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CHORAL ODES OF EURIPIDES: INTERPRETATIVE PROBLEMS AND MYTHICAL PARADIGMS
by James K. Aitken.
A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts.
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ABSTRACT

There is still a tendency to defend Euripides against a charge of inserting entirely irrelevant choruses into his tragedies, but not even the statements of Aristotle (*Poetics* 1456a25ff.) can be used to convict him of such an act. Nevertheless, certain odes do present problems of interpretation, and especially those that recount mythical tales. Four tragedies containing such odes are considered.

The second stasimon of the *Helen* presents the myth of Demeter and Persephone, which, through the use of related imagery, is seen to be the paradigm for Menelaus' rescue of Helen from Egypt and foretells the couple's successful escape. The extreme textual difficulties of the final stanza of the ode, however, means that it is unlikely that any certain conclusion on this ode will ever be achieved.

In the *IT* Orestes' capture of the effigy of Artemis and his rescue of Iphigenia result in both an assertion of the superiority of Apollo's oracular commands and the procurement of Orestes' kingship in Argos. These two elements are reflected in the third stasimon, in which the tale of Apollo securing his position at Delphi, as Orestes did at Argos, also conveys the superiority of his status.

At first the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, described in the third stasimon of the *IA*, appears to be the very paradigm that Iphigenia will not be able to follow, but as the play proceeds it becomes clear that the sacrifice she undergoes is a form of wedding, and the contrasts between a wedding and the sacrifice lend to the tragedy of her situation.

Finally, in the *Electra*, the chorus describe various heroes of legend, whom Electra and Orestes seem to take as their role models in the murders of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra. Neither of the characters, however, has the appropriate heroic qualities, and, although they commit the murders, they are unable to fulfil the roles of their heroic counterparts. Therefore the paradigm fails and thereby serves to comment upon the tragic nature of the murders.

In all the plays Euripides uses mythical paradigms, in a more developed form than in the Pindaric odes, to reflect the action on stage such that the action is a repeat of the myth. In this way the myth becomes "historical" and, as in Thucydides' concept of history, a paradigm for common human experience.

CHORAL ODES OF EURIPIDES:

INTERPRETATIVE PROBLEMS AND MYTHICAL PARADIGMS

BY JAMES K. AITKEN.

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR

THE DEGREE OF MASTER OR ARTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AJP   American Journal of Philology

Anth. Pal.   Preisendanz, C. (ed.). *Anthologia Palatina: Codex Palatinus et Codex Parisinus*

BICS   Bulletin of the Institute for Classical Studies

CP   Classical Philology

CR   Classical Review

CQ   Classical Quarterly

GR   Greece and Rome

HSCP   Harvard Studies in Classical Philology

LEC   Les Études Classiques

LSJ   Liddell, H.G., R. Scott, H.S. Jones and R. Mckenzie (eds.). A Greek-English Lexicon (with supplement)

MH   Museum Helveticum

OCT   Oxford Classical Texts

REG   Revue des Études grecques

TAPA   Transactions of the American Philological Association

YCS   Yale Classical Studies

ZPE   Zeitschrift fur Papyrologie und Epigraphik

Fragments:

DK   Diels, H. and W. Kranz (eds.). *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*

IG   *Inscriptiones Graecae*

L-P   Lobel, E and D. Page (eds.). *Poetarum Lesbiorum fragmenta*

PMG   Page, D.L. (ed.). *Poetae Melici Graeci*

INTRODUCTION

As the priest of Nemi waiting for his slayer, Euripides has often been posited as a modernist, in its most pejorative sense, ready to be condemned for any apparent flaws in his art as one chafing against the bit of his received tradition. He is seen as one discontent with conventional morality and religion as well as with the inherited form of the tragic art[1]. When commentators experience difficulties in interpreting Euripidean tragedy, it is often too easy for them to attribute any incongruities to an inability of Euripides to handle an art form with which he was no longer in sympathy. In a similar way, one critic laments that if a modern writer such as Ibsen or Shaw introduces innovations into the dramatic form, we proclaim him as a genius, but if Euripides does so, we convict him of abusing the tradition of Aeschylus and Sophocles[2]. This thesis is concerned with one element of the tragic form with which Euripides appears to struggle: the chorus, and in particular the choral odes.

The choral odes are notoriously elusive, and no one critic agrees with another as to the precise role of the chorus in Greek tragedy. The situation is complicated in Euripides when the odes are criticized from a similar viewpoint to the plays in general, and are considered as representing an obsolete art form that intrudes upon Euripides' new dramaturgy. Hence, Norwood proposes that "Euripides, one cannot but feel, more often than not produces his odes by bracing himself to a professional duty"[3]. The implications of the picture of Euripides as an unwilling successor to the tragic throne underlie other interpretations too. For example, Décharme, in defending the chorus of the *Phoenissae*, whose songs do not, he feels, arise directly from the action or

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[1] In this, the centenary year of Sir James Frazer's The Golden Bough (vol. 1, The magic art and the evolution of Kings. London, 1891), from which I compose my analogy, we are but four years away from the centenary of Verrall's Euripides the Rationalist, a book whose arguments are imaginative, if not on occasion preposterous, but whose sentiments the critic is still forced to confront.

[2] Arrowsmith, W. "A Greek theater of ideas." p.6, in J. Gassner (ed.). Ideas in the drama. New York and London, 1964.

[3] Norwood, G. Essays on Euripidean drama. London, 1954: 41

express the "requisite emotions", asks, "Was not Euripides...the victim of necessity which forced him when he took up a subject which had already been dealt with by Aeschylus to conceive his chorus quite differently from the manner in which his predecessor had conceived it?"[4] One cannot, however, excuse the poet for sacrificing quality for the sake of originality. The answer, rather, should be sought elsewhere.

A seminal study of the Euripidean chorus, published in 1916, was made by Phoutrides[5], who warned against any interpretation of the chorus as the mouthpiece for Euripides' personal opinions and insisted that the plays should primarily be viewed as the work of a dramatist: "A master stroke in the dramatic art of Euripides should not be obscured by the hypothesis of religious self-confession"[6]. This study, if vitiated somewhat by subjective opinions as to where Euripides does express his own 'philosophy', includes statistics on the proportion of lines devoted to the chorus and to the rest of the drama by each of the three major tragedians. These indicate that although Aeschylus employed the chorus to by far the greatest extent, Euripides gave a slightly greater part to the chorus than did Sophocles, and therefore did not diminish its role at least in comparison to his older contemporary[7]. Parry has made invaluable progress on the study of this area and has shown both how the choral structure stands within a tradition of lyric choral odes, as those of Pindar and Bacchylides, and how a careful evaluation of the structure of the odes may clarify one's understanding of their dramatic importance[8]. More recently Gredley has evaluated the significance of the choruses of old men to indicate that experimentation on the part of Euripides did not result in a decline in the quality of

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[4]Decharme, P. Euripides and the spirit of his dramas. tr. J. Loeb. New York and London, 1906: 303

[5]Phoutrides, A.E. "The chorus of Euripides." HSCP 27, 1916: 77-170

[6]ibid. p. 117

[7]ibid. pp. 79-82

[8]Parry, H. The choral odes of Euripides: Problems of structure and dramatic relevance. diss. unpublished. Univ. of California, 1963. See also his book, The Lyric poems of Greek tragedy. Toronto and Sarasota, 1978.

his plays[9].

Nevertheless, Euripidean criticism is still plagued by inferences drawn from the pages of the *Frogs* and the *Poetics*. Aristophanes' concern was that of a caricaturist and the debate as to how far one can detect a serious message in his work is incessant. In the *Frogs*, however, there is no direct reference to the relevance of the chorus. The issue between the two tragedians appears to be very largely concerned with the moral effect of their plays on the audience (e.g. 11. 1007-10, 1325-28) and with the intellectualization of the tragic outcome by Euripides (contrast the praise of Aeschylus at 11. 1491-95). The only parody of his choral lyrics is concerned with his use of metre (11. 1309-63) in contrast to Aeschylus' concatenations of long words. Although Euripides loses the contest in that play, he does come a very close second, which is barely a condemnation of his art. For, Dionysus even admits that he is unable to decide between the two (11. 1411-13), expressing that he actually enjoys Euripides, and therefore must leave the decision to Pluto, whose scales are initially balanced between the two tragedians.

Aristotle is more problematic. In a passage (1456a25ff.) that is open to various interpretations, both in its internal meaning and in its application to the extant Euripidean tragedies, Aristotle seems to suggest that the chorus integrate itself within the action as much as any of the actors:

καὶ τὸν χορὸν δὲ ἕνα δεῖ ὑπολαμβάνειν τῶν ὑποκριτῶν, καὶ μόριον εἶναι τοῦ ὅλου καὶ συναγωνίζεσθαι μὴ ὥσπερ Εὐριπίδῃ ἀλλ' ὥσπερ Σοφοκλεῖ.

There are various difficulties, to which I shall return, in this passage, but it should be noted that it is wholly unclear whether this is referring to the odes themselves or, which would seem more appropriate, to those occasions when the chorus or coryphaeus engaged in conversation with the actors. Aristotle, however, then continues by discussing the odes (τὰ ᾀδόμενα):

τοῖς δὲ λοιποῖς τὰ ᾀδόμενα οὐδὲν μᾶλλον τοῦ μύθου ἢ ἄλλης τραγῳδίας ἐστίν· διὸ ἐμβόλιμα ᾄδουσιν πρώτου ἄρξαντος Ἀγάθωνος τοῦ

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[9] Gredley, B. "Choruses in Euripides." BICS 20, 1973: 164-5

τοιούτου.

These three sentences are regularly linked with 1449a17, in which
Aristotle states that Aeschylus lessened the part of the chorus
(τὰ τοῦ χοροῦ ἠλάττωσε), the inference being that these two
sections represent a four-fold development in the nature and
purpose of the chorus[10]:

(i)   Aeschylus: subordination to some extent of the choral role
      to that of the actors;

(ii) Sophocles: refined integration of the chorus;

(iii) Euripides: poorer and less successful integration;

(iv) Later poets: no relevance of the chorus; i.e. ἐμβόλιμα -
      songs that have not been written for that particular play.

Else[11] emphasizes a distinction between choruses of no
relevance and ἐμβόλιμα; a distinction that I do not see as
possible. The connection διο indissolubly relates the ἐμβόλιμα
with τὰ ᾀδόμενα...τραγῳδίας, and Agathon, the first to begin such
"insertions", since he was a contemporary of Euripides, cannot be
considered as anything other than one of τοῖς λοιποῖς, and not
part of an even later category of inserters. Nevertheless, both
Sophocles and Euripides are positively distinguished from τοῖς
λοιποῖς and there is no reason to expect entirely irrelevant
choruses in Euripides. As to where Aristotle believes Euripides
does fail in comparison to Sophocles a close reading of the text
is required.

The opening of the section by καί...δέ Else considers as
unusual and as indicating a close connection with the prior
section, which discusses practical success or failure on the
stage[12]. He thereby develops his theory, whilst making certain apt
comments, that this passage urges relevance only as a practical
solution for success in the theatre. Nevertheless, the combination

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[10] Recently doubt has been raised over the interpretation of such a
linear development by Pickard-Cambridge, A. in The Dramatic
festivals of Athens. Oxford, 1968: 232-34, and Taplin, O. in The
stagecraft of Aeschylus. Oxford, 1977: 207-9.

[11] Else, G.F. (ed.). Aristotle's Poetics: The argument. Cambridge
Mass., 1967: 554

[12] ibid. p. 552

καί...δέ is "natural enough..., the former particle denoting that something is added, the latter that what is added is distinct from what precedes."[13] However, it is most likely that there is no contingent unity to chapters 17 and 18 and that each of the points are individual thoughts that must stand on their own merits[14]. If one wished to see a continuous argument in the chapter, the new point being made would clearly be that Aristotle is turning to speak of the chorus, but the addition would not be so much to that which immediately precedes as a further point in the argument that has been developing since the opening of chapter 17; namely considerations to be borne in mind in the construction of the plot.

Most interpretations of Aristotle's meaning rest on the precise denotation of συναγωνίζεσθαι. Lucas cites the use of the word in Aristophanes (*Thesm.* 1060), in which the verb has the meaning of 'helped [Εὐριπίδῃ] in the contest', and uses this as an example of the verb followed by the dative, but then asserts on his understanding that in Aristotle it should be translated as 'make a positive contribution to the play'[15], the change in meaning nullifying the justification of the dative of person. Such a translation, furthermore, Else has indicated[16], results in the syntactical difficulty of supplying παρά with the datives of the names ("in Euripides...in Sophocles"), although it would have been quite easy for παρ' to have fallen out after ὥσπερ owing to haplography, or for an original ὡς παρ' to have become assimilated into ὥσπερ. A similar example of ὥσπερ with the dative of person may be found in the *Politics* (1339b8)[17], which could either be justification for the reading here or be the result of the same error by a copyist. As regards the verb, this is the only case of the compound form in Aristotle, but the uncompounded form

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[13] Denniston, J.D. Greek Particles. 2nd. ed. Oxford, 1954: 199

[14] Lucas, D.W. ((ed.). Aristotle: Poetics. Oxford, 1968: 182) describes the two chapters as a "collection of odds and ends".

[15] ibid. p. 193

[16] op. cit. p.552

[17] Butcher, A.S. The Poetics of Aristotle. Oxford, 1950: ad loc.

ἀγωνίζεσθαι, according to Else[18], in the *Poetics* always refers to the poets' competition at the festivals, and the example is given of 1456a18 (κακῶς ἀγωνίζονται). In fact there is only one other example in the *Poetics* (1460a8-9), which Else relegates to a footnote and merely suggests that it is "significant"[19]. There the meaning does seem to be 'to take part in' or even 'to act', a meaning (although appropriate for συναγωνίζεσθαι in 1456a) that would be contrary to Else's thesis, and hence he inserts somewhat awkwardly "in competition" to his later translation[20]. Outside of Aristotle ἀγωνίζεσθαι means 'to contend' (e.g. Plato *Symposium*; Herodotus 8. 26), but LSJ translates the compounded form as 'to join in the action', although it does often mean 'to ally oneself [in a battle or contest]' (e.g. Thucydides I 143.2). It would appear that, in view of the postulate that the chorus must be one of the actors, συναγωνίζεσθαι should be translated as 'to participate in the action', which presents certain difficulties. There is no problem with many parodoi and the kommoi, as they are in dialogue form, and therefore cannot have anything but the closest possible connection with the drama. Similarly, short lyrics of triumph or lament can only arise from the situation of the moment. Stasima are more difficult, but in the case of stasima Aristotle's intention is quite obscure.

The other elements of the passage Halliwell[21] closely interrelates with the rest of Aristotle's poetic theory explicated throughout the *Poetics*. He argues that it is more than a question of pure relevance or irrelevance in that ἐμβόλιμα are intentionally separate, and the treating of the chorus as "one of the actors" must mean more than thematic appropriateness in that any event in which an actor participates must be structured according to the principles of necessity or probability set out in chapter 7. Similarly, describing the chorus as a "part of the whole" (56a26) ought to be seen in the light of the unity

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[18] op. cit. p. 553

[19] ibid. p.553 n.117

[20] ibid. p.620

[21] Halliwell, S. (ed.). Aristotle's Poetics. Chapel Hill, 1986: 241-52

discussed in chapter 8, where ideal unity is seen in a μῦθος that will be damaged if any element be removed. Therefore, on this interpretation, Aristotle suggests that the chorus must make an active contribution to the development of the plot, although this does not appear in practice to happen in any of the tragedians. Nevertheless, Halliwell concludes that Aristotle's discussion of the chorus is a "belated consideration" aimed at rationalizing the choral role to bring it into line with the rest of his theory. In chapter 6 lyrics and spectacle are presented as pleasurable accessories and hence the least important aspects of tragedy. From this Halliwell concludes that Aristotle's true belief is that there is no real function for lyric poetry other than mere embellishment. If, however, the purpose of chapter 18 is mere rationalization, then there would have been no reason to distinguish between Sophocles and Euripides, or to express the necessity (δεῖ) of his criticism. Kirkwood[22] surmises a hyperbolic quality in the description of the chorus as one of the actors (which by its raison d'être it cannot be), a quality continued in συναγωνίζεσθαι, implying that the chorus both takes an active part in the drama and, consequently, in the playwright's contest.

The difficulty lies in understanding in what respects Aristotle intended to distinguish between Sophocles and Euripides. He does imply that the odes must partake fully in the action, although he certainly does not convict Euripides of employing ἐμβόλιμα, a fact which many scholars overlook[23]. He does, however, distinguish between the two tragedians and the only method of determining his intention is by the examination of the plays themselves. Often Euripidean odes are criticized for being irrelevant, without a clear definition of relevance having been offered. I do not intend to provide such a definition, but only to show what purposes certain of the odes serve. The four plays that I have chosen (the *Helen*, the *IT*, the *IA* and the *Electra*) are all

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[22] Kirkwood, G.M. "The dramatic role of the chorus in Sophocles." Phoenix 8, 1954: 1

[23] Décharme (op. cit. pp. 314-15), Grube, G.M.A. The drama of Euripides. 3rd. ed. London, 1973: 119, and Hofmann, H.H. Inaugural dissertation. Weida I. Thur, 1916, all, despite warning against the pernicious effect of the Aristotelian tradition, do nevertheless call the second stasimon of the Helen an "embolimon".

the product of approximately the last quarter of Euripides' career (after his Great Tragic Period, according to Kitto's terminology[24]) and each contains odes that have been criticized as poetic but discursive. All the examples, furthermore, are odes that recount a mythical tale that at first sight appears to have little or no relation to the play. Although Euripides' dramatic technique is often seen to be at odds with his inherited tradition (including mythology[25]), it may perhaps be shown that the myths sung by the chorus are central to the drama, and we then may see Euripides as more of a traditonalist than usually assumed. For I shall show that the chorus presents myths as paradigms for the action on stage and that myth for Euripides is almost a recherche du temps perdu. The action of each of the plays discussed is reflected and defined by the particular myths described in the stasima. Thus the myths related by the chorus in the stasima are enactments of the action that the audience observe on stage and the sequence of a play within a play is formed. This not only serves to delight the audience as they realize they are witnessing a repeat of a previous myth, but also acts, each myth in its own way for each play, as a commentary upon the tragedy itself.

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[24] Kitto, H.D.F. Greek Tragedy: A literary study. 3rd. ed. London, 1961: 188.

[25] cf. Knox, B.M.W. "Euripidean comedy." p. 76 in, Cheuse, A. and R. Koffler (eds.). The rarer action. New Brunswick, 1970.

CHAPTER 1

A SONG OF RESURRECTION: THE SECOND STASIMON[1] OF THE HELEN.

"The Helena...aimed at providing the Athenian public with light relief.... [It] takes us to a world of make-believe, a world nicer not only than the real one but than the whole of legend whose tragedies reflect the real."[2]

The categorization of the *Helen* as a tragi-comedy is sometimes liable to endanger any serious interpretation of its message or of the function of its various characters and parts[3]. Even if the outcome of a drama is non-tragic, it is nevertheless entitled to a serious message[4] and a carefully composed structure. In the mysterious second stasimon (ll. 1301-68) I find that there are motifs that aid to shape and define the drama as a whole, and that its imagery partakes of the essential seriousness of the play. Numerous difficulties, however, abound within the ode, not least in the final stanza whose closing lines (except possibly the last) are corrupt almost beyond recovery[5], and whose content appears to have little internal unity or any relation to the rest of the ode. There are, therefore, as many suggested emendations as there are interpretations of the meaning. The commentator must

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[1] Some commentators refer to lines 1301-68 as the 3rd. stasimon, but I follow Dale, A.M. (ed.). Euripides' Helen. Oxford, 1967 ad loc. (and others) in referring to it as the second. Were it the third, the first would have to be the epiparodos of lines 515-27, which is far too short to be considered as a full stasimon.

[2] Campbell, A.Y. (ed.). Euripides: Helena. Liverpool, 1950: 160

[3] Grube, G.M.A. (The Drama of Euripides. London, 1941: 119) seems to err on the side of such a danger, when, after noting the irrelevance of the ode, suggests, "We may perhaps note in passing that Helen is a tragi-comedy...."

[4] A survey of the various views concerning the play's seriousness is provided by Alt. K. "Zur Anagnorisis in der Helena." Hermes 90, 1962: 8 and n.3.

[5] Kirchhoff describes them as "insanabiles", and Wilamowitz says of them, "Ich kann...nichts machen." ("Choriambische Dimeter" Sitz. Berl. Akad. 1902: 873 n.1). Cited by Pippin, A.N. "Euripides' Helen: A comedy of ideas." CP 55, 1960: 163 n.12.

begin with that which is clear and certain and from there proceed, using the certainties as a basis, to the obscure or unintelligible.

The first three stanzas of the ode describe the "Mother of the Gods" searching throughout the countryside for her abducted daughter, Persephone (ἀρρήτου κούρας, 1. 1307). The goddess, in her chariot, enlisted the help of Artemis and Athene, but, being unsuccessful in her search and maddened by grief, she deprived the land of fertility. As a result Zeus sent the Graces and Muses to soothe her, and Aphrodite made her smile with music, in reply to which the goddess took up the flute and began to play too. Such is the content of the first three stanzas; the fourth I shall discuss later (section III).

Throughout I have referred to the "Mother of the Gods" simply as the goddess, since it is disputed whether Demeter is the intended goddess or not. The identification of the goddess with Demeter is made at line 1343, although this is based upon Canter's emendation of δηίῳ to Δηοῖ (the poetic form of Demeter)[6]. Any emendation is open to question, as has indeed this one been doubted by Golann[7], who objects that the attributes and rites described are those of Cybele, not Demeter. It is true that Cybele often was represented in a chariot drawn by lions (1310-11) as in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* (1.400), that the cult instruments and Dionysiac type worship of the fourth stanza are associated with Cybele, and that night-time orgies (παννυχίδες, 1.1365) are characteristic of her cult as in the *Troades* (11.1071-76). Nevertheless, the syncretism of Cybele and Demeter did arise during the Classical period (cf. IG iv^{2}131) and certainly had occurred by Euripides' life time (cf. *Bacchae* 275). The *Helen* may, therefore, be seen as a definite source for fifth century syncretism. The title ὀρεία μάτηρ θεῶν does normally designate

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[6] Canter, G. (ed.). Euripidis tragoediae. XIX. Antwerp, 1571: 657.

[7] Golann, C.P. "The third stasimon of Euripides' Helen." TAPA 76, 1945: 31-46.

Cybele[8], but Demeter's association with Cybele may simply have resulted in her also receiving the title "Mother of the Gods". If, however, ὀρεία is read as a predicative adjective in conjunction with ἀνά...νάπη and, on Campbell's suggestion, one inserts a τ' after ἐσύθη to obviate the hiatus (cf. *IT* ll. 920-21), it appropriately creates an antithetic pair to the "river and ocean" of 1304-5, such that the goddess is merely described as μάτηρ θεῶν, a cult title of Demeter[9]. Nevertheless, for Dale[10] ὀρεία μάτηρ is far too common a title (cf. *Hippolytus* l. 144) to allow for an alternative reading, and the extent of syncretism need not worry us.

