαθών) — a blatant, and often-noted, departure from the Priest's attribution, in the prologue, of Oedipus' success to divine succour (38): προσθήκη θεοῦ.⁵ However, as the audience already know, and Teiresias points out, this very salutary act has in fact been the origin of another crisis, namely the plague caused by the presence in the land of the polluted killer of Laius (cf. e.g. Teiresias' remark at 442). The apparently city-saving intellectual excellence of Oedipus turns out to be a deceptive veneer that can barely conceal his utter ignorance (of his origins, of his deeds concerning his parents) — ignorance that ultimately proves potentially detrimental to the city.⁶

Significantly, as well as ironically, the Sphinx's *riddle* is said by the Chorus to have been *oracle*-like (cf. 1200 χρησμοδόν) — the *tertium comparationis* being, evidently, the human intellect's fundamental inability fully to comprehend modes of communication that do not exactly conform with the established categories of human rationality. Conversely, Teiresias' prophetic utterances come across as *riddles* (cf. 439

⁵ See further Segal (1995:149).

⁶ The theme of the intelligent saviour of the city who turns out to be its ignorant destroyer is recalled at the final tag of the Chorus (1524-30): ὅς τὰ κλείν' αἰνίγματ' ἤδει ... Admittedly, Dawe (following Ritter and Teuffel) has powerfully argued for the excision of these lines: (1973: 266-73); (1982: *ad* 124-30). But the theme is already present in the (undoubtedly Sophoclean) lines 1198-1200; and it is not unlikely that 1524-30 as we have them now preserve the spirit, if not the letter, of the original (probably anapaestic) lines. Lefèvre (1987:47) rightly defines the play's gist as "auch der Klügste irrt", but unduly tries to demonstrate Oedipus' 'Irrtum' by resorting to rigorous logical scrutiny, as if *O* were a detective story. For a similar error cf. Bröcker (1971:28-34).

αἰνικτά; see also 483–6), which Oedipus conspicuously fails to solve and thus to live up even to his partial and illusory success in outwitting the Sphinx (cf. 440–43).⁷ “Riddle and oracle come increasingly to look like mirror images of one another”.⁸ In both cases Oedipus is faced, and fails to come to grips, with what lies beyond the boundaries of human mental categories, whether that is the riddle of the Sphinx or the prophecies of Teiresias. For even his success in defeating the Sphinx, far from demonstrating the superiority of his exceptionally acute γνώμη over such praeter-rational elements, only confirms their (rationally unverifiable, but all too real) validity: ironically, Oedipus’ reward for his intelligence was a (potential) reminder of his complete and utter ignorance — the hand of the queen of Thebes — which simultaneously brought about the oracle foretelling incest. The time-old predictions concerning Oedipus’ own and his family’s fate (predictions hammered in afresh by Teiresias at 408ff. and 449ff.)⁹ come to pass, with a horrifically rigorous precision, in spite of Oedipus’ confidence that he can avert them by utilizing his prime intelligence. No matter how consistently he has tried to prevent the realization of the Delphic predictions by deploying his intellectual resources in full (note especially his description of how carefully he shunned Corinth by calculating its location by the stars: 795),¹⁰ he has

⁷ Cf. further Calame (1996: 20, 22–3).

⁸ Segal (1981: 238) with further interesting remarks. Cf. also Segal (1993: 106–7).

⁹ For a sensitive (and representative of ‘Tychoism’ at its best) solution to the problem why Oedipus does not immediately integrate the knowledge imparted by Teiresias in this point see Bain (1979). The majority of scholars — e.g. Weil (1968: 243–4), Lefèvre (1987: 41 with n. 18) — prefer to see here self-delusion or intellectual blindness.

