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POLITICS AND POETICS:
TRADITION, GENRE, AND POETIC INNOVATION IN EURIPIDEAN TRAGEDY

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To Ashley,

forever my sweeter half,

ἀστέρων πάντων ὁ κάλλιστος
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Critical interpretations of Euripidean tragedy have often focused on political issues that are central to these plays, or on the poetic innovations that are present throughout Euripides’ oeuvre. Only rarely have these two subjects been broached simultaneously. This divide, however, is unnecessary and unfortunate, as many forms of Greek poetry regularly addressed ideas of a political nature—which is to say of import to the polis—and often took their meaning from the specific civic contexts in which they were performed. As such, tragedy’s ability to refer to or employ external poetic forms has the potential to acquire a political dimension, illuminating or even problematizing the civic and political issues central to the dramas. It is thus a mistake to divorce the study of Euripides’ poetic pursuits and innovations from that of his investigation and critique of contemporary Athenian society and politics: these aspects inform each other, and should together inform our understanding of Euripidean tragedy.

It is this intersection of politics and poetics that I set out to examine in this dissertation. In it, I argue that Euripides’ engagement with different poetic works and genres is not simply a product of his interest in the literary tradition, but that it is closely related to his exploration of political questions that were relevant to the world of his audience. As I demonstrate, Euripides refashions these various poetic forms as part of a process of challenging and critiquing
Athenian cultural and political values, and in so doing he also questions and redefines the place and purpose of these poetic forms within contemporary Athenian society.

Over the course of four chapters, I look at three different tragedies and four different poetic works and genres that form the (sub)textual backbones of these dramas. In chapter one, I examine the echoes of the *Iliad* in Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Here I argue that the presence of the Homeric text in the *I* forms a critique of the dynamics of authority in democratic Athens, while the vast differences between the Homeric and Euripidean armies serve to undermine the common notion that the Homeric epics contained lessons on leadership. In the second chapter, I turn to the epinician language and themes that run throughout the *Heracles*, and contend that the tragedy exalts epinician poetry and values, a stance that is at odds with the reception of the genre in classical Athens. In chapter three, I analyze the presence of the paean in the *Ion*, and assert that Euripides’ use of the genre problematizes the fusion of mythical identities that the drama enacts, and raises doubts about the use of paeans as a means to propagate local and colonial identities. In the fourth and final chapter, I return to the *Iphigenia at Aulis* to explore its allusions to Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, and show that the *I* overturns the Aeschylean depiction of Clytemnestra as a threat to male society because of her ability to so easily deceive Agamemnon. By inverting these roles—making Agamemnon the deceiver and Clytemnestra the deceived—the *I* rejects the Aeschylean notion that deceptive speech was a specifically feminine attribute, and suggests that it is the duplicity of male leaders that represents the true threat to Athenian society. Each of these chapters examines an issue that lies at a juncture of the poetic and the political, and demonstrates that these aspects of Euripidean tragedy are fully intertwined. My
analyses are informed by readings of Thucydides, Xenophon, and other contemporary sources, all of which serve to show that the problems with which Euripides is engaged—both the poetic and the political ones—were of particular relevance to the world of his Athenian audience.
Introduction

Scholars of Euripides have generally focused either on social and political aspects of his tragedies, or on literary and aesthetic questions.\(^1\) Titles alone tend to reveal this variance: Daniel Mendelsohn’s *Gender and the City in Euripides’ Political Plays* clearly falls into the political category, while Shirley A. Barlow’s *The Imagery of Euripides: A Study in the Dramatic Use of Pictorial Language* obviously focuses on literary questions.\(^2\) To some extent, this subdivision of scholarship may be an oversimplification, but it is nevertheless useful insofar as it effectively illustrates the fact that scholars have rarely attempted to simultaneously approach both the socio-political and the literary aspects of Euripides’ work.\(^3\)

This divide, however, belies the fact that it is often difficult to disentangle the poetic and the political within the context of Greek poetry. In order to understand this point more fully, it may be useful to first define what is meant by “political.” Generally speaking, I define as


\(^3\) There are, of course, exceptions to this rule (e.g. the work of Charles Segal and Simon Goldhill), but Euripidean scholarship generally falls into one of the two categories mentioned above. One recent book that does examine precisely this intersection in Euripides, but which was published too late to be included in this dissertation, is Victoria Wohl, *Euripides and the Politics of Form* (Princeton, 2015).
“political” those values, ideologies, and beliefs that were widely seen as intrinsic or directly related to the *polis*, its institutions and processes (the *politeia*), and its members *qua* members of the community (the *politai*). Some concrete examples of such political values and beliefs would include conceptions of leadership, definitions of citizens and citizenship, the roles, responsibilities, and privileges these citizens had within the *polis*, and the ethical or moral principals that governed social and political relationships within the *polis*.

Greek tragedy constantly explored these types of issues, and often in a manner that was especially relevant to the Athenian *polis*. This is apparent in the plays I examine in this dissertation. The *Iphigenia at Aulis*, for example, tackles questions of leadership within a “democratic” army, and the types of speech that these leaders would use to persuade their audiences. The *Ion*, on the other hand, examines and redefines notions of Athenian mythical and civic identities. And the *Heracles* focuses on the peculiar relationship that develops between a heroic individual (Heracles) and the *poleis* of the tragedy. All of these topics are political insofar as they concern the values of the tragic communities, and as we shall see they were also of particular interest to the Athenian *polis* at the time that the tragedies were produced. In short, there is little question that these plays in particular, and Greek tragedy more generally, addressed political issues that were relevant to the audiences before which they were performed.

Nor was Attic tragedy a unique form of poetry in this respect. Throughout the canon of archaic and classical Greek poetry, we regularly see the articulation of political values that were
specifically related to the communities by whom and before whom they were performed. For instance, epinician odes in honor of Olympic victories were generally performed at the victor’s home polis upon his return, and frequently addressed the tensions surrounding the victor’s relationship with his fellow citizens. Paeans, on the other hand, often focused on the dissemination of a specific ethnic or civic identity to which all members of a polis (or a group of poleis) could subscribe and relate. The Homeric epics do not perhaps express the same overt interest in inculcating specific political values, but much of the action takes place within “political fields” and focuses on the social relations between different individuals and groups. Furthermore, the “Homeric narrative seeks to guide the audience’s judgment about central moral concerns...[which] have political implications.” This fact was not lost on the Greeks, many of whom believed that Homer’s texts were a repository of knowledge concerning, among other things, “the administration of cities.” Much like tragedy, each of these poetic forms shares a persistent ability to explore values that were essential to political communities.

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4 Though some scholars have taken the stance that the Iliad and Odyssey attempt to instill in their audiences a specifically elite ideology. See Ian Morris, “The Use and Abuse of Homer,” Classical Antiquity 5 (1986): pp. 123-25, for a summary of these viewpoints; and Ruth Scodel, Listening to Homer: Tradition, Narrative, and Audience (Ann Arbor, 2002), pp. 173-212. Scodel argues that while “the poems support an aristocratic order” (p. 188), their “political implications are easily forgotten in its humanistic and inclusive appeal” (p. 212).


7 Cf. e.g. Plato, Rep. 599c: διοικήσεων πόλεων. This view was by no means universal—indeed Plato himself seems to reject it—but it was clearly a common one in classical Greece. For more on the subject, see below in Chapter One, pp. 104-109.

8 I will address the political dimensions of epic, epinician, and paean in greater depth in the chapters which are dedicated to their re-use by Euripides, but a representative sample of scholars who have discussed these issues
Where Attic drama was unique, however, was in its capacity, due to its length and structure, to incorporate different poetic genres and forms within it. As a tragedian, Euripides was able to employ and allude to different poetic modes, and to do so before an audience that could identify (and identify with) these forms of poetry. On the one hand, this is obvious, as tragic choral odes and monodies often present themselves as versions of particular types of lyric songs. Less obviously, these distinct poetic forms can be crucial drivers of the action that we see on-stage, and the filter through which the audience may better understand the various extra-theatrical questions that the Greek tragedians were constantly posing. Moreover, among the tragedians, Euripides is notable—especially in his later plays—for his use of and experimentation with different poetic genres. Yet despite the interest in both the “poetics” and the “politics” of Euripides’ plays, and despite the potential for a tragic poet to explore civic


9 Examples include the choral paean in S. OT 151-215, or the thrēnos that Electra sings in S. El. 86-120.
ideologies through various forms of poetry, little work has been done to see if Euripides’ poetic innovation is consistently connected to the political and civic dimensions of his plays.

The example of the Ion shows how difficult it is to disentangle poetic experimentation and political considerations in Euripidean tragedy, and it also suggests the potential benefits of trying to understand both aspects at once. On the one hand, it is obvious that the incorporation of paeans in the Ion is a poetic endeavor that Euripides undertakes, not least because he takes great liberties with the form and substance of these songs. At the same time, insofar as paeans had their own political dimensions, Euripides’ experimentation with the genre has the potential to recall this political dimension and to thus take on one of its own. This is especially true since the political values that were regularly asserted by Greek paeans are the same ones that are explored in the Ion, namely the propagation of a civic identity that relates to the audience of the tragic (and by extension paeanic) performance. As such, Euripides’ paeanic innovations in the Ion cannot be understood simply as a poetic problem, nor yet can his consideration of Athenian civic identities be seen simply as a political problem: these two aspects are fully entwined.

With this dissertation, I seek to set forth an interpretation of Euripidean tragedy that simultaneously takes into account these two facets of his poetic production. I argue that his poetic experimentation is not merely a product of his interest in the literary tradition, but that it is also closely related to the social and political questions he explores within his plays. In order to do so, I examine Euripides’ engagement with different poetic forms and show that it works in conjunction with his constant questioning of Athenian political values. As I demonstrate, such a
process was feasible because when Euripides cited and reworked the language, tones, and myths of established poetic works and genres within his tragedies, he also evoked the ideals they represented. The audience, which was intimately familiar with these poems and genres, would naturally make the associations between genres and values, especially since these values were also pertinent to the central themes of the tragedy within which they were cited. Moreover, the questions Euripides raises through his engagement with the poetic tradition were also pertinent to the world of his audience: both the tragedies themselves and the genres explored within them directly addressed issues that were relevant to Athens in the late fifth century. Thus it is a mistake to divorce the study of Euripides’ poetic pursuits and innovations from that of his investigation and critique of contemporary Athenian society and politics. These aspects inform each other, and should together inform our understanding of Euripidean tragedy.

The poetic forms I examine are epic (specifically the *Iliad*), epinician poetry, the Apolline paean, and Aeschylean tragedy (specifically the *Agamemnon*). These were all well-known by both Euripides and his audience, and Euripides' employment of them would naturally recall or evoke a variety of political considerations. The effect of Euripides’ engagement with these different poetic works and genres is two-fold: on the one hand, he questions the manner in which poetry and the poetic tradition was used—or, in the case of epinician, ignored—in order

12 I return to this question in much greater depth later in this Introduction; please see Section Two below on pp. 14-34.
to promote certain values and ideologies in Athens; on the other hand, he is able to focus on specific political issues through the lens of these poetic traditions. In other words, by inserting traditional poetic genres and works into a contemporary context, Euripides is able to challenge both the functions of these poetic forms themselves, as well as the values of contemporary Athens. As such, we see that for Euripides, poetic innovation and social critique are not two separate and distinct elements, nor is one subordinate to the other: instead, the poetic and political elements of his tragedies consistently work together to interrogate each other and Athenian society.

Each chapter focuses on one of Euripides’ tragedies and on his engagement with a specific poetic genre or work within that play. In the first chapter I discuss the presence of the *Iliad* in the *Iphigenia at Aulis* (*IA*); in the second, epinician in the *Heracles*; in the third, paean in the *Ion*; and in the fourth, I return to the *IA* to explore its reworking of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*. Though poetic experimentation is evident in nearly all of Euripides’ extant tragedies, these three plays are notable for the length and centrality of this experimentation. Each of them openly engages with the genre or work in question and does so in such a way as to challenge both Athenian values and ideologies and poetry’s role in propagating them. The *IA* in particular embodies the issues I wish to address, for it is one of Euripides’ final plays and represents the culmination of years of poetic exploration. It is extremely rich in poetic allusions and reconstructions, and opening and closing this study of Euripidean tragedy with discussions of the *IA* highlights most distinctly the complexity of Euripides’ poetic explorations.
1. Methodological Considerations

At its most basic level, each chapter will undertake an examination of at least three dimensions of a single Euripidean tragedy. These will be: 1) the political, cultural, or civic values that are challenged or questioned in the tragedy; 2) the poetic elements of the tragedy that are not simply intrinsic to tragedy itself, but which serve to call attention to another poetic work or genre with which the audience is familiar; and 3) the complex relationship that Euripides develops within each tragedy between these poetic and political elements. Given the multiplicity and complexity of the arguments that I will be developing in each chapter, a certain uniformity of approach has been applied throughout.

My primary mode of approach is through close readings of the tragedies I am discussing and of the poetic works and genres that Euripides employs within these tragedies. Naturally, I do not rely on my analyses alone. For nearly every passage or section I examine, numerous critics have already provided interpretations and commentaries. As such, every chapter includes an overview of the scholarship regarding the Euripidean tragedy in question. The focus of these reviews is three-fold: to outline the critical consensus regarding the central themes of these tragedies; to show that scholars have already observed Euripides’ engagement, within these tragedies, with the poetic forms with which I deal; and to summarize previous interpretations of the very intertextual activities in which Euripides is engaged. Above all, these
surveys show that while the significance of the political and poetic themes that I discuss has been identified, considerable work remains to be done in order to fully understand these aspects, both on their own and in relation to one another. The scholarship on Euripides’ *Heracles* illustrates this state of affairs. Numerous critics have identified Heracles’ struggle for civic integration as one of the play’s central problems, while others have analyzed at length the epinician odes in the play. But despite the deep connections between epinician poetry and the relations between elite individuals and their respective communities, few scholars have discussed the entanglement of these two aspects of the *Heracles*. In my discussion of the tragedy, and in my dissertation as a whole, I seek to fuse and expand these two avenues of inquiry, and in so doing to illuminate the complex relationship between the poetic and political themes of Euripides’ work.

Regarding the external poetic forms that comprise the textual backbone of the Euripidean tragedies I analyze, the work of other critics is once again central to my project. In each chapter, I summarize the scholarly appraisals of the work or genre that is embedded in the Euripidean text, with a particular emphasis on their political and civic dimensions. In

15 Swift, 2010, pp. 155-56 is an exception here, but as I shall demonstrate in Chapter Two, her stance on the political implications of Euripides’ use of epinician differs substantially from my own.
conjunction with this survey of scholarship, I also provide numerous close readings of these
texts in order to demonstrate more clearly the various values and ideologies that are embedded
in these poetic forms. At times, these close readings are extensive. It would be all too easy, for
example, to select a passage from Pindar’s paeans and compare it with the paeans sung in
Euripides’ *Ion*. But I am not simply looking for similarities and differences between traditional
and Euripidean versions of these poetic forms. I am interested in identifying the common
themes of these poems and genres in order to understand what sort of social and cultural
associations Euripides’ audience would make with them, and from there examining the manner
in which the tragedian meets, manipulates, or subverts these expectations. Insofar as having a
precise understanding of the former is crucial to the latter, it is only natural that my
examinations of these different poetic works and genres are lengthy.

My analyses of the tragic texts themselves takes up the bulk of each chapter. In these
sections, I focus on elements of the play that are pertinent to both the principal socio-political
themes of the tragedy and the poetic interplay in which Euripides is engaged. In each chapter, I
demonstrate first of all that these two aspects of the tragedies are inextricably and overtly
connected. Second, I study the manner in which Euripides subverts or upholds poetic
conventions in his engagement with the canon. And finally, I discuss how this poetic
engagement should affect our interpretation of the tragedy’s main themes. Naturally, all this
varies from play to play, but in each case my analysis of the poetic apparatus of the tragedy
aims to provide a greater understanding of the manner in which Euripides uses the poetic
tradition to deal with the socio-political questions at hand, and vice-versa. For example, the
many Iliadic themes of the IA serve as a window through which to gaze at the vast differences in the exercise of military authority that are depicted in Homer and in contemporary Athens. At the same time, Euripides’ contemporization of the power structures within the Achaean army clarifies the importance of the Homeric subtext in the IA, and prompts critical reflection on the relevance of the Homeric epic to Athenian society. In other words, each chapter shows that the poetic and political are inextricably entwined in the tragedy in question, and that Euripides simultaneously challenges both Athenian civic or political values and the manner in which various poetic forms are exploited to propagate these values.

Finally, in each chapter I demonstrate that the political themes that are so central to each play, and which are so closely related to the poetic themes that Euripides explores, were of special interest to the Athenian audience at the time of the play’s original production. In order to do so, I rely on a number of historical sources and on historians’ analyses of these sources. These primary sources range from Athenian inscriptions that date to the same time period as the tragedies in question, to historiographical accounts of events in late fifth-century Athens. Thucydides’ History of the Peloponnesian War is of particular importance in this endeavor, not only because he provides what is by far the most extensive commentary on Athenian society and affairs during Euripides’ time, but especially because there is a remarkable confluence
between his and Euripides’ depictions of the social forces at play in this period. By highlighting the similarities between the central questions of each tragedy and the problems described by Euripides’ contemporaries, each chapter shows that both the political and the poetic aspects of the plays were relevant to the world of the Athenian audience.

The “authenticity” of the Iphigenia at Aulis

A special note regarding my approach to the text of the IA is necessary. It has long been recognized that the manuscript tradition of the tragedy is seriously flawed. Among other problems, the tradition presents two different prologues—one iambic and one anapaestic—which are difficult to reconcile, and the final fifty lines of the play (IA 1578-1629) violate Porson’s law and are certainly interpolated. Some scholars have been particularly aggressive in their deletions, while others have argued in favor of the authenticity of much of the text. At this point, however, the only thing of which we can be certain is that there can be no certainty regarding the provenance of much of the text. Nevertheless, insofar as my analysis is geared

\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{16} Indeed, an unintended by-product of this dissertation may be to show how similar the two writers are with respect to their interpretations and criticism of Athenian society, a question which certainly merits further attention.} \]

\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{17} For the most complete discussion of the various deletions and modifications to which the text of the IA has been subject, see Sean Alexander Gurd, Iphigenias at Aulis: Textual Multiplicity, Radical Philology (Ithaca, 2005).} \]

towards understanding how the original Athenian audience might have reacted to the IA, it is essential that I select passages which it is likely to have witnessed. As such, I propose a hybrid approach, using as a guideline Diggle’s subdivision of the text into four categories according to his estimation of their probabilities of authenticity.\textsuperscript{19} Specifically, unless otherwise noted, all the passages discussed in this dissertation will belong to the two categories Diggle believes most likely to be authentic ("fortasse Euripidei" and "fortasse non Euripidei"). For those few passages which I present that do not fall into these two categories, I will provide a justification of their usage in a footnote. This should have the twin benefit of using passages of the tragedy that are most likely to be authentic, as well as avoiding needlessly lengthy discussions of the text’s authenticity within the main body of the chapters’ themselves.

2. **Genre, Tradition, and the “Competence” of Euripides’ Audience**

One topic that, on account of its ancillary yet complex nature, I will discuss here, rather than in the individual chapters, is the question of the ability of Euripides’ audiences to recognize his use of and allusions to different poetic forms, and to appreciate their relevance to the political aspects of his tragedies. To a certain extent, this process is simplified by the fact that in each case, I will be dealing with what Laura Swift has termed “high-level interaction.”

While Swift has formulated this classification strictly with regard to tragedy’s reclamation of various choral genres, her definition of “generic interaction” is such that it can be applied to each type of poetic interaction that I discuss in this dissertation:

The most sophisticated level of generic interaction is where the reference works in two ways. Firstly, the play evokes a particular lyric genre by alluding to the motifs, *topoi*, or stylistic features of the genre. Secondly, the evocation of a particular genre is connected to the play in wider terms. It is thematically relevant that we are made to think of the genre: doing so develops our understanding of the purpose of the ode, or brings out a theme in the play. Furthermore, the reference to the genre may not be limited to one particular ode, but can be spread throughout the play.

This definition is undeniably suitable for the two instances of “lyric interaction” that I discuss in this tragedy—epinician poetry in the *Heracles* and the paean in the *Ion*. But it is equally valid

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21 Eadem, p. 30.
22 To wit, Swift herself classifies these as instances of “high-level interaction” and deals with them at some length. Cf. eadem, pp. 90-101 (*Ion*) and 121-56 (*HF*).
with regard to the IA’s interactions with the Agamemnon and the Iliad: in each case, Euripides goes to great lengths to “allud[e] to the motifs, topoi, or stylistic features” of these two canonical works, and there is a remarkable confluence of themes and subject matter that exists between the IA and both the Iliad and the Agamemnon. As such, we may conclude that if Euripides had an audience that was capable of comprehending this sort of poetic interplay, they would have had every opportunity to do so.

Regarding the audiences at the City Dionysia and their ability to grasp allusions to other poetic works within a particular drama, Martin Revermann has called this a question of “theatrical competence.”23 Although Revermann’s study is exclusively concerned with Aristophanes’ parodies of tragic poetry, much of what he says is germane to the present study. He correctly argues that we must suppose that there was some variability in the degree to which Aristophanes’ audiences would have been able to “decode” the many layers of his comedies, especially the intertextual ones.24 At the same time, given the substantial amount of experience that the Athenian audiences had in not only watching dramatic (and dithyrambic) productions at the City Dionysia, but indeed in actually performing in them, we may assume that the baseline of theatrical competence was reasonably high.25 Moreover, there are a number of Aristophanic allusions to tragedy in which “the humour can only be fully enjoyed by the

24 Ibid.
spectator who knows both the exact words of the original and its context.” All this suggests that the Attic dramatists could expect: 1) that at least some members of their audience would be able to perceive and understand very subtle allusions to, or even quotations of, other dramatic texts; and 2) that a large portion of their audiences could appreciate the more obvious references to earlier tragedies.

Insofar as the composition of Euripides’ audiences was substantially the same as that of Aristophanes’, it is reasonable to expect that they possessed a similar degree of competence. Looked at in this light, it follows naturally that, on a general level, Euripides’ allusions to other tragedies would have been perceptible to at least part of his audience. Even beyond that, however, I wish to show first of all, that a sizable portion of his audience was familiar enough with the Agamemnon to recognize Euripides’ engagement with that specific tragedy; second of all, that Euripides’ public would have been similarly “competent” with regard to epinician poetry, paeans, and the Iliad; and finally, that many spectators would have understood the political, social, or civic dimensions of the various poetic forms that Euripides repurposes.

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26 Rosemary Harriott, “Aristophanes’ Audience and the Plays of Euripides,” Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies 9 (1962): pp. 2-3, cites fifteen such cases in Aristophanes’ nine complete comedies. This definition is of course subjective, but Harriott is by and large correct that detailed knowledge of the source-texts would have been necessary for an individual to derive any meaning or enjoyment from Aristophanes’ citations.
Euripides’ audience and the Agamemnon

On the surface, it may seem incredible that Euripides could count on the audience of the IA to recall not only the plot, but even specific lines, of Aeschylus’ Agamemnon. After all, more than fifty years separated the original productions of these two plays. Nevertheless, there is ample reason to believe that Euripides’ audience was not only familiar with the Agamemnon, but that they had many opportunities to see it (re)performed on Athenian stages. Two sources mention a decree that, after Aeschylus’ death, anyone who wished to stage a production of his plays would be granted a chorus, and Aristophanes also hints at the possibility of seeing reproductions of Aeschylus’ plays. On the basis of this evidence, some scholars believe that the City Dionysia continued to host reperformances of Aeschylus’ plays throughout the second half of the fifth century. Other scholars are even more sanguine regarding this possibility and date

27 William G. Thalmann, “Euripides and Aeschylus: The Case of Hekabe,” Classical Antiquity 12 (1993): p. 130, argues that “conventions have a way of being realized in particularly memorable form in certain texts, and their use later will inevitably evoke those texts...[F]or Euripides and his audience, as well as for us, the Oresteia was such a text because of its historical significance as a major summing-up of Athenian culture.”

28 Vita Aeschyli 1.54; Σ Aristoph. Ach. 10.

29 On at least two occasions: 1) Acharnians, 9-11: ἀλλ’ ὠδυνήθην ἐτερον αὐ τραγῳδικόν, ὀτε δὴ ‘κεχήνη προσδοκών τὸν Αἰσχύλον, ὀ δ’ ἀνείπεν, εἰσαγ’ ὁ Θεογνή τὸν χορόν. (“But I suffered even more tragically/when I was hungrily expecting Aeschylus [i.e. a play by Aeschylus] but heard instead: “Theognis, bring out your choir!”). The Acharnians was written some thirty years after Aeschylus’ death, so it is safe to say that Dikaiopolis, who speaks these lines, is not referring to an original Aeschylean production. 2) Frogs, 868-69: ὡτὶ η ποίησις οὐχὶ συντέθηκεν μοι, τοῦτω δὲ συντέθηκεν, ὡσθ’ ἐξει λέγειν. (“Because my poetry did not die with me/as his died with him.) In all likelihood Aeschylus is boasting that his tragedies are still performed.

a revival of the *Oresteia* to the mid 420s—mostly on account of the lengthy allusions to the *Choephoroi* in Aristophanes’ *Clouds* and Euripides’ *Electra.*

Obviously, revivals at the City Dionysia were occasions in which a huge number of Euripides’ audience, too young to have seen the original, could have become acquainted with Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*. But this hypothesis does not represent the only chance for them to have done so. Other dramatic festivals existed in Attica throughout the year, and many of them—specifically the various Rural Dionysia—almost certainly featured theatrical productions of plays that had been previously performed at the City Dionysia. If reperformances were the

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32 On the Rural Dionysia, see Eric Csapo and William J. Slater, *The Context of Athenian Drama* (Ann Arbor, 1995), pp. 121-132; Martha Habash, “Two Complementary Festivals in Aristophanes’ *Acharnians*,” *American Journal of Philology* 116 (1995): pp. 560-67. On the existence of theatrical productions at the various Rural Dionysia, cf. Plato, *Republic*, 475d; David Whitehead, *The Demes of Attica: 508/7—CA. 250 B.C.* (Princeton, 1986), pp. 212-22. Whitehead notes that at least fourteen demes appear to have had their own theaters, and that by the mid-fifth century the deme of Ikaria already had “regularly organized dramatic festivals in honor of Dionysos” (p. 215); see also Csapo and Slater, 1995, pp. 121-22. On the probability that the plays performed at the Rural Dionysia had already been put on at the City Dionysia or Lenaia, see A.E. Haigh, *The Attic Theatre* (Oxford, 1907), p. 71, who claims that “reproductions were the rule”; and Csapo and Slater, 1995, p. 3, who note that “we hear, by the early 5th c. B.C., of the reperformance of plays at the smaller festivals of the Rural Dionysia.” Csapo and Slater infer this from the famous passage in Herodotus in which we hear that after the first production of Phrynichus’ *The Capture of Miletus*, nobody was ever allowed to produce the play again (Hdt. 6.21.2: ἐπέτειλεν μὴ δεῖνα χρῆσθαι τούτῳ τῷ δράματι). See also Biles, 2006, p. 211. Though Biles argues against the existence of Aeschylean revivals at the City Dionysia, he agrees that the Rural Dionysias’ “potential role in keeping Aeschylus alive during the fifth century is a point that should be kept in mind.”
norm at the Rural Dionysia, it stands to reason that Aeschylus’ plays would have been a popular choice for these.

Furthermore, it appears that festivals and dramatic performances were not the only medium through which Aeschylus’ poetry may have been disseminated. A few (undoubtedly elite) individuals probably had access to written texts of Aeschylus’ tragedies, and it is possible that readings of the tragic poets were part of the educational “curriculum” in fifth-century Athens. Symposia represent an even more likely setting where Athenians might get to know Aeschylus’ works. Once again, it is Aristophanes who allows us to imagine this other venue for tragic “recitations” when he describes the origin of a violent father-son skirmish in the Clouds: a disagreement about whether Aeschylus or Euripides ought to be recited at a symposium. As in the other cases, this episode does not provide positive proof that recitations of Aeschylus’ poetry regularly took place during symposiastic festivities. But it is hard to

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35 Ar. Clouds, 1353-79.
imagine that Aeschylus and Euripides would have been catalysts for this comic fracas if such recitations were unheard of. It is far more likely that they were commonplace and, as a result, another source of public knowledge of Aeschylus’ works.\textsuperscript{36}

In summary, there is evidence that the members of the audience of the IA had ample opportunity to familiarize themselves with the language, plot, and themes of Aeschylus’ \textit{Agamemnon}. These included revivals at the City Dionysia; reperformances at other festivals; recitations at symposia; and private reading or schooling. While the nature of the evidence, coming as it does from comedy and later sources, is such that the scenes described cannot necessarily be taken too literally, the quantity of the evidence suggests that Aeschylus’ poetry could be—and indeed frequently was—enjoyed well after his death. Thus it is extremely likely that a sizeable portion of Euripides’ audience had the wherewithal to recognize references to Aeschylus’ \textit{Agamemnon}.

Moreover, the likelihood that the audience of the IA could have recognized these allusions would have been greatly enhanced by the fact that this was not the first time Euripides had played this game. In fact, Euripides seems to have made a habit of toying with Aeschylus’ 

\textsuperscript{36} For more on this topic, see Alberta Lai, “La circolazione delle tragedie eschillee in ambito simposiale,” \textit{Lexis} 15 (1997): pp. 143-48; R.M. Rosen, “Aristophanes, Fandom, and the Classicizing of Greek Tragedy,” in \textit{Playing Around Aristophanes}, eds. L. Kozak and J. Rich, (Oxford, 2006), pp. 30-33; Biles, 2006, p. 229, goes even further, noting that symposia may not have been the only informal public venue at which Aeschylus’ poetry was present, but that quite simply “reciting Aeschylus was a natural and even socially acceptable thing to do.” Contra see Bain, 1977b, p. 110. For other ancient evidence on the recitation of dramatic poets at symposia, see Ar. \textit{Knights}, 526-30 (in which Cratinus’ comic odes are mentioned as banquet singing material); Ar. fr. 161 (= Athenaeus 8.365b): τοίοςσύνδειπνοις ἐπαινῶν Αἰσχύλον. For analyses of these two passages, see again Lai, 1997.
tragedies. The most famous (and disputed) example is the recognition scene in Euripides’ *Electra* (vv. 518-44). Euripides’ Electra scoffs at the idea that she could identify her brother Orestes by comparing his hair and footprints to hers—men and women have little in common in this regard, she argues—and that he might still be wearing a robe she had given him as a child. The hair, footprints, and robe are, of course, the same signs by which Aeschylus’ Electra recognizes Orestes, and barring an interpolation, it is nigh on impossible to ignore the allusive nature of Electra’s remarks. In fact, these lines serve no discernible purpose except to recall Aeschylus’ play.

Some scholars have taken this to be a matter of Euripides simply poking fun at his stuffy predecessor, a parody. But it seems likely that there is also a serious dimension to this interplay; that he is “criticizing Aeschylus in order to draw attention to his own novel treatment,” or more specifically, that he is using Aeschylus “as a backdrop against which to display the concrete, almost pedantic cast of Electra’s thinking and of his play’s approach to the


search for truth.” This is analogous to Euripides’ treatment of the Oresteia in his Iphigenia at Tauris, a play so laden with references to Aeschylus’ trilogy that it has been called “a sequel to the Eumenides.” As in the Electra, the means by which brother and sister (this time Orestes and Iphigenia) recognize each other are highly reminiscent of the Choephoroi. But the play is also closely related to the Agamemnon, most obviously in the parallels between Euripides’ Orestes and Aeschylus’ Agamemnon, and between Euripides’ Iphigenia and Aeschylus’ Clytemnestra: Agamemnon arrives at Argos to “a wife who is planning on killing him,” while Orestes is “received [in Tauris] by a sister who is planning to kill him.” Orestes avoids his father’s grisly fate thanks to the very recognition mentioned above, at which point the IT ceases to mirror the Agamemnon and turns its attention to the Choephoroi. Scholars have taken the IT’s engagement with Aeschylus more and less seriously. Caldwell, for example, argues that Euripides reenacts the Oresteia merely to highlight the romantic and playful nature of his tragedy. David Sansone and Froma Zeitlin, on the other hand, see Euripides’ engagement with the Oresteia as taking on

43 Cf. Isabelle Torrance, “In the Footprints of Aeschylus: Recognition, Allusion, and Metapoetics in Euripides,” American Journal of Philology 132 (2011): p. 193: “The verbal proofs in Iphigenia among the Taurians are 1) reference to a piece of weaving (like Aeschylus), (2) reference to an offering of lustral water sent by Clytemnestra (also a feature in Aeschylus), (3) reference to the cutting of a lock of hair (like Aeschylus).”
45 Caldwell, 1974, p. 26. Torrance, 2011, pp. 195-96, notes that this “reversal” is foreshadowed by another allusion to the Agamemnon: “[a]nticipating his imminent death, Orestes ask Iphigenia, ‘Will you [kill me] yourself with a sword, female sacrificing male?’ (αυτη ξαφνι θηλυς ἄρσενας, IT 621)...This phrasing strongly recalls Agamemnon 1231 where the horrified chorus had described Clytemnestra as ‘female murderer of the male’ (θηλυς ἄρσενος φονεύς), with Agamemnon’s death presented as a sacrifice.”
a deeper meaning.\textsuperscript{46} For them, the \textit{IT} is either “an answer to, or rejection of, the theology of the \textit{Oresteia},”\textsuperscript{47} or a rejection of Aeschylus’ “radical solution” to the problem of matricide.\textsuperscript{48}

Given this pattern of using the \textit{Oresteia} as a loom upon which to weave retellings of the House of Atreus, it is clear that the Athenian public was familiar not only with Aeschylus’ tragedies, but also with Euripides’ tendency to rework them. (It seems highly unlikely that Euripides would continue making such overwrought allusions to Aeschylus’ tragedies if nobody in the audience “got it.”) Many spectators then, though of course not all, would easily recognize that this was happening in the \textit{IA}; a few might even have hoped for it.\textsuperscript{49} But what matters here is that Euripides had already proven himself to be willing and able to make intertextual fodder of Aeschylus’ \textit{Oresteia}, and that he did so not only for the purpose of entertainment but also in order to critique ideas or ideologies that were inherent in these earlier plays. There is every reason to expect that his constant allusions to the \textit{Oresteia} in the \textit{IA} serve the same dual purpose, and that his audience, seasoned by years of Euripidean spectatorship, would have been able to grasp the \textit{IA}’s complex relationship to the \textit{Agamemnon}. Moreover, the specific question that the \textit{IA} addresses through its meditation on the \textit{Agamemnon}—the dishonest

\textsuperscript{46} As does Torrance, 2011, though her interests have more to do with the “metapoetic reflections” (p. 178) of the text.
\textsuperscript{49} As R.P. Winnington-Ingram, “Euripides: \textit{Poïêtês Sophos},” \textit{Arethusa} 2 (1969): p. 136 notes, “[t]he number of people in the audience who enjoyed a hit at Aeschylus may not have been large, but need not have been small.”
speech of male leaders—was of great concern in late fifth-century Athens, so the relationship between these two plays would have stood out all the more to the audience.

Euripides’ audience and the Iliad

The matter of Athenians’ familiarity with the Iliad is reasonably straightforward. Setting aside the more general problem of Homeric performance and reception in classical Greece,\(^5\) it is certain that Athenians in the fifth century BCE had regular opportunities to become acquainted with the great epic poems. For those few who had received some type of formal education, the Homeric epics had served as a foundation of this paideia.\(^5\) More universal access to Homer was provided at the Greater Panathenaia,\(^5\) a quadrennial festival that included rhapsodic recitations of the Iliad and Odyssey.\(^5\) And in fact, it may not have been necessary for Athenians to wait for


\(^5\) Once again, our sources are rather vague concerning nearly every aspect of these competitions. For example, “the songs of Homer,” as Plato refers to them (Hipparchus 228b: τὰ Ομηρον ἔπη), could theoretically refer to all the poems in the epic cycle attributed to Homer. But the prevailing scholarly consensus is that by the fifth century, recitations at the Panathenaia were restricted to the Iliad and Odyssey. For a full discussion of the problem, see Jonathan S. Burgess, “Performance and the Epic Cycle,” The Classical Journal 100 (2004b): pp. 1-23.
the Panathenaic festival to appreciate Homer’s poetry in public: in Xenophon’s *Symposium*, a
dialogue written in the mid-fourth century but set in the late fifth, one of the interlocutors
(Niceratus) claims that he listens to rhapsodes reciting Homer “nearly every day.” Even
though Niceratus himself is clearly a special case—his father had forced him to learn the
entirety of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by heart (X. Symp. 3.5)—his unfettered access to the rhapsodes
strongly suggests that there was an abundance of public recitations of Homer in classical
Athens. As a result, there is every reason to believe that the vast majority of the audience for the
*IA* would have been able to recognize the many thematic and textual allusions to the *Iliad*.

Regarding the audience’s ability to connect this Homeric material to the political
apparatus of the *IA*, we may feel secure of their competence on two grounds: first and foremost,
the epic material that is embedded in the *IA* is overtly political, insofar as the Iliadic conflicts
that Euripides reclaims are the very same ones that Homer uses to illustrate the hierarchies and
political organization of the Achaeans; and second, it is likely that Euripides’ audience was
accustomed to seeing the exploitation of these same Homeric episodes for political purposes
even outside the tragic stage. In a sense then, Euripides’ intertextual excavation of the *Iliad* in
the *IA* is the most blatantly political case that will be discussed in this dissertation.

54 X. *Symp.* 3.6 (ολίγου ἀν' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν), cited by Robb, 1994, p. 196.
55 Another complex issue that I will address in the chapter itself, see below pp. 104-109.
Paeans in classical Athens

The problem of the Athenian audience’s understanding of paeans is an entirely different question, for it presupposes not the knowledge of a specific text, but a general awareness of whole bodies of work—what we call genres. With this, I do not mean to suggest that Euripides’ audience had conceived of formal definitions for different poetic genres; numerous scholars have demonstrated that this process of classification did not truly begin until several decades after Euripides’ death. Nor is it my intention to articulate a theory of genre, or of this genre in particular, that might easily explain how Athenians could connect paeanic poetry to the political and social themes of the Ion. Instead, I shall seek to show first of all that Euripides’ audiences were familiar with these types of odes, and that they would be able to recognize them in a tragic setting. And second, that they were able to connect these songs to specific occasions and experiences, which in turn would lead to an implicit recognition of their social and political functions.

The strongest evidence, I believe, that classical Athenians and Greeks were capable of imagining or recognizing a paean is provided by the fact that time and again in archaic and classical poetry, we see references to paeans or the performance of paeans with little or no

description of the songs beyond the name itself. Even the earliest references to paeans consist of declarations such as “they sung the noble paean” (Hom. II. 1.473: καλὸν ἄειδοντες παιήνον), a bare utterance that suggests that nothing more was needed to transmit the generic notion.

This trend continues in the classical era. The tragedians, for example, do this repeatedly: in Aeschylus’ Persians, a messenger narrating the events of the battle is able to refer to this type of song simply by noting that “the Greeks sang the holy paean” before starting their attack; in Sophocles OT, Oedipus says that his plague-ridden city “is full of…paeans and groans”; and in Euripides’ Heracles, the chorus compares itself to “the Delian maidens [who] sing paeans before the temple [of Apollo].” Each of these passages is marked by two features: the simple mention of a “paean”; and a reference to the context in which the paean is performed. Insofar as none of these authors provides any other information, it is obvious that these two features are on their own sufficient to give a clear impression of the song that is being performed.

To be sure, the mention of the performative contexts conveyed a substantial amount of information to fifth-century Athenians. Scholars have for some time now realized that to the extent that classical Greek notions of “genre” existed, they were tied to the function and

57 See also Hom. Il. 22.391; Homeric Hymn to Apollo 518 (though here they are modified as “Cretan”); Arch. fr. 121 West (a “Lesbian paean”).
58 A. Pers. 393: παιάν ἐφιμονὸν εἰμινὸν Ἑλληνες.
59 S. OT 4-5: γέμει…παιάνων τε καὶ στεναγμάτων.
60 E. HF 687-88: παιάνα μὲν Δηλιάδες/εἴμπναιν’ ἀμφί πύλας.
61 Looking beyond tragedy, we see that even Thucydides trusts in his readers’ implicit understanding of the genre when he refers to the “prayer and paeans” that accompanied the departure of the Sicilian Expedition. Th. 7.75.7: εὐχῆς τε καὶ παιάνων.
occasions of a song’s performance.\textsuperscript{62} In each of the passages above, the singing of the paean is directly connected to contexts in which we know that the performance of paean-songs was common: as a prelude to battle (Aeschylus and Thucydides); in times of sickness and plague (Sophocles); and at the festivals for Apollo on Delos (Euripides).\textsuperscript{63} The respective (Athenian) audiences of these passages would surely have understood the authors’ references to paeans in the light of their own experiences with these specific occasions and with the songs that were performed during them.\textsuperscript{64}

At the same time, there is also evidence that classical Athenians could conceive of paeans even beyond the confines of familiar contexts. This is again visible in tragedy, especially in those moments when references are made to the singing of paeans in contexts and occasions that were decidedly unfamiliar, perhaps even perverse. One clear example of this occurs in Euripides’ \textit{Alcestis}, when Admetus asks the chorus to “cry out the libation-less paean for the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item\textsuperscript{63} Regarding the “generic” connection between paeans and these occasions, see Rutherford, 2001, pp. 29, 35-36 (paeans at Delos), 36-42 (sickness), 42-45 (war).
\item\textsuperscript{64} These experiences could have been direct or indirect. For example, by the end of the fifth century, Athens sent “theoric” choruses to Delos each year, and these choruses would have almost certainly sung paeans. (I discuss the evidence for regular Athenian performances of paeans at Delos in Chapter Three: see below pp. 218-220.) Any member of the audience for Euripides’ \textit{Heracles} who had participated in such a theoric expedition would surely be able to relate the mention of the “Delian maidens sing[ing] paeans” to their own paeanic experiences. Of course, much of the audience would presumably not have had this direct experience, but given the fame and importance of these expeditions (cf. e.g. Pl. \textit{Phaedo} 58a-c; Plut. \textit{Nicias} 3.4-6), it is reasonable too conclude that many of them would nevertheless understand the type of performance and song to which Euripides is alluding.
\end{itemize}
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god below.” To our knowledge, no such thing as a “paean for the god below” existed beyond the tragic stage. As in the passages above, Euripides provides no details as to what such a paean would look or sound like. As such, for this line to have any meaning whatsoever it is necessary that the tragic audience be able to grasp some notion of a paean that is entirely divorced from, perhaps even opposed to, any normal performative context or occasion. In other words, the audience must have been able to understand this paean as a type of song on its own, even if its performative context contrasted with their own experiences regarding paeanic occasions and functions.

All of this is not to suggest that a formal definition of the paean as a genre existed in the late fifth century. Indeed, the fact that tragic references to paeans in the fifth century were consistently devoid of any descriptions of the song, save that of context or occasion, may suggest that classical Greeks had not yet even determined the formal features of the genre. But the very fact that no such definition had been developed implies that it was not necessary; that the term “paean” was sufficiently descriptive. As such, when Creousa portrays Apollo singing a paean in the Ion, Euripides’ audience would have some notion of what this song was. The spectators would also be able to compare their abstract notions of this particular tragic paean to their own experiences in both observing and participating in the performance of actual paeans.

65 E. Alc. 423-24: ἀντιχήρατε/παιάνα τῷ κάτωθεν ἀσπονδῶν θεῷ. See also A. Ch. 151: παιάνα τοῦ θανόντος.
and understand how Creousa’s conception of the paean was similar to or different from these experiences.

This same familiarity with paeans and paeanic performances would naturally help them interpret not only references to paeans in tragedy, but also tragic paeans themselves. For example, when Ion introduces himself with a monody that is twice marked by “the only true παιάν-refrain in extant tragedy,”66 Euripides’ audience, either consciously or sub-consciously, would recognize this song as a paean, and they would again be able to relate it to their own experiences. Undoubtedly, both the similarities and differences would stand out, and by no means would this process play out in the same way among every member of the audience. Nevertheless, we can reasonably conclude that the audience of the Ion was adequately equipped to understand Euripides’ manipulation of (or conformance to) their own expectations for a paean. And given that the occasions and contexts of (non-tragic) Athenian paeans were closely related to the questions of Athenian and Ionian identity that the tragedy poses,67 we can suppose that the Ion’s tragic paeans might inspire a certain amount of reflection on these political and civic themes.

67 An issue I discuss at length throughout Chapter Three.
Epinician poetry in classical Athens

While epinician poetry has, in a sense, much in common with the paean—both were forms of choral lyric, and both have since been classified as genres—the approach one must take to understand Athenian perceptions of epinicians is entirely different. Indeed, when one seeks to conceptualize the audience’s ability to associate the odes of the *Heracles* to the broader corpus of epinician odes, two large problems manifest themselves: the first has to do with the dearth of performances of epinician poetry in Athens in the late fifth century; and the second has to do with the name “epinician” itself.

In a way, our designation of a specific body of work as “epinician” perfectly encapsulates the difficulties inherent in talking about ancient Greek genres. On the one hand, of all forms of ancient lyric, epinician seem to be the most well-suited for classification, for these odes were all composed with the same occasion in mind, namely the celebration of an Olympic victor. In other words, they meet the most basic and consistent criterion for the classification of ancient Greek genres. On the other hand, despite the fact that epinician odes were typically performed under a specific set of circumstances, they are not consistently called “epinikia” until

\[\text{68} \text{ A few exceptions to this rule may be seen in Pindar’s *Pythian* Three and Four, which Harvey, 1955, p. 160, defines as “poetic epistle[s].” But by and large we see in the epinician odes of Pindar and Bacchylides a remarkable confluence of occasion and function.}\]

\[\text{69} \text{ Compare to the paean, for example, for which Rutherford, 2001, pp. 36-58, identifies some ten types of performance-functions.}\]
the third century BCE. Pindar himself refers to them far more often as kōmoi ("songs for celebration") or as enkōmia ("encomiastic songs"), something that has led scholars to believe that epinician was considered a sub-genre of encomiastic poetry in classical Greece. But such a rigid hierarchy of classification obscures the fact that the ancient Greeks used a number of terms—including "epinikia"—nearly interchangeably when talking about the various aspects (both poetic and non-poetic) of victory celebrations. The best approach to this problem, in my view, is to set aside concerns about distinctions that the Greeks themselves did not make, and to focus on the convergence of occasion, function, and poetic topoi that would lead a tragic audience to recall the epinician (or encomiastic) canon.

With such a premise, it is of course important to show that Athenians were familiar with the poetry of Pindar, Bacchylides, and the other epinician poets. Here we find some difficulties. One problem is that the production of epinician poetry seems to have essentially halted with Pindar's death shortly after 450 BCE; as Swift notes, "the genre as a whole...seems to go out of

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70 Harvey, 1955, pp. 159-64.
71 E.g. Ol. 4.9, Ol. 8.10, Pyth. 5.22, etc.
72 E.g. Pyth. 10.53, Nem. 1.7.
74 Both Pindar and Bacchylides do refer to their poems as epinicians: Pi. Nem. 4.78: ἐπινικίοις ἀοιδαῖς; Bacch. 2.13: ἐπινικίοις. But Aristophanes (fr. 448 [= Athenaeus 9.387f]: Αὔσταγας ἠδεύεσσαν ἐξ ἐπινικίων κρέας) seems to be referring to the celebration meal (or meals) with which Olympic victors were often honored; and Plato certainly uses "ta epinikia" to refer to a celebratory banquet (Pl. Symp. 173a). Furthermore, in this latter case it is not even an athletic victory that is being honored, but a poetic one. In short, not only was the term epinikia simply one of many ways to refer to poems in honor of Olympic victors, but it could also refer to non-poetic forms of compensation for non-athletic victors as well.
fashion.” A second problem is represented by the fact that the aristocratic tone and milieu of epinician poetry appears fundamentally antithetical to the ideology of democratic Athens, and so it has been presumed that such performances were discouraged in Athens. Nevertheless, citations by Aristophanes (among others) of specific odes of Pindar and Simonides suggests that their epinicians remained well-known in Athens in the late fifth and early fourth centuries.

More compelling in this regard is the fact that around the same time as the production of the Heracles, Euripides had composed an epinician in honor of Alcibiades’ Olympic victory in the chariot race. If we presume, as seems reasonable, that this ode was performed in Athens, then we have evidence that a substantial portion of the audience of the Heracles would have witnessed—or at least known of—a specific epinician performance and all that it entailed. The combination of these experiences suggests that much of Euripides’ audience would have had no difficulty in recognizing the strong epinician tones that run throughout the Heracles. And insofar as epinician poetry regularly and overtly broadcasts its “intrinsic political loading,” we

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75 Cf. Ar. Clouds, 1354-58, Birds 924-30, discussed by Swift, 2010, pp. 112-14. Swift’s points are generally correct, though it is worth noting that since the comedy itself was not destined for theatrical production, the audience of the Clouds was limited, so it is less significant than it might otherwise be that Aristophanes expected them to “recogniz[e] a particular epinician ode.”
76 This is also treated in far greater detail in Chapter Three, but on Euripides’ epinician see esp. C.M. Bowra, “Euripides’ Epinician for Alcibiades,” Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte 9 (1960): pp. 68-79; and Swift, 2010, 115-18 (though Swift is reluctant to attribute the ode to Euripides).
77 Swift, 2010, p. 106.
may deduce that the recognition of the poetic form would on its own recall the ideology and values espoused by Pindar and others.

3. Summary of Chapters

In my first chapter, I examine the echoes of the *Iliad* in the *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Of primary interest to me in this light are two Iliadic conflicts that Euripides recasts in the world of Aulis: a dispute between Agamemnon and Achilles over the possession of a woman; and the difficult decision about whether to undertake the war against Troy. In Homer, the same two issues\(^8\) serve to illustrate the power structures that exist within the Achaean army. In the *IA*, Euripides also uses these problems to (re)frame the exercise of military authority, and he does so with many overt references to Homer’s treatment of the same. In the end, however, Euripides resolves the disputes in a manner that would have been unthinkable in the world of Homer, but typical in democratic Athens: through the direct intervention of the Achaean army. I will argue first of all that these Homeric echoes serve to emphasize the vast gulf that lay between the world of the *Iliad* and the world of the *IA*—and by extension that of fifth-century Athens—particularly regarding the manner in which political and military authority were exercised; 

\(^8\)In the *Iliad* the debate is whether or not to continue the war against Troy, but this is roughly equivalent to the question of whether or not to begin the same war.
second, that by emphasizing these differences the tragedy forms an implicit critique of the
dynamics of power in democratic Athens; and third, that the play should be read in the light of
contemporary debates concerning Homer’s educational role in the matters of leadership and
authority.

In my second chapter, I discuss the role of epinician poetry in the *Heracles*, and argue
that the values of this genre are portrayed as vital to the contemporary *polis*. As Leslie Kurke
has argued at length, one of the main purposes of epinician poetry was to ease its dedicatees’
return from the games and to facilitate their re-integration into their communities. The
function of epinician poetry is thus overtly political, in that the genre seeks to redress the
potential alienation of an elite victor within his own *polis* due to resentment felt by his fellow
citizens. In the *Heracles*, this “epinician” problem is addressed at length, for we see Heracles first
struggle to find a place in his adopted home of Thebes, and later be forced to settle in Athens.
For not the first time in Greek tragedy, Thebes and Athens are set against each other as political
antitheses, but here the principle way in which they manifest this opposition is through their
treatment of Heracles. Heracles himself is repeatedly portrayed as an ideal epinician hero, and
epinician odes dominate the lyric apparatus of the tragedy. Nevertheless, Thebes refuses to
accept Heracles upon his return from his labors, and it is ultimately up to Athens to

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81 Kurke, 1991.
82 For other instances, see the seminal paper by Froma Zeitlin, “Thebes: Theater of Self and Society in Athenian
Drama,” in *Nothing to Do with Dionysus? Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, eds. John J. Winkler and Zeitlin
accommodate the hero. As I argue, Athens does so through an explicit subscription to the values of epinician poetry. As such, the play suggests that it is necessary for a contemporary polis to provide some degree of recognition to outstanding individuals, and that adhering to the principles of epinician poetry is an effective means of doing so. Moreover, this issue was especially relevant in the period in which the Heracles was produced, when Athens was struggling to come to terms with a prodigal son—Alcibiades—who was not only an Olympic victor, but also the commissioner of an epinician poem from Euripides.

In my third chapter, I analyze the role of the paeans in Euripides’ Ion, and I demonstrate that the presence of the genre is at once unifying and problematic. On the one hand, the paean fits perfectly with the central themes of the play, which concern the fusion of Athens’ autochthonous civic identity with a collective Athenian-Ionian identity that was based on common descent from Ion, the protagonist of the tragedy. Insofar as paeans, as a genre, expressed and encouraged the unity of a group or polis, often with “the integrative function of articulating a sense of community among the members,” the presence of paean-songs in the tragedy seems most fitting. At the same time, the paeanic songs of the Ion are highly unorthodox and seem to undermine any sense of community by focusing not on solidarity, but on the isolation of the singers. This subversion of theme and genre is especially important since

83 Godfrey W. Bond, ed., Euripides: Heracles (Oxford, 1981), p. xxxi, suggests that “metrical features” allow us to tentatively date the Heracles to a period “within (or just before) the last decade of Euripides’ work.”
the *Ion* was produced at a time in which Athens was struggling with and recalibrating its attitudes regarding the purity of Athenian citizens and the city’s relations with its (non-Athenian) Ionian allies. As such, it appears that Euripides uses these songs to challenge contemporary notions of Athenian and Ionian identities, and to question the paean’s role in consolidating and projecting these identities.

In the fourth chapter, I return to the *Iphigenia at Aulis* in order to examine the play’s many allusions to Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*. In this chapter, rather than focusing on the power-struggle between Agamemnon and Achilles, I will analyze the speech and actions of Agamemnon and his wife Clytemnestra. I will argue that Euripides has deliberately inverted each character’s role as compared with their appearances in Aeschylus’ play. In the *Agamemnon*, one of the main themes is Clytemnestra’s use of deception in order to kill her husband. In the *IA*, conversely, it is Agamemnon who attempts to exploit deceitful speech in order to effect a murderous plot of his own, and the scenes in which he does so are laden with imagery from and references to Aeschylus’ play. A contemporary concern is once again evident in this shift, insofar as we can trace a growing concern about dishonest *male* speech in late-fifth-century Athens, particularly in the political sphere. I thus argue that the *IA* rejects the *Agamemnon*’s portrayal of deceptive speech as a peculiarly “female” method of communication, and instead suggests that male figures have become the main culprits of such deviant behavior.
Chapter One

Echoes of the *Iliad* at Aulis:
Agamemnon, Achilles, and the Reconsideration of Homeric Authority

Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Aulis* shares an intimate and peculiar relationship with Homer’s *Iliad*. The setting of the tragedy is the encampment at Aulis where the Achaean army awaits a favorable wind for Troy, and the question at hand is whether or not Agamemnon will sacrifice his daughter Iphigения to Artemis. This is the condition upon which the army’s departure for Troy rests, so we may see the *IA* as a sort of prequel to the *Iliad*, its outcome predetermined by the very existence of Homer’s epic. Even beyond that, the high volume of allusions to the *Iliad*, some as obvious as the choral “Catalogue of Ships” found in the *parodos*, suggests that Euripides is deeply engaged with the Homeric tradition. In short, the *Iliad* is embedded in the

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1 The second half of the *parodos* is of dubious authenticity, but the first half (vv. 164-230) is certainly adequate evidence of the song’s Homeric heritage. On the probable authenticity of the first part of the *parodos*, cf. Denys Page, *Actors’ Interpolations in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford, 1934), p. 142; J. Diggle, ed., *Euripidis Fabulae* vol. 3 (Oxford, 1994), ad loc.; David Kovacs, “Towards a Reconstruction of *Iphigenia Aulidensis*,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 123 (2003): p. 83. For a broader discussion of the problems inherent to the text of the *IA*, as well as my approach to these problems, see the Introduction to this dissertation, on pp. 12-13. In general, I will avoid bringing up questions of “authenticity” unless serious doubts have been raised about a particular passage I am discussing.
very fiber of Euripides’ text. Moreover, this intertextual relationship is dramatized before spectators that were fully capable of recognizing the existence and importance of the Homeric subtext, not least due to their similar and recent experience with Euripides’ Helen. As such, there is every reason to believe that the Iliad’s presence would have a palpable influence on the audience’s perception of the IA.

Among the many echoes of the Iliad at Aulis, two specific issues stand out for the attention which Euripides gives them: the conflict between Agamemnon and Achilles, which is central to the Iliad and ever-simmering in the IA; and the decision about whether to fight the Trojans, which hovers over the IA and is the subject of numerous debates in the Iliad. In Homer, these two issues are the clearest windows through which we may observe the structures of power and authority among the Achaeans. To wit, the Homeric debates about whether to remain at Troy demonstrate that the basileis of the Iliad retain a monopoly of authority at Troy, insofar as their decisions cannot be challenged by the common soldiers of the army. The Iliadic dispute between Agamemnon and Achilles, on the other hand, results in an irresolvable “crisis

of leadership," and shows that the relations between different basileis cannot be defined or resolved by a strict or simple hierarchy. In Homer, then, these issues are closely bound to questions of authority and leadership, and it is perhaps no surprise that the IA uses them to shed light upon the same subjects.

In the IA, the question of Iphigenia’s sacrifice sets in motion both a debate about whether to bring war to Troy and a dispute between Agamemnon and Achilles over the girl’s fate. Just as in Homer, these questions are the prisms through which we understand the leadership of the Achaeans at Aulis. But even though the outcome of the IA is superficially the same as that of the Iliad—the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles is resolved, and the war will go on—the manner in which Euripides’ Achaeans reach these conclusions is decidedly un-Homeric: the army as a whole takes control of the situation and forces the basileis to follow their lead. Such a dynamic is on the one hand inconceivable within the world of the Iliad, but it is strikingly similar to the way in which similar conflicts unfolded in the contemporary Greek world.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate that the IA consistently uses its Iliadic backdrop to re-evaluate questions of authority among the Achaeans within an overtly contemporary, one might even say democratic, context. As I will show, this process has two principal effects. On the one hand, the IA illustrates the difficulties of leadership in the world of his audience, for the

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Achaean army’s expropriation of power mirrors circumstances, described by Thucydides and others, in which masses of citizens or soldiers used violent coercion to take control of the decision-making process. At the same time, the tragedy challenges the canonical status of the Homeric epics in classical Athens. In fact, we shall see that this too is a theme to which the audience could relate, for it reflects a hotly contested contemporary debate about the usefulness of Homeric poetry as “educational” texts in the classical Greek world.

The originality of this study lies more in its conclusions than in its focus. Indeed, critics have long noted the many echoes of the Iliad that resound at Aulis. The parodos, for example, practically spells out its Homeric lineage over 140 lines, and scholars have handled this particular allusion most deftly, arguing that Euripides uses it to initiate a sort of “poetic agôn” with Homer.4 The dispute between Agamemnon and Achilles, kept at a constant simmer throughout the IA, has also been seen as a clear allusion to the two heroes’ quarrel over Briseis in the Iliad. Just as in Homer’s poem, in the IA the crux of the disagreement is a girl over whom both the heroes feel they have some claim. The situation in the IA is somewhat more

4 The term belongs to Andrew Ford, “Being There: Poetics of Earliness in the Parodos of the Iphigeneia at Aulis,” (forthcoming). Ford looks at the competition that Euripides initiates from the perspective of what he calls the “poetics of earliness” (ibid.), which has the effect of “tak[ing] the oldest parts of the oldest story and present[ing] them with such freshness and spontaneity that it must excite anyone who is there to see.” Froma Zeitlin, “The Artful Eye: Vision, Ekphrasis, and Spectacle in Euripidean Theatre,” in Art and Text in Ancient Greek Culture,” eds. Simon Goldhill and Robin Osborne (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 138-96, also examines the “possible contest between verbal and visual means, between epic narrative and theatrical vista,” (p. 164), but her interest lies mainly in the way that Euripides’ proposes a new means for establishing memory and kleos. (See also Zeitlin, “Art, Memory, and Kleos in Euripides’ Iphigenia in Aulis,” in History, Tragedy, Theory: Dialogues on Athenian Drama, ed. Barbara Goff [Austin, 1995], pp. 174-201.)
complicated than it is in the *Iliad,* but in the end, as Luschnig points out, we are led to “understand that Briseis is not the first bride stolen from Achilles by his commander-in-chief.”

But while scholars have long noted these similarities, they have yet to examine the manner in which the echoes of the *Iliad* are woven into the IA’s exploration of the structures of power and authority among the Achaean army. Indeed, the inevitability of Iphigenia’s eventual sacrifice, Achilles’ efforts notwithstanding, has suggested to many that the *Iliad*’s authority on the IA is “suffocating”; that “Agamemnon’s and Iphigenia’s choices cannot bear the significance necessary to tragedy because they are limited by the imposition of the myth”; or even that “tradition has worked to close down choices and alternatives in political, social, and artistic terms.” But such an enlarged focus on the *Iliad*’s “influence” on the IA has come at the cost of understanding the tragedy’s consistent impulse to reconsider and revise the dynamics of Homeric society. Insofar as I argue here that the IA’s Iliadic backdrop serves primarily to

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5 In the IA, Achilles only becomes aware of his “claim” as the tragedy progresses. As we learn in the prologue, Agamemnon had used the prospect of a marriage to Achilles to lure Iphigenia to Aulis, but once Achilles learns of this ruse, Achilles boldly claims that now that Iphigenia “has been promised to me, she will never be sacrificed by her father” (*IA* 935-36: κούποτε κόρη ὑπ’ ἀλαθοῖ πατρὸς ὑφαγότας, ἐμὴ φατισθεῖ). On the nature of Achilles’ commitment, see esp. Helene P. Foley, “Marriage and Sacrifice in Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Aulis,*” *Arethusa* 15 (1982): pp. 159-80. Foley argues—correctly, in my view—that “Achilles…agree[s] to act as Iphigenia’s bridegroom…[and] the fictional marriage between Achilles and Iphigenia takes on an ever-increasing reality” (pp. 162-63).
7 Luschnig, 1988, p. 78.
subvert the political structures of Homer’s epic, this chapter represents a sharp divergence from what has heretofore been the critical consensus.

1. Authority, Conflict, and Structures of Power in the Iliad

Euripides’ revolutionary use of Homeric story lines will be readily apparent only if we first see how Homer uses the same episode-types to depict the nature of power and authority in the Iliad. It is in that light that I shall provide a brief overview of the “politics” of the Iliad,10 as well as a more thorough examination of the picture of elite authority that is developed through the Agamemnon/Achilles conflict and the debate about whether to continue the war in Troy. These questions have been the subject of endless discussions among scholars, and it is fair to say that no true consensus has been found. Nevertheless, we may at least say that Moses Finley’s famous statement that “neither [Homeric] poem has any trace of a polis in its political sense,”11 a view once so en vogue,12 is no longer a commonly held opinion. Indeed, the very existence of a

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10 I will restrict myself here to a discussion of the Iliad (rather than including episodes from the Odyssey) primarily because it is with the Iliad that Euripides engages in the IA.
book entitled *The Iliad as Politics* suggests that the premise of such “politics” is at least permissible. Indeed, a number of scholars have either argued explicitly that the *Iliad* includes a political dimension, or have done so implicitly by attempting to describe and analyze the political world of Homer’s epics.

The results of these studies have been varied, but the most successful interpretations of Homer’s politics have not failed to stress the participation of a broad group of people throughout the decision-making process. As Raaflaub points out:

> The fact is...that the Homeric assembly plays a crucial role. Every action and decision with importance to the community takes place in an assembly, whether at war, on an expedition, or in the peaceful *polis*. The people witness such
actions, listen to the debate, express their approval or dissent collectively...and share the responsibility for the outcome.\footnote{Raaflaub, 1997b, p. 55.}


Nevertheless, beyond the need for the basileis to appeal to the wishes of the dēmos (“people”), the authority of the basileis at Troy remains nearly absolute. On a general level, numerous aspects of the assemblies make this readily apparent: a basileus such as Agamemnon may feel free to ignore the wishes of the dēmos; only the basileis are allowed to hold the floor at the assemblies; at no point do the common soldiers disobey the commands of their leaders; the soldiery’s only means of expressing dissent is by refusing to applaud the suggestion of a basileus, a silence that does not have any persuasive power; and the only common soldier who attempts to speak out against an Achaean basileus—Thersites—receives a severe beating for his temerity. Once a basileus decides on a particular course of action, there is nothing the dēmos can do to influence proceedings.

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21 Donlan, 1997, pp. 40-41, considers this the distinction between “power” and “authority.” He argues that while power suggests the ability to “[rule] by compulsion,” authority “rules mainly through persuasion and example, and tradition.”

22 For example in Book One, when all the other Achaeans (Il. 1.22: ἀλλοι μὲν πάντες...Ἀχαιοι) are in favor of returning Chryses’ daughter to the priest, an idea that Agamemnon decisively rejects. For a Trojan example, see Il. 7.345-97, in which Antenor proposes that they bring the war to an end by forcing Paris to give back Helen. Paris roundly refuses to do anything of the sort, though we learn that “the Trojans would have him do it” (Il. 7.393: ἦ μὴν Τρῶες γε κέλονται). On this episode, cf. Raafaub, 1988, esp. pp. 1-5.


24 Donlan, 1979, identifies forty instances in which an individual’s “Leadership Authority” (i.e. command) is rejected, but none of these instances of disobedience belongs to the common soldiers.

The hierarchy among the *basileis* themselves is somewhat more complicated. Even though Homer makes it clear that “Agamemnon is accepted by the other βασιλῆς as overall leader,” this does not give him unlimited power over the other Greek leaders, nor indeed over the Greek army as a whole. As Raaflaub affirms, Agamemnon is more of a “primus inter pares” within a “fiercely competitive group of equals.” His authority is subject to challenges throughout the *Iliad*, and he has essentially no power over the troops brought to Troy by his fellow *basileis*. In short, his position is unstable and ambiguous, but the debate about whether to remain at Troy, and the conflict between Agamemnon and Achilles, are episodes through which we may better understand the complex dynamics that exist within the Achaean army.

*The authority of the basileis and the “fight or go home” question*

In the *Iliad*, the debate about whether or not to remain at Troy arises at three separate points in the *Iliad*. In each case, Homer makes it clear, albeit in different ways, that the decision of whether “to fight or go home” lies with the *basileis*, but not with Agamemnon alone. The first instance arises in Book Two, where Agamemnon devises a poorly conceived plan to test his army with a disingenuous suggestion that they should flee Troy (*Il. 2.100-41*). Agamemnon’s

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26 Kirk, 1985, p. 81.
28 An argument that is presented in great detail by Donlan, 1982.
design is to have the other basileis restrain the soldiers (II. 2.75) but his proposal to flee is taken up with rather too much zest by the army, and a mad rush to the ships ensues (II. 2.142-54).

During the tumult, we see Odysseus corral the troops and urge them to stay and fight. In doing so, he provides a reasonably coherent picture of the Achaean hierarchy (II. 2.188-91; 198-206):

όν τινα μὲν βασιλῆα καὶ ἐξοχὸν ἄνδρα κιχεῖ 
τὸν δὲ ἄγανος ἐπέέσσειν ἐρητύσασκε παραστάς·
δαιμόνι’ ὅν σε ἔοικε κακὸν ὡς δειδώσσεθαι,
ἀλλ’ αὐτὸς τε κάθησο καὶ ἄλλους ἴδοιν λαοὺς·

όν δ’ αὖ δήμου τ’ ἄνδρα ἴδοι βοῶσται τ’ ἐφεύροι,
τὸν σκήπτρῳ ἐλάσασκεν ὁμοκλήσασκε τε μύθῳ·
δαιμόνι’ ἀτρέμας ἦσο καὶ ἄλλων μῦθον ἀκούε,
οἱ σεό φέρτεις εἰς, σὺ δ’ ἀπτόλεμος καὶ ἀνάλκης
"When he saw some man of the people who was shouting, he would strike at him with his staff, and reprove him also: 'Excellency! Sit still and listen to what others tell you, to those who are better men than you, you skulker and coward and thing of no account whatever in battle or council. Surely not all of us Achaeans can be as kings here. Lordship for many is no good thing. Let there be one ruler, one basileus, to whom the son of devious-devising Kronos gives the scepter and right of judgment, to watch over his people.'"

Whenever he encountered some basileus, or man of influence, he would stand beside him and with soft words try to restrain him: 'Excellency! It does not become you to be frightened like any coward. Rather hold fast and check the rest of the people.'