It seems quite clear that the goddess must be Demeter as the narrated tale of a search for a lost daughter and the resultant vengeful destruction of the earth is that of Demeter, and it is recounted in a similar manner in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (no. II), including the attempt to make the goddess laugh[11]. That the "unmentionable maiden" (l.1307) is Persephone is suggested by the mention of her at line 175 (on which see section II below). The goddess most certainly is not, as Golann wishes her to be, Nemesis, and therefore a significant relation to Helen[12]. His argument falls at the first hurdle; although Nemesis is in some accounts the mother of Helen, it is explicitly stated in the *Helen* that Leda is her mother (ll. 19, 144, 259, 1146-7). Golann, also, inconsistently cannot accept an identification of Cybele with Demeter, but allows Euripides to connect Cybele with Nemesis, both connections having some justification in our sources.

We have, then, a narrative of Demeter searching for her lost daughter, to the description of which are grafted the attributes and music of Cybele. This is no mere "independent development"[13],

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[8] ibid. p. 34 n.6

[9] Campbell op. cit.: ad loc.

[10] Dale, A.M. (ed.). Helen. Oxford, 1967: ad loc.

[11] There are certain differences in the arrangement of events and details, which I shall consider later in section II.

[12] op. cit. pp. 31-46

[13] So Campbell op. cit. on lines 1301-68 accounts for the apparent lack of connection with the dramatic plot.

but all the details are of relevance and require careful sifting in a play that has been described as "chameleon-like, persistently shifting, in mood, verbal fabric, and the values which it implies."[14] To assist in the disentanglement I shall divide my discussion into three sections:

I. The similarity of destinies of Persephone and Helen, Pluto and Theoclymenus, Demeter and Menelaus;

II. The relation of the choral parodos and stasima to each other;

III. A consideration of the possibilities of meaning of the final stanza.

I

Realization of the difficulties in the interpretation of the stasimon led Verrall to construct an ingenious argument that the play was an apology by Euripides to women for his portrayal of them in earlier plays[15]. For this purpose the play was first performed, he suggests, at the Thesmophoria, indicated by Aristophanes' parody of it in his *Thesmophoriazusae*, and as a consequence a hymn in honour of Demeter would have been perfectly fitting at her own festival. The *Helen*, however, was not the only play parodied in that comedy (the *Andromeda* and the *Palamedes* were given a similar treatment) but we cannot suppose that all of these were performed privately at the festival first, and they are not all apologies to women, even if we could imagine an ancient Greek being as chivalrous as an English Victorian gentleman. It would have been natural in 411 B.C. to parody the *Helen* and the *Andromeda* since both of them had been produced the year before in 412, with the *Palamedes* appearing not much earlier in 415 B.C. Verrall's reason for the play requiring a private performance initially is that its account was so different from that of Homer's that it would have confused the audience. This is contrary to our sources, which imply the Athenians would have been familiar with both accounts. We have Stesichorus' fragments (PMG 192, 193) that relate the tale and Herodotus' own expressed familiarity with

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[14] Wolff, C. "On Euripides' Helen." HSCP 77, 1973: 61

[15] Verrall, A.W. Four plays of Euripides. Cambridge, 1905: 61-68

this secondary version (II 112-21). The extent to which a performance at the secret Thesmophoria would have enabled the Athenian public to become acquainted with a new version is also uncertain.

The probable familiarity, rather, of the Athenians with the alternative version of the Helen myth provided Euripides with the scope to equate this myth with that of Persephone and Demeter. This latter myth was well-known from the Homeric hymn of how the maiden Persephone was raped whilst picking flowers and made the wife of Pluto and queen of Hades, initiating Demeter's long, grief stricken and destructive search for her daughter. Nilsson considers that in myth the rape of Kore (i.e. Persephone) is to be seen as kindred to the rape of Helen, if she, Helen, is taken in her ancient and traditional form of a vegetation goddess[16]. This similarity may be pure coincidence, and Robinson rightly counters it on points of detail, while drawing certain possible parallels from such a thesis[17]. There is no evidence that the ancients recognized such a kinship, not least because one was a tree goddess, the other a corn goddess. Although in some myths both Helen and Persephone are abducted by Theseus, myths of Theseus are often thought to be late. In the rape of Kore she was taken to Hades with the suggestion that Pluto was depriving the earth of flowers and fertility. Helen, on the other hand, was not taken underground nor in her rape was there any other motivation than her beauty. What can suitably be derived from Nilsson is that both were fertility goddesses and both were raped, although the crucial resemblance should be found in the situation of the play itself and not to any great extent in the traditional stories.

The similarity in the play of the destinies of Helen and Persephone was first suggested many years ago[18], although it has

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[16] Nilsson, M.P. The Mycenaean origin of Greek mythology. Berkeley, 1932: 74-5

[17] Robinson, D.B. "Helen and Persephone. Sparta and Demeter." p. 163 in Bowersock, G.W., W. Burkert and C.J. Putnam (eds.). Arktouros. Berlin, 1979.

[18] Paley, F.A. (ed.). Euripides. v. III. London, 1858; Pearson, A.C. (ed.). Euripides: Helena. Cambridge, 1903: 165

not gained universal acceptance. The important point of contact is in the implication of the future restoration of Helen to her husband, as Persephone was restored to Demeter, although Pearson complains that the connection is no closer. Their relation is seen at line 1312: Persephone was abducted (ἁρπασθεῖσαν), as Zeus has abducted Helen (ἀναρπάσας δι' αἰθέρος, l. 246). The link may be reinforced if one reads an acute accent on the eta of θηρων (l. 1310), as Campbell does, to convert it into a verb so that lines 1310-12 are parallel to lines 50-51: τὰς ἐμὰς ἀναρπαγὰς θηρᾷ.

The text does provide a correlation between the two females. Therefore, Robinson noted that Helen's threatened marriage to Theoclymenus (a figure probably invented by Euripides) is equivalent to Persephone's enforced marriage to Pluto. Thus he says: "Pluto detained Persephone, despite Demeter's revenge, one third of every year in Hades; Theoclymenus, if he can, will delay Helen the whole of every year in Egypt."[19] The Achilles' heel of this argument is the time period, although one can at least infer the comparison that Persephone's yearly release offers hope of redemption for Helen. Nevertheless, Persephone's release is not mentioned, which not only alleviates the difficulty over the time period, since there is no mention of any escape or return, but also creates the suspense that Helen's release is unlikely. This is developed by the expression of Demeter's joy at receiving her new toys of the instruments (ll. 1349-52), which is not the expected joy of release.

Both Helen and Persephone were abducted (as noted above), and both while picking flowers (ll. 243-7, *Homeric Hymn* II 5-10). Only Helen's flower picking is described by Euripides, but, although Dale dismisses it as the usual occupation of the abducted, the utterance of Persephone's name (l. 175: most emphatic in view of the name being ἄρρητος, l. 1307) less than 75 lines earlier, can but prepare the audience for drawing the analogy themselves. Each of the abductions also involved an element of deceit (δόλιος, l.238; δολίους, l. 1322), and each of the victims is sought for and eventually recovered. Towards the climax of the play Helen

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[19] op. cit. p. 164

enters wearing black (l. 1186), the clothing of Demeter in Persephone's absence (*Homeric Hymn* II 42), a point which could have been referred to in the description of Demeter grieving at lines 1301-7. Persephone, however, also wore black as the queen of Hades (furvae...Proserpinae, Horace *Odes* II 13 1.21; cf. τὰ κελαινὰ...δέμνια Περσεφόνης, *Anth. Pal.* 7. 352; *Alcestis* 11. 843ff.). Hence, although Helen's black garments could at first suggest the grieving Demeter, the parallel is suggested by the other allusions of another black robed figure, Persephone.

The Egyptian landscape too and Helen's predicament are portrayed as if Helen were in Hades as Persephone[20]. On the stage are the representations of a palace and a tomb implying both a kingdom and a place of death. Helen is a suppliant at the tomb (l. 64) not at an altar. Pippin Burnett asserts that this is one of the many anomalies of the play in comparison to the normal suppliant situation[21]. There are examples that she could have cited of tombs figuring significantly in the drama, although without suppliants, such as that of Agamemnon in Aeschylus' *Choephori*, of Darius in the *Persae*, and of Achilles in Euripides' *Hecuba*. Even so the visual effect of Helen seated at a tomb is pointed. As for the palace, the old woman that refuses Menelaus admittance to it corresponds to the comic type of surly doorkeepers, but she may, in particular, suggest Hades' disagreeable gatekeepers[22]. A similar figure appears in Plato (*Protagoras* 314c7ff.) at the door of a house whose inhabitants Socrates compares to figures in the Underworld from the *Odyssey* X (315a10-c10). When Teucer on his arrival sees the palace[23], he remarks that from its size it must be the palace of Πλοῦτος ("Wealth", l. 69). Πλοῦτος and Πλούτων are

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[20] The three major discussions of the similarity to Hades are Jesi, F. Aegyptus 45, 1965; Robinson, D.B. op. cit. pp. 162-66; Wolff, C. op. cit. pp. 62-72

[21] Pippin Burnett, A. Catastrophe survived. Oxford, 1971: 78

[22] Wolff, C. op. cit. p.65 n.13

[23] Robinson (op. cit. p.165) understands Teucer to have mistaken the tomb for the palace, but there is no evidence for this in the text. He would have first looked at the palace because of its eye-catching grandeur, and then as he surveyed the scene he would have caught sight of Helen at the tomb (l. 71), and hence his interjection outside of the metre.

variant spellings for the name of the Lord of the Underworld, and his domain is best known as the black palace (Pindar *Ol.* 14. 20). Conversely, "Wealth" is given the spelling πλούτων at Sophocles' frgs. 273 and 283 and at Aristophanes' *Plutus* 727[24]. This allows Helen to enforce an equation of Theoclymenus with Pluto at lines 296-7 (πρὸς πλουσίαν τράπεζαν ἱζουσ'), having just stated the possibility of γάμους ἑλομένη to remind one of her position in relation to Theoclymenus. Teucer's description, therefore, of his palace as ἐρυμνά may be a play on what it really signifies – ἐρεμνά. The invention of the name Theoclymenus belies a further connection between the king and the Lord of the Underworld. Wolff[25] has noted that the name may echo κλύμενος, a title used for Pluto at Hermione from the sixth century (cf. Lasus of Hermione fr. 1 in PMG no. 72), with special reference to Demeter (Pausanias 2.35.4-10; Callimachus fr. 285 and note *Pf.*) and later in Alexandrian literature without any reference to Hermione (Aristodicus Anth. Pal. 7. 189; Damagetus Anth. Pal. 7. 9). Hesychius records Περικλύμενος also as being used of Pluto.

Helen conceives of herself as having, in spirit at least, gone down to the Underworld: τοῖς πράγμασιν τέθνηκα, τοῖς δ' ἔργοισιν οὔ (l. 286), which apportions to her the appropriate role of queen of the Dead. Menelaus' address before the tomb (ll. 969ff.) portrays the double image of Egypt as Hades when he beseeches the Lord of the Underworld to help restore his wife to him. It was the same Lord that had it in his power to return Persephone, the irony lying in Helen being both literally a suppliant at the tomb and metaphorically a captive in Hades. The typical entrance to Hades was via a marsh, λίμνη (e.g. Aristophanes' *Frogs* ll. 137, 181), often situated at the mouth of a river, or a lake near the seashore, as, for instance, the Lacus Avernus in Campania. Therefore Dionysus went down to fetch his mother at the spot in Lerna called the Alcyonia Limne (Pausanias II 37.5), and the Underworld river could also be called the Acherousian Limne (Euripides' *Alcestis* l. 443)), as could its

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[24] See also Richardson, N.J. (ed.). The Homeric hymn to Demeter. Oxford, 1974: 320 n.2

[25] op. cit. p.64 and n.11

mouth (Thucydides I 46; Pausanias I 17.5), where, on an island, lay the tomb of Pluto (Clement of Rome, *Homilies* V 23). A similar situation is indicated in the prologue of the Helen[26], which details the streams of the Nile that water the land (ll. 1-3). Most modern editors have considered line 5, with its reference to Pharos, to be a later insertion either as a marginal note making reference to the *Odyssey* IV 355 or as an actor's interpolation to come into line with the *Odyssey*. The difficulty lies in the needless repetition that Proteus is king in both lines 4 and 5, and the mention of the island when nothing in the action suggests (although nothing denies) that they are on an island. The repetition can be explained by inferring a concessive force in the μέν...δέ clause of line 5 to state that although he lived on Pharos, he nevertheless was king of all Egypt. As for the second difficulty, Pippin Burnett unintentionally comes near the point when she suggests that when Menelaus arrives he has come as Odysseus in the *Cyclops* to search for food for himself and his companions left on the beach. This then brings the shore near and suggests that the Egyptian palace is in a wilderness like the Sicilian cave[27]. Although this may require too much of the audience's imagination, especially as his coming from the shore does not necessitate the shore being near, nevertheless the atmosphere of isolation may be created by the implication, if not in reality, of the action taking place on an island. The island imagery would also lend to the Hades-like impression (cf. Pluto's tomb being on an island, above).

Helen not only resembles Persephone by living in a form of Underworld, but also by being the victim of sexual advances. According to some versions of the story Aphrodite was involved in the original abduction of Persephone. This is, of course, the same in Helen's case. Such abduction is now threatened again by Theoclymenus, and is echoed in two scenes: when the chorus enter they say that Helen's song sounds like the cry of a nymph evading the amorous embraces of Pan (ll. 183-90), and, on sighting

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[26] As argued by Guepin, J.P. The tragic paradox. Amsterdam, 1968: 128-30, who also draws various other tenuously argued relations.

[27] Catastrophe survived. Oxford, 1971: 80

Menelaus, Helen dashes for safety like a Bacchant (this is significantly the only Bacchic reference outside of the Demeter ode) believing him to be a potential abductor (ll. 543-4). These passages are mock re-enactments of the abductions of both maidens and make the theme so insistent in the play as to ensure the link between Helen and Persephone.

Persephone traditionally was a virgin, and it is this side of Helen that Euripides' play emphasizes. The opening lines of the prologue (ll. 1-3) have raised difficulties over their meaning and interpretation. The waters of the Nile are introduced as καλλιπάρθενοι, an adjective without exact parallel (καλλιπαρθένου δέρης in *IA* 1574 is to be taken literally). It may mean "fair virgin streams" as being produced from only the white snow (l. 3)[28], a phrase not dissimilar from παρθένου πηγῆς which is used in Aeschylus (*Persae* l. 613) to refer to spring waters pure enough for libations. Or it may refer to the delta tributaries each with its presiding nymph (cf. *Rhesus* ll. 929-39)[29], or it may even be a combination of both interpretations. Whichever it is, the use of παρθένοι I would suggest is no perfunctory literary ornament, but is an expression from the outset of the virginity so important in the play both for Helen's innocence and her comparison to Persephone (cf. Kannicht's "mit schönen παρθένοι"). In myth the sky was believed to impregnate the earth with rain[30], but in the *Helen* the Nile with snow and not with rain waters the land, which is possibly a suggestion that the whole land is virgin and therefore an appropriate place for maidens. The word παρθένος, if not referring directly to Helen, occurs three times in the prologue (ll. 6, 10, 25) to drive the point home. Helen is the innocent maiden threatened by sexual advances[31].

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[28] Hermann, G. (ed.). Helena. Lipsiae, 1837; Dale, A.M. (ed.). Helen. Oxford, 1967

[29] Campbell op. cit.; Pearson, A.C. (ed.). Euripidis: Helena

[30] Ferguson, J. A companion to Greek tragedy. Austin and London, 1972: 413-14

[31] Wolff op. cit. pp. 62-68 argues for the combined motifs of eros and death in the Helen, which unites the destinies of Helen and Persephone.

Despite Grube's censure that "no one can seriously suggest that she [Demeter] symbolizes Menelaus"[32], there is, nevertheless, a suggestion of a parallel between Menelaus in his searching and Demeter. Menelaus had wandered far and wide (πολυπλανής, l. 203; τῷ πλανήτῃ Μενέλεῳ, l. 1676) as Demeter (πολυπλάνητον, ll. 1319-20), and for that reason suffered many pains (πόνοι – of Menelaus, ll. 593, 603, 621, 707, 716, 876, 1075; of Demeter l. 1320). Both caused the destruction of the earth; one by the Trojan war, the other by deprivation of fertility. The failure of each to find his or her goal is attributed to the malign will of the gods. Menelaus despairingly says: οὐκ ἀξιοῦμαι τοῦδε πρὸς θεῶν τυχεῖν (l. 403), and it is said of Demeter's attempt: Ζευς δ'...αλλαν μοῖραν ἔκραινε. Finally both reach a state of exhaustion in their search; Menelaus arrives on stage in rags (l. 421, οὔτ' ἀμφὶ χρῶτ' ἐσθῆτες), which so many people conceive as the typical example of the comic anti-hero, as Demeter arrived at a high state of exhaustion (following the emendation ἀπόνους, l. 1321; cf. τάλας, l. 408). Such parallels foreshadow the successful escape of Helen, which her mythical counterpart had achieved.

II

The arrangement of the chorus in the *Helen* is unique. For the first 1,100 lines of the play there are no choral stasima, but in the next 400 lines there are three, after which (nearly 200 lines) there is but one two line utterance by the chorus (ll. 1619-20), excepting their usual concluding comment. The proximity of the stasima to each other must be deliberate, so that each ode reinforces the others, the later to be seen in the light of the earlier. The distancing of the stasima from the parodos must be intentional too in order to distinguish the mood of the one from the other, and therefore requires consideration.

It is in Helen's prayer during the parodos (ll. 167-78) when Persephone is mentioned (l. 175). In the prayer we have the theme of music (λωτὸν ἢ σύρριγγας ἢ φόρμιγγας, ll. 171-2), but the songs are only laments, with Persephone being invoked as Queen of the

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Grube, G.M.A. op. cit. p.119

dead and the Sirens as death goddesses to mourn for Helen. The imagery as yet conveys none of the hope of rescue that the recurrence of Persephone portrays in the second stasimon. The imagery evoked by the Sirens will also appear later, but they too will be vitally changed. The Sirens, being half-bird half-woman, first recall Helen, born of a bird's egg, and the theme of a woman connected with death so explicit in the roles of the characters (Helen, Theonoe, Demeter, Persephone). They, second, highlight the theme of birds in preparation for the nightingale in the first stasimon (1.1110), a bird also associated with mourning, and then finally the birds of the escape ode (1. 1480, cf. 1516)[33]. Therefore the bird theme begins with the bastardized form of a bird in the Sirens, spirits of death, progresses through the nightingale, a normal bird but one associated with mourning, and ends with the bird as a symbol of happiness in its ability to flee to safety[34].

This development from death to escape is reflected in the three stasima. The first opens with the address to the nightingale to join in a lament (ll. 1107-1112) with the chorus, who sing of the lives lost in the war, all for the vain cause of a phantom. They finish by expressing in general maxims the futility of war in their famous proclamation of its inability to prevent further war (ll. 1151-57):

$$εἰ \ γὰρ \ ἅμιλλα \ κρινεῖ \ νιν$$
$$αἵματος, \ οὔποτ' \ ἔρις$$
$$λείψει \ κατ' \ ἀνθρώπων \ πόλεις. \quad (ll. \ 1155-57)$$

Such a statement maintains the uncertainty of the couple's escape at the moment in the drama when Helen and Menelaus have agreed upon a plan in which they themselves will embark upon a form of war with the Egyptians on the funeral ship, as well as being not an inappropriate comment for a writer of the Peloponnesian war years. The emphasis of this ode is upon the futility of war, the uncertainty of human affairs and, most of all, death. Nothing more. It is this that it has in common with the parodos.

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[33] Ferguson op. cit. p.415

[34] For examples of birds as the symbol of escape see Rose, P.W. "Sophocles' Philoctetes and the teachings of the Sophists." HSCP 80, 1976: p.30 n.61

The second stasimon is of a different nature altogether. We are again reminded of the destruction of war seen in Demeter's sterilization of the earth parallel to Menelaus' Trojan exploits, but there are other more promising details. Musical instruments play a large part in this ode, as they did in the parodos, but their purpose here is not to accompany a dirge. Certain theories have been based upon the interpretation of these instruments presented to Demeter and the comparison of this to other accounts of the myth. Pippin [Burnett][35] contrasts the distraction of Demeter in the *Homeric Hymn* II to this ode. There Iambe is not under divine command to entertain the goddess and this appeasement occurs before the devastation of the world (ll. 192ff.). Therefore, Pippin suggests, Euripides has shifted the episode to a more dramatic moment and, with Zeus as author of the scheme for placation, to a more dramatic level of importance. In Pippin's interpretation of the play as a "comedy", this ode acts as an aetiological myth for the author's dramatic form in which his new romantic high comedy is identified with the laughing Aphrodite and the Graces in contradistinction to that of Dionysus and the Satyrs. The play is "to be a diversion to make the Athenians smile in the midst of suffering". The sending, however, of the Graces and Muses may be an invention of Euripides himself based upon an assimilation of several earlier motifs, especially the above passage involving Iambe and a later attempt to cheer Demeter (*Homeric Hymn* II 313 ff.)[36]. In this second passage, although the attempt is unsuccessful, it does occur after the devastation of the world, the author is Zeus and he sends all the gods in turn. A combination of this setting with the success of the first example would produce a scene in accord with Euripides' account.

Nevertheless, Pippin also discusses the hymn to the Mother of the Gods from Epidaurus (IG iv[2] 131) in which the goddess takes up a musical instrument, in this case a cymbal, to defend herself from a thunderbolt hurled at her by Zeus. Euripides' goddess, on

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[35] Pippin, A.N. "Euripides' Helen: A comedy of ideas." CP 55, 1960: 156

[36] Richardson, N.J. op. cit. p. 83

the other hand, takes up the flute, the instrument of the arts, and not the orgiastic tympanum. The date of this hymn is uncertain, there having been various suggestions, but the majority agreement places it no earlier than the fourth century[37] (and therefore much later than the *Helen*), Koster even dating it to the time of Hadrian[38]. It may originate, however, in an earlier source. Yet Pippin's argument that the ode is a repudiation of Dionysiac comedy is flawed since the orgiastic cymbal is present (τύπανα, l. 1347), and, although it is not played by Demeter herself, it does form part of her entourage. Her argument could be better substantiated by reference to the Orphic fragments[39], in which Demeter is made to smile by the obscenities of Baubo, an unpleasantness that Euripides avoids. Despite this there are two crucial difficulties with the idea that the ode is intended to distinguish this comedy from the baseness of Dionysiac and Satyric comedy. First, the very prominence of Bacchic worship in the fourth stanza directly contradicts such an interpretation. Although the Bacchic worship in the ode conveys a more innocent side than Dionysiac comedy, its very presence would have confounded any distinction that was intended. Second, the presence of the Muses may not be to express a literary purpose, but merely to be the traditional accompaniments of both Aphrodite and Dionysus. For, Barlow finds it quite appropriate for the chorus of the *Bacchae* (ll. 403ff.) to associate Aphrodite and Dionysus with the Muses, Graces and Harmony, who regularly appear in their company on vase paintings[40], just as the personified human emotions such as Love, Desire, Grace, and Peace are the common visual accompaniments of Aphrodite and Dionysus[41].

There is nonetheless avoidance of any baseness, and, other than the temporary destruction by Demeter of the earth, no mention of death or war. Aphrodite's presence may derive from her part in

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[37] Page, D.L. PMG 935; West, M.L. CQ n.s.20, 1970: 215

[38] Ned. Ak. Letterkunde. 1962: 25.4

[39] As G. Zuntz stresses. Entretiens Fondation Hardt VI. Geneva, 1960: 201ff.

