UDC 821.14'02-2.09 Sophocles
821.14'02-2.09 Euripides
179.7

Victor Castellani
Denver

SUICIDE AS THEME AND EVENT IN SOPHOCLES AND EURIPIDES

ABSTRACT: Direct suicide by diverse means or its attempt, serious contemplation of direct self-killing or of "suicidal" action that will bring on one's death promptly, one's volunteering to die at someone else's action to gain something or to benefit other occurs in scripted reports of off-stage events orthat person's from-stage exit to immediate death, even exityess death on stage (Alcestis). of with a surprising frequency. Fourteen of Euripides' sixteen surviving tragedies dramatize the theme of self-incurred death, and a fifteenth is borderline: Creusa in *Ion* dares her unrecognized son Ion, whose poisoning she just intended, to slay *by grievous sacrilege* his unrecognized mother—what will also perplex and provoke immortal rapist Apollo as she could never do directly. Each of Sophocles' seven extant plays is pertinent.

This essay looks closely at ***two*** famous Sophoclean self-killers (**Ajax** and **Antigone**) and at ***four*** in Euripides (**Alcestis** and **Phaedra II**, these the most complex in motivation, plus far less familiar **Evadne** (in *Suppliants*) and a revolutionized *willing* victim **Iphigenia**. In Part III regarding these six we examine how they are motivated by two sometimes complementary pairs of moral characteristics that other times conflict, where sometimes one is essentially no factor: φιλιτιμία and αἴδως, φιλία ands ἔρως. Finally we look at differences between suicidal behaviors overall in the two dramatists' work. Altruism is important in Euripides, benefit to others bought at the price one's own death. This does not appear at all in extant Sophocles. On the other hand, vindictiveness is common in the oeuvre of both, yet Euripides in a larger body of work only twice shows death trade for grave harm of a hated individual or group (Phaedra II partially, completely Oedipus' sons). Revenge is more common in suicidal thinking in Sophocles and unapologetic. Sophocles also makes explicit (Antigone) or may suggest (Ais, Philoctetes) a suicide's hope for a better personal *after*-existence. In Euripides all expect personal end-it-all eternal oblivion, afterlife only in *others'* honorific and often individual grateful memory.

KEY WORDS: aidos, curse, eros, Euripides, kamikaze-spirit, philia, philotimia, revenge, sacrifice.

SURVEY: SOPHOCLES

In four of Sophocles' seven surviving plays direct self-slaying occurs: by Ajax in ***Ajax*** (treated at length below in PART II); by Deïnaneira in ***Trachinian Women***, and in ***Oedipus Tyrannus*/*OT*** Jocasta's. In the fourth, ***Antigone***, we find three linked suicides: the title character's, her distraught fiancé and indirect avenger Haemon's, and finally that by Haemon's mother Eurydice who indirectly avenges both her son and his fiancée. "Indirect". because, although the young man fails to kill his father, his death, like his mother's, hurts Creon as father and husband who, with *his* clearly drawn character, would want both to live—obedient, subservient to him.

In two of these tragedies self-killings are intended, by acting posthumously, to cause vindictive harm to hated survivors: Ajax's, as we shall see, and all one-two-three concatenated suicides in *Antigone* that punish Creon for condemning his defiant niece to a cruel and unusual death that she willfully preempts and unknowingly causes two others that, unlike hers *per se*, intentionally wound him deeply.

Trachinian Women ends with a second, quasi-suicide, i.e., with Heracles' *exeunt* command that his son Hyllus cremate him alive. However, our play leaves notoriously open whether this is put-an-end-to-my-anguish euthanasia—Hamlet's contemplated end-it-all "quietus"–with the Greek hero's son under orders to provide an on its face radically, objectively *un*filial relief that looks like patricide. Or will a metathesis of Heracles' ψυχή occur so that his may join that of Orion (*Od*. 11.572-575) in that happy hunting (and homicidal) ground which *Od*. 11.601 suggests and which the decoration of Heracles' broad belt describes (605-612)?—never mind the intrusive business about his εἴδωλον at 602-604! Or will a separation occur from his maternal, mortal part so that his paternal, divine part can enjoy apotheosis? Or a ride in his father Zeus' or his sister Athena's chariot, body and soul and θυμός escaped risen from the flames to marry another sister Hebe and spite Hebe's mother Hera for eternity?

In *OT* the slaying of Oedipus' mother-wife "herself by herself" (αὐτὴ πρὸς αὑτῆς, 1236) wreaks direct punishment not only upon herself, by hanging in a shamed woman's style, but also surely unplanned, by ironic retribution on Oedipus. For, although her death seems spontaneous, however, she takes some time before putting on a makeshift noose. S*he adorned herself for her hanging* with substantial brooch/buckle-pins (χρυσηλάτους περόνας ἀπ᾽αὐτῆς αἶσιν ἐξεστέλλετο, 1268f)—dual *bridal* fibulae?—that become the instruments by which her son-husband blinds *himself* (αὐτόχειρ (1331: this word is usual for suicide but is also applied to em-

phasize authorship of other self-inflicted mayhem).[1] Hereby he punishes himself short of suicide since he cannot bear to *see* anything (τί γὰρ ἔδει μ᾽ ὁρᾶν,/ ὅτῳ γ᾽ ὁρῶντι μηδὲν ἦν ἰδεῖν γλυκύ, 1334f), neither Jocasta's dead body nor living persons in the upper world, his children and his uncle/brother-in-law Creon (or blind seer Teiresias!), nor below to face ghosts of his parents whose destruction he was doomed to bring about and, evade it though he tried to do and until only moments ago thought he had evaded, he now knows that he has wrought. For him the question is not "To be or not to be," but "To see or not to see"! (1371-1385). Those pins in place had held up her (wedding?) gown at both shoulders so that the very last thing her son-husband ever sees would be his mother-wife's partly disrobed body! In any case, to *be* would confront him, ghost to ghosts, with the parents for whose deaths *he* is responsible, Laius', as he learned moments ago, and, just now, Jocasta's. According to Apollo's oracle he was fated to commit radical incest with his mother and to kill his father (791-793 and 995f). His parents likewise knew from dire prophecies (θέσφατα ... κακά, 1175) that their son, if he lived, was *going to kill* his (generic?) plural parents (κτενεῖν νιν τοὺς τεκόντας ἦν λόγος, 1176: no generic word for "destroy" here)). Both also knew specifically about the prophesied patricide ὡς αὐτὸν [Laius]

μοῖρα πρὸς παιδὸς θανεῖν,/ὅστις γένοιτ᾽ ἐμοῦ τε κἀκείνου πάρα, 713f). This foreknowledge, which earlier this day Jocasta had dismissed as "knowledge" at all about a future that did not occur (711-725), and of which she had reminded herself, haunted here to death.

In Sophocles' surviving oeuvre only self-slaying by the second wife of Heracles (who had killed his first!) is pure self-*punishment*. Here she is not subjectively guilty, of course.Deïaneira is, in fact, probably first and uniquely in Sophocles, despite the evident meaning of her ominous name as "slay-man//husband/hero," anti-Clytemnestra who killed her heroic *and heroically unfaithful* spouse not only *un*intentionally but out of desperate yearning to gain his reciprocating love. No conspiring adulteress she! Off stage in what the Nurse narrates as preliminaries to her suicide by vindictive sword he acts out her profound conjugal love for the man who has treated her so shabbily for so many years and who has now inflicted a final indignity on her in the importation of Iole (*Trach*. 900-922). Jocasta' much more briefly described suicide by hanging in *OT* discussed above might be appreciated by comparison with the account of Deïaneira by vindictive sword (923-935). She, too, has learned something crucially important "too late" (ὄψ᾽ ἐκδιδαχθεὶς, 934). Note especially the

[1] Did Jocasta, like Alcestis on her death-day in a play we consider below, bid farewell to her wedding bed in the θάλαμος where, by Laius, she conceived Oedipus and, by *him*, four monstrous children? See below on Deïaneira's last moments?

first four lines: συντόνῳ χερὶ/λύει τὸν αὐτῆς πέπλον, ᾗ χρυσήλατος/προύκειτο μαστῶν περονίς, ἐκ δ᾽ ἐλώπισεν/πλευρὰν ἅπασαν ὠλένην τ᾽ εὐώνυμον (923-926). Her death αὐτὴ πρὸς αὐτῆς (1132) is intended to hurt only herself, a death for Heracles' imminent death, not anyone she leaves behind, neither her outraged son (though it touches him grievously once he knows her innocent intention and the whole backstory: 936-941) nor, if before the unloving progenitor of all her children, becomes is aware of her innocence—what moves him little (1122-1145). She does, of course, escape harsh shaming and violent harm from her husband for what she has objectively done, never mind her intention. However, all we are told about her death, by sword, suggests that she is as angry with herself, guilt-ridden, as the two men are with her. Suicide for Sophocles seems essentially punitive, but where the target of hurt ranges from enemy to self. The only positive purpose is harm.

In a fifth play of Sophocles, ***Philoctetes***, a conspicuous suicide motif is likely Sophocles' innovation, as certainly is his critical "desert island" setting and his substitution of Neoptolemus for *Diomedes* as the emissary who comes from the Greek camp to Lemnos to bring Philoctetes and his archery to Troy to make possible the Greek victory that has eluded them for all the nearly ten years of his exile (as Aeschylus) or who joins Odysseus (Euripides) on that mission. Despite his own traditional destiny, that of Neoptolemus, and all Troy's, the title character Philoctetes attempts and nearly performs a suicide by leaping to his death. However, he physically is restrained (*Phil.*1002f). He was ready to accept death at the claws and jaws and beaks of beasts of the island's fauna or by starvation if he was were abandoned again *without* the bow, in effect suicidal (1146-162). Later, after not being given a sword or other bladed weapon with which kill himself (1203-1217). Events never come to that.

In the two remaining plays this poet's characters clearly contemplate suicidal action, threatened in the Sophoclean ***Electra*** (as close as Attic tragedy comes to a "suicide by cop") or resolved upon (Polyneices in ***Oedipus at Colonus/OC***, previously cursed, here cursed again).

Long before the action of that play of Sophocles to which she gives her name, Orestes' older sister saved Orestes from Aegisthus' desire to murder Agamemnon's 11- or 12-year-old potential future avenger (*El.* 10-14; cf. 295-297). Electra had thereby incurred and ever since has stoked such hatred on the part of her mother Clytemnestra and of step-father Aegisthus that *her* life is in jeopardy (379-382). When she believes their father's proper avenger, her brother Orestes, to be *dead* she tries but fails to persuade her weak sister Chrysothemis not merely to join her in her potentially lethal public vituperation of their perceived enemy (a chorus of young women overhear their tense conversation) but other audiences in public space before the royal residence may hear the same on other

occasions). Electra, but like Antigone vis-à-vis Ismene, she proses action that even more certainly and immediately would bring death to both of cursed Oedipus'unmarried daughters: in an effort themselves to slay their sire's slayers (1003-1057). Both young women would, of course, be cut down long before they could get close enough to strike a stabbing or slashing blow, especially since Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, knowing Electra's vindictive wrath, are wary and well-guarded. Orestes lives, however, and before his monomaniacal sister can get herself killed he takes over their duty of revenge, an efficient revenge of the well planned kind whe re successful avengers live on to gloat over their success.[2]

In Sophocles' posthumous *OC*, their father-brother Oedipus had already cursed both of his brother-sons to die in personal, fratricidal combat over succession to the Theban throne. Now not only blind but an exiled pariah, Oedipus doubles down on their doom in the presence of likewise exiled Polyneices, to whom his (only here) *younger* brother Eteocles has denied an agreed share in alternating rule. In the presence, too, of their sister Antigone, who fails to prevent this brother (the one we know from Sophocles' *Antigone* that she would bury) from meeting his doom. For he will gladly die in order to prevent Eteocles from living and enjoying kingship at Thebes (OC nnn.) As regards Oedipus himself he exits not to a normal, mortal's death, as divinely promised θέσφατος/ βίου τελευτὴ, 1472f) but is impatiently summoned by a god (1625-1629) to a deliberately mysterious end (1647-1666). He can hardly be classified as suicidal.

We shall return to *Ajax* and *Antigone* below in PART II because of a unique motivation that they share (and because the former influences Roman writers Virgil and Seneca Jr. in ways obvious to those who know them).

To summarize: *willfully* incurred or prevented suicidal action, in every Sophoclean instance, even that of Heracles at the end of *Trachinian Women*, who seem unaware the godhood that may his terminal agony as a mortal), the welcomed death is intended to hve negative consequences, usually more than one. [1] To end suffering (Heracles); [2] to end suffering *and* join the beloved dead in grim Hades realm(Antigone explicitly

---

[2] Compare the Sophoclean Orestes' victory over Aegisthus with Odysseus' over Polyphemus. The Ithacan hero at first impulse nearly slew the Cyclops but doomed himself and his uneaten shipmates to die trapped in the monster's cave, but a "second thought" prevented him ἕτερος δέ με θυμὸς ἔρυκεν, *Od*. 9.302). Electra meets all the specification for the "tragic hero" as Bernard Knox, *The Heroic Temper. Studies in Sophoclean Tragedy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1966), Chapters I and II, defines and exemplifies it as the essence of Sophoclean tragedy. I would argue that it is ultimately Achilles-type, whereas her brother is in a number of respects pure Odyssean. See Knox pp. 119-138 on the two Homeric models. In fact, the dust jacket of Knox' original edition shows the Side A figure of the Attic Red-figure *Achilles* Painter name vase in the Vatican that depicts the lonely, pensive hero who gives the anonymous artist his ID.

and Electra, I think, implicitly); [3] to end suffering and harm others (Ajax and Philoctetes, the latter of whom may, like the same poet's Electra, wish to join esteemed dead, in his case comrades slain at Troy: see *Phil*. 410-437; [4] to end suffering and punish oneself, even for unintended yet shameful action—Deïaneira and Jocasta); and [5] as long as his death take another, hated person with him to Hades (Polyneices: we will find something like that below in the Cassandra of *Trojan Women*)

SURVEY: EURIPIDES

As we shall presently see, Euripidean self-welcomed death is several times circumstantially self-*sacrificial*, though hardly the hateful kind that we have noted in Sophocles' surviving plays with Ajax and also Polyneices in his non-ritual death (no σφαγεύς , no *do ut detis* invocation of god) which nevertheless "buys" that of Eteocles. Phaedra's death by hanging is, if anything, anti-ritual, since no Hellenic ritual of which I am aware strangles a victim; yet by it she intends to destroy Hippolytus if not certainly to kill him. This we shall explore here and further in PART II.

Of the sixteen surviving tragedies of Euripides a deliberate suicidal deed or intention appears in all but *Ion* and, where Pentheus acts suicidally yet not intentionally so, *Bacchae*. In fact, in one of these, *Ion*'s Creusa, fleeing for her life after her plot to poison Ion has been exposed, takes the Chorus' advice to flee for asylum to Phoebus' on-stage altar. To execute her there would be grave sacrilege (*Ion* 1253-1260). Her mood is not suicidal *per se*; however, she is angry with Apollo and Xuthus and still wishes somehow to prevent her husband's supposed son Ion from being heir to kingship at Athens. She will *accept* death by Ion's impetuous, impious violation of sanctuary if in executing her on the public altar of her Delphic rapist Ion *pollutes* it. An offense to Apollo. ! The Athenia princess would willingly hurt *him* by her death (*Ion* 1308-1311). Indeed, though only Apollo would know this, it would also be matricide! Pious Ion cannot harm her, of course, much to his chagrin.[3]

The positive fourteen present a remarkable set of variations in both circumstance and intent of self-destruction. From among these we shall later look closely into four completed suicides, those by title character Alcestis (who is, however, resurrected), by Phaedra (in nearly palinodic *Hippolytus* II that modifies her means of dying and undertakes to justify her attack on her odious grown stepson and her desperate defense of her vulnerable toddler sons), by Evadne and her operatic *Liebestod* in

[3] Apollo, whom Creusa has put on a difficult, embarrassing spot resolves the impasse by ending his Pythian Prophetess with *crepundia* that prove the boy's divine paternity and lead to an awkward but satisfactory outcome for everyone, even forever duped Xuthus, only Ion's father.

Suppliants, and the eventually, uniquely willing victim of ritual sacrifice uniquely in our poet's posthumous *Iphigenia at Aulis* (whose her death in one tradition is not reversed, like Alcestis' by Heracles' Harrowing of Hades, but does not take place at all, prevented by Artemis' last minute substitution worthy of Abram's God though her life for the next seventeen year will not be a comfortable happy than Isaac's, especially if she resisted slaughter till the miraculous rescue and her last memory of *her* father and all the Greek host is a bitter one.

Here are the suicidal fourteen, each unique in species but grouped by genus:

[1] Complaisant victims. A desire to "end it all," incidentally winning glory for the willing, brave and dignified victim, involves *ritual human sacrifice* in one case, that of Trojan maiden ex-princess Polyxena in *Hecuba*). In contrast, three other instances of voluntary sacrifice lead to a desired good—survival—for φίλοι whom the victim hold dear and valued: maiden Macaria's in *Children of Heracles*, who saves numerous siblings; adolescent Menoeceus' in *Phoenician Women* who saves his father and all Thebes; and Iphigenia's at Aulis, who saves *her* father and family but also prevents heroic Achilles from suicidally (sic!) throwing away his future glory by dying in her futile defense (*IA* 1350-1420). Below in PART II we see how subjective "good"-ness of Iphigenia's heroically accepted death is mixed objectively with others' reprehensible ambitions and the Greek army's more than metaphorical lust mentioned in the text (*IA* 1264-1266; after Stasimon 1 543-589: eagerness to capture Trojan girls and young mothers!). The first two of these loving sacrifices, respectively of Heracles' eldest maiden daughter Macaria and of Theban Regent Creon's very young son Menoeceus, are either Euripides' invention or obscure variants not indicated before Euripides' plays. In all four, including now Polyxena's , some tries desperately to talk the very young victim into resisting or at least not going cheerfully to her or hi death: Polyxena's mother Hecuba (382-409), Macaria's much older cousin Iolaus (*Hcld*. 541-546), Menoeceus' father Creon (*Phoen*. 9710050-), and Iphigenia's mother Clytemnestra (*IA* 1433-1466)—as well as Achilles, who will fight to defend her from his sacrificial-bloodthirsty comrades (1421-1432). This all occurs after Agamemnon's wife and daughter appealed to him not to let her go to horrible slaughter, in the first "scene" (we would say) of this sensational episode (1098-1275: exit Agamemnon!). In its third frantic scene, after a scene of lyric duet between mother, briefly, and daughter, at length, in place of a stasimon, Achilles is their interlocutor.[4]

---

[4] This episode is the one of the longest in Euripides. During the women's lyric sequence (1276-1335) the virtuoso actor who has played (and will later again play) *Agamemnon* becomes *Achilles*.

[2] Surrogation. What young Alcestis had undertaken long before the action of the play—how long is THE question that cannot be answered from the text—is sometimes called a sacrifice, it is really either her volunteered substitution of her death for her young husband Admetus' as soon as they both learned of this daunting opportunity or, likelier from the text (*Alc*. 15-18), requested by Admetus and agreed to by her. Such surrogation is a unique privilege that the young King of Phereae has from Apollo, but he must find someone who is willing to die In his place. Whether she agreed to die for him at the beginning of their marriage or only after she had born him two juvenile children is

In melodramatic *Andromache* Hector's widow would accept her own murder to save her and her master Neoptolemus' infant son, tricked though she turns out to have been by dastardly Spartans Menelaus and his daughter Hermione (*And*. 385-435).[5]

[1 + 2] In *Iphigenia among the Taurians* human ritual sacrifice combines with surrogation. Orestes and his devoted companion Pylades arrived among barbarians for whom where any stray Greek is deemed a sacrificial victim desirable to the local Artemis. Each of the two young men iswilling, indeed eager to die in barbarous human sacrifice in order to save the other (*IT* 666-723), so that he may take a message to the sacrificial priestess 's brother in Greece. At this point e neither of the men know that she is Agamemnon's daughter long ago disappeared from Aulis, nor does she know that one of the grown-up Greeks standing before her is her brother Orestes whom she knew only as an infant.

Goethe by composing his own *Iphigenie auf Tauris* showed his admiration for the selflessness of the φίλοι, cognate cousins Orestes and Pylades in Euripides' play. That Pylades will hand Iphigenia's written message for "Orestes," signed "Iphigenia," to the man standing beside him sets up the ensuing sibling' reciprocal anagnorisis, a *coup de théâtre*

---

[5] We should keep in mind that the Chorus of Thessalian women witness all that transpires on stage between the two woman and, once he arrives with Andromache's toddler son in his clutches, Menelaus. Andromache, we infer, believes that if she dies to save her master's son, when Neoptolemus returns to Phthia he will avenge her. Hermione will get what she deserves, though it might be devastating humiliation short of execution. like what Phaedra expect from Theseus vis-à-vis Hippolytus. Only old Peleus' timely arrival at 545 saves her and nd the toddler child boy, both marked for slaying. Thereafter the Sparten princess, to avoid shame and punishment of being physically "thrown out" (τὸ ἐκβληθῆναι) or even painfully *slain* by her husband Neoptolemus attempts to kill herself by hanging, then by sword. However, her Nurse and the household staff prevent her and the Nurse calls upon the female Chorus to help in further restraint (804-819). Cousin Orestes soon arrives to take her home to Argos and marry her, widowed and eligible though (unbeknownst to her) she now is!

Too little attention has been paid to maverick Philip Vellacott's solution to a number of problems in this play as if he and it2 is over-clever, in his Introduction to his translation of *Andromache* in *Euripides. Orestes and Other Plays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, pp. 26-43). He makes both Menelaus and Orestes look even more despicable—not to mention Apollo, against whom, like Euripides he waged a decades-long campaign of deserved vilification.

as ingenious as it is sublime, between Agamemnon's son and daughter (727-826).[6] The subsequent intrigue, with its comical comment from King Troas when he hears that one of the Greeks slew his mother is priceless: Ἄπολλον, οὐδ' ἐν βαρβάροις ἔτλη τις ἄν (1174). Goethe suppressed *this*!