All translations of the Iliad from Richmond Lattimore, The Iliad of Homer (Chicago, 1962), unless otherwise noted.
Naturally, we cannot take Odysseus’ words as a precise description of power-relations among the Achaeans; they are, after all, designed to persuade his audience. But as Scodel argues, the hierarchy he describes is not so much an invention as an exaggeration, and the efficacy of his speech attests to its verisimilitude. As such, we may take as meaningful Odysseus’ division of the army into two distinct groups: the basileis and the common soldiers (laos or dēmos). It is also telling that he treats these two groups so differently. “Soft words” and an encouragement to restrain the army are reserved for the basileis, while the troops receive blows from the scepter and a command to follow their basileis. A very clear dynamic thus emerges: the basileis are to lead, the common soldiers to obey. Of particular interest here is Odysseus’ claim that the dēmos is “a thing of no account...[in] council.” While this does not precisely match what we see throughout the Iliad as a whole, it nevertheless shows that Odysseus has little regard for the soldiery’s input in the “fight or go home” decision.

Of more difficult interpretation are the final lines of the passage, where Odysseus claims there should be “one ruler, one basileus” for all the Achaeans. Were we to take Odysseus at his word, we would understand that a strict hierarchy exists among the Greeks, with Agamemnon (presumably) at the top and all the other Achaeans subject to him. Put quite simply, this in no way conforms to what we see enacted throughout the rest of the Iliad. A less literal more

32 As for example in the other debates about whether to stay at Troy, on which see more below.
accurate interpretation of Odysseus’ comment is provided by Oliver Taplin, who argues that he “is not saying that the whole army should have one single βασιλεύς, but only that every common man should have one.” In other words, each basileus may decide when and how his own soldiers will fight, but he does not have authority over other basileis, nor over the personal contingents of these other basileis.

A similar dynamic is revealed the next time the Greeks take up the “fight or go home” question. At the beginning of Book Nine, Agamemnon, downtrodden and apparently defeated, once again brings up the prospect of retreat (Il. 9.9-28). Unlike in Book Two, Agamemnon is completely serious, but rather than making for their ships, the entire army reacts with a stunned silence (9.29-30). Diomedes is the first to respond to Agamemnon, and both his words and the army’s response are of a different tone (Il. 9.32-33, 42-49):

Ἀτρεΐδη σοι πρώτα μαχήσομαι ἀφραδέοντι, 32
ἡ θέμις ἐστίν, ἀναξ, ἀγορῇ σὺ δὲ μὴ τι χολωθής.

ei δὲ τοι αὐτῷ θυμός ἐπέσυται ὡς τε νέεσθαι 42
ἐρχοῦ· πάρ τοι ὁδὸς, νῆς δὲ τοι ἀγχοθαλάσσῃς ἐστάσε, αἰ τοι ἐποντο Μυκήνηθεν μάλα πολλαί.


34 Elsewhere, Oliver Taplin, Homeric Soundings: The Shaping of the Iliad (Oxford, 1992), p. 58, describes relations between Agamemnon and the other basileis thusly: “the summoned basilēes are committed to the supervision of [Agamemnon], who acts as a co-ordinator and spokesman. At the same time they retain substantial independence, both off the field, where they can, for instance, call together an agorē or boulē, and on, where they lead their own men.”

35 Hammer, 2002, p. 89, suggests that their silence is perhaps due to their memory of the trick in Book Two.
Son of Atreus, I will be first to fight with your folly, as is my right, lord, in this assembly; then do not be angered.

But if in truth your own heart is so set upon going, go. The way is there, and next to the water are standing your ships that came—so many of them!—with you from Mykenai, And yet the rest of the flowing-haired Achaians will stay here until we have sacked the city of Troy; let even these also run away with their ships to the beloved land of their fathers, still we two, Sthenelos and I, will fight till we witness the end of Ilion; for it was with God that we made our way thither.”

Here, Diomedes insists upon his right to speak in the assembly of the Achaians, and in order to do so, he invokes *themis* (9.33)—the “law.” Whether we are to understand this *themis* as a “divine sanction” of authority or simply as the “social rules...within which the individual works,” it is clear that Diomedes appeals to a widely accepted concept of his rights.

Given the opportunity to speak, Diomedes openly questions Agamemnon’s judgment, and he does so in a manner that verges on hostility, calling Agamemnon *aphradeonti*

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36 While it is true that he sets a conciliatory tone by asking Agamemnon not to become angry, as Bryan Hainsworth, *The Iliad: A Commentary* vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1993), p. 64 notes, “his words are easily referred to the events of book I where Agamemnon, θέμις...ἀγορῇ or no, could not abide the παρρησία of Achilles.” Similarly, Jasper Griffin, ed., *Homer: Iliad IX* (Oxford, 1995), p. 78.
39 In fact, as is noted by Emma J. Stafford, “Themis: Religion and Order in the Archaic Polis,” in *The Development of the Polis in Ancient Greece*, eds. Lynette G. Mitchell and P.J. Rhodes (London, 1997), p. 158, there is some evidence that “themis” initially signified the right that every man has to speak freely in the assembly.” In other words, Diomedes invokes a right that is virtually indisputable.
(“senseless”) and declaring that he will “fight” against him. In short, on the subject of whether to “fight or go home,” Agamemnon’s word is not final, and the other basileis have the ability, perhaps even the “duty,” to challenge his authority. At the same time, by expressing his willingness to fight on his own, Diomedes concedes that he cannot force Agamemnon or the other basileis to stay at Troy. It is clear at this moment that while the basileis collectively make the decision about whether to fight or go home, no single basileus can make that decision for all the Achaeans.

This same dynamic is even more obvious on the next occasion in which the question is debated. In Book Fourteen, Agamemnon once again proposes to throw in the towel (II. 14.64-81). This time it is Odysseus who upbraids Agamemnon for his cowardice, going so far as to say he wished that Agamemnon “directed some other unworthy army, and were not lord over us.” Odysseus’ words obviously suggest that Agamemnon holds a special position among the Achaeans, but they just as obviously indicate that the rest of the basileis have considerable leeway when it comes to challenging Agamemnon’s authority. Much like Diomedes, Odysseus shows little compunction in not only rejecting Agamemnon’s proposal, but in doing so in an aggressive and even disrespectful manner. As for any input from the soldiery, this discussion

40 As Raaflaub, 1997a, p. 643, argues.
41 II 14.84-85: ὥραλλες ἀεικελίωστοι στρατοῖ ἄλλους ἐσθμαίνειν, μὴ δ’ ἀμὴν ἄνασσεμεν. In fact, Odysseus’ tone is so harsh that I.M. Hohendahl-Zoetelief, Manners in the Homeric Epic (Brill, 1980), p. 43 calls his speech “mutinous,” and compares it to Odyssey 10.429-37, in which one of Odysseus’ men attempts to foment a revolt by recalling Odysseus’ foolish behavior in Polyphemus’ cave. This comparison, however, is unwarranted, since as we have seen it is one thing for a basileus to challenge the judgment of another basileus, and another thing altogether for a common soldier to do so.
takes place in a *boulē* at which only a select few *basileis* are present. In other words, in this last instance in which the “fight or go home” question arises, the common soldiers have no voice at all.

*The authority of the basileis and the conflict between Agamemnon and Achilles*

The authority of Homer’s *basileis* acquires further nuance in the dispute between Agamemnon and Achilles that begins in Book One. Superficially at least, the possession of a woman is at the heart of their disagreement, as it is Agamemnon’s threat to “take” Briseis from Achilles that ignites the quarrel. But the words of the two heroes show that a disagreement about authority is central to the rift. Agamemnon and Achilles both describe their conflict as a sort of power-struggle, beginning with Agamemnon’s statement of intent regarding Briseis (*Il.* 1.184-87):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ἐγὼ δέ κ’ ἀγω Βρισηΐδα καλλιπάρην} \\
\text{αὐτός ἰών κλωσίνδε τὸ σον γέρας ὀφρ’ εὖ εἰδής} \\
\text{ὅσσον φέρτερος εἰμι σέθεν, στυγέ ἐκαὶ ἄλλος} \\
\text{ἰσον ἐμοὶ φάσθαι καὶ ὀμοιωθῆμεναι ἄντιν.}
\end{align*}
\]

But I shall take the fair-cheeked Briseis, your prize, I myself going to your shelter, that you may learn well how much greater I am than you, and another man may shrink back from likening himself to me and contending against me.

Here, Agamemnon explicitly states that the primary reason for which he is taking Briseis is to demonstrate his superiority to Achilles and indeed the army as a whole. The term *pherteros* is a general one, and may simply denote that Agamemnon is “better” than Achilles, but the
connotation here is that Agamemnon demands the “validation of his rank and of his authority as leader.” He explicitly states he will take Briseis in order to assert his power. Equally important is the fact that Agamemnon conceives of it not only as a punishment for Achilles’ impudence, but also as a lesson to the rest of the army, lest anyone else be similarly inclined to disrespect his authority. At the very beginning of the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon, it is already clear that a question of rank and power lies at the heart of it.

This emerges even more precisely as the quarrel reaches its climax. After Achilles responds with an angry outburst and Nestor attempts to soothe the spirits of the two heroes, both basileis take an unequivocal and intractable stance on the matter. Agamemnon speaks first (Il. 1.287-89):

\[
\text{ἀλλ’ ὁ δ’ ἄνηρ ἐθέλει περὶ πάντων ἐμμέναι ἄλλων,}
\text{πάντων μὲν κρατέειν ἐθέλει, πᾶντεσσι δ’ ἀνάσσειν,}
\text{πάσι δὲ σημαίνειν, ἣ τιν’ οὐ πείσεθαι οἶω.}
\]

Yet here is a man who wishes to be above all others, who wishes to hold power over all, and to be lord of all, and give them [all] their orders, yet I think one will not obey him.

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42 Donlan, 1982, p. 162; similarly, Joseph A. Russo, “Homer against His Tradition,” Arion 7 (1968): p. 284, suggests that pherteros here should be translated as “more powerful.” Contra see Kirk, 1985, p. 72, who states that “[a]ttempts to give φέρτερος a more specific meaning...are misguided.” But as Simon Pulleyen, ed., Homer: Iliad I (Oxford, 2000), p. 174 correctly points out, “Nestor expands on [Agamemnon’s comment] at 281 saying of Agamemnon ὁ γε φέρτερος ἔστιν, ἐπεὶ πλεόνεσσιν ἀνάσσει.” Later on, the “political” basis of Agamemnon’s point of view emerges more clearly in an analogous declaration of his in Il. 9.160: καὶ μοι ὑποστήτω ὡςον βασιλεύτερός εἰμι (“and let him yield place to me, inasmuch as I am the kinglier”). Here, Agamemnon restates his intention of showing himself to be superior to Achilles, but with an important change in the formulation: he is not simply pherteros, but indeed “basileuteros.” His aim here is fundamentally the same as it is in Book One—to prove his superiority—but the language in this instance confirms that he is specifically concerned with the matter of his authority and Achilles’ obedience. (It is a small point, but perhaps worth noting, that these two lines are the only instances in which we find the combination ὡςον + comparative adjective + εἰμι in all of the Iliad.)
Agamemnon clearly interprets Achilles’ behavior as a challenge to his authority, and believes that Achilles wishes to usurp his position and “to be above all others.” In fact, he is so concerned with this prospect that he repeats the sentiment a full four times. The source of Agamemnon’s fear could hardly be clearer, and he caps off this eloquent statement by proclaiming his remedy for the situation, namely his own refusal to yield to Achilles in this matter.43

Achilles’ sentiments are remarkably similar (Il. 1.293-96):

 серьезно усомнившись в том, что я не боюсь и не уклоняюсь от воли, я прошу тебя сказать другим о том, о чем ты командуете, а меня не нанимать. Ему нельзя молчать.

Achilles actually reclaims two of Agamemnon’s expressions from the preceding passage (vv. 289 and 296: σημαινειν and πεισθαι ὀίω), so it is obvious that Achilles sees the quarrel revolving around the same questions. Naturally, his own perspective is diametrically opposed to Agamemnon’s: rather than seeing himself as a threat to Agamemnon’s authority, he looks at Agamemnon’s abuse of authority as a threat to him. More specifically, he fears he may lose his

status among the Achaeans: if he simply backs down to Agamemnon here, he will become a nobody, akin to a common soldier.

The words of the two principle actors here demonstrate that the quarrel between them is a veritable power-struggle, with neither Agamemnon nor Achilles capable of yielding without losing face. Agamemnon prevails, at least in the sense that he can claim Briseis as his own, but we should note that every other element of the episode points to the limits of Agamemnon’s authority. Achilles does in fact have a choice in the matter, for he can choose to either surrender Briseis or kill Agamemnon, and it is only thanks to Athena’s intervention that Agamemnon survives the quarrel. When Achilles publicly states his intention to let Briseis go, he qualifies it by saying that he does so only because “you [plural] who gave her take her away.” He thus implicates the entire army in the decision to seize Briseis, but this is less an affirmation of the army’s authority than a refusal to cede openly to Agamemnon. In reality, Achilles yields

44 For Donlan, 1982, p. 162, this is evidence that “Agamemnon can coerce, of course, because he is politically more powerful than Achilles.” Similarly, see Pietro Pucci, The Song of the Sirens: Essays on Homer (Lanham MD, 1998), p. 183.
45 Donlan, 1982, p. 162, doubts that killing Agamemnon represents a “realistic” choice, but the possibility is realistic enough that Athena steps in to prevent Achilles from doing so (Il. 1.188-222).
46 E.R. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational (Boston, 1951), p. 14, has argued that Athena does not actually appear in person, but that she is rather a “projection…of an inward monition.” Contra, see esp. J.T. Hooker, “The Visit of Athena to Achilles in Iliad I,” Emerita 58 (1990): pp. 21-32. Hooker argues that, insofar as Homer frequently shows his heroes coming to decisions on their own, there is no real reason why Homer should have included the visitation unless we are to understand it as real.
47 Il 1.299: ἐπεί μ’ ἀφέλεσθέ γε δόντες· I have modified the word order in Lattimore’s translation here.
48 Few commentators have taken seriously Achilles’ claim that the army is fully responsible for the distribution of war booty. A.W.H. Adkins, “Values, Goals, and Emotions in the Iliad,” Classical Philology 77 (1982): p. 300, calls this a “convenient fiction,” made necessary by the fact that although “[w]e know…that Achilles has yielded to the two goddesses…to the others present it must appear that Achilles has backed down before Agamemnon” (p. 297). On a similar note, see Taplin, 1992, p. 65. Kirk, 1985, p. 83, is less sanguine about Achilles’ reasoning here, but agrees that
neither to the army nor to Agamemnon but instead to the authority of Athena and Hera (whom Athena represents), since “it is necessary that [he] obey” the goddesses (I. 1.216: χρὴ μὲν…εἰρύσσασθαι). Finally, Achilles ends his short speech by threatening to kill Agamemnon should he try to seize anything else (I. 1.297-303)—a clear sign of insubordination if ever there was one—and withdraws with his Myrmidons until Book Nineteen. Once Achilles has declared that he will no longer “obey” Agamemnon, Agamemnon has no ability to command either him or his Myrmidon army. What emerges from this quarrel, then, is that Agamemnon has little or no direct power over Achilles, and none over the Myrmidons.51

No other party, neither the basileis nor the common soldiers, can either compel one of the two heroes to yield or force a reconciliation between them. Nestor’s attempt to do so is an unmitigated failure (I. 1.247-84),52 and no other basileus tries to intervene in Book One—not

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50 Kirk, 1985, p. 83, argues that this is an “imagined case” and thus doubt the seriousness of the threat, but I see no evidence within the text itself that we should not take Achilles’ words at face-value.
51 Generally speaking, I follow the scholarly consensus in this regard. Cf. Donlan, 1982, p. 162; James F. McGlew, “Royal Power and the Achaean Assembly at Iliad 2.84-393” Classical Antiquity 8 (1989): pp. 283-95; Hammer, 2002, pp. 85-86. Raaflaub, 1988, astutely points out that the delicacy of the situation, in which “the stronger has to subordinate himself to the more powerful…require[s] tact and mutual respect.” Lacking both these qualities, Agamemnon has no means to convince Achilles.
even as Achilles begins to draw his sword in order to kill Agamemnon (Il. 1.194). The dēmos, for their part, make no attempt whatsoever to interfere. Donlan argues that their passivity is due to the fact that they do not have a stake in the argument. But while “their individual shares of the spoils are unaffected,” the dispute is of grave concern for them. Achilles is explicit about this when he says that “the sons of the Achaians, all of them,” will come to rue his absence, “when in their number before man-slaughtering Hektor they drop and die.” Nevertheless, once the power-struggle between Agamemnon and Achilles has broken out, no other can intercede.

All this is confirmed in Book Nine, shortly after the Greek basileis have persuaded Agamemnon to remain at Troy to fight. In light of the heavy losses that the Greek forces have taken, Nestor now suggests that Agamemnon attempt to pacify Achilles by plying him “with kind gifts and soothing words.” Agamemnon agrees to follow Nestor’s advice and to send an “embassy” consisting of Odysseus, Phoenix, and Ajax to convey a peace offering. For the first time it appears that other basileis may be able to bring about a reconciliation between the feuding heroes, and indeed the gifts with which Agamemnon would lavish Achilles are

53 Hartmut Erbse, Untersuchungen zur Funktion der Götter im homerischen Epos (Berlin, 1986), p. 139, argues that Athena intervenes at that moment precisely because none of the other basileis can.
54 Donlan, 1982, p. 162.
55 Il. 1.240-43: ἦ ποτ' Ἀχιλλῆς ποθή ἱέται νίας Αχαιῶν/σύμπαντας...ἐντ' ἄν πολλοὶ ὃφ' Ἔκτορος ἄνδροφόνου/ θνήσκοντες πιπτώσιν. Achilles’ prediction is not inaccurate.
56 Il. 9.113: δώροισιν τ' ἄγανοισιν ἐπεσοί τε μειλιχίου. Translation by author.
abundant: tripods, gold, captive women, seven citadels over which to rule,\textsuperscript{57} a daughter’s hand in marriage, and even Achilles’ prized Briseis, untouched, as Agamemnon swears (cf. \textit{Il}. 9.121-56). Instead of soothing words, however, Agamemnon ends his message on a familiar note (\textit{Il} 9.160-61):

\begin{quote}
καὶ μοι ὑποστῆτο ὅσσον βασιλεύτερός εἰμι
ἡδ' ὅσσον γενεὴ προγενέστερος εὐχομαι εἶναι.
\end{quote}

And let him yield place to me, inasmuch as I am the kinglier and inasmuch as I can call myself born the elder.

Agamemnon’s feelings have changed very little with respect to his stance in Book One. Just as it had at the beginning, the question of his authority—his “kingliness”—takes pride of place in his understanding of the quarrel. And despite Nestor’s sage advice, Agamemnon is still intent on demonstrating his superiority to Achilles.

In truth, Agamemnon’s words simply anticipate the message his gifts will convey. As numerous scholars have noted, if Achilles accepts this “generosity,” he will essentially become Agamemnon’s “dependent.”\textsuperscript{58} In both word and deed Agamemnon eschews Nestor’s advice

\textsuperscript{57} As is noted by Jonathan M. Hall, “Politics and Greek Myth,” in \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology}, ed. Roger D. Woodard (Cambridge, 2007), p. 335, these citadels do not seem to be Agamemnon’s to give, seeing as he is the king of Mycenae and not Sparta. It is likely that these lines reflect a separate tradition according to which Agamemnon was in fact a Spartan king.

and reveals that his true priority is still imposing his authority. Nor is this lost on Achilles. Despite Odysseus’ elision of Agamemnon’s parting words—itself an implicit recognition that the power-struggle is the locus of the dispute—Achilles rejects Agamemnon’s offer out of hand (Il. 9.307–97). Phoenix and Ajax also try to persuade Achilles to return to the fold, but with no success. Their failure again shows that the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon is immune to the intervention of other basileis. Such is the diagnosis, at any rate, offered by Diomedes when he hears of the embassy’s outcome: “[h]e will fight again, whenever the time comes/that the heart in his body urges him to, and the god drives him.” (Il. 9.702-03). In the meantime, the rest of the Achaeans can only stand by.

Achilles’ eventual conciliation with Agamemnon proves Diomedes’ point. Ultimately, it is only through the death of Patroclus, and the consequent transference of Achilles’ anger from

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59 Phoenix by arguing that Achilles stands to lose a great deal of kles and timē for refusing to fight (Il. 9.434-605), and Ajax on the basis of friendship (philōtēs; Il. 9.624-42). Achilles modifies his position ever so slightly (he will no longer set sail in the morning, as he first threatened), but he still rejects any possibility of returning to fight before Hector reaches his ships (Il. 9.650-52). On these exchanges, see esp. Adkins, 1982; and Wilson, 2002, pp. 96-108.

60 Il. 9.702-03: τότε δ’ αὔτε μαχήσεται ὡπότε κέν μιν/θυμὸς ἐν στήθεσσιν ἀνώγῃ καὶ θεὸς ὀρχη.

Agamemnon to Hector,\(^6^2\) that the two basileis find a way to set aside their differences. Even then, Homer emphasizes the Achaeans’ inability to force the issue, for it is Achilles’ mother Thetis, rather than any mortal, who urges Achilles to make peace (\(II\). 19.34-36). At this point in the epic, it is already a foregone conclusion that Achilles will rejoin the fold. Nevertheless, it is significant that, as Athena had done in Book One, it is once again a goddess who is able to sway Achilles’ heart: even though, as Achilles points out, many Achaeans have died and the rest will “too long remember this quarrel” (\(II\). 19.64: δηρὸν ἐμῆς καὶ σής ἔφωντος μνήσεσθαι), it is only the intervention of Achilles’ divine mother that persuades him to put an end to the conflict.\(^6^3\) The reconciliation, like the conflict itself, shows that the Achaean army and the other basileis are passive spectators in the Achilles/Agamemnon crisis.\(^6^4\)

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\(^6^2\) Cf. Achilles speaking of Hector in \(II\). 20.425-26: ἐγγὺς ἀνήρ ὃς ἐμὸν γε μάλιστ’ ἐσεμάσσατο θυμόν, ὡς μοι ἐταῦρον ἐπεφένε τετιμένον (“Here is the man who beyond all others has troubled my anger,/who slaughtered my beloved companion.”).

\(^6^3\) This point is often overlooked, but see Hooker, 1989, p. 85. \textit{Contra} see Edwards, 1991, p. 238: “Thetis is made to propose the assembly and public renunciation of Akhilleus’ μῆνις because…it would be implausible to have the idea enter the hero’s mind in any other way.”

\(^6^4\) Odysseus is at least able to overcome Achilles’ indifference and insist that Agamemnon’s gifts be presented in public, and that the Achaeans take a meal together (\(II\). 19.154-237), but this is simply a matter of ensuring that the proper rituals be carried out in the matter of the (already decided) reconciliation (cf. Postlethwaite, 1995, pp. 100-01).
2. Conflict and Authority in the IA: (Distorted) Echoes of Homer

As we have seen, the structures of power and authority in the *Iliad* are revealed most prominently and extensively through the debate over whether to continue the war and by the dispute between Agamemnon and Achilles. In the *IA*, the question of Iphigenia’s sacrifice leads directly to analogous controversies, and like Homer before him, Euripides uses these issues to provide a sense of the political landscape at Aulis. What’s more, in reworking this Homeric material as a means to approach contemporary political questions, Euripides actually follows a tragic predecessor. In his *Myrmidons*, Aeschylus had also taken up the theme of Achilles’ contentious withdrawal from the army at Troy in order to examine the potential of contemporary “social and political practices” to resolve conflicts between aristocratic individuals and the collective.65 As such, his audience was in all likelihood well-versed not only in the *Iliad*, but indeed in tragedy’s ability to reconsider Iliadic questions in a different, more contemporary light.66

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66 For the audience’s familiarity with the *Iliad*, see the Introduction, pp. 24-25. On the possibility that late fifth-century audiences had the opportunity to see reperformances of Aeschylus’ plays, see the Introduction, pp. 16-24.
Echoes of Homer amidst the suggestion of change

As Agamemnon explains the tragic dilemma he faces in the prologue, Euripides wastes little time in alerting his audience to the fact that he too will take up the question of power and authority among the Achaean at Aulis (IA 87-100):

Now that the army is mustered and arranged we sit idle at Aulis, suffering for a lack of winds. The prophet Calchas told us, in our consternation, that if we sacrificed my daughter Iphigenia to Artemis who dwells upon this plain, we would attain our journey and the destruction of Phrygia; but if we did not sacrifice her, those things would not come to be. When I heard this, straightway I told Talthybius to send home the army, as I could never bring myself to kill my daughter. But my brother brought forth every argument, and persuaded me to dare terribly: so I wrote a letter and sent it to my wife, asking her to send our daughter here to wed Achilles.67

67 It must be noted that the IA’s prologue, as it is transmitted by the manuscript tradition, is perhaps the most problematic passage of a text that is full of difficulties. Its format is odd, to say the least: the play begins with a dialogue in anapaests between Agamemnon and an old slave (1-48); continues with a monologue in trimeters spoken by Agamemnon (49-114); and then returns to anapaestic dialogue in the final lines (115-63). Beyond that, it presents numerous inconsistencies and occasionally awkward diction. For all these reasons, the authenticity of the prologue has been the subject of endless discussions that have, alas, provided no perfect solution to the many questions raised by the text. Despite these uncertainties, I have chosen to discuss these lines here because we may at least be sure that the original production of the IA contained a prologue, and that this prologue would have served to introduce the audience to the main themes and problems of the tragedy. Based on this, we may assume that the “original” prologue included something like these lines, insofar as they are compatible with what we see in the rest of the tragedy. (The picture they present is maintained until the middle of the first episode, at which point there is an abrupt reversal that is best explained if the tragedy had thus far presented the situation as Agamemnon does here.) For more on the “authenticity” of the prologue, see esp.: Page, 1934, pp. 131-40; C.W. Willink, “The Prologue of Iphigenia at Aulis,” The Classical Quarterly 21 (1971): pp. 343-64; Bernard Knox, “Euripides’ Iphigenia in Aulide 1-163 (in that order),” Yale Classical Studies 22 (1972): pp. 239-61; David Bain, “The Prologues of Euripides’ Iphigeneia in Aulis,”
It is immediately clear what the stakes are for Agamemnon’s choice: the Greek expedition to Troy, and thus the Trojan War itself, requires that he sacrifice Iphigenia; if he does not, the Achaeans will return home. Already in the prologue, then, Euripides poses a question similar to that which Homer raises in Books One, Nine, and Fourteen of the *Iliad*: will the Greeks bring war to the Trojans? The Homeric background of the issue is further emphasized by the characters whom Agamemnon mentions: Talthybius and Calchas have only minor roles in the *Iliad*, but Menelaus is a major character, and Agamemnon and Odysseus are central players in the debate over whether to remain at Troy. Just as intriguingly, the dynamic of the decision-making process is evocative of Books Nine and Fourteen in the *Iliad*, in which Agamemnon first suggests disbanding the army only to be dissuaded by a fellow *basileus*. Furthermore, there is no mention whatsoever of the Achaean army as a whole, which suggests that the soldiers at Aulis have no say in the matter. Superficially, at least, this passage suggests a situation and a hierarchy at Aulis that is similar to the one we see in the *Iliad*.

As Agamemnon continues, however, cracks appear in the Homeric façade (*IA* 106-07):

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68 Though both are involved in the beginning of the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles: Calchas is the prophet who tells Agamemnon he must give back Chryses’ daughter in order to end the plague that Apollo has set upon the Greeks (*II*. 1.92-100), and it is the loss of this war-prize that prompts Agamemnon to take Briseis from Achilles. Talthybius, conversely, is the herald whom Agamemnon sends to collect Briseis (*II*. 1.320-56).

69 Here it is Menelaus, whereas in Homer it is Diomedes (Book Nine) and Odysseus (Book Fourteen).
μόνοι δ’ Ἀχαϊῶν ἱσμεν ὡς ἔχει τάδε
Κάλχας Ὀδυσσεύς Μενέλαος θ’…

We alone of the Achaeans know how things stand, Calchas, Odysseus, Menelaus, [and I].

These lines represent a substantial innovation to the picture of decision-making that Homer provides: according to Agamemnon, not only have the common soldiers been excluded from the debate about whether to “fight or go home,” so too have the majority of the basilieis. Perhaps most surprisingly, neither Achilles, who would seem to have a significant stake in the affair, nor Nestor, whose voice is always heard in the Homeric councils, has been apprised of the situation. Instead, the Achaean leadership board has dwindled to a paltry four members. Calchas’ role here is particular notable: in the Iliad, Calchas had needed to ask Achilles for protection before delivering the bad news to Agamemnon about Chryses’ daughter (Il. 1.74-83); at Aulis, however, he seems to have received a substantial promotion, and is a virtual peer of Agamemnon and Odysseus. Even more intriguingly, his prophecy is known only by this restricted group of basilieis, a fact which leaves the decision entirely in their hands. Given what

70 These lines are almost certainly corrupted, and possibly interpolated (cf. esp. Bain, 1977a, pp. 23-24; the “impossible omission of ἐγώ as part subject of ἱσμεν in 106” is especially disturbing). Nevertheless, the other episodes of the tragedy present the situation in this very light, so unless we are to delete virtually the entirety of the first episode, as well as a good portion of the third (as does Kovacs, 2003), we must admit that the information given here is accurate, and it thus very likely that it was presented to the audience in the prologue.

71 Willink, 1971, and Kovacs, 2003, have both insisted that the “secret prophecy” motif is an invention by a later (probably 4th-century) “reviser” of the IA. While it is impossible to rule out this possibility, the argumentation developed by Willink and Kovacs is almost as problematic as the text of the IA itself. Willink, for example, contends that the prophecy was public on the grounds that “[f]or the story, a public oracle is clearly more portent than a confidential one, as intensifying Agamemnon’s predicament (especially in this democratic army)” (p. 362). Setting aside the fact that this a subjective interpretation of the drama’s aesthetics, it is hard to see why Agamemnon’s predicament is more “intense” if the “democratic army,” which at the end of the play will force Agamemnon to sacrifice Iphigenia, knows about the prophecy from the get-go. After all, if such a powerful army knew of the prophecy from the beginning, wherein would Agamemnon’s predicament lie? Kovacs, for his part, argues that “neither in Homer nor elsewhere in tragedy are important prophecies…delivered, as it were, behind closed doors, and one would not expect them to be in our play either” (p. 78). This line of reasoning underestimates the originality
we see here, it appears that the make-up of Achaean leadership at Aulis is substantially more exclusive than in Homer’s epic, and the decision-making process seems to have been radically altered.

Moreover, we soon learn that Agamemnon intends to send a slave to Clytemnestra with a second letter, this time advising her to stay at home (IA 107-23). Such an act would constitute a massive innovation in both literary and political terms: on the one hand, by writing this letter Agamemnon is attempting to render the Trojan War impossible, and to create a world in which the *Iliad* does not exist; at the same time, he would appropriate the power of judgment exclusively for himself, determining on his own whether Iphigenia will die and the Trojan War will occur. As such, the secret letter constitutes a significant adjustment to the dynamics of decision-making among the Achaean.

Shortly thereafter, Menelaus arrives and seizes the letter from Agamemnon’s slave.72 As one might expect, he is rather displeased to discover that Agamemnon has gone behind his back. Menelaus takes the issue up with Agamemnon, and in the debate which ensues questions of Euripides’ approach to prophecy in his tragedies (a disappointingly under-discussed topic, but cf. esp. *IT* 15-24, and *Hel.* 744-51, both of which deal specifically with Calchas). In short, neither of these arguments is unassailable, and they are certainly not convincing enough to call for the excision of two lines, the authenticity of which is otherwise unquestioned (i.e. *IA* 518-19, which I will discuss in some detail below). For more on the subject, and in particular Kovacs’ approach to it, see Sean Alexander Gurd, *Iphigenias at Aulis: Textual Multiplicity, Radical Philology* (Ithaca, 2005), pp. 139-45.

72 Here too Euripides does not miss a chance to emulate Homer: in a move reminiscent of Odysseus’ assault on Thersites in Book Two of the *Iliad*, Menelaus threatens to “bloody” the old slave’s head with his scepter. Cf. *IA* 311: σκήπτρῳ τάχ’ ἀρὰ σὺν καθαμαλξῳ κάφῳ (I’ll bloody your head with my scepter) and *Il.* 2.265-66: ὡς ἄγ’ ἐφη, σκήπτρῳ δὲ μετὰφρενον ἢδε καὶ ὠμῷ/πλήξειν (“So [Odysseus] spoke and dashed the scepter against [Thersites’] back and shoulder”). Luschnig, 1988, p. 88, also notes this allusion.
of power and authority come fully to the foreground. Menelaus is the first to speak, and he delivers a harsh appraisal of Agamemnon’s poor leadership. He begins with a general critique of “inconsistent minds,” and then uses Agamemnon’s behavior as an example (IA 337-44):

οἶσθ’, ὅτ’ ἐσπούδαξες ἀρχεῖν Δαναίδας πρὸς Ἰλιον, τῷ δοκεῖν μὲν οὐχὶ χρῆξαν, τῷ δὲ βουλεύσαται θέλων, ὡς ταπεινὸς ἦσθα, πάσης δεξιὰς προσθιγγάνων καὶ θύρας ἔχων ἀκλήμμοις τῷ θέλοντι δημοτῶν καὶ διδοὺς πρόσφησιν ἐξῆς πᾶσι — κεὶ μὴ τις θέλαι — τοῖς τρόποις ζητῶν πρᾶσοθαι τὸ φιλότιμον ἐκ μέσου; κάτ’, ἐπεὶ κατέσχες ἁρχάς, μεταβαλὼν ἄλλους τρόπους τοῖς φίλοισιν οὐκέτ’ ἦσθα τοῖς πρὶν ὡς πρόσθεν φίλος,

You remember when you were eager to lead the Danaans to Ilium, wishing at once to seem willing yet not covetous—how humble you were! Taking each man’s hand, leaving your door open to any common man who wished, and time again giving all a chance to speak—even those who did not wish to—striving in this way to buy the office from the middle class? But when you’d won the command, you changed your ways and were no longer friendly as before to your friends.

Menelaus’ point is that Agamemnon is an inconsistent leader, but he could have made this argument more easily by simply pointing out his brother’s change of mind concerning Iphigenia. Instead, Menelaus embarks on a digression about Agamemnon’s actions before the

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73 IA 334: νοῦς δὲ γ’ ὧν βέβαιος ἀδικον κτήμα (“an inconsistent mind is an unjust possession”).
74 Walter Stockert, Euripide: Iphigenie in Aulis vol. 2 (Vienna, 1992), p. 294, suggests that the best way to translate philotimon here is as “office” or “position” (in the German: “Ehrenstellung” or “Amt”).
75 While this translation may seem anachronistic, the idea conveyed is that Agamemnon wishes to buy his office by winning over the “middle,” and the term used (mesos) is the same one that Euripides gives Theseus in his famous discussion of the three “classes” of citizens (E. Supp. 238-49; v. 244: ἡ ἐν μέσῳ). Ann N. Michelini, “Political Themes in Euripides’ Suppliants,” American Journal of Philology 115 (1994): p. 226, describes this group as “a class that ideally would intervene between the quarrelling ranks of the wealthy and the poor as a stabilizing ‘middle.’”

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tragedy. We may conclude that this account is included not for its rhetorical effect, but rather for the other information it conveys.

The crux of Menelaus’ report is that Agamemnon has conducted a campaign to be chosen as the leader of the Achaean army. Such an event appears nowhere in the Iliad, and shows that the situation at Aulis is at least in some ways similar to that of fifth-century Athens.76 The target demographic of Agamemnon’s campaign confirms this. According to Menelaus, Agamemnon has relied on the support of the common soldiers—the mesos—in order to win the generalship. This last notion is particularly inconceivable in the world of Homer, where Agamemnon is granted his privileged position simply because “he rules over more men.”77 But it would have been familiar to much of Euripides’ audience, for the Athenian dēmos elected ten stratēgoi annually, and at times may even have chosen specific generals for specific expeditions.78 As Menelaus describes the proceedings at Aulis, the world of the tragedy begins to sharply resemble that of Euripides’ audience.

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77 As Nestor reminds Achilles at II. 1.281: ὅ γε φέρτερός ἐστιν ἐπεὶ πλεόνεσσιν ἀνάσσει.
This is confirmed by the term with which Menelaus describes Agamemnon’s objective: to philotimon (IA 342). Most literally, philotimia\textsuperscript{79} means a “love of honor,” but it was often used to denote individual ambition or even political office more generally. Even though Homer’s heroes were quite fond of timē and, as we have seen, were not averse to exercising power, the term philotimia appears nowhere in Homer’s epics. By the end of the fifth-century, on the other hand, it was commonly used in the context of the social and political arena of democratic Athens, and it was laden with both positive and negative connotations. Thucydides’ Pericles, for example, comforts the parents of the fallen Athenian soldiers by reminding them that philotimia alone is “ageless” (ἀγήρων), and that “to be honored” (το τιμᾶσθαι) is that which renders old age most enjoyable (2.44.4). A short time later, however, Thucydides laments that Pericles’ successors were guilty of following their “personal philotimia” (2.65.7: τὰς ἰδίας φιλοτιμίας), which caused them to adopt policies that were ruinous for the city. What emerges from these (and other) analyses is that philotimia could be useful when applied to the public good, harmful when it was limited to the realm of personal ambition, and above all that it was a topic of great interest and relevance to fifth-century Athenians.\textsuperscript{80} The portrait of Agamemnon


\textsuperscript{80} The subject of philotimia warrants more attention than I can provide it here, but cf. David Whitehead, “Competitive Outlay and Community Profit: Φιλοτιμία in Democratic Athens,” Classica et Mediaevalia 34 (1983): p. 59, who goes so far as to say that philotimia was “a basic feature of the society and economy of democratic Athens.” Similarly, Ricky K. Green, Democratic Virtue in the Trial and Death of Socrates: Resistance to Imperialism in Classical Athens (New York, 2001), p. 42, argues that “[p]hilotimia in fifth century Athens was nothing less than intense contest for leadership of the polis.” This competition had both positive and negative connotations. By the mid-fourth century, it seems to have become a less controversial topic, as it most often referred to the private outlay of expenditures that were crucial to
seeking to “buy” philotimia raises grave doubts about the quality of his leadership, and it leaves no question that he is more akin to a contemporary Athenian politician rather than a Homeric general.

Nevertheless, the question of Iphigenia’s sacrifice seems as if it will be decided by the two men on-stage, with the army and the rest of the basileis as passive as they were in Homer. Menelaus’ arguments are met by a strong response from Agamemnon, who points out that it is hardly fair that he should have to kill his daughter in order for Menelaus to salvage his “bad marriage” (IA 389: κακὸν λέχος). Neither man is willing to budge, and we find ourselves at an impasse. Indeed, if one looks past the brief reference to Agamemnon’s political campaign, the tragic agōn is in many ways analogous to the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon in Book One of the Iliad: both debates revolves around a woman’s fate; in each case, one basileus sees himself forced to give up his woman (i.e. Briseis/Iphigenia) to make up for the woman that a rival has lost (Chryseis/Helen); both Agamemnon (IA 396-99) and Achilles (II. 1.152-60) justifiably protest that the whole reason for the war—the recovery of Helen—is one that doesn’t truly concern them; and above all, just as in the Iliad, the quarrel between Menelaus and

the functioning of the polis (e.g. covering military expenses; for a list of examples, cf. K.J. Dover, Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle [Oxford, 1974], pp. 230-33; for the fourth-century flowering of the rhetoric of philotimia, cf. Whitehead, pp. 59-62). In the fifth century, however, it appears that feelings about philotimia were more fraught. Pindar, in perhaps the earliest known use of the term, says that “in poleis men are all too interested in philotimia, [and] they cause obvious suffering” (fr. 210: ἄγαν φιλοτιμίαν μνώμενοι ἐν πόλεσιν ἰστάον ἄλγος ἐμφανεῖς). Euripides calls it “the worst of daimones” (Ph. 532: τῆς κακότητις δαίμονος). And the subject of philotimia was controversial enough that Protagoras dedicated an entire treatise to it (Περὶ φιλοτιμίας, mentioned in Diog. Laert. 9.55, cited by Whitehead, p. 57).
Agamemnon appears to be an irresolvable conflict. For all intents and purposes, the situation, the hierarchy of decision-making, and the relations between individual basileis seem to be fundamentally the same at Euripides’ Aulis and at Homer’s Troy.

This sensation lasts only a short time, as the parallels between the power structures of the Iliad and IA begin to break down when a messenger enters to announce the arrival of Clytemnestra and Iphigenia at Aulis (IA 414-39). Agamemnon weeps with despair at the knowledge that Iphigenia’s death is imminent, and wonders how he will break the news to his wife. In truth, he finds no shortage of reasons to feel sorry for himself, and he suggests that such suffering is the fate of leaders such as him (IA 446-50):

> ἡ δυσγένεια δʹ ὡς ἔχει τι χρήσιμον. Low birth does possess some advantages.  
> καὶ γὰρ δακρύσαι ὡδίως αὐτοῖς ἔχει, For it is easier for them to cry and to speak  
> ἀπαντά τʹ εἰπέιν. τῷ δὲ γενναῖῳ φύσιν of their sorrows, while to the high-born man  
> ἀνολβα ταῦτα. προστάτην δὲ τοῦ βίου these same sorrows come, but we are beholden  
> τὸν ὄγκον ἔχομεν τῷ τʹ ὀχλῷ δουλεύομεν. to the dignity of life, and are slaves to the mob.  

While Agamemnon’s plaint is by no means unique within the Euripidean corpus, it certainly signals a radical departure from the image of authority that had thus far been projected in the play. Up until now, every indication has been that the choice to sacrifice Iphigenia would lie with Agamemnon and his fellow basileis, if not with Agamemnon alone. Here, however, the Achaean leader suggests that he may have to reckon with the mass of the army as well.

81 For the complaint that it is better to be “low-born,” cf. E. fr. 285; on “enslavement to the mob” cf. E. Hec. 868 (also noted by Stockert, 1992 vol. 2, p. 331).
Furthermore, Euripides’ choice of the term *ochlos* ("crowd," "mob," or "mass") is a loaded one. The term *ochlos* was unknown to Homer,82 but by the fifth century it was quite common. Thucydides, for example, uses it 27 times in his *History*, either in a neutral manner (i.e. "mass") or with negative connotations (i.e. "mob").83 Given the sentiment expressed here—that Agamemnon is a “slave” to the *ochlos*—it is proper to translate the word as “mob,” and reasonable to suppose that Euripides’ audience would have understood it as such. This is another subtle erosion of our initial impression that the soldiery at Aulis is passive and essentially akin to Homer’s Achaean army. It is a small moment, an almost imperceptible contemporization of the Achaean army, and one that would be unremarkable were it to occur in isolation. As it happens, however, it is the beginning of a larger paradigm shift.

This shift becomes much more obvious as the debate between the two Atreids reaches its climax. Agamemnon’s tears inspire pity in Menelaus, and in a surprising reversal he urges Agamemnon not to kill Iphigenia (*IA* 473-503). Even more astonishing, however, is Agamemnon’s own change of mind (*IA* 511-19,84 522-35):

![Greek text with translations]

82 Homer used a great variety of terms to describe the soldiery, ranging from *laos* and *dēmos* to *homilos* or *stratos*, but never *ochlos*. For more on the Homeric terminology, see E.C. Welskopf, “Die Bezeichnungen *laos*, *dēmos*, *homilos*, *plēthos*, *dēmos* in den homerischen Epen,” in *Untersuchungen ausgewählter altgriechischer sozialer Typenbegriffe* vol. 3, ed. Welskopf (Berlin, 1981), pp. 163-92.


84 Lines 520-21—a critique of the “race” (*spērima*) of prophets—are not without interest but are generally considered spurious and, above all, are not germane to the argument at hand.
M: What? Who will force you to kill her?
A: The whole assembly of the Achaeen army
M: Not if you send her back to Argos.
A: I might get away with that, but not this...
M: What? One must not fear the mob too much.
A: Calchas will tell his prophecies to the Achaeen army.

M: Not if he dies first. An easy thing to manage.
A: But do you not fear the thought that creeps upon me?
M: How can I understand the word you do not say?
A: The child of Sisyphus knows all these things.
M: It is not possible for Odysseus to hurt us.
A: He’s always been most cunning with the mob.
M: He is obsessed with honor, a terrible evil.
A: Then don’t you think he’ll stand amidst the Argives
to tell them the prophecies Calchas enjoined,
and that I lied and promised to sacrifice a victim
to Artemis? That he’ll seize the army, and order
the Argives to kill you and me and to slaughter
the girl? And then, even if I flee to Argos,
they’ll come as far as the Cyclopean walls
to carry off [Iphigenia] and destroy the land.

The picture that Agamemnon paints is undeniably violent and disturbing, but above all it
suggests that the power structures at Aulis have been radically updated. Unlike with his earlier
ruminations about the ochlos, Agamemnon explicitly states that it will be the army that will
force him to sacrifice Iphigenia (IA 514). According to him, if the soldiers catch wind of the
prophecy concerning Iphigenia, they will insist that Agamemnon sacrifice her. More to the
point, he will be forced to obey them. In other words, once they are informed of the situation,
the common soldiers will decide for themselves (and everybody else) that the war must go on.
Under these circumstances, it is easy to see why the army would be characterized as a “mob,” and indeed twice here they are referred to as an *ochlos*.

This is, of course, very different from the hierarchy that is depicted in the *Iliad*. A neat frame through which to view this evolution of authority is the manner in which Calchas and Odysseus operate. As mentioned above, in order to even speak in the *Iliad*, Calchas had to beg for protection from Achilles for fear of (presumably violent) retribution from Agamemnon. And there, his prophecy is pivotal not because he wins over the common soldiers but because Agamemnon sees that it is better to return Chryses’ daughter than to allow his whole army to die (cf. *Il. 1.68-116*). Here at Aulis, however, Calchas’ prognostication has not convinced Agamemnon to sacrifice Iphigenia, but his ability to speak to and move the Achaean *ochlos* looks to be a potentially decisive factor. The dynamics of Calchas’ intervention are thus entirely upended, and the fact that he will speak not to Agamemnon but to the *ochlos* suggests a substantial modification of Homeric authority.

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85 Cf. *Il. 1.80-82*: κρείσσων γὰρ βασιλεύς ὅτε χώσεται ἄνδρι χέρῃ/εί περ γάρ τε χόλον γε καί αὐτήμαρ κατατέψη/ἀλλὰ τε καὶ μετόπισθεν ἐχεὶ κότον, ὥρα τελέσῃ (“a basileus, when he is angry with a lesser man, is far more powerful/and even if he swallows his anger for one day/he will hold onto his wrath until he fulfills it”). Hammer, 2002, p. 83, argues that Calchas’ reticence illustrates the fact that “Agamemnon’s ability to command obedience rests on a fear of retribution.” Menelaus actually seems to allude to this episode by suggesting that it would be easy to kill the prophet (*IA* 519); to provide the retribution Calchas feared in the *Iliad*. Homer’s epic is ever-present, even, or perhaps especially, when Euripides deviates from that model.

86 The soldiers here are present as silent and passive spectators, and had in fact urged Agamemnon to ransom the girl a full ten days earlier (cf. *Il. 1.22-23*)—a recommendation that Agamemnon had roundly and rashly ignored.

87 At least not on second thought: as Menelaus (*IA* 358-63) tells us, Agamemnon had first agreed whole-heartedly to sacrifice Iphigenia, only to later change his mind. On this change of mind, cf. John Gibert, *Change of Mind in Greek Tragedy* (Göttingen, 1995), pp. 210-17.
Odyssaeus’ role also speaks to this transition. As in Book Fourteen of the *Iliad* (cf. 14.82-102), Odysseus looks set to stand up to Agamemnon and force the war to continue. But whereas at Troy he had intervened by directly rebuking Agamemnon, here we learn that he is essentially powerless on his own (*IA* 525). Instead, just like Calchas he represents a threat because he is able to appeal directly to the army. The results envisioned by Agamemnon—the murder of Iphigenia, his own assassination, the sack of Argos—amount to a violent military coup, a disintegration of the military hierarchy that is never imagined in the *Iliad*. It is a striking image of a different type of Achaean army, one whose consensus is not only necessary, but whose voice is actually decisive in the debate about whether or not to sacrifice Iphigenia and thus bring war to Troy.

Equally striking is the fact that Odysseus will be able to mobilize the army not through threats and violence, as he does in *Iliad* Two, but because he is *poikilos* with the ochlos—“cunning with the mob” (*IA* 526). This implies that his power comes from rhetorical and persuasive excellence88 rather than physical prowess or his status as a *basileus*. While the ability to persuade was certainly desirable for Homeric *basileis*, it was absolutely necessary for leaders in democratic Athens,89 so Odysseus appears to be a leader more in the mold of Euripides’

88 Isocrates, for example, implies that *poikilia* is an integral part of rhetorical persuasiveness: cf. *Isoc.* 5.27; 12.4; 15.47. For the overtly negative connotations of Odysseus’ *poikilia*, cf. my discussion in Chapter Four, pp. 302-304.
contemporaries than his Homeric antecedents. This modernity is further confirmed by the description of him “standing amidst the Argives” to incite them, as well as the fact that just like Agamemnon, he too is obsessed with *philotimia*.

The end result of these circumstances—that Agamemnon feels obliged to sacrifice Iphigenia—represents a decisive step away from the world of the *Iliad* and towards that of the Athenian audience. Strange as it might appear within the context of the Achaean army, the idea that a general such as Agamemnon could be forced to lead an expedition against his will would not have been out of place in classical Athens. An intriguing (if inadequately attested) parallel to the situation at Aulis seems to have occurred in 433 BCE, two years before the onset of the Peloponnesian War. As Plutarch tells us, after the Athenians had decided to enter into an alliance with Corcyra, Pericles “persuaded the *dēmos*” (ἐπεισε τὸν δήμον) to send Lacedaimonius “against his will” (μὴ βουλόμενον) with ten ships to their new allies.90 If what Plutarch tells us is true,91 we may see this as an analogous case in which one leader uses the “people” as a sort of wedge to force a colleague to take on a military commission.

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90 Plut. *Pericles* 29.1-2. Thucydides discusses the episode (1.44) but says nothing about Lacedaimonius being forced to lead the campaign.

91 Rarely has the episode been discussed by scholars at any length. Hamel, 1998, p. 20, is non-committal regarding the potential veracity of Lacedaimonius’ lack of enthusiasm for this commission (“[he] was allegedly sent to Corcyra...against his will”); Donald Kagan, *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War* (Ithaca, 1969), p. 244, dismisses it out of hand as “the charges of an outwitted and outraged faction”; but as is pointed out by G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (Ithaca, 1972), pp. 76-77, the element of Plutarch’s narration that is most likely to be invented is that Pericles put Lacedaemonius in charge in order to “insult” him (*ephubrizōn*) and to be able to accuse
A few years later, the Athenian “demagogue” Cleon found himself in similar circumstances when he was forced to lead an expedition at Pylos. As the summer of 425 came to a close, the Athenians were occupying Pylos and had trapped a number of Spartan soldiers on the nearby island of Sphacteria. The situation was troubling enough for Sparta that they sent envoys to Athens with the offer of a peace treaty (Th. 4.17-20). Cleon, even though he was not a general at the time, encouraged the Athenians to reject the offer in the hopes of extracting greater concessions from the Spartans (Th. 4.21.2-3). As the blockade dragged on, the Athenians became impatient and began to resent Cleon for his earlier, hawkish stance (Th. 4.27.1-3). In response, Cleon raised the stakes by proposing to attack the Spartans on Sphacteria, even suggesting that “it would be easy [to do], if the generals were men…and that if he himself had been in charge, he would have done so.” Nicias, the general at whom this snide comment had been directed, responded by resigning his command and telling Cleon to take whatever force he wanted to attack Sphacteria.

This caught Cleon off guard. According to Thucydides, Cleon had never actually wanted the command, and he now attempted to get out of it by reminding everyone that Nicias

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92 As Thucydides calls him in introducing this very episode (Th. 4.21.3: ἄνὴρ δημαγωγὸς). A number of scholars have noted the extreme bias Thucydides seems to show against Cleon, both in general but especially when describing his role in the Pylos affair: cf. H.D. Westlake, *Individuals in Thucydides* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 60-61, 69-71; Hunter, 1988; Simon Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides* vol. 2 (Oxford, 1996), p. 175. Nevertheless, my interest in the episode centers on the behavior of the ochlos, a dynamic that must, at the very least, have been credible.

93 Th. 4.27.5: ὡδίον εἶναι παρασκευή, εἰ ἄνδρες εἰσέν οἱ στρατηγοί...καὶ αὐτὸς γ' ἄν, εἰ ἥρχε, ποιήσαι τοῦτο.

94 Th. 4.28.1: ἡντὶνα βούλεται δύναμιν λαβόντα τὸ ἑπὶ σφάς εἶναι ἐπιχειρεῖν.
was the real general (Th. 4.28.2). When Nicias reiterated his resignation and indifference, Cleon found himself backed into a corner. At this point, the Athenian crowd began to make its voice heard: (Th. 4.28.3-4):

οἱ δὲ, οἷον ὁχλὸς φιλεῖ ποιεῖν, ὡς μᾶλλον ὁ Κλέων υπέφευγε τὸν πλοῦν καὶ ἐξανεχώρησε τὰ εἰρημένα, τόσῳ ἐπεκελεύοντο τῷ Νικίᾳ παραδίδοναι τὴν ἀρχήν καὶ ἐκείνῳ ἐπεβόων πλείν. οὕτος οὐκ ἕχων ὡς τῶν εἰρημένων ἐτί ἐξαπαλλαγῇ, ὑφίσταται τὸν πλοῦν…

And as the mob is wont to do, the more that Cleon tried to withdraw from the expedition and back away from his earlier words, the more they demanded that Nicias resign his command and shouted at Cleon to lead it. So that, having no way to escape his own words, Cleon undertook the expedition…

While we must be cautious when it comes to Thucydides’ portrayal of Cleon’s thoughts,95 there is no reason to believe he is distorting the basic dynamics of the scene.96 In that light, we can note a number of remarkable similarities between Thucydides’ narration and the situation at Aulis: in each case, we see a divergence of interests among leaders; at both Athens and Aulis it is evident that a certain amount of gamesmanship takes place between Nicias and Cleon on the one hand, and Agamemnon and Odysseus on the other; and most obviously, both Cleon and Agamemnon find themselves trapped by earlier promises and compelled to follow through with them by their constituent ochloi, even though neither one actually wants to lead the campaign in question.

95 Cf. esp. Westlake, 1968, p. 71-72, who points out the ways in which Thucydides’ account here diverges from the norm in the way that he attributes specific thoughts and fears to Cleon. But it is reasonable to assume that Thucydides’ description of Cleon’s mindset would have at least have appeared credible to his intended audience, in which case it is interesting to note that Thucydides and Euripides both describe their presumptive leaders as fearful (Th. 4.28.2: δεδώς; IA 522: οὐ δέουκας).

96 Especially since, as H.D. Westlake, “The Naval Battle at Pylos and Its Consequences,” The Classical Quarterly 24 (1974): p. 225, points out, Thucydides may well have witnessed this particular debate.
Perhaps most importantly, Thucydides claims that this sort of behavior was typical of *ochloi*, that mobs were wont to apply this very type of pressure on its leaders when they wanted to go to war. In other words, Thucydides claims that *ochloi* tended to behave in the exact same way that Euripides shows them behaving in in the IA. Moreover, if we dig a little deeper we may note that Euripides ascribes to Agamemnon and Odysseus the same motivations and tendencies that Thucydides sees in Athenian leaders after Pericles. Like Euripides' *basileis*, Thucydides sees Pericles’ successors (particularly Cleon) as overly interested in their own *philotimia* (Th. 2.65.7). And among other disastrous consequences, this obsession with their own *philotimia* causes the leaders to be led by the masses (Th.2.65.8), just as we see occurring at Aulis. In the first episode of the IA then, we observe a series of circumstances, agents, motivations, and results that are strikingly reminiscent of the debate about Pylos and which seem to mirror Thucydides’ perception of Athenian politics after Pericles. This is not to say that Euripides is looking back to Thucydides’ work in particular or to the Pylos episode itself, but it suggests that at the very least, Euripides and Thucydides are drawing upon a set of shared contemporary concepts of how leaders and masses tend to interact.

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97 On this point, it is notable that the only other time Thucydides makes a generalizing statement about *ochloi*, it is to describe this very type of behavior. Th. 6.63.2: ἥξιον τοὺς στρατηγοὺς, οἷον δὴ ὀχλος φιλεῖ βαρσήσας ποιεῖν, ἄγειν ὑφας ἐπὶ Κατάνην (“they called upon their generals, just as an ochlos is wont to do when it is feeling bold, to lead them to Catana”).
Far from being the climax of the tragedy’s meditation on the nature of authority at Aulis, Agamemnon’s submission to the (presumed) will of the army is only the beginning of a lengthy process. Agamemnon’s goal at this point is to effect the sacrifice of his daughter before his wife discovers his intentions, but the arrival on-stage of his erstwhile rival Achilles complicates matters. Achilles is greeted as a son-in-law by Clytemnestra (IA 835-36), and the confusion that this meeting engenders leads directly to Clytemnestra’s discovery of Agamemnon’s plot. Her only recourse is to call on Achilles to protect Iphigenia, an appeal to which Achilles accedes (IA 900-74). The prospect of another Agamemnon-Achilles dispute now looms large.

Just as importantly, the terms of the dispute fall along the same lines as in the Iliad, as Achilles’ grounds for accepting Clytemnestra’s appeal explicitly recall the reasons behind the Homeric conflict and his own stance in the Iliad (IA 928-31):98

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98 It must be noted that virtually the entirety of Achilles’ monologue (IA 919-74), a section upon which I will be drawing heavily, is of disputed authenticity. Diggle, 1994, ad loc., gives it his second-lowest authenticity-ranking (“vix Euripidei”); Page, 1934, pp. 175-79, deletes almost the entirety of Achilles’ speech (919-1035) on grounds of language and style; while Kovacs, 2003, pp. 91-93 excises large swaths because they lack any “relevant point” (919-31), on account of “oddities” (932-43), or because of repetitions and irrelevance (955-69). Contra, see esp. W. Ritchie, “Euripides, Iphigenia at Aulis 919-974,” in Dionysiaca, eds. R.D. Dawe, J. Diggle, and P.E. Easterling (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 179-203 (Ritchie also provides a fine synthesis of the history of editorial deletions of those lines); as well as Jouan, ed., 1983, p. 141, and Stockert, 1992 vol. 2, p. 463, who follow Ritchie. In general, it will suffice to note that the deletions of Achilles’ speech are generally based on questions of style and aesthetics. Given the relative weakness of such evidence, and insofar as the plot of the tragedy requires that Achilles explain his decision to intervene on behalf of Iphigenia, by far the best option seems to me to work with the text we possess. Regarding more specifically the lines I have cited above, Ritchie, p. 186, points out that 928-31 were “the only part of the speech which no one has yet held to be spurious,” though Kovacs has since corrected this oversight by arguing that Achilles’ “exordium [i.e. 919-31]…makes no recognizably relevant point” and labelling his statements “abstractions” that are “[not] tied to any concrete action or decision” (p. 91). At the risk of needlessly extending this discussion, I would simply point out that,
καὶ τοῖς Ἀτρείδαις, ἦν μὲν ἠγὼνται καλῶς, πεισόμεθ', ὅταν δὲ μὴ καλῶς, οὐ πεισόμαι.

When they lead well, I will obey the Atreides, but when they lead poorly I will not.

ἀλλ' ἐνθάδ' ἐν Τροίᾳ τε ἐλευθέραν φύσιν παρέχων...

Instead, I will maintain my free nature both here and in Troy...

Achilles here provides a perspective on Agamemnon’s authority that is similar to his attitude in the Iliad, when he boldly proclaims he will not simply “yield to every order” Agamemnon gives him (II. 1.294: πᾶν ἔργον ὑπείξομαι).

His submission to Agamemnon, both here and in the Iliad, is conditional, and will depend on the manner in which Agamemnon uses his authority. Moreover, Achilles mentions he will maintain this attitude in Troy as well—an obvious allusion to the “Homeric Achilles” and he even directly recalls his words in the Iliad with a double-use of the future-middle of peitho.

As Achilles elaborates on his reasons for standing against Agamemnon, he continues to describe the brewing conflict in a manner reminiscent of the Iliad (IA 959-61, 968-69):

οὐ τῶν γάμων ἔκατι — μυρίαι κόραι θηρώσει λέκτρον τούμων — εἰρηται τόδε.

I have said these things not on account of my marriage—countless maidens seek my hand— but because lord Agamemnon has committed an outrage against me!

νῦν δ' οὐδὲν εἰμι, παρὰ δὲ τοῖς στρατηλάταις ἐν εὐμαρεὶ με δόμαν τε καὶ μὴ δόμαν κακῶς.

And now I am nothing, and for the generals it is a small matter to treat me well or to treat me ill.

When we would eliminate all the “abstractions” from Euripidean speeches, we would find ourselves committed to the excision of a number of passages that would be sorely missed.

99 On which, see above, p. 55.

100 Ritchie, 1978, p. 186.

101 See again II. 1.296: οὐ γὰρ ἔγγοι ἐτι σοι πεισεθαι ὁι. Kovacs, 2003, p. 92, deletes the entirety of 953-69 on the grounds that they are “irrelevant” (959-61) or because they repeat Achilles’ comments in vv. 944-47. The relevance of the first three lines is adequately attested by the fact they are an overt reference to the Homeric quarrel. Kovacs’ deletion of 968-69 makes little difference to my argument, since what I say of them is equally true of lines 944-45, which Kovacs upholds. Regarding 962-67, Kovacs (and the vast majority of commentators) are probably correct that these lines have been subject to some form of interpolation. Ritchie, 1978, pp. 193-95, gamely tries to salvage them, but his attempt is less than convincing.
The first two lines of this passage are a direct allusion to Achilles’ rejection of Agamemnon’s offer of a daughter in marriage on the grounds that he could have his pick of “many maidens” (pollai kourai).103 They serve to both recall the dispute in Homer while at the same time emphasizing the fact that, just as in Homer, the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles relates only superficially to the woman in question. The accusation of hubris is also the same term with which Achilles describes Agamemnon’s actions in the Iliad, so we are further reminded of the epic.104 Finally, we come to the real reason Achilles has decided to come to Iphigenia’s defense: to protect his reputation. Just like in the Iliad, Achilles fears that he will be seen as a “nobody” (here: ouden; at Il. 1.293: outidanos).105 And once again, it is Agamemnon’s (or more accurately, the two Atreids’) disregard for him that diminishes his reputation and thus arouses his anger. In short, as Euripides concocts the dispute between his two heroes amidst a rapid fire of allusions to the Iliad. The audience is thus primed to expect a retelling of the intractable conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon in the Iliad, and once again, the twin problems of authority and status appear central to a conflict between two basileis.

Having made his decision to take a stand against the tyranny of the Atreids, Achilles must now formulate a plan. It turns out to be rather unorthodox: he suggests that Clytemnestra should attempt to persuade Agamemnon to spare Iphigenia, with his own intervention only

104 Il. 1.203: ὑβρις; repeated by Athena in Il. 1.214: ὑβρις. Luschnig, 1988 p. 67, and Ritchie, 1978, p. 193, also note this allusion. These are in fact the only two instances in which the noun hubris appears in the Iliad, so the reference is perhaps more obvious than one might initially expect.
105 Ritchie, 1978, p. 195, also points out this allusion.
serving as back-up in the event that she fails. The following episode shows Clytemnestra gamely following Achilles’ advice as she attempts to change her husband’s mind. Agamemnon is not without pity, but as he regrets to inform his wife, his hands are tied (IA 1259-68):

You see how great this ship-fenced army is, and the many masters of the bronze-clad Greeks who, unless I sacrifice you as the prophet Calchas says, will never make the journey to the towers of Ilium, nor sack the famous seat of Troy.

Some Aphrodite is inciting the Greek army to sail as soon as possible to that barbarian land, and to stop the abductions of Greek brides. And if I defy the decree of Artemis, they will kill our daughters in Argos, as well as you and me.

The scene that Agamemnon imagines here very closely resembles his closing statement in his debate with Menelaus (see above, p. 73). In both cases, Agamemnon predicts that a violent rebellion by his troops will lead directly to the deaths of his daughter(s), himself, and his interlocutor (here Clytemnestra; before Menelaus). Here too it seems that if need be, the Achaean army will travel to Argos to effect Iphigenia’s sacrifice. And as in the first episode, Agamemnon believes that resistance is futile.

These similarities between the two episodes are obvious, but the differences between the accounts are also glaring. Perhaps most notably, Calchas and Odysseus, the two individuals whom Agamemnon initially feared most, have been stripped of any agency. In Agamemnon’s new assessment of the situation, the mutinous army will not even require the guidance of a basileus. Instead, the leaders are so peripheral to the affair that even though both basileis and the common soldiers—the anaktes and the strateuma —would be deprived of the glory of the Trojan
expedition, only the army (stratos) would rise up against Agamemnon. In this new conception, the army’s voice is not simply a decisive one in the debate; it is the only one that counts. Where Homer’s basileis had once made such decisions for their armies, Euripides’ army now does so for their basileis.

The Achaean army not only expropriates all decision-making power, it also acquires, for the first time, a good deal of characterization. To begin, Euripides uses the rare term nauphraktos to emphasize the fact that this army is specifically a naval one. More poignantly, we find out their motivation for rebelling: “some Aphrodite” has fallen upon the Argives and impels them to sail for Troy. The peculiarity of this formulation recalls Thucydides’ similar evaluation of the Athenian dēmos as they voted, imprudently, to set sail for Sicily in 416 BCE (Th. 6.24.3-4):

καὶ ἔρως ἐνέπεσε τοῖς πάσιν ὁμοίως ἐκπλεύσας, τοῖς μὲν γὰρ πρεσβυτέροις ὡς ἢ καταστρεψόμενοι ἐφ’ ἂν ἐπλέον ἢ οὐδέν ἄν σφαλείσαν μεγάλην δύναμιν, τοῖς δ’ ἐν τῇ ἥλικίᾳ τῆς τε ἀπόστισις πόθῳ ὁψεῖς καὶ θεωρίας, καὶ εὔελπίδες ὄντες σωθῆσθαι· ὁ δὲ παλὺς ὁμόμοιος καὶ στρατιώτης ἐν τῇ παρόντι ἀργύρων οἰκεῖν καὶ προσκιτήσεσθαι δύναμιν θεν ἀίδιον μισθοφόραν ὑπάρξειν. ὡστε διὰ τὴν ἄγαν τῶν πλεόνων ἐπιθυμίαν, εἰ τῷ ἀρᾳ καὶ μὴ ἤρεσκε, δεδώσως μὴ ἀντιχειροτονῶν κακόνους δοξεῖν εἴναι τῇ πόλει ἤσυχαν ἤγεν. And an erōs fell equally upon everyone to set sail. For the older men [were convinced] they would either overrun the lands to which they were sailing, or that at the very least a force of this size could not be defeated. The men of fighting age [were seized] by a desire for distant sights and spectacles, and had great faith that they would survive. And the main body of the troops [yearned] to bring home money in the present and besides that to gain the potential for unlimited income in the future. So that due to the

106 Stockert, 1992 vol. 2, p. 554, also notes this similarity.
107 Simon Hornblower, A Commentary on Thucydides vol. 3 (Oxford, 2008), p. 362, believes Thucydides is referring here to the “officer class.”
excessive desire for the expedition, if there was anyone to whom it did not appeal, fearing that by voting against it they might seem unpatriotic, they remained silent.

The proceedings described by Thucydides here are strikingly similar to the situation in the IA: in each case, a crucial decision must be about made whether or not to embark on a long and costly military expedition; at both Aulis and Athens, the overriding motivation for the expedition turns out to be an irrational lust for war;¹⁰⁹ in both cases, this passion acts upon the soldiers, whose will turns out to be the decisive—perhaps even only—factor in the decision-making process; and finally, Agamemnon’s reaction may be compared to those few who opposed the Sicilian expedition, for just as the dissenting Athenians maintain their silence, Agamemnon is too intimidated by the army’s excessive passion to speak out against the sacrifice of his daughter. In summary, Euripides’ image of a passionate soldiery that is in full command of the situation suggests that a metaphorical gulf lies between his Aulis and Homer’s Troy, and that the IA hews much closer instead to the world of fifth-century Athens.