[40] Barlow, S.A. The imagery of Euripides. London, 1971: 40

[41] See Webster, T.B.L. The interplay of Greek art and literature. London, 1949: 9-10

the original abduction of Persephone as well as of Helen[42]. Earlier in the play she had been described as a great killer (πολυκτόνος, l.238), was rejected by Theonoe (ll. 1006-7)[43] and reproached by Helen in a prayer (ll. 1102-4). When she appears in the ode she is described without any censure, she is most beautiful (καλλίστα, l.1348) and she acts as the catalyst for renewed festivity. Whitman connects the ode with Helen's prayer (ll. 167-178), indicating the difference in purpose of the music there from that of the ode[44]. He sees Helen as a human counterpart of Persephone, as someone lost and recovered. Hence, although in the prayer Persephone is a death goddess, she will represent by the end of the play the hope of redemption when the deathly music of the Sirens will be replaced by the songs of the Muses played upon the tympana, flutes and tambourines of the Great Mother (ll. 1341-52). In Zuntz's words the essence of the ode is found in "music redeeming life"[45], the power of music to redeem men from oblivion[46].

The consistency, however, in this relationship between the hymn and ode is flawed. Helen is the counterpart of Persephone, the symbol of resurrection and redemption, and yet it is Demeter that is redeemed by the music[47]. Helen cannot be both Demeter and Persephone. It is true that the music in Helen's prayer is connected with Persephone, who is called upon to accompany it, but in the second stasimon it is clearly used to amuse Demeter, whilst Persephone is only of secondary importance. Wolff's argument too seems to be in need of the proverbial gadfly: "The narrative of this second stasimon then points to a cycle: Persephone fell prey to the love of the god of the dead; blight and death follow because of her mother's grief; and then they are dispelled as she

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[42] Kannicht, R. Euripides: Helena. v.II. Heidelberg, 1969: 343

[43] Reading KUPRIS is preferable to understanding the text's CHARIS as syncretism of Grace with Aphrodite.

[44] Whitman, C.H. Euripides and the full circle of myth. Cambridge Mass., 1974: 42, 65

[45] Zuntz, G. op. cit. p.227

[46] Helen's words in addressing the Sirens appear to echo Stesichorus' second Palinode (fr. 16, PMG), who had redeemed his sight by song.

[47] Although Persephone engages in the music of Dionysus, it is the music of Demeter that scholars compare to the parodos.

[i.e. Demeter][48] is reconciled by the goddess of love. Helen, then, also resembles Persephone."[49] Demeter is the one reconciled, allowing for the dissipation of "blight and death", but Persephone still remains the prey to the love of the god of the dead. All the music of the first three stanzas pertains to Demeter, who, I have argued, is the paradigm of Menelaus. He has been cheered by the meeting with his real wife and on stage the physical transformation of Menelaus will be visible in his exchange of his rags for fine clothes (l. 1382).

In its relation to the parodos and the first stasimon, the second stasimon rejects their morbidity for the delight and amusement that is possible after grief. The light tone of joy continues into the third (ll. 1451-1511). It is a typical Euripidean escape ode[50], decorative and fast moving, looking forward, across a vast geographical distance, to happier times. Such is implied in the references to Hermione's renewed marriage (ll. 1476-78), Menelaus's fulfilment of his purpose, even if it has resulted in the destruction of Troy (1493-94) and the vindication of Helen's name (1506-11). The chorus imagine Helen participating in the festivals at Sparta again (ll. 1465ff.), as she had been when gathering flowers for Athena's temple before Hermes abducted her (cf. ll. 243-4, 1466-67). The particular festival that the chorus highlights is the Hyacinthia (ll. 1469-74), which may have been part of the Spartan fertility and harvest rites, Hyacinthus acting as a vegetation goddess who underwent an annual death and resurrection[51]. Such a pattern in the festival of loss and sadness followed by revival and joy is akin to that of the myth told in the second stasimon. Both odes contain a similarity of subject matter in their references to sacrifice (ll. 1333, 1474), worship (σεβίζουσα, l. 1357; σέβειν, l. 1475) and nocturnal celebration (ll. 1365, 1470). Such associations

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[48] It is my assumption that the pronoun can only be referring to Demeter.

[49] op. cit. p.63

[50] cf. Padel, R. "Imagery of the elsewhere: two choral odes of Euripides." CQ n.s. 24, 1974: 227-241

[51] Wolff op. cit. p.75. He refers the reader to Mellink, M. Hyakinthos. diss. unpublished. Utrecht, 1943: 31ff.

represent a link between the two odes.

Although there appear to be reminiscences of the sufferings of the past beneath all the gaiety, they are but minor references. The mention of the Leucippidae (l. 1466), who were carried off by Helen's brothers, recalls abduction[52], and yet it also recalls their subsequent rescue. The wedding of Hermione, which has been temporarily delayed, is representative of some sadness that has occurred, although now there is some expectation for the joy of the wedding. Apollo acts as the representative for something that was once cherished and now lost in both his deeds of killing Hyacinthus by the discus, although this was an accident, and of building Troy. These are, however, all memories of the past, and the emphasis is on escape and future happiness such that each stanza ends with a reference to home (οἴκων, l. 1464; οἴκοις, 1476; δόμον, 1494)[53]. The final prayer to the Dioscuroi looks forward to the *deus ex machina*, in which they fulfil the expressed wish.

The choral songs, therefore, display a marked development. The parodos is a dirge and a prayer to the death deities, without expressing any hope for the future. The first stasimon continues this depressed mood, maintaining the morbid bird imagery and concentrating on the misery of war and the Trojan War in particular. The second stasimon is light in mood, its instruments are for pleasure and not the instruments of death music as in the parodos, and it expresses the joy possible after grief, although it contains a reminder of Troy in Demeter's destruction of the earth. The third is full of hope, the promise of release from past troubles. The parodos opened with a prayer to the dead; the third stasimon closes with a prayer for escape and happiness. In a cycle the prayer genre returns, but utterly transformed in theme and attitude, which reflects the movement of the drama as a whole. Ferguson says simply of the stasima that "their theme is death"[54]. This is not so. They display a return from death to life, the

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[52] Kannicht op. cit. on ll. 1565-67

[53] Wolff op. cit. p.75

[54] op. cit. p. 422

happiness achieved after sadness. The same, I believe, is evoked in the final stanza of the second stasimon, and its exegesis cannot be postponed any longer.

III

The opening lines of the fourth stanza appear to impeach Helen for an offence involving both a commission over a sacrifice and one of omission, and thereby incurring the wrath of the goddess Demeter by neglecting her rites[55]. It ends, after the two unintelligible lines, with the obscure statement that she "gloried only in beauty". In between this there is an elaborate description of the rapture and mystical delight of the music and dancing involved in Dionysiac orgia. The textual problems of this ode are particularly serious since they occur in the final stanza. It is the end of the ode that so often contains the whole point, frequently using pronominal references such as $\overset{\text{'}}{\epsilon}\gamma\overset{\text{'}}{\omega}$ δέ and σοὶ δέ after preceeding general material[56]. For this reason it is unjustified to condemn the ode as irrelevant until one has understood the final stanza, although I have shown already that the other stanzas are relevant themselves.

The second antistrophe does begin with an address in the second person (l. 1354) that would suggest a transfer to the particular situation present on stage. Parry lists a number of examples in which some form of σύ appears in the first line of the last or penultimate strophe of the ode: σοὶ δέ, *Heracleides* 1.372; σύ, 619; σοί, 777; σέ, *Electra* 482; σὺ δ', *Medea* 431; σέ, 656; σοί, 1000; σὲ δ', *IA* 1080; καὶ σέ, *Alcestis* 985[57]. In contrast, while the *Helen* contains such a pronoun in the conjectured σ', most of the above examples make it clear, by a previous address, to whom they are talking, but the *Helen* merely has the ambiguous ὦ παῖ. The one example that does not identify its addressee is *IA* 1080, in which, however, the subject Ἀργεῖοι indicates a return

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[55] So it appears in the OCT

[56] Kranz, W. Stasimon. Berlin, 1933: 204ff.

[57] Parry, H. The choral odes of Euripides. diss. unpublished. Univ. of California, 1963: 93

to the situation on stage. The lack of identification in the address to a "child" (Persephone after all was the child of Demeter and, as much as the protagonist, could in this way be addressed) suggests that this ode is not to be included in the type that move from general to particular, but rather is one that narrates a continuous tale, moving on, presumably, to address Persephone.

Pearson probably correctly surmised a reference to Persephone's eating of the pomegranate in the opening lines (ll. 1353-54). Hence, assuming an uncial confusion between Γ and Π, he read:

$$\widehat{\grave{\omega}}\nu \; \overset{\supset}{o\grave{\upsilon}} \; \theta\acute{\epsilon}\mu\iota s \; <\sigma'> \; o\grave{\upsilon}\delta' \; \overset{\text{`}}{\check{o}}\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$$
$$'\gamma\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\omega \; \widehat{\gamma\hat{a}}s \; \overset{\supset}{\grave{\epsilon}\nu} \; \theta\alpha\lambda\acute{a}\mu o\iota s$$

This is abruptly introduced, but not as much as the original reference to Helen burning unlawful sacrifices. Grégoire corrects line 1354 to read $\overset{\supset}{\grave{\epsilon}}\pi\epsilon\iota\rho\hat{\omega} \; \sigma o\hat{\iota}s \; \overset{\supset}{\grave{\epsilon}\nu} \; \theta\alpha\lambda\acute{a}\mu o\iota s$ (tu as... osé...)[58], but this preserves the original difficulty of precisely what, along with lines 1356-7, crime Helen has committed. It was a traditional motif from Homer onward to trace the suffering of an individual back to the wrath of a neglected deity, and was not unknown in tragedy (Sophocles *Ajax* 172; Euripides *Hippolytus* 1410), but it is found nowhere else in the myths of Helen. Can we convict Euripides of inserting a crime that occurs in none of the sources, is mentioned in no other place in the play, and has no effect on the movement of the drama? Clearly we cannot. The tragedy is intended as an exoneration of guilt on Helen's part, and the only reference to anything that approaches guilt is her δύσκλεια (ll. 1506-110) which she received as a punishment for sin (ποιναθεῖσ', l. 1509), without her being directly responsible for it herself. It is her very name epitomized in the phantom Helen that brings her guilt, and for this she appears to feel the blame (δι' ἐμέ...δι' ἐμὸν ὄνομα, ll. 198-9; cf. ll. 52, 109). This, however, is in reference to the Trojan war and nothing more.

Robinson[59], accepting that lines 1353-4 refer to Persephone,

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[58] Grégoire, H. (ed.) Euripide V. Paris, 1950. ad loc.

[59] op. cit. p.167

believes a change of subject occurs, somewhat abruptly, in 1355, indicated by the δέ after μῆνιν and the vocative ὦ παῖ. The new addressee he, as many others, considers to be Helen, who is accused of omitting to worship Demeter. He compares the *Electra* (ll. 476-77) as an example of an antistrophe that runs over into the epode by two lines. Unlike many others he argues that her crime is intelligible and logical. To him the chorus' purpose is to maintain the suspense of uncertainty as to whether Helen will be saved or not by suggesting a possible reason why Helen is in such difficulty without actually impugning her. Demeter was not a goddess worshipped at Sparta so that Helen could not have previously worshipped her, and, therefore, once in Egypt she was unaccustomed to the practice. This suspense will not last long since in the next ode (ll. 1465-75) the chorus remember occasions of religious ceremonies in which Helen used to participate at Sparta (of the Leucippidae, Athena Chalcioikos and Hyacinthus), and the implication is that she will do so again. In the second stasimon, the chorus has been tempted, after a long description of the goddess had been given, to observe that Helen by nature did not worship that same goddess. It is probable that, according to Robinson, Helen actually led the worship described in the next ode, as she did the Spartan ritual dances in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (1314-15), where in fact the girls are compared to the worshippers of Dionysus (1313-14). The suggestion may be that Helen will return to Sparta and then enjoy rites equally as fervent and joyful as those of Demeter, and therefore the goddess will not detain her in Egypt because Spartan piety was as great as any that Demeter or Dionysus expected. There is evidence too that the Dioscuroi had been initiated at Eleusis (Xenophon *Hell.* VI 3.6)[60], and the implication is possible, although rather difficult to infer, that once in Sparta she could join them on their journey to Eleusis.

Robinson's theory, as well as involving an irrelevant digression by the chorus initiated by the thought of Demeter, is not in agreement with what we know of Greek theology. The gods are

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[60] Farnell, L.R. The cults of the Greek city states. v.III. Oxford, 1907: pl. 19

jealous and selfish, and Demeter would only have been content with the worship of herself. She would not have forgiven Helen because she honoured with such great zeal other deities. Witness the conflict in Euripides' own *Hippolytus* in which the most earnest and pious worship of one goddess incites the revenge of another. If anything, the description of the rituals that Helen did perform at Sparta in the third stasimon serves to emphasize what little regard Helen did show for Demeter. In addition it seems inconceivable that Euripides would, or at least clumsy of him to, use Demeter as a mythic analogue of Menelaus for three stanzas, and then in the fourth talk of Demeter in reality as a goddess that Helen ought to worship. The effect is too jarring. As early as Hermann[61] it was suggested that the end of the ode may have been corrupted by an actor or producer that felt in every tragedy the chorus ought to point to an act of hybris or hamartia as the source of the protagonist's predicament. This would indeed account for such an abrupt change from myth to reality. If there is an offence referred to in the opening lines, it can only be Persephone's eating of the pomegranate, and, possibly, owing to that, the resultant marriage to Pluto. Lines 1356-57, however, are problematic (θυσίας | οὐ σεβίζουσα θεᾶς). Perhaps Persephone is being accused of irreverence that also manifests itself in her not trusting her mother and instead eating the pomegranate. There, nonetheless, seems to be no certain explanation, but the onus rests on those that believe there is a reference to Helen to prove the relevance of a crime committed by Helen. The whole stanza is most likely to be on Persephone as there is nothing else to attach it to Helen, other than the last line.

The Dionysiac worship of lines 1358-65 is, as already noted, part of the fifth century syncretism, but its prominence, dominating this final stanza, implies a significance was attached to it by Euripides. I think that a hint at the implication of the presence of Dionysus may be found in the unlikely source of Heracleitus of Ephesus. He, in explaining why Dionysiac worship is not shameful, states that "Hades and Dionysus...are the same." (ὡυτὸς δὲ Ἀίδης καὶ Διόνυσος, DK B15 from Clement Protepticus 34).

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[61]*Euripidis tragoediae II: 1.* Leipzig, 1837: 136 and n.

"Sameness" in Heracleitean thought did not mean "identical", but implied a doctrine of "perspectival identity" (= interconnectedness of apparent opposites; cf. DK B60 and 88)[62]. This does not commit him to a supposed doctrine of the "identity of opposites", but in his scheme he nonetheless identified as the same some of the most extreme opposites possible. Therefore, Dionysus is to be placed at the opposite extremity from Hades: "Hades represents death, Dionysus exuberant life."[63]

The redemptive qualities of Bacchic worship are well attested, such as, for example, in the humorous scene drawn of Teiresias and Cadmus envigorated by youthful energy in the *Bacchae*, but it is the association or even dissociation of Dionysus with death that is most important in the *Helen*, set in an Egyptian Hades. It was not only Heracleitus, but Orphic religion also, that appears to have made a similar distinction between the two. Among the bone tablets found at Olbia, dating from the fifth century B.C., was one upon which were scratched the words ΔΙΟ[ΝΥΣΟΣ], ΟΡΦΙΚΟΙ and ΒΙΟΣ ΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ ΒΙΟΣ. This positioning of "death" between "life" implies an alternation between life and death that was most probably accepted in exotic mystery cults[64]. What is of interest here for our purposes is the connection again with Dionysus. It does not only portray him as a "life force", but also associates him with resurrection to life after death[65]. The similarity of this to Persephone's destiny is striking.

The music of Bacchus acts as a parallel to the music enjoyed by Demeter so that both parties, Demeter and, if we may infer that the Bacchic music and dancing is enjoyed by her, Persephone, are cheered, as indeed both Menelaus and Helen will shortly be on their escape. Aphrodite is the symbol of delight and Bacchus the symbol of resurrection, just as the presence of the Graces and

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[62] Robinson, T.M. (ed.). Heraclitus: Fragments. Toronto, 1987: 86

[63] Kirk, G.S., J.E. Raven and M. Schofield. The Presocratic philosophers. 2nd. ed. Cambridge, 1983: 209-10; cf. Kahn, C.H. The art and thought of Heraclitus. Cambridge, 1979: 264-65

[64] West, M.L. "The Orphics of Olbia." ZPE 45, 1982: 17-29

[65] cf. the myth of Dionysus bringing up Semele from Hades (Pausanias II 31), on which see Guepin op. cit. p.127

Muses may be for the purpose of life symbols[66]. The effect the Graces had upon Demeter, whose orders were to "λύπαν ἐξαλλάξατ' ἀλαλᾶ" will be the same as that which Dionysus will have upon Persephone. That this will be achieved is made certain by the expression of power that emanates from the Bacchic cloaks and emblems (δύναται, for the unmetrical δύνανται has as its subjects the feminine plural nouns in the form of a *schema Pindaricon*. For other examples cf. *Ion* 1146, *Persae* 49[67]). The final stanza, therefore, complements the theme of joy brought about by music, expounded in contrast to the parodos. And the implication for the drama is the expected release of both Helen and Menelaus, despite the uncertainity raised by the reminder of the pomegranate in the opening lines.

The Bacchic element may also convey a reference to the *Homeric Hymn* VII in which Dionysus attacked a group of pirates upon a ship, throwing most of them overboard. Menelaus and Helen are also about to conduct a similar battle upon a ship against the Egyptians. Demeter's search party is described in terms of s battle array: she is in her Persian chariot, and riding along beside her are Artemis armed with arrows and Athena with spear and shield (ll. 1310-17). Therefore, the Dionysiac symbolism may not only articulate the release that Helen will secure, but also reflect the means by which she will secure it - by fighting.

The final three lines are of particular difficulty; the first two (1366-7) are so corrupt as to be non-sensical and ungrammatical, line 1367 is unmetrical, and the meaning of the third is obscure. Paley claims a licence for excessive emendation for a stanza that is extraordinarily corrupt, and this must be claimed by all editors if they wish to make any sense of the closing lines. Paley corrects lines 1366-7 to read:

εὗτέ νιν ὄμμασιν

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[66] Arrowsmith, W. sees the Muses and Graces as life symbols in the second stasimon of the Heracles, an ode in which, I note, Bacchus and music also appear. (The conversion of Heracles. diss. unpublished. Princeton, 1954: 123)

[67] In the example of the Persae a letter nu was also added in MS M, but has been dott- to indicate by the corrector that it is wrong. The scholiast remarks on- -n in the singular.

ἔβαλε σελάνα.

thereby interpreting them as descriptive of the παννυχίδες of the previous line. He places line 1368 in square brackets, considering it the patchwork of some grammarian, inserted to replace the genuine line that had been lost. Such a composition would either entail the final line to be continuing the description of the night festivals, although it is difficult to surmise what it would read, or suppose the line to include a further separate detail, but it is too short to provide in itself a clear picture of any additional element. Nevertheless, I suspect that he is correct in envisaging the final line to be corrupt, although I consider it to be a reconstruction of an unintelligible line rather than a replacement.

Robinson also infers that σελάνα in line 1367 invites a link with the παννυχίδες θεᾶς. He takes ἄμασιν (1366) to be a misreading of the moon's chariots (ἄρμασιν) and ὑπέρβαλε to be originally a gloss on a rarer word such as πάμφαινε (cf. *Medea* 1251-52). Therefore, when in Sparta, Helen would, during the full moon, engage in ceremonies, especially beauty contests, while Demeter was worshipped in other cities. Although it is uncertain if καλλιστεῖα were ever held in Sparta, it may be supposed on the evidence of Theocritus' *Epithalamium for Helen* (*Idyll* 18) and possibly from Alcman's *Partheneion* (a work that has its own particular interpretative problems), so that here the chorus tease Helen for participating when at home in a contest in which she was bound to win – she "gloried only in her beauty"[68]. Such teasing, however, by the chorus is pointless, especially as any reference to Helen ought to be more serious, and would truly render this part of the ode irrelevant.

The word 'moon' may have been assimilated into the text by attraction to the reference to the night festivals so that we need not see these lines as a continuation of the previous one. Hence, Grégoire reads:

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[68] Robinson, D. op. cit. pp. 171-72

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$$\text{Εἴθε νυν ἁρμόσαι}^{,69}$$
$$\text{ὑπερβασίαν ᾇ}$$
$$\text{μορφᾷ μόνον ηὔχεις.}$$

Although the first two lines are understandable, we are still left with the very obscure final line. "Beauty" is probably an attempt at a reference to Helen. But what does it mean by her 'glorifying' in it, why the word μόνον, and why introduce Helen here in accusatory terms? Campbell sees in lines 1366-67 a reference to Demeter, taking ΣΕΛΑΝΑ as a misreading of ΣΕΜΝΑ, a common epithet of Demeter. Therefore, in the final line there should be a reference to the pomegranate at which she was angry, which rounds off the antistrophe by making it end with an explanation of the allusion with which it began. He reads:

$$\text{ῥοιὰν μόνον ἔχθει}$$

("She hates only the pomegranate").

He interprets the change as follows. ῥοιάν becomes ῥοιαμ by assimilation with the following letter, which led to μοίρα, and then for "sense" μορφᾷ. From this he interprets the whole stanza: "Demeter is a very powerful (1358) deity – with all that picturesque detail in her cult – and she is also a greatly honoured (1366) one, none more so. And ῥοία is the one thing she can't abide."[70]

I, on the other hand, believe the stanza is referring essentially to Persephone and the "picturesque detail" does not refer to Demeter's power, but to Dionysus' redemptive qualities. Nevertheless, I suspect that there does lie in the final lines a reference to the pomegranate, and, therefore, combining Grégoire's and Campbell's readings, I would amend the text to:

$$\text{εἴθε νυν ἁρμόσαι}^{,}$$
$$\text{ὑπερβασίαν ᾇ}$$
$$\text{ῥοιᾷ μόνον ἄχθει.}$$

The transformation of ῥοιᾷ to μορφᾷ is slightly easier than Campbell's as it retains the iota subscript: ῥοιᾷ ⟶ ῥοιαμ by dittography ⟶ μοίρα ⟶ μορφᾷ. Therefore, the argument of the

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[69] This verb can mean "to accomodate" or "to adapt", and in the fourth century at least is used in the middle to mean "to adapt for one's own purposes".

[70] op. cit. p.139

stanza, which is written in the second person, is: Persephone performed a faux pas in eating the pomegranate, which annoyed Demeter. But great is the power for resurrection of the Dionysiac music that will save her. If only she could overcome her mistake for good [that forces her to return every year] by which she is troubled by a mere pomegranate!

In this way the final lines create the suspense that the seemingly most simple of mistakes – eating a mere pomegranate – resulted in Persephone's escape not being entirely successful. Even at this point in the drama, when the plot has been hatched, Helen must be careful. Thus the ode has its place within the other two. The first is backward looking without any hope, the second promises escape, but with the uncertainty of possible mishaps, and the third imagines escape to a happier life with all the misery in the past. To finish the second stasimon with a wish that Persephone may rid herself for ever of the burden of the pomegranate complements the wish at the end of the third stasimon that Helen may rid herself of her δυσκλεια (ll. 1506-11). In this respect the two odes are analogous; the second stasimon concerns the escape of Persephone, the third the escape of Helen.