[3] Kamikaze Spirit. In *Trojan Women* Cassandra does not merely acquiesce in her own clearly foreseen death but rejoices in it, indeed spectacularly celebrates it because she knows (even if no one else believes her!) that her murder at Clytemnestra's hands is connected inseparably with Agamemnon's (*Tro.* 445-461). Her motivation, therefore, exemplifies a tragic, pathetic glee that is canonically embodied in Iliadic Achilles, exemplar of an angry person who has "only one life to give for"—not "my country," like American Revolutionary War hero Nathan Hale, but for *my revenge*. Who is content, even grimly happy, if his or her death is the price to pay for a deeply hated enemy's (*Il.* 18.94-100).[7] He is even willing to die that humiliating death by bowshot which dying Hector predicts (22.358-360), linked therefore to his own, at the hands of his brother Paris and their Olympian patron Apollo. Achilles' death avenges both Patroclus and Hector. Furthermore, if my stubborn conviction that Jean-Paul Sartre got the sensational ending of his *Les Troyennes* (1965) right, with evidence from what Cassandra discloses at *Tro.* 427-430: that Euripides' Hecuba too in this most pathetic of the most tragic poet's plays "ends it all" *suicidally* by exiting into the burning city at the end of the play, though unlike Sartre's distraught enslaved ex-queen the Euripidean may believe that she will join Priam in death. She will also avoid becoming a derided slave to Odysseus, the most hated of all Achaeans, denying him nasty, gloating glee.[8]

Polyneices' intent, in *Phoenician Women*, anticipates the same mythic character's a few years thereafter on the same stage in Sophocles' *OC*, is a clearer example though a less complex, emotionally and morally conflicted person. Heroic, tragic, hardly pathetic. If their father's lethal curse works as intended, this (here: younger) son of Oedipus will

---

[6] They proceed into an intensely emotional lyric duet that Wagner must have had in mind when composing one for the Volsung twins that ends Act II of *Die Walküre*, adding for sensation their *entr'acte* incest!

[7] Achilles' case is complicated by the fact that he wills hurt to all three persons whom he holds responsible for Patroclus' death—(1) to the god Apollo, by slaying that god's darling Hector; (2) to Hector himself by killing him after *not* promising that his body will be given honorable obsequies; but also (3) to Achilles himself, "useless burden on the earth's fertile surface" (ἐτώσιον ἄχθος ἀρούρης, *Il.* 18.104).

[8] Odysseus' evil character had been on villainous, murderous display in *Palamedes*, the play that preceded *Trojan Women* in Euripides' trilogy of 415 BCE. Her very different and traditional fate that Polymestor predicts before his exit at *Hec.* 1259-1267 would only make an intended shock of her *suicide* in Ilium in the later play so much the greater. Euripides' innovations often shocked his audience and, if we appreciate their surprising novelty, should affect us.

be content to die if he takes the elder, Eteocles, with him. In the *bon mot* 'You can't take it with you' the 'it' is wealth, possibly with the power and pleasure that having riches gives. But in the instance now before us sometimes you *can* curtail another's enjoyment of either. Such grim sharing of sour grapes, out of reach because death intervenes for both Theban brother-princes as, however, becomes more explicit, more shocking in *OC*. *Phoenician Women* in fact dramatizes a diverse collection of self-killings, especially if in addition to Menoeceus' selfless sacrifice we count the reciprocal fratri- and punitive *sui*cidal slayings of Oedipus' brother-sons, sin and retribution coinciding. Then we have their mother Jocasta who over their dead bodies kills herself with a stab to her throat with the sword of one of them (of *which* matters not!) to her *neck*, for a gushing of gore, and who as she dies embraces them both at *Phoen*. 1455-1459. For in the poet's innovation here she did *not* kill herself upon discovering the incest in the unbloody Homeric way (*Od*. 11.277-280), by hanging, what is also the Sophoclean as detailed above in connection with *OT*. Now, her efforts to prevent the brothers' doom in long Episode 1 frustrated, she does so *now* to "end it all." Now that she has lost them, she follows them. Euripides has kept her alive for this! Her motivation combines frustration and *maternal* love lost. Her second thought is to follow up her futile onstage effort to prevent the fated double, reciprocal fratricide with a further plea to them out on the battlefield, where neither mothers nor maidens "belong," and where Sophocles' Antigone ventures under different circumstances, with a different aim and narrower duty of a φίλη. And who, as we have also seen, has colder emotion To her being a wife or a mother is an abstract notion, as it is to a certain degree also in *Phoenician Women*. We return to her and *Antigone* in Part II.

In Euripides' even later play *Orestes* the Exodos sequence includes a sensational scene in which on the roof of the royal palace of Mycenae-Argos dedicated killer of bad women Orestes holds a menacing sword at the throat of his cousin and foster-sister Hermione. Cousin Pylades and sister Electra are with him up there, brandishing torches. On ground level Hermione's father Menelaus of Sparta, Orestes' and Electra's uncle, arrives in a hurry with an armed platoon to avenge his wife Helen (who will presently hover above them all with her half-brother Apollo in a golden chariot *ex machina*!), but whom, the Spartan king believes, Orestes and Pylades have murdered. Menelaus, his wife vanished and presumed dead, intends now at least to rescue his daugHermionehter and to seize the palace of his brother Agamemnon and, where both were born, of their father Atreus. It should now fall to him since Orestes is condemned to die—today! However, if he does not back off and defend his nephew and niece from the Argives who condemned them to die because of their abominable matricide, his daughter will die, the palace and the treasures

it houses will be burned to the ground. In perhaps Euripides' most preposterous divinely decreed, save-the-myth dénouement (*Or.* 1625-1665), Apollo prevents atrocious murder of an innocent young woman and a *suicidal* Argive *Heldendämmerung* that will incinerate three young persons who until this crisis were simply following Apollo's orders. The only mortal actually dead, now for several days, is Clytemnestra whom, of course, Apollo *wanted* slain. Has benevolent Apollo "saved the day" or has he clumsily saved the myth"?[9]

[4] ἕτερος θυμὸς (cf. *Od*. 9.302). Medea contemplates an unlikely to succeed attack on Jason and his princess-bride by arson or with man-like sword (*Med*. 376-380). She thus resembles the Sophoclean Electra in a later play. However, she talks herself out of it (381-383). She wants to survive, like Odysseus in *Odyssey* 9, whom a second thought checks before he kills Polyphemus but would doom himself and his uneaten companions to die in the blocked cave. In contrast Sophocles' heroic-tempered Electra is prevented from being killed, her father still *un*-avenged, as we have seen, only by timely entrance of his avenger, her savior brother Orestes. Medea is smart enough to check her suicidal impulse. We can hardly believe that Athena has inspired her as she does Odysseus at *Od*. 5.427 and 437.

In *Hippolytus* II Phaedra II changes her *means* of suicide by "second thoughts." She seems to seems to gain energy, after enacting starved weakness earlier that day as she has a new thought about another purpose for her self-killing—and a quicker and one with a second target besides herself (*Hipp.* 715-731). More in PART II below

In melodramatic *Andromache* Hector's widow would accept her own murder to save her and her master Neoptolemus' infant son, tricked though she turns out to have been by dastardly Spartans Menelaus and his daughter Hermione (*And*. 385-435).[10] Hermione will get what she deserves, though it might be devastating humiliation short of execution, like what Phaedra expects from Theseus vis-à-vis Hippolytus. Only old

---

[9] For the former view, energetically advocated by Anne Pippin Burnett, *Catastrophe Survived. Euripides' Plays of Mixed Reversal* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971. She spends two chapters on the play, VIII (pp. 183-204) and XI (204-222) finding Orestes to blame and Apollo innocent. I find that view unsustainable. A sterner reading of the characters and Apollo's imperious-absorbed manipulation of them in several plays where Burnett attempts to justify the waywardness of Phoebus to us undermines it. *Andromache* and *Orestes* provide damning evidence of Apollo's character, not so much evil as inept and embarrassed, stupidly deficient in prescience. His divine half-brother Castor at the end of the Euripidean matricide play blames him for ordering the matricide (*El.* 1246 and1302 He or his sister starts fires—in *Orestes* literal *arsonous firebrands*—that only hasty intervention can douse, leaving real stink. after many anguished years, that his puppets cannot humanly *un*remember.

[10] We should keep in mind that the Chorus of Thessalian women witness all that transpires on stage between the two woman and, once he arrives with Andromache's toddler son in his clutches, Menelaus. Andromache, we may infer, believes that if she dies to save her master's son, when Neoptolemus returns to Phthia he will avenge her.

Peleus' timely arrival at 545 saves her and nd the toddler child boy, both marked for slaying. Thereafter the Sparten princess, to avoid shame and punishment of being physically "thrown out" (τὸ ἐκβληθῆναι) or even painfully *slain* by her husband Neoptolemus attempts to kill herself by hanging, then by sword. However, her Nurse and the household staff prevent her and the Nurse calls upon the female Chorus to help in further restraint (804-819). Cousin Orestes soon arrives to take her home to Argos and marry her, widowed and eligible though (unbeknownst to her) she now is!

In Sophocles' *Electra* her brother's timely arrival decommissions the prospective suicidal avenger. Euripides' play and central character of the same name makes her suspensively suicidal. She will kill herself by a sword thrust to her liver if Orestes with Pylades fails to assassinate Aegisthus (*El*. 686-688). When she intends to kill with a sword she means business, as her decisive role in the matricide will prove. When Orestes, blindfolded, hesitates to push his blade into their mother his sister will drive it home (1221-1223).

In *Helen* after an old slave woman (γραῦς) had, possibly (I suggest) with a broom, shooed him away in tears from the Pharaoh's front door five hundred lines before, at *Hel*. 477-488), a later scene dramatizes bipolar hero Menelaus' sudden bravado from θυμός that alliance with the real Helen who loves him (though we may wonder why!) heats up. When she and he confront the priestess-prophetess Theonoë she appeals to her intelligently, cogently, persuasively; but he must have the last word, as a "he. " This scene on the page has the look of a typical Euripidean agōn; however, like the sequence of Clytemnestra, then Iphigenia in *IA*, both speakers advocate the same thing, not as usual opposites yet one seems the more apt in addressing that third party who will judge not between them but whether to grant their shared wish. The *gloriosus* self-proclaimed conqueror of Troy threatens that, if her brother Theoclymenus will not fight him over Helen (as he and Paris did in *Iliad* 3!) he will slaughter Helen and himself atop her father Proteus' tomb, bleeding all over it (*Hel*. 977-987).[11] Bluff though that may well be from *him,* Theonoë does not call it. Helen moves her. She promises not to tell her brother who the newly arrived Greek man really is, though her reason for doing so may be a characteristic determination to do what is right and holy, to honor her late father's will that Helen be kept chaste and faithful for her husband eventually to meet and repossess (998-1021).[12]

---

[11] This is related to Creusa's implied invitation to murderously angry Ion so to pollute Apollo's altar (and in unknown fact his fathers!)—where he, not she, would commit that sin. In *Andromache* Menelaus has a nasty ploy to prevent sacrilegious homicide on Thetis' shrine, luring her away from it so that killing her will be mere murder, not sin. Old Greeks had no *divine* Commandment not to kill!

[12] As we know from *Odyssey* 4, Proteus when ranked as a sea-*god* and not entomb-able had powers of long-distance vision and pre-vision. In this play he seems to be more to have

In *Heracles,* after becoming aware that *he* has slain his three sons and their mother, the hero's first thought is to kill himself, perhaps both to avenge them on their killer—himself—and to end his painful awareness of what he has done in the madness that has possessed him (*HF* 1135-1152).

However, his younger συγγενὴς φιλός τε (1154) Theseus, who owes his life to him, arrives before he can and persuades him to live on, because to "cop out" of the horror he has now wrought *un*intentionally and at the same time to renounce all the good he has done over many strenuous years would be weakness, even cowardice unworthy of him (1248-1254). He had been making the world safer for other mortals (what the Chorus celebrate in the 1st Stasimon, 348-435), indeed continued to do so even earlier today when, in his right mind, he saved his now, alas, victims from an evil villain's *intentional* murder. This outcome inverts the ending of *Trachinian Women*. There Heracles, in *physical* agony, orders his seeming self-destruction by conflagration, leaving his son Hyllus and other children vulnerable (as Euripides' *Children of Heracles* makes distressingly clear) whereas here the same hero, in *emotional* anguish every bit as acute (and who, alluding to the tradition and Sophocles, *has* considered destroying himself by fire (1151), walks? perhaps slowly strides? into retirement at Athens, where he will have deserved honors while still alive and after he dies and goes, not to Olympus but, like everyone else, to Hades', and enjoy maximum *hero*-cult (1323-1339). This too, of course, is Euripides startling innovation. Entropy instead of blazing fire.

[5] *Liebestod*. Speaking of off-stage fire, there is one sure Euripdean instance of this as we understand it, especially since Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, i.e., Evadne's suttee (alias *sati*) in *Suppliants*. This is the simplest suicide of all, striking not only because the episode that dramatizes it is to superfluous within its play.[13] Note: *Suppliants* would be quite short without Iphis-and-Evadne, yet the rest of the play could do without it. In this it unlike the Polyneices episode in Sophocles' *OC*, which comes as a surprise when the audience expect the play to be nearing its end at our line number 1245 and which makes this by far Sophocles' longest extant play.] Her aged Argive father Iphis enters in haste, following his daughter Evadne all the long way from Argos because he fears that she may do something drastic in response to the death of her husband Capaneus—one of those of the Seven Against Thebes who fell in the

---

been a pharaoh of Lower Egypt. The priestess' very name, of course, means something like "godly/god's mind."

[13] Note: *Suppliants* would be quite short without Iphis-and-Evadne, yet the rest of the play could do without it. In this it unlike the Polyneices episode in Sophocles' *OC*, which comes as a surprise when the audience expect the play to be nearing its end at our line number 1245 and which makes this by far Sophocles' longest extant play.

failed assault on that city. He is not too late to prevent her death, but cannot gt er to obey his plea that she not proceed with her determination to jump to her own death onto the pyre where Capaneus' body is being cremated just off stage. Her dying is subject of a case study. She *could* have left a little son behind, the Sthenelus who will proudly avenge his father's death in the next generation (*Il*. 4.403-410). His existence, however, is not mentioned in the play, and he may not be among those young orphan boys present in the orchestra with their widowed mothers, the famous Epigonoi who will grow up to avenge their fathers' deaths and sack Thebes. Sthenelus can be Capaneus' son by a former wife. As will be suggested in PART II (where she like the other five suicides will be *quoted*) Evadne gives the impression of being a still very young, newly or at least recently married woman, not a mother with a baby or toddler to leave completely parentless who should therefore give her serious pause before dying.

Sophocles' Antigone could be said to invite execution and then to expedite death out of "love," but this is *non*-sexual love for predeceased family members, for her mother and agnate males. The like would be true of Hecuba if I am right about her lunging exit into off-stage flames at the end of *Trojan Women*. Here expedited death would be out of longing for sons killed during the long war and toward its end (Paris), even, if she is aware of it, the one or two slain (Deïphobus, Polydorus) during the sack of Ilium. She knows and feels how for her "ancestral land and children and husband are gone" (πατρὶς ἔρρει καὶ τέκνα καὶ πόσις *Tro*. 107), possibly aware of how atrociously Priam was speared or beaten to death during the sack of her city—and in the context of this play, how her only agnate grandson, born to her dearest son Hector, died and could at least be buried. Here, too it would be hard to argue that this lethal love is erotic! (See in our CONCLUSION the sections on φιλία and ἔρως.)

Four of the above suicidal females in Euripides three married, one maiden, each *sui generis,* receive more thorough discussion in what follows. Two, as we shall see, have complex but clear reasons for their choice to die, a third's uniquely simple motivation, and a fourth (though the first in order of creation and first to treat) offers elusive and controversial διάνοια, in part because the playwright omits some important backstory data—on purpose?[14]

Note: Of fragmentary plays by Euripides, one belonging to our study of tragic suicide surely warrants acknowledgment and another that may

[14] This is the earliest datable play of Euripides. Two by Sophocles that surely precede it, *Ajax* and *Antigone*, and *Women of Trachis* possibly as well, include notorious ambiguities, about the so-called *Trugrede*, about Heracles' post-pyre, about off-stage happenings on the battlefield. Did earlier Euripides follow that example (and maybe never quite ceased: From which play of the younger poet is ambiguity absent, particularly as its end?

be *Erechtheus* dramatized a unique *group* example self-sacrifice cum suicide to save Athens from formidable attack. King Erechtheus, three daughters, one a divinely mandated, the other two in-all-for one, one-for-all solidarity suicides for a sort of sororal *Liebestod*, and *Antigone*, which I believe ended with a suicide-pact *Liebestod* when Haemon slays his wife [sic!] Antigone, then himself many years after the action of Sophocles' play.

About *Erechtheus* play there is no controversy only about details since so much text survives from the pertinent last parts of the play. See Christopher Collard and Martin Crop, *Euripides VII. Fragments* on *Erechtheus* pp. 362-401. About a Euripidean *Antigone*, on the other hand, though one would not know it from Collard and Cropp pp. 156-169 we find fundamental disagreement. Wikipedia article Antigone (Euripides play) – Wikipedia is fair and balanced. The daunting list of formidable scholars who reject out of hand Hyginus *Fab.* 72 as testimonium for a Euripidean *Antigone* but derive it from 4th-century tragedian Astydamas' play of the same name. This rejection is based largely upon the unsupportable argument adduced by the Loeb editors "Hyginus *Fab.* 72 tells Antigone's story so very differently from Sophocles that it cannot be considered for reconstructing Euripides." Should we deny Euripidean authorship to his extant *Electra* because it differs so radically from Sophocles'! The stronger part of the argument rests on Hyginus' conflation of what a few of us believe *backstory*, with essential details different from the older poet in his *Antigone* (and here perhaps divided between a ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν Prologue spoken by Antigone or, less likely, Haemon and perhaps a central *OT* 774-813-like retrospective narration to Heracles). It sets the scene for a drama enacted years later, long after Haemon, ordered by his father to execute Antigone, had lied about having done so, set her free, probably, trysted with her among hersmen (on Mt Cithaeron?) where Heracles enters the stoty(in pursuit of the Lion of Cithaeron?) and may learn their history.

The couple eventually return *incogniti* to Thebes with their protector Heracles and their young son Maeon, both of whom will compete in games there (according to age-group?). By a conspicuous Spartoi birthmark Creon identifies the lad as an unexpected and outrageous grandson, recognizes and arrests his parents. Heracles cannot talk him out of executing them. However, like the Sophoclean Antigone, they anticipate a cruel death that Creon will inflict on them separately, dying instead together when Haemon slays Antigone by sword, who invite death now, then himself (as in *Helen* Menelaus threatened to do, by slaying Helen committing suicide over Proteus' tomb. himself). This is Euripidean enough for me, but I cannot prove it.

No one's suicide can occur without effect on at least one other person closely related to him or her. Even lonely celibate Philoctetes, who has neither sibling nor child, still may have living parents back in Greece including a father Poeias who would mourn him, a likely only son, as Peleus does Achilles. Near relatives of every kind, of course, are affected by a self-slaying and are sometimes its cause. Male kin are especially important, for good or ill, under for the most part unabashed patriarchy. Think, for example, of poor suicidal Hermione in *Andromache.* Would Antigone have risked and accepted death to bury a *sister*![15]

We begin therefore with a survey or relatives, emphasizing males in their patriarchal milieu, of Sophocles' best known self-perpetrated suicides, (1) that of a mature hero (Ajax), who is in important fact a *son* and a *father,* a *brother* as well, and *master* of a loving but soon a mourning concubine; and (2) of young but betrothed maiden princess (Antigone), consciously a *daughter* and a *sister*, but no loving fiancée to her cousin-fiancé. The former's self-slaying is a traditional one, going back to the Cycle's *Little Iliad* and well attested iconographically long before Sophocles' career. The latter's self-hanging, on the other hand, is likely Sophocles' stunning invention, as the very existence of a royal Theban Antigone, sister of earlier attested Ismene, could be and present as one of Oedipus' two unnamed daughters at the end of a later play (1462-1465).[16]

After those two we shall treat purposeful, invited or self-incurred deaths of four young women in Euripides. Two of these are married with living *husbands* and mothers of a young *son* or two (Alcestis one *and* a daughter, Phaedra two). Phaedra has an older, even coeval *stepson* as well. The third is very newly widowed, her late *husband* now on his burning funeral pyre and possibly—I doubt this, as you will see—also has a *son*, *his* son for sure and maybe quite a young one (Evadne); her aged *father* is a factor in her story, but far more deeply involved in the tragedy of our fourth is *her* father, a maiden princess who thinks herself betrothed to a heroic *fiancé* (Iphigenia), daughter to a living *father* and mother, s*ister* to an only *brother*, infant.

---

[15] Toward avenging atrocities done to her *sister* Philomela what Procne did in Sophocles' lost *Tereus,* to Tereus indirectly and directly to Tereus' infant son—and hers—is a unique and extreme example. Other tragic women avenge brothers, e.g., Althaea. What Medea does to Jason's and her sons in *Medea* may avenge her *brother*, though it is Seneca who makes this explicit at his *Med*. 963-971.

[16] Note: Ismene was mentioned by 7th century poet Mimnermus (Fr. 21) and depicted on a 6th century Corinthian vase (Louvre E 640)—as victim of murder by her brother Polyneices' comrade Tydeus in the failed war of the Seven Against Thebes!