As a result of this new vision of Achaean power-structures, the only thing that stands between Iphigenia and the altar is Achilles. Given the hero’s incomparable prowess, one might find some comfort in knowing that he is Iphigenia’s last line of defense. But as the final episode of the tragedy opens, Iphigenia catches hold of an inauspicious sight (IA 1338-39):

¹⁰⁹ Ἐρός for Thucydides, “some Aphrodite” for Euripides, though in fact earlier in the play, at a less suspect moment (IA 808-09) Achilles had used Thucydides’ formulation: οὐκο δεινὸς ἐμπέπτωκ’ ἐρωτεύοντας τηρῆσαι στρατεύμας. The secondary goals here are different—Thucydides’ troops want money while Euripides’ seek to “stop the abductions of Greek brides”—though of course it would hardly be appropriate for Agamemnon to convince Clytemnestra that Iphigenia must be sacrificed in order to satisfy the army’s greed.
A mass of Achaean soldiers\textsuperscript{110} is making their way toward Iphigenia and Clytemnestra, and they are once again called an \textit{ochlos}. Neither their appearance nor Iphigenia’s definition of them as a mob bodes well. On the contrary, it suggests that Agamemnon’s prediction is coming true, and that the army will simply assert itself and demand Iphigenia’s sacrifice.

This sensation is immediately confirmed by Achilles’ account of all that has happened behind the scenes (IA 1345-53):

\begin{align*}
\text{Ach.:} & \; \text{ώ γύναι τάλαινα, Λήδας θύγατερ . . . } & 1345 \\
\text{Clyt.:} & \; \text{ού ψευδή θροείς.} \\
\text{A.:} & \; \text{δείν ἐν Ἀργείοις βοάται . . . } \\
\text{C.:} & \; \text{τίνα βοή; σήμαινέ μοι.} \\
\text{A.:} & \; \text{ἀμφι σής παιδός . . . } \\
\text{C.:} & \; \text{πονηρόν εἰπας οἰωνόν λόγον.} \\
\text{A.:} & \; \text{ώς χρεών σφάξαι νιν.} \\
\text{C.:} & \; \text{τικουδείς ἑναντία λέγει;+} \\
\text{A.:} & \; \text{ἐκ θόρυβον ἐγὼ τι καυτός ἔλυθον . . . } \\
\text{C.:} & \; \text{τίν’, ὃ ξένε; } \\
\text{A.:} & \; \text{σώμα λευσθήναι πέτροις.} & 1350 \\
\text{C.:} & \; \text{μὸν κόρην σφόδραν ἔμην;} \\
\text{A.:} & \; \text{αὐτό τοῦτο.} \\
\text{C.:} & \; \text{τίς δ’ ἐν ἔτη τοῦ σώματος τοῦ σοῦ θυγεῖν;} \\
\text{A.:} & \; \text{πάντες Ἑλλήνες.} \\
\text{C.:} & \; \text{στρατός δὲ Μυρμιδῶν οὐ σοι παρῆν;} \\
\text{A.:} & \; \text{πρῶτος ἦν ἐκείνος ἐχθρός.}
\end{align*}

\textsuperscript{110} I regard as highly unlikely the suggestion made by Stockert, 1992 vol. 2, p. 574, that this \textit{ochlos} refers to the handful of “faithful soldiers” who remain by Achilles’ side (cf. IA 1358, in which we learn that at least two comrades are on hand to arm Achilles). The term \textit{ochlos}, which appears a full eight times in the IA (191, 450, 517, 526, 735, 1030, 1338, 1546), is in every other instance used in reference to the Achaean army as a whole.
We might recall, at this point, that when Achilles was pondering the issue with Clytemnestra, he had framed the question of Iphigenia’s sacrifice as a dispute between himself and Agamemnon, or at most between himself and other Greek *basileis*. At no point had he even spoken of the common soldiers, let alone considered their opinion to be of any consequence, and his main gripes indicated that he saw the disagreement as a struggle for power and status among the *basileis*. Generally speaking, his earlier explanation of the problem fell along the lines of the Homeric conflict, so one might expect his new report to further highlight the intractability of a dispute between two *basileis*.

The scene he describes, however, utterly defies these expectations. Instead of taking the matter up directly with Agamemnon or the other *basileis*, Achilles finds himself face to face with the entire army. The impact of the army’s intervention can hardly be understated: Achilles’ objections to Agamemnon’s unilateral exercise of power, and his displeasure with his loss of status, are effectively rendered moot. Instead, Achilles must choose between allowing the sacrifice to go ahead as planned, or losing his life at the hands of the Achaean *ochlos*. Having already decided the question of Iphigenia’s sacrifice, it appears as if the army will simply quash the dispute between Agamemnon and Achilles. Once again, the *IA* shows us a Homeric problem resolved through a radical inversion of the traditional hierarchies and power-structures among the Achaean army.

111 Conflict specifically between Achilles and Agamemnon: *IA* 961; between Achilles and the Atreids: *IA* 928-29; or between Achilles and the “generals”: *IA* 968: (τοῖς στρατηλάταις).
One detail perfectly illustrates this evolution of authority at Aulis: Achilles tells us that his Myrmidons were not only involved in this uprising, but that they actually led the rebellion. As discussed above, despite the complexities of the relations between the different basileis in the Iliad, it is a general rule that the Achaeans follow their collective lead. With regard to any individual army (i.e. the Myrmidons, the Boeotians, etc.), the situation is even simpler: each army follows the orders of its basileus (or basileis). In fact, the strict hierarchical relationship between a Homeric basileus and his own soldiers is best illustrated by none other than Achilles and the Myrmidons, as we see in Book Sixteen when Achilles finally addresses his army (Il. 16.200-07):

Myrmidones μή τίς μοι ἀπειλάων λειαθέσθω, 200
ἀς ἐπὶ νησί θησίν ἀπειλέει Τρώεσσι
pánθ’ ὑπὸ μηνιθμόν, καὶ μ’ ἥτιάσσθε ἐκαστος·
“σχέτλιε Πηλέος νεὶ χόλῳ ἀρα σ’ ἔπιρε μήτηρ,
νηλεές, ὀς παρὰ νησίν ἔχεις ἀέκοντας ἐταιρους-
οὐκαδὲ περ σὺν νησί νεώμεθα ποντόποροισιν
αὐτίς, ἐπεὶ ὧδε κακὸς χόλος ἐμπέσε θυμῷ.”
ταῦτα μ’ ἀγειρόμενοι θαμ’ ἐβάζετε’

Myrmidons: not one of you can forget those mutterings, 200
those threats that beside the running ships you made at the Trojans
in all the time of my anger, and it was I you were blaming,
as: “Hard son of Peleus! Your mother nursed you on gall. You have no
pity, to keep your companions here by the ships unwilling.
We should go back home again, then, in our seafaring vessels
now that this wretched anger has befallen your spirit.”
Often you would gather in groups and so mutter against me…’

It is evident that the withdrawal Achilles imposes on his troops in the Iliad is by no means pleasing to them. Nevertheless, at no point had they taken up the issue with him directly, choosing instead to direct criticism at him from behind his back. It appears that their unhappiness—and their latent criticism—has had no effect whatsoever. While the Myrmidons
may wish to either enter the fray or return home, they have instead been doing just as Achilles
ordered: standing idly by their ships. The situation at Aulis, on the contrary, is the reverse: as
soon as the Myrmidons disagree with their leader, they rise up against him.

On its own, the Myrmidon rebellion speaks to how differently authority is exercised in
the *IA* as compared to the *Iliad*, but it tells us relatively little about the precise characterization
that Euripides gives the Achaean *ochlos*, or the specific dynamics that are at work at Aulis. Here,
the type of behavior that Achilles attributes to the Achaean *ochlos* provides decisive information.
Achilles begins by telling Clytemnestra that the army is “shouting” that Iphigenia needs to die,
and a few lines later, he tells us that this shouting turned into a veritable *thorubos* (“tumult” or
“uproar”) when he attempted to speak in Iphigenia’s defense. Euripides’ use of the term is
significant. Much like *ochlos*, the word *thorubos* was a decidedly contemporary word,\(^\text{112}\) and it is
laden with specific connotations. It could refer to the tumult in battle when opposing armies
clashed,\(^\text{113}\) but just as frequently we hear of *thorubos* occurring in the context of debate, where it
was common for members of the public to “shout down” (*torubein*) a speaker with whom they
disagreed. The latter dynamic is certainly what Achilles has described.

The fact that a popular *thorubos* resolves the debate at Aulis lends to the proceedings an
air that is at once contemporary and decidedly democratic. Indeed, resolution-by-*thorubos* was

\(^{112}\) It never once appears in Homer, or for that matter in any pre-classical author with the exception of Aesop,
*Proverbia* 107 and 152. Among authors of the classical era, Thucydides, Euripides, Aristophanes, Xenophon, Plato,
and Demosthenes all use the term regularly.

\(^{113}\) E.g. Th. 2.4.2, 4.127.1; Hdt. 8.91.
especially prevalent in democratic poleis.\textsuperscript{114} In fact, it seems to have been, in a certain sense, an essential mechanism of ancient democracies. In Athens, for example, it was a common occurrence both in the law-courts and at assemblies where policy was debated—precisely what we see at Aulis.\textsuperscript{115} In all likelihood, thorubos was the easiest, if not only, way for the vast majority of Athenian citizens to actively engage in or “regulate” public debate and to express a “negative” opinion regarding a specific proposal.\textsuperscript{116} In other words, the primary method through which the Achaean ochlos resolves the central conflicts of the IA is one that is imported directly from the democratic world of Euripides’ audience.

Of course, the particularly violent nature of the thorubos in the IA was by no means standard operating procedure. But it was also not unheard of. Just a year before the IA was

\textsuperscript{114}This is implied by the fact that almost all classical-era descriptions of thoruboi in the context of debate are in reference to Athenian practices, as indeed are modern analyses of the phenomenon. Confirmation of the fundamentally “democratic” nature of thorubos may also be seen in its suppression during the oligarchic coups in Athens in 411 and 404 BC, as is pointed by Robert W. Wallace, “The Power to Speak—and not to Listen—in Ancient Athens,” in \textit{Free Speech in Classical Antiquity}, eds. Ineke Sluiter and Ralph M. Rosen (Leiden, 2004), p. 226.


performed at the City Dionysia, in the aftermath of the Athenian victory at Arginousae, the assembly had expressed the will of an outraged _ochlos_ by executing, _en masse_, the generals who had led the Athenian navy.\footnote{I discuss this episode in greater detail in Chapter Four, see below pp. 319-323.} Both Xenophon and Diodorus, our two ancient sources concerning the episode, emphasize the importance of _thorubos_ in the outcome of the deliberation. This _thorubos_ was instrumental in two ways: in shouting down those who spoke in defense of the generals (Diod. _Bibl._ 101.6); and in terrorizing the _prytaneis_ into allowing an illegal mass trial to proceed (X. _Hell._ 1.7.14). In short, _thorubos_ effectively brought about the death of some Athens’ leading generals, an outcome that hardly improved the city’s chances in the Peloponnesian War. The army at Aulis, with its newfound authority, its willingness to exploit _thorubos_, and its eagerness to kill its greatest hero, resembles rather too starkly the Athenian populace on this occasion.

Even beyond the simple fact that the army is threatening to kill Achilles, its _thorubic_ activity is cast in a particularly negative light. This is evident from the manner in which the Achaean _ochlos_ intends to enact the execution: with death by stoning. The threat itself is not exceptional, as stoning was a commonly proposed sanction in the Greek literary tradition, especially in tragedy.\footnote{On the literary tradition more generally, see esp. Deborah Steiner, “Stoning and Sight: A Structural Equivalence in Greek Mythology,” _Classical Antiquity_ 14 (1995): pp. 193-211. The most notable example, at least within the context of this study, is _Il._ 3.56-57, where Hector claims that if they weren’t cowards, the Trojans would have already stoned Paris for stealing Helen. But the fact that the Trojans have not stoned Paris suggests this is not a realistic possibility.} But the situation in the _IA_ stands out for the manner in which the punishment is threatened. Indeed, nearly all other tragic instances in which a character risks
being stoned, the sentence is decided and delivered by a figure (or figures) in a legitimate position of power.\textsuperscript{119} The example that provides the most relevant basis for contrast concerns another tragic version of Achilles himself, that of Aeschylus’ \textit{Myrmidons}. In the \textit{Myrmidons} it is suggested that Achilles might be stoned by the Achaean army (fr. 132c)\textsuperscript{120} for refusing to fight at Troy. On the surface, this is very similar to the uprising at Aulis, but unlike in the \textit{IA}, Aeschylus suggests that a “judicial process” is used to arrive at the decision to stone Achilles,\textsuperscript{121} and the news is brought to Achilles by an emissary from Agamemnon, possibly Phoenix.\textsuperscript{122} Furthermore, in the \textit{Myrmidons}, Achilles practically scoffs at the threat,\textsuperscript{123} and the sanction serves only to make Achilles “more obdurate,” for it is now “psychologically impossible for Achilles to rejoin battle.”\textsuperscript{124} In the \textit{IA}, conversely, the impetus to stone Achilles arises from the masses and is taken most seriously by Achilles, who flees. While Euripides is clearly alluding to

\textsuperscript{119} Either by a tribunal, as in E. \textit{Or.} 49-50, or by a group’s leader or leaders, as in E. \textit{Ion} 1111-12; \textit{Ba}. 355-57; S. \textit{Ant}. 36; \textit{Ajax} 251-55). The only exceptions are in Euripides’ \textit{IT} 240-339, in which a group of shepherds uses stones to attack Orestes and Pylades for killing their livestock, though this seems less an instance of “justice” being sought through stoning than a group of people using the only weapons at their disposal to attack armed men; and A. \textit{Ag}. 1616, in which the chorus suggests that Aegisthus will eventually be stoned by the people of Argos. Given the utterly unsympathetic light in which Aegisthûs is cast, not to mention the illegitimacy of his tyranny, comparisons between the threats to stone Achilles at Aulis and Aegisthus at Argos should be limited.

\textsuperscript{120} This fragment is from a papyrus, and it is itself fragmentary and of difficult interpretation. Even its Aeschylean provenance has been doubted, e.g. by D.L. Page, \textit{Select Papyri} vol. 3 (Cambridge, MA, 1942), pp. 137-39. More recent commentators have generally seen this fragment as genuine, though they have differed in their interpretations of it. In general I follow here the reconstruction and analysis provided by Michelakis, 2002, pp. 22-57, as this is the most extensive recent treatment of the \textit{Achilleis}. For other viewpoints, cf. Bruno Snell, \textit{Scenes from Greek Drama} (Berkeley, 1967), pp. 1-22; Alain Moreau, “Eschyle et les tranches des repas d’Homère: la trilogie d’Achille,” in \textit{Panorama du théâtre antique: d’Eschyle aux dramaturges d’Amérique Latine}, ed. Moreau (Montpelier, 1996), pp. 3-27; and Alan H. Sommerstein, \textit{Aeschylean Tragedy} (London, 2010), pp. 242-45.

\textsuperscript{121} Michelakis, 2002, p. 24.


\textsuperscript{123} Achilles notes that he is “everything for the Achaean army” (fr. 132c 11: \textit{ἐγὼ τά πάντα Ἀχαιῶν στρατῷ}).

\textsuperscript{124} Snell, 1967, p. 3.
the Aeschylean precedent, he differs in numerous and meaningful ways from that treatment of the stoning.

But although the situation in the IA is exceptional when compared to tragic precedents, it is strikingly similar to historic examples of stoning. To be clear, stoning was not a common practice in archaic and classical Greece. It seems to have been deployed only rarely, and usually against deposed tyrants or army leaders who ran afoul of their soldiers.\textsuperscript{125} We are clearly dealing with the latter here, and two instances of stoning, one which involves a general and another a speaker in the Athenian boulê, correspond almost perfectly to the situation in the IA with respect to the circumstances and the manner in which the stoning arises. Both of these examples suggest that the stoning would force the audience to recognize that the Achaean army at Aulis is acting beyond the limits of acceptable behavior.\textsuperscript{126}

One episode occurred near Argos in 418 BCE, where massive contingents of Spartans and Argives (and their respective allies) had gathered in preparation for what would surely have been a memorable encounter.\textsuperscript{127} Before the fighting could begin, however, the Spartan king Agis and the Argive general Thrasybulus brokered a truce without consulting the army or their allies. The soldiers on both sides were unhappy with the accord, not least because it was struck

\textsuperscript{126} This point is contrary to the views presented by Gras, 1984, p. 85, who claims that stoning was an “expression of democracy.” Gras is followed, and at greater length, by Sara Forsdyke, “Street Theatre and Popular Justice in Ancient Greece: Shaming, Stoning and Starving Offenders inside and outside the Courts,” Past and Present 201 (2008): pp. 3-50. Nevertheless, the analysis which follows should serve to demonstrate that the stoning of military commanders was an exceptional and problematic measure.
\textsuperscript{127} Thucydides calls the Spartan army “the finest Hellenic army that had ever been assembled” (5.60.3).
without their input. The situation is thus akin to that which we see at Aulis, where Achilles’ faces the wrath of the Achaeans for single-handedly trying to stop the war against Troy. Thucydides’ account of the soldiers’ reactions to the truce is fascinating for its resemblance to that of the Achaean army, but also for the contrasts, both subtle and obvious, that distinguish the Spartans and Argives (Th. 5.60.2, 5.60.4-6): 128

οἱ δὲ Λακεδαιμόνιοι καὶ οἱ ἔμμαχοι εἶποντο μὲν ὡς ἠγείτο διὰ τὸν νόμον, ἐν αἰτία δ’ εἶχον κατ’ ἀλλήλους πολλῇ τὸν Ἀγιν...τὸ μὲν όν στρατόπεδον οὕτως ἐν αἰτία ἔχοντες τὸν Ἀγιν ἀνεχώρουν τε καὶ διελύθησαν ἐπ’ οἴκου ἐκαστοι, Ἀργεῖοι δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔτι ἐν πολλῷ πλέον αἰτία εἶχον τοὺς σπευσμένους ἀνευ τοῦ πλῆθους...τὸν τε Θράσυλον αναχωρήσαντες ἐν τῷ Χαράδρῳ, οὕτε τὰς ἀπὸ στρατείας δίκας πρὶν ἐσπεινὰ κρίνουσιν, ἡραγόντα λεύειν. ὁ δὲ καταφυγὼν ἐπὶ τὸν βωμὸν περιγίγνεται· τὰ μέντοι χρήματα ἐδήμευσαν αὐτού.

The Spartans and their allies followed [Agis’] lead out of respect for the law, but amongst themselves they blamed him loudly [for denying them certain victory]...the army therefore withdrew blaming Agis, and returned to their respective homes. The Argives, on the other hand, were even louder in blaming those who had made the truce without consulting the people...and when they had withdrawn they began to stone [Thrasylus] in the Charadrus, the very place they hold military trials before entering the city. He survived by fleeing to the altar; they, however, confiscated his property. 129

The differences in the behaviors of the two armies is highlighted by the fact that both sides consider their leaders to be “responsible” (en aitiai) for costing them the battle. The Spartans and their allies return to their cities unhappy, but they do not rebel against or otherwise punish Agis. 130 The Argives, on the other hand, look at Thrasylus’ action as a betrayal of the collective

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128 The segments I have deleted from the Thucydidean passage merely relate the reasons the armies were upset (namely that each side fancied their chances). A second account of this incident is found in Diod. Bibl. 12.78.5-6, and it falls along the general lines of Thucydides’ narration.

129 I am indebted to Richard Crawley’s translation for a number of these turns of phrase.

130 Diodorus says that the Spartans took legal action against Agis, but that he escaped punishment by promising to make up for his error (Bibl. 12.78.6).
will, and they react with incomparably greater severity by attempting to stone their leader to death.

The fact that this stoning took place in the normal venue for military trials lends a veneer of legitimacy to the Argives’ actions, but reading between the lines we see that Thucydides suggests otherwise. To begin, he specifically emphasizes that the Spartans had maintained their collective cool “out of respect for the law”; no such explanation is supplied for the Argives’ reaction, and we may thus infer that Thucydides sees the stoning as a deviation from legal standards. Moreover, had this stoning actually been mandated by the military tribunal (such as it may have been), it is unlikely that fleeing to an altar would have been sufficient to guarantee Thrasylus’ long-term survival. In fact, Diodorus tells us that it was not the altar that saved him, but a great deal of supplication (Bibl. 12.78.5: πολλῆς δεήσεως), and Forsdyke correctly points out that this amounts to an “emotional appeal…rather than a formal defence.”131 This in turn suggests that neither the stoning nor the pardon occurred within the context of a legal procedure. Finally, the fact that his property was subsequently confiscated implies that an actual legal ruling was made, and it regarded this confiscation. As such, the stoning of Thrasylus appears to be an example of spontaneous and extra-legal activity, one that is enacted by an army that—unlike the Spartans—has little regard for the law.

A similarly problematic dynamic emerges from a second instance of stoning, one which, although it occurred long before the production of the IA, would have been easily recalled by Euripides’ audience. In refuge on Salamis in 479 BCE, the Athenian boulē found itself deliberating recently-received terms of surrender\textsuperscript{132} from the Persians. One bouleutēs, a certain Lycides, suggested that they “receive the offer...and take it before the dēmos.”\textsuperscript{133} As it turned out, his fellow citizens did not appreciate the suggestion (Hdt. 9.5.2-3):

\begin{quote}
Αθηναίοι δὲ αὐτίκα δεινὸν ποιησάμενοι οἴ τε ἐκ τῆς βουλῆς καὶ οἴ ἐξωθεν ὡς ἐπυθόντο, περιστάντες Λυκίδην κατέλευσαν βάλλοντες...γενομένου δὲ θορύβου ἐν τῇ Σαλαμίνι περὶ τὸν Λυκίδην, πυράνωτοι τὸ γινόμενον αἱ γυναῖκες τὸν Αθηναίων, διακελευσάμενη δὲ γυνὴ γυναίκι καὶ παραλαβοῦσα ἑπὶ τὴν Λυκίδεω οἰκίαν ἢσαν αὐτοκελέες, καὶ κατὰ μὲν ἐλευσαν αὐτοῦ τὴν γυναίκα κατὰ δὲ τὰ τέκνα.
\end{quote}

The Athenians immediately considered [his suggestion] terrible, both those in the boulē and those outside when they learned of it, and they surrounded Lycides and stoned him to death...and the Athenian women learned of the proceedings after the thorubos about Lycides in Salamis, and each woman exhorted the next to follow her, and they went to Lycides’ house of their own accord and there stoned to death his wife and his children.

While Lycides is not a general, his position is similar to that of the Argive Thrasylus and the Aulidan Achilles insofar as he is a central cog in a debate about whether or not to carry on a massive war. Beyond that, a number of elements in this episode stand out for their similarity to the proceedings in the IA. As at Aulis, the dēmos at Salamis resorts immediately to the extreme measure of stoning when an individual\textsuperscript{134} stands in the way of a war effort. In both cases, we see

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{132} Terms which were seemingly generous, though we may of course doubt (as the Athenians surely did) how long they could have lasted. For the entire Persian proposal, cf. Hdt. 8.140-41.
  \item \textsuperscript{133} Hdt. 9.5.1: δεξαμένους τὸν λόγον...ἐξενεκάι ἐς τὸν δήμον.
  \item \textsuperscript{134} Most likely an elite individual, as Forsdyke, 2008, p. 39, points out.
\end{itemize}
large displaced armies (the Athenians on Salamis; the Greeks at Aulis), and in both cases the war is portrayed as a Panhellenic effort against a barbarian foe. More generally, the Athenians at Salamis react with the sort of spontaneous and unconstrained violence that is characteristic of a mob—an ochlos—and they seem to realize Agamemnon’s fears by not only killing Lycides, but by then turning their rage against his family as well. And finally, all of this occurs in the context of a large thorubos, a charged atmosphere that seems in no way inseparable from the violence it accompanies.

This episode is notable not only for its resemblance to many aspects of the IA, but also for its resonance in the collective Athenian memory. Such resonance may be detected in a number of oblique references to the incident in Greek drama, but our most compelling piece of evidence regarding the after-life of the stoning incident comes a century-and-a-half after the

135 There is no doubt that Agamemnon, and subsequently Iphigenia, frame the Trojan war as just such an effort: cf. IA 1265-66 and 1400-01. How sincerely we are meant to take these claims is another issue entirely, and one into which I will not wade at this moment. For a selection of views on the subject, cf. esp. Hermann Funke, “Aristoteles zu Euripides’ Iphigenia in Aulis,” Hermes 92 (1964): pp. 284-99; Gudrun Mellert-Hoffmann, Untersuchungen zur Iphigenie in Aulis des Euripides (Heidelberg, 1969); Herbert Siegel, “Self-Delusion and the ‘Volte-Face’ of Iphigenia in Euripides’ Iphigenia at Aulis,” Hermes 108 (1980): pp. 300-21.

136 Vincent J. Rosivach, “Execution by Stoning in Athens,” Classical Antiquity 6 (1987b): pp. 232-48, makes this point repeatedly. Forsdyke, 2008, pp. 25-26, denies that this is an episode of “mob violence,” and emphasizes instead the “relative restraint of both men and women in this episode.” Her argument is belied not only by the particulars of Herodotus’ account—for example that all this occurred during a general thorubos—but also by subsequent reactions to the episode, which as Rosivach notes (pp. 237-38) include an effort to mitigate the spontaneity and ferocity of the Athenians’ behavior. (I discuss this in greater detail directly below.)

137 Agamemnon expresses these fears two different times (IA 531-35, 1267-68), but it is notable that in the second instance he specifically connects the potential murder of himself, his wife, and his children to the army’s desire for war.

138 Rosivach, 1987b, pp. 242-45, highlights many passages.
fact, when Lycurgus recalls it to argue in favor of condemning Leocrates to death (Against Leocrates 122):

ἄξιον τοίνυν ἀκούσαι καὶ <τού> περὶ τοῦ ἐν Σαλαμίνι τελευτήσαντος γενομένου ψηφίσματος, ὅν ἡ βουλή, ὅτι λόγῳ μόνῳ ἐνεχεῖει προδιδόναι τὴν πόλιν, πεμπομένη τοὺς στεφάνους αὐτοχεῖι ἀπέκτεινεν.

Accordingly, it is worthwhile for you to hear as well of the measure passed concerning the man who died at Salamis, whom the [men of the] boulê, when he had attempted to betray the city in word alone, killed with their hands after removing their crowns.

Although Lycurgus does not mention Lycides by name, there is every reason to believe that he is referring to the same episode. The fact that Lycides’ execution remained exemplary after so many generations implies that it was an exceptionally memorable incident. But Lycurgus’ retelling of the event presents some notable variations. In this new version, the members of the boulê put Lycides’ fate to a vote (ψῆφisma), and it is specifically stated—unlike in Herodotus—that Lycides has betrayed the city (prodidonai tēn polin) with his proposal. The bouleutai are also thoughtful enough to remove their crowns, and so seem to have acted with a certain degree of respect for standard legal procedures. Just as remarkably, Lycurgus does not specify that Lycides was stoned to death, opting instead for the comparatively bland report that they “killed him with their hands.”

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139 This may be because the name was no longer certain. Demosthenes, who also brings up the incident (and who does not elide the fact that the victim was stoned to death), refers to the “traitor” in question as “Cyrilus” (18.204).
140 Danielle Allen, The World of Prometheus: The Politics of Punishing in Democratic Athens (Princeton, 2000), p. 144, argues that “[i]n removing their crowns, the councilors handed their power back to the demos as a whole and acted not as magistrates...but merely as citizens...As such, they did not abuse their magisterial power by punishing beyond the limits of the magistrates.” Rosivach, 1987b, p. 238, is certainly correct in pointing out that the “detail is of interest precisely because it is unnecessary to Lycurgus’ account,” and his suggestion that it is meant to tacitly depict “the stoning...[as] a formal rational act, not a spontaneous outbreak of mob violence” is intriguing.
On the whole, Lycurgus’ account of the affair is substantially milder than that of Herodotus, for he adds a façade of legality to the proceedings and elides nearly all the grisly details. All this suggests that subsequent generations were concerned with the “lawlessness and repulsiveness” of the stoning at Salamis,\textsuperscript{141} to the extent that a subsequent mitigation of the tradition was required. Just as with the stoning of Thrasylus by the Argives, the stoning of Lycides by the Athenians seems to have occurred in a manner that was recognizably problematic in its deviation from standard legal procedures. As a result, when the Achaeans react to Achilles’ intervention with a \textit{thorubos} that devolves into a near-stoning, they are clearly engaging in deviant behavior, and of a sort that makes them most akin to contemporary armies.

This critical characterization of the Achaean army is further enhanced by other information that Achilles provides about his encounter. Unlike Lycurgus’ description of Lycides’ crime, or Aeschylus’ portrayal of the leader/army conflict in the \textit{Myrmidons},\textsuperscript{142} Achilles does not seem to be accused of treason (προδοσία). Instead, the army has risen against him because he is “a slave to [his] marriage” (\textit{IA} 1354: γάμων ἰσσονα). Achilles also reports that he attempted to defend his position only to be drowned out by “shouting” (\textit{IA} 1357: κεκραγμοῦ)—another apparent reference to the ongoing \textit{thorubos}. All of this adds to the sense that the Achaean army is acting not in any rational manner, nor indeed in response to an offense that

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{142} Cf. A. fr. 132c.20: προδοσίαν.
would justify such extreme measures, but rather because it is in the grips of some sort of madness, just as Agamemnon had foreseen.

Nevertheless, Achilles remains firm in his intention to defend Iphigenia’s life, and he has brought with him the weapons to prove it. As he prepares to stand his ground, he provides one final characterization of the army that returns us to the question of authority at Aulis and completes Euripides’ project of contemporization (*IA* 1361-66):

Clyt.: ἥξει δ’ ὄστις ἀψεται κόρης;  
Ach.: μυρίοι γ’, ἀξεῖ δ’ Ὀυθισσεύς.  
C.: ἀρ’ ὁ Σισύφων γόνος;  
A.: αὐτός αὐτός.  
C.: ἰδια πράσσων, ἢ στρατοῦ ταχθεῖς ὑπ’;  
A.: αἴρεθείς ἐκών.  
C.: πανηγάν γ’ αἴρεσιν, μιαφονεῖν.  
A.: ἀλλ’ ἐγὼ σχήσω νυν.  
C.: ἀξεῖ δ’ ὕχει ἐκούσαν ἀφάσασ;  
A.: δηλαδὴ ἔπανθς ἔθειρας.

C: Who will come to seize the girl?  
A: Thousands [will come], and Odysseus will lead her away.  
C: The son of Sisyphus?  
A: The very one.  
C: Pursuing his own interests, or sent by the army?  
A: He was chosen willingly.  
C: Murder is a poor choice indeed.  
A: But I will keep him at bay.  
C: What—will he drag her off against her will?  
A: Of course, by her golden hair if need be.

Two things immediately stand out in this passage: the first is the extreme violence of the affair, exemplified by Odysseus’ willingness to drag Iphigenia off by her hair; the second is the return of Odysseus to the center of the fray. As it turns out, the Myrmidons, and indeed the rest of the Achaean army, are not acting entirely on their own, but in concert with another basileus.

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143 Following the note by Stockert, 1992 vol. 2, p. 581. Stockert argues that ἀξεῖ is in reference only to Clytemnestra’s question of “[τίς] ἁψεται κόρης,” but not in reference to the μύριοι who are themselves the answer to Clytemnestra’s first question ([τίς] ἡξεῖ). This is feasible on a grammatical level—the particle δὲ suggests we have two short, separate clauses—but it is especially convincing in light of v. 1364, which shows that a rather peculiar relationship exists between Odysseus and the ochlos.

144 Idem, p. 582, points out that such an act is similar to the “humiliation” to which prisoners of war are subject, as for example in E. Tr. 881-82, and E. Andr. 401-02. Such comparisons hardly put the actions of the Achaean army in a positive light, in particular since they are theoretically seeking to prevent the very type of abductions of Greek brides (*IA* 1266: παύσαι τε λέκτρων ἀρταγάς Ἑλληνικών, see above on p. 83) which they are about to commit.
At first glance, this revelation might seem to bring us a touch closer to the Homeric vision of authority that we have seen disintegrate at Aulis; after all, one can now say that the Achaeans are at least following a basileus. On the contrary, however, Euripides is still blazing his own trail. The wording of 1363-64 is crucial here. Clytemnestra first asks whether Odysseus is “pursuing his own interests, or [has been] sent by the army.” Neither of these choices suggests that Odysseus might be providing inspiring leadership for the Achaeans. This is obvious in the case that he has been “sent” by the army, in which case he would actually be following their orders. But even if he is coming of his own volition, Clytemnestra’s suggestion that he is prassôn idia is equally alarming. Ta idia were regularly juxtaposed to ta koína—public matters—and in fifth-century Greek literature a very clear strain of thought emerges that sees the two as fundamentally incompatible, that the pursuit of private interests was considered to be deleterious to the interests of the community. Regardless of whether Odysseus is following the ochlos or leading them in pursuit of his own interests, it is certain that he is providing a negative model of leadership.

According to Achilles, Odysseus is actually doing both: having been “chosen willingly,” he is now pursuing his own interests and being led by the mob. In this way, Odysseus is remarkably similar to Athens’ post-Periclean leaders who, at least according to Thucydides,

146 Cf. Th. 2.61.4; 4.59.4-60.1; 6.12.2; 8.83.3; S, OT 634-36; E. Hec. 641-43. Though naturally Pindar claims to further both at once: Ol. 13.49.
began by looking towards their “private ambition and personal profit” (2.65.7: κατὰ τὰς ιδίας φιλοτιμίας καὶ ίδια κέρδη) and ended by “surrendering the affairs of the state to the whims of the dēmos” (2.65.10: ἡδονᾶς τῶ δήμῳ καὶ τὰ πράγματα ἐνδιδόναι). Everything we hear about Odysseus in the IA—his obsession with philotimia, his eagerness to pursue his personal interests, his willingness to follow the Achaean mob—all of this serves to depict him as a contemporary paradigm of a poor leader.

In summary, Achilles’ report to Clytemnestra serves to confirm Agamemnon’s earlier fears and to definitively characterize the Achaean army at Aulis as one which is thoroughly contemporary—and also thoroughly in control of the situation. Achilles’ attempt to speak in Iphigenia’s defense results in a dangerous thorubos, an outcome that is unimaginable in the world of the Iliad yet common in fifth-century Athens. This thorubos then quickly devolves into an attempt to stone Achilles, one that recalls rare yet significant episodes of stoning from earlier in the fifth century. Finally, Achilles’ description of Odysseus’ particular role in this furious mob closely resembles Thucydides’ condemnation of Athenian leaders during the Peloponnesian War. All of this confirms not only the contemporary nature of the structures of power and authority at Aulis, but also the uniquely negative spin the IA provides through this contemporization.
3. Conclusion: Questioning the Authority of Homeric Authority

At this point, at least three things should be clear: that the political setting Euripides creates for the IA is far more closely based on the world of his audience than that of the Homeric epic which he constantly recalls; that the Iliadic echoes of the IA serve to highlight this departure from tradition; and that through this departure the IA constructs an implicit critique of the mechanisms of authority and leadership in democratic Athens. Still, the revision of Homeric conflicts and resolutions does more than simply cast a light on the intricacies and deficiencies of political authority in Athens. It also forces the audience to reevaluate the meaning of Homer’s literary authority.

This final point is at odds with the opinion of most modern scholars, who, as I have mentioned, generally argue that Euripides’ engagement with the Iliad results in the confirmation of the literary authority of Homer’s text, and by extension in the inability of the tragic text to rewrite or revise the epic tradition. But if it is true that the existence of the Iliad makes Iphigenia’s death a foregone conclusion, it is also true that the IA raises some troubling questions about the future in Troy. Indeed, in the aftermath of Euripides’ Aulis, it becomes difficult to imagine just how Homer’s Iliad would unfold; an army such as the one described by Euripides would hardly allow Agamemnon and Achilles to engage in the prolonged conflict which marks the Iliad. We might also wonder how successful Odysseus would be in turning back the tide of retreat once the Achaean soldiers decide they have had enough. In other words,
while Homer’s text certainly imposes itself on the plot of the IA, the tragedy itself is able to question the contemporary relevance of the society described in Homer’s epic.

In this light, the IA’s contemporization of the power structures among the Achaeans calls into question one specific aspect of Homeric authority: its educational purpose. We know that Homer was highly regarded not only for his poetic abilities, but also for the didactic potential of his poems. The educational aspects of Homer’s poetry may not have been a central concern to the poet himself, but it is clear that by the classical era, many Greeks believed his epics to be most instructive. Xenophanes, for example, claims that “from the beginning, all men have learned from Homer.” Herodotus notes that it is from Homer and Hesiod that the Greeks first learned of the gods’ origins, names, and functions. And Plato speaks of those who praise Homer because “the poet has educated Greece,” and is a worthy example for the “ordering and culture of human affairs.” This is not to say that Homer’s usefulness as a teacher was universally recognized; among others, Plato regularly attacks the notion that the Homeric texts were valid educational tools. But it is clear that the image of Homer as an

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149 Hdt. 2.53.2. As is correctly pointed out by Andrew Ford, *The Origins of Criticism: Literary Culture and Poetic Theory in Classical Greece* (Princeton, 2002), p. 199, Herodotus does not mean to “praise the poets’ omniscience…but [to form] a historical argument that Greek images and conceptions of divinity derive from them.”

150 Pl. Rep. 606e: τὴν Ἑλλάδα πεπαιδεύκειν οὕτως ὁ ποιητὴς καὶ πρῶς διοίκησιν τε καὶ παιδείαν τῶν ἄνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων
educator was accepted by many Greeks in the fifth century, and it is likely that there was a
certain amount of controversy surrounding the idea.

Indeed, the debate about Homer’s educational merits existed not only the general level,
but also regarding specific areas of expertise to which his poetry might be applied. This range of
topics was said to be quite wide,\textsuperscript{151} and some of these were especially germane to the problems
set in motion at Aulis. For instance, judging from our classical sources, it was widely believed
that Homer could impart specific lessons on war, the men who fought them, and those who led
them. As Aeschylus asks in Aristophanes’ \textit{Frogs}, “how else did divine Homer win honor and
glory, if not from teaching the most useful things: battle lines, virtues, and the arming of
men.”\textsuperscript{152} Later on, Plato’s \textit{Ion} will claim that, thanks to his expertise on Homer matters, he
should know how a general should speak to and exhort his soldiers.\textsuperscript{153} And in Xenophon’s
\textit{Symposium}, we see Niceratus suggest that “whoever might wish to become…a leader of people
or a general…should consult [him],” thanks to his thorough command of Homer’s poetry.\textsuperscript{154} We

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\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{151} See Verdenius, 1970, for an enumeration of these topics, which range from the “moral,” “political,” and
“religious,” to the “technical” and “practical.”
\textsuperscript{152} Ar. \textit{Frogs} 1034-36: \textit{ὁ δὲ θεὸς Ὅμηρος/απὸ τοῦ τιμῆν καὶ κλέος ἐσχεν πλήν τοὺθ ὁτι χρήστ᾽ ἐδίδαξεν/τάξεις
ἀφετές ὀπλίσεις ἀνδρῶν} Barbara Graziosi, \textit{Inventing Homer: The Early Reception of Epic} (Cambridge, 2002), p. 177,
argues that “the expression \textit{hopliseis andron}…could not come closer to describing hoplites.” This is perhaps an
exaggeration, but she is surely correct that these lines suggest that Homer is adept at “teaching how to organise mass
fighting” (ibid.). So too Kenneth Dover, ed., \textit{Aristophanes: Frogs} (Oxford, 1993), p. 322: “it was still conventional in
some quarters to regard Homer as the source of wisdom on tactics.”
\textsuperscript{153} Pl. \textit{Ion} 540d. Also mentioned by Dover, 1993, p. 322.
\textsuperscript{154} X. \textit{Symp.} 4.6: \textit{ὅστις ἀν οὖν υἱῶν βουλήται...ἤ δημιουργικάς ἢ στρατηγικάς γενέσθαι...ἐμὲ θεραπευέτω. We
know from X. \textit{Symp.} 3.5 that Niceratus’ education had consisted of memorizing the Homeric epics in their entirety.
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may doubt the seriousness of Niceratus’ offer, but in making it he is clearly drawing on an idea that was accepted by many of his contemporaries, namely that the Homeric texts were repositories of knowledge of warfare and leadership.

That there was a widespread belief in Homer’s expertise on war and generalship is further confirmed by Plato’s fervent refutations of the notion. The Ion itself, of course, merely serves to ridicule Ion’s claim that his knowledge of Homer made him an expert on “the art of generalship” (Ion 540d: τέχνη στρατηγική). Plato engages in a broader confutation of Homer’s didactic abilities in the Republic (cf. esp. 598d-600e), and he singles out “wars, generalships, the administration of cities and the education of men” as the “finest” (kallistōn) subjects on which Homer is reputed to be an expert. There would be little point in elaborating such extensive denials if Plato did not believe that this view was common, so we may presume that many Athenians still claimed, and in all seriousness, that Homer was an expert in the art of war.

And in fact, the evidence suggests that the individuals who invoked this Homeric expertise were most variegated. This emerges in unexpected ways, for instance in the treatise that is known to us as the Certamen between Homer and Hesiod. The surviving work can be

156 This refutation is the crux of the conclusion of the Ion, cf. 540d-542a.
dated to the Roman era, but it is almost certainly based on a tradition going at least as far back
as the fourth century BCE, and is as such indicative of attitudes to Homer in democratic Athens.
The basic and obviously fictional conceit of the treatise is that Homer and Hesiod meet at Aulis
and engage in a poetic competition. All this would be of little concern to the matter at hand,
except that the passage that Homer chooses as his “finest” passage\textsuperscript{159} is most unusual: \textit{Il.} 13.126-
33, 339-44—lines which have been seen “as an interpolated or at best problematic depiction of
hoplite-tactics.”\textsuperscript{160} The choice of this unique passage seems to confirm that Homer was regarded
as a teacher of hoplite battle tactics, and thus especially germane to the world of fifth-century
Athens. Going even further, Graziosi argues that “in democratic Athens Homer becomes the
poet of communal fighting.”\textsuperscript{161} Despite the starkly different realities of war and leadership that
existed in the Homeric epics and fifth-century Athens, the Athenians were nevertheless able to
accommodate Homer as a teacher of these arts in a democratic society.

At the same time, we can also see the exploitation of Homeric texts by those who were
ideologically opposed to Athenian democracy. Two passages, in fact, attest to the utilization of
Homeric poetry within what we may call “oligarchic” contexts. The first is from Xenophon’s
\textit{Memorabilia}, where the author discusses the accusations made against Socrates in the trial that

\textsuperscript{159} Richardson, “The Contest of Homer and Hesiod and Alcidamas’ Mouseion,” \textit{The Classical Quarterly} 31 (1981): pp. 1-
\textsuperscript{160} Cert. 12: τὸ καλλιστὸν ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων ποιημάτων. Note that “Homer” here seems to agree with Plato, insofar as
both claim that his poems’ “finest” (kallistos) moments involve lessons on warfare.
led to his execution. One of these charges is that Socrates used to “choose the basest passages of the finest poets and use them as lessons to teach his companions to be criminals and tyrants.”  

Xenophon then goes on to cite one of these so-called base passages, and it turns out to be none other than the lines which Odysseus speaks to the basileis and to the démos in Book Two of the Iliad, including the ones cited above in which the démos are said to be “of no account whatever in battle or council.” The obvious implication is that these lines were seen as fundamentally undemocratic, and that they were wont to be used by individuals who argued in favor of oligarchy or tyranny.

An even more strikingly politicized example of Homeric citation is found in Theophrastus’ Characters. In his caricature of an “Oligarchic Man,” Theophrastus states that this is the type of man who, “of Homer’s words remembers only this, that ‘[l]ordship for many is no good thing. Let there be one ruler.’” These are, again, taken from the very same episode to which Socrates “accusers” refer, that is the passage in which Odysseus rebukes the Achaean army as it flees. Theophrastus’ diagnosis of oligarchic exploitations of Homer is not subtle. In the light of this evidence, it is virtually certain that Homer, and in particular this passage of

162 X. Mem. 1.2.56: ἐφ’ δ’ αὐτὸν ὁ κατήγορος καὶ τῶν ἐνδοξότατων ποιητῶν ἐκλεγόμενον τὰ ποιημάτα καὶ τούτων μαρτυρίαις χρωμένον διδάσκειν τούς συνόντας κακούργους τε εἶναι καὶ τυραννικοὺς. Once again, it is Graziosi who brings this passage to my attention (2002, pp. 178-79)

163 X. Mem. 1.2.58, citing Il. 2.188-91, 198-203 (which are in turn cited and discussed at length above at pp. 48-50).

Homer, were used by opponents of democracy as a “lesson” in how power and authority should be exercised in an ideal society.

The IA’s consistent manipulation of the Homeric text must be read in the context of this highly charged debate concerning the educational merits and uses of Homer’s poetry. By presenting the dynamics of the Achaean army in an overtly contemporary manner, he emphasizes the distance that lies between contemporary and Homeric societies. This gap, which becomes ever more apparent as the tragedy reaches its climax, suggests that there are severe limits to the lessons that can be imported from Homer’s world. Achilles’ plight exemplifies the irrelevance of the Homeric text. The young hero, who sees the conflicts along very much the same lines as his Homeric counterpart, discovers almost too late that he is living in a new world, one in which his elite status does not even grant him authority over his own Myrmidons, much less the rest of the Achaeans. As we watch Achilles complete this journey of discovery, we understand that these educational readings of Homer, whether “democratic,” “oligarchic,” or unaffiliated, are undermined by Euripides’ depiction of the Achaeans at Aulis. Insofar as the world of Aulis is a mirror of contemporary Athens, a world in which the Achaean army has acquired a definite political consciousness and in which even Homer’s heroes must adjust to this new reality, the audience sees most clearly the incongruity of their world with that of the epic basileis. The IA thus illustrates the utter impracticality of using the Iliad to impart lessons on leadership and military authority.
In the following two chapters I will examine a different kind of poetic engagement, one that concerns not a particular text but specific genres: epinician and paean. Here too the dynamics of the poetic interaction will be complex and significant, for we will see that the plays in question—the *Heracles* and the *Ion*—both use external poetic expressions in order to emphasize the problematic nature of political issues explored in the play, and indeed to challenge Athenian uses of the poetic genres through which these issues are explored.
Chapter Two

Heracles in the City: 
Euripides and the Case for Epinician Poetry

I wish to sing, through fine praise,  
a crown for [Heracles’] toils.  
For the virtues of noble labors  
Are a pleasing gift to the dead.  

(Euripides, Heracles 355-58)

Considering the range, scope, and ostentation of the epinician tones in the Heracles, the relative dearth of scholarship on the issue is startling. To be sure, it was necessary for Leslie Kurke and others to lay bare the “integrative” aspects of Pindar’s poetry before we could begin to understand how the socio-political function of epinician poetry operates in the context of Euripides’ play. But even in the two decades since Kurke’s seminal work,¹ little has been written

about the relationship between the tragic hero’s struggle to secure himself a home in the *poleis* of the play, and the epinician odes and tones that dominate the *Heracles*. In this chapter, I redress this dearth by examining the tragedy’s epinician apparatus and its relationship to the tragic questions and problems concerning Heracles’ eventual integration. After a brief review of previous scholarly interpretations of the tragedy, I begin by discussing the contexts in which the play is set, focusing in particular on the contemporary setting of the play, on Euripides’ depiction of Thebes as a negative paradigm for the modern *polis*, and on how this negativity expresses itself solely through the devaluation of Heracles’ heroism.

In the main section of the chapter, I analyze Euripides’ many uses of epinician poetry in the *Heracles*, and compare them to the major themes and values that emerge in Pindar’s epinician odes. Here, I demonstrate that the initial struggle for Heracles’ acceptance in Thebes, and the success of his ultimate incorporation into Athens, are spoken or sung of in terms that are decidedly epinician, and that these poetic and political processes very closely reflect ideas that Pindar sets forth. Finally, I contrast the place of epinician poetry and values in the *Heracles* to the actual reception of the genre in fifth-century Athens, with a particular focus on the period in which the play was produced (around 415 BCE). I thus make two separate but closely related points: that epinician poetry and values are shown in the *Heracles* to be beneficial—

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perhaps even necessary—for a community attempting to resolve the question of a hero’s place in a *polis*; and that this depiction of epinician mediation does not fit easily with the manner in which Euripides’ Athenian public generally perceived the place of epinician poetry—or the Olympic victors these odes celebrated—in the democratic *polis*.

### 1. Euripides’ *Heracles*: Problems and Interpretations

*Herakles* of all the extent plays raises with greatest urgency the perennial Euripidean questions about the nature of dramatic unity, the role of the gods, and the uses of cult and legend; and it has been impossible for interpreters to proceed, while leaving these central issues unresolved.³

The seemingly “broken-backed”⁴ nature of Euripides’ *Heracles* has indeed, as Michelini suggests, caused much consternation regarding the meaning or unity of the tragedy. Scholars have, perhaps not surprisingly, offered and rejected numerous themes around which the tragedy may be said to center itself. These range from virtue (*aretē*)⁵ to violence,⁶ from human

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friendship (philia) to divine justice (or injustice),\textsuperscript{8} and from combinations of these various themes\textsuperscript{9} to the “unity of contrast” suggested by Bond.\textsuperscript{10} Michelini’s own solution to the problem is attractive, not least because it absolves us of the need to “defend” the tragedy: “Herakles presents us with a part of reality usually left out of drama, a sequence of events that, like many sequences in life, is arbitrary, senseless and contradictory…it is designed to be unintelligible.”\textsuperscript{11} If no true “sense” can be found in the tragedy, then we are free to attack other problems.

Perhaps following Michelini’s lead, in more recent years many scholars have turned their attention elsewhere.\textsuperscript{12} Some have focused on the very contradictions, reversals, and odd

\textsuperscript{8} Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Euripides: Herakles vol. 1 (Berlin, 1895), pp. 120-30; and Anne Pippin Burnett, Catastrophe Survived: Euripides’ Plays of Mixed Reversal (Oxford, 1971) pp. 175-80. Both argue in favor of the “justice” of Hera’s provocation of Heracles’ homicidal madness, and the resultant death of his wife and children. Contra see Michael R. Halleran, “Rhetoric, Irony, and the Ending of Euripides’ Herakles,” Classical Antiquity 5 (1986): pp. 171-81, who argues that “the entire drama raises the question of divine justice” (p. 179) and that the play “ends with two different views of the gods…The meaning of the drama does not lie with one or the other but, rather, in the interaction of the two.”
\textsuperscript{10} Bond, ed., 1981, p. xxiv. The title of Michelini’s chapter on the play (1987, pp. 231-76), “Herakles: Tragedy in Paradox,” suggests that she essentially follows Bond’s theory of a “unity of contrast,” though she is less explicit in endorsing this as a unifying theme.
\textsuperscript{11} Michelini, 1987, p. 232.
repetitions the play presents, attempting to illuminate rather than solve them. Others have concentrated on particular problems or points of interest in the play, such as the question of “divine agency,” or the nature of Heracles’ madness. And a few have even attacked the problems with which this chapter will engage: the centrality of epinician poetry within the *Heracles*, and the meaning of the hero’s struggle to find for himself a place in the *poleis* of the tragedy.

Of these, however, no one has discussed the manner in which epinician poetics, and their place in the play, work in conjunction with Heracles’ transitions throughout the tragedy and with his ultimate integration into the Athenian *polis*. Foley discusses both the significance of praise poetry and the issue of Heracles’ marginalization from society, but for her these arguments remain separate. Papadopoulou notes that “the tragedy problematizes the nature of Heracles’ heroism and the ways in which this heroism can be accommodated in a civilized

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14 As Michelini, 1987, puts it in her section heading (p. 267). This is particularly tricky since Heracles essentially denies that the gods can act out of need or spite, despite the fact that the audience has witnessed them doing so. In Michelini’s terms (p. 275), “[i]n the plane of the play’s mimesis of reality, what Herakles says [about the gods] is patently untrue.” For more on this subject, cf. esp. S.E. Lawrence, “The God That Is Truly God and the Universe of Euripides’ *Heracles*,” *Mnemosyne* 51 (1998): pp. 129-46, in which can also be found a helpful synthesis of previous interpretations; and Yunis, 1988, pp. 139-71.


world,” but she makes almost no mention of the epinician language and odes of the play.\textsuperscript{17} Swift is the first to engage both problems simultaneously, but she explains Euripides’ use of the genre as a “renegotiation of epinician values” that eliminates the “political overtones” of the genre.\textsuperscript{18} This argument overlooks the emphasis in the play on the political consequences of either accepting or rejecting Heracles, and in particular the fact that it is only through epinician mediation that first Thebes, and later Athens, are shown to accept the hero. A fuller analysis of the Heracles’ epinician apparatus is fully warranted.

2. \textit{Context and Setting: A Contemporary World, a Sick Polis}

One might be pardoned for supposing, during the prologue, that the \textit{Heracles} takes place in the archaic past of its protagonist’s legendary endeavors. Such is the impression given by Amphitryon, Heracles’ father, when he describes Thebes’ famous foundation by an “earth-born crop of sown-men” \textit{(HF} 4-5: ὁ γηγενής/σπαρτῶν στάχυς) as if their successors—the Cadmeians—were still in power. The image of a primordial world is further developed by his report of Heracles’ whereabouts: according to Amphitryon, he has left home “to tame the earth,” \textit{(HF} 20: ἔξημερωσαί γαῖαν) and is currently in the underworld completing his final

\textsuperscript{17} Thalia Papadopoulou, \textit{Heracles and Euripidean Tragedy} (Cambridge, 2005), p. 57.
mission. Thus far, it appears that the hero is well-entrenched in the age of most of his myths, the pre-modern world in which his civilizing prowess is still needed and in which he can be referred to, unhesitatingly, as *kleinos* (famous, renowned; cf. *HF* 12).

This illusion of an archaic setting is soon broken by Amphitryon’s admission of the turmoil which seized Thebes after Heracles’ descent into Hades. As it turns out, the old dynasty has succumbed to *stasis*, and the city has fallen into the hands of the Euboian usurper Lycus (*HF* 26-34). Having killed the Cadmeian ruler (Creon), Lycus now intends to dispatch Heracles’ wife and children, the rightful heirs to the throne (*HF* 39-43). This violent rejection of the Theban dynasty is emblematic of a certain type of political strife, and it is a reflection of contemporary concerns. As Solon and Alcaeus attest, *stasis* was certainly not a new phenomenon in Greece.\(^\text{19}\) But the universality which Thucydides ascribes to it,\(^\text{20}\) as well as the belief he espoused that *stasis* was a natural consequence of war,\(^\text{21}\) implies that this problem was of particular relevance at the end of the fifth century BCE. Even the emphasis on Lycus’ status as an outsider (*HF* 32: Καδμείως οὐκ ὄν; *HF* 257: ἐπηλυς ὄν) specifically recalls contemporary correlations of *stasis* and the interference of outsiders.\(^\text{22}\) In the space of a few lines in the prologue, the setting of the play subtly shifts from dynastic to revolutionary, from primordial to contemporary.

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\(^{19}\) Solon fr. 4.19; Alcaeus fr. 326.1

\(^{20}\) Thucydides notes that after the revolution in Corcyra “the whole of Greece, so to speak, was convulsed [by *stasis*]” (*3.82.1: ὑστερῶν γε καὶ παν ὡς εἰσεῖν τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἑκανήθη*).

\(^{21}\) Th. 3.81.1-2.

\(^{22}\) As we see in Th. 3.82.1, and Plato, *Rep.* 556e.
Within this contemporary tragic setting, it is obvious that Thebes, in its stasiotic state, represents a negative paradigm of Greek society. Finley calls stasis “the greatest evil and the most common danger” within the Greek world. Thucydides is, if anything, more pessimistic. Speaking of the civil war in Corcyra, he states quite frankly that “on account of the staseis, every kind of iniquity arose in the Greek land.” An even starker description of stasis is found in a document called the Peri Politeias, ostensibly a speech by an anonymous orator in 404 BCE: “stasis surpasses war [in evil] to the same extent that war does peace.” Lest any uncertainty remain as to Thebes’ malignance, the stasis is described several times as a disease that has overcome the city. Amphitryon refers to it as such in the prologue (HF 34), as does Megara upon Heracles’ return (HF 542). But the most significant reference to Thebes’ sickness appears in a lament by the chorus (HF 272-74):

οὐ γὰρ εὗ φρονεῖ πόλις
στάσει νοσοῦσα καὶ κακώς βουλεύμαισον.
οὐ γὰρ ποι’ ἀν σὲ δεσπότην ἐκτήσατο.

For the city, sick with stasis and evil resolutions, has lost its mind.
Otherwise it would never have taken you as its leader.

24 Th. 3.83.1: πάσα ιδέα κατέστη κακοτροπίας διὰ τὰς στάσεις τῷ Ἑλληνικῷ.

This document, attributed in antiquity to Herodes Atticus, is a speech exhorting the citizens of Larisa to join Sparta in their war against Macedonia, hence the precision of the presumed date. The debate over the actual date extends back at least a century and shows no sign of being resolved. Cf. William Scott Ferguson, Greek Imperialism (Boston, 1913), p. 21. Ferguson, quoting the same passage as above, argues that the writer of the speech was a “pamphleteer” from Larisa, but that “with characteristic conservatism the English scholars, Adcock and Knox...uphold the attribution of this pamphlet to Herodes Atticus” (see p. 21 fn 1). Contra Ferguson cf. D.A. Russell, Greek Declamation (Cambridge, 1983), p. 111. More recently, Simon Hornblower, The Greek World 479-323 BC (London, 2013), p. 186, argues that the speech is indeed original, and that the attribution to Herodes Atticus is false. Elsewhere, Hornblower argues that even if the text must be dated to the second century AD, “is it not possible that the author was after all using authentic Thessalian material?” Cf. Hornblower, “Sicily and the Origins of the Corinthian War,” Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte 41 (1992a): p. 121.
The chorus equates *stasis* with disease, with poor judgment, and even with insanity, and notes that it is only thanks to this disease that Lycus is now the tyrant of Thebes. Moreover, even beyond the fact that a *stasis* brought him to power, Lycus’ tyranny is on its own a negative outcome. As Raaflaub has convincingly argued, tyranny and tyrants were anathema to the Athenian public to the extent that “[i]t helped Athenians define what they were not...[and] encompassed everything that was hostile to democracy.” Constituitionally speaking, Thebes is everything that Euripides’ Athens eschews.

Yet though Thebes is described as an abhorrent version of a *polis*, this perversion expresses itself in only one manner on-stage: with the denigration and marginalization of Heracles and his family. The connection between the two is emphasized from the very beginning. Shortly after his description of Lycus as a tyrant (*HF* 29) and of Thebes as a city “sick with *stasis*” (*HF* 34), Amphitryon portrays the effects on his family in no uncertain terms (*HF* 38-40):

\[ \text{o kai}n\, \text{o s}o\text{t}o\text{s t}i\text{r}o\text{de ge}\text{g}n\, \text{a}rchon \text{L}y\text{ko}n \]
\[ \text{to}i\text{s H}rakl\text{e}iu\text{s p}ai\text{d}as e\text{xe}le\text{in} \text{th}eli \]
\[ \text{ktau}n\text{on da}m\text{ar}ta <\theta'>, \text{w}s \text{ph}on\text{w} \text{sbe}s\text{h} \text{ph}on\text{on} \]

This new ruler of this land, Lycus, wishes to remove the children of Heracles and kill his wife, to quench blood with blood.

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Having established his tyranny, Lycus’ first order of business is to eliminate potential rivals. His reason for killing the family is that he has no desire to see Heracles’ children, his own potential “avengers,” reach adulthood. In other words, as tyrant Lycus wishes to consolidate his own position, which essentially means removing all traces of Heracles from Thebes.

Part and parcel with this operation is Lycus’ attempt to sully Heracles’ reputation as a means of justifying the murders he intends to commit (HF 151-56):

τί δὴ τὸ σεμνὸν σῷ κατείργασται τὸσει,  
ύδραν ἔλειον εἰ διώλεσε κτανῶν  
η τὸν Νέμειον ήθρα; ὃν ἐν βρόχοις ἐλῶν  
βραχίονός φησ’ ἀγχόναισιν ἐξελείν.

τοῦτο’ ἔξαγωνίζεσθε; τώνδ’ ἄγ’ οὖνεκα  155  
τοὺς Ἡρακλείους παῖδας οὐ θνησκεῖν χρεῶν;

What great thing has your husband done, if he wiped out that marshy Hydra or killed the Nemean beast that he took out with a noose but claims to have crushed in the coils of his arms?

These are your arguments? Because of these deeds the children of Heracles ought not die?

Lycus’ argument is that Heracles has done nothing to warrant the salvation of his children; that the hero is “worthless” (HF 157: οὐδὲν ὑν), and that he is owed not even this minimal compensation for his toils or virtues. This denigration of Heracles’ labors must have seemed radical to an audience accustomed to seeing sculptural representations of his “battles with beasts” (HF 158: θηρῶν ἐν αἰχμῇ)—side-by-side with those of Theseus no less—on a regular basis. Lycus’ words are shocking, and in conjunction with the accusation of cowardice which soon follows, they emphasize that the Theban stasis has one principal consequence: the

28 HF 168-69: οὔκουν τραφέντων τῶνδε τιμωρίας ἐμοῖς/χρηζὼ λιπέσθαι τῶν δεδαρμένων δίκην. (I do not wish, when these [children] are grown, that my avengers remain as punishment for the things I have done.)
29 These labors, including his battles with the Hydra and the Nemean Lion, were represented on the east metopes of the temple of Hephaestus in the Athenian agora. Cf. Homer A. Thompson, “The Sculptural Adornment of the Hephaleistion,” American Journal of Archaeology 66 (1962): pp. 339-47.
dishonest devaluation of Heracles’ heroic stock as a means to justify the extirpation of his family.

The tragic crisis that the family faces is thus explicitly related to the question of Heracles’ heroism and of how to receive and accommodate such a hero in the contemporary polis. This question is one that epinician poetry is also deeply concerned with. What is more, Heracles is himself a vivid reminder of epinician poetry, for he is the hero whom Pindar most frequently cites and was the mythical founder of the Olympic games, the occasion at which, Pindar suggests, epinician poetry was first performed. Both the plot and characters of the tragedy thus imply that epinician poetry will play a crucial role in the Heracles. In the following section, I will provide a brief overview of the formal and ideological features of epinician poetry, after which I will examine, through an epinician lens, a series of six responses to Heracles’ heroism in the tragedy.

31 On Heracles’ founding of the Olympic games, cf. Pí. Ol. 10.57-59. On the performance of epinician songs at these first games, see Ol. 10.76-77: αἰείδετο δὲ πᾶν τέμενος τερπναὶς θαλιαῖς/τὸν ἐγκώμιον ἀμφὶ τρόπον (“and the whole precinct resounded with the sound of praise at joyous feasts”).

As with most questions of genre, many of the principal elements of epinician poetry, even some of the most basic ones, remain up for debate. Among these is the question of epinician performance, specifically where and by whom the odes were performed. Most scholars agree that the majority of Pindar’s epinician odes were sung in the victor’s home city. This notion is especially convincing given the emphasis, in a number of the poems, on the victor’s return to his polis. Regarding the matter of who performed these odes, scholars appear to have returned to the consensus that most epinicians were performed by choruses, though some have argued that the genre was primarily monodic in form. Heath is certainly correct in

32 It is of course beyond the purview of this chapter to enumerate all the generic attributes of epinician poetry, a task which has, besides, been taken on by many other scholars. For more ample discussions of the genre and its features, cf. Elroy Bundy, Studia Pindarica (Berkeley, 1962); Kevin Crotty, Song and Action: The Victory Odes of Pindar (Baltimore, 1982); Gregory Nagy, Pindar’s Homer: The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past (Baltimore, 1990), esp. chapters 5, 6, and 7; Kurke, 1991; N.J. Lowe, “Epinikian Eidography,” in Pindar’s Poetry, Patrons, and Festivals: From Archaic Greece to the Roman Empire, eds. Simon Hornblower and Catherine Morgan (Oxford, 2007), pp. 167-76.
asserting that “there is no reason to insist on a single context and a uniform mode of performance,” but the evidence suggests that choral performance was the norm. The choral performance itself is often described as a kōmos—a celebration or procession—a form that suggests the participation of a relatively large group of people. Given the evidence, then, it is reasonable to assume that the victor’s return to his polis often occurred in the midst of a public celebration that was accompanied by, perhaps even driven by, epinician poetry.

One of the primary goals of epinician poetry is to provide praise for the athletic victor. This is the subject of all extant epinicians, and while it may not be the “single purpose” of Pindar’s poems, it is certainly a central feature of all of them. This poetic praise can take

36 Heath, 1988, p. 192. Heath’s suggestion appears to have been followed in full by Antonio Aloni, “Epinician and the Polis,” Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies 55 (2012): pp. 21-37, as Aloni never refers to either choral or monodic performance alone, but only to both possibilities at once.

37 Furthermore, epinician odes that appear in extant Athenian drama were generally performed by or with the chorus, typically in or near the victor’s polis. Beyond the three stasima of the Heracles, see also Ar. Ach. 1227-34; E. Alc. 435 ff.; E. Electra 859 ff. (though in this case the ode takes place outside the polis); A. Ag. 782-809; and S. Trach. 497-530. On these last three, cf. Christopher Carey, “The Victory Ode in the Theatre,” in Receiving the Komos: Ancient and Modern Receptions of the Victory Ode, eds. Peter Agócs, Carey, and Richard Rawles (London, 2012), pp. 1-29; on the epinician ode in the Alcestis, cf. Laura Swift, “Paeanic and Epinician Healing in Euripides’ Alcestis,” in Greek Drama IV: Texts, Contexts, Performance, eds. David Rosenbloom and John Davidson (Oxford, 2012), pp. 149-168. Based on the evidence, we can infer that Euripides’ audience would have thought of epinician praise poetry as a genre that was performed by a chorus in the home city of the laudandus.


39 Even more concise is Bundy’s formulation (1962, p. 22): “song and revelry are the two elements of the victory celebration.”

40 With the exception of Pindar’s eleventh Nemean, though the athletic prowess of the laudandus is still a prominent feature of that ode.

41 As Bundy, 1962, pp. 3 and 35-36 (quoted), argues.
several forms. As one might expect, much of it focuses on the victor himself. Pindar and Bacchylides consistently emphasize the *aretē* of their *laudandi*.\(^{42}\) They also stress the toil and suffering (*ponos* or *mochthos*) their *laudandi* endured in order to achieve success.\(^{43}\) In the context of epinician poetry, this toil can obviously refer to the struggle of athletic competition, but there is a spatial element that cannot be ignored: in order to compete and win at the games, one must depart from home.\(^{44}\) In this way, Pindar and Bacchylides assimilate their *laudandi* to the heroes of yore, for mythical heroes and Olympic victors share the experience of leaving home to take on considerable toils.\(^{45}\)

The prize for this toil is glory, and it is both guaranteed and embodied by the epinician poem itself. This interrelation of *aretē*, toil, victory, and poetic praise is neatly encapsulated in these lines from Pindar’s eleventh *Olympian* (*Ol*. 11.4-6):

\[
\text{εἰ δὲ σὺν πόνῳ τις εὗ πράσσοι, μελιγάρυες ύμνοι}
\text{υστέρων αρχά λόγων}
\text{τέλλεται καὶ πιστὸν ὄρκιον μεγάλαις ἀρεταῖς.}
\]

If anyone achieves success through toil, sweet-voiced hymns are the foundation of future fame and a faithful oath to great *aretai*.

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\(^{44}\) On this, see Kurke, 1991, pp. 15-34.

\(^{45}\) For more on the victor-hero comparison, see also Segal, 1967, pp. 444-45; Nagy, 1990, pp. 150-51, 196-206.
In this relatively straightforward formulation, Pindar states that epinician songs are the prize for the victor’s toils. Poetic praise is, of course, a form of gratification in itself, but Pindar is at pains to point out that it also grants ever-lasting fame—a fame predicated on the victor’s virtues and achievements.\(^{46}\) Furthermore, Pindar sees the composition of epinician songs as a veritable necessity (\textit{Ol.} 11.2: χοὴςις): “a fitting wage for good deeds” (\textit{Nem.} 7.63: ποτίφορος δ’ ἄγαθοιοι μισθὸς οὕτος).\(^{47}\) \textit{Arețē} and toil thus lead to victory and require praise, and this praise confers both present and future glory.

Praise for the victor is not the only concern of the epinician poet. Another aspect of the genre, and one which is central to the \textit{Heracles}, is the attempt to mediate the tensions that may arise between the victor and his community. Heroic returns (\textit{nostoi}) in Greek mythology and literature are fraught with difficulties, and often even violence.\(^{48}\) This appears to have been true of athletic victors as well, elite individuals who leave their communities and return imbued with even more honor and prestige, but who do not always encounter an easy reception.\(^{49}\) As

\(^{46}\) M.M. Willcock, ed., \textit{Pindar: Victory Odes} (Cambridge, 1995), p. 57, notes that \textit{ἀρετὰς} here refers to both the victor’s “achievements” and “the qualities of skill and courage that gave rise to them.”