The second stasimon, therefore, sets up Persephone and Demeter as mythical analogues of Helen and Menelaus respectively. Demeter brought destruction upon the earth in vengeance, as Menelaus did the Trojan War, in each case for a ravaged maiden. Although Helen was only indirectly the cause of the war, her beauty was the fateful key. Beauty as a disastrous quality was an old commonplace,   as in the stories of Pandora (*Theognis* 585), and of Deianeira and Iole (Sophocles *Trachiniae* ll. 25, 465), but the theme is so insistent in the first part of the *Helen*, occurring five times in the first 400 lines (ll. 27, 236f., 261, 304f., 375 ff.) that Whitman thinks Euripides intended more than a commonplace[71]. It is in fact part of the dichotomy between truth and seeming[72], expounded in the antithesis between Helen and the phantom, and parallel to the antithesis between the goddesses Hera

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[71] op. cit. p.44

[72] See Solmsen, F. CR 48, 1934: 119-21

and Aphrodite (seen most clearly at ll. 878ff.). Aeschylus also portrayed Helen as a flower, but one that wounds (*Agamemnon* l. 740), and it is this which figures throughout the *Helen*. If Helen is to be identified with Persephone, there may be a suggestion of an omen behind that name, which normally was unutterable (l. 1307). At lines 175-6 Euripides juxtaposes the name Persephone to the word φόνια, implying that the name means "destructive", as Aeschylus in the *Persae* appears to have connected the name Persian with περσέπτολις[73]. If the name Persephone is therefore meant to imply the idea of "the destructive one" (from the verb πέρθω), then it would imply a connection with Helen, who has been the true destructive one by being the original cause of the Trojan War. The drawing of omens from names was a widespread tendency in antiquity[74], and it would not have been beyond Euripides to make such an inference in the *Helen* in view of the suffering already referred to.

The sufferings borne by Helen and Menelaus, and those occasioned by war that the chorus highlight in the first stasimon are only temporary. Helen is promised an escape from Egypt as Persephone escaped from Hades. Demeter secured satisfaction by playing upon the flute in conjunction with the orchestra of deities. The instruments described may be those used in the ritual to recall Kore from the Underworld in the mysteries at Eleusis; Menelaus too will perform a ritual – that of the feigned funeral rites – in his rescue of Helen. If the drama is to be seen as evolving on an island in the from of Hades, then the prophecy by the Dioscuroi that Menelaus shall inhabit the "Isle of the Blessed" (l. 1677) envisages an exchange of islands, from one of death to one of happiness. This is the "comic" element of a happy ending, but a more serious tone may also be found. Grube's argument for not seeing Demeter and Persephone as counterparts of Menelaus and Helen runs: "It is not Persephone's detention but Demeter's sorrow that is described, and it seems quite impossible to force a parallel between Demeter's wanderings and those of

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[73] Winnington-Ingram, R.P. Studies in Aeschylus. Cambridge, 1983: 198-99

[74] cf. Verdenius, W.J. Maia 15, 1963: 125; Pease, A.S. (ed.) Cicero's de divinatione. Illinois, 1920: I 102

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Menelaus, who had the phantom with him and was not sorrowing for the loss of Helen at all."[75] It is, however, part of the essential seriousness of the play that the emphasis is upon sorrow, and Menelaus' time in Egypt forms only part of his comparison to Demeter, since the whole Trojan War and the original abduction by Paris represent his feeling of loss for Helen. The tragedy of war is one of the themes, although there is humour to be found, and, as Pippin Burnett says, "Beneath the brightness of her [Helen's] escape the dark sea of Trojan suffering still rolled."[76]

Euripides relates the search and subsequent release in the myth of Persephone as a paradigm for the predicament of Helen, and for this purpose he uses the typical elements associated with the theme of rape seen in such stories as that of Ganymede (*Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*) as well as of Persephone: a person is forcibly abducted from the parent for sexual purposes. The parent, after having grieved and searched for the abducted child, is informed of what has happened, and secures through negotiation or otherwise the return of the child[77]. In addition, Helen was abducted whilst picking flowers (cf. Creousa in *Ion* 887-96) in a meadow (cf. Io in the meadow of Lerna in Aeschylus *Prometheus* 652-53), and her rescue is achieved by twins – a pair of brothers or friends seems to be a common feature of rescue dramas, as, for example, the brothers Menelaus and Agamemnon who fetch Helen from Troy, Orestes and Pylades in Euripides' *IT*, and possibly Dionysus and his servant who enter the Underworld to fetch the greatest tragic poet in Aristophanes' *Frogs*[78]. Euripides structures the escape of Helen and Menelaus by setting the drama within the topos of rape and return. The Demeter ode occurs immediately after Helen and Menelaus have left the stage to prepare for their escape plan, and it thereby promises the success of that plan. Analogy, however, by its very nature must break down at some point, and in this case Persephone's eating of the pomegranate appears to have no

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[75] op. cit. p.349

[76] CP 55, 1960: 162

[77] cf. Sowa, C.A. Traditional themes and the Homeric hymns. Chicago, 1984: 121-144

[78] cf. Guépin op. cit. p.142

connection with Helen. The Dioscuroi promise everlasting happiness and divinity to Helen, and this, we must accept, will happen. Just as, however, Helen's re-enactment of Persephone's life presents a repetition of events, so Persephone's return to the Underworld shall recur. Other humans will in their turn experience the same sorts of difficulties as Helen has, and thereby continue the myth of Persephone once again in the future. For this is the serious message of the play, that as long as human nature remains as it is, wars will continue and the suffering experienced by the characters in this drama will be relived until men learn not to settle disputes by the sword (cf. ll. 1155-7). History does repeat itself, and Helen is just another example in the cycle.

A MYTH OF CIVILIZED SUCCESSION: THE THIRD STASIMON OF THE IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS

The resemblances in plot structure of the *Iphigenia in Tauris* and the *Helen* are marked. As Helen is a captive in the far off land of Egypt, so Iphigenia is detained in the land of the Taurians, "beyond the Clashing Rocks", and both of them are attended by a chorus of fellow Greek captives. Both look forward to a rescue by a relative; in one case her husband, in the other her brother. This escape is finally achieved, after a recognition scene, by deception. They both pretend to feel a revitalized affection for the barbarian tyrant in order to win him over, and then both cajole him into agreeing to the necessity for a religious ceremony to be performed beside the sea. In executing this ceremony both secure their escape by a fight, allowing them to sail away by ship, once the male character, in one case Orestes, in the other Menelaus, has revealed his identity. The news of their escape is brought by one of the men involved in the fight, and although the tyrant seeks revenge, he is checked in his anger by a deity; Thoas by Athena, Theoclymenus by one of the Dioscuroi.

A similarity in the content of the choral odes may be found too.[1] The 'nightingale ode' in the *Helen* (1107ff.) is parallel to the 'Halcyon ode' of the *Iphigenia in Tauris* (1088ff.), both beginning with a request to the bird to join in the chorus' melancholy strain. Both plays contain an ode depicting a sea voyage, one of Orestes' journey from Greece to Tauris, and one of Helen's and Menelaus' from Egypt to Greece. The difference between them is that the one in the *Iphigenia in Tauris* refers to the past, and therefore comes at the start of the play (392ff.), whilst that of the Helen looks forward to the future, and hence comes at the end (1451ff.), which results in an alteration in the arrangement of the odes. The final pair is that of the much debated Demeter ode (1301ff., see chapter 1) and of a similarly

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[1]cf. Verrall, A.W. Four plays of Euripides. Cambridge, 1905: 107

problematic Apollo ode (1234ff.). Both odes are narrative poems that recount an aspect of the myth of a deity, tales that are complete in themselves, with no clear relevance to the scenes in which they are immediately placed. It is tempting for those that deny all but a tenuous link between the Demeter ode and the plot in the *Helen* to infer the same dramatic purpose at work in the *Iphigenia in Tauris* as that which, whatever it may be, they see in the *Helen*. Therefore, Harsh suggests of the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, "It is possible that the poet designedly inserted an interlude at this point, believing that the extreme emotional tension here would be jeopardized less by an interlude, like an entr'acte in the modern theater, than by an effort of the Chorus to heighten or maintain the tension."[2] Similar comments have been made upon the impossibility of making a statement amid the tense action of the *Helen*, without it becoming an anti-climax.

The fact, however, that Apollo and Delphi are the very theme of the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, and that Demeter and Persephone have no part in the Helen myth, prompts one to treat the Apollo ode with more careful scrutiny than were it a mere counterpart to that of the *Helen*. Furthermore, my argument for the symbolical relevance of the Demeter ode implies that we should not be expecting to find any ἐμβόλιμον whatsoever. The ode relates how Leto, after giving birth to Apollo, carried him to the heights of Parnassus, where a dragon, installed by Gaia, guarded Themis' oracle. Apollo forthwith, whilst still an infant, slew this beast and took possession of the oracle himself. In retaliation for this Gaia sent dreams as prophecies to mankind so that Apollo would not be the sole source of insight into the future. On this account Apollo appealed to Zeus, who laughed at his greed for the oracular shrine's income, but granted, by an everlasting right, to Apollo the sole inheritance to prophetic truth and to dreams mere delusion. That is how Euripides writes the story. It should be noted here that it is unnecessary to prefer the reading of manuscript L (ἅ τ') in line 1237, and thus to include Artemis in

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[2] Harsh, P.W. A handbook of Classical drama. Stanford and London, 1944: 221. cf. Décharme, P. Euripides and the spirit of his drama. London, 1906: 312-13. To be fair to Harsh, he does proceed to admit that Apollo is, at least, the author of all the action.

the ode, rather than ὅστ'. Despite the appropriateness of Artemis in the play[3], her presence here is awkward. The description is as fitting for Apollo as it is for Artemis (cf. *Hom. Hymn to Apollo* l. 131), and the *Homeric Hymn* asserts that only Apollo was born on Delos (l. 16).

It is important to appreciate the traditional themes from which Euripides was drawing to understand the character of the ode. In the very same note[4] in which Pippin Burnett indicates the relation of this ode to the *Homeric hymns* to Apollo and to Hermes, she states that the infancy of the gods and heroes (as in the *Ichneutae, Dionysicus, Heracleisiscus* and *Dictyulci*) and the gifts of the gods (as in the *Pyrkaeus, Ichneutae, Dionysicus* and *Pandora*) are set themes of the satyr play, and that therefore this piece is intended as a mini-satyr. Pippin Burnett here, however, seems to work like Penelope, weaving her argument's cloth only to unpick it again immediately afterwards. The similarities to the satyric themes, for which the evidence is scarce, are irrelevant; for it is the standing of Euripides' work in relation to the traditional mythemes, as, for example, in the *Homeric Hymns*, that is of utmost significance. We cannot, however, begin to discuss the importance of the themes until we know whether we are to treat the tale seriously or to read it with a certain ironical slant. As I have already said, the laughter is not one of pure mockery, either of Apollo or especially of the whole tale, otherwise Zeus would never have granted Apollo his request so condoning the action undertaken. Any light tone or even joy expressed in the ode need not imply irreverence at all. Sombre tones and pallid features are more the marks of a nineteenth century Scottish Presbyter than of what we can deduce of the spectacular and at times ecstatic Greek religious ceremonies. Nevertheless, Verrall constructs a detailed argument that the ode represents the consequences of the variations of orthodoxy between different worshippers of Apollo[5]. He understands the chorus to be natives

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[3] cf. Grégoire. Euripide IV. p. 162; Grube, G.M.A. The drama of Euripides. London, 1941: 327

[4] ibid. n. 21

[5] Euripides the rationalist. pp. 217-30

of Delos, a rival Apolline institution to Delphi, and that they portray the Delphic oracle as a business, whose commodity was cheapened and revenue taken by Themis. The ode presents Delphi as an institution of profit, that was further embarrassed by the traditional polytheism found in the Dionysiac element, to which Euripides gives "priority, and much more than priority [sic]"[6]. All the words, however, used to refer to Delphi's wealth are derivatives from χρυσός, a most complimentary word, rather than the pejorative πλοῦτος and its cognates. For the ode is an ode of praise, a self contained *hieros logos*, addressed to Apollo himself, of the sort, we may imagine that could have been employed at any festival in his honour. Perhaps Kitto is correct in suggesting that there is neither a trace of reverence in the poem nor of irreverence[7], although honour accorded to Apollo prevails in his success at securing the possession of the oracle.

The particular mythemes of the ode, which may be traced in other Greek literature, appear, as we shall see, mutatis mutandis in the drama of the play as well. The first extant account of the myth occurs in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (cf. Alcaeus' *Hymn to Apollo*), in which Apollo slays the dragoness that occupied the site and leaves it to rot (and hence the place's name Pytho) before taking possession of the oracular seat (*h. Ap.* III 11.300-374). This version, as Alcaeus', presents Apollo as the founder and original owner of the oracle in contrast to the later versions of previous owners. The earliest variants in our sources all come from the fifth century. Aeschylus in the *Eumenides* (ll. 1-8), a play to which Euripides appears to be replying in the *Iphigenia in Tauris*[8], adapts and rejects the dominant tradition in order to deny that Apollo employed force, as used in the *Homeric Hymn*, in his acquisition of Delphi (οὐδὲ πρὸς βίαν τινός, 1.5). His version is so well suited to that particular tragedy that he most likely invented it himself[9]. He does, nevertheless, envisage

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[6] ibid. p. 228

[7] Kitto, H.D.F. Greek tragedy. London. 3rd. ed., 1961: 344

[8] See Pippin Burnett, A. Catastrophe survived. Oxford, 1971: 47-75; Sansone, D. "The sacrifice motif in Euripides' IT." TAPA 105, 1975: 292-293

[9] Sommerstein, A.H. (ed.). Aeschylus: Eumenides. Cambridge, 1989:

a transfer of the oracle from Gaia to Themis, to Phoebe, and finally to Apollo. The presence, therefore, of Gaia in the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, although only there as mother of Themis, may reflect an earlier tradition of her as a previous owner of the oracle. Phoebe appears in no other version and probably is intended to act as a transition from Themis to Apollo, which was normally the violent stage[10]. Pindar's account (fr. 55) is little more than the bare structure of the myth. It too is a violent event, involving Apollo wresting by force the oracle from Gaia, who as a result wanted him to be cast into Tartaros (cf. Gaia's vengeance with dreams in the Euripidean ode). Euripides, outside of the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, implies a similar set-up to the one he describes in that play, when the Delphic tripod is referred to as Themis' tripod, suggesting her original ownership of it (*Orestes* ll. 163-65). It is clear from these other versions that Euripides was drawing upon common features of the myth for his ode in the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, except that no other account gives as Gaia's vengeance the sending of dreams. Verrall claims that the ode has been inserted with the result that it would have the same appropriateness in any circumstances favourable to the credit of the Pythian deity[11], but this overlooks the considerable emphasis (25 lines) placed upon the origins of dreams, which play an important role in the play. A consideration of the emphases made in comparison to the other versions will assist in understanding Euripides' intention, and an examination of the traditional themes and features that recur will aid in dispelling misinterpretations of various elements.

Sansone conceives of the Euripidean rejection of the theology of the *Oresteia* in the *Iphigenia in Tauris* as an articulation of the difference between myth and reality[12]. The transfer in the prologue of the *Eumenides* from Gaia to Apollo by friendly means is mirrored by the evolution of the Furies, who become Eumenides ("The Friendly Ones"). In reply Euripides says that it is not the

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[10] ibid. p. 81

[11] Verrall, A.W. Euripides the rationalist. Cambridge, 1895: 219

[12] op. cit. pp. 292-23 and n. 27

gods but mortals that are subject to change and evolution. For Euripides realised that there was a great difference between religious experience reflected in myth and the experience of his own day, and human society was the cause of that difference. Sansone sees the tone of the song in the *Iphigenia in Tauris* as one of lightness and joy dominated by the laughter of Zeus (l. 1274). Therefore, he says, the Aeschylean theology is represented as little more than a pleasant story, and the third stasimon contributes by mocking tales of gods killing monsters, overthrowing each other or having disputes between each other. These are mere stories and not serious theology, as they do not represent the gods as they really are.

In two respects, at least, this theory is misguided. It first obscures the essential difference between the accounts of Aeschylus and Euripides, between the avoidance of violence and disputation, and the inclusion of it respectively. Euripides was not in this respect mocking the myth told by Aeschylus, since that myth contains none of the elements he was meant to be rejecting, and, if there is a tone of mockery, it can only be of the very lack of violence in Aeschylus' account or of his own tale, which contains violence and rivalry. This explicit mockery, however, is unlikely, since, second, the laughter, which hardly "dominates" the ode, is a common feature in tales of the gods, and, as we shall see, may have a far more simple explanation. This does not deny, of course, an implicit rejection by Euripides in writing a different account of the myth. Pippin Burnett also draws her interpretation from the laughter. To her Euripides has made the events of the *Eumenides'* prologue funny and grotesque, setting it as a descendant of the Homeric Hymns to Hermes and Apollo. In the *Hymn to Hermes*, the eponymous god, being only one day old, steals Apollo's cattle and is thereupon dragged by his enraged brother to Zeus to exact justice. Zeus laughs at Hermes' precocity and deceit, and orders the two of them to search for the cattle. It results in Apollo giving up his cattle to Hermes in exchange for the tortoise shell lyre that Hermes had made. In both this hymn and the third stasimon of the *Iphigenia in Tauris* Zeus laughs at the relevant god, and here, in the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, a laughing gift is given in the form of liberation from grief brought about

by the new knowledge afforded by Apolline prophecy[13].

Yet the laughter, on the other hand, is most probably a traditional motif, appearing, as Pippin Burnett herself acknowledges, in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*. Euripides has modelled his ode on this story of an audacious infant pleading before Zeus, although the laughter may contain a theological implication. There is no evidence that such laughter is ever intended as pure mockery, but in both of the cases Zeus supports the cause of the infant at whom he laughs. He appears as a result of, and in spite of, the infant god's precocity to have been won over to the particular case pleaded, so that the laughter represents both amusement and compliance. Thus when Iambe joked in order to cheer Demeter she managed to bring her to γελάσαι τε καὶ ἵλαον σχεῖν θυμόν – to laugh and have a propitious heart[14]. To make a god laugh indicated that he had been won over. Hence in the Demeter story the result of her laughter was the return of fertility to the fields and crops. Resumption of the work of the god was often indicated by laughter, as can be seen in related mythology from other countries[15]. In an Egyptian myth of the goddess Hathor, the goddess made her father laugh by exposing herself and thereby caused him to resume his work. Similarly, in Japan, Amaterasu, the Sun goddess, withdrew into a hole in anger until Uzume, who was particularly ugly, danced and exposed herself, causing the other gods including Amaterasu, who had come out to see what the commotion was about, to laugh at this grotesque sight. The cause of laughter can also be far more ludicrous than obscenities or an audacious infant, as, for example, in Sardinia, the Virgin Mary was made to smile by a frog who boasted that her own grief was far worse, since she had lost as many as seven children, all run over by a cartwheel; a tale that would be appropriate in modern Britain if one substituted a hedgehog for the frog. Zeus' laughter in the *Iphigenia in Tauris* indicates his compliance with Apollo's will and a reassurance that

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[13] op. cit. pp. 70-71 and n. 21

[14] cf. Richardson, N.J. (ed.). The Homeric hymn to Demeter. Oxford. 2nd. ed., 1979: on line 204

[15] These are discussed in some detail by Richardson ibid. pp. 216-17

he will reinstate the old order. It does not indicate that he finds the situation trifling or worthy of scorn.

As the *Iphigenia in Tauris* is possibly intended as a sequel to the *Eumenides*, Pippin Burnett sees the third stasimon as an equivalent of the fourth member of the *Oresteia* tetralogy, the *Proteus*, recognizing certain standard satyr play motifs[16]. Her comparisons, however, are tenuous and dependent upon great emphasis being placed on individual words. She likens Zeus' laughing gift to the gifts of wine, fire and music that appear in satyr plays (Is there here a confusion between a gift of laughter as one that wine etc. induces, and a gift given when laughing?[17]), adding that it is no accident that in describing it the poet makes his single reference to Dionysus (l. 1234). In fact there is no link made in the ode between Zeus' laughter and the Bacchic revelling, which are separated by 31 lines, including a whole stanza, from each other, and both incidents are confined to individual words in passing to more important details. It is also not the case that Dionysus had nothing to do with the myth of Apollo, as she suggests, but according to Pindar's *Pythian hypoth. a* Dionysus was the first to prophesy from the Delphic tripod, reflecting the tradition that the tripod held the remains of either Dionysus or Python. To argue that he as god of liberation reflects the liberation at the end of the play, which is as genial as any wrought by a satyr play (and in this way squeezing in a further example of satyric elements) is to read far too much into the two words βακχευούσαν Διονύσωι, which are there as part of the tradition according to some versions and have perhaps been included in view of the tragedy's performance at the festival of Dionysus – an acknowledgement of the worshipped god's colourful and varied history. Too much has been read into the laughter and the presence of Dionysus in vain attempts at interpretation of the ode, and as a result the myth in its entirety is obscured, except

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[16] op. cit. pp. 71-72 and nn. 21, 22

[17] Pippin Burnett is to me unclear on this point. She does in her footnote talk of the prominence of gifts in Satyr themes, and therefore she may find that there is a link between Zeus and Dionysus simply in the giving of a gift. She does, however, appear to bolster her argument by stating the particular nature of the Dionysiac gifts.

by those that merely note that praise of Apollo is appropriate when the god's prophecy is on the point of being proved correct[18].

The mythemes of the ode are the dominant elements and articulate the significance of the myth. The principal themes may be classed within the schemata of the divine succession, the sovereignty myth, and the previous owners myth[19]. There are other minor interlinking themes, some of which will arise on closer examination of the major themes. The divine succession, common to all variants of the myth, can be seen in its barest form in the Pindaric fragment, in which the male god replaces another deity as master. In this case Apollo as lawgiver and guide replaces Gaia, a dangerous goddess associated with deceit[20], and thereby establishes social order. The older deity traditionally represents a stage in cosmic history when vengeance rather than law held sway, and therefore Gaia retaliates by sending dreams. In the *Iphigenia in Tauris* the killing of the dragon, derived from the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, expresses the same perception of the destruction of evil, and articulates the reason for the oracle's foundation: to give law and abolish disorder. The motif of a god or hero killing a chthonic monster is commonly connected with foundation in other myths to symbolize the establishment of order and the destruction of raw nature at its most savage, epitomized in that monster[21]. In the myth Gaia, including her chthonic and prophetic powers, is finally subordinated to Apollo and incorporated into his new order; thus, the traditional myth is a sovereignty myth in which the establishment of order is preceded by disorder, and the cause of disorder is subordinated to the supreme deity, the sovereign[22].

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[18] e.g. Harsh op. cit. p. 224; Decharme op. cit. p. 313; Grube op. cit. p. 327

[19] For a discussion of the themes in the myth see Sourvinou-Inwood, C. "Myth as history." pp. 215-241 in J. Bremmer (ed.). Interpretations of Greek mythology. London, 1988.

[20] On Gaia see Arthur, M.B. "Cultural strategies in Hesiod's Theogony: Law, family, society." Arethusa 15, 1982: 64-66, 70-71, 76; Farnell, L.R. The cults of the Greek states. v.III. Oxford, 1907: 1-28

[21] Trümf, J. "Stadtgrundung und Drachenkampf." Hermes 86, 1958: 129-57, cited by Sourvinou-Inwood op. cit.

[22] cf. Vernant, J.P. Religion grecque, religions antiques. Paris, 1976: 25-26 on Hermes-Hestia relationship

One may compare the dragon's incorporation through the use of the name Pytho to immortalize the monster within Delphi. As with this sovereignty myth, the other mythemes are elaborations of the divine succession.

