STUDIES IN EURIPIDES'
ORESTES

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JOHN R. PORTER

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BY

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For my parents
John and Mary Porter

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PREFACE

This book is a revised version of my 1990 doctoral thesis, written at the University of Toronto under the supervision of Desmond Conacher. I have modified some of the arguments, taken into account recent work on the play,[1] and discarded a good deal of extraneous material. The essential text remains that of the original, however, and is likely to smell both of the lamp and the graduate study carrel. The book's purpose is twofold. First, it attempts to provide some insight into the burgeoning scholarship on this once neglected work by examining the history of various trends that have dominated criticism of the play for the past three decades. Second, it challenges what I perceive to be a misplaced emphasis on the character of the protagonist and his alleged failings by presenting a reading that takes into account the play's obvious theatrical features and still approaches it as a serious work of art.

Orestes is a most curious play, with a critical history to match. Ignored or condemned out of hand by most scholars of the nineteenth century (where it ran afoul of critical principles derived, in large part, from Sophoclean drama), it fared little better in the first half of this century, attracting the serious attention of relatively few commentators. In 1957, however, with the appearance of Karl Reinhardt's influential article, "Die Sinneskrise bei Euripides," the critical fortunes of *Orestes* took a turn for the better. Scholars were awakened afresh to the possibility that the play might be read as something other than overwrought melodrama. The troubling features of the work — its overturning of mythical tradition, its chaotic plot, the feverish nature of its characterization, its numerous violations of tragic decorum — were reevaluated as perhaps a deliberate strategy by the poet to shock his audience and thereby rouse it to reflection. *Orestes* was transformed from an unsatisfactory melodrama into a probing existentialist study of the individual's place in a world where reason and meaning no longer obtained, anticipating the modern theater of the absurd. In the next decade Reinhardt's analysis was

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[1] The following works became available too late for me to integrate them properly into my own study: Hall (1993), Quijada (1991), Saïd (1993), Theodorou (1993).

followed by two seminal articles, particularly among English-speaking scholars: in 1962, Nathan Greenberg's "Euripides' *Orestes:* An Interpretation" and, in 1968, Christian Wolff's "*Orestes.*"[2] Together, these three studies did much to inspire the series of articles on *Orestes* that appeared in the later 1960s and the 1970s, a period that also saw the publication of major commentaries by Werner Biehl (1965) and Vincenzo Di Benedetto (1965).[3] Since I began work on this study of *Orestes* in 1984, two new important commentaries have appeared by Willink (1986) and West (1987),[4] while the stream of articles and chapters on the play has continued unabated.

In the majority of these studies, until quite recently, *Orestes* has been portrayed as a work dominated by a spirit of mordant, not to say cynical, criticism: criticism of the mythic tradition and of the religion which fostered that tradition, of poets who had treated the Orestes myth in the past, of Athenian society, of the Athenian democratic system, of contemporary moral and ethical presuppositions, of the conventions of the tragic stage itself. The focus for many of these criticisms has been located in the figure of Orestes, whose behavior is generally felt by the critics to fall somewhere within the spectrum between blind folly and homicidal mania. Orestes (with his companions Electra and Pylades) has been portrayed as a murderous schizophrenic whose tendency for violence verges on the sociopathic, as a morally obtuse and intellectually myopic solipsist, as a corrupt young aristocrat of the type associated with the ἑταιρίαι rampant in the Athens of Euripides' day, and as a blaspheming traitor to his god Apollo. Whatever the critic's individual approach, it has generally been agreed that Euripides' presentation of Orestes' struggles for survival is perfused with a deep and all-pervasive irony — that the protagonist's integrity (and that of his cause) is consistently undercut by the poet, whose purpose is to lead the audience to see beneath the surface of his plot to the deeper meaning which lies below.

The following study will challenge this general approach to *Orestes* by arguing that the play's ironies, numerous as they are, have been exaggerated by scholars in their attempts to elicit a darker meaning from the text. I open with a review of the various critical responses to *Orestes,*

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[2] Developed, in part, out of his 1965 Harvard dissertation, which I have not seen.

[3] Note as well Biehl's important contributions to our understanding of the text of *Or:* Biehl (1955) and his 1975 Teubner edition. Other editions which appeared in this period include Scarcella (1958) and Cecchi (1966).

[4] De Oliveira e Silva (1982) and Falkner (1984) have produced recent commentaries for schools as well.

beginning from antiquity. Such a survey must, of necessity, be incomplete, but should suffice to indicate the general lines of interpretation that have been proposed and demonstrate the surprising degree of continuity that exists between the seminal work of Steiger and Verrall (with whom serious literary study of *Orestes* can be said to begin) and more recent approaches to the play.

In my second chapter I put forward a general interpretation of *Orestes* taken as a whole, with particular emphasis on the first 'half' of the play (lines 1-1245). Here I attempt to place *Orestes* in the context of Euripides' œuvre, arguing that the emphasis in the play is situational: the audience is made to focus, not on supposed flaws in Orestes' character, but on the particular set of circumstances that confront him in the aftermath of the famous matricide. *Orestes* is shown to present, in an extreme form, a study of victimization of the kind found in other Euripidean works, but modified to accommodate the increasing interest in tactics of suspense, confusion, and surprise — as well as sheer theatricality — displayed by the *mechanema* dramas of the poet's late period. Here I address the question of characterization (in particular, the relevance of Orestes' insanity) and examine the nature of the revenge plot. To a certain extent, I revive and defend the 'naive' reading of *Orestes* forcefully advocated by Krieg in his Halle dissertation of 1934; much of this chapter takes advantage of later studies of *Orestes* and of Euripides' dramaturgy, however, to account more fully for the air of perturbation that besets the play.

The chapters that follow concentrate on those scenes in which the character and actions of Orestes have been most at issue. Chapter Three examines the *agon* with Tyndareus (lines 456-629) and Orestes' ὕστερος λόγος before Menelaus (lines 630-681). The scene is important because it is here, according to many critics, that Orestes' criminal nature (suppressed in the play's opening scenes) begins to reveal itself, while Tyndareus' speech against Orestes has frequently been praised for its insights into the role of law in civilized society and its condemnation of Orestes' attack on Clytemnestra. Employing a variety of comparative material drawn from the orators, later rhetorical handbooks, and Euripides' other works, I attempt to demonstrate that Tyndareus' arguments, regarded by many as representing the poet's own views, are developed along well-established rhetorical lines familiar to the audience and are not to be accepted as an objective evaluation of Orestes' deed. In examining Orestes' response to Tyndareus' attack, as well as his later plea to Menelaus, I argue that Euripides portrays, not the young man's criminal depravity or lack of sensibility, but his helpless desperation in

the face of an increasingly hopeless situation.

Chapters Four and Five turn to the report of the Phrygian messenger and his later confrontation with Orestes. Here it becomes necessary to define not only the nature of Orestes' actions, but the nature of the play itself. The multiple confusions of circumstance, status, role, and genre arising in these scenes have been cited as evidence of the crazed turmoil of Orestes' thoughts, his utter demoralization, the death of tragedy, and, in the scene between Orestes and the Phrygian, the corrupt nature of the manuscripts. My analysis attempts to define the nature of the confusion that reigns in these scenes and to establish their place within the economy of the play as a whole.

Finally, Chapter Six examines the *exodos,* the climax of the play and, for many, the scene where Orestes' criminal insanity reaches a feverish crescendo. Here again the very nature of the scene is a matter of dispute: is it a final sardonic attack on the hero and his myth, a miraculous instance of the intervention of divine grace, or merely an exciting finale? As in Chapters Four and Five, an examination of the scene's place within the overall economy of *Orestes* and comparison with Euripides' practice elsewhere tell against the more extreme interpretations that have been proposed.

Orestes, by general consensus, is not Euripides' greatest work. It *is* a complex and intriguing piece of theater, however, and exhibits a curious blend of Euripidean themes and techniques. The struggles of the young Orestes against a host of opponents presents the poet with the opportunity for a virtuoso display of dramaturgical sleights of hand and also yields a disturbing study of alienation and moral outrage. Throughout his career Euripides reveals an uncanny skill at portraying a world in moral disarray; in *Orestes* that disarray is allowed to dominate the action of the play to the point that the resulting chaos threatens to overwhelm not only the characters but the mythic traditions and theatrical conventions that make their story possible.

My debts are many. Michael O'Brien, Emmet Robbins, and Ronald Shepherd presented many helpful criticisms of the original thesis and saved me from more than a few errors, major and minor. Gordon Kirkwood, who served as the external reader for the thesis, has been most generous, both in his comments on the original text and in his support of my efforts to see it published. But my greatest debt is to Desmond Conacher, whose scholarship is matched only by his unflagging kindness and patience.

The efforts of Cathy Gunderson and Alan Reese in editing and proofreading the text have been invaluable and have often rescued me

from my prolix and mildly dyslexic ways. To save me entirely, however, would be the work of one greater than mortal: the reader should be assured that all errors or infelicities are entirely of my own manufacture.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Ann DeVito, *non ignara mali,* and my parents, to whom this work is dedicated.

For the Greek tragedians I cite the Oxford Classical Texts of Page, Lloyd-Jones/Wilson, Diggle, and (for *Euripides,* vol. iii) Murray. Unless otherwise indicated, the text of *Orestes* is that of James Diggle (forthcoming). I would like to thank Dr. Diggle for his kindness in granting me access to this text in advance of its publication.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CRITICAL HISTORY OF *ORESTES:* AN OVERVIEW

ORESTES IN ANTIQUITY

The critical fortunes of *Orestes* have been remarkably diverse. Evidence for the work's popularity in the years following its initial production is abundant.[1] In a well-known fragment, the comic poet Strattis refers to the play as a 'most clever drama' (δρᾶμα δεξιώτατον),[2] and the number of parodies or echoes of the work in the productions of the comic poets amply testifies to the audience's familiarity with and appreciation of the piece. Aristophanes clearly has *Orestes* in mind in several passages of *Frogs* (most notably in the oft-cited reference to the actor Hegelochus' notorious slip in the delivery of *Orestes* 279: *Frogs* 303-04),[3] while echoes of other passages of the play can be found in Eubulus, Alexis, and elsewhere.[4] That the play was popular enough for successful revivals to be staged is attested by inscriptional evidence[5] as well as by references in the *scholia* to innovations on the part of later producers.[6] *Orestes* was familiar enough to a late fourth-century audience

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[1] See Chapouthier/Méridier (ed.) 22-27, Willink (ed.) lvii-lxiv. For a general discussion of Euripides' popularity in the century following his death see Pertusi (1956), Kuch (1978), Xanthakis-Karamanos (1980).

[2] Frg. 1.2 (Kassel/Austin), reasonably dated to soon after 408. (Unless otherwise indicated, fragments of the comic poets will be cited according to Kassel/Austin [1983-].)

[3] This blunder also provides material for the comic poets Strattis (frgs. 1 and 63) and Sannyrion (frg. 8); see Stanford (1963) and Dover (1993) on *Frogs* 303-04, Daitz (1983), Borthwick (1968), and Willink (ed.) on *Or* 279. Other echoes of *Or* can be found at *Frogs* 883-84 and 1331-64. Willink (ed.) lxiii n. 119 suggests a possible echo of *Or* 285-87 at *Plut.* 8-10.

[4] Eubulus frgs. 64 and 75.6, Alexis frg. 3, Apollodorus frg. 6. See as well Nicolaus frg. 1 (a parody of Euripides' genealogical prologues, with direct echoes of *Or* 5 and 10), Σ *Or* 234 and 742. (On Σ *Or* 554, see below, p. 142 n. 144.)

[5] See Snell (1971) DID A 2a.18-19 (Dionysia of 340 B.C.) and DID B 11.1-2 (Tegea, victory in the Dionysia at Athens, c. 276-219 B.C.).

[6] See Chapouthier/Méridier (ed.) 24: on *Or* 57 we are told of a dumbshow of Helen's arrival performed before the prologue; on 268 of an alternate staging for the bow scene; on 643 of the portrayal of Menelaus during Orestes' plea for aid; on 1366 of the entry of the Phrygian slave. Not all such references should be taken as evidence for actual productions, however: see Malzan (1908), Elsperger (1908) 72-75, Page (1934) 41ff., Hamilton (1974), Dihle (1981), and cf. the discussion of 1366-68 below, pp. 192ff.

for Menander to compose an extended imitation of lines 866ff. at *Sicyonius* 176ff.,[7] and its influence on other dramatists of the period — both comic and tragic — is likely.[8] Turning from drama to the prose authors of the fourth century, we find *Orestes* cited with a good deal of freedom in the writings of Aristotle.[9] The work's continued popularity in later ages is attested by the number of papyrus fragments,[10] by the play's representation in art (to a severely limited degree),[11] and by its selection for inclusion in the so-called Byzantine triad of Euripides' plays.[12]

Despite its popular success in antiquity, however, *Orestes* was not without its detractors, particularly (it appears) among the Peripatetics. Aristotle refers directly to the work on two occasions in the *Poetics,* each time criticizing the portrayal of Menelaus in the play as an example of 'baseness of character not required for the story' (πονηρίας μὲν ἤθους μὴ ἀναγκαίας).[13] This criticism occurs, initially, in the midst of Aristotle's discussion of the types of characters suitable for tragedy (as opposed to those appropriate to comedy), and stems from his insistence that tragedy portray characters who are 'good' (χρηστός or, more often, σπουδαῖος).[14]

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[7] See Katsouris (1975) 29-54, Belardinelli (1984), W. G. Arnott (1986) 3ff., Willink (ed.) lxiii, Hurst (1990) 101-03, Goldberg (1993). (Note the further echo of *Or* 922 at *Epit.* 910. *Or* 866 and 871 also are the object of a more overtly parodic passage in Alcaeus frg. 19.) Further allusions to *Or* can be found at *Asp.* 424-25 and 432, and *Sam.* 326. (For a possible echo of *Or* 396 see below, p. 307 n. 29.)

[8] Comedies on the Orestes theme are attested for Alexis, Dinolochus, and Timocles ('Ορεσταυτοκλείδην); *phlyakes* for Rhinthon and Sopater; tragedies for Euripides II, Carcinus II, Theodectas, Aphareus, Timesitheus and (perhaps) one unknown author (Adespota F 8c [Snell]). These works need not have been inspired by Euripides' play; see, however, Xanthakis-Karamanos (1979) 70-71 and (1980) 63ff. on the tragic *Orestes* of Theodectas and note, e.g., the similarity of frg. 5 (Snell) to Orestes' arguments before Tyndareus. (Note, in addition, the similarity between Theodectas frg. 2 [Snell] and *Or* 538-39, and see Xanthakis-Karamanos [1979] 73-76 and [1980] 66-70 for a discussion of the popularity enjoyed in the fourth century by dramatic trial scenes such as that in *Or*).

[9] *Poet.* 1454a 28-29 and 1461b 19-21 are discussed below. For further references see, e.g., *EN* 1169b 7-8 (*Or* 667; cf. *Mag. Mor.* 1212b 27-28), *Rhet.* 1371a 26-28 (*Or* 234; cf. *EE* 1235a 16, *EN* 1154b 28-29) and 1405b 20-23 (*Or* 1587-88); see as well *Rhet.* 1397a 29-30 for a possible echo of *Or* 538-39.

[10] See Diggle (1991) 115-20 and Bouquiaux-Simon/Mertens (1992).

[11] On the wall-painting at Ephesus (c. A.D. 180-90) of the play's opening sickbed scene, see W. G. Arnott (1983) 13 n. 5. Chapouthier/Méridier (ed.) 27 and Willink (ed.) lxiii-liv note other possible allusions.

[12] The play's popularity under the Empire and in late antiquity is illustrated by the copious *testimonia* in Biehl (ed.) 108-33. Cf. Patin (1913) 1.243 and 251-52.

[13] *Poet.* 1454a 28-29 (Bywater's translation); cf. 1461b 19-21.

[14] See esp. *Poet.* 1454a 16ff. and, in general, Golden (1965), Adkins (1966a), Smithson (1983), and Held (1984); cf. *Poet.* 1448a 1ff., 1448b 24-27 (cf. 1449a 32-34), 1454b 8-15. (Cf. Michelini [1987] 52ff., where the suggestion is made that Euripidean drama as a whole represents a deliberate *'recusatio* of the *spoudaion.'*) It long has been customary to criticize Aristotle's misunderstanding of Menelaus' role in the play: see, e.g., Hartung (1843) 2.497-

Later commentators — represented by the *scholia* and the *hypothesis* to
the play — seem to echo the criticisms of Aristotle and his school.[15]
There, as well, we find emphasis on breaches of tragic decorum,
particularly with regard to characterization. The author of the *hypothesis*
admits that the play has enjoyed success on the stage, but protests against
the baseness of its characters, echoing Aristotle's terms: τὸ δρᾶμα τῶν
ἐπὶ σκηνῆς εὐδοκιμούντων, χείριστον δὲ τοῖς ἤθεσι· πλὴν γὰρ
Πυλάδου πάντες φαῦλοί εἰσιν.[16] In the *scholia,* as in the *Poetics,*
Menelaus comes in for particular criticism: in line after line of the play
evidence is found of the Spartan king's maliciousness, his cruelty, and his
treacherous hypocrisy.[17] The scholiast is here led by Aristotle, whose
criticism of the portrayal of Menelaus concerns a falling away from the
standards of serious poetry towards those of comedy. It may be
reasonable, therefore, to hypothesize a Peripatetic source as well for the
repeated references in the *scholia* and the *hypothesis* of *Orestes* to the
play's lapses from tragic σεμνότης:[18] the charges that the play
degenerates from the point where the Phrygian slave first appears on
stage;[19] that the scene between Orestes and the Phrygian introduces
matters unworthy of tragedy and more appropriate to comedy;[20] that the
ending resembles too much that of a comedy.[21] Like the emphasis on the
inappropriate 'lowness' of the play's characters, this criticism of the
comic elements in the work might well stem from the rigid and
fundamental distinction between comedy and tragedy found in the

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98, Steiger (1898) 48-49.

[15] On the difficult question of the relation between Peripatetic literary theories and the
views expressed in the *scholia* and *hypotheses* to the plays (esp. those associated with
Aristophanes of Byzantium) see Malzan (1908), Lord (1908) 66ff., and Elsperger (1908).

[16] Cf. Malzan (1908) 12-13. Φαῦλος is an Aristotelian *Lieblingswort* for the type of
character appropriate to comedy (as opposed to the σπουδαῖος of tragedy): see Golden
(1965), Seidensticker (1982) 249-52, Held (1984).

[17] See Lord (1908) 47-48, who notes that "[t]he character of Menelaus receives more
notice than any other in the nine plays" for which we have *scholia;* cf. Elsperger (1908) 35-
41.

[18] On the scholiasts' emphasis on tragic decorum in general, see Roemer (1906) 57-63,
Elsperger (1908) 54-59, Heath (1987a) 33-35.

[19] Σ *Or* 1369: ἐντεῦθεν ἐξέστη τοῦ ἰδίου ἤθους ὁ Εὐριπίδης ἀνοίκεια ἑαυτῷ λέγων.

[20] Σ *Or* 1512 (ἀνάξια καὶ τραγῳδίας καὶ τῆς 'Ορέστου συμφορᾶς τὰ λεγόμενα); Σ *Or*
1521 (ταῦτα κωμικώτερά ἐστι καὶ πεζά). On Σ *Or* 1384 (τινὲς τοῦτο παρεπιγραφὴν εἶναι
ὡς εἰς τὰ κωμικὰ δράματα) see Elsperger (1908) 55-56 and 74.

[21] Τὸ δρᾶμα κωμικωτέραν ἔχει τὴν καταστροφήν (*Or hypothesis:* see Seidensticker
[1982] 103 n. 10 and 254-55); cf. Σ *Or* 1691 and note *Poet.* 1453a 12ff. (esp. 1453a 36-39:
cf. Hunter [1983] 27 n. 1). On the question of whether *Or* is pro-satyric see below, Appendix
One.

Poetics.[22] If this is the case, a coherent picture emerges of the criticisms raised against *Orestes* in antiquity. The play is found to succeed on the stage by virtue of its lapses in tragic decorum: its characters are φαῦλοι (like those of comedy), its climactic scenes undignified and unworthy of tragedy, and its finale more like that of a comedy, designed to please the groundlings but offensive to a more refined sensibility.

MODERN SCHOLARSHIP ON *ORESTES*

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Turning to modern assessments of the play, we find scholars of the nineteenth century content, on the whole, to echo and expand on the criticisms lodged in antiquity. A. W. Schlegel sets the general parameters as well as the tone of the period's response to *Orestes* and to Euripides' works as a whole.[23] In his *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur,* Schlegel dismisses the play in a few words, citing the *hypothesis* and noting that, although *Orestes* "hebt in der Tat erschütternd an [with the sick-bed scene] ..., nachher nimmt ... alles eine verkehrte Wendung und endigt mit gewaltsamen Theaterstreichen."[24] This emphasis on the play's agitated effects and theatricality reflects Schlegel's general assessment of Euripides as "ein unendlich sinnreicher Kopf, in den mannigfaltigsten Künsten des Geistes gewandt," whose gifts are vitiated by his constant aim "nur zu gefallen, gleichviel durch welche Mittel" (100). The poet's principal means toward this end, in Schlegel's view, is his emphasis on passionate states, often at the expense of probability, of the integrity of his characters, and, ultimately, of the artistic coherence of his works:

> Überall bringt er im Überfluß jene bloß körperlichen Reize an, welche Winckelmann eine Schmeichelei des groben äußeren Sinnes nennt; alles was anregt, auffällt, mit einem Worte lebhaft wirkt, ohne wahren Gehalt für den Geist und das Gefühl. Er arbeitet auf die Wirkung in einem Grade, wie es auch dem dramatischen Dichter nicht verstattet werden kann. ... Überall geht er auf Rührung aus, ihr zu lieb beleidigt er nicht

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[22] See Seidensticker (1982) 249ff.

[23] On Schlegel's influence on the nineteenth-century view of Euripides (and on his own indebtedness to the less widely known work of his younger brother Friedrich) see Behler (1986), Henrichs (1986), Michelini (1987) 3ff.

[24] Schlegel (1966) 124. Cf. L. Schmidt (cited by Steiger [1898] 51): *Or* reveals no interest in serious ethical themes but, rather, "zielt nur auf den allergewöhnlichsten Theatereffekt

bloß die Schicklichkeit, sondern opfert den Zusammenhang seiner Stücke auf.[25]

Accordingly, for Schlegel Euripides' plays reveal the decline of tragedy from the Sophoclean norm: they should be viewed as a scintillating series of *tours de force,* designed to capture the eye of the untutored, but displeasing to those who possess true discernment (101). Given this introduction, Schlegel's discussion of *Orestes* can afford to be brief. The most striking feature of that discussion, however, lies in its similarity to the scholarly verdict of antiquity: in their assessment of the play, the Hellenistic critics' concern with genre and decorum and the early nineteenth century's concern with balance, harmony, and elevated sentiment converge.

Schlegel's influence is reflected in Hermann's more extensive discussion of the play, found in the introduction to his 1841 edition. Echoing both Schlegel and Aristophanes' *Frogs,* Hermann finds in the play evidence that audiences were demanding something less lofty from their tragic poets — something more readily understood in terms of their own experiences and more immediately pleasing to the senses.[26] As in Schlegel's analysis, Euripides is portrayed as feeding popular taste at the expense of his tragic art, his subtle cleverness (contrasted with the exalted loftiness of Aeschylus, on the one hand, and with Sophocles' 'temperance,' on the other) particularly suiting him for this role.[27] Again, Hermann finds his principal offense to be the quest for scenes of passionate emotion: rather than engaging the audience's sympathies and fears on behalf of Orestes and his sister by emphasizing their nobility of character and the purity of their motives, the poet spends his energies in portraying the wretchedness of their plight, which is pitiful but (as presented) scarcely tragic (vi-vii). This superficial treatment of the protagonists results in a melodramatic plot, the main concern of which is the protagonists' frantic quest for salvation and the various reversals they meet along the way (vii-viii). The devices necessary to keep such a plot in motion are seen to entail a series of inconsistencies or improbabilities,

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ab ...."

[25] Schlegel (1966) 105; cf. 103, where he complains that, "Die gegenseitige Unterordnung der idealischen Hoheit, des Charakters und der Leidenschaft, die wir beim Sophokles wie in der bildenden Kunst der Griechen in eben dieser Folge beobachtet finden, hat er gerade umgekehrt."

[26] See Hermann (ed.) v: *Or* belongs to that time when, *simul et artis tragicae flos marcescere coeperat, et populi sensus ita erat hebetatus, ut pro pristina simplicitate et gravitate artificiosam communis vitae imitationem expeteret.* Cf. *Frogs* 907ff. (esp. 959ff.).

[27] Hermann (ed.) vi; see Michelini (1987) 7-9.

all of which detract from the piece's seriousness as a tragic work.[28] Throughout, Hermann feels, the play relies overmuch on scenes that are calculated to delight the crowd but that abandon the careful artistry evident in the works of the poet's elders.[29]

On the whole, then, two features of *Orestes* are particularly troubling for the nineteenth-century critics. The first is the seemingly chaotic nature of the play's episode-laden plot, with its numerous unexpected twists and turns. Following Schlegel's lead, scholars of the period repeatedly condemn the play as an undigested series of melodramatic episodes, designed merely to shock the audience by the agitation and the unexpected nature of its successive scenes. Steiger provides a useful survey of such critical responses: 'wilde Chaos egoistischer Leidenschaften' (Müller), *molem indigestam affectuum inter se pugnantium* (Kraus), 'wunderliche Quodlibet von Handlung' (Gruppe), 'wüste Getümmel von Abenteuern' (Bernhardy), 'Ungeheuer von Tragödie, auch im Verlauf der Handlung' (Günther).[30] For a generation of scholars trained to admire the harmony, simplicity, and restraint of classical art — the 'edle Einfalt und stille Grösse' praised by Winckelmann[31] — the latter scenes of *Orestes* represent a monstrous aberration from the classical norm.

The second troubling feature of the play, directly related to the first, is the apparent inconsistency in its presentation of the protagonist: the fact that the sympathetic Orestes of the play's opening scenes is capable, in the latter stages of the play, of the shocking assault against Helen and Hermione. Here, the critics feel, is an offense not only against artistic coherence and integrity, but against tragic decorum and even moral decency. Hence the tendency for scholars of the period to follow Schlegel in praising the opening scenes between Orestes and Electra while giving short shrift to the main action of the play. The portrayal of Orestes and Electra in the early scenes is one that could be appreciated by the nineteenth century, with its penchant for seeking rounded characters

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[28] Hermann levels particular criticisms against the gratuitous nature of the mad-scene at 253ff. and the resulting inconsistencies in the portrayal of Orestes (x-xi), and against Pylades' initial absence (xi-xii).

[29] Hermann (ed.) vi: Euripides *se adduci passus est, ut aliquid de pristina cura diligentiaque remitteret, magisque quid placiturum populo esset, quam quid deberet placere spectandum putaret.* (Note the distant echo of the ancient *hypothesis* to the play.) The 'lowness' of the scene between Orestes and the Phrygian slave receives particular criticism, as in the *scholia:* Hermann (ed.) xiii-xiv.

[30] Steiger (1898) 4 and 31.

[31] See Michelini (1987) 4 and n. 6 for this phrase and for Winckelmann's influence on Schlegel.

portrayed with the sort of quasi-realism found in the contemporary novel:[32] the remorse-ridden young man undone by pangs of guilt over his dreadful deed; his faithful sister, unselfishly tending him in his affliction. Patin's study reflects such an attitude. Like the scholars cited above, Patin faults the play for its failure to adhere to the standards of classical (that is, Sophoclean) form, citing:

> ... l'incertitude du but, l'inconstance et la multiplicité des intentions et des effets, l'imprévoyance aventureuse et étourdie de la composition, une verve inégale, qui s'anime ou qui tombe capricieusement et laisse trop souvent à l'émotion et à l'intérêt de ces moments de relâche dont profite, contre le poëte et son œuvre, la froide critique. (1.243)

The sole redeeming feature of the piece, in Patin's view, is found in its opening scenes (lines 1-315), to which Patin devotes one half of his chapter on *Orestes*. Here Patin applauds the delicacy and the subtlety with which Orestes and his sister are portrayed.[33] *Orestes* 201-305 receives particular commendation: it is "comme un abrégé du génie tragique des Grecs" (1.251). The remainder of the play, however, is dismissed with a curtness reminiscent of Schlegel: "Le reste de la tragédie d'*Oreste*, fort inférieur à cette scène d'élite, nous arrêtera moins longtemps" (1.259); "L'exécution de ces deux entreprises [*viz.* the plots against Helen and Hermione] remplit la fin de la pièce; il n'y règne plus que l'espèce d'intérêt qui peut s'attacher à une vengeance cruelle et à une lutte vulgaire contre le danger."[34]

Thus Euripides' detractors are able to present a detailed account of the ways in which *Orestes* falls short of the standards established by Sophoclean drama. By contrast, the play's defenders — who share many of the critical presuppositions of its detractors — can martial only a rather pallid defence. The most sympathetic treatment of *Orestes* in this period is that of Hartung, who reads the play as a new form of realistic tragedy, a blend of the tragic with the comic reminiscent of Shakespeare's *Henry IV*.[35] Hartung believes that the work's lapses in tragic decorum can be attributed to the poet's interest in presenting an image of everyday life, of

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[32] Verrall's study (1905) provides an extreme example of this general tendency to supplement the text by detecting subtle hints as to the 'true' character of the various individuals who appear on stage; on this tendency see DeVito (1988) 1ff., Michelini (1987) 11-16.

[33] See, e.g., Patin (1913) 1.253, 256-58.

[34] Patin (1913) 1.269. Cf. 1.268 (on *Or* 1098ff.: "Ici s'arrêtent les mérites d'une tragédie commencée avec génie, mais bien médiocrement terminée") and, later, Mercanti (1915) 75.

[35] Hartung (1843) 2.500-01. Hartung develops this view on the basis of his belief that *Or* was presented in place of the usual satyr play: see below, Appendix One.

men as they are (... *privatae ac vulgaris vitae imago ... et quasi discincti homines domesticisque tecti vestibus* [(1843) 2.472]). In opposition to Schlegel and Hermann, Hartung views this goal as a laudable poetic innovation and not as a concession to the debased tastes of an uneducated audience.[36] Thus he repeatedly praises the realism with which Euripides portrays his characters, while attributing the negative response of many critics to an overly-restrictive and rather superficial conception of heroism.[37] Where earlier critics are repelled by events in the latter sections of the play (which, they feel, involve offences against the tragic art as well as against common morality), Hartung details the ways in which Euripides justifies the deeds of Orestes and his friends.[38] In the end, however, he can defend the play only by classifying it as something less than tragedy, a work that intrigues us with its realism and with its curious blending of the comic with the serious, but that achieves these effects at the cost of a certain superficiality. *Orestes* is rescued from the attacks of Schlegel *et al.,* only to remain at the level of an above-average and rather two-dimensional melodrama.

Thus the majority of scholars in the nineteenth century dismiss *Orestes* as a melodramatic piece, the artistic merits of which (apart from the touching picture presented in its opening scenes) are nonexistent and the morality of which is questionable at best. It is not until the end of the century that two scholars — Steiger in 1898 and Verrall in 1905 — attempt extended studies that present *Orestes* not as botched melodrama that manages a skilful scene or two, nor as a realistic but simplistic tale of antique heroism, but as a tragic work worthy of serious consideration. Each of these scholars reacts directly to the earlier criticisms of the play, and while their methods differ radically, each does so in large part by adopting an ironic reading of the text. Thus the works of Steiger and Verrall not only mark the beginning of serious study of *Orestes* but also set the tone for much of the work done on the play in this century.

In attempting to account for the vagaries of *Orestes,* Steiger develops an hypothesis put forward in passing by Wilamowitz, who finds in the play "eine Fortsetzung und damit eine Kritik des sophokleischen Dramas [that is, of Sophocles' *Electra*]."[39] Wilamowitz reconstructs an on-going debate between the two playwrights regarding the Orestes myth as

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[36] For Hartung's opposition to Hermann and Schlegel see Hartung (1843) 2.498-99 (where Hermann is referred to, although not by name) and 2.500-01.

[37] E.g., Hartung (1843) 2.480

[38] See, e.g., Hartung (1843) 2.473-76, 480.

[39] Wilamowitz (1883) 240-41.

portrayed in Aeschylus' *Choephori:* Euripides criticizes Aeschylus in his *Electra,* Sophocles responds with an *Electra* of his own, and Euripides puts forward a final rebuttal in his *Orestes.*[40] The murders of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus thus are presented in a heroic light by Sophocles (in response to Euripides' *Electra*), only to be condemned in Euripides by Tyndareus and the Argive assembly in terms that are blatantly anachronistic; where the Sophoclean Electra is a study in heroic endurance, her Euripidean counterpart is presented with biting realism as "die verbitterte παρθένος μακρὸν δὴ χρόνον," while the noble revenge of the Sophoclean play degenerates into the despicable *mechanema* of the central scenes of *Orestes.*[41]

Steiger goes much further, seeing in the curious development of the work's plot evidence of the poet's polemical intent to refute and to surpass both of his predecessors. For Steiger the play does not attempt an organic or unified treatment of the Orestes myth, but presents a series of rebuttals, most of which are aimed directly at Sophocles. With Wilamowitz, he views the sympathetic opening scenes of *Orestes* as a continuation (of sorts) of Sophocles' *Electra.* Sophocles' play concludes with a celebration of the heroic Orestes and of his glorious vindication of his paternal rights (S. *El* 1508-10). Euripides takes up the tale from this point, contemplating it from the perspective of his own day (in contrast to the Homeric stance adopted by his predecessor) and with his own particular sensitivity to psychological processes. The result is an examination of the hero's emotional state once the initial flush of success has faded and he is forced to reflect on the nature of his deed:

> Wie lange dauert der Glaube an die Rechtmäßigkeit der That, an die Heiligkeit des Orakels, wie lange dauert das ruhige Glück, das Sophokles verheißen hat? Nur so lange, als die Erregung vorhält. ([1898] 6)

Thus Steiger finds the first third of Euripides' work (lines 1-355) to present a response to Sophocles' naively Homeric treatment of the myth — an impassioned study of how one might realistically be expected to react to the deed of matricide ([1898] 5-10). Aeschylus' *Oresteia* also comes in for a certain amount of revision, as the Furies, the archaic goddesses of vengeance, are internalized, becoming expressions of

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[40] See Willink (ed.) lvi n. 91 for other proponents of this view. Although agreeing with Wilamowitz in many other regards, Steiger disagrees with him on the relative dates of the works: Steiger (1898) 30-31.

[41] Wilamowitz emphasizes the parallels between the Electra of S. *El* 1398ff. and that of *Or* 1246ff., regarding the latter as "fast eine Parodie der sophokleischen parallelen Scene." Cf. Steiger (1898) 20ff.

Orestes' personal sense of guilt and remorse. Like Patin, Steiger applauds these initial scenes, finding therein a morally uplifting study of the emotional consequences entailed in Orestes' deed, one that breaks new ground by considering an issue ignored in earlier treatments of the Orestes myth. These scenes strike him (as they did many of his predecessors) as the most successful portion of the work:

> Gesetzt den Fall, von unserem Drama wäre nur die Einleitung erhalten, mit V. 469, vor der Ankunft des Tyndareos und dem ersten λόγων ἀγών bräche die Überlieferung ab; was für ein herrliches Gebäude wären wir berechtigt auf diesem Unterbau ahnend zu reconstruieren![42]

In the second portion of the play (lines 356-1097) Steiger finds the poet continuing his anachronistic re-evaluation of the Orestes myth, but focusing more closely on Aeschylus. Whereas Aeschylus concludes his treatment of the myth with a magnificent trial before the newly-established Areopagus — a trial where the main participants are the gods themselves — Euripides again brings the myth down to earth, portraying with a disconcerting realism the reaction of Orestes' immediate family and of the Argive πόλις. The Euripidean Orestes' attempts to justify his deed in Aeschylean terms (for example, at lines 551ff.) fail utterly before these earthly tribunals, dominated as they are by self-interested political motives drawn from the poet's own day. Steiger sees the shift to a contemporary perspective here, as in the first section of the play, as the poet's attempt to debunk his predecessor's treatment of the Orestes myth ([1898] 10-18). But the sympathetic Orestes of the play's opening scenes, of necessity, disappears, as Euripides turns from his own insights into the character towards more direct criticism of his portrayal in the works of Aeschylus and Sophocles.[43]

Steiger believes that Euripides uses the final section of the play (lines 1098ff.) to consider how, given this more realistic treatment of the myth, Orestes and his friends might be expected to escape from their plight. The result is the troubling *mechanema* against Hermione (the entrapment of whom Steiger, with Wilamowitz, regards as an intentional perversion of

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[42] Steiger (1898) 52; cf. *id.* (1912) 37: "... im übrigen soll die Komödie, denn das ist unser anfangs so gedankentiefes Drama geworden, zu einem allerseits fröhlichen Ende geführt werden."

[43] Steiger (1898) 12 and 42 does cite momentary glimpses later in the play of Orestes' earlier distress, but finds that these merely heighten the dissonance between the Orestes of the earlier scenes and the attitudes he evinces later in the play. In the same vein, Steiger (1898) 34-35 notes that Orestes' will to survive is evident even in the early scenes, but he denies that those scenes prepare us sufficiently for the hero's later acts.

the plot against Aegisthus in Sophocles' *Electra*) and Helen, and the
tumultuous conclusion (Apollo's sudden intervention *ex machina*). The
frantic gestures of these final scenes, with their repeated disruptions of
the tragic mood established earlier, Steiger views as a bitter parody of
Sophocles' treatment of the myth:

> Wie kann sie [*sc.* Orestes and Electra] nun trotzdem zum sophokleischen
> Schluß gelangen? Der letzte Teil des Dramas löst uns diese Frage: der
> skrupellose Orestes des Sophokles wird mit Hilfe des Freundes und der
> ebenbürtigen Schwester auch diese Gefahren zu überwinden wissen, List
> und Gewalt werden die Geschwister auch jetzt retten, wie sie es das erste
> Mal thaten. ... der dritte Teil ... durch diese Verwilderung der Handlung
> eine herbe Kritik des sophokleischen Optimismus bietet. Was für
> Menschen sind nötig und was für Götter, wenn alles so gut enden soll,
> wie bei Sophokles! ([1898] 30)

Thus the sympathetic Orestes of the opening scenes is replaced by a
maniacal parody of Sophocles' protagonist, a two-dimensional 'hero'
who undertakes a grisly repetition of his earlier deed untroubled by any
of the reflections that had plagued him earlier.

For Steiger *Orestes* is a play to be lauded more for its ethical and
psychological insights than for its art. The result of Euripides' intense
contemplation of the Orestes myth, the play's goal, in Steiger's view, is
essentially polemical: the refutation and correction of the ethically naive
versions of his predecessors, particularly that of Sophocles. Amidst the
various twists and turns of Euripides' complex plot, with its continual
shifts in perspective, Steiger detects brilliant flashes of insight into the
character of Orestes and the nature of his deed. He also marshalls a
partial defence of the play's structure, arguing that the audience is led
through a logical progression in the evaluation of Orestes' deed, from
Orestes' personal response, to that of his family, and, subsequently, to
that of the Argive πόλις.[44] Ultimately, however, Steiger finds that the
poet's proselytizing zeal vitiates the play's quality as a dramatic poem:

> Diese polemische Tendenz hat unserem Drama, wie auch der Electra, in
> einzelnem zu hohen ethischen Schönheiten verholfen, hat es aber im
> ganzen schwer geschädigt. ... so wird man finden, daß im Verlauf
> unseres Drama der Dichter immer mehr vom Polemiker verdrängt wurde.
> ([1898] 31 and 43)

Steiger's conviction that Euripides should be regarded as a philosopher
and moralist as well as — or often instead of — a poet, reflects a bias

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[44] Steiger (1898) 31ff.; cf. *id.* (1912) 33ff.

common in the classical scholarship of the day, a period when ancient poetry often was valued as much for its intellectual or moral content as for its aesthetic qualities.[45] And in his assurance that the informing principle of *Orestes* is polemic, Steiger strays into certain absurdities, most notable being his conception of the play as, in effect, a pastiche: a series of discrete scenes, each aimed at some feature of the Orestes myth as portrayed in Aeschylus or Sophocles.[46] In several regards Steiger's interpretation merely reformulates earlier criticisms of the play's general composition. Yet, despite the weakness of his central hypothesis, Steiger does *Orestes* a great service in deigning to treat it as a serious tragic work and not as a melodramatic concoction designed to please the groundlings. His theory that Euripides is manipulating earlier dramatic treatments of the Orestes myth anticipates the analyses of several more recent studies,[47] while his articulation of the difficulties presented by the characterization of Orestes raises issues that have been at the core of most examinations of the play in this century.

Characteristically, Verrall adopts an approach to *Orestes* that is uniquely his own, but on several key issues arrives at conclusions very like those of Steiger. Where Steiger presents the play as a polemical response to earlier dramatizations of the Orestes myth, Verrall regards *Orestes* as contemporary drama — a psychological study conceived independently of previous treatments of the myth and owing to earlier tradition only the characters' names.[48] And where Steiger finds disunity and inconsistency in the play's composition, Verrall detects an all too troubling congruity in the poet's handling of his material. For Verrall, *Orestes* is an exposé, a study in criminal folly verging on insanity. Two premises underlie his analysis of the play: (1) neither Euripides nor any educated person in his audience could believe in the Apollo of the

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[45] Steiger's conception of Euripides as a 'Genius der Aufrichtigkeit,' a 'Tendenzdichter,' and a 'Fanatik der Wahrheit' who operates largely by means of negation, is put forward at length in the introduction to Steiger (1912). This intellectualizing bias is reflected as well in the works of Decharme (1893), Nestle (1901), and Masqueray (1908); see Michelini (1987) 9-10.

[46] Steiger also falls into the trap (a dangerous one even today) of assuming that similarity in dramatic technique necessarily denotes an intentional connection between two dramatic works: on this and related questions see Erp Taalman Kip (1990).

[47] In this respect Steiger himself is following the lead of scholars such as Eduard Meyer, Hartung, and Wilamowitz. Closely related to Steiger's approach, with its emphasis on the play's alleged criticism of earlier *literary* treatments of the Orestes myth, is that of critics such as Mercanti (1915), who find evidence of the poet's hostility to the myth itself.

[48] Verrall (1905) 200-01 and 256. Verrall does detect ironic references to Aeschylus and Sophocles in the play (e.g., [1905] 217), but does not regard them as central to Euripides' purposes. Cf. the conclusions of Mercanti (1915) 82.

traditional Orestes myth, and (2) any young man who could kill his mother and cite such a god as his authority must be seriously, even dangerously, deranged. Thus, like Steiger, Verrall presents Euripides as a poet who strips away the mythological veneer from his material in order to consider it in the light of contemporary ethical, political, and cultural mores. Unlike Steiger, however, Verrall supplements this approach with a wealth of biographical and circumstantial detail culled from various points in the text, all of which he employs in painting an elaborate and richly detailed portrait of Orestes' insane folly. Accordingly, Verrall maintains that the traditional justifications for the murders of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are nowhere to be found in Euripides' play. Agamemnon is seen as an unpopular leader whose disappearance "did not ... arouse any effective resentment, or even excite remark," while Clytemnestra's "own infidelities were obscure and not scandalous" (205). As a result, "if many knew or suspected how [Agamemnon] died, few or none very much cared" (*ibid.*). The democratic institutions of the Argive πόλις have not been disrupted by his death, so Orestes can allege no reasons of state:

> There can be no tyrannicide, for there is no tyrant. Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus are private persons; and the murder of them, though highly sensational, has no political importance whatever. (*ibid.*)

On the other hand, Apollo's famous oracle clearly no longer enjoys any authority:

> In such an Argos as Euripides depicts, what would it matter that an act condemned by law and public opinion had been sanctioned, or supposed to be sanctioned, by a response from the woman of the tripod? So much the worse for Apollo. Some are scandalized, the majority simply indifferent. (206)

Only Orestes is affected by Apollo's command; of the other characters:

> No one, whose opinion carries weight, none but women and rustics, even allows it for supernatural, and no one allows it for authoritative. Orestes himself, though it seems to have quieted his scruples for a time, finds it impotent against his remorse and useless for his defence. (207)

We are left, then, with a misguided young man whose own foolishness, combined with the reckless folly of his friends, incites him, first of all, to the murder of his mother (who, as Verrall presents her, is thoroughly taken aback by this unbecoming breach of filial decorum! [208]) and, secondly, to a series of foolish, self-defeating, and ever more

violent attempts to escape the consequences of his crime:

> Suppose a youth so wrong-headed and weak as the Orestes of this play,
> and suppose him to be guided by such a fool as Pylades and such a fiend
> as Electra, and then the murder of Clytaemnestra is the natural
> consequence of their characters and situation. (208)

> Villains of some sort, and fools of the worst sort, the assassins of
> Clytaemnestra must be. But for this very reason they are hideously
> dangerous to themselves and to others, moral explosives of enormous
> force and instability. What hope they have they will throw away,
> pursuing their fate as blindly as they have pursued their crime. (209-10)

For Verrall, then, *Orestes* is hardly a tragedy in the classical sense,[49]
yet it does display the close interplay between character and situation that
the nineteenth century expected of serious drama. The main focus is felt
to be Orestes and his spasmodic attempts to extricate himself from his
difficulties. Verrall sees him as a near sociopath, blind to any
considerations other than his own safety and advantage:

> ... of crime as crime, as an offence against law, [Orestes and Electra]
> seem not to have the conception. Beyond himself and his family, Orestes
> sees nothing. Argos is nothing but a menace. That murder is an outrage
> against society, and matricide against humanity, are thoughts which his
> mind does not form, and ... cannot grasp. (223)

Frustrated in his attempts to gain the support of Menelaus (who, Verrall
maintains, scarcely could be of any real assistance even should he wish
it)[50] and unsuccessful in his mad attempt to win over the Argive
assembly, Orestes finally gives way altogether to the insanity that plagues
him by putting into effect the schemes proposed by Pylades and Electra.
In the final scenes this madness is seen to engulf the entire action of the
play as the hero gives free rein to his crazed imagination, thereby
unleashing the 'fire from hell' that provides the title for Verrall's chapter
on the play. Thus the apparent absurdities of the plot — its various
inconcinnities and inconsistencies,[51] its violent shifts in mood and
outlook, the frantic and unseemly nature of its concluding scenes — all
spring directly from the hero's innate foolishness and from his
increasingly tenuous grip on sanity. Orestes is transformed from heroic

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[49] See Verrall (1905) 210, where the play is described as "a highly spiritual sort of
melodrama."

[50] Verrall (1905) 213 and 234 n. 5.

[51] Note, e.g., Verrall's interpretation ([1905] 244-45) of 1075 and the inconsistency with
765-67.

avenger into an almost clinical study in paranoid delusion, a pathetic
creature whose vain flailings become dangerous when weariness,
sickness, and madness combine with frustration at the betrayals that, in
his delusion, he imagines he has suffered from those around him.

The absurdities entailed in Verrall's various elucidations of the text are
patent and have been well documented.[52] Particularly difficult to accept
are his involved psychological profiles of the various characters' states of
mind[53] and the idiosyncratic stage directions with which he frequently
supports his interpretations of individual scenes.[54] Yet Verrall's reading
of the play is the first to attempt a unified interpretation of the work as a
whole and contains elements that foreshadow much of the more recent
scholarship on the play. Most interesting, perhaps, is his conviction that
the actions of Orestes and his friends should be regarded as a comment on
the activities of the various political ἑταιρίαι active in Athens during this
period — an idea that has provided the foundation for several recent
studies of *Orestes*.[55] But Verrall's main contribution lies in the manner in
which he transforms older critical notions of Euripides' hostility toward
the mythic tradition, going beyond the usual observations regarding
dissonances and contradictions in the poet's works to present *Orestes* as a
new type of 'secular' and, above all, psychological drama of 'men as they
are.' By concentrating on the emotional and mental state of the
protagonist, Verrall is able to present the play as a unified and intensely
psychological study, whose frenzied plot — rather than resulting from the
poet's debased taste or his desperation — provides an essential clue to the
work's meaning. Thus the dissonance between the helpless, remorse-
ridden Orestes of the opening scenes and the frantic avenger of the latter
part of the play — an incongruity that drives Steiger to adopt a piecemeal
approach to the play — is regarded by Verrall as reflecting two
complementary aspects of the hero's diseased state of mind. As we shall
see, Verrall's assessment of Orestes has had a direct influence on a
majority of the studies produced in this century.

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[52] See, e.g., Michelini (1987) 11-16.

[53] The description of Tyndareus in the *agon* with Orestes (pp. 225ff.) provides a classic
example of the documentary fallacy so dear to Verrall and to the nineteenth-century critics as
a whole. Note as well the portrait of Electra on pp. 218-19 and those of Helen and Hermione
on pp. 219-20.

[54] See, e.g., Verrall (1905) 221-222 on the source of Orestes' 'visions' at 251ff. Equally
wanton are his assumptions regarding actions off stage of which nothing is recorded in the
text: e.g., Verrall (1905) 229 n. 1.

[55] See Verrall (1905) 223 and 237, and cf. below, pp. 30-32 and Appendix Four.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY VIEWS OF *ORESTES*

   The first half of this century saw relatively little critical attention paid
to *Orestes*. Since the late 1950s, however, numerous studies have
appeared, with scholars employing a variety of approaches in an attempt
to account for the curious features of this extraordinary work. Yet, despite
the apparent multiplicity of the readings that have been proposed, upon
examination it soon becomes apparent that these studies are responding to
the same issues that so concerned scholars of the nineteenth century and
frequently reach similar conclusions. Again the critics' attention focuses
on the apparent inconcinnities between the two 'halves' of the play and
on the evaluation of the protagonist's character and actions in the later
scenes. And, as in the studies of Steiger and Verrall, the foundation on
which many more recent analyses rest is the conviction that Orestes is in
some way flawed in his understanding and/or his morals. It will not be
possible here to present more than a cursory overview of the various
general evaluations of *Orestes* in this century. Such an outline should
serve, however, to demonstrate the various threads that unite the different
approaches that have been proposed and, in particular, to reveal the
singular echoes of Steiger and Verrall which can be found in the much
more sophisticated studies of present-day scholars. Inasmuch as my
principal concern is to sketch the development of critical approaches to
Orestes, I will examine the various studies roughly in the order in which
they appear; strict chronology will be ignored, however, where
considerations of clarity or continuity warrant.

   A TRAGIC *ORESTES:* 'THE VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES' AND 'MEN AS THEY ARE'

   The earliest major studies of *Orestes* in the years following Verrall's
analysis are those of Perrotta (1928) and Krieg (1934). Despite certain
shared assumptions regarding the tone of the play, their evaluations of its
themes are markedly distinct. Yet both attempt a reading of the text along
more traditional lines than those adopted by Steiger or Verrall. Thus both
Perrotta and Krieg can be read as attempts to redeem *Orestes* in the face
of the barrage of 'non-tragic' interpretations produced in the nineteenth
century. In so doing, they lay the groundwork for a number of more
recent evaluations of the play that find in *Orestes* a tragedy of human
limitations and of 'men as they are.'
   Perrotta sounds a number of themes that are central to studies later in
the century. As in Steiger, we find Euripides presented as a critic of
traditional myth and of earlier treatments of such myth on the dramatic

stage: the poet's more realistic handling of Orestes' plight (as seen, for
example, in the portrayal of his madness and in the description of the
Argive assembly in action) represents a protest against the inadequacy of
earlier portrayals of the hero's purification ([1928] 90ff.). Like Steiger,
Perrotta argues that Euripides finds Orestes' plight to admit of no solution
when considered in realistic terms. This impression is confirmed, in
Perrotta's view (again, influenced by Steiger), by the frantic *mechanema*
plot of the later scenes: there we see an Orestes who has found a release
from the Furies which haunt him, but only because has been inflamed
with a desire for revenge that leads him to commit two additional crimes
(105-07). Whereas at line 1039 Orestes claims to have had enough of
killing, a short while thereafter he is prepared to murder Helen, kidnap
Hermione, and commit a communal act of murder/suicide by burning the
palace. Yet the focus of the play, in Perrotta's view, is not the criticism of
myth or of Euripides' predecessors: instead, *Orestes* presents a moving
illustration of the inadequacy of human reason and the illusory nature of
mortal $αὐτάρκεια$.[56] In this new, realistic treatment of the myth, it soon
becomes evident that society's legal and political institutions are at best
inadequate when challenged to come to terms with Orestes' deeds (91-
94), while Orestes himself is reduced to a jumble of confused and
contradictory emotions:

> Oreste non è più un $κτῆμα$ di Apollo, come in Eschilo, quasi il corpo del
> delitto più che l' assassino; ma un uomo combattuto da pensieri e
> sentimenti opposti, che passa dagli estremi abbattimenti agli estremi
> entusiasmi, che uccide e si pente e piange, per poi tornare ad uccidere,
> che parla ed agisce come in un sogno, senza sapere mai se fa bene o se fa
> male, mentre è assillato dal desiderio di saperlo. (108)

The play itself thus becomes an extended treatment of human frailty,
its hero "un infelice che crede di fare il bene con le proprie forze, ma non
riesce a farlo, perchè l' umana $αὐτάρκεια$ è un' illusione" (115). Orestes'
crazed behavior in the later scenes is abhorrent, but arouses not so much
our revulsion as our sympathy. The result is a melancholic tragedy of the
human condition:

> ... una vera tragedia ... piena di $ἔλεος$ e di $φόβος$, piena soprattutto di
> umanità, cioè di compatimento per le contraddizioni, per le debolezze,
> per le miserie degli uomini davanti ai problemi ardui e oscuri della vita
> morale. (116)

Perrotta's concern with the philosophical implications of *Orestes* and

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[56] Perrotta (1928) 115. (See, in general, *ibid.* 107ff.)

his attention to possible allusions to earlier drama[57] associate him with
Steiger. But his emphasis on the confusion that reigns in mortal affairs
allows him to account in a more convincing fashion for the work's
structure and for the characterization of the protagonist, while his
interpretation of the play's theme (with its implicit message of γνῶθι
σεαυτόν) appears to associate *Orestes* with a central tenet of Greek moral
and religious thought.[58]

Krieg's study has proven to be the less enduring in its influence.
Although it enjoyed a temporary popularity among German critics,[59]
Krieg's reading had little impact outside of Germany and has been
rejected by most scholars since the 1950s. His views are important,
however, for their influence on Zürcher (below, pp. 23-24) and because
Krieg's reformulation of the play's issues serves as a backdrop for many
later studies. While both he and Perrotta read *Orestes* as a new type of
'realistic' tragedy, Krieg elects to develop Hartung's approach to the
play, admiring *Orestes* for its portrayal of 'men as they are':

> *Quid igitur Euripidi in Oreste propositum est? vitam depingere*
> *hominum. nam quo magis desistebat rationis ope deos, quos vulgus*
> *venerabatur, impugnare et de omnibus rebus divinis atque humanis*
> *philosophorum more disputare, eo diligentius vitam ac mores eorum qui*
> *tum erant hominum describere studebat. veros homines, quales omnibus*
> *temporibus ubicumque terrarum inveniuntur, non heroas in scaenam*
> *producebat, quamquam heroum nominibus usque ad ultimum usus.*
> ([1934] 41-42)

Thus Krieg follows Verrall in assuming a radical dissolution of

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[57] E.g., Perrotta (1928) 108-09 (*Or* recalls and inverts the emotional pattern of E. *El*),
115-16 (thematic associations with *Her*), 127ff. (reminiscences of earlier Euripidean plays).

[58] The brief discussion of *Or* in Murray (1946 [first edition, 1918]) 79-82 anticipates
something of Perrotta's approach. For the most part, however, Murray merely elaborates
Verrall's treatment, concentrating almost exclusively on the final scene. Perrotta's reading is
echoed by Daraio (1949), who (by a curious inversion of the arguments of Hartung and
others) argues *against* the thesis that *Or* is pro-satyric (below, Appendix One) by asserting
that the play presents a blending of the serious with the comic as part of "un tentativo nuovo,
seppur inconscio e tecnicamente imperfetto di esprimere un approfondimento maggiore nella
ricerca intima dell' animo umano" (102). The incongruous action of the play's later scenes is
found to represent "un sorriso convenzionale ed amaro, doloroso nella sua profondità come il
pathos tragico della prima parte" (101), a reflection of the poet's realization that, *pace*
Aeschylus and Sophocles, there can be no happy ending for this tale. For Daraio, as for
Perrotta, the play's unity, as well as its power, lies in "[la] compassione grandissima con cui il
poeta contempla la miseria e debolezza umana" (101).

[59] See esp. Hunger (1936), Wuhrmann (1940), and the numerous studies by Lesky (esp.
[1935] and [1983]). (Hunger's concern with the detailed exegesis, in realistic terms, of the
dynamics of particular scenes is echoed by Biehl [1968].) Krieg's approach is anticipated to a
certain degree by Howald (1930) 167-71, although both Howald and Wuhrmann emphasize
symptoms in the play of the decadence of late Euripidean tragedy.

tragedy's traditional ties to myth: such touches as Menelaus' reference to the god Glaucus (362ff.) or Apollo's appearance and various dispensations in the finale are dismissed as signs of the as yet incomplete nature of that dissolution.[60] Unlike Verrall, however, Krieg does not assume an ironic or polemical intent behind this presentation of a realistic Orestes. Instead, he argues that the play portrays a character locked in a desperate struggle for survival in the face of a hostile world:

> *nihil aliud, quantum nos videmus, poeta nobis repraesentare vult nisi*
> *hominem pro vita pugnantem: in homine miserrimo ac desperato, qui*
> *necem non esse effugiturus videtur, impetibus iniuriisque adversariorum*
> *ipsis appetitus oritur vitae omni modo conservandae et magis magisque*
> *in scaenas increscit, donec ille cunctis perfunctus periculis* σωτηρίαν
> *assequatur.* (43)

In this way Krieg is able to meet criticisms regarding inconsistencies in Orestes' characterization by positing a reawakening of the hero's *Lebenswille* as the result of his treatment at the hands of his adversaries.[61] His emphasis on the 'trials' of Orestes also enables him to account for the villainous nature of those adversaries:

> *... cum Orestis mores ita esse comparatos exposuerimus, ut ei favere*
> *debeamus, in discrimine periculi versanti timemus, una cum eo in*
> *Menelao, in contione spem ponimus, de salute ab Argivis damnati paene*
> *desperamus, rebus prospere gestis gaudium eius gaudemus. sed ne quid*
> *de nostra in Oresten de vita pugnantem benevolentia deminuatur,*
> *necesse est adversarios eius quam maxime detrectari; qua de causa*
> *Menelaus pessimum se praebet, cives autem tales sunt, ut Oresten*
> *iudicium eorum neglegentem recte facere censeamus.* (43-44)

The result is a new type of tragedy, one patterned after an Odyssean conception of heroism in contrast to the sterner Iliadic model traditionally invoked by tragic poetry (44). While the emphasis on the hero's survival (the σωτηρία theme) leads the work perilously close to melodrama, Krieg's implicit argument is that the audience's sympathy for the hero redeems the play and gives it tragic overtones suitable to this new type of realistic tragedy.

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[60] Krieg (1934) 42, where he proceeds to argue that this process of drama's liberation from myth is not completed until the advent of New Comedy.

[61] The reawakening of Orestes' *Lebenswille* as a result of his mistreatment at the hands of Menelaus *et al.* had been explored by earlier scholars, usually with more dire implications: see, e.g., the first edition of Pohlenz, *Die griechische Tragödie* (1930) 441ff.

While Perrotta and Krieg attempt to read *Orestes* as tragic in a somewhat more conventional sense than many of their predecessors, among English-speaking scholars of the period the influence of nineteenth-century critics remains evident, with the views of Verrall enjoying a particular prominence.

Thus Kitto, in his only partially concealed distaste for the poet's work in general, presents a Hermann-like dismissal of the play as "a melodrama based on character-drawing and character imagined sensationally, not tragically" — a spectacle with a certain tragic color, worthy of praise for its "imaginative tumult" if not for its depth of feeling or its themes.[62] To the degree that he considers the play seriously, Kitto contents himself with an attenuated version of Verrall's interpretation, but he continues the tradition of presenting the feverish rhythms of the play and the 'diseased' minds of the protagonists as evidence for the 'sickness' of tragedy itself in the hands of Euripides.[63]

Grube, by contrast, presents a characteristically sensitive reading of the play, and, although the influence of Verrall is again evident (particularly in his evaluation of the later scenes), Grube's sympathy with the spirit and techniques of Euripidean drama lead him to curb many of Verrall's excesses ([1941] 374ff.). Having done so, however, Grube is left without Verrall's assured sense of the author's purpose. Thus he finds a good deal that is praiseworthy in the poet's depiction of his various characters (with a tendency toward the biographical fallacy dear to nineteenth-century critics)[64] and in the interplay between those characters in individual scenes, yet he is stymied by the play's conclusion. His final assessment, therefore, lacks the harshness of Kitto's evaluation but echoes something of that scholar's dismissive attitude toward the play as a melodrama of character:

> It would seem that Euripides set out to dramatize a situation, and that

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[62] Kitto (1961 [first edition, 1939]) 346-51. Note the similarity to Wedd [ed.] xv-xvii.

[63] Cf. Norwood (1920) 268ff., who develops Verrall's emphasis on Orestes as a malformed product of the 'New Education.' Similar evaluations can be found in Schmid/Stählin (1940) 606ff., esp. 612 (Euripides' only consideration, as often, is to present "die bühnenwirksamste Darstellung einer verzweifelten Lage und einer unverhofften Rettung") and 621-22 (criticism of the non-tragic and cursory finale) and Rivier (1976 [first edition, 1944]), who finds *Or* to have "une allure de drame policier" (125) and admits that it is a "pièce singulière et fort séduisante" (128), but concludes that it is neither tragic nor, when considered closely, even first-rate romance.

[64] Note, e.g., the emphasis on the jealous hatred felt by Orestes and Electra for Helen and Menelaus: Grube (1941) 382, 386-87, 390-91, 393.

> it got the better of him, so that the end of the story, fixed beforehand, was made unsuitable. (397)

Sensitive as he is to the fine touches of character early in the play, Grube's Verrallian response to the *mechanema* plot reduces him to a state of ἀπορία, which he in turn attributes to the poet himself.

The most important article to appear in English in this period, however, is that of Mullens in 1941. Like Verrall, Mullens reveals a keen interest in the psychological state of the protagonist. He shares Verrall's convictions regarding Orestes' degeneracy, but rejects the latter's 'novelistic' idiosyncrasies in favor of a more sophisticated psychoanalytic examination. Mullens reads the play as "a pathological study of criminality," seeing in the figure of Orestes "a mind in the last stages of disruption" — a tortured creature who wallows in helpless uncertainty and self-tormenting guilt until presented with an outer object against which to direct his energies and thereby temporarily escape from his crazed frustrations with the world around him and, above all, with himself. Rather than Verrall's heartless fool, Mullens finds in Orestes a nearly clinical portrait of a mind deranged. Like Verrall, he interprets the frantic actions and mad rhythms of the later scenes as an expression of the hero's internal state, but in a more sophisticated fashion: Verrall's 'fire from hell' is transformed into the paroxysms of a desperate soul tormented by guilt and remorse.[65] Mullens still places great emphasis, however, on the moral degeneracy and criminality of Orestes and his 'accomplices.'[66]

Mullens' study is important because it provides those who read the play as a drama of character with a more reasonable avenue of interpretation than does Verrall's often highly fanciful analysis. As we will see, Pohlenz attempts much the same thing along quite different lines in 1954. In the 1960s, however, such concerns with characterization come to be modified as scholars begin to explore the ironic implications of the text. In this regard, Conacher's 1967 study is notable for the way it reformulates and refines Mullens' thesis by taking into account later insights into the structure of the play. Conacher develops the hypothesis that, "'inconsistencies' on Orestes' part [vis-à-vis the murder of Clytemnestra] are part of an unconscious process of self-revelation in which what Orestes turns out to be at the end is what, for all his

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[65] For more on this aspect of Mullens' interpretation, see Appendices Two and Three.

[66] Mullens' influence is particularly evident in Blaiklock (1952) 180ff., where the former's analysis of Orestes' personality is combined with a Verrallian concern with fully-rounded characters, here compounded by a tendency to read the play in light of E. *El.*

remorseful self-shielding, he really was at the beginning, the monster (as Euripides saw him) who could murder his mother."[67] Thus, as the play progresses — and particularly in the *mechanema* scene — Euripides presents a "gradual declension of honour in the deeds and, especially, the motives of Orestes and his companions" that serves to "cast a shadow on that earlier picture [in the prologue and early in the first episode] of Orestes as the suffering innocent" (223). Like Mullens, Conacher accounts for the apparently sympathetic picture of the protagonist in the early scenes by suggesting that those scenes portray the debilitated young man's state when free from the pressures of the external world; when such pressures come to bear in the persons of Tyndareus, Menelaus, and the Argive assembly, Orestes reverts to form.[68] Conacher's interpretation is neater, however, in its hypothesis of a gradual revelation of Orestes' character and the association of this process with the tripartite structure (on Conacher's reading) of the play. Thus he is able to associate the alteration in Orestes' behavior with a carefully contrived distancing of audience sympathy:

> As the play proceeds ... we experience a gradual withdrawal of sympathy for Orestes which coincides with a gradual increase in the aesthetic distance between ourselves and the dramatic action. In the end we see as an object of horror, a 'specimen,' what we had begun by regarding as a suffering subject with whom we could, to some degree, identify ourselves. (217)

Again, however, the emphasis is on the protagonist's criminality and his inner state of mind.

CONFRONTATION AND SYNTHESIS: GERMANY IN THE 1940S AND 1950S

By the mid-1940s, then, a clear distinction can be found between those scholars (largely English) who, under the influence of Verrall, read the play as a study in criminality (with the focus very much on the deluded folly of Orestes), and those who, echoing something of Steiger's concerns, attempt to trace broader tragic themes in the play. The next twenty years witness the further confrontation and partial synthesis of these two schools of criticism.

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[67] Conacher (1967) 217. Here Conacher echoes something of Greenberg's thesis concerning the play's ironic structure (below, pp. 33-34).

[68] To a degree, the emphasis on Orestes' violent response when threatened inverts earlier attempts to account for the change in Orestes' physical condition through appeals to the hero's reawakened *Lebenswille*.

In 1947 Zürcher presents a study of the play which, at first glance, recalls that of Krieg. Krieg and his followers object to the tendency of earlier critics to condemn Orestes, but their defence of the protagonist, and of the play as a whole, shares a number of their opponents' presuppositions regarding the nature of characterization in Greek tragedy. On Krieg's reading, Orestes' various moods and actions are intelligible in terms of elementary human psychology and fundamental Greek ethical presuppositions: the fault of earlier critics, in his view, lies in not properly appreciating the significance of such considerations for the development of the play's plot and themes. Zürcher ([1947] 149ff.) opposes the continuing influence of Verrall by presenting a reading which recalls that of Krieg on many points: the play is seen as presenting an Orestes locked in a desperate struggle for survival against human opponents (151-52); his actions, rather than evoking abhorrence, are viewed with sympathy by an audience that is emotionally caught up in the hero's quest (158ff.). But Zürcher differs from Krieg fundamentally in his attitude toward the presentation of Orestes and the other characters. Influenced by the formalistic approaches of Tycho Wilamowitz's work on Sophocles and Solmsen's studies of Euripides' *mechanema* plays,[69] Zürcher protests against psychological interpretations of the hero's actions, arguing that in Euripides' later plays it is the shape of the largely stereotypical plot that determines a character's words and deeds, not any concern of the poet for subtle touches of motivation or characterization.[70] Thus, in Zürcher's view, scholars such as Krieg or Lesky, who defend Orestes' character against charges of inconsistency by appeals to his re-awakened *Lebenswille,* are as mistaken as those (such as Verrall and Mullens) who condemn Orestes for his actions and scan the text for signs of his moral deficiencies: in behaving as they do, Orestes and (particularly) Electra and Pylades are merely fulfilling the roles assigned to them by the requisites of the plot, which has been laid out along conventional lines.

Combining his study with a masterful examination of Euripides' *tyche*-plays, Zürcher, like Perrotta before him, focuses on the secular nature of such tragedies and the emphasis therein on human limitations. These plays, we are told, present "das Spiegelbild einer Welt, in der aus Plänen und Zufällen das menschliche Schicksal gewoben wird" (150). The

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[69] T. Wilamowitz (1917); Solmsen (1968a) and (1968b), originally published in 1932 and 1934 respectively. I have not had access to Kleinstück (1945).

[70] See Michelini (1987) 19-22 and O'Brien (1988a) 184-85 and (1988b) 99-101 on Zürcher (1947) and similar studies of dramatic technique in Euripides.

portrayal of the protagonists' frantic struggles for survival — struggles, not against fate, but against individuals who labor under the same mortal limitations — reveals the poet's intention, "in der Darstellung der Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Selbstbehauptung die Fragwürdigkeit der menschlichen Existenz zu versinnbildlichen" (152). But in analyzing the significance of *Orestes,* Zürcher — in accordance with his views regarding the genesis and nature of the play's plot — denies any moralistic implications altogether, even of so limited a kind as those suggested by Perrotta. Instead, he presents a sophisticated version of Krieg's interpretation, finding in the realistic, secular nature of the action a telling picture of the behavior of typical individuals when caught *in extremis:*

> Wenn ... vom Dichter eine ethische Wertung diesen Tragödien nicht zugrunde gelegt ist, so springt die psychologische Tendenz nur um so deutlicher in die Augen, die Absicht also, der Vielfalt menschlicher Regungen und Handlungen in typischen Formen Ausdruck zu verleihen.
>
> ... [Euripides] sieht das Handeln seines Helden nicht in erster Linie von der Person her, sondern von der Situation; er versteht es nicht als Ausfluß einer Individualität, sondern als typisch menschliches Verhalten.[71]

Krieg's 'men as they are' here are transformed into typical examples of human behavior. Most significant, however, is Zürcher's case against those who attempt to interpret the play in terms of Orestes' character or the moral qualities of his actions.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Pohlenz (followed, some years later, by Vickers) attempts precisely such an interpretation in reviving and modifying Perrotta's reading of *Orestes.*[72] As the heading to his discussion reveals ('Der Mensch im Kampf gegen seinen Mitmenschen'), Pohlenz too subscribes to the notion that the play is concerned, not with issues of humankind versus god or fate, but with a conflict between all too vulnerable human beings. He argues, however, that the play's central concern is the demoralizing effects of such a conflict:

> Am Eingang werden uns Orest und Elektra ebenso wie Pylades nicht nur als Vorbilder echter Geschwister- und Freundesliebe vor Augen gestellt, sondern überhaupt als reine jugendliche Gestalten geschildert, die unsre volle Sympathie verdienen. Der Dichter sorgt sogar dafür, daß sie diese auch nachher nicht verlieren; aber das läßt er uns zugleich schmerzlich empfinden, daß an ihnen nun Züge hervortreten, die ihrem

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[71] Zürcher (1947) 160 and 179. See, further, O'Brien (1988a) 195-96.

[72] Pohlenz (1954) 1.412ff., Vickers (1973) 573ff.

ursprünglichen Wesen fremd waren. Es wird jetzt zur Tragik des
Menschentums, daß auch edle Naturen durch den aufgezwungenen
Kampf gegen Unverstand und Niedertracht der Mitmenschen selbst
herabgezogen werden und sich zu Sklaven ihrer Leidenschaften machen,
die sie treiben, sich mit gleichen Waffen zu wehren. (1.420-21)

Thus Pohlenz presents *Orestes* as a tragedy of character. Rather than
purposeless melodrama, the play is concerned with the tragic
demoralization of essentially noble individuals as the result of their
maltreatment at the hands of society. Pohlenz replaces Mullens' complex
portrait of a mind divided against itself with a more traditional model of
moral decline and fall. Like Mullens, he emphasizes the alleged depravity
of the hero's actions in the later scenes: the *mechanema* scheme
introduced by Pylades and Electra now appears, however, as a purposeful
denouncement of the revenge ethic implicit in the Orestes myth. In
keeping with Pohlenz's general understanding of the play, this
denouncement assumes a quite different cast from that presented earlier
by Steiger and others. The difference appears with particular clarity in the
following assessment of the play by Vickers, whose 1973 study recalls
that of Pohlenz on many points:

> ... Aeschylus and Euripides did not try to evade the issues of guilt or the
> brutality of revenge either by stressing heroic endeavour or by switching
> the blame at the last moment on to Apollo. The unique quality of
> *Orestes,* apart from its completely fluid handling of myth, is the way in
> which it pushes all the implications of the revenge ethos as far as they
> will go. It questions the whole concept of family solidarity, honour, the
> vendetta stretching through generations, yet it sees no easy solution in the
> establishment of social justice. ... Euripides shares with Swift a notable
> lack of complacency about the human reason and man's 'progress' or
> 'development.' The final insight of his *Orestes* is that you or I, despite
> our liberal and humane pretensions might, if the appropriate pressures
> built up, collapse into 'irrationality' and 'animality,' like those 'lions,
> boars, snakes,' Orestes, Pylades and Electra. (586-87)

Pohlenz's interpretation represents the first, and most successful,
attempt to reconcile the two general approaches to the play that I have
been examining. As in Perrotta, the emphasis is not on the 'criminality'
of Orestes and his companions, but on their all too human weakness. On
the other hand, the revulsion felt by Verrall *et al.* at the events of the later
scenes is taken fully into account.[73]

A different variation on Perrotta's interpretation of *Orestes* as a

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[73] Pohlenz's reading is echoed by Boulter (1962), where comparison is made with
Euripides' *Hec* (105-06).

tragedy of mortal frailty is provided by another group of German scholars who, while emphasizing the secular nature of much of the play's action, view that action in light of a larger divine framework, finding in the resulting contrast evidence of the poet's concern with the 'vanity of human wishes.'[74] Spira develops this line of criticism in his discussion of Euripides' *tyche*-plays and the elaborate *mechanema* plots that such plays frequently entail.[75] In the complex and frequently abortive actions of works such as *Ion, Iphigenia among the Taurians, Helen,* and *Orestes,* Spira detects "das Zusammenwirken von göttlichem Plan und menschlicher Blindheit" (138). Plays of this kind, in his view, do focus on the often vain efforts of mortals to confront their destiny and the violent conflicts that arise as a result, but always (Spira maintains) against a backdrop of divine wisdom and providence. Hence the tendency of these plays to conclude with a divine epiphany: the appearance of the god serves to highlight the gulf separating human ignorance from divine wisdom and provides a true insight into the actions that have occurred on stage.[76]

In the hands of Spira and his successors this approach yields an interpretation that reads like a curious mélange of Perrotta and Krieg:[77] Orestes and his friends are found to be caught up in a series of events that they cannot fully understand, surrounded by a world that is both corrupt and menacing. The human frailty of the protagonists is emphasized, as is the perfidy and baseness of the society surrounding them. The concluding epiphany is regarded as rightly leading to their salvation, but the main thrust of the play is found in its vivid illustration of mortal limitations and of "[d]ie Inkommensurabilität der göttlichen und menschlichen Ebenen" (Steidle [1968] 112).

A similar note is sounded in the examination of the play by von Fritz (1962a), which appears at the very end of the period under examination. In his study of the distinguishing characteristics of the surviving Orestes plays, von Fritz revives several of Steiger's theories regarding the genesis of *Orestes*. He endorses the view that the play completes the polemic against Aeschylus begun in Euripides' *Electra* and finds the principal

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[74] Such studies tend to focus on Apollo's appearance in the *exodos*. As a result, the following discussion should be supplemented by consulting Chapter Six.

[75] Spira (1960), esp. 113ff. (Spira's principal discussion of *Or* is on pp. 140ff.) Spira's reading is influenced heavily by the studies of Solmsen and Zürcher, cited above, pp. 23-24.

[76] Cf. Spira (1960) 113, where we find reference to "[die] durch den Gott gewährt[e] heilend[e] *Einsicht* [his emphasis] in das Ganze des Geschehens."

[77] Cf., e.g., Steidle (1968) 96ff. and Erbse (1975), both of whom develop Spira's reading of the play.

focus of that polemic to be the misguided nature of the revenge ethic as portrayed by his predecessor: Euripides strips away the various justifications for Clytemnestra's death put forward by Aeschylus and Sophocles, thereby altering altogether the audience's response to it. But von Fritz believes that the poet, in setting out the altered situation of his Orestes, goes beyond a mere attack on his predecessors, presenting a tragedy of human frailty that operates "in dem Bereich zwischen dem ganz Guten und dem ganz Schlechten, in dem Bereiche der menschlichen Beschränkung und Unvollkommenheit" (154).

> Die tragische Situation jedoch ist völlig verändert: sie liegt nicht mehr in der Unausweichlichkeit der schrecklichen Tat, sondern in der Blindheit, mit der die Täter in sie hineingetrieben werden und sich gegenseitig in sie hineintreiben helfen. (153)

Orestes and Electra are portrayed as individuals who kill Clytemnestra out of blindness, then equally blindly surrender themselves to remorse after the deed, and later just as blindly lash out against their enemies when threatened. On von Fritz's reading, however, their defining characteristic is not villainy but an all too human weakness:

> ... die Elektra und der Orest dieses Stückes sind Charaktere, die, wenn es ihnen vergönnt wäre, in normalen Umständen zu leben, sich von dem Durchschnitt der gewöhnlichen Mitbürger gar nicht sehr unterscheiden würden. Sie werden tragisch dadurch, daß sie in eine Situation gestellt werden, der sie ganz und gar nicht gewachsen sind. Dabei schaffen sie in ihrer Schwäche und Verstörtheit Situationen, die an das Farcenhafte grenzen. (154)

Thus von Fritz pulls together strands from a variety of previous studies — Steiger, Verrall, Pohlenz, Spira — to present yet a different interpretation of *Orestes* as a play of 'men as they are.' Like the other scholars cited in this section, however, he emphasizes the larger implications of the play's action: the protagonists' deeds are regarded as an illustration of "[die] allgemein[e] Begrenztheit der menschlichen Einsicht und des menschlichen Fühlens," not in personal terms as a sign of their 'villainy.'

> Eine Interpretation, die mit harten, moralischen Verurteilungen, nicht der Handlung, sondern der Personen und Charaktere über die Hauptfiguren großer Tragödien herfährt und die damit etwas zu ihrem Verständnis dienendes gesagt zu haben glaubt, verfehlt ipso facto ihr Ziel. (155-56)

New perspectives on *Orestes* are provided by the studies of Reinhardt
(first published in 1957), Greenberg (1962), and Wolff (1968), all of
which are largely responsible for the increased interest in the play in the
1960s and 1970s. The approaches suggested by these three scholars have
had a decisive influence on criticism of *Orestes* until quite recently, to a
great extent because they appear to resolve — in a more satisfactory
manner than the readings suggested by Zürcher, Pohlenz, or Spira — the
earlier disputes regarding the themes and general intent of the play.

Reinhardt approaches *Orestes* as, in effect, existentialist drama: the
culmination of Euripides' lifelong experimentation with tragic form and
theme, and a mirror in which one can view the turmoil — intellectual,
religious, moral, and aesthetic — of Athens in the age of the sophists. In a
masterful fashion, Reinhardt contrasts the themes and dramatic
techniques of Euripidean drama with those of his predecessors,
highlighting the manner in which the younger poet's works reflect the
various tensions characteristic of the period of the Greek Enlightenment,
particularly those between myth and rationalism, religious and secular
modes of thought, heroic splendor and quotidian realism, traditional
morality and fifth-century *Realpolitik.* The result of these tensions, in
Reinhardt's view, is a curious lack of fixed perspective, a constant
shifting of ground reminiscent of absurdist drama and reflecting the
intellectual and spiritual crisis — the *Sinneskrise* — of the period.

For Reinhardt, *Orestes* represents a particularly illuminating example
of such a theater. In his reading, the contradiction between the
sympathetic/pathetic earlier scenes and the frantic conclusion represents
an intentional effect contrived by the poet. The innovative opening scenes
present a complex situation that, while tragic, differs *toto caelo* from
tragedy in the traditional mode. We find Orestes and his friends,

> ... von einer Unentrinnbarkeit umringt, die, wenn wir nach dem
> eingesperrten, ausweglosen Menschen, nach dem Menschen 'in extremer
> Situation' verlangen, nichts zu wünschen übrig läßt. Im Gewissen die
> Schuld, von außen das Unmenschliche, Versagen der Nächsten,
> Opportunismus, Rachegefühle, Aufhetzung der Massen, Fremdheit,
> Feindseligkeit alles Umgebenden ... Keine Unentrinnbarkeit des
> Schicksals, wie im König Ödipus, wo Aussetzung, Orakel und Seher
> noch halb mythische Motive waren und die Götter als Sinn hinter dem

allen keinen Zweifel ließen.[78]

Thus we are presented again with a tragedy of 'men as they are,' but in a somewhat more sophisticated sense than that intended by nineteenth-century scholars, such as Hermann, or their twentieth-century counterparts:

> ... übereinstimmend mit Thukydides, es kennt keine erklärten Bösewichter, keinen Richard III., keinen Jago. Schwäche, Mangel an Charakter, Lüge, Falschheit, Egoismus, Dünkel, Hemmungslosigkeit, Verknöcherung — der Maskenzug der seelischen Gebrechen schreitet über die Szene im pompösen Aufputz der moralischen Selbstbehauptung. (239)

In the second half of the play, the confusion that Reinhardt finds to be inherent in the earlier scenes — with their lack of a unifying or ordering perspective and their innovative overturning of tradition — is realized with full force. With the condemnation of Orestes and Electra the audience expects a withdrawal into the palace followed by a choral ode and messenger speech or, perhaps, a sudden *deus ex machina* (251). Instead, at 1098 it is presented with Pylades' proposal and the frantic sequence of scenes that follows, with their ever more daring theatrical effects and their disorienting inversions of Aeschylus' *Choephori.* All of this is capped by the epiphany of Apollo and the miraculous resolution, which Reinhardt accepts as the culminating absurdity:

> Wenn Apollon ex machina dem Rasenden befiehlt, das Mädchen, das er noch eben zu köpfen bereit war, zu heiraten und dieser sein Jawort dazu gibt, so wird es uns schwer gemacht, die Lösung ernst zu nehmen. ... Der Schluß zeigt, wie es sein sollte — und nicht ist. 'Verwirrung maßlos wohnt im Göttlichen wie Menschlichen.' 'Though this be madness, yet there is method in't,' würde Polonius sagen. Und doch ist dies — der Mensch. Wo bleibt der Sinn? Zur Größe des Euripides gehört, daß er die Frage stellen, aber nicht hat lösen mögen.[79]

For Reinhardt *Orestes* is neither a botched melodrama nor an exciting tale of 'antique' heroism, neither a psychological study of criminality nor a pious meditation on mortal limitations; instead, it is a document that

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[78] Reinhardt (1960) 249. Here and below, Reinhardt's debts to the earlier studies, e.g., of Perrotta and Pohlenz are apparent.

[79] Reinhardt (1960) 256, who is echoed by Eucken (1986). The latter argues (168) that *Or* presents a complex and ultimately unresolved meditation on the question of Orestes' guilt: "Daß seine Einheit nicht in der Handlung und auch nicht in der Bedeutung der Hauptgestalten, sondern in der Darlegung einer allgemeinen Frage liegt, zeigt ihn auf dem Übergang von der dramatischen Kunst zur Philosophie."

systematically records the paroxysms of a culture undergoing dissolution — a predecessor of the modern theater of the absurd.

The influence of Reinhardt's thesis can be seen most directly in the later studies by Arrowsmith and Parry: while Reinhardt speaks of a *Sinneskrise,* Arrowsmith arrives at a very similar evaluation of *Orestes* in terms of the λόγος-ἔργον dichotomy,[80] and Parry develops a distinction between the play's superstructure (the melodramatic plot, with its happy ending) and the substructure of "polysemous ironies and ambiguities which undermine, or even negate, the simpler surface meaning of the play."[81] In each case, the metaphysical implications of *Orestes* are explored and comparisons drawn with the modern theater (whether Arrowsmith's 'theater of ideas' or the absurdist drama cited by Reinhardt and Parry), but the basic lines of interpretation bear a surprising similarity, *mutatis mutandis,* to those of Verrall and Mullens. Where the latter scrutinize the play with a condemning eye for signs of character, the former search for irony and paradox and for evidence of the contemporary *Zeitgeist.* Rather than attempt to explain away apparent contradictions or inconsistencies, the studies of Reinhardt, Arrowsmith, and Parry build upon this feature of *Orestes* as evidence for a fifth-century existential crisis of sorts. Yet here, too, the emphasis is very much on the need to see beneath Orestes' deeds to the confusion and folly that lurk below.[82]

On a more general level, Reinhardt's discussion focuses attention on possible connections between *Orestes* and contemporary Athenian society, a line of enquiry that has played an essential role in much of the more recent criticism of the play. Whereas earlier scholars show a tendency to concentrate on Orestes' personal situation, these studies shift attention to the broader political and sociological ramifications of Orestes' deeds. Thus, for many critics in the years following Reinhardt's study, *Orestes* has come to represent Euripides' response to the turbulent events of the last years of the Peloponnesian War. Emphasizing, for

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[80] Arrowsmith (1963), esp. pp. 45-47. Cf. below, pp. 260-61.

[81] H. Parry (1969), esp. pp. 338 and 343.

[82] Fresco (1976) 108ff. also stresses the work's modernness. He points to elements of absurdity in the play, with particular reference to the piece's numerous anachronisms and inconsistencies (for which he finds parallels in the works of Giraudoux and Sartre). Ultimately, however, Fresco too is concerned with establishing Orestes' guilt, which he explains in terms that recall earlier condemnations of the protagonist's criminal nature: "Zum Muttermord gehört wahrscheinlich schon eine gewisse Veranlagung — hier will nicht eine Anspielung auf den Fluch des Atridensgeschichte gemeint sein —, aber ein Muttermörder kann im Bewusstsein seiner Schuld, wenn er von der Gesellschaft gehetzt wird, nicht anders als ein noch schlimmerer Verbrecher werden" (113).

example, the topicality of the messenger's report at lines 884ff. and the generally secular and rhetorical tone of the play as a whole, these scholars find in *Orestes* a direct comment on Athenian political life and public morality in the last decade of the fifth century B.C. Most extreme, perhaps, is the interpretation of Vellacott, who reads the play as a complex political allegory on the degeneration of post-Periclean Athens.[83] The majority of scholars who adopt this approach present a less fanciful reading, however, interpreting the actions of Orestes and his companions as a protest against the increasingly violent political *stasis* experienced in Athens and elsewhere in the late fifth-century. Most prominent among these studies is that of Burkert, where the savage violence of Orestes and his friends is interpreted as representing the poet's despair, not only for the future of Athens, but for the relevance of tragedy itself in a world dominated by such senseless brutality:

> Dem *Orestes*, der die unheimliche Verwandlung der Tragödie zum Gangsterstück gestaltet, hat eine heillose Realität ihre Dissonanzen aufgeprägt. Im tieferen Sinn schlägt das Moralische aufs Ästhetische zurück: einer kriminalisierten Gesellschaft kommt auch die Tragödie abhanden. Eben in seiner Zeitbedingtheit ist der *Orestes* nur allzu aktuell.[84]

In addition to its provocative musings on the significance of *Orestes* for the state of the tragic art in the late fifth century, Burkert's thesis has the advantage of explaining not only the troubling nature of Orestes' deeds, but the corrupt nature of his opponents and of Argive society itself (as portrayed in the messenger's report), a feature of the play that has proven troubling for those who focus solely on the moral failings of Orestes. Several scholars have emphasized the failings of Orestes' opponents while mitigating, or denying altogether, the culpability of Orestes himself. Thus Ebener combines Spira's interpretation of the *deus ex machina* with Pohlenz's view regarding the demoralization of Orestes and his companions: again we find Apollo bringing a much-needed

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[83] Vellacott (1975), esp. pp. 53ff. (Note, e.g., p. 74, where Orestes at *Or* 1167-71 is said to represent Athens looking with nostalgia back to the 'heroic' age of Pericles. Cf. the analysis of the prologue on pp. 56-58: the fraternal strife of Thyestes and Atreus stands for the conflict between Sparta and Athens, Orestes' madness stands for the war-lust that has infected Greece, etc. Helen, on this reading, becomes a symbol for the beauty, culture, and graciousness destroyed by the war.) Delebecque (1951) 301ff. goes to equal extremes in detecting specific historical allusions in the play in support of his thesis that *Or* was produced in 413.

[84] Burkert (1974) 109. Similar studies are presented by Arrowsmith (1963), Rawson (1972) 157ff., Longo (1975), Schein (1975), Euben (1986), Hall (1993). (For further discussion and bibliography, see Appendix Four.)

moment of healing and insight, but here to an Orestes who himself has
become caught up in "dem Mangel an Einsicht und gutem Willen, zu dem
Beschränktheit und Haß und Niedertracht führen müssen" ([1966] 49).
For Ebener, as for Reinhardt before him, the play is intimately connected
with the contemporary situation in Athens and, in particular, with the
blind hatreds and political *stasis* that bedeviled the city in the waning
years of the war. *Orestes* thus provides a dire warning to the poet's fellow
citizens about the wages of factional violence. But the focus is less on the
personal failings of Orestes than on the dire influences of the flawed
community surrounding him. In a similar fashion, Falkner ([1983a] and
[1983b]) attributes Orestes' 'crimes' to the effects of the faulty παιδεία
offered him by his corrupt elders and an equally corrupt society. And,
much earlier, Lanza affirms that the play employs the Orestes myth:

> ... per capovolgere la fede consacrata da Eschilo nella razionalità della
> giustizia umana, e per indicare al contrario in quale oscuro intrico di altre
> circostanze e interessi sia immerso il matricidio. ([1961] 71)

For Lanza the play is not concerned with the question of Orestes' guilt,
still less with his character, but with an Athens torn apart by political
factions and the effect of such factionalism on relations between the
individual and the πόλις. The issue of Orestes' guilt or innocence, in
Lanza's view, is merely a catalyst through which the poet exposes the
corrupt nature of this Argos/Athens and its political and legal institutions:

> Se la tragedia rappresentasse la colpa di un individuo, essa dovrebbe
> sboccare nella sanzione di condanna o di assoluzione .... Ma davanti o
> accanto alle colpe di Oreste stanno la grettezza di Tindaro, l'innettitudine
> vile di Menelao, la disfrenatezza di Elena .... Oreste non ha quindi
> dinnanzi a sè una società che lo possa giudicare, ma il poeta ci mostra
> anzi come tutti i supposti cardini etici di quella società siano ormai vuote
> convenzioni, impotenti a mantenere la stabilità di qualsiasi vero valore.
> (67)

In denying the relevance of Orestes' guilt and in stressing the positive
features of the φιλία between Orestes, Electra, and Pylades, Lanza recalls
Krieg's reading of the play, although he does so within the larger
sociological context suggested by Reinhardt.[85]

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[85] Contemporary with Lanza's study is Garzya (1962) 108-18, where we find similar
stress on the positive role of φιλία in the play. Garzya is more interested in developing an
explanation for the alteration in Orestes' demeanor in the two 'halves' of the work, however,
and in refuting Zürcher's methodological assumptions. He suggests what might be called a
mixed σωτηρία action: Pylades, the loyal φίλος, provides Orestes with a means of dealing
with his internal conflicts (his σύνεσις) in the first half of the play (after the manner of
Theseus at the conclusion of *Her*), while the *mechanema* plot of the second half offers hope

Reinhardt's study has been influential in large part because it provides a satisfactory interpretation of the confused violence and abrupt shifts that dominate *Orestes* without resorting to undue emphasis on psychological interpretations of the protagonist's actions. Greenberg's 1961 study has enjoyed a similar influence — particularly among English-speaking scholars — because of its neat explanation of the play's structure.

Greenberg sees in the play a cunning repetition of Orestes' act of matricide: the plot against Helen parallels the murder of Clytemnestra in numerous details but, unlike the earlier deed, lacks a divine fiat of any sort. Thus for Greenberg the play presents an ironic undercutting of Orestes' claims to personal innocence in the matter of Clytemnestra's death, since we are allowed to watch him attempt a similar crime in the course of the play while free from the commands of Apollo, the injunctions of his father's spirit, concern for the royal succession, or any of the other grounds by which Orestes justifies his mother's murder:

> The central irony of the play, drawn with telling artistry, is that the same killers who claim that the fault is solely Apollo's can bring themselves to commit a most similar murder without that excuse. ... It is a case of chiasmus: the former crime, at divine behest, is accomplished by human agency; the latter crime, at human behest, is blocked by divine agency. Euripides' message is ironic, not realistic or rationalistic.[86]

For Greenberg, then, one of the main goals of the play is the demonstration of just how specious the alleged imperatives for Clytemnestra's death truly are. This approach to the play recalls that of Steiger, but on a more sophisticated level: rather than a series of discreet swipes at Aeschylus and Sophocles loosely jumbled together, Greenberg posits an ironic substructure that informs the play as a whole and that provides a matrix within which the echoes of earlier treatments of the Orestes myth now have meaning. This underlying structural irony is reinforced on a thematic level, according to Greenberg, by the systematic opposition, throughout the play, of a blind and folly-ridden φιλία (represented by Orestes, Electra, the αὐτουργός, and, above all, Pylades) on the one hand, and a calculating, self-seeking σοφία (represented by Menelaus) on the other.

Greenberg's emphasis on the structural aspects of the play's plot and themes seems to indicate a shift away from the moral pronouncements on

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of salvation from the external dangers that threaten Orestes and his friends.

  [86] Greenberg (1962) 162-63. This idea is voiced earlier by, e.g., Perrotta (1928) 102ff., but without the systematic elaboration provided by Greenberg's study.

the protagonist's character evident in much of the earlier scholarship on *Orestes*. The alteration in the protagonist's mood no longer need be defended on moral grounds or explained in psychological terms. As Greenberg himself affirms:

> ... the sympathies of Euripides himself are hidden. The dramatis personae do not consist of 'good guys' and 'bad guys.'

> ... the major characters of the play, specifically Orestes, Pylades, and Menelaus, despite the realism of Euripides, are representatives of types of human motivation. The apparent senselessness of the ending is not meant to ridicule their personalities but rather their ideals and motivations. (159)

Yet as Greenberg's analysis of the σοφία-φιλία theme progresses, we soon find him speaking in terms that directly recall those of Verrall: Verrall's criminal folly merely is replaced by the folly of unreflective φιλία. Note, for example, the following analysis of Orestes' words at 1172-76:

> At this point, Orestes is in the absurd world of wish-fulfillment; the wish expressed in 1172-76 has suddenly become possible, but there cannot really be both a glorious death and a glorious escape from that death. Of course, our heroes do not think of this, nor is there any point in attacking the logic of their course. They are beyond logic, and Euripides' task has been accomplished. The young man who, at the behest of Apollo, has committed matricide and has therefore been afflicted by madness will now reverse the process: completely enthralled by *philia*, which if not madness is at least the diametric opposite of *sophia*, he will attempt another murder, which only Apollo keeps from completion.[87]

Thus Greenberg continues the general trends evident in English scholarship on the play since Verrall, but with a new emphasis on the ironic structure and the thematic articulation of the piece rather than on the protagonist's criminal insanity.

Wolff's 1968 examination of the play combines the insights of Greenberg and, in particular, Reinhardt, to present one of the most sensitive studies of *Orestes* to appear to date. Wolff is particularly interested in the philosophical or existential implications of the piece, as analyzed by Reinhardt, and their relevance for contemporary Athens. Thus he examines the disorienting effects created by the play's (often distorted) echoes of earlier, traditional treatments of the Orestes myth, arguing that these echoes create an atmosphere of dislocation while at the

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[87] Greenberg (1962) 187. Cf., e.g., Verrall (1905) 244ff.

same time rendering the play's action curiously inconsequential and empty:

> The plot of *Orestes* ... stands in a twofold relation to the myth. As it is new and seems to depart from the familiar mythical tradition, it represents a break with the past. But, as it is dense with references to that past, this break effects no release. The past has no more viable connection to the present, but is still a burden on it. This burden is so great that the present — the plot of the play — appears to lose its substance, to lead nowhere, to achieve nothing. ... Euripides dramatizes a sense of emptiness and superfluousness, something, one suspects, of the contemporary mood in Athens, and perhaps something of a more general sadness. (134)

The confusion and lack of purpose suggested by the play's troubled relation to the mythopoetic tradition is reflected, according to Wolff, in the confusion of the mad Orestes himself, with his contradictory goals and motives, his oscillations between guilt-laden despair and outraged indignation, between heroic aspirations and the quest for salvation at any price. This confusion reaches its height in the report of the Phrygian slave, which Wolff believes presents a distorting mirror of *Orestes* as a whole: the slave's narrative captures the chaotic nature of the play's action, while its form reflects the angst-ridden despair and the surrealistic mood that permeate this troubled work (141-42). Above all, the song presents a vivid image of the "bafflement of human purpose" (138), a theme that on Wolff's reading dominates this play in its concern with deceptive and self-deceived mortals who become lost amid an illusory world of appearances. The result is a nightmarish mixture of guilt and delusion:

> ... since its characters are more corrupt than virtuous, and sometimes simply mad, *Orestes* lacks some of the commonly accepted qualifications for a tragedy. Commentators often call it melodrama. But that should not distract us from its underlying seriousness. It is too systematic in its elaborations of disorder to be taken lightly. Its action has too much of the nightmare about it, a nightmare dreamed by an uncertain world, oppressed by fear and guilt and a memory which longs for release of terrible things that have been done .... It is possible that *Orestes,* like *Trojan Women* (both plays about the aftermath of a famous catastrophe) is a kind of indictment of public conscience. (142)

An important part of that indictment, and of the confusion inherent in the play's action, Wolff locates in the corrupt nature of the society that surrounds the hero; this theme he develops along the lines suggested by Lanza. Wolff goes beyond Lanza, however, in suggesting that Orestes'

violent rebellion in the later scenes reflects his response, not only to the series of betrayals to which he has been subject, but to the peculiar existential crisis in which (Wolff thinks) he has become entangled:

> Revenge ... becomes an irrational response to the world's failure to render what one imagines is his due. It could be an attempt to force repayment on the loss between what seems and what is. And it is an exasperated explosion of feeling after all human intentions are denied. Until his last-minute appearance, Apollo is the mythical representation of this betrayal in things. When Electra assures Orestes, 'I shall not let you go,' *outoi methêsô* (262), she is made to echo Apollo's promise to him in Aeschylus' *Eumenides,* 'I shall not give you up,' *outoi prodôsô* (64). Human loyalty would take the place of divine. But it is far from sufficient.[88]

For Wolff, Apollo's climactic appearance in the finale provides the capping betrayal to the series of betrayals that he finds presented in this play. Like Reinhardt, Wolff emphasizes the arbitrariness of the god's 'solution' to the impasse on stage; unlike Reinhardt, however, Wolff finds here, not a provocative challenge to the audience, but a final, extremely pessimistic view of human existence as Euripides' contemporaries had come to know it:

> The plot which Euripides invented for the action of this play moves in cycles which show how futile human action is, coming always back to its starting point, a desperate and helpless strait, and how thus, without achievement, it was insubstantial and empty of all but passionate feelings. For this condition Apollo has no cure. Euripides shows us human beings who cannot save themselves. But the way the god saves them denies their humanity, or rather, finally, isolates it. The break between the new plot — "human beings as they are" — and the myth — the received, poetic vision of order — is beyond healing. What is remarkable is the unflinching steadiness with which Euripides can look at this segment of humanity he has chosen to represent, in all its degenerate and criminal nature .... Part of [the work's] peculiar 'tragedy' is that true tragedy is no longer possible, as Euripides suggests by turning to one of tragedy's most used myths for his most experimental play. (148-49)

The studies of Reinhardt, Greenberg, and Wolff have won the general approval of more recent critics of *Orestes* to such an extent that Rawson is able to make the categorical pronouncement that their research has "left us without much excuse for radically misunderstanding the nature of the play."[89] Rawson's own discussion reflects the general trends apparent in

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[88] Wolff (1968) 146-47. In emphasizing the futility of human endeavor, Wolff disagrees altogether with Lanza on the significance of the φιλία theme in the play.

[89] Rawson (1972) 155, with reference to Greenberg (1962) and Wolff (1968).

much of the criticism on *Orestes* in the years following those three studies: an emphasis on the ironic undercutting of the protagonist's position, supported by various echoes of earlier literature and myth, and on the chaotic confusion inherent in the play's action as characterized by such echoes; detailed study of the debased φιλία of Orestes and his friends; consideration of the work's relevance vis-à-vis contemporary Athenian society. It should be noted, however, that such studies frequently reflect the trend, evident in Greenberg's criticism, toward the sort of condemnatory evaluations of the play's characters that mark the earlier interpretations of Verrall and Mullens and that characterize most criticism of the play in English until very recently. Thus Rawson herself pays scant attention to the faults of Helen and Menelaus (who are portrayed as undependable but amiable figures [158]), devoting the greater part of her study to the unheroic nature of Orestes and Electra, their criminal folly, and their violent and exclusive conception of φιλία.

In a similar study, Schein returns to the rift between the mythical background to the play and the action of the play itself, finding evidence of the poet's disillusionment with contemporary Athens.[90] In doing so, however, he employs Greenberg's view of the play's ironic plot structure to develop the argument that all the major characters of the play are in fact morally bankrupt hypocrites whose pretenses are revealed in the course of the action:

> The pattern of the *Orestes* is simple. Euripides presents us with five characters, Elektra, Orestes, Tyndareus, Menelaos, and Pylades, each of whom at first wins our sympathy through apparently noble or heroic words or deeds or suffering, and each of whom is shown to be in fact unheroic, hypocritical, grasping, and full of hostility. Each character is playing a role, and in the course of the play each strips off his mask to reveal what is beneath. Illusions of virtue and nobility are penetrated, and sordid reality asserts itself. (54)

Drawing on the above-cited studies of the play's distorted echoes, the allegedly corrupt φιλία of Orestes and his friends, and the play's topicality, Schein concludes by presenting a bleak picture of the elderly poet's despair at the moral decay that afflicts Athenian society as a whole:

> In the *Orestes* three generations can be distinguished: Tyndareus', which corresponds to whatever was left in Athens in 408 of the 'men of Marathon' and their stiff virtue; Menelaos', which corresponds to the middle-aged generation of war-leaders; and that of Orestes, Elektra, and

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[90] Schein (1975). Fuqua (1976) and (1978), and Zeitlin (1980) also focus on the tension

> Pylades, which might be characterized as late fifth-century 'youth.' By
> the end of the play the values and behavior of all three generations are
> seen as hollow, god and myth are dead, and, despite Apollo, 'Mere
> anarchy is loosed upon the world.'[91]

Euripides reacts to the prevailing mood of violence and despair by taking
"dramatic refuge in violence, absurdity, and ambiguity" (ibid.).

Schein's study thus employs the insights of Reinhardt, Greenberg, and
Wolff to solve the long-standing difficulty of the alteration in Orestes'
mood, not by appeals to irony or to a Sinneskrise, but in terms of the
protagonist's character, often with the same vigorous excess that marks
the studies of Verrall and Mullens.[92] Thus Orestes comes to be revealed
"as the willful murderer he has been all along,"[93] while "[t]he suffering
Elektra and the loyal Pylades are manifestly partners in crime, and are
even more evil than Orestes himself ..." (ibid.). As in Burkert's analysis,
Orestes here is read as a Gangsterstück, although both Schein and
Burkert (unlike, for example, Verrall and Mullens) give due weight to the
corrupt nature of Orestes' opponents. The neatest touch, on Schein's
reading, is the manner in which the self-deceived Orestes of the play's
beginning manages so successfully to deceive the audience as well.

Other recent critics have taken different approaches, but the influence
of Reinhardt, Greenberg, and Wolff remains apparent. Smith examines
the medical suppositions that underlie the play, arguing that Orestes'
disease serves as an elaborate metaphor for the hero's moral illness. This
metaphor (he argues) informs the development of the plot, particularly in
the later scenes, the frenzy of which corresponds to a feverish outburst of
Orestes' 'disease' due to improper tendance on the part of his φίλοι.[94]

Zeitlin adopts a quite different approach, finding in the text an
extremely literary 'deconstruction,' not only of the Orestes myth, but of
Greek myth as a whole, Athenian society, and tragedy itself. The familiar
elements outlined above all appear, but are dissected in accordance with
modern decontructionist theories. The result is an ingenious tour de
force — at first glance a Steiger redivivus atque auctus — which finds in

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between myth and reality in Or.

[91] Schein (1975) 66. (Note the affinities with Vellacott [1971], discussed above, p. 31.)

[92] Note, e.g., Schein (1975) 58 where he states that, "The pity we feel for [Orestes] as he
awakens from sleep (211ff.) is balanced by disgust at his self-centered, contradictory orders
to Elektra to raise him and lower him, touch him and leave him alone." In the agon, Orestes is
found to be "a thorough-going young sophist" whose rhetoric "serves no end other than self-
interest and self-indulgence" and is "formally clever but morally jejune" (58-59).

[93] Schein (1975) 63 (echoing Conacher [1967] 217, discussed above, pp. 21-22).

[94] For more on Smith's views see Appendices Two and Three. Orestes' νόσος also is
central to Scarcella's analysis ([1956]).

Orestes:

> ... for the first time on an extended scale ... a truly self-reflective work of art, that is, like Hamlet's play within a play, art in the process of reflecting on art. ([1980] 69)

Despite the difference in their methodologies, Zeitlin's observations not infrequently recall those of earlier scholars, merely substituting a concern with intertextuality for the psychological, moralistic, or existential concerns of earlier critics. Again, for example, we find a confused and frustrated Orestes, but here it is not the confusion of a lunatic criminal or an existentialist hero so much as that of an outmoded and 'unfit' reader. Orestes' actions in the latter sections of the play are said to represent

> ... a wonderfully delusional attempt to reestablish for himself and his dilemma that old world in which his myth was operative and had meaning. His youthful naiveté and his bookish misreadings reduce the myths of the past to slogans of misogyny and Homeric heroism and he crudely transfers these into the present by updating them with the current slogans of patriotism and pan-Hellenism. (62-63)

> He becomes, in fact, a mythmaker in a world that has turned its back on myth. But his efforts are limited and distorted by his superficial socialization and his naiveté in relying on outworn ideologies of patriarchalism and patriotism. He has read his texts but he cannot discriminate between levels of meaning. (65)

This brief examination cannot do justice to Zeitlin's often provocative insights regarding individual passages. In general, however, her study quite ingeniously combines and reformulates, in accordance with her post-structuralist affinities, the various lines of interpretation examined above.

Finally, Burnett employs Strohm's analysis of Euripides' dramatic technique to provide a number of insights into the play's construction and the dynamics of its individual scenes.[95] In interpreting the significance of *Orestes,* however, Burnett presents a curious variation on the earlier studies of Spira, Steidle, and Wolff, finding in the play a godless Orestes who, in contrast to his counterpart in the *Oresteia,* turns away from the divine aid of Apollo in favor of the vain, immoral plottings of Pylades and so becomes all too like the murderous mother whom he has killed.

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[95] Burnett (1971) 183ff., employing the methodology developed by Strohm (1957). For evaluations of Burnett's approach see esp. Vickers (1973) 590-91 and O'Brien (1988b) 99-100.

Again the inconclusive nature of the play's action is stressed, as is the confused nature of its later scenes; for Burnett, however, these features do not suggest an abstract lesson in the insufficiency of mortal understanding or an existential crisis, but rather the futile strivings of one who has deserted god. The φιλία between Orestes, Electra, and Pylades is condemned, but again in the context of Orestes' 'sinful' self-assertion, Pylades in particular becoming the cunning devil who entices the hero to turn his back on god.

RECENT TRENDS: *ORESTES* AS A VIRTUOSO DISPLAY OF STAGECRAFT AND ΣΟΦΙΑ

Of late the critical wheel appears to have come full circle, as scholars again praise *Orestes* for those elements in its dramaturgical technique that won it applause on the ancient stage: its exciting and suspense-laden plot, its clever manipulation of audience expectation through the exploitation of (or departure from) stage convention, the virtuosity with which it employs the various resources of the stage, the variety of its scenic effects — in short, its sheer theatricality. An early proponent of this view is Winnington-Ingram, who emphasizes Euripides' σοφία — his ability to provide his audience with a sophisticated aesthetic experience, one that challenges it to abstract itself from the immediate situation on stage and to analyze the play in light of its knowledge of contemporary theatrical technique and various 'issues of the day.' Winnington-Ingram praises *Orestes* in particular for its clever manipulation of stage technique in Pylades' silence at 1591-92, its amusing challenge to the chorus' relevance in the *parodos,* and the cleverness of casting the Phrygian's report in the form of a monody.[96] The play as a whole is assessed as "a skilful, exciting, and successful drama ... full of novelty and [with] at least one interesting technical innovation [the Phrygian's monody]" (134). Such praise may seem to damn by focusing on superficial and (often) effete points of excellence, and it is true that Winnington-Ingram does not allow the play a great amount of serious import.[97] The same may be said, to a lesser degree, of the studies of *Orestes* presented by W. G. Arnott, who continues the line of investigation suggested by Winnington-

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[96] Winnington-Ingram (1969a) 130 (Pylades), 130-31 (*parodos*), 134-35 (Phrygian).

[97] See his general assessment of the work on pp. 133-34, esp. his remark in n. 49 that, "It is perhaps rather surprising that a play of this character has been regarded as a serious treatment of the ethics of matricide or a serious response to the *Electra* of Sophocles." Note as well his comments in n. 65 on the characterization of figures such as Orestes or the Creusa of *Ion:* "The simple explanation, in some cases, may ... be that, when intrigue comes in by the door, psychology flies out at the window."

Ingram.[98] Arnott is particularly interested in the manner in which Euripides misleads his audience's expectations, tantalizing it with the prospect of a radical break from mythological or theatrical convention: in the *parodos* (with the prospect of Orestes' untimely death)[99] and in the intrigue against Helen (with the prospect of her death at the hands of Orestes).[100] To a greater degree than in Winnington-Ingram's study, Euripides here is portrayed as a poet of the stage, one whose continual concern is to keep his audience off-balance by means of constant surprises and unexpected turns of events.

Such interpretations raise the question of the nature and intent of Greek tragic poetry, a question that has been confronted more directly in the commentaries by Willink and West, and that has formed the foundation for a more wide-ranging study by Heath.[101] In the view of the latter, 'intellectualizing' interpretations of Greek tragedy that locate the meaning of a work in subtle points of characterization or thematic content are founded on a misconception of the nature of τραγῳδία, which is best understood in terms of the practical concerns of the theater. Refining the critical approaches of Tycho Wilamowitz, Waldock, and others, Heath sets out a series of basic interpretative principles that reassert the essentially rhetorical preoccupations of Greek tragedy (its focus on "the effects of poetry on its audience") and its concern to give pleasure through "the excitation of an emotional response, characteristically in the range of horror, fear and pity, but more generally of those emotions which are ordinarily found distressing" (35).

> The main task of the tragedian, therefore, is to portray events to which a response of this kind is appropriate, and to do so in such a way that the emotive quality of those events is brought out and the response evoked in the most effective and satisfying way. (35-36)

The influence of such an approach to the reading of Greek tragedy can be seen in Willink's and West's introductions to the play. Willink stresses Euripides' role as μυθοποιός — a poet concerned with the dramatization of a mythic action in terms that are both theatrically effective and likely to capture the audience's imagination:

> *Orestes* is a play to be enjoyed. It is not "primarily," as modern

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[98] See W. G. Arnott (1973) 52-53 and 56-60, (1978) 4-6 and 18-20, (1982) 41-43, and esp. (1983).

[99] W. G. Arnott (1978) 4-6 and (1983) 19-22.

[100] W. G. Arnott (1973) 52-53 and 56-59, (1982) 41-43, (1983) 23ff.

[101] Willink (ed.), West (ed.), Heath (1987a).

criticism expects us to recognize, "an ironic and deeply unheroic commentary on the story of Orestes"; but to be approached rather as a many-faceted, highly sophisticated *tour de force* of audacious myth-invention and poetic art, instinct with the spirit of its age, by a supreme μυθοποιός and dramatist; strictly as a τραγῳδία (within the conventions of that genre), but in our terms as a baroque kind of tragi-comedy or *drame noir* ....

... E., as μυθοποιός and dramatist rather than philosopher, exploited both the contemporary scene and what we may call 'topical μῦθος' (both popular and sophistic) in order to enhance, on various levels, the aesthetic appeal of his essentially mythical dramas.[102]

Willink argues that the core of *Orestes* — its 'primary idea' — lies in Euripides' invention of the new and audacious attack on Helen, around which he crafts a suitable plot (xxviiiff.).

On the other hand, West, like Heath, emphasizes the emotional impact of Greek tragedy in general and of *Orestes* in particular, interpreting the evolution of Greek dramaturgic technique between the time of Aeschylus' *Persae* and that of *Orestes* as the result of "a striving after a greater variety of emotional responses within the ambit of a single story."

Early tragedy portrays, imaginatively and artistically but comparatively straightforwardly, the moods of a group of people before and after a decisive event. In time it was found that certain types of scene were particularly effective in the theatre, for example, those that created tension or mixed expectations in the audience, and those in which they saw characters on the stage acting under a misapprehension. To exploit these specifically theatrical effects, the tragedians contrived their plots so as to multiply such situations .... (26)

... there is a sense in which *tragôidiâ,* considered not as a sublime abstraction but as theatre for the people, did not realise its full potential until Euripides perfected the art of balancing one emotion against another, one expectation against another, one sympathy against another, and of running his audience through a gamut of sensations to a final tonic chord of satiety and satisfaction. If there is one play in which this perfection may be said to have been achieved, it is *Orestes.* (28)

For West, as for Winnington-Ingram and Willink, *Orestes* is not the greatest of Greek tragedies, nor does it present a profound meditation on the import of the Orestes myth;[103] rather, it should be appreciated as a

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[102] Willink (ed.) xxii and xxvi; cf., e.g., his comments on p. xlix concerning the characterization of Orestes: "[Orestes'] words and actions, like those of the other *dramatis personae,* are ancillary to a complex plot which E. invented for purposes other than further comment on the traditional matricide story."

[103] West (ed.) 27; cf. his comment on Orestes' condemnation by the Argive assembly (p.

play that is "skilfully constructed, rich in novel theatrical effects, building up to a spectacular dénouement" (27). Suddenly, the melodramatic features of the play — an object of scorn for Peripatetic critics and the nineteenth century — are regarded as evidence of its peculiar excellence: Euripides has become, not the philosopher, but the *virtuoso* of the stage.

CONCLUSION

Despite important advances in the critical assessment of *Orestes* over the past fifty years, in recent work on the play the fundamental issues being raised and many of the solutions proposed are much the same as those debated by scholars in the nineteenth century. The focus still is very much on the troubled spirit of the work itself and of its protagonist: the breaches of tragic decorum, the confusing shifts in tone and perspective, the curious echoes of earlier treatments of the Orestes myth, the disturbing nature of the later scenes. As I have shown, recent scholars have employed a wide variety of approaches in addressing these features of the play. Often, however, these approaches stem from the same impulses that guided critics of the previous century: Verrall's foolish and insane young criminal now is subjected to a more refined psychoanalysis, enrolled in a ἑταιρία, transported to an existentialist hell, chastised as a lapsed pagan, or presented as the product of his age; Steiger's Aeschylean and Sophoclean echoes still reverberate, but are enclosed within an ironic plot structure or subjected to intensive deconstruction; Hermann's decadent poet still panders to the crowd, but receives praise for this. Our appreciation of the play has become more refined, but the basic approaches to its interpretation have remained largely unchanged since the time of Verrall.