Ajax in *Ajax*

Ajax begins this play violent, sadistic, murderous in *intention*, doing what gives him malign joy doing what he does to torment, lethally, his φίλοι of the high command of the Greek army at Troy become ἐχθροί. In *fact*, he is doing it to innocent and defenseless domesticanimals, thanks to Athena's imposed hallucination (related, perhaps, to what that goddess inflicts on Penelope's Suitors at *Od*. 20.345-349). When she allows him to see properly, he realizes that he has three options. One, to go home to Salmis in disgrace, to a father who, with Heracles, easily *won* a Trojan War I. Two, to wait for an overwhelming assault on him by the Greek host and its high command, who will kill him in not\ gentle way for what he wanted to do to the Atreids and Odysseus. Three, to kill himself, to end his shame and, by Achilles-like withdrawa from the war, to harm the Greeks. He chooses the third, as ids clear in Episode 4. What he says to his concubine, mother of his little son, and Chorus misleads them. Likewise in Episode 2, with what for them (and interpreters who likewise cannot think like him) is a "betrayal speech," *Trugrede*, where in fact explains why he must die to leave such a world ashe has found it to be. In his soliloquy in Episode 4 he recovers revenge as a motive, added to his shame at irrecoverable loss of hard-won honor by the means he chooses to end his suddenly shortened life. No one will kill him but himself. About this resolution he speaks aloud to himself thoughtfully; yet he thinks so differently than wife and Chorus that and speaks to *them* with no desire to deceive but, *because* so differently, he can be and will be misunderstood. Even by interpreters who likewise cannot think like him. Only Odysseus admits in effect that cannot

In more detail: The hero's' father Telamon, Aeacid grandson of Zeus, is still alive on Salamis over in Greece. He had been chief comrade of Heracles in a first, *short* victorious Trojan War. Aias' half-brother Teucer, who has a major role in this play, is a living souvenir of that, born to Telamon of rescued, then captive Trojan royal princess Hesione. Ajax already had felt that he was not living up to his father's reputation. The first and second quoted speeches show this. Outraged disappointment in the "Judgment of Arms" that awarded the divine armor of Achilles, greatest hero of their generation *and Ajax' agnate first cousin*, not to *himself*, the immovable object to Achilles' irresistible force, but instead to Odysseus, who could think one thing and say something different (= Achilles' comment to πολυμήχανος Odysseus at *Il*. 9.312f *in Ajax' hearing*). This caused the Telamonian to go angry-mad. He came to his senses fter thinking (as Athena led him to do) that, when he actually tormented and slaughtered cattle and sheep, he was punishing the sons of Atreus and their Ithacan favorite for that *mis*judgment of the Telamonian' importance to the Achaean

cause at Troy. His embarrassment was even more profound now and he could not live with it. The third speech indicates his intention to leave his little son an orphan, whom he addresses in a clear fare-well, entrusting the little boy to trusty comrades. The fourth speech, deceptively known as *Trugrede*, "Deception Speech," describes the world as Ajax has come to understands it (and, as hearers within the play and most readers ever since suppose, indicates his acquiescence in it. It really indicates his rejection but existence in a morally unstable world where friends turn enemies and vice versa. In the fifth and final speech he offers himself as a sacrificial victim of unique worth, slain with "enemy" Hector's providential sword (with which we probably saw him making many or at least a few "wooly deaths and shipwrecks of cows" in the Prologue scene). The weapon becomes his σφαγεύς for *do ut detis* self-sacrifice to compel even unfriendly gods to heed him and to harm his ex-comrades in ways that he could and cannot do. We know that his prayer will be granted. He spares former φίλοι, now cheating ἐχθροί, the joy of killing him. He dies nearly on stage, whereafter, wearing his mask, a (probably) supine κωφὸν πρόσωπον plays a center-stage role to the end of the play. We see how hated Odysseus becomes an improbable advocate, who respects, even admires him for all he has done until just now without being able to share his thinking or fully to understand it. Odysseus is a compromised survivor.

1. 434-440
Αἴας
ὅτου [=of me] πατὴρ μὲν τῆσδ᾽ ἀπ᾽ Ἰδαίας χθονὸς
τὰ πρῶτα καλλιστεῖ᾽ ἀριστεύσας στρατοῦ
πρὸς οἶκον ἦλθε πᾶσαν εὔκλειαν φέρων:
ἐγὼ δ᾽ ὁ κείνου παῖς, τὸν αὐτὸν ἐς τόπον
Τροίας ἐπελθὼν οὐκ ἐλάσσονι σθένει
οὐδ᾽ ἔργα μείω χειρὸς ἀρκέσας ἐμῆς,
ἄτιμος Ἀργείοισιν ὧδ᾽ ἀπόλλυμαι.

2. 457-474
καὶ νῦν τί χρὴ δρᾶν; ὅστις ἐμφανῶς θεοῖς
ἐχθαίρομαι, μισεῖ δέ μ᾽ Ἑλλήνων στρατός,
ἔχθει δὲ Τροία πᾶσα καὶ πεδία τάδε.
πότερα πρὸς οἴκους, ναυλόχους λιπὼν ἕδρας
μόνους τ᾽ Ἀτρείδας, πέλαγος Αἰγαῖον περῶ;
καὶ ποῖον ὄμμα πατρὶ δηλώσω φανεὶς
Τελαμῶνι; **πῶς με τλήσεταί ποτ᾽ εἰσιδεῖν**
γυμνὸν φανέντα τῶν ἀριστείων ἄτερ,
ὧν αὐτὸς ἔσχε στέφανον εὐκλείας μέγαν;
οὐκ ἔστι τοὔργον τλητόν. ἀλλὰ δῆτ᾽ ἰὼν

πρὸς ἔρυμα Τρώων, **ξυμπεσὼν μόνος μόνοις**
καὶ δρῶν τι χρηστόν, **εἶτα λοίσθιον θάνω;**
ἀλλ᾽ οὐδέ γ᾽ Ἀτρείδας ἂν εὐφράναιμί που
οὐκ ἔστι ταῦτα. πεῖρά τις ζητητέα
τοιάδ᾽ ἀφ᾽ ἧς γέροντι δηλώσω πατρὶ
μή τοι φύσιν γ᾽ ἄσπλαγχνος ἐκ κείνου γεγώς.
αἰσχρὸν γὰρ ἄνδρα τοῦ μακροῦ χρῄζειν βίου,
κακοῖσιν ὅστις μηδὲν ἐξαλλάσσεται.

3. 565-582
ἀλλ᾽, ἄνδρες ἀσπιστῆρες, ἐνάλιος λεώς,
ὑμῖν τε κοινὴν τήνδ᾽ ἐπισκήπτω χάριν,
κείνῳ τ᾽ ἐμὴν ἀγγείλατ᾽ ἐντολήν, ὅπως
τὸν παῖδα τόνδε πρὸς δόμους ἐμοὺς ἄγων
Τελαμῶνι δείξει μητρί τ᾽, Ἐριβοίᾳ λέγω,
ὥς σφιν γένηται γηροβοσκὸς εἰσαεί,
μέχρις οὗ μυχοὺς κίχωσι τοῦ κάτω θεοῦ,
καὶ τἀμὰ τεύχη μήτ᾽ ἀγωνάρχαι τινὲς
θήσουσ᾽ Ἀχαιοῖς μήθ᾽ ὁ λυμεὼν ἐμός.
ἀλλ᾽ αὐτό μοι σύ, **παῖ**, **λαβὼν ἐπώνυμον**,
Εὐρύσακες, **ἴσχε διὰ πολυρράφου στρέφων**
πόρπακος, **ἑπτάβοιον ἄρρηκτον σάκος:**
τὰ δ᾽ ἄλλα τεύχη κοίν᾽ ἐμοὶ τεθάψεται.
ἀλλ᾽ ὡς τάχος τὸν παῖδα τόνδ᾽ ἤδη δέχου
καὶ δῶμα πάκτου, **μηδ᾽ ἐπισκήνους γόους**
δάκρυε: **κάρτα τοι φιλοίκτιστον γυνή**.
πύκαζε θᾶσσον: οὐ πρὸς ἰατροῦ σοφοῦ
θρηνεῖν ἐπῳδὰς πρὸς τομῶντι πήματι.

4. 646-692
ἅπανθ᾽ ὁ μακρὸς κἀναρίθμητος χρόνος
φύει τ᾽ ἄδηλα καὶ φανέντα κρύπτεται:
κοὐκ ἔστ᾽ ἄελπτον οὐδέν, **ἀλλ᾽ ἁλίσκεται**
χὠ δεινὸς ὅρκος χαὶ περισκελεῖς φρένες.
κἀγὼ γάρ, **ὃς τὰ δείν᾽ ἐκαρτέρουν τότε**,
βαφῇ σίδηρος ὡς ἐθηλύνθην στόμα
μολών τε **χῶρον ἔνθ᾽ ἂν ἀστιβῆ κίχω**,
κρύψω τόδ᾽ ἔγχος τοὐμόν, **ἔχθιστον βελῶν**,
γαίας ὀρύξας ἔνθα μή τις ὄψεται:
ἀλλ᾽ αὐτὸ νὺξ Ἅιδης τε σῳζόντων κάτω.
ἐγὼ γὰρ ἐξ οὗ χειρὶ τοῦτ᾽ ἐδεξάμην
παρ᾽ Ἕκτορος δώρημα δυσμενεστάτου,
οὔπω τι κεδνὸν ἔσχον Ἀργείων πάρα.
ἀλλ᾽ ἔστ᾽ ἀληθὴς ἡ βροτῶν παροιμία,
ἐχθρῶν ἄδωρα δῶρα κοὐκ ὀνήσιμα.
τοιγὰρ τὸ λοιπὸν εἰσόμεσθα μὲν θεοῖς

εἴκειν, μαθησόμεσθα δ᾽ Ἀτρείδας σέβειν.
ἄρχοντές εἰσιν, ὥσθ᾽ ὑπεικτέον. τί μήν;
καὶ γὰρ τὰ δεινὰ καὶ τὰ καρτερώτατα
τιμαῖς ὑπείκει: τοῦτο μὲν νιφοστιβεῖς
χειμῶνες ἐκχωροῦσιν εὐκάρπῳ θέρει:
ἐξίσταται δὲ νυκτὸς αἰανὴς κύκλος
τῇ λευκοπώλῳ φέγγος ἡμέρᾳ φλέγειν:
δεινῶν τ᾽ ἄημα πνευμάτων ἐκοίμισε
στένοντα πόντον: ἐν δ᾽ ὁ παγκρατὴς ὕπνος
λύει πεδήσας, οὐδ᾽ ἀεὶ λαβὼν ἔχει.
ἡμεῖς δὲ πῶς οὐ γνωσόμεσθα σωφρονεῖν;
ἔγωγ᾽: ἐπίσταμαι γὰρ ἀρτίως ὅτι
ὅ τ᾽ ἐχθρὸς ἡμῖν ἐς τοσόνδ᾽ ἐχθαρτέος,
ὡς καὶ φιλήσων αὖθις, ἔς τε τὸν φίλον
τοσαῦθ᾽ ὑπουργῶν ὠφελεῖν βουλήσομαι,
ὡς αἰὲν οὐ μενοῦντα: τοῖς πολλοῖσι γὰρ
βροτῶν ἄπιστός ἐσθ᾽ ἑταιρείας λιμήν.
ἀλλ᾽ ἀμφὶ μὲν τούτοισιν εὖ σχήσει: σὺ δὲ
ἔσω θεοῖς ἐλθοῦσα διὰ τάχους, γύναι,
εὔχου τελεῖσθαι τοὐμὸν ὧν ἐρᾷ κέαρ.
ὑμεῖς δ᾽, ἑταῖροι, ταὐτὰ τῇδέ μοι τάδε
τιμᾶτε, Τεύκρῳ τ᾽, ἢν μόλῃ, σημήνατε
μέλειν μὲν ἡμῶν, εὐνοεῖν δ᾽ ὑμῖν ἅμα.
ἐγὼ γὰρ εἶμ᾽ ἐκεῖσ᾽ ὅποι πορευτέον:
ὑμεῖς δ᾽ ἃ φράζω δρᾶτε, καὶ τάχ᾽ ἄν μ᾽ ἴσως
πύθοισθε, κεἰ νῦν δυστυχῶ, σεσωσμένον.

5. 815-865

ὁ μὲν σφαγεὺς ἔστηκεν ᾗ τομώτατος
γένοιτ᾽ ἄν, εἴ τῳ καὶ λογίζεσθαι σχολή:
δῶρον μὲν ἀνδρὸς Ἕκτορος ξένων ἐμοὶ
μάλιστα μισηθέντος ἐχθίστου θ᾽ ὁρᾶν:
πέπηγε δ᾽ ἐν γῇ πολεμίᾳ τῇ Τρῳάδι,
σιδηροβρῶτι θηγάνῃ νενεκονής:
ἔπηξα δ᾽ αὐτὸν εὖ περιστείλας ἐγώ,
εὐνούστατον τῷδ᾽ ἀνδρὶ διὰ τάχους θανεῖν.
οὕτω μὲν εὐσκευοῦμεν: ἐκ δὲ τῶνδέ μοι
σὺ πρῶτος, ὦ Ζεῦ, καὶ γὰρ εἰκός, ἄρκεσον.
αἰτήσομαι δέ σ᾽ οὐ μακρὸν γέρας λαχεῖν.
πέμψον τιν᾽ ἡμῖν ἄγγελον, κακὴν φάτιν
Τεύκρῳ φέροντα, πρῶτος ὥς με βαστάσῃ
πεπτῶτα τῷδε περὶ νεορράντῳ ξίφει,
καὶ μὴ πρὸς ἐχθρῶν του κατοπτευθεὶς πάρος
ῥιφθῶ κυσὶν πρόβλητος οἰωνοῖς θ᾽ ἕλωρ.
τοσαῦτά σ᾽, ὦ Ζεῦ, προστρέπω, καλῶ δ᾽ ἅμα
πομπαῖον Ἑρμῆν χθόνιον εὖ με κοιμίσαι,
ξὺν ἀσφαδάστῳ καὶ ταχεῖ πηδήματι

πλευρὰν διαρρήξαντα τῷδε φασγάνῳ.
καλῶ δ᾽ ἀρωγοὺς τὰς ἀεί τε παρθένους 835
ἀεί θ᾽ ὁρώσας πάντα τἀν βροτοῖς πάθη,
σεμνὰς Ἐρινῦς τανύποδας, μαθεῖν ἐμὲ
πρὸς τῶν Ἀτρειδῶν ὡς διόλλυμαι τάλας,
καί σφας κακοὺς κάκιστα καὶ πανωλέθρους
ξυναρπάσειαν, ὥσπερ εἰσορῶσ᾽ ἐμὲ 840
αὐτοσφαγῆ πίπτοντα, τὼς αὐτοσφαγεῖς
πρὸς τῶν φιλίστων ἐκγόνων ὀλοίατο.
ἴτ᾽, ὦ ταχεῖαι ποίνιμοί τ᾽ Ἐρινύες,
γεύεσθε, μὴ φείδεσθε πανδήμου στρατοῦ:
σὺ δ᾽, ᾧ τὸν αἰπὺν οὐρανὸν διφρηλατῶν 845
Ἅλιε, πατρῴαν τὴν ἐμὴν ὅταν χθόνα
ἴδῃς, ἐπισχὼν χρυσόνωτον ἡνίαν
ἄγγειλον ἄτας τὰς ἐμὰς μόρον τ᾽ ἐμὸν
γέροντι πατρὶ τῇ τε δυστήνῳ τροφῷ.

ANTIGONE IN *ANTIGONE*

Antigone, like Phaedra II in *Hippolytus* II examined below, is suicidal from the moment we first meet her until her last exit—each to die by hanging later that day. Save for Antigone's (older?) sister Ismene—whom she alienates in the dialogue that the first extract below quotes, the title girl is thereafter painfully alone.[17] The one other appearance of both on stage shows how much Antigone despises her and regards her as ex-φίλη. Indeed Antigone may, like Ajax, wish to depart from a life in which φιλία is so unstable! For he will not have her by her standards disloyal sister's *un*wanted company in dying! Their parents died some time ago, Jocasta (traditional suicide) and her brother-father Oedipus (his death not explained but indicated in much his daughters say, for example Ismene in no. 1 below and Antigone in no. 4 below). Now, only since yesterday, her two brothers are dead by reciprocal fratricide, by the working of their father's terrible curse. Eteocles died to maintain his de facto kingship of Thebes and in successful defense of "his" city, while Polyneices fell attacking at once his brother who denied him a turn as king and the city whose rule Eteocles would not share. Their uncle Creon is regent. He has ordered honors of a state funeral to martyred patriot Eteocles. To villainous traitor Polyneices, on the other hand, who would rather destroy Thebes

[17] Ismene is only willing to join Antigone in death by state execution hundreds of lines later, despondent and suicidal over the prospect of having lost her sister's respect and being the very last of Oedipus' family. However, Antigone (538f, 542f, 546f, etc.) and Creon (Chorus and Creon, 769-771) deny innocent her that escape from a life of misery that he desires by un*earned* execution! She is exits with her sister, taken by attendants at Creon's command into the palace (577-580). But Ismene stays there—unmentioned, forgotten.

than let Eteocles rule it, he forbids burial under penalty of death, even that private minimal ritual τάφος which the gods prescribe for burial of all deceased mortals, good or evil. In the second Episode Antigone, who has defied his prohibition off stage, and is under arrest for flouting it, defies Uncle Creon and his policy to his face *publicly*, before the Chorus, knowing, even welcoming the capital punishment that this will cost. She declares how, in undertaking burial of Polyneices, affirming though she does that she *did* know the prohibition, she obeyed a higher, unwritten law than Creon's decree (no. 2) and that she would win glory from her pious loyalty to *both* brothers of the same parents as hers (no. 3). No. 4 proves (a) her death wish—to join her deceased φίλοι regardless of their catastrophic behavior, objectively guilty polluting sins and crimes of each but also (b) how *the gods'* demand that *all* the dead be buried and *her* insistence that *her brother* must be buried merely coincide, seeing that she obeys only because the dead person *is* a full brother. Moreover, she does not want to live! In Episode 2 an anonymous Guard reports to Creon how the guards caught her performing funeral rites over her brother's corpse after she arrived on the battlefield during a heavy, concealing dust storm. She was not alarmed (*Ant*. 433) and denied doing neither what *she* has just done, what Greon's guards have seen and overheard (423-431) nor what had *been done* out there before (434f). The latter, as the guards would know, refers to what the same Guard had reported in the preceding episode (245-247 and 249-258). In fact, as the Prologue makes clear at 84-88, all along she wants to be arrested and to spend eternity with her brother and others "below" (72-76). So now she will not deny her "criminal" actions, nor, though she cannot positively *claim* the gods' divine support, anything that anyone else may have done to break the regent-στρατηγός' unholy prohibition of obsequies for his *enemy* nephew. Her bold defiance of Creon is a variant on "suicide by cop," although in the sealed cavern to which Creon cruelly destined her for a slow death closer to her beloved dead (534f) and under rule of her only god Hades (773-78; cf. 529 and 542) she will accelerate her death—and reunions—by hanging (524f). In those mysterious previous funeral rites some interpreters find ambiguity, even suggesting Antigone may have (also) been responsible for them. However, as the Chorus thoughtfully and rhetorically ask Creon, "Not something divinely caused?" (τι καὶ θεήλατον, 278). He is *angered* at the thought (280-288). He is, of course, as wrong about this as he was and is right about several gods manifest support of the Theban defense in yestersday' sevenfold battle.

For as they enter the orchestra and dance the Chorus of citizen men make clear that gods, against all expectation, miraculously repelled Polyneices' daunting seven-pronged attack (*Ant*. 100-154). This comes before Antigone can have gotten out to the battlefield, XX Gate *and could* be

responsible for the mysterious burial.[18] When Ismene balks at defying Uncle Creon and adding two new deaths of Oedipus' children yesterday's two and of both their parents before that (53-60). During that first episode after the Guard's report the Chorus speculate that what he described was divinely caused (θεήλατον, 278). Although Creon angrily rejects the thought (280-288), they must be right!

Hat the Guard twhat the , what details of the First Stasimon the second to cover the body a second time; see *Ant*. in Episode 1 and 394-396 and 409-436 in Episode 2.) She will, however, *s*ooner join the grim ghosts of five adored *philoi*, two parents and three brothers. (We must, of course, count Oedipus twice!) In catastrophic frustration like Ajax's, Haemon kills himself, in his case after failing to commit wrathful patricide. His mother also kills herself like Ajax, also with a sword (though one without a prehistory), also as a *sacrifice* to commandeer the gods' power, cursing Creon in order to avenge now both of her sons (holding Creon responsible for sacrificial death of their elder son Megareus in yesterday's battle) and, a collateral effect, to vindicate Haemon's beloved fiancée. Each of three suicides is differently motivated, and Antigone's stands out as an escape from a world now empty of φίλοι. All accumulate to grant Antigone's prayer that Creon—whom she does not deign to name, indeed uses a generic plural for "those who have wronged her" may suffer "no more than I" (*Ant*. 925-928). She kills herself by hanging so that she, not Creon, controls the means of her death and also that so much the more quickly she may be reunited with her parents and brothers. Only Evadne (in Case Studies) rushes to reunion with a ghost. She, however, is driven not by narrow φιλία but by even narrower ἔρως–for a *husband*.

1. 69-91

Ἀντιγόνη
οὔτ᾽ ἂν κελεύσαιμ᾽ οὔτ᾽ ἄν, εἰ θέλοις ἔτι
πράσσειν, ἐμοῦ γ᾽ ἂν ἡδέως δρῴης μέτα. 70
ἀλλ᾽ ἴσθ᾽ ὁποῖά σοι δοκεῖ, κεῖνον δ᾽ ἐγὼ
θάψω: καλόν μοι τοῦτο ποιούσῃ θανεῖν.
φίλη μετ᾽ αὐτοῦ κείσομαι, φίλου μέτα,
ὅσια πανουργήσασ᾽. ἐπεὶ πλείων χρόνος
ὃν δεῖ μ᾽ ἀρέσκειν τοῖς κάτω τῶν ἐνθάδε. 75
ἐκεῖ γὰρ αἰεὶ κείσομαι: **σοὶ** [to Ismene] **δ᾽, εἰ δοκεῖ,**
τὰ τῶν θεῶν ἔντιμ᾽ ἀτιμάσασ᾽ ἔχε.

Ἰσμήνη
ἐγὼ μὲν οὐκ ἄτιμα ποιοῦμαι, τὸ δὲ
βίᾳ πολιτῶν δρᾶν ἔφυν ἀμήχανος.

---

[18] On Antigone's movements in the Prologue see the Appendix, paragraph 5.

Ἀντιγόνη
σὺ μὲν τάδ᾽ ἂν προῦχοι᾽: ἐγὼ δὲ δὴ τάφον
χώσουσ᾽ ἀδελφῷ φιλτάτῳ πορεύσομαι.