In the *Iphigenia in Tauris* it is not Gaia whose position Apollo usurps, but Themis, who acts as a mediating figure between Gaia and Apollo, since Gaia, in other versions of the myth, appears as an older possessor of the oracle[23]. This lays the foundation for the previous owners myth, which, although not so clearly marked in Euripides as elsewhere, reflects the development in stages to a higher order from out of a less civilized one. A parallel example of divine schemata to the Gaia-Themis-Apollo succession is that most carefully delineated in the *Theogony* of Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus. Traditionally Gaia represents the primordial and savage goddess, whilst Themis is the intermediary between the primordial and civilized deities. The succession from Gaia to Themis depicts a movement from the primordial savage goddess to one associated with justice and order (θέμις), and that from Themis to Apollo, which appears in Euripides, a movement to the non-vengeful civilizing god of a new order (although it is Gaia that sends the dreams, they are nevertheless asssociated with Themis). All this presupposes the divine succession myth in which a god, often of a younger generation, replaces one of an older one, as Kronos is the son of Ouranos, and Zeus of Kronos. This may be one reason for the emphasis upon Apollo's infancy: he is not so much a young up-start, but a member of a new generation, which always promises hope of a more successful and controlled order.

In the *Homeric hymn to Apollo* the dragoness that he slays is associated with Typhoeus, the last challenger to Zeus' power, and therefore the disorder and chaos preceding the oracle's foundation, which she represents, are symbolically equated with those conditions that Zeus' ascension removed. The dragon killing is a repeat of the establishment of Zeus' rule and indicates that the foundation of Apollo's oracle is an affirmation of Zeus'

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[23] In one variant the oracle does pass from Gaia to Themis before ending up in Apollo's hands (Schol. Eur. Orestes l. 164; cf. Pausanias 10. 5. 6), a progression that Aeschylus employed.

ultimate authority, which will be served through the oracle. The sovereignty myth structures the establishment both of Apollo's oracle and of Zeus' rule, linking Delphi and Zeus with the triumph over the old order, and emphasizing the importance of Apollo's oracle in the confirmation of order amongst men. In the *Iphigenia in Tauris* there is not such a clear association of the dragon with Zeus' old enemy, but Zeus' approval for Apollo's overthrow of Themis suggests that this new position is in accord with and subordinate to Zeus' ordering of the universe. This categorization of the mythemes is somewhat artificial and they are certainly not exclusive of each other. It does, however, help to define the different mythical strata that run through the play.

The themes in the Apollo ode are reflected in the play's action on both a theological and a human level. On the theological level, and indeed the most ostensible level, Apollo is the ultimate author of all the action on stage, and, at the moment when his oracle is about to be fulfilled and Orestes saved, the god is worthy of eulogy. Apollo has commanded Orestes to transport from Tauris to Athens the effigy of Artemis in order to rid himself of his pursuers, the Furies, and yet his oracle is time and again questioned by Orestes (ll. 78-103, 570-75, 711-15, and 723). Athena's appearance at the end of the tragedy confirms that the oracle was correct and justifies Iphigenia's expressed belief in the goodness of the gods (l. 391). The sovereignty myth foreshadows this ending effectively. The play also reveals, by the very misgivings of the characters, that prophecy is uncertain and vulnerable to misinterpretation, but all the negative characteristics gravitate towards prophetic dreams in the play and towards Gaia's sending of them in the ode. The play opens with Iphigenia's explanation in the prologue of a dream that she had that night, whose misinterpretation for the first half of the play drives her to despair and almost brings her to kill her brother. Eventually this dream is shown to be unsatisfactory by its incomplete revelation of the truth, in contrast to the superior status held by Apollo's prophecy. At one point Orestes calls the gods as deceitful as dreams (ll. 570-71), but during the play Apollo's oracle contributes to the refutation of this proposition by the victory over the dream's prophetic message. The essence of

the sovereignty myth structures the drama, and the triumph of Orestes is a re-enactment of Apollo's triumph over dreams and a reaffirmation of the Delphic oracle's reliability. The previous owners myth, with its overthrow of Gaia in preference for Apollo, reassures the previously sceptical characters of the existence of a divine order that can be relied upon and of the abolition of the earlier disorder wrought by the uncertainty of dreams.

On the human level the success of Apollo is the cause of Orestes' and Iphigenia's escape, so that as Apollo won his honour back, so Orestes and his sister win back their freedom. In their escape they symbolically characterize the sovereignty mytheme that is enacted in the ode. The oracle was taken over by the employment of violent force, which led to the establishment of the superior cult of Apolline prophecy. In the same way Orestes uses violent force (fighting the Taurians on the beach) to arrest a sacred object, the holy statue of Artemis, and this also led to an established new order of the civilized and superior cult of Artemis Tauropolos at Athens[24]. Just as Themis' prophetic skills were similar to those of Apollo, so the worship of Artemis at Tauris is similar to that of the cult of Artemis Tauropolos at Athens, in which the priest draws one drop of blood from a man's throat in ceremonial re-enactment of and compensation for the sacrifices that Artemis once received at Tauris (ll. 1458-61). The difference between the two cults, as is the norm in previous owner myths, is that the new one that is established at Athens is more civilized than the older one, and this transition from savage to civilized is effected physically by the movement of the characters with the statue from the far off barbarian land (cf. the barbarian land of the *Helen* symbolized duplicity and death) to Attica; in the ode it is effected through the movement in time and generations of the previous owners. It is piquant that Apollo's oracular biography is chosen as the allegory for Orestes' seizure of the statue, since it was Apollo's oracle that had commanded him to do this.

Grube conjectures that the picture of the young Apollo is

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[24] Pippin Burnett op. cit. p. 72; Sourvinou-Inwood ibid. p. 230

developed for its own sake[25], and, apart from its important purpose of identifying this myth as a descendant of the *Homeric Hymns*, it is indeed feasible that the poetic art provide opportunity for description of a purely aesthetic value. Nevertheless, the words that describe Apollo's infancy – ἔτι νιν ἔτι βρέφος, ἔτι φίλας | ἐπὶ ματέρος ἀγκάλαισι θρῴσκων (ll. 1249-50[26]) – are repeated in remarkably similar formats elsewhere in the play. Iphigenia's last sight of Orestes before travelling to Aulis is vividly described as ἔτι βρέφος, ἔτι νέον, ἔτι θάλος | ἐν χερσὶν ματρὸς πρὸς στέρνοις τ'... (ll. 232-33). The first line of each example contains three clauses, of which each limb begins with ἔτι, and in both examples the babe is called βρέφος. The second line depicts the mother holding the child in her arms (ἀγκάλαισι, l.1250; χερσίν, l.233). On recognizing Orestes Iphigenia again recalls the last time she saw him, only this time she says that he was in his nurse's arms: τόδ' ἔτι βρέφος | ἔλιπον ἀγκάλαισι σὲ νεαρὸν τροφοῦ | νεαρὸν ἐν δόμοις (ll. 834-36). In view of the parallelism I retain the ἔτι, lost in the OCT's original τὸ δέ τι, but suggested by Diggle in the apparatus criticus as τότ' ἔτι, and I follow Platnauer's text of reading τόδε. Since Orestes as he presently stands before Iphigenia is not a babe, τόδε may be interpreted as a gender attraction from βρέφος for τόνδε, unless Matthiae's and Diggle's τότ' should be read. If τόδ' is to be understood as the neuter, then we may suppose that Iphigenia, whose last memory of him was as a child, still views him as a child, however incongruous, if poignant, it may seem. Any youngest child of a family is all too well aware of how he or she is for ever conceived of as the baby of the family, no matter what their age. This would have been more pronounced in Orestes' case, as he had not been seen since a child. Iphigenia in her description again chooses the same words used of Apollo, describing Orestes as ἔτι βρέφος and as clinging to the female's ἀγκάλαισι.

These similarities do suggest a parallelism between Orestes and Apollo, and even though Orestes is no longer a βρέφος, that is the image of him that Iphigenia clearly treasures and conveys to

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op. cit. p. 328
26
Line 1250 is the reconstruction from a suspect text.

the audience. The column in Iphigenia's dream that represents Orestes sprouts blond hair (κόμας ξανθάς, ll. 51-2 - a word in Epic, according to LSJ, "mostly used of fair golden hair"), which no doubt would have been visually represented upon the actor's mask. Therefore, the stasimon's opening description of Apollo as χρυσόκομαν (l. 1236) could well have struck the audience as not an inappropriate epithet for the fair haired figure that had just left the stage. This connection between the two may suggest that Orestes is a form of Apollo incarnate, since in his fulfillment of the task set him he confirms the position that Apollo originally had established himself.

It may also suggest, however, that Orestes is 'like' Apollo and performs the same actions as Apollo. We have already seen how his abduction of the statue establishes a new cult, as Apollo did for himself, but this merely secured for Orestes riddance of the Furies and not the restoration of a previously coveted position as Apollo had achieved. If, however, one considers the entirety of Orestes' exploits, from the murder of Clytemnestra through to his eventual return to Argos, then the mythemes of the ode come into play. The succession from Themis to Apollo represents a transition from the inferior female deity to the superior male one. Zeus' approval for Apollo's overthrow of Themis indicates that Zeus and Apollo act in conjunction as father and son, and are implicitly compared with and contrasted to the Gaia and Themis pair, who are presented as inferior. Zeus is the sovereign of the cosmos and as a result it is his offspring and the male deity that succeeds. The theme of "male is superior to female" is intertwined within the myth, which is both structured by and expressive of it. As this superiority of male to female equates Apollo's oracle with Zeus, the supreme male god, so dreams are equated with Gaia, a primordial female deity, with the result that Apollo is guaranteed success. Apollo has overthrown a female by a violent act, as has Orestes in murdering Clytemnestra (ll. 555-58), and thereby deposing her from the throne of Argos. We are reminded of the previous owners of that kingdom in the parodos, in which the chorus sing of the dreadful incidents that have befallen, one after another, the house of Atreus, beginning with Thyestes' theft of the golden lamb (ll. 184-202). Orestes' torturous flight from

the Furies is the final stage in the succession of evil; for Athena promises him safety hereafter (ll. 1469-71) and freedom from past troubles, such that there has been in the history of the house of Atreus a transition from a barabarous and disordered past to a new civilized order. As Zeus granted an everlasting right that only Apollo's prophecies may be counted as infallible, so Athena decrees a law that if the votes in the law court are equal, as in the case of Orestes, then the accused shall be acquitted (ll. 1471-72). On his return to Argos Orestes no doubt would be able to possess the throne (cf. ll. 680-82, 928-31), and, in the same way that Apollo's ascension to power was gratifying to his father, Zeus, and a confirmation of his divine order, Orestes will receive what is his by birthright and reinstate the sovreignty of his father's, Agamemnon's, lineage. He will depose, according to the myth of divine succession, the older female ruler, and, conceived of as but a young boy, take the throne as a symbol of a new generation and order. This represents the superiority of male over female . Although Apollo had secured possession of Delphi, it profited him little since Gaia had sent out dreams out of indignation (φθόνῳ, l. 1269) at her daughter's treatment. Orestes too is prevented from using his position, but this time by the Furies (ll. 928-31), who attack him out of anger (χόλον, l. 1439) at how he treated his mother. Both characters require a god to remove the threat posed by the relevant parties, and, once this has been achieved, both are secure in their rule.

The myth of Apollo, therefore, presents itself in the play on three levels. The drama on stage is firstly a reflection and re-enactment of the triumph of Apollo over dreams. The successful outcome of the plot is a witness to the reliability of Apollo's oracle and the fickleness of dreams as expounded in the third stasimon, which acts as an apology to Orestes' agnosticism and scepticism. Secondly, the ode is an allegory of the foundation of the new cult of Artemis, which will be achieved at precisely the same time as Apollo's oracle is proved sure. Thirdly, the subtext of the ode implies the return to sovereignty of Orestes in his father's kingdom; a rule that had been temporarily usurped by a fiendish woman and her lover. These latter two plots, parallel to the myth of Apollo, are of special interest, since the author of

the schemes involved was Apollo himself. He it was who directed Orestes to Tauris to fetch the effigy of Artemis, and he it was who bade him to kill Clytemnestra. Not only, therefore, is the drama a replay of the triumph over dreams that ensures Apollo's sanctity, but the two other stories that follow the plot of the Apollo ode also follow its sentiments. For these two stories, guided as they are by Apollo, confirm the wisdom behind his guidance. Apollo's biography, therefore, is the paradigm both of the action for the people on stage and of the theological background to that action.

CHAPTER 3

SACRIFICE AS A MARRIAGE: THE THIRD STASIMON OF THE IPHIGENIA AT AULIS

Written at the very end of Euripides' life, when he was living in the court of Archelaus in Macedon, the *Iphigenia at Aulis* represents the product of his creative genius in its maturity, but its very lateness does not necessarily imply a decline in the tragic art towards that of Agathon[1]. The author has only recently completed the *Bacchae*, a play lacking neither in a careful structure nor in tragedy. Despite the presence of various editorial additions to the unfinished text, many of the intentions of the original author may be derived from the extant version, provided due caution is exercised when criticizing the text[2]. The character of the chorus as mere witnesses, come out of simple curiosity in the gathering Armada (ll. 171-73), suggests that they should only be moderately affected by the fate of the characters' on stage[3], and hence the odes that they sing should express little direct concern with the fate of the protagonist. They do not express pity at the impending sacrifice, but rather in the first two stasima turn to general reflections. In the first stasimon they state in general terms the nature of ἔρως and the roles appropriate to each sex, and in the second they reflect on the destruction that will be wrought at Troy and the sufferings to be experienced by the Trojan women. Callous indifference shown by the chorus was employed by both Sophocles and Euripides at the most

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[1] Kitto, H.D.F. Greek tragedy. 3rd. ed. London: Methuen and co., 1961: 362, calls the Iphigenia in Aulis "a thoroughly second-rate play".

[2] cf. Diggle's criticism of G. Mellert-Hoffmann's Untersuchungen zur 'Iphigenie in Aulis' des Euripides (Heidelberg: Winter, 1969) in "Iphigenia at Aulis" CR n.s. 21, 1971: 178-80 - "Mellert-Hoffmann writes as if no such problem [of the disparate nature of the material] existed" (p. 179). For a careful study of the text see Page, D.L. Actors' interpolations in Greek tragedy. Oxford, 1934: 122-216, esp. pp. 207ff., who concludes that enough of the original remains to form a clear idea on the author's intentions.

[3] cf. Décharme, P. Euripides and the spirit of his dramas. New York and London: Macmillan, 1906: 299-300; Grube, G.M.A. The drama of Euripides. 3rd. ed. London: Methuen and co., 1973: 104

poignant moments of the drama, and the protagonist was thereby ennobled by such isolation from any sympathy. A similar deprivation of emotion appears to manifest itself in the third stasimon[4], in which the chorus nevertheless reveal the very terror of the final outcome by singing of a marriage in gruesome contrast to the mournful sacrifice and in reminiscence of the failure of Iphigenia's expectations. The ode is connected to the present by a family tie since its main subjects, Peleus and Thetis, are the parents of Achilles. Despite the irony of the contrast between marriage and sacrifice, and despite the family connection of the ode with the action, one is tempted to demand a more specific relevance. Nevertheless, I shall argue that by the end of the play a mediation is achieved between the marriage and the sacrifice so that the two become one, and that Iphigenia, in undertaking the self-sacrifice, offers herself in marriage.

The third stasimon is sung when the preparations for the sacrifice are all but complete and after Clytemnestra has discovered Agamemnon's plot to coerce Iphigenia into the sacrifice by the promise of marriage. The chorus tell of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, which was attended by the Muses and Centaurs, who blessed the marriage and repeated Cheiron's prophecy that the couple's offspring, Achilles, would be a beacon to Thessaly when he triumphs in the campaign against Troy. The happiness of this wedding day they contrast with Iphigenia's, which will turn into a day of sacrifice and mourning. They conclude, if the text is genuine, with a moralistic condemnation of the power exercised by wickedness such that no goodness is able to hold sway. The relevance proffered by the chorus that Iphigenia's wedding day will be so different from that of Peleus and Thetis is the essence of the tragedy, but there are further implications arising from the ode[5]. First, there is the significance of the difference between the nature of the ode's story as a blissful marriage and

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[4] ll. 1036-97

[5] For an influential treatment of the relation between the action and odes in the play, see Bonnard, A. "Iphigénie à Aulis. Tragique et poésie." MH 2, 1945: 87-107; more recent studies have been Parry, H. The lyric poems of Greek tragedy. Toronto and Sarasota, 1978: 86ff.; and Walsh, G.B. "Iphigenia in Aulis: Third stasimon." CP 69, 1971: 241-48.

that of the action involving a pitiable sacrifice. Second, the prophecy concerning Achilles' future glory at Troy raises the question of the role of Achilles, who was the bait to lure Iphigenia to Aulis, as he is revealed in the action and chorus. And finally, the question of the relation of the promised marriage to the sacrifice[6] must be raised, not least because these are the two elements of the myth upon which Euripides concentrates.

Euripides may well have been the inventor of the presence of Clytemnestra at Aulis and of the deception of Achilles, in addition to that of Iphigenia, to complicate the traditional motif of the false engagement of Iphigenia[7]. He certainly did adapt the legend of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis to ensure that it differed from the legend of the House of Atreus. The version in which Peleus overcomes Thetis by force and makes love to her only once is rejected in favour of the more amorous tale. Similarly the version in which it is Zeus that forces Thetis to marry against her will, and in which she subsequently abandoned Peleus after the birth of Achilles is avoided[8]. Instead the chorus of the *Iphigenia at Aulis* portrays the wedding with a certain untainted grace and charm. In this way the pathos and even reality of Iphigenia's fate is made more pronounced by its contrast with the happiness she looked for in such a wedding as that of Peleus and Thetis. In addition to the failure of the wedding of Iphigenia and Achilles, there is an element of failure in Clytemnestra's and Agamemnon's marriage, which originated, according to Euripides, in a violence (ll. 1149-56) unknown in any other extant version. For, Clytemnestra reveals that Agamemnon had killed her first husband,

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[6] My treatment of the relationship between the marriage and the sacrifice is heavily influenced by Foley, H.P. Ritual Irony. New York, 1985: 65-105, which is an extended and improved version of her earlier paper "Marriage and sacrifice in Euripides' Iphigeneia in Aulis." Arethusa 15, 1982: 159-80. I would not, however, place as great an emphasis on the Panhellenism in Iphigenia's voluntary act of sacrifice as Foley does.

[7] For the various treatments of the myth before Euripides, see Conacher, D.J. Euripidean drama: myth, theme and structure. Toronto, 1967: 250-53.

[8] Pindar Nemean Odes 4. 62ff.; Sophocles frs. 154, 155 and 561 Nauck; Apollodorus III 13. 5; Ovid Metamorphoses 11. 221; Apollonius Rhodius 4. 790ff.

Tantalus, along with their child, and forced her to marry him. Such unpleasantness does not occur in any part of Euripides' narrative of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis to taint the equivalent lives of the dramatic characters[9].

The specific difference between the two marriages - one blissful, the other false - is characteristic of the more general difference between the ode and the dramatic action, a difference which would instantly strike an attentive audience. In its tone the ode lacks a sense of character and motivation, something not unknown in choral lyric, but which is one reason for the chorus appearing to have little emotional concern for the characters on stage. The narrative barely advances at all in the opening strophe[10] and its subject is the wedding itself, described in colourful detail, not the people concerned. Walsh suggests that the images are static in that they are depicted in the manner of vase paintings, incorporating three related pictures. In the strophe the two dancing choruses (ll. 1036-48; 1054-57) frame Ganymede's libation (1049-53) in three images that express little direct concern for the circumstances of the drama. The central figures of Peleus and Thetis appear merely as names to identify whose wedding it is (ll. 1044-45) and all characterization, including any epithets, in the ode is withheld from them and given to the guests attending the wedding, as, for example, Ganymede, "the Dardanian and delight of Zeus' bed" (ll. 1049-50), and the raucous Centaurs that deliver the prophecy (ll. 1059-62). On the other hand, the action of the drama plays upon the very characters of the people and on the dilemma of each of their situations. The gods figure rarely in the play, allowing the audience to observe the moral decisions made by the characters in response to the issues raised. In all the extant versions of the myth before Euripides' play the sacrifice of Iphigenia is necessary for varying reasons before the Greek army can sail to Troy. Whereas, however, in Aeschylus Artemis demands the sacrifice of the girl, and, after some hesitation, Agamemnon fulfils this requirement, in

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[9] Walsh op. cit. pp. 241-242

[10] On the typical technique of dithyrambic narrative, see Kranz, W. Stasimon. Berlin, 1933: 254ff.

Euripides Artemis offers a choice, not a command: the army can go to Troy if he wishes to sacrifice Iphigenia, or, if not, we can assume the army must return home (ll. 89-92). Therefore, Agamemnon, owing to his love for his daughter, wavers in his intention and nearly rewrites (μεταγράφω, l. 108[11]) the traditional myth by rewriting his original letter inviting Iphigenia to Aulis[12].

All the characters, except possibly Clytemnestra, similarly threaten to rewrite the plot as they oscillate in the early scenes in their allegiance to either the Greek army or Iphigenia. As I noted above, the presence of Clytemnestra and the deception of Achilles may be inventions of Euripides, and it is the case that these two elements exacerbate the difficulties involved in coming to terms with the sacrifice and increase the number of changes of mind in the play. Agamemnon is proud that he has changed his mind in pity for his daughter (ll. 396-401), and his concern for his family's well-being converts Menelaus to a new resolution not to proceed with the Trojan expedition, despite his longing for his abducted wife, and Menelaus accepts every word of his brother's position (ll. 473-503) and participates in his next reversal[13]. Clytemnestra meanwhile persuades Achilles to abandon his heroic destiny promised for him in Troy in order to protect her daughter and save her from the sacrifice, even though he is not to be her husband. To do this Achilles tries to convince the king, who had

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[11] The text is suspect here, although the verb appears to be genuine.

[12] Foley (op. cit. p.94 n.54) argues for the metatheatrical meaning of the verb "to rewrite". Despite its sole occurence here in Greek tragedy, it seems to be the precise technical term for what Agamemnon is intending to do to the tragedy. Foley compares the use of a similar verb in the Heracles (l. 1118), in which two incompatible traditions confront each other when the sane Heracles cannot believe the tale of his madness that Amphitryon recounts to him, such that the mad Heracles is imposed on the earlier sane one and the sane one wishes to "rewrite" the account of his madness. This may be reading far too sophisticated a notion into the word by Foley, but the essential effect of Agamemnon's change of mind would be the same.

[13] Bogaert, R., cited by Foley (op. cit. p. 95) in "Le revirement des Ménélas." LEC 33, 1965: 3-11, argues, in opposition to some earlier views, that Menelaus' change of mind is meant to be genuine.

once again succumbed to fear of the Greek army, of the wrong inherent in the sacrifice of his daughter, although Achilles eventually accedes to the wishes of his fictitious bride. Iphigenia does not at once consent to undergo the sacrifice, unlike other Euripidean characters that sacrifice themselves voluntarily, but she finally concedes, and all the final events of the play turn on her willingness for the sacrifice (ll. 1397-98). In contrast to the normal stalemate reached after a debate in most Greek tragedies, Euripides in this play introduces many triumphs by πειθώ (cf. similar triumphs in the *Orestes* - it is possibly a feature of late Euripidean drama), even if some are short-lived. These engage the audience's interest in the mental states of the characters more than in their situation, and in particular Iphigenia's response to her sacrifice is far more engaging than the fact that she must suffer it. This is the difference in the action from the ode, in which the actuality of the wedding seems to be of main concern.