For all the apparent diversity in these approaches, most critics of the play since the late 1960s share certain fundamental assumptions that would be quite familiar to Verrall and his contemporaries. Principal among them is a conviction that the actions undertaken by Orestes and his companions in the play's later scenes are disturbing and are intended to be so. From this conviction all else follows: Orestes' criminal insanity and moral folly; his tragic demoralization; his helpless confusion and his godlessness; the poet's indictment of Athenian society and politics; the attacks on Aeschylus and Sophocles; the portrayal of a world in the grip

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29): "Orestes is condemned, not because Euripides thinks he deserved it, but because he wants to create a desperate situation for the young hero and his friends to extricate themselves from, in other words, to promote dramatic excitement."

of a *Sinneskrise.*

It is this central assumption that I will address in the following chapters. Without denying the valuable insights provided by recent work on the play, I will attempt a reading that accounts for the complex and often disturbing nature of *Orestes* while taking into consideration the melodramatic features of the play felt so keenly by critics of the previous century.

CHAPTER TWO

GENERAL INTERPRETATION:
THE STRUCTURE, THEMES, AND EMOTIONAL RHYTHM OF
ORESTES

THE PROBLEM OF *ORESTES*

The review of the scholarship on *Orestes* in Chapter One reveals that, for all the apparent diversity in the critical approaches to the play, a common thread which unites many studies in this century is a concentration upon the character of Orestes — more specifically, upon his personal flaws and moral failings as they emerge in the course of the play. As a result, *Orestes* has been read, for the most part, as a highly moralistic character study of Orestes and his companions, a study that is said in some way to spring from the poet's conception of the 'true' nature of people who could perform the deeds traditionally assigned to Orestes and his accomplices. Repeatedly we find critics beginning from such a premise in order to develop their views of the play, whether they find in *Orestes* an exposé of traditional myth, intended to refute the versions of Homer, Aeschylus, and Sophocles (Steiger), a clinical analysis of the criminal mind (Verrall, Mullens, Conacher), an indictment of the political and social mores of an Athens corrupted by years of war (Burkert, Vellacott, Schein, Euben), an expression of the poet's sense of despair at a world from which all meaning and value have been drained (Wolff, Parry), a 'deconstructed' Orestes (Zeitlin), or (as read by Burnett) a pious (and suspiciously Christian) tale illustrating the sordid vanity of human endeavor when man turns his back on god. Even those studies that expressly deny an interest in Orestes' personality (for example, von Fritz, Greenberg) and those that focus on the corrupt nature of his opponents (Pohlenz, Falkner) generally found their interpretations in the conviction of Orestes' criminal guilt.

Irony is central to such interpretations of the play, since, on the surface, *Orestes* appears to be merely another sensationalistic, incident-laden *mechanema* drama in the mold of *Iphigenia among the Taurians, Helen,* or *Antiope.* The play's exciting plot, with its numerous unexpected twists and turns, its multitude of characters and episodes, its conscious

striving after variety in presentation and pacing, and, above all, its
constant (and seemingly superficial) emphasis on the question of the
protagonists' survival, all serve to suggest not high tragedy, but
melodrama.[1] Particularly troubling for those who adopt an ironic reading
is the apparent sympathy accorded Orestes in the opening scenes of the
play. The Orestes of the play's initial 469 lines may be a pathetic
creature, but he clearly is intended to be an object of our compassion.
Thoroughly undone by remorse at the deed he has committed, he lies in
helpless squalor[2] tormented by the memory of Clytemnestra's death,[3] and
plagued with a sickness that is partly physical, partly psychological, and
partly (as symbolized by invisible onslaughts of the dread Erinyes)
supernatural in origin.[4] His expressions of remorse for the murder of his
mother are matched in their vehemence only by his bitter reproaches
against Apollo, the instigator of the deed.[5] These sentiments are
reinforced by those of his sister Electra,[6] while the loving regard
displayed by each of the siblings for the other lends an added poignancy
to these opening scenes.[7] This sympathetic portrait of Orestes and Electra
is reinforced by the utterances of the chorus, whose concern for Electra
and her brother is evident throughout the *parodos*, as is its certainty of the
pair's essential innocence.[8]

In order to justify their revulsion at the deeds of Orestes and his
friends later in the play — and their conviction that Euripides cannot
have intended his audience to view this *Banditentrio* with sympathy —
critics have tended mostly to fall back on one of two strategies (short of
condemning the play altogether as an incoherent pastiche). Some
maintain that Electra and Orestes are in fact repellent from the start:
Electra is (as Orestes in his frenzied state perceives her [264-65] and as
Tyndareus portrays her in the *agon* [615-21]) a virago, fiercely jealous of

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[1] On the implications of this much-discussed term, see Kitto (1961) 330ff., Conacher
(1967) 3ff. and 214, Michelini (1987) 22ff. and 321ff.

[2] See, e.g., the references to his physical state (and that of Electra) at 39-45, 83-85, 200,
219-20, 223-26, 301-03, 385-91.

[3] Note his opening prayer of thanks to ὕπνος and πότνια Λήθη at 211-14 (cf. Electra's
prayer at 174-81). Note as well Orestes' famous reference to the σύνεσις that haunts him
(396, discussed below, Appendix Two).

[4] On Orestes' madness, see below, Appendices Two and Three. Cf. Harvey (1971) on
Euripides' fondness for such opening scenes.

[5] Remorse at (and condemnation of) the matricide: 43-44, 392, 398, 459-69;
condemnation of Apollo: 285-93, 416. (On the latter see Steidle [1968] 98-100.)

[6] 28-30, 162-65, 191-94.

[7] See esp. 217ff. and 294ff.

[8] Note esp. 153, 160-61, 194.

her brother's attentions and hostile to the outside world as a whole;[9] Orestes himself is a self-pitying and thoroughly self-deceived creature, physically and morally repugnant.[10]

Others, more persuasively, have suggested that the true character of Orestes and his associates emerges only gradually as the play progresses.[11] Greenberg, for example, detects irony in the fact that Orestes — despite his bitter recriminations against Apollo for commanding Clytemnestra's murder — repeats his crime in the attack on Helen, but with no prompting on the god's part. Conacher presents a similar view in arguing that, "what Orestes turns out to be at the end is what, for all his remorseful self-shielding, he really was at the beginning, the monster (as Euripides saw him) who could murder his mother."[12] That Euripides is capable of such an exposé is indisputable: his *Electra* recasts Aeschylus' *Choephori* (and, quite possibly, Sophocles' *Electra*)[13] to present the killing of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus as a cowardly act of murder inspired by envy, greed, and the commands of a capricious, folly-ridden divinity. Here the audience's attention is focused intensely upon the personalities of the two protagonists, especially Electra's, as their various failings are allowed to emerge: the baseness of their motives, their weakness of character, their self-blindness, their limited perception of the consequences of their actions.[14] Difficulties arise, however, when an attempt is made to fit *Orestes* into this same mold. In contrast to Euripides' *Electra, Orestes* presents no easy moral perspectives from which to view Orestes' situation. No hint is given of Orestes' or his sister's motives for the matricide other than reverence for their father, concern for the maintenance of the royal line, and obedience to the commands of Apollo.[15] Nothing is said of the manner in which Clytemnestra's and Aegisthus' deaths were accomplished except that

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[9] See, e.g., Vellacott (1975) 61-63 and Synodinou (1988).

[10] See, e.g., Schein (1975) 57-58. A few critics go so far as to impute incestuous overtones to their relationship. See esp. Greenberg (1962) 182, Rawson (1972) 159, Schein (1975) 62, and Simon (1978) 109 and 112; cf. Reeve (1973) 159 and Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1050-51. For further references and discussion see Longo (1975) 276-78 and n. 43, and esp. the strictures of Vernant in Vernant/Vidal-Naquet (1988) 100-02.

[11] A related view (put forward, e.g., by Pohlenz [1954] and Falkner [1983a and b]) maintains that *Or* portrays the demoralization of Orestes and his friends in the course of the action.

[12] Conacher (1967) 217.

[13] The arguments of von Fritz (1962a) 140ff. for the priority of Sophocles' play seem reasonable, despite more recent efforts to reverse the relationship. See Cropp (1988) xlviii-l.

[14] See, e.g., Conacher (1967) 199ff. This view of the play has been challenged: see Cropp (1988) xxxiiiff., Lloyd (1986), Heath (1987a) 59-60; cf. Porter (1990).

[15] On Tyndareus' charges at 615-21 cf. below, n. 27.

Clytemnestra pled for her life at the last moment (526ff., 825ff.,
839ff.) — a detail that helps us to feel the horror of the deed but does
nothing to call its justness into question (as do the disturbing details of
the twin plots in Euripides' *Electra*). Similarly, Euripides makes no
attempt to defend Clytemnestra nor to suggest that her former deeds did
not merit punishment: her unmitigated guilt is admitted even by
Tyndareus, Orestes' harshest critic (496ff., 518ff.). Finally, the
concluding *deus ex machina* is quite different in tone and effect from that
of *Electra*: nothing is said at the end of *Orestes* to suggest that the
matricide was an act that involved criminal culpability on Orestes' part.[16]
The only people who condemn Orestes in the play's early scenes are the
irascible Tyndareus (who employs brute force rather than reasoned
argument in pressing Menelaus to desert Orestes at 682ff.) and the
palpably corrupt speakers in the assembly, for whom justice is never a
consideration.[17] Thus, those who argue that the play is, in effect, a
continuation of Euripides' *Electra*[18] are forced to emphasize the frantic
and admittedly brutal acts of Orestes and his companions at the end of the
play while discounting the sympathetic picture of the opening scenes. On
this reading the pitiable Orestes of the play's beginning is merely a weak,
self-pitying, yet essentially vicious and unscrupulous villain, and any
feelings of sympathy for him on our part merely result from our having
been duped by his superficial, self-serving show of remorse.

    For all of the popularity of this approach to *Orestes,* it is essentially
mistaken on two counts. First, it implies a weightiness of character on the
part of Orestes and his companions, an emphasis on hidden aspects of
their personalities, that is justified neither by the play itself nor by the
general practice of Euripides in the *mechanema* dramas of his later period
(as expounded by Solmsen).[19] It is not that these plays do not present
interesting or finely drawn characters: the portrayal of Creusa and of Ion
in *Ion* is masterful, as is that of Electra in Euripides' *Electra* (although in
a different way). The problem lies in the fact that in *this* case we are
asked to eschew being caught up in mood of the play's early scenes in
order to delve below the surface and see the 'real' Orestes: our

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[16] See below, Chapter Six, esp. pp. 281-82.

[17] Cf. Conacher (1967) 221. Diomedes represents the one possible exception. It is notable,
however, that he chooses the middle punishment of exile, which is in harmony with the
ambiguous nature of the matricide as portrayed elsewhere in *Or.* (Strophius' condemnation of
Pylades [763-67] is discussed below, pp. 50-51.)

[18] See, e.g., Erbse (1975) 434-35. The dangers of such an approach are noted by Grube
(1941) 31-32 and 374.

[19] Solmsen (1968a) and (1968b); cf. Zürcher (1947) 153ff.

abhorrence of the plot against Helen and Hermione (it is asserted) overwhelms any feelings of sympathy aroused by the first half of the play and we are urged, in effect, to avoid evaluating lines 1-1097 until we have been presented with the 'true' Orestes, who will appear only at the play's end. The entire emotional thrust of the play's first half thus is negated by an emphasis upon the fraudulent character of the protagonist and the supposed revelation that his stance in the play's powerful opening scenes was in reality a sham. Such a view renders pointless the emphasis placed there upon the betrayal of Orestes by Apollo and Menelaus, upon the tenderness between brother and sister in their lonely isolation, upon the contrast between their fortune on the one hand and that of the opportunistic Menelaus and the obliviously amoral Helen on the other. It also posits a manner of composition unparalleled in the corpus of Greek tragedy, for in *Electra* (the one Euripidean *mechanema* play where the audience *is* encouraged to delve into the personal failings of the protagonists in order to understand the significance of the action) the viewer is given early and frequent indications of the personalities of Orestes and, especially, Electra, indications that are fleshed out as the play progresses. In the case of *Orestes* we are asked to accept a sudden and complete reversal in our conception of the main characters at a point when the play is more than half finished. In fact, attempts to see below the surface of Euripidean plays into Euripides' 'true' attitude toward an apparently sympathetic character are rarely convincing, whether applied to Andromache in *Andromache*,[20] Theseus in *Supplices*,[21] Heracles in *Heracles*,[22] the twin escapees in *Iphigenia among the Taurians*,[23] or (an example very similar to that of Orestes here) Hecuba in *Hecuba*.[24] Euripides rarely adopts an underlying moralistic attitude of the type asserted in the above-listed cases; when he does, he is sure to make his intent quite clear at some point in the play, for example in the *exodos* of *Electra* or in the humiliation of Admetus at the end of the bitter-sweet *Alcestis*.

The emphasis on Orestes' personality — on his psychological state of being — is particularly unconvincing given the plot-ridden nature of the play's action and the resulting demands on the viewer's credulity. In *Orestes* Euripides elevates the complexity of the *mechanema* plot to new

[20] See, e.g., Burnett (1971) 130ff.

[21] See Greenwood (1953) 92ff., Fitton (1961).

[22] Cf. below, pp. 83-84.

[23] See, e.g., Hartigan (1986) and (1991) 89ff.

[24] See below, pp. 58-63.

levels, presenting a bewildering series of unexpected twists and reversals unparalleled in even the most frenetic of his earlier works. Failure to acknowledge the conflict between the demands of this complex melodramatic plot and the possibilities for psychological subtlety in the portrayal of the play's characters — insistence on placing $\tilde{\eta}\theta o\varsigma$ before $\mu\hat{v}\theta o\varsigma$ in the analysis of *Orestes* — has led to a number of distortions of the work's significance. This is the result of submitting the play to a critical scrutiny it was never intended to bear, all in the name of uncovering further evidence of psychological or moral flaws in the protagonist and his companions. A good example of this process at work can be found in the various responses to the clear discrepancy between Pylades' words at 765-67 (where he tells of being banished from Phocis by his father Strophius) and Orestes' impassioned exhortation to Pylades at 1075-81 that the latter return home and leave Orestes and Electra to their fate.[25] Orestes' words have been cited as evidence of the young man's crazed instability of mind — of his ever more tenuous grasp on reality as the play progresses — or (alternatively) as an instance of his extravagant and largely delusional propensity for melodramatic displays of self-pity.[26] Neither of these interpretations is convincing. The one founders on the numerous inconsistencies and improbabilities to be found in the plays of the ancient tragedians, few of which admit of such psychological interpretations;[27] the second ignores the fact that Euripidean tragedy is quite capable of melodramatic excess without such ulterior motives.[28] More economical is the assumption that Euripides either did not not notice the discrepancy between the two passages or, more likely, did not deem it of sufficient importance to delete. Strophius' edict (introduced at 765-67) provides the immediate motivation for Pylades' timely entrance at line 725 (the unlikeliness of which itself is

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[25] See Grueninger (1898) 38-42, who argues for the deletion of 763-71. Grueninger is opposed by Krieg (1934) 49-50 and Page (1934) 49.

[26] See, e.g., Verrall (1905) 244-45, Greenberg (1962) 183, Zeitlin (1980) 68.

[27] In *Or*, note, e.g., the different views presented of Electra's and Pylades' roles in Clytemnestra's death (32, 284-85, 406, 615-21, 1074, 1089, and 1235-36; attempts to emend this last passage to bring it into harmony with the others are misguided: see Willink [ed.] *ad loc.*); the contradictory sentiments expressed regarding Helen's fate at 1494-1499, 1512-13, 1533-36, 1580-86, and 1614; the somewhat confused intermingling of the motifs of vengeance and salvation in the *mechanema* scene at 1149-1245 (on which see Hunger [1936] 18ff., Pohlenz [1954] 418-19, Conacher [1967] 222-23). Cf. below, pp. 197-98, on problems regarding the sequence of events at 1296ff. and the Phrygian's knowledge of those events. See pp. 309-11 on mistaken attempts to identify a discrepancy between Orestes' words at 288ff. and his attitude later in the play. (On the other hand, the discrepancy between 52-56 and 688-90 clearly *is* meant to be noticed: see below, n. 88.) See further, Krieg (1934) 49ff. (who concedes that *Or* contains an undue number of such inconsistencies).

[28] Note, e.g., the similar scene between Orestes and Pylades at *IT* 674ff. (esp. 693-94).

perhaps the best evidence of Euripides' willingness to sacrifice
verisimilitude to the demands of plot and of the *mechanema* format). It
also sets off to a still greater degree the fidelity of Orestes' boyhood
friend (who is willing to endure his father's angry denunciations) against
the cowardice of Menelaus (whom, at this point in the play, we have just
seen fold before the similar denunciations of the elderly Tyndareus).[29] In
its immediate context this new wrinkle in the Orestes myth serves several
useful functions. Yet it clearly is not intended to bear a great critical
weight (for example, that of providing still further evidence of the
universal detestation of Orestes and his deed [Steiger (1898) 14]): if such
were the case, the scenario that it envisions could not be dropped in such
a summary fashion at 1075ff.[30] To a certain extent, the interpretation of
these contradictory passages is bound in with the much broader question
of the nature of Orestes' madness — a feature of the hero's presentation
that has been invoked repeatedly to justify a variety of interpretations of
the play as a whole and of particular passages such as these.[31] Yet the
above discussion suffices to suggest the critical pitfalls that can arise from
scanning the text of *Orestes* with an eye to minute revelations of the
protagonist's character or for data that, when extracted from the play, can
be added together to compile a brief against Orestes and his companions.
It appears that, as in the majority of his other *mechanema* plays,
Euripides here is painting on a much broader canvas, and that we must
adjust our critical perspective accordingly.

   In addition to the false emphasis on the character of the protagonists
and their psychological state, readings that search the text for evidence of
corruption in Orestes and his friends skew the focus of the play, diverting
attention toward a study of the protagonists' various flaws while passing
over, or denying altogether, the corruption of the world around them.
Thus, for example, we are asked to condemn Orestes for daring to oppose
his grandfather Tyndareus,[32] for having the temerity to address the Argive

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[29] On Tyndareus' role, see below, pp. 71-73 and 105ff. Strophius is a doublet of
Tyndareus: like Tyndareus, he emphasizes the unholy nature of the deed in which Pylades has
shared (ἀνόσιον, 767; cf. 481, 501, 515, 518), focusing exclusively on the matricide
(φόνον ... μητρός, 767: note the emphatic word order and cf. 479 [μητροφόντης]), and, like
Tyndareus, he is cast as an exceedingly hot-tempered old man, the precursor of the censorious
old men of New Comedy (θυμωθείς, 765; cf. 490 and 607-09), who threatens his opponents
with exile (765; cf. 534-37, 622-26). For similar evaluations of Pylades' role see Wuhrmann
(1940) 102-05 and Schmidt-Berger (1973) 145ff.

[30] Cf. Pylades' own words at 1093ff. (on which see the curiously forced interpretation of
Steidle [1968] 107).

[31] On attempts to see in Orestes' madness the clue to the connection between the play's
two halves, see Appendices Two and Three.

[32] E.g., Verrall (1905) 225-34, Willink (ed.) on *Or* 544-601; cf. Lloyd (1992) 121 (with

assembly,[33] and for cheating on his agreement to commit suicide when condemned by that assembly[34] — all actions that can be accounted for in terms of the conventions of the Attic stage, the requirements of the plot, and the general expectations of the audience. On the other hand, special pleading is employed to justify the secondary characters in the play and thereby further blacken Orestes (or at least remove any reasonable motives for his actions): Helen and Menelaus become virtuous and sympathetic figures who must struggle to deal with the utterly unrealistic hopes and the violent, hate-ridden insanity of Orestes and Electra;[35] Tyndareus is presented as the noble defender of a just and orderly society;[36] even the Phrygian slave is allowed a certain status at the expense of Orestes.[37] In accordance with this tendency, supporters of the protagonists are blackened as thoroughly as the protagonists themselves. Thus the messenger of lines 852ff. is presented (contrary to convention and with little evidence) as a partisan underling of the house of Atreus whose report is biased in favor of the male scion of that house.[38] Similarly, the *autourgos* who is said to have spoken in Orestes' defence (917ff.) is regarded as an untutored reactionary who is blind to the larger issues involved and whose arguments present a parodic image of the views of the 'common man.'[39]

It is not, of course, necessary to go to such extremes to feel discomfort at Orestes' actions in this play. Yet it is easy to sympathize with the impulse toward such extreme views, for the corruption apparent in the

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the displaced paragraph on 120) and see below, pp. 130-32.

[33] See, e.g., Verrall (1905) 235-37, Grube (1941) 389, Kitto (1961) 349, Greenberg (1962) 181, Euben (1986) 228.

[34] E.g., Conacher (1967) 222; see Krieg (1934) 45. West (ed.) on *Or* 946 compares Medea's stratagem against Creon but notes the lack of malice aforethought on the part of Orestes.

[35] See, e.g., Vellacott (1975) 53ff. *passim.*

[36] See below, pp. 99-103 and 105-07.

[37] See, e.g., Vellacott (1975) 77-78; cf. below, pp. 211-13 and 245-48.

[38] See, e.g., Verrall (1905) 237-8 and 241, Mullens (1940) 155, Greenberg (1962) 180, Rawson (1972) 159, Schein (1975) 61, Vellacott (1975) 69, Falkner (1983a) 296, de Jong (1991) 69-70, 107, and 114, Lloyd (1992) 127.

[39] See, e.g., Mullens (1940) 155, Wolff (1968) 144-45, Burnett (1971) 208, Schein (1975) 61, Vellacott (1975) 69, Lloyd (1992) 127-28. (Hartung [1843] 2.488 suggests that the *autourgos* represents Aeschylus and his naively heroic conception of Orestes.) Positive evaluations of the *autourgos* and comparison with the similar *autourgos* in E. *El* can be found in Krieg (1934) 40, Lesky (1965) 172, Schmidt-Berger (1973) 42-43, Vickers (1973) 582, West (ed.) on *Or* 918-22. The similarity between other expressions of this theme and its expression here in *Or,* the length and positioning of the *autourgos'* account (the last of the four speeches reported before that of Orestes himself), as well as the contrast established between the *autourgos,* as a farmer, and the corrupt urban mob of Argos all serve to argue against an ironic reading of the *autourgos'* speech.

world surrounding Orestes and his friends ill accords with the notion that
the play focuses upon the moral failings of the hero and his associates:
the critic must either attempt to play down the corruption of Orestes'
opponents or adopt a reading of the work that is pessimistic in the
extreme, one that finds in the play a bleak and rather muddled vision of a
world where no one (with the minor exception of Hermione) is unsullied
by vicious motives and corrupted principles — where each character is
introduced only to be undercut by the poet.[40]

Condemnation of Orestes and his associates diverts attention away
from larger issues to involve the reader in a picayune search for moral
flaws. It also presents the play as a diptych wherein lines 1098ff. reverse
and, to a certain degree, negate all that has come before. Most
importantly, perhaps, it leads the critic to disregard the highly
sensationalistic, incident-laden nature of the work as a whole and force
the play into the mold of a drama of character, thereby distorting its
aesthetic mode as well as its thematic and ethical thrust. Although
Orestes is not devoid of psychological insight, its concerns are largely
situational, with the emphasis on the protagonist's reactions to a series of
events over which he has little or no control. To all intents and purposes,
the murder of Clytemnestra appears in *Orestes* as a given fact, to be
manipulated by the various characters as suits their purposes.[41] The play
itself focuses on the aftermath of Clytemnestra's death, on the ways in
which different individuals respond to Orestes' deed or seek to exploit it
to their own advantage. *Orestes* is not a study of matricide (or of
matricides) so much as an account of Orestes' desperate plight following
the commission of that dreadful but unavoidable crime. Rather than a
study of criminal psychology or of heroism gone sour, *Orestes* is best
regarded as a study of betrayal, frustration, and outrage and as a portrayal
of the extremes to which individuals can be driven when faced with the
injustice of a corrupt and seemingly malevolent world. This approach to
the work has the advantage of allowing us to account both for the
sympathetic picture of Orestes and his friends early in the play and for the
extreme savagery of the final scenes. It also associates *Orestes*
thematically with a series of Euripidean plays that covers some twenty-
five years of the poet's career. In the following pages a brief review of
other Euripidean studies in victimization will help to bring the play into
perspective. Yet, as I will demonstrate, *Orestes* differs significantly from
many of these earlier works in its tone, its plot-structure, its approach to

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[40] See, e.g., Arrowsmith (1963) 47 and Schein (1975) 54.

[41] For a contrasting view, see Eucken (1986).

characterization — in precisely those features that associate it with
Euripides' later *mechanema* dramas. It is this blending of early and late
Euripidean features that gives *Orestes* its distinctive character and so
often has confounded attempts to arrive at a satisfactory interpretation of
the play.[42]

EURIPIDES AND THE PSYCHOPATHOLOGY OF MORAL OUTRAGE[43]

Euripides' interest in what we might call the psychopathology of moral
outrage can be seen throughout the corpus of his preserved works and is
apparent both in the types of stories he chooses to dramatize and
particularly in the manner in which he crafts the plots of his plays.

MEDEA

Medea, among the earliest of Euripides' tragedies to survive intact,
presents his most powerful study of this theme. The play as a whole
represents an attempt to understand the forces that could drive a woman
to slaughter her own children in cold blood. Medea, the exotic foreign
witch, is scarcely a typical mother, nor is she overly sympathetic as a
character, yet Euripides' play succeeds in communicating to the audience
the impression that, in watching this maddened folk-tale character
gradually confirming herself in her resolve to kill her children, it in fact is
seeing the work of forces that lie within us all. Medea's act springs
largely from the wild, unrestrained nature of her 'barbaric' character and
from the particulars of her situation (memory of her past crimes
committed on Jason's behalf; the fact that, having cut herself off from all
outside ties, she now faces none of those restraints that prevent the
average person from giving free vent to his or her more savage impulses).
Yet the audience is led to identify with her suffering and, for all its

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[42] In presenting this view of *Or* I am influenced to a great extent by the studies of Krieg
(1934), Lesky (1935), (1965), and (1983), Pohlenz (1954), Steidle (1968), and esp. Zürcher
(1947) 149ff. My approach is similar to those of Wuhrmann (1940) and Schmidt-Berger
(1973), whose work became available to me only after my own account was substantially
complete. The former concentrates mainly on the play's structure and its allegedly faulty
reliance on pattern's established in Euripides' plays of ἀναγνώρισις; the latter examines the
φιλία theme.

[43] The following study of the psychopathology of moral outrage in Euripides makes little
pretence of breaking new ground, but is intended as a partial corrective against the critical
trends discussed above and in Chapter One. A similar approach is adopted by da Rocha
Pereira (1987/1988).

revulsion at her deed, to sympathize with her reasons for acting as she does. Much of this sympathy is engendered by the manner in which Euripides subjects the viewer to first-hand experience of the cool, sophistical indifference of Jason in the magnificent *agon* at 446ff. and the various turns taken by Medea's frantic thoughts as a result of that meeting. As in *Orestes,* we are presented with an isolated character who is betrayed by friends, surrounded by enemies, and left with no apparent means of escaping from or remedying the situation. We follow closely the internal state of that character as by degrees she is led to commit a grisly act of revenge. The technique employed here is more probing than that of *Orestes,* less plot-directed, and delves more deeply into the internal dialogue by which Medea finally reaches her decision; moreover, the emphasis on Medea's heroic *thymos* — her Ajax-like determination to avoid humiliation at the hands of her $\dot{\epsilon}\chi\theta\rho o\acute{\iota}$ — finds no parallel in *Orestes.*[44] For all of these differences, however, the general psychology of the two plays is quite similar. In both, Euripides' viewers experience at first hand the desperation of the protagonist when confronted by a series of betrayals and injustices. As a result the audience is led to judge the situation from the protagonist's point of view and comes to regard with understanding, even with sympathy, the course of action to which that character is driven, shocking as it may be. The ghastly nature of the vengeance taken in each case acquires a symbolic quality, giving concrete expression to the dark fury of the psychological forces unleashed in the breast of the protagonist and (we are made to feel) potentially latent within us all.

HERACLIDAE

A briefer and less successful study of a similar sort can be seen in the character of Alcmene in *Heraclidae.*[45] In the final scenes of that play the elderly mother of Heracles, embittered at Eurystheus' treatment of her son and her son's offspring,[46] is relentless in seeking the former tyrant's death. The extreme vehemence of her animosity is noted but is deemed understandable in light of her former suffering at Eurystheus' hands (981-82). Alcmene is a close analogue of Menelaus at *Andromache* 537ff. (who flatly proclaims to Andromache's young son that he can expect no sympathy, $\dot{\epsilon}\pi\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ $\tau o\iota$ / $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\gamma'$ $\dot{\alpha}\nu\alpha\lambda\acute{\omega}\sigma\alpha s$ $\psi\upsilon\chi\hat{\eta}s$ $\mu\acute{o}\rho\iota o\nu$ / $T\rho o\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu$ $\epsilon\mathring{\iota}\lambda o\nu$ $\kappa\alpha\grave{\iota}$

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[44] For this feature of Medea's portrayal see Bongie (1977), Barlow (1989), Foley (1989).

[45] See Falkner (1989), Wilkins (1993) xxi-xxii and on *Hcld* 928-1055 and 1050-51.

[46] See 941ff.; cf. E. *El* 907ff.

μητέρα σήν) and of Iphigenia at *Iphigenia among the Taurians* 344ff. (who, embittered at the thought that her only brother, Orestes, is now dead, resolves to perform without pity the ghastly rites that have been placed in her charge). In each of these instances we can detect the poet's interest in the psychological effects of prolonged enmity and/or unjust suffering. Alcmene turns implacably against the man who has hounded her and her offspring for years; Menelaus (one of Euripides' darkest villains) justifies his behavior on the grounds that he has been hardened by years of suffering at Troy; Iphigenia rebels against the Greeks who sought her own death and against the gods who, having endorsed the sacrifice, now appear to have permitted Orestes' death. None of these works presents a developed study such as that of *Medea,* but each strikes a chord that Euripides is to play upon again and again throughout his career.

HIPPOLYTUS

This same type of rebellion against a perceived injustice can be seen to play a substantial role in Phaedra's decision to involve Hippolytus in her own misfortune. As in *Medea,* we are presented with a character who, not entirely by her own doing, finds herself driven into a corner and reacts by devising a desperate act of revenge. Having been betrayed to Hippolytus partially through the connivance of her nurse but largely through her own moral languor, Phaedra's first thoughts are only of escaping dishonor through suicide (599-600). As she listens to Hippolytus' diatribe against women, however, and to his threats to reveal the entire matter to Theseus, Phaedra's purpose changes somewhat. The scene is remarkable for its staging: the audience is permitted to watch Phaedra, unseen by Hippolytus and the Nurse, listen to Hippolytus' vehement reaction against the Nurse's proposal — a theatrical effect commonly employed in New Comedy but striking in the context of a tragedy.[47] (This is not the only instance we shall find of Euripides stretching the conventions of the Greek tragic stage in order to convey a psychological or emotional point.) When she comes forward after Hippolytus' departure, Phaedra is still resolved on suicide but now determines that Hippolytus too must suffer. On one level this alteration in her attitude is purely a practical matter: her εὔκλεια scarcely will be preserved if, as he has threatened, Hippolytus

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[47] See Taplin (1978) 70-71 and Ley/Ewans (1985). Note also the striking fashion in which Phaedra's lyric outburst at 669ff. is cast as the *antistrophe* to the chorus' confused and horrified song at 362ff. (cf. Taplin [1978] 155-56).

breaks his vow and tells others of her guilty love (688-92). Yet, on another level, Phaedra's plot against Hippolytus is the result of love turned to hate, a reaction against the execrations that we, along with Phaedra, have just heard uttered by the incensed devotee of Artemis. The enervated invalid of lines 170ff. here becomes as hard as steel. Assured of her own moral innocence, she is determined that the rigidly chaste Hippolytus will not be allowed to gloat (as she imagines he will) over her ruined reputation (725-31):

ἐγὼ δὲ Κύπριν, ἥπερ ἐξόλλυσί με,
ψυχῆς ἀπαλλαχθεῖσα τῇδ' ἐν ἡμέρᾳ
τέρψω· πικροῦ δ' ἔρωτος ἡσσηθήσομαι.
ἀτὰρ κακόν γε χἀτέρῳ γενήσομαι
θανοῦσ', ἵν' εἰδῇ μὴ 'πὶ τοῖς ἐμοῖς κακοῖς
ὑψηλὸς εἶναι· τῆς νόσου δὲ τῆσδέ μοι
κοινῇ μετασχὼν σωφρονεῖν μαθήσεται.

Thus the fatally indecisive Phaedra finally achieves the ability to act. Significantly, her decision is expressed in terms that, in their echo of Hippolytus' own words at 667-68 (compare 78-81), are laden with a bitter and indignant rancor. Where concerns of husband, family, and personal honor failed to provide Phaedra with the necessary resolution to take decisive action, outrage succeeds.

As was the case in *Medea,* the audience scarcely feels comfortable with the threat implied in Phaedra's final lines, nor does it fully accept her implied assertion of moral innocence. Its reaction to Phaedra's plot, when it is carried out, is one of horrified revulsion. Again, however, Phaedra's plight has been presented in such a way that her reaction at 669ff., while abhorrent, strikes us 'right' in terms of her character and in the context of the events portrayed on stage. Euripides so orchestrates the course of Phaedra's transformation that the viewer is confronted with a knottier situation than apparently was the case in his first *Hippolytus.* Rather than present a wicked adulteress for our general condemnation, here he transforms the character of Phaedra into a complex study of an essentially noble yet fatally irresolute woman whose indecision places her in a position from which there is only one escape. Threatened with the double stigma of adultery and incest (a stigma that both she and Euripides' audience feel is — to a certain degree, at least — undeserved), the helpless Phaedra of the play's earlier scenes comes savagely to life and lashes out at that person who represents both her guilty passion and

the one threat to her cherished reputation. Again, the approach differs in intensity and complexity from that of the more superficial *Orestes,* but the psychological insights and a good deal of the dramaturgical technique are the same.

HECUBA

Of all of Euripides' preserved plays, however, it is *Hecuba* that provides the closest parallels to *Orestes,* not only in particulars of theme and technique but also in the general tenor of the modern critical response to the play.[48] As in *Hippolytus,* we begin (after a brief prologue) by having our attention fixed upon a distressed female character over whom an as yet unperceived disaster impends. As in *Medea,* we look on (in the *agon* with Odysseus) as this character attempts to circumvent an immediate threat by means of arguments based on χάρις and on generally accepted standards of human behavior (νόμος). These arguments are rebuffed (again, as in *Medea*) by a cruel, sophistical application of *Realpolitik* and the protagonist (much like Phaedra at *Hippolytus* 600) collapses in a state of helpless resignation. Unlike Phaedra, Hecuba is able to find some solace, imperfect though it is, in Talthybius' account of the nobility with which her daughter confronted death (518ff.).[49] This moment of partial reconciliation with her fate is short-lived for Hecuba, however, as Euripides, employing a technique that will appear again in *Troades* and *Heracles,* introduces a second, greater catastrophe through yet another *coup de théâtre.*[50] The slave whom Hecuba had sent to fetch water for Polyxena's burial rites (609-13) returns with the newly-discovered corpse of Polydorus (658ff.). The audience has been prepared for this turn of events by Polydorus' ghost in the prologue (47-48).[51] All the same, the entrance of this slave woman followed by attendants bearing a shrouded corpse must arouse a degree of anxious uncertainty in the viewer's mind at first, an experience to which the audience of Greek tragedy is subjected somewhat infrequently and never without some purpose. Uncertainty is quickly replaced by horror, however, as the

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[48] Cf. Boulter (1962) 105-06, Burkert (1974) 101. Note, e.g., the evaluations of the play by Schlegel and Hartung cited by Heath (1987b) 60-61.

[49] Cf. Kovacs (1987) 97.

[50] Cf. Tetstall (1954).

[51] Diggle (1984) deletes 73-78, 90-97, and 211-15. If these deletions are accepted, the only preparation the audience has had consists of 47-48, 79-86, and 428-30, surely not enough to give it confidence as to the identity of the corpse. See, however, Kovacs (1988) 127-28, Brillante (1988).

audience watches the unsuspecting Hecuba learn that the body is that of
her son Polydorus, whom she had presumed safe. The cruel suddenness
of the revelation, combined with the audience's anticipation of this event,
conveys a sense of appropriateness to Hecuba's violent reaction in much
the same way as the corresponding scene in *Hippolytus* validates and
renders believable Phaedra's plot against Hippolytus. The grisly details of
Hecuba's revenge and the horrible inversion of the figure of the nurturing
female that they entail, take on quasi-allegorical overtones in this context
that recall the account of Medea's vengeance against Jason's bride at
Medea 1167ff.[52] The raw savagery of the deed effectively conveys the
violent emotion involved in the queen's reaction against the injustice of
Polyxena's and Polydorus' deaths and (in the background) her defiant,
long-repressed rage at the injustice of Troy's fall, the death of Priam and
his children, and her own enslavement.[53] The brutality of the attack
becomes a symbol both for the intensity of Hecuba's moral outrage at the
unfairness of her fate and for the raw power of the psychological forces
unleashed by that outrage.[54] In Hecuba's cruel mockery of the blinded
Polymestor we feel the unpent fury of the former victim of Odysseus'
ambition and Polymestor's greed. The transformation is a horrible one,
but, as with Phaedra, it is emotionally 'right.'

The crucial moment in this transformation, the psychological turning
point, is skilfully interwoven with the point at which the two strands of
this so-called diptych-play come together. Much of the criticism of
Hecuba has inveighed against the supposedly faulty structure of the play
without giving this important scene its due.[55] The sudden introduction of
Polydorus' corpse is not effected merely so that Euripides, somewhat
perfunctorily, can get on to the second half of his play and thereby finish
his tale. It has been shown that *Hecuba* is not the pedestrian retelling of
well-worn myths that older commentators made it out to be. In fact, it is

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[52] Cf. the alteration in the Bacchantes at *Ba* 728ff. and see Schlesier (1988), C. Segal
(1990a) 314-15 and (1990b) 119-22, Zeitlin (1991).

[53] This is not to claim that the Hecuba of the early scenes is merely a passive sufferer: see
C. Segal (1990b) 119 n. 33.

[54] Note as well the momentary sense of chaos introduced at 1056ff. The effect is similar
to that achieved on a grander scale in the final scenes of *Or* (to be discussed below). In each,
the wild disorder of the events portrayed on stage gives effective expression to the turbulent
emotional forces that underlie those events.

[55] See Conacher (1967) 152ff. and Heath (1987b) for useful overviews. Conacher himself
points to the approach I will be pursuing: "If the most distinctive feature in the plot-material
of this play consists in the blending of the traditional 'sacrifice myth' with an obscure
Thracian legend and its Euripidean sequel, surely it is reasonable to suppose that we shall find
the central meaning of the play in the dramatic exploitation of this new juxtaposition, and of
its distinctly Euripidean climax" (151).

quite likely that the particulars of the second half of the play — those
regarding the discovery of Polydorus' body and Hecuba's revenge against
Polymestor — are almost entirely a Euripidean confection.[56] We must
assume, then, that Euripides has a purpose in introducing the section of
his diptych that deals with Polydorus, that he intentionally eschews, for
example, a mere revision of Sophocles' *Polyxena*. Characteristically, he
so constructs his play that the audience's attention is focused upon the
suffering of a single character who progresses through a cycle of crisis —
defeat — despair — apparent conciliation — overwhelming catastrophe.
The abrupt introduction of Polydorus' corpse allows the poet to present a
graphic portrayal of the moment when Hecuba snaps, when the weight of
this final outrage changes her from suffering victim to demonic avenger.
In the context of her numerous sorrows, her rage against Polymestor
strikes us not merely as anger against her child's murderer but as a
furious rebellion against the wrongs she has suffered. In this way
Euripides' 'diptych' approach provides the opportunity for yet another
study of moral outrage.

    Hecuba provides numerous other points of contact with *Orestes:* note,
for example, the similarity between Odysseus' high-toned arguments at
306ff. and those of Tyndareus.[57] For the purpose of the present
discussion, however, the most important similarities are those between
the behavior of Hecuba and Orestes. Like Orestes, Hecuba is forced to
seek the support of an unwilling champion. Like Orestes, she resorts to
arguments of a more personal sort when those based on justice fail.[58] Her
vengeance scheme, like that of Orestes, involves the malicious perversion
of one of the basic religious conventions of Greek society: hers that of
ξενία, his that of ἱκετεία. Finally, she, like Orestes, has been roundly
condemned by the critics for her actions, which have been interpreted as
indicating the moral degeneration that her character has undergone as a
result of suffering.

    The common reading finds in Euripides' *Hecuba* a rationalized version
of the myth of Hecuba's transformation into a supernatural beast. Her
outrage at the treachery committed against her son and the frenzy of her
attack on Polymestor are cited as evidence that, in the latter scenes of the
play, we are witness to a gradual process of demoralization in Hecuba's
character. The vengeance-seeking Hecuba of these scenes thus is viewed

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[56] Stephanopoulos (1980) 78ff.; cf. Conacher (1967) 150-51.

[57] See Conacher (1967) 220-21 for other similarities.

[58] See Kirkwood (1947) 64ff., Conacher (1967) 221. Agamemnon's reaction at 812 marks
the shift, just as does Menelaus' pacing at *Or* 632-33. (For more on the similarities between
the two pleas, see below, pp. 165-70.)

as a "fiend incarnate, the moral precursor of the 'prowling hell-hound, baying on the plains of Troy.'"[59] This rationalistic interpretation of the myth, however, is not brought forward explicitly in the text: the last 200 lines of the play occur on the abstract level of forensic debate, with little that characterizes Hecuba as a frenzied animal, while the explicit references to her coming transformation (1265-74) are colorless and contain no hint that this transformation should be regarded as a symbol for her savageness against Polymestor. Her characteristic epithet will be 'wretched' (ταλαίνης, 1273), not 'savage' or 'vicious.'[60] It cannot be denied that the deed to which Hecuba is driven is a horrifying one, as are the deeds of Medea and Phaedra. But, as in the case of Medea and Phaedra, it is a mistake to become preoccupied with the question of Hecuba's moral failings.[61] Each of these three characters possesses important personal weaknesses, but Euripides' interest in each case goes beyond the merely particular to examine issues of greater moment. In regard to Hecuba it is particularly distressing that, as with Orestes, criticism of her character has led readers to ignore the great care taken by the poet to generate sympathy for his protagonist. Thus, for example, Hecuba's arguments before the feckless Agamemnon have been taken as a sign of her moral degeneration instead of as an indication of her desperation when confronted by the cravenness of the Greek commander, for whom justice is an admirable thing but only when unattended by risk.[62] No member of Euripides' audience would have denied that Polymestor's act was heinous or that Hecuba was acting justly in seeking vengeance against the impious and grasping barbarian chieftain.[63] The fact that she, a helpless female captive, must resort to such extreme arguments and that she gains thereby, not aid, but mere passive

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[59] Kirkwood (1947) 61, quoting Matthiae (1918) 118. For similar evaluations of Hecuba see Blaiklock (1952) 101ff., Conacher (1967) 146ff., Luschnig (1976), Tarkow (1984), Reckford (1985), Nussbaum (1986) 397ff., Michelini (1987) 131ff., C. Segal (1990a) and (1990b).

[60] Cf. Zeitlin (1991) 63.

[61] For similar arguments see Steidle (1966), Hogan (1972), Meridor (1978) and (1983), Kovacs (1987) 78ff., Heath (1987b), Gregory (1991), Zeitlin (1991).

[62] Note the similarity between *Hec* 850ff. and *Or* 682ff. For a negative assessment of Hecuba's arguments see, e.g., Pearson (1962) 144ff., Conacher (1967) 162-63 and (1981) 19-22, C. Segal (1990b) 123 and 124-25. It is important to notice, however, that her rhetorical strategy before Odysseus and Agamemnon is virtually identical: cf. 271ff. with 812ff. (The similarities between Hecuba's behavior in each 'half' of the play also is stressed by Steidle [1966] and Heath [1987a] 146-47.)

[63] Cf. Kovacs (1987) 143 n. 48. Adkins' view (1966b) that the audience would not regard Hecuba with immediate sympathy, inasmuch as she is a defeated foreigner and therefore κακός, is artificial in the extreme. See below, pp. 82-84 for more on Greek attitudes toward revenge.

acquiescence, reflects upon Agamemnon, not upon Hecuba. As Blaiklock ([1952] 111) notes, no one in Euripides' audience would have missed the biting irony of 868-69, where Hecuba the slave offers to release (ἐγώ σε θήσω ... ἐλεύθερον) the great commander of the Greeks from fear. Her appeal based upon Agamemnon's enjoyment of Cassandra's bed, like Orestes' similar appeal to Menelaus in the name of Helen (*Orestes* 669-73), marks her as wretched and desperate but scarcely as immoral. She merely alludes to an existing situation, after all, calling upon Agamemnon to acknowledge obligations that he has incurred. Her argument may be unsound (Agamemnon is hardly a κηδεστής of hers by virtue of the relationship), but it is not the unconscionable pandering that it is often made to seem. The sight of the feeble queen, forced to beg aid from the man responsible for the slaughter of her children and the virtual rape of Cassandra, contains a pathos similar to that of the aged Priam before Achilles in *Iliad* 24.

Nor should Hecuba's response to the discovery of Polydorus' corpse and to the rhetorical challenges that ensue be seen as a negative foil to the noble reaction of Polyxena earlier in the play.[64] Polyxena's courageous stance does present an example of serene nobility unparalleled elsewhere in the play and, most importantly, provides Hecuba with a momentary sense of reconciliation with her lot, of partial compensation for her loss. It is difficult, however, to see how Polyxena's example could have served to inspire Hecuba to a different course of action in the latter part of the play. It is one thing to face an unavoidable disaster nobly and with dignity, another to allow the treacherous murder of one's son to go unavenged (particularly when one lives in ancient Greece!).[65] Hecuba does what she must in order to attain revenge and the audience, rather than condemn her for it, marvels at the bitter strength with which this final injustice has endowed the formerly helpless queen. As Stephanopoulos has indicated, both the manner of her vengeance and its form are appropriate.[66] Moreover, the uncanny aura of a perverted, deadly domesticity that pervades the description of the plot (1148ff.) is eerily

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[64] See, e.g., Conacher (1967) 158ff., Reckford (1985), Nussbaum (1986) 405ff. Contrast Kovacs (1987) 104 and see the negative view of Polyxena's act in C. Segal (1990b) 113-14 and Gregory (1991) 97-98.

[65] See esp. Meridor (1978).

[66] Stephanopoulos (1980) 84: "Die Habgier Polymestors, die ihn einst zum Mord geführt hat, führt ihn jetzt ins Verderben. Er hat den Sohn Hekabes ermordet, und jetzt müssen seine zwei Kinder getötet werden, die Euripides offenbar ad hoc erfunden hat" (cf. Michelini [1987] 170-73). As for the blinding of Polymestor, it is necessary for Hecuba's escape, but it also gives her vengeance an additional savageness that, as has been argued above, is essential to Euripides' purpose.

reminiscent of the pathetic domestic realism of the third *stasimon* (914ff.), the ode that immediately precedes Polymestor's entrance. The change in tone parallels and reinforces the change that has taken place in Hecuba. The final impression left by the play is not of Hecuba's degradation but of her lonely and desperate rebellion against a world in which the noble are killed without reason while the corrupt thrive. Euripides leaves us aghast at Hecuba's deed but carefully ensures that we view that deed with sympathy and with an understanding of the larger issues involved.

TROADES

Troades is quite a different play from those we have examined thus far, yet it displays thematic and structural features that associate it directly with these plays. The main link lies in what Conacher has described as the "rhythm of hope and desolation" that pervades *Troades*.[67] While the play does not focus on the figure of Hecuba with the same intensity as *Hecuba, Troades* is concerned directly with what the same critic has termed "the long passion of the Queen and her women" as they endure the aftermath of their defeat at the hands of the Greeks. Yet, despite this continual emphasis upon the sorrows that afflict Hecuba and her followers, Conacher is able to point to "a curious intermittent hope which punctuates [their] sufferings." It is in this recurrent but intermittent hope that Conacher finds the organizing principle of the work:

> Again and again, this hope is stamped out and gives away to desolation, only to flicker forth in some new place until its final quenching at the end of the play. Thus a certain rhythm is introduced into what would otherwise be a mere chain of woeful experiences, and it is this rhythm which informs the structure of the play.

Conacher provides a detailed analysis of this rhythm of hope and desolation: Hecuba's initial despair (mournful but somewhat philosophical); the devastating effect of Talthybius' first proclamation; the perverse note of festive triumph in Cassandra's lyric outburst; Hecuba's sorrow at Cassandra's fate and at the fate of Polyxena, tempered momentarily by the hope represented by Andromache and Astyanax; the cruelty of Talthybius' second proclamation; Hecuba's spirited condemnation of Helen — apparently successful yet attended (in

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[67] Here and below see Conacher (1967) 137ff. (esp. 139).

the audience's mind, at least) by a gloomy air of defeat; the unrelieved desolation of the play's concluding scenes, with the appearance of Astyanax's corpse and the final farewell to Troy as it collapses in flames.[68] Two features of this apparently loose dramatic structure stand out in the context of the present discussion. First, it is significant that the debate regarding Helen's actions is reserved for the latter part of the play. It is only after the sorrowful plight of Hecuba and her women has been detailed in full — and directly after the cruellest blow of all (the order for the murder of Astyanax) — that Euripides brings on Helen, the person responsible for the suffering we have been witnessing. Hecuba's exultation at Menelaus' professed intentions (884ff.) comes as a direct reaction against the series of blows that she has endured: here, at last, appears to be an instance where justice will be served and the gods will be seen to be allocating suffering where it is merited. The exuberance of Hecuba's reaction, her sudden coming to life (reflected in the heightened rhetoric of her outburst), displays features similar to the scenes from *Hecuba* examined above: again we find a formerly passive victim, after a series of crushing blows, suddenly revitalized by the opportunity of taking vengeance against the person responsible for her woes. It is in this light as well that we are to understand the vehement confidence with which she asks Menelaus to allow a debate (906-10): Hecuba, in her exultation, enthusiastically endorses an opportunity to display Helen's villainy to the world. But whereas in *Hecuba* the protagonist's sudden activity swiftly leads to vengeance, here Euripides works a subtle change in the pattern, leaving Hecuba with the impression that her cause has triumphed, although the audience knows that Helen will return to Greece to resume in comfort her old position as wife of Menelaus and queen of Sparta.[69] To this point in the play Hecuba has felt the full force of the various reversals in her fortune in a manner quite similar to that of the central scenes of *Hecuba;* here the impact of Hecuba's failure is all the greater because she herself is left in ignorance of the fact. The cruel irony of 884ff. (Hecuba's exultant prayer to Zeus as δυστόπαστος εἰδέναι, yet a god who πάντα ... δι' ἀψόφου / βαίνων κελεύθου κατὰ δίκην τὰ θνήτ' ἄγεις) constitutes one of the more tragic moments in this most tragic of plays.

The second interesting feature of *Troades* (again, in the context of the present examination) also has to do with lines 884ff. Conacher has detailed the manner in which Hecuba and the chorus in *Troades* gradually

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[68] Cf. Lloyd (1984) 303.

[69] Cf. Meridor (1984) 211ff.; contrast Lloyd (1984) 303-04.

bow before the weight of their suffering and begin to despair of any justice from the gods.[70] As figures such as Odysseus, Menelaus, and Helen seem to thrive on the human level, so, on the divine level, it appears that justice counts for naught.[71] This bleak picture of a lone figure struggling against a world abounding in corruption and sorrow has much in common with *Hecuba, Orestes,* and (as we shall see) with *Ion.* Again Euripides focuses the interest of his play upon intense personal suffering and its effects on the human psyche.

ION

Ion is not regarded by most critics as a play fraught with dark or brooding overtones. Yet there is much in its structure and in its handling of the figure of Creusa that links it directly with the other plays we have been examining, particularly *Hecuba.* Again we are presented with a character who, after a series of injustices at the hands of gods and humans alike, suddenly rebels, lashing out violently at the one person who is within her reach. The pattern is familiar enough by now: Creusa's despair at the fate of her child by Apollo and her subsequent childlessness with Xuthus; her initial hope that Apollo can be persuaded to make amends and ease her present distress; her desolate state at the news of Xuthus' 'discovery' of Ion; her vehement reaction against the plot that she feels these three males (Apollo, Xuthus, and Ion) have concocted against her and, in particular, her rage at her betrayal at the hands of Apollo and Xuthus. There are several differences with *Hecuba,* differences that are associated principally with Euripides' later interest in romantic tragedy and, particularly important, in dramas of intrigue.[72] Yet, despite the lightness of tone and the superficial concerns of plot that dominate *Ion,* Euripides here continues to pursue psychological interests similar to those displayed in his earlier works. The *Ion* is a play concerned with the loss of innocence — that of Ion himself, but more so that of Creusa. It is Creusa's plight that gives the play its one dark note of unresolved suffering and it is the intricacy of her character upon which much of *Ion* focuses. From her first appearance on stage Creusa displays a complex of moral and emotional attitudes — an inner confusion regarding her

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[70] Conacher (1967) 142, 144-45.

[71] The prologue of *Tro* has occasioned a great deal of discussion in this regard, interpreted as an external frame which reassures the viewer that the gods do punish *hybris* or alternatively, as an irrelevant accretion. See, e.g., O'Neill (1941), Conacher (1967) 134-37, Lee (1976) xv-xviii, Meridor (1984) 208ff., Manuwald (1989), Dunn (1993).

[72] See Solmsen (1968a) and (1968b).

position as both wife to Xuthus and former paramour of Apollo — that
sets her apart from the other characters in the play and associates her, for
example, with the Neoptolemus of Sophocles' *Philoctetes*. Forced to
conceal her relation with Apollo, isolated by virtue of her sex and her
guilty secret, she enters as an already troubled woman who bears her
sorrows quietly and with nobility. Her opening interview with Ion allows
the audience to observe at first hand both her grief at the loss of her child
and the patient courage with which she conceals that grief from the
outside world (in this case, from Ion himself). The scenes that follow are
so constructed as to portray the series of blows that eventually overwhelm
Creusa's quiet endurance and lead her to make an attempt on the life of
the youth with whom she previously conversed so courteously. First
comes Ion's assertion that Apollo would never allow himself to be
consulted on a matter that involved his own dishonor (369ff.), followed
by the even more crushing news that Creusa is not to be given a second
child to replace the one she was forced to leave for dead (761-62). Then
comes the final blow: Apollo has given Xuthus a son (κείνῳ μέν ...
παῖδα Λοξίας / ἔδωκεν — a telling phrase) to enjoy on his own, apart
from Creusa (774-75, compare 780-81). Creusa, it appears, will not only
remain childless but will also see her patrimony, the throne of Athens,
usurped by her foreign husband's bastard son. This final offence on the
part of Apollo, added to her sorrow for her former child and the prospect
of a life without further children of her own, proves too much for Creusa
(compare 776-77).[73] Again, the manner in which the audience must watch
and wait for this final blow to fall recalls the technique of *Hecuba*. Here
the tension is undercut, however, by the audience's foreknowledge that
Ion is actually Creusa's lost son and that Apollo intends all to turn out
well in the end.

   After the blow has fallen Euripides makes interesting use of the
garrulous old retainer. Creusa, in her horror, can manage only mournful
cries of distress. It is left to the more matter-of-fact retainer to elicit from
the chorus the full details of Apollo's oracle (763-807). When the facts
have been laid out the retainer speaks two lengthy *rheseis,* totalling some
45 lines (808-831[74] and 836-56), in which, after the manner of his kind,
he draws a series of incorrect conclusions regarding Ion's true origins and
declares himself ready to die in avenging this affront to his mistress. It is
curious that so much attention is focused upon the ramblings of a minor,
semi-comic character at such an important juncture in the play. The

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[73] Cf. Dunn (1990) 135.
[74] Diggle (1981) follows Dindorf in deleting 830-31.

temptation is to regard this apparent diversion as evidence of the older Euripides' fondness for comic persiflage; such a reading overlooks the cunning use of the old retainer as yet another foil for Creusa, however, and misses the impact of the scene in performance. Earlier we have seen Creusa's hard-won knowledge set off by the contrast between her own brooding unhappiness and the innocence of the youthful Ion, on the one hand, and the awe-struck 'tourist' chorus on the other. Here we watch as the simple-minded retainer rambles on concerning the wrongs committed against his mistress, little suspecting the true extent of the suffering Creusa has endured or the significance for her of this final outrageous injustice. The technique recalls *Hippolytus* 601ff. or the treatment of Cassandra in *Agamemnon:* the audience watches this silent figure, aware of the knowledge that she possesses and waiting anxiously to hear her response. That response eventually comes in Creusa's brilliant monody at 859ff. The effect of this sudden rush of song is like a dam bursting. The passion that Creusa has been holding pent up inside of her comes rushing forth, releasing the tension that has been growing throughout the play, particularly during the old retainer's diatribe. The piece is brilliant, not only for its color and emotion but for the effective picture it provides of the formerly innocent Creusa at a time when she shared the simple naiveté of the chorus and Ion (887ff.). The audience is made to feel the greatness of the change that has occurred in Creusa and to sympathize with the bitterness that now possesses her.[75] When Creusa is persuaded by the retainer to consider plans for seeking revenge the audience is not greatly troubled: the prologue and the general tone of the play as a whole have assured it that this is not a world into which tragedy can enter. Yet in Creusa's plight there are definite tragic overtones which are brought out by Euripides through many of the same techniques that he employs in his more serious plays. One of the features of *Ion* that sets it apart from Euripides' less successful efforts at romantic tragedy (for example, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*) lies precisely in this blend of true pathos with colorful romance and high comedy. It is noteworthy that even in such a light play as *Ion* Euripides presents a powerful (although ultimately negated) portrayal of the effect of prolonged and aggravated suffering.

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[75] This fall from innocence is paralleled, to a degree, by the change in mood that overtakes the chorus: contrast the darker tone of the third *stasimon* with that of the *parodos* and the first *stasimon;* cf. above, pp. 62-63, on *Hec* 1148ff. and see Dunn (1990) 136. See below, pp. 189-92, for further discussion of Creusa's monody.

ORESTES

A similar pattern of repeated frustration and eventual reaction informs
the structure of *Orestes.* As in *Troades,* the series of set-backs endured by
Orestes and his companions is lengthy, occupying the first 1097 lines of
the play, and is punctuated by an often recurring glimmer of hope.
Orestes opens on a mournful note (as do virtually all of the plays
discussed above), with the unconscious, guilt-ridden Orestes lying in
squalor on a pallet, attended only by Electra, herself a care-worn and
woeful figure. Their one hope lies in the expected return of Menelaus, a
blood-relation who has the political, as well as moral, authority to obtain
their acquittal before the Argive assembly and arrange for their ritualistic
purification from the matricide. As we have seen, Euripides takes great
care in the early portion of the play to emphasize the wretchedness of the
two siblings, their concern for one another, and their absolute dependence
upon their uncle Menelaus. In fact, the first 347 lines of the play — an
introductory sequence exceptional for its length[76] — are devoted to the
exposition of their plight, which is examined from a variety of
viewpoints. Each detail of these early scenes is calculated, however, to
win sympathy for the cause of Orestes and his sister and, consequently, to
arouse an eager expectation of Menelaus' arrival. Electra's prologue sets
out the general background of the play and informs the audience of the
dire situation that confronts both her and her brother. She leaves no doubt
that, in her view, the responsibility for Orestes' act rests with Apollo and
with Clytemnestra herself, because of her wicked deeds (24ff.). Helen
arrives and elicits further comment as to the wretchedness of the pair and
their essential innocence (75-76, 121; compare 28-31). The brief
interview with Helen serves several important functions in regard to the
future course of the action. In performance, however, the two most
striking and immediate features of the scene are the continued note of
sympathy for Electra and Orestes and the contrast between the fortunes of
this squalid, miserable pair and those of the beautifully-attired,
complacent, essentially frivolous Helen. As in *Hecuba* (262ff.) and
Troades, the blissful and prosperous insouciance of Helen, who is the
ultimate cause of much of the sorrow on stage, serves as a foil, enhancing
our sympathy for the care-worn protagonists.[77] The chorus enters and

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[76] The unusual length of the play's 'prologue' has often been noted, but its significance
has not always been given due weight. See, e.g., Ludwig (1954) 33-34, Steidle (1968) 100-
01, Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1-315. Cf. below, pp. 306-11.

[77] Although much has been made of Helen's behavior in this scene, her cameo
appearance, on the whole, lacks color. This scene does prepare for the later plot against

again a sympathetic emphasis is placed upon the woes that afflict Electra and, in particular, Orestes, with not a word of recrimination except regarding the role of Apollo (160-65, 191-94). Next follows the longer scene between Orestes and Electra. Here the same themes are reiterated, but in a more dramatic fashion. The squalor and helplessness of the pair are laid out in greater detail (219ff., 301-03). Orestes' condition is described at greater length and is given dramatic expression in his momentary fit of madness (255ff.).[78] Most importantly, the mutual concern of each for the other's health and safety is portrayed with a great deal of that pathos for which Euripides was (and is) so famous (217ff., 294ff.). Finally, the first *stasimon* provides a coda of sorts for this sympathetic introduction.[79] Its colorful prayer on behalf of Orestes reemphasizes the young man's essentially passive role in his mother's death and the injustice of his present suffering (327-31, 341-44). By the time Menelaus arrives on stage the audience is fully sympathetic to Orestes' cause and is keenly interested in his salvation.

A particularly important feature of this sympathetic introduction is the emphasis on the isolation of Orestes and Electra and their desperate need of support. In this context, the repeated references to Apollo's role in Clytemnestra's death acquire additional force.[80] A continual note of reproach underlies these references — reproach against the god who, having impelled Orestes to murder his mother, now appears to have deserted both him and Electra to the fury of the Argives (if not the Furies themselves). It is thus no coincidence that Orestes' final speech before the first *stasimon* and the entry of Menelaus (280ff.) dwells upon the pair's unworthy treatment at the god's hands (285-87):

$$\Lambda o\xi i\alpha\ \delta\grave{\epsilon}\ \mu\acute{\epsilon}\mu\phi o\mu\alpha\iota,$$
$$\ddot{o}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma\ \mu'\ \dot{\epsilon}\pi\acute{a}\rho\alpha\varsigma\ \dagger\ddot{\epsilon}\rho\gamma o\nu\ \dot{a}\nu o\sigma\iota\acute{\omega}\tau\alpha\tau o\nu,\dagger$$

Helen's life, however, to the extent that it reasserts her responsibility for the Trojan War and the universal condemnation of her actions. More importantly, the scene presents Helen as a symbol for the undeserved good fortune of the treacherous Menelaus, thereby making her the logical target of the later plan for vengeance. For the visual impact of her attire (not explicitly noted but implied by Electra's bitter words at 126ff.), cf. the reference to Menelaus' appearance at 348-51 and the suggestive 86 (cf. 449-50); cf. Schmidt-Berger (1973) 39-40. The visual effect of her entrance and the contrast with the squalid Orestes and Electra is similar to that at *Hec* 952ff. (the arrival of Polymestor), E. *El* 988ff. (Clytemnestra), and *Tro* 895ff. (Helen).

[78] See Appendix Two.

[79] See Strohm (1957) 121 and n. 1, Steidle (1968) 100.

[80] See, e.g., 28-32, 75-76, 121, 160-65, 191-94, 276, 285-287, 327-31. Cf. Steidle (1968) 98-100.

τοῖς μὲν λόγοις ηὔφρανε, τοῖς δ' ἔργοισιν οὔ. [81]

Having been betrayed (as it appears) by Apollo, Orestes and Electra look
forward all the more anxiously to the arrival of the one person on whom
they can reasonably place their hopes: Menelaus.[82]

Menelaus in *Orestes* is modelled after the same pattern as Agamemnon
in *Hecuba*.[83] Holding a position of authority and responsibility, he is
cognizant of his obligations to Orestes and of the weight of Orestes'
various pleas but is unwilling to risk his own well-being to champion his
nephew's cause. The series of scenes at 348-806 is carefully designed to
portray Menelaus in the darkest possible light and to present his refusal of
aid to Orestes as an act of treachery on the part of a faithless φίλος who
crumples at the first threat to his own prosperity.[84] As we will see in
Chapter Three, the debate in the *agon* over the justness of Clytemnestra's
death (lines 491ff.) has led critics to focus on that issue — which, as
regards the scenes in question, is essentially irrelevant, but which has
provided more than one scholar with apparent justification for directing
his or her study of the play along inappropriately moralistic and
condemnatory lines. The central concern of the *agon* — as of 348-806 as
a whole — is not the matricide (which all agree was an abominable act),
but the decision of Menelaus and his motives for that decision. His
rejection of Orestes' claims there is presented as the second and most
outrageous in the series of betrayals and injustices which eventually leads
Orestes to lash out.

Menelaus' initial reaction to Orestes' plight is sympathetic (417, 425,
429, 447), despite his sensitivity to the enormity of Orestes' act (374,
376, 393, 413). When first confronted by Tyndareus, he maintains this
sympathetic stance, upholding the principle that he, as Orestes' nearest
male relative, is obligated to stand by him in distress (482, 484, 486).

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[81] Cf. the equally bitter 414ff. Both of these passages prepare for Orestes' even more
incensed response to Menelaus' treacherous behavior.

[82] Many scholars emphasize the fact that references to Apollo's role in Clytemnestra's
murder become much less frequent following the *parodos* and disappear virtually altogether
after the *agon* with Tyndareus, until the god's dramatic appearance in the finale. (See, e.g.,
Schein [1975] 61-62.) Like Orestes' insanity, however, Apollo's command and his apparent
desertion of Orestes play a crucial role in the initial exposition of Orestes' desperate plight,
but are of less relevance to the action that follows. As the play proceeds, the audience's
attention is focused upon a more immediate series of betrayals. Repeated reference to
Apollo's responsibility in those scenes would be superfluous and would distract from the
more pressing issues at hand. Had Euripides truly attached significance to the diminished
emphasis on Apollo as the play proceeds, we would scarcely expect the casual reference at
955-56.

[83] Cf. the Agamemnon of *IA* and see de Romilly (1972) 240-41.

[84] Cf. the analysis of Steidle (1968) 102-05 and Schmidt-Berger (1973) 36ff.

More importantly, he reaffirms Orestes' innocence in the death of Clytemnestra, arguing — as do Electra, Helen, the chorus, and Orestes himself earlier in the play — that Orestes' role in the affair was essentially passive (488).[85] Tyndareus' vindictive attitude, on the other hand, is attributed by Menelaus to the unthinking rage of an irascible old man blindly seeking vengeance for his daughter's death (490).

Following the *agon* between Orestes and Tyndareus, however, Menelaus alters his position.[86] The key to understanding the *agon* must lie in Menelaus' ultimate decision and, more particularly, in the basis for that decision. In the long-awaited presentation of Menelaus' verdict at 682ff. Euripides presents a masterful example of betrayal by equivocation, unmatched outside of Jason's arguments to Medea.[87] The high style of Menelaus' speech with its numerous *gnomai* (684-86, 694, 696-97, 706-07, 708), its frequent use of simile and metaphor (696-701, 706-07, 712-13), its heavy larding of abstracts (685, 687, 690, 694, 702, 703, 705, 708, 710, 711, 714), and its outright lies[88] mark it as the speech of a cowardly but clever villain.[89] Unlike the brazenly sophistic Odysseus

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[85] On the interpretation of this line, see below, p. 101 n. 4.

[86] Not everyone agrees that Menelaus' change of position is so clearly marked as I have argued here: see, e.g., Lloyd (1992) 114.

[87] Cf. Schmidt-Berger (1973) 39ff., Vickers (1973) 581-82, O'Brien (1988a) 196.

[88] At 688-90 Menelaus claims to have arrived ἀνδρῶν συμμάχων κενὸν δόρυ / ἔχων ... σμικρᾷ σὺν ἀλκῇ τῶν λελειμμένων φίλων (which seems to imply, but need not, that he has arrived with but a single ship remaining from his original fleet of 60 [*Il.* 2.587]). In the prologue, however, at 54-55 (our first impression of Menelaus) Electra declares that he fills the harbor of Nauplion with his fleet (λιμένα ... Ναυπλίειον ἐκπληρῶν πλάτῃ) and at 242 she refers to his ships in the plural (σέλμαθ' ὥρμισται νεῶν). Commentators have attempted to ease the apparent contradiction: Weil (ed.) suggests that ἐκπληρόω in 54 conveys the sense, *explere navigationem* (against which, see Di Benedetto [ed.] *ad loc.*); Willink (ed.) on *Or* 241-42 and Diggle (ed.) adopt the singular νεώς of O at 242 (cf. West [ed.] *ad loc.*), the former finding support in the fact that Menelaus and Helen return home in but a single ship in Euripides' *Hel.* But the audience, hearing Electra's words at 53ff., would be likely to recall, not *Hel*, but Homer's *Od.*, where Menelaus arrives in five ships (*Od.* 3.299) — a small fleet, but one large enough to allow him to pillage much of the southern Mediterranean (*Od.* 3.301-02, 4.81-92). There, too, Menelaus has suffered many losses before arriving home, but the scene of his arrival is splendid: *Od.* 3.311-12. (Euripides enhances this similarity by his use of Homeric language at 53ff.: see Di Benedetto [ed.] on *Or* 55ff.) It seems that Euripides intends his viewers to recall the magnificent Menelaus of *Od.*, only to have their expectations immediately undercut by the skulking nature of this 'hero,' who, in his fear of the Argives, sends Helen home secretly at night (56-60) and then deserts his nephew when confronted by Tyndareus. The technique involved here is much like that used of Orestes in E. *El:* the long-awaited savior turns out not to be what was expected. It may well be true, as defenders of Menelaus argue, that he could scarcely take Argos by force of arms, but it is also true that he intentionally misrepresents his position here in order to provide a specious justification for not speaking in Orestes' defence.

[89] It is this speech above all that must have motivated Aristotle's well-known pronouncements on Menelaus' character: see above, pp. 2-3. Jason, at *Med* 446ff. and 522ff., is more aggressive than is Menelaus, but employs several of the same devices. (Note esp. his

in *Hecuba,* Menelaus employs a more devious means of evading his
responsibilities. Yet the reason for this sudden change of heart is clear to
Orestes (717-24) and to the audience: Tyndareus' threats have succeeded
in intimidating him.

Many commentators have attempted to muddy the interpretive waters
in this scene by granting the arguments of Tyndareus a weight which they
do not deserve, thereby distracting attention from the fact that it is his
violent threats and not his abstract reasoning that win the day here.[90]
Menelaus' initial assessment of Tyndareus' vehemence at 490 is
confirmed by the latter's violent course at 607ff. Having had his original
arguments countered by those of Orestes, the Spartan elder reveals his
true nature by turning to brute force to win his cause. In a fit of anger he
drops all reference to abstract concepts of justice, avowing that he will
bring about Orestes' murder ($\phi \acute{o} \nu o \nu$, 609) by forcing the Argive
assembly to vote for his death whether it will or no (612-14):

> $\mu o \lambda \grave{\omega} \nu \ \gamma \grave{\alpha} \rho \ \epsilon \grave{\iota} s \ \ddot{\epsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \tau o \nu \ \text{'}A \rho \gamma \epsilon \acute{\iota} \omega \nu \ \ddot{o} \chi \lambda o \nu$
> $\dot{\epsilon} \kappa o \hat{\upsilon} \sigma a \nu \ o \dot{\upsilon} \kappa \ \dot{\epsilon} \kappa o \hat{\upsilon} \sigma a \nu ^{91} \ \dot{\epsilon} \pi \iota \sigma \epsilon \acute{\iota} \sigma \omega \ \pi \acute{o} \lambda \iota \nu$
> $\sigma o \grave{\iota} \ \sigma \hat{\eta} \ \tau' \ \dot{a} \delta \epsilon \lambda \phi \hat{\eta}, \ \lambda \epsilon \acute{\upsilon} \sigma \iota \mu o \nu \ \delta o \hat{\upsilon} \nu a \iota \ \delta \acute{\iota} \kappa \eta \nu.$

His irrational vehemence at this point is emphasized by his use of the
verb $\dot{\epsilon} \pi \iota \sigma \epsilon \acute{\iota} \omega$. Di Benedetto ([ed.] on *Or* 255-56) points to the singularity
of $\dot{\epsilon} \pi \iota \sigma \epsilon \acute{\iota} \omega$ in a context that does not involve physical contact. More
revealing, perhaps, is the use of this verb at 255 to describe Clytemnestra
inciting the Furies. In each case $\dot{\epsilon} \pi \iota \sigma \epsilon \acute{\iota} \omega$ implies the violent and frenzied
goading of irrational creatures. Tyndareus here drops his earlier appeals
to $\tau \grave{o} \nu \ \kappa o \iota \nu \grave{o} \nu \ \text{'}E \lambda \lambda \acute{\eta} \nu \omega \nu \ \nu \acute{o} \mu o \nu$ (495) and to an ideal portrait of society as
based on the rule of a communal and impartial justice. He becomes
instead an enraged old man who is determined to have his way by
whatever means necessary, while society itself becomes a brute object to
be employed as he will in obtaining his ends. In his anger he extends his
wrath beyond Orestes to include Electra (614ff.), becoming almost
incoherent in his rage.[92] He then concludes his tirade by threatening
Menelaus directly: he must either desert Orestes or sunder all ties with
Tyndareus' family, including any claims to the throne of Sparta (622-
28).[93] With this parting shot Tyndareus angrily stamps off stage, leaving

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similar appeal to political realities to justify his treacherous behavior: *Med* 547ff.)

[90] For a balanced discussion, see Lloyd (1992) 113-14 and cf. below, pp. 99ff.

[91] On the dispute concerning the text of 613 see below, p. 108 n. 24.

[92] Note the extreme *hyperbaton* at 619-20.

[93] On the problematic 625-26, see Appendix Five.

the feckless Menelaus to contemplate the risks involved in championing Orestes' cause. Despite his appeals to abstract concepts of justice, Tyndareus has proven to be an unreasonable, irascible, and vindictive old man — a stock character in Greek drama and in Greek thought in general.[94]

I have dwelt on the *agon* at such length because it is essential to recognize that Orestes loses Menelaus' patronage not because of any objective evaluation of his former deeds, but because of Menelaus' fear resulting from the threats of Tyndareus. Thus the one hope upon which Orestes, Electra, and the chorus have dwelt for the first 355 lines of the play is crushed in as cruel a fashion as are Hecuba's arguments before Odysseus in *Hecuba* or, apparently, Creusa's hopes in *Ion*. The bitterness of Orestes at 717ff. is fully justified and would strike a sympathetic note with the audience, which has observed Menelaus in action and noted the less than honorable motivations underlying his sudden change of attitude.

With the entrance of Pylades a second ray of hope appears. Not only does Orestes now have a sympathetic male companion to share his plight, but Pylades' presence and encouragement enable Orestes to attend the assembly himself and defend his cause in person. As in *Hecuba* and *Troades,* however, this positive note is short-lived, since the messenger soon brings news of the assembly's vote of condemnation.

The description of Orestes' trial at 866ff. has occasioned a good deal of discussion, much of it characterized by the same determination to condemn the protagonist that we have noted earlier.[95] It is generally acknowledged that Euripides' portrayal of the Argive assembly is intended as an indictment of the blind partisanship, the political corruption, and the excesses which characterized the Athenian ἐκκλησία in the late fifth century.[96] As we have seen, many include Orestes in the scope of this indictment, condemning both his decision to address the assembly and the arguments that he employs.[97] Yet the negative verdict is

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[94] See Richardson (1933) 27ff. and, in general, Falkner/de Luce (1989). I already have noted the similarity to Strophius at 765 (above, n. 29).

[95] See esp. de Romilly (1972), Lloyd (1992) 126-28, Hall (1993).

[96] There is disagreement, however, on the degree of specificity in this criticism. Since antiquity it has been fashionable to see in the demagogue of 902ff. a veiled attack on Cleophon (see Σ *Or* 772, 903, 904 [note as well Σ *Or* 371 and 1682], and, e.g., de Romilly [1972] 244-46; Goossens [1962] 642 suggests that the figure of Theramenes lies behind Euripides' characterization of Talthybius), but it is best to regard the demagogue, like the *autourgos,* as a generic figure, part of a general indictment of the failings of radical democracy. See Willink (ed.) on *Or* 902-16 and, on the motif of the corrupt demagogue in Euripides, Jouan (1984) 10.

[97] Cf. above, pp. 51-52. Note esp. the view of Verrall (1905) 240-42 (cf. Grube [1941] 389, Vellacott [1975] 69-70, Falkner [1983a] 296) that Orestes in fact turns the partially

the result, not of any folly on the part of Orestes, but of the corrupt nature
of the assembly itself. The two individuals who condemn Orestes
(Talthybius and the demagogue) are both characterized as thorough-going
politicians who speak only to curry favor and influence for themselves,
one with the aristocratic/oligarchic faction represented by Aegisthus'
φίλοι (893-94), the other, more generally, with the *demos*. Orestes'
condemnation is expressly attributed to the unwholesome influence of the
latter upon the volatile Argive mob, despite the nobility of the young
man's self-defence (943-44):

> ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔπειθ' ὅμιλον (sc. 'Ορέστης), εὖ δοκῶν λέγειν·
> νικᾷ δ' ἐκεῖνος ὁ κακὸς ἐν πλήθει χερῶν ....⁹⁸

The notion that the audience, having been presented with such an
account of the assembly, would focus in any way upon flaws in Orestes'
character, as revealed by his arguments, entails a variety of interpretive
difficulties.[99] Perhaps most glaring, although rarely considered, is the
relatively perfunctory nature of the messenger's account. We are told
little regarding the actual arguments employed by the various speakers,
while those arguments that *are* reported merely present abbreviated
variations of those presented in the *agon* between Orestes and
Tyndareus.[100] Talthybius asserts that Orestes' deed represents a bad
precedent for the treatment of parents by their children (ὅτι καθισταίη
νόμους / ἐς τοὺς τεκόντας οὐ καλούς, 892-93) — a faint echo of
Tyndareus' earlier arguments based on νόμος, employing a commonplace
also used by Orestes at 564ff. (and again at 935ff.).[101] And although
(significantly) the actual speeches of the *autourgos* and Orestes are
recounted in greater detail (917ff. and 931ff.), on the whole they merely
repeat Orestes' earlier arguments at 572ff. and 564ff.[102] No new

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sympathetic assembly against him by the scurrilous nature of his arguments.

⁹⁸ On the negative connotations of ὅμιλον and πλήθει, see de Romilly (1972) 243 n. 16.
Cf. *Hec* 130ff.

⁹⁹ See above, p. 52 on attempts to discount the words of the *autourgos* and of the
messenger himself on the grounds that both are biased retainers of Agamemnon.

¹⁰⁰ See Verrall (1905) 239, Di Benedetto (ed.) on *Or* 934ff., West (ed.) on *Or* 884-945
and 943.

¹⁰¹ Cf. below, pp. 105-15 and 148-51.

¹⁰² The *autourgos* modifies the argument of 572ff., employing a strategy similar to that
used by Odysseus at *Hec* 313ff. As regards Orestes' speech, the deletion of 933 is generally
accepted. Reeve (1973) 158-59 (followed by Diggle [ed.]) deletes 938-42 as well, his most
compelling argument: the awkward echo of 936 in 942. (Willink [ed.] is too extreme in
proposing the deletion of 932-42 as a whole.) At first sight 938-42 seems merely to repeat the
argument of 932-37. However, the characterization of Clytemnestra as ἡ προδοῦσα λέκτρ'

perspective on Orestes' deed is gained from this account, no general consensus regarding the nature of that deed emerges. Instead, the messenger's narrative focuses on four aspects of the assembly as a whole, the last three of which are closely interconnected: the clear diversity of opinion regarding how Orestes should be judged,[103] the corrupt motives of those speakers who oppose Orestes,[104] the wanton and unjust nature of the assembly's final decision,[105] and the pathos of Orestes' situation.[106] The poet's desire to emphasize the last three themes accounts for the messenger's open sympathy towards Orestes and for the similarities between his character and that of the *autourgos* of 917ff.: as simple country folk, they are removed from the vicious excesses that characterize the urban mob.

The 'naive' reading of this scene finds a second disappointment of the hero's hopes and a second betrayal of his claims. Forgotten by Apollo, plagued by self-doubt and remorse, betrayed by Menelaus, Orestes now finds himself unjustly condemned by the corrupt whim of the Argive mob, who care little for his ancestral claims to their loyalty.[107] The image of his departure from the assembly, conducted by the weeping Pylades and a small group of unnamed φίλοι (949-52),[108] lays the ground for the

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ἐμοῦ πατρός (939) combined with the threat of general anomie (941) and of unbridled female τόλμα (942; cf., e.g., *Hipp* 413-14) raise the specter, not only of adulterous murderesses (as asserted by Reeve; cf. below, pp. 143-48), but of a society where women's licentiousness is given free rein, unchecked by male reason (cf., e.g., *Tro* 1055-59). If allowed to stand, 938-42 lend the speech the same note of indignation found in the simlar argument at 564-71 (see below, pp. 148-51).

[103] It can be argued that the verdict of Diomedes (898-902), like that of the two sons of Theseus at *Hec* 122-29, is inserted solely to illustrate such diversity and should not be accorded great significance in an interpretation of the messenger's report (cf. Lloyd [1992] 127). Diomedes' speech serves as a foil to that of Talthybius: like Talthybius, Diomedes is a well-known figure from myth (as opposed to the two 'generic' speakers who follow) and one whom Euripides has included by means of yet another unexpected innovation in mythological tradition (see Willink [ed.] on *Or* 898-902); in contrast to the herald, however, he argues for the moderate course of exile on the grounds that killing Orestes would be wrong (note the implications of εὐσεβεῖν at 900 — as many have noted, a significant echo of Tyndareus' words at 496ff., given the latter's secret role in the assembly [915]).

[104] See previous n. on Talthybius. Significantly, we are told nothing about the specific arguments employed by the demagogue other than that they were secretly supplied by Tyndareus (915-[16]). Instead, the messenger deals only with his corrupt methods and, by implication, his equally corrupt motives.

[105] On this point see esp. de Romilly (1972), who overstresses, however, the difference between Euripides' treatment of this theme here and in his earlier works.

[106] See esp. 879-83 and 946-56.

[107] The messenger's closing words at 954-56 imply the betrayal of Orestes' ancestral claims as heir to the throne and son of Agamemnon (ηὐγένεια) equivalent to his desertion by Apollo. This point is reinforced by the conspicuous (and much maligned) acknowledgement of these claims by the messenger (868-70) and the *autourgos* (923).

[108] The identity of these φίλοι is mysterious. There is no sign of them on Orestes' entry at

melodramatic pathos of the lyrics at 960ff.[109] and the even more
melodramatic farewell scene between Orestes and Electra which follows.
It also prepares us for the ferocity of Orestes' eventual rebellion against a
world that has been shown to be almost universally hostile and corrupt.
Ironic interpretations of the report, in their quest for further evidence of
Orestes' criminal folly, are forced to assign a weight to this scene that it
will not sustain. In the process, they assume an audience endowed with
an extreme literary sophistication — one that can see beneath the words
of the (on this reading) biased messenger and the even more partisan
autourgos, that can set aside the negative characterization of the speakers
opposed to Orestes and of the Argive mob, and that is able to derive
important evidence regarding the protagonist's character from his
perfunctory apology at 931ff. It is better to examine the messenger's
report, like the similar account at *Hecuba* 117ff. and, by analogy,
messenger speeches in general, for the basic information which it
conveys — in this case, the unjust condemnation of the hero — and not
for any ironic undercurrents that can be detected beneath the speaker's
words. Euripides' audience does not seem to have been schooled to
search for such undercurrents, and the superficial tone of the report as a
whole should discourage modern readers from doing so. The speech is
not a masterpiece of narrative art, but it effectively presents the third and
most threatening betrayal of Orestes' expectations. Claims of piety,
kinship, and now heredity all have proven to be for naught.

   With the decision of the assembly Orestes and Electra again are
thrown into the depths of despair and once more Euripides has been
careful to emphasize that it is corrupt self-interest, ambition, and craft
that have placed them in this dangerous predicament, not considerations
of justice or the common good. At 1018ff. Orestes and Electra have lost
all hope. Betrayed by Apollo, Menelaus, and the fickle whim of the
Argive assembly, they seem to have no recourse. It is here that Pylades
first introduces the notion of punishing Menelaus for his cowardly act of
betrayal. Scholars have taken this scheme (and its ready acceptance by
Orestes and Electra) as a sign of the moral decadence of the three pro-
tagonists: some have regarded it as further evidence of Euripides'

1012, where their presence could only serve to undermine the sense of lonely and desperate
isolation that Euripides strives to achieve. Their appearance at 950-51 is another sign that the
poet is thinking in generic terms in the messenger speech: the sympathy of friends adds to the
pathos of Orestes' plight as at *Hipp* 1179-80 (also cited by Willink [ed.] on *Or* 950; against
his further inference that the presence of such φίλοι provokes thoughts of the Athenian
ἑταιρίαι, see Appendix Four). Cf. Schmidt-Berger (1973) 160-61.

   [109] See below, p. 189 n. 64, on the attribution of these lines.

antipathy to the morally repugnant pseudo-heroes of ancient myth, others as a condemnation of the political intrigues of late fifth-century Athens, with its numerous ἐταιρίαι.[110] Yet the dramatic technique here is the same as that of the plays examined earlier, modified to suit the demands of the late Euripidean *mechanema* drama. As in the case of Medea, Phaedra, Hecuba, or Creusa, the plot adopted by Orestes and his companions is the result of desperation and of incensed moral outrage aroused by a series of betrayals and injustices. Commentators have interpreted this plot as cold-blooded and cruel for two reasons, both of them associated to a certain degree with what we might call the *mechanema* format — that is, with the manner in which this plot comes to be articulated on stage. In the other examples just cited the schemes undertaken come as the result of intense personal suffering which is studied with a probing and sensitive scrutiny. Moreover, in several of these examples the final impetus for the scheme is provided by a startling revelation or a dramatically striking scene in which the audience watches as the protagonist suddenly is transformed from passive victim to enraged avenger. The power of such an intensely personal approach assures the audience's sympathy and understanding. *Orestes,* by contrast, for all of its pathos, operates at a greater aesthetic distance. It tells us of Orestes' suffering and provides him with numerous pathetic scenes, but it never delves very deeply into the personalities of any of its characters.[111] And when the *peripeteia* comes — when Orestes turns from wretched pleader to demonic avenger — the alteration is introduced by Pylades' unexpected suggestion rather than by a sudden tragic blow. This distance between the audience and the characters of the play, and the emphasis on the forward movement of the plot rather than on the characterization of the protagonists, are common features of the Euripidean *mechanema* play; we should not allow them to lead us into mistaken conclusions about Euripides' intent here.[112] Orestes' ready acceptance of Pylades' suggestion comes as a reaction to the various betrayals he has suffered and is meant to be taken as such. To read into the scene a subtle condemnation of Orestes as a habitual criminal with a ready inclination for felonious acts is to ignore the sympathetic details that dominate the first half of the play and the basic pattern of betrayal and rebellion that is at work. Integrated with the more superficial, plot-ridden *mechanema*

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[110] On the latter interpretation, see Appendix Four.

[111] Cf. Hermann (ed.) vi-vii.

[112] These features of the *mechanema* plays (and the contrast with Euripides' earlier concentration on *Leidenschaft*) are examined by Solmsen (1968a).

format this pattern loses something of its force, as the audience's attention is diverted by a flood of incident, shocking turns of events, suspense, and sheer spectacle. The characters themselves suffer by comparison with Euripides' earlier protagonists as they too become caught up in the complex action and, of necessity, come to be presented in broader, more generic terms.[113] These very features of the play, however, weigh against those readings that delve too deeply into the psychology of the protagonists and suggest that what we are dealing with is not a drama of character but a curious hybrid of the poet's interest in tragic victims (as revealed mainly in his earlier works) and the later *mechanema* format.

The second feature of the scene which misleads critics concerns Pylades' role, mentioned above. The fact that the introduction of the revenge plot is left to a third party, as it were, gives the scheme an air of arbitrary cruelty in the eyes of many critics and has led to dark speculations about the nature of Pylades' character and his baleful influence on Orestes.[114] Yet Pylades' role in the play can scarcely bear such a weighty interpretive burden. Pylades in *Orestes* serves the same function as do the elderly servants of Euripides' *Electra* and *Ion*, that of a relatively minor character whose entrance serves to impel the protagonist to action or to support the protagonist in the execution of a scheme of intrigue — a predecessor to the *servus* of later comedy.[115] That Euripides here is working within a pattern suggested by the *mechanema* format and not with a view to the murky underside of Pylades' character may be seen from the awkwardness occasioned by the latter's entrance: in order to have Pylades appear suddenly at this crucial juncture of the play the spectator is forced to accept the hypothesis that Orestes' faithful friend deserted both Orestes and his sister (Pylades' fiancée, as it turns out)

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[113] Cf. the characters of *IT, Hel,* and *IA.* Creusa and Ion in *Ion* stand out as exceptions to this general tendency in Euripides' later *mechanema* plays.

[114] See Greenberg's lengthy analysis of φιλία in *Or* (Greenberg [1962] 170ff.). Negative assessments of the relationship between Orestes and Pylades are legion: see Verrall (1905) 234ff. *passim,* Mullens (1940) 155-56, Smith (1967), H. Parry (1969) 339-40, 342, Burnett (1971) 213-15, Rawson (1972) 157-62, Vickers (1973) 582-83, Burkert (1974) 100ff., Schein (1975) 53-54, 59, 62, Vellacott (1975) 70-72, Roisman (1984) 181-83, 188, Hartigan (1987) 129-32, Hall (1993) 265-71. (Cf. Perrotta [1928] 98-100 and 109-110, who argues that Pylades' role is to provide Orestes with a moral buffer.) For positive assessments of Pylades and his φιλία toward Orestes see Krieg (1934) 16-17 and *passim,* Hunger (1936) 18-22, Erbse (1975) 443-47, Steidle (1968) 107-09, Schmidt-Berger (1973) 145ff. See esp. Zürcher (1947) 154ff., who emphasizes Pylades' role within the *mechanema* plot.

[115] See Csapo (1986b) 148-50; cf. Strohm (1957) 123. With Pylades' method of entry (δρόμῳ στείχοντα, 726) cf., e.g., Hyllus at *Trach* 58 and, perhaps, the messenger at *Hel* 597ff. (note 602: τῇδε τῇ σπουδῇ).

immediately after Clytemnestra's death and returned home to live in peace, leaving his two friends to deal with the situation in Argos alone.[116] Obviously, Euripides has no desire for his audience to indulge in such a line of speculation and he leaves it little opportunity to pursue the matter. But if we raise the question of why Euripides would choose to introduce the difficulty in the first place, the only obvious answer is that he needs some method of reviving and redirecting Orestes' energies: a standard method of providing such motivation is through the introduction of a new character,[117] and the logical character to introduce here is Pylades.[118]

In his selfless loyalty to Orestes Pylades assumes a role found in several of Euripides' works, that of the faithful φίλος who is willing to face danger, disgrace, and even death in the service of his friend.[119] That role has a particular relevance in *Orestes,* however, where Pylades is introduced quite deliberately as a foil for the faithless Menelaus. While the latter refuses aid to Orestes despite the obligations of blood-kinship and of past favors received, Pylades (who is under no such obligations[120] and has none of the resources available to Menelaus) freely volunteers to share in Orestes' fortunes. This contrast is presented quite forcefully in the language employed of the two characters and is given visual expression in the staging of 717ff. With the exit of Menelaus and the conclusion of the lengthy *agon* (a scene that at this point has run for over 350 lines and has involved two separate sets of entrances and exits), the audience would expect a choral ode and a moment of reflection and recapitulation. Instead, as Menelaus and his stately entourage disappear down one *parodos,* the lone Pylades is seen hastening along the other.[121] The surprise of Pylades' entrance serves to enhance the contrast between him and Menelaus and provides the opportunity for a particularly forceful

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[116] Cf. Hermann (ed.) xi-xii, van der Valk (1984) 185-86.

[117] In addition to the characters mentioned previously, cf. the role of Aegeus in *Med* and that of Orestes in *Andr* (somewhat different because it is Orestes, not Hermione, who becomes an important agent in the action related at the end of the play).

[118] Pylades' presence earlier in the play would also complicate the staging and, more importantly, lessen the sense of Orestes' and Electra's desperate isolation. See Steidle (1968) 111 on the audience's anticipation of Pylades' arrival.

[119] Particular comparisons have been drawn, for good or ill, with the role of Theseus in *Her* and that of Pylades in *IT.*

[120] Here too a certain ambiguity arises: at 804-06 Orestes emphatically asserts the contrast between Pylades as a friend unrelated by blood (ἑταίρους, θυραῖος) and Menelaus as blood-relative (συγγενές, ὁμαίμων), yet later Pylades claims to be related to Orestes on his father's side (cf. 1233-34 and see Willink [ed.] *ad loc.*). Again we find that Euripides is quite willing to manipulate facts in the interest of particular dramatic or thematic effects, at the expense of literal consistency (cf. Krieg [1934] 50, Schmidt-Berger [1973] 151).

[121] Cf. Grube (1941) 387-88, Burnett (1971) 186, Halleran (1985) 38, Saïd (1993) 185-86.

juxtaposition of the two in Orestes' words at 717-28, where Menelaus' faithlessness in times of trouble is set against the loyalty of Pylades (who becomes a new καταφυγὴ σωτηρίας for the despairing hero). Where Menelaus fails to aid friends (719), leaving the dead Agamemnon ἄφιλος amidst his family's current difficulties (721), Pylades is φίλτατος (725), a reliable source of comfort amid misfortunes (727-28). Euripides goes to great lengths here to establish the contrast between these two quite different φίλοι and to cast Pylades in a positive light. The notion that the audience might regard this contrast as in any way ironic — that it would view the φιλία of Pylades as misguided or deluded — stems from the need to justify the critic's revulsion at the *mechanema* scheme and (one suspects) from a certain dissatisfaction with the banality, for modern readers, of the φιλία theme as a whole. Ironic responses to the faithful Pylades ignore the immediate context of his role and the parallels for that role elsewhere in Euripides' works. In their attempt to detect ominous implications in Pylades' words and deeds, scholars artificially magnify the importance of his character and, in the process, distort both the ethical themes and the tone of the play.

In fact, once on stage Pylades does little to deserve the critical attention he has received. His lines regarding his own banishment from Phocis (763-68) have occasioned much comment, but, as we have seen, their function is straightforward enough: they provide Pylades with a realistic motive for his return to Argos; they reinforce the important and much-stressed distinction between Pylades, who supports a friend even if he must suffer for it, and the self-serving Menelaus; they add to the sense of isolation and persecution that oppress Orestes and his friends and soon will lead them to rebel. Strophius' angry denunciation of Pylades also adds to the mood — which (as we will see) is a constant brooding presence in *Orestes* — of a world gone awry, of a story that has wandered outside of its traditional bounds and has turned back on itself.

Having explained the reason for his return and learned the particulars of Orestes' situation there is little left for Pylades to do in this initial scene other than act as a sounding board for Orestes' half-hearted, tentative speculations as to their future course of action. In their eagerness to detect evidence of his baleful influence on Orestes, critics have asserted that it is Pylades who impels Orestes to go before the Argive assembly (a disastrously foolish notion, in their view).[122] A careful reading of the scene shows that this is not the case. Pylades lends support and encouragement to his friend, but his series of questions and

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122 See, e.g., Schein (1975) 59; cf. Grube (1941) 388 n. 1, Burnett (1971) 186.

qualified conclusions at 774-86 scarcely justify the view that he drives
Orestes further into error by exhorting him to attend the assembly. (Note
the practical consideration — missed by many commentators in their
eagerness to condemn all that Orestes does as blundering or perverse —
that there is little else Orestes can do in this situation than attempt in
person to justify his deed before the assembly.)

Upon their return from the assembly, Pylades is silent until Orestes
addresses to him a final farewell (1065ff.). When he speaks, it is to
reaffirm his faithfulness to Orestes and to establish once again his
position as a friend who, in contrast to Menelaus, stands by his friends
even in times of hardship. Yet at 1098, at the conclusion of this
impassioned declaration of loyalty, Pylades suddenly introduces the
notion of seeking vengeance against Menelaus. As was noted above, the
manner in which the idea is introduced has an arbitrary, almost
gratuitous, air that many critics have seen as a key to the interpretation of
the plot itself: it seems coldly malicious when compared, for example, to
the corresponding scenes in *Hecuba* or *Ion,*[123] and it presents us with a
curiously passive Orestes whose actions seem to be unduly influenced by
the advice of his friends. Two considerations, however, argue against the
validity of such an interpretation. First, the transition to the *mechanema*
scene proper in Euripides need not be introduced by a main character and
generally is abrupt in any case. In *Ion* it is the elderly retainer who first
broaches the topic (970ff.), while in *Iphigenia among the Taurians* it is
Pylades (again cast in a supporting role) who does so (902ff.). In each
instance the shift is rather abrupt, as it is at *Electra* 596ff. and (less so)
Helen 777ff.[124] To argue that the scene portrays a nightmarish redirecting
of Orestes' energies under the baleful influence of Pylades, or,
alternatively, to detect signs of a helpless obtuseness in the hero[125] — a
further indication of his blind folly — is to ignore the conventions at play
in this scene. Secondly, there is a logic to Euripides' method here that
should be noted. Pylades' profession of fidelity vividly calls to mind the
scene at 725ff., where that fidelity is contrasted strongly with the fickle
self-interest of Menelaus. The return to the theme of Pylades as faithful
friend at 1069ff. must remind the viewer of the pernicious betrayal of
Orestes by the false Menelaus earlier in the play, thereby bestowing a
certain fittingness on the sudden shift from Pylades' own position to

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[123] Cf. Grube (1941) 390-91, Wolff (1968) 133, 134-36.

[124] Cf. S. *El* 938ff.

[125] See, e.g., W. G. Arnott (1983) 23-24 and 27-28, who draws inferences concerning
Orestes' character in part because of the similarities between him and the obtuse protagonists
of New Comedy.

consideration of how to punish the casuistry of Orestes' uncle. On the
other hand, the very abruptness of the shift serves a dramatic purpose.
Euripides is about to take his audience into a bizarre and uncharted world
of intrigue and attempted homicide — one which, if permitted to attain
maturation, would involve the overturning of all earlier accounts of the
later fate of Atreus' descendants. It is fitting that the entry into this
surreal environment receive a certain emphasis, and the surprise of
Pylades' sudden broaching of the topic at 1098 achieves just such an
emphasis. The technique is not unlike that of *Bacchae* 810 in its
suddenness and in the sinister note which it introduces.

Any surprise or shock occasioned by Pylades' plan (and its later
modification by Electra) derives, however, from the threat it poses to the
accepted version of the myth and not, for example, from the fact that it
involves deceit or that its objects are 'helpless women.'[126] Much of the
moral repugnance felt by nineteenth-century critics of *Orestes* derives
from this feature of the play,[127] and the conviction that such a plot must
be abhorrent to right-thinking people of any age underlies the interpre-
tation of many a scholar in this century.[128] Five aspects of the *mechanema*
have received particular emphasis: (1) the hatred and initially, at least, the
apparently purposeless desire for vengeance that form the basis of the
scheme; (2) the use of deceit by Orestes and his companions to attain
their goal; (3) the fact that the plot is directed, not against Menelaus
himself, but against Helen — a woman who is not directly responsible for
the fate that has befallen Orestes and his friends and (4) who is to be
deceived through a perversion of the rite of supplication and murdered as
an unholy sacrifice at the hearth of the Atridae;[129] (5) the use of the
innocent and thoroughly sympathetic Hermione as a hostage to extort
Menelaus' aid. On examination, however, the emphasis on these features
of the *mechanema* — satisfying as it is to the modern predilection to
detect a moral that might underlie such a shocking action — can be
shown to bear little relevance to Euripides' dramatic interests or to the
concerns of his audience.

Objections based on the first of the above-listed features have been

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[126] For a defence of the play's dual *mechanema*, see Burkhardt (n.d.) 344-48, Krieg
(1934) 21-24, 44-47, Zürcher (1947) 153ff., 172ff., Steidle (1968) 107-10, West (ed.) 33-34,
36-37. On such *mechanema* plays see Solmsen (1968a) and (1968b), Zürcher (1947) 149ff.
passim, Strohm (1957) 64ff., Diller (1962), Erbse (1975) 445-47, Aélion (1983) 2.65ff.

[127] See, e.g., Grillparzer's remarks in Sauer (1916) nos. 1963 and 1965.

[128] See, e.g., Mullens (1940) 155-56, Pohlenz (1954) 1.420, Conacher (1967) 222-24,
Burkert (1972) 101-03, Rawson (1972) 160, Vickers (1973) 583 and 586-87.

[129] See, e.g., Pohlenz (1954) 2.172 ('S. 420 Z. 14 v.u.').

dealt with in part above: as Solmsen has shown, *Orestes* combines the typical *mechanema* play's concentration on σωτηρία and εὐτυχία with the concern for vengeance and εὔκλεια found in plays of Euripides' earlier period, but without the earlier tendency to portray the *mechanema* as "eine Auswirkung leidenschaftlicher Erregung und Empörung."[130] The lack of emphasis on this 'passionate' element forces the modern critic to confront directly the disparity between the ancient attitude toward vengeance and that of present-day western cultures, with their Christian notions of forbearance and forgiveness. The prevalence, even in the works of so 'advanced' a thinker as Euripides, of what has been termed the *Freund-Feind-Ethik* — the notion that one should help one's friends while doing anything possible to harm one's enemies — has been well documented for the fifth century,[131] while the failure to appreciate the strength of this ethic (or, what amounts to the same thing, the tendency to over-emphasize Euripides' 'modernity') has led to a number of misinterpretations of the poet's works.

That Euripides is capable of presenting the desire for vengeance in a negative light becomes evident in his *Electra*. In play after play, however, vengeance is presented either as a reaction to extreme suffering (*Medea, Heraclidae, Hippolytus, Hecuba, Ion* — as we have seen) and/or as the just punishment of a thorough villain (*Hecuba, Heracles, Cyclops* — note, as well, *Cresphontes, Antiope, Archelaus, Alcmeon in Corinth*).[132] In the latter plays there is no sign of the moral repugnance against revenge felt by later critics, and attempts to import it have been unsuccessful. I have already discussed the case of Hecuba in the play of that name; here it will be sufficient to cite only two further examples. Wilamowitz's portrayal of the protagonist of *Heracles* as a man maddened by blood-lust, one whose supposedly irrational revenge against

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130 Solmsen (1968a) 331; cf. Zürcher (1947) 160-62.

131 See Szlezák (1986) 48ff. Cf. Schmid/Stählin (1940) 1.3.746-47, Gouldner (1965) 41ff., Hester (1981) 22-25, Dover (1974) 180ff., Bond (1981) on *Her* 562-82, 585f., and 731-33, Saïd (1984), esp. 72-73, Gehrke (1987), esp. 126-28, Kovacs (1987) 99-100, Blundell (1989) 26ff. (For arguments in favor of the traditional interpretation of *Or*, see, e.g., Saïd and Gehrke.) Cf. below, pp. 309-11, on *Or* 288-93.

132 In *Cresphontes* the evil Polyphontes is killed in a manner reminiscent of Aegisthus in E. *El* (see Harder [1985]); in *Antiope* Lycus is the victim of a *mechanema* reminiscent of that of *Her*, but is saved at the last second by Hermes (see below, pp. 286-88); in *Archelaus* Cisseus becomes the victim of his own *mechanema* (see Webster [1967] 256-57 and Harder [1985]); in *Alcmeon in Corinth* the double-dealing Creon is on the point of death (the result of a *mechanema* scene that appears to contain a number of reminiscences of the one in *Or*), only to be saved by the *deus ex machina* (after the fashion of Lycus in *Antiope*? — see Webster [1967] 265-68). The paradigm for all such plots is, of course, Homer's *Od.*: see Dingel (1969), Michelini (1987) 65, 185-86, and index s.v. 'Homeric epic,' Cropp (1986) 190-91.

Lycus is a sign of incipient insanity, has been refuted effectively as a distortion of the play's focus, although it continues to find the occasional adherent.[133] In a different context, Arrowsmith ([1956] 6) — unable to accept the notion that a Greek audience could enjoy without reserve the brutal treatment of barbaric Polyphemus in *Cyclops* — unsuccessfully attempts to inject a dark note into the portrayal of Odysseus in that play:

> If we sympathize with Odysseus at first, this initial sympathy is nonetheless quickly alienated by the sheer, otiose brutality of his revenge and by Polyphemus' transformation into a drunken, almost lovable, buffoon. The gory description of the Cyclops' cannibalism may perhaps justify Odysseus' revenge, but it does not thereby redeem its barbaric cruelty. Just as the full action of the *Hecuba* consists in reducing both Hecuba and the barbarian Polymestor to a common subhuman cruelty, so the *Cyclops* shows, not the distinction, but the identity, between Odysseus and Polyphemus.

Presumably, the same audience that delighted in Homer's tales of Odysseus' revenge against the ogre Polyphemus (not to mention against the suitors or — worse still! — Odysseus' maid-servants) took a much darker view of the matter when it was presented as a clever, farce-laden fantasy.[134] That such a response would be foreign to Euripides' viewers can be seen from the open relish with which individuals of the fifth and fourth centuries contemplate the idea of vengeance against their enemies, which is regarded as a duty as well as a pleasure. The sentiment finds ample expression in Euripides' own works, not infrequently in the mouths of characters who must be regarded as sympathetic.[135] Vengeance for its own sake has a long and venerable history for the members of Euripides' audience: unless somehow explicitly undercut by the poet (as in Euripides' *Electra*), it should be accepted as a sufficient and respectable motive for action.

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[133] See Wilamowitz (1895) 2.127-29 and, e.g., his notes on *Her* 560, 566, 569, and 571; Wilamowitz is followed by Verrall (1905) 156ff. and W. G. Arnott (1978) 6-16; he is echoed, to a certain degree, by Burnett (1971) 165, who has different motives, however, for condemning Heracles' actions (see Burnett [1971] 170 n. 20). Contrast Chalk (1962) and Kamerbeek (1966). (See further Bond [1981] xviii-xix and on *Her* 562-82; Michelini [1987] 233-36.)

[134] Another play that has suffered as the result of an inappropriate response to this revenge ethic is S. *El:* cf. below, n. 138.

[135] See Schmid/Stählin (1940) 1.3.746-47 for references (the list could be expanded). Enthusiasm for harming one's ἐχθροί is voiced by the stage tyrant Eurystheus at *Hcld* 991ff. (cf. the Menelaus of *Andr* 519-22), by the followers of the unforgiving Dionysus in *Ba* (877-81 [= 897-901]), and by fools such as the elderly retainer of *Ion* (1045-47); but it is also associated with the Hecuba of *Hec* (1258 and 1274), the Athena of *Su* (1214-15: another passage that has been the source of unnecessarily dark speculation by commentators), the Amphitryon of *Her* (732-33), and the Creusa of *Ion* (979).

Claims that the use of deception by Orestes and his friends is problematic — a sign of a heroic ethos gone sour — also should be viewed with distrust. Again, the *Odyssey* provides an important precedent, but, while Euripides may have learned a good deal from Homer's poem, his ultimate motive in portraying such clever ruses is more basic: they make for excellent theater. The pattern is repeated in play after play (particularly in Euripides' later period), with little evidence that its function is anything other than to provide an interesting and suspenseful plot.[136] And there are occasions on which this pattern proves useful in solving various dramaturgical difficulties. To return to *Heracles:* the luring of Lycus into the palace at 701ff., far from reflecting on the character of the protagonist or (as Burnett [(1971)166] suggests) of Amphitryon, provides the poet with a convenient manner of achieving the wicked king's assassination while at the same time setting the scene for the following *peripeteia* (which must occur off stage). The deception scene, of a type well known to his audience,[137] enables Euripides to achieve his various goals with a minimum of effort and in a way that will be readily acceptable to his viewers. The assumption that the use of deceit in some way must reflect negatively on the characters concerned leads the critic to ignore other, more straightforward, motives on the poet's part in favor of an inappropriate moralism.[138]

Nor can the notion be maintained that the deception must somehow be justified — that it is one thing for the Aeschylean or Sophoclean Orestes to employ deceit when attempting the assassination of a well-guarded

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[136] It is true that the use of deceit in E. *El* has a good deal of the unsavory about it. (Even on this point there is disagreement: see the sources cited above, n. 14.) Clearly, there is a certain degree of subjectivity involved in judgments of this sort. The 'naive' reading of the *mechanema* in *Or* suits the melodramatic tone of the work, however, and is supported by the sheer number of such plots in Euripides' œuvre. As in modern films, the audience is prepared to be horrified when such stratagems are used by a 'villain' (e.g., Clytemnestra), but anxiously supportive when similar stratagems are employed by a sympathetic figure (e.g., Orestes). Thus, e.g., Neoptolemus in *Phil* instinctively rejects the use of such stratagems at *Phil* 86ff. (a striking development of the post-Homeric tradition's hostility toward Odysseus and its emphasis on the contrast between Achillean ἀρετή and Odyssean δόλος; cf. the Odysseus of *Aj*). Yet, as in E. *El*, in *Phil* this antithesis forms a central theme of the play and (more to the point) the advocate of unheroic δόλος is bested in the end; in *Her* and *Or*, by contrast, condemnation of the hero's deeds must be imported by means of appeals to a suspiciously modern form of irony. Cf. Adkins (1960) 84 n. 29, Dover (1974) 170, Lateiner (1990).

[137] Cf., e.g., the deception scenes of *Hec, Antiope, Cresphontes, Dictys* (Webster [1967] 61-62), and, of course, those of *Cho* and S. *El*. See Aélion (1983) 2.65ff.

[138] Kells' reaction to the Orestes of S. *El* (who freely confesses his willingness to employ δόλος, 36-37 and 59ff.) provides another example of the dissonance between the modern and the ancient attitudes toward such deceits: see Kells (1973) 5-6 and (1986). Contrast Gardiner (1987) 164ff., who defends the 'naive' reading of S. *El*.

monarch, but quite another for Euripides' hero to attack this magnificently frivolous Helen and her incompetent retinue in a similar fashion. The cleverness with which Euripides here transforms the familiar pattern of a heroic onslaught need not be regarded as a sign of moralistic irony: his audience would appreciate this cunning variation (one of several in the Phrygian's aria) on the traditional messenger's report and well may have detected in it clever echoes of Timotheus' *Persae*.[139] As we will see, the Phrygian's description of the attack on Helen paints a bizarre picture of a world askew; by confining the import of that picture to a moralistic condemnation of the protagonists, however, critics have distorted the broader significance of the scene.

Similarly, the fact that the intended victim is a woman should raise few qualms: successful attacks against women are found in *Stheneboea*,[140] *Antiope*,[141] and probably in Sophocles' *Epigonoi* and *Tyro*,[142] while unsuccessful attacks of this sort are found in *Phrixus II* and Sophocles' *Erigone,* both of which appear to involve divine rescues very like that of Helen in *Orestes*.[143] In none of these does the attack appear to be the source of opprobrium, despite the use of deception (in the case of *Stheneboea*), of excessive violence (in *Antiope*), or of an apparently problematic setting (in Sophocles' *Tyro*). As the wife of the hated Menelaus and the cause of the war, Helen is the logical target of Pylades' plot to gain vengeance on the feckless, but well-protected, Spartan king. The latter has come through the war untouched by the suffering that he has occasioned. He has refused to aid his nephew out of fear of losing his wife's dowry (the throne of Sparta) and (as Orestes conjectures, not unreasonably, at 1058-59) with the additional hope of acquiring power in Argos. Pylades' scheme strikes at him in all of these areas, with a logic that, if not as tragic as that of a Medea or a Hecuba, is certainly as relentless.[144]

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[139] See below, pp. 199ff. There is also the possibility that Euripides is echoing the battle portrayed in the Pinakotheke (see Paus. 1.22.6), perhaps under the influence of Stesichorus.

[140] See Webster (1967) 80-84.

[141] See Webster (1967) 209-210 and below, pp. 286-87.

[142] On Sophocles' *Epigonoi,* see Sutton (1984) 37-42; on the *Tyro,* see Sutton (1984) 152-56 and Kiso (1986). (Note that, if ps.-Apollodorus in fact echoes Sophocles' treatment of the myth, Tyro is slain at an altar in a manner reminiscent of the attack on Helen in our play.)

[143] On *Phrixos II* see Webster (1967) 131-36. (Note as well that madness plays a significant part in Dionysus' rescue of Ino and Melicertes, without, however, any indication that this madness should be taken as a sign of *criminal* insanity.) On Sophocles' *Erigone* see Sutton (1984) 42-44.

[144] On the logic of Pylades' scheme, see Zürcher (1947) 174-76 and Schmidt-Berger (1973) 170ff. On attempts to obtain an equivalency in exacting vengeance, cf. Saïd (1984) 50-51 and Michelini (1987) 170.

Finally, it is necessary to consider the kidnapping of Hermione, a particularly repugnant feature of the plot for present-day readers, who are tempted to compare with it the actions of modern terrorists. If the attack on Helen seems to reflect a gratuitous cruelty, most concede that it finds at least a superficial justification in the traditional odium against her; Hermione, by contrast, is one of the play's more sympathetic characters (according to many, its *only* sympathetic character) and has done nothing to warrant such rough treatment. The almost demonic scene in which she is seized, in the very act of interceding on her cousins' behalf,[145] and the even more disturbing finale, where she appears on the roof, Orestes' sword to her throat, have reminded readers of the heartless behavior of Menelaus in *Andromache:* there, as here, an innocent victim is employed in a cruel act of extortion.[146] Again, however, context is all. While the taking of an infant hostage is portrayed as the act of a villain in *Andromache,* Euripides' *Telephus* (produced in 438) appears to have employed the same motif to produce a tense and excitement-laden scene, but with no suggestion of ignominy on the hero's part.[147] It is likely that in the latter play Euripides distorts a traditional (and originally non-hostile) gesture of supplication:[148] such an alteration would suit the atmosphere of the Euripidean version, with its emphasis on the hero's hidden identity and the resulting air of intrigue and suspense.[149] Euripides evidently has good epic precedent for the procedure, inasmuch as the *Cypria* tells of the Achaean chiefs coercing Odysseus' participation in the expedition against Troy by threatening the infant Telemachus in a similar fashion.[150]

The citing of such precedents for the actions of Orestes and his friends is not sufficient to exonerate them from the charges of savage cruelty and lawlessness that many critics have laid, with the apparent support of Tyndareus' arguments in the *agon*. The events of the play's later scenes

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[145] 1313ff. Perrotta (1928) 101-02 compares the ghastly scene in E. *El* in which Electra lures Clytemnestra to her death.

[146] See *Andr* 309ff. On the argument that the kidnapping of Hermione recalls an infamous tactic of the Athenian ἑταιρίαι, see Appendix Four.

[147] Perrotta (1928) 132-35 considers the similarities between the two scenes. On Euripides' *Telephus* and related matters, see Aélion (1983) 1.31ff., Csapo (1986a), esp. 379 n. 2 and 384 n. 13, (1986b) 394ff., and (1990). The question of whether the infamous hostage-taking scene was presented on stage (as in *Andr* and *Or*) or by a messenger's report remains unanswered.

[148] See Csapo (1990) 46ff.

[149] Cf. Jouan (1966) 249 and Aélion (1983) 1.39-40, who contrast the Aeschylean version (so far as it can be reconstructed).

