

STATUES IN EURIPIDES: STAGING, CHARACTER, STRUCTURE AND METAPHOR

By

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To my parents

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AJA	American Journal of Archaeology
AJP	American Journal of Philology
CIAnt	Classical Antiquity
CQ	Classical Quarterly
CR	Classical Review
G&R	Greece and Rome
GRBS	Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies
TAPA	Transactions of the Proceedings of the American Philological Association



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This study examines how Euripides features statues in his works and the visual, structural, and thematic implications of such statues. While in some plays he places divine images on the stage sets (*Hippolytus*, *Andromache*, *Phoenissae*, *Ion*) or incorporates them as props (*Iphigeneia at Tauris*), in other plays Euripides uses the imagery of a statue in order to make a comparative comment on a particular character (*Alcestis*, *Trojan Women*, *Hecuba*, *Heracles*). When including statues on stage that represent deities, the playwright creates reminders of the gods in control. As deities in statue-form, the images stand as more than inanimate objects. Because of their divine nature, they take on an animated presence that allows them to act as quasi-characters. As such, the “statue-ized” gods can be addressed, garlanded, or clung to for protection. Furthermore, when the gods depicted as statues fail to intervene on a character’s behalf, they underscore the lack of protection that certain characters may receive. Finally, the statues that appear on stage offer a center around which the dramatic action can unfold. In this way, Euripides creates a visual representation of the centrality that the deity plays in the conflict and story.

In the context of mortals, Euripides often employs comparisons to inanimate statues in order to portray a character as helpless, defeated and submissive. However, statue imagery can also mark a character as triumphant and noble in times of desperation or death. Because men tend to hold positions of power in the plays, most comparisons to statues refer to female characters. This objectified presentation allows a woman to be eroticized and portrayed as a thing of beauty in her moment of submission or death. While Euripides most often develops comparisons to statues in reference to female characters, on a few occasions he uses the technique to show a male character's state of complete submission (*Orestes*, *Heracles*).

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### Overview of the Project

Scholars have often noted that of the three tragedians, Euripides pays the most careful attention to the visual and artistic aspects of his plays. The level of artistry that appears in both his staging and narrative has even led to the rise of a tradition that the playwright worked as a painter early in his life. Discussions of Euripides' unique attention to the artistic potential of the stage generally focus on the *Ion*, set at the carefully described temple of Apollo at Delphi. In this project, I show that Euripides' use of artistic detail plays an equally important role in the *Hippolytus*, *Andromache*, *Iphigeneia at Tauris* and *Alcestis*. With a focus on these four plays, this study examines how Euripides features statues in his works and the visual and thematic implications of such statues.

Euripides incorporates statues into his plays in two different manners, depending on whether the image refers to a divine or mortal subject. In the divine context, he includes divine images as part of the stage set in order to comment on the role of the gods in the conflict and story. With the statue of a god standing permanently fixed on stage, Euripides is able to present the audience with a constant reminder of that deity's supremacy and role in the action or origins of the play's particular myth. Because divine images are divine objects, they take on an animated presence that ultimately leads them to be treated as quasi-characters in the plays. As stage fixtures, moreover, the statues can offer an organizational tool around which the action of the play can visually unfold. Finally, by putting a divine image on the stage, Euripides gives a means of protection and refuge to characters conquered by war or overcome by force. Thus,

when a character seeks protection at a statue (Phaedra, Andromache) or holds a divine image in her arms (Iphigeneia), Euripides underscores an alliance between a mortal and a god.

In the mortal context, Euripides compares female characters to statues as a means of portraying them as trapped, helpless or submissive. In this way, he is able to evoke the objectified and dominated situation of the woman, while still depicting her in a noble, beautiful, and even erotic light. While these comparisons to statues sometimes occur simply via the use of a simile within a narrative (Polyxena), at other times Euripides displays a woman as a statue in a more nuanced manner (Alcestis). When depicting a woman as art, Euripides asks the other characters, as well as the audience, to step back and take a moment to consider that woman's situation. In doing so, the playwright calls for pity on behalf of a noble character near death or submission. Thus, in *Hecuba*, we even find the Trojan queen begging Agamemnon to view her as if she were the subject of an artistic piece:

οἴκιτρον ἡμᾶς, ὡς γραφεύς τ' ἀποσταθεῖς

ἰδοῦ με κἀνάθρησον οἷ' ἔχω κακά.

(807-8)

Take pity on me, and standing back as a painter, look at me and view closely the evils I have endured.

Since a person in full costume and mask would appear similar to a work of art, Euripides readily creates situations in which his characters take on aspects of a statue. One of the most interesting aspects of Euripides' use of statues lies in his ability to depict them in both narrative and staging or a combination of the two. In many ways, this presentation of "living" statues reflects the first-person inscriptions on funerary and

votive monuments that were common even in the archaic period.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the relationship between statues and performative poetry would have been a familiar trope to fifth-century Athenians.

While Euripides outshines his counterparts in his focus on the visual and artistic potential of drama, many of the same techniques of incorporating art into tragedy were already widely in use by Euripides' time. One of our earliest extant examples of such a presentation occurs in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* when Iphigenia is referred to as a δόμων ἄγαλμα (208), an ornament of the house. Later in the same play, the chorus turns to statues to describe Menelaus' grief and anger at losing his wife:

εὐμόρφων δὲ κολοσσῶν

ἔχθεται χάρις ἀνδρί·

(416-7)

The grace of beautifully sculpted statues is a thing of hatred for the husband.

Aeschylus' attention to artistic elements in the *Oresteia* can also be found in his use of tapestries and cloth throughout the trilogy. Thus, Euripides appears an innovator within an artistic tradition already extant in the tragic genre.

The presentation of the female figure in statuary terms was not a device invented by the tragic poets of fifth-century Athens. In the *Works and Days* Hesiod describes the creation of the first woman, Pandora, as a creature sculpted by the gods from the mud of the earth:

Ἥφαιστον δ' ἐκέλευσε περικλυτὸν ὅτι τάχιστα

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<sup>1</sup> Day (2010) 44 argues that "whether a single person or a group was reading a dedicatory inscription, especially in the archaic period, reception typically involved sounding out the text and hearing it. Reading epigrams, then, generated *kleos*, commemorative poetic speech uttered in performance before an audience."

γαῖαν ὕδει φύρειν, ἐν δ' ἀνθρώπου θέμεν αὐδὴν  
καὶ σθένοσ, ἀθανάτης δὲ θεῆς εἰς ὧπα εἰσκειν  
παρθενικῆς καλὸν εἶδος ἐπήρατον·

(60-63)

And he commanded famous Hephaistos that he quickly  
mix earth with water, and in it to put the voice and strength of mankind,  
and to liken the face to an immortal goddess  
giving her the beautiful and lovely form of a maiden.

Even in this early text the verb εἰσκειν appears - presenting the first woman as an artistic image. This representation of a woman as an object and a commodity for men sets the stage for the later depictions of females as statues in tragedy.<sup>2</sup>

This project, as a whole, looks primarily at four plays of Euripides: *Hippolytus*, *Andromache*, *Iphigeneia at Tauris* and *Alcestis*. In a final shorter chapter, I look at a few other plays that incorporate statues to a lesser degree.

## Chapter Summaries

### Chapter 2: Divine Statues in the Staging and Structure of *Hippolytus*

In Chapter 2, I show that Euripides places the statues of Aphrodite and Artemis on opposite sides of the stage, each statue equidistant from the palace door. Such a staging creates a reflection of the structural and thematic symmetry that runs throughout all aspects of the work. These goddesses, moreover, function as silent witnesses to the play's action and reminders of the power of divine vengeance. I show that Phaedra chooses to hide behind Artemis' statue for concealment and protection while she

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<sup>2</sup> Wohl (1998) 65 argues that as a physical object "created from raw material through divine labor, she is exchanged as a gift (δῶρον ἄγοντα, Hes. *Erga* 85) to mortals and is given her value through that exchange."

overhears Hippolytus' tirade against women. I also argue that Phaedra's body remains present on the *ekkyklema* throughout the entirety of the action, allowing Phaedra's corpse to function in a manner similar to the two statues standing on stage. With her presence, moreover, the later arrival of Hippolytus' dying body complements the symmetry in the play's staging and helps to create a sense of closure with a final visual tableau.

### **Chapter 3: The Statue of Thetis and Unity in *Andromache***

In my third chapter, I argue that Thetis and her statue act as the unifying features of a play divided into three episodes. Since the goddess remains present via her statue throughout the entirety of the play, Thetis and her image provide the setting and create the three distinct episodes of action that unfold according to her will. The play first presents the struggles of the captive, yet noble, Andromache as she relives many of the same experiences from Troy in the microcosm of Thetis' shrine. In Thetis' version, however, the goddess has the power to control Andromache's fate. In the second part, Euripides contrasts the noble Andromache with the ignoble Hermione. The play closes with a third, shorter section in which Thetis takes complete control of the action *ex machina* and immortalizes the aged and noble Peleus.

### **Chapter 4: Artemis and Her Statue in *Iphigeneia at Tauris***

In my fourth chapter, I discuss how Euripides, in *Iphigeneia at Tauris*, employs a small image of Artemis as a prop in the second half of the action. Although the statue may not be on-stage for the entirety of the play, I argue that it still acts as a unifying feature of the story. I also examine the pillar of Orestes from Iphigeneia's dream in the context of statue-imagery; and I explore the implications of Iphigeneia's description of

Artemis' statue turning away from the pollution of Orestes. When Artemis' statue takes the stage at 1156, I show that Iphigeneia and Orestes operate under the protective care of Artemis via her image. Finally, I argue that Athena's appearance at the end of the play is justified by the Athenian context of the story and the removal of Artemis' statue from the Tauric land.

### **Chapter 5: Statues and Staging in *Alcestis***

In Chapter 5, I shift my focus from divine and staged statues and look to *Alcestis*. For while an actual statue never appears on stage, Euripides repeatedly presents Alcestis as a living statue or work of art. Furthermore, I argue that the house of Admetus functions as a silent witness in the play and emerges as a quasi-temple that formerly housed Apollo. As such, Euripides presents Alcestis in a manner that likens her to a votive object or statue within the house. By objectifying the woman, moreover, the playwright expresses the liminal status of Alcestis' character, caught as she is between life and death throughout the entirety of the play. In my examination of the play's staging, I pay careful attention to the visual elements of Alcestis' presence on stage and her portrayal as a beautiful artistic object. Finally, I discuss the woman's silent and veiled return to the stage after her rescue by Heracles. I argue that the woman's presentation as analogous to a funerary monument helps to reveal Admetus' obsessive focus on the visual aspects of the woman's presence throughout all facets of his life.

### **Chapter 6: Statues in *Phoenissae*, *Ion*, *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba***

Chapter 6 looks at the remainder of Euripides' extant corpus and shows that the playwright employs statues in a consistent manner throughout. First, I examine *Phoenissae* and argue that the play would be best served if a statue of Apollo Agyieus



was present on stage. Moreover, I show that Euripides uses the image of Athena in the frieze and Apollo Agyieus' statue at the temple door in *Ion* to create reminders of the play's Athenian origins. I then survey the protective role of statues throughout Euripides, and show how a statue on stage can underscore a character's divine protection or lack thereof. Finally, I illustrate how the playwright uses comparisons to statues to depict a noble woman as pitiable and submissive, yet triumphant and defiant, in the *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*. Just as with *Alcestis*, Euripides portrays Polyxena on the altar as a beautiful work of art in her final moments.

## CHAPTER 2 DIVINE STATUES IN THE STAGING AND STRUCTURE OF THE *HIPPOLYTUS*

In *Hippolytus*, Euripides includes two statues as permanent fixtures on the stage to help organize the play both visually and thematically. By developing the action around the statues of two complementary deities, the playwright creates a masterpiece of intricate structure and symmetry<sup>1</sup> Although scholars generally agree upon the importance of the statues for the play's structure and meaning, they have divergent ideas concerning the mechanics of the arrangement. A key point of contention lies in a disputed utterance from an attendant of Hippolytus:<sup>2</sup>

τήνδ' ἢ πύλαισι σαῖς ἐφέστηκεν Κύπρις.

(101)

The one who stands near to your gates, Kypris.

The phrase πύλαισι σαῖς ἐφέστηκεν has led some scholars to place Aphrodite's statue near the main doors of the palace at the center of the stage. Stage direction from the text is lacking in regards to the placement of Artemis' statue. Thus, hypotheses have arisen that put her image off to one side of the stage in front of a forested scene painting or in the center axis of the orchestra in line with the central door and the statue of Aphrodite. Others have maintained, moreover, that the evidence is too thin to make a sound argument one way or another. However, given the size of the stage and the central location of the palace, it seems that almost any location could be referred to as "near the gates." Because of this, I believe that the wording of the line has been taken

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<sup>1</sup> See Barrett (1964) 154; Halleran (1995) 38.

<sup>2</sup> The Sorbonne papyrus attests πέλας in place of Κύπρις. For a discussion of this textual issue see: Merkelbach (1967) 100-1; Halleran (1995) 159 n101.

far too literally, especially since placing a statue at the center of the stage would obstruct entrances and exits through the palace door.

The opposing argument for the placement of the statues relies primarily on the balanced symmetry of the framing goddesses throughout all other aspects of play. Placing the two statues on opposite sides of the stage, equidistant from the central door of the palace, would produce a visual reflection of the goddess' thematic role. With such an arrangement, the garlanding of the Artemis statue by Hippolytus at line 73 would leave a permanent visual reminder of Hippolytus' mistake. The wreathed statue of Artemis on one side would make the stage appear asymmetrical and unbalanced in relation to the ungarlanded statue of Aphrodite on the other side.

The symmetrical placement of the two statues around the central axis of the palace door, I argue, presents the best reflection of the play's overall structure. The structure of *Hippolytus* develops in two mirroring halves, with Phaedra's final scene acting as a central pivot between the two. In addition, the entrances and exits of the various characters occur in a symmetrical manner, with the timing and points of entry and departure creating mirrors of earlier scenes. The play's symmetry, in addition, can also be found in a number of dialogues that echo one another. The playwright, moreover, stages the bodies of dead characters in a complementary manner and includes two *dei ex machina* scenes that frame the play in the beginning and end. Similarly, the two statues can offer a symmetrical organizing principle around which the reflective action of the play can unfold in a unified and controlled manner. Through this arrangement, Euripides emphasizes the opposing, yet complementary, nature of the two goddesses. Furthermore, the entrances of the "live" deities at the beginning and

end of the play would the placement of the statues. With the statues on opposite sides of the stage, the playwright can also show a character's divine allegiances through his or her entrances and exits and positioning near a particular deity.

### **The Divine Statues and Staging the Central Scene**

As the primary organizational principle around which the action of *Hippolytus* unfolds, the two deity statues can offer clues for the intended staging of the heavily debated central scene (601-68).<sup>3</sup> At 565, Phaedra interrupts the chorus and demands silence (σιγήσατ', ὦ γυναῖκες) in order to eavesdrop on the conversation between the Nurse and Hippolytus, and ultimately learn her fate. With the statues of the two goddesses placed equally on opposite sides of the palace door, the door becomes an obvious focal point in the staging of the action. We know that Phaedra stationed herself at that very central location from the choral remark at 577-9:

σὺ παρὰ κλῆιθρα, σοὶ μέλει πομπίμα

φάτις δωμάτων·

You're the one by the door, it's a duty for you

to convey the fate within the house.

From this position Phaedra's anxiety and suspense is played out visually as she stands at the center axis between the two statues awaiting her fate. This staging emphasizes the equal power and importance of the two deities, while the ungarlanded Aphrodite serves as a reminder of Hippolytus' unbalanced treatment of the goddesses.

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed discussion of the scholarly debate surrounding the staging of the central scene, see Roisman (1999) 106 n54. See also Smith (1960) 162-3.

At 565-600, Phaedra's positioning at the central axis of the stage between the two statues visually expresses her helplessness before divine judgment. Alone on the stage with only the goddess statues, Phaedra begs for the chorus to join her (575-6):

ἀπωλόμεσθα· ταῖσδ' ἐπιστᾶσαι πύλαις  
ἀκούσαθ' οἷος κέλαδος ἐν δόμοις πίτνει.

We are ruined. Stand next to these gates  
and listen to what resounds in the house.

Abandoned, fearful and helpless before the whims of the two goddesses who flank her on each side,<sup>4</sup> Phaedra seeks company and support from the chorus below. The chorus, however, knows that the judgment is not for them and they express this by redirecting and re-focalizing the attention on Phaedra: **σὺ** παρὰ κληῖθρα, **σοὶ μέλει** πομπίμα φάτις δωμάτων (577-9). The members of the chorus have no desire to place themselves in the path of two vengeful deities<sup>5</sup> and Phaedra's plea for them to break through the conventional boundaries that relegated their action to the orchestra reveals the extent of her fear and desperation.<sup>6</sup>

Once Phaedra acknowledges and proclaims her fate at 599-600<sup>7</sup>, the balance and suspense of the central judgment scene reaches its peak when Hippolytus and the Nurse burst through the palace door. Phaedra is forced out of the central space of the

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<sup>4</sup> Wiles (1997) 200-1 notes that in masked theatre the difference between an immobile actor and a statue is difficult to distinguish, leaving a strong sense of divine presence in the statues of the Hippolytus. This would add to the feelings of fear and anxiety over divine judgment with Phaedra outnumbered on the stage.

<sup>5</sup> Roisman (1999) 97 remarks, "The women place the burden on Phaedra because they do not want to get overly involved."

<sup>6</sup> On the pushing of generic boundaries in this scene, see Arnott (1973) 53.

<sup>7</sup> οὐκ οἶδα πλὴν ἓν, καθθανεῖν ὅσον τάχος / τῶν νῦν παρόντων πημάτων ἄκος μόνον (I know nothing except one fact, that I must die as soon as possible, the only remedy for the current ills).

stage just as the action turns toward the downfall and destruction of the main characters. The scanty evidence for the staging of the scene that follows (601-68) has led to generous scholarly debate on the subject. Some read Phaedra's words at 599-600 as exit lines:<sup>8</sup>

οὐκ οἶδα πλὴν ἓν, καθθανεῖν ὅσον τάχος,  
τῶν νῦν παρόντων πημάτων ἄκος μόνον  
I know nothing except one thing, to die as soon as possible,  
the only cure for my now present grief.

This interpretation, however, would force a reading contrary to Euripidean convention. When a character announces a desire for suicide, the ultimate outcome in all other extant Euripidean tragedies unfolds in one of three ways: 1) the character remains on-stage and dies;<sup>9</sup> 2) the character is dramatically talked out of suicide and escorted off-stage by another consoling character;<sup>10</sup> 3) in the most common type of suicide scene, the character leaves the stage and the death is carried out.<sup>11</sup> According to Euripidean convention, once Phaedra has left the stage the audience can assume that she has ended her own life.<sup>12</sup> It seems unlikely that Euripides would have defied this practice just to create a surprise for the audience when Phaedra reappears at 680. Sophocles creates a situation in at least two instances whereby he leaves the audience in a state

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<sup>8</sup> Scholars debate whether Phaedra would have exited the stage at 600. For the view that Phaedra did not hear Hippolytus' oath at 612 and was absent from the stage from 601-68, see Dörpfeld and Reisch (1896) 204; Matthaei (1918) 96; Grene and Lattimore (1955) 188; Smith (1960) 163.

<sup>9</sup> Alcestis in Alc. 252-392.

<sup>10</sup> Heracles in H.F. 1240-1428; Hermione in And. 841-1008.

<sup>11</sup> Polyxena in Hec. 432-7; Heracles' daughter in Her. 574-96; Iphigenia in I.A. 1505-9. For the same convention in Sophocles, see: Jocasta in O.T. 1071-5; Antigone in Ant. 937-43.

<sup>12</sup> For detailed discussions of suicide in Greek tragedy, see: Garrison 1995 and Pathmanathan 1965: 5-10.

of suspense over the potential suicide of a character, only to have that character re-enter later in the action.<sup>13</sup> In both cases, however, the character does not announce a desire for suicide, but instead silently leaves the stage with ambiguous intentions. Thus, it appears conventional in tragedy that a proclamation of suicidal intention seals that character's fate once she leaves the stage.

The opposing side, moreover, rightfully argues that, in addition to following convention, Phaedra's presence before the audience greatly enhances the drama and power of the scene.<sup>14</sup> I argue, in addition, that the significance of the deity statues on the stage sheds light on the stage action during these lines. Some scholars simply have concluded that Phaedra would have huddled off to the side of the stage shamefully in an unspecified location, sometimes behind a column or on a couch.<sup>15</sup> While we cannot know for certain, the idea of her lying at the side of the stage on a couch seems unlikely as Phaedra certainly was not in view of Hippolytus and the Nurse, as evidenced by their lines at 601-4:<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Eurydice in *Ant.* 1183-1256; Deianeira in *Trach.* 723-812.

<sup>14</sup> For this view see Lattimore (1962) 8; Barrett (1964) 272; Sider (1977) 17-9; Luschnig (1983) 117 n3; Luschnig (1988) 83; Hartigan (1991) 54-5 n54; Segal (1993) 254 n11; Porter (1994) 67; Halleran (1995): 200 n601-8; Bain (1997) 19; Morwood (1997) 185 n565; Roisman (1999) 98-9; Willink (1999) 414; Parker (2001) 47 argues, "To suppose that Phaedra deliberately plans the destruction of an innocent man merely because of the initial cries she heard at 565-600 (and which the audience did not hear) means attributing to her a level of irresponsible malice wholly out of keeping with her character as so far revealed."

<sup>15</sup> Roisman (1999) 98-9 suggests, "the pair may have burst through the palace door talking violently, while Phaedra returned to her litter and resumed her 'disabled' pose or cowered somewhere on the side in shame." Lawton (1889) 214 argues that "Phaedra is not noticed by them during the scene, and she perhaps shrinks back to the right as they appear. If the palace-door remained open, it may have screened her from Hippolytos' sight. In any case the spectators still see her, and watch the effect upon her of the prince's words."

<sup>16</sup> For arguments supporting her placement out of view of Hippolytus and the Nurse, see: Sider (1977) 17; Roisman (1999) 99; Willink (1999) 414. For the argument that Hippolytus is aware of Phaedra's presence but refuses to address her, see: Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1901) 145 at line 665; Meridier (1931) 124.

Ἴππόλυτος:

ὦ γαῖα μήτηρ ἡλίου τ' ἀναπυχαί,  
οἷων λόγων ἄρρητον εἰσήκουσ' ὄπα.

Τροφός:

σίγησον, ὦ παῖ, πρὶν τιν' αἰσθέσθαι βοῆς.

Ἴππόλυτος:

οὐκ ἔστ' ἀκούσας δεῖν' ὅπως σιγήσομαι.

Hippolytus: Oh earth and mother and the wide expanse of the sun, how  
unspeakable are the words I have heard.

Nurse: Silence, child, before someone hears your shout.

Hippolytus: I am not able to be silent, as I have heard terrible things.

If Phaedra was in view of Hippolytus and the Nurse during this scene, these lines would be inappropriate for the situation. While she may have hidden behind some scene or stage prop, like a column,<sup>17</sup> in view of the audience while hidden from the Nurse and Hippolytus, we know that the statues were placed in front of the palace (101: τήνδ' ἢ πύλαισι σαῖς ἐφέστηκεν Κύπρις) where Phaedra had been eavesdropping and would offer a quick refuge following the sudden appearance of new characters on the stage. If she is to hide out behind a goddess statue, moreover, Phaedra's actions would also follow a convention that often occurs in Greek tragedy whereby a character uses a deity statue as a place of retreat and protection. If this is the case, which statue seems most appropriate for Phaedra's refuge?<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> For this interpretation see Hourmouziades (1965) 28.

<sup>18</sup> On her placement behind the Artemis statue, see Hartigan (1991) 54-5 n54. For her placement at the Aphrodite statue, see Sider (1977) 19; Luschnig (1983) 117 n3; Luschnig (1988) 83. Segal (1993) 254 n11 suggests, "Phaedra is onstage, perhaps against the skene or hiding behind one of the statues of the goddesses."



## Where Does Phaedra Hide?

For Phaedra to hide behind a goddess' statue would draw attention to her relationship with that deity and carry significance during Hippolytus' tirade against women. Those who support her placement behind the statue of Aphrodite note that Phaedra acts to give life and animation to the spurned deity while Hippolytus launches into his derogatory speech.<sup>19</sup> Phaedra and Aphrodite are envisioned as a team listening to his hateful words. Furthermore, Phaedra's vengeful actions following this scene mirror the actions of Aphrodite in the play. Both, disrespected and slandered by Hippolytus, seek to destroy him.<sup>20</sup>

While arguments for the placement of Phaedra behind the statue of Aphrodite cannot be completely refuted, her location at the statue of Artemis seems the most likely staging of the scene as it would offer the most meaningful and complex comment on the relationships of the various characters in the play. Phaedra's silent and unmoving stance next to the statue would compel the audience to consider Hippolytus' hypocritical relationship with Artemis as well as her own standing with the two goddesses.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, following the eavesdropping scene just prior to this, Phaedra now knows that Aphrodite will not offer her the protection she needs.

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<sup>19</sup> Luschnig (1983) 117 n3 supports that Phaedra's placement behind the statue of Aphrodite is best as it gives more "life and personality to the statue which has been an abstraction since the departure of the goddess."

<sup>20</sup> Luschnig (1983) 117 n3.

<sup>21</sup> Hartigan (1991) 55 n54 argues, "this offers the queen the protection she thinks she deserves and shows the blindness of the prince who must look to his deity at this time of crisis but does not see or seem to see, the queen."

While Phaedra is huddled away from the Nurse and Hippolytus, yet in at least partial view of the audience, Hippolytus launches into his tirade against women at 615.<sup>22</sup> When discussing marriage, he makes the following statement about the pathetic plight of a husband at 630-33:

ὁ δ' αὖ λαβὼν ἀτηρὸν ἐς δόμους φυτὸν  
γέγηθε κόσμον προστιθεὶς ἀγάλματι  
καλὸν κακίστῳ καὶ πέπλοισιν ἐκπονεῖ  
δύστηνος, ὄλβον δωμάτων ὑπεξελών.