¹⁰ The Greek τεκμαρούμενος (Nauck: ἐκμετρούμενος codd.; see Lloyd-Jones & Wilson [1990b: 98]) specifically suggests careful calculation; on its rationalistic connotations in the intellectual milieu of the 5th century see below n. 18. Jebb’s (*ad* 794ff.) exegesis (keeping the MSS reading) is misleading (“visiting it [sc. Corinth] no more, but only thinking of it as a distant land that lies beneath

only managed to bring them to pass, down to the last detail: he has murdered his true father in an accidental (i.e. incalculable!)¹¹ meeting. Thus, despite his seemingly clear sight, he proves to be blinder than the (only physically) blind seer (302; 370-3; 412-13; 419);¹² and his carefully calculated attempts to invalidate the workings of fate intimated by oracles and prophecies turn out actually to have been but vehicles carrying out, in an entirely unconscious way, the inscrutable plans of the gods.

Another significant feature of the play is that the revelation of the horrendous truths about Oedipus extends over two successive stages that coincide with equal nodal points of the plot; at both these points a character (notably Jocasta) attempts, in a mood of triumphant (but woefully misguided) rationalistic self-confidence, to disprove the validity of the 'apocalyptic' knowledge imparted by oracular divination.¹³ The first of these structural junctures is at 707ff.: Jocasta tries to calm her alarmed husband by pointing out to him that, as no human being possesses prophetic power, Teiresias' revelations that make Oedipus culpable of the murder of Laius should cause no concern. Ironically, she prefaces this attempt by saying that she will provide σημεῖα (710) against the trustworthiness of oracles — σημεῖα being precisely the mode of communication used, according to Heraclitus (22 B 93 D.-K.), by the

the stars in this or that quarter of the heavens"): Even if the phrase contains grim humour, as Dawe (*ad* 795) thinks (keeping the MSS reading too) — which is but a hypothesis based on modern taste — it is still indicative of Oedipus' intellectual struggle to prove the futility of oracles. — For an intelligent reconstruction of Oedipus' ratiocination in fleeing Corinth see most recently Gregory (1995: 142-43). I disagree with scholars like Weil (1968), Lefèvre (1987), or Erbse (1993) who see self-delusion, or even mere dullness, in Oedipus' attempts to evade the oracle.

¹¹ Kane (1975: 196).

¹² Cf. on this paradox W.C. Helmbold, *AJPh* 72 (1951) 293-300.

¹³ See on this matter Kane (1975: 195, 201).

Delphic god himself!¹⁴ Evidently, Jocasta's implication is that the praeter-rational knowledge imparted by oracles can be substituted by human rationality: as Bushnell (1988: 79) has put it, "Jocasta's *sêmeia* [...] amount to a kind of anti-oracle."¹⁵ Indeed, she adduces seemingly irrefutable corroborative evidence: Laius himself once received an oracle that predicted death at the hands of his own son — but the oracle proved wrong, since the child was left to die shortly after his birth, while Laius was killed by bandits at a crossroads; and if the oracles proved to be wrong once, why should they be trusted on the present occasion? The mention of the crossroads, however, only increases Oedipus' alarm, as it comes dangerously close to constituting incriminating evidence against him. Thus, Jocasta has in fact achieved exactly the opposite of what she intended to achieve, namely a demonstration of the unreliability of praeter-rational knowledge: Oedipus seems for the first time to take seriously into account the fact that the divine plans extend immensely beyond the all too narrow confines of human knowledge (cf. his agonizing question at 738, esp. the keyword *βεβούλευσαι*).¹⁶ Hence his suspicion lest the *blind* seer be, after all, the one who has *clear vision* (747 *βλέπων*), and lest it have been in fact upon himself that Oedipus heaped, *unawares* (745 *οὐκ εἰδέναι*), all those dread curses he pronounced against the murderer (cf. 246–51¹⁷).

¹⁴ Cf. further Segal (1995: 149). On *σημαίνειν* as indicating especially the communication of an inner vision from a superior vantage point (notably that of the supreme authority, God) to humans see Nagy (1990b: 164–66).

¹⁵ Cf. also Kane (1975: 208).