[150] Procl. *Chrest.* 30-33 in Bernabé (1987); cf. Apollod. *Epit.* 3.7 (with Frazer's note).

seem to confirm all too clearly the elderly Spartan's references to
Orestes' criminal folly and to the disastrous consequences of his
behavior. And the preceding review of similar *mechanemata* in
Euripides' plays has shown that in these matters, as in so many others,
context is all. It may well be, for example, that Telephus' abduction of
the infant Orestes merely served to initiate an exciting scene of
confrontation, implying no criticism of the protagonist's actions, but such
a scenario in *Telephus,* even if confirmed, still would not provide a
certain interpretation for the abduction scene in *Orestes.* The feverish ex-
citement that animates Electra at lines 1313ff., along with the almost
gleeful cruelty of her words at 1315-16 and 1345ff., can have little in
common with the events in *Telephus* and certainly appears to justify those
who find the scene unsavory, after the manner of the similar entrapment
of Clytemnestra in Euripides' *Electra.* The purpose of the above review,
however, has not been to defend the actions of the protagonists as noble
or heroic, but to deny that those actions should be judged in absolute
terms as morally repugnant to 'any right-thinking person' — to combat
the view that our response to the play should be determined exclusively
by shock at the nature of the deeds to which Orestes and his friends are
driven. The plays cited above, fragmentary and incomplete as our
knowledge of them is, demonstrate that the Athenian audience, like its
modern counterpart, did not adopt the unyieldingly moralistic positions
that have characterized much of the modern scholarship on the play, but
allowed its responses to be guided by the poet according to his purposes.
Having experienced the lonely desperation of Orestes and the series of
betrayals that he must endure, the audience would find in the ensuing
mechanema, not an hysterical outburst of criminal villainy, but an act of
rebellion against the corrupt society that plagues him. Its familiarity with
such deeds from other tragedies would lead it to examine the context of
those deeds, where modern readers, importing intrusive notions of 'fair
play' and tragic decorum, register only shock and distaste.

   As in virtually all of the plays cited earlier in this chapter, the
protagonist's rebellion, when it comes, is violent and potentially bloody,
involving a chaotic release of energies formerly dormant or repressed.
The preternatural air of frantic rage and frustration evoked thereby
effectively conveys the vehemence of the emotional forces unleashed in
the breast of Orestes and presents his acts as a violent protest against the
iniquitous world in which he finds himself. As with Medea, Hecuba, and
Creusa, attention is focused on the nature of the world in which Orestes

must live rather than on any moral failings in Orestes himself.[151] Faced
with a divine order which commands hideous acts only to retire into
serene unconcern, and with a human order in which self-interest prevails
over considerations of family ties, past obligations, or social justice,
Orestes rebels with the furious rage of the wronged and isolated outcast,
thereby creating a physical chaos on stage that corresponds to the chaos
in social, political, and moral values that is ranged against him earlier in
the play. The bizarre plot against Helen and Hermione and the even more
bizarre consequences of that plot bring to fruition the confusion of
accepted traditions (mythic as well as ethical) which broods over the
early scenes of *Orestes*. The technique involved is that of *Medea* and
Hecuba, here carried to a deliberately shocking extreme. Thus, while it is
possible to see in the excesses of the final scenes of *Orestes* the late
Euripidean predilection for the strikingly melodramatic, there is a sense
that here, at least, the melodrama has a very real and very bitter point —
that Euripides is giving expression to the confused despair and frustration
that he and many of his countrymen must have felt in the waning years of
the fifth century B.C. In the blind violence of Orestes' struggles against
an oppressive, orderless world, Euripides appears to have created a
symbol for his age (as Burkert, Reinhardt, and others have suggested).
This reading supports the studies of Ebener, Falkner, Lanza, Pohlenz, and
Vickers, however, in its insistence that the play's focus is fixed on the
society that surrounds the young hero and not on the failings of Orestes as
an individual. The frantic efforts of this impotent Orestes to assert
himself in the face of such a world can be seen to reflect the sense of
helplessness and frustration that must have overcome many in Euripides'
audience as they contemplated events at home and abroad in the waning
years of the Peloponnesian War.

ORESTES AS SUPPLIANT DRAMA MANQUÉ

The above examination of *Orestes* as a study in moral outrage deals
with the series of disappointed hopes met by Orestes in the course of the
play's early scenes but neglects an important, extra-dramatic, aspect of
that series. If on the level of the plot Orestes is repeatedly disappointed in

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[151] It is significant that all the other protagonists who compel comparison with Orestes are
women. Commentators who treat Orestes as a villain often forget that he is still a young man
in this play, like the Neoptolemus of *Phil,* and, as such, would not be viewed as fully
competent in a legal sense. (On the similarities with Sophocles' youthful hero, and on this
topic in general, see Falkner [1983a]; cf. Burnett [1973] 3.)

his expectations of external support, on a formal level the audience's own expectations are continually raised only to be denied. Roughly the first half of *Orestes* (lines 1-1064) is modeled closely after the pattern of a typical suppliant play and is filled with reminiscences (often bitterly ironic) of scenes and dramatic sequences associated with this popular genre. A good deal of the confusion in the play — the sense of a world gone awry — derives from the cunning fashion in which Euripides invokes the conventions of the suppliant drama only to overturn them. Much of this ground has been covered in a masterful fashion by Burnett ([1971] 183-88); my own treatment, therefore, will be brief.

The static tableau at the beginning of the play displays what Burnett describes as "the essential suppliant shape: a threat (from the *demos*) holds the principals immobile (although not at an altar) while they await the coming of another power who can offer them a refuge" (184). Standing near the prostrate Orestes,[152] Electra opens the action with a lengthy account of the danger in which she and her brother currently find themselves, of the past events that have placed them in such a predicament, and of their prospects for the future. Although (as Burnett indicates) Electra and Orestes do not occupy an altar and bear none of the usual paraphernalia of the suppliant (such as the customary suppliant boughs), the situation of these two figures — alone on stage, surrounded by enemies and threats of death, desperately awaiting the arrival of a champion to defend their cause — would recall to the audience scenes such as those that open *Andromache, Heraclidae,* Euripides' *Supplices,* and *Heracles*. As the initial spokesperson for their small contingent Electra recalls the figures of Iolaus, Aethra, or Amphitryon (although she quickly sets aside this role in deference to her brother when he returns to consciousness), while the plaintive, despair-filled tone of her introductory monologue recalls the similar speeches of the suppliant/refugees Andromache and Helen in their respective plays. Particularly close parallels are evident in the opening of *Heracles:*[153] there too we find suppliants in a general state of squalor, with neither food nor proper clothing, lying on the ground, kept from the possessions that are rightfully theirs, deserted by friends, bereft of all aid (51-59; compare *Orestes* 39ff.). There too hostile forces hem in the pitiful band of suppliants (82ff.; compare *Orestes* 760), and the one remaining hope

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152 On the question of the staging of the initial tableau (and the significance of the *hypothesis'* cryptic note) see Longo (1967). Cf. Dieterich (1891) and, on such initial tableaux in general, Burian (1977).

153 See Krieg (1934) 56-57 on the numerous points of contact between these two plays.

consists of the νόστος of a male champion (74ff., 95ff.; compare *Orestes* 52ff.).

Thus far, then, the situation at the beginning of *Orestes* and throughout the first scene would be familiar to the audience as a variation on the typical suppliant plot and would arouse certain expectations as to the future course of the action:

> Given the circumstances special to this fiction, an action made with one or more rhetorical contests is to be anticipated. The champion will have to be persuaded to take up the cause of the children of Agamemnon, and probably a representative of the 'pursuing' Argive people will try to dissuade him. When the champion is won over, he will either persuade the *demos*, or bully it with a show of public force, unless the plot is to resolve itself into a physical rescue, with the city somehow bamboozled as Electra and Orestes are smuggled away. These are an audience's formal expectations, as the extended prologue comes to its close and the arrival of the protector is announced. (Burnett [1971] 184-85)

It is with the arrival of this protector that the course of the action begins to go awry, as Euripides sets about turning this pseudo-suppliant plot on its head. I have discussed Euripides' portrayal of the faint-hearted Menelaus, his pusillanimous behavior before the threats of Tyndareus, and the overblown rhetorical evasions with which he avoids committing himself to Orestes' cause.[154] It is instructive to compare the heroic directness of Demophon in the *Heraclidae* (τρισσαί μ᾽ ἀναγκάζουσι συννοίας ὁδοί, / Ἰόλαε, τοὺς σοὺς μὴ παρώσασθαι λόγους ..., 236ff.) or of Peleus in *Andromache* (χαλᾶν κελεύω δεσμὰ πρὶν κλαίειν τινά ..., 577ff.).[155] The contrast shows all too clearly that this Menelaus, with his numerous prevarications, makes a dismal champion indeed. So utterly lacking in authority is he that Tyndareus (unlike other blocking figures in such scenes) does not even remain to hear his decision but stalks angrily off stage, leaving Menelaus to pace back and forth troubled by his own thoughts (632-33).[156] It soon becomes apparent that these thoughts have nothing to do with abstract questions of justice or responsibilities to the

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[154] Cf. above, pp. 71-72, and see Burnett (1971) 185-86.

[155] Cf. as well the noble Teucer of *Aj* 992ff.

[156] Like Agamemnon's withdrawal from Hecuba at *Hec* 812 (cf. Odysseus' gesture at *Hec* 342-44), Menelaus' pacing signals the beginning of a renewed appeal on the part of the suppliant, in a more personal and emotional key. His action is much more striking than the attempts of Agamemnon and Odysseus to avoid or break off contact with the suppliant, which involve a single motion and are closely bound to the traditions of supplication as described, e.g., by Gould (1973). Menelaus' pacing represents a type of action rarely seen on the tragic stage, producing a vivid visual impression both of his inner perplexity and of the 'devious' nature of his thoughts as he struggles to discover a way to reject Orestes' appeal: cf. below, p. 169.

demos (as is the case with Pelasgus in Aeschylus' *Supplices* and Theseus in Euripides' *Supplices*) but rather with the question of Menelaus' own personal advantage. As Burnett concludes, "the champion [refuses] to be a champion, not out of regard for the counter-arguments of Tyndareus, but simply because he is greedy for power and sees that his own advantage will best be served by complete inaction" (186).

Menelaus departs, but his place is filled immediately by the young and energetic Pylades. His entrance marks a shift in the tone of the play, as Burnett indicates (*loc. cit.*); it does not mark an end to Euripides' variations on the suppliant plot, however, for there is a very real sense in which Pylades does enter to replace Menelaus and play the champion. While the intervention of Pylades can be interpreted as marking a transition toward the eventual escape plot, it is best seen as a continuation of the play's distorted suppliant action, for it presents an inverted version of the appeal to the *demos* familiar from Aeschylus' *Supplices* 480ff. and 605ff. and Euripides' *Supplices* 346ff. and 393-94.[157] For all of his energetic good will, in the end Pylades is revealed as still another champion manqué in still another suppliant action that goes altogether awry.[158]

In the usual course of things Menelaus would have supported Orestes' cause, sent Tyndareus packing, and led Orestes before the assembly. Once there, his personal authority, the power of his arguments, and the justness of his cause would have won the people's immediate approval and have been followed by the triumphal reentry of Orestes and the general glorification of Menelaus. After the latter fails to fulfill his role he is replaced by Pylades. The appeal to the *demos* still takes place, but in an enervated form. While the decision to seek the approval of the *demos* at Euripides' *Supplices* 349ff. is made with a confident casualness that strikes us as almost cavalier, in *Orestes* it provides the occasion for perhaps the most diffident scene in all of Greek tragedy, as Orestes and Pylades jointly back into a decision to try their luck at the assembly (774ff.). Pylades, now nominally filling the position of champion, makes no decision whatsoever but merely leads Orestes through a bit of pseudo-Socratic dialectic, the somewhat lame conclusion of which is that they have nothing to lose in the attempt.[159]

So the two set out for the assembly. Instead of a confident, decided

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[157] See above, pp. 79-80, on the surprise of Pylades' entrance at 725. One effect of this sudden entrance is to reinforce the notion that Pylades has, in a real sense, replaced Menelaus as Orestes' champion.

[158] Cf. Schmidt-Berger (1973) 146 and 153.

[159] Cf. above, pp. 80-81.

ruler as a patron and supporter, the suppliant Orestes has only Pylades —
a fellow outcast, young, with no supporters or authority among the
Argives, and tainted with the same blood as his charge. The description
of the wretched pair at 879-83 and their dismal failure — so different
from the success of Pelasgus and Theseus in the plays cited above —
require little comment here. It is sufficient to say that, left to speak for
himself in the absence of a true patron, Orestes is unable to discover any
δημηγόροι στροφαί (Aeschylus, *Supplices* 623) that will serve his
purpose. Thus, instead of the triumphant return we might have expected,
we are presented with the lugubrious, rather sullen Orestes of 1018ff. On
this bitter note of failure the suppliant action draws to a close, replaced by
the revenge plot of 1098ff.

Continual reminiscences of the traditional suppliant plot and consistent
denial of the audience's expectations result in a tension throughout the
first half of the play between things as they should be and things as they
are. This tension adds to the note of confusion, of a world out of joint,
that pervades *Orestes* and gives a further dimension to Orestes' sense of
frustration and oppression. The protagonist of *Orestes* finds himself in a
world where the accepted traditions no longer obtain — neither those of
myth, those of the proper behavior of φίλος to φίλος, nor those that
govern dramatic structure and genre.

ORESTES AS EURIPIDEAN *ARTE ALLUSIVA*

Finally, no consideration of the tensions generated by the dramatic and
thematic structure of *Orestes* would be complete without some
consideration of its relation to earlier dramatic treatments of the Orestes
myth. This aspect of the play has formed the cornerstone of several
studies of *Orestes*,[160] but it is the thesis of Greenberg that is of central
concern here. According to Greenberg, the key to understanding *Orestes*
lies in the perception that Orestes' attempt on Helen in fact repeats, point
for point, his murderous attack on Clytemnestra, but is justified by no

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[160] See esp. Zeitlin (1980), the most extensive examination of this issue. Useful general
remarks can be found in Steiger (1898) and (1912), Krausse (1905), esp. 145ff.,
Chapouthier/Méridier (ed.) 14-16, von Fritz (1962a) 145ff., Wolff (1968) 132-34, Rawson
(1972) 155-57, Burkert (1974) 103-06, Nisetich (1986), West (ed.) 31-32. Fuqua (1976) and
Falkner (1983a) 289-94 focus upon possible connections with Sophocles' *Phil.* Perrotta
(1928) 127ff. considers possible resonances with Euripides' earlier works. On the broader
mythical and poetic traditions behind the play see Perrotta (1928) 116ff., Krieg (1934) 65ff.,
Bergmann (1970), Stephanopoulos (1980) 127ff., Aélion (1983) 1.93ff., Parker (1983) 386-
88, Prag (1985), Garvie (1986) ixff., Neschke (1986).

divine sanction nor by any of the other extenuating circumstances alleged
by Orestes in defence of his earlier crime.[161] Thus, Greenberg maintains,
Euripides deliberately evokes reminiscences of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (and,
on occasion, of Sophocles' *Electra*) throughout the course of *Orestes* in
an effort to heighten the similarities between the murder of Clytemnestra
and the attempted murder of Helen. The audience, recognizing these
similarities, is encouraged to compare the two acts and to see in the
frenzied attack upon Helen the 'true' Orestes in action — a weak but
dangerous villain who becomes blindly homicidal when his wishes are
opposed. This insight, he believes, allows the viewer to arrive at a proper
conception of Orestes' character and of his earlier act of matricide.

There can be no denying that Euripides patterns much of *Orestes* after
the model of the *Oresteia* (particularly *Choephori*) and Sophocles'
Electra. He continually inserts references to his predecessors' plays,
sometimes patterning scenes after their model but more frequently
echoing specific lines or sentiments. Thus Helen sends offerings to
Clytemnestra's tomb at the beginning of the play as Clytemnestra does to
the tomb of Agamemnon at the opening of *Choephori* and at Sophocles'
Electra 405ff. Helen herself, an infamous adulteress, is a focus of the
play just as the adulterous Clytemnestra dominates the *Oresteia*.[162] At
251-52 Orestes enjoins Electra, in language that recalls *Choephori* 139-
41, to differ from her mother and her aunt, while Electra's cry at 262
(οὔτοι μεθήσω) pointedly echoes Apollo's first words in *Eumenides*
(*Eumenides* 64: οὔτοι προδώσω). The attack of the Furies at 253ff.
recalls *Choephori* 1021ff. In countering Tyndareus' charges (*Orestes*
551ff.), Orestes employs Apollo's arguments from *Eumenides* 657ff.
Lines 819-22 present a striking allusion to *Choephori* 973ff. (compare as
well the reference to Clytemnestra's murderous net at *Orestes* 25). At
1204-06 Orestes praises Electra's 'masculine' intelligence, a possible
echo of *Agamemnon* 11. The invocation of Agamemnon at 1225ff. is
reminiscent of the great *kommos* in *Choephori* (Pylades here assuming
the role of the chorus), while the 'death cries' of Helen and Electra's
savage reaction to them (1296ff.) recall the similar death scene at
Sophocles' *Electra* 1398ff. and, perhaps, the cries of Agamemnon at
Agamemnon 1343 and 1345. A model for the Phrygian slave can be found
in the nameless servant of *Choephori* 875ff. Finally, the torches in the

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[161] Greenberg (1962) 160. Cf. the modification of Greenberg's thesis by Burnett (1971)
210-12.

[162] See, e.g., *Or* 56ff., 71ff., 126ff., 245ff., 520-22, 540-41, 669ff., 750, 1105-end
(*passim*).

chaotic finale of *Orestes* (if in fact they appear on stage)[163] have been interpreted as an ironic inversion of the joyful torches that are brought forth at the end of *Eumenides.*

These echoes of earlier treatments of the Orestes myth are too numerous and, in some instances, too striking to be random displays of Euripidean 'wit.' The difficulty lies in the interpretation of this peculiarly Euripidean form of *arte allusiva.* Greenberg's view, as presented above, sees in these echoes Euripides' deliberate attempt to equate Orestes' plot against Helen with his earlier attack on Clytemnestra. Since he regards the former deed as a heinous and cowardly act, Greenberg argues that Euripides intends his audience to reevaluate Orestes' motives for the earlier murder accordingly. A few of the weaknesses of this view have been examined already: its limited understanding of the attack on Helen; its elevation of the death of Clytemnestra to the status of a burning emotional issue (a status that it possesses in Euripides' *Electra* but not in *Orestes,* where discussion of the matter remains, for the most part, on a more abstract, rhetorical, legalistic, and political level). More to the point, however, is Greenberg's neglect of a fundamental aspect of *Orestes:* the fact that in *Orestes* Euripides presents a protagonist who, for all of his 'modern' weaknesses, still possesses the basic attitudes and expectations of his more traditional, heroic self as presented in the works of earlier poets. Just as Euripides' audience continually is stunned by the numerous unexpected anachronisms that the author has introduced into his play, so Orestes himself displays a certain helplessness when, having executed his mother in accordance with the commands of Apollo and the dictates of the archaic poetic tradition, he suddenly finds himself confronted by a political and judicial system grounded in legal and ethical principles of the late fifth century. Much of the impact of *Orestes* is developed by Euripides' play upon this underlying incongruity and by the thoroughness with which he overturns (at times with an almost malicious glee) all traditional expectations.[164] The confusion that results adds to the growing

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[163] See below, p. 271 n. 74.

[164] Perhaps the most egregious example of such a dislocating effect can be found in Menelaus' words at 369-74, where he states that, having heard of Agamemnon's murder, he took comfort in the thought of a reunion with Orestes and Clytemnestra and a celebration of their good fortune. A case has been made to reduce the absurdity of this passage by deleting 361, on the grounds that τύχας in 360 by itself implies only that Menelaus, before his arrival in Argos, was aware of Agamemnon's death, not that he knew anything about the exact manner of that death (see Degani [1967] 28-30, Willink [ed.] on *Or* 356-79, and West [ed.] on *Or* 361 for discussion and bibliography; contrast Di Benedetto [ed.] on *Or* 360-61). Even with the deletion of the admittedly weak 361, however, one must understand, without much help from Menelaus' abbreviated account, that τύχας in 360 refers only to Agamemnon's death, with no implications as to the details (difficult, given the force of ἠπιστάμην), and that

sense of chaos that pervades the play and gives yet another dimension to
the confused frustration of Orestes. In this context, the numerous echoes
of earlier treatments of the Orestes myth only serve to underscore the
altered nature of the world in which this particular Orestes must operate.
Thus, whereas the Orestes of *Eumenides* has a divine patron to protect
him from the Furies and defend him at his trial — a patron who enters
with the lofty proclamation, οὔτοι προδώσω — this Orestes, deserted by
Apollo in the face of Furies of a subtler, more psychological nature, has
only his sister, who is as wretched as he. It can be no accident that
Euripides chooses to echo *Eumenides* 64 in this early section of the play,
where much emphasis is given to Apollo's neglect of his earlier promises
and to the *differences* between the troubles that afflict this Orestes and
those faced by his Aeschylean predecessor. In the same way, the *kommos*
at *Orestes* 1225ff. is a pallid, wretched affair when compared to the
magnificent *kommos* of *Choephori;* yet, given the world in which these
agents must operate, it could be no other. This is not a play where the
dead hold any real sway among the living. The pitiful tone and meager
length of the appeal are consonant with its futility, while the contrast
between the wretched suppliants of *Orestes* and the urgent, ultimately
hopeful suppliants of *Choephori* only emphasizes all the more the
desperate isolation and helplessness of Euripides' trio. Similarly, the
contrast between the lofty tribunal of *Eumenides* and the partisan
assembly before which the Euripidean Orestes must defend his actions
vividly reinforces the sense of disjunction and dislocation that typify
Orestes as a whole.[165] Examples of this effect could be multiplied, but the
general conclusion would be the same. Euripides' Orestes finds himself
trapped within a nightmarish world — one filled with distorted
reminiscences of his earlier existence as heroic avenger and defender of
the established order, but wherein that old order has been replaced by the

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λουτροῖσιν in 367 (on Menelaus' first hearing) implied *funeral* ablutions rather than the
famous homicidal bath of tradition. (These assertions are all the more difficult given: (a) that
at 373-74 the only new information Menelaus speaks of receiving on his arrival in Argos is
that of Clytemnestra's murder, and (b) the general similarity between his account here and the
scenario described in *Od.* 4.) Even with these assumptions, however, Menelaus' words at
369ff. come as a surprise: the precise sense in which Orestes and Clytemnestra could be
imagined as εὐτυχοῦντας under such conditions is, to say the least, obscure. The main
purpose of this curious statement would seem to be to stun the audience with the sudden
failure on the part of Menelaus to play his expected role. (Cf. the similarly surprising offer of
Agamemnon at *Hec* 754-55 to free Hecuba on the spot, another apparently gratuitous
tweaking of the audience's expectations that serves Euripides' immediate rhetorical and
thematic purposes.)

   165 The notion that the assembly scene parodies *Eum* was raised as early as Steiger (1898)
15-17.

social, political, and intellectual chaos of late fifth-century Athens.[166] The jarring dissonance that results adds to the tensely surreal quality of the play. Rather than encourage the audience to condemn this Orestes, it renders all the more understandable the frantic acts to which he is driven in the latter portion of the play.

CONCLUSION

Viewed in light of the above discussion *Orestes* presents the picture of a world gone bizarrely awry, where the hero's expectations are constantly raised only to be cruelly dashed. Betrayed by Apollo, Menelaus, and the Argive assembly, Orestes must also confront the chasm that yawns between the archaic tradition from which he was born and the society which now sits in judgment on his deeds. A further dissonance arises on an extra-dramatic level, as the play repeatedly raises expectations appropriate to a suppliant drama only to overturn them. The resulting tensions and frustrations eventually lead Orestes to lash out in a manner reminiscent of Euripides' earlier tragic victims, but with an important difference. For in this case the sense of chaos and confusion that occasionally attends such revolts expands to envelop the last 400 lines of the play and comes to threaten, not only Menelaus' family, but the received mythological tradition as a whole. Eventually the stress will become so great that it strains the boundaries of tragic convention itself until, in the end, the tragic potential of Orestes' predicament becomes lost amid the moral, political, and situational chaos of the late Euripidean stage.

In the following chapters I will examine four scenes from the play — the *agon* with Tyndareus, the Phrygian slave's monody, Orestes' confrontation with the Phrygian at 1503ff., and the *exodos* — each of which contributes significantly to the rising pitch of chaos, dissonance, and confusion that characterizes this curious work. In addition, each poses interesting interpretative problems of its own. Coming to terms with these scenes, then, should lead to a better understanding of *Orestes* and at the same time allow us to examine particular features of Euripides' dramatic art.

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[166] Cf. Schmidt-Berger (1973) 174ff. and, most recently, Hall (1993) 265-66.

CHAPTER THREE

THE *AGON*

INTRODUCTION

The long-awaited entry of Menelaus at line 348 marks the
commencement of the plot proper, following the lengthy series of
expository scenes with which the play opens. The ensuing scene is a
crucial one because our understanding of Orestes' character and of the
general tenor of the play depends largely on our interpretation of the
tactics employed by Orestes before Menelaus and particularly in the *agon*
with Tyndareus. Chapter Two examined the place of the scene within the
general structure of *Orestes* and the characterization of Menelaus. We
have noted (above, pp. 70-73) how Menelaus' rejection of Orestes' plea
is presented as a triumph of base self-interest over the demands of χάρις
and φιλία. We have also seen the way in which Euripides deliberately
emphasizes Menelaus' treachery (in a manner reminiscent of *Medea's*
Jason and *Hecuba's* Odysseus) in order to portray the latter's perfidy as
one link in the series of injustices that eventually lead to Orestes' violent
and bloodthirsty reaction. The present chapter will examine more closely
the speeches presented by Orestes and Tyndareus in the course of the
agon, as well as Orestes' ὕστερος λόγος following the departure of the
irascible Spartan elder. In the past, the interpretation of these speeches
has proven to be a particularly thorny problem. The difficulty may be
summed up as follows: whereas the words of Tyndareus, for all of their
vehemence and unpleasantness, present a case that appears to be both
reasonable and founded upon objective concerns for justice and social
order, the arguments of Orestes, the putative hero of the play, are felt to
be extraordinarily bad, abounding in sophistries and in extravagancies
both of speech and of thought. Thus, although no recent scholar has been
tempted to second the excessively fanciful interpretation of the scene
presented by Verrall,[1] most agree that the impression made by these two
speakers is more ambiguous than is the norm in other Euripidean *agones*
of this type — that Tyndareus is provided with more credibility than is

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[1] Verrall (1905) 225-34.

the typical blocking figure, while the integrity of Orestes' position (and
of his moral insight) is undermined by his manner of argumentation. The
degree to which this reading of the *agon* is pursued varies from scholar to
scholar and has resulted in a fairly wide range of interpretations. Virtually
all agree, however, that the speeches (particularly those of Orestes) reveal
important insights into the ἦθος of the speakers and that the audience is
intended to employ these insights in its interpretation of the scenes that
follow. The present chapter will attempt to demonstrate through the
various arguments proposed by Orestes and Tyndareus that, while these
arguments do provide important insights into the personalities of the two
speakers, the interpretation of the speeches themselves requires the
recognition of other contributing factors, particularly those of rhetoric,
Greek dramatic convention, and Euripides' own predilections (especially
those of his later period). 'Ηθοποιία is important to the *agon,* but is far
from being its exclusive concern. We shall find, despite the apparent
force of Tyndareus' arguments and the extravagance of those of Orestes,
that the general impact of the debate on the audience's view of the
protagonist and his situation is consonant with the overall strategy of the
play as outlined in Chapter Two. The audience is impressed by the
picture of an abandoned, betrayed, and desperate Orestes who even at this
relatively early point in the play shows signs of readiness for the violent
revenge plot suggested later by Pylades. The Orestes of the *agon* is
neither the heroic scion of the house of Atreus familiar from earlier
tradition, nor the villainous, completely amoral self-seeker detected by
many modern critics; he is instead a flailing, helpless, self-doubting, and
not a little melodramatic, pseudo-hero of the type familiar from *Iphigenia
among the Taurians, Helen, Phoenissae, Iphigenia at Aulis,* and the
pseudo-Euripidean *Rhesus.* Too feckless to fit the heroic mold attributed
to him by tradition, he is equally incapable of sustaining the darkly
villainous role assigned to him by many present-day interpreters of
Orestes.[2]

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[2] The most important recent discussions of the *agon* are those of O'Brien (1988a) and
Lloyd (1992) 113ff. Earlier, see Wilamowitz (1924) 254-62. Will (1961) and Schmidt-Berger
(1973) 31ff. present useful analyses of Tyndareus' character. Interesting observations on
issues relevant to the *agon* can also be found in T. Miller (1887) 64, Howald (1930) 168,
Tietze (1933) 88-93, Wolf (1952) 2.420-25, Strohm (1957) 39ff., Duchemin (1968) *passim*
(especially 79-80 and 143), Collard (1975b) 69-71, and Solmsen (1975) 59-60.

LINES 491-541: TYNDAREUS' SPEECH OF CONDEMNATION

INTRODUCTION

Wilamowitz ([1924] 256) notes that Tyndareus' opening speech is tied quite closely to his initial exchange with Menelaus and reads, in fact, as a continuation of the argument that began at 481. There, as we have seen,[3] Menelaus — who has had no opportunity as yet to commit himself one way or another to Orestes' plight — at first objects to Tyndareus' violent condemnation of Orestes, upholding the claims of family loyalty (482, 484, 486). Implicitly at least, he supports Orestes' own view of the matricide as a dreadful deed, but one from which there was no escape (488).[4] Tyndareus, for his part, reveals from the very outset a violent antipathy toward Orestes, which is reflected in the lofty vehemence of his language (ὁ μητροφόντης ὅδε πρὸ δωμάτων δράκων / στίλβει νοσώδεις ἀστραπάς, στύγημ' ἐμόν, 479-80) and in the violence with which he derides Menelaus' loyalty to his nephew (485).[5] While the harshness of

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[3] Above, pp. 70-71.

[4] The meaning of 488 is disputed. Two interpretations hold the field, both of which found proponents in antiquity (see van der Valk [1984] 184-85). One (supported, e.g., by Wilamowitz [1924] 255 n. 2) sees in the ἀνάγκη of 488 "der Zwang der Verwandtschaft für die ἀναγκαῖοι φίλοι" and believes that Menelaus defends his support of Orestes as an obligation that he cannot escape (cf. Degani [1967] 33-34). The other (defended, e.g., by Di Benedetto [ed.] and West [ed.] *ad loc.*) sees a retort to Tyndareus' assertion that obedience to the νόμοι is compulsory (cf. Willink [ed.] *ad loc.*). Neither of these readings is wholly satisfactory: the former is unconvincing in its restrictive interpretation of πᾶν τοὺξ ἀνάγκης; the latter attributes to Menelaus a view which is surprising, given his tendency elsewhere in the play to employ the standard of σοφία to advocate the avoidance of extreme measures or positions and to excuse *yielding* to ἀνάγκη (see, e.g., 415, 490, and 708-16; on the authenticity of 715-16, see Willink [ed.] *ad loc.* and O'Brien [1988a] 192 n. 13). Preferable are the interpretations of Wedd (ed.) and Paley (in his school edition of 1892), who find here the assertion that "necessity must be obeyed, as slaves obey a master" (Paley, comparing *Or* 418; cf. Wilamowitz *loc. cit.* for this interpretation of δοῦλόν ἐστ'). On this view Menelaus defends both his own conversation with Orestes and Orestes' past deeds: the σοφοί do not condemn acts performed under ἀνάγκη, even if such acts involve transgressions of νόμοι. To the degree that Menelaus' words at 488 apply to Orestes, they continue the sympathetic note sounded in 447 (συμφορᾶς) and 484 (δυστυχεῖ; cf. as well the attitude implicit in 399 and 415). The more astute among Euripides' audience might have detected a sophistic exaggeration of the attitude adopted by the judicious Athena of *Eum* 426.

[5] Note, e.g., the similarly chauvinistic language of Jason (*Med* 536-38) and Hermione (*Andr* 168-76). While it is possible to cite the numerous passages in Greek literature (including Euripides: e.g., *IA* 1400-01) in which the inferiority of βάρβαροι to Greeks is assumed as an indisputable fact (see Willink [ed.] *ad loc.* and Hall [1989b] 184-90), there is a clear distinction between such idealistic affirmations and the use of the *topos* as a rhetorical weapon (cf. Schmidt-Berger [1973] 33 and O'Brien [1988a] 196 n. 22). Tyndareus' charge cannot have struck Euripides' audience as anything other than excessive and rather dyspeptic. In effect, his attack on Menelaus presents a 'secularized' version of the Furies' charges against Apollo in *Eum* (cf. Tyndareus' objections here, e.g., with *Eum* 171).

Tyndareus' demeanor need not brand him a villain,[6] the sharp contrast between the sympathetic view of Orestes' plight that has been encouraged up to this point in the play and the unforgiving attitude of the elderly Spartan king comes as a shock to the audience[7] and must direct its sympathies, initially at least, away from the choleric elder toward the protagonist.[8] Upon Menelaus' charge that his is merely the blind anger of an old man unable to appreciate the subtle issues involved in Orestes' plea (490), Tyndareus launches into the *agon* proper, pronouncing a lengthy condemnation that sustains the choleric vein he adopted in the preceding *stichomythia,* but developing so sophisticated a case that he refutes once and for all Menelaus' charge that his old age is οὐ σοφόν.

While commentators have been quick to note the sophistic tone of Orestes' defence at 544ff., many have failed to give due weight to the highly rhetorical strategy underlying Tyndareus' condemnation of his nephew. The Spartan king declares that he stands for the ideal claims of society and social order, and many critics have accepted his declaration at face value; yet the terms in which this declaration is presented (and, indeed, the declaration itself) can be paralleled in the standard rhetorical practice of the fifth and fourth centuries and constitute a classic example of what Aristotle was to term διάνοια, "... the eloquence [as opposed to the inherent moral qualities] of the [individual character], employed in putting [his or her] case on any occasion which requires it with all possible clarity and force. ... the means by which an attitude of belief is produced in [his or her] hearers ...."[9] Euripides provides his blocking figure with a polished speech of devastating effectiveness, one that allows Tyndareus to remain 'in character' while employing textbook arguments to press his case. We shall find, however, that the effectiveness of this speech is itself a crucial part of Euripides' strategy in *Orestes,* increasing

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[6] It is possible to argue, as does Hermann (ed.) xv, that Tyndareus is an *iracundus senex, sed iustus.* Cf. Mullens (1940) 155, Blaiklock (1952) 184-86, Greenberg (1962) 173-74, Burnett (1971) 185 and 206-07.

[7] As has been noted (e.g., by Verrall [1905] 225, Will [1961] 97, Strohm [1957] 40 and 177), Tyndareus' entrance itself is a surprise (the first of many in the scenes to come): nothing in the earlier scenes has prepared us for his sudden appearance and our sources indicate that he was not a figure frequently seen on the tragic stage (Will [1961] 96, Willink [ed.] on *Or* 470-629 [who does note, however, the tradition that Orestes was prosecuted before the Areopagus by Tyndareus and Erigone; see Jacoby (1950-1962) IIIb (Suppl.) ii. 48 n. 8, Brown (1983) 33 n. 94]).

[8] Cf. Howald (1930) 168. Pearson (1962) 252 n. 5 is unduly extreme, however, in his assumption of a blatantly chauvinistic response to Tyndareus: "... Tyndareus is a Spartan and unusually stupid even by Spartan standards."

[9] Dale, "Ethos and Dianoia: 'Character' and 'Thought' in Aristotle's *Poetics*" (Dale [1969]) 149.

the pressure placed upon the young protagonist while continuing the process (introduced somewhat obliquely in the introductory sequence of scenes) of entangling the Orestes of this play in a hopelessly knotted complex of fifth-century political and ethical attitudes. Tyndareus is less the stern guardian of antique virtue, more the sophistic *rhetor,* than he would have us believe: the audience's first impressions of him as a choleric and imperiously intransigent old man are confirmed.[10] The significance of his arguments, however, lies in the disorienting effect created by the various anachronisms imbedded therein. Considered as a mere plot device, Tyndareus does an effective job of motivating Menelaus' betrayal of Orestes; on a more subtle level, his speech introduces the first in a series of radical dislocations, that dazzles us by virtue of its daring and cleverness while at the same time creating the sense of an underlying (and potentially explosive) confusion at the play's core.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SPEECH

Tyndareus opens with a short *prooemion* that sums up the central theme of his 'brief': if σοφία is the issue[11] (as Menelaus' taunt at 490 has

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[10] See Heath (1987a) 58-59 for a similar emphasis on the viewers' prejudice against Tyndareus and the effect of that prejudice on their evaluation of his arguments.

[11] The text of 491, as it stands, is corrupt. Of the various solutions proposed, that of Murray (πρὸς τόνδ' ἀγὼν τίς ⟨ἀ⟩σοφίας ἥκει πέρι;), although orthographically easy, should be rejected due to the strangeness of the locution ἀγὼν ἀσοφίας (the genitive should represent a positive attribute: cf. Collard [1975b] 61 n. 1). The same objection holds for Bothe's πρὸς τόνδ' ἀγών τις ⟨ἀ⟩σοφίας ἥκει πέρι (with colon or full stop; accepted by Willink [ed.]). The latter also is open to the objection (1) that a 'moderating' τις scarcely befits a retort to Menelaus' preceding charge (*pace* Winnington-Ingram [1969b] 54 n. 9); (2) that we might expect ὡς ἔοικε or the like in this type of utterance (cf., e.g., *Med* 522, *Hipp* 1090, *Hec* 229, *Or* 1577); (3) that ἀσοφία is found nowhere before Plutarch and Lucian (as Winnington-Ingram indicates; his comparison of δίκη ἀσεβείας is unconvincing). Di Benedetto's solution ([1961] 132-33 and [ed.] *ad loc.*), on the other hand, (πρὸς τόνδ' ἀγῶνα τί σοφίας ἥκεις πέρι;) is based on the misconception that the ἀγών in question is between Menelaus and Tyndareus (implied by Menelaus' charge at 490), with only a glancing reference to Orestes. Yet the following lines make it clear that the focus is on the folly of Orestes from the very beginning (492-95); to posit otherwise is to mangle the unity of Tyndareus' *prooemion* and weaken the fierce anger and contempt that marks his speech from its very opening. Porson's emendation (πρὸς τόνδε σοφίας τίς ἂν ἀγὼν ἥκοι πέρι;) remains the best solution to the crux (cf. West [1987] 285-86, who attempts to retain the word order of the mss. by reading τοῦ σοφοῦ γ'). Di Benedetto's objection to the translation of ἥκοι as 'concern' is not compelling (see Degani [1967] 35 and Willink [ed.] *ad loc.*), while Fraenkel's charge that a question is out of place here (private correspondence cited by Di Benedetto, accepted by Willink) is based on unconvincing parallels in *Phoen* and *Frogs* and ignores the context of the passage, where an irascible and contemptuous question is appropriate (cf. Pheres at *Alc* 675-76, Peleus at *Andr* 590-91). With Porson's emendation 492-95 present a rhetorical expansion of 491, forcefully reiterating and clarifying the charge

suggested), then the advantage must lie with Tyndareus, for, clearly, no
one is more folly-ridden and debased (ἀσυνετώτερος) than Orestes,[12]
who failed to give due observance to τὸ δίκαιον and τὸν κοινὸν
Ἑλλήνων νόμον (491-95). The latter phrase, ringing forth imperiously at
the conclusion of the *prooemion,* provides the keynote for the series of
πίστεις which follows. The arrangement of these πίστεις gives the
impression of a ruthless and devastating logic, opening (after the manner
advised in the handbooks and observed in actual practice) with arguments
based on a closely reasoned analysis of Orestes' deed, and concluding
with those of a more emotional nature.[13] We begin by returning to the
moment of Agamemnon's murder (496-506). At that time, according to
Tyndareus, Orestes should have banished Clytemnestra from the house
and indicted her for murder. Instead, he ignored the set forms of law and
murdered her by his own hand, thereby placing himself on the same level
as his mother and becoming liable to the same penalties. The general
implications of Orestes' act come under consideration in the following
section (507-11): if allowed to go unpunished, Orestes will have set a
precedent that will result in an endless string of vengeance killings and (it
is implied) bring about chaos in individual households and in society at
large. Contrasted with this dangerous practice are the wise ordinances of
the prudent men who established the city's laws in the distant past (512-
17): they declared that the murderer should be banished from the
community, thereby circumventing the possibility of continuing blood-
guilt and the resultant miasma. Having set forth the heart of his case,
Tyndareus then proceeds to clarify his own position (518-25), distancing
himself from Clytemnestra and her crimes (compare 499), as well as from
Helen and from Menelaus himself. His sole concern, he claims, is the
preservation of law and the suppression of such brutal acts (τὸ θηριῶδες
τοῦτο καὶ μιαιφόνον, 524), which, if allowed to go unchecked, would
result in the end of civilization and, ultimately, in total ruin for the
community. The final section of the πίστεις (526-33) is connected
somewhat more loosely to the others, although it gives the impression of
continuing a closely reasoned line of argument through its use of

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against Orestes. (Diggle [ed.] offers the attractive τόνδε σοφίας ⟨ἆρ'⟩ [*uel* πᾶς] ἀγὼν ἥκει *uel*
τόνδε σοφίας ⟨ἆρ' ἂν⟩ ἀγὼν ἥκοι.)

[12] For the moral connotations of terms for intellectual activity in Greek thought, see, e.g.,
Scarcella (ed.) on *Or* 491, Dover (1974) 66-69 and 116-29, and, in general, *EN* Book 6.

[13] See, e.g., Arist. *Rhet.* 1415a 26-34 and his comments on the manner in which the
epilogue of a speech should be structured (1419b 10ff., where, without saying as much, he
indicates that the epilogue should repeat on a smaller scale the scheme of the speech as a
whole). See as well *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1443b 14ff. Cf. Di Benedetto (ed.) on *Or* 579-604.

introductory ἐπεί.[14] Turning from himself to the 'defendant,' Tyndareus
conjures up before the eyes of his audience an image of the actual
moment of Clytemnestra's death, describing her pathetic pleas for mercy
and forcing his hearers to consider what type of person the man must be
who could gaze upon such a heart-rending sight and still drive home his
sword. While the impression made by this image is still fresh, Tyndareus
turns to invoke the testimony of the gods themselves, who have indicated
their own abomination of the deed by plaguing Orestes with debilitating
fits of insane fear.[15] On this powerful note the πίστεις come to a close. In
a brief epilogue (534-41) the elderly king again addresses Menelaus
directly, warning him not to oppose the gods by aiding Orestes, or, if he
does, not to think of returning to Sparta. With a final summary of his
position (θυγάτηρ δ' ἐμὴ θανοῦσ' ἔπραξεν ἔνδικα· / ἀλλ' οὐχὶ πρὸς
τοῦδ' εἰκὸς ἦν αὐτὴν θανεῖν, 538-39) and a somewhat ill-fitting reference
to his own ill fortune in the matter of his daughters,[16] Tyndareus
concludes his condemnation of Orestes.

THE QUESTION OF TYNDAREUS' CHARACTERIZATION: HIS ROLE IN *ORESTES*

The speech stands out for the effectiveness of its composition, for its
tight unity of theme and tenor. Terse, ruthlessly logical in its progression

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[14] On this use of ἐπεί as a rough equivalent for γάρ (with general reference to the charge
against Orestes implied in 524), see Biehl (1965) *ad loc.* The connection of thought implied
at *Or* 526 is more tenuous than in the parallels cited, however, and this impression of a mild
disjunction is increased by the unexpected introduction of apostrophe (cf. below, pp. 121-23)
and the shift from διάνοια to ἔλεος and διαβολή.

[15] Note the same collocation in the second *stasimon* (825ff.) of a vivid depiction of
Clytemnestra's death with an overt reference to the avenging spirits that now plague Orestes.
There the emphasis is on the complex nature of Orestes' situation and on the dual nature of
his deed (see below, p. 324); here Tyndareus' sole concern is to present a damning portrait of
his nephew.

[16] As with the equally weak 602-04 (which may be intended to answer 540-41),
Tyndareus' final distich might well be attributed to a sententious interpolator. See esp.
Fraenkel (1946) 85-89 (who deletes 602-04 but retains 540-41); also Wilamowitz (1924) 256
and 258, Di Benedetto (ed.) on *Or* 602-04, Burnett (1961) 48, van der Valk (1984) 173, West
(1987) 283. With these two sets of lines omitted, both speeches would end on a much more
forceful note and, more to the point, each would focus more directly on the issue at hand, the
question of Orestes' guilt. While the choral distiches at 542-43 and 605-06 seem to confirm
the authenticity of 540-41 and 602-04 (note as well 249-50, which seem to prepare for 540-41
[Lanza (1961) 61]), I wonder whether these typically vapid observations might not have
inspired a sententious interpolator to provide an immediate context for them that was lacking
in the original. The supposed echo of 541 (εὐδαιμονῶ) at 601 is scarcely forceful or
significant enough to affect this question. (For a different view, see Friis-Johansen [1959]
154, who notes the older Euripides' fondness for "[t]he clearly separated type of conclusive
reflection without pathos" and observes that, "... often the reflection is not much more than a
final flourish of no particular importance.")

of *topoi,* bristling with anger and contempt, it presents a seemingly devastating case against Orestes while at the same time maintaining and supplementing the impression of Tyndareus' character created in the preceding *stichomythia.* This is not to say that the arguments it presents are without flaw: several inconsistencies can be found, as we will see below. Here, however, it is important that we consider the heart of Tyndareus' case, his reliance upon νόμος. As we have seen in the above summary, the key to Tyndareus' argument lies in his assuming the role of self-proclaimed champion of law and social order. This is the note that he sounds in his *prooemion* (494-95) and it forms the cornerstone of the formal charge leveled against Orestes (496-517): Orestes scorned the law and its provisions for dealing with malefactors (496-506);[17] his practice, if allowed to spread, would subvert law altogether and result in social chaos (507-11); the ordinances of the lawgivers, on the other hand, provide both for the punishment of the guilty and the maintenance of harmony and prosperity within the community (512-17). The theme is sounded most strongly, however, in Tyndareus' clarification of his own position vis-à-vis the case: it is not that he condones Clytemnestra's crime; his sole concern is for the maintenance of social order (523-25):

> ἀμυνῶ δ' ὅσονπερ δυνατός εἰμι τῷ νόμῳ,
> τὸ θηριῶδες τοῦτο καὶ μιαιφόνον
> παύων, ὃ καὶ γῆν καὶ πόλεις ὄλλυσ' ἀεί.

The ringing idealism of these lines, as well as the apparent justice of the charge, have led commentators to see in Tyndareus' words a manifesto of the poet himself, similar to the equally idealistic speech of Theseus at *Supplices* 195ff., but with a more direct application to the Athens of Euripides' day.[18] Thus Tyndareus' earlier reference to τὸν κοινὸν Ἑλλήνων νόμον (495) recalls the patriotic and enthusiastic idealism of *Supplices* 524-27, 670-72 (compare 306-12, 538-40, 561-63) or frg. 853 N[2],[19] thereby identifying Tyndareus' cause with that of all

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17 Ostwald's contention ([1969] 25) that the reference to νόμος at 503 is general in nature ('standards of proper behavior'; cf. Lloyd [1992] 115-16) must be mistaken in light of the argument Tyndareus goes on to develop, with its echoes of forensic *topoi* and legal terminology. Regarding the latter, note ἐπιθεῖναι ... αἵματος δίκην at 500 (cf., e.g., Lys. 1.31 [of legislation rather than prosecution]) and the use of διώκω (the *mot juste* for the prosecution in a legal suit) at 501. Cf. Del Grande (1962), Lanza (1963), and Sutton (1987) 58-59 on νόμος elsewhere in Euripides.

18 For Tyndareus as a *porte-parole* for Euripides himself, see Wilamowitz (1924) 255, Blaiklock (1952) 184-85, Will (1961) 98-99, van der Valk (1984) 178; cf. Krieg (1934) 29, Conacher (1967) 219-20.

19 Cf. Conacher (1967) 219 n. 15 and see Hdt. 7.102.1, Thuc. 4.97.2, Isoc. 4.55, Demosth. 23.85. Cf. Collard (1975a) on E. *Su* 524-27 and Addenda on 429ff., Ostwald (1969) 33.

people of sound views and unbiased sensibilities. As a defender of the law (523), the aged king allies himself directly with contemporary proponents of Athenian democracy and the numerous ἔπαινοι νόμων that survive in the sources.[20] Similarly, his reference to τὸ θηριῶδες (524) recalls the various accounts (quite popular in the late fifth century) of the gradual development of human society and civilized mores out of an originally lawless and bestial existence.[21] Thus Tyndareus aligns himself with the rationalistic, enlightened views of Euripides' day and portrays Orestes as a threat to the very foundations of civilized life, one who would return society to its early state when, ἦν ... ὁ μὲν νόμος / ταπεινός, ἡ βία δὲ σύνθρονος Διί.[22]

The temptation, for those who feel that Orestes should be regarded with sympathy, is to dismiss Tyndareus as a mere hypocrite. It is true that other Euripidean characters sound a similar note for clearly nefarious ends: Jason plays off the familiar ἔπαινοι νόμων in his self-justification before Medea (*Medea* 536-38); the Herald of *Heraclidae* bases part of his obviously fallacious argument on the νόμοι of Argos (*Heraclidae* 139-43); Hermione raises a charge very similar to that of Tyndareus in her denouncement of Andromache's foreign ways (*Andromache* 175-76); the Odysseus of *Hecuba* 306ff., like Tyndareus and the Theseus of *Supplices* 195ff., claims to give priority to the good of the community over personal obligations or concerns (compare the claims of Polymestor at 1136ff.). In his influential study of *Orestes* Reinhardt (1960) 246 attempts to cast

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[20] E.g., E. *Su* 429ff. (cf. Collard [1975a] *ad loc.* [with Addenda] and the other passages from *Su* cited above), fr. 252 N², Hdt. 7.104, Thuc. 2.37, and Lys. [2].18-19. On the association of νόμοι with law, order, and prosperity see Ostwald (1969) 30-33 and 69 n. 7, de Romilly (1971), chapter 7: "La justification politique: les lois démocratiques."

[21] A useful survey of passages and bibliography can be found in Collard (1975a) on E. *Su* 201-13 and 201-02. Cf. Edelstein (1967) 21ff., Guthrie (1971) 80 n. 2, de Romilly (1971) 165-66 and 171-72, Dodds (1973) 1ff., Longo (1975) 283ff., Kerferd (1981) 139ff. (especially 142), Sutton (1987) 62, Lloyd (1992) 118. The passages gathered by North (1966) 380-81 detailing the use of beast imagery in connection with the theme of σωφροσύνη reveal the link between τὸ θηριῶδες here and Tyndareus' charge at 502, while passages such as *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1420a 27-1420b 5 demonstrate the relevance to his previous allegations of Orestes' folly (491-95). See as well Boulter (1962).

[22] Moschion 97F 6.15-16 (Snell). Cf. Aesch. F 181a (Radt); *Ant* 353-60, 368-75; E. *Su* 201ff.; Critias 43F 19.1-15 (Snell); *Clouds* 1427-31 (cf. *Birds* 755-59); Anon. Iambl. 6; Athenio frg. 1.4-8 (Kassel/Austin); Pl. *Protag.* 322A8ff.; Isoc. 3.6, 4.39-40, 11.25, 15.253-55; Arist. *Pol.* 1253a 7ff.; Epicurus ΔΚ 32; Dittenberger (1915-1924) 704.11ff.; Hor. *Sat.* 1.3.99-106. Euripides' Polyphemus is portrayed as still living on this primitive and lawless level: see esp. *Cyc* 338-41. Cf. as well the pseudo-evolutionary account at Hdt. 1.96-97. At *Cra.* 394E Plato associates Orestes directly with this notion of primitive humanity's lawless state, while the contrast between the savage existence of beasts and that of civilized humans appears in many of the sources, most significantly, perhaps, at *Eum* 193-95. Early precedents for these passages can be found in Hes. *Op.* 276-80 (cf. Pindar *Nem.* 1.63) and in the *Theogony,* with its conception of Zeus' accession as a triumph over an earlier state of lawless chaos.

Tyndareus in a similarly hypocritical role, claiming that, "Bei ihm maskiert sich hinter dem Nomos, was sich bei Menelaos hinter dem 'Möglichen', dem 'dynaton', maskiert: sein wahres Gesicht." Others[23] have expanded this view, emphasizing the fact that, for all of Tyndareus' eloquence in magnifying the sanctity of the city's νόμοι and in condemning the use of violence, he is quite willing to employ violent methods himself in order to impose his own will on Menelaus (534-37 and 622ff.) and on the Argive assembly as a whole.[24] Much is made as well of the fact that, having praised the traditional penalty, prescribed by the ancestral νόμοι, of exile for anyone condemned of homicide (512-17), Tyndareus still seeks the death penalty for Orestes.[25] Yet an interpretation of Tyndareus' role that delves too deeply into his supposed hypocrisy is unconvincing. On the one hand, it places too great an emphasis upon the character of the Spartan elder. In and of himself Tyndareus is quite incidental to the drama. Although he later is said to have played a part in Orestes' denunciation before the Argive assembly (915-16), he is no more a true participant in the action than is Aegeus in *Medea*. Like Aegeus, he is brought on perfunctorily in order to fulfill a specific function.[26] Having put Menelaus' resolve to the test (and having

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[23] See, e.g., Krieg (1934) 30-31, Lanza (1961) 60-62, Wolff (1968) 143-44, Schmidt-Berger (1973) 33ff., Erbse (1975) 441-42, Zeitlin (1980) 65, Falkner (1983a) 296 and (1983b) 18, Eucken (1986) 158-59, O'Brien (1988a) 196-97.

[24] 612-14. Most editors prefer the reading of the mss. at 613 (ἑκοῦσαν οὐχ ἄκουσαν), rejecting Canter's emendation (ἑκοῦσαν οὐχ ἑκοῦσαν): see Wedd (ed.), Biehl (1965), and Willink (ed.) *ad loc.*, and, on the use of such 'polar expressions,' P. T. Stevens (1971) on *Andr* 96, Denniston (1939) on E. *El* 985-87 and 1017, Dawe (1982) on *OT* 58-59, van der Valk (1984) 192 and n. 71. Canter's emendation is accepted, however, by Murray (ed.), Di Benedetto (ed.), West (ed.), and Diggle (ed.). It is true that ἑκοῦσαν οὐχ ἄκουσαν, ἑκόντες οὐχ ἄκοντες, and the like are employed several times in the texts (*Hcld* 531, *Andr* 357, *OT* 1230) to give fullness and emphasis to an affirmation of willingness and determination (cf. Biehl's 'pleonastische Antithesis'). Such an affirmation ill suits the context of *Or* 607ff., however: if the assembly already is eager to condemn Orestes, what need for Tyndareus' efforts? Moreover, for Tyndareus to state merely that he will urge the assembly to a course of action upon which it already has decided would undercut the impassioned rage that he displays throughout his exit speech and that is evident here in his use of the verb ἐπισείω. As we have seen (above, p. 72), the latter is a forceful word (cf. 255-56 and Di Benedetto *ad loc.*) that better suits the whipping on of a mindless beast than the swaying of an assembly. None of these considerations is conclusive (Willink indicates, e.g., that the furies whom Clytemnestra is said to whip on at 255-56 are quite willing themselves), but Canter's emendation deserves more consideration than it is given by Willink (particularly given the scholiast's paraphrase: ... παραγενόμενος εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἤδη παροξυνῶ πάντας κατὰ σοῦ καὶ μὴ βουλομένους). See West (ed.) *ad loc.* and cf., e.g., the more prosaic Hdt. 2.120.1, 4.164.4, Lys. 13.53, 21.11.

[25] See Appendix Five on 536-37 = 625-26. Verrall's contention ([1905] 228 n. 2) that φυγαῖσι at 515 is the equivalent of 'trials' (and that therefore no contradiction is involved in these lines) is typical of the type of special pleading in which he so freely indulges.

[26] Cf. as well the irascible (and wildly illogical) Teiresias of *Phoen* (discussed below, pp.

presented Euripides with an opportunity to set forth in greater detail the impossibility of Orestes' situation), Tyndareus departs and is forgotten. He is characterized only to the extent necessary for this limited purpose, as a stereotypically stern, irascible, and utterly unforgiving γέρων.[27] Thus, although Tyndareus' own position is far from unimpeachable, interpretations that dismiss his arguments as mere hypocrisy — an elaborate display of two-faced villainy — are bound to miss the mark, whereas such an attempt is quite appropriate and even necessary in the case of the other figures mentioned above. The base motives that inspire Jason, Eurystheus (as represented by the Herald), and Odysseus must be appreciated in order to come to grips with the issues being raised by the plays in which they appear; Tyndareus' personality and motives, by contrast, are of little interest vis-à-vis the broader issues in *Orestes*. To the extent that he serves as a catalyst for Menelaus' act of betrayal, it is significant that Tyndareus' arguments can be shown to represent a calculated rhetorical stance. They are not an impassioned *cri de cœur* (whether on the part of Tyndareus or the poet himself) on the bond between civic law and human civilization: it is important to see that Orestes fails before Menelaus (as he later fails before the Argive assembly) for reasons other than those of abstract justice, and that Tyndareus 'convinces' Menelaus by means of intimidation rather than by the nobility of his arguments. But an over-concentration on Tyndareus' personality or his private motives distorts his rather limited role in the play.

In this regard a peculiar feature of Tyndareus' role deserves remark. On the surface, the setting of this *agon* is familiar: two speakers, each presenting his case before a third party who acts as arbiter. In this respect, the scene is quite similar in outline to the *agones* at *Heraclidae* 134ff., *Hecuba* 1132ff., *Troades* 914ff., and elsewhere.[28] Yet at *Orestes* 491ff. there is a distinctive twist applied to the conventional scenario, one that is essential to our understanding of Tyndareus' role. Alone among the blocking figures[29] of such scenes, Tyndareus does not attempt to justify a past action of his own, nor, in any true sense, to persuade the arbiter to

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277-78).

[27] See Dover (1974) 105-06. Reinhardt's comparison ([1960] 245) of Tyndareus with the Pheres of *Alc* is particularly apt: although the function of the two characters in their respective dramas is quite different, each comes on briefly, presents a powerful and wonderfully irate speech of condemnation, and then departs.

[28] Variations can be found, e.g., at E. *Su* 162ff., *Hel* 894ff., *Phoen* 469ff. See Duchemin (1968) 140-44.

[29] I use this term although it is not strictly appropriate in the case of figures such as the Helen of *Tro*.

adopt a certain course of action in the future. Strictly speaking, Tyndareus' outburst at 491ff. is simply that: an angry denunciation of Orestes in response to Menelaus' charge at 490. He does not attempt to win over his son-in-law; he denounces Orestes, issues sentence, and commands Menelaus to comply. Unlike other blocking figures, Tyndareus deals from a position of power: he is not subject to his son-in-law's jurisdiction and (as we have noted) does not even deem it necessary to await Menelaus' decision on the matter,[30] while his contempt for Menelaus is apparent throughout the scene (particularly at lines 518ff.). Thus, although the Spartan elder does bear a distinct similarity to the menacing heralds (who also rely heavily upon threats) familiar from suppliant drama, his unique standing vis-à-vis Menelaus introduces a distinct alteration in an otherwise familiar pattern. Ultimately, Tyndareus' role is not to convince, but to intimidate. Neglect of this aspect of the elder Spartan's presentation has misled commentators on both sides of the issue, since it has caused interpreters of the play to overlook the fact that, to a greater degree than usual in a Euripidean *agon*,[31] Tyndareus' arguments are isolated from the immediate dramatic context and are not intended to win Menelaus' consent (the threats of 534ff. and 622ff. are sufficient for that purpose), still less to reveal the speaker's own character or views. As we will see, the importance of the issues raised in Tyndareus' speech have little to do with the figure of Tyndareus himself or with the relation of his character to Menelaus, but a great deal to do with the sense of dislocation and confusion that comes to dominate the world of *Orestes*.

TYNDAREUS' SPEECH: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

The second weakness in Reinhardt's interpretation of Tyndareus' role (above, p. 108) lies in the fact that Tyndareus' case is a strong one. For in relying upon νόμος Tyndareus develops the problematic aspects of Orestes' deed, already given their due weight by Aeschylus, but in a fifth-century context, employing the techniques of a skilled *rhetor* of the day. Aeschylus' Furies argue mainly on the basis of traditional religious

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[30] See above, pp. 72-73. While it is not unusual for minor characters to depart the stage in an abrupt manner, the contempt implied by Tyndareus' unceremonious departure (in contrast to the fulsomeness of his initial greeting at 470-75) may well be intended to indicate further his θρασύτητα καὶ ἀγροικίαν ἦθους (cf. Arist. *Rhet.* 1417a 22-24).

[31] Cf. Krieg (1934) 29-30, P. T. Stevens (1971) on *Andr* 184ff. Such debates rarely lead either of the disputants to alter his or her views, nor do they generally have an appreciable effect on the course of the action: see Lloyd (1992) 15-17.

sanctions governing behavior toward god, guest, and parent,[32] and, in mythological terms, on the basis of their τιμή as goddesses of vengeance.[33] Even in the second *stasimon* (lines 490ff.), where they present a brilliant picture of the consequences for society should Orestes be allowed to escape punishment, their argument remains, for the most part, on a mythological and religious plane. As Dale ([1969] 210-14) has indicated, throughout the play they are hampered in the presentation of their case by the limitations inherent in their role as chorus: confined to choral lyric, stichomythic dialogue, and brief, two- to four-line outbursts in iambic trimeter, their arguments must perforce consist largely of abbreviated appeals to traditional attitudes and long-accepted truths. By contrast, we have seen that Tyndareus is allowed to develop a sustained case of some sophistication, yet one that operates, not within a mythological or religious context, but within the political, ethical, and rhetorical traditions of Athens in the late fifth century.

It is to the last of these traditions that we must now turn in order to arrive at a proper evaluation of the idealism that seems to pervade Tyndareus' speech. For the precise nature of that speech can be appreciated only by reference to the works of the Greek orators themselves. While an exhaustive study of these would take us beyond the bounds of the present discussion, it is important to note that Tyndareus' arguments and rhetorical stratagems are in the best tradition of Athenian courtroom practice and therefore would have been quite familiar to Euripides' audience.[34] Far from representing the idealism of an old-fashioned and rigidly moral elder, or a manifesto on the part of the poet himself, Tyndareus' indictment of Orestes should be seen as a ruthlessly logical and superbly skillful exploitation of rhetorical weapons, employed to present Orestes' deed in the most damning light possible. The audience's familiarity with these devices, combined with the unfavorable light in which Tyndareus is introduced and the generally negative connotations of his role as a blocking figure, would assure that (unlike many a modern critic) it would not accept Tyndareus' arguments as an unpleasant but honest statement of the facts or, worse still, Tyndareus himself as a *porte-parole* of the poet.

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[32] See especially *Eum* 269-72, 545-49. On these 'unwritten laws' see Ehrenberg (1923), Collard (1975a) on E. *Su* 18-19 and 433-37, de Romilly (1971) 25ff., Knox (1964) 94ff.

[33] E.g., *Eum* 162ff., 208ff., 227, 323ff.

[34] On Euripides' relation to the orators see T. Miller (1887), Lees (1891), Tietze (1933), Norden (1958) 28-29 and 75-79, Goebel (1983) 266ff., Jouan (1984), Lloyd (1992) 19ff. See T. Miller (1887) 64 for a brief survey of similarities between the strategies employed by Tyndareus and Orestes and those recommended in *Rhet. ad Alex.*

It was a common practice for the speaker in a legal suit at Athens to present his opponent as a person contemptuous of the city's laws, while the speaker himself posed as a staunch ally of the city's democratic traditions and the νόμοι πάτριοι upon which those traditions were founded. Thus Euphiletus, at Lysias 1.26, quotes the ringing words with which he would have us believe he accompanied the execution of Eratosthenes, who had been caught in bed with Euphiletus' wife:

> ἐγὼ δ' εἶπον ὅτι 'οὐκ ἐγώ σε ἀποκτενῶ, ἀλλ' ὁ τῆς πόλεως νόμος, ὃν σὺ παραβαίνων περὶ ἐλάττονος τῶν ἡδονῶν ἐποιήσω, καὶ μᾶλλον εἵλου τοιοῦτον ἁμάρτημα ἐξαμαρτάνειν εἰς τὴν γυναῖκα τὴν ἐμὴν καὶ εἰς τοὺς παῖδας τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἢ τοῖς νόμοις πείθεσθαι καὶ κόσμιος εἶναι.'[35]

The deeds of the speaker's adversary are portrayed, not merely as a sign of the contempt in which he holds the city's traditional laws, but as an actual threat to the stability of those laws. Thus at Antiphon 4a6 we find:

> ὕβρει δὲ καὶ ἀκολασίᾳ παροινῶν εἰς ἄνδρα πρεσβύτην, τύπτων τε καὶ πνίγων ἕως τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπεστέρησεν αὐτόν, ὡς μὲν ἀποκτείνας τοῦ φόνου τοῖς ἐπιτιμίοις ἔνοχός ἐστιν, ὡς δὲ συγχέων ἅπαντα τῶν γεραιτέρων τὰ νόμιμα οὐδενὸς ἁμαρτεῖν, οἷς οἱ τοιοῦτοι κολάζονται, δίκαιός ἐστιν.

The νόμιμα τῶν γεραιτέρων referred to are not written laws, but rather the traditionally accepted manner of treating one's elders. The charge being leveled here is much the same as that which underlies Tyndareus' speech, however: the defendant's acts are held to represent a threat to the accepted norms of behavior embodied in the city's νόμοι — that is, in its traditional customs and unwritten laws as well as in its officially recorded statutes.[36]

Generally speaking, the adversary's contempt for νόμος is attributed to ὕβρις, ἀσέλγεια, ἀναίδεια, ἀκολασία, or the like.[37] It is not uncommon,

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[35] Cf. *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1444b 17-18. Similar passages regarding an opponent's contempt for law can be found, e.g., at Andoc. [4].14, 19, and 39; Lys. [9].17, 14.9, 30.5, frg. 5.1-2 (Gernet/Bizos); Isoc. 16.2, 20.10-11 and 22; Aeschin. 1.67; 3.8, 16, 23, 202-03, and 203; Demosth. [26].2 and 25, 30.8, [42].2, [43].72 and 78, [50].57 and 65, [56].10, 57.65, [59].12, 44, 72 and 77; Din. 1.17; Hyp. 2.12 (Jensen). Cf. de Romilly (1971) 139ff. on the use of this strategy in Demosth. 21.

[36] See Ostwald (1969) *passim* (especially 43ff., 57ff.); cf., however, Knox (1964) 97. See, e.g., Lys. [6].9-11; Demosth. 23.49, 62; 24.91-93; Din. 1.113. On the use of the related theme of δήμου κατάλυσις to generate διαβολή see Voegelin (1943) 117ff.

[37] Examples: Antiphon 3γ5 and 6 (cf. 3β3); 4a7; 4γ6; frg. 67 (Blass/Thalheim); Andoc. [4].40; Lys. 3.5, 7; 10.26; [11].9; 14.29; 24.15, 18, 25; 30.5; 33.8; Isae. 2.27; 4.19; 6.43 and 48; 8.43; Isoc. 20.16; Aeschin. 1.108 and 190-91; 3.16; Demosth. 21.1. (This theme forms something of a leitmotiv in Aeschin. 1 and Demosth. 21.)

however, to find references to an opponent's folly that are very similar to Tyndareus' charge at 491-95.[38] The strategy involved in both types of charge is the same: to inspire in the audience feelings of hostility and contempt for the opponent.[39]

Just as Tyndareus claims to act in the laws' defence (523-25), so the speaker in an Athenian court frequently presented himself as acting out of an objective regard for the welfare of the state and its laws rather than from any personal motives, and reminded the jurors of their duty to do the same. As evidence for this, see, for example, Antiphon 1.3 (τιμωρῆσαι ... τοῖς νόμοις) and 31 (βεβοήθηται ... τῷ νόμῳ), 4α7 (τῇ τε ἀνομίᾳ τοῦ παθήματος ἀμύνοντας), Lysias 10.32 (βοηθήσατε ... τοῖς νόμοις τοῖς κειμένοις), 22.3 (τοῖς νόμοις τοῖς κειμένοις ἐβοήθουν).[40]

We have seen, then, that the distinction established by Tyndareus between himself, as the valiant defender of law and social order, and Orestes, as a person whose willful actions would put an end to both of these, is based upon a commonplace of Greek rhetorical strategy.[41] The same can be said for the specific terms in which he poses this distinction at 523-25, where (as we have seen) his contrast between ὁ νόμος and τὸ θηριῶδες draws upon evolutionary accounts of the origin of human societies. We possess two forensic speeches in which the orators themselves play off such accounts, and it may be no coincidence that both seem to be literary display pieces rather than actual speeches delivered in a court of law.[42] The first is found in Antiphon's third *Tetralogy* (4α2) and is quite brief. Like Tyndareus' *rhesis,* it is delivered by the prosecution in a trial for murder:

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[38] E.g., Lys. [6].45; Isoc. 16.23; Isae. 9.11; Demosth. [25].32-35, [40].49; Hyp. 2.7 (Jensen); cf. E. *El* 1061. As Duchemin (1968) 206 notes such an approach is particularly common against a youthful opponent (cf., e.g., Antiphon 4γ2, 4δ2).

[39] Cf., e.g., Arist. *Rhet.* 1380a 1-5.

[40] Cf. Lloyd (1992) 34, 118, and see Lys. 28.13 and the lengthy set piece in praise of the laws at Antiphon 5.14 and 6.2. Cf. as well Lys. frg. 5.1 (Gernet/Bizos); Isoc. 18.27-28; Demosth. 24.37; [26].26-27; [48].84; Aeschin. 1.2; 3.7; Lycurg. *Leoc.* 150; Din. 3.20. (Ps.-Demosth. 25 repeatedly plays upon this theme: cf. below, pp. 114-15.) This same *topos* underlies *Hec* 798-805 (correctly interpreted, e.g., by Grube [1941] 96 and Solmsen [1975] 57-58). There is no support for Reckford's assertion that: "Taking *nomos* as 'custom,' not as eternal 'law,' [Hecuba's words] imply that religion and morality are human inventions: good ones, perhaps, but hardly rooted in heaven. ... Hecuba accepts chaos. For her, the gods never listen, they never enforce morality. Justice only exists insofar as it is upheld, or made, by human beings." (Reckford [1985] 120). Such a view ignores not only the *topos* involved but the words with which Hecuba opens: ἀλλ' οἱ θεοὶ σθένουσι; cf. Lanza (1963).

[41] Thus Finley (1938) 35 (cf. 39) is mistaken in interpreting this argument as an example of Spartan 'legalism' in the manner of the Thucydidean Archidamus (1.84.3).

[42] This is, perhaps, one of many reflections of the highly artificial, or 'epideictic,' nature of Euripides' oratory; cf. below, p. 124, on 530-33.

ὅτε γὰρ ⟨ὁ⟩ θεὸς βουλόμενος ποιῆσαι τὸ ἀνθρώπινον φῦλον τοὺς
πρώτους γενομένους ἔφυσεν ἡμῶν, τροφέας τε καὶ ⟨σωτῆρας⟩
παρέδωκε τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν, ἵνα μὴ σπάνει τῶν ἀναγκαίων
προαποθνήσκοιμεν τῆς γηραιοῦ τελευτῆς. ὅστις οὖν τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ
ἀξιωθέντων τοῦ βίου ἡμῶν ἀνόμως τινὰ ἀποκτείνει, ἀσεβεῖ μὲν περὶ
τοὺς θεούς, συγχεῖ δὲ τὰ νόμιμα τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

A more extensive and sophisticated use of this *topos* can be found in
ps.-Demosthenes 25, a highly artificial and, on the whole, poorly written
piece of sustained διαβολή.[43] Like Tyndareus, the prosecutor in this case
repeatedly portrays his opponent (Aristogeiton) and his followers as
enemies of the city's νόμοι (9 and 27) — men who would throw the city
into chaos (19, 42, 50, 75, 90) by destroying the harmony and prosperity
which, up until now, it has enjoyed through the reverence of its citizens
for εὐνομία.[44] And again the jury is called upon to join the speaker in his
defence of the νόμοι and the traditions for which they stand (14, 24, 45,
98-99). Most importantly for our purposes, Aristogeiton's acts, like
Orestes' act of matricide, are portrayed as the savage deeds of a creature
who has no part in a civilized society — a θηρίον μιαρὸν καὶ
ἄμεικτον[45] — and who, like the beasts, relies solely upon βία to obtain
his goals.[46] Thus Aristogeiton is a creature of φύσις, who cannot partake
in the rational social compact represented by the city's νόμοι.[47] The
climax of this theme is reached in section 20:

Λέξω δ' οὔτε καινὸν οὔτε περιττὸν οὐδὲν οὔτ' ἴδιον, ἀλλ' ὃ πάντες
ὑμεῖς ἴσθ' ὁμοίως ἐμοί. εἰ γάρ τις ὑμῶν ἐξετάσαι βούλεται τί ποτ'
ἐστὶ τὸ αἴτιον καὶ τὸ ποιοῦν τὴν βουλὴν συλλέγεσθαι, τὸν δῆμον εἰς
τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἀναβαίνειν, τὰ δικαστήρια πληροῦσθαι, τὰς ἔνας ἀρχὰς
ταῖς νέαις ἑκούσας ὑπεξιέναι, καὶ πάντα δι' ὧν ἡ πόλις οἰκεῖται καὶ
σῴζεται γίγνεσθαι, τοὺς νόμους εὑρήσει [τούτων αἰτίους] καὶ τὸ
τούτοις ἅπαντας πείθεσθαι, ἐπεὶ λυθέντων γε τούτων, καὶ ἑκάστῳ

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[43] See Gigante (1956) 268-92, de Romilly (1971) 155-73; cf. Guthrie (1971) 75-76,
Kerferd (1981) 55, 127-28.

[44] Demosth. [25].11, 24, 27. See as well the portrait drawn in 21ff. of society as an ἔρανος
to which each individual member must contribute, and that in 87ff. of the state as a well-run
household.

[45] A paraphrase of 25.58; cf. sections 8, 31, 95-96. See as well Demosth. 18.322; 24.143;
[34].52; [35].8, [43].83, [58].49; Aeschin. 2.34, 3.182; Din. 1.10 and 50, 2.10, 3.19.

[46] The words βία and βιάζεσθαι run like a leitmotiv throughout the early sections of the
speech, effectively underscoring the impression of Aristogeiton's character that the speaker
wishes to create. See [25].19, 23, 26, 27 (twice), 28, 30, 38. The use of such terms to
characterize the lawlessness of one's adversary is, of course, common in the orators: cf., e.g.,
Andoc. [4].10, Lys. 3.17, Demosth. 21.44-45, and, of greater interest, Menelaus' words at *Or*
1623-24 (an abbreviated indictment of Orestes). Cf., e.g., Lys. [2].19 and *Med* 538.

[47] Demosth. [25].15-16. Cf., e.g., Arist. *Pol.* 1253a 27-29. (Both passages can be seen as a

δοθείσης ἐξουσίας ὅ τι βούλεται ποιεῖν, οὐ μόνον ἡ πολιτεία οἴχεται,
ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὁ βίος ἡμῶν τοῦ τῶν θηρίων οὐδὲν ἂν διενέγκαι.[48]

The fact that the central strategy upon which Tyndareus bases his
speech is developed from a commonplace of Greek oratory does not
necessarily call into question its validity, but, in combination with the
other aspects of Tyndareus' role noted earlier, it does tell against those
who idealize his character or develop an overly elaborate account of his
personal beliefs. Further support for this conclusion is provided by an
examination of the specific forms in which the arguments employed by
the Spartan elder are presented: all are found with some frequency in the
texts of the orators as well as in the later rhetorical handbooks.[49]

The gambit of asserting what one's adversary ought to have done,
were he truly a person of sound reason and lawful inclinations (496-506),
is common. Compare, for example, the following passages from Lysias:

χρῆν δέ σε, ὦ Ἐρατόσθενες, εἴπερ ἦσθα χρηστός, πολὺ μᾶλλον τοῖς
μέλλουσιν ἀδίκως ἀποθανεῖσθαι μηνυτὴν γενέσθαι ἢ τοὺς ἀδίκως
ἀπολουμένους συλλαμβάνειν. νῦν δέ σου τὰ ἔργα φανερὰ γεγένηται
οὐχ ὡς ἀνιωμένου ἀλλ' ὡς ἡδομένου τοῖς γιγνομένοις .... (12.32)

καίτοι ἐχρῆν αὐτόν, εἴπερ ἦν ταῦτ' ἀληθῆ, παρακαλέσαντα μάρτυρας
ὡς πλείστους κατὰ τοὺς νόμους διαπράττεσθαι περὶ αὐτῶν. οὗτος δὲ
τοιοῦτον οὐδὲν πώποτε φαίνεται ποιήσας, ὑβρίζων δὲ καὶ τύπτων
[ἅμ'] ἀμφοτέρους ἡμᾶς καὶ κωμάζων καὶ τὰς θύρας ἐκβάλλων καὶ
νύκτωρ εἰσιὼν ἐπὶ γυναῖκας ἐλευθέρας. (3.22-23)[50]

Hyperides 3.5-6 (Jensen) provides a particularly developed variant of
the *topos* underlying Tyndareus' argument at 496-506, namely, the
sufficiency of the city's existing laws and their crucial role in safe-
guarding the state:

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response to the extreme partisans of φύσις; cf., e.g., Pl. *Grg.* 484A and *Anon. Iambl.* 6.)

[48] Cf. Lys. [2].19.

[49] As Kroll (1940) indicates ('Die Praxis des 5./4. Jhdts.' [columns 1065ff.]) the great
logographers of the 5th/4th centuries do not seem to have relied upon handbooks to compose
their works (cf. Duchemin [1968] 167-216 *passim* [especially 197-99]). Kroll also points out,
however, that the later handbooks themselves derive their rules from the practice of the
speakers of this period. The use, therefore, of relatively, or even very, late sources for
rhetorical theory and technique, although problematic, is justified if additional evidence can
be found in the texts of the orators themselves (cf. Lloyd [1992] 19ff.). I would not argue that
Euripides follows a particular rhetorical 'system,' but that the devices he employs would be
generally familiar to his audience as rhetorical strategies and would be received as such.

[50] Cf. Antiphon 1.6-7; 5.47; Lys. 7.20; [8].6; 12.48, 50; 15.5-6; 22.12; 32.23; Isae. 6.52;
9.11; Demosth. 20.96; 21.68-69; 24.25-26, 48, 74, 77; [42].1-2; [53].28; Aeschin. 3.23 and
211. At *Tro* 951-54 Helen foresees this line of argument as one which might well be used
against her. Cf. *Hec* 1218-23 and see Lloyd (1992) 32-33.

ἐγὼ δὲ οὔτε πρότερον οὐδενὸς ἂν μνησθείην ἢ τούτου, οὔτε πλείους
οἶμαι δεῖν λόγους ποιεῖσθαι περὶ ἄλλου τινός, ἢ ὅπως ἐν δημοκρατίᾳ
κύριοι οἱ νόμοι ἔσονται, καὶ αἱ εἰσαγγελίαι καὶ αἱ ἄλλαι κρίσεις κατὰ
τοὺς νόμους εἰσί[σ]ασιν εἰς τὸ δικαστήριον· διὰ τοῦτο γὰρ ὑμεῖς ὑπὲρ
ἁπάντων τῶν ἀδικημάτων, ὅσα ἔστιν ἐν τῇ πόλει, νόμους ἔθεσθε
χωρὶς περὶ ἑκάστου αὐτῶν. ἀσεβεῖ τις περὶ τὰ ἱερά· γραφαὶ ἀσεβείας
πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα. φαῦλός ἐστι πρὸς τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ γονεῖς· ὁ ἄρχων ἐπὶ
τούτου κάθηται. παράνομά τις ἐν τῇ πόλει γράφει· θεσμοθετῶν
συνέδριον ἔστι. ἀπαγωγῆς ἄξια ποιεῖ· ἀρχὴ τῶν ἕνδεκα καθέστηκε.
τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀδικημάτων ἁπάντων καὶ
νόμους καὶ ἀρχὰς καὶ δικαστήρια τὰ προσήκοντα ἑκάστοις αὐτῶν
ἀπέδοτε.[51]

The picture of the city's legal institutions and procedures presented here
employs a gambit similar to that employed by Tyndareus: designed to
establish the speaker's own right-minded views, it succeeds as well in
establishing the defendant's contempt for the very foundations of the
city's democratic traditions and, ultimately, its continued prosperity. In
both passages the invoking of an idealistic portrait of the prudent and
orderly legal procedures available to the lawful citizen serves to contrast
the dangerous and willful folly of the speaker's opponent.

In considering the results of Orestes' act, if carried to its logical
conclusion (507-11), Tyndareus employs a variation of a type of
argument often found in the texts of the orators and which will be
employed by Orestes himself in his rebuttal of Tyndareus' charges.[52]
Again ps.-Demosthenes 25 provides a particularly useful parallel (25-26):

φέρε γὰρ πρὸς θεῶν, εἰ ἕκαστος τῶν ἐν τῇ πόλει τὴν Ἀριστογείτονος
τόλμαν καὶ ἀναισχυντίαν λαβών, καὶ διαλογισάμενος ταῦθ' ἅπερ
οὗτος, ὅτι ἔξεστι καὶ λέγειν καὶ ποιεῖν μέχρι παντὸς ὅ τι ἂν βούληταί
τις ἐν δημοκρατίᾳ, ἄνπερ τοῦ ποῖός τις εἶναι δόξει [ὁ] ταῦτα ποιῶν
ὀλιγωρήσῃ, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐπ' οὐδενὶ τῶν ἀδικημάτων εὐθὺς αὐτὸν
ἀποκτενεῖ· εἰ ταῦτα διανοηθεὶς ὁ μὴ λαχὼν τῷ λαχόντι καὶ ὁ μὴ
χειροτονηθεὶς τῷ χειροτονηθέντι ἐξ ἴσου ζητοίη εἶναι καὶ τῶν αὐτῶν
μετέχειν, καὶ ὅλως μὴ νέος, μὴ πρεσβύτερος τὰ προσήκοντα πράττοι,
ἀλλὰ πᾶν τὸ τεταγμένον ἐξελάσας ἕκαστος ἐκ τοῦ βίου, τὴν ἑαυτοῦ
βούλησιν νόμον, ἀρχήν, πάνθ' ὑπολαμβάνοι· εἰ ταῦτα ποιοῖμεν, ἔστι
τὴν πόλιν οἰκεῖσθαι; τί δέ; τοὺς νόμους κυρίους εἶναι; πόσην δ' ἂν

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[51] Cf. Demosth. 24.91-93 (which also bears some similarity to [25].25-26 [cited below]),
[25].20, and [26].25.

[52] The vivid portrayal of the pernicious consequences entailed in the opponent's actions or
arguments (a form of διατύπωσις) will be employed by Orestes at 564ff.; cf. Spengel (1853)
3.79.23-26, *Rhet. ad Her.* 4.39.51, Cic. *Part. Or.* 16.55. (The term διατύπωσις is also found,
in a different sense, in connection with the figure ἐνάργεια, discussed below, p. 121.)

οἴεσθε βίαν καὶ ὕβριν καὶ παρανομίαν ἐν ἁπάσῃ τῇ πόλει καθ᾽ ἑκάστην τὴν ἡμέραν γίγνεσθαι καὶ βλασφημίαν ἀντὶ τῆς νῦν εὐφημίας καὶ τάξεως;

The speaker here relies upon several of the techniques employed by Tyndareus, but on an expanded scale.[53] In each passage we find a complex series of hypothetical propositions designed to pull the audience breathlessly along and challenge its comprehension; in each, a rapid series of images conveys an impressionistic picture of the chaos that would result if the defendant's acts were to go unpunished; and each passage concludes with a rhetorical question (or, in the case of the pseudo-Demosthenic speech, a series of such questions), the answer to which is left for the, by now thoroughly mesmerized, listener to provide.

Yet Tyndareus' use of the device is marked by a curious tension. He effectively communicates the dire implications inherent in the *lex talionis,* but his argument, with its vivid portrayal of an endless chain of vengeance killings, is better suited to a condemnation of blood feuds between families. Here the argument is artificially restricted to kin-murder, resulting, ultimately, in the rather strained picture of a grandson killing his father for the murder of his grandmother, with the implication that the great-grandson then will feel impelled to kill his own father in turn. (Note that Tyndareus must begin from the hypothetical murder of Orestes by *his* spouse: were he to begin from the situation currently facing Orestes he could not generate a lengthy enough chain of hypothetical murders without soon running into even more unwelcome improbabilities.)[54] The audience might well have noted Euripides' debt here, for example, to *Choephori* 1065ff., Sophocles' *Electra* 582-83, and his own *Electra* (1093-96), but Tyndareus' rhetorical elaboration of this familiar concept forces the *topos* into a mold into which it will not comfortably fit. Again we find that Tyndareus' argument involves a good deal of rhetorical cunning — a desire to instill a certain attitude in the mind of the audience, with a less than commendable regard for relevance or logic. Such an approach is appropriate for a litigant in a court of law, but scarcely harmonizes with the view that Tyndareus is a sensible old dicast expressing his heartfelt personal beliefs.[55]

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[53] In general, the devices of the orators, when translated into a tragic context, are found to be abbreviated and, in addition to being rendered in poetic diction, often are employed in an exaggerated or artificial form more suitable to an epideictic than to a forensic context.

[54] I disagree with Von der Mühll (1966), who argues that τόνδε at 508 is the equivalent of τὸν δεῖνα.

[55] Eucken (1986) 159 argues that, because Tyndareus does not address the question of matricide alone but condemns *any* act of murder as lawless, his speech is intended to reflect

Praise of the prudent and rational provisions of the lawgivers of old, whose statutes the defendant has ignored, and exegesis of the rationale lying behind those statutes (512-17), also are common in the texts of the orators and are recommended by the handbooks.[56] Thus the author of *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*[57] (1422b 2-3) advises that, δεῖ ..., ὅπου ἂν ῇ χρήσιμον, αὐτόν τε τὸν ἀγορεύοντα καὶ τὸν νόμον λαμβάνειν, and suggests in a later section of his treatise (1443a 11-15) that, should the defendant admit the deed but attempt to prove that it was lawful and just:

οὓς μὲν ⟨sc. νόμους⟩ ἡμεῖς παρεσχόμεθα καὶ τοὺς ὁμοίους τούτοις δικαίους καὶ καλοὺς καὶ συμφέροντας τῷ κοινῷ τῆς πόλεως ⟨καὶ⟩ κεκριμένους ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν τοιούτους εἶναι πειρατέον ἐπιδεικνύειν, τοὺς δὲ τῶν ἀντιδίκων τὰ ἐναντία.

We could not wish for a better description of the tactics adopted by Tyndareus at 512ff.

It is particularly significant that in these same lines Tyndareus plays fast and loose with the history of Greek legal institutions. The Greek states (including Athens) felt none of the modern compunction concerning the death penalty, even during the 'Enlightenment' of the fifth-century,[58] and there is no reason to assume that the case had been different in the murky past. (Note, for example, the proverbial severity of Draco's code.) After the manner of the orators, Tyndareus distorts history in order to paint an idealistic picture of the 'olden days' and to present his opponent as an individual who would introduce dangerous innovations into the wise provisions of the city's lawgivers.[59]

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upon the actions of Orestes and his friends later in the play. Lines 507-11 present a particularly striking illustration of the way in which Tyndareus' arguments, far from presenting Euripides' own views (and therefore a clue as to the interpretation of the play as a whole), modify rhetorical commonplaces and adopt a particular rhetorical stance in order to present his opponent in the worst possible light. The sentiments expressed throughout the speech are not wholesome rules for living, to be extracted by the audience and employed in judging Orestes' later actions, but rhetorical weapons applied to meet a specific rhetorical challenge.

[56] Praise: Aeschin. 3.257, Demosth. [25].16, 97. Cf. Antiphon frg. 78 (Blass/Thalheim); Demosth. [48].57; Spengel (1853) 2.154.2-3. Exegesis: Lys. 3.42, Isoc. 20.2-3, Demosth. 21.45-46, Aeschin. 3.6, Lycurg. *Leoc.* 64-66; cf. *Clouds* 1185ff. (An inversion of this *topos* is found at Andoc. [4].3.) Cf. Edwards (in Edwards/Usher [1985]) on Antiphon 5.14.

[57] On the date and authorship of this important source for early rhetorical theory see Goebel (1983) 74 n. 2 and the works cited by Jouan (1984) 4. Papyrus Hibeh 26 reads τὸν διαγορεύο[ν]τα νό[μον] at 1422b 3: whichever reading we adopt, the examples that immediately follow (1422b 4-25) reveal the passage's relevance to the point under discussion (cf., e.g., 1443a 32-35).

[58] See, e.g., Gernet (1924) and Lloyd (1992) 117.

[59] On distortions of history in the orators see Hignett (1952) 1ff. *passim,* Edelstein (1967) 67, Dover (1974) 11-13, Nouhaud (1982), Loraux (1986) 132ff.

In distancing himself from the less reputable aspects of his case and establishing the grounds for his undertaking the prosecution of Orestes (518-25), Tyndareus again employs a common rhetorical device, which appears in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* under the title of 'character' or ἦθος. At *Rhetoric* 1356a 4ff. Aristotle puts forward the commonsensical notion that the speaker's words should be so cast as to reveal him to be a reasonable and trustworthy person, particularly where the issue at hand admits of varying opinions:

> διὰ μὲν οὖν τοῦ ἤθους (sc. ἡ πίστις πορίζεται), ὅταν οὕτω λεχθῇ ὁ λόγος ὥστε ἀξιόπιστον ποιῆσαι τὸν λέγοντα· τοῖς γὰρ ἐπιεικέσι πιστεύομεν μᾶλλον καὶ θᾶττον, περὶ πάντων μὲν ἁπλῶς, ἐν οἷς δὲ τὸ ἀκριβὲς μὴ ἔστιν ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀμφιδοξεῖν, καὶ παντελῶς.

And at 1378a 6ff. Aristotle discusses the particular qualities that the speaker should seek to display: intelligence (φρόνησις), virtue (ἀρετή), good will (εὔνοια). In a related passage the author of the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* addresses a very similar concern under the title of 'opinion' or δόξα; here, however, the emphasis is on the speaker's knowledge of, and attitude toward, the specific issue at hand rather than on matters of 'character' in general:[60]

> Ἡ μὲν οὖν δόξα τοῦ λέγοντός ἐστι τὸ τὴν αὐτοῦ διάνοιαν ἐμφανίζειν κατὰ τῶν πραγμάτων. δεῖ δ' ἔμπειρον ἀποφαίνειν ἑαυτὸν περὶ ὧν ἂν λέγῃ, καὶ ἐπιδεικνύναι ὡς συμφέρει τἀληθῆ λέγειν περὶ τούτων .... (1431b 9-12)

And in a later passage (1432b 20-24) the author speaks of the need to circumvent any potential hostility on the part of the audience when taking an unpopular position on an issue (the speech under consideration is symbouleutic, not forensic, but the general techniques employed in each type of speech are the same, as the author indicates at 1432b 7-10):

> ... δεῖ προκαταλαμβάνοντα φέρειν αἰτίας παρ' ἃς ὀρθῶς ποιεῖν δόξεις συμβουλεύων, δεικνύντα τὴν ἐρημίαν τῶν λεγόντων ⟨ἢ⟩ τὸ μέγεθος τῶν κινδύνων ἢ τὸ τῷ κοινῷ συμφέρον ἢ ἄλλην τινὰ τοιαύτην αἰτίαν δι' ἧς λύσεις τὴν ἐπιφερομένην δυσχέρειαν.

Tyndareus' words at 518-25 accord with the above advice: they show him to be a man of sound reason (ἐπιεικής) who is prosecuting Orestes out of motives that reveal both his own virtue (ἀρετή) and his concern for the common good (εὔνοια, τὸ μέγεθος τῶν κινδύνων, τὸ τῷ κοινῷ

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[60] See Goebel (1983) 9, Mirhady (1991) 9-10.

συμφέρον). Above all, they anticipate and deflect any odium that might
be felt towards him as the father of the infamous Helen and
Clytemnestra.[61]

As Dionysius of Halicarnassus indicates, in his discussion of the
proem to Lysias 32 (*Lysias* 24), it is especially important for a speaker to
clarify his own position in this way when his opponent is a relative:

> τοῦτο τὸ προοίμιον ἁπάσας ἔχει τὰς ἀρετάς, ὅσας δεῖ τὸ προοίμιον
> ἔχειν. δηλώσουσι δὲ οἱ κανόνες αὐτῷ παρατεθέντες οἱ τῶν τεχνῶν.
> ἅπαντες γὰρ δή που παραγγέλλουσιν οἱ συνταξάμενοι τὰς τέχνας,
> ὅταν πρὸς οἰκείους ὁ ἀγών, σκοπεῖν ὅπως μὴ πονηροὶ μηδὲ
> φιλοπράγμονες οἱ κατήγοροι φανήσονται. κελεύουσίν τε πρῶτον μὲν
> τὴν αἰτίαν εἰς τοὺς ἀντιδίκους περιιστάναι καὶ τοῦ ἐγκλήματος καὶ τοῦ
> ἀγῶνος καὶ λέγειν, ὅτι μεγάλα τἀδικήματα καὶ οὐκ ἐνῆν αὐτὰ μετρίως
> ἐνεγκεῖν ....[62]

In just this way Tyndareus attempts to establish an objective basis for his
prosecution of Orestes and forestall objections that he is attacking his
nephew solely out of personal motives of revenge.

The attack on Menelaus (521-22), while in character for the irascible
Spartan king, is also an example of what the ancient rhetoricians termed
παρρησία, described by Rutilius Lupus (*De figuris sententiarum et
elocutionis* 2.18 [Brooks]) as follows: ... *in hoc vehementer cum iudice
agendum est, et vitium aut erratum eius audacter coram eo
reprehendendum.*[63] The device allows the speaker to appear to be all the
more unbiased and forthright because he seems, in his passionate regard
for justice, to be willing to attack even the jury itself. Thus, Tyndareus'
'frankness,' while furthering his characterization as a stern and highly
intimidating γέρων, is underlain by a rhetorical strategy that would be
familiar to the audience and would be recognized as precisely that — yet
another forensic weapon pulled from the elderly Spartan's rich arsenal.[64]

Tyndareus' use of a vivid reconstruction of Clytemnestra's final
moments at 526-29 to sway the emotions of the jury comes under the
category of διατύπωσις or ἐνάργεια.[65] The former is evaluated by the

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[61] Cf. Lloyd (1992) 118.

[62] A notable example of this strategy in actual practice can be found at Antiphon 1.1ff.
See as well Lys. Ἀπαράσημα 1 (Gernet/Bizos), Isae. 1.6-7, Demosth. [40].5, [48].1-3 and 53,
Rhet. ad Alex. 1442a 36-39, Spengel (1853) 1.336.30ff., and Dover (1974) 275.

[63] Cf. *Rhet. ad Her.* 4.36.48 and see Dover (1974) 23-25, Lloyd (1992) 118. Some
examples: Lys. 1.36 and 48-50; Andoc. [4].21; Thuc. 3.38.

[64] Cf. Helen at *Tro* 943-44.

[65] On διατύπωσις (sometimes ὑποτύπωσις) see Spengel (1853) 1.457.12ff. (quoted
below), 3.25.12ff., 3.79.15ff., 3.163.30ff., 3.180.4ff.; on ἐνάργεια see D. H. *Lys.* 7, ps.-

anonymous author of a late Τέχνη Ῥητορική as follows:

κινεῖ δὲ [πρὸς] πάθος καὶ ἡ διατύπωσις, ὅταν τις διατυπώσῃ τὸν
τετελευτηκότα λέγοντα, οἷον εἰ τύχοι, φεῖσαι, πάτερ. κινεῖ πάθος καὶ
ὅταν περὶ τοῦ σχήματος διαλέγηται, οἷον εἰ τύχοι, ὅπως μὲν ἐπὶ γῆς
ἔκειντο, ὅπως δὲ οὗτος παρειστήκει μετὰ τοῦ ξίφους. ... διατύπωσίς
ἐστιν ἐναργὴς καὶ ἐξειργασμένη φράσις τῶν ψιλῶς καὶ ἁπλῶς ἐν τῇ
διηγήσει λεγομένων, ὑπ' ὄψιν ἄγουσα τὸ πρᾶγμα.⁶⁶

The device is common in our texts of the orators (although, contrary to
the advice of the above-cited author, it is often incorporated into the
narrative itself instead of reserved for the following πίστεις) and is
associated, in particular, with Lysias and Demosthenes. Note, for
example, the prejudice generated against the speaker's opponent by the
vivid narratives at Lysias 1.26, 12.6-11, and Demosthenes 54.8-9 and
20.⁶⁷ Comparison of these examples with *Orestes* 526-29 underlines the
high degree of condensation involved in Tyndareus' use of this ploy
(which occupies only four lines of his speech), but such passages from
the orators provide a context in which the pathetic description of
Clytemnestra's death, brief though it is, can be evaluated. Again we find
that what appears to be an impassioned outburst on the part of Tyndareus
in fact involves a high degree of rhetorical cunning, an impression that is
confirmed by a closer examination of the specific form in which the
outburst is cast.

On the one hand, the emotion-filled rhetorical question by means of
which this picture is introduced (ἐπεὶ τίν' εἶχες, ὦ τάλας, ψυχὴν
τότε ...;), and the contrast with Tyndareus' own feelings, make
particularly effective use of a strategy recommended by the author of
Rhetorica ad Alexandrum (1442a 9-14):

δεῖ ... αὐτοὺς (sc.the speaker's clients) ἐκ τούτων ἐπαινεῖν ὧν μάλιστα
μέτεστι τοῖς ἀκούουσιν, λέγω δὲ φιλόπολιν φιλέταιρον ⟨εὐχάριστον⟩
ἐλεήμονα καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα, τὸν δ' ἐναντίον κακολογεῖν ἐκ τούτων ἐφ'
οἷς οἱ ἀκούοντες ὀργιοῦνται, ταῦτα δ' ἐστὶ μισόπολιν μισόφιλον
ἀχάριστον ἀνελεήμονα καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα.

As in his arguments based on νόμος, Tyndareus here places himself on

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Longinus 15, Spengel (1853) 1.439.10f., Kroll (1940) columns 1111-12; cf. *Rhet. ad Her.*
4.55.68-69, Quint. *Inst.* 8.3.61ff. and 9.2.40.

⁶⁶ Spengel (1853) 1.457.12ff.; the author proceeds to recommend its use in the epilogue of
a speech for the prosecution to produce hostility towards the defendant.

⁶⁷ Cf. Andoc. 1.48-53 and Demosth. 18.169-73, where we find ἐνάργεια and πάθος
without διαβολή. Cf., e.g., *Tro* 1015-19.

the side of all right-thinking people (that is, his audience), while
portraying Orestes as an outcast and an enemy, a man devoid of common
human sentiment. Thus 526-29 continue the note of self-justification
found in 518-25 while further arousing the audience's hostility against
the defendant.

More important, however, is the particular force of this sudden
introduction, in the midst of Tyndareus' *rhesis,* of a question addressed
directly to Orestes. Lack of appreciation for the rhetorical nature of
Tyndareus' speech has led to a particularly harsh misreading of these
lines. Several commentators have taken this address (and the apparent
inconsistency with the view expressed in 481ff.) as a sign that the old
man's passion has led him to forget his own injunction against any
contact with the polluted matricide.[68] Passionate as these lines may be,
they represent a calculated use of apostrophe,[69] here in the form of a
rhetorical question. The latter (designated by the terms πύσμα or πεῦσις)
was recognized as a highly emotional device, well-suited to the sentiment
here expressed by Tyndareus. Tiberius, in his Περὶ Σχημάτων, associates
its use with just such emotionally-charged (and highly prejudicial)
outbursts as that found here:

> τὸ πυσματικὸν σχῆμα ἔργα μὲν ἔχει τέσσαρα, προσοχήν,
> σαφήνειαν, ἐνάργειαν, ἔλεγχον. ... ἐνάργεια δέ ἐστι τὸ τοιοῦτον, πῶς
> ἂν ὠμότερος συκοφάντης γένοιτο; καὶ πάλιν, καὶ τίς ἂν γένοιτο
> ἀναιδείας ὑπερβολή;[70]

That the effectiveness of such questions was recognized by the earlier
orators may be seen, for example, from Lysias [6].49, 10.13-14, and
13.26, all of which involve similar use of apostrophe as the speaker,
'overcome' by indignation, outrage, or the like, suddenly breaks off his
speech to address his opponent directly.[71] In our passage the use of this
direct address, followed by the assertion of Tyndareus' own feelings on

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[68] See Wedd (ed.) on *Or* 526, Biehl (1965) on *Or* 526, Wolff (1968) 144; cf. Di Benedetto
[ed.] on *Or* 526ff. Cecchi (ed.) on *Or* 526, is closer to the truth when he speaks of "una
incoerenza tutt' altro che nociva all' arte."

[69] Cf. Spengel (1853) 3.123.17ff. (also 3.49.29ff., 3.61.28ff.). (In the handbooks,
however, ἀποστροφή is commonly used to indicate something quite different from what
moderns mean by the term: see, e.g., Spengel [1853] 3.23.28ff. and 3.96.3ff., *Rhet. ad Her.*
4.15.22.)

[70] Spengel (1853) 3.64.29ff. (citing Demosth. 18.212); cf. 3.25.5ff. In the examples
furnished by Tiberius the speaker addresses, not his opponent, but the jury.

[71] Cf. as well Lys. 12.26; Isae. 5.43 and 6.25; Hyp. 1.20 (Jensen); see Lloyd (1992) 98 for
parallels elsewhere in Euripides. Goebel (1983) 177-78 notes the similar use of direct address
in Gorgias' *Palamedes,* part of the counterattack (τὰ πρὸς τὸν ἀντίδικον) which traditionally
was reserved for the latter part of the speech.

the matter, allows the Spartan elder to portray all the more dramatically the gulf that separates his pious, right-thinking views from the criminal and pollution-laden attitudes of his opponent. Regarding the seeming inconsistency in Tyndareus' attitude toward Orestes, it should be remembered that, while a man accused of murder was considered a possible bearer of miasma and was subject to certain restrictions in his daily intercourse with others,[72] once in the courtroom the prosecutor could address him freely and, as here, often found it advantageous to do so.[73]

Tyndareus' address to Orestes should be read in this forensic context. Attempts to interpret 526-29 as an uncontrollable welling-up of emotion on the part of the elderly king pay insufficient regard to the skill with which this common rhetorical device is here employed. More importantly, this interpretation obscures the extremely artificial pathos of the passage, particularly in the contrast between Orestes' feelings and the speaker's. The pathetic (and not a little overblown) δακρύοις γέροντ' ὀφθαλμόν ἐκτήκω τάλας; the artificial antithesis implied by οὐκ ἰδὼν τἀκεῖ κακά (designed to play off the vivid re-creation of the scene in 526-28 and to establish [quite illogically] the impression that the speaker's viewpoint is one of distanced objectivity); the absurd notion that this particular speaker could suddenly burst out into tears for a period of four lines (note the present, ἐκτήκω)[74] before returning to the tone of savage bitterness that has dominated the speech to this point: all suggest that the 'emotion' of the passage is rhetorical — that is, intended to instill a specific attitude in the listener — rather than a heart-felt expression of the character's inner feelings.[75]

The use of portents and omens to affirm the justice of a cause (530-33) can be paralleled at Antiphon 5.81-84 and Andocides 1.137-39 (both of which appear, along with other arguments of an emotional nature, in the latter part of their respective speeches).[76] Thus we find further evidence

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[72] Cf., e.g., Antiphon 5.11 and see MacDowell (1963) 145-46. It may be that, like arguments based on the gods' anger (see next page), this type of argument had rather an old-fashioned or artificial air to it by 408 B.C. (Parker [1983] 130).

[73] Cf., e.g., Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 57.4.

[74] Cf. Di Benedetto (ed.) on *Or* 529-30, who finds in the presumed asyndeton at 530 an indication that Tyndareus has paused to allow his emotions to settle. See, however, Denniston (1954) 468, where οὖν (as opposed to ⟨δ'⟩ οὖν) is defended (tentatively) as 'introducing a new point.' (Diggle [ed.] adopts Schaefer's γοῦν, but see Willink [ed.] *ad loc.*)

[75] Note as well the artificial ὦ τάλας of 526, the extreme pathos of the enjambment at 528, and the calculated poignancy of γέροντα at 529. See, further, Scarcella (ed.) on *Or* 526-29, Biehl (1965) on *Or* 527.

[76] Cf. Antiphon 3γ8, 3δ10, Lys. [6].19, 14.27; also *Eum* 236-39 and 284-85, and, for other examples from Euripides, *Hipp* 1265-67, *Su* 494-505. With the exception of those from Lys.

that the emotional arguments employed by Tyndareus here toward the end of his speech are conventional, calculated to arouse a specific attitude in the audience. The fact that arguments based on portents are not found in speeches of the fourth century[77] may indicate that even for the Greeks they were felt to be affected — perhaps another indication of the artificial nature of Euripides' rhetorical pieces.

Finally, while the admonition addressed to Menelaus at the conclusion of Tyndareus' speech (534-39) is firmly grounded in the immediate context of the dramatic situation and Tyndareus' personal relationship to Menelaus, its tone is not unlike monitory passages such as ps.-Demosthenes 25.6-12. Tyndareus ends his speech with instructions to the jury, but instructions of a particularly formidable type.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TYNDAREUS' SPEECH

At this point in the examination of Tyndareus' speech, two potential objections loom large: (1) that the use of rhetorical devices by a character in a Euripidean *agon* is no more remarkable than that same character's use of iambic trimeter or tragic costume; (2) that no matter how conventional or even artificial Tyndareus' arguments may be shown to be, the very fact that those types of arguments are employed with such frequency by the orators indicates that they are felt to be effective; consequently, Euripides, in presenting them, must intend to mold his audience's attitude toward Orestes. Moreover, Tyndareus' case is not composed merely of rhetorical commonplaces but has a sound basis in fifth-century Athenian law. Accused murderers were felt to be stained with pollution and were ordered to keep away from 'legal things' (εἴργεσθαι τῶν νομίμων, *Ath. Pol.* 57.2).[78] The killer's miasma was felt to present a danger both to the state as a whole and to any individual with whom he might come into contact.[79] While a Theseus might ignore or discredit such danger in the name of friendship (*Heracles* 1214ff.),[80] fear of contagion was probably a real concern for the average Athenian.[81] It

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[6] and 14, these passages, too, appear in the latter part of their speeches, in emotional conclusions.

[77] See Parker (1983) 126-28 and Edwards (in Edwards/Usher [1985]) on Antiphon 5.81-84. Cf. Parker (1983) 235ff. on illness (particularly madness) as a sign of divine wrath.

[78] See MacDowell (1963) 23-26.

[79] See Bond (1981) on *Her* 1155f., Parker (1983) 104ff. *passim*.

[80] See Bond (1981) on *Her* 1232-34 and cf. Pylades at *Or* 792-94.

[81] See, however, MacDowell (1963) 141ff. and Parker (1983) 114ff., where attempts are made to correct the modern tendency to over-emphasize the importance of pollution in the formulation of Athenian homicide law.

was particularly incumbent upon the family of the murdered individual to avoid contact with the accused.[82] Thus Tyndareus' charge that Menelaus has lost touch with Greek mores (485) has a certain validity (if we ignore the added complication that in this case Orestes too is a family member). Regarding the matricide itself, it is true that there was a strong tradition of 'self-help' in Athenian legal theory, with a much wider application of the notion of justifiable homicide than would be accepted today.[83] All the same, cases in which killing was lawful were strictly defined and indiscriminate acts of vengeance were forbidden.[84] In a passage that shares much of the spirit of Tyndareus' speech Demosthenes notes that, even if a man were convicted of murder, the accuser could only watch the penalty being inflicted; he could not inflict it personally:

ἂν δὲ δόξῃ τὰ δίκαι' ἐγκαλεῖν καὶ ἕλῃ τὸν δεδρακότα τοῦ φόνου, οὐδ' οὕτω κύριος γίγνεται τοῦ ἁλόντος, ἀλλ' ἐκείνου μὲν οἱ νόμοι κύριοι κολάσαι καὶ οἷς προστέτακται, τῷ δ' ἐπιδεῖν διδόντα δίκην ἔξεστιν, ἣν ἔταξ' ὁ νόμος, τὸν ἁλόντα, πέρα δ' οὐδὲν τούτου.[85]

Parricide and matricide were regarded as particularly abhorrent crimes, as we would expect. Children were obligated to care for their parents, and neglect or abuse of one's father or mother was punishable by law, while the prosecutor in such a case was freed from the necessity of obtaining one-fifth of the votes (normal in the case of γραφαί).[86] There is some evidence that the concept of matricide was particularly troubling to the Greeks.[87] It has been shown, for example, that the vase painters tended to

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[82] Macdowell (1963) 31-32 and Parker (1983) 120-23 (who cites, among other sources, the very appropriate Demosth. 22.2).

[83] See Macdowell (1963) 73ff. and, on the obligation of the murdered individual's family to seek vengeance on the killer, 1ff., 8ff. Cf. Parker (1983) 110ff. and see Meridor (1978) on the role of such attitudes in *Hec.*

[84] If there truly existed a law in late fifth-century Athens forbidding anyone to commit murder 'either justly or unjustly' (Antiphon 3γ7; cf. 3β9, 4β3, 4δ8), we may well find an echo of it in Tyndareus' concluding remarks: θυγάτηρ δ' ἐμὴ θανοῦσ' ἔπραξεν ἔνδικα· / ἀλλ' οὐχὶ πρὸς τοῦδ' εἰκὸς ἦν αὐτὴν θανεῖν (538-39). In all of these passages a distinction is implied between a killing that is performed δικαίως and one that is performed ἐννόμως (or κατὰ τοὺς νόμους). On this problem, and on the date and authenticity of the *Tetralogies,* see Rohde (1925) 181 and Appendix Four, MacDowell (1963) 80-81, Goebel (1983) 15-16, Sealey (1984), and Carawan (1993) 235 n. 2.

[85] Demosth. 23.69; cf. Macdowell (1963) 110-11. For the condemnation of summary punishment in general see, e.g., Andoc. [4].3, Lys. [6].54, 22.2, Pl. *Ap.* 32B1ff. (and the other passages cited by Burnet [1924] *ad loc.*). Cf. Carawan (1984).

[86] See MacDowell (1963) 116-17, (1978) 92 (cf. 174), Lacey (1968) 116-17, Dover (1974) 273ff. On the abhorrence of kin murder in general see Parker (1983) 122-24 and cf., e.g., Pl. *Leg.* 873A-B.

[87] See Dover (1968) on *Clouds* 1443-44 and note, e.g., the virtual suppression of the act of matricide in Homer's *Od.*

avoid portrayals of Clytemnestra's death, favoring that of Aegisthus. Presumably the latter theme provided wholesome reflections on justice prevailing while avoiding the murky implications of the matricide.[88]

In light of the considerations raised above, it is clearly not enough merely to assert that, because Tyndareus is cast as a blocking figure, he is *a fortiori* an unsympathetic character mouthing suspect arguments; nor does it suffice to indicate that Tyndareus' threats, and not his potent argumentation, win the day in the end (although both of these observations deserve more notice than they are given in many studies of the play). The key to evaluating Tyndareus' speech lies in realizing that, for all of its validity, his case is founded directly upon Athenian legal practices of the late fifth century, whereas the play itself deals with a situation that is firmly rooted in the mythological past. Anachronisms in Tyndareus' arguments have received a good deal of notice from the critics and have been used (along with the apparent inconsistencies noted earlier) to argue for a specious hypocrisy on the part of the Spartan elder.[89] We have examined some of the difficulties entailed in such an interpretation of Tyndareus' role and Easterling has issued a salutary warning against the impulse to indulge in anachronism-hunting, in any form, as a method of interpreting Greek tragedy.[90] In the present case, however, the anachronisms are so fundamental and so striking that they demand our attention.[91] Euripides has taken the most famous court case in history — the trial that, since the production of the *Oresteia* in 458 (if not before),[92] was firmly associated with the foundation of the Athenian homicide courts and a rational system of justice — and has recast it in the form of a contemporary trial. This trial assumes all of the legal mechanisms of present-day Athens and casts the audience (many of whom would have served in the courts) in the role of jurors. Aeschylus' Furies have been transformed by the poet into the equally savage but more prosaic figure of Tyndareus, who develops his case as would a contemporary litigant in an Athenian courtroom, playing off the democratic bias of the jurors, their concerns with the nature of law and its role in human society, and their more immediate concerns (particularly

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[88] See Prag (1985) 35-43. Among the mythological cases collected by Parker ([1983] 375ff.) are found numerous instances of the killing of a father, son, daughter, brother, or sister, but only two cases of matricide: Orestes and Alcmaeon.

[89] See Grube (1941) 384, Wolff (1968) 143, Smith (1967) 300 n. 1, Heath (1987a) 58-59, and cf. Lloyd (1992) 115-16.

[90] See Easterling (1985) and the sources cited by Michelini (1987) 151 n. 78.

[91] Cf. Easterling (1985) 9.

[92] See, e.g., Stephanopoulos (1980) 148ff. and Sommerstein (1989) 1ff.

acute in the waning years of the war) regarding factional violence.[93]
While Euripidean *rheseis* typically employ a large number of rhetorical
devices, none so thoroughly or so consistently adopts the ethos of a
contemporary δικανικὸς λόγος as does that of Tyndareus. In this regard,
comparison of Tyndareus' speech with those, for example, of Helen and
Hecuba at *Troades* 914ff. is instructive. The latter reveal a good deal of
rhetorical sophistication, yet the tone of each remains that of epideictic
oratory, with its penchant for inventiveness, witty argumentation, color,
and variety. Neither develops its argument with the unflagging attention
to the realities of the case or with the relentless unity found in Tyndareus'
oration, nor does either observe so strict an adherence to the theories of
composition and argumentation employed by the λογογράφοι of
Euripides' day. Rather than a colorful display piece, Euripides provides
Tyndareus with a speech that, but for its meter and diction (and its
understandable lack of a narrative section),[94] could well have been
delivered in an Athenian courtroom. Thus Tyndareus' *rhesis* takes a form
consistent with the legal procedures that he invokes: both are grounded
firmly in contemporary legal institutions and practices familiar to the
audience, and both are striking, to say the least, in the context of Orestes'
famous trial.

Critics have tended to respond to the anachronisms involved in this
speech in realistic terms, arguing either that the audience would recognize
that the institutions invoked by Tyndareus did not exist in the Argos of
Orestes' day (and that, therefore, Tyndareus' arguments are specious and
are meant to seem so), or that, even if those institutions did exist, they
could not have been employed by Orestes against the reigning king and
queen, particularly amid the corrupt tangle of political alliances that rules
the popular assembly (as portrayed in 884ff.).[95] Such an approach,
however, soon leads to chaos. (How can Tyndareus realistically cite laws
and institutions that do not yet exist? How can we account for the
authority of the popular assembly in the play without assuming a strong
democratic element in the Argive constitution?) It is precisely this line of
enquiry against which Easterling argues so convincingly.[96] More

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[93] For Tyndareus as later-day fury cf. Burnett (1971) 206.

[94] Cf. Duchemin (1968) 170, Lloyd (1992) 24.

[95] See Krieg (1934) 30, Grube (1941) 384, Smith (1967) 300 n. 1, Eucken (1986) 158,
Lloyd (1992) 115ff. The additional point is often made that the institutions so praised by
Tyndareus have failed to bring Aegisthus and Clytemnestra to justice during the years of
Orestes' exile (e.g., Krieg [1934] 30, Grube [1941] 384, Eucken [1986] 158-59, Lloyd [1992]
117-18). This point is clouded somewhat by the Athenians' view (above, n. 83) that it was the
duty of *family* members to prosecute cases of homicide: cf., however, Lloyd (1992) 118 n. 19.