And, in turn, the one taking the destructive creature into his home rejoices while he decks her out, putting beautiful ornamentation on the most evil statue, and covering it in cloth, the baneful creature, wasting away the wealth of his home.

This image focuses the audience's attention on Phaedra huddled behind Artemis' statue, as Hippolytus has even uttered the word ἄγαλμα. The audience now recalls his initial entrance onto the stage and his unbalanced garlanding of Artemis' statue, a garland that presumably still remains at this moment in the play.<sup>23</sup>

If the tirade against women holds its greatest significance when attention is drawn to Artemis, it begs the question whether there is much difference between his own relationship to Artemis and the plight of the husband he describes. This staging brings Hippolytus' ignorance of the proper relationship to the gods to the fore and casts doubt upon the legitimacy and depth of his relationship to Artemis. Does Hippolytus favor

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<sup>22</sup> Porter (1994) 67 notes that this situation recalls *Ion* 808-56 (the tirade of the old servant) as well as the general treatment of Cassandra in the *Agamemnon*.

<sup>23</sup> Zeitlin (1996) 264, "If he scornfully speaks of the husband who is forced to adorn his vain *agalma* of a wife, we recall that Hippolytus first enters bearing garlands to adorn Artemis's image and later even names himself as the guardian of all her statues (1339)."

Artemis or an inanimate statue? Does her statue stand as a substitute for both goddess and wife? Hippolytus has used Artemis' statue to create a reality in which he seemingly maintains complete control – he surrounds himself with a band of like-minded followers and worships a lifeless statue as both religious devotee and husband. As such, Hippolytus emerges as a Pygmalion character, yet he directs his self-absorbed desire not to a statue of a mortal woman, but of a rival goddess.<sup>24</sup> His one-sided relationship to Artemis takes on a new color when, in his ignorance, Hippolytus bemoans a clever wife (638-44):

ῥᾱϊστον δ' ὄτῳ τὸ μηδέν· ἀλλ' ἀνωφελῆς  
εὐηθία κατ' οἶκον ἴδρυται γυνή.  
σοφὴν δὲ μισῶ· μὴ γὰρ ἔν γ' ἐμοῖς δόμοις  
εἶη φρονοῦσα πλείον' ἢ γυναῖκα χρή.  
τὸ γὰρ κακοῦργον μᾶλλον ἐντίκτει Κύπρις  
ἐν ταῖς σοφαῖσιν· ἢ δ' ἀμήχανος γυνή  
γνώμη βραχεῖαι μωρίαν ἀφηρέθη.

But it is easy for the one who has a nobody, although she is useless, a simpleton wife who sits in the house. On the other hand, I can't stand a clever woman. Let there never be in my house a woman who is more clever than she needs. For Kypris implants more wrongdoing in the clever ones. The witless woman is kept away from folly because of her small mind.

With attention drawn both to Phaedra and Artemis' statue, this brash statement becomes a folly in itself. Does an ἄγαλμα not represent his ideal of a wife, a τὸ μηδέν

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<sup>24</sup> This "Pygmalion effect" was not lost on Ovid, who, in the *Metamorphoses*, chose to weave the events of the *Hippolytus* into a narrative about a descendant of Pygmalion (298-502).

and ἀνωφελές? Yet to the audience this statement creates a bitter irony, as they know Artemis is no such goddess and his rejection of Aphrodite will not go unpunished.

Through Hippolytus' speech, Euripides presents Phaedra, cowering behind the statue, as the exact opposite of what Hippolytus would ever want. Moreover, the audience comes to pity her – helpless, alone, attacked without recourse and seeking protection from a goddess with whom she does not typically align herself. Yet is Phaedra so unsuited to seek protection from Artemis? Even when struck by a mad love via Aphrodite herself, Phaedra has acted on nothing and prefers death to infidelity. In this light, Phaedra's placement behind the statue of Aphrodite seems doubtful. While the statue would reinforce the split alignment that Phaedra and Hippolytus maintain to Aphrodite and Artemis respectively, the attention to the Artemis statue emphasizes these points as well, while also casting doubt upon the true nature of Hippolytus' zeal for the huntress, a key component of his ultimate demise. Phaedra's choice of the Artemis statue would also underscore Aphrodite's abandonment of her as she realizes that Aphrodite either cannot or will not offer her the protection she desires.

### **Phaedra's Presence During the Tirade**

Scholars debate whether Phaedra remains concealed behind the statue for the entirety of Hippolytus' tirade. The textually disputed lines 664-8 refer to women in the plural while Hippolytus is presumably speaking only to the nurse:<sup>25</sup>

**ὄλοισθε.** μισῶν δ' οὔποτ' ἐμπλησθήσομαι

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<sup>25</sup> For arguments against the authenticity of this line see Valckenaer (1768) 237 n664; Barrett (1964) 286 n664-8. Kovacs (1988) 125 adds that the awkwardness of lines 664-5 "do not quite succeed at saying what they are intended to say, and though we must of course be prepared to be told that the illogicality of Hippolytus' words betokens his agitation, the excuse seems particularly feeble at the end of a long speech that has been as articulate as has this." Halleran (1995) 206 n663-8 calls arguments against these lines "inconclusive," and notes that the focus on speech picks up the recurring theme of speech and silence.

γυναῖκας, οὐδ' εἴ φησί τις μ' ἀεὶ λέγειν·

ἀεὶ γὰρ οὖν πῶς εἰσι κάκεῖναι κακαί.

ἢ νῦν τις αὐτάς σωφρονεῖν διδαξάτω

ἢ κάμ' ἐάτω ταῖσδ' ἐπεμβαίνειν ἀεὶ.

May you (plural) perish. I will never cease to hate women,  
not even if someone says that I am always talking about it.

For always, somehow, those women are evil.

Let someone now teach those women to be chaste,  
or always let me be the one to trample them.

The primary question here concerns whether Hippolytus is using the plural in reference to womankind as a whole or whether he is specifically speaking to both Phaedra and the Nurse.<sup>26</sup> If he is directly addressing Phaedra at this moment, the lines raise an argument for Phaedra's being in view of him and the Nurse during the tirade. If this is true, Hippolytus overtly chooses to ignore her up to this point.<sup>27</sup> Such a reading, however, does not take into account the frequent use of peroration in Euripides. As a summary and conclusion to the lengthy tirade that began with an imperative, these lines fit well into Euripidean convention.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the plural would signify that in Hippolytus' conclusion, he generalizes about the female gender as a whole.

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<sup>26</sup> Barrett (1965) 286 n664-8 argues that "ὄλοισθε seems rather to be "you and your mistress" than "your sex."

<sup>27</sup> For this view see Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1901) 145 ad 665, "Mit einem Blick auf Phaidra"; Lawall and Lawall (1986) 49, 113 n662-64. Roisman (1999) 99 argues that "his reference at the end of his speech to "your mistress" (662), thrown in as though an afterthought, makes it clear for whom his scathing remarks are intended, while being poignant insult as well. They show that he ignores Phaedra not out of respect or shame, but because of his deep contempt for her."

<sup>28</sup> See also *Hipp.* 473. Hartigan (1991) 55 n55 notes that "the repeated emphasis on learning *sophrosyne* ties Hippolytos and Phaidra together in their deadly denunciations." Willink (1999) 415 argues that the "trampling" mentioned at 668 "adds the final motivation for her pre-emptive counter-action."

The overall sense of the lines can be justified and does not warrant their deletion. Moreover, the plural does not prove that Hippolytus is speaking directly to Phaedra. In contrast, the use of peroration adds to the hypocritical and ironic views of Hippolytus that the entire scene has brought to the fore. As an exceedingly fierce misogynist, the young man who proclaims to be most happy hunting among nature appears wholly unnatural.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, interpreting these lines as directed at Phaedra diminishes the importance of this play as a dialogue against the previous *Hippolytos Kalyptomenos*.<sup>30</sup> In this version of the play, Hippolytus and Phaedra perish even though the two characters never meet face to face on stage. This underscores the role of divine vengeance and justice in the characters' downfalls. By including Hippolytus' direct address of Phaedra, Euripides would undermine this most important innovation. In addition, as a broad, generalized statement, lines 664-8 create a conventional exit motif for Hippolytus.<sup>31</sup> The nurse's response to the tirade, moreover, further supports the use of peroration in the conclusion of Hippolytus' speech. When the Nurse picks up at line 668, she laments the plight of womankind as a whole, commenting on Hippolytus' final statement in similar terms.<sup>32</sup>

Following Hippolytus' exit, Phaedra emerges from behind the statue and returns to her previous location in the center of the stage, equidistant from both statues (669-

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<sup>29</sup> Roisman (1999) 176.

<sup>30</sup> For a lengthy discussion of this point, see McDermott (2000) 243-44. For more general discussion on the relationship between the two plays, see Séchan (1911) 105-51; Fauth (1959); Zintzen (1960); Barrett (1964) 1-45; Tschiedel (1969); Snell (1969); Herter (1975) 119-56; Zeitlin (1996) 219-24.

<sup>31</sup> Smith (1960) 46-7; Barrett (1964) 286 n664-8.

<sup>32</sup> Smith (1960) 170.

731).<sup>33</sup> This staging intensifies Phaedra's desperation for escape and sense of futility, especially when she asks at 675-7:

τίς ἄν θεῶν ἀρωγὸς ἢ τίς ἄν βροτῶν  
πάρεδρος ἢ ξυνεργὸς ἀδίκων ἔργων  
φανείη;

Who of the gods could appear as a helper,  
or who of mortals sitting nearby or as an accomplice in unjust deeds?

As Phaedra speaks these words locked between the silent deities, the terms πάρεδρος and ξυνεργὸς seem to mock the irony and futility of her plight. Although present, neither goddess does anything to aid the terrified woman. Instead their statues silently watch as she announces her own death and exits the stage with a nod to Kypris (725-7):

ἐγὼ δὲ Κύπριν, ἥπερ ἐξόλλυσί με,  
ψυχῆς ἀπαλλαχθεῖσα τῆιδ' ἐν ἡμέραι  
τέρψω·

*And for me, Kypris, the one who ruins me,  
I will delight by destroying my soul on this very day.*

Shortly after this statement, the audience, per Euripidean convention, must assume that the absent Phaedra has acted upon her stated intentions.

### **Phaedra's Body on the Ekkyklema**

Following her exit, Phaedra does not return until Theseus appears for the first time and beckons the chorus to wheel her body out of the palace door at 806-810. Now Phaedra again takes center stage, but just as the goddess statues to either side of her body, she remains unmoving and inanimate while Theseus laments his fortune. This

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<sup>33</sup> For her return to center stage, see Halleran (1995) 206 n669-731.

scene carefully mirrors the entrance of Hippolytus at line 58, comparing Theseus to his son and the corpse of Phaedra to the statue Artemis. In the latter scene, however, the joyful prayers to Artemis are replaced with emotional laments for Phaedra. The symmetry of these two episodes supports the notion that Hippolytus' band of attendants can be seen as a secondary chorus at 58-71 as their actions mirror the true choral dirge that occurs at 811-16.

Both episodes follow an exact pattern. In the first, the hero enters the stage under lively and joyous circumstances. Hippolytus has returned from the hunt with his band of followers, as announced by Aphrodite (51-7):

ἀλλ' εἰσορῶ γὰρ τόνδε παῖδα Θησέως  
στείχοντα, θήρας μόχθον ἐκλελοιπότα,  
Ἴππόλυτον, ἔξω τῶνδε βήσομαι τόπων.  
πολὺς δ' ἄμ' αὐτῷ προσπόλων ὀπισθότους  
κῶμος λέλακεν, Ἄρτεμιν τιμῶν θεὰν  
ὑμνοισιν· οὐ γὰρ οἶδ' ἀνεωγμένας πύλας  
Ἄιδου, φάος δὲ λοίσθιον βλέπων τόδε.

But I see, indeed, that child of Theseus approaching,  
having just left behind the labors of the hunt, Hippolytus,  
I will leave this place now. A group of many attendants is following him  
and shouting out in revelry, honoring the goddess Artemis with hymns.  
For he does not know that the gates of Hades are open,  
and he looks upon the light for the last time.

Hippolytus takes the stage in merriment, ignorant of the tragedy that will soon follow.

Theseus similarly appears on the stage for the first time, wearing a garland and joyously



returning from the oracle, unaware of the devastation that awaits (790-96). While Hippolytus exhorts his pseudo-chorus at lines 58-60, Theseus' dialogue with the true chorus breaks his joy as they reveal the suicide of Phaedra (797-805).

At 810, the body of Phaedra is brought out on the *ekkyklema* and creates an inverted version of Hippolytus' entrance scene; here Phaedra's corpse takes on a role similar to that of Artemis' statue in the prior episode.<sup>34</sup> Euripides signals this inversion when Theseus questions the propriety of his garlands in light of the tragedy that has occurred in his absence (806-7):

αἰαῖ, τί δῆτα τοῖσδ' ἀνέστεμμαι κάρα  
πλεκτοῖσι φύλλοις, δυστυχῆς θεωρὸς ὤν;  
*Ah, oh why is my head garlanded with plaited leaves  
if the oracle was unlucky?*

These lines recall Hippolytus' first entrance when he garlanded the statue of Artemis. Presumably, this wreath would still hang around the statue's neck even as Theseus now experiences the inverted turn of events.<sup>35</sup>

The episode continues with a short choral song at 811-16 that mirrors the song of the earlier pseudo-chorus at 61-9. In the latter case, however, Euripides replaces the joyous prayer to the statue of Artemis with a bitter lament to the corpse of Phaedra. Both scenes culminate in a speech from their respective hero. In the beginning of the play, Hippolytus offers a prayer to the statue of Artemis as he crowns her statue (84-6):

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<sup>34</sup> Wiles (2000) 118 in his description of the *ekkyklema* argues that "a dummy dressed as Phaedra lay upon it, with an incriminating letter displayed in the hand, and the costume doubtless disposed to suggest the victim of a rape."

<sup>35</sup> Halleran (1995) 218 n806-7 cites the parallels between these lines and the garlanding scene at 73ff. Halleran also notes that Theseus' casting away of his garlands recalls Cassandra at *Ag.* 1264ff and *HF* 523ff.

μόνῳ γάρ ἐστι τοῦτ' ἐμοὶ γέρας βροτῶν·  
σοὶ καὶ ξύνειμι καὶ λόγοις ἀμείβομαι,  
κλύων μὲν αὐδῆς, ὄμμα δ' οὐχ ὀρώων τὸ σόν.

For this prize is for me alone of mortals,  
that I accompany you and I converse with you in words  
listening to your voice, although I do not see your eyes.

By echoing this act when Theseus finds the body of his dead wife, Euripides highlights the hypocritical and shallow nature of Hippolytus' relationship to Artemis. Theseus' heart-wrenching lament for his wife mocks the shortsighted nature of his son's point of view (836-9).<sup>36</sup>

τὸ κατὰ γᾶς θέλω, τὸ κατὰ γᾶς κνέφας  
μετοικεῖν σκότῳ θανῶν, ὧ̃ τλάμων,  
τῆς σῆς στερηθεὶς φιλάτης ὁμιλίας·  
ἀπώλεσας γὰρ μᾶλλον ἢ κατέφθισο.

Under the earth I want to go, under the darkness of the earth  
to dwell in the shadows of death, wretched me,  
deprived of your most dear companionship.

For you have destroyed more than yourself in perishing.

While Theseus laments a true and natural relationship, he inadvertently ridicules the “companionship” that Hippolytus claims to exist between himself and Artemis. By inverting Hippolytus' own actions in an episode of authentic grief, Euripides underscores the unnatural components of Hippolytus' personality come to the forefront.

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<sup>36</sup> Mitchell (1991) 110 n39 observes that both “initially address static female figures: Hippolytus the statue of Artemis, Theseus the corpse of Phaedra.”

Sholars have heavily debated whether the *ekkyklema* was removed following the exits of Hippolytus and Theseus at 1101.<sup>37</sup> Because the text itself never overtly calls for the withdrawal of the *ekkyklema*, Phaedra's lifeless body could potentially lie alongside the two goddess statues for the remainder of the play as a fellow silent witness to the action. As such, Phaedra's corpse would take on a role that is similar to the two statues already standing on stage. Her lifeless body would become a silent witness and visual representation of the destructive force of miscommunication. Furthermore, by displaying Phaedra's corpse on one side of the stage, Euripides creates a sort of visual suspense that is only resolved after the body of Hippolytus joins her on the other side of the stage. When Hippolytus' attendants carry him in at 1341 and lay his body opposite Phaedra, the stage returns to its familiar symmetry.<sup>38</sup> By placing each body near one of the divine images, Euripides creates a sense of visual closure that reflects the thematic closure of the scene. Moreover, when the attendants carry in the dying man, Hippolytus' final moments create a shortened replay of Phaedra's earlier entrance on the sickbed and her subsequent death. In this concluding scene, however, Phaedra's corpse acts as witness to the destruction of Hippolytus, just

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<sup>37</sup> Halleran (1995) 243 n1101 closes the *agon* scene by positing that Hippolytus would leave first through the *eisodos* following his speech at 1090-1101. Theseus would then exit through the palace door, and lastly, the *ekkyklema* would be returned through the palace door as well. Halleran disputes the plausibility of the *ekkyklema* remaining on stage because her body, "the powerful visual stage property of the entire scene, cannot be left on display while Th. enters the palace on his own."; Wiles (1997) 12 concerning the treatment of Phaedra's corpse, argues a number of possibilities, that "she may be carried off by the chorus, and so absorbed into a community of women; she may be carried off in the opposite direction from the chorus by male attendants, and so be isolated from both family and community; she may be left in a final tableau, as a silent image left to challenge the audience; the actor may have removed his mask immediately, disrupting the emotional responses of the audience. We do not know which of these options was followed, but we do know that in performance "visual meaning" must in some such way be created."

<sup>38</sup> Halleran (1995) 269 n1460-1 argues that attendants would have carried Hippolytus' body inside following Theseus, which would mirror his earlier staging of pulling in the *ekkyklema* with Phaedra's body through the palace door after Theseus.

as the statues of Aphrodite and Artemis oversaw the demise of Phaedra. Furthermore, the entrances of both Phaedra (198ff.) and Hippolytus (1347-88) closely resemble each other. Both are each undergoing great suffering and beg to be repositioned in a comfortable manner. Both ask for their faces to be covered (243-46; 1457-58), and both are dramatically mourned by Theseus as their bodies remain on stage.<sup>39</sup>

### **Silent Witnesses and Deadly Miscommunication**

In *Hippolytus*, Euripides develops a recurring motif in which a silent observer to the action stands by and chooses not to intervene.<sup>40</sup> For example, Phaedra eavesdrops and hides out of sight during the pivotal scene between Hippolytus and the Nurse (565-668), opting not to confront Hippolytus or offer a defense for her actions. Hippolytus himself swears silence and chooses not to come forward regarding Phaedra's love for him, sealing his own fate (610-12). The chorus refuses to get involved on a number of occasions, neglecting to share what they know and acting as a second audience to the action (713-14; 804-5; 891-92). In all these instances the characters choose the path of non-action and non-intervention, highlighting the play's focus on the destructive nature of miscommunication.

Euripides, moreover, mirrors these broken lines of communication in the play's staging. Through the ever-present statues of Artemis and Aphrodite the playwright creates permanent fixtures on the stage that witness the action, yet never intervene. Although they are only statues, the playwright repeatedly gives the images a "living" presence as the characters frequently interact with them on a conversational level.

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<sup>39</sup> For discussions on the relationship between the sickly entrances of both Hippolytus and Phaedra, see Frischer (1970) 92; Taplin (1978) 135-6; Halleran (1995) 261 n1342-6.

<sup>40</sup> For the role of silent witnesses, see Taplin (1978) 115; Luschnig (1988) 3-15; Goff (1990) 25-6; Lloyd (1992) 46; Bushnell (2005) 208.

When characters speak to and garland the inanimate statues, Euripides offers examples of the unanswered lines of communication that recur throughout the *Hippolytus*. Furthermore, when the statues are treated as living characters, the divine images take on an animated presence that highlights the inseparable nature of a divinity and its statue. Thus, Aphrodite never truly leaves the stage. Instead, she witnesses the dramatic action in its entirety, coldly allowing the destruction to escalate. In view of this, the statue of Artemis had earlier stood as a silent spectator to her rival in the first *deus ex machina* scene, never intervening as Aphrodite laid out her plan of vengeance.<sup>41</sup> This exact image is revisited and reversed at the conclusion of the play, when Artemis takes the stage in a second *deus ex machina*, with Aphrodite standing as witness through her statue. With these divine images, alongside the corpse and tablet of Phaedra, Euripides creates a pattern of absurdity whereby the live characters choose not to intervene or speak up at the most pivotal moments, while inanimate objects “speak” and purposely create harmful and misleading lines of communication.

On many occasions the named characters call upon the statues in conversation, further vivifying the presence of the deities. Hippolytus and his attendants address both divinities directly as fellow characters during their initial appearance at 58-120. Similarly, Phaedra, while in her sick bed, also calls out to the statue of Artemis. Her hopeless wish echoes Hippolytus’ prayers and seeks a means of escape and protection (228-31):

δέσποιν' ἄλίας Ἄρτεμι Λίμνας  
καὶ γυμνασίων τῶν ἵπποκρότων,

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<sup>41</sup> See Zeitlin (1996) 229 n25.

εἴθε γενοίμαν ἐν σοῖς δαπέδοις  
πώλους Ἐνετὰς δαμαλιζομένα.

Mistress of the salt water lake, Artemis,  
and of the hippodrome that resounds with trampling horses,  
would that I could be on your plains taming Enetic foals.

In a similar manner, the Nurse later appeals directly to the image of Aphrodite for aid (522-23):<sup>42</sup>

μόνον σύ μοι, δέσποινα ποντία Κύπρι,  
συνεργὸς εἴης·

*May only you, sea-mistress Kypris, be a helper to me.*

In these instances the two women directly call out to the statues for assistance in a manner that reminds the audience of the “living” presence that the statues hold. Euripides again reminds his audience of the statues’ vivified nature during Theseus’ final words. Before he exits the stage at the conclusion of the play, Theseus bemoans the statue of Aphrodite and simultaneously, the goddess herself: ὡς πολλά, Κύπρι, σῶν κακῶν μεμνήσομαι (1461).<sup>43</sup> For the mortals on stage, the deities are not mere representations of the gods, but *are* the gods in “statue-ized” form.

Phaedra’s corpse, moreover, takes on many of the same characteristics as the statues of Artemis and Aphrodite. The scene before her death prepares the audience for her corpse to take on this role later in the play. Just prior to her announcement of

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<sup>42</sup> Halleran (1995) 194 n522-4 supports Bain (1977) 28-9 and argues that the Nurse at this point would turn away from Phaedra and address the statue directly, with the result that “the Nurse effectively breaks off contact and her words are, by convention, not heard by Ph.”

<sup>43</sup> Halleran (1995) 269 n1460-1 notes that this action recalls the attendant’s address of Aphrodite at 117 and the Nurse’s at 522. Wiles (1997) 11 notes that if Phaedra’s corpse remains in view until the end of the play, “Phaedra has not been forgiven by Hippolytus or by Theseus, and Theseus’ condemnation of Kypris contains no acknowledgement of the fact that Hippolytus offended the gods by ignoring her.”

suicidal intentions Phaedra had stood silently hidden behind Artemis' statue as a witness to the tirade against women. She chose not to speak up during the argument between Hippolytus and the Nurse. Later, when the second half of the play begins, the dead Phaedra is frozen in the same role she held at the closing of the first half. As Theseus and Hippolytus wrangle over the cause and meaning of her death, she, as before, silently witnesses the action that unfolds around her. Furthermore, the corpse of Phaedra "speaks" through the tablet attached to her wrist, again creating an unnatural line of communication and giving a vivified presence to her corpse.<sup>44</sup> The tablet attached to Phaedra's body also recalls the image of a funerary monument complete with a first-person inscription. Theseus, moreover, calls Phaedra's corpse a μάρτυς σαφειστάτος (972). Hippolytus later echoes this language when he calls Artemis and her statue as a witness (1451):

τὴν τοξόδαμνον Ἄρτεμιν μαρτύρομαι.

*I call to witness Artemis, subduing with the bow.*

Furthermore, the discovery of Phaedra's corpse sets off a chain of events in the second half of the play that mirrors the destruction Aphrodite had initiated in the prologue.

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<sup>44</sup> Both of these instances fit into the motif of giving voice to inanimate objects that repeatedly occurs in the play. Phaedra even calls out to both the statue of Aphrodite and the house at (415-18):

αἶ πῶς ποτ', ὦ δέσποινα ποντία Κύπρι,

βλέπουσιν ἔς πρόσωπα τῶν ξυνευενετῶν

οὐδὲ σκότον φρίσσουσι τὸν ξυνεργάτην

τέραμνά τ' οἴκων μὴ ποτε φθογγὴν ἀφῆι;

*How, sea-mistress Kypris, can they ever*

*look at the faces of their spouses*

*and not bristle at that thought that the darkness, their helper,*

*and the rooms of the house might at some point gain the power of speech?*

While Aphrodite sets off a spiral of destruction and leaves her statue behind to watch, Phaedra unleashes the destruction in the second half and then silently remains as a corpse.

### **The Final Scene as a Visual Tableau**

When a group of attendants carry in the dying Hippolytus at 1341, the staging creates a visual tableau that reflects the play's thematic outcome. With the two statues mirroring the corpses of Phaedra and Hippolytus, and Theseus standing amidst it all, the final scene visually projects the destruction that the goddesses have wrought. Here the audience sees, all at once, the avenging and unsympathetic statues of Artemis and Aphrodite, the bodies of the two people destroyed, and Theseus, consumed in grief. This display offers a final visual reflection of the thematic action.<sup>45</sup> The visual tableau also recalls the anxieties expressed by both Phaedra and Hippolytus over how they are perceived by others. When confiding in the Nurse and chorus and lamenting her plight, Phaedra had previously philosophized about the importance of perception and wrongdoing (428-30):<sup>46</sup>

κακούς δὲ θνητῶν ἐξέφην' ὅταν τύχηι,  
προθεῖς κάτοπτρον ὥστε παρθένωι νέαι,  
χρόνος· παρ' οἷσι μήποτ' ὀφθείην ἐγώ.