\(^{49}\) Joseph Fontenrose, “The Hero as Athlete,” \textit{California Studies in Classical Antiquity} 1 (1968): pp. 73-104, discusses several cases in which Olympic victors encounter problematic \textit{nostoi}. See also the case of the Athenian Cimon in Hdt. 6.103.1-3. Herodotus implies that Cimon was put to death by the tyrant Hippias as punishment for winning one Olympic chariot race too many, and the episode shows that it was credible to claim that Olympic victory endowed the victor with a great deal of cachet within his \textit{polis}. Naturally, Athens in the fifth century had a considerably different constitution than it did under the tyranny of the Peisistratids, but there is reason to believe that concerns persisted in democratic Athens about the excessive prestige endowed by Olympic victory. I discuss this issue in greater depth below, see pp. 168-173.
such, they are “potentially disruptive figure[s] who need to be reintegrated.”50 One of the main purposes of epinician poetry, then, was to assist in this process of reintegration; to facilitate an athletic victor’s return to his oikos or polis.51

There are two integrative elements that are both common to epinician poetry and of particular relevance to the Heracles. One of these is the epinician poet’s constant attempt to allay the envy (phthonos) of the victor’s fellow citizens, who may begrudge a success which is unattainable for them, or even the praise of that success.52 Such envy could be perilous, for it jeopardizes the victor’s return and positive reception by his community. This unfavorable outcome may take the relatively benign form of slander (cf. Pyth. 11.28-29) or censure (Ol. 6.74-76; Pyth. 1.81-86), but at its worst, Pindar suggests that phthonos can lead even to the exile (Pyth.

51 Crotty, 1982, noting Pindar’s frequent references to both athletic and heroic nostoi, was the first to convincingly argue that “the purpose of epinician poetry was to secure the victor’s reception by his fellow citizens” (p. 108). He compares the mediation offered by epinician poetry to that of ritual initiation, insofar as both the returning victor and the young initiant have an ambiguous or liminal status (cf. Crotty, 1982, pp. 112-21; and Nagy, 1990, pp. 140-45). Kurke, 1991, expands upon this point considerably, correctly noting that the process of epinician mediation differs depending on the community to which the victor is returning, whether it be oikos or polis, or indeed a democratic polis or a tyrannical one. Kurke shows that Pindar uses a variety of poetic techniques and conceptual frameworks to facilitate these different processes.
52 On Pindar’s conception of phthonos, see esp. Gordon M. Kirkwood, “Blame and Envy in the Pindaric Epinician,” in Greek Poetry and Philosophy: Studies in Honor of Leonard Woodbury, ed. Douglas E. Gerber (Chico, 1984), pp. 169-84; Kurke, 1991, pp. 195-224; Patricia Bulman, Phthonos in Pindar (Berkeley, 1992); and Glenn Most, “Epinician Envy,” in Envy, Spite, and Jealousy: The Rivalrous Emotions in Ancient Greece, eds. David Konstan and N. Keith Rutter (Edinburgh, 2003), pp. 123-42. Most makes two observations about Pindar that are especially worth singling out: that phthonos is a subject of much greater interest to Pindar than to his epinician colleague Bacchylides; and that most of Pindar’s references to phthonos occur in poems dedicated to individuals who hailed from “situation[s] of exceptional political instability or unrest to which the victor was directly exposed” (p. 135).
7.18-19)\textsuperscript{53} or the death of an exceptional individual (\textit{Nem.} 8.21-23, which I discuss in more detail below, see pp. 133-135). Insofar as the epinician poet claims that he composes for the benefit of his laudandus and strives to engender good will for him within his community, it is obvious that warding off phthonos is a crucial aspect of this poetic project.

The second integrative element of epinician poetry, and one which is intimately related to the suppression of phthonos, is the encouragement of widespread public celebration. This often takes the form of a precept, which can be either direct or oblique, as in the following Pindaric passages:

\textit{Nem.} 11.17-18:

\[\text{ἐν λόγοις δ’ ἀστῶν ἀγαθοὶσι νιν αἰνεῖσθαι χρεών, και μελιγδούσοις δαιδαλθέντα μελιζέμεν ἁοίδαις.}\]

It is necessary that he be praised by the noble words of his townsmen, and that we celebrate him, adorned in sweet song.

\textit{Nem.} 2.24:

\[\text{τόν, ὦ πολίται, κομάξατε Τιμοδήμῳ σὺν εὐκλείῳ νόστῳ·}\]

Celebrate [Zeus], oh citizens, with a glorious return for Timodemus.

\textit{Isth.} 1.50-51:

\[\text{ὁς δ’ ἀμφ’ ἀέθλοις ἢ πολεμίζων ἀριστεί κύδος ἄβρον, εὐαγγεθείς κέρδος ψυπτιν δέκεται, πολιτάν καὶ ξένων γλώσσας ἁυτον.}\]

And the one who takes up delicate glory in war or contests wins the loftiest reward of praise, a blossom of words from citizens and strangers.

\textsuperscript{53} The reference to Megacles’ ostracism in this passage is oblique, but Kirkwood, 1984, p. 178, is right to see that this is Pindar’s point.
In each of these passages, Pindar emphasizes the importance of granting the victor a worthy return. In the first passage, songs of praise are posed as a veritable necessity (Nem. 11.17: *chreōn*), and it is evident that this praise must come not only from the poet, but also from his fellow citizens (*astōn*). The same is true in the second passage, but we also learn that the glorification of Timodemus should take place within the context of a *kōmos* (*kōmaxete*) and that it is intimately connected to the celebration of Zeus. In the third passage, the necessity of praise is only implicit, but it is also extended beyond the confines of the victor’s *polis* and applied to citizens and strangers alike. In each case, the epinician poet asserts that the proper way to receive the returning hero is with praise and celebrate, and in this way seeks to facilitate the reintegration of his *laudandus* into a broader community.

To that end, the epinician poet does not merely issue injunctions. He also seeks to “make the entire *polis* feel that it participates in the victory” by stressing the tangible benefits that the victor bestows on his city. This may be in the praise of the city that is often embedded in Pindar’s victory odes. More concretely, Pindar emphasizes the fact that the victor shares his glory with the whole *polis*, for example by naming his city in the announcement of victory. On a more symbolic, but still important, level, Pindar goes to great lengths to show that the victor

54 It is true that *Nemean* 11 was composed not in honor of an athletic victory but for Aristagoras’ election to the *boulē*. But since the call for praise is followed directly by the statement that Aristagoras “crowned his fatherland” with sixteen victories (Nem.11.19-21), it is implicit that athletic success constitutes grounds for communal praise.
57 E.g. *Ol*. 5.8; *Ol*. 8.20; *Pyth*. 1.33; *Pyth*. 9.69-70, etc.
shares not only the praise he has earned, but also the kudos he has won. As Kurke has argued, this kudos is a sort of “magical, talismanic force that guarantees victory.” By sharing it with the polis, the victor becomes a source of strength for his entire community. The poet thus encourages the community to accept and celebrate the victor in recognition of his ponoi and aretai, which benefit the polis both directly and indirectly. As we shall see, a similar relationship is imagined between hero and polis in the Heracles.

4. Epinician Poetry and the Heracles: Rejection, Praise, Celebration, and Integration

Lycus, envy, and the rejection of an epinician hero

From the beginning of the tragedy, Euripides presents Heracles as a hero of unquestionable prowess. Having departed to “tame the earth” (HF 20), Amphitryon tells us that his son, before his disappearance in Hades, had nearly finished the task (HF 22-25):

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58 Cf. Kurke, 1991, pp. 203-09. Kurke cites, among others, Ol. 4.10-12; Ol. 5.7-8; Isth. 1.10-12.
59 Eadem, p. 206, drawing on the work of Émile Benveniste, Indo-European Language and Society, tr. Elizabeth Palmer (London, 1973). See also Leslie Kurke, “The Economy of Kudos,” in Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece, eds. Carol Dougherty and Leslie Kurke (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 131-63. Poulheria Kyriakou, “Epikoxon Kydos: Crown Victory and Its Rewards,” Classica et Mediaevalia 58 (2007): pp. 119-158, has recently argued against the “talismanic” qualities of kudos, claiming that in Pindar it is essentially equivalent to doxa or kleos (“glory” or “fame”). Her conclusions are certainly compelling, but while she assigns less symbolic power than Kurke does to these crown victories, by no means does she suggest that these victories were not considered to be of great value to the victor’s community.
καὶ τοὺς μὲν ἄλλους ἔξεμόχθησεν πόνους, ἐξεμόχθησεν πόνους, οἱ λοιποὶ δὲ Ταινάρου διὰ στόμα τῆς λιτούσθη τὸ τρισώματον κύνα,

H he has toiled through his other labors, and last of all he has gone to Hades through the mouth of Taenarum to bring to the light the three-bodied dog, whence he has not returned.

Lest there be any doubt that the earth-taming efforts to which Amphitryon refers are Heracles’ famous labors, he specifically mentions the capture of Cerberus, traditionally one of Heracles’ final chores, as the end of the cycle. The phrase “ἔξεμόχθησεν πόνους” (HF 22) lends a distinctly epinician flavor to this narration. Pindar constantly recalls the toils required for athletic success in order to emphasize the victor’s self-sacrifice, but also to establish a thematic connection between his laudandi and Heracles. The connection between Amphitryon’s phrase and the Heracles of epinician poetry is multi-layered and subtle, but the tragedian follows this reference with a much more obvious one: the first of his many uses of the adjective kallinikos (HF 49), a word with unequivocally epinician connotations. Already in the prologue, then, astute

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60 Cf. Charles H. Morgan, “The Sculptures of the Hephaisteion: I,” The Journal of the American School at Athens 31 (1962): pp. 216-17, for a list of the different sequences of the Heraclean labors in ancient depictions. Though there is no one established sequence, Heracles’ struggle with Cerberus consistently comes at or near the end of the cycle.  


62 The word kallinikos was closely connected with both Heracles and athletic competition: it seems to have originated in an Archilochean hymn celebrating Heracles (Arch. fr. 324): τήνελλα καλλίνικε χαρίς Ἑράκλεις, αἰφνίς τε καὶ ἴλαος, αἰχμητά δύνα (“Τήνελλα hail the kallinikos lord Heracles/and Iolaos, two warriors”). The hymn was sung in honor of athletic victors at Olympia (Cf. Pi. Ol. 9.1-4, and esp. Σ Ol. 9.1d, in which the scholiast reports that the victor himself would sing the hymn with his philoi by the altar of Zeus). As such, it was considered a sort of “proto-epinician,” a term I borrow here from Maria Pavlou, “Metapoetics, Poetic Tradition, and Praise in Pindar Olympian 9,” Mnemosyne 61 (2008): pp. 533-67. What is more, prior to the Heracles the term was used almost exclusively by Pindar in our extant sources, typically to refer to Olympic victors or to the rewards for their victories. According to the TLG database, only ten uses of this term survive prior to Euripides. One of these is found in the Archilochus.
members of the audience would have been aware of the epinician tones that will come to dominate the play.

While this smattering of epinician vocabulary is perfectly consistent with Pindar’s use of the same, the first overt reference to the ideals and values of the genre comes, oddly enough, by way of Lycus’ rejection of them. Lycus comes on stage after the parodos and immediately confirms his intention to kill Heracles’ family. The episode that follows consists primarily of a debate between Lycus and Amphitryon regarding Heracles’ prowess and the relative merits of archery and hoplitic combat. On the one hand, the structure of the agon recalls the dissoi logoi of sophistic rhetoric, and thus further highlights the contemporary nature of the tragic setting. Even more importantly, the debate confirms the antagonistic role that Lycus is to play in the tragedy, and it marks his antagonism as antithetical to epinician ideals (HF 148-58):

You who toss empty boasts around Greece that Zeus had a share of your bed and child, And you who claim to be wife of the finest man: What noble feat has your husband done if he wiped out a marshy Hydra or killed the Nemean beast, that he took out with a noose but claims to have crushed in the coils of his arms? These are your arguments? And because of them the children of Heracles ought not to die? He’s worth nothing but has a reputation of great

fragment cited above; another in an Aeschylean fragment (fr. 190); the remaining eight are all found in Pindar, and exclusively in his epinician odes. Euripides himself was quite fond of the term, using it over 30 times in his career (among extant tragedies and fragments). The eight uses in the Heracles, however, are the most of any of his tragedies, with only the Electra (three) and the Phoenissae (six) containing more than two instances.

Insofar as these words are a defense of Lycus’ plan to murder Heracles’ family, it is normal to expect some rhetorical flourishes on his part. Nevertheless, it is impressive how much false information Lycus conveys in these few lines. He questions Heracles’ divine fatherhood, about which there was no doubt. More generally, he rejects every claim to valor that the most renowned Greek hero had, going so far as to imply that the Hydra was a generic marsh snake, and denying that Heracles engaged in hand-to-hand battle with the Nemean lion. These are radical claims, and they run counter to basically the entire tradition of Heracles’ labors.

Classical Athenians were, of course, intimately familiar with the tradition surrounding Heracles’ labors. In the nearby Hephaisteion, for example, the hero is actually depicted with the Nemean lion in the “coils of his arm,” so many members of the audience would have regularly seen Heracles engaged in the very acts Lycus is attempting to debunk. Moreover, the veracity of Heracles’ feats is reaffirmed throughout the rest of the play, first by the chorus’ insistence on the

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64 While it is true that Euripides problematizes the relationship between Heracles and his natural father Zeus, and indeed with fatherhood in general, there is no question in the play that Zeus is in fact his natural father. In lines 1263-65, Heracles claims that even though he considers Amphitryon his father instead of Zeus (1265: πατέρα γάρ αὐτῷ Ζηνὸς ἡγούμαι σ’ ἐγώ), it is in fact Zeus who begat him (1263: μ’ ἐγείνατο). On this passage, see Papadopoulou, 2005, pp. 85-86. On paternity in the Heracles more generally, see Michelini, 1987, pp. 254-58; and Mark W. Padilla, 1994, pp. 290-91.

65 Bond, ed., 1981, p. 106: “the addition of the adjective ἔλειον serves to devalue this highly individual beast and turn it into a mere marsh snake.”

66 Lycus’ new reading of the situation is emphasized by the play on words he uses to suggest that Heracles had used a noose (βρόχος) rather than the “coils of his arm” (βραχίων).

67 Cf. Thompson, 1962, plate 91; it should be noted that while Heracles is using his left arm to put the lion in a stranglehold, he does stoop to using a sword with his right hand, presumably to finish the task.
heroism of Heracles’ exploits, and later (and even more compellingly) by the goddess Lyssa (HF 849-54), and by Theseus’ confirmation that Heracles had rescued him from the depths of Hades (HF 1169-70). In other words, Euripides’ audience would have had little doubt that Lycus’ speech was replete with lies, and any doubts that lingered would have been banished by the end of the play.

This mendacious effort to deny Heracles’ fame and worth is Lycus’ longest cohesive utterance of the play, and as such it is vital to any assessment of his character. It obviously casts him as an enemy of Heracles, but it also makes him a character reminiscent of Pindar’s greatest antagonists, such as the envious men who denied Ajax’s rightful claim to Achilles’ arms, and who in so doing caused Ajax’s death (Nem. 8.21-25):

\[
\text{ὡςον \textit{dē} \textit{lόgoi} \textit{phθονεροίσιν-}} \\
\textit{άπτεται \textit{d' \textit{é}sλό\textit{w} \textit{άεί, \textit{χειρόνεσσι \textit{d' \textit{ó}κ \textit{ερίζει.}}} \\
\textit{κείνος \textit{kai \textit{Τελαμώνος \textit{dάφεν \textit{υίον \textit{φασγάνω \textit{αμφικλίσαις.}}} \\
\textit{η \textit{τιν' \textit{άγλωςσον \textit{μέν, \textit{ητορ \textit{d' \textit{άλκινον, \textit{λάθα \textit{κατέχει \\
\textit{έν \textit{λυγρῷ \textit{νείκει- \textit{μέγιστον \textit{d' \textit{άιόλω \textit{ψεύδεί \textit{γέρας \textit{αντέταται.}}}} \\
\text{Words are a delicacy for the envious:}} \\
\text{and [envy] always fastens onto noble men; it vies not with the lesser sorts;}} \\
\text{and it devoured the son of Telamon, wrapping him around his sword.}} \\
\text{Oblivion holds down, in baneful strife, the man ineloquent}} \\
\text{but strong in heart; and the greatest gift is held up to a nimble lie....} \hspace{1cm} 25
\]

The \textit{logoi} of line 21 are the words of praise such as those which Pindar offers his \textit{laudandi}, and they are “a delicacy for the envious,” which is to say they inspire envy.\textsuperscript{68} This \textit{phthonos} (implied

subject of vv. 22-23)\(^6\) fastens itself exclusively onto “noble men,” who may be the laudandi of Pindar’s epinicians or the heroes of his myths. The effects of this phthonos, if unmitigated, are devastating. In the case in question, it leads to Ajax’s unfortunate demise, and it poses a threat even for the dead hero, which is to leave him in “oblivion” (v. 24: latha). This is precisely the reason that Pindar is so interested in warding off phthonos from the dedicatees of his poems.

Pindar’s choice of latha (i.e lēthē) is particularly meaningful, for the word is also the “verbal opposite” of truth (alētheia).\(^7\) The implication is that Ajax is ignored and forgotten as a result of envious deceit. Pindar makes this concept more explicit in the following line, warning that the “greatest gift”—whether it be glory or Achilles’ arms—is won by the “nimble lie” (Nem. 8.25) and he returns to this idea a few lines later (Nem. 8.32-34):

\[
\text{…..ἔχθρὰ δ’ ἄρα πάρφασις ἢν καὶ πάλαι,}
\text{αἰμύλων μῦθων ὀμόφροις, δολοφραδὴς, κακοποιῶν ὀνείδος.}
\text{ἀ τὸ μὲν λαμπρὸν βιάται, τῶν δ’ αφάντων κύδος αντεῖνε σαθρὸν.}
\]

\[
\text{….Malignant misrepresentation existed even long ago,}
\]
the wily-minded companion of seductive tales, malicious blame.
It violates the illustrious, and holds up the corrupt glory of the obscure.

Parphasis, a “perversion of the truth,”\(^7\) picks up on the concepts of oblivion and falsehood in the lines above (vv. 25-26). It is “an aspect of phthonos,”\(^7\) and it works to the detriment of worthy

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\(^6\) Following Miller, 1982, pp. 114-15, and Bulman, 1992, p. 44. Taking phthonos as the implied subject of ἅπτεται and ἐρίζει also explains the masculine demonstrative κεῖνος in the following line.

\(^7\) The quote is from Bulman, 1992, p. 45, but the general concept is fully examined in Marcel Detienne, The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece, tr. Janet Lloyd (New York, 1996), pp. 64-67.

\(^7\) Following Carey, 1976, p. 32.

\(^7\) Miller, 1982, p. 117. Miller also suggests “persuasion through the misrepresentation of facts” as a more complete translation.
men and for the benefit of the “obscure.” What emerges from these lines is a deep anxiety that envy may be inspired by the praise of significant deeds, and that the envious may exploit deceptive speech for their own gain, and to deny noble men the praise and honor they have earned.

This same process is played out, at length, in the Heracles. The logoi of praise which inspire envy (Nem. 8.21) may be compared to the praise offered by Amphitryon and Heracles’ wife Megara in the opening of the play. Amphitryon recalls Heracles’ divine paternity by claiming to be “a partner of Zeus’ bed” (HF 1: τὸν Διὸς σύλλεκτρον) and reminds the audience of Heracles’ earth-taming exploits (HF 20-25), while Megara calls her marriage to Heracles, and by extension Heracles himself, “glorious” (HF 68: ἐπίσημον). It is implicit that these mountains of praise inspire phthonos in Lycus, for he responds directly to each of these claims: he echoes and rejects Amphitryon’s “sullektron” by calling this “suggamos” (HF 149) an empty boast; he picks up on Megara’s description of Heracles as episēmon by asking, sarcastically, “what sémon feat” he accomplished (HF 151); and he questions both the value and the veracity of Heracles’ battles with the Hydra and with the Nemean lion (HF 152-54), deciding in the end that the hero is “worth nothing” (HF 157). Each of these verbal assaults is blatantly false, and they serve three related purposes: denying Heracles’ glory; justifying the execution of his family; and securing Lycus’ tyranny in Thebes. As such, Lycus’ speech is perfectly analogous to Pindar’s parphasis.

73 Carey, 1976, p. 33.
("misrepresentation"). Though he is not called such specifically, he is nevertheless cast as a representative of phthonos.

**Amphitryon’s response: the lamented loss of epinician values**

Lycus’ stunning denial of Heracles’ worth naturally calls for a response, and this is provided forthwith by Amphitryon. It has gone relatively unnoticed that epinician language and values abound in this defense of Heracles. To begin, Amphitryon focuses not on the matter of his family’s impending death, but rather on condemning Lycus’ ignorance (ἀμαθία). In order to do so, he describes Heracles’ valor in the gigantomachy, and recalls that he “celebrated [ekōmasen], with the gods, the kallinikos [hymn]” (HF 180: τὸν καλλίνικον μετὰ θεῶν ἐκώμασεν). These terms are highly reminiscent of Pindar, who frequently describes the victory celebration as a kōmos, and his victors as kallinikos. Indeed, in his ninth Olympian, when

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74 It is likely that this fact has been overlooked because so many of the discussions about the debate have revolved around its curious structure (e.g. Lycus speaks far fewer lines [30] than Amphitryon [66], and the seemingly disparate nature of the points made by each character have prompted many questions about the “unity” of the agōn). For example, Bond, ed., 1981, pp. 101-02, criticizes the debate’s lack of balance. But contra see Taragna Novo, 1973; and Richard Hamilton, “Slings and Arrows: The Debate with Lycus in the Heracles,” Transactions of the American Philological Association 115 (1985): pp. 19-25. Even the identity of the participants of the agōn have become a point of contention: Taragna Novo and Bond both consider this to be a debate between Lycus and Amphitryon alone, while Hamilton argues that the participants are Lycus, Amphitryon, and Megara, with Megara responding to some of Lycus’ points. Regarding the “unity” of the agōn, Chalk, 1962, argues that aretē is at the center of all the points made; Taragna Novo believes that the main question is that of Heracles’ divine heritage; and Hamilton sees the debate presenting a number of “fundamental themes in the play” (p. 25).


76 For more on kallinikos, cf. above p. 130 fn 62.
he refers to Archilochus’ “proto-epinician” he directly connects the *kallinikos* hymn and the celebratory *kōmos*, noting that the “triple *kallinikos* song sufficed...for Epharmostos celebrating *[kōmazonti]* with his companions.” In his opening gambit, then, Amphitryon describes the divinely blessed celebration of his son’s exploits in the very same terms that Pindar uses to describe celebrations of Olympic victories. He thus places his defense of Heracles in a context that is specifically epinician.

From here, Amphitryon departs from his defense of Heracles to criticize Lycus’ attack on archery, and to lament about the general unfairness of the situation. But before he closes his speech, he launches a broad critique that again raises questions central to epinician poetry (*HF* 217-28):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek Text</th>
<th>Translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>φεῦ· ὦ γαῖα Κάδμου· καὶ γὰρ ἐς σὲ ἀφίξομαι λόγους ονειδιστήρας ἐνδαύριμον· τοιαύτῃ ἀμύνθε· Ἡρακλεὶ τέκνοισι τε; ὡς εἰς Μινύαισι πάσι διὰ μάχης μολὼν</td>
<td>Alas! O land of Cadmus, for even to you shall I come apportioning reproachful words! Thus do you defend Heracles and his children? He who came alone in battle against all the Minyans and let Thebes look forth with free eyes? Nor do I praise Greece—never shall I suffer in silence—for she treats my son worst of all! She who most of all should come to these hatchlings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Θῆβαις εἴηθεν ὄμη· ἐλευθερον βλέπειν. οὐδ’ Ἐλλαδ’ ἠνευ’ — οὐδ’ ἀνέξομαι ποτε στιγάν — κακίστην λαμβάνων ἐς παιδ’ ἐμόν, ἢν χρήν νεοσσοίς τοίσδε πώς λόγχας ὀπλα</td>
<td>He who came alone in battle against all the Minyans and let Thebes look forth with free eyes? Nor do I praise Greece—never shall I suffer in silence—for she treats my son worst of all! She who most of all should come to these hatchlings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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77 See again p. 130 fn 62, and Pavlou, 2008, pp. 541-45. 78 Pindar, *Ol.* 9.1-4: ὁ μὲν Ἀρχιλόχου μέλος/φωναίεν Ολυμπία, καλλίνικος ὁ τριπλόος κεχλαδώς/ἄρκεσε Κρόνιον παρ’ ὀχθὸν ἀγεμισέται/καμάζοντι φίλοις Ἐφαρμόστῳ σὺν ἑταίροις: (“The hymn of Archilochus resounding at Olympia, the exultation of the triple *kallinikos* [song], sufficed for Epharmostos, celebrating with his beloved companions, to lead the way along Cronos’ hill.”) 79 Amphitryon’s defense of the merits of archery also has a contemporizing effect, both because the argumentation that Amphitryon uses is distinctly sophistic in nature (cf. Michelini, 1987, 245-46), and because the Peloponnesian War had, to some extent, demonstrated the tactical necessity of using bowmen (cf. Papadopoulou, 2005, pp. 141-42).
Amphitryon here focuses not on Lycus’ malice, but rather on the fact that Thebes and Greece have been remiss in their consideration of Heracles. Seen in this light, the crisis is not simply a matter of a tyrant refusing to grant Heracles his due, but rather one of widespread and systemic neglect. Moreover, Amphitryon contrasts the benefit that Heracles has bestowed (freedom) to the lack of regard with which these deeds were received. He considers recompense (HF 226: amoibas) for these deeds a “necessity” (HF 224: chrēn), and in this he imitates Pindar in both style and substance (cf. above p. 127 on Nem. 11.17 and Nem. 2.24). But unlike the world that Pindar describes, in Amphitryon’s world this necessity has gone unheeded. By claiming that the whole of Greece is indebted to Heracles, and by emphasizing, once again, Heracles’ role as a civilizing force, Amphitryon reiterates that the problem of a hero’s place in the contemporary world is one of the central issues of the tragedy. Thus, while Amphitryon’s defense of Heracles is not as obviously epinician as the choral ode that follows, it is nevertheless rife with epinician motifs and language, and it implies a pervasive indifference to the ideals that Pindar promotes in his victory odes.

The situation, as the chorus (HF 252-74) and Megara (HF 275-311) successively argue, is essentially hopeless. All that remains for Megara is to ask that she be allowed to return home to obtain funeral garments. Lycus’ response is simple yet telling (HF 333):

κοσμεῖσθ’ ἐσοφιόλοντες· οὐ φθονὸς πέπλων.

Go inside and bedeck yourselves; I have no phthonos for robes.
We find here the first mention of *phthonos* in the *Heracles*, one that is sharply ironic. Lycus’ “generosity” in this circumstance underscores his lack thereof in all other matters: while he may “have no *phthonos* for robes,” the implication is that in all else, he does. The first episode thus opens with Lycus’ explicit rejection of praise for Heracles; it continues with Amphitryon’s description of the gods’ epinician appreciation of Heracles and his intimation that Thebes and Greece should (but do not) act the same; and it closes with the implicit recognition that Lycus, representing Theban and Greek attitudes toward Heracles, is the descendant of Pindar’s *phthoneroi*. The stage is set for epinician’s entrance.

*The first stasimon: epinician song and praise*

Up to this point, all references to epinician poetry have been, at least to some extent, cloaked. Any subtlety, however, vanishes with the first *stasimon*, an ode that is dominated by the poetic praise of Heracles’ aforementioned conquests. Curiously enough, the song first advertises itself as a *thrēnos*, beginning with the word *ailinon* (*HF* 348) and a dedication to “the one gone to the darkness beneath the earth” (*HF* 352-53). Such a proem does not seem especially auspicious, nor does it fit easily with the rest of the ode. But it is by no means unique within the tragic canon. A striking parallel is to be found in the second *stasimon* of Euripides’ *Alcestis*, for

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80 Both Bond, ed., 1981, p. 146, and Carey, 2012, p. 17, classify the ode as a *thrēnos*, though both also stress the abundance of encomiastic motifs that run throughout.
here too the chorus begins to sing a *threnos* for Alcestis only to transition into a song of praise which “evokes the conventions of encomiastic song” (*Alc.* 393-476). More generally, the juxtaposition of different generic *topoi* within a single ode was a technique commonly used by the tragic poets. Thus, while the first *stasimon* of the *Heracles* is unquestionably anomalous when compared to Pindar’s poems, Euripides’ audience would have been accustomed to seeing this type of “generic interaction,” and it is not too much to expect that they would recognize the epinician overtones of the song despite the threnodic elements.

The threnodic introduction to the *stasimon* lends a certain power to the song that follows. The chorus here is of course proceeding on the assumption that Heracles is dead, so the fact that they now sing a song of praise for him implies by necessity that such a song still has power after the death of a hero; that it can fulfill a principal goal of epinician poetry by ensuring that Heracles’ fame outlives him. As such, we might say that the *stasimon* is at once a confirmation of this fame’s survival, as well as a guarantor of its future endurance.

To this end, the chorus quickly turns from mourning to celebration, drawing on vocabulary and imagery that an audience even remotely familiar with Pindar would easily recognize (*HF* 355-58):

![诗句](https://example.com/quotes.png)

I wish to sing, through fine praise, a crown for [Heracles’] toils.

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82 In fact, nearly all of the odes discussed by Swift, 2010, present significant amounts of what we might call generic dissonance. On the phenomenon more generally, see Swift, 2012, pp. 152-54.
Each of these four lines is laden with Pindaric language and ideas. The explicit mention of praise fits easily into an encomiastic context, and the references to Heracles’ ponoi and mochthoi are, as discussed above, normal epinician topoi. Epinician is of course deeply concerned with the question of aretē, so it should be no surprise to find such a mention here. And stephanōma is another term employed almost exclusively by Pindar prior to the Heracles, and one which he used to refer to his songs of praise, just as Euripides does here. As Kurke argues, “Pindar represents the victory ode as a crown offered to the victor, fashioned out of the most precious materials imaginable…Thus epinikion has it both ways: it is a crown and an agalma.” So too is the first stasimon of the Heracles.

This promised crown of praise lasts a full seventy-one lines (HF 359-429) before the chorus closes the ode in the threnodic mode with which it started (HF 430-41). The encomiastic section thus takes up the vast majority of the ode. It consists of an account, practically in list form, of the twelve labors to which Amphitryon had already referred. The structure and meter

85 Pindar uses stephanōma seven times in his epinicians. The only other early poets to use the term are Alcaeus and Theognis (one time each). Sophocles uses the term twice, but only once prior to the Heracles (Ant. 122; OC 684).
88 Euripides’ version of the twelve labors is: victories over the Nemean lion, the Centaurs, and the Golden Hind; taming the horses of Diomedes; defeating Cycnus; winning the Golden Apples of the Hesperides; ridding the sea of...
of the ode have Pindaric precedents, and the terms with which Heracles’ endeavors are described are overtly epinician. Given the chorus’ introduction to this section, there can be no doubt that it would have been understood as a song of praise in honor of Heracles—exactly the sort of thing Lycus had so recently proscribed. The contents of the second and third stasima, as we shall see, are more interesting from a communal or “integrative” point of view. But the first stasimon serves to truly bring the epinician mode of the Heracles to the foreground of the play for the first time, and it sets the tone for much of what is to follow.

The second stasimon: epinician song and the hero’s just reward

As the chorus breaks from the song, the mood becomes somber again: Megara, Amphitryon, and the children approach in their funerary garments; Megara recalls the seemingly empty promises of power and weapons Heracles had made to his sons, and wonders which of her children she should embrace first (HF 451 ff.); and Amphitryon, for his part, accuses Zeus of abandoning them in their time of need, bemoaning his fall from fame to misfortune. The stage is now fully set for Heracles’ triumphant return.

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90 Among others, the typical references to his labors as ponoi (HF 388, 427) and “colorful compound epithets” (Barlow, 1996, p. 139) such as ποικιλώνωτος (HF 376; Pi. Pyth. 4.249) and ξενοδαխικτης (HF 391; Pi. Fr. 140a).
Before Heracles arrives, however, Amphitryon makes one final, gnomic remark: “I do not know anyone for whom great wealth and fame are secure” (HF 511-12: ὁ δ’ ὀλβος ὁ μέγας ἥ τε δόξ’ οὐκ οἶδ’ ὅτω/βέβαιος ἐστι.). The combination here is a curious one: while prosperity was, for the Greeks, famously tenuous,91 ever-lasting fame was precisely what Pindar, much like Ibycus and Simonides before him, promised to provide with their praise poetry.92 In his disillusionment, however, Amphitryon makes the two equivalent by refuting even the enduring nature of doxa. This judgment is surprising in and of itself; as Bond points out, “Euripides’ characters, who question most things, are seldom cynical, as here, about the value of fame.”93

But coming as it does on the heels of a long epinician ode—one which presumes to provide a “bebaia doxa”—it is especially striking, for it almost seems a wholesale refutation of the first stasimon. At this climactic moment of the play, the very moment at which the entire audience expects Heracles’ return, Amphitryon places the notion of his son’s doxa front and center, and

91 The most famous assertion of this traditional line of thought is made by Solon in Herodotus 1.30-33. But Pindar endorses this view frequently: among others, cf. Pyth. 3.105-06; Pyth. 12.28-32; Ol. 12.7-12; and on these passages (and the general idea), see Hanna Boeke, The Value of Victory in Pindar’s Odes: Gnomai, Cosmology, and the Role of the Poet (Leiden, 2007), pp. 57-61.

92 Indeed, Willcock, 1995, p. 17, asserts that “[t]his is, not surprisingly, the commonest of Pindar’s gnomic themes, appearing in virtually every ode.” Among others, cf. Ol. 11.4-6 (discussed above on p. 124). But see also Nem. 6.28-30, which Rosalind Thomas quotes to support her statement that “Pindar’s choral odes leave no doubt that they brought a victor fame in his lifetime, and memory far beyond it” (Thomas, “Fame, Memorial, and Choral Poetry: The Origins of Epinikian Poetry—an Historical Study,” in Pindar’s Poetry, Patrons, and Festivals: From Archaic Greece to the Roman Empire, eds. Simon Hornblower and Catherine Morgan [Oxford, 2007], p. 141). As Thomas (p. 151) and Willcock (p. 17) both point out, the claim that poetry could secure ever-lasting fame goes as far back as Homer (cf. Od. 8.203-04). But the concept of poetic fame is stated especially clearly in encomiastic poetry. Ibycus, in his encomium to Polykrates (cf. fr. 1a, 46-48), claims that his poem will grant the tyrant “imperishable fame” (ἄφθιτον κλέος), while Simonides, Pindar’s most famous epinician predecessor, directly correlates poetic praise (ἔπαινος) and memory (μνήμη) in his epitaph to the fallen warriors of Thermopylae (fr. 531.3). In general, we might say that the idea that poetic praise leads to immortal fame is a recurring theme in encomiastic poetry in general, and in epinician poetry in particular.

questions both the natural endurance of his fame and the chorus’ ability to perpetuate it with song. The very power of epinician seems in doubt.

As if to disprove his father’s claim, Heracles himself is immediately spotted by Megara (HF 514). His arrival is naturally a source of joy for his family, who see in him their salvation, but the hero himself is dismayed to learn of their dire situation. All of this is fairly predictable, as is Heracles’ promise to punish those responsible—both the tyrant and his supporters—with his “kallinikos club” (HF 570: τῶι καλλινίκωι τώιδε ὀπλωι). Amphitryon suggests that he wait in ambush for Lycus’ return, after which Euripides allows time for what will turn out to be a final moment of tenderness between Heracles and his children. The happy family exits together, and the chorus begins the second stasimon.

As Parry notes, this song “seems basically to be an epinician ode, and one particularly reminiscent of Pindar’s songs in honour of mortal victors.”\(^9^4\) Nevertheless, “its adherence to the conventions of encomiastic poetry”\(^9^5\) is perhaps of less interest than the way the chorus intends to use this song. The actual praise of Heracles does not begin until the second strophic sequence, but the first strophic sequence constructs the framework through which the audience can better understand the purpose and importance of poetic praise.


\(^9^5\) Idem, p. 374.
The opening strophe (HF 637-54) develops the conventional view that youth is better than old age, while its accompanying antistrophe (HF 655-72) highlights the difficulty of distinguishing good and bad. The importance of this first antistrophe, in particular, has been undervalued,\(^9\) and its relation to the strophe which follows it has not been properly understood. This is likely due to the curious rhetorical approach that the chorus adopts (HF 655-66):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{εἰ δὲ θεοὶς ἡν ἔννεπις} & \quad 655 \\
\text{kai σοφία κατ’ ἄνδρας,} \\
\text{δίδυμον ἄν ἦσαν ἐφερον} & \quad 660 \\
\text{φανερὸν χαρακτήρ’ ἀρετὰς} \\
\text{όσοιον μέτα, καταθανόντες τ’} \\
\text{εἰς αὐγὰς πάλιν ἀλιου} \\
\text{δυσσοῦς ἄν ἔβαλεν διάλογος,} \\
\text{ἀ δυσγένεια δ’ ἀπλοῦν ἄν} \\
\text{εἰχον ἔσας βίοτον,} \\
\text{καὶ τάδ’ ἴν τοὺς τε κακοὺς ἄν} \\
\text{γνώναι καὶ τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς} & \quad 665
\end{align*}
\]

If the gods had understanding and wisdom concerning men, they would offer a second youth as a visible stamp of aretai for whoever had it, and after death these men would return to the light of the sun for a second run at life, while base men would have but a single course to live, and in this way one might recognize both the bad and the good.

The chorus’ main lament is that human aretē often goes unnoticed, precisely the issue that epinician poetry claims to resolve. At the same time, the mention of a second youth and life are quite obviously a reference to Heracles, on the one hand since he himself has just “return[ed] to the light,” but also because, according to tradition, he would go on to marry the goddess of Youth (Hēbē).\(^9\) Considered in this light, it would appear that not only has Heracles already

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\(^9\) To wit, Yunis, 1988, dedicates only a few sentences to a discussion of the second stasimon (pp. 146-47), despite the fact that the chorus’ criticism of the gods and suggestion of a reward for agathoi would seem to be relevant to the question of divine reciprocity which he addresses in his chapter.

received the “stamp of aretē” that the chorus longs for, but that he will earn it again. Thus, the problem of “recognizing” Heracles’ excellence, at least, has been resolved.

The chorus’ use of a contra-factual condition, however, implies that Heracles’ personal “solution” to the universal problem of discerning human excellence is not especially practical. This is confirmed by the end of the antistrophe (HF 669-72):


\[
\text{νῦν δ’ οὔδεις ὁρος ἐκ θεῶν χρηστοῖς οὔδὲ κακοῖς σαφῆς, 670}
\text{ἀλλ’ εἰλισσόμενος τις αἰ-ών πλοῦτον μόνον αὔξει.}
\]

But in truth there is no clear marker from the gods of either the good or bad, but in its turning, time increases wealth alone.

The term horos refers to a distinct landmark or boundary—precisely the type of “visible stamp” which the chorus calls for above. Despite Heracles’ successful return from Hades, the chorus still bemoans the lack of such a horos. This does not, as Papadopoulou argues, “question and undermine the validity of the identification of Heracles with pure virtue.” Rather, it suggests that Heracles’ aretē is so extraordinary that he alone has earned this mark, and that it is not a solution that is adequate for all, or really any, mortals. Indeed, most mortals risk being cast aside by individuals—such as Lycus—whose “wealth” time has favored. The first antistrophe thus eloquently articulates the difficulty of distinguishing good men from bad, and poses it as a central problem. This neatly encapsulates what the audience sees throughout the first part of the play, in which Lycus audaciously tries to cast Heracles as a kakos—and nearly succeeds. The

98 Papadopoulou, 2005, p. 34.
99 Bond, ed., 1981, p. 232: “[t]he chorus, mindful of Heracles as an exemplum, are in fact asking why all good people (like themselves) should not receive the distinction of a second life.”
hero’s return restores his status, but the chorus remains justifiably concerned that Heracles’ “second youth” is not a viable marker of a man’s excellence. Another measure must be found.

Fittingly, the following strophe describes the only practical solution to the problem of providing proper recognition of outstanding individuals (HF 673-86):

οὐ παύσομαι τὰς Χάριτας 675
Μούσας συγκαταμειγνύς,
ἀδίσταν συζυγίαν.
μὴ ζωήν μετ’ ἀμοιβίας,
αιεὶ δ’ ἐν στεφάνοισιν εἰ-
ην ἐτ’ τοῖς γέρον ἀοι-
δὸς κελαδεῖ Μναμοσύναιν·
ἐτ’ τὰν Ἡρακλέους
καλλίνικον ἀείδω
παρὰ τ’ Βρόμιον οἰνοδόταν
παρὰ τ’ ἠλικόν ἐπτατόνου
μολύπαν καὶ Λίβιν αὐλόν·
οὔπω καταπαύσομεν
Μούσας, αἱ μ’ ἑχόρευσαν.

I will never stop blending 675
the Graces with the Muses,
the sweetest union.
May I not live among the Muse-less,
but always be among the crowned.
Still now the old singer
cries forth Remembrance100
I still sing Heracles’
kallinikos [song]101
alongside wine-giving Bromios
and the tune of the seven-stringed
lyre and the Libyan flute.
Not yet shall I hold back the Muses
who roused me to dance.

Here, the chorus affirms its intention to heap poetic praise upon Heracles, that most epinician of strategies for ensuring the preservation of a deserving individual’s status and renown. References to the Graces, to garlands (stephanosin), and, naturally, to “Heracles’ kallinikos song” all give this passage a distinctly Pindaric flavor, as does the choral use of a first-person singular

100 I.e. Mnemosyne, the mother of the Muses.
aeidō. The instruments mentioned (lyre and aulos) are the ones that generally accompanied epinician songs. In short, the strophe is unmistakably epinician.

The context here is also worth highlighting: immediately after lamenting the lack of a clear “marker” for agathoi and kakoi, the chorus dives headlong into a song of praise for Heracles. They emphasize this act by opening and closing the strophe with the statement that they will never desist from this song of praise. The song thus poses itself as the solution to the very problem the chorus has been lamenting: epinician poetry alone can establish the proper boundary between kakoi and agathoi, and it can keep the memory of that boundary permanent.

This solution is perfectly in line with the epinician tradition that Euripides has been evoking throughout the play. Indeed, we find in Bacchylides a perfect epinician parallel to the chorus’ argumentation (Bacch. 3.88-92):

\[
\text{ἄνδρὶ δ᾿ οὐ θέμις, πολὸν παρέντα γῆρας, θάλειαν αὐτὶς ἀγκωμίσαι ἠβαν. ἀρετὰς γε μὲν οὐ μινύθει βροτῶν ἁμα σώματι φέγγος, ἀλλὰ Μοῦσὰ νιν τρέφει.}
\]

For a man it is not allowed to pass over grey old-age and to recover again blooming youth. At least the splendor of mortal excellence does not dwindle with the body, but the Muse nurtures it.

\[\text{102 Pindar often speaks of the Graces accompanying or favoring his epinician poems. Among others, cf. Isth. 3.8; Pyth. 9.89; Nem. 4.7, etc. For more on this point, cf. Parry, 1965, pp. 369-72. On the stephanos in Pindar, see above, p. 141. Pindar in fact uses the term more than all his predecessors combined. For aeidō, see Ol. 14.18; Nem. 10.31; Isth. 2.12.}
\]

\[\text{103 Carey, 2007, p. 208.}
\] 104 This parallel was first identified and analyzed by Parry, 1965, pp. 369-71.
Just like Euripides’ chorus, Bacchylides notes that a second youth is impossible, but that the memory of a man’s aretē may nevertheless be secured by the muse, which is to say by songs of praise. In fact, the only way that Bacchylides’ formulation of the question differs from Euripides’ is in his explicit expression of the solution. Pindar’s understanding of the problem is also comparable. As discussed above, Pindar was just as concerned as the chorus of the Heracles that a heroic individual might find obscurity instead of fame. The culprit he identifies in Nemean 8 are the phthoneroi who use slander to destroy their superiors and raise themselves up—individuals analogous to Lycus. And in the end, Pindar suggests that it is only by “praising the praiseworthy, and sowing blame for the wicked” (Nem. 8.39: αἰνεῖν αἰνητά, μομφάν δ’ ἐπισπείρων ἀλητροίς) that the epinician poet can ward off phthonos from his laudandi, and to guarantee their enduring fame. In short, Pindar and Bacchylides both pose the same problem as the chorus of the Heracles, and all three suggest that praise poetry is the only way to ensure that aretē is properly and permanently recognized.

The final antistrophe of the ode continues to advance epinician motifs, but here the chorus broadens its base, so to speak, by implicating the Theban citizenry as a whole (HF 687-700):


105 Carey, 1976, p. 34: “the form of the expression suggests especially the role of the poet and chorus as remembrancer of great deeds.”
παιόνας ἰ ἐπὶ σοῖς μελαθροὶς κύκνος ὄς γέρων ἀοιδὸς πολιάν ἐκ γενύων
κελαδήσω· τὸ γὰρ εὗ τοῖς ἔμνοισιν ὑπάρχει·

695

Λύως ὁ παῖς· τὰς δ’ εὐγενίας
πλέον υπεβάλλων ἄρετα
μοχθήσας τὸν ἀκυμον
θήκεν βισον βροτοίς
πέρσας δείματα θηρῶν.

700

So shall I, like a swan, an aged singer, cry forth Paens before your chambers from greying jaws. For the good lives in these hymns: He is the son of Zeus; yet surpassing even his nobility in virtue he labored and made the world safe for mankind, when he slayed the beastly horrors.

The chorus here transitions from a song whose central focus is the praise of Heracles, to the performance of a paean in the hero’s honor. This poetic progression has two principal and conflicting effects.\textsuperscript{106} On the one hand, by invoking the paean, a type of song that “had the integrative function of articulating a sense of community among the members, and of expressing this sense before the polis as a whole,”\textsuperscript{107} the chorus turns its attention directly to Thebes and the city’s relationship with the hero. The implication is that the entire polis should celebrate Heracles’ deeds, both his now-inevitable defeat of Lycus as well as the fact that he has “made the world safe for mankind” by “slay[ing] the beastly horrors.”\textsuperscript{108} In other words, the benefits he has conferred upon Thebes and upon humanity should be properly and widely

\begin{itemize}
\item Setting aside the fusion of different poetic genres within a single ode, a common tragic technique that I discuss above on pp. 139-140 in relation to the first stasimon.
\item Ian Rutherford, \textit{Pindar’s Paeans: A Reading of the Fragments with a Survey of the Genre} (Oxford, 2001), pp 61-62: See also Swift, 2010, p. 63: “In public \textit{paianes}, the chorus not only represents the \textit{polis} as a whole but often symbolizes a communal response to a potential disaster which could affect the group. Thus...the \textit{paian} represents the community’s response to the crisis they face or to their salvation.”
\item In fact, his defeat of Lycus is by no means totally divorced from the beast-slayings that the chorus is invoking; the word \textit{lukos}, after all, means “wolf.” Parry, 1965, p. 373, and Foley, 1985, p. 181, both briefly mention this correspondence.
\end{itemize}
repaid, just as Amphitryon had suggested earlier.\textsuperscript{109} In this sense, at least, the final antistrophe does not represent a sharp break from the praise-song of the first three strophes, for it adopts the same epinician strategy that Pindar uses when he encourages his victors’ communities to accept and celebrate their heroes by emphasizing the advantages they have conferred upon the \textit{polis}.\textsuperscript{110}

At the same time, the excessive nature of the chorus’ praise represents a sharp divergence from the epinician tradition. By comparing their song for Heracles to the paeans sung by the Delian maidens, the chorus essentially accords Heracles the same status as Apollo.\textsuperscript{111} As Hubbard points out, “[t]he \textit{laudator’s} praise should not be so excessive and unqualified as to make even the gods jealous. [He] must distinguish man from god.”\textsuperscript{112} This is precisely what the chorus does not do. This transition from the conventional to the unconventional—from crowning a mortal with a song of praise to honoring him with a paean—is an act that brings with it great risk, namely that “he might obtain from the envious gods a

\textsuperscript{109} \textit{HF} 222-28; on which see above, p.137.
\textsuperscript{110} Cf. above, p. 128.
change in fortunes.” The second *stasimon* thus ends on a note that is at once enthusiastic and ominous.

*The third stasimon: epinician song, the call to praise, and a kōmos in Thebes*

The third *stasimon* begins a mere forty lines after the end of the second, and the short episode that lies between the two odes consists mainly of Amphitryon convincing an ever-boastful Lycus to go inside, where Heracles awaits in ambush. The outcome—Lycus’ death—is predictable, and it occurs during the beginning of the third *stasimon*, with the tyrant’s death-screams punctuating the chorus’ triumphant song. The second strophe of the third *stasimon* begins immediately after the chorus announces Lycus’ death (*HF* 760-61), and it picks up where the second *stasimon* left off, with a call to the city as a whole to join with their song (*HF* 763-67):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{χοροὶ χοροὶ} & \quad \text{Dances, dances} \\
\text{kai θαλαὶ μέλουσι Θη-} & \quad \text{and celebrations enthrall} \\
\text{βας ιερὸν κατ’ ἀστυ.} & \quad \text{the holy town of Thebes.} \\
\text{μεταλλαγαὶ γὰρ δακρύων,} & \quad \text{Changes of tears,} \\
\text{μεταλλαγαὶ συντυχίας} & \quad \text{Changes of fortune} \\
< > \text{έτεκον ἄοιδας}. & \quad < > \text{have given birth to songs.}
\end{align*}
\]

While only implicit in the second *stasimon*, the civic dimension of the choral odes is explicit here. According to the chorus, Heracles’ victory has “given birth to songs”—presumably songs of praise. Most importantly, the entire city of Thebes is envisioned joining in this celebration of

\[113\] Pi. *Pyth.* 10.20-21: μὴ φθονερὰς ἐκ θεῶν/μετατροπίας ἐπικύρωσας. Even though *phthonerais* obviously modifies *metatropiais* in the Greek, in order to render the sense more clearly I have translated it as if it were modifying *theōn*. This is, in any case, the point that Pindar is making.
the hero, and it is apparent that the *polis* as a whole benefits from the “changes of fortune” wrought by Heracles.

A few lines later, the universal aspect of this celebration is even clearer—and indeed even more clearly epinician (HF 781-88):

Iσμήν’ ὄ στεφαναφόρει,  
ἐξετάι θ’ ἐπταπύλου πόλεως  
ἀναχορεύσατ’ ἁγυιαί,  
Δίρκα θ’ ἁ καλλιφειόθρος,  
σὺν τ’ Ἀσωπιάδες κόραι,  
πατρὸς ὑδωρ βάτε λιπτοῦσαι συναιδοί,  
Νύμφαι, τὸν Ἡρακλέους  
καλλίνικον ἀγώνα.

Ismenus, deck yourself with garlands,  
And raise a choral dance, polished  
streets of the seven-gated city.  
Come, beautifully-flowing Dirce,  
And with you the daughters of Asopus,  
Leave your father’s water to sing,  
Nymphs, in harmony, of Heracles’ gloriously triumphant struggle.

Perhaps the most striking feature of these lines is the series of imperatives the chorus delivers. The addressees—the Ismenus, the streets of the city, the Dirce, and the daughters of Asopus—represent the city as a whole, a metonymic strategy that Pindar also exploited. According to the chorus, Thebes must welcome Heracles with song and dance, and by bearing the crown Heracles has bestowed upon the city. Since the subject of the song and dance will be Heracles’ *kallinkos agōn*, it is clear that the chorus is calling for the performance of praise poetry in his honor. The use of imperatives, implying that this act is not only desirable but indeed necessary, is an “injunction of praise,” the sort of which are ubiquitous in Pindar’s work. And finally, the mention of a crown is especially suggestive, since it can only be a reference to the crowns with

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114 This is obviously true of the “streets of the city”; the Ismenus and the Dirce were both bodies of water associated with the city; and the daughters of Asopus include Thebe, after whom the city is named (cf. Pi. *Isth.* 8.15-20). Pindar and other poets frequently used Dirce to refer “metonymically” to the entire city of Thebes. Cf. Pi. *Ol.* 10.85; Bond, ed. 1981, p. 272; Daniel Berman, “Dirce at Thebes,” *Greece & Rome* 54 (2007): pp. 21-24.

which victors were rewarded at the Olympic games, and we know from Pindar that the “bearing of the crown” (i.e. *stephanophoria*) was often an integral part of epinician celebration.\(^{116}\) Hence, what the chorus imagines is unmistakably akin to the *kōmos* that would greet athletic victors in their home cities, and the strophe is a typical epinician demand that a local hero be received with celebratory praise.

Moreover, the chorus here does not simply call for the celebration and praise of Heracles’ victory: it also explains why this is a necessary recompense for the great benefit he has conferred on the Thebes. We know that victors would often dedicate their crowns to their home cities upon their arrival.\(^{117}\) As Kurke has argued, this act symbolized the transferal of *kudos* from victor to *polis*, a major boon for the city as a whole.\(^{118}\) Pindar frequently refers to this simultaneous sharing of crown and *kudos*, and he does so in order to both encourage and justify the accordance of poetic praise to the victor.\(^{119}\) Within this epinician framework, “[t]he city ‘receives’ the *kudos*…and the individual ‘receives’ praise from everyone, but first and foremost from his fellow citizens.”\(^{120}\) In other words, Pindar proposes a straightforward dynamic of

\(^{116}\) Cf. e.g. *Ol*. 8.9-10, in which the the *kōmos* and the *stephanophoria* occur simultaneously: ἀλλ’ ὠ Πίσος εὐδενδρον ἔτει Ἀρειώ ἄλεος τόνδε κόμον καὶ στεφανοφορίαν δέξαι.


\(^{119}\) Kurke, 1991, pp. 203-09. Among other sources, Kurke cites Pindar’s *Ol*. 4.8-12; *Ol*. 5.1-8; *Pyth*. 12.4-6; and *Isth*. 1.10-12

\(^{120}\) Eadem, p. 209.
reciprocity between victor and *polis*—*kudos* in exchange for poetic praise—and this is precisely what the chorus suggests must take place in Thebes.

The end of the strophe represents this dynamic of reciprocity in an even more concrete manner, claiming for Heracles the honor of having restored the original Theban dynasty (*HF* 792-97):