¹⁶ See further Segal (1995: 186–7) for the use of *βουλεύεσθαι* here. Oedipus of course has, as yet, no idea about the full implications (patricide and incest) of the inscrutable divine plan.

¹⁷ Lines 246–51 are deleted by Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990a) after Wecklein; see Lloyd-Jones & Wilson (1990b: 86). I would rather follow Dawe, however, who transposes these lines with 269–72: for detailed argumentation see Dawe (1973: 221–6); (1982: *ad* 222–75).

Jocasta, nonetheless, insists on her attempts to disprove the validity of praeter-rational (oracular and prophetic) modes of cognition (943ff.). Her ratiocination is basically the same as previously: if Oedipus, she complains, had been able to make good use of his mental faculties (cf. 916 ἔννοους), he would have easily inferred that, since the oracles proved wrong once, they can have no claim on universal validity (cf. 915-16, and esp. that watchword of 5th century rationalism, namely τεκμαίρεται);¹⁸ therefore Oedipus should not worry about a seer's intimations of his being the murderer. That this rationally constructed argument should occur in the context of a prayer to Apollo is not only ironical, but also very significant: Jocasta has come to the god's temple not in fear lest the oracle given to her husband come true, but only because, as she says, her own attempts to talk him out of his (supposedly) irrational fears have failed (918-21); and in wishing for some "release free from pollution" (921 λύσιν ... εὐαγῆ) she does not ask the god to prove Oedipus free from the *miasma* of committing patricide and incest (for this possibility has already been rationally excluded, as the relevant oracles have been 'proved' wrong), but rather to free him from the (seemingly) baseless fears that make him blind to, and prevent him from taking effective steps

¹⁸ Cf. Ugolini (1987:27). Thucydides and the Hippocratic corpus provide the most brilliant instances of the logical process of τεκμαίρεσθαι: see most recently G. Rechenauer, *Thukydides und die hippokratische Medizin* (Hildesheim 1991), 20-3 (with examples also from Alcmaeon and Herodotus). To the instances there cited one may add e.g. Hippocr. *de Arte* ch. 12 (6. 24. 6, 11, 15 Littré); see further J.-H. Kühn & U. Fleischer, *Index Hippocraticus* (Göttingen 1989), 777-78 (s.v. τεκμαίρομαι) and cf. Knox (1957: 122-4), Kane (1975: 197-8, 206-8 with n. 26), Vegetti (1983: 26-7, 30). Ironically, the δυστέκμαρτος character of the identity of Laius' murderer was established by Oedipus himself already at the outset (109); this should severely qualify Jocasta's claims to be able to make logical inferences about such matters. — For other watchwords of 5th century rationalism in the play, such as ζητεῖν, σκοπεῖν, ἱστορεῖν, etc. see Knox (1957: 116-38).

against, the very real pollution that besets Thebes — the plague (cf. her similar concerns at 635–6). In other words, what Jocasta asks Apollo to do is to negate himself by confirming the, rationally ‘proven’, erroneous nature of his own prophecies! Her prayer, while *apparently* evincing an upsurge of religious qualms, paradoxically appears as the extreme manifestation of her a-religious rationalism: it self-consistently divests the divine domain of its transcendental character and subordinates it (or, at best, annexes it) to the taxonomic framework created by human rationality.

Indeed, this parody of a prayer seems to be answered: Jocasta’s argumentation regarding the untrustworthiness of ‘apocalyptic’, oracular knowledge receives unexpected support from the tidings of Polybus’ death which ‘prove’ that the oracles predicting Oedipus’ killing of his father were wrong (again, the crucial piece of information that seemingly undermines the authority of oracles is referred to by the term σημαίνειν [933 σημῆναι; 957 σημῆνας]). Quite self-consistently, then, she proceeds to quell Oedipus’ fears that he may unwittingly commit incest, by suggesting (albeit, admittedly, in not too clear a fashion) that, since one half of the oracle has proved wrong (Oedipus did not kill his father), there are no reasonable grounds to believe that the other half should come true (cf. 984–7).¹⁹ Again, however, Jocasta’s syllogism proves precisely the opposite of what she intended to prove: for it is exactly the Corinthian messenger’s eagerness to join Jocasta in allaying the king’s anxiety that leads, eventually, to the revelation of Oedipus’ true parentage — especially after the final stage of Oedipus’ investigation, namely the cross-examining of the Herdsman who exposed him. This