But time reveals the evils of mortals sooner or later,  
setting a mirror in front of them as before a young girl,

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<sup>45</sup> See Luschnig (1988) 3-15; Roisman (1999) 28-29 notes the relationship between sight and Aphroditic love.

<sup>46</sup> Luschnig (1988) XII points out that "Hippolytus, Phaedra, and Theseus see themselves and what they see is good. When they must see themselves as others see them, what they see is evil." For discussions of these lines see Barrett (1964) 238-39 n428-30; Avery (1968) 31 n26; Pigeaud (1976) 14-16; Zeitlin (1985) 95-100; Goff (1990) 23; Halleran (1995) 186 n428-30.



would that I never be seen among this crowd.

Following her death, Phaedra's corpse remains on-stage throughout the rest of the action, recalling this wish as she lies in judgment before the characters and audience.

In the end, Phaedra experiences the exact opposite of what she desired. Here, her body lies on display for the characters and audience while the deceptive nature of the tablet comes to light. Thus, Phaedra's own view of time as an inevitable revealer comes to mock the futility of all her desperate actions in the play. A similar preoccupation with image also appears in Hippolytus' echo of her sentiment when he stands before the corpse of Phaedra (1078-79):<sup>47</sup>

εἴθ' ἦν ἐμαυτὸν προσβλέπειν ἐναντίον  
στάνθ', ὡς ἐδάκρυσ' οἷα πάσχομεν κακά.

Would that I could stand opposite myself and watch,  
in order to weep over these great evils that I have endured.

Carried back on stage in his dying moments, Hippolytus finally sees the fulfillment of this wish, but in a more wretched manner than he could have ever imagined.

In the closing moments of the play, Theseus stands amidst the ruin unleashed by Aphrodite and finds himself to be the spectator that Phaedra and Hippolytus had previously feared. Theseus, like Phaedra and Hippolytus before him, again mentions the κακά of Aphrodite. Now, however, in his final lines, he has become the onlooker and bitterly laments this newfound role, directly addressing the statue of the goddess (1460-61):

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<sup>47</sup> Barrett (1964) 363 n1078-9 remarks, "he is on the verge of tears (1070), yet too proud to shed them for himself; hence this rather odd wish that he could become another person to weep for his own misfortune."

ὦ τλήμων ἐγώ,  
ὡς πολλά, Κύπρι, σῶν κακῶν μεμνήσομαι.  
Oh I am wretched, how much, Kypris,  
will I remember these evils of yours.

By creating an ending that lays out the play's destruction for the audience to see, Euripides offers closure in which the themes and staging reflect one another. By visually confronting the audience with the play's outcome, Euripides compels those watching to fully recognize the power of the slighted Aphrodite. Moreover, he allows them to take in the destructive effects of perception, inauthentic relationships and the ruinous potential of miscommunication.

### CHAPTER 3 THE STATUE OF THETIS AND UNITY IN *ANDROMACHE*

Euripides' *Andromache* has long presented problems to scholars as a work that lacks a definitive main character as well as structural and thematic unity. Over time, scholars have considered Andromache, Hermione, Neoptolemus and even the House of Atreus<sup>1</sup> in the search for a "main" character or theme in the traditional sense, and their searches have met with varying degrees of success.<sup>2</sup> But there is another figure on the stage. Just as statues of Artemis and Aphrodite stand witness in *Hippolytus*, so the events of *Andromache* unfold around a divine statue that stands silently present during the entirety of the action. In this statue of Thetis, I argue, lies the true cohesiveness of the play, for *Andromache* is first and foremost centered around Thetis and the effects of her marriage. The play is set at the Thetideion in Phthia, a place named for the goddess and the locale where she formerly lived with her mortal husband, Peleus (16-20). Here, the story begins, and Thetis, through her statue, is the only character to stand present throughout the whole action.<sup>3</sup> In addition, her mortal husband, Peleus, acts as an extension of the goddess' will and directs events on her behalf. Thetis can be viewed as a source of all events that occur in the play either directly on-stage or

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<sup>1</sup> Mossman (1996) 143 reads Neoptolemus as the central figure. For the House of Atreus as the play's unifying feature, see Hartung (1844) 108-125. For the argument that we cannot understand the play because it only makes complete sense as a sequel, see Verrall (1905) 21-22. Phillippo (1995) 355-371 finds unity in the pattern of patronymic reference.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion of the play's unity, see Allan (2000) Chapter 2, especially pages 40-42 for a concise and recent summary of pertinent scholarship.

<sup>3</sup> Allan (2000) 60 comes closest to this understanding of Thetis but he quickly retracts his argument by stating: "this is not actually intended as a serious proposal."

indirectly as a result of the *Eris* unleashed long ago at her wedding. In the end, Thetis closes the play herself as a “live” deity *ex machina*.<sup>4</sup>

### **Thetis’ Statue in the Play’s Staging and Structure**

When considered with a focus on the unbroken presence of the goddess, *Andromache* emerges as a play in which Thetis provides the setting and creates three distinct episodes of action. Much of the play’s lamented lack of unity derives from this perceived tripartite structure.<sup>5</sup> When understood to unfold in three distinct movements, the play first presents the struggles of Andromache as a noble, yet captive, woman who relives many of the same experiences from Troy in the microcosm of Thetis’ shrine.<sup>6</sup> In this version, however, Thetis has the power to effect change and save Andromache and her only surviving child. In the second part, Euripides contrasts the ignoble Hermione and her eventual downfall with the experiences of the noble Andromache. In the end, the play closes with a third, shorter section in which Thetis takes complete control of the action *ex machina* and immortalizes the aged and noble Peleus.

The first two episodes of the play function as *exempla* showcasing the effects of noble and ignoble behavior on personal relationships, especially in times of hardship. The first *exemplum* portrays the enslaved, yet noble, Andromache besieged by Hermione and Menelaus and her ultimate return to safety through the help of Peleus. The second episode presents a series of contrasting ignoble characters, Hermione,

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<sup>4</sup> For a similar effect see also the statues of Artemis and Aphrodite in the *Hippolytus* and their complementary *dei ex machina* scenes.

<sup>5</sup> Norwood (1906) laments, “There are indeed practically two plays, the first concerning the woes and deliverance of Andromache, the second the distress and elopement of Hermione.”

<sup>6</sup> For example, in both Troy and the Thetideion Andromache is besieged by Greeks; and in each, she loses an infant son.

Menelaus and Orestes who behave immorally and meet punishment.<sup>7</sup> Through Thetis, a divine mother and wife who is married to a mortal, Euripides sets off the divergent relationships navigated by Andromache and Hermione and their subsequent downfall and redemption.<sup>8</sup> As the only truly noble and just main characters, the mutual respect for upright relationships with both men and the gods binds together Andromache and Peleus as allies, regardless of their conflicting backgrounds.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout its three sections Thetis remains as the play's one true constant, as her statue stands by as a silent witness within the bounds of her shrine.<sup>10</sup> For this reason, the staging of Thetis' statue and altar demands the most careful attention. The shrine and statue of Thetis, I argue, must be placed at the *thymele* in the center of the orchestra in order to best express the true nature of the work.<sup>11</sup> While many scholars have sought and failed to find true unity in a play divided into distinct parts both structurally and thematically, this division, I argue, is mirrored in the actual staging of the play's action. This divided structure also mirrors the play's focus on the divergent origins of the characters and their repeated struggles to integrate themselves into relationships with those of foreign backgrounds.<sup>12</sup> Euripides continually highlights the

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<sup>7</sup> Contrary to Norwood (1906) Ivi who laments the seeming lack of connection between the characters of Orestes and Menelaus.

<sup>8</sup> Boulter (1966) 51-58 comes closest to this understanding of the play and argues that true conflict in the play is "between two opposing concepts of morality."

<sup>9</sup> Papadimitropoulos (2006) 149 argues that as an aristocratic couple that successfully bears children, "Andromache's marriage to Hector is exemplary and constitutes a foil to Hermione's wedding with Neoptolemus."

<sup>10</sup> See above for my discussion of the role of silent witnesses in *Hippolytus*.

<sup>11</sup> For the view that the shrine of Thetis would be located in the orchestra, see Wiles (1999) 200-01. According to Wiles, the *Andromache* presents "Euripides' most ambitious use of a statue."

<sup>12</sup> Ley (2007) 57 notes that a similar separation of palace and sanctuary occurs in *Helen*.

gulfs that exist between the characters – male vs. female, Greek vs. Spartan vs. Trojan, slave vs. master, parent vs. child, divine vs. mortal.<sup>13</sup> The playwright creates visual echoes of all these divisions in the staging by creating two distinct acting areas. The constant presence of the mourning mother Thetis who struggled to negotiate the obstacles of a divine/mortal marriage also creates a fixed reminder of the dis-unity that the play thematically navigates.<sup>14</sup>

By staging the shrine of Thetis and her suppliant in the most powerful site in the Greek theatre, the center of the orchestra, while the other characters appropriate the stage space in front of the skene, two divided theatrical worlds emerge.<sup>15</sup> Scholars have generally disagreed over the placement of Thetis' statue and shrine, with most opting to locate her on-stage, off to the side from the palace.<sup>16</sup> According to convention, however, the placement of a suppliant at an altar in the center of the orchestra is by no means unprecedented, and would make better use of the theatrical space.<sup>17</sup> This divided staging would also reinforce the role of the Thetideion as a place of refuge for a goddess seeking privacy for her untraditional marriage with a mortal. Thetis had sought a home separated from traditional society, and Andromache's description of the place during her opening monologue highlights this fact (16-23):

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<sup>13</sup> See Wiles (1997) 200-1.

<sup>14</sup> Wiles (1999) 201 remarks that "in the play as a whole, the presence of the statue helps to focus a series of polar oppositions."

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of the orchestra's center as the "the strongest acting area," see Rehm (1992) 36.

<sup>16</sup> For the placement of the shrine on-stage, rather than in the orchestra, see: Norwood (1906) 45; Vellacott (1972) 145; Rutherford (1998) 8; Stewart and Smith (2001) 17. Poe (1989) 125 explores the different staging options for the shrine and remarks that "If the skene had only one door, perhaps the temple was represented by a painted canvas or panel on the wall, or even by a free-standing screen. In that case the altar will not have stood centrally before the scene building but before the temple facade."

<sup>17</sup> For similar staging see Rehm (1992) 99 and 123 on Aeschylus' *Eumenides* and Euripides' *Suppliant Women* respectively.

Φθίας δὲ τῆσδε καὶ πόλεως Φαρσαλίας  
σύγχορτα ναίω πεδί', ἴν' ἡ θαλασσία  
Πηλεΐ ξυνώικει χωρὶς ἀνθρώπων Θέτις  
φεύγουσ' ὄμιλον· Θεσσαλὸς δὲ νιν λεῶς  
Θετίδειον αὐδαῖ θεᾶς χάριν νυμφευμάτων.

I am now living on that plain that borders this place  
Phthia and the city of Pharsalia, where the sea-goddess  
Thetis lived alongside Peleus, apart from men, fleeing  
the crowd, and the Thessalian men call it Thetideion  
in honor of the marriage of the goddess.

In her account of the setting, Andromache points out the place's location as a separate sphere in which the goddess Thetis dwells. Her emphasis on the goddess' isolation makes the most sense when Andromache herself speaks from within the *temenos* of the shrine, located down in the orchestra and separate from the palace of Neoptolemus. This staging also offers the first evidence for the somewhat ironic, yet close connection between Andromache and the goddess. Even though Thetis' son, Achilles, had killed her husband, Hector, Andromache and Thetis become allies in the play. Here, Andromache stands visually adjacent to Thetis' statue and within the confines of the goddess' protective zone.

We know from the text that the statue of Thetis stood within a larger shrine to the deity that contained an altar (βωμός – 162, 260, 367, 411, 427, 565) and was surrounded by a *temenos* that was either real or imagined, but would work best if visually defined - as much of the action in the first third of the play involves the struggle

over removing Andromache from the shrine's protection. Hermione herself summarizes this struggle at 253: λείψεις τόδ' ἄγνόν τέμενος ἐναλίας θεοῦ;

By limiting Andromache's action in the first part of the play to the boundaries of Thetis' shrine, Euripides creates an area within the *temenos* that can be imagined as a geographical "other." Used as a place of refuge by both Thetis and Andromache, the distinct nature and location of the shrine appears "foreign," and thus it creates an ideal location for the refuge of the foreign Andromache. Specifically, Euripides presents the shrine as a microcosmic Troy in which Andromache relives the siege and fall of the city which she was forced to leave behind. In this replay of Andromache's plight in Troy, however, the actions of the noble woman throughout her toils are finally rewarded when her son Molossus is returned to her.<sup>18</sup> In Thetis' retelling of the story, Andromache is not forced to suffer as a grieving mother once more. While at first it seemed that the Trojan mother faced a replay of Astyanax's murder at Troy, she finally triumphs through the aid of Thetis' husband (the father of Hector's murderer). In offering refuge through her shrine and redemption through her husband's intervention, Thetis simultaneously redeems herself as she seeks to put an end to the tragedies and sufferings resulting from the Trojan War, and by implication, the destructive *Eris* that emerged from her own marriage.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> While unnamed in the play, the MSS refer to Andromache's child as Molossus and most scholars have followed suit. See Lloyd (1994) 133 n504.

<sup>19</sup> Papadimitropoulos (2006) 149 concerning lines 1186-87 ( Peleus laments: ὦ γάμος, ὦ γάμος, ὃς τάδε δῶματακαὶ πόλιν ὤλεσας ὤλεσας ἄμάν) asserts that "It is at this point that the dramatist makes clear that the play is about a marriage which has destroyed a royal house." This image of marriage, however, I believe reaches beyond the marriage of Hermione and Neoptolemus, recalling the original nuptials Peleus and Thetis and the outbreak of the Trojan War.



## Thetis' Statue and the Play's Themes

Although a play ostensibly exploring the relationships between characters of diverse origins, the *Andromache* is just as much an exposition of the common threads that run through human relationships. Euripides conveys this idea most succinctly through the statue and character of Thetis and her close relationship and similarity to Andromache, her suppliant.<sup>20</sup> At first glance these two women should be far from allies – one a mortal, the other divine and indirectly responsible for the death of Hector, Andromache's husband. Yet the commonalities between the women outweigh these differences as Andromache clings to Thetis' statue for protection. Thematically, the closeness of these characters emerges in their shared role as grieving mothers and women mourning the heroic deaths of their loved ones while seeking to navigate relationships with men of divergent backgrounds. Furthermore, Andromache has given the goddess' grandson, Neoptolemus, his only heir. While Thetis may be divine, her mortal husband and fallen son give her mourning a human quality that draws her even closer to Andromache.<sup>21</sup> Just as fate forced Andromache from Hector, so Thetis was turned away from Zeus and into her marriage with the mortal Peleus.

As a comment on the effects of just and unjust actions on personal relationships, especially in times of deep personal struggles, Euripides presents two women at odds with one another as a means of exploring their differing reactions to times of hardship. As the noble wife who never let go of her dead husband's memory even when reduced to the subject status of a concubine, Andromache emerges in the play as a paragon of

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<sup>20</sup> For similar relationships between central characters and statues see *Hippolytus* and *Phaedra's* relationships to the deities and statues of Artemis and Aphrodite, as discussed above.

<sup>21</sup> Allan (2000) 259.

correct and just nobility. Euripides takes pains to show that such nobility has earned her more than the simple protection of Thetis' shrine: she has achieved a deeper connection to the goddess. Thetis is revealed not only to be an ally, but during the time that Andromache clings to the statue within the *temenos* of the shrine the two women become physically and visually fused to one another.<sup>22</sup>

Euripides accentuates this connection by portraying each woman with characteristics of the other and by giving the statue the sense of a “live” woman while using words and images that serve to “statue-ize” Andromache. At 266-8, Hermione depicts Andromache as a statue when she promises:

καὶ γὰρ εἰ πέριξ σ' ἔχοι  
τηκτὸς μόλυβδος, ἐξαναστήσω σ' ἐγὼ  
πρὶν ᾧ πέποιθας παῖδ' Ἀχιλλέως μολεῖν  
For even if on all sides molten lead holds you there,  
I will pick you up before the one you trust,  
the son of Achilles, comes.

By employing language technical to a statue, Euripides toys with the complementary natures of Andromache and Thetis.<sup>23</sup> Euripides further likens Andromache as she clings to Thetis in the shrine to a statue by comparing her to stone (115-6)<sup>24</sup> and recalling the myth of Niobe (532-4).<sup>25</sup> The playwright portrays Thetis as an ally of

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<sup>22</sup> Ferguson (1972) 320 argues that Andromache “feels herself almost one with the statue.”

<sup>23</sup> See Allan (2000) 61 n92 and Golder (1996) 9.

<sup>24</sup> πρὸς τόδ' ἄγαλμα θεᾶς ἰκέτις περὶ χεῖρε βαλοῦσα  
τάκομαι ὡς πετρίνα πιδακόεσσα λιβάς.

<sup>25</sup> λείβομαι δάκρυσιν κόρας,  
στάζω λισσάδος ὡς πέτρας

Andromache by giving Thetis, whose son died at Troy, the opportunity to take control of the spiraling devastation of the war and rewrite the story so that she cannot only save Andromache and her single living son from complete destruction but also redeem herself in the process. In this way, Thetis' support of Andromache becomes an overall endorsement of the triumph of a just life.<sup>26</sup>

In the second movement of the play, Euripides employs the character of Hermione as a foil for exploring the outcomes of leading a life that is rash and unjust. When Hermione panics after Peleus intervenes on behalf of Andromache, the legitimate wife finds herself powerless before a slave-woman, and the choice of the ignoble road has left her floundering and alone. Euripides illustrates the destructive nature of her unjust actions when she is deserted by both her father and husband and has no defense against the effects of her chronic immoral behavior. Ultimately, Hermione must beg Orestes to offer her the same protection and refuge that Thetis offered Andromache. Thus, Hermione must seek protection in the polluted house of Atreus and bind herself to a man guilty of matricide.

Throughout the stage action it is significant that the statue of Thetis remains a silent witness to Hermione's panic and desertion and chooses not to intervene on behalf of the girl as she did for Andromache, via Peleus.<sup>27</sup> Euripides makes a concerted effort

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λιβᾶς ἀνήλιος, ἃ τάλαινα.

<sup>26</sup> A similar ironic relationship between character and statue can be found in Phaedra's hiding behind the statue of Artemis during Hippolytus' tirade against women (616-668), as discussed above.

<sup>27</sup> Wiles (1999) 21 rightly points out that the statue of Thetis acts as a visual focal point during the long description of Delphi and the murder of Neoptolemus. Wiles also argues correctly that "the immobility of the statue raises the question of whether gods are active in human affairs."

to present Hermione as a figure in contrast to both Andromache and Thetis.<sup>28</sup> While Andromache takes on the characteristics of the statue and divinity that protects her, Hermione's character acts in ways that visually distance her from Thetis and Andromache. When Hermione first walks on stage, she comments on her own wealth and appearance (147-53):

κόσμον μὲν ἀμφὶ κρατὶ χρυσέας χλιδῆς  
στολμόν τε χρωτὸς τόνδε ποικίλων πέπλων  
οὐ τῶν Ἀχιλλέως οὐδὲ Πηλέως ἀπὸ  
δόμων ἀπαρχὰς δεῦρ' ἔχουσ' ἀφικόμην,  
ἀλλ' ἐκ Λακαίνης Σπαρτιάτιδος χθονὸς  
Μενέλαος ἡμῖν ταῦτα δωρεΐται πατὴρ  
πολλοῖς σὺν ἔδνοις, ὥστ' ἐλευθεροστομεῖν.

The ornamentation of golden luxury around my head  
and this robe of embroidered cloth that covers my body  
are not from the home of Achilles or Peleus  
I have arrived here carrying them with me  
and they are instead from the Laconian land of Sparta  
and my father Menelaus gave these things to me with many dowry gifts,  
so I am freely speaking my mind.

Bedecked in wealthy clothing and boasting of her dowry gifts, Hermione immediately presents a distinct contrast to the enslaved Andromache who sits huddled by the statue of Thetis in the attire of a servant. The visual contrast between the two women is immediately striking.

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<sup>28</sup> Allen (2000) 19 remarks that Andromache's character "focuses the themes of nobility and family affection, and acts as a foil for Hermione's jealous immaturity and Menelaus' brutal treachery."

While Andromache and Thetis had taken on characteristics of each other throughout the first part of the play, in the second section Euripides visually deconstructs the character of Hermione by presenting her reaction to the failure of her murder-plot as a crazed panic that results in her physically tearing away at the ornamentation and robes that had earlier been material for her boasting (829-31):<sup>29</sup>

αἰαῖ αἰαῖ

ἔρρ' αἰθέριον πλοκαμῶν ἐ-

μῶν ἄπο, λεπτόμιτον φάρος.

Ahh! Ahh!

To the air and off of my head,

finely woven cloth.

Andromache, when previously faced with her own death or the death of her child, had bravely sacrificed herself and left the protection of the shrine with resolve. Now we see Hermione, faced with the failure of her plot against Andromache, act crazed both in her speech and the physical marring of her costume and body. Nothing could be less statuesque or antithetical to the character of Andromache.

Euripides solidifies Hermione's complete divergence from Andromache by portraying her as so desperate and alarmed that she exposes her breast in a climactic scene of human emotions gone out of control (833-35):<sup>30</sup>

τί δὲ στέρνα δεῖ καλύπτειν πέπλοις;

δῆλα καὶ ἀμφιφανῆ καὶ ἄκρυπτα δε-

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<sup>29</sup> For a discussion of Hermione's costume, see Allen 2000: 69 and Burnett 1971: 146.

<sup>30</sup> Allen 2000: 70 notes that as contrast against the suppliant actions of Andromache, Hermione's panic "points up the expressive contrast between the response of the two women to danger: Andromache's is courageous, even bullish, and in the face of pressing extinction; the danger facing Hermione, however, follows from her own wickedness and is exaggerated by her panic."

δράκαμεν πόσιν.

Why is it necessary to hide my breast with my robes?

The things I have done to my husband are  
clear and visible and unhidden.

Unlike Andromache's character, who had earlier been associated with statue-related imagery such as molten lead (266-68) or the myth of Niobe (532-4), Hermione's character appears beset by unbridled emotion through the shocking display of her breast. While Andromache had maintained her nobility even in the rags of a slave, Hermione's lack of nobility shows through the ostentatious robes that adorn her in the shameless display of her breast. Furthermore, the baring of her breast in a time of desperation recalls Clytemnestra's reaction to the murdering Orestes, Hermione's eventual savior.

Hermione emerges as an exemplum of a character of ignoble nature. Euripides, however, does not depict the woman as acting alone, but instead as a member of a tainted bloodline who carries powerful support from her similarly corrupt father, Menelaus.<sup>31</sup> As the Spartan daughter of a repulsive Menelaus and destructive Helen, Hermione appears as damaged goods tainted by a corrupt bloodline. The issue of inherited nobility and morality dominates the familial representations in the play and creates two separate family lines which can never successfully intermingle, as the only attempt at a union between the two occurs in the relationship between Hermione and Neoptolemus, a union which ultimately cannot produce offspring and ends disastrously

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<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of inherited character in *Andromache*, see Allen (2000) 99-102.

for both parties. In the end, Hermione must take refuge in a character from similarly tainted stock, Orestes.

From the start, Hermione does not appear to act alone. The dialogue, moreover, repeatedly depicts her as a close ally to her father, Menelaus:

ἀλλ' οὐ σφε πείθω, βούλεται δέ με κτανεῖν,  
πατήρ τε θυγατρὶ Μενέλεως συνδρᾶι τάδε.

(39-40)

But I am not persuading her, and instead she is plotting to kill me,  
and her father Menelaus is acting as an ally to his daughter in this.

δεινὰ γὰρ βουλεύεται  
Μενέλαος ἐς σέ παῖς θ', ἃ σοι φυλακτέα.

(62-3)

For Menelaus and his daughter are planning terrible acts against you,  
for which things you must be prepared.

As partners working against Andromache and her child, Menelaus and Hermione do not carry the support of the silent deity. Thetis, who protects Andromache within the *temenos* of her shrine and supports the continuation of her bloodline through Molossus, remains a figure antithetical to the brash, self-serving nature of the Spartan father and daughter pair. Furthermore, when Menelaus and Hermione besiege the shrine of Thetis in their attempt to remove Andromache from the protection of the goddess, they set themselves up as enemies to the goddess and ensure their own demise.

The negative characterization of the Spartan pair culminates in their removal of Andromache from Thetis' shrine, an act that defies religious laws and can be equated to

temple robbery. This impious outrage acts as a final wedge which makes it abundantly clear that the Spartan bloodline maintains a nature wholly antithetical to that of Peleus, Thetis and Andromache. In addition, by “statue-izing” Andromache while she remains in the small *temenos* of the shrine, Euripides depicts the woman as equivalent to a votive offering that stands in the possession of the goddess. When Menelaus forces Andromache from the *temenos*, he not only violates the rights afforded to suppliants, but he also literally appears to rob Thetis’ shrine of her votive offering. This shocking act of impiety presents definitive evidence for the corrupt nature of the Spartan.

When Hermione first enters the stage bedecked with a grandiose display of wealth and hurling accusations at an enslaved Andromache who is clinging to the statue of Thetis, it becomes immediately clear that Hermione lacks appropriate respect for the goddess and cannot expect divine aid herself. As Hermione accuses Andromache of poisoning her womb, the audience is left to question whether the goddess’ will may actually be behind Hermione’s infertility (157-8):

στυγοῦμαι δ' ἀνδρὶ φαρμάκοισι σοῖς,

νηδῦς δ' ἀκύμων διὰ σέ μοι διόλλυται·

I am hateful to my husband because of your poisons,

and because of you, my womb is barren and destroyed.

While Hermione repeatedly hurls similar accusations and insults at her rival, Andromache speaks with reason and nobility and eventually steers the conversation back to Thetis. She emphasizes the importance of respect for the goddess, even asking Hermione at 246, ὀρᾷς ἄγαλμα Θετίδος ἐς σ' ἀποβλέπον; (*Do you see the statue of Thetis looking at you?*). A few lines later, Andromache gives Hermione a warning (260):



σφάζ', αϊμάτου θεᾶς βωμόν, ἢ μέτεισί σε.