Ἰσμήνη
οἴμοι ταλαίνης, ὡς ὑπερδέδοικά σου.

Ἀντιγόνη
μὴ ‘μοῦ προτάρβει: τὸν σὸν ἐξόρθου πότμον.

Ἰσμήνη
ἀλλ᾽ οὖν προμηνύσῃς γε τοῦτο μηδενὶ
τοὔργον, κρυφῇ δὲ κεῦθε, σὺν δ᾽ αὔτως ἐγώ.

Ἀντιγόνη
οἴμοι, **καταύδα**: **πολλὸν ἐχθίων ἔσει**
σιγῶσ᾽, **ἐὰν μὴ πᾶσι κηρύξῃς τάδε**.

Ἰσμήνη
θερμὴν ἐπὶ ψυχροῖσι καρδίαν ἔχεις.

Ἀντιγόνη
ἀλλ᾽ οἷδ᾽ ἀρέσκουσ᾽ οἷς μάλισθ᾽ ἁδεῖν με χρή.

Ἰσμήνη
εἰ καὶ δυνήσει γ᾽: **ἀλλ᾽ ἀμηχάνων ἐρᾷς**.

Ἀντιγόνη
οὐκοῦν, **ὅταν δὴ μὴ σθένω**, **πεπαύσομαι**.

2. 450-470
Ἀντιγόνη οὐ γάρ τί μοι Ζεὺς ἦν ὁ κηρύξας τάδε,
οὐδ᾽ ἡ ξύνοικος τῶν κάτω θεῶν Δίκη
τοιούσδ᾽ ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ὥρισεν νόμους.
οὐδὲ σθένειν τοσοῦτον ᾠόμην τὰ σὰ
κηρύγμαθ᾽, **ὥστ᾽ ἄγραπτα κἀσφαλῆ θεῶν**
4νόμιμα δύνασθαι θνητὸν ὄνθ᾽ ὑπερδραμεῖν.
οὐ γάρ τι νῦν γε κἀχθές, **ἀλλ᾽ ἀεί ποτε**
ζῇ ταῦτα, **κοὐδεὶς οἶδεν ἐξ ὅτου ‘φάνη**.
τούτων ἐγὼ οὐκ ἔμελλον, ἀνδρὸς οὐδενὸς
φρόνημα δείσασ᾽, ἐν θεοῖσι τὴν δίκην
δώσειν: θανουμένη γὰρ ἐξῄδη, τί δ᾽ οὔ;
κεἰ μὴ σὺ προὐκήρυξας. **εἰ δὲ τοῦ χρόνου**
πρόσθεν θανοῦμαι, **κέρδος αὖτ᾽ ἐγὼ λέγω**.
ὅστις γὰρ ἐν πολλοῖσιν ὡς ἐγὼ κακοῖς
ζῇ, **πῶς ὅδ᾽ Οὐχὶ κατθανὼν κέρδος φέρει**;

οὕτως ἔμοιγε τοῦδε τοῦ μόρου τυχεῖν
παρ᾽ οὐδὲν ἄλγος: **ἀλλ᾽ ἄν**, **εἰ τὸν ἐξ ἐμῆς**
μητρὸς θανόντ᾽ ἄθαπτον ἠνσχόμην νέκυν,
κείνοις ἂν ἤλγουν: **τοῖσδε δ᾽ οὐκ ἀλγύνομαι**.
σοὶ δ᾽ εἰ δοκῶ νῦν μῶρα δρῶσα τυγχάνειν,
σχεδόν τι μώρῳ μωρίαν ὀφλισκάνω.

3. 502-507
καίτοι πόθεν κλέος γ᾽ ἂν εὐκλεέστερον
κατέσχον ἢ τὸν αὐτάδελφον ἐν τάφῳ
τιθεῖσα; τούτοις [Chorus]τ οῦτο πᾶσιν ἀνδάνειν
λέγοιτ᾽ ἄν, εἰ μὴ γλῶσσαν ἐγκλῄοι φόβος.
ἀλλ᾽ ἡ τυραννὶς πολλά τ᾽ ἄλλ᾽ εὐδαιμονεῖ
κἄξεστιν αὐτῇ δρᾶν λέγειν θ᾽ ἃ βούλεται.

4. 897-912
ἐλθοῦσα μέντοι κάρτ᾽ ἐν ἐλπίσιν τρέφω
φίλη μὲν ἥξειν πατρί, **προσφιλὴς δὲ σοί**,
μῆτερ, **φίλη δὲ σοί**, **κασίγνητον κάρα**:
ἐπεὶ θανόντας αὐτόχειρ ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ
ἔλουσα κἀκόσμησα κἀπιτυμβίους
χοὰς ἔδωκα. **νῦν δέ Πολύνεικες**, **τὸ σὸν**
δέμας περιστέλλουσα τοιάδ᾽ ἄρνυμαι.
καίτοι σ᾽ ἐγὼ ‘τίμησα τοῖς φρονοῦσιν εὖ.
οὐ γάρ ποτ᾽ οὔτ᾽ ἄν, **εἰ τέκνων μήτηρ ἔφυν**,
οὔτ᾽ εἰ πόσις μοι κατθανὼν ἐτήκετο,
βίᾳ πολιτῶν τόνδ᾽ ἂν ἠρόμην πόνον.
τίνος νόμου δὴ ταῦτα πρὸς χάριν λέγω;
πόσις μὲν ἄν μοι κατθανόντος ἄλλος ἦν,
καὶ παῖς ἀπ᾽ ἄλλου φωτός, **εἰ τοῦδ᾽ ἤμπλακονμητρὸς**
δ᾽ ἐν Ἅιδου καὶ πατρὸς κεκευθότοιν
οὐκ ἔστ᾽ ἀδελφὸς ὅστις ἂν βλάστοι ποτέ.

EURIPIDES' FOUR

In order of their plays' appearance four young to very young female Euripidean characters bring death upon themselves because of values higher to themselves than their personal survival 'under the light of the sun,' Two name their plays, Alcestis in *Alcestis* and Iphigenia in the posthumous play that bears her name, *Iphigenia at Aulis/IA*. Another of these women, Phaedra could well have done the same for her play; indeed other "Potiphar's wife" plays of similar plot do so, for example Sophocles' *Phaedra* of which we know next to nothing, extant Seneca's and Racine's.

(Were it the Greeks' custom to name plays like *Romeo* and *Juliet*, *Antony* and *Cleopatra*, or operatic *Orpheus* and *Eurydice*, there would be a Euripidean *Hippolytus and Phaedra* I and a second *extant* II. Maybe also an *Alcestis and Admetus*—in that order?) In contrast our fourth, Evadne, appears only in one structurally autonomous episode that, depending on our judgment, elaborates or interrupts the *Suppliants*. Each has distinctive aims in dying—all prompted in some way by the untranslatable value-word φιλία. Untranslatable, of course, because of its diverse applications to a range of relationships, including amoral-passionate and moral-dutiful. (We look into an ἔρως versus φιλία dichotomy at the end, seeing where the former conflicts with a purely individual φιλοτιμία, but where the latter extends to ambition for family reputation there is no conflict at all but rather coincidence.)

Other persons—male persons—have absolute yet often conflicting claims on a woman based upon her relationship *and duty* to the family of birth (agnate), on the one hand, and to family of marriage, to the nuclear family with her spouse and his children and to "affine" in-laws.

We shall note and take into account family circumstances of each of those four. As with the Sophoclean two plays, quotations from their respective plays' scripts follow discussion of each, proving how the suicidal can record their own self-assessments and (sometimes changing) resolution, especially encapsuled in what is quoted from them **in bold**. Each has male relatives important in her story and factoring *or not* in her decision—to die.

ALCESTIS IN *ALCESTIS*

This is an instance of an outlier "sacrifice" that is neither ritual nor immediately deadly, giving the willing courageous victim like Polyxena, Macaria, or Menoeceus little time to be talked *out of* suffering it right now, *into* resisting it, and reluctant Euripidean Iphigeneia time to be talked out of resistance and *into* accepting death. Euripides challenges audience and readers uniquely in this play, beginning with ambiguity of genre.[19] Willful lacunae in the backstory are equally important for the present drama's interpretation. Alcestis has no living father. In shocking mythological her fact, she can have been one of Pelias' daughters whom Medea tricked into killing their father! *Before* that horror he may, however, have given marriage to King Admetus of Pherae to whose city she

[19] My (on line) *Oxford Bibliographies* article on this play surveys discussion of of whether it is "satyric" tragedy, melodrama with a happy ending, tragicomedy, or black, sarcastic comedy with an ironic "happy ending." Anything but a "tragedy" like *Medea* or *Hippolytus*! Also summarized are equally varied assessments of the character and motivation of Alcestis herself and, even more controversial, of Admetus. See Euripides' Alcestis – Classics – Oxford Bibliographies.

had moved (or *after* it her brother Acastus can have arranged the match, mentioned at *Alc*. 732—as possible avenger of her death that Admetus shamelessly solicited—and thus caused. Admetus' own ancient father Pheres, retired from kingship, declined to die in his Admetus' place so that his only son might reign on benevolently and bring up the young son and daughter whom Alcestis had borne to him.

Such surrogation was available thanks to a unique personal deal that Admetus' patron god Apollo made with the Fates, contradicting his usual position that when even a Hector (for example of a person dear to that god) was fated to die, die *he* must. In backstory Alcestis had programmed her own death when she declared herself, alone among her husband's many φίλοι of assorted kin and kind, willing to satisfy the daunting condition of Apollo's special deal with the Fates: Admetus' imminent death would be deferred should he find a willing substitute. However, though we know essentials about this young mortal king and his immortal protector in the "history" up to the literal *dead*line for the surrogate queen consort, there is a great deal that, *did* we know it, would affect our judgment of both Admetus and Alcestis, each of whose character has been controversial, in large part because of that ignorance. When indeed did the couple know when Alcestis would die? Shortly before or years before? Backing up, when did Admetus learn of the possible surrogation? How long did it take him to identify a willing a surrogate—to "find" her? Did he ask, even beg *her*, finally, in desperation, and "found" (*Alc*. 17) her alone willing? Or, when she saw that no one else admired or loved him enough to die for him did she come forward without being asked? Was her agreement revocable at any point during the perhaps several years that elapsed between the day (0r night!) when she pledged her life and the play's today, when the pledge will be enforced? Did Admetus' opportunity to pass off dying to a volunteer and his ultimate enlisting of her as willing surrogate occur before or after she had born—to Admetus the little prince and the littler princess whom we will see on stage—as their mother, uniquely, dies there in their and their father's presence?[20]

---

[20] It is not unreasonable to bring into this discussion Medea's famous line and a half, also mother of two, spoken from the same stage seven years later: ὡς τρὶς ἂν παρ' ἀσπίδα/στῆναι θέλοιμ' ἂν μᾶλλον ἢ τεκεῖν ἅπαξ (*Med*. 250f). Although obviously we lack statistics, motality in pregnancy, in childbirth, or from complication thereafter was common. Every pregnancy risked a woman's life; each live birth, especially a son's, extended the father's life not, of course, in his person but in his agnate race, seed, or lineage into the next generation and potentially beyond. His name, too, whether in patronymic or as a "junior." Alcestis had faced that risk *at least* twice between marrying Admetus and her death. In the play, whatever the Athenians thought about a mother's relationship to her *husband's* children, Alcestis will outlive herself in *hers*, of whose royal future she solemnly, publicly commits a celibate Admetus to take good care, not to propagate his race further in another's womb. Alcestis owns her children even as Medea, for one tragic day, disowns hers.

When *had* she agreed to die in her husband's place—soon after or even on their wedding day? Or several years later, after bearing him two children, by which time will she must be in her 20s, he closer to 30 if not older?

Other voluntary sacrificial deaths in tragedy take place within at most *hours* from when the victim agrees to die, *under then present crisis circumstances*. Cf. Macaria, Menoeceus, even Euripides' bold *willing* Iphigenia (on whom more below.) The sacrificial suicide in Admetus' story is a unique delayed action one, with an unknown span of time—possibly several *years*—between his wife's willingness and agreement to die in Admetus' place and her future death-day. Euripides denies us essential data of backstory that includes date of her agreement to die so that—who *all* at the point when she said 'Yes'—might live *and live well*? Only Admetus and his then *not* so old parents? He and his children and now very old Mr. and Mrs Pheres? The play dramatizes *her some time ago set* day to die. The Chorus know it is now. However, she clearly has had more than a few days to think about her presumably irrevocable decision and how to justify it, especially to herself, and to explain it to the little boy and girl whom she will leave motherless. Heracles, a guest at Pherae familiar to the Chorus (*Alc*. 478), knows about her commitment to die, but not whether she can have died during an unknown interval since he saw Admetus last—even whether it can it be *she* whom his friend's palace is today in mourning (*Alc*. 512-518). But how much time has she lived knowingly in the penumbra of early death? Her time is up now, when her circumstances can have significantly changed since she made her pledge. These may include subsequent birth of her two children, but also different feelings about her pledged sacrifice itself and about its primary beneficiary Admetus. Was it out of selfless love for him that, back whenever, an adoring wife but not yet mother, she undertook to die as payment on a post-dated promissory note? When the children were infants?

A.M. Dale in *Euripides Medea* (Oxford 1954) is often cited, for agreement or for contradiction, statements that "Alcestis did the rest [scil. to open Admetus' eyes to the unflattering effect on him of Alcestis' sacrifice, after his father's harsh public indictment of Admetus' alleged unmanly cowardice], Alcestis who *loved him* and died for him" (p. xxv, emphasis added) and "of course she *loves* Admetus—what else made her die for him" (p. xxvi emphasis). However, although Medea *had* loved Jason passionately, saved his life and his quest, killed and killed *for* him, when we meet them at Corinth several years later, she hates him and will kill their sons *to hurt* him by what I call sublime punishment, inflicted indirectly on a target person who is himself or (Niobe) herself physically untouched.

If years have elapsed between the promise of future death and its imminence, her thinking can have changed. She certainly loves their children.

The only indication in what Alcestis says that *might* indicate *present* love for him occurs in line 287: κοὐκ ἠθέλησα ζῆν ἀποσπασθεῖσα σοῦ, cited by L. E. P. Parker, *Euripides* Alcestis (Oxford 2007), p. 115, in Parker's translation "I did not choose to live torn away from you." This comes within Parker's lengthy lines by lines commentary on Alcestis' loving (?) initial remarks and instructions for her husband (pp. 280-392), a "philanthropic" take on her. Concerning why she does not profess her love more effusively I do not understand Dale's and now Parker's arguments, especially since they are circular, based on alleged conventions of Athenian tragedy or single-minded rhetorical plan. Euripides conventional and straightforward!

The lines that follow that adduced line 287—no punctuation break after it—σὺν παισὶν ὀρφανοῖσιν, οὐδ' ἐφεισάμην/ἥβης, ἔχουσ' ἐν οἷς ἐτερπόμην ἐγώ (288f). She certainly loves their children!

Consider the beginning of Alcestis' Farewell Address in n. 1 (280-286: note the verb βούλομαι in *present* tense as against pasts that follow). Those lines 288f and beyond suggest a continuing meditation on her today's πράγματα before her very mixed audience—husband, young children, men of the Chorus.

If her pledged death were close after her wedding, only to be years in the future, did she *then* think of children they *might* have? Or did Admetus' solicitation and her pledge follow birth of a boy and girl with a death-date some years after? With them grown to where the elder is adolescent andvocal, the younger sentient and thei mother's dying now already in progress, it is too late for Alcestis to rescind her pledge (assuming she could ever have done so οὐκέτι ἐθέλουσα!). She can nevertheless explain herself to herself and for all present to hear and thereby assert control (as dying Phaedra will do over *her* sons' kingly prospects in *Hippolytus* II) over her children's future, aware as she must be of distraught Admetus' emotional and shame-cultural vulnerability—his who, with witnesses, will make exaggerated promises, yet beg *her* not to betray *him* (201f, 250f, 275; cf. her quoted unwillingness to "betray" bed and husband at 180, her spoken verb at 290 for his parents' refusal to die for him, finally but now at 659 on stage *Admetus' shockin* description of his father's behavior—using *his own* forceful word?)

This is not the place to raise the rarer question of whether *or for what* Admetus loves her, whose life he deemed less precious than his, with or without children.

Hanna Roisman, *Tragic Heroines in Ancient Greek Drama* (London, New York, *et alibi*: 2021), Chapter 7, pp. 179-191may not be mistaken in

assessing Alcestis. As others have suggested, Roisman declares that she does not merely no longer love Admetus or even think of him as mourner but rather as caretaker of the children she bore for him. Her chapter argues from Alcestis' reported words and behavior earlier this day in a female slave's theme- and tone-setting report at 152-198 that later she out of "anger and spite" imposes restriction on *that* future life of his which *she* has bought him are deliberately constraining, harsh and emasculating by patriarchal double standards! She makes stringent demands on his remaining decades of life! Iht was normal for a man to remarry after a first wife's deat-sometimes in childbirth! But although Alcestis has vetoed that for a soon-to-be widower, before her children and the Phaeraean public represented by the Chorus of friends of both.. Certainly till her dying moment she wishes to establish that fame far and wide as ἀρίστη γυνή/γυναικῶν (see 324f), reinforced by the Pheraean Chorus (84, 150f, 240f, 442, 742), for her humane goodness sadly remembered by slaves female (152f) and male (767-771).), as well as by her grateful father-in-law Pheres (623f), but above all for her willingness to pay out her own future life to buy it for her husband.) Note how actualltgrateful Admetus'is not! Never mind his extravagant promises and Alcestis' fear about a next *non*-statuary partner in his bed (181).

(as she mistaken about Phaedra, offering the untenable thought that she is (wink, wink!) actually licensing the Nurse to bring her proposition to Hippolytus, but much conceal this from the listening Chorus ...] She has gained coveted female glory as a γυνή, even at cost to the reputation of an ἀνήρ, *her* ἀνήρ who would allow, even ask (as he surely did) a person of "the weaker sex" to save him.

As sacrificial savior, as already noted, Mrs. Admetus will die a death uniquely *scheduled*—when? how? *for* when?— and by a different *quid pro quo* than the others'. She is not bloodily slain by a bladed instrument as Euripides' Polyxena and Macaria are and as Iphigenia expects to be or, in Menoeceus' case, is a geologically mediated self-killer, in exchange for urgent divine intervention that in the cases of the daughter of Heracles and son of Creon saves numerous others (and in Polyxena's allows thousands to sail home). Alcestis, as we have seen, is uniquely a volunteered *surrogate*, the heroic wife who for a few hundred lines is *about to* die and die she does (for a while, at least!), a supernaturally arranged death so that her controversial husband Admetus may live on, deserving to do so—or maybe not? She dies not by noose, not by blade or poison but by the sort of internal-organic death that normally Apollo and Artemis inflict with invisible arrows. This is what personified Death in person arrives to collect in the Prologue scene. Alcestis dies to amplify the womanly glory that she already has attained (see 323-325, ending her no.

1 great address and adding no. 2 to her husband, to Pherae, and to posterity) and so that her children will have better life-chances with a living royal *father* than if *he* died during their early childhood (287-319). Offstage at her grave the Chorus restrained Admetus from jumping into her grave in a burst of quasi-suicidal regret, to die there somehow? (897-902). What would, of course, have rendered her sacrifice pointless, but soothed his own remorse: An end-it-all type. Heracles might have had to wrestle Death for them both, one each deserving life for a different reason, she for heroic sacrificial loyalty to her husband, he for "above and beyond" hospitality to a great hero and a personal friend. However, Admetus was too cowardly to choose to die *now*, though on his way from the burial even though he bravely complains about having been restrained.[21] At last he realizes what Alcestis has done, for *her* fame, and, for *his* infamy, what he would *not* do (the famous ἄρτι μανθάνω at 940). Scholars' judgments of Admetus vary considerably, as sampled at length in my Bibliography (n. above). Adverse mine is unconcealed here. For an imagined 5th century audience neither Heracles' judgment of him (and that hero's resurrection of his friend's noble wife) nor Admetus' own of himself (and those resulting theatrics at Alcestis' grave) is as important here as Alcestis' inferred prior and elusive final attitude toward her husband within the play, beloved *and trusted* once, surely, but perhaps not so much in Episode 2? Elusive certainly from the female slave's account of her and her addresses to the Hearth-goddess Hestia (163-169) and to her conjugal bed (177-182)—and ensuing action.

Alcestis herself uniquely will die on stage, a death that she freely accepted (and about which has plenty to say in an extraordinary farewell ῥῆσις, nos. 1 and 2)), will exit as a dead body—but will re-enter later, alive, young, female, *veiled*. Silent—but listening. What she thinks of her husband and the father of her momentarily motherless children after he accepts that veiled γυνή into his home in the Exodos sequence is not pertinent toward a "correct" reading of what had been dramatized before.

---

[21] Evadne's (see below) is *un*ambiguous. She has nothing to do with her husband's death in battle, nor he, except by dying I an unholy cause, with hers. Would his dying now have been true *Liebestod* when one mate is consciously *responsible* for the other's preceding demise or, rather, an ashamed *Todesliebe*? In either case, like Hermione in *Andromache*, he was restrained (897-902). With no indication of a struggle, he allowed men of the Chorus to lift him up, alive if unhappily so, and to escort him home, in a sort of *kommos*-Second Parodos. If completed Admetus' suicide could look as cowardly-escapist as Hermione's more strenuous efforts to kill herself with noose, then with sword to forestall shaming and physical punishment for what she and her father had intended to do. Evadne's (see below) is *un*ambiguous. She has nothing to do with her husband's death in \ cause, with hers. Would his Admetus' dying now have been true *Liebestod* when one mate is consciously *responsible* for the other's preceding demise or, rather, an ashamed *Todesliebe*? In either case, like Hermione in *Andromache*, he was restrained (897-902). With no indication of a struggle, he allowed men of the Chorus to lift him up, alive if unhappily so, and to escort him home, in a sort of *kommos*-Second Parodos.

Indeed, as in man of his other plays here Euripides *encourages* controversy! Yet it can be thoughtful fun to speculate about. Likewise what we think *rediviva* she might say when she finally has a chance!