The difference in the characterization of the people is symptomatic of a difference in the depiction of the gods in ode and action[14]. For, the wedding of Peleus and Thetis was a traditional topos for the intimacy enjoyed between the gods and mortals, and the subsequent blessings conferred by the gods upon men (e.g. Alcaeus fr. B10 LP; Hesiod *Cat.* fr. 81 Rzach; cf. Pindar *Pythian* 3. 86ff.). In order that such intimacy may obtain, the gods must be anthropomorphic to empathize with humans and be benign, as indeed they are in the ode. The wedding of Peleus and Thetis was attended by the Muses, who praised with sweet singing the couple (ll. 1040-47), and the Nereids (ll. 1054-57), who honoured the marriage rite. The gods also ensured that the marriage and the marriage hymn would be happy (μακάριον, ll. 1076-79). In the play itself the gods are far less prominent or friendly. Artemis figures only as the giver of the oracle, whose pronouncement only offers a choice and therefore does not represent direct intervention, and it is really the army that wants the sacrifice more than Artemis (ll. 1259-63). Aphrodite appears as nothing more than a subversive human emotion in the

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[14] Walsh op. cit. p. 242

form of the murderous passion of the Greek army (l. 1264) and not as the genuine goddess (the τις indicates that it is an evil force, which is only "like" Aphrodite). The only other divinities are those of the abstract concepts of Hope, which is considered a divinity (l. 392) and the all-menacing τύχη. Humans are in reality the playthings of Chance, although in the ode they exemplify the good fortune that is dispensed by the kindly gods; for example, Ganymede is called the favourite of Zeus (l. 1050).

Such felicity afforded by the gods may be rare in human experience, but that does not entail it being any less desirable. The wedding of Peleus and Thetis is precisely the sort of engagement that Clytemnestra wishes for Iphigenia, and presumably Iphigenia for herself, and the sort of happiness that both of them miss. The expectation is intensified by references in the play to the prospective wedding. Therefore, the music of the mythical wedding, involving the sound of the λωτός (l. 1036) and the stamping of feet (ll. 1042-43), is anticipated and reflected by the messenger who announces Iphigenia's arrival in similar language (l. 438, λωτὸς βοάσθω καὶ ποδῶν ἔστω κτύπος). Also the aspect of a mortal marrying a divinity in the mythical wedding is suggested in Iphigenia's wedding when she is said to be one of the εὐδαίμονες (l. 428). The similarities between the two weddings imply that, were Iphigenia's marriage to take place, it would be as happy as that of Peleus and Thetis, and in this way the third stasimon appears to act as a measure of the happiness that Iphigenia is denied. Since Peleus and Thetis are the parents of Achilles and the ode celebrates Achilles' birth[15], then Achilles appears more desirable as a husband for Iphigenia just when it is made clear that he will not marry her. With some irony the ode provides the information that Clytemnestra would have wanted as a concerned parent about her future son-in-law (cf. l. 696, γένους δ' ὁποίου χὠπόθεν, μαθεῖν θέλω)[16]. Since there will be no wedding, there will be no marriage hymn (epithalamium), but had there been a wedding then this ode occurs at the time when we would have

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[15] Cavander, K. (trans. Iphigeneia at Aulis by Euripides. Englewood Cliffs N.J., 1973: 138-39) comments that this stasimon could even be read as a victory ode to Achilles.

[16] Suggested by Walsh op. cit. p. 243

expected their epithalamium. As they will not be married, then ironically the motifs from an epithalamium are sung for another marriage, that of Peleus and Thetis. When dealing with epithalamic poetry we encounter the problem that little of the genre survives from before or during the Classical period, although the extant fragments along with later epithalamic poetry indicate that the ode in the *Iphigenia at Aulis* probably borrows heavily from the tradition. It appears from a fragment of Sappho (fr. 44 LP), which describes the arrival of the bride Andromache at Troy[17], that lyric narratives of legendary or divine marriages may have been sung at real weddings. The motif of wine being poured at a wedding attended by the gods also occurs in a fragment of Sappho (fr. 141 LP) thought to be part of an epithalamium[18]. As for the prophecy of Achilles' future greatness, it is difficult to say whether this is typical of the genre. Nevertheless, Catullus' version of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis (in poem 64) includes a prophecy by the Fates concerning Achilles[19], although this may have been moulded upon Euripides' treatment itself or upon a larger tradition represented in a fragment of Aeschylus quoted in Plato's *Republic* 383, in which Thetis harangues against Apollo for singing prophecies about Achilles at her wedding and then later killing him at Troy[20]. If from this evidence we may presume that this ode is epithalamic, it appears poignant that the chorus sing for a wedding other than the one that ought to take place, and this is the initial effect of the differences between ode and action.

The prophecy about Achilles in the third stasimon concerns a description of his heroic exploits at Troy and of his magnificent arms, which have been made famous by the *Iliad* (Book 18), and it raises doubt over the precise role of Achilles in the play. Before

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[17] For a discussion of this fragment, see Page, D.L. Sappho and Alcaeus. Oxford 2nd. ed., 1975: 70-72; cf. Gow, A.S. (ed.). Theocritus v. II. Cambridge 2nd. ed., 1952: 348, on Theocritus' Idyll 18.

[18] See Page ibid. p. 124

[19] Catullus 61 similarly contains such a prophecy, but this again refers to Achilles and may only be indicative of a larger traditon concerning Achilles rather than epithalamic poetry.

[20] Foley discusses the implications and tone of each of these fragments (op. cit. p. 82).

the third stasimon, Clytemnestra learns that Agamemnon intends to sacrifice Iphigenia (l. 873; cf. 959-60) and therefore she pleads with Achilles to save her daughter. Achilles with the loyalty of a genuine bridegroom agrees to aid her, for which reason Clytemnestra, in expectation of his success, emphasizes his divine parentage (ll. 896, 901, 903) and even conceives of him as a divine altar at which she seeks sanctuary (l. 911, οὐκ ἔχω βωμὸν καταφυγεῖν ἄλλον ἢ τὸ σὸν γόνυ). Although Achilles denies that he is actually a god, but says he will become one in order to defend Iphigenia (ll. 973-4), the ode implies that he has the potential to achieve this status by relating the story of his semi-divine parentage. However, this does not make it certain that Iphigenia will be saved, since the ode proceeds to introduce an incompatible aspect of Achilles' life; namely, his success at Troy. His destined future in the Trojan War is just what prevents him from saving Iphigenia; for, were he to comply with Clytemnestra's wishes, he would prevent the war from ensuing, and thereby deny himself his glory.

The strophe, therefore, presents a serene and delightful picture of a wedding from history, while the antistrophe moves closer to the dramatic situation both in history, with its prophecy of Achilles at Troy, and its more excited tone. Such changes in each stanza are measured by parallel, but dissimilar, figures[21]. Ganymede in the strophe (ll. 1049-53) and Hephaestus in the antistrophe (l. 1071) are both cupbearers of Zeus, although the former is associated with a wedding celebration, the latter with weapons of war. Ganymede is most beautiful and lives in a remote felicity commensurate with that of the wedding that he attends, and by contrast Hephaestus is commonly portrayed as a crippled mechanic who contributes directly to the misery of mortals and their wars. The Muses (ll. 1040-44) , who dance at the wedding, are also counterbalanced in the antistrophe by Cheiron (ll. 1064-66), who is only referred to, and the Centaurs (ll. 1058-62), who come to hail Achilles. The province of the Muses is poetry, of the Centaurs prophecy, both of which provinces involve some mediation between the divine and human spheres, and the two

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[21] cf. Walsh op. cit. pp. 244-45

arts even overlap; for, Cheiron is described as one "knowing the Apolline Muse" (ll. 1064-65). Yet Euripides distinguishes them by surrounding Cheiron with the raucous drunken Centaurs (1. 1061, κρατῆρά τε Βάκχου)[22]. In the strophe the well groomed ladies (1. 1040, καλλιπλόκαμοι), with their golden sandals flashing in the sun, dance to a light rhythm (ἐν γᾷ κρούουσαι, 1. 1043), whilst in the antistrophe the Dionysian revelers carry rustic equipment (ll. 1058-59) and make loud uncouth noises (ἀνέκλαγον, 1. 1062). These differences between the historical wedding and the situation of the drama indicate the horror of Iphigenia's sacrifice by its contrast to the glory of Peleus and Thetis' wedding. The expectation of a blissful wedding intensifies the tragedy of the sacrifice, and when the sacrifice is finally performed the discrepancy between the two rites emphasizes the irony of Iphigenia's conception of the sacrifice as a wedding (see below).

The tone of Cheiron's prophecy of immense destruction at Troy is relevant to the dramatic situation. If Achilles is to be a hero in the war, he cannot be the hero who will save Iphigenia (cf. ll. 1368-90). Indeed the Myrmidons that accompany him into battle (ll. 1067-68), are the ones that demand the sacrifice (ll. 1352-53); and the shouting narrative of the prophecy by the Centaurs is later echoed by the clamour of the Greek army (1. 1357). Instead of the traditional wedding gifts the chorus sing of the gift of Hephaestan armour presented by Thetis to her son, which represents the reality behind the fictional marriage. The ode is a paradox: in one respect it glorifies Achilles without qualification as a hero, but in another respect it indicates that he cannot live up to Clytemnestra's expectation of his heroic abilities. This is exemplary of the problem faced by the characters of the drama in coming to terms with the relation between on the one hand their personal feelings and ties of kinship, and on the other their public personae and duties[23]. Thus Agamemnon can only act as a leader of men if he violates his most paternal instincts and kills

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[22] Walsh (ibid. p. 244 n.10) suggests that the alchoholic tastes of the Centaurs may suggest another famous, but less fortunate, celebration of Perithoos and Hippodameia: see Odyssey 21. 295ff., Iliad 2. 742, Ovid Metamorphoses 12. 219ff.

[23] Walsh ibid. pp. 245-47

his daughter. Similarly the expectations upon Achilles require him to display ἀρετή, but this he cannot do at Aulis, without forfeiting his ἀρετή at Troy. Therefore the prophecy of his heroic achievements at Troy sound a pathetic irony at Aulis, and thereby the ode highlights the role Achilles will not play at Aulis, as it does the wedding that Iphigenia will not celebrate[24].

The denial to Achilles of his role as hero, and to Iphigenia of her role as wife represent the reversal of the role of men and women explicit elsewhere in the drama. Since Achilles cannot at Aulis exercise masculine ἀρετή he must resort to the feminine αἰδώς, and Iphigenia, since αἰδώς cannot be of service to her, decides to achieve something that is more akin to the masculine ἀρετή. Achilles demonstrates his ability for αἰδώς by showing respect for the supplication of Clytemnestra (cf. Iphigenia's appeal at line 1246 for her father to have pity, αἴδεσαι), a respect that could potentially entail further αἰδώς, if he decides to save Iphigenia and abandon his heroic fate. He is trained by the "most pious" Cheiron (l. 926), who has no doubt taught him to be respectful to well-born ladies. For, on seeing Clytemnestra (l. 821) he apostrophizes αἰδώς. His "respect" is illuminated in the play by his opposition to the army, which is violent and belligerent. Iphigenia displays αἰδώς to the extent of her feminine modesty (ll. 994, 997) and her embarrasment at her predicament such that she tries to avoid Achilles (ll. 1341-42). Clytemnestra, however, realizes that in such dire circumstances Iphigenia cannot afford to be moderate or respectful (ll. 1343-44). Even if the sacrifice cannot be prevented, it can at least be transformed into a heroic event, which will approach the paradigmatic felicity of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. This will result in her saving the city and thus will enable her to display the kind of ἀρετή normally only available to a soldier (ll. 570-72). For most of the characters of the drama the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, and the change from the bliss of the myth to

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[24] In the same way the chorus has already hinted at the unreliability of tales of legendary blessedness in relating the myth of the birth of Helen (ll. 773-800). In view of the destruction she brought upon Troy, the story of her parents' miraculous mating is contradictory to her future infamy. cf. Walsh ibid. p. 246

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the reality of the Trojan War represent what they have lost; but, for Iphigenia the sacrifice becomes her wedding, and the completion of the preparations for the Trojan expedition provides for her the joy of the mythical marriage[25].

The structure of the play revolves around the final performance of the sacrifice, disguised to most of the characters as a fictitious marriage rite, and the homologies between the two rites are brought out through the course of the drama[26]. Both the marriage and the war preparations require a preliminary sacrifice (known as προτέλεια) to Artemis in order to initiate each event. From this Euripides, in the early stages of the play, suggests certain common features of the two rites. Each of them, however, have a mutually exclusive aim - marriage being the start of a new life that leads to procreation, sacrifice the end of life. Nevertheless, Iphigenia by the end of the play unites the two rituals, and in the early scenes of deception the constant repetition of ritual detail, which Iphigenia performs in the closing scenes, make this possible. From the moment that Iphigenia enters, the ambiguities inherent in the similarities between the two rites are visible, since Clytemnestra says that she has put the marriage wreath on her daughter's head (1. 905), although a sacrificial victim would also be wreathed.

The ambiguities begin in the first messenger's speech (11. 414-439), in which a messenger reports the arrival of Iphigenia, and encourages everyone to arrange the baskets and Agamemnon and Menelaus to wreathe their heads (11. 435-36)[27]: two aspects of the

[25] Cavander (op. cit. pp. 13-14) suggests, "The whole play, in fact, is a grotesque wedding celebration, with the Chorus as attendants."

[26] A useful recent English discussion of Greek marriage customs can be found, with a bibliography of earlier works, in Redfield, J. "Notes on the Greek wedding." Arethusa 15, 1982: 181-201.

[27] Owing to linguistic factors and the heavy use of irony by a normally neutral messenger, some commentators wish to excise this speech as an interpolation. See especially, Page. Actors' interpolations in Greek tragedy: 152-54. Foley (op. cit. p. 70), however, argues for the consistency of this scene with the rest of the drama and the need for a transitional scene to motivate Agamemnon's eventual decision to sacrifice his daughter. Cavander (op. cit. p. 99) also asserts the importance of at least a

traditional preparations for a sacrifice as well as for a marriage. The messenger uses the otherwise late verb προτελίζω (l. 433), a technical term for the initiating or consecrating of a rite by a ceremony, which anticipates the later double meaning of the noun προτέλεια. It also reflects the use of the noun by Aeschylus for Iphigenia's sacrifice, which is linked both to the first deaths at Troy and to the corruption of the marriage ritual by Helen and Paris (Agamemnon ll. 65, 227, 720). Euripides maintains the link that Aeschylus makes between the προτέλεια and the corruption of marriage, only it is the proposed marriage of Achilles to Iphigenia that is eventually defiled. The messenger also provides the information that the horses have been left in a meadow just outside the camp (ll. 420-23: λειμώνων, l. 422), which recalls the traditional imagery of a meadow as the place associated with a virgin before either being raped or married[28]. Persephone's rape in a meadow, for example, one of the most famous from myth, led to her being married to Hades and undergoing a form of symbolic death. For the sacrifice of Iphigenia, leading to her death, also occurs in a meadow sacred to Artemis (λειμῶν', l. 1463). This may also imply an ironic reference to the pure virginal meadows of Artemis mentioned in the *Hippolytus* (ll. 73ff.). The role of Artemis is ambiguous in that she both is the goddess for virgin brides and requires the sacrifice of Iphigenia. It was traditional in Greek weddings for the bride to make a sacrifice in order to appease the anger of the virgin Artemis (Poll. 3.38 ἡ δὲ πρὸ γάμου θυσία προτέλεια; cf. Plato *Leges* 774e)[29]. In the play the 'bride' Iphigenia offers herself to Artemis as a sacrifice.

Foley proposes that the arrival of Iphigenia in a chariot (l. 607) implies that the chariot has a dual nature[30]. It first suggests the image, popular in art, of the bride, with head wreathed, departing in a chariot for her husband's home,

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similar, if not identical, scene to this one.

[28] cf. Guépin, J.P. The tragic paradox. Amsterdam, 1968: 137ff., and my references in chapter one.

[29] See Burkert, W. Homo Necans: The anthropology of Ancient Greek sacrificial ritual and myth. tr. P. Bing. Berkeley, 1983: 62-3

[30] Foley op. cit. pp. 70-71

accompanied by a *νυμφαγωγός* (cf. 1. 610). Nevertheless, it may evoke other ominous arrivals by chariot in myth, which result in sacrificial death. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Cassandra and Agamemnon arrive by chariot at Argos only to be killed, and in Euripides' own *Electra* Clytemnestra appears in a chariot, on which some emphasis is placed, before Orestes murders her. In all three plays, the *Agamemnon*, *Electra*, and *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the occupants of the chariot expect to celebrate a festive occasion, but are deceived, they are greeted emphatically as royal, and their disembarkation from the chariot is referred to in detail[31]. In contrast to the other two plays the subjects of the *Iphigenia at Aulis* are pure of guilt, which increases the pitifulness of this version in addition to the fact that the marital chariot becomes one of sacrifice. It does, however, connect the fictional marriage once again to the later sacrifice.

The ensuing scenes concentrate on the similarities between the preliminary preparations for a marriage and for war. The first scene between Iphigenia and Agamemnon plays upon the idea of marriage as a transition to a new life with ironic foreshadowing of the final transition to death[32]. The motif of marriage as a rite of passage from blissful childhood to an unknown life with a man she has not yet met is reflected in Iphigenia's ignorance of the purpose for which she is destined, and the resultant loss felt by a parent after the marriage is expressed by Agamemnon (ll. 668-80), who knows what the real reason will be for his loss.

The ambiguity of ritual continues in the immediately following dialogue between Clytemnestra and Agamemnon, where the word *προτέλεια* appears (1. 718). The alliteration of Agamemnon's line (721):

θύσας γε θύμαθ' ἃ μὲ χρὴ θῦσαι θεοῖς

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[31] It should be noted that textual problems unfortunately cause the assesment of the scene in the IA to be uncertain.

[32] Dowden, K. (Death and the maiden: Girls' initiation rites in Greek mythology. London and New York, 1989: 9-47) discusses the motifs inherent in the Iphigenia story. See especially pages 39-41 for the connection between marriage and the sacrifice. Burkert (op. cit. p. 62) emphasizes the sacrifice of a bride to her husband, particularly seen in the blood of defloration.

emphasizes the ironic disparity between the understanding of the two characters, already implied in the ambiguity at line 718 of the words παιδός ἔσφαξας. There is a certain pathos in Clytemnestra's insistence on performing the role of the bride's mother, when she expresses interest in the lineage of the groom (ll. 695-96) and concern as to whether the προτέλεια (l. 718) has been completed, when the wedding banquet will be held (l. 722) and who will be the torchbearer in the ceremony (l. 732). She is further horrified when she learns that she will not be the torchbearer (734-36) and probably would prefer that the women's banquet did not take place by the ships, although she accepts it as necessary (ll. 722-24). This sense of the proper customs of marriage will soon be violated by the realization that there will be no wedding whatsoever. The domestic concerns of Clytemnestra are enlarged upon by Agamemnon in giving the lineage of Achilles as descended from parents (Peleus and Thetis) that were joined by a proper marriage with an engagement (l. 703). This prepares for the third stasimon both in tone and in subject matter.

Despite the fact that the engagement is fictional, Clytemnestra appeals to Achilles on the basis of the engagement (see above). Achilles in turn essentially accepts the role asked of him, as if he were the real bridegroom and future husband and the marriage were still to happen[33]. Therefore, when Achilles exclaims that his body is no longer pure (l. 940), he implies that the false marriage has compromised his position as an unmarried man. Iphigenia's entrance as a wreathed bride would suggest that she had already performed part of the marriage ritual, no doubt having dedicated her childhood toys to the gods to indicate her transition to adult life, and having said farewell to the gods of her father's hearth in preparation for entering her husband's household. As Iphigenia prepares for the marriage and Achilles assumes the role of bridegroom the marriage takes on an ever increasing reality at the same time as the characters become ever increasingly committed to the sacrifice, which indicates the ambiguity in the ritual of the sacrifice and prepares the ground

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[33] cf. Roussel, P. "Le rôle d'Achille dans l'Iphigénie à Aulis." REG 28, 1915: 240-44

for Iphigenia's acceptance of the sacrifice as a marriage.

Although, after Agamemnon has continued the word play between the two rituals (ll. 1111-13), Clytemnestra condemns Agamemnon's riddling statements concerning the sacrifice (ll. 1146-47), the two motifs are indissolubly linked. Achilles appears committed to the marriage, and the problem is compounded when he is seized by an $\overset{\scriptscriptstyle 2}{\varepsilon}\rho\omega s$ for the bride (ll. 1410-11). It has even been argued that Iphigenia too may be motivated to act out of love for the fictional bridegroom[34]. This inclusion of the romantic element probably reflects the increasing romanticization of weddings that appears on vase paintings with a youthful groom and a shy bride gazing at each other under the influence of a winged Eros[35].

As Iphigenia turns towards acceptance of the sacrifice, she unites the breach between the two rituals, and welcomes each detail as if she were entering upon the marriage. When she first appeared on stage she was crowned with a wreath by her mother as bride, and now, as the sacrificial victim her head is again crowned (ll. 1477-79). She acknowledges that her death will be to ensure the welfare of children and the institution of marriage, and in this way her reputation will be secured (ll. 1398-99), and that in compensation for the loss of a daughter she will offer $\kappa\lambda\acute{\varepsilon}os$ to her mother (l. 1440). The same expressions could be made by someone who is about to be married. One's reputation is dependent on the husband, so that if one marries a noble man, one will acquire a good reputation, and one's name will live on through one's children. A mother can also be compensated for losing a daughter in marriage by the $\kappa\lambda\acute{\varepsilon}os$ in acquiring a noble son-in-law. Her other requests are contrary to the norm for a sacrifice, but not for a wedding. For, she insists that the chorus, far from mourning, actually celebrate her act (ll. 1480-81) in the meadow of Artemis (l. 1463), which is a precise

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[34] Smith, W.D. "Iphigenia in love." pp. 173-180 in G.W. Bowersock, W. Burkert and C.J. Putnam (eds.). Arktouros: Hellenic studies presented to Bernard M W Knox. Berlin, 1979.

[35] Sutton, R. "The interaction between men and women portrayed on Attic Red-figure pottery." unpublished diss. Univ. of North Carolina, 1981: 164, 177 and 184-88, cited by Foley op. cit. p. 75 n. 17.

recollection of her plans for the προτέλεια for her marriage to
Achilles (l. 676). She also orders her mother not to perform for
her the traditional mourning and subsequent burial of a
sacrificial victim, but rather to sing a paean (ll. 1437-38, 1442,
1467-69). A paean would be sung either for celebration or
propitiation, as the preparations for marriage or the inauguration
of a battle. The ambiguity is maintained here in both its tone and
its occasion. Iphigenia requests the paean in celebration of her
'wedding', but it is appropriate also for the propitiation of the
army before the Trojan War, which will be able to proceed once
Iphigenia has been sacrificed.