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αὔξετ' εὐγαθεὶ κελάδω
ἐμὰν πόλιν, ἐμὰ τείχῃ,
Σπαρτῶν ἵνα γένος ἔφανε
χαλκασπίδων λόχος, ὃς γὰν
τέκνων τέκνοις μεταμεῖβει,
Θῆβαις ιερὸν φῶς.
```

Exalt my city, my walls,
with a cheerful cry,
where the race of Sown-men
appeared, a bronze-shielded host
that delivers this land to its children’s children,
a sacred light for Thebes.

Heracles’ defeat of Lycus, then, is not merely another one of his labors. Rather, it symbolizes the return of the descendants of Cadmus—Thebes’ “sacred light”—to their rightful place. Once again, Heracles’ benefaction is stressed, and the communal celebration and praise of Heracles is required as compensation for his work on behalf of the entire city. Euripides’ chorus not only mimics Pindar’s language, they also adopt his poetic and rhetorical strategy. In so doing, they appear to resolve the problem of Heracles’ acceptance in the contemporary *polis* through the performance of epinician poetry and the application of epinician principles. Freed of *stasis*, Thebes can now properly welcome its hero.

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121 Following Bond’s editorial correction of ἥξετ’, which “must be corrupt” (1981, p. 275). The subjects here are actually “the Pythian rock” and the muses (*HF* 790-91), though given the context it is obvious that they are to join in the general celebration that reverberates throughout Thebes.
122 E.g. *stephanophorei* and *kallinikon agon*.
123 Bond, ed., 1981, 272, notes the “encomiastic use of geography, of which there is much in Pindar,” though in his analysis of the passage he does not go beyond this basic enumeration of epinician elements.
A new crisis, or,

How Athens saves the day: epinician reciprocity and Heracles’ integration in the polis

As the third stasimon comes to a close with one final, celebratory stanza, one gets the sense that the chorus might make good on their claim to “never stop” singing Heracles’ praises (HF 673-75). Alas, a rude interruption awaits them. Just as they are wrapping up the final antistrophe of their encomium, darkness, in the form of Iris and Lyssa, rises above the stage (HF 815-21). Madness descends on the hero and turns him against his family (HF 875 ff.). His wife and children are, of course, no match for Heracles’ bow and club, both of which he uses to great effect. Amphitryon alone survives the onslaught, only thanks to Athena, who arrives and knocks Heracles unconscious.

Many attempts have been made to explain the motives behind Heracles’ downfall, but the grounds that Iris specifically enumerates are ultimately the most credible (HF 840-42):

\begin{align*}
\gamma\nu\iota\nu\, \mu\varepsilon\nu \, \tau\omicron \, \acute{\iota} \nu \, \mathrm{Hr}a\varsigma \, \sigma\varphi\zeta \, \acute{o}z \, \acute{e}\omicron \tau \omicron \, \acute{\alpha}u\varsigma \acute{\iota} \, \chi\omicron\lambda\varsigma \zeta, \\
\mathrm{m}\acute{a}\theta\omicron \, \delta\varepsilon \, \tau\omicron \, \epsilon\mu\omicron\nu \omicron \, \acute{\iota} \, \theta\omicron\varepsilon\omicron \, \mu\varepsilon\nu \, \omicron\upsilon\delta\alpha\mu\omicron\omicron, \\
\end{align*}

That he may know the depth of Hera’s anger, and so he may learn mine; for the gods will be

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124 The third antistrophe (HF 798-814) continues to develop the encomiastic themes developed throughout the first five stanzas, referring to Heracles’ divine heritage, his strength (HF 806: αλκάν), and his victory over Cerberus.

125 The scene is described by a messenger: HF 910-1015.

126 For surveys of early explanations of Heracles’ madness, see Bond, ed., 1981, pp. xix-xxii. More recently, scholars have tended to emphasize one of the two explanations provided by Iris (i.e. Hera’s anger or the gods’ desire to show their superiority); cf. e.g. Foley, 1985, p. 192; M.S. Silk, “Heracles and Greek Tragedy,” Greece & Rome 32 (1985): p. 17; Halleran, 1986, pp. 177-78; Hartigan, 1987; Yunis, 1988, p. 151; Justina Gregory, Euripides and the Instructions of the Athenians (Ann Arbor, 1991), p. 136. In a slight variation of this theme, Griffiths, 2002, has posited an innovative though ultimately unconvincing argument, namely that Heracles is punished for his “capture of Kerberos [which] threatens to destroy the fundamental basis of human/divine interaction, namely mortality” (p. 650).
The first reason is relatively straightforward: Hera is angry because Heracles is the illegitimate child of her philandering husband Zeus. The second reason—that Heracles’ punishment will serve as a lesson to mortals—is somewhat more complex. On the surface, there is no obvious reason that the gods should be threatened by Heracles’ prowess; great hero that he is, Heracles is nevertheless destined to die. Laura Swift, however, has recently made a crucial observation that both helps explain the gods’ reasoning and connects this episode to the epinician apparatus of the play: as she points out, the epinician odes of the first half of the play are, in their “lack of moderation,” an inflammatory element; by assimilating Heracles to a god, the chorus paves his road to ruin.¹²⁷

On the one hand, this observation reaffirms the importance of epinician poetry within the *Heracles*, for we see that the values of the genre are relevant even during the tragic crisis which threatens Heracles’ identity as a hero worthy of celebration. As Iris suggests, epinician praise is not enough to secure for Heracles his proper place in the *polis*; epinician moderation is just as necessary. The divine backlash against the chorus’ lack of epinician moderation creates doubts about the role that the genre is to play in the tragedy, and raises the need for a

¹²⁷ Swift, 2010, p. 149. I discuss the excessive nature of the chorus’ praise in the second stasimon above on p. 151; Swift (pp. 147-49) notes that all three choral stasima contain elements of this excess. The fact that Heracles later cites Hera’s *phthonos* (*HF* 1309: *φθονο

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reaffirmation of these epinician values. As it turns out, this reaffirmation can only be provided by Theseus, who arrives shortly thereafter and offers to bring Heracles to Athens.

Scholars have either failed to connect this pivotal episode to the epinician framework that dominates the first half of the tragedy, or have underestimated the extent to which Theseus’ reasoning recalls epinician ideology. For Swift, in fact, the outcome of the tragedy actually “undermines epinician values,” since when Athens accepts Heracles into the polis, the “political overtones [of the genre] are effaced…and the emphasis is on the role of the community to protect individuals, rather than their capacity to glorify it.” This argument, however, overlooks the fact that Theseus brings Heracles to Athens precisely because the polis stands to gain by its association with the hero—just as Pindar suggests—and that he uses epinician language to make this point. In this light, the ideals of epinician poetry appear very much alive in this tragic Athens.

It is worth looking more closely at the final episode of the tragedy, for in it we see Heracles once again at risk of exclusion from the modern polis, but with Athens now able to provide appropriate recompense for his earlier heroic deeds. Following an ample period of lamentation by the chorus, Amphitryon, and finally Heracles (HF 1016-1162), Theseus arrives on-stage to find Heracles covering his face in shame. Theseus learns of the murders from

128 Eadem, p. 151.
129 Eadem, p. 156. See also Gregory, 1991, pp. 141-49, who argues more generally (and with no reference to epinician poetry) that Euripides creates out of Heracles a hero who fits more easily with the anti-individualist ideals of democratic Athens.
Amphitryon (HF 1178-95) and commands Heracles to desist from hiding (HF 1214-15). Heracles, however, is inclined to die (HF 1241), and in a somewhat surprising defense of this desire he notes that it is not simply the death of his children, but rather his life-long suffering that is driving him to suicide (HF 1255-78).

The situation in which he finds himself is eerily familiar, and appears to take us full circle to the beginning of the play. Even though Theseus recognizes that Heracles is a “benefactor to mortals,” (HF 1252: εὐεργέτης βροτοῖ) the hero can justifiably echo Amphitryon’s earlier lament and respond that “mortals do not help me at all” (HF 1253: οἱ δ’ οὐδὲν ὄφελούσι μ[ε]). This lack of reciprocity is exemplified by the universal exile which Heracles fears awaits him (HF 1281-88):

I’ve come to this point of need; it is not holy For me to live in my beloved Thebes; even if I did stay, to which temple or group of friends would I go? For my curse is not easy to address. Might I go to Argos? But how, an exile from my own land? Then to what other city shall I turn? When recognized I shall be held in suspicion, and pricked by the bitter spurs of men’s words.

Just as Heracles’ family was cast out from Thebes at the start of the play, so too does the hero now find himself beyond the city walls and without a home. The cause this time is different—Heracles’ “curse” and pollution rather than Lycus’ tyranny—but the result is fundamentally the same: rather than receiving praise and acceptance, Heracles will be banished and subject to

\[130\] HF 222-26; see above pp. 137-138.
insults. Moreover, just as Amphitryon had pointed out earlier, this problem exists not only in Thebes but in all of Greece. Little has changed with respect to the beginning of the play: the hero will receive no compensation for his toils, and the respect for epinician values in this contemporary world again appears lacking.

Were the play to end here, without any further reference to epinician poetry, one might be tempted to agree with arguments that the Heracles ultimately rejects or depoliticizes epinician values. But Theseus’ analysis of the situation is quite different from Heracles’, and indeed he revives the idea of reciprocity in a manner that recalls Pindar’s poetry and the chorus’ earlier ruminations. The first hint of Theseus’ attitude comes directly after his arrival with a band of Athenian youths (koroi). Unaware of the massacre that has just occurred, he declares that he has come to aid in Heracles’ battle against Lycus, in order to “give recompense” (HF 1169: τίνων δ’ ἀμοιβὰς) for his recent rescue from Hades. On the one hand, Theseus’ ignorance of the situation and Heracles’ cowering stance cloud the argument that there is a reassertion of epinician ideals; Heracles now hardly seems to fit the role of the epinician hero. At the same time, however, the terms with which Theseus describes his intentions are reminiscent of both Amphitryon’s earlier calls for amoibai, and Pindaric formulations of epinician reciprocity.  

As for example in Pyth. 2.24, in which Ixion is imagined enjoining all mortals to “repay [timesthai] your benefactor with gentle requitals” (τὸν εὐεργέταν ἄγανας ἀμοιβὰς ἐποιχομένους τίνεσθαι). It is worth noting that Euripides twice emphasizes, in this episode, the fact that Heracles is an euergetēs (HF 1252, 1309).  

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such, the audience is reminded that, despite his divinely inspired mishap, great debts are still
owed to Heracles.132

A short time later, Theseus brings the notion of a widespread obligation to Heracles into
sharper focus. He does so by proposing that Heracles come to Athens, using notions of both
individual and collective reciprocity to persuade the hero to accept his offer (HF 1325-35):

δόμους τε δώσω χρημάτων τ᾽ ἐμῶν μέρος. 1325  I shall give you a home and a share of my
possessions.

α δ᾽ εκ πολιτῶν δῶρ᾽ ἐχω σώσας κόρους
dies ἐπτά, ταύτην Κνώσιον κατακτανών,
σοὶ ταύτα δῶσο. πανταχοῦ δὲ μοι χθονὸς
temένη δέδασται: ταυτ᾽ ἐπονομασμένα
σέθεν τὸ λοιπὸν ἐκ βροτῶν κεκλήσται
ζώντος: θανόντα δ᾽ εὑτ᾽ ἂν εἰς Λίδου μόλης,

θυσίαισι λαίνοισι τ᾽ ἐξογκώμασι
τίμων ἀνάξει πᾶο᾽ Ἀθηναίων πόλις.
καλὸς γὰρ ἀστοῖς στέφανος Ἐλλήνων ὦπο
ἀνδρ᾽ ἐσθλὸν ὄφελοῦντας εὐκλείας τυχεῖν

1330  What I received from the citizens when I saved
the fourteen youths and killed the Cnosian bull,
I shall give these to you. In all the land precincts
have been given to me; and these shall be named
for you and will be celebrated133 thus by mortals
while you live; and when you have died and
gone to Hades,

the whole city of Athens shall lift you up,
honored by sacrifices and marbled mounds.
For to earn great glory among the Greeks
by helping a noble man is a beautiful crown
for citizens.

A number of Pindaric principles are explicitly raised in these eleven lines. Theseus’ gift of
various lands is a case of reciprocity that falls well within the range of the closed circle of
aristocratic gift-giving. Even more compellingly, Theseus asserts that the civic dimension of
reciprocity is also crucial. In fact, such reciprocity seems to be common in Athens, for the
Athenian citizens had rewarded Theseus with great honors in exchange for his heroic battle

132 It’s true that Theseus understands the “debt” to occur within a more closed, aristocratic circle than the chorus had
previously imagined, that is to say strictly between Theseus and Heracles. But Pindar’s poetry is also replete with
references to this very type of private gift exchange (cf. Kurke, 1991, pp. 85-159), and Theseus will soon show that he
is aware of the need for a broader, civic recognition of Heracles’ actions.

with the Minotaur. In other words, Theseus had already received in Athens the reception that Heracles so richly deserved in Thebes, and for the same beast-killing feats that Lycus had earlier mocked. It is thus apparent that Theseus’ offer of honors in Athens is not simply a one-off, but rather part of a pattern of recognition and recompense for great deeds within the polis.

The epinician tones emerge even more directly in the final four lines. The word stephanos alone suffices to recall Pindar’s poetry. As mentioned above, the concept of the crown is tied to epinician poetry in a number of ways, most obviously by virtue of being, quite literally, the prize for athletic success. But the epinician crown also functions on a number of symbolic levels, not least of which is the fact that it is the physical manifestation of the kudos with which the hero returns, and which he shares with his polis.134 Theseus—much like Pindar135—suggests that the hero himself is the stephanos; that Heracles’ very essence and presence in Athens bestows this kudos on all its citizens. But in order for Athens to gain this kudos, it will have to integrate him into the polis and provide him with honors in return for his benefaction. Theseus thus adopts a common epinician formulation: that the glory of an individual such as Heracles may be refracted throughout a larger community, but that the community must first accept him into its fold. In the world of the tragedy, then, epinician celebration is necessary on a city-wide level for two reasons: to provide proper recompense for Heracles’ labors; and to allow the polis a share of his kudos.

134 For more, see above pp. 153-155.
135 E.g. Pyth. 9.4.
The epinician nature of Theseus’ offer is also borne out in the specific honors that he guarantees. That the precincts shall be named after Heracles is an obvious boon for the hero, as it will serve to preserve his memory in eternity; to ward off the lethē (“oblivion”) that Pindar warned was the gravest danger for his laudandi.\footnote{See above p. 134. Cf. also Charles Segal, “Naming, Truth, and Creation in the Poetics of Pindar,” Diacritics 16 (1986c): p. 72: “[t]he very act of naming the victor in the epinician ode overcomes the potential threat of ‘oblivion’ brought by silence.”}136 Regarding the promises of “sacrifices” and “marbled mounds,” scholars have pointed out that this basically amounts to the establishment of a hero cult for Heracles.\footnote{E.g. Foley, 1985, pp. 165-67, 192-95.}137 Here too there is an intriguing connection to epinician poetry. As Bruno Currie has argued, “epinician poetry was...anchored to hero cult at both ends of its production: at the games where the victory was won, and at the victor’s city where the ode was, most often, performed.”\footnote{Bruno Currie, Pindar and the Cult of Heroes (Oxford, 2005), p. 58.}138 Currie suggests that the analogies between victor and hero, as frequent in Pindar as they are in the Heracles, might be literal on a certain level; that great achievements, combined with epinician poetry, could actually “anticipate a posthumous cult of the laudandus.”\footnote{Idem, p. 408. This concept is, in fact, argued for throughout much of Currie’s book.}139 As such, in proposing that lands be named after Heracles, and by establishing posthumous honors for the man he calls the “crown” of Athens, Theseus uses the principles of epinician poetry to mediate the integration of Heracles into the Athenian polis. It need hardly be said that Athens plays the role of a virtuous polis in the Heracles. But just as Thebes’ sickness was manifest exclusively in Lycus’ denigration of Heracles, so too is Athens’ excellence exemplified by their acceptance of the hero.
Less than a hundred lines remain after Theseus extends his invitation. In his reply, the hero addresses a number of different topics, among which are his view of the gods and his grief at the loss of his family. His acceptance of Theseus’ offer seems inevitable, but it is worth noting the terms on which he does so (HF 1351-53):

εἶμι δ’ ἐς πόλιν
tήν σήν, χάριν τε μυρίων δώρων ἔχω.
ἀταρ πόνων δὴ μυρίων ἐγευσάμην.
I will come to your city,
and I bear great thanks [charis] for your countless gifts,
though I have tasted countless troubles.

Heracles considers Theseus’ offer an act of charis, a gift that is either the obligatory return of a prior favor, or one which establishes new obligations. This idea runs through nearly every area of Greek thought (or poetry), but the last line of the passage provides a definitively epinician flavor to Heracles’ formulation. Heracles conceives of the “countless gifts” he will receive from Theseus and Athens as proper compensation for the “countless troubles” he has undergone. This recognition of the charis he has earned mirrors Pindaric formulations, such as when the poet notes that it is “not with an un-toiled heart…that he [i.e. the laudandus] asks for

140 Scholars have interpreted Heracles’ response in a number of different ways, focusing variously on his puzzling analysis of the divine sphere (puzzling because he appears “call into question the fundamental presuppositions of the plot” —Lawrence, 1998, p. 129) and on his true motivations in deciding to live. For more on these questions, the complexity of which makes a discussion here impossible, cf. Halleran, 1986; Michelini, 1987, pp. 267 ff.; Yunis, 1988, pp. 155 ff.; Lawrence, 1998; Papadopoulou, 2005, pp. 173 ff.

141 While his use of atar might indicate that a new, unrelated thought is being introduced, Euripides’ anaphoric use of μυρίων belies that interpretation, and suggests we must consider the two lines to be completely connected. See the note ad loc. in Bond, ed., 1981, p. 404.
charis.” In short, Heracles understands perfectly the purpose and intrinsic benefits of epinician mediation.

As he wraps up his acceptance speech, Heracles dwells on the question of whether he should take his weapons. Holding them before the audience, he imagines them reminding him of the murderous role they have just played (HF 1380-81). Nevertheless, he decides he cannot be deprived of the weapons with which he accomplished “the noblest of deeds in Greece” (HF 1383: τὰ καλλιστ’ ἔξεπραξ’ ἐν Ἑλλάδι). He does so specifically in order that he not “die shamefully” (HF 1384: αἰσχρῶς θάνω), under the power of his enemies. The use of aischros here is important, for it confirms that, despite Heracles’ travails, his reputation is still of great import. It is on account of this that he brings “the symbol[s] of his aretē” with him to Athens, the one polis that can guarantee a reception worthy of his fame.

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142 Nem. 10.30-31: οὐδ’ ἀμόχθῳ καρδίᾳ…παρατείται χάριν. Here the victor (Theaeus of Argos) is praying for charis from Zeus, but the point is the same: charis can only be given as a result for toil. Cf. Bonnie MacLachlan, The Age of Grace: Charis in Early Greek Poetry (Princeton, 1993), p. 90.

5. **Conclusions: A Contrast of Receptions in Euripides' Two Athens**

*Epinician in the Heracles: some conclusions*

Throughout the *Heracles*, Euripides examines the twin problems of heroic glory and the communal recompense it is due, and he does so with a backdrop that is consistently epinician. These questions are of such import in the play that they are the focus of not one, but two different tragic crises. In the first part of the play, the possibility of praise for Heracles is blatantly rejected by the tyrant Lycus, an attitude that is the fundamental expression of Thebes’ stasis. Against Lycus stand the chorus and Amphitryon, both of whom consistently describe Heracles as a prototypical epinician hero, and both of whom insist that he has earned a certain civic reciprocity. The chorus, in particular, describes the relationship between the hero and his *polis*, or indeed the world as a whole, in terms that are unmistakably epinician: poetic praise is described as the only way to both recognize and compensate Heracles’ heroic travails, and the whole city of Thebes is called on to participate in an epinician *kōmos*. Yet the *polis*, as represented by Lycus, has failed to do so. Heracles’ victory over Lycus seems to resolve this problem, as the city of Thebes, now led by the chorus, appears ready to give him the praise and reception he deserves.

Nevertheless, the interference of the gods makes this impossible, and Heracles' integration into a contemporary *polis* is once again endangered. Theseus resolves this second crisis, and just like the chorus before him, he does so under the guise of epinician principles:
Athens will welcome Heracles; it will accord him the honors he has earned; and in so doing, the
city will earn a share of the glory and *kudos* that Heracles brings with him. In other words,
Athens and Heracles will enact the very same dynamic that Pindar is ever at pains to encourage
and cultivate. In the end, epinician poetry and principles earn the redemption that Heracles
himself does; the genre’s search for and discovery of a place in the contemporary *polis* mimics
that of the hero.

_Epinician in Athens: a different story_

In the world of the tragedy, the reliance on epinician principles in order to accomplish
the integration of Heracles into Athenian society seems perfectly natural, perhaps even
inevitable given the constant references to the genre. In many ways, however, this tragic
acceptance of epinician poetry and values is at odds with the genre’s reception in the Athens of
Euripides’ audience. To be sure, a great many Athenians were familiar with Pindar’s epinician
odes.¹⁴⁴ But there is evidence that democratic Athens was particularly reluctant to welcome
athletic victors in the celebratory manner that Pindar prescribed, or indeed to view them so
favorably as to consider them “crowns” for the city. Moreover, there is compelling evidence that

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¹⁴⁴ On this question, please see the Introduction, pp. 30-34.
suggests that the question of whether or how to do so was of particular relevance in the specific period in which the *Heracles* was produced.¹⁴⁵

The traditional view has long been that democratic Athens was naturally “hostile” to epinician poetry.¹⁴⁶ The basis for this argument generally rests on the relative dearth of epinician odes composed on behalf of Athenian victors,¹⁴⁷ on the supposition that all of these may have been composed before 486 BCE,¹⁴⁸ on the fact that no Athenian is mentioned by Pindar after the radicalizing reforms of Ephialtes in the late 460s BCE,¹⁴⁹ and on a Thucydidean passage which shows Alcibiades lamenting the unfair reception that greeted his Olympic victory at home.¹⁵⁰ Various motives have been adduced to explain this apparent indifference to athletic victors,

¹⁴⁵ I.e. c. 415 BCE, cf. above p. 112 fn 2.
¹⁴⁷ Three or four (Pi. *Pyth.* 7 and *Nem.* 2; Bacchylides 10; and Pindar’s fr. 6c, an “Oschophoricon” of which only the title remains). This is far fewer, especially considering the number of Athenian victors, than *poleis* such as Aegina (14) or Syracuse (7 or 8). All numbers listed here are based on those presented in a helpful chart in Aloni, 2012, p. 31.
¹⁴⁸ As expressed by Bowra, 1938, p. 268, and Mark Golden, *Sports and Society in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 86. Golden specifically says that “the last datable epinician” for an Athenian victor was composed in 486 BC (*Pyth.* 7), but this does not include the undatable second *Nemean*. Aloni, 2012, p. 33, states that “[a]ll three epinicia…date back to the early decades of the fifth century.”
¹⁵⁰ Th. 6.16, on which more below.
above all that Athenian democratic ideology was fundamentally incompatible with the
ostentatious celebration of an elite individual that epinician poetry entailed.\(^1\)

While these arguments are compelling, this traditional stance has been recently and
justifiably questioned by scholars such as Hornblower and Swift.\(^2\) They note, variously, that
the three or four epinicians composed for Athenian victors, while scanty in comparison to
Aegina, are more than can be found for other major cities such as Corinth, Argos, and Sparta;\(^3\)
that insofar as it is completely undatable, Pindar’s second *Nemean*, in honor of Timodemus of
Acharnae, may well post-date the radicalization of Athenian democracy in the 460s BCE;\(^4\) that
epinician poetry seems to have “died out” throughout Greece a short time after Ephialtes’
reforms;\(^5\) that other, non-epinician honors were accorded to athletic victors, such as “meals at
public expense in the *prytaneion*”;\(^6\) and that athletes appear to have been widely admired,

\(^{1}\) Once again in Bowra, 1938; Segal, 1986a; and Papakonstantinou, 2003. Other ideological reasons for this aversion
have been suggested, such as the fact established cities such as Athens (or Sparta) “had little need of Pindar’s public
relations business,” cf. T.K. Hubbard, “Pindar and Athens after the Persian Wars,” in *Geb es das Griechische Wunder?*
Michael Strocka (Mainz, 2001), p. 397; or, as Aloni, 2012 argues, that epinician self-promotion was generally
discouraged in cities with “‘strong’ polities where civic identity prevailed over ties to *genos* and family” (p. 37).


\(^{4}\) Hornblower, 2004, p. 248 fn 468, followed by Swift, 2010, p. 107. Hornblower (ibid.) argues that the same may be
true of *Ol*. 8, in which the Athenian trainer Melesias is singled out for praise by Pindar. I would argue, however, that
even if *Ol*. 8 does post-date 460 BC, it says little about the relationship between Pindar and democratic Athens insofar
as the poem, written for the Aeginetan victor Alcimeda, was not intended for performance in front of an Athenian
audience.

\(^{5}\) Swift, 2010, p. 108. Swift also mentions the possibility that victors were given “cash bonuses on their return home,”
though she herself notes that, since we hear of this only from Plutarch (*Sol*. 23.3) and Diogenes Laertes (1.55), the
evidence “may be a retrojection of later practice” (ibid., fn 19).

\(^{6}\) Eadem, p. 110.
while their training was, to some extent, publicly funded.\textsuperscript{157} In short, Hornblower and Swift effectively show that the evidence for democratic incompatibility with epinician poetry is problematic at best.

Nevertheless, there is still substantial reason to believe that the question of athletic honors, and of epinician honors in particular, was a complex problem for Athens throughout the fifth century. To begin, the existence of epinician poems for Athenian victors—whether before or after 460 BCE—cannot be unilaterally interpreted as evidence that the city had a completely easy relationship with the genre. The seventh Pythian, for example, was composed for Megacles while he was in exile from Athens, and is in fact overtly critical of Athenian attitudes towards the victory and his elite family.\textsuperscript{158} Bacchylides 10, another undatable\textsuperscript{159} epinician written for an unknown Athenian victor, features other anomalies. In particular, Bacchylides explicitly mentions the phulē (civic tribe) to which the victor belonged, noting that he has “brought kudos to broad Athens and fame [doxan] to the Oeneidae.”\textsuperscript{160} This appears to be one of only two times epinician poetry refers to the victor’s civic group, rather than his oikos or polis.\textsuperscript{161} On this basis, Aloni argues that the ode privileges civic institutions over family

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid. For a much more in-depth look at these questions, see Donald G. Kyle, \textit{Athletics in Ancient Athens} (Leiden, 1987).

\textsuperscript{158} Cf. \textit{Pyth}, 7.18-19, where, after noting the numerous athletic successes achieved by Megacles and his “forefathers” [progonōn, i.e. the Alcmaeonidae], Pindar states that he “grieve[s] at the envy with which noble deeds are repaid” (τὸ δ’ ἀχνυμαι,φθόνον αμεβόμενον τὰ καλὰ ἔργα). On this, see more below, p. 177.


\textsuperscript{160} Bacch. 10.17-18: κύδος εὐρείας Αθαναὶς/θήκας Οἰνείδαις τε δόξαν.

\textsuperscript{161} At least in the extant odes of Pindar and Bacchylides. On the second instance, see below, p. 172.
connections. Aloni may be going too far here, not least because the fragmentary state of the poem prevents us from knowing with any certainty whether the victor’s family is also singled out for praise. But given the rarity of Bacchylides’ tribal reference, it is fair to believe that he is modifying essential elements of the epinician tradition in order to conform to the peculiar civic reality of Athenian democracy.

Pindar’s second *Nemean*, conversely, appears to follow epinician conventions in repeatedly naming the victor and his family, and the final lines include one of the most straightforward calls for city-wide praise that can be found in Pindar’s poetry. In these ways, it presents itself as a perfectly normal epinician ode, attempting to mediate the potentially complex relationship between a *polis* and an elite victor and his family. Nevertheless, it is difficult to call the second *Nemean* an obvious example of Pindar applying traditional epinician principles within the context of Athenian democracy. Despite the call for celebration of Timodemus by his fellow citizens, the place of performance is very much in question. Due to the relative brevity of the poem (only twenty-five lines), Gelzer has suggested that it was performed at Nemea on the day of Timodemus’ victory. Instone is doubtful that the ode was

162 Though Aloni argues (p. 33 fn 69) that it is “unlikely on the basis of the legible remnants that the verses contain anything more than the victor’s name.”
163 Thanks are due to Prof. Jonathan Hall for his insight on this question.
164 Timodemus is named in *Nem.* 2.14 and 2.24; his father (Timonous) is named in 2.10; and even his offspring (2.18: the “Timodemidai”) are singled out for praise.
165 *Nem.* 2.24 (on which, see also above p. 127): τὸν [scil. Δία], ὦ πολίται, κομάξατε Τιμοδήμῳ σὺν εὐκλείῳ νόστῳ·
performed at all, but is otherwise cautious in noting that “if indeed so short an ode was performed, [the place] must remain uncertain.”167 Most recently, Aloni has ingeniously proposed that the ode was performed not in Athens proper, but in Timodemus’ “rural deme” of Acharnae,168 which Pindar rather singles out for praise (Nem. 2.16-17) in what is the second mention of a specific civic group in lieu of the oikos or polis. In short, there is no consensus on the question of where—or even if—the second Nemean was performed. But what is certain is that Nemean 2 is another case in which traditional epinician motifs are elided in a concession to Athenian civic institutions.

In summary, the difficulties presented by each of these Athenian epinicians precludes any firm conclusions on the “compatibility” between Athens and epinician poetry, but they do suggest that the genre’s status in the city was peculiar. Non-literary evidence also suggests that the relationship between Athens and Olympic victors was complicated. For instance, unlike other Greek poleis, Athens did not permit statues of athletic victors—another type of “epinician commemoration”169—to be erected in the agora.170 Similarly, Athens stood out in the fifth

170 Currie, 2005, p. 145; Swift, 2010, p. 110; Aloni, 2012, p. 27. The ancient evidence regarding the lack of statues is admittedly scant, and consists essentially of a contrast made by Lycurgus between Athens and other cities in which one “will find [statues] of athletes erected in the agora,” while the Athenians reserve this right for “generals and the tyrant-killers” (Lyc. 1.51: εὑρίσκετε δὲ παρὰ μὲν τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐν ταῖς ἄγοραις ἀθλητὰς ἀνακεμένους, παρ’ ύμῖν δὲ στρατηγῶν ἀγαθῶν καὶ τοὺς τῶν τύραννον ἀποκτείναντας.)
century for its reluctance to heroize “historical persons,” one of the potential aspirations of epinician poetry. Finally, there is evidence of remarkable hostility among Athens towards the breeding of horses for athletic competition (*hippotrophia*), the very activity Pindar sees as the most worthy of his epinician praise.

All of this evidence dates from the fifth century, and it suggests that the place of athletics in Athens was sensitive, at least compared to other Greek cities. Moreover, there is reason to believe that these complexities had come to the foreground right around the time of Euripides’ *Heracles*. In particular, Alcibiades Olympic victory in chariot racing in 416 BCE seems to have generated a certain amount of hostility towards him among the Athenian populace. Certainly this was due in no small part to the extravagant nature of Alcibiades’ Olympic delegation and subsequent victory celebration—a celebration that included an epinician ode which was said to be written by Euripides himself. But it is meaningful that Andocides specifically laments that Alcibiades had sought to present himself as “having crowned the city” (Andoc. 4.31:  

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171 Currie, 2005, p. 146.
172 Hornblower, 2004, pp. 250-51. Hornblower introduces as evidence of “the antipathies which horse-breeding…could generate” (p. 250) two ostraka inscribed with the words “Megacles son of Hippocrates the horse-breeder” (*SEG* 46.84 ΜΕΓΑΚΛΕΣ ΗΙΠΠΟΚΡΑΤΟΣ ΗΙΠΠΟΤΡΟΦΟΣ). This is, of course, the same Megacles whom Pindar praises in *Pyth.* 7 for his victories in equestrian events. See also Th. 6.15 on Athenian suspicions regarding *hippotrophia*.
174 Some scholars have recently questioned this assertion—see esp. David M. Pritchard, *Sport, Democracy and War in Classical Athens* (Cambridge, 2013). Nevertheless, the case of Alcibiades’ Olympic victory, which I discuss here below, confirms that the relationship between Athenian victors and the *polis* could become very problematic indeed.
στεφανωκὼς τὴν πόλιν) with his Olympic success. If this assertion is at all accurate,\textsuperscript{177} it shows first of all that Alcibiades attempted to leverage his Olympic victory in exactly the way that epinician poetry was wont to do, and secondly that this attempt was received with some resentment by his fellow citizens.

Confirmation of this dynamic is provided by Alcibiades’ own description of Athenian attitudes toward athletic victors at the end of the fifth century, as relayed by Thucydides (Th. 6.16.1-3):

καὶ προσῆκε μοι μᾶλλον ἑτέρων, ὡ Αθηναῖοι, ἄρχειν (ἀνάγκη γὰρ ἑνεῦθεν ἄρξασθαι, ἐπειδὴ μου Νικίας καθήψατο), καὶ ἀξίω ἄμα νομίζω εἰναιλόν γὰρ πέρι ἐπιβόητός εἰμι, τοῖς μὲν προγόνοις μου καὶ ἐμοὶ δόξαν φέρει ταῦτα, τῇ δὲ πατρίδι καὶ ὑφελίαν. οἱ γὰρ Ἑλλήνες καὶ ὑπὲρ δύναμιν μείζων ἦμον τὴν πόλιν ἐνόμισαν τῷ ἐμῷ διαστήματι τῆς Ὀλυμπίας ἡμῶν, πρότερον ἐλπίζοντες αὐτὴν κατάπεπολεμήσαι, διότι ἄρματα μὲν ἐπὰυ καθήκα, ὡσα οὐδεὶς πιὸ ἱδώτης πρότερον, ἐνίκησα δὲ καὶ δεύτερος καὶ τέταρτος ἐγενόμην καὶ τὰλλα ἄξιας τῆς νίκης παρεσκευαζόμην. νόμῳ μὲν γὰρ τιμὴ τὰ τοιαῦτα, ἐκ δὲ τοῦ δρομόν καὶ δύναμις ἄμα ὑπονοεῖται. καὶ ὡσα αὐ ἐν τῇ πόλει χορηγίας ἢ ἄλλῳ τῷ λαμπρόνῳ, τοῖς μὲν ἄστοις φθονεῖται φύσει, πρὸς δὲ τοὺς ξένους καὶ αὐτὴ ἱσχὺς φαίνεται. καὶ οὐκ ἄρχηστος ἢ ἢ ἄνοια, ὃς ἀν τοῖς ἱδίοις τέλεσι μη ἐαυτὸν μόνον ἄλλα καὶ τὴν πόλιν ὑφελή.

Athenians, it is both more suitable for me to rule than others (indeed it is necessary that I begin here, since Nicias has attacked me), and I also believe myself to be worthy of doing so. For I am derided for those very things which bring both honor to me and my forebears, and a benefit to my fatherland. For the Greeks, when before they hoped our city was beaten down by war, thought it to be even more powerful than it is because of the magnificence of my performance at the Olympic games, both because I entered seven chariots in the competition, a number no private citizen had ever before managed, and because I placed first, second and fourth and provided all things worthy of my victory. In custom such things are honorable, and from their performance one derives the appearance of power. And the ways in which I have distinguished myself in the city,

\textsuperscript{177} The authenticity of this speech has often been doubted, but even if it was written at a later date, it seems that its author took great care to present accurate historical details and to create an atmosphere that was compatible with the presumed late fifth-century context: cf. David Gribble, “Rhetoric and History in [Andocides] 4, Against Alcibiades,” \textit{Classical Quarterly} 47 (1997): pp. 367-91.
whether by supplying choruses or otherwise, are at once a natural source of envy to my fellow citizens, while to foreigners they appear a strength. And such folly is not useless, when someone by private means benefits not only himself but also his city.

Alcibiades makes a number of points in this passage, including the rather bold assertion that he is especially worthy of exercising power. Naturally, he must justify such a statement, and it his striking to see that his justification is strewn with epinician elements. The most obvious of these epinician elements is the ample narration of his Olympic conquests, victories that would have been the very sort that epinicians were made to praise and which, furthermore, he appears to see as a basis for his place of privilege in the polis.

Other points are even more epinician in tone. On an ideological level, we have seen that Pindaric poetry regularly presents the notion that Olympic success generates glory for the victor, his family, and his polis. This is precisely what Alcibiades does when he claims that his victories “bring both honor to me and my forebears, and a benefit to my fatherland.” Although it is “rare to find all three—victor, city and family—mentioned” in such quick succession in epinician odes, it is certainly not unheard of. Indeed, we find a similar

178 On the question of whether or not Thucydides was familiar with epinician poetry, cf. Hornblower, 2004, pp. 57-59.
179 Hornblower, 2008, p. 343. This is of course also reflected in Andoc. 4.31.
181 While Thucydides uses a term—ōphelia (assistance, advantage)—that is decidedly un-epinician, it is clear from its juxtaposition with doxa, and from the fact that it endows the city with the appearance of power, that the “advantage” Alcibiades claims to confer upon Athens is an enhanced reputation.
182 Kurke, 1991, p. 203; cf. Pi. Isth. 3.9-16, in which the victor Melissos (vv. 9-11), his hometown of Thebes (vv. 12-13), and his family (vv. 14-16) are all conferred a share of glory by Pindar’s ode; or Ol. 5.5-8, in which oikos and polis are both celebrated in short succession. (These passages are discussed in Kurke, 1991, pp. 202-04.)
formulation in Bacchylides 10, in which the poet equates the *stephanos* with which the Athenian victor has crowned himself (10.16), the *kudos* he has won for Athens (10.17), and the *doxa* he has brought the Oeneidae (10.18). The difference is that Bacchylides emphasizes the victor’s connection to a *civic* group, while Alcibiades still focuses on his own family associations. In other words, where Bacchylides adjusts the tone of his ode to fit the political community for which he is composing, Alcibiades retains the more standard epinician trifecta of *victor/oikos/polis*, but notes that there has been little appreciation of his benefaction.

Alcibiades then moves on to discuss his generosity in local liturgies. This is apparently beyond the realm of epinician, which typically restricted its focus to the glory gained from athletic victory. But Alcibiades’ mention of the *phthonos* he inspires cannot help but recall, once again, Pindar’s poetry, since the fact that success often engendered *phthonos* is one of Pindar’s main concerns.\(^\text{183}\) Alcibiades then returns to the point with which he began: that his actions benefit the city (*tēn polin ōphelēi*). The notion that he is obviously advancing is that the *phthonos* which Athenians reserve for him is totally unwarranted on account of the great advantages he provides Athens. In so doing, he mimics Pindar, who time and again stresses the civic benefits his victors provide in order to “defus[e] the *phthonos* of his fellow citizens.”\(^\text{184}\)

The crux of Alcibiades’ comments is that he is reviled for the very deeds which most become him, and he notes that this outcome is only natural (*phusei*). A similar point is made by


\(^{184}\) Eadem, p. 209.
Pindar in his ode dedicated to Megacles, the exiled Athenian victor who was also one of Alcibiades' forefathers (both were Alcmaeonidae): “I grieve at the envy with which noble deeds are repaid” (Pyth. 7.18-19: τὸ δ’ ἄχνυμαι, φθόνον ἀμειβόμενον τὰ καλὰ ἐργα). Much like Thucydides' Alcibiades, albeit in an unsurprisingly more subtle manner, Pindar suggests that phthonos is a natural, almost inevitable reaction to all types of kala erga. The fact that Megacles was in exile at the time of the ode suggests that Pindar’s formulation essentially doubles as a condemnation of Athens' failure to reciprocate its benefactors. Some seventy years later, it would appear that this problem still existed. While it is unwise to see Athens' aversion to athletic success and epinician poetry as rigid and intractable—Alcibiades was, after all, quite successful in the realm of Athenian politics—it nevertheless seems true that the city had a difficult relationship with its Olympic victors.

Such is the general context in which we must understand Euripides' Heracles and its constant references to epinician poetry. This survey of the reception of athletic victors and epinician poetry in Athens shows some contrasts with the image of the genre that is transmitted by Euripides' tragedy. While Athenian attitudes towards the epinician commemoration of elite victors were ambivalent at best, and hostile at worst, in the Heracles this type of celebration is posed not only as proper, but indeed as a mark of a good polis. Conversely, the rejection of epinician ideals, the symptom of Thebes' tragic stasis, appears to have been common in Athens, perhaps even widespread. The Heracles thus promotes the epinician genre in a way that appears fundamentally discordant with the way his audience perceived the place of the genre in the polis. In so doing, the tragedy questions Athenian attitudes towards outstanding individuals
such as Heracles or Alcibiades, and it appears particularly critical of the place to which epinician was relegated in the polis.

Such criticism is notable in its own right, but it is made even more striking by the final piece of epinician evidence that can be dated to the fifth century: fragments of a poem written in honor of Alcibiades’ victory, and attributed in antiquity to none other than Euripides. This is the only epinician from the classical era of which we have any knowledge after Pindar’s death in 446 BCE.\footnote{Swift, 2010, p. 108.} Euripides’ authorship, although it has been contested by some scholars,\footnote{Most recently by Lowe, 2007, p. 176, though his arguments against authenticity are brief and confined to a section of a footnote (fn 30).} should be considered probable.\footnote{For the longest argument in favor of authenticity, cf. C.M. Bowra, “Euripides’ Epinician for Alcibiades,” Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte 9 (1960): pp. 68-79. Other scholars who regard the Euripidean attribution as secure include Denys Page, ed., Poetae Melici Graeci (Oxford, 1962), p. 391; Nagy, 1990, p. 187; Papakonstantinou, 2003, p. 175; Hornblower, 2004, pp. 28, 56-58. Many scholars do not contest the attribution but remain essentially non-committal, e.g. Swift, 2010, pp. 115-16; Aloni, 2012, p. 36. Our fragments of the ode for Alcibiades come from two later authors, Plutarch, who quotes it twice (Dem. 1; Alc. 11), and Athenaeus, who cites it once (Deipnosophistae 1.5.10-11). Plutarch expresses some doubt about the authorship in one instance, referring to “the author…of the encomium for Alcibiades, whether it was Euripides, as most believe, or someone else” (Dem. 1: ὁ μὲν γράφας τὸ…εἰς Ἀλκιβιάδην ἐγκώμιον, εἴτ’ Εὐριπίδης ὡς ὁ πολὺς κρατεῖ λόγος, εἴθ’ ἐτερός τις ἤν). But on the other occasion, in which he quotes the ode more fully, he expresses no such reservations (Alc. 11.3: λέγει δ’ ὁ Εὐριπίδης), and the same is true of Athenaeus, who merely notes that “Euripides wrote an epinician” for Alcibiades’ victory in the chariot race (Deipn. 1.5.10-11: Εὐριπίδης ἐγραψεν ἐπινίκιον). On balance then, out of three citations we have two unequivocal statements of Euripidean authorship and one tepid endorsement of it, and we also know that Euripidean authorship was widely believed around 100 AD (Plutarch tells us this much). While such late attributions are not irrefutable evidence that Euripides did in fact write the ode for Alcibiades, they nevertheless point in that direction. Additionally, Bowra, 1960, has identified several stylistic points in the remaining lines of the ode that confirm Euripidean authorship. While the sample size of the poetic affinities is, in my opinion, too small to serve as definitive proof of any sort, there is a third argument for authenticity that has not yet, to my knowledge, been made. To wit, insofar as the very purpose of commissioning an epinician ode was to bolster one’s reputation, it seems exceedingly likely that Alcibiades would have hired a poet of great repute. While Euripides is certainly not the only such poet active in Athens at this time, he was certainly one of a select few. And if another famous poet, say for example Agathon, had written these lines, it seems unlikely that later generations would have so broadly attributed the ode to Euripides.}
an attempt to establish the specific cultural context of the *Heracles* and its epinician tones (E. Epinician for Alcibiades fr. 1):

οὐ δὲ ἄγαμαι, 5
ὅ Κλεινίου παῖ καλόν ἄ νίκα,
κάλλιστον δ', ὁ μῆτες ἄλλος Ἑλλάνων,
ἀρματὶ πρῶτα δραμεῖν καὶ δεύτερα καὶ τρίτα<τα>,
βήναι τ' ἀπονητὶ Διὸς στεφθέντ' ἐλαίαι  
κάρυκι βοάν παραδούναι.

I marvel at you,
Oh son of Cleinias; victory is a beautiful thing,
but the most beautiful thing, which no other Greek has done,
is to take first, second, and third in the chariot race,
and to go effortlessly, crowned with Zeus’ olive,
and make the herald shout…

As we might expect at this point, Euripides appears to be quite familiar with the formal features of epinician poetry. Not surprisingly, this passage is riddled with elements that are classically epinician, such as the description and celebration of the Olympic victory and the references to the official crowning. The mention of the herald’s cry is also a typical motif, though we are left frustratingly ignorant of just what was called out. It could certainly be Alcibiades’ name, as Bowra argues.188 But it could just as easily be Athens itself, which would certainly represent an effort, on the poet’s part, to mediate the tensions inherent in the victor-polis relationship.

Whatever the subject of the herald’s call, the other surviving fragment confirms that the victor’s polis received special mention in the ode. Plutarch gives us only another three words—

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188 Bowra, 1960, p. 74
τὰν εὐδόκιμον πόλιν—but his comment about the quote help us understand their place in Euripides’ poem: “he [scil. Euripides] says that for a happy man, the most important thing is to have ‘a well-famed city.’” Based on this fragment, it seems certain that Euripides stressed the specific benefit that Alcibiades had brought the city of Athens, namely to increase its fame. In so doing, he is exploiting a traditional epinician strategy for ingratiating the victor with his fellow citizens. What is more, he is also saying essentially the same thing as Thucydides’ Alcibiades, who emphasizes the benefits his Olympic victory had brought the city as a whole. It is noteworthy, however, that in Thucydides’ analysis of the situation, the ill-will felt towards Alcibiades in Athens persisted, and was in fact quite widespread. It would seem that the epinician mediation attempted by Euripides and Alcibiades was not wholly successful.

There are striking congruities, both poetic and chronological, between the *Heracles* (produced around or shortly after 415 BCE) and this epinician fragment (presumably composed in 416 BCE). One could potentially read the tragedy as a response to Athens’ lack of appreciation for Alcibiades’ victory and by extension Euripides’ epinician for him. Alas, the complete lack of evidence of any sort on this question makes such an argument difficult to make and impossible to prove. But some conclusions may be drawn. First of all, the fact that Euripides produced a tragedy with such obvious epinician overtones within just a few years of his composition of the only known epinician ode of the period suggests that the genre was, at

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189 Plut. Dem.1: ϕησὶ χρῆναι τῷ εὐδαιμονι πρῶτον ὑπάρξαι “τὰν πόλιν εὐδόκιμον.”
this time, one of particular interest for the tragedian. Second, we see that in both cases, Euripides’ stance on the genre, so to speak, is at odds with that of many Athenians, and this too is noteworthy: at the very least, Euripides seems to problematize mainstream notions about the relevance (or lack thereof) of epinician poetry in Athens, and he thus challenges popular concerns about extraordinary Olympic victors such as Alcibiades. Finally, and perhaps most germane to the broader scope of this dissertation, the Heracles shows how Euripides’ interests in choral lyric are directly related to the social and political questions he explores in his tragedies. Indeed, one cannot fully understand the Heracles’ epinician tones in isolation, nor yet the broader themes of the tragedy, for too strong a confluence exists between the issues explored by the play and those with which epinician poetry was concerned. In the following chapter, I will examine a similar poetic dynamic: the role of the paean in the Ion’s exploration of Athenian civic and colonial identities. Once again, we shall see that the use of a specific genre is closely tied to the dramatization of specific political issues, an intersection of poetics and politics that will further demonstrate the interdependence of these aspects of Euripidean tragedy.
Chapter Three

The Paean and Euripides’ Ion:
A Song for Athens and Ionia?

1. Ion and the Myth of Ion:

Euripides and the Fusion of Autochthonous and Ionian Bloodlines

It has long been recognized that Euripides’ Ion addresses and ultimately fuses two different notions of Athens’ mythical origins: the myth of autochthony, according to which Athenians were descendants of the original and earth-born inhabitants of Attica;¹ and the idea

¹ Depending on the tradition, the Athenians’ mythical ancestor was known as either Erichthonios or Erechtheus. Erichthonios/Erechtheus was said to have been born from the earth in Attica after Hephaestus’ aborted rape of Athena resulted in the god’s semen spilling on and impregnating the earth. According to the myth, Cecrops was the king of Attica at the time, and it was to him (or his daughters) that Athena entrusted the infant. For a reasonably coherent version of the myth, cf. Apoll., Bibl. 3.14. On the meaning and importance of this concept in fifth-century Athens, see Enrico Montanari, Il mito dell’autocita: linee di una dinamica mitico-politica ateniese (Rome, 1981); Vincent J. Rosivach, “Autochthony and the Athenians,” Classical Quarterly 37 (1987a): pp. 294-306; Nicole Loraux, The Children of Athena: Athenian Ideas about Citizenship and the Division between the Sexes, tr. Caroline Levy (Princeton, 1993); Loraux, Born of the Earth: Myth and Politics in Athens, tr. Selina Stewart (Ithaca, 2000); W.R. Connor, “The Problem of Athenian Civic Identity,” in Athenian Identity and Civic Ideology, eds. Alan L. Boegehold and Adele C. Scarfo (Baltimore, 1994), pp. 34-44; Jonathan M. Hall, Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 53-56.
that the Ionian peoples of Asia Minor and the Cycladic islands shared an “ethnic” identity with
the Athenians by virtue of their common descent from Ion, son of Xouthos. Xouthos was
decidedly not Athenian, so Ion was variously connected to Athens either by his mother Creousa
(daughter of Erechtheus),\(^2\) or simply because he had at one point served as their general.\(^3\)
Because his Athenian bloodline could be traced solely to his mother’s side, Ion’s autochthonous
bona fides was, as Parker has noted, “precarious.”\(^4\) Euripides, however, “purifies” Ion’s
bloodline by eliminating Xouthos from his lineage and replacing him with Apollo as his natural
father, all while maintaining Creousa as his autochthonous mother. The (re)construction of this
mythical genealogy lies at the very heart of the \textit{Ion}.

Whether this Apolline genealogy was a Euripidean innovation or an adaptation of a less
well-known myth is still the subject of debate. Given Plato’s uncritical citation of the very same
bloodline a mere twenty-five years after the \textit{Ion} was produced, I would suggest that the
tradition must have pre-dated Euripides in some form, though this evidence is hardly
unassailable.\(^5\) Regardless, Euripides appears to be the first to so fully articulate this

\(^2\) This is the genealogy presented by Pseudo Hesiod fr. 10a, 20-24.
\(^3\) Hdt. 8.44.2. Regardless of the details of the Athenians’ and Ionians’ shared origins, Solon’s claim that Athens was
the “oldest land of Ionia” (fr. 4a, 2: πρεσβυτάτην γαίαν [Π]αυνίης) makes it clear that the idea of a shared ethnicity
existed long before Euripides’ time. For more on the subject, see Noel Robertson, “Melanthus, Codrus, Neleus,
Caucon: Ritual Myth as Athenian History,” \textit{Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies} 29 (1988): pp. 201-61; W.R. Connor,
206.
\(^5\) Plato, \textit{Euthydemus} 302d, names Apollo as Ion’s father and cites this as the reason that Athenians and Ionians
celebrate Apollo \textit{Patrōos: αὕτη ἡ ἐπωνυμία [scil. Zeus \textit{Patrōs}] Ἰόνων οὐδὲν, οὐθ’ ὅσοι ἐκ τῆς πόλεως

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mythological tradition, and the fact that he does so in terms that are overtly political has suggested to most scholars that the Ion deliberately presents a merger of two myths with the potential to resolve, or perhaps challenge, highly charged issues of identity. But beyond these bare facts there is little consensus. Scholars have variously seen the tragedy as an instructive example of Athenian patriotism or as a sharp critique of Athenian nationalism, and the vast and fertile ground between has not remained fallow.

One subject that has gone neglected, however, is Euripides’ use of paeans in the Ion, and its bearing on the tragic themes. Doubtless the difficulty of approaching the topic, due not least to the nebulous nature of the genre, has dampened enthusiasm for any analysis of this sort. But there is ample reason to believe that such rocky terrain could bear rich fruits. To begin, paean-songs were traditionally performed in contexts where questions of civic and colonial identity were of central importance, and these are the same issues with which the Ion engages. Moreover, the play contains two paeanic monodies that appear to approach, albeit in a highly unconventional manner, these very same questions of identity. There appears to be a deep and multifaceted connection between the civic problems that Euripides explores in the Ion, and the lyric genre that he employs throughout this exploration.

In this chapter I examine the Ion’s paeans in order to better understand their relation to the central questions of the play, and argue that they serve both to question the origin myths that the play proposes, and to challenge the means by which these myths were created and propagated. I begin by outlining the plot and mythical apparatus of the play so as to illustrate the Ion’s emphasis on Athenian autochthony and Ionian descent, and by discussing scholarly reactions to the tragedy’s focus on these complex questions of identity. The next and main section of the chapter consists of an examination of the Ion’s paeans in contrast to traditional fifth-century examples of the genre. Here, I begin with a brief overview of the genre before moving on to an analysis of the paean Ion sings at the beginning of the play, where I emphasize what I call the “internal dissonance” of Ion’s song. I then move on to an exploration of the texts and contexts of five Pindaric paeans, each of which illuminates the manner in which Ion’s paean
deviates from the audience’s expectations. Here, we shall see that paeans were frequently used in the fifth century BCE to celebrate or propagate civic and ethnic identities and to promote communal solidarity—the very things the Ion purports to do. Ion’s deviation from these themes is striking, for with his paean he emphasizes his “isolation from community,”⁶ and creates for himself an identity the audience knows to be fictional. Ion’s song thus begins the process of undermining the fusion and dissemination of Athenian and Ionian identities Euripides claims to effect.

After I have fully explored the dissonance, both internal and external, of Ion’s paean, I discuss the episodes that follow it. These scenes work to develop many themes introduced by the ode, in particular that of Ion’s “fictional identity.” The problems with Ion’s identity culminate in another dissonant paean, this one an “anti-paean” sung by Creousa which recalls Ion’s earlier paean and re-elaborates the problems with Apolline song and fictional “Ionian” identities that Ion had introduced with his monody. As I show, these problems are never fully resolved—even at the end of the play tensions remain between Ion’s multiple identities—but they are expressed most poignantly in the two tragic paeans. Rather than aiding in the construction and propagation of a “new” version of Athenian/Ionian identity, the Ion’s two paeanic songs challenge the very solutions that Euripides poses in the play, and highlight the artificial manner in which mythical identities, be they Athenian or Ionian, are created. Looked

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at through the lens of the paeans he creates, Euripides’ *Ion* appears less a cohesive merger of competing ideologies—Athenian autochthony and Ionian “imperialism”—and more a critique of way these ideologies are developed.

2. Beyond the Tragic Plot: The Politics of Ion’s Identity

*From Hermes to Athena: Ion as the guarantor of Athenian/Ionian relations*

The *Ion* opens with Hermes standing before the temple of Apollo. The god wastes little time in exposing the tragedy’s relevance to Athens, mentioning “[the] famous city of the Greeks/named after golden-speared Pallas” and its autochthonous ancestors (*Ion* 10-11). In the following lines we learn of Apollo’s rape of the Athenian Creousa and her secret parturition and abandonment of his child (*Ion* 10-27). The heretofore unbroken line of autochthonous descent is spelled out: we are told that Creousa is the daughter of Erechtheus (*Ion* 10-11) and a descendant of “earthborn Erichthonios” (*Ion* 20-21: γηγενοῦς/Ἐριχθονίου). Her child, as we learn, is still alive and well: at Apollo’s behest, Hermes had rescued the infant and delivered him, and the basket in which he had been left with traditional Athenian ornaments, to Delphi (*Ion* 28-40). The Pythian priestess, though ignorant of his origins, had raised the child at the temple (*Ion* 41-53).

7 *Ion* 8-9: ἐστιν γὰρ οὐκ ἄσημος Ἑλλήνων πόλις./τῆς χυσολόγχου Παλλάδος κεκλημένη.
Now a young man, he remains at Delphi and serves as the “god’s gold-keeper and loyal steward of all things” (Ion 54-55: χρυσοφύλακα τοῦ θεοῦ/ταμίαν τε πάντων πιστόν). The child’s name, as we learn, will be Ion.

Meanwhile, Creousa is on her way to Delphi with her Achaean husband Xouthos. Both wish to consult the oracle about her current inability to conceive. As Hermes tells us, “Loxias is driving fortune to this point” (Ion 67-68: Λοξίας δὲ τὴν τύχην/ἐς τούτ’ ἐλαύνει). His plans for the future are even more curious (Ion 69-73):

δώσει γὰρ εἰσελθόντι μαντείου τόδε Ξούθω τὸν αὐτὸν παῖδα, καὶ πεφυκέναι  70 κείνου σφε φήσει, μητρὸς ὡς ἐλθὼν δόμους γνωσθῇ Κρεούσῃ, καὶ γάμοι τε Λοξίου κρυπτοὶ γενώνται παῖς τ’ ἔχῃ τὰ πρόσφορα.  For when he comes to this oracle he will give to Xouthos this child [Ion] as his own, and will say he was born of him, so he’ll be recognized by Creousa when he comes to her home, and Apollo’s rape will remain secret while the boy has his due.

In other words Apollo, whom Hermes has just told us “ever reveals to mortals the present and the future” (Ion 6-7: βροτοῖς/τὰ τ’ ὄντα καὶ μέλλοντα θεσπίζων ἀεί), will lie to Xouthos in order to conceal what should be considered, in this light, a transgression. The plots—both Apollo’s and the tragedy’s—seem convoluted and contradictory, but Hermes is confident of the outcome: thanks to Creousa’s ability to “recognize” her own child, Ion (and the audience) will

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learn he is blessed with pure autochthonous descent. This revelation will have major consequences throughout the Greek world, for Ion will come to be the progenitor of the Ionian Greeks (*Ion* 74-75):

> Ἰωνα δ' αὐτόν, κτίστος Ἀσιάδος χθονός, [Apollo] shall see to it that all over Greece he, ὄνομα κεκλήσθαι θήσεται καθ Ἑλλάδα.

75 founder of the Asian land, shall be called Ion.

Apolline paternity and guidance are the decisive factors when it comes to Ion’s fate, and the god thus becomes the guarantor of both Athenian purity and of Athens’ genealogical and colonial connection to its Ionian allies. The stakes are high: Athenian identity, both at home and abroad, will be tested and proved by the tragedy.

As mentioned above, by making his father Apollo Euripides creates a significant and meaningful departure from Ion’s traditional genealogy. The consequences are three-fold: Ion becomes an autochthonous Athenian untainted by foreign blood; all Ionians become descendants of Athenian autochthony; and both parties share Apollo’s divine blood. Euripides seems to find a solution to fit everyone’s needs. In the process, he merges two Athenian ideologies that had heretofore been kept separate: the concept of autochthony, which granted the Athenians superiority over the rest of the Greeks while bolstering a sense of democratic equality among their own civic body;⁹ and the idea of a common ancestry with the Ionians,

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⁹ Cf. Isoc. 12.24; Plato *Menexenus* 237e-238a; Rosivach, 1987a; Connor, 1994; Loraux, 2000, pp. 33-38. It is also worth noting that the Athenian conception of autochthony did not arise until much after their theorization of a common Ionian ancestry: while Solon already speaks of Athens’ conception of Ionia in the early sixth century BC (see above, fn 3), we hear nothing of Athenian autochthony until after the advent of democracy in the early fifth century (see esp. Rosivach, 1987a).
which had been used by Athenians and Ionians alike to justify Athenian involvement in Ionia and the Cyclades. At the risk of oversimplifying, one might state that the concept of autochthony was used more in the democratic sphere of internal politics, while Ionianism was exploited within the imperialist sphere of Athens’ dealings with its allies and subjects. But regardless of the spheres within which these ideologies operated, it is obvious that Euripides’ play engages in some serious way with Athenian and Ionian origin myths.

Lest anyone in the audience miss this point or underestimate the stakes, Euripides makes sure to frequently emphasize the tragedy’s connections to both Athenian and Ionian identity. References to Athens’ “earth-born” past are scattered throughout: Creousa tells Ion the story of her autochthonous roots when they meet in the first episode of the play (Ion 267-82); a general preoccupation with “Athenian racial purity” throughout the tragedy confirms that Athenian identity is one of the Ion’s central topics, and that this identity is autochthonous; and when Athena arrives at the end to confirm Apollo as Ion’s father, she proclaims that “it is right that he rule [her] land since he was born from Erechtheus,” (Ion 1573-74: ἐκ γὰρ τῶν Ἐρεχθέως γεγός/δίκαιος ἄρχειν τῆς γ’ ἐμής ὃδε χθονός). In total, Euripides refers to Erichthonios,

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Erechtheus, Cecrops, and autochthony more times (each) in the Ion than he does in all his other extant plays combined. Athens’ autochthonous ancestors are never far from the minds of Euripides’ audience.

Regarding Ionian identity, as long as Ion is in the limelight (the entire tragedy, more or less), it is difficult to forget about his mythical descendants. Nevertheless, this issue appears to be of only relative importance until Athena, filling in for Apollo at the last minute, fully articulates the ethnic and indeed military stakes of the autochthon’s future (Ion 1581-94):

Several things emerge from this description: Ionian descent from Erechtheus and Athens’ status as “mother-city” of Ionia is reaffirmed; Athenians and Ionians are given primacy—both

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13 Each of these mythical characters was associated with the various retellings of Athens’ autochthonous roots. On which, see above fn 1.
14 In the Ion, Erichthonios is mentioned four times; Erechtheus (including references to “Erechtheids”) eighteen times; Cecrops (including references to Cecropians) six times; and autochthony three times. One can presume that these names and terms were used quite frequently in Euripides’ lost Erechtheus, but that play also dealt closely with the concept of Athenian autochthony.
chronologically and genealogically—over the Doriens and Achaeans; and perhaps most intriguingly, the Ionian colonies that make up the Delian league are said to “give strength” to Athens. Whether this is a reference to Ionian military assistance or, as Hoffer suggests, to the tributes upon which Athens so heavily relied,\textsuperscript{15} it is explicit that the Ion’s mythical apparatus is closely related to the propagation of Athenian alliances in the Cyclades and Ionia. Implicit is the idea that the Ionian Greeks win “great glory” on account of both their privileged descent from autochthonous Athenians, and their present status as allies of the city, a subtle encouragement to remain loyal. In all senses, Euripides’ aetiology encourages and justifies Athens’ hegemonic role in the Delian League, while also guaranteeing the purity of Athens’ autochthonous stock.

\textit{Athenian/Ionian identity and the date of the Ion}

The date of performance can help us understand why Euripides may have chosen to address such complex issues of Athenian and Ionian identity. The precise year of production cannot be established, but the tragedy can in all likelihood be placed within a limited range. Metrical considerations (i.e. the percentage of “resolved” trimeters) suggest that the Ion was performed after the Trojan Women and before the Helen, or between 416/15 and 412/11 BCE.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} Hoffer, 1996, pp. 313-14.
\textsuperscript{16} The Ion contains resolution in 25.8 percent of its trimeters, as opposed to 21.2 percent in Trojan Women and 27.5 percent in Helen. On this subject, cf. E.B. Caedel, “Resolved Feet in the Trimers of Euripides and the Chronology of the Plays,” The Classical Quarterly 35 (1941): pp. 66-89 (see esp. the table on p. 70).
The metrical criterion is, of course, approximate, and earlier scholars attempted to ante-date the Ion based primarily on historical considerations. In more recent years, however, scholars have generally placed the Ion in the later years of that range, generally between 413 and 411 BCE. Such a date situates the production of the Ion either just before or during the revolt of many of Athens’ Ionian allies, an event which certainly weighed heavily on Athenian minds. It
also coincides with the only period in which democratic Athens “willingly relaxed” Pericles’ citizenship law of 451/450 BCE by allowing Athenians to “marry one woman and to have children from another.” In short, regardless of the precise year in which the Ion was produced, an abundance of evidence indicates that the questions of Ionian and Athenian identity discussed in the tragedy were highly charged topics. Euripides is clearly and deliberately broaching sensitive issues.


21 Susan Lape, Race and Citizen Identity in the Classical Athenian Democracy (Cambridge, 2010), p. 21. Lape notes that other changes were made to the law in 411 and 404/3 BC, but only under the duress of oligarchy (p. 21 fn 76).

22 Diog. Laert. 2.26: γαμεῖν ἕν ἀστήν μίαν, παιδοποιεῖσθαι δὲ καὶ ἐξ ἑτέρας. Note the emphasis in the Greek on the wife being a citizen; whether or not the “other woman” was required to be a citizen is open to interpretation, though the construction of the sentence (astēn = heteran) implies that the second woman was supposed to be an Athenian as well. Lape, 2010, pp. 263-65 argues that this was the original intent of the law, but that because of various difficulties (e.g. the unwillingness of Athenian citizens to “sacrifice their daughters to a life of concubinage” [p. 264]), the application of the law was probably fluid. Daniel Ogden, Greek Bastardy in the Classical and Hellenistic Periods (Oxford, 1996) pp. 72-75, provides a good overview of the “bigamy law,” but is non-committal in his assessment of potential collateral effects.

23 An interesting dramatic comparative is found in Aristophanes’ Lysistrata 582-86, in which the protagonist compares all the Athenian colonies (582: ὁπόσοι τῆς γῆς τής ἐπικοινωνίας) to strands of wool that need to be gathered together in order to “weave a new cloak for the demos” (586: ἐκ ταύτης τῶν ἴδιων χλαδίναι υφῆναι). As Jeffrey Henderson, ed., Aristophanes: Lysistrata (Oxford, 1987), p. 145 points out, apoikoi is used here as an umbrella term for all “[t]he allied cities [who] were, with few exceptions, Ionian and thus descended…from Attic migrants.” According to Henderson, the metaphor functions on a practical level as a call “for their incorporation into a single Athenian state with a single citizenship.” But on a secondary metaphorical level, insofar as weaving had long and vast associations with the creation of poetry, Lysistrata’s proposal also suggests the creation of a new mytho-poetic apparatus that gathers into one the various strands of Athenian and colonial identity. In other words, Lysistrata calls for something akin to the Ion. (On the weaving-as-poetry metaphor, cf. Jane McIntosh Snyder, “The Web of Song: Weaving Imagery in Homer and the Lyric Poets,” The Classical Journal 76 [1981]: pp. 193-96.) While it is perhaps too much to see Aristophanes’ words as a direct allusion to Euripides’ tragedy (although Owen, ed., 1939, p. xxxvi, does just that, and thus establishes 411 BC as the terminus ante quem for Euripides’ tragedy), these lines certainly demonstrate that these questions of identity were of tremendous importance at the time of the Ion, and that Euripides’ audience was used to dealing with such questions in a dramatic context.
Critical interpretations

Given such a loaded context, scholars have naturally been eager to determine whether Euripides is attempting to challenge or support mainstream Athenian notions of identity. Naturally, the question of a poet’s intentions will always be subject to a range of interpretations, but it is fair to say that critical interpretations can be placed within three basic categories: those which see the Ion as a positive and patriotic celebration of Athenian autochthony and its successful merger with Ionian identity; those which see it as a negative critique, either pointed or ironic, of Athenian politics of identity, exclusion, and imperialism; and those which find a middle ground, generally by conceding that the complexities of the drama do not allow for a clear understanding of Euripides’ goals.

A number of elements have been adduced as evidence for the “negative” argument. George B. Walsh, for example, argues that by showing Ion to be a potential victim of Athenian “xenophobia,” and by associating Creousa’s Paidagōgos, a character depicted in a profoundly negative manner, with “an extreme doctrine of racial purity, the poet invites his audience to reject it.”24 Nicole Loraux points out that the tragedy exposes the uncertainty of Athenian origin myths, and argues that by making a woman (Creousa) solely responsible for “carrying the weight of autochthony,” Euripides fundamentally undermines his own genealogical creation.25

Others insist variously that the play’s emphasis on ignorance,26 violence,27 complex notions of bastardy,28 or the final and presumably prolonged deception of Xouthos, who will continue to mistakenly believe that Ion is his natural son,29 all function to question not only Athenian civic myths but indeed the process of Athenian civic mythmaking.30

Earlier critics, conversely, were nearly unanimous in their assessment of the *Ion* as a “patriotic” play intended to “gratify the pride of the Athenians and to make closer the bonds that linked the Ionian cities with Athens.”31 After a period of unpopularity, this more “positive” interpretation of the *Ion* has returned, albeit in a more sophisticated fashion. Carol Dougherty emphasizes the political dimension of the tragedy and argues that Euripides successfully proposes “a new world in which Athenians emerge as both autochthonous and Ionian, simultaneously democratic and imperial.”32 For Froma Zeitlin, though the play is not without its difficulties, Ion “sets an example to colonists...[and] becomes the principle of unity in diversity,

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27 Hoffer, 1996; and to a lesser extent Dunn, 1990, pp. 130-33.
31 The quote is from Owen, ed., 1939, p. xxxiii, but this is largely the same view taken by Burnett, 1970, p. 1.
32 Dougherty, 1996, p. 250.
the central point of an expanding periphery.” Katerina Zacharia considers the play a lesson of sorts for the Athenians, who “learn to confront honestly the complexity and ambiguity of reality” as they see their city become a “μητρόπολις” and thus mirror Creousa’s discovery of her maternity. And most recently, Laura Swift has directly countered several claims made by the “ironic” readers of the Ion and argues that these more negative interpretations are generally the result of an entrenched “belief that Euripides’ work is fundamentally subversive.”

Finally, numerous commentators have avoided arriving at definitive conclusions about the message Euripides’ seeks to transmit with the Ion. This view is concisely propounded by Kevin Lee, who warns that “one should be careful of finding in the play any simple critique of its implications.” A more recent exponent of this non-committal stance is Susan Lape, who focuses on the ideas of identity in the Ion in the light of evolving notions of citizenship in archaic and classical Athens. Lape notes the problems inherent in the play’s emphasis on a violent mythical past, and she is particularly interested in Ion’s identity as a nothos and how that compares to the parameters for citizenship set by Pericles (and others). According to the Periclean law of 451/50, which stipulated that only freeborn children of an Athenian father and

33 Froma I. Zeitlin, Playing the Other: Gender and Society in Ancient Greek Literature (Chicago, 1996), p. 338.
34 Zacharia, 2003, p. 102.
35 Eadem, p. 100.
39 Eadem, pp. 119-27.
40 Eadem, pp. 127-36.
mother could be considered citizens, Lape notes the not-so-subtle irony in this situation, but while she “would not argue that Euripides is fully complicit in the racial ideology he depicts,” she also doesn’t believe “Ion’s bastardy to be the loose end leading to its unraveling.” In short, according to Lape, Euripides’ mythical apparatus is neither a simple celebration, nor an open critique, of Athenian ideology.

3. **Generic Dissonance: Paeans and the Ion**

Given the nexus of myth and civic identity that scholars have seen in the *Ion*, it is surprising that so little attention has been given to the paean, a genre that is both germane to the mythical and political issues at hand, and remarkably present in the tragedy itself. As mentioned above, this is no doubt due to the difficult nature of the genre itself, for which only a handful of fragments provide relevant fifth-century testimony. These scanty remains nevertheless provide convincing evidence that the genre, as it was perceived in the fifth century BCE, was an ideal vehicle for transmitting and reinforcing the very ideas and myths of identity