Although Apollo has predicted it to the audience (and to Death!), for the mortal characters and Chorus within the action up to the third entrance of Heracles, of course, her revival and their reunion is nothing Alcestis or Admetus could imagine, The wife's suicidal sacrifice will have its effect: she does die and thereby Admetus is saved, presumably to live out with her lives of normal expectancy. A suicide not prevented but undone. Man and wife get what they would most have desired (if they had dared even to desire it) thanks to his cowardice and her courage in facing death. But also to *his* heroic hospitality as life goes on for a king and a friend of both φίλος and ξένος kind.

The only friend who could bring this about (since Apollo cannot be near death or the dead) is Admetus' untimely yet oh so needed demigod guest who arrives in the nick of time (as Phoebus told *us* he would). Out of gratitude to his grieving, stiff-upper-lipped host *and* admiration for Alcestis (of whose looming sacrifice he was aware, like the Chorus, but not like them of its due date this very day) before Alcestis' dead body could grow cold and not without a struggle he bring her back alive for a comically awkward reunion with her no-longer widower husband. A melodrama turns comedy.[22]

Already moribund Alcestis speaks:

1) *Alc*. 280-325
Ἄλκηστις
Ἄδμηθ', ὁρᾷς γὰρ τἀμὰ πράγμαθ' ὡς ἔχει,
λέξαι θέλω σοι πρὶν θανεῖν ἃ βούλομαι.
ἐγώ σε πρεσβεύουσα κἀντὶ τῆς ἐμῆς
ψυχῆς καταστήσασα φῶς τόδ' εἰσορᾶν
θνήσκω, παρόν μοι μὴ θανεῖν ὑπὲρ σέθεν,
ἀλλ' ἄνδρα τε σχεῖν Θεσσαλῶν ὃν ἤθελον
καὶ δῶμα ναίειν ὄλβιον τυραννίδι.
κοὐκ ἠθέλησα ζῆν ἀποσπασθεῖσα σοῦ
σὺν παισὶν ὀρφανοῖσιν, οὐδ' ἐφεισάμην
ἥβης, ἔχουσ' ἐν οἷς ἐτερπόμην ἐγώ.
καίτοι σ' ὁ φύσας χἠ τεκοῦσα προύδοσαν,
καλῶς μὲν αὐτοῖς †κατθανεῖν ἦκον† βίου,
καλῶς δὲ σῶσαι παῖδα κεὐκλεῶς θανεῖν.

[22] See my article "Notes on the Structure of Euripides' *Alcestis*," *American Journal of Philology* 100 (1980), 487-496. The ending *is* happy, but as improbable as any in Old Comedy or a progressive farcical "tragedy" like Euripides' *Orestes*, with which one ancient scholar grouped *Alcestis*!

μόνος γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἦσθα, κοὔτις ἐλπὶς ἦν
σοῦ κατθανόντος ἄλλα φιτύσειν τέκνα.
κἀγώ τ᾽ ἂν ἔζων καὶ σὺ τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον,
κοὐκ ἂν μονωθεὶς σῆς δάμαρτος ἔστενες
καὶ παῖδας ὠρφάνευες. ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν
θεῶν τις ἐξέπραξεν ὥσθ᾽ οὕτως ἔχειν.
εἶέν· σύ νύν μοι τῶνδ᾽ ἀπόμνησαι χάριν·
αἰτήσομαι γάρ σ᾽ ἀξίαν μὲν οὔποτε
(ψυχῆς γὰρ οὐδέν ἐστι τιμιώτερον),
δίκαια δ᾽, ὡς φήσεις σύ· τούσδε γὰρ φιλεῖς
οὐχ ἧσσον ἢ ᾽γὼ παῖδας, εἴπερ εὖ φρονεῖς·
τούτους ἀνάσχου δεσπότας ἐμῶν δόμων
καὶ μὴ ᾽πιγήμῃς τοῖσδε μητρυιὰν τέκνοις,
ἥτις κακίων οὖσ᾽ ἐμοῦ γυνὴ φθόνῳ
τοῖς σοῖσι κἀμοῖς παισὶ χεῖρα προσβαλεῖ.
μὴ δῆτα δράσῃς ταῦτά γ᾽, αἰτοῦμαί σ᾽ ἐγώ.
ἐχθρὰ γὰρ ἡ ᾽πιοῦσα μητρυιὰ τέκνοις
τοῖς πρόσθ᾽, ἐχίδνης οὐδὲν ἠπιωτέρα.
καὶ παῖς μὲν ἄρσην πατέρ᾽ ἔχει πύργον μέγαν
[ὃν καὶ προσεῖπε καὶ προσερρήθη πάλιν]·
σὺ δ᾽, ὦ τέκνον μοι, πῶς κορευθήσῃ καλῶς;
ποίας τυχοῦσα συζύγου τῷ σῷ πατρί;
μή σοί τιν᾽ αἰσχρὰν προσβαλοῦσα κληδόνα
ἥβης ἐν ἀκμῇ σοὺς διαφθείρῃ γάμους.
οὐ γάρ σε μήτηρ οὔτε νυμφεύσει ποτὲ
οὔτ᾽ ἐν τόκοισι σοῖσι θαρσυνεῖ, τέκνον,
παροῦσ᾽, ἵν᾽ οὐδὲν μητρὸς εὐμενέστερον.
δεῖ γὰρ θανεῖν με· καὶ τόδ᾽ οὐκ ἐς αὔριον
οὐδ᾽ ἐς τρίτην μοι †μηνὸς† ἔρχεται κακόν,
ἀλλ᾽ αὐτίκ᾽ ἐν τοῖς οὐκέτ᾽ οὖσι λέξομαι.
χαίροντες εὐφραίνοισθε· καὶ σοὶ μέν, πόσι,
γυναῖκ᾽ ἀρίστην ἔστι κομπάσαι λαβεῖν,
ὑμῖν δέ, παῖδες, μητρὸς ἐκπεφυκέναι.

2) *Alc.* 371-373
ὦ παῖδες, αὐτοὶ δὴ τάδ᾽ εἰσηκούσατε
πατρὸς λέγοντος μὴ γαμεῖν ἄλλην ποτὲ
γυναῖκ᾽ ἐφ᾽ ὑμῖν μηδ᾽ ἀτιμάσειν ἐμέ.

PHAEDRA IN *HIPPOLYTUS* IN II.

Phaedra is traditionally a suicide, but only either out of regret for how her false accusation killed Hippolytus, whom she genuinely albeit quasi-incestuously loved or else to anticipate her own shaming execution

by outraged Theseus. Either way, she kills herself with a sword not by the *hanging* that a seducing, seduced, or even raped woman inflicts on herself, aware of subjective innocence, of course, but of objective shame (and performing radical birth control to prevent her possible sensed pregnancy from issuing in a bastard).

In this play Phaedra is suicidal from the moment of her first appearance, fasting now for a third day (Hipp. 274-277) intending to die by starvation to rid herself of that objectively shameful lust for her stepson which Aphrodite, instrumentalizing her, inflicts to destroy *him* if only she will yield to ἔρως. Commit suicide she does, of course, by *hanging* and for a more complex motivation, the basis of which has turned her unwanted Aphrodisian lust for Hippolytus into her own resolute mortal hatred of him, and fear of *his* accusation of *her*. Euripides' ingenuity of plot is nowhere else more brilliant and here permits him to embarrass *two* shameful Olympian goddesses.

Phaedra, like Ariadne a daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë (herself mother also of the Minotaur by a handsome *bull*), has improbably found married to

Theseus—herher sister Ariadne's seducer *and abandoner*, to Theseus. To this aging Athenian hero and king Phaedra has borne two little sons, future dual kings of Athens (whom we meet, adult and co-reigning, in *Children of Heracles*). Reigning Theseus, however, by the captured Amazon vice-queen Antiope (alias Hippolyta has another, now teen-aged son, strange asexual Hippolytus, unique male devotee of the arrogantly chaste goddess Artemis

Under the irresistible power of Aphrodite, as in the Prologue this goddess in person explains, as her instrument in the destruction of Phaedra's antisex superprude and misogynist stepson (and approximate agemate) Hippolytus II, our Phaedra II suffers unshakable passionate desire for the title character Hippolytus.[23] Earlier Phaedras in poetic narrative traditions back past the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 11.321 with just the name Φαίδρη(ν), as if notorious already), included Phaedra I in Euripides' preceding *Hippolytus* I, seem all to have *claimed* to be compelled by Aphrodite (as Helen would do in *Trojan Women* many maybe decadesafter undatable *Hippolytus* I —and as three years *before Hippolytus* Iii n *Medea* Jason asserted that Medea had been drive at Colchis, so he might deny *her* any choice but to have helped him.[24]

---

[23] "Misogynist" applies to the Amazon's son of *Hippolytus* II in its narrow sense, where the -gyn- element, from Greek γυνή, identifies as object of virulent hatred wives or other sexually mature and active/experienced nubile girl or fully mature nymphomaniacs, all the way to the lascivious hags of Aristophanes' *Women in the Assembly.*

[24] Conceivably the Love-goddess's influence was objectively indicated in the very fragmentary Sophoclean *Phaedra*, where the chance of her *appearance* may be very low; on the other hand, we must recall Athena's shaping of events now ongoing in the Prologue of *Ajax*.

Phaedra ardently striv106-107: We knoe virtually notheg about it!es, by absolute chastity in (on her side) monogamous marriage to Hippolytus' father, her husband Theseus, to bring no *more* shame on women in her family, notorious taurophile mother Pasiphaë and unfilial maiden sister Ariadne(*Hipp.* 337-350)., each disloyal to Phaedra's father Minos to whom a daughter owes first, absolute duty. Later she expects and dreads that the rabid young woman-vilifier, who infers that his stepmother's Nurse-*confidante* relayed Phaedra's incestuous proposition to him, will report it to his father and torpedo that striving. She he is in danger of a positive and believable accusation of being yet another wicked woman in that family. How might she defend herself against that accusation, even a bit rehabilitate mother and sister a bit by brave, even heroic display of womanly virtue (719-721)? A *spoken* counter accusation from a woman of her breed would not do. It could, in fact, be perceived as shame*less*.

In *Hippolytus* I Phaedra evidently killed herself, likely by sword, out of shame, but perhaps more out of fear that Theseus would not take kindly to what she did if she confesses that she accused Hippolytus falsely—and lethally. But she may die in part also out of grief over causing loved-feared Hippolytus' death. Seneca's Latin *Phaedra* may indicate all or most of that. In the extant play *Hippolytus* II there are two quite distinct suicides in Phaedra's mind, by two very different means. Self-starvation is Plan A, slow and debilitating—and already under way, with visible effect on her after three days (274-277). Then is when we first see her. She has a single motivation, with two aspects, both negative. As noted above, she is resolved *not* to bring further scandal to her family if somehow she can no longer resist her lust and try (like Phaedra I) to seduce Hippolytus, strange though he is, but exotic—and far closer in age to her than now middle-aged husband, who is old enough to be Hippolytus' father—and is. Secondly, she wants that chronic terrible, irrepressible lust to *end*—with her. For her death to look like some mortal wasting illness, not acute love sickness. Though Theseus has been fooled (278-281), Phaedra's Nurse has not, who tells the concerned young wives of the Chorus that their friend *wants* to *die* (277).

The Nurse wants to save her mistress's life. Against Phaedra' orders she suggests a liaison with his stepmother to Hippolytus. He is duly outraged,

---

Might the Cyprian goddess have taken control of a chaste Phaedra in a corresponding prologic dialogue, before a Chorus could overhear? Be less understanding if they witness the woman's proposition?

On scant fragments of Sophocles' *Phaedra* see Hugh Lloy-Jones, ed, and trans. *Sophocles III. Fragments* (Cambridge, Mass. 2006, pp. 322-331. Fragment 680 may be pertinent to the goddess' explicit involvement though not to a possible Prologue dialogue with a protatic Love-goddess.

On more richly fragmentary *Hippolytus* I (as I name it) "Veiled" (Καλυπτόμενος) ea, *Aegeus* to *Meleager* (Cambridge, Mass, 2008), pp. 466-491.

if yet somewhat excessively? However, before hearing what it was he had solemnly, famously, fatally sworn to keep secret the Nurse's message. Phaedra overhears *some* of what was said from inside the royal residence, perhaps behind a part-open door—from a little before line 575?—the conversation, or maybe only and his vociferous outrage and hyper-misogynous tirade that began, it seems, when he raise his voice upon hearing what the Nurse had to say on behalf of Phaedra, he had no doubt. The conversation moves out the front door as Hippolytus tries to flee the defilement he has just heard. But does she hear clearly what happened inside, only loud voice/s? And what, remembering the Nurse's equivocations at 516-525, she *fears* is being said? The Chorus want to hear the conversation, but at their distance from the closed doors of the residence cannot (585-587). Did she hear his oath inside or only the Nurse's statement that he took one but his vow was nullified, he would reasonably think by its immoral he immoral, unholy coverup of what was vowed (like Idomeneus' ill-conceived vow—or Jephthah's in the Hebrew Bible).

After writing a suicide note that falsely incriminates Hippolytus for a grave crime against his *father*, Phaedra now hangs herself, quickly, for several reasons. negative, vindictive, and (intertwines with the negative) positive—*and cultural*:

(1) same as before Hippolytus' explosion of hatred, *not* to add another sex scandal to two of notorious women related to her;

(2) to *avoid* having to lie to Theseus *viva voce*; also

(3) to avoid a direct confrontation with Hippolytus (whom she overhears but does not confront in the ;

(4) to *prevent* any doubt about Theseus' paternity of her sons and, related to this,

(5) to *block* any chance that in their stead half-Amazon Hippolytus succeed his rapist father as King of Athens, for the thought that their much older half-brother Hippolytus could usurp their birthright got an anguished rise out of her in at 304-310, a turning point in the tragedy;

(6) to *avenge herself on* Hippolytus[25] for specific calumny against her who would rather die than commit adultery with anyone: accuse her stepson so convincingly by that method of suicide[26] which would convince

---

[25] According to Marina Cavalli, commentator in *Euripide Medea Ippolito* (Milano 1985), p. 207, Phaedra wants *Hippolytus* to experience the power of love, *not* to get revenge herself. To exclude revenge is simply wrong given the κακόν of l. 728. However, to make him understand the power of *Aphrodite* is a possible added intention, where the νόσος in ll. 730f is not to feel ἔρως as such, but ire of a goddess frustrated now by Phaedra's and for some time Hippolytus' rejection of it and blaming her (725-727) for making that rejection lethal to both of them.

[26] Cultural factor: Phaedra accomplishes all of this by doing what a raped wife was tacitly conditioned to do, namely to exercise radical birth control by killing herself *and* her violator's potential embryonic male child *by hanging herself.* On how women kill themselves under

his father to kill him or at least disown and banish him, whereby in exile a known rapist, and a semi-incestuous one at that, could have a a fate worse than death: compare the last days of indelibly polluted Oedipus in *OC*;

(7) to chastise Hippolytus' slander of *all* women, even though—Phaedra knows and concedes this at 403-418—there *are* bad women who corrupt or try to corrupt others like her who manage to be *good* as daughters, as wivC.es, and as mothers;

(8) to make Theseus proud of the loyal woman he loved and grateful to her for her brave deed;from later-born brothers

(9) so that her husband, like Admetus if he obeyed Alcestis' expressed mandate, will not impose a stepmother on Phaedra's boys b raise them to reign in adulthood with no rival in later-born half-brothers ; and

(10) with the Chorus as witnesses she will gain praise for desperate actions that privilege that proper sort of αἰδώς which she distinguishes for the Chorus at 385-387,which in her thinking includes an accused innocent person's counter-slander, and though she cannot hope for this, understandingand forgiveness from Hippolytus' patroness Artemis if not from himself (who actually forgives only his father) and even revenge on slut Aphrodite from chaste Hippolytus' chaste patroness and promised avenger. (1420-1422). Like Antigone's, her death has consequences of which the deceased would, grimly in the Theban princess's case, more gladly in Phaedra's.

The playwright—and, at the end of this tragedy, a goddess down from Olympus!—rehabilitates Phaedra, laying blame on that sex-goddess whom the virgin Artemis most hates (1301f) and promising revenge that hardly does credit to herself!

Phaedra speaks in *Hippolytus* II

Hipp. 373-430
Φαίδρα
Τροζήνιαι γυναῖκες, αἳ τόδ᾽ ἔσχατον
οἰκεῖτε χώρας Πελοπίας προνώπιον,
ἤδη ποτ᾽ ἄλλως νυκτὸς ἐν μακρῷ χρόνῳ
θνητῶν ἐφρόντισ᾽ ἦ διέφθαρται βίος.

---

different circumstances and/or with different import for the means they usually use (sword or noose) see Michael Halleran, trans. with commentary, *Hippolytus* (Warminster 1985), ad vv 767-770. Paradoxically, therefore Theus' wife *wins* by dying as a truly shamed woman was expected to do, whether lusty adulteress on the make, one vulnerable to seduction, even blame-the-victim of forcible rape. Rape is what she alleged in writing and corroborated by hanging herself. However, she has another person in mind whom that allegation will affect profoundly. Since she hardly expects his tongue to keep the oath of secrecy that it swore (611f), inoculates Theseus against Hippolytus' expected testimony about her Nurse's proposition and Phaedra's own presumed initiative behind it. If guilty, he would allege something just like that!

καί μοι δοκοῦσιν οὐ κατὰ γνώμης φύσιν
πράσσειν κάκιον· ἔστι γὰρ τό γ᾽ εὖ φρονεῖν
πολλοῖσιν· ἀλλὰ τῇδ᾽ ἀθρητέον τόδε·
ἃ χρήστ᾽ ἐπιστάμεσθα καὶ γιγνώσκομεν
οὐκ ἐκπονοῦμεν, οἱ μὲν ἀργίας ὕπο,
οἱ δ᾽ ἡδονὴν προθέντες ἀντὶ τοῦ καλοῦ
ἄλλην τιν᾽. εἰσὶ δ᾽ ἡδοναὶ πολλαὶ βίου,
μακραί τε λέσχαι καὶ σχολή, τερπνὸν κακόν,
αἰδώς τε. δισσαὶ δ᾽ εἰσίν, ἡ μὲν οὐ κακή,
ἡ δ᾽ ἄχθος οἴκων. εἰ δ᾽ ὁ καιρὸς ἦν σαφής,
οὐκ ἂν δύ᾽ ἦστην ταὔτ᾽ ἔχοντε γράμματα.
ταῦτ᾽ οὖν ἐπειδὴ τυγχάνω φρονοῦσ᾽ ἐγώ,
οὐκ ἔσθ᾽ ὁποίῳ φαρμάκῳ διαφθερεῖν
ἔμελλον, ὥστε τοὔμπαλιν πεσεῖν φρενῶν.
λέξω δὲ καί σοι τῆς ἐμῆς γνώμης ὁδόν.
ἐπεί μ᾽ ἔρως ἔτρωσεν, ἐσκόπουν ὅπως
κάλλιστ᾽ ἐνέγκαιμ᾽ αὐτόν. ἠρξάμην μὲν οὖν
ἐκ τοῦδε, σιγᾶν τήνδε καὶ κρύπτειν νόσον.
γλώσσῃ γὰρ οὐδὲν πιστόν, ᾗ θυραῖα μὲν
φρονήματ᾽ ἀνδρῶν νουθετεῖν ἐπίσταται,
αὐτὴ δ᾽ ὑφ᾽ αὑτῆς πλεῖστα κέκτηται κακά.
τὸ δεύτερον δὲ τὴν ἄνοιαν εὖ φέρειν
τῷ σωφρονεῖν νικῶσα προυνοησάμην.
τρίτον δ᾽, ἐπειδὴ τοισίδ᾽ οὐκ ἐξήνυτον
Κύπριν κρατῆσαι, κατθανεῖν ἔδοξέ μοι,
κράτιστον—οὐδεὶς ἀντερεῖ—βουλευμάτων.
ἐμοὶ γὰρ εἴη μήτε λανθάνειν καλὰ
μήτ᾽ αἰσχρὰ δρώσῃ μάρτυρας πολλοὺς ἔχειν.
δ᾽ ἔργον ἤδη τὴν νόσον τε δυσκλεᾶ,
γυνή τε πρὸς τοῖσδ᾽ οὖσ᾽ ἐγίγνωσκον καλῶς,
μίσημα πᾶσιν. ὡς ὄλοιτο παγκάκως
ἥτις πρὸς ἄνδρας ἦρξατ᾽ αἰσχύνειν λέχη
πρώτη θυραίους. ἐκ δὲ γενναίων δόμων
τόδ᾽ ἦρξε θηλείαισι γίγνεσθαι κακόν·
ὅταν γὰρ αἰσχρὰ τοῖσιν ἐσθλοῖσιν δοκῇ,
ἦ κάρτα δόξει τοῖς κακοῖς γ᾽ εἶναι καλά.
μισῶ δὲ καὶ τὰς σώφρονας μὲν ἐν λόγοις,
λάθρᾳ δὲ τόλμας οὐ καλὰς κεκτημένας·
αἳ πῶς ποτ᾽, ὦ δέσποινα ποντία Κύπρι,
βλέπουσιν ἐς πρόσωπα τῶν ξυνευνετῶν
οὐδὲ σκότον φρίσσουσι τὸν ξυνεργάτην
τέραμνά τ᾽ οἴκων μή ποτε φθογγὴν ἀφῇ;
ἡμᾶς γὰρ αὐτὸ τοῦτ᾽ ἀποκτείνει, φίλαι,
ὡς μήποτ᾽ ἄνδρα τὸν ἐμὸν αἰσχύνασ᾽ ἁλῶ,
μὴ παῖδας οὓς ἔτικτον· ἀλλ᾽ ἐλεύθεροι

παρρησίᾳ θάλλοντες οἰκοῖεν πόλιν
κλεινῶν Ἀθηνῶν, μητρὸς οὕνεκ᾽ εὐκλεεῖς.
δουλοῖ γὰρ ἄνδρα, κἂν θρασύσπλαγχνός τις ᾖ,
ὅταν ξυνειδῇ μητρὸς ἢ πατρὸς κακά.
μόνον δὲ τοῦτό φασ᾽ ἀμιλλᾶσθαι βίῳ,
γνώμην δικαίαν κἀγαθὴν ὅτῳ παρῇ.
κακοὺς δὲ θνητῶν ἐξέφην᾽ ὅταν τύχῃ,
προθεὶς κάτοπτρον ὥστε παρθένῳ νέᾳ,
χρόνος· παρ᾽ οἷσι μήποτ᾽ ὀφθείην ἐγώ.