Slaughter me! Stain the altar with blood!

She will pursue you with vengeance!

The power of the goddess and the importance of showing her respect is not lost on the character of Andromache. Hermione's failure to secure an heir in Thetis' bloodline seems to be divine justice at work. After Menelaus impiously forces Andromache from the shrine, the dialogue again returns to the power of the gods when the besieged woman asks (439):

τὰ θεῖα δ' οὐ θεῖ' οὐδ' ἔχειν ἡγήϊ δίκην;

Do you not recognize that the gods are gods and that they maintain justice?

Again, Menelaus and Hermione emerge not only as characters antithetical to Peleus and Andromache, but also as enemies of the goddess from an impious bloodline who get what they deserve. This gulf between families is again brought to the forefront when Orestes asks Hermione to explain how Menelaus was overcome by an old man such as Peleus and Hermione replies (918): αἰδοῖ γε· καί μ' ἔρημον οἴχεται λιπῶν. (*Indeed, it was from his sense of respect. And he has left, leaving me behind deserted.*) In the world of the play, with Thetis in control, piety and respect have again prevailed over revenge and injustice.

### **The Second Episode as Mirror to the First**

As the two halves of the *Hippolytus* can be seen as inverted mirrors of one another, similarly, the second section of the *Andromache* continues to offer exempla that react to the first section of the play with its depiction of Orestes and Hermione's reaction to his arrival. While the baring of her breast for pity in a time of desperation had already likened Hermione to Clytemnestra, her eventual connection to the house of

Atreus is confirmed when Orestes enters and introduces himself as the child of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra (881-2). As her savior, Orestes' character becomes a figure of contrast to the noble and aged Peleus who had earlier saved Andromache and Molossus.

With the arrival of Orestes, the second section of the play sets up a scene in opposition to Peleus' earlier arrival and protection of Andromache (547-765). Both entrances are announced by the chorus leader in surprise (545-6; 879-80), and both men arrive in times of dire desperation. The justice, shame, and nobility that color Andromache's rescue are reversed in the arrival of Orestes, who had just plotted the murder of Neoptolemus on the steps of the Temple at Delphi. This reversal can be seen in the women's mirroring supplications, with Hermione falling before Orestes and begging (891-5):

ὦ ναυτίλοισι χείματος λιμὴν φανεῖς  
Ἀγαμέμνονος παῖ, πρὸς σε τῶνδε γουνάτων  
οἴκτιρον ἡμᾶς ὦν ἐπισκοπεῖς τύχας,  
πράσσοντας οὐκ εὖ. στεμμάτων δ' οὐχ ἥσσονας  
σοῖς προστίθημι γόνασιν ὠλένας ἐμάς.

You have appeared as a harbor to sailors in a storm  
child of Agamemnon, by your knees  
pity me whose fortune you look upon, I who am not doing well.  
No less than the wreaths of a suppliant,  
I throw my arms around your knees.

When contrasted with the parallel supplication of Andromache, this scene acts to reflect the gulf in morality and nobility that runs between the two families of characters in the

play. In this second supplication the circumstances of both Hermione and Orestes present them as debased characters from polluted families. Hermione is trapped by the failure of her murder plot against Andromache and Neoptolemus' child, while Orestes has deceived the Delphians and contrived the murder of Neoptolemus himself. By portraying Orestes in this light, Euripides strips all justice from Orestes' revenge killing of Clytemnestra and instead portrays his character as debased by nature and doomed to repeat his corrupt actions.

When given a chance to speak on his own behalf, the tainted nature of Orestes' character and bloodline becomes shockingly clear when he describes the importance of returning Hermione to her proper family and marriage, as had been arranged before the intervention of Menelaus. Orestes seems to portray Hermione's plight as a failed experiment in marriage outside of its proper boundaries (982-6):

νῦν οὖν, ἐπειδὴ περιπετεῖς ἔχεις τύχας  
καὶ ξυμφορὰν τήνδ' ἐσπεσοῦσ' ἀμηχανεῖς,  
ἄξω σ' ἐς οἴκους καὶ πατρὸς δώσω χερί.  
τὸ συγγενὲς γὰρ δεινόν, ἔν τε τοῖς κακοῖς  
οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν κρεῖσσον οἰκείου φίλου.

Now indeed, since you have had a sudden reversal of fortune,  
and since you are helpless and have fallen into misfortune,  
I will take you home and I will bring you to the hand of your father.  
For kinship is a strange power, and in evils  
there is nothing more powerful than a friend of the family.

Here Orestes makes it clear that Hermione and Menelaus do not belong in the realm of Thetis and Peleus and intermingled with a noble and just family. By taking Hermione

away from the Thetideion, Orestes removes the girl from the sphere of the goddess, whose statue has been silently watching for the duration of the action. The character of Orestes also mirrors Menelaus' character in the first section of the play, and would have been portrayed by the same actor.

Thus, the second movement of the play shows the lot of the unjust and amoral life wherein personal relationships become weak and disposable and allies few, as the absence of Hermione's male protectors and the lack of divine aid make clear. In a sense, the audience watches this movement of the play through the eyes of Thetis' statue, who stands back as a spectator while the unjust characters in the play flounder and face demise.

### **Thetis and the Play's Closing**

In the final movement the action culminates in the actual appearance of Thetis herself, as a "live" deity *ex machina*. Just as in the *dei ex machina* scenes of the *Hippolytus*, now the goddess who stood previously as a silent witness and only indirectly effected the play's action as it unfolded around her statue has arrived in full form to take active control of the play. Whether Andromache and Molossus would be present during the arrival of Thetis (1047-1288) is a subject of debate among scholars.<sup>32</sup> There are no lines attributed to Andromache following her exit at 765, making her a *kophon prospon* if she is present on-stage during the final 240 lines of the play.<sup>33</sup> The evidence for her presence on-stage, I argue, is threefold. First, the text refers to the presence of Andromache and Molossus. Second, the mother and child must remain in

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<sup>32</sup> For a detailed discussion of this issue and a review of scholarship, see Golder (1983).

<sup>33</sup> For a similar use of a *kophon prospon*, see the *deus ex machina* of *Alcestis*.

the protection of Peleus until granted safety by Thetis. Finally, the silent presence of Andromache coupled with the entrance of the live deity acts as a mirror to the role reversals seen in the earlier presentation of Thetis and Andromache.

The first clue to the presence of Andromache and Molossus during the divinity's arrival occurs at line 1041, as the chorus addresses an unnamed woman just when Peleus, Molossus, and Andromache would presumably be entering the stage (1037-41):

πολλὰ δ' ἄν' Ἑλλάνων ἀγόρους στοναχαὶ  
μέλποντο δυστάνων τεκέων, ἄλοχοι δ'  
ἐξέλειπον οἴκους

πρὸς ἄλλον εὐνάτορ'. οὐχὶ σοὶ μόναι  
δύσφρονες ἐνέπεσον, οὐ φίλοισι, λῦπαι·

Many laments in assemblies of Greeks  
were sung for wretched children and wives  
who left their homes for a foreign bed.

Not on you alone did grievous misfortunes fall,  
nor on your loved ones alone.

This passage clearly refers to Andromache: she is a wife who left her home to share a foreign bed. The use of the second person in σοὶ μόναι would best accompany an actor's gesture toward a present character.<sup>34</sup>

The presence of Andromache and Molossus is hinted at again at 1247 when Thetis proclaims (1243-49):

γυναῖκα δ' αἰχμάλωτον, Ἀνδρομάχην λέγω,  
Μολοσσίαν γῆν χρὴ κατοικῆσαι, γέρον,

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<sup>34</sup> For this view, see Golder (1983) 124-27.

Ἐλένῳ συναλλαχθεῖσαν εὐναίοις γάμοις,  
καὶ παῖδα τόνδε, τῶν ἀπ' Αἰακοῦ μόνον  
λελειμμένον δῆ. βασιλέα δ' ἐκ τοῦδε χρῆ  
ἄλλον δι' ἄλλου διαπερᾶν Μολοσσίας  
εὐδαιμονοῦντας·

As for the enslaved woman, I say

it is right for her to go and live in the land of Molossia, old man,

married to Helenus joined in marriage,

and this child, the only one left of the Aeaceans.

It is right that from this child kings, one after another,

will reign over the prosperous Molossia.

While the lines could arguably refer to characters off-stage, the direct naming of Andromache in the third person and the use of the pronoun τόνδε make a compelling argument for the presence of the mother and child.<sup>35</sup>

The entrance of Andromache and Molossus alongside Peleus at 1047 would also seem natural as they are technically under his protection following the events at the shrine. By bringing them on-stage, Euripides creates a situation whereby Andromache is kept in Thetis' protection continuously throughout the play. When the play opens, Andromache clings to Thetis' statue in refuge from the ill-will of Hermione and Menelaus. As an extension of Thetis' power, Peleus intervenes on her behalf and shelters the mother and child once they are forced to abandon the shrine. When Peleus

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<sup>35</sup> For a dissenting view, see Steidle (1968) 118-31. Golder (1983) 128 points out that a *kophon prospon* is addressed by fellow mortal characters in the second person, and by divinities in epiphany in the third, often by name. For example, at the end of the *Orestes* Orestes addresses the mute Pylades and Electra in the second person, as Menelaos uses the second person address for Pylades, and for the mute Helen; but Apollo addresses in the second person only the two speaking characters, and refers to the mutes, Pylades, Electra, and Helen, indirectly."

re-enters, mother and child in-tow, he delivers Andromache into Thetis' direct protection (1243-1249). This continuous safeguarding underscores that Andromache was always in the close care of Thetis throughout the events of the play.

By allowing for the re-entrance of Andromache as a *kophon prospon* at 1047, Euripides further emphasizes the close connection between the woman and the goddess. As in the earlier reversed depictions in which Thetis' statue appeared animated and Andromache's character "statue-ized," here again the playwright employs the same device. Now Andromache becomes the silent witness to the action and the goddess comes on the scene in live form. This mirrors the ending of the *Hippolytus* when Phaedra's corpse is present on-stage during the arrival Artemis.

Furthermore, just as in the final scene of *Hippolytus*, by bringing the characters on-stage alongside the corpse of Neoptolemus, Euripides creates a visual tableau of the play as a whole and paints a picture of the final outcome for the audience.

## CHAPTER 4 ARTEMIS AND HER STATUE IN *IPHIGENEIA AT TAURIS*

A play of role reversals, deception and escape, *Iphigeneia at Tauris* offers my final example of a statue on stage in Euripides' plays. In *Iphigeneia*, Euripides presents a small statue of Artemis that only appears in the second half of the action. Although Artemis' image does not stand as a permanent fixture like the statues I have previously discussed, her image still plays a role similar to that of the statues we find in *Hippolytus* and *Andromache*. In all three plays the divine statues function as more than mere representative works of art: they not only stand in for divinities but they "are" divinities. As divine objects, these statues hold the ability to grant protection to some characters, condemn others in silence, and create constant reminders of the divine origins of the play's conflicts. More than props, they are quasi-characters in their own right. In *Hippolytus* and *Andromache*, the statues are even joined on stage by the divinities they depict in *dei ex machina* scenes.

### **Artemis' Statue in Staging and Structure**

In *Iphigeneia at Tauris*, Euripides develops his story around a small statue of Artemis that stands under the care of her priestess, Iphigeneia. Here the playwright uses many of the same techniques as he employs in the plays previously discussed – the blurring of lines between animate and inanimate, the execution and display of divine will through a statue, the presentation of a statue as a quasi-character, and the use of a statue as an organizing principle for the play. In *Iphigeneia*, however, Artemis' statue creates a more thematic organization rather than the visual and physical organization of the statues that *Hippolytus* and *Andromache* offer. Because the statue of Artemis is not a permanent stage fixture, but only appears in the second half, it does not allow the



same physical organization as an immovable prop. Nevertheless, it still plays an integral role in the events of the play. The statue, furthermore, creates the foundation around which Euripides can build the play's two-part structure: it is in search of Artemis' holy image that Orestes first journeys to Tauris and, after the recognition scene, the statue becomes the key instrument in safely executing the escape plot.

As the central instrument in the escape plans of the main characters, the image of Artemis fits into a larger tradition in Greek literature in which artistic objects, closely related to a divinity, become tools of protection and deception. The most obvious example of artistic deception in Greek literature occurs in the story of the Trojan horse, a tale that stands ominously in the background of *Iphigeneia*, as the play narrates aspects of the war's aftermath.<sup>1</sup> Overall, however, *Iphigeneia* most closely echoes the myth of the Palladium of Athena and its theft from the Trojan citadel.

Euripides' use of the Palladium myth in his construction of *Iphigeneia* can be demonstrated by examining the cyclic epic, the *Little Iliad*. The *Little Iliad* tells of the siege and fall of Troy and includes the stories of the Trojan horse and the theft of the Palladium. The tale relates how two men, Odysseus and Diomedes, sneak into the citadel of Troy to steal the statue with the aid of Helen.<sup>2</sup> In Euripides' retelling of the Palladium myth, he replaces Odysseus and Diomedes with Orestes and Pylades and

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<sup>1</sup> Bennett (1917), 9-10 has demonstrated how Euripides' use of the term ξόανον when referring to Artemis' image recalls *Troades* 523-5:

Ἴτ', ὦ πεπταυμένοι πόνων,  
τόδ' ἱερὸν ἀνάγετε ξόανον  
Ἰλιάδι Διογενεῖ κόρα.

Here, Euripides uses the same term, ξόανον, but in reference to the Trojan horse.

<sup>2</sup> Helen refers to this story in *Od.* 4.242-64

they seek a statue of Artemis rather than one of Athena. Furthermore, now it is Iphigeneia aiding in the theft instead of Helen. Furthermore, in his substitution of Orestes for Odysseus, Euripides attaches some of the cunning aspects of the Ithacan warrior to Orestes. Finally, by switching the divinity represented in the stolen statue from Athena to Artemis, Euripides creates a tension between the two goddesses, the two female deities of the *Iphigeneia*, at least one of whom the audience expects to appear *ex machina*.

In a larger sense, *Iphigeneia* illustrates the relationship between artistic objects and scenes of recognition, trickery and escape that appears in many Euripidean plays. We can find examples of this in many of Euripides' recognition scenes. In the *Ion*, for example, the recognition tokens consist of golden serpent necklaces and a weaving of a gorgon's head (1395-1436). In the same play, the messenger describes how the deception and attempted murder had taken place in an elaborate tent of tapestries with the poison conveyed in finely wrought cups (1122-1228). In *Iphigeneia*, Euripides stages three key events in the play, all dependent on the statue. First, Orestes sets out to the Tauric land in search of Artemis' statue, at Apollo's command. Once there, we have an *anagnorisis* as he stumbles upon Iphigeneia and the siblings are reunited. Next, Iphigeneia uses the statue as a means of deceiving king Thoas in the turning point of the action. And finally, under the protection of the goddess' statue, Orestes, Iphigeneia and Pylades proceed to the sea for the purification of the statue and ultimately make their escape.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Wolff (1992) 317, notes that "though represented in the play's fictional world as a human means of deception thought up by Iphigenia to effect an escape, the ritual washing by the sea corresponds to actual cult practice familiar to the Athenian audience: the washing of the Palladium and perhaps the washing of Athena's statue during the Plynteria."

The structure of *Iphigeneia* falls into two halves. In the first half of the play, Orestes arrives in Tauris where he accidentally discovers his sister. The episode concludes with a dramatic recognition scene that recalls earlier plays such as the *Electras* of both Sophocles and Euripides or the *Oresteia*. Once the two siblings have come to know one another, the focus of the play shifts from a recognition tale to a story of deception and escape. In the execution of the escape plan, Artemis' statue becomes an object of divine protection, allowing the priestess not only to deceive king Thoas easily, but also to make an escape on Orestes' ship. Only at line 1157, after the brother and sister have been reunited, and the first half of the play has ended, does the statue appear in view of the audience.

In his construction of *Iphigeneia*, Euripides appears to have relied heavily on not only the Palladium myth, but also in the story of Pelops and Hippodamia. By echoing an earlier Atreid myth, Euripides develops a framework for a series of comparisons between generations, while also recalling the cyclic nature of the events in the myth of Atreus. In fact, we see the importance of recurring generations even in the opening lines of the prologue, as Iphigeneia gives a genealogy that selectively mentions the myth of Pelops:

Πέλοψ ὁ Ταντάλειος ἐς Πῖσαν μολῶν  
θοᾷσιν ἵπποις Οἰνομάου γαμεῖ κόρην,  
ἐξ ἧς Ἄτρεὺς ἔβλασεν· Ἀτρέως δὲ παῖς  
Μενέλαος Ἀγαμέμνων τε· τοῦ δ' ἔφυν ἐγώ  
τῆς Τυνδαρείας θυγατρὸς Ἴφιγένεια παῖς,  
(1-5)

Pelops, son of Tantalus, coming to Pisa

with swift horses, wed the daughter of Oenomaus,  
from whom Atreus was born. The children of Atreus  
were Menelaus and Agamemnon. From this one I was  
born, Iphigeneia, child of the daughter of Tyndareus.

Iphigeneia only specifically mentions two generations in the account of her lineage, the marriage of Pelops and her own relationship to Menelaus and Agamemnon.<sup>4</sup> In fact, by choosing the very first word of the play to be Πέλοψ, Euripides tells his audience to take the myth of Pelops and his marriage into consideration when formulating their expectations of the present work.<sup>5</sup> Through these five lines of selective lineage Euripides lays out the basic outline of the play: just as in the story of Pelops there will be a hero who is faced with death at the hands of a barbaric and foreign king. The hero will employ a beguiling trick through the aid of a divinity and he will ultimately escape with his female companion. However, the current generation will replay the events with Iphigeneia at the epicenter.

The staging of *Iphigeneia* follows other plays set before temples, such as *Heracleidae*, *Suppliants*, or *Ion*. The dramatic space is divided into two distinct areas, one directly before Artemis' temple and the other in the orchestra around the central focal point of the sacrificial altar. The staging in the opening scenes of the play further creates a visual reflection of the overall situation that the characters navigate.

Iphigeneia and Orestes each maintain their own separate acting spaces – Iphigeneia on

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<sup>4</sup> For discussions on the importance of the Pelops myth to this play, see Sansone (1975) 288-90; O'Brien (1988) 98-115; Hartigan (1991) 90.

<sup>5</sup> For a review of the Pelops myth and its sources, see Gantz (1993), 540-45.

stage before the temple and Orestes in the orchestra – until the two come face to face and the recognition scene begins.

When the play opens, Iphigeneia delivers her monologue and describes the sacrifice she underwent at Aulis:

καί μ' Ὀδυσσέως τέχναις  
μητρὸς παρείλοντ' ἐπὶ γάμοις Ἀχιλλέως.  
ἐλθοῦσα δ' Αὐλίδ' ἢ τάλαιν' ὑπὲρ πυρᾶς  
μεταρσία ληφθεῖσ' ἑκαινόμην ξίφει·  
(24-27)

And through the wiles of Odysseus,  
they took me away from my mother for a marriage to Achilles.  
After coming to Aulis, I, wretched one, raised up high over the altar  
was sacrificed by the sword.

As Iphigeneia narrates the story of her sacrifice at Aulis, she is standing on-stage before the audience with a blood stained altar in the orchestra below her. Here, Euripides' staging visually reflects the experiences that the priestess recalls. After her speech, Iphigeneia withdraws into the temple and Pylades and Orestes enter the orchestra to examine the altar and discuss their plans. By placing Orestes in the orchestra rather than the stage, Euripides underscores the distance and separation that has defined the relationship between brother and sister.

We can infer from the texts of *Iphigeneia* and *Ion* that both plays unfold before highly decorative temple façades. In both instances, the actors take time to point out features of the settings and draw attention to the artistic elements of the stage. In *Ion*, the words of the chorus in the first parados describe in detail the sculpture and

architecture of the temple of Apollo at Delphi (184-218). In a similar, albeit less detailed manner, Pylades and Orestes, when they first come on stage, discuss the temple of Artemis and its decoration.

Ὀρέστης:

ὄρα, φυλάσσου μή τις ἐν στίβῳ βροτῶν.

Πυλάδης:

ὀρῶ, σκοποῦμαι δ' ὄμμα πανταχῇ στρέφων.

Ὀρέστης:

Πυλάδη, δοκεῖ σοι μέλαθρα ταῦτ' εἶναι θεᾶς

ἐνθ' Ἀργόθεν ναῦν ποντίαν ἐστείλαμεν;

Πυλάδης:

ἔμοιγ', Ὀρέστα· σοὶ δὲ συνδοκεῖν χρεῶν.

Ὀρέστης:

καὶ βωμός, Ἕλληνας οὗ καταστάζει φόνοσ;

Πυλάδης:

ἐξ αἱμάτων γοῦν ξάνθ' ἔχει τριχώματα.

Ὀρέστης:

θριγκοῖς δ' ὑπ' αὐτοῖς σκῦλ' ὄρας ἠρτημένα;

Πυλάδης:

τῶν κατθανόντων γ' ἀκροθίνια ξένων.

ἀλλ' ἐγκυκλοῦντ' ὀφθαλμὸν εὖ σκοπεῖν χρεῶν.

(67-76)

Orestes: Look out, be on guard lest anyone is on the path.

Pylades: I am looking, bearing my eyes everywhere, looking around.

Orestes: Pylades, does it seem to you that this hall is of the goddess

for whom we sailed our ship from Argos?

Pylades: I think so, Orestes. You must think the same.

Orestes: And the altar, does it drip with Greek blood?

Pylades: It has dedications of hair covered in blood, at any rate.

Orestes: Do you see the armor fastened to the topmost course of stones?

Pylades: Trophies of the sacrificed foreigners.

But I must keep my eyes moving and hold a good watch.

In this passage Pylades and Orestes engage in a discussion of the physical elements of the play's staging. By filling their conversation with verbs of seeing and references to sight, Euripides draws the audience's attention to the macabre nature of the Tauric cult. Later, when plotting their escape route, Pylades points out a specific triglyph through which the two men could potentially lower themselves in order to break into the temple to fetch the statue (113).<sup>6</sup>

The close relationship between artistic objects, theme, and structure in *Iphigeneia* and *Ion* is evident in the overall role of tapestry and art works in the two plays. In each story the recognition scene hinges on tangible mementos. Orestes convinces Iphigeneia that they are siblings by mentioning the spear of Pelops that hung in her room and recalling a weaving the girl had made of the quarrel between Atreus and Thyestes (798-826). In *Ion*, Creusa recalls to Ion the weaving she made of a gorgon's head and two gold serpent necklaces that she had left with the child when she

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<sup>6</sup> Beyond the similarities in the staging of the two plays, the *Iphigeneia* and the *Ion* also mirror each other in their stories of recognition, deception and escape. Both plays, moreover, mutually emphasize the visual aspects of the performance and artistic objects. Even the temples in both of the plays are related, as the *Ion* unfolds in front of the temple of Apollo at Delphi and the *Iphigeneia* before a temple of Apollo's sister, Artemis. In each case the main character is in the service of a deity and has been translocated to the temple by a god, Ion transported to Delphi from the cave in which his mother had abandoned him and Iphigeneia to Tauris from the altar upon which her father had sent her to die.

abandoned him (1395-1436). The story of deception in each play, too, hinges on an artistic artifact. Iphigeneia manipulates King Thoas by attesting to the pollution of the statue and sacrificial victim and the need for purification at the sea. In *Ion*, Creusa plans to secretly murder the boy by poisoning him with gorgon's blood contained in a golden bracelet from Athena (1029-38); the attendant later announces that the poison was conveyed in a gilded cup within a tent of elaborate tapestries (1132-1200).

### Images of Statues in the Play

At line 42 Iphigeneia's monologue changes tone when she relates a prophetic dream that she believes to indicate the death of Orestes.<sup>7</sup> This creates an ominous echo as Iphigeneia takes on a role similar to the hated Calchas, the prophet who announced the necessity of her own death.<sup>8</sup> In the dream, Iphigeneia is still in Argos and awakened by an earthquake. After escaping from the house, she watches the palace fall in complete ruin except for a single pillar topped with blond hair and possessing the power of speech:

μόνος λελεῖφθαι στῦλος εἷς ἔδοξέ μοι  
δόμων πατρῶων, ἐκ δ' ἐπικράνων κόμας  
ξανθὰς καθεῖναι, φθέγμα δ' ἀνθρώπου λαβεῖν  
(50-53)

Only one pillar remained, it seemed to me,  
Of my paternal home, and from its capital blond hair hung down,  
and it took on the voice of a human.

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<sup>7</sup> For a detailed discussion of Iphigeneia's dream, see Trieschnigg (2008) 461-78. Kyriakou disagrees with the importance placed on the Pelops myth, 12.

<sup>8</sup> Later Iphigeneia even celebrates the news of Calchas' death (530-3).



While the statue of Artemis stands inside the temple and out of the view of the audience, we find Iphigeneia narrating a dream in which Orestes appears as a quasi-statue. In the dream Iphigeneia sprinkles sacrificial water onto a humanized stone pillar. The priestess concludes that the sacrificial act indicates that the last pillar of her house, Orestes, is dead.<sup>9</sup> However, Euripides contradicts Iphigeneia's interpretation that life has been taken away from her brother by taking a lifeless object, a pillar, and vivifying it with human qualities. The animation of an inanimate stone pillar with hair and voice in turn points the audience toward the myth of Pelops and that myth's display of slaughtered suitors on pillars around the palace in Elis. Thus, Euripides creates a connection between the present play and the earlier myth by indicating that Orestes, like Pelops, will soon be placed in a life or death situation that will require divine aid and deception for a successful rescue and escape. By offering a misinterpretation of her own dream, Iphigeneia also calls into question the credibility of seers.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, just as Euripides had done in *Hippolytus* and the *Andromache*, in *Iphigeneia* as well the playwright presents the main characters in a manner that recalls a statue. This depiction of Orestes as a stone pillar with hair allows Orestes to take on many of the same characteristics as the object he is seeking in Tauris. The identification of Orestes with the pillar is further verified when Iphigeneia finishes her description of the dream and returns to the temple. At that very moment, Orestes takes the stage.