¹⁹ As Winnington-Ingram (1980: 182) aptly remarks, the Messenger from Corinth appears to answer Jocasta’s prayer to Apollo (911ff.) —and in the most paradoxical way, by the destruction of Apollo’s credit! Reinhardt (1979: 257 n. 23) points out that Jocasta’s logic is faulty; but the almost polemically rational tone of her argument is probably an indication that we are not meant to note its speciousness.

final stage which most definitely demonstrates the illusory character of human knowledge is, not surprisingly, prefaced by σημήναθ' (1050). The σημεῖα (1059) provided so far will lead, so Oedipus thinks, to a happy revelation of his true identity — an anticipation reflected in the jovial mood of the last stasimon, 1086ff., in which the Chorus (ironically) view themselves as 'seers' (1086), i.e. agents of divine knowledge!²⁰ Nonetheless, divinity remains as inscrutable and unknowable as ever; and the attempts of us humans to decipher the divine σημεῖα, our only hope for an insight into genuine knowledge, are bound to remain problematic. To quote Segal (1995: 149), "the interpretation of 'signs' or 'evidence' brings human knowledge into its most problematical juxtaposition with divine knowledge. The noun *semeia*, 'signs', and the verb *semainein*, 'designate by signs', occur throughout the play at the points where communication among men brings something unknown and potentially dangerous from the gods." Thus, almost as soon as Jocasta has exclaimed: ὦ θεῶν μαντεύματα ἴν' ἐστέ (946-7; cf. also 953, 964-72), exulting over the triumph of her rational argumentation (cf. 973), her mental construction collapses, as she realizes the horrendous truth. That she, a champion of human rationality, should come to discourage Oedipus from pursuing any further his rational investigation into his origins (1056-7, 1060-1, 1064, 1066, 1068) — cf. the similar attitude of Teiresias, the vehicle of supra-rational knowledge (316ff.)! — is an indication of her tremendous internal change now that she realizes the futility of her best attempts to subordinate (in an *avant la lettre* Cartesian fashion, as it were) the divine to the categories created by the human intellect.²¹ The human intellect is

²⁰ Cf. *El.* 472ff.

²¹ The often-quoted 977-83 do *not* (pace Knox [1957: 48, 155, 176-80], Segal [1981: 211], Vegetti [1983: 30] and others) show an irrational Jocasta who believes in nothing but chance (977 τύχης, 979 εἰκῆ). For one thing, what Jocasta denies here is (pace Buxton [1996: 41-2]) not the reliability of human rationality, but of

inherently limited, and cannot possibly cram within its confines, let alone invalidate, the transcendent, all-encompassing divine *noos*.

We are, therefore, presented with a paradox essential to the OT: human rationality struggles to create a fully intelligible world, where all non-rational elements (such as a transcendent divinity) would be excluded, so that reality would be accommodated in neat logical taxonomies and categories; still, in this struggle the human *ratio*, instead of establishing a self-contained mental framework with which fully to make sense of the world, ends up functioning, unawares, as the *agent* or *vehicle* of the transcendent supra-rationality of divinity. As Knox (1957: 48) has put it, “the man who rejected prophecy is the living demonstration of its truth: the rationalist at his most intelligent and courageous the unconscious proof of divine prescience.” This is a measure of how limited the human knowledge is in the Sophoclean dramatic universe.²²