[96] Easterling (1985). This concern for *Realien* has caused particular confusion in the case

satisfactory results are obtained if we consider the extra-dramatic implications of the speech. Much of the effectiveness of Tyndareus' attack would have derived from the audience's surprise and (in some cases, at least) delight at Euripides' daring and inventiveness in transforming Aeschylus' dread goddesses into an irascible and rather dyspeptic γέρων, and at the equally clever manner in which he transforms the setting from the mythical antiquity of poetic tradition to an Argos very like the Athens of his own day. Before Tyndareus' arrival we have some indication that the Argos of this play will bear a certain resemblance to democratic Athens: 46-48 echo the formal proclamations made against accused murderers as part of the prosecution process[97] and, with the prominent ἔδοξε of 46, recall the language of official edicts; ψῆφον at 49 evokes a similar context;[98] the sketch of the various factions at work in the popular assembly at 427-42 has a contemporary ring. Such a sprinkling of contemporary political features would not have struck the audience as unusual, however, inasmuch as dramatists had been employing anachronisms of this sort since the time of Aeschylus, using them to present the heroic world of traditional myth in terms that would be familiar to a contemporary viewer.[99] The dominant frame of reference throughout the early scenes of the play remains that which is familiar from Aeschylus: Apollo's command, Clytemnestra's Furies, Agamemnon's need to be avenged. The threat of condemnation by the *demos,* lying in the background, is initially presented in terms too general to overturn this traditional setting. With the entry of Tyndareus, however, the frame of reference changes altogether, as the political implications latent in Orestes' predicament are brought dramatically to the fore. From this moment until the play's finale Orestes and his friends face a world ever closer in spirit to that portrayed in the pages of Thucydides and further removed from the familiar world of Aeschylus' *Oresteia.*

We see, then, that on the one hand, Tyndareus' speech represents a *coup de théâtre,* a sample of Euripides' ability to introduce the new and unexpected, to recast tradition into forms that relate directly to the world of his audience. More than mere cleverness is involved here, however, for the conflict that results between the world of myth and the contemporary world of fifth-century Athens plays an important role in the emotional rhythm of *Orestes* and in the increasing distress displayed by Orestes

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of the Theseus of E. *Su:* see, e.g., Greenwood (1953) 92ff., Fitton (1961).

[97] See MacDowell (1963) 13-18, 23-26.

[98] Cf. Easterling (1985) 2-3.

[99] Again, see Easterling (1985).

himself as the play progresses. On the dramatic level, *Orestes* portrays the frustration, alienation, and, finally, rebellion of the protagonist as he is betrayed on all sides and is left at the mercy of a world in which self-interest and political influence alone hold sway. The process by which Orestes eventually comes to lash out so violently against his enemies, however, is reinforced, on an extra-dramatic level, by the tension established between the mythic context of tradition, in the spirit of which Orestes committed the matricide, and the world of contemporary Athenian *Realpolitik* into which he is suddenly thrust. The desperate confusion that overtakes Orestes as the play progresses and the chaos that erupts in the final scenes should be interpreted in part, at least, as the result of the tension generated by this collision of two conflicting frames of reference. The gap between the divine command of Apollo and the politics of Euripides' Argos is unbridgeable in realistic terms. It is this same gap (and the resulting frustration of Orestes, caught between these two world views) that provides an important part of the psychological foundation for the crazed vehemence of Orestes' rebellion later in the play.

If the above arguments are correct, we find that Tyndareus is not the idealistic, reasonable old dicast that he often has been asserted to be. His speech is not intended to reveal the abhorrent nature of matricide in general (of which both the audience and Orestes himself are already quite aware), nor to present the poet's learned and novel views on the nature of law and its role in human societies. On the contrary, his arguments, and the strategies they are designed to serve, are of a type familiar to all members of the audience who have had experience in forensic oratory. Tyndareus is a blocking figure, similar to the heralds familiar from suppliant drama, but of much greater complexity. Although his main function is to provide the threat that motivates Menelaus' desertion of Orestes, his appearance raises several issues of central importance to the play. His use of intimidation against Menelaus allows the poet to portray the latter's desertion of his nephew as a triumph of cautious self-interest over the obligations of kinship and χάρις. Euripides thereby arouses sympathy for Orestes' bewildered sense of outrage and betrayal while at the same time introducing the note of *Realpolitik* that is to dominate the messenger's description of the Argive assembly. On this level Tyndareus plays an important role in establishing the basis for Orestes' anger and in helping the audience to understand the lawless violence of his rebellion: Orestes, we find, has been an apt pupil and has learned that power and coercion, not justice, are what command respect among his elders. In this regard, Tyndareus' characterization — his excessive anger, the

inconsistencies and touches of hypocrisy emphasized by Reinhardt and others — is important, because it ensures that the audience will view him in a critical light, as motivated by a vindictive anger rather than any concern with the greater good of society.

But an over-concern with the elderly Spartan's character has led commentators to neglect another, equally important aspect of the scene. On an extra-dramatic level, Tyndareus' speech represents a *tour de force,* wittily playing off Aeschylus' *Eumenides* while laying the foundations for the disjunction — the sense of a world that is irretrievably out of joint — that eventually contributes to the confused helplessness of the protagonist and the chaotic atmosphere of the play's finale. As a dramatic character Orestes cannot, of course, directly comment on this aspect of his dilemma (Euripides, it turns out, has not yet gotten so near the theater of the absurd as all that). Through a curious process of transference, however, the audience must sense that his growing desperation in part arises from the fact that the poet, in his role as this play's 'duke of dark corners,' has set him adrift in a poetical world that is suffering from its own peculiar *Sinneskrise,* of a more radical sort than that imagined by Reinhardt. As we will see in subsequent chapters, this impression of a world in confusion — a world where expectations are never quite fulfilled, where people never quite behave as tradition says they should, and where the ground may at anytime disappear from underfoot — grows in the later scenes until its climax in the chaotic finale.

LINES 544-604: ORESTES' APOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

In contrast to Tyndareus' relentlessly logical and overpowering attack, Orestes' defence has been judged confused, unfocused, and not a little hysterical. Moreover, where Tyndareus employed a rhetorical stance and the commonplaces of the courtroom with devastating effectiveness, Orestes appears to clutch at rationalizations, justifying his deed by means of a disordered array of sophistic arguments, many of which seem to be of dubious validity while some (it has been claimed) verge on the absurd. Gone are the young man's earlier expressions of guilt and remorse: suddenly the murder of Clytemnestra has become a glorious undertaking, permissible in light of the mother's limited role in the process of procreation, justified by Clytemnestra's own past crimes, and demanded

to preserve the orderly continuation of society itself.

As noted earlier, commentators have seized on the apparent sophisms and inconsistencies in the speech as a sign of Orestes' moral depravity and of the incipient madness that bursts into full flower in the latter scenes of the play. As a result, few critics have accorded Orestes' arguments serious consideration in and of themselves. Wilamowitz flatly proclaimed that:

> Die übrigen Enthymeme, mit denen Orestes sich verteidigt, bedürfen keiner Erläuterung; es sind nur Worte, denn für Orestes und den Dichter is die Tat nicht zu entschuldigen. ([1924] 258)

and this view has been echoed in the analyses of more recent critics. Thus Smith writes that Orestes goes "indiscriminately through all the arguments in his behalf from the *Odyssey* and Greek Tragedy,"[100] while Schein typifies him as "a thorough-going young sophist, mouthing empty antitheses and frigid conceits," and employing a rhetoric that "serves no end other than self-interest and self-indulgence."[101] Instead, emphasis has been placed upon the 'insane folly' seen to characterize Orestes' speech as a whole (Vellacott [1975] 67) — the sudden willingness on his part to ignore the negative aspects of his deed and present the matricide as a glorious act from which all of Hellas has benefitted. Such a defence bespeaks "a childish primitive point of view" according to Mullens, who continues:

> It is doubtful whether Orestes even understands the charge against him. The only thing he admits is that he is under a technical religious disability due to blood guilt, and he sees everything from his own narrow personal viewpoint.[102]

This viewpoint, we are told, is more than simply childish, it is dangerous. For a remorse-free Orestes is only too likely to lash out again in defence of his own narrow interests, as he does in the play's finale.[103] In this view it is not the specific content of Orestes' defence that is important but rather the tone of that defence and the ominous implications of his frenzied attempt at self-justification. His arguments, when they are

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[100] Smith (1967) 301; cf. Blaiklock's 'tumult of words' ([1952] 185).

[101] Schein (1975) 58. Hartigan (1991) 138 characterizes Orestes' speeches as "parodies of sophistic rhetoric."

[102] Mullens (1940) 154 and 155; cf. Verrall (1905) 230 and Kitto (1961) 349. A contrast is implied here, and in Schein's comments, between Orestes' 'narrow personal viewpoint' and Tyndareus' allegedly objective concern for the preservation of law and order.

[103] Cf. Burnett (1971) 210, Eucken (1986) 164-65 (both writing in a different context).

examined at all, generally are viewed with a jaundiced eye in an attempt
to gather further evidence of his moral deficiencies. Even the more
temperate among the play's critics — those, for example, who recognize
that Tyndareus' own arguments are not so idealistic as he would claim —
tend to regard Orestes' stance in this speech as inconsistent with his
earlier statements, sophistic, and of dubious validity.[104]

In the following discussion I will attempt to demonstrate that, while
Orestes' *rhesis* does display an aggressiveness not found in his earlier
conversations with Electra and Menelaus, its arguments are neither
irrelevant nor a sign of his latent criminality. Rather, the speech is
designed to convey the desperation of this young Euripidean hero who, in
contrast to his Aeschylean and Sophoclean predecessors, finds himself in
danger of being deserted by god and human alike. Oppressed by inner
feelings of guilt and horror at his earlier deed, he is equally aware of the
injustice of Tyndareus' sweeping charges and, above all, of his desperate
need of Menelaus' patronage. Accordingly, his speech is not
characterized by measured reason or carefully-ordered rebuttal (although
it is more carefully structured than some of the above-cited critics imply);
it displays the same desperation and helplessness that characterizes
Orestes and his sister in the earlier scenes of the play and that is a
common characteristic of such late-Euripidean heroes as the Polynices of
Phoenissae or Orestes himself in *Iphigenia among the Taurians*.
Ultimately, it is not the justice of Orestes' cause that is called into
question here (the extraordinarily lengthy series of introductory scenes at
1-455 have explored both sides of that issue in some detail), but rather his
ability to cope with the complex mix of political and personal motives
that rule the world which confronts him. Regarding Clytemnestra's
murder, we will find that Orestes' position is the same in its essentials as
in the earlier scenes, here translated into a rhetorical context.[105]

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SPEECH

The structure of Orestes' apology is looser than that of Tyndareus'
speech and, in its latter stages, reflects the young man's mounting
frustration as he frantically attempts to respond to Tyndareus' charges.
After a lengthy proem (544-[50]), Orestes presents four general πίστεις

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[104] Krieg (1934) 31-33, Strohm (1957) 41, and Heath (1987a) 58 present more
sympathetic treatments of the speech; O'Brien (1988a) 186-88 offers a nicely balanced,
although generally critical, assessment of Orestes' tactics and characterization here.

[105] Cf. Conacher (1967) 213-14 and 218-20 for a discussion of the shift in this scene to a
rhetorical evaluation of Orestes' deed.

(551-78), followed by four arguments of a more emotional nature (579-99) and a brief conclusion (600-01).[106] The opening πίστεις display a logical interconnection and order. They are divided into two groups, the first two focusing on the familial circumstances associated with Clytemnestra's death (the question of her relation to Orestes [551-56] and the fact of her adultery [557-63]), while the last two explore the public ramifications of her crime (the potential precedent established by the death of a husband at his wife's hands [564-71] and the treasonous nature of her act in light of Agamemnon's status as leader of Argos [572-78]). Within each group the first argument is more abstract (an ἔντεχνος πίστις), whereas the second deals more directly with the particulars of the case at hand and with Clytemnestra's culpability, about which all agree (an ἄτεχνος πίστις).[107] The arguments here presented (although permeated by decidedly unprofessional intimations of guilt and an aggressiveness born of desperation) are described very aptly by Wilamowitz as 'die übrigen Enthymeme': we shall find that, like those of Tyndareus' speech, they represent a Euripidean variation on rhetorical commonplaces familiar from the orators themselves and from the handbooks. The concluding series of πίστεις, however, stand in marked contrast to what precedes. Here we find a seemingly jumbled series of assertions thrown in apparently *ad hoc:* Agamemnon also commanded Furies who would have plagued Orestes had he failed to avenge his father's death (579-84); Tyndareus is partly to blame, as the father of Clytemnestra (585-87); had Clytemnestra been as virtuous as Penelope, Orestes could have been as noble as Telemachus (588-90); Apollo must bear the ultimate responsibility for the crime as instigator of the deed (591-99). The frantic series of assertions presented here, as Orestes attempts to blame everyone but himself for his mother's death, reaches an emotional pitch that has been regarded by many as an indication of paranoid delusion, of a tendency on Orestes' part to blame others for his own deeds and to lash out accordingly.[108] The following discussion will attempt to demonstrate that familiar rhetorical strategies are at work even here and that Orestes' arguments need not be taken as indications of degeneration or incipient mania.

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[106] Cf. Di Benedetto (ed.) on *Or* 579-604. See above, n. 16, on the question of 602-604.

[107] I employ these terms in a very loose fashion to convey the difference of tone found in the two arguments of each group. For the definitive discussion of these terms see Arist. *Rhet.* 1355b 35ff. (cf. 1375a 22ff.), with Goebel (1983) 7-9 and Mirhady (1991). For my looser usage regarding 'artless' proofs, cf. Spengel (1853) 1.445.27ff.

[108] See, e.g., Hartigan (1991) 138-39.

ORESTES' APOLOGY: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

In contrast to the brusque directness with which Tyndareus began his speech of condemnation, Orestes opens his defence with an elaborate proem — a subtle *captatio benevolentiae* (544-49). This proem sets the tone for the speech that follows, both in its self-conscious and rather artificial formalism and in its air of guilt-ridden diffidence.

> ὦ γέρον, ἐγώ τοι πρὸς σὲ δειμαίνω λέγειν,
> ὅπου σὲ μέλλω σήν τε λυπήσειν φρένα.
> ἐγὼ δ' ἀνόσιός εἰμι μητέρα κτανών,
> ὅσιος δέ γ' ἕτερον ὄνομα, τιμωρῶν πατρί.
> ἀπελθέτω δὴ τοῖς λόγοισιν ἐκποδὼν
> τὸ γῆρας ἡμῖν τὸ σόν, ὅ μ' ἐκπλήσσει λόγου
> [καὶ καθ' ὁδὸν εἶμι· νῦν δὲ σὴν ταρβῶ τρίχα]. [109]

Formal introductions of this sort are, for the most part, peculiar to Euripides[110] and tend to convey to modern ears an impression of chilly artifice. This one is particularly elaborate.[111] Orestes first expresses his discomfort at having to speak in opposition to his grandfather and thereby cause offence (544-45). He then proceeds, in a pair of lines reminiscent of the Δισσοὶ Λόγοι,[112] to grant a certain justice to Tyndareus' charges (546), but to insist that the elderly Spartan's view is one-sided — that, seen in another light, the murder of Clytemnestra can be considered a justified act of vengeance performed on behalf of his murdered father and involving no impiety (547). This insistence on the dual nature of the matricide (and on the impossibility of his own position at the time) is important, as it will form the central theme of the speech that follows. Having established grounds on which he might reasonably oppose his grandfather, Orestes announces, in very elaborate terms, his intention to cast off his earlier diffidence and proceed with his defence (548-49).

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[109] On the text of 544-50, see Appendix Six.

[110] Cf. Hutchinson (1985) on *Sept* 1-9. In a Euripidean *agon* speakers frequently will open with an expression of antagonism or contempt (*Alc* 675-80, *Med* 465-74, *Su* 426-28), a general philosophical *topos* (*Hec* 1187-94, *Phoen* 469-72 and 499-502, *Ba* 266-71, *IA* 919-31), or a brief statement of the grounds on which they feel justified in speaking (*Her* 1255-57, *Tro* 914-18, *El* 1013-17, *IA* 335-36 and 378-80). At *Hel* 947-53 Menelaus begins with an elaborate παράλειψις, while other instances of *captatio benevolentiae* (of a much simpler nature) can be found at *Hcld* 181-83 and *IA* 900-02. See, further, Lloyd (1992) 25-27.

[111] Useful discussions of the proem can be found at Wilamowitz (1924) 257, Di Benedetto (ed.) on *Or* 545-50, Willink (ed.) on *Or* 544-50, Heath (1987a) 58.

[112] See Di Benedetto (ed.) on *Or* 546-47. Note, in addition to the sophistic ἕτερον ὄνομα (see Willink [ed.] on *Or* 546-47 and cf., e.g., Pl. *Euthd.* 275D 2ff.), the complex antithesis established by the contrasting ἀνόσιος-ὅσιος, μητέρα-πατρί, κτανών-τιμωρῶν.

The structure of this proem is of interest because it is loosely syllogistic or, perhaps more precisely, 'enthymematic': (a) αἰδώς at having to oppose his grandfather (544-45); (b) grounds on which he might reasonably do so (546-47); (c) decision to throw off αἰδώς and proceed with his defence (548-49). It is significant that we possess two Euripidean proems of a very similar nature, each spoken by a character who, like Orestes, is acutely aware of the superior status of his opponent: Hippolytus' apology at *Hippolytus* 983-91 and Andromache's speech at *Andromache* 184-91. In all of these proems the speakers build up to the speech proper by means of an elaborate dialogue of sorts, presenting a detailed picture of the difficulties in which they find themselves, at the same time maintaining the justice of their cause.[113] And in all of these proems the general impression created is one of an artificial and (to modern ears) inappropriate formalism, more suitable to a public oration than to a private dispute.[114] Yet all of these speakers find themselves at a distinct disadvantage vis-à-vis their opponent, and it is this fact, as much as concerns of characterization, that seem to motivate these unusually elaborate prologues.

Euripides provides his speakers with just the type of opening gambits recommended by the handbooks in such cases, momentarily setting aside concerns for realism in favor of a self-consciously forensic approach.[115] The artificiality is most felt, perhaps, in Andromache's prologue: her overt contempt for Hermione and the elaborate presentation of the disadvantages under which she must speak cannot be intended to win Hermione's good will and are warranted only if one assumes the presence of a third party whose opinion Andromache is attempting to influence.[116] Hippolytus and Orestes do speak in the presence of an audience (Hippolytus before a group of his companions,[117] Orestes before

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[113] Note the similar role of ἐγὼ δέ in each of these passages (*Hipp* 986, *Andr* 186, *Or* 546) and cf. *Tro* 916. These examples and others perhaps suggest that asyndeton is unsuitable in the context of such introductory passages and that Hermann's ἐγῴδ' at *Or* 546 is out of place: see Appendix Six.

[114] See Barrett (1964) on *Hipp* 986-7 and 990 (for a general discussion of Hippolytus' speech see Gould [1978] 57-58 and Heath [1987a] 131-32), P. T. Stevens (1971) on *Andr* 184ff., Willink (ed.) on *Or* 544-50.

[115] See, e.g., the advice concerning prologues at *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1436a 31ff.

[116] The chorus, the only onstage witness to the debate, cannot be said to fulfill this role: its members do not possess the necessary authority (either in their identity as local townswomen or in their significance as dramatic characters) and in addition, they clearly are sympathetic to her cause from the very beginning.

[117] It is not certain that Hippolytus does in fact enter accompanied by νέοι ὁμήλικες (*pace* Barrett [1964] on 902): his words at 1098ff., considered in isolation, could with equal likelihood be addressed off-stage. The possibility of a male secondary chorus at 1102ff.,

Menelaus), yet the chilly formalism of their prologues implies the presence of a jury rather than of a relatively small group of friends and relatives. The forensic stance adopted by each of these characters must be read as acknowledging (by implication, at least) the presence of a larger audience — that of the Theater of Dionysus, whose opinions are a very real concern of these scenes and whose tastes Euripides is quite prepared to indulge with a display of rhetorical sophistication. In contrast to Sophocles' practice, Euripides is more than willing to recall the atmosphere of a contemporary courtroom, whether it suits the demands of dramatic realism or not.[118]

The cases of Hippolytus and Orestes are particularly similar: not only must they both oppose members of their own family,[119] but as young men speaking in opposition to older men of greater status and authority, each would be the object of a certain prejudice. That such a prejudice was a matter of concern for youthful speakers is amply attested by the handbooks[120] and finds corroboration in Euripides' own rhetorical practice.[121] Thus it is important for these two young men to establish from the outset both the justice of their cause and, more importantly, the propriety of their defence — the fact that their opposition to their elders does not arise from arrogance or recklessness. These lengthy proems allow them to establish that they are in fact ἐπιεικεῖς — reasonable young men incapable of the wanton acts of which they stand accused.[122] Thus Hippolytus' fears that he may not be able to present his case in a sufficiently elegant manner, constitute a familiar type of *captatio benevolentiae*[123] and allow him to display his moral earnestness and σπουδαιότης. Orestes' elaborate display of αἰδώς, on the other hand, is designed to portray him as a young man who does not lack common human sentiment, but who must bring forward considerations omitted by

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however (see Bond [1980]), and the apparent attempt in 1051ff. to mirror Hippolytus' first appearance at 58ff. (see Taplin [1978] 134-35) seem to imply their presence. As in the case of Andromache's speech, however, these witnesses cannot be regarded as the principal addressees of this elaborate and rather frigid prologue.

[118] A telling contrast can be found in the naturalism of Haimon's speech at *Ant* 683ff.

[119] See above, p. 120.

[120] See *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1442b 10-12, Spengel (1853) 1.336.30ff. Cf., e.g., Demosth. [44].1 and, in a symbouleutic context, Lys. 16.20.

[121] It is invoked at *Alc* 679-80 and *Andr* 184-85 (cf. 238), while speakers employ it as part of a non-invidious rhetorical *topos* at *Phoen* 528-30 and frgs. 291 and 619 N².

[122] Cf. Arist. *Rhet.* 1356a 4ff., Spengel (1853) 1.429.30ff., 2.369.13ff., 3.148.16ff.

[123] See, e.g., Barrett (1964) *ad loc.*, Edwards (in Edwards/Usher [1985]) on Antiphon 5.1, Usher (*ibid.*) on Lys. 12.3. For a different interpretation of Hippolytus' *proem* see Goldhill (1986b) 164-65.

his grandfather.[124] Both Orestes and Hippolytus attempt to disarm possible criticism by a display of judiciousness and sensitivity beyond their years.

Yet, while the elaborate nature of Orestes' proem is in great part due to external forensic considerations such as those noted above, the proem itself is very much in character for Euripides' young hero.[125] Orestes' display of diffidence and shame before his maternal grandfather is not solely a rhetorical stance but, in part, a continuation of his attitude at 459ff.[126] and of the oppressive sense of guilt seen to weigh upon him and his sister throughout the early scenes of *Orestes*. It is all the more striking, then, that as his speech progresses Orestes is led to attack Tyndareus directly and that his *rhesis* as a whole displays an aggressiveness and vehemence that stand in sharp contrast to the guilt-laden contrition he has displayed to this point. The change of attitude that seems to overcome Orestes here (like his altered view of Clytemnestra's death) has been interpreted as a sign of the young hero's true criminality, which gradually reveals itself once Orestes' feels himself to be threatened.[127] Thus the aggressive tone adopted in the speech proper (noticeable, for example, in Orestes' use of the second person pronoun and possessive adjective),[128] its vehemence,[129] its sarcasm,[130] and, above all, its direct attack on Tyndareus himself (585-87), are taken as early indications of Orestes' unstable character, of his tendency to react violently when threatened.

The contrast between this initial display of αἰδώς before Tyndareus and the aggressive stance adopted by Orestes in the speech proper need not, however, be taken as a sign of criminal folly. Although it is a commonplace of Greek rhetorical theory that the proem must gain the good will of the audience, the orators and rhetoricians also recognize the necessity of presenting a forceful and effective case, even if the latter

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[124] Cf. Arist. *Rhet.* 1380a 6ff. (esp. 1380a 14-16) and West (ed.) on *Or* 544-50.

[125] Cf. Lloyd (1992) 120-21.

[126] On these lines see Schadewaldt (1926) 212-13 and Lombard (1985) 11 n. 29. Regarding the rhetorical significance of Orestes' excessive display of guilt here, cf. Biehl (1968) 204 on his similar 'Übertreibung im pessimistischen Sinne' in the initial interview with Menelaus.

[127] See, e.g., Verrall (1905) 230-31, Mullens (1941) 154-55, Conacher (1967) 216-17, O'Brien (1988a) 188 and *passim*; contrast Lloyd (1992) 123.

[128] 557, 571, 585.

[129] Conveyed, e.g., by the emphatic use of demonstratives (562, 594-96) and the hammering rhetorical questions at 551, 580-81, 582, 583-84, 588 (see Willink [ed.] *ad loc.*), 596, and 597-99.

[130] Particularly noticeable at 566-70 (esp. 568) and 595.

should make it necessary to drop (or contradict) the stance adopted in the proem. In Antiphon 5, for example, the speaker opens with an extensive plea of his own inexperience and naiveté, only to embark at once upon a lengthy and highly complex technical challenge against the legality of the present trial (the so-called προκατασκευή).[131] In Antiphon 1 (a case that involves circumstances very similar to those facing Orestes) the prosecutor opens by attempting to deflect odium away from himself (as a young man who has charged his stepmother with murder) and to direct it toward his half-brothers, who, he maintains, are defending their own father's killer. Accordingly, he begins by expressing a proper sense of the awkwardness of his position (δεινῶς δὲ καὶ ἀπόρως ἔχει μοι ... εἰ ἐπεξιόντι ἀναγκαίως ἔχει οἷς ἥκιστα ἐχρῆν ἐν διαφορᾷ καταστῆναι, ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοπατρίοις καὶ μητρὶ ἀδελφῶν, 1.1). It is not long, however, before he casts aside all restraint, referring to his half-brothers themselves as his father's murderers (1.2) and to his stepmother as 'this Clytemnestra here' (τῆς Κλυταιμνήστρας ταύτης, 1.17 [Gernet]). In Demosthenes 45 the speaker, while attacking his dead father's former slave and business manager, Phormio, who has married his mother and gained control of his father's estate, at first alludes only obliquely to the illicit union between his own mother and Phormio which, the speaker maintains, allowed the latter to alter his father's will and thereby displace the true heirs:

> ἦν γάρ, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, τοῦτο πρῶτον μὲν ὑπὲρ τοῦ μὴ δοῦναι δίκην ὧν διεφθάρκει, ἦν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐ καλὸν λέγειν, ὑμεῖς δ' ἴστε, κἂν ἐγὼ μὴ λέγω, ἔπειθ' ὑπὲρ τοῦ κατασχεῖν ὅσ' ἦν τῷ ἡμετέρῳ πατρὶ χρήματα παρὰ τῇ μητρί .... (45.27)

Near the end of the speech, however, the speaker warms to his theme much as does Orestes. At 74 he presents a scathing vignette of a kind at which Demosthenes excelled:

> ἀλλ' αὐτὸς μὲν οὐκ ὤκνησε τὴν δέσποιναν γῆμαι καὶ ᾗ τὰ καταχύσματ' αὐτοῦ κατέχεε τόθ' ἡνίκ' ἐωνήθη, ταύτῃ συνοικεῖν ....

and in his peroration, in an attempt to discredit his own brother Pasicles (who has sided with Phormio and the speaker's mother in the case), he goes so far as to assert that Phormio is Pasicles' true father:

> ἐγὼ γὰρ ὁμομήτριον μὲν ἀδελφὸν ἐμαυτοῦ Πασικλέα νομίζω, ὁμοπάτριον δ' οὐκ οἶδα, δέδοικα μέντοι μὴ τῶν Φορμίωνος

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131 Antiphon 5.1-7 in contrast to 5.8-19. (Note as well the way in which the elaborate antitheses and verbal echoes in 5.1-7 undermine the speaker's claims of inexperience even as they are being made.)

ἀμαρτημάτων εἰς ἡμᾶς ἀρχὴ Πασικλῆς ᾖ. (45.84)

Again the speaker's initial reticence does not bar the way to a savage personal attack later in the speech.[132]

This particular strategy of building to a passionate attack upon one's opponents after first establishing the soundness of one's own outlook is a sensible one (particularly given the agonistic nature of a Greek trial) and can be seen to underlie the discussion in an anonymous Τέχνη Ῥητορική of the distinctions to be observed between proems and epilogues:

> διαφέφει δὲ τοῦ ἐπιλόγου τὸ προοίμιον, ὅτι ἐν τῷ προοιμίῳ τὸ σχῆμα καὶ τὴν ἑρμηνείαν μέτριον εἶναι δεῖ καὶ τιθασσὸν ὡς ἂν εἴποι τις, ἐν δ' ἐπιλόγοις τὸ σχῆμα συγκεκινημένον καὶ πολλὰς μὲν ἐμβοήσεις ἔχον, πολλοὺς δὲ σχετλιασμούς .... (Spengel [1853] 1.430.6ff.)

Orestes, then, is employing a sound rhetorical technique in adopting a more aggressive stance in the speech proper. Moreover, his speech is constructed in such a way (as we shall see) that the growing vehemence of his arguments is felt to be quite natural and to be the result, not of a perverse defect of character, but of the same helpless desperation that has marked him throughout the play.[133]

Orestes opens his defence proper with a series of πίστεις that, despite the criticisms leveled against them by modern scholars, deserve to be taken seriously. The initial rhetorical question at 551 (τί χρῆν με δρᾶσαι;) establishes the general approach that he will adopt: Tyndareus has charged him with criminal folly in his manner of punishing Clytemnestra; Orestes will attempt to portray the nexus of duties and interests that compelled him to undertake such a deed. He begins, however, by marshalling those aspects of the case that serve to weaken Clytemnestra's maternal claims, presenting her as a person who both by nature and by personal choice was removed from his circle of φίλοι. In this way he attacks the main source of prejudice against him, the fact that he has dared to murder his own mother.[134] His first contention (551-56) is

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[132] See as well sections 39 and 79 for further attacks on Phormio that reflect poorly on the speaker's mother. Cf. Demosth 36.18 and 20, in which it is clear that the plaintiff, Apollodorus, had employed a similar technique: a profession of his own hesitation to act in an unfilial manner toward his mother (ὤκνει, 20) combined with serious allegations regarding her complicity with the defendant (18).

[133] Cf. Goebel (1983), chapters 3 and 4 *passim*, on the importance of the counterattack (τὰ πρὸς τὸν ἀντίδικον) in fifth- and fourth-century rhetorical theory.

[134] Thus, like Tyndareus in his speech for the prosecution, Orestes may be seen to follow a strategy similar to that recommended at Arist. *Rhet.* 1415a 26ff., the relevant section of which reads: ἀπολογουμένῳ μὲν γὰρ πρῶτον τὰ πρὸς διαβολήν, κατηγοροῦντι δ' ἐν τῷ ἐπιλόγῳ· δι' ὃ δέ, οὐκ ἄδηλον· τὸν μὲν γὰρ ἀπολογούμενον, ὅταν μέλλῃ εἰσάξειν αὑτόν,

familiar from Aeschylus' *Eumenides* 658ff. and elsewhere,[135] that the mother is not a true parent but merely a receptacle within which the fetus comes to maturation:

> δύο γὰρ ἀντίθες δυοῖν·
> πατὴρ μὲν ἐφύτευσέν με, σὴ δ' ἔτικτε παῖς,
> τὸ σπέρμ' ἄρουρα παραλαβοῦσ' ἄλλου πάρα·
> ἄνευ δὲ πατρὸς τέκνον οὐκ εἴη ποτ' ἄν.[136]
> ἐλογισάμην οὖν τῷ γένους ἀρχηγέτῃ
> †μᾶλλον† ἀμῦναι τῆς ὑποστάσης τροφάς.[137]

Orestes' biology undoubtedly is sound (by the standards of the time),[138] but many feel that the use to which it is put here was repugnant to the popular sentiment of Euripides' day: it is one thing for the Aeschylean Apollo to put forward such an argument in 458 B.C., quite another for Orestes himself to do so in 408.[139] On examination, however, motives of a more positive nature can be discovered for the choice of this particular argument as the opening gambit of Orestes' speech.

Apollo's argument at *Eumenides* 658ff. represents the culmination of a lengthy intermittent debate concerning the relationship between a mother and her child, one that spans some 450 lines of the play.[140] In the early

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ἀναγκαῖον ἀνελεῖν τὰ κωλύοντα, ὥστε λυτέον πρῶτον τὴν διαβολήν ....

[135] See Willink (ed.) on *Or* 551-56, West (ed.) on *Or* 553, Conacher (1987) 161 and n. 58, Sommerstein (1989) on *Eum* 657-66.

[136] Willink (ed.) and Diggle (1990) 103 follow Nauck, Paley, and Reeve (1973) 155-56 in deleting this line. It is certainly insipid enough to qualify as an interpolation, but this fact is not enough to justify its deletion. (It is retained by Di Benedetto, Biehl [1965], and West.) Where Tyndareus lays emphasis upon Clytemnestra's status as Orestes' mother, Orestes (like the Aeschylean Apollo) emphasizes the importance of the father. Hence the prominent πατήρ at the opening of 552 and the inflated τῷ γένους ἀρχηγέτῃ of 555, as opposed to the passive (and denigratory) connotations of the metaphor in 553 (ἄρουρα) and of τῆς ὑποστάσης τροφάς in 556. The banality of the particular notion conveyed here is of less significance than the orotund reference to the father's importance, which rounds off the argument of 551-54 and prepares for the conclusion that Orestes drew as a result of this particular line of reasoning (555-56). (Note the similar pattern at 557-63 [omitting the interpolated 561]: four lines that lay out the facts of the case followed by two lines describing the action Orestes took as a result.) On 551 see Appendix Six.

[137] On the text of 556 see Willink (ed.) *ad loc.* and cf. Appendix Six.

[138] In addition to those sources cited above (n. 135), see Vickers (1973) 414ff. and 636ff.; also S. de Beauvoir *The Second Sex* (New York, 1974) 8-10, where we are reminded that this theory of procreation held the field well into the nineteenth century. (I owe this reference to Ms. A. F. DeVito.)

[139] See, e.g., Verrall (1905) 230 n. 5. (The question of how this argument should be interpreted in the context of *Eum* is far from settled: cf. Vickers [1973] 414 and n. 47, Winnington-Ingram [1983] 123-24, Conacher [1987] 161-62, Sommerstein [1989] on *Eum* 657-66.)

[140] The passages in question are *Eum* 208-21, 604-10, 652-54, and 658-61. Useful discussions of this issue can be found in Winnington-Ingram (1983) 119ff. and 145ff.,

scenes of *Eumenides* the Furies are characterized quite explicitly as slavering hell-hounds who track their prey by the scent of the kindred blood which stains the killer. This is their prerogative, on which they insist with savage vehemence: the punishment of kin-murder. Against Apollo's objection at their inconsistency in pursuing Orestes while allowing Clytemnestra to go unpunished for the murder of her spouse, they point out that the latter crime is not a matter of ὅμαιμος αὐθέντης φόνος (212) and therefore does not concern them. They repeat this argument in their confrontation with Orestes (605) and fall back on it yet again when frustrated in their debate with Apollo (652-54). It is in reference to this charge that Apollo presents his famous closing argument (658-61), maintaining that, in terms of blood kinship, the mother is in fact a stranger (ξένη) to the child, a mere nurse (τροφός) who tends the *father's* offspring:

οὐκ ἔστι μήτηρ ἡ κεκλημένη τέκνου
τοκεύς, τροφὸς δὲ κύματος νεοσπόρου·
τίκτει δ' ὁ θρῴσκων, ἡ δ' ἅπερ ξένῳ[141] ξένη
ἔσωσεν ἔρνος, οἷσι μὴ βλάψῃ θεός.

In the context of this ongoing debate, then, the Aeschylean Apollo poses a technical objection, but an objection that involves a legitimate point of fact:[142] if the Furies insist upon rigidly enforcing the archaic claims of blood-kinship while disregarding those bonds (such as those of marriage) that are sanctioned by the πόλις,[143] then the fact that the child is not, after all, ὅμαιμος with its mother poses a legitimate difficulty and indicates yet another flaw in the primitive notions of guilt and innocence advocated by the Furies.

Returning to the Euripidean Orestes, we find that he opens with this same argument for a number of reasons. First of all, it is quite technical in

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Conacher (1987) 143ff. and 159ff.

[141] The reading ξένον (cf. Winnington-Ingram [1983] 122 n. 101) certainly would reinforce Apollo's argument here and is more in accord with the view presented at 213ff. (The text as it stands implies a distance between husband and wife that is somewhat troublesome in light of that earlier passage.) Perhaps the dative could be attributed to scribal tinkering, but, in the absence of any textual evidence thereof, emendation should probably be resisted, particularly inasmuch as *polyptoton* between noun and noun is more common than between noun and adjective (see, e.g., the passages cited by Fehling [1969] 226 and, in general, Garvie [1986] on *Cho* 89-90).

[142] It should be noted that, while it is Apollo who develops this argument, it is actually Orestes himself who first raises (albeit obliquely) the possibility that he and Clytemnestra are not consanguineous (606, with the Furies' outraged reaction at 607-08). This point is neglected by those who damn the Euripidean Orestes as an unprincipled shyster in the mould of the Aeschylean Apollo. Note as well the implications of φιλτάτου at *Eum* 463-64.

[143] Cf. Conacher (1987) 139ff. *passim* and esp. 206ff.

nature and therefore best introduced early on in the speech rather than
later, when it would interfere with the rising emotional tone of the finale.
Secondly, because it does directly recall the arguments of Apollo in
Eumenides, the appearance of this particular argument in this context
serves to re-awaken the audience's appreciation of the peculiarly *un*-
Aeschylean circumstances that confront this Orestes. In a manner
reminiscent of the (in)famous recognition scene at *Electra* 508ff. or, more
specifically, Electra's οὔτοι μεθήσω at *Orestes* 262, the incongruities
suggested by this Aeschylean reminiscence bring to the fore the secular
nature of the struggle that confronts Orestes here — the dominance of
political and personal rather than religious concerns and, above all, the
complete absence of Apollo, who in Aeschylus' version appears in person
to defend his young protégé with just this argument. Confronted by the
cunningly transformed Fury Tyndareus, the Euripidean Orestes opens
with Apollo's climactic (and, most likely, famous)[144] argument from
Eumenides: the very incongruity of this attempt serves to highlight the
altered nature of the mythical landscape.

　　Yet Euripides employs the argument to virtually the same end as does
Aeschylus. Tyndareus, in his role as prosecutor/Fury, had hammered
home the fact that the murdered woman was Orestes' mother,[145]
particularly in the διατύπωσις at 526-29.[146] Orestes counters this charge
(the principal basis of the animus against him)[147] by dealing first of all
with a technical error in his prosecutor's case, much in the manner of the
Antiphonian προκατασκευή.[148] Tyndareus had asserted the particularly
heinous nature of matricide; Orestes presents the biological 'data' that
render such an assertion invalid on technical grounds.

　　While it cannot be denied that the biological argument is more in place
at *Eumenides* 658ff. (the murder of one supposedly near and dear is still
repugnant, whether that person is a blood relation or not), Orestes quickly
follows up this weaker argument with a much stronger one (557-63):
Clytemnestra, in her illicit union with Aegisthus, had effectively severed
all ties with Orestes and his kin and had of her own volition joined her

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　　[144] Σ *Or* 554 (ἄνευ δὲ πατρός· λέγεταί τις αὐτοῦ εἰπόντος τοῦτο εἰρηκέναι· 'ἄνευ δὲ
μητρὸς, ὧ κάθαρμ' Εὐριπίδη;') no doubt draws upon a comic text and represents a willful
disregarding of this echo.

　　[145] See 502 (note the effective use of enjambment), 504, and esp. 506.

　　[146] Note, again, the effective enjambment at 528.

　　[147] Despite Tyndareus' high-minded arguments at 512ff., it is clear that no one is
concerned about Aegisthus' death: cf. 887, 892-93, and *Cho* 989-90. See West (ed.) on *Or*
562.

　　[148] See, e.g., Edwards (in Edwards/Usher [1985]) on Antiphon 5.1-7 and 8-19.

husband's enemies. Therefore her murder was not that of a φίλος but was instead merely one part of Orestes' just vengeance against the slayers of his father and the usurpers of the Argive throne.

> ἡ σὴ δὲ θυγάτηρ (μητέρ' αἰδοῦμαι λέγειν)
> ἰδίοισιν ὑμεναίοισι κοὐχὶ σώφροσιν
> ἐς ἀνδρὸς ᾔει λέκτρ'· ἐμαυτόν, ἢν λέγω
> κακῶς ἐκείνην, ἐξερῶ, λέξω δ' ὅμως·
> [Αἴγισθος ἦν ὁ κρυπτὸς ἐν δόμοις πόσις·]
> τοῦτον κατέκτειν', ἐπὶ δ' ἔθυσα μητέρα,
> ἀνόσια μὲν δρῶν, ἀλλὰ τιμωρῶν πατρί.

Here Orestes clearly feels himself to be on firmer ground, as the aggressive ἡ σὴ δὲ θυγάτηρ demonstrates. Tyndareus had attempted to distance himself from his daughters and their misdeeds (518-25); Orestes reasserts the close ties between this seemingly impeccable defender of morality and his shameless daughter, thereby undermining his opponent's claims to moral authority.[149] At the same time the young defendant's own professions of shame at being forced to air such unseemly matters (557, 559-60) distance him from Clytemnestra's crime and again reveal him as a sound-minded individual.[150]

But the main point to be observed is the pejorative force of the terms in which Orestes refers to Clytemnestra's alliance with Aegisthus. He does not merely assert the fact of her adultery with a bland reference, for example, to the unseemliness of her deed[151] or to her having shamed Agamemnon's bed,[152] but presents her union with Aegisthus as a perverse and illicit marriage (ἰδίοισιν ὑμεναίοισι κοὐχὶ σώφροσιν / ἐς ἀνδρὸς ᾔει λέκτρα, 558-59). For the ancient audience this charge would be particularly rich in its implications, suggesting a complex matrix of associations, all of which weaken Clytemnestra's claims upon her son and fortify Orestes' allegation that he was correct to treat her as an

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[149] Tyndareus' association with his wicked daughters was, of course, traditional: see Willink (ed.) on *Or* 249-50, Will (1961) 96. Allusions to an opponent's infamous friends or relatives are common in the orators and were recommended by the theorists as an effective means of alienating the jury's sympathy: see, e.g., *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1445a 12-16 and, for specific instances of this device in practice, Lys. 14.16-17 and *passim;* Isoc. 16.2-3 and 42.

[150] As Willink indicates ([ed.] on *Or* 559-60; cf. Di Benedetto [ed.] *ad loc.*), Orestes' hesitation arises in part because such a charge calls into question the legitimacy of his own birth. On this aspect of the adulterer's crime see, e.g., Lys. 1.33 (below, pp. 145-46), Demosth. 45.83-84, Fantham (1975) 47, Cole (1984) 106. The possibility of such a charge in part underlies Phaedra's anxiety at *Hipp* 419-25.

[151] Contrast, e.g., Penelope's gentle treatment of Helen's adultery at *Od.* 23.222.

[152] A common method of alluding to adulterous behavior: e.g., *Od.* 8.269-70, *h.Ap.* 328; in Euripides see *Hipp* 408-09, 420, and 944, *Tro* 1041, *El* 920.

ἐχθρός. Of particular interest is the way in which the charge operates simultaneously in both a poetic (largely Homeric) and a rhetorical/legal context.

The bed repeatedly is employed in Homer (especially in the *Odyssey*) as a symbol for marriage and, more particularly, for the husband's position of authority and control over his household and over his wife.[153] A wife's proper role is to tend her husband's bed,[154] while in the famous passage at *Odyssey* 23.177ff. the bed becomes a complex symbol for marriage, the family, and the οἶκος as a whole. Obviously, a wife who enters another man's bed is wicked, a Helen.[155] Not only does such an act constitute a betrayal of the marriage bond and a source of shame for the husband, but it implies a transference of the woman's allegiance from her husband to her lover and a subservience to this new κύριος. That such subservience on the woman's part would result from sexual intercourse is an assumption that appears repeatedly in the ancient sources. An important part of the 'taming' of Circe in *Odyssey* 10 consists of her immediately going to bed with Odysseus: the act assures their mutuality of interests.[156] In the Homeric hymn to Aphrodite the goddess' explanation of Aeneas' name refers to her shame at having mated with a mortal man, implying that she now is somehow subject to that mortal (198-99):

τῷ δὲ καὶ Αἰνείας ὄνομ' ἔσσεται οὕνεκά μ' αἰνὸν
ἔσχεν ἄχος ἕνεκα βροτοῦ ἀνέρος ἔμπεσον εὐνῇ.

At Herodotus 4.110-17 a group of Amazons, having come to the land of the Scythians, successfully defends itself on the battlefield only to be won over individually as a result of covert sexual liaisons with the Scythian warriors; like Circe, they are 'tamed'[157] through sexual union with a man. And Andromache's strenuous protestations that the tendance of Neoptolemus' bed will *not* lead her to forget her previous husband (*Troades* 665ff.) gain force by playing off the generally accepted maxim that μι' εὐφρόνη χαλᾷ / τὸ δυσμενὲς γυναικὸς εἰς ἀνδρὸς λέχος.[158]

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[153] See, e.g., *Od.* 4.333-34 (=17.124-25) and 16.75 (=19.527); cf. *Hel* 784.

[154] E.g., *Od.* 3.403, 7.347; cf. *HF* 1372, *IA* 1202-03.

[155] See *Od.* 23.215-24, a passage that may well be on Euripides' mind here (see Appendix Seven). Note the ironic inversion at *Hel* 48, 65, 794-95, and 836-37, where the infamous adulteress assumes the role of the chaste Penelope figure.

[156] See esp. *Od.* 10. 333-35.

[157] Note the use of δαμάζω and δάμνημι in various sexual contexts: Cole (1984) 109.

[158] Andromache is characterized in a similar fashion in the prologue of *Andr.* Mention should be made here as well of Creusa's principal reason for rejecting the Paedagogus'

Further examples of this sort could be adduced,[159] but our main concern here is with the effect that this general attitude has on the Greek view of adultery as a legal offence. In the orators a common term associated with the act of adultery is διαφθείρειν,[160] in reference to the adulterer's corruption of another man's wife. This term refers not only to the corruption of the general relations between husband and wife and (most important in Greek eyes) to the doubts cast on the legitimacy of any children the couple might have (that is, the impossibility of the wife any longer performing her primary duty of bearing legitimate offspring),[161] but also to the dangerous alienation of the wife's interests from those of her husband. The management of household affairs was the wife's concern;[162] for her allegiance to be transferred to another man was, therefore, doubly pernicious. Lysias' first oration presents a subtle picture of such a transference of loyalty. The speaker's wife, once the best of women (7), forms a liaison with the handsome young Eratosthenes. As a consequence of this liaison, not only does she humiliate her husband with a series of tricks worthy of an Aristophanic adulteress,[163] but she forms attachments with Eratosthenes' own οἶκος that imply she is a member of it. This is the implication behind the apparently gratuitous detail given in the course of the speaker's narrative (20) that she attended the Thesmophoria in the company of Eratosthenes' mother: the attachment is now so strong that she takes part in religious and social occasions as one of the women of her lover's οἶκος. So there is more than a mere straining after rhetorical effect in the speaker's dubious explanation of the difference between the legal penalties for adultery and those for rape (32-33):

> οὕτως, ὦ ἄνδρες, τοὺς βιαζομένους ἐλάττονος ζημίας ἀξίους ⟨sc. ὁ νομοθέτης⟩ ἡγήσατο εἶναι ἢ τοὺς πείθοντας· τῶν μὲν γὰρ θάνατον κατέγνω, τοῖς δὲ διπλῆν ἐποίησε τὴν βλάβην, ἡγούμενος τοὺς μὲν

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proposal that she kill Xuthus: αἰδούμεθ' εὐνὰς τὰς τόθ' ἡνίκ' ἐσθλὸς ἦν (*Ion* 977).

[159] Cf., e.g., Hypermnestra's decision to spare Lynceus.

[160] See, e.g., Lys. 1.4, 8, 16, 33, and 37, 13.66, frg. 38.5 (Gernet/Bizos); Demosth. 45.27, 39, and 79; Aeschin. 1.182 (cf. 183); cf. *Andr* 947, *Ba* 318, and *Or* 928-29 (contrast ὑγιὲς εὐνατήριον [of Penelope] at 590). Ὄλλυμι and its compounds are also employed in this sense: e.g., E. *El* 921, 1065.

[161] It should be remembered that the charge of μοιχεία applied to illicit intercourse with any freeborn woman whose parents were citizens and who was under the charge of a male κύριος; see Paoli (1950) *passim*, Cole (1984) 98 and 110. Thus the man who committed μοιχεία with an unwed woman 'corrupted' her in the sense that she no longer would be considered eligible for marriage: cf. Fantham (1975) 55, Cole (1984) 107.

[162] See passages cited by Usher (in Edwards/Usher [1985]) on Lys. 1.6-7 and cf. *Lys* 495, *Eccl* 211-12.

διαπραττομένους βίᾳ ὑπὸ τῶν βιασθέντων μισεῖσθαι, τοὺς δὲ
πείσαντας οὕτως αὐτῶν τὰς ψυχὰς διαφθείρειν, ὥστ᾽ οἰκειοτέρας
αὐτοῖς ποιεῖν τὰς ἀλλοτρίας γυναῖκας ἢ τοῖς ἀνδράσι, καὶ πᾶσαν ἐπ᾽
ἐκείνοις τὴν οἰκίαν γεγονέναι, καὶ τοὺς παῖδας ἀδήλους εἶναι ὁποτέρων
τυγχάνουσιν ὄντες, τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἢ τῶν μοιχῶν. [164]

The insidious betrayal of the husband's interests implied by the above
passage — a betrayal which goes beyond what is generally associated
with adultery today — is presented more baldly in Lysias frg. 38.5
(Gernet/Bizos):

ἀλλὰ γὰρ οὐ τὴν οὐσίαν κέκτηται Ἑρμαίου τοῦ μυροπώλου, τὴν
γυναῖκα διαφθείρας ἑβδομήκοντα ἔτη γεγονυῖαν; ἧς ἐρᾶν
προσποιησάμενος οὕτω διέθηκεν ὥστε τὸν μὲν ἄνδρα αὐτῆς καὶ τοὺς
υἱοὺς πτωχοὺς ἐποίησεν, αὐτὸν δὲ ἀντὶ καπήλου μυροπώλην
ἀπέδειξεν;

and is asserted as a general rule in the following fragment of an unnamed
speech:

ἧ γὰρ ἂν ἡμέρᾳ γυνὴ προδῷ τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴν τάξιν λίπη τῆς αἰδοῦς,
εὐθέως παραλλάττει τῶν φρενῶν, ὥστε νομίζειν τοὺς μὲν οἰκείους
ἐχθρούς, τοὺς δὲ ἀλλοτρίους πιστούς, περὶ δὲ τῶν καλῶν καὶ αἰσχρῶν
ἐναντίαν ἔχειν τὴν γνώμην. [165]

And, of course, domestic betrayals of this sort abound in Euripides'
own works: Stheneboea (in the play of that name) offers Proetus' halls
and kingdom as an inducement to the young Bellerophon to share her bed
(κτήσει δ᾽ ἄνακτος δώμαθ᾽ ἐν πεισθεὶς βραχύ, 14 [Page]); Thyestes'
plot against his brother Atreus is initiated by the seduction of Aerope
(*Electra* 720ff., *Orestes* 1007-10); some such usurpation of another man's
estate appears to underlie Electra's reflections (*Electra* 921ff.) concerning
the sorry lot of those who are forced to marry the women they have
corrupted; and the possibility of such a plot may underlie Hippolytus'
protestations at *Hippolytus* 1010-11.[166]

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[163] Note the resemblances between the narrative at Lys. 1.9ff. and that at *Thesm* 476ff.

[164] For a discussion of the difficulties presented by this problematic passage see Harris
(1990), who argues that Euphiletus deliberately misrepresents the laws he cites but that the
jury would have found his interpretation quite seductive.

[165] Ἀπαράσημα 7 (Gernet/Bizos). Cf. Demosth. 45.79 and the passages from that speech
cited above, pp. 138-39. Mention also should be made, in this context, of the oft-cited law
that invalidated an adoption or a will effected by one νοσοῦντα ... ἢ φαρμακῶντα ἢ γυναικὶ
πειθόμενον ἢ ὑπὸ γήρως ἢ ὑπὸ μανιῶν ἢ ὑπὸ ἀνάγκης τινὸς καταληφθέντα (Demosth
[46].16; cf. [48].56 and see MacDowell [1978] 101).

[166] See as well the similar charges against Clytemnestra at E. *El* 1088-90. For more on the

Thus Orestes' reference to Clytemnestra having entered another man's bed is rich in nuance. The distant echoes of Homer's *Odyssey* strike a suitably stern note and recall the Homeric view of woman as potentially dangerous yet ultimately passive, subject to the wishes of a male κύριος. The image of Clytemnestra suggested is that of *Odyssey* 3.254ff., where she is in effect an unimportant pawn in the struggle between Agamemnon and his representative (the anonymous ἀοιδός), on the one hand, and Aegisthus on the other. This image of his mother, and the implied appeal to the Odyssean version of his myth, are employed by Orestes as part of his attempt to shift the focus onto Aegisthus, the admitted villain of the affair. More importantly, however, the reference to Clytemnestra entering another man's bed ἰδίοισιν ὑμεναίοισι would imply, to a Greek audience, the severing of bonds with Agamemnon's οἶκος and a new unity of interest with that of the unnamed man — that is, with Aegisthus' household.[167] Having become alienated from Agamemnon, Clytemnestra has acquired a new φίλος[168] and thereby rendered her former family ἐχθροί.[169] Orestes' use of the generic ἀνδρός adds to the force of this charge, echoing the impersonal language of legal decrees[170] while further developing the suggestion that this liaison had the status of a quasi-legal marriage.[171] Thus Clytemnestra's death was merely a fitting by-product of Orestes' justified vengeance against Aegisthus: τοῦτον κατέκτειν', ἐπὶ δ' ἔθυσα μητέρα.[172]

Orestes rounds off these opening arguments by repeating his earlier admission of the dreadful nature of his act (ἀνόσια μὲν δρῶν, 563 [a direct reference back to 546]), yet emphasizing again the justification for that act (τιμωρῶν πατρί, 563 [echoing 547]). Tyndareus had movingly

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significance of adultery in Greek society see Goldhill (1986a) 24.

[167] On the particular force of ἰδίοισιν, cf. Di Benedetto (ed.) *ad loc.*

[168] Cf. E. *El* 1036-38.

[169] Cf. S. *El* 593-94. Similarly, the reference to Helen going ξένας ἐς εὐνάς at *Tro* 1036-38 has stronger implications than would be apparent at first to a modern reader. Cf. Jones on the nature of Clytemnestra's guilt in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* ([1962], esp. pp. 116-18).

[170] Cf., e.g., Dittenberger (1915-1924) 985.35-37 (Philadelphia, 1st century B.C.): γυναῖκα ἐλευθέραν ἀγνὴν εἶναι καὶ μὴ γινώσκ]ειν ἄ[λ]λου ἀνδρὸς πλὴν τοῦ ἰδίου εὐνὴ[ν ἢ συνουσίαν].

[171] The term ἀνήρ is, of course, the *mot juste* for both 'husband' and 'paramour' (LSJ [1968] s.v., V). For the use of phrases such as ἐς ἀνδρὸς ἤει λέκτρα in reference to marriage see, e.g., E. *Su* 822-23, *Hel* 295, *IA* 1223-24, frg. 318 and 889 N², and cf. Demosth. 30.33 and the ironic Demosth. [59].41. For the use of such imagery in reference to illicit liaisons see, e.g., *Cho* 133-34, *HF* 344-45, *Ion* 545 and 819-20, *Hel* 666-68, *Or* 619, *Ba* 222-23, *Rh* 910-11. (The above considerations in part answer the concerns expressed by Willink [ed.] concerning the feebleness of ἀνδρός at 559.)

[172] On the euphemistic use of ἐπιθύω see Krieg (1934) 32 and Di Benedetto (ed.) and West (ed.) *ad loc.*

portrayed the horrendous aspects of the matricide; by presenting those qualifying circumstances neglected by Tyndareus, Orestes effectively leaves hanging the question with which he opened: τί χρῆν με δρᾶσαι;[173] And it is fitting that he closes this section of his speech with the same word with which he began the argument proper: πατήρ (552 and 563).[174]

Having countered the main source of odium against him (the fact that the murdered woman was his mother), Orestes turns to the public ramifications of the case, directly confronting Tyndareus' charges that his deed represents a threat to society as a whole. He begins by challenging Tyndareus' stance as a defender of νόμος. Far from posing a threat to law and order, he claims, his deed actually will have a healthy deterrent effect and will prevent women from emulating Clytemnestra in the future (564-71):

> ἐφ' οἷς ἀπειλεῖς ὡς πετρωθῆναί με χρή,
> ἄκουσον ὡς ἄπασαν Ἑλλάδ' ὠφελῶ.
> εἰ γὰρ γυναῖκες ἐς τόδ' ἥξουσιν θράσους,
> ἄνδρας φονεύειν, καταφυγὰς ποιούμεναι
> ἐς τέκνα, μαστοῖς τὸν ἔλεον θηρώμεναι,
> παρ' οὐδὲν αὐταῖς ἦν ἂν ὀλλύναι πόσεις,
> ἐπίκλημ' ἐχούσαις ὅτι τύχοι. δράσας δ' ἐγὼ
> δείν', ὡς σὺ κομπεῖς, τόνδ' ἔπαυσα τὸν νόμον.

This argument has struck many as cold-blooded, artificial, and wildly at variance with the healthy sense of remorse displayed by Orestes in the play's earlier scenes. Here he adopts an even more aggressive stance toward Tyndareus (note the tone of ἀπειλεῖς in 564 and, in particular, of ὡς σὺ κομπεῖς in 571), while his language is generally laced with contempt. Suddenly the pitiful image of Clytemnestra begging for mercy before her son, employed so effectively by Tyndareus at 526-29, is reduced to her 'fashioning an escape' (καταφυγὰς ποιούμεναι) by 'hunting after pity with (her) breasts' (μαστοῖς τὸν ἔλεον θηρώμεναι),[175] after having killed her husband for 'some chance offence' (ἐπίκλημα ... ὅτι τύχοι).[176] Moreover, the dread nature of her murder, previously

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[173] For the use of this type of rhetorical question cf., e.g., Andoc. 1.57-60, 2.7, Isae. 2.25, Demosth. [12].15, 18.28 and 69, Spengel (1853) 3.53.3-9, and see West (ed.) on *Or* 551. See Strohm (1957) 41 on the importance of this theme for Orestes' argument.

[174] Cf. O'Brien (1988a) 186-87.

[175] See Willink (ed.) *ad loc.* on the scornful force of the plural μαστοῖς and of the definite article in τὸν ἔλεον. Boulter (1962) 104 detects a sarcastic echo of τὸ θηριῶδες (524) in θηρώμεναι.

[176] See Willink (ed.) *ad loc.* on this biting colloquialism; cf. ἐς τόδ' ... θράσους at 566 (with West [ed.] *ad loc.*).

admitted quite freely by Orestes himself, he now suggests is a malicious and distorted allegation on the part of Tyndareus (570-71); instead, we are told, this deed benefitted all of Hellas (565) by putting a stop to the practice (νόμος) of murderous adulteresses like Clytemnestra (571).

We have seen that the apparent disparities in Orestes' attitude toward Tyndareus need not be read as a clue to the young man's true personality: like any skilled logographer, Euripides heightens the rhetorical tone here in order to maintain the audience's interest and give the impression that the speaker is building to an impassioned climax.[177] Thus the vigorous opposition to Tyndareus is designed to encourage the audience to share Orestes' indignation towards his opponent,[178] while the contemptuous reference to Clytemnestra's pleas for mercy subverts the emotional force of Tyndareus' appeal to that very image, reminding the audience that if such pleas were always to be honored, no woman ever need fear punishment.[179] The almost derisive scorn of these lines is intended to reflect the speaker's outraged indignation and contempt both for his opponent and for the latter's allegations. Such tactics may not win the sympathy of a modern audience, but they clearly were felt to be effective in antiquity and are a natural consequence of the ancient assumption that opponents in a courtroom *ought* to adopt an aggressive stance and express personal enmity towards one another.[180]

More important are the objections that have been raised against Orestes' general argument here. This argument, some assert, is wildly

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[177] This raising of the rhetorical 'temperature' is particularly useful in effecting a transition to a new topic, as here.

[178] Reference to the threats employed by one's opponent (implied obliquely here by the ἀπειλεῖς of 564) are common in the orators and are used to supply further evidence of his violent tendencies, his malicious use of litigation, and (at times) his lack of confidence in the validity of his case. (See, e.g., Lys. 3.28, [9].5; Isae. 10.19; Demosth. 4.9, 19.2 and 257, 21.17, 135, and 194, [25].49, [58].7; cf. E. *Su* 542.) Ὡς σὺ κομπεῖς in 571 is eristic as well (see Willink [ed.] *ad loc.*): the contemptuous use of σύ is, of course, quite common (cf. above, pp. 122-23, and see, e.g., Isae. 6.25; Aeschin. 2.59, 78, 79, and 151; 3.164; also *Rh* 438 and 876, with Ritchie [1964] 244-45), while κομπέω, κομπάζω, κόμπος, and the like often are employed to imply a blustering speciousness in the high-sounding arguments employed by the other side (see, e.g., Lys. [6].48, Aeschin. 3.101 and 237; cf. *Hipp* 950, E. *Su* 581-82, *HF* 148, *Phoen* 600, *Rh* 438 and 876).

[179] Cf. the frequent pleas by prosecutors that the jury not pity the defendant: e.g., Antiphon 1.25-27, 2γ1; Lys. [6].55, 10.26, [11].9, 12.79, 13.33, 14.17 and 40, 15.9, 22.21, 27.12-13, 28.11 and 14, 29.8, 32.19. (Cf. *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1427a 5ff. and E. B. Stevens [1944] 3-15.) Such pleas often are cast in a contemptuously sarcastic tone: e.g., Lys. 13.44, Aeschin. 3.209-10, Demosth. 21.99.

[180] See, e.g., *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1442b 12-16, 1445b 2-5; cf. Lys. 12.2 (with Jebb [1888] *ad loc.*), 13.1, 14.1-2, 15.12, 24.2, Demosth. 22.1ff., 24.6ff., [59].1, 8, and 12-13. (Of course one might on occasion claim to be acting for the common good and *not* out of personal motives: see above, pp. 112-13, and cf., e.g., Lys. 31.2.)

absurd and reflects the young man's slipping grasp on reality, his almost megalomaniacal tendency to endow his personal interests with the status of a universal good: it is one thing, after all, to justify Clytemnestra's death as a hideous but necessary evil, another to present it as a glorious act performed to benefit all Greece. Yet the audacity of this assertion is part and parcel of the aggressive stance adopted by Orestes in his attempt to rebut Tyndareus' νόμος-based arguments. The Spartan elder had claimed to be acting in the interest of society as a whole, putting a stop to such acts of savagery as Orestes' murder of Clytemnestra (523-25); Orestes meets this claim and tops it by focusing on the deterrent effect of his deed — the commission of that act has arrested an even more insidious νόμος.[181] Such arguments based on deterrence are common in the orators,[182] and again Lysias' first oration provides some particularly useful parallels.[183] At the conclusion of this speech the defendant, who has killed the adulterer Eratosthenes in accordance with the law and who now finds himself being prosecuted for murder, makes a claim very similar to that of Orestes (47-48):

> ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν, ὦ ἄνδρες, οὐκ ἰδίαν ὑπὲρ ἐμαυτοῦ νομίζω ταύτην
> γενέσθαι τὴν τιμωρίαν, ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ τῆς πόλεως ἁπάσης· οἱ γὰρ τοιαῦτα
> πράττοντες, ὁρῶντες οἷα τὰ ἆθλα πρόκειται τῶν τοιούτων
> ἁμαρτημάτων, ἧττον εἰς τοὺς ἄλλους ἐξαμαρτήσονται, ἐὰν καὶ ὑμᾶς
> ὁρῶσι τὴν αὐτὴν γνώμην ἔχοντας. εἰ δὲ μή, πολὺ κάλλιον τοὺς μὲν
> κειμένους νόμους ἐξαλεῖψαι, ἑτέρους δὲ θεῖναι, οἵτινες τοὺς μὲν
> φυλάττοντας τὰς ἑαυτῶν γυναῖκας ταῖς ζημίαις ζημιώσουσι, τοῖς δὲ
> βουλομένοις εἰς αὐτὰς ἁμαρτάνειν πολλὴν ἄδειαν ποιήσουσι.

We find the same reference to the deterrence of future crimes, the same claims to have benefitted society as a whole,[184] the same tone of righteous indignation. The latter is prominent as well in a very similar passage earlier in the same speech (36):

> οἷς (sc. νόμοις) ὑμᾶς ἀξιῶ τὴν αὐτὴν γνώμην ἔχειν· εἰ δὲ μή, τοιαύτην

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[181] Willink's useful note on 566-71 remarks on the way in which παύω at 571 answers Tyndareus' use of this verb at 525. Cf. O'Brien (1988a) 186-187, Lloyd (1992) 123.

[182] See, e.g., Antiphon 2γ11; Andoc. [4].40; Lys. 14.12 (cf. 4), 15.9, 28.11; cf. Rhet. ad Alex. 1427a 14-18. Burnett (1971) 207-08 directs our attention to Eum 490ff.; Eucken (1986) 160 compares S. El 1505ff. (note as well Tro 1031-32).

[183] See, e.g, Perrotta (1928) 92, who compares the rhetorical strategy of Lys. 1 to that of Orestes before the Argive assembly.

[184] For other examples of this motif, see Demosth. 21.127, [50].1, [59].114, and the sources cited by Lloyd (1992) 123. Cf. Spengel (1853) 2.139.27ff. on the figure known as ἀντίστασις. As noted by Willink (ed.) on Or 565, Orestes' version of this claim presents a specific reply to Tyndareus' appeal in 495 to τὸν κοινὸν Ἑλλήνων νόμον.

ἄδειαν τοῖς μοιχοῖς ποιήσετε, ὥστε καὶ τοὺς κλέπτας ἐπαρεῖτε φάσκειν
μοιχοὺς εἶναι, εὖ εἰδότας ὅτι, ἐὰν ταύτην τὴν αἰτίαν περὶ ἑαυτῶν
λέγωσι καὶ ἐπὶ τούτῳ φάσκωσιν εἰς τὰς ἀλλοτρίας οἰκίας εἰσιέναι,
οὐδεὶς αὐτῶν ἅψεται.

Just as Orestes presents the outlandish image of wives casually murdering
their husbands, secure in the knowledge that they will escape retribution,
so the defendant in Lysias 1 speaks of cat-burglars claiming to be
adulterers: in each case the absurdity is intentional, calculated to reflect
the speaker's outraged indignation at being prosecuted for an act that any
reasonable person should praise.[185]

Viewed in light of the above considerations the argument presented at
564-71 is neither vicious nor facetious[186] but represents a rhetorical
commonplace, particularly suited to displaying the speaker's outraged
innocence and calculated to induce the audience to share in this sense of
outrage. Several critics have objected, however, that although Orestes
purports to refute Tyndareus' νόμος-based arguments, he never addresses
the most important of these arguments, the charge that Clytemnestra
should have been taken to court and banished rather than killed.[187] The
proper response to such an objection is: (1) that it would be poor strategy
on Orestes' part, and (2) that it is impossible within the framework of the
drama. As they stand, lines 564-71 present an effective rebuttal of
Tyndareus' case. The Spartan elder had championed the cause of νόμος
and social order; Orestes demonstrates that his act has served the interests
of precisely those causes by deterring others from following
Clytemnestra's example. For the purposes of this argument it is not in
Orestes' interest to admit the problematic aspects of his deed, as he does
elsewhere in the speech, or to elaborate, for example, upon the difficulties
entailed in prosecuting a reigning monarch or the factors that distinguish
Clytemnestra's murder from that of Agamemnon. For him to do so would
involve tedious distinctions and qualifications that would blur the moral
clarity of his central assertion here, that Clytemnestra's murder was both
justified and beneficial to society as a whole. And while Euripides will

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185 The commentators cite *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1444a 5-7: ἂν δὲ ὁμολογῶμεν τὰ ἐγκαλούμενα
πεποιηκέναι, ἐκ τῶν δικαίων καὶ νομίμων μετιόντες ἐννομώτερα καὶ δικαιότερα τὰ ἡμέτερα
ἀποδεικνύναι πειρασόμεθα. This strategy is sometimes referred to as δικαιολογία (e.g., *Rhet.
ad Alex.* 1438a 25, 1443a 4). Cf. Lloyd (1992) 31-32 for this and other examples of the
reductio ad absurdum.

186 For the former view see Mullens (1940) 154, Blaiklock (1952) 185, Greenberg (1962)
176, and cf. Eucken (1986) 159-60. The latter view is that of Ostwald (1969) 36.

187 See, e.g., Verrall (1905) 230, Blaiklock (1952) 185, Eucken (1986) 159, Willink (ed.)
on *Or* 566-71 and 581-82.

often undermine a character's position in an *agon* by providing him with
a case of dubious validity or wisdom,[188] it is not uncommon for aesthetic
considerations of form and economy to lead even the most noble and
sympathetic of characters to omit points that would be considered
essential in a more realistic forensic context.[189] Orestes merely proposes
an alternative evaluation of the matricide and leaves the matter there.[190]

Moreover, it is difficult to conceive of a way in which Orestes could
respond to this particular argument of Tyndareus even were it in his
interest to do so.[191] We have seen that Tyndareus' appeal to fifth-century
legal practice represents, not Euripides' own view of the steps that
Orestes ought to have taken were he mentally and morally sound, but a
highly problematic and quintessentially Euripidean overturning of the
play's mythic framework. There is nothing that Orestes, Apollo's agent,
can say in response to such an allegation other than to affirm the
traditional background of his story, as he will do in his concluding
arguments (591ff.). And, consonant with his reliance on fifth-century
rhetorical devices, Tyndareus himself at 607ff. will provide no refutation
of Orestes' appeal to Apollo, but instead will merely increase the
vehemence of his opposition to his nephew and the violence of his threats
against Menelaus. This fact has often been noted,[192] but is generally
interpreted as a sign of the old man's angry contempt for such an
argument or cited as evidence that the two 'speak different languages'
(Mullens [1940] 155), with the implication either that Orestes is
incapable of understanding Tyndareus' position, or that both Orestes and
Tyndareus suffer from a narrowness of outlook that prevents them from
appreciating the valid points in the other's arguments.[193] Yet the degree to
which the outlooks of these two opponents are at odds must be accorded
more weight in an assessment of their speeches. To read the Spartan
elder's allegation as in any way a serious indication of the course Orestes

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[188] Perhaps the best example is that of Admetus in *Alc:* see Conacher (1981) 5ff.

[189] E.g., Theseus at E. *Su* 426ff. skirts the Herald's arguments regarding democracy's
reliance upon the wisdom of an unsophisticated and, for the most part, uneducated general
populace (cf. Lloyd [1992] 122); at *Ba* 266ff. Teiresias (not, perhaps, either sympathetic or
noble) ignores Pentheus' charge that he has abetted the introduction of this new god out of
selfish motives. Turning to Sophocles, at *Aj* 1093ff. Teucer is able to ignore the enormity of
Ajax's attempted crime and the fact that, as a traitor, he was indeed subject to disgrace.

[190] We should note that the rhetoricians themselves acknowledge the wisdom of ignoring
the details of an opponent's argument if a neat rebuttal is not readily at hand: see, e.g., *Rhet.
ad Alex.* 1443b 24ff.; cf. Krieg (1934) 31.

[191] Cf. Lloyd (1992) 121-22 (with 104). For a different view, see Conacher (1967) 219.

[192] See, e.g., Krieg (1934) 30, Strohm (1957) 42, Greenberg (1962) 176, Burnett (1971)
207 (cf. 208-09), Boulter (1962) 104, Ebener (1966) 46, Euben (1986) 239.

[193] See, e.g., Greenberg (1962) 176, Eucken (1986) 158-60.

might have taken is to deny the mythological background which forms the very foundation of the play. Moreover, such a view implies that any miraculous elements in the play (for example, the disappearance of Helen or the *exodos* as a whole) are merely dramatic expedients employed by the poet to prevent his work from straying too far beyond the framework of the mythological tradition and irrelevant to his true purpose, which (it is maintained) is a 'realistic' treatment of Orestes' story. Yet Euripides is quite capable of employing, at different times and for his own purposes, both a mythological and a realistic, contemporary framework without troubling to reconcile the two. Thus he presents an Argos that is ruled by a monarch yet has a popular assembly indistinguishable from that of contemporary Athens;[194] he represents the Furies who haunt Orestes both as the goddesses of vengeance familiar from tradition and as a guilt-induced fantasy; and he drops Apollo from the central scenes of his play, only to have him appear miraculously in the *exodos*. Like Heracles' famous outburst at *Heracles* 1341ff., Tyndareus' charge creates a momentary breach in the fabric of the myth, introducing a tension that is as irresolvable as it is central to the play's dynamic. Attempts to employ this allegation as a key to the evaluation of Orestes' apology or of his general character upset the delicate balance that Euripides has established and ultimately lead one down the treacherous path toward Verrallian 'realism.'[195]

In the last of his formal arguments (572-78) Orestes considers yet another of the public ramifications of Clytemnestra's crime, that her infidelity led to the death of Argos' king and commander in chief:

μισῶν δὲ μητέρ' ἐνδίκως ἀπώλεσα,
ἥτις μεθ' ὅπλων ἄνδρ' ἀπόντ' ἐκ δωμάτων
πάσης ὑπὲρ γῆς 'Ελλάδος στρατηλάτην
προύδωκε κοὐκ ἔσωσ' ἀκήρατον λέχος·
ἐπεὶ δ' ἁμαρτοῦσ' ᾔσθετ', οὐχ αὑτῇ δίκην
ἐπέθηκεν, ἀλλ', ὡς μὴ δίκην δοίη πόσει,
ἐζημίωσε πατέρα κἀπέκτειν' ἐμόν.

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[194] For recent examples of the effect of such an emphasis on *Realien* in this context see Euben (1986) 234 and Hall (1993) 266-67 (echoing Verrall [1905]), where it is maintained that Orestes cannot be regarded as a tyrannicide in this play inasmuch as Argos here is portrayed as a democracy. Again, Euripides has blended the contemporary with the traditional to form an irreconcilable whole that can only be disentangled by importing issues of our own manufacture.

[195] The final chapter in Whitman (1974) has some useful observations on Euripides' ironic mode and its often uncertain balancing of myth and realism. Also of use are Vernant, "Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy" (Vernant/Vidal-Naquet [1988] 29ff.), and Barlow (1986a) 3ff.

Once more Orestes' words evoke a complex response. Foremost is the image of Clytemnestra's infidelity as a traitorous act against the state, a betrayal (προύδωκε) of the city's military commander.[196] This aspect of her crime is traditional[197] and carries with it misogynistic overtones in addition to the odium that attaches to all traitors. The underlying assumption is that the murder of a king and military leader is a matter of greater import than the death of a mere woman. This misogynistic strain is reinforced by the added contrast between the two's respective roles as mother and father (572 and 578) which in turn recalls the emphasis earlier in the speech (551-63) on the superiority of the father's claims. The wantonness of Clytemnestra's offence is further emphasized by the rather artificial image of her punishing *Agamemnon* for her own act of faithlessness (576-78). Again, this somewhat strained charge is intended to convey Orestes' outrage at the extreme willfulness of his mother's crime and maintain the tone of righteous indignation established in 564ff.[198] And just as his first pair of arguments concluded by focusing on Aegisthus (whose death all agree was well deserved), so this second pair ends with a compelling emphasis on the wanton murder of Agamemnon, Argos' king and Orestes' father.

At this point Orestes' formal arguments come to an end. He has attempted to meet Tyndareus on his own terms and has done a creditable job of employing the forensic tactics of Euripides' day to counter his opponent's high-toned legal and moral arguments. In the second half of his speech, however, the rising indignation that we have observed above becomes even more noticeable, as Orestes turns to a series of emotional appeals and attempts to allocate to others the responsibility for Clytemnestra's death.

He begins at lines 579-84 by appealing to the injunctions of his dead father, building upon the impression made by 572-78:[199]

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[196] Note the repetition of this image in Orestes' similar argument before the Argive assembly (939). It is true that προδίδωμι and related words are used with some frequency in reference to adultery (e.g., *Med* 207, 489, Lys. 'Απαράσημα 7 [Gernet/Bizos]), but its appearance in this particular context is notably apt.

[197] See *Ag* 1451-53, *Cho* 919-21, *Eum* 455-61 and 625-39.

[198] Cf. Biehl (1965) on *Or* 578 and *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1427a 2-5: ... αὐξητέον ἐστὶ τὰ ἀδικήματα καὶ τὰ τῶν ἐναντίων ἁμαρτήματα, καὶ μάλιστα μὲν δεικτέον ὡς ἑκὼν καὶ ἐκ προνοίας οὐ τῆς τυχούσης ἀλλὰ μετὰ παρασκευῆς πλείστης ἠδίκησεν. The cold-hearted cunning of Clytemnestra implied here is placed in sharp contrast to Orestes' own prudent reflection (emphasized by the striking ἐλογισάμην of 555: see Willink [ed.] and West [ed.] *ad loc.*).

[199] The transposition of 579-84 to follow 585-90 (Willink) or 585-87 (Diggle) is unnecessary: see West (1987) 283 n. 9 and Lloyd (1992) 124 n. 43. The abruptness of the transition at 579 is rhetorically effective, furthering the impression of a multiplicity of

πρὸς θεῶν — ἐν οὐ καλῷ μὲν ἐμνήσθην θεῶν,
φόνου δικαστῶν· εἰ δὲ δὴ τὰ μητέρος
σιγῶν ἐπήνουν, τί μ' ἂν ἔδρασ' ὁ κατθανών;
οὐκ ἄν με μισῶν ἀνεχόρευ' Ἐρινύσιν;
ἢ μητρὶ μὲν πάρεισι σύμμαχοι θεαί,
τῷ δ' οὐ πάρεισι, μᾶλλον ἠδικημένῳ;

Again the argument based on Agamemnon's claims to vengeance is traditional and would have been familiar to Euripides' audience.[200] Critics have detected further evidence of Orestes' deluded criminality, however, in this particular application of that argument. Citing the apparent contradiction to Orestes' attitude in lines 288ff., they have detected in this contradiction the poet's underlying condemnation of blood vengeance as both savage and pointless. More importantly, they have found evidence that Orestes, under the pressure of Tyndareus' challenge, is beginning to undergo a transformation of a more subtle yet even more horrifying nature than that witnessed at 255ff., as his earlier feelings of guilt and remorse come to be replaced by a narrow-sighted, amoral striving after salvation at any cost. As we have seen, this interpretation is based largely on a misreading of 288ff. and the false conclusion that Orestes' attitude toward the matricide undergoes a change in the course of the play.[201] But it is also due in part, I suspect, to a general assumption that such an argument could not be accepted seriously in late fifth-century Athens — that the theater audience would have rejected out of hand Orestes' claim as inherently specious and sophistical in the context of a forensic debate (as opposed to that of an Aeschylean *agon*). Yet it was a religious as well as a legal duty of the murdered man's relatives to avenge his death; failure to do so would result in ritual impurity and would render them subject both to the gods' anger and to malevolent chthonic influences of their murdered kin.[202] Accordingly, Plato, at *Laws* 871B,[203] explicitly

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justifications for Clytemnestra's death. The argument itself has strong thematic links to 572-78 in its emphasis on Agamemnon and its continuation of the mother-father antithesis. The notion that arguments based on Agamemnon's Furies and Apollo's commands belong together seems artificial (note, e.g., Apollo's absence from the grand *kommos* of *Cho*), while the overall structure that results from the transposition is weaker than that of the mss. text: we want a strong introduction to the concluding sections of the speech to match their heightened emotion. Most importantly, there is no compelling reason for the transposition, which is motivated largely by objections to 588-90. See further, Appendix Seven.

[200] See *Cho* 283-84, 925, 1029-33, *Eum* 465-67, E. *El* 977-78, and the other references to 'paternal ἐρινύες' in Willink (ed.) on *Or* 581-82. Cf. the passages cited by Norwood (1920) 156 n. 5 and see Garvie (1986) on *Cho* 284.

[201] On this question, see Appendix Two. Cf. Zürcher (1947) 168ff.

[202] See above, pp. 123-25; cf. Rohde (1925) 174ff., Dover (1974) 243ff., and esp. Hester (1981) 22-25.

refers to τὴν τῶν θεῶν ἔχθραν being transferred from the murderer to the
dead man's negligent relations, while references can be found in the
orators themselves to the obligation of the living to avenge the dead.[204]
Such references presuppose not only legal obligation and personal
motives of revenge, but also the fear of incurring divine displeasure by
failing in what was, in large part, a religious duty. That such is the case
becomes clear in one of the admittedly rather anachronistic *Tetralogies* of
Antiphon, where we find the prosecution emphasizing the gravity of its
responsibilities in terms very like those employed by Orestes:

> ἡμεῖς τε οἱ τιμωροὶ τῶν διεφθαρμένων, εἰ δι' ἄλλην τινὰ ἔχθραν τοὺς
> ἀναιτίους διώκοιμεν, τῷ μὲν ἀποθανόντι οὐ τιμωροῦντες δεινοὺς
> ἀλιτηρίους ἔξομεν τοὺς τῶν ἀποθανόντων προστροπαίους, τοὺς δὲ
> καθαροὺς ἀδίκως ἀποκτείνοντες ἔνοχοι τοῦ φόνου τοῖς ἐπιτιμίοις
> ἐσμέν ....[205]

Thus where the litigant would refer to the claims of a murdered relative in
justifying his going to law and in urging the condemnation of his
opponent, Orestes raises very similar claims in justifying his attack on
Clytemnestra, replacing the orators' general appeals to the claims of the
dead with the traditional argument (familiar from earlier treatments of the
myth) based on *Agamemnon's* Furies.

Orestes' use of this traditional argument is designed, in part, to counter
Tyndareus' assertion of divine anger at the murder of Clytemnestra (530-
33) and effectively builds upon the τί χρῆν με δρᾶσαι; theme established
earlier in his speech. Yet, in the pressing urgency of these rhetorical
questions, in the broken rhythm of the introductory 579-80, and in the
sudden renewal (in those same lines) of Orestes' awareness of the
negative aspects of his deed, we find a new note of desperation mingling
with the righteous indignation evident in the speech's previous
arguments.[206]

This tone is maintained in the following section of the speech (lines

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[203] Cited by Garvie (1986) on *Cho* 284, along with Pl. *Leg.* 866B.

[204] As we would expect, among the orators it is Antiphon who provides most of the
surviving references to this notion: see Antiphon 1.1, 3-5, 21, 23, 24, 29-31; also Lys. 13.41-
42, 92.

[205] Antiphon 4α4 (cf. 3 and 5); see also 2α3, γ10-11, 3γ11-12, δ9, 4β8, γ7, δ10; cf.
Rohde (1925) 215 n. 176 and Maidment (1941) 38ff.

[206] One important objection to the transposition of 579-84 (see above, n. 199) concerns
the manner in which these lines introduce the emotional second half of Orestes' speech. The
sudden shift that Willink postulates from the reasoned indignation of 572-78 to the emotional
allegations of 585ff. is too abrupt. As the text stands, 579ff. do introduce a distinct alteration
in the rhetorical tenor of the speech, but they announce this shift (and buffer it somewhat) by
means of the elaborately self-conscious 579-80.

585-90) as Orestes proceeds to lay the ultimate responsibility for his deed upon Tyndareus and upon Clytemnestra herself:

σύ τοι φυτεύσας θυγατέρ', ὦ γέρον, κακὴν
ἀπώλεσάς με· διὰ τὸ κείνης γὰρ θράσος
πατρὸς στερηθεὶς ἐγενόμην μητροκτόνος.
ὁρᾷς; 'Οδυσσέως ἄλοχον οὐ κατέκτανεν
Τηλέμαχος· οὐ γὰρ ἐπεγάμει πόσει πόσιν,
μένει δ' ἐν οἴκοις ὑγιὲς εὐνατήριον.

Commentators have been troubled by a perceived weakness in these allegations and, for this reason and others, have proposed the deletion of 588-90 or of the entire passage.[207] It is troubling that the charge that *Tyndareus* is responsible for Orestes' predicament (585-86) recalls arguments put forward by other Euripidean characters who are less than sympathetic: Helen at *Troades* 919-22 and the equally brazen Pasiphae of *Cretans* 4ff. (Page).[208] Yet this attack on Tyndareus effectively associates him again with the crimes of his wanton daughter, further challenging his posture as an unbiased and unsullied defender of law. It also provides a smooth transition to the assertion that Clytemnestra was responsible for her fate, her death the direct result of her own arrogant daring (586-90). The passage as a whole represents an example of the so-called ἀντέγκλημα, a rhetorical ploy wherein the defendant admits the deed but claims that the victim (or the prosecution, if the two are distinct) either deserved such treatment or himself bears responsibility for the matter under dispute.[209] The second and third of Antiphon's *Tetralogies* present useful parallels for Orestes' application of this tactic vis-à-vis Clytemnestra,[210] but it is difficult to discover exact precedents for his attack on Tyndareus. It is not uncommon, however, for defendants to charge their opponents in court with responsibility for crimes of various sorts in an attempt to arouse the jury's anger and to establish that their opponents, and not they themselves, are the ones who should be prosecuted.[211] Such allegations seem to be part of a general strategy of

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[207] See Appendix Seven.

[208] Cf. Hermione's excuses at *Andr* 929ff. See Lloyd (1984) 305-06 and 308, and (1992) 124 for further parallels.

[209] See Spengel (1853) 2.139.30ff.; cf. 2.162.3-5, *Rhet. ad Her.* 1.15.25, Quint. 7.4.8, Krieg (1934) 32. See as well *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1442b 5-9 and esp. 21-25 (in both of these passages, however, the main concern involves responsibility for the present litigation). For some examples of this use of counter αἰτίαι see (in addition to those cited below) Demosth. 32.31, 41.12, [48].36, [56].50.

[210] E.g., 3β4-5 and 8, δ4 and 10; 4β1 and 6, δ3 and 5; cf. Lys. 3.35ff.

[211] E.g., Lys. 3.1 and 20, 25.31; Demosth. 18.41, 50, 143, 158. Particularly interesting

directing responsibility (and blame) elsewhere, whether rationally or not. Thus the speaker in Lysias 7 is able to blame the war for his predicament (7.6), while, in a remarkable passage, the defendant of Lysias 1 claims that his mother, in her death, became the cause of his subsequent troubles.[212] And Aeschines, in his speech against Timarchus, explicitly anticipates and precludes such a strategy on the part of his opponent (1.3):

> τοῦ μὲν οὖν ὅλου ἀγῶνος φανήσεται οὔθ' ἡ πόλις αἰτία οὖσα Τιμάρχῳ οὔθ' οἱ νόμοι οὔθ' ὑμεῖς οὔτ' ἐγώ, ἀλλ' αὐτὸς οὗτος ἑαυτῷ.[213]

He elaborates further on this theme at the conclusion of the same speech (178-79):

> ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις καὶ τοῖς δικαστηρίοις πολλάκις ἀφέμενοι τῶν εἰς αὐτὸ τὸ πρᾶγμα λόγων, ὑπὸ τῆς ἀπάτης καὶ τῶν ἀλαζονευμάτων ὑπάγεσθε, καὶ πάντων ἀδικώτατον ἔθος εἰς τοὺς ἀγῶνας παραδέχεσθε· ἐᾶτε γὰρ τοὺς ἀπολογουμένους ἀντικατηγορεῖν τῶν κατηγόρων. ἐπειδὰν δ' ἀπὸ τῆς ἀπολογίας ἀποσπασθῆτε καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς ἐφ' ἑτέρων γένησθε, εἰς λήθην ἐμπεσόντες τῆς κατηγορίας, ἐξέρχεσθ' ἐκ τῶν δικαστηρίων οὐδὲ παρ' ἑτέρου δίκην εἰληφότες, οὔτε παρὰ τοῦ κατηγόρου, ψῆφος γὰρ κατ' αὐτοῦ οὐ δίδοται, οὔτε παρὰ τοῦ ἀπολογουμένου, ταῖς γὰρ ἀλλοτρίαις αἰτίαις ἀποτριψάμενος τὰ ὑπάρχοντα [αὐτῷ] ἐγκλήματα ἐκπέφευγεν ἐκ τοῦ δικαστηρίου.[214]

Orestes' allegations regarding Tyndareus' responsibility for the present state of affairs are not, then, as sophistic or as scurrilous as might first appear: as the father of Clytemnestra, the Spartan elder would be held responsible for his daughter's conduct,[215] and Orestes would be expected to exploit this fact. West's brief comment sums up the matter admirably: "For Greek orators attack was an essential part of defence."[216] There is no mistaking the rising desperation of the charges in these lines: in rapid succession Orestes proceeds from attempting to cite Agamemnon's authority for the deed (lines 579-84) to attacking

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examples of this device appear at Antiphon 1.2 and 4β7.

[212] Lys. 1.7: ἐπειδὴ δέ μοι ἡ μήτηρ ἐτελεύτησε, ἣ πάντων τῶν κακῶν ἀποθανοῦσα αἰτία μοι γεγένηται. Scodel (1986) ad loc. is correct to follow Frohberger in remarking that "Greek prefers a person rather than an event or abstraction as its subject .... We would say, 'her death was the cause'"; the fact remains, however, that the defendant feels compelled to place responsibility for his present difficulties elsewhere.

[213] Cf. Demosth. 24.1.

[214] Cf. Demosth. [58].22-23.

[215] The scholiast compares Il. 5.875. Cf. Lanza (1961) 61.

[216] West (ed.) on Or 585.

Tyndareus himself and his wayward daughter. Argumentation here has been replaced by a series of emotional allegations. Yet there is no justification for the assumption that Orestes presents us here with a repulsive perversion of his earlier feelings toward Tyndareus or that these allegations are mere sophistries without any foundation. Such a view ignores the rhetorical tradition in which Orestes is operating as well as the immediate context of the passage as a whole, with its series of increasingly emotional appeals.

This urgent tone reaches a climax in Orestes' concluding appeal, in which he asserts that Apollo is responsible for the murder of Clytemnestra (591-601):

> ὁρᾷς δ'[217] Ἀπόλλων', ὃς μεσομφάλους ἕδρας
> ναίων βροτοῖσι στόμα νέμει σαφέστατον·
> [ᾧ πειθόμεσθα πάνθ' ὅσ' ἂν κεῖνος λέγῃ·]
> τούτῳ πιθόμενος τὴν τεκοῦσαν ἔκτανον.
> ἐκεῖνον ἡγεῖσθ' ἀνόσιον καὶ κτείνετε·
> ἐκεῖνος ἥμαρτ', οὐκ ἐγώ. τί χρῆν με δρᾶν;
> ἢ οὐκ ἀξιόχρεως ὁ θεὸς ἀναφέροντί μοι
> μίασμα λῦσαι; ποῖ τις οὖν ἔτ' ἂν φύγοι,
> εἰ μὴ κελεύσας ῥύσεταί με μὴ θανεῖν;
> ἀλλ' ὡς μὲν οὐκ εὖ μὴ λέγ' εἴργασται τάδε,
> ἡμῖν δὲ τοῖς δράσασιν οὐκ εὐδαιμόνως.[218]

This passage is harshly criticized by Mullens (1940) 154-55, who compares Orestes to a trapped animal and contrasts his 'whining' here with Prometheus' bold proclamation at *Prometheus Bound* 268. Yet both the tone and the substance of these lines conform with Greek rhetorical theory and practice. As we have seen, Tyndareus himself closes in an emotional vein, calling upon the testimony of the gods as further evidence of Orestes' polluted state.[219] In like fashion Orestes reserves his appeal to Apollo for the conclusion of his own speech, both for its emotional impact and because it is the strongest of the four ἀναφοραί[220] which constitute the latter half of his defence. If Apollo truly did order Clytemnestra's murder (and events will prove that he did), then this argument effectively counters Tyndareus' similar appeal at 530-33 and undermines the entire basis of the Spartan elder's case. There is no

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[217] If we retain 588-90 before 591ff., δέ must be retained as well (cf. Appendix Seven). On difficulties with the text of 591 see Di Benedetto (ed.) and Willink (ed.) *ad loc.*

[218] On 602-04 see above, n. 16.

[219] 530-33: cf. above, pp. 123-24.

[220] See Willink (ed.) on *Or* 414 for this term.

denying the agitation evident in these lines: note, for example, the short, staccato clauses joined by anaphora,[221] the sardonic commands (595), and the barrage of rhetorical questions (596-99). But there is nothing here to warrant Mullens' vehement condemnation of this argument. Again, it is not uncommon for litigants in the courtroom to transfer responsibility for their actions to another party, and Krieg (1934) 76 cites a number of passages in which ἀναφέρειν is employed in contexts resembling that of 597-98. The best parallel, however, is provided by Plato *Apology* 20E (also cited by Krieg), where Socrates employs a similar appeal to Apollo in preparing for the story of Chairephon's famous consultation at Delphi:

> καί μοι, ὦ ἄνδρες ᾿Αθηναῖοι, μὴ θορυβήσητε, μηδ᾿ ἐὰν δόξω τι ὑμῖν
> μέγα λέγειν· οὐ γὰρ ἐμὸν ἐρῶ τὸν λόγον ὃν ἂν λέγω, ἀλλ᾿ εἰς
> ἀξιόχρεων ὑμῖν τὸν λέγοντα ἀνοίσω.[222]

Like Orestes, Socrates appeals to the god's authority, claiming that Apollo alone bears responsibility for his plight. Nor is this claim on Orestes' part a new one: Apollo's responsibility for Clytemnestra's death has been emphasized repeatedly throughout the play's earlier scenes, both by Orestes himself and by others.[223] Thus it is misguided to suggest that Orestes attempts "to flee from the dock, so to speak, where he feels like a trapped animal" (Mullens [1940] 154) merely because he employs such an argument in his defence. We cannot explain Orestes' strategy here as a 'reversion to type' in the face of Tyndareus' threats. Where the Aeschylean Orestes had been able to address his confident appeal directly to the god himself (*Eumenides* 609ff.), all that remains for the Orestes of this play are urgent justifications based on the commands of a god who is presently nowhere in evidence and whom his opponents ignore.[224]

The emotional tone in which the Euripidean Orestes presents his case is more clearly explained by the peculiar features of his lot. Yet even this excess of emotion can be paralleled to a certain degree. For example, the rhetorical questions of 596-99 are closely echoed by *Cyclops* 307-09 (another desperate appeal tinged with indignation) and by the following

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[221] 594-96, with τούτῳ ... ἐκεῖνον ... ἐκεῖνος.

[222] See Krieg (1934) 33 n. 14, who also notes the similar use of the t.t. ἀξιόχρεως here and at *Or* 597. (Biehl [1965] on *Or* 597 and Willink [ed.] on *Or* 597-98 cite further parallels for the latter; cf. Lloyd [1992] 34.)

[223] See Ebener (1966) 44 (who cites 28ff., 76, 121-22, 162ff., 191ff., 285-86, 329, and 416ff.).

[224] Note as well *Eum* 465-67, where the Aeschylean Orestes also rounds off the précis of his case with a reference to Apollo's responsibility. (Again, the calm assurance of this Orestes stands in sharp contrast to the desperation evident in our passage.) Cf. *Eum* 426, where Athena herself implicitly acknowledges the legitimacy of such a line of defence.

plea to the jury from Antiphon 1.4:

> οὓς γὰρ ἐχρῆν τῷ μὲν τεθνεῶτι τιμωροὺς γενέσθαι, ἐμοὶ δὲ βοηθούς,
> οὗτοι τοῦ μὲν τεθνεῶτος φονῆς γεγένηνται, ἐμοὶ δ' ἀντίδικοι
> καθεστᾶσι. πρὸς τίνας οὖν ἔλθῃ τις βοηθούς, ἢ ποῖ τὴν καταφυγὴν
> ποιήσεται ἄλλοθι ἢ πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ τὸ δίκαιον; [225]

But it is perhaps the feverish outburst at 595-96 that most has given the impression of a young man cracking under pressure and seizing upon any justification which comes to mind. The notion of declaring the god himself ἀνόσιος and condemning him to death is bizarre in the extreme, while the repetition of the τί χρῆν με δρᾶσαι; motif here could be regarded as a particularly subtle touch:[226] at 551 this question served a useful programmatic function, evoking the dilemma in which Orestes found himself; here, however, it seems to betray a pathetic incoherence, a desperate return to a theme that was important earlier in his defence but that now is merely another in a series of panic-stricken self-justifications. It seems more in harmony with the general tenor of the passage, however, to read these lines, not as a panicked, grasping *cri de cœur*, but as an aggressive and indignant assertion of the justice of Orestes' cause. This interpretation accords better with the passionate but far from panic-stricken questions at 597-99 (which, as we have seen, employ a standard type of rhetorical question to assert the reasonableness of this line of defence) and with the opening of Tyndareus' subsequent response (ἐπεὶ θρασύνῃ ..., 607). Just as earlier Orestes could issue the imperious commands to the Furies that beset him: τί δῆτα μέλλετ'; ἐξακρίζετ' αἰθέρα / πτεροῖς, τὰ Φοίβου δ' αἰτιᾶσθε θέσφατα (275-76, echoing *Eumenides* 179ff.), so here he emphatically presses home the fact that it was *Apollo* who commanded the murder of Clytemnestra, that if anyone should be condemned and executed it is the god himself and not his helpless agent. Again an apparently absurd statement on Orestes' part is the result of a rhetorical strategy, meant to reflect the speaker's passionate indignation, and not to indicate moral perversity or deluded incoherence.[227] From his deferential and uncertain opening Orestes has built to an impassioned and aggressive assertion of his personal innocence in the matter, despite the admitted horror of the act that he was led to commit. He concludes with a suitably complex summation (600-

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[225] Cf. the sarcastic anticipation of such a ploy at Aeschin. 3.209. (The use of ποῖ in such passages seems to justify its appearance at 598, *pace* Willink [ed.] on *Or* 598-99).

[226] I am not certain, however, that the shift from the aorist of 551 to the present here is as significant as Biehl ([1965] on *Or* 596) suggests.

[227] Cf. Biehl (1965) on *Or* 595f. on the tone of this 'Adynaton.'

01): "But do not say that these things were not done properly (εὖ); rather, that for us, the agents, they were not done with good fortune (εὐδαιμόνως)." The form in which this sentiment is cast is sophistic,[228] but the sentiment itself aptly catches the tone of Orestes' defence. The murder of Clytemnestra was an ignoble and repulsive act, considered in isolation;[229] but when account is taken of the circumstances which led to that act, one can only feel sympathy for the hapless murderer. Tyndareus had maintained, not that Clytemnestra's punishment was undeserved nor that Orestes acted out of criminal motives, but only that his *manner* of taking vengeance was criminal. Orestes has demonstrated that his actions were performed under the compulsion of external forces beyond his control, and he concludes his speech in a reasonable manner by claiming that he himself is as much a victim to be pitied as his mother.

GENERAL EVALUATION OF ORESTES' APOLOGY

As we have seen with regard to Tyndareus' speech, a dramatic character's use of well-known rhetorical strategies and commonplaces cannot, in and of itself, tell us how we should respond to that character's arguments: we must consider the specifics of the case, the particular ends to which those arguments are employed, the overall tone of the speech, the general dramatic context. Yet it seems that neglect of the rhetorical tradition, in conjunction with a predisposition to condemn Orestes, has led critics to find signs of moral depravity or, at best, folly in Orestes' words, where an ancient audience would have seen merely the justifiable use of familiar rhetorical stratagems. This is perhaps most true of his claim to have benefitted Greece as a whole (564-71) and of his appeal to the demands of the murdered Agamemnon (579-84). Each has been cited as a sign of a twisted and demented outlook, as the critics (certain that Tyndareus has been introduced as the objective voice of reason and armed with a mistaken notion of Orestes' attitude toward Clytemnestra's murder earlier in the play) search here for signs that the young man has reverted to type and is displaying those murderous impulses that allowed him to kill his mother in the first place. At times it becomes difficult to

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[228] For the figure employed (known as ὅρος, ὁρισμός, or παραδιαστολή) see, e.g., Spengel (1853) 2.153.22ff., 154.28ff., *Rhet. ad Her.* 3.3.6, 4.25.35, Quintillian *Inst.* 9.3.65. Perhaps we can detect here the influence, e.g., of Protagoras and Prodicus and their concern with ὀρθότης ὀνομάτων: see Pl. *Cra.* 384B, *Euthd.* 277Eff., Plut. *Per.* 36.

[229] As Willink (ed.) *ad loc.* notes, 600 does not imply that Orestes feels that his act εὖ εἴργασται, but merely requests that his judges dwell instead on his personal situation and the circumstances surrounding that act.

know what case these scholars would have Orestes argue, and Orestes
himself, were he able, might well address to them the same question with
which he confronts Tyndareus: τί χρῆν με δρᾶσαι; Obviously, a mere
plea for mercy would be futile: Tyndareus' attack and his threats against
Menelaus have rendered it imperative that Orestes find some means of
actively winning his uncle's sympathy and support, inasmuch as it is only
through Menelaus' patronage that he and his sister can hope to sway the
Argive assembly.[230] Orestes must find some means of justifying his deed,
and he attempts to do so by employing a mixture of forensic
commonplaces and traditional arguments familiar from earlier treatments
of his myth. His appeal has nothing of the quiet confidence displayed by
his Aeschylean counterpart in similar circumstances, nor is it so
relentlessly forceful as Tyndareus' speech of condemnation. But it *is* very
much in character for this particular Orestes: emotional, brimming with
self-righteous indignation, yet repeatedly revealing an awareness of the
negative aspects of his deed, it successfully catches the mood of
desperation and the exasperated helplessness felt by this particular
Orestes when faced with the threat of losing Menelaus' support. For all of
its belligerence, the general impression that it conveys is of a pervasive
fecklessness, the same sense of passive helplessness displayed by Orestes
and his sister in the play's earlier scenes and associated with many of
Euripides' later heroes. Although much of his speech consists of an
indictment of Clytemnestra, Orestes is on the defensive throughout, and
the plaintive, often quite agitated tone in which he presents his case (in
contrast to the stern potency of Tyndareus' outburst) gives the viewer a
presentiment that his efforts are in fact doomed to failure. Again,
however, desperation does not necessarily indicate degeneracy: as a
young man faced with an intimidating older opponent, surrounded by a
society that condemns him for his act while refusing to acknowledge the
legitimacy of his motives, deserted by his principal ally (the instigator of
the deed), and himself racked with remorse, Orestes can hardly be
expected to deliver a dispassionate discourse in which he analyzes, for
example, the gulf separating Tyndareus' political/secular viewpoint from
his own obedience to the commands of Apollo. The speech that he
delivers is desperate in the extreme, but its arguments, while reflecting
the depth of that despair, are by no means contemptible — if, that is, one
considers them in light of the forensic practices of the day.

　　Cast into the context of a fifth-century judicial *agon*, Orestes attempts
to meet Tyndareus on his own ground. In the end he fails; but as we have

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[230] Cf. Lloyd (1992) 121 (with the displaced paragraph on 120).

seen (above, pp. 70-73), his failure has nothing to do with the quality of
his arguments or his moral character. His apology (like the *agon* as a
whole) no doubt delighted many in the audience for its clever transferral
of contemporary rhetorical techniques to a mythic setting;[231] its rising
note of urgency, however, gives an impression of the hero's increasing
desperation, thereby reasserting the importance of Menelaus' ultimate
decision and preparing for the grand anti-climax of the latter's strategic
retreat at 682ff.

LINES 640-79: ORESTES' ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ

In Chapter Two I examined Tyndareus' parting speech at 607ff. and
Menelaus' response at 682ff. Some account should also be taken of
Orestes' intervening δεύτερος λόγος at 640ff. Here those who pronounce
the Orestes of the *agon* a 'thorough-going young sophist' (as Schein
labels him) find further support. Upon Tyndareus' departure, Orestes
directs to Menelaus a plea in which all concerns for justice or morality
are openly rejected: the young man now demands that his uncle aid him,
no matter how heinous his past crimes, as recompense for Agamemnon's
earlier favors in the war for Helen. The rising urgency noticeable in the
concluding sections of his apology reaches new heights here, leading
Orestes to express sentiments that strike many as repulsive and absurd,
particularly when juxtaposed with his grandiose claims earlier in the
agon. Thus Willink, in support of an elaborate analysis of Orestes'
character as revealed in this scene, cites the young man's "egotism,
sophism, exaggerated language, callousness and blinkered extremism."[232]
Again, however, it can be argued that there is nothing in the speech, when
correctly understood, to brand Orestes as either villainous or sophistic.

The rhetorical devices and *topoi* that mark Orestes' apology are
noticeable to some extent in this speech as well. Like a *rhetor* addressing
a large audience, Orestes opens with a formal announcement of his
intention to speak (λέγοιμ' ἂν ἤδη, 640).[233] This formal announcement is
matched at the speech's end by an equally formal concluding statement
(εἴρηκα κἀπήτηκα, τὴν σωτηρίαν / θηρῶν, ὃ πάντες κοὐκ ἐγὼ ζητῶ
μόνος, 678-79), that recalls the famous conclusion of Lysias 12.[234]

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231 See above, p. 2 n. 8, on the popularity of formal legalistic debates in the late fifth and
fourth centuries.

232 Willink (ed.) on *Or* 640-79.

233 See Di Benedetto (ed.) and Biehl (1965) *ad loc.*

234 Lys. 12.100: παύσομαι κατηγορῶν. ἀκηκόατε, ἑοράκατε, πεπόνθατε, ἔχετε·

Devices such as προκατάληψις[235] and προσωποποιία[236] also appear. But it is clear that, on the whole, Orestes' second speech functions within a quite different mode from that of his apology. In fact, this δεύτερος λόγος resumes the formal supplication begun at 449-55 and interrupted by the arrival of Tyndareus; its principal models are not the forensic speeches of the orators but the numerous *hiketeia* scenes familiar from Greek epic and drama.[237]

Hiketeia scenes in Greek tragedy frequently take the form of quasi-*agones* involving elaborate *rheseis* on the part of the suppliants.[238] It is not uncommon for such *rheseis* to be divided into two sections, each very different in tone. Hecuba's speech to Agamemnon at *Hecuba* 787-845 provides a useful example: comprising 57 lines in all,[239] it divides neatly at line 812 into two sections of 25 and 32 lines respectively. The first section presents an impassioned but rational and rather elegant argument: the interests of Agamemnon and the Greeks are involved in the affair of Polydorus' murder, Hecuba claims, inasmuch as Polymestor's deed represents a threat to νόμος and, thereby, to civilized society as a whole. In the second part of her speech, however, Hecuba resorts to appeals of a more personal and extreme sort. She begins by demanding Agamemnon's aid as a return (χάρις) for Cassandra's bed (824-30), which (she claims) has bound him to Hecuba's family and made Polydorus, in effect, his κηδεστής (833-35): in this way Hecuba is able to invoke the double claims of both χάρις and φιλία. She then increases the pressure on Agamemnon — in a manner typical of such suppliants — by means of a frantic appeal that, in its sheer excessiveness, has troubled modern readers (836-40):

εἴ μοι γένοιτο φθόγγος ἐν βραχίοσιν
καὶ χερσὶ καὶ κόμαισι καὶ ποδῶν βάσει

δικάζετε. The perfect has a finality and a forcefulness that make it useful in such conclusions: see Hartigan (1991) 140. It is perhaps worth noticing that Orestes' assertion that he is acting on principles shared by all sound-minded people also echoes a motif common in the orators: the suspect nature of 'innovation' (cf., e.g., the criticism of the prosecution at Antiphon 5.15 and Andoc. [4].6).

[235] 665-66: see Di Benedetto (ed.) and Willink (ed.) *ad loc.* for references and parallel passages; cf. Lloyd (1992) 30-31.

[236] 674-76: see below, p. 167.

[237] Cf. Collard (1975b) 69-71 on the skillful construction of the *agon*. See Gould (1973) for a general discussion of such scenes.

[238] Cf. Lloyd (1992) 6-11.

[239] 786 concludes the preceding *stichomythia* and does not belong to the *rhesis* proper. Diggle (1984) is probably justified in deleting 831-32 as an interpolation; the case against 793-97 is less convincing.

ἢ Δαιδάλου τέχναισιν ἢ θεῶν τινος,
ὡς πάνθ' ἁμαρτῇ σῶν ἔχοιτο γουνάτων
κλαίοντ', ἐπισκήπτοντα παντοίους λόγους.

Finally, Hecuba concludes with an equally excessive address to
Agamemnon that combines extreme adulation with a heavy-handed
pathos (841-43):

ὦ δέσποτ', ὦ μέγιστον Ἕλλησιν φάος,
πιθοῦ, παράσχες χεῖρα τῇ πρεσβύτιδι
τιμωρόν, εἰ καὶ μηδέν ἐστιν ἀλλ' ὅμως. [240]

The general structure of Hecuba's speech — reasoned argument
followed by pleas on the basis of favors owed (χάρις) and emotional
appeals — is found in other supplication *rheseis*[241] and echoes, *mutatis
mutandis*, the strategy of a typical forensic oration, where (as we have
seen) passages of logical argumentation tend to be found early on, while
arguments of a more emotional sort are reserved for the concluding
sections.[242]

Returning to *Orestes*, we can see that Euripides has cleverly modified
this familiar structure in the *agon*. An opening stichomythic passage
informs Menelaus of the situation facing Orestes (385ff.).[243] The latter's
initial appeal to Menelaus is broken off by the arrival of Tyndareus at 456
and, in the ensuing *agon*, Orestes is forced to justify Clytemnestra's
murder in the face of Tyndareus' attacks. While his apology at 544ff.
constitutes a complete speech with a well-defined structure of its own, on
the whole it can be said to correspond to the early sections of a
supplication *rhesis*: despite the emotional tone of its conclusion, its
principal mode throughout is rhetorical argumentation. Finally, in the

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[240] I have omitted the final generalizing *gnome* at 844-45.

[241] See, e.g., *Hcld* 184-231 (184-204: reasoned arguments; 205-22: claims of φιλία and
χάρις; 223-31: emotional appeal) and *Hec* 251-95 (260-70: reasoned arguments; 271-78:
claims of χάρις; 279-90: pathetic appeal). *Cyc* 286-312 varies the pattern (286-98: χάρις;
299-303: reasoned arguments; 304-09: pathetic appeal). At *Hec* 271-73 Hecuba openly calls
attention to the strategy we are examining: τῷ μὲν δικαίῳ τόνδ' ἁμιλλῶμαι λόγον· / ἃ δ'
ἀντιδοῦναι δεῖ σ' ἀπαιτούσης ἐμοῦ / ἄκουσον (note the similar language at *Or* 642-43, cited
on the next page). *Alc* 280ff. provides a further useful example of an argument based on
χάρις, as well as something of a test case (inasmuch as few would cite her use of this
argument as an indication of a flawed character): see esp. *Alc* 299-302.

[242] Note esp. the inherent similarities between appeals in the orators based on a litigant's
various λειτουργίαι (which tend to be placed in the latter sections of a speech) and appeals to
χάρις and φιλία in the above-cited suppliant speeches: the practice of expecting that favors
be repaid is well-established in Greek society. (See, e.g., Gouldner [1960] and Christ [1990]
155.)

[243] Note, e.g., the similarities between *Or* 356ff. and *Hec* 726ff.

speech now under consideration Orestes turns to arguments of a more personal sort, as does Hecuba at *Hecuba* 812ff.[244]

The principal theme of the speech is stated with considerable force at the outset. Menelaus is to do Orestes no favors, but is to repay favors that he has received from Agamemnon (642-43):

ἐμοὶ σὺ τῶν σῶν, Μενέλεως, μηδὲν δίδου,
ἃ δ' ἔλαβες ἀπόδος πατρὸς ἐμοῦ λαβὼν πάρα.

This notion of repayment dominates the early part of the speech through a series of verbal echoes and word-plays, where (as O'Brien notes) Orestes speaks at times like a nervous creditor.[245] Agamemnon fought an unjust war to help Menelaus regain his wicked wife; by rights, Menelaus now should aid Orestes, despite the heinousness of his deed (646-51).[246] In aiding Menelaus, Agamemnon exposed himself to danger, fighting faithfully beside his brother through ten years of war; so, now, Menelaus should share in Orestes' danger (although the advantage is on Menelaus' side, since only one day's courage is required, 652-57). Iphigenia's sacrifice will be forgotten (Orestes' plight is so desperate that he must offer something of a 'discount'): only let Menelaus grant (δός) to Agamemnon the life of his sole heir (658-64).[247] There follows a paraenetic discussion of the obligations of φίλοι (665-68) which leads, in turn, to an elaborate supplication in the name of Helen (669-73). Fittingly, Orestes' petition concludes with an ornate plea in the name of Agamemnon, who is envisioned as both listening below the earth and hovering above Menelaus' head, presenting a ghostly echo of Orestes' pleas (674-76).[248] The speech ends with the formal concluding statement

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[244] Cf. the analysis of Lloyd (1992) 113, who notes the thematic links between 640ff. and 448ff.

[245] See O'Brien (1988a) 190 and cf. Biehl (1965) on *Or* 642 on this 'kommerzielle Aufrechnung der Schuld in der Philia.' Note 651 (ἐν ... ἀνθ' ἑνὸς δοῦναι), 652 (ἀπέδοτο, a strained usage employed here to emphasize further the theme of 'repayment'; cf. Paley [ed.] and Scarcella [ed.] *ad loc.*), 655 (ἀπότεισον), 678 (ἀπῄτηκα); cf. 654 (ἀπολάβοις), 659 (ἐῶ σ' ἔχειν ταῦθ') and 662 (δός). Di Benedetto (ed.) on *Or* 646ff. notes the verbal pyrotechnics of the speech and ascribes them to Gorgianic influences (cf. O'Brien [1988a] 191-92). It could be argued, however, that the hammering insistence of Orestes' speech is much more forceful than Gorgias' jingles tend to be and serves to display, not his cleverness (as often in the sophist), but his fierce desperation.

[246] Diggle (ed.) accepts Paley's transposition of 651 to follow 657.

[247] Diggle (ed.) correctly deletes 663 as an interpolation: see Willink (ed.) *ad loc.*

[248] Orestes here combines a couple of motifs found in the orators. The vivid image of the dead Agamemnon listening to the debate and seconding Orestes' pleas invokes a *trope* usually designated as προσωποποιία in modern criticism; cf. Lys. 12.100, Lycurg. *Leoc.* 150, and see Usher (Edwards/Usher [1985]) on Lys. 12.100, with his caution against this use of the t.t. προσωποποιία. The notion of a murdered person listening expectantly for the jury's

noted above (678-79), where again Orestes drives home the principle of repayment (ἀπῄτηκα).