Customary female ἀρετή may be expressed within marriage in
the form of private sex and reproduction, which will lead to the
bearing of heroic offspring. This is exemplified by Thetis, who
bears Achilles, in the third stasimon, and is stated in general
terms in the first (ll. 568-70). The central circumstances of the
drama are that Iphigenia has been denied her promised marriage and
therefore any hope of acquiring such a marital ἀρετή. Instead she
acquires a more public ἀρετή, seen in her courage in facing the
sacrificial knife (ll. 1561-62; cf. ll. 570-72). Hence her role in
acting as saviour to Greece is analogous to Achilles' as warrior
(l. 1502; cf. l. 1063). Her reward is the fame (ll. 1383, 1504)
normally accorded to a male hero (ll. 566-72) and with this fame
she acquires the blessedness of marriage (κλέος...μακάριον, ll.
1383-84; cf. μακάριον...γάμον, 1076-77; μακάριόν μέ...εἰ τύχοιμι
σῶν γάμων, 1404-5). She sees the sacrifice as her wedding, and the
destruction of Troy as her offspring (ll. 1397-99). This is the
crux of the play; it expresses the irony of her sacrifice, but
also explains the courage and uprightness with which she faces the
sacrifice. The wedding of Peleus and Thetis is paradigmatic of the
happiness she feels she will attain and reflective of the kind of
marriage that she will have.

The theme of marriage is dominant in the play. As well as
introducing the first marriage of Clytemnestra to Tantalus, which
led to violence, the play stresses Helen's betrayal of marriage,
which has caused a war with barbarians and has threatened the
whole institution of marriage. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* the primary

cause of the war was Paris' breach of hospitality. Agamemnon's action in Euripides' play now renews the threat to his marriage, which originally started through violence. At the opening of the play Agamemnon says that it was by Tyndareus' guile that Helen was able to choose a husband wherever "the winds of passion" swept her (ὅτου πνοαὶ φέροιεν Ἀφροδίτης φίλαι, l. 69); a phrase that contrasts Helen's marriage with Iphigenia's dilemma and the windlessness at Aulis[36]. Agamemnon abuses the institution of marriage by inventing a false one to achieve the unpropitious sacrifice of his daughter. By the end Iphigenia reconciles these deceptive and unfavourable elements of marriage by herself marrying in sacrifice in order to occasion a war that will restore the sanctity of marriage portrayed in the third stasimon and transgressed by Helen's adultery, although the personal fame that she will gain is of greatest importance to herself.

In acting as the parent of the destruction of Troy Iphigenia assumes the same role as the subjects of divine marriages of the past. Leda and Zeus produced Helen, the primary cause of the War, and Peleus and Thetis produced Achilles, one of the principal campaigners at Troy. She differs from them in that she is innocent of occasioning the war, whereas Helen was intentionally adulterous and Achilles will be prepared to kill the Trojans. In this way her marriage will be more glorious than the previous examples. Owing to the sacrifice, Iphigenia is able to approach the divine status of those whom she imitates. She needs no tomb since the altar of Artemis will be her monument (ll. 1443ff.), implying she will transcend to a superior life, having seemed earlier to be doomed to be the bride of Hades (ll. 460-61, 540, 1278). By becoming a heroine in facing the sacrifice she attains to the ideal felicity of the third stasimon. In the epode of the third stasimon the chorus lament Iphigenia's fate, being ignorant of the divine status she will attain and unaware of the ambiguity in its own words. The early scenes of the play and the differences between the ode and action emphasize the cruel deception and the loss to be experienced by the major characters of the tragedy. However, as the play proceeds, the characters act as if the marriage may still

[36] Foley ibid. p. 75

be a real possibility and Achilles responds as a real groom would. As Iphigenia moves towards acceptance of her sacrifice, she visualizes it as her wedding so that she re-enacts the earlier wedding of Peleus and Thetis and experiences the celebration suggested in the third stasimon. In one respect this heightens the bitter irony of the pain and grief that the rest of the characters involved will feel, already emphasized by the contrast between ode and action, but it also permits Iphigenia the psychological shift of mind to face the sacrifice with nobility and a true ἀρετή.

PARADIGM LOST: THE FIRST TWO STASIMA OF THE ELECTRA

We have seen in three plays how the chorus equate the action of the characters on stage with that of earlier figures in myth, and how the characters re-enact their counterparts' roles. In the *Electra*, Euripides adapts this device in order to express his tragic viewpoint of the plot. It is a play that cannot be classified as a tragi-comedy, and yet, as the other three, it contains choral odes that are often considered to be dithyrambic and discursive. The first two stasima[1], the one describing the giving to Achilles of his armour, the other relating the story of Thyestes' abduction of the golden lamb, at first sight appear to be of only tenuous relevance.[2] Scholarship has learnt, however, to look deeper into them for clues as to the meaning of the play. This has resulted in a better appreciation of word and image parallels in ode and action, but it has also produced a tendency to interpret the play as more of an expression of Euripidean modernism than as a drama of tragic motivations. Thus, a predilection for delineating a contrast between the mythical and the real world, portrayed by the odes and the dramatic situation respectively[3] (an aspect I do not deny in itself - see below) has on occasion obscured the more subtle details of the odes and a proper understanding of mythical illustrations therein. The odes have been described as "une succession de tableaux analogues à ceux que [le poète] créerait...un enlumineur de légende"[4] and yet they not only depict the artist's view of the mythical background, but also, as we shall see, the chorus' response to the characters' relationship to that background.

Despite the clear contrast between myth and reality evident

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[1] ll. 432-486, 699-746

[2] cf. Conacher, D.J. Euripidean drama. Toronto, 1967: 210-12; Barlow, S.A. The imagery of Euripides. London, 1971: 20 - "A classic case of pictorial irrelevance".

[3] e.g. Adams, S.M. "Two plays of Euripides" CR 49, 1935: 120-22; Gellie, G.H. "Tragedy and Euripides' Electra" BICS 28, 1981: 1-12

[4] Parmentier, L. Euripide. Paris, 1942: 188.

in the contrasting themes and styles of the stasima and the action (see below), the stasima are far more complex than this evidence suggests. It is not enough simply to say that the play is a "skeptical attack on myth"[5] or that "Euripides rejects Homeric values, typified by Orestes, and prefers the morality of the farmer"[6]; for these are but surface readings. The details of the stasima are as intricate as the characters' motives, the two of which, as we shall see, are not unconnected, and abstract concepts concerning Euripides' "philosophy" must not obscure the tragic message itself. A recognition, therefore, of the tension between myth and reality must only be the starting point.

The immediate relevance of the first stasimon is provided by the epode[7]: τοιῶνδ′ (l. 479) and τοιγάρ (l. 482) make the connection between ode and situation. Agamemnon was the leader of the great Trojan expedition that included the mighty Achilles described in the first four stanzas; what, therefore, glorifies Achilles in turn glorifies Agamemnon (cf. ll. 439-40, 479-80). Since Clytemnestra and Aegisthus killed the leader of such men as described in the epode, they too deserve to die (ll. 479-486). The ode thereby connects past events with the present action, further represented by the geographical progression in each strophe from remote places to the immediate scene of the drama. The ode opens with the voyage to Troy (l. 432), the Nereids then pass from Euboea to Pelion and Ossa (ll. 442, 445-6) and finally the Argive women hear of the armour at Nauplia (ll. 452-3), the harbour of Argos. This rhetorical progression nearer to the scene is counterbalanced by a movement back in time with each strophe. The first describes the voyage to Troy (ll. 432-41), the second the Nereids seeking Achilles before Troy (442-51) and the third the deeds of still earlier heroes on the shield (452-75). The further one looks back into the past the nearer one approaches the

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[5] Gellie op. cit. p. 7.

[6] Arnott, W.G. "Double the vision: a reading of Euripides' Electra" GR n.s.28, 1981: 179-80

[7] The epode appears almost as an afterthought to provide the ostensible relevance. The first four stanzas have already implied a relevance, which, I shall argue, are crucial to the play's interpretation.

present, both in the geography and, as will be shown below, in the implied causes.

Although Clytemnestra is criticized in the *Electra*, her cause is pleaded with more validity by Euripides than Aeschylus, and with more sincerity than Sophocles, who also uses the sacrifice of Iphigenia as a defence. For Euripides offers some justification for her killing Agamemnon; namely the sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis. This is how she defends herself later[8], and this is implied in the first stasimon. Achilles, the principal subject of the ode, was the one who lured Iphigenia to Aulis (cf. 11. 1020-21). The Sphinxes allure their prey with songs (ἀοίδιμον ἄγραν, 11. 471-72) just as Iphigenia was enticed by the offer of marriage and hence a marriage song. The image of the severed head of the Gorgon (I read at line 459 λαιμοτόμαν, passive in implication, agreeing with head rather than the received text's λαιμότομον[9]. It is possible that λαιμότομος may have three terminations, like θεόδματος) also reflects the fate of the girl, who was beheaded as a sacrifice to the gods (cf. 1. 1023)[10]. This sacrifice took place at Aulis, a bay on the mainland into which stretched the promontory of Chalcis in Euboea. It is from Euboea that the Nereids depart, carrying Achilles' arms; quite possibly it is from Chalcis itself[11], a subtle reminder of Aulis. The ode therefore, by implication, refers back to the primary causes of the impending matricide, and whilst intending to condemn Clytemnestra, at the same time it in part acquits her by providing a validation for her crime.

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[8] 11. 1018-23.

[9] Denniston, J.D. ((ed.). Euripides: Electra. Oxford, 1939: 106) prefers the text as it stands with the noun "throat cutter", arguing that "the head of the Gorgon" can well stand without an attribute. This may be true, but the adjective has been applied by Euripides to the head in the IA (1. 776) and particularly to the head of the Gorgon in the Ion (1. 1054). The uniqueness of the noun encourages the idea that it is a copyist's misreading.

[10] The Gorgon also conveys more sinister consequences for the tragic characters. See below.

[11] Engelmann, R. Archaologische Zeitung. 31, 1874: 133, cited by Denniston, conjectures from archaeological evidence that a cult of Hephaestus was at Chalcis, and therefore that that is the most likely place from where the Nereids would take the arms. Denniston (op. cit. pp. 103-4), however, expresses caution over the geography implied by the Greek.

The effect of the stasima is to portray the conceptions that the two leading characters have of themselves as mythical figures, which is at variance with the reality of their natures. The opening of the play does present the audience with a picture far removed from mythical splendour. It is a humble farmer that introduces the scene, which is set before his lowly cottage rather than the palace. We are told of, and no doubt the costumes indicated, the poverty of the farmer and the hardships of Electra. Orestes cautiously and unheroically enters (1. 82) only to be surprised by the poor state of Electra and the humility of the farmer. This simple, almost barren, scene is then immediately shot through with the glamour and pace of the first stasimon. There is a sense of speed as the ships with countless oars (1. 433), whose prows are encircled by prancing dolphins (ll. 435-6), transport dancing nymphs (1. 434) to deliver the magnificent arms to swift Achilles (κοῦφον ἅλμα ποδῶν, 1. 439; ταχύπορον πόδ', 1. 451). In contrast to the quotidian persons on stage, the ode is peopled with gods (Thetis, Hephaestus, Zeus and Hermes) and with mythical characters (Chiron, the Chimaera, Sphinxes, Pegasus and the Gorgon). Celebration is expressed in the dancing groups (χοροὺς, 1. 434; χοροί, 1. 467), the enjoyment of the flute (φίλαυλος, 1. 435) and the gamboling of the dolphin (εἱλισσόμενος, 1. 437). There is the brightness of the sun drawn by horses (κατέλαμπε, 1. 464), of stars wheeling across the sky (ἄστρων τ' αἰθέριοι χοροί, 1. 467) and of the fire breathed by the Chimaera (πύρπνοος, 1. 472), as well as the colour of the blue prows (κυανεμβόλοισιν, ll. 436-37) and of the golden armour (χρυσέων, 1. 444). All this is drawn against the background of an Aegean landscape stretching from Troy to Euboea, from Nauplia to Pelion and Ossa. The ode, although this is not an uncommon feature of the tragic chorus, is given a strong Homeric flavour by its epic/Ionic diction such as the initial syllables of εἱλισσόμενος (1. 437) and εἰναλίας (1. 450), and the epic endings of χρυσέων...τευχέων (1. 444) and ἁλίοιο (1. 465)[12]. The rarity of the word φύαν[13], which only occurs

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[12] For a fuller treatment of the Homeric language see Walsh, G.B. "The first stasimon of Euripides' Electra." YCS 25, 1977: 279

[13] The reading of one manuscript, originally emended by Herwerden. The emendation is preferred by Murray in the old OCT.

in tragedy elsewhere in Aeschylus' *Niobe* fr.273[14], would enhance the flavour of the ode; but, its very rarity precludes it in favour of either κεφελάν or especially, as in Diggle's text, κορυφάν, which most often occurs in epic with reference to the head. As the chorus finish singing, a complaining decrepit old man enters, casting aside the world of Achilles and reinstating the hard life of the farm.

A similar case may be made out for the second stasimon. The style is equally heroic, involving celebration expressed by music and singing (ll. 702-4, 716-17), dancing (χοροί, l. 712), glitter and colour, especially gold (χρυσέαν, l. 705; χρυσήλατοι, l. 713; χρυσέας, l. 719; and in the description of the earth being dried up - χρυσεόμαλλον, l. 726; χρυσωπόν, l. 740). However, the chorus ironically undermine their own picture by expressing disbelief in the story that Zeus would change the courses of the heavenly bodies as a consequence of Thyestes' crime: a possible attack on the traditional mythology[15]. This emphasis on reality in contrast to the high level of myth can also be seen in the need for the justification of the validity of information that is received in the play[16]. Thus in the parodos the chorus explain that they have learnt of the Argive festival to Hera from a Mycenaean (ll. 169ff.) and in the first stasimon they relate how they learnt of Achilles' arms from a soldier at Nauplia (ll. 452f.)[17]. On the arrival of the messenger to report Aegisthus' death Electra must first know who he is and how trustworthy his news is (l. 765), an obsession with evidence that may explain the questioning by Electra of tokens in the recognition scene. For Electra herself, on the other hand, is not a reliable witness to the situation in Argos. She asks Orestes to note her squalid appearance, since she is denied fine robes and excluded from festive dances (ll. 304-13). Earlier, however, the chorus had invited her to the festival of Hera (ll. 167-74), which is the sort of occasion from

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[14] For a fuller treatment of the Homeric language see Walsh, G.B. "The first stasimon of Euripides' *Electra*" YCS 25, 1977: 279.

[15] For a detailed discussion of this section, see below

[16] Gellie op. cit. pp. 3-7.

[17] Gellie does not tackle the difficulty that this piece of realism occurs in one of the unrealistic and romantic mythical odes.

which she claims she has been excluded, and the koryphaeus even offers to lend her a fine garment to improve her appearance (ll. 190-93). It is Electra that refuses the opportunities for self improvement rather than any external circumstances preventing her. In the same way she reports to Orestes that she must fetch water herself from the stream (l. 309) when previously she had said that there was no compulsion for her to do so (ll. 57-58)[18]. Finally, her picture of Aegisthus exulting upon the tomb of Agamemnon (ll. 319-31) is contrary to that of the pious Aegisthus dutifully sacrificing by the wayside and inviting the strangers to join him (ll. 774-787). It will become clear that Electra's distorted conception of certain people is important to the play's tragic element. Electra's misinformation reveals her thoughts to be in the world of myth and far removed from the reality portrayed, in a world distinct from the actual one on stage.

The first strophe and antistrophe present the magnificence of Achilles and Agamemnon, the significance of which can be seen in its contrast with the world on stage, which in turn reflects the contrast between Electra's viewpoint and reality. She perceives the world with a naive heroic vision and simplified obsolete values. Therefore she believes that Orestes will be as great a hero as those of the Trojan War, inheriting the qualities she ascribes to Agamemnon (cf. l. 338). In killing Aegisthus he will assert his claim to the Argive throne, winning the victory crown from Troy denied to Agamemnon by Aegisthus and Clytemnestra (ll. 880ff.). He will complete the victory at Troy and thus restore the visionary past of the first stasimon. Juxtaposed to the present situation, Electra sees the past as both the utopia she has lost owing to Aegisthus and Clytemnestra as well as that which she hopes to gain with the arrival and subsequent triumph of Orestes.[19]

Electra and Orestes have as their role models the heroes of mythology and the past. Achilles, therefore, is described as

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[18] There is some doubt as to whether Electra would utter line 57 herself, but it does emphasize one of the many false statements made by Electra more effectively than the farmer's words (ll. 64-66).

[19] Walsh op. cit. p. 283

having a "nimble leap" (κοῦφον ἅλμα ποδῶν, 1.439) and "swift feet" (ταχύπορον πόδ', 1.451). Such a description is used by Electra of Orestes as he emerges from the farmer's hut (λαιψηρῷ ποδί, 1.549. cf. λαιψηρός used of Achilles in the *Iliad* 21. 264). As the chorus in the first stasimon describe Achilles as an ʽΕλλάδι φῶς (1. 449), so in a short dochmiac system they call Orestes a πόλει πυρσόν (1. 587). He is likewise conceived of as a Perseus holding the severed head of the Gorgon (λαιμοτόμαν, 1. 459). For he too will cut the throat of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra (cf. 1223), and when he does kill his mother he must cover his eyes (1218) as if she were the Gorgon herself. When Orestes appears with Aegisthus' head the messenger announces that he is not bringing the head of the Gorgon (1. 856), which implies that the connection between Orestes and Perseus was to be made (see also below). The victims also have their counterparts. The noun applied to the Chimaera of "lioness" (λέαινα, 1. 474) is again applied to Clytemnestra at line 1162[20]. The Chimaera was a female victim killed by the young hero Bellerophon, as Clytemnestra will be by the young Orestes[21]. There is, finally, the image of hunting both in the scene of Bellerophon chasing the Chimaera and in the portrayal of the Sphinxes catching their prey (ll. 470-72). Orestes too is a hunter with a net (βόλον, 1. 582) and Clytemnestra is the prey caught in the trap (ἄρκυν, 1. 965). The play serves, we are led to believe, as a re-enactment of the older myths, with Orestes following in the line of older mythological heroes. All these heroic figures are the characters' mentors, but the questions arise, To what extent do Electra and Orestes fulfil their roles? And to what extent are they even justifiable models?

A peculiar application by Euripides of myth is seen by Kubo to exist in his choice to dwell upon the myth of the golden lamb in the second stasimon[22]. The thematic relevance, in addition to the chorus' suggestion that such an example ought to have been

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[20] Sheppard, J.T. "The Electra of Euripides." CR 32, 1918: 140

[21] The noun was first applied to Clytemnestra by Aeschylus (Agamemnon 1258)

[22] Kubo, M. "The norm of myth: Euripides' Electra." HSCP 71, 1966: 15-31

heeded by Clytemnestra[23], is clear. Three generations ago Pan had brought the lamb to the Pelopidae to settle a dispute over the kingship of Argos so that it represents the beginning of the tragedy and sin of the House, as well as the first example of contention for the kingship of Argos. The reason why, according to Kubo, the poet dwells on this story is his delight in double perspective myths. At the beginning of the anagnorisis scene the old man enters carrying a lamb and a few other gifts for the guests (ll. 494-5). This man is the one to recognize Orestes, basing his conviction upon the same tokens as those of Aeschylus' play. Then the first strophic pair of the second stasimon make it clear that the recognition scene has been structured according to the earlier myth of the golden lamb. In this myth Pan, who, as the old man must have been, was an ἀγρῶν ταμίας (l. 704), brought the lamb as a symbol of royal identity. Now the old man also bearing a lamb attests to the royal identity of Orestes. Thus, thinks Kubo, the lamb over the duration of three generations remains the symbol of kingship. In this case, however, such an interpretation does not seem to work, since on the arrival of the old man more attention is given to the wine than to the lamb. The audience, therefore, is far from encouraged to pay any attention to the lamb despite its visual appearance on stage. Nevertheless, Kubo's explanation of the effect of the device is interesting, and may be applied to our interpretation of Orestes. The stasimon thrills the audience as they realize that the scene they have visually witnessed being acted before them is a projection from a still earlier myth. The title myth of the *Electra* identifies itself with the older myth, whilst the older myth is rejuvenated and given a broader perspective in the title myth. The poet justifies his innovation in the recognition scene by structuring it as a living norm of the common archaic myth[24].

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[23] As in the first stasimon the relevance offered by the chorus seems to be of less significance than the implied meaning of the rest of the ode.

[24] Kubo also suggests that the myth type of a cruel parent persecuting his or her child in fear of a usurper to their position (e.g. the exposure of Oedipus) underlies the Electra. Hence, in a careful if tenuous examination of the agon scene, he argues that all Electra need report is the fact that a male child has been born, and Clytemnestra will come.

A similar effect may be viewed in the image of the Gorgon. Euripides identifies Orestes with the myth of Perseus killing the monster and from this Orestes seeks his justification as a precedent. Euripides has taken this image from Aeschylus (*Choeoporoi* 808-30), who had his chorus pray that Orestes may have the spirit of Perseus inside him and be assisted by Hermes (cf. the presence of Hermes as aid at ll. 461-2)[25]. This identification is implied by the allusions detailed above: Orestes is a throat-cutter and must avert his eyes when killing his victim. The messenger that reports Aegisthus' death explicitly states that Orestes does not carry the Gorgon's head but only Aegisthus' (ll. 856-7), which reminds one of the identification whilst suggesting that it is not to be taken literally. Although messengers are often neutral reporters of the facts, this one, nevertheless, appears to show some bias towards Orestes and yet there may be a degree of ambiguity in his words. The implication is that the denial that the head is the Gorgon's breaks the identification between Orestes and Perseus. The words are not an expression that Aegisthus is not to be the Gorgon and that instead Clytemnestra shall be later, since this would have little sense and both the characters are equally to be feared. Rather the very words make clear the meaning[26]:

ὸν στυγεῖς Αἴγισθον (l. 857).

Aegisthus is Orestes' personal enemy, not a monster. Whereas killing a monster is a glorious heroic achievement involving no moral ambiguity, the killing of a man to satisfy one's lust for revenge is stripped of all heroic value and stands as an act of bitterness and moral ambiguity. O'Brien even argues that by the end of the play Orestes himself has become the Gorgon. For after the death of Aegisthus there is great emphasis on the coming of Orestes as victor (ll. 871-72). From here on he would bear a crown on his head (ll. 854, 880-89). Finally, he cries out that he has become an object of horror upon whose head no-one can look (l.

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[25] Sheppard, J.T. (op. cit. p. 140) was one of the first to realize the significance of the Gorgon allusion. Not everyone is willing to accept this. e.g. Denniston op. cit. p. xxxii n.2: "I think they see too much".

[26] cf. Walsh op. cit. p.285

1195), a statement that draws visual effect from his earlier appearance as a garlanded hero. He has become the Gorgon monster since his crime of matricide has been as horrific and as guilty as that of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra[27]. An exchange of sin has occurred as Orestes has tried to live up to the design on the shield, but failed. The chorus had promised a glorious re-enactment of the slaying of the Gorgon, but the audience shall be disappointed. The title myth has not revitalized the earlier myth; it cannot, for the two are incompatible.

Many critics interpret the failure of the matricide to attain to any heroic status as due to the deceitfulness of mythology and the true abominations behind its glorious frontage. To them the underlying meaning of the opening two odes reveals the horrors beneath the mythological past, and in this way portrays the mythological characters as inappropriate models to be followed. Walsh thinks that these horrors are concealed beneath its charm[28], Ferguson that they are palpably present[29], and Morwood that they progressively appear, the ode ending "as something altogether different from what was suggested at its outset"[30]. None of these opinions is entirely correct. Previous treatments not only incorrectly credit certain images with horrific aspects, but also fail to distinguish between the heroic figures and their enemies or monsters. In the first stasimon the first strophe tells of the famous ships transporting Achilles to Troy. The journey is idyllic: the Nereids, dancing all the way, accompany Achilles, whilst dolphins jump and turn to the music of the flute round the dark prows of the ships. The antistrophe shifts the scene from sea to land, but continues the mood of joy: the Nereids, bearing the golden armour, seek Achilles on Pelion and Ossa, where the nymphs live and where Chiron has raised him up to be a light ($\phi\hat{\omega}s$, l.