Hipp. 683-694, 708-712, 715-722, and 725-731
ὦ παγκακίστη καὶ φίλων διαφθορεῦ,
οἷ᾽ εἰργάσω με. Ζεύς σε γεννήτωρ ἐμὸς
πρόρριζον ἐκτρίψειεν οὐτάσας πυρί.
οὐκ εἶπον, οὐ σῆς προυνοησάμην φρενός,
σιγᾶν ἐφ᾽ οἷσι νῦν ἐγὼ κακύνομαι;
σὺ δ᾽ οὐκ ἀνέσχου· τοιγὰρ οὐκέτ᾽ εὐκλεεῖς
θανούμεθ᾽. ἀλλὰ δεῖ με δὴ καινῶν λόγων.
οὗτος γὰρ ὀργῇ συντεθηγμένος φρένας
ἐρεῖ καθ᾽ ἡμῶν πατρὶ σὰς ἁμαρτίας,
[ἐρεῖ δὲ Πιτθεῖ τῷ γέροντι συμφοράς,]
πλήσει τε πᾶσαν γαῖαν αἰσχίστων λόγων.
ὅλοιο καὶ σὺ χὥστις ἄκοντας φίλους
πρόθυμός ἐστι μὴ καλῶς εὐεργετεῖν
ἀλλ᾽ ἐκποδὼν ἄπελθε καὶ σαυτῆς πέρι
φρόντιζ᾽· ἐγὼ γὰρ τἀμὰ θήσομαι καλῶς.
ὑμεῖς δέ, παῖδες εὐγενεῖς Τροζήνιαι,
τοσόνδε μοι παράσχετ᾽ ἐξαιτουμένῃ,
σιγῇ καλύπτειν ἀνθάδ᾽ εἰσηκούσατε.
καλῶς ἐλέξαθ᾽· ἓν δὲ πρὸς τούτοις ἐρῶ·
εὕρημα δή τι τῆσδε συμφορᾶς ἔχω,
ὥστ᾽ εὐκλεᾶ μὲν παισὶ προσθεῖναι βίον
αὐτή τ᾽ ὄνασθαι πρὸς τὰ νῦν πεπτωκότα.
οὐ γάρ ποτ᾽ αἰσχυνῶ γε Κρησίους δόμους
οὐδ᾽ ἐς πρόσωπον Θησέως ἀφίξομαι
αἰσχροῖς ἐπ᾽ ἔργοις οὕνεκα ψυχῆς μιᾶς.
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.
ἥνη

Like Alcestis This young sudden war widow is a speaking, singing character in a single lyric-and-iambic episode of the play in which she appears, *Suppliants*. Alcestis, of course, reappear, alive and well—but silent. However, the difference between these two plays is much greater. The *Alcestis* is rightly so named. It is all about the woman of that name and her relationship with her husband (whose role is much longer) and their children for whose future lives she is giving and then has given up her. up hers. Evadne, on the other hand, is not names involved before or after Episode 5 (*Supp*. 980-1113). The entire episode could be removed without harm to the play's plot, such as it is, that is, about Theseus' and Athens' intervention between Thebans and Argives and Argive mothers' and children's tragedy of mourning sons an fathers,

Evadne, daughter of an Argive nobleman Iphis, was married to formidable but blasphemous young warrior Capaneus, one of the Seven Against Thebes. She was sister to another of the Seven, Eteoclus (not to be confused with Eteocles!), also fallen in their spectacularly failed attack. It isnot clear whether Evadne bore Capaneus' son Sthenelus. Sthenelus grew up to be one of the Epigoni who avenged their fathers and sacked Thebes (and of whom two, he and Diomedes, went on to fight on the Achaean side at Troy. [(Note: Scholia on Pindar, *Olympian Ode* 6.46 preserve the name Ianeira for a/the wife of Capaneus. This obscure lady is also said to be Sthenelus' mother.] If Evadne, who seems very young and newly or at least recently wed to Capaneus, is nevertheless the boy's *mother*, he must have been an infant, too young to be among the adolescents who make up a Χορὸς Παιδῶν Chorus late in the play. An older Sthenelus could be. It is, I believe, best to think of Evadne as childless, perhaps Sthenelus' *step*mother—a very different relationship! Were Capaneus' son hers, she would not only be abandoning her own child but doing no favor to her beloved husband by leaving their little boy, his heir (and potential avenger) motherless. We can, in any case, scarcely suppose Ianeira to be Sthenelus' stepmother after Evadne's death!

The Evade Episode: Upon her appearance atop a "rock" (πέτρα, the roof of the σκήνη-building), probably by ascending a ladder behind it, from what from what follows she wears a bride's attire, not a widow's. She sings joyously about her wedding to bronze-armored Capaneus at Argos and a sweetest death in which she is about to join what is left of him on a still flaming? now smoldering? pyre (nos. 1 and 2). The Chorus suggest that, invisible to us, this outlier pyre consumes remains of Evadne's lightning-struck husband (*Supp*. 1009-1011). *This* fire, we sense, has burned continuously since a well aimed thunderbolt cast the blasphemer

atop the city wall down to the ground. A makeshift pyre was constructed where the sinner landed and fire still burned.

Evadne's attire and lyrics may anticipate Cassandra's song in the poet's later *Trojan Women* before her "wedding" to doomed Agamemnon. (Was ecstatic music similar? Prosody compared helps little.) After Evadne's runs of monodic lyric —with a dance on the "cliff" ledge?—we and the Chorus overhear her moving, urgent, and futile exchange with her distraught father Iphis, mostly breathless stichomythy. (no. 3). He has hurried as fast as his frail old legs can carry him (*Supp.*1034-1071), perhaps from other, grouped pyres a-building: for he is mourning that *son* Eteoclus who also died in the Seven's failed assault. Now he suddenly fears for his *daughter's* life. Were Eteoclus and Evadne his only children? He is frantic to restrain the surviving one from crazed, suicidal impulse. He must know her passionate love for his dead son-*in-law* Capaneus and knows why that she accompanied him all the way from Argos. Like his father and mother, his wife played a major role in a young man's funeral. But father and daughter have parted companyat Thebes. *Where is Capaneus?* Looking this way and that ground level, lphis demands guidance from the Chorus of bereaved mothers.. However, before they can point upward to her Evadne addresses him. She will *not* obey that male to whom she most owes natural/patriarchal obedience.[27] On another facet of her short but sensational role, she claims unique glory among women/wives (γυναῖκες) not for domestic crafts or good counsel but for ἀρετή, "valor," such that that death will *not* separate her and her beloved valorous but reckless spouse.

Hers may not be the only suicidal *Liebestod* in early Greco-Roman myth but is surely the most theatrical, spectacular Like Sophocles' Ajax she is in view of the audience until she lunges literally behind the scenes to die.

Here Evadne is actually *above* the main performing platform *and everyone else in the cast* until she leaps down and out of the spectators' sight (as the Telamonian lunged laterally behind a scene-painting of maquis that, later removed, opened a path for dead Ajax to "re-enter" on the ἐκκύκλημα after *Aj.* 890). Smoke can have been visible from the direction into which Evadne leaped and disappeared behind the stage-building after 1071. *Un*like Ajax' dead body that after he has had his *say* for a third of the *Ajax* plays a silent yet conspicuous role in *Ajax*, neither

---

[27] Tellingly for my hypothesis about a newlywed daughter, her father (and Sthenelus' grandfather) Iphis does not appeal to her *maternal* duty to a baby boy nor her duty to her dead *brother.* Euripides' script may be utterly silent about a son of hers to imply that that Sthenelus son of Capaneus whom we Athenians all know from *Il.* 4 (367and 403-410) was indeed only her stepson in order to concentrate on two conflicting "loves," conjugal-erotic, which moves her, and filial-"philial," which she rejects.

she or her father nor memory and mention of either has any part at all after Evadne's unique exit and Iphis' sad exit after 11forty-two lines later after 1113. Why would the playwright conceive of and insert—one may almost write intrude—this episode, so loosely connected with the grand scenario of the defeat of the Seven and belligerent contention over whether their non-Theban relatives will be permitted to recover burn and bury their bodies immediately in Boeotia or transport them or their ashes to a faraway birthplace inthe Argolid? Home of losers! Consider the stark *dissonance* between he gloating Theban herald's political condemnation of Capaneus (*Supp.* 494-499: the traditional one likely since the *Thebaid*) and more generically of his evil leading comrades contrasted, on the one hand, and, on the other, Adrastus' counter-political eulogies of him (860-871) and of his brother-in-law, Evadne's brother Eteoclus (871-88). This would in itself say a lot about warriors and war propaganda. IN addition pacifist Euripides seems in the Evadne-Iphis scene, to show how every fallen fighterr, no matter how unholy his cause, can have loved and have been loved, would be mourned and to the ends of their lives be missed by persons to whom they were dear. Mothers and eventually sons of the fallen show this within the rest of this play, here a father and a wife here. Evadne's suicide is an extreme example, cutting that mourning and missing short, while her pitiable doubly bereaved old father Iphis (who in his parting six lines emphasizes his age (1108-1113) indeed *triply* so as the father who had chosen gallant Capaneus for his dear daughter's spouse and for his own son-in-law, to make himself κηδεστής and (as Euripides uses the word) γαμβρός—chosen relationship of generic "emotionally involved person" and father-in law" to a hero, grandfather of that hero's son. All gone. Will he live on without at least her to care for him? His last two lines especially suggest he himself , with the example of his probably teen-age daughter, can be is thinking of suicide, his reproach of *others*, old like him, οὓς χρῆν, ἐπειδὰν μηδὲν ὠφελῶσι γῆν,/θανόντας ἔρρειν κἀκποδὼν εἶναι νέοις (1112f).[28]

Evadne sings, later argues in dialogue:

---

[28] Iphis will likely die before he reaches an empty home at Argos, a resigned non-sacrificial suicide. This play's Evadne presents, like Ajax, an exit that *is* suicide, though hers is (alien) ritual, not bloody slaughter like the Greek hero's. Polyxena, Macaria, Menoeceus, and, as we see next, Iphigenia exeunt to *imminent* willed sacrificial death. That Theban boy will be his own slayer—cutting his throat before leaping? falling, already mortally wounded? into the den of the δράκων that Cadmus slew which lies adjacent to a tower in the fortification wall of Thebes, where according to Teiresias Menoeceus' blood must be poured (931-936) and into which, soon after, that blood does flow and the boy's body descends (1092-1094). Exit to commit suicide is a plot element of modern drama developed by Henrik Ibsen in *The Wild Duck* (where adolescent girl Hedvig's has a self-sacrificial essence), and *Hedda Gabler* (Hedda's profound disappointment + escape are motives), both events indicated by a shocking offstage gunshot. Ibsen's *Rosmersholm* ends with the suicidal leap of the two chief characters into a torrential creek, witnessed by a servant.

1. *Supp.* 990-1008
Εὐάδνη
τί φέγγος, τίν᾽ αἴγλαν
ἐδίφρευε τόθ᾽ ἅλιος
σελάνα τε κατ᾽ αἰθέρ᾽ ἃ
λαμπάσιν ὠκὺ θοαῖσι νυμφ-
φεῖ᾽ ἵππευε δι᾽ ὄρφνας,
ἀνίκ᾽ <ἡδυθρόοις> γάμων
τῶν ἐμῶν πόλις Ἄργους
ἀοιδαῖς εὐδαιμονίας
ἐπύργωσε καὶ γαμέτα
χαλκεοτευχέος Καπανέως;
πρὸς <ὅν γ᾽> ἔβαν <νῦν> δρομὰς ἐξ
οἴκων ἐκβακχευσαμένα
πυρᾶς φῶς τάφον τ᾽ ἐμ-
βατεύσουσα τὸν αὐτόν,
ἐς Ἅιδαν καταλύσουσ᾽ ἄμοχθον
βίοτον αἰῶνός τε πόνους·
ἥδιστος γάρ τοι θάνατος
συνθνῄσκειν θνῄσκουσι φίλοις,
εἰ δαίμων τάδε κραίνοι.

2. *Supp.* 1012-1030
ὁρῶ δὴ τελευτὰν
ἵν᾽ ἕστακα (τύχα δέ μοι
ξυνάπτει ποδὸς ἀλλαγάς),
εὐκλεΐας χάριν ἔνθεν ὁρ-
μάσω τᾶσδ᾽ ἀπὸ πέτρας·
πηδήσασα <δὲ> πυρὸς ἔσω
σῶμα τ᾽ αἴθοπι φλογμῷ
πόσει συμμείξασα φίλῳ,
χρῶτα χρῷ πέλας θεμένα,
Φερσεφόνας ἥξω θαλάμους,
σὲ τὸν θανόντ᾽ οὔποτ᾽ ἐμᾷ
προδοῦσα ψυχᾷ κατὰ γᾶς.
ἴτω φῶς γάμοι τ᾽· <εὐ-
τυχ>οῖθ᾽ αἵτινες εὐναὶ
δικαίων ὑμεναίων ἐν Ἄργει
φανῶσιν τέκνοις, ὅσιος δ᾽
εὐναῖος <ναίοι> γαμέτας
συντακεὶς αὔραις ἀδόλοι
γενναίας ἀλόχοιο.

3. *Supp.* 1048-1071
Ἶφις
τέκνον, τίς αὔρα; τίς στόλος; τίνος χάριν
δόμων ὑπεκβᾶσ᾽ ἦλθες ἐς τήνδε χθόνα;

Εὐάδνη
ὀργὴν λάβοις ἂν τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων
κλύων: **ἀκοῦσαι δ᾽ οὔ σε βούλομαι**, **πάτερ**.

Ἶφις
τί δ᾽; **οὐ δίκαιον πατέρα τὸν σὸν εἰδέναι**;

Εὐάδνη
κριτὴς ἂν εἴης οὐ σοφὸς γνώμης ἐμῆς.

Ἶφις
σκευῇ δὲ τῇδε τοῦ χάριν κοσμεῖς δέμας;

Εὐάδνη
θέλει τι κλεινὸν οὗτος ὁ στολμός, **πάτερ**.

Ἶφις
ὡς οὐκ ἐπ᾽ ἀνδρὶ πένθιμος πρέπεις ὁρᾶν.

Εὐάδνη
ἐς γάρ τι πρᾶγμα νεοχμὸν ἐσκευάσμεθα.

Ἶφις
κἄπειτα τύμβῳ καὶ πυρᾷ φαίνῃ πέλας;

Εὐάδνη
ἐνταῦθα γὰρ δὴ καλλίνικος ἔρχομαι.

Ἶφις
νικῶσα νίκην τίνα; μαθεῖν χρῄζω σέθεν.

Εὐάδνη
πάσας γυναῖκας ἃς δέδορκεν ἥλιος.

Ἶφις
ἔργοις Ἀθάνας ἢ φρενῶν εὐβουλίᾳ;

Εὐάδνη
ἀρετῇ: **πόσει γὰρ συνθανοῦσα κείσομαι**.

Ἶφις
τί φῄς; τί τοῦτ᾽ αἴνιγμα σημαίνεις σαθρόν;

Εὐάδνη
ᾄσσω θανόντος Καπανέως τήνδ᾽ ἐς πυράν.

Ἰφις
ὦ θύγατερ, οὐ μὴ μῦθον ἐς πολλοὺς ἐρεῖς. 1066

Εὐάδνη
τοῦτ᾽ αὐτὸ χρῄζω, πάντας Ἀργείους μαθεῖν.

Ἰφις
ἀλλ᾽ οὐδέ τοί σοι πείσομαι δρώσῃ τάδε.

Εὐάδνη
ὅμοιον: οὐ γὰρ μὴ κίχῃς μ᾽ ἑλὼν χερί.
καὶ δὴ παρεῖται σῶμα — σοὶ μὲν οὐ φίλον, 1070
ἡμῖν δὲ καὶ τῷ συμπυρουμένῳ πόσει.

IPHIGENIA IN *IA*

Euripides' shocking project here is to add as final to his series of voluntary, even eager human sacrificial victims of bloody sacrifice the originally, understandably most reluctant Iphigenia. Against all likely versions of her story going back to the epic Cypria[29], she becomes a willing, indeed gung-ho enthusiatic victim who proudly enables the Achaean expedition to Troy to get there at all. Unlike Euripidean Polyxena, whose mother tries to talk her daughter Polyxena out of accepting it (although neither has any choice in the matter)—female vs female nor like Creon who does the same and even commands his son Menoeceus to flee for safety—male vs male, the Argive maiden Iphigenia's father *dooms* his dear, initially horrified daughter—male vs female, before he talks her into it, whereas her mother desperately tries to save the girl also *after she has embraced her sacrifice*—female vs female. Note: In Macaria's case neither grandmother Alcmena nor cousin Iolaus wants any Child of Heracles to *have* to die in order to save everyone else—both female vs female and male vs female, however she rejects their wish and volunteers to break an impasse that would be deadly to them all unless a lottery

[29] Proclus' summary of the *Cypria* already includes Iphigenia's fictional wedding and her last minute replacement with a roe by Artemis (and transportation to the land of the barbaric Tauri). No indication is givenof her state of mind at any point.

On fragments of Sophocles' *Iphigenia* see Hugh Lloyd-Jones, ed, and trans. *Sophocles III. Fragments* (Cambridge, Mass. 2006, pp. 138-141. We know that this dealt with the sacrifice, but possibly dramatized the visit of a delegation sent to bring the victim from Argos. \Odysseus was a speaker—there or at Aulis? Clytemnestra seems also to have been a speaker.

On the fragment (a single trimeter!) of Aeschylus' *Iphigenia* see Alan Sommerstein, *Aeschylus. Fragments* (Cambridge, Mass., 2008), pp. 106f. MNot much help. Someone is told not to speak badly to one or more women: a plural could be generic, with reference only to one—or to more, present or absent. At Argos or Aulis!

chose which Child of Heracles must bleed to save his or her siblings. Furthermore, Euripides takes up for a last time his career-long campaign to de-heroize the Achaeans' "glorious" victory over the Trojans and make scandalous treachery among themselves (*Palamedes*, *Philoctetes*); war-crimes, as we would call them, ended it (*Scyrians*, probably; and sacrileges and atrocious crimes against humanity in its aftermath (*Trojan Women*)—in *IA* even before they set out across the sea and started slaughtering the wrong Anatolians at their setting out (famous lost *Telephus*). He also takes a last dig at wily and wicked Spartan Menelaus, postulated above, who never looks good in Sophocles (appears in *Ajax* only, where, however, both Atreids are vilified *in absentia*) or Euripides (before *IA* in *Andromache*, *Trojan Women*, *Helen*, and *Orestes*).

Iphigenia was the first-born child and eldest daughter of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, King of "Golden Mycenae" (that, of course, becomes Argos in 5th-century tragedy). Her mother Clytemnestra, half-sister to Helen of Sparta/Helen of Troy, also bore to him one or two other daughters, and, last, his only son and heir baby Orestes. At Aulis beach the elder Atreid has gathered a thousand ships full of warriors bound for Troy to recover his brother Menelaus' wife Helen. However, the goddess Artemis blocks the sailing of the Argive Armada unless/until Agamemnon *sacrifices* Iphigenia on her altar there. He agreed to do this at his brother Menelaus' insistent urging, appealing to his desire for the glory of conquering Troy as *elected* commander-in-chief of the Greek expeditionary fleet.

How then to lure the girl from distant Argos to Aulis? That Iphigenia is now a maiden of earliest marriageable age but not yet betrothed made believable her father's lethal deception. A grotesque lie is pivotal to his plan to appease the hostile, pro-Trojan goddess and so sail to Troy to recover his sister-in-law Helen for his brother. At Aulis, he had by letter informed his daughter and her mother Clytemnestra that she will wed young but already very famous super-spearman Achilles. This marriage alliance with him, Agamemnon explains, is the demigod hero's condition for joining the expedition to Troy. She must therefore promptly join her father and fiancé at Aulis.

As the play opens her father has changed his mind about all that. He writes another letter telling her that the wedding is off. She should stay home. Any marrying will take place *after* the war. However, Menelaus knows how reluctant his brother was about the sacrifice and fears that he will do exactly what he is doing. He keeps watch and intercepts the faithful old slave who is hurrying with the message from the camp. With savage reproach his brother confronts Agamemnon about his shameful, unfraternal reneging (IA 335-375). Agamemnon defends his now far better judgment (378-401).

While the two sons of unbrotherly Atreus are arguing, word comes that it is too late to prevent the promised victim's arrival at Aulis.

While the brothers are arguing, a messenger arrives, a πρόδρομος in advance of the traveling party from Argos. He announces that Iphigenia and Clytemnestra are nearby. After a long stretch on the road, they are resting while their horses drink from a spring and graze in a meadow (IA 425-423). The supposed bride's mother has made this a family outing to join, she believes, a happy celebration. She accompanies her daughter, her first-born child and the supposed bride-to-be, bringing along baby Orestes to meet the glamorous bridegroom who will be his brother-in-law. They have come far in eager haste, but need one more rest stop. Mother, daughter, and baby will reach the camp very soon.

This *to Agamemnon* bad news devastates him (442-468). Menelaus exhibits sudden, surprising sympathy over the fate of his niece Iphigenia and willingness to let the war go, not sacrifice good Iphigenia to get bad Helen (472-504). This sudden sympathy for Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia, once it is clear that it cannot be avoided, seem to me surely to be pretense for, we shall see, he remains in his evil character.

So far the harsh demand of Artemis to Agamemnon, in essence "slaughter your daughter *or call off the Trojan War*, is known only to four men (107): the Atreid brothers, Calchas the prophet who had revealed to the commander-in-chief at 89-92 [or 93]), *and Odysseus*.

Menelaus now proposes murdering Calchas before he tells anyone else (472-504)! He knows, of course, that it would be next to impossible to catch and kill equally amoral, equally wary, *and wily* Odysseus.[30] Agamemnon knows and distrusts the Ithacan. (We learn later from Achilles at 1392 that, as Agamemnon feared he would do, Odysseus had clearly informed the entire army that Iphigenia's sacrifice was required to get them across the sea to win expected glory, Trojan treasure, and Trojan women.)