Viewed in the light of Hecuba's speech at *Hecuba* 787ff. and other supplication *rheseis*, much in this speech that has been taken as absurd or debased can be interpreted as an attempt to represent Orestes' pathetic desperation. The mercantile nature of the young man's theme corresponds closely to the appeal to χάρις and φιλία at *Hecuba* 824ff.: in both passages, references to past favors due and to the obligations of family bonds become intimately interwoven. Orestes' supplication in Helen's name (669ff.) is recalled by the same passage of *Hecuba:* in each, the protagonist is placed in the degrading position of having to plead in the name of someone or something odious (Orestes, the hated Helen; Hecuba, her daughter's rape). Finally, the two suppliants are driven to similar heights of rhetorical excess in their concluding appeals.[249] To a great extent, then, it can be argued that those interpretations which focus on the character of these two suppliants not only mistake the general *ethos* of such scenes but invoke ethical and aesthetic criteria that the Greeks did not share: where the ancient audience saw pathetic appeals based on reasonable ethical presuppositions, the modern critic tends to find debased depravity and ἀναισχυντία.

There remains something disturbing in the eyes of most readers, however, about what is viewed here as the harsh cynicism of Orestes' demands and the seeming ease with which he appears to toss off his former assertions concerning the justice of Clytemnestra's death, pressuring Menelaus to aid him regardless of the immediate issues involved.[250] Thus Willink (who, as we have seen above [p. 165], concentrates on the characterization of Orestes in this scene) finds here a young sophist similar to the Ἄδικος Λόγος of Aristophanes' *Clouds*.[251] Those commentators, on the other hand, who emphasize the baleful effects of φιλία in *Orestes* find a good deal of support for their reading in this scene: Orestes, they say, looks for blind loyalty from Menelaus and does not receive it; Pylades, by contrast, provides just such loyalty, with

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decision finds an echo in passages such as Antiphon 1.31, usually with the implied threat of chthonic anger in the event of a false verdict.

[249] Note esp. the similarities between *Hec* 841 and *Or* 674; cf. *Hcld* 229-31.

[250] A judicious treatment of this question is presented in O'Brien (1988a) 188ff. as part of his argument that the apparent contradictions in Orestes' attitude to Clytemnestra's death at different points in the play are in fact significant and would be noticed by the audience.

[251] Willink (ed.) on *Or* 646-51.

disastrous results.[252] Again, however, it can be argued that these readings ignore the general dramatic context and the formal traditions in which Euripides is operating.

The key to understanding both Orestes' speech and Hecuba's at *Hecuba* 824ff. lies in the immediate motivation for their appeals. In each case the suppliant has presented strong rational arguments for his or her pleas only to see those arguments fail, and in each case striking evidence of that failure is provided in the staging of the scene. At *Hecuba* 812, as the elderly queen concludes her initial plea, Agamemnon begins to back away, clearly troubled at the dilemma in which she has placed him (οἴμοι τάλαινα, ποῖ μ' ὑπεξάγεις πόδα; / ἔοικα πράξειν οὐδέν· ὦ τάλαιν' ἐγώ, 812-13). At *Orestes* 630ff. the staging is even more worthy of comment: as Tyndareus withdraws, Menelaus begins to pace to and fro, thereby giving evidence of the torturous reflections into which the old man's threats have thrown him.[253] It is only after these indications of the failure of their abstract arguments that Hecuba and Orestes turn to pleas of a more personal sort: the formal divisions associated with such appeals are given an immediate motivation in the scenes' staging. The change in tone that accompanies this transition reflects the desperation of the suppliant, whose pleas are in danger of failing, not because they lack justice, but because there is a failure of courage on the part of the potential patron. The audience, to the degree that it is encouraged to look for traces of characterization in such scenes, would focus on the characters of those patrons; to a large extent, Hecuba and Orestes are mere figures of pathos.

In the case of Orestes, however, an unmistakable note of aggression and bitterness is mingled with the pathos, continuing the indignant tone of the latter sections of his apology. The source of this bitterness would be obvious to an audience watching the scene in performance: Menelaus, true to his traditional role as a cowardly opportunist (familiar, for example, from Euripides' *Andromache*), is giving clear signs of reneging on the very bonds of φιλία that he himself acknowledged in his initial interview with Tyndareus (481ff.). There it is taken for granted that Menelaus has a duty, as Agamemnon's brother, to aid Orestes.[254] The audience can have no doubt at lines 630ff. that Menelaus has been intimidated by Tyndareus and is planning to retreat from his duty. The

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[252] See esp. Greenberg (1962)177-80 and cf. above, p. 60 n. 58.

[253] So far as I can ascertain, this is the only time we observe pacing of this sort in Greek tragedy; the use of such realistic staging to suggest a character's state of mind is striking.

[254] Note as well the emphatic 244, which anticipates the emphasis on this theme in the *agon*.

desperate aggressiveness of Orestes' appeal at lines 642-68 indicates that
he too has read Menelaus' mood and is seeking to impress upon his uncle
the depth of his obligation to Agamemnon and, by extension, to Orestes
himself. Hence there is a cynical tone to the young man's appeal to the
χάρις owed Agamemnon (which here, as we have seen, takes the form of
a ledger of debts unpaid) and a hammering insistence on the language of
commerce: underlying this section of the speech is the assumption that
Menelaus will place his personal interests above his obligations to
Agamemnon and that he will attempt to justify his actions on the grounds
of some specious objection (as in fact he does at 682ff.). The speech is
not composed of a crass and morally short-sighted account of debts owed
but contains, mingled with its undeniable note of entreaty, an insistent
lecture on the obligations entailed by φιλία. It is intended to forestall
Menelaus' denial of those obligations. Orestes clearly has taken
Menelaus' measure, and, in his desperate attempt to compel the latter's
compliance with his plea, only partially conceals his angry contempt for
his uncle's perfidiousness.

Orestes' striking concession that Clytemnestra's murder was unjust
(646: ἀδικῶ) operates directly within this dramatic context. The
concession has aroused a great deal of discussion due to the apparent
contradiction with Orestes' arguments at 564ff., where the deed is
presented as a service performed for the good of all Hellas.[255] Read in
light of the situation now facing Orestes, however, it can be seen to be,
not a cynical piece of sophistic argumentation, but a biting use of
consensio. Orestes assumes for a moment that Menelaus will cite
Tyndareus' characterization of the murder of Clytemnestra and proceeds
to point out that Agamemnon stood by Menelaus as a true φίλος (652)
and at great personal cost in a cause that clearly *was* ἄδικος (646-51). The
passage reveals nothing about Orestes' personal view of Clytemnestra's
death, but is intended strictly *ad hominem*.[256] With a good deal of force,
Orestes asserts that Menelaus, having caused such troubles for the Greeks
in general and for Agamemnon's household in particular, is scarcely in a
position to deny Orestes aid on the basis of his delicate moral
sensibilities, particularly after receiving such benefits from
Agamemnon's hands.[257]

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[255] See O'Brien (1988a) 188-92; contrast Biehl (1965) on *Or* 646, Lloyd (1992) 126.

[256] Cf. Schmidt-Berger (1973) 44-45. The *ad hominem* aspect of Orestes' speech
frequently receives notice, often, however, with the mistaken notion that Orestes is employing
sophistic arguments that the σοφός Menelaus will be able to appreciate: see, e.g., Greenberg
(1962) 176-77, Lloyd (1992) 126.

[257] It cannot be accidental that this striking admission forms Orestes' opening argument:

The reference to Iphigenia at 658-64 presents the same curious mixture of pathetic entreaty and only partially submerged indignation. Orestes' plea that Menelaus grant the wretched (ταλαιπώρῳ) Agamemnon the life of his sole heir (662 and 664) is pathetic in the extreme; underlying that plea, however, is the charge that Menelaus is responsible for Iphigenia's death and, indirectly, for the danger that Agamemnon's οἶκος might be rendered ὀρφανός. Again, this passage is motivated by the assumption that Menelaus, having precipitated these calamitous events, might now look to his own advantage and refuse aid to Orestes out of fear of Tyndareus' threats. Like the arguments in the latter sections of Orestes' apology, the passage displays a melodramatic desperation but also contains a bitter note of accusation.

Orestes' indignation becomes even more apparent in the προκατάληψις of 665-68: there, Menelaus' imagined attempts to escape his obligations on the grounds of τὸ δυνατόν (significantly, the very argument he will employ at 682ff.) are anticipated and countered in advance, while the φιλία theme, which forms the underlying foundation of the appeal as a whole, is brought explicitly to the fore.

Taken as a whole, then, Orestes' δεύτερος λόγος, like many other aspects of this play, represents a variation on a common dramatic scheme. The suppliant Orestes employs many of the same *topoi* and devices as does, for example, Hecuba before Agamemnon in *Hecuba* or Iolaus before Demophon in *Heraclidae*. His appeal on the basis of the χάρις/φιλία theme and the exceedingly emotional and elaborate rhetoric of his concluding pleas do not reflect a peculiar deficiency in his character, but are typical of supplication scenes of this sort. As in his apology, however, Orestes does display a desperate aggressiveness — an aggressiveness that reflects the grave nature of his present plight and also suggests a certain indignation, a sense of grievance, that will come fully to the fore both at 717ff., following Menelaus' treacherous retreat, and in the later *mechanema* plot. Thus the speech plays an important role in the emotional rhythm of the play. Again, however, the audience, sympathetic to Orestes' situation, would accept his plea before Menelaus in light of the immediate dramatic context and would find therein, not indications of the young man's character, but of his pathetic desperation. The melodramatic pathos and, at times, excessive ingenuity evident in Orestes' concluding *rhesis* is not to modern tastes and might lead some to

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again we can see the poet taking delight in shocking his audience while at the same time providing his character with an argument that suits both the dramatic situation and the character's present mood. In its tone and its rhetorical force it displays a certain similarity to *Cho* 930, although the *Or* passage, typically, is much more elaborate.

charge Euripides with being overly clever in contriving this speech; we should not, however, lay such a charge at the feet of his protagonist.

CONCLUSION

The present chapter has attempted to argue against readings of the *agon* that would focus on the alleged moral or intellectual flaws of the protagonist. Such readings, it has been argued, misconstrue the purpose of the scene within the drama's unfolding action and invoke a series of unfounded assumptions regarding certain basic ethical principles and, more importantly, the nature and purpose of rhetorical argumentation in Greek tragedy. The interpretation proposed here has employed a number of assumptions of its own, principal among them: (1) that the audience is predisposed to favor Orestes and that the poet plays on this predisposition in the course of the scene; (2) that, as a consequence, the audience is more concerned with the situation confronting Orestes and the eventual response of Menelaus than with the possibility of uncovering failings in the protagonist's character; (3) that the audience enjoys enough familiarity with Athenian forensic oratory and with the conventions of the tragic stage to respond with a certain sophistication to the speeches of Orestes and Tyndareus. The main justification for these assumptions is that they result in a reading of the *agon* that is in harmony with the themes, the overall strategy, and the emotional rhythms of the play as outlined in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PHRYGIAN MESSENGER

INTRODUCTION

Following the exit of Electra, Orestes, Pylades, and the captive Hermione into the palace at 1352 and the chorus' brief song at 1353ff., the audience anxiously awaits some indication of the state of affairs within the palace. Helen's cries at 1296ff. seem to indicate that the plot against her life has been successful, while the plan to kidnap Hermione (the second component of the *mechanema* scheme) evidently has succeeded. Euripides, it appears, is on the point of overturning mythical tradition altogether, while the possibility of a peaceful resolution to Orestes' situation is rapidly diminishing. At this point in the play, however, little is clear: the audience can only judge from the confused evidence of the on-stage events at 1246ff. It has seen Orestes and Pylades disappear within the *skene,* intent on murdering Helen. It has watched as Electra and the chorus nervously stand guard, their agitated lyrics and repeated misapprehensions reflecting their frantic anxiety (1246-95). Then follows a tumultuous rush of events: Helen's cries (1296ff.), Electra's savage shouts of triumph (1302ff.), the entrance of Hermione (1311ff.) and her capture by Orestes and Pylades, who suddenly appear at the *skene* door, swords in hand, at the very moment when Hermione is about to enter to intercede on their behalf (1344ff.).[1] The knowledgeable spectator, realizing that there is much here that requires elucidation, would be likely to expect the entrance of a messenger to provide a clear account of these shocking events, and the chorus itself virtually promises the arrival of such a messenger at 1359. What Euripides presents, however, confounds his audience's expectations altogether.[2] Rather than the colorless, generic figure commonly associated with such reports — one whose business-like narration, presented in regular iambic trimeters,

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[1] On the unorthodox and surprising nature of this staging, see Appendix Eight.

[2] Seidensticker (1982) 104 is reminded of Horace's *parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus.* As Seidensticker goes on to indicate (cf. Wolff [1968] 139, Halleran [1985] 48 n. 18, Willink [ed.] on *Or* 1366-1502), the audience might well have expected an *eccyclema* scene: in either case, the surprise occasioned by the Phrygian's entrance would be notable.

concentrates on a clear exposition of events off-stage — there appears a terrified Phrygian slave,[3] whose frantic account, delivered in agitated lyric meters, repeatedly taunts the audience with its inability to get to the point. While the Phrygian serves the technical function of a messenger, the form in which his report is delivered presents a theatrical moment as unexpected and as striking (in its own peculiarly Euripidean way) as the Cassandra scene in *Agamemnon*[4] or the Io scene in *Prometheus Bound.* Like Solon, the Phrygian comes κόσμον ἐπέων †ᾠδὴν ἀντ᾽ ἀγορῆς θέμενος (frg. 1.2 [West]). The account that follows is an attempt to sort out the various ingredients that go into this κόσμος ἐπέων, identify the various levels at which it operates, and examine its thematic significance for the drama as a whole.

The Phrygian's song has had a number of labels attached to it. Dale ([1968] 98) speaks for many in describing it as a "slightly preposterous aria." That the Phrygian performs a crucial service to the play there can be no doubt: his appearance comes at a critical juncture in the action, and it is from his stammering lips that we learn (although in a maddeningly tardy and incomplete form) the details of the assault on Helen. Yet critics of the play, while confessing that the piece is an effective bit of theater, have generally concentrated on the formal peculiarities of the Phrygian's aria, stressing its blatantly unorthodox form, its seemingly chaotic meters, and above all the jumbled confusion of its narrative. The result (particularly in critical assessments of *Orestes* in the nineteenth and early twentieth century) is an emphasis — inspired to a great extent by Aristophanes' criticisms — on the melodramatic qualities of the scene, with the attendant suggestion that the song's effectiveness is due to those very elements in Euripides' work that rob it of tragic depth or significance: a flashy superficiality, a love of the striking line strikingly delivered,[5] an attention to realistic detail at the expense of tragic meaning,[6] a sacrifice of content to musical form,[7] a general lack of

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[3] Nowhere in the text is it explicitly stated that the Phrygian is a eunuch. Lines such as 1110-12 and 1528 (cf. Krieg [1934] 61) might suggest as much, as might the Phrygian's dress, his mannerisms, and, perhaps, his appeals to the 'Idaean Mother' at 1454ff. (but see West [ed.] on *Or* 1453). Cf. Σ *Or* 1384, which demonstrates that certain readers in antiquity regarded the Phrygian as a eunuch. On the vase-painters' increased awareness, c. 400, of the general function of eunuchs in the courts of eastern potentates, and on the subject of such fan bearers in general, see M. C. Miller (1988), esp. 86-87. The point should not be pressed, however: cf. Willink (ed.) and West (ed.) on *Or* 1528; contrast Hall (1989b) 157-58.

[4] While the two scenes are alike in their lyrical frenzy, I cannot agree with Zeitlin (1980) 59 that the Phrygian is intended as a perverse inversion of the prophetic Cassandra.

[5] This trait of Euripides is parodied at *Frogs* 92ff. At *Frogs* 304 Aristophanes mocks one such line that backfired in performance: see above, p. 1.

[6] On the increasing use of naturalism in Euripides' later works see Webster (1939) 174ff.

'virility,'[8] a lowering of the tragic tone into bathos on the one hand, comedy on the other.[9] Thus, for example, the Phrygian's song is prominent in the complaints of nineteenth-century scholars regarding the unseemly agitation of the play's later scenes: concurring with Aristophanes, these critics detect in this innovation a sure indication of the decline of popular taste and a resulting degeneration of the tragic art.[10] On the other hand, Radermacher employs the Phrygian's aria as the foundation for his argument that *Orestes* is not a tragedy in the proper sense at all, but a pro-satyric piece like *Alcestis*.[11]

The song has received relatively little attention in more recent studies of *Orestes*.[12] The tendency, however, has been to shift the focus away from questions of decorum or genre toward a consideration of the song's function within the drama itself. Thus, for example, Erbse notes the way in which the comic elements in the Phrygian's presentation serve to lighten the tone of the play momentarily and anticipate the happy conclusion of the finale.[13] Yet for most recent critics of the play the outlandish novelty of the aria remains its most significant feature. In the chaotic confusion of the Phrygian's monody and its wanton overturning of convention, these scholars find evidence of a process of demoralization in the character of Orestes himself and a reflection of the allegedly insane nature of his schemes. The surrealistic quality of the Phrygian's account, in form and style as well as content, is taken as a comment on the maddened irrationality of Orestes and his companions. Thus Vickers detects in the Phrygian's babblings "an incoherence in which the

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[7] This charge and the last are brilliantly illustrated in Aristophanes' parody at *Frogs* 1331ff.: cf. Decharme (1893) 537-39, Barlow (1986b) 10-12, Dover (1993) on *Frogs* 1329-63, and, in general, Rau (1967), Barlow (1971) 44-45. Cf. Norwood (1954) 41, who claims that the Phrygian's song is clearly "a musical far more than a dramatic or literary *tour de force*," and see Thomson (1929) 2-3 and 149-50 for a similarly critical assessment.

[8] See, e.g., *Frogs* 1013ff. Cf. Schlegel's criticisms of Euripides: Schlegel (1966) 101 and 104-05.

[9] See Barlow (1986b) 12-13 for other references to such criticisms of Euripides' monodies in more recent times.

[10] See, e.g., Hermann (ed.) xii-xiv (who praises the technical aspects of the piece, however) and above, pp. 4-8, on the criticisms of Schlegel, Patin, *et al.* As often with nineteenth-century interpretations, there is an ancient precedent for this reading of the play: Seidensticker (1982) 103 n. 10 is correct to assert that the ancient *hypothesis'* remark concerning the play's κωμικωτέρα καταστροφή refers only to its happy conclusion, but Σ *Or* 1369 (ἐντεῦθεν ἐξέστη τοῦ ἰδίου ἤθους ὁ Εὐριπίδης ἀνοίκεια ἑαυτῷ λέγων) suggests that certain scholars in antiquity associated the beginning of the play's decline into comedy with the entrance of the Phrygian.

[11] See Appendix One.

[12] Important exceptions are Wolff (1968) 139-42 and Seidensticker (1982) 101ff.; see, earlier, Krieg (1934) 61-64.

[13] Erbse (1975) 448. Cf. Biffi (1961) 101.

breakdown of language seems to echo the breakdown of society and civilization," while the crazed and abortive action reported by the slave "mirrors precisely the collapse of human values contained within that action."[14] For many critics, an important feature of that collapse, and of the confusion that results, is the subversion of traditional distinctions between Greek and barbarian, male and female, citizen and slave, hero and knave presented in the scene.[15] They detect irony in a barbarian, a messenger, and a slave presenting a virtuoso monody of the sort normally reserved for tragic protagonists.[16] Even more significant, for many, is the discomforting impression that, outlandish and contemptible as the Phrygian may be, his Greek opponents have sunk to even lower levels. "It is a cruel irony," according to Vickers, "that the barbarian is the only one who can see these Greeks for what they are,"[17] and Vellacott goes further, proclaiming the Phrygian as one of only three characters in the play (the other two being Helen and Hermione) who are "honest and good."[18] That such a character is cast as Orestes' opponent, and that the attack on Helen is narrated in such a bizarre form, is felt to cast the entire endeavor of Orestes and his friends in an ironic and derogatory light. In support of this reading, particular emphasis is placed on the song's numerous echoes of epic vocabulary and motifs: repeatedly the Phrygian's aria portrays the assault on Helen (presented as a heroic undertaking by Pylades and Orestes themselves at 1132ff.) in terms that recall Homer's *Iliad.* Yet the deeds that he describes comprise a furtive attack on an unarmed woman and battle with a group of Phrygian slaves who, dressed in their flowing gowns and slippers, are more familiar with the elaborate paraphernalia of

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[14] Vickers (1973) 584 and 591. Cf. Kitto (1961) 350-51 and Burnett (1971) 191-92, who argues that the Phrygian's absurd monody aptly reflects the absurd, godless, and (because godless) vain actions of the protagonist himself: "At first it seems that the poet is amusing himself by having an action that was swift and sinister prolonged and dissipated by the delaying speech habits of the narrator, but gradually we realize that the events related by this bizarre messenger are themselves all wrong. ... The Phrygian's style proves to be no more confused than is the situation within the palace, for we learn that the murder of Helen has turned into an ill-contrived farce."

[15] See, e.g., Zeitlin (1980) 63, who finds in the androgynous Phrygian an inversion of the Clytemnestra of *Ag,* and who develops the view that, whereas the *Oresteia* portrays the gradual consolidation of a social order firmly grounded in male values, *Or* presents the dissolution of such values and the resulting social chaos. Cf. as well Lanza (1961) 71 and Euben (1986) 232.

[16] Wolff (1968) 140 observes that, "The world has become so disordered that anyone may occupy the stage's center." Cf. Seidensticker (1982) 104 n. 18.

[17] Vickers (1973) 585. Cf. Wolff (1968) 140: "As the Phrygian appears outlandish to a Greek, so he tells what he has seen with the amazement of an outsider." (Cf. Men. *Asp.* 206-08.) See as well Mullens (1940) 156, Boulter (1962) 105.

[18] Vellacott (1975) 77.

the harem than with the tools of war. The constellation of dissonances and inconcinnities that result between the form, the diction and imagery, the provenience, and the content of the Phrygian's bizarre song have suggested to many a scene of mock-Homeric pseudo-heroism, wherein the allegedly glorious enterprise of Orestes and Pylades stands revealed as a perverse distortion of the heroic ideals that they profess.[19] Thus where nineteenth-century scholars detected a corruption of tragic tone and decorum, more recent critics have found evidence of an insane perversity in the character of the protagonist himself and in the action he undertakes.

There is no denying the theatrical nature of the scene or the fact that it is motivated in large part by Euripides' penchant for the new, the innovative, the unexpected.[20] The poet who introduced elegiac verses into his *Andromache,*[21] who included a virtual victory ode in his *Heracles,*[22] and (most pointedly) who had his chorus enter singing a messenger speech cum *parodos* in his *Hecuba,*[23] here takes the bold step of transforming a messenger speech into a lengthy monody (ignoring, for the moment, the occasional one-line interruptions of the chorus). Thus he provides his audience with an exciting bit of theater and one of his actors with the opportunity for a virtuoso display of his talents. On a practical level this *coup de théâtre* serves the double function of allowing Euripides to avoid the introduction of a second iambic messenger's speech after that of 866-956[24] and of injecting a further lyrical element into what has been, for the most part, a very 'prosaic' play.[25] But a case can be made that scholars have exaggerated the outlandish features of this admittedly outlandish song, thereby overlooking the cunning with which Euripides here adapts elements of the traditional messenger speech in casting the slave's report in monodic form. I will argue that the Phrygian's song is neither so preposterous nor so chaotic as some have

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[19] See esp. Wolff (1968) 140-41 and Seidensticker (1982) 107-08; cf. Fuqua (1976) 91-92 and (1978) 22-23. See below, pp. 211-13 and 245-48, on the view that the Phrygian represents a mocking caricature of Orestes himself.

[20] On Euripides' 'showmanship' see, e.g., P. Arnott (1962) 114ff. and, on his tendency to experiment with dramatic forms, Winnington-Ingram (1969a) 134-35.

[21] *Andr* 103-16: see Page (1936).

[22] *Her* 637ff. See H. Parry (1965) and Bond (1981) *ad loc.* Cf. the first *stasimon* of the *Her,* a combination threnody, encomium, and hymn (see Bond [1981] on *Her* 348ff.).

[23] *Hec* 98ff. See Taplin (1977) 82 n. 3 for examples of other pseudo-messengers.

[24] Cf. Winnington-Ingram (1969a) 134-35. (Contrast Krieg [1934] 61.) Had complaints against the numerous speeches of *Phoen* been as vigorous in Euripides' day as in our own?

[25] *Or* has the lowest percentage of choral lyric of all the extant plays: cf. Damen (1990) 137 n. 18, Kranz (1933) 229-30.

suggested. An examination of the song's meters reveals a good deal of order, and not a little cunning, in the metrical articulation of the piece: frantic and unorthodox it may be, but it is far from formless or chaotic. I will also compare the Phrygian's aria to other Euripidean monodies and to the conventional messenger speech, again to illustrate that some of the more extreme assertions regarding the outlandish nature of the slave's song should be tempered. Following a discussion of the Phrygian's entrance (often cited as further evidence of the scene's general *bizarrerie*), I will compare and contrast the Phrygian's monody with the so-called New Music of Timotheus, as represented by the latter's *Persae:* again, this examination will illustrate the relative restraint with which Euripides employs the various metrical and poetic devices associated with such verse. Having demonstrated something of the functional nature of the song — that it is more than a formless outburst of comically hysterical barbarisms — I will examine the role of the Phrygian's aria within the emotional and thematic structure of the play as a whole. The song presents a world in chaos. That chaos is a product, however, not of some moral deficiency in the protagonist's character, but of the deliberately perverse situation that Euripides has so cunningly contrived for his young hero. As we have seen (above, pp. 89-97), from its opening scenes *Orestes* is fraught with disconcerting deviations from tradition; in the *agon* before Menelaus and the later *mechanema* scene, the tensions that result from Euripides' repeated overturning of the audience's expectations become ever greater, threatening to topple the accepted myth altogether. At lines 1246ff. and, still more, in the Phrygian's monody, these tensions begin to reach fruition, as the confusions, dislocations, and frustrations inherent in Orestes' situation begin to be reflected in the stage-action itself.

METER AS A STRUCTURAL DEVICE[26]

The song covers some 134 lines in the text and is divided into six sections by one-line interjections from the chorus in iambic trimeter at 1380, 1393,[27] 1425, 1453, and 1473. The meters are largely polymetric,

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[26] A detailed discussion of the text and the meters of the Phrygian's monody is provided by Willink [ed.]. A full evaluation of the complex issues involved is beyond the scope of the present study, which is concerned only with the general metrical structure of the song. My account employs Diggle's line numbers, which differ slightly from those used in earlier texts.

[27] 1394 is spurious: see Willink (ed.) *ad loc*. The line's authenticity is defended by Erbse (1975) 448 and van der Valk (1984) 191-92.

resulting in what Griffith ([1977] 24) has described as "a bizarre medley." The effect of the piece on stage must have been bizarre indeed. The exotic variety of meter, the no doubt equally unrestrained music accompanying those meters, the numerous melodramatic outcries,[28] the frequent (and quintessentially Euripidean) *anadiplosis*,[29] the dancing and gestures of the actor[30] (attired in exotic eastern garb):[31] working in combination, these features of the Phrygian's monody must have left the more conservative members of Euripides' audience with the feeling that all restraint and order had been forsaken and the play allowed to degenerate into utter chaos.

To some extent (as we shall see) such an effect is precisely what Euripides has in mind. Yet there is a certain method to the Phrygian's madness. In regard to the song's meters Webster[32] is able to point to some degree of regularity in the recurrence of iambic rhythms throughout, although he shows a certain doubt as to whether this meter can be said to predominate. Instead, he emphasizes the runs of metrically identical lines found in the piece and the general impression of orderliness that these passages convey in contrast to the much more free practice of Timotheus. The passages in question are: 1382ff. (dochmiacs), 1403-06 (anapaests), 1419ff. (cretics), 1426ff. (anapaests), 1437ff. (bacchiacs), 1444ff. (iambic dimeters), 1483ff. (anapaests), and 1490ff. (dochmiacs). Biehl has used these runs (along with other metrical and structural considerations) to subdivide the Phrygian's song into twelve sections (1369-79, 1381-92, 1395-1406, 1407-24, 1426-36, 1437-43, 1444-52, 1454-56, 1457-67, 1468-72, 1474-82, 1483-1502). In dealing with complex ἀπολελυμένα of this sort absolute unanimity of opinion in matters metrical is not to be expected, but for the most part Biehl's divisions are defensible, coinciding with definite shifts in the metrical and narrative structure of the song. These divisions are useful in revealing the way in which the shifting metrical texture of the aria serves to articulate — in a general

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[28] 1373, 1375, 1381, 1389, 1390, 1395, 1397, 1454-56, 1465, 1496.

[29] 1373 (two instances), 1381, 1387, 1390, 1395, 1415, 1416, 1426, 1427, 1428, 1431 (Diggle), 1444, 1454 (two instances), 1456, 1461, 1465, 1469, 1480, 1481, 1483, 1500. On Euripides' love of *anadiplosis* see Kranz (1933) 231-32, Stanford (1963) on *Frogs* 1335-36, Dover (1993) 358. Both Krieg (1934) 62 and West (ed.) on *Or* 1426-28 find the degree and type of *anadiplosis* in the slave's song excessive. As we shall see, however, any self-parody on the part of Euripides in the Phrygian's aria (see, e.g., Seidensticker [1982] 106 n. 27, West [ed.] on *Or* 1380 and 1426-28) is at best incidental.

[30] Cf. Ath. 1.21F.

[31] See Bacon (1961) 121-27.

[32] For what follows see Webster (1967) 17-20 and 285; *id.* (1970) 171 and 209-12. Cf. Krieg (1934) 62-63 and Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1366-1502, both of whom protest against the tendency to exaggerate the frenzy of the Phrygian's aria.

way, perhaps not consciously noted by the audience, but effective
nevertheless — the different sections of the Phrygian's agitated narrative.
Of particular interest are 1437ff., 1444ff., and 1483ff., passages that aid
in the internal articulation of the song between choral interjections. Thus
Orestes' address to Helen in bacchiacs at 1437-43 is distinguished, on the
one hand, from the mainly anapaestic passage that precedes it and, on the
other, from the more forthrightly iambic passage that follows.[33] Similarly,
at 1483ff. the description of the actual 'battle' and its outcome is set off
from the introductory passage in 1474ff. by a shift from iambic rhythms
to anapaests.

But the monody as a whole is quite calculating in its use of meter to
suggest different moods and give the song a variety and colorfulness that
is still very much in evidence today, despite the loss of music and of
whatever coloratura effects the actor may have employed. The result is an
account that is rather more orderly than often has been suggested. The
chaotic impression conveyed by the song's agitated rhythms — no doubt
reinforced by the musical accompaniment and the actor's delivery — is
mitigated somewhat by the regularity with which shifts in metrical
rhythm coincide with natural junctures in the narrative itself. Moreover,
as we shall see, Euripides very cunningly reserves the most agitated,
'dithyrambic,' notes of the song for the colorful introductory set pieces
that appear throughout the aria (1369ff., 1381ff., 1395-99, 1426-36,
1454-56), while presenting the narrative proper in rhythms that, for all of
their turbulence, are not nearly so jumbled as some maintain.

The first two sections of the song (1369ff. and 1381ff.) are not
designed to convey information but to shock, as the audience finds itself
presented, not with the expected messenger, but with the terrified
Phrygian. The dithyrambic note sounded here by the turbulent variety of
the Phrygian's dochmiac and iambic rhythms is admirably suited to this
end. The jumbled confusion of the lines also serves to whet the
audience's already intense curiosity about events within the palace and
(as we shall see) to mislead it to a certain extent regarding those events.

The third section of the song (1395-1424), which begins the narrative
proper, opens with a mournful introduction in anapaests and iambic
meters (1395-99) and uses much the same meters to introduce Orestes
and Pylades and tell of their entrance into the palace (1400-07, largely in
iambic rhythms but switching briefly to anapaests for the introduction of
Pylades at 1403-06). It then shifts into somewhat more regular iambic
rhythms for the narrative at 1408-24. The audience may have detected a

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[33] Cf. Di Benedetto (ed.) on 1437ff.

distant echo in these last lines of the iambic trimeters customary for messenger speeches. Euripides cultivates this impression by employing iambics in many of the piece's longer narrative stretches (compare 1444ff., 1457ff., 1474ff., and 1490ff.).[34] Lines 1408-24 themselves show a fair degree of internal articulation, telling of Orestes' and Pylades' initial approach to Helen largely in iambic dimeters (1408-13), turning to the reaction of Helen's Phrygian servants at 1414-17 (lines that are connected by the sudden rush of short syllables at 1414-16 and by the parallelism of περὶ δέ ... ἀνὰ δέ ..., ἔβαλον ἔβαλον ... ἔθορον ἔθορον, Ἑλένας ἄμφω ... ἀμφίπολοι Φρύγες, as well as by the sudden admixture of dochmiacs), then continuing in cretics to detail the various opinions held by the Phrygian slaves.

Lines 1426ff. begin on a colorful, agitated note, describing Helen at ease in her 'harem.'[35] Anapaests are employed to set the scene at 1426-[30] (note the patterned effect achieved by the paroemiacs at 1427 and 1429).[36] The introduction of Helen herself at 1431-36 is marked by a shift to iambic and anapaestic rhythms which maintain the colorful note with which this section opens. Orestes' address (1437-43) is set apart by the shift to more orderly bacchiacs noted above, and the section ends with another extended narrative section in iambics (1444-52).

The fifth division of the monody begins, as does the third, with an exclamatory lament (1454-56). Like 1426ff., this section is set apart from what follows by its agitated anapaestic rhythms. Lines 1457-64 then describe the initial assault on Helen in 'narrative' iambics. The section as a whole concludes with more agitated dochmiac and iambic rhythms (1465ff.), which convey a sense of the wild confusion within the palace as Helen attempts to flee and Orestes prepares to slit her throat.

The final section of the song (1474-1502) is also the most involved metrically. The opening lines, describing the escape of Helen's Phrygian

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[34] Cf. Hermann (ed.) xiii.

[35] On the realism of the scene Euripides presents here (and the general rarity of such detailed 'barbaric' realism in Euripides' works) see Bacon (1961) 147; cf. West [ed.] on *Or* 1429 and M. C. Miller (1988). On the echoes here of the Helen of *Od.*, see West (ed.) on *Or* 1431 and 1434; cf. Zeitlin (1980) 61. The description of this scene at this point of the narrative is out of chronological order. (In a prose account we would expect it to precede 1400.) Euripides clearly wants to begin the first three narrative sections of the monody (1395ff., 1426ff., 1454ff.) with a colorful introduction before getting into the narrative proper. (Note the use of anapaests in all three of these introductory sections.) At 1474ff. we are rushing toward the climax of the report and therefore no introductory passage is included.

[36] At 1430 Murray, Chapouthier/Méridier, Di Benedetto, Dale, and Willink retain βαρβάροισι νόμοισι. Biehl (supported by West and Diggle) certainly is correct to follow Hartung here, seeing the words as an intrusive gloss taken from 1507. They are repetitive, otiose, and break the careful symmetry with which Euripides opens this section of the song.

servants and their rush to confront Orestes and Pylades, are written largely in 'narrative' iambics (1474-82) and in fact contain several 'trimeters' (1475, 1476, 1478; compare 1489 and, perhaps, 1447).[37] At 1483 we find the shift to anapaests noted earlier, as the Phrygian describes the various fates of his feckless comrades (1483-88a). Lines 1489-88b round off this section of the narrative (rather unexpectedly) in iambics.[38] At 1490-91a Hermione suddenly enters and our surprise at the abruptness of her introduction is heightened by the sudden shift to dochmiacs. The account of Hermione's capture and Helen's disappearance then follows in iambic rhythms (1491b-99), interrupted by the melodramatic outcry at 1496. Finally, the Phrygian's concluding reflections regarding Menelaus' misfortune bring the piece to a mournful close in dochmiacs (1500-02).

Lines 1474ff., as a whole, reveal the same use of metrical shifts to articulate their narrative that we have noted above. Here, however, these shifts come more rapidly and, at times, unexpectedly, as the meter keeps time with the turbulent events being narrated. As a result, the frantic confusion of the scene being described in these thirty lines — the wild rout of the Phrygian servants, Hermione who suddenly appears out of nowhere, and Helen who, after being on the brink of death for some forty lines, suddenly vanishes — is emphasized by the frequent shifts in the metrical 'texture': the climax of the narrative account is accompanied by a metrical crescendo.

As the above analysis reveals, it would be disingenuous to deny the confused and troubling impression conveyed by the agitated and constantly shifting meters of the Phrygian's monody. Yet when Wolff refers to the "[f]rantic outbursts, narrative, commentary, and genre scenes, such as Helen at her weaving" that "flash by for our distraction,"[39] he exaggerates the degree of chaos in the song's articulation. The attempt to uncover an atmosphere of nightmarish unreality in the song (and to employ that atmosphere as a commentary on the protagonist's endeavors) leads him to exaggerate the turbulent nature of the piece. The audience would be surprised at the form in which this outlandish messenger's report is cast, but it is doubtful that the song itself would inspire in Euripides' viewers the apocalyptic reflections that it has

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[37] See Dale (1968) 85-86 and 197-98.

[38] On the transposition of 1488b and 1489 see Willink (ed.) Addenda on 1488-91. (I have not seen Willink's later discussion of these lines, cited by Diggle [ed.]: the sudden appearance of iambics here is unexpected, but cf., e.g., the anapaests at 1403-06 and see Dale [previous n.] on mixed delivery in Euripidean lyrics.)

[39] Wolff (1968) 141; cf. Mercanti (1915) 76-77.

suggested to some of the play's modern critics.

THE PHRYGIAN AS MESSENGER

If Euripides' carefully calculated use of meter brings a certain control and orderliness to the Phrygian's frantic outburst, the fact that the slave is made to conform to certain conventions commonly associated with messenger speeches also serves to lend an air of familiarity to his highly unconventional monody. The Phrygian is not a messenger in the usual sense of the term — that is, he is not an anonymous mouthpiece who enters, delivers his report concerning some occurrence (often, but not invariably, a catastrophe) off-stage, and then exits, with a minimum of personal comment and little to call attention to any qualities he might possess as a character.[40] Quite the contrary: a good deal of our attention during the course of the monody is focused directly on this outlandish figure who suddenly rushes onto the stage, dressed in wild eastern garb and dancing frantically as he sings his strange song. We are constantly confronted with his excitable nature,[41] his cowardice,[42] above all his exotic foreignness.[43] Yet, despite the fact of his strangeness, several features of this messenger's report are quite conventional, although translated into a lyric mode. For one thing, this Phrygian, unlike the barbarians of Aristophanes and Timotheus,[44] does not babble mangled Greek but sings Euripidean lyrics.[45] Highly excited as those lyrics are,

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[40] Cf. Lattimore (1958) 32-33, Collard (1975a) on E. *Su* 634-777, Katsouris (1975) 29ff., Bremer (1976), Taplin (1977) 80-85. Heath (1987a) 153-57 and de Jong (1991) 65ff. qualify this emphasis on the impersonal anonymity of the typical messenger.

[41] *Passim,* but esp. in his outcries and frequent word-repetitions.

[42] 1375ff., 1498-99.

[43] Bacon (1961) 115ff. emphasizes the way in which Euripides' barbarians constantly speak of their own foreignness without displaying very many truly non-Greek habits in their actual speech or mannerisms. (She does see the Phrygian as something of an exception to Euripides' usual practice, however: pp. 118-19. Notice, e.g., the very oriental προσκύνησις at 1507.) For the Phrygian's foreign qualities see, e.g., 1369-70, 1374, 1381-85, 1395ff., 1426ff., 1454-56, and cf. Kranz (1933) 110-12, Krieg (1934) 61-62, Scarcella (1956) 270-71.

[44] For Aristophanes see, e.g., *Ach* 98ff., *Birds* 1628ff., *Thesm* 1001ff., and cf. Long (1986); for Timotheus see *Persae* 145ff. and cf. below, pp. 206-07. (A broader survey can be found in Hall [1989a] 38-39; on barbaric speech in tragedy see Hall [1989b] 117-21.) Nor does the Phrygian indulge over much in the sort of effects found, e.g., in *Per* 1ff., 909ff., A. *Su* 112ff., etc. Thus Bacon (1961) 118 contrasts Aeschylus' "gorgeously cacophonous passages" with the language of the Phrygian.

[45] The Phrygian talks of using foreign speech (1385, 1397) and of being foreign, but, for the most part, employs the Greek of Euripidean lyric. Cf. Krieg (1934) 62, West (ed.) on *Or* 1369-1502. Seidensticker (1982) 106 presents a useful catalogue of late Euripidean features displayed by the monody.

characterized by wild outcries (especially 1373), frequent word repetitions, and occasional prolixity (for example, 1381-92), they have few (if any) barbarisms.[46] Their main features (or, as some maintain, faults) are characteristic of Euripidean monody in general, intensified to suit the dramatic situation and the excitable character of the messenger. The truth of this assertion can best be felt, perhaps, if we compare the Phrygian's Greek with Arrowsmith's English translation of that Greek. Arrowsmith does an admirable job of communicating the wild blend of panic and confusion which characterizes the tone of the Phrygian's song. But in attempting to transmit the feeling of the song (which, in the Greek, is largely a matter of the meter, music, and choreography), he has been forced to barbarize the Phrygian's language. Consider verses 1492-99:

> ἄθυρσοι δ' οἷά νιν
> †δραμόντε βάκχαι σκύμνον ἐν χεροῖν†
> ὀρείαν ξυνήρπασαν·
> πάλιν δὲ τᾶς Διὸς κόρας
> ἐπὶ σφαγὰν ἔτεινον· ἁ δ' [ἐκ θαλάμων]
> ἐγένετο διαπρὸ δωμάτων ἄφαντος,
> ὦ Ζεῦ καὶ Γᾶ καὶ Φῶς καὶ Νύξ,
> ἤτοι φαρμάκοις
> ἢ μάγων τέχναις ἢ θεῶν κλοπαῖς.
> τὰ δ' ὕστερ' οὐκέτ' οἶδα· δραπέταν γὰρ ἐξ-
>   έκλεπτον ἐκ δόμων πόδα.

Arrowsmith translates these verses:

> Men stop, yes, Bacchantes,
> dropping wands for seizing prey,
> snatch at girl, then turn back
> to kill, kill madam dead.
> But then, oh then —
> suddenly, ah, ah!
> madam vanish,
> fly through roof
> as though some magic mebbe mebbe
> or robbery of thiever gods!
> O Earth! O Zeus! O Night!
> What then happen I not know.
> No, no, run, I ran!

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[46] Words such as αἴλινον and μάγος (cited by Bacon [1961] 117) or εὔμαρις (ibid. 28 n. 13) may have a foreign ring to them but should scarcely be compared (esp. in their isolation) to passages such as those cited above, n. 44. It must be admitted, however, that 1373 (φροῦδα φροῦδα Γᾶ Γᾶ) does have a barbaric ring to it (cf. A. Su 119, 130, 776), as do the excessive repetitions of, e.g., 1426-30.

In capturing the Phrygian's excitement Arrowsmith has turned him into much more of a clownish non-Greek than his own language suggests.[47] It is true that the lines are intensely agitated. The intricate word order of 1492-93, for example, would never have been found in the colloquial speech of the day. It is, however, something found quite often in the lyrics of Euripides, as Di Benedetto indicates in his note on these lines.[48] The lines display a serious artistry that can scarcely be guessed from Arrowsmith's translation. There are difficulties to be found in the verses, but these concern Euripidean diction and/or the manuscript tradition, and only point toward a comic barbarism of language if we are already predisposed to detect such barbarisms.

Returning to our examination of the Phrygian's function as messenger, we do find several elements of the traditional messenger speech incorporated into his monody, but in a new, lyrical form. I have noted above (pp. 180-81 and 182) the use of iambic meters in many of the narrative sections of the song and the way in which those iambs recall the iambic trimeters traditionally employed in messenger speeches.[49] In a similar vein, the Phrygian's mournful cries at 1381ff. and 1395ff. can be seen to correspond to the curt announcement of disaster and the reference to grief (the community's and/or the messenger's own) that precede many a messenger speech.[50] There are differences — of length, of form, and of content — but they are the natural result of translating an essentially prosaic form into a lyric mode.[51] Again, the abrupt entry into the narrative proper at 1400 corresponds to the regular practice of messengers (particularly Euripidean messengers),[52] while the generalized conclusion with which the monody closes (1500-02) is typical of messenger

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[47] Cf. Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1366-1502.

[48] Di Benedetto (ed.) on *Or* 1473ff. and 1492ff.

[49] Cf. Hermann (ed.) xiii, Schadewaldt (1926) 18 n. 1.

[50] See, e.g., *Per* 249-55, *OT* 1223-31, *Trach* 871-72, *Cyc* 375-76, *Andr* 1070-71, *Hec* 488ff., *Her* 910-16, *Phoen* 1335-39, *Or* [852]-54, *Ba* 1024-27, *Rh* 728ff., and see Scarcella (1956) 270 and n. 28, Schadewaldt (1926) 18 n. 1. (This is not to deny the humorous implications of the Phrygian's extravagant grief: cf. Page [1938] xix on the notorious affinity of Phrygians for such exorbitant laments.) Csapo (1986b) 149 cites similar parallels for 1375-79 (the Phrygian's request for directions and wish for escape).

[51] 1381ff., which emphasize past sorrows, find parallels in monodies such as Andromache's in *Andr* 103ff. or Hecuba's in *Tro* 98ff. See Webster (1939) 193 (who compares *Tro* 122ff., *Ion* 112ff., and *Or* 1426ff. for style), Wolff (1968) 140 (discussed below, n. 57).

[52] See Lattimore (1958) 32 n. 5: the Euripidean messenger, "after preparing his hearers, usually sails into his narrative with a brisk ἐπεί ...." Cf. Rijksbaron (1976) 299-301, de Jong (1991) 34.

speeches as a whole.[53] Similarly, the use of quotations to give the report a sense of immediacy and vary the narrative (1437ff., 1447, 1461ff., 1465) is common in Euripides' messenger speeches, particularly in his later period.[54]

If we turn to the content of the Phrygian's report we find motifs that appear in almost the same form in other Euripidean messenger speeches (again, particularly in his later works).[55] It is common for Euripides to bring on a messenger who is a member of a group of slaves, often (but not always) belonging to the 'villain' of the piece (or, at least, to a person opposed to the play's protagonist[s]). As a member of such a group, our Phrygian keeps company with the messengers of *Helen* and *Bacchae*,[56] as well as the two messengers of *Iphigenia among the Taurians*.[57] At 1426ff. the Phrygian gives a colorful picture of his activities and Helen's (and, by implication, the activities of his fellow servants) at the moment when Orestes and Pylades first entered the palace. Such vignettes of activities that precede the revelation of some nefarious plot are common: compare, for example, *Andromache* 1100-03, *Electra* 797-802, *Helen*

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[53] Often these conclusions show a tendency toward philosophical reflection (e.g., *Ant* 1240-43, *Trach* 943-46, *Med* 1222-30, *Hcld* 863-66, E. *Su* 726-30, *Hel* 1617-18, *Ba* 1150-52). It is not unusual, however, to find them, as here, emphasizing the impact on the other characters of the events just narrated (cf., e.g., *OT* 1280-85, *Hec* 580-82, *Phoen* 1478-79, and note *Hel* 603). Cf. Friis-Johansen (1959) 155, de Jong (1991) 74-76 and 191-92.

[54] See de Jong (1991) 131-39 and 199-200.

[55] Cf. Krieg (1934) 64 n. 37

[56] It could be argued that the first messenger of the *Ba*, like the first messenger of the *IT*, is not a slave so much as a herdsman. The distinction is unimportant for the purpose of the present discussion, since Euripides endows him with the same generic character as he does the slaves of the other scenes we shall be comparing. Similarly, it is not necessary to discuss here the question of whether Pentheus is the villain of the *Ba*. It suffices that he is the blocking figure whose representatives make a futile attempt to hinder the activities of his opponent.

[57] Cf. the messenger-slaves of *Alc* (a pseudo-*exangelos*), *Hipp*, and *Her*. Wolff (1968) 140 stresses that the Phrygian, *qua* messenger, is atypical because, "unlike the usual messenger, he is directly affected by the play's action." It is unusual to find a messenger who feels himself to be in danger at the moment of his report; yet comparison of the Phrygian with those messengers cited above (or with those, e.g., of *Cho* 875ff., *Med* 1121ff., *Ion* 1106ff.) reveals just how typical is the tone (if not the specific form) of the Phrygian's opening words. (Needless to say, the audience has no way of knowing at this early stage of his report that the scene at 1503ff. will follow.) It is misleading to see in 1376-77 a parody of Euripidean heroes in distress. Wolff's parallels are unconvincing: of the six he cites, two are spoken by a chorus of women, one by a *deus ex machina*, two by women in distress. Moreover, the tone of these passages (with the partial exception of *Andr* 861ff.) is one of shame or of revulsion against the ugly realities of life, not one of hysterical fear. (Di Benedetto more aptly compares *Hec* 1099ff.) The Phrygian is frightened to an absurd extreme (a trait he shares with Timotheus' Phrygian) but he is too firmly identified as a messenger and a cowardly barbarian to suggest to the audience any thoughts of heroic parody in his characterization.

1533-36.[58] When Orestes and Pylades begin to put their plot into operation by formally supplicating Helen, we are given a lengthy picture of the fear and distrust of the Phrygian servants and their debate regarding the true motives of the two Greeks (1416-24). Again, such episodes are common in Euripides' messenger speeches. The messengers of *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (1333-35, 1339ff.) and *Helen* (1549-53, 1589-91) both speak of the early suspicions that plagued them and their companions,[59] while similar scenes of debate among servants are described at *Iphigenia among the Taurians* 264ff. and *Bacchae* 714ff. As the plot unfolds further Pylades is given the task of ensuring that the household slaves are safely out of the way and unable to aid their mistress (1446-51) — another common motif, found at *Iphigenia among the Taurians* 1329-35 (compare *Hecuba* 1148-49 [with 978-83] and *Antiope* 28ff. [Page]). Finally, at 1473ff. the Phrygians rush to the rescue but are routed by the valiant Greeks. Similar scenes are found at Euripides' *Electra* 844-47, *Iphigenia among the Taurians* 301ff., 1364ff., and 1407ff., *Helen* 1591ff. (note 1604-06: σπουδῆς δ' ὕπο / ἔπιπτον, οἱ δ' ὠρθοῦντο, τοὺς δὲ κειμένους / νεκροὺς ἂν εἶδες), with routs described at *Andromache* 1136-46, *Iphigenia among the Taurians* 323-24 and 1372-74 (note ἐφεύγομεν πρὸς κρημνόν, οἱ μὲν ἐν κάρᾳ / κάθαιμ' ἔχοντες τραύμαθ', οἱ δ' ἐν ὄμμασιν), and *Bacchae* 734ff.[60] A particularly good parallel for *Orestes* 1482-88b can be found (in a messenger speech of a different type) at *Phoenissae* 1189-95, both passages capturing the confusion of battle through their short phrases and multiple images:

> φασ-
> γάνων δ' ἀκμὰς συνήψαμεν.
> τότε δὴ τότε διαπρεπεῖς
> †ἐγένοντο Φρύγες ὅσον Ἄρεος ἀλκὰν†
> ἥσσονες Ἑλλάδος ἐγενόμεθ' αἰχμᾶς,
> ὁ μὲν οἰχόμενος φυγάς, ὁ δὲ νέκυς ὤν,
> ὁ δὲ τραῦμα φέρων, ὁ δὲ λισσόμενος,
> θανάτου προβολάν·
> νεκροὶ δ' ἔπιπτον, οἱ δ' ἔμελλον, οἱ δ' ἔκεινθ'·
> ὑπὸ σκότον δ' ἐφεύγομεν.

Orestes 1482-88b

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[58] Cf. such vignettes as *Hipp* 1185ff., *Her* 922ff., where no plot is involved. At *Hec* 1151ff. the servants themselves are the plotters.

[59] Cf. *Alc* 760-64 and *Her* 950-52.

[60] A similar rout is described in the *Mel. Desm.* 54ff. (Page), where the messenger himself is a member of a group of conspirators whose sneak attack has failed: cf. the first messenger of *Ba*.

οἱ δ' αὖ παρ' ἡμῶν δεξιὸν Διὸς τέρας
ἰδόντες ἐξήλαυνον ἁρμάτων ὄχους
ἱππῆς ὁπλῖται, κᾆς μέσ' Ἀργείων ὅπλα
συνῆψαν ἔγχη· πάντα δ' ἦν ὁμοῦ κακά·
ἔθνησκον ἐξέπιπτον ἀντύγων ἄπο,
τροχοί τ' ἐπήδων ἄξονές τ' ἐπ' ἄξοσι,
νεκροὶ δὲ νεκροῖς ἐξεσωρεύονθ' ὁμοῦ.

Phoenissae 1189-95

The comparisons suggested above show just how familiar many of the general features of the Phrygian's report would have been to Euripides' audience, despite its unorthodox form. Motifs of a more specific kind could be added to the list,[61] but these are less important, perhaps, than general similarities of the type noted above.

The above-noted affinities between the Phrygian's song and the traditional Euripidean messenger speech point to an important yet generally neglected difference between the Phrygian's monody and other monodies found in Euripides' plays. Simply put, the difference is this: unlike other monodies in Euripides, the Phrygian's song must present the audience with new and important information of which it has no previous knowledge.[62] Euripides' works abound, for example, in heroines bewailing their piteous fates in song and, in the course of their lamentations, detailing the history of their sorrows.[63] Each of these laments involves a certain amount of narrative, as past misfortunes are described in order to illustrate either the full pathos of the heroine's situation or the larger pattern of woe into which the heroine's plight is seen to fit. In every instance, however, this narrative deals with facts that have been carefully presented in an earlier section of the play (often in the prologue or in a preceding messenger speech) or with stories traditionally associated with the relevant myth and already familiar (in general terms, at least) to most of the audience. Thus at *Andromache* 103ff. Andromache sings of the fall of Troy, the death of Hector, her enslavement to Neoptolemus, the persecution she is currently suffering at the hands of Hermione, her refuge at the altar of Thetis: all subjects that have just been treated in more detail in her introductory monologue (1-

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[61] E.g., the reference to the concealed weapons of Orestes and Pylades at 1457-58 is paralleled by *Hec* 1160ff. and *Hel* 1573ff. (cf. *Andr* 1114ff.); the servants' makeshift weapons at 1476-78 are reminiscent of *IT* 308ff., 1366ff., and *Hel* 1597-1601 (cf. *Andr* 1128).

[62] Cf. Krieg (1934) 62.

[63] See, e.g., *Andr* 103ff., *Tro* 98ff., *IT* 143ff., *Phoen* 301ff., 1485ff., *Or* 960ff. (on which, see the following n.), *IA* 1279ff.

55). Again, at *Orestes* 960ff. Electra[64] responds to the messenger's announcement of the Argives' decree with a lyrical version of her opening monologue,[65] but passes over the by now familiar details of her own and Orestes' plight (974-75, 1010-12), dwelling instead upon the traditional tales of Pelops and Myrtilus, the golden ram, Thyestes and Aerope, the feast of Thyestes: tales that were readily familiar to Euripides' audience, as the very similar allusions at Euripides' *Electra* 699ff. and *Iphigenia among the Taurians* 186ff. (compare 812-13) demonstrate. The fact that the subjects dealt with in these monodies are already known to the audience frees the poet to treat them in a more lyrical manner, that omits unnecessary details and concentrates instead on the more emotive aspects of the subject at hand. The poetry that results is written in a style closer to that of the colorful introductory pieces of the Phrygian's song, at times even approaching the impressionistic, baroque manner of Timotheus. It stands in sharp contrast to the narrative portions of the Phrygian's monody, where the emphasis is on the presentation of a dramatic narrative in full and clear detail. For the Phrygian's monody is in fact a messenger's speech above all else. The events that it narrates are crucial to the play and are neither familiar from tradition (far from it!) nor dealt with elsewhere within the framework of the play. It is here alone that the audience learns of the important events within the palace and of the outcome of Orestes' and Pylades' deadly plot against Helen. Thus, for all of its frenzy, the song must maintain a certain control in its narrative sections, a certain attention to prosaic detail that sets it apart from other Euripidean monodies.[66] This difference is well illustrated by a comparison with Creusa's song at *Ion* 859ff. That song employs melic anapaests and related meters to present a detailed narrative of the young princess' rape by Apollo. The relevant portion of her monody follows

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[64] Recent editors atheticize 957-59 (Kirchhoff, with support from the Σ) and assign 960-81 to the chorus (Weil [1894] 208-09, Pasquali [1930]): see Biehl (1955) 60-61 and (ed.) 101, Reeve (1972) 254, West (ed.), and Diggle (ed.). The case in favor of assigning 960ff. to Electra is presented by Di Benedetto (1961) 138-39 and (ed.), Degani (1967) 17, van der Valk (1984) 189-90. Willink (ed.) offers a compromise, assigning 960-64 and 971-75 to Electra and 965-70 and 976-81 to the chorus; but see the objections of West (ed.). (I cannot concur with Damen [1990], who argues that the lyrics at 960ff. represent an original choral ode, later modified to provide the actor playing Electra with yet another monody. Damen [pp. 135-36] raises an important consideration, however, in citing the evidence of *P. Oxy.* 3716, which does not indicate a change of speaker at 982.) The argument presented here is not substantially affected if all or part of 960-81 are assigned to the chorus.

[65] Cf. 976-81 with 1-3, 982-86 with 4-11, 987-1010 with 11-[15], 1010-12 with 28-[51]. Cf. Erbse (1984) 249.

[66] Cf. Barlow (1971) 61ff. *passim* on the predominance of factual detail over emotional/lyrical 'color' in Euripidean messenger speeches.

(*Ion* 881-906):

> ὦ τᾶς ἑπταφθόγγου μέλπων
> κιθάρας ἐνοπάν, ἅτ' ἀγραύλοις
> κεράεσσιν ἐν ἀψύχοις ἀχεῖ
> μουσᾶν ὕμνους εὐαχήτους,
> σοὶ μομφάν, ὦ Λατοῦς παῖ,
> πρὸς τάνδ' αὐγὰν αὐδάσω.
> ἦλθές μοι χρυσῷ χαίταν
> μαρμαίρων, εὖτ' ἐς κόλπους
> κρόκεα πέταλα φάρεσιν ἔδρεπον
> †ἀνθίζειν† χρυσανταυγῆ·
> λευκοῖς δ' ἐμφὺς καρποῖσιν
> χειρῶν εἰς ἄντρου κοίτας
> κραυγὰν Ὠ μᾶτέρ μ' αὐδῶσαν
> θεὸς ὁμευνέτας
> ἆγες ἀναιδείᾳ
> Κύπριδι χάριν πράσσων.
> τίκτω δ' ἁ δύστανός σοι
> κοῦρον, τὸν φρίκᾳ ματρὸς
> βάλλω τὰν σὰν εἰς εὐνάν,
> ἵνα μ' ἐν λέχεσιν μελέαν μελέοις
> ἐζεύξω τὰν δύστανον.
> οἴμοι μοι· καὶ νῦν ἔρρει
> πτανοῖς ἁρπασθεὶς θοίνα
> παῖς μοι καὶ σοί.
> τλᾶμον, σὺ δὲ ⟨καὶ⟩ κιθάρᾳ κλάζεις
> παιᾶνας μέλπων.

Two points stand out at once. First of all, the passage is short: 26 lines of narrative in a song of 64 lines (41%) as opposed to the Phrygian's 94 lines out of 128 (73%). Secondly, it deals with a subject that has been dealt with in detail twice previously (by Hermes in the prologue and by Creusa and Ion at 330ff.) and has been referred to by the chorus in lyric terms at 492ff. Thus in this passage Creusa's narrative is able to present the tale in a manner that neglects prosaic detail while emphasizing the pathos of the situation. Her outrage at the way in which she has been treated by Apollo, and the discrepancy between the god's external grandeur and the callous brutishness of his acts, are presented in the luxuriant poetic style that Euripides delights in employing in such monodies. Gone are any references to the exact location of the rape (contrast 11-13), to the details of the infant's exposure (contrast 15-27), or to Creusa's later attempts to find the child (contrast 348-52). Instead the focus is on a series of brilliant cameos: the god's sudden appearance

(887-88), the lonely girl culling flowers (888-90), the god drawing the distraught maid away to his bed (891-96), the exposure and death of the child thus begotten (897-904), and the god's callous indifference to its fate (905-06). Details appear in profusion, but they are the timeless, emotive details of lyric monody: seven-stringed lyres (881-84), the god's golden hair (887-88), brilliant flowers (889-90), a girl's delicate white arm (891-92).[67] Contrast the prosaic detail of the Phrygian in the following passages (presented *exempli gratia*):

ἦλθον ἐς δόμους,
ἵν' αὖθ' ἕκαστά σοι λέγω,
λέοντες Ἑλλάνες
δύο διδύμῳ ⟨ῥυθμῷ⟩·
τῷ μὲν ὁ στρατηλάτας
πατὴρ κλήζεται,
ὁ δὲ παῖς Στροφίου, κακόμητις ἀνήρ ....

<div style="text-align:right">Orestes 1400-03</div>

οἱ δὲ πρὸς θρόνους ἔσω
μολόντες ἃς ἔγημ' ὁ το-
  ξότας Πάρις γυναικός, ὄμ-
  μα δακρύοις πεφυρμένοι,
ταπειν' ἔζονθ', ὁ μὲν
τὸ κεῖθεν, ὁ δὲ τὸ κεῖθεν, ἄλ-
  λος ἄλλοθεν δεδραγμένοι,
περὶ δὲ γόνυ χέρας ἱκεσίους
ἔβαλον ἔβαλον Ἑλένας ἄμφω.

<div style="text-align:right">Orestes 1408-15</div>

ἄγει δ' ἄγει νιν, ἁ δ' ἐφεί-
  πετ' οὐ πρόμαντις ὢν ἔμελ-
  λεν· ὁ δὲ συνεργὸς ἀλλ' ἔπρασσ'
†ἰὼν κακὸς Φωκεύς†·
Οὐκ ἐκποδὼν ἴτ'; †ἀλλ' ἀεὶ† κακοὶ Φρύγες.
ἔκλῃσεν δ' ἄλλον ἄλ-
  λοσε στέγας, τοὺς μὲν ἐν
σταθμοῖσιν ἱππικοῖσι, τοὺς δ'
ἐν ἐξέδραισι, τοὺς δ' ἐκεῖσ'
ἐκεῖθεν [ἄλλον ἄλλοσε] διαρμόσας
ἀποπρὸ δεσποίνας.

<div style="text-align:right">Orestes 1444-52</div>

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67 For further discussion of Creusa's monody, see Barlow (1971) 48-50 and (1986b) 15-16.

ὡς κάπροι δ' ὀρέστεροι
γυναικὸς ἀντίοι σταθέν-
    τες ἐννέπουσι· Κατθανῇ κατθανῇ·
κακός σ' ἀποκτείνει πόσις,
κασιγνήτου προδοὺς
ἐν Ἄργει θανεῖν γόνον.
ἁ δ' ἀνίαχεν ἴαχεν· Ἰώ μοί μοι.
λευκὸν δ' ἐμβαλοῦσα πῆχυν στέρνοις
†κτύπησε κρᾶτα† μέλεον πλαγάν,
φυγάδι δὲ ποδὶ τὸ χρυσεοσάμβαλον ἴχνος
ἔφερεν ἔφερεν ....

Orestes 1460-68

Even in the emotional 1460-68 we get the sense of a sustained narrative
rather than a series of decorative cameos. In none of the above examples
are the colorful adjectives as abundant or as striking as in Creusa's song,
while we do find, for example, the connective particles μέν ... δέ
employed — not a sophisticated device, but one that is not found in the
lyrical λέξις εἰρομένη of Creusa's song and that adds to the prosaic
orderliness of the Phrygian's account. It is this 'prosaic' aspect of the
Phrygian's monody that links it, again, with the traditional messenger
speech. Approached in isolation the Phrygian's report stands out as an
egregious anomaly. But compared with Euripides' other monodies, on the
one hand, and with some typical Euripidean messenger speeches, on the
other, the Phrygian's song, unusual as it may be, demonstrates a
surprising degree of control and coherence. In composing this song
Euripides intended more than a simple scene of frantic confusion
(although the Phrygian is both frantic and, to a certain degree, confused);
he also wanted the events within the palace to be related clearly and in
some detail.

THE PHRYGIAN'S ENTRANCE

We see, then, that the Phrygian's monody does have several points of
contact with the traditional messenger speech familiar to Euripides'
audience. It is a bizarre, outlandish, chaotic scene, but not quite so
bizarre, outlandish, or chaotic as might appear at first sight.

This last observation holds true for another, much-debated feature of
the scene: the manner of the Phrygian's entrance onto the stage.[68] Many

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[68] The debate over the Phrygian's mode of entrance has apparently been settled many
times (e.g., by Malzan [1908] and Dale [1969] 268-69) only to be opened afresh (most

editors follow the scholiast to line 1366, maintaining that in Euripides' original production the Phrygian entered by a sudden leap down from the roof of the *skene,* but that the actors later (presumably in the fourth century, when we know the play was reproduced)[69] added lines 1366-68 to spare themselves this hazardous leap. The *scholion* runs as follows:

ἀλλὰ κτυπεῖ· ἐξιών τις ψοφεῖ, τοῦτο γὰρ ἔθος, ταῖς θύραις. τούτους δὲ τοὺς τρεῖς στίχους οὐκ ἄν τις ἐξ ἑτοίμου συγχωρήσειεν Εὐριπίδου εἶναι, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον τῶν ὑποκριτῶν, οἵτινες, ἵνα μὴ κακοπαθῶσιν ἀπὸ τῶν βασιλείων δόμων καθαλλόμενοι, παρανοίξαντες ἐκπορεύονται τὸ τοῦ Φρυγὸς ἔχοντες σχῆμα καὶ πρόσωπον. ὅπως οὖν διὰ τῆς θύρας εὐλόγως ἐξιόντες φαίνωνται, τούτους προσενέταξαν. ἐξ ὧν δὲ αὐτοὶ λέγουσιν, ἀντιμαρτυροῦσι τῇ διὰ τῶν θυρῶν ἐξόδῳ. φανερὸν γὰρ ἐκ τῶν ἐξῆς ὅτι ὑπερπεπήδηκεν.

If lines 1366-68 are an interpolation inserted by fourth-century actors, the Phrygian's entrance, as originally staged, represents a theatrical venture the boldness of which quite overshadows the unusual features of the monody that follows. This point has not received the emphasis from the commentators that it deserves. When compared to the Phrygian's leap, Ajax's suicide scene is tame, the re-entrance of Polymestor in *Hecuba* or the Pythia in *Eumenides*[70] mild, Euripides' various heroes and heroines flying about on the *mechane* pedestrian.[71] The leap constitutes the only violently physical, absolutely unstylized act to which we can point in our texts of the Greek tragedians, if it in fact exists. Evadne's suicide leap in *Supplices* has been adduced as a parallel,[72] but the fact that she must disappear behind the *skene* makes all the difference: her 'leap' could be managed in a number of different ways. A glance at various editions reveals a fairly even division on the issue, with Wecklein, Murray, Biehl, West,[73] and Diggle challenging lines 1366-68, while Porson, Hermann, Hartung, Weil, Paley, Wedd, Chapouthier, Di Benedetto and Willink print the text of the manuscripts. There is no hard evidence against the lines: they are found in all of the manuscripts; the

recently by West [1987] 289-91 and [ed.] *ad loc.;* note as well Willink [ed.] on *Or* 1366-68). The following review of the issue adds little new to the debate but is perhaps justified by the stubborn nature of the controversy and by the implications of the staging here for the scene as a whole.

[69] See above, pp. 1-2, for evidence of the play's later popularity and various revivals.

[70] See Taplin (1977) 363.

[71] See Mastronarde (1990) on the question of the *mechane* in Euripides and earlier.

[72] See, e.g., P. Arnott (1962) 43 (with 119 and 137-38). For criticism of this supposed parallel see West (1987) 290 n. 32, Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1366-68.

[73] West (1987) 291 and (ed.) *ad loc.* suggests that 1366 alone be deleted.

scholiasts do not comment, as they do elsewhere,[74] that any of their copies lacked or suspected the lines; the verses are grammatically unimpeachable.[75] But none of these facts should surprise us if 1366-68 represent an innovation dating from the early to middle fourth century (that is, before the archonship of Lycurgus). Arguments against the authenticity of the lines (and/or in favor of the Phrygian's leap) have not been lacking, therefore, and they are numerous. For the sake of brevity I list the more cogent of them here.[76]

(1) The cornerstone of the 'pro-leap' position is, naturally enough, the *scholion* to *Orestes* 1366. The scholiast, we are told, is familiar with the practices of actors, as demonstrated, for example, by the *scholia* to *Orestes* 57 and 643 (Grueninger). He is also much closer to Euripides in time and sensibility than we are (and, presumably, is familiar with more of his works) and is therefore apt to have a better feel for Euripides' plays. (2) 1366-68 contradict the Phrygian's own words at 1369ff. (the scholiast's own contention).[77] (3) The whole point of the leap is the daring nature of the spectacle it presents. There is no purpose in mentioning it if it is not performed (Grueninger). (4) The sudden entry of the Phrygian is part of a general *Überraschung bei den Szenenüber-gängen* that the play exploits. To delete the leap and provide the Phrygian with a formal introduction would destroy this effect and weaken the effect of the delayed introduction at 1380, with its emphatic double identification of the Phrygian. Line 1503 is, in fact, a glancing reference back to the slave's bizarre, unexpected entrance (Biehl).[78] (5) Lines 1366-68, which refer to the noise of the door, represent a type of entry formula that belongs to New Comedy and is identifiably late (Grueninger, Biehl). (6) The chorus has no way of knowing that the character entering is one of Helen's Phrygian slaves before it has actually seen the person (Miller). (7) The repetition in 1359 and 1368 ($\pi\nu\nu\theta\acute{a}\nu o\mu\alpha\iota$) is suspect (Biehl). (8) The parenthetical construction between $\grave{a}\lambda\lambda\acute{a}$ and $\sigma\iota\gamma\acute{\eta}\sigma\alpha\tau$' is equally

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[74] E.g., 640-41, 933, 957-59, 1024, 1227-30, 1384, 1394, 1527.

[75] Both Dale (1969) 269 and Page (1934) 42 agree on this point.

[76] References: Wilamowitz (1895) 1.153-54 and n. 63, Grueninger (1898) 7-8, Verrall (1905) 248, W. Miller (1929) 113 (cf. 211ff.), Page (1934) 42 and 107, Pickard-Cambridge (1946) 53 (cf. 125-26), Biehl (1955) 79-81 and (1965) *ad loc.*, Reinhardt (1960) 254, Reeve (1972) 263-64, West (1987) 289-91 and (ed.) on *Or* 1366-68. Dihle (1981) 109-13 adopts a different approach, arguing that 1366-68 represent an *ad hoc* introduction designed for a later production of the Phrygian's monody as a display piece. In the discussion that follows these accounts will be cited by author's name only.

[77] Walcot (1976) 32 suggests the rather strained possibility that the inconsistency between 1366-68 and 1369ff. is intentional: that the Phrygian, beside himself with fear, makes a claim that is patently false.

[78] Cf. Dihle (1981) 112.

suspect (Biehl). (9) 1366-67 are harsh and contradictory so soon after the
chorus' self-exhortations at 1353ff. (Biehl). (10) The leap from the roof
of the *skene* would be "no neck-breaking performance," being but some
ten to twelve feet (Miller, P. Arnott).[79]

Many of these objections are highly subjective or palpably false. Di
Benedetto has dealt convincingly with (7) and (8).[80] (5) is easily refuted
by comparing 1366-68 with, for example, *Helen* 857-60 (cited by Biehl
as a *model* for the interpolator).[81] The latter passage also suggests the
manner in which objection (6) should be answered. There, as here,
Euripides has taken care in the preceding scene to prepare the audience
for the entrance of a specific character (*Helen* 815ff. and *Orestes* 1359).
On the approach of that character the customary introductory formula is
employed, noting both the reason the speaker has for assuming that
someone is approaching (that is, the sound of the door) and the identity of
the newcomer.[82] The formula ensures that the audience is aware of the
newcomer's identity, while also covering the time necessary for the new
character to reach 'center stage' and prepare to speak. A certain degree of
realism is sacrificed in the process, but it is necessary to remember that
the new character would quickly be visible to both the chorus and the
audience. In the case of the Phrygian, his garb (in conjunction with line
1359) would make his identity immediately obvious.

Objection (9) misses the formulaic nature of the command for silence
after a choral song: compare *Cyclops* 82 and 624, *Hippolytus* 565 (all
addressed to the chorus by one of the actors), Euripides' *Electra* 747ff.
(where the exhortation to be quiet and listen can be implied from the
context), *Phoenissae* 1308-09, *Rhesus* 730.[83] Such formulae are intended
to facilitate the return from choral ode to ongoing action and to provide
time for the newly-arrived characters to take their positions on stage.[84]
Orestes 1366-68 perform both of these functions admirably and are not at

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[79] West (1987) 290 raises the valid point that the increased height of the *skene* in the later
fourth and third centuries lends some credence to the scholiast's claims of misgivings on the
part of later actors. West suggests that the actor let himself down by means of a rope or
ladder, but this staging is ruled out (*pace* West) by the brevity of the entrance announcement
and by the ungainliness of such a procedure.

[80] See Di Benedetto (1961) 152 n. 123 and (ed.) *ad loc.* (On the construction of 1367-68,
see Bond [1981] on *Her* 138.)

[81] Cf. *Ion* 514-16 and, for the motif as a commonplace, *Her* 77-79. For references in
Greek New Comedy see Bader (1971).

[82] On Euripides' careful preparation for the entrance of his messengers see Murray (1946)
109-12. Cf. Halleran (1985) 33ff.

[83] Cf., also, *Hec* 724-25.

[84] Thorough discussions of the use and form of entrance announcements are provided by
Hamilton (1978) and Halleran (1985) 5ff.

all out of place in the context of the scene. The chorus has just said that its song will provide a cover for Orestes and Pylades until some assurance is provided, either through autopsy or from a messenger, that the heroes' deed is a *fait accompli*. With the arrival of the Phrygian the latter possibility seems to have come to pass and the chorus accordingly stops singing and waits to hear his report. Again, it is a trifle unrealistic that the chorus should predict the course of the next scene with such accuracy, but the Greek tragedians in general seem to have cared little for realism in such matters.

Objections (3) and (4) are too subjective to refute definitively. In opposition to (3), it can be noted that the Phrygian's fearful description of his flight does play an important role in establishing his character as a wild, outlandish, excessively timid and absurd foreign slave.[85] It also develops the 'cowardly Phrygian' theme, frequently touched on throughout the play, and particularly important in 1369-1536. In opposition to (4), the sight of a wildly dressed slave rushing out on stage and performing the monody with which Euripides has provided him is certainly sufficient to ensure a certain *Überraschung* among the audience,[86] while Hamilton's study of announced and unannounced entrances in Greek tragedy shows that there exists no simple equation between surprise entrances and the absence (or the presence) of an announcement formula.[87] The Phrygian's song is intrinsically worthy of the adjective καινός (1503), and while the notion expressed by the chorus in 1503 is, to a certain degree, merely a stock phrase (compare *Troades* 1118-19, *Hecuba* 690), such an overt reference to the bold new form of the Phrygian's messenger speech is not uncharacteristic of Euripides.[88]

Finally, concerning objection (10), it is necessary to remember that we have no certain knowledge about the height of the *skene* in the late fifth century B.C. Even based on P. Arnott's (problematic) assumption of eight

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[85] Cf. Malzan (1908) 15-16.

[86] Cf. Seidensticker (1982) 103-04.

[87] Hamilton (1978), esp. pp. 66-67 and 72. Hamilton's study suggests the possibility that the true surprise consisted in the chorus suddenly breaking off in mid-song to announce the Phrygian's entrance; hence the necessity for an entrance announcement (cf. Hamilton [1987] 592 and West [ed.] on *Or* 1366-68). Seidensticker (1985) 449 n. 22 cites Barner (1971) when arguing that the Phrygian, *qua* monodist, should be introduced by a formal announcement of some sort.

[88] Cf., e.g., E. *Su* 94-95, where Theseus' words might be taken as referring to the shift (both metrical and choreographic) that occurs in the *parodos* at 71ff. (see Collard [1975a] *ad loc.*) The question of whether *Or* 129 (which fits the dramatic situation perfectly) contains a latent reference to *Thesm* 850 and Euripides' *Hel* is, I think, debatable, although the idea has been criticized harshly by Krieg (1934) 20 n. 13.

feet,[89] the proposed leap is far from negligible, particularly for an actor dressed in flowing robes and mask. It would be a bold producer who would allow such an important scene as this to be placed in jeopardy by a sprained ankle or a broken leg.[90]

We are left, then, with the scholiast to 1366 and his assertion that 1366-68 contradict 1369ff. The *scholion* to line 1371 provides the obvious solution to the apparent contradiction: that the roof over which the Phrygian has clambered should be imagined to belong to a structure within the palace compound and therefore out of the audience's sight:

> κεδρωτὰ παστάδων· τὰ ἐκ κέδρου ξύλα. παστάδων δὲ τῶν
> κοιτώνων. τέρεμνα δὲ τὰς ὑψηλὰς στέγας. φαίνεται δὲ ἐκ τούτων
> ὑπερπεπηδηκὼς τὰς ὑψηλὰς στέγας. ἀντὶ τοῦ ὑπὲρ τεράμνων. ταῦτα
> οὖν φησιν, ὡς ὑπερπεπηδηκὼς τῶν ἔσω τινὰς οἴκων. παστάδων γὰρ
> τῶν θαλάμων. Αἰσχίνης δὲ τὴν ὑπέρ ἀντὶ τῆς πρό φησίν, ἵν' ᾖ ἀντὶ
> τοῦ πρὸ τεράμνων.

Most of the critics who defend 1366-68 accept the scholiast's argument with little comment.[91] Dale[92] cites a number of instances in Greek drama where characters on stage describe events that must be understood to occur behind the quiet facade of the *skene,* often within a palace compound.[93] This explanation must be correct, but even taking this view, Euripides cannot be absolved altogether of the charge of theatrical legerdemain. There are certain questions that we cannot ask the Phrygian. (How was he able to witness the events of 1454-72? How were Orestes and Pylades able to take time out from attacking Helen and fighting Phrygians to come out and fetch Hermione?)[94] The poet depends on his

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[89] See Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1366-68.

[90] On the hazards that blithe assumptions concerning the feasibility of such stunts can hold for the unwary, see Laurence Olivier *Confessions of an Actor* (London, 1982) 127-28. (I owe this reference to Ms. Ann DeVito.)

[91] Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1370-72 follows Musgrave and Hartung in attempting to revive the interpretation attributed by the scholiast to the unidentified Aeschines. He translates ὑπέρ in the sense 'beyond the confines of,' taking κέδρωτὰ παστάδων ... τέραμνα as an elaborate periphrasis for the *skene* facade and thereby obviating the apparent contradiction with 1366-68. Against this interpretation see Pickard-Cambridge (1946) 53 n. 1 and West (1987) 289-90 (cf. Biehl [1955] 80, Di Benedetto [ed.] on *Or* 1369-74).

[92] See Dale (1969) 126-29 and 268-69. Other relevant discussions include: Hartung (1843) 2.491-92, Paley (ed.) *ad loc.,* Weil (ed.) *ad loc.,* Malzan (1908) 13-16, Bacon (1961) 132-40, Roux (1961) 28-30 and 42-43, Di Benedetto (ed.) *ad loc.,* Hourmouziades (1965) 137-45 (esp. 141), Hamilton (1974) 396-97, Walcot (1976) 31-32, Taplin (1977) 437 n. 2, Seidensticker (1982) 103-04, Lesky (1983) 349, Mastronarde (1990) 285.

[93] *Alc* 546ff., *Hel* 1180, *Ba* 509-10, *Cyc* 701ff. Dale also refers to the easy coming and going of Odysseus in the latter part of *Cyc.*

[94] See, e.g., Verrall (1905) 251 n. 6, Krieg (1934) 63-64, Schmid/Stählin (1940) 1.3.619

audience being too caught up in the rapid confusion of events to ponder such considerations, a legitimate license employed by dramatists of all ages and one that has been examined too often to require discussion here. For our purposes, however, we might pause for a moment and ask: from where does the Phrygian have to escape? Grueninger quite rightly denies (in response to Weil's note *ad loc.*) that lines 1448ff. provide any help here, since the Phrygians had escaped from their original confinement, as narrated at 1473ff. Yet it is difficult, on the face of things, to see why Euripides should have his Phrygian avoid using the *skene* door. That door has been used quite freely up to this point in the play; Orestes will use it with no apparent difficulty at 1503; the Atridae will be urged to barricade it, but not until 1551. And the parallel of *Choephori* 875ff. (cited by Dale)[95] suggests that the audience would not have assumed, without being told specifically, that the Phrygian had to eschew exiting through the *skene* door in order to avoid being seen by Orestes and Pylades. The fact is that we cannot say exactly from where the Phrygian is escaping. Given Euripides' vagueness,[96] however, it is easier to imagine the slave slipping out of a chamber somewhere within the palace (Orestes and Pylades presumably being near the only door) than to manufacture some reason for his avoiding the *skene* door.

But the important point is that scholars probably never would have entered this tangled debate if they had not been led to do so by the

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n. 6, Erbse (1975) 448, Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1425 and 1473, de Jong (1991) 19-23, and cf. below, Appendix Eight. Even if Hermione enters the house and then notices Orestes and Pylades we are still left with the contradiction that Hermione is captured at 1345-52, while our frightened Phrygian, who is in such a hurry to escape the palace, does not appear until 1366, long after he and his companions have been routed by the two Greeks. The suddenness of Hermione's appearance at 1490 in the Phrygian's narrative and the apparent contradictions in his account with what the audience has witnessed on stage (1344ff.) are best attributed to the climactic nature of the final section of the Phrygian's aria (on which see above, pp. 181-82). 1490-91 add to the flurry of confused, frenetic activity with which that account ends. They are employed by Euripides to establish a particular mood and cannot be used as evidence concerning the staging of 1344ff. (Cf. Meridor [1975] for a similar discrepancy in *Hec;* de Jong [1991] 134-35 notes the discrepancy between Helen's outcries as we hear them [1296, 1301] and those reported by the Phrygian at 1465.)

[95] Dale *loc. cit.* Di Benedetto (1961) 152-53 and (ed.) on *Or* 1366 disagrees with Dale and argues for three doors, with the Phrygian entering from 'il gineceo.' Such an assertion raises several questions (How would the audience be expected to know which door led where? Would the audience accept the notion of a house designed in such a way that the women's quarters had direct access to the street?), but its main difficulty lies in the gratuitous nature of its assumptions and its violation of dramatic economy: nothing in *Or* calls for the presence of more than one door in the *skene.* Cf. Taplin (1977) 349ff. and 438-41, Bain (1981) 56ff., and Garvie (1986) xlviiff.

[96] See Bacon (1961) 121ff. on Euripides' tendency to use colorful nouns and adjectives to evoke momentary images and moods rather than to describe objects in a concrete, realistic sense. 1369-74 give a vivid impression of someone desperately clambering over the rafters of a building, but little else. (Cf. Hourmouziades [1965] 86-88.)

scholion at 1366. Malzan indicated long ago that the scholiast's language reveals that he is drawing his own conclusions from the text of the play and is not privy to any independent sources superior to our own: note the implications of οὐκ ἄν τις ἐξ ἑτοίμου συγχωρήσειεν and φανερὸν γὰρ ἐκ τῶν ἑξῆς. The scholiast, comparing 1366-68 with 1369ff., saw an apparent contradiction and explained it through one of the favorite scapegoats of ancient dramatic criticism, the actors. Malzan provides convincing evidence of this tendency in antiquity[97] and establishes beyond reasonable doubt that the author of the *scholion* to 1366 was *unu(s) ex nimis morosis histriones immerito castigantibus grammaticis.* Once the scholiast has been discredited, the case against 1366-68 is too weak to justify the brackets found in many editions. Given Euripides' general lack of concern for ordering the details of his plots into a unified, consistent, and realistic whole (particularly noticeable in this scene), the critic who attempts to analyze the frantic opening words of the slave by the strict standards of realistic drama risks leaving Euripides behind altogether. The Phrygian's entrance presents a remarkable theatrical moment even without a leap: only a mistaken attempt to defend the integrity of the scholiast and an exaggerated sense of the Phrygian's absurdity have led scholars to endorse its existence.

THE PHRYGIAN AND TIMOTHEUS' *PERSAE*

The account of the Phrygian's monody given above differs from those commonly found in literature on *Orestes* to the degree that it emphasizes, not the outlandish nature of the song, but the traditional elements that it displays. This approach highlights the various ways in which Euripides brings an air of order and familiarity to the slave's frantic outbursts. The reader may well feel that in attempting to correct one excess the above analysis has fallen prey to another, more serious one — that too little attention has been paid to the song's most striking feature, its anomalous form and its clear debt to the Timothean *nome*. What follows is, to a certain degree, an attempt to redress this imbalance — 'to a certain degree,' because a comparison of the Phrygian's song with Timotheus' *Persae* reveals some significant differences as well as undeniable similarities. We shall find that Euripides, by introducing this startling

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[97] See Malzan (1908) *passim;* cf. Hamilton (1974), Taplin (1977) 435-38. The opposing case is presented by Dihle (1981) 28ff. and esp. 39ff. (Dihle's defence of Σ *Or* 1366 [pp. 111-12] is based on the curious assumption that the leap in question should be imagined to occur at 1532ff.)

example of the New Music into his play, has placed certain constraints upon the genre and, again, has forced it to conform (in part, at least) to the conventions of the Euripidean stage.

The approximately 220 lines of Timotheus' *Persae* that remain[98] constitute our best direct evidence for the nature of the New Music, a style that gained popularity in the late fifth and early fourth centuries.[99] The discovery of this work at Abusir in 1902 was hailed at the time with even less enthusiasm than was that of the Bacchylides papyrus,[100] but, whatever its faults, the poem's significance for the study of Euripides was appreciated at once, because it strikingly confirmed the link between Euripides and the new, popular style of poetry of which Timotheus was the chief proponent. Wilamowitz, whose interest in the poem focused on its more technical aspects, noted the metrical similarities between the *omphalos* of *Persae* (lines 1-201 in Page's text) and the songs of Jocasta and Antigone at *Phoenissae* 301ff. and 1485ff., and of Electra at *Orestes* 960ff.[101] He also suggested parallels between Timotheus' musical experiments and such 'ornamental' Euripidean lyrics as fragment 1023 N[2] (identified by Wilamowitz as the opening of a *nome* from the lost *Antiope*),[102] *Hypsipyle* 18ff. (Page),[103] *Andromache* 103ff., and *Hecuba* 684ff.

Even more far-reaching parallels could have been found between *Persae* and the Phrygian's song, but these were neglected for the most part until the publication of Bassett's examination of the poem in 1931.[104] Bassett argues conclusively for the priority of *Persae* vis-à-vis *Orestes*, suggesting that the form of the Phrygian's speech can be explained (in part, at least) by Euripides' desire to capitalize on the popularity of Timotheus' recent poem and to pay a literary compliment to a fellow poet

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[98] I use Page's text (Page [1968] #425) in conjunction with Wilamowitz's important edition (Wilamowitz [1903]). A general bibliography is provided by Janssen (1984) 165-69.

[99] See Pickard-Cambridge (1927) 53-75, Abert (1921), and Vetter (1933) 867ff. (esp. 870-71). Edmonds (1940) 3.666-79 and Webster (1939) 166ff. present useful discussions of the New Music and related genres. Apart from *Persae* itself and the evidence of Aristophanes (e.g., *Birds* 227ff., *Frogs* 1331ff.) and Euripides, we are forced rely on the chance remarks of later authors. See Edmonds (1940) 3.280ff. for the *testimonia* relating to Timotheus.

[100] See, e.g., the remarks (some years later) of Kenyon (1919) 5.

[101] See Wilamowitz (1903) 100-01 and cf. Bassett (1931) 160. Webster (1967) 19-20 and (1970) 209-12 has an expanded list of similar passages. (On the question of *Or* 960ff. see above, n. 64.)

[102] See Nauck's note on this fragment (cf. Wilamowitz [1903] 76 n. 1) and Kambitsis (1972) 30-33.

[103] Cf. *Frogs* 1305-06 and Dover (1993) *ad loc.*

[104] Bassett (1931), esp. 160-61. Wilamowitz (1903) includes the Phrygian's song in his list of parallel passages cited above but without detailed commentary.

and friend.[105] The sheer number of similarities between the two pieces indicates that they could not have been written in isolation, that Euripides intended for his audience to appreciate his own bravura in inserting this sample of the New Music into his play.[106] An examination of these similarities will form a useful complement to the analysis of the Phrygian's song given above and should help to define the nature of the song with greater accuracy.

There can be no doubt that the similarities between these two pieces that would have struck the audience most forcefully in performance are precisely those which have been lost to us almost completely: similarities in the accompanying music and in the method of performance. Some small hints concerning these matters can be found in the testimony of antiquity — in the attacks made upon Timotheus, in Aristophanes' ridicule of Euripides, in the musical notation of *Pap. Vindob.* inv. G 2315[107] — but these do little beyond confirming what could easily be surmised from the texts themselves: these pieces were performed in a manner congenial to their highly excited meters and melodramatic content. We can be certain that the music of each struck Athenian ears as highly exotic and $\mu\alpha\lambda\alpha\kappa\acute{o}\varsigma$;[108] that certain coloratura effects were employed by the singers and musicians;[109] that the words were accompanied by wild gestures, at times bordering on the grotesque[110] — in short, that each piece provided musician, singer, and dancer alike with numerous opportunities for virtuoso displays of the latest in musical vogues. A precise knowledge of these matters is impossible, however,

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[105] Cf. Herington (1985) 159. Bassett's general arguments dating *Persae* to 412-08 are accepted by Maas (1937), who argues for 419-16, Francis (1980), who argues for early 410, and Herington (1985) 151 and n. 3. For a concise presentation of the older view that *Persae* dates to the early fourth century, see Ebeling (1925). For a general summary of the issues involved, see Hansen (1984), who argues for 410/09, and Janssen (1984) 13ff., who suggests 408-07.

[106] To a certain degree the question of which work is the earlier is irrelevant to this argument (although Bassett's case is convincing): the ties between the Phrygian's song and the New Music would have been obvious even if *Persae* were yet to be performed. The testimony of Satyrus' *Life* (*P.Oxy.* 1176.39.22; cf. Plut. *Mor.* 795D) is probably based upon the very similarities in the styles (as well as in the careers) of the two poets that will be examined below. (Cf. Wilamowitz [1903] 67.)

[107] See Solomon (1977), Feaver (1978), Aylen (1985) 360, Willink (ed.) liii-lv, West (ed.) on *Or* 316-47, Comotti (1989) 112.

[108] Cf. Pl. *Rep.* 398E-399A, which specifically singles out the Lydian and Ionian modes, the first of which is explicitly associated with the *nome* (cf. Proclus *loc. cit.* below, n. 112). (At 399C-D and 404D-E Plato seems to have mélanges such as *Persae* in mind.) See also *Rep.* 411A and Arist. *Pol.* 1290a 20ff.

[109] Cf. Pherecrates frg. 155.8ff. (Kassel/Austin) and ps.-Plut. *Mor.* 1135C-D; see Fleming (1977) 223 and Herington (1985) 153.

[110] See Herington (1985) 153-54.

given the limitations of the textual tradition, and it is improbable that
such knowledge survived even the second century B.C.[111] On the other
hand, the one distinct difference between the two pieces — the fact that
Timotheus' *nome* was a κιθαρῳδία while the Phrygian's song was
accompanied by the flute — is clouded by Timotheus' notorious attempts
to blur distinctions between the stately lyre-sung *nome* and the dithyramb,
traditionally more frenzied and accompanied by the flute.[112] The musical
experiments of Timotheus may well represent an attempt to reproduce the
sounds of the flute on the lyre, and Plato expressly connects such
attempts with Timotheus' (in)famous instrument, the many-stringed
lyre.[113]

Regarding the meter of the two works, we are on much firmer ground.
Both pieces are written in astrophic ἀπολελυμένα, each presenting an
intricate "medley of rhythms"[114] fitted around an iambic framework.[115]
Yet an examination of the meters in the narrative section of *Persae*
reveals little of the patterning effect, little of the order within chaos that
characterizes the Phrygian's song.[116] Not only are runs of metrically
identical lines much less frequent in *Persae* than in the Phrygian's
song,[117] the placement of these runs shows little attempt to reinforce
articulations in the narrative structure by means of metrical shifts. We do
find, for example, the use of dactyls at 139 to conclude the prayer of
Xerxes' land forces (the prayer itself being largely aeolo-choriambic in
its final section: 128ff.) and to differentiate this highly emotional prayer
from the quick-moving action of the iambic meters that follow.[118] Again,
at 173-77 the climactic introduction of Xerxes is set off by the sustained

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[111] See Wilamowitz (1903) 101 n. 3. Cf. Abert (1921) 533.

[112] Cf. Procl. *Chrest.* in Phot. *Bibl.* 320a 33ff. and ps.-Plut. *Mor.* 1132E. See Pickard-
Cambridge (1927) 66, Fleming (1977) 223-25, and Herington (1985) 15ff. and 153. (Cf.,
however, West [1971] 309-10 and Maas/Snyder [1989] 167.)

[113] *Rep.* 399C-D and *Leg.* 700D-701B. *Frogs* 1281ff. also may reflect such musical
experiments: see Wilamowitz (1903) 101-02 and Fleming (1977) 226. On Timotheus' eleven-
stringed lyre see Wilamowitz (1903) 69ff. and Maas (1937) 1333-34; contrast Maas/Snyder
(1989) 62-63 and 154-55.

[114] Bassett (1931) 160, citing Wilamowitz (1921) 333.

[115] Cf. Webster (1970) 155. Webster (1970) 154-55 presents a useful general description
of the meters of *Persae*. See as well the metrical analyses in Page's text, Korzeniewski
(1974), and West (1982) 1-5.

[116] See Webster (1967) 19-20 and (1970) 211. Cf. Heph. Περὶ ποιημάτων 3.3
(Consbruch). The *sphragis* of *Persae* stands in striking contrast to the body of the poem (as
preserved) by virtue of the calm orderliness of its meters: see Maas (1937) 1335 and
Herington (1985) 158-59.

[117] Webster (1967) 19 notes 90-93, 116-20, 130-33, 144-47, 164-67.

[118] At 196 dactyls are used to mark the transition from a scene of agonized defeat to one
of calm assurance and victory.

use of trochaic meters.[119] On the whole, however, *Persae* is much more of a mélange than is the Phrygian's song and displays a luxuriant freedom in its meters that must correspond to a musical and choreographic ecstasy surpassing even that of Euripides' Phrygian. Thus we find choriambs freely mixing with iambic metra (and the reverse: see 135 and 138; compare 131), trochees with iambs, even an isolated ionic (83), all in marked contrast to Euripides' piece. While the metrical texture of Timotheus' poem does assume a different general character at times (for example, aeolo-choriambic at 128-39, trochaic at 173-77, aeolo-choriambic again at 188-98), on the whole it maintains a wild homogeneity, presumably relying on alterations in the musical accompaniment and in the performer's gestures to lend it variety and distinguish its different narrative sections.[120] The piece continually flows out of one metrical ambience into another, for the most part consciously rejecting the sort of orderly, well-marked metrical progression found in the Phrygian's song.

Equally important is the freedom with which Timotheus avoids coincidence of metrical pauses with word- or phrase-end.[121] This phenomenon (readily apparent from a glance at Page's text) combines with Timotheus' avoidance of sustained metrical runs to give the poem a rushed, frantic quality, each line drawing the reader on to the next without pause amid a constantly shifting spectrum of rhythms. The result is a poem whose differences from Euripides' piece are as important as its similarities.

In the study, however, perhaps the most striking similarities between *Persae* and the Phrygian's aria are similarities of form, subject matter, and content. As Bassett notes (*loc. cit.*), each poem is an operatic solo that narrates 'actual' events as opposed to stories culled from traditional myth. Each is a dramatic narrative, with an abundance of direct quotation.[122] Moreover, the two pieces deal with characters and situations that are strikingly similar and involve close similarities in language. Bassett points out that both poems place before their audience a cowardly

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[119] The use of iambic 'trimeters' at 171-72 (cf. 74) is very similar to Euripides' practice: see above, p. 182. Note as well how the similarities between 178 and 187 serve to frame Xerxes' initial despairing outburst (cf. Herington [1985] 157-58).

[120] See Reinach (1903) 80-83, ps.-Arist. *Pr.* 918b 13ff., and Dion. Hal. *de comp. vb.* 19; cf., however, Herington (1985) 156.

[121] Cf. Webster (1967) 20.

[122] Bassett (1931) 161 n. 3 cites *Persae* 72-81, 105-38, 150-61, 178-95, and the fragmentary [κ]αλεῖ of verse 50 (Page's numbering). For the use of quotation in the Phrygian's speech see above, p. 186. In each work these direct quotations help to heighten the melodramatic tone of the narrative while adding vividness and variety.

foreigner who is a Phrygian and employ that character as a foil for their Greek characters. In each the foreignness of the non-Greek is emphasized by reference to his speech.[123] Furthermore, both poems describe scenes of abject supplication (Orestes and Pylades before Helen at *Orestes* 1414-15, Timotheus' Phrygian before his captor at *Persae* 145-46), and both portray one character seizing another by the hair and taking that character captive (*Orestes* 1469-70, *Persae* 144).[124] Finally, each poem delights in portraying the reactions of non-tragic, ignoble characters to situations of extreme danger and confusion. In this regard both depart from Classical standards and lay themselves open to the charge of vulgarity.[125]

This last observation is an important one and will merit further attention when we discuss the later scene at 1503ff. between the Phrygian and Orestes.[126] Bassett's remarks as a whole, however, are limited by the nature of his argument and emphasize similarities between the two poems while neglecting some essential differences. It is not that similarities such as those listed above are unimportant: they point to marked affinities of style and subject-matter and reveal a great deal about the nature of Euripides' piece and how it would have struck a contemporary audience.[127] It would be wrong, however, to conclude from these similarities that the Phrygian's song is wholly or even mainly a musical or stylistic *tour de force*, an ἐμβόλιμον of sorts, inserted into the play merely to allow the poet the license of indulging in the excesses of a poetic and musical style that he found congenial. Although Euripides has incorporated many features of the New Music into the song (as he does elsewhere in his plays), he has rejected many of the more excessive features of the genre. We have already noticed Euripides' relatively conservative stance in metrical matters. He displays the same

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[123] *Or* 1397 and *Persae* 147 (see Herington [1985] 159 and n. 37; contrast Willink [ed.] *ad loc.*). Cf. *Or* 1385 and the references to outcries at *Persae* 34, 66-67, 100-03, 169-70 (with Page's emendation).

[124] See, further, West (ed.) on *Or* 1469.

[125] See Bassett (1931) 164. Cf., e.g., the remarks of Paley (ed.) on *Or* 1369 and 1503.

[126] See below, pp. 215-16 and 242-44.

[127] Bassett's list of similarities could be expanded. Cf., e.g., the references to flight at *Persae* 86-87, 119-20, 162-77 (and the lack of valor suggested thereby) with those at *Or* 1369-79, 1483-88b, 1498-99. *Persae* 104ff. reads much like *Or* 1381ff. and, esp., 1454ff. (cf. West [ed.] on *Or* 1453), although scenes of people in distress calling upon their distant homeland and its gods are not infrequent in tragedy. The references to clothes at *Persae* 167-68 and 134-36 (perhaps: see Page's note *ad loc.*) recall *Or* 1369-70 and 1431-36. (Again, references to oriental clothing are traditional and frequent: see Bacon [1961] 26ff., 74-75, and 121ff.) Finally, *Persae* 66-67 convey an accurate impression of the melodramatic terror of Euripides' Phrygian and provide a further clue about the manner in which these two pieces may have been performed. (The relationship between *Persae* 140ff. and *Or* 1506ff. is examined below, pp. 206-07.)

conservatism in regard to language and imagery. Despite the jibes of Aristophanes,[128] Euripides here, at least, displays little of the dithyrambic absurdity that is such an oppressive mark of Timotheus' style. True, we do find elaborate images (1377-79, 1383-89), the occasional descriptive circumlocution (1428-29, εὐπάγι κύκλῳ πτερίνῳ), and an admixture of ornamental epithets (1468, χρυσεοσάμβαλον ἴχνος). Yet such poetic contrivances pale beside Timotheus' kenning-like circumlocutions and neologisms,[129] outrageous metaphors,[130] and colorful and ever present polysyllabic epithets.[131] As a result, Euripides' Phrygian, for all of his excitement, delivers a more coherent report than that of *Persae,* where the luxuriant language and imagery often take on a life of their own, thereby obscuring the events being narrated. *Persae* 86ff. provides a useful example: metaphors such as ὀρείους πόδας ναός and στόματος μαρμαροφεγγεῖς παῖδες, while adding to the frenzy of the passage in their own peculiar way, distract the attention and give the verse an artificial, affected quality that is lacking in the Phrygian's more straightforward account at *Orestes* 1482ff.[132] Euripides' Phrygian remains a messenger in a Greek tragedy despite the atypical form in which his report is cast. The emphasis in his speech is on the facts being related, while poetic flights of language and imagery are kept firmly subordinated to the clear exposition of those facts.

As with language, so with narrative technique. As we have seen the Phrygian's account, despite the colorful introductory pieces at 1369ff., 1381ff., 1395ff., 1426ff., and 1454ff., presents a fairly sustained and coherent narration of a single event in a manner similar in some ways to that of Euripides' more prosaic messengers. In contrast, *Persae* jumps from dramatic situation to dramatic situation, presenting a series of vignettes that, while not entirely without order,[133] seem designed in great part to exploit the largest possible number of opportunities for

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[128] E.g., *Frogs* 98-100, 1309ff.

[129] E.g., *Persae* 5-6, 12-13 (with Page's suggested reading), 20, 22 (following Wilamowitz), 37-39, 63, 78, 79-81, 89-90, 90-91, 92-93.

[130] E.g., *Persae* 31-33 and 61-63.

[131] E.g., *Persae* 31, 62, 106, 123-24, 132-33. For general evaluations of Timotheus' language and imagery see Reinach (1903) 77ff., Ellingham (1921) 63-65, Pickard-Cambridge (1927) 66-68, Webster (1939) 185, 196, 197, and 201, Brussich (1970), and Herington (1985) 155.

[132] Even more extravagant poetic flights of fancy can be found in the battle scenes of *Persae* 5ff.

[133] Note, e.g., the climactic introduction of Xerxes at the narrative's end: see Ebeling (1925) 319.

Timotheus' dithyrambic language.[134] The difference between the two pieces is quite marked in this regard even on a casual reading, but is obscured if the Phrygian's speech is catalogued simply as a poetic experiment in the manner of the New Music as practiced by Timotheus. While each poem could be said to employ an 'impressionistic' style, Timotheus carries this style to an extreme unmatched in the Phrygian's song.

Thus Euripides consistently avoids the excesses of Timotheus in each of the facets of his poem: meter, language and imagery, narrative technique. Despite the numerous similarities between the Phrygian's speech and Timotheus' sole surviving work, differences do remain which are far-reaching and significant. Timotheus' poem consistently employs every possible poetic and (presumably) musical device to obtain different theatrical effects which seem to serve no other purpose than to provide an emotionally thrilling series of dramatic vignettes. The Phrygian's song also strives to present an exciting theatrical moment and, in so doing, employs several of the same devices as *Persae*. The question of whether it employs these devices to some greater purpose must be left for below, but that it employs greater control and more calculation in achieving its effects is beyond doubt.

In conclusion, it is worthwhile to compare Timotheus' Phrygian (*Persae* 140ff.) with Euripides':

> ἐπεὶ δέ τις λαβὼν ἄγοι
> πολυβότων Κελαινᾶν
> οἰκήτορ' ὀρφανὸν μαχᾶν
> σιδαρόκωπος ″Ελλαν,
> ἄγει κόμης ἐπισπάσας,
> ὁ δ' ἀμφὶ γόνασι περιπλεκεὶς
> ἐλίσσετ', ʽΕλλάδ' ἐμπλέκων
> ʼΑσιάδι φωνᾷ διάτορον
> σφραγῖδα θραύων στόματος,
> ʼΙάονα γλῶσσαν ἐξιχνεύων·
> ἔπω μοί σοι κῶς καὶ τί πρᾶγμα;
> αὖτις οὐδάμ' ἔλθω·
> καὶ νῦν ἐμὸς δεσπότης
> δεῦρο μ' ἐνθάδ' ἥξει·
> τὰ λοιπὰ δ' οὐκέτι, πάτερ,
> οὐκέτι μαχέσ' αὖτις ἐνθάδ' ἔρχω,
> ἀλλὰ κάθω·
> ἐγώ σοι μὲν δεῦρ', ἐγὼ

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134 See Bassett (1931) 164 and cf. Webster (1939) 154-55 and 173.

κεῖσε παρὰ Σάρδι, παρὰ Σοῦσα,
'Αγβάτανα ναίων·
"Αρτιμις ἐμὸς μέγας θεὸς
παρ' "Εφεσον φυλάξει.

Persae 140-161

As elsewhere in Timotheus' poem, the differences from Euripides' approach strike us as forcibly as the similarities. Timotheus' Phrygian dissolves in fear, providing the audience with 12 lines of intensely frightened, intensely mangled Greek.[135] The introductory lines 'Ελλάδ' ... ἐξιχνεύων (themselves a Timothean *tour de force* unparalleled in Euripides' piece) sum up the very heart and soul of Timotheus' Phrygian: a frightened, ignorant knave who is brought on briefly to provide a moment of comic pathos through his barbaric language and stereotyped cowardice. A short glimpse and he is gone. Euripides' Phrygian is a comic coward as well, but has greater depth, if only because he is allowed to present a coherent speech and is not limited to semi-barbaric gibberish. His eloquent fear, his excited nature, his loyalty to Helen and hostile mistrust of the Greek Orestes and Pylades, his evident pleasure in the customs of the East (1426ff.), all bespeak a fulness of conception that is lacking in Timotheus' more frenzied, more superficial, and briefer treatment. In exploiting the artistic possibilities of the New Music Euripides has not fallen prey to that genre's notable weaknesses. He presents his audience with an exciting, highly theatrical scene, but not at the expense of coherence or relevance. As an example of the New Music *per se* his piece is so conservative as to constitute a virtual failure; its success as a dramatic scene will be evaluated in what follows.

THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF THE PHRYGIAN'S NARRATIVE

As has been argued above, the Phrygian in lines 1366-1502 is first and foremost a messenger, bearing a report that must be delivered clearly and unambiguously. He makes his appearance (as messengers often do) at a moment of particular tension and uncertainty. The audience has seen Orestes and Pylades enter the palace with the intention of murdering Helen; it has heard Helen's off-stage cries of terror (1296 and 1301); it has seen the innocent Hermione lured into the trap plotted and laid by

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[135] On the tone of the Timothean passage, see Herington (1985) 156-57. Contrast the scholars cited by Scarcella (1956) 275 n. 32.

Electra. It now joins the chorus (1353ff.) in anxiously waiting to hear
what has come to pass behind the now ominously silent palace door. The
tension is particularly high because the events about to be reported are
not a foregone conclusion, as is generally the case with such speeches.
We know beforehand, for example, at *Andromache* 1085ff. that
Neoptolemus has been killed, at *Supplices* 650ff. that Theseus' forces
have been victorious. The accounts given by messengers in such
instances might be exciting and might involve incidents or points of detail
or emphasis that are unexpected and significant, but the basic import of
their speeches — victory or defeat, 'unexpected' joy or sudden
catastrophe — is either known to the audience well before the messengers
arrive or is made clear before their speech proper begins. In this case
Euripides has taken his viewers into uncharted, exceedingly murky
waters by departing entirely from tradition and entering the realm of free
(or nearly free) invention.[136] The audience would probably expect that
Euripides could not allow Helen to die, but only the most jaded of
theater-goers would not give their closest attention to the Phrygian's
words when he finally appeared.

The account with which Euripides provides his Phrygian does not
disappoint. It is carefully structured to tantalize the audience to the
utmost, toying with its viewers' curiosity and ignorance, and saving its
one crucial bit of information (the disappearance of Helen) until the
climactic finish.[137] The Phrygian's initial outburst (1369ff.)
communicates only a sense of extreme terror and ($\xi\iota\phi\sigma$ $\dot{\epsilon}\kappa$ $\theta\alpha\nu\dot{\alpha}\tau\sigma\upsilon$
$\pi\dot{\epsilon}\phi\epsilon\upsilon\gamma\alpha$) danger. The audience's attention is fully engaged, its curiosity
piqued all the more, but it still is ignorant of Helen's fate. The chorus
rather blandly asks, $\tau\iota$ δ' $\dot{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\iota\nu$; (1380), to which the Phrygian responds
(1381ff.) with an even more frantic outburst that approximates the
confused terror of Timotheus' Phrygian in tone if not in specific form or
content. Again, however, all that is communicated to the audience is the
Phrygian's extreme fear and anguish as he sings his intensely agitated
lyrical lament for Troy. Twenty-four lines of frantic verse have passed
and still the audience knows nothing of Helen's fate. Again the chorus
asks what has happened within the palace (1393). In response, the
Phrygian opens with yet another lyrical lament (1395-99). This one is
more ominously to the point, however, with its reference to 'kingly blood
shed down upon the earth' (1397-98): the possibility that Helen has been

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[136] See de Jong (1991) 32.
[137] On what follows see W. G. Arnott (1973) 52-53 and 56-69.

murdered suddenly does not seem so distant.[138] The narrative proper begins: the initial approach and supplication of Orestes and Pylades (1400-15), the hostile mistrust of Helen's foreign entourage (1416-24). In response to another question from the chorus (1425) the Phrygian backtracks in order to describe the household activities interrupted by the arrival of the two Greeks (1426-36). Nearly 70 lines have passed at this point and the audience seems to be as far as ever from learning precisely what has happened to Menelaus' wife. With Orestes' address to Helen (1437-43) the plot finally begins to unfold, as the audience hears of Orestes leading the unsuspecting woman off to another section of the palace while his companion shuts her servants away in various out-of-the-way places (1444-52). Again an anxious question from the chorus: τί τοὐπὶ τῷδε συμφορᾶς ἐγίγνετο; (1453). The audience expects the information that it has been waiting so patiently to receive. Euripides first tantalizes it with still another general yet ominous (φονίων παθέων, 1455) lament (1454-56). At 1457ff., however, comes the moment of truth, or so it seems. Orestes and Pylades draw their swords (1457-64), Helen flees and is captured (1465-71), and Orestes is on the point of driving his sword into her neck (1471-72), when suddenly another interruption occurs: with a loud cry the Phrygian slaves rush to the rescue, forcing Orestes and Pylades to turn from Helen and fight them off (1473-88b).[139] No sooner is the chaotic battle over than Hermione appears (another interruption) and is taken captive (1490-93). Again the two Greeks turn toward the business at hand, the slaughter of Helen (1494), only to see her vanish into thin air (1494-97). The event which the spectators have anxiously awaited for some 125 lines never occurs. In the space of five lines it is snatched from the audience's grasp as suddenly as Helen disappears from the grasp of Orestes and Pylades: all that remains is confusion.[140] The speech draws to a rapid close (1498-1502) and the viewer is left to savor the realization that all of Orestes' and Pylades' plotting, all of the events just narrated in such detail, have

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[138] See Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1395-99 and 1398-99. Di Benedetto's comments (ed.) on 1397ff. are misguided. The lines present a general statement concerning an oriental custom, a statement that is intentionally ambiguous and misleading. To limit its reference to the death of Priam is not only problematic *per se* but diverts attention away from the more important function of further misleading the audience and thereby laying the ground for the surprising climax of the speech.

[139] In the text, explicit mention is made only of Pylades; the implication, however, is that Orestes, too, is distracted by the sudden onrush of Helen's retinue. (The similarity of the former scenario to that described at Paus. 1.22.6 suggests that Euripides might be employing a lost source as a model here.)

[140] Cf. Willink (ed.) on 1494-97.

been an exercise in futility. Except for the capture of Hermione, the situation of the protagonists is exactly the same as it was when Orestes and Pylades first entered the palace.

The exciting, action-packed narrative of the Phrygian's song reflects a common feature of the Euripidean messenger speech.[141] So also does the carefully-paced manner in which the story gradually unfolds, slowly building to its exciting conclusion. Two features of the Phrygian's narrative, however, do stand out. One (examined above) is the way in which the speech toys with the audience's ignorance of Helen's fate.[142] Before the Phrygian's entrance the audience has every reason to believe that, the authority of mythical tradition notwithstanding, Helen has been murdered. The two cries of Helen at 1296 and 1301 are those of a dying woman (ὄλλυμαι κακῶς, θνῄσκω). Moreover, to an audience versed in what Mastronarde has termed "the 'grammar' of [stage] conventions,"[143] the scene at *Orestes* 1296ff., with death cries from behind the *skene* to which an on-stage character (or the chorus) responds, could only be interpreted as indicating the actual murder of the character whose cries are heard.[144] Of the nine other examples of such scenes preserved[145] only *Antiope* uses off-stage cries to no effect. In all other instances when screams are heard, they indicate a corresponding action (either murder or, in the case of Polymestor and Polyphemus, blinding) which is actually taking place and they are usually followed by a dramatic tableau of the aftermath. In the case of *Antiope* 48ff. (Page) the evil Lycus survives the attempt on his life, despite the impression created by his off-stage calls for help. Three features of this scene distinguish it from Helen's cries at *Orestes* 1296ff., however: (1) Lycus, Amphion, and Zethus appear on stage within five to seven lines of Lycus' initial outcry;[146] (2) Lycus' offstage cries do not indicate that he is perishing but only call for aid; (3) when Lycus does refer to his death it is in the future tense (line 56,

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[141] Cf. the Errol Flynn-like feats of the doomed Neoptolemus in the report at *Andr* 1085ff.

[142] See Seidensticker (1982) 104 n. 17, W. G. Arnott (1973) 56-59, Willink (ed.) xxxvii-viii.

[143] Mastronarde (1979) 3. (Mastronarde is following Fraenkel [1950] 2.305; cf. Bain [1981] 1-2).

[144] Cf. W. G. Arnott (1973) 57, (1982) 38ff. (esp. 41-43), and (1983) 25-27, Seidensticker (1982) 104 n. 16, Halleran (1985) 74-75 and n. 64, Hamilton (1987) 591-92. See, in general, Taplin (1977) 218-20 (on the βοή in Greek tragedy) and 323 (with n. 1, on *Mord-Stichomythie*), and Hamilton (1987) *passim*.

[145] *Ag* 1343ff., *Cho* 869, S. *El* 1404ff., *Med* 1270aff., *Hec* 1035ff., E. *El* 1165ff., *Her* 749ff., *Cyc* 663ff., *Antiope* 48ff. (Page). For a more complete survey of 'tragic cries within' see Hamilton (1987) 585-88; cf. Flickinger (1939).

[146] See below, p. 343, on the *Antiope* passage, a scene that recalls *Cyc* 663ff.

θανοῦμαι) and he is on stage. As a rule, then, cries from behind the *skene* are a relatively accurate guide to events off stage: Agamemnon screams that he has been stabbed, Polymestor that he has been blinded and his children slain, Polyphemus that his eye has been burnt out, Lycus (in *Antiope*) only that he requires aid. Thus when Helen cries ὄλλυμαι κακῶς and θνῄσκω, the audience has every reason to take her words literally.[147] The Phrygian himself does nothing to disabuse his listeners of this belief until the very end of his speech. His terrified entrance, his words at 1397-99 (βασιλέων ... αἷμα χυθῇ κατὰ γᾶν ξίφεσιν σιδαρέοισιν ῾Αιδα) and 1455 (φονίων παθέων), the ambiguity of ἐπὶ φόνῳ χαμαιπετεῖ ματρός at 1491[148] are all designed expressly to build upon the false impression created earlier by Helen's cries. The truth, when it does come, comes with a suddenness and a brevity that is wrenchingly anticlimactic.