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<sup>9</sup> Cropp (2000), 177 n50-2 asserts that "both pillars and human statues would have been known to Euripides as markers on tombs of the archaic period (cf. McGowan (1995) 616-7), which adds emotive depth to Iphigeneia's impression that Orestes is dead."

<sup>10</sup> Kyriakou (2006) 63 notes that, "unlike virtually all other dreamers of symbolic dreams, Iphigeneia interprets her dream all by herself and never doubts the correctness of her interpretation. The dream is not reinterpreted when she learns that Orestes is alive (568)."

The likening of Orestes to a statue may also indicate Artemis' protection over the hero as he navigates the deadly Tauric land. Previously, we have seen how Euripides uses a similar device with Phaedra and Artemis in *Hippolytus* when Phaedra takes refuge behind Artemis' statue and later the woman's corpse becomes a silent witness to the second half of the play alongside the stone goddesses. Similarly, in *Andromache*, Andromache takes on characteristics of Thetis' image when she is associated with molten lead (266-68) and the myth of Niobe's transformation into stone (532-4). Likewise, just prior to the recognition scene, and after Iphigeneia reads her tablet to the two fugitives, Iphigeneia is treated in much the same way as the statue that she serves (798-802):

Χορός:

ξέν', οὐ δικάίως τῆς θεοῦ τὴν πρόσπολον  
χραίνεις ἀθίκτοις περιβαλῶν πέπλοις χέρα.

Ὀρέστης:

ᾧ συγκασιγνήτη τε κάκ ταύτοῦ πατρός  
Ἀγαμέμνονος γεγῶσα, μή μ' ἀποστρέφου,  
ἔχουσ' ἀδελφόν, οὐ δοκοῦσ' ἔξειν ποτέ.

Chorus: Stranger, unjustly you touch the attendant of the goddess,  
throwing your hands upon her robes that are not to be touched.

Orestes: My own sister born of my father, Agamemnon,  
don't turn away from me, the brother you are embracing,  
whom you never thought you would embrace again.

Here, Euripides presents Iphigeneia as isolated and untouchable, just as the image of Artemis. The language employed even creates a parallel to the treatment of the statue when it first appears on stage:

Θόας:

ἔα·

τί τόδε μεταίρεις ἐξ ἀκινήτων βάθρων,

Ἀγαμέμνωνος παῖ, θεᾶς ἄγαλμ' ἐν ὠλέναις; (1153-55)

Thoas: Look!

Why have you picked up this up from the pedestal that must not be moved, child of Agamemnon, why is this statue of the goddess in your arms?

Ἴφιγένεια:

οὐ καθάρᾳ μοι τὰ θύματ' ἠγγρεύσασθ', ἄναξ.

Θόας:

τί τοῦκιδῶξαν τοῦτό σ'; ἢ δόξαν λέγεις;

Ἴφιγένεια:

βρέτας τὸ τῆς θεοῦ πάλιν ἔδρας ἀπεστράφη.

(1163-65)

Iphigeneia: The sacrificial victims you have captured for me are not pure, lord.

Thoas: Who told you this? Or are you just speaking a thought?

Iphigeneia: The image of the goddess turned back from its place.

In both scenes Euripides portrays Iphigeneia and the statue as separate from the rest of the Taurians. The language of the two scenes echo each other as well. While Orestes begs his sister, μή μ' ἀποστρέφου (801), Iphigeneia similarly tells Thoas: βρέτας τὸ τῆς

θεοῦ πάλιν ἔδρας ἀπεστράφη (1165). Euripides takes this parallel a step further in the procession scene, when Iphigeneia leads Orestes to the sea in shared pollution with Artemis' image (1153-1202).

Returning to the play's first episode, when Orestes and Pylades first enter the stage and discuss the temple and altar, their words recall the ones that Iphigeneia had previously used in the description of her dream:

Ὀρέστης: Πυλάδῃ, δοκεῖ σοι μέλαθρα ταῦτ' εἶναι θεᾶς

ἔνθ' Ἀργόθεν ναῦν ποντίαν ἐστείλαμεν;

Πυλάδης: ἔμοιγ', Ὀρέστα· σοὶ δὲ συνδοκεῖν χρεῶν.

Ὀρέστης: καὶ βωμός, Ἕλληνας οὗ καταστάζει φόνος;

Πυλάδης: ἐξ αἱμάτων γοῦν ξάνθ' ἔχει τριχώματα.

Ὀρέστης: θριγκοῖς δ' ὑπ' αὐτοῖς σκυλ' ὀρέας ἠρτημένα;

Πυλάδης: τῶν κατθανόντων γ' ἀκροθίνια ξένων.

(69-75)

Orestes: Pylades, does it seem to you that these halls are of the goddess for whom we readied our ships to sail?

Pylades: Definitely, Orestes; and it must be that you agree.

Orestes: And the altar, does it not drip with Hellene blood?

Pylades: The hair, at any rate, is colored by blood.

Orestes: Do you see the spoils fastened from the tops of the walls?

Pylades: Trophies of murdered foreigners.

Here the altar is described in language similar to that which Iphigeneia had used to describe the vivified pillar from her dream. Both are raised stone objects covered on top with blond hair. Taken together, the two objects can offer a glimpse into the before and

after of a Tauric sacrifice.<sup>11</sup> Iphigeneia describes the first image, the pillar, as a sacrificial victim that is just being sprinkled by water on his blond hair, κόμας ξανθὰς (52-3), while on the second structure, the altar, the blond hair appears again, but now covered in blood after the actual sacrifice: ἐξ αἱμάτων γοῦν ξάνθ' ἔχει τριχώματα (73). Moreover, the armor and weapons of dead foreigners that hang on the walls are anthropomorphic reminders of the potential fate of Orestes if he fails in his task. This morbid décor stands ominously in the background of the stage for the entirety of the action, never allowing the audience to forget the bloody nature of the Tauric cult. When compared with the *Ion*'s descriptive narration of the sculptural frieze at the temple of Apollo in Delphi, Artemis' temple appears as a similarly ornate monument to the goddess. In addition, the hanging armor also allows Euripides to play with the distinctions between humans and their artistic representations as the audience can visualize the foreigners who once wore the spoils of arms.

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<sup>11</sup> The two images are connected again later by the chorus at 399-406:

τίνες ποτ' ἄρα τὸν εὐϋδρον δονακόχλοα  
 λιπόντες Εὐρώταν ἦ  
 ρεύματα σεμνὰ Δίρκας  
 ἔβασαν ἔβασαν ἄμεικτον αἶαν, ἔνθα κούρα  
 δία τέγγει  
 βωμούς καὶ περικίονας  
 ναοὺς αἶμα βρότειον;

Whoever are these men who left behind  
 the Eurotas, abounding in water and green with reeds,  
 or the revered waters of Dirce, and came here, came here  
 to this inhospitable land, where, on account of the girl,  
 mortal blood stains the altars and columned temples?

As a whole, this episode with Orestes and Pylades creates a visual tableau of the slaughters that have previously occurred in Tauris. Euripides signals this fact by including language of sight and seeing repeatedly throughout the scene:

Ὀρέστης: ὄρα, φυλάσσου μή τις ἐν στίβῳ βροτῶν.

Πυλάδης: ὀρῶ, σκοποῦμαι δ' ὄμμα πανταχῆ στρέφων.

(67-68)

Orestes: Look out, be on guard lest anyone should come into the path.

Pylades: I am looking out, turning around and casting my eyes in every direction.

The imperative ὄρα instructs Pylades, but also the audience, to look around and overtly take in the scene on the stage. During this intense focus on the visual aspects of the stage, Orestes comes upon the hair-covered, bloody altar and addresses the armor hanging from the walls of the temple. The visual focus on the stage set continues when the two point out this armor:

Ὀρέστης: θριγκοῖς δ' ὑπ' αὐτοῖς σκῦλ' ὀρᾶς ἡρτημένα;

Πυλάδης: τῶν καθανόντων γ' ἀκροθίνια ξένων.

ἀλλ' ἐγκυκλοῦντ' ὀφθαλμὸν εὖ σκοπεῖν χρεῶν.

(74-76)

Orestes: Do you see the spoils hanging from this very wall?

Pylades: The trophies of sacrificed foreigners.

But I must look all around me and hold a careful watch.

After taking in the sights outside the temple of Artemis, Orestes reveals for the first time that he has entered Tauris to steal the statue of the goddess and transport it to Athens in order to rid himself of pursuit by the Furies. The statue, however, is no typical divine

image and Orestes, when he calls out to Apollo, is sure to mention that it has fallen directly from heaven into the temple:

σὺ δ' εἶπας ἔλθειν Ταυρικῆς μ' ὄρους χθονός,  
ἔνθ' Ἄρτεμις σοι σύγγονος βωμοῦς ἔχοι,  
λαβεῖν τ' ἄγαλμα θεᾶς, ὃ φασιν ἐνθάδε  
ἔς τούσδε ναοὺς οὐρανοῦ πεσεῖν ἄπο·  
(85-88)

You told me to come here to the boundaries of the Tauric land,  
where Artemis, your sister, has an altar,  
in order to take the statue of the goddess, which they say fell  
in to the temple at this location from heaven.

This description of the statue as sent from heaven follows a tradition in Greek literature whereby a statue is marked as extraordinary and closely connected to the gods because it has fallen directly from the sky. Orestes repeats this detail again at 977, when he refers to the statue as *διοπτειξ*. Because of the statue's close relationship to the divine, it often takes on powers and animation that can blur the lines between a stage prop and a character in the play. We can find examples of this motif as far back as Hesiod's telling of Pandora's creation and the *xoanon* of Athena housed in the Erechtheum in Athens. Most similarly, Artemis' statue recalls the story of Troy's Palladium, an image of Athena that also fell from the sky, was stolen, and transported to a new location. According to the legend, the loss of the Palladium and its protective qualities led to the final fall of Troy. By likening the Artemis statue to Troy's Palladium of Athena, Euripides creates a tension between the two goddesses that comes to a head when Athena appears in the final *deus ex machina* scene, rather than the

expected Artemis. It also signals that the Tauric cult will end once Orestes removes the statue, just as the loss of Athena's image signaled the fall of Troy.

In the final lines of his speech at 77-92, Orestes brings the audience back to the myths of Pelops, the Trojan horse and the Palladium when he openly admits that he will need luck and tricks in order to steal the statue and transport it to Athens successfully:

λαβόντα δ' ἢ τέχναισιν ἢ τύχη τινί,  
κίνδυνον ἐκπλήσαντ', Ἀθηναίων χθονὶ  
δοῦναι — τὸ δ' ἐνθένδ' οὐδὲν ἐρρήθη πέρα —  
καὶ ταῦτα δρᾶσαντ' ἀμπνοᾶς ἕξειν πόνων.

(89-92)

And taking it either by devices or some luck,  
completing the endeavor, to give it to the land of the  
Athenians – whatever happens after that was not spoken about –  
and doing these things I would have freedom from my punishments.

In many versions of the myth of Pelops and Hippodamia, divine aid allows the hero to best king Oenomaus, escape death, and rescue the girl.<sup>12</sup> In *Iphigeneia* divine aid comes through the statue of Artemis. As with all divine statues, Artemis' image has a protective nature that helps Orestes to complete his task safely. Artemis plays the role of the protective, aid-giving divinity as Athena had acted in the stories of the Trojan horse and Palladium, and Hermes had acted (in some cases via Myrtilus) in the Pelops myth. Now, rather than a suitor, Pelops, carrying off his future wife, here, a brother, Orestes, carries off his sister.

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<sup>12</sup> For an overview of the myth, see Grimal (1996) 214-15.



The transport of the statue to Athens further echoes the myth of the Palladium, which was brought to Greece after its removal from the citadel at the end of the Trojan War. In this parallel, Orestes and Pylades appear as foreign Greeks besieging the Tauric land as if it were Troy. In *Iphigeneia*, again the Greeks are on a mission of rescue. This comparison of Orestes and Pylades with the Greeks invading Troy recurs when the shepherds describe their reaction to first stumbling upon the pair at the shore; the messenger describes their reaction upon seeing the two men in epic language and imagery:

ὡς δ' εἶδομεν δίπαλτα πολεμίων ξίφη,  
φυγῆ λεπαίας ἐξεπίμπλαμεν νάπας.  
ἀλλ', εἰ φύγοι τις, ἄτεροι προσκείμενοι  
ἔβαλλον αὐτούς· εἰ δὲ τοῦσδ' ὠσαίατο,  
αὔθις τὸ νῦν ὑπεῖκον ἤρασσεν πέτροις.

(323-27)

But when we saw the double swords being brandished by our enemies,  
we took flight and filled up the rugged glens.

But, while some of us would take flight, others stuck around  
and attacked them. If they forced them to retreat,

the ones who had just withdrawn came back and pelted them with stones.

In these lines, Euripides heightens suspense as to the true purpose for the statue's transport to Athens. When Orestes states τὸ δ' ἐνθένδ' οὐδὲν ἐρρήθη πέρα he emphasizes that his only concern is to take the statue in order to clear himself of blood guilt and the Furies. All other results of the play's action occur at the will of the gods, and in the execution of this one task, Orestes unintentionally creates order in a world of

chaos and reversals. Overall, Euripides' tale of the image's theft in Tauris appears to be primarily a fusion of the Pelops and Palladium myths, reworked for Iphigeneia and the stage and capped off with an aetiology of the cults at Brauron and Halae.

At line 93 Orestes puts the audience on the lookout once again in language that emphasizes the visual as well as the conceptual ideas of entrapment and escape:

ἀμφίβληστρα γὰρ τοίχων ὄρας  
ύψηλά· πότερα δωμάτων προσαμβάσεις  
ἐκβησόμεσθα; πῶς ἂν οὔν λάθοιμεν ἄν;  
(96-8)

For you see that the walls around us are raised high.

Should we go up the steps that lead to the house?

How are we to escape notice?

By pointing out possible escape routes, Orestes reminds the audience that he and Pylades are trapped foreigners while also drawing attention to what they can see on stage. Here, Pylades directs the eyes of the audience to the temple façade in much the same way as did Ion and the chorus in that play's opening. Thus, the audience themselves begin to understand themselves as foreigners in the dramatic world and take part in the fears that Orestes and Pylades experience.

The focus on the visual elements of the performance continues when Pylades, laying out their plan and aims, mentions artistic objects:

ὄταν δὲ νυκτὸς ὄμμα λυγαίας μόλη,  
τολμητέον τοι ξεστὸν ἐκ ναοῦ λαβεῖν  
ἄγαλμα πάσας προσφέροντε μηχανάς.  
ὄρα δὲ γ' εἴσω τριγλύφων ὅποι κενὸν

δέμας καθεῖναι· (110-14)

But whenever the eye of dark night arrives,  
It must be dared that we take the polished statue  
from the temple through every device.

Do you see right there where there is an empty spot between the  
triglyphs to be let down?

Here Pylades fills his speech with descriptive details such as calling the statue of Artemis ξεστὸν (111). While the statue has not yet been brought out of the temple and into the view of the audience, Pylades describes it as an artistic piece and the main objective for which the two men have undertaken so much danger. Pylades also directs the audience's sights to the physical elements of the stage and the temple, even mentioning, and most likely pointing to, the architectural detail of a particular triglyph. In this way, Euripides again mixes language descriptive of art with that of deception and escape. Both detailed references act as a means of illustrating the purpose of their journey, their plan of escape, and their need for deceit.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> A similar emphasis on the architectural aspects of the temple occurs when the chorus addresses Iphigeneia in the ode that follows this scene:

πρὸς σὰν αὐλάν, εὐστύλων  
ναῶν χρυσήρεις θριγκούς,  
πόδα παρθένιον ὄσιον ὀσίας  
κληδούχου δούλα πέμπω  
(128-131)

To your court, the golden walls  
of your well-pillared temple,  
as a servant of the divine key-holder, I  
send forth my virgin foot

Throughout *Iphigeneia*, moreover, the concepts of translocation and transfer of power recur repeatedly in the story. With respect to Artemis' statue, the image is passed from one place to the next as an object of power that holds its origins in the divine. From its beginnings in the heavens among the gods, the statue fell to Tauris and later would carry its power to Halae. Furthermore, Iphigeneia herself acts as a transferable power when she first acts as the scapegoat that will allow the ships to sail from Aulis, then she is moved to Tauris where she oversees the sacrifices of foreigners, and later she will become priestess and honoree at Brauron. This idea of transference of power that colors the statue and its priestess in *Iphigeneia* recalls the earlier myth of the scepter that is traditionally passed through the generations of house of Atreus. The scepter was first created by Hephaistos, then passed to Zeus, Hermes, Pelops and through the generations of the Atreids.

In an episode overseen closely by Athena, the scepter story appears in *Il.* 2.100-108 as part of an introduction to Agamemnon. This passage from the *Iliad* shows the house of Atreus bestowing rule in a peaceful manner, even leading Aristarchos to believe Homer was ignorant of the curse of Atreus.<sup>14</sup> The same scepter is mentioned in the *Iphigeneia* both by the chorus and Iphigeneia. In lamenting the house of Atreus' fall, the chorus proclaims: ἔρρει φῶς σκήπτρων (187). Furthermore, in the scene that follows, Iphigeneia describes Orestes as the Ἄργει σκηπτοῦχον (235). Much like the cyclical murders that plague the Atreids, the scepter story reinforces the cyclical basis of the Atreus myth. In *Iphigeneia* Euripides plays with the traditional image of the Atreid

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<sup>14</sup> Gantz (1993) 540.

scepter and gives the true transfer of power over to the statue, as it stands ready to be taken up and passed on by Orestes.

The ability of Artemis' statue to translocate from one place to another also gives an animated presence as the image, as it is able to move and change location either *sua sponte* or by willing humans to perform the task on its behalf. In order to arrive at the temple, the statue simply fell directly from heaven on its own accord. Now, the statue will move a second time after Apollo has instructed Orestes to bring the image to Athens. This ability to move on its own is reemphasized much later in the play when Iphigeneia is able to deceive the king by purporting that the statue physically turned away from Orestes' pollution and closed its eyes (1165-67). The scene recalls Euripides' earlier use of the Thetis image in the *Andromache* when Andromache asks Hermione: ὀρθῶς ἄγαλμα Θέτιδος εἰς σ' ἀποβλέπον;<sup>15</sup>

### **Artemis' Statue Takes the Stage**

Once the recognition scene has ended, the focus of the play shifts to Thoas' deception and the ultimate escape with the statue. In this final episode of the play the goddess' image seems to take on the role of a quasi-character. While the statue has already acted to drive the events of the play throughout, once the characters agree to their plan, the centrality of Artemis' image becomes even more apparent. Here the image becomes not only the object of their theft, but also the protective tool with which they are able to carry it out and stands in view of the audience as the siblings make their escape.

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<sup>15</sup> In both *Hippolytus* and the *Iphigeneia* Euripides uses a tablet or letter to reveal an important secret that forces a reaction and moves forward the dramatic action of the play. In both cases these letters, read aloud, are given the power to speak out to the other characters and the audience. Often, in the plays that center around divinity statues, such as *Hippolytus*, *Andromache*, and *Iphigeneia*, similar instances of vivification of the inanimate appear.

Once Iphigeneia and the two fugitives agree upon their means of deception, Euripides takes a number of steps to build suspense in anticipation of the confrontation with Thoas. After convincing the chorus of women to be silent and assist in the escape plans (1056-74), Iphigeneia warns Orestes and Pylades that Thoas will soon arrive on stage to inquire about the sacrifice of the strangers. With a prayer to Artemis, Iphigeneia also reminds all present of the ultimate goal of the deception: to free Orestes of blood guilt by transferring the statue to Athens (1082-8). When all three main characters withdraw into Artemis' temple, Euripides offers the audience a choral ode of escape that emphasizes the dire circumstances of the three main characters. It also delays the moment when Thoas will take the stage and go up against the clever Iphigeneia (1089-1152).

When the chorus finally finishes their song, Thoas enters just as Iphigeneia bursts from the temple with the statue in her arms – Artemis, at last, has arrived. The chorus underscores the importance of this event in their introduction of the priestess: ἧδ' ἐστίν (1156). While the statement surely introduces Iphigeneia, it also ambiguously can refer to the first appearance of the goddess onstage. The king, in search of details concerning the foreigners and their obligatory sacrifice, is dumbfounded at the sight of Iphigeneia with the statue. At this moment, Iphigeneia, under the protection of Artemis' image, takes authoritative control of the play and confronts the king in a battle of wits in which he is obviously the inferior party.

When the priestess exits the temple carrying the image in her arms, Euripides highlights the close and protective relationship between Iphigeneia and the goddess. The statue will visually declare Iphigeneia's safety while also acting as a tool in the

deception of the king. By clinging to the statue as she undertakes a great risk, Iphigeneia recalls other tragic heroines who take refuge at a divinity's altar or statue. Earlier, we saw how Andromache gained protection from the attacks of Hermione and Menelaus by staying within the *temenos* of Thetis' shrine and physically clinging to the image of the goddess. Likewise, the statue of Artemis plays a similar role in the *Hippolytus* when Phaedra hides behind the statue while the nurse reveals the truth behind her "sickness" to the enraged Hippolytus. In the *Iphigeneia*, Euripides uses a small statue which Iphigeneia can carry with her as she undertakes the escape. Through the use of a small and mobile statue, Euripides illustrates that the goddess' divine protection of her priestess will carry on throughout both the escape from the Taurians and the subsequent journey to Athens.

The image of Artemis, carried in Iphigeneia's arms, appears here in its most overtly animated state. Her purported animation prompts Iphigeneia and Thoas to deliberate over the possibility of and meaning behind the statue's ability to shut its eyes and turn itself away *sua sponte*. By arguing that the statue's movements were a reaction to Orestes' pollution, Iphigeneia convinces Thoas to allow a procession to the sea for purification rituals. Here the image appears connected to Iphigeneia, who is her priestess and the one physically holding the statue before the audience. Euripides also subtly brings the audience back around to Orestes and the initial aim of his journey, to free himself of blood pollution by removing the statue. When deliberating the potential movement of the statue, Thoas echoes Iphigeneia's dream about Orestes from the beginning of the play (1165-67):<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Trieschnigg (2008) 471 n32 notes, "Thoas' question on the turning of the Artemis' statue in 1166, ('Of its own accord, or did an earth-tremor turn it?'), recalls the earthquake in the dream (46)."

Ἴφιγένεια:

βρέτας τὸ τῆς θεοῦ πάλιν ἔδρας ἀπεστράφη.

Θόας:

αὐτόματον, ἢ νιν σεισμὸς ἔστρεψε χθονός;

Ἴφιγένεια:

αὐτόματον· ὄψιν δ' ὀμμάτων ξυνήρμοσεν.

Iphigeneia: The image of the goddess turned back from where it sits.

Thoas: On its own accord, or did the shaking of the earth turn it?

Iphigeneia: On its own accord. It closed shut its eyes.

In this exchange, Iphigeneia reiterates her speech at the prologue when she describes the house of Atreus as shaking and falling, leaving only a single pillar (46-52):

χθονὸς δὲ νῶτα σεισθῆναι σάλω,  
φεύγειν δὲ κᾶξω στᾶσα θριγκὸν εἰσιδεῖν  
δόμων πίτνοντα, πᾶν δ' ἐρείψιμον στέγος  
βεβλημένον πρὸς οὐδᾶς ἐξ ἄκρων σταθμῶν.  
μόνος λελεῖφθαι στῦλος εἷς ἔδοξέ μοι  
δόμων πατρῶων, ἐκ δ' ἐπικράνων κόμας  
ξανθὰς καθεῖναι, φθέγμα δ' ἀνθρώπου λαβεῖν.

But the back of the earth was shaken by a quake, and having fled outside  
I watched the top course of stones on the house fall down,  
and the entire roof thrown down and crash to the ground from its heights.  
Only one pillar remained, it seemed to me,  
of my paternal home, and from its capital blond hair hung down,  
and it took on the voice of a human.



In the exchange between Iphigeneia and Thoas (1165-67), the statue is reported to be animated and have the ability to move on its own. Similarly, Iphigeneia had described the pillar of Orestes as possessing the ability of human speech. Furthermore, Thoas, when questioning Iphigeneia, inquires whether she mistook a σεισμός for the statue's movement. In her description of the pillar, Iphigeneia explains that the remainder of the house fell down around the pillar due to an earthquake. Finally, both Orestes and the statue will be brought to the sea for purification, also echoing Iphigeneia's dream in which she sprinkles water upon the "statue-ized" Orestes. By creating echoes of the dream in this pivotal exchange between Iphigeneia and Thoas, Euripides reminds the audience of the importance of the statue to Orestes' freedom from the blood pollution of matricide.

When Iphigeneia comes through the doors of the temple with the statue in her arms, the priestess takes control of the play's action by intellectually dominating the king and delegating instructions to the Taurian people. The priestess does this, moreover, while Artemis' statue rests in her arms, a sure ally to Iphigeneia. The success of her deception is made clear when Thoas acquiesces to her ritual demands (1199-1202):

Ἴφιγένεια:

ἀγνιστέον μοι καὶ τὸ τῆς θεοῦ βρέτας.

Θόας:

εἴπερ γε κηλὶς ἔβαλέ νιν μητροκτόνος.

Ἴφιγένεια:

οὐ γάρ ποτ' ἄν νιν ἡράμην βάθρων ἄπο.

Θόας:

δίκαιος ἠυσέβεια καὶ προμηθία.

Iphigeneia: The divine image of the goddess must also be washed by me.

Thoas: Indeed, as long as the pollution of matricide has touched it.

Iphigeneia: For no other reason would I have taken it from the pedestal.

Thoas: Your reverence is just and upright.

Once she has convinced the king, Iphigeneia controls the behavior of not only Thoas, but also, of all the Taurian people. Here, Euripides inverts the traditional relationship between Artemis' statue and the Taurians when Iphigeneia commands all to go indoors once the statue has left the temple. With this command, the priestess compels the other characters in the play to go through the isolated experience of a divine image. At the very moment that statue makes its appearance in broad daylight outside the temple, she commands the Taurian people to leave and go indoors. Furthermore, when the statue comes out into the view of the audience carried by Iphigeneia, it purportedly boasts the amazing and unusual ability to take on human characteristics. Euripides creates a contrast that highlights the unique nature of the statue when he juxtaposes its human abilities with the locking away, blinding, veiling, and silencing of the mortal characters on the stage throughout the rest of the episode (1203-33).