foreknowledge (978 πρόνοια), which in this specific context comes down to *prophetic* / *oracular* foreknowledge (cf. 857-8). For another, εἰκῆ (979), qualified by ὅπως δύναίτο τις, by no means precludes the employment of rational means; cf. Reinhardt (1979: 124): “εἰκῆ means, not ‘frivolously’, but disregarding the mysterious and obscure, not opening up the depths which make life problematic, for it is the gods who make man problematic”. As for Oedipus, even when at 1080 he calls himself “child of Chance”, he nonetheless goes on *rationally* to investigate his origins: see Kane (1975: 204 n.24), *pace* Bowra (1944: 208), Knox (1957: 179-81), Kitto (1961: 142-3). Burkert (1991: 25) is much closer to the truth when he remarks that, in this unintelligible world, all Man can do is to construct his own interpretative models and then inevitably to discard them.

²² The paradox of the characters’ impeccable *logic* leading them away from the truth due to their limited *perspective* is further explored by Kane (1975: 190-92). See also (from a slightly different angle) Buxton (1996: 43 with n. 16).

7.1.2 The collapse of dichotomies

To repeat: *rational scrutiny of divinity is a self-defeating process*. We have just seen how over-confidence in human rationality ends in all the starker a realization of its limitedness. We shall now see how this excessive rationalism can lead to a subversion of the very categories the human *ratio* itself has set in order to organize, and make sense of, the world. Rational intelligence can wreak chaos as easily as it can create order: the line that separates these two fundamental opposites is an extremely fine one.

Relatively early in the play (447-62) Teiresias describes how Oedipus' past deeds have caused fundamental dichotomies to collapse: to begin with, Oedipus has thrown the orderly structure of his family into utter disarray and confusion. Family structure (in exogamous societies) is normally a rigorous system constituted of quite sharp distinctions, whereby each member is allowed to have one, and one only, kind of relation ('value') with each one of the other members of the system; thus, if a member is e.g. father to another member, he cannot have any other 'value' in relation to that particular member — e.g. he cannot be his / her brother. Oedipus, however, has anomalously acquired a double 'value' in relation to each and every member of his family: he is *both* a father *and* a brother to his own children-siblings (457-8); *both* a son *and* a husband to his mother-wife (458-9); finally, he is *both* issued from, i.e. structurally subsequent to, his father *and* functionally identical with him: for, by annihilating his father, Oedipus replaces him both in his function as Jocasta's husband (459-60 τοῦ πατρὸς ἢ ὁμόσπορός τε καὶ φονεὺς)

and in his function as father of Jocasta's children (cf. also 260-2).²³ This anomalous fusion of the paternal with the filial identity is brought up, in a *tour de force* of Sophoclean irony, by Oedipus' own remarks at 137-41 (note especially the telling combination αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ at 138 and the reflexive ἐμαυτόν at 141) and at 258-65; besides, the recurrent use of αὐτόχειρ (231, 266) to designate the murderer of Laius "points", as Bernadete (1966: 110) perceptively remarks, "to the murderer as one who killed in his own family".²⁴

Nevertheless, the distinctions that constitute the family structure are not the only ones that have been irretrievably confounded by Oedipus' deeds: the confusion extends to the most fundamental, even elementary constituents of human reason, namely numbers, and especially the self-evident bi-polar distinction between *one* and *many*, or singular and plural. This is especially well exemplified in the question of the exact number of the person(s) who killed Laius. 'One', Oedipus argues, cannot be the same as 'many' (the so-called 'law of non-contradiction'), so if it is true that Laius was killed by a multitude of highwaymen, then he may rest assured that he is free of the charge of regicide and of being the *miasma* destroying Thebes (839-47). That Oedipus' future should depend, as Dawe (*ad* 845) puts it, on elementary mathematics is one of the most striking and significant features of the play.²⁵ Still, even elementary mathematics do not seem to work: paradoxically, the killer appears to be both 'one' and 'many', as the question is confusingly clouded by ambiguity and self-contradiction. The matter is introduced in a deliberately ambivalent manner: at 122 Creon mentions "bandits" in the plural (cf. 107), whereas at 124 Oedipus speaks of only one bandit; cf.