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42 Lape, 2010, p. 129. She takes a similar stance on the problem of violence in the play (p. 125): “[a]lthough the plot may well exploit the dark side of autochthony, I am not certain that this is tantamount to a critique.”
with which the Ion purports to engage. As such, an examination of the tragedy’s paean, especially in comparison to contemporary Athenian uses of the genre, should provide crucial color and shading to our interpretations of the civic myths Euripides creates and employs.

In the rest of the chapter, I offer a new assessment of the Ion, and in particular of its paeanic monodies, in the light of the actual forms and uses of Apolline paeans throughout Greece in the fifth century BCE. I begin with a general presentation of the features and functions of Greek paeans in order to demonstrate that the Delphic setting and the issues of the tragedy form a natural context for paeanic song. I follow this discussion with an analysis of Ion’s paeanic monody, which follows immediately on the heels of Hermes’ prologue, and I demonstrate that Ion’s song is remarkably anomalous. I then present and discuss a number of fifth-century paeans, Athenian and otherwise, in order to elucidate the typical features and uses of Athenian paeans, and in particular to show just how strikingly Ion’s paean differs from these standards. The following section is dedicated to an examination to the manner in which the tragedy develops and explores the themes that are central to Ion’s paean, and culminates with a close reading of Creousa’s monody, a song which presents itself as a sort of anti-paean and which sets in motion a serious tragic crisis.

An overview of the Paean: a song for Apollo, a song for the community

First and foremost, it is important to note that no fifth-century definition of the paean has survived. Influenced no doubt by Proclus’ proclamation that paeans were “sung to allay
plagues and diseases” scholars have long persisted in the notion that the genre was primarily—even exclusively—apotropaic in nature. Proclus’ definition, however, comes nearly a thousand years after the classical era, and as such cannot be considered an accurate reflection of the genre’s function in Athens and Greece at the time the Ion was produced. Indeed, the evidence that we have from the fifth century BCE suggests that the paean was remarkably flexible in every respect, to the extent that Andrew Ford justifiably points out that “among all archaic genres, paens have proven the most resistant to definition and categorization.” Nevertheless, the fact that Greeks were able to simply use the word “paean” to express a specific kind of poetic performance implies by necessity that the Greeks were able to conceive of such a poetic form, and to associate with this genre specific, if varied, elements and functions.

A few general points may be made. The paean was a form of lyric poetry that was typically performed by choruses of young men and most often associated with Apolline cult.

46 As we see for example in the Ion itself (v. 906), but also in Aeschylus (Persians 393, Ch. 870), Archilochus (fr. 121), Thucydides (7.75.7), Plato (Symposium 177a7), and many others. I discuss this issue at greater length in the Introduction: see pp. 26-28.
48 Paenas to Artemis and Asclepius would also fall under the umbrella of Apolline cult, according to scholars both ancient and modern. Photius tells us that Proclus had identified the paean as a type of song that “in antiquity was assigned to Apollo and Artemis” (Bibliotheca 320a22-23: τὸ δὲ παλαιὸν ἔως ἀπενέμετο τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι καὶ τῇ Ἀρτέμιδι). But Käppel, 1992, pp. 61-62, 344-46, identifies a number of paenas which were not “Apolline”; and Rutherford, 2001, pp. 47-50, identifies other (non-Apolline) cults that may have called for the singing of paenas, though he is non-committal regarding the chronology of these cultic paenas, i.e. whether they were classical or hellenistic. Contra see Stephan Schröder, Geschichte und Theorie derGattung Paian: Eine kritische Untersuchung mit einem
Although this association was not exclusive, as the survival of Philodamus’ fourth-century *Paean for Dionysus* shows, there are a number of reasons to insist on a link between Apollo and paeans. Most obviously, “Παιάν” was, at least by the classical era, one of Apollo’s titles. We may also note that the vast majority of extant paeans are dedicated to Apollo; that the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* presents an aetiology for the invention of the paean, which was in this (fictional) origin dedicated to the god in question; that the majority of extent fifth-century paeans were written for performance at either Delphi, Delos, or other festivals of Apollo; and that Pindar—our greatest fifth-century source on paeans—refers to “the seasonal paean songs of the children of golden-distaffed Leto.” Furthermore, Delphi itself may have been the place most closely associated with the performance of paeans, and it “must have resounded on many

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*Ausblick auf Behandlung und Auffassung der lyrischen Gattungen bei dem alexandrischen Philologen* (Stuttgart, 1999), pp. 10-49, who denies that the songs identified by Käppel as non-Apolline paeans were indeed paeans at all.


50 On the evolution of the divinity Παιήων, who was considered a healing god distinct from Apollo at least as late as Homer (cf. *II. 5.401, 900*), cf. Rutherford, 2001, pp. 10-17.


52 *HH* 3.516-19; on the aetiological nature of these lines, see Furley and Bremer, 2001 vol. 1 p. 80.


occasions of the year to the choral paeans performed by both local choirs and foreign theoriai.”

In short, the Delphic setting of the Ion practically begs for the performance of paean-songs.

Beyond its Apolline associations, fifth-century paeans are so inconsistent and varied in their forms that it has been decried that the genre has “practically no rules at all.” The only generic markers we consistently find within the texts of extant paeans are the presence of the name (or word) “Paean,” and what has been called the paean “refrain”—something along the lines of the “ἰὴ ἢ Παιάν” found at the end of each strophe in Pindar’s second Paean. But even this refrain is not a universal feature of the genre: at times the refrain was simply “denoted by the verb (παιανίζω),” and some fifth-century paeans seemed to have lacked it altogether. In short, the paean is not a genre that can be easily defined or recognized by its formal features.

In that light, an understanding of the paean’s performative contexts, and its functions within those contexts, may be the best way to determine how the Greeks conceived of the paean. Naturally, this too is easier said than done. The evidence shows that paeans were sung on a wide variety of occasions. These certainly included requests for divine aid—the apotropaic function mentioned above—but paeans were also sung in celebration of victories in battle, and

55 Furley and Bremer, 2001 vol. 1 p. 83. Calame, 2009, argues this on the basis of Philodamus’ Paean for Dionysus, but even more compelling evidence is provided by Bacch. 16.18-22 (also cited by Furley and Bremer, 2001 vol. 1 p. 83, and vol. 2 p. 22): δ’ ὑπ’ παιανίων/ἄνθεα πεδοχεῖν./Πυθί’ Ἀπόλλων, τόσα χοροὶ Δελφῶν/οὖν κελάδησαν παρ’ ἀγαλλία ναόν (“and you come in search/of flowers of paeans/Pythian Apollo,/which the Delphic choruses/sing beside your glorious temple”).


59 Idem, pp. 19-23 (quote on p. 19).
even at weddings.⁶⁰ Such a broad spectrum of uses could be seen as a lack of generic unity, but Rutherford has developed an intriguing hypothesis regarding the genre’s “coherence”: insofar as paeans are “usually performed by a group of men…performing the παίαν act on behalf of the polis as a whole,” these songs “were perceived as promoting the safety and stability of the polis,” and were “an assertion of the strength of the community” as a whole.⁶¹ In other words, the paean is an expression of communal solidarity: whether it was sung to prepare an army for battle,⁶² in celebration of a victory won,⁶³ by theŏriai who performed at Apolline festivals,⁶⁴ or even for apotropaic purposes,⁶⁵ paeans were performed by groups of men that represented and advanced the interests of their communities. To Rutherford’s analysis I would add one final point, and one that will emerge quite clearly from my analysis of fifth-century paeans below: the Apolline paean was used throughout Greece as a means of forging, reaffirming, or celebrating the collective identity of a single polis or of a group of poleis.

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⁶⁰ For a general typology of the different instances in which paeans were employed, cf. Rutherford, 2001, pp. 36-58.
⁶² As we see in Aeschylus, Persians, 392-94, and in Pindar’s second Paean.
⁶³ E.g. Pindar, Paean 2, which has the double function of celebrating a past victory and preparing for a future battle.
⁶⁴ Ian Rutherford, “χορὸς ἐς ἐκ τῆς πόλεως (Xen. Mem. 3.3.12): Song-Dance and State-Pilgrimage at Athens,” in Music and the Muses: The Culture of ‘Mousikē’ in the Classical Athenian City, eds. Penelope Murray and Peter Wilson (Oxford, 2004), p. 67, defines theŏriai as “sacred delegations…sent out by their city-states to perform religious functions abroad.” Examples of such theoric paeans include in all probability Pindar, Paean 5, Paean 6 (at least the first two strophes), and Paean 7b and Bacch. 17 (if it is indeed a paean, on which more below).
⁶⁵ E.g. Pindar, Paean 9; the paean in the parodos of Sophocles’ OT (151-215).
Ion’s paeanic monody: internal dissonance

Given the Delphic context and the questions of Athenian and Ionian identity that Hermes refers to in the prologue, it is not surprising that paeans play a role in the Ion, nor indeed that the genre makes an appearance early on. Immediately after Hermes departs, Ion arrives on-stage, laurel broom in hand, and prepares to fulfill his daily task of sweeping the entrance to the temple. As he works, he introduces himself and the setting with a series of recitative anapaests.66 These lines are rich in Apolline imagery, another frequent feature of fifth-century paeans: Ion sings of the temple’s sacred tripod (Ion 91), of Delphi’s prophetic workings (Ion 92-94, 98-102), of the Kastalia’s “purifying waters” (Ion 96: καθαράς δὲ δρόσοις), and of the laurel branches with which Ion is making the temple’s entry “pure” (Ion 105: καθαράς).

The words and images are reminiscent of the Delphic Septerion,68 a festival at which an ἀμφιθαλής κοῦρος (a young man with two living parents) re-enacted Apollo’s post-Pytho purification by burning down a small hut in front of the temple at Delphi, traveling to Thessaly to purify himself in the river Peneius, and then collecting branches of laurel—the same ones with which victors at the Pythian games were crowned—before leading a procession to Delphi,
branches of laurel still in hand. Central to this festival was the performance of paeans, and given its connection to the Pythian games, one might imagine that the ritual was fairly well-known. In this light, it is significant that Ion closes the anapaestic section of his monody with the declaration that, rather than being ἀμφιθαλής, he is “motherless and fatherless” (Ion 109: ἀμάτωρ ἀπάτωρ τε γεγώς). Ion thus creates an early expectation that his song will express some sort of connection to an οἶκος or family, only to then immediately defy this expectation. In doing so, he anticipates the striking divide between form and content that will dominate the entirety of his song.

Following this strange proem, Ion then begins a lyric monody that at once trumpets its paeanic essence while presenting a number of themes that are incongruous with the genre (Ion 112-27):

āγ’, ὦ νεήθαλες ὦ
καλλίστας προπόλευμα δά-
φνας, ἀ τὰν Φοίβου θυμέλαν
σαίρεις ύπὸ ναισίς,
κήπων ἐξ ἀνανάτων,
ἰνα δρόσοι τέγγουσ’ ἱεραί,
ῥοάν ἁέναιον

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Come, o fresh-blossomed
lovely laurel servant
who sweep the hearth beneath
the temple of Phoebus,
from immortal groves
where sacred dew sends forth
an ever-flowing

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70 Rutherford, 2001, pp. 28, 202-05. Rutherford makes a compelling argument that Pindar, Paean X(a) was destined for performance at the Delphic Septerion. Given the preponderance of themes that perfectly match the festival (not least of which is an ample narration of the very Apolline purification the Septerion purported to reenact!), I suspect that Aristonooos of Corinth’s fourth-century BC Paean to Apollo (inscribed on the temple of Delphi) was also associated with the Septerion, though other scholars have argued that it was performed during the Delphic Daphnephoria: cf. Arthur Fairbanks, A Study of the Greek Paean (Ithaca, 1900), p. 28.

The strophe is dense with Apolline imagery—the laurel, the sun, the temple—and in its closing refrain (vv. 125-27) it fully and unmistakably defines itself as a paean. It is in fact striking to note, as Rutherford does, that this is “the only true παιάν-refrain in extant tragedy.” And thanks to this refrain, the audience must have readily identified Ion’s song as an exemplar of the genre. At the same time, however, they would also easily recognize that Ion’s paean is in many ways anomalous, beginning with the fact that he sings alone and defines himself as a slave and orphan.

The next strophe continues in the same vein and culminates in the same refrain, thus eliminating any doubt that the song purports to be a paean. But the puzzling aspects of the first strophe are only magnified (Ion 128-43):

καλόν γε τὸν πόνον, ὦ
Φοῖβε, σοί προὶ δόμων λατρεύ-

A beautiful toil, o Phoebus,
I minister for you before the prophetic

73 Contra, see Lee, ed., 1997, p. 172, who calls this a “Delphic Hymn”; and Furley and Bremer, 2001 vol. 1 pp. 322-23 (and esp. fn 14), who argue that “the cultic refrain of Ion’s song is intended by Euripides to show Ion’s deep familiarity with the type of songs which rang out constantly at the oracle.” In my view, it is far less likely that the audience would come to this conclusion than that they would simply interpret this song as a “solo” paean, given the presence (and eventual repetition) of the paean refrain surrounded by a multitude other paeanic elements.

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The focus here is obviously on Ion’s toils at the temple. Such a topic is, in a sense, suitable for paean. Typically, however, the toil to which a hymnal or paeanic chorus refers is the very act in which it is engaged—the song and dance. Here, on the other hand, the ponoi to which Ion refers are the janitorial duties in which he is engaged. His use of this paeanic motif thus serves to emphasize the unconventional nature of his paean. This incongruity is further highlighted by the fact that Ion calls his toils “auspicious” (v. 134: euphāmous ponous). The paean itself was considered a form of euphēmia, so by using the adjective to refer to his mundane task, Ion again seems to be using a paeanic formula in a most unusual manner. Euripides thus overtly

74 Rutherford, 1995a, p. 130, notes that this is “a theme that can be paralleled in nondramatic paean,” pointing to Simonides, fr. 35b.6 (=PMG 519), and Pindar, Paean 7b.21-22.
75 As Rutherford, 2001, p. 249 indeed notes regarding Pindar’s seventh Paean. But cf. also Pindar, fr. 70c.16 (a dithyramb): πόνοι χορόν.
76 Ian Rutherford, “Paeanes by Simonides,” Harvard Studies in Classical Philology 93 (1990): p. 173, makes a similar point (“there seems to be an association between the word εὐφήμος and its cognates and the paean-refrain”), and the examples he cites point to how close this association was: rather than speaking of “singing a paean,” a number of ancient authors simply say (ep)ευφήμεω παιάν or even simply (ep)ευφήμεω (A. Pers. 389; Ar. Eq. 1316-18; E. IT 1403-04; IA 1467-68; Macedonius, Paean, 3).
manipulates the generic conventions of the paean, and in so doing he draws the attention of the audience to the innovative nature of the song itself.

In this vein, Ion’s words about Apollo are crucial. Ion speaks of Apollo as a father:77 a father in “name,” but not, it would appear from his formulation, in actuality.78 He recalls his earlier claim to be “motherless and fatherless” (Ion 109), and affirms this fictional identity by referring to Apollo as “τὸν βόσκοντα,” a term that befits a shepherd rather than a parent.79 The irony here is obvious,80 for of course Apollo actually is his father.81 This underscores a crucial aspect of Ion’s song: throughout the paean, but especially in the second strophe, Ion is intent on defining himself, and the definition he gives himself is erroneous: rather than stressing that he belongs to a community of Athenians or Ionians, or indeed any community, Ion instead defines himself as a temple slave who knows not who his actual parents are. His paean in fact “symbolizes his isolation from community,”82 and it celebrates the fictional identity that Apollo has imposed upon him. As the audience might expect from the prologue, the question of Ion’s identity will be central to the play. And as we shall see, this question will be marked by a

77 The line could of course also be interpreted as “Apollo is my father,” but given the emphasis on Ion’s ignorance of his origins, it seems unlikely that the audience would interpret it in such a way, and very likely that the double-entendre would only add to the sense that Ion is using his paean in a most unconventional manner.
78 I discuss the Greek opposition of logos (or onoma) and ergon in ch. 4 (see below, pp. 284-285). See also Adam Milman Parry, Logos and Ergon in Thucydides (New York, 1981).
79 Euripides uses this term several times in the Phoenissae as well (Pho. 396, 400, 405), but here too it is used to emphasize an individual’s (i.e. Polyneices’) exile and lack of community. To my knowledge the ion is the only case in which Euripides uses βόσκω to refer to an actual parent; he generally uses the more appropriate τρέφω.
80 Lee, ed., 1997, p. 173, also notes it.
81 Though at the end of the play Apollo will refuse that name, for all intents and purposes.
82 Rutherford, 1995a, p. 131.
constant tension between his real and fictional identities, a tension that is anticipated in this song. Ion’s paean, with its inability to provide an accurate narrative, emphasizes the artificiality of myth and thus challenges the reliability of paeanic origins and mythical identities.

At this point, Ion’s monody changes tone and becomes an “astrophic song” that is unmarked by the paean refrain (Ion 144-83). In this section of the ode, we see Ion chasing birds from the premises, bow in hand (Ion 154-179), lest they sully the temple he has been cleaning. Among those that Ion abuses is a swan, Apollo’s bird, whose “beautifully-resounding songs” he threatens to “bloody” (Ion 168-69) with his arrows. While there is undoubtedly an element of humor in this scene, there is also a sense that Ion has exceeded the bounds of propriety: to kill one of Apollo’s swans “would surely constitute a form of sacrilege.”

Even more disturbing is his preface to the threat (Ion 164-65):

οὐδὲν σ’ ἀ φόρμιγξ, ἀ Φοίβου σύμμολπος τόξων ὄσιατ’ ἀν. 165 Phoebus’ lyre, your accompaniment, will not protect you from my bow.

On the surface, Ion’s dismissal of Apollo’s ability to preserve the swan may seem reasonable enough; in theory, a lyre would offer little protection against arrows. But the lyre in question belongs to Apollo, so Ion’s suggestion that his own instrument is more powerful smacks of

86 Furley and Bremer, 2001 vol. 1, p. 323.

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hubris. Such a remark is particularly out of place in a paean. In essence, he is using an Apolline song to question the power of Apolline music. Though the event is made to seem insignificant by its triviality, it nonetheless speaks to the tension with which Ion’s paean is laden, and it anticipates the serious criticism that Creousa will later direct at the god and, above all, his music.

_Ion’s paean and paeans in fifth-century Greece: dissonance by contrast_

While the oddities of Ion’s paean stand out on their own, it is in contrast to other fifth-century paeans that the song’s dissonance is most remarkable. Indeed, it is obvious that Ion’s solo paean does little to advance the outcomes that Hermes leads us to expect in the prologue, such as Ion’s successful integration into the Athenian _polis_ and the consequent fusion of Athens’ more exclusive autochthonous identity with its broader Ionian identity. But it is only when compared to extant fifth-century paeans that it becomes apparent how boldly Ion’s paean defies the standards for a genre that was consistently deployed to promote and celebrate these very civic and colonial identities.

An excellent starting point for this comparison is provided by Pindar’s fifth _Paean_, which is in fact the only Pindaric paean that we know, with relative certainty, was commissioned by Athens (Pindar, _Paean_ 5.35-43):

[Εὔ-]

βοιαν ἑλον καὶ ἐνασσαν·

[The Athenians] took and inhabited Euboia.
ἰήι εΔάλι' Απολλον· καὶ σποράδας φερεμίλους ἐκτισαν νάσους ἐρικυδέα τ' ἐσχον Δᾶλον, ἐπεὶ σφιν Ἀπόλλων 40 δάκεν ὁ χυσοκόμας Ἀστερίας δέμας οἰκεῖν· ἱήιε Δάλι' Απολλον·

Iēie Delian Apollo! And they settled the scattered flock-bearing islands and held much-famed Delos, since golden-haired Apollo gave them the body of Asteria to settle.

This paean, of which only ten other lines remain, was almost certainly intended for a theoric pilgrimage to Delos. The surviving strophe emphasizes Athens’ early settlement of Euboia, Delos and the “flock-bearing” Cycladic islands, all of which were Athenian allies and members of the Delian League. In what appears to be an “assertion of Athenian claims to leadership in the region,” the paean emphasizes the allies’ descent from Athenians. Just as importantly, the Athenian colonization of Euboia and the Cyclades is explicitly endorsed by Apollo, the god to whom the song was dedicated. Moreover, it is implicit that the Athenians, as forebears of the Ionian people and the beneficiaries of Apollo’s “gift” of Delos, had founded the very festival at which this song was performed. As such, the paean suggests that Athens’ hegemony of the Delian League is justified by its status as mother-city, its foundation of the

87 Five of which are the paean refrain seen in v. 37.
88 The context alone (settlement of Euboia and the Cycladic islands) points overwhelmingly to the Athenians, an assumption that is supported by the various surviving scholia (e.g. Σ 35: ἀπὸ Ἀθηναίων). Scholars generally agree on this point, and on the fact that it was destined to be performed in Delos. Cf. Rutherford, 2001, 296-97; Barbara Kowalzig, Singing for the Gods: Performance of Myth and Ritual in Archaic and Classical Greece (Oxford, 2007), p. 84; G.B. D’Alessio, “Defining local identities in Greek lyric poetry,” in Wandering Poets in Ancient Greek Culture: Travel, Locality and Pan-Hellenism, eds. Richard Hunter and Ian Rutherford (Cambridge, 2009), p. 146.
89 On the identification of these islands as the Cyclades, cf. Rutherford, 2001, p. 295.
91 And given the presence of a scholion mentioning a son of Erechtheus (Σ 45: Πάνδωρον Ἐρέχ[θεως]Ἀίκλον), he may even have connected them to autochthonous Athenians.
festival in question, and its appointment by Apollo’s divine will. It is a powerful promotion of shared Ionian identity, and a stark contrast to the “isolation” that Ion projects in his paean.

While the scarcity of Athenian paeans does not facilitate the task of confirming that Athens regularly used paeans to reinforce the solidarity of their allies via claims of kinship, we may use other evidence to buttress that argument. Pindar’s second Paean is another ode which provides an interesting comparison to Ion’s paean. While this ode, composed for the city of Abdera (also a member of the Delian League), focuses primarily on creating, perhaps even “performing its civic identity,” it also shows the city forging ties with a broader community. After opening with an invocation of the city’s mythical founder Abderus, the poet states his intention to “pursue this paean for the Ionian people.” This may be the only instance that the word “Ionian” is found in all of Pindar in reference to a group of people, so we may assume that the poet’s choice is not casual and that he intends to emphasize Abdera’s ties to a community outside the polis.

A large lacuna from lines 6-23 follows and unfortunately obscures much of what the poet may have done in this regard. But the contents of the first epode (directly after the lacuna) confirms the colonial character of the song (Paean 2.28-34):

93 Pindar, Paean 2.3-4: Ἰόνιν τόνδε λαῷ/παίλαντα [Νήσῳεω...
94 With the probable exception of another paeanic fragment, in which we read only “Ἰονι” (cf. Rutherford, 2001, p. 346), though of course this only increases the possibility that Pindar considered the idea of Ionian identity to be particularly appropriate for paeans. It is fair to say that Pindar’s mentions of the “Ionian” sea in Pyth. 3.68, Nem. 4.53, and Nem. 7.65, are distinct from the second Paean’s references to an Ionian people.
Pindar boldly insists that the chorus is connected to both a local community—the city of Abdera—and a broader, colonial one. The former connection is obvious: the chorus actually embodies and speaks in the voice of Abdera. The remarkable phrase “I gave birth to my mother’s mother” has caused much consternation among scholars, but what Pindar refers to here is actually Abdera’s re-foundation of its own mother-city Teos after the latter had been burned to the ground. In this context, the gnomic lines that follow about “helping one’s friends” gain new meaning: they specifically encourage the idea of mutual assistance between mother-cities and their colonies. Paean 2 thus provides another important contrast to Ion’s song. Abdera’s relationship with its “mother” may be peculiar, but unlike Ion it certainly does not consider itself to be “motherless,” nor is there any doubt that the chorus, and by extension the city, is composed of members and representatives of a broader community.

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A similarly colonial, and indeed Ionian, dynamic emerges in Bacchylides 17. There has been a great deal of debate regarding the genre of this ode, with scholarly opinion divided between dithyramb,\textsuperscript{97} paean,\textsuperscript{98} and some mixture of the two.\textsuperscript{99} The strongest arguments in favor of its identification as a dithyramb remain its classification as such by the Alexandrian scholars, its presentation of the narrative "\textit{ex abrupto},"\textsuperscript{100} and its (possible) performance in a circular dance (\textit{kuklios choros}).\textsuperscript{101} None of these arguments is unassailable.\textsuperscript{102} Meanwhile, a number of the ode’s


\textsuperscript{100} Comparetti, 1898, p. 27; much more recently, Calame, 2009, relies mainly on this point in identifying the ode as a dithyramb.


\textsuperscript{102} Even its identification by the Alexandrians is tenuous, for we know from a marginal comment on P.Oxy. 23.2368 that Callimachus and Aristarchus disagreed over the classification of another Bacchylidean fragment (23b), with the former arguing (successfully) in favor of dithyramb, and the latter in favor of paean. On this, cf. esp. Maehler, 1997
elements are decidedly paeanic, such as the poem’s dedication to Delian Apollo, its emphasis on Theseus’ transition into adulthood, and its structural similarities to the section of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* which describes the invention of the paean. The most paeanic moment of all, however, comes at the end of the poem, when Theseus’ youthful companions celebrate his success by “singing the paean” (17.129: παιάνιξαν). This small but significant moment has by no means sufficed to banish all disagreement on the question of genre, but it is certainly enough to demonstrate the ode’s paeanic side: no one present at the poem’s performance on Delos could listen to it without at least thinking of paeans.

Beyond the question of genre, the poem itself is a fascinating example of Athenian mythmaking in an Apolline context. The song was performed by Ceans at Delos, most likely in the 470s BCE, but the myth in question is clearly Athenian in origin. Theseus is aboard a Cretan ship as one of the fourteen Athenian youths who are to be sacrificed to the Minotaur. When Minos begins acting aggressively towards one of the young maidens, Theseus intervenes

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105 I.e. *HH* 3.397-501, in which Apollo takes to the sea in the form of a dolphin and leaps aboard a Cretan ship, and demands that the Cretan sailors follow him to Delphi and sing the first paean song. On Bacchylides’ many allusions to the *Hymn*, see Pavlou, 2012, pp. 518-26.


(17.8-50), at which point Minos demands that Theseus prove his descent from Poseidon by retrieving a ring he casts into the sea (17.50-81). The Athenian hero does not hesitate, and as soon as he takes the plunge he is accompanied by dolphins108 to the bottom of the sea to the home of Poseidon’s wife Amphitrite (17.81-101). After witnessing a dance of the Nereids and receiving gifts from Amphitrite (17.101-18), Theseus returns safely to the ship (somewhat oddly, the ring is never mentioned again) where he is celebrated with the aforementioned paean. He thus symbolically anticipates his defeat of Minos and the Minotaur and his liberation of Athens from its grisly debt to Crete. Just as importantly, he proves his divine heritage. Unlike in Ion’s paean, there are no longer any doubts about his paternity.

It is easy to see how this validation of Theseus’ divine heritage would appeal to Athens, but it is less apparent why the Caeans should be celebrating Theseus’ defeat of Minos, particularly since it is Minos whom the Caeans typically regarded as a mythical founder.109 Kowalzig and Fearn have both demonstrated the serious ideological ramifications of Bacchylides’ theoric ode, in particular Theseus’ substitution of Minos as the Caeans’ “culture-hero.”110 Even more crucially, Bacchylides fuses Athenian and Cean identities. This he does most cleverly at the end of the poem by transitioning directly from his description of the Athenian paean song (17.129) into a call for Delian Apollo to rejoice at and smile upon the Cean

108 It is perhaps not a coincidence that dolphins also appear on a number of Cean coins from the Archaic era: cf. again Reger, 2004, p. 748.
109 Fearn, 2013, p 141. Minos’ founding role is celebrated at length in Pindar’s fourth Paean (on which more below, see pp. 223-225) and Bacchylides 1.
110 Ibid.
chorus (17.130-31). Such a “merg[er] of choral identities...suggests an imposition of an Athenian, albeit mythical, identity onto the Cceans by means of their theoric performance.”111 Put slightly differently, the Cean chorus mimics the song performed by Theseus’ companions and thus transforms itself into a chorus that self-identifies as Ionian, with Theseus serving as their “mythical khorēgos.”112

Even beyond that, their narration of the myth in an Apolline theoric context implies that the actual Cean chorus celebrates Theseus’ success in the same manner, and indeed for the same reasons, as the mythical Athenian chorus on board the ship. This final point is confirmed by the opening lines of the poem, in which Bacchylides most ostentatiously alters the identity of Theseus’ wards (17.1-4):

> Κυανόπρωφος μὲν ναῦς μενέκτυπον
> Θησέα δίς ἔπτα τ´ ἀγλαοὺς ἄγουσα
> κοῦροὺς Ἰαόνων
> Κρητικόν τάμινε πέλαγος·

The dark-prowed ship bringing Theseus steadfast-in-battle and the twice-seven splendid youths of the Ionians cut through the Cretan sea.

Other sources are generally quite firm in noting that the “twice-seven” youths saved by Theseus were Attic or Athenian.113 In ode 17, however, it is a tribute of Ionian youths that are sent to the Minotaur. The chorus, made up of Ionians from Ceos, is thus implicated in the very act of salvation about which they are singing, and so too are the other Ionians who were present at the theoric performance, which is to say a healthy portion of the Delian League. Meanwhile, the

111 Idem, p. 142; a similar point is made by Kowalzig, 2007, p. 89.
112 Fearn, 2007, p. 255.
113 It is explicit in Isoc. 10.27; Diod. Sic. 4.61.3; and Plut. Thes.14. And it is implicit in E. HF 1327 and Pl. Phaedo 58a11.
Ionians themselves “are subject to the finest ideological trick,” for in celebrating their liberation from Minos, they implicitly sanctify the tribute imposed on them by Athens. As in Paean 5, we see here a paeanic song performing an act of mythological mediation between Athens and its colonial allies by promoting their shared Ionian identity.

Paeans were by no means the only way to achieve this type of mediation, as is evidenced by the straight-forward appeals for military aid on the basis of Ionian kinship made by both Athens and its allies throughout the fifth century BCE. But while these diplomatic appeals generally occurred strictly in times of need, the use of paeans as a mediatory mechanism seems to have been regular during the fifth century. Athens may have been sending such theoric choruses to Delos since Solon’s time, and by the classical period this certainly occurred at least once a year. Moreover, by the time the Ion was produced, Athens’ commitments to Delos had been further increased by their decision to repurify the island, and to establish the pentetic

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114 Kowalzig, 2007, p. 91. Kowalzig applies the logic only to the Cean chorus, but given the opening lines of the poem, and the Delian context in which it was performed, it seems reasonable to extend this implicit debt to all the Ionians.

115 Cf. Hdt. 5.97.2; Th. 1.95.1, and 3.86.3; Barron, 1962; Alty, 1982; Bremmer, 1997.

116 Rutherford, 2001, p. 297; Kowalzig, 2007, p. 84. Our source for this is Polemon Periegetes fr. 78 Preller (= Athenaeus 6.234e-f), who tells us it was stipulated in Solon’s kyrbeis (tablets) that a theoric delegation of Δελιασταί was to be sent to Delos each year.

117 Plato tells us that during Theseus’ voyage to Crete with the fourteen Athenian youths who were to be sacrificed to the Minotaur, “the Athenians had made a vow to Apollo, as they say, that if they were saved, they would lead a theōria to Delos every year, which they still now send to the god each year.” (Phaedo 58b: τῷ οὖν Ἀπόλλωνι ἡξολέον ὡς λέγεται τότε, εἰ σωθεῖν, ἐκάστου ἔτους θεωρίαν ἀπάξειν εἰς Δῆλον· ἣν δὴ ἂν καὶ νῦν ἐτεῖς ἐκείνου κατ’ ἐνιαυτὸν τῷ θεῷ πέμπουσιν.) On other potential occasions on which Athenian choruses would be sent to Delos, cf. Rutherford, 2001, pp. 297-98. For a more detailed account of Athenian theōriai, particularly the annual trip in celebration of Theseus’ celebration, cf. Peter Wilson, The Athenian Institution of the Khoregia: The Chorus, the City and the Stage (Cambridge, 2000a), pp. 44-46; and Rutherford, 2004.
festival to Apollo on Delos in 426/25 BCE. It is significant that Thucydides tells us that “the cities brought choruses” to this festival (Th. 3.104.3). Hornblower calls this increase in theoric activity in Delos “evidence of an Athenian desire to reaffirm the ‘Ionianism’ of the Delian league.” And while we do not have any concrete evidence regarding the songs performed at this festival, paeans were certainly the most obvious generic choice for a festival to Apollo on Delos. Indeed, it is easy to imagine that songs such as Pindar’s fifth Paean would have been the ideal choral vehicle for effecting Athens’ desire “to bring Ionian cult within her control.”

Furthermore, two sources tell us of the great impact such theoric delegations had: Xenophon’s Socrates boasts that no city can match the splendor of Athens’ choruses, such as “the one sent to Delos,” while Plutarch, even several centuries after the fact, specifically recalls the splendid theōria that Nicias led to Delos. In other words, theoric delegations to Delos, such as the one for which Pindar likely composed Paean 5, left a lasting impression on all parties involved. As such, it is probable that much of Euripides’ audience would have understood the important role paeans played at Apolline festivals in promoting intra-Ionian relationships, and would have associated this genre with the mythological setting and goals of the Ion. In this

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118 Th. 3.104. This was the second time that Athens had “purified” Delos, the first instance having been effected by Peisistratus in what A. Andrewes, “The Tyranny of Pisistratus,” Cambridge Ancient History 3 (1982): part 3, p. 403, calls “a notable assertion of Athens’ primacy among the Ionians cities.”


120 Hornblower, 1992, p. 195. Wilson, 2000a, p. 46, also notes that paeans would seem to be the “most appropriate” genre for these festivals, though his reasoning is based on cultic grounds rather than political ones.

light, it is somewhat ironic that the only paean we have seen that does not stress the idea of a shared Ionian identity is the one sung by Ion himself—the most Ionian of all possible singers.

While Athens’ exploitation of paeans to further its interests among its Ionian allies is adequately attested by our sources, the matter of the genre’s connection to questions of local, Athenian identity is a more difficult case to prove. Given the paean’s role in community-building and the general importance of Apolline cult in civic matters throughout Greece, and especially among the Ionian Greeks, one might expect to find evidence of Athenian paeans that asserted their autochthonous identity. Alas, this is not the case. The chief problem here is that besides the scanty fragments of Pindar’s *Paean* 5, there are only two other fifth-century Athenian paeans from which any words survive. One of these is an extremely fragmentary paean to Asclepius written by Sophocles, of which fewer than twenty words can be salvaged. One of these is “Κεκροπιδῶν” (descendants of Cecrops), an obvious reference to Athens’ earliest origins, but since the paean was dedicated to Asclepius it is difficult to connect this to

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123 This does not include paeans found in tragedies, though none of those are performed by “Athenian” choruses.

civic cults or the promotion of Athenian identity.\textsuperscript{125} The other fragment (Pindar fr. 152hAc = \textit{Paean} 7c [c]) somehow pales in comparison to the remains of Sophocles’ paean: only four, possibly five, words can be established with any degree of certainty. The presence of “δᾶμον Ἀθήνα[να...]” among these hints that civic identity may have been stressed in this ode, but any argument based on such scanty evidence is inevitably doomed to uncertainty.

Equally frustrating is the lack of any source that mentions performances of paeans for Apollo in Athens. The Thargelia festival would seem to be the ideal setting for such songs:\textsuperscript{126} not only was the festival dedicated to Apollo, but it included choral competitions,\textsuperscript{127} and was one of the occasions on which young Athenian males could be enrolled in the phratries, with a concomitant oath to Apollo \textit{Patrōos} guaranteeing the purity of the child’s Athenian origins.\textsuperscript{128} This marriage of Apolline cult, choral performance, and citizen-initiation, would seem the perfect occasion for paeans. Nevertheless, until recently scholars have generally insisted that the competition featured dithyrambs.\textsuperscript{129} It must be said that the evidence for this claim is extremely

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{125}] Considering the scholion to Pindar’s fifth \textit{Paean} which mentions a son of Erechtheus (Σ 45: Πάνδωρον Ἐρέχθεως Αἴκλον), one might see a pattern of mentioning autochthony in fifth-century Athenian paeans. The small sample-size and lack of context, however, renders it impossible to form any solid conclusions in this regard.
\item[\textsuperscript{127}] There were two choral competitions, one for men and one for boys. Tribes were grouped in pairs in order to form the choruses, making for a total of ten choruses, five in each competition. Cf. Lys. 21.1; Antiphon, 6.11 Arist. \textit{Ath.Pol.} 56.3; Wilson, 2000a, p. 33; Wilson, 2007, p. 156-57.
\end{enumerate}
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tenuous, for it consists merely of a very late reference to a competitions among *kuklioi choroi* at the Thargelia.\(^{130}\) We cannot simply take this term to mean “dithyrambs.”\(^{131}\) On the contrary, as Wilson has argued, this term refers primarily to the shape the chorus takes during its performance, and its use specifically “avoid[s] any more explicit generic, or cultic, markers.”\(^{132}\) Athenians would have used this term to refer to dithyrambs for Dionysus, but also for Apolline songs such as Bacchylides 17 and Pindar’s fifth *Paean.*\(^{133}\) As such, it is extremely unlikely that the competition at the Thargelia consisted solely of dithyrambs, and by extension extremely likely that it included the performance of paeans.\(^{134}\)

All that is well and good, but it still tells us remarkably little about the way, or whether or not, Athenian paeans were used to assert autochthonous identity. Our only recourse, then, is...

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130 *Suda* and Photius, *Lexicon,* s.v. Πύθιον: οἱ τῶν κυκλίων χορὸν νικήσαντες τὰ Θαργήλων (“those who won in the [competition of the] circular chorus at the Thargelia”). Although Pickard-Cambridge, 1962, p. 4, mentions “many references in literature and inscriptions” to the performances of dithyrambs at the Thargelia, with the exception of the *Suda* those which he cites (cf. p. 4 fn 2) make no mention of genre, or even of *kuklioi choroi*.


133 Idem, pp. 177-78.

134 As many scholars have suggested, e.g. Rutherford, 2001, p. 33 fn 37, who states that the Thargelian chorus mentioned in Antiphon 6.11 “may have been a παιάν”; Ceccarelli, 2013, p. 160 fn 35, follows Rutherford and states that “both in Delos and at the Athenian Thargelia the songs performed will have included dithyrambs, but also paeans.” Another possibility for the performance of paeans at the Thargelia resides in the “presumably choral” dances of the *Orchestai* (Wilson, 2000a, p. 33). Somewhat incredibly, even less evidence exists for these performances than for those of the aforementioned competition, though we can at least presume that Euripides, who as Theophrastus tells us (fr. 119) was once a cupbearer for the *Orchestai,* knew more about them than we do.
to examine paeans that were performed in other Greek poleis. The evidence is not ample, but it is suggestive. One ode that confirms the paean as a genre par excellence for expressions of self-definition is Pindar’s fourth Paean. Like Bacchylides 17, Paean 4 was composed for the Ceans, but unlike Bacchylides’ poem it was most likely performed on Ceos, and it presents a mythical structure which emphasizes the Cretan roots shared by all Ceans. Perhaps most importantly for our context, the ode sets upon these shared mythical roots the grounds for remaining dedicated to the civic community.

Pindar’s approach to the topic is clever. He begins by noting the island’s poverty and its lack of horses and oxen (4.27). He then gives an example of a foreign hero (Melampous) who had contented himself with the relative poverty of his homeland (4.28-30). Finally, Pindar makes his point and illustrates it with an origin myth (Paean 4.32-39):

135 On this, see especially Ian Rutherford, “State Pilgrimage and the Performance of Paean 4,” in Poesia e religione in Grecia: Studi in onore di G. Aurelio Privitera, eds. Maria Cannatà Fera and Simonetta Grandolini (Napoli, 2000), pp. 605-12; and Rutherford, 2001, pp. 292-93. Contra see Käppel, 1992, pp. 146-51, who argues that the ode was destined for performance on Delos on the basis of a reference to Artemis in the opening lines of the poem, the fact that the paean’s extensive praise of Ceos seems more appropriate for a pan-Hellenic context, and because a mention of the Graces must refer to reciprocity between Delos and Ceos. None of these arguments is unassailable (cf. Rutherford, 2000, p. 610), and it is particularly hard to see why the praise of Ceos would be more fitting for Delos than for a local context. What’s more, Käppel’s arguments are far outweighed, in my estimation, by the mention of a specific locality on Ceos (Karthaia, 4.13-14), but especially by the fact that much of the poem is dedicated to the idea of not leaving Ceos (see below).

136 These lines, in particular 4.28-29 (ἀλλ’ ὃ γε Μέλαμπος οὐκ ἠθέλειν/λιπὼν πατρίδα μὴ[να][χε][ thiện Ἀργεί]) have been subject to various interpretations centering around the question of whether Pindar is saying Melampous left his home (Pylos) or not. The tradition with which we are most familiar states quite plainly that Melampous did in fact leave Pylos (cf. Hdt. 9.34), and indeed Käppel, 1992, pp. 132-40, tries to reconcile Pindar’s lines with this tradition. But G.B. D’Alessio, “The Greek Paean [review of Käppel],” The Classical Review 44 (1994b): p. 64, points out that Käppel’s reconstruction “simply makes no satisfactory sense,” since it posits the following logical construct: 1) my homeland is poor; 2) Melampous left his homeland to accept a share of rule in Argos; and 3) it is best not to leave one’s homeland.
Pindar’s point is that it is better to remain at home, as Euxantios had, rather than seek fame and fortune abroad. Euxantios was the son of King Minos and Dexithea (the last surviving Telchinean), and is essentially the mythical progenitor of the Ceans. The fact that Euxantios refused a share of the Cretan kingdom—the greatest Aegean power in that mythical time—is a poignant reminder for the Ceans that not only are they all descended from a common lot, but that it is one that has traditionally kept its sights focused on home. Pindar simultaneously emphasizes ethnic homogeneity and the tradition and benefits of loyalty to one’s community.

In closing the poem, Pindar goes even further. The final twenty lines consist of Euxantios’ words of refusal in reply to the offer of a Cretan kingdom, and the Cean chorus plays the part of their progenitor. This choral act is similar to that which we saw in Bacchylides 17, in which the Cean chorus embodies and thus identifies with Theseus’ “Ionian” companions. In the
case of Paean 4, however, the effect is altogether different: rather than placing themselves within a broader, Ionian, context, Pindar’s chorus represents a figure with which all Cean—and indeed only Cean—could truly identify. Beyond being a simple appeal for loyalty to one’s homeland, which D’Alessio correctly identifies as an endorsement of political stability,\textsuperscript{141} Pindar’s poem forcefully promotes the cohesion of the Cean people through an emphasis on kinship that is embodied by participation in a choral community.

Another fascinating paean, and one which artfully shows the genre’s ability to negotiate both local and colonial identities, is Pindar’s sixth Paean, an ode dedicated to the Aeginetans and possibly performed at both the Delphic Theoxenia as well as in Aegina itself (Paean 6.123-36):\textsuperscript{142}

\begin{verbatim}
όνομακλύτα γάρ ἐσσι Δωριέι
μ[ε]δεισα [πόντω
νάσος, [ὡ] Δώς Ἑλ-
λανίου φαεννόν ἁστρον.
σύνεκεν οὐ σε παιμόνον
ἀδορπον εὐναξομεν, ἀλλ’ ἀοιδὰν
ὦθα δεκομένα κατερεῖς,
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
Your name is famous, island
ruler of the Dorian
Sea, o bright star
of Zeus Hellanios.
Because of which I shall not put you to bed
starved of paeans, but you shall take
a surge of song and declare
\end{verbatim}

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\textsuperscript{141} D’Alessio, 2009, p. 164.
\textsuperscript{142} The question of the performance of Paean 6 is tremendously complicated. On this, see esp. Ian Rutherford, “‘For the Aeginetans to Aiakos a Prosodion’: An Unnoticed Title at Pindar, Paean 6, 123, and Its Significance for the Poem,” Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 118 (1997): pp. 1-21; and Rutherford, 2001, 329-38. To summarize, the combination of a title which implied performance by the people of Delphi and a mythical structure that is decidedly Aeginetan has generated a number of (increasingly) complex hypotheses of performance scenarios over the last century. The question was further complicated by the recent discovery of a second title at the beginning of the third triad: “For the Aeginetans in honor of Aiakos, a Prosodion.” After a survey of previous performance hypotheses Rutherford (1997) introduces a new set of theories based on the emergence of the new title, and decides that two scenarios are the most likely: that all of Paean 6 was performed at Delphi, the first two triads by a chorus of Delphians and the final one by Aeginetans; or that only the first two triads were originally performed at Delphi, and that the third triad was a supplement, most likely meant for performance in Aegina. Rutherford gives a slight advantage to the second option, insofar as it better explains the apologetic tone of Pindar’s Nemean 7, but both are credible.
póthēn ἐλαβες ναυπρύτανιν
δαίμονα καὶ τὰν θεμίζενον ἀφετῆν.

ódantον τα τά τε καὶ τὰ τεύχων
σὸν ἐγγυάτης ὀλβον
eφού[π][α] Ἴον ταῖς, ὑδάτ<ες>βכר ἔπʼ Ἀσ[ο]-
ποῦ π[ὸ] α[ῦ]πο τ’ ᾶθυρων μαθυκόλ-
πον ἄνερἐςατο παρθένον Αἰγιναν·

whence you received your ship-ruling
daímôn and the virtue of justice to guests.

The far-seeing son of Cronos, who builds
all things, bequeathed your
happiness, when on the waters of the Asopos
he carried off the deep-bosomed maiden
Aegina from her door-way.

The encomiastic elements of these lines are obvious, but other aspects of the genre’s function are
embedded within this praise. In Pindar’s formulation, Aegina’s self-evident fame and power
require that paeans be sung in her honor; without these paeans, the island would be unjustly
“starved.”¹⁴³ The implication is that the paean is the genre par excellence for celebrating a city,
much like epinician poetry was for athletic victors.

But Pindar does not simply celebrate Aegina’s greatness; he also prompts the island to
reveal the source of its naval prowess (i.e. its “ship-ruling daimôn”) and its virtuous treatment of
xenoi. The chorus responds to this query in its own voice, but the structure of the poem suggests
that the island itself is providing the answer, and thus guaranteeing the legitimacy of the
account. As we learn, Aegina’s excellence stems from Zeus’ rape of its namesake, the river-
nymph Aegina. Zeus kidnapped her and brought her to the previously uninhabited island,
where he begat Aiakos, the first king of the island. Despite the fragmentary state of the final
forty lines, references to the Myrmidons—the island’s semi-autochthonous inhabitants—¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ This is in no way dissimilar to the dynamic we see in his epinician poems, in which the song itself is necessitated
by the victor’s prowess and virtue.
¹⁴⁴ Zeus was said to have transformed the ants on the island into men, whence the name “Myrmidon.” On this see Ps.
Apoll. Bibl. 3.12.6; Hesiod fr. 205 West.
(6.143) and Aiakos (6.144-45, 155-56) attest that Pindar recounts this origin story in some detail. The mention of “the boundless virtues of the Aiakides” (6.176-77) suggests that he extends the narration of Aiakos’ bloodline, perhaps through his grandson Achilles. And this genealogy is presented as a reason to “love [your?] native city and kindly people” (6.178-79).

The paean operates on several levels, and claims to be perfectly suited for each one: it celebrates Aegina’s fame; it augments that fame by “persuading” the island to tell of its divine provenance and glorious ancestry; and it ends with a call for civic unity, one that is clearly enhanced and encouraged by the paean’s mythical apparatus. These mythical elements—divine heritage, autochthony, and the city’s place in the broader Greek (in this case Dorian) world—are the same ones around which Euripides constructs the Ion. If the paean was indeed performed at an international festival such as the Delphic Theoxenia, one of the two hypotheses Rutherford suggests, “Paean 6 would provide an excellent example of negotiation between panhellenic and local traditions within the context of ancient pilgrimage.” In this case, the number of both contextual and mythical elements shared with Euripides’ Ion would be overwhelming, and there would be little question regarding the genre’s suitability for the tragedy. But even if all or part of Pindar’s song were performed in Aegina, it would still serve as confirmation that the

145 6.144-45: τὸν μὲν ὁφροσύνατον Ὀνίκος, must refer to Aiakos, who, as Pindar tells us, was “the wisest of all men on earth” and “even settled disputes for the gods” (Isthm. 8.23-24). It appears that he recounts this same episode in 6.155-56: Ζηνὶ πρὶν Στυγὸς ὄρκιον εἰς εὐδαιμόνιον. On which cf. Rutherford, 2001, p. 326.
fifth-century paean was a convenient vehicle for the propagation of local myths and civic identities that we also see in the *Ion*, a thematic confluence that is on its own notable.

Like the “Ionian” paeans discussed earlier, the two “local” paeans examined above present powerful assertions of a community’s shared identity, and they again stand in contrast to the strange paean with which Ion introduces himself to the audience. In both the Cean and the Aeginetan paeans, the divine paternities of the cities’ founding heroes are fully articulated and certain, and these origins are explicitly used to reinforce communal solidarity. Ion, on the other hand, emphasizes the uncertainty of his origins and his isolation from community, asserting instead an identity that the audience knows to be an Apolline fiction. The number of contrasts between Ion’s monody and traditional paeans suggests that Ion’s song deliberately eschews the genre’s typical promotion of origin myths and civic unity. And the fact that Ion closes his puzzling song with a singular critique of Apolline music certainly draws the audience’s attention to the idea of Apolline song itself, an implicit provocation which paves the way for Creousa’s more explicit critique of Apolline music later in the play.
4. Dissonance Refracted:

The Multiplication of Fictional Identities and Creousa’s Anti-Paean

The problems of fictional identities, unknown origins, and isolation from community that Ion introduces with his paean do not simply disappear when he ends his song. Ion closes his paean by curbing his impulse to kill the temple birds, at least saving himself from sacrilege, at which point the chorus enters the stage. The *parodos* (*Ion* 184-236) does little to dispel the paeanic anxiety that Ion has developed. In other Euripidean tragedies in which a single actor follows the prologue—but precedes the chorus’ entry—by singing an anapaestic monody, the *parodos* typically mirrors the themes and modes of the actor’s monody.147 For example, when Hecuba follows the prologue of the *Trojan Women* with an anapaestic dirge bemoaning the fall of Troy and the slave’s fate that awaits her, the chorus is moved by her laments and joins her in song before performing a dirge of their own.148 By analogy, we might expect the chorus of the *Ion* to present some sort of choral paean, or to at least express some interest in the young man still present on-stage. Instead, a group of Creousa’s female hand-servants arrives and performs an ekphrastic song in which they marvel at the decorations on Apollo’s temple. They communicate with Ion only in order to find out the rules of the sanctuary.

148 Cf. E. *Tro.* 98-229. Hecuba’s anapaests at the beginning of the *Hecuba* serve a similar function.
Even this light-hearted song is not without some anomalies. The sculptures described by the chorus are not those located at the entrance (east end) of the temple of Apollo—the side before which the tragic scene presumably takes place. Instead, the chorus sings of three battles (Heracles and the Hydra, Bellerophon and the Chimera, and the gigantomachy) that were depicted on the rear (west end) of the temple.\textsuperscript{149} This incongruity has been the cause of much debate, as scholars have tried to reconcile the \textit{parodos} to the theatrical setting in a number of ways.\textsuperscript{150} Less has been made of the scene which actually did adorn the front of the temple and which Euripides quite obviously ignores, which is to say Apollo’s arrival at Delphi. As with any omission, one must be cautious in assigning too much meaning to it. But it is worth noting that the Apolline arrival the chorus declines to describe is an event for which paeans were typically performed.\textsuperscript{151} It is as if Euripides deliberately avoids having his chorus describe a scene which is


\textsuperscript{150} The most successful of which is to suggest that the \textit{skēnē} consisted of a “non-dimensional representation” of the temple, as it is put by Karelisa V. Hartigan, \textit{Ambiguity and Self-Deception: The Apollo and Artemis Plays of Euripides} (Frankfurt am Main, 1991), p. 72 fn 10.

\textsuperscript{151} This point has not yet, to my knowledge, been adequately argued. Rutherford, 1994, p. 116, makes it in regard specifically to Bacch. 16.8-9, and he hints at the possibility that Apollo’s springtime return was a traditional occasion for a paean in 2001, pp. 28 and 54. But there is meaningful evidence suggesting that Apollo’s annual arrival at Delphi would have been marked by the performance of paeans, and that this fact would have been reasonably well-known: according to the \textit{Homeric Hymn to Apollo}, the very first paean was performed in honor of Apollo’s original return to Delphi (cf. \textit{HH} 3.517-19.), and Bacchylides tells us that Apollo’s annual arrival at Delphi is greeted by “flowers of paeans” (Bacch. 16.8-9: \textit{ίκη παοήνων/ἀνθεα πεδοχείν}). Bacchylides’ testimony is particularly relevant for the nonchalance with which he relates the detail: the poem itself is not a paean but a dithyramb, and the point of mentioning this welcoming paean is simply to “mark the performatve or contextual boundary between paeans and dithyrambs” (Fearn, 2007, p. 171). This suggests to me that the god’s paeanic greeting at Delphi was common knowledge. Further evidence that his return was marked by paeans can be found in Alcaeus’ “paean” for Apollo
Ion’s paean does not simply recede into the background; it is kept in the foreground by contrast.

*Ion and the projection of contemporary notions of Athenian identity*

The end of the parodos is marked by Creousa’s arrival (*Ion* 237). Ion, still on-stage, instantly recognizes Creousa’s “nobility” (γενναιότης), but of course he cannot know her relation to him; mother and son are united in ignorance. She gives him her background and the full story of her autochthonous lineage (*Ion* 260-82), an excursus that brings into focus the centrality of Athenian identity in the play. Soon thereafter, Ion inquires after Creousa’s present circumstances, an exchange that recalls fifth-century Athenian citizenship laws (*Ion* 289-93):

Ion: πόσις δὲ τίς σ’ ἔγημ’ Ἀθηναίων, γύναι;  
I: What Athenian husband married you, woman?  
Cr.: οὐκ ἀστός, ἀλλ’ ἑπακτὸς ἐξ ἀλλῆς χθονὸς.  
C: He is not a citizen, but a foreigner from another land.  
I: τίς; εὐγενῆ νιν δεὶ πεφυκέναι τινά.  
C: Ξοθὸς, πεφυκὼς Αἰολοῦ Διὸς’ ἀπό.  
I: καὶ πῶς ἔνος σ’ ἄν ἐσχεν οὐσαν ἐγγενῆ;  
C: Xouthos, born of Aiolos the son of Zeus.  
I: And how did a foreign man acquire you, a native woman?

Ion’s initial assumption that Creousa married an Athenian seems innocent enough, but his response upon learning that Creousa has married Xouthos is curious. Although Xouthos is a

(paraphrased in prose by Himerius, 48.105 ff.; on this cf. esp. Furley and Bremer, 2001 vol. 1, pp. 99-102; vol. 2, pp. 21-24). Alcaeus tells us that the Delphians “composed a paean” (Him. 48.115: παιάνα συνθέντες) in order to encourage Apollo to come to Delphi. And in Philodamus’ *Paean for Dionysus* we learn that Dionysus’ arrival and acceptance at Delphi was to be marked by the performance of this paean (cf. esp. Clay, 1996, pp. 94-96), which further confirms the sense that the Greeks considered the paean to be a song of welcome *par excellence* at Delphi.
grandson of Zeus and thus a perfectly appropriate match for Creousa “[f]rom a mythic or aristocratic perspective,” Ion is surprised that a “xenos” had been allowed to marry the “native” queen. He appears to be operating on the notion that “civic endogamy” is the norm among the elite classes in Athens, a condition that in all likelihood arose only after Pericles’ citizenship law of 451/50 BCE. In short, Ion appears familiar with Athens’ fifth-century citizenship laws, and he places the tragedy’s questions about identity within this decidedly contemporary context.

The remainder of the episode focuses on Ion’s own background (308-29), and on Creousa’s intention to ask Apollo about the fate of their child (330-69). Unbeknownst to the two characters, these subjects are closely related, and the discussion naturally serves to set up the eventual anagnōrisis (recognition). Just as importantly, both topics bring into focus another theme that had been introduced by Ion’s paean and that quickly becomes one of the tragedy’s focal points: fictional identities. In Ion’s case, the fictional identity is known to the audience, for he simply relates the same story of orphaned servitude that he had told in his paean. Somewhat more surprising is the fiction that Creousa’s creates. In the process of explaining her oracular

152 Lape, 2010, p. 29; see also Loraux, 1993, pp. 201-02
153 Lape, 2010, p. 29.
154 On Pericles’ citizenship law most generally, see above, p. 198. One effect of Pericles’ law, regardless of whether it was the primary motivation for the regulation, was surely to curb marriages between Athenians and non-Athenians. On the matter, cf. Boegehold 1994, pp. 62-63; Connor, 1994, pp. 36-38; Lape, 2010, pp. 23-24. S.C. Humphreys, “The Nothoi of Kynosarges,” The Journal of Hellenic Studies 94 (1974): pp. 93-94, suggests that eliminating such marriages was actually the main goal of Pericles’ law, though Patterson, 2006, p. 282, correctly points out that we know too little about the frequency of such marriages to suppose that this was a serious motivating factor.
155 Lape, 2010, pp. 29, 107-08.
request, she gives the details of Apollo’s rape and the subsequent birth and abandonment of her child, but she does so under the guise that this had occurred to a friend of hers (Ion 338: τις φίλων ἐμόν). Both Ion and Creousa thus present themselves inaccurately, Ion by revealing the bogus status he had been supplied by Apollo, Creousa by concealing her suffering at the god’s hands. An uncomfortable blend of fictional identities and Athenian origins is well developed by the end of the first episode, and the problems inherent in this mixture will subsequently be dissected throughout the tragedy.

The following episode only sees the complexities of identity and origins deepen. Xouthos leaves the oracle and enthusiastically greets Ion as his child (Ion 517: ὁ τέκνον). Ion is naturally taken aback at this strange behavior, and threatens to fend off Xouthos’ affectionate advances with “an arrow to the lungs” (Ion 524: εἰσω τόξα πλευμόνων). Xouthos prevents this assault by relating Apollo’s strange oracle, namely that the first person he met on leaving the temple—Ion, of course—would be his natural son (530-37). Ion is strangely non-plussed at the news. Rather than celebrating with his newfound father, he asks after his mother (540). Disappointed to learn that Xouthos knows nothing of his maternal origins, he wonders if he wasn’t, perhaps, “born from the earth as a mother” (Ion 542: γῆς ἄρ’ ἐκπέφυκα μητρός). Xouthos rejects this proposition out of hand, pointing out that “the ground does not bear children” (Ion 542: οὐ πέδον τίκτει τέκνα). The irony here is thick, for we already know that Ion’s maternal ancestors were in fact born from the earth, but the important point is that just as Ion acquires a new fictional identity, Xouthos actually suggests that the entire basis of Athenian identity is also an impossible fiction.
This blend of Athenian and other fictional origins is drawn out in the rest of the exchange, and in terms that are again relevant to late fifth-century Athens. Xouthos offers to bring Ion with him to Athens, an offer at which Ion balks first and foremost because of issues of identity (Ion 589-92):

They say that famous Athens is autochthonous, born of no foreign stock, so that I shall succumb to a double sickness as the bastard son of a foreign father.

Ion contrasts his new, but still fictional, identity to the purity of Athenian autochthony. Xouthos manages to convince Ion to leave Delphi by proposing to introduce him to Creousa and Athens as a xenos (Ion 654) and “sightseer” (Ion 656: θεατήν), but here we simply see the replacement of one fictional identity with another, both of which are constructed in opposition to Athenian identity. Thus far in the tragedy, these two thematic strands—Athenian autochthony and fictional (Ionian) identity—have been consistently placed side by side, if not fully woven together.

This is expressed even more poignantly as the father-son discussion draws to a close. Although Xouthos finally convinces Ion to join him in Athens, he cannot allay all of Ion’s concerns (Ion 670-75):

If I may pray for one thing, let my birth-mother be Athenian so I may inherit from her freedom of speech. For when a foreigner comes to a pure city, even if he is a citizen in theory, he acquires a slave’s mouth and has no freedom of speech.
Ion’s use of the term *parrēsia* (“freedom of speech”) confirms that the civic context in which the tragedy takes place is that of late fifth-century Athens. Ion’s recognition of “maternal inheritance” may be another reference to citizen identity in Athens after 451/50 BCE, though insofar as he discounts the political obstacle his foreign father represents, this point should perhaps not be over-stated. More telling in this regard is his reference to Athens as a “pure city” in which foreigners have no political place, a condition that certainly reflects Pericles’ citizenship law. The *polis* Ion imagines is Athens in the late fifth century, and it is within this context that the problems of autochthony and his fictional identity must be seen.

In the following episode, the problems with Ion’s fictional origins lead to a tragic crisis that is both expressed within and prompted by paeanic song. Despite Xouthos’ injunction that the chorus keep silent about his newfound son (*Ion* 666-67), no sooner does Creousa return, accompanied by her faithful *Paidagōgos*, than do the Athenian hand-maidens reveal his plot and the existence of his “son” Ion (*Ion* 752-807). The tragedy swiftly takes on a sinister tone. Creousa’s *Paidagōgos* is convinced that she will be “cast out of the house of Erechtheus” (*Ion* 810-11: δωμάτων τ’ Ἐρεχθέως/ ἐκβαλλόμεσθα)—that her childlessness and Ion’s arrival will result in the loss of her community. The situation is not yet unsalvageable, but it appears to jeopardize the easy solution Hermes had envisioned in the prologue, and casts doubt on Apollo’s prophetic powers and on his ability to control the narrative. Things do not seem to be working

156 Somewhat surprisingly, the term practically does not exist in extant literature before Euripides.
out quite as planned, and for a myth that relies on Apolline descent to establish a common link between Athenian autochthony and Ionia, it is perhaps troubling that the god in question seems less than reliable.

The *Paidagōgos* then provokes even more uncertainty by suggesting that Xouthos began engineering this plan years ago after coming to Creousa’s home as a *xenos* (Ion 813-14) and learning of her inability to bear children (Ion 819-29):

He took, in secret, a slave to the bridal bed and begat the child, and gave him to some Delphian to raise, who freely taught him in the house of the god.

And when he knew the child was grown, he convinced you to come here on account of your childlessness. The god did not lie, Xouthos did long ago by bringing up the child; and he wove such a web, that if he were caught, he could ascribe it to the god… [???]

…he meant to invest him with tyranny over our land.

The *Paidagōgos* adds a false mother to the false father Apollo had already granted Ion. In the eyes of the Athenians on-stage, Ion is now the son of a foreigner and a slave, and the key cog in a years-in-the-making conspiracy to usurp the throne of the Erechtheids. His identity is ever-shifting and tenuous, and ever-contrasted to the purity of Athenian autochthony.

Just as troubling is Apollo’s role in the affair. The question of Ion’s identity has become confused, rather than clarified, by Apollo’s prophecy, and Athenian interpretations of his oracle

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158 Lee, ed., 1997, p. 254: “These words, which make no sense, seem incurable.”
only muddle the situation further. Although he mistakenly acquits Apollo of lying, the Paidagōgos suggests that the Delphic oracle can be exploited in order to create false identities and to advance political aspirations. The idea that Apollo’s will can be so brazenly manipulated for political purposes is certainly distressing in a play that explicitly deploys an innovative Apolline myth to advance Athenian aspirations, particularly since the tragic audience was accustomed to seeing these same mythical pretenses exploited in very real political contexts. Even though we know that Xouthos reports the oracle as he received it, this in turn means that Apollo himself has lied. Apollo’s will, which Hermes has explicitly stated would be crucial to the successful fusion of Athenian and Ionian identities (cf. Ion 67-68, above p. 188), is steeped in deception and subject to human misinterpretation. Euripides thus emphasizes Apollo’s unreliability in the matter of establishing origins and identities, and he casts doubt on the very mechanisms upon which his creation of a new Athenian/Ionian identity resides.

Creousa’s monody and the anti-paeanic culmination of the identity crisis

Immediately after the Paidagōgos throws into relief the problematic nature of Ion’s identity and the unreliability of an Apolline solution, Creousa reconnects these troubling dynamics to paeanic song. She can no longer contain the secret of Ion’s birth, which she has kept so long, and to disclose it she resorts to a monody that is undoubtedly “a complement to
Ion’s [paean].” Numerous scholars have classified her song as an “anti-hymn,” but it may be more accurate to call it an anti-paean. To begin, Creousa’s monody abounds with elements that recall Ion’s paean: like Ion before her, she introduces her song with a series of recitative anapaests before turning to lyric anapaests; when Creousa names Apollo, her invocation is the very same one Ion had used in his paean-refrain earlier in the play (Ion 127, 143, 885: ὦ Λατοῦς παῖ); while Ion introduces his ode by addressing the sun which puts the stars to flight (Ion 81-85), Creousa instead calls on the “starry seat of Zeus” as her witness (Ion 870: τὸ Διὸς πολύαστρον ἔδος); while Ion’s song sees him rediscover his aidōs with regard to the temple birds (Ion 179: κτεῖνειν ὑμᾶς αἰδοῦμαι), Creousa uses song to let go of her aidōs in order to reveal her secret (Ion 861: αἰδοῦς δ’ ἀπολειφθῶ); and Creousa even recalls Ion’s false claim to be “motherless and fatherless” (Ion 109) when she mistakenly asserts that she is “bereft of home, bereft of children” (Ion 865: στέρομαι δ’ οἴκων, στέρομαι παίδων). This mirroring has two principal effects: first, in recalling a song that was overtly paeanic, it shows that Creousa’s song is intimately related to the genre; second, by drawing on some of the more disturbing elements

162 To be more precise, Creousa begins with three lines of lyric anapaests (859-61) before turning to recitative anapaests (862-80) and then again to lyric anapaests (881 ff.) with a sprinkling of dochmiacs (894-96; 906). Cf. Lee, ed., 1997, p. 257, and Furley and Bremer, 2001 vol. 2, p. 317.
of Ion’s monody, Creousa builds off the dissonance of his paean to create a far more overt condemnation of Apolline music.

The hostile relationship between Creousa’s monody and the traditional paean-song is further exemplified by her subversion of a number of paeanic themes and topoi: most obviously, her song is dedicated to Apollo, but it serves not to praise or propitiate the god, but rather to “reproach” him (Ion 885: μομφάν); the structure of the monody mirrors the typical structure of cult paeans, except that the closing prayer is replaced by a curse against Apollo,163 and references to Apolline music and singing appear throughout the ode, but in an overtly critical context. This is in fact clear from the very first lyric anapaests of her song (Ion 881-86):

> ὦ τάς ἐπταφθόγγου μέλπων
κιθάρας ἐνοπάν, ἀτ᾽ ἀγαράλοις
κέρασιν ἐν ἀψύχως ἀχεὶ
mουσάν ὑμνους εὕαχητοῦς,
σοὶ μομφάν, ὦ Λατοῦς παῖ, 885
πρὸς τάνδ᾽ αὐγάν αὐδάσω.

O you who stroke the voice
of the seven-stringed kithara, which
peals out from lifeless rustic horns
the loud-sounding hymns of the muses,
reproach for you, o son of Leto,
I shall call out before this light.

The importance of Creousa’s invocation must not be understated: in beginning her condemnation of Apollo, Creousa turns directly to, and indeed only to, his musical identity. Her reference to the kithara and the emphasis on sound (ἀχεὶ, εὕαχητοῦς) make Apolline music the central motif of Creousa’s proem, and it is a theme that remains prominent throughout the ode.

163 Rutherford, 2001, pp. 74-75, notes that “cult παῖνες” typically consist of an opening section in which the god “is directly appealed to,” a narrative section which describes an “aretology of Apollo,” and “a closing prayer.” On Creousa’s “curse,” cf. LaRue, 1963, p. 136.
Creousa follows her “musical” invocation with a striking description of her rape by Apollo and the subsequent birth and (presumed) death of their son. Her former pain and terror are palpable: she screams out for her mother as the god takes her (Ion 893); in giving birth to her son she is “wretched” (Ion 897: δύστανος); and she leaves the child in the very spot Apollo “took [her], wretched and miserable in an unhappy union” (Ion 900-01: με λέχεσι μελέαν μελέοις/ἐζεύξω τὰν δύστανον). It is on this unhappy note that she then returns to the subject of Apolline music (Ion 902-06):

{oǐμοι μοι· καὶ νῦν ἔφες
πτανοῖς ἄρπασθε θοῖνα
παῖς μοι — καὶ σοί.
τλάμον, σὺ δὲ <καί> κιθάρα κλάζεις
παιάνας μέλπων.}

Alas for me! Now my son
and yours is gone,
a feast seized by birds.
And you, wretch, pluck your kithara
and sing paens!

Within the context of the ode, the return to Apolline music serves to close the ring that Creousa had opened at line 881. In both lines she describes the god singing (μέλπων), a coincidence that confirms that, in this section at least, Creousa is deeply concerned with Apollo’s music, and that the songs themselves—his paens—draw her ire. The stanza functions as a meta-poetic but overt condemnation of Apolline music.

Creousa’s image of Apollo singing a paean has other effects as well. Given that he both opens and closes this strophe singing, it appears that she imagines Apollo singing his paens throughout her own performance; the two songs are, in a sense, contemporaneous. More importantly, Creousa’s condemnation of Apollo’s paens recalls Ion’s consideration, or lack thereof, of the god’s music in his own monody. Creousa’s critique is, if anything, more poignant. While Ion’s lack of reverence for the god’s music was troubling, he at least limits
himself to dismissing the power of the god’s lyre. Creousa, on the other hand, singles out Apollo’s song and condemns it as an accomplice to her own unjustified suffering. Here, it is important to note that both of the tragedy’s Apolline songs challenge the very notion of the paean, first with regards to its efficacy, and second with regards to its reliability. Given the associations between the paean and the questions of identity that have been emphasized throughout the tragedy, the paeanic degradation of paeans severely undermines the play’s supposed fusion of Athenian and Ionian identity.

Furthermore, the problematic nature of Creousa’s monody stands out not only for its relation to Ion’s ode but also for an allusion to an Aeschylean fragment (A. fr. 350):\(^\text{164}\)

\[\text{Thetis:} \quad \text{τὰς ἐςφωάς ἐυπαιδίας νόσουν τ’ ἀπείρους καὶ μακραίωνας βίου, ξύμπαντά τ’ εἰπὼν θεοφιλεῖς ἐμὰς τίχας παιῶν’ ἐπηρήμησεν εὐθυμών ἐμὲ. καγὼ τὸ Φοίβου θείου ἄφευγες στόμα 5 ἡλπίζον εἶναι, μαντικὴ βρύον τέχνην: ὁ δ’ αὐτὸς ὑμνῶν, αὐτὸς ἐν θοίνῃ παρών, αὐτὸς τάδ’ εἰπὼν, αὐτὸς ἐστίν ὁ κτανὼν τὸν παῖδα τὸν ἐμὸν.}\]

\[\text{[Apollo allotted]}\(^\text{165}\) to me the blessing of children both free from disease and long of life, and having told of all my god-loved fortunes, he sang a paean and greatly cheered me. And I expected Phoebus’ divine mouth to be unlying, abounding in its mantic craft; But the one who sang those hymns, who was present at my feast, who said those things, is the same one who killed my child.