After the women arrive in the camp at Agamemnon's quarters and although Agamemnon desperately dissembles in Episode 2, the truth comes out. In Scene 1 of the following episode Clytemnestra meet Achilles, who = to her shock and embarrassment knows nothing about Iphigenia's wedding (819-854). In the following scene together they learn about the sacrifice from the frantic old slave of Agamemnon (855-895). The victim's *mother*, mentioning his goddess *mother* at 896, 901, 903, and 909, supplicates the young hero for protection and, since his name was abused in the deception that brought her and her daughter to Aulis, he promises it

---

[30] Who at 524 and 1393 is said to be son *not* of Laërtes but of the famously devious and impious *seducer* Sisyphus—him of the Rolling Stone in the Underworld! All who at least distrust him, at most vehemently hate him usually call him a bastard in both senses, only putative son of his mother's husband. His maternal grandfather, moreover, was a notorious cattle rustler and perjuror. No wonder his daughter, Odysseus' mother was an adulteress!

(919-974). In Scene 1 of the long Episode 4[31] Clytemnestra angrily (1098-1208) and her daughter pathetically (1211-1252) appeal to Agamemnon to call off the atrocious rite. What Achilles reports to the princess and her mother at 1338 in agitated lyrics at the beginning of the next scene (or episode?) brings the girl to understand that by *accepting* sacrificial death she will save her father's *and mother's* lives and that of baby Orestes, whom earlier in the same long episode she had recruited as silent co-suppliant in entreating their sire to spare *her* life.[32] Otherwise, she will not only *not* save theirs but also cost Achilles' life, since his restless Myrmidon troops have turned against him (1352f). They will with the rest of the huge army attack and kill him if, to defend his honor (and make the wedding come true), he attempts single-handedly to save the doomed princess, "bride" now only of Death. Orestes' survival and that of the rest of the maiden's family depends upon preventing all thousand ship-loads of lusty Achaeans from turning murderously on their commander-in-chief and even sacking faraway Mycenae if he should flee there with his family (1259-1268). Therefore, by agreeing to the sacrifice she also preserves the young hero Achilles for his most glorious achievements, those in store for him over his nearly ten years' future at Troy before he dies there—if he ever *gets* there! Her life, one woman's she says, is worth vastly less than his (*IA* 1392-1394). Indeed, in this crisis Iphigenia transforms from that Achilles A who, if only *asked*, might have allowed Agamemnon to use his name to lure his daughter to her death (962f!). Now that he has seen her beauty and can admire her fortitude. Achilles B becomes a "true hero" who would fight, might well lose his life for a damsel in distress, Here he would not be fighting to gain the *glory* promised him in Troy if he were willing to die there, nor, over there, to keep or regain a mere pleasing spear-won *concubine*.[33] Rather at Aulis he would defend and perhaps win

---

[31] It challenges us to mark off Aristotelian ἐπεισόδια in Euripides' latest plays *Phoenician Women*, *Orestes*, and *IA*, perhaps slightly less so for *Bacchae*. Especially so with *IA*'s patchwork text, partly posthumous, the end not even as "Euripidean" as the *Rhesus* (which some explain as work of the junior Euripides. I reckon *IA* Episode 4 as extending from 1098 to 1508. Long solo or duet lyrics might take the place of choral stasima in articulating structure, for the playwright himself and for us, into units like our "acts." They can divide the preceding or the following iambics (or occasional trochaics).

[32] I submit that Diggle's OCT edition wrongly doubts and Kovacs' Loeb wrongly square-brackets the little Orestes sequence of *IA* 1241-1248 yet not 621-626 that brings the infant prince onto the stage with his mother and big sister and sets up the later *pathos*. Text editors should be more careful of guessing what to include, with only personal reservation, according to assumptions about what maverick dramatist Euripides should not have and thus *could* not script as, for example, excessively cutesy or bathetic. Denys Page led the way for Anglophones in *Actors' Interpolations in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford 1934) and his edition of *Euripides.Medea* (Oxford 1938). Did he ever have theatrical, on-stage experience? I find none in such biography as I can find.

[33] When at *Il.* 19.556-564 he considers the consequences of the Quarrel of Book over the couple of weeks that have ensued, Achilles can astonishingly, unromantically wish that Briseïs had died during the sack of Lyrnessus!

a virgin princess—defending her city, too, if necessary, and her siblings and her parents. This would in fact be quite opposite to what Peleus' son would do years later to acquire with other booty that concubine Briseïs, he who slew her *husband and* (probably he also did) her *three brothers* in the sack of her city (*Il*. 18.291-296 before even seeing her for the first time, eventually to be awarded her as γέρας by the Achaean army (*Il*. 1.185 356, 689-691, and 9.106-111). Moreover, at this early point in his association with mighty king of kings Agamenon Achilles might well have welcomed a marriage alliance with the senior daughter of Agamemnon, the royalest possible match, and a brave girl fit to be spouse of the bravest hero! (By the time of *Iliad* 9, of course, nine years later he would accept no such espoused bride, even with seven cities' dowry: *Il*. 9. 142-156 and 383-397).

Again we confront the relative unimportance of women under unchanging culture of the Bronze Age/Age of Heroes. Iphigenia herself says (in no. 2) that a man's life is more important than a thousand women's! Her life, given his pedigree and promised greatness, may be one ten-thousandth as much as hers! Nevertheless the glory she expects to win vicariously from future achievements of her father and of Achilles that *she* enables will also make her a purposeful victim (as according to the *Hecuba* Trojan princess Polyxena will be, whose sacrifice allows the surviving Greeks to sail homeward and uphold the reputation of the brave Trojans whom, no easy conquest, they defeated.

Among the many ironies of which we Athenians and other over the thousands of years to follow us is that because the expedition can and does sail in a day or two, over the next ten years myriads of men, Achilles included, will *die* at Troy—on both sides, first some innocent, non-aligned Mysians, and that in eventual consequence of a good daughter's/sister's calm death both her parents will be violently slain at home after all. On the one hand, hers will be only apparent death, as we know (though her parents die without knowing), "merely" seventeen years' exile among nasty Greek-hating barbarians?[34]!

(*IT* 1104). No *Thracian* Apollo would have commanded a *matricide*.]

1. *IA*. 1211-1253
Ἰφιγένεια
εἰ μὲν τὸν Ὀρφέως εἶχον, ὦ **πάτερ**, λόγον,
πείθειν ἐπᾴδουσ', ὥσθ' ὁμαρτεῖν μοι πέτρας
κηλεῖν τε τοῖς λόγοισιν οὓς ἐβουλόμην,
ἐνταῦθ' ἂν ἦλθον· νῦν δέ, τἀπ' ἐμοῦ σοφά,

---

[34] On the other hand, when hearing that two Greeks now among them had together killed one's *mother* their King Thoas exclaims Ἄπολλον , οὐδ' ἐν βαρβάροις ἔτλη τις ἄν! (*IT* 1104). No *Thracian* Apollo would have commanded a *matricide.* Iphigenia herself says nothing about her rescuer brother's first great deed to date. Rescuing her will be another, far less morally dubious.

δάκρυα παρέξω· ταῦτα γὰρ δυναίμεθ᾽ ἄν.
ἱκετηρίαν δὲ γόνασιν ἐξάπτω σέθεν
τὸ σῶμα τοὐμόν, ὅπερ ἔτικτεν ἥδε σοι·
μή μ᾽ ἀπολέσῃς ἄωρον· ἡδὺ γὰρ τὸ φῶς
βλέπειν· τὰ δ᾽ ὑπὸ γῆς μή μ᾽ ἰδεῖν ἀναγκάσῃς.
πρώτη σ᾽ ἐκάλεσα πατέρα καὶ σὺ παῖδ᾽ ἐμέ·
πρώτη δὲ γόνασι σοῖσι σῶμα δοῦσ᾽ ἐμὸν
φίλας χάριτας ἔδωκα κἀντεδεξάμην.
λόγος δ᾽ ὁ μὲν σὸς ἦν ὅδ᾽· **Ἆρά σ᾽, ὦ τέκνον,**
εὐδαίμον᾽ ἀνδρὸς ἐν δόμοισιν ὄψομαι,
ζῶσάν τε καὶ θάλλουσαν ἀξίως ἐμοῦ;
οὑμὸς δ᾽ ὅδ᾽ ἦν αὖ περὶ σὸν ἐξαρτωμένης
γένειον, οὗ νῦν ἀντιλάζυμαι χερί·
Τί δ᾽ ἆρ᾽ ἐγὼ σέ; πρέσβυν ἆρ᾽ ἐσδέξομαι
ἐμῶν φίλαισιν ὑποδοχαῖς δόμων, πάτερ,
πόνων τιθηνοὺς ἀποδιδοῦσά σοι τροφάς;
τούτων ἐγὼ μὲν τῶν λόγων μνήμην ἔχω,
σὺ δ᾽ ἐπιλέλησαι, καί μ᾽ ἀποκτεῖναι θέλεις.
μή, πρός σε Πέλοπος καὶ πρὸς Ἀτρέως πατρὸς
καὶ τῆσδε μητρός, ἣ πρὶν ὠδίνουσ᾽ ἐμὲ
νῦν δευτέραν ὠδῖνα τήνδε λαμβάνει.
τί μοι μέτεστι τῶν Ἀλεξάνδρου γάμων
Ἑλένης τε; πόθεν ἦλθ᾽ ἐπ᾽ ὀλέθρῳ τὠμῷ, **πάτερ**;
βλέψον πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ὄμμα δὸς φίλημά τε,
ἵν᾽ ἀλλὰ τοῦτο κατθανοῦσ᾽ ἔχω σέθεν
μνημεῖον, ἢν μὴ τοῖς ἐμοῖς πεισθῇς λόγοις.
[**ἀδελφέ**, μικρὸς μὲν σύ γ᾽ ἐπίκουρος φίλοις,
ὅμως δὲ συνδάκρυσον, ἱκέτευσον πατρὸς
τὴν σὴν ἀδελφὴν μὴ θανεῖν· αἴσθημά τοι
κἀν νηπίοις γε τῶν κακῶν ἐγγίγνεται.
ἰδοὺ σιωπῶν λίσσεταί σ᾽ ὅδ᾽, ὦ **πάτερ**.
ἀλλ᾽ αἴδεσαί με καὶ κατοίκτιρον βίου.
ναί, πρὸς γενείου σ᾽ ἀντόμεσθα **δύο φίλω**·
ὁ μὲν νεοσσός ἐστιν, ἡ δ᾽ ηὐξημένη.
ἓν συντεμοῦσα πάντα νικήσω λόγον·
τὸ φῶς τόδ᾽ ἀνθρώποισιν ἥδιστον βλέπειν,
τὰ νέρθε δ᾽ οὐδέν· μαίνεται δ᾽ ὃς εὔχεται
θανεῖν. κακῶς ζῆν κρεῖσσον ἢ καλῶς θανεῖν.

2. *IA.* 1368-1401 and 1416-1420

* * *

λέγω τάδ᾽ οὐδὲν οὐδέν᾽ εὐλαβουμένη.
ἡ Τυνδαρὶς παῖς διὰ τὸ σῶμ᾽ ἀρκεῖ μάχας
ἀνδρῶν τιθεῖσα καὶ φόνους: **σὺ δ᾽**, **ὦ ξένε**,
μὴ θνῇσκε δι᾽ ἐμὲ μηδ᾽ ἀποκτείνῃς τινά,

μῆτερ, εἰσακουστέα
σῷ πόσει· τὰ δ᾽ ἀδύναθ᾽ ἡμῖν καρτερεῖν οὐ ῥᾴδιον·
τὸν μὲν οὖν ξένον δίκαιον αἰνέσαι προθυμίας·
ἀλλὰ καὶ σὲ τοῦθ᾽ ὁρᾶν χρή, μὴ διαβληθῇ στρατῷ,
αἰ πλέον πράξωμεν οὐδέν, **ὅδε δὲ συμφορᾶς τύχῃ**.
οἷα δ᾽ εἰσῆλθέν μ᾽, ἄκουσον, μῆτερ, ἐννοουμένην:
κατθανεῖν μέν μοι δέδοκται: **τοῦτο δ᾽ αὐτὸ βούλομαι**
εὐκλεῶς πρᾶξαι, **παρεῖσά γ᾽ ἐκποδὼν τὸ δυσγενές**.
δεῦρο δὴ σκέψαι μεθ᾽ ἡμῶν, μῆτερ, ὡς καλῶς λέγω·
εἰς ἔμ᾽ Ἑλλὰς ἡ μεγίστη πᾶσα νῦν ἀποβλέπει,
κἀν ἐμοὶ πορθμός τε ναῶν καὶ Φρυγῶν κατασκαφαί,
τάς γε μελλούσας γυναῖκας μή τι δρῶσι βάρβαροι
[μηκέθ᾽ ἁρπάζειν ἐᾶν †τὰς† ὀλβίας ἐξ Ἑλλάδος,
τὸν Ἑλένης τείσαντας ὄλεθρον, ἣν ἀνήρπασεν Πάρις].
ταῦτα πάντα κατθανοῦσα ῥύσομαι, καί μου κλέος,
Ἑλλάδ᾽ ὡς ἠλευθέρωσα, μακάριον γενήσεται.
καὶ γὰρ οὐδέ τοί <τι> λίαν ἐμὲ φιλοψυχεῖν χρεών·
πᾶσι γάρ μ᾽ Ἕλλησι κοινὸν ἔτεκες, οὐχὶ σοὶ μόνῃ.
ἀλλὰ μυρίοι μὲν ἄνδρες ἀσπίσιν πεφραγμένοι,
μυρίοι δ᾽ ἐρέτμ᾽ ἔχοντες, **πατρίδος ἠδικημένης**,
δρᾶν τι τολμήσουσιν ἐχθροὺς χὑπὲρ Ἑλλάδος θανεῖν,
ἡ δ᾽ ἐμὴ ψυχὴ μί᾽ οὖσα πάντα κωλύσει τάδε;
τί τὸ δίκαιον τοῦτό γε; ἆρ᾽ ἔχοιμ᾽ ἂν ἀντειπεῖν ἔπος;
κἀπ᾽ ἐκεῖν᾽ ἔλθωμεν: οὐ δεῖ τόνδε διὰ μάχης μολεῖν
πᾶσιν Ἀργείοις γυναικὸς εἵνεκ᾽ οὐδὲ κατθανεῖν.
εἷς γ᾽ ἀνὴρ κρείσσων γυναικῶν μυρίων ὁρᾶν φάος.
εἰ βεβούληται δὲ σῶμα τοὐμὸν Ἄρτεμις λαβεῖν,
ἐμποδὼν γενήσομαι ‘γὼ θνητὸς οὖσα τῇ θεῷ;
ἀλλ᾽ ἀμήχανον: δίδωμι σῶμα τοὐμὸν Ἑλλάδι.
θύετ᾽, ἐκπορθεῖτε Τροίαν. **ταῦτα γὰρ μνημεῖά μου**
διὰ μακροῦ, **καὶ παῖδες οὗτοι καὶ γάμοι καὶ δόξ᾽ ἐμή**.
βαρβάρων δ᾽ Ἕλληνας ἄρχειν εἰκός, **ἀλλ᾽ οὐ βαρβάρους**,
μῆτερ, **Ἑλλήνων**: **τὸ μὲν γὰρ δοῦλον**, **οἳ δ᾽ ἐλεύθεροι**.

Part III Motivation in Review

Life is *not* painless for any of the characters adduced in the above Euripidean foursome. Despite Alcestis' assertion that ψυχῆς οὐδέν ἐστι τιμιώτερον, "nothing is more valuable than life," death forthe three others *and for her* is a fair price to pay for something *more* valuable. Alcestis' own surrogate death prioritizes moral absolutes of loyalty and duty to "one's own people" (φίλοι) plus—*not* for men only—"ambition for high esteem" (φιλοτιμία), whereas how far In these respects she resembles Sophocles' Antigone (albeit not Euripides' responding one so far as we know *her*). The Sophoclean limits her "friends" in a way that marginalizes a

woman's spouse or child, and permits a somewhat arbitrary owning or (Ismene) disowning of even an agnate sibling.

We conclude with a brief review of how, in our half-dozen exemplary suicides and subsidiary ones *Antigone* and selected forestalled ones elsewhere, in two dichotomies of ancient Greek moral thought: A. Love-of-Honor (φιλοτιμία), often competitive, as against Shame (αἴδως), particularly the kind that beforehand prevents rather than afterward regrets "shameful" deeds; and B. Loyalty-and-Duty, included in "dutiful love" broadly understood (φιλία), as against Sexual Love (ἔρως). Motivation from one member of one pair can interact with or collide with one of the other pair. In my discussion not in a person's actions (as often in other investigations of tragic motivation) lethally to *others* but to oneself. Suicidally. Of course, hurt to others is often that person's intention, where the deadly harm to oneself is the means to that end. Of Pair B either attitude, if greatly disappointed or outright violated can turn to its opposite, hatred. This has happened in the case of Ajax in backstory.

Members of a motivating pair may indeed clash one with the other, but can at times be complementary, even harmonize—if a person is fortunate in family and other circumstances. Although Such harmony does not normally lead to suicide. It does, however, for Phaedra II with her involuntary passion. Clashes, however, regularly lead to tragic murderous or/and suicidal pressures. Coincidence of a strong motive each from A and B can incite what has been named "Kamikaze spirit" above in SURVEYS.

A Φιλοτιμία and Αιδως

Φιλοτιμία

This is a driving force for **Ajax**, who responds murderously when his τιμή is, in his outraged estimation, maliciously humiliated by the award of Achilles' armor to Odysseus, conspicuously inferior as a loyal man and as a warrior When Athena frustrated his killing in a particularly humiliating way, undeserved but inescapable, be cannoy live on to help the Greeks or to face his parents. He will, however, make his self-slaying int a mean to achieve τίσις, a restoration of honor by causing suffering for the men he most blamed for his indignity under a terrible curse. (Athena he can only touch by harm t oher darling who cheated him, Odysseus.

Antigone herself (*Ant.* 502-505) and Haemon (690-700; cf 733) claim that the princess's defiance of an unholy decree that exhibits heroic and obedience to gods and loyalty to a brother will win her high κλέος that wise of subjects Creon are afraid to acknowledge openly.

Although posthumous κλέος is an aim in two of our four Euripidean stories, possibly a third, it is *sole* motive for none of our four brave

women. Avoidance of infamy moves **Phaedra** II, whose fame for resisting Aphrodite, not a spontaneous lust, Artemis institutes publicly at Troezen and indirectly at Athens, praising Mrs Theseus' γενναιότης in nobly trying to defeat that mighty goddess [(1300-1305 and 1429f; cf. Chorus at 773-75).

In the earlier two of these four plays dying wives do nothing (**Phaedra**) or worse than nothing (**Alcestis**) to exalt their *husbands*. Instead the former tries, as already noted, to maintain women's honor for her Minoan family, the scandals of her taurophile mother and treasonous sister notwithstanding, while Alcestis positively scorns her (absent) parents-in-law and imposes her will and her attitude on meek, crumbling Admetus. Admetus is far less in a moral position to blame his parents, let alone to shock an audience with his (public) response to Pheres' wish to thank and honor Alcestis (*Alc*. 629-650 and beyond, with threats to his father at *Alc*. 662-668 and in stichomythy and exchanged parting remarks (711-738).

On the other hand, how Alcestis as well as **Iphigenia** *and* **Evadne** would attach Achilles-like posthumous κλέος to their names as more precious than living as someone's satisfactory wife (or ever as someones' mother, in the case of the ln-bride last: *IA* 1399) needs little argument. Texts: *Alc*. 323-25 (see chorus at 150f); *Supp*. 1015, 1059-61, 1067; *IA* 1375f, 1440-44. Prestige of kingship for Alcestis' *son* is in her posthumous projection and a king for her mate, while Phaedra's *sons* will boast not only of co-kinghip at Athens and of a heroic mother, but of a uniquely chaste one.

Αἰδώς

By my preferred reading of *Hipp*. 385-387 (αἰδώς... δισσαὶ δ' εἰσίν, ἡ μὲν οὐ κακή,/ἡ δ' ἄχθος οἴκων. εἰ δ' ὁ καιρὸς ἦν σαφής,/οὐκ ἂν δύ' ἤστην ταὔτ' ἔχοντε γράμματα) Phaedra comments concisely on this concept, "sense of shame" as I understand its operation in tragedy. She divides it into a good, pro-moral force, and a bad, retrospective one when inhibition has failed and an agent is ashamed.[35] Phaedra may take pleasure in her moral αἰδώς, but only because hers is the right kind! Too much time on one's hands for gossip (μακραί τε λέσχαι καὶ σχολή, τερπνὸν κακόν, 374) leads to trouble. She goes on to suggest that, unlike her, sluttish women compare notes among themselves on their pleasure in secret infidelities at 392-418. The former keeps her from following up on but

[35] For the competing view that that δισσαί refers to plural ἡδοναὶ πολλαὶ back in 383 see David Kovacs, "Shame, Pleasure, and Honor in Phaedra's Great Speech (Euripides, Hippolytus 375-87)," American Journal of Philology 101/3 (1980), 287-303.

instead striving to rid herself of that lust for her stepson Hippolytus that *we* know from the goddess herself that Aphrodite herself has imposed on her. The latter, "bad" kind would only apply to her should her malady become known—even were also known her effort never *in a deliberately shortened life* to satisfy the quasi-incestuous desire that Aphrodite imposed on her and that she, a mortal struggled in vain to dismiss. To her vicarious embarrassment from her mother's and her sister's world-famous passions is added Hippolytus' outrage at her, the Nurse, and all women, what he expresses to the Nurse and a Chorus of young wives (*Hipp*. 616-650 and 664-668) and then to the Nurse (651-663).