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[27] O'Brien, M.J. "Orestes and the Gorgon: Euripides' Electra." AJP 85, 1964: 22-24

[28] op. cit. p. 288

[29] Ferguson, J. A companion to Greek tragedy. Austin and London, 1972: 387, 390; cf. Adams, S.M. op. cit. pp. 121-22 and O'Brien, M.J. op. cit. p. 17

[30] Morwood, J.H.W. "The pattern of Euripides' Electra." AJP 102, 1981: 362

449) to Greece. The concentration is upon the brilliance of Achilles, whose stature is enhanced by his cortege of Nereids.

The glorification of Achilles continues into the second strophe, although it is here that many begin to detect a tarnishing of the shine of the opening strophic pair. The heroic deeds on the armour initially enhance the stature of the bearer. Yet Morwood[31] feels that the dreamlike quality is shattered by the juxtaposition of an eye-witness account from Troy, and places great emphasis on the word δείματα[32] as evoking the brutality of the Trojan War. He also suggests that the beauty of Perseus flying over the sea is counterbalanced by the gruesome picture of him uplifting the head of the Gorgon. The fear, however, that strikes an enemy by the magnificence of a warrior's arms is a commonplace (cf. *Phoenissae* 1104ff., *Troades* 1136, and Hesiod's *Scutum* 144ff.), and such fear is aimed at enemies of war (note the stanza begins with Ἰλιόθεν). For the Greeks there was nothing horrific or unheroic in the defeat of one's enemies.

In the second antistrophe the αἰθέριοι χοροί of the stars (l. 467) do recall the choruses of Nereids (l. 434), but there has been no sinister development from the first to the second image. Although the brightness of the stars evokes the glare of Achilles' armour that terrifies Hector[33] (ll. 468-69; cf. *Iliad* 22. 131-37), there is once again nothing horrific in terrifying one's enemy, and if the images of good conquering evil in the form of the hero killing a monster are to be taken as exempla, then they can only be effective through fear. The stanza concentrates on a bold description of the Chimaera in flight (ll. 473-75), rather than on the conquering of the monster by Bellerophon, but this is not to be taken as a preference for the morbid or horrific in its failure to exploit the optimism inherent in the tale[34]. It represents rather an emphasis upon the fate of the victim (in this case a

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[31] ibid. p. 363

[32] The Greek text is in fact uncertain at this point.

[33] Morwood op. cit. p. 363 and O'Brien op. cit. p. 17 both see the glare of the stars as part of the developing horror in the ode.

[34] cf. Morwood ibid. p. 364

paradigm for the "lioness" Clytemnestra), whose defeat should be considered glorious, and prepares for the picture of the slain Clytemnestra in the epode. In the same way the fact that the Sphinxes, an admittedly odd choice as it is an animal with evil overtones (although the emphasis may be upon their ability to lure prey, as Iphigenia had been lured to Aulis), use their music to attract their prey ($\overset{\circ}{\alpha}o\acute{\iota}\delta\iota\mu o\nu$, l. 471, meaning either "won by their song" or "to which they have sung"; the effect is the same[35]) is not to be viewed, in a sinister perversion of the enjoyment of the dolphins ($\phi\acute{\iota}\lambda\alpha\upsilon\lambda o s$, l. 435), as further deterioration within the ode[36], but it is again an emphasis upon the fate of the victim, looking backward to the enticement that brought Iphigenia to Aulis and forward to the one that will bring Clytemnestra to the farmer's hut. It should not be considered as emblematic of the horror beneath mythology.

The fire that the evil Chimaera breathes ($\pi\acute{\upsilon}\rho\pi\nu oos$, l. 473) could represent the destructive power behind certain forms of light[37], but this is in the context of a *monster's* power. I have already suggested that the Chimaera is an intended paradigm for Clytemnestra, but the very fact that the Chimaera's "brightness" is destructive reflects that it is a monster, whilst Clytemnestra, whose brightness is one of wealth and beauty (ll. 314-18; l. 966, $\lambda\alpha\mu\pi\rho\acute{\upsilon}\nu\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$; and see below), is not a monster. In the stanza one of the other fearful pictures is that of the severed head of the Gorgon, but the Gorgon was a savage monster whose death was justified and it represents no tarnish on the heroic status of the figures involved. It is an exemplum that ought to be heeded or even feared by anyone that is cruel, and it foreshadows the beheading of Aegisthus and the murder of Clytemnestra. The very importance is that the Gorgon, as the Chimaera, was a monster and therefore its killing was heroic, whilst the later pictures of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra are not those of monsters and therefore their deaths are unjustified.

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[35] O'Brien op. cit. p. 22; cf. Denniston op. cit. p. 107

[36] Morwood op. cit. p. 364

[37] Morwood op. cit. p. 364

As the epode turns to consider the murder of Agamemnon by Aegisthus and the future death of Clytemnestra, the language changes too, becoming tainted by the murders. The sword of Achilles does not shine as the rest of his armour, but it operates in battle as a death weapon (φονίῳ, l. 476). The movement of the four horses repeats the wording of the movement of the dolphin (πάλλω is used in both lines 435 and 476-77), but whereas the dolphin moved with delight to music, the horses move into battle. The horses also recall by contrast the winged horses of the sun, which were associated with a glaring brightness (κατέλαμπε... φαέθων, l. 464) as opposed to dark colours and dust (κελαινά...κόνις, l. 478). The final defilement is the vision of Clytemnestra with her throat slit, which will soon become a visible reality (ll. 1223, 1228). Therefore the first four stanzas are a glorification of Achilles, and by transfer Agamemnon, and a depiction of heroic triumphs over monsters, which at first sight appear to reflect the murders of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, foreshadowed in the epode. It has already been suggested to the audience in the opening scene that Electra's perception of the situation is perverted and that Orestes is cowardly, so that we are already prepared to appreciate that the reality in the epode is not the result of heroes killing monsters as in the rest of the stasimon, but of unheroic people killing humane figures. Most of the recent commentators have stressed the darkening of light and its transformation, along with gold, from an object of beauty to one of destruction, taking their lead from Ferguson[38], who suggested the ambivalence of light in the stasima. Many of their suggestions, of which some have been countered above, are, however, tenuous. Although in the first stasimon the images of the golden armour and of Achilles as a light to Greece (φῶς, l. 449) develop into the brightness of the sun and stars (l. 465ff.) that terrify Hector[39], there is nothing inappropriate or terrible in this, since Hector was an enemy, just as the Chimaera's fire belongs to a monster.

The second stasimon narrates the story of how Pan gave to

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[38] Ferguson, J. op.cit. pp. 387-89

[39] cf. Adams op. cit. pp. 121-22; O'Brien op. cit. pp. 18-22

Atreus a golden lamb to endorse the kingship of Mycenae. The first one and half stanzas celebrate the arrival of the lamb with images familiar from the first stasimon. There is the recurrence of sweet music on the pipes of Pan (μοῦσαν ἡδύθροον, l. 703) and the sound of the flute and songs is suggested by the mimetic effect of the soft consonants of lines 716-18[40]. The people celebrate with dances (χοροί, l. 711; cf. ll. 434, 467) and the city is illuminated by the fires of the censers and altar (ll. 713-15; cf. ll. 464-65). The gold of Achilles' shield from the first stasimon reappears in the descriptions of the lamb (l. 705) and the censers (l. 713). Upon this scene of colourful celebration the treachery of Thyestes, Atreus's brother, abruptly breaks (εἶτα δόλοι[41] | Θυέστου, ll. 719-20). By a secret affair with Atreus' wife he is able to steal the lamb, as a consequence of which Zeus changed the courses of the heavenly bodies. In this way the reality of human nature intrudes on the joyous celebration. The theme of distorted marriage is greatly developed in the play. Helen's adultery launched the expedition to Troy (ll. 479-81), Iphigenia was lured to Aulis on the false pretext of a marriage to Achilles (ll. 1020-23), Clytemnestra killed her husband for another man (ll. 122-24) and Electra is living in a marriage of convenience. Hence the wresting of the kingship by an adulterous affair is so tragically relevant to the present, and especially since Thyestes was Aegisthus' father (l. 10). It is again tempting to interpret the change in the ode as a revelation of the horror beneath mythical utopia[42], but this would be misleading. That the golden lamb of the second stasimon is the cause of the treachery does not entail the defilement of gold[43]. On the other hand, the presence of the sun and stars for the purpose of punishment, not as emblems of joy, physically represents the conversion from light to dark in the reversal of their revolutions. Thyestes' treachery does interrupt the mythical picture, but it is not intended as a

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[40] On the imitative effect of words, rhythm and probably music in the third stasimon of the Helen, see Kitto, H.D.F. Greek tragedy. London, 1961 3rd. ed.: p.343 n.1.

[41] I follow Camper's and Nauck's emendation. 'Epilogoi' in this context is meaningless and clearly corrupt.

[42] cf. Morwood op. cit. pp. 365-66

[43] cf. Morwood ibid. p. 365

portrayal of the imperfection of myth; rather, it is intended as a admonitory example for all that seek to take retribution out of the province of the gods and into their own.

The chorus admit that they are sceptical about the story (737-46), although the precise elements about which they are sceptical are unclear. There are three respects in which the chorus is commonly considered to be cynical in this ode. Firstly it rejects the legend that the sun changed course (739-40), which would be in keeping with the view that the play presents a contrast between myth and reality. Secondly, it proposes that these tales of gods are appropriate only for the piety of the people (ll. 742-43), which may seem an apt scepticism coming from the pen of an allegedly atheistic Euripides[44]. Thirdly, it relates the tale to the Argive, history suggesting that Clytemnestra would have fared better had she remembered such stories in order to frighten her from killing Aegisthus (ll. 745-46). It is feasible that all three of these play a part, and that the general tone is to be inferred more than an interpretation of a specific intention. Stinton[45], for example, argues that the disbelief is not aimed at the miraculous event, but its motivation, although this distinction is of little significance. Rather the chorus cannot believe that Zeus would cause such a cosmic upturn "for the sake of a mortal suit [or "punishment"]" (θνατᾶς ἕνεκεν δίκας, l. 742) such that it appears to be a rejection of divine interest altogether in human affairs[46]. Expression of disbelief does not, however, necessarily entail rejection of the tale concerned, or at least rejection of the possibility of a similar event happening on another occasion. Therefore, the chorus continue that such stories, whether true or not, are a reminder of divine justice and ought to have been heeded by Clytemnestra. The truth of any particular story is irrelevant as long as it illustrates a general

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[44] For a recent re-assessment of the evidence for Euripidean atheism, see Lefkowitz, M.R. "Impiety and atheism in Euripides." CQ n.s. 39, 1989: 70-82.

[45] Stinton, T.C.W. "Si credere dignum est" pp. 258-262, reprinted in Collected papers on Greek tragedy. Oxford, 1990: 236-64.

[46] Stinton ibid. interprets this as a rejection of divine inequity rather than of divine equity.

maxim that the gods will intervene when appropriate with harsh retribution. The implication for the play is that the gods may punish Orestes if he is acting against divine sanction, which he quite possibly is doing in view of the ambiguity of Apollo in the tragedy. The likelihood of punishment for Orestes is particularly strong since traditionally the cosmic changes were made in response to Atreus's *revenge*. If the crime itself is punished so severely, then the revenge, which was the normal cause of punisment, will be all the more severely dealt with. It is not that the chorus deny Electra's or Orestes' actions as having any mythological bearing at all[47], but that as a consequence of their lacking divine endorsement they become unmythical and guided only by personal motives, and this makes the crime all the more shocking.

The recurring motifs throughout the play that are familiar from the odes contrast with grim irony Orestes' and Electra's actions with those of their mythical counterparts, and in particular highlight the lack of justification for the murders. Achilles is accompanied by Nereids (l. 434) and is looked after by Nymphs (l. 447), whilst the only aid that Orestes has from nymphs is that Aegisthus, by sacrificing to them (l. 805), is brought away from the city and distracted enough for Orestes to deliver the death blow. It is also ironic that the Nymphs were the protectors of children, as they protected Achilles, and are here indirectly involved in a murder of a parent by a child, at the very time when Aegisthus was probably asking the nymphs for a child. The motifs of both ritual sacrifice and celebration have determined much of the dramatic structure and imagery of the play[48]. They embody the invitation of the chorus to Electra to attend the festival of Hera (ll. 169-74), Electra's expression of her pitiable situation (ll. 175-89), the gamboling of the dolphins and the chorus of the Nereids that accompany Achilles to Troy (ll. 432-41) and the city's festival to celebrate the arrival of the golden lamb (ll. 708-18). These examples of genuine ritual

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[47] Sheppard, J.T. op. cit. p.140

[48] Zeitlin, F.I. "The Argive festival of Hera." TAPA 101, 1970: 651-55

celebration are poetically distorted in the murder of Aegisthus as well as in the rejoicing after it (cf. ll. 872-9). Not only does Orestes not have the gods' help in any genuine form, but he even violates their divine sanctity in killing Aegisthus while he was performing a religious duty, the irony being striking of Orestes cutting up Aegisthus as he is cutting up a sacrificial animal. Likewise Perseus is aided by Hermes (l. 462), although in the drama the position of divine sanction and retribution is far from certain. Orestes only has a dubious understanding of Apollo's oracle (l. 971) since the gods only provide riddles (ll. 1244-48; cf. l. 1302, Φοίβου τ' ἄσοφοι γλώσσης ἐνοπαί), and Electra blames herself, not Apollo, isolating the human motivation from the divine.

The crime of Thyestes resulted in the reversal of the movement of the sun, and the "shine" of the heroic past turns to darkness in the description of the present in the first stasimon's epode. Electra's understanding of the situation, identified in her use of the imagery of light, however, proceeds in the opposite direction. Her very first line is

ὦ νὺξ μέλαινα, χρυσέων ἄστρων τροφέ   (l. 54)

employing the image of dark night to express metaphorically her trouble, with the darkness of the sky emphasized by its ability to intensify the brightness of the stars[49]. After the killing of Aegisthus she praises

ὦ φέγγος, ὦ τέθριππον ἡλίου σέλας   (l. 866),

a pitiful reversal of the choral image. The imagery of change from light to darkness is given visual confirmation in the murder of Clytemnestra. Electra firstly describes the brightness of Clytemnestra (ll. 314-18), but then when she finally appears Electra again comments upon the shine of her chariot and dress. On her arrival she is greeted by a choral lyric (ll. 988-97), which celebrates her brothers, the Dioscuri, and through them refers to the stars in the shining (φλογεράν) heaven (ll. 991-92). This sets up Clytemnestra as a subject of light and brightness. At the end of the episode, however, as Clytemnestra proceeds into the hut

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[49] Denniston (ad. loc.) quotes Camper on the appositeness in the word 'nurse': "siderum nutrix, ea nempe quae siderum augeat per tenebras suas splendorem."

where she will be killed, Electra warns her lest the smoke of the hut soil her clothes (1139-40). In fact something far more gruesome than smoke will defile her appearance (cf. 11. 1178-79, 1228). Such a change or reversal in the odes from light to dark either foretold a wicked act (Clytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon, 11. 480-86) or was the result of wickedness (Thyestes' crime, 1. 719). The implication is that by tarnishing the shine of their mother, the brother's and sister's crime is as wicked as Clytemnestra's own or as punishable as, if not more than, Thyestes'[50].

The prospect of punishment for the children, therefore, appears to be the implication of the odes. The juxtaposition of mythical stories to a plain setting arouses the audience from mild inattention and fixes their minds with the realization that these odes are something different and for that reason must be carefully scrutinized. This has been called by Walsh a *Verfremdungseffekt*[51]. As the audience are kept at a distance they are able to evaluate the problems indicated by the themes and images shared between the odes and the action. The myths are used with a double perspective combining "two apparently contradictory features: thematic relevance to the dramatic situation and contrast with it"[52]. However, that contrast represents the incompatibility between the latter day "heroes", Electra and Orestes, and the heroic stance. The chorus frames the slaying by Orestes of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra within the picture of an earlier myth, offering as a paradigm for Orestes' actions various heroes of legend, and in particular Perseus. For such is Electra's perception of him, and from the earlier myths both seek their justification. Their motives, however, are insufficient, and the guidance of the gods is dubious. Therefore Euripides deliberately and explicitly breaks this connection between the title myth and the earlier myth, and the arrangement of a play within a play fails. Modern literary

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[50] In view of Atreus' revenge being the normal cause of punishment in the Thyestes' myth, it is likely that the punishment of the children's revenge will be greater than that of Atreus' crime.

[51] Walsh op. cit. p.289

[52] ibid. p.278

theorists would say that the text deconstructs itself, but this dehumanizes the very essence of the tragedy. The play is a study of human failure, and the difficulties humanity experiences in coming to terms with their pale conceptions of the gods' will. It is not a rejection of myth; for myth is Euripides' medium. It is a rejection of the characters' attempts to embody their personal motives in mythological exempla.

CONCLUSION

The nature and a definition of myth have been discussed throughout the history of thought and are still being debated. The complexities of myth are usually avoided by artists as they seek to find unity behind myth and to use myth as an articulation of the fundamental truths of human behaviour and morality. Myth is not a personal biography, but an expression of a world view that "is not wishful distortion of the world"[1]. When one envisages, in the *Electra* for example, a contrast between the myths of the chorus and the "reality" on stage, it is not to imply that the myths are an imperfect vision of life, but that they are an abstraction from the experience of the past that the characters may or may not complement. Myth, therefore, acts as an abstract paradigm and becomes expressive of human feelings. It is used, furthermore, to define the almost inexpressible – historical and empirical continuity. This we find in Euripidean thought.

In his work Euripides unites mythological, artistic and historical thinking, all of which partake of the same imaginative and abstractive forms of expression. He structures the *Helen* according to the myth of Demeter and Persephone, about which the chorus sing in the second stasimon, such that the dramatic action is a repeat of that earlier myth and the earlier myth acts as a mythological exemplum or paradigm for the action. Human nature never changes, and as the value in the study of history is to be found in the understanding of the course of events, so for Euripides myth is reflective of human action in general. We see him apply earlier myths to his title myths to indicate how history, if we may speak of history within myth, repeats itself. In the *Iphigenia in Tauris* and the *Iphigenia in Aulis* too the chorus present the action on stage as a re-enactment of a myth from the past. The succession of Apollo to Delphi in the *Iphigenia in Tauris* not only is a paradigm for the succession of Orestes and the triumph of the new cult of Artemis, but also is indicative that Orestes' success will result in Apollo's position at Delphi

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[1] Langer, S.K. Philosophy in a new key. 2nd. ed. New York, 1951: 153

being assured. The dramatic action is both a repeat of the action in the myth and a confirmation of the very same theocracy as the myth conveys. The paradigm of the *Iphigenia at Aulis* is more complex, since it at first sight appears to be the direct opposite of the action. The sacrifice of Iphigenia, however, assumes the components of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, so that Iphigenia effectively undertakes a wedding when she submits to the sacarifice. This not only thrills the audience, but also lends to the tragedy of the drama. The felicity of the marriage that she has lost – a marriage which by word-play is clearly demonstrated as having been abandoned – she can only attain to by by subjecting herself to its opposite, a marital sacrifice. Iphigenia re-enacts the paradigm and in so doing resolves her dilemma and overcomes any fear at her inevitable fate.

Euripides introduces a further application of this technique in the *Electra*, where the chorus appear to set the myth of Perseus as the paradigm for Orestes. The historical precedent, however, that is so successful in the other three plays, is deliberately made to fail and Orestes cannot live up to his paradigm. This does not entail the myth being false, but rather presenting a different human aspect from the one that Orestes tries to embody. In all four plays, therefore, the chorus sing of myths that act, each in their own way, as paradigms for the action, and in this way their odes are directly relevant to the drama. In the *Iphigenia at Aulis* and the *Electra* in particular the use of paradigms assists in expressing the tone of the drama; in the one the tragedy of Iphigenia's situation, in the other the inappropriateness of Orestes' matricide.

As with Euripides the Pindaric odes incorporate many myths whose connections with the main theme are not always clear to us. Pindar, nevertheless, displayed great versatility with myth, using it as a standard by which he could compare his contemporaries. In his epinician odes especially, myth could be employed to illustrate and illuminate the present occasion that concerned his laudandus. Heroic epic legends provided a boundless source for both poetry and works of art of ideal instances from which the artist was able to extract the perfect exemplum. In Pindar myth

transports the reader's mind to an idealized world, and the main subject of an ode is reflected in the light of that idealism. It was shown similarly how the myths in Euripides' *Electra* portray the ideal, against which in that play the characters are contrasted. In Pindar, as in the three other Euripidean plays discussed, the characters are illuminated rather than cast imto a shadow by the myth.

In *Pythian* 10 the myth of Perseus reaching the Hyperboreans (representative of happiness) with the help of a goddess takes the reader outside of the normal world of Greek experience, as according to Walsh[2], Euripides' mythical choruses arouse the audience from inattention by their very extraordinary qualities. The myth in *Pythian* 10, however, is merely illustrative of the difficulty of humans to attain to happiness without the gods' assistance, and not a clear paradigm for the action of others within the ode. In *Olympian* 1 Pindar defends his version of the Pelops myth, in which Poseidon stole Pelops out of love for him, by comparing it to a similar event: "where, on a second occasion, there came also Ganymede to Zeus for the same use." The plausibility of Pindar's new story is enhanced by a comparison with another myth, rather as modern scholars defend one interpretation by the occurrence of the same phenomenon in other similar cases. The plausibility of Euripides' title myth does seem to be enhanced by its parallel myth in the chorus, but in Euripides this does not seem to be the only purpose of a paradigm[3].

In general the purpose of myth in Pindar is to set the particular non-recurrent event in relation to an event in the permanent, "paradigmatic" world of the gods and heroes, which makes it understandable. Euripides places a seemingly single non-recurrent event in relation to the permanent world of myth in

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[2] Walsh, G.B. "The first stasimon of Euripides' Electra." YCS 25, 1977: 289

[3] Newman, J.K. and F.S. Newman (Pindar's Art. Munich and Zurich, 1984: 150) call the example of Olympian I a paradigm, although, in my application of the term to Euripides, I would not have so called the Pindaric myth.

order to show that that event is part of a recurring cycle. This century Collingwood has said that myth is antihistorical[4]. Euripides, by contrast, would have said that it is in the very historicity of myth that we can find its ultimate value. Human lives and myth are not purely for comparison, one with another; rather one life is the re-enactment of another, two organically related perspectives. Helen relives Persephone's life (within the confines of the drama at least), Orestes relives Apollo's, and Iphigenia Thetis'. Euripides was not alone among contemporaries in noting the continuity in human behaviour. It is the basis of Thucydides' history as expressed in the prologue of his work (Book I 22) and it is the theory from which the medical scientists drew their conclusions. Euripides, therefore, followed in the tradition of lyric poetry, as exemplified by Pindar, in his application of myth for illustrative purposes, but combined with this tradition the historical thinking of his contemporaries to produce his own historical and mythical paradigms.

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[4] Collingwood, R.G. The idea of history. New York, 1956: 15. To be precise Collingwood in fact says that myth is not human. For him, to be non-human is to be antihistorical.

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