This last observation leads to the second distinguishing feature of the Phrygian's report, the sense of confused futility, of chaotic helplessness that it conveys. Like the messenger's report at *Ion* 1122ff., the Phrygian's speech describes in lengthy detail a plot that fails.[149] But, unlike Euripides' Phrygian, the messenger of *Ion* describes very matter-of-factly and with relative calm a series of events the outcome of which is known from the beginning. Here the form of the Phrygian's speech becomes significant. The excited lyrics of his song, with their numerous word repetitions and anguished outcries, not only add to the tense excitement of the scene, but develop the impression of a world in helpless disarray. This impression has been growing for some time in the play and will reach a climax in the final confrontation between Orestes and Menelaus. The sudden entrance of this terrified slave dressed in exotic garb and singing his frenzied song communicates a sense of jumbled confusion matching his chaotic tale of devious plots, mobs of frightened slaves, Hermione, who suddenly appears from nowhere, and Helen, who just as suddenly disappears.

As we have seen, a number of scholars interpret the chaotic confusion of the monody as reflecting a moral confusion on the part of Orestes, an indication of the unwholesome nature of his schemes against Helen and

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[147] Gredley (1968) 415-16 notes that ὁ πραχθεὶς φόνος at 1354 further misleads the audience.

[148] See W. G. Arnott (1973) 58 and Willink (ed.) *ad loc.* Di Benedetto (ed.) also notes the ambiguity, but goes too far in suggesting a further reference to the earlier death of Clytemnestra (i.e. ἐπὶ φόνῳ as "'inoltre,' 'e in aggiunta,' nel senso che un' altra vittima viene ad aggiungersi a Clitemestra").

[149] Cf. esp. *Mel. Desm.* 26ff. (Page) and, on *mechanema* messenger speeches, see de Jong (1991) 179-81.

Hermione. Thus they emphasize the absurdities of the slave's song and use them to form an indictment against the protagonist. The significance of the Phrygian in lines 1369-1502 lies not in his role as a possible caricature of Orestes,[150] however, nor in any ironic implications that his ridiculous demeanor might have for Orestes' actions. The fact, for example, that a cowardly slave is allowed to hold the stage alone for such a lengthy scene[151] to a large degree merely reflects his status as messenger: that role is typically assumed by just such homely characters who hold the stage for the duration of their often lengthy reports and who, while not as colorful in their ignobility as Euripides' Phrygian, frequently reveal a timely 'prudence' in moments of danger that befits their humble status.[152] Similarly, the bizarre exoticism of the Phrygian's dress, his exaggerated fear, and his ungainly confusion might well make the spectators smile (or, perhaps, grimace), but there is little reason to assume that their reaction to the Phrygian's comic absurdity would color their evaluation of Orestes' deeds. The lively terror with which the slave responds to the onslaught of Orestes and Pylades constitutes an important feature in the colorful baroque of his personality, but it is difficult to imagine that an audience would regard his remarks concerning the two Greeks as in any way authoritative. On the other hand, the audience might well regard this strange scene as being of a piece with the action of the play, which has been growing ever more baffling since the entrance of Menelaus. The Phrygian's report is significant because it gives an impression of frenzied incoherence, which reflects the world of the play itself, and contributes to the ever increasing sense of disjointedness experienced by the audience. The melodramatic excitement of the scene serves a purpose beyond merely providing a lively bit of theater: it gives poetic expression to the spirit that underlies a world in which the valorous Orestes of tradition can be called into court for his famous deed and tried before a corrupt mob of demagogues and political factions; in which Menelaus can look forward to embracing the murderous Clytemnestra and letting bygones be bygones; in which Orestes, Pylades, and Electra can be reduced to laying insidious plots against Helen and the innocent Hermione; and in which such plots can be frustrated at the last moment by the bewilderingly sudden disappearance of Helen. In this regard the Phrygian's impotent terror and confusion do mirror the response of

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[150] This view is developed, with particular reference to *Or* 1503ff., by (e.g.) Wolff (1968) 136-37, H. Parry (1969) 345, Schein (1975) 63, and Zeitlin (1980) 63 (cf. below, pp. 245-48). By contrast, Biehl (1955) 84-85 sees the slave as a parodic reflection of Menelaus.

[151] Cf. Wolff (1968) 140.

[152] Cf., e.g., the messengers of *IT, Hel, Ba, Mel. Desm.*

Orestes to a certain extent:[153] the anguished helplessness of the Phrygian parallels the hero's anxiety and frustration, which have been growing since the early scenes of the play.[154] In a similar fashion, the exotic confusion generated by the Phrygian's unexpected violations of convention builds on the growing agitation evident in the series of scenes at 1246ff. and prepares for the even more surprising scenes that follow. In attempting to evaluate the import of the Phrygian's song, attention should be directed, not to the possible moralistic implications of the scene, but to the manner in which it brings to a glorious culmination the brooding sense of dislocation, of nothing being quite what it should be, that characterizes *Orestes* from its earliest scenes.

In casting the messenger speech at *Orestes* 1369ff. in the form of a monody Euripides achieves more than a mere musical or theatrical *tour de force*. Without impairing the function of such a speech to relay important information to the audience, he uses the agitated lyrics of the report to give expression to the troubled, almost surrealistic atmosphere that has pervaded his play from its very beginning and that has been growing steadily since the entrance of Menelaus. He also establishes a mood that will be important in the truly chaotic scenes that follow. Faced with a world in a similar state of disarray the Ephesian Dromio of *The Comedy of Errors* cries, "Will you be bound for nothing? Be mad, good master; cry, 'the devil!'" (4.4.121). The logical response to a world gone mad, he feels, is to follow suit and play the madman oneself.[155] In a similar way Euripides seems to have felt that the proper messenger for the bizarre circumstances surrounding the attempt on Helen, the only messenger who could give proper expression to the mood of the play at this point, was one like the Phrygian. Only such a report as the Phrygian's monody could communicate the frenzied helplessness and frustration, the darkly surrealistic confusion that comes to dominate *Orestes* in its later scenes.

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[153] Note the way in which, at 1462, with the words, Κατθανῇ, κατθανῇ, the Phrygian's seemingly incoherent agitation becomes one with that of the excited Orestes and Pylades as, with a hysteric scream, they leap to put their deadly plot into effect.

[154] Wolff (1968) 141-42 develops a similar argument but, again, goes farther in drawing parallels than is justified.

[155] Note the similar sentiment at Theognis 313-14.

CHAPTER FIVE

ORESTES 1503-36

INTRODUCTION

The Phrygian's aria at 1369ff. represents one of the oddest messenger speeches in the tragic corpus. It is succeeded by an even more peculiar spectacle, a scene that is, by general consensus, the most singular in all of Greek tragedy: *Orestes* 1503-36. No sooner has the Phrygian finished his report than the frenzied Orestes (ἐπτοημένῳ ποδί, 1505) enters in hot pursuit of the escaped slave. A curious debate ensues, as the formerly helpless Orestes menaces his defenceless adversary with a vehemence reminiscent of his brief appearance at 1347-48.[1] In the end he spares the Phrygian and retreats within the confines of the palace. Critics have found here evidence of the protagonist's depraved cruelty in the vicious way in which he toys with his victim. Many have gone further by asserting that Orestes here displays in full the deluded criminality with which Tyndareus charges him. The confusions evident in the scene and the content of the debate itself are regarded as intentional reflections of the young man's degenerate nature, insecurity, lack of a fixed purpose, and, above all, crazed violence of thought. Here is the matricide in his true colors, stripped of his former self-pitying pretensions to sympathy. This chapter's principal goal will be to address these charges and to demonstrate that in this scene Orestes should be regarded neither as degenerate nor insane.

Before such a study can be undertaken, however, it is necessary to address a very different issue. For many readers of *Orestes* the most striking, as well as the most problematic, feature of the scene is its clear debt to the comic stage. While homely or even mildly humorous minor characters can be found as early as Aeschylus,[2] none engages in the open slapstick of the Phrygian, nor is any so overtly modeled after a stock

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[1] See Appendix Eight.

[2] Note, e.g., the nurse in *Cho*, the watchman of *Ag*, the guard in *Ant*, the messenger in *Trach*. For a brief review of such characters see Biffi (1961).

comic character.[3] Moreover, the scene itself appears to serve no
immediate purpose, doing nothing to further the action of the play. On the
contrary, Orestes' playing straight-man to the Phrygian's witticisms
scarcely accords with the dire nature of his plight at this point in the play.
These features of the scene drew charges of impropriety in antiquity (Σ
Orestes 1512 and 1521) and have aroused the suspicions of critics in
more recent times, who have challenged the scene's authenticity. The
first scholar to study the issue in detail was Grueninger, who argued
forcefully that the scene had been interpolated from another work by
actors in the fourth century, *ad animos spectatorum delectandos*.[4] In his
general study of such interpolations Page rejected Grueninger's
arguments and for some thirty years afterwards his view held the field:
the scene was regarded as an aberration from the tragic norm but not out
of character for Euripides in the later stage of his career.[5] In 1968,
however, Gredley reopened the argument, modifying and augmenting
Grueninger's thesis. Few studies of the scene have supported Gredley,[6]
who has nevertheless raised important issues, including fundamental
questions regarding the nature of late Euripidean tragedy.

THE QUESTION OF AUTHENTICITY

Gredley objects that most defenders of the scene restrict themselves to
the explication of isolated difficulties and vague pronouncements
regarding the scene's dramatic importance and do not make "any attempt
to consider what may be the positive, thematic relationship of these
verses to their context or the implications of certain of the scene's
characteristics in juxtaposition to the dramatic conventions which
Euripides is elsewhere agreed to have observed" (409). He maintains that

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[3] The similarities between the Phrygian and the clever but cowardly slave of New
Comedy have often been noted: see, e.g., Mercanti (1915) 79-80 and Csapo (1986b) 148-51.
The closest parallel for such a scene in the tragic corpus is provided by the Portress in *Hel*
(noted by Mercanti [1915] 80).

[4] Grueninger (1898) 23 (see, in general, pp. 11-24). Grueninger is followed by Olivieri
(1900) 235, who argues that the interpolation was made possible by the comic tenor of the
work as a whole.

[5] Page (1934) 45-48. Cf. the comments of Mercanti (1915) 78-80, Perrotta (1928) 111.
The scene's authenticity is accepted (or assumed) by most editors and commentators: see
O'Brien (1986) 213 and n. 3 and add Scarcella (ed.), Willink (ed.), West (ed.), and Diggle
(ed.).

[6] Gredley's thesis is rejected by Seidensticker (1985), O'Brien (1986), and Willink (ed.)
on *Or* 1506-36; it is supported by Reeve (1972) 263-64, W. G. Arnott (1973) 58 n. 1, and
Bain (1981) 45 and n. 9.

the scene serves no purpose in the larger context of the drama's plot nor its thematic development; that it violates stage conventions employed by Euripides elsewhere in his works; that it presents a view of Helen's fate that is contradicted elsewhere in the play; that it contains several peculiarities of diction; that it is riddled with internal inconsistencies and a generally muddled conception of the situation that faces Orestes and his friends. Examination of Gredley's arguments will help us to arrive at a better understanding of the scene as a whole. Only then can the larger charge of dramatic irrelevance and the question of the place of the scene within the play's economy be considered. In the following pages, therefore, Gredley's five principal arguments are individually summarized in italics, followed by my own analysis. A final section then considers broader matters of interpretation.[7]

(1) *It is Euripides' usual practice to have* ἄγγελοι *exit immediately after their message has been delivered; apparent exceptions to this rule (such as the messengers of* Helen *700ff. and* Phoenissae *1067ff.) are not* ἄγγελοι *in any true sense but should be classified as* δοῦλοι γενναῖοι, θεράποντες, *etc. The Phrygian, for all of his peculiarities, fulfills the function of an* ἄγγελος: *therefore the fact that he remains on stage after 1502 deserves remark and "is, perhaps, bound to stimulate a somewhat closer examination of the reason for* [the scene's] *composition."* (Gredley [1968] 410-11)

The narrow classification of characters upon which this argument rests is not supported by the practice of the fifth-century dramatists. Tradition provided Euripides with the convention of lengthy speeches to report action that occurred off-stage and with models for several types of minor characters of subordinate rank; nothing prevented him from melding these two conventional features or (to put the matter more correctly) nothing justifies the rigid system of distinctions presupposed by Gredley's argument. Thus, for example, at *Cyclops* 382ff., *Hecuba* 1145ff., and *Bacchae* 616ff., characters of major importance in their respective plays deliver what can only be described as messenger speeches,[8] while at *Hecuba* 98ff. the chorus presents an anapaestic messenger speech in lieu of the traditional *parodos*. Moreover, Gredley's

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[7] Much of this ground has been covered by Seidensticker (1985) and O'Brien (1986), to whom the reader will find frequent reference.

[8] Cf. Tecmessa at *Aj* 284ff., Oedipus at *OT* 774ff., the *paedagogus* of S. *El* 680ff., Chrysothemis at S. *El* 892ff., Hyllus at *Trach* 749ff., Ismene at *OC* 361ff.

list of tarrying pseudo-messengers could be extended.[9] For example, it is
reasonable to identify the character who opposes Theoclymenus at *Helen*
1627ff. (misidentified as the chorus in LP) with the messenger of 1512ff.,
despite the change of tone between 1512ff. and 1627ff.[10] A parallel can
be found at *Heraclidae* 961ff.,[11] where again an apparently nondescript
character who enters to perform a menial task (928ff.) suddenly
intervenes directly in the on-going action. Compare, in addition, *Antigone*
1244ff., where the nameless messenger who has announced the deaths of
Haemon and Antigone enters the house explicitly to check on Eurydice's
condition. He is followed almost immediately by the entrance of an
unidentified ἐξάγγελος (1278ff.) who has seen Eurydice's death and is
fully aware of the sorrows already besetting Creon: the audience must
assume that the two characters are in fact identical.[12] Like the messenger
in *Helen*, this character remains unnamed and is sketched with only the
broadest strokes yet is allowed to exceed the strict limitations
hypothesized by Gredley for the role of the ἄγγελος.

    In permitting the personality of his Phrygian messenger to develop,
however, Euripides needed only to consider the guard of *Antigone* 223ff.
and 384ff., or Lichas and the slave/messenger of *Trachiniae* 180ff.[13]
Gredley's implied objection is that these individuals, unlike the Phrygian,
are not true messengers but characters with definite personalities. The
weakness of this claim becomes clear when we recall the remarkable
nature of the Phrygian's monody and the high degree to which he is
characterized there (although in stock, stereotypical terms).[14] While

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    [9] Cf. Taplin (1977) 89, Burnett (1971) 219-20, Seidensticker (1985) 448 and n. 16.

    [10] See Campbell (1950) on *Hel* 1627. Dale (1967) *ad loc.* rather unconvincingly defends
LP. She argues against the notion of an "attendant appearing (unheralded and unidentified)
like a jack-in-the-box from within [the palace]," and rejects as equally unlikely the possibility
of one of the king's silent attendants suddenly speaking up. Dale's objection to identifying
the speaker with the messenger of 1512ff. (the most obvious candidate) is based on the same
problematic set of *a priori* assumptions as is Gredley's argument cited above: "Nor can the
Messenger stay on, after a speech of 100 lines, to carry on further dialogue; it is part of the
Messenger-concept that after delivering his grand set piece he goes offstage. Besides, the
Messenger's sentiments here, *after* his recent experiences, would in effect characterize him to
a distracting and quite unparalleled extent." (Cf. Kannicht [1969] on *Hel* 1621-41.) See as
well Stanley-Porter (1977), who identifies the speaker as an attendant of Theonoe, and cf.
Mastronarde (1979) 63 and n. 34.

    [11] See Diggle (1984) *ad loc.* and Wilkins (1993) on *Hcld* 961-72. For a fuller discussion,
see Zuntz (1955) 125-28 and cf. Mastronarde (1979) 96-97. (For a contrary view see Burnett
[1976] 11 n. 12.) Cf. E. *Su* 634ff. (cited by Seidensticker [1985] 448 n. 16).

    [12] See Brown (1987) on *Ant* 1278-80; contrast the remarks of Kitto (1964) 212-13 and de
Jong (1991) 67.

    [13] Cf. Burnett (1971) 219 n. 16, who also cites the Corinthian herdsman at *OT* 924ff. Cf.
as well the charioteer of *Rh* 729ff.

    [14] See above, p. 183. Cf. Seidensticker (1985) 448-49, who stresses that, properly

Greek tragedy provides numerous examples of messengers who appear, present their report, and immediately disappear without a trace, many precedents exist for an ἄγγελος with a more developed character. To exclude the Phrygian from the latter group while including the messengers of *Helen* 700ff. and *Phoenissae* 1067ff. is to indulge in special pleading.

On the other hand, Burnett ([1971] 219-20) has indicated positive dramatic reasons for the Phrygian to remain on stage and confront Orestes. Whatever the audience's expectations, it certainly would *not* be prepared for a quasi-*agon* between Orestes and this frantic slave. The sudden appearance of Orestes and the bizarre nature of the scene that follows add, then, to the confused lack of order that pervades the latter scenes of *Orestes*.[15] The scene is fantastical — heroes do not ordinarily busy themselves in sardonic exchanges with messengers — but its bizarre nature is in harmony with the direction taken by the play as a whole in these final scenes.

(2) *The motivation for the scene is feeble and inconsistent. Orestes enters with the avowed purpose of preventing the Phrygian from sending a cry for help to Menelaus (1510), yet at 1529ff. professes to despise any attempt by the feckless Menelaus to rescue Hermione by force but fears instead a possible attack from the Argives. The series of eventualities considered in these final lines is muddled. The inconsistency between 1510 and the confused 1529ff. represents an attempt by the bumbling interpolator to alleviate the glaring inconsistency between Orestes' successful mission to prevent any news from reaching Menelaus and the immediate arrival of the latter at 1554. Thus the nature of Orestes' concern is clumsily transformed from a fear lest Menelaus be warned to a fear that the Argives might be summoned. The latter then is complicated further by consideration (at 1533-36) of a third possibility — that Menelaus and the Argives may arrive jointly — with a tedious precision typical of interpolators. Lines 1533-36 are particularly troublesome, with: (1) the use of γάρ in 1533 to introduce a third, disjunctive alternative; (2) the epexegetic καί of 1534, which implies "that Menelaus' unwillingness to save Orestes will in some way be more likely*

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speaking, the Phrygian is not a messenger but a monodist and therefore, according to the conventions of the fifth-century stage, would not be expected to exit immediately after his song. (Seidensticker cites Barner [1971] 306.) Cf. Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1503-36: "... it would be at least as strange if, having sung, the actor did not remain to *speak*."

[15] Cf. Biehl (1965) on *Or* 1503 regarding Euripides' use of *Überraschung bei den Szenenübergängen*.

if he is accompanied by Argives;" (3) a further example in 1535 of the
tedious precision dear to interpolators;[16] *(4) the use of* νεκρός *in*
apposition to a noun in 1536 (where we expect a dependent genitive) and
the uncomfortably close echo there of Hecuba *45-46.* (Gredley [1968]
411-13 and 418 n. 20)[17]

The central assumption that underlies the above assertions is a familiar
one, that an inept interpolator, rather than repairing his monstrous
creation, merely shifted course in mid-stream, thereby creating even more
of a muddle. The practice of invoking such straw men has atrophied in
the course of this century and there are good reasons for rejecting its
revival here.[18] Several of the detailed textual problems alleged by
Gredley are exaggerated. His inference that the καί of 1534 somehow
implies that Menelaus will be less willing to aid Orestes if he (Menelaus)
is accompanied by Argives is untenable: elaboration of a condition
through the use of epexegetic καί and a negative is a common rhetorical
device employed to add weight and emphasis to an utterance.[19] Here
Orestes merely asserts that, if Menelaus should bring a large force against
the house and, as such a course of action would imply, should refuse to
champion Orestes' cause, then the ultimate step of killing Hermione will
have to be considered. The link between the two parts of the condition is
particularly close in this instance: Menelaus is obliged by ties of blood
and by past favors to unite with Orestes in an attempt to win the Argives
over to a sympathetic view of Orestes' deed; instead, he is envisioned as
actively summoning the Argives to join in an attack *against* Orestes.

Suspicions regarding 1535 imply nothing concerning the authenticity
of the passage as a whole, as has often been noted.[20] As for Gredley's
criticism of the construction in 1536 and his remark that, "... I can find
no instance in the extant plays of nouns in apposition with νεκρός" (418

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[16] Cf. Paley (ed.) *ad loc.*

[17] Cf. Grueninger (1898) 13-16; *contra:* Page (1934) 46-47.

[18] Cf. Reeve (1972) 264 n. 47, Seidensticker (1985) 452, O'Brien (1986) 216, Willink
(ed.) on *Or* 1536.

[19] Cf., e.g., the less complex example at *Or* 607: ἐπεὶ θρασύνῃ κοὐχ ὑποστέλλῃ
λόγῳ .... For the mixture of indicative and subjunctive in the protasis at 1533-34, see Willink
(ed.) on *Or* 1534.

[20] Cf. O'Brien (1986) 225 n. 23. As Biehl (1955) 84 and Seidensticker (1985) 455
indicate, the interpolation of an individual line can be envisioned more readily than that of an
entire scene in trochaic tetrameter. Di Benedetto (ed.) and West (ed.) defend 1535, claiming
that Orestes could not omit mention of Electra and Pylades in the course of this ultimatum.
(See below, pp. 239-41, on Diggle's deletion of 1533-36.)

n. 20), see *Hippolytus* 905-06 (σὴν δάμαρθ' ὁρῶ, πάτερ, / νεκρόν),[21] while the echo of *Hecuba* 45-46 (δυοῖν δὲ παίδοιν δύο νεκρὼ κατόψεται / μήτηρ, ἐμοῦ τε τῆς τε δυστήνου κόρης) merely reflects the Greek fondness for precision in such matters (a precision that is not solely the concern of interpolators).[22]

The more damning charge, if proven, lies in Gredley's contention that the motivation for the scene is specious and inconsistent. Here a fresh examination of the passage as a whole is in order. The central assumption found in Gredley's arguments, as well as in Grueninger's, is that Orestes enters to prevent the Phrygian from calling to Menelaus for help, that his mission in fact is successful, and that, as a result, no one mentioned in the play can have informed the Spartan king of events within the palace. The question of the identity of Menelaus' informant will be taken up in section (3) below; here I wish to consider the motivation of Orestes in the suspect scene. An initial difficulty arises in the interpretation of verse 1510, where the force of the diaeresis and the parallel construction of 1511 compel us to read Μενέλεῳ as the object of βοηδρομεῖν and not (as Gredley argues) as the object of κραυγὴν ἔθηκας.[23] Thus even in this early portion of the scene Orestes' concerns focus, not on the arrival of Menelaus (which, as Di Benedetto [(ed.) *ad loc.*] indicates, is necessary for the *mechanema* to succeed), but on the arrival of the Argives: although he can depend on using the threat to Hermione to coerce Menelaus' cooperation, Orestes has no means of controlling the Argive populace.[24]

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[21] Cf., e.g., *Med* 1220, *Andr* 1156, *Tro* 448, *Phoen* 1445.

[22] Euripides frequently employs δύο for the sake of vividness (e.g., *Ion* 466, *Or* 1401; Wedd [ed.] on *Or* 1536 notes the adjective's "pictorial effect") or pathos (e.g., *Alc* 246, *Hcld* 653, *Su* 1157, *Tro* 818, *IT* 897, *IA* 1247), or to achieve a verbal jingle (e.g., *Hipp* 515, *Andr* 516, *Ion* 539, *Hel* 731-32, *Phoen* 423, *Or* 551). Emphasis on the visual dimension of another's death or misfortune is also common (e.g., *Med* 1313, *Andr* 1225, E. *El* 486); Gredley's suspicions (418) regarding the appearance of κατόψεται exclusively at *Hec* 45 and *Or* 1536 in the Euripidean corpus are therefore unfounded. Cf. M. Parry (1971) 292-96 on Euripides' tendency to echo his own works (further bibliography is cited in Sutton [1987] 66 n. 23) and see Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1536 for other echoes of *Hec* in *Or*. Cf. below, pp. 338-39.

[23] Cf. Di Benedetto (ed.) and West (ed.) *ad loc.*, O'Brien (1986) 216-17. Willink (ed.) and Diggle (ed.) adopt the reading Μενέλεων, thereby erasing the ambiguity altogether. This reading seems to be based less on textual considerations than on the conviction that the Phrygian must be calling to Menelaus for aid: see Willink (ed.) *ad loc.* I cannot agree with Willink that, "the slight shift in the Phrygian's reply [at 1511] is quite straightforward."

[24] Cf. Weil (ed.) on *Or* 1533, Wedd (ed.) on *Or* 1531, Page (1934) 47, Erbse (1975) 448-49. Page is led, on the basis of Grueninger's objections ([1898] 13-14), to place undue emphasis on 1132ff. (If Orestes and Pylades count on being celebrated as heroes by the Argives after Helen's murder, why this concern at 1530ff. regarding their anger?) The enmity of the Argives and their opposition to the schemes of Orestes and his friends is taken for granted by the chorus at 1353ff. and by Orestes himself in his later attempt to blackmail

This same state of affairs is assumed in lines 1529-36:

> τοῦ δὲ μὴ στῆσαί σε κραυγὴν οὕνεκ' ἐξῆλθον δόμων·
> ὀξὺ γὰρ βοῆς ἀκοῦσαν Ἄργος ἐξεγείρεται.
> Μενέλεων δ' οὐ τάρβος ἡμῖν ἀναλαβεῖν ἔσω ξίφους·
> ἀλλ' ἴτω ξανθοῖς ἐπ' ὤμων βοστρύχοις γαυρούμενος.
> εἰ γὰρ Ἀργείους ἐπάξει τοῖσδε δώμασιν λαβών,
> τὸν Ἑλένης φόνον διώκων, κἀμὲ μὴ σῴζειν θέλῃ,
> [σύγγονόν τ' ἐμὴν Πυλάδην τε τὸν τάδε ξυνδρῶντά μοι,]
> παρθένον τε καὶ δάμαρτα δύο νεκρὼ κατόψεται.²⁵

Lines 1529-30 reiterate Orestes' concerns regarding the Argives: he has come out of the palace to put a stop to the Phrygian's cries for fear they will rouse the townspeople and thereby forestall his plans.²⁶ The Argives have condemned Orestes and his sister to death; their premature arrival can only represent a threat to the success of his schemes. On the other hand, the prospect of Menelaus' arrival (Μενέλεων δ', 1531) causes Orestes no qualms, for two reasons: (1) Menelaus himself (as we have witnessed in the course of his earlier appearance) is a contemptible and feckless coward who can hold no terror for anyone (1531-32);²⁷ (2) even with the support of the Argives Menelaus can do nothing without endangering Hermione, a fact that ensures either safety or (at the very least) a bloody revenge for Orestes and his friends (1533-36). Gredley questions the suitability of γάρ in 1533 for the introduction of what he maintains is a disjunctive alternative (the distinction between Menelaus alone and Menelaus accompanied by the Argives), although he sees possible merit in Biehl's suggestion that εἰ γάρ is hypothetical here, the equivalent of *denn wenn* ....²⁸ This explanation must be correct.²⁹ As suggested above (p. 220), the condition stated in lines 1533-34 is best paraphrased as follows: "For if Menelaus should refuse to aid me against the Argives but, instead, should lead the Argives *against* me ...." There is a certain awkwardness in the mention of the Argives again in 1533 so

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Menelaus into interceding with the Argives on his behalf. Note as well that it is the Argives whom the chorus considers summoning at 1539-40 and to whom Menelaus turns for help at 1621ff. Cf. Erbse, *loc. cit.*, and O'Brien (1986) 217 and n. 21.

²⁵ See below, pp. 239-41, on Diggle's deletion of 1533-36.

²⁶ Burnett's contention ([1971] 219) that Orestes still plans to kill Helen once he finds her, and that he fears any intervention beforehand, is untenable: cf. below, n. 88.

²⁷ Against Grueninger's notion ([1898] 15) that Orestes here seriously contemplates a duel with Menelaus, see Page (1934) 47 and O'Brien (1986) 217-18: this improbable image is of a piece with the boastful tone of 1529ff. as a whole. (On the latter feature of the scene cf. O'Brien *loc. cit.* and Biehl [1955] 85 and [1965] on *Or* 1533.)

²⁸ Gredley (1968) 412 and n. 7, Biehl (1965) on *Or* 1533.

²⁹ See O'Brien (1986) 225 n. 23.

soon after 1530,[30] but the distinction being made is clear and certainly is not so troublesome as to justify charges of interpolation. The passage at 1529ff. presents a highly compressed description of the potential dangers that confront Orestes which is far from muddled:[31] the audience's knowledge of the state in which things now stand and of the plan to employ Hermione as a hostage assures that it will comprehend the implications of Orestes' words. Orestes' hostility toward Menelaus, his contempt for his uncle's self-serving cowardice, his partially contemptuous, partially jealous reference to Menelaus' golden locks (a symbol both of the latter's nobility and of his unsullied prosperity), and his assumption that Menelaus and the Argives will be in league with one another in seeking his death, are perfectly comprehensible to an audience that has witnessed the first 1097 lines of the play.

Further awkwardness arises when we consider the more general question of the practical value of Orestes' mission in this scene: he must be aware, for example, that slaves other than this one have escaped, and his plans require that word be taken to Menelaus. There is no denying that the author of 1503-36, in his desire to have Orestes appear on stage, has provided his protagonist with the weakest of motivations. It should be stressed, however, that any such improbabilities or confusions lie in the assumptions underlying Orestes' motives and not in the particular expression of those motives at 1510 or 1529ff. Gredley's charges against these lines represent an attempt to magnify and embellish the general improbabilities inherent in the scene's motivation in order to justify his conviction that the entire scene is a later insertion into Euripides' play.

Other scholars have discovered quite a different significance in 1527ff. Some (considered below, pp. 248-49) have argued that the supposed confusion evinced by these lines reflects Orestes' own frenzied state of mind. Like Gredley, these critics often emphasize the allegedly garbled nature of Orestes' logic here in order to build their case. Willink, on the other hand, (followed by West) arrives at an interpretation that is admirable in its clarity, if not completely convincing. At 1525-26, he argues, Orestes is not toying with the Phrygian's fear, but actually changes his intentions regarding the helpless slave: having come on stage

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[30] Cf. Seidensticker (1985) 452 n. 38 and O'Brien (1986) 218.

[31] For the connection of 1533-36 to what precedes, cf. Denniston (1954) 61: "The connexion of thought [implied by γάρ] is sometimes lacking in logical precision. Verrall well observes, on E. *Med.* 573, that 'the use of γάρ is regulated by the substance of the thought, and not by its form.' *Compression of thought is often the source of difficulty ....*" (the emphasis is mine). Denniston's further remarks on p. 63 are also relevant; see as well Goldhill (1986b) 158-59.

to prevent the slave's escape, he suddenly remembers that someone must carry word of what has occurred to Menelaus; hence at 1526a he breaks contact with the Phrygian and announces a change of plan (ἀλλὰ μεταβουλευσόμεθα, mistakenly taken by the Phrygian as a threatened revocation of the pardon promised in 1525).[32] The Phrygian's witty rejoinder at 1526b is brushed aside with some irritation (1527-28), and only then does the young hero explain the nature of his altered plan: originally, he came out to prevent the hysterical barbarian from raising a hue and cry (1529-30), but, in fact, he now realizes that he has nothing to fear from Menelaus (1531) and actively desires his arrival (1532), founding his confidence on the knowledge that he can murder Hermione in retaliation should Menelaus prove intransigent (1533ff.). (Presumably the imperious ἴτω of 1532, on this reading, would be accompanied by an appropriately contemptuous gesture informing the Phrygian that he is free to depart and, by implication, that he should inform Menelaus of all that has occurred.)

This interpretation is quite ingenious. It gives the scene a more sophisticated dynamic than it is usually granted and solves the question of who informs Menelaus. In addition, it enables Willink to account for the apparent oddity of 1536 (discussed below, pp. 239-41) by seeing therein a boastful rehearsal of "the future situation *as* [Orestes] *intends that Men. should see it.*" But there are severe objections to be raised against Willink's reading. The future indicative μεταβουλευσόμεθα well suits the general threat that the Phrygian takes it to be, but is less happy as a statement that Orestes has changed his mind. Moreover, the momentary breaking of contact posited by Willink does not sit well in the context of 1524-26. It is difficult to accept the notion that, in the midst of the rapid verbal sparring here concerning the Phrygian's fate, the audience could understand 1526a as anything other than a threatened revocation of the pardon offered at 1524 and 1525, particularly when the Phrygian responds so emphatically to the line in precisely that sense. Moreover, Orestes' *Katz- und Mausspiel* with the Phrygian here (as understood by the traditional reading) results in a bit of comic business similar to the exchange at *Orestes* 1608-09[33] and familiar even today. Despite its originality, Willink's reading of 1526ff. is not convincing.

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[32] See Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1506-36, 1526, 1529, and 1531-32. Cf. West (ed.) on *Or* 1526.

[33] See below, p. 275.

(3) *Despite all of Orestes' precautions, when Menelaus arrives he has already been informed by someone of events within the palace. The messenger who has given him this report possesses accurate information concerning what has transpired (1556-57) and behaves in every way like the Phrygian messenger. He is terrified (φόβῳ σφαλείς, 1558) and employs turns of phrase that strongly recall the Phrygian's own words: διssοῖν λεόντοιν (1555: compare 1401); ἄφαντοs (1557: compare 1495). The final words of the Phrygian's monody turn to Menelaus (1500-02), leading to the natural assumption that the Phrygian (at this point, at least) intends to report to his master. On the other hand, no hint is given of any other messenger who might have informed Menelaus of the attack on Helen. The Phrygian uses the singular at 1369 and 1499, while references to escapees at 1486 and 1488b are of no assistance inasmuch as these fugitives can have no idea of subsequent events within the palace. Verse 1550, with its bothersome πού, is an interpolation meant to replace a quite different original, while 1549 is suspect due to its unparalleled use of ἀλλὰ μήν. Verses 1503-36 themselves assume that the Phrygian is the only escapee and, given the absence of any hint as to another possible informant, the natural assumption is that originally the Phrygian did indeed carry word to Menelaus of the attack on Helen. Moreover, the structure of this section of the play is improved if 1503-36 are omitted, since the choral* antistrophe *at 1537ff. then follows immediately after the Phrygian's account, just as the corresponding* strophe *(1353ff.) directly preceded that account.* (Gredley [1968] 413-16)[34]

At first sight this particular line of objection to the authenticity of 1503-36 carries conviction. A useful parallel for the staging envisioned by Gredley can be found at *Ion* 1106ff. There, as here, an agitated messenger enters and delivers his report to the chorus rather than to an individual actor. As here, that messenger ends on a general note of sympathy for the intended recipient of his mournful report (1225-28; compare *Orestes* 1500-02) and, as Gredley posits for *Orestes* in its pristine state, immediately exits to deliver that report off-stage. The chorus follows with a mournful outburst of moderate length (1229-49; compare *Orestes* 1537-48), after which the anguished recipient of the message enters (1250ff.; compare *Orestes* 1554ff.), only to be confronted almost immediately by her opponent (1261ff.: compare *Orestes*

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[34] Cf. Grueninger (1898) 12-13 and 16-18 and Reeve (1972) 264 n. 46; *contra:* Page (1934) 46.

1567ff.).[35]

Yet the parallel scene at *Ion* 1106ff. also raises difficulties for Gredley's view. While an offstage character frequently will respond to a βοή directly[36] or, alternatively, may be summoned by messenger and appear after a suitable interval,[37] it is difficult to discover a parallel for the scenario that Gredley posits for the original *Orestes,* where a character is summoned by a messenger and appears on stage almost immediately. It is true that concern for the realistic portrayal of the passage of time is not to be found in the texts of the Greek tragedians, particularly in so frantic and turbulent a series of scenes as that in the final 400 lines of *Orestes;*[38] the fact, however, that a certain amount of realism generally is observed in this matter suggests that Gredley's staging of the scene is problematic. It is one thing for the messenger of *Ion* 1106ff. to disappear into the *skene* at 1228 and for Creusa to enter *from the skene* some 21 lines later, quite another for Menelaus to enter by the *parodos* after the chorus' brief twelve-line outburst at 1537ff. This brief lyric outburst cannot be regarded as an extradramatic choral ode of the sort found in many of the examples cited above, during which any amount of time may be felt to have elapsed on stage: the passage is too brief for it to to be considered a formal ode and its content is tied too intimately to the ongoing stage action.[39] A similar outburst at *Hippolytus* 362-72[40] provides a suitable parallel: there we find similarly agitated lyrics of approximately the same length as *Orestes* 1537ff., presented as

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[35] I have passed over some of the obvious differences between the two scenes: e.g., the fact that the relation of the messenger to pursuer and pursued is reversed.

[36] See Taplin (1977) 219-20.

[37] E.g., Jason in *Med* (sent for at 820-23, arrives at 866 after a formal choral ode); Peleus in *Andr* (sent for at 89-91, arrives at 547); Polymestor in *Hec* (messenger departs at 904, Polymestor arrives at 953 after a formal choral ode); the elderly slave of E. *El* (messenger departs at 431, the slave arrives at 487 after a formal choral ode); Clytemnestra in E. *El* (messenger departs at 698, she arrives at 988); Orestes and Pylades in *IT* (messenger departs at 343, they arrive at 467 after Iphigenia's *rhesis* and a formal choral ode); Teiresias in *Phoen* (messenger departs at 783, Teiresias arrives at 834 after a formal choral ode); the elderly messenger of *IA* (whose exit and return, if the earlier scene is authentic, are separated by the *parodos*).

[38] E.g., Winnington-Ingram (1969a) 131-32 points to E. *El* 747ff., where the messenger enters with news of the successful attack against Aegisthus, whose cries were heard only some seven lines before; cf. Grube (1941) 211 n. 2 on the arrival of the messenger in the *exodos* of *Andr.* On the disregard for realism in the final scenes of *Or,* cf. my remarks above, pp. 197-98.

[39] *Pace* Gredley (1968) 415. See Rode (1971) 90ff. and Mastronarde (1979) 101 on the distinction between 'mimetic' and 'reflective' choral odes.

[40] Consider also *Ag* 1331ff., *Cho* 855ff., *Cyc* 656-62, *Med* 1251ff., *Hec* 1024-34, *Her* 875-85, E. *El* 859-79, and *Ba* 1153-64.

an isolated *strophe,* and similarly tied to the dramatic situation.[41] Such interludes serve a variety of purposes — they heighten tension, build suspense, create expectations in the minds of the audience, establish a mood for the scene to follow — but none of them (and here we can add *Ion* 1229-49 and *Orestes* 1353-65) removes the audience into a timeless realm as do formal *stasima.*[42]

In the *Ion* passage the poet takes care to present something of the situation of Creusa and Ion individually before the *agon* proper is joined (1250ff., 1261ff.). In the corresponding scene from *Orestes,* the deletion of lines 1503-36 would result in the protagonist's absence from the stage for some 320 lines (if we disregard his brief appearance at 1347-52) and would remove any consideration of Orestes' own position following the critical events within the palace other than that which is provided by the highly rhetorical and combative *agon* at 1567ff. The audience's last opportunity to contemplate the situation facing Orestes and his friends from the point of view of the protagonists would be found (on Gredley's reconstruction) in the scene that ends at 1245. Such a scenario must be viewed with skepticism: too much of importance has occurred for Orestes' reappearance to be delayed until the *agon* proper. Although at first sight *Medea* 1236ff. seems to support Gredley's scenario, one essential feature sets it apart. The events of *Medea* 1273ff. are cast in a mold that is foreign to the corresponding scenes of *Orestes* inasmuch as they are modelled on such offstage murders as those at *Agamemnon* 1331ff., *Choephori* 855ff., Sophocles' *Electra* 1384ff., and *Hecuba* 1023ff. Thus Medea's appearance atop the *skene* after the offstage cries of the children comes as a variation on the tableaux usual after such scenes. While *Orestes* invokes such a pattern in lines 1286ff., the pattern is dropped with the appearance of the Phrygian messenger. The murder of the children in *Medea* represents the climactic finale of a lengthy

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[41] Phaedra's outburst at *Hipp* 669-79, the *antistrophe* that answers to 362ff., also is tied to the immediate dramatic situation. I note in passing that no apparent attempt is made to employ these two lyric passages in *Hipp* as a frame for the intervening dramatic action (as Gredley posits for *Or* 1353ff. and 1537ff.). Reeve (1972) 264 places particular emphasis on such structural symmetry, arguing for the additional deletion of 1366-68 (on which, see above, pp. 192ff.). His arguments have been rejected by Seidensticker (1985) 449-50 (who describes Reeve's approach as Procrustean, esp. in light of the "hectic atmosphere and restless dramatic rhythm" of the play's later scenes), O'Brien (1986) 218-19, Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1506-36 and 1549-53 (with Addenda), and West (1987) 291 n. 35.

[42] It might be argued that Euripides intentionally violates conventional practice with the sudden entry of Menelaus in order to heighten the confused and frantic atmosphere that dominates the final scenes of this play (cf. above, p. 219). While it is impossible to rule out such a reading, other considerations demonstrate that any gains made in terms of *Überraschung* are more than offset by the difficulties entailed in Menelaus' abrupt entry.

dramatic sequence: Medea's motives for the deed and her complex
attitudes toward it have been the object of intense analysis throughout the
play, particularly since line 1021; following the act itself there remain
only rage, anguish, and, finally, closure, as the play swiftly reaches its
conclusion. The Phrygian's report, by contrast, introduces troubling and
important new information that calls for some reaction on the part of the
protagonist. Like the similar report in *Ion,* it tells of a failed *mechanema;*
it can be regarded as a variation on numerous other reports of disaster in
Greek tragedy, however, which regularly are followed by a response on
the part of the protagonist.[43] While Orestes himself is not the recipient of
the message (since he himself was a participant in the action being
reported) the audience would expect to see something of his state of mind
following the unhappy events within the palace, as it does, for example,
in the case of Amphitryon at *Heracles* 1042ff. and Pentheus at *Bacchae*
642ff. The latter passage occurs in a series of scenes which, *mutatis
mutandis,* bears a particularly close resemblance to *Orestes* 1353ff.: an
agitated choral section (576-603), followed by the report of an ἐξάγγελος
(here Dionysus himself, 604-41), the entrance from the *skene* of the
agitated protagonist 'in hot pursuit' (642-46), and a subsequent
confrontation in *stichomythia* (647-55). Neither this passage from
Bacchae, the similar passage at *Ion* 1250ff., nor *Orestes* 1503ff. present
the audience with a formal response to the report of disaster (as does, for
example, the passage from *Heracles* cited above), yet each allows the
audience to see something of the protagonist's state of mind following the
events reported. Admittedly, in *Ion* and *Bacchae* the protagonist's
presence on stage is necessitated by the next scene, whereas Orestes must
exit immediately after his confrontation with the Phrygian in order to
reappear above the *skene.* The need for some response on the part of
Orestes is still felt, however, and the brevity of his appearance finds
parallels at *Cyclops* 624ff.,[44] *Heracles* 701ff., *Ion* 401ff., *Phoenissae*
1264ff., and *Orestes* 112ff. and 1323ff.[45] — all of which involve
characters of some importance who will appear again in the course of
their plays.

   As for the identity of the messenger who has reported to Menelaus,
lines 1549-60 contain nothing that demand the Phrygian, while they

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[43] E.g., *Andr* 1173ff., *Hec* 585ff.

[44] The fact that this is a satyr play deserves remark. *Or* in its later scenes shows clear
affinities with comedy and satyr play (as has been noted repeatedly by scholars since
antiquity: see Appendix One): the episodic nature of the scene currently under discussion
should be added to the list of such affinities (cf. O'Brien [1986] 219-20).

[45] See Appendix Eight, on the staging of *Or* 1344ff.

present several reasons for believing that it is *not* our terrified barbarian
who has informed the Spartan king of his wife's disappearance.[46]

The chorus introduces Menelaus' arrival with the words (1549-50):

> ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ τόνδε λεύσσω Μενέλεων δόμων πέλας
> ὀξύπουν, ἠσθημένον που τὴν τύχην ἢ νῦν πάρα.

As was noted above, Gredley atheticizes line 1550, where που suggests
an uncertainty about the source of Menelaus' information that is hardly
consonant with the departure of the Phrygian (for the express purpose of
reporting to his master) only some fourteen lines previously.[47] Yet 1549
presents difficulties for Gredley's view as well. As is noted by Di
Benedetto,[48] 1549 provides the sole example of a choral entry
announcement introduced by ἀλλὰ μήν rather than by the more familiar
καὶ μήν. Di Benedetto attributes this oddity to the close thematic
connection that he detects between the entry announcement and the
preceding choral ode: pervading that ode is a premonition of the disaster
that is about to fall upon the house of Atreus,

> [e] l'arrivo di Menelao in questo momento, con le fiaccole che già sono
> accese, è sentito come una conferma di questo presentimento. Ἀλλὰ μήν
> è quindi da intendere nel senso di 'e appunto': si noti anche il καί, che
> presenta l'arrivo di Menelao come un altro anello di una serie negativa.

Gredley, who quotes these remarks, notes that the close connection
posited by Di Benedetto between the choral song and the following entry
announcement violates normal practice and thus raises further doubts
regarding the passage's authenticity.

Here, too, the case for interpolation is weak. As Willink indicates
([ed.] *ad loc.*), ἀλλὰ μήν provides a useful trochaic equivalent for the καὶ
μήν of iambic trimeter. Although no parallel can be found for the use of
ἀλλὰ μήν in an entry formula, ἀλλὰ ... γάρ (a near equivalent of ἀλλὰ
μήν) is common in such formulas to indicate that the speaker is breaking
off from a previous topic to acknowledge the arrival of another

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[46] Many of the following arguments are presented by Page (1934) 46, Seidensticker
(1985) 453-55, and O'Brien (1986) 216 and n. 14. Others who assert that the Phrygian
escapes to inform Menelaus include Verrall (1905) 253, Schmid/Stählin (1940) 1.3.620,
Grube (1941) 395, Reinhardt (1960) 255, Lesky (1983) 350, Willink (ed.), and West (ed.).

[47] In deleting 1550 Gredley follows Nauck (cf. Seidensticker [1985] 454 n. 43). See
Seidensticker (1985) 454 (who, with Page [1934] 46, indicates that που in 1550 is answered
by Menelaus' τις at 1559) and O'Brien (1986) 224 n. 14 (who places much less significance
on που at 1550).

[48] See Di Benedetto (ed.) *ad loc.* and cf. Gredley (1968) 414 n. 11.

character.[49] It is worth noting that ἀλλὰ γάρ (useful in tragic verse as a trochaic equivalent for ἀλλὰ ... γάρ) appears much less frequently,[50] presumably due to the relative scarcity of entrance announcements in trochaic tetrameter. Thus the unique use of ἀλλὰ μήν at *Orestes* 1509 as a trochaic equivalent for καὶ μήν is not so striking as might appear.

The unusual nature of the formula employed can be explained in part, however, by reference to the dramatic context. At 1503-05 the chorus announced the unexpected entry of Orestes with the words:

> καὶ μὴν ἀμείβει καινὸν ἐκ καινῶν τόδε·
> ξιφηφόρον γὰρ εἰσορῶ πρὸ δωμάτων
> βαίνοντ' Ὀρέστην ἐπτοημένῳ ποδί.[51]

At 1549 yet another surprise is introduced as Menelaus comes rushing toward the stage. The connection between these two unexpected entries is highlighted by the emphatic καί of 1549 ('And here comes Menelaus as well!') and by the echoes of 1503-05 in 1549-50.[52] The sudden arrival of Menelaus is viewed as yet another example of καινὸν ἐκ καινῶν, and the chorus' surprise at his frantic entrance (which comes on top of the equally unexpected and frantic appearance of Orestes some 46 lines previously) is expressed by its use of the more emphatic ἀλλὰ μήν, an expression that intentionally builds on the familiar καὶ μήν of 1503. Thus line 1549 presupposes 1503-36 fully as much as does 1550. Without the scene between Orestes and the Phrygian, we can make no sense of the chorus' surprise at Menelaus' arrival nor of the particular form in which that surprise is expressed.

Grueninger has a better appreciation of the difficulties involved in 1549-53 for anyone who would delete lines 1506-36. He proposes that 1549-53 be dropped and that 1503-05 be inserted in their place (with Ἀτρείδην read for Ὀρέστην at 1505).[53] This solution is overly

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[49] See, e.g., *Hec* 724, *Her* 138 and 442, *Or* 1366, *Ba* 1165. On the use of ἀλλὰ ... γάρ, and its affinities with ἀλλὰ μήν, see Denniston (1954) 103-04 and 342.

[50] Denniston (*loc. cit.*) cites only *Phoen* 1307.

[51] See Hourmouziades (1965) 143-44 and Willink (ed.) *ad loc.* (with p. 287) on these lines.

[52] Note: τόδε (1503) and τόνδε (1549); εἰσορῶ (1504) and λεύσσω (1549); πρὸ δωμάτων (1504) and δόμων πέλας (1549); ἐπτοημένῳ ποδί (1505) and ὀξύπουν (1550). Viewed independently, none of these parallels is striking, since each involves stock phrases often found in choral entry announcements. The repetition of this particular collocation of phrases, however, must be significant. (Note as well the interwoven meters of the two announcements, on which see next page.) Cf. Biehl (1965) on *Or* 1503 and Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1503-05 (with p. 287) on the similar associations between 1503-05 and 1366-68.

[53] Grueninger (1898) 23-24.

ingenious: the proposed emendation is unconvincing, and it is simpler merely to condemn 1503-36 and 1549-53 as a whole.[54] Of Grueninger's objections to the form and phrasing of 1549-53, none deserves serious consideration. Isolated trochaic tetrameters of this sort are problematic: as a rule, entry announcements are cast in the same meter as the scene they introduce (if, that is, they are not composed in anapaestic or lyric meters and if the following scene involves a dialogue).[55] But the appropriateness of this meter for the mood of such a tense scene is shown by its appearance, for example, at *Ion* 1250-60 (a very similar moment, as was noted above, p. 225).[56] Moreover, a particular motive for the violation of conventional practice is readily apparent in this instance. The use of iambic trimeter to introduce a scene in trochaic tetrameter, or for a choral interjection in the midst of such a scene, is not uncommon in Euripides' later plays.[57] The cunning inversion of this practice at *Orestes* 1549-53 scarcely seems the work of an interpolator, while the clever *chiasmus* that results (an announcement in iambic trimeter at 1503ff. introducing a scene in trochaic tetrameter, followed by an announcement in trochaic tetrameter at 1549ff. introducing a scene in iambic trimeter) could be regarded as still another indication that 1503-05 and 1549-53 have been written by the same hand.[58]

The use of 'Ατρεῖδαι at 1552 in reference to Orestes and Electra is unremarkable,[59] while the argument that 1552-53 are insipid could be employed to condemn many such a choral tag.[60] Nothing condemns lines

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[54] Cf. Reeve (1972) 264 n. 46. It could be argued as well that the parallelism noted above between 1503-05 and 1549-53 indicates that the two passages form a unit and have been composed by the same hand.

[55] The only specific parallel for *Or* 1549-53 (*Phoen* 1307-09) is generally rejected as spurious: see Reeve (1972) 264 n. 46 (citing Fraenkel [1963] 83 and n. 2), Halleran (1985) 18 and n. 56, Willink (ed.) on *Or* 729-806 and his Addenda on *Or* 1549-53.

[56] Cf. Willink (ed.) and West (ed.) on *Or* 1549-53.

[57] In addition to *Or* 1503ff., see *Or* 725ff., *IA* 376-77; cf. *Phoen* 586-87.

[58] Willink ([ed.] on *Or* 1549-53) suggests that 1549-53 link 1554ff. with the preceding tetrameter scene, but he does not note this interlacing effect.

[59] Grueninger maintains that 'Ατρεῖδαι is never used of anyone other than Agamemnon and Menelaus without additional qualification (e.g., *Cho* 407: 'Ατρειδᾶν τὰ λοίπ'); at *Or* 1538, Grueninger argues, Menelaus is included in the reference. But the use of 'Ατρείδαιν in reference to Orestes and Iphigenia at *IT* 898 provides sufficient grounds for its authenticity here. In any case, the phrase ὦ κατὰ στέγας 'Ατρεῖδαι contains the very qualification that Grueninger requires. See Willink (ed.) Addenda on *Or* 1549-53 and O'Brien (1986) 224 n. 5, who observes that the patronymic is in place inasmuch as "the preceding antistrophe has placed present events in the context of family history."

[60] Grueninger's objection (echoed by Reeve [1972] 264 n. 46) to the use of εὐτυχῶν ἀνήρ in reference to Menelaus (1552) ignores the emphasis placed on the undeserved prosperity of Menelaus and Helen throughout the play. (See Biehl [1965] *ad loc.* for a list of references; cf. Willink [ed.] Addenda on *Or* 1549-53.) Di Benedetto's suggestion that these words are

1549-53 other than the fact that they assume lines 1503-36.[61] Those who
delete this latter passage are forced to assume that the interpolator was
not so inept as to neglect replacing a Euripidean entry announcement
(presumably one that referred to the Phrygian as Menelaus' source of
information) with one of his own invention.

Menelaus' words upon his arrival (1554-60) also raise difficulty for
those who atheticize 1503-36:

> ἥκω κλυὼν τὰ δεινὰ καὶ δραστήρια
> δισσοῖν λεόντοιν· οὐ γὰρ ἄνδρ' αὐτὼ καλῶ.
> ἤκουσα γὰρ δὴ τὴν ἐμὴν ξυνάορον
> ὡς οὐ τέθνηκεν ἀλλ' ἄφαντος οἴχεται,
> κενὴν ἀκούσας βάξιν, ἣν φόβῳ σφαλεὶς
> ἤγγειλέ μοί τις. ἀλλὰ τοῦ μητροκτόνου
> τεχνάσματ' ἐστὶ ταῦτα καὶ πολὺς γέλως.[62]

As was noted in the introduction to this section, Gredley argues that
Menelaus' words can be read as a virtual quotation of the report that the
Phrygian himself has given and that we therefore must assume that
Menelaus originally received his information from the Phrygian.[63] The
weakness of this claim becomes apparent on closer examination. Δισσοῖν
λεόντοιν (1555) and μητροκτόνου (1559) present Menelaus' own
assertions, as the context shows quite emphatically, while ἄφαντος
(1557), which could be taken as an echo of the Phrygian's words at
1494ff., merely establishes that Menelaus' source is in possession of the
same information regarding Helen's disappearance as the Phrygian. The
added detail that this source was distraught with fear (φόβῳ σφαλεὶς,
1558) seems to suggest the Phrygian, but the Phrygian's own words at
1483ff. (and the familiar racial stereotype there invoked) suggest that any

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intended to deceive Menelaus is untenable for dramaturgic reasons as well as for dubious
logic. O'Brien (1986) 224 n. 5 attempts to mitigate the insipidity of 1552-53 by suggesting a
mocking irony at Menelaus' expense, but he supports this reading with parallels that do not
seem altogether apt: the reference to Orestes' misfortunes in 1553 appears to be presented in
all seriousness, esp. after the failed attempt against Helen and so soon after 1537-38 and
1546-48.

[61] Reeve's additional arguments against 1549-53 ([1972] 264 n. 46) are largely subjective
and are answered by Willink (ed.) in his Addenda ad loc.

[62] Willink (ed.) and Diggle (ed.) delete 1556-60 (the former also deletes 1563-64, the
latter 1564-66). The objections to 1556-60 posed by Willink are not compelling, however,
while the resulting speech seems intolerably abrupt and (given the vagueness of 1554-55)
obscure. We expect some explanation of Menelaus' portentous opening statement, and
comparison with the similar entry speeches cited below (pp. 233-34) suggests that he ought to
give some account of his entrance before taking any action (1561ff.).

[63] Cf. de Jong (1991) 190.

of Helen's servants could be indicated by this phrase.[64] As for arguments based on the realistic consideration that none of the other slaves could have witnessed Helen's disappearance, we have seen how treacherous such arguments can be, particularly in this section of the play.[65] The singulars at 1369 and 1499 prove nothing, and if the references to escapees at 1486 and 1488b are taken to indicate that none of these slaves can have witnessed Helen's fate, the Phrygian's own knowledge on this point becomes something of an embarrassment. It is true that lines 1503-36 themselves seem to suggest that the Phrygian was in fact the only escapee (especially Orestes' words at 1506: ποῦ 'στιν οὗτος ὃς πέφευγεν ἐκ δόμων τοὐμὸν ξίφος;). Yet the point must be emphasized again that the use of such lines as pieces in a literary jigsaw puzzle is extremely problematic (particularly when the critic employs a supposedly spurious passage as a piece of that puzzle!). As we have seen, the motivation for Orestes' entrance at 1506 is extremely weak: nothing has been said to suggest that Orestes had the opportunity to take particular note of the Phrygian (following the rout of the servants at 1483ff., he was much too concerned with capturing Hermione and killing Helen), and 1483ff. themselves suggest a number of escapees.[66] The author of 1503ff. clearly desired some excuse to bring Orestes on stage and found it in the presence of the Phrygian messenger. The degree to which such a piece of dramaturgical legerdemain can be defended, or at least justified, will be of concern at a later stage of this examination; here it suffices to indicate that there is nothing inherently un-Euripidean in the device's lack of concern for realism.

The question, then, of who has informed Menelaus of the events within the palace remains open. His source is in possession of the same information as the Phrygian, but need not be considered an anonymous duplicate of him, as Gredley (following Di Benedetto) suggests.[67] An anonymous messenger of a very similar kind is implied at *Andromache* 1047ff. and *Bacchae* 1222ff.,[68] while more distant parallels can be found at *Heracles* 1163ff. and *Bacchae* 215ff.[69] The fact that Menelaus speaks

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[64] On the faultiness of Gredley's arguments from verbal parallels, see Seidensticker (1985) 454 and n. 44, O'Brien (1986) 216.

[65] See above, pp. 197-98 and 208-10.

[66] There is also the discomforting question of just what Orestes, who seems to enter in hot pursuit of the Phrygian, has been doing during the approximately 140 lines since the slave's first appearance. But the poet does not allow such questions to arise and neither should we.

[67] Gredley (1968) 415 n. 13; cf. Di Benedetto (ed.) on *Or* 1557.

[68] I owe this second reference to Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1554-66.

[69] Cf. *Aj* 974ff., *OT* 513ff. and 1416ff., and see O'Brien (1986) 216.

at length concerning his source is felt by Grueninger (who believes that
the Phrygian is Menelaus' informant) to argue against the authenticity of
1503ff.: why would Menelaus detail the reasons and the conditions of his
arrival after the Phrygian's departure at 1536, a mere thirteen lines
before?[70] This argument applies equally well, however, to the scenario
envisioned by Grueninger and Gredley, since only twelve lines would
then separate the Phrygian's departure at 1502 from Menelaus' entrance
at 1549. Menelaus' words at 1554-60, by contrast, suggest both that the
audience needs to be informed of his source and that it has been some
time (certainly more than a mere twelve lines) since Menelaus' own
situation has been the focus of attention.[71]

Moreover, critics of 1503ff. tend to ignore the implications of lines
1537-40:

> ἰὼ ἰὼ τύχα,
> ἕτερον εἰς ἀγῶν' ἕτερον αὖ δόμος
> φοβερὸν ἀμφὶ τοὺς Ἀτρείδας πίτνει.
> τί δρῶμεν; ἀγγέλλωμεν ἐς πόλιν τάδε
> ἢ σῖγ' ἔχωμεν; ἀσφαλέστερον, φίλαι.

It makes little sense for the chorus to ponder the second question if it has
just seen the Phrygian depart in the direction of the city.[72] Grueninger
rather ingeniously (if unconvincingly) takes the whole of 1537ff. as a
reference to the coming suicide of Orestes and his friends (which the
chorus deduces from the sight of the burning torches).[73] On his view, it is
this joint suicide that the chorus ponders announcing, not the attempt on
Helen and the danger to Hermione. Such an interpretation cannot be
correct, however, because the chorus does not notice the burning torches
until line 1541.[74] In addition, no overt reference to a premature act of

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[70] Grueninger (1898) 16.

[71] Note, e.g., the reticence of Peleus on this point at *Andr* 547ff. in contrast to his account
at 1047ff. (see P. T. Stevens [1971] 218-19 and cf. Norwood [1954] 37-38 on *Ion* 510ff.).
(The passages mentioned here are also cited by Stanley-Porter [1973] 92 n. 126.) Other
passages of note include *Med* 866-68, *Hec* 953ff. (esp. 964-67), E. *Su* 87ff., E. *El* 487ff. and
998ff., *Phoen* 834ff. Each involves the entry of a character specifically summoned earlier in
the play; only in the passages from *Med* and *Hec* is attention paid to the motive for the arrival,
and in both of these passages the arriving character is making an overtly hypocritical attempt
to ingratiate himself with a person whom he has betrayed.

[72] Cf. Page (1934) 46 and Seidensticker (1985) 455. O'Brien (1986) 218-19 observes
other difficulties for the interpretation of 1537ff. raised by the deletion of 1503ff.

[73] Grueninger (1898) 18-22. On the problems raised by Grueninger's interpretation of
φόνου at 1544, see O'Brien (1986) 218 and n. 24. (Willink [ed.] and West [ed.] follow Kells
[1966] 51 in reading πόνου.)

[74] See Seeck (1969) 18-20 and 21 n. 1 for an attempt to delete 1541-44 altogether.

suicide can be found in the passage; in fact, 1551-53 (which Grueninger, however, deletes) deny such a supposition on the part of the chorus. 1537-40 must refer to the expected confrontation (ἀγών᾽) with Menelaus and the peril facing both Hermione and the protagonists; with the deletion of 1531-36 the lines lose their immediate reference and, with it, much of their force.[75]

On the whole, then, the arguments of Gredley and Grueninger regarding the identity of Menelaus' informant raise difficulties that appear as serious as those they posit for the transmitted text, casting doubt on the meaning and function of lines 1539-40 (with the corresponding 1355-56?), 1549-50 (with, most probably, 1551-53), and 1556-60.

(4) *The view of Helen's fate presented in 1503ff. contradicts the view put forward elsewhere in the play. At 1493-99 the Phrygian states that Helen vanished miraculously at the very moment Orestes and Pylades were about to slay her (ἁ δ᾽ [ἐκ θαλάμων] / ἐγένετο διαπρὸ δωμάτων ἄφαντος, 1494-95). At 1579ff. her sudden disappearance is confirmed emphatically by Orestes himself.[76] Yet at 1512 Orestes implies that he has killed Helen, and the Phrygian's response at 1513 (with its clear reference to the slitting of Helen's throat: εἴ γε λαιμοὺς εἶχε τριπτύχους θενεῖν)[77] reinforces that impression. The attempts of Page and Biehl to explain away this discrepancy rely on "a maze of psychological intricacies, which enjoy at most a dubious probability." We are forced to suppose that Orestes is ignorant of the Phrygian's own knowledge of Helen's disappearance and is merely baiting him, that διώλετο at 1512 is employed in an ambiguous sense, that 1512-13 constitute an isolated instance of interpolation (in which case 1514-15 must be atheticized as well), or that the assumption of Helen's death is merely put forward here to provide a starting point for Orestes' interrogation of the terrified slave. While 1534 (τὸν Ἑλένης φόνον διώκων) need only refer to an*

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[75] Cf. O'Brien (1986) 218-19 against Gredley's argument (cf. Grueninger [1898] 21) that ἀγών᾽ at 1537 refers back to the failed plot against Helen. 1537ff. pose similar difficulties for Reeve's suggestion ([1972] 264 n. 47) that 1503ff. were intended to replace the Phrygian's monody altogether (on the supposition that later ages were unreceptive to such arias): see Seidensticker (1985) 452 n. 39 and O'Brien (1986) 224 n. 13.

[76] Consider as well 1556-57, 1613-14, 1629-34.

[77] Cf. σφάξαντες at 1107, σφαγάν at 1494, σφάγιον at 1614. The association of these terms with the slitting of the victim's throat can be seen with particular vividness at 1199: καὶ σὺ σφάζε παρθένου δέρην. (On the text of 1513 see Willink [ed.] *ad loc.*)

inference on the part of Menelaus (as is noted by Page),[78] *at 1536 Orestes openly refers to Helen's corpse in a context in which he must be viewed as expressing his own understanding of Helen's fate.*[79] *Page's argument that this line sacrifices factual accuracy in favor of rhetorical force is "quite inadequate." Thus in the scene at 1503-36, and in this scene alone, a view of Helen's fate is put forward that openly contradicts the view presented elsewhere in* Orestes. *In his quest for suitably dramatic utterances to place in the mouths of his creations, the interpolator fails to notice that he has strayed from the scenario established by Euripides.* (Gredley [1968] 416-18)[80]

There is much to be said for this line of argument, inasmuch as it presents the best objective evidence against the authenticity of 1503-36.[81] Closer examination of the passages criticized by Gredley, however, reveals that, while peculiar, they do not justify condemnation of the scene as a whole.

The reference to Helen's death at 1512-13 arises naturally out of the immediate context of Orestes' ἔλεγχος of the Phrygian slave. Upon seeing Orestes enter, sword in hand, the Phrygian at once begins to fawn upon him in the elaborate manner customary in the East and frequently made the object of ridicule by Greek authors of the fifth century B.C. (lines 1506-07).[82] Orestes recognizes the insincerity behind this elaborate act of obeisance and proceeds, in the *stichomythia* that follows, to lay bare the full extent of the Phrygian's cowardly disloyalty to his former masters and his utterly shameless love of life. Earlier commentators (as well as the scholiasts themselves) object to the overtly comic tone of the scene and to the prominence which it grants to a character of servile status,[83] yet the interview is conducted in a masterly fashion, proceeds

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[78] Page (1934) 45. Menelaus draws this very inference at 1556ff.

[79] See above, pp. 220-21, for a refutation of Gredley's suggestion that this line is an interpolator's adaptation of *Hec* 45.

[80] Cf. Grueninger (1898) 11-12; *contra:* Page (1934) 45-46. A useful review of different responses to these objections is provided by O'Brien (1986) 215.

[81] Cf. Seidensticker (1985) 450, O'Brien (1986) 215. Seidensticker (1985) 450-52 presents a battery of possible explanations for the difficulties documented by Gredley; by contrast, O'Brien *loc. cit.* agrees with Gredley that the inconsistency in Orestes' view of Helen's fate cannot be explained away by such piecemeal arguments: "No rebuttal of Grueninger's case has taken into account the fact that the three phrases [1512, 1534, and 1536] reinforce one another and add up to something that may be called the drift of the passage."

[82] On the Phrygian's *proskynesis* see De Romilly (1961) 79 n. 3, Bacon (1961) 147-48, Burkert (1974) 104-05, Scarcella (ed.) on *Or* 1506-07, and cf. Fauth (1972).

[83] See, e.g., Paley (ed.) on *Or* 1503, Maas (1962) 53, Σ *Or* 1512 and 1521.

logically, and, if read as a darkly comic elicitation of the Phrygian's
φιλοψυχία, contains nothing disconsonant with the tone of the play in its
later scenes. Orestes begins by scornfully criticizing the Phrygian's
importation of eastern customs to Greece (1508), a charge that the latter
(employing a witty *non sequitur* characteristic of the comic κόλαξ)
parries with the observation that life is sweeter than death everywhere, 'to
reasonable-minded people' (τοῖς σώφροσιν, 1509). This open admission
of δειλία on the part of the Phrygian leads Orestes to explore further the
lengths to which this cowardly slave will proceed in order to save his
life.[84] At 1510 he poses the sarcastic question:

οὔτι που κραυγὴν ἔθηκας Μενέλεῳ βοηδρομεῖν;[85]

to which the Phrygian, immediately throwing off all loyalty to his former
master — the master for whom he has just expressed such sympathy
(1500-02) — responds (1511):

σοὶ μὲν οὖν ἔγωγ' ἀμύνειν· ἀξιώτερος γὰρ εἶ.

It is at this point that Orestes turns to the related question of Helen, the
slave's former mistress, and again the Phrygian shows himself more than
willing to renounce — in the most extreme, even grotesque terms — a
formerly-beloved master in order to avoid death (1512-13):

OP.   ἐνδίκως ἡ Τυνδάρειος ἆρα παῖς διώλετο;
ΦΡ.   ἐνδικώτατ', εἴ γε λαιμοὺς εἶχε τριπτύχους θενεῖν.

If the Phrygian exited from the palace in search of help for Orestes, it
stands to reason that he must have viewed the latter's assault on Helen as
just. As Denniston ([1954] 49) notes, ἆρα in 1512 (like πού at 1510) is
ironic and continues the mocking, sarcastic tone of Orestes' previous
question: Orestes is toying with the Phrygian here, a fact not given due
weight by those who see in this passage grounds for the charge of
interpolation.[86] Read as a further step in Orestes' ἔλεγχος of the
Phrygian, the question posed at 1512 is perfectly reasonable. The aorist
διώλετο is vague enough to suit Helen's mysterious disappearance,[87]
while the slave's response, marked by a grotesque exaggeration born of

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[84]   Cf. Scarcella (ed.) on *Or* 1512-13.

[85]   See above, p. 221, on the text and translation of this line.

[86]   That Orestes is not fooled by the Phrygian's κολακεία and does not in fact take this
interview at all seriously becomes even clearer at 1524-28.

[87]   Cf. Σ Dindorf 324.26ff. (ex cod. Guelferbytano) on *Or* 1536 (cited by Seidensticker
[1985] 450 n. 28).

hysteria, is of a piece with his early reply at 1511. The pursuit of this line of reasoning in 1514ff. then provides further opportunity for a display of the Phrygian's clever but utterly abject cowardice and allows the poet to present the intriguing picture of Orestes cruelly toying with the terrified slave.

The principal objection to the above explication is that Orestes does not ask whether his attack on Helen was justified, but whether it was just that Helen perished (διώλετο). While ὄλλυμαι and its derivatives can be used in a metaphorical sense similar to the English 'I am ruined,' 'I am undone,' and the like, the context of the passage seems to compel us to accept the word in its literal sense at 1512.[88] And comparison with other such 'disappearances' in Euripides might suggest that διώλετο implies a certainty as to Helen's fate that is at variance with the lack of assurance evinced by Orestes elsewhere in the play.[89] On the other hand, the fact that Euripides is at such pains to keep his audience off-balance in the latter scenes of *Orestes* has been put forward in defence of the verb's use here. For in *Orestes* (unlike the passages cited above) it is not merely the characters of the play who are uncertain of Helen's fate: the audience itself is completely bewildered at this point.[90] Rather than employing an omniscience borne of familiarity with mythic tradition to note at its ease the confused errors of the characters on stage, the audience of *Orestes* must struggle to imagine how the poet will resolve the complex situation that he has created. The reference to Helen's death adds to this uncertainty, heightening the audience's curiosity regarding her fate.[91]

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[88] Burnett (1971) 217 circumvents the problem by translating 1512 as, "Then is it just or is it not, that Tyndareus' girl *should* die?" (emphasis mine), assuming that Orestes, in his maddened state, believes that Helen is still somewhere inside the palace and plans to kill her upon his return (cf. *ead.* 219; this explanation has been suggested as well to deal with the problematic 1536: see Schmid/Stählin [1940] 1.3.620 n. 3, Reinhardt [1960] 255, Scarcella [ed.] on *Or* 1531-36, Seidensticker [1985] 451). Διώλετο, however, is a simple preterite (*pace* Seidensticker [1985] 450 n. 28). West (1981) 70 and (ed.) *ad loc.* attempts to lend textual support to Burnett's view by proposing the reading διώλλυτο or διόλλυται (the former is accepted by Diggle [ed.]). The emendation is unnecessary, as is Herwerden's διώλετ' ἄν. Cf. Willink (ed.) *ad loc.* and O'Brien (1986) 215 and 224 n. 13.

[89] Cf. *Hel* 605ff., *Ba* 629ff., and *IA* 1578ff. (probably spurious). In each of these scenes the language employed leaves no doubt that it is a disappearance and not some mysterious form of death that is being described. Cf. the ambiguity concerning the fate of the elderly Oedipus at the end of *OC*.

[90] This feature of the scene receives particular attention from Seidensticker (1985) 451-52 and Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1506-36, 1512, and 1536 (on Euripides' repeated use of *suggestio falsi* in this scene). Cf. Strohm (1957) 125 n. 4 and Wolf (1968) 142. The difficulty with such an emphasis on the misleading aspect of 1512 and 1536 lies in the incidental role of those lines in Orestes' elaborate ἔλεγχος of his feckless opponent: cf. below, pp. 249-50.

[91] Several scholars have attempted to solve the problem of the contradictions about Helen's fate in 1503ff. by claiming that Orestes is insane and raving in this scene (cf. below,

Orestes' question is not a logical one: he cannot be certain that Helen has perished (as opposed to having been whisked away) and his question seems to assume that, whatever force was responsible for her disappearance, this force was operating from motives similar to his own (that is, exacting retribution for her past misdeeds). Amid the rapid give-and-take of *stichomythia,* however, and in the context of Orestes' ἔλεγχος of the Phrygian, the question — while surprising — is defensible because it provides an opportunity for the further disclosure of the slave's abject and unashamedly fickle cowardice.

The Phrygian's reply at 1513 raises fewer difficulties. Its grotesque exaggeration, its shameless betrayal of a once-beloved mistress, and its blatant disregard of facts are well in character. In his desperate efforts to assure Orestes of his support, he casts away all concern for factual veracity as well as for propriety, saying whatever he thinks will please the armed antagonist who confronts him.[92] His apparent assumption that Helen's throat has been cut demonstrates that he has understood the import of Orestes' question at 1512 but does not provide a basis for the charge of interpolation.

Orestes' final threat at 1533-36, however, presents a more difficult problem:

> εἰ γὰρ Ἀργείους ἐπάξει τοῖσδε δώμασιν λαβών,
> τὸν Ἑλένης φόνον διώκων, κἀμὲ μὴ σώζειν θέλῃ,
> [σύγγονόν τ' ἐμὴν Πυλάδην τε τὸν τάδε ξυνδρῶντά μοι,]
> παρθένον τε καὶ δάμαρτα δύο νεκρὼ κατόψεται.

As Gredley (following Grueninger) rightly objects, at this point in the play there seems to be no possibility of Menelaus' ever seeing Helen's corpse, if indeed she is a corpse. In fact, at 1586 Orestes himself refers to this impossibility:

> ME. ἀπόδος δάμαρτος νέκυν, ὅπως χώσω τάφῳ.
> OP. θεοὺς ἀπαίτει· παῖδα δὲ κτενῶ σέθεν.

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pp. 248-49); this view fails to take into account the all too rational manner in which Orestes toys with the Phrygian and Orestes' complete sanity (in regard to this point, at least) when he reappears at 1567. Similar ambiguities (on a smaller scale) regarding the death of an offstage character can be found in the early scenes of *Alc* (esp. 141; cf. 518-29 and see Conacher [1984] 75ff.), *Hel* 138, *IA* [1611-12].

[92] In addition to the grotesque λαιμοὺς τριπτύχους, Biehl (1965) *ad loc.* notes the excessiveness of ἐνδικώτατ' ("Superlativbildung eines Adj., das an sich keine Gradation zuläßt"). There is no foundation for the assertion of Scarcella (ed.) on *Or* 1512-13 that the Phrygian should be viewed as playing with Orestes, ironically expressing his contempt for this Greek 'hero' by the extravagance of his language.

Thus lines 1533ff. present an anomaly. Nowhere else in extant Greek tragedy does a character make an impossible threat of this sort, and the egregious contradiction between the set of circumstances that it assumes and those that obtain elsewhere in the play might lead us to posit the work of an interpolator. Page's assertion that "a slight inaccuracy of language is almost necessary to couple the similar fates of Hermione and Helen"[93] would carry more weight could such an inaccuracy be paralleled elsewhere, and, as Gredley indicates, the fates of the two women are anything but similar. Gredley summarizes the problem thus:

> ... a glaring inconsistency remains which can be bypassed only by attributing a singular lack of clarity in thought and language to Euripides and by placing on his audience the intolerable necessity of seeing an idea contradicted by its expression. (418)

This inconsistency leads Seidensticker to suggest, somewhat tentatively, the deletion of 1533-36, a much less severe remedy than the deletion of 1503-36 as a whole but equally efficacious.[94]

Again, however, attention to the context of the passage may help to make the contradiction, if not less egregious, at least more understandable. The Orestes of this scene is a character much altered from the helpless invalid of the play's first scenes or the despair-ridden suppliant of 380ff. His manic reaction against the injustices and betrayals that he has suffered is in full force and he has become a heartless, sardonic, and, if not powerful, certainly murderous individual.[95] He is, in fact, the same Orestes whom we have glimpsed briefly at 1347-48, and one of the principal arguments in favor of the authenticity of 1503ff. is that the audience needs to see more of this altered Orestes in preparation for the confrontation between him and Menelaus in the play's finale (particularly the climax of that confrontation at 1617ff.).[96] Orestes' sardonic debate with the Phrygian serves as a prelude to the climactic meeting that follows.[97] In this context, his final words at 1531ff. are of critical importance. We have seen him toy with the Phrygian slave, enjoying a deadly game of cat-and-mouse in which, for the first time, *he*

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[93] Page (1934) 45; cf. Gredley (1968) 417-18.

[94] Seidensticker (1985) 452. His deletion of 1533-36 is adopted by Diggle (ed.).

[95] Cf. Hermann (ed.) xi, Lanza (1961) 67, Biehl (1968) 215.

[96] This observation is anticipated, to a certain degree, by, e.g., Burnett (1971) 219-20 and Biehl (1967) 472, but to much different effect: cf. below, pp. 244-46. On the problematic 1617ff., see below, 269ff.

[97] See Biehl (1955) 84-85. Cf. the manner in which the Helen-Teucer scene in *Hel* prepares for the initial meeting of Helen and Menelaus.

wields the power while another must play the supplicant.[98] At 1531ff.,
still reveling in this new-found sense of power, he turns to the question of
his coming meeting with Menelaus. Biehl has suggested that in this scene
Orestes is cast in the role of ἀλάζων (answering to the Phrygian's
κόλαξ),[99] but such a view misses the sardonic bitterness of Orestes'
words — a biting mockery that is too vehement to be classified as part of
a variation on a stock comic type. At 1531ff. the formerly passive hero
whips himself into a climactic frenzy of hatred and contempt. As O'Brien
notes (in a slightly different context):

> ... the blustering note grows consistently louder from 1530 to 1536, and
> this may be the proper focus of attention. The pursuit of the Phrygian,
> acknowledged as a tactic of caution at 1530, has led up to a challenge to
> Menelaus, and then to a reckless defiance of the whole city. ([1986] 218)

Orestes' final words at 1536 must be understood in the context of this
outburst as a whole:

> As for Menelaus, I've no fear of getting *him* within sword's reach.
> Rather, *let* him come, making a show of those famed[100] golden locks of
>   his spread across his shoulders;
> For if he brings the Argives for a joint attack against these halls,
> Seeking vengeance for Helen's murder, and isn't willing to save me,
> [and my sister, and Pylades, who joined me in all this,]
> he'll see both his daughter *and* his wife corpses!

Line 1536 builds on 1534, where Menelaus' point of view is assumed.[101]
Orestes' threat is neither logical nor possible of fulfillment, but it is in
harmony with the savage hatred and the general air of braggadocio
displayed by the passage, and provides a fitting conclusion for Orestes'
brief appearance.[102] When Menelaus enters at 1554 we know what sort of
an opponent he will face.[103]

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[98] See, e.g., Greenberg (1962) 188 and Falkner (1983a) 297, who see an ironic reversal of
the earlier scene in which Orestes supplicated Menelaus.

[99] Biehl (1965) on *Or* 1533; cf. Gredley (1968) 417 n. 19.

[100] As various editors have noted, Euripides combines the blond hair traditionally
ascribed to Menelaus (and to numerous other heroes) with a stock picture of the *miles
gloriosus* (familiar from Archil. 114 [West]).

[101] Cf. Biehl's suggested translation of 1533ff. ([1965] *ad loc.*): "denn wenn Men. die
Argeier heranführt — als Vergeltung für die (angenommene) Tötung Hel.s — und somit
mich nicht retten will ..., so wird er (damit rechnen müssen) Tochter und Gattin als Leichen
(zu) sehen."

[102] See Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1536 for a similar, if somewhat more elaborate, analysis.

[103] It should be noted that the alleged interpolator's motives for introducing this peculiar
inconsistency remain obscure: Grueninger's hypothesis ([1898] 22-23) of a lost Orestes

(5) *The scene at 1503-36 stands outside the course of the plot and adds nothing to the play's thematic structure. Unlike other quasi-comic confrontations in Euripides (for example, Ion 517ff. or Helen 1627ff.), it cannot be said to have a "meaningful relationship" to the work as a whole. Rather, it is characterized by "intrinsic and irrelevant comedy" that cannot be paralleled elsewhere in the tragic corpus. The scene is an interpolation added by a later actor/producer "in order to exploit more fully the comic possibilities of the Phrygian as outlined by Euripides in the lyric διήγησις," and is the product of an age when the individual actor, not the poet nor the play itself, was dominant. A fragment of Apollodorus alludes to a tradition of Phrygian δειλία in comedy that may well have provided the interpolator his source of inspiration:*

οὐ πανταχοῦ Φρύξ εἰμι· τοῦ ζῆν ἂν ὁρῶ
κρεῖττον τὸ μὴ ζῆν, χρήσομαι τῷ κρείττονι. [104]

In any case, the scene should be dismissed as a later attempt to improve an already popular play and to add scope for the comic talents of the actor cast as the Phrygian. (Gredley [1968] 418-19)

It is true that Greek comedy, like the comedy of other cultures, delights in deriding as absurd or debased the customs and manners of foreign peoples. In this regard the mocking of Phrygian δειλία can be seen as a logical development, in the comic realm, of a commonplace familiar from Aeschylus, Herodotus, and the orators: whereas Greek forces are comprised of free men fighting out of love for homeland, family, and personal honor, the forces of the East consist of mere slaves, whipped into battle by cruel and distant masters.[105] It is not surprising that evidence for such a tradition can be detected in the fragments of the comic poets.[106] The existence of this tradition does not, however, further Gredley's case. On the one hand, the frequency with which 'barbarians'

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drama is unconvincing, while (as Willink [ed.] on *Or* 1536 indicates) the cunning humor of the scene belies the notion of an "incompetent hack who had 'forgotten' the true facts about Helen's corpse." Cf. O'Brien (1986) 221.

[104] Apollodorus (*Carystius an Gelous incertum*) 6 (Kassel/Austin). This fragment is cited by Mercanti (1915) 80 n. 2; cf. Di Benedetto (ed.) on *Or* 1509 and Tert. *De Anim.* 279B: *comici Phrygas timidos inludunt* (cited by Gredley [1968] 418 n. 23).

[105] Also at work here, of course, are traditions of eastern luxury and effeminacy that can be traced as far back as Homer (e.g., *Il.* 2.872-75, 3.15ff.). See Bacon (1961) 151-53, Dover (1974) 83ff., Aélion (1983) 2.180-85, Kerferd (1981) 156-59, duBois (1982) 78ff., Goldhill (1986a) 59-60, Long (1986) 132-33, Hall (1989b) *passim* (esp. 124).

[106] See Long (1986), esp. Chapter Six: "The Barbarian-Hellene Antithesis," and cf. below, p. 297, on the frequency of this theme in satyr play.

are presented as objects of ridicule in fifth-century sources (particularly
Aristophanes) invalidates the suggestion that the appearance of this comic
topos indicates a date in the fourth or early third century B.C.[107] In fact
Euripides himself frequently alludes to a tradition of Phrygian δειλία in
non-comic contexts.[108] On the other hand, Euripides' well-known
fondness for inserting into his plays motifs and character-types derived
from comedy undercuts the central assumption of the above argument,
that the scene is overtly comic and therefore suspect.[109] Slaves
reminiscent of those in comedy can be found in *Alcestis* 747ff.
(admittedly, a pro-satyric work), Euripides' *Electra* 487ff., *Ion* 735ff.,
and *Iphigenia at Aulis* 303ff.,[110] while stock comic characters of other
types can be recognized, for example, in the elderly Iolaus of *Heraclidae*
678ff., the Teiresias and Cadmus of *Bacchae* 170ff., and the Apollo,
Thanatos, and Heracles of *Alcestis* 24ff. and 773ff. At *Helen* 435ff.[111] we
find a scene that bears a striking similarity to *Orestes* 1503-36, as
Menelaus is forced to parley with a dyspeptic portress of a type familiar
from later comedy. This last passage is particularly useful in reminding
us that, in the case of many of these stock comic characters, Euripides
may bear a valid claim to being the originator of the type and not a mere
imitator. With such an author the critic must be extremely careful in
employing high seriousness as a standard of authenticity or originality.

But the clearest indication that the comic elements in *Orestes* 1503ff.
should not necessarily be attributed to a decline in taste in the fourth and
third centuries is the similar scene in Timotheus' *Persae*, which is very
like *Orestes* in its union of the serious with the absurd.[112] The frantic
attempts of Timotheus' Phrygian to persuade his Greek captor that he has
come on Xerxes' expedition against his will and that he would be only
too happy to leave Greece never to return (lines 140ff.) display several

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[107] Gredley is difficult to interpret on this point. While he regards the Apollodorus
fragment as a *terminus ante quem* for the scene, he denies that the fragment alludes to the
scene directly (418 and n. 23). Such a view is difficult to maintain, given the play on
πανταχοῦ (not an overly common word, which appears more naturally at *Or* 1509), the
similar use of substantival infinitives in each passage, and the number of other direct allusions
to this popular play in later comedy (on which see above, pp. 1-2).

[108] *Alc* 675-76, *Andr* 194-95 and 592, *Tro* 971-74, and, most significantly, *Or* 1110-1115,
1350-51, 1416-24, 1447, and 1474-88b

[109] See esp. Seidensticker (1982) 89ff., who provides a useful bibliography.

[110] The above list is by no means complete: consider the herdsman of *IT* 238ff., the
unlettered rustic of *Theseus* (frg. 382 N²), and cf. the confrontation between Lichas and the
unidentified servant at *Trach* 393ff. Such characters, while not always specifically identified
as slaves, display the characteristics of obedient and humble servants.

[111] Cited as well by Mercanti (1915) 80.

[112] See above, pp. 199ff., on possible ties between Timotheus' *Persae* and *Or*.

affinities to the tactics of Euripides' Phrygian, despite radical differences
in content and form. We find the same shamelessness in the manner of
supplication,[113] the same willingness to desert the cause of a former
master,[114] the same obsequiousness of address.[115] While it is tempting to
see in Timotheus' poem the origin of *Orestes* 1503ff. (particularly given
the other similarities of tone, outlook, and style in the two works), such a
connection cannot be proved. The presence of such a scene in *Persae,*
however, further confirms the popularity of the motif in the late fifth-
century and demonstrates its suitability to a non-comic context.[116]

THE RELEVANCE OF *ORESTES* 1503-36

The charge that the scene at 1503ff. is irrelevant to the play as a whole
has already been refuted in part. On a dramaturgical level, we have seen
(pp. 227-28) that an interlude of some sort is required between 1502 and
1537. We have seen as well (p. 219) the manner in which Orestes' brief
appearance on stage adds to the confused frenzy that dominates the later
scenes of *Orestes,* confirming the viewer's growing sense of a world
gone awry, in which the conventions of myth, heroism, even stagecraft no
longer pertain. In this regard the grim humor of the scene is fitting, to the
degree that it serves to heighten the surrealistic, disjointed atmosphere of
the play as it approaches its finale.

But the scene functions most importantly as an opportunity for the
audience to view, first-hand, the change which Orestes has undergone
since the play's opening scenes, and as a preparation for Orestes' savage
anger in the following *agon* with Menelaus. Those scholars who
understand that Orestes undergoes a process of self-revelation or
demoralization in the course of the play emphasize the seemingly
gratuitous viciousness with which he here toys with his helpless
opponent: this, we are told, is the protagonist in his true colors. Thus
Schein observes:

> The manner in which Orestes plays with the Phrygian, like a cat with a
> mouse, illustrates his characteristic cruelty and inhumanity, which are no

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113 Cf. *Persae* 145-46 (ὁ δ' ἀμφὶ γόνασι περιπλεκεὶς / ἑλίσσετο) with the Phrygian's
προσκύνησις at *Or* 1507.

114 *Persae* 152-56.

115 Cf. πάτερ at *Persae* 154 with ἄναξ at *Or* 1507.

116 O'Brien (1986) 220 makes the important additional point that the humor of 1503ff. is
of a piece with that of 1369ff.: Gredley's assertion that the humor of the former is somehow
intrusive is therefore unjustified. (Cf. above, n. 4.)

longer veiled by any illusions of nobility. ([1975] 64)

In a similar vein, Vickers speaks of "a sickening demonstration of force" in the scene ([1973] 585), while Burkert finds in it an archetype for what he regards as the play's central theme, "die Absurdität der Gewalt" ([1974] 104-05). Burkert argues that the staging of the scene presents a troubling distortion of traditional iconographic representations of the Greek warrior triumphant over a fallen barbarian foe, while others find a continuation of the (allegedly) parodic reminiscences of epic which they detect in the Phrygian's monody.[117] In a different context, some discern a warped reminiscence of *Choephori* 875ff., with the Phrygian (whose entrance at 1366ff. recalls that of the unnamed οἰκέτης at *Choephori* 875) cast in the role of Clytemnestra.[118] In all of the above studies, Orestes' treatment of the terrified slave is portrayed as perverse and/or absurd.

Several critics have gone further, detecting in the Phrygian of 1503ff. a distorted yet troubling caricature of Orestes himself as he is presented in the earlier sections of the play:[119] Orestes and the Phrygian are each forced to supplicate a character with whom he has little actual sympathy but in whose hands his own fate lies;[120] each finds the thought of survival 'sweet' (1172-76 and 1509);[121] each rejects death as a possible source of relief from his troubles;[122] and, most significantly, each is felt to be willing to place the preservation of his own life above any moral or ethical considerations. Thus at the close of the exchange Orestes concurs with the Phrygian's reply to his mock philosophical question (lines 1522-24):

> OP.   δοῦλος ὢν φοβῇ τὸν "Αιδην, ὅς σ' ἀπαλλάξει κακῶν;
> ΦP.   πᾶς ἀνήρ, κᾶν δοῦλος ᾖ τις, ἥδεται τὸ φῶς ὁρῶν.

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[117] See, e.g., Fuqua (1976) 92 and (1978) 22-23, Euben (1986) 232.

[118] See Seidensticker (1982) 111-12, who develops the suggestion of Reinhardt (1960) 254 and Burkert (1974) 104.

[119] See Di Benedetto (ed.) on *Or* 1509, Conacher (1967) 223, Wolff (1968) 136-37, H. Parry (1969) 345, Burkert (1974) 104-05, Schein (1975) 63-64, Fuqua (1976) 92, Zeitlin (1980) 63, Seidensticker (1982) 111-13, Euben (1986) 231-33, Lichtenberger (1986) 6-7, Willink (ed.) li and on *Or* 1506-36. Greenberg (1962) 188 and Biehl (1955) 84-85 point to the Phrygian's affinities with Menelaus, the former stressing the slave's use of σοφία, the latter the parallelism between the *agon* at 1503ff. and the one with Menelaus which follows. Smith (1967) 305 sees in the Phrygian a mock Helen. (Cf. Falkner [1983a] 297 and [1983b] 19, who combines all of the above viewpoints.)

[120] With the Phrygian's *proskynesis* (1507) cf. Orestes' supplication of Menelaus at 382-84.

[121] Noted by Wolff (1968) 137, who sees in τοῖς σώφροσιν at 1509 an ironic allusion to Orestes' madness. He also finds an echo of 448 in 1522.

[122] Cf. 414-16 with 1522-23 (cited below). Verrall (1905) 253 detects in Orestes' words at 1522, "a strange commiseration, the echo, as it seems, of some inner self-pity."

OP.   εὖ λέγεις· σῴζει σε σύνεσις. ἀλλὰ βαῖν' ἔσω δόμων.

Orestes' reference to σύνεσις at 1524 (and the echo there of 396) has received particular attention and has been employed to further the argument that the Phrygian is a *Zerrspiegel* of Orestes, used to underline the baseness of the latter's actions in the second half of the play.[123] Whereas in 396 σύνεσις referred to Orestes' sense of guilt and remorse at his killing of Clytemnestra, it now is praised under the guise of an amoral readiness to do and say whatever is necessary in order to survive.[124] As Seidensticker indicates in his excellent discussion of this subject:

> ... die Bedeutungsverschiebung des Wortes σύνεσις ist ein deutliches Zeichen für die 'Verwilderung' Orests, der aus einem von seinem Gewissen gemarterten Täter zu einem gewissenlosen Mörder 'gesundet' ist. ([1982] 113 n. 55)

Thus, in Seidensticker's view, the transvaluation of the word here parallels and reemphasizes what Conacher has referred to as a "gradual declension of honour in the deeds and, especially, the motives of Orestes and his companions" in the central scenes of the play, as their decision to die honorably is gradually transformed into a plot to seek revenge and, ultimately, escape death altogether.[125] Seidensticker summarizes the impact of the scene thus:

> Hatte die bizarre Arie des Phrygers gerade auch die Funktion, die Verwandlung der tragischen Rachehandlung zur brutalen und dabei doch auch erfolglosen und lächerlichen Farce zu demonstrieren, so präsentiert die kleine, scheinbar so bedeutungslose Begegnung Orestes' mit dem Sklaven im Anschluß daran, die Decouvrierung und Zerstörung des tragischen Helden.

> ... Der tragische Held ist auf die Ebene eines phrygischen Eunuchen herabgesunken. Die kleine, scheinbar so bedeutungslose Szene konfrontiert Orestes, mitten in der Durchführung des schändlichen Mechanema, mit einer Karikatur seiner selbst, verzerrt und doch wahr, lächerlich und bitter zugleich.[126]

The difficulty with Seidensticker's interpretation, as with the other interpretations cited earlier, lies in its emphasis on the moral degeneration of the play's protagonist. No doubt the audience would appreciate the

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[123] See, e.g., Burnett (1971) 219, Schein (1975) 64, Fuqua (1976) 92, Seidensticker (1982) 112-13, Euben (1986) 232. Cf. below, Appendix Two.

[124] Cf. Orestes' praise of Electra at 1180.

[125] Conacher (1967) 223; cf. *ibid.* 221ff.

[126] Seidensticker (1982) 114 and 113.

reversal that has taken place in Orestes' position since his earlier
supplication of Menelaus and would note the alteration that the hero has
undergone, the savage, deadly air that now characterizes the words and
actions of the formerly helpless suppliant. The notion, however, that the
Phrygian should be identified as Orestes' double — a figure introduced in
order to caricature and, ultimately, condemn Orestes' actions — is too
extreme. The Phrygian's frantic attempts to evade death are firmly based
in the typology of the comic and utterly cowardly barbarian; an audience
of Euripides' day would not be likely to equate his feckless squirming
with the pathetic and (more importantly) just claims that Orestes makes
on Menelaus at 380ff. The Phrygian's extreme and, at times, openly
comic love of life (see, for example, 1513, 1517, 1521) and his utter lack
of loyalty provide the central focus of the scene (compare above, section
[4]). Both of these qualities set him firmly in the comic/parodic traditions
just mentioned and preclude attempts to have him bear too heavy a
critical burden. In fact, the Phrygian's complete lack of loyalty to his
former masters and his conspicuous verbal agility ally him, not with
Orestes, but with Menelaus,[127] whose specious excuses to Orestes at
688ff., love of *sententiae* (684-86, [694-95], 708), and emphasis on
wisdom and 'the wise' (397, 415, 417, [695], 710, [716]) all find echoes
in the Phrygian's brief interview with Orestes (1509, 1510-17, 1523).

It is in light of these echoes that Orestes' sardonic praise of the
Phrygian's σύνεσις should be understood. The protagonist has
recognized, not a reflection of himself, but another example (in an
absurdly extreme form) of the shameless self-interest that motivates
people in the godless, highly political world of *Orestes*. Orestes' words
do not indicate approval, but a vicious, extremely cynical scorn. Again,
we should note that lines 1527ff. present Orestes' true motives for
confronting the Phrygian: he never intended to kill the slave, only to
prevent his summoning the Argives. Thus the entire interview (including
1516) should be read as a vicious game on Orestes' part. It is not his
σύνεσις that saves the Phrygian: Orestes merely taunts the slave with this
scornful piece of sarcasm as he dismisses him into the palace. Only by
ignoring the taunting, contemptuous attitude adopted by Orestes
throughout the scene as a whole can Seidensticker (following earlier
critics) claim that the protagonist "ist auf die Ebene eines phrygischen
Eunuchen herabgesunken," or that Orestes actually seeks the Phrygian's

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[127] Cf. Biehl (1955) 84-85, Greenberg (1962) 188, and Hall (1989b) 209-10, and see
above, n. 119. Hall (1989b) 119 n. 59 notes that the same actor would have played both
Menelaus and the Phrygian.

approval and sanction for his deed.[128] Such assertions reflect a curious
determination to unearth evidence of Orestes' depravity at seemingly any
cost. This determination reaches something of a Verrallian peak in
Vellacott's praise of the Phrygian as "one of the three persons in the play
whom the poet allows us to think of as honest and good," a sympathetic
character, "guileless and open-eyed," who is forced to answer "a madman
in his own terms."[129]

Much the same criticism applies to those studies that regard Orestes in
this scene as a frenzied lunatic, vainly flailing about in a futile effort to
achieve a series of poorly-conceived and contradictory goals. This
approach is developed most vividly by Verrall, who argues that Orestes
here has lost all capacity for rational thought or sustained purpose.[130]
Smith presents much the same reading in his searching analysis of what
he regards as Orestes' physical and moral infirmity.[131] And Burnett paints
a similarly elaborate picture of Orestes' confusion in this scene as part of
her argument that Euripides here is presenting the vain efforts of a man
who has deserted god:

> Orestes is not needed, but he has been plucked out of the palace because
> the poet must show him in a new and necessary light. ... The Erinyes
> have gone to work in a creature who has turned his back on god and out
> of the void in his faith they have created Orestes' depravity. The
> depravity is real and its intentions are supremely ugly, but it is wholly
> ineffective. ... Orestes had criminal intentions that could be called
> insane, but there was also a mad mindlessness in his prosecution of
> them .... In the end, after all, it is not [his] success but the insane
> celebration of [his] total failure that the god must interrupt.[132]

As in the other studies cited above, the confused frenzy of the scene is
taken as a clue to the protagonist's moral state; Burnett differs in shifting
the focus away from Orestes' alleged criminal insanity and onto his
alleged godlessness.

Such readings gain a good deal of support from the sheer unorthodoxy
of the scene and its frantic pacing, both of which lend Orestes'
confrontation with the Phrygian slave the surrealistic quality noted

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[128] See, e.g., Burnett (1971) 219, Burkert (1974) 105, Eucken (1986) 165-66.

[129] Vellacott (1975) 77. As we have seen (above, pp. 51-52), it is significant that many
critics, in their attempts to damn Orestes, are led to present sympathetic and even glowing
portraits of characters such as Menelaus, Tyndareus, Helen, and the Phrygian, while casting
scorn on Orestes, Electra, and, e.g., the αὐτουργός of 917ff.

[130] Verrall (1905) 252-53; cf., e.g., Mullens (1940) 156, Kitto (1961) 351, Vellacott
(1975) 76-79.

[131] Smith (1967) 305; cf. Appendix Two.

[132] Burnett (1971) 219-20.

earlier. The hypothesis that Orestes is truly insane or in some sort of deluded state also provides a realistic motive for the scene's apparent inconsistencies, while reinforcing the popular image of the Orestes of this play as a criminally insane or, at best, morally short-sighted and foolish individual. But these readings pose some difficulties as well. Orestes seems to be cogent enough in his interrogation of the Phrygian, and he displays none of the symptoms of madness as it is portrayed in fifth-century sources or the traditions of the tragic stage.[133] The notion that the Phrygian gulls a raving Orestes does not accord with either the content or the general tone of the interview. Moreover, much of the protagonist's alleged confusion in the scene has been imported by modern scholars: we have seen, for example, that the weak motivation for Orestes' entrance has no bearing on his mental state, while the notion that the Phrygian actually escapes from the distracted Orestes to warn Menelaus (advocated by Verrall and Burnett in their efforts to demonstrate the mad folly of Orestes' deeds) is without foundation. The sight of the hero toying with this Phrygian slave certainly is surprising, even troubling, but there is nothing in it to suggest either the insanity presumed by Verrall or the godless ineffectualness posited by Burnett.

O'Brien presents a more convincing interpretation of the scene along slightly different lines.[134] He suggests that in this scene Orestes represents a figure common in Greek myth and poetry: the assailant cheated of his victim by a god. Orestes, he argues (on the basis of lines 1512 and 1534-36), clearly believes he has killed Helen. In his boasts of success and his bullying of the Phrygian slave he recalls other deluded assailants such as Heracles, Agave, and Ajax. The audience, familiar with this type of character, would recognize Orestes' behavior as that of a man cheated of his prey by divine intervention. This reading is commendable insofar as it provides a convincing explanation for the apparent contradiction regarding Helen's fate. It also deflects attention away from the moralizing judgments on the protagonist's actions, common in other discussions of the scene. Yet this interpretation, too, presents difficulties, most of which are noted by O'Brien himself. Nothing is said by the Phrygian beforehand to indicate any delusion on Orestes' part,[135] nor does anyone refer to such a mistake later in the play. Moreover, Orestes is aware of Helen's disappearance at 1580ff., again with no mention of how he acquired his

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[133] Cf. below, pp. 311-12.

[134] O'Brien (1986) 221-23.

[135] O'Brien (1986) 222 and n. 50 suggests that Euripides wishes to surprise his audience, but the technique posited is unusual (the tragedians rarely allow such surprises to pass without remark) and potentially confusing.

knowledge in the interval since his last appearance. Equally suspect is the peculiarly incidental use of this theme. There seems to be no practical need for the deception (as there is in the parallels cited), nor any particular consequences associated with it. If the analysis presented above is correct, the audience's attention in the scene focuses on the Phrygian's δειλία, on the one hand, and the new-found (and highly embittered) forcefulness of Orestes on the other. The reference to Helen's fate, puzzling as it may be, forms only a minor issue in Orestes' ἔλεγχος of the slave and his later threats against Menelaus. We can well admit the confusing nature of that reference and the weakness of the explanations posited by scholars to date, but it is equally difficult to discover a motive for the fleeting appearance of the divinely inspired delusion posited by O'Brien.

Lines 1503ff. present Orestes in a state of manic revolt, faced with a character who, despite his roots in the comic tradition, displays a close affinity to his master Menelaus. Like Hecuba in the latter scenes of her play, Orestes has learned the ways of the hostile world that confronts him: his former passivity in the face of his opponents' specious treachery has been replaced by a savage and biting cynicism, a willingness to cast off old forms and confront his enemies on their own level.[136] The emphasis in the scene is not on Orestes as a raving lunatic or parodic pseudo-hero, but on the transformation that he has undergone from passive sufferer to savage avenger. The scene is crucial to the play's economy: while building on the confused agitation and outlandishness of the previous scenes, it also prepares for the ensuing confrontation with Menelaus.

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[136] Cf. Falkner (1983a) 297-300.

CHAPTER SIX

THE *EXODOS*

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the most problematic section of this exceedingly problematic play is the *exodos* (lines 1537-[1693]). In the span of these 157 lines the drama rushes to its conclusion through a series of startling entrances and changes of direction, finally careering to a happy finale, but only after approaching the brink of catastrophe. Following the exit of Orestes and the Phrygian into the palace at 1536, the chorus engages in a brief fit of aporetic hand-wringing, typical in such moments of extreme tension,[1] as it reacts to the increasing violence and confusion of events on stage and notices the ominous signs of torches being lit within the palace (1537-1548). At 1549 Menelaus and a group of attendants, introduced by the chorus in agitated trochaic tetrameters,[2] rush onto the stage. The Spartan king has heard of the attempt on Helen's life (which he believes has been successful) and has come to rescue Hermione, if possible. His attendants are on the point of breaking in the doors of the palace when suddenly Pylades, torches in hand, appears with Orestes, who is holding a sword to Hermione's throat.[3] In striking contrast to his previous deference before

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[1] See Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1539-40 and Hamilton (1987) 595 for parallels.

[2] On the unusual features of this announcement see above, pp. 228-32, and cf. Willink (ed.) and West (ed.) on *Or* 1549-1553.

[3] There is uncertainty as to whether Electra is present during the finale. Most commentators would have her appear on the roof out of thematic considerations and for the sake of closure: see Steidle (1968) 109; contrast Dihle (1981) 111. The spectacle afforded by a large group of mute supernumeraries frequently is cited as a further motive for her presence: see Steidle *loc. cit.*, Nisetich (1986) 49 (cf. Stanley-Porter [1973] 81, West [ed.] on *Or* 1625; Willink [ed.] on *Or* 1567-75 posits the presence of a pair of torch-bearers on the roof as well). There are good reasons for opposing this staging: (1) ὕφαπτε at 1618 implies that Electra is within the *skene;* (2) a crowd-scene on the roof would be awkward to introduce and would be visually confusing; more importantly, it would undercut the emphasis on the protagonist's desperate isolation; (3) Apollo seems to address or refer directly to all parties present, yet nowhere does he speak of Electra as if she were visible (note 1658-59: the force of the initial Πυλάδῃ δ' immediately after the reference to Hermione suggests that at 1653-59 Apollo is dealing with the two individuals present on the roof with Orestes); (4) the notion that Electra should be present reflects a modern bias not necessarily shared by the ancients: she does not appear at the conclusion of *Cho* (Taplin [1977] 340), nor does the *autourgos* at the end of E. *El;* note as well the notorious absence of Antigone's corpse at the end of *Ant,* of Iole at the

Menelaus, Orestes here is imperious and peremptory in addressing his
uncle,[4] threatening the immediate death of Hermione and the destruction
of the palace should Menelaus refuse to comply with his demands for aid.
An angry confrontation ensues, Orestes reveling in his new position of
power and Menelaus alternately pleading for the life of his daughter and
threatening revenge (1567ff.). This confrontation builds in intensity,
shifting into rapid *antilabe* at 1600ff.[5] and culminating in Menelaus'
apparent collapse at 1617a (ἔχεις με). Orestes turns to his companions
and orders the firing of the palace (1618-1620); in despair Menelaus calls
on the people of Argos to come to his aid.[6] Disaster seems unavoidable.
Only at this point does the *deus ex machina* appear: Apollo, accompanied
by the recently rescued Helen.[7] With breath-taking suddenness (and with
little in the way of explanation or justification) the god sets about putting
things to rights: Helen, safely delivered from Orestes' sword and

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conclusion of *Trach* (Easterling [1982] on *Trach* 1275), and of Andromache at the end of
Andr (see below, n. 7).

   [4] Note the opening οὗτος σύ (cf. Taplin [1977] 220, Di Benedetto [ed.] on *Or* 1567) and
εἶπον (see Willink [ed.] on *Or* 1568) of 1567-68. Orestes here maintains the same tone of
haughty contempt that he displayed earlier toward the Phrygian slave. Smith (1967) 305,
Steidle (1968) 106-07, Schmidt-Berger (1973) 48 and 171ff., Halleran (1985) 43, and
O'Brien (1988c) 39-40 have useful comments on the inversions that arise in the latter sections
of the play.

   [5] See Hancock (1917) 21 and n. 1 and Seidensticker (1971) 210 on *antilabe* in the late
plays of Euripides. For reasons that will be made clear in the following discussion, I see no
need for the various transpositions proposed by Willink (ed.) and Diggle (ed.) at 1600ff.

   [6] Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1621-1624 suggests that a group of Argive citizens enter at the last
moment in response to Menelaus' cries, but: (1) there is no time for such an entry before
Apollo's miraculous appearance; (2) the confusion that would result would distract the
audience, lessening the effect of the *deus ex machina*. Menelaus' cries constitute a general
call to potential helpers: see Mastronarde (1979) 90.

   [7] Helen's presence with Apollo in this scene is disputed. Those who challenge the
authenticity of 1631-32 have suggested that she is there only as the result of a later
interpolation (Paley [ed.] on *Or* 1629, accepted by Murray [ed.], and, provisionally, by Page
[1934] 41-42 and Biehl [1955] 92-93). Lesky (1935) 45-47 argues that only the end of 1631
is an interpolation: i.e. that Helen, originally with Apollo, later was placed above him by an
ambitious producer (cf. Mastronarde [1990] 287 n. 15); West (ed.) 38 follows Hermann in
adopting the variant πύλαις in 1631. The transmitted text is defended by W. Schmidt (1964)
48 n. 1 and 185, Di Benedetto (ed.) on *Or* 1631-32, Stanley-Porter (1973) 81 and n. 128, and
Vellacott (1975) 80 and n. 16. Of late the tendency has been to accept Helen's presence while
admitting the problematic nature of 1631-32 (see Hourmouziades [1965] 168 n. 1, Falkner
[1983a] 298 n. 43, and Willink [ed.] on *Or* 1625-90 and 1631-1632): Helen's presence is said
to be assured by the τῆσδε of 1639, by Menelaus' farewell at 1673-74, and by Apollo's
prophecy at 1683ff. None of this is compelling evidence that Helen is in fact visible to the
spectators: for the deictic pronoun used emphatically of a character not actually present, see
Dale (1964) 166 and Kovacs (1980) 49; for addresses to characters 'off' see Stanley-Porter
(1973) 77-78 and n. 89; for dispensations concerning a character not present cf. *Andr* 1246
and 1247 (with Stanley-Porter [1973] 87 n. 72, Kovacs *loc. cit.*, and Heath [1987a] 94 n. 6).
On the staging of Apollo's entrance see Hourmouziades (1965) 30 and 168, Willink (ed.) on
Or 1625-90, West (ed.) 38, and Mastronarde (1990) 262-64.

exonerated of all blame for her past actions (1629-1642), will join her brothers as one of the lesser immortals, a patroness of sailors (1683-1690); Orestes, after a year's exile in Arcadia, will be acquitted of his mother's death and, married to the very Hermione whose throat he was prepared to slit only moments before, will rule Argos in prosperous tranquility (1643-57, 1664-1665);[8] Pylades will marry Electra (1658-59); and Menelaus will make a truce with his future son-in-law, contenting himself with his position as king of Sparta (1660-1663). Orestes and Menelaus scarcely have time to express their surprise and acquiescence (1666-1681) before Apollo departs and all file off to their apportioned fates. A situation that only moments before appeared to admit of no solution has been resolved completely in the proverbial blink of an eye, while the events of the previous 1624 lines have suddenly amounted to nothing but a fleeting and (it appears) inconsequential aberration from the traditional *Oresteia* legend.

In the history of scholarly criticism on *Orestes* the *exodos* has become a touchstone, inasmuch as a verdict regarding the merits and the significance of this frantic series of scenes is, by necessity, of a piece with the critic's evaluation of the play as a whole. It is here that evidence has been found of both Euripides the clumsy melodramatic botcher and Euripides the skilled and provocative virtuoso of the stage; of Orestes the lunatic felon and Orestes the desperate hero more sinned against than sinning; of *Orestes* itself as an ironic indictment of contemporary myth, religion, morals, politics, and literature, and of *Orestes* as a serene reflection on the two extremes of human folly and divine providence. Two points have proven to be particularly contentious: the characterization of Menelaus and Orestes in their confrontation at 1567-1624 (most notably Orestes' command to set fire to the palace at 1618-1620, after Menelaus' apparent surrender [ἔχεις με, 1617a]), and the degree of seriousness to be accorded Apollo's dispensations at 1625ff. These two features of the *exodos* have provided the foundation for probing studies of the play's significance; on analysis, however, we will find that the *exodos* functions directly within the emotional structure of the play as outlined in the previous chapters.

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[8] See Robert (1881) 181 n. 30, Perrotta (1928) 125-27, Stephanopoulos (1980) 153ff. and West (1987) 284-85 on the blending of mythical traditions here.

SOME PREVIOUS VIEWS

Negative response to the *exodos* of *Orestes* dates back to the ancient *hypothesis,* which flatly states that the finale (καταστροφή) is too like that of a comedy (κωμικωτέρα). The ancient commentator refers primarily to the piece's non-tragic conclusion, containing reconciliations and marriages all round;[9] yet comparison with remarks in the *scholia* suggests that a more far-sweeping and subjective criticism is implied as well. Clearly even in antiquity there were those who felt that the frantic entrances and exits at the end of the play, the empty taunts, threats, and counter-threats which Orestes and Menelaus hurl at each other (particularly Orestes' threat at 1569-70 to bash Menelaus on the head with a piece of the palace roof),[10] and the overall staging of that confrontation, as characters rail at one another between the *skene* roof and the *orchestra,*[11] were beneath the dignity of the tragic stage, despite their effectiveness in performance (τῶν ἐπὶ σκηνῆς εὐδοκιμούντων, as the *hypothesis* observes with clear disdain).[12] This negative evaluation of the play's finale is echoed in the remarks of Schlegel, whose influential early study curtly dismisses the *exodos* as relying on "the most violent strokes of stage effect" ("gewaltsamen Theaterstreichen"),[13] and is a factor as well in the decision of a number of scholars to classify *Orestes* as a pro-satyric piece.[14]

But questions of decorum or propriety as a rule have concerned moderns far less than those regarding the logic and coherence of Apollo's sudden epiphany and his miraculous resolution of the play's many conflicts. The gap between the characters as presented by Euripides and their traditional roles as assigned by Apollo has been a persistent

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[9] Cf. Steidle (1968) 112 n. 90, who correctly interprets καταστροφή in terms of the 'formalistischen Betractungsweise' of the ancient grammarians.

[10] Mercanti (1915) 80-81 compares Plaut. *Amph.* 1021ff. and suggests that the confrontation between Orestes and Menelaus may have served as the model for such scenes in later comedy. Olivieri (1900) 236 notes the presence of similar scenes on comic vases from southern Italy. See, however, O'Brien (1988c) 40-41, who finds here one of a series of allusions throughout the play to the Tantalus myth; cf. Rosivach (1987) 244-45.

[11] For the use of the *skene* roof in comedy Willink (ed.) cites Goosens (1962) 654 n. 20. Mastronarde (1990) 280ff. provides a useful catalogue of its use in tragedy.

[12] See Heath (1987a) 33-35 (cf. *ibid.* p. 41) on the scholiasts' criticisms of lapses in σεμνότης. The contemporary allusions and other anachronisms detected in the play by scholars, ancient and modern, also are felt to be more appropriate to comedy: see Heath (1987a) 66 n. 56. Contrast Perrotta (1928) 113-14 and Scarcella (1956) 271-72, who argue that there is no hint of comedy (or of what Frye terms the 'ironic mode') in the *exodos.*

[13] Schlegel (1966) 124 (J. Black's translation).

[14] See Appendix One; cf. the young Wilamowitz ([1974] 135-38), Olivieri (1900) 236, and Mercanti (1915) 80-81.