When Iphigeneia begins the procession down to the sea, the human characters in the play, excluding Iphigeneia, are all variously "statue-ized." Immediately, Iphigeneia commands that chains be put around Orestes and Pylades (1203), even though Thoas sees no need for this as they have nowhere to run (1204). Beyond the chains, Iphigeneia also asks that the two men be veiled with their robes (1207).<sup>17</sup> Throughout this episode, Orestes and Pylades have been inside the temple, while the goddess is in

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<sup>17</sup> Sansone (1975) 283 notes that this scene mirrors Iphigeneia's own experience as a veiled and deceived bride.

the open air for the first time. When they finally exit the temple at 1222, the two men enter the procession veiled, silent, and unable to move freely. In a manner parallel to the statue, the two men are led down to the water alongside Artemis' image.

Iphigeneia's careful instructions in the execution of the procession lead to the creation of a visual tableau that recalls the familiar genre of processional art. The image would become even more striking if the processional tableau mirrored a frieze depicted on the temple of Artemis, standing in the background of the stage. As the characters, costumed and masked, stand according to the careful instructions of Iphigeneia, Euripides brings a familiar art form to life and commands the visual attention of his audience.

As the procession passes, moreover, Iphigeneia orders Thoas to cover his eyes and then enter the temple in order to purify it of pollution (1215-1221).<sup>18</sup> As Iphigeneia announces the entrance of Orestes and Pylades, Thoas now stands silent and with his eyes averted, waiting to enter the temple from which the image has just been removed. Iphigeneia, furthermore, commands that the entire community stay indoors as well. At this point in the play, the statue, now in view for the first and only time, holds the stage. At the very moment that Artemis' image can finally leave the temple and begin her journey to Athens, every other member of the community, including the king, are asked to turn away before her power and shut themselves indoors. Thoas will not be seen on stage again until the messenger bangs on the doors of the temple to tell the king of Iphigeneia's deception (1302-1310). By removing all witnesses from the ritual

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<sup>18</sup> Mastrorarde (2010) argues that "the repeated motif of males inside a closed space recalls the traditional image of the woman as womb, as a hollow vessel for bearing offspring to the male" (254).

procession, Euripides eliminates all community involvement from the ritual act and allows only the play's audience to observe the procession and its tableau.

Toas remains locked up and fooled until the messenger arrives and convinces him to leave Artemis' temple at 1307. After the messenger explains to Thoas that he has been tricked and Orestes' ship is attempting to leave the harbor, the king immediately exhorts the Taurians to overtake the ship and capture the fugitives. Moreover, he specifically promises the chorus punishment for their involvement in the deception. His plans are abruptly halted, however, when a goddess appears on stage *ex machina*. Euripides, however, foils expectations and chooses not to bring Artemis onstage as a "live" deity and instead chooses Athena to close the play (1435-6):

ποιῖ ποῖ διωγμὸν τόνδε πορθμεύεις, ἄναξ

Θόας; ἄκουσον τῆσδ' Ἀθηναίας λόγους

Where, where are you taking this chase,

Lord Thoas? Listen to the words of the one here, Athena.

In her speech, Athena speaks for all the gods involved in the play, delegating duties and actions to the characters. She even addresses the three absent fugitives, calling upon Orestes in particular: κλύεις γὰρ αὐδὴν καίπερ οὐ παρῶν θεᾶς (1447). Here, Athena appears as an authoritative yet impartial messenger who ensures the expected outcomes of the play. In the opening of her speech, Athena recalls Orestes' initial task sanctioned by Apollo and the quest to free himself of bloodguilt by bringing the statue of Artemis to Athens, which she calls ἐμὴν χθόνα (1441). She notes that Poseidon has aided the sea swell that was holding back Orestes' ship and has helped it out of the gulf. The goddess then gives the aiteology of the cults of Artemis at Brauron and Halae. Finally, she notes that it is her who is once again facilitating Orestes' freedom from

bloodguilt, as she had previously done on Ares' hill in Athens, even noting that she counted out the vote determining Orestes' release. Thus, in her speech, Athena speaks for the other gods and concludes the events of the play with a reminder of the initial mission of Orestes and the effects that the statue's transfer will have on the Athenians.

Is this appearance of Athena, rather than Artemis or Apollo, at the end of *Iphigeneia* a justifiable choice? First off, the arrival of Athena follows Euripides' choices in other plays when unexpected deities arrive *ex machina*. Euripides employs a similar device in *Hippolytus* when an unusual *deus ex machina* by Aphrodite opens the play, and rather than having the slighted goddess return to close the action, he brings Aphrodite's rival, Artemis, onstage instead. Euripides' choice of Athena in the *Iphigeneia* also closely mirrors the events of the similarly structured *Ion*, in which it is once again Athena who appears rather than that play's central deity, Apollo. Her unexpected arrival in the *Ion* can shed light on the events of the *Iphigeneia* since Athena justifies her appearance over the temple of Apollo at Delphi in the *Ion* (1555-58):<sup>19</sup>

ἐπώνυμος δὲ σῆς ἀφικόμην χθονὸς  
Παλλάς, δρόμῳ σπεύσασ' Ἀπόλλωνος πάρα,  
ὄς ἐς μὲν ὄψιν σφῶν μολεῖν οὐκ ἤξιου,  
μὴ τῶν πάροιθε μέμψις ἐς μέσον μόλη,  
I have come from your land which is named after me,  
Pallas, hastened on my journey by Apollo  
who does not think it right to come before your eyes,

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<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of Athena's appearance in both *Ion* and *Iphigeneia* in place of a guilty divinity, see Kyriakou (2006) 451.

lest blame for the things that have happened comes up in his presence. Here the goddess speaks for Apollo and explains his decision to avoid confrontation with the characters in the play. Apollo, not wishing to answer for his morally ambiguous actions, sends Athena to speak on his behalf. Her speech even echoes her appearance in *Iphigeneia* when she refers to Athens as ἐμὴν χθόνα (1441). Apollo, in the *Ion*, has only to answer for a potentially deadly false prophecy. In comparison to the bloody sacrifices undertaken in the name of Artemis at Tauris, Apollo's misdeeds appear fairly innocuous. Thus, in *Iphigeneia*, Athena's appearance *ex machina* allows both Artemis and the playwright to avoid giving explanations for the morally ambiguous behavior of the divinity.

Moreover, although *Iphigeneia* is a play that takes place in Tauris, is truly for and about Athenians and the ultimate establishment of Athenian cults. Athena, furthermore, is the goddess traditionally in charge of eliminating Orestes' bloodguilt, which is the overall aim of the play. As the action of the play shifts to the escape and flight of the fugitives, Euripides reminds the audience repeatedly of this goal. *Iphigeneia* even makes reference to Orestes' bloodguilt in her speech to the chorus and prayer to Artemis just before the deception scene takes place. Moreover, as a basis for the plot of the *Iphigeneia*, Euripides follows the myth of the Palladium, a story about a statue of Athena, allowing that goddess to stand in the background of a play nominally concerned with Artemis. Finally, by choosing Athena as the closing deity of the play, Euripides emphasizes Artemis' evacuation of Tauris and her wholehearted rejection of the Tauric cult and its human sacrifice. Thus, Artemis' absence reflects her translocation from a morally questionable role in a foreign land to her civilized and proper home of Athens, a translocation physically represented by her stolen statue.

## CHAPTER 5 STATUES AND STAGING IN *ALCESTIS*

Thus far, I have discussed how the statues of *Hippolytus*, *Andromache* and *Iphigeneia at Tauris* help to organize the dramatic action of those plays in both a visual and thematic manner. These divine statues also create visual reminders of the controlling deities and their silent presence in on-stage affairs. Moreover, they serve as quasi-characters in the plays, embodying the deities that they depict and can even be joined by the gods they represent in *dei ex machina* scenes. Euripidean characters often speak to these statues as if they were animate beings, paying their respects (or not) and clinging to them for protection. Here, I shift my focus from divine and staged statues and look to the title character, whom Euripides repeatedly presents as a living statue or work of art. Although no statues of mortals were ever part of the staging of an extant Euripidean play, the similarity between a statue and a silent and unmoving, fully masked and costumed character was not lost on the playwright. In *Alcestis*, Euripides cleverly and eagerly exploits the statue-like presence of his characters on the stage.

Scholars have long recognized and discussed the relationship between the character of Alcestis and statues. Much of this scholarship examines Admetus' desire for a statue substitute of his wife, and its relationship (if any) to the unique ending of the play when Alcestis returns veiled and silent. The ending has even led some scholars to conclude that Euripides staged the play with two actors and that a statue of Alcestis literally stood on stage during the closing scene.<sup>1</sup> Other scholars have sought to explore the relationship between statues and death in the play, concluding that Euripides likens the silent Alcestis to a traditional funerary statue. While many of these

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the scholarly debate over Alcestis' silence see: Stieber (1998) 92 n3.

arguments are convincing, in this chapter I demonstrate that the statue-like presentations of Alcestis are all individual pieces of a larger focus on visual aesthetics and descriptive narratives in the play. I also show that Euripides' portrayal of the woman as an artistic object pervades the play from beginning to end as a means of reflecting her thematic role as objectified wife and death substitute. Moreover, Euripides frames the work with artistic presentations of Alcestis. The servant's description of the dying woman at the beginning of the play creates an image that mirrors her statue-like return at the end. By portraying the woman in this way, the playwright underscores the liminal state that the woman inhabits throughout the play, halfway between life and death.

### **The House of Admetus in Staging the Alcestis**

While no true statue appears on-stage in *Alcestis*, the setting still holds many elements in common with the staging of the other plays I have discussed. In *Hippolytus*, for example, Euripides organizes the dramatic action around two permanent divine statues. This allows the characters to reveal visually their divine allegiances in a manner that reflects the play's themes. The statues also function as silent witnesses to the action and stand as reminders to the audience of the deities who are in control. *Andromache* similarly unfolds around a statue of Thetis that stands in the center of the orchestra, the most powerful point in the theatre. As the presiding deity of Thetideon, her image not only visually organizes the play's action, but also reminds the spectators who truly controls the events of the story. Likewise, *Iphigeneia* takes place before a temple of Artemis, and a sacrificial altar, stained with the blood of human victims stands as an omnipresent reminder of Artemis' bloody cult. In the first half of the play, Euripides allocates the orchestra and area around the altar to Orestes and the space



before the temple to Iphigeneia. In doing so, the playwright's staging reflects the distance that has existed between the siblings prior to the play's start. In the second half of the story, Iphigeneia leads to the sea a procession that is thematically and visually organized around Artemis' statue.

In all of these instances Euripides includes permanent, divinely sanctioned fixtures in the settings. This divine presence frames the performance of each play and is integral to a full understanding of the thematic points. *Alcestis* similarly includes statue-based imagery and a permanent divine fixture.<sup>2</sup> In *Alcestis*, however, Euripides uniquely gives the role of divine witness to the palace of Admetus, a house that, as the play progresses, comes to resemble a quasi-temple.<sup>3</sup> Just like the statues of Artemis, Aphrodite and Thetis, Admetus' house appears a vivified and divine object to which the characters offer words and prayers. The palace even receives the first address in Apollo's opening monologue:<sup>4</sup>

ἽΩ δώματ' Ἀδμήτει', ἐν οἷς ἔτλην ἐγὼ  
θῆσσαν τράπεζαν αἰνέσαι θεός περ ὦν.

(1-2)

House of Admetus, into which I came to endure  
the servant's table, although being a god.

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<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of the *Alcestis*' classification as a pro-satyrical play with a review of literature, see Thorburn (2002) xvi-xxx.

<sup>3</sup> Conacher (1988) 47 notes that two features of the play "lend themselves to visual illustration: the ambiguous play on life and death and the emphasis on hospitality. It is the latter which makes the palace of Admetus (which provides the total scenic background), and going and coming which revolve around the palace, so important to the stage action of the piece."

<sup>4</sup> Thorburn (2002) 51 comments that the "play's first noun reveals one of the drama's thematic focal points."

With these first words the god makes it clear that the palace is no ordinary home. It has housed a god as a servant and stands as a constant reminder of the divine origins of the play's conflict.<sup>5</sup> Later, in the central scene of the play, the chorus even sings an ode to the house, praising its virtue and connections to the gods:

ὦ πολυξείνου καὶ ἐλευθέρου ἀνδρὸς αἰεὶ ποτ' οἶκος,  
σέ τοι καὶ ὁ Πύθιος εὐλύρας Ἀπόλλων  
ἤξιωσε ναίειν,  
ἔτλα δὲ σοῖσι μηλονόμας  
ἐν νομοῖς γενέσθαι,  
δοχμῖαν διὰ κλειπύων  
βοσκήμασι σοῖσι συρίζων  
ποιμνίτας ὑμεναίους.

(568-77)

House of a tirelessly hospitable and kind man,  
even Pythian Apollo with his beautiful lyre deemed it worthy  
to reside in you and took up the role of shepherd  
to your pastures,  
playing his flute-song throughout the hillsides to your flocks,  
urging them to mate.

The chorus, in their song, presents the house as a place that Apollo chose, dwelled in, and filled with divine song. As such, the palace takes on many of the characteristics of a temple. Just as the primary role of a god's temple is to house and protect a divinity's divine image, here the chorus describes the palace literally housing and protecting

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<sup>5</sup> In his discussion of "The Role of the House" in the *Alcestis*, Diller (1968) 111 notes that "the house, the royal palace, plays from start to finish a decisive role in the dramatic situation presented by the myth".

Apollo. In this way, the house not only appears a quasi-temple to Apollo, but it also acts as a divine fixture on the stage that silently witnesses the events as they unfold, much like the statues of *Hippolytus* and *Andromache*.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, the house organizes the action of the play in much the same way as the divine statues I have previously discussed. Only by means of carefully planned entrances and exits through the palace door can Euripides stage the simultaneous mourning and revelry that occurs in the story. As a divinely inspired place analogous to a temple, the interior of Admetus' house is presented as a place of protection and refuge. This can also help explain the unusual nature of Alcestis' on-stage death. While most tragic characters withdraw into the house to meet their deaths, Alcestis only dies once she has left the divine and protective threshold of the house.

Apollo's prologue addressed to the house, moreover, sets up many of the larger themes that appear throughout the *Alcestis*. Even in the god's very first words we see examples of substitution, role reversals, hospitality and premature death:

Ἰὼ δώματ' Ἀδμήτει', ἐν οἷς ἔτλην ἐγὼ  
θῆσαν τράπεζαν αἰνέσαι θεός περ ὦν.  
Ζεὺς γὰρ κατακτὰς παῖδα τὸν ἐμὸν αἴτιος  
Ἀσκληπιόν, στέρνοισιν ἐμβάλων φλόγα·  
οὗ δὴ χολωθεῖς τέκτονας Δίου πυρὸς  
κτείνω Κύκλωπας·

(1-6)

House of Admetus, into which I came to endure

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<sup>6</sup> Conacher (1988) 156 comments that Zeus' punishment of Apollo has "a symbolic significance in the play, indicating the impossibility in the traditional world of tragic myth (which the Chorus describes) of resurrections from the dead."

the servant's table, although being a god.

Zeus was the reason, for he murdered my son Asclepius,  
hitting him with a lightning bolt to the chest.

Provoked in anger by this I killed the son of Zeus  
who forged fire, the Cyclops.

Framed as an address to the house, Apollo traces the true origins of the story to the premature death of his son Asclepius, for which he exacted revenge against Zeus by killing the Cyclops. These deaths and their overturning of familial stability foreshadow the very events we will watch unfold as Alcestis' early death leads to instability and disorder in Admetus' home as well.

### **Alcestis as Image of the House**

Throughout the play, Alcestis' character navigates an unusual liminal state between life and death. In the first description of the woman, Alcestis is readying herself to die and bedecking her own body with ornamentation, a task typically carried out by family members after a loved one has passed. Alcestis then loses her life while lying in the central point of the orchestra in full view of the audience and her corpse later becomes the centerpiece of a visually compelling funerary procession. Finally, Heracles returns the wife to Admetus, alive, yet veiled and silent in the manner of a statue. By presenting the woman as a statue during critical moments of the play, Euripides emphasizes the liminal state of Alcestis by comparing her to inanimate objects. While he always presents her in a highly visual manner, in three key instances Euripides portrays Alcestis in way that specifically compares her to a statue.

In the beginning of the play, before Alcestis has even appeared on-stage, the maid servant tells of the dying woman's preparations for her death as if she were narrating a

scene from a work of art or describing a statue. Through intensely descriptive language, Euripides creates an image of a silent and pale woman bedecked with ornamentation at her family altar. The description recalls a votive statue or object and sets Alcestis up as a quasi-divine image within the divine palace. Later, when Alcestis and Admetus agree upon the terms of her death and he promises never to take a wife, Admetus describes his desire to have a statue replica of Alcestis made in order to take her place in the marriage bed. Here, Euripides changes her presentation from that of a votive object to an object of erotic longing. And finally, at the end of the play Alcestis re-emerges alongside Heracles, but silent and statue-like, much in the manner of a funerary monument. In presenting her as an artistic piece and inanimate object, Euripides is able reiterate her role as an objectified substitute and add to the liminal status of her character.

Moreover, by presenting Alcestis as a quasi-divine image within the palace and a woman of exceptional nobility, Euripides casts Alcestis as the centerpiece and heart of the household. While Admetus values the woman for her physical beauty and willingness to take his place in death, the audience recognizes that Alcestis' role in the home is much more central than her husband realizes. As a result, the liminal status that Alcestis embodies ultimately throws the entire household into a state of limbo that reflects the plight of its mistress. We find the house in this state of confusion as early as the first *parados* when the chorus seeks information concerning Alcestis' status as living or dead. Later, with the arrival of Heracles, Admetus' attempt at juggling hospitality and mourning all at once compounds the house's liminal state. Without the woman,

Admetus appears unable to bring order and stability to the household, as he shows in his melodramatic lamentation (935-61).

### **Alcestis as Liminal Figure and Statue**

As we have already seen in *Hippolytus*, *Andromache* and *Iphigeneia*, the playwright stages critical scenes in ways that visually reflect thematic elements of the story. In much the same way, Euripides shows great concern for the relationship between the visual and thematic elements of the *Alcestis*. A focus on aesthetics is clear even in the first moments of the play when Apollo delivers his monologue. We see the god standing alone before the palace which had previously housed and protected him as he paid repentance to Zeus. This is the play's beginning, and the staging visually recalls the beginnings of the myth as well: Apollo's arrival at Admetus' house and the resulting offer of a death substitute.

Euripides, moreover, carries this close connection between staging and meaning over into the scene just following the prologue (28-76). Here the playwright creates a visually dynamic *agon* between two gods with starkly contrasting appearances.<sup>7</sup> Death, undoubtedly, would have arrived dressed entirely in black, as Admetus himself later refers to the god as *μελάμπεπλος* (843). Set against the bright, golden image of the sun-god Apollo, the disparate appearance and nature of Death creates a scene of visual and thematic opposition. The clash between the two gods also visually plays out one of the *Alcestis*' central conflicts – Admetus' inability to balance his roles as mourner (Death) and host (Apollo). This tableau is repeated in the second half of the play when

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<sup>7</sup> Conacher (1988) 47-8 hypothesizes a staging in which "Apollo, the god of light, dressed perhaps in gold-coloured robe with matching mask, leaves Admetus' palace (where he has been so hospitably treated) as Death, black-robed (or possibly black-winged, if we accept Musgrave's emendation at v. 843), approaches and, after his altercation with Apollo, enters the palace to begin his symbolic possession of Alcestis."

Admetus, dressed in black and hair shorn in mourning, is surprised to find the revelry-loving Heracles at his doorstep.<sup>8</sup> Finally, in a third example, this scene is once again recalled when Heracles questions the mourning servant, clad in black, who confronts the hero over his inappropriate carousing.

In opening *Alcestis* with such visually-striking scenes, Euripides lays the foundation for the frequent use of artistically compelling staging and descriptive narratives that recur in the play. The visual aspects of the *agon* come to the fore when black-robed Death draws attention to the appearance of Apollo, asking the god why he carries a bow and arrow, calling out the emblems of the god's artistic iconography. This exchange focuses the audience on not only the details of the characters' costumes, but also the specific representation of Apollo that Euripides creates in the *Alcestis*.

Ἀπόλλων:

θάρασει· δίκην τοι καὶ λόγους κεδνοὺς ἔχω.

Θάνατος:

τί δῆτα τόξων ἔργον, εἰ δίκην ἔχεις;

Ἀπόλλων:

σύνηθες αἰεὶ ταῦτα βαστάζειν ἐμοί.

Θάνατος:

καὶ τοῖσδ' ἔγ' οἴκοις ἐκδίκως προσωφελεῖν.

(38-41)

Apollo: Take courage, I come to you with justice and trustworthy words.

Death: Then what is the purpose of your bow and arrows,  
if you bring justice?

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<sup>8</sup> Conacher (1988) 48 comments that Heracles' arrival "jars with the pathos of the preceding death."

Apollo: It is customary for me to always carry these things with me.

Death: Yes, and also to assist this house unjustly.

In the opening monologue Apollo had explained that he was formerly a servant and shepherd in Admetus' house. Here, Apollo appears with bow and arrow, a weapon that seems comically useless when set against the god of Death personified. More importantly, however, Euripides draws attention to the traditional iconographic costume, already familiar from the visual arts. Even in a context when a bow and arrow seem to have no use, Apollo carries them around because those items visually identify the god.

Once the gods leave the stage, the chorus enters (77) in a state of confusion, unsure whether Alcestis is living or dead.

ἀλλ' οὐδὲ φίλων πέλας <ἔστ'> οὐδεῖς,

ὅστις ἂν εἴποι πότερον φθιμένην

χρῆ βασιλείαν πενθεῖν ἢ ζῶσ'

ἔτι φῶς λεύσσει Πελίου τόδε παῖς

Ἄλκηστις, ἔμοι πάσι τ' ἀρίστη

δόξασα γυνῆ

πόσιν εἰς αὐτῆς γεγενῆσθαι.

(79-85)

But no relatives are at the gates

who would be able to say whether she has died and

it is necessary to lament the queen or whether she, still living,

looks upon the light, the child of Peleus,

this woman Alcestis, in my opinion, regarded as the best wife

to her husband by everyone here.



This argument over Alcestis as dead or alive carries on for over 60 lines, building suspense through a song of prolonged confusion.<sup>9</sup> By creating a *parados* that discusses at length uncertainty over Alcestis' life and death, Euripides foreshadows the unusual liminal status of Alcestis' character throughout the entirety of the play. The first *parados* also creates suspense and anxiety for the audience, who come to want some answers themselves.

Finally, a maid servant comes from the house and the chorus (and the audience) is relieved that finally they may get some information. The chorus immediately questions the serving-woman:

πενθεῖν μὲν, εἴ τι δεσπόταισι τυγχάνει,  
συγγνωστόν· εἰ δ' ἔτ' ἐστὶν ἔμψυχος γυνή  
εἴτ' οὖν ὄλωλεν εἰδέναι βουλοίμεθ' ἄν.

(138-140)

Grieving is allowable, if anything has happened to your mistress.

But if the woman is alive

or whether she has died I would like to know.

The servant, however, confounds the issue when she describes Alcestis as neither dead nor alive: καὶ ζῶσαν εἰπεῖν καὶ θανοῦσαν ἔστι σοι (141). While the serving-woman's description of Alcestis as both living and dead nominally only applies to the situation of the current scene, the audience will find as the play progresses that Alcestis' character exists in this liminal state throughout the entirety of the play. Her liminal state, moreover, will eventually culminate in her presentation as a quasi-funerary statue in the

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<sup>9</sup> Conacher (1988) 160 agrees that the "opening anapaests and the first half of this ode introduce the ambiguity between life and death which, in one form or another, is to hover over the whole of the play, including its finale." For a similar sentiment, see Luschnig & Roisman (2003) 72.

closing scene. It is in the context of this ambiguity that Euripides develops his artistic portrayals of the woman in which he compares her to a statue or work of art.

When the serving-woman launches into a visually detailed description of Alcestis, we find our first example of an objectified and artistically focused presentation of the woman:

ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἦσθεθ' ἡμέραν τὴν κυρίαν  
ἤκουσαν, ὕδασι ποταμίοις λευκὸν χροῶ  
ἐλούσατ', ἐκ δ' ἐλοῦσα κεδρίνων δόμων  
ἐσθῆτα κόσμον τ' εὐπρεπῶς ἠσκήσατο,  
καὶ σταῖσα πρόσθεν Ἑστίας κατηύξατο·  
(158-62)

For when she heard that the appointed day had arrived,  
washing her white skin with pure water,  
and taking clothing and ornamentation from her  
cedar closet she dressed herself in a beautiful manner,  
and standing before altar<sup>10</sup> of the hearth she prayed:

With this narration the servant paints a picture of the beautiful Alcestis ornamenting her body and praying as she readies herself for death. In addition to the artistic nature of the narrative language, the servant's description also recalls the image of a statue or votive object. Here, Euripides portrays Alcestis' skin as λευκὸν (159) and her body washed and adorned as she stands before the palace's central altar. The description calls to mind the ritual bathing and dressing of divine images that we have previously

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<sup>10</sup> Not all editors capitalize Hestia in the text, however, "it seems probable that Alcestis is standing before Hestia's altar" (Conacher (1988) 164).

seen in the garlanded statues of *Hippolytus* or the ritual cleansing that plays such an important role in *Iphigeneia at Tauris*.

In addition, Alcestis' actions also recall the customary washing and dressing of a corpse as a family prepares a loved one for burial. Thus, the term λευκὸν that the maidservant uses to describe the woman's skin recalls both the appearance of sculpted stone and a lifeless corpse. Here again we see the connection between Alcestis' life/death state and her status as an object substitute in the play. By portraying the woman in a manner that recalls both a living corpse and a statue, Euripides underscores the liminal nature of Alcestis' character. Moreover, by presenting her in a way that recalls a divine image in the house, Euripides adds to the divine and "temple-like" presentation of the palace.