²³ See further the excellent analysis by Bernadete (1966: 110).

²⁴ I have offered a detailed analysis of the implications of the use of αὐτόχειρ and other αὐτο-words in Chapter Six, *passim*, esp. section 6.1.1.

²⁵ Cf. also Knox (1957: 151 with n. 141, 154 with n. 148); Buxton (1996: 45).

also 139 ὁ κτανών; 225 ἀνδρὸς ἐκ τίνος; 231, 266 τὸν αὐτόχειρα; 236 τὸν ἄνδρα ... τοῦτον; etc. And whereas the Herdsman had mentioned a *plurality* of highwaymen (cf. 122-3, 715-6, 839-51), it transpires that the murderer of Laius was only *one*: ‘one’ and ‘many’ appear again to be bafflingly interchangeable.

This constant shift from singular to plural and vice-versa makes little sense unless we realize that *in Oedipus’ case ‘one’ does indeed become ‘many’*:²⁶ we have just seen how Oedipus acquires, anomalously, a double ‘value’ in the system of his family relations (both a father and a brother of the same children, etc.). The flashback on Oedipus’ supposed origins at 771ff. serves further to play up the antinomic tension between ‘one’ and ‘many’ in Oedipus’ identity: his certainty about what he considered to be his true, and only, identity (son of Polybus and Merope), is seriously challenged when a drunken man jibes him as a ‘false’, ‘supposititious’ (780 πλαστός) son. As Oedipus can never allay the doubts caused by that remark (785-86),²⁷ he can never be sure whether he really is who he thought he was or whether he is someone else; his formerly *single* identity now splits into a *double* identity — or two alternative identities both of which are (to Oedipus’ mind) equally false and equally true. So, again Oedipus can be both ‘one’ and ‘many’ — which means that he actually belongs to neither category. Ironically, when his painstaking rational investigation leads him to establish, at last, a *single* identity (he discovers that he is beyond doubt the son of Laius and Jocasta), the

²⁶ See, most recently, Segal (1981: 214-16 with n. 21) with the extensive literature there cited; also Segal (1993: 101, 103). Segal (1981: 216) offers a conclusion similar to mine: “Oedipus founds his innocence on a basic law of noncontradiction, the fundamental logic in man’s apprehension of reality. Here, however, noncontradiction gives way to a fantastic, irrational ‘logic’ of paradoxes in which opposites can in fact be equal and ‘one’ can simultaneously be ‘many’”; cf. also Zeitlin (1990: 139); Segal (1993: 118).

²⁷ See further Gregory (1995).

mind-bending vacillation between ‘one’ and ‘many’ does not end: for as soon as the new single identity emerges out of the previous double identity confusion, it becomes clear that this single identity is in fact constituted by a series of *dédouplements* of roles (father and brother, husband and son etc.). Thus, a paradigmatically rational procedure (the investigation for Laius’ murderer) causes the very foundations of human logic (such as the simple assumption that ‘one’ cannot be ‘many’) to collapse into chaotic disarray; in this respect, the *OT* could be justly named an ‘anti-detective’ story, insofar as it very seriously questions, instead of celebrating, human rationality.²⁸ It is one of the many ironies of this play that the man who could solve the riddle of the Sphinx by discerning the ‘oneness’ behind the apparent multiplicity (what appears to be triple — four-footed, two-footed, and three-footed — is in essence only one)²⁹ proves unable to establish a single system of family relations, and thus becomes entangled in a destructive multiplicity of family roles

²⁸ Burkert (1991) is thus justified (partly, at least) in comparing *OT* with Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose*, where Man’s use of intellectual constructions in order to comprehend the supposed order of the universe is pronounced a useful, but meaningless tool.