σκάνδαλον to critics of the play. The 'minimalist' position has been to appeal to the familiar notion of Euripides the botcher, the dramatist whose taste for innovative and exciting scenes leads him so far astray that he must resort to the god from the machine in order to salvage his *ad hoc* plot and return it to the path dictated by tradition. Thus Hermann flatly states: *Manifestum est ... poetam, postquam rem ita implicavit ut in se ipsa nullam contineat quae vulgari fama congrueret nodi solvendi rationem, ad deum ex machina confugisse....*[15] This early criticism is picked up and repeated throughout the literature: "La divinité remplit ici un office qu'elle n'a nulle part ailleurs: celui de tirer d'embarras un poète dramatique en quête d'un dénouement" (Decharme [1893] 396); "... l'apparition merveilleuse d'Apollon, qui vient au secours du poète embarrassé ...." (Patin [1913] 1.270); "It would seem that Euripides set out to dramatize a situation, and that it got the better of him, so that the end of the story, fixed beforehand, was made unsuitable."[16] Jones is sympathetic to this view, but incorporates his criticisms of the *exodos* into a more elegant analysis of Euripides' dramaturgy that accounts both for the theatricality of the play's final scenes and for the apparent clumsiness of Apollo's final dispensations:

> Clearly defined terminal climax, so impressively absent in the older drama as a whole, becomes a felt need in Euripides .... The classical unravelling (*lusis*) of the action has veered and narrowed towards a theatrical *dénouement* ...; but in the *deus ex machina* ... Euripides sees the opportunity in play after play of coupling visual sensation with climactic event. And these plays are among his failures or marred successes. In the *Andromache* and the *Orestes* and the *Electra,* a superimposed, hustled inruption of the deity is simply damaging ....[17]

Implied in these criticisms is the notion that this resolution of the plot reflects a lack of seriousness in the play as a whole, that Apollo's sudden epiphany and subsequent dispensations are, at best, irrelevant to the

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[15] Hermann (ed.) ix, echoing Cic. *Nat. D.* 1.20.53.

[16] Grube (1941) 397. Such dismissive views of the *deus ex machina* find support in the ancient critical tradition: see W. Schmidt (1964) 5ff., esp. 23-24. Apollo's intervention also is dismissed from serious consideration, e.g., by Conacher (1967) 224 and Melchinger (1973) 168 ("Why did Apollo not undertake to do this [*viz.* intervene with the Argives] long before? That is as it may be. The game is up. It was just a play."). Cf. Michelini (1987) 103 n. 41.

[17] Jones (1962) 266-67. (Jones discounts the notion that any parody of popular religion is intended, citing the *exodos* of *Med,* "where religion is plainly not an issue.") Cf. Rivier (1976) 126 n. 2 and Michelini (1987) 106. On Euripides' increasing tendency in his later plays to tie the appearance of the *deus* directly into the plot cf. Steiger (1898) 25-27, 37-39 and Spira (1960) 113ff., 138ff. Cf. Pohlenz (1954) 1.419, who contrasts the *deus ex machina* of *Phil:* Apollo appears, "nicht als göttlicher Freund und Berater, sondern als der echte Deus ex machina, der mit einem Machtwort Frieden gebietet."

events that have transpired on stage — an abrupt and awkward return to the world of traditional mythology, with no function other than to draw a curtain over a play that Euripides' penchant for thrilling finales has allowed to get out of hand. Thus the *exodos* often is treated as a meaningless conclusion to an equally meaningless work, clumsily introduced by means of a gross violation of both psychological realism and sheer common sense.

Yet there are those who, remarking on these same features of the *exodos,* stress the skill with which Euripides has choreographed the finale of his play. For such critics the *exodos* is a masterly *tour de force,* a virtuoso display of the poet's adeptness at manipulating stage-conventions and of his sure sense of pacing.[18] This view has been advocated in particular by Lesky in a series of discussions of the play.[19] Like Jones, Lesky feels that the *exodos* is intended primarily for its dramatic effect,[20] but he maintains that it should not, for this reason, be condemned unconditionally.[21] Instead, he sees the Euripides' reliance on Apollo as a device that allows him to explore to the full the possibilities inherent in the situation that he has worked so hard to bring about. We begin this riotous finale in suspense whether the protagonists' scheme to coerce Menelaus' aid will be successful or will end in the general conflagration that seems such a real possibility at lines 1537ff. In effect, we get both conclusions. Orestes toys with Menelaus (who thereby is given a further opportunity to display his indecisiveness and his unheroic temperament) until the latter gives way with his colorless ἔχεις με (1617a). But this capitulation does not bring the conflict to an end, inasmuch as such a conclusion would leave unresolved the extreme emotions of the preceding scenes and would fail to address the question of just how Orestes and his most unprepossessing uncle finally placate the Argive assembly. It is for this reason, Lesky argues, that Orestes ignores Menelaus' words and orders the burning of the palace. While such a reaction goes against psychological probability, it allows Euripides

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[18] Cf. above, pp. 40-43.

[19] Lesky (1935) 43-44, (1965) 192-93, (1971) 446, and (1983) 352-53.

[20] See, e.g., Lesky (1971) 446: "Der Schluß, aber nicht er allein, zeigt uns, wie sich in diesen letzten athenischen Jahren des Dichters der Wunsch nach Fülle und Effeckt in einer für das Kunstwerk gefährlichen Weise auszuwirken begann." Cf. Lesky (1935) 43: "... [die] ganz auf den dramatischen Effekt gestellt[e] Schlußszene."

[21] Lesky (1965) 192-93: "... the poet has not hesitated to use spectacular effects, particularly in the final scene .... But to dismiss *Orestes* as merely aiming at effect, or to treat it as symptomatic of the decay of Euripidean art, is going too far. This is a work where his genius is particularly alive, although the different elements have not been completely harmonized."

to present an exciting spectacle and provides a motive for the sudden entrance of Apollo, who alone can effect a true resolution to the conflict.[22]

Lesky's attempts to salvage the *exodos* by emphasizing its theatrical qualities and its emotional effectiveness are echoed by those scholars who would have us appreciate *Orestes* for its technical and theatrical merits — the skill with which it presents an exciting series of innovative and duly rousing scenes — rather than for its intellectual or thematic content. For these critics, it is the sure sense of theater, the cunning pacing, and the exciting innovations that justify this particular conclusion to the play. The series of events that precede Menelaus' entrance have gradually built to a climax; it is therefore imperative that Euripides provide a finale exciting enough to cap those earlier scenes and match their novelty and verve. Viewed in these terms, the *exodos* surely succeeds.[23] The 'imaginative tumult' of the scenes immediately preceding the *exodos* is maintained in the agitated *stichomythia* between Orestes and Menelaus, in the suddenness of Orestes' decision to fire the palace, and in the equally abrupt appearance of Apollo.[24] And, as in those earlier scenes, the audience is kept off-balance by further Euripidean departures from convention. The sudden entrance of Orestes onto the *skene* roof is doubly striking, for the thrilling tableau that it presents — the enraged Menelaus and his attendants in the act of storming the palace below; Orestes, Pylades, and the captive Hermione above, torches aflame — and for its sheer unexpectedness. As commentators have noted, mortal characters rarely appear on the *skene* roof in classical tragedy: generally the upper regions are reserved for the supernatural epiphanies of figures far removed from the stage action.[25] The sudden appearance there of a group of mortal characters still very much caught up in the proceedings on stage thus constitutes a striking innovation. And, in fact, knowledgeable spectators of Euripides' day would have been doubly misled by their expectations. Aware that things have reached something

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[22] Lesky (1971) 446 ("... Euripides mutet uns einiges zu, wenn er Orestes auf des Menelaos Nachgeben mit dem Befehle antworten läßt, den Palast in Brand zu stecken. Diese befremdliche Reaktion ist weder mit Psychologie noch sonstwie zu erklären, sie ist einfach dazu da, die Situation auf die äußerste Spitze zu treiben.") and (1935) 43-44. Lesky's influence is apparent at Wuhrmann (1940) 116-17, Webster (1967) 251, Di Benedetto (ed.) on *Or* 1617ff., and West (ed.) on *Or* 1618. Cf. Σ *Or* 128: ἐφελκυστικός ... ἐστιν ἀεὶ μᾶλλον τῶν θεατῶν ὁ ποιητής, οὐ φροντίζων τῶν ἀκριβολογούντων.

[23] Cf. Kitto (1961) 348-51 (the source of the phrase quoted in my next sentence), Webster (1967) 279-80. Contrast Seeck (1969) 13-14.

[24] Cf. Wolff (1968) 147.

[25] See Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1567-75, Taplin (1977) 440, Mastronarde (1990) 281-86.

of an impasse at 1566 and that Menelaus and his men cannot in fact smash down the doors of the *skene,* such spectators would anticipate the appearance of the requisite *deus ex machina* (or equivalent)[26] to forestall the proposed violation of theatrical convention and to restore order to a situation that has been deteriorating at an alarming pace since the commencement of the *mechanema* plot. Instead of a god, however, the audience finds itself suddenly confronted by Orestes — an Orestes who appears above the skene (as would a god),[27] who displays all of the imperious assurance of the expected divinity, and who does in fact bring a temporary halt to Menelaus' plans; but who, far from resolving the present impasse and restoring order, drives the situation even further from any hope of resolution.[28] Apollo's entrance, when it finally occurs, results in an additional surprise: the only instance in tragedy of a scene involving characters on three different levels: orchestra, *skene*-roof, and *mechane* (or *theologeion*). This striking tableau provides a fitting visual climax to this most innovative and unorthodox work.[29]

From a strictly theatrical point of view, then, the *exodos* is a success: a witty and exciting means by which the poet reaffirms the traditional myth, suddenly transforming his carefully invented plot into a mere interpolation or extra episode within the framework of the familiar *Oresteia* legend.[30] The problem with this quintessentially Euripidean approach, according to Lesky, is that the sudden appearance of Apollo and his abrupt restoration of the traditional myth acquire something of a 'tacked-on' quality. But in his view the resulting disparity with the preceding stage-action serves a useful purpose by highlighting Euripides' uniquely secular treatment of his material within the body of the play itself, thereby setting off the poet's peculiar skills to greater effect.[31]

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[26] The appearance of the Pythia at *Ion* 1320 provides a particularly interesting variation on the *deus ex machina* (discussed below, pp. 285-86). The most frequently-cited parallel for our scene, however, is the conclusion of *Med:* see Strohm (1957) 126, Hourmouziades (1965) 17-18, Petersmann (1971) 107-09, W. G. Arnott (1973) 59-60, Taplin (1977) 443, Zeitlin (1980) 62, Halleran (1985) 43, Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1561-62 and 1567-75, West (ed.) on *Or* 1567.

[27] On the question of the *theologeion* (whether, as is likely, it should be imagined merely as the roof of the *skene* or as a structure rising above the roof) see Mastronarde (1990).

[28] Cf. Halleran (1985) 43, Lichtenberger (1986) 7-8, Hartigan (1991) 153. Euben (1986) 234 suggests that the image of Orestes, Pylades, and (in his view) Electra atop the palace with torches ablaze recalls Cassandra's vision of the Furies at *Ag* 1186ff.

[29] On the striking nature of this multi-level tableau, see Lesky (1935) 46-47, Webster (1968) 29, W. G. Arnott (1973) 60, Spira (1960) 144, Hourmouziades (1965) 168, Di Benedetto (ed.) on *Or* 1567ff., and West (ed.) on *Or* 1625.

[30] See West (ed.) 30.

[31] Lesky (1983) 353 and 390-91.

Webster adopts a similar view, speculating that Euripides may have been led to employ *di ex machina* of this sort by a belief in the value of cult (which frequently is a focus of these Euripidean finales) and by a heartfelt appreciation for the beauty of the mythical landscape these gods inhabit.[32]

For the majority of scholars, however, the contrast between the traditional myth and the characters and events of Euripides' play is too great to be glossed over so easily and requires an explanation that goes beyond mere assertions of the poet's incompetence or references to his dramaturgic technique. Accordingly, attempts made to resolve this dissonance (which tends to present itself as a conflict between prologue, lyric, and epilogue on the one hand, and the main action of the play on the other)[33] usually cast discredit on the traditional myth. Von Fritz speaks for many in flatly proclaiming that none of Euripides' *di ex machina* should be taken seriously, that the resolutions effected by these stage divinities (or their equivalents) are intentionally absurd and are meant to be regarded as such by the audience.[34] He cites *Orestes* as a particularly egregious example of this Euripidean practice, which he believes becomes more extreme (and therefore more overt) in the poet's later works. The suddenness with which the play's issues are resolved provides von Fritz with the foundation for his case: Orestes, who a moment before was prepared to slit Hermione's throat, suddenly drops his sword and declares himself happy to fill the role assigned to him by legend; Menelaus not only forgets his anger over the attack on Helen, the kidnapping of his daughter, and the numerous insults of Orestes, but even declares himself to be delighted at the nobility of the match (1676-77): Orestes, it appears, suddenly is regarded as a good 'catch.'[35]

> Wenn das nicht bitterer Hohn ist auf das happy end einer Orestes-
> tragödie, dann weiß ich nicht, wie blutiger Hohn etwa sonst noch
> aussehen könnte. Es ist, als ob Euripides aus Verzweiflung darüber, daß
> das allgemeine Publikum den Sinn der unvermutet glücklichen Ausgänge
> vieler seiner Tragödien gar nicht verstehen wollte, diesen Sinn hier

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[32] Webster (1967) 251-52 and 290-92; cf. *id.* (1968) 44-45.

[33] See Webster (1967) 252, Cilliers (1985) 15. For an expanded treatment of this contrast see Fuqua (1978).

[34] Von Fritz (1962b) 312-13. (Von Fritz includes in his strictures figures such as the Heracles at the conclusion of *Alc.*) Cf. Melchinger (1973) 57-58.

[35] Cf. Fuqua (1978) 25 n. 56 on 1676-77 and his comments on pp. 24ff. Euben (1986) 225 (cf. 241-45) suggests that the marriage between Orestes and Hermione be read as a symbol for the play's many confusing 'marriages of opposites.' Smith (1967) 307 notes further absurdities: "Helen is saved, Ζηνὸς γὰρ οὖσαν ζῆν νιν ἄφθιτον χρεών (1635), on the strength of a pun, and the Trojan war was to reduce overpopulation."

einmal ganz kraß deutlich zu machen suchte ....[36]

On this view, Euripides does reassert the traditional myth, but in such
a fashion that the knowledgeable spectator will realize that this
conclusion is not to be taken seriously.[37] Apollo's miraculous appearance,
far from being irrelevant or reflecting the poet's desperation, acts as a
signpost for the audience, a clue that the poet's true intentions involve
more than just an exciting finale.

For von Fritz, as for the majority of scholars who adopt this view of
the *exodos,* Euripides' principal concern lies in refuting the traditional
myth by exposing it as a celebration of inhuman savagery and wanton
folly.[38] They feel that the sudden return to the serene calm of myth
intentionally jolts the audience into reflecting on the true nature of that
myth and on the nature of traditional mythology as a whole. This
interpretation is put forward with some force in Verrall's study of the
play,[39] and is nicely formulated by Arrowsmith in terms of the λόγος-
ἔργον controversy:

> In the *Orestes,* ... if anywhere in Euripides' work, the contrast
> between *logos* and *ergon* is structural and crucial. The play falls abruptly
> into two distinct parts. *Ergon* is represented by the body of the play
> proper, a freely invented account of the events which followed Orestes'
> matricide; and *logos* by the concluding epiphany of Apollo, an archaizing
> *deus ex machina* in which the god foretells the known mythical futures of
> the characters. These two parts are enjambed with jarring dissonance,
> since the characters as developed in the play and their mythical future as
> announced by Apollo are incompatible. Through this device the play
> becomes problematic: the spectator is literally compelled, it seems, to
> choose between his own experience of the play and Apollo's closing
> words, between *ergon* and *logos,* behavior and myth.
>
> [Yet] the impasse between *logos* and *ergon* in the *Orestes* is apparent
> only. What resolves it is a common purpose in both parts — an ascending
> curve of exposure, first of the 'heroic' Orestes who killed his mother and

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[36] Von Fritz (1962b) 313; cf. Verrall (1905) 256-60, Pohlenz (1954) 1.419-20, Zeitlin
(1980) 70-71, and see Steidle (1968) 112 n. 90.

[37] In antiquity this notion is put forward at Lucian *Iupp. Trag.* 41: see W. Schmidt (1964)
19-21.

[38] Cf. von Fritz (1962a) 146ff. See as well Jens (1968) 8ff., Vellacott (1975) 78-81, Fuqua
(1976) 93-94. Cf. W. Schmidt (1964) 26-28.

[39] Verrall (1905) 253ff., important (as often with Verrall) more for its later influence than
for its particular views. This study is marred, above all, by Verrall's conviction that Apollo's
epiphany, like the choral sections, is a later appendage, added to an original private
production of the play in order to make it suitable for performance at the City Dionysia. Thus,
according to Verrall, the 'true' play ends with a mad Orestes standing atop the burning palace
(already set ablaze by Pylades and Electra before his entrance) with a Hermione who is either

tried to kill Helen, and then of the traditionally 'wise' Apollo who drove
Orestes to matricide. The exposures are, in fact, mutual and cumulative,
compelling us to see that if Orestes, by any human standard of morality,
is mad, Apollo is utterly insane ....[40]

Thus, the finale is regarded as intentionally absurd — a farcical, fantasy-
laden ending that, through its sheer impossibility, leaves us to
contemplate afresh the bleak outlook of the play as a whole.[41] Particular
irony is detected in the fact that it is Apollo — the god whose folly has
been assailed repeatedly throughout the play — who effects this
resolution.[42] As such, the finale calls to mind the sardonic lines with
which Brecht concludes the film version of *Dreigroschenoper,*[43] and, in
fact, Roberts has argued that the end of the play intentionally mocks the
audience's desire for just such happy endings.[44]

This reading of the *exodos* has undergone a variety of modifications at
the hands of individual critics. In Reinhardt's influential study, the
existential implications of the finale are stressed, as the critic finds
therein evidence of the *Sinneskrise* that pervades Euripides' works:

> Wenn Apollon ex machina dem Rasenden befiehlt, das Mädchen, das
> er noch eben zu köpfen bereit war, zu heiraten und dieser sein Jawort
> dazu gibt, so wird es uns schwer gemacht, die Lösung ernst zu nehmen.
> ... Der Schluß zeigt, wie es sein sollte — und nicht ist. 'Verwirrung
> maßlos wohnt im Göttlichen wie Menschlichen.' 'Though this be
> madness, yet there is method in't,' würde Polonius sagen. Und doch ist
> dies — der Mensch. Wo bleibt der Sinn? Zur Größe des Euripides gehört,
> daß er die Frage stellen, aber nicht hat lösen mögen.[45]

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unconscious or dead.

[40] Arrowsmith (1963) 45 and 46; cf. *id.* (1958) 109-10. Arrowsmith is followed by
Vickers (1973) 585-86.

[41] Cf. Steiger (1898) 24-31, who finds here criticism of Sophocles' heroic 'optimism' in
the conclusion of his *El.* Steiger is echoed by Eucken (1986) 168.

[42] Special emphasis is placed on Orestes' passing remark at 1668-69: see Perrotta (1928)
106-07, Wolff (1968) 138, Vellacott (1975) 80-81, Fuqua (1978) 24 n. 55, Roberts (1984)
117, Euben (1986) 243-44. For a review of the portrayal of Apollo in the play's early scenes
see, e.g., Roberts (1984) 110ff., Cilliers (1985) 14.

[43] Note esp. the second stanza: "Daß er nur im trüben fische / Hat der Hinz den Kunz
bedroht. / Doch zum Schluß vereint am Tische / Essen sie des Armen Brot." Griffin (1990)
148-49 cites W. H. Auden, "Five Songs," II: "But—Music Ho!—at last it comes, / The
Transformation Scene: / A rather scruffy-looking god / Descends in a machine / And,
gabbling off his rustic rhymes, / Misplacing one or two, / Commands the prisoners to walk, /
The enemies to screw."

[44] Roberts (1984) 115-20; cf. Euben (1986) 249 and, for a similarly sophisticated analysis
of the Euripidean *deus ex machina* as a device intended to enhance the audience's aesthetic
distance (and hence its critical faculties), Michelini (1987) 110-11 and 120.

[45] Reinhardt (1960) 256; cf. Lichtenberger (1986) 10-12. H. Parry (1969) 343-44 and 352

Wolff, on the other hand, stresses not the confusion so much as the futility of things:

> The arbitrariness of [Apollo's] interference is the most disturbing demonstration yet of the simply irrational course of things. It recalls Orestes' arbitrariness with the Phrygian slave, differing only as the god has more power and uses it now to restore a traditional order. The plot which Euripides invented for the action of this play moves in cycles which show how futile human action is, coming always back to its starting point, a desperate and helpless strait, and how thus, without achievement, it was insubstantial and empty of all but passionate feelings. For this condition Apollo has no cure. Euripides shows us human beings who cannot save themselves. But the way the god saves them denies their humanity, or rather, finally, isolates it. The break between the new plot — 'human beings as they are' — and the myth — the received, poetic vision of order — is beyond healing.[46]

Other scholars choose to find a more immediate significance in these alleged absurdities, associating them with the deterioration of Athenian society in the late fifth century. Ultimately, such readings detect in the chaotic violence of the finale and the incongruity of the resolution effected by Apollo evidence that Euripides believes the traditional myths have lost their relevance for a generation that has experienced the brutality — both abroad and at home — elicited by the Peloponnesian War: the old myths are dead, and, with them, the tragic poetry they fostered.[47]

Daraio, on the other hand, finds in the arbitrariness of Apollo's externally imposed resolution support for his view that Euripides is feeling his way toward a new dramatic genre, one that is not tragic in the traditional sense, but neither is it comic or satirical. For Daraio, the matter of Orestes' guilt is infinitely more complex for Euripides than it is for Aeschylus: presenting his story within the framework of religious tradition, Aeschylus is able to resolve the question of the hero's guilt along lines established by that framework; in the eyes of Euripides — with his awareness of the broader social and human implications of the deed — no such easy redemption is possible. The arbitrariness of the

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adopts a very similar approach, somewhat tentatively comparing Apollo to Godot; cf. Hartigan (1991) 154-56.

[46] Wolff (1968) 148. Cf. Greenberg (1962) 189-90.

[47] See Pohlenz (1954) 1.419-21, Arrowsmith (1963) 46-47, Wolff (1968) 148-49, Schein (1975) 50 and 64-66, Euben (1986) 241-45; cf. Vellacott (1975) 78-81, Zeitlin (1980) 70-72. Falkner (1983a) 299 and (1983b) 19 suggests that the Orestes of the finale has attained his true φύσις, revealing himself as a genuine child of his society and (by implication) of Athens in the late fifth century. Cf. Lanza (1961) 68-71.

solution imposed by Apollo thus intentionally serves to point out the desperate nature of Orestes' plight:

> Questa soluzione così facile insomma il poeta l'aveva voluta per esprimere l'impossibilità di un vero scioglimento e catarsi: mostrando infatti quanto essa fosse inammissibile e suscitando, col rappresentarla, la incredulità degli spettatori, egli indicava con maggior forza di documentazione, che ogni scioglimento era impossibile ed anche, osservando lo stato di fatto, inutile.[48]

Essential to the majority of the above readings is the discrediting of both Orestes, as criminally insane, and Apollo, as either absurd or himself tainted with the homicidal folly of his mortal protégé. Not all critics, however, accept these two premises. To begin with Apollo: a number of students of *Orestes* have found the *deus ex machina* to be, not a figure of mockery, but the august god of Delphi who brings divine order and a healing sanity to a situation brought about by the all too human weaknesses of the mortal characters.[49] An early proponent of this view is Murray, who maintains that when Apollo enters the characters on stage fall into a trance, from which they emerge only at 1666ff. The god from the machine wakens the mortals from the hellish nightmare of the play's final scenes, effecting a mystic return to the sane and wholesome traditions of myth.[50] This mystical and inexplicable moment of healing finds an appropriate symbol in the transformation of Helen from a heartless and treacherous mortal to a benign divinity, an honored protectress of sailors at sea.[51] Mullens echoes this reading, positing a psychological interpretation: the play demonstrates the way in which minds, strained to the breaking point, will suddenly snap and unaccountably enter into a mood of tranquil joy; the final vision of peaceful reconciliation takes us into a wistful realm of the 'might-have-been,' allowing Orestes to attain redemption while simultaneously

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[48] Daraio (1949) 98, developing the arguments of Perrotta (1928) 114-16.

[49] See Cilliers (1985), who argues that there is nothing absurd about the resolution effected by Apollo because the audience's familiarity with the mythological tradition would lead it to accept his dispensations at face value. For other discussions of the relation of the *exodos* to the traditions regarding the house of Atreus, see Krieg (1934) 71-74, Steidle (1968) 110-11, Stephanopoulos (1980) 127ff.

[50] Murray (1946) 80-82.

[51] Murray *loc. cit.;* cf. Steidle (1968) 112, Falkner (1983a) 298-99. Willink (ed.) xxxvii, for whom the plot against Helen forms the heart of the play, maintains that the *deus* is necessary in order to highlight sufficiently the curious nature of Helen's fate: "... something special was needed for this dramatized transition from mortality to immortality; the passing of Helen must be surpassingly paradoxical."

impressing on us afresh the depravity of his earlier actions.[52]

But the most influential defenders of Apollo (in quite different ways) have been Spira and Burnett. Spira's approach is based to a great extent on a study of Euripides' dramaturgic technique and, as a result, displays certain affinities to the studies of Lesky and Jones. His evaluation of the *deus ex machina* in Euripides, however, stresses the serious religious implications of such epiphanies, finding in the god's sudden appearance a miraculous shift away from the secular/psychological perspective found in the body of the play and into the tranquil, knowing realm of divinity:

> Der D.e.m. bewirkt eine *Erleuchtung,* deren umwandelnder Kraft sich *keine* der betroffenen Personen je entzieht. Die natürliche Psychologie setzt aus, eine neue Kategorie des menschlichen Verhaltens setzt ein. Diese neue Kategorie aber is offensichtlich *religiös* zu verstehen. ([1960] 83-84)

In Euripides' late plays, in particular, this miraculous transition to a loftier plane heightens the distinction between divine providence and human folly, whose interplay is central to the poet's plays of intrigue.[53] Thus, on Spira's view, critics who find irony in these epiphanies are reading from a quotidian perspective what is in fact a *mysterium* of sorts, to be accepted with pious humility. In the case of *Orestes,* Spira maintains that it is the κακία of Menelaus that necessitates the god's wholesome intervention.[54]

Burnett's view of the *exodos,* by contrast, springs directly from her contention that *Orestes* portrays a man who has turned away from god, which results in a murderous tumult.[55] For her the final epiphany of Apollo and his restoration of order are both appropriate and long awaited, a fitting end for what is in effect a morality play about the most prodigal of sons. As the author of the matricide Apollo is capable of vindicating Orestes,

> [a]nd since the doubts that produced the excesses of the present action came when Orestes lost sight of his god, the epiphany itself will be a most effective medicine. ... Apollo's mere appearance can be expected to restore his servant's ailing faith, and with it his sanity, his *aidos,* and

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[52] Mullens (1940) 157-58. W. Schmidt (1964) 184-92 presents a similar view: "Die ironischen Kontraste dienen auch hier in erster Linie der Verfremdung, sie markieren den Schnittpunkt zwischen Mythos und Drama, zwischen Stoff und Interpretation. Das Happy end verdeutlicht durch seine Kontrastwirkung die ätzend scharfe Wirkung dieser Tragödie des Hasses" (192; cf. 204ff.).

[53] Spira (1960) 132ff. Cf. Zürcher (1947) 153 n. 9.

[54] For criticism of Spira's views see W. Schmidt (1964), esp. 34-35, 188, 205-06, 213-14.

[55] See above, pp. 39-40.

his normal pious lawfulness.[56]

Any absurdity in this final resolution, on Burnett's view, should be attributed to mortal folly, not to the god from the machine:

> If there is a hint of caricature in the speed and the perversity of this salvation scene, it is because Apollo's smile must stretch to a grimace to take these creatures in, for they would try the patience of a god.[57]

Ebener (in a study that precedes Burnett's) sounds a very similar note. Basing his account of the play on the appeal for peace in lines 1682-83, he reads the *exodos* as a poignant but unattainable vision of reconciliation and brotherly love that is directly applicable to the strife-ridden Athens of 408 B.C.:

> Mochte Apollon in letzter Minute der Bühnenhandlung einen Abschluß geben, der dem Mythos wie dem Theater eher gemäß war, und dazu mit einem Friedensappell von den Zuschauern scheiden: Der Dichter hat seinem Volk das Ende vor Augen geführt, zu dem Mangel an Einsicht und gutem Willen, zu dem Beschränktheit und Haß und Niedertracht führen müssen. Er hatte wohl jetzt selber die Hoffnung aufgegeben, mit seiner Kunst der durch den Krieg bedingten allgemeinen Verwilderung und Verrohung steuern zu können. Aber vor seinem Aufbruch nach Makedonien noch einmal seinen Athenern die ungeschminkte Wirklichkeit mahnend zu zeigen, hielt er für seine Pflicht. ([1975] 49)

Only the god of Delphi, we are told, could effect order and harmony out of the blind hatreds and confusion that beset the mythical Argos and, by implication, the Athens of 408 B.C.[58]

Critics frequently cite the curious staging of the finale in support of this line of interpretation. According to Falkner, Apollo's appearance at a third level, above the *skene* roof, provides a visual expression of the gap separating divine knowledge from human ignorance: from Apollo's perspective, Orestes and Menelaus are on an equal level, both mired in a sublunary world of appearance and (as Ebener maintains) *Beschränktheit*.[59] Oh what κακοί these mortals be![60]

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[56] Burnett (1971) 220; cf. Nisetich (1986) 50-54. Burnett's view is anticipated to a certain degree by Greenberg (1962) 189, who argues that Apollo's appearance completes the 'underlying symmetry' of the play, *viz.* the repetition of Clytemnestra's murder in the attempt on Helen's life, but *without* the sanction of Apollo.

[57] Burnett (1971) 222. Contrast Howald (1930) 167-68, who finds a tragic irony similar to that of *Ion* in this Orestes who loses faith in his god. For Howald, Apollo's intervention is not motivated by practical necessity (since Menelaus is on the brink of capitulating) but by the poet's desire to absolve the god of the charge of having deserted his agent Orestes.

[58] Cf. Blaiklock (1952) 189-90, Strohm (1957) 127.

[59] Falkner (1983a) 297-98; cf. *id.* (1983b) 19-20. Zeitlin (1980) 62 and 70 finds multiple

If the above-mentioned scholars directly or indirectly defend Apollo, others have done the same for Orestes. Rather than emphasizing the folly of Orestes' behavior and contrasting that folly to the tranquil wisdom of Apollo, these critics stress the hero's helplessness in the face of a corrupt society. Thus Krieg, who regards Orestes as a sympathetic character, finds nothing problematic about the dispensations of Apollo, who presents each character merely with his or her due. While he admits a certain disharmony between the characters as we have come to know them and the lots assigned them by tradition, he regards this as the inevitable result of the poet's desire to present *veros homines, quales omnibus temporibus ubicumque terrarum inveniuntur, non heroas,* and not as an indication that Euripides wishes to attack the myth.[61] Rather, the myth should be seen as a mere pretext that allows the poet to present a picture of 'men as they are': *... omissis personarum nominibus haec Euripidis temporibus Athenis facta esse putes* ([1934] 42).

Spira develops Krieg's approach to Orestes, characterizing the play as a *Wettlauf* between the young hero's quest for salvation and the κακία of Menelaus, on whom that salvation depends. Echoing Lesky, he believes the poet exhausts the possibilities inherent in Orestes' situation before finally effecting a solution — a solution that, given the spineless nature of this Menelaus, can only be brought about by divine intervention. The play thus presents an inversion of the situation presented at the conclusion of Sophocles' *Philoctetes:* there, it is the Neoptolemus' ἀγαθὴ φύσις and Philoctetes' heroic singleness of purpose that threaten to derail the action from the course set by tradition; here it is the feckless nature of Euripides' Menelaus. In both plays, however, Spira finds that "[d]er D.e.m. wird durch eine ethopoietisch bestimmte Struktur 'notwendig.'"[62]

Steidle (followed closely by Erbse) agrees with Spira that the *deus ex*

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levels of significance in the staging of the finale: the appearance of Orestes, Pylades, and the imperiled Hermione on the roof with torches recalls: (1) the sacrifice of Iphigenia, (2) the burning of Troy, (3) Euripides' *Telephus,* (4) the image of Tantalus presented in the prologue (5-7; cf. 982ff. and see O'Brien [1988c]), (5) the watchman at the beginning of *Ag* (cf. Euben [1986] 242), and (6) the *exodos* of *Med;* the tri-level deployment of the characters recalls not only the "hierarchical distinction between men and gods" but also the same distinction between actors and author and, ultimately, presents a "spatial analogue" to the palimpsest effect that Zeitlin detects throughout the play. (Clearly, for Zeitlin the 'fit' reader must be something of a πένταθλος!)

[60] Note the similarity between this view of the *deus ex machina* and that underlying the pseudo-Platonic *Clit.* 407A (cited by W. Schmidt [1964] 9). Schmidt (p. 31) remarks, however, that such a "vordergründige Paränese" is alien to Euripides' practice.

[61] Krieg (1934) 41-42; cf. *ibid.* 26-27.

[62] Spira (1960) 140-45, esp. 142 and 145. On pages 145-48 he posits a reciprocal influence between Sophocles and Euripides, the latter developing exciting and complex intrigue plots that the former (in *Phil*) makes subservient to character.

machina signals a shift in perspective and, like Spira, emphasizes the resulting gap between divine knowledge and human ignorance. Steidle regards *Orestes* as a work that is similar in spirit to *Ion:* a play in which the spectators' knowledge of the myth serves to maintain both their sympathy for the protagonists and their assurance that all will come right in the end, no matter how unlikely such an outcome may appear at any one point in the action. This knowledge also assures that they will accept the *deus ex machina* at face value:

> Wenn Apoll als θεὸς ἀπὸ μηχανῆς am Ende alles nach seinem Willen 'in Ordnung' bringt, so ist nicht etwa dieser Tragödienschluß, das heißt also das Verhalten des Gottes absurd ...; von Apoll weiß vielmehr der aufgrund seines Wissens den Bühnenpersonen überlegene Zuschauer, daß er eingreifen wird und daß er sozusagen ein bestimmtes τέλος gesetzt hat. Absurd is eher das menschliche Handeln und Leiden, obwohl es andererseits eine eigene Wirklichkeit darstellt, die mit ihrem besonderen Gewicht zu berühren und zu ergreifen vermag.[63]

Thus Steidle opposes Reinhardt in particular, arguing that Reinhardt's *Sinneskrise* in fact extends no farther than the world of the mortal characters on stage:

> In Wahrheit inhäriert jedoch die 'Sinneskrise' den tragischen Sachverhalt selbst beziehungsweise sie ist nach Euripides mit der Situation des Menschen in der Welt und mit seiner Begrenztheit sozusagen konstitutionell gegeben. Πολὺς ταραγμὸς ἔν τε τοῖς θείοις ἔνι κἀν τοῖς βροτείοις (Iph. Taur. 572f.), dies is nach Euripides die einzige Möglichkeit, wie die Menschen die Wirklichkeit sehen können, sofern nicht einmal ein Gott eingreift, was dann gewissermaßen wie ein Blitz eine sonst finstere Landschaft für einen Augenblick erhellt. ([1968] 114)

If the spectators' foreknowledge of the myth vindicates the poet's use of Apollo, it also (on Steidle's view) ensures their sympathy for Orestes, particularly in his struggles against the cowardly and treacherous Menelaus. On this reading, Orestes' plot against his uncle, like Creusa's plotting in *Ion,* should be perceived as a temporary detour from Apollo's plan, justified by the wrongs that Orestes believes he has suffered.[64]

Erbse develops Steidle's thesis, but with a greater tendency toward moralistic allegory (note the peculiarly Sophoclean ring):

> Die aus dem Mythos herstammende Götterwelt hat ... für die Gestalten der euripideischen Bühne dieselbe Bedeutung wie das undurchdringliche Schicksal für die übrigen Menschen. Hier wie dort stehen die

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[63] Steidle (1968) 112. Cf. Cilliers (1985).
[64] Steidle (1968) 112ff. Cf. Howald (1930) 167-68.

> Betroffenen ihrer Zukunft ratlos und verlassen gegenüber, unter dem
> gleichen unerklärlichen Zwang entfaltet sich hier wie dort die ganze
> Vielfalt ihres Gemütes, zeigt sich aber auch ihre ganze Not und sittliche
> Scwäche. Selbst wenn die Menschen zuversichtlich handeln (wie im
> zweiten Teil unseres Dramas), sind sie gehalten, Dinge zu tun, die kein
> gottgewolltes Ende nehmen. So besehen stellt sich nicht die Wirksamkeit
> des Deus ex machina als Ironie dar, sondern eher das Treiben der
> Menschen, und die poetische Gestaltung ihres Handeln entbehrt bei aller
> Tragik nicht eines gewissen mitleidigen Spottes von Seiten des Dichters.
> ([1975] 457)

Like Steidle, Erbse denies that Euripides' ultimate purpose can be
found in this portrayal of humanity's confusion before an inscrutable
divine will; rather, he emphasizes the nobility with which certain
characters (that is, Electra and Pylades, in contrast to Menelaus,
Tyndareus, and Helen) comport themselves in the face of such troubled
uncertainty. Thus, for Erbse the play is ultimately concerned, not with
Orestes' act of matricide, but with the manner in which others respond to
his resulting plight:

> Nicht die Frage nach der Rechtmäßigkeit dieses Mordes [*viz.* that of
> Clytemnestra] steht zur Debatte, sondern die Reaktion der Menschen auf
> eine unverständliche Forderung der Gottheit. ([1975] 459)

Apollo then becomes a symbol for those unfathomable forces that govern
the lives of all mortals, and the play itself a homily of sorts on the value
of loyalty, self-sacrifice, and courage in the face of such forces.

DRAMATIC TECHNIQUE IN THE *EXODOS*

The majority of critics who seek a more profound significance in the
exodos of *Orestes* begin by asserting the problematic nature of the play's
finale and/or the perceived dissonance between the world of the play and
the mythical landscape reinstated by the god. As I noted in the
introduction to this chapter, the two features of the piece that arouse the
most discussion are: (1) the decision by Orestes to fire the palace (lines
1617-20) and (2) the suddenness and apparent absurdity of Apollo's
resolution of the play's various disputes. If we examine these two
controversies afresh we may arrive at a balanced assessment of the
exodos and of the reasons why Euripides should construct it as he has.
Emphasis on the dramaturgic elements in the *exodos* may provide a more
convincing reading than do those approaches that seek answers in the
realms of psychology, absurdist drama, or moral quasi-allegory.

ORESTES 1617-20

Perhaps the most disputed passage in *Orestes* is at lines 1617ff., where, despite Menelaus' apparent surrender (1617a), Orestes still orders his companions to ignite the palace. The passage appears below, beginning at line 1608:[65]

Με. ἄπαιρε θυγατρὸς φάσγανον.   Ορ. ψευδὴς ἔφυς.
Με. ἀλλὰ κτενεῖς μου θυγατέρ';   Ορ. οὐ ψευδὴς ἔτ' εἶ.
Με. οἴμοι, τί δράσω;   Ορ. πεῖθ' ἐς Ἀργείους μολών ...   1610
Με. πειθὼ τίν';   Ορ. ἡμᾶς μὴ θανεῖν αἰτοῦ πόλιν.
Με. ἦ παῖδά μου φονεύσεθ';   Ορ. ὧδ' ἔχει τάδε.
Με. ὦ τλῆμον Ἑλένη ...   Ορ. τἀμὰ δ' οὐχὶ τλήμονα;
Με. σφάγιον ἐκόμισά σ' ἐκ Φρυγῶν ...   Ορ. εἰ γὰρ τόδ' ἦν.
Με. πόνους πονήσας μυρίους.   Ορ. πλήν γ' εἰς ἐμέ.   1615
Με. πέπονθα δεινά.   Ορ. τότε γὰρ ἦσθ' ἀνωφελής.
Με. ἔχεις με.   Ορ. σαυτὸν σύ γ' ἔλαβες κακὸς γεγώς.
      ἀλλ' εἶ', ὕφαπτε δώματ', Ἠλέκτρα, τάδε,
      σύ τ', ὦ φίλων μοι τῶν ἐμῶν σαφέστατε,
      Πυλάδη, κάταιθε γεῖσα τειχέων τάδε.   1620
Με. ὦ γαῖα Δαναῶν ἱππίου τ' Ἄργους κτίται,
      οὐκ εἶ' ἐνόπλῳ ποδὶ βοηδρομήσετε;
      πᾶσαν γὰρ ὑμῶν ὅδε βιάζεται πόλιν
      ζῆν, αἷμα μητρὸς μυσαρὸν ἐξειργασμένος.
ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ
      Μενέλαε, παῦσαι λῆμ' ἔχων τεθηγμένον (κτλ.)   1625

Menelaus' ἔχεις με at 1617a appears to imply that, despite his evident frustration at having to yield to Helen's murderer (1613-16), the threat to Hermione's life has forced him to accede to Orestes' demands for aid (1608-12). Orestes' disregard for this apparent surrender has been explained in a variety of ways.[66] As we have seen, the minimalists cite the passage as yet another example of Euripides' preference for dramatic stage effects over organic plot construction or human depth; admirers of the poet's stagecraft emphasize the virtuosity with which he brings his work to a climactic conclusion. Both sides agree that no realistic explanation can be found for Orestes' decision.

Those who seek greater profundity in the *exodos* are not content with this response, however, and many turn to the realm of psychoanalysis in their attempts to make Orestes' action more palatable to modern readers.

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[65] I have retained the line ordering of the manuscripts. See below, pp. 271-72, on the transpositions proposed by Willink (ed.) and Diggle (ed.).

[66] Useful reviews of the scholarship can be found in Spira (1960) 140-41, Seeck (1969) 11-12, Erbse (1975) 449-56, Lesky (1983) 352-53, Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1600-17.

A number of those scholars who regard the play as an indictment of the Orestes myth maintain that the young hero's criminal insanity, evident since the commencement of the *mechanema* plot, here reaches a frenzied pitch, as Orestes, losing touch with reality altogether, suddenly snaps under pressure, indulging in a final suicidal spasm of revenge at the very moment when his plan for salvation appears to be succeeding:

> Die Rachgier hat über den Lebensdrang gesiegt. Wie bei Medea ist der Dämon der Leidenschaft bereit, das eigne Dasein zu zerstören, wenn er nur den Feind an der empfindlichsten Stelle verwundet.[67]

This insane rush to destruction is interpreted either as a symptom of Orestes' personal torment (particularly by those scholars who are sympathetic to Menelaus),[68] or as symbolic of the general confusion and impotent hatreds that reign in the world of *Orestes*.[69]

Others attempt to provide a more convincing rationale for Orestes' decision. The most direct (if not the most compelling) method is to alter the text or interpolate a bit of unattested stage-business. Thus Hermann suggests that a further response on the part of Menelaus has fallen out of the text after 1617 (for example, ἀλλ᾽ οὐχὶ φεύγεις σύ τε κασιγνήτη τε σή).[70] More influential has been the proposal of Grueninger, who seeks to cut the Gordian knot by deleting Orestes' response at 1618-20 altogether.[71] The objective grounds for such a deletion are tenuous at best. Grueninger maintains that the task assigned Electra is unworthy of her (*incendiariorum inhonestum munus*), that the bulk of 1619 is mere metrical padding (*merum ... metrorum complementum*), and that the end of 1620 jars with that of 1618 (final τάδε in each). Diggle (cited by Willink) adds that εἴ᾽ in 1622 is "a bit surprising" so soon after εἴ᾽ in 1618, that the notion of *burning* γεῖσα τειχέων (as opposed to *throwing* them: 1569-70) is somewhat odd (1620), and that Apollo takes no notice

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[67] Pohlenz (1954) 1.419. Cf. Reinhardt (1960) 255, Grube (1941) 75 and 395, Daraio (1949) 97, Boulter (1962) 106, Biehl (ed.) 106 on *Or* 1618-20, Eucken (1986) 167-68 (who denies, however, that salvation was ever Orestes' goal, despite 1610ff.).

[68] See Verrall (1905) 253ff., Kitto (1961) 351 (who asserts that Orestes in the latter part of the play is "now obviously a maniac," still clinging to the crazed notion that Menelaus could save him if he wished), Wolff (1968) 137-38, Vellacott (1975) 79, Schein (1975) 64 n. 40.

[69] Murray (1946) 80 (who supposes, however, that Menelaus has rejected Orestes' terms); Hartigan (1987) 131.

[70] Hermann (ed.), cited by Grueninger (1898) 26 and Paley (ed.) on *Or* 1617 (with φεύξει for φεύγεις).

[71] Grueninger (1898) 24-35. He is followed by Page (1934) 50-51 and Willink (ed.) 363-64.

of the burning.[72] Thus 1618-20 are condemned as the work of later producers who missed the significance of the apparently innocuous 1616-17 and saw no motivation for Menelaus' cries at 1621-24. Not realizing that the burning of the palace was envisioned only as a last desperate act of suicide, the producers added a false climax to a play that originally portrayed a disgruntled but defeated Menelaus.

Seeck (1969) also proposes the deletion of 1618-20, maintaining that inasmuch as Orestes' principal goals — revenge on Menelaus through the murder of Hermione and escape from punishment by means of suicide — can be achieved without burning the palace, Orestes' command in these lines must be considered "ein bloßer Bühneneffekt" (13) added by later producers, who also are responsible for the emphasis placed on the destruction of the palace at 1593-96 (as well as at 1149-52 and 1541-44).[73] For Seeck the command to burn the palace represents an inorganic elaboration of the text, to be distinguished, for example, from the blaze at the end of *Troades*.[74]

None of these objections are sufficient to justify atheticizing 1618-20: they are raised only to support the subjective notion that the lines were added *spectaculi causa* by a later producer indifferent to the apparent lack of motivation for such a command. In fact, however, the sequence 1608-17, 1621-25 involves an equal absurdity: Menelaus, for no apparent reason, suddenly cries out for aid against Orestes immediately after yielding to his demands.[75] The contention that this appeal should be regarded merely as an anguished cry of frustration at having to give way to the murderous Orestes (that κτίται in 1621 refers to abstract *di conditores,* or that this appeal, although addressed to the Argives, has no serious intent)[76] is refuted by the convention of the βοή on the Attic stage[77] as well as by the vivid command: οὐκ εἶ᾽ ἐνόπλῳ ποδὶ βοηδρομήσετε; (1622).[78]

Aware of the above-cited difficulties, Willink tentatively proposes a

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[72] Diggle (ed.) does not, however, delete 1618-20.

[73] Seeck is supported by Reeve (1972) 264 n. 46.

[74] Seeck argues for the deletion of all references to the burning of the palace and torches: 1149-52, 1541-44, 1573, 1593-96. Longo (1975) 281, by contrast, demonstrates the relevance of this motif to the *mechanema* plot. See as well Schmid/Stählin (1940) 1.3.620 n. 7 and P. Arnott (1962) 120-21 on Euripides' use of torches for theatrical effect.

[75] See Biehl (1965) on *Or* 1618.

[76] Grueninger (1898) 28, Page (1934) 51. Cf. Reinhardt (1960) 255, Seeck (1969) 11 n. 1.

[77] Cf. above, p. 226 and p. 252 n. 6.

[78] Grueninger's interpretation also provides only an attenuated motivation for Apollo's dramatic opening words (1625-28).

transposition of the text to supplement Grueninger's proposal.[79] He reads
the sequence: 1610-11, 1600-07, 1613-17, 1608-09, 1621ff. (delete 1612,
1618-20). The objections to such a procedure are numerous: in addition
to the apparent arbitrariness of its various transpositions and deletions
(just how did such a radical disturbance of the text come about?),[80] I will
argue below that it misconstrues the nature of such stichomythic scenes
and the logic of the passage itself in its transmitted form. Regarding the
difficulty under discussion, this series of transpositions does provide an
apparent logic to the scene: Menelaus gives a vague token of surrender
(1617a), but then attempts to gain Hermione's freedom without making
any concrete promises to act on Orestes' behalf (1608a); Orestes accuses
him of falsehood (1608b), whereupon negotiations break down altogether
and Apollo's intervention becomes necessary. But in attempting to fill the
gap left by the deletion of 1618-20, Willink appears to have rendered that
deletion superfluous: 1618-20 follow naturally enough after the
transposed 1608-09.

Burnett seeks a solution by means of an equally violent manipulation
of the stage action. She posits the sudden appearance in the *orchestra*
(immediately following 1617a) of the equivalent of an Argive S.W.A.T.
team. But the Argives' entry at 1617 would render Menelaus' appeal at
1621-24 irrelevant.[81]

Less drastic in their approach are those scholars who seek some
unstated logic underlying Orestes' abrupt commands. Some posit that
Orestes suddenly realizes that the spiritless Menelaus is not to be trusted,
no matter what promises he might make,[82] or that Menelaus cannot be of
any real help in any case.[83] In this form, this view should be rejected:
there is nothing to inform the audience of such a realization on Orestes'
part, and it is difficult to accept the notion that, after all of the energy that
Orestes (not to mention the poet himself) has put into his plot, he will
discard it at the very moment it appears to be coming to fruition.[84] To
support this line of interpretation, however, several scholars have

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[79] Willink (ed.) 363-64, a variation on his earlier proposal, discussed below, p. 276.

[80] Willink (ed.) 347 cites the similarity between δίκαιον at 1600 and ἐνδίκως at 1599, but
the echo is more readily ascribed to the rhetorical thrust and parry of stichomythic debate than
to a scribal corruption. Diggle (ed.) is more moderate: he proposes the transposition of 1608-
12 to precede 1600.

[81] Burnett (1971) 193 and n. 7. See Mastronarde (1979) 90 for criticisms of this notion.
The same objection applies to West's suggestion ([ed.] on *Or* 1533) that Menelaus is attended
by citizens of Argos on first entering.

[82] Ebener (1966) 48.

[83] Spira (1960) 143-45, Biehl (1955) 91-92 and (1965) on *Or* 1554-1624 and 1618.

[84] Cf. Steidle (1968) 115, Erbse (1975) 450-51.

suggested that Menelaus' ἔχεις με is not actually a capitulation but merely a comment on his own helplessness in the face of his nephew's threats. Spira presents the most persuasive case for this reading, but the interpretation of 1617a on which it relies is best summarized by Seeck:

> Die Aussage des Menelaos 'du hast mich' ist, was man bisher anscheinend nicht recht bemerkt hat, nicht eine Aussage innerhalb des Streites, sondern *über* den Streit, eine Art Kommentar zur Situation. ... 'Du hast mich' heißt dann 'ich muß zugeben, du hast mich in eine Zwangslage gebracht,' ohne daß damit etwas über die Konsequenzen gesagt wäre, die Menelaos daraus zu ziehen gedenkt.[85]

On this view, Menelaus vacillates and temporizes until the very end, admitting defeat but offering no concrete concessions. Thus Orestes' response at 1618ff. should be regarded as an implicit acknowledgement that Menelaus cannot be compelled to take a stand and therefore that the scenario envisioned at lines 1149ff. has become a reality:

> ... die κακία des Menelaos hatte die Hoffnung auf freiwillige Hilfe durch ihn scheitern lassen, und jetzt läßt sie die Intrige scheitern, die diese Hilfe zu erzwingen hoffte. Damit sind alle mit der Exposition gegebenen Motive, die das Ziel des Dramas, die Rettung Orests, hätten erreichen können, erschöpft. (Spira [1960] 144)

Steidle (following the lead of Strohm) accepts the above interpretation of 1617a but argues forcefully that Orestes' response at 1618ff. is not a suicidal act of despair, but a final attempt to force Menelaus' compliance, a more extreme form of the threats against Hermione at 1578, 1586, 1596-98, and 1609:

> ... es sich in den V. 1618ff. um nichts als den letzten Akt der Erpressung handelt, der unweigerlich und in Kürze zu einem völligen Einlenken des ohnehin schon von seiner Niederlage überzeugten Menelaos führen müßte, wenn nicht der Gott erschiene ....[86]

Steidle's thesis has several features to recommend it. At 1621-24 Menelaus himself clearly feels that Orestes is still attempting to extort aid by means of threats against Hermione and the royal palace (πᾶσαν ... ὅδε βιάζεται πόλιν / ζῆν, 1623-24); he says nothing of the suicidal rush to

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[85] Seeck (1969) 13; cf. Spira (1960) 143-44. See as well Hermann (ed.) ix, Krieg (1934) 12-13 and 26-27, Greenberg (1962) 189 and n. 32, Schwinge (1968b) 52, and Burnett (1971) 193 n. 7.

[86] Steidle (1968) 116, following Strohm (1957) 88 n. 2; cf. Mercanti (1915) 81, Perrotta (1928) 113-14, Zürcher (1947) 177 n. 32, W. Schmidt (1964) 190-91, Seeck (1969) 12-13, Erbse (1975) 450-53, Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1549-1624.

death posited by those who approach the *exodos* in search of *Blutgier* or a
'fire from hell.'[87] Nor do Orestes' words display the raving frenzy of a
suicidal maniac: his ἀλλ' εἶ' (1618) shows a certain cool deliberation and
a contemptuous imperiousness that scarcely bespeak raging
incoherence.[88] Moreover, Orestes says nothing about killing Hermione
(the more immediate concern facing Menelaus), but instead orders his
companions to set fire to the palace.[89] On the other hand, Apollo, when he
enters, does not project a sense of urgency about the palace, addressing
Orestes only after he has addressed Menelaus, and then only in reference
to the threat against Hermione.[90] It is much easier to extract from the text
an Orestes who continues to employ his momentary (if precarious)
position of power to goad the helpless Menelaus than it is the madman
suddenly overwhelmed by blood lust and *Rachgier.* Menelaus' outcry at
1621-24 then is the result of his helpless frustration and despair: irrational
(because the Argives would not be able to accomplish any more than
Menelaus and his attendants), but fully in character for this weak-willed
individual as Euripides has portrayed him throughout this work.[91] Thus,
on Steidle's reading, the action proper concludes with an exultant Orestes
taunting his helpless enemy and a thoroughly humiliated Menelaus:
Apollo's intervention merely ties up unwanted loose ends in the manner
of most Euripidean *di ex machina,* the play already having reached a
satisfying conclusion on an emotional level. We need not share in
Steidle's optimistic view regarding the course Menelaus finally would
have chosen had Apollo *not* intervened in order to find this interpretation
attractive.

   The question arises, however, whether Euripides and his audience
would not be surprised to find modern scholars debating at such length
about what, on the surface, appears to be a throw-away line. The chief
argument against those who maintain that 1617a constitutes an
unqualified capitulation on the part of Menelaus, is the expression's

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[87] See Strohm (1957) 88 n. 2, Steidle (1968) 115-16, Biehl (1965) and Willink (ed.) on *Or*
1624. Nauck's ζῇ δ' and Lloyd-Jones' ζῶν ([1957] 97-98) are unnecessary, despite the
apparent support of the scholiast for the latter: see Di Benedetto (ed.) and Willink (ed.) *ad
loc.*

   [88] See Denniston (1954) 13-15.

   [89] See Steidle (1968) 116-17. Note the force of the present imperatives in 1618 and 1620:
see Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1618-20 and cf. West (ed.) 34 (on *Or* 1199).

   [90] Cf. Grueninger (1898) 31 and Seeck (1969) 12 n. 4, who raise this point to argue for
the deletion of 1618-20.

   [91] See Spira (1969) 141ff.; cf. Steidle (1968) 116. Contrast Grueninger (1898) 27-28, who
argues that Menelaus yields but is too proud and vexed to humiliate himself by a direct
reference to his ignominious position.

colorless brevity: after 41 lines of the artificial give-and-take of stichomythic sparring between Orestes and his uncle, the audience could be forgiven for failing to realize that Menelaus' ἔχεις με in fact represents the culmination toward which the entire play has been building, particularly when it is immediately made the grounds for yet another taunting rejoinder by Orestes (σαυτὸν σύ γ' ἔλαβες κακὸς γεγώς, 1617b).[92] Such rejoinders have figured prominently in the *antilabe* between the two since line 1602 and build to something of a crescendo at 1613-17 as Orestes repeatedly undermines the grounds for Menelaus' piteous cries, insisting that the latter is responsible for his own misfortunes.[93] Thus it can be argued that Menelaus' ἔχεις με would be accepted by the audience in the limited context of this on-going verbal battle. The weakness of the utterance results in a certain artificiality, but this artificiality is minor by the standards of stichomythic discourse, where such throw-away lines are not uncommon.[94] A good parallel is provided by the exchange at 1608-09:

> Με. ἄπαιρε θυγατρὸς φάσγανον. Ορ. ψευδὴς ἔφυς.
> Με. ἀλλὰ κτενεῖς μου θυγατέρ'; Ορ. οὐ ψευδὴς ἔτ' εἶ.

Orestes' response at 1608b exists mainly to prepare for his rejoinder at 1609b.[95] In both instances it is evident that the poet's concern lies more with the rhythms, the tension, and the wit of this vigorous repartee than with exacting standards of relevance or psychological probability.[96]

It is possible to go farther and maintain that the scholarly evaluation of the *exodos* as a whole has been marred by persistent attempts to understand the characters' various responses in terms of modern notions of probability and realism. Emphasis has been placed on the problematic nature of Orestes' sudden command at 1618ff. and the ease with which he

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[92] Note the possible echo here of *Cho* 923.

[93] Cf. the similar exchange at *Phoen* 604-10 (cited independently by Mastronarde [1979] 63, who also cites *Hel* 1630-34).

[94] Cf., e.g., *Hipp* 316-17 and *Ion* 542. See Duchemin (1968) 229-34.

[95] This couplet is taxed for its artificiality, under the conviction that the adjective ψευδὴς must mean 'liar' or 'false' (cf. West [1981] 70 and [ed.] on *Or* 1608, who suggests the addition of δ' in 1608). Willink attempts to supply a more immediate context by placing 1608-09 after 1599 ([ed.] on *Or* 1600-17) or after 1617 ([ed.] 363-64). But the aorist ἔφυς is better regarded as 'dramatic' and not as a reference to a specific event in the past (cf. Scarcella [ed.] on *Or* 1608-09), while ψευδὴς is best translated as 'mistaken' or 'deluded', as at *IA* 852 and *Antiope* 102 (Page). Note as well the paraphrase of 1608 provided by the scholiast (ἐψεύσω τῆς ἐλπίδος, cited by Paley [ed.] *ad loc.*, who supplies, e.g., εἰ προσδοκᾷς με τοῦτο ποιήσειν) and the very similar exchange at 1525-26.

[96] See Ludwig (1954) 81, Seidensticker (1971) 209-19, and Heath (1987a) 128-30 for particularly apt comments regarding the mannered nature of Euripidean *stichomythia*.

and Menelaus accept Apollo's commands at 1666ff., but the entire
confrontation between Orestes and Menelaus at 1554-1617 is riddled with
such improbabilities and inconcinnities, as well as with repetitions and
inconclusive sequences of dialogue, all of which are extremely hard to
explain in terms of dramatic realism. Willink's attempts to deal with
these supposed flaws are instructive for the light they shed on the
insufficiency of modern criteria of 'reasonableness' for dealing with the
practices and conventions of the Attic stage: 1556-60 must be deleted for
their fuzzy logic, ambiguous phrasing, and lack of clarity regarding what
Menelaus has heard of Helen's fate;[97] 1579-84 must go, in part due to the
inept anticipation of 1587 at 1579 and the artificiality of 1583, but
principally because it makes no sense here for Orestes to deny having
killed Helen; 1600-07 should be placed after 1612 inasmuch as Menelaus
as yet knows nothing about Orestes' intentions to blackmail him: thus his
question at 1600 ($\mathring{\eta}$ γὰρ δίκαιον ζῆν σε;) is a *non sequitur* in the text as it
stands.[98] When a text requires such radical surgery at the hands of
modern editors, it becomes necessary to question the model they
employ.[99]

Perhaps most instructive, however, is the proposed deletion of 1598,
motivated in part by an overly-rigid conception of stichomythic form,[100]
but largely by the silly picture of Menelaus it suggests: at 1597 Menelaus
stands firm against Orestes despite the threat to his daughter; at 1598b he
suddenly becomes desperate when Orestes promises to carry out that
threat; and at 1600, after Orestes has made as if to kill Hermione on the
spot (1599), the threat is suddenly forgotten altogether as the debate veers
to the question of the justification for Orestes' various deeds (1600ff.).
(Meanwhile, as Grueninger and Willink indicate, nothing at all has been
said to this point regarding just what Orestes hopes to gain by means of
this threat.) Thus Grueninger regards 1598 as a histrionic interpolation
intended to increase the sound and fury of the scene;[101] yet the above
summary makes it plain that the difficulties in the exchange go far
beyond questions regarding the propriety of a single line.

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[97] The deletion of 1556-60 was first proposed by Oeri and is accepted by Diggle (ed.). Cf.
above, pp. 232-34.

[98] Willink's arguments here are anticipated to a certain degree by Grueninger (1898),
cited below, n. 101. Willink also deletes 1563-64.

[99] Note as well Willink's transposition of 1638-42 (after 1663); cf. West (ed.) *ad loc.* and
(1987) 284-85, W. Schmidt (1964) 185 n. 2 (who, with Wilamowitz, merely deletes 1638).
(West [ed.] *ad loc.* also places 1589-90 after 1584.)

[100] See Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1598-99. (Willink deletes 1598, but mainly to facilitate his
transposition of 1600-07.)

[101] Grueninger (1898) 31-32.

Lesky attempts to deal with such difficulties by presenting Euripides as a proto-psychologist who is interested in exploring the psychological responses elicited from his characters by their various experiences, but is hampered by the limited expressive modes afforded him by the poetic tradition:

> Euripides hat mit der Darstellung des Seelischens als Antrieb, Konflikt und Reaktion in verschiedener Richtung Neuland betreten. Er hat Dinge dargestellt, für die in der Sprache der Tragödie die Ausdrucksmittel nur in beschränktem Maße bereitlagen. ... Wenn wir von ihm absehen, dürfen wir sagen, daß eines der wesentlichen Kennzeichen für die Aussage des Dichters über seelische Vorgänge deren außerordentliche Kargheit ist. Wohl findet das Zuständliche, finden Jubel, Angst und Klage besonders in den lyrischen Partien breitesten Ausdruck in einer Formensprache, die innerhalb der Tragödie ihre Tradition hat, wo es jedoch um seelische Abläufe geht, bleibt es bei der Bezeichnung der Grenzsituationen, ohne daß eine Entwicklung als Bewegung in der Zeit dargestellt würde. ([1960] 23-24)

Thus for Lesky the defining feature of Euripides' characters is their *Labilität der Reaktionsweisen* — the unexplained suddenness with which they will respond to external pressure. Medea in her grand monologue, Phaedra in *Hippolytus,* Agamemnon and Menelaus in the early scenes of *Iphigenia at Aulis,* Iphigenia herself at the climax of that play, Orestes in the *agon* of *Orestes:* all, in Lesky's view, are subject to such sudden shifts in outlook as a result of this tension between the poet's pioneering interests in psychological processes, on the one hand, and the limitations imposed on him by dramatic convention, on the other.[102] While an explanation of this kind might be justifiable in the case of such grand tragic figures as Medea or Phaedra, it is less happy in its application to the Atridae of *Iphigenia at Aulis* or to the Menelaus of our passage: it appears that Euripides is interested in presenting scenes involving sudden and violent changes in outlook on the part of his characters, and often is not overly concerned with providing a convincing motivation for such changes.[103] This tendency appears in an exacerbated form amid the frenzied give-and-take of *stichomythia.* The absurd scene between Creon and Teiresias at *Phoenissae* 896ff. provides an excellent parallel: at 894-95 Teiresias (following the model of his counterpart in Sophocles' *Oedipus?*) starts to depart without disclosing the κλῆροι that he introduced with such fanfare at 838-40 and 884ff.; at 896-900 Creon

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[102] Cf. Lesky (1968) 94ff., Knox (1966), Michelini (1987) 113-14.
[103] See Chant (1986) on *IA.* Contrast, e.g., the portrayal of Neoptolemus' change of heart in *Phil.*

presses him to reveal his secret but he steadfastly refuses to do so; at 901-
14 he relents and announces that Creon's son must be sacrificed for the
salvation of the city; in the lines that follow (915-28), Creon rejects such
an action as an abomination while Teiresias suddenly insists that he must
publish his prophecy to the entire city. The scene presents an odd
chiasmus of sorts, with Creon and Teiresias exchanging positions at 915:
Creon moves from absolute dedication to the city's safety (898, 900, 902)
to a rejection, motivated by self-interest (927), of the means of effecting
that safety (919, 925); Teiresias, on the other hand, proceeds from a self-
interested fatalism (891-95) to an indignant patriotism (922, 926).[104]
While Creon's reactions are understandable, the vacillations of Teiresias
seem to exist solely in order to motivate those reactions and cannot
themselves be explained on realistic grounds. It appears that the ancient
audience was expected to focus on the figure of Creon and his πάθος;[105] a
modern audience, unable to maintain that focus, finds not πάθος but
melodrama.

A similar aesthetic can be detected at work in the *stichomythia*
between Orestes and Menelaus. The passage continually circles back on
itself as it recapitulates the various issues of the play, employing the
emotionally charged atmosphere of *stichomythia* to elicit Orestes' bitter
resentment against his uncle and Menelaus' enraged impotence. The
focus is on the raw emotions that have been building throughout the latter
half of the play and, in particular, on the helplessness of Menelaus, who
consistently finds himself bested in the rhetorical ebb and flow of the
argument.[106] The attempts of Willink and others to impose a logical
progression on that argument and remove melodramatic touches (such as
line 1598) reveal a misunderstanding of the scene's dynamic. More
convincing is the rhetorical/emotive model adopted by Schwinge:

> In der Stichomythie ... die Partner ... richten ... sich nur nach dem, was
> der andere gerade vorher gesagt hat; sie schimpfen aufeinander ein, wie
> es der jeweilige Augenblick befiehlt. Von einer Systematic der
> Argumentation also kann keine Rede sein und aus diesem Grund auch
> nicht von einer durchsichtigen Gliederung oder klar erkennbaren
> Bewegung der Stichomythie. Das Einzige, was dieses kurze, Schlag auf
> Schlag erfolgende, stets gleiche Hin und Her der Anschuldigungen nun
> aber doch bewirkt, ist, daß sich Haß und Feindschaft immer intensiver
> artikulieren. ... Entwicklung und Wandlung im Grundsätzlichen nämlich

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[104] A similar *chiasmus* occurs between Agamemnon and Menelaus at *IA* 471ff.: cf. Lesky
(1968) 95 and Knox (1966) 229-32.

[105] See Heath (1987a) 90ff. for the use of emotional 'focus' in Greek tragedy.

[106] See Duchemin (1968) 221ff. on the tendency for one character ('le meneur du jeu') to

finden bei diesen Partnern nicht statt. Die Streitstichomythie also, so dürfen wir formulieren, is nicht dynamisch, sondern statisch.[107]

Objections might be raised against Schwinge's rigid separation of static *Streitstichomythie* from, for example, more dynamic *Überredungsstichomythie* like that in the *Phoenissae* passage discussed above. But his analysis of the dynamics of these verbal duels adds further weight to Steidle's interpretation of 1617a: the audience, familiar with the conventions of stichomythic debates, would not expect any serious alteration in the dramatic situation until after the verbal sparring had reached its conclusion. To repeat: the poet's principal concern in such scenes lies with the tension, the rhythms, and the emotions of the debate, not with subtleties of characterization or motivation. The critic should not apply scholarly standards of logic and consistency or interpolate hidden motives and rationales in order to render scenes of this kind acceptable to modern tastes.[108]

This is not to say that the debate between Orestes and Menelaus is completely without form; in fact, the important concluding lines of the confrontation (1608-17) reveal a satisfying logic. At 1608-09 we turn for the fourth time[109] to the threat against Hermione. Since the confrontation has run its course by this time, however, the poet now allows the decisive issue to come to the fore: Orestes takes Menelaus' general cry of despair (οἴμοι, τί δράσω; 1610a) as a direct enquiry;[110] accordingly, he states the terms on which Hermione's life will be spared (1610b-12). The thought of interceding on Orestes' behalf causes Menelaus to think of Helen, dead (or so he supposes) by Orestes' hand: he therefore breaks contact with Orestes, calling out to his wife in his agony at the thought of having to aid her murderer.[111] Meanwhile Orestes continues to refute his various claims to sympathy (1613-15). At 1616a Menelaus re-establishes partial

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control the argument at any one time.

[107] Schwinge (1968b) 38-39, on *Alc* 708ff.; cf. Schwinge (1968b) 35 and 51, where he notes that, like *agon* scenes, stichomythic debates momentarily freeze the action of the play in order to present the head-on clash of rigidly opposing views. Thus, for all of their subtleties, such scenes stand outside of the play's dynamic and do not admit alteration in the characters' viewpoints or in the situation they confront; instead, these exchanges "statisch sind, die für sich stehen."

[108] Note, e.g., the assertion of Burnett (1971) 193 (cf. Nisetich [1986] 51) that Menelaus is merely stalling for time throughout the debate.

[109] Cf. 1578, 1586, and 1596. See Spira (1960) 143-44 on Menelaus' repeated refusals to commit himself; if my earlier argument is valid, however, convention plays as great a role here as does characterization.

[110] See Mastronarde (1979) 85; cf. *ibid.* 59.

[111] Cf. Zürcher (1947) 174 and n. 29.

contact with another general cry (πέπονθα δεινά), only to have Orestes refute him again (1616b). Finally, at 1617a, he admits defeat. Those who regard Menelaus' curt statement as a sign of his complete submission may find here a *chiasmus* similar to those discussed above — Menelaus suddenly gives over his determination to avenge Helen's murder while Orestes just as suddenly despairs of his earlier plan and prepares for death. But a modified version of Steidle's interpretation (tempered in particular by Schwinge's observations regarding the nature of Euripidean *Streitstichomythie*) seems to accord better with the frantic pace and tension of the scene as a whole: Orestes refutes Menelaus' colorless[112] and non-committal ἔχεις με in the same fashion as he does his earlier outcries at 1613-16; Orestes then breaks off the *stichomythia* (in a manner common in Euripides) by turning away and directing his companions to begin firing the palace;[113] Menelaus, unable to commit himself to a decisive course of action, calls out in despair to the citizens of Argos; at this critical juncture Apollo enters to bring the confrontation to a halt and restore the traditional mythic framework. The *stichomythia* and (from line 1600) the even more agitated *antilabe* communicate both the intense hatred of the antagonists for one another and their desperation, thus providing a suitably emotional climax to the play. It is in its raw emotions — particularly the moral outrage of the now ascendant Orestes — that the scene's justification can be found. Like Medea, Orestes attains a ghastly triumph over his treacherous opponent: the emotional backlash against the helpless frustration that has beset him throughout the play here reaches its height; the principal theme of the play — the effect on the hero of a series of betrayals and injustices — is brought to a satisfying climax. In contrast to *Medea,* however, Orestes' adventures do not end on this tragic note: Apollo comes, and with him, a return to the tranquil world of the received myth.

APOLLO *EX MACHINA*

Earlier I asserted that Euripides and his audience would be puzzled by the modern debate over the significance of lines 1617ff.; no doubt it

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112 Cf. Lesky (1935) 43.

113 Those who delete 1618-20 have failed to note the frequency with which passages of *stichomythia* in Euripides are brought to a conclusion by such a command (or by a similar turning away from speech to action): see, e.g., *Med* 820, 1019 (cf. 709), *Hcld* 698, *Hipp* 108, *Hec* 888, 1019, (cf. 432, 787, 1284), *Su* 582, *Her* 622, 1422 (cf. 562), *Hel* 477, 1431, *Phoen* 986, 1708, *Or* 112, 799, 1060, 1337 (cf. 1240), *Ba* 973 (cf. 509), *IA* 678 (cf. 903); see as well E. *El* 1132, 1342, *Ion* 1029.

would be equally at a loss to explain many of the interpretations of Apollo's arrival. Whatever the modern critic's particular view of this *deus ex machina* — whether they consider it an ironical commentary on the part of the poet or a mystical affirmation of some higher wisdom — scholars have tended to stress the unusual nature of Apollo's epiphany: the abruptness of his entry, the apparent arbitrariness of his various dispensations, and, above all, the discrepancy between the world of myth that he reinstates and the world of the play proper. These alleged peculiarities have formed the basis for further (often darker) speculations about the significance of the finale for the work as a whole. Yet a detailed examination of these allegations reveals their inability to bear the critical burden placed upon them.

At the heart of the matter — particularly in the view of 'ironists' like von Fritz — seems to lie the conviction that the *deus ex machina* is somehow unworthy of tragedy in its highest form, that such endings need to be justified in some way in order to avoid the complaint that Euripides was either a 'botcher' who could not construct a proper plot[114] or a writer of melodrama. Thus refuge is sought in irony: the poet doesn't really intend this to be taken seriously; he cannot mean us to accept such a *gutes Ende* at face value.[115] Against this interpretation is the sheer number of *di ex machina* in the corpus of Greek tragedy, not in Euripides[116] alone but in Sophocles[117] as well. It can be argued that the poet's audience would have grown tired of the joke, assuming that it could be counted on to distinguish Euripides' *ironic* divine epiphanies from the straight-faced divinities of his fellow dramatist. It is equally important that Euripides clearly informs his audience elsewhere that the ending of one of his plays is *not* to be regarded as perfectly happy.[118] In *Orestes* the only hint of

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[114] The ultimate source for such criticism is *Poet.* 1454a 37ff.; see W. Schmidt (1964) 12-14 and 31. For a review of the criticism of the *deus ex machina* in antiquity, see Spira (1960) 149-52, W. Schmidt (1964) 5ff.

[115] Cf. the comments of Heath (1987a) 49ff. (esp. 54-56, on Athena's epiphany in *Ion*).

[116] Among the preserved plays (in addition to the *di ex machina* proper of *Hipp, Andr, Su, El, IT, Ion, Hel, Or, Ba,* and the original *IA*) are those works that close with a mortal who dons a supernatural aura (*Med, Hcld, Hec;* cf. Heracles in *Alc* and [perhaps] Bellerophon in *Stheneboea* [Webster (1967) 84]): see W. Schmidt (1964) 198-201. Among the fragmentary works that likely concluded with a *deus ex machina* are *Alcmene, Alcmeon in Corinth, Alexander, Antiope, Archelaus, Erechtheus, Hypsipyle, Mel. Desm., Mel. Sophe, Phaethon,* and *Phrixus II;* note as well the spurious *Rh, Rhadamanthus,* and *Tennes.* Cf. Lefkowitz (1989) 70.

[117] In addition to *Phil* note *Athamas II, Erigona, Peleus;* other possible candidates are *Tereus* and *Tyro II.* Presumably the list of *di ex machina* in Sophocles, Euripides, and others would be much longer were our knowledge of fifth-century tragedy not so incomplete: cf. W. Schmidt (1964) 5 and n. 1.

[118] See *El* 1244ff.

such a view is Orestes' statement at 1668-69 that he was beginning to
fear lest the voice whose commands he had obeyed belonged to an
ἀλάστωρ and not to Apollo.[119] Yet this statement, like the similarly
misunderstood 288-93, is presented from the very limited perspective of
Orestes' self-interest: when it appeared that Clytemnestra's murder would
lead to disaster for Orestes, Apollo's authority for that murder began
(note the imperfect: ἐσῄει) to be doubted; now that Apollo has vindicated
both the deed and his earlier prophecies (1666-67) and has effected a
happy resolution (1670), his sanctioning of Clytemnestra's death is
proven beyond doubt.[120]

   If the ironical interpretation of the scene is called into question on
certain *a priori* grounds, both it and the 'pietistic' interpretation of
Burnett are open to the same objection, that they exaggerate the
significance of certain features of the scene. Thus, for example, the
former emphasizes the unexpected suddenness of Apollo's intervention
and the apparently absurd readiness with which his commands are
accepted by Orestes and Menelaus:

> We must not underestimate the effect both of the exaggerated suddenness
> and completeness of the ending and of the exaggerated alacrity with
> which the characters are reconciled to the god and to each other. We find
> here an ironic vision of the thanks rendered by Orestes to Apollo at the
> end of the *Eumenides*, as Euripides leads us to ask what we are to make
> of human willingness to accept such a fulfillment as the god offers, to
> allow it to cancel out the past (ἀλλ᾽ εὖ τελεῖται), and to believe a being
> who was formerly so distrusted. (Roberts [1984] 117)

Yet both of these alleged oddities are characteristic of the poet's *di ex
machina*, particularly in his later plays. Unheralded entrances occur with
equal suddenness at the conclusion of *Hippolytus, Supplices, Iphigenia
among the Taurians, Helen, Antiope,* and Sophocles' *Philoctetes,* as well
as at *Ion* 1320.[121] In each instance the entrance provides a theatrical
effect, although none is quite so dramatic as Apollo's appearance at
Orestes 1625. The readiness with which the characters accept the god's
commands is also typical,[122] as is the speed with which the drama then

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[119] Cf. E. *El* 979 and see above, n. 42.

[120] Cf. Σ *Or* 1668 and see Howald (1930) 167-68 and Hamburger (1962) 54.

[121] Note as well the suddenness of Medea's final epiphany at *Med* 1317 and see Halleran
(1985) 25. (For my comments here and below cf. the admirably brief treatment of *di ex
machina* in Collard [1975a] 2.407-08. Collard refers to these abrupt and unannounced
epiphanies as 'typical.')

[122] Cf. *Andr* 1273ff., *Su* 1227ff., *Ion* 1606ff., *IT* 1475ff., *Hel* 1680ff., *Antiope* 98ff.
(Page), considered below, pp. 286-88, and *Phil* 1445ff.

concludes.[123] Moreover, the ancient audience had several reasons to accept Apollo's entrance with greater equanimity than do many moderns. As we have seen, it was accustomed to divine epiphanies of this sort at the end of dramas. In addition, popular religious belief held that the gods did intervene in human affairs with some frequency, either directly or indirectly, while the poems of Homer provided ample literary precedent for such occurrences.[124] In his later plays Euripides shows an increasing tendency to employ the *deus ex machina* and to tie the arrival of the god directly to the plot by some (usually rather fleeting) crisis.[125] Whether this tendency represents the author's personal appreciation of myth and the cults with which it is associated[126] or merely the desire to attain a sense of closure through a return to tradition,[127] many in the audience familiar with Euripides' practice must have been expecting the appearance of the *deus* long before his actual arrival.[128] (The knowing spectator would have found a number of clues during the course of the play as to the identity of the god who will appear.)[129] The structure of Orestes' final confrontation with Menelaus would have reinforced this impression: as Schwinge has indicated, *Streitstichomythie* of this sort frequently conclude with the arrival of a third party.[130] These considerations imply that Apollo's sudden epiphany would have generated much less comment in antiquity than it has among moderns, the later criticisms of scholars such as

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[123] Note the brevity with which the conclusion follows the appearance of the *deus* in *Andr, Su, IT, Ion, Hel, Antiope,* and *Phil;* cf. the abrupt ending of *Hcld* following Eurystheus' *deus*-like proclamation.

[124] On these points, see Decharme (1893) 398-400, who refers to popular traditions on the presence of Theseus at Marathon (Plut. *Thes.* 35.11), the role of the Aeacidae and Athena (?) at Salamis (Hdt. 8.64 and 84, Paus. 8.10.4), and, later, Heracles' intervention at Leuctra (Xen. *Hel.* 6.4.7); cf. Spira (1960) 159-61, W. Schmidt (1964) 66-87, Michelini (1987) 108 and n. 60.

[125] Note, e.g., *Ion* (will Ion confront Apollo directly?), *IT* (will the sudden adverse winds place Orestes and his friends in Thoas' grasp?), *Hel* (will Theoclymenos punish Theonoe?).

[126] Webster (above, pp. 258-59); cf. Spira (1960) 161 and Collard (1975a) 2.407.

[127] See Heath (1987a) 103. Murray (1946) 113-14 emphasizes the appropriateness of the *deus ex machina* for Greek tragedy, with its themes drawn from the tales of myth and epic (cf. Cilliers [1985]); the Euripidean epilogue, with its emphatic reassertion of the mythic landscape, provides a particularly hospitable setting for such epiphanies.

[128] Several scholars have found in Sophocles' *Phil* (produced the year before *Or*) a more particular motivation for Apollo's entrance: see Pohlenz (1947) 1.419, Spira (1960) 147-48, Fuqua (1976) 93-94, Falkner (1983a) 297-300.

[129] As Grube (1941) 76 and Cilliers (1985) 14 indicate, Apollo is the logical choice for the *deus ex machina,* given his intimate association with Orestes' plight. See Burnett (1971) 221 for ways in which Euripides prepares us for Apollo's appearance.

[130] Schwinge (1968b) 52, citing *Hcld* 61-68, *Ion* 1282-1311, *Hel* 1627-41, *IA* 303-13 (add *Antiope* 55-63 [Page]). On the further possible clue provided by 1591-92 see Winnington-Ingram (1969a) 130, Mastronarde (1979) 93-94, Nisetich (1986) 50-54.

Aristotle and comics such as Antiphanes notwithstanding.

But the above arguments leave untouched the most striking feature of Apollo's epiphany: the manner in which it reverses the action on stage. Even in antiquity conclusions of this sort were the object of ridicule,[131] and a majority of modern scholars (including those who find a mystical relevance in Apollo's epiphany) place great emphasis on the alleged scarcity of parallels for such a resolution among the preserved works of the tragedians.[132] It is true that the majority of *di ex machina* in Euripides are called on to perform much more modest services than is Apollo in *Orestes*. Collard provides a useful general description of those services:

> The god ... contributes hardly at all to the play's action; the poet's purpose is rather its external validation or an 'enlargement of meaning.' Divine omniscience and power bring the characters explanation or endorsement, consolation in suffering, encouragement, hope or promise of reward ..., sometimes instruction in the gods' higher provision: the Tragic *deus* inherits from Epic the concept of the commanding epiphany. E.'s individual contribution to the form lies in the aetiological element ...; he wanted either to retain for Tragedy, by his day increasingly secular and free-thinking, some explicit associations with myth and cult, or to win credibility for his plays through the link with holy places, relics or observances .... ([1975a] 2.407)

The use of the *deus* in *Orestes* differs a good deal from this norm, although Apollo does perform the customary duties of clearing away any mysteries or unwanted loose ends that might remain (for the audience as well as for the individuals on stage: 1629-34, 1664-65), of foretelling the futures of the various characters, and of providing ties with contemporary society by means of etiologies.[133] The fact remains, however, that the *deus* in *this* play contributes a great deal to the action, effecting a sudden and miraculous reversal of the dramatic situation that appears to overturn completely what has gone before.

The question is whether this feature of Apollo's epiphany is so egregious as to justify its use in validating the various (and contradictory) interpretations proposed. Comparison with other plays in the tragic corpus suggests, rather, that the *exodos* of *Orestes* represents the culmination of Euripides' increasing tendency, noted by Spira and others,

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[131] See, e.g., Antiphanes frg. 189 (Kassel/Austin).

[132] Sophocles' *Phil* typically is cited as the only similar instance of a *deus ex machina* being employed to effect an ending that the characters cannot or, in that case, will not bring about.

[133] See 1636-37 and 1686-90 (regarding Helen, although, as Willink indicates, we know of no marine cult in her honor) and the problematic 1646-47 (see Willink [ed.] *ad loc.*).

to generate a *nodus vindice dignus* in order to motivate the appearance of the god. The contrast between the on-stage conflict and the resolution enforced by Apollo is paralleled in a number of Euripides' other works.[134] It is likely, for example, that divine epiphanies and the announcement of a miraculous rescue were featured in the original *Iphigenia at Aulis*,[135] in *Phrixus II*,[136] and in Sophocles' *Athamas II*.[137] Each of these *exodoi* seems to involve a reversal as radical as that of *Orestes*, although our fragmentary and not entirely reliable evidence limits the conclusions that we can draw concerning these works. It is probable that such divine pronouncements concern events off stage rather than the on-stage situation: the god's final proclamation may have had only a tangential relevance to the issues raised in the body of the play (as does, for example, that of Thetis in *Andromache*). The fact remains, however, that plays of this sort appear to present a sudden return to mythic tradition and a negation of the preceding dramatic action very like *Orestes*. Again the question arises whether the audience could discriminate between these presumably straightforward reversals and the ironic denouement of *Orestes*.[138]

The entry of the Pythia at *Ion* 1320 provides an even stronger precedent for Apollo's epiphany: at *Ion* 1282-1311 we witness a violent confrontation in *stichomythia* after the manner of *Orestes* 1576-1617, the issue here being Ion's threat to drag Creusa away from Apollo's altar and thereby violate the right of refuge; at 1312-19 Ion breaks out of *stichomythia* as does Orestes at *Orestes* 1618-20 (although it should be noted that, unlike Orestes' commands, Ion's reflections do not present a threat of imminent crisis); at this crucial juncture the Pythia enters to bring the confrontation to a close[139] and initiate the recognition sequence — her only motive, the facile assertion that Apollo directed her to conceal her knowledge of Ion's origins until this particular moment

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[134] Cf. W. Schmidt (1964) 29-30 and 202ff.

[135] See Ael. *H.A.* 7.39, Webster (1967) 263-64, and Lesky (1983) 362; contrast Page (1934) 199ff.

[136] See Austin (1968) 102-03.

[137] See Sutton (1984) 25.

[138] The divine rescues at the conclusion of *IT* and *Hel* are of a different order: in these plays (as discussed, e.g., by Spira [1960] 139-40) the poet goes to great lengths to generate a fleeting crisis in order to motivate the *deus*. While the *deus* in these plays does impose a reversal of the immediate stage action, these reversals do not call into question the character or the motives of the protagonists and raise no difficulties regarding the earlier action of the play: they are as ephemeral and as inconsequential as the crises they are designed to allay.

[139] Note the emphatic ἐπίσχες with which she opens, after the fashion of the typical Euripidean *deus*: cf. Spira (1960) 131 (with n. 85) and 139 n. 114.

(1346-49). The effect of this entrance is not as jarring as that of Apollo's intervention since, once the Pythia has provided the necessary clues to Ion's identity, the hostility between the two antagonists dissolves quite naturally. Yet the dynamics of the scene are essentially the same as those of the *exodos* of *Orestes:* a climactic confrontation between two foes — one speaking from the safety of a defended position, the other accompanied by an armed band yet stymied by his opponent's defenses — suddenly cancelled by the advent of a third party whose entry is weakly motivated at best. Critics of *Ion* have detected irony in the conclusion of that play as well, finding evidence therein for a bumbling and rather embarrassed Apollo who is unable to heal the effects of his earlier crime without revealing his guilt to those concerned.[140] If it exists, however, this irony operates quite apart from the stage technique involved in this particular scene: the Pythia herself is a mere cipher, her function that of introducing the recognition sequence. The likelihood of similar denouements, for example, in the lost *Melanippe Sophe* and *Tennes*[141] suggests that Euripides' audience would be accustomed to such sequences and would not be searching for hidden ironies underlying these sudden reversals.[142]

The plays of divine rescue and climactic recognition provide suitable precedents for a sudden negation of the earlier stage action and an abrupt return to received myth, but none of the works cited to this point seems to involve such a radical realignment of the characters' loyalties and outlooks as is found in *Orestes:* it is one thing for Creusa and Ion to be reconciled once their relationship to one another has been revealed, quite another for Orestes and Menelaus to exit as loving father- and son-in-law.[143] Yet this aspect of *Orestes* also can be paralleled. The *Antiope,* traditionally regarded as having been produced in the same period,[144] involves a series of intrigues very like that of *Orestes:* Dirce (as we can gather from the fragments, a rather two-dimensional villainess) is killed in an exceedingly gory fashion by Amphion and Zethus (see lines 57-61

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[140] See the criticisms of Heath (1987a) 54-56.

[141] In these works the question is not one of recognition but rather confirmation: Hippo's appearance *ex machina* in *Mel. Sophe* confirms that Poseidon is the father of Melanippe's children; Apollo in the pseudo-Euripidean *Tennes* reveals the truth regarding Cycnus' wife.

[142] I have omitted references to works such as the *IT* or the other plays cited at *Poet.* 1454a where it is probable that the recognition was not brought about by means of a *deus ex machina* (or equivalent).

[143] Cf. Arist. *Poet.* 1453a 30-39. This crucial distinction is missed, e.g., by Steidle (1968) in his attempt to link *Or* to Euripides' other plays of intrigue and τύχη.

[144] *Antiope* commonly is dated to c. 410-08 as one of Euripides' last works. This view has been challenged of late: see below, p. 294 n. 16.

[Page]), while in the finale her husband Lycus is lured into an ambush by the unnamed βουκόλος or by Amphion himself;[145] at the moment when Amphion and Zethus are on the point of dispatching Lycus as well, Hermes enters, ordering a stop to the proceedings and, after the manner of Apollo in *Orestes,* commanding Lycus to resign his kingdom in favor of his would-be assassins, who are also his wife's murderers (72-73 [Page]).[146] Again we find the disconcerting juxtaposition of this command with a reference to the fate of the addressee's spouse (lines 74ff. [Page]), and again the addressee's response frustrates our expectations with its exuberant acquiescence (*Antiope* 98-111 [Page]):

> ὦ πολλ' ἄελπτα Ζεῦ τιθεὶς καθ' ἡμέραν,
> ἔδειξας [εἰς φῶς] τάσδ' ἀβουλίας ἐμὰς
> ἐσσφρα[. . . .] δοκοῦντας οὐκ εἶναι Διός.
> πάρεστε καὶ ζῆθ'·[147] ηὗρε μηνυτὴς χρόνος
> ψευδεῖς μὲν ἡμᾶς, σφῷν δὲ μητέρ' εὐτυχῆ.
> ἴτε νυν, κρατύνετ' ἀντ' ἐμοῦ τῆσδε χθονὸς
> λαβόντε Κάδμου σκῆπτρα· τὴν γὰρ ἀξίαν
> σφῷν προστίθησιν Ζεὺς ἐγώ τε σὺν Διί.
> Ἑρμῇ δ]ὲ [πίσυν]ος Ἄρεος εἰς κρήνην [β]αλῶ
> γυναῖκα θάψας, τῇσ[δ' ὅπως] θανοῦσα γῆς
> νασμοῖσι τέγγῃ πεδία Θηβαίας χθονός,
> Δίρκη παρ' ἀνδρῶν ὑστέρων κεκλημένη.
> λύω δὲ νείκη καὶ τὰ πρὶν πεπραγμένα ....

Like Menelaus, Lycus acknowledges the divine fiat for the events that have occurred and acquiesces without complaint. As we have seen, similar sequences can be found in a number of *exodoi* in the Greek tragic corpus, but a modern reader is inclined to distinguish, for example, between the matters in which Peleus (*Andromache* 1273ff.), Thoas (*Iphigenia among the Taurians* 1475ff.), or even Philoctetes (Sophocles' *Philoctetes* 1445ff.) are called to acquiesce and the personal outrages that Menelaus is compelled to accept. The easy acquiescence of Lycus at the conclusion of the *Antiope* — where it is exceedingly difficult to detect the possibility of ironic undercurrents beneath the various speakers' words — suggests that such a distinction did not occur to the ancient audience as a

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[145] Most editors assume that the unnamed interlocutor is the βουκόλος; Webster (1966) 96 and n. 33 and (1967) 210 argues convincingly for Amphion, largely on the basis of dramatic economy. Cf. Hamilton (1987) 589 n. 10.

[146] For discussions of Euripides' technique in this scene, see Hourmouziades (1965) 167-68, Snell (1964) 78-79, Matthiessen (1964) 164, Webster (1966) 95-97, Halleran (1985) 24-25.

[147] There is disagreement as to whether these two verbs should be taken as imperatives (Page) or indicatives (Kambitsis).

matter of course, because it was not inclined to detect irony in divine epiphanies without some prodding from the author. As we have seen, the *exodos* of *Orestes* provides no such prodding.[148]

If the above arguments are accepted, the *deus ex machina* of *Orestes* differs from those of other plays of Euripides' late period only in the degree to which it is bound to the plot proper and in its high theatricality. As the culmination of the poet's quest for terminal climax (to use Jones' phrase), it deserves note: there is a good deal of bravura in the way in which Euripides, having already put the traditional version of the Orestes myth at risk a number of times in the course of this play, here threatens the complete obliteration of the house of Atreus, only to snatch away that threat with the same abruptness as Helen was earlier snatched from Orestes' grasp.[149] In this sense the finale is remarkable and, as we have seen, it does present a suitable climax to the agitated series of scenes that constitute the latter half of the play. But Apollo's sudden epiphany is not so atypical as to justify the various interpretations placed on it: like other Euripidean *di ex machina,* the god of Delphi here arrives for the purpose of resolving any remaining issues or uncertainties before the conclusion of the play and not of providing a final insight about the work's true meaning.[150] The play proper has attained its end with the final confrontation between Orestes and Menelaus, an exciting scene that brings the action to its logical climax by effectively expressing the frustration, outrage, and indignation that have been building since Orestes' initial confrontation with the Spartan king. Apollo restores order and mythological orthodoxy, but his brief and extremely traditional appearance in the *exodos* provides no opportunity either for ironic commentary or for Olympian reproof of mortal folly.

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[148] A particular protest should be lodged against the indignation frequently expressed at the possibility of Orestes and Hermione proceeding to live in married bliss. Such reflections — of the 'How many children had Lady Macbeth?' variety — import an inappropriate conception of character into the dramatic text (cf. Lesky [1968] 100 and see DeVito [1988] 12ff.). They also point to concerns that do not seem to have troubled Athenian audiences: note, e.g., the frequency with which the happy ending of New Comedy is predicated on the notion of a young girl being lucky enough to marry her rapist.

[149] Cf. Spira (1960) 145. It is worth noting that Sophocles adopts much the same strategy in his *Phil* by allowing Neoptolemus to yield to the older hero's insistence upon returning home and skipping the Trojan War altogether (*Phil* 1393ff.).

[150] It is perhaps timely here to protest another popular misconception regarding Apollo's role, the notion that his epiphany is necessary because only a god could effect a true resolution of the various conflicts that have arisen in the course of the play. It is by no means clear just how, e.g., Apollo will placate the Argive assembly (or, for that matter, why he did not do so earlier: cf. Melchinger's comment, above, n. 16), nor are we meant to consider the question; this announcement is merely part of the Euripidean *deus'* traditional function of resolving any issues that might remain at the end of the play. (Contrast Hall [1993].)

CONCLUSION

Heath has lodged a protest against the 'intellectualizing' tendencies of modern critics of Greek tragedy.[151] While the validity of this protest can be disputed in specific instances, Heath's position seems justified in regard to much that has been written about the *exodos* of *Orestes* and, indeed, the play as a whole. In their search for thematic relevance in the *exodos,* critics have engaged in a great deal of speculation regarding the characterization of Orestes and Menelaus, the half-hidden nuances of specific lines, and the ironic implications of Apollo's epiphany. As a result, certain features of the *exodos* have been artificially exaggerated— the curious lapses of logic in the *stichomythia* between Orestes and Menelaus, the abruptness and business-like brevity of Apollo's epiphany — and the impact of these concluding scenes distorted to coincide with the particular critic's reading of the play. In focusing on an alleged 'moral,' scholars have tended to discount the role of the *exodos* in the emotional or melodramatic structure of *Orestes.* But in fact the *exodos* fittingly concludes this exceedingly agitated and innovative play, providing an appropriate climax to Orestes' growing frustration and outrage, while building to a similar crisis the sense of a world that has gone disastrously and irrevocably awry. Betrayed on all sides, his expectations repeatedly frustrated by a world where the old rules no longer seem to apply, Orestes threatens the destruction of his ancestral palace and, with it, the entire mythical tradition associated with the house of Atreus. This most unorthodox of plays finds a fitting finale in the sheer bravura of the scene, whose intensity presents a suitable emotional climax. To a large degree the anger and frustration of Euripides' protagonist — his bitter alienation from a society corrupted by self-interest and political factionalism — must have spoken directly to the poet's contemporaries. Apollo, it is true, appears at the end to set things right, but the audience departs from *Orestes* with the sense, not of a final reconciliation, but of a resentful and angry grievance against a world in chaos.

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[151] Heath (1987a); cf. above, p. 41.

APPENDIX ONE

A PRO-SATYRIC *ORESTES*?

Hartung attempts to deal with the peculiarities of *Orestes* by proposing that it be classified as a 'tragi-comedy' (echoing the phrase in Thomas Magister's *hypothesis* to the play: τὸ παρὸν δὲ δρᾶμά ἐστιν ἐκ τραγικοῦ κωμικόν)[1] — that is, as a pro-satyric piece, designed to be performed in place of the traditional satyr play. This theory has found a number of adherents, who see in it a means of explaining the work's curiously bitter tone, its apparent lack of a moral focus, its transgressions of tragic decorum, and its seemingly jumbled plot.[2] Justification for the theory has been found in the ancient commentators, who stress the play's happy ending:[3] in addition to the late third *hypothesis* cited by Hartung (which merely reflects Thomas Magister's adherence to the earlier tradition) note the observation in the second *hypothesis* that "the play's resolution is too like that of a comedy" (τὸ δρᾶμα κωμικωτέραν ἔχει τὴν καταστροφήν).[4] This phrase clearly is a formula employed to characterize those plays that do not have the requisite 'Aristotelian' peripety εἰς τὴν δυστυχίαν,[5] for it appears again in the *hypothesis* to *Alcestis*. The latter continues (after the usual Aristophanic τόποι have been covered):

> τὸ δὲ δρᾶμά ἐστι σατυρικώτερον, ὅτι εἰς χαρὰν καὶ ἡδονὴν
> καταστρέφει παρὰ τὸ τραγικόν. ἐκβάλλεται ὡς ἀνοίκεια τῆς τραγικῆς
> ποιήσεως ὅ τε Ὀρέστης καὶ ἡ Ἄλκηστις, ὡς ἐκ συμφορᾶς μὲν
> ἀρχόμενα, εἰς εὐδαιμονίαν ⟨δὲ⟩ καὶ χαρὰν λήξαντα, ⟨ἃ⟩ ἐστι μᾶλλον
> κωμῳδίας ἐχόμενα.

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[1] See Hartung (1843) 2.398-02, 471-72, and 500-01; *id.* (ed.) vff.

[2] See Wedd (ed.) xi-xvii. An alternate theory, put forward by Schlegel, maintains that *Or* is the second play of a trilogy: the critic's dissatisfactions with the work then can be attributed to the unfinished nature of the poetic 'action.' (Cf. Sauer [1916] no. 1964.) Cf. Delebecque (1951) 301-07, who dates *Or* to 413 as part of the trilogy *El-Or-IT*.

[3] On what follows see Sutton (1973).

[4] Cf. above, p. 3.

[5] See *Poet.* 1453a 7-12. Aristotle contradicts himself regarding the type of ending most suited to tragedy: cf. *Poet.* 1453b 26ff. and see Jones (1962) 47, Moles (1979) 82ff., Seidensticker (1982) 254-55, Halliwell (1986) 218ff. Whatever Aristotle's final view of the matter, later scholarly tradition clearly considered the 'tragic' conclusion a *sine qua non* of the genre.

The fact that *Orestes* here is linked with *Alcestis* — a play that the
Aristophanic *hypothesis* proves is pro-satyric[6] — as a work that is
σατυρικώτερον, and that both plays are said to be 'excluded from the
canon of genuine tragedies' (ἐκβάλλεται ὡς ἀνοίκεια τῆς τραγικῆς
ποιήσεως ὅ τε 'Ορέστης καὶ ἡ "Αλκηστις)[7] on the basis of their non-
tragic conclusions, appears to be decisive. Dale argues convincingly,
however, that the paragraph cited represents an inept elaboration of the
Aristophanic formula, the work of late commentators who knew only the
ten 'select' plays of Euripides, recognized from the Aristophanic
hypothesis that *Alcestis* must be pro-satyric, and concluded that *Orestes*
(the only other play of the ten to end 'happily') must be pro-satyric as
well.[8] Sutton has demonstrated that just such an assumption was the
source of a self-acknowledged error on the part of Tzetzes, who appends
to line 93 of his Περὶ διαφορᾶς ποιητῶν the comment:

> τοῦτο εἶπον ἠπατημένος τοῖς ἐξηγουμένοις Εὐριπίδην καὶ Σοφοκλέα
> γράψας οὕτω· "τὸ δρᾶμα τὸ τῆς 'Αλκήστιδος Εὐριπίδου καὶ ὁ
> 'Ορέστης καὶ ἡ Σοφοκλέους 'Ηλέκτρα καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα, σατυρικά εἰσι
> καὶ οὐ τραγικά. ἀπὸ συμφορῶν γὰρ καὶ δακρύων εἰς χαρὰν
> καταντῶσιν." οὕτω μὲν οὖν ἔγραψα περὶ τῶν σατύρων τούτοις
> ἠπατημένος.[9]

The adjective σατυρικά here provides an important clue both to
Tzetzes' source (compare the σατυρικώτερον of *Alcestis hypothesis* and
note the resulting confusion of satyr play with comedy in each passage)
and to the late date of that source, inasmuch as the older scholiasts
maintain the Peripatetic distinction between tragedy and *comedy:*
presumably the muddying of that distinction here is due to the
interpolator's attempt to define the pro-satyric nature of *Alcestis*.

The more common view of *Orestes* in antiquity may be represented by
Σ *Or* 1691, where the assumption that tragedies should end 'tragically' is
tempered by the realization that this ideal frequently is not maintained in
the texts themselves:

> ἡ κατάληξις τῆς τραγῳδίας ἢ εἰς θρῆνον ἢ εἰς πάθος καταλύει, ἡ δὲ
> τῆς κωμῳδίας εἰς σπονδὰς καὶ διαλλαγάς. ὅθεν ὁρᾶται τόδε τὸ δρᾶμα

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[6] See Dale (1954) xxxviii-xl.

[7] Sutton (1973) 120.

[8] Dale (1954) xl; cf. Welcker (1839) 1.531-32. *Or* and *Alc* are also associated with one
another by Σ *Or* 1691 (cited below).

[9] Kaibel (1958) 1.30 n. on l. 177. Cf. the similar remarks in Tzetzes' various *Prologues to
Aristophanes* (Kaibel [1958] 1.21.51ff., 1.30.176ff., 33.68ff.) and the *Prologue to Lycophron*
(Kaibel [1958] 1.34.7ff.).

κωμικῇ καταλήξει χρησάμενον· διαλλαγαὶ γὰρ πρὸς Μενέλαον καὶ
Ὀρέστην. ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀλκήστιδι ἐκ συμφορῶν εἰς εὐφροσύνην
καὶ ἀναβιοτήν. ὁμοίως καὶ ἐν Τυροῖ Σοφοκλέους ἀναγνωρισμὸς κατὰ
τὸ τέλος γίνεται, καὶ ἁπλῶς εἰπεῖν πολλὰ τοιαῦτα ἐν τῇ τραγῳδίᾳ
εὑρίσκεται.

Moreover, it is evident that in 340 B.C. the play was restaged as a
tragedy.[10] For each of the years 341-339 the *didascaliae* for the Dionysia
at Athens record one satyr play, one 'antique' tragedy, and works by
three contemporary playwrights: at the Dionysia of 340 the satyr play was
a *Lycurgus*, while the 'antique' tragedy was Euripides' *Orestes*. Evidently
Orestes was not at that time held to be an actual satyr play, and it could
be argued that it would not have been honored as the single 'antique' play
to be reproduced that year had it been regarded as in any way less than a
legitimate tragedy.[11]

Despite this inscriptional evidence from the fourth century, some
scholars have attempted to reconstruct the didascalic record of Euripides'
productions in such a way as to strengthen the case for a pro-satyric
Orestes. The most recent proponent of this argument, C. W. Müller,
employs the much-discussed *scholion* to *Frogs* 53 to argue for a
Euripidean tetralogy in 408 B.C. consisting of *Hypsipyle, Phoenissae,
Antiope, Orestes* (satyr play).[12] The scholiast cavils regarding
Aristophanes' selection of *Andromeda*, a play produced in 412 B.C.,
some seven years before *Frogs:*

διὰ τί δὲ μὴ ἄλλο τι τῶν πρὸ ὀλίγου διδαχθέντων καὶ καλῶν,
Ὑψιπύλης, Φοινισσῶν, Ἀντιόπης; ἡ δὲ Ἀνδρομέδα ὀγδόῳ ἔτει
προεισῆλθεν.

Arguing that the scholiast, in consulting the didascalic record,
naturally would select a group of tragedies produced nearer to 405 B.C.,
Müller proceeds as follows: (1) *Hypsipyle, Phoenissae,* and *Antiope* must
have been produced in the same year, at some time between 412 and 408

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[10] See Snell (1971) DID A 2a.18-19 (cited above, p. 1 n. 5).

[11] There is also the question of whether Aristophanes, Strattis, Sannyrion, and others
would have taken such note of a pro-satyric piece; see above, pp. 1-2.

[12] C. W. Müller (1984) 66-69. This argument initially was proposed by Hartung (1843)
2.400-01 and (ed.) vff. Hartung employs two late *scholia* (Σ *Or* 1457 and 1481 [Matthiae]),
each of which cites passages from *Phoen,* which it refers to as 'the third play' (ἐν τῷ τρίτῳ
δράματι). Combining these references with Σ *Frogs* 53, Hartung argues for the tetralogy
proposed by Müller, but with *Phoen* as the 'third play.' The scholiast is not referring to a
didascalic notice, however, but to an edition of the so-called Byzantine Triad (the standard
order of which was *Hec-Or-Phoen*), and therefore is worthless: see Mueller-Goldingen
(1985) 9-10.

(Euripides' last production in Athens before leaving for the court of Archelaus);[13] (2) it is unreasonable to assume that Euripides could compose at such a rapid pace as to produce tetralogies at the City Dionysia in two consecutive years (an argument based in part on what we can judge to be the average output of Sophocles and Euripides throughout their careers);[14] (3) therefore the trilogy cited by the scholiast must have been produced in 410 or 408; (4) if this trilogy was produced in 410, the scholiast's complaint is absurd, the difference between five years and seven years being negligible; (5) therefore the trilogy must have appeared in the records for 408; *Orestes* is not cited by the scholiast because it was listed as the satyr play for that year.[15]

Müller's revival of Hartung's argument is open to several objections. The scholiast does not necessarily imply that he is citing a single trilogy: each of the plays he names was popular in later antiquity and may have been selected on that basis (hence the addition of καὶ καλῶν).[16] In any case, the omission of *Orestes* should raise doubts about the nature of that selection, since (as we have seen) it was immensely popular in later antiquity and would be familiar to any commentator on Euripides, even one who relied heavily on didascalic records. Still more problematic is the assertion that Euripides could not have produced a tetralogy in 409. We know little about the speed with which the ancient poets composed their works, and, while the two-year cycle described by Müller is plausible, it cannot be taken as an immutable law.[17] In fact, if we consider the number of plays reasonably attributed to Euripides' later period, Müller's hypothesis becomes difficult to maintain. On Müller's view, we can assume only three Euripidean tetralogies for production in Athens following that of 415 B.C. (the content of which is established by Aelian's *Variae Historiae* 2.8): one in 412 (the year in which we know *Andromeda* and *Helen* were produced), one in 410, and one in 408. Thus

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[13] The common assumption that no plays by Euripides could have been produced in Athens in 407 or even 406 has not gone unchallenged: see Bond (1963) 144, Cropp/Fick (1985) 75.

[14] See C. W. Müller (1984) 60ff. for his justification of this assumption.

[15] In support of Müller's theory, Luppe (1987) rewrites the lacunose Aristophanic *hypothesis* to *Phoen* so as to circumvent the reference there to Nausicrates as the eponymous archon for the year in which *Phoen* was produced. Luppe adds nothing, however, to Müller's arguments: the strained nature of his speculations serves rather to highlight some of problems inherent in Müller's thesis.

[16] Particular difficulties are entailed in the scholiast's assertion of a late date for *Antiope:* see Cropp/Fick (1985) 74-76, where it is suggested that *Antiope* here is a slip for *Antigone*.

[17] Our uncertainty concerning the ancient playwrights' habits of composition can be illustrated, e.g., by Hooker's theory ([1980] 180-81) that the texts of Euripides' plays sometimes were in circulation long before their exhibition at the City Dionysia.

only nine tragedies can be attributed to the latest period of the poet's career (discounting *Archelaus* [produced in Macedonia in 407][18] and the posthumous *Alcmeon in Corinth, Iphigenia at Aulis,* and *Bacchae*). Yet metrical and dramaturgical considerations suggest that, on a conservative estimate, some eleven of the known plays should be attributed to this period.[19] Uncertain as such arguments must be, the evidence in support of Müller's hypothesis is too subjective, and the consequences of that hypothesis too disruptive, to justify its acceptance.[20]

Deprived of ancient evidence for a pro-satyric *Orestes,* critics have turned their attention to the work's plot elements, its themes, and its dramaturgic technique. Several scholars have followed the ancient commentators in emphasizing the play's 'happy' conclusion as evidence for its pro-satyric nature.[21] Yet this criterion is uncertain at best, given the number of plays with 'non-tragic' conclusions to be found in the corpus (as the above-cited *scholion* indicates).[22] And our knowledge of production dates, though limited, suffices to demonstrate that — as we would expect, given the numbers involved — there were dramatic festivals at which Euripides presented more than one such play.[23]

More important is the nature of the 'happy ending' that is attained: *Alcestis* — the one certainly pro-satyric piece — presents a *Märchen*-like

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[18] C. W. Müller (1984) 69-70 circumvents the embarrassment occasioned by this date (only one year after the production of *Or*) by denying that Euripides composed a complete tetralogy for his hosts in Macedonia. Thus he denies that *Temenos* and *Temenidae* were written to accompany *Archelaus*. If this view is accepted, the list of late Euripidean tragedies in the following note should perhaps be expanded to include these two works.

[19] *Andromeda* and *Hel* are certain, *Hypsipyle, Phoen,* and *Antiope* virtually so (on the basis of Σ *Frogs* 53, which provides the foundation for Müller's argument; see above, n. 16, however, on *Antiope*). There remain *Auge, Ion, IT, Meleager, Oedipus,* and *Polyidos,* all of which are dated late on metrical and/or dramaturgical grounds, but only four of which (in Müller's view) can be dated after 417 B.C. (unless, that is, we expand the pro-satyric genre to include such plays as *Hel* and *IT*). This list could be expanded to include, e.g., *Antigone* and *Mel. Desm.* (On *Temenos* and *Temenidae,* see previous n.) For a useful table of these fragmentary works, see Webster (1967) 3-5. For detailed discussion of the metrical evidence, see Cropp/Fick (1985) 69ff.

[20] As Willink ([ed.] xxv n. 16) indicates, Seaford's dating of *Cyc* to 408 would settle the matter conclusively (Seaford [1982]). Sutton (1980) 60-61 proposes that *Busiris* was the satyr play in 408, pursuing Radermacher's arguments (see next page).

[21] E.g., Patin (1913) 1.270-71 and 2.307. Most recently, see C. W. Müller (1984) 67 n. 192 and O'Brien (1988b) 45 n. 28.

[22] For an account of tragedies that lack a 'tragic' conclusion, see Decharme (1893) 377ff. and cf., e.g., Jones (1962) 47, Dale (1967) ix.

[23] Note, e.g., the presentation of both *Andromeda* and *Hel* in 412. Sutton, who argues that *Hel* is pro-satyric, is forced to go to great lengths to account for the similarities between the two plays and for the fact that many of his criteria for presenting *Hel* as a pro-satyric work also apply to *Andromeda;* in the end, he can only assert that *Hel* is much lighter in tone and less 'heroic' than its companion piece (Sutton [1971] 57-58 and [1972] 330).

fairy tale that, as fairy tales generally do, assures us of a happy ending from the very outset (in the oft-discussed confrontation between Apollo and the fairy-tale ogre, Thanatos).[24] Thus *Alcestis* shares with the satyr play the not-so-tacit assurance that, despite any bits of unpleasantness that might occur on stage, all will be well in the end: the contrast with *Orestes* is clear.

The other feature of *Orestes* frequently cited as evidence of its pro-satyric nature is the prominence of the Phrygian messenger at 1369-1536. Like the drunken Heracles of *Alcestis* 773ff., the presence of this comic barbarian strikes many as incongruous in the context of a tragedy and seems, like that of Heracles in *Alcestis,* to imply that the poet and his audience are approaching the play with different expectations than those normally associated with high drama. Radermacher (1902) argues more specifically that the comic scene between the Phrygian and Orestes and (in particular) the details of his report at 1369ff. recall the myth of Heracles' confrontation with the Egyptian Busiris, a favorite theme for comedy and the subject of satyr plays by both Phrynichus and Euripides. In *Orestes,* he argues, Euripides transforms this myth by employing its essential details as an armature around which to create his plot, thus giving his audience the pleasure of novelty while at the same time flattering its perspicuity by allowing it to observe the correspondences thus established.[25]

These arguments are far from compelling, principally because it is clear that Euripides continually seeks the new and unorthodox in his plays, frequently blurring just such distinctions of genre as are assumed by the above-cited scholars.[26] And if Timotheus' *Persae* is any indication, this blurring of distinctions is symptomatic of the age.[27] Furthermore, as Sutton demonstrates in his discussion of *Alcestis,* a happy ending and a comic scene or two are not sufficient to qualify a work as pro-satyric:

> ... it is not merely a question of the insertion of formal elements in order to give the play a certain satyric cast. ... *Alcestis* is not merely a tragedy with a happy ending and a boisterous scene intended to lighten the tone, but rather a genuine hybrid combining important elements of both

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[24] See, in general, Lesky (1925).

[25] See Hartung (1843) 2.401-02, 471ff. and (ed.) viiff. for further discussion of comic features in *Or:* the baseness of character displayed by Helen and Menelaus, the homely content of the play's opening scenes, the looseness of its iambic trimeters.

[26] See esp. Seidensticker (1982) 89ff. on Euripides' use of comic elements. On Euripides' defiance of traditional genre distinctions see, e.g., Burnett (1971) 14-17 and Michelini (1987) *passim;* cf. Dunn (1989).

[27] See above, pp. 199ff., on Timotheus' style and the possible influence of his poem on *Or.*

tragedy and satyr play ....[28]

Thus Sutton's own discussions of possible pro-satyric works focus more on plot elements and matters of theme.[29] Of the motifs that he cites, several may be detected in *Orestes:* for example, the prominence of trickery, the presentation of a civilized Greek in opposition to a barbarian, a focus on hospitality and its abuse, and (in general) elements that can be asserted to be 'visibly subversive of tragedy.' But these criteria are subjective at best and cannot suffice to identify a work as pro-satyric.[30] On the evidence that we possess there is nothing to indicate that *Alcestis* was not a unique experiment never to be repeated: the burden of proof must rest with those who would present the pro-satyric play as an unacknowledged fourth dramatic genre.[31]

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[28] Sutton (1980) 182. Cf. *id.* (1987) 11.

[29] See Sutton (1972), (1973), (1980) 180-90. Sutton himself does not believe that *Or* is pro-satyric.

[30] Note, e.g., that the first three of these criteria apply with equal validity to *Hec,* while numbers one, three, and four would qualify E. *El* for pro-satyric status.

[31] I forego the usual arguments against a pro-satyric *Or* (e.g., that it is too long, that it employs too many actors in too sophisticated a manner, that its tone is more biting than that of *Alc*), all of which are as subjective as those they are meant to disprove.