At 231, Alcestis' character finally takes the stage, entering via the *ekkyklema* and on the verge of death. In this state Alcestis launches into a description of Charon coming to ferry her to the underworld. She even includes an iconographic detail like Charon's hand resting on the boat pole:

ὄρῳ δίκωπον ὄρῳ σκάφος ἐν  
λίμνα· νεκύων δὲ πορθμεὺς  
ἔχων χέρ' ἐπὶ κοντῷ Χάρων  
μ' ἤδη καλεῖ· Τί μέλλεις;  
ἐπείγου· σὺ κατείργεις· τάδε τοί  
με σπερχόμενος ταχύνει.

(252-256b)

I see the two-oared boat, I see the boat in  
the lake. The ferryman of the dead,

holding his hand on the boat pole, Charon,  
he calls me now. “Why do you delay?  
Hurry up. You hold me up.” These things he says to me  
urging me to move quickly.

This visually focused narrative complements the serving-woman’s description of Alcestis. With the repetition of ὄρω at the beginning of her description, Alcestis emphasizes the visual elements of her experience and indirectly asks the audience to imagine the scene she describes.

### **Staging the Death Scene**

The special attention that Euripides paid to aesthetics is also evident in the staging of Alcestis’ dramatic death scene. The playwright arranges the characters who take part in the death scene in a way that creates a thematic comment on the woman’s role in the household. Until this point, Alcestis has remained out of sight within the palace and was described like a beautiful statue standing before the altar or hearth. This presentation of her casts the woman as the centerpiece of the household and an object of praise. Furthermore, she dwells in a place that previously housed a god and now functions as a quasi-temple. It is fitting in that regard that Alcestis’ unusual death scene takes place outside the palace and before the eyes of the audience, as death was strictly forbidden inside the *temenos* of a holy place.

When the servants carry the woman out of the palace door on the *ekkyklema*, she arrives surrounded by the other members of the household. Once she is carried into the orchestra, we see the woman become the centerpiece of the dramatic space as the servants and family members surround her. With this staging, the audience identifies Alcestis as the central figure in the scene and the figurative heart of the household.

Alcestis' first words even reflect the circular nature of the orchestra and the scene's staging when the dying woman calls out:

Ἄλιε καὶ φάος ἀμέρας  
οὐράνιαί τε δῖναι νεφέλας ὄρομαίου  
(244-45)

Sun and light of day! Heavenly  
whirlpool of swiftly moving clouds!

By placing Alcestis at the center of the orchestra, Euripides reinforces the woman's role as a semi-divine object. While earlier the servant described her as pale white and ornamented, standing before the altar, here she lies at the point in the orchestra where an altar would typically stand.

Yet, we see that Alcestis' centrality to the household is lost on Admetus. In his over-the-top promise of unending mourning and fidelity, Admetus again recalls the association of Alcestis with a statue. Ironically, however, unlike the servant's description of her as a noble statue at the palace altar, Admetus chooses to objectify the woman in a sexual manner and voices his desire for a statue replica of his wife to lay in his bed as a substitute:

σὺ γάρ μου τέρψιν ἐξείλου βίου.  
σοφῆι δὲ χειρὶ τεκτόνων δέμας τὸ σὸν  
εἰκασθὲν ἐν λέκτροισιν ἐκταθήσεται,  
ᾧ προσπесоῦμαι καὶ περιπτύσσων χέρας  
ὄνομα καλῶν σὸν τὴν φίλην ἐν ἀγκάλαις  
δόξω γυναῖκα καίπερ οὐκ ἔχων ἔχειν·  
ψυχρὰν μὲν, οἶμαι, τέρψιν, ἀλλ' ὅμως βάρος

ψυχῆς ἀπαντλοίην ἄν. ἐν δ' ὄνειρασιν  
φοιτῶσά μ' εὐφραίνοις ἄν· ἠδὺ γὰρ φίλους  
κάν νυκτὶ λεύσσειν, ὄντιν' ἄν παρῆι χρόνον.

(347-56)

For you have taken the enjoyment out of my life.

A likeness of your body, created by a skilled hand

will be laid out upon my bed,

upon which image I will fall enfolding arms

and calling it by your name I will seem to have my own wife in my embrace

even though I won't really have her.

A cold enjoyment, I suppose, but nevertheless it will be a way

to lighten the weight upon my soul. But approaching me in dreams

perhaps you might cheer me up. For it is a sweet thing to look upon

loved ones in the night, for the time which they are present.

Compared with the reverent portrayal of the woman in the servant's speech, Admetus' desire seems not only selfish, but also short-sighted. He fails to grasp Alcestis' centrality to the stability of the home, even as the audience watches her die at the altar point of the orchestra and surrounded by the members of her household. Admetus shows the true extent of his undervaluation of Alcestis when he vocalizes his wish for a statue substitute of the woman for his bed while she lies dying on the *ekkyklema*.

Through his staging Euripides creates a visual comparison between Admetus' wished for statue and the dying woman at the center of the dramatic space.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> According to Steiner (2001) 206, Admetus' description of his pleasure in the statue as ψυχρὰν emphasizes a quality that is common to both the future corpse of his wife and the statue creating a stark contrast between the living and dead Alcestis.

Euripides again reveals his desired emphasis on the visual aspects of the play when he chooses to forgo a typical tragic death in which the woman would be brought back inside the palace to die, away from the eyes of the audience. Instead, we find the woman lying in her sickbed surrounded by the members of her household and watch as her life slips away. Thus, the audience sees Alcestis, the centerpiece and heart of the household die away before their very eyes. In this way, Euripides is able to reflect the true nature of the loss, juxtaposed against the self-absorbed laments and desires of the dead woman's husband.<sup>12</sup> Finally, her corpse is carried into the house and the stage is set for the arrival of Heracles.

Alcestis' body does not leave the palace door until 606, following Heracles' arrival and Admetus' deception of him. In line with the visual focus on Alcestis' character that pervades the play, her body is carried out of the house then, as part of a funeral procession that creates a striking visual tableau, of which Alcestis' body is the centerpiece. In staging an event that typically includes community participation, Euripides also invites the audience to take part in the mourning for the dead woman. We have already seen how Euripides constructs a similar tableau in *Iphigeneia at Tauris*, when the priestess carries Artemis' statue down to the sea for "purification." In *Alcestis*, however, the procession bears the richly decorated body of Alcestis on her way to her tomb. The arrival of Admetus' father with additional finery for the body underscores the artistic aspects of the woman's corpse. Because the mourners would undoubtedly be dressed entirely in black, the richly ornamented corpse of Alcestis

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<sup>12</sup> Segal (1993) 37-8, notes that Admetus' rhetoric "magnifies the distance between his dreamy romanticism, almost an aestheticism of grief, and the down-to-earth practicality of the dying woman, whose concern is for the future of her children, not self-centered emotion."

would become the visual focus of the scene. This staging recalls the earlier death scene, in which the woman lay at the center of the orchestra, the most powerful point of the theatre. In the procession, however, Euripides gives a visual emphasis to the woman through the use of contrasts in color and dress, a technique that the playwright has employed throughout the work as a whole.

### **Staging Alcestis' Return**

When the procession finally exits at 747, the play undergoes a major visual shift as the dramatic space, once full of family and mourners, now stands empty. In a marked contrast, a single servant enters from the house to narrate a description of the events that have been occurring within the palace. In his speech, the servant, alone on stage, gives an account of Heracles' revelry that paints a picture of the hero carousing inside:

ποτῆρα δ' ἴέν χειρεσσιτ' κίσσινον λαβῶν  
πίνει μελαίνης μητρὸς εὐζωρον μέθυ,  
ἕως ἐθέρμην' αὐτὸν ἀμφιβᾶσα φλόξ  
οἴνου. στέφει δὲ κρᾶτα μυρσίνης κλάδοις,  
ᾄμουσ' ὑλακτῶν·

(756-60)

Taking the ivy wood drinking bowl into his hands,  
he drank the unmixed wine of the black mother grape  
until the warmth of the wine embraced his heart.  
He garlanded his head with branches of myrtle and  
sang rude songs.



Here, Euripides creates a series of stark contrasts by juxtaposing this narration against the prior tableau of the funeral procession. During the procession the audience watched the stage fill completely with mourners dressed in the dark attire of lamentation. In the current scene, a single speaker recalls the festive dress and behavior of Heracles. By creating a scene that contrasts so completely with the earlier funeral procession, Euripides marks the beginning of the second half of the play. From the opening prologue until the funerary procession, the play dealt primarily with Alcestis' sacrifice and death for her husband. When the mourners finally carry her body away, they bring an end to the story of Alcestis' death. Now with the stage emptied and a servant relating a tale of revelry, the overall focus of the play shifts, and Heracles and his eventual return of the woman become our primary story.

Euripides also signals that a new episode has begun when Heracles exits the house and addresses the grieving servant: οὔτος, τί σε μνὸν καὶ πεφροντικὸς βλέπεις; (773). We know from the recent description that Heracles is dressed for revelry and his temples are garlanded. Standing opposite the mourning servant, Heracles' contrasting appearance recalls the prologue when Apollo and death spar over Alcestis' life. Again, Euripides visually plays out the conflicting duties of hospitality and mourning that have beset the household. When Heracles leaves the stage after vowing to bring Alcestis back, this "second prologue" mirrors the first thematically as well. In the first prologue, Death exits the stage to take Alcestis to her death. Here, Heracles exits to restore the woman to life.

When the funeral procession returns at 861, the grieving members of the household again fill the dramatic space. However, Alcestis' body is gone and the visual

centerpiece of the procession has been lost. Under these circumstances Admetus launches into a melodramatic and self-absorbed lamentation that centers on the loss of his wife as a visual object. Before Admetus can even gather himself to speak, the chorus sets the tone for his speech when they console the man:

τὸ μήποτ' εἰσιδεῖν φιλίας ἀλόχου  
πρόσωπόν σ' ἔσαντα λυπρόν.

(877)

To never see the face of your dear wife  
before you is a grief.

In his lamentation, Admetus echoes this sentiment and makes sight and seeing the key emotional triggers of his grief:

ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἔνδον ἐξελά μ' ἔρημία,  
γυναικὸς εὐνὰς εὗτ' ἂν εἰσίδω κενὰς  
θρόνους τ' ἐν οἴσιν ἴζε καὶ κατὰ στέγας  
αὐχμηρὸν οὕδας, τέκνα δ' ἀμφὶ γούνασι  
πίπτοντα κλαίῃ μητέρ', οἱ δὲ δεσπότην  
στένωσιν οἴαν ἐκ δόμων ἀπώλεσαν.  
τὰ μὲν κατ' οἴκους τοιάδ'· ἔξωθεν δὲ με  
γάμοι τ' ἐλώσι Θεσσαλῶν καὶ ξύλλογοι  
γυναικοπληθεῖς· οὐ γὰρ ἐξανέξομαι  
λεύσσων δάμαρτος τῆς ἐμῆς ὀμήλικας.  
ἐρεῖ δὲ μ' ὅστις ἐχθρὸς ὦν κυρεῖ τάδε·  
ἴδοῦ τὸν αἰσchrῶς ζῶνθ'·

(944-55)

For the solitude inside the house will drive me out

when I see the bed of my wife empty and the chairs  
in which she sat and the floors in the house dusty,  
and the children falling at my knees  
and calling for their mother, and the servants  
lamenting what sort of a mistress they have lost from the house.

On the one hand, this is the state of things inside the house.

On the other hand, outside the house weddings of  
Thessalians and gatherings of women will drive me away.

For I will not be able to stand looking at women  
who are the same age as my wife.

And whoever is an enemy of mine will look at me and say,

“Look at that man who lives shamefully!”

Admetus' grief springs from a variety of potential scenarios, all of which hinge on the sense of sight. First, the widower laments the thought of seeing (εἰσοράω) Alcestis' bed and furniture with the woman absent. He also weeps at the thought of seeing (λεύσσω) reminders of Alcestis, like weddings or even any woman the same age as his wife. Finally, Admetus turns himself into the object of sight and laments the gaze (ὄραω) of those who will judge him a cowardly and shameless man. In all of these instances, Admetus emphasizes the power of sight over his emotional state. By centering the husband's grief on the act of seeing, Euripides reiterates the comparison of Alcestis to an artistic work or statue valued for its aesthetic beauty. In doing so, the playwright not only highlights Admetus' undervaluation and objectification of the woman, but he also reminds the audience of the state she inhabits between life and death.

Finally, at 1006 the songs of lamentation are brought to a halt when Heracles takes the stage, leading a veiled and silent woman. So begins the recognition scene in which Admetus will be reunited with his wife. In their introduction of the hero, the chorus calls out to Admetus:

καὶ μὴν ὄδ', ὡς ἔοικεν, Ἀλκμήνης γόνος,  
Ἄδμητε, πρὸς σὴν ἐστίαν πορεύεται.

(1006-7)

And here he is, as it seems, the son of Alcmene,  
Admetus, he is coming to your hearth.

Rather than employing the expected term δῶμα, the chorus tells Admetus that Heracles is headed πρὸς σὴν ἐστίαν (1007). With the term ἐστία, the statement recalls the earlier description of Alcestis readying herself for death πρόσθεν Ἐστίας (162). By echoing language and imagery from the serving woman's depiction of Alcestis as a statue, Euripides lays the foundations for the statue-like role of the woman in the final scene.

When Heracles speaks, the hero adds to the objectified valuation that Alcestis has undergone throughout the play when he describes her as a prize and profit won in an athletic competition:

ὄθεν κομίζω τήνδε νικητήρια  
λαβών. τὰ μὲν γὰρ κοῦφα τοῖς νικῶσιν ἦν  
ἵππους ἄγεσθαι, τοῖσι δ' αὖ τὰ μείζονα  
νικῶσι, πυγμὴν καὶ πάλην, βουφόρβια:  
γυνὴ δ' ἐπ' αὐτοῖς εἶπετ'

(1029-31)

From there I won this woman as a victory prize.

For, to the ones who won light events  
horses were given, and to those, in turn, who won bigger events,  
like boxing and wrestling, they took a herd of oxen;  
and a woman went along in addition to these things.

In Heracles' narration of his win, the woman becomes an afterthought in a list of victory prizes. The hero even describes her as a κέρδος (1033) and commands Admetus to take her in: γυναῖκα τήνδε μοι σῶσον λαβών (1020). Here, we see Alcestis become, once again, a mere object of exchange valued for some profit, rather than as a human being.

The characterization of Alcestis as an object of exchange at the end of the play, moreover, mirrors Apollo's words in the prologue:

ἦνεσαν δέ μοι θεαὶ  
Ἄδμητον Ἄϊδην τὸν παραυτίκ' ἐκφυγεῖν,  
ἄλλον διαλλάξαντα τοῖς κάτω νεκρόν.  
(12-14)

But the goddesses promised me that  
Admetus could flee an immediate death by giving  
over another corpse in exchange to the ones below.

In the prologue, Apollo describes Admetus exchanging Alcestis to Death in order to win a longer life. In Heracles' description of the woman at the end of the play, he describes winning Alcestis as a prize in an athletic competition and attempts to give the woman back to Admetus. Here we see Alcestis variously passed between the hands of men as an object of value and profit. Admetus, however, does not accept the woman right

away. Instead, he again returns to his grief and reiterates the pain he suffers at “seeing” the woman:

σὺ δ', ὦ γύναι,  
ἤτις ποτ' εἶ σύ, ταῦτ' ἔχουσ' Ἀλκήστιδι  
μορφῆς μέτρ' ἴσθι, καὶ προσήϊξαι δέμας.  
οἴμοι. κόμιζε πρὸς θεῶν ἐξ ὀμμάτων  
γυναῖκα τήνδε, μή μ' ἔλης ἠρημένον.  
δοκῶ γὰρ αὐτὴν εἰσορῶν γυναῖχ' ὄρᾶν  
ἐμήν:

(1061-67)

You, woman,

whoever you are, recognize that you have the same shape as Alcestis  
and that your frame looks just like hers.

Ah me. By the gods, take her away from my sight,  
don't take the life of one who is dead.

For I think about my wife when I look at this  
woman.

By lingering on the physical appearance of the veiled woman and noting her exact likeness to Alcestis, Admetus echoes his earlier wish for a statue replica of Alcestis to lay in his bed. As the woman stands silent and still, she takes on the likeness of the statue that Admetus had previously desired. Admetus again recalls the image of a stony statue when he reaches out to touch the veiled woman and exclaims: καὶ δὴ προτείνω, Γοργόν' ὡς κατατομῶν (1118). With a reference to the Gorgon, Euripides recalls the image of a person turning to stone, i.e., into a statue.

Finally, at the moment when Heracles has convinced the timid Admetus to reach out and touch the woman, the hero unveils Alcestis and commands the husband:

βλέψον πρὸς αὐτήν, εἴ τι σῆ δοκεῖ πρέπειν  
γυναικί: λύπης δ' εὐτυχῶν μεθίστασο.

(1121-2)

Look at her, does she seem to look anything like  
your wife? Stop your grief as you are a fortunate man.

At this moment, Admetus' sight no longer brings him pain. In a complete reversal, Admetus now exclaims that looking at the woman brings him wonderment and joy (1123-24). Yet, as the audience expects the woman to greet her husband and embrace him, she instead stands silent and still, leading Admetus to posit: ὄρα δὲ μή τι φάσμα νεπτέρων τόδ' ἦ. (1127). In choosing the term φάσμα to describe the silent Alcestis, Euripides emphasizes not only the woman's state between life and death, but also her status as an objectified statue or work of art. This focus on her appearance continues when Admetus embraces his wife a second time and rejoices to once again behold her face and physical form (1133-4). By always linking Admetus' emotions and valuations of the woman's outward appearance, Euripides displays how shallow is Admetus' devotion to his noble wife.

Alcestis' silence following the recognition scene has befuddled scholars, leading some to conclude that the play must have been performed with only two actors.<sup>13</sup> It seems, however, that an actor in full costume wearing a mask and remaining still and

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<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of the scholarly debate over Alcestis' silence see: Stieber (1998) 92 n3; Damen (1989).

silent would present the most striking image to the audience.<sup>14</sup> Through this presentation Euripides would liken the actual actor to a statue and echo the earlier language of substitution, an appropriate image to recall in the final moments of a pro-satyric play. While Alcestis previously substituted herself for her husband and a statue substituted her role as a wife, now an actor stands in substitution for a statue, and ultimately, for Alcestis.<sup>15</sup>

By keeping a silent actor on stage in full costume and mask, Euripides once again underscores the liminal nature of Alcestis' character in the closing moments of the play. The staging also recalls other key moments in the play, all of which centered on Alcestis both visually and thematically. As a silent and unmoving character who repeatedly

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 85: Stieber takes no firm stance on whether an actual statue would have been brought out on the stage or whether an actor simply would have come on stage in silence

<sup>15</sup> While Stieber has shown that the silent Alcestis at the end of the play is meant to recall the image of a funerary statue, Stieber does not attempt to explain why Euripides decided to include such a motif. Erna Trammell has pointed out that Alcestis may require a three day silence in order to be purified of the pollution of death, a pollution that Apollo mentions in the prologue of the play:

ἐγὼ δέ, μὴ μίασμά μ' ἐν δόμοις κίχῃ,  
λείπω μελάθρων τῶνδε φιλιτάτην στέγην.  
ἤδη δὲ τόνδε Θάνατον εἰσορῶ πέλας,  
ἱερέα θανόντων, ὅς νιν εἰς Ἄϊδου δόμους  
μέλλει κατάξειν·

(22-6)

And I, lest pollution reach me in the house,

I am leaving the beloved roof of this house.

Already I see death nearby, the priest of the dead,

who is preparing to take her down to the house of Hades.

While the number three may have held a mystic quality in ancient Greece as Trammell (1968) 85-91 argues and to some extent this explanation may hold true, I think it overlooks the real impact of the silent Alcestis on the audience.



becomes an object of discussion and visual assessment, Alcestis once again become the centerpiece of the dramatic space. Her silence here recalls her death scene in which she lay at the center of the orchestra surrounded by the members of her household.

Furthermore, Alcestis' silent and unmoving character also brings the funeral procession to mind, again associating the living woman with a dead body. While Euripides consistently portrays the woman as navigating the borders between life/death and human/object, this scene acts as a culmination of all these depictions, rendering the woman unable to speak or act as a fully animated human. Thus, the liminal status that has followed Alcestis' character throughout the play has become so consuming of her character that Alcestis will not even have the ability to speak for three days. By closing the play on this note, Euripides creates an ending that stages a summation of the thematic focus on Alcestis' objectified living/dead state. Furthermore, by presenting her character as a statue Euripides invites the audience to reflect on her situation and the sacrifice that she chose to make for her husband rather than simply rewinding her character to its role previous to death.

CHAPTER 6  
STATUES IN *PHOENISSAE*, *ION*, *HERACLES*, *TROJAN WOMEN* AND *HECUBA*

In the course of this project I have focused primarily on four plays of Euripides: *Hippolytus*, *Andromache*, *Iphigeneia at Tauris* and *Alcestis*. In these plays Euripides relies most heavily on statues and statue-imagery when developing the staging and themes. In this final chapter I look more broadly at the playwright's extant work to show that his use of statues in these plays follows a pattern that carries through the corpus as a whole. Specifically, I show that in placing statues of deities on stage, the playwright reminds the audience that the gods are in control and stand as silent witnesses to the dramatic action. The statues, moreover, serve as a center around which the dramatic action can develop both visually and thematically.

In the context of mortal characters, Euripides creates comparisons between women and statues in order to express their status as noble, yet helpless and pitiable individuals. At the same time, moreover, this objectified presentation allows the woman to be eroticized as a sex object and portrayed as a thing of beauty. Euripides tends to employ this sort of comparison in the context of female death and sacrifice, as these are typically the moments when a woman is the most submissive and dominated, yet most valuable and triumphant.

**Apollo in *Phoenissae***

Because the texts of *Hippolytus*, *Andromache* and *Iphigeneia at Tauris* all make direct references to divine images, we know that statues certainly appeared on stage. Here, I want to examine another instance of a statue in dispute, Apollo's image in

*Phoenissae*.<sup>1</sup> In *Phoenissae*, it has been posited that a statue of Apollo Agyieus stood on stage near the palace door. Specifically, scholars have concluded that Polyneices' direct address to Apollo Agyieus in his farewell to Eteocles and Thebes may suggest that a statue, column, or altar to the god was present:

καὶ σύ, Φοῖβ' ἄναξ Ἄγυιεῦ, καὶ μέλαθρα, χαίρετε,  
ἤλικές θ' οὐμοί, θεῶν τε δεξιμηλ' ἀγάλματα.  
οὐ γὰρ οἶδ' εἴ μοι προσειπεῖν αὖθις ἔσθ' ὑμᾶς ποτε·  
ἐλπίδες δ' οὔπω καθεύδουσ', αἷς πέποιθα σὺν θεοῖς  
τόνδ' ἀποκτείνας κρατήσειν τῆσδε Θηβαίας χθονός.

(631-5)

And you, Phoebus, lord of the streets, and my palace, farewell,  
and my fellow men, and statues of the gods, where sheep are sacrificed.  
For I do not know whether it will ever fall to me to address you again.  
But hopes are not yet sleeping, which leads me to trust that alongside  
the gods, after I have killed that man I will rule the land of Thebes.

Because Apollo Agyieus' statue was typically located near the doors of a house for protection, scholars have read this passage as indicating that an image of Apollo may have stood as a permanent stage fixture in the play. The actual appearance of Apollo's doorway image introduces an additional subject of debate, as the archaeological record shows that the god's presence could variously be indicated by a statue, pillar or altar.<sup>2</sup>

As a pillar, Apollo Agyieus was typically portrayed by a column with a uniquely pointed

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<sup>1</sup> Kovacs (2002) 279 n31, for example, states that "Apollo Agyieus, god of ways, may have been represented on stage as a statue. Apollo's role in the action is, of course, a significant one."

<sup>2</sup> Mastronarde (1994) n631, posits an interesting possibility when he asks, "and wherever a palace is portrayed in tragedy I wonder whether there may not have been a prop of a real image rather than the more mundane pillar."

top, a detail that identifies it with the specific Agyieus version of Apollo. As the divine founder of Thebes and the god most closely associated with the Oedipal myths, I agree that a statue of Apollo Agyieus would make an effective stage prop for the story of *Phoenissae*.<sup>3</sup> Apollo Agyieus, moreover, would especially recall the importance of the crossroads in Oedipus' downfall. While there is too little evidence to know for certain whether a statue or pillar depicted the god, I think any standing object that specifically identifies Apollo's protection would serve the same function as a statue, whether specifically a divine image or not.

While the presence of Apollo's statue cannot be decisively proven, Polyneices' direct address to the god does hold similarities to the addresses that characters in *Hippolytus* give to the statues of Aphrodite and Artemis. The nurse's farewell to Phaedra, for example, employs similar language and content:

οἴμοι, τί λέξεις, τέκνον; ὧς μ' ἀπώλεσας.  
γυναῖκες, οὐκ ἀνασχέτ', οὐκ ἀνέξομαι  
ζῶσ'· ἐχθρὸν ἦμαρ, ἐχθρὸν εἰσορῶ φάος.  
ρίψω μεθήσω σῶμ', ἀπαλλαχθήσομαι  
βίου θανοῦσα· χαίρετ', οὐκέτ' εἶμ' ἐγώ.  
οἱ σώφρονες γάρ, οὐχ ἐκόντες ἀλλ' ὁμως,  
κακῶν ἐρῶσι. Κύπρις οὐκ ἄρ' ἦν θεός,  
ἀλλ' εἴ τι μεῖζον ἄλλο γίγνεται θεοῦ,  
ἦ τήνδε κάμῃ καὶ δόμους ἀπώλεσεν.

(353-61)

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<sup>3</sup> Craik (1988) n631 supports that "the physical presence of an image of Apollo on stage is a constant reminder of his inexorable part in the action."

Oh my, what are you saying, child? You have destroyed me.  
Women, these things can't be endured; I can't suffer through this  
alive. The day is an enemy; the light I look upon is an enemy.  
I will cast myself down and release my body; dying, I will let go of life.  
Farewell, I exist no longer. For those of sound mind,  
although not wanting it, nevertheless, love evils.  
Kypris is not a god, but whatever is bigger than what a god is,  
she is this and has destroyed me and this household.