This fragment belongs to an unknown play, but its contents are quite clear: Thetis is most displeased with Apollo for first predicting a long life for Achilles, only to then be responsible for his death at Troy. This story may well belong to a broader tradition with which even Homer

\(^{164}\) = Plato, Republic 383b. Ian Rutherford, “Paeanic Ambiguity: A Study of the Representation of the παίαν in Greek Literature,” Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica 44 (1993): p. 91 fn 41, was the first to recognize that Creousa’s words are an allusion to this fragment.

\(^{165}\) From “ἐνδαπείσθαι,” Plato’s introduction to the lines of Aeschylean verse.

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was familiar, but its relevance to the Iliad is certain: these are the only two instances, to my knowledge, in which Apollo is said to sing a paean, and in each case the description is hardly flattering. Each woman holds the god responsible for her child’s death, and both women implicate his paean in their loss. Like Creousa, Thetis emphasizes the treachery of the god’s music by making a second, emphatic reference to the god in the act of singing (v. 7: ὑμνῶν), and by juxtaposing this song to her child’s death.

Thetis’ reference to the rare beast that is the false Apolline prophecy is also relevant to Creousa’s monody, for immediately after condemning Apollo’s song she too moves on to focus on his oracle (Iliad 907-918):

wód, τὸν Λατοὺς αὐθῶ,  
ὅστ’ ὠμιλῶν κληροῖς  
†πάροις χρυσέσις θάκους†  
καὶ γαῖας μεσόσεις ἑδρας,  
eἰς φῶς αὐθᾶν καρφῶν·  
Ἰῷ <Ἰ>κακός εὐνάτωρ,  

óē, I call the son of Leto,  
who dispenses his divine voice  
at golden thrones  
and the midmost seats of the earth,  
I shout this song out to the light:  
iō iō, wicked bedmate,

166 In Iliad 24.62-63, Hera lambasts the “ever untrustworthy” (II. 24.63: αἰὲν ἀπιστε) Apollo for disrespecting Achilles despite having been present, “lyre in hand” (II. 24.63: ἔχων φόρμιγγα) at the wedding of Thetis and Peleus. Ruth Scodel, “Apollo’s Perfidy: Iliad 59-63,” Harvard Studies in Classical Philology 81 (1977): pp. 55-57, argues that Aeschylus’ fragment is an allusion to these lines in the Iliad, which in turn implies the existence of a tradition of Apollo’s apistia. Contra, see Jonathan S. Burgess, “Untrustworthy Apollo and the Destiny of Achilles: Iliad 24.55-63,” Harvard Studies in Classical Philology 102 (2004a): pp. 21-40. Burgess denies both that Aeschylus’ fragment is a Homeric allusion and that there was a tradition of “Apollo singing a misleading prophecy about Achilles at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis” (p. 21). At the very least, however, it seems clear that Apolline prophecy was associated in some way with the wedding: cf. Hes. fr. 212(b); Pi. Nem. 5.22-25; E. IA 1062-79. On Pseudo-Hesiod and Pindar, see esp. Jennifer March, The Creative Poet: Studies on the Treatment of Myth in Greek Poetry (London, 1987), pp. 12-20. But IA 1062-79 is perhaps the most compelling of these passages. Here, Chiron is said to deliver a prophecy which he received from the “Phoebic Muse” (IA 1064: φοιβάδα μούσαν; almost certainly a priestess—perhaps Delphic?—of Apollo), according to which Achilles would become a great warrior. It is true that Apollo is not directly involved in the prophecy, and that the “prophecy does not explicitly promise a long life for Achilles and so cannot be considered deceptive” (Burgess, p. 26). But the combination of an Apolline prophecy at Thetis’ wedding that omits any mention of Achilles’ death does seem to fall in the tradition of Aeschylus’ fragment.
ὃς τῷ μὲν ἐμῷ νυμφεύτα
χάριν ὑπὸ προλαβὼν
παιδὶ εἰς οἴκους οἰκίζεις·
οὗ δὲ ἐμὸς γενέτας καὶ σῶς τὰμαθής
οἴονοις ἔρρει συλαθεῖς,
σπάργανα ματέρος ἔξαλλάξας.

who took no favor
from my husband
yet settled a child for him in my home;
and my child and yours, ignorant one;
is gone, carried off by birds,
casting off his mother’s swaddling-bands.

The structure and many of the features of these lines should by now be familiar: both this and the earlier stanza begin with an invocation of Apollo as son of Leto. In each case, the invocation is followed by a narration of Apollo’s crimes, though this time Creousa recounts his present offenses rather than his former ones. Creousa also continues to juxtapose her own suffering (916-18) to Apollo’s actions (912-15), and she even uses the same word (ἔρρει) and image (an avian assault) to describe her son’s death. The similarities between the two stanzas mean we do not simply cease to hear Apollo’s paean when Creousa turns to denigrate his prophecy; his song is always lurking in the background.

Furthermore, the connection between Apollo’s prophecy and his paean is suggested not only by the allusion to the Aeschylean fragment but also by the terms with which Creousa describes the oracle. She defines it as an act of colonization with Apollo “settling” (οἰκίζει) Ion in her house.167 Certainly this phrase elicits the strong associations between Apolline prophecy and colonial foundations in the Greek world.168 This in turn reminds us of the role paeans played in establishing colonial narratives, as in Pindar’s second Paean where the poet explores, at length,

167 Creousa uses the same term that Thucydides does when describing the Athenian colonization of “Ionia and most of the islands” (Th. 1.12.4: Ἰωνας μὲν Ἀθηναίων καὶ νησιωτῶν τοὺς πολλοὺς ὥκεαν).
the colonial relationship shared by Teos and Abderus. An even more intriguing (and Athenian) congruity exists between Creousa’s words and Pindar’s fifth Paean. In that ode, Pindar lays the roots for Athenian hegemony by noting their early colonization (Paean 5.39: ἐκτισαν) of the Cycladic islands and Apollo’s desire that they “settle” (5.42: οἰκεῖν) Delos. Oikeō in particular is virtually synonymous with Creousa’s oikizō, so the two formulations are lexically analogous. Just as important is the conceptual similarity: while Pindar claims that Apollo gave Delos to Athens and allowed it to colonize the Cyclades, Creousa imagines Apollo giving Ion to Xouthos and colonizing the house of Erechtheus. In Creousa’s song, the paeanic and prophetic are utterly entwined.

Central to Creousa’s paeanic song, and to her objection to Apollo’s colonization of her house, is the question of Ion’s identity. Here it is once again a fictional one. While Creousa cannot of course know that her understanding of the situation is based on an entirely false premise, the audience can certainly grasp this point. As such, it must be factored into our interpretation of her ode. In this sense, Creousa’s anti-paean mirrors Ion’s earlier paean by expressing a false “Ionian” identity. The same can be said of Apollo’s paean, and of Apolline music more generally. Insofar as the god is envisioned singing a paean while colonizing the house of Erechtheus with the son of Xouthos, his paean and his music are closely related to the

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169 Thucydides also uses the verb oikeō to mean “settle.” Cf. Th. 1.8.1; 2.27.2; 6.2 passim.
expression of fictional (Ionian) origins. The blend of paeanic song, Athenian autochthony, and false Ionian identities is an all-encompassing theme of the tragedy.

Hence we must not lose sight of the paean’s role in establishing and magnifying the themes that dominate the tragedy. Ion’s monody is a paean that introduces Ion’s fictional identity and, perhaps even more troubling, it openly questions the power and potential of Apolline song. The issue of identity remains squarely in the audience’s mind throughout the tragedy, and though the uncomfortable critique of Apolline song passes momentarily from view, it is reintroduced with gusto by Creousa when she weaves the plot’s many strands into an anti-paean that is the tragedy’s “emotional climax.” Here, she mimics Ion by using Apolline music to both demonstrate the paean’s potential in propagating an “Ionian” identity—she herself does so—but also the risk that this identity may be fictional. Apolline music continues to acquire dimensions that are deeply troubling for a play that purports to completely fuse Athenian and Ionian identities. By the end of Creousa’s monody, Apolline song is expressly associated with colonial prophecies that are both false and deleterious to the purity of the house of Erechtheus and, by extension, of all Athenians.

Creousa’s take on the Apolline paean also leads directly to a full-blown crisis in the play. Beyond functioning as a condemnation of the god and his music, her monody is also a means to help her “abandon aidoς” (Ion 861: αίδοις δ’ ἀπολειφθῶ) and disclose the truth of Apollo’s rape

and her lost child. In this sense, it is a complete success, for she tells the sad tale at length immediately upon finishing her song (Ion 923-69). This is problematic for a number of reasons. To begin, her revelation thwarts Apollo’s stated (by Hermes, cf. Ion 73) intention of covering up his earlier relations with Creousa. Even more troubling is the response this revelation provokes: the Paidagōgos declares that Creousa must “punish the god” (Ion 972: ἀποτίνου θεόν) and proposes the radical solution of burning down Apollo’s temple (Ion 974). Creousa and the Paidagōgos eventually adopt a more moderate course of action by deciding to poison Ion with a drop of Gorgon’s blood before he can come to Athens (Ion 985-1038). But even though Apollo’s temple is not at risk of conflagration, the god’s modest goal of seeing Ion recognized by Creousa and receiving his due (Ion 72-74) is in serious danger of coming to naught.

Her murderous plot cannot, of course, be allowed to come into fruition. Ion’s death is averted by the intervention of a temple bird who drinks the poison cup in his stead and dies dammingly on the spot (Ion 1202-10). The bird’s intervention naturally recalls Ion’s earlier aggression against this future savior,171 but above all it marks the final turning point in the tragedy. Creousa is sentenced to death (Ion 1222-25) and seeks shelter as a suppliant at Apollo’s altar (Ion 1255-60). Ion arrives to confront her, intent on dragging Creousa from the altar and killing her (Ion 1261-1319). And lest we forget that this potentially gross violation of sacred laws

171 We may even be meant to understand that the dead bird is the same swan whose song Ion had earlier threatened to strangle: both birds are described via uncommon compound adjectives as having reddish feet or legs (Ion 162-63: φοινικοφατδα; Ion 1207-08: φοινικοσκελες/χηλας).
is a product of mistaken identity, Creousa and Ion replay the latter’s fictional identity, with Creousa accusing him of wishing to “colonize” her house (Ion 1295: ἕμελλες οἰκεῖν τὰμ’).

Athena and the problematic solution to the tragic crisis

It is at this point that the Priestess of Delphi arrives to put an end to the quarrel. Ion greets the priestess as his “dear mother, even though you did not give birth to me,” (Ion 1324: χαῖρ’, ὦ φίλη μοι μήτερ, οὐ τεκοῦσά πεθ). This address serves to keep the questions about Ion’s identity front and center, and the priestess’ response is equally telling, for she highlights the gap that exists between those who actually are and those who are simply called Ion’s parents: “I am called this, at any rate, and the name is not bitter to me” (Ion 1325: ἄλλ’ οὖν λεγόμεθα γ’· ἥ φάτις δ’ οὐ μοι πικρά). Finally, in a move with the potential to banish this confusion once and for all, the priestess produces the basket and belongings with which Ion was first found (Ion 1337-39). Creousa recognizes the basket as hers and proves her maternity by identifying, sight unseen, the objects in it. A joyous and lengthy recognition follows (Ion 1357 ff.), culminating in Creousa’s triumphant proclamation that “the house is established and the land has its rulers: Erechtheus has returned!” (Ion 1464-65: δῶμ’ ἐστιοῦται, γὰ δ’ ἔχει τυράννους, ἀνηβά δ’ Ἐρεχθεὺς).

Despite Creousa’s joy, the tragic problem is not fully resolved. Ion at first still believes that Xouthos is his natural father (Ion 1468-69), and then refuses to believe Creousa’s tale of rape at Apollo’s hands (Ion 1470-1527). He even wonders, and not illogically, why Apollo “gave
[me], his child, to another father, and said I was born a child of Xouthos.” Creousa explains that Xouthos had merely misinterpreted Apollo’s prophecy; that Ion was said to be a gift to but not “born of” Xouthos (Ibn 1534-36). Ion, however, is not convinced, and he wonders whether the god “prophesies truly or falsely” (Ibn 1537: ὁ θεὸς ἀληθῆς ἡ μάτην μαντεύεται). The answer is obvious to the audience who know that Apollo has lied, but Ion’s uncertainty speaks to the tension between his true and false identities that has driven the play forward to this point. Not even Apollo can be a trusted guarantor of Ion’s origins.

In order to resolve his uncertainty, Ion proposes entering the temple and asking Apollo himself (Ibn 1546-48). The possibility that Apollo will have the final word on the matter of Ion’s birth is tantalizing. But Athena arrives at this very moment and precludes any chance that we may see—or at least hear from—the god who has “driven” the plot to such confusing extremes.

Acting on Apollo’s behalf (Ibn 1556: σπεύσασ’ Ἀπόλλωνος πάρα), Athena confirms Ion’s Apolline paternity. As elucidated above (see p. 191), she takes great pains to outline the importance of this genealogical revelation both in Athens, where Ion will maintain the continuity of Erechtheus’ autochthonous line, and throughout the Greek world, where his descendants will “give strength to [her] land” (cf. Ibn 1573-94). All things considered, Athena assures us, Apollo “has done everything well” (Ibn 1595: καλῶς δ’ Ἀπόλλων πάντ’ ἐποίησε); in

172 Ibn 1532-33: πῶς οὖν τὸν αὐτῶν παιδ’ ἔδωκ’ ἄλλω πατρὶ/Ξούθου τε φησὶ παιδὰ μ’ ἐκπεφυκέναι;
173 One may wonder, as does Owen, ed., 1939, p. 176, just how Creousa knows this, since the exact words of Apollo’s prophecy have not been spoken in the play, nor was she present when Xouthos received the oracle.
her conception at least, Apollo has successfully and flawlessly carried out the promised fusion of Ionian and autochthonous ideologies.

The general levity of Athena’s tone notwithstanding, her arrival and analysis by no means resolve all the play’s difficulties. To begin, Athena’s appearance as Apollo’s “emissary,”174 in a tragedy that is set in Delphi and which purports to present Ion as Apollo’s natural son, is puzzling. While it’s true that Athena’s presence is in some ways “natural” for a play that concerns Athens as much as Delphi,175 Apollo’s absence, especially at this crucial juncture, only increases our doubts regarding the god’s ability to control the situation.176 The excuse Athena provides for his absence does not help his cause. According to her, Apollo does not wish “that blame for what happened earlier come to the fore” (Ion 1558: μὴ τῶν παρασταθεὶς μέμψης ἐς μέσον μόλη). While we cannot necessarily take this to mean that Apollo is ashamed at his prior actions,177 his reluctance to present himself certainly reminds the audience of the criticism, exemplified by Creousa’s monody, that Apollo has faced throughout the play, and it further undermines the imperfect solution for which he ultimately settles.

More problematic, however, is the way Athena suggests that Ion and Creousa deal with Xouthos and the false prophecy Apollo had earlier offered (Ion 1601-03):

174 As Zacharia, 2003, pp. 99, 141, calls her.
Now then, do not reveal that this child is yours, so that Xouthos may delight in his delusion, and you, woman, may move on with your own blessings.

In a sense, Athena allows Apollo to achieve his desire to keep his relationship with Creousa secret. But there are steep costs associated with this outcome. This deceit is essentially a mirror-image of Xouthos’ attempt to infiltrate his own son into the house of Erechtheus—a deceptive act for which Creousa had harshly condemned Apollo. In fact, it may be even more serious, for it will rely on Xouthos’ false belief that Ion is his son; on the “uncertainty of paternity”\(^\text{178}\) to which all men are subject, an issue of some concern in ancient Athens.\(^\text{179}\) At the same time, it means that Ion will continue to possess two different—and mutually exclusive—identities: his “true” identity as the son of Apollo and Creousa, and his “false” identity as the son of Xouthos and an unknown woman.

Most disturbingly, however, this “division” between appearance and reality “exposes the factitious nature of Athens’ civic mythologizing...[and] reveals the truth that the city’s mythologized unity is a convenient fiction for the sake of some ulterior purpose.”\(^\text{180}\) Athens creates for itself a myth that, as Athena emphasizes, has great authority both in the city and within the sphere of external (colonial) politics. But this myth is based on false premises: Ion can only return to Athens if Xouthos accepts that he is his true son, and we must imagine that this

\(^{178}\) Saxonhouse, 1986 p. 272.

\(^{179}\) Cf. Lysias 1.33.

\(^{180}\) Segal, 1999, p. 68.
deception can only function if the Athenian polis of the tragedy remains ignorant of Ion’s true origins. As such, Ion will have to assume a third and final fictional identity, and Creousa will perform what is essentially a mirror-image of the Apolline “colonization” that she had so furiously decried. The only difference is this time it is Xouthos who will see his home “settled” by a child who is not his own. Such an accumulation of false origin-myths, all of which are propagated by Apollo, can hardly be a source of comfort for those who understood the role these myths played in the creation of Athenian and Ionian identities.

At the same time, it is certainly no coincidence that the tragedy’s real “dupe” is also its only non-Athenian. It is also telling that the autochthonous Athenians we see on-stage are more than happy to help propagate a false notion of Ion’s origins and identity simply to further their own and their city’s interests. These facts must be taken into consideration when it comes to the “conciliatory aspects”181 of the Ion’s conclusion. Presuming that the tragedy was produced at the City Dionysia, there would certainly have been Ionian Greeks in the audience,182 some of them even present as official delegates bearing the allies’ annual tribute to Athens.183 We should probably not press too far the similarities between Xouthos, whose acceptance in Athens, such as it may be, derived solely from his ability to provide military assistance (cf. Ion 59-61; 294-98),

and the allies present at the City Dionysia. But it is reasonable to assume that the ideological fusion presented in the Ion would be less compelling to Ionians in the audience if the only non-Athenian character, one with whom they might easily identify, is the victim of such a serious deception at the hands of his Athenian relations. In short, the tragic resolution, based on the deception of Xouthos, does not seem to hold much appeal for the non-Athenians in the audience; if Euripides is attempting to create some sort of “conciliation”\textsuperscript{184} with them, his approach does not seem ideal.

We need not imagine that “the audience feels sufficient sympathy with [Xouthos]”\textsuperscript{185} to see that his deception casts a pall over the play’s outcome. Even without this sympathy, much of the audience should have been able to recognize that this deception is the culmination of the persistent problems with Ion’s many and shifting identities, for these problems are exhaustively portrayed throughout the tragedy. Indeed, each of Ion’s three identities threatens to cause a tragic crisis: in the first case, Ion’s existence as a temple slave nearly causes him to defile the sanctuary with the murder of Apollo’s swan; in the second, the general belief in the prophecy which “gave” Ion to Xouthos almost results in the grotesque pollution of both Delphi and the house of Erechtheus, first by filicide and then by matricide; finally, the crisis that would presumably result from the broad disclosure that Ion is the son of Apollo is averted by maintaining his true identity a secret. But beyond the fact that the outcome relies on Xouthos

\textsuperscript{184} As Zacharia, 2003, pp. 54-55, suggests.
\textsuperscript{185} Swift, 2008, p. 97.
raising his wife’s child under the illusion that it is his own, this solution sustains and exemplifies the tension inherent in Ion’s competing identities: at no point is the shadow of fiction banished.

5. Conclusions

At this point we must return to a more general consideration of the tragedy’s paeans. Despite Hermes’ description of a seemingly straightforward fusion of Ionian and Athenian identities in the prologue, the play focuses on the tensions that must be overcome, and which ultimately are not, for any such resolution to take place. These tensions are first introduced and ultimately encapsulated by the tragic paeans. Chief among these are the questions that arise concerning mythical identities and origins. These are artfully presented in the play’s opening paean, in which Ion uses his poetic voice to stress his unknown parentage and to claim for himself an identity that is, as the audience well knows, an Apolline fiction. The questions surrounding Ion’s identity only increase with his acquisition of a new identity—another Apolline fiction—in the episode following his paean. And the problems with these fictions are only fully realized when Creousa provides her own take on the Apolline paean. Here, she not only reiterates Ion’s fictional identity: she also expresses the consequences the arrival of such an “Ionian” could have on the city of Athens, and above all emphasizes the role of Apollo’s paean in creating this difficult situation. Especially troubling is the fact that her song works in perfect
disharmony with the theoretical goal of the tragedy, for Creousa’s paean does nothing to promote Athenian/Ionian solidarity; on the contrary, it threatens to destroy it.

The fact that the paean is the vehicle chosen to express these problems, to emphasize that mythical identities, even those approved by Apollo, may be false, and to drive a wedge between the autochthonous Athenians and the progenitor of the Ionians, is neither arbitrary nor insignificant. It can hardly be a coincidence that Euripides takes paeans, the very genre that was used to celebrate group identities and promote communal solidarity, and uses them to instead reveal how artificial these identities may be, and how easily rifts may appear within even the most homogeneous communities. By using paeans in this most unorthodox way, Euripides challenges not only the stability and veracity of mythical origins, but also the process by which they are disseminated and by which popular identities are established.

It is in this light that we should see the play’s critique of Apolline music. It is not enough for Euripides to merely use the paean in a way that appears, on close inspection, to be antithetical to both the traditional use of the song and to the stated goals of the tragedy. The point is powerful but subtle, liable to be overlooked. The Ion also emphasizes the radical nature of its paeans by casting doubt on the notion that Apolline song is used to present mythical narratives that are beneficial or, above all, reliable. The critiques of Apolline music, delivered paeanically by both Ion and Creousa, draw our attention to the anomalous aspects of the songs these two characters sing. As such, the tragedy highlights the problems and difficulties that may arise when paeans are used to generate or propagate mythical identities, whether it be in Delphi
or in Athens. Once again, we see Euripides exploiting a form of choral lyric to both focalize the political issues of a tragedy, but also to challenge the use of this genre in the classical *polis*.

In the following chapter, we will look again to the *Iphigenia at Aulis* and the echoes it contains of a specific poetic text—Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*. This return will allow us to see how Euripidean tragedy was able to accommodate multiple poetic forms at once, and to consistently do so in conjunction with the exploration of different social and political questions. As one of the last plays of Euripides’ career, it is fitting that studies of the IA should both open and close this dissertation, for in its excavation of multiple texts it represents one of the final and most highly developed intersections of poetics and politics in Euripidean tragedy.
Chapter Four

Duplicity at Aulis:
Euripides, Aeschylus, and the Gendering of Deceptive Speech

In chapter one, I discussed Euripides’ use of the Iliad in his Iphigenia at Aulis. The Iliad, however, is not the only work with which Euripides consciously engages in the IA, for this tragedy also responds in many ways to Aeschylus’ Agamemnon.¹ The connection between the two plays is natural and, one could say, almost inevitable. To begin, the central question of the IA—the sacrifice of Iphigenia—is one that had been addressed by Aeschylus in his earlier play. In the Agamemnon, Iphigenia’s death is the event that precipitates the play’s dramatic action. It is described in the parodos by the chorus (A. Ag. 160-247), and it is invoked as the primary reason for Clytemnestra’s murder of her husband (A. Ag. 1412-18, 1432, but cf. also 154-55).²

¹ This is by no means the only play in which Euripides reworks the Agamemnon. Richard Garner, From Homer to Tragedy: The Art of Allusion in Greek Poetry (London, 1990), p. 165, notes that the Agamemnon is “the most frequent source of imitation” in several of Euripides’ plays. On top of the IA, Garner also points to the Trojan Women, Iphigenia in Tauris, and Helen.

² Though Iphigenia’s sacrifice is not given as the motive for the murder of Agamemnon in Homer (cf. Odyssey 1.35-40; 3.262-72; 11.405 ff.), by the end of the fifth century BCE nearly every account of the affair stresses the relationship between Agamemnon’s death and Iphigenia’s sacrifice. Besides Aeschylus, cf. Pindar, P. 11.17-27, (Pindar wonders
the IA, Euripides unpacks the parodos of the Agamemnon, turning 100 lines into 1600 and breathing life into Agamemnon’s indecision and Iphigenia’s death, while also providing us with a surprising glimpse of Agamemnon’s relationship with Clytemnestra before the sacrifice. Much like it does to the Iliad, the IA functions as a narrative prequel to Aeschylus’ play.

In this chapter, I examine the relationship between the two tragedies and argue that a central aspect of Euripides’ engagement with Aeschylus has heretofore been missed by scholars. The IA, we shall see, does not simply offer an earlier episode in the relationship between Aeschylus’ characters: the characters themselves are radically different from those in the Agamemnon, and these differences have consequences that extend beyond the dramatic plot and relate to the world of the audience. In the first section, I discuss Aeschylus’ portrayal of Clytemnestra, and argue that with her, he creates a paradigm for deceptive and dangerous women. In the second section, I show that Euripides rejects that paradigm by depicting Clytemnestra as a character who eschews deception in all circumstances, and that he does so while making explicit references to Aeschylus’ version of the queen. In the third and longest section, I discuss Euripides’ depiction of Agamemnon, and assert that he is portrayed as the consummate deceiver Clytemnestra had been in Aeschylus’ play. Finally, in the fourth section I show that by making Agamemnon the deceiver, Euripides brings to the foreground an anxiety that is evident in the works of many of his contemporaries: that deceptive speech was now whether it was the sacrifice of Iphigenia or Clytemnestra’s adulterous ways that led the queen to commit murder); Sophocles, Electra, 534-51; and Euripides’ Electra, 1011-31.
characteristic of the male, political elite. In summary, I demonstrate that the IA’s intertextual relationship with the Agamemnon is another case in which Euripides uses a canonical text as a backdrop against which to illuminate a central political theme of the tragedy. In doing so, he competes with and questions Aeschylus’ version of this peculiar husband-wife relationship, and frames his tragedy as one that deals directly with an issue that pertained more specifically to the world of his audience.

1. The Agamemnon as Subtext: Evidence and Interpretations

If Aeschylus’ Agamemnon is an inevitable and ever-present subtext for Euripides’ IA, Euripides seems to go out of his way to call his audience’s attention to this fact. The IA is rife with dramatic elements that recall Aeschylus’ tragedy. That Clytemnestra shares the stage with Agamemnon throughout the play is significant in and of itself, for one can hardly help but be reminded of their famous encounter in Aeschylus’ play. And following Aeschylus, Euripides makes Argos (rather than the traditional Mycenae) the home of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, a detail Euripides dwells on to the extent that he mentions Argos more times in the IA alone (eleven) than Aeschylus does in the entire Oresteia (six). With Clytemnestra’s

entrance on chariot, he “evoke[s] the ominous arrivals for a sacrificial death of Agamemnon and Cassandra at Argos in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*.” Before Clytemnestra speaks her first lines, we are already reminded of the royal couple’s Aeschylean showdown.

Specific verbal allusions add to the sense that Euripides’ play is, at its most basic level, a response to Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*. One such example occurs when Euripides’ Agamemnon refers to “the yoke of necessity” (*IA* 443), paraphrasing the words of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* (*Ag.* 218) as he/they (i.e. both Agamemnons) face the harsh reality that Iphigenia must be sacrificed. Another is Agamemnon’s first form of address to Clytemnestra, which in both plays is “offspring of Leda” (*IA* 686 and 1106; A. *Ag.* 914: Λήδας γένεθλον). This is a moniker that appears nowhere else in extant Greek literature, and the use of the matronymic is on the whole very rare in Euripides, so this reclamation of the Aeschylean appellation is significant. Still, perhaps no allusion is more obvious than Clytemnestra threatening to kill Agamemnon upon his return (*IA* 1180-82), the very act she accomplishes in Aeschylus’ play. These allusions make

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4 Helene Foley, *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides* (Ithaca, 1985), pp. 70-71; Rachel Aélion, *Euripide Héritier d’Eschyle* vol. 1 (Paris, 1983), p. 106, makes the same connection. It must be noted that Diggle, 1994, doubts the authenticity of the entrance (cf. *ad loc.*), though it is by no means certain that her entrance by chariot is a later invention simply because the text itself is interpolated.


7 While it is true that the words Λήδας γένεθλον fit quite conveniently into the first two and a half feet of iambic trimeter, and that this no doubt encouraged the two poets to use it, it nonetheless seems significant that it appears only in these two works, as it is yet another examples of Euripides picking up on the language and themes of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*.

it very likely that an audience familiar with the *Agamemnon*, as Euripides’ was, would certainly have recognized that the references to Aeschylus’ play.⁹

Scholars have also long observed Euripides’ reclamation of Aeschylean themes and language, but they have almost universally seen the *Agamemnon*’s influence on the *IA* as unilateral and overwhelming. Foley, for example, argues that “[r]egardless of how the audience evaluates the motives of the characters…no one can in the end change the myth.”¹⁰ For Gamel, tradition itself “has worked to close down choices and alternatives in political, social, and artistic terms.”¹¹ And according to Luschnig, *Agamemnon* is “caught in a traditional role from which there is no escape,” for there is no way out of “the suffocating legend.”¹² Each of these scholars sees the Aeschylean tradition as an uncomprising force that acts upon the *IA*, both in terms of plot and character.

An even more direct assessment is provided by Sorum, who follows the consensus by arguing that the inflexibility of tradition is most visible in Clytemnestra’s attempt to alter it:

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⁹ On the familiarity of Euripides’ audience with the *Agamemnon*, see above in the Introduction, pp. 16-24.
¹⁰ Foley, 1985, p. 97
¹² C.A.E. Luschnig, *Tragic Aporia: A Study of Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Aulis* (Melbourne, 1988), pp. 77-78. It should be noted that Luschnig does contend that Iphigenia “defies” the literary tradition in order to take control of her own fate: “she sees the portrait of herself as…the Iphigenia of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, and rejects that piteous spectacle for a heroic portrait of martyrdom” (p. 5). But this is a point of some contention, insofar as other scholars are skeptical that Euripides has created a truly “heroic” version of Iphigenia. Cf. D.J. Conacher, *Euripidean Drama: Myth, Theme and Structure* (Toronto, 1967), pp. 261-64, who agrees that Iphigenia is “heroic,” but he calls it a generous, almost naïve, heroism (pp. 263-64); Herbert Siegel, “Self-Delusion and the ‘Volte-Face’ of Iphigenia in Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Aulis*,” *Hermes* 108 (1980): pp. 300-21, who concludes that “Iphigenia is to be seen as a dupe, who has been exploited by a brutal force and who is an innocent victim of political expediency and necessity” (p. 316); and Dana L. Burgess, “Lies and Convictions at Aulis,” *Hermes* 132 (2004): pp. 37-55.

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In the fourth episode, Clytemnestra reveals a mythological past in which she has been previously married and Agamemnon had murdered her first husband and child (1146-56). More clearly here than anywhere else—at the very moment Clytemnestra is trying most desperately to persuade her husband to change his mind—the inability of the dramatic fiction to escape from the tradition and, consequently, from its future is manifest.\(^\text{13}\)

Sorum’s analysis is at once consistent with the critical consensus and representative of its shortcomings: while it is true that Clytemnestra is incapable of changing the outcome that the dramatic tradition demands, her failure to persuade Agamemnon is in and of itself a radical departure from the *Agamemnon*. Indeed, it is her very ability to persuade her husband through the uses of deceptive speech that is perhaps her most marked quality in Aeschylus’ play. While Euripides may be constrained by tradition on the level of plot, he faces no such constraints when it comes to the characterization of his main players. Moreover, insofar as Clytemnestra’s portrayal in the *Agamemnon* is emblematic of the play’s deep concern with the danger that feminine deceit represents to society, Euripides’ new vision for her character is also a challenge to one of the main themes of Aeschylus’ tragedy. By looking closely at the *IA*’s portrayal of Clytemnestra and—even more importantly—Agamemnon, we may also understand just how radically Euripides engages with the Aeschylean tradition.

\(^\text{13}\) Sorum, 1992, p. 538.
2. Aeschylus’ Clytemnestra: The Epitome of the Deceptive Woman

For Aeschylus, Clytemnestra is a consummately persuasive woman, one who gains her ends primarily through deceit and guile. Aeschylus draws upon and refines a literary motif of women who use trickery to achieve their ends—ends that were generally ruinous for men. A classic example of female deceitfulness is Pandora, the prototypical woman. Hesiod describes her as imbued by Hermes with “lies and wily words and a thievish heart” (Hes. Op. 78: ψεύδεά θ’ αίμιλίους τε λόγους καὶ ἐπίκλοπον ἡθος). She is “a bane unto men” (Hes. Op. 82: πήμ’ ἀνδράσιν ἀλφητήσιν) and an “irresistibly baited trap” (Hes. Op. 83: αἰπὺν δόλον ἀμήχανον; see also Theog. 589). More generally, and clearly as a result of Pandora’s legacy, Hesiod warns us that no woman can be trusted (Op. 373-75):

μὴ δὲ γυνὴ σε νόον πυγοστόλος ἔξαπατάτω
ἀκῦλα κατίλλοσα, τεὴν δυρώσα καλιήν.
δὲ γυναικὶ πέποιθε, πέποιθ’ ὁ γε φηλήτησιν.

Let no temptress woman, eager for your land, deceive your mind by prattling on with wily words. Whoever trusts a woman trusts thieves.

14 Sue Blundell, Women in Ancient Greece (Cambridge, 1995), p. 19: “a woman employs trickery and deception in order to dispose of others; and the others disposed of are generally related to her by blood or by marriage.” Cf. also John Gould, “Law, Custom and Myth: Aspects of the Social Position of Women in Classical Athens,” Journal of Hellenic Studies 100 (1980): pp. 38-59. Gould argues that “[i]t emerges from an examination of Greek myth that male attitudes to women, and to themselves in relation to women, are marked by tension, anxiety, and fear. Women are not part of, do not easily belong in, the male ordered world…and they threaten continually to overturn its stability or subvert its continuity…” (p. 57).
Through their Pandoran origin, Hesiod directly links women and *dolos* (trickery, treachery, cunning), and posits that women represent a threat to men precisely because of their ability to deceive.

Before and after Hesiod, the motif of the "deceptive woman" is a common, though not universal, theme in Greek poetry. Penelope, for example, is able to remain a faithful wife only by a clever *dolos*, but in Homer’s epic the true master of guile is a man: Odysseus. Semonides, who seemingly runs through the entire catalogue of negative female traits, grumbles only vaguely about a certain woman who "knows all ways and means." And Pindar, though he mentions Clytemnestra’s *dolos* (*Pyth.* 11.18), seems far more troubled by the ramifications of Odysseus’ trickery in the contest for Achilles’ arms (*Nem.* 8.20-32).

In contrast to Hesiod’s relatively vague warnings about female treachery, and to Semonides’ curious reticence on the subject, Aeschylus makes Clytemnestra a paradigm of deception. This is at once an actualization of Hesiod’s condemnation of women, and a departure from the mythical tradition surrounding the murder of Agamemnon. In part this is due to the time and space Aeschylus devotes to the story of Agamemnon’s death, but it is mainly because he depicts Clytemnestra as the sole architect of his murder. Homer notes

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15 Penelope tricks her suitors into waiting indefinitely for her hand by promising to marry one of them only when she had finished making a funerary garment for Laertes (Odysseus’ father). Unbeknownst to the suitors, for three years she spent her nights unraveling in her room each day’s work (cf. *Odyssey*, 2.93-106; 19.137-51; 24.121-41). Penelope’s act is called a *dolos* several times in the *Odyssey* (Od. 2.93, 106; 19.137; 24.128, 141).

16 *Sem.* 7.78: δήνεα δὲ πάντα καὶ τρόπους ἐπίσταται.

17 Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* is nearly 1700 lines, while Homer only devotes thirty to Agamemnon’s narration of his own death (*Od.* 11.405-34).
Clytemnestra’s treachery but offers no description of it, and attributes to Aegisthus (Clytemnestra’s lover) the lead role in both the plotting and the killing. For Homer, Clytemnestra’s fault lies much more in her susceptibility to Aegisthus’ seduction than in her own desire for power. Aeschylus, on the other hand, depicts every detail of Clytemnestra’s dolos while (literally) relegating Aegisthus to the back rooms. This is done within a context of explicit antagonism between male and female. As Zeitlin argued some time ago, Clytemnestra’s attempt to seize power in the Agamemnon symbolizes the mythical “Rule of Women,” wherein male is to be subjugated to the female. For Aeschylus, Clytemnestra does not just tarnish the reputation of her gender: she epitomizes the extreme danger that women represent to men, a danger that must be suppressed.

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18 We know only that she is treacherous. Agamemnon calls her δολόμητις (Od. 11.422) and Odysseus refers to her actions as a dolos when he hears this sad tale (Od. 11.439), but we hear nothing more of this.
19 cf. Od. 3.303: ταύτ’ Ἀγισσοθος ἐμήσατο οἰκοθ ἐυνα. ("Aegisthus plotted these baneful acts."); Od. 11.409-10: ἀλλὰ μοι Ἀγισσοθὸς τεῦξας θανατόν τε μόρον τε/ἐκτα σὺν οὐλομένη ἀλόχω ("Aegisthus fashioned death and doom for me/and killed me with my cursed wife"). Furthermore, Aegisthus is mentioned by name 20 times in the Odyssey, as compared to only 4 mentions of Clytemnestra. Marilyn B. Arthur, “Early Greece: The Origins of the Western Attitude Toward Women,” Arethusa 6 (1973): p. 49, speaks of a “Homeric exoneration of Clytemnestra”; Rachel M.E. Wolfe, “Woman, Tyrant, Mother, Murderess: An Exploration of the Mythic Character of Clytemneta in All Her Forms,” Women’s Studies 38 (2009): p. 695, also notes that Aegisthus’ name comes up far more often in Homer than Clytemnestra’s.
Clytemnestra is a threat precisely because of her ability to manipulate and deceive the men around her, and Aeschylus emphasizes that her capacity for *dolos* is a specifically feminine trait. When the exiled Aegisthus is finally allowed to come on stage, he responds to the deluge of comments on his cowardice by noting that it was only natural that Clytemnestra be in charge of the *dolos*: τὸ γὰρ δολῶσαι πρὸς γυναικὸς ἦν σαφῶς (Ag. 1636: “setting the trap” was clearly the woman’s job”). The comment mirrors other references in the play to Clytemnestra (and her actions) as *dolios*—“treacherous”—and confirms that not only is Clytemnestra dangerous, but that she is dangerous in a specifically feminine way.

The threat represented by Clytemnestra’s ability to deceive is emphasized throughout the play by both her speech and actions. As Goldhill notes, “[L]anguage, when Clytemnestra uses it, becomes frightening. The uncertainty she introduces is not merely verbal, but works also towards the death of her husband, the king—the overthrow of social order.” Indeed, it is not difficult to find evidence for this, as Clytemnestra herself acknowledges as much (Ag. 1372-76):

23 τὸ δολῶσαι, from *dolos*.
24 Clytemnestra is called treacherous (*δολία*) in the *parados* (Ag. 155); Agamemnon is said to die by a treacherous fate (Ag. 1495, 1519: *δολίωι μόρωι*); Cassandra foresees that Agamemnon will die in a treacherous basin (Ag. 1129: *δολοφόνου λέβητος*); Clytemnestra herself obliquely refers to her treachery when she says that falsely claims that her excuse for Orestes’ absence is credible because it “holds no *dolos*” (Ag. 886: οὐ δόλον φέρει).
Having said, earlier, many things opportune
I will not now be ashamed to say the opposite.
How else could one, tending evil for enemies
of ruin at a height too great to be overleapt.

Clytemnestra makes two crucial admissions: that she has engaged in deceptive speech throughout the first three quarters of the play; and that she has done so with the specific aim of betraying and destroying her (male) adversary.

This confession merely serves to highlight what has been evident from the beginning of the play. In her very first speech, Clytemnestra celebrates the Greek success in Troy (Ag. 264-67), the first of many deceptive statements. Her joy at Agamemnon’s victory may be real, but only because it will afford her an opportunity to kill him on his return—a fact that she conveniently omits. Her next great speech, delivered to the chorus and Agamemnon’s messenger, is a veritable tour de force in deceit. It begins with a reiteration of her joy and culminates in this devious message for Agamemnon (Ag. 604-10):

Tell my husband this:
to come with all haste to his city, beloved,
where he might find at home his faithful wife
just as he left her, a noble watchdog
of his home, an enemy to his foes,
unchanged in every way, her seal
unbroken by this length of time.

None of Clytemnestra’s words are true in any real sense. It is possible, perhaps even likely, that she is “just as he left her,” but if so this merely underscores the fact that she is able to lie without lying, as she had in describing her “joy.” Certainly she has not been faithful—her seal has indeed been broken—and she has acted more like a welcoming committee for his enemies than
a watchdog against them. What this message is truly meant to do, as Clytemnestra herself later admits, is set an irresistible trap for Agamemnon. Such deception is typical of Clytemnestra’s speech throughout the first half of the play.26

Clytemnestra’s actions are no less tricky than her words, and they support the notion that Aeschylus is portraying a specifically feminine type of deceit. Once Agamemnon arrives, evidently persuaded by the duplicitous message Clytemnestra had sent him, a metaphorical contest takes place at the palace gates. Clytemnestra must convince her husband to walk upon colorful garments against his objections, and it is implicit that her victory in this agōn represents his death. Once inside, she will entangle him in another garment as he exits his bath,27 thus ensuring that he can “neither flee nor ward off his fate”28 as she kills him. The use of woven garments in her plot is significant. “The female art of weaving provided a natural metaphor for the art of deception,”29 and it had been exploited by other mythical women in order to overcome male adversaries.30 Aeschylus provides Clytemnestra with a murderous plot that is peculiarly feminine, and this femininity is emphasized repeatedly: Clytemnestra does not

26 For further examples of Clytemnestra’s ability to convincingly lie, cf. Ag. 855-86.
28 Ag. 1381: ῥα μὴν φεύγειν μὴν ἁμύνεσθαι μόρον.
30 Most notably Penelope in the Odyssey (see above p. 263), but the story of Procré and Philomela is another early example of women weaving deceit. Procré’s husband Tereus had raped Philomela and cut out her tongue to ensure her silence. Not to be outdone by her brother-in-law’s treachery, Philomela wove a garment depicting the events and sent it to her sister Procré. The two then teamed up to kill Procré’s son (who is, of course, also Tereus’) and “boiled him down and served him to an unwitting Tereus.” Cf. Ps.Apoll. Bibl. 3.14.8; Richard Buxton, Imaginary Greece: The Contexts of Mythology (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 123-24.
mention the weapon she uses to actually kill her husband, yet she dwells on her description of this treacherous peplos. In total, it is mentioned five times by four different characters, and it is the garment that, in all likelihood, covers Agamemnon’s dead body when he is brought out on stage.

Aeschylus thus captures his audience’s imagination with descriptions and, in the end, a display of this peplos, leaving no doubt as to the feminine nature of Clytemnestra’s treachery. In so doing, he creates a paradigm for deceptive and dangerous women. The power and influence of this paradigm is illustrated by the imitations Aeschylus’ Clytemnestra would spawn, especially in Greek tragedy. Among others, Euripides’ Medea, Phaedra, and Hecuba, and Sophocles’ Deineira all use deception in order to bring about the death of a man; all of them are described as committing doli; three of them even use garments as part of their plots (Deianeira, Medea, and Hecuba). All of these can be considered descendants of Aeschylus’ Clytemnestra. Outside of Athenian drama, a comparable situation can be found in Herodotus’ story of the only woman to rule Egypt, a queen who had avenged her brother’s death by

32 According to her, it is a “boundless net” (Ag. 1382: ἄπειρον ἀμφίβληστρον) and an “evil wealth of cloth” (Ag. 1383: πλοῦτον εἴματος κακόν).
33 Respectively Cassandra (twice), Clytemnestra, the chorus, and Aegisthus (Ag. 1115-16 and 1126; 1383; 1492; 1580). The obsession with this device continues in the Choephoroi, as both Electra and Orestes cannot resist but mention it (Ch. 494, 999-1000). For a fuller discussion of all these references to the peplos, see Richard Seaford, “The Last Bath of Agamemnon,” Classical Quarterly 34 (1984): pp. 247-54.
34 Taplin, 1977, p. 325; Seaford, 1984, p. 250.
35 Cf. S. Trach. 850; E. Med. 783; E. Hipp. 1312; E. Hec. 1269.
“killing many Egyptians by *dolos*.”\(^{36}\) The proliferation of deadly and deceptive women in drama, and the fact that Herodotus singles out a woman as the culprit in his tale of murderous treachery, are a testament to the power of Aeschylus’ Oresteian paradigm in fifth-century literature.

3. *Euripides’ Clytemnestra: The Inversion of the Aeschylean Model*

It is against this Aeschylean backdrop that Euripides frames his own version of Clytemnestra. As mentioned above (see pp. 258-260), there are many overt references to the *Agamemnon* in the *IA*. As such, it is reasonable to conclude that much of Euripides’ audience would have Aeschylus’ play in mind as they watched the second half of the *IA*.\(^{37}\) And those members of the audience who were familiar with the *Agamemnon* would undoubtedly have been able to recall one of the most striking themes of that play: Clytemnestra’s deceptive ways and her astounding perfidy.

In fact, Clytemnestra’s first scene manages to at once evoke her duplicitous past while also forming a strong contrast with it. Her arrival is reminiscent of her husband’s ill-fated

\(^{36}\) Hdt. 2.100.2: πολλοὺς Αἰγυπτίων διαφθείραι δόλωι.

\(^{37}\) Clytemnestra does not enter until close to the halfway point.
entrance in the *Agamemnon*,\(^{38}\) and in both plays it is the first yet long-anticipated meeting between husband and wife. In Aeschylus’ play, this scene is none other than the climactic carpet scene. There, we see Clytemnestra ask Agamemnon a series of trick question which serve to change the terms of their discussion and persuade him to walk voluntarily to his own death. In the *IA*, she also introduces herself to Agamemnon with barrage of questions, but these are undeniably plain and transparent: “where is Achilles from?”; “who are his parents?”; “when will the wedding be?”\(^{39}\) These queries obviously serve not to trick her husband but to learn the details of Iphigenia’s wedding and the background of her future son-in-law. In essence, Clytemnestra’s first encounter with Agamemnon in the *IA* is the antithesis of the analogous scene in the *Agamemnon*, and it sets up a contrast that will be reinforced throughout the rest of the tragedy.

Soon thereafter, Clytemnestra comes to discover that her husband is secretly planning to sacrifice Iphigenia. This plot is quite similar to Clytemnestra’s undisclosed intention to “sacrifice” Agamemnon in the *Agamemnon*, but from this point on the differences between the Aulidan and Aeschylean Clytemnestras become ever more marked. Her discovery of the plot occurs only thanks to an incidental encounter and conversation with Achilles, and it his

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\(^{38}\) I.e. by chariot. On this allusion, see above p. 259 (and fn 4)

\(^{39}\) I am paraphrasing here, but this is the gist of the series of questions that Clytemnestra asks Agamemnon in *IA* 695-720.
presence at Aulis that becomes Iphigenia’s only hope for survival. The young hero promises to help Clytemnestra save her daughter, and he even has handy a plan of action (IA 1011):

πειθώμεν αὐτὶς πατέρα βέλτιον φρονεῖν. Let us persuade her father to think better.

Achilles uses the first person plural as if to suggest that he and Clytemnestra will work together to convince Agamemnon of his folly, but what he really means is that Clytemnestra should do it herself (IA 1015-18):

ίκέτευ’ ἐκείνον πρώτα μὴ κτείνειν τέκνα; Beseech him first not to kill your child;

ἡν δ’ ἀντιβαίνῃ, πρὸς ἐμὲ σοι πορεύεσθεν. if he resists, only then should you come to me.

τείη γὰρ τὸ χρηζον ἐπιθέτ’ ὦ τοῦμον χρεων If he’s persuaded by your desire I shall not

χωρεῖν· ἐχει γὰρ αὐτὸ τὴν σωτηρίαν. be needed, for therein lies your salvation.

Achilles is not as eager to help as it first seemed when he boasted of the blood with which his sword would be stained were anyone to take Iphigenia (IA 970-72). More important, however, is Achilles’ emphasis that Clytemnestra must persuade Agamemnon. Persuasion is, of course, the very same strategy that Clytemnestra employed to entrap her husband in the Agamemnon, and Achilles’ reliance on her to convince her husband is reminiscent of Aegisthus’ willingness to allow her to take care of “setting the trap.” The audience is thus reminded both of the Agamemnon on a general level, but also of Clytemnestra’s rather unique way with words in that tragedy.

40 The first half of v. 1017 is marked with cruces by Diggle, but all the variants that have been suggested (e.g. ἄν γὰρ τὸ χρηζον ἐπιθετ’) present fundamentally the same meaning. Regardless of the accuracy of this line, that this is the correct interpretation is borne out by the action of the play: Clytemnestra attempts to convince Agamemnon without Achilles’ help, and only after she (and Iphigenia) fail to do so does Achilles return to the scene.

41 Ag. 1636, on which see above p. 265.
One might imagine that if we were dealing with the same woman who so successfully ensnared Agamemnon, Clytemnestra would have made short work of her husband’s resistance in the *IA*. This is not the case in Euripides’ tragedy. Clytemnestra’s failure to carry out Achilles’ plan is the most obvious indication that her persuasive prowess is not what it was in Aeschylus’ drama, but there are signs throughout that Euripides’ queen no longer traffics in deceit and deception. Above all, her speech is consistently marked by frankness. This becomes rapidly apparent during her attempt to dissuade Agamemnon from sacrificing their daughter. Her first line of attack is to ask after her husband’s plans, but unlike her manipulative questions in the carpet scene, this approach can hardly be characterized as cunning (*IA* 1131):

> τὴν παιδα τήν οἴη τὴν τ’ ἐμὴν μέλλεις κτενεῖν; Do you intend to kill your child and mine?

Subtle this is not, and given her failure to save Iphigenia, it is perhaps not the best route for her to take. But such directness is entirely typical of the way she communicates in the *IA*. Agamemnon responds to this frank question with a weak lie—not his first of the play—which of course only angers Clytemnestra. This anger, however, does not lead to deceit. Instead, as Agamemnon continues to dance around the subject, Clytemnestra’s language becomes more transparent rather than more opaque. She bemoans her fate and Iphigenia’s (*IA* 1137), and declares bluntly that she already knows everything, that it is no longer worth it for Agamemnon to lie (*IA* 1141-43). All this suggests that Clytemnestra’s communication techniques have evolved significantly with respect to her portrayal in the *Agamemnon*. 

272
An even more intriguing indication that Euripides’ Clytemnestra is utterly different from Aeschylus’ comes at the beginning of her speech intended to dissuade Agamemnon (IA 1146-47):42

ἀκούεις δὴ νυν: ἀνακαλύψω γὰρ λόγους, κοινεῖτι παραδοσὶς χρησίμεσθ᾽ αἰνηγμασίν
Hear me now, for I shall unveil my words and no longer employ obscure riddles

This statement is important for several reasons: first, Euripides openly emphasizes the fact that his Clytemnestra will employ frankness rather than dishonesty; second, Clytemnestra has heretofore neither veiled her words nor employed obscure riddles, an irony which only heightens the emphasis on her directness; and finally, her words are highly reminiscent of the first lines of iambic trimeter which Cassandra speaks in Aeschylus’ Agamemnon (Ag. 1178-79, 1183):43

42 This monologue runs from IA 1146-1208, and its most striking features are: Clytemnestra’s mention of a previous marriage of hers which Agamemnon had broken up by killing both her husband and her child from that marriage; and Clytemnestra’s threat to kill Agamemnon upon his return (about which more shortly). It should be noted that scholars, on the rare occasions that they have analyzed it in its entirety, have been critical of this speech. Philip Vellacott, Ironic Drama: A Study of Euripides’ Method and Meaning (Cambridge, 1975), p. 47, condemns Clytemnestra for reminding Agamemnon of “everything that ever made him regret marrying his wife,” and for “speak[ing] no word appealing to his pity, to his fatherly love, his decency, his courage”; Susanne Aretz, Die Opferung der Iphigenia in Aulis: die Rezeption des Mythos in antiken und modernen Dramen (Stuttgart, 1999), pp. 165-69, offers a similar breakdown of Clytemnestra’s use of “accusations and threats” (p. 166) in this speech, which for her are indicative of her selfish nature. But W.D. Smith, “Iphigenia in Love,” in Arktouros: Hellenic Studies Presented to Bernard M.W. Knox, eds. Glen W. Bowersock, Walter Burkert, and Michael C.J. Putnam (Berlin, 1979), p. 178, correctly notes that Clytemnestra’s first marriage is rhetorically relevant: “[as] a girl, Clytemnestra, was violated, her beloved was killed, she was the object of negotiation among men…Readers, and there are many, who fail to see the relevance of this to Iphigenia’s role, mistake the import of Iphigenia’s acceptance of the man’s decisions about her.” More recently, John Gibert, “Clytemnestra’s First Marriage: Euripides’ Iphigenia in Aulis,” in The Soul of Tragedy: Essays on Athenian Drama, eds. Victoria Pedrick and Steven M. Oberhelman, (Chicago, 2005), p. 230, has provided a brief but astute defense of Clytemnestra’s rhetorical approach, noting that it would be useless to “anticipate either the reasoning or the particular emotional angle adopted by Iphigenia whose first thesis…is still to come.”

43 I am greatly indebted to Prof. Sarah Nooter for first bringing this to my attention. Garner, 1990, p. 174, also points out this allusion.
καὶ μήν ὁ χρησμός οὐκέτ᾿ ἐκ καλυμμάτων ἔσται…
…φρενώσω δ᾿ οὐκέτ᾿ ἐξ αἰνιγμάτων.
No longer shall the oracle come from beneath veils…
…and no longer shall I teach in riddles.44

There are two striking similarities between Cassandra’s formulation in the *Agamemnon* and Clytemnestra’s in the *IA* that suggest Euripides is purposefully drawing an analogy between the two characters: the twin usage of the term αἰνιγμα; and the identical metaphorical use of “unveiling” one’s speech in order to be understood (χρησμός ἐκ καλυμμάτων vs. ἀνακαλύψω γὰρ λόγους). Both of these locutions are relatively rare,45 and in fact, the *Agamemnon* and the *IA* contain the only two extant passages in which they are used together.

The combination of αἰνιγμα and unveiled speech is not the only way in which these two passages are similar. Clytemnestra’s use of the verb χράω (χρησόμεθα) mirrors Cassandra’s χρησμός,46 and both women insist that they will no longer (οὐκέτι) use such enigmatic, oracular

44 I have excluded four lines from this passage because, while they are indeed part and parcel of Cassandra’s declaration that she will engage in clear speech, they manage, in their own inimitably Aeschylean oracularity, to at the same time be nearly impenetrable in their opacity. Cf. Simon Goldhill, *Language, Sexuality, Narrative: The Oresteia* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 85: “the expression of clarity comes through an extremely complex interplay of meanings of the central term for ‘clear’, which, through the cumulative refraction of the structure of the similes, undercuts the very desire for clarity.”

45 Prior to the *IA*, in fact, only nineteen uses of the noun αἰνιγμα are found in the *TLG*, and seven of these are in reference to Oedipus and the Sphinx (E. Ph. 48; 1049; 1688; 1731; 1759. S. OT 393; 1525), which is quite clearly not what Clytemnestra is talking about. The metaphorical concept of “unveiling” one’s language is even rarer: I have found only five instances in extant classical Greek literature, including the two cited above. (This tally factors not only the uses of ἀνακαλύπτω and the expression ἐκ καλυμμάτων, as in the above passages, but also those of the verb ἐκκαλύπτω.) The other three are: A. PV 196; Critis Fr. 1 Snell; and, curiously enough, *IA* 872. Indeed, Clytemnestra uses a similar expression (ἐκκαλύπτε οὐσίνας στέγεις λόγους) when she insists that the *Presbutēs* inform of her of the plot to kill Iphigenia, to which he has been alluding. This second use of such a rare expression again points to a general preoccupation, in the *IA*, about the potential ubiquity of deceptive speech.

46 The two words are etymologically related, and the verb, translated here as “employ,” is also commonly used in reference to oracles and prophetic speech.
speech. It is clear that with Clytemnestra’s first words in her attempt to persuade Agamemnon, she alludes to Cassandra’s famous speech in the *Agamemnon*.

Despite Euripides’ mimetic precision, this close verbal parallel could not have been easy for his audience to perceive on the spot. But this is not the only way in which Clytemnestra’s speech echoes Cassandra’s. As a prophetess, Cassandra is concerned with revealing the future, but she begins by revealing “crimes committed long ago”\(^47\)—specifically the murder of Thyestes’ children and the banquet at which they were served to him—before going on to predict Agamemnon’s death at the hands of his wife.\(^48\) In the *IA*, Clytemnestra also reaches into the past before discussing the future. After describing Agamemnon’s past transgressions—namely his shockingly unchivalrous courtship techniques\(^49\)—Clytemnestra goes on to issue a not-so-subtle warning to her husband. With a prediction that no one in the audience could have overlooked, she recalls the future acts already dramatized by Aeschylus (*IA* 1180-82):

\[
\begin{array}{l}
βραχείας προφάσεως ἐδει μόνον, \\
ἐφ’ ἢ σ’ ἐγὼ καὶ παῖδες αἱ λελειμέναι \\
δεξόμεθα δέξιν ἦν σε δέξασθαι χρέων. \\
\end{array}
\]

1180 only a small pretense is wanting
for me and your abandoned daughters
to receive you with the reception you deserve.

\(^{47}\) *Ag*, 1184-85: κακὼν../τῶν πάλαι πεπαγμένων.

\(^{48}\) *Ag*, 1219, 1222: παῖδες θανόντες ὠσπερεὶ πρὸς τῶν φιλῶν...ἀν πατήρ ἐγεύσατο. (“Just like children, killed by loved ones...whom their father tasted.”)

\(^{49}\) *IA* 1148-56. Euripides has either invented or used an uncommon variant of the story of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra’s marriage. In this version, we find out that Clytemnestra was already married when she and Agamemnon first “met.” Undeterred by this trifling detail, Agamemnon apparently killed her husband (a curiously named Tantalus) and her infant child, risking death at the hands of Castor and Pollux but ultimately procuring for himself the hand of his bride. Cf. Gibert, 2005, for the most complete discussion of this novel version of the myth.
As Smith quite elegantly put it, Euripides’ Clytemnestra is “threatening Agamemnon with the *Agamemnon*.”\(^{50}\) With her talk of a fitting reception, she foresees, some ten years in advance, exactly what Aeschylus’ Cassandra does: the murder of Agamemnon. Furthermore, the “small pretense” (*IA* 1180) yet lacking is almost certainly Cassandra herself,\(^{51}\) who will eventually arrive in Argos as a replacement bride.\(^{52}\)

In summary, Euripides’ Clytemnestra draws on Cassandra’s prophetic speech in three important ways: she echoes the words and meaning of Cassandra’s introductory iambic lines; she adopts Cassandra’s technique of highlighting past transgressions as a context for future consequences; and she does so for the same revelatory purpose, to prophesize both the act of and the motivation for Agamemnon’s death. In doing so, she reminds the audience of Cassandra’s future arrival at her house, the very circumstance in which, according to the tragic tradition, Cassandra will make the speech that Clytemnestra is now imitating in the *IA*. Such strong parallels in both style and substance can hardly be a coincidence. Euripides is clearly suggesting that there is a connection between his Clytemnestra and Aeschylus’ Cassandra.

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\(^{50}\) Smith, 1979, p. 178.

\(^{51}\) As the prophetess well understood, Aeschylus’ Clytemnestra will “redeem her abduction with death” (*Ag* 1263: ἐμῆς ἡ ἄγωγής ἀντιτέσσασθαι φόνον).\(^{52}\)

The connection between the two tragic women is profoundly relevant to any comparison between Euripides’ Clytemnestra and Aeschylus’ version of the queen. In the *Agamemnon*, Cassandra embodies “the inverse of Clytemnestra.”53 She first stands by silently as Clytemnestra weaves her web of lies around her husband, leading him to his (and eventually Cassandra’s) certain death. She then wordlessly resists Clytemnestra’s attempts to coax her inside, fending off her powerful *peitho* with an equally powerful silence (Ag. 1035-71).54 When Cassandra finally does speak, her speech is very much the opposite of Clytemnestra’s: she says nothing but the truth. Unfortunately, the outcome of her speech is also radically different, for where Clytemnestra is utterly convincing, Cassandra can persuade no one.55 In each of these ways, Cassandra differs dramatically from Aeschylus’ Clytemnestra, and is at the same time most similar to Euripides’ version of the queen.

The Aulidan Clytemnestra’s strong resemblance to Cassandra encapsulates the manner in which Euripides marks the differences between his queen and Aeschylus’, namely through the contrast in their modes of communication. This contrast remains intact throughout Clytemnestra’s long *rhesis* (IA 1146-1208). The specific purpose of this speech is to persuade Agamemnon, but rather than being laden with trickery and deceit, Clytemnestra’s words are

55 Thalmann, 1985b, p. 229: “it is one of the terrible ironies of this play that [Cassandra] is cursed with the inability to persuade…whereas Clytemnestra’s talent for persuasion is formidable.”
completely consistent with the frankness she has thus far manifested. This is especially apparent in the way that she predicts that Agamemnon will receive the reception he deserves if he kills Iphigenia, a threat that Clytemnestra never dares to utter in Aeschylus’ play. What is striking about this moment—and what should have stood out for the audience—is that the two Clytemnestras’ modes of speech differ on the very same subject: Aeschylus’ Clytemnestra cannot help but lie about her plans for Agamemnon’s return; Euripides’, on the other hand, tells the truth about the event when she is by no means forced to.

In summary, in both episodes in which Clytemnestra and Agamemnon appear on-stage together in the IA, Euripides goes to great length to emphasize the fact that his character is significantly different from Aeschylus’ version of the queen. These contrasts are evident above all in their different modes of speech: the trick questions of the Agamemnon become the forthright ones of the IA; the Aeschylean Clytemnestra’s ambiguous ritual language becomes, in Euripides’ tragedy, an unveiled threat; and while Aeschylus’ queen is depicted as fundamentally antithetical to his Cassandra, Euripides emphasizes the similarities between his Clytemnestra and the prophetess. In short, where the queen of the Agamemnon is the embodiment of feminine guile, one whose ability to manipulate speech represents a grave danger to her husband and to male society, the Clytemnestra of the IA seems to have forgotten how to either lie or persuade.
4. Agamemnon in the IA: Clytemnestra’s Heir

As boldly as Euripides flouts the Aeschylean tradition by portraying Clytemnestra as a frank wife and loving mother, his innovative treatment of Agamemnon is even more arresting. In Aeschylus’ play, Agamemnon appears on-stage for a scant 200 lines, barely enough time to be bested by his wife in a contest of words and led blindly to his grisly fate. While many conflicting reasons have been given to explain Agamemnon’s submission, it is at least clear that when it comes to manipulative speech, Agamemnon is the prey to Clytemnestra’s predator. Euripides dispels the possibility of seeing this dynamic again in the IA by making his Clytemnestra avoid any of the “multivalent” language which she so fluently delivered in the Agamemnon. But it is not only Clytemnestra whose speech patterns and character undergo significant changes. In the IA, it is Agamemnon who dons the mantle of Clytemnestra’s deceptive speech. In this section, I argue that one of Agamemnon’s principal characteristics in the IA is his tendency to lie to essentially everyone, and that in creating such a character, Euripides completes his subversion of Aeschylus’ portrayal of Clytemnestra as a deceptive and dangerous woman who ensnares the hapless male (Agamemnon) with her feminine guile. The result of this conversion is that in the IA, it is no longer feminine guile that threatens to corrupt the oikos and the polis, but rather the treachery of the male protagonists.

The fact that Agamemnon is not exactly honest in the IA has not been lost on scholars. Much critical analysis, however, has focused on trying to understand Agamemnon’s “true”
motivations for sacrificing Iphigenia. On this subject, at least, myriad conclusions have been reached. These include the explanation that Agamemnon is weak and pliable; that he is dominated by fear, or by personal ambition; that he becomes truly convinced that the war is justified, or that he succumbs to a form of “insanity.” Some scholars have dodged the question of Agamemnon’s real motivations by claiming that he undergoes a process of self-deception whereby he unwittingly convinces himself of something that is not true—that Iphigenia must die because Greece requires it.

The argument that Agamemnon manages to deceive himself is a particularly interesting one, though not necessarily because of its accuracy or its provability. On the contrary, one

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56 This is made difficult by the fact that Agamemnon changes his mind both as to whether or not to sacrifice Iphigenia (before the play he had agreed to; at the beginning of the play he decides not to; and eventually he decides that he must), and regarding his reasons for doing so. At first it seems that in sacrificing Iphigenia, Agamemnon simply relents to his brother’s pestering (IA 97-98), or perhaps to his own ambition (IA 361); then it is only because the perfidy of Odysseus and Calchas leaves him no choice (IA 511-37); then because the army’s bloodlust demands it (IA 1264); and, finally and most oddly, he decides to kill his daughter for the sake of Hellas and patriotism (IA 1271-75). On these vacillations, cf. John GIBERT, Change of Mind in Greek Tragedy (Gottingen, 1996), pp. 202 ff.
62 Blaiklock, 1952, pp. 115-16, 120; Siegel, 1981, p. 264; Lawrence, 1988, pp. 94-95; Burgess, 2004, p. 48. It is especially curious that Burgess, whose article is entitled “Lies and Convictions at Aulis,” chooses to focus so heavily on this idea of self-deception rather than on the (many) lies that Agamemnon tells throughout his play. In his final analysis of the king, he states: “I suggest that this speech [i.e. IA 1271-75] portrays the process of the formation of a conviction for Agamemnon. He is converting the lie that he has no agency in determining what will happen to Iphigenia into a belief that Iphigenia must die...with a justifying claim for the value of that action.”
63 This is not to say that this reading isn’t justified, or that there is not any evidence that Agamemnon does indeed deceive himself. It is simply that, much like the other interpretations that have been advanced, there is no
might say that it is both a consequence of and a testament to the fact that a major theme of the IA has been consistently downplayed by critics: that Agamemnon spends most of the play trying to deceive the other characters. It is not that Agamemnon’s lying ways have been completely ignored; his cruel deceit of Iphigenia (IA 640-90) can hardly go unmentioned in any discussion of his decision-making process.\textsuperscript{64} But it has gone relatively unnoticed that his most consistent characteristic is a persistent tendency to distort the truth (and not just to himself).\textsuperscript{65} Put simply, in every single scene in which Agamemnon appears, he either lies, talks about having lied, is exposed as a liar, or manages some combination of the three.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{64} Though Felix M. Wasserman, “Agamemnon in the Iphigeneia at Aulis: A Man in an Age of Crisis,” Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association 80 (1949): p. 183, has defended Agamemnon’s treachery by arguing that “when he has recourse to lying and deceit he acts against his better nature.”

\textsuperscript{65} A particularly instructive example of this is Burgess, 2004. In the seven pages that he dedicates to Agamemnon (pp. 42-48), Burgess only mentions two specific lies that Agamemnon tells (p. 43: the false letter to Clytemnestra; and p. 45: the deceit of Iphigenia). At no point does he mention the many other instances of deception that we see Agamemnon perpetrate. Other scholars have de-emphasized Agamemnon’s lying by arguing that they are the result of the pressures he faces or external factors: cf. Wasserman, 1949, p. 183; Siegel, 1981, pp. 263-64, who argues that his “web of lies and deceits” is merely a result of his “fear and powerlessness.” Lawrence, 1988, on the other hand, scarcely mentions these deceptions at all, noting only his “agonizing hypocrisy in the presence of his wife and daughter,” but even this appears to be the fruit of his “self-deception” (p. 94).

\textsuperscript{66} This is again excluding the spurious lines 1621-26.
Prologue: Agamemnon’s first deceptions

Agamemnon is the first to admit that he has not been entirely truthful during the events leading up to Iphigenia’s sacrifice, and it doesn’t take long for him to do so. Indeed, we first find out about his dishonesty in the iambic section of the prologue (IA 98-105):

καὶ δέλτοι πτυχαῖς
gράψας ἐπεμψα πρὸς δάμαρτα τὴν ἐμὴν
πέμπειν Αχιλλεὶ θυγατέρ’ ὡς γαμουμένην,
tο τ’ ἀξίωμα τάνδρος ἐκγαυούμενος,
συμπλειν τ’ Ἀχαιῶς σύνεκ’ συ θέλοι λέγων,
eἰ μὴ παρ’ ἡμῶν εἰσίν ἐς Φθίαν λέχος−
πειθὼ γὰρ εἴχον τήνδε πρὸς δάμαρτ’ ἐμὴν,
ψευδὴ συνάψας τὰντι παρθένον γάμον. 105

So I wrote a letter and sent it to my wife, asking her to send our daughter to wed Achilles, while also glorifying the man’s reputation and saying he would not sail with the Achaeans unless a bride came from us to his bed in Phthia. For I found the means to persuade my wife by contriving a false marriage for the maiden.

Here, Agamemnon comes clean to his trusted servant, the Presbutēs, but only because he needs him to deliver a new letter to Clytemnestra telling her to remain at home (IA 115-23).68 Thanks to this necessity, a mere 100 lines into the play we learn that Agamemnon has already perpetrated a series of deceptions: he has lured Clytemnestra and Iphigenia to Aulis with the promise of a “false marriage” to Achilles, and he has compounded this lie by exaggerating Achilles’ status. The purpose of this false marriage—this dolos as it will later be called—is to arrange the sacrifice of his daughter (cf. IA 89-98), and the efficacy of these lies quickly becomes evident. A short time later (IA 607), Clytemnestra arrives with Iphigenia; both are eager for the

67 Diggle marks these two words (ἀντὶ παρθένον) with cruces, but this must certainly be the point.
68 Diggle has moved lines 117-18, spoken by the Presbutēs, up before line 115.
69 IA 898, 1457.
wedding, and Clytemnestra is particularly curious to know more about Achilles’ provenance. Agamemnon’s lies have clearly been persuasive thus far.

Furthermore, his pre-play machinations are not limited to the deceit of his wife and daughter. As we soon learn, he has not been entirely honest with Achilles either. When the _Presbutēs_ warns him that Achilles may be enraged to “be bereft of his marriage,” Agamemnon brushes off this concern on the grounds that Achilles doesn’t even know about the arrangement (IA 128-30):

> ὄνομ', οὐκ ἔργον, παρέχων Ἀχιλεὺς
> οὐκ οἴδε γάμους, οὐδ' ὁ τι πράσσομεν,
> οὐδ' ὅτι κεῖνω παιδ' ἐπεφήμισα

Achilles is supplying his name, not the deed, and knows not of the wedding, nor of what we are doing, nor that I have pledged my child to him

According to Agamemnon’s defense, since Achilles has only supplied his name to the mission, his involvement is only marginal, and so there should be no cause for concern. He refers to the contemporary trope that _logoi_ (words or speech) and _erga_ (facts or reality) were often inconsistent with each other. He “treats the issue casually,” perhaps even too casually, for in

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70 After Clytemnestra introduces herself and explains that she has come for the marriage that Agamemnon has arranged (IA 607-34), she proceeds to inquire after Achilles’ provenance (seven separate questions, cf. IA 698-712) and about the plans for the wedding (four questions, cf. IA 716-22). (In between Clytemnestra’s entrance and her questions there is a dialogue between Agamemnon and Iphigenia, about which more below.)

71 IA 124-26: καὶ πῶς Ἀχιλεὺς λέκτοραν ἀπλακών/ὸν μέγα φυσών θυμὸν ἐπαρείσοι αὐτῷ τ' ἀλόχω;

72 Foley, 1985, p. 68, notes that this may have been a Euripidean invention.

73 Obviously Agamemnon uses the term ὄνομα rather than λόγος, but in this context _onoma_ was commonly substituted for _logos_ and equally antithetical to the notion of _ergon_. Cf. Adam Milman Parry, _Logos and Ergon in Thucydides_ (New York, 1981), pp. 11-13. In general, the authors who juxtapose _onoma_ and _ergon_ are the same ones who do so with _logos_ and _ergon_ as well (e.g. Thucydides, Herodotus, Euripides, Isocrates, Xenophon etc.).