He jumps to the wrong conclusion that his step-mother's Nurse gladly served her mistress—woman allied with woman—when she conveyed to him Phaedra's shameless wish. His indignation is loud and clear to eavesdropping Phaedra *and also to the female world (the Chorus)*. Never mind his oath of secrecy, he *might*, given the notorious, *ambiguous* line 612 (ἡ γλῶσσ᾽ ὀμώμοχ᾽, ἡ δὲ φρὴν ἀνώμοτος: *could* he sit down and *write* a piece of his angry *mind* to his father?). In fact, given his filial duty to his father he *should*; and given his exclaimed general *and specific* misogyny surely *would* inform Theseus of Phaedra's supposed outrageous proposition. By her suicide and suicide *note* Phaedra could inoculate herself against such an accusation. Toward the end of the play Phaedra's inhibiting αἰδώς is vindicated by none other than radically chaste Artemis. Indeed, though dead and unaware of it, when the whole truth comes out that she was neither objectively nor subjectively "shamed" by alleged rape (and thus fit for falsely evidentiary hanging) comes out, she is vindicated even though by her fiction an innocent unknowingly false accuser is soon to be as dead as she is. She has succeeded in holding her honorable own against Aphrodite's power and so does break the series of sensationally bad women in her family. Comparable to Sophocles's rehabilitation of fellow suicide Deïaneira in *Trachinian Women*: would that we could date it!), this equally stunning re-envisioning of Phaedra's tragedy, will bring *her* renown: οὐκ ἀνώνυμος πεσὼν /ἔρως ὁ Φαίδρας ἐς σὲ [sc. Hippolytus] σιγηθήσεται (1429f). debunking her *subjective* guilt and *simple* deadly slander in *Hippolytus* I—and maybe Sophocles' *Phaedra*? can he have qusalified her guilt, e.g., by a false report of Theseus' deah or at lease his known descend to Hades?0) And to two goddesses infamy?

Othe characters who seem to be moved by pre-action "inhibition" are Hippolytus (see *Hipp*. 8-81and 997-999) who is hardly suicidal, though his scrupulous honoring of an oath leads to his death in our extant Greek play; and Hecuba, slyly at *Hec*. 969 where she preend reluctance to tell a secret and ask a favor of evil Polymestor. She, too, is not suicidal in this play, though she will shed her human decency and nature to become

a howling bitch after tr retriubution she exacts from the wicked Thracian and his innocent little sons.(1265).

Post-action shamed regret lurks in the breast that Ajax will fatally stab through, on account of his two failures—to win Achilles' arms and, in a very embarrassing divinely inflicted delusion, to punish the Greek High Command for that indignity, a sensational ἀτιμία. He would, however, be ashamed to admit either kind of shame.[36] Admit though does that he cannot go home proudly to face his father Telamon, in his day co-conqueror of Troy with a royal princess and lots of loot to bring home to Salamis. Ajax will not allow frustration to be an explicit motive for his suicide, only as be fuel to his wrath. No inhibition blunted his bloody-murderous intention to torture and kill the Atreids and Odysseus.

Shame after misdeed and, more powerful, fear of awful punishment drive the Hermione of *Andromache* to apparently serious attempts to kill herself. A different "shame" caused her to get in trouble with Neoptolemus in the firs place, once she deemed him and his kingdom beneath her dignity—and shamelessly told everyone who would listen (including a Chorus of Phthian women) all about it.

In *Alcestis* the title character's decision to die so that Admetus may is motivated, today, however much she was originally spurred by ἔρως, by ambition to claim, *inter vivos* and posthumously, supreme womanly/wifely κλέος and control over her children and her bed (see Alc. 179-182 and her public effort to veto a successor there (300-310). On the other hand, the fleeting and quickly passing attempt or pretense on Admetus part of a *Liebestod* leap into his dead savior wife's grave may be as much out of embarrassment after his deplorable colloquy, before the Chorus of men, with his frank father Pheres. In fact, he seems not to have struggled much when his friends of the Chorus raised him, not from the dead but from Alcestis' uncovered bier, according to his own lyric account of what had transpired at th upon his return from the graveyard He is chastened and famously morose (ἄρτι μανθάνω, 912), but far from suicidal.[37] After a second Prologue by a male slave and drunken Heracles and a second *Kommos*-Parodos.

---

[36] The word αἰδώς does not appear in this play. Its only two occurrences in his other six surviving plays are in Electra's lyric, complaining that , except for her (and, of course Orestes!) there is no αἰδώς, no εὐσέβεια in a world that does nothing about the atrocious murder of King Agamemnon or about the evil regicide rulers of Argos (*El*. 245-250). The other, at *OC* 1267-1270, comes in Polyneices' hypocritical appeal to his discarded father Oedipus to join him, who himself has now been wronged, in any unholy attack on his brother, Oedupus' brother-and-son Eteocles. Polyneices has no shame of any kind that would inhibit him from treason against his native city Thebes, fratricidal intention against his brother.

[37] Contrast Hermione after a *series* of *serious* attempt to kill herself (*And*. 803-856). Not a love crisis of lost sublime (though sexual) love, of course, in the Sparta princess's case, but acute fear of a fate worse than death.

Φιλία

Ajax is moved by the *inverted* moral principle φιλία as he understands its stability. He finds it, like its opposite ἔχθος or perhaps δυσφιλία, shockingly *un*stable in a topsy-turvy world from which he will escape by dying. He knows who his *true* φίλοι are, *and the many who have proven themselves false ones*. He is not moved at all by sexual love. Unlike Sophocles' anguished Heracles, however, he is attached to a half-Trojan *brother* by the same heroic father and to his half-Trojan *son* by a concubine who loves him far more emotionally than he seems to care for her except as little Eurysaces' soon to be sole surviving parent: the ἡμῶν at *Aj.* 689 seem to refer to an "us" that does not include himself.

Antigone is moved by moral "dutiful friendship," albeit severely narrowed. She invites early death by an antipolitical (and anti-democratic) determination to honor a treasonous φίλος and to join him and other φίλοι without whom life is not worth living but not at all by the amoral other, sexual love (but see n. xx above for possibility of her feeling for Cousin Haemon. Suicide Haemon in the same play is her opposite, disobeying his *father*, even trying to kill him in the worst possible *deliberate* violation of narrow, φιλία and kills himself when after failing to save his beloved Antigone he has failed to kill Creon. He will not live in a world with Creon, without Antigone. (Eurydice acts upon suddenly built-up ἔχθος toward her husband, as avenging φίλη to her two sons whom Creon, as stern arch-πολίτης (see *Ant.* 178-191) who puts πολιτεία before φιλία (and therefore patriots before φίλοι and who literally sacrificed one of his two sons directly the day before, the other indirectly today to the interests of the πόλις as he perceives them. *His* only "friends" will be law- and government-abiding ἀστοί. He addresses an emergency assembly of mature citizens in the Chorus as ἄνδρες only (162: the first word of his Inaugural address) until they prove by civic loyalty that they *can* be his φίλοι. Antigone's famous retort to Creon regarding dead but unburied Polyneices

> **Κρέων**
> οὔτοι ποθ᾽ οὑχθρός, οὐδ᾽ ὅταν θάνῃ, φίλος.
>
> **Ἀντιγόνη**
> οὔτοι συνέχθειν, ἀλλὰ συμφιλεῖν ἔφυν. (522f)

sounds noble. Not so noble, however, when we consider how harshly the speaker distinguishes *living* κοινὸν αὐτάδελφον Ἰσμήνης κάρα (1!) from her treasonous "dear" *dead* brother at 69-94 and 560-536.

An essential difference between φιλία and ἔρως is almost too evident to mention. One may extend one's "friends" by choice or by external circumstances. Admetus and Heracles became first ξένοι, then φίλοι (with important consequences for both) by chance meeting as the great hero passed through the young king's realm in the past—and, whether Apollo sends as well as predicts this in the Prologue of *Alcestis*, as he does very opportunely during the course of the play! In the *Heracles* by releasing Poseidon's son from Uncle Hades' while he was down there on other business Zeus's son racter acquired friendship with the younger Theseus, although as sons of those seldom fraternal Olympians they were hardly bound to be "kissing cousins." At the end of that play Theseus saves Heracles from a one-way trip to the Underworld from an acute "shame" even more grievous than that of suicide Ajax. (See below on the Telamonian's relation to αἴδως.)

On the other hand, although neither Ajax nor Antigone is happy about this, "friends" can become not mere neutrals but "enemies." For Ajax countless former comrades in the war (who certainly honored him in Iliad 7, not that long ago); for Antigone her full sister (αὐτάδελφον... κάρα) Ismene and, not so closely connected, her mother's brother Creon.

῞Ερως

Traditional Greece did not think the "lover" might choose to desire another individual passionately, a potential "beloved" who might not reciprocate the intense feeling, but become an complaisant φίλος/φίλη to a fortunate lover. Rather itwas imposed by an external, supernatural force, often with quite undesired effect on an unwilling "beloved" as well (e.g., Phaedra vis-à-vis Hippolytus!) could turn to στύγος-ἔχθος (as Medea and Jason demonstrate). If the eager, pushy lov*er* was a *woman*, look out, *man!* Or take advantage, like Jason?[38]

Alcestis may have been motivated by teen-age ἔρως when she offered her long life expectancy to make possible his; and there may be a bit of sexual jealousy in her reported bed-and-bedroom scene as well as in her ambiguous denial of a generic γυνή to him for the rest of those long decades of life which she is about to leave him—a "wife" or companionship of any "woman"?[39]

---

[38] Jason is only one of a set of mythic heroes who gain benefit from the lust of an adversary father's maiden daughter. Theseus is another cad who, like him, encourages the girl Ariadne and elopes with her. Amphitryon and (ironically) Ariadne's father Minos win *wars* thanks, respectively, to enemy Pterelas' indirectly patricidal daughter Comaetho and enemy Nisus' similarly patricidal Scylla.

[39] No matter. A beloved concubine or proto-prostitute could bear him a darling little rival to Eumelus. Athens' mid-5th century citizenship law did not apply to Bronze Age heroes.

Phaedra is loyal to her husband and his and her two legitimate sons, to the memory of her full sister (ἀδελφή) despite her disloyalty to their father and to their mother despite her fling in Daedalus' convincing cow costume with the Minotaur's sire. A good φίλη all around, to the female Chorus and even to her father Minos or after his death or metathesis her brother, probably Deucalion, whichever gave her in overseas marriage to the notorious philanderer Theseus old enough to be her father. Evidence is lacking to suggest that she is prudish about ἔρως-sex; and utterly anti-moral Aphrodite in our play does not use her to destroy Hippolytus but possibly in part to punish her. in part to punish her. Phaedra, *suicidally* monogamous, despises unfaithful wives make husband and children ashamed (and allow "woman" to be a immoral stereotype: *Hipp*. 405-418).

Evadne is totally controlled by ἔρως, to the detriment of her duty of obedience to her father. Indeed her *non*-mention (like her father's) of *her* possible orphaned son of Capaneus may indicate that she does not feel that corollary of conjugal ἔρως which makes a husband's children emotionally dear to his wife. Recall how Alcestis' children will represent her long after she herself is gone and embody her feelings for the man who asked her to *die* for him to live with them, a mama's boy son—ὁ σὸς ... νεοσσός he calls himself—who at Alc. 393-403 and 414f utters his pathetic farewell to her now lifeless body and a daughter who as she grows up may, as daughters so often do, happily remind of her late mother those who knew *her*. Compare adoring Andromache's extreme tolerance of her husband Hector's affairs and resulting bastards *And*. 222-228, and now as Trojan concubine, her apparent willingness to trade her life for the baby son of a master who, like his father Achilles, came to have real affection for her.

Pre-Aulis **Iphigenia** believed that her father returned her intense filial love for him. Her disappointment when she leans of his undertaking to *sacrifice* her with little explanation of why devastates her, especially once her mother unpacks that "why" in terms of uxorious Uncle Menelaus and his slutty wife Helen of whom he should be glad to be rid. Nevertheless the girl still appeals to Agamemnon's and her affectionate father-daughter relationship during all of their preceding something-teen years together. She would have been all right with marrying Agamemnon's chosen young but famous husband for her, sight unseen, even if she would see him little after their wedding at Aulis and his departure for Troy. Her lingering naïve trust in her father (even though she does not learn learns of his too-late effort to prevent her leaving Argos) leads her to swallow some of his forced advocacy of hyperbolic moral and nationalist justification of a quasi-genocidal Trojan War, righteous Hellenes versus savage barbarians. A positive reason to die, however shabby (as Euripides' audience know by now), is now before her. Negative ones,

however, will actually move her first to acquiesce in a horrific death, and finally to welcome it. Loyalty to father extends to agnate siblings, including adorable baby brother Orestes. When she enters in a carriage she may be holding the sleeping infant whom Clytemnestra gently awakens to meet his Daddy and his prospective uncle Achilles, The nubile princess also loves her mother. Cognate (!) φιλία, or the natural mother-daughter relationship. She discovers that her closest relatives are in danger from the entire Achaean host if Agamemnon or anyone else stands up and tries to prevent her sacrifice and stall the expedition that requires it. Enter Achilles, suicidally ready to defend her nonetheless. She wants him and tells him to live, *thanks*, literally, to (sigh!) her. She may be experiencing first teenage crush? The rest is an incipient love story *interrupta*.

CONCLUSION

Sophocles and Euripides both make drama out of plots with an event of self-perpetrated death (in two cases bloody sacrifice with ritual features, victims Ajax, Creon's wife Eurydice, and Theban Menoeceus; for non-ritualized others' those of Antigone, S Jocasta, and Phaedra all hanged; by sword Haemon's, Deïaneira's, and E Jocasta's; Evadne's—and Hecuba's in *Tro*?—by fire. Other characters invite killing by others (in ritual sacrifice of Macaria, Polyxena, and Euripides' *willing* Iphigenia; in the unique case of **Alcestis** when Death himself comes to take her at an agreed future date).

From the comprehensive surveys we have the several suicides that did not take place. These show a similar variety. Their avoidance can lead to good or at least prevent something clearly bad. Actual in-progress attempts *frustrated* are by Admetus, Hermione, and Philoctetes.

Admetus lives on possibly (there are doubts!) to resume a happy marriage with unexpectedly revived Alcestis as if nothing had happened, certainly to prevent his wife's self-sacrifice from being in vain, certainly as well to reward his extraordinary insistent hospitality and to keep in place an evidently popular *and good* king who has invaluable allies in the god Apollo and the demigod hero Heracles.

After a terrible frustration and scare, **Hermione**, is happy to have lived to be Neoptolemus' *widow* (and so not to rear a husband's wrath if he ever found out about the Spartan plot against his compatible slave-γυνή and their baby) and to be Cousin Orestes' bride. She and he They deserve one another and also have the patronship of Apollo (whatever Euripides seems to think about him).

The most interesting of the three is *the on-stage* thwarting of Philoctetes' desire to deny victory in the Trojan War for the army and its leaders

who abandoned him to die on a desert island , glory to the corrupted, degenerate son of Achilles. Deified Heracles will send him to healing and glory of his own at Troy, but how "good" will Greek victory be with Odyssean *trickery* needed to bring it about and with *atrocities* committed during and after it in both of which Neoptolemus was deplorably implicated? What would Achilles' ghost think of his son is Odeysses actually told him πᾶσαν ἀληθείη about Neoptolemus at Ilium (*Od.* 11.505-537)?

Electra in Euripides' *Electra* threatens to kill herself with a sword if Orestes fails to assassinate Aegisthus; however, he succeeds and she survives to join in matricide after maliciously luring and taunting her mother with a lie about a baby she has (not) born, then steering her to deadly ambush in the peasant's cottage where she has been living celibate. **Heracles** will kill himself in any of three ways: by a leap from a height such as Philoctetes attempted, like Ajax by an Apollonian sword (Hector's), or by incineration, like *Trachinian Women*'s Heracles! (*HF* 1146-1152). Theseus, however, arrives in time to talk him out of doing any of those things, though his anguish in spirit can be no less than his can be no less than his Sophoclean counterpart's in body. His courage to live is tested—and passes. He will liveto enjoy fame for al the good he has done and can lay blame for this day's catastrophe to Hera—and ultimately to Zeus. His highly *honored* retirement to Athens is, of course, Euripidean invention for this perhaps most troubling of all his anti-traditional tragedies.

Contemplated violence, surely suicidal, possibly unsuccessful, if pursued in "Kamikaze" hatred of its target/s occurs to Medea (against Jason and his princess bride in Creon's palace) to the Electra in Sophocles, play (against Clytemnestra and Aegisthus in the Argive palace. Others put or themselves in positions that dare enemy to attack them with terrible consequences for themselves Creusa, at Apollo's altar) or threaten to do so (Menelaus, speaking for himself and Helen, on the tomb of Proteus), Orestes, speaking for himself, Electra, and Pylades (from the roof of Atreus' palace, which he threatens to have his companions burn down even as they stand on it, if Menelaus wants to save his own daughter, whom Orestes will slay, Orestes himself the girl's fiancé and his sister Electra, two of his brother Agamemnon's children (in *Orestes*).

Finally, there are reciprocal intentions to save one another by each offering to be sacrificed so that the other might return to Greece (Orestes and Pylades in *IT*) or Kamikaze-spirit, fratricidal mode, each surely to die under their father's comprehensive curse, but determined to kill the other and prevent him from reigning in Thebes (Polyneices in *OC*, he and Eteocles in *Phoenician Women*) Non-reciprocal but similar in structure are **Alcestis'** willingness to die to save her husband *and*, as above, to give their—her—children a better life without step- mother/s and non-*sibling* step-brother/s and/or -sister/s and **Andromache**'s readiness to leave a

shrine's asylum and die to save her toddler son, who will otherwise be murdered.

Both playwrights offer variety, more so Euripides if only because more than twice as many plays are his to be surveyed. On the other hand, we find some salient differences between them in the tragic or melodramatic theme of self-destruction accomplish or seriously considered. In Sophocles no one dies or is willing to in order to benefit someone else *among the living*. Eschatology is important for him, not so for Euripides. Indeed the older dramatist and two of his characters explicitly think of their meeting with close relatives in the Underworld, φίλοι of the kind called *necessarii* in Latin, Antigone to be rejoined with them, apostrophizing father, mother, and Polyneices and explaining to her emotionally endeared brother that she did what did for him, though dead, incurring death for herself, for uniquely irreplaceable him (*And*. 897-915). Oedipus, in contrast and as noted above, wants to delay confrontation with either of his parents' ghosts, and therefore will delay it by not committing suicide, and blinds himself so he does not have eventually to meet their gaze among the violently deceased. Is it too fanciful to think that Ajax hope to be reunited with Cousin Achilles by expediting his death? Philoctetes has no time for elaborate thoughts or to explain himself before jumping, he hopes, to his death; but he would be glad to join all those estimable heroes whose deaths in the war he mourns, four of them, and no longer have to breathe the same noxious air as the five others—including Odysseus—whose survival he deplores and implies, *he* may imply, cowardice.

"Suicide is" *not* "painless," but it is not worthless, either. Where the high value of the a courageous deed of a model of virtue can outweigh his painful death and extended mourning by those who survive him and be the basis for exalted drama forever.

Victor Castellani
Denver

SELBSTMORD IN SOPHOCLES UND EURIPIDES

Zusammenfassung

Mit erstaunender Häufigkeit findet man in Tragödien von Sophokles und Euripides statt: blossen Selbstmord und Mordanschlag auf sich selbst, durchgedachte Erwägung von Selbstopfer, auch blutiges, um entweder einen Vorteil zu erwerben oder gut anderen Leuten zu tun. Alle diese wenn *un*sichtbar werden berichtet oder auf der Bühne bemerkt, falls durch Abgang in sofortigen Tod (Aias, Evadne) oder baldigen (mehrere) gezeigt, einmal genau vor den Augen und Ohren des Publikums (Alkestis) dargestellt. Vierzehn aus den sechszehn vorhandenen Tragödien des Euripides dramatisieren das

Thema des von Selbst zugezogenen Tods. Eine fünfzehnte ist Grenzfall: Kreusa der *Ion* fordert ihren unerkannten Sohn heraus, sie, die ihn soeben zu vergiften versucht hatte, sie seine unerkannte Mutter sehr gotteslästerlich auf dem Alar Apollos zu töten, was würde den göttlichen Vergewaltiger höchstens beleidigen und verwirren, wie der Prinzessin selber ihm direkte Verletzung nie leisten könnte. Jedes aus den sieben sophokleïschen gehört zu diese Untersuchung.

Nach einem ausführlichem Überblick, in Part II untersucht dieser Aufsatz *zwei* berühmte Titelrollen von Sophocles, Selbstmörder **Aias** und -mörderin **Antigone** und danach *vier* Personen von Euripides: **Alkestis** and **Phaidra II**, das Paar besonders komplex an Motivation, dann bei weitem minder bekannte **Evadne**, endlich eine in freiwilliges Opfer umgewandelte **Iphigenie**. Bei denselben sechs Personen sehen wir und messen wie weit jede zwei Paaren sittlichen Charakterzüge (φιλιτιμία und αἴδως, φιλία und ἔρως) bewegen, wo die zwei *Mitglieder* eines Paars bald zusammengehörig sind (z.B. europäische Iphigenie), bald widersprüchlich (Antigone).

Am Ende machen wir Unterschiede zwischen den zwei Tragikern im selbstmörderischen Tauchhandel. Altruismus oft pur, seltener komplex setzt sich in Euripides durch, wo viele andere einen beabsichtigen Gewinn zu Preis eines eigenen Todes empfangen. In Sophokles kaum! Rachsucht verbreitet sich dennoch in fast allen griechischen Tragödien, obwohl Euripides jemanden selten vorstellt, der seinen eigenen Tod für maximales Leid eines Feindes bezahlt (Phaedra II teilweise, gänzlich beide Söhne des Ödipus). Während in Sophocles man deutliche Hoffnung auf eine gemütlichere *post mortem* Nachexistenz ausdrückt kann (Antigone) oder vielleicht andeutet (Aias, Philoctetes), erwarten alle in Euripides allein eine ewige persönliche Schlußmachung, wonach am besten dankbares, ehrendes an sich Gedächtnis bei folge

Selbstmord ist weder schmerzlos noch wertlos, wo der hohe Wert einer tapferen Tat eines Tugendboldes seine kurze Todesqualen, auch ausgedehnte Trauer der seinigen Überlebenden sehr überwiegen kann und hocherhabenes Drama für ewig gründen.