Both the nurse and Polyneices express their helplessness in the face of a desperate situation and then bid farewell (χάριτετε) to their home and related gods. Just as Polyneices bids goodbye to Apollo, so does the nurse to Kypris. In the nurse's speech, moreover, we know that a statue of Aphrodite would have stood nearby while the nurse called out to the goddess. With these close parallels in language and content, it seems reasonable that Polyneices' final words of farewell to Apollo Agyieus would also be addressed to a statue of the god.

Due to Apollo's importance in the Theban myths, his presence on stage via an Agyieus statue would also act as a constant reminder of the god's role as Thebes' protector and his importance in the city's foundation myth. In this way, Apollo's statue would function in a manner similar to Thetis' image in *Andromache*. As Cadmus founded Thebes according to the direction of the oracle at Delphi, so the foundation of the Thetideion held divine origins as it represented the place where Thetis and Peleus made their home. Apollo's statue, like Thetis' statue in *Andromache*, would signal to the audience that the god was in control. The audience knows that Thebes must fall according to the prophecy given to Laius, and Jocasta herself confesses: κακῶς θεῶν

τις Οιδίπου φθείρει γένος (379). A statue or pillar identified with Apollo would underscore the importance of divine control in the fall of the Theban house, in much the same way as Aphrodite's statue coldly watches Phaedra's destruction via her image.

Euripides further signals the supremacy of Apollo in the play by depicting the chorus as a group of beautiful young girls completely devoted to the worship of the god. While the family of Oedipus expresses despair over the catastrophe that has befallen the house, the chorus maintains an air of celebratory devotion to the god that stands in stark contrast to the sentiments of the desperate victims of Laius' curse. In order to express fully the chorus' complete devotion to the god, Euripides portrays the girls in a manner that recalls votive objects or statues:

πόλεος ἐκπροκριθεῖσ' ἐμᾶς  
καλλιστεύματα Λοξία  
Καδμείων ἔμολον γᾶν,  
κλεινῶν Ἄγηνοριδᾶν  
ὁμογενεῖς ἐπὶ Λαΐου  
πεμφθεῖσ' ἐνθάδε πύργους.  
ἴσα δ' ἀγάλμασι χρυσοτεύ-  
κτοις Φοίβῳ λάτρις ἐγενόμαν·  
(214-21)

Chosen from my city as the  
greatest beauty for Loxias,  
I came to the land of Cadmus,  
of the famous decendents of Agenor,

my kinsmen, sent here to the towers of Laius.

And, just as statues made of gold,

I became a servant to Phoebus.

When the chorus describes themselves as equivalent to golden votive statues, they portray themselves as physical property of the god. We see Euripides use a similar technique in *Andromache* when he systematically presents Andromache in ways that recall a statue while she takes refuge at Thetis' image.<sup>4</sup> When Menelaus and Hermione force Andromache from the *temenos* of Thetis' shrine, their actions appear analogous to sacrilegious temple robbery. Similarly, when the servant narrates Alcestis' preparations for death before the altar of the house, Alcestis also takes on characteristics of a votive object or statue within a palace sacred to Apollo.

### **Athena and the Temple of Apollo at Delphi in the *Ion***

I would now like to draw attention to the sculptural frieze on the temple of Apollo at Delphi in the *Ion* and the significance of the deities it depicts. In my analysis of *Alcestis*, I showed that Admetus' palace, having previously housed Apollo, emerges in the play as a quasi-temple and silent witness to the action. Scholars have often noted the unusual attention paid to Admetus' house by the characters of the play and the direct addresses given to it by the characters on stage. Similarly, the temple of Apollo at Delphi functions as both a divinely sanctioned structure and silent witness to the action of the *Ion*. In fact, Euripides takes pains to remind the audience that practically the entire pantheon of the gods watches the stage action from their places on the temple's frieze. In the chorus' description of the temple's sculpture throughout the *parados* (184-

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<sup>4</sup> Swift (2009) 80 n67, notes the similarity between the language of this passage and that of *IT* 18-21, "where Iphigeneia describes herself as owed to Artemis on account of her beauty."

218), they point out the many deities who are watching the play alongside the audience. Thus, it appears that not only Apollo watched over Ion's youth at Delphi, but all the gods offered him protection and safety.

The sculptural depiction on the temple frieze, moreover, allows Euripides to create a constant reminder of Athena's importance in the play. While the *Ion* is set at Delphi and revolves around a child of Apollo, the play's true beginnings take place in Athens and Creusa's rape there by the god. Moreover, Creusa and Xuthus were compelled to make the journey to Delphi due to their inability to produce an heir back home.<sup>5</sup> As the chorus is made up of a group of Creusa's servants from Athens, the women naturally identify with Athena's depiction on Apollo's temple:

— λεύσσεις οὖν ἐπ' Ἐγκελάδῳ

γοργωπὸν πάλλουσαν ἴτυν —

— λεύσσω Παλλάδ', ἐμὰν θεόν.

(209-11)

Do you see the goddess brandishing  
her gorgon-eyed shield against Enkelados?

I see her, Pallas, my goddess.

Here, Athena's presence on the temple façade offers Euripides one more opportunity to bring a play ostensibly about Apollo back around to Athena, the goddess who will ultimately appear *ex machina* at the end of the play. Thus, when Athena takes the stage in person at the end of the play, she stands alongside a sculptural depiction of herself, much like Aphrodite and Artemis in *Hippolytus*, or Thetis in the *Andromache*.

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<sup>5</sup> For a detailed discussion of Athena's role in the *Ion*, see Zeitlin (1996) 329-33.



In the chorus' description of Apollo's temple at Delphi, moreover, we find another reference to Apollo Agyieus, as we just saw in the *Phoenissae*:

— οὐκ ἐν ταῖς ζαθέαις Ἀθά-  
ναις εὐκίονες ἦσαν αὐ-  
λαὶ θεῶν μόνον, οὐδ' ἄγυι-  
άτιδες θεραπεῖαι·

(184-87)

Not only in revered Athens  
are there beautifully-columned halls  
of the gods, but there is also worship  
of Apollo Agyieus.

In the opening lines of the first parados, we find the chorus sight-seeing at Apollo's temple at Delphi and pointing out the statues and sculptures that stood in the area. Because their mention of Apollo Agyieus occurs in this context, it can be posited with some certainty that a statue of Apollo Agyieus was intended to stand on stage. The use of such a statue here would resemble the Apollo Agyieus that appears in the *Phoenissae*. Finally, Euripides uses this common statue of Apollo as another means of bringing the audience's attention back to the Athenian roots of the play, as the chorus is sure to mention that similar temples and statues stand back in their homeland.

### **Divine Statues and Protection**

In positioning divine statues on stage, Euripides exploits the protective aspects of divine images in ways that underscore the themes of each work. The degree and means of protection offered by a deity's statue depends on the context and events of that particular play or scene. In *Hippolytus*, Euripides shows that a divinity's protection

via a statue is not guaranteed to a devotee when Artemis stands by and allows Aphrodite to destroy Hippolytus and Phaedra. While Hippolytus may have devoted himself fully to the worship of Artemis' statue, this is not enough to negate the dire consequences of his hubristic attitude toward Aphrodite. The statue on stage, in reality, ends up underscoring the lack of protection that Artemis gives to Hippolytus as the image ultimately becomes a cold reminder of divine vengeance and the jealousy of the gods.

We see a similar absence of protection in *Phoenissae* with the protective Apollo Agyieus statue that stands near the palace door. Rather than intervening in the downfall of Oedipus and his family, Apollo's image stands silently on stage and watches the devastation unfold. By creating a celebratory chorus that is wholly devoted to the god, Euripides creates an *exemplum* of correct worship and respect for the god. Rather than protecting the family of Laius, Apollo's statue seems to protect Thebes by expelling the cursed ruling family from his city.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Euripides' acute awareness of the protective role of divine images also appears frequently in his narratives of off-stage action and images. For example, in the *dei ex machina* scene of the *Electra*, the Dioskouroi specifically instruct Orestes to seek protection from Athena's image:

έλθῶν δ' Ἀθήνας Παλλάδος σεμνὸν βρέτας

πρόσπυξον• εἴρξει γάρ νιν ἐπποημένας

δεινοῖς δράκουσιν ὥστε μὴ ψαύειν σέθεν,

γοργῶφ' ὑπερτείνουσα σῶ κάρᾳ κύκλον.

(1254-57)

Go to Athens and embrace the revered divine image of Pallas.

She will bar them, terrifying with their dreadful serpents,

so that they are unable to touch you,

stretching out her gorgon-eyed shield over your head.

## Comparisons of Mortal Women to Statues

In a scene that holds a number of similarities to Alcestis' presentation as devoted object, in the *Trojan Women* Hecuba, as a means of expressing her feeling of helplessness and loss of control, describes her situation in words recalling a statue:

φεῦ φεῦ.

τῷ δ' ἄ τλάμων

ποῦ πᾶ γαίης δουλεύσω γραῦς,

ὡς κηφήν, ἄ δειλαία,

νεκροῦ μορφά,

νεκύων ἀμενηνὸν ἄγαλμα,

αἰαῖ

τὰν παρὰ προθύροις φυλακὰν κατέχουσ'

ἢ παίδων θρέπτειρ', ἃ Τροίας

ἀρχαγοὺς εἶχον τιμάς;

(190-96)

Alas! Alas!

Belonging to whom and

in what place on earth

will I become a slave in my old age,

as a drone, a wretched thing, the outline of a corpse,

feeble adornment to the dead,

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In his depiction of Athena's statue, Euripides portrays the goddess' statue as an untouchable provider of protection and refuge. Just as Thoas easily accepted the purported movement of Artemis' statue in the *Iphigeneia*, here the Dioskouroi employ the present active participle of the verb ὑπερτείνω and give a living, breathing presence to Athena's statue. The detail of her gorgon-eyed shield, moreover, portrays the statue as actively menacing and protective, animating its presence even further. Roisman and Luschig (2011) ad loc., comment that "even Athena will intimidate the Furies, unlike her Aeschylean counterpart who uses persuasion and diplomacy."

alas!

Keeping watch as a guardian by the gates

or an attendant to their children,

I who once was royalty in Troy.

By describing herself as a νεκύων ἀμενηνὸν ἄγαλμα (193), Hecuba objectifies herself and expresses her powerless state in terms of an artistic piece. By projecting herself as a beautiful statue, Hecuba also underscores her nobility and authority. The Trojan queen stands in a liminal state that forces her at once to be both alive and dead, queen and slave. By comparing her to a beautiful object, Euripides is able to simultaneously elicit pity on her behalf, while also maintaining her image of beauty and nobility.

Similarly, Euripides compares Polyxena to a statue at the moment of her sacrifice in the *Hecuba*. When Talthybios relates the events of the girl's sacrifice at Achilles' tomb he describes the girl in terms of a statue:

κάπει τόδ' εἰσήκουσε δεσποτῶν ἔπος,  
λαβοῦσα πέπλους ἐξ ἄκρας ἐπωμίδος  
ἔρρηξε λαγόνας ἐς μέσας παρ' ὀμφαλόν,  
μαστούς τ' ἔδειξε στέρνα θ' ὡς ἀγάλματος  
κάλλιστα, καὶ καθεῖσα πρὸς γαῖαν γόνυ  
ἔλεξε πάντων τλημονέστατον λόγον·

(557-62)

And when she heard the words of her master,

taking her robe from the top of the shoulder she

pulled it open over her chest to the waist,

before their eyes, and she showed her breast and chest,

most beautiful as a statue, and bending down upon her  
knee she delivered a speech more pitiable than all others.

When the messenger depicts the girl getting on one knee and exposing her breast to Neoptolemus in a heroic acceptance of her fate, his comparison of her to a statue allows the girl to appear both an object of pity and erotic desire.<sup>7</sup> Her depiction as a statue underscores the girl's submission to her fate and loss of control. Here, in this liminal state just moments before her death, Polyxena is portrayed in a manner that recalls Alcestis' preparations for death at the family altar. Both women appear as beautiful works of art when they accept their deaths and choose to die nobly.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the comparison of Polyxena to a statue just prior to her death also recalls the image of a funerary monument, much like Alcestis' silent return at the end of her play.<sup>9</sup>

### **Heracles' Portrayal as a Statue in *Heracles***

As we have seen from the previous examples, Euripides' comparisons of mortals to statues usually occur in the context of female characters. Because men tend to hold positions of power in tragedy as kings or generals, and comparisons to statues indicate submission, it seems natural that these portrayals would focus on females. In *Heracles*, however, we find a male hero utterly dominated by the gods and forced into a state of

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<sup>7</sup> For the argument that Polyxena's baring of her breast is actually a misinterpreted heroic warrior's gesture, see Mossman(1999) 157-60.

<sup>8</sup> Hall,(2006) 133, notes that "the sexual aura emanating from a charismatic actor wearing the mask of a beautiful woman, a painted sculpture, may have filled spectators with especially uneasy pleasure."

<sup>9</sup> Rabinowitz (1993) 82, sums up this function nicely when she states, "In this way, the statue is reminiscent of the grave markers of the day, which served somewhat inconsistent functions: like a song, they denied the death through memory, but they also affirmed the death by marking the place of burial and preventing use of the site for another grave." For a discussion of the confusion over Polyxena's act as erotic and pitiable, see Segal (1990) 112.

complete helplessness and submission. Thus, we also find one of the few examples in Euripides of a male character depicted in the manner of a statue. At both the beginning and end of *Heracles*, the playwright portrays the hero as a stony object. This depiction expresses the hero's helpless state and his inability to protect his family. Euripides takes this statue-like presentation a step further, moreover, when the hero sits bound to a column of the house, restrained, helpless and fused to a stone pillar.

When Amphitryon delivers his prologue (1-59), the family of Heracles sits in the center of the orchestra taking refuge at an altar of Zeus. Under siege from Lycus, they are left with only this altar for protection in Heracles' absence:

ἐγὼ δὲ — λείπει γάρ με τοῖσδ' ἐν δώμασιν  
τροφὸν τέκνων οἰκουρόν, ἠνίκα χθονὸς  
μέλαιναν ὄρφνην εἰσέβαινε, παῖς ἐμός —  
σὺν μητρὶ, τέκνα μὴ θάνωσ' Ἡρακλέους,  
βωμὸν καθίζω τόνδε σωτήρος Διός,  
ὄν καλλινίκου δορὸς ἄγαλμ' ἰδρύσατο  
Μινύας κρατήσας οὐμὸς εὐγενῆς τόκος.

(44-50)

But I – for he left me at home to rear his children  
and watch over the house,  
while he goes into the black darkness of the earth,  
my child – I, with their mother, lest the children of Heracles perish,  
I am seated here at this altar of Zeus the savior,  
which my well-born child set up as a commemorative  
monument to his glorious victory after he overcame the Minyae.

Here, at the palace of Heracles, the audience finds the hero's family seeking protection from an altar, a καλλινίκου δορὸς ἄγαλμ' (49).<sup>10</sup> Thus, the stone monument comes to represent the absent hero and highlight his lack of intervention. This motif of using a statue or monument as a substitute for an absent character recalls Admetus' desire for a stony substitute of his dead wife. The staging of the scene, moreover, resembles that of Alcestis' death scene, when the grieving household assembles around the dying woman in a visual reflection of her central role in the family. Here we find a similar assembly, yet the central figure in the family, Heracles, is absent and replaced instead with an ἄγαλμα.

At the end of *Heracles*, Euripides mirrors the comparison to a statue that occurs in the prologue when Heracles, just prior to his exile from Thebes, expresses a wish to be turned to stone:

Θησεύς:

άνίστασ', ὦ δύστηνε· δακρύων δ' ἄλις.

Ἡρακλῆς:

οὐκ ἂν δυναίμην· ἄρθρα γὰρ πέπηγέ μου.

Θησεύς:

καὶ τοὺς σθένοντας γὰρ καθαιροῦσιν τύχαι.

Ἡρακλῆς:

φεῦ·

αὐτοῦ γενοίμην πέτρος ἀμνήμων κακῶν

Theseus: Stand up, wretched one, enough of your weeping.

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<sup>10</sup> Griffiths (2006) 48, agrees that "the opening tableau, then, shows us a family sheltering around a stone monument in place of Heracles himself."

Heracles: I am not able, for my limbs are held fast.

Theseus: Indeed, fortune even takes down the mighty.

Heracles: Alas, would that I become a rock, unmindful of evils.

By desiring to be turned to stone, Heracles shows himself to be a helpless and pitiable object. Furthermore, his lack of movement and his desire to lose the ability to experience grief reiterates the hero's helpless state. The image, moreover, recalls Hermione's threat when Andromache refuses to leave the protection of Thetis' shrine:

καὶ γὰρ εἰ περίξ σ' ἔχοι  
τηκτὸς μόλυβδος, ἐξαναστήσω σ' ἐγὼ  
πρὶν ὧ πέποιθας παῖδ' Ἀχιλλέως μολεῖν.

(266-8)

For even if on all sides

molten lead holds you there, I will pick you up

before the one you trust, the son of Achilles, comes.

Both Theseus and Hermione use a form of ἀνίστημι when addressing the “statue-ized” characters. In both, moreover, Euripides employs language related to statues in order to express the defeated and helpless nature of the characters involved. By portraying a character as an inanimate object, the playwright is able to express a sense of powerlessness and vulnerability. While such situations most often occur in connection with female characters, the *Heracles* has shown that men, too, can find themselves desperate and abandoned.



## CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

This study has illustrated Euripides' use of statues and the effects of such statues on the structure and meaning of his plays. While in some plays he places statues on the stage sets (*Hippolytus*, *Andromache*, *Phoenissae*, *Ion*) or incorporates them as props (*Iphigeneia at Tauris*), in other plays Euripides uses the image of a statue in order to make a comparative comment on a particular character (*Alcestis*, *Trojan Women*, *Hecuba*, *Heracles*). When including statues that represent deities in the staging, the playwright creates reminders of the gods in control. As deities in statue-form, the images stand as more than mere inanimate objects. Because of their divine nature, they take on an animated presence that allows them to act as quasi-characters. As such, the "statue-ized" gods can be addressed, garlanded, or clung to for protection. Furthermore, when the gods depicted as statues fail to intervene on a character's behalf, they underscore the lack of protection that certain characters may receive. Finally, the images that appear on stage offer a center around which the dramatic action can unfold. In this way, Euripides emphasizes the centrality of that deity in the play's conflict and story.

In the context of mortals, Euripides employs comparisons to statues in order to portray a once noble character as helpless, defeated and submissive. Because men tend to hold positions of power in the plays, most comparisons to statues refer to female characters. This objectified presentation allows a woman to be eroticized and portrayed as a thing of beauty in her moment of submission and surrender. The comparison to an inanimate object, moreover, lends itself to the context of death and sacrifice as the characters involved can be portrayed as maintaining a liminal state between life and

death in their final moments (*Alcestis*, *Polyxena*). While Euripides most often develops comparisons to statues in reference to female characters, on a few occasions he uses the technique to show a male character's state of complete submission (*Orestes*, *Heracles*). Thus, when Orestes arrives in Tauris besieged by the Furies and risking death by sacrifice, Iphigeneia dreams of her brother in the form of a stone pillar. Likewise, when Heracles is driven mad and compelled to murder his family in the *Heracles*, Euripides depicts the devastated hero as a stony object, analogous to a statue.

### **Statues and Staging**

In this study, moreover, I have shown that careful attention to the role of statues can help illuminate the intended staging of certain plays. In *Hippolytus*, placing the statues of Aphrodite and Artemis equidistant from the palace door offers the best reflection of the play's overall structure. With this arrangement, Euripides develops an organizing principal around which the reflective action can unfold. When the goddesses are located on opposite sides of the stage, the arrangement emphasizes the opposing, yet complementary, nature of the two deities. The statues also allow the playwright to demonstrate visually divine allegiances in the play. Thus, Phaedra's concealment behind the statue of Artemis during Hippolytus' tirade against women would underscore both Phaedra's abandonment by Aphrodite and Hippolytus' abandonment by Artemis. Finally, I argue that once Phaedra's body is wheeled out of the palace on the *ekkyklema*, the staging and themes are best served if the woman's body remains there until the end when Hippolytus' body joins her and returns the stage to its familiar symmetry.

In *Andromache*, I argue that Thetis' role as the controlling deity in the play is best represented by placing her statue and shrine at the center of the orchestra. By placing the goddess and her suppliant in the location of the *thymele* while the other characters appropriate the stage space in front of the skene, two divided theatrical worlds emerge. This divided staging underscores the Thetideion's role as a place of refuge for Thetis and her mortal husband, Peleus. The shrine, moreover, would work best with a visually defined *temenos* surrounding it, as such a partition would underscore the sacrilegious nature of Hermione and Menelaus' removal of Andromache from the boundaries of the shrine.

In *Iphigeneia at Tauris*, Euripides includes a small divine image of Artemis in the second half of the action. Because the portable statue does not stand as a permanent stage fixture like the statues of *Hippolytus* and *Andromache*, Artemis' statue does not offer the same level of visual organization. Euripides, however, still uses the divine image as a foundation around which he can build the play's two-part structure: it is in search of the statue that Orestes first arrives in Tauris and, after the recognition scene, it becomes the key instrument in safely executing the escape plot.

In my final chapter, I discussed two plays in which the textual evidence suggests a statue of Apollo Agyieus stood on stage. In *Phoenissae*, Polyneices bids farewell to Apollo Agyieus' statue as he exits in order to bring an army against Thebes. As the divinity most closely associated with the Theban myths, a statue of Apollo on the stage would underscore the god's role in the story and his lack of intervention in the fall of Laius' family. Furthermore, Apollo Agyieus would especially recall the importance of the crossroads in the downfall of Oedipus. A similar statue, moreover, appears in the

staging of the *Ion*, as the chorus makes mention of Apollo Agyieus' image when they conduct their tour of the temple at Delphi. Because they mention the presence of similar statues at Athens, Athena's image here helps to remind the audience of the play's Athenian origins.

### **Statues and Protection**

Divine statues in Euripides' work function not only as organizational tools, but also as objects that convey divine protection. When a character clings to or hides behind a divine image in search of refuge, their actions reflect the thematic alliances between mortals and divinities. Likewise, when a statue silently watches a character's downfall and offers no protection, the image serves to underscore the lack of protection offered to that character. For example, the two deities present on stage during *Hippolytus* act as constant reminders to Hippolytus' misunderstanding of proper divine-mortal relationships. Furthermore, when Phaedra takes refuge behind Artemis' statue during Hippolytus' tirade against women, the woman shows that she no longer expects protection from Aphrodite. Similarly, the statue of Apollo Agyieus in *Phoenissae* silently watches the downfall of Laius' family. This lack of intervention or protection from Apollo emphasizes the power of Laius' curse and the cold nature of divine vengeance.

In *Andromache*, Euripides visually expresses the thematic commonalities that exist between Andromache and Thetis by positioning Andromache within Thetis' *temenos* and clinging to her statue. When Andromache is forced from the confines of the shrine, Peleus emerges to take over as protector of Andromache on Thetis' behalf. Thus, when Thetis silently witnesses Hermione's downfall and chooses not to intervene, the goddess shows her disapproval of that woman's actions. Likewise, the relationship between Artemis and Iphigeneia in *Iphigeneia at Tauris* resembles the relationship

between Thetis and Andromache. Just as Andromache receives continuous divine protection, so does Iphigeneia, Artemis' priestess. However, while Andromache is delivered into the hands of Peleus after leaving the shrine, Iphigeneia carries an image of Artemis along with her.

### **Mortals as Statues**

Euripides presents a mortal character in a manner that recalls a statue either as a means of underscoring a character's relationship to a divinity (Andromache, Iphigeneia) or as a means of portraying a character as nobly submissive or near death (Alcestis, Polyxena). For example, Hermione characterizes Andromache as a statue when she attempts to remove the woman from Thetis' protection:

καὶ γὰρ εἰ περίξ σ' ἔχοι  
τηκτὸς μόλυβδος, ἐξαναστήσω σ' ἐγὼ  
πρὶν ᾧ πέποιθας παῖδ' Ἀχιλλέως μολεῖν.  
(266-8)

For even if on all sides molten lead  
holds you there, I will pick you up  
before the one you trust, the son of Achilles, comes.

By depicting Andromache as a statue fused to Thetis' image, the playwright underscores the alliance between the goddess and mortal. In other instances, Euripides likens Andromache to a statue when he compares her to stone (115-6) or recalls the myth of Niobe (532-4). Similarly, in *Iphigeneia at Tauris*, Iphigeneia takes on characteristics of the image she serves. At 798-802, the woman is treated as isolated and untouchable, just Artemis' statue.

Euripides also compares mortal characters to statues in order to portray those characters as nobly submissive in times of desperation or death. The most obvious example of this occurs in Euripides' presentation of Alcestis as a statue or work of art throughout her play. By depicting her as an attractive object, Euripides emphasizes her beauty and submission to her husband. This comparison to an inanimate statue, moreover, helps to express the liminal state between life and death that the woman navigates. Alcestis' portrayal as an artistic piece also acts to undercut the submissive aspects of her story and simultaneously portrays her as triumphant and strong. Similarly, Hecuba describes herself as νεκύων ἀμνηνὸν ἄγαλμα (193) in the *Trojan Women*. By objectifying herself, the Trojan queen expresses her powerless state in terms of an artistic piece. Although a helpless slave, Hecuba is far from a mere weak and powerless slave. Finally, Talthybios chooses to describe Polyxena as a beautiful statue just prior to the girl's sacrifice in the *Hecuba*. Such a depiction allows the girl to appear both an object of pity and erotic desire in her final moments of life.

This study has shown that Euripides employs statues in his plays in a consistent and significant manner. By placing divine statues on stage, the playwright is able to underscore the importance of divine influence in his works and visually define divine-mortal allegiances. By creating comparisons between mortals and statues, moreover, Euripides depicts his characters as noble objects in times of death and desperation. By examining the role of statues in his plays, moreover, one can see the careful attention that Euripides paid to the visual and artistic elements of the stage.

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