making this argument, he emphasizes his own lies of omission and mistakenly relies on the uncomfortable relationship between *logoi* and *erga*.

The idea that speech and fact were fundamentally antithetical had grown increasingly popular throughout the fifth century,75 almost to the point of becoming a truism.76 Euripides’ audience surely would have recognized that Agamemnon is referring to this notion, according to which *logoi* were less reliable than *erga*, chiefly because words often didn’t reflect reality.77 The preponderance of false *logoi* was an increasing source of anxiety in the fifth century, especially in a democratic society such as Athens that relied on public discourse to achieve consensus.78 Nevertheless, Agamemnon seems untroubled by the gulf between his words and his deeds; for him it is a trifling matter to manipulate *logoi* when it suits his purposes. In this, he

75 Parry, 1981, pp. 15-21, 47-51. According to the TLG, the words *logos* and *ergon* appear within one line of each other only twenty-two times before the fifth century BCE; in Thucydides alone this happens nearly twice as many times. On Thucydides’ use of *logos* and *ergon*, cf. Parry, 1981, passim; Adam Parry, “Thucydides’ Use of Abstract Language,” Yale French Studies 45 (1970): pp. 3-20; Josiah Ober, Political Dissent in Democratic Athens: Intellectual Critics of Popular Rule (Princeton, 1998), pp. 53-63. Ober’s reading of Thucydides’ skepticism of *logoi* is particularly relevant since, in his view, it is a harsh critique of the democratic process which relied on the (unreliable) *logoi* of public speakers.
76 Parry, 1981, p. 48 states that it “becomes common coin in the Vth century.” Outside of Thucydides, the juxtaposition between *logos* and *ergon* comes up frequently in oratory (cf. Antiphon, On the Choreutes, 47.5; On the Murder of Herodes, 84.12; Isocrates, 3.1.8, 8.134.2) and in philosophy (cf. Plato, Apology 32a and 32d, Gorgias 450d), but also in drama (cf. E. Alc. 339, Ph. 389; S. El. 357, 893). Euripides had actually made this contrast the central conceit of one of his later tragedies: cf. Charles Segal, “The Two Worlds of Euripides’ *Helen*,” Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association 102 (1971): pp. 553-614. On Plato’s stance on *logos* and *ergon*, cf. David Grene, Greek Political Theory: The Image of Man in Thucydides and Plato (Chicago, 1950), pp. 95-124; Gerald M. Mara, Socrates’ Discursive Democracy: Logos and Ergon in Platonic Political Philosophy (Albany, 1997). Naturally, different Greek authors and thinkers took different stances on the relationship between words and deeds. But what is important in this context is that, given the frequency of the juxtaposition between *logos* and *ergon* in fifth-century literature, we can safely say that Euripides’ audience would have had considerable exposure to this idea and would have recognized it as a contemporary discourse.
77 Parry, 1981, pp. 18-19, calls this the “popular distinction” of the *logos/ergon* antithesis (as opposed to the “literary distinction” and the “philosophical distinction”).
resembles Aeschylus’ Clytemnestra—both are only too happy to say “opportune things” when it suits their purposes—\(^{79}\)—but also politicians such as Cleon who, as we shall see, is depicted in a similar way by Thucydides and Aristophanes.

The Presbutēs, for his part, is unimpressed: “you’ve dared a terrible thing” (\textit{IA} 133: δεινά γ’ ἐτόλμας), he tells Agamemnon, implying that he should be less cavalier about his manipulation of \textit{logoi}. Achilles’ later response to the situation lends credence to the Presbutēs’ concerns. Indeed, when he eventually learns of the elaborate wedding ruse, Achilles finds little consolation in the fact that “only” his name was used to effect it (\textit{IA} 936-41):

\begin{verbatim}
οὐ γὰρ ἐμπλέκειν πλοκάς
ἐγὼ παρέξω σῷ πόσει τοῦμὸν δέμας,
τοῦναµα γὰρ, εἰ καὶ μὴ σίδηρον ἔρατο,
τοῦμὸν φονεύσει παιδα σὴν. τὸ δ’ αἴτιον
πόσις σῷς. ἀγνὸν δ’ οὐκέτ’ ἐστὶ σῶμ’ ἐμὸν,
εἰ δὲ εἴμ’ ὀλείται δα τε τοὺς ἐμὸὺς γάμους.
\end{verbatim}

Achilles is clearly displeased that, unbeknownst to him, his hand in marriage has been used as bait for Agamemnon’s trap. He blames Agamemnon, but notes very specifically that his name will be the murderer, and that he himself can no longer be considered chaste—in fact, he will no longer consider himself an unmarried man.\(^{80}\) He too is aware of the relationship between \textit{logos} and \textit{ergon}, but in a manner that is more reminiscent of Thucydides or Gorgias, both of whom

\footnotesize
\(^{79}\) As in A. \textit{Ag}. 1372; see above p. 266
understood that “λόγος is opposed to ἔργα, but it can act itself as an ἔργον.” It is clear that the deceptive use of Achilles’ name for this plot is not merely a white lie for which there will be no consequences; on the contrary, Achilles’ reaction shows that Agamemnon’s tendency to lie is a serious and objectionable matter. Moreover, the fact that Achilles describes Agamemnon as “weaving a web” casts Agamemnon’s dolos in feminine terms, another reminder of his once and future murderess.

Beginning in the prologue, then, the audience learns that Agamemnon has been willing to bring about his daughter’s sacrifice by any (dishonest) means necessary. These include actively deceiving his wife and daughter in order to lure them to Aulis, and concealing from Achilles the fact that he has used his name as bait. Both of these lies are cast in a nefarious light, and in defending himself, Agamemnon refers to fifth-century concerns about deceptive speakers. Audience and reader alike are alerted to the possibility that this kind of deceitful behavior is central to the play. As the tragedy unfolds, two additional points will become increasingly clear: that deception is Agamemnon’s primary mode of communication; and that Euripides intentionally presents him as an individual analogous to Aeschylus’ Clytemnestra, the embodiment of feminine guile. While the latter of these only becomes obvious once Clytemnestra arrives near the middle of the play, the former is emphasized in the first episode.

81 Parry, 1981, p. 45. Parry here refers to Gorgias (on whom see more below, pp. 307-310), but given his analysis of Thucydides’ understanding of the logos/ergon dynamic (cf. pp. 76-89), the words seem applicable to both.
Episode one: more lies revealed

The parodos momentarily distracts us from the implications of Agamemnon’s deceit, but Menelaus’ arrival on stage brings his gamesmanship swiftly back into focus. It is only natural, though again hardly forthright of him, that Agamemnon has not told his brother that he plans to call off the wedding/sacrifice. After all, as we learned in the prologue, it was Menelaus who had insisted that they sacrifice Iphigenia. But when Menelaus catches the Presbutēs, secret letter in hand, he is furious to learn that his brother has gone behind his back and back on his word. “Your mind is treacherous” (IA 332: πλάγια γὰρ φρονεῖς), he roars, before berating Agamemnon for being οὐ βέβαιος (IA 334: “inconsistent”)—another key term in the logos/ergon dichotomy. Menelaus’ reaction is, if not predictable, then at least understandable.

What is surprising is Menelaus’ description of Agamemnon’s initial reaction to Calchas’ announcement that Iphigenia had to be sacrificed. While Agamemnon had previously stated that he had ordered the army to disband at once (IA 94-96), Menelaus’ recollection is rather different (IA 358-62):

κἀτ’, ἐπεὶ Κάλχας ἐν ἱεροῖς εἶπε σῆν θύσαι κόρην
Ἀρτέμίδι, καὶ πλοῦν ἐσσεθαί Δαναίδας, ἦσθείς φρένας
ἀσμενὸς θύσειν ὑπέστης παῖδα· καὶ πέμπεις ἐκών, 360

82 IA 97-98: οὐ δὴ μ’ ἀδελφὸς πάντα προσφέρων λόγον ἐπεί θλίψαι δεινά (“At which point my brother, bringing forth every argument/convinced me to dare this terrible deed”).
When Calchas said the Danaans could sail if you
sacrificed your daughter to Artemis, you rejoiced
and happily promised to sacrifice her. You willingly,
not by force—make no such claim—told your wife
to send your child here, her marriage to Achilles a pretense.

Menelaus’ version of the pre-tragic events is in many ways similar to Agamemnon’s. Both brothers agree that Calchas had said that Iphigenia must be sacrificed to Artemis, and both brothers note that the ruse by which they lured Iphigenia to Aulis is a fake marriage to Achilles. But they differ on one crucial point, and that is Agamemnon’s willingness to kill his daughter: where Agamemnon claims that he had at first refused to sacrifice her, only to be persuaded otherwise by Menelaus, Menelaus insists, in no uncertain terms, that Agamemnon had been only too happy to do so.

Given these two contradictory accounts, it is impossible to know for certain what Agamemnon’s true reaction had been in the (imaginary) time before the play. But there is some evidence that we may be “justified in assuming that Menelaus’ version is nearer to the truth [than Agamemnon’s]”: when given the chance, for instance, Agamemnon does not disavow this accusation; and it is more likely that he would gloss over his enthusiasm to the Presbutēs, who was not present when Calchas made his prophecy (and thus could not know how Agamemnon reacted), than that Menelaus would lie so baldly to Agamemnon (who of course knows full well

84 In fact, even the precise language that the two brothers use is very similar: ὡς γαμουμένην appears in both lines 100 and 362; πέμπεις...σὴ δάμαρτι (360-61) and ἐπεμψα πτόχ δάμαρτα τὴν εμήν (99);
how he reacted). Furthermore, since (as we discover) the Presbutēs’ first allegiance is to Clytemnestra, it would be ruinous (for Agamemnon) if he discovered how callously his master had at first acted. So regardless of how precise Menelaus is in his description of Agamemnon’s gleefully unpaternal reception of Calchas’ prophecy, it seems safe to conclude that this is yet another example of Agamemnon’s tendency to dissipulate. Within the first 400 lines, then, we have already discovered that Agamemnon has lied to his wife and daughter in order to bring them to Aulis; lied (by omission) to Achilles regarding the use of his name; and lied to the Presbutēs—and by extension the audience—about his reaction to the news about the sacrifice.

Each of these deceptions is obviously done in self-interest. Agamemnon first lies to his wife and exploits Achilles’ name because he believes that it is in his own interests to sacrifice his daughter; perhaps he is even eager to do so. After he changes his mind, he coaxes the Presbutēs into faithfully delivering another letter to Clytemnestra by falsely characterizing his original intentions. At the same time, he attempts to circumvent his brother by operating behind his back, and it should also be noted that the army, the men whom Agamemnon is to lead into war, have been kept in the dark this entire time as well. The picture that emerges is of a man who is

85 Both the quote and the reasoning belong to A. Maria van Erp Taalman Kip, “Truth in Tragedy: When Are We Entitled to Doubt a Character’s Words?” American Journal of Philology 117 (1996): p. 532; Siegel, 1981, p. 260 also believes that Menelaus’ version is closer to the truth.

86 Soon after Clytemnestra arrives, the Presbutēs informs her of Agamemnon’s plan to kill Iphigenia, noting “I am well-disposed to you [Clytemnestra], and less so to your husband” (IA 871: καὶ σοὶ μὲν εὐνοῦς εἰμὶ, σοὶ δ’ ἥρσον πῶς). This is because he had come to Agamemnon’s house as part of Clytemnestra’s dowry (cf. IA 869-70), which of course Agamemnon knows perfectly well (this is obvious, but cf. IA 46-48).

87 As we learn in IA 106-07, only Agamemnon, Menelaus, Odysseus, and Calchas even know of the need to sacrifice Iphigenia. Some scholars, most notably David Kovacs, “Towards a Reconstruction of Iphigenia Aulidensis,” The Journal
woefully inconsistent except in his consistent use of deceit and manipulation; a leader who uses
artifice and guile to achieve his goals. Euripides expands upon this motif in the following
episodes as Agamemnon spars with Clytemnestra, and he does so in explicit juxtaposition to
Aeschylus’ memorable portrayal of feminine guile.

Episode two, part one: Agamemnon deceives his daughter

After he learns that Clytemnestra and Iphigenia have arrived at Aulis, Agamemnon’s
stated goal is to keep them from uncovering his plot so that Iphigenia’s sacrifice may be
accompanied by “the fewest tears possible” (IA 541). To this end, he orders both Menelaus and
the chorus to keep quiet (IA 538-42). Silence will not, however, suffice for Agamemnon. Instead,
he must resort to manipulative language to delude first Iphigenia—stirringly overjoyed to see
her father—and then Clytemnestra. He begins with simple evasive tactics when Iphigenia
wonders why he is not happy to see her, but as she begins to press him for the details of her
future, he becomes more and more mendacious (IA 666-76):

Iph.: εἰθ’ ἦν καλὸν μοι σοὶ τ’ ἄγειν σύμπλοιν ἐμὲ. Αγ.: ἔτ’ ἔστι καὶ σοι πλοὺς, ἵν’ ἡμὴν πατρός.
I.: σὺν μητρὶ πλεύσας ἡ μόνη πορεύσομαι; If only it was right for you to bring me by ship.
A voyage yet awaits you, a memory of your father.88
Will I sail with mother or be taken alone?

88 This true meaning of this line appears unsalvageable.

of Hellenic Studies 123 (2003): pp. 77-103, have doubted the genuineness of the tragedy’s “secret prophecy,” but the
evidence against its authenticity is insufficient to justify the number of deletions that would be required to eliminate
this plot device. I address this issue in greater detail in Chapter One, p. 65 fn 71.
A.: μόνη, μονωθεὶσ’ ἀπὸ πατρὸς καὶ μητέρος.
I.: οὐ ποὺ μ’ ἐς ἄλλα δώματ’ οἰκίζεις, πάτερ;  670
A.: εἰσὶ· οὐ χρῆ τοιῶδ’ εἰδέναι κόρας.
I.: σπευδᾷ ἐκ Φρυγῶν μοι, θέμενος εὗ τάκει, πάτερ.
A.: θύσαι με θυσίαν πρῶτα δεῖ τιν’ ἐνθάδε.
I.: ἀλλὰ ξὺν ιερῷς χρή τό γ’ ἐνθέζες σκοπεῖν.
A.: εἰσῃ σὺ· χερνίβων γὰρ ἐστήξη πέλας.  675
I.: στίσομεν ἄρ’ ἀμφὶ βαλόν, ὦ πάτερ, χοροῦς;
In response to this final question, Agamemnon manages not to lie, noting only that he envies
her ignorance (IA 677). In response to the other questions, however, he either dissembles or
deceives. Throughout the exchange, Agamemnon’s ability to convey lies via the truth is
especially reminiscent of Aeschylus’ Clytemnestra.89

Agamemnon tells the truth, in the broadest sense of the word, when he says that
Iphigenia will soon take a trip by boat (IA 667), though presumably she imagines she will be
sailing the high seas and not the river Styx. While it is accurate to say that she will, on this
voyage, be deprived of her mother and father (IA 669), the permanence of this state is hardly
betrayed by Agamemnon’s words. His most honest statement is his third (671), when he simply
refuses to answer Iphigenia’s question. But when she begs of him to make a speedy return from
Troy (highly unlikely), Agamemnon for some reason mentions, in the vaguest terms possible,
that he must “sacrifice a sacrifice.” This is not a lie, but the full meaning is again impossible for
Iphigenia to know. Euripides is obviously drawing attention to Agamemnon’s dissimulation by

89 I am indebted to Shadi Bartsch-Zimmer for both this phrase and the broader point.
using this emphatic—and ridiculously ambiguous—formulation.\textsuperscript{90} To pound the point home, the tragedian then has Agamemnon note that Iphigenia will be able to “see” the sacred rites herself, since she will be standing “near the libations” (an understatement if ever there was one). Had anyone in the audience heretofore failed to notice Agamemnon’s exploitation of multivalent and deceptive language, surely this last comment would have shocked them into recognition. At the same time, Iphigenia’s pathetically naïve excitement at the prospect of leading the dances around the altar emphasizes, yet again, how effectively Agamemnon can manipulate language.

\textit{Episode two part two: Agamemnon deceives his wife}

So ends this (relatively) brief father-daughter reunion. But having convinced Iphigenia that everything is as it should be does not mean that Agamemnon can cease dissembling. He must now face his wife and attempt to convince her that nothing is amiss. Even before this encounter begins, it is already reminiscent of the famous husband-wife \textit{agōn} in Aeschylus’ \textit{Agamemnon}; the roles have simply been reversed. This time, it is Clytemnestra who arrives by chariot,\textsuperscript{91} summoned to her spouse by a duplicitous message.\textsuperscript{92} And before Clytemnestra can

\textsuperscript{90} In fact, it is one that he will use again in a short time, cf. \textit{IA} 721 and below, p. 294.
\textsuperscript{91} Aélion, 1983 vol. 1, p. 106; Foley, 1985, pp. 70-71.
even get a word in edgewise, Agamemnon has already lied to her: he apologizes for his sour mood and once again shrouds the truth in ambiguity by noting that although Iphigenia’s “sending off” is a happy occasion, it is always sad for parents to see their children leave (IA 685-90). His sadness is reminiscent of Clytemnestra’s “joy” at the news of her husband’s imminent return in the Agamemnon; in each case the feeling is true, but the underlying motive is falsely implied. Agamemnon thus sets the terms of their exchange from the beginning: Agamemnon will play the deceiver, and Clytemnestra the deceived. At stake is Iphigenia’s life.

Despite this inauspicious start, and despite the reminders (both textual and dramatic) of the royal couple’s traditionally rocky relationship, the conversation begins on good terms. Clytemnestra asks after the provenance of Iphigenia’s “future husband,” and Agamemnon answers with candid ease. The natural simplicity of their dialogue is almost enough to make one forget that it is based on a lie. But when Clytemnestra brings up Iphigenia’s wedding, Agamemnon must dissemble once more (IA 716-24):

Clyt.: ἀλλ’ εὐτυχοῖτην. τίνι δ’ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ γαμεῖ; May they prosper! Which day will they marry?
Ag.: ὅταν σελήνης εὐτυχῆς ἔλθῃ κύκλος. When the blessing of the full moon arrives.
C: προτέλεια δ’ ἡδη παιδός ἐσφαξας θεᾶ; And have you made offerings to the goddess on behalf of our child?
A: μέλλω· ’τι ταύτῃ καὶ καθέσταμεν τύχη. I’m about to. It is for this act I am now prepared.
C: κάπετα δαίσεις τοὺς γάμους ἐς ύπτερον; And then you’ll serve the wedding feast?

92 In the Agamemnon, this function is fulfilled by a messenger who takes Clytemnestra’s hypocritical greeting to her husband. In the IA, this is done not by a verbal message but by a letter, though on a dramatic level, it fulfills essentially the same function.
93 A. Ag. 264-67.
94 Gamel, 1999, p. 466: “Klytemnestra probably means Hera, who is the principal female deity of Argos, but Agamemnon and the audience would think of Artemis, also associated with marriage.” Clytemnestra’s misconceptions—constantly fostered by Agamemnon—take place even on this minute level.
A: θύσας γε θύμαθ’ ἀ ἐμὲ χρῆ θύσαι θεοῖς.
C: ήμεῖς δὲ θοίνην ποῦ γυναιξί θήσομεν;
A: ἐνθάδε παρ’ ὑπρύμνοισιν Ἀργείων πλάταις.
Cκαλῶς ἀναγκαῖος τε· συνενέγκοι δ’ ὁμοί.

After I’ve sacrificed the sacrifices I must sacrifice to the gods.
Where shall I set up the feast for the women?
Here, by the well-sterned ships of the Argives.
Fine, as it must be; all the same it will do.

Clytemnestra’s first line—wishing the future newlyweds well—is yet another testament to the efficacy of Agamemnon’s lies; much like Agamemnon when he arrives home in Aeschylus’ play, she still believes in her spouse’s good faith. Agamemnon’s words, however, betray her trust. Even more so than in his discussion with Iphigenia, each of his responses is full of treachery. Knowing what we know, it is obvious that the full moon will not be blessing the wedding of Iphigenia and Achilles. It also seems unlikely that Agamemnon will get around to setting up Iphigenia’s (or any) marriage feast, or that the women will, in the end, have a feast of their own by the Argive ships (a curious choice of venue, to say the least). Moreover, Euripides again accentuates the ambiguity of Agamemnon’s language by giving him an absurd line (721) in which he uses three words stemming from θύω (to sacrifice). This is very similar to the line he uses to deflect Iphigenia’s attention. It is once again an ostentatious and dramatically unnecessary allusion to the deception he is perpetrating, and a way of calling the audience’s attention to the fact that he is systematically using veiled ritual language to disguise his intentions.

Nevertheless, perhaps the most peculiar “misunderstanding” in this scene concerns the *proteleia* to the goddess on behalf of Iphigenia. Clytemnestra asks Agamemnon if he has
performed these sacrifices, and it is obvious that she is referring to the prenuptial sacrifices that would take place before any wedding. Agamemnon’s response is again deceptive: it is true he is “about to” perform *proteleia*, but not the ones that Clytemnestra is asking about. But aside from the fact that Agamemnon clearly takes advantage of the multivalent nature of the word in order to deceive his wife, this is also a sly allusion, on Euripides’ part, to the *Agamemnon*. Indeed, the only prior extant uses of “*proteleios*” occurred in Aeschylus’ play. And although only one of these concerns a sacrifice, this sacrifice—the *proteleia*—is none other than Iphigenia herself as “an offering on behalf of ships.”

Euripides thus invents a situation that is bound to remind much of the audience of Aeschylus’ play. He creates a sort of reverse *Agamemnon*, one in which it is now Agamemnon

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95 John H. Oakley and Rebecca H. Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens* (Madison, 1993), p. 11: “[s]acrifices to the gods preceded every major undertaking in ancient Greece, and the wedding was no exception.” By the fourth century, Oakley and Sinos continue, “it was especially important to pay respect to the gods by performing prenuptial sacrifices, called *proteleia*.” Although the *IA* was first produced before any other known reference to these prenuptial sacrifices as *proteleia* (according to the TLG, after the *IA* the earliest certain use of *proteleia* in this manner is Plato, *Laws*, 774e9: ὅσα δὲ πρότελεια γὰρ ἀνακαινίζεται), it is reasonable to assume that the audience would interpret these *proteleia* as such; Clytemnestra is, after all, primarily interested in the wedding at this point. Furthermore, her follow-up question (v. 720)—“and then you’ll serve the wedding feast?”—is perfectly in line with actual ceremonial procedures. Cf. Oakley and Sinos, 1993, p. 22: “[e]very wedding included a feast, with abundant meat provided by the prenuptial sacrifices performed by both families.”


97 Ag. 227: here too *proteleia* takes a genitive complement to convey the meaning of a sacrificial offering on behalf of a person or thing.

98 Garner, 1990, p. 174, also notes this allusion. Euripides had already alluded to the first line of the choral strophe from which these lines come by referring to the “yoke of necessity” which Agamemnon donned in his eponymous play. (Cf. above, p. 259; Garner, 1990, p. 174; and Sorum, 1992, p. 537.) In fact, the *IA* itself is arguably a massive elaboration of these ten Aeschylean lines, a process that is neatly illustrated by the fact Euripides directly alludes to both the first and last lines of this strophe.
who attempts to ensnare Clytemnestra with his words. He first draws attention to Aeschylus’
tragedy by having Clytemnestra arrive on-stage on chariot and under the false impressions
created by her spouse. He then alerts the audience that Agamemnon will continue with his
earlier treacherous use of language by showing him brazenly manipulate Iphigenia, and by
having him lie to Clytemnestra before the *agon* even begins. Then, even in the midst of the *agon*,
even as we see Agamemnon hoodwink Clytemnestra much like she had him in Aeschylus’ play,
Agamemnon takes advantage of the ambiguity of a term that had only been used in the
*Agamemnon*—and used to describe the very sacrifice which he is at such pains to conceal. There
can be no doubt that Euripides is intentionally and openly using the *Agamemnon* as the
backdrop against which to cast his depiction of his utterly untruthful king. He brings this point
home by closing the husband-wife *agon* just as Aeschylus does: “obey!” demands Agamemnon
(*IA* 739: πιθοῦ). This is the very same word with which Clytemnestra springs the trap she had
set for her husband in the *Agamemnon* (A. Ag. 943). Euripides has systematically overturned one
of the primary dynamics of Aeschylus’ play: the male is now the deceiver, the female the
deceived; Euripides’ Agamemnon has essentially become Aeschylus’ Clytemnestra.

*Episode three: the dissolution of Agamemnon’s duplicity*

In the fourth and final scene in which Agamemnon appears (episode three), his
consistent distortion of facts and language continues—at least until he realizes the game is up.
Clytemnestra has, by now, learned that her husband’s true intention is to sacrifice Iphigenia.
And she is under express orders (by Achilles) to convince her husband to call off this sacrifice. Nevertheless, Agamemnon continues to use duplicity in his attempt to persuade Clytemnestra that nothing is amiss. Unaware that the Presbutēs has sold him out to Clytemnestra, Agamemnon continues to speak as if the wedding preparations are proceeding without a hitch. He refers to Iphigenia as a “bride-to-be” (IA 1108: τὰς γαμουμένας) and speaks, in great detail, of the sacrifices which must be completed “before the wedding” (IA 1113: πρὸ γάμων). Clytemnestra is hardly pleased with this, and her response to Agamemnon’s duplicity provides more context. (IA 1115-16):

τοῖς ὀνόμασιν μὲν εὖ λέγεις, τὰ δ᾿ ἐργα σου
οὐκ οἶδ᾿ ὡς χοῇ μ᾿ ὀνομάσασαι εὖ λέγειν. \hspace{1cm} With names you speak well, but in naming your deeds I know not how to speak well of them.

Though this play on words is, at first glance, somewhat confusing, it is clear that Clytemnestra is using the exact same juxtaposition between logoi and erga that Agamemnon and Achilles did before. And just as for Achilles, the gulf between Agamemnon’s words and his deeds is a matter of grave concern for Clytemnestra. This third explicit juxtaposition of logoi and erga shows again that it is a central theme of this tragedy, and that dishonesty is the one consistent aspect of Agamemnon’s character.

Once Agamemnon can no longer invent words to disguise his deeds, there is little left for him to say. Soon after Clytemnestra hints at the distance between his logoi and erga, she

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\footnotesize{91} Contrary to his earlier claim to be completely trustworthy; IA 44-45: φέρε κοίνωςον μῖθον ἐς ἡμᾶς./πρὸς <δ'> ἄνδρ’ ἀγαθὸν πιστον τε φράσεις· (“Come now, share with me your tale; you’ll be speaking to a good and loyal man.”).}
reveals that she knows what his plot is. After a brief exclamation of despair (IA 1140: ἀπολόμεσθα), he falls silent (IA 1144: ιδού, σιώπω). It is almost as if, with lies no longer available to him, his power of speech abandons him; honest words, perhaps, do not become him. His final statement of the play comes some one-hundred lines later, after both his wife and daughter have, to no avail, sought to dissuade him from the sacrifice. Critics have endlessly tried to assess his sincerity, although there is no way of knowing whether the sentiments expressed—dismay at his options, fear of the army, and a patriotic love of Hellas—are honest.100 But the irresolvable question of Agamemnon’s belief in the Panhellenic cause is less striking than the undeniable consistency with which he uses deceit and deceptive speech throughout the IA. His dishonesty is pervasive.

_The Agamemnon/Clytemnestra inversion and its reverberations at Aulis_

It should by now be clear that Euripides uses the Agamemnon as a central subtext to the IA, and in the process he inverts the deceiver/deceived relationship that existed between Aeschylus’ Clytemnestra and Agamemnon. This inversion has several effects. The play both competes with and critiques Aeschylus’ earlier work. By making Clytemnestra the deceived and Agamemnon the deceiver, Euripides rejects Aeschylus’ version of the myth and completely

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100 In favor of his sincerity are: Wasserman, 1949, p. 185; Conacher, 1967, p. 262; Mellert-Hoffmann, 1969, and perhaps Foley, 1985, p. 98 (“Agamemnon…now appears to undertake the venture to Tory as if it were a public…venture.”). Contra see Blaiklock, 1952, pp. 119-20; Funke, 1964; Siegel, 1980, pp. 306 and fn 17; Siegel, 1981, pp. 264-65.
reformulates this canonical relationship. Even if we know that Clytemnestra will kill Agamemnon upon his return—perhaps some things truly are inevitable—the context supplied by the IA stands as a powerful explanation for her actions: she can no longer simply be considered an evil woman. Beyond the strictly dramatic implications of Euripides’ reformulation, Euripides also rejects Aeschylus’ idea that deceptive female speech is an evil that threatens “the overthrow of social order”;¹⁰¹ in the IA, male deceit is the main catalyst for instability. And while Agamemnon’s lies to his wife and daughter are the most visible manifestations of male deceit in the play, it is also one of the tragedy’s pervasive and unifying themes. Deceit is central to the political dynamics of Euripides’ tragic world.

To a certain extent, this is visible even at the most general level. As mentioned above, the army is unaware of Agamemnon’s machinations until the tragedy is nearly over. But Euripides is also careful to show how deceit and lying are integral to the political world of the play—a political world that reflects, in many ways, the world of his Athenian audience.¹⁰² This is no easy task due to the physical and dramatic impossibility of actually showing, on-stage, such deceptive behavior on a broad and public scale. Yet it is implicit that the deceptive nature of Agamemnon’s exchanges with Clytemnestra is characteristic not only of him, but also of his male peers in the tragedy, and more generally of the political climate of the play. Indeed, it is

¹⁰² As argued at length throughout Chapter One.
one of the principal methods through which the leaders of the Greeks exert authority over an army that, as we have seen, is empowered with its own political clout.103

At first glance, it does not seem particularly noteworthy that Agamemnon has neglected to inform the army of Calchas’ prophecy. After all, we learn of this neglect during the prologue (IA 106-07), at which time there is no reason to think that the army is (or will become) part of the decision-making process. It seems plausible that the Greek leaders have not informed the army simply because there is no reason to, and one could infer that Agamemnon is relatively forthright with his men. Menelaus’ description of Agamemnon’s behavior before Aulis contradicts this impression (IA 337-44):

οἶσθ’, ὅτ’ ἐσποιοῦδαξεν Ἀρχεὶν Δαναῶν πρὸς Ἰλιον, τῷ δοκεῖν μὲν οὐχὶ ἠρηζόν, τῷ δὲ βούλεον θέλων, ὡς ταπεινὸς ἦσθα, πάσης δεξίας προσθυγγάνων καὶ θύρας ἕχων ἀκλίντως τῷ θέλοντι δημοτῶν καὶ διδόσων πρόσφησιν ἐξῆς πάσι — κεὶ μὴ τις θέλοι — τοῖς τρόποις ζητῶν προσάσθαι τὸ φιλότιμον ἐκ μέσου; κατ’, ἐπεὶ κατέσχες Ἀρχᾶς, μεταβαλὼν ἄλλους τρόπους τοῖς φιλοσιτεῖ δυνάτ’ ἦσθα τοῖς πριν ὡς πρόσθεν φίλος

You remember when you were eager to lead the Danaans to Ilium, wishing at once to seem willing yet not covetous—how humble you were! Taking each man’s hand, your door open to any common man who wished, and time and again giving all a chance to speak— even those who did not wish to—striving in this way to buy the office from the middle class?104

103 See again Chapter One.
104 While this translation may seem anachronistic, the idea conveyed is that Agamemnon wishes to buy his office by winning over the “middle,” and the term used (mesos) is the same one that Euripides gives Theseus in his famous discussion of the three groups of citizens (E. Supp. 238-49; 244: ἢ ’ν μεσός). See Ann N. Michelini, “Political Themes in Euripides’ Suppliants,” American Journal of Philology 115 (1994): p. 229, who refers to this mesos as a “middle class.”
But when you’d won the command, you changed your ways and were no longer friendly to your friends as before.

Just as he has consistently misrepresented reality in his dealings with Clytemnestra, with the Presbutēs, and with Achilles, so too has he misrepresented himself in his dealings with the army. His warmth, his open-door (tent?) policy, his willingness to hear out the common people, all of these are merely façades designed to “buy” the support of the common people of the army. Even before we see him in action with Clytemnestra, we already know that Agamemnon is a cagey politician willing to use flattery and duplicity to achieve his goals.

This dynamic of self-interested and deceptive leadership is a motif that Euripides explores primarily with Agamemnon, but also with the other leaders of the Greek army. A short time later, Agamemnon points his accusing finger at his partners in politics. Despite having convinced Menelaus to forego sacrificing Iphigenia, the news of Clytemnestra’s arrival prompts a dramatic transformation in Agamemnon’s attitude: he now believes he has no choice but to kill his daughter. Menelaus, justifiably enough, wonders why; after all, the army is as yet unaware of all these machinations. The answer is that Agamemnon fears his authority over the army will be usurped by his former ally Odysseus (IA 525-33):

-Men.: σῦκ ἐστ’ Ὀδυσσεύς ὃ τι σε κάμε πημανεί. 525
-Ag.: ποικίλος ἀε ἐφυκε τοῦ τ’ ὅχλου μέτα.

M: φιλοτιμία μέν ἐνέχεται, δεινοί κακῶι.
A: σῦκ σύν δοκεῖς νιν στάντ’ ἐν Ἀργείοις μέσος

λέξειν ὁ Κάλχας θέσθατ’ ἐξηγήσατο,
καμ’ ὡς ὑπέστην θύμα, κάτ’ ἐπευδόμην,
Ἀρτέμιδι θύεις; οὐ ἐναρπάσας στρατόν,
σὲ κάμ’ ἀποκτείναντας Ἀργείους κόρην
σφάξαι κελεύσει;

M: It is not possible for Odysseus to hurt us.
A: He’s always been most cunning with the mob.

M: He is obsessed with honor, a terrible evil.
A: Then don’t you think he’ll stand amidst the Argives to tell them the prophecies Calchas enjoined, and that I lied and promised to sacrifice a victim to Artemis? That he’ll seize the army, and order the Argives to kill you and me and to slaughter the girl?
Agamemnon does not claim that Odysseus will lie in order to persuade the army, but this
description nevertheless alludes to a deep anxiety about the ease with which he could
manipulate the “mob.”

To begin, the word *poikilos* (“many-colored,” “intricate,” but also “wily”) has many
negative and deceptive connotations. It was often used to describe woven fabrics, and in fact it
is the very term used to describe one of the “tricky” garments discussed earlier in this chapter:
the “carpet” which leads Agamemnon to his death (cf. A. Ag. 923, 926, 936; see above p. 267).
When used to describe humans, *poikilos* “indicate[s]...a man of cunning, full of inventive
ploys...and tricks of every kind.”

Homer’s Odysseus, Hesiod’s Prometheus, and the divine
trickster Hermes are all characterized as endowed with *poikilia*. Within the context of these
archaic texts this was considered a positive, or at least useful, attribute. But within the context of
public discourse—the context within which Odysseus’ *poikilia* is described in the *IA*—this is not
the case.

Alcaeus, for example, maligns a rival who “like a *poikilo*-minded fox foretold an easy
outcome and hoped to escape notice.” Since the figure of the fox in Greek poetry had

106 Odysseus is regularly described with the compound ποικιλομήτης (cf. Hom. Od. 3.163; 7.168; 22.115, etc.);
Prometheus receives a variety of *poikilo*-compounds (Hes. Th. 511: ποικίλος αιωλόμητος; Th. 521: ποικιλόβουλος);
and Hermes is also called ποικιλομήτης (*HH* 4.155, 514).
heretofore enjoyed “a broadly positive profile” and “instantiat[ed] a laudable cunning,”\(^\text{108}\) it is the term \textit{poikilos} alone that conveys the negative connotations of Alcaeus’ remarks. In Euripides’ \textit{Hecuba}, the chorus uses the same adjective (\textit{poikilophrōn}) to describe this tragic version of Odysseus as a “\textit{poikilo}-minded, glib, sweet-talking \textit{dēmos}-pandering”\(^\text{109}\) speaker who persuades the army that it is necessary to sacrifice the maiden Polyxena. The dramatic parallels to the \textit{IA} are striking, but so too is the fact that both plays use \textit{poikilos} to describe Odysseus’ ability to manipulate the crowd. Aristophanes draws on the same lexical tradition in his \textit{Knights}, a comedy which, as we shall see, is similar to the \textit{IA} in its preoccupation with deceptive speech.\(^\text{110}\)

In the \textit{Knights}, the characters Cleon and the Sausage-Seller represent the ubiquity and danger of deceptive speech and flattery in Athenian political discourse.\(^\text{111}\) Aristophanes calls each of these men \textit{poikiloi},\(^\text{112}\) and even more compellingly, he refers to their methods of persuasion as \textit{doloi poikiloi} (Eq. 685).

A speaker who is \textit{poikilos}, then, is one who is able to twist words in order to be persuasive, and this is exactly what is implied of Odysseus when he is described as such. Furthermore, his reasons for using rhetorical \textit{poikilia} are clearly self-interested: he is \textit{philotimos—}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item E. Hec. 131-33: ὁ ποικιλόφρων/κόπις ἡδικός δημοκρασίής/Λαερτιάδης πείθει στρατιάν.
\item On this see below, pp. 315-319.
\item Also noted by A.M. Bowie, \textit{Aristophanes: Myth, Ritual and Comedy} (Cambridge, 1993), p. 54. Cf. Ar. Eq. 685 (the Sausage-Seller), and 758 (Cleon). Cleon is in fact considered dangerous specifically because he is a \textit{poikilos anēr}.
\end{enumerate}
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ambitious—a term which, even when not qualified as “a terrible evil” (as it is here) was already rife with negative connotations. Finally, it is clear Odysseus’ poikilia allows him to exert considerable influence over the army—in Agamemnon’s words to “seize” (IA 531: συνάρπασας) the army. The use of this verb suggests an act of violence, one that is essentially analogous to Paris’ theft of Helen, which is also described in the IA with harpastō-compounds.

In other words, the terms with which Agamemnon describes Odysseus reflect, ironically enough, a deep anxiety on his part about his rival’s use of questionable rhetoric for his gain. Much like, for example, Cleon in Thucydides’ Mytilenian Debate (on which much more below), Agamemnon complains bitterly about his rival’s use his own deceptive tactics.

Even though Agamemnon is not the most trustworthy source, and despite the fact that we never see Odysseus in action, there is reason to believe that his concerns about Odysseus’ honesty and scruples are warranted. Achilles’ testimony at the end of the play confirms that Odysseus has succeeded in doing just what Agamemnon feared. After the exposure of Agamemnon’s lies, the passionate pleas for Iphigenia’s life, and the pater familias’ eventual

113 Cf. LSJ; Pindar, fr. 210; Th. 2.65.7: Thucydides speaks of private philotimia (ἰδίας φιλοτιμίας) as being one of the downfalls of the Athenians in the Peloponnesian War; while Euripides does not specifically qualify Odysseus’ philotimia as “private,” it seems safe to say, from this passage, that he is perceived to be pursuing his own interests. See also Th. 3.82 and 8.89 (not terribly dissimilar in sentiment from 2.65); E. Ph. 531-32; and of course IA 342 (cited above on p. 67) and IA 520. Euripides and Thucydides are, essentially, the first authors to use these terms (philotimos, philotimia etc.) with any frequency.

114 IA 75-76: ἐρῶν ἔφον ὑπετέρ’ ἐξαναρπάσας/Ελένην. Iphigenia, when she explains her reasons for accepting her own sacrifice, also uses a harpastō-compound to describe Helen’s kidnapping/elopement (IA 1382: ήν ἀνήρπασεν Πάρις). She even argues that it is right that she be sacrificed specifically because it is necessary to stop the barbarians from seizing (IA 1381: ἀφηρύητων) Greek women. See also Herodotus, 1.2-4, in which he constantly uses the terms harpastō and harpagē to describe the exchange of kidnappings that preceded the Trojan War. In all of these cases, including the one that relates to Odysseus, forms of harpastō clearly denote acts of violence.
rejection of the same, Achilles bursts onto the scene and announces that the Argive army is hot on his heels. Clytemnestra asks him if any of them are coming for Iphigenia, to which Achilles responds (IA 1362-64):

Ach.: μυρίοι γ’, ἄξει δ’ Ὀδυσσεύς.  
Cly.: ἄρ’ ὁ Σισύφου γόνος;  
A.: αὐτὸς οἶτος.  
C.: ἵδα πράσσων, ἢ στρατοῦ ταχθείς ὑπ’;  
A.: αἰρεθεὶς ἐκὼν.

Achilles’ pithy analysis—αἰρεθεὶς ἐκὼν—says it all. Odysseus has most willingly been chosen to lead the Greeks in their mission to drag Iphigenia, by the hair, if need be (cf. IA 1366), to the altar.

While we cannot know exactly how Odysseus managed to be chosen, there is some evidence that the information he gave the army is not altogether accurate. Achilles, who had been at the camp and who describes a scene similar to an Athenian assembly,115 reports that the army is furious with him for protecting Iphigenia because, according to them, “it is necessary to slaughter her” (IA 1348 χρεὼν σφάξαι νιν). Even Achilles’ own men have turned against him and are calling him “a slave to marriage” (IA 1354: οἱ μὲ τὸν γάμων ἀπεκάλουν ἥσσονα) believing that he is choosing his marriage over their war. Neither of these claims is true, since

115 Achilles notes that he had attempted to speak out against the plan to sacrifice Iphigenia, but had been shouted down by a general thorubos (uproar, clamor). This kind of popular uproar is described by Plato (Rep. 492B) as being frequent occurrences at “assemblies, law courts, theaters, or military camps,” and it is undoubtedly the type of commotion to which Xenophon refers in Hell. 1.7.13 when he describes the people’s uproar at the thought that they should not be permitted to “do as they please.” On the frequency of such thoruboi in democratic Athens, cf. above, Chapter One pp. 89-90; Victor Bers, “Dikastic Thorubos,” in Crux: Essays in Greek History Presented to G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, eds. Paul Cartledge, F.D. Harvey, (London, 1985), pp. 1-15; Judith Tacon, “Ecclesiastic Thorubos: Interventions, Interruptions, and Popular Involvement in the Athenian Assembly,” Greece & Rome 48 (2001): pp. 173-192.
we know it is really a choice between sacrificing Iphigenia and returning home (cf. IA 89-93), and that Achilles wishes to save Iphigenia not in order to marry her, but rather to clear his name (IA 935-47). It is possible that the army has come to these conclusions on their own, without Odysseus’ encouragement. But since we already know that he is a crafty speaker, that he is leading the army in this endeavor, and that the army has used misinformation to malign and shout down Achilles in an assembly-like atmosphere, the implication is that Odysseus has planted these ideas in the army’s (collective) head. As the leader of this mob, he practically embodies a demagogue.

More generally, the terms with which Odysseus is described throughout the IA—poikilos, philotimos, “child of Sisyphus”—consistently depict him as a man who is untrustworthy because of his ambition and because of his ability to cunningly achieve his goals. A third leader of the Greeks, the prophet Calchas, is described in even less flattering and ambiguous terms. Like Odysseus, Agamemnon accuses him (and his ilk) of being an “ambitious evil” (IA 520: φιλότιμον κακόν). Later on, Achilles asks “what kind of man is a prophet? One who says a few true things, and many false.” 116 While he is not a central character in the IA, this brief characterization helps evince the idea that the Greek leaders, as evidenced by Agamemnon’s behavior on stage, are ever willing to lie and deceive in order to win the glory that only Iphigenia’s sacrifice can enable.

116 IA 956-57: τίς δὲ μάντις ἔστ’ ἄνηγός, ὡς ἄληθές πολλὰ δὲ ψευδῆ λέγει.
The sacrifice of Iphigenia is in fact an ideal device through which to contemplate this male dishonesty. Through it, Euripides is able to portray Agamemnon deceiving his family on-stage, but also to show how leaders such as Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Calchas adopt a similarly cavalier attitude towards the truth in their dealings with the army. The IA thus focuses the audience’s attention on the facility with which these men dissimulate when it serves their interests. This is done against the backdrop of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, and in particular his portrayal of Clytemnestra as the female deceiver *par excellence*. The constant allusions to the *Agamemnon* thus serve a dual purpose: they call attention to the fact that lying is a central to the plot of the IA, as it is in the *Agamemnon*; at the same time, they are instrumental in emphasizing the difference in the lying that takes place, namely that rather than feminine guile, it is deceptive male speech that is the true threat to society at Aulis. Agamemnon’s deceit of Clytemnestra, in all its contrasts to the Aeschylean tradition, reverberates through every scene and relates to every aspect of the IA.

5. *Deceptive Male Speech in the Late Fifth Century*

The centrality of deceit to Euripides’ play does not occur in a vacuum. It is closely related to the growing anxiety, felt in Euripides’ Athens, concerning the use of deceptive language and rhetoric by the (male) political elite. This anxiety had been increasing throughout
the latter half of the fifth century, spurred on by both the influence of rhetoric within
democratic Athens and by the resulting arrival of sophists, such as Gorgias, who claimed to be
able to teach the power of persuasion. In the following section, I will first discuss the deceptive
potential of rhetoric in the late fifth century BCE, as seen through the theories of Gorgias, after
which I will examine three texts that mirror the IA in their concern about the proliferation of
deceptive rhetoric: Thucydides Mytilenian Debate; Aristophanes Knights, and Xenophon’s
description of the aftermath of Arginousae.

Gorgias and the power of (deceptive) logos

Gorgias of Leontini was a figure of some renown throughout the Greek world, including
in Athens. It is likely that many Athenians (and not just his pupils) were familiar with his
theories on rhetoric and persuasion. Relatively few of his writings have survived, and Plato’s

117 The fact that Plato wrote a dialogue in which he is a central figure is certainly an indication of that, but we also
know that Gorgias came to Athens on a diplomatic mission in 427 BCE. Cf. B.H. Gannon Williams, “The Political
also said that he taught prominent Athenians such as Pericles, Critias, and Isocrates. For more details on Gorgias’ life
and works, see Scott Porter Consigny, Gorgias, Sophist and Artist (Columbia, SC, 2001), pp. 4-10.
has Gorgias play a relatively minor role in the Platonic dialogue bearing his name (for more than three-quarters of
the dialogue Polus and Callicles are Socrates principal interlocutors) because “Plato could not have ascribed to
Gorgias ideas that the latter himself, as was publicly known, would have disavowed.” Charles P. Segal, “Gorgias and
Gorgias “as if the association between Gorgias and the earlier fifth-century Eleatic and Sicilian physical and
philosophical speculation was well-known and generally accepted.”
depiction of the man and his teachings cannot simply be taken at face value, but it is nevertheless possible to come to a general understanding of his theories. Perhaps most obviously, much like the characters of the IA, Gorgias was well aware that *logoi* and *erga* do not always correspond. Indeed, what remains of Gorgias’ work is perhaps the “most extreme statement of the divergence and counterbalance of words and actuality.” In the Defense of Palamedes, for example, Gorgias directly contrasts the words of his accusers to his actual deeds: “you must not rely more on words (*logoi*) than deeds (*erga*).” The implication is obviously that the things said about Palamedes in no way match the reality of the situation.

Even more telling is his conceptualization of the *logos*/*erga* opposition in his *Encomium for Helen* (8):

> εἰ δὲ λόγος ὁ πείσας καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπατήσας, οὐδὲ πρὸς τὸ τούτο χαλεπῶν ἀπολογησάσθαι καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν ἀπολύσασθαι ὁδε. λόγος δύνασται μέγας ἐστιν, ὃς σμικροτάτω σώματι καὶ ἀφανεστάτως θεώτατα ἔργα ἀποτελεῖ.

If *logos* persuaded [Helen] by deceiving her soul, then it is not difficult to defend her or absolve her of blame. For *logos* is a powerful master, which with the smallest form and appearance accomplishes marvelous *erga*.

Two obvious points emerge from this passage: first, that *logos* itself may be deceptive; and second, that *logos*, whether deceptive or not, is extraordinarily powerful. Further on, Gorgias

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119 Bruce McComiskey, *Gorgias and the New Sophistic Rhetoric* (Carbondale, 2002), pp. 17-31, argues quite strongly that the arguments Plato puts in the orator’s mouth are not, in fact, an accurate reflection of the historical Gorgias’ thinking.

120 Parry, 1981, p. 41.

121 Gorg. Palamedes 34: ὑμᾶς δὲ χρῆ μὴ τοῖς λόγοις μᾶλλον ἢ τοῖς ἔργοις προσέχειν τὸν νοῦν. The juxtaposition of *logoi* and *erga* continues throughout sections 34 and 35. Elsewhere (sections 24 and 25) he uses the contrasting terms *doxa* and *alētheia* to make a similar distinction.
highlights the dangers of deceptive *logos* by arguing that people tend to rely not on true knowledge but on *doxa*—opinion or reputation. *Doxa* itself is “slippery and unreliable” (*Hel*. 11: *σφαλερὰ καὶ ἀβέβαιος*)

and its “instability…makes possible the deception on which all persuasion must rest.” Given our own tenuous grasp on reality, it is almost inevitable that some form of deception be a part of the persuasive process. Accordingly, and perhaps most disturbingly, in many debates (*agônes*) “one speech (*logos*), written with skill but not delivered truthfully, has delighted a great crowd (*ochlos*) and persuaded them.”

Gorgias does not necessarily advocate such an approach, nor indeed can we be sure that his “Encomium” is entirely serious. Nevertheless, it is easy to see how the problems outlined by Gorgias would appear troublesome in democratic Athens, given that important decisions were made on the basis of speeches given to large audiences—the very *ochloi* whom Gorgias regarded as most susceptible to persuasion (*Hel*. 13 but also *Pal*. 33).

*The Mytilenian debate and the rhetoric of deception in late fifth-century Athens*

While Gorgias himself, as far as we can tell from his writings, does not seem particularly concerned about the implications of rhetorical deception in fifth-century society, the same cannot be said of some of his contemporaries. A classic example, in this regard, is provided by

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122 Note that Menelaus uses the same term to describe Agamemnon in *IA* 334, cf. above p. 287.
123 Segal, 1962, p. 112.
124 Gorg. *Hel*. 13: εἰς λόγος πολὸν ὀχλὸν ἔτερψε καὶ ἐπεισὶ τέχνη γραφείς, οὐκ ἀληθεῖαι λεχθεῖσ
Thucydides in his description of the Mytilenian debate. This episode is particularly germane to the previous discussion insofar as it demonstrates both a sharp anxiety about, but also a certain Gorganic acceptance of, the inevitability of deception in public speech.

In the immediate wake of Mytilene’s unsuccessful revolt from Athens in 427 BCE, the Athenian assembly had voted to execute all adult males in Mytilene and to enslave the women and children (Th. 3.36.2). The following day, however, the Athenians repented upon recognizing the cruelty of their plan (Th. 3.36.4). What follows in Thucydides’ account is a debate between Cleon and a certain Diodotus. Cleon argues that the original plan must be adhered to; Diodotus that it is in Athens’ best interests to reconsider. On the surface, the central question of this debate is whether or not wipe out Mytilene. At root, however, the main subject of the two speeches is the role and the amount of power political speech is to have in the Athenian democracy.\textsuperscript{125} Both speeches are filled with rhetorical tricks and substantive inconsistencies.\textsuperscript{126} And neither speaker really attempts to address the question at hand, that is to say the people’s doubts about the morality of the death sentence. Instead, Cleon and Diodotus accuse each other of lying in order to further personal interests, and attack the Athenian assembly for being an active participant in this process of deception.

\textsuperscript{125} Ober, 1998, pp. 94-104, frequently calls both speeches discourses of “meta-rhetoric.” Hesk, 2000, pp. 248-55, refers to the discourse as the “rhetoric of anti-rhetoric.”

Cleon begins with a sharp critique of both the democratic process and of intellectualism\textsuperscript{127} (Th. 3.37), and then turns to an excoriation of both speakers and speech. Whoever speaks against him, he says, is either treating this debate as a rhetorical contest (ἀγωνίσατ’ ἄν), or has been “induced by profit” to “try and mislead” the people (Th. 3.38.2: ἢ κέρδει ἐπαιρόμενος...ἐκπονήσας παράγειν). The people themselves, however, are just as accountable as Cleon’s rivals: they put more weight on the words (logoi) of the orators than on the actual deeds (erga) in question; they judge future events (erga, again) based only on who speaks well; and they are “the best at being deceived by a fancy turn of phrase.” (Th. 3.38.5: μετὰ καινότητος μὲν λόγου ἀπατάσθαι ἄριστοι). “Slaves to your pleasure,” he exclaims, “you are more like the sophists’ seated spectators than men deliberating for their city.”\textsuperscript{128} A clear concern with rhetoric and with the distance between words and deeds emerges from Cleon’s speech. He claims that the unreliability of logoi poses a great threat to democratic discourse, while at the same time he himself uses unreliable logoi. In this sense, he is akin to Euripides’ Agamemnon: he is able to use manipulative speech while complaining about his rivals doing the same.

Cleon’s attacks lead to some potentially chilling conclusions. Following his logic, whoever “speaks well” is doing so in order to manipulate the people for his own benefit; among

\textsuperscript{127} Cleon specifically praises ἀμαθία (ignorance) as more useful to the governance of a city (Th. 3.37.3). On this, see James A. Andrews, “Cleon’s Hidden Appeals (Th. 3.37-40),” The Classical Quarterly 50 (2000): pp. 53-56.

\textsuperscript{128} Th. 3.38.7: ἀπλῶς τε ἄκοις ἡδονή ἤρσισμενοι καὶ σοφιστῶν θεατὰς ἐοικότες καθημένοις μᾶλλον ἢ περὶ τόλμως βουλευομένοις.
the audience, whoever chooses to follow such a speaker willingly submits to such manipulation for his own enjoyment. Concerning his actual rival, Cleon makes two accusations: that he is knowingly “misleading” the people by encouraging them to abandon the execution of all Mytilenians; and that he is doing so either for purely “agonistic” purposes, or because he has accepted money (presumably from the Mytilenians) to do so. Cleon thus purports to be deeply concerned with those who use language in order to manipulate the people, with the people’s own fascination with such manipulative language, and even with the sophistic nature of this speaker/spectator experience. Given his ability to exploit these “problems” for his own ends, it is hard to believe that Cleon was sincerely troubled by them. But Thucydides’ use of these arguments implies that many in Athens were.

Cleon’s rival Diodotus, despite his more “lenient” stance on the Mytilenians, returns like-for-like rhetorically. In defense of his audience (who have dared revisit the earlier sentence) and himself (who dares to speak against it), he dispels the notion that anything but words (logous) can be used to understand events (pragmatōn; Th. 3.42.2). He thus seems to re-establish a positive connection between logos and ergon. This impression is short-lived. Soon after we find “the most astounding stroke in Diodotus’ speech”: according to Diodotus, any speaker—even an honest one must lie to the assembly in order to be believed (Th. 3.43.2), while

129 As Macleod, 1978, p. 72, notes: “[t]here is a wealth of verbal echoes” between Diodotus’ and Cleon’s speeches.
Athens itself is “the only city it is impossible to openly benefit without using deception.”131 Diodotus blames his audience for this sorry state of affairs, for it is their habitual suspicion of candor that forces the orators to turn to deception (Th. 3.43.4). All this obviously suggests that “Diodotus himself will have to use apatē.”132 The fact that his proposal wins the day implies that he does so, and skillfully. Diodotus’ stunning proclamation and Cleon’s similar grumblings about deception indicate that there was a pervasive anxiety about deceitful speech in Thucydides’ Athens—an anxiety that would also have been stirred by Euripides’ portrayal of similarly manipulative speech in the IA.

In Thucydides’ portrayal, the tendency of orators to equivocate before the public was not only expected in Athens, it was practically demanded. This dynamic is propagated by speaker and spectator alike; each half of the equation is equally responsible for the dishonest nature of the discourse, and each is fully aware of this fact. But perhaps most troublingly, in Thucydides’ narration, neither speaker is at all inclined to reduce the gap between logoi and erga in Athenian public discourse, but instead try to exploit the gap for their own advantage. The same may be said about the leaders of the Greeks in Euripides’ IA who both use—and accuse others of using—words that are well removed from the reality of the situation, and who do so exclusively for their own gains.

131 Th. 3.43.2-3: μόνην τε πόλιν διὰ τὰς περινοίας εὑ ποιήσαι ἐκ τοῦ προφανοῦς μὴ ἐξαπατήσαντα ἀδύνατον.
132 Hesk, 2000, p. 53.
Aristophanes’ Knights and the Comedification of Deceptive Male Speech

Thucydides was not alone among his contemporaries in his concern for the deceptive tendencies of the orators, nor in his suspicion that the people themselves played a role in this, nor even in his identification of Cleon as one of the most dangerous exponents of this problem. Aristophanes, in his Knights (424 BCE), also openly accuses the Athenian orators (and specifically Cleon) of dishonesty, and maligns the Athenian public for their willingness to accept it. In this play, Aristophanes is extremely direct in his depiction of the politicians (οἱ ὑπηρέται—the orators, literally) as self-serving and manipulative. The main conceit of the play is that the two main characters (a thinly-veiled Cleon and his rival, an unknown Sausage-Seller) must pander for the favor of the Dēmos (itself a character). It is clear that they do so exclusively for their own personal gain, principally by means of flattering and, whenever necessary, lying to the people.

Aristophanes’ allegory is not subtle. In the opening scene of the play, we see two other characters discussing Cleon’s relationship to the people. They describe him bathing and feeding the Dēmos to its heart’s content, fawning over it shamelessly (Eq. 50-65). Cleon’s prize for this is that he can use his power to extort bribes from the other “slaves” of the people (Eq. 65-70) and, less allegorically, from other cities (Eq. 801-09). His methods are the same ones that Diodotus decries in Thucydides’ Mytilenian debate: he makes false and slanderous accusations against
his peers, and thus scares them into submission.\textsuperscript{133} This tactic is certainly analogous to the one Agamemnon ascribes to Odysseus in the \textit{IA}, and which the latter then appears to use against Achilles.\textsuperscript{134} Aristophanes implies that this is typical of all politicians, for indeed the Sausage-Seller’s bright future in politics had been recognized at an early age due to his ability to steal and dissemble (\textit{Eq.} 417-26).

Instances of both Cleon and the Sausage-Seller telling blatant and self-serving lies are so abundant in the \textit{Knights} that it would be impossible to mention them all. The two characters square off in specious \textit{agônes} before both the \textit{boulê} (not shown on-stage) and the \textit{Dêmos}. At the \textit{boulê} level, we hear that Cleon invents outlandish—yet “most persuasive” (\textit{Eq.} 629: πιθανώταθ’)—tales of conspiracies until the Sausage-Seller, seeing the \textit{boulê} “deceived by this crookery” (\textit{Eq.} 633: τοῖς φενακισμοίσιν ἐξαπατωμένην), steps in. He distracts them with the news of a steep drop in the price of sardines, an initiative clever enough to bring him victory. The chorus celebrates the Sausage-Seller’s victory by claiming that with his \textit{poikiloi doloi} (“devious tricks”; \textit{Eq.} 686), he is more than a match for Cleon. They thus describe his political dishonesty with the same terms that Euripides uses to describe the tradecraft of Agamemnon and Odysseus in the \textit{IA}.

The competition before the \textit{Dêmos} takes place in two parts: a contest to see who can slather on the most obsequious compliments and offer the finest enticements to the people; and

\textsuperscript{133} The term used—διαβάλλω—is the same in the two authors (cf. Th. 3.42.2; Ar. \textit{Eq.} 64).

\textsuperscript{134} Cf. \textit{IA} 526-37, 1348-54, and above pp. 301-306.
one in which Cleon and the Sausage-Seller take turns producing and interpreting a series of ludicrously unbelievable (and yet so easily swallowed) oracles for their own benefit. In the latter contest, the play’s deep skepticism about the legitimacy of prophetic speech is similar to the condemnations of Calchas in the IA. And in both contests, it is evident that the two politicians are low-bred liars, and that the people enjoy this. It is on this final point that Aristophanes is most explicit (Eq. 1111-12; 1115-20):

\[
\begin{align*}
\omega \Delta \mu \epsilon \ k\alpha \lambda \eta \iota \nu \; \gamma' \; \acute{e} \chi e i s \; \acute{a} \rho \chi \eta i n... & \quad 1111 & \text{Oh Dēmos, a fine empire you have...} \\
...\alpha l l' \; \epsilon \upsilon \pi a r\acute{a} \gamma \omega \gamma o s \; e i, \theta \omega \pi e \nu \omicron \omicron \epsilon \omicron \nu o s \; t e \; \chi a i r e i s \; k\acute{a} \acute{x} a p a t o m e n o s, \; p r \acute{o} s \; t o n \; t e \; \lambda \acute{e} g o n t' \; \acute{a} e i \; k\acute{e} \chi n a s; \; \acute{o} \; n o u s \; d e \; s o u \; p a r\acute{o} w \; \acute{a} p o d h \acute{e} m e i. & \quad 1115 & \text{...but you’re easily led astray, delighting in flattery and being deceived, and always a-gape at your speakers. Your mind, though present, is on leave.}
\end{align*}
\]

Aristophanes’ opinion of the people’s ability to discern honest arguments is similar to that of Thucydides’ Cleon and Diodotus. Not only are the people easy to trick; they actually enjoy it. The Dēmos defends itself by arguing that it is in fact the people who have been duping Cleon: because of their penchant for drink, they simply allow their thieving politicians to get fat before they “sacrifice and eat them” (Eq. 1140: θύσας ἐπιδειπνεῖς). It is easy to be skeptical of this argument, but even if the Dēmos is correct in its evaluation of the situation, this is hardly heartening.

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135 And it is essentially rejected at the end of the play; when the Sausage-Seller describes the former behavior of the Dēmos (Eq. 1340-55), it is clear that the Dēmos had been completely hoodwinked by its politicians.
Despite all this, Aristophanes’ *Knights* ends on a relatively high note. The Sausage-Seller prevails over Cleon and, even though “we are encouraged to believe that he will rule in the same way as his predecessor,” he is presented at the end of the play as the “honest adviser” to a “rejuvenated” Dēmos. In fact, the Sausage-Seller has quite literally “boiled down” the Dēmos (Eq. 1321), reverting it back to its pure state of the early fifth century. Despite this optimistic tone, Hesk is correct to argue that “[t]he conclusion of *Knights* is not...a clear-cut utopian fantasy of a democratic politics freed of flattery [and] deceit.” As Bowie points out, the way that this positive resolution is founded—the boiling down of the Dēmos—is obviously unrealistic; Aristophanes proposes no solution that could ever occur in the real world. And reverting the Dēmos to its form in the age of Aristides and Miltiades implies a return to politics as they were before Ephialtes’ reforms, a time that arguably precedes the advent of true democracy in Athens. Ultimately, the vast majority of the play focuses on the deceptive and manipulative practices of Athenian politicians, and on the democratic public’s willingness to submit to their perfidy. All this cannot be simply washed away by the magical rejuvenation of the Dēmos and its politicians; at the heart of Aristophanes’ play there still resides a deep anxiety about the

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137 Hesk, 2000, p. 257.
138 Bowie, 1993, pp. 76-77.
139 The question of when we see the true beginning of Athenian democracy is complex and controversial. On the subject, cf. Kurt A. Raaflaub, “The Breakthrough of Dēmokratia in Mid-Fifth-Century Athens,” in *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece*, eds. Raaflaub, Josiah Ober, and Robert W. Wallace (Berkeley, 2007), pp. 105-54; Raaflaub argues that it was only after the reforms of Ephialtes that the Athenian democracy was “as fully realized as was possible under the conditions prevailing in antiquity” (p. 106). For the opposite view, i.e. that the “origins of Athenian democracy” can be found in 508/07 BCE, see, in the same volume, Josiah Ober, “‘I Besieged That Man’: Democracy’s Revolutionary Start,” pp. 83-104. Thanks are due to Prof. Jonathan Hall for suggesting this point to me.
crooked and duplicitous nature of Athens’ politicians, and about the people’s eagerness to reward such behavior.

The Arginousae affair and the dangers of deceptive rhetoric

While Aristophanes and Thucydides both provide fine (literary) examples of the pervasive distrust of public speech in Athens, an even more concrete example is provided by the prosecution of Athenian generals after the battle of Arginousae in 406 BCE. Despite the success of the Athenian forces in this naval battle, this can hardly be described as a happy incident in Athenian history. Upon their return, six of the generals who had led the Athenians at Arginousae (two refused to return), were brought to trial because they had neglected to pick up the men who had been shipwrecked during the battle (X. Hel. 1.7.4). According to Xenophon’s account, the trierarch (and former general) Theramenes was instrumental in prosecuting his colleagues. After a series of reversals—the generals had almost talked themselves out of trouble before nightfall, and a festival, intervened—they were all condemned to death and executed (X. Hel. 1.7.4-34). The city thus “deprived itself, by a tragic judicial error, of men who were both its best generals and the most loyal supporters of democracy.”¹⁴⁰ In the

aftermath, the Athenian citizens “repented,” and lashed out at those who had urged the execution. The charge against these men was that they had “deceived the dēmos.”

Both Xenophon and Diodorus provide accounts of this incident, and although they diverge on many important details, they both agree that the Athenian dēmos felt it had been deceived, and that specific charges of deception were subsequently levied against those who had urged the prosecution of the generals. This is crucial, since it represents the “only certain instance of probolai against deceivers of the demos” in fifth-century Athens. That fact alone would seem to indicate that the anxiety about elite deception, already well-embedded in the texts of Thucydides and Aristophanes that we have seen, had come to a head in 406 BCE. But Xenophon adds several other details which, even if not entirely accurate, are nevertheless indicative of the atmosphere of distrust that existed in Athens.

Much like Euripides does in the IA, Xenophon describes a wide variety of deceitful machinations that are used in order to achieve certain political ends. The historian claims that, in order to inflame the dēmos against the generals, Theramenes’ partisans actually hired people to impersonate the relatives of those who had died at Arginousae. These individuals then

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141 X. Hel. 1.7.35: τὸν δήμον ἐξηπάτησαν; Diod. 13.103.2: τὸν δήμον ἐξηπατηκώς.
142 Most notably in their explanation of Theramenes’ role in the conviction of the eight generals. For a concise analysis of the divergences in the two accounts, the questions that it raises, and some possible solutions (especially concerning our interpretations of Theramenes), see A. Andrewes, “The Arginouï Trial,” Phoenix 28 (1974): pp. 112-22.
144 Andrewes, 1974, tends to cast doubt on these claims; Sordi, 1981, is more sanguine about Xenophon’s accuracy.
appeared at the assembly when the question of the generals was being discussed (X. Hel. 1.7.8). Obviously, the purpose of this gambit must have been to cause the assembly to become more incensed at the abandonment of those shipwrecked men. At the same time, Xenophon reports that Theramenes bribed a certain Callixenus to appear before the assembly and propose the extraordinary (and “probably illegal”) measure of trying all the generals together (X. Hel. 1.7.9-10). After this, another man spoke to the assembly who claimed to have survived the shipwreck by chance, and to have been urged by his drowning companions “to report to the dēmos that the generals had not picked up the men who had done the most in service of the fatherland.” Whether or not Theramenes was as central to this plot as Xenophon tells us, his narration and the outcome both suggest that a great deal of underhanded measures were taken in this debate.

The same thing is implied in a speech made in defense of the generals, as transmitted by Xenophon. After Callixenus’ proposal for a mass trial had been accepted, and the objections of the Prytaneis had been forcefully overruled, a certain Euryptolemus spoke up. The central argument of his speech is quite straightforward: he suggests that the generals be tried separately, as the law accords, and that they each be allowed to defend themselves (X. Hel. 1.7.20-23). But before he gets to his point, he feels compelled to note that he will “advise them in

146 X. Hel. 1.7.11: ἀπαγγέλει τῷ δήμῳ ὅτι οἱ στρατηγοὶ οὐκ ἀνείλοντο τοὺς ἄριστους ὑπὲρ τῆς πατρίδος γενομένους. Xenophon does not actually say that this man was planted, but the structure of the narrative and the nature of the remarks suggest that he was.
such a way that you cannot be deceived either by me or by anyone else” (X. Hel. 1.7.19: συμβουλεύω δ' ύμίν, ἐν οίς ὁθ' ὑπ' ἐμοῦ ὁθ' ὑπ' ἀλλου οὐδενός ἐστιν ἐξαπατηθῆναι ύμᾶς). This is similar to what we see in Thucydides’ retelling of the Mytilenian debate. Both controversies revolve around the appropriate punishment to mete out to people who have violated the trust of the Athenian people. More strikingly, in both cases orators feel obliged to preemptively defend themselves from accusations of deceiving the people, whilst of course implying that others are trying to do just that. In this, Xenophon demonstrates a sensibility that is remarkably similar to that of Thucydides, one that clearly points to broad concerns about deceptive speech at the end of the fifth century.

Euryptolemus was not able to secure standard trials for the generals, a fact that no doubt influenced the people’s decision to execute them. Just as they had after the initial vote to annihilate the Mytilenians, the Athenians repented. This time, however, it was too late to stop the executions; the generals were already dead. Rather than hold a new trial, then, they turned their wrath on Callixenus and four others. Xenophon and Diodorus agree that these men were accused of “deceiving the dēmos” (X. Hel. 1.7.35; Diod. 13.103.2). This was, as Christ notes, nothing short of extraordinary. The case of Arginousae thus shows that the deep anxiety about deceptive rhetoric, one that is evident in Thucydides’ Mytilenian debate and in Aristophanes

147 The Mytilenians had of course quite plainly betrayed their “alliance” with the Athenians; the actions of the generals is a much less obvious type of betrayal, but insofar as Euryptolemus suggests they be tried as traitors (X. Hel. 1.7.22), it would appear that they too could be considered to have betrayed the dēmos.

Knights, was not only present but indeed boiling over in 406 BCE, one year before the production of the IA.\textsuperscript{149}

6. Conclusions

As we have seen, Athenian preoccupations about deceit and rhetoric had roots in the Gorgianic notion that deception was inherent to public speech. Such a theory would naturally be problematic in a city such as Athens that depended on public speech in order to arrive at political consensus. This anxiety is easily visible in both Thucydides' description of the Mytilenian debate and Aristophanes' Knights. In these texts, it appears to be a concern that is central to the Athenian polis. But these are not the only texts in which one can detect this apprehension concerning the use of deceit by elite males. Aristophanes' Acharnians, for example, is another comedy in which this is quite openly depicted.\textsuperscript{150} And Thucydides' Melian dialogues goes so far as to suggest that not only were the Athenians suspicious of their orators, so too were the other Greeks. Indeed, the entire reason that the dialogue occurs, as the Athenian

\textsuperscript{149} Cf. the scholion to Ar. Frogs, 67; J. Diggle, ed., Euripidis Fabulae vol. 3 (Oxford, 1994), p. 358. Euripides may well have written the IA before these events occurred, or at any rate been unaware of them due to his (presumed) exile in Macedonia. Nevertheless, it is clear that the conditions in Athens were such that, regardless of his knowledge of the Arginousae affair, the play could speak to a great deal of concern about the use of deceptive speech in public debates.

ambassadors state in their opening sentence, is because the Melians will not let them speak before the people, lest they “be deceived” by the Athenians’ “alluring” words (Th. 5.85.1: μὴ ἐπαγωγὰ καὶ ἀνέλεγκτα ἐσάπαξ ἀκούσαντες ἡμῶν ἀπατηθὼσιν).

Nor were these the only authors or genres that address contemporary anxieties about deceptive political speech. Sophocles’ Philoctetes is another tragedy that foregrounds the problem of deceit and sophistic rhetoric, further proof that Athenian audiences were used to engaging with the questions Euripides raises in the IA. Antiphon’s Tetralogies highlight another problem Sophistic theory faced in the late fifth century. In these speeches, Antiphon all but gives up trying to establish what actually happened in the hypothetical incidents, focusing heavily on what is “likely” (τὸ εἰκός) or what is “credible” (τὸ πιστός). A recurring theme in Antiphon’s work is the relationship between logos and ergon, and what emerges is “an alignment of probability, discourse, and law on the one hand against direct evidence, facts, and nature on the other.”

Finally, Critias fr. 19 portrays another instance of an individual using deceptive means in a coercive manner. The speaker of this fragment postulates that the gods were invented by “some cunning and wise man” (v. 12) as a means of scaring other humans into behaving well. It is explicit that this was achieved by “concealing the truth with false speech” (v. 26: ψευδεῖ...
καλύψας τὴν ἀλήθειαν λόγῳ). And although the outcome (good behavior) is theoretically a positive one, it is nevertheless another example of the disconnect between logos and ergon, particularly in persuasive speech. The nonchalance with which the speaker describes this act, and the fragment’s conformity with mainstream sophistic thought on deceitful rhetoric, demonstrate that such means were considered common. Unlike in the time of Aeschylus’ Oresteia, the proliferation of deceptive speech in the public arena seems to have been a source of grave concern when the IA was produced.

We can see that in the IA, Euripides addresses concerns that we see constantly in other late fifth-century Athenian documents. Euripides differs from these other writers, however, by framing this concern against a background of Aeschylus’ Agamemnon. His use of this subtext has two purposes: to alert the audience that the IA will seriously engage with the question of problematic speech; and to provide a tragic model that competes with Aeschylus’ depiction of deceptive female speech as a great—if not the greatest—threat to society. If the male elite consistently engages in the same type of “double-speak” as Aeschylus’ Clytemnestra, if such deceptive rhetoric has become a key to obtaining power in Athens, if, furthermore, the democratic public actively encourages the use of such deceptive rhetoric, then the concerns raised by Aeschylus can hardly be pertinent to the Athenian audience, and perhaps not even to the tragic theater. Although he had, it would seem, followed this model in his Medea and

Hippolytus, Euripides now dismisses Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* as a relevant model for Athenian drama. He offers in its place a new type of tragedy that will engage the questions and problems of his own time. A new model for a new age.
Bibliography