²⁹ True, the content of the riddle is never mentioned in the play. Still, it is relatively safe to assume that the riddle as it is known to us had, by the time the *OT* was written, become integrated into the traditional story: to the famous Vatican cup (ca. 470 BC) depicting the Sphinx addressing Oedipus and beside her the words [κ]αὶ τρί[πων] (*ARV*² 451,1; *LIMC* VII.1, p.4 no. 19; cf. Fraenkel on A. Ag. 1258, Bremmer [1987b: 57 n. 26]) add now the even earlier (520/10 BC) hydria from Bâle (coll. Cahn 855) discussed by Moret (1984: I. 39-40 and II. pl. 23). Edmunds (1981b: *passim*, esp. 18-21) has argued that the Sphinx is a late addition to the Oedipus legend; this view, however, has been effectively refuted by Bremmer (1987b: 46-7 with n.26), and even if one accepts it, this does not in the least diminish the Sphinx’s importance for the interpretation of the Sophoclean play. After all, as Edmunds (1981b: 20) himself remarks, “[the Sphinx] motif served to characterize Oedipus as a man of intelligence, and this characterization had special significance in the Athens of Sophocles’ day”.

and functions, thereby creating utter chaos out of what should have been a carefully articulated and organized structure. As Kirk (1986: 17) says, à propos of the paradox implicit in the name 'Oedipus', "the man who knows, *oide*, the truth about the three ages of man as contained in the Sphinx's riddle is the very one who rejects that truth by confounding the three ages in his own case..."³⁰

The extensive use of verbal ambiguity and, especially, of dramatic irony in this play is a corollary of this anomalous fusion of distinctions essential to our making sense of the world. Ambiguity and irony consist in a collapse of the correspondence between *signans* and *signatum*, between what the characters mean by what they say, and the true application (graspable only by an informed audience) of what they say — which is a reflection of that deepest and most disturbing collapse of fundamental categories and dichotomies that define human life.³¹

7.2.1 Conclusion: riddles, oracles, and dreams

It is significant that the Chorus, with their common-sense frame of mind, react to Teiresias' revelations about Oedipus with horrified disbelief (483-511) and utter ἀπορία (486); they even doubt the trustworthiness of 'apocalyptic' knowledge as communicated through human agents (499-

³⁰ On this confusion of the three ages see also Benardete (1966: 116) and especially the brilliant article by J.-P. Vernant, "From Oedipus to Periander: Lameness, Tyranny, Incest in Legend and History", *Arethusa* 15 (1982), 19-38; cf. also Goldhill (1986: 212), Segal (1995: 141). On the collapse of distinctions in general see the exhaustive discussion of Segal (1981: 207-48 *passim*). Further on the connotations of the name of Oedipus see Knox (1957: 149, 183-4); Hay (1978: 27-35).

³¹ Cf. also Reinhardt (1979: 103-4), Bushnell (1988: 3-4). Probably the most thought-provoking treatment of the significance of ambiguity in this play is Segal's (1981: 241-44, esp. 242), who also provides further bibliography.

506) — not unreasonably, since what the Delphic oracle prophesied (and Teiresias reiterated) is simply beyond the boundaries of human understanding.³² Oedipus' reputation (496 φάτις) for σοφία (cf. 509), continues the Chorus, has been established by means of *rational proof* (510 βασάνω), and this fact could be assailed by *no rational proof* (494 βασάνω)!³³ Even more significantly, Jocasta (980-2) points out that such acts as the incest prophesied by the Delphic oracle are most likely to occur in dreams, i.e. *on a plane of consciousness wholly different from the one dominated by rational thought*. In other words, the kind of knowledge contained in oracles is of such an alien order that the common processes of the human intellect are incapable of grasping it in its fullness. It is a different kind of consciousness (such as the one manifesting itself in dreams) that is required for the praeter-rational knowledge of oracles to be properly comprehended. But dreams (regardless of the fact that they may come true) are also, in Greek thought, stock symbols for things utterly immaterial (see LSJ s.vv. ὄναρ I. 2; ὄνειρος I. 2): human rationality, in its tendency to accept as true only what fits into its neat categories, is unavoidably tempted to dismiss the praeter-rational as merely immaterial, unreal and unsubstantial like a dream — i.e. to do exactly what our 'Cartesian' (or 'Parmenidean') Jocasta does.³⁴

To conclude: the essence of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* as seen from an epistemological point of view can be summarized in a typically Sophoclean paradox (already intimated on p. 447): divine signs (oracles, prophecies and such like) are the only way for humans to gain insight

³² Or, as Segal (1981:241) has put it, "too horrifyingly specific to be understood".