APPENDIX TWO

MADNESS AND ΣΥΝΕΣΙΣ IN *ORESTES*

For many critics, the most striking innovation in *Orestes* is its treatment of the hero's mental state following the commission of the matricide. Since the production of Aeschylus' *Choephori,* at the latest, the Athenian stage had been accustomed to the sight of mythical figures such as Orestes or Alcmeon who were plagued by avenging ἐρινύες as the result of having shed kindred blood.[1] Euripides himself presents such figures in his *Electra, Iphigenia among the Taurians,* and *Alcmeon in Corinth* (produced posthumously).[2] The Euripidean versions differ from their Aeschylean predecessors in two important ways. On the one hand, they present the hero's mental turmoil with a realism and (many claim) a clinical accuracy that transform the Aeschylean onslaught of supernatural ἐρινύες into a portrait of physical and mental collapse that appears to be based, in some fashion, on actual case histories. On the other hand, they inject a note of remorse and guilt into the hero's behavior which suggests that he is subject as much to the pangs of a guilty conscience as to persecution by supernatural agents of vengeance. As in so many other features of its dramaturgy, *Orestes* raises both of these Euripidean tendencies to new levels.[3]

At *Choephori* 973ff. the Aeschylean Orestes is portrayed experiencing

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[1] See Mattes (1970) 45-48 and, on various features of the *Erinyes,* Brown (1984) 264-65 (contrast Lloyd-Jones [1989]), Garvie (1986) on *Cho* 1049-50, Heubek (1986), Podlecki (1989) 1ff., Sommerstein (1989) 6ff. On Alcmeon see Parker (1983) 377. Aeschylus treated the myth of Alcmeon in his *Epigonoi,* Agathon in his *Alcmeon.* Sophocles wrote an *Alcmeon,* an *Epigonoi,* and an *Eriphyle.* (Against the view that the latter two titles refer to the same play, see Sutton [1984] 37.) Antiphanes 189.8ff. (Kassel/Austin) attests to the popularity of Alcmeon on the tragic stage of the early fourth century: we have evidence for plays on this theme by Timotheus, Astydamas, Theodectas, Evaretus, Nichomachus, and Achaeus (a satyr play).

[2] E. *El* 1172ff., *IT* 281ff. On *Alcmeon in Corinth* see Webster (1967) 39ff. and 265ff.

[3] Given the numerous studies of madness in Greek thought and, particularly, Greek tragedy, the following account can afford to be brief. See esp. O'Brien-Moore (1924), Dodds (1951) 64ff., Collinge (1962), Mattes (1970), Ferrini (1978), Simon (1978), Feder (1980), Bond (1981) on *Her* 930-1009, Pigeaud (1981), Aélion (1983) 2.215ff, Parker (1983) 129 and 235ff., Schlesier (1985), Hartigan (1987). Theodorou's detailed study (1993) appeared too late for me to incorporate it into my discussion.

a psychic trauma that goes beyond the mere seeing of visions.[4] His speeches in the scene display a rising urgency that bespeaks something of his inner turmoil following the deed, his desperate need to justify his act. That turmoil bursts into full bloom in his climactic speech at 1021ff., where he refers to his wits being driven wildly from their course by φόβος. Finally, at 1048ff., the agents of this φόβος are made apparent[5] in Orestes' graphic description of the gruesome beings that haunt him, visions unseen by any but himself (1051-54), yet acknowledged by the chorus to have an objective existence as the supernatural agents of his mother's vengeance (1055-56).[6] The tormented state of Orestes' thoughts is portrayed with striking intensity, but in mythological terms and with a certain curious objectivity: like Io in *Prometheus Bound*,[7] Orestes describes his confused state vividly (1021-25), yet is still able to speak rationally and with relative calm (1025-43). His description of the ἐρινύες provides a graphic indication of the horror that oppresses him, but that horror remains objectified in the gruesome details of his account (the Furies' dusky garb, the snakes in which they are wreathed, the blood dripping from their eyes). Most importantly, the supernatural visions to which he is subject are acknowledged to have an objective external existence and are not the result of demented hallucinations on his part. On the whole, then, the Aeschylean scene is vivid and exciting — a suitable climax for the second play of the trilogy — yet there is little in it to suggest actual insanity.[8]

By 408 B.C., however, the tragic stage had become interested in more elaborate portrayals of mental disturbance, whether extreme insanity (for example, the heroes of *Ajax* and *Heracles*) or, in a less severe form, aberrant behavior as the result of extreme suffering (Heracles in *Trachiniae,* Philoctetes), emotional distress (Phaedra in *Hippolytus*), or divine possession (Alcestis, Cassandra in *Troades;* compare Pentheus and Agave in *Bacchae*). As has been well-documented, Euripides excels in the realistic portrayal of such states, drawing upon popular conceptions

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[4] For a detailed discussion see Brown (1983) 14-22, whose reading of the scene differs from that presented here.

[5] As Garvie (1986) indicates, κότῳ at 1025 points to the Erinyes as the source of Orestes' sudden distress (cf. 1054). See, further, Garvie (1986) on *Cho* 973-1076.

[6] I cannot agree with Garvie (1986) that at 1055-56 the *choryphaeus* "persist[s] in her belief that the Erinyes are merely a subjective symptom of Orestes' madness." Rather, having had the nature of Orestes' δόξαι clarified at 1054 (αἵδε μητρὸς ἔγκοτοι κύνες), the *choryphaeus* understands that he has fallen prey to the very law of which the chorus sang at 400-04 (cf., e.g., the concluding 1075-76).

[7] On Io see O'Brien-Moore (1924) 86ff., Mattes (1970) 75-78, Aélion (1983) 2.233ff.

[8] Contrast Brown (1983) 14-22.

derived, ultimately, from the medical writers of the period. Thus Orestes' symptoms in *Iphigenia among the Taurians* are presented in terms that suggest an extreme form of epilepsy, accompanied by convulsions (282-83), inarticulate cries (283), foaming at the mouth (308), and, following the attack, deep sleep (307).[9] In this new realistic context the Aeschylean ἐριννύες undergo a subtle alteration. Although the Euripidean Orestes describes his vision of these creatures in terms that recall *Choephori* (*Iphigenia among the Taurians* 285ff.), their objective existence is called into question by his half-comic, half-pathetic identification of his persecutors with a nearby herd of cows and shepherds' dogs (291ff.) whose lowing and barking he mistakes for the cries of the ἐριννύες.[10] Seen through the eyes of the rustic messenger, Orestes' seizure becomes less a persecution by the eerie goddesses of vengeance than a rather curious 'fit,' while the ἐριννύες themselves are reduced to the hallucinations of a feverish convalescent. The result is a curious ambiguity that typifies Euripides' description of such paranormal states (and, indeed, his plays as a whole): contemporary medical observation has become inextricably fused with elements derived from traditional mythology.[11]

In Euripides' *Electra,* by contrast, the aftermath of the matricide is portrayed in a manner that transforms the ending of *Choephori* altogether. Here the onset of Clytemnestra's ἐριννύες is mentioned only in passing as an event to follow in the future (1252-53, part of the restoration of traditional myth commonly found in Euripidean *exodoi*). On stage we find instead the elaborate *kommos* between Orestes, Electra, and the chorus (1172ff.), where the emphasis is not on Orestes' need for ritual purification but on his and Electra's remorse and guilt at their deed, the full impact of which they now feel for the first time. The Aeschylean Orestes displays little sign of such remorse at *Choephori* 973ff. beyond the urgency of his attempts to justify the matricide, an urgency that prepares for his desperate stand against Clytemnestra's ἐριννύες in

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[9] Ferrini (1978) provides a useful discussion of the significance of such symptoms in the medical writings of the period. The portrayal of Heracles' madness in *Her* is quite similar: cf., e.g., Aélion (1983) 2.242-43.

[10] Mattes (1970) 68 suggests an echo here of Sophocles' *Aj,* but the comic overtones of the Euripidean scene discourage such an association. Here we view the hero's fit of madness, not through the tragic eyes of a Tecmessa, but through those of the 'rude mechanical,' who looks on in wonder — until, that is, Orestes begins to kill his cows! The scene of the simple herdsmen banding together to ward off the intruder (301ff.) — in juxtaposition with the mock-Homeric simile of Orestes rushing, not upon an enemy, but upon an actual *herd,* λέων ὅπως (297) — displays a lightly humorous touch of the type explored, e.g., by Knox (1979).

[11] On this curious blending of the mythological and the secular in Euripides' portrayal of madness, see O'Brien-Moore (1924) 114-20, Collinge (1962) 48-49, Simon (1978) 152-53, and cf. below, pp. 307-08.

Eumenides. Thus, in his *Electra* Euripides once more transforms the external affliction represented by Aeschylus' supernatural goddesses of vengeance. Here, however, he introduces, not a quasi-clinical description of Orestes' symptoms, but a moving scene of the inner remorse of a young man driven by a combination of his own folly and circumstances beyond his control to murder his mother.[12] The brief but vivid encounter between Orestes and the chorus at *Choephori* 973ff. is replaced by the distraught lyrics of Orestes, Electra, and the chorus, while concern with the ἐρινύες is replaced by a new concern with the emotional state of the matricides.

The treatment of Orestes' condition in *Orestes* combines the striking realism of *Iphigenia among the Taurians* with the psychologizing tendencies of *Electra*. Again Orestes' ailment is described in rich detail, his symptoms apparently drawn from knowledge of actual case-histories: frantic bouts of activity followed by a trance-like sleep and general weakness (42-45, 227-28, 800), disorientation and depression on re-awakening from sleep or from a seizure (211ff., 277ff.), a generally wretched physical state (41-42, 219-20, 223-26), and, above all, an actual bout of insanity at 253ff. (in this instance portrayed on stage rather than through a messenger's speech), with its attendant hallucinations.[13] In conjunction with this detailed treatment of Orestes' condition, however, the early scenes of the play also repeatedly stress the anguish felt by Orestes and Electra, after the manner of Euripides' *Electra*. Thus at 39ff. Electra informs us that Orestes spends his sane waking moments wrapped in a mantle (a gesture of shame and distress repeated by Electra at 280), weeping, apparently refusing food or any attempts to relieve his squalor. At 211-14 Orestes' first words are a prayer of thanks to Sleep and Forgetfulness (Λήθη) which have brought him a momentary release from his torments. At 288ff. he makes the surprising claim that Agamemnon himself, had he been able to foresee the outcome of Orestes' deed, would have asked him to spare his mother. And at 395ff., in what is perhaps the

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[12] The account in *IT* suggests a similar remorse on Orestes' part in the nightmarish (and rather bizarre) image of the ἐρινύες carrying Clytemnestra in their arms and threatening to throw her at him like a stone (*IT* 289-90).

[13] See de Jong (1991) 164-65 on the distinctions between the reported madness scene in *IT* and the enacted scene in *Or.* On the vexed question of the nature of Orestes' bow at 268ff. see Willink (ed.) on *Or* 268-74. The tendentiousness inherent in the way this issue sometimes is addressed can be seen by contrasting Steidle (1968) 102 (who emphasizes Apollo's desertion of Orestes and so denies the presence of an actual bow) with Burnett (1971) 201-03 (who argues for an actual bow as part of her thesis that it is Orestes who forsakes Apollo). I am inclined to think that there was no bow, but the curious blending of psychology and myth in Euripides' presentation of Orestes' state (addressed below, pp. 307-08) suggests that its presence cannot be ruled out.

most discussed passage of this play, we find the following exchange
between Orestes and the newly-arrived Menelaus:

> Με.   τί χρῆμα πάσχεις; τίς σ' ἀπόλλυσιν νόσος;
> Ορ.   ἡ σύνεσις, ὅτι σύνοιδα δείν' εἰργασμένος.
> Με.   πῶς φῄς; σοφόν τοι τὸ σαφές, οὐ τὸ μὴ σαφές.
> Ορ.   λύπη μάλιστά γ' ἡ διαφθείρουσά με ...
> Με.   δεινὴ γὰρ ἡ θεός, ἀλλ' ὅμως ἰάσιμος.
> Ορ.   μανίαι τε, μητρὸς αἵματος τιμωρίαν.

Orestes' reference to the σύνεσις that haunts him is cited repeatedly in
histories of Greek thought and ethics as the earliest extant reference to
what today we call 'a guilty conscience.'[14]

   This repeated emphasis on the grief (λύπη) of Orestes following the
matricide and the similar distress that he evinces at the conclusion of
Electra account for the tendency on the part of some scholars to speak of
Orestes as a continuation of Euripides' *Electra* and to maintain that in
both plays, "La mythologie s'est transformée en psychologie" (Weil [ed.]
675). Euripides here has replaced the supernatural apparatus of Aeschylus
with a searching exploration of a soul tormented by the memory of his
past crimes and of the psychosomatic symptoms that accompany such
remorse. Today many scholars go farther than Weil in their assessment of
the degree and significance of this transformation. As illustrated in
Chapter One, critics in the nineteenth century found the opening scenes
of *Orestes* quite acceptable, even admirable, in portraying the tender
emotions between Electra and Orestes and the young man's pitiable state
following the commission of the matricide. Hence their disgust at the
play's latter scenes, which offended not only their sense of tragic
decorum but their convictions regarding the importance of consistent,
well-rounded characterization in tragic poetry. That the sympathetic,
remorse-ridden, and thoroughly enfeebled Orestes of those early scenes
should defend himself with such vigor (and such sophistries!) before
Tyndareus and then proceed to effect the frantic *mechanema* that
comprises the latter portion of the play seemed to them insupportable, a
clear sign that the poet was straining after theatrical scenes to please the
groundlings and, in the process, sounding the death-knell of serious tragic
poetry.

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   [14] The bibliography on the question of Orestes' σύνεσις is vast. See esp. Rodgers (1969),
cited below, n. 29. Other relevant studies include Dodds (1951) 36-37, Seel (1953), Class
(1964) 102-07, Cancrini (1970) 61-64, Stebler (1971) 117-21, P. T. Stevens (1971) on *Andr*
805, Solmsen (1975) 139, Borowska (1980), Pigeaud (1981) 126-27 and 418-19, Willink
(ed.) on *Or* 396; cf. Dover (1974) 220ff.

Among modern critics (influenced to a large degree by the work of Verrall) the tendency often has been to find in this supposed inconsistency the clue to the play's meaning. In fact, for such critics Orestes' character is all *too* consistent, and his insanity the key to interpretation of the play as a whole. Orestes' madness, it is argued, serves as a metaphor for the moral confusion of the protagonist, his inability to distinguish right from wrong[15] — an inability that comes to infect his associates and, in the final scenes, the plot itself. Thus, according to Mullens, the contradictory statements early in the play concerning Orestes' guilt are the sign of "a division in Orestes' mind" and not the result of carelessness on the poet's part ([1940] 153). The fact that Orestes can give voice to such moving expressions of remorse yet still periodically attempt to transfer all blame to Apollo and (in the *agon* with Tyndareus) defend his matricide as a glorious deed in the service of all Hellas, merely reflects the tormented confusion of his mind, haunted as it is by the horrors of the past ([1940] 154). Based on this view, Orestes' madness consists not merely in seizures like the one at lines 253ff. but in a fundamental weakness of character and, ultimately, in a tendency toward criminal violence.[16]

In the same vein, Greenberg's view, that Orestes re-enacts the matricide in the attack upon Helen, is invoked to argue the thesis that the hero's insanity represents a fundamental reinterpretation of Orestes' myth as a whole, wherein Orestes' willingness to commit murder is revealed as the true source of the madness that dominates the play. Thus, for example, Gregory argues that:

> Not only Orestes, but also Pylades and Electra are mad .... Orestes is no innocent victim of the gods: the play reveals that the murder of Clytemnestra, far from being a duty imposed on him by Apollo, was an expression of his own nature — so much so that he tries to repeat it with his plots against Helen and Hermione. Madness is associated with character, seen as a perversion of the mind rather than an outside force attacking the mind. Orestes' complex of weakness and violence, delusion and vindictiveness is his real madness, of which the fits and the Furies are only the most obvious sign.[17]

The confused violence and apparent absurdities that dominate the final scenes of the play thus are regarded as representing the fruition of

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[15] Note the similar view at Hor. *Sat.* 2.3.134-36.

[16] See below, Appendix Three, on the role of 819-24 in such interpretations.

[17] I have not seen Gregory's 1974 Harvard dissertation. The above is taken from the summary of that work in *HSCP* 81 (1977) p. 301.

Orestes' criminal insanity as it first spreads to Electra and Pylades,[18] then engulfs the world of the play as a whole.[19] Confirmation of this reading is found in Electra's words at 42-45: there she speaks of a quiet remorse on Orestes' part during those periods when he is ἔμφρων, punctuated by frantic bouts of crazed activity. In the readings under discussion these lines provide the design, as it were, after which the play as a whole is patterned.[20]

   An important consequence of such an approach to the play is that Orestes' feverish activity in the latter scenes — his new-found energy and vigor — now admits of subtle psychological explanations. (Again, Verrall comes to mind.) So, for example, Mullens finds in the violent chaos of the final scenes the frightening picture of a diseased mind desperately seeking to escape the knowledge of its own corrupt nature:

> Orestes jumps at the opportunity of committing a crime of which he always claimed to be innocent — common, cold-blooded murder. ... Action works a transformation in Orestes. It orientates his thoughts and saves him from gloomy brooding over the past. As a result he loses his mental fluctuation and sense of guilt; and he regains his confidence. ([1940] 156)

Simon, on the other hand, examines Orestes from the vantage-point of modern psychoanalytic theory and finds in the hero's character and deeds evidence of a clinical paranoia:

> We have, then, a subtle portrait of a man who, when psychotic, feels himself persecuted by malignant females. When 'normal' he handles his guilt and ambivalence by externalizing the blame and by destroying women, whom he constantly fears will unman him.[21]

   In his more sophisticated analysis, Smith employs ancient medical theories regarding the correct care of emotionally disturbed patients to argue that Orestes is the victim of bad tendance on the part of his φίλοι. Adopting the view (noted above, p. 38) that, "Disease and delirium are caught up in the verbal expression as a metaphor for the moral condition

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[18] See, e.g., Hartigan (1987) 131. Vellacott (1975) 71-72 would have the chorus itself infected by Orestes' madness.

[19] See esp. Murray (1946) 80.

[20] See, e.g., Smith (1967) 299. Simon (1978) 153 notes that, "The madness of Orestes, with its sudden onslaughts and remissions and transformations, is well suited to parallel the labyrinthine twists and sudden starts and stops in the plot structure."

[21] Simon (1978) 112. (Cf. Mullens [1940] 153-54 on Orestes' alleged misogyny.) For some of the problems inherent in employing modern psychoanalytic categories when dealing with ancient sources, see O'Brien-Moore (1924) 7ff.

which is the play's subject: a loss of perspective that confounds good and evil,"[22] he argues that in *Orestes,*

> ... Euripides has gone farther than usual in exploiting the metaphor [*viz.* of insanity or aberration as a νόσος], to the extent of basing the structure of the drama on the exacerbation of Orestes' moral disease, and viewing psychological and social processes in the light of the medical analogy. ([1967] 291)

In his debilitated state (brought on, significantly, by mental distress)[23] Orestes is in need of gentle tendance to calm the perturbation (τάραγμα or τάραξις) that has disrupted his system and thereby given rise to his affliction ([1967] 294ff.). Instead, he is confronted by Tyndareus' attacks and the treachery of Menelaus, treatment that can only exacerbate his condition. With the agitated entrance of Pylades and his even more agitating proposals, Orestes' relapse is assured[24] and, according to Smith, the action of the later scenes is the product of just such a relapse. In his view the *mechanema* plot is 'diseased,' as various elements from the earlier sections of the play are repeated, but in an unwholesome, inverted form:

> Each element in this scenic tour de force [that is, in the the final scenes] is brought out of the early part of the play, transformed by madness. What happens to the elements of action happens also to the healthy instincts and values on which hope could be based before: Agamemnon, who in a period of sanity could not be thought to desire [a] murder which does no good to anyone, becomes the sponsor of the perverse justice of the conspiracy. Like Agamemnon, all else changes its aspect with the change from health to disease: αἰδώς ... is melted when the tenderness of Orestes and Electra is replaced by the union in self-pity. Φιλία, which can cure the inflamed mind ... is replaced by the unity of conspirators. Σύνεσις, the painful awareness of evil, ... is replaced by the grotesque wit [of 1528] .... This is παράνοια, not the destruction but the dislocation of the mind. ([1967] 305-06)

In the face of such sophisticated analyses of Orestes' character and of the play in general, the 'naive' reading of *Orestes* defended in Chapter Two must appear rather commonplace. By examining the points on which those analyses are founded, however, we will find again that the 'naive' reading seems truer to the text and, just as important, to the spirit of the

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[22] Smith (1967) 291. Cf. H. Parry (1969) 348.

[23] Smith (1967) 294 n. 1 notes the similar reference to λύπη as a cause of illness at *Or* 398 and in case histories 11 and 15 of the Hippocratic *Epidemics* 3.

[24] See Smith (1967) 302, where particular significance is detected in the switch to trochaic tetrameters and their accompaniment by the flute.

play as a whole.[25]

The initial impetus behind such psychoanalytic interpretations of *Orestes* — the context that inspired much of Verrall's study — was provided by protests against apparent inconsistencies in the behavior and the character of the protagonist. On the one hand, the audience was expected to believe that the invalid of the opening scenes could undertake the demanding task of defending himself before Tyndareus and the Argive assembly and, subsequently, the violent assault upon Helen. On the other, they were asked to accept the apparent contradictions between Orestes' open remorse early on and the indignant self-righteousness that he adopts when later in the play he confronts Tyndareus, the Argives, and, in particular, Menelaus. It can be argued, however, that both of these apparent inconsistencies arise from the faulty premises of the critics, who approach the play with a keen interest in the character of the protagonist while ignoring as jejune the rhetorical strategy of the work's early scenes. As we have seen (above, p. 68), *Orestes* is distinguished by its lengthy introductory sequence, which comprises the play's first 347 lines. We also have observed the manner in which every detail in this introductory sequence is calculated to set before the audience, in as moving a manner as possible, the desperate plight of Orestes and his absolute reliance on Menelaus' expected assistance. Regarded in this context, Orestes' insanity and remorse are seen to represent two aspects of his pitiable and desperate plight. Faced with the external threat of condemnation by the Argive assembly, he is also overwhelmed by personal feelings of remorse and by his illness. The emphasis on these themes here in the early scenes, and their virtual disappearance in the latter half of the play, can be explained quite readily in terms of Euripides' general practice and need not involve us in discussions of Orestes' newly re-awakened *Lebenswille* or in apocalyptic visions of his spreading insanity. This interpretation of Orestes' state in the early scenes is far from new, but the need for its reformulation here can be seen from the number of studies that continue to detect ominous significance in this feature of the hero's presentation.

Protests against the inconsistency in the presentation of Orestes' physical state need not detain us. Euripides has long been noted for his fondness for pathetic introductions that present the protagonist (generally a female) in a state of physical and mental distress.[26] Alcestis, Medea, Phaedra, and Hecuba (in both *Hecuba* and *Troades*) are all introduced in

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[25] Many of the arguments presented in the following account can be found in Zürcher (1947) 149ff.; cf. Steidle (1968) 102 n. 37.

[26] See esp. Harvey (1971).

such a fashion and all proceed to engage actively in the rational discourse
of a formal *rhesis* and behave in a relatively sane manner throughout the
remainder of their appearance on stage. The Hecuba of *Hecuba* also takes
part in a revenge plot similar to that of *Orestes*.[27] This practice is
grounded in considerations of aesthetic form and what we might call the
emotional rhetoric of the scene rather than in a concern for the
personality of the character in question. That such considerations are at
play in *Orestes* can be seen from the manner in which the hero's
disability suddenly comes to the fore again at 790ff. (compare 879-83)
for the sake of Orestes' pathetic exit on his way to attend the Argive
assembly. An audience could be forgiven for having forgotten Orestes'
supposedly weakened condition in the course of the *agon* and the lengthy
interview with Pylades, but the sight of the young invalid feebly making
his way to defend himself before the assembly, supported by his faithful
companion, effectively conveys the pathos of his plight, his isolation, and
the sterling qualities of Pylades. Orestes' wretched condition is set before
us in the early scenes as part of the pathos of his situation but, as in the
other instances just cited, it is not allowed to hinder the further
development of the play's action.[28]

Regarding the emphasis that has been placed on Orestes' σύνεσις —
the remorse that he exhibits in these scenes — it can be argued similarly
that scholars have extracted a single feature of Orestes' plight and
endowed it with a status that the text will not support. The much-debated
question of whether it is correct to understand the reference to σύνεσις at
396 as the equivalent of our 'guilty conscience,' and therefore as a sign of
a transition in Greek thought from shame culture to guilt culture, will not
be addressed here: it will be taken as axiomatic that the murder of one's
mother is a dreadful undertaking in any age and that Orestes means just
what he says when he speaks of the grief (λύπη) that he feels at the
knowledge of having killed Clytemnestra.[29] On the other hand, attempts

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[27] Cf., e.g., Greenwood (1953) 131ff. and Dale (1954) on *Alc* 280ff. regarding the
frequency with which characters in Greek tragedy enter singing distracted lyrics only to
engage immediately in formal *rhesis*. (For further references see DeVito [1988] 8 n. 18.)

[28] Cf. Wuhrmann (1940) 95-96 and 104-05.

[29] On the whole, I agree with Rodgers' evaluation (1969) of *Or* 396 and his protest
against those who detect revolutionary implications in that passage. The fact that Orestes
must explain the significance of this expression in 398 has less to do with the startling nature
of his assertion than with the dynamics of *stichomythia* and the lexical slight of hand which
Euripides here employs, apparently for metrical reasons: see Rodgers (1969) 250 n. 11 and
251 n. 12. (Rodgers notes only two other uses of σύνεσις in such a context, one an
interpolated gloss in Polybius, the other [significantly] a fragment of Menander [fr. 522
Koerte], where metrical considerations again apply and where the echo of *Or* might well be
intentional. [On Menander's familiarity with *Or* see above, pp. 1-2.]) Cf. Collard (1975a) on

to overemphasize the psychological nature of Orestes' affliction — to base an interpretation of the play on the premise that Euripides presents us with an Orestes whose initial defining characteristic is a convulsive sense of guilt — misrepresent the text. *Orestes* offers the same curious mélange of myth and clinical observation that we find in *Iphigenia among the Taurians,* most clearly revealed by the fact that, in addition to the σύνεσις and λύπη that oppress him, Orestes cites 'μανίαι, vengeance for my mother's blood' (400), a striking reminiscence of the Aeschylean Orestes that is expanded at 407ff.[30] That Orestes himself offers such a variety of perspectives on his deed (a key issue in Mullens' argument) reflects, not a division in the protagonist's mind, but the multiple aspects of Orestes' plight which the poet wishes to highlight in these opening scenes. His affliction by the combined assaults of the ἐρινύες and his own remorse both accounts for his wretched physical condition at the play's opening and presents a striking impression of absolute helplessness, of Orestes' utter dependence on Menelaus. The emphasis on these features of the hero's plight is necessary, not merely because it affords the poet another opportunity to shock his audience with an innovative and unexpected approach to what had been a familiar story, or because it allows him scope for scenes of extreme pathos, but because it lays the foundation that will enable his audience to grasp the dramatic situation assumed by this new scenario. The introductory sequence that comprises the first 347 lines of the play is both a dramatic *tour de force,* featuring a variety of innovative and emotional scenes, and a necessary introduction to Euripides' innovative plot. The sight of this remorseful Orestes, compelled to the dreadful act of matricide only to be deserted (it seems) by Apollo and left to suffer the afflictions presented with such drama and pathos on stage, must win the viewer's sympathy, while rendering all the more shocking Menelaus' act of treachery when it comes.

It is equally incorrect to assert that these opening scenes present us with a sympathetic hero who later 'turns bad' by losing sight of the healthy sense of remorse that he evinces here. That Orestes and Electra look exclusively to the hope of salvation represented by Menelaus and ignore their inner remorse is not evidence of their moral folly or shortsightedness. It *is* evidence that Euripides finds that remorse much less significant than do many modern readers. The grief felt by Orestes is part of the pathos of his situation and should not be interpreted as implying that Clytemnestra's murder is regarded in these scenes as utterly

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E. *Su* 203-04.

    [30] Cf. Brown (1983) 22.

villainous, or that Orestes, in his remorse, has lost all hope of salvation. The view of the matricide adopted by Orestes and those sympathetic to him, at this stage of the drama and throughout, is summed up in the exchange between Electra and the chorus at 191-94, where the allusion to Apollo's responsibility and Clytemnestra's own crimes lead to the concise formulation of the dual aspect of the matricide in 194:

> Ηλ. ἐξέθυσ' ὁ Φοῖβος ἡμᾶς
> μέλεον ἀπόφονον αἷμα δοὺς
> πατροφόνου ματρός.
> Χο. δίκᾳ μέν.   Ηλ. καλῶς δ'οὔ.

It is this two-fold nature of Clytemnestra's murder as both just and horrible that Euripides emphasizes in these early scenes. The increased emphasis he places on the emotional and psychological ambivalence of Orestes and Electra toward the deed — the combination of resentment and remorse they feel toward Clytemnestra[31] — is typical of the poet and represents a further transformation of the Aeschylean version, where, by contrast, it is the legal and religious ambiguities of the matricide that are exploited. But the audience would find nothing shocking in the fact that Orestes, despite this remorse, could still look to Menelaus for salvation or could present a defence of his acts: in the prologue Electra stresses the urgency with which she and Orestes look to Menelaus for aid (lines 52ff.), while the exchange at 241-44 makes it clear that Orestes sees in his uncle's arrival hope for escape from his evils as a whole. The exploration of the various facets of his plight here in the introductory sequence assures both that the audience will understand Orestes' position in the ensuing scenes and that they will give him a sympathetic hearing. His torment regarding the matricide implies only that this Orestes, as opposed to his Aeschylean counterpart, experiences in full the conflicting emotions inherent in his situation.

But perhaps the most egregious example of the distortion resulting from the effort to trace signs of Orestes' guilt feelings in these scenes, is found in the common interpretation of lines 288-93. Following his momentary fit of insanity at 253ff., Orestes laments the misfortune which he has brought on his sister and proceeds to blame Apollo, who commanded the deed but now provides none of the assistance that he appeared to promise (281-87). Orestes then continues (288-93):

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[31] For signs of Orestes' and Electra's resentment of Clytemnestra see, e.g., 24-27, 195-207, 249-52.

οἶμαι δὲ πατέρα τὸν ἐμόν, εἰ κατ' ὄμματα
ἐξιστόρουν νιν μητέρ' εἰ κτεῖναί με χρή,
πολλὰς γενείου τοῦδ' ἂν ἐκτεῖναι λιτὰς
μήποτε τεκούσης ἐς σφαγὰς ὦσαι ξίφος,
εἰ μήτ' ἐκεῖνος ἀναλαβεῖν ἔμελλε φῶς
ἐγώ θ' ὁ τλήμων τοιάδ' ἐκπλήσειν κακά.

As we have seen, Smith cites the apparent contradiction between these
lines and the prayer to Agamemnon at 1225ff. as an indication of the
demoralization that Orestes undergoes in the play's central scenes:

> ... Agamemnon, who in a period of sanity [288ff.] could not be thought to
> desire [a] murder which does no good to anyone, becomes [at 1225ff.]
> the sponsor of the perverse justice of the conspiracy.[32]

Such a reading of 288ff. suggests a condemnation by Orestes of the
revenge ethic *per se* in these lines (a sentiment he nowhere voices)[33] and
thus a damning contradiction to the motives asserted for the later plot
against Helen and Hermione.[34] Yet this reading altogether misconstrues
the nature of Orestes' utterance at 288ff. The focus in this passage (as
throughout the introductory sequence) is on the wretched consequences
of the matricide for him and, by extension, his sister. Apollo, the
principal sponsor of the deed, seems to have deserted Orestes to face the
miseries that have just received dramatic expression on stage (140ff.). In
his despair, Orestes imagines that, had he been consulted, Agamemnon
himself (by tradition, the other sponsor of the deed) would have begged
him not to perform the matricide, *since such a deed could not bring him*
(Agamemnon) *back to life* (that is, it would do Agamemnon himself little
practical good), *while it would cause his son such difficulties.* To a certain
extent we have here another example of Euripides rather mischievously
standing tradition on its head: Agamemnon, who in *Choephori* is such a
powerful sponsor of the matricide, here is envisioned as pathetically

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[32] Smith (1967) 305-06, cited more fully above, p. 305.

[33] Cf. above, pp. 82-84. As in *Oresteia,* the problematic nature of Clytemnestra's murder
lies in the fact that she is Orestes' mother, not in the act of vengeance *per se.* Cf. Meridor
(1978) on the positive *duty* of kin to seek vengeance of this sort and the role of such attitudes
in *Hec.*

[34] For similar interpretations of 288ff. see Mullens (1940) 154, Webster (1967) 250,
Wolff (1968) 132-33, Vickers (1973) 576-77, Schein (1975) 53 n. 17, 61, and 63, Eucken
(1986) 159-60, Euben (1986) 242. On the apparent contradiction between 288ff. and Orestes'
argument at 579ff., cf. above, pp. 154-56. Distinctions between Orestes' behavior when with
friends and when confronted by his public accusers are perhaps valid (see, e.g., Lesky [1935]
41), but misrepresent the essential point that even in the introductory sequence Orestes does
not condemn the matricide as altogether villainous.

begging Orestes *not* to perform the deed.[35] But the main thrust of the passage is found in the italicized section of the above paraphrase, the condition on which the earlier lines are predicated. At this point in the play it appears that the considerations which made the matricide necessary all have proven to be for naught: the royal line Orestes sought to preserve seems doomed to perish; his father's death has been avenged, but Agamemnon is still dead and his spirit much less efficacious in defence than is Clytemnestra's in persecution; and Apollo, the author of the deed, seems to have deserted him altogether, leaving him alone (except for the company of Electra) to confront the personal horror and the public condemnation incurred by matricide. Had Agamemnon foreseen these results, Orestes tells us, even *he* would have denied the necessity of seeking vengeance for his death. Again the focus is on Orestes' present situation rather than on his character or abstract questions of morality. The passage, like so much else in *Orestes,* is extreme, even melodramatic, in its pathos. Full weight is given to the abhorrent nature of mother-murder and the unholy nature of Apollo's commands (at 286, on which see Diggle's *app. crit.*). But moral responsibility for the matricide is placed firmly on the god and not on Orestes. The passage provides no brief for the moral condemnation of the protagonist himself or the revenge ethic that motivated his deed.

Finally, some consideration must be given to the assertion that in the latter sections of the play Orestes, Pylades, and Electra are all consumed by the flames of Orestes' insanity. Certain features of the action in these scenes might be said to resonate with ancient popular conceptions of madness. For example (to supplement the observations of Smith, noted above, pp. 304-05), insane individuals are often portrayed in our sources engaging in random violence as the result of their delusions and (as is repeatedly threatened in the case of Orestes) are stoned if felt to be dangerous.[36] Moreover, one individual infamous for such violence is the foot-pad Orestes, mentioned three times in the plays of Aristophanes. He may be an actual person named Orestes; but if (as is likely) this Orestes is merely a comic type or nickname,[37] Euripides' audience might well be

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[35] Cf. West (ed.) on *Or* 288-93 and see above, p. 95 and n. 164, for similar effects elsewhere in *Or.* A good deal of the surprise occasioned by Orestes' words lies in the manner in which he discounts the religious obligations that form such an important part of his motivation in the earlier tradition and are invoked by Orestes himself in his later speech at 579ff.

[36] See O'Brien-Moore (1924) 57ff. For more on stoning, see Dodds (1951) 68, Simon (1978) 152-53.

[37] See esp. *Ach* 1166-67 (εἶτα κατάξειέ τις αὐτοῦ μεθύων τῆς κεφαλῆς Ὀρέστης / μαινόμενος). The passage might well suggest, not a particular individual of that name, but a

prepared to detect violent criminal tendencies in a tragic Orestes.

Yet, if we consider other portrayals of madness on the Greek stage, it becomes increasingly difficult to imagine that the audience would experience the admittedly frantic action of the later scenes, not as a particularly striking development of the *mechanema* format, but as an actual outbreak of communal insanity.[38] Nothing that Electra or Pylades do in the play suggests madness on their part: to claim that their plot against Helen and Hermione is 'insane' is to attribute to the ancient audience a metaphorical judgment that, as we have seen (pp. 82-88), is based on a modern aversion to revenge rather than ancient conceptions of madness. Neither does Orestes himself display behavior that a spectator in antiquity would term insane, apart from his dramatic spasm at 253ff. The ancient spectator was accustomed to the sight of heroes who suffered such spasms, frequently much more violent in nature than those of Orestes.[39] But in cases of that sort the character's madness is generally indicated, not by his/her violence, but by the deluded nature of his/her actions: Ajax attacks the Achaeans' herds and flocks rather than their leaders; Heracles slaughters his own wife and children rather than Lycus' family; Agave kills her son, believing him to be a wild beast. Moreover, nowhere is it suggested that such a fit of insanity extends beyond the scene in which it is specifically mentioned. When Hartigan (speaking on behalf of many) states that, "At lines 1098-1100 madness enters *Orestes* as surely as Lyssa arrived at 815 of the *Herakles*" ([1987] 130-31) she speaks with no support from the text but rather from a conviction that the *mechanema* reveals signs of a criminal insanity. Beginning from the false premise that in Orestes' madness we have a symbol for the criminal folly of the matricide, the critic then is able to apply (wrongly) the same metaphor to the action of the second half of the play.

In fact, however, the one scene where Orestes' insanity *is* at issue (lines 253ff.) is best interpreted (apart from its obvious theatrical qualities) in terms of the general strategy in the introductory sequence: winning sympathy for the protagonist.[40] Rather than suggesting Orestes' tenuous grasp on reality or his tendency toward persecutory fantasies and violent outbursts, the scene generates pathos, providing a vivid

stock comic parody of the mythical Orestes: see, however, Sommerstein (1980) *ad loc.* Cf. *Birds* 712 and 1490, Isae. 8.3 and 44.

[38] For similar arguments, see Zürcher (1947) 164, Aélion (1983) 2.246, West (ed.) on *Or* 211-315. Contrast O'Brien (1986) 222.

[39] E.g., Ajax, Heracles in *Her;* cf. Philoctetes and the Heracles of *Trach.*

[40] Cf. Willink (ed.) on *Or* 211-315 and West (ed.) on *Or* 211-315 regarding the emphasis on the themes of φιλία and θεραπεία in the scene.

illustration of the hero's sufferings and (in the process) further underlining his desertion by Apollo (lines 260-61, 275-76).

Characteristically, the most pathetic touch in this scene has been misconstrued as providing still further grounds for condemning the later actions of Orestes and his friends. At 264-65 Orestes mistakes Electra (who clearly is attempting to quiet his turmoil by embracing him)[41] for an avenging ἐρινύς. Repeatedly critics take this particular hallucination as a subtle hint concerning the nature of Electra's relationship to her brother: she is, we are told, his evil genius, who first inspires him to kill his mother (284, 615-621), then (at 1177ff.) suggests the plot to kidnap Hermione.[42] Yet no audience watching this scene could be expected to draw such a conclusion in the context in which it is presented. Electra, who has been her brother's sole friend and protector in his illness, is now driven violently away as, in his madness, Orestes mistakes her for an enemy. The effect is very like that of *Heracles* 984ff. in its pathos, here all the more striking because it is portrayed on stage.[43]

On the whole, then, interpretations that find in Orestes' madness a key to the protagonist's character (and, as a result, to the ethical thrust of the play as a whole) overstate their case, invoking conceptions of insanity that would not have occurred to an ancient audience in the Theater of Dionysus. As we have seen, there is an atmosphere of bizarre unreality that hovers over the play, particularly in the climactic final scenes. Euripides repeatedly overturns the expectations, not only of his viewers, but of his characters themselves. The result comes very near to the modern theater of the absurd (as Parry and others have indicated). But it is essential to bear in mind that it is the world of *Orestes*, not its principal character, that has gone awry.

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[41] 262-63. Willink's proposed redistribution of 257-67 is unnecessary: see West (ed.) on *Or* 262; cf. Aélion (1983) 2.244 n. 138 on the possible reminiscence of *Cho* 1051ff.

[42] See, e.g., Schein (1975) 62-63.

[43] Note as well the half-comic use of this device at *IT* 281ff. discussed above, p. 300.

APPENDIX THREE

ORESTES 819-24 AND THE SECOND *STASIMON*

For anyone who denies that the main thrust of *Orestes* is aimed at a subtle psychological examination (and subsequent condemnation) of the character of Orestes and his companions, one of the principal stumbling blocks must be the second *stasimon* (lines 807ff.). There, in lines 819ff., we find what appears to be an overt condemnation of Orestes' deed and of his motives for the deed, couched in terms that imply the sort of moralistic stance that has dominated criticism of *Orestes* in recent years. More specifically, lines 819-24 appear to validate the argument (discussed in Appendix Two) that Orestes' madness is central to an understanding of the play and that that madness consists essentially of a peculiar moral blindness — a criminal folly that leads the hero to commit heinous deeds and cloak them in specious claims of righteousness.

A principal difficulty in interpreting 819-24 is the text of 823.[1] Here is the text as it appears in the majority of the manuscripts:

> τὸ καλὸν οὐ καλόν, τοκέων
> πυριγενεῖ τέμνειν παλάμᾳ
> χρόα, μελάνδετον δὲ φόνῳ
> ξίφος ἐς αὐγὰς ἀελίοιο δεῖξαι·
> τὸ δ' αὖ κακουργεῖν ἀσέβεια μεγάλη
> κακοφρόνων τ' ἀνδρῶν παράνοι-
>   α.

Most editors accept Porson's τεμεῖν at 820 and the scholiast's ποικίλα for μεγάλη at 823,[2] while retaining the manuscripts' κακουργεῖν in favor of the scholiast's κακοῦργον. The first part of 823, however, is disputed. The manuscripts read τὸ δ' αὖ, which is supported by the scholiasts and is retained by most editors. If this reading is accepted, however, the relationship of 823-24 to 819-22 cannot be that which most editors, following Wilamowitz, maintain. As Di Benedetto indicates in his note

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[1] For discussion and bibliography see Nordheider (1980) 74-76 and Willink (ed.) *ad loc.*

[2] The reading μαινόλις (the independent conjecture of both Porson and Hermann accepted by many earlier editors) represents a mistaken attempt to make orthographic sense of the mss. reading.

ad loc.:

> Il Wilamowitz *GV.* 211 n. 1 intende *αὖ* nel senso di 'andererseits' e aggiunge: "dass die andere Seite seines Tuns, das Komplement zu dem καλόν, betrachtet werden soll, zeigt *αὖ*." Ma questa interpretazione non convince, poiché del lato negativo del matricidio si era parlato già ai vv. 819-822: questi versi sono già un'accusa contro Oreste e mostrano già l'altro aspetto del matricidio, che è *οὐ καλόν* in contrapposizione a *τὸ καλόν* appena accennato all'inizio.

On the one hand, Wilamowitz's interpretation assumes an ellipsis that is untenable: "[In fact, Orestes' deed should be classed as] τὸ κακουργεῖν, [which in turn is actually] ἀσέβεια ποικίλα."[3] More importantly, it ignores the force of δ' *αὖ*, which asserts a stronger antithesis than Wilamowitz admits and demands a translation such as: "τὸ κακουργεῖν, by contrast, ..."[4] The combination δ' *αὖ* often introduces an emphatic contrast between two alternatives (compare, for example, *Andromache* 188, *Hecuba* 591, *Troades* 663, *Orestes* 687, *Antiope* 46 [Page]),[5] but nowhere in Euripides does it introduce the restatement and modification of a previous assertion in the way required by Wilamowitz's interpretation: such an interpretation requires, for example, the γάρ found in the *Gnomologium Vatopedianum.*[6] Thus Biehl's 'rursus, *contra*' and Scarcella's 'anzi' (with the remark, "L'opposizione δ' *αὖ* è istituita contro la presunzione dell' assassino di legittimare il suo gesto") — both based, it appears, on Wilamowitz's interpretation — are questionable.

Di Benedetto's own view of 823-24 is equally problematic. He unites *αὖ* closely with κακουργεῖν to produce "ricambiare un misfatto con un altro misfatto," an interpretation that is difficult to accept.[7] Αὖ typically works in tandem with one or more words in a sentence to create an opposition to what has gone before. The degree of opposition can vary from sharp contrast (as when *αὖ* is joined with δέ) to what Willink (*loc. cit.*) identifies as a 'progressive' force. Generally speaking, the word or

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[3] Thus Wedd (ed.) *ad loc.,* who explains that τὸ κακουργεῖν "refers to Orestes' matricide, which has already been described as οὐ καλόν (i.e. κακόν) and is now explained on the ground that all crime is based on madness: mere impiety and mere malice are not enough, both must be spurred on by madness before crime can be committed."

[4] Cf. Nordheider (1980) 75 n. 1, Willink (ed.) on *Or* 823-24.

[5] Cf. as well *Sept* 232, *Eum* 954.

[6] Examples such as A. *Su* 570 and *Ag* 1295 cannot be used to bolster Wilamowitz's interpretation. In these instances *αὖ* merely reinforces the coordinating effect of μέν ... δέ. Note as well that in these examples it is merely a matter of associating two apparently discordant adjectives (or the equivalent) with a single substantive, a much less sophisticated grammatical undertaking than that posited by Wilamowitz in this passage.

[7] See Nordheider (1980) 75 n. 1, Willink (ed.) on *Or* 823-24.

words with which αὖ unites is not the verb. Thus in the parallels proposed by Di Benedetto (*Agamemnon* 1280, *Ajax* 1087-88), αὖ reinforces ἄλλος and νῦν δ᾽ ἐγώ, respectively (compare, for example, *Orestes* 1537, where αὖ reinforces the repeated ἕτερον, and *Oedipus at Colonus* 1543, where it emphasizes σφῷν). In *Orestes* 509 (the keystone of Di Benedetto's argument) it is significant that the verb itself carries the notion of reciprocity (ἀνταποκτενεῖ; compare *Iphigenia at Aulis* 843 [with πάλιν]). When united closely with the verb αὖ generally implies, not reciprocity, but repetition: for example, *Cyclops* 664 (with Markland's emendation); compare *Septem* 258, *Agamemnon* 1215, *Prometheus Bound* 67, 878, *Trachiniae* 987, 1027, 1031, 1082, 1124, Sophocles' *Electra* 516, *Philoctetes* 783.[8] Di Benedetto's assertion that τὸ δ᾽ αὖ κακουργεῖν can refer to a retaliatory act of villainy is unconvincing.

If we accept the reading δ᾽ αὖ in 823, it seems that we must translate the line, "τὸ κακουργεῖν, by contrast, ..." This is precisely the sense assumed by two of the scholiasts on the passage, who find there a contrast between the actions of a κακοῦργος and those of Orestes. The first (MTAB in Schwartz) paraphrases 823ff. as follows:

τὸ μὲν κακουργεῖν ἀσεβῶν ἐστι καὶ πονηρῶν ἀνθρώπων, τὸ δὲ τῆς συμφορᾶς τῆς κατὰ τοῦτον ἐλεεινότερον. οὐκ ἠλέησε γὰρ τὴν μητέρα οἰκτρῶς παρακαλοῦσαν.

The second scholiast (MTA&B) identifies the unnamed κακοῦργος with Clytemnestra herself:

ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ δεινὰ πράττειν ἀσέβειά ἐστι. τοῦτο δέ φησιν, ἐπεὶ ἡ Κλυταιμνήστρα μοιχευθεῖσα ἐφόνευσε τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονα.

Paley echoes this interpretation in his 1889 edition of the play *ad loc.*:

The αὖ means, that though the act of Orestes was bad, yet so on the other hand was that of the guilty pair, ἀνδρῶν referring to Aegisthus as the author of the wrong, or perhaps to ancestral crimes, the πρώταρχος ἄτη, Aesch. *Ag.* [1192].[9]

The difficulty with these interpretations lies in associating 823-24 with the lines that immediately follow (825-30):

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[8] Even in this sense αὖ routinely requires reinforcement: cf. Aesch. frg. 47a 16 (Radt) (πάλιν), *Trach* 1088 (πάλιν), E. *Su* 626 (ἀνακαλούμεθ᾽), 1081 (πάλιν).

[9] In his school edition of 1892 Paley alters his view, suggesting the paraphrase, "'Yet on the other hand to play a base part (e.g., not to avenge a murdered father) is the impiety of one demented, and the false view of wrongly-minded men.'"

θανάτου γὰρ ἀμφὶ φόβῳ
Τυνδαρὶς ἰάχησε τάλαι-
να· Τέκνον, οὐ τολμᾷς ὅσια
κτείνων σὰν ματέρα· μὴ πατρῴ-
αν τιμῶν χάριν ἐξανά-
ψῃ δύσκλειαν ἐς αἰεί.

As Wedd indicates in his note on 823f. (criticizing the second of the scholiasts cited above):

> ... "but then too the mother's crime was mad impiety: for she uttered a piteous appeal at her death: with the result that Orestes is mad," hardly forms an intelligible sequence.

Clytemnestra may be a sophist (we do not hear enough about her in this play to be able to tell), but her words at 827ff. scarcely could be described as evidence of ἀσέβεια ποικίλα: in fact, they crystallize the very dilemma that so haunts Orestes throughout this play. On the other hand, the assumption that 823-24 represent a parenthetical comment — that the γάρ of 825 explains and elaborates upon the statement at 819-22 — involves a use of δ' αὖ that is difficult to parallel.

To meet these difficulties, Willink proposes reading τόδ' οὐ in 823 and further emends the passage so as to transform 819-24 into one rather unwieldy question:[10]

τὸ καλὸν οὐ καλόν τοκέων
πυριγενεῖ τέμνειν παλάμᾳ
χρόα μελάνδετόν τε φόνῳ
ξίφος ἐς αὐγὰς Ἀελίοιο δεῖξαι,
τόδ' οὐ κακούργων ἀσέβεια ποικίλα
κακοφρόνων τ' ἀνδρῶν παράνοι-
α;

A paraphrase of the passage, as emended, would then run, "The (predication) 'καλὸν οὐ καλόν to kill parents and to display the sword black-adorned with (their) blood to the αὐγαί of the Sun', is *this* not ἀσέβεια ποικίλα ...?" This reading provides a logical connection between 819ff. and 825ff., but at the price of a prosaic awkwardness. More important, despite Orestes' argument at 564ff. (cited by Willink) that the death of Clytemnestra represents a public service, no one to this point in the play has expressly claimed that the deed was 'καλὸν οὐ καλόν.' It seems preferable to regard the phrase τὸ καλὸν οὐ καλόν, with

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[10] Willink (ed.) on *Or* 819ff. and 823-24. (Note that in the lemma to his comment on 823-24 he prints the mss. text in daggers.)

its lyric concision and strikingly paradoxical force, as a direct expression
of the chorus' reaction to Orestes' plight, comparable to *Bacchae* 395 (τὸ
σοφὸν δ' οὐ σοφία).

More elegant is the solution offered by Murray's influential Oxford
text (followed by West and Diggle), where Bothe's emendation of αὖ to
εὖ is adopted, with the apparent support of one scholiast *ad loc.* (MTAB
in Schwartz) who paraphrases the line: τὸ δὲ μετὰ λόγου καὶ
πιθανότητος ἐπιχειρεῖν τι. On this reading we seem to have an
evaluation of Orestes' deed that accords perfectly with the interpretations
of the play examined in Appendix Two: the murder of Clytemnestra was
a villainous act (κακουργεῖν) cloaked in specious and cleverly deceptive
(ποικίλα) claims of honor and righteousness (εὖ), the insane act of
deluded criminals (κακοφρόνων ἀνδρῶν παράνοια). Voiced at this point
in the play (between the *agon* and the messenger's account of Orestes'
trial), this evaluation seems calculated to call into question the
protagonist's assertions regarding the justification for Clytemnestra's
murder and the later claims of both Pylades and Orestes that the attack on
Helen will win them glory. It also suggests the conclusion that Euripides
wishes to imply that "all crime is based on madness," a thesis that (as we
have seen) many claim to be central to the play's meaning.[11]

On this reading, 823-24 display a boldness and a concision that are not
unworthy of Euripides, but Bothe's emendation is not without difficulty
and perhaps risks being overly ingenious.[12] The principal difficulty lies in
the sheer inappropriateness of the chorus' language here — in the context
of the play as a whole and of this specific ode — as an expression of its
response to Orestes' deed. In fact, one of the best arguments for the δ' αὖ
of the manuscripts is the striking change of tone that is introduced into
the chorus' song at this point, with or without Bothe's εὖ. The language
of 823-24 is packed with terms of the harshest condemnation (hence
Arrowsmith's exuberant translation: "Damnable, awful crime! Sacrilege
of madness born!"). Not only do these terms voice (on the common

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[11] See above, Appendix Two. The quotation comes from Wedd (ed.) *ad loc.*

[12] A good parallel for such a bold use of εὖ would be helpful. *IA* 378 is too muddled to be
of any help and is probably corrupt. West and Diggle cite *IT* 559 (ὡς εὖ κακὸν δίκαιον
ἐξεπράξατο): despite the appropriateness of the sentiment expressed there, the Greek of that
passage is much clearer, with nothing of the harsh oxymoron of the proposed reading at *Or*
823. (It is worth noting that κακὸν δίκαιον there expresses precisely the evaluation of the
matricide found in *Or;* cf., e.g., *Or* 194.) The same holds for *Hec* 1191, cited by Diggle.
Willink (ed.) on *Or* 823-24 implies that the notion of τὸ εὖ κακουργεῖν would puzzle a fifth-
century audience: compounding this general difficulty is the fact that, as we shall see,
Euripides' audience has been presented with nothing as yet that associates Orestes with
κακουργία.

interpretation) an attitude toward Orestes on the chorus' part that contradicts its attitude elsewhere in the play (see below, pp. 322-25), but they suggest a matrix of interconnected ethical and moral concepts that have little or nothing to do with the Orestes of this play or with the matricide as it is portrayed in *Orestes*. This inconcinnity of moral outlook presents great (and as yet unacknowledged) difficulties for those who relate lines 823-24 to Orestes, whether we subscribe to the views of Bothe, Wilamowitz, or Willink regarding those lines.

The terms κακουργεῖν and κακοῦργος are used repeatedly by Euripides in contexts that suggest the wily cunning of professed villainy: among the crafty women pictured by the incensed Hippolytus (*Hippolytus* 642); in Helen of *Troades* (line 968); in Pylades as seen by the terrified and outraged Phrygian (*Orestes* 1407, elaborated by the problematic τᾶς ἡσύχου προνοίας); in the Bacchic rites as Pentheus sees them (*Bacchae* 232); in a malicious plot to brutalize others (*Supplices* 537). Ποικίλος and its derivatives suggest much the same quality, for example when used to describe the cunning Odysseus (*Hecuba* 131, *Iphigenia at Aulis* 526).[13]

If we turn to the Orestes of our play it is difficult to see in him characteristics which justify the use of such terms, particularly at this point in the play. Mullens, Greenberg, Conacher, and others argue that Orestes will soon more than justify such appellations. General objections to this view of the protagonist's character have been presented in Chapter Two; here it suffices to point out that the insertion of such a harshly condemnatory attack on the character and motives of Orestes (whether or not justified by the later course of the action) is unwarranted and confusing at this early stage. Orestes tries to be clever in his arguments before Menelaus[14] and will repeat the attempt in his later address to the Argive assembly, but it is his general state of pitiful ἀπορία that has been his characteristic feature to this point. Far from being a wily manipulator of others he has been (and will continue to be) the dupe of gods and humans alike. He is no Odysseus figure. The only character who has portrayed him as a rogue has been Tyndareus: his harangue does find numerous echoes in this *stasimon*[15] but scarcely constitutes an objective testimony of fact. In the all-important early scenes of the play (before the arrival of the implacable Tyndareus) Orestes is candid about the horrible nature of what he has done and demonstrates none of the traits of the

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[13] Cf. *Eum* 460, *OT* 130, *Trach* 1121, *Phil* 130, *OC* 761-62, and see Di Benedetto (1961) 134, Detienne/Vernant (1978) 18-19.

[14] As in, e.g., his notorious argument that Menelaus 'owes' him an act of injustice in return for the injustice committed by Agamemnon on Menelaus' behalf (646-50).

[15] Cf. Di Benedetto (ed.) on *Or* 807-43, Nordheider (1980) 75 n. 1 and 79-80.

ποικίλος κακοῦργος.[16]

The term ἀσέβεια also has strongly condemnatory connotations and, at first sight, may seem a more appropriate term for Orestes the matricide. Ἀσέβεια and related words are particularly apt in describing transgressions of such basic social and religious laws as those regulating the behavior between child and parent. For example, Oedipus twice calls himself ἀσεβής when referring to his acts of parricide and incest (*Oedipus the King* 1382 [recalling lines 236ff.], 1441). However, ἀσεβής can be used in reference to villainy of a more general sort, as it is at *Oedipus at Colonus* 823. We shall see below (p. 322) that the term ἀσέβεια in Euripides is intimately associated with a matrix of moral notions that have no particular association with crimes against family members.

More important, perhaps, than the question of whether or not the picture implied in 823 fits Orestes' character, is the black and white simplicity of moral outlook that the editors cited above attribute to the chorus (and, by extension, to Euripides) in these lines. If we accept the argument that the chorus here is acting the part of an 'ideal spokesperson' for Euripides, voicing the simple, down-to-earth views of all the right-thinking members of the audience, then we must admit that the chorus, the audience, and even Euripides himself have not been paying very close attention to the play, for the one point on which this confusing play is consistent is in its insistence upon the horrible ambiguity of Orestes' position and of the deed which he has committed. As we have seen, great care has been taken to make the audience feel sympathy for Orestes throughout the opening scenes. We are appalled at his deed, perhaps, (as is Orestes himself) but are sympathetic to his position nonetheless. Horror, pity, and sympathy, not moral indignation, are the reactions Euripides has contrived to evoke thus far. And, in fact, Orestes himself shares a very similar attitude toward the matricide. For all of the emphasis that some critics have placed on the σύνεσις of Orestes in the early part of the play, we have seen that Orestes nowhere treats his deed as a heinous crime whose commission he regrets *per se*. Orestes sees himself as a man who has been driven by a combination of forces to commit the murder of his own mother — a deed that, however justified or even demanded, must still give any right-thinking person pause. Tormented by remorse at this act, he finds himself both an outcast and a prisoner, damned by his grandfather Tyndareus and betrayed by his uncle

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[16] See above, pp. 130ff., on the mistaken response of modern critics to Orestes' apology in the *agon*.

Menelaus, while his patron god Apollo — the instigator of the deed — is nowhere to be seen. The labels κακουργεῖν and ἀσέβεια ποικίλα are pitifully inadequate to describe this complex web of motives, constraints, and real or seeming betrayals.

But there is another aspect to our passage that is equally difficult to reconcile with the portrayal of Orestes in this play. In line 824 the chorus elaborates upon the concept of τὸ κακουργεῖν, calling it κακοφρόνων ἀνδρῶν παράνοια. The term παράνοια here seems to recall Orestes' fits of madness, to which allusion is frequently made throughout the play and which are specifically mentioned at 834ff. The word is a *hapax* in Euripides, but παρανοοῦσα at *Iphigenia at Aulis* 838 and παράφρων at *Hippolytus* 232 (both in reference to the senseless utterances of an unsettled mind) support the translation 'madness' here. This interpretation is strengthened by a similar passage in Euripides' *Electra,* where the chorus chastises the now remorseful Electra with the words (1201-05):

> πάλιν πάλιν φρόνημα σὸν
> μετεστάθη πρὸς αὔραν·
> φρονεῖς γὰρ ὅσια νῦν, τότ' οὐ
> φρονοῦσα, δεινὰ δ' εἰργάσω,
> φίλα, κασίγνητον οὐ θέλοντα.

In the context of a harsh condemnation of Orestes' act of matricide, the use of παράνοια at 824 takes on a special significance for those who see in Orestes' character a portrait of criminal insanity and who reinforce their interpretation by reference to Electra's words at 42ff., which (they allege) foreshadow the chaotic events in the play's finale.[17] The difficulty lies in the fact that the words κακοφρόνων τ' ἀνδρῶν παράνοια can be seen to relate closely to the same matrix of moral and ethical concepts evoked by the words κακουργεῖν and ἀσέβεια ποικίλα.

The word κακόφρων is consistently employed by Euripides when referring to extreme folly (for example, *Iphigenia at Aulis* 391). Usually, however, it is folly of a very specific sort — namely, the imperfect understanding of the wicked man, whose blindness to his own limitations and to the power of the gods leads him into acts of *hybris* and, ultimately, into ruin.[18] Thus it is used of Eurystheus at *Heraclidae* 372, of the haughty Thebans at Euripides' *Supplices* 744, of Clytemnestra at

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[17] See above, p. 304.

[18] Cf. West (ed.) on *Or* 824 and above, p. 104 n. 12, on the Greek habit of alluding to moral deficiencies in terms that imply a failure of intellect.

Euripides' *Electra* 481 — each time with the hint of approaching retribution.[19] The intimate association of the terms κακοῦργος, κακουργεῖν, ἀσέβεια, ποικίλος, and the like with such a context can be seen from a comparison, for example, of Euripides' *Electra* 952ff. and *Bacchae* 489-90, 502, 882ff.[20] *Bacchae* 882ff. is of particular interest, for in it the folly of 'those who honor ἀγνωμοσύνη' (that is, the κακόφρονες) is said to be caused by μαινομένη δόξα, a clear parallel to παράνοια in our passage. In the context of *Orestes* 819ff., then, the madness referred to by the term παράνοια cannot be the clinical state ascribed to Orestes in our play; rather, it is the folly-ridden cleverness of the κακόφρων — the 'mis-understanding' that leads him, abetted by his overconfident cleverness, to his own ruin.[21] Again, such a presentation of Orestes the matricide has no parallel elsewhere in *Orestes*. Few would laud Orestes' powers of insight in this play or his strict adherence to the dictates of justice, but just as few would be comfortable with a depiction of this hapless hero as a cunning 'over-reacher.' It is this emphasis on the sophistic cunning of the unnamed κακόφρονες that distinguishes *Orestes* 823-24 from the more straightforward *Electra* 1201-05 (quoted above).

It is worthwhile to remark as well on the problems in the characterization of the chorus that arise from the common interpretation of lines 823-24. The chorus is profoundly sympathetic to Orestes and his cause throughout the play. Its concern for Electra and her brother is evident throughout the *parodos,* as is its certainty of their essential innocence.[22] The first *stasimon* offers a lengthy lament for Orestes' situation and repeated reference to the youth's passive role in the events that have overtaken him (for example, 327ff., 341ff.). The chorus supports Orestes' appeal to Menelaus (680-81), while at 1246ff. and 1353ff. it will take an active part in assuring the success of the plot against Helen and Hermione. Its only moment of possible alienation from the cause of Orestes and his friends comes at 1539-40 (compare the tone of 1543-44), where, in a scene of suspense-filled confusion, the chorus debates whether the Argives should be informed of events in the palace. The confusion of the chorus here, however, merely reflects the general confusion that reigns at the end of the play and serves to heighten the dramatic tension in preparation for the approaching climax. The overall

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[19] Cf. *Ant* 1103-04.

[20] This association is neglected by Nordheider (1980) 75 n. 1, who argues (in support of Bothe's εὖ) that κακουργεῖν alone is insufficient to motivate the appearance of ποικίλα.

[21] Biehl (ed.) in his *Testimonia Selecta* on 824 cites Hesychius, who glosses παράνοια with ὑπερηφανία.

[22] Note esp. 153, 160-61, 194.

tone is still one of sympathy for Orestes' cause.[23]

Against this background of general sympathy for Orestes and his companions, the harshness of the condemnation voiced at 823-24 (on the common interpretation) stands out all the more vividly. It could be argued that choruses in Greek tragedy are not remarkable for their consistency of character or their faithfulness to the logic of the plot. As Burton has noted in his study of the Sophoclean chorus (he refers to *Ajax*):

> It is a convention in Greek Tragedy that a group of people whose sympathies are known to be wholly devoted to one contestant should step out of character for a moment and make a detached, even censorious reflection on both.[24]

Nordheider appeals to this practice in his interpretation of our passage:

> Das 2.Stasimon ist das einzige Chorlied des Stückes, das nicht unmittelbar an der Handlung teilnimmt. Vielmehr legt es sich im Gang der Handlung merkwürdig 'quer' .... Dabei tritt der Chor aus seiner Rolle als Freundinnen Elektras heraus ..., ist nicht wie sonst in den Liedern an der Handlung beteiligt, sondern benutzt eine Handlungspause zu grundsätzlicher Stellungnahme. ... Das Lied zieht also eine Art Schlußbilanz, ehe das Geschehen in eine andere Richtung umbiegt. ([1980] 76-77)

> Die Sentenz τὸ καλὸν οὐ καλόν zielt auf Orests Argument, die Tat habe zwei Seiten und wenn man die gute gegen die schlechte aufrechne, komme man insgesamt zu einem guten Resultat; das wird abgelehnt und in der zweiten Sentenz (τὸ δ' εὖ κακουργεῖν ...) mit einer Schärfe gebrandmarkt (ἀσέβεια ποικίλα κακοφρόνων τ' ἀνδρῶν παράνοια) .... [In contrast to the obvious bias displayed by Tyndareus,] spricht der Chor, der nur hier im Stück aus der Rolle der 'Freundinnen Elektras' und damit aus dem Gang der Handlung heraustritt, mit großer Autorität. Im Unterschied zu Tyndareos kennt er auch, wie die Epode zeigt, Mitleid mit dem Täter. Sein Urteil setzt einen Schlußstrich unter den Streit der Parteien, noch bevor die von Opportunisten beherrschte Volksversammlung ihr Urteil gefällt hat, bringt damit ein für die Handlung wesentliches Thema zum Abschluß. ([1980] 79 and 80)

On this reading, the chorus momentarily casts aside its role as a dramatic character in order to provide a clear and unbiased perspective on Orestes' deed and correct any misapprehensions that might remain as a result of ambiguities in the presentation of Tyndareus' motives in the preceding *agon*. The chorus, as an objective commentator, represents the voice of reason and presumably that of the poet himself. As noted above,

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[23] Cf. 1537-38, 1547-48.

[24] Burton (1980) 35. On this question in general see Gardiner (1987).

the dropping of the dramatic persona on the part of the chorus has been posited in other dramas as well. The choral ode at *Philoctetes* 676ff. is notorious in this regard,[25] but the complex attitude of the chorus toward Antigone in Sophocles' play of that name might also be compared or, even more to the point, the chorus of Euripides' *Electra* (particularly lines 1168-1232). The situation here, however, is rather more problematic than in the cases cited above. Unlike, for example, the *Electra* passage, to this point in *Orestes* nothing has happened to motivate such a change of heart on the part of the chorus, nor will any immediate use be made of the sentiment as the play progresses.[26] More important is the extreme nature and isolation of the condemnation assumed here (unparalleled in *Electra*). Remove lines 823-24 and there is nothing in the second *stasimon* to suggest that Orestes' deed was anything other than a ghastly but nonetheless unavoidable act, horrible to contemplate yet deserving of pity all the same (831-33) — a deed that was both καλόν and yet not καλόν. In fact, the chorus' attitude here is the same as in the first *stasimon* (with which this ode shows many affinities),[27] differing mainly in emphasizing Orestes' plight after the matricide (as portrayed throughout the early scenes of the play) rather than the deed itself and its grisly ambiguity. Yet both display much sympathy for Orestes, calling attention (in very similar terms) to the catastrophic downfall of his once great house (lines 340-47, 807-18) and to the piteous condition in which he now finds himself.[28] The use of substantially the same elements in the second *stasimon* as in the overtly sympathetic first *stasimon* argues against a reading of lines 819-43 as a moral condemnation of Orestes: references to δάκρυα or ἔλεος regarding the murder of Clytemnestra need not imply a tone of moral condemnation.[29] The negative aspect of his deed is expressed there with

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[25] See, e.g., the interpretations of Waldock (1951) 209-11, Gellie (1972) 146-48, Burton (1980) 234ff.; contrast Gardiner (1987) 30ff.

[26] In E. *El*, by contrast, the audience has just heard Clytemnestra's death-cries, while the *kommos* itself serves the immediate purpose of preparing for the *deus ex machina;* cf. the role of the chorus' fluctuations in *Ant.*

[27] Cf. Scarcella (ed.) 121.

[28] Note, e.g., τίς ἔλεος at 333 and 832; the references to tears at 335-36 and 831; the similar references to mother's blood at 338 and 833; μόχθων οἴων ... ὀρεχθείς [with its pun on 'Orestes'] at 327-28 and the very similar οἶον ἔργον τελέσας at 834; the references to Bacchic madness at 319, 338, and 835; the identification of the goddesses who afflict Orestes as Eumenides, at 321 and 836; θοάζων at 335 and δινεύων at 837 (both verbs indicating the violent frenzy of Orestes' fits); the pointed references to Orestes as *Agamemnon's* son at 325 and 838.

[29] The one significantly new element in the epode is νόσος at 831. As we have seen (above, pp. 304-05), Smith (1967) argues that imagery of disease in *Or* is employed to express Orestes' depravity, a "corruption of the mind" (297). The term νόσος is used in this type of moral context (as, e.g., at *Or* 10), but it often refers to an external affliction that

great force, but Orestes still is viewed as a passive sufferer (μέλεος, 839), as he is throughout the play's early scenes, not as the wicked instigator of the deed. Thus the view said to be expressed in 823-24 jars harshly, not only with the chorus' views elsewhere in the play, but with the general tenor of the *stasimon* of which it forms a part, where (as Nordheider himself notes) the chorus continues to express sympathy for Orestes.[30] The idea that the chorus here assumes the role of ideal narrator, temporarily stepping outside the world of the play in order to instruct the audience, in a manner curiously like that of an Aristophanic *parabasis,* about the proper attitude with which to regard the action as a whole, is difficult to accept when we consider that the presentation of Euripides' 'real' attitude is allowed only two lines.[31]

The difficulties presented by 823-24 thus remain unsolved. The δ' αὖ of the manuscripts suits the change of tone introduced by those lines but runs counter to the general logic of the *antistrophe* as a whole. Bothe's δ' εὖ, by contrast, is motivated as much by the desire to detect condemnation of Orestes' actions on the poet's part (and, I suspect, by a misguided response to the παράνοια of 824) as by orthographic considerations. With the exception of those two lines, the picture of Orestes' deed presented in the second *stasimon* agrees precisely with the view adopted elsewhere in the play. While it may be satisfying to find the chorus voicing the 'moral' of *Orestes* at 823-24, that moral is not borne out by the play as a whole. Thus the notion that *Orestes* presents a homiletic condemnation of all crime as madness — and that Orestes himself embodies such madness in, for example, his pleas before Menelaus and the Argive assembly, and in his activities later in the play — rests to a large extent upon the emendation of a single pair of lines by a scholar of the early nineteenth century. It ignores the complex ambiguity of Orestes' plight. As in earlier treatments of the myth, the

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strikes its victim from without and involves no moral failing or personal guilt. In connection with δάκρυα and ἔλεος it is the latter sense of νόσος that must predominate. Its more specific reference is to the struggle in Orestes' mind to come to terms with his act — the struggle referred to in the oft-cited passage at 395-400 (cf. νόσος at 395) and recalled by the emphasis on the dual nature of Orestes' deed in the present ode.

[30] Nordheider (1980) 80. Willink (ed.) on *Or* 819ff. also reveals something of the difficulty of reconciling the overt condemnation expressed at 823-24 with the chorus' generally sympathetic attitude toward the protagonist.

[31] Hose (1990) 2.166-68 argues that the second *stasimon* prepares for the report of the debate in the Argive assembly (866ff.) by presenting the matricide in purely secular terms as part of the troubled history of the house of Atreus: viewed in such terms, with no consideration of Apollo's responsibility, Orestes' deed can only be judged criminal. This reading still fails to account for the exuberance of the condemnation voiced at 819-24 and assumes an equally artificial dropping of the chorus' persona.

hero's difficulties have arisen, not because he committed the crime of killing his father's murderers, but because one of those murderers happened to be his own mother. With Bothe's εὖ, lines 823-24 present a pithy condemnation of Orestes that appears quite telling when cited in isolation; the language of these lines is inappropriate, however, when considered in the context of the play as a whole or of the second *stasimon* itself. Given these difficulties, and in view of the fact that the line clearly has suffered at the hands of later interpolators, 823 should be printed: †τὸ δ' αὖ κακουργεῖν† ἀσέβεια ποικίλα.

APPENDIX FOUR

ORESTES AND THUCYDIDES 3.82-83

In Chapter Two I have argued that in *Orestes* Euripides has captured
something of the troubled nature of his times: the violence, the political
and moral turmoil, and the resulting sense of alienation that dominated
the lives and thought of many Athenians in the last years of the
Peloponnesian War. This is a theme that arises continually in the play.
Many commentators have detected a more specific significance to this
theme, however, finding in the violent acts of Orestes and his friends and,
more specifically, in the description of Orestes' relationship with Pylades,
a direct comment on the political clubs, or ἐταιρίαι, responsible for much
of the factional strife that beset Athens during this time.[1] A particular
connection has been detected between this feature of *Orestes* and
Thucydides' analysis, at 3.82-83, of factional violence at Corcyra in 427-
424 B.C. and the spread of similar violence to other communities in the
later years of the war.[2]

At first glance the similarities between the Thucydidean account and
themes suggested by *Orestes* are striking. The historian dwells with
particular emphasis on the passion for revenge that came to dominate
rivalries between the oligarchic factions, marked by pro-Spartan
tendencies, on the one hand, and the radical democrats on the other. He
places special stress on the increasing inventiveness and enormity of the
plots laid (3.82.3 and 7), describing the use of fine-sounding phrases to
mask schemes that, in reality, were grounded solely in ambition, greed,

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[1] On the role of such political associations in the politics of late fifth-century Athens, see
Calhoun (1913), Sartori (1957), Connor (1971). (Further bibliography can be found in Longo
[1975] 266 n. 9.)

[2] The fullest discussion is in Longo (1975). The relevance of Thuc. 3.82ff. to *Or* is raised
by Verrall (1905) 223 and 237, Murray (1946) 82, Solmsen (1968a) 333-34, Pohlenz (1954)
1.420-21, Chapouthier/Méridier (ed.) 20, Arrowsmith (1963), Biehl (1965) on 805, Ebener
(1966) 48-49, Wolff (1968) 146, H. Parry (1969) 350, Rawson (1972) 160-62, Burkert (1974)
106-08, Schein (1975) 62. West (ed.) 36-37 opposes this use of Thuc. 3.82 in interpreting *Or*.
It is notable that this passage of Thucydides has been applied to *Hec* as well: see Reckford
(1985) 125-6, Nussbaum (1986) 404-05, and the discussion of *Hec* above, pp. 58-63. The
authenticity of Thuc. 3.84 has yet to be determined (see, however, Christ [1989]): the passage
is of only limited relevance to the issues at hand, however, and will be omitted from the
following analysis.

and vindictiveness. He refers to the way in which 'non-aligned' individuals also came to be the object of such plots, either because they failed to lend aid or because others envied their survival amidst the general ruin (3.82.8). Many have found in these passages a commentary on the actions of Orestes and his friends: their obsession with vengeance[3] and the shocking nature of their plot against Helen and Hermione; Orestes' habit (in these critics' view) of cloaking with fine words, first his murder of Clytemnestra (in the *agon* with Tyndareus and later before the Argive assembly),[4] then the attack on Helen;[5] the spiteful nature of the plot against the innocent Hermione (and, some maintain, against the equally inoffensive Menelaus). Thucydides is particularly eloquent about the way in which the excesses of party faction came to pervert human relationships and the values governing such relationships, where bravery was redefined in terms of reckless and violent daring,[6] loyalty in terms of fanatical devotion to the cause (3.82.4; compare 3.82.5), and understanding or wisdom in terms of vicious cunning (3.82.5 and 7). Again, it is possible to regard these passages as a comment on the φιλία between Orestes and Pylades. Pylades clearly represents the loyal φίλος (after the model of Theseus in *Heracles* or Pylades himself in *Iphigenia among the Taurians*), a foil for the faithless Menelaus. But certain features of his presentation in this play appear to recall the Thucydidean account. The intimate bond between the two friends is twice referred to explicitly as a ἑταιρία (the only occurrence of this word in Euripides' extant works),[7] and the dynamics of their relationship, many critics feel, bear the same marks of latent corruption as the historical ἑταιρίαι which Thucydides describes. Like members of such ἑταιρίαι, both Orestes and Pylades define integrity and nobility in strictly amoral terms as factional loyalty (that is, in the quasi-euphemistic term employed by the ἑταιρίαι, as loyalty to one's φίλοι), without reference to abstract or objective standards of justice or legality.[8] Menelaus, who declines to aid Orestes, is branded — for this reason alone — as κάκιστος, while Pylades is praised as the πιστὸς ἀνήρ who supports his φίλος in any cause without

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[3] Note, e.g., 1102, 1117, 1160, 1163-66, 1171.

[4] Note his arguments in both speeches that Clytemnestra's death has benefitted all of Greece: 564ff. and 931ff.

[5] 1167ff.; cf. Pylades' words at 1132ff.

[6] Thuc. 3.82.4. (On the connotations of the term τόλμα, see Longo [1975] 266 n. 10 and 280 n. 58.)

[7] 1072 and 1079. See Burkert (1974) 108.

[8] Cf. Vellacott (1975) 68.

hesitation.[9] Like the more prominent members of such factions, Pylades possesses a genius for contriving revenge[10] and an enthusiasm for undertaking devious plots that wins him praise.[11] Thus the condemnation of the traitorous Menelaus in contrast to the approbation of the faithful Pylades can be interpreted as reflecting the skewed vision of such factions, which consider prudent foresight a screen for treachery against one's ἑταιρία.[12] It is particularly interesting that Thucydides contrasts the intimate bonds between members of such ἑταιρίαι — based on a willingness to join blindly in any undertaking whatsoever — with the bonds of blood-kinship, to the detriment of the latter (3.82.6). The historian's words here have been felt to present a telling echo of Orestes' praise of Pylades at 804-06:[13]

> τοῦτ' ἐκεῖνο· κτᾶσθ' ἑταίρους, μὴ τὸ συγγενὲς μόνον·
> ὡς ἀνὴρ ὅστις τρόποισι συντακῇ, θυραῖος ὤν,
> μυρίων κρείσσων ὁμαίμων ἀνδρὶ κεκτῆσθαι φίλος.

Furthermore, like members of such a political club, Orestes and Pylades operate outside the realm of law,[14] turning to assassination, kidnapping, and arson to obtain their goals.[15] Thucydides explicitly notes the way in which complicity in such crimes served to bind the members of a ἑταιρία more closely together through joint fear of discovery and punishment.[16] In a similar way Pylades, having shared in the murder of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, is repeatedly said to be destined to share Orestes' fortune as a result.[17]

Commentators have used these apparent parallels with Thucydides 3.82-83 to argue for an ironic reading of *Orestes* 725ff. The repeated praise of Pylades as the faithful φίλος, they claim, is consistently

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[9] *Or* 794; cf. Thuc. 3.82.4 and 6.

[10] Note the adjective ξυνετός used of Pylades at 1406 and the similarity to Thuc. 3.82.5 and 3.82.7. Even more striking, perhaps, is Orestes' use of τὸ συνετόν when referring to Electra at 1180, at the very moment she is introducing the plot against Hermione.

[11] E.g., 1100, 1155ff.; cf. 1204ff. (of Electra). Pylades is lauded in much the same terms as is the fanatical member of a ἑταιρία at Thuc. 3.82.5 (note, e.g., the echo of *Or* 1236).

[12] Cf. Thuc. 3.82.4.

[13] See, e.g., Longo (1975) 266ff.

[14] Cf. Thuc. 3.82.6. On the other hand, one might see in Pylades' support of Orestes before the Argive assembly a pseudo ἑταιρία ἐπὶ δίκαις (cf., e.g., Thuc. 8.68.1 on Antiphon and see Rawson [1972] 160, Hall [1993] 267).

[15] On the use of such measures by the ἑταιρίαι, see Rawson (1972) 160-61, Burkert (1974) 106-08.

[16] Thuc. 3.82.6. Cf. Longo (1975) 273-74 for discussion and examples.

[17] 1089-91, 1158-61, 1236.

undermined by the audience's revulsion at the unholy nature of this alliance and the corrupt state of Orestes' moral sensibilities. They detect specific evidence of this corruption in the supposed alteration that Orestes undergoes in the scene at 1018ff. as the result of Pylades' influence; there the young man's notions of heroism and nobility are felt to suffer the same process of moral inversion as that described so eloquently at Thucydides 3.82.4-5. Orestes opens the scene determined to die nobly and in a manner worthy of his birth (1060-64). Yet after Pylades introduces the plot against Menelaus, Orestes' thoughts of a noble death come to be intimately bound up with the notion of vengeance against his enemies — the very sort of vengeance condemned by Thucydides — while he regards his earlier intention to commit suicide as servile and unworthy of Agamemnon's son (1163-1171). Thus it might be argued that Orestes' own words betray the same process of degeneration in moral outlook and in language analyzed so persuasively by Thucydides.[18]

I have documented at length the possible ties between *Orestes* and Thucydides' account; it remains to point out the many interpretive difficulties in using the historian's analysis to understand Euripides' play.[19] Although the specific context of the discussion concerns the allied cities,[20] it seems clear that in composing this passage Thucydides is thinking very much of the situation at Athens in the years following the failure of the Sicilian expedition.[21] It seems equally clear that he is presenting, not a familiar view of the *stasis* that rocked Athens in those years, but a very personal (and not a little polemical) analysis of the situation, one that arises from his own observations regarding the effects of the war and from his general view of human nature and politics.[22] It is one thing to employ Thucydides' testimony regarding a commonly-shared experience as evidence for the public mood at a particular period and as a guide in seeking possible reflections of that mood in contemporary drama[23] (although even this procedure is not without difficulties), quite another to mine a specific analysis such as 3.82-83 for verbal or situational echoes. That the Athenians in 408 B.C. were aware

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[18] Cf. Schein (1975) 62, Burkert (1974) 102-03.

[19] For general treatments of the problems associated with the historicist approach see Zuntz (1955) 3ff. and 58ff. (cited by Longo [1975] 266 n. 8), Michelini (1987) 28-30.

[20] See Thuc. 3.82.1 and 3.

[21] See Di Benedetto (1971) 211 n. 64.

[22] Cf. Gomme (1956) 385-86, Solmsen (1975) 106-10.

[23] E.g., the possible relevance of Thuc. 2.47ff. for the *parodos* of *OT* or of Thuc. 8.1.1 for *Hel* 744ff.

of the dire effects of factional strife is certain;[24] that they would have recognized an attack on such factionalism in Euripides' portrayal of the relationship between Orestes and Pylades at *Orestes* 725ff. is doubtful. As we have seen (above, pp. 76-82), that relationship can be explained very readily in terms of the dynamics of the late-Euripidean *mechanema* play and Euripides' interest in the φιλία theme. It is difficult to accept that the audience should be expected to recognize — regardless of the sharply drawn contrast between Pylades and the faithless Menelaus, on the one hand, and the similarities of *Orestes* 725ff. with *Heracles* 1163ff. and *Iphigenia among the Taurians* 672ff., on the other — that Pylades here is no true friend but a symbol for the mindless and violent loyalties that typified the ἑταιρίαι. The appearance of the term ἑταιρία in the play scarcely justifies such a conclusion: audiences do not possess concordances, and the word itself is unremarkable.[25] And although the emphasis on vengeance in both *Orestes* and the Thucydidean account might appear significant, we have seen (p. 84) that Euripidean characters — even sympathetic ones like Creusa in *Ion* — repeatedly turn to such revenge plots in their outrage, while it is possible to argue that the emphasis on vengeance in Thucydides represents, not a common view, but his personal analysis of the suicidal folly of the political clubs. Most importantly, the context of *Orestes* 725ff. does not suggest that of the Thucydidean account. Orestes and Pylades are not moved by the political motives that characterize the factions of Thucydides 3.82.8 (πλεονεξία and φιλοτιμία), nor does their conflict with Menelaus carry any overtones of a struggle between democrats and oligarchs.[26] And only by means of a rather strained series of assumptions can there be found in their relationship an example of two villains bound by τῷ κοινῇ τι παρανομῆσαι after the manner of the Thucydidean ἑταιρίαι, particularly since Pylades' decision to share in Orestes' fortunes is emphasized as a

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[24] On this point we have the evidence of the orators and of Aristophanes' *Frogs,* which enjoyed unparalleled success, we are told, due to its plea for political harmony (see the first *hypothesis* to the play and cf. Dover [1993] 73-74).

[25] While it is true that the words ἑταῖρος and ἑταιρία come to be intimately associated with the political clubs in the late fifth century, they have a lengthy and respectable history in the poetic tradition as well. 'Εταῖρος is used by the tragedians in contexts where the poet wishes to evoke heroic (more specifically, Homeric) and/or sympotic overtones. (See references in Burkert [1974] 108 n. 48; on the Homeric use of the term, see Roisman [1984] 6 and 23ff. [with a useful bibliography at 44 n. 62].) While not common in poetry, the term ἑταιρία is found at *h.Merc.* 58 and *Aj* 683. The use of these terms in *Or* serves to cast the relationship between Orestes and Pylades in an aristocratic/heroic mold, much after the manner of Pindar at *Ol.* 6.87, 9.4, *Pyth.* 4.239, 5.26, *Nem.* 11.4, *Isth.* 7.11.

[26] *Pace* Hall ([1993] 267-68), who detects parallels between the outlook and career of Orestes and those of the Athenian oligarch Antiphon.

willing act of self-sacrifice in the name of friendship (1082ff.). Scholars today — influenced by Thucydides' justly famous analysis of factional strife, and possessed of relatively few of the *mechanema* dramas so beloved by Athenian audiences — have been led to detect dire implications in Pylades' role, where the original audience saw only another example of the faithful (but, in terms of the play's ultimate significance, not overly important) friend.

It is difficult, however, to read *Orestes* in light of Thucydides 3.82-83 and not detect significant resonances. That *Orestes* reflects something of the violence and turmoil attested by Thucydides may readily be admitted: both authors seem to be responding to similar phenomena in the world around them. But where the historian presents a damning analysis of the corrupt motives and the savage folly that inspired various factions in the later years of the war, the poet explores the effects of such a world on the individual — the alienation, frustration, and outrage aroused by confrontation with a community dominated by such factions and their principles. The bond that exists between the two works is therefore much more general in nature than that suggested by the critics cited above.

A useful parallel can be found in the relation between *Troades* and the famous Melian dialogue at Thucydides 5.84ff. For years interpreters of *Troades* have found in the play a response to the brutal subjugation of Melos; yet an examination of the chronology shows that Euripides could not have known of the event before the writing of this work.[27] Because Thucydides focuses upon the event, employing it as an opportunity for a stark illustration of Athenian *Realpolitik* in this period, the destruction of Melos looms large in any modern discussion of the Peloponnesian War and of Athenian policy in the years following the Peace of Nicias. Yet it is quite possible that the subjugation of Melos evoked little comment among the average citizenry of the time, being regarded as a relatively minor event in what had come to be a long and violent conflict.[28] Such a view does not deny the possibility of important similarities between the Thucydidean passage and Euripides' play, but — as in the case of *Orestes* and Thucydides 3.82-83 — it does deny the very specific connections that have been asserted between the two.

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[27] See van Erp Taalman Kip (1987).

[28] Van Erp Taalman Kip (1987) cites *Birds* 186 as evidence for the popular attitude of the day. Xen. *Hell.* 2.2.3, which appears to contradict this view, is written under the same Thucydidean influence as are many modern accounts of the Peloponnesian War.

APPENDIX FIVE

ORESTES 536-37 = 625-26

The best discussions are those of Biehl (1955) 36-39 and Lloyd (1992) 119-20. For a survey of various views see Willink (ed.) on *Or* 536-37.[1] It seems evident that one of these couplets is an interpolation inspired by the similarity in context of the two passages as a whole (ὡς οὖν ἂν εἰδῇς [534] — τοσαῦτ' ἀκούσας ἴσθι [627] and, particularly, τοῖσιν θεοῖς / μὴ πρᾶσσ' ἐναντί', ὠφελεῖν τοῦτον θέλων [534-35] — μὴ τῷδ' ἀμύνειν φόνον, ἐναντίον θεοῖς [624]): compare Biehl (1955) and van der Valk (1984). Theories involving 'cross-interpolation' (Wecklein, followed, for example, by Wilamowitz and Diggle) or a Euripidean repetition of a single line (536 = 625) being expanded by a later interpolator (Hermann) are unconvincing: the lines seem designed to go together. Choosing between the passages, however, is difficult. The frenzied anger of Tyndareus' final exit speech at 607ff. seems to call for the sort of direct threat supplied by 625-26 (compare Willink [ed.]). More particularly, the pointed δράσω τε πρός of 622 and τοσαῦτ' ἀκούσας ἴσθι at 627 point to something more substantial than the admonition at 623-24. Conversely, such a threat is equally fitting at the end of Tyndareus' initial speech, which is left curiously inconclusive if 536-37 are omitted.[2] Orestes' overt reference to Tyndareus having threatened him with stoning (564) also deserves consideration. Orestes is attempting to create the impression that he is answering Tyndareus' charges point-by-point: such an approach makes little sense if the referent is lacking.[3]

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[1] Cf., e.g., Wilamowitz (1924) 258, Grube (1941) 385 n. 2, Scarcella (ed.) on *Or* 625-626, Greenberg (1962) 175 and n. 26, Biehl (1965) on *Or* 625f. and (ed.) *app. crit.* on *Or* 625f. (with n. on p. 99), Di Benedetto (ed.) on *Or* 536-37, Degani (1967) 38, Burnett (1971) 206 n. 1, van der Valk (1984) 177-78, West (ed.) on *Or* 536-37, O'Brien (1988a) 197 n. 23. In what follows, these discussions will be cited by author's name and date.

[2] Cf. West (ed.) and Lloyd (1992). Willink's contention that this threat clashes with "the otherwise temperate and 'sorrowing' conclusion" of Tyndareus' speech is unconvincing in light of the analysis presented in Chapter Three above, while the mild reaction of the *choryphaeus* at 542-43 (cf. Lloyd [1992]) and the scholiast's excursus on Σπαρτιάτιδος χθονός at 626 (rather than at 537) tell us nothing.

[3] Willink maintains that 564 motivated the interpolation of 536-37; his hypothesis of an original ἀπειλεῖθ' in 564 seems particularly strained.

It can be argued that the lines are more appropriate to the context of 536-37 than that of 625-26 (compare Biehl [1955]). 534-37 together present a forceful and highly intimidating command, a fitting conclusion to Tyndareus' relentless speech of condemnation. 538-39 then provide a neat summary of his case, rounding it off with a 'dying fall' of sorts. If 536-37 are omitted, ὡς οὖν ἂν εἰδῆς (534) is left hanging, pointing to a climax that never comes. At 622ff., by contrast, the insertion of 625-26 results in a rather jumbled series of negative and positive commands (μὴ ... ἀμύμειν [624]; ἔα [625]; μὴ 'πίβαινε [626]; ἴσθι [627]; μηδὲ ... ἔλῃ [627-28])[4] and, to a certain extent, disrupts the continuity between 623-24 and 627-28, with their emphasis on the role of the gods (ἐναντίον θεοῖς [624]; δυσσεβεῖς ... εὐσεβεστέρους [627-28]) and on Menelaus' relationship with Tyndareus (623 and 628). The dire warnings of 622-24 and 627-28 imply the presence of *some* threat at 625-26, but not necessarily the one that appears in the manuscripts. I suggest, therefore, that 625-26 be atheticized as an intrusive gloss that has ousted one or, more likely, two lines that elaborated the threat implied at 623.[5]

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[4] The awkwardness is exacerbated by the deletion of 625 alone. Note as well the shift from an imperatival infinitive (μὴ ... ἀμύνειν, 624) to direct imperatives (ἔα [625]; μή 'πίβαινε [626]).

[5] This solution seems preferable to Biehl's hypothesis (1955) that the repetition marks a cut made for the sake of a later reproduction.

ORESTES 544-50

ὦ γέρον, ἐγώ τοι πρὸς σὲ δειμαίνω λέγειν,
ὅπου σὲ μέλλω σήν τε λυπήσειν φρένα.
ἐγὼ δ' ἀνόσιός εἰμι μητέρα κτανών,
ὅσιος δέ γ' ἕτερον ὄνομα, τιμωρῶν πατρί.
ἀπελθέτω δὴ τοῖς λόγοισιν ἐκποδὼν
τὸ γῆρας ἡμῖν τὸ σόν, ὅ μ' ἐκπλήσσει λόγου
[καὶ καθ' ὁδὸν εἶμι· νῦν δὲ σὴν ταρβῶ τρίχα].

Commentators have focused on four central issues relating to the text and the logic of Orestes' proem, all of which are interrelated: (1) the text and authenticity of 545; (2) the text of 546; (3) the placement of lines 546-47; (4) the significance of δύο γὰρ ἀντίθες δυοῖν in 551 and its potential relevance to 546-47.

(1) The sole objection to 545 is the vacuousness of the collocution σὲ ... σήν τε ... φρένα. Willink (ed.) *ad loc.* argues for Musgrave's ὅπου γε μέλλω σήν τι λυπήσειν φρένα, with support, for γε, from *Lex. Vind.* and AtMnᵘᵛPrʸᵖSʸᵖZZc (Diggle [1990] 102). Diggle agrees that the line, if retained, must be so emended but prefers its deletion. The mss. text (with λυπήσειν for V's λυπῆσαι) is defended by Biehl (1965) and is retained by Di Benedetto and West. Following 544 something is wanted to give weight to the fear voiced there and to serve as an adequate foil for Orestes' subsequent decision to proceed with his defence. Although 545, as it stands, is rather vapid, Musgrave's reading does not represent much of an improvement. The collocation ὅπου γε itself is rare (for example, Sophocles frg. 677, Euripides' *Supplices* 442, Menander frg. 264.2) and the support for γε cited by Diggle is not strong. More telling are the objections against the qualifying τι, which ill suits this context: unlike Jocasta at *Phoenissae* 383 (cited by Diggle), Orestes is under no doubt as to whether or how his words will grieve Tyndareus, nor is the moderating force of τι altogether convincing here (compare [2] below). On the other hand, the distinction between the self and the φρήν in the transmitted text is suitably sophistic in tone (see below, pp. 338-39) and accords with the highly formal nature of Orestes' introductory remarks (above, pp. 134-

37).

(2) A number of editors who reject Hartung's transposition of lines 546-47 (see [3] below) accept Hermann's ἐγῷδ': see Murray (ed.) *ad loc.*, Biehl (ed.) and (1965) *ad loc.*, Willink (ed.) *ad loc.; contra:* Wilamowitz (1924) 257, Pohlenz (1954) 2.171 (n. 'S. 415 Z. 9 v.u.'), Biehl (1955) 30, Di Benedetto (ed.) on *Orestes* 545-50. An important objection to ἐγῷδ' here is that it needlessly muddies Orestes' argument, introducing a superfluous concession on his part when what is required is a potent expression of the dilemma inherent in his situation to counterbalance the extreme αἰδώς expressed at 544-45 (compare [3] below). Like the moderating τι proposed for 545, ἐγῷδ' seems to be motivated, in part, by the notion that a more conciliatory opening gambit better accords with Orestes' unheroic portrayal in this play and, in particular, with the sentiments expressed in 544. This confuses the rhetorical expression of αἰδώς for an expression of heartfelt sentiment. While it is important for Orestes to demonstrate that he is no scoundrel, it is equally important that he firmly establish reasonable grounds on which he might oppose his grandfather (compare above, pp. 136-37): the proposed emendations introduce a note of obsequiousness inappropriate to a forensic context of this sort. In defence of ἐγὼ δέ following a sentence in which the first-person is prominent, one might adduce, for example, *Medea* 522-28 and *Rhesus* 422-25, although in neither of these passages is the juxtaposition so harsh. On the other hand, the use of simple οἶδα is suspect in conceding a point: more common are ὁμολογῶ (frg. 265 N²; compare *Philoctetes* 980, *Knights* 296, *Wasps* 1422; note as well Andocides 1.68, cited by Denniston [1954] 155), σύμφημι (*Prometheus Bound* 40), σύνοιδα (as in the well-known *Orestes* 396), and emphatic expressions such as ἔξοιδα, εὖ οἶδα, σάφ' οἶδα, or the like.[1]

(3) Hartung's transposition of 546-47 after 550 is accepted by Chapouthier/Méridier and West; *contra:* Wilamowitz (1924) 257, Di Benedetto [ed.] on *Orestes* 545-50, Willink [ed.] on *Orestes* 544-50. Although the body of a Euripidean speech is introduced not infrequently by ἐγὼ δέ (for example, *Alcestis* 681, *Medea* 526, *Phoenissae* 473: see Willink [ed.] on *Orestes* 544-50 and West [ed.] on *Orestes* 546 [who cite

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[1] *Alc* 874, *Med* 94, 948, 963, 1066, *Hcld* 386, 717, E. *El* 684, and *Hel* 253 express sympathetic agreement or confidence rather than a concession of the type desired here, with οἶδα merely adding emphasis to an assertion. At *Med* 39, E. *El* 1210, *IT* 852, *Phoen* 716 and 1617, and *IA* 1141, οἶδα introduces a simple statement of fact. S. *El* 221-25 presents a sentiment similar to what is required here, but the verb used is ἔξοιδα and the passage forms part of an emotional lyric exchange between Electra and the chorus. Cf. above, p. 135 n. 113.

Denniston (1954) 170-71]), Hartung's order destroys the quasi-syllogistic structure of the proem (above, p. 135) and undermines the force of Orestes' question in 551 (τί χρῆν με δρᾶσαι;), a concise statement of Orestes' main line of defence that provides a particularly effective opening (see Biehl [1965] on *Orestes* 551). Without 546-47, Orestes' dramatic announcement of his intention to proceed with his defence is rather awkward and abrupt, particularly if we accept the deletion of 545. As the text stands, Orestes' forceful assertion (reading ἐγὼ δέ in 546) that he is both ἀνόσιος and ὅσιος presents an effective rebuttal of Tyndareus' charge at 481ff. that all converse with the matricide is forbidden by ancestral custom. Having voiced his fear of addressing Tyndareus, Orestes here nevertheless asserts his right to do so.[2]

(4) Diggle (1990) 101-05, who accepts the arguments against leaving 546-47 where they are, places these lines after 553 (deleting 554-56 as a later interpolation). His main argument concerns the interpretation of δύο γὰρ ἀντίθες δυοῖν in 551. Commentators have shown a good deal of uncertainty regarding just what pairs of opposites Orestes in fact is contrasting here. By placing 546-47 after 553, Diggle is able to read this enigmatic sentence as an introduction to 551-<547> as a whole; this nicely poses the two horns of the dilemma on which Orestes was caught: "The first opposition is between father and mother, his joint parents, who shared in the act of procreation (552-3). The second is between the unholiness of killing a mother and the holiness of avenging a father (546-7)," ([1990] 103). This solution, while neat, is open to objection. The Aeschylean overtones of Orestes' initial argument, on this reading, are vitiated, our attention instead deflected onto 546-47 and the second pair of opposing claims cited above. This radically alters the structure of the speech and undermines the effective contrast with the Aeschylean Orestes (see above pp. 139-42). While 554 might well be an interpolation (the inverted echo of *Eumenides* 663, however, could be used to argue *for* its authenticity; compare Lloyd [1992] 121 n. 34), the objections against 555-56 do not appear to justify their deletion.[3] Moreover, 546-47 do not,

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[2] On the force of δή in 548, which depends on the presence of 546-47, see Wilamowitz (1924) 257, Pohlenz (1954) 2.171 (n. 'S. 415 Z. 9 v.u.'), Denniston (1954) 216-17, Di Benedetto (ed.) on *Or* 545-50 and 548; *contra:* Willink (ed.) on *Or* 548-49.

[3] On these lines, see Paley (ed.) *ad loc.* The unusual metrical shape of ἐλογισάμην can be explained as a deliberately prosaic touch (Willink [ed.] *ad loc.*) designed to characterize Orestes' speech, while the pretentious ἀρχηγέτῃ suits the exalted claims of the father that Orestes is championing; τῆς ὑποστάσης τροφάς also can be defended as an attempt to belittle the mother's role in procreation (Di Benedetto [ed.] *ad loc.*). The construction, ἐλογισάμην ... μᾶλλον ἀμῦναι, is more difficult to defend (Biehl [1955] 31-32, Willink [ed.] *ad loc.*), but does not necessarily justify deletion of 555-56.

like 552-53, present conflicting claims which might have guided Orestes'
actions, but conflicting ways of *interpreting* those actions. As such, the
lines have a broader scope which better suits the speech's opening where
they serve to introduce what will be a principal theme of Orestes' defence
(see 563, 595, 600-01 and, by implication, 579-84) as the young man in
effect reverses Tyndareus' charge at 505-06.[4]

We are left, then, with the problem of δύο γὰρ ἀντίθες δυοῖν in 551.
Given the careful structuring of Orestes' speech (above, p. 133), it seems
reasonable to look for these two pairs of opposites in lines 551-56, the
section of the speech which they introduce. If this argument is sound, all
attempts to incorporate Clytemnestra's adultery (treated in 557-63) should
be rejected. Instead, we must follow Willink (ed.) *ad loc.* (supported by
Weil [ed.] *ad loc.* and, possibly, by the scholiast) in concluding that
Orestes presents a 'double antithesis' between the father who has sown
the seed, on the one hand, and the mother who has received it, on the
other. Diggle (1990) 103 objects that this presents us, not with two
opposites, but with "a single set of opposites in 552, which are elaborated
in 553." This is quite true, but it is arguable that Orestes' words here have
been selected as much for their rhetorical effect as for their literal
significance, that the artificial and forced nature of this quasi-antithesis
represents a deliberate echo of yet another rhetorical model: the
(in)famous Gorgias. The phrase δύο γὰρ ἀντίθες δυοῖν presents both the
clever, jingling rhyme[5] and the ornate precision that mark the master
sophist's style: where the first lends his speeches an incantatory quality
designed to mesmerize his audience, the latter compels assent by means
of an often specious appearance of rigor and authoritative knowledge.[6]
The reader, who has the leisure to analyze Gorgias' words in detail, is
tempted to dismiss these speeches as clever grandiloquence,[7] but they
clearly were effective in performance, as Diodorus 12.53 (among others)
attests. Reexamined in light of Gorgias' practice, Orestes' words can be
seen, appropriately enough, to have twin functions. On the one hand, their
brevity and precision promise a detailed, rational analysis of the issue at
hand, thereby establishing the speaker's authority and his reasonableness.

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[4] Note as well the unfortunate proximity, on Diggle's reading, of μητέρα in 546 and
μητέρ' in 557.

[5] Such word-play is esp. common with δύο/δυοῖν: cf., e.g., *Hec* 45, *Phoen* 423, and, in
particular, Pl. *Grg.* 481D, where the Platonic Socrates lightly parodies the very features of
this style that we are examining. Cf. above, p. 221 and n. 22.

[6] Cf., e.g., Gorg. *Hel.* 18: πολλὰ δὲ πολλοῖς πολλῶν ἔρωτα καὶ πόθον ἐνεργάζεται
πραγμάτων καὶ σωμάτων.

[7] Thus, e.g., R. Schmiel's reference to Gorgias as 'the Liberace of Attic Prose' (*EMC* 29
[1985] 176).

On the other, they pose something of a conundrum which, by its very ambiguity and complexity, reinforces the notion of the hopeless complexity of the situation with which Orestes was confronted. The words are intended to be puzzling and, thereby, to suggest the confusing number of competing claims that Orestes had to sort out.[8]

There are good reasons, then, to resist the emendations of 544-50 cited above. There is a certain awkwardness, however, to Orestes' argument as it stands. A simpler solution is suggested by Oeri,[9] who deletes line 550, thereby removing the artificial emphasis on Tyndareus' age[10] and eliminating the confusing return, here at the conclusion of the proem, to the theme of Orestes' fear.[11] This results in a crisper text with clearer logic. Moreover, the intricate ring composition that results (γέρον-γῆρας, σὲ δειμαίνω-μ' ἐκπλήσσει, λέγειν-λόγου) is just what we would expect in an elaborate introduction of this sort.[12]

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[8] For other sophistic touches in Orestes' proem, see above, p. 134 and n. 112.

[9] Oeri (1898) 18; note, however, that Oeri deletes 546-47 as well.

[10] Cf., e.g., Diggle (1990) 102. With the elimination of 550, Orestes' awe before Tyndareus is readily understood as a typical expression of αἰδώς on the part of a young man compelled to speak in opposition to an older relative: see above, pp. 136-37.

[11] The logic of νῦν δὲ ... ταρβῶ is difficult to defend after the elaborate *rejection* of such fear in 548-49: see, e.g., the unsuccessful attempt by Biehl (1965) *ad loc.*

[12] For more on the elaborate nature of Euripides' proems, see Lloyd (1992) 25-27.

ORESTES 585-90

Delete 588-90: Dindorf, followed by Page (1934), Fraenkel (1950) 3.814 n. 3, Friis-Johansen (1959) 51-52, Di Benedetto (ed.), Diggle (ed.), Lloyd (1992) 125 n. 46; delete 585-90: Reeve (1973) 156-57 (on the grounds that lines 585-87 are then too isolated to stand by themselves). In defence of 588-90 see Biehl (1955) 32-33 and (1965) on *Orestes* 588-90, van der Valk (1984) 172-73, Willink (ed.) on *Orestes* 588-90, West (1987) 283 and (ed.) on *Orestes* 588. The fullest discussion is that of Mirto (1980).

There are three principal objections against 588-90:

(1) the use of the active ἐπεγάμει with a woman as the subject: see, however, Biehl (ed.) 98 and (1955) 33, Mirto (1980) 389-92, Willink (ed.) and West (ed.) *ad loc.* The best defence of the verb can be found in the bitterly aggressive tone displayed by Orestes in this section of his speech. Orestes' situation — both the death of his father and his deplorable act of matricide — is, he claims, entirely the result of his mother's θράσος (586-87). The latter term implies both Clytemnestra's unwomanly daring in actively plotting her husband's murder and her all *too* womanly sexual passions.[1] The sexual sense of θράσος is picked up nicely in 588-90: unlike the chaste Penelope, the brazen Clytemnestra was quick to 'acquire one husband on top of another.'[2] The active ἐπεγάμει admirably suits this caustic indictment of Clytemnestra's θράσος.

(2) the proximity of two unrelated arguments each opening with ὁρᾷς (588 and 591) and the lack of a connecting particle in M's reading at 591 (Page [1934] 53): a subjective argument. Willink (ed.) attempts to meet this objection by transposing 579-84 after 590, thus increasing the margin between 588 and 591 and rendering δέ in 591 unnecessary (as he remarks

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[1] Cf. above, p. 74 n. 102, on the reference to τόλμα at *Or* 942.

[2] The commentators note that ἐπιγαμέω regularly indicates remarriage following the divorce or the loss of a previous spouse. The present context, however, combined with the sarcastic jingle of πόσει πόσιν, suggests the translation here given (cf. ἐπιγαμία at Ath. 13.560C): unlike Penelope, Clytemnestra betrayed her absent husband to take an illicit lover (cf., e.g., 558-59 and 575, and see Scarcella [ed.] *ad loc.*, Mirto [1980] 398).

in his note *ad loc.*, ὁρᾷς + the accusative elsewhere is always asyndetic when introducing a παράδειγμα); but the anaphora adds force to Orestes' urgent appeals here and, as West (ed.) indicates, the appearance of ὁρᾷς at 588 prepares us for its less usual use in 591 (while also motivating the use of connective δέ in that line). For the use here of ὁρᾷς see Willink (ed.) *ad loc.*, Friis-Johansen (1959) 51, and Lloyd (1992) 125 n. 47. Orestes here appeals to a variety of 'witnesses' in response to Tyndareus' similar tactics at 530-33; van der Valk (1984) detects a conscious echo of ἅ γ' εἰσορᾶν πάρα at 533.

(3) the impropriety of the reference to "un mito completamente estraneo a quello degli Atridi" (Di Benedetto [ed.] on *Orestes* 588-90; compare Friis-Johansen [1959] 52 n. 10): answered sufficiently by Willink (ed.) and West (ed.) *ad loc.* (compare Fuqua [1976] 67, Mirto [1980] 393ff., Michelini [1987] 185-86). Euripides relies on the *Odyssey* as a paradigm in his *mechanema* plays in general and, more particularly, in his treatment of the Orestes myth in this play and in his *Electra*. Moreover, he has an excellent precedent in *Agamemnon* 841ff., where Agamemnon's reference to Odysseus is designed (in part, at least) to introduce an ironic and very timely reminiscence of the *Odyssey's* repeated contrast between Agamemnon's disastrous homecoming and Odysseus'.[3]

Such appeals to mythic paradigms abound, of course, in Homer (to the passages cited by Willink and West add the particularly apt *Odyssey* 23. 215-24), the lyric poets, Aristophanes (for a similar forensic context see, for example, *Clouds* 1056-57, 1061ff., which presumably reflect a technique common among the 'smarter' set of the day), and the choral odes of tragedy;[4] they are not unknown in the orators themselves (for example, Antiphon 1.17, Andocides 1.129 and 4.22, Isaeus 8.3 and 44, Hyperides 2.7 [Jensen]).

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[3] See, further, Zeitlin (1980) 60-62.

[4] See, in general, Oehler (1925) 100-06, Canter (1933), and Friis-Johansen (1959) 50-53.

APPENDIX EIGHT

THE STAGING OF *ORESTES* 1344FF.

There is a good deal of disagreement regarding the staging of *Orestes* 1344ff. Biehl follows Listmann in having lines 1347-48 spoken off stage from within the palace.[1] Listmann himself does not argue the matter but merely assumes that Hermione enters the *skene* without delay in the course of 1345b-46. As West (ed.) *ad loc.* indicates, however, this staging is difficult to reconcile with the text, which allows little time for Hermione's departure (note in particular the *antilabe,* with elision, at 1345) and instead suggests a 'sudden coup.' The objection that there is no reference to Orestes' surprise entrance at 1347[2] is unwarranted: at 1345-46 Electra summons Orestes and Pylades from the *skene;*[3] at 1347 Hermione refers to their arrival on stage, her shocked οἲ 'γώ and emphatic τούσδε reflecting something of the audience's own surprise. On the other hand, Biehl's comparison of the traditional and easily-paralleled 'death cries' at 1296 and 1301 is not to the point. While the appearance of Orestes and Pylades at the palace door for a brief line and a half might appear to be problematic (see Di Benedetto [ed.], Willink [ed.], and West [ed.] *ad loc.*), such a bending of dramatic conventions is not without precedent: compare, for example, *Choephori* 653ff.,[4] 875ff.,[5] and *Philoctetes* 1293ff.[6] The Greek dramatists in general display a ready willingness to sacrifice convention to gain a dramatic point. Here the unexpected appearance of Orestes and Pylades at the palace door and the sight of Hermione being led off at sword-point heighten the frantic confusion that plays such an important role in the later scenes of *Orestes*

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[1] Biehl (1965) on *Or* 1347 and (ed.) *app. crit.* on 1347, citing Listmann (1910) 80-81. Cf. Hamilton (1987) 588 n. 7 and 591-92.

[2] Di Benedetto (1961) 151, Hamilton (1987) 588 n. 7.

[3] *Pace* Willink (ed.) on *Or* 1345-46, κατὰ στέγας at 1345 need not imply that Orestes and Pylades do not come on stage: cf., e.g., the summons at *Cho* 654 and see following n.

[4] Taplin (1977) 341 has *Cho* 657 spoken from behind the *skene,* which would result in Orestes addressing his remarks at 658ff. to the unseen οἰκέτης within: cf. Garvie (1986) *ad loc.* Contrast Bain (1981) 46 n. 1, however, who reasonably opposes this staging.

[5] On difficulties regarding the staging of *Cho* 875ff. see Bain (1981) 56ff. and Garvie (1986) xlvi-l.

[6] See Taplin (1971), esp. 36-37.

and increase the ominous mood of the approaching finale. Produced in this way the scene is more effective and avoids the awkward assumption: (1) of a character being heard off stage only one and a half lines after taking part in a dialogue; (2) of an actual exchange occurring off stage (as opposed to mere cries of shock or horror); (3) of a *Dreigespräch* in which two of the participants are off stage (an arrangement that Listmann himself characterizes as "besonders eigenartig"). All of these are, so far as I can ascertain, without direct parallel.[7] *Bacchae* 576ff. is a very special scene — a divine epiphany, with the miraculous divine voice familiar from tragedy and elsewhere — and is not applicable. *Medea* 1270aff. is somewhat closer (especially with regard to point (2) above), but again involves despair-filled cries from within the *skene* and not the sort of exchange we find at *Orestes* 1347-48. At *Antiope* 48ff. (Page) Lycus, Amphion, and Zethus must come on stage at 53ff., certainly by line 56.[8] While Sophocles' *Electra* 1404-16 might seem to provide a parallel for Electra calling off-stage to Orestes and Pylades, the difference in tone between the lengthy instructions at *Orestes* 1349-52 and the Sophoclean Electra's short, brutal cries is all-important. (Moreover, we have just been presented with such a scene at 1296-1310: a repetition of the device so soon afterwards would be too much of a good thing.)

The revival by Di Benedetto[9] of Lachmann's proposal that 1347b-52 be attributed to Electra *en bloc* is criticized convincingly by Biehl (1965) and Willink (ed.) *ad loc.*: Electra's words at 1347b-48 are premature if spoken while Hermione is still on stage; on the other hand, the lines are nonsensical if spoken after Hermione has quitted the stage and can no longer hear them. In addition, the bombastic 1348 (on which see Willink [ed.] *ad loc.*) makes some sense if spoken by the newly-arrived Orestes as he hustles Hermione inside with his sword; spoken by Electra it is intolerable, particularly so soon after 1343. Perhaps most noticeable, however, is the awkwardness of the frantic ἔχεσθ' ἔχεσθε at 1349 following the sinister address to Hermione at 1347b-1348 (particularly if, with West, we assume that Hermione has yet to enter the *skene*): 1349 reads quite naturally if 1347b-1348 are assigned to Orestes; Lachmann's reading, however, renders the motivation for this sudden urgency murky at best.

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[7] See, in general, Hourmouziades (1965) 88ff.

[8] See Pickard-Cambridge (1933) 109 (who cites as evidence a Campanian crater that depicts the conclusion of the play [Trendall/Webster (1971) III.3.15]), Hausmann (1958), esp. 58, 68-69, and 72, Webster (1966) 96, Kambitsis (1972) 113-14, Bain (1981) 40, Hamilton (1987) 589.

[9] Di Benedetto (1961) 150-51 and (ed.) *ad loc.*, followed by West (ed.).

Equally difficult is the proposal of Willink (followed by Diggle), who deletes 1347-48 altogether as an actors' interpolation, citing in particular the weakness of 1348 and the difficulties of staging entailed in the lines. Again, the agitated ἔχεσθ' ἔχεσθε at 1349 lacks motivation and is awkward after the imperious 1345b-1346. If a solution is to be sought in deletion, it seems more reasonable to question 1345-52 as a whole.

Such extreme measures are not, however, necessary. As at *Choephori* 892ff., Sophocles' *Electra* 1466ff., and *Heracles* 701ff., we are presented here with characters who enter with the sole intention of leading another character off to death. Whereas the other scenes cited involve some type of dialogue, too much is happening at this stage of *Orestes* and too much frenetic action is building for Euripides to lessen the tension by pausing for any non-essential conversation. The fact that the appearance of Orestes and Pylades on stage at this point does not jibe with the Phrygian's account at 1474-93 (cited by Willink in support of his deletion of 1347-48) is irrelevant: as we have seen (pp. 181-82, 197-98, 232-33), that portion of the Phrygian's narrative presents an emotionally charged picture of the climactic rush of events within the palace as it builds to the sudden disappearance of Helen; it cannot be used to establish the staging of 1344ff. The disorienting effect of Orestes' and Pylades' sudden appearance at 1347 is appropriate at this point in the play and justifies the relatively minor breach of convention.

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[1] The following works are cited in the notes by the editor's name + (ed.): e.g., "Willink (ed.) on *Or* 342." For a more complete list of earlier editions see Biehl (ed.) xlvi-xlvii.

[2] To avoid confusion with Paley's 1889 edition, this work is cited as the "school edition of 1892."

[3] To avoid confusion with his 1975 Teubner text, Biehl's *Euripides: Orestes* (Berlin, 1965) is included in the general bibliography and is cited in the notes as "Biehl (1965)."

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