³³ This is not to suggest that the word βάσανος *per se* carries any rational connotations; but surely in our context such connotations must be recognized.

into genuine and unimpaired knowledge. These signs are reminders that there is much more to reality (even everyday reality) than its purely rational aspect: wherefore pure *Vernunft* — the means predominantly used by humans in order to make sense of the world — cannot possibly provide a sufficient tool to organize and comprehend reality. But even when the only alternative mode of cognition available to humans, namely divine knowledge, is communicable to them, the human mind, precisely because of its fundamental limitedness, proves unable to grasp the essentially alien order of that knowledge: such knowledge is as little susceptible to rational scrutiny as dreams — which automatically consigns it to the realm beyond the boundaries of human intellect, or rather beyond the boundaries of existence, since the human mind tends to regard as inexistent what cannot be rationally accounted for. When, however, Oedipus witnesses what he has established as inexistent come to existence, as his horrendous deeds are finally revealed, then the very foundations of human logic collapse: the non-Being becomes Being.³⁵ What appeared unreal up to this point turns out to have been only too real all along. The truth has come to light *despite* the rationally and empirically constructed certainties that the human mind rests content to regard as the sole realities. Oedipus therefore has to discard the faculties of *sense* and *thought* that create such disastrous illusions: his self-blinding indicates his desire to disable other *sensory avenues* as well (cf.

³⁴ On Parmenides cf. above n. 2. That Sophocles should make his deluded heroine express *quasi*-Parmenidean thoughts is argument enough against Champlin's (1969: 342-45) attempt to detect Parmenidean influences in Sophocles.

³⁵ That the Being cannot coincide with the non-Being was most emphatically proclaimed by Parmenides (28 B 7 D.-K.) — significantly, the only Presocratic who (in a thoroughly un-Greek fashion) claimed *to have insight into the realm of divine knowledge* (28 B 1), and was, it seems, criticized for that by Empedocles (31 B 3). See further Introduction (section 0.2.4).

1386-89),³⁶ while it seems to blunt his *thinking* (φροντίς) too (1389-90)³⁷ — a bitter reversal of his earlier taunts against Teiresias' blindness as affecting also the seer's mind (νοῦς) and ears (ὠτα) too (371).³⁸ In the end of *Oedipus Tyrannus* the limitations of human knowledge are painfully demonstrated, as its elementary constituents (the functions of perceiving and thinking) disintegrate into nothingness; whereas genuine knowledge, possessed exclusively by divinity, remains as remote and inscrutable as ever.

³⁶ Cf. Calame (1996: 23-5).

³⁷ That thought and knowledge are necessarily preceded by vision ('eye-witnessing', as it were), so that 'seeing' is sometimes almost equivalent to 'knowing' (cf. e.g. ἰδεῖν—εἰδέναι), is hardly a new concept (a fact that Benardete [1966: 119] seems to have failed to realize): see in the first instance Snell (1924: 26-7); for a detailed discussion of this equation in Sophocles see Coray (1993: 11-18); in the *OT* : Champlin (1969: 339-42). An identification of seeing with knowing is indicated, according to Segal (1995: 150), by the paronomasia εἶδε — εἰδώς at 119. Lefèvre's (1987: 48) —and others' —interpretation of Oedipus' self-blinding as a metaphor of his intellectual blindness ignores how this act is justified by Oedipus himself in e.g. 1386-90.

³⁸ Cf. Vegetti (1983: 25 with n.1).

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